



# the thin curve

The  
Red Moon  
Anthology  
of English-  
Language  
Haiku

Edited by  
Jim Kacian  
& the  
Red Moon  
Editorial  
Staff





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The Red Moon Anthology  
of English-Language Haiku  
1999

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**the thin curve:**

The Red Moon Anthology of  
English-Language Haiku 1999

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## foreword

The health of contemporary haiku culture is perhaps best measured by the success of its most fragile components: its journals and magazines. These important vehicles are, in the main, labors of love, gifts from their editors and publishers, since all of them are laborious to produce and none pays for itself. It is to be expected, then, that there is a regular turnover in this field. Perhaps surprisingly, the trend in the past few years has been that more journals and magazines have started up than have folded. This was again the case in 1999, and on the basis of this it is possible to conclude that interest in noting and sharing haiku is at an unprecedented level in the west, and it is perhaps not too much to say that it promises to long continue in this vein.

This year *Azami* closed its welcoming covers forever due to the death of its founder and editor Ikkoku Santo. *Persimmon* also announced its last issue late in the year. On the plus side, however, *The Heron's Nest* made a very promising debut, as did *Mariposa*, the journal of the Haiku Poets of Northern California, and the long-awaited *Tundra*. Also appearing late in the year, just after the nomination period had closed for 1999, but with promise for 2000, was *Bottle Rockets*; and *Pocket Poems* devoted one of its issues this year completely to haiku. These events, coupled with impressive second seasons from *Acorn* and *Snapshots*, and the continued vigor of the largest haiku magazines, *Modern Haiku* and *Frogpond*, mean that there are more outlets of high standards than ever before for English-language haiku, and therefore more places where poets are pleased to see their work appear and where it will be treated well and rest in good company. All of which speaks most encouragingly for the future. As the level of publication improves, so, too, does *The Red Moon Anthology*. Enjoy!

Jim Kacian  
Editor-in-Chief



**the thin curve**







**haiku**





Dimitar Anakiev ✧ Slovenia

garden work—  
talking to each other  
back to back



Harriet Axelrad ✧ United States

snowflakes glued  
to the kindergarten window—  
no two alike



Annie Bachini ✧ United Kingdom

after the spring clean  
wishing I'd played the music box  
one last time



Jerry Ball ✧ United States

summer morning  
the old dog seems to know  
the length of his leash



Jack Barry ✧ United States

skipping stones  
talking to people  
no longer here



Roberta Beary ✧ United States

my son and i  
counting fireflies  
counting stars



Alex Benedict ✧ United States

night of stars  
the rhythm of my boat  
across the swells



Ernest J. Berry ✧ New Zealand

vanishing point  
the lark song  
beyond it



Peter Brady ✧ United States

trapped  
in the revolving door  
autumn leaves



Randy Brooks ✧ United States

spring afternoon  
I try another combination  
on the shed lock



Yu Chang ✧ United States

pebbled beach  
how carefully she chooses  
her words

a scorpion emerges  
from a pile of chilies  
desert sunset

winter solstice—  
the slow curving of your breast  
into dawn





Margaret Chula ✧ United States

Indian summer  
the ground-fall pear  
warm in my hand



Ellen Compton ✧ United States

call of a night bird—  
illness  
in a foreign bed



Pamela Connor ✧ United States

breaking free  
from the last snow . . .  
earthscent



Helen K. Davie ✧ United States

Solstice night—  
your breath on the embers  
rekindles the flame



Cherie Hunter Day ✧ United States

approaching gale  
the beach grass sweeps circles  
deeper in the dune



Dani DeCaro ✧ United States

thunder—  
my dog follows me  
to the bathroom



Bruce Detrick ✧ United States

spring sale  
a sidewalk rack of coats  
sleeves all waving



Mike Dillon ✧ United States

long distance:  
the screen door slams  
back home



Dennis H. Dutton ✧ United States

Desert waterhold—  
a yellow finch dips its beak  
in the puma track.



Charles Easter ✧ United States

close lightning  
the metallic taste  
in my mouth



Jeanne Emrich ✧ United States

dwindling light –  
I turn peaches  
one by one



Robert Epstein ✧ United States

first spring day  
taking the long way  
to the gas station



Dee Evetts ✧ United States

lighting the woodstove  
he kneels absorbed  
in last year's newspaper



Stanford M. Forrester ✧ United States

blue popsicles—  
the children  
compare tongues



D. Claire Gallagher ✧ United States

Advent altar—  
a candle wick straightens  
with the first flame



Fred Gasser ✧ United States

abandoned shanty  
inside the open door  
more wild roses





Ferris Gilli ✧ United States

floodlight  
encircled by darkness  
the captive moths



joan iversen goswell ✧ United States

soldiers' graves—  
the snappings of so many flags  
in the autumn wind



Robert Gilliland ✧ United States

transplanting the sage—  
a wheelbarrow full of bees  
from backyard to front

dry creekbed—  
the sougning of wind  
in summer weeds

Indian summer  
a co-worker's ivy  
invades my cubicle



Carolyn Hall ✧ United States

icicles drip on the sill  
a pile of bills waiting  
to be paid



Yvonne Hardenbrook ✧ United States

death-day of my son  
a scattering of oak leaves  
in creek ice



Tsunehiko Hoshino ✧ Japan

the noontide heat—  
standing at the bottom  
of a hole I dug



Jen Jensen ✧ United States

estate sale  
a house spider waits  
inside a teacup



Kris Kondo ✧ Japan

let loose  
on a commuter train  
dandelion seeds



Ava Kar ✧ Canada

the funeral home—  
a birdbath  
with no water



Jim Kacian ✧ United States

red light—  
a few seconds' worth  
of robinsong

campfire—  
shadows of men disappear  
into the woods

calm night  
the moon broken  
by the oar



Joann Klontz ✧ United States

on the subway  
settling into  
a stranger's heat



Rob Krevitz ✧ United States

nighthawk  
back and forth between  
the first stars



Rich Krivcher ✧ United States

train whistle—  
river ice crackling  
beneath the trestle



Robert Kusch ✧ United States

not knowing their names  
not wanting to  
. . . a day of tall trees





Lori Laliberte-Carey ✧ United States

digging compost  
worms in the wheelbarrow  
burrow again

the wind  
in the kite's taut line  
shifting sand



Watha Lambert ✧ United States

after lightning  
waiting for thunder—  
a rooster crows



Leatrice Lifshitz ✧ United States

in the bucket  
bait fish  
schooling



Rebecca Lilly ✧ United States

Autumn evening—  
yellow leaves covering  
the plot reserved for me



Michelle V. Lohnes ✧ Canada

angels in the snow  
I measure myself  
against a stranger



Burnell Lippy ✧ United States

the frayed rope  
swings back into the shade—  
country swimming hole

a lure  
reeled through lily pads—  
August afternoon



Matthew Louvière ✧ United States

Summer stillness  
–only a horse tail  
out of the barn



John Martone ✧ United States

this  
angle–  
sun

in  
a  
fern–

pot–  
forest!



