



Frogpond

The Journal of the Haiku
Society of America

Volume XXVIII Number 3
Fall 2005

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ISSN 8755-156X

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear HSA Members,

In this space one year ago retiring *Frogpond* Editor Jim Kacian wrote his valedictory message. Now, having decided not to continue as HSA President, I find myself having to bid farewell too and so much at a loss for words that I will simply have to piggyback on his.

Jim wrote in part, "... everything I have volunteered to the Haiku Society of America has been given back to me a hundredfold." This is certainly true for me as well. This has been a fabulous two years in which I never stopped learning, never ceased to be amazed at the passion and concern of our members, and was ever in awe at the sheer creativeness of poets working the wrinkles out of haiku, which is still a very new poetic genre for us Americans. Much has been accomplished by the Society already, but much remains to be done as well. This I leave—not without some regrets—to the Executive Committee and the new Officers and Regional Coordinators.

I'll conclude—again relying upon Jim's eloquence, which I cannot match much less exceed—"I thank you all for your support, your kindness, your compassion, and especially for your fine poetry, criticism, and thought over this time."

Sincere best wishes to you all!

Charles Trumbull, President

on my copy of
Robert's Rules of Order
a dried speck of blood

*Museum
of Haiku
Literature
Award*

\$100 for the best unpublished work
appearing in the previous issue of
Frogpond as voted by the HSA
Executive Committee

From XXVIII:2

autumn morning—
repainting our bedroom
the color it was

Mike Spikes

haiku

Frogpond XXVIII:3

sleeping bats—
an echo suggests
the depth of the cave

Peggy Willis Lyles

vacant resorts—
car sounds come and go
with the night surf

Mathew V. Spano

fine rain—
his careful words
prior to hanging up

Helen Russell

forgiven again—
the strong fragrance
of a withered rose

Kala Ramesh

shelling snap peas
the eldest sister's
swollen fingers

Jack Barry

Haiku Society of America

ebb tide
the extra warmth
of a friend's sweater

Deborah P. Kolodji

children outdoors,
I finish the roof
of their Lego house

Scott Metz

crimson maples—
maybe death
won't recognize me

Cherie Hunter Day

Gnarled hands
reaching for the palette
Autumn Sunset

Tony Virgilio

after sunset . . .
the shapes
of the clouds

Hilary Tann

Frogpond XXVIII:3

the warmth of his pocket
evening shadows

Alice Frampton

illuminated clouds—
a store for sale
way out here

Tom Clausen

election day
cloud shadows darken
the island hills

Kirsty Karkow

another bookstore
out of business
snow falling

Michael Fessler

a web
joins the Christmas angel
to the ceiling

Scott Metz

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winter silence
snow falls
four more inches

Jacquelyn Canning

another shirt
on the ironing board
winter afternoon

Charlie Close

insomnia . . .
a rabbit changes shape
on the ceiling

Jörgen Johansson

dawn
the reading light
no longer needed

Charlie Close

this cold morning
I pull on my pants
hot from the dryer

Michael McClintock

Frogpond XXVIII:3

winter beach
a dog alternates
between its master and me

Marcus Larsson

hands in pockets—
the wait to view
VanGogh's sunflowers

paul m

“macy's”
snow gathering
in all the curves

Mark Koerber

on the stair landing
piled one on top of another
three stones

Katherine Murphy

False spring
snow
where Custer last stood

Shane Bartlett

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a row of garages
on one side of each roof
remaining snow

William J. Higginson

wind gust
the cyclist coasts
uphill

Allen McGill

spring in the air
I remove the unknowns
from my key ring

Deb Baker

frost in the shadows
a Canada goose bends
to turn her eggs

Jack Barry

all night rain
the gravitational pull
of my pillow

Scott Mason

Frogpond XXVIII:3

soft April breeze—
she cools a cup
of make-believe tea

Stanford M. Forrester

spring morning i'll have what mother nature is having

Marlene Mountain

spring break
computers hum
in the empty lab

Victor Ortiz

northern prairie spring—
flowers blooming
all the way to sundown

K. H. Clifton

near the end
of Easter Sunday . . .
hazy moonshine

Robert Mainone

Dissection of the Haiku Tradition: Insects

By Fay Aoyagi

When I think about insect-related kigo, the first one that comes to mind is "butterfly." This kigo always reminds me of the ancient Chinese philosopher, Chuang-tzu. He became a butterfly in his dream and the story is used to explain the meaning of life—its transience and vulnerability.

hitsugi mada kara no omosa yo chô no hiru

casket . . . yet
weight of emptiness—
afternoon with butterflies

Shugyo Takaha ⁽¹⁾

"Butterfly" is a spring kigo. Spring is the beginning of a cycle of four seasons. Flowers are vying with their colors; birds chirp happily; cats fall in love. However, I often think about reincarnation in the beginning of spring. I am an atheist. I am not practicing Zen. I do not believe in fate. But, a butterfly in haiku can be a medium for me to explore the depth of life.

kaishi yori nukekishi chô ni pin no ato

on the butterfly
out through the ocean mirage
. . . trace of a pin

Shogi Kawana ⁽²⁾

A couple of years ago, I had a chance to see the monarch butterflies in Pacific Grove in California. I don't know how those tiny butterflies can travel thousands of miles. But, they came all the way to mate and die. Among the crowd, one or two could come from the other world.

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ari yo bara o noboritsumetemo hi ga tôi

ants . . . even if you manage to
climb up to the top of a rose
the sun is still far away

Hosaku Shinohara ⁽³⁾

I always want to ask soldier ants if they are satisfied with their lives. In their society, there are no psychologists, no judges, no chiropractors. On their behalf, I would look up at the sun and measure the distance from here to there. I may not tell the ants how far it is. I may just leave them an encouraging note.

semi shigure ko wa tansôsha ni oitsukezu

cicada's chorus—
my child cannot keep up with
my ambulance

Hideno Ishibashi ⁽⁴⁾

"Cicada shell" in ancient Japanese is utsusemi. The first character means "empty." In the same pronunciation of other characters, the meaning becomes "a human living in this world." The word "utsusemi" (a summer kigo) has been used often in traditional waka. You may remember a tragic heroine named Utsusemi in The Tale of Genji.

Hideno Ishibashi (1909-1947) passed away at the age of thirty-nine. She was a wife of Kenkichi Yamamoto (1907-1988), the most famous haiku scholar in Japan. Hideno started writing haiku in her early teens. She learned tanka under Akiko Yosano; haiku under Kyoshi Takahama. I translated semi shigure as "cicadas chorus," but "shigure" literally means intermitting rain from the end of autumn to early winter. It implies a thing that lasts for a while. Figuratively, it is a way to say "crying." The above haiku is the last haiku Hideno wrote.

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suzumushi wo kaite shiniyuku kotomo aru

keeping bell crickets
sometimes their lives
slip away from me

Hideo Furuya ⁽⁵⁾

Suzu (bell) mushi (insect) is an autumn kigo. I am not sure "bell cricket" is the right translation, but the sound of this insect is like a tiny bell. In the clear autumn night, listening to the sound of suzumushi and admiring the full moon, what did my ancestors have in their minds?

When I was a child, every year my grandparents brought back a cage of kôrogi (crickets) from a stall at the autumn festival. I was happy and proud to be in charge of those tiny insects. Following my grandmother's instruction, I fed them cucumbers, but the crickets always died in a few days.

fuyu bachi no shini dokoro naku aruki keru

winter bee
without a place to die
is . . . walking

Kijo Murakami ⁽⁵⁾

"Bee" itself is a spring kigo, but in the above haiku Kijo described an insect which somehow lived long enough to see winter. Kijo Murakami (1865-1938) was hearing impaired. His work has been categorized as "kyôgai" haiku. The circumstances of the poet's life are the theme for these haiku. I have not read his work extensively, but in his signature haiku, like the one above, he compares himself to small animals as Issa Kobayashi (1764-1827) did.

The sample haiku I chose for this article are rather heavy. However, insect-related kigo can be used to describe everyday life with tenderness and humor. The following two are such

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"light" examples. Both "caterpillar" and "jewel beetle" are summer kigo.

mamagoto no mama o nakasete kemushi kana

making a girl playing Mom
cry . . .
a caterpillar

Shingo Kanamura ⁽⁶⁾

Shingo, my Japanese haiku mentor, has excellent eyes for a small, heart warming scene of life. I have a tendency toward drama, but haiku can be like Noh with minimal movements.

tamamushi ya myôrei no sen hikinaoshi

jewel beetle—
I redraw the line
for a woman's youth

Michio Nakahara ⁽⁷⁾

Michio Nakahara has a unique approach toward his haiku subject. Often his juxtapositions surprise me. Tamamushi has two golden-purple lines down its back and is considered beautiful by insect-lovers.

I am planning to discuss food and beverages next time.

(1) *Kigo Betsu Takaha Shugyo Kushu*, (Collection of haiku by Shugho Takaha categorized per kigo) Furansu-do, 2001

(2) Unpublished at the time the article was written. Used with permission from the author

(3) *Gendai no Haiku* (modern haiku anthology) edited by Shôbin Hirai, Kadokawa Shoten, 1982

(4) *Gendai 100 Meiku Shu* (Best 100 Modern Haiku Collection) Vol. 5, edited by Kotaro Inagaki, Katsumi Ozawa, et al, Tokyo Shiki Shuppan, 2004

(5) *Kiyose* (Collection of Kigo) edited by Kenkichi Yamamoto, Bungei Shunju-sha, 1996

(6) *Kaki* (Persimmon), haiku collection of Shingo Kanamura, Kadokawa Shoten, 2000

(7) *Gendai Haiku Shusei* (Modern Haiku Collection), edited by Yasumasa Soda, Rippu Shobo, 1996

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rising
from the brown nest
three pink throats

William M. Ramsey

cries of a child
from the rooms downstairs—
spring dusk

Penny Harter

spring night—
cold settles into
the child's wading pool

Penny Harter

scent of pine needles—
I pause to smell
the vacuum cleaner bag

John J. Dunphy

construction site—
scent of new lumber
and lilac

Joan Vistain

Frogpond XXVIII:3

spring rain clouds
carrying the blue patch
with them

Bruce Ross

cog railway—
a burst of bobolinks
from the alpine meadow

Linda Jeanette Ward

spring sun—
at the top of the roller coaster
she says yes

Michael Dylan Welch

golden retriever
the sunshine choice for her
inner animal

Francine Porad

spring evening
one side of my briefcase
covered with pollen

CarlosColón

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struggling
to touch my toes . . .
summer solstice

Victor Ortiz

first summer day
thud of a soft drink
in the vending machine

Lenard D. Moore

school's out—
boys get a trucker
to blow his horn

Christopher Patchel

below the foot-bridge
the bridge's shadow
on a standing ripple

Michael Dylan Welch

new deck grill
the smoke rollicks
into cooling dusk

Lenard D. Moore

Frogpond XXVIII:3

tarot cards
spread under the willow—
darting swallows

CarrieAnn Thunell

dawn at the lake
goose cries mark the path
of a lone runner

Elizabeth Howard

hailstones
the dog
lays back down

Doreen King

before the fall
of the sandcastle—
saltwater in its moat

Tom Tico

freshly hosed driveway—
a black ant
on my toes

Yu Chang

Haiku Society of America

rose garden
the outer petals rush off
with the summer wind

Tom Tico

learning to sleep alone
the depth of moonlight
in an empty vase

William Cullen Jr.

