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(Please follow the submission guidelines carefully.)

1. Submissions from both members and nonmembers of HSA are welcome.
2. All submissions must be original, unpublished work that is not being considered elsewhere and must not be on the Internet (except for Twitter and Facebook) prior to appearing in *Frogpond*.
3. Submission by e-mail is preferred
  - (a) in the body of the e-mail (no attachments)
  - (b) with subject line: Frogpond Submission + the kind of work sent
  - (c) with place of residence noted in the body of the e-mail
4. A submission by post will receive a reply only if accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope with sufficient U.S. postage to reach your destination.
5. Only one submission per issue will be considered.

### The Submission May Include Any or All of the Following:

1. Up to ten haiku/senryu
2. Up to three haibun
3. Up to three renga or other short sequences
4. One renku or other long sequence
5. One essay
6. One book review

### Submission Periods:

1. February 15 to April 15 (Spring/Summer Issue)
2. June 1 to August 1 (Autumn Issue)
3. September 15 to November 15 (Winter Issue)

Acceptances will be sent after the end of each period.

### Note to Publishers:

Books for review may be sent at any time.

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Literature Award  
\$100**

for the best previously unpublished work appearing in the  
last issue of *Frogpond* as selected by vote of the HSA  
Executive Committee

**From Issue 37:3**

afternoon rain  
emptying a book  
of its words

*Peter Newton*  
Winchendon, MA



## Haiku & Senryu

late winter—  
lighting both lobes of my brain  
sweet daphne

Kristen Deming, Bethesda, MD

starlight beyond all reasonable doubt

jukebox  
the barmaid  
gives me a tip

Tom Painting, Atlanta, GA

shaft of sunrise  
through the hemlocks  
old lightning scar

Elizabeth Hazen, Williston, VT

shaking out  
the paint brush  
rain turning back to snow

Jeffrey McMullen, Cuba, NY

empty flatbed hauling stars

Gene Myers, Rockaway, NJ

longest night—  
another round for sorrows  
that won't drown

Sue Burke, Madrid, Spain

mother's day—  
visiting the grave  
in my mind

Richard Bruns, Napa, CA

year's end  
I leave my clothes  
on the floor

Barbara Snow, Eugene, OR

she said  
he said they said  
contagion

dl mattila, Oakton, VA

more rain I turn the other cheek

Adrian Bouter, Gouda, The Netherlands

goose bumps . . .  
your breath a memory  
on my skin

Chase Gagnon, Detroit, MI

autumn wind—  
children tugging at  
my elbows

George Gerolimatos, Barrington, IL

the aging seagull  
tufts its feathers—  
December wind

Melissa Watkins Starr, Portsmouth, VA

first date  
one too many  
dietary restrictions

hiking in bear country  
the right distance  
behind strangers

Marsh Muirhead, Bemidji, MN

dust devil  
my adversary  
lies under oath

Alanna C. Burke, Santa Fe, NM

old Beatles tapes—  
dad says I'm not the man  
he used to be

Lew Watts, Santa Fe, NM

artificial sweetener—  
a cup of tea with  
the mother-in-law

Kasturi Jadhav, Mumbai, India



autumn night  
a robocall  
from Buddha

moonlight  
and its demand for  
two-factor authentication

Fay Aoyagi, San Francisco, CA

sounds in the dark  
my imagination  
awake

Stephen A. Peters, Bellingham, WA

buttermilk clouds—  
my mother's voice singing  
an old cowboy song

Billie Wilson, Juneau, AK

sumi-e . . .  
a sparrow returns  
to its shadow

Paresh Tiwari, Hyderabad, India

re: falling leaves  
he says he still  
loves her

Stella Pierides, Neusaess, Germany

some rice  
some beans . . .  
this wooden spoon

Bill Waters, Pennington, NJ

beyond the front door the deep long lights of ancestors

Susan Diridoni, Kensington, CA

Sunday sermon  
rivers that bend  
my knees

summer river  
I speak more slowly  
to my mother

Glenn G. Coats, Prospect, VA

gun salute  
the soldier's daughter  
doesn't blink

Ken Olson, Yakima, WA

sunset . . .  
fire lanterns  
drift out to sea

Margaret Anne Gratton, Canby, OR

packed snow beneath our feet my firstborn's bones

John McManus, Carlisle, England

sitting down hard  
on a hard rock  
hunger moon

tulip bulbs—  
that first piano recital  
still in my fingers

Carolyn Hall, San Francisco, CA

almost dawn  
a brandy flask circles  
the bonfire

Joe McKeon, Strongsville, OH

shooting stars  
my mother covers her face  
and weeps

Louisa Howerow, London, ON

what binds us  
a single blossom left  
on the crepe myrtle

Scott Wiggerman, Austin, TX

empty nest  
my son's jeans  
a perfect fit

David Jacobs, London, England

hundredth birthday  
she thinks her husband  
is playing trumpet

Phyllis Lee, Sebring, OH

grey clouds  
everyone around me  
under the weather

Vessislava Savova, Sofia, Bulgaria

bits of scandal  
heard in passing—  
hot coffee grounds

Bill Deegan, Mahwah, NJ

pull of tonight's moon—  
the harbour lighthouse  
a little taller

Michael Dylan Welch, Sammamish, WA

Statue of Liberty  
a wasp hangs over  
your ice cream

Alexey Andreev, Moscow, Russia

melting snow  
continents emerge  
across the lawn

Jay Friedenberg, New York, NY

dark of the moon  
fireflies skirting  
the lake's edge

Marjorie Buettner, Chisago City, MN

day-  
light

in  
the  
tiny  
drops

of  
night  
rain

on  
horsetails

John Barlow, Ormskirk, England

milkweed pod even if we fell in love

motel mirror  
the miles between  
who we've become

Brent Goodman, Rhinelander, WI

scudding clouds  
a bit of crow's nest  
with the leaf fall

Ferris Gilli, Marietta, GA

shadows at sunrise  
a drip moves  
the pond

keeping night gentle  
campfire  
songs

Gary Hotham, Scaggsville, MD

the wind shifting a bittern as driftwood as bittern

chrysalis—  
a woman struggles out  
of her puffer coat

Lorin Ford, Melbourne, Australia

morning light  
the Lotus Flower Sutra  
opens my eyes

Jerome J. Cushman, Victor, NY

scrawny drawings  
on scraps of paper  
memories of my son

Raj K. Bose, Honolulu, HI

fish market:  
moving reflections  
in every puddle

Oana Aurora Boazu, Galați, Romania

autumn leaves  
mastering the art  
of hair parting

John J. Han, Manchester, MO

winter rain—  
the history of birds  
in the chimney

Joshua Williams, Carrollton, GA



bee skep  
all the sweetness  
of spring light

Angela Terry, Lake Forest Park, WA

periwinkle  
how could my mother forget  
the summer sky

Barbara Kaufmann, Massapequa, NY

reclaiming  
the shimmer of boyhood—  
wild blueberries

Devin Harrison, Vancouver Island, BC

live jazz  
the sea bass  
in reduction sauce

Deborah P. Kolodji, Temple City, CA

a second number  
where I can be reached  
Indian summer

Ross Plovnick, St. Louis Park, MN

A trail vanishing  
in snowy woodscape—  
long ago, the day . . .

Dandelions, grass scents  
in gentle rain—  
my late life, unexamined

Rebecca Lilly, Charlottesville, VA

long after the quake the abstract left askew

Philip Rowland, Tokyo, Japan

tilted mirror  
before  
and after

Kristin Oosterheert, Grandville, MI

mind spiraling up to the falling ash key

clouds over mountains i can't reach what's real

Jim Kacian, Winchester, VA

thistledown flurries  
handstands  
for a red-haired girl

new year's day  
each gravestone's  
party hat of snow

Daniel Liebert, Maplewood, MO

treat me roughly like the sea makes a fractal splinter

David Boyer, Stamford, CT

the geologist  
explains tectonic plates  
my mind drifts

Pat Tompkins, San Mateo, CA

two ballerinas in one skin a newborn foal

a squirrel's from pole to pole punctuation

Peter Yovu, Middlesex, VT

cooler days  
fresh camouflage  
for the machine gun turret

Bob Lucky, Jubail, Saudi Arabia

honeymoon suite—  
wishing the shower curtain  
was opaque

Audrey Olberg, Chevy Chase, MD

dinner in the cabin  
candlelight  
the only sound

Linda Ahrens, Arlington, TX

a thin mattress  
grooved down the center  
restless nights

James D. Fuson, New Haven, MI

leaves  
of jewelweed in the breeze  
i tremble

Arch Haslett, Toronto, ON

Bloomsday  
I try to step  
into the same text twice

Jeanne Cook, South Bend, IN

orange peels and clove  
a dream left  
to simmer

Peter Newton, Winchendon, MA

beaming . . .  
my poems translated  
into Klingon

Haiku Elvis, Shreveport, LA

unloading the dryer  
my daughter's bra and mine  
entangled

Hannah Mahoney, Cambridge, MA

everywhere snow—  
distant trees  
divide the whiteness

Craig W. Steele, Cambridge Springs, PA

Parris Island  
clouds turn the marsh  
gunmetal gray

Robyn Hood Black, Beaufort, SC

autumn . . .  
taking turns sniffing  
the baby's head

supermoon  
my nothingness  
on tiptoe

Patrick Sweeney, Misawashi, Japan

ryokan's sliding doors  
secret chambers  
of the heart

Bruce H. Feingold, Berkeley, CA

in the time it takes him  
to answer the door  
thistledown

Jonathan McKeown, Sydney, Australia

dandelions . . .  
more fluff  
crosses my desk

Donald Wilson, Toronto, ON

morning prayer  
she knots and unknots  
her apron strings

hearing it pull  
into the driveway—  
my neighbor's attitude

Sondra J. Byrnes, Santa Fe, NM

that familiar laugh  
back from maternity leave  
leafless trees

James Chessing, San Ramon, CA

berries and buds  
on the same branch  
first grandchild

Mary Frederick Ahearn, Pottstown, PA

gutter downspout  
the sound of rain  
tamed

Michael Ketchek, Rochester, NY

this time  
I open the envelope  
Doctors without Borders

Neal Whitman, Pacific Grove, CA

Ebola contain ment

Jyothirmal Gubili, Rochester, MN

autumn morning  
rain of leaves  
in the forecast

Mary Kipps, Sterling, VA

his fading days  
just the red brow  
of a finch

Greg Piko, Yass, Australia



the vendor's ledger  
worn at the edges  
street fair

Leslie Rose, Shingle Springs, CA

distant music  
the leaves soundlessly  
decomposing

Ernest Wit, Warsaw, Poland

fever rising to give a keynote

Bill Cooper, Richmond, VA

New husband  
my friend's  
new vocabulary.

Alexis Rotella, Arnold, MD

hotel elevator  
a man shows me his  
just-pulled tooth

William Hart, Montrose, CA

on loneliest days  
he nitpicks his way  
back into my heart . . .

*As Guest, that would be gone—*  
one wren dares sip  
from my Japanese bowl

(Line one from Emily Dickinson, “As imperceptibly as Grief”)

Janelle Barrera, Key West, FL

freight track the far ends of visible light

now that I know earthshine

Christopher Patchel, Green Oaks, IL

bedroom the tractor beam of the moon to

shoulder blades  
without wings  
leaves in the wind

Dietmar Tauchner, Puchberg, Austria

rift in the clouds . . .  
the fox in roadside slush  
still breathing

the mountain making  
its own weather . . .  
a raven's fingered wings

Allan Burns, Colorado Springs, CO

condolence cards thinking of you thinking of him

leaf mound memories in autumn decay

Susan B. Auld, Arlington Heights, IL

carving into the pumpkin the wild night wind

full moon—  
a grasshopper's  
one small leap

Mark E. Brager, Columbia, MD

late-stage Alzheimer's—  
a swan disappears  
into the mist

Steve Hodge, White Lake, MI

lake sunrise  
a duckling sets off  
downstream

Ramesh Anand, Bangalore, India

beautiful moon maybe knows about its  
ditto . . . ditto . . . ditto

Linda McCarthy Schick, Brooklyn, NY

sampling cakes  
for her wedding day  
dieting daughter

Patricia Prime, Auckland, New Zealand

midnight barking—  
I turn up the volume  
of my thoughts

Chen-ou Liu, Ajax, ON

upturned faces  
in the dusty riverbed  
rain darkens stones

Annette Makino, Arcata, CA

the cry of a loon  
the cry of a loon  
no answer

Marshall Hryciuk, Toronto, ON

expressly to dream  
I ride the slow train

Michael Fessler, Kanagawa, Japan

arching its back  
the cat  
the morning light

Robert Witmer, Tokyo, Japan

chakra healing—  
the pinwheel whirls  
in autumn wind

Angelee Deodhar, Chandigarh, India

a carrel in Biography  
the scent  
of unread lives

hunting lodge  
the soup stock  
packs a kick

Scott Mason, Chappaqua, NY

star magnolia more sensitive than you seem

Beverly Acuff Momoi, Mountain View, CA

left behind  
names on stones  
without stories

Robert Mainone, Delton, MI

tamarind  
the bitter sweetness  
of pregnancy

Shrikaanth Krishnamurthy, Birmingham, England

November blizzard—  
trying to recall  
my euphemisms

half moon  
passing over  
the bones of war

Bill Pauly, Asbury, IA

mini-tornado the barn owl goes awol

Helen Buckingham, Somerset, England

Oktoberfest—  
pouring rain  
and drunks

Chantal Deslances, Philadelphia, PA

first warm day  
along the creek  
the hurry of melting snow

Robert Forsythe, Annandale, VA

trapped  
the terminal bird  
in my brain

ice floes into the deep blue snowy owl

Deb Koen, Rochester, NY

wild plum blossoms in fog—  
the feeling of being lost  
at home

Brent Partridge, Orinda, CA

stargazing . . .  
no distinction between  
the living and the dead

Tom Tico, San Francisco, CA

Heron sounds . . .  
hammered silver floats  
on midnight blue.

