



# the loose thread

THE RED MOON ANTHOLOGY

OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

HAIKU

edited by Jim Kacian & the Red Moon Editorial Staff





# the loose thread

The Red Moon Anthology  
of English-Language Haiku  
2001

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**the loose thread:**

The Red Moon Anthology of  
English-Language Haiku 2001

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## foreword

Haiku have been used for any number of purposes. As PEN/Faulkner award-winning translator Hiroaki Sato avers in his *One Hundred Frogs*: “Hokku and haiku have been written to congratulate, to praise, to describe, to express gratitude, wit, cleverness, disappointment, resentment, or what have you, but rarely to convey enlightenment.” Of course, in light of the haiku practice of the past 50 years, we cannot eliminate this usage, either. But we understand what Sato intends: to limit our understanding of what haiku may be to a kind of Zen revelation is to reduce its variety, its scope, and most of all, its art.

It is clear that both traditions—haiku as art, haiku as Zen expression—are flourishing, and there is no reason to insist that only the one or the other is “true.” Haiku, if it is a serious art form, is capacious enough to contain both, and more. In fact, without this capacity, it would not be worthy of our full artistic study—its own limitations would diminish its importance.

At one point in the West’s understanding of what haiku might be, some subject matter—poems or war, for example—would have been eschewed. But art must be capable of giving expression to the totality of our reality, all of our emotion and understanding. To rule important topics “out of bounds” would be the death-knell of haiku as serious art.

Of course, this has not been the case, as is evidence in this volume, and elsewhere. Haiku is capable of expressing all of the critical issues which face us as human beings today, and in the particular fashion which makes it unique. *The Red Moon Anthologies* aim to recognize the best of haiku regardless of the school out of which it arises, based on its relevance, yes, but most especially, based on its achievement as art. This is its most important legacy, and the only real argument why such work deserves to be retained in our literary heritage.

Jim Kacian  
*Editor-in-Chief*





**the loose thread**







**haiku / senryu**





Stephen Addiss ✧ United States

late autumn—  
love  
without desire



ai li ✧ United Kingdom

talk of divorce  
she feels the knife edge  
of her skirt's pleat



Bin Akio ✧ Japan

The snow on a cedar mountain  
is elastic—  
the first light of the New Year



odd g. aksnes ✧ Norway

empty corner  
slowly the moon leaves  
the dust



Francis Alexander ✧ United States

abandoned house—  
the fallen branch stretches  
the telephone wire



Stephen Amor ✧ United States

A moonlit night;  
the firefly reappears  
in a different spot.



an'ya ✧ United States

After its first flight  
the young gyrfalcon's talons  
tighter on my glove.