Sunday morning
the give of tires
on a speed bump

Mark Hollingsworth

dinner bell—
the green-leafed wind
walks across the lake

D. Claire Gallagher

lawn sprinkler revolves . . .
fireflies
spangle the spray

Emily Romano

Frogpond XXVIII:3

hot morning
the mockingbird
winds down

Clyde Glandon

deep summer
the dirty bottoms
of bare feet

Chad Lee Robinson

don't take my picture—
come, work with us!
stone mason wipes his face

Janet Brof

the barn door
closes on the hay wagon
evening fields

Burnell Lippy

in the right places at the right times a lightning bug

Marlene Mountain

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no one about
the neighbor's rooftop clothesline
lifts in the wind

H. F. Noyes

August Sunday
the closing hymn
her hips in a summer dress

Noah Paul Borgondy

one night
much like another—
my summer garden

George Dorsty

summer dawn—
small stones along the dirt road
close to their holes

Peter Yovu

the river
dead calm this morning . . .
we both deceive

Joan Vistain

Frogpond XXVIII:3

farmers' market
behind the vegetables
a faded shirt

Stephen Peters

the pull
on my sweater sleeve
autumn wind

Becky DeVito

the apple orchard—
filling all my senses
with autumn

Adelaide B. Shaw

hip flask
the warmth of my body
in the brandy

Michael Ketchek

endless drizzle
the hairdresser shows me
the back

Carolyn Hall

senryu

Frogpond XXVIII:3

Gaps in her teeth—

this far

from six years old

Charles Gillispie

pop fly

going foul . . .

the catcher's bald spot

Barry George

rolling snow . . .

the snowman's

grumbling belly

George Dorsty

one snail

eye turns ahead

of the other

Jason Sanford Brown

radiation

has shrunk the rose

in my brain

William M. Ramsey

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diagnosis
just about everyone
makes her sick

Tom Painting

catching my breath—
like I was running
in the rest home

William Fraenkel

that little grunt
dad always made—
putting on my socks

David Giacalone

half moon
thinking about
my fiftieth birthday

Tony Pupello

ninety-two
congratulations
from the hairdresser

Ruth Franke

Frogpond XXVIII:3

homemade kite—
yesterday's headlines
tugging, swooping

Robert L. Brimm

war's end
I remember
chocolate ice cream

Anne LB Davidson

Memorial Day
the politician's gravestone
a little crooked

Adelaide McLeod

cheshire cat in the family tree our stillborn sister

John W. Sexton

mountain trail—
on which tree's roots
am I stepping now?

Lane Parker

Haiku Society of America

a ping
as the engine cools
happy hour

Dan Schwerin

seafood restaurant
guppies circle
the lighthouse

Yu Chang

winter sundown
our waiter returns
with a flaming tray

Barry George

romantic evening
curled on the couch
just me and Ben & Jerry

Ashley Peth

monday morning
a bird escapes from
the cat's grip

K Ramesh

Frogpond XXVIII:3

inside
the stone buddha
stone

Cyril Childs

at the Poetry Guild
they ask if haiku
is all I have

Janelle Barrera

fundraiser
the inflated price
of her kiss

Ernest J. Berry

Appalachian wedding—
the fiddle player
slides into a love song

Curtis Dunlap

monarch grove
the flutter
of tour-bus ladies

D. Claire Gallagher

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exam week
tangled kites
above the quad

Peggy Willis Lyles

April sun
a student tells her cell phone
it's so pretty

Hilary Tann

ultrasound clinic
the thick book
of baby names

Vanessa Proctor

autumn woods
our claim of rights
to the binoculars

Marcus Larsson

view from the balcony
a few bald heads
a little cleavage

Michael Ketchek

Frogpond XXVIII:3

gum-sore jaws
waiting for my son's
turn to play

Ariel Lambert

Halloween party—
after a few drinks
the masks come off

David Grayson

hail on the window
she turns in her sleep
taking the covers

James Fowler

old cat
sleeping the day away
mother-in-law

James Chessing

from under my arm
a long-forgotten whiff
of dad

Mykel Board

Haiku Society of America

her painting becomes
a window
that lets in darkness

Stephen Addiss

my mistakes—
no matter how many
coats of paint

Tom Clausen

the window so clean
I can see clearly now
the flaw in the glass

Peter Yovu

train conversation
trees flash by
on his glasses

Gonzalo Melchor

empty apartment
the blue of a crayon
through the dust

John Kinory

Frogpond XXVIII:3

nine brown socks
a perfect mate
for none of them

Dorothy McLaughlin

first date
the sound of the motor
between us

Dietmar Tauchner

meeting him
in a dream
only business talk

Nobuko Masakawa

before
the candlelight dinner
a match

Dorothy McLaughlin

work day
you come home
with the tide

Marie Summers



Tan Renga

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Haibun

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Linked Poems/Sequence

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TAN RENGA

*Easter sunrise
the Bible balanced
on her knees*

back and forth
the raw egg toss

*bumper crop
a watermelon holds
the door open*

at the end of the kite string
the smile on his face

w. f. owen & Yvonne Cabalona

LEAF GALL, CRICKET, PINES AND GRASSES

the great pine
sails into the wind
cold sunset

November 12, 1982

Hike to and in Fahnestock State Park

AFTER GETTING OFF THE TRAIN from New York City in Cold Spring, New York, I hiked about eight or nine miles from the Hudson River Valley up into the mountains to Fahnestock, a wilderness area of forests and lakes, carrying my lunch in a brown paper bag and a black cane-sized umbrella for the rain that was forecast for the evening.

Halfway up the mountain, still on the asphalt road, I was attacked by two large dogs. One ran bounding down the middle of the road, barking and snarling, with his teeth bared like rows of small daggers. He looked to be a cross between a mastiff and a German shepherd. Stopping about three feet from me, he crouched as if to spring, growling menacingly.

Slam of a door, a woman's call—and the dog turned sharply and retreated back to the farmhouse. I had kept my umbrella pointed straight at him and was going to try to jam the point into his mouth, if he had tried to leap at me.

The other dog barked weakly from about twenty feet away—a harmless looking Irish setter walking on three legs. (I worried about encountering the big dog later on my way back down the mountain that night—but saw or heard no sign of him as I went by his house with my flashlight and umbrella at the ready.)

milkweed seeds
hang limp from their pods
misty morning

When I got well along the road (Rt. 301) where it passed

Frogpond XXVIII:3

through Fahnestock Park, I bushwhacked into the forest and over the long ridge just south of the highway. Stopped on top of the ridge to lie on a grassy spot among rocky ledges and boulders to rest. The air felt damp and the big rocks were wet from the misty moisture, though the grasses were dry. I watched the misty sheets of clouds tumbling northeast above me, just under the solid overcast sky.

I thought about all the shapes and colors of the grasses—tall grasses, short grasses, in-between grasses, all dried and colored by the chill of autumn. Along the sides of the road I'd seen branching grasses (panicked), marsh grasses, grasses with heavy, nodding seed heads, some with large brushy tassels, others with big greyish-brown blossoms on top of spearlike stems. There were grasses seven and eight feet tall.

And there was even more variety in the sizes and shapes of the weeds, many with dried-out, weathered heads that had become silver blossoms floating into winter.

I continued bushwhacking into the forest until I picked up the Appalachian Trail and its white trailmarkers. I hiked along it till I came to some of my favorite spots—the flat valley, the steep hemlock ridge above the brook, the tall pine on the knob looking down into a ravine.

on the ridge
I go over to touch
a great rock
its surface cold and wet
in the misty mountain air

Moving down into the gorge, the trail crosses a brook and then follows its curves and bends as it meanders through the woods. And I follow it.

a seven-foot weed
withered to a ragged stick
—from off the peak a breeze
comes along the trail to sway
its torn flag of fluff

Haiku Society of America

below the brook's
small waterfall always
at least one bubble

From time to time I could hear the sounds of tree branches and trunks rubbing against each other in the autumn wind. Especially dead trees leaning against still living ones. Suspended in air and so denied for a while their return to the earth, they groaned and even screamed. At times I thought I heard the calls of strange birds, but it would be these trees "talking."

darkening rocks
a cricket chirps under
the fallen leaves

Quite often I heard crickets softly chirping from under piles of autumn leaves. Usually a very gentle continuous ringing song, almost like a purr in rhythm. When it slowed down a bit and I listened very closely, the individual chirps were quite musical and faintly bell-like in tone. Tracked one of the crickets by getting closer and closer to it by stages and then quickly lifting off the leaves from the spot I'd pinpointed. Saw him for just a second as he crawled and hopped quickly back under the leaf-cover. He was jet black and wiry-looking, about the size of a skinny pussy-willow bud. Much different from the one I found in my NYC apartment earlier this year. That one was much larger, had a brown color, sang in spaced chirps, rather than continuously, and, of course, sang much louder, more tune-fully and resonantly.

I wonder if the continuous vibrations of this small black cricket help to keep him warm under the leaves in the chilly autumn weather, which is when I usually notice this sort of song. This is, I think, the only time of the year I hear crickets singing this way.

a tiny hole
in the leaf gall
autumn wind

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This was one autumn leaf among millions on the forest floor. Inside the sphere of the gall was another small, parchment-thin ball which also had a small hole drilled in it. This was supported inside the larger ball (the gall) by threads or filaments. Perhaps the young wasp after drilling out of the smaller ball then ate around these threads, leaving them in place? Or maybe it came out of the small “egg” as a grub—then lived, eating away and maturing, in the little world of the gall, developed into a wasp, and then drilled a hole out to “this world.” Or one more scenario: the swelling of the leaf, caused by the mother wasp’s injection to create the gall, left the space around the inner ball. Supported in this space by threads from the leaf matter, the inner ball or capsule with its egg was protected and held in place. And so the maturing wasp had all its nourishment in that inside cell and when ready to emerge drilled through it and then through the outer wall of the gall itself.

At sunset I could see cold yellow streaks through the grey and white overcast.

a last leaf
goes flying off the ridge—
the wind in the pines

Cor van den Heuvel

UMBILICAL

THE MOBILE TWISTS slowly above my son’s crib catching moonlight slicing through the Venetian blinds. I have no reason to worry, but come in to check on him, to hear him breathe, to cover him. His twitching eyelids . . . what could he be dreaming?

full moon
his umbilical
falls out

w. f. owen

UNTITLED HAIBUN

I LIVE ABOUT A QUARTER HOUR FROM WORK and don't have to leave the house till 8:45 in the morning. One morning, while I was waiting to turn from my street onto the main drag, a young lady wearing a nondescript coat knocked on my window. I reached over and rolled it down. She said, "Can you give me a lift downtown?"