Mollie Danforth, Alexandria, VA



morning walk  
a wooly bear  
headed the other way

first-day moon a hanging chad

Charles Trumbull, Santa Fe, NM

smokestack skyline  
a technicolor sunset  
smolders

Doug Kutney, Scotch Plains, NJ

spring fever . . .  
a grizzled mare rolls  
in the sprouting grass

Elizabeth Howard, Crossville, TN

roadside honey  
and an honesty box . . .  
second chance

Claire Everett, North Yorkshire, England

the forest for the trees  
beyond  
a shadow of a doubt

precipic

e

Alan S. Bridges, Littleton, MA

by the time another war harvest moon

all the after of a rose remaining

Melissa Allen, Madison, WI

razor sharp  
the shadows  
of the araucaria

not a drop  
is lost  
thawing icicle

Tom Rault, Laxviken, Sweden

remission . . .  
barefoot he reads  
the rain

s  
makeup  
x

Roberta Beary, Bethesda, MD

recipe  
for  
chocolate  
covered  
crickets—  
summer's  
end

Doris Lynch, Bloomington, IN

if leaves  
were tongues  
children at play

finding myself  
where it always was  
ebb tide

George Swede, Toronto, ON

zazen  
in the hillside clover  
bee wings

Valentine's Day  
each of us gets  
a pink slip

Randy Brooks, Decatur, IL

slow stir  
of the honey moon  
gondolier

Roland Packer, Hamilton, ON

the sky  
emptier for them  
calling geese

Ann K. Schwader, Westminster, CO

December cold  
sticking to the mortar  
damp rice

Michael McClintock, Clovis, CA

blister moon  
a wish  
rubbed raw

sun-backed ridge  
a wool-gloved erasure of the tactile

Eve Luckring, Los Angeles, CA

fog surrenders  
to blue  
the surgeon's eyes

s.m. kozubek, Chicago, IL

communion  
how the light  
reaches me

Jayne Miller, Hazel Green, WI

rain all day  
I tell myself  
she means nothing

C. William Hinderliter, Phoenix, AZ

leaves  
accordingly  
moved

Eddie Donoghue, Centereach, NY

autumn equinox  
I wouldn't say  
it is or isn't

spring the cat out of my lap

John Stevenson, Nassau, NY

fireweed  
a hummingbird  
fans the blaze

George Dorsty, Yorktown, VA

botanic gardens  
the world's biggest flower  
stinks

Quendryth Young, Alstonville, NSW, Australia

bowl of cherries  
she spills  
the beans

Genevieve Bergeson, Chesterfield, MO

early twilight  
sorting shells  
by sound

how it's plucked out of the daisy love

Elmedin Kadric, Helsingborg, Sweden

the last log on  
snaps the loudest  
New Year's Eve

Brad Bennett, Arlington, MA

dry yellow grasses  
bending and unbending  
this long night

William Seltzer, Gwynedd, PA

half moon  
his pain after  
my surgery

Karen DiNobile, Poughkeepsie, NY

standing water  
trying to be  
something else

the grey areas  
coming in  
with winter

Dan Schwerin, Waukesha, WI

drawbridge  
she won't  
drop it

Robert Epstein, El Cerrito, CA

all dressed up  
for Halloween . . .  
the Christmas cactus

Autumn Noelle Hall, Green Mountain Falls, CO



strand of spider web  
my body drawn  
to the warming blanket

Cyndi Lloyd, Riverton, UT

candle flame  
the sheen of silk  
in cobwebs

windchill  
her chorus  
of heartaches

Charles Baker, Mineral Point, WI

homeward bound—  
swapping a cactus wren  
for a woodpecker

Kevin Valentine, Mesquite, TX

leaves underfoot  
the handprint  
of a stillborn

Els van Leeuwen, Sydney, Australia

seaside café  
the bottomless cup  
of her story

late summer sun  
the lift of a frisbee  
between friends

Ben Moeller-Gaa, St. Louis, MO

autumn twilight's fading glow of an old flame

Jeff Stillman, Norwich, NY

till death do us part wild geese

Michael Henry Lee, Saint Augustine, FL

between one wife and another divorce

Michele L. Harvey, New York, NY

trying to feel it  
when I close my eyes  
moon-bathing

ripe Brussels sprouts  
some intended endearments  
backfire

J. Zimmerman, Santa Cruz, CA

in between the sound of taps forest silence

Rick Black, Arlington, VA

spring  
failing  
snow

firefly  
always  
mo re

LeRoy Gorman, Napanee, ON

# Rengay

## GOOD-BYE in Lipstick

Phyllis Lee, Sebring, OH  
*Julie Warther, Dover, OH*

supermoon  
our shadows watching  
from the porch

*so close  
and yet . . .*

mother-daughter time  
the little voice saying  
don't say it

*the important things—  
texting  
with all caps*

on her mirror  
GOOD-BYE in lipstick

*another phase . . .  
watching home movies  
alone*

## Chicory and Lace

Julie Warther, Dover, OH  
Dan Schwerin, Greendale, WI

first  
to break the silence—  
red-winged blackbird

*sunlight warms  
the marsh between them*

traipsing through wild mint  
lost  
in their thoughts

*the winter-burned pines  
become less  
one-sided*

a fallen tree  
spans the creek bed

*coloring the miles  
ahead  
chicory and lace*

# Haiku Sequences

## Project Chrysanthemum

Fay Aoyagi, San Francisco, CA

a matrix to measure my chrysanthemum-ness

iBeacon to identify a right chrysanthemum

Deep Packet Inspection in the chrysanthemum network

chrysanthemums at the edge and a sea of censors

a phishing mail from mal-chrysanthemum

Bring Your Own Device and a bunch of chrysanthemums

development kit to design a chrysanthemum from scratch

chrysanthemum-oriented three-tier architecture

my chrysanthemum sentiment in columnary database

the proposal rejected by one chrysanthemum

high-tech and high-touch for premier chrysanthemums

open-source chrysanthemum now in beta

my chrysanthemum acuity lower than expected  
a topology to show how I connect to chrysanthemums  
chrysanthemum resource centralized and shared  
failover to the chrysanthemum with higher availability  
a white paper on Internet of Chrysanthemums  
Moore's Law not applicable to me and chrysanthemums  
a use case to show chrysanthemum's vulnerability  
Chrysanthemum Inc. adopts the phased approach  
photon for communication chrysanthemum for storage  
user-friendly chrysanthemum in bright red  
a migrating plan for withered chrysanthemums  
the methodology only chrysanthemums understand  
am I losing the chrysanthemum attribute?

## **Going to Extremes**

Scott Mason, Chappaqua, NY

wind horses  
prance with abandon  
just above the Hillary Step

heat shimmers up  
from sidewinder imprints  
Furnace Creek

brittle stars in the darkness  
beyond a submersible  
Challenger Deep



## Memorial Service

Roberta Beary, Bethesda, MD

dark winter sky  
mourners approach  
in single file

memorial service—  
work on the left  
family on the right

slide show  
a handsome young soldier  
with the same nose

eulogy—  
his only son  
tests the mic

ending  
the moment of silence  
pop of champagne

## Study in Blue

John Thompson, Santa Rosa, CA

*Renée Owen, Sebastopol, CA*

mistaking  
a streetlight for the moon—  
this lonely night

*study in blue we won't speak of it*

bare maples  
I wake up cold  
unsure of love

*dinoflagellates' bioluminescence early dawn*

the grapefruit's  
other half  
tasting of you

*bitter noon just me & this mockingbird*

# Renku

## Double Moon

A Rokku Renku

bhavani, Mumbai, India  
Barbara A. Taylor, Mountain Top,  
NSW, Australia  
Kala Ramesh, Pune, India  
G.R. LeBlanc, Dieppe, NB

after the beach party  
we linger by the sea . . .  
double moon

bhavani

too many wishes  
for that one shooting star

Barbara

as the cage opens  
parrots somersault  
into wing beats

Kala

lobes disturbed  
the Venus flytrap snaps shut

G.R.

at the crossroads  
a policeman dances  
before large crowds

Barbara

tall grasses sway  
within the stone circle

G.R.

\*\*\*

a single stroke of his brush swirls in an ensō	Kala
beneath fingers skin like satin	G.R.
today eHarmony reaps success on the last attempt	Barbara
an icicle wall inches its way down	G.R.
I become Mme Michelin in my extra layers	Barbara
of our excesses the earth soon loses count	Kala

\*\*\*

through hollowed bamboo the wind rushes by in tune	bhavani
tiny fur bandits invade the melon patch	G.R.
everywhere in Kakadu raindrops bounce off crocodiles	Barbara
click clacking down the hall my new leather boots	G.R.
a golden champa blossom tucked into her greying hair	bhavani
the pilgrimage they've longed for begins	Kala

# Haibun

## First Year

Doris Lynch, Bloomington, IN

Never had there been such a plenitude of roses: yellow, pink, varicolored ones, purple and red glories. Sitting on the porch of our New Orleans shotgun, my daughter suckling at my breast, my eyes would roam over the buds and those in full blossom, especially lingering on the blowsy ones that had scattered faded petals across the sidewalk, the lawn.

Across the street the old man, whose name we never learned, tended to his garden, his tens of roosters, pheasants, and homing pigeons. The racket those birds made: clucks, chirps, crows, an occasional screech, and underlying everything a continuous murmuring.

The New Orleans heat coated my daughter's skin and mine in a patina of sweat. Time seemed endless those days, the only clock my daughter's eyes boring into mine, the only happenings, brown, curling petals fluttering over the fence in the wind before the big storm.

below the levee  
watching a tugboat  
float on sky

## A Word to the Wise

Carolyn Hall, San Francisco, CA

hazy day moon—  
a gift from the cat  
lies at my feet

Directly overhead, a dozen vultures circling, circling. "Just keep moving," my husband says.

## *Ātman*

Paresh Tiwari, Hyderabad, India

Acutely aware of the hands that dig into my shoulders, the unbearable heat of a thousand flames licking my skin, the scent of sandalwood that fails to mask the smell of charred flesh, the whispers of how young she was, the slowly bleeding sun going down a banyan tree and then the certain reluctance with which they press a long wooden pole into my hand . . .

Almost as if this act is supposed to purge her out of my thoughts, memories, existence, breaths . . . I am asked to perform the rite of the skull.

early darkness—  
the jagged flight of  
a firefly

## **A Theory of Everything**

George Swede, Toronto, ON

According to leading-edge physicists, the most basic units of reality are no longer space and time, but “scattering amplitudes.” They are waves that result from collisions among subatomic particles.

spreading the ashes    wind change

## **Leaving for Daycare**

Elmedin Kadric, Helsingborg, Sweden

While we’re tying her shoes, she asks about war. I change the subject and talk about dreams.

out of the mist  
the nozzle of a gun  
tied in a knot

## Misalignments

Thomas Chockley, Plainfield, IL

The glass bounces off the motel room wall, spraying brandy across the wallpaper and the wicker chair in the corner. It's dramatic proof. She tells me it shows she is free of inhibitions, free of social conventions. It wins the argument in her mind. Still I hold on to my glass, not wanting to lose a drop of the mind-numbing liquor.

Two years later our daughter calls to tell me that her mother has had a psychotic episode and that our son was able to coax her into a hospital for assessment.

next time  
a perfect circle  
smoke rings

## Flat Tire

Bob Lucky, Jubail, Saudi Arabia

My watchman Teshome and I get the car jacked up and the lug nuts off, but the tire won't budge. He goes and brings back a mechanic who knocks the tire loose with a sledgehammer and puts on the spare.

warm day  
flies swarm for  
a drop of sweat

We drive the mechanic back to his shop where he pulls a three-inch piece of screw out of the tire and squirts a sealant into the hole. Back home, Teshome and I put the tire back on. He does most of the work. I hand him the lug nuts.

jacaranda shade  
the dog plays with  
a dying bee

## Piano Practice

Roberta Beary, Bethesda, MD

My grandma speaks in a thick accent. I try to keep her away from my school friends. I don't want them to make fun of me. At home it's different. I like having her around because she likes me. That puts her way ahead of both my parents and my sister. Those three avoid me at all times. So when my grandma tells me to play the piano, I obey. I like the way her face lights up as I stumble my way through *five easy pieces for classical piano*. It warms my insides. Fast forward three lifetimes. My therapist says that someone must have loved me very much when I was young. He tells me he can see that love in my face, in my smile, in my eyes. Yes, I answer, there was one person.

on the broken  
middle c  
winter dusk

## Finding Meaning

Melissa Watkins Starr, Portsmouth, VA

While working in Old Dominion University's Writing Center, I helped foreign students with English composition and often saw unique phrasing in their writing. Here are some examples: She took a deep breath not to sound wept. I unaccepted that she did not love me.

In my current work as an editor, I still see interesting attempts at expression in English. For example, I love this speaker attribution: "Let's go," told her to him. I admire those who stretch to create meaning with foreign words, and sometimes I wish their way with words would fall naturally from my tongue.

wake dreaming  
under my stars night—  
years gone spring rain



## **Star Sapphire**

Sharon Lask Munson, Eugene, OR

As they pull up the old Berber, she kneels, searches the wooden floor for a stone that fell out of a filigree ring a decade ago. She spots sewing pins, a large pearl button, a bent buffalo nickel, but nothing that reminds her of her lover's eyes at midnight.

branches  
almost bare  
trill of a warbler

## **Staying**

Elizabeth Hazen, Williston, VT

He says: Next winter I'm going to Florida. Every year in the middle of January he says: Next winter, Florida for sure.

