



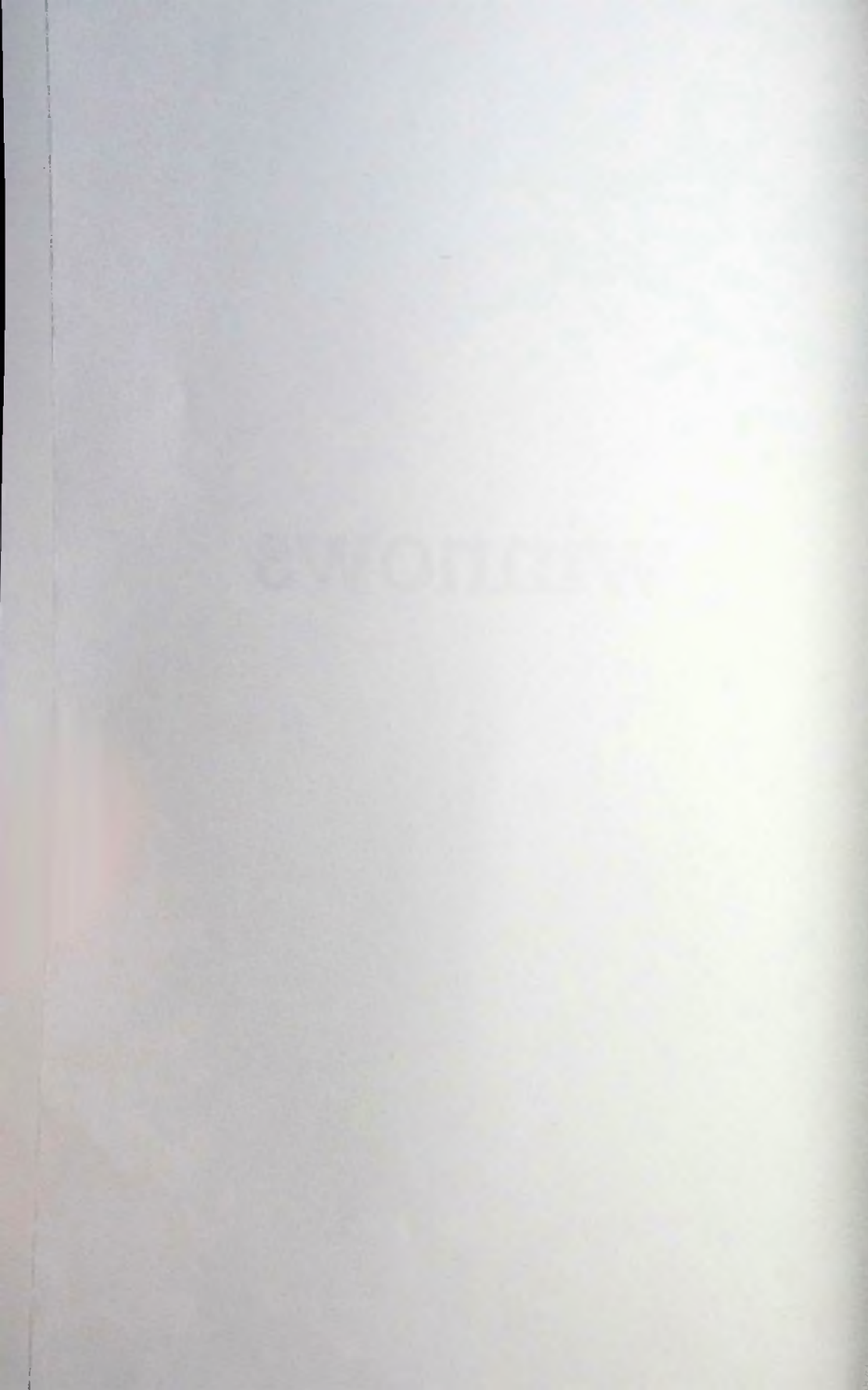
Maxianne Berger

WINNOWS

haiku and senryu "plundered" from
Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*
with a preface by the poet



winnows



Maxianne Berger

winnows

haiku and senryū
“plundered” from
Herman Melville’s
Moby Dick

with a preface by the poet

WILSON

WILSON
WILSON
WILSON
WILSON

WILSON

in memory of Phil Ross
1949-2008

*every one knows,
meditation and water
are wedded for ever*

Herman Melville
Moby Dick

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Gregory Betts for introducing me to this constraint-based technique. When he was looking for poets who might enjoy the challenge, Carmine Starnino suggested he contact me.