I checked my watch even though I knew what time it was and answered, "I'm going about halfway there. I can't take you all the way because I'll be late for work."

She said that would be ok and hopped into the front seat. We hadn't gone even a block before she asked me if I wanted a "date" with her and I realized that she was a spillover from the nearby mean streets. I told her politely no several times and then she dropped the subject. When we got to the intersection where I had to turn, I pulled over to the curb and told her this was where she should get out. Instead of getting out she told me it was her birthday and I should give her some money as a present. I chuckled at this brazen hustle, but reached into my pocket and pulled out the assorted change I had and handed it to her. She looked at it, shook her head and said it wasn't enough.

"That's it." I said. "I'm just a poor working guy. That's all you are going to get." She just sat there shaking her head, but I noticed that she was now holding a razor blade in her hand.

My first thought was to hit her in the face as hard as I could. I could feel the adrenalin rush into my blood, but a split second later I was already reaching for the key in the ignition. In one quick motion I removed the key and stepped out of the car. I could hear her cursing from the car's interior. I gave my shoulders an exaggerated shrug to let her know that she and her razor could sit in the car until hell froze over or a police car drove by.

morning sun
my little red Chevette
sure could use a wash and wax

Michael Ketchek

MOUNTAIN AIR IN OKLAHOMA

WE HAVE WEEKS of hundred-degree weather, into September. The front finally comes sometime in the early hours. The big Sunday paper thuds on the driveway then, suddenly, heavy rain pours down. For days after, the coolness rests upon the plains. But tonight I'm deep in the mountains. The dark smells moist through window screens, the leaves make a sound like low surf. Instead of dried-out cricket noises: a metallic ratchet—from memory—the gentle clink of our neighbor's swing.

Traveling nowhere I'm on my way old woman of the north
I lay my thoughts to rest ai-ye ai-ye ai-yaa this air fills the
house around us

the curtain stirs
clear waters
of sleep

Clyde Glandon

SOUTHERN CROSSING

TRAVELING IN ANOTHER HEMISPHERE, I come to the center of a lava island. Rock pockets and ragged hollows, errant seeds begin to grow. Barrenness requires such faith. And what of patience? My husband, who assists me, has wandered off. I could shout but no one will hear me.

I need help. Otherwise, I would not be wishing for something, which I think is my son, or a fairytale—silly and hopeless. I'm considering my feet and the fissured rock—this place where Darwin found his proof—when the hand of God reaches down to me. I look up as if this is the Sistine Chapel. It's the guide.

I do not know him but when someone offers his soul, you take it. Last night when we were reveling he did not join in. I have that picture in my mind as he begins to speak. His grip is a magic carpet. We are gliding.

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Machismo is not good for marriage. His bride has returned to mother and he has remorse but no hesitation and he doesn't know if he deserves to be her husband, or if she'll let him. And I don't know why he's telling me all this. But I do know that he needs to be forgiven. It's a catholic country.

"All marriages have rocks." I say, "Even after 39 years you have to work things out. You listen. You don't expect perfection. You try to be sensitive. Only a very sensitive person would have seen I needed help. Today it's not the husband. You're the one who is helping me."

how long can it last—
two albatross
ride an updraft

Laurie W. Stoelting

TENSION

MY GRANDFATHER WANTS a glass of milk with his meal.

I go to the fridge and empty the carton, topping off a tall glass. Only surface tension and my steady hand keep the milk from spilling.

So the glass is a little full. Big deal. I'll be leaving home before too long.

My grandfather is a recovering alcoholic. It's another Thanksgiving. Just get the old man his drink.

He thanks me as I place the glass in front of him.

Soon I watch him raise his glass for the first time. His hand trembles. Milk dribbles onto the tablecloth, onto his shirt, onto his chin. He drinks, then puts the glass down. I wait for something. Anything.

He smiles and says nothing.

family reunion—
old grass stains
on clean clothes

Lane Parker

HER SECRET

MY SISTERS HAVE TO LEAVE right after the funeral, to get their children back in school. I am to stay for two weeks and help my father over the worst of it. Immediately he implements his proven method for weathering life's storms, the work cure. On one vacation he had me picking strawberries all day ("ALL YOU CAN PICK \$5") to get over being jilted.

During the day he keeps busy outdoors. He avoids the house as much as possible, the house he designed to my mother's sometimes unreasonable specifications. He comes in long enough to scoop armloads of clothes from Mama's closet, hangers and all, throws them into the car, and takes them to the church for charity. There are a dozen pairs of shoes, a size too small, new and still in the boxes. She was proud of her small feet. Once a size six, always a size six; no shoe clerk could persuade her otherwise. I remember Daddy's observations on the Chinese art of foot-binding when yet another pair proved unwearable once she got it home. He takes them all to a poor neighbor widow down the road who actually wears a size six. Things of no practical use are burned.

Still September day
a column of smoke rises
from the widower's fire.

I'm doing the indoor work, going through a cabinet full of old health magazines, hundreds of them, promoting odd theories dating back before my birth: diatribes on how cows' milk is responsible for a generation of tall but unhealthy children; grapefruit juice as universal cure; a testimonial by a lady who "gained 9 lbs. on carrot juice alone." When growing up, I sat through many a monologue, prefaced by "They say," extolling, for instance, the benefits of a grape juice—or grapefruit juice—diet. (The virtue seemed to lie in the word "grape.") As I leaf through these tracts, a \$20 bill drops out. I start over, carefully fanning the pages before discarding them. The stack of 20's

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keeps growing. When my father comes in, his coveralls smelling of smoke, I point to it. "Looks like she was putting aside a little nest egg in case you-all went broke."

Daddy smiles wryly. "So that's where she was putting it. It's her mad money. In case she decided to run away."

"I'm not a prince.
I can't build you a palace—"
planning their retirement.

He adds that I can keep any bills I find. Then he grabs the discarded magazines to add to his bonfire.

The house at night
surrounded by tall grass
and miles of darkness.

Doris Heitmeyer

* * * * *

SMOKE RISING

WHEN THE ASHES ARRIVE from the crematorium, my father is doing something outside—burning trash, weeding, cutting grass—anything to get out of the house, which was always her domain. I sign for the package and put it on the coffee table in the living room.

Having seen the truck, Daddy comes in, decides the ashes don't belong on the coffee table, walks around distractedly with the package for awhile, and finally leaves it on the washing machine in the kitchen.

The family cat, Sno'Ball, strolls over. Here I must introduce Sno'Ball. He adopted my family, not the other way around. My father was dozing in a deck chair on the lawn when a big white cat suddenly jumped into his lap as if he belonged there. My father was never that fond of cats, merely tolerated them—

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but they liked him. During my mother's last illness, Sno'Ball, as if he knew exactly what to do, became her constant companion, curling up next to her and purring for hours at a time.

Sno'Ball leaps to the top of the washer to inspect the strange package. One sniff, and he shoots out the door, I swear never touching the ground. He streaks for the woods and does not come back until the next day.

Late summer twilight
a screech owl keeps crying
in the half-grown pines.

Early the next morning we drive to a special spot in the woods, far from the world she shunned, to bury her ashes near a spring where she loved to picnic. To please her, my father had bought it, along with 80 surrounding acres of mature pine and hardwood.

An early start—
fog fills the valley
to overflowing.

Sourgum on the mountain
begins to turn scarlet—
chimney smoke rising.

Doris Heitmeyer

RENOVATIONS

I WORK so he can work. He buys tools and lumber so they can work. They buy groceries so she can work. She takes her children to daycare so I can work.

renovations . . .
from under the old tub
a child's marble

Alice Frampton

RESPITE

AN ANT IS CRISSCROSSING an area of the patio. It navigates the bricks without falling between the cracks. Slowly, but continuously moving, covering the same area of about four square feet. Twenty minutes of zigzagging across and back to where it began. I turn away for just a moment and lose sight of it. Did it move on, having given up on finding food? Or did it fall into a crack after all? Such persistence and determination for no apparent gain.

the spring evening
comes slowly to a close—
bird songs fading

Adelaide B. Shaw

THE KINGDOM OF SHELLS

*“It is full of rips and tears, its bright color drains outward
into the kingdom of shells”*

—Mary Oliver, “Lion’s Mane”

SHE NEEDED TO GO TO THE BATHROOM, and there wasn't a public toilet around for thirty miles. We hardly needed that as a reason to stop, for the stretches of undisturbed beaches, rocky outcroppings, and glistening tide pools were reason enough. This was the Lost Coast, the remotest region of the state's northern shore, at Cape Mendocino, the westernmost point of California. Coming down the long hill between sheep farms, past a barn in need of paint at the end of a creek drainage, we drove under patchy clouds that had streaked our windshield as we left Ferndale earlier in the day. Pointing the car down the most obscure road, we ended up here, in need of a bathroom.

My wife hopscotched down the bluff to the edge of the beach, dropped her pants, and squatted among some dry grasses.

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“Tell me if someone comes,” she urged, looking up. I promised that I would.

Her deed done, I went down the hill, too. “Let’s walk,” I said, taking her hand.

Beyond the reach of the highest tides, wind-decayed footprints hid among the weeds, but ten yards west the slate-clean sand was pocked only by the earlier rain and little air holes from whatever creatures hid underneath.

Memorial Day clouds—
to the tracks of the sandpiper
we add our own

Not far along the beach we saw a carcass—a rotting stingray, five or six feet long, and maybe five feet wide if its wings had been uncurled. Upside down, its mouth buck-toothed to the elements, sand sculpted around its shoulders and wing-fins, its hide leathered in the sun of lengthening days.

“Don’t touch it!” my wife blurted. So I touched it. With my shoe.

tumbling waves—
the wind shifts sand grains
at the stingray’s teeth

It was heavier than I expected, or maybe just so worked into the sand that dislodging it was more of a task than budging its weight. Soon, I imagined, it would sink into the sand and disappear.

We went on walking south, into the salt spray. I had chosen this direction when we started so the walk back would be nicer, the wind at our backs. We held hands, swinging them sometimes, at times letting go to inspect some trapped tidewater, flotsam, a polished stone.

pelicans gliding—
again a perfect shell
lifts out broken

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“Let’s go to the big rock,” I said, half a mile south. There, each circling the boulder from a different side, we passed on the far side like satellites, then met again to the north in a slow-motion hug.

Soon we returned to the stingray, its long tail barbed near the end, threatening like a rattler. I pushed at it again with the toe of my shoe and, on releasing it, the tail swung back firmly across the sand, leaving an arc as if it were a windblown reed. On a more trafficked beach this old stingray would have decayed long before. Here. . .how long it had been here, I could not guess.

