

FROGPOND

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OF AMERICA

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## About HSA & *Frogpond*

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**Cover Design and Photos:** Christopher Patchel, Green Oaks, IL.

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## Submissions Policy

(Please follow the submission guidelines carefully.)

1. Submissions from both members and nonmembers of HSA are welcome.
2. All submissions must be original, unpublished work that is not being considered elsewhere and must not be on the Internet (except for Twitter and Facebook) prior to appearing in *Frogpond*.
3. Submission by e-mail is preferred
  - (a) in the body of the e-mail (no attachments)
  - (b) with subject line: Frogpond Submission + the kind of work sent
  - (c) with place of residence noted in the body of the e-mail
4. A submission by post will receive a reply only if accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope with sufficient U.S. postage to reach your destination.
5. Only one submission per issue will be considered.

### The Submission May Include Any or All of the Following:

1. Up to ten haiku/senryu
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

### Submission Periods:

1. February 15 to April 15 (Spring/Summer Issue)
  2. June 1 to August 1 (Autumn Issue)
  3. September 15 to November 15 (Winter Issue)
- Acceptances will be sent after the end of each period.

### Note to Publishers:

Books for review may be sent at any time.

### Submission Addresses for *Frogpond* 38:3, June 1–August 1, 2015

E-mail: [fnbanwarth@yahoo.com](mailto:fnbanwarth@yahoo.com)

Postal: Francine Banwarth, Editor, *Frogpond*, 985 South Grandview, Dubuque, Iowa 52003 (USA)

\*\*\*\*\*New Submission E-mail Address for *Frogpond* 39:1\*\*\*\*\*

September 15–November 15, 2015: [frogpondhsa@gmail.com](mailto:frogpondhsa@gmail.com)

Web site: <http://www.hsa-haiku.org/frogpond/index.html>



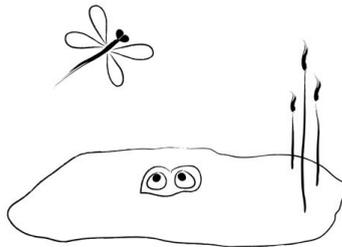
**Museum of Haiku  
Literature Award  
\$100**

for the best previously unpublished work appearing in the  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

**From Issue 38:1**

blister moon  
a wish  
rubbed raw

*Eve Luckring*  
Los Angeles, CA



## Haiku & Senryu

baseball season begins the earth's little wobble and spin

Lesley Anne Swanson, Coopersburg, PA

the porch  
when lilac scent starts to reach  
the dark

Burnell Lippy, Danville, VT

petal by petal the yellow rose on her inner thigh

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

squash blossoms  
the ribbon on her dress  
unraveling

Patricia J. Machmiller, San Jose, CA

strawberry picking  
the red mouth  
of a migrant child

Mark E. Brager, Columbia, MD

fork in the river  
I find my bearings  
in the clouds

Louisa Howerow, London, ON

despite all our bumbles . . . bees

Autumn Noelle Hall, Green Mountain Falls, CO

monsoon rain . . .  
film posters  
peel to pentimenti

Srinjay Chakravarti, Calcutta, India

Omaha Beach  
leaves falling  
on fallen leaves

Steve Hodge, White Lake, MI

last molar  
he leaves childhood  
under his pillow

Annette Makino, Arcata, CA

outback train  
a lost teddy bear  
in dreamtime

Ron C. Moss, Tasmania, Australia

shoulder ride the taste of mirabelles

John Barlow, Ormskirk, England

a small tree  
of tender leaves . . .  
evening breeze

K. Ramesh, Chennai, India

star watching  
the scent of the blanket  
we share

Sandi Pray, Lake City, FL

people huddled  
in the monkey house—  
winter rain

Peter Barnes, San Diego, CA

peacock display—  
if the peahen could yawn

Marian Olson, Santa Fe, NM

December sunset  
a lipstick too red  
for her age

Glenn G. Coats, Prospect, VA

the slight blush of a ripe anjou pear at the Amish market

Brent Goodman, Rhinelander, WI

low winter sun  
a swan's ripples stop  
at the reed patch

Marietta McGregor, Stirling, Australia

fresh snow  
the small tracks left  
by a skittering leaf

Michael Ketchek, Rochester, NY

braiding my daughter's hair—  
just enough tension

Carol Ann Palomba, Wanaque, NJ

the broom strikes a pebble  
that strikes a stone  
sunset clouds

Mike Dillon, Indianola, WA

screaming children chasing children screaming

Al Fogel, Miami Beach, FL

never quite reaching  
maximum velocity—  
leopard tortoise

Andrea Eldridge, Claremont, CA

hazy moon  
an H-1 visa  
issued to the fox

flu season  
the Bruce Lee movements  
of falling leaves

Fay Aoyagi, San Francisco, CA

all the symptoms  
of a looming breakdown  
morning glory

J. Brian Robertson, Berlin, Germany

where the creek takes  
the other creek's name . . .  
a gadwall spins

Allan Burns, Colorado Springs, CO

we didn't really try  
to change the ending  
white camellia

Angela Terry, Lake Forest Park, WA

mother's day  
pushing all the wrong  
buttons

ash wednesday  
my thin layer  
of platitudes

Stella Pierides, Neusaess, Germany

late summer sun . . .  
the prayer strip meets  
its reflection

Bruce Ross, Hampden, ME

used book  
someone has underlined  
loves me anyway

Lauren Krauze, New York, NY

deep autumn  
a door nailed shut  
and whitewashed over

Daniel Liebert, Maplewood, MO

instant oatmeal  
I wonder  
what the hurry is

Michael Rehling, Presque Isle, MI

dog park  
owners congregate  
by breed

Marsh Muirhead, Bemidji, MN

stargazing  
the starts and stops  
along the way

Stephen A. Peters, Bellingham, WA

garden wedding  
the chirping and tweeting  
of guests

Adelaide B. Shaw, Millbrook, NY

Southern roots  
pink magnolia  
in her hair

Johnny Baranski, Vancouver, WA

Venice café  
the red rose seller's  
tired eyes

Dawn Bruce, Sydney, Australia

late-winter paystub  
soup bones pinging  
in the roiling froth

Kiik A.K., San Diego, CA

back from Goodwill  
we find one more  
shabby dress

Steve Addiss, Midlothian, VA

dogwood smell  
an earthworm probing  
wet pavement

Ian Willey, Kagawa, Japan

memories . . .  
a flower seed between  
the pages of a book

Ludmila Balabanova, Sofia, Bulgaria

handwritten will  
the rusty imprint  
of a paper clip

Barbara Snow, Eugene, OR

skywriting  
the words too old  
to read

Christopher Suarez, Brooklyn, NY

at the edge of town  
a stray dog looks away  
moonless night

Tim Happel, Iowa City, IA

trial separation . . .  
spacing out  
my hangers

Ken Olson, Yakima, WA

fifty years  
my thoughts  
his voice

Lynne Steel, Hillsboro Beach, FL

my old toy box  
a plastic soldier  
still fighting the war

Dave Serjeant, Derbyshire, England

family quarrel  
she adds water  
to the brandy

Gergana Yaninska, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

the voice  
of my ancestors  
mouths stopped with dirt

Marilyn Fleming, Pewaukee, WI

rewording his excuse  
the prickly seedpods  
of cheatgrass

Susan Antolin, Walnut Creek, CA

daylight savings  
the neighbor's cat  
still in the dark

Matthew Caretti, Mercersburg, PA

winter solstice  
dragging a deer  
to deeper woods

Mark Dailey, Poultney, VT

snowflakes . . .  
a gradual accumulation  
of lost identities

Padma Thampatty, Wexford, PA

dog marking a cairn marking the wilderness

Alanna C. Burke, Santa Fe, NM

laundromat window  
a child drawing circles  
in her breath

Chase Gagnon, Detroit, MI

milk bubbles  
from a straw this universe  
& that & that

Joyce Clement, Bristol, CT

hometown streets  
place names that fit  
in my mouth

Carmen Sterba, University Place, WA

through frosted glass  
shadow of the tree planted  
when mother died

Aalix Roake, Hamilton, NZ

mirror pond the slight tug of a talon

Bill Cooper, Richmond, VA

painter's sky  
the knife edge of her  
cerulean blue

Michael Henry Lee, Saint Augustine, FL

the owl  
haunts the farmlands—  
stirring the roux

Randall Herman, Lyons, NE

starless night  
the blank space  
in an empty pen

Michelle Schaefer, Bothel, WA

spring breeze  
in the beggar's lap  
a blossom

Mojgan Soghrati, Isfahan, Iran

on the shores of great silence father's eyes

our yesterday behind the blinds

Richard Gilbert, Kumamoto, Japan

EXIT  
four flies  
in the cobweb

windblown seeds  
a mutt barks at  
my thoughts

George Swede, Toronto, ON

night-blooming cereus  
for years  
I didn't know

Carolyn M. Hinderliter, Phoenix, AZ

blind kittens  
the light this time  
of the year

Adrian Bouter, Gouda, The Netherlands

warm the blur of Persephone a beat I can almost hear

blacksnake to love myself and the past turns liquid

Michelle Tennison, Blackwood, NJ

water restrictions  
the river's marginalia  
in full view

dusk quiet  
the tented green  
of a lacewing

Cherie Hunter Day, Cupertino, CA

callback  
the soliloquy  
in my hip pocket

seesaw  
grounded by her  
make-believe friend

Tom Painting, Atlanta, GA

hands up  
my son surrenders  
to sleep

Matthew Moffett, Mt. Pleasant, MI

ebb tide  
the moonlight drifts  
out to sea

Diana Barbour, Clarksburg, WV

pearls off  
she slides the lace  
curtain shut

Jeffrey Winke, Milwaukee, WI

night grows  
everywhere  
the moth turns

a spring wind  
takes up  
with the chaff

Dan Schwerin, Waukesha, WI

smoldering eyes  
the Lambda rhythm  
hip to hip

Angelee Deodhar, Chandigarh, India

paper stars  
I try on  
his last name

Aubrie Cox, Taylorville, IL

this lifetime  
of sleeping together  
hum of the fan

David Elliott, Factoryville, PA

peach shortcake  
at twilight we agree  
on more

Deb Koen, Rochester, NY

seven sisters . . .  
the subtle scent  
of midnight roses

David J. Kelly, Dublin, Ireland

breadcrumbs  
she tells me to stop  
overthinking

Robert Epstein, El Cerrito, CA

shelling pecans  
all the words  
come out wrong

Bob Lucky, Jubail, Saudi Arabia

body to body  
the puzzle  
of love

Dietmar Tauchner, Puchberg, Austria

open iris  
the nurse searches  
for another vein

Sharon Pretti, San Francisco, CA

winter clouds  
she double knots  
her apron

Robert Piotrowski, Mississauga, ON

thick fog  
the heart of the beetroot  
stains my hands

Els van Leeuwen, Sydney, Australia

heavy rain  
end of the war  
with cardboard swords

Robert Kania, Warsaw, Poland

deep into Lent . . .  
deer strip bark  
from the trees

Julie Warther, Dover, OH

ebbing tide  
she rolls her skirt  
above her knees

Mary Kipps, Sterling, VA

just before  
the pearl is born  
in the heart of an oyster

going out  
into April  
frayed at the sleeve

Bill Pauly, Asbury, IA

northern lights  
the old albatross  
changes a shade

Doreen King, Hornchurch, England

river's edge  
the skip and splash  
of a life

Joseph Robello, Novato, CA

spring plough  
a spider running  
from the cowbell

David He, Gansu Province, China

a splash  
from the book of sounds  
in the words of a frog

which lie . . .  
it doesn't matter  
to the new dress

Charles Baker, Mineral Point, WI

sweltering day  
the wooden grizzly bear  
held by a chain

Phillip Kennedy, Monterey, CA

Obon  
I'm given the same  
corner room

Patrick Sweeney, Misawashi, Japan

death rattle—  
someone turns down  
the praise music

Phyllis Lee, Sebring, OH

woodpecker slowing dusk to silence

Lew Watts, Santa Fe, NM

words worth repeating rifles

Carolyn Hall, San Francisco, CA

latest news  
the tv broadcasts  
an old war

Ken Sawitri, Jakarta, Indonesia

hook  
and worm  
of time

snow Adam  
snow Eve  
and so forth . . .

John Stevenson, Nassau, NY

winter dusk  
looking back  
I turn to nothing

D Blackwell, Yorkshire, England

down to the studs her father's ashes

Betty Shropshire, Giddings, TX

winter garden crocus breaking through the dysthymia

Bruce H. Feingold, Berkeley, CA

a rainbow  
in my rearview mirror  
morning commute

Pat Tompkins, San Mateo, CA

coatless  
my turnaround jumper  
swishes the net

blue moon  
more money  
than month

Christopher Patchel, Green Oaks, IL

Labor Day . . .  
children loading sand  
in their toy trucks

Ali Znaidi, Gafsa, Tunisia

vacation over  
the sound of a wasp  
caught in a can

Michele L. Harvey, Hamilton, NY

summer's last rays  
the county fair  
in Ektachrome

Robert Forsythe, Annandale, VA

cicada  
you too  
leave when you like

Vincent O'Connor, Cork, Ireland

idiopathic disease—  
riding on a horse  
with no name

Karen DiNobile, Poughkeepsie, NY

another postcard . . .  
the whistle of a freight train  
passing through

Kathe L. Palka, Flemington, NJ

leaves drifting  
after *long time no see*  
a silence

Chen-ou Liu, Ajax, ON

moonless sky  
a crow separates  
from the night

Maria Tomczak, Opole, Poland

recycling  
the death notice  
buried deep

Bryan Rickert, Belleville, IL

yin moon  
the beauty spot  
on my shady ego

Thomas Chockley, Plainfield, IL

summer evening  
I release the shadows  
in a bow tie

under snow comma embryos

paul m., Bristol, RI

beginning  
the kiss  
at the nape

P M F Johnson, Minneapolis, MN

Monument Valley  
a feather takes its time  
to land

Natalia L. Rudychev, New York, NY

rippling moon . . .  
the splash of each wish  
before sinking

Yesha Shah, Surat, India

half moon  
reading the palindrome backwards

this side of the equinox this side

Eve Luckring, Los Angeles, CA

with their hands  
deaf lovers  
shape the night

Robert Witmer, Tokyo, Japan

December rain:  
the warmth in listening to it  
sluicing on the roof

Wally Swist, Amherst, MA

Rhapsody in Blue  
visiting my father's grave  
I hear it again

Adam Chmielnicki, Sosnowiec, Poland

a silver coin  
hiding behind her ear . . .  
winter moon

Lolly Williams, Canyon Country, CA

shaking off snow  
the white sheep  
turns black

Alexander B. Joy, Amherst, MA

Ides of March  
an empty coke can  
rolls across the asphalt

Navajo sunset  
the bluffs take on the colors  
of the rugs

Charles Trumbull, Santa Fe, NM

indigo cloth . . .  
feeling my mother's hands  
embroider it

CaroleAnn Lovin, Clearwater, FL

dawn  
the approaching rain  
in a robin's song

Rob Dingman, Herkimer, NY

rivers begin  
their monsoon ragas  
stories retold

Kala Ramesh, Pune, India

trout rising . . .  
less of the boy  
in my son's voice

buoy bell  
where my brother drowned:  
fireflies flicker

Chad Lee Robinson, Pierre, SD

summer fog  
an old woman sucks the color  
from an orange

James Chessing, San Ramon, CA

thunder fading . . .  
the chickadee's clear taps  
on a sunflower seed

Ferris Gilli, Marietta, GA

hip-hop  
the beat goes on  
and on and on

Richard St. Clair, Cambridge, MA

war stops at nothing rolling fog

Oleg Kagan, Los Angeles, CA

winter wind  
beer cans plastered  
against the fence

Scott Larson, Carrboro, NC

my dignity  
no longer intact—  
yesterday's snow

Bonnie Stepenoff, Cape Girardeau, MO

the dust  
that remains after dusting  
winter sunlight

Joan Prefontaine, Cottonwood, AZ

funeral over  
spring  
in the heir

Kevin Goldstein-Jackson, Poole, England

after the windstorm cherry bl ss ms

dl mattila, Oakton, VA

hospice  
her toenails trimmed  
for the journey

Victor Ortiz, San Pedro, CA

becoming night . . .  
the owl flies  
on silent wings

Larry Gates, Portal, AZ

beach stones  
give up their heat  
blood moon

Bill Deegan, Mahwah, NJ

portrait  
seeing myself  
outside the mirror

Brenda Lempp, Madison, WI

ornamental plums  
persuading her  
I'm of substance

Renée Owen, Sebastopol, CA

early frost  
a cicada  
serenades itself

S.M. Kozubek, Chicago, IL

café chairs  
stacked on the tables  
winter dusk

Jack Barry, Ashfield, MA

my father's cancer—  
the year ends  
with a cold moon

Ce Rosenow, Eugene, OR

Mother's last breath . . .  
my dog leaves us  
alone

Charlotte Digregorio, Winnetka, IL

pond ripple  
a faint pulse  
of moonlight

Simon Hanson, Allendale, Australia

hex hatch  
her legs open  
to the moon

David McKee, Madison, WI

dust trembling  
in the cobweb  
spring night

Paul Chambers, Newport, Wales

taking  
the shape of the wind  
her hair

Dave Read, Calgary, AB

peepers at dusk call out the calla-pinking sky

Stephanie Baker, San Francisco, CA

my thumb  
in the baby's mouth  
. . . thunderstorm

Michael McClintock, Clovis, CA

firefly light our life together our life together

Wanda D. Cook, Hadley, MA

lemonade  
grasping  
at straws

Michael Fessler, Kanagawa, Japan

tall grass prairie  
the sound of summer  
between our lips

Debbie Strange, Winnipeg, MB

the age I am ready or not

Peter Newton, Winchendon, MA

*thunder*  
the watercolorist  
looks all around

john martone, Charleston, IL

row gently stream your dreams forsythia light again

Linda McCarthy Schick, Brooklyn, NY

so close  
it comes between us  
the moon tonight

th. vandergrau, Norrköping, Sweden

modern art gala  
the sudden urge  
to sneeze

C. William Hinderliter, Phoenix, AZ

winter rose  
the used condom  
limply hung

David Jacobs, London, England

lost glasses crawling through the landscapes of Dali

war zone an ancient god's disfigured face

Marcus Liljedahl, Gothenburg, Sweden

evening crescent . . .  
four point seven billion years  
viewed from a plastic chair

