

JUXTAFOUR

RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP IN HAIKU

2018

THE *Haiku* FOUNDATION

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EDITOR'S WELCOME

We are proud to partner with The Haiku Foundation in presenting *Juxtapositions* 4 in this, our fourth year of providing a scholarly outlet for haiku research. We work hard to find articles of the quality that meet academic standards of scholarship, and break new ground in interesting explorations and research. We hope this issue of *Juxta* both adds to the corpus of haiku scholarship, and is an enjoyable read as well.

Fittingly, we pay homage to Marlene Mountain (1939–2018), who died this year at the age of 79, by featuring her haiga, honoring a groundbreaking poet who for more than fifty years pushed the boundaries of creative haiku. She will be sorely missed.

So welcome to *Juxta* 4. From an in depth examination of syllabic counting in haiku by librarian Clayton Beach to the expressive voice of 'magic' in the haiku of Sonia Sanchez to an examination of poet and transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson as his work pertains to Zen and modern haiku, *Juxta* 4 continues our tradition of publishing the finest in scholarly work on haiku research. We hope you enjoy it!

Warm regards,

Peter McDonald
Senior Editor



leaves shudder off the morning

Haiga: Marlene Mountain

The Pig and the Boar:

The Limits to Brevity and Simplicity in Haiku

CLAYTON BEACH

ABSTRACT: English-language haiku has stressed the concepts of brevity and simplicity to a further extent than the Japanese haiku, pushing minimalism as far as humanly possible short of saying nothing, aiming at the Zen-inspired idea of the haiku as a free-verse, “wordless poem.” The way in which early translators and theorists approached the original often failed to acknowledge many literary and linguistic features of Japanese haiku, largely ignoring haiku as language-poetry and instead reading them in terms of Zen inspired simplicity, with a focus on the psychological aspect of capturing heightened, “haiku moments” in a diaristic fashion, or else interpreting the images in Japanese poems through free association even when the original poems were highly stylized and followed poetic clichés with precise meaning and complex use of language. In its lack of normative cultural implications, instead making personal readings the basis, Haiku in English came to be seen as a poetry of indeterminacy—a collaborative process between poet and reader—with each poem being open to interpretation rather than referring to an established matrix of coded words that evoke a highly allusive literary tradition. In losing the Japanese implications and focusing on an individualist, psychological/spiritual approach, English-language haiku both divorced itself from strict Japanese tradition and developed a genuinely new poetics with its own unique canon, built around minimalism and thus exploring haiku

as extreme micro-poetry to a greater extent than has generally been seen in Japanese practice. Comparing and contrasting two well known haiku, one by Marlene Mountain, the other by Kaneko Tohta, and further exploring the issues these differences raise, we can see the ways in which prevailing ideas on the nature of brevity and simplicity in haiku have affected meter, diction, length, punctuation and aesthetics in English-language haiku, and can use this knowledge to further inform the development of English-language haiku in terms of the aforementioned elements of poesy.

There has been a tendency toward what Richard Gilbert has called “atomization” in contemporary English-language haiku (ELH). This uber-minimalist approach is never more apparent than in Cor van den Huevel’s “tundra,” a single-word poem that is perhaps the perfect example of the fullest extent to which this tendency can be taken, though it lacks the two part structure many hold to be necessary of proper haiku.¹

The single portmanteau word—poem-word, or “pwoermd”—remains a popular trend on the experimental side of ELH. Nick Virgilio’s “fossilence”² is an excellent early example; instead of mere juxtaposition of two concepts—fossil and silence—they are concentrated and blended into a single word, creating what is perhaps the shortest possible distillation of the idea of “haiku” that still allows for the characteristic base section and superposed fragment in what is already perhaps the shortest form of poetry in the world. However, these composite neologisms have precedent in English language poetry outside of haiku, thus while we might extend the definition of haiku to embrace this practice, it is a technique that is neither novel nor unique to the world of haiku in English; some haiku are pwoermds, but not all pwoermds are haiku.

While some theorists demand rigid adherence to the 2-part formula for haiku in the English language, others allow for the occasional artful exception to the fragment and phrase ideal, for there are a variety of examples in both contemporary and classic Japanese haiku of “one image” ku, though these are of course generally seen as deviations from the standard formula and still contain some kind of disjunctive effect.

Putting aside the controversial, “one image ku,” when concentrating exclusively on haiku that contain a bipartite structure centered on blending and juxtaposition, the tendency toward extreme brevity in ELH is often touted as being more authentic and true to the spirit

1. Gilbert, Richard. *Poetry as Consciousness*. Keibusha, Co. LTD, p. 147.

2. Gilbert, Richard. *The Disjunctive Dragonfly*. Red Moon Press, p. 94.

of Japanese haiku than a fuller treatment in longer, more lyrical lines, with well meaning poets admonishing beginners for writing in “5-7-5,” the syllabic pattern often associated with haiku due to its extensive (but not exclusive) use in the original Japanese. Charles Trumbull writes:

“Haiku has been described as “the wordless poem.” Because of need for brevity, the haiku poet must use language with extreme economy and accuracy and employ techniques that are very different from those used in crafting Western style poems.”³

This idea of haiku as a “wordless poem” completely different than Western poetry was first put forward by popular Zen philosopher Alan Watts, and the extreme brevity advocated in the name of wordlessness is held to be a reflection of the spare minimalism, nonliterary and economical language supposedly found in the poetry of Bashō.⁴ However, while these assumptions have attained the status of “common knowledge” in the word of ELH by virtue of repetition, they are not accurate reflections of the more complicated truth regarding Japanese haiku, something I will explore in the course of this essay.

While I’m not opposed to brevity and simplicity in haiku, pursuit of them as an end rather than a means—at the cost of creative liberty and poetic value—is, in my view, ultimately short-sighted, restrictive and antithetical to both Japanese tradition and good poetics in general. Some in the ELH community have taken their crusade against syllabics and length too far, for too long, disenfranchising poems that they deem unsuitably long for no other reasons than

3. Trumbull, Charles. “Haiku Diction”. *Frogpond* 38.2. Haiku Society of America, 2015 <<http://www.hsa-haiku.org/frogpond/2015-issue38-2/Trumbull-WordsHaiku-Fp38-2.pdf>>.

4. Amann, Eric W. *The Wordless Poem. Haiku Magazine* III.V, p. 6. <<https://www.thehaikufoundation.org/omeka/files/original/65955e779a5d99a1643028599939f3ba.pdf>>.

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dogmatic thinking, ignorance of the original tradition and artistic inflexibility.

Perhaps the extreme position some take on the issue of brevity is an heirloom of the Anglophone “haiku wars” of the 1970’s, when die-hard 5-7-5 syllable counters squared off in vigorous debate with a new generation of free verse haiku enthusiasts who were pushing the form in new artistic directions. In order to gain artistic freedom, the chains of the past had to be broken—and the bean counters did not give up without a fight—so some poets in the world of ELH took a more severe, all-or-nothing stance than was really justified; rather than saying “haiku need not be 5-7-5,” the dictum became “haiku should not be 5-7-5.”

Lingering vestiges of the bitter enmities formed in this period can be seen in the exclusionary “no 5-7-5” motto of the NaHaiWriMo (National Haiku Writing Month)⁵ and a general preference for poems around or less than 12 syllables—an approach suggested by William Higginson in the 1980’s to be a more accurate reflection of the amount of space it takes to say in English what would have taken 17 morae in Japanese.⁶ Thus (the argument goes) the shorter, free verse haiku is a closer approximation to the original Japanese than a strict 5-7-5 in English, because morae are shorter than syllables and the Japanese take longer to say something; brevity is the soul of haiku.

And indeed, if we look at a haiku such as

5. Welch, Michael Dylan Why “No 5-7-5?”. “NaHaiWriMo,” <<http://www.nahaiwrimo.com/home/why-no-5-7-5>>.

6. Gilbert, Richard. “From 5-7-5 to 8-8-8 Haiku Metrics and Issues of Emulation”. *Language Issues: Journal of the Foreign Language Education Center*, Vol. 1 Prefectural University of Kumamoto <<http://www.gendaihaiku.com/research/metrics/haikumet.html>>.

静けさや岩に染み入る蝉の声
shizukesa ya iwa ni shimi iru semi no koe
 — Bashō⁷

quietude. the cicada's voice permeates the cliffs
 (trans. Clayton Beach)

My translation here follows a pattern of 3-5-5, just slightly more than Higginson's ideal of 12 syllables, so he is on the mark in this case. However, if a haiku has a few words that are short in Japanese but long in English, the translation can just as easily balloon out as shrink down:

つちふるやつり革で読む三国志
tsuchifuru ya tsurikawa de yomu sangokushi
 — Hiroaki Fukumoto⁸

Yellow dust from China—
 hanging from the train strap while I read
 Romance of the Three Kingdoms
 (trans. Clayton Beach)*

At 6-9-7, the 17 morae in Japanese have expanded to 22 syllables in English. So a few words or concepts that take more space for expression in English can radically change the proportion between the length of a translation and the original 17 morae. Add this to the facts that Japanese is a language of implication and insinuation, can often leave out parts of a sentence that would seem strange to do in English, and that Japanese haiku has developed many symbolic associations over the years to pack more and more information into the same receptacle, and all of these factors can often make up for

7. Matuso, Bashō. *Bashō: The Complete Haiku*. Kodansha International.

8. Fukumoto, Hiroaki. *The Haiku Universe for the 21st Century*. trans. David Burleigh, 2008 Modern Haiku Association, p. 153.

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any slight discrepancies between the length of the English syllable and the Japanese mora.

On average, the simplest haiku in Japanese can indeed come between 12 and 17 syllables in English, depending on one's approach to translation, while more complex haiku can translate to 20 syllables or more. In other words, the haiku in Japanese still translates to about 17 syllables, with a plus or minus 5 syllable margin of error. This is without even getting into the Japanese haiku that break the 5-7-5 rhythm by exceeding the standard of 17 morae, a practice not uncommon in Bashō's time and that would become the greater part of an entire movement of "free verse" haiku in early 20th century Japan.

ELH poets are perhaps touchy on the topic of syllabics in haiku because of widespread ignorance regarding the topic of haiku in the general public, and the default assumption by the uninitiated that haiku is defined by the 5-7-5 count and little else. However, once one is past the stage of the rankest neophyte, it quickly becomes obvious that the 5-7-5 model is not anywhere near as onerous or clunky as some would have us think, and well-crafted haiku in English can fall naturally to within a few syllables of this general rubric. Many ku naturally break down into almost 5-7-5, with small adjustments like 3-7-5, or 5-7-2. In these almost 5-7-5 poems, the superposed section is generally slightly shorter, but the base section often fits within 10 and 12 syllables. Other variations find each line short for 4-6-4, or all even at 5-5-5. Thus, while rigid adherence to syllable counting is anathema to the writing of good haiku in English, it is equally true that any strict aversion to poems that approach or exceed 17 syllables is unfounded, with little evidence to suggest that poems under 12 syllables reflect the existence of enough content to fill a 5-7-5 haiku, were they to be back-translated into Japanese. There are many haiku in English that have counts as brief as 2-3-2 or 2-2-2, but are these really more authentic to Japanese haiku tradition than a 5-7-5, as advocates of brevity claim?

One of the biggest perceived sins that comes from counting 5-7-5 is “padding” the poetry—adding an extraneous “and,” “a,” or “the” in places where they aren’t completely necessary, or else filling the verse with extraneous imagery or adjectives, cluttering the poem just so that every syllable is filled. Some haiku enthusiasts take their admonishments to such an extreme that beginning students end up afraid to use any connective tissue whatsoever, thus the dictum of eliminating all extraneous material can lead to a choppy delivery. In the name of wordlessness, even veteran poets (who remember the tyrannical reign of the 5-7-5) can be caught meting out a few paltry syllables, poetic misers hoarding all of their pronouns, articles and God forbid they splurge on an adverb or an adjective.

Some perhaps take this tendency as fidelity to the direct transliteration of Japanese syntax, such that Bashō’s earlier *ku* would be rendered more along the lines of “stillness / enters into rocks / voice of cicada;” a wordless poem. Japanese syntax puts the verb at the end of a phrase (rocks into enters), but beside that slight adjustment for the sake of coherence, stripped of any words not directly equivalent to the Japanese, and giving the images in as close of an order to the original as possible, this style of “Japonism” in ELH is accurate in the sense of literal transcription of the Japanese original, but unfortunately results in what is often an artless contortion of the haiku itself as well as the English language. Literal translations of Japanese actually can completely miss the thoughts and ideas being expressed—by ignoring idioms, poetic clichés and implications that are apparent to those in the native culture but that aren’t reflected by a literal word-for-word translation.

For my own ear and sense of poetic rhythm, such stilted delivery also results in a unpleasant chopiness, a list of verbs and nouns telegraphed like the grunted speech of Tarzan, or the comedic syncopation of William Shatner’s exaggerated delivery of spoken word poetry. Overt telegraphing is unpoetic, inelegant and ultimately culturally insensitive in the way that it dons an Orientalist mask and

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mimics non-native English speakers for rather arbitrary reasons. There are times when it's difficult to tell whether a poet is trying too hard to be terse and edgy, or is simply not fluent in the English language. Japanese haiku does indeed twist language to artful effect, but this is at crucial points of juncture through breaks in syntax or cutting words (*kireji*), and oftentimes the sections separated are still full of particles, adjectives and connective words that function as normal, flowing—even poetic—phrases. *Katakoto*, or “baby talk,” is held up as a justification for extreme derangement of syntax, but *katokoto* in Japanese has more to do with a simplicity of mind and childlike innocence that is a stylistic evolution of previous concepts like elegant confusion and poetic madness, and is used with skill and precision as linguistic play, perhaps even a literary sort of Dadaism.⁹ *Katakoto* certainly has nothing to do with wordlessness as it is interpreted through a lens of Zen mysticism.

Because I still regularly see poems that are being work-shopped in online groups being taken to task for having too many articles like “and” or “the,” poems being criticized for following a count of 5-7-5, since I still regularly come across telegraphed haiku published by beginning as well as experienced poets that sound forced in their syntactic derangement, and since I still see punctuation largely abandoned or simplicity being touted as an absolute requisite for haiku among writers of the English language haiku, I believe it is necessary to carefully examine the premise that less is better, or that less is more “authentic” to tradition—when it comes to dropping certain elements of speech, telegraphing lines or eliminating punctuation in ELH. I will do so primarily by contrasting two popular haiku about pigs, one in English, the other in Japanese, as well as treating some of the ancillary topics that the differences between these two poems—and thus the two traditions—raise.

9. Tsubouchi, Nenten, “*Katakoto*.” “Cross-cultural Studies in Gendai Haiku: Tsubouchi Nenten.” Gendai Haiku Online Archive, Kumamoto University, 2007 <<http://gendaihaiku.com/tsubouchi/TsubouchiKatakoto.mp4>>.

pig and i spring rain

—Marlene Mountain¹⁰

This ku was written in the 1970's, early in Mountain's career, and has remained a favorite for its wordlessness and child-like simplicity. Compared to the fluffed up 5-7-5 of the day, Mountain's poetry glinted sharp and brilliant as Occam's Razor itself, providing many with the answer to a question they didn't even know they had asked, clearing the way for an artful, literary English-language haiku that was not bogged down by artificial constraints and counting on one's fingers. Mountain was an early adopter of the "one-line haiku," an approach some suggest is more authentic due to the single line presentation in Japanese. This poem is important and beloved in the ELH community, and rightly so; it helped lay the ground for a new poetics centered on exploring what haiku could mean in English without the monkey of 5-7-5 hanging on its back, and it established a new voice and visual format that would influence several generations of haiku poets.

豚とわれも春雨

buta to ware mo harusame

(trans. Clayton Beach)

Here I have made a rough translation of Mountain's famous ku into Japanese, to see exactly how it translates mora-wise. In its concision, Mountain's ku has fallen far short of a full haiku, even by the standards of brevity in Japanese—breaking down into a 3-3-4 count that sounds a bit unpoetic and reductive in Japanese, lacking as it does any allusions to previous Japanese haiku tradition or layers of meaning through word associations or pivots. Adding the kireji "kana" to the end would stretch the poem to a roughly bipartite 6-6 and make the language sound slightly more literary, but still, this is

10. Mountain, Marlene. *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years*. ed. Jim Kacian et al.. W. W. Norton & Company, 2013, p. 68.

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a full 5 syllables short of a standard haiku, and even shorter than the 7-7 short verses from linked verse. In this case, the ELH penchant for brevity has far exceeded that of the Japanese, rendering what in Japanese comes across as a rather flat verse that lacks the usual nuance of traditional haiku.

And that's the strange thing—while in the west we often talk about simplicity of language in English haiku, the Japanese haiku still retains a large amount of “bungo,” the classical, formal literary language residual from the courtly tanka, or “waka.” Kireji, the cutting words so often touted as a requisite for haiku, are in fact often inflected verb tenses or particles that are no longer used (or now used differently) in normal speech than in written language. Medieval haikai differentiated itself from classical poetry by using the old formal language in playful, ironic ways: twisting conventions and adding slang, unrefined imagery and focusing more on the everyday world outside of the Imperial palace and its elegant clichés. So compared to the highly elevated, ornate language of emperors and princes, haiku was simple—but it was still elevated above common speech. Even today, even the most progressive haiku still uses some of these ancient conventions that have long fallen out of use in regular speech and retains an air of literary elevation on a linguistic level. Bashō's poetry, while often presented as simple and austere in English, was actually often quite literary and complex, multifaceted, allusive and playful in its contortions of language and poetic tradition.

It was Shiki in the late 19th century who criticized the literati and drifted away from the literary elitism of previous generations, and his disciple Kyoshi who insisted on unadorned description of nature. However, Shiki despised tired tropes and cliché used without honest feeling, not necessarily all literary language, and he could be quite playful, while Kyoshi wanted to go back to tradition and at times revived phrases that would have been seen as formal even for Bashō—he simply wanted to take the recent trends of radical politics and social commentary out of modern haiku and focus on nature

and an idyllic vision of the Japanese tradition, rejecting modernism rather than elevated diction.

Mountain's *ku* is pure and honest—an open page—but there is no elevated diction, there are not even any details beyond the pig, the authorial “i” and the rain. One gets a sense of interbeing in connection with the land and nature through “and i,” and perhaps a smell of the farm pungent with a raw, animal scent from the “pig” and the fresh “spring rain.” But what the pig is doing, its personality, whether or not it really feels like spending time with the “i” there in the rain, even why “i” is there—to slaughter the pig or feed it slop, or is the speaker merely trespassing across the field on their way somewhere else?—beyond that amorphous feeling of unity and contentment implied by “spring rain,” there is very little detail or particularity. There is not a single action or adjective beyond the seasonal setting: just pig, person and impersonal nature. What they're doing, beyond coexisting, is completely unsaid. Even the sense of contentment and peace relies on assuming that the rain is a light mist falling on the speaker's face and the relation with the pig is amicable, and assuming a Zen calm and serenity as the default tone of haiku. It very well might be the torrential downpour of a mid-Atlantic thunderstorm in May with a surly and uncouth sow who the speaker needs to wrestle into its pen—in English, seasonal references are not necessarily precise, normative evocations of emotional tone. The pig could be one of any sort, and so too with the spring rain, like the storm that lashed my windows as I wrote this on an April evening. That said, of course the general tone seems does seem to suggest a peaceful, contemplative scene, but such is the problem with unspecific wordlessness—the reader can interpret it as they will.

In ELH, the haiku is often presented as a poem that is finished by the reader in a creative act, thus this level of minimalism and incompleteness is seen as an invitation for open interpretation, the poem is opened to the “white space” in which the reader is invited to interpret the poem as a kind of literary Rorschach test.

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This wordlessness is actually expected by many as a defining feature of the genre, and poets can be criticized for supplying too much. Mountain's poem is imprecise and subjective, so there are no wrong answers, thus reading takes on an individualist approach to choosing significance in an ostensibly objective portrayal of reality, in the absence of symbolism or metaphor. In that sense, contemporary English language haiku is a poetry of indeterminacy and subjective reader experience.

On the other hand, in traditional Japanese haiku, while the reader must recognize the signs that point toward hidden meaning, these are generally a set group of topical tropes (topoi), or else precise seasonal indications (kigo) that have established normative connotations over the centuries through poetic tradition. Thus, "autumn evening" immediately conjures up the idea of loneliness and melancholy. "Summer moon" brings up the romance of the shortest nights of summer, when one cannot stay with their lover long and the dreams in which lovers visit each other are ended all too soon. "Cherry blossoms" calls to mind a deep longing and attachment for the fleeting and ephemeral beauty of the world that puts one at odds with their spiritual goals of non-attachment.

Personal, subjective interpretations do not belong to the world of Bashō's haikai, for images have an "essential implication" called hon-i, meaning they represent something specific, decided a priori by normative cultural values, thus seasonal references not only target a very specific, codified period of time within a highly graduated progression through the calendar year, but also have fixed emotional attributes and set connotations.¹¹ The lack of this system of shorthand cultural markers in haiku in the English-language is perhaps the most fundamental difference between the two traditions, and raises questions about how much the haiku in English can ever be called

11. Kawamoto, Kōji. *The Poetics of Japanese Verse: Imagery, Structure, Meter*. trans. Stephen Collington, Kevin Collins and Gustav Heldt, 2000 University of Tokyo Press, pp. 61-63.

“traditional” when it fails to incorporate such a major component of what “traditional” means to the Japanese haiku.

猪がきて空気を食べる春の峠
inoshishi ga kite kūki o taberu haru no tōge
 —Kaneko Tohta¹²

a wild boar arrives, and eats the air. spring mountain pass
 (trans. Clayton Beach)

Our second pig arrives with a stamped hoof and gnashing of its teeth. Here the base section is not the chopped up, broken jumble of syntax modern Japanese haiku is sometimes described as, but a straightforward, declarative statement just as I have translated it. At 5-4-4, the translation clocks in just over Higginson’s ideal of 12 syllables, but well over Mountain’s terse 5. Interestingly, this *ku* is irregular in its count, breaking down to something like 7-7-6 in Japanese. In my translation, the period could also have been indicated by an em dash, semi-colon, line break or a mere space; in Japanese the previous phrase has ended conclusively with the infinitive of the verb, and a new thought is started, but no classical *kireji* has been used. The juxtaposition is created merely through a single break in syntax, almost exactly the same way Mountain created the cut between “i” and “spring rain.” Thus, there is no need to worry about “translating” the *kireji*—in this case the sense of cutting in English is largely as it is in Japanese.

However, punctuation can be of great help in English. In the Japanese language, punctuation is largely enunciated through particles, verb inflections etc. and the written language technically needs no extra punctuation for clarity. That’s the main reason haiku has no external punctuation marks. Certain *kireji*, like *yo* and *ka* (よ, か), are actually

12. Kaneko, Tohta, *Selected Haiku with Notes and Commentary* Part 2, trans. Kon Nichi Translation Group, 2012 <<https://www.thehaikufoundation.org/2017/11/10/revivals-113/>>.

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the (spoken) Japanese equivalents of the exclamation point and question mark, respectively. In English, punctuation is generated through rhythms of speech and tone when spoken and in the written word it creates ambiguity to leave the marks out, whereas Japanese punctuation is often through an enunciated emphatic particle, giving the word weight in the meter and making added visual punctuation superfluous.

Unless the multiple possible readings created through lack of punctuation are desired, the practice of dropping all punctuation in English is an imitation of a natural feature of Japanese that doesn't function neutrally in English the way it does in the source language—it calls great attention to itself in an affected sense of transliteration—and thus can distract from the poem. If anything, abandoning punctuation ignores the emphatic particles that often serve as *kireji* and fails to translate them into an English equivalent. Thus, punctuation marks are often our best equivalent to the function of cutting words, so we would benefit from using them sparingly, but artfully, rather than completely discarding them.

As ELH has developed, the ambiguity caused through lack of punctuation has given rise to layered pieces that break down into several possible readings, especially in one line haiku. But in the cases where a question mark might be called for, echoing the cutting word *ka* (か), for instance, leaving it out is the very opposite of fidelity to the Japanese haiku. Increasingly, in the more experimental journals, some one-line haiku in English have begun to utilize punctuation again in order to reflect the more varied use of cutting one finds in Japanese haiku:

half autumn color. Come take my hand in the ghost land and
—David Boyer¹³

13. Boyer, David. *Bones—Journal for Contemporary Haiku* 14, November 15th 2017, p. 22.

Here the period separates the seasonal reference and calls attention to it, keeping it from flowing in one uninterrupted train of thought, much in the way *ya* (や) is used in Bashō's "quietude" (*shizukesa ya*), while the "and" creates further cutting by adding a sense of incompleteness akin to the *-te* form of a verb, which while not listed as a classical *kireji* by Haruo Shirane,¹⁴ is used extensively in haiku to create cuts and leave verses with a sense of open-endedness. In that sense, this treatment of punctuation is much more in line with Japanese tradition than a *ku* like Mountain's

just a touch of deer within tall things that just grow
—Marlene Mountain¹⁵

Without punctuation, this haiku tempts us to read it as a single thought, but when that becomes paradoxical, we are then forced to start parsing the language into smaller, digestible phrases. Is it "just a touch of deer within. tall things that just grow," or is it "just a touch of deer / within tall things / that just grow." Without any punctuation, the poem is left open ended, and in this case that adds some depth and a tendency to read the poem as several simultaneous superpositions of possibility. At its best, the one line format exploits the ambiguity inherent in not giving line breaks that shape the content, and yet there are times when the effect is jarring or unwanted, thus completely abandoning all punctuation for stylistic purposes can end up with unwanted implications, innuendos or unintended comic effect through bathos in bizarrely blended images.

Regarding Tohta's boar, there is a two step action on the part of the animal; it bursts upon the scene, and then eats the air. This is a dynamic pig, alive and full of spirit and vigor, eating the air greedily, perhaps

14. Shirane, Haruo *Traces of Dreams*. Stanford University Press 1998, p. 100.

15. Mountain, Marlene *One-line Twos. Bones—Journal for Contemporary Haiku*, 2015 Kala Ramesh and Marlene Mountain, p. 11, <<http://www.bonesjournal.com/books/kala-marlene%20one-line%20twos%20final%20.pdf>>.

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tasting the scent of the poem's speaker in the breeze. The seasonal reference, "spring mountain pass" also has a secondary connotation of danger or excitement; the character for the word "mountain pass" has a secondary meaning of "crisis" the way the word crossroads has both a literal and figurative meaning in English. So there is a bit of a pun in the superposed section, indicating that the unexpected encounter with this feisty animal is a bit of a "spring crisis."¹⁶ In fact, haiku in Japanese often use irregular meter to express heightened emotion or distress on the part of the poet, thus the extraneous syllables are a conscious distortion of meter with a traditional implication, adding a sense of tension and chaos to the ku.

Both of our pigs share a warm vitalism and sense of nature, of being alive and in the moment, both share a connection between a human speaker and the natural world, but in Tohta's ku we have a much more detailed picture: the setting, a mountain pass in spring; the action, a boar bursting onto the path and snapping at the air; and then we have secondary clues to the speaker's emotional reaction to the events through punning on the kigo, not to mention a tendency toward extending length beyond the normal 5-7-5, playing with the meter in a way that is the opposite of brevity.