We continued north. The wind blew my wife’s dark hair from behind her ears and around her cheeks, our feet sinking, not sinking, as we walked around this rock and that weathered stump. Sand fleas scattered as we stepped over sinewy kelp-strands or stepped on the kelp bladders to pop them. Against wet sand they popped easily, but against dry sand they often sank.

We stopped at a dripping little log at the edge of the waves. “See Japan?” I asked, as we looked to the ocean’s horizon. “No, silly, that’s Hawaii.” Just then we darted away from the water, retreating from an overzealous wave. Then it retreated from us, taking with it the little log.

bubbling foam—
far out to sea
a streak of spring sun

My wife dropped my hand to angle back towards the car. I went on, along the wave edge, to inspect a dark mass—another stingray.

This one was larger, fresher, closer to the water, its mouth also turned to the sky. I wondered about this, that both stingrays were on their backs—their way of death, perhaps, to contravene their way of living. I heaved against it with my shoe, against the side of its wing, heavy yet still gracefully curved. I crouched down beside it, as if a doctor at its bedside. It was too fresh to smell, too recently alive to have flies. I looked at the

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crescent moon of its mouth, at its pebbly yellow teeth, the tatters and scrapes along its wings, the awkward twist in its tail.

“Don’t touch it,” I imagined my wife saying. Strange, and not strange, I thought, and reached out, taking the tail’s mid-section between my thumb and forefinger, pulling it sideways till it straightened.

grains of sand
stuck to my finger—
tears in the stingray’s eyes

In a moment I was back at the bluff, my wife up by the car, waiting for me and the keys. It was my turn to pee. I unzipped my pants and peed into the dry weeds. My urine made a quick pool, then sank into the sand, yellow into yellow, on its way to the kingdom of shells. Overhead, the clouds had shifted their quilt, teasing with scraps of blue. In the entire hour, no other cars had stopped here. Not one had passed us on this long stretch of the Lost Coast.

“Tell me if someone comes,” she had said. “Tell me if someone comes.”

Michael Dylan Welch

ONE NIGHT AT TURTLE POND. . .

HEAT SNAPS across fields of summer grasses. The moon le creme in swirls of black. Hissing and croaking sounds circle the pond. In the clearing a tent filled with children's voices. A giggle then a hush as a narrator tells about a snake, the biggest snake he ever saw, slithering. . .along the edge. . .of the hedge row—about a hundred feet from that very spot

I listen to the sudden quiet.

wind and water—
a curved path
to my front door

Karina Klesko

HOUND WITH UKULELE

I HAVE NAMED MY DOG "CAT."

When I call out to him, "Here, CAT," he comes sidling up to my ankles and purrs. A curiously postmodern construction of self. The soft tread of his white socks, the arch of his black back on the window sill, and his compulsive, finicky cleaning of whiskers—all are as natural to him as slobbering over a bone or bounding after a passing auto.

A lost waif, CAT was found by my wife. For hours she puffs on her cigar while watching him chase a catnip toy or stalk spiders. Chugging a beer she is likely to say, "Ya know, that's one daggum fine little dog." Or, "What's on the menu for dinner?" Only a football game on the tube appeals more strongly to her than the dog.

Late last night, as light glared benignly through the window onto an illuminated circle of carpet, the phone rang. It was my boss. Stammering, he asked if I would let him quit. "Why?" I asked; "You're doing fine." He said, wearily and tersely, "Pat, I'd rather live in a straightjacket." And he quit, in a remarkable loss of nerve.

What could I do about it? Nothing. So I retired to my study to write some haiku. Over the years, I have found that pushing around a few helpless syllables into random combinations satisfies a profound need to shape my world, at least imaginatively, into some kind of comforting fixity, a simulacrum of permanence. Here, for example, is the haiku that I wrote last night:

the hound
meowing in the tulips
with ukulele

William M. Ramsey

THINGS THAT ARE ROUND

1955

AT CHRISTMASTIME, the reflections of tree lights on the picture window at night are mesmerizing. So are the headlights and taillights of the passing vehicles.

Before I fell in love with boys, I was fascinated with automobiles. As I advanced in grade school, cars became more streamlined in shape, but that style never lured me as much as my first love, a '52 light-blue Chevy. Its rounded lines were so attractive.

The 50's curiously were times inundated with roundness: triple-decker ice cream cones, circle skirts, hula hoops, page boy haircuts, and pouty lips. . .

Poof

2005

On the first day of the Cruiz-In at the town square, I arrive early to stake out a place for a photo shoot. I choose a stone church with blood red doors as a backdrop. First a bright blue '72 Oldsmobile Cutlass parks in front of the church, and its owner leans open the hood. A dark red Dodge pulls in and parks in the same fashion, while another '70's Classic car, a metallic navy blue Chevy Chevelle drives by. I snap my best shot of the day.

Down the street, I spot what I was looking for, a '52 Chevy. This is not the pastel variety of my childhood dreams. It's a bright yellow one with flames of red and gray, reminiscent of the bold and angry late '60's. It will do. Click. Click.

one-hour photo—
last week's lift off
of hot air balloons

Carmen Sterba

PAIRS OF POEMS

bees
humming to the hollies
all day long

av

the heat!
sit on my lap,
shadow!

rdw

ah, coolness . . .
you knew I'd
want more

rdw

something wondrous happened!
the pond reeds
are shuddering from it. . .

av

The above are excerpts from the forthcoming book *Come Dance With Me* by Robert D. Wilson and Anita Virgil.

BASEBALL MOMENTS

deep winter
a fielder's glove hangs on the wall
in the gym office

early spring sun
a line-drive breaks the ice
near third

summer morning
a cloud shadow crosses second
into center field

a cool breeze
passes along the near-empty bar
the ballgame drones on

lightning flash--
far away on the western horizon
a ballpark's lights

Cor van den Heuvel

Essays

pages 57 - 61 To Tell The Truth - Hall

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TO TELL THE TRUTH

By Carolyn Hall

When our mother died, it brought out the worst in us three “kids.” My brothers and I—well into middle age—each had our own way of dealing with this loss. Rather than drawing us closer, it drove us apart. After a week spent together going through Mom’s things, I was in a rage. When I returned to my home in California, I strove to deal with my feelings by writing about the experience. Early drafts were truthful: just the facts as I perceived them. But somehow that was not very satisfying. Finally, in an attempt to distance myself from the rawness of my emotions, I made a decision to turn the events into fiction. It was surprising how easy it was to stand back and watch Myrna (my fictional alter-ego) interact with her fictionalized brother. In draft after draft their roles in this drama became clearer and clearer. And their words and actions strayed farther and farther from the truth. By the fortieth draft (!) Myrna sticks her foot out and purposely trips her brother as he carries a box of clean-scrubbed jam and jelly jars to the recycling bin. Once he’s on the ground, she pummels him.

No such thing ever happened of course. (Except his obsessive recycling.) So why am I telling you this? It’s because “Myrna” could do to her brother what I wanted to do to mine, but could not. In other words, the farther I strayed from the facts, the closer I got to the emotional truth of the story. The same can be true of haiku.

If a poet holds staunchly to the belief that haiku must tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” but then finds him or herself protesting “well that’s what really happened,” it is evidence that the reader or listener was untouched by the poem. I believe the purpose of haiku is to touch us at our core. We write haiku to record our experience. We put our haiku out into the world in hopes of sharing our emotional response with others. And sometimes that requires fictionalizing the haiku just enough to stay true to the moment but also to communicate to our audience the full impact that experience

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had on us.

In his book *Haiku: A Poet's Guide*,* Lee Gurga makes reference to Shiki's three stages in a haiku poet's development. The first is shasei (or "sketching from life"), in which the poet describes precisely what he observes in nature. The second is selective realism, in which (in Gurga's words) "the poet can make the breakthrough that allows him or her to select from or rearrange actual scenes in order to create a record that both reflects truth (in an ontological sense) and is a poem (an art form in words)." The third and final stage is "truthfulness," which Gurga describes as "put[ting] forth descriptions of our inner landscapes using images from the physical world." This essay concerns itself primarily with the last two stages, and suggests specific mechanisms one might use to communicate the emotional truth of a haiku moment.

For instance: I am walking around the lake on a fine summer morning. A father and his son are fishing on the banks. This seems a happy, shared experience. But on closer inspection I notice that they are baiting their hooks with minnows, and suddenly I am struck with the sad irony of the situation. I can write this poem "truthfully," including mention of the summer day. But there will be a confusing disjunction between the season and my emotions. Or I can take advantage of the haiku convention of using the seasons to deepen the emotional response to a poem. I take this option and write

baiting one fish
with another
autumn dawn

Have I lied? Technically, yes. But the emotional truth of this poem lies in the first two lines. By changing the season from summer to autumn, it simply opens the door wider; it clears the path to that emotional response. It feels truer to my experience than the "truth."

Another example:

empty sandals
on the beach
pull of the moon

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There are many ways to have written this. The last line might have been “ebb tide.” Or “outgoing tide.” But I chose “pull of the moon,” not because it was something I could observe (i.e., sticking to incontrovertible, observable facts), but because it seemed to add another layer of meaning. I saw that pull as perhaps the cause of those sandals being empty, as if their human owner had himself been pulled so strongly by the moon that all that was left of him was his zapatos.

Though far from a desk haiku, the following was in a sense “invented.”

war news
the underbelly of a moth
pressed to my window

In its earliest iterations, I attempted to describe moths trying to get into our brightly lighted kitchen late at night. I tried out many versions before I finally stopped seeing it from the moth’s point of view (i.e., trying to reach the light in the room), but, rather, from my point of view, i.e., observing the moth’s soft underbelly exposed against the window glass. I was very excited about this. But what to do with it? It lay dormant for many months, tucked nearly out of reach somewhere at the back of my brain. It was not until we went to war with Iraq and stories of the dead and wounded began filtering back that this image of the moth again made its way into my consciousness. By pairing something current with an image from the past, I knew that the whole was greater than the sum of its parts. I had my haiku. Did I “cheat” by combining two separate experiences into a single poem? Some would say so. But in doing so, I was able to express an emotion strongly felt. In that, I felt I was telling the truth.

Sometimes truth is stranger and stronger than fiction. For example:

wildfire
the thermometer climbs
all night

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giant sequoias—
split redwood fence rails
keep us on the path

cloudless sky
the baaing
of penned sheep

In each of these cases I reported exactly what happened. And in each case it seemed to me that what I had experienced—and what I felt—had been communicated as clearly as I was capable of doing.