d. e. connelly, Providence, RI

frog pond  
a passing car's  
hip-hop bass

George Dorsty, Yorktown, VA

silver hair  
all ducktailed  
his shuffle

Amy E'toile Skinner, Columbus, GA

batteries fading i'd like to die in the light

asparagus in the urine tang of spring

Jim Kacian, Winchester, VA

little streams chatter  
on the way to the waterfall . . .  
I, me and mine

Lorin Ford, Melbourne, Australia

family reunion  
the humidity  
of hugs

Genevieve Bergeson, Chesterfield, MO

second marriage—  
we circle the pothole  
after it's filled

Sondra J. Byrnes, Santa Fe, NM

elections  
a woman on the billboard  
losing her smile

Janina Kołodziejczyk, Pavullo, Italy

rain-scarred night  
before surgery  
the harsh soap

Nicole Caruso Garcia, Trumbull, CT

ice-sheathed branches  
a thought stops  
mid-sentence

Susan B. Auld, Arlington Heights, IL

white wildflowers—  
I stop hiding  
my gray

Crystal Simone Smith, Durham, NC

new widower  
the unevenness  
of his sideburns

Caroline Giles Banks, Minneapolis, MN

caribou in the stream—  
the torn edge  
of the painting

kjmunro, Whitehorse, YT

Alzheimer's  
her intricate Christmas cookies  
gone

Theresa Woods, Canton, OH

winter numbness  
tightening the butterfly knot  
on his sageo

Sheila K. Barksdale, Gainesville, FL

reading Issa—  
my fingers answer  
the woodpecker's tattoo

Ellen Compton, Washington, D.C.

dotting an i  
dotting an i  
death verse

surf                      breath  
singing a lullaby

Lee Gurga, White Heath, IL

if I may if I might sleep beneath constellated tales

Susan Diridoni, Kensington, CA

the moths  
of her eyelashes  
summer night

a shiver running  
through the horse's side  
summer dusk

Ernest Wit, Warsaw, Poland

fourth time at rehab  
a moth circles  
the canteen light

John McManus, Carlisle, England

under the umbrella  
stopping to let the words  
sink in

after Bach  
space for snow to fall  
deeper

Gary Hotham, Scaggsville, MD

saturnine sunrise coffee cup half full of dreams

Anna Cates, Wilmington, OH

purple ribbon and red seal  
on the 13th Amendment  
winter evening

night snow falls  
on the whole neighborhood  
thumping bass

Lenard D. Moore, Raleigh, NC

thawing  
an old lady sits  
on the swing

Alexey Andreev, Moscow, Russia

how long the grass holds her breath

any other metal would tarnish some sunny afternoon

David Boyer, Stamford, CT

crescent moon and her silk blouse a zephyr swells

Jan Benson, Fort Worth, TX

insomnia . . .  
getting to know  
the night

Tom Tico, San Francisco, CA

laughing gulls  
my hair loosens  
in the breeze

Anne Elise Burgevin, Pennsylvania Furnace, PA

calling home  
the bad connection  
in Mom's voice

Ann K. Schwader, Westminster, CO

where to find the psych ward orderly

midnight my brush with white plumage

Scott Mason, Chappaqua, NY

the economy of a solar system our daughter's first date

Ralf Bröker, Ochtrup, Germany

winter night  
the pure pitch  
of a tuning fork

Tom Drescher, Rossland, BC

the old woman's hands  
water sounds  
from the koto strings

Madelaine Caritas Longman, Calgary, AB

first frost—  
mother's old wind chime  
back in its box

Michael Dylan Welch, Sammamish, WA

sharpening the raindrops autumn dusk

Kristen Deming, Bethesda, MD

some of these monsters  
I know by name . . .  
All Hallows' Eve

Rebecca Drouilhet, Picayune, MS

winter ghosts  
swamp trees  
covered in rime

Arch Haslett, Toronto, ON

the slightest touch  
signaling forgiveness  
January moon

Johnnie Johnson Hafernik, San Francisco, CA

father's day  
the pine board ramp  
I wheel him down

Michael Blottenberger, Hanover, PA

together again rain puddle

Gregory Longenecker, Pasadena, CA

working on the precise wording  
my wife calls me to sharpen knives

Mac Greene, Indianapolis, IN

Water Board meeting  
I have a bee box to clean  
in thin spring rain

J. Zimmerman, Santa Cruz, CA

turning leaves  
an old friend forgets  
where I live

Beverly Acuff Momoi, Mountain View, CA

a young boy plows  
into the snowbank  
winter solstice

Peg McAulay Byrd, Madison, NJ

static cling AM news cycle

C.R. Harper, Seattle, WA

fraction of ocean his ashes

Alan S. Bridges, Littleton, MA

first frost I give a beggar nothing

Anna Maris, Tomelilla, Sweden

winter sun  
mother's fingertips  
inside baby's mitten

Cristina Moldoveanu, Bucharest, Romania

mortuary window  
the light flies  
cling to

LeRoy Gorman, Napanee, ON

wi dow

Roland Packer, Hamilton, ON

first crocus opening up about her bruise

arriving with the hospice bed snow that stays

Jeff Stillman, Norwich, NY

claw marks the lost knack of wonder

agapanthus  
starting another load  
of whites

Cherie Hunter Day, Cupertino, CA

whiff of skunk on main street another store closes

Scott Glander, Glenview, IL

mint moths each to our own pot

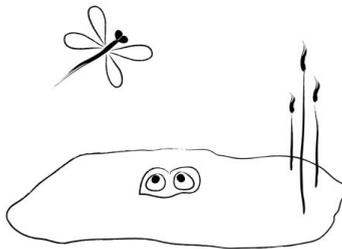
Helen Buckingham, Somerset, England

the Lourdes of her lips April moonlight

Mike Spikes, Jonesboro, AR

fireflies!  
why do we  
whisper

David Gershator, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands



## International Exchange Canada

In past issues of *Frogpond*, we've featured haiku written by poets in Romania, Serbia, the United Kingdom, Germany, Bulgaria, and Colombia. In turn, the haiku organizations in these countries have published haiku by HSA members, chosen by the HSA executive committee. In this issue, we turn our attention to our neighbor to the north—with a little twist. These poets belong to both the HSA and Haiku Canada. Mike Montreuil, vice president of Haiku Canada, selected the poems, which appear in *Haiku Canada Review*.

~David Lanoue, President, HSA

summer's end  
the lost cat notice  
fading

Dan Curtis

lake effect snow  
the wind plays its game  
of hide and seek

Dina E. Cox

falling leaves  
the chess game left  
mid-move

Ignatius Fay

two sides  
to every argument—  
arriving at departure bay

kjmunro

wind chimes ring in the first snow

Jean Jorgensen

winter creek—  
the details of her face  
now blurred

Jacquie Pearce

dolls for sale—  
red lights  
at Jarvis and Wellesley

Don Wilson

# Rengay

## White Point\*

Victor Ortiz, San Pedro, CA  
*Deborah P Kolodji, Temple City, CA*

gusting winds  
a ladybug clings  
to yarrow blossoms

*slow circles  
of a red-tailed hawk*

bladderpod  
rattles on and on  
about the cold

*WWII ruins  
of a gun emplacement  
wild mustard*

inside of me  
scent of purple sage

*magenta stalks  
of island alumroot  
we look out to the sea*

\*White Point is a nature preserve on the coast of southern California that once was used by the military.

## **The Year Getting On**

Ron C. Moss, Tasmania, Australia  
*Allan Burns, Colorado Springs, CO*

ancient middens  
oystercatchers tread  
the tideline

*the old birding patch  
now a golf course*

wood ducks land  
as the ink painter  
loads his brush

*a chickadee keeps  
repeating his name . . .  
the year getting on*

silver gulls in formation  
at the turnout parade

*Christmas Day—  
crows from the foothills  
ahead of the storm*

## A Collective Gasp

Angela Terry, Lake Forest Park, WA

*Julie Warther, Dover, OH*

the way the words  
catch us off guard  
moonlight on snow

*hearing not one heartbeat  
but two*

star formation  
in the tadpole nebula  
a whisper of wind

*an owl lifts—  
the first staggered pings  
in the sugar bush*

incoming swans . . .  
winter silence on their wings

*houselights down—  
a collective gasp  
as the curtain rises*

## **Almond Eyes**

Greg Piko, Yass, Australia

*Glenys Ferguson, Yass, Australia*

yellow wagtails  
in the chinese elm  
street lanterns

*almond eyes behind her fan  
fluttering butterfly*

crimson petals  
the ladybird alights  
on a peony

*dancing kite  
a young man strains  
against the wind*

chinoiserie  
golden reeds on black lacquer

*her hand in his  
above their tea leaves  
chrysanthemum night*

## **Southern Hospitality**

Terry Ann Carter, Victoria, BC

sunrise  
my aunt pours iced tea  
into gallon jugs

Texas side road  
we sidestep the rattlers

family reunion  
more than one way  
to peel a peach

my brother takes  
another chance—  
horseshoe toss

reputations  
in a single slice of pie

bonfire magic  
all our tall tales  
up in smoke

## All the News\*

Paul O. Williams

*Michael Dylan Welch, Sammamish, WA*

the daily word game  
gives him trouble this morning—  
his difficult son

*fingers blackened  
by news of terrorism*

the dignified man  
on the train—paper open  
at the comics page

*fish and chips—  
yesterday's newspaper  
wet with vinegar*

smoothing away the food  
to read “News of the Weird”

*teen with a boombox . . .  
dad's eyes appear  
above the headlines*

\*This rengay was written in 2004. Paul O. Williams died on June 2, 2009.

# Haiku Sequences

## Summer Wages

Memories of a Summer Job on a Cattle Ranch  
at Valmora, New Mexico

Charles Trumbull, Santa Fe, NM

bright July morning  
a dust cloud follows me  
over the cattle guard

up with the rooster  
the boss has me  
shovel out the barn

moving the tarps  
down the irrigation ditch  
alfalfa in bloom

leafy cottonwoods  
I find a shady spot  
to read *The Good Earth*

blades flying free—  
we pull the windmill rods  
from deep in the rock

mattock in hand  
alone on this rocky road  
distant virga

learning to ride . . .  
a prickly pear cactus  
really is

amble, trot, canter, gallop  
each pace hurting my butt  
in a different place

the lariat harsh  
on this college boy's hands  
season of drought

rising breeze  
I learn to roll my own,  
in the saddle

riding fences

...  
the cosmic hum

ratcheting barbed wire  
now and then  
the rasp of a locust

my cutting horse  
                  jumps to the right  
I don't

Mexican yearlings  
for fun the ranch hands practice  
heading and heeling

August midday sun  
the sizzle  
of the branding iron

clenching my teeth  
I hold the bull calf down  
as he's made a steer

their obscene hiss  
in the cast-iron skillet:  
mountain oysters

squirming at both ends—  
the garter snake  
wired to a hay bale

getting pretty drunk—  
I'm glad the Indian's with *me*  
in this cow-town bar

ranch house game of Hearts  
I try again  
to shoot the moon

cool wind coming down  
off the Sangre de Cristos  
summer wages

## **Form Follows Function**

Scott Mason, Chappaqua, NY

private beach community  
the circles in which  
dune grass moves

pipng ditties  
of no tone  
trumpet vine

sea urchins  
half stuck in mud  
soar in their Sputnik dreams

# Tan Renga

Kathe L. Palka, Flemington, NJ  
*Peter Newton, Winchendon, MA*

unfurling  
along the lake's edge, the music  
of fiddleheads

*not a scratch  
on the old vinyl*

Kathe L. Palka, Flemington, NJ  
*Peter Newton, Winchendon, MA*

hospital visit  
going up to your room  
a song we once danced to

*our lives inside  
a holding pattern*

# Renku

## Four Corners

### Twenty-Verse Nijūin

Karen Cesar, Tucson, AZ

Polona Oblak, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Ron C. Moss, Tasmania, Australia

John Stevenson, Nassau, NY

our journey begins where four corners meet . . . autumn afternoon	Karen
the snip of scissors harvesting grapes	Polona
a display of moonlight in Waterford crystal	John
the printer's hands smell of black ink	Ron
loaf after loaf of wholemeal bread slides into the oven	Polona
like the other girls and yet, and yet	John
the groupie signs her name with a Jagger	Ron
a team of packhorses heavily laden	Karen

stockpile of snowballs for an after school ambush	John
fairy penguin tracks sparkle with the frost	Ron
life of Neanderthals in a multimedia presentation	Polona
great grossmutter's accent difficult to trace	Karen
enamoured with my French teacher I order escargots	Ron
cold beer and a ruffie for their midnight swim	Karen
from time to time the moon appears between cloud peaks	Polona
the enduring mystery of mathematics	John
how quiet the church becomes during the consecration	Karen
something stirs within the thawing earth	Polona
everyone beneath the blossoms holding up their phones	John
lambs ripple away from the farmer's tractor	Ron

## Puddles

Freeform Jūnichō

Steve Mason, London, England

Annie Bachini, London, England

sound mist  
grasses struggle  
in the wind  
Annie

flags at half mast  
for the despot king  
Steve

the things  
that people do  
with arms  
Annie

security guards  
go through every bag  
Steve

many exits  
but only one leads  
to where they want to go  
Annie

waiting for a taxi  
blue skies heading this way  
Steve

too early  
first snowdrops  
already in bloom  
Steve

climate change  
but don't create an image

Annie

puddles  
take on the shape  
of oceans

Steve

night view  
the moon in small waves

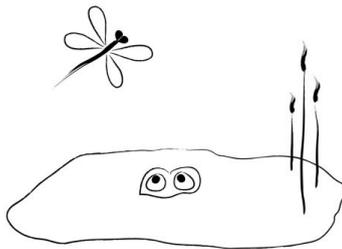
Annie

shouting hello  
to old friends  
across the street

Steve

a calmness  
as we step forward

Annie



# Haibun

## Flight Patterns

Aubrie Cox, Taylorville, IL

Because I promised I would teach you origami on our first date, paper was the first thing I threw into my purse this morning. But instead, when I burst into tears, you fold my hand into yours and gently crease the veins from knuckle to wrist.

There are two main ways to make a paper crane. The first is tidy and neat, like the ones in movies and photographs of shrines. The second skips a step near the end, which relaxes the final fold so that when you pinch the base of the neck and tug on the tail, it flaps its wings.

wind chimes . . .  
we bring in laundry  
off the clothesline

## Be Mine

Marco Fraticelli, Montreal, QC

You know, the hungry woman sees only food.

What the heck does that mean, Grandpa?

I don't know. These thoughts just come to me and I have no choice but to tell them to you. I realize that I'm starting to lose it a little, but you, you're still getting smarter. That's the way of the world. Someday, if life goes the way it should, you'll be sitting by my bedside trying to explain all these things to me.

more junk  
on the shelves  
valentine's day

## **Anatomy of Loneliness**

Lynn Edge, Tivoli, TX

Late afternoon. We circle the Taos plaza, find all the shops closed, then go directly to Margarita's Motel. Evening falls and from the balcony I see red-gold mountains shining in the distance. Dreamlike. I think of Georgia O'Keeffe and Mabel Dodge Luhan. Maybe Natalie Goldberg sits at a local restaurant writing in her notebook.

During our dinner downstairs, I say, "Why don't we stay a few days?"

