

# R13.1

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members of the Council have  
atched the emergence of  
he HMS Center for Primary  
are with great interest. The  
enter aims both to fill a gap  
in HMS students' exposure  
to primary care careers and  
to bring more attention at  
HMS to the central role that  
primary care plays in any  
well-functioning, socially  
responsible, high-value  
health care delivery system.  
As a primary care physician  
and HMS faculty member  
myself, the new Center is  
an exciting and welcome  
initiative. The Alumni Council  
has previously expressed  
its support of the Center to  
Dean Flier and will continue  
to monitor the Center's  
progress as its programs  
develop in the coming year.

Nancy Rigotti '78 is an HMS  
professor of medicine at

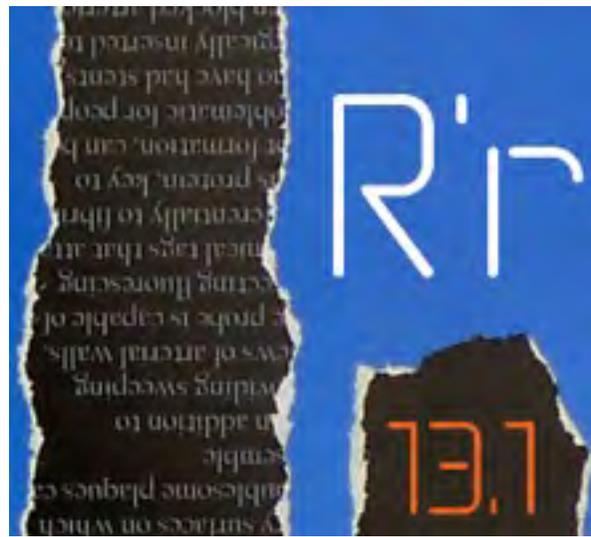
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# contents

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*moon hooks*

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*An Interview with Makoto Ueda (Part 2) by Eve Luckring*

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*the green octopus*

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moon hooks



unfamiliar alphabet cleaning the talons of winter

*Cherie Hunter Day*

Moist clods      earth  
scented      stream      blades  
of corn      the words easy

*Rebecca Lilly*

on us the rain falling behind a zipper

*Peter Yovu*

UNZIPPED

light  
leaves  
room

*Eve Luckring*

Twilight's hum      a sprig  
of beastliness      monkshood  
I will sell you      sunlessly

*Rebecca Lilly*

under a linden tree  
disobeying  
the Nuremberg Laws

*Patrick Sweeney*

the poison surprises some monkhood

*Dan Schwerin*

or a nun bared to the bone shined night

*Eve Luckring*

patriarch throw a stone in molecular season

*Cherie Hunter Day*

Seldom from that under-  
world moon hooks itself  
wind-fertilized in birds

*Rebecca Lilly*

all night I've tried on houses butterflies taste with their feet

*Sabine Miller*

the large gone and in its place empty

*Jim Kacian*

before the last fig is ripe  
our size doesn't make the story  
end

*Gary Hotham*

Every tree is tall      lives in  
its own leaves      work out  
of      a black flock withdrawal

*Rebecca Lilly*

between what  
I think and what is  
lawn flamingo

*George Swede*

nobody with a bomb hazards a dream day moon

*Mark Harris*

Ghost ride hyphy                      might've  
been the way      to coast      but  
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*Rebecca Lilly*

open  
ocean

no  
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(her  
mirror)