Peggy Willis Lyles ✧ United States

spring sunbeam  
the baby's toes  
spread apart

sonic boom  
the peony sheds  
a small black ant

chalk dust  
in the eraser trough  
autumn chill



Paul David Mena ✧ United States

wrong turn  
down a dead-end street  
irises in bloom



Patricia Neubauer ✧ United States

low clouds  
the swallows  
close to earth



A. C. Missias ✧ United States

still this drought—  
the thin curve  
of the young squirrel's tail

park chessboard—  
rain caught  
in the missing squares

winter dawn—  
leaning into  
the mare's warm flank





Matt Morden ✧ United Kingdom

end of the holiday  
a square of pale grass  
beneath the tent

blackberry picking—  
three generations  
in the graveyard



H. F. Noyes ✧ Greece

long after dark  
the fishing boat returns  
carrying moonlight

a breath on my cheek  
fresh from the swooping wings  
of the swallow

Saturday downpour—  
swiveling the stool  
at the soda counter



John Ower ✧ United States

cancer scare  
I've missed  
the summer lilies



Brent Partridge ✧ United States

hoofprints of her fawn  
often precisely centered  
in her own



Tom Painting ✧ United States

muted dawn  
an abandoned hubcap  
holds the rain

beach walk  
the stick I tossed  
yesterday



Alan Pizzarelli ✧ United States

in the schoolyard  
one of the saplings  
has failed to bloom



Chris Pusateri ✧ United States

a note from my wife—  
willow branches rub  
the window sill



Carolyn Rohrig ✧ United States

autumn chill—  
the silence  
of the bee hive



Bruce Ross ✧ United States

autumn day  
a stone half way out  
of the puddle



Timothy Russell ✧ United States

noon  
the egret shifts from stillness  
to stillness



Grant Savage ✧ Canada

along the highway  
flooded fields  
flooded with moonlight



John Stevenson ✧ United States

leaves budding,  
a little girl  
spinning in her dress

my son noticing  
the attention i pay  
to butterflies





R. A. Stefanac ✧ United States

autumn apple  
where the bruise is  
a taste of cider



Brian Tasker ✧ United Kingdom

after an argument  
on the future of haiku—  
the wind in the pines



Tom Tico ✧ United States

empty playground  
under every swing  
a hollow of rain

This hot summer day . . .  
looking for a little give  
in the honeydews



Ando Tomizo ✧ Japan

Station building  
shorter than the train  
–winter begins



J. P. Trammell ✧ United States

Mother's grave –  
a bee seeks nectar  
from the fresh-cut flowers



Charles Trumbull ✧ United States

angy at them too  
for challenging my mood  
crabapple blossoms

dragonflies mating—  
the outboard motor  
coughs into life

late to the office  
my desk already piled high  
with zucchini



Cor van den Heuvel ✧ United States

summer afternoon  
the long fly ball to center field  
takes its time

cold evening rain  
in his window, the tailor  
pulls a long thread taut



vincent tripi ✧ United States

the shell i take  
the shell it takes  
ebb tide



Andrea Vlahakis ✧ United States

redpoll  
in the bare hawthorn—  
Christmas alone



Michael Dylan Welch ✧ United States

lazy afternoon—  
the digital temperature sign  
rises one degree



Paul O. Williams ✧ United States

after the zinnias  
the gardener, too,  
drinks from the hose



Thom Williams ✧ United States

grandmother here  
grandfather there  
under January ice

by their wintry lights  
across the way  
I feel I know them

together tonight  
fingers trace the way  
to Polaris





Ruth Yarrow ✧ United States

evening  
our paddles drip  
into liquid sunset



Edward Zuk ✧ Canada

August sunset—  
the quick red flicker of  
a lizard's tongue





**senryu**





ai li ✧ United Kingdom

chinese painter  
deciding  
on rain



Dimitar Anakiev ✧ Slovenia

chicken pox—  
the embrace of my daughter  
even warmer



Fay Aoyagi ✧ United States

dinner for two  
between our silence  
the oyster shells



Pamela A. Babusci ✧ United States

chiropractor's office –  
the pictures  
hang crooked



Alice Benedict ✧ United States

crowded museum  
everyone also looks at  
the sleeping baby



Cathy Drinkwater Better ✧ United States

scanning the skies  
for converging planets  
I grind the gears



Gregg Billingsley ✧ United Kingdom

tight going-out dress  
delaying  
our plans to go out



Marianne Bluger ✧ Canada

3 a.m.  
the airport conveyor turning  
one battered green valise





Mykel Board ✧ United States

the all-night café  
a teenager sits alone  
smelling his fingers



Robert Boldman ✧ United States

after the funeral  
the closet dark  
with rows of coats



Miriam Borne ✧ United States

the dancer practices  
rising and balancing—  
long checkout lines



John Brandi/Steve Sanfield ✧ United States

Clearing the table  
everything  
except a square of light



Cyril Childs ✧ New Zealand

child's voice—  
the old dog settles  
lower in its box



Tom Clausen ✧ United States

reading her letter—  
suddenly aware of the look  
on my face



Carlos Colón ✧ United States

closing arguments—  
the length of the lawyer's  
skirt

my daughter's eyes  
when I refuse  
the beggar



Ellen Compton ✧ United States

finding the cup  
for a saucer  
I gave away



Carol Dagenhardt ✧ United States

city park  
in the butterfly garden  
discarded syringes



Bruce Detrick ✧ United States

table for one  
the waiter doesn't  
light my candle



Mike Dillon ✧ United States

wooden crucifix  
his build the build  
of the local peasants



John J. Dunphy ✧ United States

first alimony check  
her reclaimed family name  
misspelled



Dennis H. Dutton ✧ United States

health clinic—  
at the staff entrance  
cigarette butts



Dee Evetts ✧ United States

channel dispute  
she aims the clicker  
at me



James Ferris ✧ United States

pumping gas—  
her scent lost  
from my fingers





Michael Fessler ✧ Japan

first tremor . . .  
everyone in English class  
speaking Japanese



Barry George ✧ United States

sweeping the walk  
the barber's  
thin hair



Caroline Gourlay ✧ United Kingdom

all morning  
her hands behind her back  
the new assistant



Yvonne Hardenbrook ✧ United States

“I can’t stay!”  
she takes an hour  
to tell me why



Jackie Hardy ✧ United Kingdom

the first move both of us making it



eric l. houck, jr. ✧ United States

infirmery  
counting the tiles from her room  
to the elevator



Jim Kacian ✧ United States

awaiting confession—  
sitting on my hands  
for warmth

his last exhalation—  
everyone in the room  
draws it in

soothing her hand—  
the rough interference  
of her diamond



Joann Klontz ✧ United States

dad's birthday  
I schedule my call  
for half-time



David Lanoue ✧ United States

the old priest dines  
his wine  
just wine



Jack Lent ✧ United States

carrying a son  
wondering how  
a daughter would feel



Leatrice Lifshitz ✧ United States

right on time  
the train  
with no passengers



Peter Meister ✧ United States

turning on the light—  
examples on the board  
from the last class



Melissa Leaf Nelson ✧ United States

spring cleaning—  
throwing away last year's  
things-to-do list



Pamela Miller Ness ✧ United States

after chemo  
wanting only to read  
seed catalogs



Zane Parks ✧ United States

house guest gone . . .  
I undress for my bath  
on the way





Tom Painting ✧ United States

his death  
added to her litany  
of complaints

lift bridge  
the broken flow  
of tourists



Mauree Pendergrast ✧ United States

years after the divorce  
passing our honeymoon spot—  
vacancy



Patricia Prime ✧ New Zealand

first steps  
he lets go of one hand  
for another



Anthony J. Pupello ✧ United States

unemployment line—  
the middle-aged man  
counts his change

decaf latté—  
turning quickly past  
the war news

optometrist visit  
the receptionist wears  
a see-through blouse



Carolyn Rohrig ✧ United States

newly divorced  
the sucking sounds  
of an emptying bathtub



Philip Rowland ✧ Japan

inside an envelope  
inside an envelope:  
funeral money



Emily Romano ✧ United States

jangling his keys  
the caretaker struts a bit  
before letting us in

new bifocals  
the carpenter swears  
under his breath

using his toes  
to pick up a pencil:  
the new boyfriend



Karen Sohne ✧ United States

second wedding  
her daughter  
wears white



R. A. Stefanac ✧ New Zealand

hangover  
milk detonating  
the rice krispies



John Stevenson ✧ United States

a big check  
my handwriting  
looks childish

nursing home survey:  
for two out of five  
it is spring

Father's Day  
she tells me  
I'm not the father



Neca Stoller ✧ United States

birthday cake  
for this year's candles  
a deeper breath



George Swede ✧ Canada

dating again  
my sister opens the fridge  
then closes it





Brian Tasker ✧ United Kingdom

in the midst  
of my depression—  
the smell of a baked potato



Maurice Tasnier ✧ United Kingdom

his wasted words  
lecturer with  
a crumb on his cheek



Charles Trumbull ✧ United States

closing time—  
zoo animals smaller  
than their shadows



Michael Dylan Welch ✧ United States

my hand on your thigh . . .  
from the window seat  
the curve of the earth



Ruth Yarrow ✧ United States

evening: my yawn  
slips through the bus window  
to a stranger



Laura Young ✧ United States

pressure headache—  
trying not to tailgate  
the highway patrol





**haibun**





## Violation

The wind stings my cheeks and promises snow. Far ahead I see the masonry walls of the old pueblo—still standing without mortar.

“Your car is parked in violation,” a voice summons. “You have to move it.”

I turn to see a car painted *Tribal Police Chief*.

Can I expiate centuries of genocide by sliding between two narrow white lines in a huge parking lot empty except for my car? Never mind that my ancestors were mucking around in European *shtetls* getting their gene pool knocked up by Cossacks, while *his* ancestors were getting fucked over by the U. S. Cavalry.

I bow to his authority and align my car. I place my foot onto his blacktopped Nation, pay my fee at the kiosk and climb the mesa . . .

cliff dwellings:  
500-year-old cookfires  
blacken the ruins



Melissa Dixon ✧ Canada

## the caves of Kanheri: India–1973

Traveling alone in a strange land may be perilous for anyone. But for a woman, at times it can work in her favor. She could, for instance, find herself escorted by kind fellow-countrymen to the hidden heart of that land—where no buses go. They tend to trust her. Does she not speak their language? Is she not reasonably dressed, courteous, interested? Yes. She is company, a friend.