"What in the world would you do here?" he asks. I stare down at the Spanish yellow tablecloth, and can think of no answer he will understand.

late in the night  
only the sound  
of winter wind

## **No Regrets**

Michael Ketchek, Rochester, NY

Even now, gray haired and all, I am at Auger Falls having hiked through a forest of towering pines and scrubby underbrush. I crawl, crazy for a better view, onto this small outcropping of rock high above the raging torrent. The whitewater shoots out in a mad spray dashing against the shiny, brown black rocks as I sit on my perch drinking a bottle of beer and eating smoked baby clams directly from the tin with my Swiss army knife. After I'm done I light a cigar and laugh because of the beauty of stone and water and fairy ferns growing out of the cracks in the lichen-covered rock wet with waterfall mist and pines silently pointing to puffball clouds in a blue heaven.

below the falls  
a deep pool of water  
wildly swirls

## Chinese Shar-pei

Kyle D. Craig, Indianapolis, IN

When young I dreamt of my companion being a Chinese Shar-pei: sand skin, blue-black tongue, deep wrinkles layered like the poems of Li Po. I saw him seated by my side in quiet meditation, eyes half closed, his tiny paws pooling *Qi*, occasionally bowing his head toward his bowl to slurp herbal tea.

morning rainbow  
beneath the ripples swim  
ornamental koi

But my father—the Great Wall—never shared my Shar-pei dream. Where I saw mindfulness, he saw lethargy. Where I saw wrinkles of wisdom, he saw secular skin infection. And where I saw the manifestation of natural beauty, he saw manipulation by emboldened breeders.

lakeside  
the blue heron is still  
set in his ways

Twenty years later, however, the Great Wall crumbled—crippled by a stroke. No longer Great nor Wall, by my side today sits a small Shar-pei: his blood-thinned skin shaped into a thousand tributaries, his eyes punctuated by stillness, a soliloquy of silence, a perfect model of detachment.

front porch  
an old master points  
his cane towards the moon

**And it all comes down to this**

Renée Owen, Sebastopol, CA

When that great red peony bursts forth from your breast pocket, with its dark, delicate stamens, and an earth-shaking hue, crimson so bright it hurts. When each wavering petal opens to its utmost fullness, it is then you're asked to burn. Till there is nothing left but ash and grit. And when you think it's all over, you must do it again—burn, burn and blossom.

waning moon  
the first day  
she's unable to rise

**Earning my Degree**

Mary Frederick Ahearn, Pottstown, PA

*Young men holding violets are curious to know  
if you have cried,  
And tell you why  
And ask you why  
Any way you answer.*

“Albatross” ~Judy Collins

When you left, everything changed; what was clear became cloudy, what was bright, tarnished. I tried to change, too. Being alone was anathema, too much time to brood, cry, and hold reproachful conversations with you in my head. You were lost to me. My apprenticeship in regret and loss had been unceremoniously launched. An unlikely courtesan, I made my way through too many silly, small affairs fueled by youth's arrogance and solipsism, mine and others'. Art and curiosity led me into a kind of freedom I didn't really want. I became someone else, only to the onlookers. Were you one?

crescent moon  
conjunct with Venus  
but only if you look

### **The Meeting**

Bud Cole, Ocean City, NJ

We crossed paths near the end of March. She asked if we  
might meet for coffee.

the snow . . .  
knows when  
to melt

### **Reunion**

Tom Painting, Atlanta, GA

Come again she says as if not having heard me the first time  
fifty years ago when I used the same three words in trying to  
woo her.

twilight  
the whip-poor-will's  
whip-poor-will

### **With Clouds as My Witness**

Sabine Miller, San Rafael, CA

Dog sore heart  
is beautiful, is witchery  
enough for one.

Do you miss his not, his everything-  
in-one-with? I do.

single living—  
the naked emperor's something,  
something blue

## **Cold Comfort**

Peter Newton, Winchendon, MA

The deer are motionless under the low-hanging pines, easily mistaken for the trees themselves. Their sapling legs thin trunks losing sunlight. I only know to look a few hundred yards past our back fence because they've come here before. For the last few nights they have bedded down under what little canopy young pines provide at the edge of the woods. One deer reaches up to nibble a loose piece of bark. How could this ever be enough? Forecasters say single digits. The neighborhood is quiet. Everyone's inside standing over their stoves. Through bird binoculars I can see one deer fold in on itself, front legs first as if kissing the earth. Then the hind. It's like watching the closing scene of a play. No music. No dialogue. All slow, intentional action. The central character coming to terms with the gradual dark.

tracking their every up and down ridgeline coyotes

## **Returning the Chairs**

Bill Gottlieb, Cobb, CA

The mountain where we were married is shrouded in cloud, like a body too big to bury or burn. The lake jostles and rolls under a low gray sky as slight rain finds December's trees, the straggling leaves like hands that can't let go. I sit in your car—mine now, title transferred—with 30 silent passengers, the chairs I rented for your memorial, stacked neatly as the lines of a eulogy. Perhaps their next event will be a party where two people meet, two hearts in their careless dark cases, ready to travel anywhere a lover is able to go.

bare elders  
you were here where  
two finches sing for me

## What We Now Know

Mary Kipps, Sterling, VA

Like a hurricane, it has degrees; the higher the number, the more intense the destruction. It can grow, undetectable, for years, often accompanied by a subtle, invidious change in personality. In his case, the doctors theorize, it started a decade ago. He is at the highest stage.

first punch  
a *whoosh* escapes  
the risen dough

## Summer Folk

Glenn G. Coats, Prospect, VA

It is late September and the lake is dead quiet. I cannot hear the sound of a single outboard. My father is getting the floating dock ready for winter. He removes screws from the ladder and pulls it straight up and out of the water. Legs are black from the mud and look like charred limbs. Next he loosens the anchor chains so the dock can move in and out with the ice. The dock begins to rock like a boat and my father kneels down to tie a length of rope to an eyebolt. He carries the other end to the shore and fastens it to a limb in the ash tree. If the anchor chains snap then the rope will keep the dock from drifting away.

I empty nest material from the bird boxes, lower the flag, stack chairs under the overhang, and wrap the rowboats with sheets of plastic. I study the changing sky, the yellows and reds in the trees. I try to soak it all in one more time. The colors before the first dusting of snow.

not a cloud  
nothing to soften  
the leaving

## **Why Haiku**

John Stevenson, Nassau, NY

There are so many of us and everyone wants to be heard. It seems only fair to be brief.

a lakeside  
weekend . . .  
mayflies

## **In a Rush**

Alexis Rotella, Arnold, MD

Our houseguest, a poet, is in a rush to get back to LaLa Land. It is dark and the Milky Way is unusually bright as we rush through an open field to get him to the Greyhound station. I keep gazing upward but he keeps looking straight ahead.

Look at that constellation packed with stars—it must be a new one, I joke. The Goddess must have hung another chandelier. Still no response.

The Page of Cups  
reversed—  
all I need to know.

## **White Elephant**

George Swede, Toronto, ON

I worry that an image from a violent novel might keep replaying because I don't want it to: swinging a child by the heels and crushing the head against a sea wall.

low tide  
a baby bottle  
with note inside

## On the Cusp

Roberta Beary, Bethesda, MD

My A.P. English teacher said I would go on to have other children. He was right about that. I have three, two boys and a girl. He also said it would hurt for a little while. He was wrong about that. It still hurts.

filling the hopscotch  
honeysuckle dusk

## netiquette

Roberta Beary, Bethesda, MD

i email him a birthday heads-up. he emails me back a thank you. that's how divorced parents roll. in the nation's capital.

empty nest  
the kitchen clock wags  
its tail

## The Visual

Roberta Beary, Bethesda, MD

When the doc asks about the divorce I close my eyes and see my son at age 10. He's on his knees in the dugout. He's got on his big sister's glove. It swallows his hand but he won't take it off. In a few seconds his sister will run to him. She'll hug him tight and say it wasn't his fault, it was a wild pitch. But I don't go into all that. "It was hard," I say. Then I open my eyes.

nightstand—  
keys to the house  
two houses ago

## Gathering Tools

Michael McClintock, Clovis, CA

Summer lingers, the sky pale blue with heat radiating up from the valley floor, stirring the occasional high, lone vulture, or small cloud strayed inland from dream-time on the coast.

Cool melon for lunch, a walk barefoot down the road to the almond trees. In the evening the harvesters gather their tools.

I collect mushrooms, the way back home carpeted in leaves.

moonless . . .  
the wind whispers  
my mother tongue

## Yield

Claire Everett, North Yorkshire, England

First warm day and once again I'm musing whether this tree, the first in our garden to blossom, is a blackthorn or some kind of ornamental plum. The blooms are starry white and seem to start their slow, snowy drift almost as soon as they unfurl. Around midsummer the spindly boughs will drop their fruit—not dusky sloes, but greenish yellow orbs that gather in the tree's shadow with no other purpose than to rot. The birds won't touch them and the cat merely gives them a cursory sniff or, during a rare dalliance with her kitten-self, a pat that rolls one to its resting place. Speaking of the cat, here she is, with a chirrup of greeting that hoists the flag of her tail. If she were human she would be greying at the temples, but instead her long black coat is tinged with russet. She can still slink, though, slalom style through the 100-watt daffodils, then away, all high heels and feather boa, toward the blackbird's whistle.

a flash forward  
of my old woman face  
perigee moon

## Legacy

Philomene Kocher, Kingston, ON

My cousin tells me that I share a mannerism with my mother:  
that when I sit at the table, I smooth the wrinkles from the table-  
cloth like she did. I didn't know this, and I am moved to tears.

late autumn  
so many nests  
in the bare tree

## The News

Marsh Muirhead, Bemidji, MN

The dental records do not match. And so, this person is not  
the missing person, although this person is missing too, from  
somewhere, by someone, and for about the same length of  
time as the missing person we know. But since this one is a  
stranger, she will be folded away and forgotten, taking her  
place in the waiting room of the news, unable to find a chair.

problems  
of my own  
amber alert

## Hearing Her

dl mattila, Oakton, VA

seeking asylum the deaf woman gestures to the deaf man  
who brought her who understands her who then turns to me  
and motions in a language he and I share while I relay in  
spoken English what he tells me she told him so the official  
asking questions can document her plight

leaves tremble  
in the wind  
distant rumblings

## Mountain Mountain

Carol Pearce-Worthington, New York, NY

We sit at the top of Mount Etna. A smoke ring passes through us. We share a sandwich—half for him, half for me. We have left birds behind. The path has disappeared, handholds are scarce, and the slopes are steep. At every turn something slips away—clothes, knee bends, friends. At first we didn't notice, then we laughed because we believed we could conquer anything.

so many stars  
voices echo  
in the dark

The sandwich is ham and cheese. He prefers Zabar's roast beef. Next time he wants pastrami on white with mayo from the Stage Deli—if it still exists. We argue about memories.

where were you  
butterfly before  
you flew away

There is much to contemplate. Below, Africa and Eurasia converge. Sometimes the ground trembles, the sky changes. We get wet, we dry. We check to see if our eyes are open.

For a moment the mountain air clears. We finish our sandwich; he forgets about Zabar's. We stow our memories across the hall in our minds. We agree that we are not tired. We fall asleep.

wail of a tenor sax  
how high  
the moon

### Repetition 490

Jonathan McKeown, Sydney, Australia

Today over coffee he brings it up again. I listen long enough to know where he's going, then interrupt. Yes, you've told me this before. He's annoyed. You haven't let me finish. I let him finish. When he's finished I tell him he's told me that at least half a dozen times before. Have I told you that before? Yes, I tell him, at least half a dozen times. And I get the moral of the story too. What do you mean? —That my mother is a liar and a thief and unfaithful, and in many respects just like her mother . . . a despicable person. I wouldn't say despicable, he says. I wonder if he knows what it means. He was never good with words. He always said he was better with numbers. I love you Dad, but why do you want to bring this up now? What good will it do? It's been years. I just want to know the reason, he says. But I know that isn't the reason. What if she told you? Would it make any difference? It depends. On what? He looks down at the small wad of papers on the table and pokes at it with a pen. Forget about it. I shouldn't have brought it up. I won't bring it up again.

seventy times seven  
he begins a new  
sudoku

## The Rented Self

Elizabeth Hare, Hudson Valley, NY

I reek of old nails, peeling wallpaper, and hobbled right angles. I taste spiders and childbirth and loss when the wind busies my prayer wheels, spinning Earth's holographic mysterious mill.

walking between moon shadows

I step on the moon

## Impromptu

Anne Elise Burgevin, Pennsylvania Furnace, PA

My young student grabs the Bananagrams pouch and we plop down on some pillows. She turns the letter tiles face *up* then suggests we use made-up words. I am caught off guard. "Hmm, how can we do that?" "You know, just make up some words. I'll go first." She spells SOVAT and says it reminds her of food. I reach for some tiles to make a non-word and spell TRAATCH. Each time I invent a new word it gets easier to invent the next one.

bottomless  
I keep coming back  
to this murky lake

## Ode for the Shasta Ground Sloth

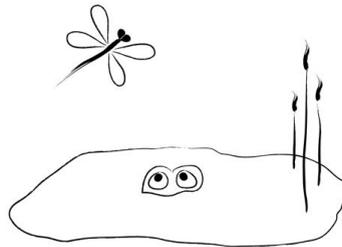
Deborah P Kolodji, Temple City, CA

I might have met you  
13,000 years ago.  
We could have dined on seeds;  
you would eat the fruits  
of yucca and give me  
leaves for sandals.

We would have traveled  
North America,  
your shaggy bear-sized shadow  
next to mine  
as outstretched arms of Joshua Trees  
marked our wanderings.

But the Ice Age is over,  
you're not here,  
yucca breviflora confined  
mostly to the Mojave. I cry  
tears of Canterbury Bells,  
carpet the desert floor.

brittlebush  
the hint of silver  
in my hair



# Essays

## **The Haiku Society of America: Our Mission\***

David G. Lanoue, New Orleans, LA

When Harold G. Henderson and Leroy Kanterman founded the Haiku Society of America in 1968, they stated that the purpose of their new organization would be to promote the writing and appreciation of haiku poetry in English. This double focus upon both the writing and appreciation of haiku is important. To write real haiku, one needs an appreciation of what a haiku is, can do, and should do. In 1968 most Americans had never heard of the term “haiku,” and so Henderson and Kanterman’s desire to promote not only its writing but also its understanding plainly filled a societal need.

Today in 2015, 47 years after the founding of HSA, that need is still great. Today, many Americans recognize the term “haiku” and believe that they understand it, thanks to an educational system (both private and public) that introduces haiku to school children as a component of language arts instruction. The sad truth, however, is that teachers in the United States, though well intentioned, often impart a misunderstanding of haiku to the nation’s children. Many Americans believe that a haiku is a short poem consisting of seventeen syllables, period. Due to this distorted understanding of the genre’s essence, poems like the following (about the Super Bowl) can be tweeted and retweeted as if they were true haiku:

Is the game over?  
I missed the entire thing.  
I was out shopping.<sup>1</sup>

\*This essay is a slightly edited version of a speech delivered at the Joint Meeting of HSA and the Meguro International Haiku Circle, held in Tokyo, Japan, March 14, 2015.

Anyone who understands haiku tradition, anyone who appreciates what a haiku is and should be, will know immediately that this humorous quip, though arranged in a pattern of 5–7–5 syllables, is an imposter. Given a nationwide program of haiku mis-education, the HSA’s mission to promote an informed appreciation of the genre is even more needed today than it was in 1968. Then, people didn’t know about haiku because they hadn’t heard of it. Today, people believe they know what a haiku is, but they are wrong.

Our challenge today isn’t ignorance; our challenge is the more insidious problem of institutionalized, systematic misrepresentation. For example, the Ohio Department of Education’s Grade 7 Reading Achievement Test of March 2006 included the following poem:

If things were better  
for me, flies, I’d invite you  
to share my supper. —Basho<sup>2</sup>

The Ohio Department of Education makes many mistakes in this example. In the first place, the poem is erroneously attributed to Bashō, when in fact it is a mistranslation of Issa:

世がよくばも一つ留れ飯の蠅

yogayokuba mo hitotsutomare meshi no hae

it’s a good world!  
one more, help yourself  
flies on my rice<sup>3</sup>

In the second place, the translator, Harry Behn,<sup>4</sup> misreads the opening phrase, *yogayokuba*, to signify, “*if only* the world were good,” but in fact Issa’s meaning is, “*since* the world is good.” Because the harvest has been bountiful, Issa generously invites his flies to partake of his rice. The editors of *Issazenshū*<sup>5</sup> further explain that the poet is specifically alluding to a popular song, *Kotoshiyayogayoi*: “The world is good this year!”—a song that celebrates an abundant harvest (6.167). R.H. Blyth in his four-volume work, *Haiku*,<sup>6</sup>

and Noboyuki Yuasa in *The Year of My Life: A Translation of Issa's Oraga Haru*,<sup>7</sup> translate the poem correctly. Blyth renders the first phrase, “Everything is going well in the world” (3.796), and Yuasa has Issa tell the flies, “May you, too/ Enjoy a rich harvest” (56)! It’s unfortunate that educators in the state of Ohio chose to use Behn’s translation from *Cricket Songs* (1964) rather than Blyth’s or Yuasa’s easily obtained, better translations—or my own translation, for that matter, posted on my online *Haiku of Kobayashi Issa* archive.

The real damage of the Ohio example isn’t that the test designers mistranslate and attribute the poem to the wrong poet. The real damage lies in the instructions that follow, which state: “Look back at the haiku by Basho, translated by Harry Behn, at the beginning of this article. See how it follows the rules: First, it is written in seventeen syllables without rhyme.” The instructions go on to mention some more essential aspects of haiku, including its connection with nature and the importance of presenting an image. However, primary emphasis is placed—or we should say, *misplaced*—on syllable count.