Yet, Tohta is hardly one of those obscurantist, avant-garde gendai poets who revels in excessive literary games—on the contrary. His work took modern haiku into a more humanist vein, and he was vocally against literary pretension, looking to the humble, direct simplicity of Issa as the ideal haiku poet.¹⁷ While his juxtapositions could be surrealist, he's not the kind of poet one would call effete or over-intellectual. And yet, his poem is considerably more complex, literary and full of detail than Mountain's idealistic simplicity, and he errs on the side of extending the haiku, of making it more expansive

16. Katsumata, Senkichi. *Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary*. 1954 Kenkyusha Limited, p. 1821.

17. Kaneko, Tohta. *The Future of Haiku: An Interview with Kaneko Tohta*. trans. Kon Nichi Translation Group, 2011 Red Moon Press, pp.17-18.

and explicit rather than open-ended and amorphous. This doesn't make his ku flat or too literal though—there still remain some unanswered questions and a feeling of wanting to know more—it piques the interest and gets the imagination going.

The interesting thing about Japanese haiku masters is that they're often disparaging literary pretentiousness while simultaneously taking their own poetry quite seriously and putting an enormous amount of effort and craft into their work, which sounds to me a lot like the pursuit of "literature." Thus, when we repeat their admonitions against "literary pretension," we have to take it in context—as a rejection of the extreme classism, conservatism and literary cronyism of previous generations, and a bit of Japanese self deprecation and humility, or else perhaps viewing haiku as an embodied personal philosophy rather than an external art of mere wordplay; for some, haiku is also a way of living and seeing in addition to being literature.

While "pig and i" will remain a beloved and quintessential English language haiku, we must accept that some ELH theorists have quite oversold the idea of simplicity in Japanese haiku, taking Shiki's theory of objective life sketching to extremes that far exceed even the simplicity of the most straightforward of traditional Japanese haiku. In order to find any Japanese haiku that exhibit the kind of extreme economy in language used in "pig and i," we have to look to avant-garde free verse haiku poets of the early 20th century, like Ogiwara Seisensui:

石のまろさ雪になろ

ishi no marosa yuki ni naru

—Ogiwara Seisensui¹⁸

a stone's roundness turns to snow

(trans. Clayton Beach)

18. Seisensui, Ogiwara. *Modern Japanese Haiku: An Anthology*. ed. Makoto Ueda, University of Toronto Press 1976, p. 80.

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With a count of 11 morae split 3-3-5 or perhaps merely 6-5 in Japanese, and translating to around 7 syllables in English, this ku comes very close to the brevity of “pig and I,” but ironically, this is a haiku that many conservatives in Japan would not consider legitimate haiku. In terms of meaning, it is slightly more surreal and paradoxical, exceeding the simplicity of thought found in Mountain’s ku. In order to justify the extent of brevity promoted in English haiku through the lens of Japanese tradition, we have to embrace the avant-garde and admit modernism into haiku, something that early ELH theorists like R. H. Blyth and Harold Henderson detested and did their best to stymie by echoing Kyoshi’s conservative dictums on natural beauty and proclaiming non-conforming poetry as “not haiku” while expounding upon their ideal of the “traditional” haiku in English. The further irony is that if we accept Mountain and Seisensui’s briefest works as reflecting a legitimate form of haiku, then we have to contend with the fact that Seisensui also pushed the limit of length in haiku to its maximum, writing some extremely long haiku:

牡丹一弁一弁の動きつつ開つつ姿ととのう
botan ichiben ichiben no ugoki tsutsu hiraki tsutsu sugata totonou
— Ogiwara Seisensui¹⁹

peony: petal by petal
as it moves, as it opens,
slowly takes its shape

(trans. Clayton Beach)

With 29 mora in Japanese, and 20 syllables in my English translation, this poem challenges the assumption that haiku cannot relish in excess language—the original is full of repetition/parallelism, alliteration, and assonance. And this is not the first haiku of such length; both Bashō and Buson have a few ku that far exceed the normal allotment

19. Seisensui, Ogiwara. *Modern Japanese Haiku: An Anthology*. ed. Makoto Ueda, University of Toronto Press 1976, p. 81.

of syllables. In fact, most of the time, when a Japanese haiku deviates from the 5-7-5, it is generally to exceed the length — a poet finds the strictures preventing them from expressing certain ideas, or it is a stylistic manner of saying “I’m so ecstatic (or distraught) that I don’t have time to count syllables!”

molasses dance of moonflowers the story folds itself into a crane

—David Boyer²⁰

This ku by David Boyer has 18 syllables, only a single syllable beyond 17, but it inhabits the opposite end of the spectrum of ELH from Mountain’s early work, in that it is maximalist in its effect. Instead of merely having a simple image as the superposed section, it has a somewhat elaborate and abstract one that is almost a base section itself; “molasses dance of moonflowers” plays on the contrast between dark syrup and white flowers while connecting through the sweetness of both, while also perhaps playing on the suggestion that the movement of the flowers is “as slow as molasses.” These layers of contrast are almost sufficient for a stand alone haiku. The actual base section is also compound and complex; “the story folds itself into a crane” could in and of itself be a successful stand-alone haiku in the minimalist vein, like van den Heuvel’s “the shadow in the folded napkin,”²¹ but when modified by the antecedent phrase, it grows even more mysterious and resonant, with the white flowers transforming into the paper crane while “the story” is left to the reader’s imagination. This haiku is complex and has many layers of contrast and affinity between the images, but it does not revel in superfluous words and padding; every word is chosen carefully and used with precision toward meaningful effect, and when put together the base and superposed sections resonate and create more than the sum of their parts.

20. Boyer, David. *Bones—Journal for Contemporary Haiku* 13, July 15th 2017, p. 24.

21. van den Heuvel, Cor. *The Haiku Anthology* (3rd Edition). ed. Cor van den Heuvel. W. W. Norton & Company 2000, p. 232.

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In the end, however, Boyer's approach to haiku ultimately falls in the same tradition of Mountain's "pig and i," in that the origins of one line haiku in English inescapably lead back to her pioneering work in introducing and extensively developing the possibilities of haiku in English in a single line. If Mountain's minimalism is justified by the first poem by Seisensui, Boyer's maximalism is equally validated by Seisensui's longer ku, even though it certainly pushes the boundary of what still feels cohesive as a single haiku. To be sure, even though it is long by haiku standards, Boyer's ku still has an economy of language and concision that is characteristic of haiku—it simply is longer than is generally promoted by the stewards of brevity.

Just as Japanese haiku average about 17 morae and seem to top out around 30 morae, 12-15 syllables seems to be a comfortable average for ELH, with 20 syllables being near the maximum a haiku in English can withstand before it starts to fall apart from instability. Or, at least, 20 syllables seems to be about the most anybody regularly attempts with any amount of success.

Even Mountain's later work occasionally revels in more linguistic play, multiple cuts and longer, more complex structure, as seen in her "just a touch of deer," and in the following ku:

before the dew unsettles a cardinal dries off the sun

—Marlene Mountain²²

Just shy of 17, at 15 syllables (7-6-2), this poem has a certain kind of simplicity at its heart and is not excessively long, but it is also complex, more literary and certainly uses words like "the" and "a" to provide structure. Any sense of cutting and disjunction is achieved through paradoxical, playful syntax that provides multiple readings in a way that increases depth and resonance, rather than stubborn

22. Mountain, Marlene *One-line Twos. Bones—Journal for Contemporary Haiku*, 2015 Kala Ramesh and Marlene Mountain, p. 7, <<http://www.bonesjournal.com/books/kala-marlene%20one-line%20twos%20final%20.pdf>>.

minimalism for the sake of brevity. The derangement of syntax here is the opposite of random telegraphing, in that it demonstrates skillful cutting toward artistic, poetic effect: the verb “unsettles” can be taken as an intransitive action of the dew in-and-of-itself, or paradoxically, as a transitive verb, where the dew “unsettles” the cardinal. Later, if the poem is read without a caesura after “off,” the cardinal impossibly “dries off the sun.” A period would make the final cut clearer, but it would also remove that element of wordplay. Mountain still shows the same simple heart and purity of spirit found in “pig and i,” but she also shows more craft and complexity in her approach to haiku as literature and linguistic play. This later poem is much more in line with the tradition of Japanese haiku in terms of use of language and aesthetic than her early minimalism.

While haiku are always short poems, the exact extent to which “brevity is the soul of haiku” differs from poet to poet—even from poem to poem by a single author—and minimalism has always been a style that falls in and out of favor from generation to generation. There is always a school that promotes spartan simplicity and raw feeling on one hand, and a more literary minded, intellectual school on the other. While Mountain’s “pig and i” was groundbreaking and perfect for its time, such simplicity is no longer entirely necessary for our poetry (though neither is it entirely obsolete), and even the poet herself took to more complexity as her mature style developed and changed with the times.

Banality is merely the antipode of obscurantism, and neither extreme is desirable in any literature that aims to move hearts and communicate effectively. Poems like van den Heuval’s “tundra” and Boyers’ “molasses dance” inhabit the outer range limits on the spectrum of brevity and simplicity in haiku that show how, while haiku certainly has boundaries as a genre, it also has a great deal of variety and space to play.

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Homogeneity in verse is not something to aspire to as a community, and the hive mind sometimes tries to police aesthetics that are arbitrary and dull when faced with challenging work. In his book, *The Poetics of Japanese Verse*, Kōji Kawamoto offers some critique on shasei realism, objectivity and simplicity in haiku:

“The problem lies in Shiki’s readiness to equate the ability of a verbal description of a concrete object to move men’s hearts with the ability of the real object to do the same . . . Shiki was not necessarily a rigid adherent of biased realism even when it comes to realism vs. idealism and the question of objectivity, nonetheless, his remarks on shasei led to considerable misunderstanding of the function of poetic language and literature in general . . . Shiki errs in assuming that these objects can be incorporated into a poem merely through the simple process of identifying them by name . . .”²³

Thus, we don’t actually get a full vision of a pig, or spring rain, merely by mentioning them. There must be a few salient details, a bit of specificity for any true sense of realism to emerge—there is such a thing as “too simple” in haiku. Kawamoto drives the point home even further.

“Perhaps it can be postulated in a very general way, that the literary success of any haiku poet or school or period largely depends upon the awareness of the fact that a tendency toward stylistic simplicity can lead to sheer banality despite insistence and measures to the contrary”²⁴

Here Kawamoto warns us against the trap of simplicity for its own sake. The periods when simple aesthetics like shasei and karumi were in vogue created a large volume of inoffensive but mediocre

23. Kawamoto, Kōji. *The Poetics of Japanese Verse: Imagery, Structure, Meter*. trans. Stephen Collington, Kevin Collins and Guztav Heldt, 2000 University of Tokyo Press, p. 53.

24. Kawamoto, Kōji. *The Poetics of Japanese Verse: Imagery, Structure, Meter*. trans. Stephen Collington, Kevin Collins and Guztav Heldt, 2000 University of Tokyo Press, p. 127.

haiku that few people cherish today. Some of the harshest critiques of the poet Chiyojo were centered on the simplistic interpretation of Bashō's "karumi" aesthetic that was the hallmark of her teacher Shikō (a disciple of Bashō) and was quite in vogue at the time she was writing. Her one-dimensionality is not an unintentional fault, but was actually the style of her time.²⁵ And Shiki's ku are not without their critics either; Kyoshi felt the shasei approach was shallow and needed a deeper profundity. So ironically, though shasei in ELH is often promoted as Kyoshi saw it—looking for a deeper profundity in the every day—Shiki was a playful poet accused of immaturity by his own disciples, insofar as they felt his style was superficial and not allowed to mature due to his untimely death. Shiki reveled in the use of language as play—haiku as poetry and wordplay rather than deep philosophy—even creating multiple personas from which he wrote, and he engaged the world with a painter's eye rather than a philosopher's heart.²⁶

Kawamoto is also critical of Blyth's original focus on the Zen in haiku, a major and almost fundamental premise in the Anglophone interpretation of the soul and spirit of the genre, attributing it to exoticism rather than an accurate portrayal of haiku:

“Most of the post-war beat generation and subsequent haiku poets [in English] first came to haiku and developed their interest in this literary genre mainly by way of Zen. In actuality, this manner of assimilating the haiku is no more than a manifestation of a form of fascination with something foreign and exotic and may be seen as having corrupted a more accurate picture of haiku.”²⁷

25. Ueda, Makoto. *Far Beyond the Field*. ed. Makoto Ueda. Columbia University Press, 2003, p. 91.

26. Tsubouchi, Nenten, “Haigo & Persona.” “Cross-cultural Studies in Gendai Haiku: Tsubouchi Nenten” Gendai Haiku Online Archive, Kumamoto University, 2007 <<http://gendaihaiku.com/tsubouchi/TsubouchiKatakoto.mp4>>.

27. Kawamoto, Kōji. *The Poetics of Japanese Verse: Imagery, Structure,*

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Insofar as ELH minimalism is based on an outlook that views haiku as expressions of Zen metaphysics along the line of them being ‘one breath koans,’ it simply isn’t a culturally sensitive or accurate interpretation of Japanese haiku. Byth’s descriptions of haiku are ecstatic and seductive, but ultimately hyperbolic and distorted by his enthusiasm for Buddhist interpretation, with him often evaluating the success of haiku by the “quality of their Zen.”

“Haiku require our purest and most profound spiritual appreciation, for they represent a whole-world, the Eastern world, of religious and poetic experience . . . Haiku are to be understood from the Zen point of view . . . the mood in which they are written and in which they are to be read, is the same as that of Rōshi [Zen master], the same as that of the Diamond Sutra and the verses of *Hekiganroku* [*Blue Cliff Record*, a collection of Zen koans] . . . Haiku is the final flower of all Eastern culture; it is also a way of living . . . Haiku is not only poetry . . . it is a way of life, a mode of living all day long; it is religion . . . haiku is a kind of satori or enlightenment . . .”²⁸

Blyth’s writings are sprinkled with these kind of proclamations, but his saying that haiku are to be meditated upon like a koan from the *Blue Cliff Record* and that every nuance equates to some aspect of Zen scripture is equivalent to if someone else said that English sonnets are not just love poems, but expressions of Christ’s perfect love and the Christian faith, that they are not just poetry, but ecstatic visions of Christian gnosis and the eternal love of Christ. Yes, Shakespeare was ostensibly Christian, writing in a Christian nation, but this coincidence of fate and cultural background does not necessarily imbue every syllable of his poetry with theological implications and overt Christian allegory, even if an extremely enthusiastic foreign

Meter. trans. Stephen Collington, Kevin Collins and Guztav Heldt, 2000 University of Tokyo Press, p. 171.

28. Blyth, R.H. *Haiku*, Vol. 1: Eastern Culture (First Edition 1981). Hokuseido Press, Tokyo 1949, p. iii.

critic who had recently converted to Christianity decided to say so (and managed to convince his countrymen that it were true). Certain Japanese haiku poets have indeed put more Buddhism into their poetry than others, just as certain western poets have done with Christianity, but that doesn't make it an essential feature of the haiku in particular, for it is an underlying feature of all poetry and art of medieval Japan. Furthermore, the prominence of Buddhism in haiku has faded into the background with the rise of modernity, with periods of Shinto revivalism and modern Agnosticism flavoring the haiku of their eras.

Japanese haiku was first and foremost poetry for much of its history, and thus has long been subject to literary aesthetics. The Buddhism of its practitioners has shaped it to a certain degree through normative cultural assumptions, but Zen is by no means the main factor in the vast majority of haiku. Haiku as a lifestyle and discipline has indeed been promoted by poets like Ishida Hakyō; “haiku is not intellect . . . Rather it is flesh. It is life . . . haiku is not literature . . . haiku is raw life,”²⁹ and it has had its periods of status as anti-literature or non-art, but those are far from the only positions, nor are they exactly the dominant ones, and living the life of a haikai isn't so much a religious matter as a matter of imbuing one's poetry with what Tohta would call *shisō*, “existentially embodied thinking,” which he sees as “an ideology, but not an ‘ism’”... rather “a living conceptual framework integrated with and absorbed into daily life—both a form of consciousness and personal philosophy.”³⁰ Thus haiku is an intense engagement with the act of living and being, and every haiku poet brings their own personal philosophy to haiku, be they Buddhist, Atheist or Christian, and these outlooks on life might very well change the poetry as it leaps from poet to poet and culture to culture.

29. Ueda, Makoto. *Far Beyond the Field*. ed. Makoto Ueda. Columbia University Press, 2003, p. 19.

30. Kaneko, Tohta. *The Future of Haiku: An Interview with Kaneko Tohta*. trans. Kon Nichi Translation Group, 2011 Red Moon Press, pp.17-18.

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Harold Henderson was a friend of Blyth's and a founding member of the Haiku Society of America. As a member of the committee to define haiku for the society, he was integral in forming what I call the "orthodox haiku in English," or the "ELH orthodoxy." This is the dominant set of views and "common knowledge" explanations for haiku that one finds in American ELH and which has spread to the broader English language haiku traditions in other countries. One might also call this "haiku sensu Blyth," for his four volume set of haiku translations was a cornerstone of this understanding of haiku. One often finds Blyth and Henderson's ideas repeated on blogs, in magazines, books etc. as incontrovertible facts about haiku, and seldom do people examine where these ideas came from, or question their accuracy. When the ideas are reflected in Japanese criticism, the source can often be traced back to Kyoshi and his strict neoclassical model, but often the ideas are simply inaccurate and unique to the world of ELH. In recent years their work and ideas have come under closer scrutiny by western scholars, but the rank and file of poets writing haiku in English still have a great deal of investment in this vision of the form.

Blyth and Henderson's interpretations of Japanese tradition are largely the basis of the strong fixation on Zen in the early days of haiku in English. It is incredibly telling to read early interpretations of Bashō's haiku written from the orthodox ELH perspective and compare them to the more culturally informed and literary nuance of Japanese scholars like Kawamoto.

蛸壺や はかなき夢を 夏の月
takotsubo ya hakanaki yume o natsu no tsuki
— Bashō

octopus pots—these fleeting dreams, the summer moon
(trans. Clayton Beach)

“Here the religious implications are obvious, even if we do not go into the Buddhist symbolism of the boat and the moon. It is, however, worthy of note that whenever Bashō uses the word “dream,” he seems also to be thinking of human life . . .”³¹

Henderson takes the fleeting dreams as Buddhist allegory for life, he conjures a boat from his imagination to reference the Parable of the Ferryboat, and takes the moon as a Buddhist symbol of enlightenment. If interpreted as a koan, this haiku is a serious meditation on the transiency of life, the illusions of our hubris and the redemption offered by the luminous moon. But is this what Bashō was thinking? What does this haiku say from the context of poetic tradition, looking at the traditional associations of the words and how they’ve been treated in Japanese poetry, how does a Japanese haiku scholar read this poem?

“Here a most peculiar mood is created by the assortment of “fleeting dreams,” an elegant cliché at the core of the courtly waka tradition—and the obviously vulgar yet comical image of the pots used as octopus traps . . . the word *hakanaki* (“fleeting” or “ephemeral”) was an essential epithet for the word *yume* (“dream”) . . . When we read Bashō’s haiku, we are amused by the image of an octopus . . . dreaming a fleeting dream with little thought for the fisherman in the morning. The traditional treatment of *hakanaki yume* further impels us to associate this dream with those of melancholy love. In this way, the eccentric image of an octopus sadly dreaming of love . . . blends together a heightened sense of absurdity and pathos.”³²

So on one hand, one of the founders of the ELH tradition takes this poem as an austere and serious Buddhist parable, while by Japanese

31. Henderson, Harold G. *An Introduction to Haiku: An Anthology of Poems and Poets from Bashō to Shiki*. Harold Anchor, 1958, p. 22.

32. Kawamoto, Kōji. *The Poetics of Japanese Verse: Imagery, Structure, Meter*. trans. Stephen Collington, Kevin Collins and Guztav Heldt, 2000 University of Tokyo Press, pp. 113-114.

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poetic standards it is a comical juxtaposition of romantic cliché and vulgar image, resulting in utter bathos! Could the two interpretations differ any more?

Kawamoto's book was written in Japanese for a Japanese audience and later translated into English. It is a rare glimpse into in-depth literary criticism on haiku from the Japanese perspective, and it puts forth haiku as a sophisticated literary genre that is a playful mix of the elevated and the vulgar, but most definitely a literature that plays upon previous Japanese poetic tradition while at the same time innovating and moving forward. What is striking when reading his criticism is just how incorrectly Blyth and Henderson have interpreted much of Bashō's work, and in general the nature of traditional haikai. The picture of haiku they painted using the poetry of Bashō shows a simplicity of thought and freedom from literary artifice that wasn't necessarily there, simply because they didn't catch the cultural references or subtle implications, blinded as they were by a Western perspective of the haiku as "exotic" and their search for Zen allegory. When Blyth or Henderson rate haiku by the quality of the Zen, this is utterly tone deaf to the reality of haiku criticism in Japan, which looks at skilled use of traditional language and fresh insight into the essence of the subject. While Bashō's final *karumi* aesthetic was more shallow, imagistic and rather similar to Shiki's conception of *shasei*, the poems of the *sabi* period, which are his most popular and frequently discussed, are steeped in the Japanese literary tradition even when colored by an undercurrent of Zen detachment.

One of the most famous quotes from Bashō about haiku mind, often put forward as a koan-like proclamation to empty one's mind and destroy one's attachment to self, is, "Go to the pine if you want to learn about the pine, or to the bamboo if you want to learn about the bamboo. And in doing so, you must leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself."³³ Of course, according to

33. Matsuo Bashō. *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches*. trans. Nobuyuki Yuasa. Penguin Books, 1966, p. 33.

the orthodoxy of ELH, this is a profound call to sit out in the forest listening to the sound of nothing reverberating through the bamboo and trees until you are struck with enlightenment and can finally write an authentic haiku full of Zen.

Kawamoto on the other hand, reads this as an admonition against subjective and personal interpretation of natural images, but rather than saying it is about achieving a Zen state of “no-mind” and merging with the plants in satori, he states that Bashō is urging poets to respect literary tradition and conform to the “essential implications” (hon-i) of these elements, acknowledging the traditional implications even when playing around with them ironically; “In Bashō’s haiku, the temporary rejection of the traditional was always followed . . . by a return to the time honored notions of hon’i.”³⁴ Thus, “going to the bamboo” is not a Zen matter, but a literary one. It is not destroying the ego, but keeping it in check and respecting the encoded meanings and normative associations of imagery established in the imperial anthologies of waka, thus recognizing the inherently romantic implications of a summer dream, even if it is being dreamed by a doomed cephalopod. This was a turn away from the previous Danrin school of haikai, which had often been wildly satirical of and contrary to the essence of courtly language.

This also has ramifications regarding kigo, or seasonal references. Japanese haiku kigo have essential implications that are coded and add deeper meaning to the poem, but if used incorrectly, the subtext suddenly gets very confusing. Thus, Japanese haikai spend a lot of time learning their proper use. There are many kigo that if translated directly would be completely unrecognizable as a seasonal implication, as they have a stylistic association with a season on a culturally specific basis due to poetic tradition. So there’s nothing natural about kigo, it’s highly affected and stylized, and it relies on shared con-

34. Kawamoto, Kōji. *The Poetics of Japanese Verse: Imagery, Structure, Meter*. trans. Stephen Collington, Kevin Collins and Guztav Heldt, 2000 University of Tokyo Press, p. 108.

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sensus of the “essential implication” of a word. Kigo falls between the subjective and objective, occupying the realm of the intersubjective.

In English language haiku, there is a tradition of more personal interpretation vs. normative connotation, so kigo in the strictest sense doesn't actually exist. We see this reflected in the ELH focus on haiku centered on “nature vs. human nature,”³⁵ abandoning the strictly seasonal aspect of traditional haiku to focus on a looser concept of nature, pulling the human out of haiku in a way that Kyoshi advocated, but is completely out of line with haiku from Bashō to Shiki, and much of the modern, gendai haiku. In Japanese, there are kigo that are entirely cultural, for instance, “temari,” a stitched ball that is given to children on New Year's Day.

鳴く猫に赤ん目をして手まり哉
naku neko ni akamme wo shite temari kana

—Issa

playing ball
the little girl makes a face
at the mewling kitten

(trans. Robert Aitken)³⁶

This haiku is an idyllic picture of a New Year's Day, but there's no “nature” there beyond a domesticated animal, and the focus is on human nature; the little girl teases the cat that wants the new ball for itself, giving it the “red eye” (equivalent to sticking one's tongue out). So season may have nothing to do with the pastoral, and can be urban and human centered. This is without even delving into the ironic and deconstructive use of kigo in some gendai, where authors twist kigo in a way that remains in the tradition of haiku in that it respects

35. van den Heuvel, Cor. *The Haiku Anthology* (3rd Edition). ed. Cor van den Heuvel. W. W. Norton & Company 2000, p. xvi.

36. Kobayashi, Issa. *The River of Heaven: The Haiku of Bashō, Buson, Issa and Shiki*. trans. Robert Aitken. Counterpoint 2011, p. 146.

the implications, but only by utilizing contrast and irony for effect in the way Bashō contrasted courtly language with vulgar imagery.

In English, if there's no set emotion or essential implication for, say, "spring rain," then it can't be used ironically, or traditionally, or to give you a clue as to what the rest of the poem might mean, it's just naturalistic description—and that's very different than a true "kigo," even though you could call it a "seasonal reference."

Ultimately, this is the biggest barrier to anything written in English truly being part of the Japanese haiku tradition; the coded language and cultural topoi established first in the Imperial collections of waka and then later through haiku saijiki (seasonal almanacs) do not translate in the same way features like cutting, disjunction, simplicity or the love of nature can. Insofar as haiku is steeped in the more untranslatable linguistic and literary heritage with corresponding cultural assumptions in Japanese, the English-language haiku fails to connect to Japanese tradition in a meaningful way.

Thus, while haiku in English is an interesting body of poetry that is inspired by the Japanese haiku and does retain several key elements, there remain severe barriers to importation and adaption of the "traditional form" in English. This is both good news and bad. The strictures put on English-language haiku in the name of Japanese haiku tradition in the past are largely hypocritical and sometimes completely inaccurate, for there is no truly "traditional" haiku in English, at least regarding Japanese tradition, and the original expositions of the form in English were riddled with inaccuracies that distorted our ideas of that tradition. This knowledge liberates us to experiment with what haiku might mean in English, since we'll have to build much of our own tradition from the ground up, but it also leaves the question of why we persist in calling our work haiku in the first place, and continue to claim fidelity to the Japanese form.

The positive side is that Japanese haiku in the 20th century and beyond has proven to be flexible, and in the more liberal side of the

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modern tradition, there is increasing commonality and connection between the traditions in Japanese and English. So long as we recognize the differences between the traditions, and don't represent our way of approaching haiku as reflecting Japanese practice or being the one true way—so long as we don't misrepresent Japanese practice through repetition of misinformation—we can be inspired by the Japanese haiku and learn a great deal from it while developing our own interpretations of the form and still feel we are part of the haiku tradition. That is to say, we are part of the haiku tradition in the broadest sense, but we can not write “traditional haiku” in English. It is a mistake to follow Kyoshi's conservative dictums on haiku when writing in English, for he likely would not have recognized any such work as authentic haiku. Only by the most liberal of Japanese conceptions of haiku are the two genres connected.