But he doesn't go. The steamy chewing of cows at their stalls in the early morning, the chickadee's "spring's here dear" over the snow, the neat cords of dry firewood ready for sap run, the taste of fresh smelts caught through the ice . . .

this other paradise  
year after year  
to walk on water

## **Place Setting**

Tom Painting, Atlanta, GA

I've inherited the Andy Warhol Pop Art dinner plates. With the exception of a few chips here or there the set is intact, minus one of the original eight that met an end when my mother smashed it on the kitchen floor the night my father showed up drunk and late from work with lipstick on his face.

deep winter I beg the question

## **The Color of Rain**

Marjorie Buettner, Chisago City, MN

Three days before she died she told me she was being called home. I wonder which home she meant: the home she made for us as a widow with four children or the home she had with her parents along with nine siblings. Or maybe it was the home—brief though it was—with him, her first and only love, before the fates took him away, too, calling him home before she could reach out for him saying, no, don't go, not yet, stay . . .

winter solstice the sound of stars calling out in the wind

We all carry the bones of our relatives with us wherever we go, dream the dreams of a blind man, continue on with a journey that has no beginning or end without home in sight. And where is home? Somewhere over the next ridge where the wolves are howling way into the night . . .

first frost—  
my falling leaf  
nature

## **Alder, Apple, Elm**

Cherie Hunter Day, Cupertino, CA

and hickory are all sharp-tongued trees. Plush moths keep the conversation brief. A guidebook provides the dot-dash descriptions of these shadow eaters. They have common names like abrupt brother and unknown dagger as they work the low light fizzle of dusk. Appetite and the fierce instruction come from the long-buried script. Turn away from the sex show: the quiver and shimmy during the touch, touch, touch of a bud scar.

skinny dipping—  
moths drawn to  
the boathouse lights

## **Prisoner's Wife**

Carol Pearce-Worthington, New York, NY

I want to be the ticket you wait for, want to be that sprinkler  
plume and you the grateful grass, want to be the one you talk  
about for centuries want to be yes and splendid beside you.  
Well, handsome, my arm tires. My shoulder that was hurt in  
previous wars, there were so many. My eyes have faded. I  
forget things but not all, not you. I drink tea which is barely  
warm having aligned itself with sunlight in the window. Birds  
whistle in distant trees, a fan cools as the day passes. What  
has been has been forecast: Perhaps in the end there will be  
tickets for us all.

cold hands  
the color  
of winter wheat

## **Without Question**

Peter Newton, Winchendon, MA

who lets go first?  
the leaf or the tree?  
is it the earth or sky that decides?  
does the grass ask to be cut?  
the mower to be put through its paces?  
to whom were the tulips ever a source of food?  
why do deer wear their white tails the way they do?  
isn't gathering a form of hunting?  
hunting a form of gathering?  
what if we could all beat the odds?  
what in the world would any of us do then?  
is hell other people like Sartre said?  
or just other people's children like I don't know who said?  
but isn't it true in many cases  
humor is key?

raking things over as I think the yard

## Whales

Michael Dylan Welch, Sammamish, WA

1.

The whale's curve splits the water, leaving a wake that melds with ours. In the spray of wind, we cannot hear the whale spouting, but we hear each other oo-ing and ah-ing. The tour boat surges forward in the same direction until the whale dives.

clanging buoy—  
we keep looking  
to where it was

2.

The whale's curve splits the sand, its heavy flesh swarmed with flies. We are close enough to look into its large eye as we leave our own marks in the windblown sand. Though its spine is curved as if to disappear beneath the waves, it never dives.

dark blubber—  
the size of its shadow  
in blazing sunlight

3.

The whale's curve splits in two, heavy wet machetes swinging in unison. The tribal dancers sing and chant, stray feathers and modern grease paint flying and dripping. Blood drains away into concrete gutters, making its final dive.

tribal elder  
pausing in his dance  
to open his cell phone

4.

The whale's curve blocks out the sun. Its calf follows closely in its mother's shadow, as swells above them roll and roll. Together they rise for an intake of air.

a thousand bubbles—  
each one the shape  
of a pulsing jellyfish

## The Cougar

Sheila Sondik, Bellingham, WA

Three years ago, my husband and I took a hike with another couple to a waterfall on Tiger Mountain. On the other side of the chasm, we were amazed to see a large wild cat stretched out on a ledge, spotlighted by the sun.

Strange that we've never reminisced about this, our only sighting of a wild feline. What kind of cat was it anyway? Cougar, lynx, bobcat? I don't remember its having the tufted ears of a lynx. I don't remember our talking about what species we were seeing up on Tiger Mountain.

I visited my friends recently and asked them about this sighting. They remembered the outing, but not the cat. Neil said he'd never seen a wild cat. I was beginning to doubt the veracity of this vivid memory. When I got home, I searched my computer for photos from this hike and found five. Three were of Marnie and Neil at the railing overlooking the falls. The other two were cryptic shots of rocks and ferns. They looked like stage sets which the actors had vacated just before the shutter clicked.

When my husband got home from work, I asked him if he remembered anything extraordinary about that hike. He didn't.

I suppose that sometime after our waterfall viewing, my subconscious, in classic Freudian wish-fulfillment manner, produced this dream vision. Later, with tail switching, the phantom migrated on padded feet into my autobiography.

tiger lily  
we stop dead  
in our tracks

### **Voorhies Hill**

John Stevenson, Nassau, NY

My best friend through childhood and adolescence was one of twelve siblings, falling somewhere in the middle. His family lived on a farm, from which they drew subsistence and little more. The family was proud. Some were prouder than others.

birth certificate  
an honorable  
mention

### **Portage la Prairie**

Ruth Holzer, Herndon, VA

Potato-growing, wheat-growing, heartland town, with its tattooed teenagers and washed-out young mothers. Strip malls bake under the endless pale sky. The provincial jail stands in classic dignity near a Subway. Down by the river, the youth offender center. Far and wide not a soul carrying a canoe.

prairie dusk—  
the sharp-tailed grouse  
drumming their feet

### **Downsizing**

Roberta Beary, Bethesda, MD

In class the instructor tells us there are two kinds of people, keepers and throwers. I already know I am a keeper. Tell me something I don't know, I mutter. My husband gives me a look. He raises his hand and says he's a thrower. I knew that already too.

car clutter the coffee cup's smiley face

## **Autumn Walk**

Jacqueline Pearce, Vancouver, BC

Crows drop chestnuts on the road ahead of me. The glossy, brown nuts bounce and crack, revealing the white inner meat. One crow drops a plastic bubble (the kind with a tiny toy prize inside). I pause to watch as, over and over, the crow flies up, drops the bubble, flies down to prod it with its beak, then flies up to drop it again. But, the strange nut does not break open.

rustle of dry leaves . . .  
what your letter  
doesn't say

## **Patchwork**

Pat Tompkins, San Mateo, CA

Her hands are cold but damp. The skin appears paler in contrast to the thick nails, a bluish purple spotted with white. Puffy fingers move stiffly, as though without joints. Although able to grasp a pen or crochet hook, her hands cannot manipulate tools. No longer can needlecrafts help pass long hours of TV. She can hardly feel her grandson's hand, hot, sticky, smooth as polished stone but tiny, lost in hers, a crocus bud muffled by drifts of snow.

the wind-shaped rabbit  
becomes a whale  
the speed of change

## Remembering Kam Holifield, AKA Pearl\*

Cor van den Heuvel, New York, NY

Indian Summer  
on the forsythia bush  
one blossom

~Kam Holifield

Her little garden plot in the community garden was, she would say, “the size of a cat’s forehead.” She loved all kinds of plants. I still have a stalk of bayberry she gave me a long time ago—decades. It stands in a narrow glass vase on a small lamp shelf just above my desk, next to a wooden-framed vintage color photograph of Mount Chocorua. It still has its blue-grey bayberries on it. I had been reading a book to my son Dirk when he was about six or seven that was about a boy whose grandfather taught him, among other things, how to make bayberry candles. When I told her about this book and the grandfather Mustafa, who was a sorcerer as well as a candle maker, Kam asked me if I were familiar with bayberry and I said no.

At the next meeting of our Spring Street Haiku Group, she brought in the slightly more than a foot-high stalk of the plant with its leaves and clusters of berries. The leaves, now dried and withered but still intact, stand sentinel above the muted color of the berries clinging like small beads along the stalk.

lighting up the garden  
the pale-blue phlox takes its scent  
softly into twilight

\*Whenever Kam took part in a formal reading of her haiku, she would announce herself as “Kam Holifield, AKA Pearl,” pronouncing the three letters, rather than saying the words “Also Known As.” Kam’s haiku from *Five O’Clock Shadow*, Spring Street Haiku Group, NY, NY. © 2000. All Rights Reserved.



**Lightly Traveled Roads**  
Glenn G. Coats, Prospect, VA

Dry summer. The Wichecheoke is down to a trickle and in some parts of the creek bed there is no water at all—only stones. Still the boys ride their bikes down every evening to a spot they have christened Deep Hole. They flip over rocks and find crickets, salamanders, or worms—anything they can thread on a hook, toss in the pool, and catch pan fish with. I tell them to be home before dark but they seldom are.

Last night on the ride back, they heard Mrs. Crowley screaming for help. The boys found her in tears and Mr. Crowley slumped behind the wheel of his pick-up truck. He had on his overalls, long-sleeved shirt, and that engineer's cap he always wore. No neighbors close by. No telephone.

Johnny is the younger of the two boys—thirteen, about a head taller than a fence post. He drove my tractor a few times and drove his mother's car up and down the lane—nothing more. Johnny pushed and his brother pulled Mr. Crowley over to the passenger side of the cab. Then Andrew closed the door, ran around the truck, and slid in the middle. Johnny got behind the wheel and started the engine, his eyes barely above the steering wheel. The truck bucked and sputtered down the lane and Johnny drove back roads to Route Twelve. It was dark then—not much traffic.

The boys parked the truck by the Emergency Room door and called out, "Help! Help! Somebody needs help!" They didn't hang around, knew there was nothing to say or do. The man had been dead for some time.

insects at night  
the whisper of prayers  
through a screen

## Commute

*Mt. Union, Pennsylvania*

Matthew Caretti, Mercersburg, PA

They climbed out of necessity. To a quarry. A livelihood.  
Support for a family. Now the young make the trek for fitness.  
Lycra-clad. Sipping designer water. A self-conscious move-  
ment to preserve what is soon lost.

a thousand steps  
in each fitted stone  
a story

## Early Autumn

Adelaide B. Shaw, Millbrook, NY

A sunny, crisp day. Here and there a splash of red, a tinge of  
yellow. In the maple, one thick branch glows golden. The rest  
remains green. The coloring on most trees is random, almost  
quixotic, except for the dogwoods along the fence. They look  
to be painted by an artist obsessed with symmetry, dark red on  
the tips of the leaves, dark green towards the stems. Each tree  
a copy of the others.

from first light  
a plan of no plans  
to color the day



# Essays

**Newku for Old?  
*Haiku 21* and *Haiku 2014* as Guides  
to the Experimental and Traditional in Haiku  
(With an Extended Digression into Richard Gilbert's  
*The Disjunctive Dragonfly*)<sup>1</sup>**

Lee Gurga, White Heath, IL

Scott Metz and I faced an interesting challenge when we were editing *Haiku 21*. We were attempting to present haiku from the full range of contemporary practice, from the best “traditional” to the most innovative. The difficulty of our task was reflected in reviewers’ comments on the anthology—from Klaus-Dieter Wirth’s review in *Chrysanthemum*, which declared it “a public nuisance,” to Michael Dylan Welch’s in *Modern Haiku*, which observed that “this sea change may simply leave some poets at sea.”

You may not believe this, but there was a time when some of us thought that we knew what haiku was—or is. R.H. Blyth taught us that haiku is Zen and that Zen is haiku. All we had to do was to learn what Zen was and we were set. And wouldn’t that be fun, anyway?<sup>2</sup>

Then Kenneth Yasuda taught us that haiku is an *experience of aesthetic contemplation* called *The Haiku Moment*.<sup>3</sup>

Then Herold Henderson taught us that haiku contains a *nature image* and refers to *a particular event in the present*. And that haiku uses the technique of *internal comparison*, better known as *juxtaposition*.<sup>4</sup>

Then Cor van den Heuvel taught us that *concision, perception, and awareness* are the essence of haiku.<sup>5</sup>

More recently, Haruo Shirane taught us that in addition to a *horizontal axis rooted in the present*, haiku must also have a *vertical axis connecting the poem to a cultural memory of language, philosophy and aesthetics* that engage the poem in a dialogue with poets of the past as well as those of the present.<sup>6</sup>

Then, in *Poems of Consciousness*, Richard Gilbert reminded us that *kire*, or cutting, and fragmentary language are key semantic features of haiku.<sup>7</sup> And now in his 2013 *The Disjunctive Dragonfly*,<sup>8</sup> he tells us that haiku have three *genre features: perceptual disjunction, misreading as meaning, and overturning semantic expectation*.

It's not as straightforward as one might think to "know" haiku!

### *Haiku 21*

We will begin with *Haiku 21 (H21)*. Several "how to" haiku books have appeared on the market in recent years, including books by Bruce Ross, Jane Reichhold, and myself. Scott and I conceived of *Haiku 21* as a "what to" rather than a "how to" haiku book. As we wrote in the introduction,

We want to cover the whole gamut of contemporary haiku. We looked for poems that demonstrate ambiguity without obscurity, that demonstrate the range of haiku emotionally, intellectually, imaginatively, linguistically. In other words, poems that answer the question, "What can haiku be?"

As you read this anthology, you may discover that many of the haiku that seem entirely new or puzzling contain surprisingly traditional elements. You may, on the other hand, find yourself bewildered by some of the new directions in haiku. One haiku poet sent me a short essay he had written titled, "How Lee Gurga and *Haiku 21* Ruined Haiku for Me." I hope not to ruin haiku for any of you.

That said, we have this new anthology, *Haiku 2014 (H2014)*, subtitled "100 notable ku from 2013." Notable haiku—what does that mean? We are not claiming to have assembled the

“best” haiku of 2013, as others may do. What is best from today will be decided, not by us, but by future voices. What we can highlight—what we’ve tried to highlight here—are *haiku that are attempting to extend the tradition while remaining a part of that tradition.*

How is this done? To expand the tradition risks destroying it. To conserve the tradition necessarily limits it. As examples from *Haiku 21* or from our newborn *Haiku 2014* suggest, notable haiku take defining concepts traditionally associated with haiku (brief form, concrete seasonal images, juxtaposition, grammatical incompleteness, and the playful use of language) and reinterpret them with a twist.

