

JUXTANINE

RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP IN HAIKU

2023

THE *Haiku* FOUNDATION

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Research and Scholarship in Haiku

2023

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EDITOR'S WELCOME

I am pleased to welcome you to *Juxtapositions* 9 and hope you enjoy its contents. Original haiga by our new haiga editor, the internationally renowned artist Ion Codrescu, appears throughout the issue. There are also five fine articles: “Referencing Language Words in English Haiku,” by Randy Brooks; “‘Factor N400’ in the Reading of English-Language Haiku” by Jan Nasemann et al; “Synesthesia and Haiku” by Owen Bullock; “Prison Participant Poetry” by Dorothy Abram; and “Natural Meddlers,” by Ryan Lally. Cherie Hunter Day’s insightful interview with Chad Lee Robinson, “Walking in a Sacred Way,” follows the essays, and our resources section contains Randy Brooks’ annotated bibliography of haiku anthologies.

Thanks to the generosity of our anonymous donor, we once again offer an award for the best content in the previous issue. Congratulations to Madelaine Caritas Longman, whose article, “bird tweets turn into an orchestra: Haiku and Neurodiversity,” received the “best of” award for *Juxta* 8!

Looking ahead to 2024, *Juxta* 10 will be a themed issue focusing on translation. We seek submissions in three categories: full-length academic articles, personal approaches to translation by established translators, and interviews. Please see the full call for papers on p. 12.

As always, I am grateful for the work of my fellow editors and Managing Editor Jim Kacian, for the support of The Haiku Foundation, and for the contributions of everyone who made this issue possible.

Ce ROSENOW
Senior Editor

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

Madelaine Caritas LONGMAN

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

“‘bird tweets turn into an orchestra’:
Haiku and Neurodiversity”

from *Juxtapositions* 8. The adjudicators were

Janine BEICHMAN and **Toru KIUCHI**.

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

Call for Papers: Translation and Haiku

Juxtapositions: Research and Scholarship in Haiku seeks submissions about translation and haiku in the following three categories:

1. Full-length academic articles: 2,500-10,000 words; any focus on translation and haiku including theoretical approaches, historical overviews, specific challenges, etc. is welcome. Articles should be thesis-driven and situated their claims within the context of existing scholarship about the topic.
2. Personal approaches to translation: 500-1,000 words; for established translators; may focus any aspect of one's own approach to translating haiku in general or the work of a specific haiku poet or poets; may include discussions of mentors and influences on one's approach.
3. Interviews: no length requirements; email or in-person interviews should be conducted with established translators and not reproduce information about the translator's work that is already available.

Source and target texts can be in any language but the article must be in English and follow the current version of MLA style.

Please send queries and submissions to Ce Rosenow, Senior Editor, <rosenowce@gmail.com>.

JUXTA

Articles



Poet/Artist: **ION CODRESCU**

‘FACTOR N₄₀₀’ IN THE READING OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE HAIKU

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Jim KACIAN³, Stella PIERIDES³, & Hermann J. MÜLLER¹

ABSTRACT: What goes on in the ‘mind-brain’ as we read haiku poetry? To approach this question, we analyzed readers’ *electroencephalograms* (EEG) recorded along with their eye movements as they read normative English-language haiku (ELH): three-line poems juxtaposing two images — ‘fragment’ and ‘phrase’ —, with a clear *cut* between the two. The eye-movement data (reported in Geyer, Günther, et al.) had revealed extended dwell times on words in the fragment line, pointing to the process of meaning construction being concentrated on the fragment. Here, we assumed that meaning construction is a relatively slow and ongoing process, extending across a whole sequence of eye fixations (rather than occurring within individual fixations). Accordingly, we analyzed brain-electrical activity in the *delta* (0.1–4-Hz) frequency band, which would capture processes that take 0.5 seconds or longer (i.e., 2–3 or more fixations) to complete. One ‘semantic’ EEG component in this time range, which has attracted a great deal of psycholinguistic research, is the ‘N₄₀₀’: a negative-going voltage deflection peaking around 400 milliseconds after encountering a word that is unexpected within a given (sentence) context. Our analyses revealed similar, though more ongoing ‘N₄₀₀-type’ deflections that were systematically influenced by the way normative ELH are constructed.

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In a centro-parietal cluster of electrodes (where the N400 is typically found in psycholinguistic research), the N400-type deflection — indicative of the ‘semantic load’ — was more pronounced for the fragment than the phrase of the haiku being read, whether the fragment preceded or trailed the phrase image. However, across all electrodes (distributed over the whole scalp), the N400-type effect was dominated by whatever image came second: the fragment in haiku with a cut at the end of line 2 and the phrase in haiku with a cut at the end of line 1. This pattern is consistent with the ‘*local*’, centro-parietal N400 acting more like a cut detector: it responds to the disjunction between the two images. In contrast, the ‘*global*’, whole-brain N400 reflects the ‘*resonance space*’ of (more or less in-/compatible) perceptual and semantic associations, including linking schemas, sparked by the disjunct images, within which a coherent ‘reading’ of the haiku may be found. We discuss ways of how this opening-up of the resonance space and its closure when the meaning of the haiku is resolved may be investigated in further research.

Introduction

What goes on in the ‘mind-brain’ as we read haiku poetry? In particular, what processes contribute to the—sometimes sudden—understanding of haiku, the ‘aha moment’ that a reader may experience while reading a well-written poem? This is the central question that our Haiku and Brain Research Group attempts to address by using a combination of behavioral and neuroscientific methodologies. Being part of a larger endeavor, the emerging field of *neuro-/cognitive poetics* (e.g., Jacobs; Stockwell), we consider haiku to provide a paradigmatic ‘material’ for studying how we understand poetry in general.

Having emerged from the classical Japanese haiku aesthetic, with poems written in calligraphy, with brush and ink; with affinities to the Imagist movement, emphasizing simplicity and clarity of expression; and with echoes of Zen Buddhism’s focus on the moment and pared-down approach, haiku developed its own identity in the (English-speaking) West (see, e.g., Kacian, Rowland, and Burns). Using everyday, unadorned language, haiku poetry records, and shares, a moment of insight into the nature of the world: The contemporary haiku poet aims to convey her/his experience of that moment in words that render it so concisely and directly (without commenting, explaining, or marveling at the experience) and, at the same time, so suggestively (making the words expand in the reader’s mind into a multitude of images and feelings) that it is possible for the reader to re-create and share that moment and the insight it encapsulates. The aim of our research is to understand this act of ‘re-creation’.

To this end, we have thus far focused on the reading of normative for English-Language Haiku (ELH): three-line poems placing two images—structurally, a ‘fragment’ and a ‘phrase’ image (cf. Kacian)—in relation to, or juxtaposed with, one another across a *cæsura* (gap) or cut, inviting the reader to construct the haiku’s

meaning. In previous studies (Geyer, Günther, et al.; see Pierides et al. for a summary), we examined readers' patterns of eye movements while they read and re-read such poems. This approach was informed by the *eye-mind* hypothesis: the reader's attention is focused where the eyes dwell (to take up visual word information) in the fixations between successive saccades that move the eyes across the text. One major finding was that readers spend more time per word sampling the (single) fragment line of the poems compared to the (two) phrase lines — a finding we termed the *cut effect*. We took this to indicate that much of the mental work to integrate the two images into a coherent reading is concentrated on the fragment line.

In addition to tracking readers' eye movements, in the study of Geyer, Günther, et al., we also recorded the *electroencephalogram* (EEG) while they were reading and trying to understand the poems — in an attempt to gain further insight into the processes that go on in the brain during and across the successive eye fixations. The present note provides an overview of our initial findings of how the cut effect is expressed at the brain-electrical level. — To set the stage, we first briefly introduce the EEG methodology in natural reading research and sketch our approach to looking for EEG correlates of the cut effect in our co-recorded data set.¹ The

1. We stress 'natural' here and below, as in most previous EEG studies of reading (especially studies with a focus on the N400; e.g., Kutas and Hillyard), the text was actually presented word for word at the same display position and readers were not allowed to make eye movements (i.e., they had to maintain fixation at the presentation location). This was done to exclude brain-electrical 'artifacts' induced by the eye movements themselves: the eye is an electrical dipole, with the back (the retinal pole) of the eye being electro-negative relative to the front (the cornea), so that any eye movement itself induces brain-electrical activity that could overlay the EEG response of interest (inducing so-called spike potentials; e.g., Keren et al.). However, this is an unnatural scenario, as it is not the reader who decides for how long to view a word and where exactly to fixate on a word,

results reveal the cut effect to be present in relatively slow brain-electrical activity occurring beyond individual fixation durations. We discuss what mental processes these brain-electrical effects may reflect and consider ways in which these assumptions may be tested in further analyses of existing data and dedicated new research.

Recording the EEG during natural (haiku) reading

The EEG is recorded from electrodes placed in a systematic (grid-like) manner across the scalp surface: in our case, 64 electrodes, each providing a reading of brain-electrical activity every millisecond (i.e., 1,000 samples per second, affording a high temporal resolution of the ongoing reading processes). When plotted across time, the activity recorded at each electrode yields a wave-like pattern (see Figure 1) that can be analyzed in various ways. One standard way is to examine *event-related potentials (ERPs)*, in which case the wave is referenced, or ‘locked’, to the onset of some particular event, such as, in reading research, the onset of an eye movement (saccade-related potential) or a fixation (fixation-related potential) — the aim being to understand and interpret the sequence of peaks and troughs in the ensuing wave dynamics. For instance, fixation-related potentials in reading show a spindle-like profile of positive-

but the experimenter (who controls the location of the word presentation and the exposure direction). In natural reading, by contrast, the ongoing reading process determines how long to dwell on a word and where to move next, in forward or backward direction; also, the perceptual span – the area from which visual information is taken up – is skewed (extended) in the reading direction (e.g., McConkie and Rayner), permitting the next word to be pre-processed in parafoveal vision, prior to bringing it into foveal, high-resolution vision in the next saccade. Given this, there are currently various attempts to deal with EEG analyses in dynamic reading situations that permit free eye movements (so-called co-registration studies; see forthcoming Special Issue in Attention, Perception, and Psychophysics).

and negative-going voltage fluctuations, where the early positivity and negativity (the so-called P1 and N1 component, i.e., positivities and negativities emerging some 100 ms [milliseconds] after fixation onset, which we referred to as P1-N1 complex; Nasemann et al.) are affected by the distance traversed by the critical saccade and, respectively, the length and statistical frequency of the new fixated word. The distance traversed by a saccade is a more *visual* factor influencing how much new letter information is to be processed at the post-saccadic fixation location: the larger the saccade, the less the letters making up the new word have been pre-processed in parafoveal vision (colloquially, ‘out of the corner of the eye’) during the preceding fixation. And the statistical frequency with which a fixated word is encountered in written and spoken contexts is a linguistic factor determining the speed of ‘lexical access’: words we have encountered more frequently are cognitively more readily available, so that it takes less ‘effort’ to access their meaning in the ‘mental lexicon’ (our internal dictionary).

An alternative, or complementary, approach is to decompose the recorded waves into their underlying component *brain rhythms* via Fourier decomposition (e.g., Buszski). The underlying idea is that the scalp-recorded wave pattern is the composite, or superposition, of cyclical activity of a number of ongoing processes (i.e., Fourier components) in various regions of the brain that operate at different frequencies (measured in terms of Hertz, abbreviated Hz, i.e., cycles per second), from slow to high frequencies.² Note that based on the scalp-recorded EEG alone, it is very difficult to localize the neural generators, or ‘sources’, in the brain that contribute to the wave at each electrode, as the generated signals can propagate over larger cortical distances (and may in fact provide a means of communication between different brain

2. Standard frequency-bands examined are: theta, 3–7 Hz, representing processes that cycle some 5 times per second; alpha, 8–13 Hz; beta, 14–29 Hz; and gamma, 30–90 Hz, but also delta, 0.1–4 Hz (see Figure 1).

areas). However, the distribution of activity across the scalp (and across time) provides some hint of where, and especially when, in the brain significant activity arises. Thus, for instance, pursuing a spectral-cluster approach in a recent study of natural haiku reading (analyzing the EEG data of Geyer et al., 2020, who had examined only the eye-movement data), looking at the amount of activity, or ‘power’, in a range of frequency bands (above delta), we (Nasemann et al.) found a spectral dissociation, with faster-cycling (gamma and beta) spectral components being consistently linked to saccadic activity over fronto-lateral brain regions, and slower-cycling (theta and alpha) components to fixation-related activity over parieto-occipital regions. This makes sense as the fronto-lateral regions pick up activity generated by the eye movements (i.e., shifts of the corneo-retinal dipoles; see footnote 1) themselves, as well as activity projections from the so-called ‘frontal eye fields’ where neurons play a role in oculomotor control; and the incoming visual information (after fixation onset) is analyzed in the parieto-occipital regions, including the processing of letter and word-shape information and, in the (more) ventral visual stream, the accessing of word meanings. Importantly, the parieto-occipital theta exhibited higher magnitudes for long and statistically rare (compared to short and frequent) words, thus providing a marker of the ‘visual/linguistic information load’ during eye fixations.

Based on these findings, we proposed a cascade-type scheme of the stream of activity in natural reading, from fast to slow frequency bands: from saccade preparation and execution (associated with gamma, beta) through the uptake of visual word information and the early accessing of word meanings within individual fixations (associated with alpha, theta) to the multi-fixation-spanning construction of semantic meaning (from the local integration of individual words within the sentence context to global, sentence-spanning meaning construction), which occur at slower frequencies (including *delta*). This scheme (along with the putative

functionalities of the different frequency bands in reading) is depicted in Figure 1, which also illustrates how the ongoing activity in the various frequency bands combines additively (witness the + signs) to yield the ‘raw’ signal recorded at the scalp surface. Note also the scalp-topographic activity (distribution) maps, or ‘topomaps’, on the far right, with which show (gamma, beta) activity associated with saccade events to be prominent over fronto-lateral brain regions and (alpha, theta) activity associated with fixation events over parieto-occipital regions.

Haiku as ‘factor N400’ poetry

Thus, by whatever means reading behavior is examined (eye movements and/or EEG), the act of reading is essentially a composite process that is made up of subprocesses that run at different time scales. The typical fixation duration is some 200–250 ms (i.e., 4–5 fixations per second, corresponding to the *theta* frequency range), which is often (though not always) sufficient to access the meaning of the currently fixated word. However, constructing the meaning of a sentence or, in our case, a whole haiku is a much slower process requiring the integration of semantic information across multiple fixations — in our case, fixations in the phrase and fragment lines of the poem. In other words, global meaning construction is a process that operates at a (much) slower frequency than theta.

Linguistically, one frequency of particular interest is the *delta* band (0.1–4 Hz), in which the so-called N400 ERP component may be observed: a negativity emerging some 400 ms after fixation onset. The N400 — one of the most investigated ERP components in linguistics since Kutas and Hillyard’s seminal discovery — is reliably triggered by words that do not fit the sentence context, such as on the word ‘*moon*’ in ‘The cat catches the *moon*’ as compared to ‘*mouse*’ in ‘the cat catches the *mouse*’ (example taken from Grünbein). More generally, the amplitude of the N400 increases

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with decreasing predictability of a word in a sentence, idiom, or story and, so, is thought to reflect the difficulty with which a given word can be integrated in the semantic context (see Kutas and Federmeier for review).

Intrigued by the signature role of the N400 in the unfolding of meaning (which he learned about on a visit to the Max-Planck-Institute of Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, NL), in an essay in 1996, the German poet Durs Grünbein introduced the term ‘factor N400’ as a general proxy for neurocognitively foregrounding, “brain-physiological attention catchers” (Jacobs) in literary texts and called for a poetry full of images (or metaphors) rich in ‘factor N400’. Grünbein writes:

“Effective poetry, I believe, has always assumed the second alternative, of a giant leap across lexical gaps [i.e., a ‘leap of thought’ or ‘Gedankensprung’ as opposed to a mere associative step or ‘Assoziationsschritt’]. It obeys its own paralogic, which calls together that which is conceivably distant, places next to each other that which is almost incompatible. The further and unexpected this leap, the greater the factor N400 in a line or a sequence of syllables, the more roomy the verse or the prose. In the ideal case, they encompass the whole experiential space [‘Erlebnisraum’] captured by the sensorium of the speaker, reader, or listener” (Grünbein 57, our translation from the German).

Here, taking our cue from scholars of haiku, we propose—and empirically test the idea—that, by virtue of the way they are constructed, haiku quintessentially constitute a form of poetry that is ‘factor N400-rich’. In the words of Kacian writing on ‘haiku technique’:

“... haiku always are positing image against image [fragment against phrase or vice versa], and allowing the energy contained in these images . . . to charge the whole of the poem. We might consider the images to be the two poles of an electrical element, like a Tesla coil, and the relationship between them to be the spark which shoots the gap. The more powerful, clear and certain the choice of images, the brighter and surer the spark . . . And the stronger the spark, the more likely we will find secondary sparks as well, which in haiku we term resonance. Our goal in haiku is to find the correct images to serve as poles, and to allow the energy in the things themselves, the images and the language, to provide the spark inherent in them” (Kacian 56).

In our previous analyses of the eye-movement patterns during the reading of haiku, we established that “[t]he eyes, and thus the mind, spend more time (per word) in the poem’s fragment line compared to the phrase lines—a finding we referred to as ‘cut effect’. For instance, in ‘bruised apples / he wonders what else / I haven’t told him’ (Allen), the reading time (per word) is longest in the fragment line “bruised apples”. This is true whether the cut occurs at the end of line 1 (like in the above example) or at the end of line 2 (like in ‘closing my eyes / to find it / cricket’s song’; Antonio), and whether the poem is a context–action haiku (‘closing my eyes . . .’) or a juxtaposition haiku (‘bruised apples . . .’). . . . No such pattern is evident in uncut, one-image haiku, in which the eyes dwell for similar amounts of time (per word) in all lines” (cited from Geyer, Würschinger, et al., 11–12). Given this, we took the cut effect in two-image haiku to indicate that the reader treats the fragment as being pivotal for global meaning construction. Accordingly, we expected the cut effect in the eye movements to go along with N400-type processes in brain-electrical activity, that is, in Grünbein’s terms: reading of the fragment line should be richer in ‘factor N400’ (i.e., the N400 should be more negative going) than reading of the phrase lines.

Assuming a Gestaltist framework, we (e.g., in Geyer, Günther, et al.) considered the reading of haiku to proceed from initial puzzlement or ‘surprise’ at the, at first sight, seemingly incompatible fragment and phrase images through processes of ‘search’ of how to align (or bridge the gap between) the two images to an eventual resolution: the integration of the images into a coherent ‘meaning Gestalt’ (Iser) — the latter potentially involving the experience of sudden insight or an ‘aha’ moment. Which stages of this ‘poetic trajectory’ might be reflected in N400-type processes cannot be determined a-priori.³ However, if these relate to the cut effect, then it is likely that the ‘load’ is associated with the search for a solution, rather than the initial surprise or the finding of a solution itself. Assuming this, we tentatively interpret N400-type effects in the reading of haiku in terms of their ‘semantic (work) load’.

Examining for N400-type effects in the natural reading of haiku

One difficulty in assessing this hypothesis in co-registered (EEG and eye-movement) data is that in natural reading (in which the eyes move freely across the text, making several saccades and fixations per second), activity in the 400-ms (or, more generally, the delta) range is contaminated by the ongoing oculomotor activity. For example, in the poetry line ‘bruised apples . . .’, the first fixation (lasting some 250 ms) may fall on ‘bruised’ and the second fixation (also lasting some 250 ms) on ‘apples’. Accordingly, the N400 response elicited by ‘bruised’ would occur only after the eye has already jumped to ‘apples’, where the activity generated by the second saccade and fixation (the marked P1-N1 complex and the following components) overlays that generated by the previous oculomotor (saccade and fixation) events.

3. This is actually also true of the ‘psycholinguistic’ N400-effect produced by semantically ill-fitting words.

Thus, while it is hard to isolate activity relating to processes within the (200–250-ms) duration of a particular eye fixation (such as visual information uptake and lexical access; see Nasemann et al., 2023, under revision), this is even harder if the critical processes operate at a slower time scale, spanning not only one but several oculomotor events (saccades and fixations) — such as processes reflected in the N400, which operate at a delta frequency (0.1–4 Hz; e.g., processes taking from 500 ms = 2 Hz to 2000 ms = 0.5 Hz or longer to work). Technically, however, the superimposed activity from the higher (i.e., faster-cycling) frequency bands (alpha, beta, gamma, and partially theta) can be removed by applying a 0.1–4 Hz (delta frequency) band-pass filter, providing a ‘cleaner’ picture of the slower-cycling activity related to (N400-type) processes of meaning construction. This is aided by the fact that successive oculomotor events are somewhat jittered in time (i.e., the first fixation may be randomly shorter or longer, as may be the second and the third fixation and so forth), so that the overlaying activities generated by each of these events gradually peter out. Together with applying a 0.1–4-Hz band-pass filter, this allows us to isolate slow brain-electrical components related to the first — or, more generally, the ‘reference’ — fixation.⁴ Essentially, this is the analytical approach we adopted in the present study.

In more detail, in the set of co-registered haiku-reading data collected by Geyer, Günther, et al.⁵, we examined the evoked

4. The delta frequency (0.1–4-Hz) band partially overlaps with theta (3–7 Hz). As a result, 0.1–4-Hz band-pass-filtered activity still includes 4-Hz rhythms, reflecting the ‘visual/linguistic information load’ during sequential fixations (occurring at a rate of around 4 per second). Given this, the delta activity would be dominated by the rhythmicity of the fixations in the initial time windows of the saccade- (or fixation-) locked potentials, with the slower frequencies, related to processes of meaning construction, coming to the fore only later on (e.g., < 1 Hz, > 1000 ms).

5. For the present study, we (re-) analyzed the data of 24 native English speakers (13 female and 11 male students at LMU Munich, aged between

potential elicited by a given word (more precisely, the event-related potential referenced to the saccade to a given word, i.e., the saccade-locked potential) across a 1.5 second time range. Of note, this range extends beyond several (typically > 6) saccades and fixations after the critical oculomotor event (the saccade to a given word), allowing us to track brain-electrical activity associated with the non-immediate processing of the critical word (i.e., processing beyond visual word analysis and lexical access in the direct fixation on this word). As already said, the recorded 'raw' signals were filtered using a band-pass of 0.1–4 Hz (the delta

20 and 36 years), who read English-language haiku (ELH) under conditions of combined eye-tracking and EEG recording. Almost all participants were naïve with respect to the purposes of the study (two had participated in a previous study of haiku reading); eight participants reported to be regular readers of poetry, two of whom were experienced with haiku in particular. Key results from the eye-movement analyses were already reported elsewhere (Geyer, Günther, et al.; Geyer, Würschinger, et al.). Here, the focus is on the delta-band-filtered EEG data (see also Nasemann et al. for an analysis of the faster frequency bands). All of the (64) ELH examined here consisted of three lines, with a clearly discernible 'cut' between the phrase and fragment images. The haiku differed in terms of (i) the semantic relation between the two components (which was either of the relatively concrete "context-action" or the more abstract "juxtaposition" type; see Kacian), (ii) the positioning of the cut (either after the first line [i.e., fragment in line 1 and phrase in lines 2–3] or after the second line [i.e., phrase lines 1–2 and fragment in line 3]), and (iii) whether the cut was implicit or marked by an explicit cut marker. Linguistic properties—including word length and word frequency, the ratio of content to function words, the position and form of realization (finite, infinite, ellipted) of the verb, occurrence of phoric elements like pronouns or definite determiners, etc. (for details, see Geyer, Günther, et al.)—were controlled and balanced across the various haiku conditions. All haiku were selected from highly reputed journals and registries (including Frogpond, *Modern Haiku*, *The Heron's Nest*, *A Hundred Gourds*, The Haiku Foundation, etc.) and judged to be strong exemplars of the context–action and juxtaposition types (for a larger sample, see, e.g., Figure 1 in Geyer, Günther, et al., or Figure 2 in Geyer, Würschinger, et al.).

frequency band) to exclude the impact of faster-cycling brain-electrical activity unrelated to N400-type processes. Given that N400-type processes, by definition, emerge only some 400 ms plus after encountering a critical word, we then determined the lowest (i.e., *minimum*) negative voltage value within the time range from 600 to 1300 ms after the reference event (the saccade to the critical word) — to provide a statistically analyzable index of the ‘N400’.⁶ Given we were interested in the ‘cut effect’, we computed this measure separately for fixations on words in the fragment and, respectively, the phrase lines — the expectation being that the N400 would show a greater negative-going deflection for the fragment vs. the phrase lines. Analogously to our analysis of the fixational dwell times (reported in Geyer, Günther, et al.), we also tested whether this N400-type cut effect would be modulated by the image order (or cut position), that is, whether the fragment image (in line 1) is followed by the phrase image (in lines 2 and 3; i.e., the cut occurs at the end of line 1) or the phrase image (in lines 1 and 2) by the fragment (in line 3; i.e., cut at end of line 2). We expected the N400 to be increased for haiku with the fragment image trailing the phrase image (i.e., with a cut at the end of line 2). Further, we examined for an effect of the haiku type, expecting the cut effect to be increased for so-called (Kacian) ‘juxtaposition’ vs. ‘context–action’ haiku.

Note that in psycholinguistic research, the N400 is typically calculated as the average across the more central (or centro-parietal) electrode positions (C2, C1, CP2, CP1, P1, P2, P3, P4, CP3, CP4, C3, and C4; see blue electrode locations in Figure 1), at which the negative deflection (in response to semantic anomalies) is typically most pronounced. This is conceptually plausible, as the neural mechanisms that deal with the semantic processing of words

6. An alternative measure would be the ‘sum’ (or integral) of the points of the wave over a certain range, such as from 600–1300 ms. The essential result pattern turns out the same whether we use the local minima or the sum to index the magnitude of the negative deflection.

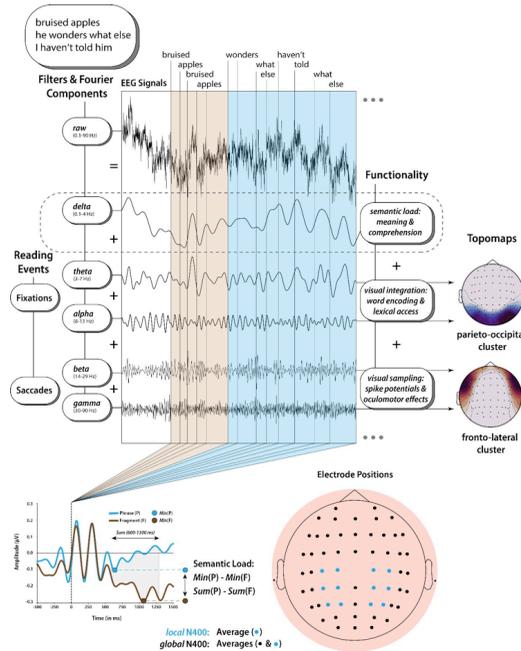
in (sentence) context are thought to involve a network of regions including the (left) posterior temporal cortex, the (left) anterior temporal cortex, and angular gyrus, and, in particular, the (left) inferior frontal cortex.⁷ Studies attempting to localize the neural source(s) of the N400 evoked by sentence-level semantic congruity or incongruity (see Lau et al. for review) converge on the mid-posterior temporal cortex (STS and MTG), with contributions from anterior temporal and inferior frontal areas post 500 ms. The latter is in line with fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) studies, which revealed the (posterior and anterior) inferior frontal cortex to be the only region in which activity was consistently affected by contextual semantic fit. However, given that the ‘cut’ in normative English-language haiku involves the juxtaposition of two (in themselves relatively complete) images, and so goes far beyond the semantic fit of individual words within the sentence context, we also conducted an analysis of the N400 non-selectively across all electrode sites (instead of focusing just on the ‘local’, centro-parietal sites); we refer to this as the *global* N400. For statistical analysis, we examined those two — *local* and *global* — N400 clusters by ‘analyses of variance’ (ANOVAs)⁸ with

7. According to the scheme proposed by Lau et al.: “Lexical representations are stored and activated in the middle temporal gyrus (MTG) and in the nearby superior temporal sulcus and inferior temporal cortex, and are accessed by other parts of the semantic network. The anterior temporal cortex (ATC) and angular gyrus (AG) are involved in integrating incoming information into current contextual and syntactic representations. The anterior inferior frontal gyrus (aIFG) mediates controlled retrieval of lexical representations based on top-down information, and the posterior IFG (pIFG) mediates selection between highly activated candidate representations” (Lau et al. 929). For an illustration of the putative brain network involved, see Fig. 5 (p. 929) in Lau et al. (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23484560_A_cortical_network_for_semantics_Deconstructing_the_N400/references).

8. ANOVAs allow us to look for the ‘main effect’ of a given factor (e.g., in our case: is there an overall difference in the N400 between fragment

the factors Image (fragment vs. phrase) and Haiku Type (context-action vs. juxtaposition), and another with the factors Image (fragment vs. phrase) and Image Order (fragment first = cut at the end of line 1 vs. phrase first = cut at the end of line 2).

To preview the main results: The cut effect is reflected in both the local and the global N400, with the fragment line being associated with an overall (i.e., on average) higher semantic load than the phrase lines. However, the global N400 is also modulated by the order of the two — phrase and fragment — images in a haiku (i.e., the position of the cut): it is higher from whatever image comes second. We go on to present, and consider, these findings in turn.



and phrase, i.e., a cut effect; and, respectively, is there an overall difference between in the N400 between context-action and juxtaposition haiku) and for ‘interactions’ (e.g., is the cut effect modulated by the type of haiku or the order of the two images).

Figure 1. In the top section, the example haiku (“bruised apples / . . .”) is shown as it was presented to the readers. The middle section shows the combination of eye-tracking and EEG signals from a participant reading the example haiku. While the sequence of fixated words (or word parts) is depicted at the top, the black vertical lines demarcate the individual fixations (with the separation between two lines indicating the fixation duration). Note that, rather than scanning the text linearly, the reader goes forth and back within lines and across lines. The EEG signals consist of the ‘raw’ or standard recorded signal (depicted on the top), which includes the whole frequency range (0.1–90 Hz). Underneath, the signals in the distinct frequency bands (or Fourier components) are shown for delta (0.1–4 Hz), theta (3–7 Hz), alpha (8–13 Hz), beta (14–29 Hz), and gamma (30–90 Hz) (left side), which are associated with specific oculomotor events (saccades or fixations) and functionalities (right side) in reading. Also, the event-related ‘topomaps’ are presented for fixations, showing a parieto-occipital electrode cluster in alpha and theta for (visual) word encoding and lexical access; and, respectively, for saccades, showing a fronto-lateral cluster in beta and gamma, which reflects spike potentials and/or oculomotor effects. Further, word fixations in the fragment (beige shading) and phrase lines (blue shading) are highlighted. On the bottom left, the saccade-related potential represents the time-locked aggregated average of word fixations for the fragment (brown line) and the phrase (blue line), respectively (indicated by the vertical lines converging on the time point 0 ms, i.e., the saccade onset). The N400 is selected as the minimum voltage (in μV) within the 600–1300-ms time window after saccade onset. The (differential) *semantic load* is reflected in the difference of the minima between the phrase N400 and the fragment N400. The bottom right shows the placing of the EEG electrodes across the scalp (with the nose pointing upwards). Here, blue electrodes indicate the centro-parietal electrode cluster for the *local* N400, while the *global* N400 includes all electrodes (blue and black).

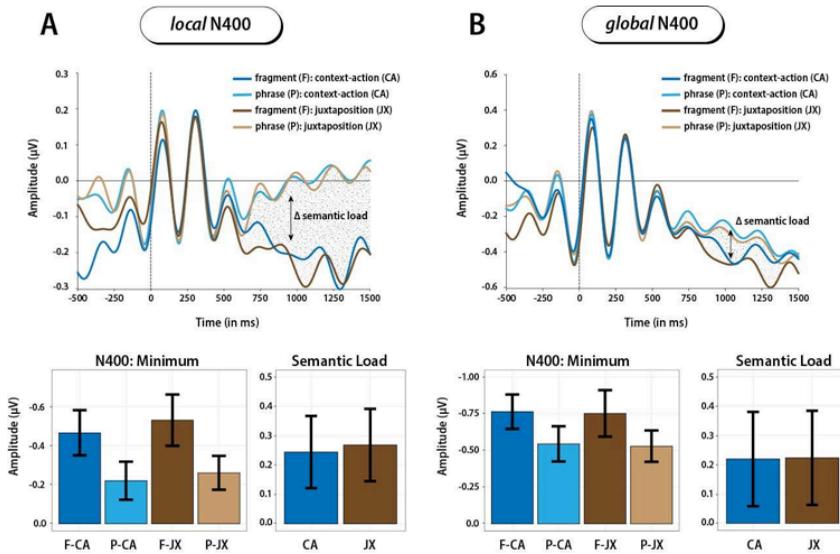


Figure 2. (A) *Local N400* for the four conditions resulting from the factorial combination of the two Image conditions (**Fragment F vs. Phrase P**) and the two Haiku-Type conditions (**Context-Action CA vs. Juxtaposition JX**). (B) *Global N400* for the four Image x Haiku-Type conditions. A main effect of Image is present both over centro-parietal regions (A) and across the whole brain (B), with the N400 being more negative for the fragment v. the phrase image of the haiku. We take this ‘cut effect’ to indicate that the fragment is associated with a higher semantic load (difference between phrase and fragment).

The cut effect is reflected in the N400

The top of Figure 2 shows the (0.1–4-Hz-filtered) saccade-related brain potentials, that is, the positive and negative voltage

fluctuations over time, locked to the onset of a given saccade.⁹ The right-hand figure (A) shows the results for the local N400 analysis (centro-parietal electrodes), and the left-hand figure (B) those for the global analysis (including all electrodes). Saccade onset is marked by the point 0 on the time (i.e., the x) axis, with negative time values belonging to the prior fixation periods and positive values to the reference fixation and the subsequent fixations occurring in the period up to some 1.5 seconds. In the present context, the interesting time range is that after about 500 ms, where slow, fixation-overarching N400-type processes would be expected to emerge.¹⁰ As can be seen from both figures (i.e., both the local and the global analysis), in the N400 range the curves clearly diverge — or ‘bifurcate’ — between the fragment and the phrase lines: the N400 is more negative-going for the fragment line compared to the phrase lines.

The bar charts in the bottom figures show the minimum negative voltage in the 600–1300-ms time range (using the minimum as an estimator of the N400). As can be seen, the N400 cut effect is little influenced by the type of haiku: the difference in the N400 between the fragment and phrase lines is similar for both context–action and

9. Technically, for each of the two haiku types (context–action/juxtaposition), the voltage fluctuations during all critical fixations that a reader made in the respective haiku image (the first, second, third, etc. fixation in the fragment or, respectively, the phrase lines) were aligned to the onset of the preceding saccade, effectively overlaying the ensuing voltage fluctuations with reference to the critical saccade-onset ‘event’, and then averaged first for a given reader and subsequently across all readers. The averaging is meant to cancel out random noise in the recorded signals on individual saccade/fixation ‘events’, yielding a potentially interpretable pattern of voltage fluctuations.

10. During the preceding range, activity is dominated by processes, at the higher-frequency end of the delta range, going on within the first few fixations following the critical saccades (see footnote 4).

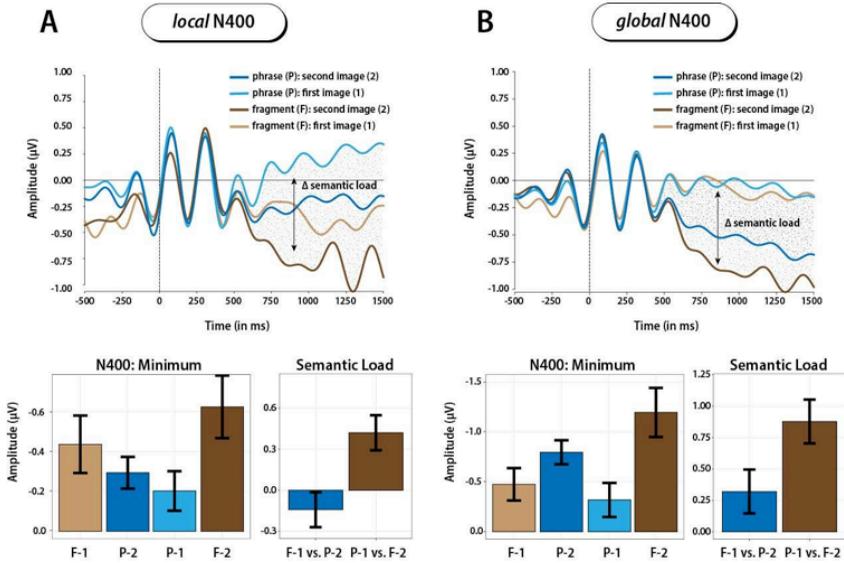


Figure 3. (A) Local N400 for the four conditions resulting from the factorial combination of the two Images (Fragment F vs. Phrase P) with the Image-Order (fragment in line 1 = cut at end of line 1 vs. fragment in line 2 = cut at end of line 2) conditions. (B) Global N400 for four Image x Image-Order conditions. While the N400 is generally higher for the fragment (vs. the phrase) image, it is modulated by the image order. In comparison with the local analysis (A), the effect of the image order position becomes dominant in the global analysis (B): here, the N400 is higher for whatever image comes second: the fragment in haiku with a cut at the end of line 2 (the typical cut effect) or, respectively, the phrase in poems with a cut at the end of line 1 (a reversal of the typical cut effect).

and juxtaposition haiku.¹¹ Overall, this effect pattern is consistent with our hypothesis that the fragment is associated with a higher semantic load than the phrase lines.

The semantic (work-) load is shifted towards the second haiku image

Figure 3 depicts the saccade-related brain potentials for the fragment and phrase images, dependent on the image order, that is, whether the fragment preceded or, respectively, followed the phrase. The local N400 is depicted on the left (A), the global N400 on the right (B). The bar charts underneath again present the *minimum* negative voltage (indexing the magnitude of the N400) within the 600–1300-ms time range. To read the figures, note that the labels F-1 and P-2 go together — meaning that the image order contains the fragment first and the phrase second, and P-1 and F-2 go together — that is, the phrase image comes first and the fragment image second.

As can be seen from Figure 3(A) (most clearly from the bar chart at the bottom), the *local* (centro-parietal) N400 was generally more marked (i.e., more negative-going) for the fragment than the phrase lines — consistent with both the local and global analyses presented above. However, the image order modulated the balance of N400 in the fragment and phrase lines: in haiku with the fragment in line 1 (i.e., cut at the end of line 1), the N400 was reduced for the

11. Statistically, examined in terms of the minimum negative voltage within the 600–1300-ms time range (estimated individually for each reader), the factor Image (fragment vs. phrase) yielded a significant main effect in both the local and the global analysis—see the bar charts at the bottom of Figures 2(A) and 2(B). In contrast, there was no main effect of the factor Haiku Type (context–action vs. juxtaposition), and the haiku type did not modulate the difference in the N400 between the fragment and phrase lines.

fragment and increased for the phrase compared to poems with the fragment in line 3 (i.e., cut at the end of line 2).¹²

As can be seen from Figure 3(B), the effect pattern was generally similar for the *global* N400, though with one striking difference: there was an even stronger modulation of the Image (i.e., the cut) effect by the Image Order. The major difference to the local N400 is that, for the global N400, the cut effect was actually reversed for haiku with the fragment in line 1 (cut at the end of line 1), that is: the N400 was significantly less marked for the fragment than for the phrase image (in lines 2–3), whereas it was still slightly more marked in the local N400 (see above). In contrast, poems with the fragment in line 3 (cut at the end of line 2) showed the typical cut effect: a more pronounced N400 for the fragment image than for the phrase image (in lines 1–2). Thus, compared with the local analysis (A), the effect of the cut position becomes dominant in the global analysis (B): here, the N400 is higher for whatever image comes second: the fragment in haiku with the fragment in line 3 (the typical cut effect) or, respectively, the phrase in poems with the fragment in line 1 (a reversal of the cut effect).

Taken together, these findings point to a dissociation between the two N400 clusters: while the *local* N400 is more sensitive to the existence as such of a ‘disjunction’ between the fragment and phrase images, the *global* N400 is sensitive to the image order, with the semantic load being higher for whatever image, fragment or phrase, comes second. The latter suggests that the global N400 reflects the space of the search for meaning that is opened up by the cut — beyond the mere registration of the break. Encountering

12. Statistically, there was a significant main effect of Image (fragment vs. phrase) and a significant Image x Image-Order interaction, the latter indicating the modulation of the cut effect—the difference in the N400 between the fragment and the phrase lines—by the Image Order: in haiku with the fragment in line 1, the ‘cut effect’ was only marginally significant, whereas it was statistically robust in poems with the fragment in line 3.

the fragment second reinforces the cut, piling the semantic load on the fragment line (maximizing the cut effect). In contrast, when the phrase is encountered second, it is already read in the light of the fragment, deferring the semantic load to the phrase lines (and so minimizing or even reversing the cut effect).¹³

This idea will be developed in more detail below after looking at the link between the behavioral reading dynamics and the N400.