*Mark Harris*



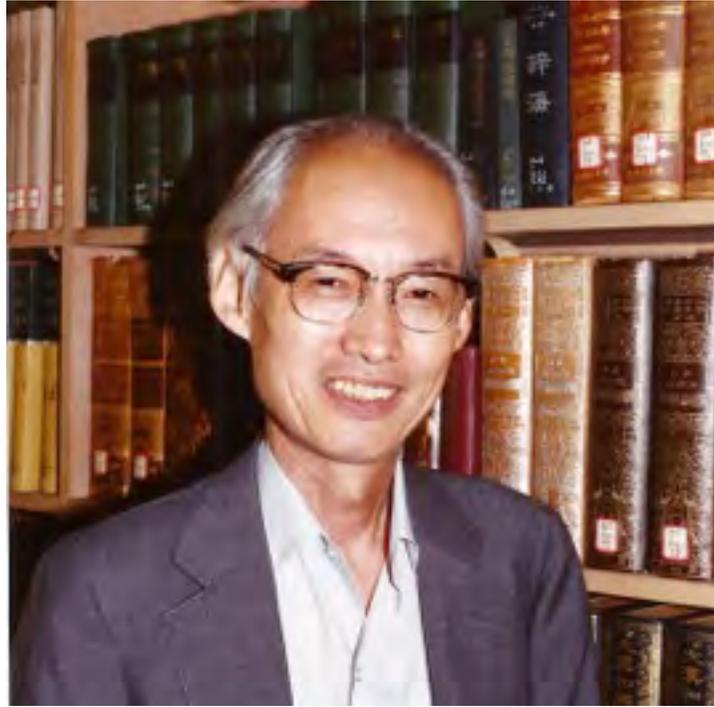
# True Before It is Made Truth:

an Interview with Makoto Ueda

·  
part 2

·  
by Eve Luckring





An introduction and Part 1 of this interview can be found in [R'r 12.3](#).



R'r: What other translators of Japanese haiku into English do you especially appreciate? Can you say why?

MU: I highly admire the works of R. H. Blyth. He did a great deal to introduce Japanese literature to the West, especially in the area of haiku and senryu. The four volumes of *Haiku* and two volumes of *A History of Haiku* are monumental works he authored in the way of making haiku available to English readers. Such famous authors as J. D. Salinger, Jack Kerouac, and Gary Snyder are said to have come to know haiku through his books. His translations are generally precise and read well in English; especially I like their inclusion of no word that is not in the original, unlike those by most other translators before him. His comments on haiku, based on his rich knowledge of English literature, are full of insightful perceptions and expressed with wit and humor. Perhaps he overemphasized the Zen aspect of haiku, but that was perhaps inevitable in view of the fact that he was a devotee of Zen. With all things considered, I think he must be said to be the most important person in the international community of haiku.

R'r: In the introduction to *Bashō and His Interpreters*, you comment: “In the final analysis, translation is a form of literary criticism as well as artistic creation . . .”

Could you expand upon what you mean by translation being a form of literary criticism?

How is translation like “artistic creation”? Could you give a few examples of haiku you've translated wherein you feel that the end product (your artistic creation) was especially successful? Why/how so?

MU: I think translation is a form of literary criticism in the sense that the translator’s notion of literature reflects itself in the works he translates. It does so whether or not he is conscious of it. As the critic applies his idea of literature to the criticized work, so does the translator to the translated work. He shapes it in the way he feels a literary work should be.

For instance, Harold G. Henderson translates a haiku into an English poem with rhyme in his book, *An Introduction to Haiku*. Obviously there is no rhyme in the original Japanese. Henderson defends it by saying that his notion of a short poem has a sort of “frame,” a frame like that of a picture. To take another example, Hiroaki Satō renders a haiku into a one-line English “poem” in *From the Country of Eight Islands* edited by Burton Watson and himself. His reason is that the original Japanese haiku is always printed in one line and that the English translation should follow that pattern. His one-line translation emanates from his idea of haiku, which is a one-line poem.

Unfortunately I have to decline your request that I show what I think are the best samples of my translation. I have no sample to show to myself or others. I have always endeavored to do my best, but I have never felt I attained that goal.

R'r: You wrote in *Far Beyond the Field*, “The finest work done by a female haiku poet exemplifies her era just as well as that of a male poet, even though her status in her time's haiku circles may not have been very high” (ix).

Could you discuss this concept of the importance of era (exemplifying era) in haiku composition?

Why do you feel it is so important?