### Defining Elements

**Form.** Let’s begin with form. Haiku today are almost always briefer than the “traditional” 17-syllable form. The briefest in *Haiku 21* is Carolyn Hall’s

sept-  
ember

I think we could spend an hour on this haiku. In fact, David Lanoue has said that at a conference in Germany they *did* spend an hour debating whether or not it is a haiku.<sup>9</sup>

While shorter forms are in vogue today, sometimes a poet is able to artfully craft a haiku that is “invisibly” 17 syllables, a worthy accomplishment. My favorite is Peter Yovu’s

mosquito she too  
insisting insisting she  
is is is is is

**Concrete Seasonal Image.** This image is still often present, but in many cases is balanced with an abstract image rather than a second concrete one. As Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro wrote:

The abstract should become concrete and the concrete abstract. That is to say, a perfect equilibrium should obtain between the two, because if the abstract keeps stretching you further towards the abstract, it will come apart in your hands and sift through your fingers. The concrete, if made still more concrete, can perhaps serve you some wine . . . or furnish your parlor, but it can never furnish your soul.<sup>10</sup>

Here are two haiku that in my mind effectively juxtapose the concrete and abstract:

quiet graveyard  
warm breeze and an end  
to alphabetic order

not male  
not female  
snowing

LeRoy Gorman

John Martone

Traditional seasonal images are still used, but often in startling ways, sometimes in such a way as to produce what could be considered “anti-haiku”:

cherry blossoms  
worth a spider’s laugh  
no more

Mark Brooks

Others approach the seasonal image with a lighter touch:

dandelion: dos & dont’s

Aditya Bahl

spring dawn  
I put on  
my gender

David G. Lanoue

**Juxtaposition.** Juxtaposition in traditional haiku usually takes place between the two images of the poem. This is still the primary technique of haiku.

big bang  
the cough of the old astronaut  
living alone

Dietmar Tauchner

**Disjunction.** In today's haiku, juxtaposition can take place in surprising new ways. Sometimes it occurs within a single image, created by combining disparate senses within it, or by overlapping the senses of nearby images, creating a cognitive shift or vibrating field of coherence, what Richard Gilbert refers to as perceptual disjunction. Disjunction, according to Gilbert, can be accomplished in many ways; he lists 24. For example, one can use fractured syntax, thus "overturning semantic expectation." Here Marlene Mountain takes us from the incomplete syntax of traditional haiku to fractured syntax:

out of nowhere isn't

And another from Brendan Slater:

you whisper  
just your sometimes

One can use a shifting sense of pivot to create different levels of meaning as we read the haiku in various ways. Take, for example, Marian Olson's

unable to hide the migrating birds in his eyes

By presenting the haiku in one line, rather than in a three-line form that would direct us how to read the poem, Olson gives us the opportunity to experience it in several ways, first experiencing each part separately:

unable to hide  
  
the migrating birds  
  
in his eyes

and then putting them together in various ways. After "unable to hide" we don't know if we are trying to hide or we are trying to hide something or if something is trying to hide from us. Then with the addition of "the migrating birds" we have

introduced an image from nature into the poem. Then we add “in his eyes” which shifts the locus of the poem from the sky to an intimate personal encounter and causes a shift from the literal to the figurative. Whether the focus of the poem is on the poet’s inability to hide or on the apprehension of a loss of intimacy with the beloved, it is artfully done—and in the haiku way, shifting from literal to figurative and back again.

Awareness of the primacy of disjunction over juxtaposition began with Richard Gilbert’s essay “Disjunction in Contemporary English-Language Haiku,” published in *Modern Haiku* 35.2 (2004), where he wrote,

Overall, the play between reading and misreading, between the plain existence of nouns as known things, and the strangeness (idiosyncrasy) of collocation creates a perceptually disjunctive tension, resulting in a form of semantic paradox which can be called misreading as meaning, as the process of misreading, in itself, powers the reader’s poetic experience and the poem’s significance. . . .Next, semantic expectations are overturned. (p. 27)

In the updating of his essay published as *The Disjunctive Dragonfly in 2013*, Gilbert has codified these effects of haiku as *genre features*. In a section titled “Genre Features: Three Main Techniques,” he writes,

These disjunctive genre features are found in all haiku to some degree, and include the use of *kire/cutting*, compression, and *katakoto* (a tensile brevity; or sense of “fragmentary” language):

- 1) Perceptual Disjunction
- 2) Misreading as Meaning (a falling out of, and recovery of meaning)
- 3) Overturning Semantic Expectation (p. 45)

Here is a haiku of Scott Metz’s that very deliberately uses all of these features:



man  
u  
fact  
u

red  
rose

echoing mountain  
lingering body

We begin with “man.” OK, a pretty straight forward noun. Then “u.” What now? Is this Text Speak? Is it direct address? Then we add another noun: fact. “man u fact.” Well, a man is a fact, sometimes. Then “man u fact u.” Are we back to direct address again? Is this rap? Then the poet indicates a break, telling us we are going somewhere new. Then “red.” OK—a color. Then “red rose.” Clear enough. Then “echoing mountain.” Certainly an image inviting an appeal to the *yūgen* aesthetic of traditional haiku. Then “lingering body.” An intimacy here, one that invites one to make the “echoing mountain” more archetypal than geological. But there is much more here. Going back, we see that “man u fact u red” can be collated differently as “manufactured,” giving us a completely different picture of what is going on here. No doubt we have “the strangeness of collocation” creating “a *perceptually disjunctive* tension” here. And there is no doubt that a “misreading as meaning” is effected by the poet by overturning our semantic expectations. And there are other things going on here, too. For example, a juxtaposition between a language-based approach in the first “line” and a traditional, image-based approach in the last two lines. Quite a *tour de force* in a six-word haiku!

Working your way into a haiku like this might seem like a lot of work. Some people are troubled by haiku that they don’t “get” immediately—they seem at odds with the ideal of the “haiku moment” that has so long been a part of ELH. But, as Victor Shklovsky wrote in “Art as Technique,” and Scott and I agree, “The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things

as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make the object “unfamiliar,” to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because *the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.*”<sup>11</sup> (Italics mine.)

### ***A Disjunctive Dragonfly Digression***

Now that we have introduced Gilbert’s genre features and looked at them in terms of a single haiku, it might be a good time to take an extended excursion together into his *The Disjunctive Dragonfly*.

Early in the book, Gilbert states his purpose: “One of the aims of this updated essay is to provide the reader with a new collection of haiku, most composed and published in the last few years, exemplifying the burgeoning growth and continuing evolution of innovation in ELH, as seen in the light of language style and technique.” (p.10) *In the light of language style and technique*: in other words, from the point of view of *linguistics*. As such Gilbert’s treatise is different from most previous examinations of haiku, since it leaves out completely the issue of content. This is something to keep in mind as we examine Gilbert’s thoughts.

Gilbert has divided his presentation of techniques into three groups: the first he labels “genre features,” mentioned above. These are the “three disjunctive modes” he claims are “prevalent in all haiku.” The second set of techniques, “expanding the palette,” comprises 14 *additional* disjunctive modes which, he writes, “encourage reader de-familiarization regarding the text.” The third set, called “strong reader resistance,” includes seven *additional* disjunctive modes which, as he says, “instrumentally challenge reader comprehensibility.” In addition, he has a fourth section demonstrating the wide range of *degrees* of disjunction that can be present in effective haiku. It is worth emphasizing that he explicitly states that stronger *disjunction does not necessarily make for a stronger haiku*—a point worth keeping in mind as we consider his ideas and as we write our own haiku.

My main interest here is in Gilbert's first group, the "genre features." Please note that by choosing this characterization Gilbert has in effect given us, for the first time in decades, what amounts to a new definition of haiku.

What are these genre features, which Gilbert writes "are found in all haiku to some degree"? They are, to repeat:

1. Perceptual Disjunction
2. Misreading as Meaning
3. Overturning Semantic Expectation

Note that this is quite a different approach to the essence of haiku than Yasuda's *haiku moment* or Cor van den Heuvel's *concision, perception, and awareness*. What is radically different about Gilbert's approach is that the genre features are not posited as elements of the poem—language features—but as effects of the poem on the reader's *consciousness*.

I think the first feature, **perceptual disjunction**, is fairly easy to understand. It proposes, essentially, that haiku is not simply a narrative, a straight-line journey from point A to point B. There are some bumps in the road, traditionally called "cuts" in haiku, and these take us in unexpected directions. But is it more than that, for disjunction can be caused by things other than the fragmentation of language.

The second feature, **misreading as meaning**, is key to Gilbert's approach to haiku. Remember he wrote that "the process of misreading, in itself, powers the reader's poetic experience and the poem's significance" and additionally that "'misreading as meaning' occurs as reader phenomenology." In a personal email exchange he elaborated further. Because of the brevity of haiku, in reading a haiku there occurs

[a] circulation of reading/cognition/experiencing/re-reading. The process isn't static—because there is no definitive landing point semantically, one re-reads, and each reading is slightly or wildly different, and each one is "correct" in its positing of and for those moments, and also incorrect, with regard to

antecedent and consequent readings. And it is this *ongoing process in its entirety* that creates misreading as meaning. The meaning isn't in or only within the readings, it's in the interactive-intersubjective process as an entirety. Further, though I may have stated this only once or twice, it's through this process that haiku deepen, in reader-experience. I am talking about a dynamism which has only been described rather perfunctorily as "incompleteness" or "suggestion."<sup>12</sup>

When speaking of misreading, the elephant in the room is, of course, Harold Bloom, who championed misreading in his 1973 *Anxiety of Influence* and then again in *A Map of Misreading*, where he states, "Reading, . . . if strong, is always a misreading." (p. 3) Gilbert's approach to reader phenomenology is, however, significantly different from Bloom's—Bloom is dealing with authorial tradition and lineage while Gilbert is dealing with reader reception. While Bloom's theory deals with the issue of poets borrowing from and then misreading predecessors in order to develop their own voices, Gilbert's misreading pertains to the phenomenology of reading individual haiku. He goes as far as to say that haiku is "a poetic genre that is designed to be misread."

Gilbert's third genre feature, **overturning semantic expectation**, has been a feature of haiku that all of us have consciously or unconsciously been using for years. In some cases, it results from haiku's incomplete syntax or fragmentation of syntax, in other cases from compression or unexpected collations. Of it, Gilbert says,

"Semantic expectation" has to do with what we expect of sentences and words, word parts and images that arise from such formations/deformations. . . . You cannot write haiku without "reversals" (semantic deformation) and most poetry implies this language feature, or we wouldn't call it "poetry." . . . So, this concept is generic—where "misreading as meaning" is definitely not.<sup>13</sup>

Those who are working to get a better handle on these three concepts might do well to spend some time with the nine haiku in the section of *The Disjunctive Dragonfly* called "Haiku

Exhibiting Strong Disjunction.” It’s unfortunate that Gilbert doesn’t discuss these haiku in more detail than he does, but at least he has put this group together for consideration. In fact, I have nowhere been able to find where he has given an extended elaboration of these three genre features—only snippets here and there. This is a deficiency that I hope he will remedy soon.

Gilbert’s work reminds us that not only literary or grammatical or content or language features define haiku. There are cognitive features as well or perhaps cognitive features primarily. In this sense his message is akin to that of R.H. Blyth. It may seem curious to think of Gilbert and Blyth together, but they have more in common than meets the eye. (The difference in their approaches has been humorously contrasted by Bill Ramsey in his *Roadrunner* essay, “From R.H. Blyth to Richard Gilbert: The Postmodern Turn from Essence.”)<sup>14</sup>

Blyth told us that haiku is Zen. Now Richard Gilbert tells us that haiku is cognitive poetics, reader phenomenology. As if to say that the Zen is not cognitive poetics and reader phenomenology.

Blyth said don’t mistake the pointing finger for the moon. Gilbert seems to say don’t mistake the moon for the moon. Or perhaps Gilbert is saying don’t mistake the moon for the mind. Or the mind for the moon. I’m not sure I can make out which one it is.

To return to *The Disjunctive Dragonfly*, I’m not sure how helpful its extensive taxonomy of techniques will be to most haiku poets. I think it would have been more helpful for him to discuss and demonstrate the potentials of more fundamental concepts such as *cutting*, *compression*, and *fragmentary language* than present a taxonomy of arcane disjunctive techniques such as “forensic parthenogenesis” and “alchemical distillation.” Nevertheless, the book provides a useful anthology of interesting contemporary haiku selected by today’s leading theorist of English-language haiku. This, surely, is enough reason to consider its contents carefully. His explication of some of the poems is also valuable, particularly his

tender handling of haiku such as Richard Wright's "just enough of rain / to bring the smell of silk / from the umbrellas," which is touching in the extreme. Gilbert has done much to legitimize a wide range of content and language approaches as haiku. For this we are all greatly in his debt—as is *Haiku 2014*.