I remember with much gratitude my chance encounter in Bombay with the Taj Mahal Hotel: Tight budget or not, I'm treating myself to a two-day stay. In the elegant lobby, guests from East and West mingle and part; exotic prints, shirts and slacks; a mix of languages. I recognize sounds coming from a young couple studying a map nearby. On their packs the maple leaf identifies them. "Canadian!" "Yes!" we greet each other like long-lost friends. They are university researchers, backed by a grant co-sponsored by Canada and India. My intuition twitches: "So, um . . . what do you do?" "We investigate Buddhist rock-cut cave sites," they say. "In the morning we're driving to Kanheri, a monastic center south of here. It's a couple of thousand years old—they still get a few pilgrims. . . ." I stammer something in reply. They break into grins and look at each other. "Care to come along?" Indeed,



yes! Next day, just past sun-up I'm waiting for them near the hotel entrance. In a rented auto we edge into the early melée of Bombay's downtown streets

cars honking  
cyclists dodging dogs—  
pilgrim's path

Women in multicolored saris calmly crisscross in front of us. Slow going till traffic thins out. With Western reserve we choose a route to avoid the slums, now and then checking the map, watching for signs and landmarks. I hug my knees in the back seat, still astonished at my good fortune. Up front, my companions discuss the chronological dating of the caves. Miles go by; calm monochrome of dried fields, earth, stone. City bound, a rickety bus comes toward us, grinding slowly past—rows of faces dark behind dusty windows. I recall my pilgrimage to the ashram at Ganeshpuri, sitting in the bus on my suitcase in the middle of the aisle. Up ahead on a hilltop a tiny white shrine, most probably Hindu. With palms together as we pass, I salute the Oneness of holy shrines, whatever their origin. More hills and immense rock formations tumbled against the sky. The road lifts, our spirits, too, as we turn left on to a cave site.

The car's motor dies, stops. The three of us clamber out and stare at our surroundings: sparse vegetation; the bearable February sun warming the hillside. Confronting us is a huge smooth stone dome, embedded in arid earth. At intervals around its base, the pale rock is penetrated by dark rectangular doorways.

domed mountain—  
its core chipped away by monks  
seeking inner peace

An abandoned monastery. Under endless skies it offers shelter for a solitary seeker—I decide to stay. After a brief inspection the others depart to search for caves with carvings and inscriptions. Alone, I absorb the nature of this “chaitya,” this holy place, visualizing weary but hopeful monks arriving centuries ago, faithfully willing themselves to see a sanctuary in this bald monolith.

I step inside a doorway. To my surprise, I find a room of considerable size. My eyes adjust to the half-light—yes, a room indeed—walls, ceiling and floor as straight and true as any modern building. But not as smooth, my fingers tell me. Every plane, every corner has been chiseled out, chip by chip, layer by layer. Presumably this is an assembly hall, perhaps thirty feet wide. Ahead, its length appears similar, but from back left a partition stretches to an opening at the right. In its depths, shelves are carefully cut into the walls, suggesting a kitchen behind.

At my knees the dominant feature of the hall extends at each side—a very long, low table thrusting forward, hewn out of the rock floor itself:

somewhere sunlight—  
gleam on the edge'  
of a legless table

I move around the outside of the mountain to another doorway. Inside, the room is narrower, its

darkness deeper and reaching higher above. I wait for a minute. As a faint light grows at the far end, a bulky rounded shape emerges, about five feet in diameter and much the same in height—a sculpted monument, crown-like, with a knobbed spire on top. A slight shiver runs through me: I am standing in a temple where sacred rituals were performed in a far distant past. Before me is a stupa, the traditional memorial to the Buddha. Around it the monks walked their walk, chanting their chants to gain spiritual merit. Drawing near, I am conscious of the worn floor under my bare feet as I follow in their footsteps. In the dim light I can just make out cathedral-like arches over my head, the graceful rock-cut ribs made to resemble timber support beams. The stillness seems heavy, expectant. A familiar chant wells up within me and I speak it aloud: “*Om mani padme hum . . .*”

I am no longer alone—the voices of monks rustle and float like autumn leaves in the vaulted hall—“*Om mani padme hum,*” “*padme hum. . .*” As I chant, they chant with me; as I falter, their voices fade. In the subsequent silence I recall the mention of a possible “whispering gallery”:

ancient arches  
my murmured words  
return . . . return . . .

After a time, I leave the emptiness of the temple, wandering around outside. Other openings lead into shadowy single cells, each one as plain for an abbot as a novice. The wooden doors which once protected the occupants have been long since carted away for firewood. Unexpectedly, at one side of the

great dome the seams of a dried streambed roll by.  
The sun is focusing on a large stone mass on the far  
shore, reflecting into my eyes. It reaches too into the  
nearest cell, revealing—here a narrow recessed closet  
for humble belongings—there, jutting out from the  
wall, what once served as a bed. Climbing onto its  
unyielding surface, I seat myself cross-legged and  
prepare to meditate. Did the monk of compassion who  
slept here last do the same? Did the soft afternoon  
light shine thorough the barred window onto his face?

dried streambed—  
a lone tree survives  
in a niche of rock



## fast food

She has six pairs of arms, like a railway Shiva, but is perhaps more truly an incarnation of Kwannon, the Shinto Goddess of Mercy. Each pair is busily engaged in bringing warmth and sustenance to the cold and weary travellers in Niigata Station.

The first pair collects and sorts by kind the hundreds of chits per hour by which these travellers buy their *soba*, then stacks them when the orders are filled; the second pair boils and drains the several pots of *soba* and *umon* as the orders come in; a third pair chops the seaweed, cabbage and rice dumplings, and places them in the bowls with the steaming noodles; a fourth stirs and ladles the hot broth atop this mixture and hands the bowls to the chilled and grateful diners; a fifth washes the emptied bowls for the next wave of hungry travellers arriving from Akita or Tokyo. She chats amiably with her customers all through this, pushes back with her forearm a few wisps of hair that have come loose from under her peasant's bandanna, smiles with benevolence upon her reviving customers, and sends them on into the chill air a bit readier to meet the night.

busy chef—  
she pours the self-serve water  
for two strangers



## descent

Three hundred miles we have trained today, and arrive in the gloaming at Tazawako. The place we seek lies yet ahead, to the north and into the mountains. The tattooed driver of the local cab has heard of it, and we are relieved. He quotes a price, and we are dismayed. His breathstream plumes white into the cooling air as we converse, agree, and bid him take us there.

The valley road is two lanes wide, straight and smooth all the way to the Pacific Coast. We follow it for several minutes, then turn north onto a narrower road aimed straight at Mt. Iwate. The dusklight has now faded, and no moon has risen. The mountains crowding round are discernible only as a greater blackness against the blackness of the sky. The snow which skirts the road deepens as we rapidly rise.

We turn again, onto a road even more ragged and narrow. We cannot see around the switchbacks the road makes to accommodate this steep climb. The headlights illumine only the wall of snow which now surrounds us. The shapes of the roadside trees, mere shadows hurrying past, are mixed, then become all pine, then disappear altogether. When at last we crest, the road turns to gravel, and we careen down into an unlit valley, snaking along a river whose rush we can hear above the rattle of the cab, but cannot see.

We have grown accustomed to this dimness, but there is nothing out there for our eyes to hold, merely the apparitions of snow and landscape. It is in some other manner, then, that we slowly become aware of a looming presence, the blackness which presides here. As we have plunged down, a mountain has risen up before us, whose dimensions we cannot take in with a single pass: it is the genius of the place. Its arms extend around and behind us; there is no other place to go but into its embrace. The cab, fishtailing in the mud and ruts, slows and finally stops. We remain seated before the presence, silent in the darkness.

Only then, and slowly, do we make out the dim light of kerosene lamps strung out before an ancient building. We have arrived.

into the dark  
of an unknown country—  
beginning to see



Michael Ketchek ✧ United States

## Birthday Haibun

It is nap time at the day care center where I work, and have worked for thirteen years. The children are sleeping on their cots on this pleasant July afternoon. It is my birthday. I am forty-four years old, about fifteen to twenty times older than the children in my care. I am twice as old as my co-teacher. In two years, if we are both alive, I will be half as old as my father.

None of my fellow workers have remembered my birthday, and I have done nothing to remind them. In the quiet I can hear birds chirping through the open window.

gentle wind  
ruffles where my wild hair  
used to be





Michael Ketchek ✧ United States

## Haibun

It's been a long winter of personal grief, problems at work, illness, as well as this old idealist's tendency to take to heart the world's pain, its wars and inhumanity. The coming of spring seems joyless this year.