Perhaps the most important points (regarding the English language haiku community's urge toward brevity) involve Kawamoto's exposition of the function of meter in Japanese prosody. It is a lengthy essay that discusses the entire origins of the theory of metrics in Japanese poetry across several generations, so I will try to reduce his voluminous study to a few crucial revelations:

1. The basic unit of Japanese metrics is a “bimoraic foot,” a two mora unit accented on the first mora, somewhat like a trochaic foot in English.
2. The underlying meter of haiku is three bars of 4/4 time, corresponding roughly to three lines of trochaic tetrameter, with 12 possible accented beats and 24 “eighth notes” that reflect possible positions in the meter where the morae may fall.
3. Each of the 5-7-5 mora “lines” are overlaid on this metric framework, one line per bar of 4/4 time, with some feet having a single mora with its duration stretched out or a pause after it, making the syllable counts odd numbered and leaving a fair

amount of blank space as silence or a caesura at the end of each 5 mora line and a briefer caesura in the 7 count line.

4. “Extra syllables” are added to the form without changing the meter simply by filling out the empty spaces generally left blank at the end of the lines. Most “hypermetric” lines still nest into 4/4 time, with extreme modern deviations incorporating occasional tri-moraic “triplets” that would change a single trochaic foot to a dactyl.

5. Meter in Japanese poetry does not come from natural linguistic features, but is an artificial, performative element of poetic tradition, separating poetry from natural speech. This is because the Japanese language lacks the pitch, duration or accentual stress patterns necessary for building the more traditional poetic meters found in Chinese, Greek or English poetry.³⁷

This information has a number of important ramifications for adapting haiku into English. The most interesting facet is that haiku’s bi-moraic foot, 4/4 meter and overlaying 5-7-5 pattern all are a result of the language lacking the traditional stress patterns needed for long-form metrical poetry. In other words, haiku sounds like poetry not because of its inherent phonological or semantic structure, but because of a tradition that has developed around performing it as poetry; the structure is a learned experience of metrics, rather than a natural rhythm of speech. This explains why after a brief period of free verse, both conservative and avant-garde Japanese haikai alike returned to the 5-7-5. Without it, Japanese poetry simply doesn’t sound much like poetry at all. The occasional deviation, if it fits the meter, can still sound like verse, but otherwise, it falls apart and becomes mere prose. Bashō recognized this implicitly in his oft quoted advice, “If you have three or four, even five or seven extra

33. Kawamoto, Kōji. *The Poetics of Japanese Verse: Imagery, Structure, Meter*. trans. Stephen Collington, Kevin Collins and Guztav Heldt, 2000 University of Tokyo Press, pp. 206-221.

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syllables but the poem sounds good, don't worry about it. But if one syllable stops the tongue, look at it hard.”³⁸

Looking at haiku in English, however, we have a wealth of poetic meters available, and all of them sound like poetry. Our free verse can be variable and adjustable and still not lose a sense of our accentual rhythms the way Japanese verse does without a set pattern. So whether our verse falls into regular iambics, trochees or slightly more varied free verse, it still largely sounds like poetry, or at least it ought to if we strive for authenticity. Japanese haiku, it turns out, has a heavy beat and a meter that is exaggerated in comparison to the rhythms of regular speech, so any interpretation of the genre that says our haiku should avoid sounding too “poetic” is off the mark: Japanese haiku uses elevated, literary diction and has a strong, regular pulse that separates it from prose and clearly demarcates its status as verse. Thus haiku in English, no matter what style it chooses, should be recognizable as verse rather than mere prose, if it aims to emulate the actual Japanese tradition of haiku as best it can.

It also follows that any argument against the authenticity of the 3 line format in ELH is completely wrong. The 5-7-5 pattern, when placed over the 4/4 meter of haiku in Japanese, has caesuras that generally fall after each sub-group of morae, which makes them function very much like a line in English verse. In fact, most of the Japanese contests and journals that accept ELH insist on a three line format. So while the one line haiku has a rich canon in the English language and the format has some very strong merits in terms of literary aesthetics and novel techniques that have grown from it organically over time, it is not a particularly accurate reflection of Japanese practice and can be seen more as an evolution within ELH than a traditionalist interpretation. The one-line format can obscure the meter, and, barring careful punctuation and obvious cutting that

38. Hirshfield, Jane. *Seeing Through Words: Matsuo Bashō*. The Haiku Foundation, p. 22 <<https://www.thehaikufoundation.org/omeka/files/original/049b9a7e795d51117de8969c5a0163e5.pdf>>.

creates a tripartite rhythm, will lead away from the Japanese haiku rather than towards it. This is not to say anything negative against the practice of one-line haiku, for many of the finest ELH being written today follow the format, but we must recognize that any argument for this practice in terms of it being more “traditional” than the 3-line format has little basis in fact.

(/ x) (/ x) (— —) (/ x)
 pig and i < > spring rain < > < >

Now, we can return to Mountain’s pig and examine it metrically by the standards of Japanese 4/4 meter. If we give a weak stress for the rest after the single, strongly stressed syllable in the middle foot, as happens in Japanese meter, we have two trochees and a spondee, giving three feet of roughly trochaic meter, then an empty foot. This is closely analogous to the bi-moraic meter of the first line of a Japanese haiku. So, metrically, this emulates what’s going on in Japanese haiku very accurately, it simply concentrates the entire poem into the space of a single first line. Whether this similarity was intentional or coincidental, I find that Mountain’s intuitive grasp of haiku spirit and form was often quite impressive. She consistently cut through the nonsense and grasped the essence of the form insofar as it can be expressed in English, even when she bucked ELH orthodoxy and made a new path for herself.

However, just because Japanese meter is trochaic doesn’t mean we can’t use a more natural iambic meter in English haiku, though I do find it interesting that Mountain’s ku demonstrates in English an affinity to the natural meter of Japanese haiku. Moving forward, for those interested in exploring meter in ELH, keeping this flexible framework in mind and experimenting with slight deviations within the concept of a 4/4 time framework overlaying the text would be profitable, much more than restricting poems to arbitrary numbers of syllables with no set beat or meter and the resulting anarchy.

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Now that we have seen that the extreme brevity of Mountain's ku is not actually all that in-line with traditional Japanese practice in terms of poem length and number of images or details, and that poems like "tundra" and "fossilence" are absolutely extreme takes on the concept of brevity in haiku in English that stretch the genre to its limit, there is a final interesting way in which Japanese poetics can be used to re-frame an element of our own approach to the adaptation of the haiku. That is, the popular feature of our briefest expressions of haiku — the "poem-word," — can be seen as a valid analogue to a feature of the Japanese haiku tradition, the *kaketoba* (pivot word), and thus it can be expanded upon and used as part of a fuller form that opens new horizons for the haiku in English.

人に生死蒨田鳥の争うよ
hito ni seishikarita tori arasou yo
— Shin'ichi Takeda

Life and death for man;
a battle fought by chickens
on the paddy stubble
(trans. David Burleigh)³⁹

Here the phrase "life and death" *seishikari*, functions as a pivot word, sharing the symbol 蒨 (*kari*) with the first word in 刈り田 (*karita*), or "paddy stubble/harvested rice field." However, like fossil and silence in *fossilence*, *seishikari* and *karita* have been blended together as *seishikarita*. The fact that the kanji used for the 2 shared syllables, *kari*, is the one contained in the word for the concept "life and death," 蒨, rather than the 刈り that would normally be used in the word for the *kigo* of harvested rice field, or "paddy stubble," means that the entire phrase also functions as the neologism *seishikarita*, "rice field of life and death." The *kigo* is embedded in this neologism and must be teased out by recognizing it in the blended word. This dual
39. Takeda, Shin'ichi. *The Haiku Universe for the 21st Century*. trans. David Burleigh, 2008, p. 153.

meaning deepens the metaphorical resonance of the ku in a more nuanced and complex manner than is communicable in English translation, where the pun/pivot disappears. This usage ties in to the long Japanese poetic tradition of *kakekotoba*, which was a crucial part of the poetics of courtly *waka*.

Because the fusion of words into novel portmanteaus has been a prevalent feature of Japanese poetry for over 1000 years, the concept of “pwoermd” is nothing new to the Japanese haiku tradition and fits perfectly well in the context. However, in terms of practice, in Japanese the blending is used to save space in the 5-7-5 form while showing linguistic playfulness, generally tying the superposed and base sections together and emphasizing the blending of multiple images, becoming the bridge between what are in some cases two very different worlds. I know of no Japanese haiku that consist of a single blended word. In the ELH “poem-word,” the blended word becomes the entire locus of the poem, and the brevity puts an immense amount of focus on the neologism, with the word becoming almost a mantra upon which to meditate, reflecting perhaps the Zen obsessed idea of haiku as wordless koan.

It would be interesting to see more poets working in English expanding beyond the singular pwoermd and using these blended words the way they are used in Japanese haiku — as pivots between sections in a normal haiku — rather than giving them the entirety of the focus; using them to open up a more complex way of blending phrases and imagery. Individual (not blended) pivot words that create double entendre or multiple ways to read a line have been used extensively in one-line ELH for some time now, but the portmanteau is generally seen as a poem in and of itself, and has yet to make regular headway into the body of longer haiku, where it has the most promise in terms of moving the genre in novel directions in English while re-engaging with Japanese tradition.

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In conclusion, English-language haiku has stressed the concept of brevity and embraced its practice to a further extent than the Japanese haiku, and long ago found the limits of this trajectory, pushing minimalism as far as humanly possible short of saying nothing, aiming at the Zen-inspired idea of the haiku as a “wordless poem.” However, the way in which early translators and theorists approached the form often failed to acknowledge many literary and linguistic features of Japanese haiku, ignoring haiku as poetry and instead reading them in terms of Zen inspired simplicity and focusing on the psychological aspect of capturing heightened, “haiku moments” in a diaristic fashion, or else interpreting images through free association even when the original poems were highly stylized and followed poetic clichés with precise meaning and complex use of language (rather than directly painting subjective experience in the simplest terms available). By missing the normative cultural implications of many haiku and instead making personal readings the basis, ELH became seen as a collaborative process between poet and reader, with each poem being open to interpretation, rather than referring to an established matrix of coded words that evoked a highly allusive literary tradition. In losing the Japanese implications and focusing on an individualist, psychological/spiritual approach, English-language haiku both divorced itself from strict Japanese tradition and developed a genuinely new tradition with its own unique canon, built around minimalism and thus exploring haiku as extreme micro-poetry to a greater extent than has generally been seen in Japanese practice.

While this indicates a significant level of divergence and differentiation between the two genres, exemplified by the two pigs of Mountain and Tohta, ultimately the diversity in practice illustrated by the contrast between the two enriches and broadens our vision of the possibilities available in the haiku genre as a whole.

However, oftentimes this gradual divergence on the part of ELH has been couched as if it were adherence to Japanese tradition, with many believing Blyth’s misinterpretations of the genre as fact, and

truly believing they were writing “traditional haiku.” If we are truly to engage with the Japanese haiku as literature and learn from it as an antecedent of our own poetry, it should be seen that many of our early impressions were, if not completely false, certainly warped, and certain restrictions on length, content and outlook that have been imposed upon the English language haiku in the past can be loosened without fear of losing authenticity to the spirit and tradition of Japanese haiku.

There have been some ELH “traditionalists” resistant to the modern Japanese haiku (*gendai*), and other ELH poets who model their poetry after this liberal tradition. While the brevity of ELH goes far beyond that of Bashō, we can allow for the extreme brevity practiced in ELH only insofar as we admit that modern Japanese haiku is indeed a valid part of the broader haiku tradition, and we should admit the modern Japanese haiku as valid, for if experimental Japanese poets like Seisensui cannot use the word “haiku” to describe their work, surely what we do in English has even less veracity as authentic haiku. The ramifications of this acceptance of modernity in haiku is that minimalism is not the only acceptable interpretation of the genre, and that expanding the complexity of both the base and superposed sections—working in longer lines that have a sense of metricality, using more complicated literary language or even working in or close to the 5-7-5 syllabic pattern—and leaving the realm of strict objective realism all are valid choices that can be made within the broader tradition of haiku, with precedent going back to Bashō, and which carries all the way to the present day.

Often, when someone in the ELH community makes a pronouncement about the true nature of haiku, they use Japanese tradition to justify it. But when one then uses more accurate information about Japanese tradition to challenge that person’s view of haiku, they suddenly become completely uninterested in Japanese tradition, and begin to speak of their own view of poetry, or else their adherence to a unique Anglophone tradition. However, even anglophone haiku has

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never been truly unified in aesthetic and outlook, as evidenced in our “haiku wars” and ongoing debates. Thus any move to strictly define the genre is going to result in the disenfranchising of non-conforming poets and promoting internecine conflict.

In many ways the modernist and post-modernist schools in Japanese and English language haiku have more in common philosophically with each other than with the traditionalist schools in their respective languages; the conservatives are rule bound and love to call anything that doesn't confirm to their vision “not haiku,” while the liberal schools look to expand the form and make it more inclusive.

While there are significant differences in English haiku and Japanese, I don't think it's helpful to segregate Japanese haiku from the English, French, German, Italian, Chinese, Arabic ku etc. traditions, in that all ultimately come from the single germ of the traditional Japanese haiku. They have differentiated immensely, with some bearing only vestigial traces of the original, but like every leaf on the tree of life, each brings its own unique expression to the form—just as different poets and schools have added new visions and interpretations to the tradition over the years—and all trace back to the same roots.

Rather than pretending every branch is equivalent and interchangeable, that our differences are minimal, and thus erasing important cultural distinctions, or saying that our traditions are too different to even be considered part of the same tradition and thus suggesting we abandon the word haiku, driving an artificial wedge between cultures and separating poets who share a common interest, I urge a cosmopolitan approach to haiku as a broad, multicultural tradition with its roots in Japanese poetics, and I urge poets to seek out the other traditions, interact with poets from other linguistic and cultural traditions and find out what they bring to the form. Haiku is in a unique position to be a poetic genre that embraces many languages, styles and cultures under one canopy, but only if rigid, dogmatic thinking is set aside.

It must, however, be stressed that strictly “traditional” haiku does not exist outside of the Japanese haiku and its matrix of word associations and master-disciple lineages, so while I say that we all belong to a single broad tradition, it does not mean that ELH is in any way “traditional haiku,” or that there are no borders between the genres. Everything we write in English is modernist or postmodern haiku, and it remains significantly different from the Japanese haiku in crucial aspects.

As the internet brings us closer and closer together, inclusivity and respect for differences in aesthetic becomes more and more important. Hard-fast rules in haiku have always had two functions, to give power and prestige to those wielding them as a cudgel, and to give direction to those who are lost without them. Basho knew the rules of haikai and regularly flouted them. Shiki cast the entire apparatus of haikai and its literati out the window and created a new name for the genre. The pendulum swings back and forth between innovation and nostalgia, but the history of significant haiku poets is the history of writers who have engaged with tradition while adding something new, who have given us a unique and fresh perspective on the haiku and cut another facet on this tiny jewel of world literature.

While simplicity and brevity are fine goals in any poetic tradition, these will mean different things to different poets, and one certainly cannot judge the quality of a ku by its syllable count or the bare simplicity of its diction. I challenge haiku poets writing haiku in English to open their minds to the expansive and literary side of haiku in addition to the minimalist and atomized. I challenge poets to explore the many different schools of haiku in Japan as well as other language traditions, drawing inspiration from what they find.

There is nothing wrong with the unique tradition formed by Blyth and Henderson’s idiosyncratic visions of haiku, it has in fact created a vibrant new form of poetry, but we do both the Japanese and English-language haiku traditions injustice when we make broad

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generalizations that fail to recognize the fundamental differences in approach between the two, just as we make an unnecessary schism between two branches of that same tree when we fail to recognize the many similarities and affinities they continue to share. We do even more damage when we close our minds and refuse to consider that other approaches to the form within our own communities are equally valid to our own, and that haiku has a very colorful, complicated and rich history that only grows stronger with diversity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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winter



first
match
across
the
bricks

MMW

winter first match across the bricks

Haiga: Marlene Mountain

Sonia Sanchez's 'magic/now':

Black History, Haiku and Healing

META L. SCHETTLER

ABSTRACT: Sonia Sanchez has chosen haiku for many decades to create magic in the now and to throw down sacred words with the power of healing past trauma. As a writer of the Black Arts movement, like Amiri Baraka, she has also consistently affirmed African culture and turned to an “ancient image” of African civilization to nurture her vision. This paper explores Sanchez’s wide-ranging development of new strategies within haiku—techniques that, in the words of Baraka, “raise up, return, destroy, and create,” knocking down almost all of the traditional conventions for haiku to chart her own journey as a Black woman poet. The paper especially investigates Sonia Sanchez’s relationship to the natural world, to the artist’s path of creativity, and the pendulum swings she makes between human relationships and the natural world. Her continuing attention to African culture has allowed her to lay claim to natural images within haiku while navigating the tensions of an exploitative, nihilistic past that destroyed African life as ordinary practice. Sonia Sanchez covers a wide range of historical topics in her haiku, including the 1985 MOVE bombing in West Philadelphia, the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, and the courageous actions of Harriet Tubman in the abolitionist movement affirming a collective consciousness and implicitly calling for increased activism for social justice. Sonia Sanchez relates her own

understanding of spirituality, self-discovery, and scholarship to her reading of Egyptian and West African philosophies that affirm unbroken connections between the New World and African civilizations, and these connections inevitably influence her approach to writing haiku.

we be. gonna be
even after being. black
mass has always been. (*I've Been a Woman* 79)

In Amiri Baraka's seminal poem "Ka' Ba" he describes an urban landscape embedded with images of African culture and African spirituality in his poetic vision. In the center of the poem he contrasts the oppression and cold grayness of the New World to the freedom and fullness of an embodied African culture affirming creativity, community, ritual, and wholeness. He writes:

We are beautiful people
With African imaginations
full of masks and dances and swelling chants
with African eyes, and noses, and arms (Gillan 156)

He describes the need for escape, the need to find a way out of the New World context, "we labor to make our getaway, into/the ancient image," and the poem's title "Ka' Ba" points to ancient Egyptian philosophy, and Egyptian beliefs of the soul, personality, the afterlife, how the soul travels. Baraka ends the poem with a call for magic, an invitation to conjure while his own poem serves as the first spell, the first invocation of African culture to dispel the cold grip of repression and self-destruction. He writes:

. . . We need magic
now we need the spells, to raise up
return, destroy, and create. What will be
the sacred word? (Gillan 156)

Sonia Sanchez has chosen haiku for many decades to create magic in the now and to throw down "the sacred word." As a writer of the Black Arts movement, like Amiri Baraka, she has also consistently affirmed African culture, and turned to "the ancient image" to nurture her vision. This paper will explore Sonia's wide-ranging development of

new strategies within haiku, techniques that “raise up, return, destroy, and create,” knocking down almost all of the traditional conventions for haiku to chart her own journey as a Black woman poet. I am especially interested in Sonia Sanchez’s relationship to the natural world, to the artist’s path of creativity, and the pendulum swings she makes between human relationships and the natural world. In the tradition of Bashō, the path of creativity tied to the natural world is called “zōka zuijun.” As Haruo Shirane writes in *Traces of Dreams: Landscape, Cultural Memory, and the Poetry of Bashō*, “The poet who follows or ‘returns to the Creative’ implicitly engages in a process of spiritual cultivation that allows the zōka within to join the zōka of the cosmos” (261). Derived from Daoist texts “Zōka is written in two Chinese characters whose literal meaning is ‘create and transform’” (Qiu 324). With her haiku, Sonia Sanchez seeks foremost to create and transform herself, to release herself from an oppressive history, to reconcile herself to the world as it is, and to create a glimpse of what might be.

For the African American poet, the ability to connect to the natural world can be severely compromised by current racism, the dearth of natural beauty in urban landscapes, as well as the history of colonialism and enslavement, the forced exile from African land, the violence of the New World. As Camille Dungy describes in the introduction to her anthology *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry*, some Black poets “implicate the natural world in a personal or collective history of trauma. The plants, animals, water, and weather seem to be complicit with society, creating various taunts and tragedies even while flaunting potential beauty and possibility” (xxxix). This interpretation of the natural world is quite separate from Zen or Taoist principles. In her haiku, Sanchez records this complicity of the natural world, but she also affirms it as a space of empowerment and healing. In his introduction to her first published volume of poetry *Home Coming*, Haki Madhubuti notes a rejection of nature replaced with an intense focus on building love among

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Black people, “The love of blackpeople, the love of blackness. That’s what it is all about, the love-of self & people. . . . She need not talk about the aesthetics of a tree; there are no trees in Harlem or on the westside of Chicago” (Sanchez 7-8). Sonia’s poetry has evolved greatly from this first collection in 1969 to the present, and the haiku form makes space to reconcile herself with the forces of nature and the natural world. Her continuing attention to African culture allows her to lay claim to natural images within haiku while navigating the tensions of an exploitive, nihilistic past that destroyed African life as ordinary practice.

Sonia Sanchez’s poetic truth quite often explicitly proclaims her political intent and political consciousness. For example, she writes a concise prose poem in *Under A Soprano Sky* which declares:

For I know as Martin knew: “The masses of people are rising up. And wherever they are assembled today, whether they are in Johannesburg, South Africa/ Nairobi, Kenya/ Accra, Ghana/ New York City / Atlanta, Georgia/ Jackson, Mississippi/ or Memphis, Tennessee, the cry is always the same— ‘we want to be free’” (97).

A few haiku also implicitly affirm this Pan-African vision, and her desire to keep historical memory alive. In two poems from *Like the Singing Coming Off of Drums*, Sanchez takes images of fire to consecrate the space of the poem and remember the damaging fires of racism. She writes:

to be lifted in
smoke to be cast in iron
remembering the fire. (82)

and i am flesh burnt
red charcoal black gift wrapped in
philadelphia blood. (91)

In the first poem, she does not explicitly mention race or the history of slavery, but the image of iron directly relates to iron chains, ironwork, African culture, and the exploitation of African people. Her use of enjambment in the first line break creates a stronger presence for smoke and iron as images in the second line as they stand out as bookends for the line. The last line, “remembering the fire” produces no relief but does allow us to pause and stay with the troubling images of the second line. As Elaine De Lancey wrote of Sonia’s haiku, “Introspective moments rarely produce epiphanies; at most, they are moments of fragmented insight” (De Lancey). The disturbing images are meant to unsettle us, to raise political consciousness more than zen consciousness.

In the second haiku, the final image of “philadelphia blood” immediately recalls the 1985 tragedy of the bombing of the row house owned by the revolutionary Back-to-Africa group MOVE. In a standoff with police the MOVE organization’s house on Osage Avenue was fire-bombed and allowed to burn resulting in eleven deaths (including five children) and 61 houses destroyed in the surrounding blocks in West Philly. In her poem, Sonia Sanchez takes this enormous loss of life and destruction of a Black neighborhood, and compresses it down to an intensely personal depiction as intense and graphic as Richard Wright’s poems for lynching. The image of fire here is inseparable from a charred body and her naming of this body as a “red charcoal black gift” holds a bitter irony. The idea of a “gift” forces us to wonder why the gift was given, who took it, and what we are supposed to learn from the transaction. The opening of the poem with the conjunction “and” also extends the scope of the poem to a larger story. It could be the complex and twisted story of the MOVE bombing itself, or it could be the broader history of racial violence and slavery. Both poems create healing by refusing to look away, by cauterizing the pain by exposing the wound, indirectly in her first poem’s use of metaphor and image and quite explicitly in the second’s graphic nature.

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Two poems that document an urban landscape and link Sonia's militancy to the younger generation pronounce her desire to keep struggle and resistance alive. She writes:

summer has sped a/
cross this philadelphia land/
scape warrior style. (*I've Been a Woman* 84)

and also:

haiku (for mungu and morani and the children of soweto)
may yo seasons be
long with endless green streets and
permanent summer legs. (*Under A Soprano Sky* 81)

In the first poem, her use of forward slashes to break the lines into haiku-form calls attention to her images, the “cross” within “across” and the “warrior” within “warrior style.” Again, like her more graphic poem for the MOVE bombing, she alludes to a larger history of racial violence, this time embedding that violence in Western culture signified by the cross. Instead of streets, she points to the “land/scape,” which might also recall colonial exploitation with its larger range of vision and deeper history. The image of summer as warrior suggests endurance after the tragic losses of the MOVE bombing and a refusal to surrender to the desolation of injustice.

In both poems, she uses the seasonal reference to summer atypically, politically, to demonstrate that the struggle should be the apex of life with the sun and long days providing strength for the work ahead. She further subverts the convention of the seasonal word in the Soweto poem by invoking a blessing that refers to plural seasons rather than a singular image to wish her sons and the children of Soweto longevity and resilience, “may yo seasons be/long”. The final image of “permanent summer legs” in the Soweto haiku affirms the march of the Soweto students moving in the Soweto uprising, and the

continuing need for movement in the struggle. Struggle continues, *a luta continua*, with the energy of a “permanent summer.”

In her commitment to Black history and the struggle, Sonia Sanchez also backs away from the convention of self-forgetting, to make the poet secondary to the primary power of Nature itself. Instead she invokes the power of Nature within herself, sometimes to the level of an *orisha*, or deity, with supernatural powers. For example, in *Like the Singing Coming Off of Drums*, she writes:

come windless invader
i am a carnival of
stars a poem of blood. (22)

and also:

i am moving in
air amazon woman bare
foot thunderbound bells. (23)

In both poems she aligns herself with the elements, especially the sky, to lift herself to the cosmos gathering strength and a sense of invincibility. In the first poem, the “windless invader” remains unidentified and nonspecific, but like the poems for Philadelphia and Soweto, the final image of a “poem of blood” directs us to a larger, ancestral struggle. With its image of the poet as a carnival of stars, this poem also recalls her haiku sequence for Emmett Till in her latest collection *Morning Haiku* where she writes:

13.
walking in Mississippi
i hold the stars
between my teeth (13)

Like “come windless invader” Sanchez breaks multiple haiku conventions by employing multiple images instead of limiting herself

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to two separate images to build resonance and meaning. As a result, her haiku create a strong sense of movement rather than stillness or pause. The carnival of stars morphs into a poem of blood, an Amazon warrior treads on air with thunder ringing out like bells from her feet, and the repression of Mississippi disintegrates as she holds the stars in her teeth. All three poems hold a cacophony of images in a very small space. Sonia signals her intent to keep moving forward, as a woman, a poet, and even an *orisha*, to achieve her goals and chart a new path. This magical realism in her haiku conjures a vision of a “magic/now” as Amiri Baraka called for, a sense of magic that asserts mindfulness and a sense of presence that refuses to remain earthbound, a sense of possibility that leans on African philosophy and the infinity of African ancestors embedded in stars.

Sonia Sanchez also creates movement in her haiku by affirming *ubuntu*, the African principle of connection between people, in poems describing romantic love, honoring contemporaries, and remembering important communal ancestors. The principle of *ubuntu* affirms generosity, open-heartedness, and a divine, unbroken connection between the living, the ancestors, and the unborn. In the spirit of *ubuntu* Sanchez has consistently honored many artists and legends of Black history in her poems, especially within her most recent collection *Morning Haiku*. She constructs a broad and inclusive family through various dedications, poems that directly praise fellow artists and activists and/or poems that imagine their experience and reconstruct Black history. For example, the April 2018 issue of *Poetry* published a series of haiku and tanka by Sanchez for Harriet Tubman. These poems include many of the hallmarks of Sanchez’s haiku written for Black history, the magical realism, the value of community, and a tumultuous combination of multiple images of Nature blended together to evoke supernatural powers and larger than life experience. The poems that open the series show Tubman’s *orisha* status, heroic, iconic, and large-looming:

1

Picture a woman
riding thunder on
the legs of slavery . . .