It is a grave mistake to make syllable count a necessary prerequisite for haiku in English. The linguistic differences between Japanese and English have been well documented, including the facts that English “syllables” are not the equivalent of Japanese *on*, and that the English lexicon contains a higher percentage of monosyllabic words, making it dangerously possible in English to create a seventeen-syllable poem using seventeen different words. Such a long-winded monstrosity would violate the esthetic qualities of succinctness and simplicity that we so admire in Japanese haiku. Of course, fine haiku can be written in English following the 5–7–5 pattern, but this is only possible when a poet has a clear understanding of haiku’s most essential aspects. Sadly, many teachers assume that it’s merely an empty vessel of seventeen syllables into which any content can be poured, and so they can read the Super Bowl “haiku” that I quoted earlier, count on their fingers, and conclude: it must be a haiku because it has the correct number of syllables. This misconception leads to two false conclusions: (1) haiku is simply a clever language game,

and (2) as such, it isn't moving, challenging, or important in the way that great works of literature can be.

The Haiku Society of America is still on a mission, in its 47th year, to clarify for writers and readers of haiku in English the essence of haiku so as to lead to a deeper appreciation of this marvelous international poetic genre. It's tragic when educators in the United States choose amateurs like Harry Behn for rules rather than deep-thinking critics and writers familiar with Japanese tradition and culture, such as Blyth, whom I mentioned earlier, or—before Blyth appeared on the scene—Lafcadio Hearn. It's a shame that the designers of the Ohio Department of Education's reading achievement test didn't open the pages of Hearn's 1899 book, *In Ghostly Japan*, in which he writes about the essence of haiku:

The term *ittakkiri*—meaning “all gone,” or “entirely vanished,” in the sense of “all told,”—is contemptuously applied to verses in which the verse-maker has uttered his whole thought;—praise being reserved for compositions that leave in the mind the thrilling of a something unsaid. Like the single stroke of a temple-bell, the perfect short poem should set murmuring and undulating, in the mind of the hearer, many a ghostly aftertone of long duration.<sup>8</sup>

In a later book of 1901, *A Japanese Miscellany*, Hearn adds, “Almost the only rule about *hokku*,—not at all a rigid one,—is that the poem shall be a little word-picture,—that it shall revive the memory of something seen or felt,—that it shall appeal to some experience of sense.”<sup>9</sup> At the beginning of the 20th century, Hearn laid the groundwork for haiku in English: it should evoke rather than explain; it should leave much unsaid; it should comprise a “little word-picture,” and appeal to “some experience of sense.” All these aspects are lacking in the earlier-cited Super Bowl verse. All these aspects, however, are present in the haiku that fill the pages of *Frogpond*, the official journal of HSA, and the pages of our annual members' anthology.

Indeed, in our publications the HSA promotes a more profound understanding and appreciation of English-language

haiku than do most elementary and junior high school teachers. Nevertheless, we need to do more in the way of educating educators, if we are to fulfill our mission. Last year, to cite one hopeful example, organizers of a city-wide haiku contest in Lawton, Oklahoma, contacted the HSA, requesting that we provide educational packets for the high school teachers of the city, as well as judges for the contest. We gladly agreed to this, and as a result the students in three high schools of a city in Oklahoma in 2014 learned that haiku is not a syllable-counting game. Although some of the winning entries scanned to 5–7–5 syllables (old habits are hard to break), several of the best poems selected by the panel of HSA members broke out of this mold, such as Michael Deck’s award-winning haiku:

empty sea  
echoes of whales  
panicking krill

I mention our success in Lawton as an example of incremental progress, but we most certainly have a long way to go. I sincerely hope that the HSA and our sister groups dedicated to English-language haiku around the world, such as Meguro International Haiku Circle, will continue to enlighten people to the fact that haiku is not a syllable game but instead a rich, resonant poetic genre that sets “murmuring and undulating, in the mind of the hearer, many a ghostly aftertone of long duration.”

The HSA can do a better job of promoting a good understanding of English-language haiku. Concretely speaking, we might take the following first steps. First, we might improve our outreach to teachers by making available on our website more materials and lesson plans for teachers of all levels: primary, secondary, college, and adult education. Second, we might devote one of our upcoming quarterly meetings or, perhaps, a major separate conference, to the teaching of haiku, and make sure that news of this meeting, both before and after, reaches as many educators as possible. Third, we can improve our outreach directly to young people, using our new HSA Twitter account as well as our Facebook page to pass on blurbs about

what a haiku is and what it can be, along with invitations to contests. We might also look into including more social media platforms in this effort, such as Instagram.

The HSA should aggressively promote a vision of English-language haiku informed by study of the rich traditions of Japanese and world haiku.

### Notes

1. "Is the game over?" *Twitter @HaikuHare*. Accessed 6 February 2015.
2. Ohio Department of Education. *Grade 7 Reading Achievement Test*, March 2006. Accessed 6 February 2015. Web.
3. *Haiku of Kobayashi Issa*. Trans. David G. Lanoue. Archives accessible at [haikuguy.com/issa](http://haikuguy.com/issa).
4. In Harry Behn, *Cricket Songs: Japanese Haiku* (New York: Harcourt, 1964).
5. Kobayashi Issa, *Issazenshū*. Kobayashi Keiichirō, ed. (Nagano: Shinano Mainichi Shimbunsha, 1976–1979), 9 vols.
6. R.H. Blyth, *Haiku* (Tokyo: Hokuseido, 1949–1952; rpt. 1981–1982 [reset paperback edition]), 4 vols.
7. Nobuyuki Yuasa, *The Year of My Life: A Translation of Issa's Oraga Haru* (University of California Press, 1960; 2nd ed., 1972).
8. Lafcadio Hearn, *In Ghostly Japan* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1899), 155.
9. Lafcadio Hearn, *A Japanese Miscellany* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1901), 97–98.



*David G. Lanoue maintains The Haiku of Kobayashi Issa website, for which he translated 10,000 of Issa's haiku. His recent books include Issa's Best: A Translator's Selection of Master Haiku and Issa and the Meaning of Animals. Lanoue is the current HSA president.*

## Grief and the Collapse of “Distancing” in the Reader— Haiku and Ethics, a Brief Consideration

Richard Gilbert, Kumamoto, Japan

The [question] is what it means for our ethical obligations when we are up against another person or group, find ourselves invariably joined to those we never chose, and must respond to solicitations in languages we may not understand or even wish to understand. . . . [W]e might say that we do not merely or only receive information from the media. . . . We do not only consume, and we are not only paralyzed by the surfeit of images. *Sometimes, not always, the images that are imposed upon us operate as an ethical solicitation . . . we are in such moments affronted by something that is beyond our will, not of our making, that comes to us from the outside, as an imposition but also as an ethical demand . . . these are ethical obligations that do not require our consent.*

~Judith Butler<sup>1</sup>

### A Poetics of Resistance

Philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler is concerned with grieving, in particular with possibilities for grieving for the distanced other.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, it is a crime against an ethical humanity when the U.S. population no longer experiences any real feeling for the deaths of Iraqis and Afghans, in these wars<sup>3</sup>—and this “non-feeling” is composed or composited through coercive and selective forms of censorship, such as the government’s disallowing photos to be taken of returning coffins and destroyed bodies—these images rarely appear on TV or in the press, if at all.<sup>4</sup>

I would submit that modern haiku, in one of its faces, is a poetics of resistance, offering a site of grieving. Through the use of broken language, imagistic and linguistic fragments, shards of a world presented via savage omission, and relativisms which linger absolutely, the haiku cuts into ordinary reality with a salient hammering: a temple bell resonant with after-images of endinglessness. The brevity of haiku is consonant with alternation, alerity, iterations of composited “frames” of

image and imagelessness; all of which flicker into a twilight, hypothetical livingness, a bardo body<sup>5</sup> or liminal state of distributed democracy where each reminiscence receives equal hypothetical weight.<sup>6</sup> While examples abound, these two recently published works play with *the impossibility of language as image* (as in “syllable rain”; “words lie dislocated streets”) evoking liminality:

hold your glass against the syllable rain

(Cherie Hunter Day, 1 Mar 2015)

storm ends words lie dislocated streets of air

(George Swede, 29 Mar 2015)<sup>7</sup>

Feel what is suddenly close to you, what is distant, what images arise as intimate, as tragic? As a result of the above-mentioned irruptions of perception and consciousness (“shards,” “savage omission[s],” etc.<sup>8</sup>) one possibility for haiku is that vulnerability as conjured by the imagination becomes embodied.

The problem of the distanced other is not the “other” or distance, it is the distanced itself, as a psychological breakdown between the self, an object, and the way it is referenced.<sup>9</sup> Haiku retain and embellish distance, yet cut through defensive *distancing*: for example, the objective stance and suppression of the poetic “I” enhances distance, while the value placed on transparency of thought cuts through objectivity.<sup>10</sup> You might then say that haiku are performatively meant to confront and thus revive an intimacy of caring, which lies somnolent, deep within the reader.

In order to demonstrate what I mean by this, let’s take a look at several haiku. These are all recent examples from *is/let*:

the here here  
amidst tulips’  
untidy deaths

(David Boyer, 20 Feb 2015)

The iterative “here” is instrumentally untidy; death and immanence may be the context, yet “tulips’ untidy” forms a crux: this personification upsets attempts at balancing dialectical equations (consider the presence of “tulips” contrasted with “untidy deaths”; the “here here” [presence itself] contrasted with “deaths” [death]; an “amidst,” poised against an absence). The near non-narrative acts as embellishment: absence as ornament effects a disturbing, precarious sense of loss. The reader becomes less distanced even as the haiku and its author remain distant.

house calls  
Strangelove  
in the afternoon (Helen Buckingham, 16 Feb 2015)

This may be seen as a haiku of domestic disturbance, or domestic-semantic disturbance, due to the easy collocational familiarity of “house calls” “in the afternoon.” The irruptive insertion of Strangelove collapses the normative Real via multiple puns and through mutual impossibilities—if we allow to co-exist the eponymous film (a perverse comedy concerning the atomic bomb, military-industrial complex and possible end of the world)—with sexual perversion (as “strange love”), and the boredom implicit in viewing said film on some nameless cable channel in the context of an anonymous ex-urbia on some perhaps out-of-work “afternoon.” Here the cause for ironic humor is grief; an ever-aching emptiness almost filled. Finally it’s the white spaces between words which become a focus: the strange love of that emptiness existing between collocations, film titles, and prepositional phrases. A cultural void, or societal numbness, is indicated.

A final example,

be mine —  
alive for one  
more war (Richard Gilbert, 30 Dec 2014)

is written perhaps for a lover, yet equally alludes to the recent Iraq and Afghan wars (and wars yet to occur). This haiku

senses union and catastrophe in brutal monosyllabic savagery but for the dyadic “alive” (“be mine” implying a couple)—clinging to life on the left side of the middle line. The only image that can exist here is one of language fragments taken out of life, organized by you, the distant reader—distant from the author’s love and grief—indeed, perhaps the reader, as much as a lover, is ironically implied by “be mine”?

### To Know Is Not Merely to Witness

Butler comments that even the universal is always relative to a particular people, time, and place—yet interestingly, haiku fragmentation and omission allow for a potent universalism, in that the universals of love, war, and death in all the haiku above are relativized by each individual reader, via subjective, idiosyncratic experience. In their various guises, these haiku might be seen as *all war*: yet each in a uniquely specific manner persuades a collapse of emotional distancing in the reader.

There is an additional effect found in many haiku, alluded to earlier as the avoidance of, or objectification of, the “I”—the avoidance of any overt insertion of the author as protagonist. This stylism was first presented artfully (as haiku or the haiku-esque) by the early modernists, in Imagism and elsewhere, and then brought into postwar popular culture primarily through the haiku translations of R.H. Blyth. The ethical dimension of haiku has been presented definitionally as *makoto* (an aesthetic of sincerity, truth) in Japanese, and since the 1970s from the Haiku Society of America (HSA), as an “essence . . . keenly perceived . . . nature [ ] linked to human nature”;<sup>11</sup> and later as “the essence of an experience . . . intuitively linked to the human condition.”<sup>12</sup> But what is *kenned* in “keenly”? What is being *linked* in the “linked to”? And, why does the HSA end both definitions with an *implicit* (or *implicate*) *sense of sincerity* in “human nature,” or “the human condition”?

To know is not merely to witness. The objectification of a landscape or scene implicate with loss implies a nuanced sense of witnessing. As Maurice Blanchot indicates, “in the work of

mourning, it is not grief that works: grief keeps watch.”<sup>13</sup> The vulnerability of the body is not instantiated in the reportage or “sketch” of a haiku scene, but in that which “keeps watch” over the life of the poem. To become sensitive to this poetic space or *topos*, one must yield, be “cut”: then reader and poem open endlessly as flowers. Excellent haiku are both tender and harsh; their “images are imposed upon us . . . not of our making . . . an imposition,” and so often indicate “also an ethical demand” (Butler, epigraph above). Whether the reader is passive and the poem active or the reverse, within the interplay of reader and work, one potential answer to grief moves us towards dissent. As Butler puts it, elsewhere: “If we are interested in arresting cycles of violence to produce less violent outcomes, it is no doubt important to ask what, politically, might be made of grief besides a cry for war.”<sup>14</sup>

### “Precarious Life”

In this regard, haiku often open us to an ethical sense of ourselves and the world, towards the “precarious life” and vulnerability of both bodies and words; towards an “ethics of cohabitation.” A good haiku resists us—and we too may resist *the increasing commonality of “non-feeling”* in which questions such as,

Is what is happening so far from me that I can bear no responsibility for it? Is what is happening so close to me that I cannot bear having to take responsibility for it? If I myself did not make this suffering, am I still in some other sense responsible to it?<sup>15</sup>

are no longer being posed, have exited social address. These are questions which repeatedly and insistently arise within the “frames,” the hypotheticality or liminality of haiku. “In the register of the imaginary, the pain of the other not only asks for a home in language but also seeks a home in the body.”<sup>16</sup> Even if the “street” is in this case an inner landscape, it is likewise true that we meet the world each day. Does haiku composition imply in its formal approach to literary production modes of ethical practice? Arguably, yes.

## Notes

1. Judith Butler, “Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation,” *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26.2 (2012): 134–51. (Emphasis mine.)
2. In her historical analysis, Butler, Maxine Elliot Professor in the departments of rhetoric and comparative literature at the University of California, Berkeley, discusses two approaches; she contrasts the thought of Emmanuel Levinas (“drawing on religious traditions . . . the ethical importance of passivity and receptivity”), with Hannah Arendt (“a social and political philosopher, adamantly secular, who emphasizes time and again the political value of action”). See Butler, “Precarious Life, Vulnerability . . . ,” 142.
3. Butler, in her *New Statesman* (August 30, 2009) interview with Nina Power, comments “. . . [on] the sudden instrumentalization of ‘gay rights’ or ‘women’s rights’ to fight the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, a move that suggests that we are actually fighting a culture, a religion, or an entire social structure rather than a particular state or its government.” See <http://bit.ly/1yCP6iR>. Cf. Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009).
4. “War is ‘framed’ in the media so as to prevent us from recognising the people who are to be killed as living fully ‘grievable’ lives, like ours. That is the thesis” (*Frames of War*, book review, Steven Poole, *The Guardian*, 9 May 2009). “Journalists and newspapers were actively denounced for showing coffins of the American war dead shrouded in flags. Such images were not to be seen in case they aroused certain kinds of negative sentiment” (*Frames of War*, 65). “Media names any mode of presentation that relays to us some version of reality from the outside; it operates by means of a series of foreclosures that make possible what we might call its message and which impinges on us, by which I mean both the foreclosure—that is edited out, what is outside the margins—and what is presented. When we find ourselves in the midst of a responsive action of some kind, we are usually responding to what we have not chosen to see . . .” (“Precarious Life, Vulnerability . . . ,” 136–37).
5. Bardo—In Tibetan Buddhism, a “‘transitional state’ or ‘in-between state’ or ‘liminal state’ . . . of existence . . . when one’s consciousness is not connected with a physical body” (*Wikipedia*).
6. Discussed in Richard Gilbert, “Plausible Deniability: Nature as Hypothesis in English-language Haiku” available at: <http://research.gendaihaiku.com/plausible>.
7. All haiku quoted in this article are taken from *is/let*, an online journal of haiku, founded and edited by Scott Metz. Available at <https://isletpoetry.wordpress.com>.

8. Here the concept of cutting (sharp, potent, sudden, shocking, raw) as *savage* disjunction is not meant to imply aggression but rather an irruptive force analogous to storm, earthquake, volcano: natural phenomena which relativize the human. Mallarmé, in his noted aphorism, “The poet does violence to language in order to purify the words of the tribe,” is, I believe, articulating much the same thing.
9. “Distancing” in psychology is defined positively as an aspect of language development, and pathologically as a collapse of words and their referents, in schizophrenia (cf. “Distancing (psychology),” *Wikipedia*).
10. This contrastive example was suggested by Michele Root-Bernstein (personal communication, 2 Apr 2015).
11. This is the “previous” HSA definition of haiku, composed “1973/1976.” Available at: [http://www.hsa-haiku.org/archives/HSA\\_Definitions\\_2004.html](http://www.hsa-haiku.org/archives/HSA_Definitions_2004.html).
12. The “official” current 2004 HSA definition of haiku (endnote above, for the URL).
13. Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*; Trans. Ann Smock. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 19.
14. Judith Butler, *Prekarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), xii.
15. “To make this view plain, I want to suggest as a point of departure that images and accounts of war suffering are a particular form of ethical solicitation, one that compels us to negotiate questions of proximity and distance. They do implicitly formulate ethical quandaries: Is what is happening so far from me that I can bear no responsibility for it? Is what is happening so close to me that I cannot bear having to take responsibility for it? If I myself did not make this suffering, am I still in some other sense responsible to it?” (Butler, “Prekarious Life, Vulnerability . . .,” 135).
16. Veena Das, “Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain.” In Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock, eds., *Social Suffering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 67–93.



