

JUXTA ELEVEN

RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP IN HAIKU

2025

THE *Haiku* FOUNDATION

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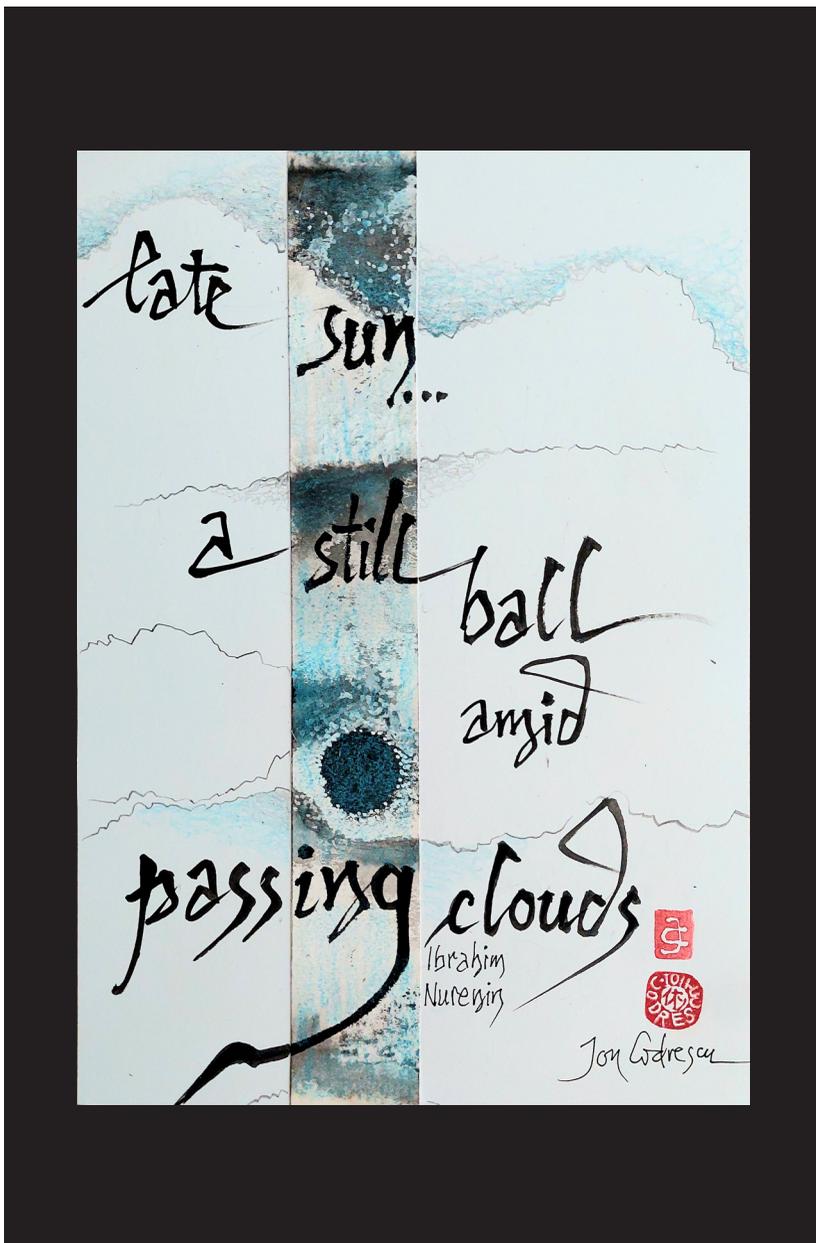
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in memory of

Adjei ADGEI-BAAH
(1977 – 2023)

pioneer in African haiku



Poet: Ibrahim NURENI / Artist: Ion CODRESCU

EDITOR'S WELCOME

I'm happy to welcome you to the eleventh issue of *Juxtapositions*!

As the journal grows, the editorial board continues exploring different organizational approaches to best feature current scholarship in haiku. Previous issues of *Juxta* have either been general issues or themed issues. This time, *Juxta* contains a themed section alongside the regular section, an approach the editors intend to keep for the near future. Thank you to Sheila Smith McKoy for her willingness to serve as the first guest editor and her excellent work on "Haiku from Africa and the African Diaspora."

The regular section presents several fine pieces. These materials include two articles, a presentation, and two book reviews. See also the beautiful haiga created by Ion Codrescu with haiku from the special themed section.

I join the other editors in congratulating Jennifer Hambrick, whose article-interview, "Found in Translation: The Kon Nichi Translation Group, Gendai Haiku, and the Rise of Avant-Garde Haiku in English," received the "best of issue" award for material published in *Juxta* 10. Thank you to our esteemed judges. Also, we could not offer the award without funding from an anonymous donor, and we are grateful for this generous support.

As always, I am thankful to our contributors, the editorial board, managing editor Jim Kacian, peer readers, proofreaders, Dave Russo for technical support, and The Haiku Foundation.

Please enjoy the issue!

Ce ROSENOW
Senior Editor

Juxtapositions: Research and Scholarship in Haiku

seeks academic essays for a special themed section in *Juxta* 12: AI and HAIKU (as well as related poetic forms such as haibun, haiga, senryu, and tanka). Topics may be wide-ranging, including tributes to haijin who have influenced the author's work by engaging/not engaging AI tools to write in someone else's style.

Full articles: 2,500-10,000 words

Short explications: 1,000 words

Interviews: Query the guest editor

Format: Word document; MLA style; cover page including author's name, address, contact information, and abstract

Deadline: July 15, 2026

Send materials to Ce Rosenow, Senior Editor, at rosenowce@gmail.com.

Juxtapositions is the only English-language, peer-reviewed journal of haiku scholarship. Published by The Haiku Foundation, it is indexed in the MLA Bibliography and has published one issue per year for the past eleven years. The journal is available electronically and in print: <https://thehaikufoundation.org/juxta/>.

THE **JUXTA** AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE
IN HAIKU RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP

Jennifer Hambrick

is the recipient of a **JUXTA** Award for

**“The Kon Nichi Translation Group,
Gendai Haiku, and the Rise of Avant-
Garde Haiku in English”**

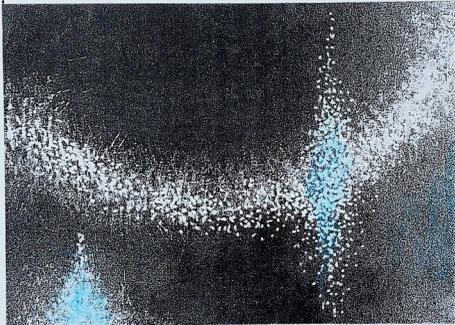
from *Juxtapositions* 10. Adjudicators were Janine
BEICHMAN, Cheryl CROWLEY, and Toru KIUCHI.

The **JUXTA** Award is a cash stipend granted to
the author(s) of the article deemed “best of issue”
in each iteration of *Juxtapositions*, and is made
possible by the generosity of an anonymous donor.

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Articles

cancer survivor...
&
flower



Joy Codrescu

sipping the dew

Ali Znaida

Poet: Ali ZNAIDA / Artist: Ion CODRESCU

Reading Bashō's Seasonality in Context: A Case Study

Yukio KACHI

ABSTRACT: In intercultural communication such as reading Bashō's writings in English, it is crucially important to understand the context of a text. This is particularly true of Bashō's use of a kigo. For a kigo is a complex of nature and culture involving natural history, seasons, calendar, ethnography, word history, and literary tradition as well as the particular poem in which it has its life, and the particular text in which Bashō placed that poem. And this complex may well be significantly different from what is familiar to us. In this case study, I try to recover the context of one hokku by Bashō with respect to the kigo in it in order to show what light the context throws upon the hokku, and how inadequate contextualization results in critical misunderstanding.

Bashō's hokku typically and essentially involve kigo, or in the terminology of the day, *shiki no kotoba*, words of the four seasons.¹ Kigo is a phenomenon embedded in culture. It never points straightforwardly to nature in simple, one-to-one correspondence. Instead, it involves multiple factors pertaining to nature, calendar, ethnography, word history, and literary tradition. For this reason, in translation and cross-cultural interpretation of Bashō's hokku, kigo presents some difficulty. In translation, something about a kigo is inevitably lost or added. Something lost may be vital to the original, or something added may be quite alien to it. The remedy is to read the particular use of a kigo in a hokku in the context of nature and culture specific to Bashō's practice. Inadequate contextualization is likely to result in misunderstanding and failure to appreciate his hokku.

A case in point is the English translation and interpretation of the following hokku by Bashō:²

初雪	や	水仙	の	は	の	たはむ	まで
<i>hatsuyuki</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>suisen</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>tawamu</i>	<i>made</i>
first snow	(exclamatory particle, cutting word)	daffodil, narcissus	(attributive particle)	leaf, blade	(subjective particle)	bend, arch, arc	(adverbial particle of extent)

There are two kigo here, *hatsuyuki* and *suisen*. In this case study, I'll first examine how these kigo function in their contexts in order to work out an interpretation of this hokku. Then I'll proceed to a consideration of how inadequate contextualization results in misunderstanding. My aim throughout is to demonstrate the power and necessity of reading Bashō's seasonality in context.

1. The term *kigo* did not appear in Bashō's poetics lexicon. It did not gain currency till the beginning of the 20th century. For details see Kern, Adam L., *The Penguin Book of Haiku*, pp. XL-XLI.

2. *SBT*, p.27, #285.

Hatsuyuki

Hatsuyuki is a compound of *hatsu* (first) and *yuki* (snow). Thus it can only be translated as “first snow” or “first snowfall,” with or without “the.” *Hatsu-* as a prefix means *first of the season* as in *hatsu-makuwa*, the first makuwa melon of the season, or *first in the new year*, as in *hatsu-hinode*, the sunrise on New Year’s Day. *Hatsu-* in *hatsuyuki* means not *first in the new year* but *first of the season*—namely, winter. Both *hatsu* and *yuki* are old Japanese words with distinct power, which the English words “first” and “snow” do not fully convey. Let’s consider *yuki* first.

Japan is a snowy country—or at least it was before global warming began to set in. The Japanese archipelago stretches southwest to northeast. If you map it onto North America, it stretches from New Orleans to Montreal. In winter, as Siberia freezes but the Pacific Ocean remains relatively warm, a wind blows steadily from the Siberian high-pressure system to the Pacific low. This cold wind picks up moisture over the Sea of Japan and dumps it in the form of snow on the islands of Japan. The snowfall is especially heavy on the northwestern coast of the main island and the mountains.³ This snowfall has been a vital resource for the Japanese.

Japan is also a mountainous country. Most of its total area, about that of Montana, is occupied by mountainous regions, leaving less than 20% as arable lowlands. Long before the emergence of a country there, when the tribal inhabitants of the archipelago shifted their economy from hunting-and-gathering to agriculture, they drew on the snowmelt from the mountains to irrigate paddies. Rice was, as it still is today, *the* grain of their diet, “the apex of

3 Cf., Issa (1763–1827): “my goodness / is this my last dwelling— / five feet of snow” (Maruyama Kazuhiko, ed., *Shintei issa haikushū*, p. 172, # 870), and the opening sentence of Kawabata Yasunari, (1899–1972), *Snow Country*, trans., Seidensticker, Edward G., p. 3: “The train came out of the long tunnel into the snow country. The earth lay white under the night sky.”

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food” (*imijiki kate*) as Bashō called it.⁴ Thus, for the inhabitants, who were confirmed animists, snow was an object of apotheosis, a key factor in the life-sustaining trio of rice-snow-mountain. The aesthetic appreciation of snow for the purity of its whiteness has its taproot in animistic snow worship.

In the primordial psyche, a word was believed to have the power of the thing itself. This phenomenon, which we might call language animism, was captured by the old term *kotodama*, the spirit of the word. Here is an early celebration of *kotodama*:

Ever since the age of gods
has this been passed on:
In the Land of Yamato
seen-from-the-sky
where the emperors' begetters are august
thrive the spirits of words (*kotodama*).
This have I heard passed on mouth to mouth,
generation to generation.⁵

Under the influence of language animism, if snow was an object of worship, the word *yuki* itself must have had numinous power. The aesthetic of *yuki* has its taproot not only in the life-sustaining power of snow itself but also in the animistic inspiration of the word *yuki*.

Early waka evinces this genealogy of the snow-aesthetic. On New Year's Day in 746, a composition party was held to celebrate a heavy snowfall. The following are a couple of waka presented at the party:

4. In his haibun, *shizan no hisago*, four-mountain gourd. In *SBT*, p. 383, #31.

5. *Man'yōshū*, #894 (NKBT, vol. 5, pp. 102–3). Cf., Robert Hass, *The Essential Haiku*, p. 314: “My personal theory, not especially well-informed, about *kigo* is that their origin is shamanic, animist, and ritualistic, that the words for ‘winter blast’ and ‘spring blossoms’ and ‘summer shower’ were intended at one time to call forth the living spirits manifested in those natural phenomena.”

All under heaven / Covered over completely / By the falling snow — /
When I look at the shining / My heart is filled with awe⁶

At the beginning / Of the new year the coming / Of bountiful harvest /
Surely is augured already / In the falling of the snow⁷

A century and a half later an anonymous poet wrote:

here in the ancient / capital Mount Yoshino / is so near that not /
a single day passes when / the dazzling snow does not fall⁸

Here “the dazzling snow” translates *miyuki* 御雪, where *mi-* is a prefix originally connoting *divinity, spiritual being, sublime, or august status*, and later, *preciousness, being treasured*.⁹ In the winter section of *Kokinwakashū*, the first imperial anthology, which includes this poem, there are twenty-nine *tanka* altogether. Among them those about snow account for twenty-five, which established *yuki* as the predominant winter topic in Japanese poetry. And among these *yuki tanka*, the word *shirayuki*, white snow, occurs six times, the word *miyuki* three times — an indication that the aesthetic purity of white snow was rooted in snow worship.

6. Ki no Kiyohito (d. 753), *Man'yōshū*, #3923; trans., Edwin A. Cranston, *A Waka Anthology, volume one: The GemGlistening Cup*, p. 595, #1170.

Here “My heart is filled with awe” translates *tōtoku mo aru ka*. Bashō used the same adjective *tōtoshi* in the following *hokku* (*Oku no hosomichi*, in *SBT*, p. 338, #4):

ara tōto aoba wakaba no hi no hikari

Awe-inspiring! / on the green leaves, budding leaves / light of the sun

(trans., Haruo Shirane, *Early Modern Japanese Literature: Anthology 1600-1900*, p. 214).

On this poem Reginald Horace Blyth comments: “The leaves share in Bashō’s admiration” (*A History of Haiku*, vol. 1, p. 21).

7. Fujii no Moroi, *Man'yōshū*, #3925; trans., Cranston, *op. cit.*, p. 596, #1172.

8. *Kokinwakashū*, #321; trans., Laurel Rasplica Rodd, *Kokinshū: A Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern*, p. 139.

9. See the entry *mi* (御) in Maeda Kingorō, et al, *Iwanami kogojiten*, p. 1246.

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Renga masters inherited snow worship from classical waka poets. One of them, Senjun (1411 – 1476), wrote:

“Look — snow!” / — says the wind, rolling / up the blinds¹⁰

And Sōgi (1421 – 1502), much esteemed by Bashō:

The pond, clear / with cold mountain water — / reflecting snow¹¹

The pine tree knows / The mind of him who pines / For the snow in the garden¹²

First snow: / no dust in the garden, / none in my heart¹³

Haikai represents a late phase in the long genealogy of snow worship and snow aesthetic. The traditional snow poetry had much for haikai to draw on or play with. And so it did for Bashō. Particularly fond of snow, he wrote as many as forty hokku on this topic, by far the most prevalent topic in his winter hokku. As snow was the predominant winter topic in the first imperial anthology, so too was it the favorite winter topic of Bashō seven centuries later. Among various aspects of his poetic treatment of snow, four seem especially relevant to understanding and appreciating his first-snow-on-daffodil hokku: falling snow observed, snow-viewing, snow awakening the child in him, and snow provoking “poetic madness” in his persona. First, there are some poems about snow as it is falling or about to fall:

10. Trans., Steven D. Carter, *Haiku Before Haiku: From the Renga Masters to Bashō*, p. 56, #88.

11. Trans., Carter, *Haiku Before Haiku*, p. 64, #111.

12. Trans., Reginald Horace Blyth, *A History of Haiku*, vol. 1, p. 51. Generally speaking, puns are untranslatable. A pun here on *matsu*, “the pine tree” and “him who pines” is a well-known exception.

13. Trans., Carter, *Haiku Before Haiku*, p. 66, #113.

snow falling — / miscanthus for the shrine hut / still uncut¹⁴
 so interesting / it's about to turn into snow / winter rain¹⁵

There are also poems about the activity of snow viewing formal or informal. Viewing beautiful snowscapes will be naturally enjoyable:

has it returned this year too / the snow / we, two of us, viewed
 together

Bashō addressed this question to his snow-viewing companion.¹⁶ One's joy of viewing a snowscape would be enhanced in the company of "a true friend" equally appreciative of its beauty.

smoothing it out / to attend the snow-viewing party / my paper robe¹⁷

A paper robe (*kamiko*), made of thick paper treated with persimmon juice for water repellency, was worn as an overcoat by itinerant monks and poor people. It is not a proper garment for a refined snow-viewing party, but that is what Bashō has. Smoothing its wrinkles out is the most he can do. In the poem, the sacred, the beautiful, the mundane, and *wabi* coalesce humorously.

14. *SBT*, p. 49, #455; trans., David Landis Barnhill, *BH*, p. 118, #518.

15. *SBT*, p.34, #342. Jane Reichhold's translation (*BCH*, p.102, #344): "how interesting / it seems the snow becomes / winter rain." She goes on to comment on it (p. 229, #344): "The wit of this poem works with the idea that rain usually turns into snow, but here the snow warms to become winter rain [. . .]." Incredibly, she reverses the process observed in the hokku.

16. *SBT*, p. 397, #70. The prefatory note to this hokku reads, in Barnhill's translation (*BJ*, p. 112): "Jūzō of the province of Owari is known as Etsujin, a name that comes from the place where he was born. Now he hides himself in the city, but only to supply himself with some food and fuel. If he works two days, he plays the next two; if he works three days, he plays the next three. He loves his wine, and he sings from the *Tales of the Heike* when he's drunk. A true friend indeed."

17. *Oi no kobumi* in *SBT*, p. 331, #6.

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yo, let's go / snow-viewing till / we all tumble down¹⁸

This is an invitation to the same snow-viewing excursion: “Never mind the tricky footing in the deep snow! If we tumble, so be it!” Such snow-viewings are highly reminiscent of the snow celebration the Man'yō poets participated in nearly one thousand years before. But the mode of celebration has changed. Another remarkable aspect of Bashō's snow aesthetic is the utterly childlike delight he took in snow:

you start a fire / I'll show you something fun / a giant snowball¹⁹

Playing with children in the hills
in the first snow / of rabbit hide / make whiskers²⁰

The first one is directly addressed to his disciple and bosom friend Sora, age 37, who had come for a visit one snowy night. Bashō was 42 years old then. The second one Bashō wrote while staying in his hometown of Iga Ueno. The hokku sounds as if it had been taken directly from his excited shout to the children running around with him in the first snow. He was 45 years old then. By then he had long been called Old Man (Ō, *okina*) by his disciples, friends, and even himself. Closely associated with the snow-awakened child in Bashō is his snow-provoked “poetic madness” 風狂 *fūkyō*. Bashō called out:

market shoppers! / let me sell you this hat / full of snow²¹

Snow arouses his eccentric desire to sell his travel-worn hat piled with snow at a marketplace. As Haruo Shirane felicitously notes, “Such a

18. *SBT*, p. 331, #6.

19. *SBT*, p. 384, #34.

20. *SBT*, p. 71, #612.

21. *Nozarashi kikō* in *SBT*, p. 325, p. 9; trans., Shirane, Haruo, *Traces of Dreams*, p. 69.

hat is priceless to the poet, who prizes snow, a major object of poetic beauty, but worthless to merchants dealing in material goods.”²²

Let’s now consider *hatsu*, the prefix in the word *hatsuyuki* in Bashō’s first-snow-on-daffodils hokku. As noted above, this prefix has two distinct meanings: *first of the season* and *first in the new year*. The differentia is the kind of the word to which it is prefixed. If it is prefixed to a kigo as in *hatsu-gatsuo*, first bonito, and *hatsu-shigure*, first winter shower, it means *first of the season*. If it is prefixed to a non-season word as in *hatsu-hinode*, first sunrise, and *hatsu-yume*, first dream, it means *first in the new year*. Since *yuki* is a kigo par excellence, *hatsu* in *hatsuyuki* means *first of the snow season*.

What season did the kigo *hatsuyuki* designate? In the Japanese archipelago, the actual snow season varies greatly. And in any given place in any given year, it may begin earlier or later than usual. But in haikai poetics, the *yuki* season was the three phases of winter, namely Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Moons,²³ or in a narrower sense, mid-winter — namely, Eleventh Moon. In the longer *yuki* period, the time for *hatsuyuki* was the earliest one-third of the *yuki* season. In the shorter *yuki* period, it preceded the snow season by one phase. This seasonal correlation between *yuki* and *hatsuyuki* is exhibited in the following three haikai reference works, which were widely used in Bashō’s day and probably often by Bashō himself:²⁴

22. Shirane, *Traces of Dreams*, pp. 69-70.

23. I am using the word “Moon” to mean a moon cycle, which was a unit of time in the luni-solar calendar in use in Bashō’s days (to be precise, from 862 to 1872 with an adjustment in 1684). In this calendar, generally speaking, First Moon, the year, and spring all began around the 4th of February. The use of “Tenth Month” for Tenth Moon would be misleading without an explanation. For we are accustomed to equating Tenth Month with October. Bashō’s sense was keenly attuned to the transition of one season to the next, and a majority, about eighty percent, of the kigo he used are specific to one moon cycle, namely, one particular phase—early, middle, late—of a season. See note 56 below.

24. Ikejima Yōji, et al, comp., KZS. The pagination in the chart is of this book. Kefukigusa was reprinted repeatedly. *Yama no i* and *Zō-yamanoi* were compiled by the young Bashō’s teacher Kigin (1624–1705).

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	<i>yuki</i>	<i>hatsuyuki</i>
<i>Kefukigusa</i> , 1645	mid-winter (p. 141)	early winter (p. 140)
<i>Yama no i</i> , 1647	winter (p. 252)	winter (p. 252)
<i>Zō-yamanoi</i> , 1667	Eleventh Moon (p. 391)	Tenth Moon (p. 385)

Since the first snow graces the beginning of the snow season, it usually and typically falls only briefly, accumulates little, and melts away quickly. Here as elsewhere, the typical in nature is the essential in poetry. Accordingly, an early handbook reads:²⁵ “The topics of *hatsuyuki* should be treated as accumulating little.” For the first deep snowfall there was a separate kigo available, 初深雪 *hatsumiyuki*. Another aspect of the poetic essence (本意 *hoi*) of *hatsuyuki* is that it melts fast. *Kefukigusa*, one of the above-mentioned reference works, presents not *hatsuyuki* but *hatsuyuki no kie*, melting of the first snow, and *Zō-Yamanoi* presents the kigo *hatsuyuki* and follows it up with *hatsuyuki kiyuru*, the first snow melts away, in smaller lettering. Focusing upon this aspect, Bashō’s disciple Kyoriku (1656–1715) wrote: “First snow — / from the stable / it starts to melt.”²⁶ The soil rich with horse dung is warm from fermentation. After the scentless snow is gone, a smelly cloud of steam may be rising.

In addition to these physical characteristics, the *hoi* of *hatsuyuki* has symbolic significance and emotive power. If *snow* feels inherently pure and beautiful, and its beauty is numinous, the *first* snow cannot but be “a major object of poetic beauty.” Thus, we hear an eleventh-century poet intone:

my eyes accustomed to viewing / snow in the heights of Yoshino /
year after year / utterly delighted with the fresh beauty/ of first snow
this morning²⁷

25. Quoted from *Shiorigusa* (1627) in Kadokawa shoten, ed., *Zusetsu haiku daisaijiki-Fuyu*, p. 81.

26. *Sumidawara* in Abe Kimio, et al, ed., *Shōmon haikaishū*, vol. 1, p. 404.

27. Fujiwara no Yoshitada (d. 1041), *Shikawakashū*, #154, in *Kinyōwakashū*, *Shikawakashū*, p. 264.

Six centuries later, Bashō's disciples joined in after the fashion of haikai:

first snow — / mother lets her baby see it / tucked in her bosom²⁸
— Sanpū

first snow — / watching it first / washing face after²⁹
— Etsujin

on the first snow / who could he be / to take a leak?³⁰
— Kikaku

“first snow, first snow” / you sing, flitting about — / wren³¹
— Kayū

Bashō, under whose tutelage these disciples engaged in poetic explorations in the usage of *hatsuyuki*, was of course aware of the power of this kigo. To gain a sense of this power, his use of *hatsu-*prefixed kigo is worth a look. Such kigo compounds designate much awaited seasonal phenomena or events, and the time when a hokku centering on such a kigo is composed will typically match the kigo's season. As a result, the hokku is charged with the joy of having an anticipation finally and happily fulfilled. Such hokku represent a special form of what Bashō calls “friendship with the four seasons,”³² and he composed a score of them with kigo like *hatsu-gatsuo*, first bonito, and *hatsu-gōri*, first ice. They include six *hatsuyuki* hokku, the most numerous of them all. Here are four examples featuring *hatsu-makuwa*, first makuwa melon, and *hatsu-shigure*, first winter shower. In Sixth Moon of 1689 Bashō wrote:

When we enjoyed the evening cool at the residence of Gyokushi in Ōmi,
our host treated us with a melon and asked each of us for a hokku, saying

28. Abe Kimio, et al, ed., *Shōmon haikaishū*, vol. 1, p. 236.

29. Abe Kimio, et al, ed., *Shōmon haikaishū*, vol. 1, p. 97.

30. Ishikawa Masahiro, et al, ed., *Shōmon meiika kushū*, vol. 1, p. 209.

31. Kon Eizō, Miyamoto Saburō, ed., *Shōmon haikaishū*, vol. 2, p. 459.

32. *Oi no kobumi* in SBT, p. 330, #1.