What are some examples of 20th/21st century haiku that you feel represent this concept?

MU: Japan is a small country area-wise, with a large population. Japanese people are less individualistic and more totalitarian, especially so in the feudal times, when they were expected to serve for their family clan, country, etc. Thus

when some new fashion caught the attention of a few people, it might spread very quickly and end up gaining utmost popularity. The situation was the same in haiku. In the first half of the 18th century, for instance, the so-called “plain” style popularized by Kagami Shikō (1665-1731) conquered most areas of the haiku world of Japan. The latter half of the 19th century was mostly the era of what is called the “tsukinami” (conventional) style, a style made up only by conventional words and techniques peculiar to the existing haiku.

In the early years of the 20th century, the *hototogisu* (mountain cuckoo) school was prevalent among haiku poets. It taught that haiku should concentrate on the beauties of nature for its subject-matter. Its head was the dictatorial Takahama Kyoshi, and I already cited an example of his haiku (“a paulownia leaf . . .”). Here is another:

*shūten no shita ni nogiku no kaben kaku*

under the autumnal  
sky, a wild chrysanthemum  
lacking one petal

In a poem the author is to be made to recede backward as much as possible—that is what Kyoshi taught.

In the 1930’s several major poets began to oppose the tenets of the *hototogisu* school. The most influential among them was Yamaguchi Seishi, who extended the meaning of nature to include a number of modern man-made objects such as a motion picture, a smelting furnace, and a steam-engine. In haiku he looked at them from a cool, non-human point of view:

*shūya au kikansha ni tsuzuku sharyō nashi*

autumn night I watch  
a steam engine  
followed by no car

A steam engine is a modern subject non-existent in classical haiku. Usually it is followed by a long train of passenger or freight cars, but in this instance there is none. Does the engine stand for something?

The number of haiku schools gradually increased since the end of World War II. According to the Museum of Haiku Literature, schools that publish “little haiku magazines” total somewhere between 800 and 1,000 in Japan today. Poets have become more individualistic, each with his or her tenet. The concept of “era” in the traditional sense is disappearing—or has disappeared—in the 21st century.

Rr: What do you believe were some of the most significant changes/developments in Japanese haiku poetics during the post-war period?

MU: I think there were three major movements in Japanese haiku poetics during the post-war period. The first was “social haiku”; the second, “avant-garde haiku”; and the third, “surrealistic haiku.”

Social haiku started partly because some poets wanted to oppose Kuwabara Takeo’s argument for haiku as a “second-rate” art form (Note: a translation by Mark Jewel is available at <<http://simplyhaiku.com/SHv4n1/features/Kuwabara.html>> *Simply Haiku* 4.1, 2006). Kuwabara blamed haiku poets’ concentration on the beauties of nature with little or no concern with political or social happenings. Especially “humanist” poets, such as Nakamura Kusatao and Kato Shūson, argued against this blame and tried to show their concern with contemporary Japanese society. Other poets, like Suzuki Murio (1919-2002) and Satō Onifusa (1919- 2002), did not belong to the humanist group, but wrote haiku that connote the discontents and struggles of the lower class. Here is Murio’s poem published in 1947:

*kanashiki kana seibyōin no kemuridashi*

how sad—  
the smokestack  
of a VD hospital

In the background is the image of a large city, with a number of prostitutes serving soldiers of the Occupied Forces. In a short time venereal diseases are widespread, their patients filling hospitals and clinics. The dark smoke coming out of the stack in the poem symbolizes the patient and his secreting fluid.