Fay Aoyagi ✧ United States

Independence Day—  
I let him touch  
a little bit of me



Winona Baker ✧ Canada

breast self-examination  
a moth batters  
the screened window



Geri Barton ✧ United States

moving day  
again, I pack the china  
we never use





Gretchen Graft Batz ✧ United States

April sunrise  
the soft call and response  
of two barred owls



Cathy Drinkwater Better ✧ United States

heading into the sunset  
the sister I don't talk to  
one year older today



Gregg Billingsley ✧ United Kingdom

suddenly  
in a garden centre  
becoming 30



Mykel Board ✧ United States

fiftieth birthday  
standing a little closer  
to the toilet



Susan Bond ✧ Canada

canyon  
hearing the loose stone  
again



Miriam Borne ✧ United States

in the casket room  
the funeral director's children  
play hide and seek



Mark Brooks ✧ United States

new hammock—  
my beer on the other side  
of the porch

crescent moon  
the gas pump handle  
steals my warmth

withering wind  
the fence-builder pulls a nail  
from his lips



Randy Brooks ✧ United States

moonrise . . .  
cattle single file through  
the narrow pasture gate

early morning cool  
men in hard hats gather  
on the last patch of grass



Greeba Brydges-Jones ✧ New Zealand

arm in plaster  
the weight  
of a careless moment



Jonathan Buckley ✧ United Kingdom

the ebb and flow  
of sea between my legs  
a passing girl



Yu Chang ✧ United States

old passport  
the tug  
of my father's smile

back at camp  
the mountain peak  
still in my legs





Tom Clausen ✧ United States

in her sleep  
she steals back  
her hand



David Cobb ✧ United Kingdom

the trees move  
only at their tips:  
midsummer dusk



Kathy Lippard Cobb ✧ United States

scraping frost  
off the windshield—  
no words between us



john crook ✧ United Kingdom

mid-autumn  
the fridge magnet  
slides to the floor



Michael Cross ✧ United States

dinner alone—  
orchid shadows  
on the opposite chair



Joyce Walker Currier ✧ United States

at my father's grave—  
the weight  
of unspoken words



DeVar Dahl ✧ Canada

empty cabin  
the beached canoe  
fills with leaves



Cherie Hunter Day ✧ United States

cold snap—  
the skittish crow sets off  
an entire field



Andrew Detheridge ✧ United Kingdom

on the country road—  
turning off the headlights  
to feel the darkness



Bruce Detrick ◆ United States

public garden  
she photographs the blue iris  
I just smelled



Steve Dolphy ✧ United Kingdom

All Saints' Day  
closing the garage door  
on old shadows



Connie Donleycott ✧ United States

30<sup>th</sup> reunion—  
raising our glasses  
to see



Frank Dullughan ✧ United Kingdom

searching the cupboard  
for the answer  
to why I opened it



David Elliott ✧ United States

Hiking by full moon—  
the rockslide a spill of light  
down the mountain





Dee Evetts ✧ United States

store window  
the young couple takes turns  
testing the double bed

retuning  
the guitarist turns to face  
the subway wall



Michael Fessler ✧ Japan

closing time  
bronze cupid  
stops peeing



Stanford M. Forrester ✧ United States

winter afternoon—  
a slow shadow fills  
the empty bowl



Sandra Fuhringer ✧ Canada

changing light  
the face of a woman  
reading a letter



D. Claire Gallagher ✧ United States

a hairling crack  
in the vase of daylilies—  
water changing shape



Barry George ✧ United States

Making change—  
the conductor shifts  
his toothpick



Brian Gierat ✧ United States

approaching storm—  
minnows dart  
in the bait bucket



Ferris Gilli ✧ United States

divorce papers  
she carefully snips  
a loose thread

autumn wind  
a small red dragon  
warm from the kiln



Chris Gordon ✧ United States

drinking tea i didn't stop the war i just forgot about it



Maureen Gorman ✧ United States

silent car ride  
after the argument  
I adjust the heat



LeRoy Gorman ✧ Canada

exam silence  
chalkdust settles  
in the sun

the quiet graveyard  
a warm breeze & an end  
to alphabetic order



Caroline Gourlay ✧ United Kingdom

below the door  
of the photo booth  
unlaced shoes



David Gross ✧ United States

snowed in  
the old hen  
too tough to eat





Carolyn Hall ✧ United States

January 3<sup>rd</sup>  
the Weight Watchers meeting  
doubles in size

indian summer  
both gardening gloves  
worn through



Yvonne Hardenbrook ✧ United States

end of winter  
a spot of sunlight inside  
the potting shed



Jackie Hardy ✧ United Kingdom

straight road ahead:  
the shimmering mirage  
keeps its distance



Kei Hayashi ✧ Japan

Breaking  
my yellow crayon to draw  
the barley harvest field



Peggy Heinrich ✧ United States

first contraction  
stopping in the snowstorm  
to buy cat food



Claire Bugler Hewitt ✧ United Kingdom

newly pregnant—  
the light around my shadow  
in the field



eric l. houck, jr. ✧ United States

separating fog  
from fog  
strand of barbed wire



Ken Jones ✧ Wales

Aging address book  
the living squeezed  
between the dead



Patrick Kelly ✧ United States

light snowfall  
the tick of an engine  
cooling



Jim Kacian ✧ United States

just now  
as my life turns crazy  
forsythia

the melon splits  
ahead of my knife—  
midsummer heat

sundown—  
one dog starts  
them all



Jerry Kilbride ✧ United States

day after diagnosis  
avoiding my eyes  
while shaving



Valeria Krestova ✧ Russia

guests gone . . .  
I eat again  
from the cracked plate



Robert Kusch ✧ United States

missed the train  
—a small green shoot  
between the tracks



Burnell Lippy ✧ United States

a cricket  
where the mortar's gone  
September evening





Leatrice Lifshitz ✧ United States

alone—  
she takes the daisies  
from room to room

land's end—  
sand in each bite  
of my apple



Rebecca Lilly ✧ United States

A warm breeze . . .  
the scent of hay bales  
from the moonlit field

Cold autumn dusk—  
fog mantles the bridge  
where the suicide jumped



Matthew Louvière ✧ United States

first light  
the old rooster crows  
one white breath



Robert Mainone ✧ United States

all around  
light failing in a field  
of fireflies



paul m. ✧ United States

Indian summer  
the trolley conductor  
forgets to charge me

a coyote call  
goes unanswered  
evening star



Steve Mason ✧ United Kingdom

argument at dinner  
a fly moves  
from plate to plate



Paul David Mena ✧ United States

snow mixes with rain—  
my mother keeps calling me  
by my brother's name



David Meyers ✧ Canada

church exit—  
they pick up the argument  
where they left it



Lenard D. Moore ✧ United States

funeral procession  
the stillness of cotton blossoms  
in sunlight



A. C. Missias ✧ United States

reading the poems  
of a lost friend—  
summer rain

veterans' cemetery—  
a wide expanse of lawn  
beyond the graves

holding her hand;  
the pattering  
of summer rain



Matt Morden ✧ Wales

shortlisting . . .  
a hint of perfume  
on the résumé



Marlene Mountain ✧ United States

just enough rain to moisten the lips of the wild lily





Naia ✧ United States

heat wave—  
the fly's iridescence  
just before the swat



John Ower ✧ United States

lovers on the beach  
the moon draws the ocean  
to their toes



Pamela Miller Ness ✧ United States

Alzheimer's ward  
snow fills the sill  
of his empty room

her dead mother's room  
opening the window  
to let out a moth

vacation over—  
hearing the sea  
in the traffic's road



W. F. Owen ✧ United States

summer wind—  
a dragonfly rips  
the clothespin

prostate exam  
the doctor and I  
trade jabs

her estate  
dividing  
the children



Tom Painting ✧ United States

family plot  
the gravedigger  
severs a root

solicitation  
the wildlife activist  
flashes her teeth



Christopher Patchel ✧ United States

bitter cold  
a snowplow's scrape  
in the night

midnight stars  
our stroll through the neighborhood  
trips light after light

spring fever—  
pedaling my new bike  
through the scents



Matthew Paul ✧ United Kingdom

my train delayed  
by a suicide—  
Easter drizzle



Brett Peruzzi ✧ United States

deep summer—  
the sweet-smelling wake  
of a hay wagon



Joanna Preston ✧ New Zealand

hospice visit    he still beats me at chess



Patricia Prime ✧ New Zealand

mending his fence  
the neighbor's mouth  
full of nails



Anthony J. Pupello ✧ United States

blustery wind  
the dog walker sorts  
a tangle of leashes



William Ramsey ✧ United States

afternoon light  
on the sill  
his urn's warmth





Linda Robeck ✧ United States

winter waves  
she folds and unfolds  
her layoff notice

back from the PO—  
an empty space  
where the manuscript was



Patricia Anne Rogers ✧ United States

birthday snow—  
she erases her footprints  
with a broom



Eric Rutter ✧ United States

in the next fitting room  
a woman tells her husband  
whether his pants fit



Bruce Ross ✧ United States

early spring  
the cemetery side gate  
open a little

dense rain clouds  
the small blue tent over  
the open grave

morning fog  
the ladder higher than  
the house



Steve Sanfield ✧ United States

\$200 a night  
but in the hotel fountain  
only pennies



Robert Scotellaro ✧ United States

as she talks of aging—  
smoothing the creases  
in her grocery bag



Rob Scott ✧ Netherlands

still no word  
the moon  
through another window



Semimaru ✧ Japan

A child of God—  
will he be circumcised?  
the spring Milky Way



R. A. Stefanac ✧ United States

communion wafer  
she sticks out  
her pierced tongue



Gary Steinberg ✧ United States

winter rain I finger each seam on the baseball



John Stevenson ✧ United States

last piece  
of a jigsaw puzzle . . .  
filling in the sky

hazy moon  
what to say  
to your machine

tax return  
pressing the air out of  
the sealed envelope



Richard Stevenson ✧ Canada

memorial gun—  
sticks, stones and candy wrappers  
stuffed down the barrel



Susumu Takiguchi ✧ United Kingdom

moonless night  
I throw a beetle  
into deep darkness





Hilary Tann ✧ United States

eye exam  
i stop trying  
so hard

hotel room  
watching the *Weather Channel*  
for news of home



Rick Tarquinio ✧ United States

sent back out  
for something I forgot  
winter stars



Tom Tico ✧ United States

Thanksgiving:  
having the flat  
all to myself



Maurice Tasnier ✧ United Kingdom

all her troubles  
by my third pint I am  
so understanding

recalling the days  
it sounded like a flower  
dementia . . .



Marc Thompson ✧ United States

a small white church  
at the highway stoplight  
evening rain

steady rain . . .  
the man on the ladder  
adjusts his cap



Cor van den Heuvel ✧ United States

a drop of water  
floats by the canoe  
on a curled leaf

the rusted paperclip  
has stained my old poem  
wind in the eaves

deep snow  
the amusement park lit  
by a single bulb



Zinovy Vayman ✧ United States

forest path:  
when it becomes a fork  
we turn back



David Walker ✧ United Kingdom

wearing the suit  
we shared  
to your grave



Linda Jeannette Ward ✧ United States

heat waves—  
the hitchhiker shifts her child  
to the other hip

wind shift—  
he plans a new route  
for her wheelchair



Billy Watt ✧ Scotland

“Zen for Beginners,”  
with the remote control  
lying on top.



Michael Dylan Welch ✧ United States

the silence between us  
a quail finds its way  
through the underbrush





Alison Williams ✧ United Kingdom

darkness gathers  
in the tree tops  
crow by crow



Peter Williams ✧ United Kingdom

five days later  
counting the syllables  
of my mother's illness



Billie Wilson ✧ United States

an open book  
on the old porch swing—  
first fireflies



Jeff Winke ✧ United States

Amtrak depot  
a large man's yawn  
connects two announcements



Ryuji Yamagishi ✧ Japan

On the chair  
in the moonlight  
different silences



Toshiro Yoshida ✧ Japan

Man will lean  
someday, a ladder  
against the Milky Way



Cindy Zackowitz ✧ United States

unseasonable heat—  
a woodpecker  
in the lightning scar



Alenka Zorman ✧ Slovenia

dry laundry—  
the fish pattern towel  
still damp





**haibun**





## Refrigerator

One day last summer, my old refrigerator suddenly quit. When the repairman handed me the culprit, a broken heating element, I happily paid \$75 to get my refrigerator back. After that, it worked nicely except for hot days. Then, the motor would moan noticeably but there was no cooling at all. The thought of getting a new one did cross my mind, but I never got around to it.

The fridge's condition got worse in the middle of June this year. "That's it," I said to myself and headed for the mall. When I was removing the postcards and stickers to prepare the old fridge to be trucked away, a yellowed Christmas card caught my eyes. The message inside read, "Merry Christmas! Hope everybody is fine. See you in New York. Love, Siv."

Siv Engstrom grew up in Göteborg, Sweden, but had spent many years abroad both in Europe and in the US by the time I met her. She was the happiest person I'd ever known, and she brought out the best in everyone. Siv particularly loved Britain, so much so that she bought a dilapidated English cottage near Cambridge. Restoration had already begun in the summer of 1988. Siv never made it to New York that year. She made it as far as Lockerbie, Scotland.

new fridge  
the motor's faint hum  
still there





David Cobb ✧ United Kingdom

## Down Epiphany Way

In Berlin on a late summer's day the Epiphanienweg leads to a cemetery called Luisenfriedhof. I am coming to see you, Corporal Gabler. My second visit. After fifty years.

Monuments face each other across the gravel path, so that the acute morning sun, creating a pattern of serried shadows, strikes the blank rears of those on my left, while lighting up the inscribed faces of those on my right.

The place is full of flowers and German widows. The widows stare at me, they tend graves, some of the recording loved ones born in the very year you died in. Almost-old-comrade in the enemy's army, on the last day of the war you had a Russian bullet in the head, in the street outside your home, wearing your civvies. And me now, obligated to bring you the news of your widow, she too lying at peace, though in a corner of some English field.

Weren't we all three confirmed Romantics? The triangle has to be closed.

The sun is very warm today and, traversing row after row of tombstones, I can't find you anywhere. As I speak to you, *Wo steckst du denn?*, I wonder if it's in order to call you *du*. We were never properly introduced, we never even spoke. Just I stood beside

her at the grave, holding a trowel that had lost its shape, while she laid flowers on you. That day, also in summer.

Rest, we all wished you rest, thinking of peace for ever. *Ewige Ruh'*. But now, fifty years on, when I ask the gardener with a watering can in his hand where you might be concealed, he shakes his head, tells me—and I know he means to help—to ask at the office. A plot for Gabler? Maybe his tenure . . . ?

‘Rest in Peace’—  
and just nearby a plaque,  
‘Lease expired.’

I cannot face the office, go to the Lietzenseepark instead, where “the public are requested to respect the local residents’ need of quietness.” A Turkish family are spreading out a picnic, a Chinese woman goes through the unhurried postures of Tai-Chi, weeping willows touch the surface of the lake. It is still beautiful, do you remember the tulips, *Liebchen*? I think of sitting down in Babylon and weeping, and in that moment a faint shower begins.

a sound I can’t hear  
the consciousness of leaves  
receiving rain . . .



Ion Codrescu ✧ Romania

## Towards a Mountain Temple

even through mist  
the light finds its way . . .  
old temple bell

Early morning. I open the window and look outside. Suddenly, I feel the moisture which comes into my room. I sip my jasmine tea and at the same time I look at the unfolded map. I take a last look before going towards the mountain temple. The English explanations are written under the Chinese text, which is smaller. To get to the narrow stepping path, I have to walk many hours on a forestry road which goes through two villages and one hamlet. I take my knapsack and say goodbye to the host where I stayed only one night.

parting time —  
the host offers the guest  
some dewy plums

The road ascends through bamboo, cedar, pine forests, and other trees whose names I've forgotten. From time to time, a bird call crosses the mist. I can't see beyond thirty or forty meters. All is gray and it's difficult to distinguish the outline of the trees, plants

and rocks. Everything seems unreal. The landscape is like an ink painting where the strong strokes and details have disappeared. It's so quiet that I can hear the dewdrops falling on me from the branches of the tall pines.

lonely mountain road —  
how smooth the surface  
of the rock is

After an hour of climbing, I pause beside a large stone covered with brushwood and I take a swig of the tea I have with me. I find it strange that I have not met anyone – neither travelers nor woodcutters. Time passes while I am gazing at the dense forest, at the branches of the old trees that come together overhead and are so tangled. After some minutes a native approaches and stops his horses, and then invites me to take a seat in his cart. Guessing the place where I will go he pronounces loudly the name of the temple. In my turn, I confirm his intuition and say the same words. His face brightens up and his eyes look at the mountain peak. After some moments, by an interjection, he starts his horses. The sound of the cart and the clatter of hoofs are all I hear in the silence of the mountain.

a broken tree —  
it's apricot picking time  
in my country

After we pass through two villages the mist begins to rise. The landscape can be seen far away.

Unnoticeably cedars and bamboos are more and more rare. We approach the hamlet. From near the first house two children with their hands up run toward us. They shout the same words. When they notice that in the cart there is a foreigner, their voices fade and they become ashamed. My guide is their father. He stops the horses and raises the children onto the cart, one after another, even though their house is no more than twenty-five or thirty meters away. The faces of the children are radiant. Near their house, I get out from the cart and bend my head to thank my guide. Saying again the name of the temple he points out the place where the path begins through the woods towards the peak.

a gust of wind —  
fern leaves cover and uncover  
the small white mushroom

Even after the fog disappears, the moisture is on my clothes, plants and the air is full of resin scent. In the sunbeams the dewdrops sparkle. I watch the pine needles, which end with tiny, gleaming dewdrops. Butterflies zigzag around me and I wonder where they stayed hidden until now. Deep in the woods, sometimes loudly, sometimes gently, I hear a woodcutter. Worn down by time and by the steps of countless pilgrims who came to visit the temple, the stone steps are slippery and I must pay attention to each. After half an hour of difficult climbing, I stop for a short while. From far away I can barely hear the waterfall. I continue to climb and the roaring of the water is louder and louder. Unexpectedly, on the

narrow path a terrace and a pavilion appear in front of me. I enter the pavilion to sit on a bench and gaze towards the waterfall. Its water is completely white.

as I  
    approach  
        to watch  
            the waterfall  
                a lonely  
                    bird  
                        leaves  
                            its place

The peaks alternate far away, one by one, like petrified ships floating above a still sea made of white clouds. Suddenly I remember the first Chinese reproductions I saw when I was a teenager. At that time I thought that Chinese mountains are only the fantasy of the painters and that their shapes are not real. Now I have the impression that the mountains I see are a copy of those paintings. I am thinking of Wang Wei, the poet-painter, who wrote in a poem:

I notice a lonely far away peak  
which vanishes among clouds

As in Wang Wei's poem, this landscape I admire behind the waterfall, far away, a solitary summit is gradually covered, and disappears into the sea of clouds. Sometimes I think that only art copies nature. In this moment I realize that nature imitates art too.