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playfully, “If you don’t come up with a verse, no melon for you.”³³

The first makuwa — / shall I split it into four / or cut round slices?
— Bashō

The first melon — / we’d take a bite and pass it along / I recall
— Sora

Among us three / our Old Master — / the first makuwa
— Fugyoku

It’s been much fun / but rather lacking / is the melon’s flavor
— Gyokushi

As he was setting out on a western journey in Tenth Moon of 1687, Bashō wrote:

tabibito to waga na yoba re n hatsu-shigure
first winter showers! / call me by my true name — / Traveler!³⁴

On the occasion of meeting someone *for the first time*, Bashō presented the following hokku to him:

hatsu-shigure hatsu no ji o waga shigure kana
first winter shower / of all winter showers / the one with “first” is my favorite³⁵

The implication is: Just as I especially welcome the first winter shower falling upon us right now, so it is my special pleasure to meet you. Late in 1689, while walking in the first winter shower, Bashō wrote:

33. SBT, p .408, #92.

34. *Oi no kobumi*, SBT, p. 330, #2; trans. adapted from Peter J. MacMillan, *Matsuo bashō o tabisuru*, p. 138.

35. SBT, p .101, #849.

hatsu-shigure saru mo komino o hoshige nari

first winter shower — /the monkey's face seems to say, / "I too want
a little straw coat"³⁶

The point of this poem is not that the monkey is sunken in misery, badly in need of protection from the threat of hypothermia, and the poet takes pity on it. *Mo* (too) here is crucial. The poet finds in the monkey's appearance an enthusiastic fellow-frolicker in the first winter shower. The straw coat is the fitting thing to wear for the occasion, and the poet has one on himself. "Little" indicates the poet's affection for the creature.

Having explored the legacy of the compound kigo *hatsuyuki* from traditional Japanese poetry, and how Bashō generally draws on it in his usage of the venerable kigo, let's turn to the other kigo, *suisen*.

Suisen

The word *suisen* is commonly translated into English as "narcissus" or "daffodil,"³⁷ and could only be so translated. *Suisen* is of Chinese origin. It seems probable that when the plant *suisen* came over to Japan from China, the Japanese, having no word of their own for it, adopted the Chinese word. 水仙 *suisen* is the compound of 水 (water) and 仙, and this latter character combines 人 (person) and 山 (mountain).³⁸ It refers to a person living "far from the madding crowd," typically in the depths of mountains. The plant was so named presumably because it likes moist soil, and its flowers suggest purity. Because of its Chinese origin, the word *suisen*, unlike *hatsuyuki*, is not rooted in the cultural soil of Japanese animism.

36. *SBT*, p. 71, #606. For an excellent commentary on this hokku, see Haruo Shirane, *Traces of Dreams*, p. 72.

37. "Narcissus" much more often than "daffodil."

38. In Bashō's magnum opus *Oku no hosomichi*, we find an analysis of the configuration of the Chinese character for chestnut tree (*SBT*, p. 340, #9).

A Chinese character used in writing Japanese, called *kanji*, usually has two distinct sounds, *ondoku* and *kundoku*. *Ondoku* is the Chinese reading adjusted to the Japanese phonetics, while *kundoku* is the Chinese word rendered into Japanese. For instance, the *ondoku* of 水 (water) is *sui*; the *kundoku*, *mi* or *mizu*.³⁹ The *ondoku* of 仙 is *sen* but it does not have a *kundoku*. *Suisen* is the *ondoku* of 水仙, but it also has no *kundoku*. This means that the word *suisen* wears its Chinese origin on its face, especially for diction-sensitive poets. Such *ondoku*-only compounds were not considered elegant and were therefore shunned in composing classical waka. Thus, *suisen* is a uniquely haikai topic and kigo. In sharp contrast, 初雪 *hatsuyuki*, which lacks an *ondoku* counterpart, was eligible for classical waka diction, and haikai inherited it.

Of the two candidates for translating *suisen*, “narcissus” and “daffodil,” which is preferable? The history of these English words is fraught with confusion and compromise. Through it all, no usage has emerged to the exclusion of the other, such that these words are coextensive in denotation. Thus *The Oxford English Dictionary* reports that a certain Perkinson wrote in 1656: “Narcissus is the Latin name, and Daffodil the English of one and the same thing,” and that botanists accept the more popular daffodil over narcissus.⁴⁰ This usage has apparently been preserved in American English: in 2017, Katherine Wagner-Reiss, a guide in the Brooklyn Botanical Garden, wrote: “Daffodil is the common name for spring-flowering bulbs in the genus *Narcissus*.”⁴¹

So, “daffodil” and “narcissus” differ in register, the former more popular, the latter somewhat technical. Furthermore, they signifi-

39. Another example: the *ondoku* of 木 (tree) is *moku*; the *kundoku*, *ko* or *ki*. In today’s Mandarin, 木 is read *mu*, but its earlier sound was *muk*. The *k* sound has been dropped in China but preserved in Japan. The *u* sound at the end of *moku* was added in conformity with the Japanese phonetics.

40. See the “daffodil” entry of *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

41. Wagner-Reiss, Katherine, “What’s in a Plant Name: Narcissus, Daffodils, and Jonquils” in The New York Botanical Garden, *Around the Garden*, April 18, 2017.

cantly differ in connotation, as a myth from ancient Greece has it that Narcissus, a handsome youth, was so entranced by his own image in a pool of water that he leapt in to his own demise and was transformed into the flower that bears his name.⁴² From this myth arose a cloud of associations. In the 17th century, Milton wrote “Narcissus that still weeps in vain,”⁴³ and 20th-century psychoanalysis identified a pathology it termed “narcissism.”⁴⁴ In 2021, Leila Chatti wrote about her poem “After Touching You, I Think of Narcissus Drowning”:

I turned to the myth of Narcissus as a way to understand a man I loved, but the myth ultimately revealed to me at least as much about myself. What interests me about Narcissus is not his vanity, which I think is a mischaracterization, but his desire, an obsessive yearning that is his undoing.⁴⁵

At this late date, the myth still has power, whether it is about vanity or obsessive yearning. But Bashō’s *suisen*, as it fell outside of the Greco-Roman tradition, escapes this power. Since the myth of the plant name’s origin does not pertain to “daffodil,” this word is the preferable option for *suisen*. A lesson here is that what is added in translation can be as much of a problem as what is lost.

“Daffodil” and *suisen* in Bashō’s usage, however, are not synonymous. We hear the guide at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden call, “Don’t miss Daffodil Hill in April when it’s a sea of yellow and white.”⁴⁶ Bashō saw *suisen* grow and bloom in November and

42. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book III, lines 411-510, trans., David Raeburn, pp. 112-116.

43. “Narcissus” in *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

44. See the definitions of “narcissism” in *The American Heritage Dictionary*: “1. Excessive admiration of oneself. 2. Psychoanalysis. An arresting of development at, or a regression to, the infantile stage of development in which one’s own body is the object of erotic interest.”

45. Chatti, Leila. “After Touching You, I Think of Narcissus Drowning.” *Poem-a-Day*, 21 Jan. 2021, <https://poets.org/poem/after-touching-you-i-think-narcissus-drowning>.

46. “Daffodils.” New York Botanical Garden. <https://www.nybg.org/garden/>

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December. The only kind of narcissus growing in Japan in his day was *Narcissus tazetta* L. var. *chinensis* Roem. Makino Tomitarō (1862–1957), the famed father of modern botany in Japan, describes this variety as follows:

Supposed to have come over to Japan from China. A perennial growing in the wild in warm areas along the Pacific coast of the mainland of Japan, from the Kantō region westward. Also cultivated for its beauty. 20–30 cm in height. Fleshy leaves; flowers, abloom in midwinter, are fragrant.⁴⁷

Suisen, specified by Makino as a midwinter bloomer, is reflected in the usage of kigo *suisen* in the following mid-17th century haikai reference works:⁴⁸

	<i>Suisenka, daffodil flowers</i>
<i>Hanahigusa</i> , 1636	Eleventh Moon, p. 88
<i>Haikai shogakushō</i> , 1641	Early Winter, pp. 115-116
<i>Kefukigusa</i> , 1645	Frost Moon, pp. 132-133
<i>Yama no i</i> , 1647	Winter, p. 255
<i>Zō-yamanoi</i> , 1667	Eleventh Moon, p. 386 & 391

All these reference works agree that *suisenka*, daffodil flower, is a winter kigo, and three of them assign this kigo specifically to Frost Moon or Eleventh Moon — that is, mid-winter. In the extant 17th century hokku containing the kigo *suisenka*, that kigo was used, I'd suspect, without exception, to mark the winter season. Here are a couple:

daffodils. Accessed 29 May 2025.

47. *Genshoku makino shokubutsu daizukan* (Makino's Great Flora in Colour), p. 757, # 2270. As other species of *Narcissus* came over to Japan later, the sense of *suisen* expanded to mean them as well. See the same flora, p. 757, #2271. Tokyo, called Edo in Bashō's days, is at the center of the Kantō region.

48. All these haikai reference works are included in Kobayashi Shōjirō and Ogata Tsutomu, comp., *KZS*. The pagination in the chart is that of this volume.

why have you withered / winter grasses? / daffodil flowers ask⁴⁹

— Sōmin

under snow / who have come to bloom? / daffodil flowers⁵⁰

— Ippo

No wonder that *suisenka* was also called 雪中花 *setchūka*, bloom-in-the-snow.⁵¹ The kigo *suisen* was also used to mark the winter. Thus Gonsui (1650 – 1722) wrote:

*yukiji fukaku suisen kari tsu yoru no fugu*⁵²

path deep in snow / I clipped daffodils / abalone dinner

In the winter section of the haiku reference work *Yumemigusa* (1656), six hokku are listed under the heading of *suisenka*. Of these six, one has the kigo *suisen*.⁵³ Thus in the 17th century, *suisenka* and *suisen* were used exclusively as winter kigo, and this practice was in complete agreement with botanical and horticultural fact.

Aside from the daffodil-in-the-first-snow hokku, in Bashō's extant hokku we find the kigo *suisen* and *suisenka* used just once each:

suisen ya shiroki shōji no tomoutsuri

daffodils / and white paper screens / reflecting each other

— Bashō

sumi no hi bakari fuyu no motenashi

just a charcoal brazier / for winter hospitality

— Baijin

49. Inui Hiroyuki, et al, ed., *Teimon haikaishū*, vol. 2, p. 102.

50. Ezaka Hironao, et al, ed., *Danrin haikaishū*, vol. 1, p. 76.

51. Kadokawa shoten, comp., *Zusetsu haiku daisaijiki-fuyu*, p. 498.

52. Abe Kimio, et al, ed., *Shōmon haikaishū*, vol. 1, p. 19. A vase of daffodils together with the abalone dinner is a treat for an expected guest.

53. *Danrin haikaishū*, vol. 1, p. 76.

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Visiting a Baijin around the 20th of Tenth Moon, 1691, Bashō is expressing his appreciation of the beauty of the host's residence, and Baijin responds with modesty.⁵⁴ A few days later, he went to visit a Hakusetsu:⁵⁵

sono nihoi momo yori shiroki suisenka

its color / whiter than the peach / daffodil bloom

— Bashō

tsuchiya waraya no narabu usuyuki

clay huts straw hats in a row / a skiff of snow

— Hakusetsu

Since the guest's hokku and the host's haiku agree on the season, in the first guest-host exchange, “a charcoal brazier” and “winter” clinch *suisen* as a winter kigo. So does “a skiff of snow” in the second exchange clinch *suisenka* as a winter kigo.⁵⁶ In these instances, Bashō's use of *suisenka* and *suisen* conforms with their usage in 17th-century haikai, and also with botanical fact.

Hatsuyuki and *Suisen* Coming Together in Bashō's Hokku

In Bashō's hokku under investigation, *hatsuyuki* and *suisen* come together. Just how do they do so as phenomena of natural history

54. *SBT*, p. 266, #212. On Bashō's hokku, see the commentary on the poem in Makoto Ueda, *Bashō and His Interpreters*, p. 325.

55. *SBT*, p. 266, #213. On Bashō's hokku, see Yukio Kachi, “Bashō and the Poetry of His Pen Names,” *Origami Butterflies*, pp. 98–99.

56. On the first hokku, Jane Reichhold writes (*BCH*, p. 356, #758): “1691 — spring but written in autumn. Bashō wrote this verse as a greeting to Baijin of Atsuta when he stayed with him on October 20, 1691.” As we have seen, this hokku is a wintertime verse written in winter. She mistakes “the 20th of Tenth Moon” (December 9) for October 20. By the same token, she misidentifies the season of the second hokku (p. 359, #778; see note 23 above). She correctly notes that this hokku is the opening stanza of a linked verse but apparently fails to read the wakiku — a typical case of reading out of context.

and of literary history? How does the hokku draw on the poetic powers and images of these kigo the literary tradition bequeathed to Bashō, and how are they modified for aesthetic effects? How do *hatsuyuki* and *suisen* come together with respect to seasonality? In the poem, are these kigo coequals in thematic weight? If not, which is weightier? What roles do the other words of the poem play in bringing them together? And finally, how does the poem reflect the phase of Bashō's life as a poet? To answer these interrelated questions, we must turn to the poem's context — context, to begin with, in the sense of the textual material in which Bashō embedded it.

Embed it he did in the collection known as *Atsumeku*, meaning “verses gathered.” In the autumn of 1687, seven years after Bashō retired from downtown Edo to a grass hut in the village of Fukagawa, he compiled this collection, selecting thirty-four hokku of his own from the past seven years (1681 – 87). Bashō gave this collection no title. A thematically informative title would be *A Journey Through the Four Seasons at the Grass Hut*. He arranged the thirty-four in the order of the seasons, beginning with spring and ending with winter. The first two are New Year's hokku, and the last two are Year's End hokku in perfect counterpoise. Immediately before the last two, (33) and (34), Bashō placed the hatsuyuki pair of (31) and (32):⁵⁷

57. For Bashō's work of calligraphy see *Bashō zenzufu zuhanhen*, pp. 106–7; for a printed version see *Bashō zenzufu kaisetsuhen*, p. 76. For the calligraphy work and printed version together see Akahane Manabu et al, comp., *Shohon taishō bashō haibun kubunshū*, pp. 530–35.

At the end of the collection Bashō dated *Jōkyō teibō aki* (autumn 1687) and signed *Bashō-ō tōsei* (Old Man Bashō Tōsei).

Bashō did not assign a number to each of the thirty-four hokku. I am numbering them to facilitate reference.

(32) is extant in two other brushworks by Bashō. See *BZZ-zuhanhen*, p.99, #87 and #88. #87 is accompanied by his own picture of daffodils in snow (also reproduced in Makoto Ueda, *Bashō and His Interpreters*, p. 148); #88, by a daffodil picture by Sanpū. From the features of handwriting and drawing an expert conjectures #87 to be a work of 1694, the last year of Bashō's life, and eight years after the composition of (32) in 1686–87 (*BZZ-kaisetsuhen*, p. 72, #87).

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- 31 我くさのとの *waga kusa no to no* Wanting to see the first snow
 はつゆき見むと *hatsuyuki mi mu to* at my grass hut,
 よ所に有ても *yoso ni ari te mo* even when the sky just
 空だにくもり *sora dani kumori* clouded over
 侍れば *habere ba* while I was away,
 いそぎかへること *isogi kaeru koto* I rushed home
 あまたたび *amata tabi* time and time again.
 なりけるに *nari keru ni* Then on the middle
 師走中の八日 *shiwasu naka no yōka* eighth of *Shiwasu*
 はじめて雪 *hajimete yuki* snow fell for the first time,
 降けるよろこび *furi keru yorokobi* a true joy:
- はつゆきや *hatsuyuki ya* first snow —
 幸庵に *saiwai an ni* luckily here I am
 まかりある *makari aru* at my hut
- 32 初雪や *hatsuyuki ya* first snow —
 水仙のはの *suisen no ha no* just until
 たはむまで *tawamu made* the daffodil blades bend

Bashō leaves no room for doubt that the theme here is the first snow. At the beginning of the prose preface, we have “Wanting to see the first snow,” and at its end, “snow fell for the first time, a true joy.” In addition, both hokku begin with *hatsuyuki ya*, where the interjectory particle *ya* marks the emphatic presentation of the topic, ushers in a pause to let that topic reverberate, and leaves us eager to see what’s to follow. *Hatsuyuki* is the primary topic of hokku (32). “The middle eighth of *Shiwasu*,” namely, the 18th of Twelfth Moon, clinches the idea that *hatsuyuki* here is functioning as a winter kigo, and this idea precisely matches the placement of (31) and (32) in the winter section of the cycle of seasons represented in *Atsumeku*.

The aesthetic power of *hatsuyuki*, an old poetic expression, originates in animistic snow worship and *kotodama*, spirit of the

word. But it is not easy to reactivate this potency. For by Bashō's time it had been used for centuries, and the sense of *déjà vu* it would conjure up is deadly in poetry. The difficulty is even more acute in hokku composition. If a hokku begins with *hatsuyuki ya* as (31) and (32) do, there remain only twelve syllables, or some half-dozen words with which to bring to life the potency of this time-honored expression in eye-catching ways. In (31) and (32), does Bashō surmount this difficulty and succeed in rendering the power of *hatsuyuki* palpable again? If so, how?

As prehistoric farmers eagerly waited for the first snow as a promise of a bountiful crop, so did poets look forward to it as the paragon of cold beauty. Especially Bashō. In the winter of 1686–87, however, what he wished to see was not just the first snow. It was instead “the first snow at my grass hut.” This specification is significant. From downtown Edo he had retreated to his grass hut in the village of Fukagawa five years before. That winter, the first snow did not come to Fukagawa in Tenth Moon when it was ordinarily expected. Nor did it fall in the following moon cycle. So we read: “even when the sky just clouded over while I was away, I rushed home time and time again.” Each time he rushed home, his anticipation was dashed. The more often it was dashed, the more intense his wish grew. Notice his homing orientation and utterly childlike eagerness here. When the first snow finally came, his wish finally fulfilled, it was already the middle of late winter — “the middle eighth of *Shiwasu*” to be precise. This is a rather elaborate way to date the felicitous day. In a moon cycle there are three days called eighth: the early eighth (8th), the middle eighth (18th), and the late eighth (28th). *Shiwasu* designates Twelfth Moon. This way of dating calls attention to itself. Its effect is fourfold. It specifies exactly how overdue the first snow was, identifies the memorable day, hints at how excited the child in the forty-two-year-old poet might well be when it finally arrived, and evokes a picture of “poetic madness.” The way Bashō wrote *shiwasu*, 師走, literally meaning *teachers on the run*, evokes a

picture of underpaid teachers rushing about this time of the year to quiet their creditors' demands, forestall an interest rate increase, and welcome the New Year debt free. Contrast this picture of financial exigency with that of a man-child afflicted with “poetic madness” rushing home time and time again just to see his grass hut, or perhaps the daffodil blades in his garden, dusted with the first snow!

In haibun (31), the episode described in the prose section leads up to a celebration in the form of hokku: “first snow — / luckily (*saiwai*) here I am (*makari aru*) / at my hut.” What is celebrated is the felicitous union of the first snow, the grass hut, and the poet, and the celebrant is that poet. The last word of the prose section, *yorokobi* (“a true joy”),⁵⁸ a noun, is derived from the verb meaning *to be joyous* and also *to celebrate*.⁵⁹ 幸 *saiwai* (“luckily”) in “luckily here I am at my hut” is a word connoting vitality. Derived from *sakihahi* or *saihahi* by phonetic change, the word is cognate with 咲 *saku* (to bloom), 榮 *sakau* (to flourish, thrive), and 盛 *sakaru* (to be at its peak, in one's prime). The etymon of *sakiwau* according to *Iwanami Dictionary of Classical Japanese*, is for flourishing plants to bring about human happiness.⁶⁰ In this particular instance, the first snow at the hut brings about the poet's fulfillment. *Makari aru*, translated “here I am,” is a highly formal and theatrical expression. Its formality fits the celebratory ceremony. An actor might utter this expression as he emerges to announce his attendance in accordance with the will of an authoritative figure already on stage.⁶¹ In this instance, Bashō is playacting as prompted by his madness. The poem does not depict a celebration. It is itself an act of celebrating in which “true joy” is expressed.

Now comes the crux of the matter: how *hatsuyuki* and *suisen* come together in (32):

58. I am borrowing Barnhill's translation (*BH*, p. 56, #189).

59. Maeda Kingorō, et al, ed., *Iwanami kogojiten*, p. 1398.

60. *Saihahi* (p. 549) and *sakihahi* (p. 561) in *Iwanami kogojiten*.

61. See *makari* in *Iwanami kogojiten*, pp. 1213–14.

hatsuyuki ya suisen no ha no tawamu made
 first snow — / just until / the daffodil blades bend

Made, an adverbial particle of extent, at the end of the poem is noteworthy. The typical translation is Makoto Ueda's: "the first snow / just enough to bend / the daffodil leaves,"⁶² where "just enough" suggests the extent of quantity and weight more than that of time. My translation makes the extent of length of time explicit, leaving the extent of quantity and weight implicit.⁶³ Consider the function of this little word in the description of Bashō's departure scene in his *Oku no hosomichi*: "When I looked back I saw my friends standing in a row, no doubt to watch *until (made)* we were lost to sight."⁶⁴ His friends had come to see him and his companion off on a long journey to the Deep North. They went on watching, it is said, until a definite terminus. In general, in this temporal usage of *made*, a process continues until a specified limit is reached. In (32), when the first snow stops falling, it leaves the daffodil blades arching, and the poet holds his gaze at the dynamic snow-blade interaction till then.

Hokku (32) is the culmination of haibun (31). (31) begins with a description of the poet's eager anticipation to see the first snow at his grass hut and ends with his celebration of the fulfillment of his hope and wish. Having ceremoniously welcomed the first snow, in (32) he begins to gaze at snowflakes as they fall in twos and threes on the daffodil blades by the veranda. As more flakes come down, the white dots on the green leaves become more and more numerous, and here and there they become contiguous. The arc

62. *Bashō and His Interpreters*, p. 149. Cf., David Landis Barnhill (*BH*, p. 56, #190): "just enough to bend," and Jane Reichhold (*BCH*, p. 91, #279): "enough to bend down". Cf. Andrew Fitzsimmon's "beginning to bend" (*Bashō: The Complete Haiku of Matsuo Bashō*, p. 106, #280).

63. In 1974, Yamamoto Kenkichi wrote of "the passage of time" suggested by *made*. (*Bashō zenhokku*, p. 230).

64. *SBT*, p. 337, #1; trans., Donald Keene, *The Narrow Road to Oku*, p. 23, with my italicization and parenthetical insertion.

of the blades increases little by little. Then before long, flakes stop coming down, leaving the snow's weight and the blades' flexibility and resiliency in perfect equilibrium. Had it gone on falling longer, the blades might be broken or pressed down and buried under the snow. The color contrast between the snowflakes and the daffodil blades, the gradual shift in color configuration and the arc of the blades, and what appears to be the perfect equilibrium reached at the end of the first snowfall, are all marvelous to behold. Each of these four features of the scene in the flow of time is an aesthetic delight; the four of them together, all the more so — just the sort of *hatsuyuki* modality the poet fervently wished to see “at my hut,” as he specifies the locality in hokku (31).

(31) and (32) form a fascinating pair that contrasts subject and object. (31) is all about the poet. Its prose section describes how the poet acted in anticipation of the first snow at his hut. Its hokku is itself an act of celebrating the advent of the first snow at his abode. The celebrant is on the stage. (32) is, in contrast, all about the first snow, how it has acted upon the daffodil leaves. The gazing poet has disappeared to bring forth exactly what his gazing has revealed. Or so it seems at this layer of interpretation.

What is celebrated in (31), as we noted, is not just the advent of the first snow but the first snow “at my hut.” And insofar as (32) is the culmination of (31), the daffodil blades too are not abstracted from a particular patch of soil but are growing in Bashō's yard in Fukagawa. What is the significance of this locality in the context of (31) and (32)? Since Bashō himself does not give a straightforward answer, I'd like to explore an exegetic possibility and propose a symbolic reading *in addition* to the more literal interpretation set forth so far.

In the winter of 1680–81 Bashō, then known as Tōsei, retreated from the hustle and bustle of downtown Edo across the Sumida River to a grass hut in the village of Fukagawa. From that time on

to the autumn of 1687, the date of his compilation of *Atsumeku*, he called that grass hut home.⁶⁵ Towards the end of this seven-year period, he went on a long westward journey commemorated in his *Nozarashi kikō*, *Journal of Bleached Bones in a Field*. At its beginning we read: “It was the first year of Jōkyō, autumn, the eighth moon. *As I left my ramshackle hut by the river*, the sound of the wind was strangely cold.”⁶⁶ His bosom friend and travel companion Chiri (1645 – 1716) also wrote: “Fukagawa — / leaving the *bashō* tree / to Mount Fuji’s care.”⁶⁷ The *bashō* tree was growing by the eaves of the grass hut. It was so appealing to the poet that he adopted it as his pen name, which would remain his favorite for the rest of his life.⁶⁸ Mount Fuji was visible far to the west from his “ramshackle hut.” Bashō made sure to include this hokku by Chiri in his *Journal*. In a perfect counterpoint to its beginning, the *Journal* concludes: “At the end of Fourth Moon, I returned to my hut, and as I rested from the weariness of the journey: summer robes — / still some lice / I’ve yet to pick.”⁶⁹ Thus does the author register his clear and definite sense about his hut in Fukagawa as his basis of operation.⁷⁰

Bashō’s grass hut indeed is the venue for the four-season concert called *Atsumeku*. Hence my proposal to give the concert the thematic title of *A Journey Through the Four Seasons at the Grass Hut*. Consider the following four hokku, the first two from its spring poems, the last two from the autumn ones:

65. In the winter of 1682 – 83, his hut burned down, and another was built in its vicinity one year later.

66. *SBT*, p. 323, #1; trans., David Landis Barnhill, *BJ*, p. 13. Emphasis added.

67. *SBT*, p. 323, #1; trans., Barnhill, *BJ*, p. 14.

68. See Yukio Kachi, “Bashō and the Poetry of His Pen Names,” *Origami Butterflies*, Yuki Teikei Haiku Society Members’ Anthology 2024, pp. 94–120.

69. *SBT*, p. 326, #13; trans. Adapted from Barnhill, *BJ*, p. 22. To Make this translation respond to his departure date as he renders it, I have changed Barnhill’s “Month” to “Moon.”

70. This is strikingly different from his departure to the Deep North four years later. Having sold his grass hut in preparation for this journey, he had no grass hut to which to return. He thus made his journey his abode (*SBT*, p. 336, #1).