I thank Herman Melville for *Moby Dick*, or *The Whale*. Without this American classic, there could be no “winnows.” I am indebted to the University of Virginia’s Electronic Text Center for making available the digitized text I used for this project: the version based on the Hendricks House edition that was prepared by Professor Eugene F. Irey at the University of Colorado.

I am grateful to the editors of the anthologies, the literary magazines and the webzines where some of these haiku have previously appeared, sometimes in slightly different versions (including French translation): the Haiku Canada members’ anthologies *Geese Landing* (2008), *In the clear dawn sky* (2009), *Shape Shifting* (2010), *Observer Observed* (2011), *Touch of a moth* and the 35th anniversary holographic anthology (2012); *Carpe Diem: Anthologie canadienne du haïku/ Canadian Anthology of Haiku* (2008), and *Do Not Write In This Space* (2012); *Brèves littéraires*, *Frogpond*, *Poetry Quebec*, *The Asahi Shimbun Digital*, *Ploc* ; and *World Haiku Review*. Some were bravely entered in the monthly Shiki Kukai. Two were selected for Montreal’s 2012 *Nuit Blanche* activity, *Attention : poésie lumineuse !* As well, the project is discussed and illustrated in *Language Matters*, interviews with 22 Quebec poets (2013).

Writers of the online community Crewrt-L and my fellow haiku poets have provided ongoing encouragement. I am especially grateful to Angela Leuck, Mike Montreuil, and the late H. Palmer Hall.

Personal gratitude goes to Doug Williams, my first reader.

CONTENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| "The Pipe," plundered | 8 |
| Winnowing the Whale: A Preface | 9 |
| Winnows | 13 |

every lamp

Melville, Herman, 1819-1891. Moby-Dick, or, The Whale
Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library

Table of Contents for this work:
Full-text databases | Text Center Home page

Chapter xxx

THE PIPE

When Stubb had departed, Ahab stood for a while leaning over the bulwarks, and then, as had been usual with him of late, calling a sailor of the watch, he sent him below for his ivory stool, and also his pipe. Lighting the pipe at the binnacle lamp and planting the stool on the weather side of the deck, he sat and smoked.

In old Norse times, the thrones of the sea-loving Danish kings were fabricated, with tradition, of the tusks of the Narwhale. How could one look at Ahab then, seated on that throne of bones, without being thinking him of the royalty it symbolized? For a Khan of the plank, and a king of the sea, and a great lord of Leviathans was Ahab.

Some moments passed, during which the thick vapor came from his mouth in quick and constant puffs, which blew back again into his face. "Now now," he soliloquized at last, "drawing the tube, this smoking no longer soothes. Oh, my pipe! hard must it go with me if thy charm be gone! Here have I been unconsciously toiling, not pleasuring, - idle, and ignorantly smoking to windward all the while, to windward, and with such nervous whiff as it, like the dying whale, my final jets were the strongest and fullest of trouble. What business have I with this pipe? This thing that is meant for serenity, to send up mild white vapors among mild white hairs, not among torn iron-grey locks like mine. I'll smoke no more.

He tossed the still lighted pipe into the sea. The fire hissed in the waves, the same instant the ship shot by the bubble the sinking pipe made. With slouched hat, Ahab lurchingly paced the planks.

WINNOWING THE WHALE: A PREFACE

In Chapter 105 of *Moby Dick*, Herman Melville's Ishmael asserts the whale to be "immortal in his species, however perishable in his individuality." Greed and disregard have undermined this optimism. However the *text* of the novel endures and is a renewable resource in that it lends itself to endless recycling as a Dada cut-up, or as Gregory Betts calls it, "plunderverse."

Plunderverse is a compositional method of producing poems from other texts. The process amounts to an extreme edit of a source text, striking out the vast majority of words. The product is a stand-alone poem – built from the (acknowledged) source text, but functionally stand-alone.¹

The goal of the "Winnows" project has been to abstract from each chapter of *Moby Dick* words which, while maintaining their original order, will group together to effect a haiku-like poem. The previous page shows the process in "The Pipe," which through its many hopeful turns leading to as many blind alleys, eventually yielded the following:

raw weather
in his face
the dying fire

It is quite obvious that the poem has nothing to do with the novel. *Moby Dick* is a source of words, not tale. The chapter titles at the bottom of each page of *Winnows* serve as rough coordinates.