Fixation durations are dynamically linked to the N400

Given that we had first established the cut effect in the fixational dwell times (per word) in the fragment vs. the phrase lines (Geyer, Günther, et al., 2020), we also examined whether there is a link between the cut effects in the fixation durations (a behavioral measure) and the N400 (an electrophysiological measure). To this end, we computed the mean fixation duration per word for each condition of the two analyses above: (1) Image (fragment, phrase) and Haiku-Type (context-action, juxtaposition) and, respectively (2) Image (fragment, phrase) and Image Order (first, second). We then calculated the correlation coefficient r to describe the relationship between the two measures.¹⁴ Interestingly, we found the *local* N400 (but not the global N400) to correlate significantly negatively with fixation duration in analysis (1) ($r = -.29$);

13. Consistent with our take of the global N400, this component also turned out sensitive to whether or not the cut was explicitly signaled by a cut marker: while again being more pronounced for whatever image came second, an explicitly marked cut at the end of the first line (e.g., with a dash or an ellipse as a cut marker) led to a reduced N400 for the fragment (in line 1) compared to an unmarked cut. That is, encountering a cut marker helps to defer the semantic load to the subsequent phrase image.

14. Technically, to take the factorial structure of our N400 variables into account, we computed *repeated-measures* Pearson product-moment correlations (Bakdash and Marusich).

conversely, the *global* N400 (but not the local) N400 to correlate negatively with fixation duration in analysis (2) ($r = -.37$). Although these correlations explain only a limited amount of variance in the data (local: 8%; global: 14%)¹⁵, they reflect a systematic trend for the fixation durations to be the longer the more negative-going the respective N400 was. The dissociative pattern in the correlations is in line with the findings reported above, underscoring the distinct functional roles of the *local* and *global* N400: locally, the N400 derives mainly from the fragment (rather than the phrase), whereas globally it derives primarily from whatever image comes second (rather than the image that comes first).

Discussion

In summary, we found the oculomotor cut effect to be mirrored in a brain-electrical component in the delta frequency range: a negative, N400-type deflection emerging some 500–600 ms following the saccade to a word in a given, fragment or phrase, line and extending up to 1.5 sec and (likely) beyond (in which time several other saccade and fixation events would have occurred). This ongoing negative deflection was overall more marked for the fragment vs. the phrase lines, in line with the cut effect in the fixational dwell times (Geyer, Günther, et al.).

This N400-type component was evident both over the centro-parietal electrode cluster (*local* N400) and across the whole brain (*global* N400). The local N400 appeared primarily sensitive to the fact of a disjunction between the two images (it was always larger for the fragment). This suggests that it serves as a kind of ‘cut detector’, perhaps driving the global N400. The latter, by contrast,

15. Given that fixation durations in reading are determined by multiple factors—including the size of the preceding saccade, (visual) word length, (statistical) word frequency, and contextual predictability of the word, etc.—the amount of explained variance is not ‘insignificant’.

was dominated by the order of the two images: it was larger for the second image, that is: the fragment in haiku with a cut at the of line 2 and the phrase in haiku with a cut at the end of line 1.

We take this order effect to indicate that encountering the second image, after the cut, opens up the brain-physiological ‘resonance space’, a distributed network of perceptual-sensory regions and association areas, evoking a multitude of (more or less concrete) representations of what is depicted in the images and as well as activating multiple linkages — e.g., based on established cognitive schemata (Bartlett; Rumelhart), such as the grounding of an action in a context — between them. In terms of computational theories of brain function (e.g., Friston), the cut may be seen to spark a state of high ‘free energy’ in the system: the ‘semantic load’ imposed by the more or less incompatible and so ‘competing’ representations and possible bridging schemas. This load is then minimized by the system settling on one (or a few) solution(s), reaching an equilibrium stage that represents our ‘reading’ of how the two images go together, that is: our understanding of the haiku.

This interpretation of the cut effect in the global N400 would be consistent with poet Grünbein’s notion of the ‘factor N400’, which he took to reflect the ‘roominess’ of a verse or the ‘*experiential space*’, involving the reader’s entire ‘sensorium’, opened up by it (see citation above). Drawing on the metaphor of the ‘spark’ and ‘secondary sparks’ set off by the juxtaposed images (see, e.g., the citation of Kacian above), we propose to interpret the global N400-effect to reflect the global ‘*resonance space*’ in which the meaning of the poem unfolds.

Finally, we established systematic (negative) relationships between the N400 and fixation duration: more negative-going N400 components went along with longer fixation durations. This finding is theoretically interesting given that the N400 is a slow component extending across multiple fixations (i.e., one second

or longer), whereas eye movements are fast events occurring at a rate of 4–5 per second (see Figure 1). Note that the existence of a correlation between two variables (or measures) A and B cannot be interpreted in terms of a direct causal relationship (i.e., A causes B or vice versa), because there may be another variable that mediates the correlation. We conjecture that it is the processes that give rise to the enhanced N400 — locally, the detection of a cut and the ensuing ‘surprise’ and, globally, the opening-up of the semantic workspace or strategic processes reactively brought into play to narrow down the solution space –, which lead to the adjustment of the fixation durations.

Given the newness of our discovery of N400-type processes in the reading of haiku, we acknowledge that the interpretations offered above are speculative and require further, dedicated research. One major difference from the ‘standard’ N400 investigated in psycholinguistic research is that the enhanced N400-type deflection in the fragment vs. the phrase shows no clear increase towards a negative peak followed by a decrease towards the baseline provided by the phrase;¹⁶ rather, the negativity turns out to be sustained for a considerable period of time. Conceptually, however, we envisage the reading of haiku to involve a complete ‘arch’ from the initial surprise upon encountering the cut through the opening-up of a search space to the eventual resolution: the integration of the fragment and phrase images into a coherent meaning.

Thus, our existing data and findings leave one critical question unanswered, namely: what happens in the brain when this space is narrowed down as the reader settles on one (or one or two) solution(s) — whether by an active, ‘controlled’ process of hypothesis testing or a sudden falling-into-place of the separate pieces (i.e., a process of ‘insight’ associated with an ‘aha’-moment)?

16. The standard N400, driven by misfitting words in a sentence context, typically around 400 ms post the encounter of the critical word and then returns towards the baseline.

That is: while we see the space opening up in the divergence (or bifurcation) of the N400-type activity between the fragment and the phrase (see Figure 2), would we be able to see the activity coming together again in the closing of the gap between the two images?

Answering this question might require referencing the brain dynamics to an end state, such as the point at which the reader felt s/he had understood the haiku (e.g., when experiencing a sudden insight). Accordingly, in a new (currently ongoing) study — combining eye-movement recording with both EEG and fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) —, we ask readers to press a button once they have achieved an understanding. The idea is to use this button press as a reference event to track back in time from there — potentially revealing a (re-)convergence of the N400-type activity, reflecting the reduction of the semantic load.

The moments of initial divergence and subsequent convergence potentially allow us to trace the curve readers traversed in their attempt to understand a poem. The shape of the curve may provide insights into how meaning resolution was achieved. Arguably, an insight- or ‘aha’ moment can only occur upon the formation of a concrete ‘meaning Gestalt’, which would be associated with a rapid and complete convergence, that is, a sudden vanishing of the representational free energy and transition to a stable, maximum-coherence state. In contrast, a more controlled strategy of meaning resolution (trying out different hypotheses of how the two images might go together) may be reflected in a more gradual convergence, which may remain incomplete if closure is not ultimately achieved.

Beyond the question of how we come to understand haiku generally, there are subtleties in the form introducing challenges for future research, such as understanding the ways they affect the N400. For instance, one essential element of the form is the inclusion of season or keywords, such as ‘snow’, ‘Easter’, and ‘spring’. These evoke a plethora of both culturally shared associations and

individual memories, including, for the initiated reader, references to their use in other, well-appreciated poems and by other poets. Would the expansion of such words in the reader's mind enhance the (global) N400? This is a question going beyond the statistical frequency of such words in everyday language, which we controlled for in our sample of haiku.

Similarly, haiku are rich in images engaging the senses, and “Poems in which the imagery evoked in one, dominant sense, sets off a cascade of associative links to other senses, letting a rich, multi-dimensional experience emerge” (Pierides)—such as in “sculpture garden . . ./the marble bench/cool through my jeans” (Randy Brooks). While one sense may be in the foreground (e.g., vision, which dominates normal human perception: “sculpture garden”), an image may also involve one or more other senses (e.g., images referring to sound, touch, smell, heat: cool to the touch). One interesting question in this regard would be whether and how the engagement of multiple senses in a haiku, and interactions between them, would impact the (global) N400.

Combining fMRI with EEG (in our new study) might provide us with a better insight into the brain areas involved in the poetic trajectory from the initial surprise to the end state of an achieved understanding, including the areas activated by the rich (uni- vs. multisensory) imagery conveyed by particular haiku.

Conclusion

Thus, our analysis of the EEG activity recorded during readers' attempt to understand a variety of haiku revealed first insights into the brain dynamics involved in the reading process. In particular, we established that haiku is a poetry rich in ‘factor N400’—or, more, precisely, N400-type activity in the delta frequency band. This may, of course, appear trivial to the haiku poet—who skillfully employs the cut to maximize the effect of this form of

poetry. Arguably, however, demonstrating this ‘factor’ in neural terms promises to enhance our understanding of how this effect is realized in the brain. Tentatively, we interpret the pattern of (especially global) N400 effects in terms of the cut opening up the semantic search—or *resonance*—space: the larger or more contrasting this space, the higher the semantic load reflected in the N400. What we cannot yet tell, though, is how this space is closed again as the brain resolves the meaning of a haiku. We are currently undertaking further work designed to track the complete trajectory from the encountering of the cut to achieving an understanding of a haiku.

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Synesthesia and Haiku

Owen BULLOCK

ABSTRACT: Synesthesia is a neurological condition in which the senses are felt together. Synesthesia can be found in numerous art forms. Examples of synesthetic writing can be overlooked in novels and longer poems as just another form of figurative language. The concentration of imagery this device produces is rich and resonant in the short form that is haiku, forming the core of the work, and making the use of synesthesia particularly noticeable. This means that haiku constitute a rich site for the discussion of synesthesia, in writing which blends the senses through the imagery used. In the literature, the term 'synesthesia' is often confused with 'sense-switching'; I argue for a distinction between these two terms. Some discussions betray the influence of synesthesia rather than representing examples of it. In both cases, I recognise that it may be difficult or impossible to prove a distinction between the ideas, because of the innate subjectivity of the experiences from which they emanate.

The article considers examples of synesthetic haiku in detail; often using more than one example of sense combinations employed to illustrate diverse effects. The article considers dynamics of which create additional categories: speculative/abstract; shifting, multiple; variations; influence; the beyond; reflections; and experience. The latter additional category charts my own ventures in writing haiku with synesthetic qualities and the discovery of a 'zoned out' state which invites a blending of the senses. The article aims to increase understanding of how synesthesia can be employed as a technique in haiku, even if the writer is not synesthetic.

Introduction

Synesthesia is a neurological condition in which the senses are felt together by the individual. The rarity of the condition is somewhat contested. Richard Cytowic claimed it affected 1 in 25,000 people (1995, 1). Recent research argues it affects as many as 1:23 people, whereas previously estimates suggested an occurrence of 0.05% of the population, a difference of 88 times magnitude. (Simner et al.)

Synesthesia can be found in numerous art forms and the first section of the article references Scriabin's musical compositions. As a literary device, synesthesia is widespread, and I have collected examples from fiction and longer form poetry, as well as haiku. In novels, especially, synesthesia can be overlooked as just another form of figurative language; it is reasonably apparent in long form poetry (but space forbids including examples for each genre here). The concentration of imagery this device produces is rich and resonant in the short form that is haiku, forming the core of the work, and making the use of synesthesia particularly noticeable. This means that haiku constitute a rich site for the discussion of synesthesia, in writing which blends the senses through the imagery used.

Only two substantial examinations of synesthetic haiku exist in the literature. Authors Toshimi Horiuchi and Paul Miller each categorise a variety of sense combinations in haiku, with examples. Miller uses the terms 'sense-switching' and 'synesthesia' interchangeably; I argue for a distinction between these two terms. Other critics mention synesthesia or sense-switching as haiku techniques, with ongoing confusion over terminology. I contend that some of Horiuchi's patterns betray the influence of synesthesia rather than representing direct examples of it. I recognise that it may be difficult or impossible to prove a distinction between these ideas, because of the innate subjectivity of the experiences from which they emanate, but I attempt to clarify their differences through analysis.

The analysis demonstrates that synesthetic haiku create original and powerful imagery, intensifying the moments described, and emphasising interconnectedness. The diversity of effects speaks to subjectivity and the fact that many haiku could be categorised in more than one way. The article aims to increase understanding of how synesthesia can be employed as a technique in haiku, even if the writer is not synesthetic.

Synesthesia — what is it?

“There’s aren’t enough points on the chicken.” This is the strange, murmured statement that greeted psychologist Richard Cytowic when his friend Michael Watson was cooking dinner. Michael perceived taste as having shape. The conversation led Cytowic to research insights into the topic of synesthesia which are relevant to art and artists of all kinds, both in their actual manifestations as the experiences of a rare group of people and as metaphors for how the senses might be employed in combination in any form of art, including writing.

Richard Cytowic describes the phenomenon in his popular book *The Man Who Tasted Shapes* (1993). Cytowic tells Michael:

“*Syn-es-thé-sia*,” I repeated. “It’s Greek. *Syn* means ‘together’ and *aisthésis* means ‘sensation.’ Synesthesia means ‘feeling together’, just as *syn-chrony* means at the same time or *syn-thesis* means different ideas joined into one, or *syn-opsis* means to see all together.” (1993, 5)

The senses are ‘hooked together’; one might hear colours, feel sounds, or taste shapes.

James Ward explains that a clear definition of the phenomenon of synesthesia is not forthcoming and suggests that examples might be better. In most cases, two senses are experienced at the same time. One sense does not replace the other: someone tasting

music does not stop hearing it. As Ward puts it: “One attribute of a stimulus (e.g., its sound, shape, or meaning) may inevitably lead to the conscious experience of an additional attribute.” I agree that examples describe the phenomena more effectively. He continues, “the word ‘Phillip’ may taste of sour oranges, the letter A may be luminous red, and a C# note on the violin may be a brown fuzzy line extending from left to right in the lower left part of space. The attributes do not always lie in different senses (e.g. a visually presented letter may trigger a color).” (50) Ward gives the examples of tasting words, seeing colour for words, and seeing music spatially and in ways that evoke felt sensation. Perhaps the most unusual example is that of mirror-touch synesthesia, where the individual perceives feeling touch on the body when seeing someone else being touched. The sensation may be found on the corresponding side, or the opposite side — an incredible and sometimes disturbing event.

The trigger for the synesthetic experience may lie internally, for example, the sum ‘5 + 2’ could trigger the colour associated with ‘7’. The perception of taste can occur even if the word that triggers it is inaccessible — in a ‘tip-of-the-tongue’ state. This dual occurrence seems amazing to most of us, but for synesthetes, Ward writes, it is strange that others *do not* have such experiences. Synesthetes cannot control the event, and although researchers are still unclear exactly what it is and what causes it, there is some agreement that synesthesia is more like a perception than some form of mental imagery.

The synesthetic experience is grounded in language. When word/colour synesthetes see colour, it is dependent on the spelling of the word, which may be a sequence of colours according to the letters — this has been found to be true of both English letters and Chinese characters. When words have taste, it is about the spoken word rather than the written word — no one knows why. (Ward) One might assume that the brains of synesthetes are different

to that of others; this is not the case. The brains of people with synesthesia are not structurally different, but having this capacity is associated with increased grey and white matter in the parts of the brain affected. The condition is genetic (Ward), though the genetic contribution may only be moderate. (Slattery) Offspring usually have a different form of synesthesia to their parents. (Ward) Testing for synesthesia is more consistent across adults, though this may be because of the way synesthesia is still developing in children—this hypothesis has been demonstrated. Adults can form new synesthetic experiences, for example, by learning musical notation or a new language. (Ward) Understanding of synesthesia is dependent on literacy, and how it manifests in cultures without literacy is not known.

Synesthesia can be acquired through sensory loss, as the remaining senses compensate. This only happens in some cases, not all, which begs the question whether there is a tendency towards synesthesia that is structural or genetic. Synesthesia can be acquired pharmacologically (through drugs like LSD). This is achieved quickly, in an “un-masking of pre-existing pathways” (Ward, 63), and may be quite a common aspect of hallucinogenic use (Harrison, in Slattery).

People with synesthesia are more often drawn to the creative industries than the general population. Auditory-visual synesthetes have a particularly rich experience. Creativity is expressed by this group in enhanced ability to form novel and adaptive associations. (Ward) Synesthetes score highly in divergent thinking. Divergent thinking uses imagination to create new things; convergent thinking uses logic and analysing to judge information and stimulus. Both Ward and Cytowic reserve the term ‘synesthesia’ for people who actually experience it.

Synesthesia in haiku literature

I have been collecting synesthetic haiku for about five years, in preparation for writing this article. Before I introduce those examples, I will consider the literature on the subject, including the two major essays mentioned above.

Synesthesia as a literary device:

William J. Higginson defines, “synesthesia, a special variety of metaphor in which the author writes of one sensation in terms of another, occurs in haiku now and again. Perhaps this is not so much a technique of haiku as an unusual sensory perception that sometimes finds its way into haiku.” (125) Or, one might say, that it is only a technique in the hands of the non-synesthete. Either way, the definition forms an astute evaluation and anticipates a growth in understanding of synesthesia that has been lacking amongst haiku poets. Charles Trumbull considers synesthesia “the most disjunctive of the poetic devices,” (186) perhaps a truism, and one with which not all readers might be comfortable. In his blogpost, ‘To the Lighthouse: A rhetorical device, synesthesia’ (2014), Chen-ou Liu assembles a range of examples and short quotes about synesthesia by other writers. Though the examples are compelling, the selection makes no attempt to categorise synesthetic haiku, nor to theorise on possible approaches to writing them. Scott Mason claims the technique can “convey startling perceptual effects by blurring the senses,” (52-53) like Trumbull, suggesting that the work might be confronting at times. Carmen Sterba names synesthesia as a literary technique, but the example she gives is one of sense-switching.

Sense-switching as a literary device:

Jane Reichhold's description of sense-switching as a literary device accommodates both sense-switching and synesthesia; the example she gives is clearly of the latter term but without naming it. Similarly, Megan Arkenburg cites sense-switching as a literary device, even though the examples she gives blend the senses in a synesthetic manner.

Other writers approach synesthesia without using the term. Matthew Paul's essay on the haiku of Caroline Gourlay includes discussion of this piece:

Daylight fading —
a curlew's cry
lengthens the hill.

He describes the third line, "then comes a secondary, almost meaningless, abstract sense which defies exegesis and takes the haiku into another realm of wondrousness" (97) — disjunctive, indeed. Paul discusses another haiku by Gourlay, which Trumbull correctly cites as an example of synesthesia in haiku. Paul refers to Martin Lucas's discussion of the same haiku in terms of "the puzzle of how we can hear the event." (98) This made me return to Lucas' wonderful book, *Stepping Stones: A Way into Haiku*, where he makes that statement about puzzlement, and with the proviso, "if we take line one to be connected directly to lines two and three." (121) Here is the poem in question:

listen!
the skins of wild damsons
darkening in the rain

Lucas notes the vivid delight of the second and third lines and celebrates the way the first line gives the reader, "the simultaneous

act of listening—to the rain pattering on the leaves and the ripening fruit.” (121) It is interesting that Lucas renders this haiku centre-justified, whereas Trumbull has it left-justified—the former perhaps reinforces the sense of connection across lines for which Lucas was arguing.

These varied and sometimes confusing discussions of the attributes of sense-switching and synesthesia hopefully provide justification for my insistence on attempting to distinguish between them, even if that attempt is not always possible, definitively, as stated.

Paul Miller, ‘Haiku Toolbox: Synesthesia’ (2013)

Miller discusses 25 haiku and describes seven different sense combinations: Visual Vs Auditory; Visual Vs Olfactory; Visual Vs Tactile; Visual vs Gustatory; Olfactory Vs Auditory; Tactile Vs Auditory; and Multiple and Other.

Miller claims that ‘Sense-switching’ is also known as synesthesia, reflecting the fact that these two terms are often used interchangeably. The idea perhaps stems from practice rather than being a thesis statement, but it is one that this article will challenge. I will argue that the two techniques are subtly different, though related.

Miller suggests that the use of different sense imagery can broaden or steer the reading of a haiku. Citing Bashō, he comments that by adding a second sense the poet constructs the scene more fully:

the sea darkens—
a wild duck’s call
faintly white

It also heightens the contrast between the duck and the sea. This example constitutes more than sense-switching, since a call cannot be white: it is synesthetic.

In another example, Miller talks of the way the second sense can illuminate and expand the haiku's reference points; there is a transformation at work whereby one sense becomes another. This approach, Miller argues, is more Japanese than American. Perhaps because of the stigma against metaphor, American poets tend to use 'sense-switching' in preference to synesthesia and in a 'proximate' way, the two senses standing side by side, rather than being blended. This certainly permeates many of the examples he offers. In my reading, these examples should be described purely as 'sense-switching', with the term not being used interchangeably with 'synesthesia': I argue that they are two different things, though, again, because of the subjectivity inherent in their composition, one cannot be absolute in terms of a dividing line between the two techniques, and some examples might be interpreted in either mode.

An example Miller gives from American poet Lee Gurga confirms the tendency towards sense-switching:

winter prairie —
 a diesel locomotive
 throttles down in the night

As Miller notes, the poem begins with the visual and moves towards the introduction of sound; the second sense, he writes, "bleeds into the first": (46) the prairie gains life and the sound gains breadth. This in itself is an astute metaphor for the way this relationship between the senses in writing can function. Many of the examples that follow in this section on the Visual vs. Auditory articulate the same effect of sense-switching and convincingly argue for Miller's idea about steering the reader, in terms of which sense they might experience, and in what order. Only the occasional example in Miller's selection suggests a full-bodied form of synesthesia, such as this haiku by Gloria H. Pascal in the Visual vs. Olfactory section:

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deserted field —
on waves of heat
wild onion scent.

We can see a juxtaposition between the initial image of the field with the scent that appears in the third line. We also encounter a physical sense of touch through the waves of heat (which is not remarked on). Sense-switching might be seen as a particular kind of juxtaposition in haiku, a technique which I have written about elsewhere (2021). Such elemental references are often capable of evoking the sense of touch (or movement, as Horiuchi says), as well as the visual, and much depends on reader subjectivity here in terms of which will be recognised, either or both.

The Visual vs. Gustatory section includes a fully synesthetic piece:

home-grown lettuce
the taste of well-water
green

Taste cannot be green, yet the continuation from the second line to the third surely suggests that it is. An example from Buson (Tactile vs. Auditory) has the sound of a mouse being cold, which is clearly synesthetic. Miller refers to Horiuchi for two examples of what he calls Multiple and Other, which are fully synesthetic. In my reading, that makes for only six haiku of 25 which are synesthetic, with the rest favouring sense-switching. In this regard, it is mystifying that the title of the essay favours synesthesia when the bulk of the examples pursue sense-switching. Of course, Miller's idea of the senses bleeding into each other does create an overlap in the description of the two techniques.

It is understandable that Miller says that the term 'synesthesia' might be resisted, given the link with or similarity to metaphor, but it is important to make a distinction between the two terms because truly synesthetic haiku are bolder in their inferences.

Miller's writing undoubtedly responds to a moment in time, but this haziness of terminology has unfortunately persisted, even if the reception of synesthesia in relation to its metaphorical function has clearly changed in the ensuing years, as the examples below testify. In synesthesia, the senses are blended, rather than merely juxtaposed or quickly following one another. At present, the two terms being used interchangeably overlooks variations of dynamics, and an awareness of at least two techniques that might be useful for the writer — my analysis points to the fact that some haiku contain both techniques.

Toshimi Horiuchi, 'Synesthesia in Haiku' (1990)

Horiuchi catalogues the combinations of senses in what he calls 'patterns', totalling fifteen: Hearing-Sight; Hearing-Touch; Hearing-Movement; Hearing-Hearing; Hearing-Olfaction; Sight-Touch; Sight-Hearing; Sight-Olfaction; Sight-Palate; Sight-Movement; Sight-Sight; Touch-Sight; Olfaction-Touch; Olfaction-Sight; Olfaction-Hearing. As we can see, four of these combinations are the two senses around the other way, making a distinction about which came first, and which led to the second sense. Perhaps, if the synesthete perceives the senses together, assigning priority to one sense over another may be somewhat irrelevant, though in the haiku itself the reader encounters one sense first and then another, making the discussion format useful, as well as the fact that it is appealing to see a variety of examples, an approach this article will follow. Horiuchi claims that the last combination, Olfaction-Hearing is unknown in haiku, but he does not list a 'Hearing-Gustatory' combination (of which I have found an example, see below, under 'Sound-taste'). His extensive cataloguing includes discussion of 58 haiku as well as seven extracts from longer poems.

Horiuchi asserts, "synesthesia is inseparable from subjectivity," which is an important caution since its use may be tied closely to the original sensory perceptions of the authors. The subjectivity

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of reader reception is significant, including variation in the order in which senses are perceived. This inherent subjectivity is an important reason why I will not be too conclusive in my discussion of synesthetic haiku. It is possible that neurological testing of synesthetes composing could evaluate that subjectivity rigorously. In any case, an element of subjectivity does not mean that something is totally subjective (a fact that is often overlooked in discussions of all kinds); some relativity needs to be brought to the idea of subjectivity — in other words, there may be a degree of objectivity present, too, and I believe that is the case in Horiuchi's descriptions, and I hope in my own.

Horiuchi gives an example from Issa (trans. R.H. Blyth):

The young *uguisu*
Calls its parents
With a yellow voice.

This haiku suggests that the yellow of the voice of the *uguisu* (bush warbler) connotes the sweet tone of infancy and other qualities. Use of the word 'connotes' is important since synesthesia expands the range of connotations possible in writing. Horiuchi highlights an important aspect of the technique in writing, that "the interaction of the two senses embellishes the poem." (3) However, I would argue that some of Toshimi Horiuchi's patterns foreground a juxtaposition of the senses rather than a blending of them, as in this example from Jōsō (trans. R.H. Blyth):

A *hototogisu* cries;
The waters of the lake
Are slightly muddy

The sensory experiences are placed alongside each other, as signalled by the semi-colon. They might be interpreted synesthetically, or they might not. I would argue that the poem represents what is

often called ‘sense-switching’ rather than synesthesia. It forms a contrast with the previous haiku Horiuchi discusses, by Issa (trans. R.H. Blyth):

A cicada is chirping:
The toy wind-mill
Is bright red.

Here, the cicada’s chirping causes the windmill to be bright red, signalled by the full colon. As Horiuchi puts it, “if the cicada’s voice had a form, it would be that of a red windmill.”

Some of the examples of a doubling of the senses, such as ‘Hearing-Hearing’ perhaps betray the influence of synesthesia rather than direct examples of it, as in this example from Bashō (trans. H.G. Henderson):

This quietness:
the shrilling of cicadas
stabs into rocks

Certainly, we move from the quietness (sound) to the shrilling (sound), but again this seems a mere contrast or succession of events. The analysis overlooks the fact that another sense is then invoked; the poem is in fact fully synesthetic, since the use of ‘stabbing’ evinces touch. It is odd that this piece is categorised in the ‘Hearing-Hearing’ pattern, especially as Horiuchi has shortly before this talked about the ‘Hearing-Movement’ pattern (which I read as ‘Sound-touch’), where this example perhaps belongs.

When it comes to interpretation, differences of opinion are inevitable. More importantly, Horiuchi’s analysis points to the advantages of synesthetic haiku in convincing ways, and its use is contagious: in one discussion he talks about a coyote’s cry polishing the silence of a moonlit night, the comment being more vividly synesthetic than the haiku in question. Looking ahead, Horiuchi

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writes that associating the sense of sight or touch with sound is relatively easy, whereas connecting sound with smell or taste is very difficult and that, doing so represents “the developmental task of synesthetic imagery.” (11-12) I may have discovered an example of this combination, below (in the section headed ‘Experience’).

Synesthetic haiku

This discussion section considers examples of synesthetic haiku in detail; often using more than one example of sense combinations employed to illustrate diverse effects. The dynamics discussed create additional categories: speculative/abstract; shifting, multiple; variations; influence; the beyond; reflections; and experience. The latter additional category charts my own ventures in writing haiku with synesthetic qualities and the discovery of a ‘zoned out’ state which invites a blending of the senses.

To metaphor, or not?

Haiku poets tend to avoid metaphor, preferring work that is grounded in the moment, without comparison. Many examples of synesthetic haiku, though creating a very subtle form of metaphor, still have a grounding in the literal details of the moment captured. In that sense synesthetic haiku do not differ so much from other haiku which occupy both these literal and metaphoric levels, thereby deepening and enriching the work, as opposed to imagery that is merely metaphor and tends not to stand well alone.

Dead metaphor

We are so familiar with dead metaphors that we do not notice them — phrases like ‘away with the fairies’ were once fresh and new and, like all good metaphors, told us something interesting through

comparison between things that are not normally compared. Repeated thousands of times, they eventually contribute little, and the dead metaphor becomes synonymous with cliché. I have realised that some dead metaphors contain examples of cross-sensory imagery: they are synesthetic. If we talk about a dish having a ‘sharper taste’ we are creating a synesthetic phrase, blending taste with the sensation of sharpness. In this sense, synesthetic imagery may be more common than we have previously realised. Perhaps we have been expressing ourselves in this way for some time, but it is only now, with our increased understanding of synesthesia and artists’ heightened use of it that we are aware of this inventiveness in language. I will explore the dead metaphor in conjunction with my first example of sense combinations. In total, I offer 44 examples and describe (at least) 19 categories of sense combinations.

Sight — taste

This haiku presents a familiar kind of image:

a hush in the line
 all eyes tasting
 the soup

Ellen Compton

To write about eyes tasting the soup is like writing about a ‘sharper taste’. The idea of eyes tasting the soup is a familiar one, perhaps a cliché — I am sure we would all have said similar things: that our eyes devoured the cake in the shop window, maybe. Yet this haiku has a strong sense of presence, especially as the first line borrows slightly from the second’s conflating of the senses with the hush in a line. Until we know what kind of line we are dealing with, this is a somewhat eccentric idea, and although an element of cliché endures, it is treated with sufficient freshness, or recycling, to affect the reader, and its synesthesia forms part of the impact.

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Sight — touch (movement)

Colouring itself across the pond the autumn wind . . .
Vincent Tripi (in Ross, 1993, 269)

We cannot see the wind. As with time, we only know the wind by its effects. This single-line haiku shows us the wind colouring itself in its movement across the water — it leaves us to imagine what colours they are. It is quite conceptual, but I doubt many of us would read the haiku without imagining actual colours. Some readers may experience sound rather than touch — the elemental wind might evoke sight, touch or sound, which means that this example could be categorised under the ‘Multiple’ heading.

empty field –
chalked soccer lines
whiten the wind . . .

David LeCount (in Mortimer, 35)

I have included this haiku because it does something else with the idea of the colour of the wind: it effectively asks that lovely ‘what if’ question, so productive for creative writing, ‘what if the wind had a colour?’ Do the soccer lines whiten the wind? They must be very white. Perhaps they are new. They are in an empty field, no one is playing there at the moment. Are they present only for the wind; to whiten the wind? What is their purpose when no one is around? The situation recalls the *koan* (riddle) about the tree falling down in a forest.

Touch (or abstraction) — sight

Another example further elucidates the idea that dead metaphors have previously been the seat of synesthetic combinations:

Treasuring the fires
of the Daimonji Festival
as they die away

Shoji Shikyo (in Ross 2015, 45)

When we speak about treasuring fires, are we not being synesthetic? What do we do when we treasure things? Do we cradle them, physically, or just think about them? Surely the verb begins with physical gesture. However, this haiku points to the difficulty of categorisation and interpretation of the subjective elements of the synesthetic haiku. One might say that touch is the first sense employed, but one could just as easily term it a fusion of abstraction and sight. One might wonder if this is merely an example of the influence of synesthesia. Influence could be the operative element of other pieces which employ abstractions, together with sensory detail. What gives this haiku resonance, I think, is the ‘as they die’ idea, suggesting a complex of perception, rather than a commonplace, recycling the clichéd element.

Sight — smell

jonquils!
a quick whiff of yellow
through fog

Jan Dobb

We can smell jonquils, not the colour yellow. It is a natural association, though — jonquils and yellow — because the flower is often that colour. The smell helps us see the flowers, one sense assisting the other. The way the smell and the colour reinforce each other accentuates the contrast with the fog, and synesthesia brings a weird kind of clarity to the situation, through a particular focus or adjustment of the senses.

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White chrysanthemums:
in the fragrance, too, there are
light and shade.

Akutagawa Ryunosuke (in Ueda, 98)

This poem comments on smell in a self-conscious and deliberate way, forcing fragrance to have light and shade, just as the visual field does. The abstract ‘fragrance’ forms a bridge from the specific chrysanthemum to the other sense. Because we know that white chrysanthemums are closely associated with death in Japan, the haiku potentially comments on the grieving process: light and shade might also represent elements or degrees of grief.

Sight — sound

mango blossom dawn
everything dyed with
cuckoo song

Shrikanth Krishnamurthy

This haiku begins with a strong and complex image: ‘mango blossom dawn’. It then simplifies, drastically, to the generalisation ‘everything’. Normally, such a generalisation might be considered weak. It might not work as effectively if offered in the first line, and the haiku would probably be overwrought if the second line was as complex as the first. The poem achieves contrast and balance. The cuckoo song is pervasive; we have been grounded so well in the first image, and have plenty to imagine already, that the use of ‘everything’ does not come across as some loose claim. We are then struck by the beauty of the idea that everything could be dyed — which relates to colour — by a bird’s song. This makes us focus even more fully on the bird, suggesting that synesthesia is an effective technique for enhancing the moment.

In the empty church
 at nightfall, a lone firefly
 deepens the silence

Nick Virgilio (in Ross, 1993, 285)

In this piece, sight and sound intensify each other. That single dot of light, flitting about, appearing then disappearing, becomes associated with the already silent church setting. The darkness when the firefly ‘goes out’ resembles conventional, aural silence. It is as if the relationship with sound must include the ghost of sound: silence. It is night, so we can see little; there are probably no lights on in the church or we wouldn’t be able to see the firefly at all. Our senses are heightened during silence or when we can see little, because we are straining to perceive something. The lack of something to see intensifies the lack of sound.

The silence
 in moonlight
 of stones

Virginia Brady Young (in Van den Heuvel, 319)

This haiku is similar to the previous. Perhaps it is the free flow of meaning (its direction, or lack of) from one line to another that makes this minimalist poetic succeed. If we read the first two lines and then pause — and it is not clear where the cut, or pause for contemplation, lies here (the advantage, sometimes, of not using punctuation) — it seems that the voice of the poem thinks there could be silence in moonlight; the visual and the aural are fused. The silence is the subject of the phrase, and the moonlight and stones become almost interchangeable as object. Do stones normally make a noise — have you heard one chatter away to itself of a quiet moonlit night? Maybe. What a magical world the poem captures through its disjunctive, synesthetic approach.

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thaw
i listen to
the sun

Dietmar Tauchner (in Ross 2015, 65)

I am inclined to say that the first sense used here is sight, but because of the presence of the personal pronoun in the second line, it could be touch: the voice of the poem feeling the thaw. The poem potentially houses multiple sense combinations.

Sound — sight

It is as though the next haiku creates a kind of sensory spillover, through its exuberance:

Voices of the sea
also turning green —
recalling Ganjin

Namekata Katsumi (in Ross 2015, 33)

A note to this haiku tells us that Ganjin (Jian Zhen) was a Chinese monk who came to Japan in the eighth century. The sea green is so pervasive here that it has to colour the voices, evoking an overwhelming level of green, as the synesthesia has the effect of intensifying sensory description, as well as communicating intense perceptions.

The next haiku is self-conscious, aware of colour relations:

snow furrows
the rasp of a pheasant
the only colour

Claire Everett

The description of sound is given as the only instance of colour, otherwise it would have none — the need to go to another sense

for this ‘colour’ helps convey the dominance of white in the snow-filled landscape. The word ‘colour’ is abstract yet links the other senses together in a similar way to the example from Ryunosuke, above.

Sound — taste

Additional vividness is applied to this description through the medium of sound:

October fest
too much oom-pah-pah
in the mustard

Adelaide Shaw

What a great word: oom-pah-pah. It is a funny way to sum up the music. The poem achieves even more humour in considering the idea that it is in the mustard, a double serving. Maybe the band will stop, and the poet can enjoy the beer (implied) and the sausages (implied). This haiku might also be categorised in the Multiple section since it may also evoke the visual.

Sound — touch

Reed warblers
sing the great river
still.

Kobayashi Issa

The phrase ‘sing the great river’ reminds me that in Welsh one sings an instrument, so that to ‘play a guitar’ is to sing a guitar: ‘canu y git r’, from ‘canu’ to sing. That implicitly synesthetic idiom is extended as we roam through the senses, returning to sight through stillness—the reed warblers are so active they make a

great river seem still, or, more importantly (for the way synesthesia enhances the effects of writing), the technique captures the magical sense of the birds influencing the scene.

Touch — sound (acquired)

smiling deaf lady
her palm listening to
the cat's purrrrrr

Djurdja Vukelic Rozic

This haiku narrates a kind of enforced or acquired synesthesia, through deafness. The use of the onomatopoeic 'purrrrr' reinforces the fact that the deaf person also feels the purring and through it knows the sound. It reminds those of us who are not sight impaired that there is another possibility at work here: to feel sound well, which is actually always the case with sound because the type of vibration that it creates sound waves that can be felt and measured. The phrase 'her palm listening to' evokes sign language (and, more distantly, braille).

Sense-switching

In the next haiku, we might wonder what the Nightingale's song is like. Perhaps we get a new understanding from a sense other than sound. Switching abruptly from one sense to another is enough to offer something new. In that way, the poem justifies sense-switching, though I do want to stress its difference to synesthesia, a fuller form of imagery.

Here, too, the senses are quickly juxtaposed and in doing so inform each other:

Nightingale's song
 this morning
 soaked with rain

Kobayashi Issa

Additional categories

Speculative/ Abstract (the sense combinations identified within these additional categories are given in parenthesis)

I mentioned the way in which an abstract word can be used to help link senses in the examples from Everett and Ryunosuke, and in a confident manner. Some haiku are speculative, using the senses to inform and modify situations, creatively, outside a conventional view. I had intended for the speculative and abstract related pieces to occupy separate categories, but the more I thought and wrote about them the more I realised that they were intrinsically linked, at least in the examples that I could find.

(Abstraction — sight)

The water lying
 in a withered lotus . . .
 if repentance has a colour

Kagiwada Yuko (in Ross 2015, 18)

This is another creative ‘what if’ way of seeing. In this case, the synesthetic element is working on abstraction, rather than a second sense. The lotus is symbolic of transformation, and we might consider that dynamic as an aspect of repentance. Perhaps this haiku marks the influence of synesthesia, rather than an actual example of it. We could say that some haiku have synesthetic attitudes.

Here is a very literal version of the great ‘what if’ question:

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If the passing world
has any colour . . . this
cherry-petal seashell

Ueda Hizashi (in Ross 2015, 53)

There are a number of synesthetic haiku like this which speculate what colour a thing would have which does not normally possess colour; it is imaginative and the kind of effect many poets in other forms accomplish.

first snow
still some summer
in the hare

Nika

This haiku uses the abstraction ‘summer’ to evoke some form of movement, energy or vitality in the hare, despite the wintry scene. We might only be ‘seeing’ the hare in terms of that abstract and its connotations. It begins to suggest the shifting nature of sensory information in a synesthetic haiku which will be explored further in the next section.