My wife says take a few days off, go camping. I agree, but lack enthusiasm even for this. Still I throw my gear into the Subaru and kiss my wife and son goodbye.

a hollow sound  
the trunk  
slamming shut

It is early afternoon when I arrive at the trail head in the mountains. Automatically—I've done this countless times before—I arrange my pack. Everything fits into place. I'm thinking more of where I've come from than where I'm going. My hands know—clothes and poncho into the bottom compartment; food, water, cook kit, stove, fuel, tarp into the top compartment; first aid kit, rope into the right side pocket; matches, compass, flashlight, toilet paper, toothbrush into the left side pocket. I check to see that the car is locked, heft the pack onto my back, feel the straps dig into my shoulders and without a glance back walk from the asphalt of the parking lot onto the dirt path leading into the forest.

around the first bend  
old acquaintances greet me  
mosquitoes

Shortly before dusk I reach the camping area next to the pond. It is pure relief, almost joy, just to drop my pack and walk without it by the water.

another from its territory  
minnows swim between reeds

I feel like a stranger in these mountains, or worse, like a relative gone too long, who upon returning doesn't know what to say or what to feel among his kin. I has been years since I last walked this shore, or gazed at Mount Colden across the lake.

mountain and pond  
unchanged—I dip my hands  
into the water

After dinner I notice smoke from another campfire about half way around the lake. I walk to meet my fellow camper. He is alone. He pulls out a flask, and tells me to “pull up a log and have a snort.” I find out he is divorced, two kids, between jobs at the moment.

the warmth  
of shared whiskey—  
another star appears

It is late when we finish talking. I follow the pond back to my campsite. A slim crescent moon rests just above the dark shape of Mount Colden. I stand at the edge of the pond watching the stars shine in the black water. Suddenly I tear off my clothing.

naked as the night  
splash  
into the stars



## Haibun

With grey in his beard and long hair he sits, dressed in biker leather, atop the cab of his pickup truck a few blocks from the Spectrum in Philadelphia, soaking up late afternoon sun, several hours before the Grateful Dead will go on stage. The streets are awash in tie-dyes, people looking for a miracle ticket, vendors selling touch shirts, vegi burritos, roses.

Two teenage boys drinking beer walk by the truck. One of the boys takes a last swig of beer and casually tosses the bottle. It shatters on the sidewalk.

Leather and Beard leans forward on his perch and says “Hey!” just loud enough to stop the boys who turn and gaze up at him. “We don’t do that. Pick it up.”

The boy who dropped the bottle doesn’t argue or hesitate, there was no room for anything but compliance in that simple command, he just stoops down and picks up all that glass.

I doubt that boy ever smashed another bottle. He had been reprimanded, but also included, welcomed, in that “We don’t do that.” If he didn’t know before, he knew now, he was one of us.

another man –  
the circle around the fire  
opens



Jerry Kilbride ✧ United States

## Men of Property

Weekday afternoon and few customers at the Sintra café as I occupied an outdoor table and ordered coffee. At the far end of the terrace sat an attractive older woman with lively dark eyes. She nodded and smiled as we glanced at each other . . . the glancing that one does when seated alone in a restaurant . . . the quick and furtive observations of other occupants. I pulled a book from my jacket and began to read, but again found myself looking in her direction. Another nod . . . another smile . . . this time her eyes held a hint of consternation. Lifting my head a short time later, I saw her speaking to the waiter. The waiter approached from across the terrace. "Excuse me, sir, but would you mind telling me if you are an American; Beatriz Costa would like to know." "Yes, from Chicago." The waiter bowed and returned to the woman's table, where they exchanged a few quick words. The waiter retraced his steps. "Excuse me, sir, but would you be offended if I asked your name?" "Not at all, but please tell me why the lady wants to know?" "SIR" he shot back indignantly! emphatically!—"SHE is a WOMAN we PORTUGUESE love!" A bartender by profession, I had empathy for a waiter caught in a sticky situation which, for me, was gathering elements of intrigue. I gave him my name. He frowned and

repeated it with some difficulty, awkwardly stumbling over the syllables. Walking at a much brisker pace, he went back to confer with the woman, but only for a moment. Back across the terrace, almost running. "Excuse me, sir," he said breathlessly, "but would you mind writing your name?" He offered a pencil and tore a page from his order pad. The woman looked at me apprehensively, as if in supplication, and her lips slowly formed two, possibly three words. I nodded in acknowledgment and very carefully printed my name. The waiter scrutinized my name before going back across the terrace, and, after examining what I had written, the woman folded the page from the order pad and placed it in her purse. Rising slowly, she leaned toward the waiter and gently touched him on the shoulder, and then bowed . . . bowed very graciously in my direction. Below the terrace, a chauffeur helped her into a waiting automobile which was driven down the sloping street and around a curve. The waiter came to my table with an element of almost haughty sense of accomplishment. "Sir, Miss Beatriz Costa requests that you go to the desk of the Tivoli Hotel in Lisbon, where she will leave two complimentary tickets for a film of hers. Beatriz Costa said to say that you have brought back the memory of an American gentleman she was fond of years ago."

tip tray  
smooth profiles  
on old coins

The afternoon visit to Sintra had been a way of killing time. Having a reservation for an overnight

train from Portugal to Spain, I would continue my *wanderjahr* by meeting a friend in front of Madrid's Main Post Office on the following morning; together we would journey to Morocco. After picking up my backpack—left for safekeeping at a Lisbon pension—I stopped at the Tivoli Hotel. Indeed, there was a white envelope holding the promised tickets which, unfortunately, I would be unable to use. In addition, the desk clerk gave me a small poster of an attractive young woman sporting a Clara Bow pageboy haircut—obviously the reproduction of an old photograph. The lively dark eyes were immediately recognizable! *Para a dear Jerry Kilbride, um beijo, da sua grata amiga de Portugal, Beatriz Costa, Lisbonne—77*. On the way to the railroad station, I passed a billboard advertising a film that seemed to be about the Roaring 20s. Again, those huge eyes smiled as they had across a terrace in Sintra . . . *grata amiga de Portugal*. Further down Avenida Liberdade, I noticed a young couple holding hands while strolling in the evening air; the white envelope was quickly given to them as I passed.

the moon begins  
to move at the same speed  
as the departing train



Larry Kimmel ✧ United States

## Three Haibun

### *The Home Front*

A lone bumblebee patrols a hole in the ground. Kill it  
and soon there's another. How am I to finish painting  
the house?

war and the rumors  
of war—still the routine  
of bee and clover

### *Iris*

ladies gathered for  
a garden tea and gossip  
irises in bloom

And in the summer breeze these now beige irises seem  
to nod and whisper, and if you listen closely—the faint  
rattle of tea cups.

### *The Doe*

As the headlights touch her, her legs fold to unfold  
on the far side of the fence where she isn't . . . having  
vanished into thin dusk . . .

gone—  
but the wonder  
of blood and spirit  
remains



Lori Laliberte-Carey ✧ United States

## The Laundry Pile

morning sunshine  
on the laundry pile  
her faded towel

I remember my Mother sitting on the floor by a large pile of laundry, crying, I don't know when it was or why she was crying. But I remember the grief in her sobs.

Years after her death, I wish I could share my understanding with her, my appreciation. I think of her raising three children for more than 15 years as a single parent. And her Mother raising three children. And so many women before them. Giving birth, finding joy in their children, struggling to raise them, suffering losses in their lives. Each going through endless daily routines of cooking, cleaning. And their lives are forgotten. Until one of us has a child, a moment of joy, a moment of sadness, and remembers that it has been the same many times before.

bath time  
my son's clothes  
still warm





Gary LeBel ✧ United States

## Beside a River in Georgia

The roar of the river –  
water finding  
its way

It is the simplest of things, to enjoy the woods when the senses are awake and hungry. One is always an accidental tourist among trees and swift water, in the moist secret worlds beneath the fronds of a fern. There is so much to see, to touch and hear. It's seldom we leave the ghost-lives we drag around with us in our cars and seek out the things that are their teeth and muscle.

As I pass under a group of trees, a strong fetid odor rises in a sudden breeze from the riverbank. It is heavy and close to the tang of human sweat. These fragrances are found everywhere soil and water mix, in the mingling of fresh life with old decay, an indelible signature of the Southern landscape. Though I wasn't born in the South, I've come to relish these pungent smells because they are such visceral reminders of nature's continual rebirth.

Scattered along the trail are bright flashes of orange, red and yellow ochre, from leaves that have turned too soon and fallen to the ground. My children gather them while I pause to examine an old stump.

a patch of moss;  
looking into its worlds  
within worlds.