Here is one where omission of one word perhaps changes the reader's perception of my experience—but not my meaning.

winter sunset
buttoning mother's coat
up to her chin

I confess that this reads as if I were the one tending to my mother. But in fact, for many weeks I had been observing a very elderly mother with her very attentive daughter. More than once I saw the daughter tuck a blanket across her mother's lap and button her coat to protect her from the breezes coming across the lake. A simple "her" (buttoning her mother's coat) would have told the story more truthfully. But then I was stuck with the problem of "her" in both the second and third lines. Also, another syllable in line two would have made for a less felicitous stress pattern. I am convinced that it is the tenderness of the mother/daughter relationship that is at the core of this haiku. My job was to communicate that as clearly, and as poetically, as I could.

A truthful observation in seventeen syllables or less does not (necessarily) a haiku make. Sometimes it is necessary to distance oneself physically, emotionally or temporally from the "facts" in order to enable an audience to share in your emotional experience. In short, truth in haiku sometimes requires

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bending the truth. Ever so slightly.

Carolyn Hall

* Gurga, Lee. *Haiku: A Poet's Guide*. Illinois: Modern Haiku Press, 2003.

“baiting one fish” *The Heron's Nest* IV:11

“empty sandals” *The Heron's Nest* III:5

“war news” *The Heron's Nest* V:11

“wildfire” *Mariposa* #4

“giant sequoias” *haijinx* I:1

“cloudless sky” *The Heron's Nest* VI:7

“winter sunset” *Palomar Showcase*, Vol. 12 (NLAPW)

THE MIND OF A PLAGIARIST

By George Swede

As a victim of someone who stole over sixty of my haiku and senryu, (see Swede, 2005), I have tried to understand what occurs in the mind of a plagiarist. To help in this process, I did some research on plagiarism, its history and current manifestations, and combined this information with what psychology can tell us about a person who steals the work of others. The result of these efforts is an imagined look at a progression of thoughts leading a person to the fraudulent side of literary enterprise:

You read a haiku that resonates within you. Unbidden, it returns to your thoughts now and then. Eventually, the poem becomes a familiar part of you and you begin to believe that you are its author. The poem expresses your perceptions so clearly that you want to share it with others.

You decide to put the haiku on an Internet poetry site. This

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is the best way to share it with a large number of others. You don't consider attaching the real author's name, however. What would be the point? You're only doing this to show others how you perceive the world. To assuage a lingering doubt, you decide to use a nom de plume.

To make the other person's haiku feel more like your own, you create visual and musical backgrounds for it. When your page finally appears on the site, you marvel at the beautiful blend of poetry with visual and sound effects. Nearly all doubts disappear about what you have done. You have grown certain that everything you see really is your work, so sure that you include a copyright symbol with the date, plus "All rights reserved" for emphasis.

The site you have chosen has the capacity for viewers to comment about each poem. The rewards are immediate. Viewers love the haiku! This public response encourages you to find more haiku as effective as this one. You post them with different visual and musical backgrounds but sign them all with your pseudonym plus the copyright symbol, date and the reserved rights statement. Feedback continues to be positive. You post more and more work taken from unsuspecting poets until you have over 100 haiku on the site.

You grow even bolder. To reach more readers, you put many of the haiku on another poetry site and use the same modus operandi. You don't mind that interested viewers can discover your true identity by going to the sections for poet profiles found on both sites. Once there, viewers can link to your personal web site. Your home page provides personal information plus links to your other activities, including more haiku you have appropriated. You are so sure of yourself that you devise no disguises. You attribute the haiku to yourself, using your real name.

After a few years, your venture comes to an end. The managers of the two poetry sites you have used tell you that a number of poets have provided evidence that your pages contain plagiarized work. The managers also mention a deluge of irate email from other people who have heard about your actions. The managers state that they will remove from their sites all

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evidence of you and your work, plagiarized or not.

But you do not remove the plagiarized work from your personal web site despite stern messages threatening lawsuits. Warnings about you also appear on some haiku sites. These developments merely heighten the sense that you are becoming famous. Finally, though, you do succumb. Some poet-friends, who have learned what you have done, advise you to purge your site of all plagiarized material. You do as they say, but reluctantly.

A month goes by and you no longer feel the pinpricks of guilt that plagued you earlier. Sure you were a plagiarist. But the poems you took proved you had good taste, that's all. Furthermore, having been labeled a plagiarist, you look up the word on Google and find that you are not alone. A history of plagiarism indicates that literary theft was commonplace in early English literature. Laws against such pilfering are a recent development. And despite them, many modern writers continue to steal the words of their fellows. In the visual arts, forgery is rampant, even respected. Exact copies of masterpieces are selling for over \$25,000. Sure, copying a poem is easier than using a brush and paint to copy a painting, unless, of course, you photocopy the painting. Also, the musical world is full of stolen melodies, to the extent that persons can earn a living as forensic musicologists. Straitlaced academe is not much better. Every year, professors are caught for plagiarism in their publications.

This information makes you feel good about yourself again. You begin to search for new haiku that affect you deeply. You find several and you wonder whether you should put them on your site with your name. Why not? By now what you did before will have been forgotten.

Of course, this description might not fit the person who stole my work. It is meant to be a composite internal sketch of the typical plagiarist as suggested by the literature.

Since the first copyright act, "The Statute of Anne," was struck in England in 1710, copyright law has evolved around the world to deal with increasingly complex issues. Today, the most advanced forms of it consider stealing someone else's

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ideas, inventions, visual art, musical and literary works in the same light as the theft of money, jewels or a car. In my case, as well as in the imagined example, years passed before the discovery of the plagiarism. To insure that plagiarists are detected more quickly, we must become more vigilant and extensive readers of haiku and develop more finely-tuned memories for them.

Found: my sunrise haiku
with someone else's name—
this dawn dark

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SWAN SONG

By Jason Sanford Brown

New Year's Eve bath—
I fail to become
a swan

Fay Aoyagi⁽¹⁾

In her essay, “Dissecting The Haiku Tradition: Birds and Animals,”⁽²⁾ Fay Aoyagi reveals the allusion that this haiku invokes.

my wife on New Year's Eve
taking a bath
as though she is a swan

Sumio Mori⁽³⁾

When I learned the true source of the swan metamorphosis allusion in Fay's haiku, I was inspired to explore how a reader can imbue a work with their own mythology, preferences and understanding. As readers we bring to a work what we know and believe, through reading, experience, education and cultural/familial influence. What is the result then, when a reader's values and knowledge differ from those of the writer? What is the effect on the poem when it is viewed under a different context than it was written?

Fay states that in alluding to the haiku by Sumio, she was commenting on her inability to meet Mr. Right, for yet another year. We will see, by exploring various world myths and applying them to Fay's haiku, that the shades of interpretation can differ considerably.

As a child growing up in the United States, I was inundated with countless versions of fairy tales and folklore. On my first reading of Fay's “New Year's Eve bath” I thought immediately of Andersen's *The Ugly Duckling*⁽⁴⁾. The interpretation is of a woman feeling that she has not yet reached her potential,

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tial, she has not transformed into a beautiful swan. She cannot transcend her ugly duckling state. Of course, this is not characteristic of Aoyagi's usual subject matter.

The next myth that came to my mind was that of Leda and the swan⁽⁵⁾. This presents the themes of adultery and rape. Perhaps in stating that she fails to become a swan (Zeus' disguise), Fay is saying that a secret affair has been discovered. This is certainly a stretch and quickly becomes convoluted within the context of a New Year's Eve bath.

An Irish myth, The Children of Lir⁽⁶⁾, tells of how the immortal children of the Lord of the Sea were changed into swans by their evil stepmother. This is too distant a swan myth to be a suitable allusion, and like the Leda myth falls apart when superimposed on Fay's haiku.

A more apt swan myth is that of the Valkyries/Swan-maidens of Norse mythology⁽⁷⁾. Time has evolved the myth of the Valkyries into the beautiful Swan-maidens that serve Odin in his heavenly kingdom of Valhalla. The Valkyries are also known as Swan-maidens because they wear cloaks made of swan feathers that allow them to fly. They are said to alight near a secluded pool where they bathe. If a mortal man can steal the cloak of feathers while they bathe, the Swan-maiden is obliged to marry him. In the context of Fay's haiku this myth fits remarkably well. If, as applied to the myth of the Swan-maidens, Fay has failed to become a swan it is because she cannot redress in her swan feather cloak. If she cannot don her cloak and become a swan it is because the cloak has been stolen, and she is obliged to marry that mortal man who has taken it. She has failed not to fall in love.

This Norse myth is very similar to the Japanese legend of the Tennyo⁽⁸⁾. A Tennyo was said to be a heavenly nymph or angel who wore a robe of feathers called a hagoromo. If a man could capture the hagoromo while the Tennyo bathed, again the nymph was obliged to grant a wish or to marry the man. This legend has been adapted into a Noh play⁽⁹⁾ as well as an anime⁽¹⁰⁾ cartoon and may be the source of the original haiku above by Sumio.

While a haiku often relies on allusive elements to add depth

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of layers, it must resonate without depending on the reader's foreknowledge of any mythological or literary allusion. A good haiku must speak intuitively to the reader outside of circumstance. This is how a kigo (and also the keyword⁽¹¹⁾) is supposed to work; intuitively the reader recognizes the word as being related to a thing. That thing evokes a response or emotion from the reader, without the writer having to explain anything. Aoyagi's haiku utilizes an allusion to another haiku and perhaps unintentionally invites the reader to apply any of several different swan myths, but it does not rely on the allusion to succeed. Without being encumbered by what becoming a swan might entail, we see a person with the need for dramatic change. While culturally, the New Year has been celebrated at different times, throughout the world it is a time when we look forward to the promise of a better future. Bathing often serves as more than a hygienic operation, it can be a mental and spiritual cleansing as well. In the human psyche the swan represents beauty and purity. All three of these elements speak to us as readers on the most fundamental level and that is why Fay's haiku works. We all relate to the wish to purify ourselves and become something beautiful. While Fay fails to become a swan (haven't we all?), there is a sense that she is still trying and will one day.

(1) *Chrysanthemum Love* by Fay Aoyagi, Blue Willow Press, 2003

(2) *Frogpond XXVIII:2*

(3) *Mori Sumio/Iida Ryuta Shu (Collection of haiku by Sumio Mori and Ryuta Iida) selected by Sumio Mori and Ryuta Iida*, Asahi Shinbunsha, 1984. Translated by Fay Aoyagi.

(4) *The Ugly Duckling* by Hans Christian Andersen, translated by Jean Hersholt, Hans Christian Andersen Center web site, http://www.andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/TheUglyDuckling_e.html, accessed 2 July 2005.

(5) *The Encyclopedia of World Mythology* by Arthur Cotterell and Rachael Storm, Lorenz Books, 2005.

(6) *Mythological Cycle: The Children of Lir*, Irish Mythology.com web site, http://www.irishmythology.com/Irish_Mythology_Children_of_lir.htm, accessed 2 July 2005.

(7) *The Floating World: A Trip Into the Japanese World of the Mythical*, web site, <http://www.tokyoteleport.com/teleport/soul/essays/ausa2004a.htm>, accessed 2 July 2005.