Shifting

(Sight — sound — sight — sound)

bent echo
in the mirror:
aged voice

Leons Briedis (in Ross 2015, 81)

The first, compressed phrase is brilliantly original—in what universe can an echo be bent? The answer is in the poetic one. From the echo we move back to the image of the mirror and to hearing an aged voice, which could be a metaphor, a synesthetic

representation of an aged image seen in the mirror. This haiku shifts and shifts again between the two senses, each informing the other and creating a richly dense whole. It really is as if the senses are scrambled, yet it is not a chaotic piece; it is minimalist in form, if large in scope. It is a sophisticated poem. It is a poem formed from literal reflection, so that I might just as easily have included it in the section of that name, below.

(Sight — smell — sight)

In the mist
a scent appears
hidden by the sun

Kaj Falkman (in Ross 2015, 97)

Scent informs the visual in an unusual way, and in turn is hidden by the visual of the sun, in an equally disjunctive manner. The scent is both present and absent (reminiscent of the haiku referencing silence, above). That the scent can be hidden by the sun creates a synesthetic link and intensifies the mistiness of the first image. At the same time, we might wonder if we really smell the scent at all.

(Sight — sound — sight)

Again, we find that in synesthetic haiku things act in ways they should not:

morning mist
whistling to the birds' songs
an old bike

Anatoly Ilyustchyts (in Ross 2015, 66)

The lack of attribution is productive here, a delightful ambiguity, emblematic of the way the haiku is hard to pin down in terms of category. Is the morning mist whistling, or the bike? Contemporary

NINE

convention suggests that the cut comes at the end of the first line, but the lack of punctuation ‘unfixes’ it. In either case, it is a synesthetic act. It recalls a brilliant metonym in the poem ‘So far’ by New Zealand poet Michele Leggott, a “warble on a bike,” (2005, 3) which could be a bird perched on the handlebars, or a rider whistling. The poem’s fluidity creates the magical sense in which the morning mist whistles a bike into existence (or view). Another reading might hear the voice of the poem doing the whistling of the second line, though it is quite an effort to arrive at that idea, and, in the logic of the poem’s multiplicity, it seems counter-intuitive.

(Sight — sound — sound (in something else))

distant sawmill
just loud enough
to hear the sunset

Vladislav Vassiliev (in Ross 2015, 91)

As we read this haiku, I think most of us would see an image first, after reading the first line, and then realise that sound is implicated: it is a rapid movement. Then we meet the complex idea of hearing the sunset, which compounds the strange appreciation of sound. There is an element of the speculative in the consideration of sound. It is just loud enough to constitute something, and that something is quite unexpected: hearing sunset. Whether the word ‘sunset’ returns us to the visual is uncertain: the poem does not stand still.

Multiple

(Touch/sight — scent)

stars above the pines sharpen the scent
Ron C. Moss

The effect here is more than juxtaposition of the senses. We move rapidly between them, aided by the single line speed rush. We see stars; we get a physical sense of sharpness which is immediately transferred to or fused with the aroma. The physicality of the word ‘sharpen’ intensifies the clarity of the stars and of the scent; the scent is not made specific but evoked as a type or effect by the other sense.

(Sight/ touch — sound)

The next haiku begins with the sense of sight and then offers dynamic movement (which implies touch), concluding with a musing on the absence of sound:

autumn evening
the grasshopper’s long jump
into silence

John J. Han (in Ross 2015, 127)

Again, movement and the visual seem intertwined or doubled, and the haiku potentially has multiple effects.

(Sight — touch — sound)

stones skipping the edge of his whistle
Theresa A. Cancro

Much is combined here. The word ‘whistle’ most likely refers to sound, as an actual whistle (an instrument) would make little sense. The sight and touching of the stones on water coalesces with the sound; they inform each other and deepen the imagery around each in a way that conveys connection.

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(Touch — sound — sight (or touch))

the fatness
of bee-hum
flowering pear

Marietta McGregor

If bee-hum had a shape, this would be it, and the use of synesthesia enables the poet to put it directly in those terms. The indirectness of bee-hum (rather than merely referencing the bee) is essential in allowing the merging of senses and pleasing in its specificity. The implied connection between the first two lines and the third suggests both a contrasting image and a larger passage of time than the moments observed. There is also potential sense-switching from lines two to three. A lot depends on how we read the word 'flowering': if we allow it to operate as a verb as well as a noun, we get a multiple effect. Alternatively, this piece could be categorised under Variations, with similar possibilities, in terms of utilising both sense-switching and synesthesia, to the example by Parsons.

(Sound — sight/touch (sound) — taste)

The next haiku takes synesthesia about as far as it is possible to go in terms of multiplicity before breaking down:

song of a hermit thrush
braided with autumn rain
the taste of that

Jo Balistreri

Perhaps it does break down. Is this too much sensory information, akin to the way three images in a haiku make it cluttered and overburdened? That the song could be braided with rain, having a visual or tactile dimension, *and* having a taste is a lot to declare. Perhaps it takes a while to digest, but it may be delicious to some readers.

Variations

(Sense-switching (touch to sound) — sound — sight (and back to touch))

cold church
 funeral hymns
 the colour of breath

John Parsons (in Ross 2015, 73)

The movement across the first two lines could be seen as an example of sense-switching. The synesthesia that develops across lines two and three suggest sound and sight as the predominant combination — it is interesting to see a haiku which makes use of both the main techniques discussed in this article. It also, like some of the examples above, possesses a speculative quality in its use of the abstract ‘colour’ to help convey something fresh about the visual element of the poem. Once again, a synesthetic haiku proves hard to fix in terms of category.

(Sense-switching — sound — touch)

frosty night,
 echo of a bell
 opens the sky

Andrea Cecon (in Ross 2015, 80)

Can a sound open the sky, which is a visual and physical reality? Usually not, though this haiku reminds one that sound waves are recordable and, given Einstein’s unified field theory, lends the impression that nothing is really separated from anything else: all forces in the universe are interconnected, so how could the senses be otherwise. The emphasis on connection in synesthetic haiku evokes interconnectedness or relationality, recalling Scriabin’s search for the integration of the senses. (Triarhou)

NINE

(Sight — touch/ sound (and sight again?))

Does this haiku do more than offer a weird metaphor?

shining wind
an orchestra
of bobbing boats

Bisshie

The wind does not normally shine, that is surely synesthetic. We move from the visual to touch and an image of the effect of wind on water. We can hear the wind, too, and that sensory reference is embellished by the use of the rather overt metaphor of the orchestra. The poem does not rest there and moves on with the idea that this particular orchestra is a visual one, composed of bobbing boats. Perhaps everything in the poem is really about the visual, with a clumsy metaphor slewing about. The poem is delightfully complex, and I think there is more to it than metaphor alone. The orchestra metaphor may have been suggested by ‘shining wind’ — already synesthetic and alluding to the gleaming brass instruments of an orchestra pit. One goes round and around with this haiku, trying to anchor it (please enjoy the pun) in a starting point; the synesthetic element is interconnected, relational and we cannot separate out cause and effect.

Influence

(Touch — sound)

In some haiku, it is sometimes as if one thing *becomes* another, perhaps through the influence of synesthesia.

The winter tree
I am leaning on has turned
into a tank's roar.

Kato Shuson (in Ueda, 219)

This becoming of movement creates an insistent metaphor. It is an important act of imagination. We graduate from touch, of the tree (and sight), to the sound of the tank.

(Touch — sight (or sound))

Similarly, in the next haiku, we move from the feeling of walking through the vineyard (as well as the visual of it) to the physicality of the wind, with a strongly visual element to boot.

walking through the vineyards —
the wind
turns into a hare

Daniele Duteil (in Ross 2015, 76)

Again, the influence of the imagination is enormous, and the fluidity of the poem might suggest a multiplicity that makes my reading limited.

The beyond

(Sight — sound)

Some synesthetic haiku possess what I call the beyond tendency: that beyond one sense we start experiencing or thinking about another.

morning mist . . .
beyond it, the cry
of a quail

Kanchan Chatterjee

Perhaps the beyond haiku is really a version of sense-switching. The movement to the sense beyond this one is often clearly signalled, as if the author is aware of this transcendent movement as it is happening.

(Sight (or sound) — sight — sound)

winter rain. . .
 snow geese flying over
 the factory whistle

Rich Youmans (in Ross 1993, 304)

Can geese fly over a sound, such as that of the factory whistle? Perhaps so, but we might not always think of a relationship between such a movement and sound. Perhaps this haiku would be better categorised in the Shifting or Variations sections — such doubts reinforce the point I made earlier about the arbitrary nature of categories, and the fact that an individual piece might occupy more than one. The whistle here, the mechanism that produces the sound, could also be physical (and more likely so than in the Cancro example, above). Often, in the haiku discussed there have been things literal and things implied, and the subtle ways in which they intersect or underpin each other form part of the charm and depth of the poem.

Reflections

The synesthesia in some haiku is forced by the presence of reflections, most often in water. I hesitate to describe them as synesthetic, because the method is different, yet they are surely synesthetic in their effects. The natural experience of reflection invites this complex reading, as one's perception of the sense of sight is altered by it.

(Sight — taste)

clouds flow
 in the teacup
 a sip of sky

Dainius Dirgela (in Ross 2015, 82)

garden pond
 a koi nibbles
 at spring rain

Michael L. Evans (in Ross 2015, 126)

(Touch (space) — sight — touch (space))

In the next piece, we shift between sight and a physical sense of space, which invokes touch, indirectly.

bus stop
 a room inside
 the rain

Peter Newton

There is a space within a space here. A both/and mechanism is at work: the bus stop is itself a room *and* forms a metaphor. Because we can hear rain as well as see or feel it, some readers might point to sound more readily than touch. The poem could also be categorised as Shifting.

Experience

I am not synesthetic, but I have sometimes used synesthesia as a literary technique. By necessity, one must say that each of my haiku in this vein is *influenced* by synesthesia. They are perhaps a little more than that. In describing the context of their composition, I realised a further common factor. Each of these haiku have been written in a temporary state one might euphemistically describe as ‘zoned out’, which causes a blurring of the senses that is somewhat disorientating and at the same time rich for poetic mining, and analogous to synesthesia.

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(Sound — sight (or smell))

walking in the heat
no conversation
but the lilies

(2009, 22)

This is a shifting haiku. In the absence of words, the lilies are the conversation. Affected by the heat, the family was not talking; the heat merges the senses in a kind of juxtaposition or new-found and strange awareness. Perhaps that juxtaposition is an example of sense-switching — I will leave the reader to decide.

(Touch — abstraction — abstraction)

watching you plait
the seconds
into an hour

(2009, 31)

There is a transferal of dimensions at work here: one cannot plait seconds except by fusing the senses, and then one can say it directly, as metaphor, rather than simile. Time passing is an abstract concept made real by observing actions; the haiku speaks to a long process that is beyond the moment. I remember the context: watching my daughter plait wool, a mesmerising thing to watch, another experience of zoning out. These realisations recall Ward's idea of synesthesia being acquired pharmacologically and causing an 'unmasking' of the senses (above), but in this case through means more natural than recourse to hallucinogenics.

(Sight/ touch — sound)

below the cliff
 a fishing boat
 carrying voices

(2009, 42)

A fishing boat cannot carry voices, though it seems to, and it certainly carries people, who carry voices. This way of looking at the scene accentuates the ethereal quality of voices rising up towards a clifftop. It feels as though the use of synesthetic inference or indirection assists the expression (and might be compared with the Ilyustchyts example, above).

(Sound — sight (and a hint of touch?))

harpsichord recital
 I listen to
 cracks in the walls

(2012, 57)

Initially, I was listening to this concert (at the Great Hall in Totnes, UK) quite enraptured. Something about the sameness of tone in the instrument made my mind and eyes wander; I was gazing at the ancient walls, which seemed to fuse with the music. It was another zoned out experience. It felt as though the music was pushing me into appreciating everything as part of the performance, analogous to the tendency in visiting galleries to start perceiving ordinary, functional objects as part of an installation. It is an event that temporarily merges the senses.

(Sight — touch/sight)

This piece revisits the power of reflection to have a synesthetic effect:

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still lake
clouds
miles deep

(2022a, n.p.)

This is a case of the visual affecting the spatial. To look down into a lake and perceive it through the depth of the sky reflected in it can be overwhelming — I have often felt dizzy at such a sight, which is a strange surprise and a surreal experience that nature is able to generate through us.

(Hearing-smell-hearing (or Smell-hearing))

Here is one occasion when I used the technique of synesthesia quite deliberately:

burnout —
the smoke in my
ears

(2022b, p. 19)

As a reader, I associate a burnout with hearing it first, though one might alternatively see the evidence of it in the tell-tale lines of burnt rubber. This haiku came into being as a dedication to a colleague who described feeling burnt out at work, so it started life purely as a metaphor, but a reader may not guess that this was the case since we seem to read first of a literal event. The discussion of burnout at work prompted another colleague and myself to complete various surveys to gauge our risk of burnout. I was in the vulnerable category, and I was trying to evoke this state of being, both for myself and in sympathy with others. I felt muddled and a bit zoned out. I have stated that the piece moves from hearing to smell and back to hearing, but one could interpret the first line as a smell — smoke can be visual, aural or olfactory, or suggest touch, a delicious ambiguity — perhaps it satisfies the parameters of Horiuchi's missing combination: 'Olfaction-Hearing'.

Conclusion

I suspect that synesthetic haiku are becoming more common, as our receptivity and knowledge of their dynamics grow. In this article, I draw heavily on haiku from Bruce Ross' relatively recent anthology, *A Vast Sky: An Anthology of Contemporary World Haiku* (2015). The selection made me wonder if Ross himself were synesthetic, or if the selection simply reflects contributors' inclinations. I found fewer examples of synesthetic haiku in older anthologies, with the exception of translations from Japanese, perhaps re-asserting Miller's idea about resistance to the technique on the part of North American haikai. I also discussed two recent haiku by Peter Newton and Nika from the same issue of *The Heron's Nest*, a prominent online journal from North America, from 2022. They comprised two of the three Editor's Choices for that issue, suggesting that editors are increasingly receptive to synesthetic effects.

Writing this article naturally made me speculate about individual poets, as well as editors. The only poet other than Bashō and Issa by whom I have collected multiple synesthetic haiku is Australian haikai Jan Dobb. I reference just one of her pieces here, but I have found many others, making me suspect she is a synesthete, though I have yet to confirm this. In future research, interviews with synesthetic poets might prove productive. Dobb also uses sense-switching.

Sense-switching and synesthesia are different. They may overlap in ways that cannot be clearly discerned, and they have different effects: sense-switching favouring a subtle juxtaposition and synesthesia creating bold and often metaphorical imagery. One might say that if a synesthetic haiku is written by a synesthete the cross-sensory effects created do not constitute metaphor (except in reader reception), and, as noted above, synesthesia is not a technique but an experience and only constitutes a technique in the hands of non-synesthetes. My own experiments raise a further complication: it is possible that the inclusion of synesthesia as a

literary technique emanates from an unusual experience where recourse to synesthetic dynamics aids the writer in expressing the otherwise inexpressible quality of the moment.

Synesthetic haiku make distinctive and subtle use of inference and connotation. They enable us to enjoy the senses in fresh ways. They embellish and intensify the moments described; they help us, as writers, to notice and utilise sensory detail with greater variety. The writing of this article has made me more conscious of the way elemental phenomena, such as wind, rain, water and smoke can invoke multiple senses, and of how productive that can prove when harnessed in haiku. Making use of synesthesia as a technique is surely an option which reflects an openness to possibilities that can enrich our writing and reading of haiku, at the same time as representing nature's abundance.

Nature does multiple things at once. We all experience multiple senses; they are not commonly fused as they are for synesthetes, but we can relate to that multiplicity and employ it ourselves as a technique. Synesthetic haiku emphasise connection and interrelatedness at a time when our need to preserve the planet suggest the intelligence of looking at and fostering worldviews that are grounded in relationality.

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old
pine
needles
leave
some



the
tree
without any
sound

Jon Codrescu



Prison Participant Poetry:

A Personal Experience of Engagement through the Power of Haiku

Dorothy ABRAM

ABSTRACT: Toward the middle of the twentieth century, scholars in the fields of the Social Sciences (such as Margaret Mead and others) questioned the accepted existence of an objective observer who was detached from and independent of what the researcher observed. Though an engaged witness is fundamental to understanding haiku poetry since its beginnings with Basho in the 1600s, the academic world insisted on objectivity and distance from the subject of one's study as the highest standard of scholarship and its valued method of acquiring knowledge.

Subsequently, an alternate understanding of knowledge arose and it was formulated in a methodological approach called "participant observation." Identifying the subjective role of the researcher, this method of participant observation encouraged engagement through the interaction of the group being studied with the person who is doing the studying. Rather than a remote exploration, participant observation emphasized the lived experience of both researcher and participant in the process of their engagement. It transformed the impersonality and objectification of what philosopher Martin Buber named the I-It relationship into a humanistic engagement of respect and dignity for the Other of the I-Thou (Buber 49).

At the same time, scholarship in the arts was still celebrating the notion of the independent artist who is said to create artistry through personal genius apart from context or connection. This essay seeks to challenge that model of the individual artist to offer an alternative proposal for haiku creation through participant engagement. My participant poetry proposal seeks to recognize that, in contrast to isolated and distant poles, certain artistry may be elicited by recognizing two poles in relationship that only exist by acknowledging and honoring the space between them.

In that space emerge the insights of haiku.

*Spirit is not in the I
but between I and You.*

Martin Buber, I and Thou

Not a man but number J41430

For this essay, I propose that an engaged relationship is vitally necessary in certain circumstances and with certain people who would otherwise be closed out of haiku creation. Specifically, I examine my relationship with a double “lifer” who has spent the last thirty years at the Pelican Bay State Supermax Prison in California. I came to know this person who has become a close and dear friend through a mutual acquaintance.

My friend was not comfortable with his written English, so our participant poetry developed in conversation over the phone (see, also, p. 4). This work did not begin as a research project or classroom exercise where I would keep track and drafts of the haiku as they develop. It started as a friendship without publishing thoughts or intentions. Thus, I do not have a step-by-step sequence of his written development. I could not record our conversations in that context of a super-maximum prison, and it never occurred to me to do so. I only kept the final poems. Certainly, a quick search of the internet reveals many talented writers of haiku who were formerly incarcerated. Others are not even aware of this possibility of expression or feel closed out of such creativity for whatever reason.

This prison has earned the designation of incarcerating the “worst of the worst” and known for its torturous solitary confinement practices.

I'm waiting for what
waiting for the wait to end
it already happened

I sprinkle haiku throughout this essay to offer the reader a sort of experience of participant engagement as I develop this theme. These haiku demonstrate the range of our writings together from my work with my friend to introduce and familiarize him with this creative process, to our mutual haiku creation, to my haiku interpretations, and finally to his independent haiku expression. In this first haiku offered, the intent was to demonstrate the distortion of time within the prison setting by a disorienting assertion of its endlessness.

Just as the model of participant observation brings the researcher into the lives and activities of the people studied, prison participant poetry necessitates that both of us engage in this process of haiku creation together. Our engagement took on different forms that shifted over the course of our haiku writing together. Three stages developed. In the beginning, when haiku was an unfamiliar form for my friend, I provided the format to structure his memories and perceptions into haiku. Since he is an insightful and visual thinker, it seemed easy to format his words into haiku form. The second stage was more interactive where we shared thoughts and ideas to create haiku together. At the third stage, he was on his own. This stage coincided with his release from prison and here we witness a strong release of emotion.

Simultaneously throughout these developmental stages, I was challenged to absorb the enormity of his psychological, spiritual, and emotional experiences of incarceration. Haiku became a tool for me to concentrate and to attempt to comprehend his extreme experience. We shared our work together in weekly video chats, telephone calls, and letters throughout the years of the pandemic and beyond. He was often touched to experience the power of his own words through eloquence of haiku poetry as was I, too.

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This was not an impersonal process for me. I had to feel his feelings as best I could to participate in writing haiku together. Clearly, this would be a challenge for someone who has not experienced the cruelties and privations of extended prison life. I had to be constantly vigilant that the haiku structure and vocabulary that I employed appropriately represented and sensitively rendered his meanings. There were times when I became conscious of an experience that seemed particular to his time and place. A memory seemed to capture a significance that was somehow beyond me, but I attempted to make my own meaning out of his memory. This was an assertion of the transformative power of the sensory experience in the context of participant poetry. Always he corrected or confirmed the end product. With the multiple poems that I share in this essay, haiku represent a mutual process of reflection and meaning-making.

Entering prison

My friend readily takes responsibility for his crimes. Along with the individual, we must also consider the sociocultural context of his actions. Cultural historian Keith Morton elucidates the prerequisites for this sort of manifestation of violence. Along with Lonnie Athens, Morton claims that violence is a learned response to trauma that results from direct experience of physical and emotional trauma. In addition, these authors specify that this trauma occurs in a context of poverty, racism, and marginalization and the failure of protective social institutions. My friend fits all these criteria. Add the ease of the acquisition of fire arms and the influence of a toxic masculinity of machismo to this troubling setting of trauma, and conflicts easily and quickly turn deadly.

my manhood challenged
niece's quinceanera
two dead and me too

This haiku was my friend's confession of his crimes. I had never asked him what actions he committed that resulted in his imprisonment. One day, however, he felt a personal need to tell me so that I "would know the whole story."

dangerous rules
Pelican Bay State Prison
a reach through the bars

For this man to befriend me, he had to reach past actual prison bars (through phone calls, letters, and video chats). He also had to reach through figurative bars. That is, unlike the potentially dangerous interactions of the carcerary setting, we required trust, honesty, and even vulnerability for participant poetry to work.

My friend is a rare story of the person who chose to radically change his life from being the "worst of the worst" to become "the best of the best" through his own insight and efforts to construct a positive life, even in such a context. This turn opened him to a world that otherwise is inaccessible to most inmates at Pelican Bay, but possible through outside friendships and communications. My scholarly research oftentimes focuses on scents, smells, and perfumes, both pleasant and malodorous, in diverse cultural settings. Talking about the senses and consciousness in this way seemed to catch his attention.

Stepping into Haiku

I suspect that my friend initially was amused and entertained by my olfactory stories. In any case, he responded by generously sharing with me his sensory experiences behind those prison bars. How often I exclaimed, "You have to write this down! It's important!" But he never did. Though he would talk excitedly and at length about sensory experiences in the prison context, I could not

motivate him to put these stories into writing. Writing simply was not “his thing.” And, there were personal and legitimate reasons for this resistance.

My friend came from Puebla, Mexico as a five-year-old child. He spoke to me about his memories of lying flat on the highway so he would not be seen by Border Control and holding on to a rope that was tied around his mother’s waist when they crossed the river to enter into the United States. With seven siblings, my friend dropped out of school at fourteen and went to work to support his family in an impoverished neighborhood in Los Angeles.

From the beginning, I could hear how sensitive and perceptive he was about his sensory memories. What insightful poetry this past could possibly produce! However, to insist that he note it all down when he clearly felt insecure about his written expression would serve no purpose and might even create feelings of inadequacy.

What was I to do?

It occurred to me that this quandary was an outcome of that limited model of the individual artist I mentioned at the start of this essay. I realized that my friend and I were the two poles of relationship that move beyond the narcissism of individuality: he had this vast experience and imagination, and, I, at the opposite pole, have a basic skill to put his memories into written haiku form. Additionally, I wondered if haiku could move his descriptions beyond literal meaning and exact description to accentuate a significance that could engage readers through the value of our shared humanity. Could it offer insight? With its basis in Zen Buddhism and enlightenment, haiku became our goal.

Enter prison participant poetry.

Share power, spread privilege, enjoy process

Critical scholars warn about embedded privilege that lurks in systems of power that ensnares all participants in its webs simply through our assigned status and placement in society. At the same time, we must acknowledge that privilege has dual aspects: both its use and its abuse. My profession as a university professor held high status in my friend's cultural value system. In this way, our work together offered him a mantle of individual and artistic respectability. It redressed the stigma of being a felon to clothe him in dignity as a fellow human being.

A critique of prison haiku programs concerns the rigid form of haiku—its five-seven-five syllable sequence and other rules—that are said to reproduce the harsh and unforgiving discipline of incarceration (Joy 23-44). As such, the act itself of writing haiku is claimed to replicate the oppressive disciplinary experience of incarceration. Does this mean that we should abandon teaching haiku in prison? Should we eliminate the formal haiku structure to offer the freedom of free-form to heal the trauma of imprisonment? However, if we consider the sensory deprivation of prison, we might choose to address this concern by recognizing that the haiku structure can be psychologically supportive at times of trauma when sensory encounters may trigger disorientation and overwhelming emotions.

I believe that haiku has the power to address psychological concerns, especially at the time of reentry. Traditional haiku, based on the seasons and senses, offers a formal structure that may act as a scaffold for emotional and sensory support. The moment of transition from prison and reentry into society is a crisis of identity that is manifest in the overwhelming challenge to the senses that were denied in prison. Think of encountering sunlight after living in a world of fluorescent lighting for many years or many decades. A prison reentry counselor described it to me as turning on a

colored television after watching in black and white all your life. Accordingly, we know that recently-released inmates sometimes reoffend simply to avoid the sensory overload they encounter at reentry. Haiku is an affirming act of survival, support, and creativity during this fraught time of identity upheaval.

Poets recognize this contradiction inherent in haiku's practice of strict and sustained discipline with its concurrent promise of spiritual insight. At the same time, haiku is also recognized as the means to resolve this conflict, even as it replicates that core concern of conflict of freedom versus coercive discipline. How can haiku be both? If we want prison participatory engagement to be practical and practiced as well, we must enter again that liminal realm between the I and the Thou, a space that Buddhists call "being present."

This is the way of haiku.

Haiku form and feeling

An easy and enjoyable entry into haiku writing is to count its 5-7-5 syllable pattern on one's fingers. It's oftentimes amusing to witness people with multiple advanced academic degrees counting on their fingers as if they are back in kindergarten. Such democratic artistry!

And yet. The challenge of writing good haiku rests in the necessity to incorporate a *kiregi*, a Japanese term that is typically translated as the "cutting" word. *Kiregi* slices through unimaginative and predictable endings to offer a surprising twist. As a ploy that startles, *kiregi* creates a personal space for the reader to engage and participate in the meaning of a haiku. An example of *kiregi* may be seen in 2011 Nobel Prize in literature Tomas Tranströmer's haiku about his work with incarcerated youth in Sweden (Tranströmer 45). He describes a familiar story of a boy's football (soccer) game

when their ball is unexpectedly kicked out of their playground. The kiregi in this haiku is the wall that surrounds the space. The reader understands that it is impossible for the boys to retrieve their ball, because they are imprisoned by that wall and unable to venture outside its limits to recover the means of their play. The effect of the kiregi is to elicit an empathetic realization of the loss of childhood innocence and human freedom behind the prison walls.

Kiregi, hereby, encourages the haiku writer to consider and feel multiple dimensions of reality without settling for trite or expected endings. With my friend, I would often hear about puzzling behaviors of prison life that simply made no logical sense. They upended expectations of normal life, but without offering the haiku's kiregi insight. For example, my friend experienced a disruption in his life that challenged his capacity to endure. Saddened by his experience of loss, I wrote the following haiku in commemoration.

mother came to visit
a long highway to prison
never made it back

This tragic car accident was a source of grief and created a tremendous burden of guilt for my friend because his siblings oftentimes blamed him for his mother's death. I hope that the kiregi in my haiku motivates the readers to wonder about the mystery of her disappearance and also to communicate terrifying emotional loss. The challenge to survive such loss is not limited to the prisoner. Most people whose family members are arrested and imprisoned agree that "when one person in the family is incarcerated, the entire family is incarcerated." The trauma of imprisonment goes beyond the individual. Some people find resilience and reenter society, but, for others, they never make it back.

Expanding the space between I and Thou

Trust brings challenges. My friend had been in prison for thirty years while I had been free during that entire time. We did not share similar cultural or religious backgrounds, or ages or genders. Sometimes our different social positions would arise as an issue, especially when he would discuss sexual memories. He was hesitant to be explicit with me—a cultural respect for me as an older woman. For example, he would often talk about how “dangerous” it was to even remember the scent of a woman. When a female Correctional Officer happened to be wearing an intensely aromatic perfume, he was flooded with memories he said, of “how wonderful women used to smell” and how much he missed that. It reminded him of what it was like to be “alive.” However, it was a dangerous trigger that propelled him back in time to feeling female sexual attraction while living in an exclusively male punitive sensory institution. Haiku offered us the safety to enter into risky and sometimes awkward conversations.

such dangerous scents
 memories of attraction
 indulge at own risk

Translating my friend’s memories into poetic form, this haiku was an exact recording of his words to me—except for one word: indulge. In deciding to use this word, I had to resist my desire and habit to focus on an olfactory encounter that would have been more consistent with my perfume interests. For that rendering, I would have chosen to use the word inhale. But, I realized that my friend was speaking about a very dangerous sexual threat in the form of a sensory encounter rather than simply a single sense perception. Additionally, the word “indulge” carries a connotation of sinfulness in the indulgence of forbidden pleasure. My friend’s Catholic religious background seemed to validate this word choice

and to magnify the extreme danger of the gratification of the senses in the prison environment.

Our accepted focus on the senses and haiku artistry eased the perils of this conversation. Particularly encouraging, my friend continued to bring up sensory memories as trust between us grew. In telling me these stories, he moved beyond traumatic confession to insight and affirmation of his growth.

used to grow roses
my wife's pungent aroma
petals fall to earth

Admittedly, this is perhaps my most intrusive translation of my friend's testimony into haiku. At the time of telling me his recollections, he did not mention his wife specifically. Instead, he spoke about the scent of women in general. My initial drafts followed his lead, combining women, rose perfume, and sex, but these poems seemed to me to sound like popular perfume advertisements, rather than holding any promise of empathy or insight. I ran into my own wall of cultural values and biases. Coming from a collectivist Latin American culture, my friend held different understanding of gender roles than I. This was seen in his social perspective that tends to separate women and sex into different categories that depend on their placement within the legitimacy of marriage or outside of it. Not quite the duality of virgin and whore that plagues Western patriarchy, he definitely was referring to a sexuality that was not the status of wife in the legitimized institution of marriage.

However, as my friend and I continued to develop trust in our relationship, I saw that my haiku representation was not far off the mark. He shared stories of the difficulties of maintaining a marriage over thirty years in prison. Can poetry also be prophetic

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in explaining the past? If so, the haiku now made sense and was true to his experience; that is, his wife would no longer carry a sweet aroma, especially when he repeatedly used the word ‘hurtful’ to describe her behavior toward him. With this understanding, the line of the haiku about wilting flowers whose “petals fall to earth” needs no further explanation.

Discovering each other through haiku

Throughout his transfers among various prisons in California before ending up at Pelican Bay, my friend took advantage of many educational programs, including gardening and landscaping, masonry, and welding. When he talked about gardening, I felt touched by his immersion into the beauty of the flowers he grew and my sadness over his “lifer” sentence with little possibility of parole.

a prison garden
round yellow marigolds glow
in the setting sun

Perhaps our most interactive haiku, this poem began as my friend was telling me about the round yellow flowers that he tended at his prison garden. I recognized his flower description through my involvements with Hindu communities in the US and in India. At that time, neither of us could remember the name of the flowers that we knew that we were both referring to: prison participatory poetry amnesia!

The first two lines follow his description exactly. The concluding line of this haiku originated in my visualization of flowers with my sadness and regret for his life wasted in prison. Imagine how differently the poem would read if I replaced “setting” in the final line with the word “rising.” The syllables are the same number.

Perhaps a reader might prefer this rewrite to soften the reality of prison life. The feeling, however, even as hopeful as it may suggest, rings hollow and untrue for a prison lifer.

watering flowers
cars speed by with blinkers on
slowing at yield sign

Quietly watering flowers alone in a barb-wired prison garden as cars speed by outside serves to expose the thoughtlessness of our oblivious lives outside prison walls. This haiku represents an equal division for labor in its creation, but not through our design or intention. Instead, it resulted from extremely poor telephone connections at Pelican Bay. My friend was describing what it was like to water the prison flowers amid traffic when the telephone line had such static that it was impossible to continue our conversation.

I chose pick up on his imagery with my own visualizations and interpretations of meaning. If, under such circumstances, the cars only speed by, without looking right or left and without noticing an inmate watering a garden of flowers, the world seems heartless, oblivious, and senseless. Seemingly, nothing can slow the speed of our mechanical obsessions.

Instead, I wrote the haiku with the car intending to yield “with blinkers on.” Now, the driver is going somewhere intentionally, perhaps even for a prison visit, though the reader does not know whether the driver is going to turn right or left. The car could turn in either direction. Opening to possibility, the driver cannot slam on mental and spiritual brakes to come to a full stop and close oneself to the world. Instead, the driver, as I hope the reader too, recognizes the given yield sign as opportunity for expanded awareness and enhanced compassion.

My friend also shared difficult sensory memories, especially those that characterized his early imprisonment when he, as the others,

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hid phones, drugs, and other contraband materials from the guards.

clandestine objects
sleeping with one eye open
dogs, flashlights in face

As we know, images and metaphors are vital to poetry. This haiku is my friend's exact words—in meaning if not in transcription. I chose the word “clandestine” for syllable count without sacrificing meaning.

My friend seemed surprised when I knew the meaning of the expression “sleeping with one eye open” as if it were a phrase so particular to life in prison that it wouldn't be known outside of the carcerary context. As a Classics major in ancient Greek during my early University years, I was intrigued by his use of this expression. It derives from Greek mythology and refers to the queen Hera's 100-eyed guard dog that earned the epithet “panoptes” (all-seeing). Of course, the reader will recognize this word in Foucault's critique of the modern prison system. Designed and explained in 1791 by Bentham, it was a model of a new prison architecture that he called the “panopticon” as a “new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind in quantity hitherto without example” (Bentham 31). French philosopher Foucault names this the Pantoptikon Effect. It is an incarnation of Buber's I-It in action: “He is seen, but does not see; he is object of information, never a subject in communication” (Foucault 200). How curious it is as an inversion and repetition—a juxtaposition—that today's multi-eyed prison guard dog, that keeps watch over the prisoners, also turns the inmates into a panoptikon, too, by forcing them to sleep “with one eye open.”

Discovering oneself

Eventually my friend decided he didn't want the hassle or effort to be that hunted person anymore. He entered therapy and other reformatory programs, including mindfulness and transcendental meditation, and accomplished a change that is difficult to attain and even harder to maintain.

is anyone home
dusk tumbles into deep silence
peace arrives at last

I am always impressed by people who can achieve such resilience against all odds and while living in the most nonconducive settings. With all the disadvantages discussed at the beginning of this essay, his achievement of redemption and transformation was highly unlikely. Still, he was able to achieve a remarkable new understanding of who he was and who he is in the world. This is my attempt to communicate one aspect of the metamorphosis of this man through sharing our work on participatory haiku with the readers of this essay.

The third stage of our haiku participation, described earlier, developed during the time when my friend was granted parole but had to wait three months for his release. Now it seemed that the emotions that he dared not entertain during imprisonment were being allowed to be voiced.

sitting in a rut
risky to act on feelings
do what you need to do

Notice how his anticipation of freedom did not release repressed anger, but, instead, expressed a new awareness of emotional growth and purpose.

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instead of crashing
we destroy each other's life
we can be stronger

These poems that my friend composed before his release were written as an assertion and in anticipation of his freedom.

it's way different now
stop feelings to hell with them
now I care and breathe

We can feel the liberation he achieved from the protective emotions that held him down in prison. His newfound easy breathing transforms him into a compassionate human being—a thirty-year journey from his imprisonment to his release, and still continuing. During this time, my friend attributed his imminent release to a higher power and to shared human connections. This was his last haiku written at Pelican Bay State Supermax Prison:

we have the same god
sometimes called by different names
always here for us

Conclusion

Participant poetry offers a partner and community to sustain an identity. Social psychologists assert that identity is formed through the context and role a person plays in that setting. Many times, this explains why recidivism is such an intractable problem: send a person back to their former lives, without adequate social supports, and the regrettable outcome of return to prison is predictable.

I wish that I could propose that my experience of participant poetry with my imprisoned friend is a model for other compassionate

people to challenge the stereotypes, stigmas, and prejudices concerning incarcerated persons. It is almost impossible to contact and connect with inmates if you are not an immediate family member, relative, or have a professional purpose. This prohibition contributes to the isolation that many inmates suffer. As in my haiku about the impossibility of return by my friend's mother, the necessity of return is an existential and psychological concern. Even after an inmate has completed the sentence and desires to journey back to society, stigma and ostracism follow. The United States prison system is designed for the felony disenfranchisement of the formerly incarcerated. "The prisoner is forbidden from participating in society and its development," writes haiku poet Alexander Joy.

In this way, our prison systems are an exact representation of Martin Buber's description of the inhumane and objectifying I-It relationship. My prison experience with my incarcerated friend promises the possibility of achieving an I-Thou relationship through participant haiku poetry in the prison context.

February 8
 why is this day different
 my friend breathes again

I met my friend after he had already been refused parole nine times over the years. When his parole came up for a tenth hearing, I realized that I could use my privilege as a professor to support his release. Because all prison phone calls, video visits, and letters are monitored, surveilled, recorded, and transcribed by the prison, our constant communications provided the back-up evidence for the prosocial identity that I explained he had achieved in my letter of support to the Parole Board. Though he was granted parole this tenth time at the beginning of December, he had to wait another 150 days for the governor to sign the release.

Mexican ice cream
spicy cayenne burns red hot
to welcome my friend

“All real living is about meeting” asserts Martin Buber about the I-Thou encounters in everyday life. A most unexpected meeting at California’s Pelican Bay State Supermax Prison came about through haiku discovery and engaged participant poetry.

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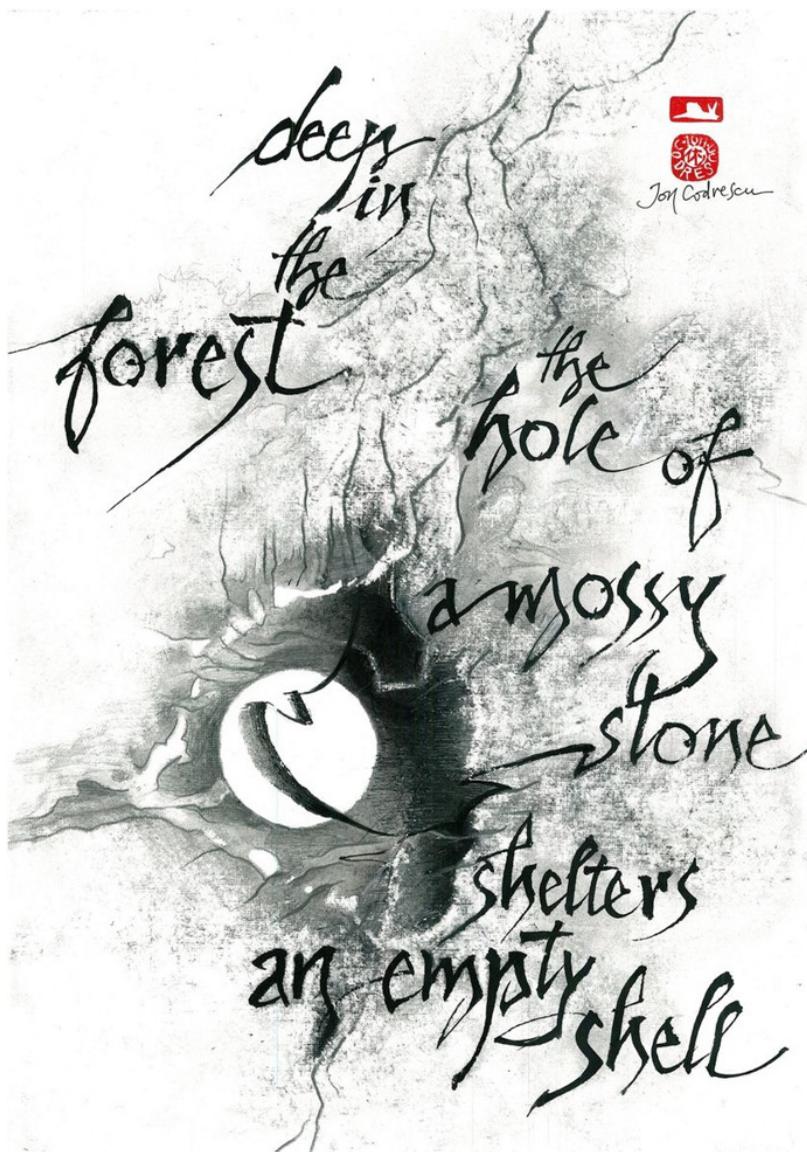
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Poet/Artist: **ION CODRESCU**

“Natural Meddlers”:

Etheridge Knight’s Hoosier Haiku and the Poetics of Black Aliveness

Ryan LALLY

ABSTRACT: “Poets are naturally meddlers” (xiii). This sentiment, expressed in the preface to Etheridge Knight’s *Born of a Woman* (1980), encapsulates the ways in which Knight’s poems wonderfully upend readers’ expectations and break them out of conventional understandings. His inquisitive and disruptive meddling brings levity to hallowed or traumatic subjects, it envisions black empowerment amidst totalizing systems of racist power, and—most pertinent to this article—it toys with the possibilities of literary convention and genre. Grounded in a black aesthetic evocative of Kevin Quashie’s black aliveness, Knight’s “Indiana Haiku – 2”, included in *Born of a Woman*, meddles with the state of Indiana, resisting what Knight sees as its erasure of black life. Celebrating the depth of Knight’s generic reformulations, this article ultimately seeks to reaffirm his legacy as a monumental Hoosier poet and haiku theorist.