Avant-garde haiku, meaning a new type of poetry that refreshes the traditional form, had existed many times in Japanese haiku before World War II. The term in the post-war period is applied specifically to the works of Kaneko Tōta (b. 1919), Abe Kan’ichi (1928-2009), Higashigawa Kishio (b. 1927), and others who advocated the expression of the poet’s perception intellectually in terms of images. Haiku, according to them, was a metaphorical presentation of the creative self by way of imagery. An oft-quoted example by Tōta is:

*ginkōin-ra asa yori keikō su ika no gotoku*

like squids  
bank clerks are fluorescent  
from the morning

Tōta explains: “In the dark morning each bank clerk holds fluorescent light lonesomely and shows a vivid shape peculiar to the finny tribe. That has settled down into an image.” In other words, he intellectually made his consciousness into two images; he brought the squid and the bank clerk together, though they were distant and unrelated from each other.

Surrealistic haiku are those that make use of techniques like incongruous comparisons, dreamlike metaphors, and abstruse words and phrases. Some free-verse poets, like Hagiwara Sakutarō (1886-1942), Nishiwaki Junzaburō (1894-1982) and Takahashi Shinkichi (1901-87), wrote moving poems in the preceding years, and haiku poets might have read their works. Among surrealistic haiku poets Takayanagi Shigenobu shocked readers by bringing out his first collection of haiku in 1950; above all, his haiku were printed in multi-line form. Other poets like Nagata Kōi (1900-97), Nakamura Sonoko (1912-2001), and Akao Tōshi (1925-81) stuck to the 5-7-5 form, although they used obscure and inscrutable language. I have cited Takayanagi’s haiku before [Note: see part one of this interview, *R’r* 12.3]; here is an example by Tōshi published in 1957:

*ongaku tadayou kishi hitashi yuku hebi no ue*

music is afloat—  
a snake’s hunger  
invades the shore

Are the poet’s spiritual hunger and the uneasiness symbolized in the snake slithering along the shore?

R’r: Charles Bernstein, an American poet, theorist, editor, and literary scholar, recently made the following statement in an interview on *The Poet In Today's World*:

“ . . . [W]e have many poems translated into English which are much more—they’re like expository summaries or paraphrases. . . . we have poems translated into English from Spanish, Portuguese, for instance, which are more

comprehensible than the originals. They lose the whole resonance. They become sort of silly—they're like paraphrases. You wanna keep some understanding of the overall incomprehensibilities sometimes of the original.”

Each poem, no doubt, presents different difficulties/issues for a translator. Your book, *Bashō and His Interpreters*, is a monumental work for a number of reasons, but particularly because it makes every attempt to help readers unravel all the intricacies, allusions, background and cultural capital that might go into, or surround, a haiku written in Japanese.

It could be argued that much, if not most, of English haiku over the last hundred years has been written almost exclusively based upon translations of Japanese haiku (in respectful, reverential imitation). In other words, translations and how they are explicated have had an enormous impact on how English-language haiku and senryu are composed, discussed and intellectualized.

Could you discuss, if possible, this notion of what “resonance” is most often lost when Japanese haiku are translated into English?

And, do you feel that the “incomprehensibilities . . . of the original” is sometimes, or even often times, lost when translating Japanese haiku into English? How so/in what ways?

MU: It is inevitable that a poem loses something when it is translated. In the first place, the original poem has certain denotations and connotations, and while the translator may be able to convey the most of denotations, connotations are often difficult, sometimes impossible, to transmit to readers in a totally different culture. To cite an example easy to understand, here is a haiku by Nishiyama Sōin (1605-82):

*matsu ni fuji tako ki ni noboru keshiki ari*

wisteria on a pine—  
the scene of an octopus  
climbing the tree

The original poem is humorous, for, beside the fact that the whole poem is a parody of famous lines in a noh play, the octopus is a familiar food item in Japan and has been humorously referred to a number of objects like a bald-headed man. In America the octopus is not a familiar object; it is rather an uncanny, bizarre creature seldom appearing in poetry.

Familiarity and humor that go with the image of an octopus are used in a well-known haiku by Matsuo Bashō:

*takotsubo ya hakanaki yume wo natsu no tsuki*

an octopus pot—  
inside, a short-lived dream  
under the summer moon

In many critics' opinions, here Bashō identified himself with, or at least had sympathy for, the octopus sleeping in the pot. He wouldn't have done so if the octopus was not so close to him in his mind. English readers wouldn't feel the same way, because the octopus is an uncanny creature living under the sea. The familiar and slightly humorous feeling that makes part of the resonance of the poem is gone from the English translation, and the translator can do nothing about that.