The greenest carpet of moss I have ever seen drapes the stump with only its shape a reminder of what it once was. I stoop down to touch a luxuriant softness that feels remarkably firm, an ordered city of feeders and roots sharing equally in the rotting wood. No single part of it rises above another; it is uniform, yet beautifully random, flowing over the stump entirely, fitting it like a glove.

And the stump is an empire with its own inhabitants, laws and customs. I imagine the hidden realms I cannot see that lie just below its velveteen surface, funneling into ever more fragile worlds that I crush without intending to, just by touching. Imagine all the unseen life for which this stump is home and the boundary of their known universe! A world without perfect circles or right angles.

We reach an area where the river widens and begins its fall over ledges worn smooth by countless years of its steady passage. The tiny colonies of plants that live and even thrive on a handful of dirt wedged into the narrow crevices constantly surprise me.

autumn wind;  
a wisp of cornflowers  
quivering on the ledge

They bloom resolutely, these tiny blue flowers, sun-bent and cradled in their scant foliage, islands in a windswept sea of granite. On another ledge, a larger,

craggy pine with jointed and angular limbs also pokes out of a crack and lives on apparently nothing.

The river surges over the ledge-steps of its bed, falling without effort, seemingly without friction in eddies and sheets of open water downstream. Each is a channeled explosion of turbulence that finds its own path of least resistance, tracing a shape it has made in the earth over unimaginable time.

All too rarely do I look down at the path I am following and see something other than my own feet. How easy it is, day after day, to simply ignore the exquisite sense of being and mystery that lives in all things and take no responsibility for its acknowledgement. How sad it is to trace no shape beyond our own turbulence.

strangers to us,  
these great old trees with roots  
growing into the river



Patricia Neubauer ✧ United States

## Haibun

Perhaps those of us seated in the topmost tier of the concert hall were the only ones who noticed the sparrow fluttering from crystal chain to crystal chain of the great chandelier. Spellbound, sick with vertigo, we watched his short arpeggio flights out into the vast space that surrounded his perch, watched the glass pendants tremble in the wing-brush with his returns. Each time he vanished into the bright center of light and sparkle, we awaited his reappearance with anxiety. In the minutes before the concert began, we wondered whether he would go to roost when the hall was darkened, or if the vibrations of the kettle drum and the seductive call of the piccolo would excite him to greater activity.

The house lights dimmed. Mounting the podium, the conductor bowed to the audience, turned to the orchestra, and raised his baton.

into deep silence  
one small clink of crystal  
against crystal



Donnie Nichols ✧ United States

## My Lai

*March 17, 1968*

The chopper sounds and machine gun fire of yesterday have long been silenced. I slowly step down the sandy path, maybe a dozen feet in width, towards mounds of bloated flesh—women and children—arms and legs every which way, their remaining clothes, those that haven't been striped away, stained with dried blood. Standing here, the putrid smell thick in the air, my camera captures the perspiration from my trembling hands.

sweltering heat  
a fly crosses  
her unblinking eye



Charles Rossiter ✧ United States

## Downtown in the City of Duck's Blood

Three days on the coast, three days in paterson, nj,  
talking poetry to junior high ghetto kids, walking the  
streets of closed-down mill town paterson, meditating  
on the great falls, crossing the river for a night on the  
town, oh ghost of william carlos williams oh spirit of  
ginsberg oh tank-top beauties of washington square  
braless in the heat oh congas and guitars oh city of a  
million bleeding ducks and backed up sewers as lorca  
called it. . . .

christopher street:  
tattoo'd men with three days growth  
holding hands

Strolling the East Village after taking the PATH train  
into lower Manhattan from Hoboken. Hoboken! My  
God, if these people in black only knew, and in fact  
they probably do, by the way we look to street signs  
for direction, the color of our clothes. Oh fashion thy  
downtown name is midnight. . . .

East Village:  
mannequins with nipples  
in black denim

Amid subway rumble and yellow cab honk the ghost of Dustin Hoffman's Ratso Rizzo skulks across Broadway "hey, I'm walking here," the cry of me, the cry of "I am," straight out of Midnight Cowboy walking against the light and into the park without a glance at the woman with orange hair and six rings through her lower lip, four in each ear and a dozen plastic necklaces cascading in a rainbow of beads. . . .

corner grocery—  
the Asian counterman  
greets the customer by name

In the public garden at 6th St. and Avenue B a woman with gray hair, matted, in ragged skirt and sweater, bedraggled, pushing a shopping cart among the flowers, alternately mutters and shouts profanities, cursing the rich, cursing the mayor, cursing the city, cursing government in general and no one in particular as dog walkers with plastic bags give her wide berth and two gentlemen in berets discuss perennials and play a slow game of chess inside the gazebo beside the three-story tall structure of found wood, baby dolls, and dangling merry-go-round horses. . . .

nightfall:  
a sliver of moon  
in the skyscraper window



Carla Sari ✧ Australia

## The Piave River

New paths, more benches, a children's playground.  
Tall liquid ambers. But the Piave is the same. From  
the bank its body is a giant snake soaking up the sun.  
Lazy, somnolent. I think of it as a god of changing  
moods. Of secrets. I try to understand its powerful  
grip.

a dragonfly  
the lightness of its touch  
on my knee

A cousin drowned in the Piave when I was a child.  
An uncle won a boating race. Photos of the two young  
men on my grandparents' mantelpiece. Their eyes  
wanting to convey something. The attraction and  
danger of water.

blackbirds  
on a willow branch  
sail past

Nice girls don't loiter on the banks after sunset,  
they used to warn me. The area was reclaimed by  
smugglers and prostitutes. I no longer worry about  
loss of reputation either before or after sunset.

The Piave is the same. Jade coloured, velvety.



daydreaming  
in the river's depths  
I chase clouds

On Sundays, mothers push prams along shady trails, girls hunt butterflies, picnickers spread bright cloths. A guide will take you for a cruise. I know the history of the place. Foot soldiers led attacks to defend women and children from invading armies. The Piave stained with blood. Folk songs recall bravery and sacrifices.

With the onset of autumn the river's smell is stronger. I find it in my grandparents' home. In their cellar, wood panelling, spiral staircase. In the backyard.

the well's water level  
rising  
a gull's cry

Down town work is in progress to stem the overflow. Soon some roads will be closed to traffic. The sky's turning charcoal grey. Taste of raindrops on my lips. I'm still here, unable to leave the river.

softness of fallen leaves  
I walk barefooted  
to the edge



## The Winter Hour

The clarity of the winter night as she bundles our newborn—a second feeding. She has just hobbled over to the darkened corner, her bare back softly brightening, the chill air there, and blue shadows snow across the now-opened sheets, a mirror for the window.

Turning from the crib—  
one breast pointed  
with mother's milk



Émile Waldteufel ✧ United States

## Haibun

The men talk and smoke. I drowse in a small depression of this great rock extrusion. Off to the east, fog fills the Eel River drainage; mountains float on a white sea.

This rock outcrop is still warm from yesterday's sunlight. The horses stomp and twitch their skins to rid themselves of flies. There's that sound and the swish of a tail from time to time, useless because the flies leave and come right back.

Down below us about a mile is Blue Rock Creek. I've fished there. The creek is a steep drop and you have to perch somewhere on these massive boulders to fish the pools below. And you've got to be careful not to get your line hung up in the bushes below the rocks.

I was eight years old then—I'm eighty now—but I remember how it was and how I felt then, alone with the smells, the sound of the creek water, the occasional bird, the rock, the tree, the fish, the bird, no separate, not apart from reality, but in a shared world, not one just for me.