2

Picture her kissing
our spines saying no to
the eyes of slavery . . .

3

Picture her rotating
the earth into a shape
of lives becoming . . .

4

Picture her leaning
into the eyes of our birth clouds . . . (23)

In this introduction, Tubman appears as a shape-shifting giant “riding thunder” and capable of wrapping herself around the “legs” and “eyes” of slavery to inhibit it and reject it. Poem 3 especially depicts Tubman as a god-like figure spinning the earth like a ball and shaping a new world for the Black community. Within the series, Sanchez uses repetition in creative ways, repeating both particular phrases or words and particular elements of nature especially air to signify breath and life. Twenty out of the twenty-four poems in the series start with the directive “Picture” to emphasize both vision and a tone of command, directing us to see Tubman in our minds’ eye and follow her on rescue missions to liberate the enslaved. The remaining four poems of the series start with another directive, “Imagine.” Sanchez writes:

6

Picture a woman
jumping rivers her
legs inhaling moons . . .

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7

Picture her ripe
with seasons of
legs . . . running . . .

8

Picture her tasting
the secret corners
of woods . . . (24)

In poem 6, she employs synesthesia with Tubman's legs breathing while crossing rivers with superhuman strength. This combination of senses is slightly disorienting and creates a stronger sense of the supernatural, bending nature to the service of myth-making. Like her unconventional use of summer and the struggle as a political seasonal word, here Sanchez describes "seasons of legs . . . running" to show Tubman's long dedication to her dangerous escape missions and innovates a new representation for seasonal words. The physical description makes the seasonal reference more literal and unconventional compared to traditional Japanese seasonal words. The phrasing commemorates a longer history and a collective history of physical resistance to slavery through physical escape. Sanchez intentionally foregrounds images of the body to encourage healing but simultaneously recalls dismemberment and destruction. When she writes, "Picture her kissing/our spines," Tubman embraces her community collectively, and then "leaning into the eyes of our birth clouds . . ." Tubman reaches back through time to see instinctive, primal beginnings. Sanchez again privileges a collective, communal history making Tubman's story not so much the story of an exceptional individual but a people's history of resilience and collective triumph. As the epigraph of this paper shows Sanchez holds this sense of community strongly and firmly:

we be. gonna be
 even after being. black
 mass has always been. (79)

Like Tubman's time leaps to primal beginnings and her ability to shape the future the lines "we be. gonna be/even after being" suggests a breaking out of ordinary linear time to make a new larger chronology that reconciles the past, present and future into a collective story of survival.

This collective story also includes other important figures that link Tubman to the broader history of abolitionism and freedom-fighting. She writes:

15

Picture the daylight
 bringing her to woods
 full of birth moons . . .

16

Picture John Brown
 shaking her hands three times saying:
 General Tubman. General Tubman. General Tubman. (26)

This repetition of Tubman's honorary status as a general and commanding role in the war against slavery reads like an incantation and a blessing. The ending of the poem with its focus on air and breath also affirms a sacred approach, honoring Tubman with basic elements of life, breathing life into the people and the country as a whole:

21

Picture this woman
 freedom bound . . . tasting a
 people's preserved breath . . .

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22

Picture this woman
of royalty . . . wearing a crown
of morning air . . .

23

Picture her walking,
running, reviving
a country's breath . . . (27)

Sanchez claims the haiku elements not solely for herself but to document the collective struggle of Black people, to keep the memory of a painful history alive, retold and redeemed through praise stories of resistance and the desire to find freedom. As Sanchez says in the middle of the poem, “Imagine a woman/asking: *How many workers for this freedom quilt . . .*” (25), and Sanchez stitches the quilt pieces together with elements of haiku. The pendulum swings between people’s actions, heroic or tragic, comes to a standstill in the final part of the poem with Tubman “wearing a crown/of morning air . . .” This crown of morning air strengthens the repetition of breath and further boosts Tubman’s status as a goddess-like figure or *orisha*, an ancestor to be highly honored and loved.

Besides this important communal love that preserves an African heritage, in her many poems dedicated to romantic love, Sanchez creates healing spaces for finding love, savoring love, as well as losing love, always affirming the connection to her loved one as sacred and essential as breath. Like her *orisha* poems, in these love poems, nature is subsumed by human need subverting haiku conventions, and movement dispels any stillness that might be possible in the space of the haiku. From *I’ve Been A Woman*, she writes:

at the center of
me, you, holyman walking
in lightning colors. (71)

And also:

bear the rhythm of
your name and mine wide on green
rivers of change. (79)

We get a brief moment of stillness in the first poem with the sequence and punctuation of the first half of the poem, “at the center of / me, you,” with the center holding a certain stillness, and the commas forcing us to pause almost abruptly, but the poem takes off with the final phrasing, “holymen walking/ in lightning colors.” Like her *orisha* poem where she herself walked the air, she again invokes the sky to create a sense of expansion and vivid action. Both “walking” and “lightning” create this strong sense of movement that suggest transformation and change, and naming her lover as a “holymen” explicitly affirms the sacred and posits human love as divine love. The second love poem also strongly suggests a space of transformation with the image of wide, green rivers of change and the melding of the lovers’ names borne in the sound of the river. Here human elements become so fused with natural elements that Sanchez create a magical realist or even surreal effect in place of an objective or Zen self-forgetting way. The communication and transportation of the lovers’ names seems to suggest a space of continuity and remembrance rather than a distinct still moment of time. In this way, Sonia blends historical elements with natural elements to repurpose literal images of nature typically found in haiku.

Within her haiku, besides movement and change, Sonia Sanchez also makes effort visible, the effort to be an activist and the effort to be a writer. In this self-assertion, she claims the space of haiku to confront and contain the enormity of losses in Black history, and the difficulty in achieving harmony when facing hard truths. In two poems from *I’ve Been A Woman* she shows us both the struggle and release when she writes:

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these words stained with red
twirl on my tongue like autumn
rainbows from the sea. (74)

And also:

morning snow falling
astride this carousel called
life. i am sailing. (75)

Both poems again affirm movement and a cluster of strong images knocking together. In the first poem she alludes to some difficulty with words twirling in a color that again suggests blood and “autumn rainbows from the sea” again invoking nature in a surreal and supernatural way. Rather than passively observing nature, Sonia infuses nature with her own vision and purpose, which may negate Taoist principles but ultimately carves out her own path. In “morning snow,” we do see an effective and perhaps more conventional resonance between the falling snow and the poet’s persona “sailing” with both images conveying a sense of lightness and floating in air. However, Sonia Sanchez also audaciously shares a vision of a world in perpetual movement, “astride this carousel called / life” inserted between the parallel images, which creates an expansive sense of movement, and a sense of belonging and self-awareness. The world is not overwhelming. It charms us like a carousel, and invites us to embrace its fast-moving succession of experiences.

In a 1985 interview Sonia Sanchez spoke of the influence of African religions in her poetry and her desire to bring “another life force” into her writing when she was asked, “When did the African influence enter your poetry?” and Sanchez replied:

There were some phenomena I could not explain, like the collective unconscious, but I wanted to. When I read *Flash of the Spirit*,

[and] the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, I laughed. That's the person I talked to, that was Yémaya. . . . I was bringing into the arena of poetry the sense of another sensibility, another way of looking at the world, another life force. If I touch you, I give you a life force, also. (Joyce 16)

Sonia relates her own deep sense of spirituality and that sense of self-discovery through scholarship, her reading of Egyptian and West African philosophies that affirmed unbroken connections between the New World and African civilizations. Yemaya, the Yoruba goddess or *orisha* of love and creation, especially relates to the New World, the Middle Passage, and the African Diaspora because of her association with water, rivers, and the ocean. When Sonia announces that she speaks to Yemaya, she affirms an African goddess as her muse. In describing her own project with haiku in comparison to traditional haiku, Sonia Sanchez also tells us that she connected with the traditional principle of tapping into spirituality in nature. She says:

That's what I try to do too. Sometimes there are double meanings and triple meanings there too, which means that you know there is life between the poem and the lines, which means that if you really understand your life, our lives, there are lives in between that we don't always see, because we limit ourselves. (Joyce 43)

Sanchez alludes to the Zen concept of *yūgen*, a concept described in this way by Hakutani and Tener in their afterword of Richard Wright's haiku *This Other World*, "In Zen, every individual possesses Buddhahood and must realize it. *Yūgen*, as applied to art, designates the mysterious and dark, what lies under the surface" (Hakutani and Tener 256). For Sonia Sanchez, as well as Richard Wright, this spirituality then becomes a unifying element to build a new tradition, blending the Black aesthetic and African animism with the Zen tradition. Sanchez may radically alter haiku conventions, but through the haiku form she is constantly learning and offering new

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lessons of Black history and conjuring up the “magic/ now” to heal herself and her readers.

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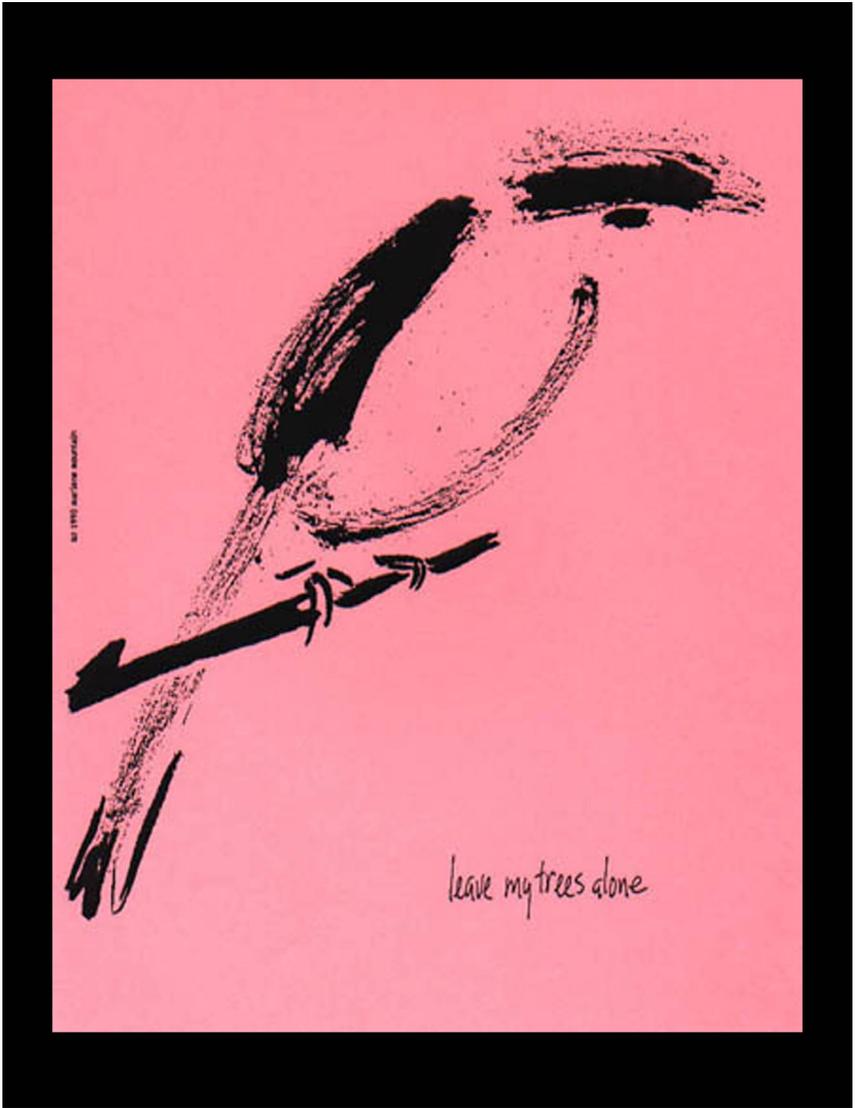
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leave my trees alone

Haiga: Marlene Mountain

THE POSTDOMESTIC WOMAN
IN ROBERTA BEARY'S
THE UNWORN NECKLACE

JOSHUA GAGE

Abstract: In her doctoral thesis *The Postdomestic Woman: Divorce and the Ex-Wife in American Literature, Film, and Culture*, Deborah Marie Sims explores female characters who have experienced divorce, a character type which she has labeled the “Postdomestic Woman.” While Sims explores this character type in fiction and film, she does not explore postdomestic women in biographical texts, nor does she explore postdomestic women in other literary genres, such as poetry. Roberta Beary’s *The Unworn Necklace*, through its implied narratives, serves to document the process of a woman going through the process of divorce, in other words becoming postdomestic, and the struggles and ultimate triumphs of that character as she works to reclaim herself and her identity after divorce. By examining the juxtapositions within various haiku in this collection, as well as the juxtaposition of haiku against each other, it’s clear that *The Unworn Necklace* serves as a Postdomestic text, capturing the moments of a postdomestic woman, as well as challenging the clichés and stereotypes associated with that character type.

As Rachel Bowlby argues in her essay “Domestication,” the word domestic has a fairly harmful etymology. It originally meant the subjugation of a tribe to a colonizing power. The “domestic” represented the civilized, orderly authority of the colonizer, and the wild, untamed, “other” was seen as something that needed to be brought under control. Later, when it was transferred to ideas of home and home life, the “domestic” was seen as the central locus, a safe place from the dangerous outside, or undomesticated, world. For the bulk of the 19th and 20th century, the home, the domestic, was the location of the woman, specifically the wife. It was her domain to command and make pleasant for the husband, who was meant to brave the wild and dangerous world outside the home, the undomesticated parts of life. While some theorists argue that women, in their domestic roles, had a subversive power over men, specifically when it came to the raising and moral guidance of children, for the most part feminist critics have eschewed the idea of the domestic woman. The home is seen not as a safe haven, but as a patriarchal cage or prison. Bowlby argues “As far as domestication gets a thematic mention in these theories, it is to perpetuate the assumption that of course women would and should want to leave home and enter the workforce; or at least, not to be spending their days solely as housewives, a situation still implicitly marked by the imagery of confinement within a space that excludes participation in a real world elsewhere” (86). She cites authorities like Friedan and Beauvoir, who argue that domestication represents a deprivation of full human potential and is associated with a false version of femininity.

What then can be said of a woman who escapes this domesticity through the dissolving of the marriage? Deborah Marie Sims explores this very sort of figure, which she has labeled the “Postdomestic Woman,” in her doctoral thesis *The Postdomestic Woman: Divorce and the Ex-Wife in American Literature, Film, and Culture*. She defines the postdomestic woman as

a female character who has been married and occupied the role of wife but has since rejected or been excluded from that role. Frequently this character has purposefully severed her marital relationship and thus deliberately operates as an independent agent based on her own desire and willingness to do so. Regardless of intention or desire, the postdomestic woman must renegotiate her identity with society. Issues of freedom, femininity, family, and love are central to the postdomestic woman, as she must resignify these once (seemingly) stable concepts according to her new postdomestic identity. (1-2)

Sims explores the history of divorce in the United States, tracking changes in attitudes towards divorce and love-based relationships. She then examines postdomestic women in film, exploring relationships between child custody, feminism and antifeminism in Hollywood over the last fifty years. After that, she explores the concept of single, black motherhood in postmodern African American novels. To end her dissertation, she explores postmodern canonical novels written by white men. She does not explore postdomestic women in biographical texts, nor does she explore postdomestic women in other literary genres, such as poetry; the purpose of this paper is to delve deeper into these categories of literature, focusing on the haiku collection *The Unworn Necklace* by Roberta Beary. Beary's text, through its implied narratives, serves to document the process of a woman going through the process of divorce, in other words becoming postdomestic, and the struggles and ultimate triumphs of that character as she works to reclaim herself and her identity after divorce.

The Unworn Necklace is a seminal collection of haiku and senryu by one of the masters of the form. It won the Merit Book Award from the Haiku Society of America, and was a finalist for the Poetry Society of America award. While this collection is multifaceted and has many narratives running through it, one of the more prominent subjects in the collection is the demise of the speaker's marriage. This

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subject is first directly addressed in the ninth poem of the collection:

rainy season
again he tells me
she means nothing (17)

However, two haiku earlier, the poem

on my finger
the firefly puts out
its light (15)

indirectly creates an image of a marriage dissolving. Part of Beary's brilliance in this collection is the way she juxtaposes haiku against each other to add richness to the narrative. Haiku lead into each other thematically, and while there seems to be a seasonal progression through the book, the poems also work to reinforce the underlying narratives present within the text as well.

The first sense of the speaker dealing with a postdomestic identity occurs with this senryu

it's over
slicing his shirt
for the ragbag (37)

Keith Heiberg, when reviewing this collection, made special note to criticize this poem: "If a haiku or senryu is seeing 'the extraordinary in the ordinary,' this poem only gives us the latter. The experience may have been moving for the speaker, but here the form and content are so commonplace, the poem fails to connect for the reader." Heiberg seems to be reading this poem only as a senryu; however, read as a postdomestic text, the poem is lush with meaning and resonates well.

"it's over" works as a blanket statement here in that Beary has already addressed the issue of divorce and deception in previous haiku.

This, however, is the first poem presented from the point of the speaker AFTER the divorce; as such, it works as a turning point in the collection, setting up a new identity for the speaker. “it’s over” identifies this shift for the reader, and presents the speaker beginning to wrestle with her new identity. The rest of the senryu is a poignant act both of defiance and determination, as well as reclaiming lost territory. The male figure, who has cheated on the speaker in previous poems in the collection, is literally being cut from her life. She is severing ties to her identity as his wife and working to create a new identity. The idea that this is a domestic chore—cutting up clothes for cleaning rags—is important. The speaker is not seeking to separate herself from the home or home life completely; she is not completely abandoning the role of domestic caretaker. However, she is claiming it for herself. Instead of the traditional idea of wife taking care of the house for the comfort and succor of the husband, this speaker is taking care of the house for herself. She is splitting herself, literally, from the role of “wife” and recreating herself and the home as independent from the patriarchal structures which betrayed her.

This independence can be seen three poems later.

custody hearing
 seeing his arms cross
 i uncross mine (40)

Peter Harris, when analyzing this poem, argues that the attitudes are indeterminate. “When the speaker sees the husband cross his arms, does she uncross hers to induce him to keep open to negotiation? Or is she conceding something in the custody arrangements?” (284) Taken in juxtaposition with the senryu “it’s over,” it seems that both of these possibilities are unlikely and that the speaker’s motivation is one of independence and defiance. The “he” in this poem is no longer a husband, but an ex, and the speaker is working to establish her postdomestic identity in opposition to this ex. Readers have already seen her destroying his clothes for this purpose. Now, even her

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gestures are important. She very clearly is uncrossing her arms because he crossed his. She is gesticulating a visible difference between herself and him, emphasizing her new identity as postdomestic woman. The fact that this is a custody hearing is equally as important. While it conjures up images of two parents sparring with their lawyers across a courtroom, it also works to reinforce the speaker's identity. She is not abandoning her role as mother; if anything, she is seeking to protect it. This is part of her new identity as a postdomestic woman, that of single motherhood. In uncrossing her arms, she is opening herself up to this new identity and showing the obvious difference between herself and her ex-husband. This is a conscious, calculated move by a woman creating a new, distinct identity for herself and viewing herself through a postdomestic lens.

The next pairing of haiku that concerns the divorce is another victory for Beary's speaker. The two haiku occur on facing pages:

court-ordered visit
i take up her unfinished
crossword (42)

and

family picnic
the new wife's rump
bigger than mine (43)

serve to further distance the speaker from the ex-husband and have her not only accept, but almost champion, the mantle of ex-wife. In the first poem, we are shown the protective nature of the speaker as mother figure. The first line "court-ordered visit," sets a very specific scene. This is a visitation visit, court-ordered, which makes sense post-divorce; however, the fact that the speaker, the biological mother, stays on the scene alludes to the fact that this is not a mutual visit. She stays to protect her child and to witness the father's interaction

with the child. As a postdomestic woman, she is fully embracing single-motherhood and total care of her child. She no longer trusts her child's father, and thus stays with the child through the court-ordered visit. This idea is emphasized in the second line, "i take up her unfinished" The fact that Beary broke the line here is important, as it puts emphasis on the word "unfinished." Readers are left wondering what is unfinished, and realize that, in the speaker's perspective, the new wife is incomplete as a maternal figure and wife. The new wife leaves things incomplete. Paired with the first line, this is clearly a commentary on the new wife's relationship with the child in question. The new wife is unable to replace the speaker as a maternal figure, and the speaker maintains her dominance as a postdomestic woman in the realm of motherhood. That Beary ends with "crossword" serves almost as a punch line to a joke, making this poem more of a senryu than a haiku. The crossword serves as a symbol for all the things the new wife is unable to complete, including the parental role implied in the first line. There is humor here, to be sure, and commentary on human nature, but more importantly a reaffirmation of the speaker as postdomestic single-mother.

That this poem is juxtaposed with "family picnic" further develops this idea and the relationship of the speaker with the new wife. This poem reads more like a haiku, with "picnic" working as a summer kigo. However, the postdomestic commentary is still present in lines two and three. While this may seem to some readers petty and even anti-feministic, as the speaker is clearly comparing her body image to the new wife's, there is a sense of postdomestic triumph here as well. As an ex-wife, as a postdomestic woman, the cliché would be that the speaker let herself go. The image of the single-mother who is out of shape, overweight, with no make-up and a simple ponytail or bed-messed hair is a classic trope in American culture. The idea, of course, is that a woman simply cannot keep up with her kids and work schedule enough to put herself into any semblance of healthy, positive projection of self-image, and thus let's herself go. This poem

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challenges that notion by comparing the speaker to the new wife, a woman who theoretically has more time and support to keep up her body image due to her relationship with the husband and his support. The fact that the husband has admitted to cheating in previous poems in this collection means that this woman also could be his former mistress, and thus has everything to prove at a family picnic. The fact that she is seen as more out-of-shape than the speaker is a victory for the speaker, both over the woman who stole her husband, as well as the ex-husband himself. This poem is a commentary on the ex-husband, who is seen as in particularly bad taste for not only showing up at a family picnic, but for bringing his new wife, too, but also on the new wife as well. The idea that the speaker looks better than the new wife shows that she is not only able to survive without the husband, but to thrive without him. She is a postdomestic champion, capable of living a healthy, independent life as woman and mother, free of the constraints of marriage without any ill-effect on herself.

At this point, readers might expect the relationship narrative to be over. As Sims points out throughout her thesis, the traditional postdomestic narrative—again, often those written by men or where the man is the protagonist—creates a series of binaries to trap women. A woman can either have a career OR be a mother, a woman can either be nurturing towards her children OR cold and heartless to her husband, a woman can either stay with her husband OR live a life of solitude. There seem to be few options for postdomestic women that do not exclude other roles. Beary's challenges that notion with her speaker, who is capable of being a mother, a housekeeper, and, as it turns out, a romantic partner as well. Beary's speaker's life does not simply end with the divorce; if anything, she is now in complete control of her destiny, and capable of pursuing new and different avenues of intimacy on her own terms.

This can be seen with a series of poems where the speaker begins dating again. The first of these explores the joy and uniqueness of a new romantic relationship.

first date—
 the little pile
 of anchovies (49)

The idea of a first date, and all its complications and awkwardness, works as a solid juxtaposition against the image in lines two and three of this poem. There is something elegant, perhaps even exotic, about being served anchovies. One assumes the anchovies are an accompaniment to a larger course, perhaps served with an appetizer tray of crackers, cheeses and spreads, or maybe served on top of a rich Italian pasta dish. However they are being offered, they are a unique choice, and thus catch the speaker's attention. They offer a commentary on the uniqueness, and perhaps foreignness, of the dating experience for the speaker. She is in new territory; presumably, she has not dated in a while, having just gone through the disillusion of a marriage. Furthermore, there is always the uniqueness and difficulty with a first date in general. There is also the feeling of hope that this might become something new and exciting, if only an opportunity for a second date. Beary is able to capture all those emotions with the focus on the unique, somewhat awkward, somewhat foreign, somewhat intriguing food offering of anchovies.

The next two haiku in the collection pursue this narrative further.

daffodils
 crushed by snow
 . . . waiting for him to call (50)

and

third date—
 the slow drift of the rowboat
 in deep water (51)

The first is a great early spring haiku that captures the anticipation and anxiety of a new relationship. The couple has had a first date, and now the pressure of waiting for a response from that date is perfectly

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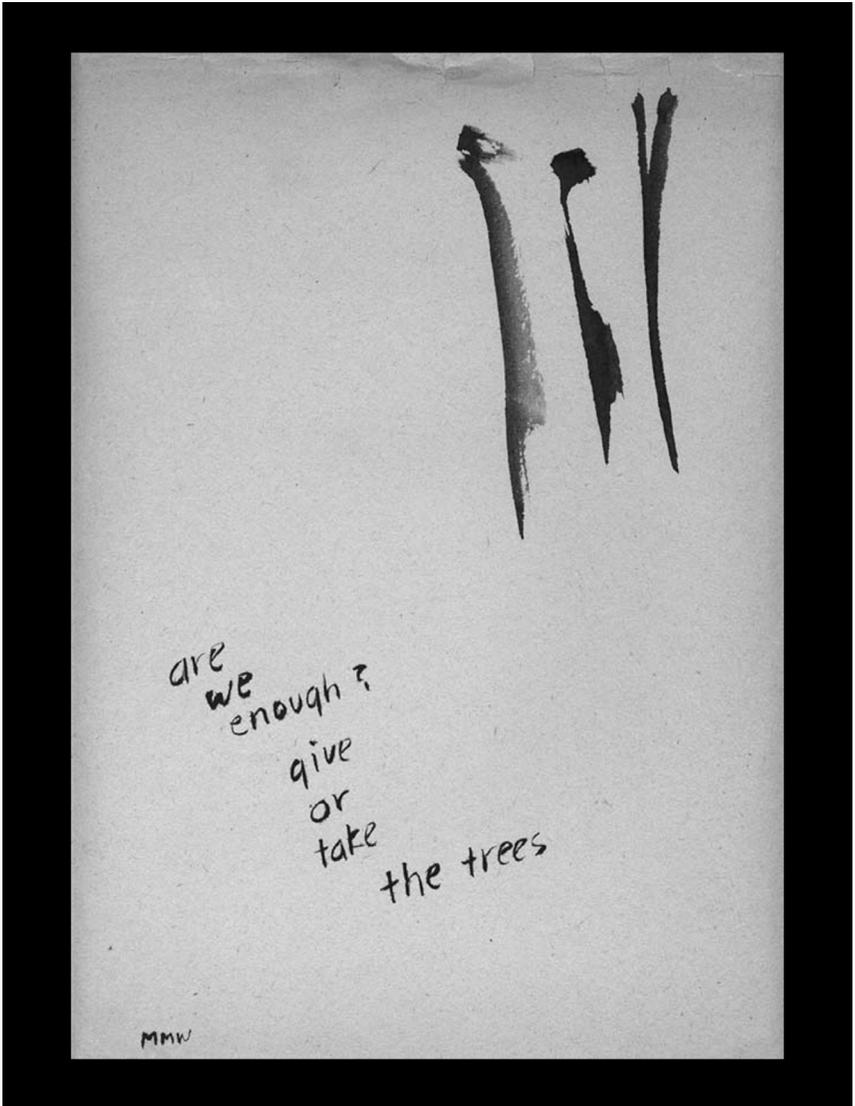
juxtaposed against the crushing pressure of the snow on daffodils. On one hand, the reader can mourn that these flowers are being crushed, possibly killed, by the cold and the snow; however, it's also possible that the plants will be resilient and will thrive despite the snow. Beary's narrative of a strong postdomestic woman leads readers towards this second interpretation. Readers know that this woman has already survived so much, and more than that, has thrived in spite of all her trials. It is fully expected that she will survive this new, minor trial in tact as well.