### *Haiku 2014*

Returning to the haiku, today we find a shift from the traditional *yūgen* mystery of misty mountains to a mystification spun by paradox, or in Gilbert's lexicon the semantic paradox that stimulates meaning from misreading, as Michele Root-Bernstein does here:

this morning  
it takes the iris to open  
forever

Another, from Peter Newton:

impossible clowns introducing the theory of chaos

and George Swede:

between what  
I think and what is  
lawn flamingo

In these poems the impossibility of the paradox creates what Gilbert has told me is a stronger form of disjunction than the contrast offered by traditional haiku juxtaposition. As we read haiku like John Stevenson's

leaf color of an old song turning

or Patrick Sweeney's

the penetrating catechism of the freezing rain

we do well to remember, too, what Carl Jung wrote about paradox:

Oddly enough the paradox is one of our most valuable spiritual possessions, while uniformity of meaning is a sign of weakness. . . . only the paradox comes anywhere near to comprehending the fullness of life. Non-ambiguity and non-contradiction are one-sided and thus unsuited to express the incomprehensible.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, today's haiku have added to *syn*-aesthesia, the overlapping of multiple senses that is a traditional ideal of haiku, what might be called *surreal*-aesthesia:

the phantom limb  
of believing  
*war is over*

Robert Epstein

wounded sky—the apothecary fly returns to base camp

Sara Winteridge

Contemporary haiku practice often foregrounds language, sometimes as subject, as Gary Hotham does here:

night  
the side of earth  
the noun is on

Sometimes as a miniaturized philological discourse, as in Jack Galmitz's:

the  
a  
born in England

“a” what? And “the” what? Is it a puzzle for us to solve? Or is Galmitz saying that the articles “the” and “a” are born in England? Or perhaps that the indefinite article, “the a” was born there? Or something else entirely? And then there is the word

“born,” which introduces a new ontology. “A” and “the” are no longer cast in a foundry or stamped out in a factory, but have become living beings. We are present at the creation of a new world, populated by the single-celled organisms “a” and “the.” *And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.*

Words can also be chosen to take us on a sound journey, with or without definite explicable meaning, as Ann K. Schwader does here:

stiff breeze—  
a forsythia’s  
forsythitude

or Mark Harris:

bomb nor embody to take blue sky

or Roland Packer:

styx and bones the cry of a stone

### Concluding Thoughts

With this we end our brief survey of form, seasonal images, juxtaposition, grammatical incompleteness, and the playful use of language in contemporary haiku, with a side trip into Richard Gilbert’s genre features. As we explore new techniques in haiku, and nurture old ones, let us be reminded of the Matsuyama Declaration, which told us that haiku is not merely *personal narrative* nor mere *wordplay*. Haiku *at its best* is *symbolic poetry*; haiku *at its best* transcends the personal and approaches the universal:

home alone a pear’s empty face

Marilyn Appl Walker

In exploring how to achieve this, we would do well to keep in mind Haruo Shirane’s exhortation to follow Bashō in writing



haiku with both a vertical and horizontal axis. As Shirane wrote, “There were two key axes: one horizontal, the present, the contemporary world; and the other vertical, leading back into the past, to history, to other poems.”<sup>16</sup>

The horizontal axis is, of course, *our* present. One can approach the vertical axis in several different ways. One can have references to literature, as Mike Dillon with his:

and the buzzard also rises

or David Caruso’s powerful:

columbine, by any other name

One can remember childhood grammar as Kate S. Godsey does in:

I am  
you are, he is  
jellyfish

Or childhood games, with Sabine Miller’s:

rock paper scissors ocean

One can mimic aphorism, as John Martone does in:

*not*  
*from here*

how  
nothing  
is

or Don Wentworth in:

hiding in everything plain sight

One can explore the intersection of history and language, as Christina Nguyen does in:

nothing rhymes with it Agent Orange

or Paul Pflieger, Jr. does in:

isms with our clothes on

One of the negative assessments of traditional ELH, of what is referred to as “*shasei*-style” haiku, is that it is nothing more than “naïve realism.” In an essay on avant-garde haiku, Philip Roland referred to a particularly insipid kind of haiku we should avoid, the haiku of “watery pebbles.”<sup>17</sup> Here Kris Kondo has moved beyond them with a wink and a nudge:

pebble poems  
&  
black rain

There is no doubt that haiku of naïve realism are not as interesting as haiku with deeper levels of meaning, the kind of haiku, neither naïve nor befuddling, that many of us strive to write. Some will prefer haiku like Steven Carter’s

oncologist’s aquarium the goldfish know

Others will prefer Helen Buckingham’s

at seven we are replicants

or Mike Andrelczyk’s

starfish in the mathematical Bahamas

Some might say that these last two haiku don’t have much to offer the reader or the haiku genre. What they have to offer is something different than what we have been accustomed to in

our haiku: an invitation that shifts from the heart to the mind. While we each have our preferences—some for goldfish, others for replicants—we need them both and our haiku must address them both, both heart and mind.

Not all would agree with me—including those who have helped place American haiku on the map. In response to Philip Rowland’s essay “Avant-Garde Haiku,” for instance, Cor van den Heuvel wrote the following on the poetry of John Ashbury:

[T]he magician’s tools Ashbury uses are such things as non-referent pronouns, jarred syntax, juxtaposition of phrases that don’t coalesce into meaning, logical statements that veer off to non sequiturs, incomplete sentences, and so on. The result is that the poem . . . is always on the verge of making sense, yet almost always slips away into meaninglessness again. . . . His poetry is interesting, often even fascinating but is as far from haiku’s concerns as a sonnet by Shakespeare. And this includes his “haiku.”<sup>18</sup>

I concur: if concision, perception, and awareness are what you’re looking for, then non-referent pronouns, jarred syntax, juxtaposition of phrases that don’t coalesce into meaning, logical statements that veer off to non sequiturs, incomplete sentences, and so on, seem to be going in exactly the opposite direction you want to travel. Maybe I should write an essay “How Richard Gilbert and *The Disjunctive Dragonfly* ruined haiku for me” or “How Scott Metz and *Roadrunner* ruined haiku for me” or maybe even “How Lee Gurga ruined haiku for me.” But when I read a haiku like Michelle Tennison’s

just please how to forgive spring rain

or Jim Westenhaver’s

lettuce your grandmother’s car

I find that there is perception and awareness here—perhaps just not the sort of perception and awareness I was looking for when I walked in the door.

There are dangers that face us as poets as we get older. As Randall Jarrell once wrote, “a man who is a good poet at 40 *may* turn out to be a good poet at 60; but he is more likely to have stopped writing poems, to be doing exercises in his own manner, or to have reverted to whatever commonplaces were popular when he was young.”<sup>19</sup>

A practical alternative to this conservative stance is to strive to be what someone once called the psychologist Carl Jung: *an avant-garde conservative*. This is what Bashō was—he broke new ground while preserving the best of the tradition he inherited. To combine the centrifugal forces of the avant-garde with the centripetal forces which connect us to our common human heritage—that is the challenge. Isaac Newton helped us understand how the balance between these two forces creates a cosmos: without centrifugal forces we become an inert pile of rubble. Without centripetal forces we don’t have a home. You might personally appreciate grounded haiku, or haiku that put you into orbit. Whatever your tastes, *Haiku 21*, *Haiku 2014*, and whatever anthologies may follow aim to present the variety and vibrancy of contemporary haiku, and to inspire new approaches in writing. I believe that the haiku in these two anthologies—like any good haiku—form a guidebook to life, the life of the mind, the life of the senses, and the life of the heart, that can help us find a path to the Haiku Cosmos, to a

blue swallowtail corner of the psyche

that contains a home for all of us.

### Notes

1. This essay was originally presented as a talk at the Cradle of American Haiku Festival at Mineral Point, Wisconsin, on July 26, 2014.
2. R.H. Blyth, *Haiku* (Tokyo: Hokuseido, 1949), vol. 1.
3. Kenneth Yasuda, *The Japanese Haiku* (Rutland, VT: C. E. Tuttle Co., 1958).
4. Harold Henderson, *Haiku in English* (Rutland, VT: C. E. Tuttle Co., 1967).

5. Cor van den Heuvel, "Concision, Perception, Awareness—Haiku," *New York Times Sunday Book Review* (March 29, 1987).
6. Haruo Shirane, "Beyond the Haiku Moment: Bashō, Buson and Modern Haiku Myths," *Modern Haiku* 31.1 (winter-spring 2000), 48–63.
7. Richard Gilbert, *Poems of Consciousness* (Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2008).
8. Richard Gilbert, *The Disjunctive Dragonfly* (Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2013).
9. Discussion at HSA meeting, Atlanta, GA, March 21, 2014.
10. Vicente Huidobro, *MANIFESTOS manifest* (Copenhagen and Los Angeles: Green Integer Press, 1999), 60.
11. Quoted in Reuven Tsur, *Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics* (Eastbourne, Sussex, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2008), 4.
12. Richard Gilbert, personal correspondence, 2014.07.10.
13. Ibid.
14. Retrieved November 15, 2014 from [http://www.roadrunnerjournal.com/pages93/Ways\\_In\\_Roadrunner\\_August\\_2009.pdf](http://www.roadrunnerjournal.com/pages93/Ways_In_Roadrunner_August_2009.pdf).
15. Cited in Murry Stein, ed., *Jung on Christianity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 192.
16. Shirane, "Beyond the Haiku Moment," 53.
17. *Frogpond* 25:1 (2002), 47–59.
18. Cor van den Heuvel, "A Dialogue on the Experimental," *Frogpond* 25:3 (2002), 53.
19. Randall Jarrell, *Poetry and the Age* (New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1953), 147–48.



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## Beautiful Dance: A Conversation with Eve Luckring About Video Art and Haiku

Michele Root-Bernstein, East Lansing, MI

I first “met” Eve Luckring in the pages of *A New Resonance* 6, where her haiku were presented as “thumbnail sketches for short stories,” alive with introspection and self-discovery.<sup>1</sup> Bumping into her again, in the pages of haiku journals, in an online kukai, I found myself relearning her lineaments, for her poetry, it seemed to me, headed rapidly for the frontiers of haiku territory. Because Eve is also an artist at work in video, sound, photography and installation, the trajectory intrigued but did not surprise me. Polymaths, individuals with strong interest and activity in more than one field of endeavor, dominate the annals of creative achievement. Challenged and compelled by her art, I jumped at the chance to get to know her in person. This is an edited, compressed version of our face-to-face conversation in Los Angeles, June 18, 2014.

**Michele:** Eve, what fascinates me about your work, both in video and haiku, is the fusion of visual and verbal arts. Which is the chicken and which the egg?

**Eve:** Both? I can’t make neat categories. Depending on what I’m attending to, different ways of thinking kick in. With writing poetry there’s a very visual thing that happens. If I’m in the words, I’m seeing. And then with the visual work, it’s a language to me. There’s a syntax I’m always working with. So the visual and the verbal are very fused; I don’t know really how to break them apart.

**M:** Some of your haiku that I consider my favorites would attest to that, for instance

A country road. A tree.

for lack of a bit of  
crow

Tell me, have you always been interested in language and visual art, *both*?

**E:** Yes. But the first formal training I had in anything was music lessons, like a lot of middle-class kids. And they were very, very impactful for me. I'm as attuned to sound fabrics as much as anything. Sound is key for me. It's almost like the bridge between the visual and verbal.

**M:** Can we talk about the connections between all three in your video installation, *Chicken*? I watched it several times on your website,<sup>2</sup> and was taken with how much like haiku the visual-aural piece is. Can you describe it for us and what you were trying to accomplish?

**E:** I used a large warehouse space to create a virtual chicken coop. Human-size chickens scurry across a 36 foot by 9 foot screen made of six vellum panels. Three different video projections intersect side by side to create a frenetic effect. The space is filled with squawking coming from behind the screen, behind the audience, and from both sides of the room. There is a strong physical relationship between the chickens and the viewer's body because of the scale and how that activates peripheral vision. Some people came in and saw these big chickens and bright colors and movement and were just satisfied with that on that level. I remember a colleague of mine who said, "So it's just bright colors and chickens running around," and I thought, No. Okay, for you it is, but that's just one level.

**M:** I agree. For me, *Chicken* looked like what you might see through a kaleidoscope. And the fracturing was happening at two different levels, at least. The visual fracturing was gorgeous, but it wasn't until I was "in there" for a while that the sound of chickens clucking started getting fractured, too. Towards the end, especially, the clucking seems syncopated, compressed—like music to this particular chicken dance. It all added up to something, even before I could say what.

**E:** Yes. I was thinking about the gestures and the movement and the sound and the installation of the fractured screens as reflecting our contemporary lifestyles: this constant "look here, look there" running around; this anxious rush through things and no focus. And there's this anti-climax, when one of the chickens

makes this feeble attempt to fly. Nothing culminates in the end and then the video loops back round to the beginning. What I attempted to do is bring the visual experience to a visceral level for viewers, so that in the gut, affected by sight and sound, they are feeling something that may be difficult to articulate, but will take them to this other place.

**M:** It did me. Aside from the sensual immersion, *Chicken* had me thinking of artists who have worked with permutations—Sol LeWitt, for example, where there’s only one thing different as you move through a series of cubes.<sup>3</sup> Then I was thinking, a haiku poet might also move through iterations of a ku with slight slight slight changes, weighing what each one feels like. Additionally, there are certain themes that haikin write about, for instance, the moon. Take all the moon haiku and you have umpteen iterations of how we humans experience the moon.

**E:** I think the second way you frame it was on my mind. I was trying to integrate what I was doing with haiku into the visual work. I was thinking, this piece is about chicken-ness, in the same way so many haiku are about moon-ness. In fact, to me *Chicken* is a haiku—a visceral haiku.

**M:** A haiku without words? I love it!

**E:** That was the first time I tried to take the words out. It’s a long story, but when I went back to haiku, I was interested in its experiential, fragmentary, minimal nature. I was writing, but I had no intention of writing to write. I was writing for my studio work.

**M:** You said you “went back to haiku.” What’s your history with the form?

**E:** Very little. I had read it and had one class in college, a creative writing class, where I was writing poetry to go with my visual work. And my professor said, “Look, you’re a photographer, why don’t you write haiku?” And I’ll never forget that was the hardest thing I ever did. It took me a week to write one poem. And I didn’t continue it, then. But years later during a



crucial transition time—moving out of a ten-year public art practice back into the studio—I began reading haiku again, and then I began trying to write it. I realized I'd got bitten by haiku. I couldn't stop. I was studying it and finding out as much as I could about it. I wasn't thinking about writing haiku to write haiku, I was thinking of it to help me move my visual work into a new place. I began writing a series of poems—they weren't really haiku, right?—to embroider them on butterfly nets. I tried all these things in the studio and they weren't working, but then I stripped them down to a series of words and actually used them in the piece that became *Wet Moon*.

**M:** Another video piece on your website. How would you describe it?

**E:** This is one installation I don't have good documentation of. *Wet Moon* is a concrete poem animated with motion graphics and rear-projected through four undulating screens, one in front of the other, suspended like sails. You walk into this vibrant blue cove-like space and the words float up from the back of the room changing shape through the screens, expanding and rocking, washing through your body, creating a strong sensation—many people felt they were on a boat.