Etheridge Knight's influential haiku manifesto, "A Statement From Etheridge Knight" (1982) argued that American haiku must be "rooted/grounded within the NOW, within OUR BEING" (23). Knight was one of the most prominent poets of the Black Arts Movement, the 20th century artistic wing of Black Power predicated on militant Black nationalism, immediate political liberation, and lasting cultural empowerment. His immense intellectual contributions to the movement stemmed from his criticisms of antiblack racism and its relationship with the epidemic of American incarceration. Creating poetry that met the needs of his contemporary audience in their contemporary moment was an ambition he voiced frequently, telling Stephen C. Tracy that he models poets who "were dealing with their times" (10). And, to Charles H. Rowell, he further argues "You definitely have to speak to people of your own experiences or your own history" (971). This discussion of writing for contemporaries is underscored by his goal of reaching an audience of Black people, highlighting a perspective shared widely during the Black Arts period that liberation required an autonomous Black literary culture (972). Triangulated in these remarks is an aesthetic project that boldly reflects inwards in order to voice Black identity, Black struggle, and Black joy. In other words, Knight's *self* manifests his community, creating its poetic representations even as his community is integral to how his *self* is created.

And so, while his statement about haiku certainly reinforces rather than complicates his poetics, Knight's synthesis of Black Arts aesthetics and haiku highlights the ways in which genre adapt and transform. By making a case for a living poetry, Knight demonstrates that genre only exists in its capacities to change. By grounding haiku in "OUR BEING," he centers what Kevin Quashie calls Black aliveness, celebrating the process of existing, mattering, and becoming that parallels the operations of genre. Knight's sequence of haiku entitled "Indiana Haiku - 2," taken from

his 1980 collection *Born of a Woman*, exemplifies this twofold purpose for haiku by prioritizing the existence of Black being in the face of a white supremacist power structure that excludes and harms Black people. Because Knight was so careful to characterize his haiku as a modern renegotiation of its orthodox parameters, “Indiana Haiku – 2” serves as an extension of his artistic manifesto. As the sequence tells a story of Black being persisting beyond the strictures of antiblack racism, it also envisions the persistence of haiku at odds with its anglophone literary genealogy.¹ Knight defines his Black Aesthetic as art that is not separate from politics (Rowell 966). This sequence manifests such a fusion, critiquing Indiana for being hostile to Black people and resisting the stoic aestheticism and calls for self-abnegation that Knight implicitly witnesses as unproductive generic conventions for the liberation of Black people. Operating with these complex and interrelated motivations, Knight emerges as not just a practitioner of haiku, but one of the 20th century’s most consequential theorists of the genre.

Creating a Living Poetics of Black Being

On March 11th, 1980, Etheridge Knight gave a reading in support of his upcoming publication *Born of a Woman* (1980) at the University of Scranton. He began with a joke, something about “the demands of technology” as he and his introducer struggle to attach a microphone to his lapel (5:20-6). Though met with little laughter, the relaxed, droning delivery of his voice and the gentle way he rocks from side to side immediately dispenses with any expectations of stiffness or severity. This demeanor is a careful balancing act, as the poems he shared at this reading are certainly severe, ranging in subject matter from the trauma of American

1. William J. Higginson argues in his chapter “Early Haiku in the West” from *The Haiku Handbook* that haiku became heavily associated with the avant-garde aesthetic aims and serious tone of Modernist poetics, shaping the genre even into the 1980s when his book was published.

incarceration to his own struggles with addiction. As his reading unfolds, he gets the crowd going with a joke between every poem he reads — there is a levity to these spaces he cultivates with words, one that sustains the documentations of fear, oppression, and pain in his poems.

He announces his first poem to be his famous “Hard Rock Returns to Prison from the Hospital for the Criminal Insane,” originally published in 1968. At the time of the reading, “Hard Rock” was due to be recollected in *Born of a Woman*, but with a significant change. Knight writes in his introduction that, in order to better match the liberating ethos of his poetics, he has altered a few poems. One such alteration is to “Hard Rock,” exchanging a metaphor of “like indians at a corral” to “like a herd of sheep” so that he is not propagating a harmful and divisive stereotype born of white supremacy (xiv). Yet, after centering this change as an important step towards crafting a poetry “rooted/grounded with the NOW, within OUR BEING,” he performs “Hard Rock” with the original metaphor (“A Statement” 23). The reason for this is materially understandable, for though he gathers the manuscripts of poems in his hands to read, he soon drops his arms to his side as he recites the poem from memory. The memory of the poem endures alongside its revision, and there is not so much a tension between the two versions as there is a coexistence, a living poetry capable of change at every turn of the page and every performance.

His eyes scan around the room as he recites, making contact with an off-camera listener for a moment before linking to another’s gaze, and this, for Knight, is the cornerstone of his aesthetic disposition. At this reading, he argues that “spoken word is the main way we communicate, we come into communion” (3:26-7). In another interview he reiterates “The real poem happens when I say it to someone. Of course it has to have a form, a shape. But the poem starts to live when the man who makes it says it to an audience” (“Gwendolyn” 3). He pulls these points together when he defines

the poetic act in his introduction to *Born of a Woman*, where “Art happens” as predicated on the relationship between “The Poet, the Poem, and the People” (xiv). “Language is a living thing” (2:42-4), it comes into being only in the particular circumstances of contact, defined by the “shape of the environment that you live in” (2:54-6). Knight seems to offer these lessons wherever he shared his poetry, and they conjure up a host of reflections. Art is community. Art is flexible, meeting the demands of the context in which it comes into being. Art is the humor in tragedy and the tragedy in humor. And, most fundamental for Knight, art is a mark of Being. It is comprised of unique and constitutive acts, not just capable of revision but demanding of it in order to stay relevant, to maintain its ethos of liberation. He breathes his poetry into existence during the communion of reader and listener; his poetry is alive.

Of course, a living poetry necessitates a living community to participate in the iterative acts of *becoming* that comprise *being*. The poet/poem/people triumvirate makes and consecrates its constitutive parts in an aesthetic act foregrounded, as a matter of course, in the presupposition of Black life and Black existence. Literary critic Kevin Quashie clarifies these ideas in *Black Aliveness, Or a Poetics of Being* (2021). Quashie envisions a black aesthetic, a black world “where black living is compassed by being alive, where aliveness sets the parameters for understanding, loss, pain, belonging, for countenancing love, grace, healing” (10). Knight’s performances, bridging impossible gaps between the violence of antiblack racism and the healing power of humor, reflect this world-making aesthetic. Knight’s revisions, shaped by the evolutions of his resistance towards what he called “the prison of our american consciousness,” underscore a poetics predicated on aliveness (“Statement” 23).

Each performance recreates a poem. Each revision recreates a poem. Therefore, a poem exists only in re-creation. In all of these interviews, artistic manifestos, and poetry readings, Knight was

working towards the aliveness Quashie describes as “the pulse of being and happening, the characterization of becoming that exists all over the world of black texts” (28). Art is a mark of Being, and his poetry is a presupposition of Being in the face of cultural and political apparatuses that enforce non-Being. Each reading subsists on the inviolable assumption of Black existence, of Black art being an active and meaningful creation, a living Blackness. Knight was masterful in his occupation with *being* and living; his community-centered poetics are a testament to the Black Arts movement and its goals to create autonomous Black nationalist spaces. As interesting as the nature of poetry and the generative capacities of art were for him in general, his concept of a living poetry is fruitfully applicable to studies of generic transformation, particularly in regard to haiku.

Because he wrote and published a significant number of them over the course of his career, what Knight said about his poetry generally is also applicable specifically. He credits haiku as a practice that sharpened his skills as a poet, but he also signals how it reflects his broader poetic engagement with aliveness — “From Haiku I also learned the syllabic importance of poetry: the ability to evoke (= spoken) a major metaphor containing (1) something *living*, a sense of motion (= verb) and a sense of time (= season, night, day, noon, etc.)” (“Statement” 23). The syntax here is richly evocative of Black Arts contemporaries like Haki Madhubuti or Amiri Baraka. It delineates the animating principles, what literary critic Caroline Levine would call affordances, that Knight values in the haiku form. Haiku underscores the “syllabic importance” of his chosen art form. Syllabic references the strict syllable count Knight adheres to in his haiku, but he seems to broaden that idea out to be metaphorical as well. He is discussing a language-based art form, one that he defines as primarily oral, and so it follows that he would liken the components of poetry to syllables, which constitute the vocalic atoms of speech. In other words, haiku are shaped by more

than syllable and line count. Whatever a poet conveys in haiku must be syllabic, energized solely by the necessity of the message. To do more than evoke a metaphor in three parts would be akin to saying a word with extra syllables, which would entirely undo and distort the spoken message. Here, the calculations of Knight's haiku are both formal and content driven, brief composites of his literary purpose.

His use of a colon after "syllabic importance of poetry" clarifies his intentions — the colon suggests that he is going to give a definition for what the crucial components of a poem are. The syllabic importance is the evocation of "a major metaphor," which itself has constitutive parts, as suggested by the "(1)" that indicates a list of enumerated attributes that the major metaphor must feature. The first attribute, "something *living*," clearly links the poetics of Black aliveness to Knight's haiku. However, he fails to offer a "(2)" to continue his numbered list. The effect of leaving just the "(1)" here suggests that the following components, "motion" and "time," are in fact not separate attributes but corollaries to "*living*." It is as though he changed his mind halfway through his sentence, deciding to define life in terms of physics, motion and time, instead of offering them as separable entities. In the midst of his definition he is evolving, reconsidering; he defines haiku as living and his definition enacts that life by changing course in rich and unpredictable ways. "[A]ll *this*," he continues, "an old/concept poured from a new jug" (23). Elsewhere in this statement, he uses two words separated by a forward slash to indicate that they are synonyms, and so he offers old as a synonym for concept. The haiku is old, is a concept, re-created out of a living newness. This "new jug," Knight indicates, is the specific preoccupation of "the NOW, within OUR BEING" (23). In his terms, generic transformation is the only way that genre exists. It is animated by the needs of a poet to speak to Black Being and the contemporary moment.

He defines the perpetual newness of the haiku as “sing[ing] the haiku the american way” (23). I follow literary critic Tom Morgan’s argument that Knight’s description of an American haiku “modif[ies] traditional haiku in order to make them culturally and historically relevant for an ‘American consciousness’” (75). The American way of haiku does not define a set of formal or content concerns as say, a Shakespearian sonnet establishes a distinct rhyme scheme that deviates from a Petrarchan model. As Morgan shows, he is not postulating a nationalized version of the form, just as Wanda Coleman’s *American Sonnets* advocate for an opening of the sonnet’s possibilities to reflect contemporary life rather than a distinct formal foreclosure (Nelson Interview). Instead, it is Knight’s pragmatic way of describing haiku transformation—it is an argument that haiku, like all poetry, must be contemporary, applicable, meaningful in the perspicacity of what is happening “NOW” to the living people he performed for, who happened to be American.

To Sing the Haiku the American Way

Knight’s performance at the University of Scranton, which encapsulates key aspects of his poetics, parallels the generic transformations he makes in his haiku. There is his humor, deflating the stodgy expectations of poetry readings and the grim realities his verse brings to life. His penchant for storytelling, too, becomes a factor in his haiku. In an hour-long reading, he recites fourteen poems, padding most with a lengthy contextualization, a story behind its creation or a story to emphasize its themes. These two hallmarks of Knight’s performances of course serve his more primary concern with building a relationship with his audience. Humor and storytelling build connections between people. Through this communion, he glories in his aliveness. His communal acts of artistic creation juxtapose with the living

immediacy and inherence of his Black being. The poetry is alive, and so is he. Anglophone haiku scholar William J. Higginson gestures towards the significance of Knight's pursuit of living haiku in his review of a cadre of African American haiku writers that included Etheridge Knight. In his adulatory conclusion, he argues that "the range and impact of the 'haiku movement' in English has been seriously diminished by the absence of their work from our consideration" (10). These three aspects of haiku—humor, storytelling, and Black aliveness—are Knight's contribution to the anglophone haiku movement. Though his haiku follow the 5-7-5 syllabic conventions of English-language haiku as popularized by scholars like Kenneth Yasuda, they articulate expansive possibilities for the tone and purpose of the genre.² I will argue over the course of this section that Knight pushes against the minimalist aestheticism of anglophone haiku, weaving humor together with social critique in order to insist on the importance and vitality of the Black self.

The series of prefatory materials that initiate *Born of a Woman* (1980) establish Knight's approach to humor as a destabilizing force for existing literary and political paradigms. They also provide a vocabulary that is applicable to what the transformative adaptations he accomplishes with "Indiana Haiku - 2." The collection begins with a dedication poem, two epigraphs, acknowledgements, and a preface. Indicative of the weightiness of convention, this series of beginnings continually upend our expectations, combining reverence and irreverence in a manner that challenges readers' presuppositions of what is important and what should have a voice. He immediately overturns expectations by dedicating *Born of a Woman*, despite its title, to his father. He follows this surprise with an unconventional elegy for his recently deceased father. Conventionally, the aesthetic role of an elegy is to comfort mourners. Refusing to play by the accepted rules of the elegiac

2. For a survey of how and why 5-7-5 haiku form was popularized, see Yasuda pp. 38-40, 60-68.

mode, Knight does not eulogize his living memory, but instead the silence and absence of his death: “he ain’t saying nothing” (6). Knight is not reliant on what a genre should be, or perhaps more accurately what a genre historically has been, but rather what he thinks it needs to be for “the NOW.”

Needling away at our expectations for conventionality, Knight continues to transform these prefatory materials, an act made all the more comical by the sheer amount of prefaces and introductions he provides before getting to his actual poetry. Following the unconventional elegy, Knight offers two epigraphs — one is Job 14:1-3, which features the collection’s title, and the other quotes the rough graffiti of an anonymous poet in the Bridgeport Correctional Center who wrote about his friend’s fatal drug addiction. I reproduce them below side by side, in order to emphasize their parity:

Man that is born of a woman	My friend said — “I’m a junkie.”
is of few days, and full of trouble.	I said, “You’re full of shit!”
He cometh forth like a flower,	He’s dead, he’s gone —
and is cut down: He fleeth also	— He’s buried now —
as a shadow and continueth not.	I guess his statement was legit.

Knight presents the two passages as equivalent five-line poems. The effect is multifaceted. The parallelism presents addiction as Job-like suffering. Here, the “friend” makes one last cry for help that is only met by the feeble response of a modern Zophar the Naamathite, who, in a moment of dramatic irony, calls him “full of shit.” Job is alongside this unnamed addict, and Knight therefore welcomes us to see addiction as a way of dehumanizing. Like Job’s man born of a woman, this addict becomes a broken flower, a shadow of himself, “dead” and “gone.” In these epigraphs, Knight spotlights both the suffering of the marginalized and the ways they speak out against their conditions, though they often are heard too late or unheard entirely. The wisdom of Job is everywhere in this collection, and

in these two epigraphs Knight aims to reorient the conventions of political and poetic value. Here is Knight's aesthetics writ large: a spirit of connectedness that undermines convention. He infuses these ideas into his haiku as well, which similarly recognize the connections between that the state and antiblack oppression that his country refuses to acknowledge.

He develops this argument further in his acknowledgements. He gives a sardonic nod to "Richard Nixon and company," whose "evil forces" also impelled this collection's creation. I love all this. This is hilarious. How often are books dedicated to the author's enemies? Knight takes up every conceivable form of preface in his collection, humoring these genres and conventions. This "humoring" takes two intertwined characteristics. He both accommodates expectations while joking about them. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. may call this a version of Signifying, but in this collection Knight himself defines this ethos as meddling--"searching and loving and questioning and digging into this or that" (xiii). One of these meddlings that Knight lists is "Zen." Yoshinobu Hakutani teaches that Zen is "the philosophy that underlies much of classic haiku," and so it is no surprise that Knight publishes twenty-two haiku in this volume (2). Knight's mastery of humorous meddling, on clear display in this seemingly endless array of beginnings, carries into these haiku. Voices from the margins meddle with conventional expectation, and Knight uses the liberating spirit of humor to delineate strange and defamiliarizing possibilities for the haiku genre with his sequence "Indiana Haiku - 2." The wisdom of scholar and poet Michael S. Collins furthermore connects generic transformation to pro-Black activism. He interprets Knight's meddling as originating "out of loving concern . . . to provoke or help sustain liberating reinterpretations of reality" (116). Using the liberating spirit of humor, "Indiana Haiku - 2" stands as a reinterpretation of genre that yields reconsiderations of how Indiana has neglected and excluded its Black citizens.

Knigh’s prefaces foreground how humor acts as a form of meddling with the potential to destabilize convention. Built upon a Black Aesthetic that does not draw distinctions between artistry and politics, these conventions range from the antiblack deliberations of the state to the solemn and detached aesthetic of mainstream anglophone haiku. Although published a few years after *Born of a Woman*, William J. Higginson’s *The Haiku Handbook* codifies how anglophone haiku practitioners in the 1980s viewed haiku. For Higginson, it is a way for a poet to say “It is hard to tell you how I am feeling. Perhaps if I share with you the event that made me aware of these feelings, you will have similar feelings of your own” (5). Ezra Pound, in explaining his haiku-like “In a Station of the Metro” (1913), provides a similar rationale: “The ‘one-image poem’ is a form of super-position, that is to say it is one idea set on top of another. I found it useful in getting out of the impasse in which I had been left by my metro emotion.” Pound’s attraction to haiku arose out of his interest in cultivating a minimalist aesthetic that would induce a meditative experience amidst the surging changes of early 20th century life.³ Even if Knight never read this poem, Higginson’s description of haiku indicates that Pound’s initiation of the haiku movement in America left a sizeable impact on the conventions of the genre. In Pound’s hands, the haiku is detached and suggestive, a sanctimonious outpouring of high art. Of course, Knight desisted from such poetic airs by endeavoring to shape a living poetry with orality being the vehicle and central metaphor of that life. As discussed earlier, Knight’s orality brings together humor, storytelling, and selfhood, speaking a Black world into existence. Therefore, humor is a transformative tool for haiku, part of what “supplements an absence [Knight] finds in white American poetry” (Morgan 75).

3. Kenneth Yasuda articulates a similar connection between Modernist poetics and Japanese aesthetics, comparing Ford Maddox Ford and Japanese dramatist Chikamatsu in *The Japanese Haiku* (xvi)

Ironically, in meddling with what he saw as the stoic conventions of American haiku, Knight inadvertently produced haiku more in keeping with its earliest practitioners. Higginson argues that the “mixture of joking banter and seriousness pervades much of Chinese and Japanese poetry” (9). From self-deprecating jokes to parodies of the literary mainstream, early practitioners approached their hermetic lives of religious and artistic devotion knowing that laughter refined knowledge and sharpened meditation. Knight would have been no stranger to this idea. Especially since toasts, an oral poetry tradition known for its limerick-like humor, were his entrance into the wider world of poetry in the first place (Rowell 972). This assertion still surprises modern readers in the West, who conflate the Chinese tradition of Zen with the meditative practice of Japanese haiku as two iterations of taciturn spiritualism. This lesson, that austerity and wit could go hand in hand, is reflected in Knight’s meddling, making the practice of haiku a seamless extension of his broader aesthetic goals.

Further meddling with the norms of American haiku are his plot-driven sequencing of haiku and his critiques of *mu* self-abnegation. Wallace Stevens’s 1917 “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird,” a haiku-like poem that follows Pound’s lead of imagistic suggestion, is an early example of how haiku sequences work in American haiku. Divided into thirteen distinct parts, “Thirteen Ways” is about approaching a single entity in its densely metaphoric complexity from different vantage points, different contexts of use and situations. It parallels a work of art like Claude Monet’s *Haystacks* series, capturing a single object from different points of view, times of day, and seasons in order for viewers to meditate on how an image is made and transformed by its context. Later sequences, like Knight’s “Indiana Haiku – 2,” are not necessarily focused on a single image or event taken from multiple angles. Instead, Knight’s sequence deposits readers at various locations in Indiana. As he repositions us geographically, he tells a story

about Indiana and the ways that it stands as a hostile climate for Black life. Indeed, the Indiana of his haiku acts as an external force that denies the self. *Mu*, typically rendered in Zen philosophy as nothingness or non-being, is a state of enlightenment achieved through contemplation wherein the self is completely shed. Though the goal of a contemplative tradition of haiku, Knight's sequence meddles with this convention. In a world that denies Blackness, the only meaningful recourse is a celebration of Black presence, Black aliveness.

Aliveness and "Indiana Haiku – 2"

Meddling with Zen and the haiku genre, Knight offers Black liberation as a skeleton key for interpreting his work. With this starting point, Knight's haiku sequence flourishes within the unstable expectations of genre in order to challenge forces of marginalization. Let us marvel at how Knight cultivates the haiku as a space for Black aliveness. The first haiku in his sequence, "Vigo County," reads:

Beyond the brown hill
Above the silent cedars,
Blackbirds flee April rains. (35)

Like the haiku we expect from writers like Basho and Buson, the circumstance of the poem is simultaneously specific and open-ended—readers are left to experiment with interpretations that may approach the possible emotion and meaning elicited from such a scene. Scholar John Zheng offers a starting point with Knight's inclusion of *kigo* into his haiku, those words that are suggestive of a season (xi). Knight begins with the image of "the brown hill" and closes with "April rains." The barren earth indicates a period of transition into life—the grass has not yet reinstated its

verdure, and spring rains come to reawaken it. Despite the promise of rebirth, Knight's speaker is disinterested in the wetting soil, pushing his attention "Beyond" it towards the "Blackbirds" leaving Vigo County. Here stands a compelling irony. The land has finally begun to reawaken and become habitable to its migratory flocks, and yet the blackbirds, these beings of Black flight, resist and evade any promise of Indiana.

By taking up Zheng's argument that Knight's haiku are grounded in personal experience and his "attitude toward blackness" (xi), readers may take his blackbirds as a free-roaming and autonomous personification of Blackness. Their desire to leave this unripe landscape and its torrential environment points readers toward approaching this poem as a commentary on Black emancipation in Indiana. The next haiku, "The Penal Farm," contextualizes the blackbird's unseasonable departure as a response to synthetic and oppressive systems. It reads:

The wire fence is tall.
The lights in the prison barracks
Flick off, one by one. (35)

Note how Knight directs his readers' attention in "Vigo County." "Beyond" and "Above" guide readers towards an unfolding scene, starting narrowly and growing more open, past the ground, past the trees, into the rain-battered sky. Conversely, each line in "The Penal Farm" encloses, beginning at the perimeter of the prison and narrowing in on the nameless and unmentioned who are partitioned off into their cells.

Knight's poetry consistently articulates how incarceration is an extension of racial oppression, as exemplified by his discussion of the poem "For Freckled-Faced Gerald." Knight wrote the poem after hearing about a Black teenager who was sexually assaulted while they were both in prison in Michigan City. He reflects that

“There was also a young white boy from Indianapolis who had burglarized some and homes and shot some people. He had gotten life too. When he came to prison, the warden made him houseboy and kept him outside the walls — protected him. But the warden put Gerald back inside the wall” on account of his race (Rowell 977). The wall, demarcating the boundaries between freedom and imprisonment, being and non-being, is an indissoluble reminder of how prison operates as an extension of antiblackness. Mirroring the movement of the previous haiku, the “wire fence” and the extinguishing of the lights recalls the brown hill and the rain that blackbirds flee. The scene shifts from the natural darkness of a storm to the all-powerful reach of Indiana, and Knight continues to expose a hostile landscape that prevents the self-actualization of Blackness. The lights are shut off, wings are clipped, and the inmate population is disabused of their dreams of freedom. The lives of the prison are unspoken and unilluminated, their aliveness unrecorded amidst the violence of the state.

This concluding image evokes the alienation and exclusion that Knight sees as the core violence of American incarceration. Knight once described prison as a “very oppressive, painful, alienating world,” adding “You’ve been, not exiled, you’ve been in-ziled. You’ve been cut off from your community” (Tracy 21). In honing a contrast with “Vigo County,” Knight also manages to craft a context for the blackbird’s flight. Having transitioned from the convention of haiku as imagistic nature poems, Knight talks about human institutions. Yet, even as he eschews the metaphor of the blackbird to talk about the lives of people directly, “The Penal Farm” is focused solely on the material structure of the prison itself, its wire fence and its extinguished lights that only hint at the possibilities of life inside. Without the blackbird as a metaphoric extension of Black life, it is as if there is no room to talk about Black aliveness. Indiana seems to be both naturally and culturally hostile to it. His speakers observe Indiana to be an alienating and dehumanizing

place, one of extinguished hope and inescapable containments. Note again how the lights “Flick off one by one” as if they worked themselves, as if the prison could persist in its antiblack violence even without other people operating it. Mute Indiana structures, from natural scenes to silent prisons, confine and oppress.

After captivating readers with two scenes that teem with unacknowledged life, Knight exposes the irony of how Indiana makes Black life invisible while maximizing the visibility of a monument of white death. His third haiku in the sequence weighs the hidden and unspoken to the public, describing a scene from Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis. There is something suggestive of death and entombment in the second haiku, and our shift to the quiet living death of prison to the victorious and monumentalized death of this symbol of whiteness creates a stark contrast in who gets to live and *be* in Indiana. Here, at the highest geographic point in Indianapolis,

A black and white dog
Sniffs gravestone to gravestone:
Pees on Hoosier Poet. (35)

The Hoosier Poet referenced here is Indiana native James Whitcomb Riley, famed for his popular, often humorous verse. Biographer Elizabeth Van Allen notes that Riley, after receiving the unparalleled honor of having a public funeral at the state rotunda, something that not even President Harrison was given, was eventually buried at the crown of the city. His grave is a stately, Classical structure — a Hoosier Parthenon. A premier city attraction, its creamy marble glows in the sunlight, a shining monument commensurate with his popularity and success. He was awarded such a grave, according to Van Allen, because he was received as a synecdoche for Indiana and Midwesternness. However, she critiques his ascendance to the title of Hoosier Poet as a gambit to centralize and institutionalize whiteness. She writes “By avoiding the cultural anxieties of the

upper and middle classes instead of confronting them, Riley's writings represented an escape for his nineteenth-century readers from real threats to the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant domination of American society" (269). In other words, Riley's work enabled his fans to escape into a white world, untroubled by attempts to dismantle the white power structure. Thus, for his contemporaries and his later critics, Riley traded on a monolithic dream of a white Indiana despite his own views as a racial moderate.

Knight meddles with this monument wrapped up in fantasies of white supremacy. The same mirthless structuring of Riley's grave seemed to seep into the American haiku, where early writers of haiku-like poems evaded any semblance of witticism or humor in the genre according to Higginson (51-3). The dog's pee is therefore pulling double-duty. It meddles with the monolith of white fantasy that Riley's legacy has come to represent for Van Allen, and it alleviates some of the reverent aestheticizing the genre was known for, thereby restoring the haiku as crowd-pleasing entertainment for what Claude Wilkinson called "its more common audience" (89). A caustic assessment from the margins, Knight's treatment of the genre revels in the exceptional irony of a lonesome dog relieving itself on the grandest monument in Indianapolis.

The admixture of wit and austerity demonstrates that even something as apparently formal and regimental as haiku are flexible and open to reinterpretation and re-evaluation. Knight conceives of genre as a network of stylistic possibilities, and he exercises this network of minimalist evocation to explore the immobility and invisibility that Indiana enforces on its Black citizens. His choice to combine his aesthetic engagements with humor and storytelling, grounded in oral poetry performance and its connections to Black aliveness, meddles with the haiku genre and the legacy of Indiana poetry. Guided by his affirmations of Black life, he demands a haiku and an Indiana that are capacious, inclusive, and accessible. He has taken his readers from the hidden drama of the natural world to

the margins of society. Now having been deposited at one of the premier public attractions of the state, readers are invited to reckon with the absence of Blackness from these visions of Indiana. In a delightful coincidence, Knight defines meddling in part as “digging into this or that” (xiii). This haiku acts as a spade, digging up Riley’s symbolic sovereignty over Indianapolis and overturning the layers of acculturated meaning heaped upon Riley’s whitewashed vision of Indiana. Knight meddles with the form of the cemetery, making it a place of mirth rather than reverence. He toys with the haiku, exchanging its wistful visions of spiritual enlightenment for a pessimistic witness to racial disparity. In both spaces, Blackness is given no recognition, no sense of belonging and purpose.

Knight wages this silent war against erasure in his next haiku. He selects a second monument, the Indianapolis War Memorial, and extends his anger towards this more directly violent socialization into whiteness:

Young boys play in pairs,
Touch the War weapons: tanks, guns,
Dreaming blood and Death (35).

Instead of acting as a warning, the memorial stands as an extension of the devastation he witnessed as Vietnam War veteran. The poem builds off of the ways public figures were articulating connections between the military industrial complex and anti-blackness. Late in his life, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. brought such an idea to the public consciousness in his 1967 speech “Beyond Vietnam.” He proclaimed to his listeners in Riverside Church that the “experiments, hopes, [and] new beginnings” of social investment in poverty fell to the wayside during “the buildup in Vietnam.” King recognized “that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube.”

There is a deeply dark irony at play in Knight's movement from Riley's grave to children playing at the War Memorial. Atop Riley's grave is a statue of a child reading, representative of Riley's lifelong mission towards supporting children, which is memorialized today by the charitable organization for pediatric medicine called the Riley Children's Foundation and the enduring popularity of his poem "Little Orphant Annie." Health and stories sustain the whimsical imagination of the children in his poem, who are ultimately instructed to "churish them 'at loves you, an' dry the orphant's tear, / An' he'p the pore an' needy ones 'at clusters all about" (42-3). The children in Knight's haiku instead imagine a world of schism and conflict, where play is synonymous with death and brutality instead of the life and kindness that Riley's famous orphan extols.

Still meddling, Knight targets America's romance with violence and death, making good on his assertion in the Preface that poets meddle with "politicians, zen, the church, god, and children" (xiii). This monument holds a sacred space in Indianapolis, but in Knight's meddling, Readers are startled to see that its sanctification is less to do with lament over harrowing loss and more to do with acculturating children to a cult of imperialist violence. The monument is nearly an equation for the list of concepts that Knight targets with his meddling — politicians approve a zen-like space in which to honor the dead that becomes something of an American church, one whose metaphysic is war and whose god is death, welcoming children into its flock.

The deaths that mute monument represents, gestured at by the silently endured trauma of a veteran, point towards a social scene that renders Knight and the Black world to which he dedicated his collection into nothingness. Engrossed in the myths of American militarism, the children are inducted into a world sustained by white settler colonialism and its aftermaths. This is a white fantasy that exists at the expense of Black and brown peoples, excluding

them from civic concerns at best and actively destroying them at worst. They are rendered into nonexistence, into a nothingness that is not so much a step into Zen Buddhist *mu* of enlightened self-abnegation, but rather an abnegation of Black selfhood and aliveness. Knight toys with this aspect of haiku but approaches the loss of individuality as violence instead of atonement. Haiku are a conventional tool that guides writer and reader to dispossession in the Zen tradition and imagistic contemplation in a white American tradition, but something odd happens when they are written from the perspective of the dispossessed. Knight discovers, at the close of his sequence, that haiku can equally be a vehicle for self-affirmation.

His haiku track a journey counter to most conventions of enlightenment. He is not leaving his body, nor is he subsumed into the landscape. Indiana appears to inflict these difficulties upon him, and he overcomes them by escaping into Harlem in the final haiku:

Streetwalking woman,
Leaning in Harlem Hallway:
Sister of my soul! (35)

In these ways, Knight's haiku are a generic reversal. His rebirth is not in nature, but in a Black community, one emblematic of Black autonomy and Black creativity. It reasserts his personal value against three institutions of Indiana power that he sees as adversarial to it. Wilkinson reads Knight's concluding haiku in the sequence as a "salacious" recognition of shared survival — he has a special kinship with this figure that Wilkinson reads as a prostitute because they both get by through socially unaccepted means (99). Compared to the young boys socialized into militaristic phantasmagoria, this woman lives outside of normative white American culture in a way that Knight immediately recognizes as kinship. Knight revels in the affirmation of this soul sister, recognizing a shared

outsider status where they are both marked by the wrongness of their being and their resistance to assimilating into white norms.⁴ Knight's speaker finds a home in her unconventionality — in her Blackness — that mirrors the ways he is finding a space to affirm Black aliveness in haiku. Beyond personal affiliation, however, is a restored sense of community. Breaking from the “in-zile” of prison and the monuments in Indianapolis that extend its reach, Knight can finally speak himself into being. His “my,” a daring moment of self-recognition, is a freedom that Indiana has not and could not provide.

His sequence, tracing a story of antiblack institutions from rural Indiana to Indianapolis and finally Harlem, closes with a singular note of optimism, one that would be unfortunately brief. He died at sixty years of age, eleven years after what would end up being his last collection of new poems. In a way that Walton Muyumba sees as prescient of his own legacy, Etheridge Knight is buried in a modest plot on Crown Hill Cemetery, the same place that Riley lies. Absent of state honors, Knight is marked by a simple gravestone that reads “Poet, Son, Father, Brother” with a lower engraving that says “We Free Singers Be.” This line, taken from his eponymous poem, encapsulates the liberatory power of his song. As Jean Anaportte-Easton notes, “[Knight’s] metaphor for art was freedom (945). That freedom encapsulated Knight’s convention-shattering humor, his penchant for bending the rules of a form in order to confront the institutions of white supremacy that occlude justice.

Knight’s expansive welcome that “We” share in the production of this art of freedom again confirms the way that his poetry was guided by the relationships he forged between poet, poem, and audience. This flexible, reiterative, living poetry produces the 4. The phrase “wrongness” here borrows from Sylvia Wynter’s usage of the term, which she defines as “the negative-value connotations that both the mainstream order of knowledge and the mainstream aesthetics placed upon all peoples of Black African descent” (114).

same sort of relationality that affirms his speaker's aliveness in the final haiku in his "Indiana Haiku - 2" sequence. The dynamics of humor and meddling in his poetry performances are imprinted on this haiku sequence and etched upon his legacy. There is an indescribable delightfulness in "We Free Singers Be" as he enjambes "We free singers be / come agitators at times" (4-5). The playful way he separates *become* into *be* and *come* is a final reminder of how his poetry addressed "the NOW, within OUR BEING." We *be*, a present tense aliveness shared between Knight and his readers despite his death. We are confronted with the dynamism and the beautiful possibilities of aliveness, and as we *be* we come to his grave. We come knowing that the critique he lodged against Indiana, the critique he welcomed us to join in creating, reflects work not yet finished. We become singers sharing in a song of freedom, creating a living art forged in collective being so that Indiana can become a place where Blackness can freely *be*. Knight's grave envisions a different path for Indiana, just like his haiku, one that reflects Quashie's definition of aliveness as "the becoming of beingness" (19). Knight's haiku poetics invokes this *being*. His haiku sequence, beyond its critique of Indiana white supremacy, is a story of flight, moments on a formative journey towards achieving the affirmation of his Black aliveness.

These haiku are a song of flight and freedom, a song that Indiana did not join in singing. What Knight offers in these meddling haiku is a reframing of Riley's austere grave and its solitary pre-eminence at the top of a lonely mountain. They push us to add another Hoosier poet to our notable graves page, making it a poets' cemetery instead of a poet's cemetery. In doing so, we may better articulate Indianapolis and genre as crossroads instead of distant hills and Hoosier identity as truly inclusive of the state's diversity. Damien Sojoyner offers that Black people "have relied upon visions of other worlds, other places, other times, and conjured realities to craft a more humane existence" (204). Indianapolis is a

storied center for Black collectivism and community action. And yet, even today, when I listen to my Black Hoosier students' future plans, they oftentimes are of elsewhere, out of their home city and out of their home state. This too is Knight's vision of freedom, a blackbird's escape to more habitable climates and to a city that embraces him. If we care about Indiana, if we accepted Knight's call for an American way of haiku that attends to life and the living, we must build that vision of acceptance and freedom here. Just as he revised the haiku to meddle with the symbols and assumptions of American culture, let us revise our monuments, and let us start with this Hoosier poet. Let us raise up the name of Etheridge Knight; we are not Hoosiers without him.

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Referencing Language Words in English Haiku

Randy M. BROOKS

ABSTRACT: Language is a key part of the human experience, so it is not surprising that poets have written about language in their English haiku. Our experiences of language include a wide range of social situations and related emotions. Language is not merely in our heads. Language is not private. It's also on our tongues, in our hands, our ears, and our minds. Language is part of a shared collective consciousness of a society or culture. In this essay I explore examples of how writers have referenced the words "grammar," "syntax," "semantics," and "metaphor" in haiku. I also discuss references to "parentheses" in haiku, which is related to syntax. Haiku about language words connect us to moments of insight and awareness about how language is one aspect of our lived human experience. Haiku about language words provide an imagined sense of being present in a moment of language interaction.

(1) Haiku about “grammar”

Grammar is a system of rules and principles for speaking and writing a language. For those learning a language, grammar is characterized as rules for correctness, a means of showing that you are a literate person. For linguists, grammar is a system of language usage conventions that changes over time.

Several English haiku and senryu focus on noticing someone’s “bad grammar” or correcting someone’s grammar. Incorrect grammar becomes a social recognition or a means of conveying a sense of superiority. These are experiences of judging people because of their language usage, or lack of “correct” usage. Consider this first haiku, which is a scene from a school setting:

“A” for content
“F” for grammar —
spring morning

Mike Spikes, *Modern Haiku* 36:1 (2005), 71

In Mike Spikes’ haiku, the student has just received their graded paper. The teacher separates the content of the paper from the lack of grammar compliance. I imagine that the student is not pleased with this grade but also doesn’t care too much, because he got an A “for content” which is the more important thing. Correcting someone’s grammar is always a trivial thing, even for a teacher or editor who see such corrections as part of their jobs. Besides, outside the schoolhouse window this student sees that it is a beautiful spring morning. She can’t wait to go outside for recess. The freshness of a “spring morning” is in direct contrast to the boring, stale lessons and worksheets on proper grammar. She’s a thinker. She’s got imagination. The grammar police won’t hold her back, or will they?

elevator graffiti:
 the grammar corrected
 in red ink

Tom Clausen, *Frogpond* 14:4 (Winter 1991), 9

Here we are riding an elevator, perhaps at a school or library. The graffiti artist was clearly not interested in following the rules. They were probably writing something socially inappropriate on an elevator wall. They want to be public and confrontational. However, a teacher or someone who is used to editing others' writing has "corrected" the grammar of this spontaneous message. And they have used the teacher's "red ink" as the appropriate color to mark mistakes. It's not like they are rejecting the message or content of the graffiti. The corrector is not censoring the graffiti message. They are habitually correcting the grammar usage, which in its own way is a subversive act of complicity.

just can't help it
 correcting the grammar
 of the blues singer

Terry Ann Carter, *The Heron's Nest* 12:1 (2010)

In this senryu the narrator is confessing that they "just can't help it" when it comes to grammar. They recognize that they are a member of the grammar police. The blues singer is following their own traditions of repetition and expression to convey the emotion of their song. They are being raw in their voice and language as part of the tradition. They are not trying to "fit in" or follow grammar conventions of an educated person who "just can't help" correcting others' grammar. This is an interesting clash of cultures. Our narrator wants to just enjoy the blues singer and to "fit in" to that scene, but she can't help what she has been trained to be when it comes to language.

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summer's end
the shoeshine man polishes
a teacher's grammar

Darrell Lindsey, *Shiki Internet Kukai*, 2006

In this haiku, the narrator points out a surprising reversal. The haiku is at “summer’s end,” so I imagine that the teacher has been on vacation and is now getting ready for the start of another year. The shoeshine man is possibly a former student of the teacher. As the teacher excitedly shares details of his summer, the former student “polishes / a teacher’s grammar.” There’s nothing better than correcting a member of the grammar police! This haiku also features a brilliant turn of phrase where the “polish” changes from spiffing up the shoes to correcting the teacher’s grammar. It’s a humorous social status reversal that the teacher is the one who needs polishing.

dawn
remembering her
bad grammar

George Swede, *Cicada* 3:3 (1979)

In this morning-after senryu, Swede’s narrator remembers the previous night. It’s a new day, dawn. The only thing that stands out for this narrator is “her / bad grammar.” Whatever other redeeming characteristics she may have had, the only thing remembered was grammar. The narrator will not be able to get over this social mismatch, so the relationship is probably not likely to grow.