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- (8) old pond — / a frog leaps in / the sound of water
(11) clouds of blossoms / ah, a temple bell, / Ueno? Asakusa?
(23) straw-coat worm: / come listen to its call / my grass hut
(29) just one possession / my life is but / a light gourd⁷¹

In (8), Bashō has invited his friends and disciples to his grass hut, where he treats his guests to a faint sound of water from the pond in the yard. It is so quiet here — a fitting environment for tuning into a subtle sign of awakening vitality. In (11), the clouds of cherry blossoms on the yonder shore of the Sumida River are in view. While enjoying this late spring scene, the poet hears the sound of a temple bell wafting across the river. The poem is a springtime sight-and-sound duet at “the ramshackle hut by the river.” Another presentation of this poem comes with a prefatory note: “My grass hut.”⁷² (23) is Bashō’s invitation to his friends and disciples. Both the host and the prospective guests know that the *mino-mushi*, bagworm, makes no call. So the poem is an invitation to listen to the silence at his grass hut. A bagworm makes a miniature sleeping bag out of leaf slivers and tiny twigs, hangs it from a tree branch, and lives in it. “Straw-coat worm” is my direct translation of *mino-mushi*, where *mino* means a straw raincoat worn by travelers, as Bashō himself did. There is a common motif running through the images of a *mino-mushi*, a traveler with a *mino* on, and a dweller in a grass hut. (29) depicts Bashō’s grass hut. It is so sparsely appointed that the gourd hanging from a rafter and used as a rice bin, is conspicuous. It is said to be light because it is gutted and dried. “My life is but a light gourd” because it is not — no longer — encumbered by pursuit of wealth, power, and glory.⁷³

71. *Bashō zenzufu kankōkai*, comp., *BZZ zuhanhen*, pp. 106–7.

72. *Zoku-minashiguri* (1687) in Abe Kimio, et al., ed., *Shōmon haikaishū*, vol. 1, p. 71.

73. Jane Reichhold translates (29): “the one thing / that lights my world / a rice gourd” (*BCH*, p. 90, #275) and comments on it: “The light color of the gourd made it look like a lantern. [. . .] due to Bashō’s poverty he had no lantern other than the rice gourd” (p. 282, #275). Bashō’s word *karoki* (light), cognate

It all began with Bashō's retreat to Fukagawa. He had come to realize serving the anonymous throng of haikai hobbyists for a fee, which was the typical practice of masters of which he was one, turned haikai into commodity. He had come to realize this practice in the marketplace of haikai was part and parcel of the pursuit of wealth and fame in which "the madding crowd" was steeped. He had to get away. He had also come to realize the haikai that featured wordplay for its own sake and parodies of classics — the more outrageous the better — were bound to fall short of the true spirit of poetry. He had to abandon the haikai of that ilk and search for a voice of his own enlivened by the spirit of true poetry in conformity with nature. In this search for a new life and poetry, he had three guides, Zhuangzi (4th century BCE) and Du Fu (712 – 770) of China, and Saigyō (1118 – 1190) of Japan.

In his new life in the village of Fukagawa, initially, the influence of these writers upon Bashō was rather shallow. Flavoring his writing with their tastes did not go much beyond writing style, like preferring *ondoku* to *kundoku* or vice versa, and his borrowing of their expressions and images here and there. But it gradually deepened as he reflected on their values and modes of life. Initially, his new life of *wabi* — "lonely poverty" in Barnhill's translation — was mentally hard to bear, and the increased exposure to nature, particularly in winter, was physically distressing. But he persevered, sustained by his hope for liberation from conventional strictures and tapping into nature's creativity. At this stage he wrote poetry of suffering. Eventually, however, as he adapted to his new life of asceticism, he awakened to the joy of aestheticized *wabi* and began to embrace the *wabi*-saturated life for its simplicity and purity. His new poetry expressive of this joy replaced the poetry of

with 空 *kara* (empty), means *light* as opposed to *heavy*, not *light* as opposed to *dark*. Having confused the two English homonyms, Reichhold fabricates a context and attributes it to Bashō. His poem has nothing to do with the gourd as a lantern substitute. Besides, poor as he was, he did have a lantern.

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suffering.⁷⁴ The following statement by the eminent Bashō scholar Kon Eizō (1924–2012) precisely locates the period during which Bashō’s retreat to the village of Fukagawa came to bear fruit in his life and poetry:

<p>On the basis of what he achieved on his journey of <i>Bleached Bones in a Field</i>, during his absorption in poetry composition at his hut for two years and a half right after the journey, Bashō continued his thought and practice which deepened his newly discovered haikai voice. [. . .] Judging from his later reference to “the turning point in my haikai career in the Year of the Tiger,” he seemed to own the third year of Jōkyō as the time when he firmed up this new voice of his. He focused upon the principle of nature in the depths of the quite ordinary life activities of grasses and flowers, insects and birds at hand. [. . .] It seems best to assign the time when this philosophy bore fruit to this period.⁷⁵</p>	<p>1684-5 Fifth Moon, 1685– Tenth Moon, 1687 1686 1685–87</p>
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So it was during the two-and-a-half-year period right after his journey of *Bleached Bones* (1685–87) that Bashō, absorbed in poetry composition at his grass hut, brought his development to fulfillment. And in this period, the Year of Tiger (1686) was his self-acknowledged “turning point.” Let’s see where those poems from *Atsumeku* we have considered are located in this chronology:

<p>1686 1686–87 1687</p>	<p>spring (8) old pond — / a frog leaps in / the sound of water autumn (29) just one possession / my life is but / a light gourd winter (31) first snow — / luckily here I am / at my hut " (32) first snow — / just until / the daffodil blades bend spring (11) clouds of blossoms / ah, a temple bell / Ueno? Asakusa? autumn (23) straw-coat worm: / come listen to its call / my grass hut “ Compilation of <i>Atsumeku</i></p>
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74. Yukio Kachi, “Bashō Awakens to the Joy of Wabi,” forthcoming.

75. *Bashō nenpu taisei*, p. 88, with my identification of the years on the side. An anonymous reader of an earlier version of this essay called my attention to this passage.

Here we have the exact concurrence of “the turning point in my haikai career” and the composition of these poems from *Atsumeku*. This means that hokku such as these exhibit and celebrate the true art of haikai Bashō had sought to attain ever since his retreat to the grass hut. In this “true art” nature and poetry came together. In (8), for example, Bashō was treating his guests with both the faint “plop” and the hokku about it.

(31) and (32) and their surroundings in *Atsumeku* are ripe with symbolization. “Grass hut” connotes rusticity, quietude, simplicity, purity, and closeness to nature, or rather immersion in nature. It is the fertile basis of operation for the poet, and poetry is the heart of his operation. When a poem is of his life, as they are in *Atsumeku*, it is no wonder that “grass hut” is present. Hence its explicit presence in (23) and (31) and tacit presence in (8), (29), and (32). In adopting the *bashō* tree’s name for himself, Bashō must have made the tree into a symbol. It had grown remarkably by the eaves of the grass hut. Of the gourd used as a rice bin and hanging from a rafter in the hut, Bashō wrote: “my life is but a light gourd.” It holds rice — a staple of life — in it. The straw-coat worm is quiet, and it weaves a straw raincoat and wears it just as Bashō does when on a journey. The old pond is quiet too, and in its quietude, there is a subtle but definite sign of life. And all these life activities — the leaping frog, the blossoming cherry trees, the straw-coat-weaving worm, the fast-growing *bashō* tree — are manifestations of the principle of life. So is Bashō’s composition of these poems.

In this context, the (31)–(32) pair seems to lend itself to a symbolic reading. In (31), as the poet rushes home again and again, so has he struggled long to achieve his goal of “the true art of poetry.” As the poet has finally come to see the first snow at his grass hut, like welcoming home a long-awaited loved one, so too has he finally learned to embrace nature and become “a friend of the four seasons” at his rustic domicile. As the first snow promises more snow to come for a bountiful harvest, so too does his embrace of

nature promise further poetic creation. As seeing the first snow at his grass hut is worthy of celebration, so too is his life ripe in poetry worthy of it. As for (32), while it shows a particular image of the first snow, just of the sort he was so eager to see, the poem itself vividly shows the art of poetry he feels he has finally achieved. As more and more snowflakes fall on the daffodil blades under his watch, so too is development in art a process, a deepening of thought and practice for the poet. As the first snow has stopped after falling briefly, to the satisfaction of its 本意 *hoi*, poetical essence, so too has Bashō fulfilled *hoi*, original intent, of retiring to the grass hut in the village of Fukagawa. As the daffodil blades are not crushed to the ground under the snow, so too is Bashō not overwhelmed by his exposure to nature. As the matching purity of the snow and the daffodil, the contrast of the white of the snow and the green of the blades, and the equilibrium of the snow's weight and the blades' resilience and flexibility are all exquisite, so too are the poet's discovery of home in nature and its expression in poetry felicitous.

How does (31)–(32) draw on the powers of the two *kigo*, *hatsuyuki* and *suisen*? And how does it modify them for fresh aesthetic effects? First, as we noted above, these *kigo* have very different roots. *Hatsuyuki* is a time-honored *kigo* prized in classical *waka*; *suisen* is a Chinese expression banned from classical *waka*. These heterogenous words might be juxtaposed for an odd bedfellow effect as they would be in Danrin school *haikai*. But here they are juxtaposed for marvelous aesthetic effect. This is the aesthetic way of establishing *suisen* not only as an entry in the *haikai* lexicon but also as a uniquely *haikai kigo* while rejuvenating the aged *kigo hatsuyuki*. This way of elevating a non-elegant word into the language of poetry while rejuvenating an old poetic word marks Bashō's new voice. Second, the latent potency of *hatsuyuki* backed up by the almighty *kigo yuki* comes to life. Third, the use of *hatsuyuki* for the one which did not come until “the 18th of

Twelfth Moon” deviates from its standard usage for early winter by two moon cycles. Even this deviation suggests the intensification of the poet’s anticipation. Fourth, the haikai practice tended to focus on *hatsuyuki*’s *melting*. But Bashō’s focus is on its limited time of falling.

With regard to *suisen*, we have seen botany and haikai poetics and practice all agree on its winter seasonality. There is no question that *hatsuyuki* and *suisen* belong together as sharers of the season. One significant deviation from the norm is that while the traditional image of *suisen* is of *suisenka* daffodil flowers, (32) focuses on *suisen no ha* daffodil blades, which, being multi-seasonal, is not a kigo. This departure from the norm is what enables (32) to bloom. Furthermore, given a test to fill in a blank in the trio of *yuki* (snow) and *tawamu* (to bend), a good haikai beginner would write *matsu* (pine) or *take* (bamboo). Bashō may have been the first to fill in the blank with *suisen no ha*. Thus (32) breaks out of the traditional mold to sparkling effect and prepares the way for others to follow. For example, Bashō’s disciple Sanpū (1647 – 1732) wrote:⁷⁶ “little by little / bend under snow — / fir branches.” *Suisen* also has a potential ring that suits the grass hut in Fukagawa and its resident. See how a certain Kūson (d. ca. 1671) exploited this potential a generation before Bashō when he wrote:⁷⁷ “daffodils grow / seeking refuge — / a hidden hamlet.” He also wrote: “gardener too / cutting the figure of / a daffodil man.” “A daffodil man” is my translation of 水仙人 *suisennin*, Kūson’s coinage. In this compound noun, 仙 *sen* is a pivot: going with the foregoing 水, it forms the word *suisen*; going with the following 人, it forms the word *sennin*, a holy man of the mountain. Though Bashō was not exactly a *sennin* — and would not have called himself one — he did aspire to lead a *sennin*-like life away from “the madding crowd.” Thus *suisen*, *sennin*, and the resident of the grass hut have purity in common. As does *hatsuyuki*.

76. Ishikawa Masahiro, et al, ed., *Shōmon meika kushū*, vol. 1, p. 366.

77. *Yumemishū* (1656) in Ezaka Hironao, et al, ed., *Danrin haikaishū*, vol. 1, p. 76.

Reading Bashō's *Hatsuyuki-Suisen* Complex out of Context

Among the various contexts of (32), its link with (31) and its first appearance in *Atsumeku* are especially important. Thus the editors of Bashō's hokku collections in Japanese generally identify *Atsumeku* as the textual source of (32),⁷⁸ and many of them comment explicitly on the relationship between (31) and (32) in addition to presenting them together. For instance, Yamamoto Kenkichi (1907–88), a distinguished scholar of Japanese poetry in general and Bashō's hokku in particular, remarks that the preface to (31) is also applicable to (32),⁷⁹ and Kira Sueo and Satō Katsuaki call (31) and (32) “a perfect pair.”⁸⁰ But when it comes to English translation, it's another story. In Makoto Ueda's *Bashō and His Interpreters*, a standard reference work for translators of Bashō's hokku ever since its publication in 1991, (32) is treated without reference to either (31) or *Atsumeku*.⁸¹ Such is also the case with representative translations of Bashō's hokku that include (31) and (32). David Landis Barnhill, for instance, presents (31) and (32) right next to each other in that order and says of (32): “Winter: first snow; narcissus (*suisen*), 1686–87 (18th of Twelfth Month; January 31, 1687).”⁸² This note identifies the two kigo in (32) and its date of composition correctly. But it says nothing about the textual source of (32) or the context of its dating.

78. Of the eleven collections I have consulted, only one fails to name *Atsumeku* as the textual source.

79. *Bashō zenhokku*, p. 230.

80. *Bashō zenkushū*, p. 475. They call (31) and (32) *kōittsui*.

81. P. 149. On p. 148 is presented a painting and calligraphy of (32) by Bashō. The date of this art work is unknown, but an expert conjecture places it in 1694, eight years after the composition of (32).

82. *BH*, p. 56, #189-190, and p. 185, #189-190. In the preface of #189, Barnhill has “the 8th of Twelfth Month,” which should read “the 18th of Twelfth Month.” Since Barnhill identifies the date of composition of (32) as “18th of Twelfth Month,” according to his mistranslation, (31) and (32) were composed ten days apart.

Thus the stage is set for puzzling over the date of “18th of Twelfth Month.” Consider for example Michael Dylan Welch’s interpretation of (32).⁸³ Reading it out of context, he wonders: “[it] sounds like a known date associated directly with the poem rather than any kind of extraneous note by the translator.”⁸⁴ Instead of confirming this correct conjecture, he proceeds to set this aside, assign *hatsuyuki* not to winter, to which it belongs, but to sometime after the New Year in the luni-solar calendar,⁸⁵ and concludes that *hatsuyuki* is not functioning as a kigo in (32).⁸⁶ Relegating the heart and soul of (32) to a non-kigo status is nothing short of a disaster.

Welch’s reasoning for this line of thought is his experience of seeing the narcissus bloom, such an experience as one may have upon visiting Daffodil Hill in the Brooklyn Botanical Garden in March or April. Given such an experience, we face a pressing question: How could “the first snow” possibly fall on daffodils unless this expression meant the first snow of the lunar New Year? The urgency of this question would keep us from pondering the possibility that our experience might be a far cry from Bashō’s.

The general tendency to read a hokku in isolation, of which Welch’s examination of (32) is a particular manifestation, stems in part from the Western idea of a poem as an individual poet’s creation. In the haikai tradition, composition is a collaborative group activity, and a verse inherently is a part of a whole. This fact

83. “First Snow on Daffodils : Writing Reality,” *nesting dolls*, The Yuki Teikei Haiku Society Members’ Anthology, 2018, pp. 63-72.

84. P. 66.

85. Pp. 68-71. Jane Reichhold (*BCH*, p. 91, #278) and Andrew Fitzsimmons (*Bashō: The Complete Haiku of Matsuo Bashō*, p. 106, #279) mistranslate *hatsuyuki* as “the first snow of the year” or “first snow of the year.” This translation would suggest snow in First or Second Moon. But Fitzsimmons, for one, correctly places (32) in “Winter, 1686.” An implication is that no snow fell early in the spring of that year. Bashō’s use of *hatsuyuki* carries no such implication. *Hatsuyuki* in his use never meant “the first snow of the year.”

86. “. . . the two season words in this poem are essential, but in actuality, only one of the potential season terms is functioning as the season word.” (p. 72).

is encoded in the term “hokku.” Originally, it meant the opening stanza, an invitation to fellow poets to follow with their stanzas in a joint composition of linked verse. Adam L. Kern is emphatic on this point: “Bashō . . . never, strictly speaking, wrote a single haiku in his life” where a haiku is understood “as a standalone utterance of the individual poet.” He elaborates further: “Whenever a *hokku* appeared outside of its original sequence, it was almost always snapped back into another linked context as with affiliated prose (*haibun*) and images (*haiga*).”⁸⁷ Both the pair of (31) and (32) and the *Atsumeku* as a whole are such linked contexts. And it is these contexts, among others, that anchor (32) with its first snow and daffodil blades in the winter season.

In order for haikai as a collaborative group activity to succeed, the group’s members must enjoy a common basis of knowledge, sensibility, and cultural memory, despite diversity in their socio-economic background. And to understand and appreciate their creation we must feel our way into their shared knowledge as much as possible by, for example, learning their language and reading what they read. This is especially true of the culturally dense, historically layered phenomenon of *kigo*. To find our way into it from across the gaps of time, place, and language, we must read the *kigo in context*, both in the broad and the strict senses of the term.

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87. *The Penguin Book of Haiku*, XXV and XXVII.

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- BJ *Bashō's Journey: The Literary Prose of Matsuo Bashō*
- BZZ *Bashō zenzufu*
- KHBT *Koten haibungaku taikei*
- KZS *Kinsei zenki saijiki jūsanshu honbun shūsei narabi ni sōgō sakuin*
- NKBT *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*
- SBT *Shinpen bashō taisei*
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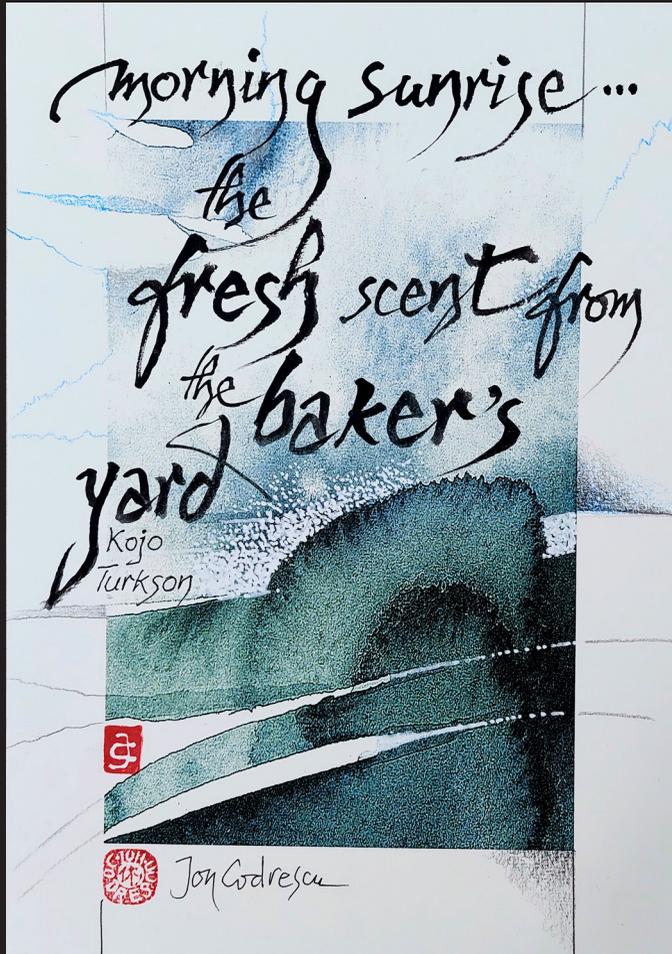
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AFRICAN HAIKU:

Colonial Wounds and Reconciliation in Adjei Agyei-Baah's *Afriku*

Ibrahim NURENI

ABSTRACT: This paper analyzes Adjei Agyei-Baah's *Afriku* (2016) as a collection of haiku that revisits colonial wounds and offers poetic insights into what reconciliation means between the West and the postcolonial world. Using sensory imagery, Agyei-Baah's *Afriku*, a poetic touchstone for the Afrocentric haiku movement, derives its name from merging Africa and haiku to describe the African indigenization of the Japanese poetry form to convey postcolonial issues, such as colonial violence, trauma, and systemic inequalities. The preoccupation of Agyei-Baah's *Afriku* aligns with the tradition of examining the effects of colonization in the embryonic stage of every genre in African literature. Agyei-Baah comes into Africa's literary scene to contribute to the never-ending postcolonial conversations about wounds and resilience, and to use the temporality of haiku to illuminate how colonialism perpetuates and undermines the economic, social, and psychological growth of the people in post-colony. This paper concludes that Agyei-Baah's *Afriku* exemplifies how haiku uses pictorial language to help readers (re)imagine colonial wounds as embodied experiences and provides a poetic blueprint for political reconciliation between the West and the postcolonial world.

Introduction

Post-independence African poetry in English (1950s-1970s) exalted African cultural identity and the euphoria of freedom (e.g., Ghana's 1957 liberation), while also scrutinizing postcolonial disillusionment and inherited colonial burdens. The poets in this generation, namely Okot p'Bitek (Uganda), Leopold Sedar Senghor (Senegal), Niyi Osundare (Nigeria), Ama Ata Aidoo (Ghana), and Mongane Wally Serote (South Africa), domesticated Western literary traditions by using what I refer to as the mainstream poetry—meaning, the general poetic forms such as epic, narrative poetry, sonnet, etc., that are widely taught, published, and recognized—to articulate their own cultural, political, and personal experiences. Most of these poets did not use the non-Western (or Japanese) literary traditions like *renku*, *waka*, haiku, tanka, and *senryū* in their anti-colonial struggle. This is because the Western poetic styles learned through colonial education largely influenced the early generation of poets. Even pioneers like Wole Soyinka—though he blended African and European modernist traditions—overlooked Asian poetic forms, despite the cultural exchanges of the Bandung era. Thus, decolonizing African poetry required contemporary generations (of haiku poets) to look beyond Eurocentric models.

The twenty-first century ushered in a generation of poets with a great desire for experimentation to explore new genres and forms. Poets like Adjei Agyei-Baah and Emmanuel Jessie Kalusian have recognized the value of venturing into haiku and other Japanese literary traditions to express their personal, political, social, and environmental experiences. Agyei-Baah emerged after Africa's mainstream Anglophone poetry was fully developed, but he used his debut collection, *Afriku* (2016)—which Keith Simmonds in “Afriku: Haiku & Senryu from Ghana” describes as “the [first] work of its kind to come out of the African continent” (43)—to signify

that the haiku tradition in Africa is in its nascent stage. This stage, much like the earlier phases of Africa's post-independence poetry, requires the African indigenization of haiku—a traditionally non-Western (Japanese) form—into an Afrocentric literary mode of representation. Agyei-Baah worked vehemently toward indigenizing haiku and advocating for its study in the curriculum of African literature till his death in 2023. Like Okot p'Bitek and Niyi Osundare did in their early stage of writing poetry, Agyei-Baah, in his collection, *Afriku*, introduces us to the themes of colonialism and the celebration of African culture. He, being one of the forerunners of Afrocentric haiku movement, models the sentiment that we “breathe coloniality all the time and everyday” (Maldonado-Torres 243) by means of the way he interrogates colonial wounds.

While Agyei-Baah champions the Afrocentric haiku movement, one needs to note that haiku predates his writerly engagement with the form in African society. In “A History of African Haiku,” Agyei-Baah admits that haiku was first written in Africa in 1989, when Sonowo Uchida (1924-2009) likely introduced it to the continent in Senegal (107). The Japanese haiku poet and ambassador to Senegal and to Morocco in 1981 promoted haiku through contests, but this genre was not wholly recognized like mainstream poetry. African American writer, Richard Wright, also wrote haiku about Africa when he traveled “to the newly independent Ghana in West Africa” to witness Ashanti culture (Hakutani 510). Wright's haiku, though inspired by his travels in Africa, often universalizes its imagery but detaches it from distinctly African contexts. This approach sparks debate about authenticity, questioning whether his poems reflect African traditions or merely project diasporic abstractions onto the continent.

This tension between outsider perspectives and African self-representation is not unique to haiku. The broader debate over who should write about Africa, or what qualifies as African poetry,

has long preoccupied postcolonial and decolonial thinkers. For decades, scholars have critiqued literary works that misrepresent or exoticize African traditions, demanding more nuanced, culturally grounded poetics. Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa* is one of such literary pieces that is ruled out of a corpus of African literatures that defines colonial experiences due to the ill-representation of the African people—Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o describes the novel as one of the “most dangerous books ever written about the African continent” (*Moving the Centre* 151). The acute portrayal of African culture forms the larger constituent of African literature. On this note, it becomes important to also point out who can write African haiku. The art of writing haiku is not only for African-born or African-diasporic writers, foreign writers with an interest in this indigenized genre should be considered with the clause of firmly understanding African culture. I argue that African haiku should interrogate or articulate what defines African philosophies of life. To put it differently, writing African haiku is all about objectivity, observation, and in-depth knowledge of African culture. These three elements are paramount because “one cannot write about robins in the snow if one is sitting in Thabazimbi” (Heese 71). Haiku written by writers lacking the elements, even if they possess a sense of Afrocentric sensibility, cannot be classified as Afriku (a portmanteau of ‘Africa’ and ‘haiku’), but rather as haiku about Africa.

Since the introduction of the Japanese poetry form in Africa in 1989, haiku lacks formal ties to African cultural sensibilities. The formalization of African haiku started in the twenty-first century, with the birth of Agyei-Baah's *Afriku*. As Berglund points out, Agyei-Baah's work should not be read as a mere imitation of Japanese tradition but as an attempt to create authentic, localized forms of haiku (119). Prah views African haiku as an offshoot of the Japanese poetry that expresses “simple and complex subject matter(s) and theme(s) indigenously tied to seasons, nature, sound or myriad

of issues in sync with Africa” (77). I define African haiku as the use of African sensory elements and seasons to present nature or human experiences that not only capture a sense of impermanence or beauty but also reflect African cultural and literary nuances. Agyei-Baah, in his attempt to foreground African haiku, revisits the issues that predominantly shaped the first generation of African poetry: colonial wounds and reconciliation; thus, the *fons et origo* of this paper. His desire to revisit these foundational issues in African poetry is to align with the earlier literary traditions and comment on the remnants of colonial wounds. Agyei-Baah’s use of African haiku reflects on how colonial wounds continue to shape identity and voice in postcolonial African society. Thus, what differentiates Agyei-Baah’s representation of the subject of discourse from mainstream poetry is not only the immediate pictographic-like image that makes readers pause and reflect for emotional resonance, but also how it “facilitates the possibility of iterative engagement” (Rosenow and Hamington 54). This iterative engagement is germane for exploring colonial wounds because trauma resurfaces non-linearly—not as coherent memory, but as disjointed, intrusive re-callings. The brevity, juxtaposition, and ambiguity in haiku make readers engage repeatedly with the poem to uncover a plurality of meanings and emotional resonance in every reading attempt. Every reading creates a new image of colonial wounds, resulting in new meaning and affect that can facilitate reconciliation.