Near me, another peak, flooded by the light of the sun, is full of green due to the pine trees. In classic

Chinese painting a green mountain means stability and a white cloud suggests instability, wandering. To know a mountain you must wander through its paths, woods and rocks, hearing its sounds and voices, watching it from far away, or drawing it. Frederick Frank wrote that “Drawing is the discipline by which I constantly rediscover the world. I have learned that what I have not drawn I have never really seen, and that when I start drawing an ordinary thing I realize how extraordinary it is, sheer miracle: the branching of a tree, the structure of a dandelion’s seed puff. I discover that among *The Ten Thousand Things* there is no ordinary thing. All that is, is worthy of being seen, of being drawn.” I take the brush, the paper and the ink and paint the landscape. Then I’ll go towards the mountain temple.

the last brush stroke —  
a dewdrop falls  
on my ink sketch



John J. Dunphy ✧ United States

## Facing the Wall

The polished black granite of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC—popularly known as The Wall—subtly reflects its visitors. While reading the names of the over 58,000 Americans killed during that conflict, we suddenly realize that our images are transposed on those names.

This experience is especially poignant for 'Nam vets seeking the names of those with whom they served. They will never know a closer reunion with their fallen comrades.

Vietnam Memorial  
aging veterans reflected on  
names of young men





David Elliott ✧ United States

## Through the Silence

Another meal refused—  
“Is this what you want?”  
my father slowly nods

Late at night  
one goose flies through  
the silence

Dying? maybe  
but out of the silence  
he opens his eyes and winks

Sorting Dad’s old letters—  
across the street  
a leaf blower

The night of his death  
a few crickets  
and light rain

His favorite chair—  
dent in the cushion  
not my size

so small  
the bag of ashes  
beside the newly dug hole

After Dad’s death  
so many Christmas cards  
wishing him well



Juan Escareal / Peggy Willis Lyles / Ferris Gilli

## Talons in the Chimney

autumn wind  
a styrofoam dish scrapes  
the darkness

chalk across the blackboard  
a shiver up my spine

softly tapping  
on a bedroom window  
the strangler fig

soundless the clamp  
of a Venus flytrap

open flue  
talons in the chimney  
flush out soot

stroke of midnight  
an owl screeches twice



Arwyn Evans ✧ Northern Ireland

## Winder 1950

Saturday morning. I help my father count the takings  
at the Pithead Baths.

Now for *that treat*, he says.

We cross the yard the tram rails to the East Pit  
winding house; enter its small door:

the smell steam and hot oil.

The sense of something breathing in its sleep.

The vast wheel drum I'm overawed.

We walk a little further following the warm  
handrail.

The gleam of polished steel fills the dim-lit hall.

Gently the pistons start to move.

The huge wheel slowly turns.

Gains speed.

Pistons feed-back valve-rods brass balled governors  
awhirl all in concert.

Thought most of all the ponderous drive rod's  
thrust.

The lunge and swing

of massive cams—

their milk-smooth flow

Such momentum nothing, it seems, could make it  
cease.

But just as smoothly all slows down. Comes to soft  
rest.

The sight between  
my waking dreams



## Vigil

An ant circles the “O” of October—Circus Maximus, carved in granite. A rain of hay drifts at the turning post. The sound of the mowers far above, blue sky of another world . . . The rests of the letters and numbers—your full name/your empty dates: the simple maze of 8, the oxbow of S, the great serpentine without its Versailles, the drained locks of H, its empty artificial waterways. The great moulds emptied of molten summer. The prison yards, pristine canals and slave quarters of E.

laying above you  
tracing the Braille  
of your name

The boys on riding mowers, their fluttering open-legged khakis, legs with their dark growth of hair, close-cropped summer haircuts consciously ungainly, spoiling to mar the beauty *you* will see to, dead or alive. All the things you would say like a hive at the end of summer.

teenage mower  
rests his gas can  
on someone's grave



Gerald George ✧ United States

## Arizona

Though a visitor, I could see how this place would drive any sensitive person to ecological radicalism. Flagstaff sprawls right under extraordinarily beautiful, emotionally powerful mountains. So life there, if you really are alive, is engagement with them, and becomes a fight to protect what makes you want to live from the landscape's death through commercial indifference. "Nature" itself rebels.

spreading all over  
the deserted parking lot  
sweet smelling pine cones

A pumice mine's cancerous encroachment on a national forest preserve has in fact provoked a protest, which, shedding years of professional caution, I joined. After all, some company is gouging the mountain so that thirteen-year-old counter-fashion fashionables can dress themselves in "stone-ground" jeans! The voracious bulldozers were gouging way down in the bottom of the life-stripped canyon they are savagely widening, but we got the "media" out to see and kept the pressure on.

saving the planet  
me and ten kids in a  
rusty truck

Afterwards, we went to the mountain's other side to see ancient structures left by people who could build beautifully but lacked the technical sophistication to devastate the landscape: rock-mason predecessors of the Hopi.

alone, a stone ruin  
white clouds pile  
silently

Through the afternoon, while the bright sun gave brilliance to the Painted Desert miles off in one direction, dark clouds accumulated over the peaks above Flagstaff in the other. How the hardscrabble prehistoric dwellers must have looked back and forth each way, struggling to conceive a theology of adequate power and glory, especially when the sky grew wild over the fifteen visible, black peaks and lightning erupted.

rumble of thunder  
quick gust of chill breeze  
a lizard skitters

Nonetheless, we stopped at another site, and almost reached an "overlook" before the long-building rainstorm struck. Even to me it seemed sacrilege to unfurl an umbrella, though the wind grew frighteningly fierce, scaring us back down to the safety of the one building at the site's entrance.

hiding  
in the park latrine  
rain roof-battering

Later, the storm long gone, we found the little house, where I was to spend the night, via dirt roads through over-grazed scrub-land (how quickly one can learn to regret cattle!), on which, notwithstanding, delightful junipers and pinyon pines survive, and astonishing cactus clusters. Lonely, desolate—but there, such words described attractions.

over the dark rim  
the setting sun burns down:  
a juniper fire

desert night sounds  
I try to hear as if  
I weren't here





## Protective Coloration

On the street where I go for take-out burritos, you can also buy old Wedgewood stoves and Westinghouse fridges, new and used books, old and new clothing, low fat lattés, and assorted recreational drugs. It's what my mother used to call a "colorful" neighborhood. It's there that I went to pick up the main course for a casual dinner with friends.

underside  
of the red canvas awning  
not faded

Heading back to my car with beers, soft drinks, and burritos and chips for a party of six, browsing at sidewalk sales was clearly not on my agenda. But there, just in my path, a homeless man was emptying the contents of his grocery cart onto the pavement, hoping to sell what he could. At first glance, I thought there was nothing here to waylay me. But next thing I knew, I had set my bags on the ground and was sorting through his meager belongings. Just under a pile of wrinkled shirts, I found them—two trays of colorful butterflies pressed under glass. "How much?" I said—then paid him what he asked.

Later, after our dinner guests had gone, I inspected my purchases to see just what I had bought. They were scientific specimens illustrating the principle of mimicry. According to legends printed on the back, in each tray a butterfly distasteful or poisonous to birds was displayed beside an innocuous butterfly which looked so much like its noxious cousin that it was shunned by predators.

in the appliance store doorway  
calling a Maytag box  
home

Next time I went to the burrito shop, I looked for that man to ask how he came to possess these wonderful things. There were several men with grocery carts -- but I couldn't recognize whether the man who'd sold me the butterflies was among them.

city lights  
trying to make out  
the constellations



Ken Jones ✧ Wales

## Autumn Gothick

The night storm howls round the gables, rattles the casements, growls down the chimney, and lashes the windows. Hour by hour we toss and turn.

Only half awake, I venture out into the dawn light. The wind chimes have been silenced and hanged high on an oak. Beside the cottage, Nant Sebon—the Soapy Brook—is foaming off to join the Rheidol as fast as it can go. And the patio presents a shocking sight.

Plastic chairs  
tossed where they fell—  
a nasty incident

Only the table remains unmoved . . .

On the picnic table's marble top  
all winter long  
this smooth round stone

The pond has a ruffled clarity. The stream which feeds it comes roaring out of Coed Simdhe Llwyd – Grey Chimney Wood—at one end, and cascades over the drystone dam at the other. In the middle—

Beneath the troubled surface  
a mounting hoard  
of well-washed acorns

The water laps the lotus throne of the walnut wood  
Buddha and the claws of the pewter Pictish war-dog.

World Honoured One  
a lapful  
of dead leaves

The war-dog has his ears back.

From the pond a flight of steps rises through  
dripping ferns.

Top of the steps a watchman  
tall scrap iron stanchion  
his face a rusty bolt

Up here is a place of moss and many stones. Some  
have attitude, while others are quite humble.

Comes the rain  
and every small half-buried stone  
reflects the light



Jim Kacian ✧ United States

## every thanksgiving

I head north to visit my mother in the town I grew up in. Like the town, she's thin and failing. This will be the last time.

half-way home  
I miss my turn—  
the century oak now gone



Jim Kacian ✧ United States

## a long trip

is promised, and this just the beginning, and i don't  
know where it is exactly i am to go or how i am to get  
there, just that the going is what matters, and i have  
agreed to go, and am going

into my dream  
the gentle rocking  
of the ship



Jim Kacian ✧ United States

## in the heart

of the hubbub “peace officers” from sweden  
switzerland holland & united states walking the mid-  
day heat stopping here to cool on leave from the  
action in kossovo i too cooling after a hike across  
the bridge to the old albanian side of town a bazaar  
with rugs and metals and spitted chickens but no luck  
on the coffee grinder i cover then up to the fortress  
overlooking the vardar where d and i compare notes  
on the cosmopolitan life of skopje which is the best  
balkan solution to date cosmopolitan multicultural  
hospitable but doomed in the near future by internal  
rumblings of nationalism here the smoke of many rises  
commingles beneath the canopy and up alongside the  
building past a poster for the eponymous fyfo who  
aspires to be mayor the smoke haze dims him ever so  
slightly & seems to make him wave . . .