During our quarrel
he corrects
my grammar.

Alexis Rotella, *Modern Haiku* 18:1 (1987), 24

This senryu by Alexis Rotella could be seen as the other side of a grammar mismatch. It is written as a simple sentence. Our narrator is telling a friend about an argument with a boyfriend (or maybe an ex-boyfriend). There is no haiku cut in this poem, just the narrator's statement "During our quarrel / he corrects / my grammar." However, we can imagine the break in the argument when he corrects her grammar. The silent glare of her eyes. I doubt that this correction helps his position at all. In fact, the grammar of her argument probably doesn't matter, and correcting it isn't helpful.

funeral sermon
 forgotten
 the preacher's grammar

Frank K. Robinson, *Wind Chimes* 12 (1984), 54

Funerals often bring people back together into a community from their childhood. The narrator of this haiku is listening to the funeral sermon, perhaps for a grandparent or parent. I imagine the setting as an old church with stained-glass windows in a small village. The preacher is delivering the sermon with passion, employing rhetorical methods learned long ago. This is a voice that seems authentic to the people from this church and to the people who are part of the grandparent's town. In contrast, this narrator now lives in another community of professionals. At his urban church the minister preaches with eloquence and precision. The contrast is apparent as he listens to the "funeral sermon," but perhaps doesn't matter as the words ring true.

Autumn exile my grammar starts inside the mountain
 Rebecca Lilly, *is/let*, November 10, 2019

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This haiku takes up a question of origins of language and grammar. The narrator speaks of their “Autumn exile” and where “my grammar” comes from. The narrator says it “starts inside the mountain.” Hmm. Why is she in exile? She has been removed from her home, from spring and summer. She has to find a new way to speak, to think, to understand her place in the world. She has to start over. Dig in. Go deep. Build a new vocabulary and system of speaking. She will start “inside the mountain.” This haiku has a mythic quality of exile, quest and rebirth. I related most directly to fall visits to the Smoky Mountains, where we retreat and marvel at the colorful leaves and misty sky. This is a mystical land where we can find ourselves again.

Crab holes
punctuate
our broken grammar

Paul Pflieger Jr., *Modern Haiku* 41:1 (2010), 63

In this playful haiku, nature becomes the corrector of the “broken grammar.” The narrator and his friend have written a message on the beach sand. As the day continues, the narrator notes that “Crab holes” have appeared and seem to “punctuate” the message. He portrays them as grammar police who have properly punctuated “our broken grammar.” They have added a perfect final edit to their sand writing.

circling crows the weight of the subjunctive

Mark E. Brager, *A New Resonance* 10, 2017, 51

Although this monoku does not mention grammar, it employs a grammatical term, “the subjunctive.” The haiku begins with the narrator’s observation of “circling crows.” Crows are, of course, scavengers so we imagine that they are circling a dead animal or carcass below. They can detect the faint smell of the rotting flesh

and are drawn to it for a closer look. It appears that our narrator is a student of grammar or languages, because the next part of the haiku is “the weight of the subjunctive,” which is an odd phrase juxtaposed with the “circling crows.” Unless they’ve studied Latin or linguistics, I’m not sure what most readers would think about this phrase. The dictionary definition of the subjunctive is a verb or adjective “that represents a denoted act or state not as a fact but as contingent or possible.” For example, you could say “I wish it were Friday” when it is actually not Friday. So, the “weight of the subjunctive” is something like “what if” or “if only.” Perhaps the crows are pulled down to earth by the “weight” of something possible, like a snack of carcass remains. In this case, grammar is not the subject of the haiku; a component of grammar becomes the metaphorical vehicle for an abstraction about possible unknowns. Oh, those tricky crows!

When poets focus on “grammar” as a subject for haiku, they often cite a social judgement that comes from noticing “grammar mistakes.” The empathy of these haiku comes from noticing that another person’s worth is not just based on their grammar correctness. Nevertheless, as humans, especially as “educated” humans, we “just can’t help” but notice bad grammar. We make judgments of others based on their mastery of “correct” grammar. Grammar usage is clearly a social status marker and can be a source of conflict, estrangement, or duality of consciousness. In some haiku, such as the “funeral sermon” and “Autumn exile” poems, the incorrect grammar is connected to the haiku narrator’s past, before they gained a more educated mastery of grammar. Pfleuger provides a surprising twist in his haiku, with nature (crab holes) seemingly correcting “our grammar” whereas Brager’s haiku narrator uses a grammatical concept as a metaphor about crows hoping for some tasty leftovers.

(2) Haiku about “syntax”

Syntax is the arrangement of words and phrases to create sentences in a language. For those learning strategies of arrangement, syntax is often taught as style guides to create more effective or well-formed sentences. Linguists view syntax and style options as issues of social usage and convention. Let’s read some English haiku that refer to elements of syntax — sentence structure, phrases — as well as some that use the term as a metaphor for considering the structure or design of other aspects of life. What do haiku poets notice about experiences of syntax?

without a full stop
 you run — childhood, a country
 with no paragraphs

Caroline Gourlay, *Haiku in English*, 2013, 163

Perhaps this is a haiku about the ultimate run-on sentence “without a full stop.” The narrator makes an observation that “you run.” There may not be a full stop sentence, but there is a pause, the dash, right in the middle of this nonstop story. It has no sentences and even through the rush of “childhood, a country” there are also “no paragraphs.” The narrator seems to be the spouse or observer of a very busy person, perhaps a politician, whose entire life story is about running through life and, ultimately, running a country. It sounds exhausting. Without syntactical stops or paragraph breaks, everything just runs on and on without end.

scorn of syntax the silence filled with dark knives

Claudia Coutu Radmore, *Matrix* 107 (2017)

In this haiku, syntax appears to be the enemy — a limitation or restraint. The narrator opens with the phrase “scorn of syntax,”

which seems like saying that syntax is worthless. Not desirable. Why would our narrator have scorn of syntax? The narrator doesn't like order, organized speech, structured thoughts. What follows this narrator's "scorn of syntax"? The narrator gives us "the silence filled with dark knives." Without syntax there is just dark silence, no way to organize our thoughts so that we can share or communicate with others. We are resisting the shared usage conventions of language arrangement. "The dark knives" are sinister. Threatening. You can't see them coming. Ouch!

marriage proposal —
she analyses
my syntax

Dan Iulian, 23rd Indian Kukai, March 2018

This haiku features a wedding proposal. Obviously, the groom is the narrator. The offer of marriage has been made but instead of a quick answer, the possible bride "analyzes / my syntax." She is carefully considering the structure and movement of his words. What does he put first? Who does he put first? Why is this placed here instead of brought up later? Is this about the process and ritual or the expression of hopes and wishes? Somehow, analyzing "my syntax" does not seem as socially condescending as correcting "my grammar," and yet it suggests that the analytical rather than emotional is guiding this bride's decision.

Wampanoag the syntax of cauliflower

Bill Cooper, *Bones* 16 (2019), 21

"Wampanoag" is a nation of Native American tribes who lived in Massachusetts and New England. They interacted with the pilgrims and early Massachusetts Bay settlements. After a little research, I found that are several cauliflower recipes that claim to

be derived from the way it was cooked for early celebrations of thanksgiving. I don't know what "the syntax of cauliflower" means, which is perhaps the point of this haiku. We don't really know much about the Wampanoag nation either. In recent years there have been attempts to recover this language, but it's hard to get the actual usage in-between the folklore of things like recipes from the first thanksgiving feast.

studying the syntax of a firefly's blinks . . . starless night

S Srinivas, *Wales Haiku Journal*, (2020)

In this haiku, the narrator uses "syntax" as a metaphor for a mysterious or complex system beyond immediate grasp. The narrator is "studying the syntax of a firefly's blinks" and sees repetition, the on and off of the light. Is there some code, some message, some structure to this communication? Can other fireflies read the language, understand the syntax of these messages? The haiku ends with another image of things beyond our understanding: "starless night," where we know there are stars out there, but they are not visible now. Humans always try to make sense of patterns, to understand the underlying syntax.

without
syntax

the
bare
skin

of
dawn

Lee Gurga, *without syntax* (2020)

This is the title poem of Lee Gurga's collection, *without syntax*. The narrator begins by saying that this is a moment "without syntax." This could mean without words, without phrases, without sentences, without organized thoughts. And without that, what do we have? Just "the bare skin" we live in. Wait, there's more. "the bare skin / of dawn" which suggests we are in the presence of sunrise. We can feel the warmth of the sun reaching our bare skin. We can just be in a Lacanian preverbal state of oneness with the world. We don't need words. We don't need syntax. We are not communicating with others, just communing with the dawn. Just being. I can almost hear the Beatles singing "here comes the sun!"

In these haiku the authors pay attention to the way someone's words, phrases or sentences are shaped, guided, controlled, or limited by syntax. "Syntax" often represents a means of organizing thoughts, carefully providing pauses, and emphasizing significant clusters of words. In the first haiku, the narrator is noticing the breathless run-on of thoughts and ideas. The inability to shape words into meaningful messages threatens our second haiku narrator who is trapped in "dark silence." In considering a marriage proposal, a haiku narrator analyzes the underlying, unspoken messages of the proposal. In two of these haiku, the narrators employ the word "syntax" as a metaphor for carefully considering unknown codes or patterns of a Native American cauliflower recipe and fireflies. In the last haiku, Gurga's narrator calls for a human consciousness or perception that is preverbal, "without syntax," only available in our skins.

(3) Haiku about "parentheses"

A parenthesis is a word, clause, or sentence inserted as an explanation or afterthought into a passage that is grammatically complete without it, in writing usually marked off by curved brackets, dashes, or commas. The use of parentheses is related to

syntax — a means of modifying a word or phrase within a sentence by inserting additional nonessential information. Since haiku are usually not written as complete sentences, the syntax of haiku is often characterized as fragments or a combination of fragment and phrase. Like the haiku cut, parentheses are another way to disrupt textual elements with extra information. The parenthesis is viewed by editors and typesetters as an indication that the information is “extra information” within a sentence that may be cut if needed. Haiku writers are drawn to both the shape of parentheses as well as the idea of how we determine what is essential and what is extra information in a haiku.

Insect small
as a period (.), crawling
Into my parentheses

Zhanna P. Rader, Lewis Sanders, ed., *Nightshade:
An Anthology of Haiku* (1987), 31

In this first example, the parenthesis makes a double appearance. The narrator compares a tiny insect to a small period. It appears to be an accidental surprise addition to her writing, but then it becomes the feature star of the haiku. The narrator is a writer, but, in this case, nature is helping her write this haiku. She enjoys this unnecessary, but fun, additional bit of information showing up in the middle of her parentheses and haiku. As the narrator/writer, she takes possession of “my parentheses” even though it has a small intruder.

decisively
parting her
parentheses

Jeffrey Winke, *Vexing Laughter* (2013)

In this senryu our narrator appears to be very assertive: “decisively / parting.” What do we make of “her / parentheses?” How can someone part parentheses? If we are sticking with a language context, then this haiku is about writing. He is “parting” or analyzing the parentheses. Is this really needed? Is there anything significant within “her / parentheses”? Is he parting the parentheses to make room for even more content? Or is this narrator (and haiku) just using the word “parentheses” as a metaphor for parting something else of hers? While this is vague, we do know how he is doing whatever he’s doing to “her / parentheses.” Decisively. If you look up “parentheses” in the urban dictionary, it notes that the “()” is used in text messaging as a symbol for “a woman’s sex organ.” If we read the senryu with this meaning, then the narrator is either engaged in rough sex or rape. Where does that leave the woman in this haiku? Does she get to be decisive about this “parting?”

brackets
within parentheses
deep winter

Sarah E. Metzler, *Modern Haiku* 50:2 (Summer 2019)

This haiku also has a double parenthesis, “brackets / within parentheses,” which suggests a complicated layering of extra information within extra information. The last line, “deep winter,” suggests that the ground is covered with layers of snow upon snow. Our narrator is suggesting that both the double parentheses and the multiple layers of snow are more than we need.

couched in parentheses (I become an afterthought)
Laura Williams, Zee Zahava, ed., *Brass Bell*, September 2014

This monoku features a narrator who both by comment and example has become “an afterthought.” Instead of getting top billing in the sentence, they are relegated to parentheses. What is

this narrator's place in the room? They have been "couched" or set aside. Present but not a key player. Redundant, just as the second phrase demonstrates "(I become an afterthought)." The parentheses have become their prison.

no second
parenthesis
just swallows

Chris Gordon, *Roadrunner* [Web] 11:3 (October 2011)

What a fun reference to an open parenthesis. Unlike the previous haiku, in this one the narrator notices that there is no closing parenthesis, "just swallows" who have escaped. Without being closed within, the swallows are free to soar and swoop wherever they please. They are such show offs!

closed parentheses moon
summing up
my story

Edward Cody Huddleston, *Modern Haiku* 53.3, (2022), 47

Parentheses are often used to indicate an aside within a story, or a brief phrase adding more detail on a particular point of the story. The assumption is that the parentheses are not necessary but may add some flavor or detail that adds color or clarification. In this haiku, the moon seems to be the closed parentheses that just shows up in the middle of the story. There is a pause to let it become part of the story for a moment, then our narrator moves on to finish the story. Turns out the moon is not extraneous but essential. I also get a nice visual of the crescent moon, which looks like the closing parentheses.

With a long history of the haiku cut, haiku is often characterized as a fragment and phrase with a pause somewhere not quite in the middle. Haiku poets know how to create interruptions within the

flow of a sentence or idea. They know how to draw attention to breaks in the syntax of haiku phrases. In these six haiku, we can see how authors address our experiences with “parentheses.” In the first two haiku, we see the haiku narrators refer to the shape of parentheses. The tiny insect appears insignificant but finds its place within the walls of a parenthesis in the haiku. Winke’s narrator perhaps views parentheses as a sex object. In the third and fourth haiku, the poets consider how parentheses signal redundant or unneeded information. Who needs more snow in deep winter? How simply someone is relegated to “an afterthought” with parentheses. In the last two haiku, the narrators play with the concept of open versus closed parentheses. With the swallows, there doesn’t need to be an end to their flights. However, the “closed parentheses moon” provides a sense of completion of a story, even the digressions that may have come up.

(4) Haiku about “semantics”

Semantics refers to the meaning of a word, phrase, sentence, or text. For linguists, it is the study of how people shape, find, change, or share understandings about the meaning of words or texts. For social-linguists, semantics is the study of how the meanings of words and texts change over time based on usage and cultural perspectives. For haiku writers, semantics often refers to a difference of opinion about the meaning or significance of words. Sometimes it refers to a challenging search for meaning.

At the rim of the Grand Canyon
two Englishmen
argue semantics

Alexis Rotella, *The Red Pagoda* 5:2 [1988], 6

The scene of this senryu is the Grand Canyon. Several people are gathered “At the rim of the Grand Canyon,” but our narrator is paying more attention to “two Englishmen” than the view. She is observing how they “argue semantics” as they try to find the right words to describe this amazing vista. They are impassioned about language. Maybe they are poets? Which word best captures the scale, the scope, the bigger than life, the geologic time, the grandeur of this view? What a great opportunity to watch a word fight, a struggle for words that can convey the meaning of this experience.

semantics
crows chase the one who has
found something

Cherie Hunter Day, *Bones* 4 (2014), 36

The narrator of this haiku appears to be studying a community of crows, sometimes called a murder of crows. What is the system of communication or language apparent in the behavior of crows? What is the meaning of life for the crows? The narrator starts by simply stating a broad word that references a wide range of linguistics, “semantics.” By itself we get little more than thinking about language or a general sense of how words gain cultural significance or meaning in a society. But when linked up to the narrator’s observation that “crows chase the one who has / found something,” we can imagine that “semantics” is a metaphor—an abstract way to consider the minds, caws, and actions of the crows. The crows’ language appears to be based on the constant search for food. For the crows, the “chase” reveals their self-interest. Mine. Mine. Mine. Of course, as readers we might shift back to human society and realize that much of our own semantics are about securing basic needs such as shelter and food. We become crows chasing the one “who has / found something.”

Hazy semiotics:
Red lipstick
on red lips.

Ali Znaidi, *Bones* 4 (2014), 24

The narrator of this haiku is puzzled by the appearance of “Red lipstick / on red lips.” What is the meaning of wearing lipstick? The lips are already red. Why do they need to be redder? What message is the lipstick wearer trying to send? Who is the message of red-on-red lips for? The narrator or someone else? The narrator is not sure. They can’t make out the meaning and summarizes that this is an example of “Hazy semiotics.” Not clear even though the lips seem to be a very vivid declaration.

pretty sure my red is your red

John Stevenson, *My Red: The Selected Haiku
of John Stevenson* (2021), 54

The narrative voice of this monoku is, of course, ironic. The narrator is “pretty sure” which can be interpreted as “not sure at all” or as “confidently sure.” These two possible meanings occur simultaneously, so there is no audible haiku cut. The double meaning is a consciousness of complicated semiotics. This haiku is an example of the indeterminacy of language. We think we share understandings of the meaning of words, like red, with others, but how can we ever know for sure? A color-blind person’s red is more likely a shade of gray. And as any artist knows, there are infinite shades of any color when you are mixing paints. Beyond the lack of certainty, our emotional responses, choices, and preferences related to colors vary widely depending on the context.

heat mirage
semantics
at the vanishing point

Grant D. Savage, *Haiku Canada Review* 12:1 (2018), 14

The narrator of this haiku is a traveler who can see far into the distant plains or desert. In the distance he sees a “heat mirage” which appears like a reflection of water across the highway. He has a word for this illusion, calling it a “mirage,” but we don’t have good language for talking about the unknown. Our words fail to have clear meaning when talking about the unknown — beyond “the vanishing point.” We have a system of meaning-making. We have semantics. But words fail us in these visions of the beyond.

protest sign
wanting to overcome
semantics

Caroline Giles Banks, *Bottle Rockets* 44 (22:2, 2021), 1

The opening line, “protest sign,” positions this narrator as a member or observer of a protest group. They are trying to get their message out to the community, to politicians, or to society in general. They are for or against something. We don’t know what the protest is about. Instead, this narrator is thinking about language. How does a protest attempt to change people’s minds? It’s a matter of framing the issue in ways that help them understand. It’s about finding language that means something to the recipients of the protest. It’s ascribing or creating meaning to an issue by the way we talk about it. What do the protesters want? In this case, they want a shift in “semantics” ... the meaning of social justice, or reproductive rights, or gun ownership. The semantics are embedded in a culture’s collective consciousness. That’s a big cultural shift. It’s not “just semantics,” but rather overcoming the accepted meaning of our words.

In these haiku that reference “semantics,” the narrators often focus on the difficulty of finding shared meanings. People have a different understanding about words and their significance. I start with the haiku about “two Englishmen” who are more interested in arguing semantics rather than taking in the amazing view. Observing another kind of bird, Cherie Hunter Day’s narrator notices that the crows know the significance of their cawing, but we are just observers, outside their system of semantics. Two of these haiku puzzle over the “hazy” or uncertain effectiveness of conveying something as fundamental as the color red. Do we really share what we mean by the significance of red lips or my red? In the last haiku of this section, we see that “semantics” may just be an illusion, a mirage. Semiotic significance is a socially constructed, constantly changing element of language usage. Sometimes meaning eludes us. Other times, we boldly print OUR new meanings of words onto political or social justice protest signs.

(5) Haiku about “metaphor”

Metaphor is often defined as a figure of speech that directly refers to one thing by mentioning another. It contains an implied comparison between two things that are otherwise unrelated. Unlike a simile, it doesn’t use comparison terms such as “like,” but leaves it to the reader to notice similar characteristics or connections. As a specific application of semiotics, metaphors have always been part of haiku, even though many how-to guidebooks for writing haiku often prescribe avoidance of metaphors and similes. Let’s consider the ways haiku writers have written about the language experience of metaphors.

Here is a poorly-written haiku about metaphor from an early English language haiku writer:

ARTISTRY

Metaphors of grass
Punctuate the thawing snow.
Poetry of spring.

Clara Gates, *Haiku Highlights* 2:5 (1966), 14

This haiku, written in the 1960s, comes complete with a title, 5-7-5 syllabic form, and punctuation. It is written as two sentences. The title indicates it is about “Artistry,” and the haiku attempts to be a poetic, artistic expression about the “Poetry of spring.” As an artistic creation, the grass is not really grass. The grass blades are “metaphors” that “Punctuate the thawing snow.” The grass looks like it is punctuation marks, because what this is really about is writing a poem instead of actually experiencing the thawing snow. Images are just metaphors to be used to make the poetic art. The writer is using these phrases as symbolic examples of the “Poetry of spring.” The grass is not punctuating the thawing snow; the writer’s metaphors are doing the punctuating (which of course is another metaphor). While this is an example of bad writing, the same strategies of empowering abstract language concepts (like metaphor) as metaphorical agents have returned in some recent avant-garde haiku. It’s all about the writer creating poetic artistry. It is poorly written haiku like this one that led to the common advice that English haiku writers should avoid metaphor.

sorry no metaphors in English haiku really haiku

Keiko Imaoka, *Raw NerVZ Haiku* 2:3 (Fall 1995), 6

In this one liner, the narrator is satirizing the haiku advice to avoid metaphors. With this apology, “sorry no metaphors,” the narrator is parroting the advice for English haiku writers. The emphasis on “in English haiku” implies that this advice is only for writers of haiku in English. The emphasis on reality that often comes with

the prohibition of metaphors is the final twist of the narrator's comment. To write "haiku really haiku" you have to give up metaphors. I can't resist but note that this one-line poem is not really a haiku, because it is just commentary. There is no scene, no images, just a voice apologizing. There's also no metaphors here. There is no reality here other than the voice of the speaker. Maybe we should call it a satirical senryu?

skipping that lecture
on metaphor in haiku
Indian summer

Bill Kenney, *Tinywords*, October 18, 2007

Bill Kenny's narrator explains why he is "skipping that lecture / on metaphor in haiku." The "Indian summer" calls for him to go outside the stuffy lecture hall. He will learn to write haiku from nature, from being out in the unexpected warmth of this day. The issue of metaphor in haiku is something for the theorists and pedantic teachers to debate. He'd rather let nature be his teacher.

spring fever —
wishing it were only
a metaphor

Susan Constable, *Bottle Rockets* 26 (2012), 38

This haiku starts with "spring fever" which is not really an image. It's a phrase that refers to a wide range of possible associations. Perhaps it is referring to a longing for warmth and renewal after a long, hard winter? Or it is the rebirthing of plants and flowers rising out of the dirt? Or in a more human connection, it is the rising of a desire for romance, the start of a new flame. It is not literally a "fever," but a metaphor for all of the possible things we associate with spring. Then we get the second half of the haiku. The narrator is "wishing it were only / a metaphor." If it were only a metaphor, it could be dismissed as a bit of word play. It is just

something in a poem or work of literary art. It's not real. Not felt. A rhetorical flourish. But this narrator says it is real. Real warmth. Real desire. Real eagerness to be spring. The narrator feels it in her blood and body and heart.

and me still caught on the edge of metaphor . . .

Ann McKay, *Can I Get There by Candle* (1996), 69

This senryu is about the narrator being trapped in a metaphor. Help, let me out! The voice begins in the middle of things “and me still caught” as if this has been going on for a long time. She is caught “on the edge of metaphor . . .” which seems ominous, like a cliff. She could fall off this edge. Or maybe the metaphor is an aspiration, just out of reach? She is “on the edge” but unable to climb on top of it, to conquer it. If only she could reach some solid ground. If only she could ground herself in reality, instead of living in this indeterminate state of metaphors.

don't give me metaphor things are just barely what they are

Michael Ketchek, *Bottle Rockets* 31 (16:1, 2014), 12

Here is another voice-only poem that echoes the common advice to avoid metaphors in haiku, with less certainty. Perhaps the narrator is a haiku editor or teacher? In an angsty voice he says, “don't give me metaphor” with the implied *because* “things are just barely what they are.” This narrator raises the question of being and epistemology. How do we know that things are what they are, what we call them? At one time when things were named, weren't we using familiar metaphors or analogies to understand them better? With an ever-changing reality and indeterminacy of what is real, this speaker is asking for something to grasp with certainty. We fool ourselves thinking we know what things are, with knowing the names of things, so don't complicate it with another layer of metaphoric abstraction.

the whole world the other half of this metaphor

Jim Kacian, *Ginyu* 63 (2014)

Jim Kacian's narrator also voices the question of epistemology. How do we know what we think we know? How do we understand "the whole world" without considering "the other half?" This narrator seems to take a cosmic or omniscient perspective. It reminds me of images of earth from the Apollo space mission window. There's the earth with its swirling clouds, oceans, deserts, city lights, and mountain ranges. How do we do justice to our understanding of "the whole world" without a metaphor like a "blue marble?" We accept some words as reality, but they are actually just symbolic metaphors.

A Pope, a Lama and a witchdoctor walk into a metaphor

Billy Tuggle, *Failed Haiku* 1:12 (December 2016)

The narrator for this senryu is an amateur comedian, perhaps at a bar. He follows the structure and formula for an old joke about an odd assortment of people coming into the bar together. Usually, the bartender replies, "Is this a joke?" In this case we have a "A Pope, a Lama and a witchdoctor," but instead of a bar they "walk into a metaphor." So what's the unspoken punch line? "It's just a metaphor?" We are surprised that they end up in a metaphor instead of a joke. That's not funny. It's so hard to get a metaphor to do what you want it to.

starlight
through my body
of metaphors

Michelle Tennison, *NOON* 15 (2019)

This haiku was originally published in three lines and later republished in an anthology as a monoku. I prefer the three-line

version because it adds more substance or existential reality to the “starlight.” The narrator starts with observation, then moves the focus of the poem into abstraction. The starlight is not out there in outer space. It is inside. Moving “through my body,” but with the third line we discover that even “my body” is not actually a substantial body. It is “my body / of metaphors.” A collection of ideas. The poem is about the narrator collecting ideas or metaphors from out there to in here. From images to ideas. From sensory detail to abstracted metaphors. This narrator fully embraces language as the universe and body of ideas for poetry.

summer ending
no anchor aboard
The Metaphor

John Stevenson, *Upstate Dim Sum*, 2021/I, 24

I will end with this playful haiku in which a metaphor becomes a boat. With the end of summer approaching, the narrator of this haiku wants to have an endless summer, with no anchor to ground the boat. The boat’s name is painted on the tail. Its name is “The Metaphor.” This narrator is a poet and has playfully named his boat “The Metaphor.” The narrator wants to ride The Metaphor as long as possible. Metaphorically, summer never has to end. Fun scene!

There are several haiku that reference the word “metaphor.” Frequently, these poems resist, or attempt to disprove, the prescriptive advice about avoiding the use of metaphors in haiku. Language, of course, is inherently metaphorical, so these haiku consider how that advice may not be very helpful. These haiku ask us to consider how or when the use of metaphors might be effective. They are usually framed by the narrative voice of a writer. The haiku writer is struggling to find the right words or images. They consider whether a metaphor might spice up an otherwise boring descriptive haiku.

Conclusion

Language has been a common subject of English-language haiku. In referencing words about language, haiku authors explore how language is one aspect of our lived human experience. In these haiku, authors explore how language is one aspect of our lived human experience. Some of the more naïve, less effective haiku on language words simply use terms like “grammar, syntax, or semiotics” as metaphors for the complexity of understanding something. Others notice a connection between language words and the appearance of things, as noted in the examples of a couple of haiku on parentheses. However, the most effective haiku on language words focus on the social significance of language usage. Haiku about noticing or “correcting” someone’s grammar reveal empathy and caring between people. Language experiences help us understand our connections to the past or to different communities. When haiku poets pay attention to the way people shape their messages, they share insights into intuitive syntax choices. Phrases, pauses, parentheses are experienced not just as editing devices but as ways of understanding consciousness. Finally, when we consider the words and related concepts about “semiotics” and “metaphor,” haiku poets explore the challenges of sharing insights and meaning. They notice that often our efforts to communicate fail. An assumption that others understand “my red” may be a delusion. We come to see the indeterminacy of language in our lives. There may not be as much correspondence between words and reality as we assume in our everyday lives. On some levels, all language is metaphorical — a semblance of things we socially construct and agree on . . . and yet, haiku is a beautiful way to share such realizations about language and its limitations in our lives.

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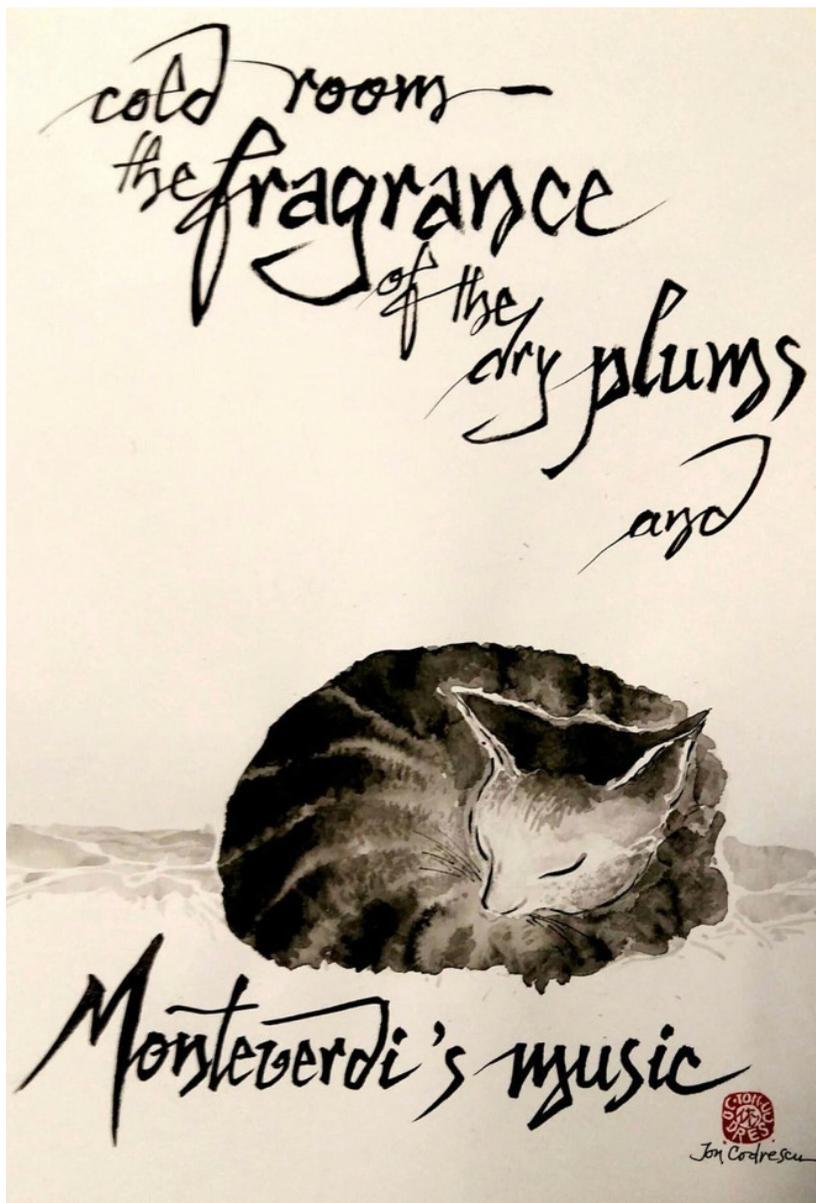
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JUXTA

Interviews



Poet/Artist: **ION CODRESCU**

WALKING IN A SACRED WAY:

An Interview with Chad Lee ROBINSON

Cherie Hunter DAY

Cherie Hunter Day: Let's go back to the beginning. I read in *The Deep End of the Sky* (Turtle Light Press, 2015), your third collection, that your introduction to haiku came during your senior year at South Dakota State University. David Allan Evans shared a translation of Bashō's haiku about the crow on a bare branch. It was that same haiku that sealed my interest in haiku. As you say, the attraction was immediate and there was no going back. What is it about this particular poem that changed the focus and trajectory of your work?

Chad Lee Robinson: Allow me to travel back a bit further. From the age of fourteen until going to college I had been writing free verse poetry, none of it any good. It wasn't until college that I started to learn what poetry really is, what imagery is. It started to sink in what William Carlos Williams meant when he said, "No ideas but in things." And while my poetry had improved considerably during my time at South Dakota State University, I still struggled with the feeling that my writing wasn't coming together how I hoped it would. And then I read a translation of Bashō's haiku about the crow on a bare branch, and it was a watershed moment.

I had right in front of me a poem I didn't know was a poem. How could it be? It barely had any words! I had read many wonderful poems before this, but Bashō's haiku moved me differently, in some deeper way. It was like a bell rang inside me, silent but still vibrating. Initially I was struck by the imagery, just the crow, a bare branch, and an autumn evening, without any commentary from the poet, which allowed me to connect with it on my own terms. It was the first time I interacted with a poem without feeling guided or just reading about someone else's experience.

Though it may sound odd, I connected to the haiku's size by thinking of it as a powerlifter. I used to be a powerlifter mostly in my teenage years, and I would compete in the 114-pound class. You wouldn't have known it by looking at me. I wasn't a big, muscly guy. I was short and skinny. But being small in size didn't mean I wasn't strong. So, I thought of haiku in that way, small in size but no less powerful than other longer poems, and maybe, word for word, even more explosive. Before writing some of my own haiku, I wanted more examples, and so I went to the campus library and found the third edition of *The Haiku Anthology*, edited by Cor van den Heuvel (W.W. Norton & Company, 1999) and *Haiku Moment*, edited by Bruce Ross (Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1993). With those anthologies in hand, I was all in on haiku. I stopped writing all other kinds of poetry to focus solely on haiku and senryū (and later, tanka and *kyōka*). I wanted to be a published poet, and before I was introduced to haiku, I didn't think that was going to happen for me. Bashō's haiku showed up at the right time. Everything I've accomplished over the last twenty plus years started with Bashō's poem.

CHD: You were born and raised in South Dakota and went to an in-state university. You now work in your dad's grocery store. It's a legacy that you will likely pass along to your son someday.

straightness of the bean rows —
a simple nod
from my father

“Haiku in the Workplace: A Job Well Done”

(The Haiku Foundation — Troutswirl Blog, June 2017)

advice for my son —
the tissue paper
protecting each pear

The Heron's Nest XXV:1, 2023

Does anyone else in your family write haiku or any other form of poetry or prose? Would you encourage your son to follow in your footsteps as a haiku writer?

CLR: No, no one else in my family writes. If my son were to show an interest in writing haiku, I would certainly encourage him. Writing haiku is not something I would insist on him though, but I do hope he will at least be a reader and appreciator of haiku. I've been building a haiku library since 2002 – 2003, so he would have a wealth of journals, anthologies, and collections by individual poets at his fingertips. Whatever path he takes, I hope haiku is a part of it in some way.

CHD: Another legacy that you tap into with your work is self-sufficiency and care for the land. In *The Haiku Foundation* feature “New to Haiku” September 19, 2021, you say, “I've been connecting with the land since I was a boy. The prairie is part of who I am. It's as present in my life as my wife and son.” That deep connection goes beyond the nostalgia of place to the very center of home. Each one of your haiku is like a homecoming — a love letter to the landscape.

small town diner —
 in three crayons or less
 the prairie landscape
Mayfly 73, 2022

Do you see haiku as part of the nature writing tradition in America: a way to champion nature and call attention to the climate crisis?

CLR: Absolutely. Haiku in America has been part of the nature writing tradition since the very beginning, and I'm thinking of poets like Elizabeth Searle Lamb, Foster Jewell, Robert Spiess, John Wills, and Nick Virgilio (just off the top of my head). These poets weren't just writing nature-based haiku about any random thing in nature, they were writing haiku that came directly from the landscape where they lived. When I set out to focus on haiku, I wanted to write haiku in the nature tradition, but most of those early attempts missed the mark because I didn't have the skills yet. But I was inspired by books like Elizabeth Searle Lamb's *Across the Windharp*, Lee Gurga's *Fresh Scent*, Wally Swist's *The Silence Between Us*, and various selections in *The Haiku Anthology* (3rd edition.) What these collections showed me was that I could do something bigger than just write in the nature tradition. I could write about a place and build a body of work that is greater than the individual poem.

As far as the climate crisis is concerned, haiku poets are more than capable of addressing it, and they've been doing it for decades. I think writing in the nature tradition means that it is inevitable that a haiku poet would at some point address climate issues like increasing heat, extended droughts, acid rain, water availability and its purity, wildfires, deforestation, etc. In the last few years, I have addressed wildfires in my haiku on a couple occasions. I have seen the impact of drought on crops as well as the damage that can be caused by stronger than usual storms passing through, where hail and wind obliterate whole fields worth of corn or sunflowers.

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wildfire —
the horse given water
from a cowboy hat

Autumn Moon Haiku Journal 4:2, 2021

I think of Nick Virgilio's snapping turtle/beer bottle haiku that addresses the human impact on wildlife as well as our littering the planet, creating unsafe and unclean conditions.

on the creek bottom,
century-old snapping turtle:
years of beer bottles

Nick Virgilio, *Frogpond* XIII:4,1990

And the acid rain haiku by Marlene Mountain, who was also a writer of place and in the nature tradition, addresses the human impact on the climate as well as our increasing disconnect from nature.

acid rain and less i am at one with nature*

*less and less nature is nature

Marlene Mountain, *pissed off poems and cross words* (1986)

More recently, haiku poet Joe McKeon published *To Whom It May Concern* (Red Moon Press, 2023), an entire book of haiku and related poems dedicated to climate and social issues. Haiku is rooted in nature, and so haiku poets can lead the way on climate crisis poetry. I think it's crucial that haiku poets continue to observe and write about the ever-changing nature of our planet and ourselves.

CHD: Years ago, I took a road trip with my husband and son. We drove from Yellowstone National Park on the Idaho border across northern Wyoming, through the Black Hills to Mount Rushmore National Monument in South Dakota. This is wild country with big sweeps of sky, wind, carved rocks, and heat. The experience was very much like being thrown into the deep end of the sky—the fitting title of your haiku collection and the name of your website. The four elements: wind, rain, earth, and fire are well-represented and have been foundational in your work. I think the prairie has been one of your greatest mentors. Would you agree? Have there been other mentors in your twenty plus years of writing haiku?

CLR: For sure. My love for the prairie started at an early age on vacations out west to the Black Hills with my family. There was so much to see on the way, rolling hills with herds of cows, horses, fields rolled up into hay bales. And then you'd see the Badlands with its rugged and rocky terrain. And beyond that the Black Hills (which are actually mountains) with their red dirt, ponderosa pines, streams, and of course the buffalo. There's not as much farmland in western South Dakota due to less rainfall. Most of that is east of the Missouri River. Pierre is situated right on the river. From the house I grew up in on Dakota Avenue, I could see the sparkle of the Missouri. It wasn't until I went to college and started traveling east that I learned more about the farmland found on that side of the state. So yes, the prairie has most definitely been an inspiration. Also, I would just like to add that South Dakota has four distinct seasons, and you can see that plays a big role in my haiku as well. In fact, my last two books, *The Deep End of the Sky* and *The White Buffalo* are both organized by season.

I would consider David Allan Evans, the former poet laureate of South Dakota and a literature and creative writing professor of mine at South Dakota State University, as an early mentor. But once I left college, I didn't have anyone to guide me or discuss my writing with. Most of what I know about haiku I learned on my own

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either from reading haiku or figuring it out by writing it. A number of haiku poets are inspiring to me, especially those who wrote/are writing a significant amount about place or in the nature tradition. Poets such as Elizabeth Searle Lamb, Marian Olson, John Wills, Ce Rosenow, Laurie Stoelting, Wally Swist, Michael McClintock, Robert Spiess, Allan Burns, Lee Gurga, Virginia Brady Young, Ron Moss, and Charles Trumbull (among others) have all impacted my work. When I think of what these poets have done with haiku, and I look through what I've been doing, I just hope that my work is adding something of value to American haiku and to haiku in general.