Readers are, of course, immediately rewarded by the facing poem. The new couple has advanced in their relationship to a third date. Beary artfully juxtaposes the relationship against the image of a boat moving into deep water. Readers will be careful to note that neither she nor the man are propelling the boat forward; the boat is drifting of its own accord. They are letting the boat, and thus the relationship, steer itself forward. That the boat is moving towards "deep water" implies the deepening of the relationship, too. This is an interesting change for the speaker, and one that adds depth to her character. For the most part, readers have seen a postdomestic woman who is completely in charge and in control of her fate. Now, she is letting go a little, and allowing the new relationship to take its own course; however, this should not be interpreted as a weakness or relinquishing of control to the other person. Both of them are clearly taking their time, allowing the relationship to mature and deepen as it will. She is not relinquishing control to this new man, but simply taking a hands-off approach. This challenges the notion or stereotype of the postdomestic woman as control-freak or power-mad dominant, and again upturns some of the clichés and binaries which Sims explored in her thesis. Beary's speaker, while fully capable of being in control when necessary, is also willing to loosen her grip on the reins when the time calls for it, allowing things to naturally take their course, thus adding depth to her role as postdomestic woman.

In the postdomestic narrative that runs through *The Unworn Necklace*, Beary creates the identity of a postdomestic speaker, a woman who has, as Sims puts it, “occupied the role of wife, but is narratively showcased *after* she has ceased to occupy that identity. In other words, the moments and experiences captured in the text—and, by implication, *worth capturing*—occur after and outside of a traditional marriage” (6). Beary uses haiku to capture these moments and experiences, detailing the heartache, struggles and successes of a woman going through the process of divorce and ultimately triumphing as a postdomestic character. Beary is also able to use this character as a way to challenge the preconceptions and clichés of a postdomestic woman, as well as dismantle some of the exclusionary binaries offered to postdomestic characters. In her thesis, Sims only explored works of fiction and film to discuss postdomestic characters, but it is clear that other works of literature, such as poetry, can be used to explore postdomestic women and their roles and relationships in society, and it is hoped that further study will occur concerning these works of literature and the commentaries they make on postdomestic characters.

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are we enough? give or take the trees

Haiga: Marlene Mountain

TEXTS WITHIN TEXTS: INTERTEXTUALITY IN JAPANESE HAIKU

RICHARD TICE

ABSTRACT: Intertextuality is a term for underlying texts within a text being read and the relationship between them. Intertexts are common in Japanese haikai, hokku, and haiku and form part of the vertical axis, a term proposed by Shirane Haruo, that ties a piece of literature to past literature, religion, and culture. Though texts within texts may sometimes be difficult to see, recognizing intertextuality in haikai, hokku, and haiku greatly enriches one's appreciation and understanding of them. This article identifies and examines embedded texts in numerous poems and prose passages, exploring how they work. For example, the introductory part of the modern short story "Haru no tori" ["The Spring Bird"] by Kunikida Doppo embeds a passage about summer grass from Matsuo Bashō's *Oku no Hosomichi* [*The Narrow Road to Oku*], which in turn embeds some lines of a poem by Du Fu. A haiku by Shiki about the aftermath of modern warfare also embeds that "summer grass" passage of Bashō. Examples of texts within texts are presented in other hokku and haiku of both past and modern poets. A common interplay of intertextuality in *hokku* and haiku depends on the use of set phrases of five or seven *on* (sound syllables), like *hototogisu* (mountain cuckoo) or *furusato ya*

(hometown). This usage dates back to the *Man'yōshū*, the earliest book in Japanese literature, in the form of *makura kotoba* (pillow words) and continues with numerous other set phrases to the present. Though a popular set phrase may link thousands of haiku that use the phrase, the poet and reader experience it subjectively, recalling specific poems that resonate personally. One other form of intertextuality, highlighted in a passage of Kawabata Yasunari's *Yama no oto* [*The Sound of the Mountain*] comes into play when readers experience or interpret poems as representative of their own experiences. The reader's life becomes a text of one within the poem he or she is reading. Any of the three kinds of intertextuality explored in the article add depth and connectivity both to a poem and to the reader's experience with that poem.

Does this passage from a 1904 Japanese short story recall another, more famous passage?

On the summit remain the ruins of a castle. Vines of ivy cling to a high stone wall and seem, in a way that cannot truly be described, to be arranged and imbued with crimson. Anciently the area where a tower stood had become level—at some unknown time young pines had grown here and there, and summer grass had left no open space. When gazing on this, I feel keen sorrow recalling ancient days.

This is the second paragraph of “Haru no tori” [“The Spring Bird”] by Kunikida Doppo (1871–1908), describing a mountain where the narrator loved to walk. Readers may recall another passage if they are familiar with Matsuo Bashō’s travelogue *Oku no hosomichi* [1694, *The Narrow Road to Oku*]. Nowhere does Doppo mention Bashō (1644–1694), nor does he quote any of the related passage, Section 27, from *Oku no hosomichi*, but he uses key elements and words from that section: castle ruins on the mountain, a wall, his feelings of sorrow for the past, and the words “summer grass” (*natsugusa*). These effectively recall the prose passage with its famous poem:

natsugusa ya tsuwamonodomo ga ume no ato (Matsuo 364)

Summer grass —
the aftermath
of warriors’ dreams

It is as if Bashō’s words are embedded in Doppo’s description, setting up a parallel and implicitly sharing the moment with another moment 118 years before.

This use of embedding or alluding to an underlying text within the main text is an example of an intertext, defined as “a text drawing on other texts, for a text thus drawn upon, and for the relationship between both” (Baldick). “The various relationships that a given

text may have with other texts” is intertextuality, a term invented by Julia Kristeva to discuss intertextual relationships (Baldick). Thus it relates closely to other literary terms like allusion, echo, allegory, and correspondence. Because it is a term related to deconstruction theory, it need not be intentional on the author’s part but may be perceived in the response of the reader. Though it is a modern term, the concept of embedded texts and embedded meaning goes back hundreds of years, and in the case of Japanese haikai and hokku, including texts within texts was once a common practice.

Doppo’s passage recalls a passage of Bashō’s *Oku no Hosomichi*, but Bashō’s passage in turn recalls a passage of Du Fu (712–770). Bashō: “The country crumbles; mountains and rivers remain. The castle, when spring comes, is seen as green grass” (Matsuo 364, Section 27). Du Fu: “The country has fallen, but its mountains and rivers remain; when spring comes to the city the grass turns green again” (Keene, *World within Walls* 104, tr. Donald Keene). Section 27 of *Oku no hosomichi* also recalls Section 21, when Bashō describes his reaction to reading a thousand-year-old monument referring to a castle that no longer exists. He writes that “from old, though names and places have remained from poetry and have been passed on, mountains crumble, rivers cease, new roads are made, rocks disappear and are hidden in the earth, trees become old, replaced by new trees” (Matsuo 358). He is astonished the stone monument has survived, bringing the ancients to his memory. Because of the intertext, the “summer grass” haiku becomes a partial repudiation of Du Fu’s claim that manmade things are temporary, but mountains and rivers remain: For Bashō everything perishes except summer grass, which always returns, and the enduring legacy of poetry.

Haruo Shirane has demonstrated how prevalent, and even essential, allusion and allegory are in the writings of Bashō and Buson and how much their work shares the past in terms of literature, culture, society, and religion. This aspect of *haikai* and *hokku* he calls the vertical axis, the horizontal axis being the present (53). For Bashō and many other

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haikai practitioners, their links to the past expressed in their poetry were shared experiences in an ongoing stream of literary experience. Intertextuality is equally a sharing with the past, part of the vertical axis, but is narrowly focused, a sharing with a specific poet and a specific text. Of course, readers can appreciate merely the here and now—the horizontal axis—of good literature, but how much more their interpretation and appreciation of the work are enhanced by recognizing the references to the past—the vertical axis.

Shirane has also pointed out how Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902), influenced by Western literary theories, greatly stressed personal, direct observation of the subject (*shasei*) (52). That focus on the here and now, though, does not entirely preclude sharing with the past. Here is Shiki's use of intertextuality in a haiku that plays off of Bashō's "summer grass" poem and passage in *Oku no hosomichi*:

nashi saku ya ikusa no ato no kuzure ie (Higginson 22)

the pear is blossoming—
after the battle [or, the battle's aftermath]
a collapsed house

Where is the summer grass, all that remains of warriors' dreams? Shiki's battlefield haiku differs distinctly from, yet still recalls, Bashō's poem above. The first lines of both poems have the same initial sound, *na*, and end with the *kireji* (cutting word) *ya*, indicating the line break and emphasizing the image. *Kusa* (grass) is a pun within *ikusa* (battle), both poems set up a series of possessives (*no / ga*), and the focus is on "no ato," which in Shiki's poem can mean both "after" or the trace, tracks, or aftermath left behind. *Ato* is in *hiragana* (characters for sound only) rather than *kanji* (Chinese characters), so it suggests both meanings; in Bashō's poem, it is in *kanji* for "trace," the sound suggesting the alternative meaning of "after" (Higginson 22-23).

In Bashō's prose just before and after his poem, he writes of a castle in ruins; in Shiki's work, a house is in ruins. Shiki's haiku focuses on the immediate ruin of war, which in Bashō's poem has long since disappeared, yet in both, the cycle of nature, along with its beauty, has survived.

Sometimes a haiku depends so much on erudition that obscurity and learning, not the effect, become the purpose of the poem. The poem is meaningless to all except a select few. Unfortunately for most modern readers, the value of secret traditions in literature and the importance of knowing Chinese and Japanese classics weighed heavily in *haikai*, allowing poets like Teitoku (1571–1653) and Kikaku (1661–1707) to shine. Donald Keene gives an excellent example of a Teitoku poem ruined by intertexts—it is amazing that Keene can make sense of it, and as he points out, why would anyone want to?

neburasete
yashinaitate yo
hana no ame

Let him lick them—
That's the way to bring him up:
The flower sweets.

This cryptic verse, presented to a man who had just had a child, depends for its effect on puns and allusions. . . . *Ame* means both “sweets” and “rain.” *Hana no ame* is “rain on the flowers,” recalling the line in the Nō play *Yuya* that calls rain the “parent” of the flowers; it also refers to the “rain of flowers” that fell when Shakyamuni Buddha was born. The verse is deliberately ambiguous, but the expanded meaning is something like: “Raise your child by giving him sweets to lick, as the rain raises the flowers, your child born as Shakyamuni was, amidst a rain of flowers.” (Keene, *World within Walls* 31)

Here the intertexts are multiple and, to modern readers (me, at least) obscure. Without them the poem defies understanding, and even with them may still defy understanding. Fortunately, after the time of Teitoku, *haikai* became less cryptic.

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Most modern Japanese and English readers appreciate a haiku for reasons other than its embedded text, but seeing an intertext can open the poem greatly. This haiku by Chiyoni works cleverly by itself, though a modern reader may wonder how a butterfly can dream:

chōchō ya nani o yume mite hanezukai (Bowers 47)

the butterfly—
what is it dreaming,
wings fluttering?

How much is added, however, if the reader knows the text from a Taoist philosopher that the haiku plays with:

Once upon a time, I, Chuang Tzu [Zhuangzi], dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of following my fancies as a butterfly, and was unconscious of my individuality as a man. Suddenly I awaked, and there I lay, myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly dreaming I am a man. (Giles 32)

Could the butterfly be dreaming it is Zhuangzi (circa 400 or 300 BCE)? Could it be an incarnation of a human, not knowing if it is a man dreaming it is a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming it is a man?

Both the passage of Zhuangzi and the poem of Chiyoni are well known in Japan. So perhaps it is not too surprising to see them embedded in an interesting modern variation by Kamakura Sayumi:

ningen ni naritai kurage pukari pokari (Kamakura)

jellyfish with a wish
to be a human
bobbing, floating (tr. Fay Aoyagi)

Instead of a butterfly with moving wings, the poem focuses on a jellyfish whose entire body is moving. Without the intertexts, readers may wonder how the author perceives that a mindless jellyfish has a wish to become human. They may come to the conclusion that this “wish” is merely an interjection or superimposition of the author. With the intertexts, the dreaming of humans or butterflies may include other creatures, like jellyfish, and the poem may suggest an interpolation from the Buddhist and Taoist beliefs in reincarnation: reborn as a jellyfish, the creature has perhaps an innate desire to become human in a future incarnation.

The intertext for the following haiku by Suzuki Shizuko (1919–unknown) definitely adds meaning to an otherwise puzzling juxtaposition:

Chūnen no otoko no miryoku tori kumo ni

A middle-aged man's charm: bird in a cloud (Tr. Hiroaki Sato)

Is this poem suggesting that a middle-aged man's charm is like a bird in a cloud, distant and soon disappearing? Or is the man attractive, as a bird in a cloud is attractive? Or both? Or something else entirely? The poem actually may also be a response to Bashō's question in this poem:

kono aki wa nande toshiyoru kumo ni tori

This autumn, why do I grow old? In clouds a bird. (Tr. Hiroaki Sato)

The order of the bird and cloud (*kumo*, cloud, can be either singular or plural) is reversed from Bashō's poem, but the image is obviously a shared one. Suzuki seems to be directing a comforting response to Bashō's dismay at growing old—even a middle-aged man has charm. On the horizontal axis, she juxtaposes a middle-aged man with a bird in a cloud. On the vertical axis, she feels warmth toward Bashō, no matter his age.

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An interesting example of how intertext can save a poem is this one by Bashō:

michinobe no mukuge wa uma ni kuwarekeri

(Keene, “The Haiku Abroad” 75)

The roadside mallow flower has been eaten by the horse.

No matter how this is read, it hardly seems to be a poem. Especially in the standard one-line form used for printing Japanese haiku and with the use of present perfect (“has been eaten”), the statement seems to be just that—a statement. This commentary by Donald Keene is helpful in showing how this haiku can work as a poem:

In order to appreciate the poem one must possess some background information. The first is a line from a poem by Po-Chüi [772–846] found in . . . *Collection of Japanese and Chinese Poems for Reading Aloud*, compiled at the beginning of the 11th century. This work was a part of the standard education of Japanese of Bashō’s day, and no doubt he knew it well. The line in question goes in translation, “The mallow flower has one day of glory.” The meaning is obvious: the mallow flower lasts only a single day before withering, but during that day it shows itself in glory. With this knowledge in mind, we can see that being eaten by the horse deprived the flower of even that brief moment of glory. (“The Haiku Abroad,” 75–76)

Read by itself in the here and now of Bashō’s moment, the poem seems to be a straightforward observation, one sentence with no juxtaposed images. Paired with Po-Chüi’s poem, the mallow flower becomes, in a light-hearted way (*karumi*), a tragic victim.

In the ongoing tradition of Japanese poetry, any poem or passage of prose can become a possibility for intertexting. According to Keene, this haiku of Yosa Buson (1716–83) borrows every image from Li Bo (701–762):

ureitsutsu oka ni noboreba hana ibara (*World within Walls* 347)

taken by melancholy
I climb a hill—
flowers of the briar rose

However, almost 150 years later, Ishikawa Takuboku (1886–1912), embedded this haiku into his *waka*: “Melancholy sweeps over me/ And, when I climb the hill,/ A bird whose name I don’t even know/ Is pecking there / At the red fruits of the briar” (*World within Walls* 347; tr. Keene). In Western tradition, the intertexting can look suspiciously like plagiarism—Buson plagiarizing Li Bo, and Takuboku plagiarizing Buson.

One form of intertexting is quite common and easily seen, relying upon the use of set five- or seven-*on* phrases. The use of set phrases dates back to *makura kotoba* [literally, pillow words]—found abundantly in the oldest Japanese books, *Kojiki* and *Man’yōshū*, and continuing several centuries past them in national anthologies of *waka*. The *makura kotoba* is an adjectival epithet, usually of five *on*, attached to a deity, person, or place, typically used to begin a section of a poem. They really have nothing to do with pillows (*makura*). Some have lost their meaning, some have become independent, and some have passed into current usage. For example, the phrase *yasumishishi* (*makura kotoba*—governing the world in peace) *ōkimi* (exalted person) is archaic and no longer used, whereas *chiba no* (*makura kotoba*—many leaved) *kazu* (name of a plain) is still used (McCullough 82-83). For several centuries many 5-7-5-7-7 *waka* would use pillow words to harken back to *Man’yōshū* poems and create an elegaic tone. They functioned intertextually, as noted on a *waka* website: “*makura kotoba* formed links in terms of meaning, association or sound and provided a means by which a poet could add depth to his/her poems or heighten the tone of his rhetorical style” (“*Makura Kotoba*”). Many were also used, some in more modern forms, in classical linked verse (*renga*), and their use continued to the twentieth century.

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Set phrases of five sound-syllables or seven sound-syllables, counted as *on*, have proliferated greatly over the centuries beyond the five hundred or so original *makura kotoba*, appearing in countless *haikai* and haiku. There is no Japanese term that I have found for them, so I will continue to call them *makura kotoba* (or if anyone objects, *man'yōgo makura kotoba*—pillow words subsequent to the *Man'yōshū*), even when they are not used adjectivally. Such phrases may include season words by themselves, like *hototogisu* (lesser cuckoo, rendered skylark in the translation below) if they are five *on*, or in combination, like *aki no kure* (autumn dusk/the end of autumn). They may include locations, such as *urusato* (birthplace, hometown) in the set phrase *urusato ya* (*ya* for emphasis) or *Minasegawa* (Minase River). As such, they operate independently at the time of the poem, while also participating in the traditional ethos and cultural values of the past for the term (Shirane 58-59). More importantly, *makura kotoba* link a poem to any number of other poems with those words, but it is quite subjective, depending on what poems the poet has in mind and on what poems the reader associates with the words.

In the following experience related by Mukai Kyorai (1651–1704), Kyorai and Bashō consider a verse of Yamamoto Kakei (1648–1716) for inclusion in the collection *Sarumino* [*The Monkey's Raincoat*]. Kakei's verse includes the word “*hototogisu*,” a set term of five *on* used in Japanese poetry since the eighth century. Apparently though, Kakei had a specific Bashō poem using “*hototogisu*” in mind, a poem that both Kyorai and Bashō recognize.

Omokaji ya
Akashi no tomari
Hototogisu
—Kakei

Port the helm!
There, by Akashi harbor,
A skylark!

This poem was being considered for inclusion in “The Monkey's Cloak.” Kyorai said, “It's just like the Master's

*No wo yoko ni
Uma hikimuko yo
Hototogisu*

Across the fields
Turn the horse's head—
A skylark!

It should not be included.” The Master said, “The ‘skylark of Akashi’ is not a bad image.” Kyorai replied, “I don’t know about the ‘skylark of Akashi,’ but the poem merely substitutes a boat for a horse. It shows no originality.” The Master commented, “He hasn’t made any advance in the conception of the verse, but you may include it or not as you please on the basis of the Akashi skylark.” We finally did not include it. (“Conversations with Kyorai,” tr. Donald Keene)

Unfortunately for Kakei, though the poems use very different images (a boat instead of a horse), Kakei’s poem is rejected, not for repeating “hototogisu” but for not advancing “the conception of the verse.” In fact, Bashō is willing to include it because of the image, though it is the repeated part of Bashō’s poem. In both poems, the riders want to turn the boat/horse to look at the skylark—perhaps that is why Kyorai says the poem shows no originality.

Instead of referring to another poet’s poem, a poet may use set phrases while thinking of some of his or her other poems using those words. It may also be that the poet has no specific previous poem in mind even though the phrases are commonly used words. More importantly, the pillow-word poems the poet has in mind may be entirely different from the set of pillow-word poems the reader brings to mind. The reader’s recall of *makura kotoba* is usually independent of the writer’s recall of *makura kotoba*. For example, Kobayashi Issa (1763–1827) has more than thirty haiku that use the pillow word “*fuyugomori*” (winter seclusion), most of them humorous or bawdy and most showing some impatience with being house-bound for three or more months. Here is one about flies:

hae uchi ga kōsha narikeri fuyugomori (Lanoue)

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he has become expert
at swatting flies . . .
winter seclusion

The subject is omitted, but the haiku probably refers to Issa himself in summer and fall busily swatting flies until he becomes a fly-swatting master, now house-bound in the cold with no flies around. Who knows what “*fuyugomori*” poems, if any, Issa had in mind when he wrote this, but whenever I read any of Issa’s *fuyugomori* haiku, I invariably think of one Bashō poem:

kinbyō no matsu no furusa yo fuyugomori (Saitō 105)

on the gold-leaf folding screen
how old the pines . . .
winter seclusion

Perhaps it is the contrast that causes me to put them together—Issa’s humor and earthiness contrasting with Bashō’s *wabisabi* (a genteel perception of aging beauty), Issa’s smugness and self-deprecation in contrast to Bashō’s acceptance. Issa may not have had Bashō’s haiku in mind, but as a reader I do.

Considering the enormous number of haiku written in Japan since the 1600s, the poems containing *makura kotoba* of the “big five” season words—cuckoo, cherry blossoms, snow, autumn leaves, and the moon (Shirane 58)—may number in the millions. That may be one reason for the modern search in Japan for new and novel images. Fortunately, the pillow words link each poem only to the ones that resonate with each reader. English writers are wary about using phrases they feel are overused or react negatively to what they feel are stock phrases—too many “cherry blossom” poems, for example—but they may be inadvertently closing their poems to the vertical reach of the poem, because shared images or phrases may create intertexts in English readers’ minds, favorite haiku being recalled when reading a certain familiar-sounding phrase.

One type of intertext is experienced often no matter what the language or literary tradition. Kawabata Yasunari (1899–1972) writes of a family haiku discussion in *Yama no oto* [*Sound of the Mountain*]. A family of three—an aging father, mother, and adult daughter—are eating *ayu*, or sweetfish, a small trout-like fish, at the dinner table, when the father, Shingo, begins to talk about haiku, mentioning season words relating to sweetfish: *aki no ayu* (autumn sweetfish), *ochi ayu* (descending sweetfish), *sabi ayu* (rusty sweetfish): “These are sweetfish that have laid their eggs and become worn out. Dilapidated, their color faded, they make their way unsteadily down to the sea.” Fusako, Shingo’s recently divorced daughter, immediately says, “Just like me!” (321). Shingo pretends not to hear and relates two unidentified haiku:

ima wa mi o mizu ni makasu ya aki no ayu (321)

now surrendering
its body to the water—
autumn sweetfish

shinu koto to shirade kudaru ya sese no ayu (321)

not knowing it’ll die,
a sweetfish swims down
the shallow rapids

Then he adds, “Very much like me.” His wife, Yasuko, follows with “That’s my situation!” (321).

The three characters, as portrayed by Kawabata, see their lives encapsulated in the season words and haiku. Fusako had suffered a bad marriage, which led to divorce. Her former husband later attempted suicide. Now at her parents’ home, with two children and no real prospect of another marriage, she must have felt like a rusty sweetfish, worn out, making its way to the sea, only to die. The elderly

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parents, the best part of their lives having passed, burdened with two grown children who still lived with them and whose marriages were difficult, must have felt like the autumn sweetfish and descending sweetfish. They are reading themselves in the haiku; in this kind of interpretation, their lives become the intertext. The implicit meaning in these haiku is personal, not necessarily shared by others, though another reader may also see him- or herself in the haiku.

The above poems operate allegorically, a one-on-one correspondence between poem and reader. The vertical and horizontal axes in the sweetfish haiku are both in play, the present of the poems resonates with the present situations of the readers, but those situations have developed over the past, so the poems provide a very personal reach back in time up to the present moment. The interplay of one's life with the text of a poem can move a person deeply. We appreciate haiku that we deem striking, insightful, full of tension, but the haiku that stir us most are the ones that we identify with—a intertext of self in the haiku of another.

In Bashō's and Buson's century, when poets immersed themselves in classical Chinese and Japanese literary, religious, and cultural traditions, the intertexts operating in poems were more visible to readers, and the connections between past and present were easier to make. Much of that depth has been lost to the modern reader and seems reserved for the classical scholar. Nevertheless, extensive reading of haiku and writings about the genre will help readers discover over time aspects of poems that they had been oblivious to. Fortunately, the other two aspects of intertextuality operate for all readers:

- (1) The use and reuse of standard phrases in Japanese haiku have created a rich tapestry of interconnected poems, which hopefully Western readers do not reject because of too much repetition. Western haiku may not have set forms of syllable length or meter, but nevertheless something close to *makura kotoba* may be developing, despite diversities of geography, environment, and culture. Enough haiku has been written that share phrasing in a

way that allows the poems to also share experiences and the readers to make connections.

(2) Some poems also operate as metaphors for ourselves; they pull us in as part of the poems. Perhaps only a few haiku for a reader will resonate one to one, but there is always the possibility of encountering oneself while reading haiku. One poet's observation, phrased in a certain way in haiku, may end up being an observation of the reader's experience.

Whatever the intertext, recognizing it deepens our appreciation of the haiku that harbors it.

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a thin line of haiku the heat

Haiga: Marlene Mountain

Matter and Method:

Emerson, Haiku, and the Way of Zen

DONALD EULERT

ABSTRACT: Especially in his *Journals*, a spontaneous Ralph Waldo Emerson reflects on Zen experiences that also find expression in classical haiku. More than coincidental flashes of poetic insight seem involved in the deeper correspondences between hundreds of Emerson lines and haiku.

To the extent we discover the expression of Zen “haiku moments” in Emerson, we can make a comparative determination of Emerson’s commitment (unconscious or no) to the way of Zen.

Some critics prefer an Emerson of rational inquiry but distrust the Emerson given to spontaneous “Ah-ha!” moments. He himself laments the loss of wholeness when the rational mind dissects.

On a withered branch
a crow has settled—
autumn nightfall.

At night the frogs were loud,
but the eagle was silent
in his cliff . . .

Both these examples are superb expressions of the direct but subtle Zen spirit which infuses and finds expression in haiku. The first “haiku moment” is from the ancient Japanese master of Zen and haiku, Bashō. The second (which I have put into haiku form) is an experience recorded without further explanation in the journal of Ralph Waldo Emerson.¹

Almost everyone has experienced moments of “awe” in the presence of natural things. But there is a great deal more than coincidental flashes of poetic insight involved in the deeper correspondences between hundreds of Emerson lines and the haiku. Not that Emerson had Zen sources for his ideas or attitudes. In fact, as Robert Detweiler has pointed out in the most suggestive paper to date on Emerson and Zen,² no work of the Zen masters was translated into English in Emerson’s time, nor into European languages. What Emerson did know of Buddhism was mostly in the form of Brahmanism and generally had too much fatalism and despair to be very palatable for him.³ He might have found Zen more compatible; as a later

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), VI, 264.