It is especially difficult to convey the whole resonance of a haiku in translation, because the verse form is so short. In a long work like a novel, the translator can try to transmit the resonance by adding words and phrases, or even sentences. I've heard that Prof. Edward Seidensticker, the famous translator of *The Tale of Genji*, did not translate haiku for that reason. According to him, the image of a pond makes the Japanese first think of "the quiet place," while Americans' first association of it is "water." Bashō's old-pond poem, he thinks, is untranslatable.

As for the "incomprehensibilities . . . of the original," I have an episode to tell. Prof. Royall Tyler, in re-translating *The Tale of Genji*, said that the original has many abstruse, incomprehensible sentences and that he would try to retain them as such in his translation. Apparently the comment was made to justify his re-translation, for the existing work by Prof. Seidensticker was well known for its fluency and readability. Later Prof. Donald Keene, an expert in Japanese literature and a translator himself, opposed the view and said that English readers would think the abstruseness in translation comes not from the original but from the translator's lack of skill. I'm on Prof. Keene's side. I think there are incomprehensible Japanese haiku, but I always skip translating them. I see no meaning to translate a haiku I don't understand.

R'r: Do you think haiku is a dying art in Japan, in the sense that it is no longer really a high-art enterprise?

If you feel that it does, in fact, remain a high-art enterprise, who would you consider to be some of the top poets, and why?

MU: I don't think haiku is a dying art in Japan. It is hard to call it so when ten million people are writing it and when more than 800 "little magazines" publish their works. Whether today's haiku can be compared in merit to the best of Bashō and Buson, it is difficult to say. But most of the arts have not fared well since the middle of the last century. Japanese poetry, including haiku and tanka, seems to be in the downward trend. I still think, though, haiku occupies a more significant position in Japan than poetry does in the United States.

I am not well read in contemporary haiku, and so my choice for top poets may be too personal to be taken as a standard one. Before I was stricken by a stroke, I had been translating a good number of 20th century poets, and I will select three from among them. Ōki Amari (b. 1914), also a painter, belongs to a group of poets who write not only haiku but many other genres; her haiku present original impressions of various moments in her fresh, peculiar diction. Tsubouchi Toshinori (b. 1944), Takayanagi Shigenobu's student, holds haiku to be a poem of fragmentary speech and makes intellectual use of colloquial words and phrases. Natsuishi Ban'ya (b. 1955), another of Takayanagi's followers, has done a lot of experimental writings, one quality of which is to transcend the sense of the seasons. All those poets work in areas outside haiku as well (the latter two are university professors), and their haiku tend to be intellectual and surrealistic.

R'r: Would you be so kind as to offer us a few of your translations of these three poets? (A few books by Natsuishi Ban'ya have been translated into English, but the other two are largely unknown in English.)

MU: I hesitate to show these, because they are unfinished translations I had been working on before I suffered a stroke. But here they are, two poems each from the works of Ōki, Tsubouchi, and Natsuishi.

Ōki Amari:

*shonen no tsukue ni chizu to utsusemi to*

on the boy's desk  
a map  
and an empty cicada shell

*shinu to iu yasuragi fuyu no umi ni nashi*

death—  
that peace is nowhere  
in the winter sea

Tsubouchi Toshinori:

*aki no kaze shiosaba wo fuku miko wo fuku*

autumn wind  
blows at a salted mackerel  
blows at a prince

*ganbaru wa nante iu na yo kusa no hana*

“I’ll stand firm!”  
don’t say anything of the sort,  
flowers of grass

Natsuishi Ban’ya:

*hi izuru kuni no tenshi no midaregami*

in the Land of the Rising Sun  
an angel  
with tangled hair

*mangetsu ni kizu ari niku niku yasai niku*

a wound  
on the full moon—meat, meat  
vegetable, meat

R'r: What is the relevance of haiku in Japan, particularly after World War II, especially with regards to the postwar *gendai* and avant-garde haiku movements?