CHD: In your most recent award-winning haiku collection, *The White Buffalo* (Backbone Press, 2023) you pay homage to the Lakota, the people indigenous to your area of South Dakota.

buffalo drum
old growth pines
frame the dawn

spring morning
the hoop dancer spins a wind
of many colors

whirling snowflakes —
a Lakota elder
passes the pipe

These haiku directly reference the sacred ceremonies of the Lakota. Those ceremonies were illegal from 1880 to 1978. Now that the ban has been lifted, they can once again practice in the open. Have you attended or participated in a sweat lodge or the sun dance? What do the Lakota mean to you?

CLR: I saw some of the dances in school (I don't remember the names of them, the hoop dance was probably one), certainly not the sun dance or the ghost dance since they wouldn't be appropriate for school-age children, and I've never attended or participated in any actual dances or ceremonies.

The Lakota culture deserves to be understood and celebrated, no differently than the farm/ranch culture or the cowboy culture. The Lakota are part of the prairie, and I feel like, if I didn't at least attempt to write about them, then that would be a disservice to my work as a poet of place, to those who read my work and to the greater haiku community. When I write about the Lakota, my intent is to be respectful and to be accurate always. One of their values is kinship which comes from the family, and family is how they measure wealth. I have written extensively about the members of my own family because they are a big part of my experience, and they are my connection to this prairie landscape. The Lakota believe that the earth is sacred (Grandmother/Mother Earth), that the land does not belong to us but that we belong to it, that the animals and creatures that live here with us are our brothers and sisters and cousins. I feel more than just a passing connection to these values. The prairie is my home as well, going back multiple generations on both sides of my family. That history is one of the ways I connect to the prairie landscape. To truly understand a place, one must learn its history, and the Lakota are a part of that prairie history.

CHD: On your website you discuss the background and importance of “the winter count” for the Lakota in the following haiku:

the winter count
brought before the elders —
hush of first snow
Modern Haiku 52:2, 2021

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“Winter counts are fascinating objects. The Lakota, and other plains tribes as well, used them to record important events in the tribes’ history. With the tribe’s elders, the winter count keeper would choose one or two events to represent a calendar year. They marked the years from first snow to first snow. Winter counts were usually drawn on buffalo hide, but other durable materials were also used. One event that was marked on the winter counts of multiple tribes was the Leonid meteor shower of 1833. Other events depicted on various winter counts include disease and war. The keeper of the winter count was also a storyteller, and so the pictographs aided him in the oral tradition of telling the tribe’s history through stories.”

I’m curious to know more about the title haiku.

summer grasses
the Lakota sings
of a white buffalo

What is the legend of the white buffalo? What is your white buffalo?

CLR: The legend of the white buffalo is the story of White Buffalo Calf Woman, a spirit who came to the Lakota people and gave to them the seven sacred ceremonies (also called rites), the sacred pipe (also known as the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe), songs and their traditional ways. When she left, she transformed into a white buffalo and disappeared. That is how she got her name. The legend is said to have taken place in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

According to Chief Arvol Looking Horse, the White Buffalo Calf Woman also taught the Lakota how to walk in a sacred way on the earth. And I think what that means is that we must take care of this place. If the earth is seen as a grandmother or mother, then it must be treated and cared for as such. These Lakota values that date back

more than 1,000 years are even more important in the face of the climate crisis.

The Lakota consider the white buffalo a sacred living thing. And so I think that too. I actually have two white buffalo: my family and the prairie. I don't think there's any surprise that I say that my family is one. I think a lot of people would say that. But I also say the prairie is too because my roots are deep in the history here. The prairie isn't just where I live, it's a living, breathing thing. I think of it like it's a family member.

CHD: Another haiku of yours that I find striking is the following:

Wounded Knee —
 trying not to speak
 above the wind

The Wounded Knee Massacre took place on December 29, 1890, near Wounded Knee Creek on the Pine Ridge Reservation. White settlers perceived a gathering of Ghost Dancers to be a prelude to an armed uprising. U.S. Army troops were mobilized to prevent this unsubstantiated rebellion. A gun was discharged by accident and the troops opened fire killing nearly 300 Lakota. They were buried three days later in a mass grave. Black Elk, an Oglala Lakota holy man, witnessed the aftermath of the battle and had this to say:

“I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream.”

Your poem reminds me of Bashō's haiku written while overlooking a different battlefield.

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summer grass
all that remains
of a soldier's dream
Matsuo Bashō (1689)

Both haiku are lamentations. Can you tell me more about your sources of inspiration?

CLR: Essentially, in writing this haiku, I simply wanted to honor those who lost their lives at Wounded Knee. I sometimes think about events like this one, events that should never have transpired the way that they did or should never have happened at all. It is such a black mark on South Dakota history and our nation's history. It also makes me think about what the country's relations are with indigenous people. And without straying into social/racial issues, allow me to just say that while there have been some positive steps forward, there is still such a long, long way to go in coming to terms with the past and reconciling for the future.

CHD: The haiku in *The White Buffalo* written about the Lakota comprised only a small portion of the collection. You also write about your family, the abiding beauty of the landscape, and challenges of living on the prairie. I highlighted certain poems in this interview because of my own interest in the Lakota. Is there a way to show respect as interested observers without perpetuating the racism and colonialism forced on indigenous people?

CLR: This is a difficult line to walk. I do believe you can be an outside observer of another culture and still write about that culture in a respectful way, but there are some things to consider before putting pencil to paper. First, you must have some amount of knowledge about the culture, its people, its practices, and its history. The best kind of knowledge comes from direct, authentic

experience. Most of my knowledge of the Lakota has come from a class I took in college, reading various pieces of literature by American Indian writers (Lakota and others), and my own reading and research for the haiku I've written about the Lakota. I am by no means an expert on the Lakota, but I enjoy their art and learning about their traditions, beliefs, and especially their history.

Secondly, you can't assume you know something about the culture you want to write about. There's too much racism, stereotyping, and misinformation out in the world. In lieu of authentic experience, the next best thing is research. You must be ready to research everything using reputable and reliable sources. The best way I've found to do that is to find sources written by members of the culture you're interested in. So, if you're in a situation like I am where you don't have any direct, first-hand experience with or you aren't in any way related to the culture you want to write about, then you must absolutely seek out the most accurate information available.

Finally, and maybe most importantly, you should seriously consider your intent as an author who is writing about another culture. My biggest fear anytime I publish a haiku about the Lakota, and certainly as I was selecting poems for *The White Buffalo*, is that I'm going to be accused of cultural appropriation. That's why I think the author's intent is so important. As I mentioned elsewhere in this interview, my intent is to show my respect for the Lakota culture, as it is important to the landscape of the Great Plains. I feel like if I didn't acknowledge the Lakota in my haiku, then I'd be ignoring a critical piece of the prairie. I know this is a highly sensitive subject, so I want to reassure anyone who takes a look at my work that I'm not out to offend or do harm to the Lakota culture. I'm not out to twist or distort the Lakota culture for personal gain. Quite the opposite, in fact. I celebrate the Lakota the same way I celebrate the farmer, the rancher, the cowboy, the prairie itself, and even my own family. I sincerely hope that when someone reads one of my

haiku about the Lakota that it opens up an opportunity to learn more and understand better.

CHD: What is the next writing project that you will be working on?

CLR: Well, I'm not exactly sure what my next project will be just yet. What I would really love to do is put a small collection together and have it printed using letterpress. I love the whole experience of a letterpress collection, the textured paper, the tactile feeling of the words printed on that paper. In the meantime, I'm happy to be writing and working to bring some of my ideas closer to fruition.

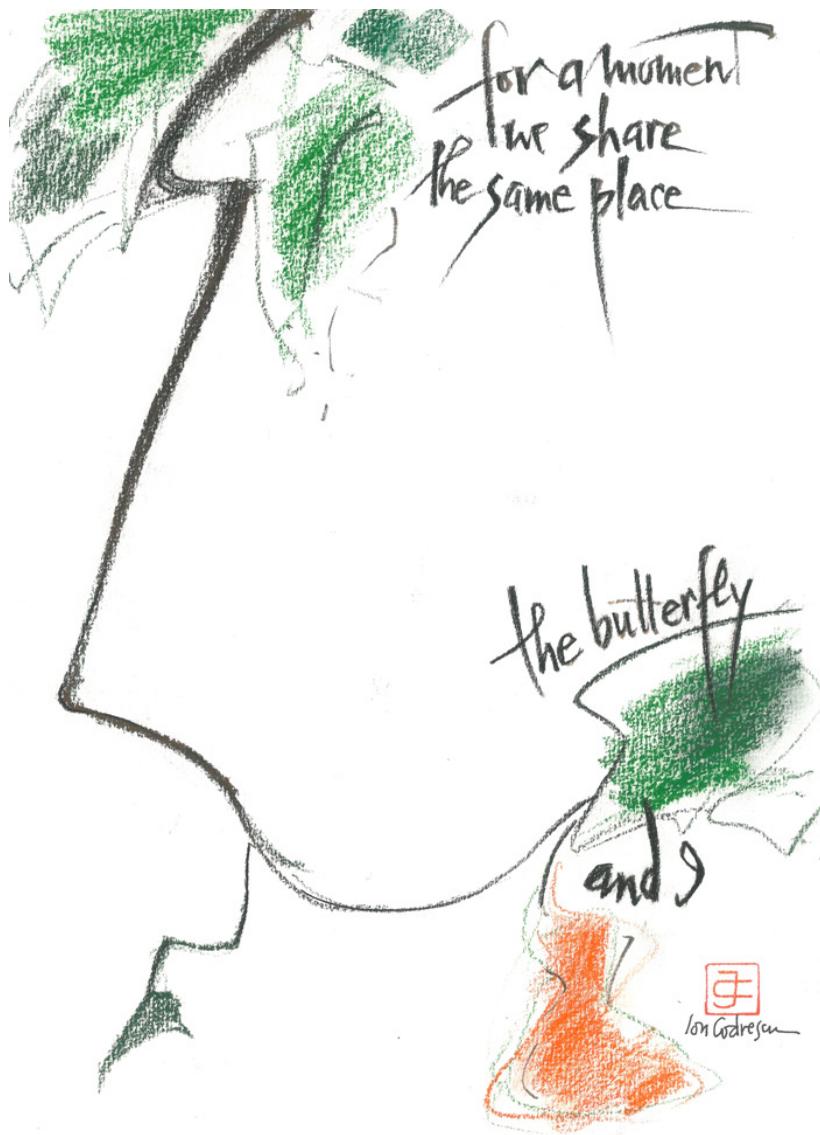
CHD: Thank you, Chad. It's been an absolute pleasure to learn a little more about you and your part of the world. I'd like to end this interview with one of my favorite haiku of yours, which also won a Touchstone Award for one of the best haiku published in 2018:

deep night sky
the dashboard lights too bright
for this loneliness

Frogpond 41:3, 2018

JUXTA

Resources



Poet/Artist: **ION CODRESCU**

English Haiku Anthologies: An Annotated Bibliography

Dr. Randy M. BROOKS

ABSTRACT: This bibliography focuses only on print editions of English Haiku Anthologies, not online PDF collections nor website anthologies. The bibliography includes five sections: (1) Major English Haiku Anthologies, (2) Special Topic English Haiku Anthologies, (3) Regional English Haiku Anthologies, (4) Serial & Event-based English Haiku Anthologies, and (5) English Haiku Organization Anthologies. Only the first section, the Major English Haiku Anthologies, are annotated.

Chronology of Major English Haiku Anthologies

Included in this short history of English haiku anthologies is a brief chronological overview of the contributions of each major anthology. More detailed annotations with notes from the editors' introductions are provided in the bibliography, summarizing claims of the editors for each of these books.

One of the first English haiku anthologies, *Borrowed Water: A Book of American Haiku*, was published by Charles E. Tuttle Company in 1966. Technically, this was a regional organization's anthology edited by Helen Stiles Chenoweth, leader of the Los Altos Writing Roundtable in California. While some of the haiku were previously published in *American Haiku* magazine, all 300 of the haiku were written by members of this writing group. They avoided imitating Japanese haiku or concepts; their goal was to draw on American images, language and experiences. By workshopping the haiku selected as a group, the result is a homogenized style. Each haiku is written as a sentence with 5-7-5 syllables.

One of the most influential anthologies of English haiku was *The Haiku Anthology* edited by Cor van den Heuvel. The first edition was published by Anchor Books in 1974, with a second edition published in 1986 and a third edition published by W.W. Norton in 1999. This anthology has been available in books stores for almost fifty years and has probably shaped North American haiku more than any other anthology. One reason for its success was the diversity of approaches and voices represented in each edition. As Cor wrote in 1974, "A great diversity lies in the pages ahead. But though these poets are all moving along individual paths, they are all following the haiku 'way.' The variety of their voices should delight us as much as the oneness they reveal enlightens us." Each subsequent edition increased in size going from about 200 haiku to 700 then 850 haiku with new authors added each time based on their significant contributions and new approaches.

With each edition he provided a short history and account of new developments of the haiku movement as a genre of poetry.

In the 1990s there were a couple of small press anthologies published. One was *Milkweed: A Gathering of Haiku* edited by Marshall Hryciuk and another was *The Rise and Fall of Sparrows* edited by Alexis Rotella. Both included only haiku that had not appeared in *The Haiku Anthology*.

In 1993 Charles E. Tuttle Company published another major anthology, *Haiku Moment: An Anthology of Contemporary North American Haiku*, edited by Bruce Ross. Ross selected over 800 haiku by 185 poets written or published from 1982 to 1992. As he stated in the introduction, “Most of the haiku in this collection are nature poems” which he viewed as following the style of Bashō and Issa. As indicated in the title, he emphasized an authentic haiku moment: “All of the haiku in this anthology, moreover, should convey a moment of insight experienced by a poet in real time through real beings and objects, a moment that the reader may enter and share.”

In 1996 Kodansha International published *Haiku World: An International Poetry Almanac* edited by William J. Higginson. Although this is technically a world anthology, this massive project was the first attempt to create an English language haiku *saijiki*. The anthology includes over one thousand English haiku by over 600 poets from fifty countries. Higginson discusses traditional Japanese haiku *sajiki* and how this project is “a collection of haiku, senryu, and linked-verse-related stanzas, all organized not by poet or language or country, but by topic. There are more than 680 topic entries in the *saijiki*.” Again, the editor avoided using any haiku from *The Haiku Anthology*.

At the turn of the century several new anthologies sought to be more inclusive of international English haiku. *The Acorn Book of Contemporary Haiku*, edited by Lucien Stryk and Keven Bailey,

featured the work of 140 poets from 25 countries. George Swede and Randy Brooks took a more selective approach featuring the work of 25 of the best English haiku poets, regardless of their geographic home. Their anthology, *Global Haiku: Twenty-Five Poets World Wide*, was celebrated and released at the Global Haiku Festival hosted by Dr. Randy Brooks at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois in 2000. Two years later, John Barlow and Martin Lucas edited and published *The New Haiku* in 2002. Barlow made the point that there was “a convergent evolution of the English haiku that had previously existed in relative geographic or social isolation” so in this anthology English writers from all parts of the world would appear side by side in the anthology because “beyond occasional indigenous subject matter and dialect, only slight differences may now be perceptible between haiku from region or country.” In another anthology, *Haiku Poetry Ancient and Modern*, published by Charles E. Tuttle Company in 2002, editor Jackie Hardy includes both classic Japanese haiku in translation with contemporary English haiku declaring that “the haiku form is practiced around the globe. In their unique, small way, haiku show what it is to be human.” Emiko Miyashita’s 2002 anthology, *The New Pond: An English-language Haiku Anthology*, gathers 124 English haiku from diverse geographical regions, translated into Japanese for readers of her newspaper column, “HAIKUKAI”.

In 2005 John Brandi and Dennis Maloney edited *The Unswept Path: Contemporary American Haiku*, an anthology that featured the work of thirteen well-known American poets. In the introduction, William J. Higginson highlights the different ways that these poets embraced the art of haiku. Three are “established leaders of the American haiku community” whereas two “discovered haiku in the nexus of the Beat Generation.” And “several poets in *The Unswept Path* began their work in the genre while living and studying for long periods in Japan.” Poets included are John Brandi, Margaret Chula, Cid Corman, Diane DiPrima, Patricia Donegan, Penny

Harter, Christopher Herold, William J. Higginson, Elizabeth Searle Lamb, Michael McClure, Sonia Sanchez, Steve Sanfield, and Edith Shiffert. Each poet wrote an introduction to their approach to writing haiku followed by a selection of their work.

In the second half of the first decade in this century, we saw three anthologies of English haiku published based on a reader-response approach. This approach is familiar to anyone who has read R.H. Blyth's translations of Japanese haiku which include extensive reader commentaries. In 2007 Martin Lucas edited *Stepping Stones: A Way into Haiku*, a collection of 366 British haiku (one for each day of the year) with extensive commentaries. He notes that in these comments "there is no attempt at any unifying idea, and no consistent standpoint. . . . I am doing nothing more ambitious than giving an immediate reaction." He concludes, "the value of the commentaries is not so much in what they say, it is that they encourage us to stay with the poetry."

One year later in 2008, we get *Haiku Mind: 108 Poems to Cultivate Awareness and Open Your Heart* edited with extensive contemplations by Patrica Donegan. In this collection of 108 haiku from English and Japanese authors, Donegan reads each as "a meditative springboard for the contemplation of a specific theme, be it adversity, oneness, or compassion. . . . Hopefully each haiku and each reflection will encourage further contemplation—and will cultivate a sense of awareness, compassion, and peace."

In another collection, *Montage: The Book*, editor Allan Burns provides another model of the art of reading haiku. This anthology was developed as an online weekly exhibit on The Haiku Foundation web site. The goal of these galleries was to be comparative: "juxtaposing the work of poets, often from different times and places, in order to suggest something about the range and breadth of haiku in English. Translations of Japanese classics, world haiku, pioneering attempts to domesticate haiku to English,

senryu, and experimental efforts to stretch the boundary of what haiku can be were all considered fair game. Each gallery has its theme and features seven haiku by three different poets.”

In 2011 Modern Haiku Press published *Haiku 21: An Anthology of Contemporary English-language Haiku*, edited by Lee Gurga and Scott Metz. In some ways, this anthology is like serial anthologies in that it selects haiku from a limited time frame—one decade from 2000–2010. And indeed, these co-editors continued their process by issuing a series of small annual anthologies published by Modern Haiku Press. The editors make a case for the value of co-editorship: the two editors of the current volume fall on different points of the haiku spectrum, with Lee’s strengths in the area of traditional haiku and Scott’s in the area of experimental haiku. As they state, “On the more traditional side, we tried to guard against banality and formulaic expression. On the more experimental side, we needed to guard against obscurity and incomprehensibility pretending to be profundity.”

In 2013 Allan Burns edited an anthology of nature haiku, *Where the River Goes: The Nature Tradition in English-Language*. This anthology could be considered a “special topics” collection. However, due to the size and scope of the book as well as the argument related to the essential contributions of nature writing within the haiku tradition, I have included this among some of the major English haiku anthologies. As the dust jacket notes, “*Where the River Goes* details and celebrates the evolution of the nature tradition of haiku over an active period of fifty years. Featuring more than 900 haiku, the anthology highlights and explores the work of forty essential ‘voices,’ from pioneers such as James W. Hackett, Robert Spiess, and John Wills to major contemporary haiku poets who regularly write in a naturalistic mode.”

In 2013 W.W. Norton published another significant English haiku anthology, *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years*, edited by Jim Kacian, Philip Rowland and Allan Burns. The editors write,

“Our purpose from the outset of this project has been to tell the story of English-language haiku, to identify its most singular accomplishments in its century of existence and place them, in their context, before our readers. We felt, for instance, that the order of presentation was of particular importance. You will find here the first instances we can discover of the subjects, techniques, forms, and allusions that have come to guide haiku to its present practice, and, when subsequent poems realize an even greater accomplishment, you’ll find those too.” The editors attempt to present each author with their best, most recognized, key haiku that they are known to have written. These are the haiku that have often “made” the haiku poets’ lasting reputation.

As English haiku continued to grow in India and other regions of the world, there have been additional international anthologies published. In 2015 a team of editors including Bruce Ross, Koko Kato, Dietmar Tauchner and Patricia Prime published *A Vast Sky: An Anthology of Contemporary World Haiku*. While this is not technically an English haiku anthology, it includes the work of 400 poets from around the world with all haiku in English or translated into English. Each editor selected poets and haiku from their region: Japan, Europe, The New World, and The Rest of the World. With significant growth of English haiku in India, it is not surprising that Kala Ramesh and her colleagues, Sanjuktaa Asopa and Shloka Shankar, edited a large anthology of 746 haiku from 26 countries by 231 authors. Their anthology, *Naad Anunaad: An Anthology of Contemporary World Haiku*, was published in 2016.

In 2017 Scott Mason edited and published *The Wonder Code: Discover the Way of Haiku and See the World with New Eyes*. He is one of the editors of *The Heron’s Nest* and all of the haiku in this anthology were first published in that online journal. Mason makes an argument for haiku as an antidote to disenchantment and disappointment in life. He asserts that “Wonder abounds. What’s more, it can be experienced by anyone, anywhere, and at

any given moment. The question to ask — if we truly seek more balance and happiness in our lives — is how to tap into the wonder around us. The method I propose in these pages is to learn to see the world anew through ‘haiku eyes.’” The book is organized into six “galleries” showing how haiku can “act as a corrective and even an antidote to wonder deprivation.”

Editor Jessica Malone Latham has a similar goal for readers of *Another Trip Around the Sun: 365 Days of Haiku for Children Young and Old*, published in 2019 by Brooks Books. She writes, “Children are easily able to tap into life’s wonder, unfiltered and not yet conditioned by society’s expectations, familial patterns, and the rush of adult responsibilities. I believe each of us has this capability, but for some, as time carries on and pains of life deepen, the opportunity to drift from this sacred presence can diminish. It takes courage and commitment to come back to and connect with the childlike wonder that lives within each of us. So I ask, is there a way that we can live like this, with a gentle and grateful sense of awe? I say yes, and I hope you do too. The poems in this collection are astounding, and the poets featured are many of those who write from the consciousness of which I am speaking.” The book includes 377 poems arranged with one haiku per calendar day. Latham writes “My vision for this collection is for these poems to be read each day throughout the year. Read them with your child or grandchild, gift them to a friend whose children no longer live at home to spark memories from the past, or spontaneously sift through the book on a cloud-drift day.”

The last major English haiku anthology highlighted is *The Signature Haiku Anthology*, edited and published by Robert Epstein. As you will see in the bibliography of “Special Topics Anthologies”, Epstein has been editing several topical anthologies, but *The Signature Haiku Anthology* is a gathering of a diverse group of English haiku writers. On the back cover of the book he explains the inspiration for this collection. “Every committed poet has a

haiku, senryu, or tanka that he or she personally cherishes as his or her best — perhaps favorite — poem. It may be the poem that the poet wants to be remembered by. This is what is rightly called a signature poem. In these pages you will find signature haiku, senryu and tanka by dozens of English-language poets from around the world. Some may be instantly recognizable as classics while others will quietly stir the reader’s imagination for their depth, passion, incisiveness, poignancy, subtlety or humor — to name a few of the qualities associated with signature poetry.”

Major English Haiku Anthologies

The following anthologies are in alphabetical order, based on the primary editor’s last name. The annotations are based on excerpts from the editor introductions or summaries. Page numbers have not been included.

Barlow, John and Martin Lucas, Editors. *The New Haiku*. Liverpool, England: Snapshot Press, 2002.

Editor’s Overview: Barlow argues that this new haiku “is a convergent evolution of the English haiku that had previously existed in relative geographic or social isolation. . . . The contemporary English-language haiku is thus now a genre in its own right — a genre of which there are many diverse subgroups, the definitions and relevance of which have been, and will be, the subject of argument in some quarters for some time. But these subgroups — divided as much by form, subject matter, perspective, etc., than by any geographical consideration — are ultimately subordinate. . . . It is now too late to apply the brakes and return to regionally or nationally-centric models of English haiku, even given the diversity that exists within these groupings.” This anthology includes “300 real poems rooted in real life” selected from recent issues of four journals: *Blithe Spirit*, *Haiku Spirit*, *Presence*, and

Snapshots. The editors acknowledge that “there is a high ratio of British and Irish contributors in this anthology, but this is only in proportion to their representation in the publications concerned. We make no apologies for this.”

Brandi, John and Dennis Maloney, Editors. *The Unswept Path: Contemporary American Haiku*. Buffalo, NY: White Pine Press, 2005.

Editor’s Overview: This anthology features 13 American poets “who have chosen the haiku as one of the forms in which they write. In the preface William J. Higginson notes that “these poets move decisively beyond any particular camp boundaries that may enclose one or another group of haiku writers. . . . [Three are] established leaders of the American haiku community whereas two discovered haiku in the nexus of the Beat Generation. And several poets in *The Unswept Path* began their work in the genre while living and studying for long periods in Japan.” He concludes: “Why bring these poets together in what may seem a confusing welter of diverse voices and ideals too broad to fit under that apparently simple rubric, haiku? To demonstrate that ‘haiku’ may have too many faces to appreciate it fully from only one point of view. But each poet has also worked the territory of the haiku into a personal landscape; here they offer strikingly different panorama of image and sound, joy and sadness, recollection and thought.”

Burns, Allan, Editor. *Montage: The Book*. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2010.

Editor’s Overview: This collection was developed as an online weekly exhibit on The Haiku Foundation web site. “Montage’ in the cinema signifies an edited sequence, composed of rapid cuts between shots of different images, which compresses time, space and meaning. The filmmaker most associated with the development of this technique, Sergei Eisenstein — best known for his silent masterpiece *Potemkin* (1925) — modeled his theories in

part on haiku poetry, which characteristically cuts from one image to another. Appropriating the term ‘montage’ for a series of haiku galleries merely brings things full circle.” The goal of these galleries was to be comparative — “juxtaposing the work of poets, often from different times and places, in order to suggest something about the range and breadth of haiku in English. Translations of Japanese classics, world haiku, pioneering attempts to domesticate haiku to English, senryu, and experimental efforts to stretch the boundary of what haiku can be were all considered fair game. Each gallery has its theme and features seven haiku by three different poets.”

Burns, Allan, Editor. *Where the River Goes: The Nature Tradition in English-Language Haiku*. Ormskirk, UK: Snapshot Press, 2013.

Editor’s Overview: “*Where the River Goes* details and celebrates the evolution of the nature tradition of haiku over an active period of fifty years. Featuring more than nine hundred haiku, the anthology highlights and explores the work of forty essential ‘voices,’ from pioneers such as James W. Hackett, Robert Spiess, and John Wills to major contemporary haiku poets who regularly write in a naturalistic mode.” The editor employs George Swede’s “useful division of haiku into ‘three content categories’: nature-oriented haiku with no reference to humans or human artifacts, haiku that explicitly reference both humans or human artifacts and the natural world, and human-oriented haiku with no reference to the natural world.” Burns makes a clarification that “haiku of the first type do not exclude humanity. Only a human can convert observations of the natural world into poetry. The observer is never excluded from haiku but needn’t be its focus. So a human perspective on nature — is always present in haiku, even if the content of a haiku makes no reference to humanity.” Summarizing Swede’s study of haiku content in Red Moon anthologies, he states that “Over the past five years, ‘type one’ haiku have accounted for slightly less than eight

percent of the anthologies' haiku and a notable number of those haiku have come from the United Kingdom rather than from North America. Undeniably, haiku in recent years has witnessed a kind of anthropocentric creep that mirrors an accelerating alienation of humans from the natural world. The anthology principally collects 'type one' haiku by poets who frequently write in this mode." Burns notes, "Rather than anthologizing 'the best' individual nature haiku by all poets, *Where the River Goes* provides a more in-depth representation of the work of forty crucial 'voices' associated with this tradition. . . . The forty poets anthologized in *Where the River Goes* have all created substantial bodies of self-effacing haiku oriented principally toward nature." The "anthology's organization is chronological. The haiku by each poet are presented in the order of initial publication, as best as that order could be established. This way, on the 'micro' level readers can observe and indeed participate in the development of each poet's voice. . . . At the 'macro' level the poets themselves are presented in chronological order, which allows readers to witness the stylistic and thematic development of the nature tradition across fifty years, all the haiku included in the anthology having been published previously between 1963 and 2012. . . . The chronological ordering is not based on birth years . . . but by when each poet's first anthologized haiku appeared in print."

Chenoweth, Helen Stiles, Editor. *Borrowed Water: A Book of American Haiku by the Los Altos Writing Roundtable*. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1966.

Editor's Overview: "In 1956 the Writers Roundtable of Los Altos, California, was organized by Helen Stiles Chenoweth. . . . The poets used the Japanese tone poem haiku to appreciate the syllabic content of words. Use of haiku taught the prose writers that brevity and simplicity improved their writing. . . . [They] became fascinated with composing their own haiku. They read and discussed the biographies of the four most prominent Japanese

poets, Basho, Buson, Issa, and Shiki, and decided to form a special group devoting all class time to composing American haiku.” When *American Haiku* magazine came out in 1963, they became contributors. With encouragement from editor James Bull, they created this anthology of 300 haiku, selected from 700 submitted. Chenoweth notes that all of these “haiku have been read, discussed, criticized and, in some cases, annotated by every member of the group.”

Donegan, Patricia. *Haiku Mind: 108 Poems to Cultivate Awareness and Open Your Heart*. Boston, MA: Shambala, 2008.

Editor’s Overview: Patricia Donegan employs a reader response approach “to share the idea of ‘haiku mind’ — a simple yet profound way of seeing our everyday world and living our lives with the awareness of the moment expressed in haiku — and to therefore hopefully inspire others to live with more clarity, compassion, and peace.” She explains haiku mind this way: “A fine haiku presents a crystalline moment of heightened awareness in simple imagery. . . . However, this moment is more than a reflection of our day-to-day life — it is a deep reminder for us to pause and to be present to the details of the everyday. It is this way of being in the world with awakened open-hearted awareness — of being mindful of the ordinary moments of our lives — that I’ve come to call ‘haiku mind.’” In this collection of 108 haiku from English and Japanese authors, Donegan reads each as “a meditative springboard for the contemplation of a specific theme, with its adversity,nowness, or compassion. . . . Hopefully each haiku and each reflection will encourage further contemplation — and will cultivate a sense of awareness, compassion, and peace.”

Epstein, Robert, Editor. *The Signature Haiku Anthology*. West Union, WV: Middle Island Press, 2020.

Editor's Overview: "Every committed poet has a haiku, senryu, or tanka that he or she personally cherishes as his or her best — perhaps favorite — poem. It may be the poem that the poet wants to be remembered by. This is what is rightly called a signature poem. In these pages you will find signature haiku, senryu and tanka by dozens of English-language poets from around the world. Some may be instantly recognizable as classics while others will quietly stir the reader's imagination for their depth, passion, incisiveness, poignancy, subtlety, or humor — to name a few of the qualities associated with signature poetry. . . . All of the signature haiku were self-selected, with authors invited to submit one previously published favorite poem, along with a short optional commentary on why it is one of their favorites."

Gurga, Lee and Scott Metz, Editors. *Haiku 21: An Anthology of Contemporary English-language Haiku*. Lincoln, IL: Modern Haiku Press, 2011.

Editor's Overview: "Our goal was to publish every interesting haiku we could find that was first published in the period 2000–2010. In order to do this, we attempted to read every haiku that was published in every journal, both in print and online, during that period. Our overriding concern was excellence. Beyond that, we wanted to cover the whole gamut of contemporary haiku. We looked for poems that demonstrate ambiguity without obscurity, that demonstrate the range of haiku, emotionally, intellectually, imaginatively, linguistically. In other words, poems that answer the question, 'What can haiku be?' On the more traditional side, we tried to guard against banality and formulaic expression. On the more experimental side, we needed to guard against obscurity and incomprehensibility pretending to be profundity." The editors make a case for the value of co-editorship: The two editors of the current volume fall on different points of the haiku spectrum, with Lee's strengths in the area of traditional haiku and Scott's in the area of experimental haiku. We would like to believe that we have

reinforced each other's strengths and canceled out each other's weaknesses. . . . While Lee preferred haiku that were more toward the transparent end of language, Scott preferred those that were more toward the opaque. For Lee, the ideal is not really transparency but rather translucency — for haiku that work at the literal level of the experience but work at deeper levels as well. Lee's ideal has been haiku that convey a real experience transparently, but that also have other deeper levels of meaning, metaphorical or symbolic, available to the reader. This is what Lee believes adds richness to haiku and makes them worth keeping as part of the poetic canon. Scott is also a lover of translucent haiku, although the ones he likes are more opaque or, as he says, more 'interesting' — more open, more ambiguous, fresher, wherein most is left for the reader to engage with."

Hardy, Jackie, Editor. *Haiku Poetry Ancient and Modern*. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 2002.

Editor's Overview: This anthology includes both classic Japanese haiku in translation as well as contemporary English-language haiku. In the introduction Hardy writes, "the haiku form is practiced around the globe. In their unique, small way, haiku show what it is to be human. . . . The brevity of the form encourages a precise and plain language, direct and objective, where each word must work hard to maintain its place. Haiku have been described as the poem of a single breath. This short span highlights the transcendence of the evocation of experience, the transcendence of life. Haiku are open-ended, pointing out the mystery and depth of emotional experience, the ambiguity of the joyfulness and the futility of any moment." The haiku are organized by the five elements in Taoist cosmology — wood, fire, earth, metal and water."

Higginson, William J. *Haiku World: An International Poetry Almanac*. New York: Kodansha International, 1996.

Editor's Overview: "This unique anthology contains over one thousand haiku and related poems by more than six hundred poets living in fifty countries and writing in twenty-five languages, presented in both English and their original languages. It demonstrates how a tradition begun hundreds of years ago in Japan has now become international. These highly condensed poems often hinge on words or phrases connected with nature; Japanese anthologies have traditionally been arranged by these seasonal themes and included explanations of them. *Haiku World* is the first book in another language to follow this structure — with explanations of seasonal phenomena from countries, cultures, and environments on every inhabited continent." In the preface William Higginson explains that this book is intended to be an "International Haiku *Saiki*". He discusses traditional Japanese haiku *sajiki* and how this project is "a collection of haiku, senryu, and linked-verse-related stanzas, all organized not by poet or language or country, but by topic. There are more than 680 topic entries in the *sajiki*. . . . The first five sections cover the classic seasons of *haikai*: Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, and the New Year. A final section, All Year, includes topics and poems which connect with nature, but which do not name anything either traditionally or obviously connected with the seasons. . . . The five seasonal sections of the *sajiki* are divided into the categories: The Season, The Heavens, The Earth, Humanity, Observances, Animals, and Plants."

Hryciuk, Marshall, Editor. *Milkweed: A Gathering of Haiku*. Toronto: Nietzsche's Brolly, 1987.

Editor's Overview: "There is neither an historical nor a critical assessment of the contemporary scene being clarified . . . I began this project accepting for publication whatever struck me as a vivid vehicle for the haiku moment and maintained this orientation throughout. . . . there is no grouping of the haiku or authors by style or school. . . . What this anthology does open towards is the

consideration of haiku as independent poems; both from the renga and from the author. I favour the consideration of the poem over the consideration of the author.”

Kacian, Jim, Philip Rowland and Allan Burns, Editors. *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013.

Editor’s Overview: “Our purpose from the outset of this project has been to tell the story of English-language haiku, to identify its most singular accomplishments in its century of existence and place them, in their context, before our readers. We felt, for instance, that the order of presentation was of particular importance. You will find here the first instances we can discover of the subjects, techniques, forms, and allusions that have come to guide haiku to its present practice, and, when subsequent poems realize an even greater accomplishment, you’ll find those too. . . . We have chosen to order this volume not alphabetically or by date of birth of the author, which are more customary, but based on the publication date of the first poem in each poet’s selection — in other words, at the time he or she began making an impact on the genre.”

Latham, Jessica Malone, Editor. *Another Trip Around the Sun: 365 Days of Haiku for Children Young and Old*. Taylorville, IL: Brooks Books, 2019.

Editor’s Overview: “Children are easily able to tap into life’s wonder, unfiltered and not yet conditioned by society’s expectations, familial patterns, and the rush of adult responsibilities. I believe each of us has this capability, but for some, as time carries on and pains of life deepen, the opportunity to drift from this sacred presence can diminish. It takes courage and commitment to come back to and connect with the childlike wonder that lives within each of us. So, I ask, is there a way that we can live like this, with a gentle and grateful sense of awe? I say yes, and I hope you do

too. The poems in this collection are astounding, and the poets featured are many of those who write from the consciousness of which I am speaking. Though we began with thousands of worthy poems, this collection is filled with the 377 poems that seem to carry the heart of some of life's most significant occasions, and the most ordinary moments from infancy to grandparenthood. These poems are about children and for children, but also about the simple treasures that come our way." The editor explains the arrangement of the anthology as one haiku per calendar day. "My vision for this collection is for these poems to be read each day throughout the year. Read them with your child or grandchild, gift them to a friend whose children no longer live at home to spark memories from the past, or spontaneously sift through the book on a cloud-drift day."

Lucas, Martin. *Stepping Stones: A Way into Haiku*. Essex, UK: British Haiku Society, 2007.

Editor's Overview: "Our own haiku have added a new and valuable creative possibility to the range of poetry in English. But let's not be too quick to claim that our own approach is in some way authorised by Japanese practice." Lucas explains his conception of haiku as an "artless art." He writes that "It may be true that for some of our poets, haiku are not so much given as constructed, but I often think it helps to stress the role of artlessness and an apparent serendipity and de-emphasize craft and conscious manipulation. Yet the danger of focusing exclusively on haiku-as-gift is that it gives the impression that it is sufficient for the writer to make an objective record of events, in a way which might be appropriate for a journal but does not do enough to make a poem. Haiku is not a descriptive poetry, it is a reflective poetry, and we need to understand this distinction." *Stepping Stones* is a collection of 366 British haiku (one for each day of the year) with commentaries by Martin Lucas on each haiku. He notes that this is not an original idea and cites Blyth's books of translations with commentaries and

H.F. Noyes' collections of *Favorite Haiku* for including reading responses. Lucas notes that in his own commentary "there is no attempt at any unifying idea, and no consistent standpoint. . . . I am doing nothing more ambitious than giving an immediate reaction." He concludes "the value of the commentaries is not so much in what they say, it is that they encourage us to stay with the poetry. May you enjoy meeting these haiku and meeting them again."

Mason, Scott, Editor. *The Wonder Code: Discover the Way of Haiku and the See the World with New Eyes*. Chappaqua, NY: Girasole Press, 2017.

Editor's Overview: Scott Mason makes an argument for haiku as an antidote to disenchantment and disappointment in life. He asserts that "Wonder abounds. What's more, it can be experienced by anyone, anywhere, and at any given moment. The question to ask — if we truly seek more balance and happiness in our lives — is how to tap into the wonder around us. The method I propose in these pages is to learn to see the world anew through 'haiku eyes.' . . . Each chapter in this book responds to one of the subtle ways in which our culture and times estrange us from wonder. In each case I will suggest how the practice of haiku poetry — especially the attentive reading and assimilation of haiku poems — can start to act as a corrective and even an antidote to wonder deprivation. Every chapter title in this book states an imperative; collectively they formulate what I call *The Wonder Code*." Here are the chapter titles: Think Small, Come to Your Senses, Feel the Moment, Prepare for Surprise, and Only Connect. Each chapter begins with a short introduction to one "imperative" followed by a "gallery" of haiku that exhibit this approach. The galleries "display the haiku poems of nearly three hundred ordinary men and women from dozens of countries on six continents. All were first published over the last two decades in the online journal *The Heron's Nest*, where I serve as an editor."

Miyashita, Emiko, Editor and Translator. *The New Pond: An English-language Haiku Anthology*. Tokyo: Hokumei-sha, 2002.

Editor's Overview: Emiko Miyashita wrote a newspaper column, *HAIKUKAI*, introducing Japanese readers to English-language haiku. *The New Pond* collects 124 haiku translated into Japanese for this column. These are arranged by geographical regions and related English-language haiku organizations.

Ramesh, Kala, Sanjukta Asopa, and Shloka Shankar, Editors. *Naad Anunaad: An Anthology of Contemporary World Haiku*. Near City Post, Pune, India: Vishwakarma Publications, 2016.

Editor's Overview: This anthology was “a dream project that entailed publishing in India an anthology of contemporary haiku from around the world and making it affordable for anyone wanting to know more about haiku in my country. . . . Halfway through our selection process for this anthology, we realized that poets were submitting haiku, border-line haiku, senryu, so-called *gendai* (modern) haiku and the new ku. They have all found a place in *Naad Anunaad*, because we, as editors, loved them.” The anthology includes 746 haiku from 26 countries written by 231 authors.

Ross, Bruce, Editor. *Haiku Moment: An Anthology of Contemporary North American Haiku*. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1993.