(8) *Hagoromo "Noh" or Accomplishment: a Study of the Classical Stage in Japan*, translated by Ezra Pound and Ernest Fenollosa, MacMillan, London, 1916 (Print Version), No⁷ Plays web site, <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/japanese/noh/PouHago.html> (electronic version), accessed 2 July 2005.

(9) *Ayashi no Ceres*, by Yuu Watase, Studio Pierrot, 2000.

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(10) *Technique used in Modern Japanese Haiku: Vocabulary and Structure* by Ban'ya Natsuishi, World Haiku Association web site, <http://www.worldhaiku.net/archive/natsuishi1.html>, accessed 2 July 2005.

RESPONSE TO SWAN SONG

First of all, I want to say thank you to Jason. One of the objectives of my essay series is to encourage readers to explore kigo on a deeper level.

In Sumio's haiku, I found unity and harmony between husband and wife. That was how I started thinking about marriage, being single, the meaning of water and the loss of my reproductive organs due to cancer.

I write haiku to express my visceral feelings. What I have experienced is the critical element of my work. I do not expect readers to visualize the holistic picture of my life. Haiku is too short for that. But, if I can stir the emotion of others, even subtly, I will be rewarded as a poet.

Many people living in the United States grew up in very different cultures, speaking different languages. English-language haiku can be a key to appreciate and understand unfamiliar cultures. I bow to Jason because his comments made me think about rich myths I have never considered before.

Fay Aoyagi

Re:Readings

Pamela Miller Ness on Tom Painting ("open grave/I resist the urge/to jump in"): "Tom's haiku is a masterful expression of courage and humanity. In eight brief words he captures Everyman/woman on the fine dividing line between abandon and self-control, hope and despair, thought and action, life and death. How many times has each of us stood at the edge of the precipice (figuratively or literally) and wondered 'what if'? Thank you, Tom, for a haiku I will carry through all these moments."

Merrill Ann Gonzales on Jim Kacian ("without islands in the dead center loneliness . . .") "Only someone who has lost something as dear as life itself knows the "dead center loneliness." He has given words to the place without islands. No foothold of any kind."

Merrill Ann Gonzales on Peggy Willis Lyles ("mops and pails-/the wren goes on singing/with straw in its beak") "In spite of it all, we go on singing and it's the song that carries us through and gives us a place of healing, a place of rest in the midst of our work here on earth."

Robert Epstein on Beverly Bachand ("cloudy sky/father and son/laying bricks") "I read this poem on the third anniversary of my father's death. Although we didn't lay bricks together, we did change the brakes on many a car over the years as I was growing up. I was conscripted into the role of helper from an early age. Not being mechanically inclined (compared to my father), I couldn't wait until I was old enough to escape the drudgery of being my dad's go-fer. Yet, today, as I mournfully recall those childhood memories, I would give anything to have my father back to do one more brake job."

Robert Epstein on Harriot West ("painter's drop cloth/all the colors/of other rooms") "The poet has taken a prosaic object, which is ordinarily used then stuffed in the back of a truck, and created a perfect picture. Are we not all of us painters, too? Are not our very lives the drop cloths that catch every single colorful moment we've encountered, both conscious and unconscious?"

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Clyde Glandon on Scott Mason (“lost in the woods a stone wall. . .”) “To me this is a really fine and enjoyable example of the mastery of allowing the reader to participate and co-author an experience. Is the poet lost, is the wall lost? Both? In the one reading, the stone wall offers some promise of direction. In the other, the sense of a wall being lost in a woods, perhaps a woods that has overtaken a previous generation’s efforts to carve out space in life. Reminiscent of the sensibilities of Wendell Berry or C.W. Gusewelle, in their walks in woods, and of Elliot’s ‘indecipherable stones.’ A haiku to remember.”

Clyde Glandon on Caroline Gourlay’s (“I close my book.../ a wave breaks in silence/against the rocks”) “Is it just a temporary pause in reading, or has she finished the book? Are we sitting inside, looking out at a shoreline’s surf we cannot hear? A pause in reading, and an interlude of the sea’s life? Or the end of the book, and the sea touches its ‘ending’? Written text: the world’s tzu-jan. The content of the book—and perhaps the poet’s mind—is ‘silent’ in this moment, there are no conclusions to draw, nothing to learn. Here is haiku.”

Jason Sanford Brown on Vanessa Proctor (“desert sky... wishing I knew more about everything”) “The desert sky looms above, incompressible and uncontained. It has a mysterious vastness that we cannot know, layers and spaces we will never explore. When you see it, it invites you to contemplate, to hope and dream but it leaves you there without promise. Vanessa Proctor has deftly captured a deep psychological resonance between the incomprehensible desert sky and the human desire to understand all the world’s mysteries.”

Jason Sanford Brown on Scott Mason (“lost in the woods a stone wall . . .”) “This haiku calls to mind why humans keep records and write histories. Who has not strayed into what one thought was the wilderness to find some remnant left behind by unknown peoples? We wonder: who has built this, what was it used for, why here? For a moment we are connected to a history that we all share, a history of human concerns that takes shape so unexpectedly.”

Kay Anderson on Ruth Yarrow (“Haiku Awareness in War-time?” - “against the wind/we hold the peace banner—our

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spines straighten”) “Talk about an admirable impassioned job of research and reporting! With rapt attention, I followed Yarrow’s essay-tour through the published haiku dealing with the war. Therein she calls us, even those with differing heartfelt peace banners, to straighten our spines. She reminded me that I have feared to admit that I am not in alignment with the vocal majority of poets. I’m not political. I’m not wise enough to know absolute truths. I do know that I have former Sunday school boys in Iraq. I know that my niece’s husband has done several tours in Iraq and is back there again, overseeing repairs of helicopters, and serving in many other positions they need him to fill. This father of two young girls then test flies the Blackhawks. A year ago I submitted a woman Captain’s haibun to one of our major journals, and it was readily rejected although it brings a very well-told and unheard story. During the fighting in Afghanistan she was a Lieutenant serving as a radar specialist. Having read Yarrow’s essay and heard her clear call to the haiku community, I feel that maybe now this personal military haibun may see print. Perhaps Yarrow’s essay has stirred others, who are not of the “only poet-political mind” regarding this war, to find space for their reflections, too.”

Kay F. Anderson on D. Claire Gallagher “smell of hot asphalt/I never got another pair/of Mary Janes”) “This haiku snapped me back to a beginning grade school summer when tar was poured on our back street. I knelt with the BIG kids and claimed a “chaw” of it, too. Gallagher’s haiku revived the pull of still warm tar on my fillings. The scolding that followed resulted in my one-trial learning.”

BOOK REVIEWS

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Pizzarelli, Alan *The Windswept Corner* (bottle rockets press, PO Box 290691, Wethersfield CT 06129-0691, 2005. No ISBN. 40 pp., 4" x 5.75" saddlestapled softbound. \$6 ppd. US from the publisher.

Alan Pizzarelli has long made the realm of senryu his own domain, and it is in this genre that he is almost certainly best known. In his earliest books, however, and increasingly again (if we discount the thematic Senryu) he has demonstrated his interest in and mastery of the urban haiku. This is work quite apart from the heavily contextual poems of his amusement park series; it seeks intimacy with the quotidian of life in the city. This is material which has been mined before, but perhaps never so assiduously as here, and certainly never before with such consistent success.

This is one of the best books of haiku produced in English in our new century, and should become a benchmark for urban haiku for years to come. It is a modestly produced and priced volume, and so is accessible to all, and for this we should be grateful, to the poet and to the publisher.

Pizzarelli succeeds on several levels in this slim work. First of all, he makes the urban environment approachable to all—even the staunchest of urbaphobes will find resonance and connection to their own experiences here.

Then there is his flexible sense of line and image: a line may consist of a single syllable, or be extended to as many as ten. There is no formulaic regularity, but instead a close listening to the music produced, and the ear is unfailing.

He also employs a distinctively American diction. It is not only that he finds ways in which to use "flatiron," "cornice," "dentils," "k'plink," "radio flyer," "brownstone," "drive-in," and "brakeman" in these poems, but that they are used tellingly, to gritty and cumulative effect.

It is possible to quibble with a couple poems for minor reasons: one ("a butterfly alights") is perhaps a bit too sweet and somewhat derivative of many other such poems; a second ("left outside") depends too much on a jokey sort of mental rhyming; and the causality of one ("sun brightens") is just a bit too

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much in the foreground. One or two are ordinary. But that's it—the remainder are above reproach, from the quiet to the striking. The cumulative effect is resonant and descriptive, and several individual poems will be savored for years: in particular, “in the antique shop,” “mid-day heat,” “in the dark garage,” “eating pomegranates,” and the songlike “far down the railroad tracks.”

Effective cover, good production values, good poetry: highly recommended.

Anakiev, Dimitar (editor) *The Pond of Silence* (Apokalipsa, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2005). ISBN 961-6314-64-5. 268 pp., 4.25" x 6.75" perfect softbound. No price. Enquire with the publisher.

I should admit my bias from the beginning: I was responsible for the English versions of these fifty poems and of Ban'ya Natsuishi's concluding essay. Even more, this work is the offspring of a concept Red Moon Press published earlier this decade, the Dozen Tongues Project. It should not surprise, then, that I am enthusiastic for the realization of this anthology. In my opinion, this is the most serious and effective attempt so far to bring Slovenian haiku practice before the notice of the rest of the world.

It should be no surprise that this book succeeds to the degree it does: it is a veritable Who's Who of the Slovenian haiku world. Editor Dimitar Anakiev is surely the most accomplished poet and theoretician of haiku in the Balkan world, and publisher Apokalipsa, under the direction of Primoz Repar, certainly the house most committed to the dissemination of haiku there. The conception and design are in keeping with the very high standards which these men have established in their previous work, and the result is a book that is a pleasure, as well as an education, to read.

Each of the fifty poets represented has a pan-Balkan reputation, and some few are known in the larger world, either for

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haiku or for their other writing. Each has but a single poem in the volume, but each of these poems appears in a dozen different languages. As the expected major market for the book will be the Balkans, these languages feature prominently: eight of the twelve languages are Slav-based, or else are spoken nearby (Slovenian, Croatian, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Czech, Polish and Russian; and then the proximate, non-Slavic Hungarian); in addition, poems appear in Japanese, Spanish, German and English. The remainder of the volume is occupied by nine versions of Natsuishi's essay "Six Flowers of Haiku from Slovenia" in which the Japanese master identifies six stylistic trends in Balkan haiku—realist, existentialist, impressionist, psychological, surrealist and mythological—and comments on germane examples from the volume.