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## **Haiku Diction: The Use of Words in Haiku**

Charles Trumbull, Santa Fe, NM

Haiku has been described as “the wordless poem.” Because of need for brevity, the haiku poet must use language with extreme economy and accuracy and employ techniques that are very different from those used in crafting Western-style poems. In this essay we will explore the poetics and aesthetics of English-language haiku as they apply to the poet’s choice and deployment of words.

In working with words, there are three basic strategies that a haiku poet can adopt:

1. minimizing the number of words in the first place
2. being sure that every word used is the right one
3. making each word as full of meaning as possible

We’ll look at some of these approaches, concentrating on questions of simplicity and conciseness of language, levels of poetic diction and choice of words, the use of metaphor and simile, the importance of allusion, and related questions of the haiku craft.

### **Haiku and Conventional Poems**

It is important to know what we are trying to do with our haiku, which usually is significantly different from conventional poetry. We’re talking about English-language haiku, and our examples will be mostly that. Still, haiku evolved from Japanese haiku, and we’ll need to touch on Japanese poetics and aesthetics as well.

The goal of haiku is to communicate. The means of communication has to be words, yet words are an inefficient, misleading, even meretricious vehicle for the conveyance of meaning. It would be wonderful if the haiku poet, like the graphic artist, could communicate images directly, without the medium of words, but of course that is not possible.

The careful choice and use of words is important in all kinds of writing—in fact that is practically a definition of poetry—but I would argue that the haiku poet is under a different pressure. Poets writing mainstream poetry select words for their intrinsic and resonant beauty. Haiku poets strive for precision of meaning and appropriateness of diction. Wordplay or any other use of a word that calls attention to the word itself or away from the meaning of the haiku is discouraged. Words must be used as gently as possible so as to minimize perturbations of the image. From this comes the idea that haiku is, or insofar as possible should be, a wordless poem.

### Using as Few Words as Possible

The observant reader will have noticed that haiku are shorter than conventional poems. In fact the haiku poet approaches the craft from a different direction than the conventional poet. He/she tries to describe a moment as succinctly and directly as possible. When poets set out to write haiku, they realize that the quota of words will be extremely limited so they impose on themselves constraints that conventional poets generally need not worry about.

The haiku poet should be aware of the danger of including an extra word or two by way of explanation, to add color to the poem or for any other reason. Here are some examples of haiku that I have seen in my editing work that I found less than ideally concise, followed by the version that was finally published or approved.

As the spring rains fall  
soaking in them, on the porch  
a child's rag doll

Spring rains  
soaking on the porch  
a child's rag doll<sup>1</sup>

my young child's  
schoolhouse  
toy soldiers  
at the doorway

schoolhouse  
toy soldiers  
at the doorway<sup>2</sup>

sidewalk at dusk  
a skateboard's clip-clop  
fading toward home

dusk  
the clip-clop of a skateboard  
fades<sup>3</sup>

Most of what was trimmed in these examples falls in the category of unnecessary information. "Spring rains" says everything necessary from the original, five-syllable first line. "Schoolhouse" already suggests young children, and that the child was the poet's is neither here nor there to the reader. "Dusk" plus "fading" carry the suggestion of returning home, so the surrounding words can profitably be dropped.

A frequent problem, especially for beginners, is the bloating that occurs when the poet tries to pad out a verse to the 5-7-5 syllable structure that was—and still is by some—considered a norm. Here are two examples from early writers of haiku in America:

This brave plum tree shakes  
its fisty buds at retreating  
bullying winter<sup>4</sup>

Wrinkled summer pond:  
turtle sailing old brown log  
gulps pirate stone flies.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the bloat, caused mostly by the use of puffy descriptors—I call them "perfidious adjectives and adverbs"—both these haiku show other stigmata of having being stuffed into 5-7-5-syllable structure. The second especially suffers from "tontoism," the dropping of small words—articles here—with the resulting stilted diction, and the introduction of words purely for their ornamental value.

## Redundancy

Haiku poets must be supremely aware of the full meaning of the words they select for their verses, both their denotation and connotation. It is easy to fall victim to cliché or otherwise include words in their haiku that are not necessary or distract from the essence of the verse.

A common problem is the “double *kigo*” (we’ll talk about *kigo* later, but for now a *kigo* is a word or phrase that connotes a specific season of the year and is one of the main devices the Japanese haiku poet can use to expand his poetic vocabulary). If you have “snow” in your haiku, mention of “winter” is redundant.

Here is a real before-and-after case where a second *kigo* was surgically removed without damaging the patient:

unraked leaves  
the first autumn  
without him

unraked leaves  
the first year  
without him<sup>6</sup>

Double *kigo* is more of a problem when dealing with (or imitating) Japanese haiku. For example, water birds and whales are both winter *kigo*, so to the Japanese these two published American haiku would be seasonally redundant or conflicting—or at least confusing:

toddler’s frown . . .  
winter ducks swim past  
her bread crumbs<sup>7</sup>

summer’s end  
at the high-water mark  
pilot whales<sup>8</sup>

Both these haiku are probably acceptable to the English-language readership for whom the nuances of seasonality are not of great concern. Still, I wonder if “winter” in the first haiku adds anything.

There are many other situations in which words unnecessarily overlap one another in connotation. A phrase such as “my pet dog” could probably do without “pet,” which aspect would likely be assumed. Likewise, “steep” in “steep cliffs” is probably unnecessary. In the following haiku it seemed to the poet that “old” was gratuitous, even a cliché, as we already receive a sense of age from “granddad,” “cracked,” and “coalbucket.”

granddad’s old coalbucket  
cracked at the handle—  
early autumn dusk

granddad’s coalbucket  
cracked at the handle—  
early autumn dusk<sup>9</sup>

In the following haiku, having “fingers” and “hands” in the same haiku troubled me. The version on the left was published, but the version on the right suggests that additional pruning might have served the poem well.

fingers still sticky  
from cotton candy  
we hold hands<sup>10</sup>

still sticky  
from cotton candy  
we hold hands

### Internal Inconsistency

Haiku poets can have a problem with internal inconsistency—using two expressions that contradict each other. One example that piques me is using a word such as “still” or “quiet” plus a mention of a noise or movement:

quiet woods—  
sound of an acorn falling  
through the tree<sup>11</sup>

old and quiet pond  
suddenly a frog plops in—  
a deep water sound<sup>12</sup>

Maybe in “quiet woods,” one could argue that “quiet” describes the general atmosphere that permits the hearing of a small sound such as an acorn dropping. The addition of “quiet” to the translations of Bashō’s “old pond” haiku, however, seems to muddy the waters a bit by using three words relating to sound (as well as adding three “perfidious” descriptors that are not in Bashō’s original: “quiet,” “suddenly,” and “deep”). The following haiku keeps me in the dark as to the state of illumination, and that very phrase seems eminently expendable:

No one lights a lamp.  
Just our voices in the dark  
as the night descends.<sup>13</sup>

### Choosing the Right Word

English is an amazingly rich language, and the poet almost always has available a range of word choices, allowing great precision and nuance.

## How Specific?—Tech Talk

What degree of precision is desirable and acceptable? In a wonderful essay in *Frogpond* 32:1 (Winter 2009), Paul Miller discusses specificity in terms of balance:

Poetry is a balancing act. As writers we are all misunderstood. That is fortunately(!) the nature of the short poem. Words are abstractions, so the less words we use, the more abstract and general our poems become—and more open to reader interpretation. And haiku are the least wordy poems! It is important to remember that each poem is two poems: the writer’s and the reader’s. As a writer I want to express my discovery in just enough words to lead the reader to discover what I did, but I don’t want to tell them too much or they lose their discovery.

Riffing on Miller’s idea, examine six variant first lines for a haiku of John Barlow’s and see if you can determine which is the one he actually wrote. Lines two and three follow below. The meaning of the haiku shifts substantially with the changing first line.<sup>14</sup>

- a bird
- a long-tailed bird
- a passerine
- a warbler
- a whitethroat
- *Sylvia communis*

[ ... ]  
flits through the thicket ...  
late summer wind

Different choices make for different interpretations. “Bird” and even “long-tailed bird” are pretty general and don’t evoke much of an image for me. “Passerine” is not a common word in English; it refers to perching songbirds. “Warbler” is more specific and better known. People can be expected to understand it. “Whitethroat” is a species native to Europe but not North America; presumably an ornithologically

challenged North American might discern that this is some kind of bird or butterfly but would likely have no idea of the creature or its habits. *Sylvia communis*, the Latin genus and species, would be known only to a scientist or a serious birder.

The consideration here is how the level of specificity relates to the rest of the haiku. Any bird might flit through the thicket. Does it really matter if it is a warbler, whitethroat, or any old bird? Maybe even a butterfly or a chipmunk? How specific does the word choice *need* to be?

Occasionally a slight shift in one word will make a haiku more universally understandable:

a county plow  
closes the driveway—  
April 15th

a county snowplow  
closes the driveway—  
April 15th<sup>15</sup>

In April “plow” would mean “snowplow” in Wisconsin, but perhaps an Arizonan might momentarily be puzzled.

Having found the right word, the poet needs to be sure to place it in the haiku where it receives appropriate emphasis. By zeroing in on the coming-out party and placing it first, in revisions this poet achieves desirable directness:

news  
of his coming out party  
the cacti in bloom

coming-out party  
the cacti in bloom<sup>16</sup>

### **High-falootin’ Talk**

Sometimes a haiku poet will choose words that are not in common use or that are more complicated or *recherché* than they need to be, such as these two that were submitted but not accepted for publication:

A capriccio  
Temple and Grand bumpers glare  
—Anagnorisis

smoking cessation  
a cigarette butt  
in the grackle’s nest

In such cases I always have the impression that the poet is trying to advertise that he/she knows more words than I do—i.e., showing off. Again, the point of writing a haiku is to communicate. If it does not do so because one word or another is unfamiliar, I have to adjudge a failed haiku. My tolerance for Googling or Merriam-Webstering is definitely limited.

### Pretty Talk

Some haiku poets believe they're writing conventional poetry and choose words that are intended to make their poem lyrical or pretty. Oftentimes a single image is decorated in such a way that it may pass itself off as more than one image. James Hackett does this. The first of these two haiku of his is really a statement with one heavily decorated image. The second has two images, but their focus and meaning are, I feel, subverted by the wordplay:

Made impregnable by squadrons of bumblebees: this clovered coolness. <sup>17</sup>	The censored souk echoes my 'coughing Zen' . . . asthma in Islam <sup>18</sup>
--	--

Here are two unpublished submissions that to me seem to be mostly about poetry, pretty images, and wordplay:

louring clouds a Spode dish of pills on a silver tray	plangent loons I find moonlight in the room
---	---

I had to Google “louring” only to learn that it is a rare usage. I thought it might be an allusion of some sort, but couldn't find anything. What would be the effect on the haiku by using “lowering clouds” or “low clouds”? And in the second line maybe “Meissen” or “Quimper” instead of “Spode”? “Plangent loons” seems to me an exercise in the sound of the words, especially the rhymes and assonance. For me, the sound of a haiku is a consideration, but definitely a secondary one. I believe haiku are made for the eye not the ear.

## Invented Words

A haiku poet with a poetic bent may even find that the available lexicon is inadequate to support his/her feelings of lyricism. Consider the invention of portmanteau words such as Elizabeth Searle Lamb's "nightdark":

into the deepest of the nightdark    the talking drums<sup>19</sup>

Certainly a descriptive and lovely image, but is it too-too poetic for haiku? Anne McKay was especially noted for her gorgeous haiku-like poems and inventive use of language, for example:

dreams under umbrellas  
in the rainvalley  
raindreams<sup>20</sup>

torn lace  
and tincan geraniums  
on sills of secondstory rooms

face<sup>21</sup>                      a bonnard

In addition to inventing new words, poets today manipulate text and use concrete-poetry techniques to push the meaning of their words well beyond even lyricism. Such is the case with classic poems such as Cor van den Heuvel's single-word "tundra"<sup>22</sup> or Nick Virgilio's compressed "fossilence."<sup>23</sup> Or with visual poems such as:<sup>24</sup>

i  
niche  
o  
n

For my money, all of these devices raise the flag that we warned against at the outset: words that call attention to themselves divert attention from the meaning of the haiku itself. If, as Bashō taught, you point at the moon with a bejeweled finger you won't notice the moon.

## Specificity and the Haiku Persona

The haiku poet will often omit the “small” words in the pursuit of brevity and conciseness (see tontoism earlier). When this involves personal pronouns, however, necessary specificity may be lost. For instance, the poet must decide whether or not to include a persona in the haiku—and how. It has long been fashionable to use present participles—the “-ing” form, sometimes mistakenly called gerunds—rather than full verbs. This probably reflects the fact that Japanese typically does not use personal pronouns and the doer is understood from the context. To Westerners it sounds as if “[somebody or other] drinks” or “traveling [is done by someone].” In English, however, a full-fledged subject and verb is usually more meaningful. Compare these variant pairs, published versions on the right:

autumn wind:  
giving my red heels  
away

autumn wind:  
I give my red heels  
away<sup>25</sup>

Valentine’s night—  
breaking up  
the chocolate heart

Valentine’s night  
we break up  
the chocolate heart<sup>26</sup>

In addition to bypassing the indefinite antecedent problem (“the autumn wind giving my shoes away”), the addition of specific persona through an active verb strengthens these verses immeasurably.

Having a personal pronoun in a haiku is not the same thing as having an ego-centered haiku. Haiku are usually expected to be objective and egoless, but if the poet becomes the focus of the haiku, the necessary objectivity is lost.

on a dirt road  
I notice an approaching  
cloud of dust

This haiku was submitted to *Modern Haiku* but not published for that reason. “I notice” seemed both gratuitous and injurious, putting the poet at the focal point.

## Making the Words You Choose More Meaningful

Haiku use words to convey images. The choice of just the right word is essential. But we have pointed out that an image or an emotion can only be inadequately expressed by words. What can a poet do when available words are insufficient? One fundamental technique is to have key words refer to some outside thing by means of an allusion of one sort or another. That is, using a certain word can evoke in the reader's mind another thing of philosophical, literary, cultural, or historical significance that is not itself directly mentioned in the haiku.

*Kigo* (season words) and *utamakura* (place references) are standard Japanese techniques for external allusion and can be adapted for English-language haiku. Western poetic devices such as conventional metaphor, simile, hyperbole, and personification can be viewed as internal allusions (i.e., both the target and source image are contained within the haiku), but these are generally held in low regard by serious haikuists. Still, many poets employ conventional metaphor and simile, and open-ended comparison or metaphor—what Paul O. Williams called “unresolved metaphor”—is the English-language-haiku version of the product of the Japanese *kire* (cutting or caesura to divide in two and qualify the impact of the phrases of a haiku).

### *Kigo*

*Kigo*, or season words, are the basic poetic device in Japanese haiku, one of the two or three indispensable aspects. Japanese poets use *kigo* as a device to link their haiku not only to a precise time of the year but also as a literary allusion by means of which their haiku is added to the collective weight of all other haiku and other poetry written over the centuries. We really have nothing like *kigo* in Western poetry.

A famous example of *kigo* as “vertical” or historical axis of Japanese haiku is Bashō's:

over an entire field  
they have planted rice—before  
I part with the willow<sup>27</sup>

This haiku refers also to a certain willow tree at Ashino village at which the poet Saigyō had composed a famous *waka* some 500 years earlier. “Willow” is an early spring *kigo*. Bashō visited the willow in the summer, however, as revealed by the reference to planted rice.

The application of *kigo* in English-language haiku is problematical. Many American haiku poets persist in using season words, but the function is perforce different and often seems an idle formality:

clothesline—  
from a shirt sleeve  
a cicada sings<sup>28</sup>

The cicada (late summer *kigo* in Japan) might be the subject of the haiku from New Zealand but does not seem to have been included to add a seasonal dimension or allusion to the poem. Similarly, in the following haiku the first line seems to be a “date stamp,” quite unnecessary in the company of two other winter season words.

winter wind  
colder in prison  
frost radiates on my window<sup>29</sup>

### *Utamakura*

A similar device used in Japanese haiku to extend meaning is *utamakura*, or making reference to historical places or events to broaden the significance of the bare words in a haiku and open a nest of associations. Bashō used *utamakura* all the time, especially in his travel diaries. This is a valuable tool too for English-language haikuists and could be employed even more widely. Here are two examples of references to places replete with meaning for all Americans:

False spring  
snow  
where Custer last stood<sup>30</sup>

Where the Twin Towers stood

Harvest Moon.<sup>31</sup>

And one more, a prizewinner in 2007, that uses the *kigo* “summer grass,” familiar from Bashō as well as the place reference in the first line to the vast herds of buffalo that formerly roamed the Great Plains:

buffalo bones  
a wind less than a whisper  
in the summer grass<sup>32</sup>

What might be called haiku of place is somewhat different than *utamakura*. Poets who use haiku for journaling and pay close attention to the time and place a haiku is composed, might mention a specific place of significance to them, as Gary Hotham has done in:

rocks  
in the ocean’s way  
—————  
Schoodic Point<sup>33</sup>

This is a brilliant evocation of the pounding surf in Acadia National Park, but Hotham does not seem to be trying to tap into a collective image as much as record his own awe at the scene. The 2009 Haiku Society of America members’ anthology featured haiku of place, some, like this one, getting really close to *utamakura*:

Trail of Tears  
a soft rain falls  
on my cheeks<sup>34</sup>

In these cases, we can see poets reaching for meaning beyond the naked words of their haiku by using place names to stimulate collective memories and emotions.