on my writing stand  
shadows  
back and forth





**linked forms**





John Brandi/Steve Sanfield ✧ United States

## Selected Pairs

Long after  
the call to prayer  
the bell rope swaying

Laid flat by the wind  
autumn grass  
shows the way

So angry  
he writes off the mileage  
to & from the audit

All his efforts  
like grey  
unmelted snow



Cherie Hunter Day ✧ United States

## Farewell

potted geranium  
in the empty woodshed—  
my father's illness

leather work gloves  
on a nail in the garage  
shape of his hands

remembering him  
on this mountain ridge  
blue lupine





Rich Krivcher / Garry Gay / John Thompson

Friday the 31<sup>st</sup>

moving day:  
inside an empty box  
the smell of rice cakes

down the musty hall  
spaces where pictures hung

luring our cat  
into the open van—  
tuna sandwich

bare closet  
a whiff of aged leather

autumn wind—  
left on the kitchen counter  
incense ashes

the landlord's beer-breathed grunt  
as I hand him the keys



Carol Purington / Raffael de Gruttola

## remaining snow

remaining snow  
... the red squirrel's tunnel  
roofless

*crocus buds  
where the elm branch rests*

gusty wind  
the child and her kits  
against the sky

*on a thin wire  
the paper angel vibrates*

calculus class  
—figuring when earth's shadow  
will halo the moon

*the brilliance of Hale-Bopp  
at sundown*

*radiation ripples  
above the pond—  
sound of the hummingbird*

not to frighten the fireflies  
she whispers

*chiaroscuro.  
wild turkeys  
walk the golf course*

sketching the lighthouse  
because it's there

*on the saltmarsh  
broken sea shells  
leave with the tide*

two sets of footprints  
one sand castle

argument—  
how to decorate  
the nursery

*returning home  
Minnie Mouse in her arms*

street dance  
—loudspeaker rhythm rises  
with the moon

*for his birthday  
lily of the valley and cognac*

suddenly  
with the smell of new mown hay  
someone else somewhere else

*in from the field  
horses carry the yellow sky*

*at every station  
remembrances of things past—  
young boys play soccer*

physics lab demo  
on momentum

*that nimbus cloud  
passing over . . .  
President's speech on race*

this tattered copy  
of *Little Black Sambo*

*out of exile  
the gray hairs of a nest  
under the eaves*

at last enough rain  
to end the dry spell

only a few beans growing  
. . . the theology  
of weeds

*after the downpour  
spider mends his universe*

all that racket  
—only a big frog  
in a small puddle

*nowhere for the  
diving beetle to feed*

on the pantry shelf  
an old glass pie plate—  
in three pieces

*poison sumac rashes  
after apple picking*

*solitary Sojourner  
tracks dust . . .  
its robotic arms*

just me and the night  
and a million crickets

*by the campfires  
near the church the gypsies  
sing till dawn*

you already so far away  
that wide-eyed moment

*wind rattles the leaves . . .  
in the reflecting pool  
the rainbow comes and goes*

to hold on to the notes  
of the nameless bird



William M. Ramsey ✧ United States

## Coming Through

my mouth  
the pistol barrel's mouth  
round

a scream  
in the scarecrow's mouth  
of winter wind

shards  
of a wine bottle  
the last green grapes

a sudden caw—  
perceiving mist  
only mist

one moon  
one black sky  
—one breath



**essays**







Dee Evetts ✧ United States

## The Conscious Eye: Abuse of Children

Having some time ago conceived the idea of writing in this column about the mistreatment of children, I was discouraged to find I had only two poems on file that seemed of sufficient strength or interest for discussion. Caught between the options of deferring this theme until a later date, or launching a search for extra material, I was saved at the last moment by finding in my mailbox several pages of submissions from a single author.

Of this, more later. To begin with the work I already had on hand, here is Carol Montgomery (I am indebted to Linda Jeannette Ward for recommending this):

foster child—  
making up stories about  
the charms on her bracelet<sup>1</sup>

We cannot tell from the poem how much the girl has suffered. Equally poignant, though with a darker undertone, is the following by D. J. Curtis:

late for lunch  
the gambler's child prays  
for the big win<sup>2</sup>

On the surface this is almost funny—and then suddenly it isn't. Gamblers do not necessarily ill-treat their children, but I imagine there is a significant correlation. And the poet makes me feel that this child fears something far worse than a scolding. This is achieved by the choice of words "prays for the big win"—an almost flippant phrasing, immediately undercut by the chilling possibility that this is real and desperate prayer.

Both of these poets convince me that they experienced or witnessed these events—or, at least, heard of them with a strong sense of empathy and emotional involvement. The poems do not seem to be the product of merely sitting and thinking about the subject of abused children. In that sense, they are not fabricated. Of course I could be wrong about this. Why do I care—and how much does it matter?

For many years I held the view that a haiku or *senryū* poet was in some way guilty of cheating, or of short-changing the reader, if she or he wrote what have sometimes been referred to as "desk haiku." That is, poems drawing upon the writer's imagination or fantasy rather than from life. At first glance this looks like a clear enough distinction, yet I found that it kept falling apart on closer examination. What about the role of memory, of literature, the media? How about the combining of two separate moments, or allowing one even to suggest another—or even using imagination to modify or build upon an actual experience?

My view today is that what really matters isn't the source of material or inspiration, but the degree to which the poet comes from a place of genuine feeling, not from tinkering around with ideas or ideals. This

is related to the Japanese concept of *makoto*, often translated as sincerity but for our purposes more usefully expressed as the “truth of the poet’s heart.”

If my old beliefs needed a *coup de grace*, it was given by a recent conversation with Prof. Haruo Shirane of Columbia University. He told me that one of my favorite poems of all time, Buson’s

piercing cold—  
my dead wife’s comb  
in the bedroom underfoot<sup>3</sup>

is believed by scholars to be fictional. Yet this had been in my mind for years as a model for the way a wrenching experience can be powerfully expressed in such spare forms as haiku and *senryū*. I understand now that Buson’s ability to think himself so effectively into the situation of being recently widowed can be seen as an achievement that is on the level with any strictly autobiographical expression.

In the midst of these reflections, the aforementioned package of submissions landed on my desk. It came from John J. Dunphy, a poet who has surely published more *senryū* and haiku than anyone on the themes of child abuse, homelessness, war, and imprisonment. It struck me at once that I have managed to ignore or dismiss his work in this field. I suppose it was that I couldn’t imagine any one person having first-hand experience of such a wide range of suffering, and thus concluded this was little more than emotion-mongering. I have only in recent months learned that he is closely involved in providing recognition and support for the deprived and damaged people who appear so frequently in his poems.

Should this alter my perception or opinion of his work? I leave that question open. At least, I think I am better able—having this information, and given my own broadening concept of truthfulness—to make a fair assessment. Here are four of Dunphy's poems:

even the tooth	abused child
her father knocked out	only her doll
placed under her pillow <sup>4</sup>	still cries <sup>5</sup>
at thirty-four	child rips apart
still afraid to be alone	the doll her father gave her
with her father <sup>6</sup>	not to tell <sup>7</sup>

Of these I favor the first two, for the way they focus on particular and innocent aspects of childhood—the tooth fairy, the doll with the built-in cry—which assume a specially charged significance in the context of abuse. The third poem is limited to a generalized comment on the subject's state of mind. The fourth presents a violent and powerful image, yet has more the ring of a social worker's case-notes than a poem, to my ear.

I am inclined to say that this poet needs to get more under the skin of his readers, instead of slapping them in the face. But maybe it takes a Dunphy or a Mountain to reach one audience, one kind of reader, and a Montgomery or Curtis to touch another. If this is the case, we can simply be grateful for such diverse approaches to an important subject.

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1. *Modern Haiku* XXIX:2; 2. unpublished; 3. Translated by William J. Higginson;  
4. *Modern Haiku* XVI:1; 5. *Frogpond* XV:1; 6. *Frogpond* XIV:1; 7. *Frogpond* XIV:2.



Dee Evetts ✧ United States

## The Conscious Eye: On Human Folly

I have taken the environment as my theme for this issue, partly inspired by the material that has come my way in recent weeks, but also because I regard this as the crucial question and fundamental challenge of our time. However important it is to oppose inhumanity and oppression in every form, what will this avail us in the end, if meanwhile we allow our very habitat to be destroyed?

A first step towards confronting such dilemmas is to recognize and give expression to them. The poets represented below all pose the question, in one form or another: “Where are we going, and what price are we paying?” As always, this is done most effectively when the poet refrains from climbing onto a soapbox or into a pulpit. The poems that speak most eloquently to me are those that present an arresting image, or juxtaposition of images, leaving me to ponder the implications.

An outstanding example of this is found in paul m.’s

afternoon sun  
the trail down  
a logged hill<sup>1</sup>

This is at first glance a gentle, even appealing picture: we see the slanting light, the way it delineates the

trail winding down a treeless slope. I have spent many summers in western Canada, and still have friends there who campaign doggedly, like others in Washington, Oregon and California, to convince government and the timber industry that selective logging makes far more sense—for all of us—than crude clear-cutting. I am therefore primed, no doubt, to experience an aftertaste of sadness and desolation when I read this poem. I feel my feet once again on trails made soft by pine needles and moss—and wonder if today they are merely dust, baking under the sun.

A recent poem by Bruce Detrick addresses deforestation in a more urban context:

between the inbound  
and outbound lanes  
a slice of woods in bloom<sup>2</sup>

Here the loss seems inevitable, the price to be paid for the highways on which we all expect to ride. This poem can be read in two ways: as an elegy for the vanished woodland, and as a celebration of the fact that something has been spared, and is blooming. On another level it simply says: keep your eyes open—and your heart.