MU: Most remarkable in Japanese haiku after the Second World War was its popularity. Although haiku, as well as senryu, had been an art for commoners before the war, it has become immensely popular as people began to have more time to spend beside making their living. Today haiku is regarded as one of the respectable hobbies. Many popular magazines and newspapers have a haiku column to which readers contribute their works in the 17-syllable form. Haiku (or senryu) accompanied by a photograph serves as another popular competition in a TV program. For that matter, major haiku poets appear on various television programs. Mayuzumi Madoka (b. 1965), a former Miss Kimono, has become a notable talent who writes in various journals and appears on TV programs.

A number of women have become part of the Japanese haiku world. Some say women occupy about 80% of the Japanese haiku-writing population. Beyond doubt a large majority of them are amateur poets who write haiku in their spare time. But since the end of the war such women as Hashimoto Tahako (1899-1963), Mitsuhashi Takajo (1899-1972), and Katsura Nobuko (1914-2004) have written some of the finest examples of 20th-century haiku. Inahata Teiko (b. 1931), granddaughter of Takahama Kyoshi, is the editor of the most influential of the haiku magazines, *Hototogisu*.

The post-war period was an era characterized by chaotic, transitional and therefore free creative trends; poets could take liberty in whatever style they would like to. It was in that period when avant-garde and surrealistic schools appeared to experiment with extreme styles. Today's poets do not seem to go to those extremes. No longer is there any major poet who writes free-style haiku like Hōsai and Santōka. Very few poets who follow Takayanagi Shigenobu use a multi-line form as he did. But they are well aware that modern haiku has gone through those experiments in the recent past. They write haiku in the 5-7-5 form and use season words, yet their poems are more like free verse in implications.

R'r: In your opinion, how does haiku work as a contemporary poetics?

MU: Haiku is one of the shortest verse forms in the world. It is easy to write one. For Japanese people, the 5-7-5 syllable pattern is the basic rhythm of the language, and even elementary school children can produce works without difficulty. For that matter, haiku is being used in American grade schools to teach the basics of poetry. Some mental hospital patients compose haiku to help promote their cure. While poetry is on the decline in many countries, haiku may work as one of the stimulating means to reawaken the significance of poetry.

Haiku is also the type of poetry that makes use of imagery, while leaving its speech fragmentary and suggestive. It creates a good deal of ambiguity, making readers think, associate, and imagine, somewhat like a Zen phrase. It raises questions,

yet gives no answers. Beginners are there, yet endings are not. In today's world where nothing is clearly closed, haiku may be a fitting art form.





the green octopus



words not in the dictionary  
hearing it happens  
to the ocean wave

*Gary Hotham*

one eye on  
the green octopus  
at the bottom of night

*Patrick Sweeney*

The night I know      the whole  
runs                      its own myth  
mystification              hollows