Haiku as a Picture of Colonial Wounds

One of Agyei-Baah’s poems that not only triggers emotions but also has many interpretative lenses is “Morning Dew.” The poem, typical of most haiku compositions, uses the fragment and phrase technique to juxtapose human-related concerns with nature images:

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morning dew —
perhaps heaven weeps
for mankind (20)

Simmonds reads the haiku as “the intimate relationship of nature with the social milieu belies the author’s inquietude for man’s salvation or his interrogation about a benevolent God coming to humanity’s rescue” (44). The reading of Simmonds is largely focused on humanity and Agyei-Baah’s existential concerns. While this is not a misreading, the imagery in other haiku in the collection, like “Castle Cannons,” “Mining Town,” and “All That Remains,” prompts one to raise questions about why heaven weeps for humanity in the “Morning Dew” haiku. The symbol of mourning in the poem suggests a sense of horror, which one can link to the colonial themes present in the collection. I argue that the “Morning Dew” haiku can be read as a prologue to Agyei-Baah’s representation of colonial violence. Agyei-Baah uses haiku, what Kacian calls “the most painterly of poetries” (145), to capture the image of sorrow in a frozen moment through the artifice of language. The haiku operates through intuition, thus immersing readers in real-life moments. Its economy of language achieves this by showing (not telling): it evokes raw emotion through precise imagery, leaving meaning to resonate beyond the page.

As shown in the poem, the *kigo* “morning dew” is not about small water droplets, far from it, but rather carries the weight of sorrow. Metaphorically, dewdrop resembles tears; that is, the transformation of the natural world into mourning. The phrase “perhaps heaven weeps / for mankind” can best be understood when it thematically relates to other haiku like “All That Remains,” where Agyei-Baah obviously uncovers the theme of colonial destruction. The haiku, “Morning Dew,” suggests a cosmic sorrow over the colonial dehumanization of people in post-colony. The phrase suggests that the divine regrets the inhumanity of man to man that preoccupies the world. Colonialism is a great example

of man's inhumanity to man in the sense that it, in the view of Maldonado-Torres, "left profound marked not only in the areas of authority, sexuality, knowledge and the economy, but on the general understanding of being as well" (242). The complexity of these inhumanities across race, gender, class, and more leads to a state of divine mourning. In this sense, Agyei-Baah situates the poetic meaning within the context of religious allusion. The poetic expression "for mankind" alludes to *Genesis* 6: 6-7, thus: "The LORD regretted making human beings on the earth and his heart was grieved" (Gen. 6.6-7, NABRE). The intriguing component of this poem is how the natural beauty of morning dew contrasts with human brutality to present the weight of (colonial) history of destruction.

Agyei-Baah in the haiku below pictures the horror of slavery and how it brings negative affect in post-colony today. The haiku is emotionally driven in that it leads the reader down to a path of self-reflection about the weight of colonial terrors and destruction and one cannot agree more than heaven truly weeps for mankind. The haiku goes thus:

castle cannons —
pointing where
their owners have gone (39)

This haiku evokes images of European castles built on the African continent in the 15th century. It has an in-depth note on colonial stewardship and the unresolved specter of power. The haiku represents the three forms of violence Mbembe identifies: founding, legitimating, and maintaining violence (25-26). The "Castle Cannons" can be interpreted as the foundation of violence used to enforce colonial sovereignty. The verse "pointing where their owners have gone" legitimizes and maintains this violence by framing colonial power as almost naturalized force. I argue that the cannons, though abandoned, remain fixed in their aggressive

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posture thus implying that the violence they represent is not past, but perpetually latent. More so, colonizers determine, as Mbembe notes, what is considered “just and unjust” or “right and not-right” (26). The end of colonial rule does not signify the end of violence but rather its continuation. The image of “castle cannons” thus suggests European forts along the West African coasts. One of the famous castles that this haiku brings to mind is the Elmina Castle, which Bruner describes as both “a part of Ghanaian history” and African American history (292). The Portuguese built this castle in 1482 to “facilitate trade on the Gold Coast, to the Dutch who captured the Castle in 1637 to the British who gained control of Elmina in 1872, through to Ghanaian independence in 1957” (Bruner 292). This castle, as Bruner argues, is now a tourist attraction in postcolonial Ghana. The cannon was a central node during the transatlantic slave trade and was used as a shield against rival colonial powers and to enforce control over the people. I suggest that the presence of these cannons in post-independent Ghana is nothing but an artifact of dehumanization. Agyei-Baah indeed eagle-eyes the direction of the cannons to convey that they do not literally point toward Europe or America as the route of the slave ship (“where their owners have gone”), a destination of extracted wealth and human lives, but the cannons metaphorize a system of oppression that outlives the colonial period. To Agyei-Baah, the owners have departed, but the cannons testify to the horrors of colonialism. Agyei-Baah, therefore, is creative in depicting the cannons not as mere objects but as, in a metaphoric sense, silent witnesses of colonial oppression. The function of this castle-themed haiku is memorial in the sense that the image of the cannons conjures the memory of violence and slavery. The beauty of the haiku lies in Agyei-Baah’s desire not to use any registers of violence, but allows us, the reader, to envision the image and draw emotions from it.

In another poem, Agyei-Baah is unapologetic in his use of the registers of violence to draw emotions and to present the gravity of colonial wounds. The haiku goes thus:

all that remain
 of a lost tribe's story —
 scratches and scars (67)

The above haiku dwells on the erasure of indigenous culture and the colonial traumatic experiences in the Global South. Laden with historical pain, the registers are employed to expose the trauma of colonial wounds. This haiku portrays the colonial wound as a present occurrence, as evinced in Agyei-Baah's use of present tense. The present moment in the poem is not just about its tense usage, but also about the pictorial language that metaphorically breathes life into colonial trauma. To breathe life into colonial trauma is to create an imagination of colonial wounds and a reminder that colonialism is not a foregone matter in the sense that its remnants continue to perpetuate in the post-colony today. In the words of Oostindie, "Every former colonial country is constantly being reminded of that past and accused of triumphalism and concealing the 'dark pages' of its history" (133). Mbembe adds that the colonized people "belonged to those forms of living whose distinctive feature was to remain forever enclosed in the virtual and the contingent" (28).

I argue that remembering the past risks reinforcing postcolonial paranoia, a term De Chavez uses to describe the tendency in postcolonial critique to become fixated on injury, suspicion, and trauma as the only lenses through which to understand colonial legacies (219). While some postcolonial readings risk reifying trauma through what De Chavez calls a "paranoid" mode of remembrance, where melancholia and suspicion dominate interpretive frameworks (219), Agyei-Baah's *Afriku* navigates a more reparative path. Rather than becoming entrapped in cycles of injury, the haiku's visual immediacy and brevity encourage reflection, recognition, and the possibility of healing. Importantly, *Afriku* does not deny the persistence of colonial violence; instead, it renders such violence visible without surrendering to the affective

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impasse of paranoia. Here, Mbembe's view that postcolonial societies have inherited "unconditionality and the regime of impunity" (26) from the colonial order becomes crucial: Agyei-Baah's work acknowledges this structural inheritance but resists reducing postcolonial subjectivity to woundedness alone. His haiku signal that confronting inherited trauma can coexist with gestures toward reconciliation and futurity.

Agyei-Baah's engagement with colonial horror is not, as De Chavez cautions, a form of affective overinvestment in trauma or a reiteration of "bad news" poetic narratives (218); rather, it is a deliberate act of historical reckoning that seeks to illuminate the past in order to imagine a more just and reconciled future. In the haiku, Agyei-Baah begins with a phrase, and the fragment follows. The haiku is unveiled with a stark declaration, "all that remain:" this first part of the phrase carries the weight of extinction, and the second, "lost tribe's story," tells it all in that it renders a vivid image of the disappearance of indigenous communities. The disappearance here is not just about their stories but also their language and culture, thus delineating the colonial policy of assimilation in some postcolonial countries. The em-dash after the word "story" tells readers to pause and ponder the phrase before reading the closing line. The haiku ends with a visceral image of "scratches and scars:" scratches is creatively used to suggest the diluted cultural practice and the scars, to portray colonial trauma passed from one generation to another. In pre-colonial society, the oral tradition was mostly passed through generations. The narrative has taken a downward turn: what is now passed on are pain and colonial atrocities.

What is striking about Agyei-Baah's haiku is creating a snapshot of awareness that leaves room for a readerly imagination and interpretation. He uses this moment of awareness to reveal the impacts of colonial and postcolonial extractions in the following haiku:

mining town
 on the surface of buildings—
 worry lines (98)

The mission of colonialism, as Muiu argues, “was based on exploitation” such that “the colonial state did not have the interests and needs of Africans” (1313-1315). This exploitative mission of colonialism is portrayed in an array of colonial and postcolonial poetic-narratives, including Derek Walcott’s “A Far Cry from Africa,” Wole Soyinka’s “Telephone Conversation,” and Mazizi Kunene’s “Europe.” Agyei-Baah’s haiku differs from the listed poetic style in that it embeds human emotion and socio-economic criticism through minimal cum imagistic delineation, instead of persona-driven storytelling. His use of town as a physical setting is used to convey emotion, unlike the novels where setting is employed not as emotional but narrative cum character journey subject. The line “mining town” depicts a physical setting where extraction, labor, and economic hardship take place. Mining town is portrayed as a boom-and-bust layer in that extraction prospers the colonial rulers but destroys the postcolonial environment. Further on, Agyei-Baah reveals how the colonial footprint is not just economic but architectural in that the colonial buildings, both in design and style, are constructed to show dominance and oppress the indigenous people. The metaphorical image in the last line depicts the psychological effects of mining as an exploitative means, and how it leads to environmental and health crises like lung diseases, pollution, and traumatic experiences passed down from the colonial generation to the present.

Agyei-Baah also touches on the (post)colonial border crossing in his Afrocentric haiku collection. He uses his collection to uncover the violence of colonial borders in an absurd manner. The haiku that best captures the absurdity of human-drawn division goes thus:

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disputed land —
crows flout
the borderlines (37)

The haiku begins with “disputed land,” which hints at the history of divide-and-conquer colonial operations. This operation was primarily about how the European powers partitioned Africa in the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, with no regard for the people’s cultural, social, and territorial relationships. The conference led to the division and border crisis in today’s Africa. As Paine et al point out, the postcolonial society today “retained the colonial-era international border” (1). Agyei-Baah’s haiku, though lacking a traditional *kigo*, uses “disputed lands” as a thematic anchor to expose the role of colonial cartography in sowing Africa’s conflicts. The image in the haiku satirizes how postcolonial societies are embroiled in a violent confrontation over land disputes. Further, Agyei-Baah uses the image of a crow to portray the indifference of nature to human politics. He satirizes the militarization of the border in that it only prevents humans from crossing, but “crows flout the borderlines.” The haiku is a wake-up call for the present postcolonial Africa to revert to the precolonial era, where there are overlapping zones. Agyei-Baah nudges readers to meditate on the tragedy and absurdity of colonial borders. To him, nature fails to take note of our borderlines or our internal conflicts, as exemplified in the case of crows, where its image exposes the hubris of the leaders that implant colonial ideologies in post-colony.

The Pathway to Reconciliation

Agyei-Baah’s *Afriku* is not only a collection filled with paranoid poetic thoughts but also presents readers with his own philosophy of optimism and reconciliation. For him, reconciliation is to respect difference and seek prosperity, and not the type that risks reinforcing Western dominance when unity is prioritized over

equity. One of the poems that best touches on reconciliation in the collection goes thus:

black coffee
 white sugar
 I stir the world into oneness (94)

This haiku, Simmonds reads, is a “stunning plea for worldwide peace and unity” (44). To Soyinka, this haiku “speaks to the affliction of human borders that nations and races construct, thus implanting doctrines of separation that distort not only human relationships, but the very human condition” (91), but what is striking, I argue, is the symbol used to convey the message. Agyei-Baah employs two lucrative commodities in the colonial epoch (“coffee” and “sugar”) to present his reconciliation ideology. The haiku is historically driven, thus aligning with Gilroy’s call for understanding the history of racial inequalities so as to address “the principles of solidarity and collectivity that produced ‘races’ as totalities” (45-46). Agyei-Baah takes us back to the era of transatlantic slave trade, through the symbols of coffee and sugar. Coffee was one of the exotic goods that the Europeans used as a means of economic exploitation and dehumanization. As Chan argues, coffee production was “imposed on the colonies for the benefit of colonial powers and their economies at the expense of local laborers” (39). The phrase “black coffee” in the haiku speaks to the black bodies who labored to produce coffee on the plantation. Historically, many black people were enslaved to work on the sugar plantations under inhumane conditions. The black coffee, using gustatory symbolism, portrays the bitterness of colonial exploitation, and the color “black” depicts the skin of the African people. Sugar, on the other hand, is also a lucrative commodity: the force, I argue, behind the transatlantic slave trade. Agyei-Baah symbolizes “white sugar” as a refined product to condemn the colonial powers that were enriched from the hard labor of black people. The white

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sugar symbolically depicts sweetness and the deliberate attempt to erase the ill experiences of black people in colonial narratives. The “white” shows the skin of white people. The haiku contrasts black labor and white profit, an avenue for articulating racial differences. The haiku’s aha moment, “I stir the world into oneness,” speaks directly to the theme of reconciliation. The mixture of black coffee and white sugar into “oneness,” while expressing a strong desire for reconciliation, is metaphorically laden. It can be read as the need to merge and reconcile the colonial and indigenous cultures, that is, the normative of cultural hybridity in post-colony. The haiku speaks about, to use the words of Gilroy while he echoes Fanon, “unmaking of racialized bodies and their restoration to properly human modes of being in the world” (45). Agyei-Baah does not imply that reconciliation is about forgetting or ignoring the past, which is far from it, but engaging with history to blend opposing forces into something that models a way forward.

The post-colony today needs healing and reconciliation for social, political, and psychological development. The haiku collection is an allegory for reconciliation, thus, a process that requires cultural erasure, oppression, and trauma be addressed. Agyei-Baah reveals his penchant for reconciliation in the following haiku:

moving water
causing stagnant water
to move (82)

The haiku is rich with symbolism: “stagnant water” depicts the decay, inertia, and never-ending traumatic experiences. The idea of stagnation in the haiku is a metaphor for how the effects of colonial violence have undermined Africa’s social, political, and economic development. It reveals inequalities as a byproduct of colonial violence. To Agyei-Baah, there is room for the post-colony to develop and become better; that is, through the “moving water.” This haiku thus juxtaposes “moving water” with “stagnant water”

to suggest that development begins with an initiation of change. The metaphor of “moving water” and “stagnant water” represents colonial forces, and indigenous or oppressed postcolonial society. Moving water metaphorizes colonialism that historically disrupted indigenous societies and re-directed their modus operandi for imperial gains. This use of metaphor echoes the words of Fanon, saying: “Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content... it turns to the past of oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it” (210). To Agyei-Baah, stagnant water is nothing but the aftermath of colonialism in post-colony: suppression of culture, fragmentation of identities, cycles of poverty, and many others. The stagnant water thus is the effects of what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o calls “cultural bomb” that annihilates “a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves” (*Decolonising the Mind* 3). Having said this, the process of water movement in the poem (“causing stagnant water/to move”) suggests that reconciliation requires an active disruption of stagnation. This subscribes to the postcolonial thought of re-examining history, revitalizing indigenous knowledge, and deconstructing colonial ideologies. Agyei-Baah shows us that the moving water does not simply replace the stagnant water, but rather creates an interaction or what I would call new possibilities. In this purview, to Agyei-Baah, reconciliation is not about returning to pre-colonial past but rather forging a new life that blends with the past and present.

Conclusion

Most genres in African literature begin with a critique of colonial wounds to unveil the issues that affect the development of post-colonial societies. The African novel, for instance, was championed by Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, and their contemporaries

to authenticate African identities while condemning colonial violence. In drama and poetry, writers such as Ama Ata Aidoo, Wole Soyinka, Athol Fugard, Leopold Sédar Senghor, Dennis Osadebay, and Gladys May Casely-Hayford similarly used their genres to critique empire and recover cultural memory. In the embryonic stage of African haiku, Agyei-Baah's *Afriku* continues this tradition by confronting colonial violence and seeking reconciliation. What distinguishes Agyei-Baah is his ability to use the pictorial language of haiku to render colonial experiences with emotional precision and formal restraint. The collection, as a kind of "text-photography," guides readers through histories of colonial violence, cultural erasure, and psychological trauma, while also suggesting ways forward.

In contrast to postcolonial texts that risk dwelling in paranoia and melancholia, *Afriku* presents a reparative archive that neither erases colonial trauma nor is overwhelmed by it. Through imagistic clarity and affective control, the collection critiques the remnants of empire while envisioning a path toward recovery. The stagnant water in the collection, symbolic of postcolonial underdevelopment, is portrayed not merely as inherited conditions but as histories that must be confronted and transformed. In this way, *Afriku* demonstrates that to develop postcolonial societies is not only to reckon with the past, but also to actively reconcile racial, political, and economic divisions in the pursuit of collective healing.

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JUXTA

Presentation

Africa forest



a tractor keeps
tunneling



Ion Codrescu

in and out
Adjei Agyei-Baah

THE WRITING OF HAIKU BEYOND JAPAN

Grant CALDWELL

This paper was prepared in response to five questions posed by the Australian Studies Association Conference at Matsuyama University, Japan in June 2024. I will be focussing on the writing of haiku in English, but I believe my responses are equally applicable or at least relevant to all languages and cultures globally.

1. Do you think the concept of “*fueki ryūkō*” is specific to Japanese literature and culture, or is it universal and has its equivalents in Western culture?

There are numerous questions contained within this question.

In order to respond adequately, I will presume to talk about the specificity of *fueki ryūkō* in Japanese haiku rather than the broader aspects of ‘Japanese literature and culture’. As suggested already, I will address the equivalents of *fueki ryūkō* predominantly in the writing of haiku in English outside of Japan rather than in ‘Western culture’. Indeed, I have difficulty defining or conceiving the notion of culture, western or otherwise, but any adequate discussion of this difficulty is beyond the confines of this paper. In brief I will say that most great Japanese poems I have read reveal universal principles rather than specific cultures or cultural references. Indeed, it is my belief that part of the value and attraction of haiku lies in this universality.

My reading of Japanese literature is limited to the reading of haiku of the past 300 years, in translation, as well as in books and essays also in translation. Some of these essays or books are written by Japanese American scholars such as Haruo Shirane. In Shirane’s 1998 book *Traces of dreams; Landscape, cultural memory, and the poetry of Bashō* he appends a number of concepts or tropes that can be used by haiku poets, including *fueki ryūkō* which he describes as: ‘The unchanging and the everchanging... haikai must constantly change (*ryūkō*), find the new (*atarashimi*), shed its own past, even as it seeks qualities that transcend time’ (1998: 293-299). *Atarashimi* is a concept that was applied by Bashō and refers to the ‘new new’, or novelty, required of haiku writers.

In addressing the first part of this question I believe that while the concept of *fueki ryūkō* is specific to Japanese haiku, the idea behind it is not exclusively so. There are many parallel notions or

concepts in literature outside of Japan. I would also note here that in my reading of English translations of Japanese haiku, I perceive *fueki ryūkō* and other concepts such as *wabi sabi* in many poems but not in all (and I include the poems of the Japanese masters here). This same point can be made of the many fine haiku written outside of Japan. This suggests to me that while such concepts are of vital importance, they are not always essential in the poetics of haiku, in Japan or elsewhere.

In talking of Western culture, I might need to focus somewhat on Australia. The notion of Western Culture, while sometimes useful, is reductive and not effective when applied to specific questions. It also suggests the equally reductive and misleading notion of 'Eastern Culture' or indeed, 'Asian Culture'. I may reference the thoughts and poetry of other regions and languages, but my focus will likely be on Australia, at least implicitly, as this is naturally where my knowledge mostly resides. Having said this, I confess that I am unsure exactly what Australian culture is, beyond its mainly British (English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh) recent history. But it is also influenced by the ancient texts of the bible and prominent philosophers and writers, stretching back to the Greeks. Australia is a mostly secular society, although there exist churches of various religions and there are many who still practice these religions. Most of the poets and writers I know are agnostic or gnostic. Australia is also made up of pretty much all the cultures in the world, including the oldest known culture, the Australian Aboriginal culture, which is some 60,000 years old. I have recently published an essay in *Axon: Creative Explorations*, linking the writing of haiku with the culture of Australian (and other) First Nations people, specifically their attitude to Country. The central thrust of that essay is the common trait of embodiment, as also opined by Bashō when he advised poets to 'learn about the pine from the pine, the bamboo from the bamboo'. The Australian landmass is almost as large as China, and equally environmentally and climactically diverse, so

that any reflection, in poetry or otherwise, of or on the nature, the geography, the climate, the natural phenomena, needs to be understood in this context.

Two attitudes, or 'schools' of thought on the writing of haiku

I posit here that the writing of haiku seems to generally incorporate two attitudes: the traditional, where the poet is required to follow strictly certain formal 'rules' of haiku: of *fueki ryūkō*, of *kigo*, of *wabi-sabi*, the regular use of *sajiki*, and in Japan the adherence to 5-7-5 *mora* or sound units (a more extended address of this will be made later); and what is usually referred to as 'freestyle haiku, which takes a more liberal view, avoiding a conscious adherence to such rules while being aware of them, and instead focusing on capturing a moment in time and place and its cultural or universal ramifications. In my view the degree to which the poem reflects cultural aspects becomes more arbitrary, even accidental, and secondary to the universal aspects suggested. Indeed, I believe the attractiveness of haiku for poets globally has been its extant but less requisite or specific requirements or principles such as its brevity (in English a general unwritten 'rule' is for less than 17 syllables), its use of everyday language, its reference to or symbol of time (season) and place (locale), the inclusion of a 'jump', of *ma* or space, its suggestions of juxtaposition, its avoidance of direct metaphor or simile and its inference of the universal in the particular. This last principle, which is a universal poetic principle, I suggest might equate with the concept of *fueki ryūkō*.

I feel a need to emphasise here that it is my view that a detailed knowledge and understanding of theoretical or formal concepts, while helpful, especially for early writers, need not be at the forefront of the poet's mind while composing. For me their use needs to be secondary, unconscious, peripheral to the writing, especially the initial inspired draft. I firmly believe that an attitude

to the writing that is too conscious of specific, formal, conceptual requirements in the writing of haiku, or any form of verse is anathema to its effectiveness, and indeed usually results in shallow, stagnant, cliched poetry. The Polish poet, Czeslaw Milosz, who was greatly taken by and interested in haiku, warned that poems 'should be written rarely and reluctantly, under unbearable duress and only with the hope that good spirits, not evil ones, choose us for their instrument'. I believe that an overly conscious attitude to the concepts or rules for any kind of writing results in far too many poems, the very great majority of which are mediocre at best. This is not to dismiss the importance of these concepts, but if they are learned they should remain peripheral for the poet. Great value resides in the reading of the masters and their ideas or principles of the form, but as I say, without these existing at the forefront of the poet's mind when composing.

In addressing the second part of this first question, as I have suggested above, the poetic principle of the universal in the particular is understood by most poets and writers worldwide, even if unconsciously, and it may be seen as equating with fueki ryūkō. I think it is in *Ulysses* that James Joyce writes that 'in the particular is contained the universal'. In other words, in art, the universal is reflected in the particular. This concept goes much further back into antiquity than Joyce, and perhaps it could be argued that the universal equates with the unchanging (fueki) and the particular to the everchanging (ryūkō).

The ancient Socratic Greek philosopher, Heraclitus (6th C BC to 5th C BC), is an example of an influential thinker from another culture making observations that might be said to equate with fueki ryūkō. Heraclitus famously said: 'No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it is not the same river and he's not the same man'. He is also quoted as saying: 'Nothing changes but change itself'. I hope it can be seen how these statements approximate the principles of fueki ryūkō. The river is both unchanging (fueki),

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as it continues to flow, and changing as it flows, is ‘fluid’ (ryūkō): its presence remains unchanged and yet it moves, it changes, as does the ‘man’ who might step into it. Equally, ‘nothing changes’ could be said to equate with fueki, and ‘change itself’ or the way things change or can change, is fluid, ryūkō. For example, the fact of the seasons does not change but the way they occur may change. Current climate change and its effects may be a pertinent example of this.

Lao Tse, the Chinese philosopher poet who wrote the *Dao de Jing* (or *Tao Te Ching*) lived around the same time as Heraclitus and Confucius, (although he is recorded as preceding Confucius). There are of course various translations of this title and of the text. In Chinese *dao* in this context means ‘the path’ or ‘the way’, and *jing* means ‘ancient text’. This suggests that the wisdom therein came from many centuries prior to Lao Tse, that he was the person who wrote it down for posterity. The first lines of the first verse of the *Dao de Jing* state:

The Dao that can be expressed
is not the eternal Dao.
The name that can be named
is not the eternal name.
‘non-existence’ I call the beginning of Heaven and Earth.
‘Existence’ I call the mother of individual beings.

I interpret these lines as saying that the Universal Way (Dao), perhaps fueki, cannot be put in words, cannot be explained or described, but ‘individual things’ exist and can be described, and individual things can reflect the new (Atarashimi), the fluid (ryūkō) and through these things, the universal. Or as Joyce put it: ‘in the particular is contained the universal’ (in the Atarashimi or ryūkō is contained the fueki). Bashō trained as a Zen monk, and like many haiku poets in those past times, went on to live the life of a lay monk. He would have been aware of and studied the *Dao de Jing*,

as would the Chinese Tang poets who he was so influenced by. In other words, I think it is fair to say that this notion of fueki ryūkō is not exclusive to Japanese poetry or culture but existed and has been passed down from ancient times. Fueki or the unchanging is the universal, and ryūkō or the everchanging is individual or particular things. The universal in the particular.

Please note that I am not advocating haiku as ‘Zen haiku’. I merely suggest that the influence of Daoism through Zen was significant in the development of the form. The Australian scholar, Sharon Dean, expressed this caution very clearly in their 2011 PhD thesis ‘White Heron: The Authorised Biography of Australian Pioneering Haiku Writer, Janice Bostok’.

In the history of haiku in the West, a Buddhist — and in particular, a Zen Buddhist — interpretation has at times been ‘over-emphasised to the point of displacing or strongly misinterpreting the main intention and even brilliance of haiku as a literary art’ (Gilbert 2004: 27). [Jim] Kacian explains, this over-valuing of the role of Zen in haiku hasn’t been helped by the great number of books and papers that have espoused Zen as the true way of haiku, not to mention the oft-quoted fact of Bashō being a Zen priest.