¹ <http://wordsters.net/poetics/poetics05/05betts.html>

For most of *Winnows*, the words are either whole in the original, or come from adjacent letters in the original – words left over when outside letters are stripped away. As well, letters from the end of one word can join letters at the beginning of the next. In the epilogue, for example, “aster” is within the single word “astern” whereas “love” spans the adjacent words “fell over.”

The title of chapter 122, “Midnight Aloft – Thunder and Lightning,” provides the compound “nightlight.” But otherwise, for this chapter only, I resigned myself to picking through the text for individual letters I could gather to make other words.

Chapter cxxii

~~MIDNIGHT ALOFT – THUNDER AND LIGHTNING~~

~~The Main top sail yard. Tashtego passing new lashings
around it.~~

~~‘Um, um, um. Stop that thunder! Plenty of much
thunder up here. What’s the use of thunder. Um, um, um.
We don’t want thunder, we want rum, give us a glass of
rum. Um, um, um!’~~

Yes, that is the entire chapter! Yet even it allows for choices.

midnight/ her old slippers/ on the rug
nightlight/ (her)his old shoes/ on the rug
nightlight/ (her)his slippers/ on the rug

The ideal would be “nightlight/ her old slippers,” but when “light” is taken from “lightning,” its “l” is unavailable for “old,” and the next set of letters that combine to make “old” overlap with the ones for “slippers.”

I did not permit myself this sort of letter collection in any other chapter. As a result, the novel’s simple past could not become a haiku’s present in third person singular because an “-ed” could not be replaced by an “-s” from a word further along. Nor could I graft a later “-ing” to some previous verb root. In short, with the exception of chapter 122, words used in *Winnows* stem from adjacent letters in *Moby Dick* – though compounds (such as “nightlight”) are also forged from root elements that are complete though not adjacent.

I did permit myself two cheats, however. In chapter 129, I not only removed the “s” from the end of “applies,” I also removed the “i” from the middle – to obtain “apple.” And in chapter 20, I changed “signing” to “singing” – though “singing” can be composed from individual letters abstracted in proper order from the available text. But surely my ascribing the word to an inversion of letters seems more deviously elegant.

Like many other contemporary haiku poets, I do not adhere to a seventeen syllable poem simply because in Japanese they are written with seventeen *more*. And though two-line haiku are written, the couplet abstracted from chapter 43 is more akin to the Chinese *duiliàn*. The poems from chapters 62 and 121 are closer to aphorisms, and of course, as stated in the subtitle, many of these poems are more senryū than haiku.

Certainly the composition technique for this project is highly *unhaikulike*: there was no ginkgo walk, but there was an oceanful

of words holding many moments just below the surface. In *Winnows*, Melville's metaphors and similes become literal. His nouns, verbs and adjectives slip in and out of one another's roles. And his nineteenth-century signifiers sometimes emerge with today's twenty-first-century meanings – as with chapter 99's "blackberrying."

The limits imposed by available words have yielded their surprises – ways of expressing that would never otherwise be considered. What makes these "winnows" possible is the remarkable flexibility of our language – without which, constraint-based writing never could succeed.

Maxianne Berger

winnows

drizzly afternoon
better the fields than the house
right, grasshopper!

the little stone
still in my pocket –
snow on her tomb

old silk handkerchief
a draft of cold air
blowing out the light

Chapter i – loomings
Chapter ii – the carper-bag
Chapter iii – the Spouter-Inn

patchwork squares
half-steeped in dreams
I open my eyes

smell of satin
lingers in the parlor
his lighted pipe

howling gale
your question answered
miles off shore

Chapter iv – the counterpane
Chapter v – breakfast
Chapter vi – the street

sunny cold
standing among flowers
my shadow

February's melt –
black rocks and sunlight
breaking through

a swinging lamp
flame and all
his restless glance

Chapter vii – the chapel
Chapter viii – the pulpit
Chapter ix – the sermon

together
in the afterglow
reading

no fire in the room
the blanket between us
now familiar

down in these thickets
we share the mysteries
of light

Chapter x – a bosom friend
Chapter xi – nightgown
Chapter xii – biographical

meadow wedding
rose glitter marks the green
of young saplings

in their nets
more cod
and a watery moon

the evening
starlit and warm
in your bed

Chapter xiii – wheelbarrow
Chapter xiv – Nantucket
Chapter xv – chowder

weather-stained chair
an old man
watches the evening

so silent
following a cold night
the first glimpse of sun

darkness at last
I lay down my pen – now
what was I thinking?