Editor's Overview: “The vast majority of the haiku chosen for this anthology were originally written or published between 1982 and 1992. . . . Most of the haiku in this collection are nature poems, some of these merely nature sketches overlaid with recognizable human emotion. When human nature is directly represented, it is almost always subsumed under or correlated to some element of non-human nature. In general, these haiku are meant to reflect either the style of the Bashō School of haiku with its emphasis on the presentation of temporal loneliness and emotional objectivity

in the treatment of nature subjects (and, occasionally, as in later Bashō, an elevated warm-heartedness found in one's relation to commonplace things) or the haiku of Issa with their joyful evocations of the liveliness and empathetic resonance found in the natural world. All of the haiku in this anthology, moreover, should convey a moment of insight experienced by a poet in real time through real beings and objects, a moment that the reader may enter and share." This collection includes over 800 haiku by 185 poets from North America.

Ross, Bruce, Koko Kato, Dietmar Tauchner and Patricia Prime, Editors. *A Vast Sky: An Anthology of Contemporary World Haiku*. Bangor, ME: Tacho Press, 2015.

Editor's Overview: *A Vast Sky* is an anthology of haiku from around the world. The haiku are presented in their original language with translations into English. Over 400 poets are included with one or two haiku each. "This collection of contemporary world haiku written between 2000 and 2014 is an introduction to the emergence of haiku as an international poetry form. . . . The four sections of this collection, Japan, Europe, The New World (North, Central and South America and the Carribean), and The Rest of the World (Australia, Bhutan, China, Ethiopia, India, Israel, Nepal, New Zealand, Phillipines, South Africa, South India, and Sri Lanka), reflect the historical progression of haiku's dispersion and practice, no doubt promoted by the unique qualities inherent in the haiku form. There is a vast range of expression appearing in haiku, from serious to light-hearted within an overall haiku feeling bolstered by the *kireji* or implicit *kireji* and in most cases a nature connection. . . . Yet, contemporary haiku are expressions of their own cultural backgrounds, natural settings, and modern idioms, circling universally around nature, the seasons, emotional breakthroughs, human nature, temporality, mystery, dreams, memory, synchronicity, and the like."

Rotella, Alexis, Editor. *The Rise and Fall of Sparrows: A Collection of North American Haiku*. San Diego, CA: Los Hombres Press, 1990.

Editor's Overview: "In *The Rise and Fall of Sparrows* you will read two types of poems: haiku and senryu. Suffice it to say that haiku is traditionally about nature whereas senryu deals with emotions and foibles. . . . I spent months reading through hundreds of haiku journals and books. I eventually chose from those thousands of poems only about a hundred. I decided not to include any haiku in this anthology that were already published in van den Heuvel's *The Haiku Anthology*. . . . What struck me the most [rereading this collection] was how this collection sang of North American life."

Stryk, Lucien and Kevin Bailey, Editors. *The Acorn Book of Contemporary Haiku*. Surrey, UK: Acorn Book Company, 2000.

Editor's Overview: "The poems in this book are a celebration of life, love, and beauty. They have a right to oust a vapid, despairing art. You have in your hands a twenty-first century art gallery. Do not just read the poems in this book but look at each one of them as you would a painting or sculpture displayed in a brilliant spacious gallery. Let your mind stand before the poem and study it. Get the image and the idea of the poem working simultaneously in your mind. Realise it. See the word-picture in your minds eye and absorb the emotions, light or dark, into your soul." This is a collection of haiku in English by 140 poets from 25 countries, mostly gathered from British journals.

Swede, George and Randy Brooks, Editors. *Global Haiku: Twenty-Five Poets World Wide*. Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 2000. [Iron Press edition in UK.]

Editor's Overview: George Swede explains that unlike most of the previously published haiku anthologies that often included both major and minor haiku poets, this anthology would feature only 25 of the major English-language haiku poets regardless of their

geographic home. “It is time that the poets who have contributed most in terms of quality and innovation be recognized. . . . The editor(s) in charge of this project will have to have a deep knowledge not only of all the work published in the haiku periodicals, but also of the true history of development in haiku writing. For instance, who were the most significant poets influencing others? Who were the true innovators, who were the imitators? Who produced the most haiku of the highest quality, regardless of whether they were innovators or imitators?” This anthology was released at the Global Haiku Festival hosted by Dr. Randy Brooks at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois in 2000. Many of the authors attended this conference featuring the history of international haiku and participated in a reading from *Global Haiku*.

Van den Heuvel, Cor, Editor. *The Haiku Anthology*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1974.

Editor’s Overview: “Until now, the poets represented in this anthology have been largely ‘invisible.’ Though some of them have been writing haiku for nearly two decades or longer, their work has flowered practically unnoticed—their only recognition coming from the small world of the haiku magazines. The movement of which they are a part, however, has now reached a point where its accomplishments can no longer be ignored. . . . A great diversity lies in the pages ahead. But though these poets are all moving along individual paths, they are all following the haiku ‘way.’ The variety of their voices should delight us as much as the oneness they reveal enlightens us. For the joy of life is to be able to see it anew each moment. These haiku moments await only your contribution of awareness.”

Van den Heuvel, Cor, Editor. *The Haiku Anthology, Revised Edition*. New York: Touchstone, 1986.

Editor's Overview: "This edition of *The Haiku Anthology* contains around 700 haiku, senryu, and related works — about 500 more than there were in the first edition, which was published in the spring of 1974. Extraordinary things have happened to haiku since then — due, primarily, to the innovative, fresh approaches brought to the genre by the poets represented in this book. . . . In the years between editions there have been three major developments: the emergence of the one-liner as a common form for haiku and senryu; the growing practice of writing longer works, such as sequences and renga; and . . . the increasing importance of human relationships, especially sex and love, as subject matter."

Van den Heuvel, Cor, Editor. *The Haiku Anthology, Expanded Edition*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.

Editor's Overview: "In this book there are about 850 haiku and senryu by eighty-nine poets. Around half of the poems are new to this edition. Forty-four of the poets appear in the anthology for the first time."

Special Topic English Haiku Anthologies

The titles of these English haiku anthologies usually indicate the focus of the collection. For example, the first anthology, *The Awakened One: Buddha-themed Haiku from Around the World*, makes it clear that the editors have gathered haiku that address experiences and concerns of Buddhism. Two collections are titled in such a way that there is no indication of the topic being addressed: (1) *Wishbone Moon* is an "anthology of haiku by women in the international haiku community"; and (2) *One Window's Light* is a collection of haiku "presenting insights into African American history and culture. . . . We employ haiku to tell the African American story, which is the American story." Haiku anthologies collected and organized around a specific topic or perspective are

an interesting way to understand how this genre can be used to explore and share related human experiences.

Agyei-Baah, Adjei and Gabriel Rosenstock, Editors. *The Awakened One: Buddha-themed Haiku from Around the World*. Poetry Chaikhana, 2021.

Anakiev, Dimitar, Editor. *World Haiku Anthology on War, Violence and Human Rights Violation*. Templeton, CA: Kamesan Books, 2013.

Barlow, John and Matthew Paul, Editors. *Wing Beats: British Birds in Haiku*. Waterloo, UK: Snapshot Press, 2008. Illustrated by Sean Gray.

Beary, Roberta, Ellen Compton and Kala Ramesh, Editors. *Wishbone Moon*. Durham, NC; Jacar Press, 2018.

Buitelaar, Marlene, editor. *The Scent of Music: Haiku with a Touch of Music*. 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands; 't schrijverke, 2013.

Dornaus, Margaret, Editor. *Behind the Mask: Haiku in the Time of Covid-19*. Ozark, AR: Singing Moon Press, 2020.

Epstein, Robert, Editor. *Contemplating Nature: Pictures, Passages & Haiku*. West Union, WV: Middle Island Press, 2021.

Epstein, Robert, Editor. *Every Chicken, Cow, Fish and Frog: Animal Rights Haiku*. West Union, WV: Middle Island Press, 2016.

Epstein, Robert, Editor. *Healing into Haiku: On Illness and Pain*. West Union, WV: Middle Island Press, 2018.

Epstein, Robert, Editor. *The Helping Hand Haiku Anthology: Including Senryu, Tanka, and Haiku*. West Union, WV: Middle Island Press, 2020.

Epstein, Robert, Editor. *The Sacred in Contemporary Haiku*. El Cerrito, CA: Createspace, 2014.

Epstein, Robert, Editor. *Sitting Upright: Therapy Haiku & Senryu*. West Union, WV: Middle Island Press, 2019.

Epstein, Robert, Editor. *They Gave Us Life: Celebrating Mothers, Fathers & Others in Haiku*. West Union, WV: Middle Island Press, 2017.

Epstein, Robert, Editor. *Turkey Heaven: Animal Rights Haiku*. West Union, WV: Middle Island Press, 2016.

Forrester, Stanford M., Editor. *Gatherings: A Haiku Anthology of Amusement Parks, Carnivals, County Fairs, and more*. Windsor, CT: Bottle Rockets Press, 2008.

Forrester, Stanford M., Editor. *Lanterns: A Firefly Anthology*. Wethersfield, CT: Bottle Rockets Press, 2007.

Gorman, LeRoy, Editor. *A Haiku Alphabet in Celebration of Spring*. Aylmer, Quebec: Proof Press, 1994.

Gorman, LeRoy, Editor. *A Haiku Alphabet in Celebration of Summer, 2nd edition*. Aylmer, Quebec: Proof Press, 1995.

Harr, Lorraine Ellis, Editor. *Frog Bites*. Portland, OR: Pond Stars Press, 1993.

Huth, Geof, Editor. *Ampersand Squared: an/thology of pwoermds*. Port Charlotte, FL: Runaway Spoon Press, 2004.

Krawiec, Richard, Editor. *Taboo Haiku: An International Selection*. Greensboro, NC: Avisson Press, 2006.

Lanoue, David G., Editor. *Katrina-ku: Storm Poems*. Canton, MS: Magnolia Press, 2006.

Mason Scott, Editor. *Gratitude in the Time of COVID-19: The Haiku Hecameron*. Chappaqua, NY: Girasole Press, 2020.

Moore, Lenard D, Editor. *One Window's Light: A Collection of Haiku*. Greensboro, NC: Unicorn Press, 2017.

Munro, Katherine (kjmunro) and Jessica Simon, Editors. *Body of Evidence: A Collection of Killer Ku*. Carleton Place, Ontario: Catkin Press, 2017.

Pearce, Jacquie, Editor. *Last Train Home: An Anthology of Contemporary Haiku, Tanka, and Rengay*. Vancouver, BC, Canada; Pondhawk Press, 2021.

Rosenstock, Gabriel. *The Naked Octopus: Erotic Haiku in English with Japanese Translations*. Translated into Japanese by Mariko Sumikura. Leac an Anfa, Cathair na Mart, Co. Mhaigh Eo, Éire: Evertime, 2013.

Rotella, Alexis, Editor. *Butterfly Breezes*. Mountain Lakes, NJ: 1981.

Rotella, Alexis, Editor. *Unsealing Our Secrets: A Short Poem Anthology About Sexual Abuse*. Arnold, MD: Jade Mountain Press, 2018.

Rozmus, Lidia and Carmen Sterba, Editors. *The Moss at Tôkeiji: A Sanctuary in Kamakura that Changed Women's Lives (1285-1902)*. Santa Fe, NM: Deep North Press, 2010.

Sato, Hiroaki, Editor. *Erotic Haiku*. New York: IBC Books, 2005.

Swede, George and Terry Ann Carter, Editors. *Erotic Haiku of Skin on Skin*. Windsor, Ontario: Black Moss Press, 2017.

Timmer, Corine, Editor. *Barking Mad*. Portugal: Bidadeideias Books, 2018.

Timmer, Corine, Editor. *Hog Wild Haiku*. Portugal: Bicaideideias Books, 2019.

Timmer, Corine, Editor. *Rattled*. Portugal: Bicaideideias Books, 2020.

Timmer, Corine, Editor. *Bull-Headed Haiku*. Portugal: Bicaideideias Books, 2021.

Van den Heuvel, Cor, Editor. *Baseball Haiku: The Best Haiku Ever Written About the Game*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.

Van den Heuvel, Cor and Jim Kacian, Editors. *Past Time: Baseball Haiku*. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 1999.

Willmot, Rod, Editor. *Erotic Haiku*. Windsor, Ontario: Black Moss Press, 1983.

Regional English Haiku Anthologies

Regional English haiku anthologies collect haiku by authors from a specific geographic region. The goal of these anthologies is to share common human experiences and images drawn from that region. Often these anthologies do not make a big deal about representing the region, so in that sense they are regional anthologies only in the sense that authors included come from a certain region. Others make a more deliberate effort to portray a regional perspective. For example, as co-editor of the *Midwest Haiku Anthology*, I wrote that “although the subject matter, format, and language has been based on a Midwestern perspective, in what ways are these poems the same as all haiku? They are haiku in that they attempt to share moments of insight, of perceived universals of nature, of the felt experience of the inner forces of being alive now, here, in this, our familiar Midwest.”

Alaska

Davis, Carol Beery, Editor. *Haiku Drops from the Great Dipper*. Juneau, Alaska: Poetry Society of Alaska, 1973.

British Haiku

Cobb, David, Editor. *The British Museum Haiku*. London, UK: British Museum Press, 2002.

Cobb, David, James Kirkup and Martin Lucas, Editors. *The Haiku Hundred*. North Shields, Northumberland: Iron Press, 1992.

Cobb, David and Martin Lucas, Editors. *The Iron Book of British Haiku*. North Shields, Northumberland: Iron Press, 1998.

California

Ball, Jerry, Garry Gay and Tom Tico, Editors. *The San Francisco Haiku Anthology*. Windsor, CA: Smythe-Waithe Press, 1992.

Cabalona, Yvonne, Jo Lea Parker and WF Owen, Editors. *Blink: Haiku and Other Forms from the Central Valley Haiku Club*. Modesto, CA: Central Valley Haiku Club, 2002.

Chenoweth, Helen Stiles, Editor. *Borrowed Water: A Book of American Haiku by the Los Altos Writing Roundtable*. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1966.

Decker, Kathleen P., Editor. *My Neighbor's Life: The San Damiano Anthology*. Bellevue, WA: Laughing CyPress, 1999.

Dee, Billie, Editor. *Scent of Rain: 2011 Southern California Haiku Study Group Anthology*. Temple City, CA: Southern California Haiku Study Group, 2011.

Galasso, William Scott and Deborah P. Kolodji, Editors. *Eclipse Moon: 2017 Southern California Haiku Study Group Anthology*. Tempe City, CA: The Southern California Haiku Study Group, 2017.

Galloway, Linda, Editor. *Battle of Bamboo: A Haiku Collection*. Pasadena, CA: The Southern California Haiku Study Group, 2007.

Hart, William, Editor. *Drawn to the Light: 2015 Southern California Haiku Study Group Anthology*. Tempe City, CA: Southern California Study Group, 2015.

Longenecker, Gregory, Editor. *Dandelion Breeze: 2013 Southern California Haiku Study Group Anthology*. Tempe City, CA: Southern California Haiku Study Group, 2013.

Canada

Howard, Dorothy and Andre Duhaime, Editors. *Haiku: Canadian Anthology*. Hull, Quebec: Editions Asticou, 1985.

Magpie Haiku Poets. *A Piece of Egg Shell: An Anthology of Haiku and Related Work by The Magpie Haiku Poets*. Calgary, Alberta, Canada: Magpie Haiku Poets, 2004.

Swede, George, Editor. *Canadian Haiku Anthology*. Toronto, Ontario: Three Trees Press, 1979.

Tiwana, Amarjit Sathi, Angelee Deodhar, Arvinder Kaur, and Jagdish Kaur, Editors. *Painting Sunlight: A Trilingual Canadian Haiku Anthology*. Ottawa, Ontario: Wah Publication, 2015.

Hawaii United States

Reynolds, Carol, Editor. *Haiku of Hawaii Nei: Haiku Poetry by Islanders and Visitors*. Hilo, HI: Marble-Us, Inc., 1978.

Braida, Darold D., Editor. *The Anthology of Hawaii Education Association Haiku Award Winners 1977–1979*. Honolulu, HI: Hawaii Education Association, 1979.

India

Deodhar, Angelee, Editor. *Indian Haiku: A Bilingual Anthology of Haiku by 105 Poets from India*. Chandigarh, India: Azad Hind Stores, Ltd., 2008. [Hindi & English.]

Ireland

Kudryavitsky, Anatoly. *Bamboo Dreams: An Anthology of Haiku Poetry from Ireland*. Tralee, Co. Kerry, Ireland: Doghouse, 2012.

Maryland & Washington DC

Compton, Ellen, Jim Kacian and Jeff Witkin, Editors. *Pocket Change: Towpath Anthology 2000*. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press for the Towpath Haiku Society, 2000.

Fanto, Elizabeth and Cathy Drinkwater Better, Editors. *Autumn Harvest: HPCM Members' Collection 2009*. Eldersburg, MD: Haiku Poets of Central Maryland, 2009.

Singleton, Tim, Editor. *Paper Lantern: Haiku Poets of Central Maryland Members' Anthology*. Eldersburg, PA: Black Cat Press, 2011. Broadside.

Midwest United States

Brooks, Randy and Lee Gurga, Editors. *Midwest Haiku Anthology*. Decatur, IL: High/Coo Press, 1992.

Brooks, Randy, Emily Evans, Melanie McLay and Rick Bearce, Editors. *Millikin University Haiku Anthology*. Decatur, IL: Bronze Man Books, October 2008.

Cehota, Cynthia, Francine Banwarth, Jayne Miller, David McKee and Bill Pauly, Editors. *Haiku Dubuque: The River Knows the Way*. Dubuque, IA, 2010.

Dunphy, John J., Editor. *Confluence: A Haiku Collection by the Mississippi Mud Daubers*. Alton, IL: Second Reading Publications, 2009.

Gage, Joshua, Editor. *The Ohio Haiku Anthology*. Huron, OH: Cuttlefish Books, 2020.

Gurga, Lee and Kelly Sauvage Angel, Editors. *Blossom Moon: Waukesha Haiku Group*. Champaign, IL: Modern Haiku Press, 2020.

Peoples, Brock and Aubrie Cox, Editors. *Riverbed Haiku 2008 Anthology*. Champaign, IL: Riverbed Haiku, 2008.

Root-Bernstein, Michele and Jennifer Burd, Editors. *Because of This Light: A Collection of Haiku by the Evergreen Haiku Study Group*. East Lansing, MI: Evergreen Haiku Press, 2020.

New England & New York United States

Bittle-DeLapa, Mary Lou, Editor. *Oneself: Haiku by Poets from Rochester, New York*. Rochester, NY, 2000.

De Gruttola, Raffael and Karen Klein, Editors. *Voice of the Peeper: Boston Haiku Society Anthology*. Boston, MA: Aether Press, 1999.

Ziembra, John, Editor. *Biting the Sun: Twenty-Five Years of the Boston Haiku Society*. Boston, MA: Boston Haiku Society, 2014.

New Zealand

Childs, Cyril, Editor. *The Second New Zealand Haiku Anthology*. Wellington, New Zealand: The New Zealand Poetry Society, 1998.

Proctor, Vanessa, Editor. *A to Zazen: Haiku Anthology by the Zazen Group*. Tauranga, New Zealand: The Zazen Group, 2004.

Northwest United States

McDonald, Tanya, Marilyn Sandall, Michelle Schaefer, and Angela Terry, Editors. *No Longer Strangers: Haiku Northwest 25th Anniversary Anthology*. Bellevue, WA: Haiku Northwest, Vandina Press, 2014.

McDonald, Tanya, Michelle Schaefer, and Angela Terry, Editors. *Zig Zap Bridge: 2019 Haiku Northwest Anthology*. Seattle, WA: Haiku Northwest, 2019.

Southwest United States

Burke, Alanna C. and Basia Miller, Editors. *Open Spaces: Haiku from the Santa Fe Haiku Study Group and Guest Poets*. Santa Fe, NM: Deep North Press, 2017.

Wiggerman, Scott and Constance Campbell, Editors. *Lifting the Sky: Southwestern Haiku & Haiga*. Austin, TX: Dos Gatos Press, 2013.

Serial & Event-based English Haiku Anthologies

Several English haiku anthologies are published on a serial basis. Some of these commemorate events, such as the biennial Haiku North America conference, Cradle of American Haiku festival, or the annual Seabeck Getaway retreat. Participants in these events are invited to submit haiku to be published as a commemorative anthology. Others are published to recognize winners of an award, as in the Herb Barrett Award sponsored by Haiku Canada. Some haiku presses and journals publish anthologies on a serial basis. These include the Modern Haiku annual anthologies edited by Lee Gurga and Scott Metz and anthologies featuring work from *Heron's Nest*. Since 1997 Red Moon Press has published an annual collection of haiku and related work nominated and selected from known English haiku publications that year by an editorial team. Red Moon Press has also published a series of anthologies featuring “emerging voices in English-language haiku,” including the work of 17 English haiku poets who are gaining recognition through their publications.

Cradle of American Haiku

Bull, Gayle and Francine Banwarth, Editors. *Tommy Knockers: Mineral Point Retreat Anthology 2011*. Ottawa, Canada: Editions Des Petits Nuages, 2011.

Montreuil, Mike, Editor. *Wet Cement: The Cradle 2 Anthology. Haiku from the 2nd Cradle of American Haiku Festival*. Carleton Place, Ontario: Bondi Studios, 2011.

Cox, Aubrie and Mike Montreuil, Editors. *Brambles: Cradle of American Haiku 3*. Ottawa, Canada: Editions Des Petits Nuages, 2013.

Haiku Circle

Martin, Jeannie and Peter Newton, Editors. *Evening Stillness: Haiku Circle 10th Year Anthology*. Bristol, CT: Haiku Circle Press, 2016.

Haiku North America

Welch, Michael Dylan, Editor. *Harvest: An Anthology of Haiku Commemorating Haiku North America*. Foster City, CA: Press Here, 1991.

Story, Ebba and Michael Dylan Welch, Editors. *The Shortest Distance: An Anthology of Haiku Commemorating Haiku North America 1993*. Foster City, CA: Press Here, 1993.

Welch, Michael Dylan, Editor. *Northern Lights: An Anthology Commemorating the 1995 Haiku North America Conference*. Foster City, CA: Press Here, 1995.

Welch, Michael Dylan and Cherie Hunter Day, Editors. *Shades of Green: An Anthology Commemorating the 1997 Haiku North America Conference*. Foster City, CA: Press Here, 1997.

Welch, Michael Dylan and Lee Gurga, Editors. *Too Busy for Spring: An Anthology Commemorating the 1999 Haiku North America Conference*. Foster City, CA: Press Here, 1999.

Welch, Michael Dylan, Carol Purington, and Larry Kimmel, Editors. *Paperclips: An Anthology Commemorating the 2001 Haiku North America Conference*. Foster City, CA: Press Here, 2001.

Welch, Michael Dylan and Yu Chang, Editors. *Brocade of Leaves: An Anthology of Poems Commemorating the 2003 Haiku North America Conference*. Sammamish, WA: Press Here, 2003.

Welch, Michael Dylan and Billie Wilson, Editors. *Tracing the Fern: An Anthology of Poems Commemorating the 2005 Haiku North America Conference*. Sammamish, WA: Press Here, 2005.

Moyer, Bob, Editor. *Chasing the Sun: Selected Haiku from Haiku North America 2007*. Pittsboro, NC: Rosenberry Books, 2009. A “book in hand” edition.

Welch, Michael Dylan and Lenard D. Moore, Editors. *Dandelion Wind: An Anthology of Poems Commemorating the 2007 Haiku North America Conference*. Sammamish, WA: Press Here, 2008.

Yamaguchi, Tazuo and Randy Brooks, Editors. *Haiku: The Art of the Short Poem. Film by Tazuo Yamaguchi on DVD*. Decatur, IL: Brooks Books, 2008.

Welch, Michael Dylan and Grant D. Savage, Editors. *Into Our Words: An Anthology of Poems Commemorating the 2009 Haiku North America Conference*. Sammamish, WA: Press Here, 2009.

Welch, Michael Dylan and Ruth Yarrow, Editors. *Standing Still: An Anthology of Poems Commemorating the 2011 Haiku North America Conference*. Sammamish, WA: Press Here, 2011.

Welch, Michael Dylan and William Hart, Editors. *Close to the Wind: An Anthology of Poems Commemorating the 2013 Haiku North America Conference*. Sammamish, WA: Press Here, 2013.

Welch, Michael Dylan and Scott Mason, Editors. *Fire in the Treetops: Celebrating Twenty-five Years of Haiku North America*. Sammamish, WA: Press Here, 2015.

Welch, Michael Dylan and Scott Wiggerman, Editors. *Earths signs: An Anthology of Poems Commemorating the 2017 Haiku North America Conference*. Sammamish, WA: Press Here, 2017.

Welch, Michael Dylan and Crystal Simone Smith, Editors. *Sitting in the Sun: An Anthology of Poems Commemorating the 2019 Haiku North America Conference*. Sammamish, WA: Press Here, 2019.

Herb Barrett Haiku Award

Gorman, LeRoy, Editor. *Gathering Light: An International Haiku Anthology*. Hamilton, Ontario: Hamilton Haiku Press, 1997. The winning poems of The Herb Barrett Award, 1996.

Saunders, Margaret, Editor. *Cold Morning: An International Haiku Anthology*. Hamilton, Ontario: Hamilton Haiku Press, 1998. The winning poems of The Herb Barrett Award, 1997.

Welch, Michael Dylan, Editor. *Through the Spirea: An International Haiku Anthology*. Hamilton, Ontario: Hamilton Haiku Press, 1999. The winning poems of The Herb Barrett Award, 1998.

Jongman, Hans, Editor. *Sweeping Leaves: An International Haiku Anthology*. Hamilton, Ontario: Hamilton Haiku Press, 2000. The winning poems of The Herb Barrett Award, 1999.

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Presentations



Poet/Artist: **ION CODRESCU**

The Future of Poetry: Haiku in the Digital Age

Timothy GREEN (with Katie DOZIER)

Higginson Memorial Lecture
Haiku North America
Cincinnati, OH, June 30, 2023

To understand the future of poetry, we have to understand its history—not literary history’s canons and conventions and movements, but the deep history of poetry’s relationship to humanity itself.

Anatomically modern humans have existed for some 250,000 years. Around 125,000 years ago, a mutation developed in the FOXP2 gene that is now present in all of us. The gene helps regulate the production and comprehension of grammar, and its evolutionary selection implies that complex language already existed at that point. The time-scale is hard to imagine. That’s 5,000 generations of mothers and fathers, of lessons and legends, of headache and heartbreak—all of it felt by actual human beings, with rich inner lives, in brains the same size as ours.

Hominids had been living in our Stone Age for 2 million years. For the first million, all they had was a hand-ax, which is to say, a way to fracture a rock into a crude blade. In the second million, they added a few improvements to the hand-ax, making them more durable and putting them on sticks to make spears. It was only the introduction of language that brought a cultural explosion. Once humans could speak, we started building entire toolkits with fishhooks and harpoons and sewing needles. We started decorating our bodies and burying our dead and developing our own mythologies.

Thirty thousand years ago, we had already been making jewelry for forty thousand years and had the artistic ability to create the astonishing cave paintings found in Lascaux. Thirteen thousand years ago we were carving intricate, fictional creatures in relief on pillars at the temple at Gobekli Tepe, demonstrating a complicated and completely lost religion.

Human beings had all of this culture for tens of thousands of years, with no way to write it down. Text has only existed for 1% of our history. The only thing we had to preserve a culture across

the telephone game of time was the oral tradition of poetry. We could set our most important stories into meter and rhyme and preserved them in our memories as song.

Poetry was the first digital technology—it was a biological blockchain. Rather than the 1s and 0s of binary or the 128 characters of ASCII, we had the 50 sounds we could make with our mouths. We said them in strings to make meaning and used repetition to store them over time. A word is an object that doesn't exist without the word. Every noun is a metaphor for a pattern we noticed.

We've always known this. A “poem” isn't a dance of the tongue. A “poet” isn't a painter of words or a gazer of navels. Each is derived from the Greek *poiein*, meaning “to make.” Poetry is the creation of meaning. It's how we bootstrapped all of modern life out of the muck.

Poetry isn't an ornament hung on the tree of life. It isn't something we invented. Poetry is what invented us. We evolved through poetry, which was the tool that allowed for the ratchet effect of cumulative culture. Poetry is hard-wired into the neural bundles in our brains as a result. It's no coincidence that we first learn about the world through nursery rhymes. It's no wonder that we all find the music of speech appealing. We're all poets. We think in metaphors. We speak in analogies. We riff in casual conversation to an iambic beat, which is the beat of our hearts across the span of a breath. Poetry is what we are.

Finally knowing what we are, it's easier to see what we're missing. We evolved to be storytellers, and structurally, on a biological level, that's still who we are. And when we don't make poetry, both as a culture and as individuals, we suffer.

I recently interviewed the psychologist James Pennebaker about his work on expressive writing. In 1986, he brought a few dozen freshmen students into his lab and told them to write. By coin flip, he asked one group to write about a traumatic experience, and

the other to write about anything they wanted. They wrote for 15 minutes a day for four days — an hour total.

The group who wrote about a traumatic memory for that short period of time at the beginning of the semester ended up with better grades. They reported getting more sleep than the control group and were sick less often as recorded in visits to the health office. Later studies did bloodwork before and after, and showed better immune function, with a higher T-cell count in the group who wrote about a traumatic memory — again, for just that brief amount of time.

Writing is healing. This is something all poets know, but Pennebaker's work to quantify that and show just how well it works led to the development of an entire field of bibliotherapy. But how did it work? A humble scientist, Pennebaker didn't want to speculate — what mattered to him was that it did work, and he could show it.

When I was 12 years old, my mother was struggling with a mental illness that included dramatic mood swings and hallucinations. It was a frightening time, and while this was happening, I had a recurring dream. I would wake up in my bed, still asleep, and hear a strange noise. Investigating, I'd follow it down the hall and through the kitchen. It was coming from the basement. A light at the bottom of the stairs threw long shadows. In the dream, night after night, I would creep down the stairs, terrified but unable to stop myself. At the bottom, around a corner, I'd find my mother, dressed as a witch, stirring a large black cauldron. After a moment, she'd look up and lock her eyes on me, and I would startle awake in a panicked sweat.

I had the same dream every night for months, until one night I finally did something different. I heard the same noise, followed it down the same stairs, but instead of looking up at my mother, the witch, and seeing her see me, I focused on the cauldron. I crept

closer and closer until I peered over the side and finally saw — it was only laundry. The witch was washing our clothes. I looked up then, and the witch wasn't a witch at all; she was just my mother. She was always my mother. Finally getting the message, apparently, I never had the dream again.

That's what poetry does. It's why Pennebaker's expressive writing program worked so well. Meaning-making brings symbolic order to the chaos of our experience. We give words to the patterns that we notice and turn them into objects that we can hold and control, so that they don't control us.

Exploring this further, I interviewed psychiatrist and scholar Iain McGilchrist, whose book, *The Master and His Emissary*, explores the role of the bifurcated brain in human cognition. Everything the public has heard about the left- and right-brains is wrong, but the truth is even more interesting. We really are two minds, which evolved for two completely different purposes. Every animal has two main problems: it has to eat, and it also has to not be eaten. Seeking food, whether hunting or foraging, requires a focused attention. Avoiding predators requires the opposite — a broad view of the entire environment that notices what might be sneaking up from behind.

Nature's efficient solution to this dual problem was to evolve two specialized brains that work side-by-side on their different tasks. The left brain is the focused hunter, scanning the world through a narrow lens, looking for things it can use. The right brain is the defense system, taking a holistic view of the entire landscape.

Having evolved this way over hundreds of millions of years, the right brain has become the source of wisdom. It makes leaps of association and sees the broader connections; it deploys symbols and metaphors; it understands nuance and complexity — this is why McGilchrist calls the right brain the Master. The left, the more active but lowly Emissary, is only interested in utility, in

apprehending rather than comprehending. It controls language but thinks in clichés and suffers from its own ignorance.

Like a recurring dream, a poem is a message from the Master to the Emissary. It's the way we translate the holistic wisdom of the right brain into something concrete that the left brain can use. My own dream about the witch was a desperate effort by the Master to tell the Emissary not to be afraid, that my mother was still my mother.

And this is what poems do. When successful, a poem passes the wisdom of the right brain into the left, bringing with it a moment of new coherence. Emily Dickinson famously said that she knows it's a poem when it takes the top of her head off. Reading submissions to *Rattle*, I know it's a poem when it gives me goosebumps. In *Haibun: A Writer's Guide*, Lew Watts calls this feeling a "spark." The spark is the cut in a haiku. It's the strange resonance between the prose and the haiku in a haibun. It's a leap of understanding made articulate.

And we need to articulate. McGilchrist goes on to critique the world as having become too dominated by the left's mode of perception. As technology advances, our obsession with objects and utility has come to drown out the deep wisdom of holistic understanding. He calls this "the matter with things." According to McGilchrist, the new left-brain dominance is why we get so trapped in black and white thinking politically. It's why anxiety and depression and nihilism are so prevalent despite the fact that we're living safer and more prosperous lives than anyone in human history.

This is only going to get worse. Social media has allowed us to get lost inside echo-chambers of tribalism. Scientific materialism has become by far the dominant mode. And soon we'll be outsourcing much of our thinking to artificial intelligence and the hollow insights of large language models.

In the future, we'll need poetry more than ever. Increasingly, it will be the way we stay in touch with our own humanity. The question anyone already engaged with any form of poetry should be asking is, how can we help? How can we invite more people into the psychological healing that is poetry?

Haiku practitioners should already understand why haiku will play a central role in the future of poetry. A haiku is the smallest unit in that leap of understanding. It's easy to teach, but impossible to master. And it creates a positive, supportive, compassionate community. How do we help it to grow beyond the narrow niche it currently exists inside, as a subgenre of a subgenre of literature in a technologically obsessed culture?

Curation over Publication

The first and easiest step is to fix a huge problem by changing a single word. The literary industry has spent decades unnecessarily shackled by language itself. The word “published” has little significance in the digital age, and yet, purely out of habit and momentum, writers and publishers still pretend that it does. Literary magazines require submissions be “previously unpublished,” so authors hide their work offline in the dungeons of file folders like some archaic purity rite. Writers avoid sharing new material on Zooms and open mics, as if it might become deflowered by the exposure. Poems and haiku must be banished from friends online when they matter most—when they're fresh and relevant to the cultural conversation.

Creative writing is constrained by a simple lack of imagination: no one's thought of a word to replace “publication,” now that publication is irrelevant.

The word “publish” is almost 700 years old. It comes through Old French from the Latin *publicare*: “to make public.” This wasn't easy in the 14th century. Text was still copied by hand. Even after

Gutenberg invented the printing press, making something public required real skill and a large capital investment. The very act of having your words published by a press carried significant value.

In the age of the internet and social media, words can be published with a single tap. What does it even mean to be a “publisher” in this new world?

I’ve come to realize that what I’ve been providing for my 20 year-career as an editor isn’t publication at all: it’s *curation*, from the Latin “curare,” which means “to take care of.” I’m not a publisher; I’m a curator. My job is to sift through thousands of submissions each week and highlight the poems that others might enjoy reading. In the abundance of the digital age, curation is a far more significant service than publication. More literature is being written today than at any time in history — the need for curation is immense. And that’s what the publishers and editors of the literary world are actually doing — building and providing access to an audience that appreciates their tastes.

But literary venues still think of themselves as publishers, and demand that submissions be “previously unpublished.” That phrase is what’s known as a term of art, something with a special meaning for a particular field or profession. And it’s become a damaging term of art.

Imagine how literature would thrive if writers could share haiku with our friends in the medium of the era? How much fun would it be to have massive, online, recorded kukais? The joy of sharing what we create is one of the main things that sustains artists. Writers shouldn’t have to wait years wading through rejection letters to feel it.

What we need is a new term of art that reflects the environment we’re actually living in. I propose that we adopt the term “uncurated” to replace “unpublished.” Previously uncurated work is that which has not yet appeared in any curated collection — no

books or magazines or anthologies, in print or online. But it leaves open the ability to self-publish on social media or blogs or message boards. It allows the work to be shared on podcasts and open mics. Tweet your haiku. Tag the person it was written for on Facebook. Workshop poems online. This is how a literary culture thrives.

At the beginning of the year, we updated *Rattle's* guidelines to say that we accept submissions of “previously uncurated” poems, and then explain what curated means — that the poems can't have appeared in any other books or magazines or similarly selected collections, in print or online.

I'd like to call on the editors of haiku journals to adopt *uncurated* as a new term of art along with us. Writers can encourage others to switch by using *curated* in their bios. “My poems and stories have been curated by X, Y, Z.” Focus on the curation that matters, rather than the publication that doesn't. It will only take a simple find-and-replace to catch us up to the current era and to encourage more people to participate in the healing practice of making poetry.

Building an NFT Economy

As we've discussed, poetry has been the way humans make and store meaning stretching back into our deepest history. We're all poets, and we all should be poets — this is the grand dialogue of our species, and everyone deserves a seat at the table — but that fact makes selling poetry impossible.

This is our Ouroboros Problem: every reader of poetry is also a writer of poetry. The more we grow our audience for books, the more books we end up producing. Billy Collins quips in his poem that this is “the trouble with poetry.” Every time we read a good poem, it just makes us want to write another of our own. We see this at every book fair: we're just trading with each other.

As if that weren't bad enough, the nature of books forces us into an

economics of copies rather than originals. A painter or sculptor can make a unique object that, as such, retains value. A painting can become a collector's item, which is a way to store wealth, launching visual art into a separate marketplace, with an external audience of consumers who have money. That's why a painting can be sold for millions of dollars while a poem is worth nothing.

The value of a poem isn't in the piece of paper or the ink—it's a spark in the mind, rekindled by the breath of the reader. Any copy of a poem is as good as the next, and the entire purpose of poetry was to be easily copied in the mind, so even the copy isn't necessary.

The only way to sell a copyable product is to have the number of sales outpace the rate of copying. This is how prose books work—bestsellers reach a mass audience large enough to create an economy. Supply is restricted enough by the sheer size of a book, and by the locking of ebooks, that artificial scarcity can create a demand.

But with poetry we have the Ouroboros Problem, too: more consumers inevitably turn into more producers, and no matter how much poetry grows, it's always a zero sum game. This is why the modern history of poetry is one of patronage and charity. Our profit model can't work.

For two decades, I've been exploring different ways to overcome this intrinsic problem. Slam poetry tried to follow the musician's path, building value in performances. Instagram turned poetry into a fashion accessory. Neither were able to break the snake of poetry consuming itself. But NFT poetry is the first thing that's come along that might actually make a difference.

NFTs are non-fungible tokens, coded with blockchain technology. It sounds complicated, but a blockchain is simply a ledger, like a bank would use, but networked and decentralized. It's designed so that anyone can access the chain but no one has the computing

power to alter it on their own, creating a lasting, public log of information. An NFT is a smart contract written into that log, which creates a wide variety of practical uses. Soon our government registrations, our ticket purchases, and likely our voting, will be done via blockchain, taking advantage of the technology's unique combination of security and transparency.

One of those valuable uses is to allow copyable art to be treated like original art. Suddenly digital art can have the provenance and collectability of a physical painting—and the same applies to poetry, which was, of course, the very first digital art. The ability to display the original copy of a poem, connected directly to the artist's digital wallet, completely reverses the economics of publishing. Rather than hide our poems from each other, hoping to create a scarcity that will force readers to buy books, we can share our poems widely—the more people who read and appreciate the poem, the more potential value that digital, collectable original, accrues.

Imagine your favorite haiku. Maybe it's Basho's "summer grasses." Maybe it's Cor van den Heuvel's "tundra." Wouldn't you want to own the original version of that? Anytime we read a great poem, it becomes a part of us, a part of our psyche. Collecting the poem as a digital asset would allow us to become connected to the artist directly, to show our appreciation, and to add tangible value to what is already immensely valuable to us personally.

Because of the nature of smart contracts built into a blockchain, that poem is always tied to the author, so NFTs also solve the used book problem. When we buy copies of a book used, the artist doesn't see a penny of that sale and doesn't even know it happened. With an NFT book or poem, that object is forever tied to the artists' wallet, and we can write into that smart contract a royalty on secondary sales.

If poets were to all suddenly start minting their poems as NFTs, multiple new economies would quickly emerge. The first would be a tip economy, with the poem's newfound collectability becoming a way to show appreciation to the poets we admire. We would trade poems like baseball cards and feel the excitement of building a poetry collection. The second would be a store of wealth economy, with investors recognizing the potential growth in a poet's career and using the NFTs as part of their portfolios, in the same way they invest in physical art, but actually investing in poets themselves, finally breaking the Oroborus by injecting external wealth into poetry, in the same way a fine art gallery functions.