Thus, even though Zen has been ‘an important element in the transmission of haiku understanding in the West’, according to Kacian, it is important to remember that: While discovering the revelatory in the ordinary may sound like Zen, it also sounds like any other exhortation toward heightened perception: slow down, pay attention to what’s before you, write clearly and accurately. This might just as well be a step-by-step procedure in scientific enquiry as Zen understanding. What may be more accurately said, then, is that Zen is one of several orientations of mind which holds in common many of the valued precepts of haiku (Dean 2011, 38).

In my view, a major factor confusing this area is the focus on Zen, the idea of which has become misunderstood to the point of vagueness. This confusion also extends to the contemporary

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understanding of Daoism. This confusion is clearly articulated by the Chinese American academic and scholar, Peipei Qiu.

Qiu relates how many important aspects of Daoism have been obscured by being blended with recent popular Chinese, Confucian and Buddhist concepts, and as a result,

[...] popular Daoist beliefs and practices combined in themselves many things that are integral parts of Chinese culture, including beliefs in heaven and God, ancestor worship, aspirations to immortality, divination, the yin and yang theory, geomancy, astrology, medical thinking, and exorcism. As a result, to what exactly “Daoism” refers has generated a lot of debate (2005, 3).

I would take this point further and say that this confusion has understandably resulted in a discrediting and distrust of Daoism. Nevertheless, in accord with Dean and Kacian’s views, it needs to be acknowledged that the true principles evinced in Daoism are universal, and indeed have their basis in the observation of nature, just as many other areas of thought have done, down through time.

As a final word on this question of *fueki ryūkō*, Shirane suggests that Bashō believed the poet should work along these notions as two axes:

One of the ideals that Bashō espoused toward the end of his life was that of the “unchanging and the ever-changing” (*fueki ryūkō*). The “unchanging” implied the need to seek the “truth of poetic art” (*fuga no makoto*), particularly in the poetic and spiritual tradition, to engage in the vertical axis, while the “ever changing” referred to the need for constant change and renewal, the source of which was ultimately to be found in everyday life, in the horizontal axis. (Shirane 2000, np; Shea and Caldwell 2024, 25).

I read this statement as advising the need for poets to understand that ‘old poets’ were using the ever-changing nature of nature

(things) and aligning it with unchanging nature of nature. It follows that poets need to understand these principles of unchanging and ever-changing, either explicitly or implicitly, and to work with both principles, or else fail to have what Bashō called ‘the sincerity of poetry’.

Again, according to Shirane, Bashō believed that:

[...]the poet had to work along both axes. To work only in the present would result in poetry that was fleeting. To work just in the past, on the other hand, would be to fall out of touch with the fundamental nature of haiku, which was rooted in the everyday world. Haikai was by definition, anti-traditional, anti-classical, anti-establishment, but that did not mean that it rejected the past (Shirane, 2000 np; Shea and Caldwell 2023, 19–20).

2. Lots of non-Japanese-speaking haiku writers do not read Japanese. How much of Japanese culture do you think they understand? And do they have to understand Japanese culture to write good haiku?

I do not believe non-Japanese writers need to read Japanese to write effective haiku. I also feel that non-Japanese writers do not need to understand Japanese culture. Part of this paper addresses the importance of understanding the origins of Japanese culture and poetry prior to and during Bashō’s time. However, as I feel that the principles underlying haiku are, broadly speaking, universal principles, non-Japanese writers can write effective haiku without extensive knowledge of Japanese language or culture. The essential principles of the form, however, need to be learned and understood and applied, and the history of haiku can be key in this learning, leading to effective haiku, even if they are applied liberally according to the writer’s own particular language and environment.

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Because of the worldwide popularity of haiku and the subsequent proliferation of texts on and about the writing and history of haiku in many excellent translations globally, poets can study the origins and basis, and the essential nature of haiku, or ‘haiku spirit’, as applicable to their own regions. As already stated, this ‘essential nature’ I see as universal, even though its application to haiku has been made almost exclusively to Japan up until the beginning of the twentieth century. Many poets outside of Japan do not learn or familiarise themselves adequately with this essential nature of haiku, and their poems often suffer or lack because of it. But this is the case with all forms of poetry, where aspiring poets fail to learn or grasp underlying poetics. Of course, these poetics can be challenged and change, and indeed all art requires such challenges and changes. This also applies to haiku. However, such challenges or changes need to be mindful of the basic principles of the form they are challenging or they risk being shallow or fleeting. I would emphasise that it is my view that the essential nature of haiku equates with other poetics from around the world because they are the basis of all poetics, which have their origins in the keen observation of nature and the environment – both natural and human. I would include in the ‘required’ reading, texts on Daoism and Zen, especially the early foundational texts which I believe greatly influenced the early writing of haiku, particularly in its transition from *hokku* to haiku as developed and propagated by Bashō and his successors. Of course, some translations are better than others, so it is advisable to read widely.

I will include below a selection of haiku (and *senryū*) written by non-Japanese poets. These poems come from various publications in Australia and USA: I have included some of my own poems, with the hope of showing in my practice what I am suggesting in this essay. I also recommend the annual *World Haiku Association Anthology* from Tokyo which has been published since the early 2000s and includes haiku from around the globe, including Japan.

The quality of these poems vary in their approach and quality, as is the case with all anthologies, but they contain many excellent poems from all regions. More importantly, this anthology presents a valuable view of the global practice of haiku.

Australia

swimming beyond the mangroves full moon
 — Graham NUNN
 (Reeves, L. 2012, 3-9)

banksia
 all the shades
 of dying
 — Quendryth YOUNG

steps down
 to grandpa's basement...
 echo
 — Andrew PHILLIPS

sundown
 shadow larger than itself
 a wandering bull-ant
 — Petrus HEYLIGERS

urban flood
 the old creek
 traces its ancestry
 — Carol REYNOLDS

wild roses
 she catches him
 kissing her sister
 — Bee Jay

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silent night the fridge hum changes pitch

— Chris LYNCH

mountain ash forest

a lyrebird vanishes

into currawong song

— Louise HOPEWELL

beer held aloft

he swims through

the flood waters

— Matt HETHERINGTON

(Reeves, L. Proctor, V. Scott, R. 2023)

leaving the house—

a leaf

on the doormat

Covid—

people wearing masks

outside the bank

in the trees

the sound

of wind

a butterfly

flies in and out

of the bird cage

silent tree—

the sky

moves you

in the library

a woman holding a book

watching people

— Grant CALDWELL (2021)

America

straining at the padlock,
the garage doors
at noon

— Jack Kerouac

end of the line
the conductor starts turning
the seats around

— Cor van den Heuval

fog.
sitting here
without the mountains

deserted tennis court
wind through the net

waiting room quiet
an apple core
in the ash tray

— Gary Hotham

where three drowned
the lake water
sparkles in the morning

dead cat...
open-mouthed
in the pouring rain

— Michael McClintock

an empty elevator
opens
closes

— Jack Cain (Canada)

(Kacian, J. Rowland, P. Burns, A. 2013)

3. Are there haiku-related things in Japan that seem strange or just confusing to you?

I can only refer to the poetry I read in translation here. Much of the work that I read translated from prior to the end of the nineteenth century I find wonderfully lucid, although there is a variation in the quality of the translation. I judge poor translations by comparing different translations of the same poems, but also by noting poor syntax in some translations. In more recent Japanese poetry, there are what appear to be mystical or specifically locational or cultural references that are esoteric and seem to miss the essential spirit of haiku as I understand it. Some poems seem to be aiming for the avant-garde or are focussed on contemporary Japan, and this poetry seems to lack depth or is 'fleeting' or 'strange'. I confess I am somewhat surprised if not confused to see that some contemporary Japanese poets use simile or direct metaphor. I regard the eschewing of such tropes as essential to the basis of haiku, as it is my understanding that haiku represents a unique moment. That is, it is beyond any comparison, just as Heraclitus observed: 'No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it is not the same river and he is not the same man.'

4. Japanese haiku worlds are still based on master-disciple relationships or often hierarchical organizations called "kessha." What do you think of this?

I confess I am surprised to hear that Japanese haiku worlds are still based on master-disciple relationships or often hierarchical organizations called kessha. I presume I can speak freely when I say that I do not trust such a relationships or organisations. They suggest too rigid an adherence to an accepted notion of what is

valuable in art. I suppose this all depends on how rigidly such hierarchies are applied in their judgment of novice poets' work and what tools such judgment uses and how. Generally speaking, for European and American aligned art, strict rules and requirements have become antithetical to art.

Of course, there can be valuable mentor-mentee relationships develop between poets which can be beneficial, but these usually work best on an informal and liberal basis in my experience, and while they might adhere to certain poetic principles they also allow for development or change or indeed challenge to these principles where this challenge is well argued or evidenced. My work at the university involved my giving written and verbal feedback on students' poetry but this feedback was based on principles of effectiveness for writing that was given in a liberal manner of suggestion rather than strict judgment.

In all regions there are recognised masters, and there is also judgment of new work, in what is exhibited or published, what and how it is reviewed, what work is awarded prizes etcetera. But these judgments can be arbitrary or biased or prejudicial and even erroneous, as they rely on the judgment of an individual or group of individuals. Art is difficult and controversial to judge or indeed to advise on.

Having said this I accept that valuable advice and learning can occur between an experienced poet and a novice. I might add here that this notion of master-student or kessha may have initially existed in times when the availability of historical and contemporary texts was not readily available. In recent times the availability of texts through libraries, both actual and digital, has proliferated so that they are readily available to most communities worldwide. This means that an aspiring poet can learn, if they put in the time and effort to read, but this learning may be enhanced by a mentorship of some kind.

5. What hints do you think Japanese writers can get from haiku written outside Japan?

It is difficult to answer this question definitively as it seems to presume that haiku written outside of Japan is different to that written in Japan. I cannot judge this as I do not read Japanese poetry except in translation, which I expect would only make up a small portion of that written in Japan. From the limited poetry I read from Japan, I can say that poets around the world can learn from poetry written in Japan, just as they can learn from poetry written in all countries, given effective translation where necessary. Haiku written outside of Japan may address different natural phenomenon with different cultural and idiomatic reference, but it is no different 'at base' if it is written with a good grasp of the basic principles of the form. I therefore believe that all poets can learn from each other, globally. All haiku poets globally, including in Japan, might follow what Bashō advised when he said: 'Do not follow what the old [poets] did, seek what they sought' (Hass 1994, 233). I believe that what the old poets sought was to capture an allusion of the otherwise ineffable universal truth in a particular moment. In other words, to capture the unchanging or *fueki* in this unique moment which shall never be repeated exactly, and which therefore represents the everchanging or *ryūkō*. The idea of this principle is simple, but its execution is not at all simple. I believe it takes a prolonged practice of reading and writing. This practice may lead to a poet attaining greater discernment of their writing, and they might learn to write more effectively. Part of this practice requires constant vigilance, being alert to those moments that catch the allusory sense of the universal or unchanging, or the 'haiku moment'. But I would add that such vigilance can in time become natural, almost effortless or unconscious. And as Bashō also advised, poets need to learn to capture these moments in plain, everyday language. To not show off, but to aim for simplicity with elegance in expressing the 'haiku moment'.

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Appendix

During the Q&A session, a question was posed from an audience member regarding the use of the 5-7-5 syllables in English: how this is possible, and how the rhythm created by 5-7-5 can be maintained.

My response was translated to the audience via earpieces from the translator. I have a general recall of how I responded but because this is such a tricky area, and from the question an area equally misunderstood in Japan as it is in 'the West', I have written up a more considered and expanded answer to the question, below:

It is safe to say that the great majority of contemporary poets writing in English (and I suspect, in other languages) ignore the 5-7-5. Below are the reasons for this:

- a. The 5-7-5 Japanese 'sound units' (*mora*) are very different to Germanic syllables. A good example (and excuse any inaccuracy, I am quoting something I read) the Japanese word for Japan, *Nippon* has 5 *mora* but 2 English syllables. If English were to be written as 5-7-5 syllables (and many mistakenly are) when translated it would become something like 12-17-12 sound units — absurd.
- b. From my reading, I understand that this 'rule' was abandoned by most Japanese *haijin* around Shiki's time. Of course there are always stalwarts to tradition.
- c. There is indeed rhythm in English poetry, but contemporaneously, rhythm regarded as 'natural speech rhythm', inherent in the language used by a poet, including haiku, not forced by rules. Meter was abandoned in 'Western' poetics early last century, following the lead of the French poets' *vers libre*. Ezra Pound said 'we no longer want to sound like metronomes'. Here again it must be noted that there are modern poets who follow the old, required meter, and indeed, rhyme. But such requirements are generally viewed as out of date.

d. The general ‘rule’ of less than 17 syllables in haiku in English aims for brevity and the creation of space (*ma* perhaps) etc. for thought/reflection, and rhythm: natural speech rhythm. Compare the natural, improvised rhythm of jazz to earlier, regulated musical forms.

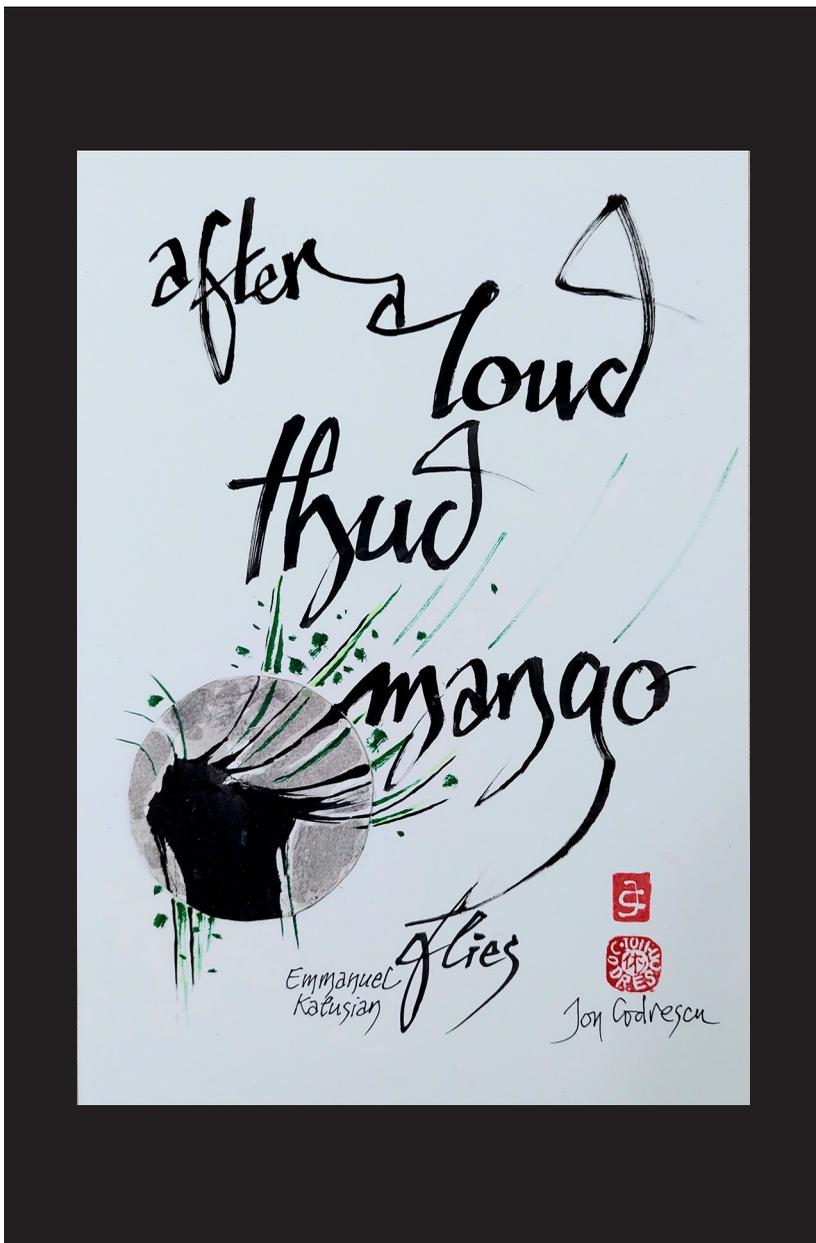
This is Michael Dylan-Welch’s excellent take on the issue of 5-7-5:

“Translation is also a victim, at times, of misunderstanding [...]. The fundamental misunderstanding in this case is the belief that haiku in English is a poem of 5-7-5 syllables, which is really an urban myth, despite how widely haiku is taught this way in the West [...] In fact, as noted Japanese scholar and translator Haruo Shirane emphasized in introducing Kōji Kawamoto’s *The Poetics of Japanese Verse*, “the term syllable is an inaccurate way of describing the actual metrical units of Japanese poetry.” As such, [...] the pattern of 5-7-5 syllables in English is really a violation of the Japanese form, not a preservation of it. Thus, a poem of 17 syllables nearly always produces a poem that is significantly longer (with more content) than what is said in the seventeen sounds in Japanese. For this reason, nearly all respected haiku translators generally do not follow a 5-7-5 syllable pattern, more commonly producing versions of about 10 to 14 syllables. This choice is more faithful to the length and rhythm of the original, and helps the translator focus on natural speech rhythms and line breaks in English rather than padding or chopping lines to force an arbitrary and awkward adherence to an incorrect 5-7-5 pattern. Quite simply, readers need to stop counting the syllables in haiku to see if the poet (or translator) “did it right.” Moreover, this change of emphasis also enables the translator (and thus the reader) to pay attention to more important aspects of the haiku genre that are frequently obscured by an obsessive and misguided assumption that 5-7-5 syllables is accurate for English.”¹

1. Dylan-Welch, Michael. Translation as Treason — Michael Dylan Welch on translating haiku, Global Literature in Libraries Initiative. Posted on May 12, 2018 by David Jacobson: <https://glli-us.org/2018/05/12/translation-as-treason-michael-dylan-welch-on-translating-haiku/> accessed 30.5.24.

JUXTA

Themes



Poet: Emmanuel KALUSIAN / Artist: Ion CODRESCU

African Haiku: An Introduction

I am excited to share this Special Section on African haiku, the first themed special section to be published in *Juxta*. When I first proposed the idea of having a special themed section focused on haiku from the African continent—Afriku—the idea arose from my search for traditional African short poetics and their performances alongside my journey as an African Diasporan haijin. I began with several questions, many of which remain unanswered. Given the vastness of the African continent and its thousands of cultures, what links these texts? Is there a connection between traditional African oral poetry and contemporary African haiku? What, indeed, is the legacy of Adjei Agyei-Baah, the late Ghanaian haijin and co-founder of *The Mamba* and the Africa Haiku Network, who mentored and tutored many contemporary African haijin? And again, given Africa's vastness and diversity, what are the defining features of Afriku? While this special section offers only glimpse into the growing body of haiku created by writers on the African continent, I remain grateful for the journey of awakening that I had the opportunity to experience as this special section became a reality. This offering is but an invitation for the work that remains to be done about Afriku and the haijin who create it. These haijin capture the seasons, experiences and landscapes of Africa in their work; the possibilities are as vast as the continent itself.

Since much of the critical and cultural work on African haiku remains undone, I am particularly pleased that the special section contains five interviews with established, mid-career and emerging African haijin including Emmanuel Jesse Kalusian, co-founder of *The Mamba*, Celestine Nudanu, Beverley Nambozo Nsengiyunva, Ibrahim Nureni and a joint interview with Raphael d'Abdon and Phillipa Yaa de Villiers. Ibrahim Nureni's insightful essay, "African Haiku: Colonial Wounds and Reconciliation in Adjei Agyei-

Baah's Afriku" (see page 55 of this issue) provides deeper insight into Agyei-Baah's work. Of course, haiku remains at the center of our efforts. In addition to new haiku written by Om'Oba Jerry Adesewo, Nsengiyunva, Nureni, and d'Abdon, I am particularly pleased to include an excerpt of some of the best Afriku compiled for the forthcoming anthology *Afriku and Emerging Voices: A Compilation of African English Language Haiku*. Ion Codrescu's haiga connects visually with each of the haiku. The themed section includes writers from Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda and South Africa.

I remain grateful to the contributors to this special section, to the reviewers who work in anonymity, to my fellow editors, and to the thought partners I hope will join in this journey. I am also looking forward to welcoming the work of African haijin from across the continent. Perhaps together, we might answer some of the questions I considered at the beginning of this journey. I do hope that this also an open invitation that will lead to new questions, as well.

— Sheila Smith McKOY, PH. D.
General Editor



**A SHARED VISION:
An Interview with Emmanuel Jessie KALUSIAN**

Nigerian haijin, Emmanuel Jessie KALUSIAN, was born on February 8, 1996 in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. He has been writing haiku since 2012 and has been published in *The Heron's Nest*, *Modern Haiku*, *A Hundred Gourds*, *Cattails*, and other international journals. His work received honorable mention at the Yamadera Bashō Memorial Museum Haiku Contest in 2016 and the H. Gene Murtha Memorial Senryu Contest in 2017. Kalusian is the cofounder of the Africa Haiku Network and coeditor of *The Mamba*, Africa's first haiku journal. He lived for several years in Ghana before returning to Port Harcourt, Nigeria where he writes and works as a document controller and procurement expert and foreign exchange trader.

I had the pleasure of meeting with Emmanuel on February 10, 2025 and April 19, 2025 as we connected from the hometowns that we left to which we chose to return. Speaking with him at his home in Port Harcourt from my home in Raleigh, North Carolina, I had the extraordinary opportunity to connect with a writer who found his passion for haiku early and who has never wavered from it.

Sheila Smith McKoy [SSM]: Emmanuel, it is a pleasure to have the opportunity to interview you. Can you please share a bit of your journey as a poet, editor and lover of haiku?

Emmanuel Jessie KALUSIAN [EJK]: Thank you Sheila. It is a pleasure to speak with you on this important topic of haiku.

My journey as a haiku writer and lover is one I would describe as a journey of life. This journey chronicles my entire life. It is the well spring of meaningful relationships I have had over the years.

My earliest memory as a student. I was inspired by Chimamanda — hers are not Colonial stories — hers are modern African stories — and philosophers — Freud, Nietzsche and others. The most busy place is a person's mind. It flows from the inside. We are able to build empathy and understand people, their concerns and where they are coming from — you can understand the internal dialogue. My writing helps people understand the internal dialogue and understand the lives of others. I used to write short stories before I ventured into haiku on *Kalahari Review* and other African journals. What drew me into haiku was that I could tell the same story in a shorter form and the readers get layers of understanding.

I began writing haiku as a teenager in 2011. I was 15 years old at that time. My journey proper began in 2012 on the poetry website *Allpoetry.com*, where I met and was mentored in haiku writing by Myron Lysenko, Fay Aoyagi of *The Heron's Nest* journal, Andrew Hide who used to teach the Advanced Haiku Class at that time, Michael Smeer whose work I enjoy and who has been my friend for nearly 15 years, Kala Ramesh, Michael Dylan Welch, Jane Reichold, Don Baird, Cor van der Heuvel and many others who played an important role in my haiku journey.

For the classics, I learnt a great deal from the works of Issa Kobayashi, Masaoka Shiki, Matsuo Bashō, etc. on the important aesthetics of haiku.

It was a great joy to learn about haiku. I recall composing haiku every day for one year in 2013, a practice I recommend for those wishing to learn haiku. The impetus for this is that haiku is life and should be composed everyday. I still look at haiku I wrote last year. One peels the layers until one can refine it to get the actual moment. Time is one of the elements that makes the haiku better. It takes a great deal to understand the context of haiku for writers from Africa and other writers who are from particular cultural contexts.

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There are excellent haiku that are not being published. When you expect haiku from Africans, haiku editors must learn to understand the cultures and perspectives before discrediting the work.

For new writers of African haiku, I hope that they are not discouraged by rejections. Rejection is a part of a writer's life.

What we see today, where a writer writes a haiku and publishes it the next day is not right! A well-written haiku takes months of writing and rewriting, taking out the unnecessary words and choosing the right words that juxtaposes the moment.

My famous haiku:

thunderclap
the village priest
hears his name (*The Mamba* 2016:1)

The haiku above took me about eight months to writing and rewriting until I came up with the right juxtaposition “thunderclap,” a sounds that resonates mystically with the last line.

As the late Adjei Agyei-Baah would say in one of our conversations, “. . . haiku are deceptively simple poems . . .” I completely agree with this statement.

Haiku as a minimalist poem sometimes gives this impression that can it be written in one sitting, no it can't! This is what we see today; haiku hurriedly written.

I believe we should go back to the approach of haiku as life, something that is part of our being, something we attend to everyday: like a flower or plant in a pot until it grows into a beautiful tree. When I teach haiku I focus on *tao* — the Japanese concept of the way, the life. I was observant on the way two, everywhere that I went. When haiku is seen as life, not something that you pause and compose, you live and compose haiku. It is the life that you live that becomes haiku.

This is the correct approach to haiku, one I was taught in my early days and I strongly believe we must imbibe that in the current crop of haiku learners if we want to see avant-garde haiku.

SSM: You had the incredible experience of working with the renowned Ghanaian haiku poet, Adjei Agyei-Baah, with whom you founded *The Mamba* journal. I particularly enjoyed reading the tribute article you contributed to the most recent issue of the journal in which you describe Prof. Agyei-Baah. What would you like for those discovering African haiku for the first time to know about him and about your journey together?

EJK: This is an important question. I would like those discovering African haiku for the first time to know Adjei Agyei-Baah as the creator of the ‘afriku’, sub-genre. He always wanted Africans to write haiku that resonates with Africa by using African season words as opposed to Japanese season words.

This is why in *Mamba* 17 we introduced what we call the African *kigo*, a collection of African season words put together by Mr. Nurein Ibrahim. This is to encourage the composition of afriku. Our hope is that the collection of African *kigo* will help people compose where they are, to capture the natural world here. The collection will be routinely updated so that we can help writers Africanize their approach to haiku.

SSM: In that same issue of *The Mamba*, several writers including you, wrote tribute haiku in honor of Prof. Agyei-Bah. In your poem, you rightly refer to him as a “haiku legend.” As you continue your work as a haijin, how do you see yourself as extending his legacy and creating your own legacy? How would you like for your work to be remembered?

EJK: The continuation of the work at Africa Haiku Network and *The Mamba* is my own way of extending the legacy of Adjei Agyei-

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Baah and our shared legacy which is the creation of AHN and *The Mamba*. It is important to note that AHN and *The Mamba* runs completely free of charge, the journal, essays and even books on our website are available for download at no cost.

The Africa Haiku Prize renamed the Adjei Agyei-Baah Prize to assure that his work would be remembered and extended. In essence, he worked to assure that the world understands that haiku can be African.

I'd like to be remembered as one African haiku writer who contributed immensely to the creation of a central network of haiku writers in Africa. Also, as one who was unafraid to write about his own fears, political opinions, etc, this forms the central theme of my chapbook 'Map of Nowhere'.