Chapter xvi – the ship
Chapter xvii – the Ramadan
Chapter xviii – his mark

my ragged old dog
a vague shadow
at my side

singing on the shovel
a starling –
the long day over

misty shadows
then quiet light spreading
sunrise on the shore

Chapter xix – the prophet
Chapter xx – all astir
Chapter xxi – going aboard

after the last gift
two songs
moonlight and frost

stoneless grave –
the wind
her only friend

all this
for a handful of earth
after the eulogy

Chapter xxii – merry Christmas
Chapter xxiii – the lee shore
Chapter xxiv – the advocate

his cat
a soft spot
here in the sun

days like this
an ordinary rainbow
over leaves of gold

old rigadig man –
still his black eyes, glittering,
talk of youth

Chapter xxv – postscript
Chapter xxvi – knights and squires
Chapter xxvii – knights and squires

Christmas away
I find home
in a little red flower

rose-water
a mere hint
in the rumpled sheets

raw weather
in his face
the dying fire

Chapter xxviii – Ahab
Chapter xxix – enter Ahab; to him, Stubb
Chapter xxx – the pipe

there's the farm!
a chimney standing
alone in the wind

my line cast
in the shadow of the crane
patience

this time of night
purple in its fullest sweep
moves the skies

Chapter xxxi – Queen Mab
Chapter xxxii – cetology
Chapter xxxiii – the Specksynder

noon sun
pauses at a sky-light –
hollow of a tree

stars just out
a cosy fireside chat
with the universe

the same garden
near close of day – painted
by wind and shadows

Chapter xxxiv – the cabin-table
Chapter xxxv – the mast-head
Chapter xxxvi – the quarter-deck

white wine
at sunset
the path through the mountains

I feel my eyes
touch the dark
its wolfish howl

evening? what of it?
at home now, crying,
I drink to love

Chapter xxxvii – sunset
Chapter xxxviii – dusk
Chapter xxxix – first night-watch

green
and green and fireflies
green mell pell-

a worn hearth
all the fireside tales
in this blade of grass

marble crosses
muffled in snow
a Requiem

Chapter xl – midnight, forecandle
Chapter xli – Moby Dick
Chapter xlii – the whiteness of the whale

moonlight in the water
silence in the wind

shadows on the path
this sleepless night
a lost sheep

my obituary?
one candle and
a little wind

Chapter xliii – bark!
Chapter xliv – the chart
Chapter xlv – the affidavit

voyage
in the shadow of the moon
this long night of love

cloudy afternoon
in the air stretched out
see the cranes?

listen silence
rising to a whisper
dawn mists

Chapter xlv1 – surmises
Chapter xlvii – the mat-maker
Chapter xlviii – the first lowering

white water!
soaked through and flying
my frantic heart

after all my tears
is it wise to awaken
such a ghostly moon?

silence and the moon
companions
however far apart we are

Chapter xlix – the hyena
Chapter l – Ahab's boat and crew. Fedallah
Chapter li – the spirit-spout

branches of hoar frost
not one word from home but
the far wind

thumb-worn letters
your love
is constant

small heap of dust
here in the silent chapel
I remove my hat

Chapter lii – the albatross
Chapter liii – the gam
Chapter liv – the Town-Ho's story

ancient pagoda –
running over the bridge on the cup
they elope

see that flash?
time leaping in the black calm
Northern Lights

lively weather cock
that windy-day traveller
round and round

Chapter lv – of the monstrous pictures of whales

Chapter lvi – of the less erroneous pictures of whales, and the true
pictures of whaling

Chapter lvii – of whales in paint; in teeth; in wood; in sheet-iron; in
stone; in mountains; in stars