At the same time, we would be encouraging more people to share more poems more freely, experiencing all that desperately needed psychological health and spiritual well-being that expressive writing provides.

This process has already begun. There are dozens of groundbreaking poets working right now in NFTs as the vehicle for sharing their work. For the most part, they're publishing content that we're already familiar with. Whole ebooks can be published on-chain, like Katie Dozier's collection, *Watering Can*. Other poets are making haiga, and other static styles of mixed media poems, and minting those rather than publishing them by traditional means. The 2023 Haiku North America conference featured a haibun film festival, which is another great example of familiar mediums that can flourish in this marketplace. Any digital file can be made collectable, and the only limits are those of our imaginations.

The task of minting a file onto a blockchain can seem intimidating, but it's easier than one might think, and getting easier all the time as the technology finds its way into more and more mainstream spaces. The first step is to create a digital wallet, such as Metamask or Kukai (yes, one of the popular wallets is actually called Kukai). Next, that wallet is synced to a marketplace like Objkt or OpenSea.

Once those are set up, the process of minting a poem is as easy as uploading a photo and description to Facebook and pressing “post.” Katie Dozier has a step-by-step guide on her website, *thenftpoetrygallery.com*.

The choice of which blockchain to use is important. Ethereum is currently the most well-known option, but transaction fees are high. Tezos, on the other hand, which links to the Objkt marketplace, uses a system that’s much less energy-intensive, and much more aligned with a poet’s budget and sensitivities.

The energy costs is a common criticism of blockchains generally, but there are different ways of verifying transactions, and the “proof of stake” chains like Tezos use a tiny fraction of the energy used by the more familiar “proof of work” chains, making them no less environmentally friendly than a *YouTube* server.

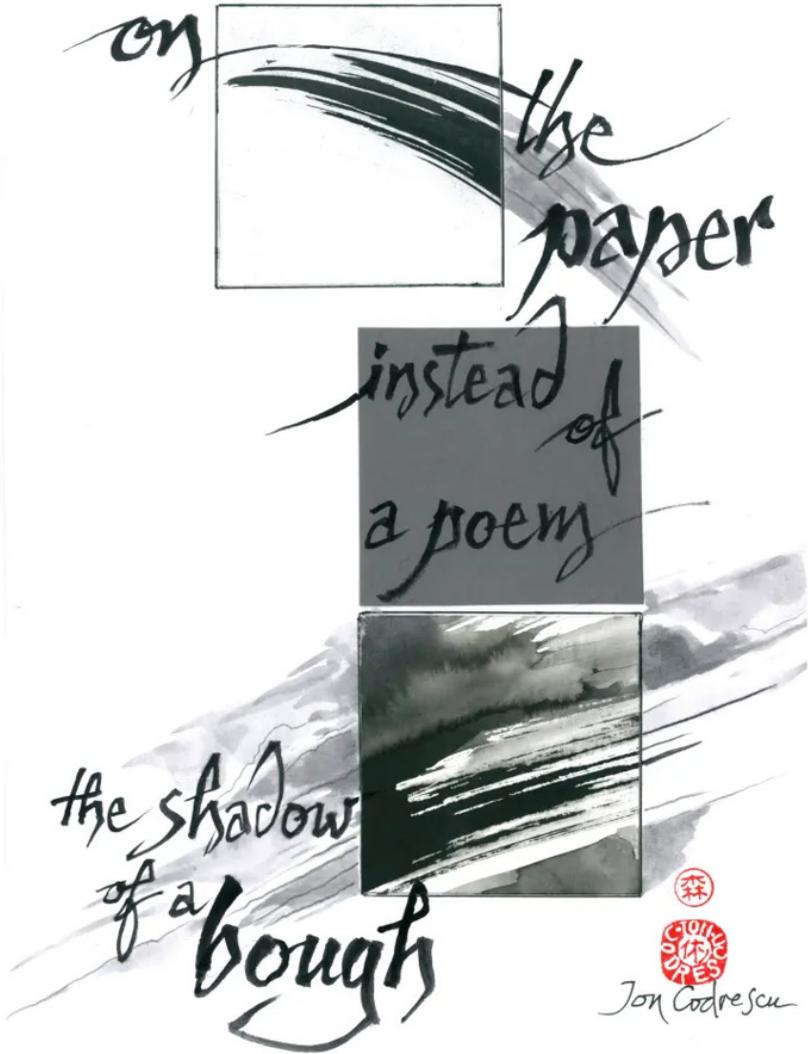
In reality, there is very little downside to turning poems into NFTs, while poets gain more control over their work, and a new potential way to earn money from it.

The Future of Poetry

In the future, poetry will be a kind of mental yoga that everyone who cares about their mental wellbeing will participate in. Poems will be shared widely on social media and curated by magazines and individual collectors looking to highlight and share their love of the best poems. The future of poetry is a future of growth, not scarcity. To be a poet is to be human. We are all makers of meaning, and we all have valuable stories to share and make sense of. By focusing on curation and flipping the poetry economy on its head, we can help each other connect with ourselves and prosper.

JUXTA

Reviews



Poet/Artist: **ION CODRESCU**

The Poetry of Incarceration:

*A Review of *They Never Asked: Senryū Poetry from the WWII Portland Assembly Center**

Rebecca LILLY

They Never Asked: Senryū Poetry from the WWII Portland Assembly Center, edited and translated by Shelley Baker-Gard, Michael Freiling, and Satsuki Takikawa. Corvallis, Oregon: Oregon State University Press, 2023. ISBN: 978-0870712357.

They Never Asked is an anthology of senryu written by incarcerated Japanese Americans during WWII, which also includes a wide range of essays that offer historical, sociocultural and literary perspectives on the senryu and related subjects. While the essays provide ample historical background and discussions of translation and the influence of Japanese haiku on English language haiku, the real focal point is the senryu written over the course of several weeks, by Japanese Americans who were incarcerated at the Portland Assembly Center. These senryu were culled from one particular journal: that of Masaki (“Joe”) Kinoshita, a prominent member of the Japanese American community in Portland, Oregon, who kept a meticulous record of the senryu composed both by him and his fellow poets at the Portland Assembly Center, essentially a temporary incarceration camp or way-station where

Japanese Americans were housed before being sent to more permanent concentration camps in Idaho, Northern California and Wyoming in September of 1942.

Kinoshita's journal records 450 senryu written during a two-week period in August of 1942, when twenty-two senryu poets met on four separate occasions, to write together, often on selected topics, and often focusing on their incarceration experiences. *They Never Asked* is notable, in particular, for being the first anthology of WWII senryu to be published. (Apparently there have been multiple publications of haiku written at these camps, but none comprised solely of senryu.) Because senryu tend to focus on human interactions, these poems provide more direct insights into the emotional life of the Japanese Americans who were incarcerated, and in so doing, draw our close attention to the tragic and unethical actions of the U.S. government, beginning with Roosevelt's Executive Order, an execrable black mark on our country's history, which set in motion a series of events that had terrible psychological and physical impacts on those who were arrested and incarcerated.

Great care was exercised in translating these senryu. Michael Freiling did a literal translation of the Japanese, and Shelly Baker-Gard then transformed that translation into English senryu form in a way that better captures the intent and spirit of the original. The collaborative effort has resulted in translations of historical importance, as a document of what Japanese Americans endured in incarceration, with copious notes provided by the translators on the historical and personal contexts for each individual senryu, which greatly aid in understanding the poems. Unfortunately, in many cases, I'm afraid a substantial portion of the aesthetic power of the originals is lost, but I feel this would be true no matter how nuanced and sensitive the translation. As a native English speaker (with no knowledge of Japanese) I can only assume that the

original Japanese versions possess rhythmic and sonic resonances, and aural depth, that simply cannot be preserved in an English translation. In addition, the footnotes, which are necessary to clarify the poet's intent or to explain contextual particulars relevant to the poem's interpretation, are obstacles to immediate aesthetic impact. Despite what I see as an inevitable loss in translation of aesthetic quality, however, these senryu should be read and appreciated for their historical significance.

Although the poems are the focus, the real strength of this book is less in the aesthetic impact of the senryu, but in the excellent essays that provide historical background of the period during which the senryu were written, explain the difficulties of translating Japanese senryu into English, and offer a historical overview of how Japanese poetic forms were introduced into English and gained popularity. Freiling has written an enlightening essay on the difficulties of translating these poems, highlighting important linguistic differences between Japanese and English that relate to poetic structure and sound. One formidable obstacle is that Japanese has three unique scripts: one with pictographic characters, and two with different syllabic scripts. Add to this the fact that the subject of a Japanese sentence does not need to be "stated" (introducing grammatical ambiguity) as well as the fact that the senryu rely heavily on indirect communication and context for meaning. Such grammatical and contextual ambiguities inherent to the original poems are of aesthetic importance and don't carry over well (or at all) into English. Aside from this, Freiling had to contend with how to communicate linguistic conventions, idioms and allusions of the Chinese characters: Japanese words have a colloquial meaning and nuance which aren't explicated by the dictionary definition. Freiling, to discern the poet's intent, had to research personal facts about each individual poet: their life circumstances, including specific references to historical events and situations in the camps, in order to make possible the most accurate translations. The essay

underscores how truly difficult it is to preserve the aesthetics of a poem in translation.

Shelley Baker-Gard's contributions to this book are also notable. In addition to her excellent Introduction to the senryu, with a comprehensive explanation of the conditions of the camps and situations of the prisoners, as well as a brief history of haiku and senryu and their introduction into English, her second essay, "American English Senryu and Haiku," usefully expands that history by documenting several notable authors and poets in the U.S whose translations and/or criticisms of Japanese senryu and haiku were instrumental in making these forms popular among English-speaking scholars, poets and readers, and ultimately creating a large following of the forms in English. This is a useful timeline which gives an overview of the introduction of haiku into English. Of particular interest is her discussion of visual haiku, which she rightly points out are more closely related to haiga than haiku. She also presents various definitions of haiku that have been proposed, also very insightful. She might have included a lengthier discussion of how Zen Buddhism and East Asian spirituality influence the haiku aesthetic, but in a short, well-organized and well-written essay, she does an admirable job of condensing the history of haiku's introduction into English down to the essentials.

Another very interesting component of this book is Fay Aoyagi's essay, "Reflections on First-Person Experience in War Haiku." As an acclaimed haiku writer herself, and a Japanese American who grew up in Japan but now resides in this country, she is well-positioned to raise the question whether, or to what extent, a poet is justified in writing about the tragedies and trauma of war from a first-person perspective without having experienced those tragedies first-hand. Consider that a poet might feel culturally inhibited in writing from a first-person viewpoint about the experiences of those of a different culture or race. (Aoyagi admits that she doesn't

feel qualified to write about the Holocaust, for instance.) This may be due to a personal feeling of inauthenticity, as if a person of one race or culture cannot fully understand the trauma experienced by one in an entirely different sociocultural situation or from a different background (ethnicity, race, gender, etc.). One concern is that the poet may be doing these victims a disservice by pretending or faking a first-person experience. On the other hand, it might well be possible to step into another's shoes psychologically to know their trauma, particularly if the writer has experienced an analogous trauma herself. And attempting to write about another's trauma first-hand could well be seen as an act of compassionate solidarity, an empathic extension of the self in an attempt to understand another's plight, and to share it in a powerful way by giving such victims a voice in an artistic medium they themselves have not mastered. Additionally, there is the fact, as Aoyagi points out, that if writing about war isn't first-person, but composed from an outsider's perspective, it may seem journalistic, a mere record of the facts, an abstracted commentary devoid of personal affect or, worse, didactic, opinionated or severely censorious (as bad "political poetry" can be). In sum, then, in raising such questions specifically in the context of war poetry, and with reference to her Japanese heritage, Aoyagi sparks further questions about the nature of first-person experience and the extent to which a poet can imagine or experience vicariously the trauma of another well enough to write about it authentically.

While I expressed reservations earlier about preserving the aesthetic quality of the original Japanese *senryu*, I do not think the excellent team of translators and advisors (mainly, Freiling and Baker-Gard) could have done a more thorough and professional job, given how delicate, nuanced and multi-faceted the act of translation must be to be "true" to the original poem. Freiling, as mentioned earlier, provides a "literal" English equivalent for each *senryu*, and Baker-Gard then developed an analogous counterpart

in English (a further interpretation of the “literal” content) which seeks to capture the poet’s intent and aesthetic. The book provides the reader with a comprehensive background for understanding the senryu, with a thorough discussion of the historical and cultural events at the time the Japanese Americans were incarcerated, including a timeline. This is supplemented with material on the definitions of haiku and senryu, the birth and history of these forms in Japan, and influential developments which led to their adoption as “English” forms of poetry. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly for understanding the senryu, was the detailed and informative piece by Freiling on the difficulties of translating Japanese senryu into English, and the extensive research and notes he provided about the individual poets. This book is remarkable for its comprehensiveness and as an important historical document of what Japanese Americans experienced when incarcerated in U.S. camps during World War II.

Then There Is:

A Review of *The Wild Beyond Echoing: James Hackett's Haiku Way*

J. ZIMMERMAN

Paul Russell Miller. *The Wild Beyond Echoing: James Hackett's Haiku Way*. Painswick, Gloucestershire, UK. Grandad Publishing. 2021. Soft cover. 150 pages. ISBN 978-1-9995-931-4-8. (Order from the author by emailing pr.miller at live dot co dot uk; £10 plus p. & p. in UK; \$15 plus postage elsewhere.)

A half-century after many North American haiku tastemakers seem to have separated from James W. Hackett (1929–2015), the British poet Paul Russell Miller has written *The Wild Beyond Echoing: James Hackett's Haiku Way*. The book offers a welcome opportunity to appreciate and assess Hackett's significance as a founder of English-language haiku. Miller explores how Hackett can still inspire a more expansive view of what haiku may include. He guides the reader through Hackett's poetry in 17 chapters, each focused on one of Hackett's "Suggestions for Writing Haiku in English." Despite Hackett's initial success and fame in the 1960's, in subsequent decades he became almost invisible in North America. Now we have Miller's book. As its back cover says, this is the "first

book-length study” of Hackett’s haiku, his work being “increasingly neglected as trends in English-language haiku have changed.” First there is Hackett, then there is no Hackett, then there is.¹

First there is Hackett.

Hackett’s haiku were first published in 1963 in *American Haiku*. They appeared more widely in 1964, when R. H. Blyth included 31 of Hackett’s haiku in the authoritative *A History of Haiku Volume Two: From Issa up to the Present* (352–362). Hackett was the only non-Japanese poet whom Blyth included. He commented that Hackett’s haiku “are in no way mere imitations of Japanese haiku, nor literary diversions. They are (aimed at) the Zen experience, the realising, the making real in oneself of the thing-in-itself” (351). Blyth quoted from a letter to him by Hackett:

I regard “haiku” . . . as primarily an experience, rather than a form of poetry. Bashō’s statement that: “Haiku is simply what is happening in this place, at this moment,” shows that he regarded intuitive experience to be the *basis* of haiku. And Now, his criterion is my own.

Then, also in 1964, Hackett won the first JAL (Japan Air Lines) haiku contest in the United States with this haiku (Miller 75-76):

1. The refrain of the 1967 pop-chart success “There is a Mountain” written by singer-songwriter Donovan, who studied Buddhism, was “First there is a mountain, then there is no mountain, then there is.” Donovan likely learned from D.T. Suzuki’s *Essays in Zen Buddhism* of the 9th century belief by Ch’an [in China, Zen in Japan] Buddhist Ch’ing-yüan Wei-hsin: “Before I had studied Ch’an/Zen for thirty years, I saw mountains as mountains . . . When I arrived at a more intimate knowledge, I came to the point where I saw that mountains are not mountains . . . But now that I have got its very substance I am at rest. For it’s just that I see mountains once again as mountains.” (Essay 1 in *Essays in Zen Buddhism* by Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. 1949. 24.)

A bitter morning:
 sparrows sitting together
 without any necks.

Haiku historian Charles Trumbull reported in his 57-page *Juxtapositions* article “Shangri-La: James W. Hackett’s Life in Haiku”² that as a result, “Hackett catapulted to international fame” (45) and “suddenly became the top haiku poet in America” (58). Trumbull’s stature in the haiku community (past editor of *Modern Haiku*, past president of the Haiku Society of America, and much more³) suggests that his views on Hackett serve as a representative for the views of a contemporary majority of North American haiku poets, and are worth addressing here.

For two decades, Hackett published haiku collections, culminating in *The Zen Haiku and other Zen Poems of J.W. Hackett* (1983, hereafter *The Zen Haiku*). As in his earlier collections, he included a concise list of “Suggestions” on creating haiku, a list he adjusted for different contexts.⁴ Reviewing *The Zen Haiku for Frogpond*, Alexis Rotella (32) was “pleased that Hackett’s work is finally under one cover.” This was a warmer welcome than Trumbull (63) gave it, calling it merely a “blip.”

Miller maps each of *The Zen Haiku*’s suggestions into the theme of

2. Trumbull’s article was an amalgamation and expansion of his two earlier articles on Hackett published in the journal *Frogpond* (2010, 33:1, 80-92) and *Frogpond* (2010, 33:2, 88-102).

3. For example, see the American Haiku Archive

<https://www.americanhaikuarchives.org/curators/CharlesTrumbull.html>.

4. Hackett’s beautifully illustrated *Bug Haiku* had 12 suggestions (55). *The Way of Haiku: an Anthology of Haiku Poems* (251-252) had 17. For *The Zen Haiku*, he increased his total to 18 with the addition of a Zen-related item regarding “the Zen-haiku mind” (255-256). The published lists are recognizably similar. A 2002-updated 20-entry list is archived at the World Haiku site (<https://whrarchives.wordpress.com/2013/02/19/reflections/>), on the Hackett legacy site (<https://hacketthaiku.com>), and elsewhere.

a different chapter (choosing however to include one suggestion “inside another for a total—aptly—of seventeen” (127)). He comments on and discusses the relevance of the suggestions to over 50 of Hackett’s haiku as well as haiku by others.

The first five suggestions concern how “haiku experience precedes haiku poetry,” a subheading in *Bug Haiku* (55). These occupy Miller’s opening chapters. Their themes are: (1) always be aware of this present moment; (2) carry a notebook and record your haiku experiences in nature; (3) contemplate natural objects closely; (4) interpenetrate with nature (which Miller (30) envisions as Hackett’s version of Bashō’s “learn about a pine tree from a pine tree”); and (5) reflect on your notes of nature in quiet solitude.

Miller’s next six chapters deal with Hackett’s suggestions about how “haiku poetry shares haiku experience with others,” the other subheading in *Bug Haiku* (55). Their themes are: (6) write about nature as it is and be true to life; (7) choose each word very carefully to express what you feel; (8) include words that suggest the season, location, or time of day; (9) use only common language; (10) write in approximately 17 syllables if appropriate; and (11) read each verse aloud to ensure it sounds natural.

In the context of Hackett’s practice of reading aloud, Miller comments (86):

The concept of haiku as a form of service mattered extremely deeply to Hackett, leading when circumstances allowed to his returning to try an unfinished poem out in situ and en plein air, ultimate test and gratitude combined.

He prints this Hackett haiku, whose second line provides Miller’s book title:

NINE

Swinging on a pine, —
the wild beyond echoing
my newest haiku.

Hackett's five subsequent suggestions help a poet to step back and reconsider a drafted poem. The chapter topics are: (12) attend to "lifeliness" and significance; (13) avoid obscurity, abstractions, and intellectualization; (14) include humor if you wish, but mere wit is more the realm of senryu; (15) revise your poem until it suggests exactly what you want others to see and feel; and (16) avoid verbal over-decoration. Miller's 17th and closing chapter addresses Hackett's final suggestion in *The Zen Haiku*: use awareness to honor the senses and use meditation to center the mind.

Here are two more illustrations of suggestions by Hackett. For "Choose each word carefully" (Chapter 7), Miller includes (53):

As Nile dusk deepens
egrets blizzard to the same
solitary isle . . .

I find Hackett's choice of "blizzard" to be a brilliant use of poetic license,⁵ repurposing a noun as a verb to illustrate the density, whiteness, and commotion of egrets. In eleven words, this poem contrasts the many (egrets) with the solitary (isle), the dark (dusk) with the bright (blizzard), and subtly the heat of the Nile region with the chill of whiteout snow. Furthermore, Hackett's words flow into each other gracefully with repetition of vowel sounds and of the consonants d, l, and n.

In contrast, Trumbull criticized this use of "blizzard" and many of Hackett's other innovative word choices: "For poetic meaning Hackett invents locutions, twisting intransitive verbs into transitive and turning nouns into verbs that are not recognized as such by

5. A variation from conventional rules of language in order to create an effect.

Mr. Webster” (93). Trumbull was taking a prescriptive approach to language rather than aligning himself with flexible descriptivism, “the fundamental approach of academic linguists” (McWhorter 136).

Hackett’s theme of “Write in three lines that total approximately 17 syllables” (Miller’s Chapter 10) seems rare with haiku poets today, who favor, as Hackett also did, a recognition that not all haiku experiences are well expressed in 5-7-5.⁶ Miller (Chapter 10) presents not only Hackett’s 5-7-5 JAL prizewinner (see above) but also the 4-4-3 form (76) of Hackett’s first publication in *American Haiku* (Trumbull 97):

Bitter morning:
sparrows sitting
without necks.

See Miller (74-78) for a full discussion of these two versions. Nowadays English-language haiku journals tend to publish free-style haiku (free-ku) that have considerably fewer than 17 syllables, even though many editors are explicitly open to 5-7-5 haiku.⁷

6. I created convenience samples of haiku from one recent issue of *Frogpond* (46:2 (2023): 16-17) and one of *Modern Haiku* (54:2 (2023): 26-27) on pages I opened at random. They gave me 18 haiku with a mean of 12 syllables per haiku and a mode of 11. The longest haiku had 14 syllables and the shortest 3; 15 haiku were in three lines with various patterns averaging 3-5-4 syllables; 3 were each one line.

7. For example, *The Heron’s Nest* (<<https://theheronsnest.com/submit.html>>) welcomes “both modern, freestyle haiku, and haiku that adhere to a syllabic structure of 5-7-5 with the inclusion of a seasonal reference.” Guidelines at some journals (e.g., *Kingfisher* <<https://kingfisherjournal.com/submissions/>>) do not reject 5-7-5 haiku but discourage submission of haiku padded “to adhere to a 5-7-5 syllable count.” The strongest anti-5-7-5 statement I heard recently was at *Acorn’s* Zoom-based celebration for its 25-year anniversary: A.C. Missias, founding editor (retired) of *Acorn*, expressed distaste for “17-syllable doggerel” that she had got “quite

I add, on the topic of the 5-7-5 haiku, that increasingly English-language haiku poets seem to understand that an English “syllable” measures something different from a Japanese “sound unit.” Japanese language texts⁸ teach in their first few pages that what would be one long syllable in English counts (and is written) as two sound units in Japanese; also that *n* at the end of a word counts (and is written) as one additional sound unit. A poet so disposed could create a 17-syllable haiku in English with a similar duration to a 17-sound-unit Japanese haiku by using only short vowels and by adding one to the syllable count for every word ending with any consonant.

Then there is no Hackett.

In the 1970s and onward, Hackett rarely sent new work to North American journals. This was despite being well recognized in anthologies, including in all three editions of Cor van den Heuvel’s *The Haiku Anthology* (1974 to 2000) and in Allan Burns’ *Where the River Goes* (2013). Hackett’s infrequency could be due to aftershocks of conflict with *American Haiku* editors Clement Hoyt and James Bull, as reported by Trumbull (55-56). Apparently, after Hackett had agreed with Hokuseido Press on publication of his first manuscript, Hoyt was “furious at what he considered Hackett’s double-dealing” over who had publication rights, the manuscript having been “developed in part with the help of the *American Haiku* editors” who thought they had agreed to publish

a lot of.” Hopefully that was not intended to discredit skilled, long-term practitioners of the 5-7-5 form. Current *Acorn* editor Susan Antolin (email 2023) writes 5-7-5 haiku and is open to accepting them provided the form does not drive the words.

8. Texts include *Genki Textbook* Volume 1, 3rd edition (2020) by Banno Eri, *Elementary Japanese* (2005) by Yoko Hasegawa, and *Reading Japanese* (1976) by Eleanor Harz Jordan and Hamako Ito Chaplin.

it.⁹ Another reason for Hackett's disconnection seems simpler: "he had stopped writing haiku. He said that he could not write it any more" (Yamagata 1979).

Hackett's disinterest might have been accelerated by distress over aggressive criticism of his and his mentor Blyth's beliefs in an inescapable Zen-haiku relationship (Trumbull 56). Hackett reached his deep convictions through an exceptional path:

in the 1950s . . . I suffered a life-threatening injury that profoundly changed my values and direction. This trauma was an apocalyptic experience . . . every live moment was an epiphany . . . I became directly aware that the Way of Zen and Tao was ever present.¹⁰

Trumbull (56-57) stated that, even more than the concern about Hackett's publication rights, "the crux of the argument between him and the *American Haiku* editors" was "Hackett's devotion to Zen over haiku." *American Haiku* published what Trumbull called a "balanced" review¹¹ that included "sometimes his [Hackett's] immersion in Zen mysticism leads him astray into statements marked by cultist subjectivity."

Perhaps it was Hackett's version of Zen that Trumbull dismissed when he concluded his *Juxtapositions* article with this haiku:

9. I found no evidence that *American Haiku* editors were also indignant that Hackett omitted acknowledgments of first publications in their journal, and no evidence of the 1964 JAL contest requiring submitted haiku to have been unpublished.

10. From Hackett's remarks titled "R. H. Blyth and J. W. Hackett" at the World Haiku Festival 2002 in Akita, saved at *World Haiku Review* Vol 2-3 November 2002. 25 July 2023. <<https://wbrarchives.wordpress.com/2013/02/19/r-h-blyth-and-w-h-hackett/>>.

11. Trumbull (56) cited Gustave Keyser's review (in *American Haiku* 3:1 (1965): 37) of Hackett's *Haiku Poetry*.

Half of the minnows
within this sunlit shallow
are not really there.

and the cutting remark that “Like the minnows, however, perhaps the other half of Hackett’s presence is now not really there” (101).

By contrast, Miller (26) includes the same haiku in Chapter 3 exploring Hackett’s suggestion “Contemplate natural objects closely . . . unseen wonders will reveal themselves.” Miller comments that this haiku might be exhibiting the opposite of an “as it is” quality, namely a quality of “as it *isn’t*,” resonating with a “long-established tradition of illusionistic haiku in Japan.” Miller continues “along with the poet, we realize half the minnows we’re watching are actually the other half’s flickering shadows . . . [causing] an abrupt change in perception, making the poet *more really there* [Miller’s italics] than he was a moment ago” (27).

Miller does not draw attention to how this insight and others are sometimes the reverse of Trumbull’s. While I agree with aspects of Trumbull’s criticisms, at least to the extent that I sometimes appreciate Hackett’s haiku better when I ignore his punctuation and mute the discussions of his personal spiritual beliefs, areas where I differ from Trumbull include:

- where I would say that Hackett carefully refined his suggestions and his haiku, Trumbull wrote that they “have been tinkered with” (83) and undergo “a constant tinkering” (97), which seemingly belittle the refinements.
- I believe Hackett’s main intention concerning punctuation at his website (where he decoded his use of it)¹² was to communicate that he “found the discretionary use of punctuation can often clarify and vivify subtle haiku

12. 25 July 2023. <<https://hacketthaiku.com/hacketthaiku/TAThaikuPoem.html#punctuation/07>>.

poems.” By contrast, Trumbull found his “main intention seems to be to flog other haiku poets who have abandoned normal punctuation in their work” (91).

- where I am interested to see how Hackett used words in new ways, Trumbull seemed dissatisfied that “Hackett’s oeuvre is speckled with words that only he has used in haiku” (92).

- I am distressed by Trumbull’s suggestion that one could “dismiss him as [a] quaint, peripheral figure” largely due to “his brand of mysticism” (100).

Despite such North American concerns exemplified by Trumbull and others, Hackett continued to be generous with his time. From 1991 to 2009 he judged the British Haiku Society’s¹³ annual “James W. Hackett Award” Contest. Usually selecting haiku that were not 5–7–5, he particularly appreciated poems that showed “immediacy” and “here-and-now concentration” and the “ephemeral nature of life.”¹⁴ He planned his website (now maintained by his literary executor Christopher Thorsen)¹⁵ and he wrote for the World Haiku Review.¹⁶ He was generous with his books, handing them out trailside to interested persons.¹⁷

13. 25 July 2023. <<http://britishhaikusociety.org.uk>>.

14. 25 July 2023. <<http://britishhaikusociety.org.uk/2009/12/the-bhs-james-w-hackett-annual-international-award-for-haiku-2009/>>.

15. 25 July 2023. <<https://www.hacketthaiku.com>>.

16. 25 July 2023. <<https://whrarchives.wordpress.com/about/>>.

17. Betty Arnold (a medical doctor as well as subsequently the editor of Geppo for four years) reports that she was a lucky albeit surprised recipient when she met, helped, and reassured Hackett after he had fallen near her on a hiking trail (personal emails and conversations, July 2023).

Then there is.

With Miller's book, haiku poets have the opportunity to discover Hackett's haiku for themselves and to decide which of his suggestions might benefit their own approach to haiku. Hackett (adapting from Blyth) reminded us that "haiku is a finger pointing at the moon, and if the hand is beautiful and bejeweled, we may forget what it is pointing at." This is Miller's topic for Chapter 16, which he illustrates by (113-114):

Over this smooth beach
between each wash of the moon, —
our vanishing prints.

Miller explores how the phrase "wash of the moon" here "compresses imagery to help develop atmosphere and meaning together — something of a trademark Hackett technique . . . a factually accurate phrase as well as an unusual, deeply evocative one" (115).

In his final chapter, Miller gives Hackett's longest suggestion:

Honor your senses with awareness, and your Spirit with zazen or other centering meditation. The Zen-haiku mind should be like a clear mountain pond: reflective, not with thought, but of the moon and every flight beyond . . . (119)

Miller contrasts various opinions on the relevance of Zen to haiku, both pro and con. Essayist Boyé Lafayette De Mente (236) gives additional support to the opinion of relevance when he emphasizes how the Japanese have learned deeply from Zen Buddhism and that: "Till this day there is no area of Japanese life that is not affected by the legacy of Zen."

With *The Wild Beyond Echoing*, active haiku poets can at last learn deeply and sympathetically about Hackett. I hope the reader will seize this chance to explore Hackett's poetry and its thoughtful analysis by Miller. *The Wild Beyond Echoing* gives those of us less familiar with Hackett's work a chance to see what the Hackett mountain was, and to explore whether that mountain now exists and might even foster new growth in our own haiku styles.

Miller concludes his study of Hackett with this view: "Significance, not consistency, tends to impress me most, however, and in challenging the range and depth of my perception no other haiku poet comes close" (125).

Acknowledgements

I thank Charles Trumbull for generously emailing me a 182-page pdf generated from his haiku database to show Hackett's haiku with publication details. In addition, I strongly recommend his article in *Juxtapositions* 1.1; I learned so much about Hackett from it in preparing this review.

For advice on improving my first draft, I am entirely grateful to these companions on the haiku path: Betty Raffin Arnold, Robert Holbrook, Gregory Longenecker, and David Sherertz. Responsibility is mine, of course, for any errors.

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JUXTA

Haiga

Listening to John Cage

space in
the
silence

for birdsong

Sylvia Forges-Ryan


Jon Codrescu

Poet: Sylvia FORGES-RYAN

Artist: Ion CODRESCU

A NOTE ON THE HAIGA

I started creating haiga paintings after 1980, without knowing much about this unique art from Japan in which you have to combine poetry, calligraphy and painting in such a way that everything is in harmony. My training as a visual artist and as an art historian at the National University of Art in Bucharest, Romania, helped me a lot to penetrate the spirit of haiga art, but it was not enough. When I decided to do doctoral studies, I was very determined to have haiga painting in Japan and the West as the subject of my research thesis. After years of research, with study trips to Japan, I began to understand the “grammar” and “syntax” of this unique art in which the three languages (poetry, calligraphy and painting) melt into one. I like to remember the fact that one of the most renowned literary critics in the West—the Frenchman Roland Barthes—author of the famous book *Empire of Signs*, said that in a haiga painting you don’t know “where the text of the poem ends and where the painting begins”. A very suggestive notation for the essence of this art that we have to take it into account because many haiga authors in the West separate the text of the poem from the painting of the haiga composition, and some even add it outside the image, writing it on the computer. Many times, some authors use a very colorful photo with visual elements that cover the whole space, which is completely foreign to the austere spirit of the haiku poem that uses only a few words, silence and emptiness (*yohaku*). Where are a few suggested elements we encounter in haiku? Maybe we have to call these “baroque” images *photo-haiku*, not haiga.

Through these haiga paintings that I have selected from my decades of creation for *Juxtapositions*, I want to discuss a little all these thoughts that I expressed above. I prefer to work with the brush in ink, because the calligraphy of the poem and the painting harmonize best and allow me to be both spontaneous and

elaborate in the compositional elements. The empty space has a very important role in the viewer's imagination, because it invites him to continue what the poet/artist started to say. I like when the text of the poem becomes an image, and sometimes when the image becomes a text or . . . one continues on the other (as in the haiku painting inspired by the haiku written by Sylvia Foges-Ryan, p. 224). I sometimes like to use a little color to suggest an idea from the poem as I did in the haiga painting created after the poem written by Ikuyo Yoshimura (p. 228). In the painting "*grazing grass*" everything is suggested, without the need to paint a horse because it would be redundant. The poem says the content very clearly. In the "*picnic*" haiga (p. 46), the twisted wisteria branches suggest the spider's difficulty in choosing a path on the white tablecloth spread on the grass. The text of the poem is written like a bunch of wisteria flowers. In the composition "*deep in the forest*" (p. 110) I liked to play with the relationship between the huge forest and the small snail shell, between fullness and emptiness. In the haiga painting with the "*butterfly*" (p. 156), the elements of the tree become calligraphy, and the calligraphy becomes an organic part of it. The calligraphy in the work "*Bach*" (p. 186) is reminiscent of raucous rap music and graffiti writing, and the brush strokes are evocative of Gothic vaults or a church where Bach's compositions were played on the organ. I like to experiment with several techniques in haiga art (pencil, pastel, watercolor, collage and others), as I did in the composition "*the shadow of a bough*" (p. 202), but at the same time I have to take into account the way in which a certain technique must be adapted to the spirit of the haiku poem. The final step in creating a haiga composition is choosing the seals and where to place them next to the signature, as they must also be part of the composition. I usually use two seals: one with my name and one that has an image that brings to mind to the onlooker an idea from the content of the poem.

— Ion CODRESCU

JUXTA

People

Try challenging
a new
color of lipstick—
Nazi
sky
in spring

Ikuyo Yoshimura



Poet: **Ikuyo YOSHIMURA**
Artist: **Ion CODRESCU**

JUXTA *Contributors*



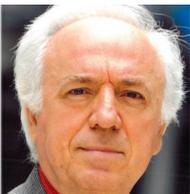
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Ion CODRESCU taught graphic arts, history of art, and comparative art at Ovidius University, Constanța, Romania. He is founder of the Constanța Haiku Society, *Albatross* and *Hermitage* haiku journals, and the Constanța International Haiku Festival.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



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Jim KACIAN is founder and president of The Haiku Foundation (2009), founder and owner of Red Moon Press (1993), and managing editor of *Juxtapositions* since its inception in 2015. His latest book of haiku and sequences is *after / image* (2018). He is editor-in-chief of *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years* (W. W. Norton, 2013) and, with a new team, is well into the work of a revised second edition.



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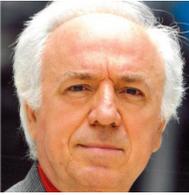


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Jim KACIAN is founder/president of The Haiku Foundation (2009), founder/owner of Red Moon Press (1993), editor-in-chief of *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years* (W. W. Norton, 2013), and managing editor of *Juxtapositions* since its inception in 2015. His latest book of haiku is *after / image* (2018), and he is nearing completion of *Clerikus*, his anecdotal history of haiku in the West, in process since 2014.



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



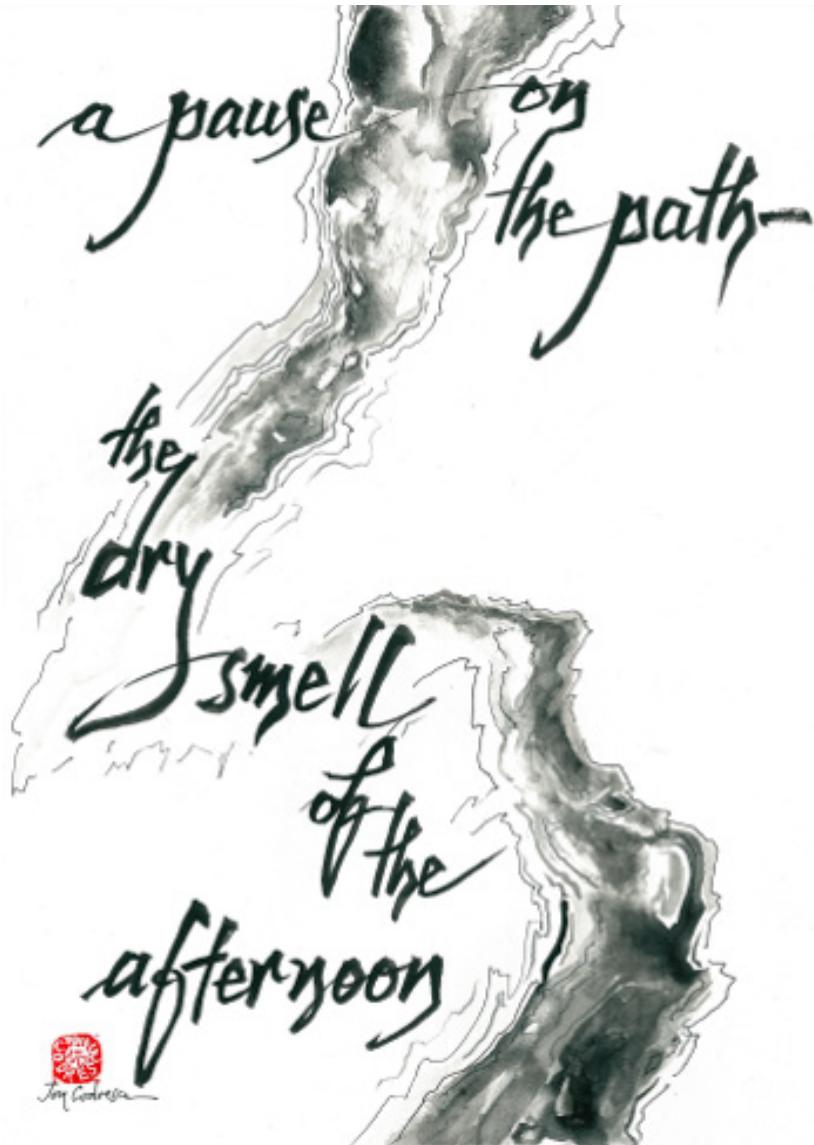
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Poet / Artist: **Ion CODRESCU**

JUXTAPositionS is the only annual publication dedicated to haiku research and scholarship. **JUXTANINE** features “Factor N400’ in the Reading of English-language Haiku”, further work from the Haiku and the Brain Team—Jan Nasemann, Thomas Geyer, Heinrich R. Liesefeld, Jim Kacian, Stella Pierides, & Hermann J. Müller; plus articles from Owen Bullock (“Synesthesia and Haiku”), Dorothy Abram (“Prison Participant Poetry”), Ryan Lally (“Natural Meddlers”), and Dr. Randy Brooks (“Referencing Language Words in English Haiku”). The new **JUXTA** Interview offers “Walking in a Sacred Way: An Interview with Chad Lee Robinson”, with Cherie Hunter Day. For **JUXTA** Resources Dr. Brooks offers “English Haiku Anthologies: An Annotated Bibliography”. A feature inaugurated this issue, **JUXTA** Presentations explores “The Future of Poetry: Haiku in the Digital Age” by Timothy Green (with Katie Dozier). We also offer two reviews: “The Poetry of Incarceration” by Rebecca Lilly, and “Then There Is” by J. Zimmerman. Cleasing your palette are eleven color pieces by our new Haiga Editor, Ion Codrescu. Plus we announce the winner of our first **JUXTA** Award for Excellence in Haiku Research & Scholarship, and invite your submissions for **JUXTATEN**.



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