SSM: As a native of Nigeria who spent a great deal of time in Ghana, you are deeply invested in the cultural work of the haiku of Africa. Are there particular things that make a haiku "African," in your opinion?

EJK: Yes please. There are things that make a haiku 'African,' one of such is, it must have an African season word that is a word usually in the fragment of the haiku that refers to an African season . . . something like this haiku I composed a while ago:

after
a loud thud
mango flies

'mango flies' also refers to mango season, a season of ripening for mangoes.

Another thing that makes a haiku African is that it resonates seamlessly with Africa's sights and sounds, the images are so clear and unforced. Such that an African knows it is about Africa without the haiku telling it!

I am a pan-Africanist, this is the essence of the Africa Haiku Network. We have people from all over the continent writing haiku with an African taste to the work, work that can be understood by all Africans. The part of the continent that I would like to see more work from is North Africa. We had several writers involved from the region publishing in Mamba. I would also see more work from East Africa, Southern Africa and Central Africa. Africa Haiku Network is the banner for African haiku and we are ready to help as much as we can.

SSM: In your chapbook, *Map of Nowhere*, you use haiku and other short poetic forms as you focus on social justice and politics. How do these issues shape your haiku and how do you determine whether a poem will evolve into a haiku rather than other short poetic forms?

EJK: The theme of social justice and politics is one that resonates throughout my works, because I believe strongly that this is one of the key issues in our society and the world cannot be a better place until we look objectively at issues surrounding social justice and politics.

I see haiku as a child borne in one's imagination and like every child needs great care and attention to become an adult. So my haiku process typically takes weeks and months, say six months of rewriting and writing for the haiku to become an 'adult'!

Naturally, if the poem doesn't survive this period of writing and rewriting; I let it become another kind of poetry that fully expresses it, like haibun, senryu, etc.

I think one of the areas where we get it wrong as haiku writers is when we try to make a haiku poem out of what wasn't meant to be a haiku poem.

All my work is about the internal dialogue; this was written during a time of my life when I was thinking about what I am to do. It was

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a critical time for me. I discovered that my passion is my direction. Your passion leaves you to where you need to be. I am passionate about helping people achieve their goals, helping different people meet their goals.

SSM: What do you see as the future of haiku in Nigeria? Ghana?

EJK: I see haiku in Africa as a continental movement rather than a nationalistic one. So I'd rather talk about the future of haiku in Africa.

What I see in the coming years is an uptick in haiku workshops across schools and university colleges in Africa. Which will give haiku contests and competitions that will in turn give birth to a new breed of haiku writers that will permit me say, Africanize the genre through 'afriku'.

This is one of the reasons why AHN is very passionate about haiku workshops, some of which we have organized through our representatives in recently South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana. We are also very open to expanding to other countries in Africa.

SSM: I am particularly impressed by the reach of *The Mamba*, which includes haiku from Africa and globally. What is your hope for the future of haiku as it enriches the world?

EJK: I am impressed by the reach of *The Mamba*.

Interestingly, when Adjei and I started *The Mamba* we wanted it to be an Africa-only haiku magazine but it grew to become an international haiku journal!

I guess you can create a bird but you can't tell how high it will get! Today, 60 percent of submissions we receive at *The Mamba* comes from the USA, alone! This has changed the trajectory, we no longer see the *Mamba* as an African haiku journal but as an international African haiku journal.

This is why once every year we have guest editors in our journal; recently we had Dr. Randy Brooks and Myron Lysenko in *Mamba* 16.

SSM: What's next for you, Emmanuel?

EJK: The next collection is *Haiku: The Journey of Life*, a chapbook that will include haiku and haibun, and continuing my work with the Africa Haiku Network. I am thinking of all of the writers to whom we can extend the work and continue growing the work of AHN. I want to be remembered as one who opened doors for other writers like Adjei Agyei-Baah. I still remember when we met in Ghana. I want to be remembered as someone who collaborated, not someone who "owned." *The Mamba* was conceived of as an African journal; it is now an international journal.

We do this work for free. It is our gift to the world. The writers who will carry this shared vision to ensure that the Network continues. That is the way we will continue.



Haiku of Delicious Sensuality: An Interview with Celestine NUDANU

Celestine NUDANU is a haijin from Accra, Ghana. She has the distinction of being the first Ghanaian writer to publish haiku. Her published collections are *Haiku Rhapsodies* (2016), *Whispers of Dawn* (2018) and *Musings of a Muse on Fire* (2025). Her works have been included in two anthologies: *Western Haiku: A Collection*, and *Ballads*, both produced by Dagda Publishing, UK. Her haiku has also been published in numerous journals including *Cattails*, *The Mamba*, *Akita International Haiku Network* (Japan), *Failed Haiku*, *Prune Juice*, *The Bamboo Hut*, *Haikuniverse*, *Brassbell Journal of Haiku*, *Stardust Haiku* and *Flamingo Clouds* (Netherlands) among others. Nudanu earned her BA in English and Theatre Arts, and MA degree in International Affairs from the University of Ghana, Legon. She serves as Deputy Registrar with the University of Professional Studies, Accra. She is a Supporting Editor of *The Mamba*. We connected via email in May of 2025 to celebrate her work.

Sheila Smith McKoy [SSM]: I was introduced to your work through your blog, *Reading Pleasure* (<https://readinpleasure.wordpress.com/about-me/>), and have been thinking about how your haiku posts, which you call “Haiku My Heart.” What was your journey to writing haiku?

Celestine NUDANU [CD]: Thank you Sheila. I am excited to be a part of this wonderful exercise.

I was introduced to haiku through blogging. When I started my blog, *Reading Pleasure*, in 2012, I was just writing random poems and soon, I had a good number of followers, mainly from outside my home country. Among my fellow bloggers were haijins who posted weekly or daily memes and I soon found myself exploring

the genre and trying my hands at it. Some of my haiku friends whose memes I followed religiously were Kristjaan Pannerman of *Carpe Diem Haiku* and Rebecca Brookes of *Ricuerda Mi Corazon*, (*Haiku My Heart*). These blogs and their writings had a big impact on my writing. I also made a lot of friends through sharing of these memes and visiting each other's blogs to comment on their haiku. And I must say I learned to hone my skill through their wonderful haiku.

SSM: Is there any characteristic you would say that defines your haiku?

CN: Well, haiku is mainly about nature. But I must say I tend to lean towards the romantic. I wouldn't say my haiku is erotic, though. More romantic than erotic. My haiku has been described by friends as a delicious sensuality.

crystal drops
on swaying petals
I inhale

midday nap
a bouquet of beads
her only cover

SSM: How do you see yourself writing in kinship with other African haiku writers?

CN: Even though I come from Ghana, in West Africa, I have come into contact with other African haiku writers through social media and particularly through the online haiku platform, the Africa Haiku Network, where other Africans from Nigeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco etc. showcase their works. Special mention must be made here of the *Mamba Journal*, an online journal of Afriku, which also feature fine haiku by African haiku writers and of course non-Africans alike.

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SSM: I will revisit the previous question by delving a bit further into your work as a haikin. There are a number of poets across the African continent writing haiku. What makes a haiku “African”? How do you see African writers shaping the global embrace of haiku?

CN: What makes a haiku African? Hmm! I must say, a haiku becomes African when it is imbued with the seasons, sights, sounds and smells, as well as heritage of Africa. When a haiku becomes African, it is known as Afriku. The concept of Afriku was conceived by Adjei Agyei-Baah of blessed memory. He was a Ghanaian, and the finest haiku writer Africa had ever known. He conceived the idea that, Africa has a rich heritage in its sounds, sights, smells and the seasons, and these are perfect settings and background that can feed into haiku writing, haiku that is peculiar to Africa. A beautiful concept I must say. Afriku was thus born, and over the years it has taken concrete shape with many more African haiku writer embracing it. It is heartening to note that non-Africans have also fallen in love with Afriku and are writing in the genre.

With this unique form, African haikins can shape the global embrace of haiku by the portrayal of the rich culture and heritage that are peculiar to Africa. African haikins have a lot to offer the haiku world through advocacy and showcasing of our Afriku.

SSM: You have been writing in the form for a long time. I want to focus a bit on your award-winning haiku collections, *Haiku Rhapsodies* (2016) and *Whispers of Dawn* (2018). What are the birth stories of these collections?

CN: *Haiku Rhapsodies (Verses from Ghana)* was born from some of my haiku writings on my blog. I fell in love with the haiku genre through extensive blogging. The brevity of haiku appealed to me and I could relate so much with the themes and memes that were posted by the hosts of the various blogs I followed. So after honing my craft, I decided to publish the poems so my fellow Ghanaians

could also have a taste of the genre and appreciate it. I was the first Ghanaian, and the first female for that matter to have published the haiku genre in print. Ghanaian haijins like Nana Fredua Agyemang, Kweku Feni Addo, Kojo Turkson and the late Agyei-Baah had published wonderful haiku on their blogs and elsewhere before me, but theirs were online.

Haiku Rhapsodies is divided into the following themes; Afriku, Nature, Haiku My Heart, the Divine and Death. Through these themes I succeed in transporting the reader into my world by creating animated, serene and yet powerful scenes.

Haiku Rhapsodies has been described as being able to draw the reader into the complex yet fascinating phenomena of what life is all about; love, death, spirituality and life itself. The beauty and elegance of the poems lie in that special skill of brevity as a haiku poet.

Whispers of Dawn, my second poetry collection is a book of *cherita*. The word *cherita* is a Malay word meaning story, or tale, created by the Malaysian-born haijin, ai li, in 1997. *Cherita* tells a story in only six lines of three stanzas; 1-2-3; 2-3-1; 3-2-1; 1-3-2.

Again, I think I was attracted to the *cherita* because of the brevity of words. Unlike the haiku that is mainly about nature, the *cherita* does not limit you. The story can be about anything and any topic: Here are two examples of the *cherita* overleaf:

see me

fall to pieces
as you strum
on the breeze

andante
andante

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to name me breeze

fragrance of weightlessness
buoyant

the cares of this world
beyond me
I am breeze without winds

Whispers of Dawn is the first ever collection of *cherita* to be published in Ghana, and I dare say Africa. I am also the first practitioner of this minimalist poetry form in Africa. I had hoped that the publication of my book would popularize the poetry form, at least in Ghana.

In *Whispers of Dawn* I write about love, betrayal, abuse, loss and ultimately faith. *Whispers of Dawn*, is written with grace and exceptional poignancy, allowing readers to ponder over the words and reflect on the stories long after the pages have been closed on the collection.

I also find the art form therapeutic; very simple to write and very apt in expressing whatever I want to say.

SSM: How would you define the elements of Afriku? Would you say that the haiku of Ghana and that of other African nations and cultures are culturally aligned or distinctly “African” and, if so, in what ways?

CN: Afriku is simply haiku based on Africa and its settings. Afriku must have the seasons, sounds, sights and smells, as well as the culture and heritage of Africa. Afriku must carry with it or portray the cultural heritage of Africa. In as much as there are many countries making up the African Continent, and for that matter certain aspects may vary, there are certain elements that are common among the countries. Afriku must be able to celebrate

the uniqueness as well as the common heritage pertinent to the African Continent.

fireside
kids chatter fills
mother's cooking pot

This Afriku I wrote is symbolic of the cultural alignment of haiku that you mentioned above. Typically, in African villages, most mothers would be cooking by the setting of the sun. And it is a common sight to see hungry kids sitting by the fireside, anxiously waiting for the food to be cooked so they can eat. And it is every mother's joy to hear the chatter of these kids as they wait impatiently.

I would say the haiku of Ghana and that of other African countries are culturally aligned and yet distinct from each other. As already mentioned, each country would celebrate what it has, its rich culture, heritage, environment, sights, smells, and even language. For instance, Adjei Baah wrote all his haiku in English, but he also translated them into the Akan language, which is widely spoken in Ghana. Thus, making it accessible to every Ghanaian who speaks the Akan language. It would be welcoming to see haiku translated into other African languages by our African haijin.

SSM: Looking back at that work and the time in which you were writing it while considering recent African haiku, how does your haiku carry the reverence for nature that reflects that of ancient Ghanaian traditions?

CN: Nature is universal, as we all very well know. And even though the seasons and times differ from continent to continent, there are similarities with other forms of nature; the environment, wildlife and fauna, for instance. That said, ancient Ghanaian traditions and customs have evolved. Technology may have changed the way we view our traditions and we have cases where our elders have tried

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to find modern way of doing the old things. So there is a blend. The African haiku, or Afriku, has embraced this change.

SSM: What are your hopes for haiku writers who foray into subjects such as climate change and the changing terrain of the African continent?

CN: I think in their own way, haikins in Africa do write about climate change in their haiku. I mean haiku is all about the various aspects of nature, including climate change and the environment. And I think the fact that the timing is very opportune cannot be overemphasised. I am hopeful that African haikins will go a long way with such writings. But we must be more visible out there; our works should be seen across borders. How can we sell our haiku out there? By participating in competitions and awards and through online publications and visibility.

SSM: From your perspective as a writer and storyteller, how do you capture ancient knowledge in your work? How do you see other haiku writers from the continent as they craft poems about ancient African ways of knowing?

CN: To be able to capture ancient knowledge in your work, you must be prepared to go back in time. Or you must be able to research into your history and the ancient traditions or way of doing things by your people. We cannot run away from our history. As a people, our history defines us, irrespective of where we are coming from. We learn from history so we can be a better people. We learn from history so our writings can be richer in content. It is only when we go back and study our beginnings and history that we can be able to leave a better legacy and make an impact through our writings.

SSM: As writers, we often find inspiration in the work of the writers who came before us. What writer/writers have influenced your work and how do you hope to influence the writers who come after you?

CN: The late Adjei Baah and his writings had a major impact on my writings. He was also a dear friend and mentor whose deep love and appreciation of the haiku genre has been unsurpassed. I have also been inspired by the works of Kristjaan Pannerman of *Carpe Diem Haiku* and Rebecca Brookes of *Haiku My Heart*. Of course, one cannot talk about haikins who inspired or influenced me without talking about Matsuo Bashō himself. His works and influence are legendary.

When Adjei Baah was alive, he and I organised haiku workshops for the Creative Arts Class of the English Department of the University of Ghana, Legon. This was at the invitation of the then Head of Department, Dr. Mawuli Adzei. At the end of the sessions which run for two years, the class was able to produce their own haiku.

On my own I have organised haiku workshops for high school students of Tema International School, and more rewardingly, for Grade 1 and 2 pupils of Lincoln Community School in Accra.

I must admit that haiku has not firmed up much in Ghana as I would have wished for. We as haikins in Ghana should and must do more to make the art form popular and appreciated by all.



**“MULTITUDE OF STORIES TO TELL”:
An Interview with Beverley Nambozo NSENGIYUNVA**

Beverley Nambozo NSENGIYUNVA is an award-winning poet, joint runner-up in the 2010 international erbacce-press poetry competition. She's the founder of the Babishai Niwe Poetry Foundation that promotes African Poetry through publications, poetic events across the continent and training.

In 2014, Beverley was appointed the BBC Commonwealth Games Postcard Poetry Ambassador representing Uganda. Prior to that in 2012, she received her Distinguished Master's in Creative Writing from Lancaster University in the U.K.

In 2025, Babishai launched its latest poetry anthology, *Feeling*, celebrating iconic Ugandan women. Other poetry anthologies include *Boda Boda Anthem: A Kampala Poetry Anthology*, *A Thousand Voices Rising*, *When Children Dare to Dream*, and collections by Marial Awendit, South Sudanese winner of the 2018 Babishai poetry award titled *The Night Does Not Drown Us* and Beverley's *Dress me in Disobedience* poetry collection.

Sheila Smith McKoy [SSM]: What were your first encounters with haiku as a reader and as a writer?

Beverley Nambozo NSENGIYUNVA [BNN]: Many years ago, with the Japanese form. It was entertaining, musical and intellectual. It was at a young age when the word haiku was introduced. Having studied with a few Japanese students at a very early age, they were able to explain a bit of the context. Because I always liked writing, I was interested. Later on in life, while working to broaden the Babishai Niwe Poetry Foundation, I met Professor Kwame Dawes who introduced and shared his 100-day haiku writing challenge, which I used with many African writers, even as we launched the annual African haiku prize.

SSM: There has been a blossoming of haiku on the African continent in the last few decades. What does the poetic artform on haiku mean to you as a Ugandan writer? As an African writer?

BNN: As a Ugandan, it creates more intimate opportunities to explore relatable themes. As an African it creates a large community to bond with over the African haiku form.

The haiku community for now is largely virtual. Our last haiku award ceremony was conducted during the lockdown and we got to interact as a larger African community. In 2021, the Babishai coordinated a storytelling presentation with Alliance Francaise de Kampala and together with various artists, from poets, actresses, bakers, pianists, one of the performers was our latest haiku winner. The storytelling was an infusion of various art forms. It was the first time haiku had been used as part of a theatre performance.

SSM: How do you believe that African haiku writers have transformed haiku?

BNN: Through specific imagery to their immediate environment, the African haiku writers have transcended borders. They have also used unique forms of language to distill new ideas.

I have only read haiku in English and I would be fascinated to read it in other languages too.

SSM: The late Adjei Adjye-Bah has spoken about the importance of African writers “using haiku to tell the African story.” What does that statement mean to you? How do you negotiate your own African story in your work?

BNN: It means that there is not just one African story to tell, but a multitude of stories which are able to be experienced in the numerous creations of haiku. Mine are personal and experiential. I am not inclined to call them African stories during the creation process, rather they are my stories, sometimes stories of women at various points in their lives, and not specifically African.

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I think deeply before I write and often in my mind, I perform parts of the poem to imaginary audiences, which helps as I articulate it in words.

SSM: As the founder of the Babishai Niwe Poetry Foundation, you have touched many writers across the African continent. Please tell us about Babishai and its impact on you as well as the poets that you have touched through it.

BNN: The Babishai Niwe Poetry Foundation started as the Beverley Nambozo poetry Award, an annual platform to support Ugandan women poets through annual poetry awards. It grew to become the Babishai Niwe Poetry Foundation that promotes poets from the entire continent through publishing, festivals and awards. There has been immense growth amongst the poets we have interacted with, from opportunities to visit renowned festivals, opportunities to be trained by the most prolific writers and poets known from the continent and to also establish themselves as formidable creators.

SSM: What do you think drew writers to Babishai's haiku competition if they are new to the artform?

BNN: We last held the Babishai haiku competition in 2020 and the participants often told us that they were drawn to it because of the novelty surrounding it, the challenge to learn more about the haiku and to learn from experts.

The haiku competition was new and fresh and gave an opportunity for Africans to harness their skills, read up on it and also gave us a chance to partner with haiku writers across Africa.

SSM: Of all your haiku, which poem is your favorite one today?

BNN: It is hard to pick one.

SSM: Where do you see connections between traditional Ugandan poetry and haiku?

BNN: I see them in constant conversation with one another. They will merge, like most creative ideas do. This is because almost every person who writes in haiku form, first started as a traditional poet. It is worth noting how thoughts metamorphose as they distinguish between the two and finally distill them into similar ideas and images.



**HAIKU AS A WAY OF SEEING:
An Interview with Ibrahim NURENI**

Ibrahim NURENI has emerged as a celebrated haikai on the global stage, earning accolades such as the Mukai & Farm Haiku Festival (Social Justice Category) Award, the People's Choice Award at the Atlanta Haiku Festival, and second place in the 2025 Maya Lyubenova International Haiku Contest. An award-winning poet, creative writer, critic, and researcher, Nureni holds a Bachelor's degree in English from Ahmadu Bello University and a Master's degree in English from Louisiana State University. His intellectual contributions extend to multiple fellowships, including the Harrison Middleton University Fellowship in Ideas, where he engages in scholarly discourse with faculty and students while writing essays for the university. Recognized for his work on disaster and social issues, he is also a 2024 Bill Anderson Fund Fellow. In 2018, he joined *Wawa Book Review* as a fellow, contributing ten reviews of African-published books. Nureni has worked with various literary organizations, including *Open: Journal of Arts & Letters* and Baram House, and his haiku are published in *The Heron's Nest*, *Shamrock*, *Acorn*, *The News-Gazette*, and elsewhere. His writings primarily focus on disaster, trauma and healing, and other social, cultural, and environmental issues. He is currently the Assistant Editor of *The Mamba* and the Editor of LSU's *Comparative Woman Journal*.

Sheila Smith McKoy (SSM): Ibrahim, I am delighted to have a chance to speak with you about your work. What should readers unfamiliar with your work know about your poetry?

Ibrahim NURENI (IN): Thank you for having me today, June 16, 2025, and I am delighted to speak with you. For readers who are new to my work, I would describe my poetry, particularly my haiku, as deeply rooted in observation, simplicity, and the quiet

moments that reveal larger truths. My focus is on capturing human experience, nature, and emotions by drawing inspiration from everyday life, culture, and social themes. As you know, we live in a chaotic world filled with disaster and war (to name but two). I strive to use haiku to tell stories of trauma and healing. If this is your first encounter with my poetry, I hope you find moments of reflection about life — not just concerning humans but also animals and plants, as they are vital parts of our ecosystems that should never be neglected.

SSM: When you think about the growing interest in African haikin, do you see yourself as a Nigerian haikin, an African haikin, an international haikin or some combination of these identities? How would you describe your writing community?

IN: What a thought-provoking question! I see myself as all three: Nigerian, African, and international. I will forever cherish my roots, and though I am far from Nigeria, I often remind myself of the proverb, “A river that forgets its source will surely dry up.” My identity as a Nigerian haikin grounds me in the rhythms of my homeland, particularly in the vivid imagery of Lagos streets. One of my published haiku, which appeared in *The Mamba*, captures this:

Lagos traffic
behind the roaring engine
a dozing driver (*The Mamba* 5, 2018)

As an African haikin, I carry the collective textures of our continent. While most African societies share cultural similarities, they are also richly distinct. Wole Soyinka, Africa’s first Nobel laureate in literature, argues that Yoruba culture is synonymous with the broader African cultural world due to their parallels. Though I don’t fully embrace his use of synecdoche, I acknowledge that most African cultures, while diverse, are united by communal values

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and shared postcolonial experiences. This is why I also identify as an African haijin, one who writes haiku that reach beyond my Yoruba heritage.

As Jerome Berglund noted in his *Frogpond* article on Afriku (written in memory of Adjei Agyei-Baah), haiku transcends borders. Many of my haiku are infused with African philosophy. One such poem, which won the People's Choice Grand Award in the 2025 Atlanta Haiku Festival Competition, reads:

winter cold
grandma's footprints
in the herb garden

While this haiku reflects my personal gratitude for my grandmother's care during my childhood illness, its seasonal imagery allows it to resonate universally. In essence, my voice is shaped by Nigeria and Africa, yet it belongs to the global community of poets who find kinship in haiku's brevity.

My writing community spans continents. I am a member of the Africa Haiku Network, a collective of African haiku writers, and a mentor for young poets through SprinNG, an initiative nurturing emerging talent. I also believe the world is a global village and the internet bridges distances. I actively engage in Facebook haiku groups like *Buds of Haiku* and *My Haiku Pond*, where fleeting moments are shared and celebrated. These spaces remind me of how a single image can alter our perception of the world.

SSM: Your haiku has appeared in *The Best Haiku Collection 4: International Anthology*. And, you were honored with the second place in the 2025 Maya Lyubenova International Haiku Contest. You hold the distinction of being the first African writer to be honored in this competition. In an interview following the win, you indicated that you see haiku as your calling. Can you say more about what that means to you and how you began to write haiku?

IN: Haiku is not just a poetry genre, it is a way of seeing. It requires presence, or what I would call surrendering to the moment where the ordinary becomes luminous. When I say it is my calling, I mean how I bear witness to the harsh harmattan wind, the silent battlefield between a gecko and a fly, the voices of the muezzin, among others.

Let me share my interest in haiku. Before I knew there was such a thing, I wrote sonnets, lyrics, epics, and other forms of poetry. I first encountered haiku in 2017 during my third year in my undergraduate program at Ahmadu Bello University. My curiosity about this new type of poetry led me to learn its art more deeply. I devoured the works of Basho and Buson. I also reached out to Ed Bremson, Akor Emmanuel Oche, Dr. Ahmad Holderness, and Adjei Agyei-Baah for further guidance, and I was fortunate to receive materials and support from them. It's impressive to see how my haiku have transcended borders, with judges now recognizing the meanings in my work.

SSM: How does your poetry and specifically, your haiku, connect you both to Africa and to the global network in which you live and work?

IN: My haiku are rooted in African soil but speak a universal language. Consider winter, for example, a season foreign to most of Africa yet one that finds kinship in our harmattan. When I write about it, I anchor the moment in Africa's cultural ecosystem. My haiku that won the People's Choice Grand Prize at the 2025 Atlanta Haiku Festival does just this. It uses winter as the *kigo*, but the scene is unmistakably African. It depicts a grandmother stepping into her garden to gather herbs for her ailing grandchild.

In African homes, grandmothers are keepers of medicinal wisdom. Their knowledge is passed down like heirlooms. That haiku was born from a moment I witnessed, one so familiar, it could have been set during harmattan. But by framing it in winter, I invited the

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world in. The cold might differ, but the act, the love, the resilience, is a language we all understand. That is the alchemy of haiku. My lived experience becomes a shared pulse.

SSM: I was delighted to see that you are pursuing your advanced research degree program in English at Louisiana State University. I feel a kinship with you because of that. How do you balance your dual identities as a creative and as a scholar? Is there a synergy between your creative work and your scholarly work?

IN: That is a great question. When I reflect on balancing my dual roles as a researcher and creative writer, I draw inspiration from Wole Soyinka, who excelled in both creative and scholarly writing. While these roles might appear contradictory, one requiring analytical precision with texts, the other thriving on spontaneity and affect. I find them complementary. My research in disaster studies, healing narratives, and postcolonial ecopoetics directly informs how I understand the relationship between land/nature and language in my haiku. At the same time, writing poetry keeps me connected to literature's emotional core, reminding me why words matter beyond theoretical analysis.

I approach both research and creative writing as essential passions that nourish each other. Some days are spent in the library, carefully examining archival materials and scholarly references. Other days are devoted to crafting the precise words that transform an observed moment into haiku. Whether analyzing texts or composing poems, I am engaged in the same fundamental pursuit: exploring human experience through language.

SSM: How do you define Afriku? What are the distinctive characteristics of Afriku? Relatedly, how do you, as a Nigerian living in the U.S, imbue your haiku with a sense of being/feeling African?

IN: In my paper on Agyei-Baah's work, I define Afriku as "the use of African sensory elements and seasons to present nature or human experiences that not only capture a sense of impermanence or beauty but also reflect African cultural and literary nuances." I believe African haiku needs to examine African philosophies of life. To write authentic Afriku requires being objective and observant while possessing deep knowledge of African cultural traditions.