Venetian blind
cutting swaths of yellow
the sun drifts in

snow flitting
almost chance-like
vague rumors

golden morning
coiled for the first time
around you

Chapter lviii – brit
Chapter lix – squid
Chapter lx – the line

whispers and a rose
mingle with twilight now
and his ashes

however long
the voyage you take there
starts in this world

wooden harp
and two hands – such sad
intricate passages

Chapter lxi – Stubb kills a whale

Chapter lxii – the dart

Chapter lxiii – the crotch

foot-path at night
a thousand mumbling spirits
around my lantern

our train
transparent in the long night
how sad you look

small gleams of light
darting
ghosts in the garden

Chapter lxiv – Stubb's supper
Chapter lxv – the whale as a dish
Chapter lxvi – the shark massacre

Saturday night
frost in the wind and now
a second blanket

the shore
of a dried-up lake
this memory of home

lost –
in the white sky
a white sun

Chapter lxvii – cutting in
Chapter lxviii – the blanket
Chapter lxix – the funeral

a yellow lotus
unfolding its noiseless leaves
the other name of love

secret signal
a white rose
falling from his hand

almost dancing
on my lips
hot ginger tea!

Chapter lxx – the Sphinx

Chapter lxxi – the Jeroboam's story

Chapter lxxii – the monkey rope

a yellow rose
the look in his eye – I mourn
these passing things

a young you
in white bridal satins
long and floating

so elegant
the Crested Green Fisher –
ah, these few white hairs!

Chapter lxxiii – Stubb and Flask kill a right whale; and then have a
talk over him

Chapter lxxiv – the sperm whale's head – contrasted view

Chapter lxxv – the right whale's head – contrasted view

a comb so fancy
with only the one hair?
sentimental then!

my wine spilled –
lost in red
the setting sun

a cat
here and then gone
the mist over his grave

Chapter lxxvi – the battering-ram
Chapter lxxvii – the great Heidelburgh tun
Chapter lxxviii – cistern and buckets

rock garden
all along the snow line
this immense silence

an entire world
from this summit
emerging in light

deer perhaps
in this long blue afternoon
shadows playing

Chapter lxxix – the prairie
Chapter lxxx – the nut
Chapter lxxxi – the Pequod meets the Virgin

ancient city
all jumbled
by modern art

for want of faith
an eagle
there in the wind

his swift boats
flying fast and furious
the length of the tub

Chapter lxxxii – the honor and glory of whaling
Chapter lxxxiii – Jonah historically regarded
Chapter lxxxiv – pitchpoling

and yet . . .
through the steam on the mirror
all my doubts

a crimson lily –
my inability
to understand it

bluish morning
quiet with
our last strawberries

Chapter lxxxv – the fountain
Chapter lxxxvi – the tail
Chapter lxxxvii – the grand armada

summer warmth
my daughter's moody secrets
lingering near her

drifting cobweb
the same lines in marble
these thoughts

an apple
after a hard fall
its black bone of branch

Chapter lxxxviii – schools and schoolmasters
Chapter lxxxix – fast-fish and loose-fish
Chapter xc – heads or tails

dry roses
in a broken bowl still
their faint perfume

spicy cooking –
home
in the very scent

in his cabinet
a fiddler's bow now too
at rest

Chapter xci – the Pequod meets the Rose-Bud

Chapter xcii – ambergris

Chapter xciii – the castaway

cut violets
musky morning in a jar –
supposing it matters

you and wind
allies
carrying dead leaves

smoke
curling out of the fire
laughter in the dark

Chapter xciv – a squeeze of the hand
Chapter xcv – the cassock
Chapter xcvi – the try-works

in this handful of sweetgrass
April
on the Prairie

the fire now
all but ashes
oh! the weary years

an empty text
the ghost of my father
BlackBerryng

Chapter xcvii – the lamp
Chapter xcvi – stowing down and clearing up
Chapter xcix – the doubloon

still running
in this faded blue shirt
his old watch

good bye, swallow!
such a short summer
this far north

dust flies humming
too restless
for a poem

Chapter c – leg and arm the Pequod, of Nantucket, meets the
Samuel Enderby, of London