Still on the subject of land use and development, Patricia Okolski gives us:

Old Indian camp . . .  
we look for arrowheads  
while developers browse<sup>3</sup>

Although this needs not a word of explanation, I enjoyed hearing what the author wrote to me about it: “The history of this poem comes from Berkeley,

Massachusetts, where a friend of ours owned a piece of land on the Taunton River. When I heard that the property was to be developed, I hastened to collect artifacts from the accessible land. The property is now an affluent community with a great view of the river, but perhaps someday their children will dig in the yard and come up with a different view. It is something to hope for.” What works so well in her poem is the picture of two kinds of browsing, with utterly different motivations, while the poet holds back from passing judgment.

Conflicting priorities are also on display in Mark Arvid White’s

last house on the left  
that unmanicured lawn  
where butterflies come<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps this is in one of those neighborhoods where property owners can be fined for letting their yard go to seed. The eyesore or nuisance to neighbors can be a haven for wildlife. I admire this poem because it insists on nothing, yet compels me to reconsider what matters.

Pollution is the theme of the next two poems, both of which seem more obvious in their intentions than those discussed so far. With imagination and irony Tom Tico presents a paradox:

Spring rain  
even the oil-slicks  
have bloomed<sup>5</sup>

I am reminded of our sunsets here in New York City, so often enhanced by the emissions of industrial New

Jersey across the Hudson River. It can be confusing, and poignant, when beauty emanates from something we know to be harmful.

Diane Borsenik takes a very definite position with her:

the only cloud  
in this perfect sky  
nuke plant's vapor<sup>6</sup>

I find this accomplished, playing skillfully on the literal and figurative interpretation of “the only cloud.” It is with the word “perfect” that I find the poet overreaches. The simpler alternative “the only cloud / in the sky” would have made for a stronger poem in my opinion. This view can be supported by asking: where is the reader’s attention directed—or where does it finally rest—on the problem, or on the poet?

The last word goes to Penny Harter, whose work in haiku and *senryū* as well as her longer poems has for many years reflected a passionate awareness of the interdependence of species, and the fragility of our common ecosystem. Her lyrical yet understated

distant thunder  
overhead a satellite  
moves in the dark<sup>7</sup>

evokes for me a gamut of feelings about our brave new world: awe, wonder, doubt, hope, and foreboding.

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1. *Frogpond* XXII:1; 2. unpublished; 3. unpublished; 4. *black bough* 11; 5. *The San Francisco Haiku Anthology*, ed. Ball, Gay & Tico (Windsor CA: Smythe-Waite Press, 1992); 6. *The Red Moon Anthology* 1997, ed. Kacian *et. al.* (Winchester VA: Red Moon Press 1998); 7. *The Monkey's Ear* (Fanwood NJ: From Here Press 1987).





H. F. Noyes ✧ Greece

## Haiku Magic

In Zen, life is wonder, life is miracle. There occurred a great loss in our awareness of the sheer magic and wonder of our very existence, concomitant with the inroads on our thinking and feeling made by nineteenth-century rationalism and twentieth-century “factualism.” It’s been my hope that haiku might restore our awareness of the wonder of the interplay of the moment. We are not of course concerned here with superstitious, prestidigitory, or surrealist magic. A phrase that often recurs in my thoughts is “magic empowerment.” I think it well expresses the feeling a child has when in a thick dark woods s/he finds it possible to extinguish all light with a slight movement of one hand. And I still remember my childhood amazement when moving along the sea’s edge I discovered that the moon on the waves kept following me. Most children sense and enjoy being a part of the interrelatedness of all that goes on in the moment. They would not ask how or why, in Shiki’s haiku, birdsong knocked down the berries.

How naturally and spiritedly children delight in magical empowerment. How entranced a child can be on some hilltop perch making a distant steamer disappear by moving a leaf or even a pine needle. What exultation in heaving rocks into the sea to create great

geysers of splash and those widening circles of wave.  
Joan Couzens Sauer's haiku captures the wondrous  
interplay of nature with a young boy's fishing.

On the riverbank  
a small boy casts his line  
scattering clouds<sup>1</sup>

Fishing in itself is magic enough in boyhood. I can so easily believe that this child is aware of a connection between his casting and the cloud movement. Not cause and effect, of course, but a part of the interplay that makes our moments live. There is a somewhat related haiku by Federico C. Peralta, in which the boy is missing:

half buried in mud  
a toy gun points upward—  
a star apple drops<sup>2</sup>

The little toy gun goes on “doing its thing,” half-buried in mud. And the “star” in star apple makes one think of our human inclination to aim for the stars.

In music, for most of us there's a seeming magical element that's almost constant. The avant-garde poet Suzuki Murio wrote:

on a quiet night  
the violin  
makes the snow fall<sup>3</sup>

Though Zen is the most reality-rooted of the religio-philosophical ways, it never works with logical formulations or abstractions. Blyth cites Ryutan

Soshin as saying: “Seeing is direct seeing. Hesitate and think about it, and you have gone astray.”<sup>4</sup> Can you see that it would not be a more realistic haiku were Murio to have written “seems to make the snowflakes fall”? He faithfully records and experience in which there was no seeming at all. (Even in scientific experiment, it is now well known that there’s no separating the observer from the observed.) In the moment of oneness there is virtually no separate self.

Beauty when unsentimental and prettified is a natural element in haiku. Here is a similar haiku moment from my own experience:

silver thaw  
a piano prelude  
unmasks the moon<sup>5</sup>

D. T. Suzuki writes that to the awakened it may be “a direct statement of their living existential experience . . . that the waters do not flow, but the bridge does.”<sup>6</sup> True art, like its genuine religion, has its existential leaps. Adele Kenny writes in *Questi Momenti* of Venice: “water / holding the city / in”—just as she saw it.<sup>7</sup> The magical images and influences of nature’s interfusion are all day and every day happening. Yet it is still relatively seldom that we see haiku such as the following:

the cold night  
comes out of the stone  
all morning<sup>8</sup>

the milkweed pod bursts  
silencing the blackbird<sup>9</sup>

In my estimation Kacian's haiku rivals Bashō's famous haiku of interpenetration about the voice of the cicadas sinking into the rocks. Here we have de-penetration, and it's surely a universal experience—yet one that few have observed and recorded. The “parallel poem” by tripi is a delightful example of Jung's speculations on synchronicity, based on the *I-Ching* theory that everything happening in the moment is interrelated. As the Buddhists express it, all of life is “dependently co-arising.” I believe it to be a way of viewing life that's consistent with the haiku spirit.

A poet needs to see behind the veil of familiarity the infinite meanings of “trivial” everyday occurrences. I find this kind of depth in a miraculous sight recorded by L. A. Davidson in an early issue of *Mayfly*:

in rising tide  
fishermen waking on water  
along the reef

Out of the rule-free informality of the haiku form, with its emphasis on intuition, will emerge a poetry truly fresh, with a spirit uniquely unbound—such as expressed in the following by Tao Li (Evelyn Tooley Hunt), in *Frogpond's* earlier days:

The	I	beneath
summit	steady	my
reached	the	foot
	mountain	

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1. *Wind Chimes* 10; 2. *Azami Modern Haiku* Winter-Spring 1991, translated by Masaya Saito; 3. *Kushū Akuryō* (Tokyo: San'nichi Shobo 1985); 4. Blyth, R. H. *Haiku*, Volume III (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press 1953), p. 741; 5. *Frogpond* XII:1; 6. *Living by Zen* (Garden City NY: Doubleday Anchor 1956), p. 47; 7. *Frogpond* XI:4; 8. *Presents of Mind* (Portland OR: Katsura Press 1996); 9. . . . *the path of the hummingbird* (Richland Center WI: Hummingbird Press 1996).



Bruce Ross ✧ United States

## Patrick Frank's *Walking Alone*: Alienation, Poverty & Consolation

1 birds suddenly take flight spirit of a man lifted  
2 calm spirit in the shelter ripples of peace expand  
3 feeling you fade away fade away  
4 hard to face the truth I really am sick  
5 head down standing in line a homeless man  
6 heart empty no quarter to call my girl  
7 homeless alone but the snow falls gently  
8 homeless man scared by his mirror image  
9 homeless shelter my head is in my hands  
10 some part of me has the desire to disappear  
11 soup kitchen homeless woman feeds pigeons  
12 the planets shining bright closer closer  
13 this time really locked in really homeless  
14 walking on the shoulder of the road lost  
15 walking walking walking alone alone

Patrick Frank<sup>1</sup>

Frank's stark haiku sequence *Walking Alone* has a precursor in his *Return to Springfield: Urban Haiku*. The haibun describes the recognizable but preferably avoided squalor found in many of our urban centers:

Saturday I returned to Springfield with my wife. She dropped me off at the ghetto court across from Burger King where I used to play. Despite the city's long-standing and well-publicized "urban renewal" program, the physical condition of the court and surrounding area are badly deteriorated:

back to the city—  
glass litters  
the ground

The court itself, where neighborhood kids are supposed to go to stay out of trouble, is a disgrace. The flotsam and jetsam of urban life have been discarded at the court's perimeter.

cigarette butts  
everywhere beside  
the ghetto court

the shattered pieces  
of a transistor  
radio<sup>2</sup>

The profound alienation depicted in Frank's sequence and the urban collapse described in his haibun are emblematic of the unstated poverty and malaise of late twentieth-century America. This "postmodern condition" was envisioned at the beginning of this century in Rainer Maria Rilke's *The Book of Poverty and Death*:

You are the poor one, you are the destitute.  
You are the stone that has no resting place.