Dusanow bridge—  
a stranger stops to light  
my cigarette



Michael Ketchek ✧ United States

## Lunar Eclipse

My friend Frank and I are driving through a snowstorm on the way to Bare Hill in hope of seeing the total eclipse of the moon. The radio warns us there is a travel advisory, and all unnecessary travel is discouraged. We laugh a bit foolishly at this advice coming over the airwaves.

snowstorm—  
out on this eclipse night  
only lunatics

Bare Hill, a place revered by the Seneca Indians, rises from the shore of Canandaigua Lake into a large broad hill that overlooks the lake and the surrounding country. The sacredness of the hill, the chance that the storm front will move through, along with more than our fair share of dumb luck are what Frank and I are counting on in our quest to see the eclipse.

driving by faith . . .  
from the farmer's windblown field  
blinding snow

Because of the storm we are running late and are ten minutes from Bare Hill at the time the eclipse is beginning, but it is still snowing so we don't feel as if



we are missing anything. We notice that the snow is no longer falling heavily and we take this as an omen that it might clear altogether later that night and some of the eclipse will be visible to us. Suddenly Frank who is driving points at the windshield. "Look."

A glowing orb  
mysterious behind clouds  
missing a sliver

Both of us are stunned to see the eclipse through the now gently falling snow. After an hour and a half of tense driving we slap each other five and exult in our good fortune. A few minutes later we are driving up the side road that leads to the Bare Hill parking area, pleased that it is plowed all the way to the top, something that does not happen every winter. We jump out of the car into bitter cold. Clouds rush past, covering then uncovering, stringing wispy trails swiftly across the eclipsing moon.

the wild wind  
carries our howls  
to the moon

Even though it is cold (checking a wind-chill chart the next day I estimate that it felt like thirty below) we are exuberant. Frank has taken a drum from his car and is beating a primal rhythm. Wearing a parka and hiking boots I am dancing in the snow-reflected moonlight that waxes and wanes according to the wind-driven clouds.

Then it happens the last bit of silver crescent

is gone and magically moments later the sky clears completely. Orion the Hunter and hundreds of other stars shine brightly in the clear winter sky. The moon glows dimply orange like a pumpkin, or rather like a lit but uncarved jack-o-lanterns.

In the car there is a thermos of hot ginger tea and a bottle of scotch. We pour ourselves a cup of tea and pass the bottle back and forth several times. Then we walk a couple hundred yards to the edge of the nature preserve where a mutual friend has a tiny cabin.

the wood so cold  
in the cast iron stove  
before it's lit

Forty minutes later we are barely getting warm when we leave the shelter of the cabin for the blustery wilderness of Bare Hill and the rebirth of the moon. That is not how we think of it as we walk out into the cold, but it is how we will think of it in a few minutes, and any time after that. We stand in the biting wind gazing at the orange ball in the sky. The lower left edge is getting lighter. It even seems to bulge a little.

bursting out  
of itself, a silver  
speck of moon

Frank and I are both awed by the sight. It is wondrous in an indecipherable way. All the science of converging orbits and celestial shadows is lost in the moment. There is just this outpouring of joy at the reappearance of some of the moon in its bright form.

glowing silver  
starts to creep across  
the orange disk

It is powerfully cold and we start walking to keep warm. We finally stop when we come to a stand of pines that offers shelter from the wind. We find a spot where the pines are spaced a bit farther apart and through a gap in the branches view the moon as it slowly becomes full once more. Then we hurry back to the cabin cold, but feeling as if we have been blessed by being able to witness this extraordinary event. We feel fulfilled in ways we don't understand, nor do we try to, happy just to somehow have been part of this cosmic occasion.

warming my feet  
by the stove, glancing  
again out the window



Michelle V. Lohnes ✧ Marco Fraticelli

## Two Swans: A Septenga

rubble lining the pond  
two swans  
share soggy bread

*the taste of coffee  
in her kiss*

tossed kitchen scraps  
the compost pile growing  
black eyed susans

*geese  
gathering dried weeds*

off to work  
colours of autumn  
stuck on the windshield

*that red tree  
outside the tennis court*

late November  
and still white blossoms  
in the flower box



## A Visit to the Mall

The air is crisp this spring at the mall. The stores are not open yet. The French bakery is the only place doing business this early. With *café au lait* and *baguette* I sit outdoors in the early morning sun. I'm waiting to see a friend of many years. This is her favorite mall and she visits it almost daily. She's schizophrenic. Her illness makes her refuse all medical help and intervention is against the law in California, so she remains untreated. I wait several hours. Just when I am about to give up, she suddenly appears. I notice dark circles under her eyes and her blouse and pants are dirty, but neat. The people around us stare. She recognizes me. She stops a few yards from my table. "Hello, are you visiting?" she asks. "Yes, I came to see you. Can I buy you a cup of coffee?" "Sure," she smiles. "I'll be right back." She walks on and is swallowed up by the crowd of shoppers.

looking over my shoulder  
my seat already taken  
by another woman



Gary Steinberg ✧ United States

## Haibun

I draw back the shades to reveal the mountain across the valley. The peak just begins to show a trace of redness. The sky to the west still contains stars dotting the fading blackness. I drain the remaining drops from a cup of green tea, and place it carefully on the window ledge.

daybreak  
all at once the absence  
of stars

Turning from the window I take two steps towards my cushion. With the first step comes excitement and with the second fear and the narrative question: “Why exactly do I do this?” I sit for morning practice. Same time, same place, same practice. Yet somehow, like the sky, it is different every morning. I set the timer for an hour, draw my legs into their best facsimile of a half-lotus and straighten my back. Too straight as usual, overcompensating for poor posture. Pressing the start button I sight as my eyes shut to the darkness of the room. I know that I’m in for a show this morning.

sunrise  
as the bell fades  
thought resonates

In the darkness, investigating the facets that make up my self-concept: possessions, job, social status, friends, children and relationships. This body, these emotions, and the thoughts that flit in and out of awareness. All that we take ourselves to be are dependent upon conditions. By their very nature these conditions are everchanging and so intertwined that they are unfathomable. I walk the razor's edge between contemplation and unrestrained thought as mind is again and again drawn towards the crescendo of this practice.

spring morning—  
the curve of her back  
in a distant bed

What will be? Of all the mind and body phenomena rising into the moment, this thought bullies itself to the forefront. Again and again I relax against it only to find mind suddenly and aggressively attack it. A vicious dog choking itself on the stout chain that fetters it. To confuse me, it changes forms. How-when-why? Swiftly and precisely it becomes why not? Different outfits on the same mannequin. Suddenly, it becomes obvious that there is no answer, except the one that rings of a yielding and patient unfolding. It is miraculous that after such a wise observation the very next thought is inevitably, "What will be?" I look for a way to reconcile my hopes and desires with patient unfolding only to find myself lost, deep in thought again.

early morning  
a dog barking  
at the wind

The timer beeps. Opening my eyes to the room I find it has brightened. Daybreak has become dawn and is fast becoming day. The neighborhood begins to fill with sounds of people setting into the state of motion that carries them through their days. Car doors slam. Engines turn over. The squeal of tires as someone drives off reveals that even at this early hour people are already late for something.

I bow, pressing my head to the floor. It is not the dirt beneath the giant ficus, but the intention remains the same. I feel my heart loosen as I ring the bell. As it resonates I untangle my legs and begin the motions that will take me through this day. I too am late.

the chatter of sparrows —  
what will be will be, and yet  
I hope





John Stevenson ✧ United States

## opportunity

Alzheimer's—  
the word is . . .  
kettle

We've been down this road with her sister and I saw how mom always tried to fill in the blanks or to correct her with she said something that made no sense. I vowed to myself I wouldn't do that because I could see it did no good and only made my aunt feel more ashamed. It's been easy enough to keep this vow with Aunt Marian but mom is different.

This morning we were looking at pictures on the sideboard when we came to my father's. "He died," she said. "I don't believe you knew him."

Dad died when I was twenty-four, so I was taken by surprise and thus missed an opportunity. Just afterward I realized I could've simply asked, "What was he like?"

Alzheimer's—  
I remind her  
of her son



**essays**





## The Conscious Eye: Divorce

I am indebted to Tom Painting for suggesting divorce as a theme for this column, and equally to Charles Trumbull for providing an abundance of material culled from his every-expanding haiku database. Ironically, though all the signs were there, I had no expectation that when I sat down to write this piece I would find myself in the midst of separating from my wife of ten years. The timing of this has added for me an extra significance to many of the poems I have been considering for discussion.

In the process it has been impressed on me just how much strong work there is to be found on this topic. Somewhat ruefully I concluded that this is really not at all surprising. The ending of a significant relationship tends to generate a complex array of feelings, such as anger, disappointment, and grief, typically followed by loneliness or emptiness (not unmixed with intimations of freedom and renewal). These stages are often indelibly linked with particular moments and places and actions.

Profound feelings associated with specific events and images? This sounds like an excellent prescription for haiku composition—and so it proves to be. As a place to start we could hardly do better than to re-examine Alexis Rotella's archetypal

Discussing divorce  
he strokes  
the lace tablecloth<sup>1</sup>

It would surely be unfair to say that this has inspired many imitations. It is more likely that numerous poets have been impelled to record their experience of that conversation—the one in which the unthinkable is not only thought, but put into words. Here are two more examples, by Fred Donovan and George Swede:

discussing divorce—  
my onion chipping  
quickens<sup>2</sup>

calmly talking divorce  
underfoot the crackle  
of fallen leaves<sup>3</sup>

Both of these are evocative enough, yet remain essentially one-dimensional. By comparison, Rotella's poem feels multi-layered and correspondingly more interesting. (We should note in passing that it may or may not refer to the poet's own relationship.) The word "strokes," while conveying something akin to embarrassment or placation, serves also as a reminder of past tenderness, of intimacy lost. Meanwhile the lace tablecloth suggests family ties—if not an heirloom, then something fine that must soon be reckoned among the possessions to be divided. It's easy to see why this poem has been so often republished and anthologized.

Of course there are always antecedents, whether months or years in advance of the pivotal conversation: small cracks in the edifice of marriage.

Divorce? she echoes  
I'm not thinking of it.  
Thinking of it<sup>4</sup>

This is Ruth Yarrow, giving us a scrap of dialogue (between the couple, between women friends?—it works either way) that poses the larger questions: where does the heretical idea come from? Precisely when does the unthinkable become thinkable?

Among the more painful of circumstances must be the case where one partner has already decided on breaking up while the other still has no inkling of this. Jeff Witkin has expressed this predicament with great poignancy in his

perennials  
for my wife of thirty years  
... not knowing it's over<sup>5</sup>

This appears as the second poem in a collection that chronicles the poet's experience of divorce from first intimations through to the beginnings of acceptance and healing. The above is closely followed by a poem that confirms the partners' disparate viewpoints:

cold november night—  
she adds another  
reason for divorce<sup>6</sup>

I admire the finely-judged misdirection provided by the second line. The phrase "she adds another" would so often be the prelude to something nurturing ("log to the fire," "dish to the table"). The reader's expectation being nudged in that direction helps to deepen the

chill of the last line.