Chapter ci – the decanter

Chapter cii – a bower in the Arsacides

a whole village
the disordered wood blocks
of a child at play

because
that condor's sweep through light
is silent

red light of sunset –
a wild horse
on the savanna

Chapter ciii – measurement of the whale's skeleton

Chapter civ – the fossil whale

Chapter cv – does the whale's magnitude diminish? – will he
perish?

already night
the marsh seems
deeper than before

High Mass
a lost bird whirling
in the cathedral

old window
its pattern of light and dust
there that's me

Chapter cvi – Ahab's leg
Chapter cvii – the carpenter
Chapter cviii – Ahab and the carpenter

with this snow
against the door one day more
to relax

faint grey shudder
something in the lilies
a sudden leap

my dear shadow,
all that tossing in bed –
seems you need your lover

Chapter cix – Ahab and Starbuck in the cabin
Chapter cx – Queequeg in his coffin
Chapter cxi – the Pacific

muffled lullaby
in the churchyard grass
a new gravestone

black horses
one after the other
the smell of wind

struggling
through the tall grass – a boy
again

Chapter cxii – the blacksmith
Chapter cxiii – the forge
Chapter cxiv – the gilder

home
coffee in the pot
for two

Vesper hymns
in the slow hum of the dark
the darker valley

two hearses
so silent – grey dawn
and the rose

Chapter cxv – the Pequod meets the Bachelor
Chapter cxvi – the dying whale
Chapter cxvii – the whale watch

glassy revery
in the old man's gaze
the glow of ash

after lightning
the long moment before thunder
would this be love?

nothing in the wind
but wind
this time

Chapter cxviii – the quadrant

Chapter cxix – the candles

Chapter cxx – the deck towards the end of the first night watch

holding my hat
it's easy
to laugh at the wind

nightlight
his old shoes
on the rug

through star-drift
and shadows
my sleeping child

Chapter cxxi – midnight – the forecastle bulwarks
Chapter cxxii – midnight aloft – thunder and lightning
Chapter cxxiii – the musket

muffled
in silence
her knitting needles

after rain
her long wet hair
in my hands

nightfall
the blue shadow of snow in the woods
... come

Chapter cxxiv – the needle
Chapter cxxv – the log and line
Chapter cxxvi – the life-buoy

again the woodpecker
second thoughts
at twilight

his unexpected question
wind
in the cherry trees

to feel desire
an apple
in my hand

Chapter cxxvii – the deck

Chapter cxxviii – the Pequod meets the Rachel

Chapter cxxix – the cabin

a single leaf
this shadow and that shadow
falling

a stranger's trumpet
in that hot night
her burial urn

bluebirds but
only shadows at the horizon
crossing the sky

Chapter cxxx – the hat

Chapter cxxxi – the Pequod meets the Delight

Chapter cxxxii – the symphony

snow
feathering the breeze
herons take wing

steadfast plough
pulling slowly through the oats
a centipede

summer house
through the wind's long breath
a hawk screaming

Chapter cxxxiii – the chase – first day
Chapter cxxxiv – the chase – second day
Chapter cxxxv – the chase – third day

one red aster
in full sunburst
love so near

Epilogue

Winnows is published by Nietzsche's Brolly of Toronto

and copyright to Maxianne Berger

The cover art is a photo by rougetete entitled

Glass Minnows Swimming in a School

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Berger, Maxianne, 1949-, author
Winnows / Maxianne Berger.

Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-920489-48-2 (paperback)

I. Title.

PS8553.E673W56 2016 C811'.54 C2016-901254-9

Nietzsche's Brolly is an imprint of Imago Press

imagorediron@gmail.com Toronto Canada



Don't be fooled. The words in these haiku may have been first penned by Herman Melville, but Maxianne Berger makes them uniquely hers. In her meticulously fashioned short poems, we hear the poet's own inimitable voice as it shifts between joy and lament, humour and introspection. Having "plundered" *Moby Dick*, Berger serves up 136 rare and brilliant haiku gems.

— Angela Leuck, author of *a decade in the cosmos*

In *Winnows*, Maxianne Berger has transformed Melville's masterpiece into a remarkable work of erasure poetry. Much more than a distillation or reduction—in all senses, this is a book to intoxicate us, and one we should savour.

— Paul Vermeersch, author of *The Reinvention of the Human Hand* and *Don't Let It End Like This Tell Them I Said Something*

struggling
through the tall grass – a boy
again

— Maxianne Berger