**M:** Oh, wow! Was there an audio component?

**E:** Just the sound of chimes tracing the breeze.

**M:** Haiku ambience, too!

**E:** I think the actual installation became much more of a haiku than I could achieve in writing at that time. But I know now the piece isn't as condensed and consolidated as haiku. The floating words move you through something, but there's way more movement through time than in haiku. I'm not a purist about what a moment is, but *Wet Moon* is too long even for me to call it a haiku.

**M:** Haiku deconstructed, perhaps? The piece seems to play with certain elements of the genre—and can we change course a bit

here?—it raises certain questions, at least for me. Like, what is the optimal number of message channels in a work of art and what is the optimal relationship between message sets? I mean, ever since I heard Robert Irwin talk about the Getty Garden<sup>4</sup> he designed, ever since I walked its one path—(this was years ago, just after it opened)—I’ve wondered about over-control in art. When has too much been said and done by the artist? I want to choose my own path, my own point of view, my own vista through a garden. Ditto video art. Ditto haiku.

**E:** I agree with you about that garden, because I like it and I don’t like it at the same time. And this is the constant question. I mean, in critique with students that’s always what comes up. How much is enough to guide your viewer, your audience, and when are you smothering them? There’s a difference between control and getting the parts to cohere well enough so people can have access, yet, their own experience.

**M:** Actually, we have the same discussions with haiku all the time, don’t we? How much is too much information? Are fragment and phrase too close together, too far apart? How obvious is the link? How unexpected the shift? Which brings me to “Junicho Video-Renku #5,” also available for viewing on your website, and explicitly based on Japanese linked poetry.

**E:** Yes, it is. In fact, I’ll be presenting the finished series of twelve video-renku as a “book” at a film forum held by the Museum of Contemporary Art/MOCA in Los Angeles in September of 2014.<sup>5</sup>

**M:** What gave you the idea to model your video art on renku?

**E:** Well, when I started reading and writing renku, I was blown away by how similar the linking techniques were to film editing techniques. Then I learned that Eisenstein, the Russian filmmaker who actually was one of the early theorists of montage editing, was inspired by Kabuki Theater in Moscow and his own reading of haiku and tanka.

**M:** Was he!

**E:** Yes. If you look at Eisenstein's techniques, they are very analogous to linking techniques in renku. What renku does with link and shift, a video does with cutting. You bump two images up against one another and it's what happens between the two that creates meaning. I had been struggling to figure out how to put together a video without a three-dimensional context and, I thought, Ah, I'm going to use link and shift. And I did it very, very loosely in a piece called *Small Wonder* and then I got super-excited—Hey, Eisenstein was doing something like this, I wonder what would happen if I do it really rigorously and try to create video-renku!

**M:** What kinds of technical adjustments did you have to make to transfer renku form to video art?

**E:** The first thing I grappled with was, okay, long / short / long / short line lengths—how do I do that in video? If duration in video is the analogous element, then how to create a system of duration? I tried several things. At first I tried working with fixed durations or ranges of duration, for example, long equals greater than x seconds and short is less than y seconds, but what happens in a video, it just makes it clunky and stilted. You need an arc and a pace, and each clip carries its own rhythm, so that's where I was tweaking. I really was as rigorous as I possibly could be, long / short / long / short, but sometimes the difference in duration from one clip to the next is only by frames. Standard video format is 29.9 frames per second, so sometimes the difference is merely ten frames.

**M:** Fascinating! Did you get surprised in any way or otherwise end up constructing something visually that you would otherwise not have conceived or achieved?

**E:** Yes. In some ways I was making something I wouldn't otherwise have made. The first efforts I tried to do collaboratively, but that was a disaster. So I did it solo. And honestly, the amazing thing was I often didn't know what was going to come next. I actually often felt I was writing with other people. I really did. Because I'd get excited; I'd put this with this; and then I'm the new person, going, "Oh my god, what am I going to

do with that?” And sometimes I’d be stumped for weeks; I couldn’t figure out what to do. I didn’t plan, I just worked one verse at a time, just as you would if you were working collaboratively.

**M:** Can I ask why the junicho?

**E:** I picked the junicho because it’s the loosest structure.<sup>6</sup> There’s no designated *jo-ha-kyu* movement; there’s a lot of freedom—which makes it quite challenging in a different way. The form was invented in the 1980s by Shunjin and Seijo Okamoto. They named it junicho, meaning “twelve-tone” and to me that’s a nod to the composer Arnold Schoenberg . . .

**M:** And his atonal music.

**E:** Yeah, his twelve-tone serialism produces this discordant result. I thought, Oh, that’s really interesting. This contemporary form of renku is looking at its relationship to other fields of modern artistic composition outside of literature. Yet, as the form requires, I used traditional *kigo* for the seasons. Did you pick up on them?

**M:** Well, you’ve got your doves in the flowering tree . . . and close-ups of the moon’s surface.

**E:** Yes, it has a blossom link, and a moon link, the four seasons—starting with centipede for summer—and then the back-to-back love links. I had to stop making video-renku because I couldn’t write any more love links!

**M:** The ones in #5 are funny, clever—two guys shouting at each other on walkie-talkies, “but . . . but . . . I . . . I . . . . I love you!”

**E:** That’s where I broke some rules. They’re not at all what love links should be in a traditional renku—I couldn’t do it. Anyway, in answer to your question, why video-renku, the two forms seem so closely related that there was a natural merger. Almost more than with *Chicken* or *Wet Moon*.

**M:** Do videos and haiku start in the same place, and then at some point you make a decision that this will be video and that haiku? Or does something else happen?

**E:** For some reason it's very clear from the start which is which. When I work in video and photography, I'm out in the world. And the writing comes from the same place. In both situations, I feel like I'm responding. And I'm responding with my whole body. Camerawork for me is a very physical thing. And likewise, when I sense something in words, it also involves many different modalities, like sound, smell, texture, color—it's not usually just one sense. Maybe one sense gets highlighted or foregrounded; maybe it's almost like the words become a frame, the same way if I'm out photographing or video-taping, there's a frame. There's all this stuff happening out there and somehow I'm selecting—not the right word—I am recognizing something through that frame.

**M:** How does that work with haiku?

**E:** Something happens and I respond. Other times, it's from a memory of something—a lot of times. I'm re-experiencing it. Barthes said about haiku something like, an object becomes an event.<sup>7</sup> So whatever it is, whether it's directly experienced in the moment of this time, this world, or if it's generated from memory, a whole event is unfolding and I'm framing that.

**M:** So the words that come to you become a frame?

**E:** Yes. Though really I have no one set way of writing haiku. The magical ones are the ones that come all at once, don't need anything. Sometimes I hear a phrase and it really sticks with me and often—I have trouble articulating this—it creates a physical sensation.

**M:** And yet many of your haiku might be considered overly conceptual or intellectual, dealing as they do in abstractions—for instance:

bleeding under my skin the American dream

or

half moon in broad daylight the placebo effect

**E:** The idea of abstraction—that it’s too intellectual—I’m honestly confused by that sometimes. I think we all have a different relationship to the body-mind connection. In some of my poems, which are considered abstract, I don’t experience them as abstract.

**M:** Well, there’s certainly an emotional value to the words, “American dream.”

**E:** Very much an emotional one. Emotion in the sense that it’s derived from a feeling, a sensation. There’s a physical-ness to it. To me the American dream is something that’s manifested in physical, hard work. It’s very connected to bleeding under my skin, bruising. And it’s very related to people trying to achieve the American dream and being beat back down. I could analyze it, but I don’t want to. That’s why I write a poem.

**M:** I’m not asking you to explain the poem, because I agree with you. I’m trying to ask around it—

**E:** And “half moon.” This is one of those haiku that is “an object as an event” for me. There’s a moon in the sky and it becomes the placebo effect. It acts. I see a very specific moon in the sky with a certain set of clouds. It’s not just any half moon in broad daylight, but a very specific moon with a certain translucency and a certain number of clouds and their translucency . . .

**M:** So, what you’re saying is your haiku are really based in concrete image even when you are using words that might seem conceptual or abstract—and not just a visual, but a felt image.

**E:** Yes, a felt image. That’s a really nice way to put it. There’s a strong visual part, but I think what people call abstract about my poetry is coming from what is felt.

**M:** Well, there's got to be a connection, right? My understanding of abstract is based on what Picasso and others have had to say: you start with something real and then, as you seek its essence, you eliminate more and more irrelevant particulars.<sup>8</sup> The abstract is always tied to the concrete. Maybe the process of attenuation has gone so far that you get to a point when others might not easily see the connection. But it's there.

**E:** That is how I would relate to abstraction completely. And maybe then I'm confusing two words as we speak—abstract and intellectual, because they are often used interchangeably.

**M:** Yeah. People sometimes say abstract when they should be saying non-representational . . .

**E:** Or representational of something other. I remember vividly Eisenstein talking about this, when he was developing his editing techniques: you put together this material thing with this material thing and you come up with a representation of something completely new, and he would say, psychological. If you really think about it, an image or a word is a pointer to something else. They represent something else. But for some reason with anything psychological or emotional or intellectual, we do not understand them as “real” in the same way we understand a physical object, like a table leg, to be real. And so we can ask, what's the difference between the representational quality of a word like “perjury” and a word like “table”? What's a fact? What's real? How or where do we draw the limits around reality? I think there's a strong relationship between haiku and indexical mediums like photography and video in how they deal with that.

**M:** What do you mean by indexical?

**E:** An “index” is a term in semiotics that classifies the way a “sign” refers to its referent. An index has an actual association, a physical relationship to its referent—the way photography/video traces light to record.<sup>9</sup> The magic of photographic mediums is that they describe so well, there's an illusion that you

are seeing the actual thing. I'm probably the most skeptical person out there, still my very first reaction to a photograph is to believe it. But it's absolutely not the same as reality and it's always communicating on a symbolic level. That's what's moving a person when they look at a photograph of a sunset. The colors, the light, the memory of the experience, and how that made them feel. Similarly, we could say "a sunset." And there's a whole set of associations and emotions that come with that.

**M:** Haiku really thrive on that associational baggage.

**E:** Exactly. In some ways haiku are abstractions in and of themselves, the scaffolding of something that allows someone to flesh the rest out.

**M:** This has me thinking that the attenuation of the concrete and the shifts in context that this allows might help explain a lot in contemporary or, should we say, experimental haiku. In his study of disjunction in haiku, Richard Gilbert includes your "bleeding under my skin" as an exemplar of the "impossibly true."<sup>10</sup>

**E:** That's the beauty of haiku. It works in that interesting space of playing with our preconceptions of what real is, what is true.

**M:** It seems to me that your work in video art has perfectly positioned you as one of the poets pushing exploration in English-language haiku.

**E:** I don't feel like I'm pushing the edge. I'm just doing what I experience. I think that I'm lucky enough that there's this history of haiku—it's like when you meet an old friend, Oh, you match how I think. When video editing went from A/B-roll to non-linear on the computer, I was like, Thank god, this is the way I think, this other way was hell. It feels like that with haiku for me. I love words, I love poetry, but I never thought I'd be writing it.

**M:** A lucky find, then, you and haiku.



**E:** Yeah. I think it has to do with the compositional process. Right now the best word I can come up with to describe it is that I experience a “recognition” of something. The way I photograph and make videos, I’m out in the world, I put myself into a situation, and I have no idea what’s going to happen. When I’m in sync there’s a beautiful dance between me and the camera and knowing where to point it and when to move it, when to zoom in and when to pan.

**M:** I suppose, with writing, you’re opening yourself up to images and ideas and words coming to you and sometimes it all works out.

**E:** And when I’m out of sync . . . with writing, the joy is, it’s not over, I didn’t miss it. I can write down the phrase in my notebook and go back to it. And when I go back to it, it’s a re-experiencing. I can do that over and over and over, until I’m in sync.

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rain

### Notes

1. Jim Kacian and Dee Evetts, eds., *A New Resonance 6, Emerging Voices in English-Language Haiku* (Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2009), 87.
2. All videos discussed in this interview can be viewed at [www.eveluckring.com](http://www.eveluckring.com).
3. Sol LeWitt, 1928–2007, was an American artist linked to Conceptual Art and Minimalism. See his “Incomplete Cubes” at <http://www.formmag.net/student-correspondents/2010/10/19/laiad-project-one-sol-lewitt-permutations.html>.
4. See some images of the Getty Garden at <http://www.getty.edu/visit/center/gardens.html>.

5. For program and program notes, see <http://sites.moca.org/the-curve/2014/09/02/los-angeles-filmforum-at-moca-presents-eve-luckring-with-what-tongue/>.
6. See John Carley's discussion of junicho form at <http://www.darlingtonrichards.com/index.php/updates/renku-reckoner-by-john-carley/>.
7. In *Empire of Signs* (trans. Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), Roland Barthes argues that haiku is an "apprehension of the thing as event and not as substance" (pp. 75, 78). See also, Chen-ou Liu, "The Breach of Meaning? Roland Barthes's View of Haiku," *haijinx* (April 2010), retrieved December 11, 2014 from <http://www.haijinx.org/columns/haiku-a-looking-bird/the-breach-of-meaning-roland-barthess-view-of-haiku/>.
8. See Michele Root-Bernstein, "Haiku as Emblem of Creative Discovery: Another Path to Craft," *Modern Haiku* 41.3 (autumn 2010), 20.
9. Readers interested in further explanation of the sign as index may refer to "Peirce's Theory of Signs," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/peirce-semiotics/>. As explained there, a photograph is like a finger pointing to the "scene" out there described within its frame.
10. Richard Gilbert, *The Disjunctive Dragonfly, A New Approach to English-Language Haiku* (Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2008), 60–64.