This essay is quite to the point: many of the poems would not be considered particularly good by the somewhat narrower English-language conception of haiku. It is easy to be dismissive of such work. But a genuine theoretical issue must be recognized in such cases: there are deep reasons why the animism which pervades many of these poems works in Slovenian (and Serb and Russian) and not at all in English. But we can hardly come to terms with such matters if we never encounter them, in good translation, in good company, and in a predisposition to find the deeper resources which the best haiku contain. Natsuishi's recognitions go some ways toward helping us come to terms with these poems and this practice.

But it is hardly exhaustive: the only remedy is to go to the poems themselves, and consider why a poet of serious repute might be pleased to have such a poem attached to her name. Clearly it is not a matter of not knowing better—theoretical materials have been available longer in the Balkans than in English. No, it is a conscious choice to maintain something essential to the culture which is of such significance that it is worth risking misunderstanding over it. Anakiev has done us the service of selecting these poems well, and we will find this deeper resonance in these poems if we are inclined to seek it without bias.

We should be delighted when such an opportunity to gain

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a glimpse into another mindset is offered us. It does require our willingness, our energy, our imagination, but these, presumably, are exactly the commodities we as readers of haiku prolifically have at our disposal. Highly recommended.

Gray, R. *Haiku* (Infinity Publishing.com, 1094 New DeHaven Street Suite 100, West Conshohocken PA 19428-2713, 2004). ISBN 0-7414-2200-X. 78 pp., 5.5" x 8.25" perfect softbound. \$9.95 from the publisher, or online at www.bbotw.com.

Let's get the negative things out of the way first. This is an uneven book, which is more the rule than the exception for haiku books anyway. But I find it odd that the same sensibility that can write "why go there/when it's here now?/the Cage exhibit" can also approve "cat stops/and sniffs the wind/data-processing". And, the Author's Notes include definitions of haiku, senryu, tanka (certainly not "short song" except by poetic license), haibun and, specific to the text, saudade, which are idiosyncratic and no better than anyone else's, though of course they do help to suggest how the author proceeds.

That's it. Not too bad at all. For the rest I can be quite enthusiastic. The book is divided into two parts: a section of haiku followed by an equal section of more-or-less related haibun entitled "Wolf Walk". The haiku, as mentioned, have high and low moments, with an acceptable hit rate. The book really takes off, however, when we get to the haibun. The reason, quite simply, is because Mr. Grey writes interesting and exciting prose. He is capable of keeping the energy he feels about certain situations and people caught within the words. His prosody is elastic and vibrant, and he makes you want to keep reading. His prose affronts the reader, providing a restorative slap, and makes you want to read the next one, too. The haiku do not always match the energy and invention of the prose, and occasionally it is true that there is some self-indulgence to be found. But it's okay. It doesn't last long, and the rush of his verbiage has carried you on anyway.

It's not just style, either. Grey is very adept at sounding the

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emotions of circumstance. His very moving "Between", for instance, evokes the imbalance of an unequal or just forming relationship, and seduces the reader into rooting for the narrator and for the beautiful mind he is encountering. True, we have only his word for it: it's enough.

In short, I'd like to see more of Mr. Grey's work, and I'd like to see more people write with his verve. Highly recommended.

Epstein, Robert *a clear view of* (tribe press, Greenfield MA, 2005). No ISBN. 1 page folded chapbook. Free for SASE from the author at 1343 Navellier Street, El Cerrito CA 94530.

Holzer, Ruth *Silk Flower* (tribe press, Greenfield MA, 2005). No ISBN. 1 page folded chapbook. \$4 ppd. from the author at 601 Madison Street, Herndon VA 20170.

More beautiful productions. vince tripi selects well, Ed Rayher knows his craft, and the blending of sensibilities and technicalities is harmonious. The poems include many old favorites, and the ensembles are pleasing. A very welcome new series.

Freeland, Christine *Straight Up Haiku* (Trafford Publishing, 6E-2333 Government Street, Victoria BC V8T 4P4 Canada, 2005). ISBN 1-4120-4658-0. 52 pp., 5" x 6" perfect softbound. \$10.50 from the publisher.

A sort of Bridget Jones in 5-7-5, Freeland records the quotidian in populist haiku format. She proffers nothing too deep or disturbing, but is nevertheless often self-effacing and frequently funny. This isn't going to move haiku further into its future, but it's enjoyable enough while we're waiting here.

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King, Doreen *The Katsura Tree* (Iron Press, 5 Marden Terrace, Cullercoats, North Shields, Northumberland, NE30 4PD UK, 2004). ISBN 0-906228-95-6. 60 pp., 4" x 5.75" perfect softbound. £6 from the publisher.

Doreen King is an avid newcomer to haiku, and she is going to be very good. In her short time in the genre, however, she has already published more haiku than many poets of good standing get published in a lifetime, and this hastening to market shows in the results. While there are felicitous moments here, too many of the poems are prosy or anecdotal. They are not helped by the format, which jams 4 poems on each small page, restricting the possibilities of savor. A volume with a quarter of these poems would have been welcome, but this is too much, too fast, and may serve as a cautionary tale to us all who would have our every poem exposed. Most often, we live to regret it.

Forrester, Stanford M. (editor) *the motley sangha* (bottle rockets press, PO Box 290691, Wethersfield CT 06129, 2005). No ISBN. 40 pp., 4" x 5.75" hand-sewn softbound. \$6 ppd. in the U.S. from the publisher.

This is quite a nice mini-anthology, encompassing 6 poems from 7 poets whose work is supportive of each other (hence "sangha"), mostly but not exclusively on Buddhist themes; the result is a multifaceted mirror, several slightly different looks at not exactly the same, but a similar way of looking at, content: a sensibility. I am surprised there are not more such thematic compilations offered by different haiku groups. Perhaps what is necessary is what this group has: an active publisher who is willing to make such a volume a reality. For the modest price and the high quality of the goods, recommended.

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Forrester, Stanford M. *buddha's fingerprint* (Lily Pool Press, Northfield MA, 2003). No ISBN. 32 pp., 4" x 5.75" hand-sewn softbound letterpress. \$10 ppd. in the U.S. from the author at PO Box 290691, Wethersfield CT 06129.

This very attractive book illustrates the essence of Forrester's work and practice, its roots in the Buddhist tradition, the sensibility he cultivates, and the fruits of his labors. It is minimal, but well-conceived and executed. Recommended.

Leuck, Angela (editor) *rose haiku* (Redlader Publishing, Montreal 2005). ISBN 1-896881-52-1. 108 pp. 5.75" x 6" perfect softbound. \$8.95 US \$9.95 Canada at bookstores.

This charming themed anthology contains more than a hundred haiku and tanka on the Queen of Flowers, evoking many moods and musings on scent, season and sentiment. This is one of a series of such volumes, and worth supporting. Recommended.

de sousa, elehna *A Shower of Blossoms* (Rainshadow Books, 401 Reynolds Road, Salt Spring Island BC V8K 1Y3 Canada). ISBN 0-9738238-0-1. 44 pp., 4" x 5.25" saddlestapled softbound. No price. Enquire with the publisher.

This small volume, subtitled haiku & images of Salt Spring Island, is a tribute to and evocation of coastal British Columbia and the wonderful island geography and life there. The poems are what we might term traditional, nature-based and seasonal and featuring a soft interplay between poet and her world. More unusual are the rich and overripe photo reproductions tipped in by the author. This handsome small tribute has entered its second printing, with brisk sales on the island, sug-

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gesting the natives are both supportive and appreciative. Recommended.

an'ya (editor) *moonset* (the natal * light press, PO Box 102, Crescent OR 97733 USA, 2005). ISBN 0-9727130-7-7. 64 pp., 5.25" x 8" saddlestapled softbound. \$15 ppd. (subscription of 2 issues) from the publisher.

The natal*light press has been doing interesting things recently, and their latest offering fits right in. *moonset* is a biannual journal which features (in this premier issue) more than 60 poems by as many authors, and offers commentary on each. This handling may not appeal to some who would prefer to let the poems speak for themselves, but in truth such an approach is long overdue in the English-language haiku market. We all pay lip service to the notion that the reader contributes half the poem in haiku, as the Japanese tradition has had it for centuries, and which has been brought to bear in the volumes through which most of have come to haiku: Blyth, but also Miyamura, Aitken, and so on. These interpretations don't mean to be exhaustive, but rather participate in a larger discussion of the potential field of each poem. Most journals and books offer merely the poems, a monologue, if you will, which doesn't always achieve full recognition of the variety and depth of the poems involved. I doubt that editor an'ya would claim her readings are exhaustive; rather, they are the second step in what hopefully will be continued dialogue about these and other poems in the haiku genre. Such an approach is bound to enlarge the understanding of not only the poems, but the context in which the poems work. The most critical aspect of such an enterprise resides with the editor, who must choose poems whose interest is not easily exhausted, and which might potentially expand in meaning and significance as additional cultural perspectives are considered. Perhaps it would be germane to suggest that a "classical" haiku or two be added each issue, to see how older poems have held up over time, as well as to

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honor again poems that are the bedrock of our understanding and practice. Perhaps it would be useful to include previous commentaries on these poems, so we have a jumping off point. Further, the perspectives of other readers might be welcome—perhaps even multiple readings of single poems—as the journal matures into its further form. There is much to be hoped for here, and potentially much to be gained. Recommended.

Jim Kacian

Tim Sampson "*skin half shed*" (self-published, 2005). 36pp., staple-bound. Inquire timsampson@hotmail.com

John Martone "*housekey*" (williston park: dogwood & honeysuckle, 2005). 34pp., saddle-bound. Inquire jophilmar@yahoo.com.

Tim Sampson of Canada is making a habit of following established sacred paths. Last time it was the well-known penitent road of southern Europe. Now we have a haiku record of his trek to the 88 temples of Shikoku that have been visited for at least a thousand years. Nowadays these mostly Shingon Buddhist temples are seen by bus or car. Tim walked the 1400 km route, and a Zen spirit of emptiness and humor determines this collection.

my sore feet	a little lost
and with each step	scarecrows pointing
"Here I am!"	everywhere

dewdrop hanging	middle of nowhere
from a snail hanging	a small frog doesn't help
from a branch	but he helps

Heartfelt and simply stated these fine haiku call for another

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journey.

John Martone is known for his minimalist vertical haiku. This handsome collection includes a few of these but is mostly 3-liners with a variety of indentations. As usual his favored theme of plants, here a spring garden, determines the haiku. The images are pared down, almost field notes, but they resonate with the profound stillness of things "just as they are."

washing dishes my wash strung out
& could touch you & vegetables
sparrow in rows

nothing
more
to do

water bury
& my housekey
in garden
water
this

trans
planted
pine

These simple actions and completed actions elicit the simple pared down phrases and sounds of those phrases in a bareness of mind and feeling in these engaging haiku.