Though geographically distant from my Nigerian homeland, I continue to create haiku that embodies African sensibility. I focus on capturing untapped African imagery, transforming remembered observations into poetic form. When I recall specific moments from home, like the sound of mortar and pestle, I work to translate these into haiku.

To maintain my cultural connection, I regularly watch Nigerian films rich in traditional themes. These not only keep me grounded in my heritage but also provide fresh material for my haiku writing. Through this practice, Afriku becomes my way of preserving and sharing African experiences across continents.

SSM: As you consider the relationships forged in the Africa Haiku Network, what has contributed meaningfully to your journey as a haijin?

IN: My role in the Africa Haiku Network has been transformative for my growth as a haijin. As a dedicated member who regularly engages with *The Mamba Journal*, and now serving as an Assistant Editor for the publication, I have gained invaluable opportunities to expand my community of haiku writers.

Through the network, I have cultivated meaningful connections with fellow poets across the continent. We exchange haiku, provide thoughtful peer feedback on each other's work, and collaborate on strategies to elevate haiku's presence in African literary

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spaces. My connections include Akor Emmanuel Oche, Taofeek Ayeyemi, and Emmanuel Kalusian (to mention but three), whose insightful readings and shared perspectives consistently enrich my understanding of the form.

These ongoing dialogues within the network have become crucial to my development. Through our discussions, we are not just sharing poems; we are actively shaping the definition of African haiku aesthetics. Each conversation helps us articulate what makes our approach to this form distinct, while honoring its Japanese roots. The collective wisdom of the network continues to challenge and refine my practice in profound ways.

SSM: How do you bring your interests in environmental and health literature to inform your creative work?

IN: The connection between haiku, nature, and environmental consciousness is, I believe, no longer open for debate. As such, my work as a Bill Anderson Fund Fellow regularly takes me to disaster historical sites, where I engage with communities impacted by environmental crises in the United States. These experiences directly inform my creative practice, as I transform research insights into haiku that capture both ecological realities and their human consequences.

In my Yoruba culture, health occupies a sacred space that encompasses both personal and communal healing. This worldview shapes how I approach health themes in my writing. When I witness environmental degradation or community resilience during my fieldwork, I interpret these moments through our cultural understanding of healing as a collective endeavor.

My haiku thus become bridges between academic research and cultural wisdom, between environmental observation and health consciousness. Whether documenting a polluted river's slow

recovery or the communal rituals that restore wellbeing after disaster, I strive to capture how nature and human health are fundamentally intertwined.

SSM: What's next for your creative journey, Ibrahim?

IN: As part of the Africa Haiku Network, I am actively working with fellow members on an exciting Afriku anthology project that will showcase the unique African perspective within this traditional form. On a personal creative journey, I am currently compiling my first collection of haiku. While I am not yet ready to announce specific publication timelines, the collection will represent years of careful observation and distillation of African experiences into the concise beauty of haiku form. Each poem undergoes multiple revisions as I strive to perfectly capture those fleeting moments that reveal deeper truths about our environment, cultures, and shared humanity.



SAWUBONA AND SHIBOKA: On South African Haiku
with Raphael D'ABDON and Phillippa Yaa DE VILLIERS

I was introduced to Raphael D'ABDON and Phillippa Yaa DE VILLIERS when I discovered the 27th Poetry Africa panel, "Afriku: the art of haiku in Africa and South Africa." The 2023 panel, featuring Ongezwa Mbele, the late Adjei Adyei-Baah, Solly Ramatswi, Fumane Nthlabane, Raphael and Phillippa, was a beautiful discussion of the diversity of African poets engaged in haiku. As importantly, I have had the pleasure of coming to know these multifaceted writers during our work for this special section of Juxta. Completed in the waning days of July when I was in the midst of the hottest summer on record and they were enjoying the South African winter, this interview gave us to opportunity to speak more about their work.

Sheila Smith McKoy [SSM] I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak with you about South African haiku. Would you begin with brief introductions of yourselves and a brief description of what brought you to haiku.

Raphael D'ABDON [RDA]: I am an Italian-born writer and I moved to South Africa in 2007 when I was writing my PhD on South African spoken word poetry. In the process, I also started writing my own poetry, reading it on local stages and publishing it in journals. I write poetry in English only, and I am to all effects a South African poet, a child of Jozi open mics. Reading the Beats and Pound and, retrospectively, the Japanese Masters is what initially brought me to haiku, I was fascinated by the apparent simplicity of a deep and complex form.

Phillippa Yaa DE VILLIERS [PYDV]: I was born in South Africa and was working as an actor when, as Neruda says, "poetry came in search of me." My curiosity led me to an email list which included

Moira Richards, a noted writer of renga and tanka. I had been experimenting with haiku but found the short form too limiting, and Richards told me about haibun, specifically the Kikakuza Haibun society, which ran an annual contest to which only mailed entries were admitted. I was drawn by the collegial and critical atmosphere, to have great thinkers such as Nobuyuki Yuasa and Stephen Henry Gill and was drawn back to the craft challenge of haiku. I have not been a consistent practitioner, but sent work in for annual contests over about seven years.

SSM: What brought you to haiku for the first time as haijin rather than just as readers?

PYDV: Feedback always told me that my haiku were the weakest part of my haibun. As a poetry teacher at university, I have really enjoyed exploring the form with my students for the past ten years. I met Raphael around 2003 but didn't know about his secret passion. I was testing my voice at poetry slams and participating in a monthly poetry discussion convened by Myesha Jenkins, a prolific writer of short poems that never became haiku. Raphael and I eventually joined the South African Poetry Project, a cross-institution research group and he began talking about *The Mamba*. I was skeptical; I felt quite at home with Kikakuza and its annual contest, which provided rigorous commentary on particular haibun. I was moved to improve because my reports kept seeing potential. It seemed churlish to not make an effort.

RDA: Reading the first issue of *The Mamba*, in 2016; realising that African writers were now telling gripping African stories using one of my favourite forms was an epiphany. I wrote my first haiku, submitted it expecting a rejection, but to my surprise it was chosen as the epigraph for issue 2:

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black mamba
coiled in sugar cane field
scythe glistening

This is how the journey began.

SSM: In one of your co-authored works-in-progress, you note that Africa, and I will add by extension, African haiku, “is a competitive collective.” People so often think of Africa and her cultures as a monolith. What do you want readers to understand about the diversity represented in African haiku.

RDA: African haiku (or Afriku) are reflections of the history and the present of the continent, its beauty and its terror. There are countless languages, cultures and landscapes in Africa, as well as millenary poetic traditions, both oral and written, and this complex imaginative background is what one explores with Afriku. As a poet and a scholar, I am intrigued by how poetic forms “travel”, preserving their original spirit, but also adapting their prosodic features to the new context(s). This has been the case for the sonnet, the ghazal, the epigram, and many other forms, and is certainly the case for haiku, which found fertile, regenerative soil when it was brought to Africa, a continent in which short, imagistic, nature-centred poetry had been flourishing for centuries.

PYDV: South Africans tend to think of themselves as exceptional somehow, and I find in haiku the space to explore a more grounded sense of humanity. Before I really investigated Afriku, I dismissed it as a kind of identity politics of poetry, claiming an exotic, ‘other’ status, less authoritative than the Kikakuza which seemed more authentic. How wrong I was! In 2023 I was invited to participate in a panel with Raphael, Adjei-Agyei Baah, the father of Afriku, and two of Raphael’s students who were making Afriku in indigenous languages. It was a powerful encounter that rekindled my interest in haiku.

SSM: When you write haiku, what do you want your readers to understand about South African cultures, their diversity and their relationships?

PYDV: I want them to be able to enter the haiku and see an aspect of themselves while being true to the South African context.

RDA: The form allows me to develop a deep spiritual connection with nature primarily, but also with the urban environment in which I live. I hope that, through the moments I capture in my haiku, the readers can catch a glimpse of what it means to live in South Africa. I also hope that they can see and feel what I see and feel in these moments, and use my haiku as a starting point to reflect on their own symbiosis with their surroundings, both visible and invisible.

SSM: As I have engaged with the contributions for this special section, I've been struck by the relationships between traditional forms of African short poetry and haiku. How do you see these tradition African short forms influencing Afriku?

RDA: As I said before, one can find “haiku-ish” poetic forms that pre-date renga and haiku in Southern Africa, but also in Western Africa, in Somalia, in Morocco, etc. Our Poet Laureate Keorapetse Kgositisile reminds us that, according to African indigenous knowledge systems, poetry is a product of the community's collective unconscious (something that Jung also discovered some centuries later). When haiku appeared in Africa, it was embraced by storytellers who already had that “poetics” in their DNA, in their ancestral memory.

PYDV: I agree with Raphael, and also many African indigenous languages are under threat of erasure. One of our foremost scholars, AC Jordan wrote in 1973, that the context and conditions for the composition of African oral poetry was largely under threat by urbanisation and colonisation. Many poets feel a strong allegiance

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to their language, while still knowing that the only way they will be read is in translation, mostly into English. Afriku in African languages potentially is an adoption of writer, thereby ensuring a longer lifespan of the poem, and by extension, the language.

SSM: I know you have considered seasonal kigo from the standpoint of South African haikin. What should readers understand about seasonal kigo from South African as compared to other regions of the continent?

PYDV: I think Raphael is much more knowledgeable about that. I bow to his expertise!

RDA: Southern Africa's weather is more diverse than the weather one finds in drier, hotter, climatically more uniform regions of Africa, and kigo change according to time and place. What are you writing about? Snowy Lesotho or the Kalahari desert? The dry karoo or misty, windy Cape Town? Is the poem set in summer or in winter? In my haiku mentioned above, for instance, the *kigo* is the scythe, which symbolises the harvest season in the sugar cane fields of Kwa-Zulu Natal. "Birthing whale" could be another example of an unmistakably South African *kigo*, which would indicate a period between June and November, and a specific place like Walker Bay near Hermanus in the Western Cape.

SSM: You have both had the opportunity to meet Adjei Agyei-Baah and to know his legacy in reference to Afriku. Could you say more about your interactions with him and what he means to you in reference to haiku in Africa?

RDA: Unfortunately, I could never shake Adjei's hand and only met him virtually. But we corresponded regularly and we immediately became fellows and friends. If it weren't for him, I wouldn't be writing these lines today. He published my first haiku, encouraged me to pursue this path, valued my scholarship on Afriku, and mentored me throughout my journey as a haikin. He was my

Master in the traditional sense of the word, he means everything to me, in reference to African haiku and haiku in general.

PYDV: That single encounter on a zoom panel at Poetry Africa was impressive — I was particularly struck by his deep immersion in haiku and his dedication to promoting the form, his compassion and enthusiasm in teaching.

SSM: How are your specific South African identities reflected in your poetry in general and your haiku?

PYDV: My identity is very complex and emotional and I find that the slenderness of haiku provides a conceptual distance that enhances the expressive potential of language. For example, Raphael was helping me with one that I was working on while depressed about having been given up for adoption. Raphael's suggestions were more impressionistic, while being true to the feeling and the image.

RDA: I am an outsider, a journeyman, a migrant writer who has found his home in the South African poetry community. I explore issues of identity, displacement, translingualism in my poems, but with haiku my focus shifts. I see haiku as a sacred space, a territory of my imagination where I explore the love I have for nature, animals, African landscapes, etc.

SSM: As you think about the work that you would like to complete as readers of, critics of and creators of African haiku, what are each of you thinking of working on next individually and together?

RDA: As South Africa representative of the Africa Haiku Network, one of my tasks is to facilitate workshops in South African schools, universities etc, to promote the knowledge of haiku and Afriku in the country; I am busy organising two workshops and, with other members of AHN, I am co-editing an anthology that celebrates 10 years of *The Mamba*, which will be launched in 2026. Phillippa

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and I are also writing an article on Afriku, which hopefully will be completed and published this year.

PYDV: I want to practice, practice, practice haiku until it becomes my default means of expression. I will see what comes to me. I loved working on this article with Raphael because it united my love of poetry, my obsession with a sense of place and the practice of the craft. I learn by writing. It was so much fun!

SSM: The Zulu greeting and response, *sawubona* — I see you — and *shiboka* — I exist for you — resonates with me as a haijin. How do you see the depth of these sentiments reflected in your writing processes?

PYDV: I didn't know that there were words for this feeling. Thank you, I do feel seen by haiku — as Sonya Sanchez writes in *Morning Haiku*, one does feel a deep sense of humanity in the form that affirms one's belonging. In people who come from histories of dehumanisation, it is profound.

RDA: I too am discovering something new here, thanks Sheila! Poetry (and art in general) exists to create bonds amongst people who would otherwise be disconnected. Good poetry transcends time, place and even language because it finds in the mundane what is common in the human experience. For this reason for me haiku is not just another form, but it represents the deepest and smartest expression of poetry. To learn about haiku is to learn about the quintessence of poetry.

SSM: Thank you both for your time. I am looking forward to reading with you and greeting you in person to talk more about haiku and other vital things.

*Excerpt from Afriku And Emerging Voices:
A Compilation Of African English Language Haiku*

We are pleased to have the opportunity to share an excerpt from *Afriku And Emerging Voices: A Compilation Of African English Language Haiku*, an anthology celebrating the 10th anniversary of *The Mamba*, Journal of African Haiku Network (2016–2026). As the editors of the collection, our goal is to showcase the burgeoning of haiku in Africa and to share the global reach of *The Mamba*. The anthology is dedicated to the memory of Adjei Agyei-Baah (1977–2023), the renowned Ghanaian haijin and co-founder of *The Mamba*, the Africa Haiku Network and the Poetry Foundation Ghana. Agyei-Baah, author of *Afriku* (2016), *Ghana 21 Haiku* (2017), *Piece of My Fart* (2018), the first senryu collection from Africa, and *Afriku: Haiku and Senryu from Ghana* (2020), taught and mentored African poets across the continent. The haiku in this excerpt were selected as part of the best of haiku published in *The Mamba* over the years. *Afriku And Emerging Voices: A Compilation Of African English Language Haiku* will be published in 2026.

Emmanuel Jessie Kalusian, Ibrahim Nureni, Celestine Nudanu, Raphael d'Abdon, Taofeek Ayeyemi, Editors.

WEST AFRICA

morning sunrise . . .
the fresh scent
from the baker's yard

— Adjei AGYEI-BAAH, Ghana (*The Mamba* 4, 2017)

thunderclap
the village priest hears
his name

— Emmanuel KALUSIAN, Nigeria (*The Mamba* 1, 2016)

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Africa forest
a tractor keeps tunneling
in and out

— Babajide Michael OLUSEGUN, Nigeria
(*The Mamba* 4, 2017)

long afternoon
a mango hangs
on a ripe sun

— Kojo TURKSON, Ghana (*The Mamba* 1, 2016)

EAST AFRICA

savannah cruelty
a gazelle finally rests
between the cheetah's jaws

— Teddy KIMATHI, Kenya (*The Mamba* 2, 2016)

Arusha Park —
the click of a camera
startles an antelope

— Patrick Wafula WANYAMA, Kenya
(*The Mamba* 2, 2016)

SOUTHERN AFRICA

moonlight across trees
a black mamba's slough
shimmers in wild berries

— Raphael D'ABDON, South Africa (*The Mamba* 2, 2016)

year's end
her skipping rope
too short

— Maria STEYN, South Africa (*The Mamba* 4, 2017)

a house
drown in a pond
seashell

— Nshai WALUMZIMBA, Zambia
(*The Mamba* 1, 2016)

NORTH AFRICA

woodland . . .
the rising smoke
from the hunter's fire

— Abderrahim BENSALD, Morocco
(*The Mamba* 4, 2017)

cancer survivor . . .
a flower sipping
the dew

— Ali ZNAIDI, Tunisia (*The Mamba* 2, 2016)

THE REST OF THE WORLD

rain —
the weighty wings
of a stork

— Antonio MANGIAMELI, Italy (*The Mamba* 4, 2017)

morning sunrise
Africa sends me a smile
of a child

— James McRIGHT, United States (*The Mamba* 1, 2016)

a day without rain —
catching up at last
with all my bills

— Michael Dylan WELCH, United States
(*The Mamba* 3, 2017)

NEW AFRIKU

There are few things more moving than to explore one's own culture, world views and lived experiences. This section celebrates new haiku that are uniquely African. They offer glimpses into the complexities, ways of knowing and ways of being that are limned in haiku written by African haikin.

parted curtains —
children wide-eyed
at morning snow
— Raphael D'ABDON, South Africa

after church
imoto yocingo race
the kids' formula 1
— Raphael D'ABDON, South Africa

fresh magwinya
in gogo's¹ kitchen
the children's wet lips
— Raphael D'ABDON, South Africa

Kente folds catch sun —
Cassava, spice, SIM cards.
Life bargains in tongues.
— Om'Oba Jerry ADESEWO, Nigeria

1. *gogo* is the Zulu word for grandmother.

Rusted railway tracks
split baobab's swollen heart —
Roots swallow the nails.
— Om'Oba Jerry ADESEWO, Nigeria

Village wakes to drums —
Elders' palms bleed the rhythm.
Horizon cracks light.
— Om'Oba Jerry ADESEWO, Nigeria

When the rainbow sets
You'll see another layer
There are two meanings
— Beverley Nambozo NSENGIYUNVA, Uganda

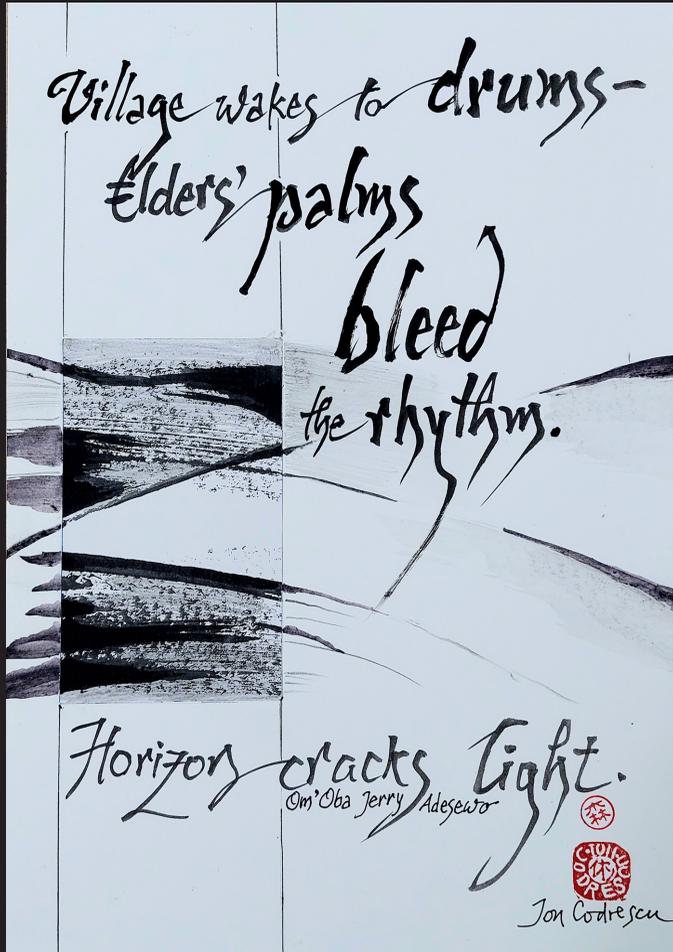
late sun . . .
a still ball amid
passing clouds
— Ibrahim NURENI, Nigeria/USA

different scene
a madman's monologue
too dramatic
— Ibrahim NURENI, Nigeria/USA



JUXTA

Reviews



Poet: Om'Oba Jerry ADESEWO / Artist: Ion CODRESCU

Sixteen Ways of Looking at a Consummate Poet

A Review of Conversations with Lenard D. Moore

Judson EVANS

John Zheng (editor). *Conversations with Lenard D. Moore*. Literary Conversations Series, Monika Gehlawat, General Editor. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2024.) Hardcover: ISBN 9781496853943. 173 pages.

For most of us in the American haiku community, Lenard D. Moore has established himself as the most well-known and widely published African-American haiku poet: a writer with a body of indelible haiku that both catalyze intense emotion in the elegiac mode:

hot afternoon
the squeak of my hands
on my daughter's coffin

and fuse the roots of jazz and blues with the essence of Japanese aesthetics:

after midnight sax
 I contemplate calling her
 in this coolness

I could fill a paragraph listing the prestigious awards Moore has won for the spectrum of work in haiku, tanka, haibun, as well as books that sequence and combine these forms. Likewise, his work has been explored in this journal and in two recent texts: *African American Haiku: Cultural Visions* (U. Press of Mississippi, 2016), also edited by John Zheng, and *Lenard D. Moore and African American Haiku: Merging Traditions* (Lexington Books, 2022) by Ce Rosenow. The conversations in this new book bring Moore's own unique voice into dialogue with poets, critics, and editors who follow the evolution of his work from his unique position as one of the very few African-American voices in the official haiku community of the 1980's and as president of the Haiku Society of America (HSA) in 2008 and 2009, to his continued prolific productivity in our present moment. And although as Zheng's own anthology of critical essays makes clear, "African American haiku has had a long tradition since the twentieth century Harlem Renaissance" (*African American Haiku*, xv), Moore is unique among African-American poets in centering haiku and related forms at the core of his practice.

In these conversations, Moore also revises the accepted early history of African-American haiku to illuminate important early figures, like Harlem Renaissance poet Louis G. Alexander, who have been largely ignored. He exposes the racist assumptions within the publishing world, and describes to Crystal Simone Smith his difficulty getting an anthology of African-American haiku by important writers published back in 1995-96, because the publishers "didn't think enough African Americans wrote haiku" (62). He also reveals himself as a catalyst for opening up Black spaces for writing and reception of haiku where contexts and

assumptions about African-American experience are recognized and welcomed, especially through the Carolina African American Writer's Conference, which he founded and has continued to nurture since 1992. The reader of these lively conversations comes away with deep respect for the wide range of Moore's writing in haiku forms and beyond, as well as his artistic mastery in forging a poetic practice that merges Japanese with African-American aesthetics "through rhythms, cultural allusion, historical references, and sociopolitical impact" (Lucas Laryea, 16). Above all, the reader gains the sense of Moore's deep humanity and his comprehensive vision of the poet's role in culture.

Haiku for Moore is the leading edge of a much broader poetic practice, since, in his words, writing in any form "is as crucial as inhaling and exhaling . . . I write to learn, to stay in touch with my own inner self, to make sense of the past, present, and future, to inform and entertain, celebrate our existence" (Lucas Laryea, 9). Moore notes in an early interview with Jane Reichhold: "I write haiku, tanka, and renga because it is a way of life, which is a part of me just as I have become a part of it . . ." (5). Likewise, John Zheng quotes Moore: "For me, haiku is a way of life. I live haiku without reserve" (52). Moore recounts his early "crusade to record whatever I perceived in nature . . ." which evolved into his daily practice in omnipresent longhand journals. For Moore, the haiku is first and foremost a "poem" — a well-made thing. As he states in his conversation with Lauri Scheyer: "Like a carpenter, I will build poems frame by frame. To that end, I will keep experimenting with various building materials or literary elements . . ." (140).

Doris Lucas Laryea's conversation sets Moore's haiku writing in the larger context of his first collection of haiku *The Open Eye* (1985) and the free verse collection *Forever Home* (1992) which establish the importance of place — specifically the geography, geology and cultural world of Piney Green Community in Jacksonville, North Carolina. But Laryea also veers widely into the specifics of Moore's

influences, both from a wide range of music — R&B, funk and disco, to central blues musicians and singers — to the modernist poetics of Williams, Pound, and Stevens. Here, Moore also demonstrates his awareness and connection with a “new Black renaissance” in the lyric poetry of the 1990s, including Elizabeth Alexander, Carl Phillips, Patricia Smith, and Kevin Young.

Several conversations tap into Moore’s ambition to construct larger forms out of haiku: “I’ve tried to write haiku as often as possible. . . . Dealing with the discipline of image and careful attention to language in haiku, I believe I have strengthened my writing of longer forms of poetry. I have maximized what I learned in haiku to write a book-length haiku sequence titled *Desert Storm: A Brief History*.” This work is part of a larger project “to do something new within the African-American canon by writing a long poem or sequence using the haiku” (Laryea, 15). Similarly, John Zheng asks how haiku work within Moore’s larger free verse structures and sequences, and we learn that haiku function as a basic building-blocks of all of Moore’s poetry. As Moore says to another interlocutor, L. Teresa Church, haiku makes him “able to chisel a form until it’s tight as a rubber band”(30).

Other interviews, especially the conversation with Sheila Smith McKoy, take us deeper into Moore’s biography, his connection to the agricultural world he grew up in, his earliest experiences with writing and writing practices: “I have more than one journal on me. I don’t want to miss any of the haiku moments that might present themselves.” (45) And Susan Antolin broaches the tragic loss of his daughter Maiisha LaShawn Moore:

When I lost my daughter, I went to the library daily to write about her. I gave myself a challenge. I wanted to write poetry about her, employing several different poetic forms. I had to teach myself to write in some of those poetic forms. Some . . . were difficult . . . I think I employed more than twenty-five different poetic forms to write about my daughter . . . writing is healing. (109)

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Likewise, Ce Rosenow opens up the deep vein of spirituality in Moore's life and poetry. We learn of Moore's hands on connection to the church (before COVID, he sang in two church choirs) and hear him speak of spirituality and expression: "The relationship I see between spirituality, music, and poetry mainly showcases freedom and expression because those elements seem to eliminate restrictions of voice . . ." (156).

A constant theme across these interviews is Moore's experimentation with haiku, as he describes it to Doris Lucas Laryea: "bending the rules of haiku poetry to make them my own, to capture of the pulse of the African American community":

September warmth —
on watermelons the shadows
of migrant workers

In the same discussion Moore brings African-American musical forms into haiku with his innovations in jazzku, bluesku, gospelku and traces an African American aesthetic tradition within haiku poetry as he speaks of his invention of the jazzku:

jazzwoman moaning
to the heart
riff I stir in
the almost midnight

Laryea probes into the specific prosodic dimensions of Moore's haiku, distinguishing different ways of embodying musical and emotional contours of jazz and blues in the tanka and haiku forms:

In my "blues tanka" I build upon what I do in bluesku by rhyming the last two lines. Jazzku is an effort to evoke excitement and tone within jazz with allusions to both jazz songs and artists. I am careful about word choice to paint sharp contrasts in my jazzku, and the line breaks are not predictable . . . (16-17).

These conversations develop another common theme, Moore's collaborations with musicians, choreographers, painter, even quilters, and, most specifically, photographers. In his conversation with Crystal Simone Smith, Moore speaks of the unique possibilities of collaboration:

The collaborations are the only ways that those projects would have been able to come to fruition. They open my imagination further . . . In fact, my collaborative haiku projects with Black poets garnered a number of firsts, including the structure of books and the kinds of museum collaborations . . . (63).