*Eve Luckring works primarily in video, photography, poetry, and installation. Her work questions the assumptions—and experiments with the boundaries—that define place, body, and habit. Currently, she has been translating traditional Japanese poetic forms into the visual realm to renegotiate the binaries of nature/culture, subject/object, and self/world. Luckring's videos and installations have been exhibited internationally in both traditional art venues and public spaces. Her poetry has been published in numerous journals and anthologies.*

*Michele Root-Bernstein has one foot in the humanities and social sciences, another in the arts. Co-author of Sparks of Genius, The 13 Thinking Tools of the World's Most Creative People with her husband and colleague, Robert, she studies creative imagination across the life cycle. She also writes haiku, appearing in a number of North American journals, A New Resonance 6, and Haiku 2014. Currently, she serves as associate editor of Frogpond.*

**Nick Virgilio, Walt Whitman, and the American  
Poetic Tradition: An Interview with Kwame Dawes**

Rick Black, Arlington, VA

To mark the third anniversary of the publication of *Nick Virgilio: A Life in Haiku*, which was named one of the best haiku books by the Touchstone Distinguished Book Awards (2012) and the R.H. Blyth Haiku Book Awards (2013), I interviewed poet, writer, and editor Kwame Dawes.

In 1998, Dawes and I became friends following a poetry reading at the University of South Carolina. I had lent my copy of Nick Virgilio's now out-of-print book, *Selected Haiku*, to the reader and he left it with Dawes to return to me. Subsequently, Dawes went on to become editor in chief of *Prairie Schooner* at the University of Nebraska and I founded Turtle Light Press. *Nick Virgilio: A Life in Haiku* was published after I found out that a large stash of unpublished work by Virgilio was being kept in the archives of Rutgers University in Camden, NJ.

In this wide-ranging interview, Dawes compares and contrasts the work of Walt Whitman, who is considered in large part the father of modern American poetry, and Nick Virgilio, one of the pioneers of the American haiku movement. Both of their lives and poetry were transformed by war—in Whitman's case, the Civil War; in Virgilio's, the Vietnam War. In addition, Dawes reflects on being a poet in America and finding one's voice as well as the place of haiku in the American poetic tradition.

**Rick Black:** You know, Nick Virgilio is buried right near Walt Whitman in Camden, NJ—he's literally a stone's throw away—and they strike me as comrades-in-arms though they have polar opposite styles. I mean, Whitman is so verbose and Virgilio so pithy; yet both deal with war and nature in their poetry.

**Kwame Dawes:** I like the connection that is implied by the proximity of their graves but I think also in terms of the larger project. It seems to me that Virgilio was very committed like Whitman to speaking from a personal lyric place, a place from within himself, as well as in a communal way.

So many of his haiku assume a dynamic relationship between the individual and society; they assume that the poet is at once a voice of internal introspection but also burdened with the task of articulating human feelings that should resonate with people outside of himself.

One of the biggest gifts that Whitman gave to poetry—not just poetry in America, but poetry in general, in the world—is, of course, his sort of willful defiance of the inherited European poetic forms, the strong metrical verse and the strongly rhymed verses. His willful defiance of that is in the spirit of, I think, a kind of American newness. But also in the sense that his poems are so much about ego, and not ego in the pejorative way but about the individual—a sort of joyful engagement with the individual. There’s a very un-British lack of bashfulness about the individual and the self, combined with what was a clear kind of commitment to try to speak for a nation. You know, I mean, “I sing America,” this is the kind of monumental role that he assumes for himself. I see more similarities than would seem obvious because in a sense Virgilio takes on a form that is not endemic to American culture. At a time when there is at least a feeling that there is an American aesthetic, an American poetic, he decides to do something with a Japanese form, and he does it with such a lack of guile, with just a clear sense that, “It’s available to me and I’m most comfortable in this space.”

And so, in a sense, Virgilio is pushing against the expected; he is pushing against the norm out of a kind of willful commitment to what his vision is. And in that sense I think he is very American and in that sense I think he is very much like Whitman. Recently, I was reading Whitman’s writing about nursing soldiers in the Civil War, and just the raw honesty of his expression, the sense of his brokenness in that act [impressed me], and I think that that kind of commitment to people and their bodies and their lives is also there in Virgilio’s work, so I think the connections are great.

**RB:** What other similarities do you see between them?

**KD:** The thing that I was thinking about a lot was the way in which Virgilio's haiku also trace a physical landscape. They're very much rooted in the Northeast, they're very much rooted in Camden, New Jersey. There's a way in which he's writing that space into being by being true to these haiku, these small poems, and Whitman definitely saw his own work as articulating the Northeast, too. Again, they're not exactly the same locations—[Whitman spent the first half of his life in New York before he left for Washington, D.C., during the Civil War]—but they're similar efforts to write into being those landscapes and those spaces.

the old neighborhood  
falling to the wrecking ball:  
names in the sidewalk<sup>1</sup>

tenement roof:  
tilted TV antenna  
touches the moon

the blind musician  
extending an old tin cup  
collects a snowflake

**RB:** You talk about the way Whitman was speaking for a nation or “singing America.” That's not my sense of Virgilio. He's writing about things that matter to Americans, you know—about the Vietnam War in particular—but it's out of his own particular experience. I feel like he's singing for himself and his family. And, as a result, America's able to share that song.

**KD:** Where I push back a little bit on that is the anger that I see there; the kind of despair and anger that I see in Virgilio's work is not free of a sense of him being implicated as an American in the discussion about war and that kind of thing. In a sense, he is voicing what was commonly true—the anxieties and conflictedness of a large proportion of the American population in that engagement, so I think it's profoundly American. When you as an individual speak to power, you're

not just speaking to power on your behalf, you're clearly speaking to power on the behalf of people who share your view, and I think that's clear in his work.

You know, the truth is Whitman lamented the war but he wasn't "anti-" the war. He lamented the horror of war but he decided to focus his attention on the people who were being shaped by this horror rather than speaking against it, against the larger question of why are you doing this and why are you doing that. But I think Virgilio is doing something riskier in some ways because he's speaking about something that is being carried out that I don't think he agreed with.

**RB:** How is Virgilio different from other haiku writers? What's unique about his work?

**KD:** The difference actually speaks to Virgilio's achievement—and the achievement is what most poets seek to achieve—and what they seek to achieve is the kind of mastery of form that allows them to be distinctive in voice. In other words, they so master the form that the form disappears and their voice begins to be what defines it.

So, in many ways as much as it's a simple task to say, "Issa is a haiku poet" or "Basho is a haiku poet," I think that anybody who has immersed themselves even slightly in their work would not be comfortable to simply say that these guys are represented by the haiku. There's a voice that Basho has that is his voice. It is incidental that this is the form that it emerges out of and that sense of its incidental nature is because of the mastery of the form. It's the authority with which he takes the form and turns it into something that speaks in a voice that is natural and honest to what we think or imagine to be the imagined voice of the poet. And so the best poets manage to—and I use this word guardedly—manage to transcend the form. In other words, they're using the form but they really sort of leap outside of the form and they can manipulate the form in remarkable ways. And I think that's one of the great things that Virgilio achieves. It's in this sense that Virgilio's haiku strike me as being remarkably adept, they just seem to be masterful,

they seem to be so natural. It doesn't feel forced; there's that level at which he seems to have found the language, the words that can be contained in that very tight and really, really challenging form.

The other statement that I'll make is more specific to what he's actually doing in individual poems. One of the things that I find very striking is the way in which he layers symbolic possibilities in his pieces. There's a level at which we read the poem as the simple observation of a moment and we are familiar with that as the haiku but in each of those moments there's a kind of symbolic weight to some of the images that he creates, and that symbolic weight goes deeper and deeper, so it works on different levels. It's layered with different meanings and what I find admirable is how he manages to do that. So, if he's writing about war he will take a simple image that's not necessarily a commentary on war, but as you start to think about it more, you realize that he is doing more things with that image than meets the eye. In a sense he is employing what I think is the hallmark of modernism—it's the metaphor, the lyric metaphor—and I think he's finding ways to pare it down into the haiku while still maintaining the tensions that are inherent in that lyric metaphor.

shadowing hookers  
after dark:  
the cross in the park

atop the town flagpole,  
a gob of bubblegum  
holds my dead brother's dime

Thanksgiving alone:  
ordering eggs and toast  
in an undertone

At the end of the day, I keep enjoying his work because he does it well. You're not worrying about annoying clichés or images that aren't fresh. The other thing that I appreciate about his work is that he's still rooted in the physical landscape, the

physical space. The poems—and I think this is consistent with the haiku—are not willfully cerebral. If there's any cerebral engagement with it, it's in response to the world we see in front of us. There seems to be a dogged commitment to the idea of what we see and what we sense, what our senses engage, and I find that very appealing.

**RB:** More generally speaking, do you see haiku as a genre as part of an American tradition, as a reflection of a kind of minimalism like that of Rexroth or Snyder?

**KD:** Or even Auden in some moments or William Carlos Williams. But, listen, I think the Japanese can say we've had a great influence on the haiku. You know what I mean? I think these writers, Rexroth and all these guys in classic American style—and this is one of the greatneses of American letters—is that it's a greedy monster. It devours other styles and other cultures and then spews out something that becomes comfortably and distinctively its own, and it's not bashful about doing that. And I think in that sense the haiku is influential in American letters but it is an influence, I think, more than anything else. To propose that it's an American form—it would be to do so only in the spirit by which Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian writer, when interviewed and asked questions during a very troubling period for African writers about the use of language, the use of European languages for their work, where, you know, writers like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o were arguing that African writers should write in African languages and really questioning whether work that was being produced in European languages was legitimate or some kind of betrayal—and Achebe then said, "Well, I do write in a Nigerian language because English is a Nigerian language," and that is a very provocative but interesting thing because what he was saying was that English no longer is for the English. There are so many Englishes . . .

**RB:** As transformed by, as being used by a Nigerian . . .

**KD:** That's right. And it's not used by a Nigerian as it's used by an Englishman, and therefore it's now a Nigerian language



in the same way that Igbo is a Nigerian language and Yoruba is a Nigerian language and Hausa is a Nigerian language.

So in that spirit the haiku, if only in that way (and that way is not an insignificant way), can be seen as American. But I don't think the poetry establishment grants haiku a tremendous amount of respect. I think the lyric, the lyric poem is still king, even over and above poems of political agitation, praise poems, all of those—the lyric poem is still seen as king.

**RB:** That's kind of what I was trying to get at—haiku often seems like the step-son . . .

**KD:** Yes, I think that's fair to say and remember that haiku is taught as something exotic. You know, in elementary school they say, "Let's do a haiku!" And the kids will do it but they're taught the haiku as a kind of, "Now we can do that, so let's go and write a real poem." This is to me quite unfortunate because it's a very shallow understanding of the form. I mean, the form is only known to be a form; it's not known for its rhetorical qualities, its rhetorical values. Its intrinsic philosophical values are never engaged in that preliminary introduction to the form. What is engaged is simply that it's the syllabic form and, if you meet the syllables, then you're good to go.

**RB:** Right.

**KD:** Which, of course, is asinine but I think that's still the case.

**RB:** Well, you know, maybe you could speak to that, to the way in which Virgilio's haiku are different from what I call these "junk" haiku or faux haiku.

**KD:** Well, one thing is that he's not enamored by 5–7–5.

**RB:** No, in fact, he was one of the first to break out of the prevailing use of that syllabic pattern, to take haiku in a new direction, to break that . . .

**KD:** Yeah, and I think that gesture becomes a gesture that says that he has abandoned the superficiality of the form, the superficial treatment and engagement with the form, but he's actually reaching for something that is within, that is buried inside the form.

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

bass  
picking bugs  
off the moon

I think, look, his massive contribution and achievement is to say, "It's enough for me." I don't know how to explain it better but it's to say that as a poet, with all the instincts and all the passions of writing poetry that any poet has in America or anywhere else, I find that when I pour myself into this form, it is enough for me. The form gives me challenge after challenge. The form is a universe where I can still play around. I don't feel as if I'm constrained by it. I am challenged by it; I am expanded by it. His work carries that feeling for me. In other words, his work does not carry the feeling that, "Okay, I need to say something brief here and let me just use this form to say something." You see what I mean? For him, he's saying, "The form is everything. I'm fine with the everything of the form. It's enough for me."

And I think that's significant, I think that's quite monumental. And, of course, the other part of it is to say that I have space to move in here, I have space to write different things, I have space to play with different things within this form, the form is not a constraint in a negative way. I mean, all poetry is constraining in the way in which it intentionally says, "Let us create a frame within which we're going to build a universe." Right? But what he is saying is that this is not a debilitating constraint, this is an empowering constraint of challenge.

**RB:** You know, in terms of Virgilio's Italian American heritage, is there something special that he would hold for us?

**KD:** You know, I think the problem with that is . . .

**RB:** I don't mean to label him as an Italian American writer, he's an American writer and I'm not trying to pigeonhole him . . .

**KD:** No, but I think that's fine. I can't imagine that this would be a problem for him. As long as he thinks . . . I mean this is one of the things as poets that we have to engage and wrestle with is that as long as we think, as long as we live with the idea of family, with the idea of nation, with the idea of race, with the idea of nationality, with the idea of community in our lives, then in a sense to separate our art from that discussion is probably a mistake; it's ultimately disingenuous. And by that I mean, there's this great essay by Langston Hughes—he was 24 years old when he wrote, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”—and it begins with a statement, I'm paraphrasing here, that recently one of the young Negro poets said to me, “I do not want to be a Negro poet, I just want to be a poet.”

And then Hughes goes on in that same paragraph and he proposes a preposterous kind of rejoinder to that and says the meaning of that statement, of course, is that the poet wants to be white, and this is where he takes the argument. And, of course, it is provocative because he then goes on to argue in the rest of the essay that in the context of American society the very act of saying, “I do not want to be named a Negro poet,” compels you to have to want to be something else, and that something else presents what Hughes describes as American standardization, which is essentially whiteness, as the norm. So, this poet does not want to be mistaken as black, so Hughes' question to him is, “Who do you want to be mistaken for then?”

I've raised that because I think Virgilio is an American poet but that does not mean that he's not an Italian poet and it doesn't mean that he's not a Catholic poet or a poet who has wrestled with his Catholicism. It does not mean that he is not all of those things and it does not mean that the Italian community or the Catholic community will not find an affinity for him because, in a sense, his work reflects his own experience and history and so on. Because his confidence as a thinker and a

writer grows out of the power and authority that comes with his patriotism and his Americanness, but it also grows out of the community of support, that awe, the anxiety of support that would have come from being an Italian American. After a while when we talk about a writer being of a certain grouping or a racial grouping or a community grouping and so on, we are not necessarily delimiting what they write about. What we are doing is saying that this, too, becomes part of the narrative of that group.