Bruce Ross

Tug of the Current: the 2004 Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku, edited by Jim Kacian and the Red Moon Editorial Staff (Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2005). 164 pages, perfectbound. 5.5" x 8.25". ISBN 1-893959-48-1. \$20.95 postpaid from Red Moon Press, P.O. Box 2461, Winchester, VA 22604

Like most people, because of spatial and monetary issues, I only subscribe to 7 of the 20 haiku periodicals that I know of—which means I am exposed to miss any number of excellent haiku. That 20 doesn't include the dozens of individual haiku collections and small group anthologies published each year, or the work from numerous internet sites and online mailing lists that may also escape my notice. So it is a wonderful service to the haiku community to have a group of seasoned haiku poets parse the thousands of published haiku and haiku-related forms, and assemble the strongest in one volume.

The 2004 Red Moon Anthology, Tug of the Current, is the ninth installment in the award winning series that showcases more than 120 poets who published work during the prior year. It contains a good mix of haiku and senryu on a wide variety of topics and themes by an equally wide variety of poetic voices. Compared to previous years' anthologies, roughly the same amount of space (nearly half) is allocated to poems, the rest to haibun, linked verse, and a few essays. The selection process is simple: "Each (Red Moon) editor is assigned a list of books and journals, but is free to nominate any work, from any source..." All ten editors then vote upon the large pool of anonymous haiku, and poems that receive at least five votes are selected for the anthology.

The poems in *Tug of the Current* are as strong as we have come to expect from the series. Naturally, many of them are by established poets. Margaret Chula has a poem selected from her book, *The Smell of Rust*,

end of summer
the rust on my scissors
smells of marigolds

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And Leonard Moore's Valentine Award winning poem from *The Heron's Nest* is included,

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

Interestingly, other seemingly obvious selections such as the winning poems of the Spiess, Henderson, and Brady contests are not included, which goes to show how subjective judging a contest can be. Likewise, two of the three winning poems of Frogpond's Museum of Haiku Literature Award were also missing. Yet each of the winning poets is represented in *Tug of the Current* with other strong poems. I was particularly pleased to see Garry Gay's,

River stones
worn smooth
I have no regrets

picked from an issue of *Mariposa*, rather than his winning Spiess entry—a weaker poem in my subjective estimation.

To say that the anthology is comprised solely of established haiku poets would be a mistake because the democratic process allows quality to rise regardless of experience, and I was pleased to discover previously unknown (to me) poets such as Jeanne Martin and her poem,

dry riverbed
it too
leads to the sea

The second half of the book collects haiku-related work, and it is here that I start to have slight issues with it—particularly with the haibun. Haibun is the new black, and as such, everyone these days seems to be writing them; and since they are obviously haiku related, space needs to be made for them. The haibun included in *Tug of the Current* are of good quality, although for the most part indistinguishable stylistically from each other. Like most haibun written these days, they are written in the form of a diary or journal entry. I would have preferred their number

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be reduced to allow some of their 24 pages to be used for more haiku, or for the inclusion of haiga (discussed later).

The linked verse section contains 5 short sequences, 4 of which are rengay. My favorite was “Clack of the Rails” by Carolyn Hall and Ebba Story, with its flirty link:

a Valentine’s Day bouquet
perfumes our trolley

uptown bus
the pickpocket so courteously
offers me his seat

Tug of the Current concludes with a selection of essays: one on images in John Wills’ poems, one of Dee Evetts’ “Conscious Eye” columns on urban haiku, and three “Favorite Haiku” by H.F. Noyes. The high note, however, is editor Jim Kacian’s essay on haiga selected from the e-journal *Simply Haiku*. I cannot think of a better tutorial on the relationship between haiku and visual art, as well as the ways and means of haiga. It is worth the cost of the book itself. I do, however, wish more space had been given to a few of the examples where words are reproduced so small that they are hard to read.

Being composed of different mediums, haiga to me are more challenging and interesting than haibun, yet they themselves are oddly missing from the anthology. I realize that I am editorializing: asking for more haiku, less haibun, and the inclusion of haiga. But I think the question might be raised, as the use of haiku related forms like haibun and haiga continue to explode, requiring ever more space, whether the tried and true format of the *Red Moon Anthology* might not need tweaking.

Haiku is a sea that constantly washes ashore at my house, and I don’t often get the chance to go back through older journals. The *Red Moon Anthology* serves an invaluable service by consolidating favorite poems from those journals, as well as alerting me to work outside my current vision that I may wish to further pursue. I have no doubt that *Tug of the Current*, like its predecessors, will be one of the volumes—when I do have the chance—I reach for.

paul m

HSA
NEWS

*Pages 87 - 90 The Nicholas Virgilio Haiku Contest
2005*

2005 Nicholas Virgilio Haiku Contest

Prize 1 grandma's wake *Alex Degas, 18, Grade 12*
my little cousin *School of the Arts*
shakes her etch-a-sketch *Rochester, New York*

Various views of life, death, and permanence are powerfully placed together in this prize winning haiku for 2005. The adults gathered at the wake are undoubtedly observing the age-old church traditions for celebrating the end of a life, emphasizing continuities and eternities. The little cousin shows a much more transitory view of creations: one shake and they are gone, ready to be repeated.

A child's hands upon an etch-a-sketch erase and yet draw a picture that captures the finality of death. That moment is recorded in a literary snapshot, of two cousins during their grandmother's wake. The poet fills the scene with the motion of youthful innocence and the motionless nature of death. Yet life for the two cousins' creativity lives on. "Little cousin shakes her etch-a-sketch" and a poet shares a few insightful words.

Prize 2 memories *Guilia Perucchio, 14, Grade 9*
caught in my brush *School of the Arts*
long strands *Rochester, New York*

For the writer what may have once been just "my brush" has acquired a special significance because of the "long strands." The question now arises; who does the hair belong to? If it is the hair of the poet, the significance of its length may remind the poet of younger days. If it is not the poet's, one can surmise that the poet has shared the brush with someone whose hair is longer than the poet's. We are left to ponder the question. I love a mystery.

What would be more likely to induce deep personal thought and memories than the repetitive brushing of hair at night. My mind's eye sees a young lady sitting before a mirror in her dressing gown dreamily brushing her hair and almost measuring out

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her life strand by strand. A wonderful image!

Prize 3 pre-school *Allen Bartter, 15, Grade 10*
a triangle block *School of the Arts*
stuck in a square hole *Rochester, New York*

This haiku is both philosophical and very funny. There is the suggestion that if you want to get something tricky done—"a square peg in a round hole"—perhaps you need to go study the youngsters: bypass the basics and...just jam it in!

Here the reader is given the opportunity to take the poem at face value or rearrange the triangle block in his or her mind. The what is, or what ought to be, that is the question. The word "stuck" may cause the mind to wonder how the triangle was placed in the hole, was it forced or just placed there with ease? Does it matter? A moment in the poet's eye lets us see that design is a state of mind. A triangle stuck in a square hole shows that a young person was exploring another way of looking at how the world works.

Prize 4 harvest moon *Kate Bosek-Sills, 15, Grade 10*
the homeless man's cup *School of the Arts*
filled with silver *Rochester, New York*

In this haiku a celestial event is brought to earth. By looking down the reader sees that which glows from above, reflected in the cup of a homeless man. This haiku gives the reader a number of ideas to reflect upon. From the ethereal nature of light to the earthiness of the homeless man. The multidimensional nature of this haiku makes it a joy to read.

The homeless man's cup is finally full, not of the one kind of silver he wishes for, but something much different. Alas, only if he is a poet will he be able to rejoice much.

Prize 5 my father *Asha Bishi, 14, Grade 9*
in the stubbled wheat field *School of the Arts*
scratches his beard *Rochester, New York*

This author employs a device of classical haiku: using an im-

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age from nature to link to and describe a human subject. Because of the two juxtaposed images, the delighted reader receives a crystal-clear portrait of a man at one with his environment.

I can see the golden “stubbled wheat field” with the evening sun hanging heavy in the western sky. The poet gives the reader a wonderful view of a landscape. A landscape touched by rays of the sun and care of his/her father’s hand.

Prize 6	superstitious	<i>Adrian DiMatteo, 14, Grade 9</i>
	a fortune cookie	<i>School of the Arts</i>
	seals my fate	<i>Rochester, New York</i>

Does a person’s superstition last as long as they can remember that their belief system is alive and well playing a role in their life? I would like to think that when the poet opened a fortune cookie that fate had good things in store. The power of suggestion is illustrated in the words of this intriguing dilemma.

Many people look beyond the normal for clues to their fate or the way to conduct their lives. Sealing a fate-especially in a young person-seems excessive, and yet. . . Do you really think it is mere hyperbole that a young person would be so superstitious as to put all his/her eggs in one basket?

General observations:

The judges noticed a few things about the contest entries. All winning entries are closer to senryu than haiku; that is, they deal more with human nature than with nature. None of the winning haiku used punctuation. The idea of a haiku comprising two images has been nailed home by these student poets. The contest images, in fact, were not infrequently too far apart for comprehension. Many of the entries contain a personal reference, which is normally avoided in haiku. Four of the six winners contain the word “my.” Many haiku among the entrants were about haiku, grandmothers, and small children.

Reading the work entered by poets in the Virgilio Haiku Contest was a wonderful experience. Each poet should be proud

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of their individual contribution to this literary event. For those of you who were not selected as winners, please continue to share your talent as writer of haiku and share your talent with others.

Judges: Michael Moore and Charles Trumbull

A FAVORITE HAIKU, H. F. Noyes

snail shell the way in the way out

Karma Tenzing Wangchuk⁽¹⁾

Heraclitus, father of Greek philosophy, wrote that “the road up and the road down is the same.”⁽²⁾ And here we have a modern haiku poet offering a similar reflection. A perfect example of how profoundly meaningful the “wordless poem” can be, in the *karumi* lightness of its expression.

⁽¹⁾ *Hermitage*, Issue Number 1, 2004

⁽²⁾ Fifth century B.C.E.

A FAVORITE HAIKU, H. F. Noyes

a stone
i saved
casting stones

Stanford M. Forrester⁽¹⁾

What superb simplicity—six words, and two virtually the same. For anyone who's known beach life, this haiku captures the essence of the childlike innocence that grows upon us in those carefree moments of skipping stones. Something about that prized stone—too precious for casting—seems to enter our very being. Magically, some of our ego burden is shed to make room within for a gift of nature.

⁽¹⁾ *buddha's fingerprint*, Lily Pool Press, Northfield, MA, 2003

EDITOR'S NOTE:

With a “senryu reading” of this poem, a second set of images arise as one focuses on the word “casting.” This may invoke the tendency of most of us to see clearly the faults of others while being blind to our own. From that point of view, the poem is imbued with a modest sense of accomplishment based upon the poet's self-knowledge and self-discipline, and possibly a sadness in the knowledge that he has held back this one stone only after casting others, perhaps many others.

J.S.

ERRATA
Volume XXVIII, Number 2

The names of poets Nobuko Masakawa and Marian Olson were misspelled in the index and with their poems on page 29.

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