It is obvious that in these few pages I have been able to do no more than introduce this far-reaching topic, one that touches so many lives. I now envisage a series of articles, aiming to encompass successive stages: the process and aftermath of separation, the pangs of child custody, the role of ex-partners and the forming of new relationships. I hope that some readers will send their own best work relating to any of these aspects, or alternatively recommend any noteworthy haiku they may have read.

To conclude with a forward glance, this poem by Jane Reichhold would appear to be located in the very thick of a difficult break-up:

Mother's Day  
the daughter's call  
about her divorce<sup>7</sup>

The suggestion here, as I read it, is that the daughter is so preoccupied with her own drama that she has overlooked the fact that the day is Mother's Day. Our personal crises tend to drive out the attention and consideration we might usually have for those around us. The poet has achieved a fine balance between humor and compassion, and seems to be saying: this too is human.

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1. *Frogpond* VI:3; 2. *pocket change* (Winchester VA: Red Moon Press for the towpath haiku society 2000); 3. *Almost Unseen: The Selected Haiku of George Swede* (Decatur IL: Brooks Books 2000); 4. *Wind Chimes* 8; 5. *Beyond Where the Snow Falls* (Enfield CT: Tiny Poems Press 1997); 6. *ibid.*; 7. *A Dictionary of Haiku* (Gualala CA: AHA Books 1992)



Kaj Falkman ✧ Sweden

## The Mechanics of Haiku

*bigurashi ya kyu-ni akaruki umi no kata*

is a haiku by Issa with R. H. Blyth translates

The lake  
Is bright over there suddenly:  
A *bigurashi* sings.

The *bigurashi* is a kind of cicada and in the original poem, as you can see, it opens the poem. This English version of mine shows the correct order of the images:

A cicada!  
Suddenly it grows light  
over the lake.

When the poet hears the song of the cicada, the light over the lake changes, growing brighter. The *sound* seems to affect the light.

In Blyth's version the air suddenly grows lighter over the lake, after which comes a possible explanation: a *bigurashi* is singing. This retrospective explanation is so unclear that readers have to recall the lake before they can alter the first image—the image which portrayed the increasing light objectively rather than subjectively.



In the Japanese poem we hear a sound and brightness suddenly spreads over the lake; it is like a *fan* opening up before our eyes. But in Blyth's version the landscape is actually diminished by the arrival of the cicada.

*kono michi ya yuko hito nashi ni aki no kure*

This is a famous haiku by Bashō and Blyth makes of it

An autumn eve;  
Along this road  
Goes no one.

The mood of desolation and loneliness is apparent already in the first line. The second and third lines reinforce this mood. Where is the surprise, where is the extension of the theme?

The Japanese original, on the other hand, starts with the image of the road. The road may lead anywhere, to fortune or disaster or to neither, in mood it is more or less neutral. It provides a strong "earth line" which stimulates curiosity and the imagination: where does this road go? Who or what is on it?

The second line provides an answer: there's no one on it. The road becomes empty and desolate.

In the third line the mood darkens into an *autumn evening*. At the same time the road disappears into the trees, swallowed up in the landscape and becoming part of the cosmic cycle of the seasons. Similarly, the mood of human desolation dissolves too; the figure who must be on the road to see that it is empty (poet, reader) also becomes part of the eternal cycle. A picture of universal meaning emerges:

Along this road  
goes no one.  
Autumn eve.

This poem could also be interpreted more pessimistically: we are all of us alone on the path through life which leads inevitably to death (autumn eve). But even in this interpretation the view is cosmic, which is not in Blyth's version, where the opening image of the autumn evening is never transformed or enhanced with greater symbolic value. In his version the autumn evening remains just an autumn evening.

A few pages later on in his *A History of Haiku*, Blyth makes another attempt:

No-one  
Walks this road;  
Autumn evening.

But even this translation is not particularly happy. The opening fails to provide an "earth line"; the inner eye or mind can find no fixed point in *No-one*. In the second line, *no one* acquires a meaning as it is linked to *walks*, but this means that *walks* assumes too great an importance at the expense of *this road*. No one walks this road; perhaps they always go along it on horseback or in a carriage?

Rather surprisingly, Blyth gives us a third translation in the same volume:

Along this autumn road  
Goes no one,  
This autumn eve.

This version comes closer to the original, but by calling the road an *autumn road* the later effect of *autumn eve* is diminished.

Let us close this series of discussions by looking at Bashō's other famous "autumn evening" haiku, with Blyth's translation:

*kare-eda ni karasu no tamomari ken aki no kure*

Autumn evening;  
A crow perched  
On a withered branch.

The first line sets a mood, but the scene lacks precision. In the second and third lines this mood is clarified and the eeriness and transitoriness of an autumn evening are brought into play. We feel the crow, damp, dark. However, true haiku never closes on such a dark and hopeless note. Even in its most melancholy mood we are always left with a glimmer of light, the possibility of a new opening. And so it is in the original version of Bashō's poem:

On a withered branch  
a crow has landed.  
Autumn evening.

Line 1 fills us with the mood of autumn, using concrete detail. In line 2, while the emphasis shifts from the withered state of the branch to the living crow, the mood is reinforced by a symbol of transience and death. Landing (*tomari* implies a dynamic interplay between the silhouettes of branch and crow which is not caught so well in Blyth's *perched*).

The final image, autumn evening, is at once concentrated and tensing, but at the same time expansive. We are invited to look beyond the crow on its withered branch and to see whatever else is in our imagination—an autumnal landscape, darkening, perhaps cloudy, sky? Though the forbidding crow and branch remain as points on the earth line, our senses draw away into a landscape where there is still a possibility of light.



Caroline Gourlay ✧ United Kingdom

## Some Thoughts on the Writing of Haiku

In considering my response to the question do I write haiku in the same way as I write longer poems I thought it a good moment to ask myself whether or not I believe haiku to be a form of poetry. As regards most aspects of the writing and interpretation of haiku there are varying opinions on this. In *Traces of Dreams* Haruo Shirane persuades us that Bashō saw himself in the context of the Chinese and Japanese literary tradition and therefore must have thought of haiku as poetry and himself as a poet. R. H. Blyth on the other hand maintained that a haiku was not a poem: ‘Haiku . . . has little or nothing to do with poetry, so called, Zen, or anything else.’ (*Haiku*: Vol. 1, *Easter Culture*). He goes on to say what he does think haiku is: ‘. . . A way of living, a certain tenderness and smallness of mind that avoids the magnificent . . .’

None of this to my mind rules out haiku as poetry and in fact I do believe it to be a form of poetry, for if a haiku is not a poem what is it? It certainly isn’t an epigram, a statement or an aphorism. Neither is brevity a barrier to its claim to be poetry—several poems that find their way into collections and anthologies are no more than two or three lines long. That said it would seem that there are comparatively few people who approach the writing of haiku and

the writing of longer poems with the same degree of interest or seriousness. Many haiku poets, to ring the changes and give themselves a break, will occasionally try themselves out on a longer poem, but probably most don't bring to it the same level of effort and commitment as they would to writing a haiku, or try to get it published. Likewise we know that some mainstream poets make it their practice to limber up with haiku in order to get themselves going on what they regard as 'proper poetry'—for them it is a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

So what, if any, is the difference between the method employed in constructing a haiku and that brought to bear in writing a longer poem? It is self-evident that longer poems are in a position to give themselves more time to achieve their ends than can the much shorter haiku. Each form requires a different discipline, a different approach. The most successful haiku are those achieved by juxtaposing images to condense the poem into the most economic and apt arrangement of words possible. As every writer knows for a haiku to be effective it has to pack its punch in very few syllables. There is no time for the communication of an idea or experience to unfold at a leisurely pace; the haiku has to be right here, now, instantaneous, fleeting, eternally present – indeed it must demonstrate the only reality which is the present. Three of the best examples of such haiku come to mind:

Medical reprieve  
wandering the streets  
empty handed    (*Ken Jones*)

breakfast in silence  
both halves of the grapefruit  
unsweetened    (*David Cobb*)

custody battle  
a bodyguard lifts the child  
to see the snow    (*Dee Evetts*)

Each captures a moment of interaction (in the case of Ken Jones's with himself) and each by means of economy of language and skillfully juxtaposed images demonstrates the complexity of human nature. Why would a medical reprieve leave one 'empty handed'? Surely the opposite should be the case, yet one immediately feels the truth of this haiku, recognizing that the writer has managed to reach the reader at a level deeper than rational thought.

Haiku point to the here and now, whether they deal with incidents relating to the natural world, human nature or successfully link the two. They result from those comparatively rare moments of awareness when we are able to let go of rational thinking and allow a deeper understanding to take over; when this happens their practice, as R. H. Blyth suggests, expresses, if not a way of life, a way of seeing. The fact that most of us achieve this ideal of fully engaging with the moment only rarely is no reason not to practice writing on a daily basis. There are techniques that can be employed, exercises that we can do to help make language work for us and such practices apply whether we are concentrating on haiku or on longer forms of poetry. Waiting for 'inspiration' means that the Muse will come less and less often. Writing is a craft and

should be engaged with as such – only when the tools of the trade are kept in good working order are we properly prepared for those welcome times when the Muse does decide to pay us a visit.

Winston Churchill once said that he needed more time and concentrated energy to write a short speech than he did to write a long one. Equally I think it is true to say that the writing of a haiku demands a higher degree of attention and accuracy than is necessary for the creating of a longer poem. Not only should every syllable be the right one, but it should be the only one and maybe the reason that I find I cannot write a long poem at the same time as I am concentrating on haiku is because the mind-set required for each is entirely different. When I focus on the latter I build up a kind of ‘haiku mind’ (or ‘haiku no-mind’); I begin to form the habit of living more intensely in the present and of seeing the ‘ordinary’ as extra-ordinary.

Not that working on a longer poem is necessarily easier than writing haiku; on the contrary, it can demand every bit as much stamina and perhaps in a certain way more considered care. For instance there is a danger when writing a longer poem that over time the original idea, the initial impetus, will be lost sight of, whereas the construction of a haiku happens so quickly that the mind more easily retains its freshness. As well, in many cases the writing of longer poems requires a comprehensive knowledge of the subject about which one is writing. Norman McCaig could not have written with such authority and so satisfyingly about the countryside if he had not had a very real understanding and appreciation of the natural world



around him; likewise Derek Walcott could not have written *Omeros* had he not immersed himself in the Greek myths. No haiku writer needs such specialised knowledge; he only needs to trust in his ability to see, to recognise what the moment has to offer and record it faithfully.