2. Robert Detweiler, “Emerson and Zen,” *American Quarterly* XIV (Fall 1962), pp. 422-438.

3. His general distaste seems indicated by the description (in *Journals*, VI, 318) of a friend who was grounded in the Buddhist faith: “In one, this remorseless Buddhism lies all around threatening with death and night. We make a little fire in our cabin, but we dare not go abroad one furlong into the murderous cold. Every thought, every enterprise, every sentiment has its ruin in this horrid Infinite which circles us and awaits our dropping

development of Buddhism, Zen has more compassion, more belief in human possibilities, and more joy than the older systems.

However, the question is not whether Emerson would have been converted to Zen had he known it.⁴ What we have is Emerson's finished work—sometimes contradictory, with its own evolutionary and sometimes ungainly structure. What we require is a clear light in which to see how and where the inconstancies exist: viewing Emerson against the traditions of haiku and Zen can give a new illumination into it. If killing all Buddhists would do the least good, we would have a slaughter of the Innocents directly.”

On the other hand, Stephen Whicher points out in *Freedom and Fate* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), p.151, that Emerson's reading in Buddhism began to influence him in his later years. But that was the Indian system—full of fate, a dread reality of untameable and immense abysmal Force that Emerson sometimes gave himself to for the “relief of utter submission.” Whicher says that this experience allowed Emerson in momentary lapses to be “indifferent to all human values,” to rise above himself in merging with the One “identity of all things and yet identical with nothing.” At other times Emerson praised Plato and thus synthesized the One and the Many. Frederick Ives Carpenter has also given indications in *Emerson and Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1930), pp. 232 and 244, and in *Emerson Handbook* (New York: Hendricks House, 1953), pp. 250-251, that Emerson was responding to the thought of India rather than the Zen practiced in Japan and China during his time.

4. See Van Meter Ames, *Zen and American Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1962), pp. 65-78. The idea of Emerson as the West's first Zen master has its interesting possibilities, albeit a sterile speculation. Ames says Emerson was an American Bodhisattva because he wanted and preached having life for itself, a presence and satisfaction rather than always a referred existence. On the surface, this seems a light proof. My own direction of speculation would be to wonder what Emerson would have come to, given his natural bent toward an instinctive Zen, if he had had knowledge of some of its systems and disciplines to steady his vacillations, or to give him some substantial support for his insights besides falling back on verbalized intellectualizations. As Ames points out (p. 11) in an Emerson echo, “When a man is thinking, he stands off from what he is trying to understand.”

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for that study. The apparent contradictions have long been a kind of embarrassment to Emerson supporters and would-be admirers. Jonathan Bishop, dealing with Emerson's term "Soul," recognizes at the beginning of *Emerson on the Soul* that terms like Reason, Understanding, and Instinct are often opposing and inconsistent, and result in a "persistent ambiguous inclusiveness."⁵ One dichotomy which he tries to synthesize will be highly relevant to our discussion: Emerson's statement of the common, direct relationship of the Soul to nature seems true, and the moment is a release of natural joy—but often to Emerson the meditative speaker, "the I, is innocently absurd at best."⁶

Paul Elmer More⁷ and Irving Babbitt⁸ both indicate ambivalence in their reactions to Emerson's spontaneity. Babbitt is especially hesitant, approving an Emerson of rational inquiry but distrusting another Emerson given to spontaneous sentiment. Stephen E. Whicher, describing Emerson's attraction to both intuitive Buddhism and the balanced mind of Plato, implies that Emerson's use of both meant a synthesis of them, since they represent "the necessary duality of human life."⁹

I have no sense of need to synthesize two Emersons, if two exist. Mindful of F. O. Matthiessen's warning that describing the reasons for the cleavage between Emerson's two lives "of the understanding and of the soul" would require a book, I submit only that comparison of

5. (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1964), p. 21.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 15. Bishop knits some inconsistencies by showing how a whole Emerson can be revealed through his works in "imaginative action," (p. 12) which is at first a physical response to a natural environment and then the self-demonstration of a speaker. He also tabulates separate faculties to make up Emerson's "whole Soul."

7. "Influences of Emerson," in *Shelburne Essays* (Boston and New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963).

8. *Masters of Modern French Criticism* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1912).

9. *Freedom and Fate* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), p. 151.

his intuitive-Transcendental ideas against the intuitive-mystic system of Zen can help define Emerson's inconsistencies and even suggest their evolving structure.

The way of Zen is anti-intellectual, intuitive in a resolution of dualism through a belief in and expression of the universal One-ness of all creation. Zen is not so much a belief as it is a way of life, and thereby Zenists express it directly in all their activities, most notably in their art-forms. Of the Japanese art forms inextricably bound up with the way of Zen, the one most directly expressive of the attitude is haiku.

In a cause-effect oversimplification, what we have is haiku as a result of a Zen experience, a Zen insight. To the extent to which we discover the expression of Zen "haiku moments" in Emerson, we can make a comparative determination of Emerson's commitment (unconscious or not) to the way of Zen. This comparison should prove illuminating to the study of Emerson, since such key Emerson words as "unity," "intuition," and "oneness" are the terms of comparison.

Haiku is often defined as an ancient Japanese verse form having a 5-7-5 arrangement of its 17 syllables. However, this discipline in Japanese language doesn't translate in the way we count syllables in English. The three-line arrangement can provide the tension of an internal comparison in two lines, then a turn to . . . a kind of resolution that leads on. Emerson's expressions may not fit to haiku form, but they capture the haiku experience. One might say a "haiku moment" is a momentary glimpse into the Oneness of things, as discovered in an experience or fact of nature. Things come together so that their being/meaning is realized, and the intuitive realization comes as an indivisible whole. The essence of this "haiku moment" is expressed in as few strokes as possible, unembellished by analytic intellect, or by subjective coloring.

On a withered branch
 a crow has settled
 autumn nightfall.

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Harold Henderson¹⁰ uses this Bashō haiku to demonstrate two things about the haiku experience. First of all, how two parts of nature occur, or are experience brought together, as phenomena in their own right, but at the same time indicating a larger likeness—in this case the night, the universe, and the dark bit of life against the larger blackness. Secondly, the poem is plainly direct, telling us in concrete words how things are in nature, but giving a sudden, striking “haiku moment” that is a starting place for thought and emotion. It would be a mistake to go on the say, “How things *are* in the world, and what they *mean*.” Whether in terms of Zen or Emerson’s Transcendentalism, we would be perverting the ideal of Oneness. The key point of the haiku in our ensuing discussion will be that there is no separation of things into “being” and “meaning.” To do so would separate things from meaning, and intuition from intellect.

A direct reflection of how things are in the world is profoundly religious. It unifies the many into the One (Emerson’s “perfect whole,” in “Each and All”). Such a view finds its explicit corollary in Blyth. “. . . where there is religion there is poetry, where there is poetry there is religion; not two things in close association, but one thing with two names.¹¹ Haiku is the direct expression of moments of Zen illumination (satori) for which there are really no words, but which we know only as a kind of realizing of reality (“how things are in nature”) which some Christian theologians have praised as being “the highest form of natural mysticism.”¹²

To find haiku in Emerson, we will be looking for records of such experienced moments in which he was totally engaged with the unity in “being.” He describes the intuitive basis for his philosophy in the well-known lines from “Self-Reliance.”

10. *An Introduction to Haiku* (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 18.

11. R. H. Blyth, *Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1960), p. ix.

12. Henderson, p. 21.

For the sense of being which in calm hours rises, we know not how, in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them and proceeds obviously from the same source whence their life and being also proceed.¹³

We can glean from Emerson's *Journals* the most unworked expressions of this "being." To compare traditional haiku, we look for similarities in Zen attitudes:

- Expression of the beautiful in things themselves not beautiful (nothing in Nature is impure);
- Simplicity (no didacticism or moralizing);
- Zest for life, wonder in the ordinary;
- The knowledge that nothing is alone or unimportant;
- Wide sympathy and compassion;
- Avoidance of the violent for the small moment of insight;
- Expression of "nonattachment" (acceptance the particular opposite of competitive "getting" for oneself);
- Everything taken religiously (what is, and the humble life-process of doing, contains all meaning).

All these avail the intuitive moment previously discussed. Whether defined as the "haiku moment" or "moment of Ah-ness," or satori or transcendence, it is the intuitive glimpse into the Oneness of all things. But the partitions provide some recognizable attitudes so that one can distinguish Zen experience from random effusion about nature.

Particular attitudes are embodied in Emerson's writings. For that, he fished in the larger pond of Zen intuition, in classic expression by Bashō:

13. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance" in *Works* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1903-1904), Vol. II, p. 64. Page numbers subsequently noted in the text refer to this edition.

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The old pond.
A frog jumps-in
Plop !

This translation is Blyth's. His explanation of the haiku is worth noting because it is such a pointed transition to our search for haiku in Emerson.

It is just the old pond and the frog and the "plop" and no more and no less. "No more" means there is no symbolism, no mysticism, no diving into infinity, no listening to the voice of Universal Nature. "No less" means that the mind is spread out in a smooth glassy surface; the mind is green . . . with goggle eyes and webbed feet. It is "Plop!" The real pond, the real frog, the real jumping were seen, were heard, were seen/heard, when Bashō's eyes were flicked open by the "plop" of the water. This is the state of being undivided from a thing, from all things, a state in which we are as Divine as God himself . . .

He goes on to give a second level of meaning.

At the moment of the "plop" the sound and the silence, the movement and the stillness, were perceived unseparated, uncontrasted, unantagonised as they were before the Spirit of God blooded over the Chaos. And if you have seen one piece of reality, you have seen it all, for the parts are not less than the whole."¹⁴

The "Zen Emerson" believes that the moment of experience contains everything, annihilates time and space, and solves the problem of immortality because the perceived object expands to cosmic dimensions—very much as Bashō was the frog-experience with the moment containing all the ages.

This kind of intuitive Emerson satisfied himself best in self-reliance and transcendence before his strong intellect posed dualistic
14. Blyth, pp. 222-223.

paradoxes that led him into tortuous paths. The serene Emerson knows that “The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are so pure that it is profane to seek to interpose helps” (“Self-Reliance,” II, 65). He wrote, “The moment is all . . . I sit on a stone and look at the pond and feel that having basked in a nature so vast and splendid I can afford to deace . . .” (*Journals*, VI, 44). His experience from immediate moments was a knowledge that there was no difference between divine and human, but a totality. The following lines give a direct expression of such a Oneness.

As sings the pine tree in the wind,
So sings in the wind a sprig of the pine.¹⁵ (*Journals*, VI, 203)

He writes of simplicity and singleness of insight:

The little boy who walks with me to the woods: has no design in his questions, the question which is asked in his mind he articulates to me—over him, over me,—we exist in an element of awe and singleness. In Nature there is no emphasis. (*Journals*, VI, 35)

Issa’s haiku expresses very much the same apprehension of awe without design:

What a red moon!
and whose is it,
children?
—Issa¹⁶

15. Compare Boncho’s haiku from *Haikai and Haiku* (Tokyo: Nippon Gakujustu Shinkokai, 1958), p. 29.

That way drift the upper clouds,
this way the lower,
across Autumn heavens.

16. Henderson, p.136.

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Emerson's *Journals*, (perhaps because they are the more spontaneous records) are very rich in "haiku moments." The two above and several of the following, for example, can all be gleaned from a single volume, covering the years 1841 – 1844. Compare the following:

And yet all truth
is ever the new morn
risen on noon.
(*Journals*, VI, 14)

Life ? Butterfly
on a swaying grass, that's all—
but exquisite.
— Soin¹⁷

They both express a deep sense of the way Nature *is*, in sufficiency. So does Emerson's following statement, which matches precisely the Zen belief in the "thingness of things."

. . . the turnip grows in the same soil with the strawberry; knows all the nourishment that it gets, and feeds on the very same itself; yet is a turnip still.¹⁸

The following Shiki haiku is matched by an Emerson insight.

The autumn wind :
for me there are no gods;
there are no Buddhas.
— Shiki¹⁹

. . . I love the peeping of a Hyla in pond in April . . . better than all . . . the turtles of whole Palestina (*Journals*, VI, 195).

A poem from Hakurakuten goes:

17. *Japanese Haiku* (Mt. Vernon, N. Y.: Peter Pauper, 1955), p. 13.

18. Compare Nicolas Virgilio's haiku from *American Haiku* 2 (1963), p. 11.

lily:
out of the water . . .
out of itself.

19. Henderson, p. 164.

As I wandered round the lake and gazed at the fishes gliding to
 and fro,
 I came across some boys fishing in boat.
 Both they and I loved the fish—but our state of mind was
 different:
 I had come to feed the fish, they to catch them.²⁰

The boys wanted something, as opposed to the attitude of “non-attachment.”²¹ Emerson’s attitude of non-attachment is worth a full examination on its own, since his attitude that “nothing can give you peace but yourself” (like Wordsworth’s conviction that those concerned with “getting” lay waste to their powers) is very much the way of Zen. Emerson images the larger attitude, writing of a farmer much concerned about making a crop:

You do not break off your flowers.
 You plough your crops in. (*Journals*, VI, 68)

Emerson makes a “haiku” statement indicating that humble life-processes contain all meaning:

The prayer of the farmer kneeling in his field to weed it, the
 prayer of the rower kneeling with the stroke of his oar . . . (“Self-Reliance”, II, 77-78)

20. Blyth, p. 301-302.

21. One expression of “non-attachment” is by Joso in *Haikai and Haiku*, p. 24.

Grasping at nothing,
 the frog by itself
 floats on the water.

An attendant realization is quoted by Henderson (p. 150), from Issa:

A one-foot waterfall—
 It too makes noises,
 and at night is cool.

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The scene and its metaphor are reminiscent of Raizon's famous haiku:

Women planting rice—
Ugly every bit about them
But their ancient song.
—Raizon²²

Since nothing's evil or bad, there is beauty in things of themselves not beautiful, as seen by Emerson and by Rōko.

Even the corpse After last night's snowfall,
has its own beauty. the sky is clear—
("Nature," I, 16) how the corpse glistens!
—Rōko²³

Any number of Emerson and Japanese haiku could be compared to illustrate the sense of simplicity, concreteness, and acceptance of the "religion" of everyday life—the large truths in simple being.

Water is good to drink, Cherry blossoms, more
coal to burn, and more now I Birds have two legs!
wool to wear . . . Oh, horses have four!
("Nature", 1.i 38) —Onitsura²⁴

These roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones . . . There is simply the rose . . . ("Self-Reliance", II, 67)

Without unnecessary parsing, the reader can relate the following haiku to the attitudes mentioned earlier. Hundreds of other examples of religiously poetical Zen-haiku moments can be found in Emerson's works.

22. *Japanese Haiku*, p. 2.

23. *Haikai and Haiku*, p. 37.

24. Henderson, p. 73.

Every day, the sun; Deeper grows the night !
 and, after sunset, Over the paddy-fields
 Night and her stars. The milky way.
 (“The American Scholar,” I, 84) — Izen²⁵

Blue Heron, loon, and sheldrake come to Fairhaven Pond; raccoon
 and otter to Walden. (*Journals*, VI, 66)

. . . dew gives to the morning Slipping off a blade of grass,
 meadow, the fireflies the firefly
 give to the evening meadow flies up again.
 (*Journals*, VI, 211) — Bashō²⁶

. . . certain stars open They blossom, and then
 before us, and certain stars we gaze, and then the blooms
 close up behind us. scatter, and then . . .
 (*Journals*, VI, 93) — Onitsura²⁷

All insects are out, all birds come forth,-the very cattle that lie on
 the ground seem to have great thoughts, and Egypt and India took
 from their eyes. (*Journals*, VI, 114)

. . . the blue east . . . and the stars of the dead calices of flowers,
 and every withered stem . . . mute music. (“Nature,” I, 18)

. . . when today is great Oh springtime twilight . . .
 I fling all the world’s future precious moment worth to me
 into the sea. a thousand pieces.
 (*Journals*, VI, 216) — Sotoba²⁸

25. *Haikai and Haiku*, p. 32.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

27. Henderson, p. 78.

28. *Cherry Blossoms* (Mt. Vernon, N. Y. Peter Pauper, 1960 p. 18.

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. . . I appear to myself
to dig parsnips
with a dung fork . . .
(*Journals*, VI, 191)

My hut in spring!
True, there is nothing in it—
there is Everything!
—Sōdō²⁹

They nod to me, and I
to them. The waving of the boughs
in the storm . . .
("Nature," I, 10)

In terms of our earlier cause-effect proposition (that true haiku are necessarily the result of Zen experiences) we can discover an Emerson who not only participates in the way of Zen, but is imbued with it. And when we more formally take the philosophical tenets of Zen and compare them with Emerson (particularly in the earlier years), a thorough parallel is revealed. Robert Detweiler's "Emerson and Zen" makes this sort of philosophical comparison and finds that as to belief in God-as-mind, in universal acceptance, in the experience of intuitionally knowing the miracle of being, in reverence for life, in love of nature, in his drive for unity and passion for totality, ". . . Zen indicates a way that Emerson might naturally have taken . . ." ³⁰ We can add other correspondences. For Zen, one thing is as good as another in this world; for Emerson, nothing is good or bad. In Zen and in Emerson infinity can be found in a grain of sand. Zen is a methodical destruction of Self-full thinking and acting to Unself-conscious realization, and Emerson's greatest transcendence is a mindless sally of the over-soul into the infinite. Zen implies that the usual Western way of discovering truth is futile, tied as it is to separating mind from object. And as Emerson writes, "Intellect always puts an interval between the subject and the object" (*Journals*, VI, 242). Both Emerson and Zen are unconcerned with after-life and concerned with total all-in-one, infinite, present: Emerson says, ". . . there is no other world; here or nowhere is the whole fact . . ." and he

29. Henderson, p. 86.

30. Detweiler, p. 436.

goes on to decry those who invent “this old double, Creator-creature, mind-matter, right-wrong” (*Journals*, VI, 219).

Emerson sometimes experienced the Oneness of Zen and he records the distillation in haiku moments. But the dualistic Emerson also did something else, and something more. Compare this haiku, which gives the concrete things as they are

Across the water —
 such a deep sound of water —
 in the darkness.³¹

with Emerson’s “a pound of water in the ocean tempest or in the land-flood has no more momentum than in a midsummer pond” (*Journals*, VI, 11). His error in physics aside, the difference reveals how Emerson, though he originally must have been intuitively moved into the actual presence of the “thingness” of water, has the habit of mind which immediately begins to weight, interpret, intellectualize; to get away from the things to concepts. Or to analogies, or to moralizing: “The unstable estimates of men crowd to him whose mind is filled with a truth, as the heaped waves of the Atlantic follow the moon” (“The American Scholar,” 105-106).

Furthermore, the fact that Emerson’s intellect is separate from the intuitive moment is hinted in lines like, “But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars. The rays that come from those heavenly worlds will separate between him and what he touches (“Nature,” I, 7), and becomes explicit in statements like, “There is still another aspect under which the beauty of the world may be viewed, namely as it becomes an object of the intellect” (“Nature,” I, 22). The latter statement describes what Emerson believes is a high order of Nature’s uses. He goes on to say that it is the *intellect* which searches out the absolute order of things as they stand in the mind of God. Such a position seems far from the “mindlessness” of a transparent eyeball.³²

31. Don Eulert, *American Haiku* (1964), p. 29.

32. Another comparison might serve to point up the difference between

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Finally, although he realizes in transcendent experiences that moments and things are all of one spirit (and he calls for a reunion of man with things, saying all is made of one hidden stuff), still he does not seem to make the final resolution of Zen that the divine (Buddha or God) is not just *in* the thing perceived, it *is* the thing. Nature for Emerson often is only a divine analogy or cipher: “Every natural fact is a *symbol* of some spiritual fact: Every appearance in nature *corresponds* to some state of the mind (“Nature,” I, 26). (The italics are mine.) It is because of this point that Henry B. Parkes, like other critics, declares that Emerson did not experience true mystic enlightenment.³³

These three areas of differences (his conceptualizing, his intellect distance, and his sense of things as symbols) are inconsistent with the Emerson who wrote haiku—inconsistent enough that they seem to show at the least a dichotomy, at the most a contradiction. Consider that the living way of Zen is supreme matter-of-fact engrossment in what one is doing, so that the way of truth is in the everyday mind, and the religious life is to eat when hungry and sleep when tired. Emerson seems to embrace this view, as in the quoted “There is no other world; here or nowhere is the whole fact,” or when he says, “A Fact is the end or last issue of the spirit” (“Nature,” I, 34). But then he contradicts himself, “The foundations of man are not in matter, but in spirit” (“Nature,” I, 70). His dualism, the differentiation, is almost too much to assimilate. The answer must be that at the same time his *instincts* prefer the direct intuitive and transcendent “sense of being

Emerson in experience and in practice. The expression of his direct experiences is very much the same as that of the Chinese Monk Seng-chao, quoted in Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture* (Kyoto: Eastern Buddhist Society, 1938), p. 225. “Heaven and Earth, with me, are of the same root.” But the practice of Emerson’s mind divided the sense of God into levels of unconscious Nature, the conscious self, and the unrealized ideal.

33. Henry B. Parkes, “Emerson,” in *Emerson, A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Milton Konvitz and Stephen Whicher (Englewood Cliffs, N. J. : Prentice-Hall, 1962).

which arises” from the each-and-all in things, Emerson is addicted to the separate *mind* as a tool of self-reliance, and to intellectualization as an irrepressible habit of mind. The light which this paper might lend to the study of his work would derive, then, from this thesis: that Emerson’s work can be described as structured between these divergent attitudes, each standing in tension against the other. His differences with Zen reveal an active intellect opposing an intuitive being; one Emerson felt the primacy and immediacy of perfect Oneness, another contradicted it with his ideas of correspondence.

Emerson’s vacillation might be accounted to the difficulty of making any moment of “satori” lead to a satisfactorily permanent illumination. Transcendence is transient. To attain a matter-of-fact knowledge of reality, Zen students must go through arduous trials even though they have available models and traditions to lead them to permanent serenity. In contrast, Emerson had to make his own way. He groped in an unknown land, experienced transient moments of satori, and, unable to hold them for long, fell back on intellect. Detweiler says:

. . . Emerson cannot participate spiritually in the identity of God and all because he has neither the whole constitution nor the method of the mystic that would enable him to do so. He cannot really move beyond the dichotomy of subject and object (beyond “conceptualizing,” Suzuki would say), although he can talk about it and “metaphorize” on it, and thus he never experiences the merging of his personality with that of deity.³⁴

In actuality Emerson frequently communicates his experiences of being part of the Eternal One. Detweiler may be more to the point when he goes on to talk about Emerson’s cultural conditioning that led him gradually (because of reaction to Puritanism, idealism, and normal human biases) to look more and more for salvation in the super-rational.³⁵

34. Detweiler, p. 427.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 436. Even Van Meter Ames’s attempt to make Emerson an

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The structure of Emerson's thinking and work, then, falls between these poles of the intuitive and the super-rational. It is not surprising that in the latter mode Emerson himself has given us a thorough description of the "tension" which existed in his own mind. He talks of actions, and of how they are acted upon by the intellect, and then goes on, "A strange process too, this by which experience is converted into thought, as a mulberry leaf is converted into satin. The manufacture goes forward at all hours" ("The American Scholar" 1, 96). Extensive quotation from Emerson's *Journal* can show us graphically (and somewhat poignantly) the process of this dichotomy.

I am most of the time a very young child who does not pretend to oversee Nature and dictate its law. I play with it, like other infants, as my toy. I see sun and moon and river without asking their causes. I am pleased by the mysterious music of falling water or the rippling and washing against the shores, without knowing why. (*Journals*, I, 253)

But this purely intuitive reaction will not stand still, as we see how it turns to intellect:

I wake in the morning, and go to my window, and see the day break, and receive from the spectacle a new secret of Nature that goes to compromise all my past manner of living, and invite me to a new . . . Yet is not that figure final or adequate; it is a prison rather of the thought, of the emotion, if I am contented with it. The thought scorns it, mocks at it as some wretched caricature; the thought has already transcended it, is already something else . . .

American Bodhisattva recognized the need to account for his divergences. In moments of exaltation, says Ames, (*Zen and American Thought*, pp. 75-76), Emerson achieved the highest experience of man in Nature. If he sometimes did otherwise in applying himself to science and reason, it need not be "interpreted as a philosophical inconsistency or indecision between relativism and absolutism. It is just the difference between effort and rest. It is physiological rather than metaphysical."

Emerson seems to feel he has lost something in the transition. He concludes the description, “The oak leaf is perfect, a kind of absolute realized, but every work of art (might we substitute “every work of the intellect?”) is only relatively good. . . .” (*Journals*, VI, 324-325).

Earlier we noted that in Zen the poetry and the religion were the same thing, so that the following contrast integrates our discussion of both the matter and the method, and reveals Emerson yearning for totality, but being too involved with the intellect to find it:

The poet should walk in the fields, drawn on by new scenes, supplied with vivid pictures and thoughts, until insensibly the recollection of his home was crowded out of his mind, and all memory obliterated, and he was led in triumph by Nature. When he spoke of the stars he should be innocent of what he said; for it seemed that the stars, as they rolled over him, mirrored themselves in his mind as in a deep well, and it was their image and not his thought that you saw. (*Journals*, VI, 453}

Now, alas, we know something too much about our poetry,—we are not part and parcel of it: it does not descend like a foreign conqueror from an unexpected quarter of the horizon upon us, carry us away with our flocks and herds into a strange and appalling captivity . . . (*Journals*, VI, 75)

Emerson says “alas,” but we would be poorer without the captivity of his thoughtful and prescient essays, whether or not imposed on raw experience.

At the beginning, I mentioned Emerson’s work as sometimes contradictory, but having its own evolution. We desired not just a comparison, but a way of illuminating Emerson as both an intuitive (in Zen) and an analyzing intellectual.

If his work seems ungainly, no surprise then—building with two ridgepoles. But it’s a roomy house, with windows in all directions.



rain forest

Haiga: Marlene Mountain

Neither Here nor There:

A Review of East-West Literary Imagination: Cultural Exchanges from Yeats to Morrison

TIFFANY AUSTIN

Hakutani, Yoshinobu (ed.). *East-West Literary Imagination: Cultural Exchanges from Yeats to Morrison*. (Columbia MO: University of Missouri Press, 2017. 336 pages. ISBN 9780826273949.

East-West Literary Imagination: Cultural Exchanges from Yeats to Morrison by Yoshinobu Hakutani offers a comprehensive exploration of the influences of the Eastern traditions of Buddhism, Zen practice, Confucianism, the haiku form, Chinese characters, noh play, and Japanese aesthetics on the Western literary tradition, starting from the American transcendentalists of the early nineteenth century and extending to the postmodern traditions of African American literature. Specifically groundbreaking is Hakutani's historical and specific relationality of the East and West regarding the writers Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, and Jack Kerouac, especially examining who influenced whom in comparing Western literature to Eastern religions, philosophical, and literary traditions. For example, he details Emersonian philosophy's relationship to Buddhism, pointing

out Emerson's differing views about nirvana and Zen notion of mu (state of nothingness). Hakutani's main argument consists of the point that instead of reading the West's impact on East, one should consider more readily the Eastern traditions' influence on major Western writers and Western literary traditions.