### Literary Reference

Japanese and English-language poets alike are fond of alluding to canonical works of literature in order to link their nascent verse with the wisdom and perceptions of the ancients. We

saw how Bashō often made obeisance to Saigyō, while there have been countless English-language allusions to Bashō's "old pond" haiku. Here are more citations/parodies (on the right) of two of Bashō's and one of Issa's poems:

Lonely silence,  
a single cicada's cry  
sinking into stone<sup>35</sup>

the silence.  
a bee is singing  
right into rock<sup>36</sup>

summer grasses—  
traces of dreams  
of ancient warriors<sup>37</sup>

army blankets—  
traces of the warriors'  
wet dreams<sup>38</sup>

The man pulling radishes  
pointed my way  
with a radish.<sup>39</sup>

farmer pointing the way  
with a shotgun<sup>40</sup>

More and more we're seeing haiku poets use allusions to canonical Western literature to expand the meaning of their work. Ezra Pound's "In a Station of the Métro" is one frequent referent, as are Wallace Stevens's "Thirteen Ways of Looking at A Blackbird," and William Carlos Williams's "The Red Wheelbarrow." For example:

Wet petals  
against a black bough—  
and my up-turned face.<sup>41</sup>

An apparition  
in the crowd of white petals  
the wet black bough<sup>42</sup>

the fourteenth way

a black bird on this black bough  
sings a reckoning, though none may.<sup>43</sup>

nothing  
depends on  
this hyacinth blooming<sup>44</sup>

small town Fourth  
so much depends  
on the fireflies<sup>45</sup>

American classics are popular targets for allusion too, such as Longfellow's "The Village Blacksmith" and Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken":



These two would miss me entirely if they hadn't been patiently explained:

New Year's Eve bath—  
I fail to become  
a swan<sup>53</sup>

day moon  
the only living boy  
in Chicago<sup>54</sup>

Fay Aoyagi's haiku, on the left, refers to another by Sumio Mori, well known in Japan, in which his wife is bathing on New Year's Eve and reminds him of a swan. Christopher Patchel's haiku, on the right, refers to Simon & Garfunkel's 1970 song, "The Only Living Boy in New York."

### Internal Allusion

The discussion above concerns *external* allusion, in which the source image is contained within the haiku but the referent is external to it. There are many devices in both Japanese- and English-language haiku that can extend the meaning of words even using *internal* referents, that is, metaphor—especially unresolved metaphor—and other referents that are contained within the haiku.

Because good haiku in any language rely for their effect on the technique of *cutting* (*kire* in Japanese), which causes the juxtaposition of the images for the purposes of internal comparison, it is important that, first, there be two images, and second, that they be in some manner comparable. The left-hand version here was the original and the one that was published, but I would have liked to sharpen the two images as on the right:

smell of asphalt  
tells of summer's  
beginning

asphalt smell  
the start  
of summer<sup>55</sup>

The following haiku as submitted seemed to me to lack a well-articulated second image, leaving the potential of the haiku unrealized. The author came up with "evening primrose," a plant that is native to her area, and an image that seemed to add a fine dimension to the haiku.

through open range  
the blackened windows  
of a prison bus

evening primrose  
the blackened windows  
of a prison bus<sup>56</sup>

Not many haiku are written these days that use metaphor or simile as blatantly as did Carrow De Vries and Etheridge Knight, respectively:

Mock orange is snow,  
ruby-throated hummingbird  
sledding over it.<sup>57</sup>

Eastern guard tower  
glints in sunset; convicts rest  
like lizards on rocks.<sup>58</sup>

The objection haikuists have to such work is that, in an attempt to broaden the meaning of an image, it is presented as something that it is not: mock orange is not really snow and convicts are not lizards. The haiku principle of objectivity is violated.

### Internal Comparison: *Kire*

The technique of cutting—*kire*—in order to promote internal comparison of images or phrases, basic and essential to haiku, is itself a sort of metaphor. The reader is given two things—images or phrases—and challenged to compare or contrast them. The poet is saying in essence, “I see some meaning beyond the obvious in Image A; the essence can be expressed as Image B; can you see the connection?” Not exactly saying A = B (metaphor) or A is like B (simile) but as a suggested, or unresolved, metaphor. In both “asphalt smell” and “evening primrose,” by defining the cut between the two images the vital element of internal comparison in the haiku is enhanced.

More or less appropriate to haiku—but frequently used—are other Western poetic devices such as synecdoche (the representation of the whole by a single part) and zeugma (a word modifying other words in a different way).

a new blue shirt  
leaves this solitary house  
to go wife hunting<sup>59</sup>

Running  
across the meadow . . .  
stream and six-year-old.<sup>60</sup>

Clearly, James Tipton's blue shirt is to be understood as something much larger—i.e., himself—while in the second haiku the meaning of the word “running” is amplified by its application to both the stream and the child.

Similar to zeugma are devices in which a descriptive word for one image is mentally extended by the reader to the second image. I call this transference, as in Carol Montgomery's senryu,

honeymooners  
. . . fondling  
their menus<sup>61</sup>

Sometimes in cases like this the haiku poet wants to amplify the meaning of his/her words but in a misleading, nebulous, or ambiguous way, perhaps to increase the challenge to the reader in decoding the poem. Because such techniques sully the notion that haiku is a mode of communication, I'm not sure that deliberate ambiguity is always desirable, but it is certainly now a trend in English-language haiku composition. The following haiku won a top spot in the Shiki Internet Kukai and was picked up for the Red Moon Anthology:

moon in the lilies  
she asks me  
to stay the night<sup>62</sup>

so clearly not everyone was worried about the indefinite “she” in line two. Knowing that the poet is a woman didn't solve much for me, however, as I still wrestle with whether “she” is a mother, daughter, sister, lover—or who exactly. I sort of like the ambiguity, but more than one of my editorial colleagues finds this sort of puzzle in haiku off-putting.

Another, more telling case is the following famous verse. By itself and without any context this haiku would be unintelligible to 99% of readers:

cockscombs  
there must be 14 or 15<sup>63</sup>

If you know that the poet was Shiki—and if you know who Shiki was and that he was bedridden and immobilized by painful spinal tuberculosis for the last several years of his life—the haiku perhaps begins to make some sense. You can visualize the invalid pulling himself up to the window with excruciating difficulty to check the state of his garden.

Misdirection is a mainstay of senryu, of course. The first part of the poem sets the mind going in one direction and the second part comes as a complete surprise, usually humorously—the “aha! moment” writ large:

nude beach  
his enormous  
sand castle<sup>64</sup>

This kind of disjunction, especially Jim Kacian’s haiku

my fingerprints  
on the dragonfly  
in amber<sup>65</sup>

has been much discussed in the literature in recent years. Here the reader is misdirected to puzzle over how fingerprints can be found on a dragonfly. Haiku critic Richard Gilbert has identified dozens of types of disjunction that are used in haiku to cause a jump in meaning and, one hopes, an expansion of the meaning of the words of the haiku.<sup>66</sup>

### Afterword

To recap, words are the key building stones of haiku. In choosing words for a haiku the poet faces three basic tasks: first, to choose as few words as possible—only those that are absolutely necessary; second, to select just the right word with the right meaning; and third, where necessary, to expand the meaning of the words through connotations and tropes. Skill in haiku diction comes through reading and study, and in the doing.

## Notes

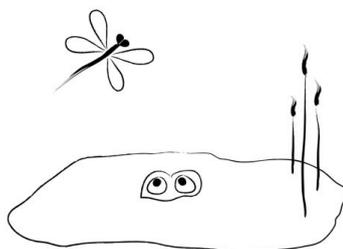
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*Charles Trumbull is retired editor of Modern Haiku and past president of the Haiku Society of America. His book, A Five-Balloon Morning: New Mexico Haiku, was published in Santa Fe by Red Mountain Press in 2013.*



## *In Memoriam*

*Anthony Nicholas Virgilio*  
1929–2015

old timer's game  
seventh inning stretch  
the creaking of knees

~Gerald Brady Senryu Contest 2009

His famous brother, Nick Virgilio, began his professional life as a sports broadcaster. Tony Virgilio, known to family and friends as “Little Nick,” was a Little League coach and diehard Philadelphia Phillies fan. What he never was, until after Nick’s untimely death, was a haiku poet.

In fact, when the tributes and accolades began to roll in after Nick’s passing, Tony claimed to have known little about his brother’s “other life,” even though they had lived together for years in the family home in the Fairview section of Camden, NJ, caring for elderly parents after their younger brother Larry, a U.S. Marine, was killed in Vietnam. Yet, in the 26 years since Nick’s death, Tony became the keeper of the flame of his brother’s legacy, securing the Virgilio archive in the Robeson Library at Rutgers University, Camden, and managing the HSA’s Nicolas A. Virgilio Memorial Haiku Competition for 25 years. His support was instrumental in the development of the 2012 award-winning Turtle Light Press collection: *Nick Virgilio: A Life in Haiku*, and he was the heart of the Nick Virgilio Haiku Association, at the same time writing many fine haiku himself. In fact, within 18 months of Nick’s death in January 1989, Tony Virgilio had haiku published in three issues of *Frogpond* that also featured the last haiku that Nick had submitted before his death.

Anthony N. Virgilio, born on the day the stock market crashed in 1929, spent his entire life, except for a stint in the Air Force from 1948–52, in Camden, New Jersey. Like many other members of the Nick Virgilio Haiku Association, I got to know Tony in the aftermath of the back-to-back losses of his mother Rose in November, 1988, and Nick, only six weeks

later. We worked with him to sort through Nick's papers, helped him make the decision to have Nick reinterred at Harleigh Cemetery in Camden, and founded the NVHA in Nick's memory.

Slowly, Tony emerged from the shock of those losses. His world grew larger, and the friends and admirers devoted to preserving Nick's work and who'd begun to learn and teach haiku, grew fond of Tony and his dedication to the preservation of his brother's body of work. He had his quirks, and could be a bulldog in valuing Nick's haiku, as anyone who tried to negotiate for the rights to publish any of Nick's work quickly discovered. To his credit, he slowly yet decisively grew into this new world of haiku poetry and all who loved Nick grew to love "Little Nick." Tony's humor and wit at the granite lectern at Nick's gravesite, where we gather for poetry and a toast every June on or about Nick's birthday, will be missed.

This year, on June 28, Nick's actual birthday, we will reunite the two poets by burying Tony's ashes next to Nick—just a stone's throw away from Walt Whitman's mausoleum—with a deep appreciation of Tony and Nick's contribution to the knowledge and perpetuation of haiku.

A final tribute to Tony Virgilio: the 2015 Nicholas A. Virgilio Memorial Haiku Competition attracted over 3,600 entries representing middle school and high school students from each and every state and the District of Columbia—an all-time record!

One of Tony's last requests was to have us bring together some of his own haiku with a selection of Nick's in a *Big Nick, Little Nick* collection. Even now, you can hear the echo of Nick in some of Tony's best haiku:

Easter morning  
the sermon is taking the shape  
of her neighbor's hat

Nick Virgilio  
*Selected Haiku*, 1988

Easter morning  
the new-born turtles  
race to the sea

Tony Virgilio  
*Frogpond* 21:1, 1998

A toast to their reunion!

~Kathleen O'Toole, Takoma Park, MD

The Nick Virgilio Haiku Association, founded in 1989 and based in Camden, NJ, works to preserve the haiku legacy of Nick Virgilio, and to promote the writing of haiku, especially by young people. Please “like” Nick Virgilio Haiku Association on Facebook and visit our website: <http://www.nickvirgiliohaiku.org/>.



*Kathleen O'Toole is a poet and friend of Nick Virgilio, a board member of the Nick Virgilio Haiku Association, and member of Towpath Haiku poets in Washington, D.C. She co-edited a few stars away, the 2010 Towpath anthology. She has published many haiku of her own, and two poetry collections, Meanwhile, and Practice. She contributed the afterword to Nick Virgilio: A Life in Haiku (Turtle Light Press, 2012). Visit her at [www.kathleenotoolepoetry.com](http://www.kathleenotoolepoetry.com).*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Robert Mainone  
1929–2015*

The HSA was saddened to hear that Robert Mainone, Delton, MI, passed away in February. He was a longtime member and frequent contributor to *Frogpond*. He will be missed by “his treasured haiku community.” To read a warm and loving tribute to this poet’s life, please visit: [www.lifestorynet.com/memories/105816](http://www.lifestorynet.com/memories/105816).

Out of its slipper  
her bare foot talking  
under the table

Henderson Haiku Contest 1985

left behind  
names on stones  
without stories

*Frogpond* 38:1

Old frog  
up to his ears  
in moonlight

Henderson Haiku Contest 1977

walking half awake  
my whole life  
a dream

*Frogpond* 36:1

## Reviewed

**Harriot West.** *Into the Light*. Mountains and Rivers Press, 2014, 45 pp., perfect softbound, 5.5 x 8.5 inches. ISBN 0-978-0-9896021-2-9. US\$15 plus shipping from mountainsandriverspress.org.

by Melissa Allen, Madison, WI

Harriot West's new collection of haibun and haiku, *Into the Light*, although physically thin, is emotionally and artistically robust. Among its many virtues is the superb sequencing of its poetry, which is evident from the very first piece in the collection, a haibun aptly called "Stories I Might Tell." Beginning by cynically describing the publicity efforts of an unnamed celebrity ("She's on TV again, promoting her memoir"), the narrator goes on to ironically compare the sensational, tragic subject matter of the celebrity's life story with the potential material for her own memoir: "the drafty house where I grew up, the way I always said yes please, no thank you or maybe how I felt the first day of school in my thick woolen socks and sturdy brown oxfords."

With this first haibun, West does several things. She establishes the subject matter for the collection—the mundane substance of daily life and the inner emotional life of the narrator and other characters. She establishes its dominant tone, one of detached, ironic, mature observation. She displays her signature prose style—a controlled, assured, taut brevity that contains precisely the type and amount of information needed to convey her point and not a syllable more. And she names the central artistic dilemma the book will contend with, the dilemma that faces so many of us who draw on autobiographical material in our writing: If nothing very exciting seems to happen to us, if we have ordinary lives, how do we write about them in an extraordinary way? How do we make meaning of, and compel our readers' interest in, the minutiae of our daily existence?

The haiku that completes this haibun, I feel, offers one possible rejoinder to these questions:

secret garden  
one slat missing  
from the picket fence

This image of a narrowly controlled view into someone's private life—her “secret garden”—is an appropriate metaphor for West's writing in this collection. Anyone who's ever peered through such a gap in a fence knows that the limited scope of your view makes what you can see all the more interesting. Similarly, West compels our interest by maintaining a laserlike focus in each haibun on a small number of telling, concrete details that vividly evoke both the narrator's sensory experience and her emotional experience. Each piece in this collection can be thought of as yet another slat missing in the fence, another view into the narrator's life.

The early haibun in the book, gathered under the title “Sepia Shadows,” describe a child's life in a well-to-do but emotionally chilly family, with parents who are alienated from both each other and their children. Later this section moves on to describe the narrator's adult relationship with her aging parents and their eventual deaths, but the early haibun, rich with the tiny details that children so often notice and remember more effectively than adults do, are more powerful. All West's haibun are brief, usually no more than one short paragraph, but by carefully choosing these details, she is capable of effectively summing up an entire character, episode, world in no more than one sentence and a haiku, as in “Praxis”:

She wouldn't let me call her momma or mom; mummy was  
okay but she preferred mother and when I graduated from  
boarding school she suggested I call her Jean.

not one crease  
on the linen tablecloth  
bone china

In “Dissimulation,” likewise, West packs a vast amount of information about the narrator’s family into just a few images by describing “how mother sat on the couch all afternoon holding an unopened copy of the *The New Yorker* on her lap, how ice cubes rattled round the pitcher as father stirred the second martini, how voices sharpened late at night behind closed doors . . .” And in “His Story My Story,” West combines the memories of the narrator and her brother, shifting back and forth between their experiences to evoke the confusion, fear, and also hope of two small children whose mother is temporarily institutionalized for, presumably, mental health reasons: “He remembers mother’s story about a place where she could only cut with plastic scissors. I remember a bottle of small red pills. . . . I remember the toy train lurching into a tunnel, my brother and I certain it would emerge once more into the light.”