Yet one can be more relaxed when writing a longer poem; it allows more flexibility, gives one greater leeway than a haiku does, for the making of it will probably stretch over a period of days or weeks, even years. One can first encounter it in the past, one's own or the poem's, accompany it through the present and follow it into the future. There is a sense in which a poem is never finished. It can stretch and yawn, venture up alleyways, only to be brought back and re-directed if a particular foray proves unsatisfactory and a new one presents itself. Nudged by a phrase or image that takes root and persists in the imagination a poet can begin a poem without necessarily knowing how the poem will end or even which aspect of that writer's experience or vision it will finally represent. He/she can abandon it and come back to it and as long as it remains creatively alive in the consciousness it will eventually flower. These kinds of liberties can never be taken with a haiku. If the writer doesn't succeed in grabbing it the instant it presents itself the moment will be gone, vanishing like a lizard that leaves only its tail in his hand.

Another significant difference between that writing of haiku and mainstream poetry is in the use of metaphor, simile and anthropomorphism and aphorism. There is insufficient space here to deal more

than superficially with this topic, but suffice it to say I feel that there is sometimes more of an overlap in these areas than is commonly supposed. The writing of all poetry, haiku or otherwise, depends on using words that are appropriate in the given situation rather than in the keeping or breaking of rules. However anthropomorphism, because it is essentially misleading, weakens not only haiku but all poetry and should be treated with great caution. Neither has aphorism (which can be appropriate in other forms of poetry) any place in haiku since it tells rather than points, working through the intellect rather than the senses. Simile, also often effective in longer forms, rarely seems to work in here, lessening tension and taking up too many valuable syllables.

But metaphor is a little different and surely has an important role to play in all poetry; it is a powerful tool in the hands of a good writer, creating often subtle layers of connected meaning. It is not always helpful in haiku and used crudely can imprison and constrict the poem. Undoubtedly the kind of extravagant, idiosyncratic metaphors found in many of the poems of Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton for instance, while perfectly appropriate in their context would distort and overpower such a short form. Yet used sparingly looser, less personal metaphor can enhance a haiku, add texture while still allowing the poem to breathe:

writing at my desk  
I look out towards the sea—  
words slip their moorings    (*Caroline Gourlay*)

Another way in which the writing of haiku and longer poems share common ground is in the extraordinarily difficult area of needing to say exactly what we mean; or perhaps, to put it more accurately, of knowing what it is we want to say. So often we think we are clear about an idea until we take a piece of paper and pick up a pen. Then somehow the words elude us, not always and only because we cannot find the right ones, but because we haven't really understood or identified what it is we want to communicate. What we thought was clear in our minds turns out to be phantasmagorical, an intimation only and hunting down what lies behind this vague yet pressing reality takes a surprising amount of concentrated energy. It is at this point that things can go wrong, for it is much easier to let the mind slide over that initial impulse, that whatever-it-was that first caught our attention and search for something more accessible than persist in trying to pinpoint it. But although whatever our lazy minds light on as a substitute for what we really wanted to say might appear to offer an answer, it will inevitably fall short. Unwillingness to dig deep and unearth what it is we are really looking for and instead take the easy option leads to derivative, cliché-ridden writing that dooms any would-be poet. The difference between a truly original poem and a second-rate one depends on the integrity of the writer. The best poets have the tenacity, the ability and patience to be true to themselves and this applies universally to the creating of haiku or longer poems, a painting, sculpture or any other artistic endeavour.

Harold Henderson famously said: Haiku is more akin to silence than to words. We know what he means and this statement sums up for me the main difference between haiku and mainstream poetry. Because in a sense haiku is more akin to silence than to words does not mean it is not a valid form of poetry, but it does mean that in some essential way it is different from other forms. As I have said it is because I recognise the ‘otherness’ of haiku that when preparing to write it I wear a different hat than the one I would choose for working on a longer poem. Perhaps this difference is also felt by other poets, even if they are not altogether consciously aware of it, and accounts for the fact that most choose to write either haiku or longer poems but not both.

It remains to be seen in which direction haiku will be taken in the future. If the view that haiku is evolving . . . into a new genre of short poetry that enables each individual to express something important in a few words (Ban’ya Natsuishi) supersedes the view of haiku based on the traditional origins of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Japanese poem created and introduced by Bashō—those encompassed in the thirteen states of mind considered necessary for the writing of it—then it is almost certain that haiku will become indistinguishable from other forms of poetry. Its brevity, however, will never be in question. More important than having something ‘important’ to say is having the ability to say it effectively. With so few syllables available in which to do so, this will always challenge the haiku poet in a unique way.



## Issa & Buddhism<sup>1</sup>

Historically speaking, the first Buddha became such through an act of meditation.

Siddhartha Gautama sat himself down under that fig tree, locked his legs firmly together in a lotus position, and waited. He vowed not to budge from the spot till he attained Supreme Enlightenment. He kept this vow. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., in a place in ancient India shaded by what would later be called the Bodhi Tree, the Tree of Wisdom, the man Siddhartha woke up, and Buddha was born.

What he experienced on that day under that tree cannot be expressed or explained in words, according to Nancy Wilson, author of *Buddhism: A Way of Life and Thought* (14). However, she does her best to describe the experience:

As a term, enlightenment signifies a direct, dynamic spiritual experience brought about, in the Buddhist view, through the faculty of intuition, a faculty developed and sharpened by such spiritual disciplines as intensive meditation and contemplation. It is a condition beyond the power and pull of “the opposites,” a full realization of the universe and the self as one. (15)

Unlike other figures in world religions, Wilson notes, the Buddha’s enlightenment did not involve divine

intervention. For Gautama Buddha, Nirvana “lay in the here-and-now [. . .] not in some remote realm or celestial state far beyond one's present existence” (16).

Seeking to duplicate his experience under the Bodhi Tree, the Buddha's followers, especially those of the Zen school, adopted sitting meditation as a central practice. In sitting Zen, one keeps perfectly still, open to that which is, intuiting connection and oneness where ordinary eyes see division and separateness. The first master of haiku, Matsuo Bashō, studied Zen and imbued his own art with the sensibilities of that sect. Thanks to Bashō, the one-breath poetry of haiku came to demand of its most serious practitioners the same attitude of Gautama Buddha under the Wisdom Tree, one of openness, receptivity, and non-intellectual, intuitive insight. A frog leaps into an old pond, and the poet, attentive to the here-and-now, focuses attention on the simple, wondrous “sound of water,” *mizu no oto*. With words he intimates connections that lie beyond words; through language he arrives at pregnant silence.

Issa did not belong to the Zen sect, nor is there evidence that he studied Zen or practiced sitting meditation. However, the particular school where he received his haiku training claimed the legacy of Bashō, and sought to emulate him—and so Issa learned to practice and portray a Zen openness to the here-and-now:

*daibutsu no hana kara detaru tsubame kana* (1.141)

from the great bronze  
Buddha's nose  
a swallow!<sup>2</sup>

The haiku ends with *kana*, a particle of emphasis in traditional haiku. Following nouns<sup>3</sup> *kana* has the literal effect of “Ah! Imagine that!” In the present case, the immense statue sneezes out life as a swallow darts from its cavernous nostril, or, as Bob Jones envisions the moment, a whole flock of them “pour forth” (49). Either way, Issa gasps with delight.

In haiku after haiku, this pattern of quiet observance followed by stunning revelation is repeated, and so Issa’s poetic method recapitulates the sitting and awakening of Buddha under the Bodhi Tree. Though he makes no claim or even suggests that nirvana waits at the end of his one-breath poems, Issa typically concludes them with insights into the marvel of the ordinary that are much in keeping with the spirit of Buddhist awakening. After which, he trails off into silence, leaving the reader to savor the experience.

*yūzen to shite yama wo miru kawazu kana* (1.159)

serene and still  
mountain viewing  
frog

This haiku appears in *Hachiban nikki* (“Eighth Diary”) in 1813, without prescript, but Issa recopies it six years later in *Oraga haru* (“My Spring”) with a prose preface: “In the summer evening, spreading my straw mat, I call ‘Lucky! Lucky!’ and soon he comes crawling out from his hiding place in the thicket, enjoying the evening cool just like a person” (6.143). The editors of Issa’s collected works explain that “Lucky” (*fuku*) is a pet name for toads (6.169 note 114). On its surface the

haiku is comic. Someone is sitting “serene and still,” looking at a mountain or mountains, but in the end, the moment of insight and surprise, this someone turns out to be a critter: *kawazu kana*, a frog—imagine that! Yet deeper than its humor, the poem and its prescript reveal the oneness of Lucky and Issa. Both enjoy the cool evening air, both gaze at the mountains, and both do so with an attitude of sublime tranquility. Issa describes their common state with the word *yūzen*: *yū*, “boundless calm,” and *zen*, “resembling.” Frog and poet sit in profound meditation. Lucky the Frog, like Issa, is a Buddhist.

The particle *keri* does for verbs what *kana* does for nouns, providing a final emphasis, in this case for an action rather than a thing, before the aftermath of silence.<sup>4</sup>

*ushi mo mo mo to kiri kara detari keri* (I. 487)

moo, moo, moo  
cows emerge  
from the mist

In his translation of this haiku, Blyth imagines one cow in the scene (I.10-11), but I prefer to visualize several. In either case, the climactic word, the focus of attention and delight, is *detari*, to come forth, to emerge. My translation somewhat rearranges Issa’s ordering of the images: (1) cows mooing, (2) from mist, (3) they emerge! The miracle of cows in their ponderous bodies materializing from the nothingness of autumn mist is so natural, so ordinary, and yet so astounding.



As has been mentioned, Issa was a Pure Land Buddhist, a devout follower of the Jōdoshinshū sect. He concludes his 1819 poetic diary, *Oraga haru* with a description of how trust in the Buddha is a transforming experience:

Rather than the mouth reciting *namu amida butsu* while weaving a net of greed over the fields, behaving like a long-armed spider, robbing people's sight, a transient wild goose passing through the world; one never again shall possess the heart and mind of one who steals water for "my" rice field. One need not constantly strain to raise one's voice, reciting the *nembutsu*—such is not needed, for the Buddha deigns to protect us. Hence, the so-called great peace of spirit [. . . Thy will be done!] (6.156-57)

Issa scorns the *nembutsu* chanters who believe that they are somehow in control of their destinies, that by invoking Amida's name their future rebirth in the Pure Land might be assured. Such people, Issa argues, have not moved beyond covetousness, for their desire for personal salvation is as insidious and as spiritually damaging as the greed of a farmer who steals water from a neighbor's field. Those who think to save themselves by chanting the *nembutsu* are as avaricious, Issa claims, as long-armed spiders. In short, they are thieves, since having "long arms" is a Japanese euphemism for kleptomania. They seek to steal that which can only be freely given: the Buddha's salvation. The Pure Land Buddhist cannot "earn" rebirth in the Pure Land any more than a Christian, by personal effort, can earn redemption. No one's arms are that long. In both religious systems, grace is required.