While Hakutani's work divides its analysis between transcendentalists, modernists, and African American writers, the discussion of modernist and disseminator of Japanese art Yone Noguchi's overall influence on Western writers provides the most noteworthy realm of analysis. At one point when discussing the haiku form's influence on Pound's conception of the concrete image, Hakutani quotes Noguchi: "*Hokku* means literally a single utterance or the utterance of a single verse; that utterance should be like a 'moth light playing on reality's dusk,' or 'an art hung, as a web, in the air of perfume,' swinging soft in music of a moment" (104). These morsels, describing the influence of haiku and inserting the lines of masters like Buson or Basho, presents the greatest insight within the text because of their specific exemplification of Eastern artistic distinction and impact. Hakutani further displays effective analysis during his rendering of the influence of Buddhism on Beat Generation poet Jack Kerouac's novels *On the Road* and *The Dharma Bums*.

However, noteworthy is that the chapters concerning African American literature appear briefer and less detailed in their analysis in comparison to the discussion of the Eastern tradition in relation to the works of the transcendentalists and modernists. For example, regarding African American writers' use of haiku, specifically Sonia Sanchez and James Emanuel, the link made to humanity and nature does not appear to be nuanced but perceived in general statements in terms of blues and jazz. While Hakutani does link the Eastern principle of *yūgen* to blues as an expression of "the mysterious and dark" (254), he then relates, "Unlike the blues, jazz is characterized by its flexibility and creativity" (261), missing the opportunity to provide a more gradated view of blues and jazz as it relates to

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Eastern artistic sensibility. Yet as Hakutani admits, his work acts as a “preliminary marker” for future analysis of, we hope, the cross-cultural engagement of the East and West, especially as it relates to African American literature.

Perhaps due to the study over time or work as inclusive of separate working chapters, the text does include some repetition of thoughts and arguments placed not far from one another, sometimes the same sentences and paragraphs appearing within a chapter and across chapters (especially in chapter 5). Finally, although the introduction offered: “American literature has become a hybridization of Eastern and Western literature as modern, postmodern, and postcolonial African American literature has demonstrated” as a result of cultural exchanges began in the early nineteenth century (3), no overall conclusion is given at the end of the work. At this point, the reader may ask why do we turn to and end with the discussion of African American writers other than to proffer another example of the cross-cultural theme rendered in the work?

Then again, this may be Hakutani’s main goal, to mark a cross-cultural engagement that weighs the East’s literary influence more heavily, to mark African American literature as part of the globalization of this engagement. *East-West Literary Imagination: Cultural Exchanges from Yeats to Morrison* signifies an overall engaging discussion of Eastern philosophy, religion, literature, and aesthetic on the Western literary tradition, providing an opportunity to counter-study the influences between the East and West, where one is often seen as dominant, and within that engagement, signaling the need for the important counter-study amidst the East and African American “West.”

Exploring Haiku Across Western Cultures:

A Review of
African American Haiku: Cultural Visions

JOSHUA GAGE

John Zheng, Editor. *African American Haiku: Cultural Visions*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi. Hardcover, 197 pages. ISBN 978-1-4968-0303-0.

John Zheng's new book explores one of the more interesting cross-pollinations in Western literature—African-American haiku. Zheng has collected essays focused on the haiku of five African-American poets: Richard Wright, James Emmanuel, Ethridge Knight, Sonia Sanchez, and Lenard D. Moore. These essays focus primarily on the influence of African-American culture on haiku and the various approaches these authors take towards haiku. It's a very important collection of essays, though writers and scholars of Western haiku may occasionally be dismayed at the approach that some of the authors take.

Zheng's Introduction serves as a history of haiku in African-American writing, going back to the Harlem Renaissance and Lewis Grandison Alexander. He explores various African-American haiku poets,

providing a list of over twenty authors who have explored haiku in their writing in one way or another. The purpose of the introduction seems to be not just educating the audience about African-American haiku, but also to position the five featured authors of this anthology in that greater history. It's a thorough, though not exhaustive, history and really serves to introduce the readers to the concept of haiku that is distinctly African-American in aesthetic.

The first two essays in the anthology focus on the haiku of Richard Wright. The opening essay, written by Zheng himself, focuses on the influence of Japanese haiku on Wright's poetics. Zheng focuses on haiku principles like juxtaposition, perishability, *sabi*, suggestion, as well as haiku's connection to Zen and Taoist principles. Zheng's argument firmly places Wright's haiku into a strong Japanese aesthetic and shows how contemporary haiku scholars may have had a direct influence on Wright's haiku. In the second essay, Sachi Nakachi argues that Wright's haiku cannot only be analyzed via a lens of Japanese aesthetics; she argues that there is a more direct connection between Wright's understanding of blues, and that he was attempting to infuse haiku with a sense of the blues, not Japanese aesthetic. These two essays serve in stark juxtaposition against each other. Both, however, are argued and defended quite well, so that readers are able to see not only the influence of Japanese culture on Wright's haiku, but also the influence of blues lyricism on his haiku. This provides for a richer experience of Wright's haiku and a deeper appreciation for his work among haiku readers.

The next two essays focus on the jazz haiku of James Emanuel. Yoshinobu Hakutani argues commonalities between jazz and haiku, then asserts that Emanuel's haiku embody a sense of *mu*, a Zen state of mindlessness or nothingness, and that Emanuel uses his haiku to urge African-American readers towards this state through individualistic means. Hakutani regularly connects Emanuel's haiku and its use of jazz as a subject matter to Eastern concepts, seeking to legitimize Emanuel's haiku as not just abstract or experimental, but also rooted

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in haiku tradition. Virginia Whatley Smith continues in this vein, her essay arguing that Emanuel's haiku are a syncretism between Japanese philosophy and African-American musical traditions. This section will be problematic for most readers of Western haiku because both Hakutani and Smith try so hard to connect Emanuel's haiku with Japanese traditions that they often stretch their arguments past defensibility. Emanuel is writing poems in a 5-7-5 syllabic pattern with a topic of jazz; it will be a stretch for readers of Western haiku to see these poems as haiku (Smith even quotes Bruce Ross's description of haiku which argues against a strict 5-7-5 model), let alone to say they contain elements of Japanese philosophy as well. The scholarship here is thin at best, especially where Japanese terms are concerned, and this section stands out as the weakest in the collection because of it.

The next essay focuses on the haiku of Etheridge Knight. Claude Wilkinson explores elements of improvisation in Knight's haiku, which Wilkinson believes stems from the urban attitude and blues or jazz lyricism of Knight's haiku. Wilkinson also looks into the orality of Knight's haiku, delving into the way Knight was able to bring rhythms of sound and speech into haiku. This is a solid essay that introduces readers to the scholarship on Knight and also shows how Knight was able to expand the form and make it uniquely his own.

The fourth section of the anthology focuses on the haiku of Sonia Sanchez. Meta L. Schettler explores the use of a black aesthetic in Sanchez's haiku, arguing that Sanchez created a new, hybrid form between traditional English haiku and a black aesthetic which served to expand the boundaries of both traditions. She focuses on Sanchez's use of non-seasonal topics for haiku, the idea that Sanchez breaks the "rules" for haiku, and uses Zen principles related to animism. Schettler uses definitions from The Haiku Society of America to ground her discussion, but makes the argument that because Sanchez breaks away from these definitions, she is innovating a new form and infusing haiku with a black aesthetic. This may be problematic for

scholars of Western haiku because Schettler seems to dismiss the idea that if enough “rules” are broken, something ultimately ceases to be a haiku, and instead becomes simply a three-lined poem. She insists that what Sanchez writes are haiku, and approaches her analysis from that perspective.

Richard A. Iadonisi also explores Sanchez’s rebellion against tradition. He argues that Sanchez dismisses the haiku attitude prescribed by Kenneth Yasuda, and infuses haiku with the personal and political, especially the voices and representations of black women. This essay accuses American poets and editors of cultural appropriation of haiku, and insists that Sanchez’s haiku subverts this appropriation by using haiku as a vehicle to expose the world struggle against inhumanitarianism. Some readers may take offense at the idea that American haiku is cultural appropriation, or that by breaking the “rules” of haiku, Sanchez reclaims haiku in some way. The logic is questionable, and while Iadonisi makes excellent points about the cultural and personal content about Sanchez’s haiku, his attempt to give it revolutionary meaning seems a bit over the top.

The last section will probably be the most comfortable for readers and scholars of Western haiku. It focuses on the poetry of Lenard D. Moore, past-president of The Haiku Society of America and notable haiku poet and editor. Toru Kiuchi examines the African-American aesthetic in Moore’s haiku, exploring the rich natural imagery in Moore’s work and his ability to connect the *kigo* of his haiku to a larger black history and ancestry. Ce Rosenow argues that, while haiku are traditionally individual moments, Moore crafts haiku sequences that reveal a communal, African-American narrative and the stories of a collective black experience. In the third, and final, essay on Moore, Sheila Smith McKoy argues that Moore’s haiku use *renso*, a Japanese concept of linking two ideas that initially seem disparate, and *sankofa*, a concept from the Akan culture of Ghana in which people are called to engage in their cultural history in order to understand themselves. McKoy argues that, by using both of these

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ideas, Moore is able to craft haiku that have individual importance, but also a greater African-American cultural importance. All three essays look at Moore's individual haiku as well as his two book-length narrative haiku sequences, *Desert Storm* and *Gathering at the Crossroads*. These essays stand as a contrast to the other essays in the anthology in that they don't seek to legitimize Moore's haiku nor, with the possible exception of McKoy, connect it directly to Japanese haiku or defend it with Japanese aesthetic principles. For example, despite the fact that both *Desert Storm* and *Gathering at the Crossroads* are meant to be read like narrative sequences, none of the critics use a term like *rensaku* to describe them. It is clear that, of all the poets studied in this anthology, Moore has one of the strongest connections to the Japanese tradition and that critics are able to focus more on the African-American aesthetics in his haiku rather than trying to prove that his work is haiku. This makes the last three essays of the book the most rewarding because they explore the work more fully and through a more critical lens than their earlier counterparts.

Overall, *African American Haiku: Cultural Visions* is a fascinating collection of essays focused on the haiku of five prominent African-American poets. For readers unfamiliar with the work of these authors, it serves to not only introduce the haiku of these poets but to place them firmly in the haiku tradition. It is a well-developed collection of essays that expands the definition of American haiku and its authorship, and exposes readers of Western haiku to poets they may not have explored previously. While some readers may find the assertions of some of the critics questionable, overall the scholarship is rich and thorough and the anthology serves as an excellent exploration of African-American haiku.

Against Tradition:

A Review of *Sonia Sanchez's Poetic Spirit Through Haiku*

JOSHUA GAGE

John Zheng, Editor. *Sonia Sanchez's Poetic Spirit Through Haiku*. New York, NY: Lexington Books. Hardcover, 183 pages. ISBN 978-1-4985-4332-3.

John Zheng's new book explores the haiku of Sonia Sanchez, including her literary and social influences, the unique perspectives she takes towards writing haiku, and the importance of her haiku to the Western canon. These essays focus primarily on the influence of African-American culture on her haiku and the liberties she takes with the term haiku and the haiku form. It's a very important collection of essays, though writers and scholars of Western haiku may occasionally be dismayed at the approach that some of the authors take.

“‘another life force’: Racial Violence and Collective Memory in Sonia Sanchez's Haiku” by Meta L. Schettler explores the influence of African religions in Sanchez's poetry, particularly those involved with communication with ancestors. Schettler examines the ways that Sanchez uses personal and collective memories to create a haiku that exists as both an individual and communal protest. She uses events like the Middle Passage and the murder of Emmitt Till as sources

of imagery to connect readers to the past and urge them towards creating a more hopeful future.

“‘The Color of Your Song’: Sonia Sanchez’s African American Haiku as Cosmopolitan ‘Green’ Poetry” by Michio Arimitsu explores the cosmopolitan, international aspects of Sanchez’s haiku. He argues that by using a form that is both foreign and familiar, Sanchez is able to represent African-American identity in new and vibrant ways. He also argues that Sanchez challenges and recreates African-American identities with nature, creating a form of African-American ecopoetics that encourages African-American readers to interact and protect the natural world.

The next essay is an expanded reprint of Richard A. Iadonisi’s essay “‘Some Beauty . . . Some Love’ and an Attitude: The Haiku of Sonia Sanchez” from Zheng’s other book, *African American Haiku: Cultural Visions*. This essay explores Sanchez’s rebellion against tradition. He argues that Sanchez dismisses the haiku attitude prescribed by Kenneth Yasuda, and infuses haiku with the personal and political, especially the voices and representations of black women. This essay accuses American poets and editors of cultural appropriation of haiku, and insists that Sanchez’s haiku subverts this appropriation by using haiku as a vehicle to expose the world struggle against inhumanitarianism. Some readers may take offense at the idea that American haiku is cultural appropriation, or that by breaking the “rules” of haiku, Sanchez reclaims haiku in some way. The logic is questionable, and while Iadonisi makes excellent points about the cultural and personal content about Sanchez’s haiku, his attempt to give it revolutionary meaning seems a bit over the top.

In “Constant Sky: Sonia Sanchez’s Haiku,” Becky Thompson looks at how Sanchez’s haiku is “embodied,” how it infuses images of the body with natural images. She then explores Sanchez’s ability to speak to future generations with her haiku, including its influence on the Black Lives Matter movement. Thompson then explores Sanchez’s

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use of haiku as tribute to ancestors, both personal and communal, and how that connects to Sanchez's Swahili praise poems.

Sally Michael Hannah, in her essay "Reading Sonia Sanchez's Haiku as Racial Representation," argues that Sanchez uses haiku as a platform to explore self-identity through jazz and blues motifs. She then argues that Sanchez's haiku is used to reclaim African-American feminist history, or "herstory," by using a communal "I" in her haiku to represent all African-American women, past, present and future. Hannah argues that haiku "emerges as epiphany inspired by a merger of human and nature bringing wisdom" (92).

Ce Rosenow explores Sanchez's haiku sequences in her essay "Reflections of the 'Haiku Mind': Formal Innovation in Sonia Sanchez's Haiku Sequences." Rosenow is the first critic in this volume to explore Sanchez's through the lens of *rensaku*, a haiku sequence in which the haiku are meant to be read in a particular order. Rosenow focuses on Sanchez's interpretation of "haiku mind" and uses that as a lens through which readers can understand Sanchez's haiku and achieve a sense of understanding, compassion, and peace.

John Zheng focuses on Sonia Sanchez's invented form, the "sonku," in his essay "A Writer's Creative Mind: Sonia Sanchez's Sonku." The sonku is a four-line stanzaic form of 4-3-4-3 or 3-3-3-3 syllables. Zheng looks at the history of this form across Sanchez's work, and how it reveals her creative thought processes at different stages of her career. He also explores how Sonia Sanchez's sonku are used to express African-American cultural sensibilities.

John Han, in his chapter "Celebratory and Defiant: Sonia Sanchez's Ethnographic Haiku," explores the celebratory and defiant nature of Sanchez's haiku, connecting it to feminist ideology and the Black Arts Movement. He argues that Sanchez writes "ethnographic haiku," which are "haiku that reveal the intricacies of a certain culture which encompass a group's values, ideologies, and frame of reference" (142). He really examines how Sanchez's haiku are different from most of

Western haiku, and how Sanchez changes and manipulates the form of haiku to suit her own purposes.

In “The Gendered Blues in Sonia Sanchez’s Haiku,” Tiffany Austin looks at how the body, nature, and music intertwine in Sanchez’s haiku to create a unique voice. She further connects Sanchez’s haiku to Lorca’s ideas about “duende” and “cante jondo,” arguing that Sanchez uses similar notions of spirit and emotion to create her haiku.

Toru Kiuchi takes a more historical approach in his essay “Sonia Sanchez’s Haiku: From Origin to Development.” He explores Sanchez’s writing before she discovered haiku, and really makes that argument that haiku changed Sanchez and the direction of her writing. He looks at how Sanchez used haiku to parallel the moments in her life, and how biographically she used haiku to express herself.

Overall, the essays in this book worked well, and really exposed a lot of information and unique perspectives about Sanchez and her haiku. However, many scholars of Western haiku and haiku literature may be disappointed in this book. This source of this disappointment can be found in Zheng’s introduction, when he writes

According to traditional haiku standards and aesthetics, these poems may not be haiku, for they are simply plain questions and statements lacking the haiku elements of indirectness or juxtaposition that sets a haiku in two parts. But, we need to understand that Sanchez never tries to bend to the strict haiku standards. Instead, the form bends to her need when she adopts it to express her poetic spirit of blackness. In other words, she refuses to follow the tradition. (xii)

This really captures the essence of the issue that many readers of Western haiku will take with Sanchez’s haiku. If she refuses to follow tradition, if her poems lack the core elements that make up a haiku, is it even appropriate to label these poems as haiku or to study them

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as haiku? Are these merely three line poems or stanzas, and would it be better to analyze the poems from that lens instead?

The authors of these chapters seem to all agree that these are haiku, and contain enough comparison to Western haiku that they should be studied through that lens. They do a solid job looking at how Sanchez connects with current haiku theory and how she departs from it to create her own unique voice within the form of haiku. They also offer various lenses through which to analyze her haiku, providing unique insight into the language and themes of her work. Overall, this is an impressive collection of scholarship focused on one of the more unique voices in American haiku.

Renga Roots:

A Review of *Haiku Before Haiku*

MICHAEL DYLAN WELCH

Steven D. Carter. *Haiku Before Haiku: From the Renga Masters to Bashō*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011. 164 pages; 5.5" by 8.25"; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-231-15647-9.

It's hard to break new ground in popular English-language haiku and renga scholarship, but Steven D. Carter has done it. His new book, *Haiku Before Haiku: From the Renga Masters to Bashō*, is an informative exploration of the "haiku" poetry that preceded the first of the four great haiku masters in Japan. Of course, Bashō wasn't a haiku master at all, since he never wrote haiku—the term wasn't applied to what he wrote until the end of the 19th century, hence the irony, and catchiness, of the book's title. Instead, what Bashō wrote was *hokku*, or the starting verse of linked poetry creations known at various times as renga, haikai no renga, and renku. Now, with *Haiku Before Haiku*, we can see more clearly into the context and history of haiku poetry before Bashō perfected it, and into the renga collaborations from which it sprang.

Students of haiku in English know the four great Japanese haiku masters and their work, and have the general idea that what we now call haiku existed for centuries before Bashō, and that hokku was

sometimes preserved as an independent verse form even though it began life as part of long sets of linked verse. Carter's book provides a more in-depth view of this poetry than ever before. Keene and Waley and other translators have given us glimpses of this early poetry, but never in as comprehensive and focused a way as Carter has now done. The book is eminently readable by any haiku or renga enthusiast, yet also provides the scholarly apparatus for those who wish, for example, to explore the sources of all the poems.

In the book's 18-page introduction, the author explains that what we know as the haiku form was already 500 years old before Bashō got his hands on it. We learn that the first renga anthology, called the *Tsukubashū*, was published in 1356, compiled by Nijō Yoshimoto, who Carter says "was adamant about treating renga not as a pastime but as a legitimate genre within the larger tradition of *uta* [song]" (6). He explains that the hokku began its circuitous path to becoming an independent verse form because Yoshimoto's "endeavor to elevate renga to a higher aesthetic sphere demanded focus on the *hokku*, in particular" (6). Carter reminds us, too, that "social interchange would always remain a feature of the renga aesthetic" (5) and that "many *hokku* were in fact prepared beforehand" (10), rather than written in the moment as some people believe—or preach that it should be. Carter also states that "the fact that Bashō later altered the text in order to suit the narrative purposes of *Oku no hosomichi* is undeniable, as is the conclusion that for him the hokku was to that extent and in that context, at least, an independent form—a form that was no longer an initiating verse" (10).

After his introduction, Carter presents 320 hokku poems ranging in date from the 13th century up to and including twenty hokku by Bashō himself (Bashō died in 1694). On each left-hand page, many poems appear with headnotes that identify the location and circumstances of composition. On each right-hand page, Carter classifies each poem by season, and identifies the season word when the season isn't directly named. Also included are the romaji, text

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source (all sources are itemized in a bibliography at the end), and other notes, such as explanations of prominent allusions, plus other glosses. Each of the 55 poets is also given a brief biography, often with an identification of which renga school he or she was part of.

What's amazing about the contexts provided for each poem is how many of them were part of 1,000-verse collaborations, and even the occasional 10,000-verse renga. Think about that for a moment — such a huge scale. I suppose renga is what the Japanese aristocracy — “the very center of elite Japanese literary culture” (8) — did with its time when it didn't have television and the Internet. Indeed, the number of these creations is staggering, including the number of 100-verse renga, known as *hyakuin*, eventually the most dominant form of renga (the 36-verse *kasen* form did not emerge until the Edo period, from 1603 to 1868), as well as what was known as *kusari renga*, or a “string of verses” of indeterminate length. Carter notes that the full texts of these long creations, often written as memorials or celebrations, were seldom preserved, even to the point that not one single text of a complete 100-verse renga survived from the entire 13th century (3). Nevertheless, many of their *hokku* were preserved, which underscores their perceived value as an increasingly independent verse form. He also notes that, “Like all texts, *hokku* survive the demise of the events that produced them, taking on a different life” (14). Because of their focus on the seasons and nature, each poem is as immediate and easily accessible today as it must have been when it was written.

Here are some favourite selections of *hokku* from *Haiku Before Haiku*, each one exhibiting chiefly objective imagery, as well as the traditional subjects and seasonal references that we know from later *hokku* and *haiku*:

Beneath a tree,
autumn wind shows itself
in a single leaf.
—Junkaku (24)

Who would guess
 they could ever scatter?
 Cherries in full bloom.
 — Gyōjo (44)

Ah, the deep woods—
 so quiet one can hear
 blossoms fall.
 — Shinkei (48)

Cooler still
 after I leave it—
 the shade of the trees.
 — Sōgi (60)

My days may be few—
 yet I cannot complain
 to such a moon.
 — Sōgi (62)

Blossoms scatter—
 never knowing
 our regrets.
 — Ōuchi Masahiro (70)

The road home—
 longer for all
 after blossom viewing.
 — Sōchō (80)

A thin snowfall—
 made deeper by moonlight
 in the garden.
 — Inawashiro Kensai (88)

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In a flowing stream—
leaves weighted down
with light snow.

—Sōyō (104)

A hazy night—
and somewhere out there,
the absent moon.

—Miyoshi Chōkei (112)

Ah, for some pain—
to make me forget about
the moon, blossoms.

—Satomura Jōha (114)

One cherry tree—
a tollgate for people
for near and far.

—Satomura Jōha (114)

Wind in blossoms—
the sound of an axe
cutting firewood.

—Satomura Jōha (114)

Wind and waves
chide any who would sleep
on a moonlit night.

—Okā Kōsetsu (122)

Ah, solitude—
it does have a color.
Evening showers.

—Nishiyama Sōin (140)

What kind of flower
I don't know, but ah—
such a scent!

—Matsuo Bashō (144)

Come on, kids!
Let's have ourselves a run
among the hailstones.

—Matsuo Bashō (152)

A few other poems warrant additional attention:

Spring departs—
the clear moon oblivious
of passing time.

—Sōseki (1471–1533; not to be confused with the novelist
Natsume Sōseki, 1867–1916) (94)

Carter says that the preceding poem includes “A rare ‘abstract’ statement” but adds that it “is traditional in the way it focuses on the gap between the natural and human worlds” (95).

Leaves on the reeds
will be suffering too—
after a storm.

—Ikkadō Jōa (108)

It is worth noting this hokku's tone. In the *jo-ha-kyū* tradition of renga's tonal development (an elevated and formal beginning, a paced and exploratory development, and speeding up to a positive ending), which Nijō Yoshimoto established in the first renga anthology of 1356, we have learned that the hokku was typically supposed to be upbeat, celebratory, or complimentary. Yet that is not always the case with the hokku in this book, as the preceding poem demonstrates. Perhaps the tradition to have a more elevated tone in the opening stanzas, including the hokku, was not adhered to stringently, or

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perhaps not yet, but most examples in Carter's book do present what seems to be a noticeably elevated tone.

Plum branches—
umbrellas taking shape
in spring rain.

—Wife of Mitsusada (134)

Carter tells us that the wife of Sugiki Mitsusada was “often called the first female haikai poet” (135), which tells us how male-dominated haikai poetry must have been, even to the extent that this “first” female haikai poet, who lived from 1583 to 1647 (rather late in the period covered by this book), is identified only in relation to her husband. This dominance of males seems to be in sharp contrast to tanka, where women traditionally reigned supreme. Might this gender split also have something to do with the tanka being more overtly emotional, and the early hokku and later haiku being traditionally more objective, as if the males who dominated its early history were too reticent with their emotions, along with a narrow presumption that women are more emotional than men?

You may have noticed that the previous poem seemingly has two seasonal references—plum and spring rain. However, these are plum *branches*, not plum blossoms, even though it's hard not to think of blossoms. But a number of other poems include more than one season word. Many English-language haiku poets labour under the notion that haiku should never have more than one season word, but I contend that this is limiting to actual experience and inspiration, and that usually only one potential season word actually *functions* as a season word if more than one appears in a verse. I believe this stance also applies to renga and renku composition, although any sort of refinement to remove redundancy—seasonal or otherwise—is to be welcomed. Nevertheless, we see plenty of hokku in Carter's book that present more than one season word. Perhaps season words and guidelines for how to handle them were still evolving in the “haiku”

before Bashō, but the following are selected examples from Carter's book, including his classification of which season predominates:

- An early spring— / sent back into seclusion / by morning snow.
— Sōchō (80) [spring]
- Chat about the snow / on Fuji's peak— / and summer is no more. — Sanjōnishi Sanetaka (90) [summer]
- All I waited for: / blossoms, glowing leaves, / then this morning— snow. — Sanjōnishi Sanetaka (94) [winter; snow; Carter calls this “A tour de force that comprehends an entire year in its 17 syllables” (95)]
- A dusting of snow— / and I forget about blossoms / on withered fields. — Miyoshi Chōkei (112) [winter; snow]
- Falling onto water, / snow in winter is— / spring snow.
— Miura Tamenori (136) [winter; snow]
- Green, so green— / new greens sprouting / in snowy fields.
— Konishi Raizan (142) [spring; new greens]

Perhaps these and other poems raise more questions than they provide answers, but that is part of this book's intrigue. It flings open a door to pre-Bashō hokku in an accessible way, and hints at the many renga that spawned them. What a treat it would be to devour even just one of those 100-verse or 1,000-verse renga from which they survived, or to be a fly on the wall to have witnessed their composition. In his introduction, Carter notes that “The *hokku* that I have translated in this book will in an ironic way . . . offer something new to modern *haiku* enthusiasts—poems that make a clear connection *back* to the traditions of Japanese court poetry while inevitably gesturing *forward* to Bashō, Yosa Buson, Kobayashi Issa, and Masaoka Shiki” (12). Indeed, haiku and renga enthusiasts now have a bigger—and clearer—picture of haiku before haiku. Perhaps, as a result, they also have a bigger and clearer picture of what is possible in contemporary haiku and renga, thanks to these old hokku that gesture forward beyond the great haiku masters even to us today.