After the powerful material of this first section, the brief middle section of haiku, “Foreshadowing,” acts as something of a palate cleanser, clearing the mind for the quite different material of the haibun to follow. The haiku begin to take the reader into more adult territory, evoking the complexities of mature relationships with fresh images and syntax:

the pear in his hand rearranging my thoughts

The third section of the book, “The Pinwheel’s Colors,” contains more haibun, but this time the subject matter is the adult love affairs of the narrator. The tone is lighter and more playful and the perspective, of course, less naïve. West’s wry commentary on the vagaries of love and relationships is once again supported and made compelling by her keen powers of observation, encompassing all the senses. In “Foraging,” for example, the narrator’s daydreams about a grocery store clerk she imagines is about to kiss her are interrupted by her thoughts about what to have for dinner: “But there, on the shelf above his head, a tin of split pea soup. Perfect for supper if I buy some sole from the curly-haired fishmonger. The one whose fingers smell of lingcod. On second thought, I’ll grab

some endive from the greengrocer down the street. His fingers smell like mint fields on a summer morning.” And in “Wrangling,” West once again demonstrates her consummate skill at summing up an entire personality in a single sentence-plus-haiku:

His voice sounds like one bourbon-minus-the-rocks too many,  
the skin on his triceps most likely is beginning to sag, but I like  
the low-down way he wears his Lee’s and there’s something  
about a man with calluses and that ‘Amarillo by morning’ look  
in his eyes.

until I asked  
just another scar  
he’d forgotten

I’ve spent most of this review on West’s haibun prose, perhaps because it often seems to me that haiku poets are liable to have more trouble writing effective prose than effective haiku, but I must note that West is better at writing skillful, apt haiku that are effectively and meaningfully linked with the prose than just about any other haibun writer I’ve ever read. Her haiku almost always seem like an essential part of the work, not tacked on as an afterthought, and almost always open the piece up wider, give us a deeper understanding of the subject or a new perspective. They are clearly distinct from the prose and could easily stand alone, but they resonate with it, like the echo of a bell that continues long after the bell has been rung and continues to make you think about the bell’s sound.

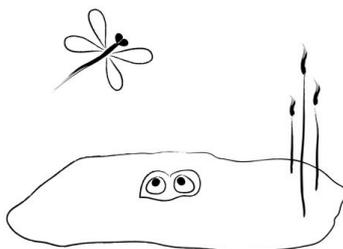
Just as the first haibun serves as an effective introduction to the book’s style and themes, the final haibun, “New Year’s Resolution,” serves as a joyful summing-up of the sensory feast West has provided us with and, perhaps, a promise for the future. Throughout the book food is a frequent subject; in this haibun it makes a final appearance, in the form of a detailed description of a rich holiday feast—so detailed that it made this reader salivate. The final words of the prose appear to offer a challenge to both writer and reader: “Full. So full. Sated. But resolved. When asked, say yes. Say yes to it all.”

And with the final haiku, we can imagine a writer who has just finished one book sitting down to begin another:

fresh snow  
the dazzle  
of a blank page



*Melissa Allen's haiku and haibun have been widely published and anthologized, including in Haiku: The First Hundred Years (Norton). She is currently a co-editor of Haibun Today and of the haiku journal Bones, as well as a board member of the American Haiku Archives. She writes the haikai blog Red Dragonfly.*



**Ron C. Moss.** *The Bone Carver*. Ormskirk, Great Britain: Snapshot Press, 2014, 112 pp., perfect softbound, 5 x 7.75 inches. ISBN 978-1-903543-32-0. £9.99, US\$23 (includes shipping) from [www.snapshotpress.co.uk](http://www.snapshotpress.co.uk).

by Michael McClintock, Clovis, CA

T.S. Eliot wrote in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* that the “auditory imagination” involves “returning to the origin and bringing something back.”<sup>1</sup> I think Moss’s haiku exhibit a magic for doing just that.

How the past manifests itself in the present appears to be one of Moss’s claims on a reader’s interest and attention. This theme is clearly experienced in what is, perhaps, his best known poem to date:

crescent moon  
a bone carver sings  
to his ancestor

This remarkably good, haunting poem won the second prize in the 2009 Harold G. Henderson Memorial Contest. In her foreword to *The Bone Carver*, Ferris Gilli, one of the veteran editors at *The Heron’s Nest*, quotes from the write-up of judges Peggy Willis Lyles and Marian Olson:

Carved from light, the evocative shape of the crescent moon sets an appropriate mood for another song, this one uniquely human. The second image is exotic and the bone carver’s cultivation of spiritual connection with his ancestor stirs intuitive contemplation of a debt to past generations and our place in the cosmos.

Many of Moss’s poems are imbued with a sense of the mythic and primitive that is similar to that found in Joseph Campbell’s best writing. Also present are Jungian elements of deep imagery from nature and the inner caves of human imagination and memory. These characteristics may be Moss’s central grounding as a poet and the chief markers of his distinction

in the milieu of contemporary English-language haiku. In poem after poem Moss creates a sense of continuity with the primitive, revealing a Jungian awareness that imparts aesthetic tension between a sense of the past and our experience of the present:

sudden downpour  
cotton-candy screams  
on the ghost train

Myth and tradition are present, as ghosts in the psyche, and as freshly apprehended and embodied things and human dramas of the present—often unexpectedly so, as in the above poem, or in this one, purely from nature:

almost heard  
the wind between  
the stones

Moss is a poet of human and environmental (natural, urban) convergence. Alienation and irony are not major premises in his work. One could say that Moss's importance to the current expansion and development of haiku literature is the almost complete absence in his work of those exhausted modern and postmodern issues. Again I quote from the book's foreword, where Ferris Gilli speaks of Moss's "joy in the most mundane of circumstances, hope in the midst of despair. In his hands, recorded events become precisely carved haiku, each one with its own powerful light."

This is not to say there is no angst, as for instance that induced by the tension and menace in this poem's innocent setting:

late call for dinner  
the click of a toy gun  
in the twilight

The violence we fear and deplore in today's world is indeed the ugly potential (and payback?) that is embedded in our entertainments and toys. Moss makes his point without clubbing

us with it, conveying an important idea and criticism. This toy gun registers a very loud “click” of recognition.

I find much compassion, humor, and tenderness in Moss’s vignettes. Here are two favorites:

end of shift  
returning my name badge  
to the pile

trout rising  
singing Baptists gather  
by the riverbank

In *Where the River Goes*, the 2014 winner of the Mildred Kanterman Award for Best Anthology, Allan Burns praises Moss for adding “a wealth of fresh images and references to our haiku” and for exemplifying “the poet-observer effaced by the act of seeing.”<sup>2</sup>

*The Bone Carver* is Ron C. Moss’s first collection, a carefully selected body of 97 poems from his first ten years of work in the genre. He sets a high standard for himself and for others, too, of course. This ambitious debut should, I think, unlock many rusted, broken gates.

### Notes

1. Thomas Stearns Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933).
2. Allan Burns, *Where the River Goes: The Nature Tradition in English-Language Haiku* (Ormskirk, Great Britain: Snapshot Press, 2014).



*Michael McClintock’s lifework in haiku, tanka, and related literature, as both poet and critic, spans over four decades. His latest haiku collection, Sketches from the San Joaquin, is from Turtle Light Press (2008). He resides in central California’s San Joaquin Valley with his wife, Karen.*

**Rebecca Lilly.** *Elements of a Life.* Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2014, 112 pp., perfect softbound, 4.25 x 6.5 inches. ISBN 978-1-936848-34-8. US\$12 from [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com).

by Michele Root-Bernstein, East Lansing, MI

Rebecca Lilly's new book is a puzzle, a challenge, a work of art that abides in mystery and creative verve.

The slim volume begins from both ends, which is to say, the back cover is in actuality the front cover for a second book. Where to start? Cover 1, designed in black on white, opens with an introduction and a set of haiku chosen from Lilly's corpus by the editor Allan Burns. Cover 2, designed in white on black, opens to a complementary set of "haiku" in which Lilly responds to the poems chosen by Burns with "a deeper more expansive awareness beyond an initial observation"—and with an experimental style all her own. The reader may enter where he/she will, cognizant, of course, that, figuratively as well as literally, notions of haiku experience, composition, and comprehension are shortly to be turned around and upside down.

Thus, a Book 1 poem:

His short life . . .  
crows flocking northward  
from the windy rise

is mirrored by the Book 2 poem,

Crows	on a summit
still	distant short
caws	crosscurrents

or, rather, by two "parallel" poems, the second in this instance,

transiting aspects	of
Jupiter	house lords
a life	flying northward

What is one to make of all this? Though I count myself a fairly experienced reader of haiku, the Book 2 poems initially threw me for a loop. I am accustomed to haiku featuring (usually) two images or image plus thought, but these poems featured three, even four ideas within the same spare number of words. The cognitive fragmentation had me worried that here was a poetic world for which I would find no entry. How was I to relate two inaccessible poems to one I might “understand”?

Thankfully, Lilly’s introduction proved an invaluable resource and guide to her purpose and her process. As she explains it, Burns suggested organizing his selection of her haiku around the four natural elements of water, earth, air and fire. Intrigued by the symbolism of this categorical device, Lilly immersed herself in the “ancient, esoteric systems” of tarot and astrology, in which earth represents the material body, water the emotions, air the rational mind, and fire the intuitive self or spirit. Her interest in these elements, singly and in combination, lay in the illumination they might cast on the human psyche. What she set out to do in her “parallel” poems, then, was to “uncover the deeper psychic roots behind the observations captured in the poems in Book 1.” She did so by reimagining the original haiku and moving her observations away from their apparent subject to the surrounding sensory “field.” The task of capturing these field impressions called for a different compositional style, she found, one “with less adherence to syntax, linear apprehension, and the rules of grammatical construction.”

As I soon realized, the task of reading these sensory fields also called for a different way of entering and exploring the poem. Indeed, it struck me that these experimental haiku might be mindfully approached as verbal analogues of the visual image in haiga or as the associational prose poem of a haibun written, so to speak, for the right brain. This notion was liberating.

Consider the following complex of haiku and parallel poems:

Ice-cased conifers—  
the inner work  
left undone

Dusk conifers                    stone-  
rooted                                twisted in  
knots                                the ice breaks up

from mystery                    always  
under                                creeping slowly  
on stone                            toward sun

“Ice-cased conifers” appears last in the first section of Book 1, titled “On the Tide Break.” “Dusk conifers” and “from mystery” appear last (and on the same page) in the first section of Book 2 titled water. Given Lilly’s framing of the work, we know that these water poems will certainly explore emotion—as, indeed, the juxtaposition of ice-cased conifers and “inner work / left undone” quite clearly signals. In and of itself, this first haiku successfully inserts itself within a well-recognized corpus of contemporary ku joining natural phenomenon to mental states.

Yet Lilly has more to say, or rather, to urge towards consciousness in her two companion pieces—for in “Dusk conifers” and “from mystery” the first thing one observes is the deliberate breakup of linear (verbal) logic. The poems “read” in multiple fragments that never fully cohere into phrase. Moreover, given the open layout of words, the eye is free to link different fragments *across* lines, reading left to right, but also top to bottom, which adds to the possible number of fragments and, of course, the dissolution of linear thinking. For instance, “stone- / rooted                    twisted in / knots” exists in the same conceptual space as “stone- / twisted in / the ice breaks up.” This second vertical phrase is additionally energized by an ambiguity of action: is it the stone or the ice that breaks up? Both, each providing a concrete image for the vague abstraction of “the inner work / left undone.” Similarly in the poem “from mystery,” the fragment “creeping slowly / on stone”

shares simultaneity with “creeping slowly / toward sun.” Again, both images speak to the original *ku*, suggesting an emotional movement, a doing of the work so far left undone. In short, there is a melting—or perhaps a repeated cycle of freezing and melting—that finally breaks up the stone and releases its twist of knots.

If haiku and parallel poems speak to each other within a single triplet, each triplet speaks to every other in the collection. Despite their nominal categorization into water, earth, air, and fire, the haiku and their complementary poems reveal an interpenetration of elemental images. The psyche is not just made up of emotion, but of body, mind, and spirit. Lilly evokes this interplay by masterfully manipulating symbolic images throughout the text. And attending to these symbolic complexes the reader gains entry into a highly original wordscape that explores, in her words, “less conscious or apparent parts” of an “ordinary mind-based personal self.”

The following set of poems offers example:

In fields	the purple
flowerwhorls	careful
eternity’s	from here

A rise	crows	valley
evergreens		a stream
winds	flowers of	ice

field & stone	mountains
violet	foolishly the mind
works	the light mined

“In fields” appears last in the section titled “Star Decals”; “A rise” and “field & stone” appear last in the section titled “fire,” nominally representing “the intuitive self or spirit.” (In fact, these are the final poems of Books 1 and 2, which meet and merge, like night and day, in the center of the volume.) In this triplet of poems, fire is most obviously manifest in the final fragment, “the light mined,” and the associated spirit in

“eternity’s      from here.” Yet the element surfaces elsewhere in these poems, as well. Lilly’s evocation of fire throughout “Star Decals” touches not just on light, but on heat, energy, and other manifestations of forceful action, intent, or expansion. Within this context “flower whorls” and the undulation from “a rise” to “valley” take on the aspect of an immanent dynamic. Equally relevant are the signs of water: “a stream / flowers of ice”; of earth: “field & stone      mountains”; and of air: “A rise / evergreens / winds” or “foolishly the mind / works.” Matters of the spirit are inextricably bound up with matters of body, mind, and emotions.

In the repeated use of certain images, along with their associations, Lilly brings her abstractions home. Stone, rise / mountain/summit, ice, wind, crows, still/stillness, stream/flight/rustle—all these sensory phenomena carry symbolic meaning that will be familiar to many readers of haiku. The purple flower spirals in its growth just as the cosmos (or our perception of it) spirals out from the here and now. At the “careful” center of awareness is our recognition of the inevitability of death: the crows that fly down from the heights, the stream that winds its way to ice or that flowers with ice. The emotional response to mortality is a heavy stone, a mountain to traverse, yet the body perseveres in its instinct to live, just as “the field violet works.” Lilly deals with some of humanity’s darkest thoughts, yet is not immune to the “foolish” consolations of mind and spirit. Indeed, these are the moments her poetry strives to distill. “I’m / in lilac” the narrator of “monks walk here” proclaims, I am a being of sensory experience, subject to all its perturbations. Yet a certain calm abides in the clear sense of a “divine      still      rustle.” In that paradoxical awareness of motionless movement lies the eternity in now.

It is Lilly’s hope that by sharing attempts to uncover less conscious or apparent parts of herself with her readers, they, too, may open to the same deepened experience in themselves. Certainly for me, walking the unfamiliar path charted in *Elements of a Life* has been well worth the effort. For one thing, I appreciate as never before the associative play of spare

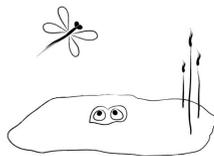
images in a psychic field. For another, I see how Lilly offers contemporary poets a novel, meaning-making template that reaches well beyond the typical grounds for haiku. I do not mean that haikai should necessarily take up astrology or tarot. I mean, rather, that by attending fully to the sensory or symbolic fields of their poems, they may push words that much further to say what cannot be said, but only felt.<sup>1</sup> Turning the world of haiku experience, composition, and comprehension on its head, Lilly dares take the first step in offering creative direction for the genre. The next step belongs to her readers and to those she will surely inspire.

### Notes

1. Borrowing from Ursula K. Le Guin, who wrote, “The artist deals with what cannot be said in words. . . . The artist whose medium is fiction does this in words.” In *The Left Hand of Darkness* (New York: Ace Books, 1976), introduction.



*With one foot in the humanities and social sciences and another in the arts, Michele Root-Bernstein studies creative imagination across the life cycle. Her most recent book in this field, Inventing Imaginary Worlds: From Childhood Play to Adult Creativity, is featured at [www.inventingimaginaryworlds.com](http://www.inventingimaginaryworlds.com). Her haiku have appeared in a number of North American journals, A New Resonance 6, and Haiku 2014. Currently she serves as associate editor of Frogpond.*



## Briefly Reviewed

by Michele Root-Bernstein, East Lansing, MI  
& Francine Banwarth, Dubuque, IA

**Robert Epstein.** *Haiku Forest Afterlife.* West Union, WV: Middle Island Press, 2014, 136 pp., perfect softbound, 5 x 8 inches ISBN 978-0-69221-2170-9. US\$13 from [www.create-space.com](http://www.create-space.com) and [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

As Epstein explains in a preface to his new (and fourth) book of solo poems, he long maintained an agnostic view concerning what happens after death. Yet, in his sixtieth year, he found himself exploring the possibilities of an afterlife. The challenge, as he understood it, was to look at death totally, without fear. As serious as the endeavor may be—and the cover art by Ron C. Moss sets the scene beautifully—in the poems collected here Epstein treats his subject in a light-hearted, playful, and ultimately innocent manner. How else to fend off the fear? Nearly every haiku gracefully distills a thought, an emotion, a wry observation that readers will recognize as uncannily like their own—which is to say, profoundly human. There is much that pleases, too, in Epstein's deft handling of a variety of haiku formats. Altogether a satisfying read for those who like a bit of wit with their solemnities: *comes a time / when the corpse pose / no longer is; dust* (after Cor van den Heuvel); *edge of night / coming and going / through the cracks.* ~MRB

**Bob Lucky.** *Ethiopian Time.* St. Paul, MN: Red Bird Chapbooks, 2014, 52 pp., single signature, hand sewn, 5.5 x 7 inches. 100 copy edition. US\$12 + shipping from [www.redbirdchapbooks.com](http://www.redbirdchapbooks.com).