The haiku that follows Issa's salvation treatise poetically expresses the theme of submission:

*tomokaku mo anata makase no toshi no kure* (1.616)

come what may  
trusting in the Buddha  
the year ends

For human beings, according to Issa, a childlike faith in Amida's power is required:

*namu namu to meigetsu ogamu kodomo kana* (1.461)

"Praise 'Mida!"  
in harvest moonlight  
a child prays

Just as the *nembutsu* is a joyous prayer of gratitude for Amida Buddha's grace, poetry becomes a form of prayer for Issa, a celebration of Nature. When he opens his palms to catch the flitting-down flakes of snow, he does so with reverence:

*tenobira e hara-hara yuki no furi ni keri* (1.642)

to my open palms  
snow flitting  
down

Just as one cannot demand salvation or control Amida's grace, Issa approaches Nature with open palms and grateful acceptance. Haiku is his praise-song for blooming flowers, shining moon, fellow creatures, wind, rain, snow, and all wonders of the universe, received, in the moment of poetic insight, as precious and sacred gifts. For Issa, prayer and poetry are one.

When one sits, waits, and watches—like Gautama Buddha under the Bodhi Tree, the universe reveals itself, yielding insight and revelation. Though he was not a contemplative Buddhist, his poetic attitude was shaped by this tradition. The Pure Land Buddhism to which he did subscribe convinced him to surrender all calculating efforts, both in the quest for salvation and for the next poem. With joyful trust, Issa opened himself to the Other Power, and wrote.

*bito shizuku atama nade kerī hikigaeru* (1.355)

a raindrop falls  
he rubs his head  
toad

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#### NOTES

1. This paper was delivered at the Global Haiku Festival hosted by Millikin University, April 16, 2000; it appeared in *Modern Haiku* Vol. 32, No. 1 (Winter-Spring, 2001): 35-40.
2. English translations of the haiku in this essay have been published (2000) on my “Haiku of Kobayashi Issa” website: [www.xula.edu/~dlanoue/issa/](http://www.xula.edu/~dlanoue/issa/)
3. In rare cases, *kana* follows verbs in Issa’s haiku; for example: *yama-garasu orega tsugiki wo warau kana* (1.119):

the mountain crow  
laughs at the branch  
I grafted

Here, *kana* follows *warau* (“laughs”). However, *kana* more typically follows and emphasizes nouns.

4. *Kerī*, I’ve been told, is an archaic past tense verb ending—literally. However, its cadence and effect in oral recitation make it analogous to *kana* in that it highlights and brings poetic emphasis to the action.

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H. F. Noyes ✧ Greece

## The Way of Haiku

Haiku is surely the most elusive form of poetry. Every time one tries to define it, the “rule” is broken in the same week by one of our best haiku poets. But art in all its forms is mysteriously elusive to some degree. Artists are always trying to convey the how of their success, and their explanations are generally of little help to the beginner. What is most vital is that we expose ourselves to the *spirit* of the art form.

The spirit of haiku lies most of all in its simplicity and in its selflessness. Both are a *way* of life requiring real commitment and depth of understanding. The simple, and the plain and ordinary, are quite different. One learns from the Japanese haiku that simplicity is characterized by a feel for the flow of life and the harmony of nature, which translation often fails to find. Here we have one of Shiki’s plainest haiku:

A stream  
flowing through the town  
and the willows along it.

Yet in Japanese, the flow and the euphony are inescapable:

*machi naka o ogawa nagaruru yanaagi kana*

The greatest secret of haiku writing is to listen to the voice of things, to let nature speak for itself. Just listen to the woody, watery, sounds!

Another secret is to allow the haiku moment to choose *you*, rather than, with our near-inescapable duality, trying to choose the moment yourself. The mind is the great interferer. tony suraci, editor of the 1980s magazine *old pond*, called mentality the “only barrier”:

It's always unsubstantial, unalive, unactual, unreal and untrue—it can never substitute for anything alive.

And our thought is not rooted in eternity, as is the fleeting haiku moment. It's fully claimed by time—a stranger to tunelessness.

Our ego is concerned with means to an end. Nothing could be farther removed from the spirit of haiku. The ego-self is only an illusion, in any case, as Buddhism has made very clear. Yes, our individuality is expressed, as in *all* forms of art. But the haiku is in no respect primarily a means of self-expression. The haiku way is a path on which the followers shed the ego just as naturally as a snake sheds its skin or a butterfly emerges freed of its cocoon. We are not intended to live our lives cocooned off from nature and reality, as if the self were a virtual prison. The natural self, the self that is one with all of nature, does not see itself as subject and all else as mere object. Bashō warned us that if you and the object of your observation in the haiku moment have not become one, the feeling you express will be a mere imitation of life.

Let us also consider what is noteworthy, according to the haiku tradition. Let us not make the mistake of trying to say something unusual, something original. Robert Spiess has pointed out that the desire for novelty for novelty's sake is strongly rejected in the haiku tradition. "Originality," he says, "does not mean novelty, but direct contact with things in their original nature. It is the suchness of things that is vital."

In conclusion, I would like to offer my two favorite quotes from Spiess's *Speculations*, as I feel they offer special insight into the spirit of haiku. "In being a momentary interruption of silence," he observes, "haiku actually are affirming the primacy of silence." They emerge from the silence, only to re-enter it a moment later. Eric Amann called haiku the wordless poem because it is as much what is not said and cannot be said—that comes through to the reader, as the actual words the poet has used. My second quote reminds us that haiku are never mere description, never mere reports of what our senses convey. They reflect the inner eye, the inner ear, our feelings "from the bottom of the heart." He says:

Haiku poets write from the heart and only tangentially or peripherally by the mind; for the light of the latter, like that of the moon, only exists because of the light of the heart, the sun.



Robert Spiess ✧ United States

## A Certain Open Secret about Haiku

In being here today the wisdom of Ajahn Chah comes to mind: “Do not speak unless you can improve on silence.” However, as haiku is essentially the briefest of poetry, it comes closest to silence, and perhaps your compassionate nature will allow me to forego for a short while the sanctity of silence.

Preliminary to the main subject, “A Certain Open Secret about Haiku,” I would like to mention that a haiku is not a brief bit of prose, scientific account, journalistic report, intellectual comment, aphorism, epigram or the like. It is a unique mode of poetry with characteristics and attributes that most poems do not have, particularly in the manner in which they are combined in haiku. I shall touch on some of these attributes.

A haiku does not exceed a breath’s length. The reason for this probably stems from the fact that a deeply felt *moment of awareness* of an event-experience can last only this long. During this moment of pure awareness our intellect is in abeyance, and we simply are experiencing the moment in the depth of our psyche. In one of his many books of translations of Japanese haiku, R. H. Blyth wrote: “A haiku is a flash of illumination in which we enter into things.”

The purpose, then, of the haiku poet is to memorialize this moment, which may be one that is recalled from memory, by exteriorizing it through language. This can be accomplished only by a poem that is very brief, and specifically through the genius of the traditional aesthetics that are the foundation of haiku.

Genuine haiku do not express ideas but put forward sensory images that evoke intuition or insight into the suchness or essence of entities. Therefore, they are not cognitive, ratiocinative, analytical, or examples of mere cause and effect. They can be said to be created not from our head but from the body's center of gravity—or from what all traditional Teachings affirm, namely, that the seat of wisdom is not in the head but in the heart. Five thousand years ago a person in Egypt carved hieroglyphs on a slab of stone that translate as: "When the eyes see, the ears hear, and the nose breathes, they report to the heart. It is the heart that brings forth every issue and the tongue that repeats the thoughts of the heart." (This stone is in the British Museum and is known as *Stele Nr. 797*.) Haiku poets will not go astray in holding to the belief among the ancients that the brain is merely the organ for cooling the blood.

Aspects of nature usually are included in haiku. It would not appear that haiku's use of natural objects as its foundation is more or less by happenstance. Rather, some sort of conscious or nonconscious intention is involved, for natural objects are the best means of expression of that which guides humankind toward egoless self-integration and comprehension of one's essential beingness. We are immersed in and



linked with the all-encompassing, natural universe. The accomplished Japanese woman poet, Chiyo, said: “A haiku must be the expression of inner feelings totally devoid of ego.” And Dogen, the 13<sup>th</sup> century founder of Japanese Soto Zen, wrote: “To forget the ego is to be illuminated by all things.” But this does not mean that personal pronouns, such as “I” or “me” are not to be used in haiku, though in Japanese haiku personal pronouns are rare. This stricture against inclusion of the self in haiku just indicates that one’s self when it is a part of haiku generally should be well in the background or almost hidden—much like in those wonderful landscapes of Chinese artists where we must look ever so closely to find a very small human figure rounding a cliff on a narrow path, or perhaps only an indication of a person, as by a bit of the prow of a boat peeping from a growth of reeds.

As most of us live in cities we may believe that we have little opportunity for finding nature. But nature does not have to be “wild nature.” A couple of haiku about nature that a city dweller could come upon:

the city bus stop—  
through the opened door a caw  
of a winter crow

white peony—  
an ant draws its forelegs  
along a feeler

In reference to the things of nature, each entity is wonderful in itself. In haiku it exceedingly seldom needs the trappings of similar, metaphor, personification, anthropomorphism, and never of prettiness or sentimentality.

Bashō, “the spiritual founder of haiku” (R. H. Blyth) and the most eminent of haiku poets, said,

Go to the pine if you want to learn about the pine, or to the bamboo if you want to learn about the bamboo. And in doing so, you must leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself. Otherwise you impose yourself on the object and do not learn. Your poetry issues of its own accord when you and the object have become one, when you have plunged deep enough into the object to see something like a hidden glimmering there. However well phrased your poetry may be, if your feeling is not natural—if the object and yourself are separate—then your poetry is not true poetry but merely your subjective counterfeit.

However, these words do not imply that a haiku is to be simply objectivity, per se, just bare facts, but that the poet’s choice of words, their associative qualities in relation to each other and to the haiku’s entities, their cadence, music, must evoke depth of feeling in the hearer of the haiku. Therefore, haiku do not explain or overtly tell the poet’s feelings; they hint at or suggest. With haiku the part is greater than the whole. As R. H. Blyth puts it: “The whole is the whole, but the half is infinite.” And the perception of that unknown writer of 3<sup>rd</sup> century China is applicable to haiku: “The mind of heaven loves not what is too complete.”

Now for the open secret—in the nine-volume English-language *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* the entry for haiku states in part:

From the point of view of formal technique, the most vital element (after brevity) in the creation of haiku-like expression is the technique of cutting. What this involves

is the introduction of a caesura after either the first or second metrical unit so that the poem is cut into two sections. . . . in English the effect is roughly equivalent to a line break punctuated by a colon, long dash or ellipsis.