Sharing Experience:

A Review of *The River of Heaven*

MICHAEL DYLAN WELCH

Robert Aitken. *The River of Heaven: The Haiku of Bashō, Buson, Issa, and Shiki*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2011. 5.5" by 8.25", 200 pages, perfectbound, ISBN 978-1-58243-710-1.

There's a class of haiku books wherein the author sets out to appreciate a particular set of haiku. Hundreds of pages in the books of R. H. Blyth do exactly that, as does Patricia Donegan's more recent *Haiku Mind*. Another fine example is Robert Aitken's *A Zen Wave*, which offers an extensive appreciation for the haiku of Bashō, from a Zen perspective. *A Zen Wave* was one of Aitken's earliest books, from 1978, and haiku was a subject he returned to with his final book before he died, *The River of Heaven*, published in 2011. This book presents a brief overview of each of the four haiku masters he celebrates—Bashō, Buson, Issa, and Shiki—and each section contains an extensive selection of poems, plus commentary. The commentary ranges from historical context to personal reaction, and we learn something new or refreshing in most cases. Above all, perhaps, we feel the author's love for these poems, and his joy in sharing them with readers.

Bashō

The section on Bashō, the book's longest, features 88 haiku. I have not checked to see if some of the poems here are repeated from *A Zen Wave* (New York: Weatherhill, 1978), partly because I do not want to know, and would prefer to apprehend these poems regardless of whether he may have addressed them previously. Here we have occasionally opinionated comments. For example, on page 9, Aitken says of Bashō's famous poem about the crow settling on a withered branch that it does *not* mark the poet's great awakening. He states that the last line (referring to an autumn evening) has an "intellectual kind of symbolism that is quite out of keeping with his mature work." (Here I am reminded of Roland Barthes, who said in *The Empire of Signs* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1970) that haiku simply *is*, and does not symbolize, although I don't necessarily agree.)

On page 21, Aitken comments on "Fleas, lice, / a horse pissing / just outside" by saying that "This verse is commonly mistranslated" by a reference to "by my pillow." He says that the word "*Makuramoto* is 'by my pillow' literally, but it is a metaphor meaning 'near where I sleep.'" I would disagree with this interpretation, however, because words always have literal meanings before they offer implications. Words denotate before they connote. And the literal denotation is indeed "by my pillow," and thus would seem not to be a mistranslation to say so. That being said, it certainly is plausible that the term is also a metaphor meaning "near where I sleep," so I'm grateful for that observation.

On page 64, Aitken notes that "All of Bashō's verses were occasional verses," meaning that they were written about direct personal experience and to commemorate specific occasions (he often gave his poems as gifts to honoured recipients). While this is most likely true, I would hasten to add that Bashō never hesitated to alter his poems for the sake of literary value — thus taking them *away* from the occasion. Many of the poems in Bashō's famous *Oku no Hosomichi* were revised

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or repositioned for best literary effect. Indeed, while Bashō's poems may have all started out as "occasional" verse, he didn't stop there with them, seeing a greater value in haiku as *poetry* rather than merely as diary entries.

In discussing the poem "Everyone says / a chopped herb helps / if you are confused" on page 67, Aitken declares that "There was no topic that was not grist for Bashō's mill." I particularly appreciate this comment, because it suggests that Bashō would surely write about mobile phones and computers if he were alive today. It has been too easy for some students of haiku to assume that technology is not an appropriate topic for haiku, simply because "technology" as we know it did not exist in Bashō's day. Some poets who favour a pre-Shiki aesthetic for haiku will say that all haiku have to be about nature, but I feel this is a misunderstanding, because haiku aims at the seasons, not just nature, and Bashō and other poets had no hesitation in writing about the "technology" of their day, such as "fulling blocks" (page 93), a device used to dry and soften laundry.

Buson

The Buson section features 30 haiku. On page 101, in discussing Buson's famous poem about the butterfly resting on a temple bell, Aitken states that "This verse played a key role in the establishment of the English and American Imagism movement of the '10s and '20s of the last century." He then talks about Pound and Fenollosa, and a number of the early Imagist poets, even quoting Amy Lowell's translation of this temple bell poem. These comments are exemplary of Aitken's cross-cultural awareness, speaking of Western culture and not just which Zen temple a particular poem was composed in.

On page 103, Aitken makes a puzzling claim in regards to "Just Mount Fuji / shows above / the young foliage" by saying that, with this poem, "Buson lays the dismissive stereotype of 'The Imagist Poet'"

to rest.” Yet I find the poem to demonstrate the opposite, in that it is *entirely* imagistic. Indeed, it underscores rather than dismisses the so-called stereotype that Buson was an “imagist” poet, which I would say is nothing to be ashamed of in the first place. I wish I could ask Aitken more about this poem, and what he meant by his claim here, or that he’d written more to explain himself.

A further thought on the imagist question occurs on page 107. Aitken features the Buson poem “A handball / is caught in the drainpipe / in the spring rain.” He says we may wonder if this is simply a “so what” poem, but counters by saying “The sheer lack of meaning and the absence of connections, except for an accidental and unexpected proximity, give life to this poem.” But this wouldn’t be possible if it were not for the value of images placed upon it by the perspective of Imagism. To me, Buson remains a strongly imagist poet, and there’s nothing at all wrong with that—it’s his strength, not his weakness. Aitken seems to have left something unexplained in his comments that dismisses the Imagist interpretation of Buson’s haiku.

Issa

The section on Issa features 29 haiku, and we are immediately reminded (on page 135) that “Amid all this tragedy [that Issa’s life was filled with], Issa could be light of spirit.” On page 161, Aitken refers to Issa’s “I have a noonday nap / making the mountain water / pound the rice” as “one of Issa’s best-known verses,” but this puzzles me. In fact, before reading the poem in *The River of Heaven*, I don’t even recall knowing about the poem. This goes to show, perhaps, how varying one’s impressions of haiku can be, so I actually find it intriguing rather than “wrong” that Aitken believes this poem to be among Issa’s most well known. In the poem itself, I appreciate how Issa values his nap, leaving the mountain water to pound the rice for him while he sleeps. What this example shows is that the book presents fresh poems to readers, for which I’m grateful.

Shiki

The Shiki section features 26 haiku, and the overview of the poet reminds us that Shiki coined the term “haiku.” I particularly like Aitken’s explanation that it means “play verse” (as opposed to “playful verse,” as some others have said). He defines “play” as being “in the sense of ‘dramatic endeavor,’” which strikes me as a fresh take on approaching haiku. Each haiku is a little story, a little drama, as momentary as it might be, and implies additional drama or story before or after its brief moment of celebration. David Mamet has said that the secret to script writing is to arrive late and leave early, and this is certainly true of the here-and-now “drama” presented in haiku.

On page 170, Aitken presents Shiki’s “Lighting the lamps, / One shadow is for each / of the dolls.” His capitalization of “One” is inconsistent with his usual method, but I particularly like his comment that, “Like the best verses of the other great haiku poets, something very slight is presented [in the spirit of *karumi*, or lightness], but yet it is something unforgettably significant.” He goes on to say that “While Bashō, Buson, and Issa did bring forth slight phenomena of human affairs, Shiki made them his primary concern.” He later notes (on page 181) that “Shiki is sensitive to subtle points in his everyday world.”

Other Observations

As already mentioned, *The River of Heaven* was Aitken’s final book. The copyright page explains that the author died before being able to finish the final stages of manuscript revision and book preparation, and thus that a number of errors have crept into the book, seemingly as a result—but not at the fault of the author. Whether for this reason or not, I am definitely aware of errors in the book. For example, the introduction to Bashō refers to his birthplace of Iga-Ueno as being

just north of Kyoto. It is in fact some twenty miles to the southeast. The romaji for some of the poems is printed inconsistently, too, such as “yobaren” on page, 6, but “yobare n” on page 13 (when referring to the same poem). The introduction to Bashō refers to the word “oto” (sound) in his famous “old pond” poem as being onomatopoeic, whereas numerous scholars have said that the poem has no onomatopoeic content. The name E. E. Cummings is incorrectly lowercased on page 12, although this is a common misunderstanding. The poem described on page 15 refers to “Girls’ Day Festival” and “Dolls’ Day Festival,” when it would be more accurate to pick one or the other and not switch inexplicably (even if both terms are sometimes used for the same event). This would avoid suggesting that they are different events. And then the next page refers to “Boys’ Day festival,” introducing an inconsistency in capitalization. Aitken typically ends all his translations with periods, yet the poem on page 24 lacks such a period, and the poem there is referred to again on page 49, yet in an inexplicably different translation. The poem on page 45 is described as using a 7-5-5 pattern, but it is actually 8-4-5. On page 76, and again on page 191, Aitken refers to senryū with an unnecessary capital letter. On page 151, Aitken perpetuates a misunderstanding that “money is the root of all evil,” when in fact the original Biblical statement, in translation, from 1 Timothy 6:10, is that “the *love* of money is the root of all evil.” And on page 183, he makes the odd claim that “boys don’t fly kites anymore.” If Aitken had been able to finish the revisions to his book, perhaps many of these issues would not have changed, but I mention them because they are among examples of where tighter editing and fact-checking would have been helpful, even without the author’s involvement.

Although just passing mentions in both of two cases, for me one of this book’s most intriguing aspects is when Aitken presents haiku that he wrote himself. On page 26, in discussing a poem on camellias, Aitken shares an exquisite poem he penned in 1951 (although I would suggest removing the word “and” to give the poem a traditional cut):

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A camellia flower falls
and the Bashō scroll
quivers a little.

And on page 105, in response to a Buson poem, Aitken shares the following haiku he says he wrote “in Japan long ago”:

People walking
through the steady rain
within themselves.

In both of these poems, I appreciate that they are not forced into a 5-7-5 pattern (remarkable for haiku written in English as long ago as 1951). The first poem is direct and clear with its objective imagism, and we can feel the implication that Bashō himself must have appreciated camellias when even the scroll with his image quivers slightly at the falling of the camellia blossom. Camellias drop their entire blossoms all at once, rather than petal by petal, and have traditionally symbolized samurai warriors who lose their heads honourably through decapitation—or at least that the fallen flower represents the fallen soldier (Bashō himself was born into a samurai family).

The second poem introduces a subjective interpretation (“within themselves”) but I find it to be plausible and believable, and thus entirely effective. Perhaps the poem takes the author out of himself, so it offers a sense of awakening, in contrast to those around him. This hint of Aitken’s own haiku output leads me to wonder if it would be possible to have an entire book of haiku by Aitken. I would certainly be interested in such a collection, especially when we know that Aitken shared part of his World War II internment with R. H. Blyth in Kobe, Japan, and was so heavily influenced by Blyth (see “Remembering Blyth Sensei,” in *Tricycle*, Spring 1998, which the magazine had also briefly published online, with photos, under the title of “Remembering R. H. Blyth”).

In retrospect, I wish someone (maybe me) had interviewed Aitken about his memories of Blyth in the internment camps, to provide more insight on how Blyth wrote his monumental books on haiku at that time. Aitken's approach to haiku, like Blyth's, is heavily Zen-focused, but as the preceding two example haiku demonstrate, they are also imagistic and immediate, and do not suffer from the so-called "stink of Zen." (I note that Aitken titled his previous haiku book: *A Zen Wave: Bashō's Haiku and Zen*, and did not title it *Bashō's Zen Haiku*, for good reason.) Elsewhere, we do feel a bit of this stink, as in the reference to "A cloud of cherry blossoms! / Was that the bell at Ueno or Asakusa?" where Aitken says this "is an experience old-time Zen students everywhere can relate to." This seems to reflect too narrow a view on haiku, as if only Zen students cared, which is hardly the case. But that, of course, was Aitken's world. Nevertheless, I am drawn to the possibility that Aitken might have penned many haiku himself. They would be a pleasure to read, for historical as well as literary reasons, whether from a consistent Zen perspective or not. No wonder Aitken refers to this poetry (on page 51) as "my beloved haiku." I would love to see more haiku by Aitken himself, and they would surely help to mark Aitken as a pioneer of English-language haiku, even if his poems in this genre have never been widely known.

In numerous other places in the book, we have peeks into Aitken's life and his relationship to haiku. For example, on page 23, Aitken refers to the first time he read "The sea is wild! / stretching to Sado Island / is the River of Heaven" (which provides the book's title). He mentions first reading this poem in 1938 in Miyamori Asatarō's *Anthology of Haiku: Ancient and Modern*, in Hawaii, and mentions that "I couldn't have imagined that Miyamori was launching me on a lifelong passion for Bashō." On page 32, referring to a Bashō poem about shepherd's purse flowers blooming under a hedge, Aitken mentions that "D. T. Suzuki was fond of this haiku." This tease immediately makes me want to know the story behind this understanding—how does Aitken know this? Fortunately, in this

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case, he explains by saying that he remembered a talk that Suzuki gave in which he said that “people who give attention to a tiny, beautiful flower like the shepherd’s purse will never use an atom bomb.” On page 49, Aitken reports that Sōen Nakagawa “scolded the director of the Bashō museum in Iga-Ueno for not exhibiting Bashō in a shrine. He is a true bodhisattva, the Rōshi said, just as worthy of a shrine as Manjushrī or Maitreya.” I have visited this museum myself and would say that Bashō is presented primarily as a literary figure, despite having been deified, but that does not mean the poet is any less revered. Aitken also quotes a haiku by Sōen on page 36: “The place established / for the bagworm / is among the cherry blossoms” (Aitken worked and studied with Sōen extensively; fortunately, many of Sōen’s haiku are collected in his book *Endless Vow: The Zen Path of Soen Nakagawa*, Boston: Shambhala, 1996). On page 51 Aitken refers to his Parkinson’s disease and how it limited his typing “to two fingers that are forever hitting the wrong keys” and on page 193 he says that “I am wheelchair bound” (he was 93 when he died in 2010, just before *The River of Heaven* was published). These revelations make the author human and humble—and the accomplishment of this book all the more admirable.

In a few places I disagree with Aitken’s translation choices. For example, if haiku is typically a here-and-now moment, why does he use past tense? On page 14, he renders part of a Bashō poem as “I wept over my umbilical cord,” whereas saying “weep” would make it more immediate and personal, even if he’s remembering a moment from the past. Likewise, the translation on page 25 says “How I longed / for my parents” when “How I long” would make the poem more intense in the moment. Several translations handle the punctuation poorly, as in “The sound of someone / blowing his nose with his hand / the cherry blossoms” (from page 27). The addition of a dash after “hand” would have been easy to do. The poem has the cutting word “kana” at the end, indicating that the poem employs a one-sentence structure, but this is not represented

in Aitken's translation, a problem that occurs in quite a few other translations (nevertheless, I am attracted to Aitken's free expression). On page 71, Aitken offers a translation with indefensibly odd syntax: "The end of the year, / affect the wedded / sacred rocks at Futame." I simply cannot parse the use or form of the word "affect." Even if it's simply a typo and he meant "affects," that itself is unclear, and still at odds with the comma that precedes it, as we gain no feeling for *how* this might be the case, whether at New Year or not. One of Aitken's translations is extraordinarily long (page 69): "The full moon and the chrysanthemums / are in almost complete accord. / The chrysanthemums are just past their prime." This is a total of 27 syllables, in a pattern of 9-8-10 (the original Japanese is 5-7-5, and mentions *kiku*, chrysanthemums, just once). Here is how I might render the poem, simply to shorten it (7-6-6), retaining both articles, which I feel are necessary for the meaning:

the moon and chrysanthemum
 in almost full accord—
 the flowers just past prime

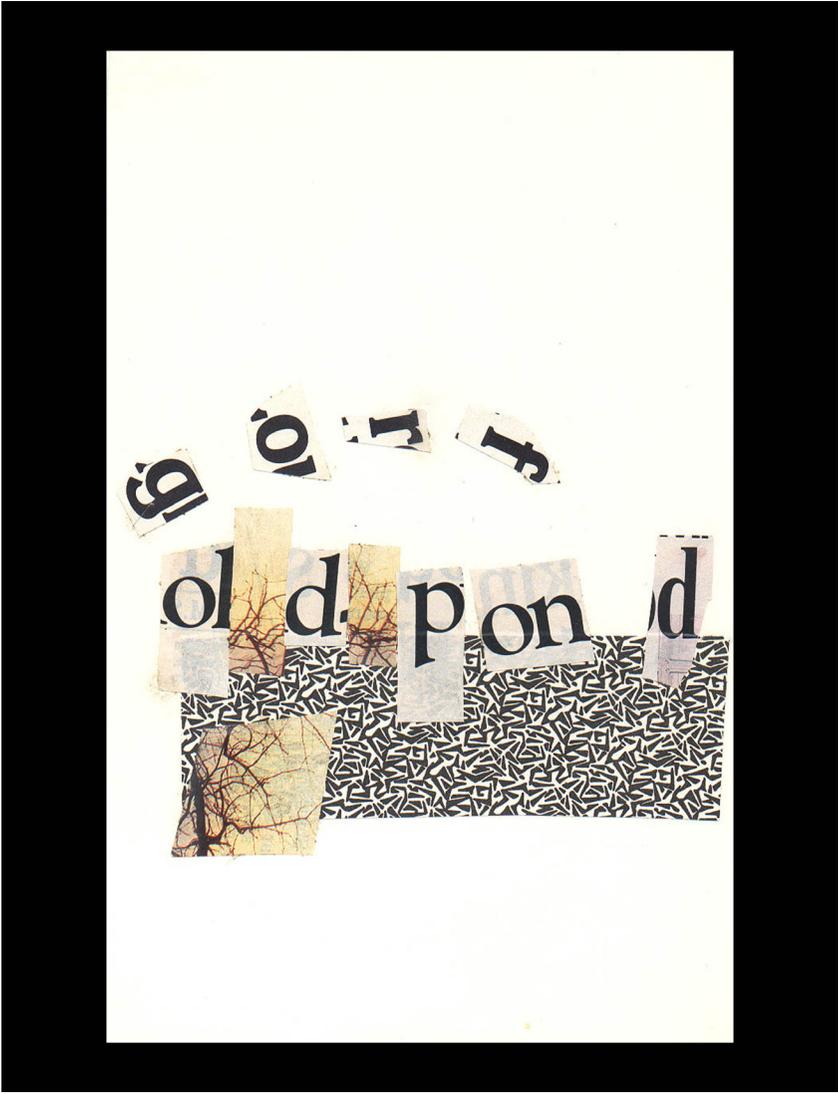
Any unmodified reference to the moon can be taken in haiku as being to the full autumn moon, at least in the old lunar calendar that dominated haiku in Japan for most of its history, and the lengthy word "chrysanthemum" need not be repeated. Nevertheless, I appreciate the fact that Aitken was not in the least bothered by using as many as 27 syllables for his version, demonstrating that content matters more than form.

Speaking of syllables, on page 78, Aitken refers to one of Bashō's poems as being 8-8-5, and says that Bashō was "too upset at saying farewell . . . to remember the rules." That seems to be a far-reaching speculation at best. Aitken doesn't mention any reason for Bashō not "remembering" the rules for several other poems he translates that are also not 5-7-5 in Japanese (such as on pages 72, 73, 74, and 76, just for a few in close proximity to the one on page 78). Furthermore, I

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doubt Bashō ever “forgot” the rules but internalized them. Indeed, I believe he valued poetic expression ahead of so-called “rules.” He simply said what needed to be said. Bashō used haiku; he was not used by it.

Throughout this book, readers become acquainted or reacquainted with many exemplary haiku. The glosses provided with each poem are at times personal, at times historical, cultural, and factual. Most importantly, though, they are acts of sharing. Near the end of *The River of Heaven*, in the section on Shiki, Aitken presents the following poem (page 189): “His hands full of basket clams / he joyfully calls / his bosom pal.” He immediately notes that “Human experience is only meaningful when it is shared.” This is perhaps more true for haiku than any other kind of poetry, because it dwells so strongly on human experience. In the very first sentence of *The Haiku Handbook* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1985), William J. Higginson wrote that the primary purpose of haiku is to share them. I am grateful for Robert Aitken’s enthusiastic sharing of poems in *The River of Heaven*, together with his rich personal and cultural perspectives. It is a book where the author joyfully calls each of us as readers to share in the transcendent joys of haiku.



frog old pond

Haiga: Marlene Mountain

JUXTA *Haiga*

Marlene Mountain was one of the pioneers of haiga in the Western world, and she continued to explore different techniques throughout her life. Examining some of her work provides not only insights into her own visual-verbal creative process, but also can help to make clear how different approaches can bring quite varied artistic possibilities.

In Japan, haiga have usually been created by a single artist-poet doing all the parts—painting/drawing, poetry, calligraphy, and the compositional interaction of the three. Occasionally the poet and artist have been two different people, but that is not the standard. In this regard, Marlene’s work followed the usual Japanese pattern; the poems and images are almost always her own. In other aspects, however, she departed from Japanese traditions. While some of her haiga were made in Japanese style, entirely brush and ink on paper, other times she combined her image with a computer-font poem, or printed both the image and the poem, or even used photographic images that she cut and pasted—these haiga are the farthest from being traces of her hand, but they are still redolent with her personality.

Each technique brings its own positive and potentially negative aspects. Computer-printed haiku, for example, do not have the personal touch that many haiga followers highly appreciate. The same is true with photographic images. The first three of the Marilyn Mountain haiga included here (“tree lost,” page 7, “leave my trees alone,” p. 53, and “are we enough?” p. 73) show her strength in completely traditional brushwork. This is certainly appropriate for these haiku, which express her long-time devotion to conservation. In her poems, this is especially shown by her respect for all living

beings, of which trees were often her direct subject. It is significant that she chose the most personally expressive of techniques—just ink, brush and paper—for these poems.

Marlene frequently chose the method most often favored by non-Japanese, with a computer-printed poem joining a painted image (“leaves” p. 7, and “a hawk circles” p. 177). Here, the potential advantages are that the words are easy to read, and the poet can choose a font and size to suit the haiku. On the other hand, this choice loses some of the direct connection between poet and reader. This is even more true when both the image and poem are computer printouts (“a thin line,” p. 109), but in this case the rich colors and full composition add a sense of drama to the haiga.

Cutting and/or assembling and then pasting is much less common, and relate to modernist collage traditions. Less well-known is that Igor Stravinski also used a cut-and-paste method in some of his musical compositions, breaking away from rigid compositional traditions. Marlene, in her tribute to and variation upon Basho’s famous “frog,” (p. 169) shows how even the world’s best-known haiku could be given new life through her creative visual imagination.

Ending this selection where it began, the final Marlene Mountain haiga included here is composed of just brush and ink, but her expression of “winter” (p. 53) takes a structure made by laying her well-inked brush almost completely on its side multiple times. This is a technique thought to have been invented almost a millennium ago by the noted Chinese poet-calligrapher Mi Fu (1051–1107) when depicting mountains, and its use here establishes one more connection for Marlene with the artistic past. In her haiga, she made significant use of the past while creating poem-paintings both bold and new.

—Stephen Addiss

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DONALD EULERT co-founded, with James Bull, the first dedicated English-language haiku journal, *American Haiku*, in 1963. His seven books of poetry range from haiku to translations of modern Romanian poetry. With a background in literature and Jungian studies, for 40 years Professor Eulert directed an Integrative track for doctoral candidates at the California School of Professional Psychology, San Diego.



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MARLENE MOUNTAIN was a pioneer both in English-language haiku and haiga. Her education was as a painter, and this visual orientation was evident in both her literary and artistic output. Despite considerable physical ailments she remained an active voice in the haiku community to her end, which came 15 March 2018, at Sweetwater, her beloved home in Tennessee.



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JIM KACIAN is founder and president of The Haiku Foundation (2009), founder and owner of Red Moon Press (1993), and editor-in-chief of *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years*, the definitive work on the subject (W. W. Norton, 2013). His latest book (Red Moon Press, 2018) of haiku and sequences is *after / image*.



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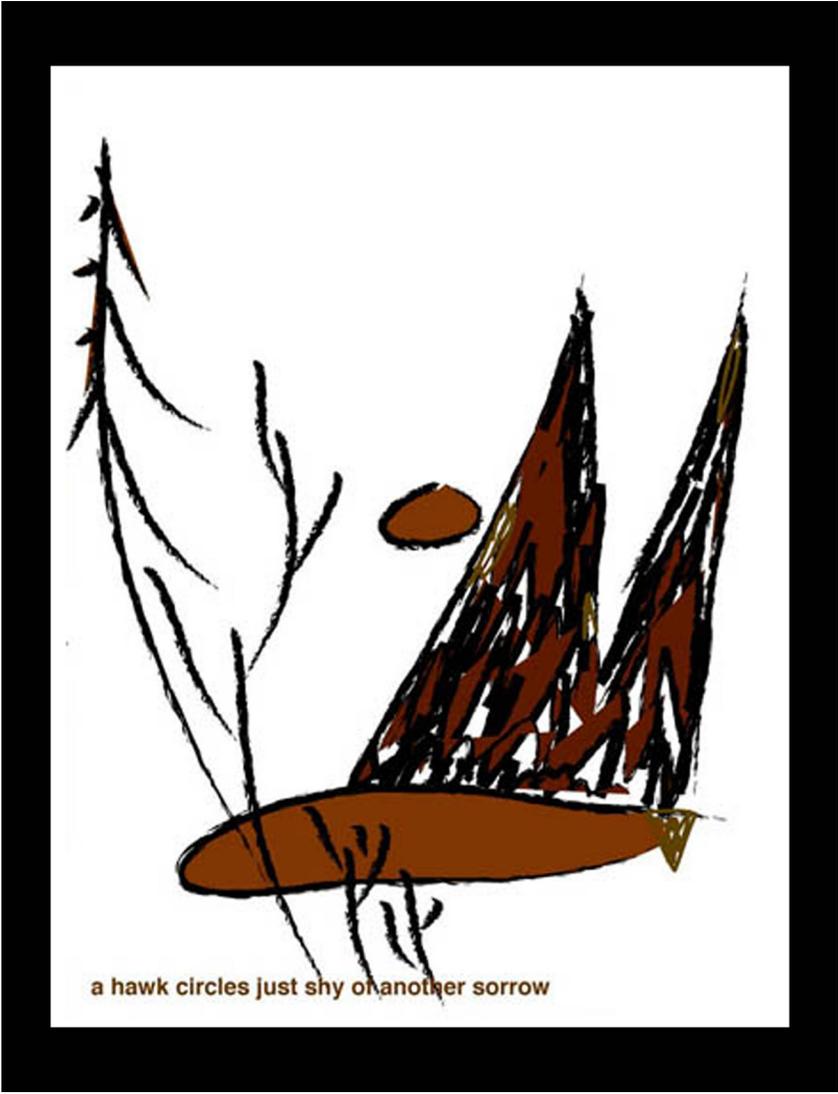
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a hawk circles just shy of another sorrow

Haiga: Marlene Mountain

JUXTA**FOUR** features new articles by Clayton Beach (“The Pig and the Boar”), Meta L. Schettler (“Sonia Sanchez’s ‘magic/now’”), Joshua Gage (“The Postdomestic Woman”), Richard Tice (“Texts within Texts”), and Donald Eulert (“Matter and Method”); book reviews by Tiffany Austin, Joshua Gage and Michael Dylan Welch; and *haiga* by the late Marlene Mountain, with commentary by Stephen Addiss.



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