In this small collection, 29 haibun capped with haiku or tanka or, in a few cases, with no ku at all, deal with Lucky's four

years living in Ethiopia. The exercise, laced with the poet's habitual cynicism, humor, and pathos, evokes a foreign place experienced as surpassing strange, yet home, also, to the achingly familiar. "New Home," "Waiting," "An Update on the Class War," "Some Notes on Paradise," and more explore the paradox beautifully. What's more, where the veneer of his own cultural expectations rubs most raw, Lucky finds his greatest awareness of the world and self. In "Some Nights," when the electricity goes out, the poet sits in the garden and looks at the stars he knows "so little about." Real insight comes, however, when he realizes that the lights have come back on:

I'll get up and go into the bathroom or the kitchen and reflexively switch on the light, discovering I've been sitting in the dark needlessly. I quickly turn it off.

crescent moon  
an alley cat tightropes  
the garden wall

~MRB

**John Gonzalez. *Crystal Clear*.** Sutton Bridge, England: The Magic Pen Press with Hub Editions, 2014, 69+ pages, handmade softbound, 5.25 x 7.25 inches. ISBN 978-0-9576460-3-2. £6.50 from Hub Editions, Longhold, East Bank, Wingland, Sutton Bridge, Lincolnshire PE12 9YS, UK.

In this somewhat uneven collection there is nonetheless a felt energy in the poet's repeated use of butterflies, shadows, monastery paths, funerals, and fishing. Willy-nilly the reader engages with the overriding theme of death and the stay of death in poetry: *in the small hours / an owl's call / and the hint of a haiku*. An ex-monk and a practicing nurse, Gonzalez is especially touching in the many poems about the passing of his mother: *three days gone— / the old dog / sleeps by her slippers*. Despite the occasional repetition of poetic idea, an overuse of exclamation points, and more than a few typos, the poet's path lights up with poems all the more startling and insightful for the company they keep: *between / streetlamps / dark flowers*. ~MRB

**Edward J. Rielly. *Spring Rain Winter Snow*.** Brunswick, ME: Shanti Arts Publishing, 2014, 32 pp., 18 illustrations, hardcover, 9 x 9 inches. ISBN 978-1-941830-94-9. US\$19.99 from [www.shantiarts.com](http://www.shantiarts.com). (Also available in ebook format.)

The contemporary format haiku in this engaging little collection hold images and surprises that children will appreciate, though the POV is decidedly “grandpa’s.” In the best haiga tradition, the lovely illustrations by Angelina Buonaiuto complement but do not repeat the poems. Altogether a welcome reprieve from the usual 5–7–5 directed at children. *Spring melt . . . / a baseball rises beneath / the forsythia; full autumn moon; / on an oak branch / owl slowly turns his head; midwinter thaw / our old friend, the ground / shows up again.* ~MRB

**Ion Codrescu. *Something Out of Nothing, 72 Haiga*.** Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2014, 162 pp., perfect softbound, 7.5 x 10 inches. ISBN 978-1-936848-35-5. US\$30 from [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com).

In the footsteps of similar collaborations with French and German poets, Codrescu presents his visual interpretation of 74 North American haiku and one of his own, as well. A graphic arts instructor teaching in Romania, Codrescu is (in the words of Stephen Addiss) “one of the leading contemporary masters of haiku painting.” Utilizing the renku method of link and shift, he responds to the words of others with his own sensitive merging of painting and calligraphy. For the reader, absorbing a varied array of haiku moments through a singular artistic lens is a real and revealing treat. ~MRB

**Renée Owen. *Alone on a Wild Coast*.** Ormskirk, Great Britain: Snapshot Press, 2014, 72 pp., perfect softbound, 5 x 7.5 inches. ISBN 978-1-903543-34-4. £9.99, US\$23 (includes shipping) from [www.snapshotpress.co.uk](http://www.snapshotpress.co.uk).

In her first book-length collection, Renée Owen is as “at home” on the page as she is on the wild coast of northern California. A widely published and award-winning author, Owen

illustrates a sensitivity for deepening and expanding a moment in which she seamlessly translates what she *sees* into what she *perceives*. At this junction, or “juxtaposition,” of natural and human landscapes, she invites the reader in: *a kingfisher calls / from out of nowhere / everywhere*. A mixed-media artist and psychotherapist, Owen “draws the reader into the interplay between a dynamic landscape and an interior coast, between our environment and intuited feelings” and she sustains this energy and insight throughout the collection of fifty haiku, twelve haibun, and a pair of sequences. A good number of her poems and linked forms reference the personal: *finding myself / in the night sky / star by star; my bottomless ache hollows fill with bird song*. In gems such as these Owen intuitively keeps the “I” in the shadows and lets the natural world sparkle. Even in those that seem to focus purely on nature images, the heart is aware: *autumn moon / the pale butterfly / with half a wing; wild madder root / forever searching / for something*. In her haibun, too, we witness a search for something, for some order in the chaos of this wild yet priceless existence:

#### Grand Moons

All week the new baby. Another link in our chain.  
Watching her eat, sleep, cry. A few moments of play, a  
smile, tiny fingernails, the soft toes. Then eat, sleep, cry.  
Oh the order, in those first few months, as she opens to  
life. And I—for her, I try not to close.

this bent cypress  
beneath a half moon  
what day, what year

“So Much of Life” and “Tidal Time”—a pair of sequences set in the center of the collection—recount the impending death of a loved one. The first link in the pair reaches out in an attempt to hold on to life: *making art / at your bedside / the vibrancy of blue*. The last link in the pair comes to terms with loss and lets go: *who am I to say / the world disappears / in ocean fog*. Bringing this fine collection to a close, the poet finds herself “alone on a wild coast,” at one with the universe: *one two three stars / I become stillness / then night*. ~FB

**Gary Hotham, ed. *Take-out Window: Haiku Society of America 2014 Members' Anthology*.** New York: Haiku Society of America, 2014, 124 pp., perfect softbound, 5.5 x 8.5 inches. ISBN 978-1-930172-12-8.

The 2014 HSA anthology features haiku and senryu by almost 300 members, selected and arranged by Gary Hotham, with book cover and sumi-e illustrations by Lidia Rozmus. There is much to please the ear and the eye in this collection. A favorite, the title poem by Cor van den Heuvel: *boardwalk rain / a wet ketchup bottle / at the take-out window*. ~FB

**Steven Carter. *A Wilderness of Mirrors*, 2014, 164 pp. ISBN 978-1-910185-06-3. *Ocean in the Drop*, 2014, 144 pp. ISBN 978-1-910185-08-7. *The Heretical Owl: A Steven Carter Miscellany*, 2015, 120 pp. ISBN 978-1-910185-14-8.** Uxbridge, UK: Alba Publishing, perfect softbound, 5.25 x 5.75 inches. £10.00, US\$15 each from [www.albapublishing.com](http://www.albapublishing.com).

Three new titles by a prolific and award-winning author who is not afraid to experiment with range of subject matter and form. *Ocean in the Drop* is a collection of Carter's haiku and tanka; *A Wilderness of Mirrors* features his haibun. In *The Heretical Owl* we find haibun-like prose with a small selection of haiku on the final pages. Carter has a voice that comes alive on the page, as if he is having a conversation with himself as well as with the reader. Each of these collections comes with its own energy, one that probes mind, heart, and spirit as well as the complexities of the human and natural worlds. From *Ocean in the Drop*: *Warplanes loop the loop the same loop; One folded rose she makes up her mind*. ~FB

**Jim Kacian & the Red Moon Editorial Staff, eds. *Big Data: The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku 2014*.** Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2015, 206 pp., perfect softbound, 5.5 x 8.25 inches. ISBN 978-1-936848-36-2. US\$17 from [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com).

Always anticipated, with high expectations, the 2014 RMA *Big Data* is well worth the wait! Order a copy today. ~FB

## Re:Readings

### From *Frogpond* 37:3

**James B. Fuson**, New Haven, MI, on Lorin Ford's haiku:

I like the little things. Those seemingly insignificant moments and activities that we never really put much thought into but that take up a great deal of our "idle" time. Lorin Ford's poems

white breath  
on the night window  
a ghost of myself

and

thistledown children drifting away

perfectly capture these little moments.

How many times, from childhood to today, have I fogged up a cold window with my breath, intentionally or not? How many different words, phrases, designs, and faces have I etched with a finger? After "white breath," I imagine lying in bed on a cold night, next to the window, thinking about a girlfriend and writing "I heart \_\_\_\_" into the breath-frosted surface, of sitting next to a window on the school bus and drawing smiley faces into the condensation.

And "thistledown" reminds me of that momentary joy of blowing on a dandelion and watching the seeds float lazily on the wind, or walking home from school or a game and kicking the fluffy white heads, the seeds drifting all around.

Those are the pleasant memories Lorin Ford's poems whispered into my ear and made me smile.

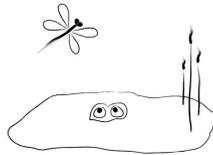
## From *Frogpond* 38:1

**Catherine Anne Nowaski**, Rochester, NY, on Jeanne Cook's haiku:

I was very much drawn to

Bloomsday  
I try to step  
into the same text twice

For anyone who has ever waded into the deep waters of James Joyce's novel, this poem has resonance. For me, it brought back college memories. Every June 16, my favorite professor sponsored an all-night Ulysses reading. In those days, we English majors were filled with optimism, with a desire to walk the streets of Dublin carrying Joyce's book in our hands, with dreams of the literary masterpieces we were sure to write in the future. Not many of those hopes and dreams came to pass, and I doubt that I could now "step into the same text twice." But, Jeanne's poem, with its skillful juxtaposition of two great works of western literature (one modern, one ancient) giving it what Haruo Shirane calls a "vertical axis," makes me want to try.



## *Call for Designs*

Help stock this pond with frogs! We welcome frog designs in black and white for inclusion in the pages of this journal. We hope to choose a different frog design for each issue, so please e-mail your submission of high-quality .jpeg or .tiff files to the editors of *Frogpond* at [frogsforthepond@gmail.com](mailto:frogsforthepond@gmail.com).

# 2015 Nicholas Virgilio Haiku Contest

## Judges

Aubrie Cox, Taylorville, IL  
Mike Rehling, Presque Isle, MI

This year we had over 3,600 haiku to judge. We were excited to see so much student work come in. There were, of course, the traditional 5-7-5 poems along with those that were clearly writing about the fact that they had to write a haiku. However, with that said, many of them delved deep into the psyche and human experience. We were moved by those that opened up about depression, about heartbreak and the loss of family members. We were also delighted by those that captured the wonders of childhood.

In the end, we looked for quality haiku: poems that had a clear cut and juxtaposition of images and/or ideas, offered original ideas for universal experiences, and simply moved us.

soon-to-be stepdad  
blabbers politics  
looking for my vote

Elena Bonvicini  
Grade 10, Sage Hill School  
Newport Coast, CA

We were enamored with this haiku's wit and play on words. It captures the essence of the relationship between a child and a future stepparent who desperately wants the child to like him or her. The first two lines make it seem as though the speaker is bored and that the soon-to-be stepdad is blabbering

on about grown-up matters, but the third line provides a twist at the end, showing the reader that the future stepdad is talking to the child but he or she isn't impressed. "Blabbers" works multiple angles and serves an important role in this haiku.

missing puzzle piece  
we blame  
the vacuum

Maggie George  
Grade 11, Sprayberry High School  
Marietta, GA

Nothing worse in the puzzle world than getting almost there, and having to endure the indignity of an incomplete image. This group of puzzle solvers has not resorted to blaming one another, or using the worn out "the dog ate it" line. No, they have placed the blame squarely on a piece of metal and plastic. There is a creativity in their decision on where to place the blame that shows they indeed are good at problem solving, if not puzzles.

first day of school  
eating lunch  
in the bathroom

Catharine Malzahn  
Grade 10, Sage Hill School  
Newport Coast, CA

Starting in a new school, or a new year in a new building can be tough. We can just imagine a kid on his or her first day not knowing where to sit in the lunchroom and too shy to talk to anyone, so he or she eats alone in the bathroom where there is privacy and not a lot of noise. This haiku does a phenomenal job of conveying emotion without stating that the child may be feeling sad, anxious, out of place, etc. It establishes season and location without any excess words.

coffee crumble cake  
my mom  
brings up grades

Kian Etedali  
Grade 12, Sage Hill School  
Newport Coast, CA

If your mother is going to bring up your grades, chances are you are not on track to be valedictorian of your class. But if you have to endure that discussion it is by far better to do it with “coffee crumble cake” on a plate in front of you. It is a sign of a Mom who gets her way without resorting to brute force, but then again that cake is indeed a force to be reckoned with in the end.

Friday morning prayer  
purple hijabs  
dance in the wind

Claire Reardon  
Grade 12, St. Ignatius College Prep  
Chicago, IL

We don't see a lot of haiku that mention hijabs, which is unfortunate. The way this poem uses specific language and shifts from line one to line two makes it an evocative haiku. There's something contemplative about the fabric moving in the wind during prayer: the movement, the rich yet lightness in the color purple, and the early morning air. There are limitless possibilities for smells and sounds that undoubtedly heighten while our eyes are closed and we lower ourselves to the ground.

bedtime story  
only pretending  
to fall asleep

Sophie Sadd  
Grade 8, The Paideia School  
Atlanta, GA

As we grow up there is the inevitable pull between the child in us and the desire to be fully adult. Children are not the only ones torn between these two aspects of our life. Parents want their kids to grow up, but they also hang on to the fond memories of childhood, both their own and their child's. In this poem we have bridged that gap nicely. The parent is reading the story, and the child has kindly allowed this to happen, but cut short the moment with their own very kind deception. It shows the merger of child and adult in one fell swoop.



*Aubrie Cox went to university to write a novel and came out writing haiku. It's worked pretty well so far. Now, she is an editor for both the online journal A Hundred Gourds and Juxtapositions: A Journal of Haiku Research and Scholarship. Her poetry and prose can be found in publications such as Frogpond, Modern Haiku, and NANO Fiction. She sometimes tweets @aubriecox.*

*Michael Rehling is a quiet poet, living in the North Woods of Michigan with his wife and two cats. Twitter at: @MikeRehling.*

## ***The Haiku Society of America Annual Contests***

Thank you to the judges and contest coordinator, Charlotte Digregorio, and congratulations to the winners of the 2015 Nicholas Virgilio Haiku Contest. The deadlines for HSA-sponsored contests are:

- HSA Haibun Contest: July 31, 2015
- Harold G. Henderson Haiku Contest: July 31, 2015
- Gerald Brady Senryu Contest: July 31, 2015
- Bernard Lionel Einbond Renku Contest: February 28, 2016
- Nicholas Virgilio Haiku Contest: March 25, 2016
- Mildred Kanterman Merit Book Awards: March 31, 2016

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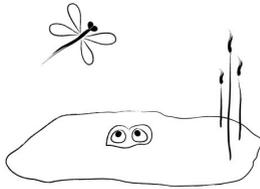
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Thank you to all who have renewed your membership for 2015. The HSA and *Frogpond* appreciate your support. If you have not renewed, please do so soon so that you receive the current issues of *Frogpond*, *Ripples*, and the online monthly newsletters. Please see p. 2 for membership information.

\*\*\*\*\*

**New Submission E-mail Address for *Frogpond* 39:1**  
**September 15–November 15, 2015: [frogpondhsa@gmail.com](mailto:frogpondhsa@gmail.com)**

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## From the Editors

*Words ought to be a little wild, for they are the assault of thoughts on the unthinking.*

~John Maynard Keynes, Economist

*Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought.*

~Albert Szent-Györgyi, Physiologist

Isn't it interesting to find scientists and social scientists of the past century speaking directly to poets of the 21st? There's something about the creative process that is universal across time and discipline. To make anything—a theory, an experiment, a poem—requires thought, and true original thought depends on an immediate, sensory apprehension of the world. Original thinking also requires a willingness to discard the tame response when it comes to investigations of natural phenomena, both inner and outer.

The reading period for the spring/summer issue hatched a record number of submissions, and, as always, we purposefully looked for work that treats familiar ideas, images, and words in ways that energize what is possible in English-language haiku. We hope you will be challenged and find inspiration on the pages of this issue.

Putting the final touches on an issue always comes with a sigh of relief, but mostly with a breath of gratitude for all those whose work we were privileged to read; for the authors of essays, reviews, and feature pieces who persisted until the last *t* was crossed and the last *i* dotted; for the HSA contest coordinator and judges, as well as the executive committee for their support; for our proofreaders, Charlie Trumbull and Bill Pauly, and Noah Banwarth for his technical support.

Thank you, to Steve Hodge, for his delightful pond frog, and deep gratitude to our amazing Chris Patchel, who turns our eyes to the sea and to all that blows in on the four winds of this season.

Francine Banwarth, Editor  
Michele Root-Bernstein, Associate Editor