Cutting is vital to haiku expression because the cut divides the poem into two parts and forces the reader to relate or reconcile these two parts. This struggle to intuit or grasp the poetic association between the two images represents the heart of haiku complexity.

. . . the successful use of cutting involves three conditions. First, the two sections must be sufficiently distinct and disassociated from each other; i. e. in terms of imaginative distance they must not be too near each other. Second, these sections must be related to each other in a manner that precludes total mystification: i.e. they must not be too far apart. Third, the relationship between the two sections must be two-sided: in other words, the first section must enhance the appreciation of the second, and the second section must enhance the appreciation of the first. The internal comparison must be reciprocal.

Note that the definition says that the two sections must not be too near each other. This rules out cause and effect between the two parts, as cause and effect is about as near to each other as can be achieved. However, cause and effect *within* one of the two parts is acceptable. Also, the word “image” as used. In haiku, “image” does not mean only a visual image, but images presented by all our senses. Often the use of different images by different senses in a haiku makes for a more effective haiku.

What is being described is juxtaposition of entities or parts in a haiku. *Webster's Third New International*

*Dictionary* defines juxtaposition as: “The art or instance of placing two or more objects in a close spatial or ideal relation.” Please note two important aspects of this definition: the word “art” and the phrase “ideal relation.” Haiku is a poem, and a poem is art. And “ideal relation” is important because the juxtaposition of just any objects will not necessarily result in an ideal or genuine haiku. It is interesting that the Japanese word for “juxtaposition” is *toriawase*, literally meaning “putting different things together.”

Why does the juxtaposition of two entities in a haiku make it more evocative and aesthetically appreciated than does one entity, even if it is elaborated upon? Isak Dinesen (Countess Karen von Blixen) has a passage in *Shadows on the Grass* that is very applicable to haiku:

In order to form and make up a Unity, in particular a creative unity, the individual components must needs be of different natures, they should even be in a sense contrasts. Two homogeneous units will never be capable of forming a whole, or their whole at its best will remain barren.

In the book *Matsuo Bashō*, the author, Makoto Ueda, has several passages that refer to Bashō’s use of juxtaposition. One of them refers to the development of Bashō’s haiku style. “Bashō now began to juxtapose disparate objects not so much for the shock effect as to create a specific mood or sensation which could not otherwise be evoked.”

And Bashō is recorded as saying: “Haiku is a matter of juxtaposition. A person who can bring two elements together and do it well is a skillful poet.”

In the *Kodansha* quotation the word “cutting” is used. In Japanese there is the word *kireji*, usually translated as “cutting word” or sometimes as “pause word.” *Kireji* are words or suffixes used in Japanese for various purposes, such as to hint at or to express certain affective states of the poet, or to act in a punctuation-like capacity. As Joan Giroux suggests in her book *The Haiku Form*, “. . . it would seem that English punctuation, with its fine nuances, would adequately substitute for *kireji*. An explanation of the shades of meaning indicated by the semicolon, the colon, the linking dash, the exclamation mark and suspension points reveals their value in haiku.”

The following excerpt from an article on *kireji* would appear to have value for English-language haiku poets. It is from Professor Tsutomu Ogata’s article “Essentials for Writing and Appreciating Haiku.” It appears in his *The Cyclopedia of Interpretation and Appreciation of Haiku* (Obunsha Co.). I thank Ryosuke Suzuki for his translation of this excerpt that he sent me in a letter.

Why did haiku writers start to write verses set apart by means of *kireji*? In order to find an answer, you have to think of the origin of haiku: the beginning part of *renga* (linked verses). In *renga* writings, the beginning part should be deep and great as it is the verse which leads the following part to a world of changes and developments. For that purpose, writers had to find something special since the length of the verse was limited. . . . Thus they invented *kireji*, and by cutting the verse apart they tried to produce a silent interval just after the *kireji*. They sometimes succeeded in making readers sense various feelings out of the space of nonexpression, or the silent interval. It is, in other words, a new way to express various emotions beyond ordinary experience.

Juxtaposition also has been linked to the two poles in an electrical circuit, in that when the positive and negative poles are brought into proximity a spark jumps across the interval. So is it in haiku: when there is effective juxtaposition a spark of intuition can result.

Let us now look at some haiku in which effective juxtaposition enhances our appreciation of them through our felt-depth, insight or intuition of the now-moment of awareness that the authors experienced. The first is by Roberta Stewart:

Evening bells . . .  
shimmer of green tomatoes  
in the padre's garden.

In this haiku several elements simultaneously juxtapose. A harmony results from the tension and interplay between the juxtaposed aspects. There is a compound relation between the bells and tomatoes: one is made by humans, the other is natural; one mineral and the other vegetable. Yet there is a certain similarity to their shape, and also the bells are hard and the tomatoes, being still green, are also relatively hard. In this compound juxtaposition there is a relation or harmony set up between two senses, hearing and sight. The sound of the bells and the shimmer of light reflected from the glossy green tomatoes interplay; they are distinct from each other, yet their effects on us are rather similar. The shimmer is qualitatively the same as the sound of the bells; both have vibrational features that make them akin. Each enhances our appreciation of the other.

There also is juxtaposition or linkage of the first and third lines through the padre (who may or may not be physically present). The padre belongs to both the bells and the garden, to the spiritual and the natural, to nourishment of the soul and nourishment of the body. And just as the greenness of the tomatoes implies later fulfillment, the sound of the bells suggests or invites one to another kind of fulfillment on another plane of beingness.

Of course this interpretation is intellectual, even somewhat analytical; but when one becomes acquainted with haiku the aura, as it were, of haiku affects our psyche without need for such explanations.

Janine Beichman, in her book *Masaoka Shiki*, has this translation of a haiku by Shiki:

old garden—  
she empties a hot-water bottle  
under the moon

Dr. Beichman states:

The overt content of this poem is indeed simple: someone (unspecified, but one might imagine Shiki's mother or sister) is pouring out the water from a hot-water bottle into an old garden lit up by the moon. Yet, there is more to it than that. The poem juxtaposes a conventionally beautiful object (the moon) with a banal, everyday one (an invalid's hot-water bottle) against the background of an old garden . . . Although the two images are opposite in their association . . . they become complementary opposites, each highlighting the other: as the moon reveals the hot-water bottle on a literal level . . . so the hot-water bottle, on a figurative level, sets off the beauty

of the moon by its own banality. Additional associations are possible . . . The moonlight is being reflected in the water poured from the hot-water bottle and the moon and the water are united in a fusion of light and liquidity.

Or again, one may take the hot-water bottle as shorthand for the invalid who used it, that is, Shiki himself, and pursue yet another train of association: the moon will go on after both garden and the invalid are gone. Yet here, as the moon and the water from the bottle are, for a moment, one, so too the invalid, by extension, knows a moment of immortality, of respite, from his own mortality. This, finally, is the meaning of the poem. The tawdry mortality of the hot-water bottle and of the invalid who depends on it is seen for a moment in the light of immortality and beauty.

Here is a haiku by Dan McKinley. It carries the title “Viet Nam War Memorial”:

Not one day, these  
Cherry blossoms in the rain;  
Wet black monument

Let us look at some of its characteristics that make it such a fine haiku. In it there is the juxtaposition of a man-made object of stone that stands in contrast to the natural object of soft cherry blossoms. The monument is black and the cherry petals are white and pink. They are linked by the rain that falls equally on both.

Just as the rain does not let the cherry blossoms flower for their full time, so the monument with its many thousands of names symbolizes the death by war that did not allow these scores of thousands of



human beings to live our more of the years that would have been allotted to them. And as we feel a sense of poignancy at the untimely falling of the petals, we feel deep grief at the loss of so many persons who also fell untimely.

For the final example please permit me to use one of my own haiku which sometimes has been anthologized, but the interpretation of it is by Dr. J. P. Trammell of the Kentucky State University System. In the haiku the word “stringer” is used and refers to a cord that is threaded through the mouth and a gill opening of a fish that has been caught, is lowered into the water and one end is fastened to the pier or side of the boat.

becoming dusk —  
the catfish on the stringer  
swims up and down

The poet summons a response quite beyond the conventional: we *empathize* with a *catfish*. The ominous approach of dusk finds the catfish, often a nocturnal feeder, captive in its own element. Encoding draws it to deeper water, as it “swims up and down,” following a futile, ancient directive quite insufficient for solving its present dilemma. Because of the adroit juxtaposition of logically unrelated images, we empathize with the fish and suffer the constraints of its captivity. Later we may realize that, through empathy and intuition, we affirmed our kinship with all living things compelled toward liberty and life in the ever-present face of restriction and death.

A few words in conclusion: As all entities in the universe are interconnected, as both traditional Buddhism and modern quantum mechanics inform us, poets can incorporate this verity into their haiku. By using juxtaposition they can evoke in their readers and hearers heightened awareness, felt-depth, insight and intuition of aspects of life and the world around them—aspects that may have been overlooked or superficially considered too mundane to be of interest, but which may be marvelously interlinked.

(Presented at the 50th Anniversary convention of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, June 10, 2000, Green Lake Convention Center, Green Lake, Wisconsin.)





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- Blithe Spirit* (ed. Colin Blundell, Longholm, East Bank, Wingland, Sutton Bridge, Spalding, Lincs UK)
- bottle rockets* (ed. Stanford M. Forrester, PO Box 290691, Wethersfield CT 06129 USA)
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- Midwest Poetry Review* Contest 2001
- New Zealand Poetry Society Haiku Contest 2001
- Penumbra* Haiku Contest 2001
- Snapshots* Calendar Haiku Contest 2001 (Snapshot Press)

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**Jim Kacian** (1996) is a co-founder of the World Haiku Association, editor of *Frogpond*, and owner of Red Moon Press.

**Dimitar Anakiev** (2000) is a co-founder of the World Haiku Association, and recipient of the Medal of Franz Kafka in 2001.

**Jan Bostok** (1996), retiring with this issue, has found editing RMA to be one of her most rewarding and enjoyable projects.

**Tom Clausen** (1996) works in a library at Cornell University and lives with his family in the house where he grew up.

**Ellen Compton** (1996) is a freelance writer with a background in visual and theatre arts, and a deep love for the earth.

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Editors may neither nominate nor vote for their own work.

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When the nominating period concludes, all haiku and related works which receive nomination are placed (anonymously) on a roster. The roster is then sent to each of the judges, who votes for those works s/he considers worthy of inclusion. At least 5 votes (of the 10 judges, or 50%—the editor-in-chief does not have a vote at this stage) are necessary for inclusion in the volume. The work of editors must also receive at least 5 votes from the other 9 editors (55%) to merit inclusion.

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