You are the diseased one  
Whom we fear to touch  
Only the wind is yours.

...

Like flowers along the tracks, shuddering  
as the train roars by, and like the hand  
that covers our face when we cry—the poor.

Yours is the suffering of birds on freezing nights,  
of dogs who go hungry for days.  
Yours the long sad waiting of animals  
who are locked up and forgotten.  
You are the beggar who averts his face,  
the homeless person who has given up asking;  
you howl in the storm.<sup>3</sup>

The narrator of *Walking Alone* can be compared to the emotional flavor in many of the haiku of the modern wandering Zen haiku poet Santōka (1882-1940). Compare Frank's "walking on the shoulder of the road lost" to this haiku by Santōka:

Wearing rags,  
In the coolness  
I walk alone.<sup>4</sup>

Both authors are wandering in a state of poverty and homelessness. But Frank is overcome by his situation—he is literally and psychologically lost—while Santōka is indifferent to his poverty and isolation—he in fact takes pleasure in the "coolness" (*suzushi*). This word stands in the middle of the haiku (it has the most syllables) and, as it were, mediates between Santōka's poverty and isolation.

In its tone and “free form” haiku style *Walking Alone* also resembles the haiku of the modern reclusive Zen haiku poet Hōsai Ozaki (1885-1926). The painful self-revelations of Frank’s sequence touch on a common subject of Hōsai’s haiku. Frank was in fact reluctant to publish the sequence because of its subject. As he notes in his haiku sequence article: “I felt that too much revelation would expose me to ridicule.”<sup>5</sup> Compare the existential honesty of Frank’s “homeless shelter my head is in my hands” to Hōsai’s “On a December night there’s one cold bed, nothing but.”<sup>6</sup> Or Frank’s “free form” expression of loneliness: “walking walking walking alone alone” to Hōsai’s expression of a similar emotion: “I cough and am still alone.”<sup>7</sup> Both haiku poets are looking objectively at their loneliness, their emotion concretized in a self-cradled head, a cold bed, endless walking, and a solitary cough. All of these reflect a somewhat distanced connection to the common emotional subject except Frank’s “Walking / alone.” Here the spareness of the haiku—10 syllables, 5 words, and no syntax and the dominating repetition—the same 2 words repeated 2 or 3 times reflect an enormous overflow of strong emotion that makes this haiku one of the most moving evocations of modern alienation and aptly concludes one of the great haiku sequences of the late twentieth century.

This haiku and the sequence resonate with the utter psychological estrangement of Robert Frost’s “dark” poem “Acquainted with the Night.” Its first stanza introduces the theme of alienation with words that echo the last two haiku of Frank’s sequence:



I have been acquainted with the night.  
I have walked out in the rain – and back in rain.  
I have outwalked the furthest city light.<sup>8</sup>

Frost's "dark night of the soul" offers the narrative the "saddest city lane" (l. 4), an "interrupted cry" (l. 8), and an "unearthly" clock that asserted that "time was neither wrong nor right" (ll. 11-13). Though not grounded in a specific social context like Frank's sequence, Frost's poem maintains the same struggle with psychological disassociation so endemic to the late twentieth century as Frank's sequence.

The sense of social collapse and squalor evoked in Frank's haibun and Rilke's *Book of Poverty and Death* and which *Walking Alone* becomes a testament of was, however, enumerated a century ago by Walt Whitman in "I Sit and Look Out." The first line introduces Whitman's concern: "I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon all / oppression and shame."<sup>9</sup> The poem then explores examples of social and natural breakdown and concludes with implicit despair in the face of this condition of sheer global failure: "All these – all the meanness and agony without end I sitting look out upon, / See, hear, and am silent."<sup>10</sup> But yet even within these common conditions there can be transformative gestures.

In Frank's "Return to Springfield: Urban Haibun" Frank by chance meets another fellow who has also come to visit this area where they used to live. Both unemployed and somewhat desperate, they play a game of basketball and discuss their respective conditions. Frank concludes his haibun in a transformative gesture:

I felt I had made a friend.  
As I reflect on this whole experience the double im-  
age that pops into my mind is as follows:

greenery entwined  
in a chain-link fence

wildflowers growing  
out of the cracks  
in the cement<sup>11</sup>

Something about his encounter has allowed Frank to see the natural beauty that exists even in this depressed setting. That something is the compassion humanity is able to grant itself.

Accordingly Gary Snyder has noted: "Buddhist teachings . . . say that the true source of compassion and ethical behavior is paradoxically none other than one's own realization of the insubstantial and ephemeral nature of everything."<sup>12</sup> This turn to an awareness of universal mutability is broached in Rilke's prayer for the poor in his *Book of Poverty and Death*:

make it so the poor are no long  
despised and thrown away.

Look at the standing about—  
like wildflowers, which have nowhere else to grow.<sup>13</sup>

Can someone in a state of alienation and poverty be able, particularly in the postmodern First World, to come to the Buddhist realization and take consolation in it?

Frank's sequence is written from the extreme edge of such a situation. Yet, as he notes in his commentary upon it, the sequence has the "potential to induce . . . 'creative transformation and renewal,' *i.e.* lines 1, 2, 11 and 12, but they are outnumbered by haiku that convey a sense of alienation." Each of these lines, except 2 (which follows the emotional current of line 1 through the word "spirit") is connected with the consolation of non-human nature: birds, pigeons, and the planets, which, as well as line 2, "uplift" the narrator's spirit. Interestingly, the only other haiku in the sequence that contains a direct reference to non-human nature (line 7) is left out of the list. This haiku is most Zen-like in its tone: "homeless alone but the snow falls gently." The "but" clearly reflects an attitude of consolation, particularly in conjunction with the adverb "gently." Compare it to this haiku by Santōka:

Pressing on and on,  
Until finally falling down;  
The grass along the roadside.<sup>14</sup>

The metaphysical importance of the two haiku is uncovered in the well-known Zen story of a man chased by a tiger. Hanging from just below the edge of a cliff by a root that is pulling out while the tiger looks down on him, the man notices some wild strawberries and comments on how beautiful they are. One consolation for alienation and poverty is non-human nature, Frank's birds, pigeons, planets and snow, Santōka's grass, and the Zen story's strawberries. Such consolation when human nature is in collapse, the enormously touching subject of Frank's sequence,

brings the realization of universal subjectivity—these non-human, often outrightly beautiful realities are, like Rilke’s figurative wildflowers, readily existing in their own right. Yet they are often most obviously also ephemeral in their nature, like Santōka’s grass or Frank’s snow. The realization of universal subjectivity and mutability, including one’s own human nature, however subconscious that realization might be, brings with it the consolation for our so often pressing mortality.

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1. The sequence, without line numbers, appears in Patrick Frank, “Loosening the Constraints of Haiku Sequencing,” *Point Judith Light*, Fall Winter 1998, p. 18.
  2. Patrick Frank, “Return to Springfield: Urban Haibun,” *Point Judith Light* 2:3 (1993), pp. 12-13.
  3. *Rilke’s Book of Hours, Love Poems to God*, trans. Anita Barrows and Joana Macy (New York: Riverhead, 1996), pp. 141-142.
  4. *Mountain Tasting, Zen Haiku by Santōka Taneda*, trans. John Stevens (New York & Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1980), p. 46.
  5. “Loosening the Constraints of Haiku Sequencing,” p. 18.
  6. *Right under the big sky, I don’t wear a bat: The Haiku and Prose of Hōsai Ozaki*, trans. Hiroaki Sato (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1993), p. 71.
  7. *Right under the big sky, I don’t wear a bat*, p. 108.
  8. *Selected Poems of Robert Frost*, intro. Robert Graves (New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 161.
  9. Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, ed. James E. Miller Jr. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p. 197.
  10. Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, p. 197.
  11. Patrick Frank, “Return to Springfield: Urban Haibun,” p. 13.
  12. Gary Snyder, *A Place in Space—Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds, New and Selected Prose* (Washington DC: Counterpoint, 1995), p. 246.
  13. *Rilke’s Book of Hours, Love Poems to God*, p. 143.
  14. *Mountain Tasting, Zen Haiku by Santōka Taneda*, p. 50.



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