*Rebecca Lilly*

black on black, I crawl in—

*Eve Luckring*

the fantasy that is me central singularity

*George Swede*

by proxy I'm bound to show

up           jukebox sabotage

dream a deeper desire free the laughter what

*Rebecca Lilly*

small below a yellow ginkgo  
flesh-flies attend  
Pio's stigmata

*Patrick Sweeney*

flesh afterimage of an unreadable page

*Cherie Hunter Day*

the word never stood  
until I felt  
the forest

*Peter Yovu*

monophonic ghost frozen river

*Mike Andrelczyk*

the cold picks you out in a ski mask

*john martone*

arguing  
my eyes  
involve every corner

*Peter Newton*

and gloves what we how

*Eve Luckring*

the same ice flashes from a satellite dish

*john martone*

in my sector of the oneness others

*Jim Kacian*

missing two walls  
the ceiling becomes  
more important

*Tyler Pruett*

wet the ratio & wake the threshold spring mud

*Cherie Hunter Day*

so greenly history puts forth thorns

*Eve Luekring*

waking up the baby an almanac of stars

*Cherie Hunter Day*

a blue coffin  
one nail escapes  
the solar system

*Peter Yovu*





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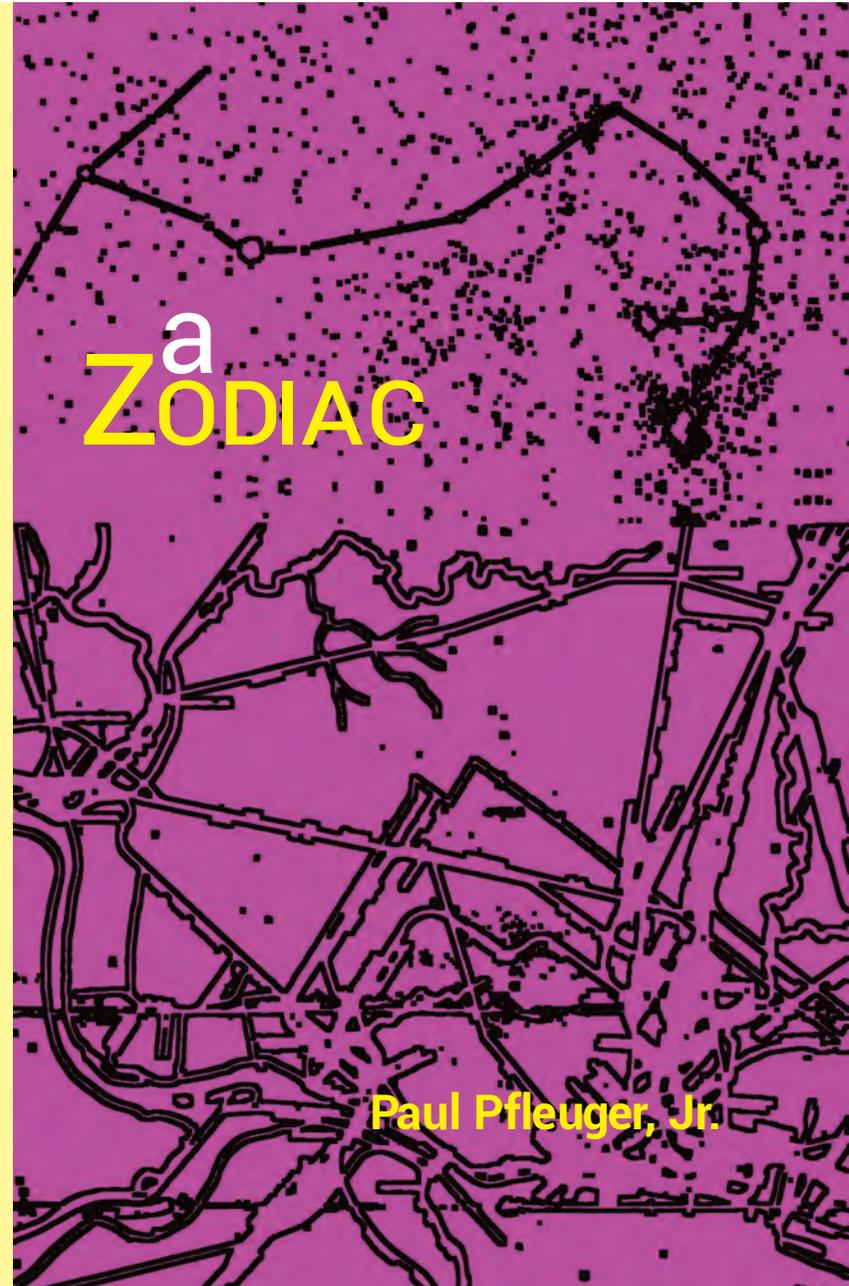
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