Speaking of ekphrasis, Moore states: "I wanted to write beyond mere descriptions because the photographs have already done so . . . I also wanted to challenge myself to write, hopefully effectively about women." He goes further in explaining how haiku creates a unique documentation parallel but distinct from photography: "photography gives you what is there, but I think (haiku) provides more, especially when considering color, light, shadows, contrast, rhythm, perspective, shapes, figures . . . Poetry triggers one to find the gaps . . . (63)"

sun plaza:
 one million shadows darken
 foot by foot
 (from *Gathering at the Crossroads*, 2003)

The editor of these conversations, John Zheng, whose affinity for jazz and blues are clear in his own haibun collection, *A Way of Looking* (2021) — which I reviewed for *Frogpond* (45:1) — speaks with Moore about the influence of the African American church through "the cadence of the preacher's sermons and the rhythm of the gospel choir" (48), as well as the influence of the myriad collaborations Moore has done with jazz bands and solo jazz musicians. Zheng draws out Moore's thoughts on improvising

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words with jazz: “breath, rhythm and feeling help me transcribe my voice into lines.” We see how haiku fits into Moore’s larger goal of creating a distinct “jazz poetry” — a goal most fully expressed in his book *The Geography of Jazz* (2018), which is examined in detail in John Zheng’s interview. Moore speaks of “ancestral memory” and his life-long deep immersion in recordings and live performance of jazz, blues, and gospel music. “I wanted to document daily life, the natural world, historical events, ancestral stories, and the cultural arts” (48).

Moore’s sense of the African American poet’s cultural and social role stands out in these conversations. Focusing on both historical witness and spiritual transmission, this role evokes the African concept of griot — a spokesman for deep, necessary truths of a people. As he says to Sharon Hayes-Brown: “I think it is important for Black writers to write about the Black experience and culture because we are the Black experience and culture. We live it. We know it. It also is important to write about truths” (121). As is suggested in several conversations, but pointed out more fully in Ce Rosenow’s study of Moore, he employs haiku to suggest experiences and responses of war among soldiers “as individuals and as members of a corps (in Zheng’s *African American Haiku*, 170). That word “corps” is suggestive of the metonymic rather than metaphoric structure of haiku, and how in Moore’s work a part suggests a larger whole, and the damage to one affects the larger group:

night heat
the blown-off arm
still in fatigues

This social role also includes speaking for the natural world, as Moore suggests in calling haiku “eco-poetry.” Further, in an interview with Dee Clere, Moore speaks of poetry as a “memory tool” (87), and this “memory” function surfaces in discussions with

David G. Lanoue of Moore's *Desert Storm: A Brief History* (1993) and *Gathering at the Crossroads: The Million Man March* (2003):

on the stage
 a line of brothers lock arms
 autumn sunshine

Inevitably, there is some redundancy in such an assemblage of “conversations,” but through the multiple perspectives (and I have too little space to comment on the many fascinating insights from all fifteen authors) we gain a vision of Moore as not only a consummate poet, but as the quintessential poetic citizen. His poetic role includes proselytizing for poetry, building supportive poetic communities, and teaching, which he has done at several institutions in parallel with his life-long career as a poet. Speaking with Sharon Hates-Brown, Moore states: “perhaps I am still a teacher who writes . . . When I teach, I also learn . . . teaching is a give-and-take profession for me.”

Crystal Simone Smith, the current President of the Haiku Society of America, who was mentored by Moore, offers the most comprehensive portrait of Moore as teacher and mentor. The collection's title, “Conversations,” is appropriate here to the way Moore sees his work with other artists, including his students. This attitude is implicit in the collaborative view he takes in editing the first African-American haiku anthology by the Carolina African American Writer's Conference: *One Window's Light* (2017), which won the HSA “Merit Book Award.” Moore reads and publishes with this group of imminent writers. Ultimately, this collection, with its Chronology of Moore's impressive body of work, and interweaving of witnesses to his craft and humanity, presents a haiku master forging a crucial direction of both African American haiku and haiku poetics in English. Moore contradicts Yeats' claim that “the intellect of man is forced to choose/ Perfection of the life, or of the work” (*The Choice*, 1900). Moore's life and work flow seamlessly into each other with a sense of excellence.

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A Multitude of Perspectives

A Review of *One Thread: Zoka in Contemporary Haiku*

Mary STEVENS

Janice Doppler (Editor). *One Thread: Zoka in Contemporary Haiku*. Massachusetts: Independently published, 2024. Softcover: ISBN 979-8335710350. 251 pages.

In the introduction to her book *One Thread: Zoka in Contemporary Haiku*, Janice Doppler, with humor and humility, acknowledges the limitations of her Western-cultivated mind's ability to see from an Asian perspective (7). Further, Don Baird, in his essay in this volume, quotes from and elaborates on chapter one of the *Tao Te Ching*: “The Tao that can be described is not the Tao.’ And in some way, the *zoka* that can be described, therefore is not the *zoka*.” (225) The difficulty in perceiving from outside of one’s cultural heritage and the insufficiency of language to explain the ineffable are why an anthology for this concept is important: comprised of the thoughts and works of artists from the distant past through the present and across several cultures, *One Thread* presents a multitude of perspectives on an aesthetic that can only be intuited.

The book's title comes from a quotation attributed to Matsuo Bashō, in which he refers to the common aesthetic spirit that runs through all Japanese art forms, resulting from following the constantly dynamic energy of nature that exists in everything from the workings of the cosmos to the human act of creating. Doppler's book is an exploration of whether accessing *zoka* holds potential for deepening haiku today, and if so, how to do it.

One Thread consists of an enthusiastic foreword in which Kala Ramesh traces how Hindu, Taoist, Buddhist, and Shinto philosophies contributed to the conceptualization of *zoka*, and is divided into two sections, followed by an appendix with related works by three haiku poet-scholars: Jim Kacian's prose-poem "Presence," James W. Hackett's essay "Suggestions for Creating Haiku Poetry in English," and Don Baird's essay "*Zoka*."

The first section offers an overview of Asian philosophy through a summary of three classic Chinese philosophical texts — the *Tao Te Ching*, the *I Ching*, and the *Chuang Tzu*; a discussion of meditation practice and writing as a spiritual act; and selections from the works of seven past (618-1694 CE) Chinese and Japanese masters of poetry, painting, *renga*, *waka*, and the tea ceremony.

The second section, which comprises 75% of the book, is a collection of essays by 26 contemporary haiku poets on their understanding of *zoka* and a sampling from each poet of twelve of their *zoka*-influenced haiku. There are a few *haiga* as well. Doppler is sincere in her focus on contemporary poets for this section: the majority of these poems were published in the decade prior to the volume's publication, and at least one poem from each poet was published in the past two years.

While she doesn't mention her criteria for selection of poets, there is a balance among cultures: 58% of the poets are from Ireland, Japan, Australia, Bulgaria, Switzerland, France, India, and China. Collections by editors from the United States run the risk of

including a disproportionate number of contributions from poets from their country; however, Doppler avoids this pitfall. This sense of proportion extends to the fact that more than half of the poets selected are women, particularly since all of the contributors in section one and the appendices are men. Interestingly, 19% of the poets in this section are women from India. We might attribute this editorial choice to Doppler having detected great representation of *zoka* in their works, since these poets describe a similar concept in Hindu cosmology.

At the various transition points in the book, Doppler weaves in a “head and heart” theme, with the essays coming from thinking and the artworks from feeling. In this way, and along with a presentation of poets from a variety of cultures, she mitigates the limitations of attempting to explain the unexplainable while providing a balance of perspectives.

While the book as a whole is well-structured, direct explanations of how the various artworks exemplify *zoka* would have helped elucidate the concept. Discussion of *zoka* is lacking in the introductory information for a couple of artists in section 1, and the purpose of the book would have been better achieved with more editorial involvement in the poem selection process for section 2, where it is difficult to discern *zoka*—as it is described in the text, anyway—in about one-third of the poems. Further, another editing pass of section 1 would have provided the opportunity to flesh out the subsections and paragraphs for better coherence and cohesion, create more consistency in tone, address the spelling and mechanical errors, especially those affecting the clarity of a few sentences, and correct the explanation that the first half of the *Tao Te Ching* is about the processes of the Tao and the rest is about how to live with virtue (22), where in actuality the two aspects are interwoven throughout the book.

These concerns are minor, however, given the ambitions of the book and the treasures that reside within it. By including summaries of Asian philosophies, descriptions of an ineffable Japanese aesthetic, and works in a variety of media and from ancient masters to current haiku poets, Doppler effectively approaches the concept from multiple angles. For example, Patricia Machmiller, in her beautiful essay, “Wonderment,” describes witnessing the birth and death of *Valella velella* jellyfish or “by-the-wind sailors.” She writes, “I discovered, it is this continually interlocking and overlapping series of cycles that is the wellspring, the never-ending source of the creative within” (116). In “*Zoka* as Poetic Persona,” Nina Singh writes, “*Zoka* enriches haiku by infusing it with a deeper awareness of the life force that animates the natural scene and elevates the poem from a simple observation to a reflection on the larger cycles of life and the interconnectedness of all things” (170). Several contributors offer exciting insights into how they access *zoka* — be it through empathy with the natural world, as espoused by Chuck Brickley in “Stuff of Life” (104) or engaging in “reverent listening,” as Nicky Gutierrez suggests in “*Zoka: A Haiku Cosmology*” (146).

In addition to providing a succinct primer on Asian cosmology, *One Thread* offers something unique. Spirituality is not often discussed in recent haiku scholarship. Doppler’s book is an exciting exploration of the interface between spirituality and creativity and shows how an awareness of *zoka* can enrich our haiku writing.

Some favorites from the contemporary poets section:

painting the sea
she lets water do
what water does

— Mimi Ahern (88)

summer solstice
the ebb and flow
of neighborhood kids
—Gregory Longenecker (130)

my steps heavy
yet light
muddy spring
—Emiko Miyashita (70)

summer twilight—
the old cemetery
alive with midges
—Sean O'Connor (59)

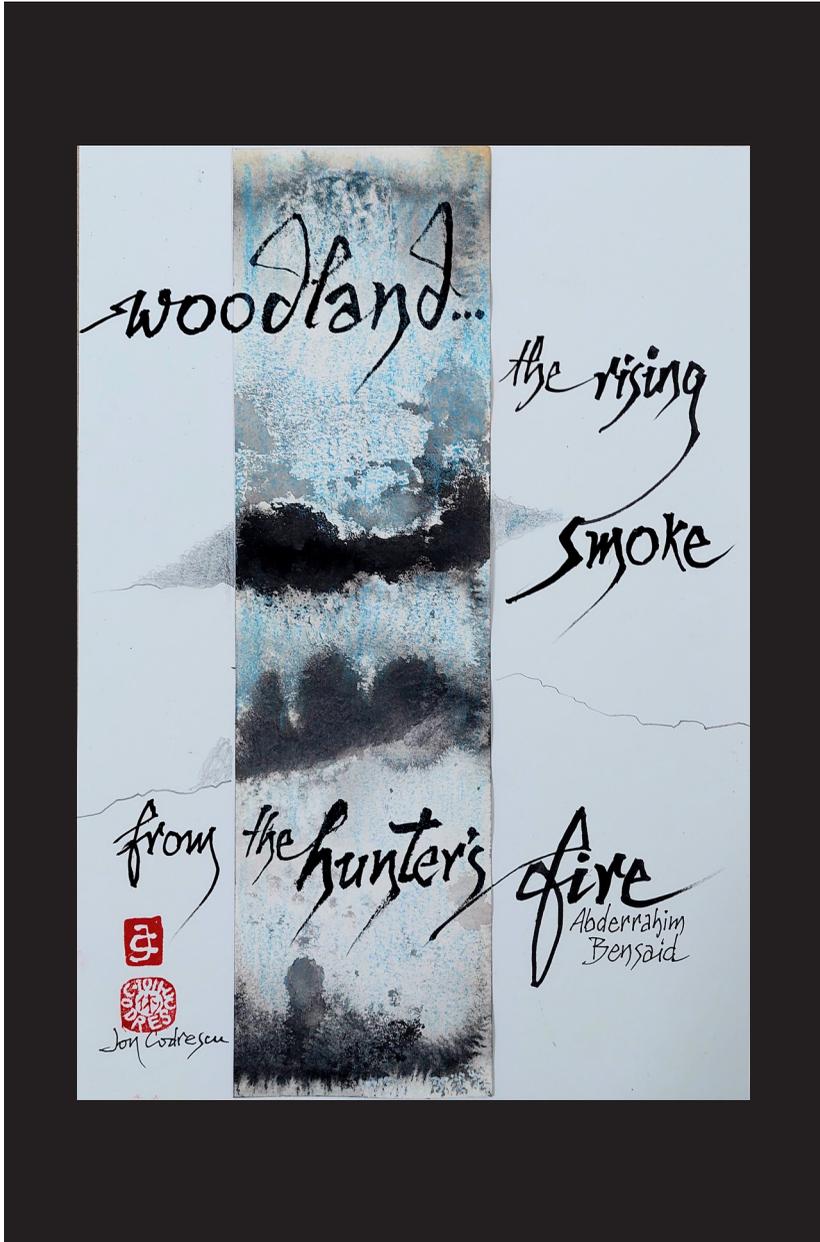
falling night
the sound of water
darkening
—Vandana Parashar (180)

dripping trees
I wait for the right path
to choose me
—Debbie Strange (93)



JUXTA

Haiga



Poet: Abderrahim BENSALD / Artist: Ion CODRESCU

HAIGA

Here we are almost a year later with another *Juxta* volume, the eleventh and of course with another eight haiga paintings. This time, the main theme of the volume we have in our hands is haiku from the African continent. All eight compositions I made for this edition are inspired by poems written by African authors.

From many points of view, it is difficult to be original in the creation of haiku. However, when I read a poem composed by another author, I would like to feel her/his cultural space and the landscape in which the poet created it, because these elements are among the most powerful that influence us in writing haiku, in addition to many other details that determine us to choose a certain “story”, theme, subject, sensation, revelation, illumination or moment. In creating these haiga paintings I paid attention to the keywords, to the vocabulary specific to this area of the world for each poem that I chose to be transformed into an image juxtaposed to calligraphy. Of course, in the vocabulary of these poems I found the words that suggest the African space: the sun, the bright light, the elders and the rhythm of the village drums, the wide and distant horizon, the long-awaited rain, the birds, the fire, the hunter, etc.

In my search to transpose the linguistic sign (the words of the poem) into an iconic sign (the painted image), helping myself with calligraphy that must make this transfer harmoniously, since I use the same tool (the brush) and the same technique (ink painting), I sought to suggest the expanse of the African land illuminated by the sun, the vast spaces and the lines that define a completely unique landscape.

In the compositions that evoke the African territory of the haiku poems, I used, through the collage technique, narrow vertical screens to create a contrast and a rhythm inspired by some words

of what each poem tells us. As always — without making a direct illustration to avoid redundancy between words and painting — I have tried to convey, through the images I have suggested, the meanings that the poet put into the words of the poem he wrote. I have also paid special attention to the empty space, untouched by the brush (*yohaku*, in Japanese) that a haiga painting needs to give free rein to the imagination of the one who looks at this type of art in which poetry, painting and calligraphy come together.

— Ion CODRESCU

JUXTA

People

parted curtains-
children
wide-eyed



at morning



Jon Codrescu

SNOW

Raphael
d'Abdon

Poet: Raphael D'ABDON / Artist: Ion CODRESCU

JUXTA *Contributors*



Om'Oba Jerry ADESEWO is a writer, theatre producer/director, and cultural administrator. He is the Founder and Artistic Director of Arojah Royal Theatre, in Abuja, Nigeria, and founder and festival director of the Abuja Children Theatre Festival. His publications include *Womb of Peace* (a collection of haiku), and *From Here to There I & II* (a cross-cultural anthology of poems). A new book, *Justice: A Mirage and Other Plays* (co-edited with Dr. Ola Ifatimehin), is forthcoming.



Grant CALDWELL is the recipient of two Australia Council for the Arts Established Writer Fellowships. He is an Honorary Senior Fellow at the University of Melbourne, where he was a lecturer in the Creative Writing Program for twenty years, and former Managing Editor of the Australian Poetry Centre's poetry journal *Blue Dog*. His most recent major work is *The Routledge Global Haiku Reader* (co-edited with James Shea). His collection of haiku, *the soundless sound*, appeared in 2025.



Raphael d'ABORD is a scholar, poet, short story writer, editor and translator. He is a Research Fellow at the Department of English Studies at the University of South Africa (UNISA), and a founding member of the international research projects ZAPP (The South African Poetry Project) and Consortium on Advancing Poetic Inquiry in the Global South. His research focuses on South African literature in English, spoken word poetry, poetic inquiry, and poetry therapy.



Phillippa Yaa DE VILLIERS studied Journalism at Rhodes University, theatre at the Jacques Lecoq School in Paris and creative writing at Lancaster University. Born in Johannesburg, South Africa, de Villiers is author of *Taller than buildings* (2006), *The everyday wife* (2010) and *ice-cream headache in my bone* (2017) and co-editor of *The Poems of Keorapetse Kgositsile 1969-2018* (2023). Her fiction and poems appear in *Relations* (2023) among many others, including the journals *Stanzas* and *New Coin*.



Judson EVANS teaches full-time in the Liberal Arts & Sciences Dept. at Berklee College of Music, and serves as co-Editor (with Lew Watts) of Haibun for *Frogpond*. He is part of The Broadmoor Haiku Collective. His chapbook of haibun *Mortal Coil* appeared from Leap Press in 2005. Two collaborative books in free-verse—*Chalk Song* with Susan Berger-Jones and Gale Batchelder and *Gear* with the accompanying book of photographs *Remote Viewing* by Ray Klimek—are more recent publications.



Yukio KACHI, born in England in 1936, was schooled in Japan and the United States, earning his PhD in philosophy in 1970. After retiring from teaching philosophy, he taught Classical Japanese, turned to Bashō, and now considers himself a beginning mountain guide in the Bashō massif. His articles include “Bashō’s Retreat from City Life” (*Modern Haiku* 55.2, 2024) and “Bashō and the Poetry of His Pen Names” (*Origami Butterflies*, The Yuki Teikei Haiku Society Members’ Anthology, 2024).



Emmanuel Jessie KALUSIAN is a document controller, procurement expert and foreign exchange trader. He has been writing haiku since 2012 and has been published in *The Heron’s Nest*, *Modern Haiku*, *A Hundred Gourds*, *Cattails*, and other international journals, and his work received commendation most recently at the 2025 IAFOR Vladimir Devidé Haiku Award. He is the cofounder of the Africa Haiku Network and coeditor of *The Mamba*, Africa’s first haiku journal. He lives in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.



Sheila Smith McKoy is an award-winning poet, fiction writer, and filmmaker. She is co-author of *One Window’s Light: A Haiku Collection*, winner of a 2017 HSA Merit Book Award for best haiku anthology. Her full length poetry collection, *The Bones Beneath* was nominated for the Pulitzer and Pushcart awards. Editor emeritus of *Obsidian*, Smith McKoy has authored and edited numerous scholarly volumes in the areas of Africana Studies, race and difference, literature and culture, and mentorship.



Beverley Nambozo Nseniyunya is Founder and Director of Babishai Niwe Poetry Foundation. A published poet, spoken word artist, and prolific editor, she regularly participates on poetry competition panels, speaks at literary festivals, and coordinates poetry programs across Africa. She is the author or editor of several poetry collections including *Feelings: A Poetry Collection Celebrating Iconic Ugandan Women*, *A Thousand Voices Rising: An Anthology of Contemporary African Poetry*, *Dress Me in Disobedience*, and *Boda Boda Anthem: A Kampala Poetry Anthology*.



Celestine NUDANUHAS is the first Ghanaian writer to have published haiku. Her collections are *Haiku Rhapsodies* (2016), *Whispers of Dawn* (2018) and *Musings of a Muse on Fire* (2025). Her works have been included in two anthologies: *Western Haiku: A Collection* and *Ballads*, both produced by Dagda Publishing, UK. Her haiku has also been published in numerous journals. She earned her BA in English and Theatre Arts, and an MA in International Affairs from the University of Ghana, Legon. She serves as Deputy Registrar with the University of Professional Studies, Accra, and is a Supporting Editor of *The Mamba*.



Ibrahim NURENI is an academic researcher and creative writer. He has placed or been mentioned in many literary contests, including most recently the Atlanta Haiku Festival Competition and the Maya Lyubenova International Haiku Prize, both in 2025. He has worked with or provided support for various literary organizations, such as *Open: Journal of Arts & Letters*, *Wawa Book Review*, and *Baram House*. His work has appeared in *Acorn*, *Shamrock*, *The Mamba*, and *The Heron's Nest*, among others. He serves as Assistant Editor of *The Mamba*, Africa's first haiku journal.



Mary STEVENS is author of the haiku collection *enough light* (2023). She judged the Peggy Willis Lyles Awards contest (2024) and serves as panelist for the Touchstone Awards for Individual Poems. In 2025, she published the essay "The Self Who Writes" (*Modern Haiku*) and the interview "Advice for Beginners" (The Haiku Foundation). With the Route 9 Haiku group, she publishes the biannual haiku journal *Upstate Dim Sum*. She is a book indexer at Look Within Indexing.

JUXTA *Staff*



Janine BEICHMAN, biographer and translator of Japanese poets, has published *Masaoka Shiki: His Life and Works* and *Embracing the Firebird: Yosano Akiko and the Birth of the Female Voice in Modern Japanese Poetry*. She was awarded the Japan-United States Friendship Commission Prize for the Translation of Japanese Literature for her translations of Ōoka Makoto's poetry. Her most recent book is *This Overflowing Light*, translations of the poetry of Ishigaki Rin.



Ion CODRESCU taught graphic arts, history of art, and comparative art at Ovidius University, Constanța, Romania. He is founder of the Constanța Haiku Society, Albatross and Hermitage haiku journals, and the Constanța International Haiku Festival. He is author of nineteen books and three anthologies of poetry, haiga, and essays. His paintings have been exhibited and collected in many countries.



Cheryl CROWLEY studies the literature of premodern Japan, specializing in the popular verse form *haikai* (ancestor of modern haiku) of the 17th and 19th centuries. Her book, *Haikai Poet Yosa Buson and the Bashō Revival* (2007) explores the intersections of poetry and visual art, elite and popular culture. Recently her research has focused on the work of women *haikai* poets in early modern Japan (1603–1868).



David GRAYSON has been writing haiku and senryu for more than twenty years. He authored *Discovering Fire: Haiku & Essays* (Red Moon Press, 2016), and edited *Full of Moonlight* (HSA 2016 Members' Anthology). He was featured in *A New Resonance 6* (Red Moon Press, 2009), *My Neighbor* (Two Autumns Press, 2009) and *Spring Haiku in the Park 2018* (Yuki Teikei Society). He lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with his family.



Jim KACIAN — founder/chairperson of the board of The Haiku Foundation (2009), founder/owner of Red Moon Press (1993), editor-in-chief of *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years* (W. W. Norton, 2013) — has served as managing editor of *Juxtapositions* since its inception in 2015. His latest book of haiku is *after / image* (2018), and this year he completed, after 14 years, his anecdotal history of haiku in the West, *Clerikus*, now in search of a publisher.



Adam L. KERN is author and editor of several books on Japanese literature, including *The Penguin Book of Haiku* (Penguin Classics, 2018). He studied Japanese literature at the University of Minnesota, the University of Kyoto, and Harvard University, where he earned a Ph.D. in East Asian Languages & Civilizations. Kern is Professor of Japanese Literature and Visual Culture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Toru KIUCHI is the editor of two collections of essays, *American Haiku: New Readings* (2018) and *Haiku, Other Arts, and Literary Disciplines* (2021) (with Yoshinobu Hakutani). He is also the author of *The Critical Response in Japan to African American Writers* (2003) (with Yoshinobu Hakutani and Robert Butler) and *Richard Wright: A Documented Chronology, 1908-1960* (2014) (with Yoshinobu Hakutani).



Sheila Smith McKoy is an award-winning poet, fiction writer, and filmmaker. She is co-author of *One Window's Light: A Haiku Collection*, winner of a 2017 HSA Merit Book Award for best haiku anthology. Her full length poetry collection, *The Bones Beneath* was nominated for the Pulitzer and Pushcart awards. Editor emeritus of *Obsidian*, Smith McKoy has authored and edited numerous scholarly volumes in the areas of Africana Studies, race and difference, literature and culture, and mentorship.



Ce ROSENOW is the author of *Lenard D. Moore and African American Haiku: Merging Traditions* and the co-author with Maurice Hamington of *Care Ethics and Poetry*. Her edited collection, *Japanese Forms in American Poetry: Beyond Haiku*, is forthcoming in 2026. She is the former president of the Haiku Society of America.



Dave Russo is the digital project manager for The Haiku Foundation and is a founding member of that organization. He is the author of *Summer Music Festival at Natural Chimneys Park*, a small handmade book. And he's the consulting editor for *The Coach Gaither Story*, a sports biography.



Crystal Simone SMITH is an award-winning poet and educator. She is the author of *Runagate: Songs of the Freedom Bound* (Duke University Press, 2025) and *Dark Testament* (Henry Holt, 2023). In 2022, her collection of haiku, *Ebbing Shore*, won The Haiku Foundation Touchstone Distinguished Book Award. Her work has appeared in numerous journals including *POETRY Magazine*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Rattle*, *Frogpond*, and *The Heron's Nest*. She teaches in the Thompson Writing Program at Duke University.



John ZHENG is author of two collections of haibun and tanka prose, *Dreaminations* (Madville), and *A Way of Looking* (Silverfish Review Press), editor of seven books including *Sonia Sanchez's Poetic Spirit through Haiku* and *Conversations with Lenard D. Moore*, and coeditor of *Conversations with Michael S. Harper*. He has received three poetry fellowships from the Mississippi Arts Commission.

JUXTAELEVEN is our third themed issue, and our topic is the African haiku diaspora. It features new scholarship by Yukio KACHI and Ibrahim NURENI, a presentation by Grant CALDWELL, our thematic presentation of African Haiku and the African Diaspora, chaired by Sheila Smith McKOY and featuring conversations with Emmanuel Jessie KALUSIAN, Celestine NUDANU, Beverly Nambozo NSENGIYUNVA, Ibrahim NURENI, Raphael D'AUBON and Philippa Yaa DE VILLIERS. We offer reviews by Judson EVANS and Mary STEVENS, and 8 new haiga by Ion CODRESCU to poems from African poets.



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