Anyway, that's a long way of saying that Virgilio is as much an American poet as an Italian-American poet. I can't say the elements of his poems beg that, you know, point to that, but I think his idea of faith, the idea of what the church means and does not mean, and the idea of how he positions himself within that is part of that experience, as you said, and that tradition in a way that another person might not have at all.

my palsied mother,  
pressing my forehead on hers  
this Ash Wednesday

Easter morning:  
finishing up Communion wine  
in the sacristy

**RB:** You know, Cor van den Heuvel is a pretty well-known haiku critic and anthologist and he has called Virgilio's series of poems about the loss of his youngest brother in Vietnam, "one of the finest elegies in the American poetic tradition." Your thoughts about that statement?

**KD:** There's a whole list of writers who have written poems of loss and poems of lament and so forth, and [they're] very varied and complicated. The elegies on war and victims of war exist in the work of people like Yusef Komunyakaa and Brian Turner more recently.

But, listen, the claim for Virgilio's elegy for his brother, I don't think it's a far-fetched claim. It's a moving, powerful, and

evocative sequence. It carries all the ideas of what a brother's relationship with another brother means. It's not just about his brother dying in war but it's about what it means to survive a brother, and what it means when that relationship is complicated by death in a war, especially in a war that was so problematic. I think it's a remarkable piece and I don't think it is a stretch to say that it is one of the great elegies in American writing.

deep in rank grass,  
through a bullet-riddled helmet:  
an unknown flower

in memory of Lawrence J. Virgilio

on the darkened wall  
of my dead brother's bedroom:  
the dates and how tall

sixteenth autumn since:  
barely visible grease marks  
where he parked his car

**RB:** What is the relevance of Virgilio's work given the ongoing war in Afghanistan and our recent experiences in Iraq? What does he have to tell us? And how important is it for people to read him?

**KD:** I suppose one of the troubling confessions we can make to ourselves, we who are living in America today, is that we are living in a time when our leaders have been unable to end a war that has been waged for over a decade. It has never happened before. Is this, then, what it feels like to be a country at war?

It certainly does not feel as dangerous and as harrowing as it should be. But I think this is because we have accepted what is decidedly a collusion of silence and numbness that has been facilitated by technology, by the capacity of our society to proceed along very compartmentalized and sanitized lines while death and tragedy take place outside of our protected

mental and emotional spaces. I met a man a few months ago who told me that his job was to assassinate the terrorists who are plotting to kill Americans. He worked on a computer somewhere in Texas or Arizona. He sat there with a cup of Starbucks and a bagel, and he targeted people thousands of miles away, and on the command of his superiors, he clicked “send,” and sent death and destruction instantly. I imagined him sipping his coffee afterward. He said he found this to be a disturbing thing. He knew that there was something wrong with this. But he also knew that there was something about this that made sense.

So, here is what war means in America today and what Virgilio is doing is asking us to think about the implication of war. He is asking us to feel the weight of war. He teaches us how to empathize, teaches us to cope with the inexplicable horrors of our world. The poet will speak the unspoken and in so doing, the poem offers a way to manage pain. In light of where we are as a nation, I believe that Virgilio’s work is a challenge to all poets to think about why we are not writing enough poems about war.

In Jamaica, where my family lives and a place that I call home, over 1,500 people die by the gun each year. The nation’s population is just under three million people. I know that the toll on the psyche of that nation is grave. But what I believe that our poets have to do is push hard against the temptation to go silent, to withdraw, to cope, and to find ways to voice the tragic implications of these numbers. For all the places in the world where peace reigns, there are places of violence and conflict that demand the language of poetry. This, I think, is what Virgilio offers us by example. Were he alive, he would be, I am sure, writing poems about Iraq and Afghanistan.

**RB:** You’ve seen the film *remembering Nick Virgilio* by Sean Dougherty.<sup>2</sup> What are your thoughts about it? I especially like the beginning where there’s that poem about the bell and Virgilio’s own comments about it, about how it took him so long to get the last line of that poem ’til it just kind of reverberated within.

**KD:** I thought it was a wonderful film especially what you just described about him talking about the making of the haiku and the way it takes him time to notice what the last line is, that kind of exposition of the process of writing and the challenges of writing and the pleasures and rewards of writing, the peculiar circumstances of what it means to make art. I think those are all very clearly articulated in the film and what's nice about the film is that it shows this so-called ordinary person and how the community engages his work and is moved by his work. And, of course, it's showing how people are moved not only by his work but by him. It's a real interesting biography of a person, a biography full of praise.

But there's also a certain kind of stoic and handled sadness about it. I kept looking at the film and thinking in the crudest way, "This should be bigger; this guy's more important than this film makes him out to be. His work should be known in a broader sense."

after the bell,  
within the silence:  
within myself

**RB:** Could you see the film and the book, *Nick Virgilio: A Life in Haiku*, being used together to help teach writing?

**KD:** I think using the film and the book together would enhance the poetry's value, especially for the high school student in a writing group, or for someone who is thinking about writing. There's a sense in which Virgilio makes it seem as if everyone can do this, not just can but should, should have a life of creativity, should have a side of their life that is creative. And the democracy of that certainly appeals to me but, I think, it appeals to younger people, too. That they have permission to think creatively and to write creatively is, I think, one of the big values of both the film and the book. The book is nicely manageable because the haiku form is not inscrutable; it's something you can enter without a tremendous amount of investment and leave with a great deal. That's part of the richness of the form and that's probably one of the reasons why it won't disappear.

## Notes

1. All of the poems cited in this article were written by Nicholas A. Virgilio and appear in the volume, *Nick Virgilio: A Life in Haiku* (Arlington, VA: Turtle Light Press, 2012). They are all reprinted here by permission of his brother, Tony Virgilio.

2. The film, *remembering Nick Virgilio*, was produced and directed by Sean Dougherty, an independent filmmaker. A copy of the film can be purchased from the Nick Virgilio Haiku Association. For more information, please contact Mary Heron of the NVHA: [mhheron@verizon.net](mailto:mhheron@verizon.net). See review of film in this issue.



*Kwame Dawes is the author of nineteen collections of verse and numerous plays, critical essays, and books, and Chancellor's Professor of English at the University of Nebraska. Born in Ghana in 1962, he grew up mostly in Jamaica and has won numerous awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Barnes and Noble Writers for Writers Award, several Pushcart Prizes, as well as an Emmy and Webby for LiveHopeLove.com, an interactive website based on the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting project, "HOPE: Living and Loving with AIDS in Jamaica." His most recent collection of poems is Duppy Conqueror: New and Selected Poems, published by Copper Canyon Press in 2013. Dawes is the founder and director of the African Poetry Book Fund and the artistic director of the Calabash International Literary Festival.*

*Rick Black is an award-winning poet and publisher of Turtle Light Press. His haiku collection, Peace and War: A Collection of Haiku from Israel, has been called "a prayer for peace" by poet Kwame Dawes, and his most recent book Star of David won the 2013 Poetica Magazine poetry contest. He was haiku poet of the month in April 2013 at Cornell University's Mann Library.*





## *In Memoriam*

### *Francis Masat*

the rising moon  
slows the flow of darkness  
towards home

*Frogpond 37:1*

sunset—  
a sudden wave  
washes away our names

*Frogpond 36:2*

Francis “Fran” Masat passed away peacefully on December 30, 2014. After 35 years as a university professor in the midwest and New Jersey, Fran moved to Key West, Florida in 1998. He was a passionate volunteer for the Wildlife Center. He also enjoyed running and ran his first of many marathons at age 66. Fran was a poet for most of his life. In Key West he deepened his love for poetry and haiku. His writing appears in more than 75 publications worldwide. He was a member of the group of five haiku/haibun enthusiasts, which meets in the home and gardens of Elsa Colligan in Key West—a group that will miss him so much. Ever with an optimistic outlook on life and a love for nature, Fran left us with this last poem:

with a whip of her trunk  
an elephant sprays  
another rainbow

~Janelle Barerra, Key West, FL

*(My friendship with Fran stemmed from our association with the Key West Poetry Guild where we met some years ago. Being in a small town and with a tiny number of people who follow haiku, we found a lot in common, such as representing our love of the art by writing it and judging the annual Robert Frost Haiku Contest as well as the annual County School Kids’ Poetry Contest. Fran and I also edited the Solares Hill haiku column, which we inherited from Lee Gurga when he moved away.)*

*Tom Rault*

how it feels at home  
the worm  
in the apple

*Frogpond* 36:1

thunderstorm  
the eyes of fish and men  
darkening

*Frogpond* 36:3

In November 2013, *Frogpond* received notice from Angelique Rault to let the HSA community know that “On Saturday, 18 October 2014, we saw off our dearest husband and father.” Tom was a regular contributor to *Frogpond*, and on November 13 Angelique sent in a last submission in his name (see Tom’s haiku on p. 34 of this issue). He will be missed. The message in Tom’s memorial reads:

Sisyphean mover of boulders, tender of gardens, sure-footed, steadfast—along *skogsvägar* and shorelines—roof-runner, grenade-trader, builder of fires and baker of bread, quick-witted, shark-bitten, wanderer in flesh and word.

the raven  
flying away from the forest  
left its cry



## Reviewed

**Collin Barber.** *The Devil is a Child.* Stoke-on-Trent, England: Yet to Be Named Free Press, 2014, 125 pp., perfect softbound, 5.25 X 8.25 inches. ISBN 978-1-493748-06-8. US\$8.00 plus shipping from [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).

by Dan Schwerin, Greendale, WI

Collin Barber's first collection, *The Devil is a Child*, has the feel of a sax wailing in the dark on the corner of rainy lament and Memphis noir. These are brown bottle songs reminiscent of Charles Bukowski. Sometimes you can hear Santoka:

spring cleaning  
how much of this dust  
is me?

The images convey a world of lizard cages, jail cells, and cramped rides in the car. Some poems riff on death and hell, all of them whispering the frailty of being human.

the surgeon  
before giving the news  
washes his hands

Many of the poems are tanka. These longer songs slow down to a steel-guitar rhythm for the vagaries of domesticity and child prophets:

as he sketches  
an imperfect drawing of me  
my seven year-old son  
asks me why I need  
so many beers

Barber's collection makes me wonder if noir is a season, like war—a human season arising from natural cycles—especially

post-2008 with the impact of the banking crisis on the U.S. household. Reading this collection brought to mind the gritty blues of Jeffrey Winke, Lucas Stensland, Colin Stewart Jones, and the dewdrop world of French-Quarter New Orleans in David Lanoue's haiku novels. Remember Richard Wright populated his haiku with the seasons via green cockleburrs and lice, but also drunken girls and consumptive men.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps one of the earliest antecedents of noir as a season can be found in the hard-luck wandering haiku priest, Issa. David Lanoue, in his book, *Pure Land Haiku*, describes one of the poetic themes of Issa as featuring the state of the world (*setai*).<sup>2</sup> In the Pure Land Buddhism of Issa's time, a journey through life has to reckon with the depravity (*mappō*) of the age.<sup>3</sup> It has the feel of a spirituality born in getting honest:

this world's  
blooming lotuses  
are bent<sup>4</sup>

Barber's poems do not make this claim of noir as a season except in their force and frequency—especially alongside the growing chorus of writers who render more urban settings. Barber's butterfly poem is less Issa and more North American:

butterflies . . .  
a child's name  
set in stone

Like the butterfly poem, many of Barber's haiku begin with an opening image and end with closure through image or action.

another first date . . .  
I fail again  
to be myself

talk of sex  
a lime wedge slides  
down the bottle's neck

This is the high-wire act of *The Devil is a Child*: the most successful poems can end with a closing down but still continue to resonate. This collection reminds us that what we focus our attention on as writers creates a world or a place in time we ask readers to interpret. When one tanka ends, “I wonder if it is we who have been captured in a jar,” we have Texas chain-saw honesty about the walls closing in on a dystopian world. A close reading of Barber reveals plenty of natural images: leafless maples, sunrises, and swatted flies—but also hotels, fishbowls, and dive bars—a reminder our best poems lament or praise with layer and nuance the song of being human.

rural sky  
what other worlds  
have a Beethoven?

### Notes

1. Richard Wright, *Haiku: This Other World* (New York: Arcade, 1998), 31, 114–15.
2. David Lanoue, *Pure Land Haiku: The Art of Priest Issa* (Reno, NV: Buddhist Books International, 2004), 42.
3. Lanoue, *Pure Land Haiku*, 42.
4. Issa in Lanoue, *Pure Land Haiku*, 46.



*Dan Schwerin's most recent poetry has appeared in Frogpond, Modern Haiku, bottlerockets, The Heron's Nest, is/let and Bones. He has most recently been anthologized in Robert Epstein's The Sacred in Contemporary Haiku. His first collection, ⊕rs, is forthcoming from Red Moon Press.*

**Angelee Deodhar, ed. *Journeys, An Anthology of International Haibun*.** Hyderabad, India: Nivasini Publishers, 2014, 252 pp., perfect softbound, 6 x 8 inches. ISBN 978-8-192960-21-6. Price: Rs 300/India and others US\$18 (postage paid). Contact: angeleedeodhar@gmail.com.

by Marjorie Buettner, Chisago City, MN

I have been an editor, briefly, for *Contemporary Haibun Online*, and I know how difficult this position can be and yet how rewarding it is when all is said and done. Angelee Deodhar, in the introduction to *Journeys, An Anthology of International Haibun*, states that she would like her anthology to “attract more interest in the genre,” an interest which Jeffrey Woodward admits, in an interview with Ray Rasmussen at *Contemporary Haibun Online*, is deficient in representative anthologies:

There are few haibun anthologies and not one, to my knowledge, that even approaches a fair representation of the good work that has been done in the past dozen years or more . . . A comprehensive anthology of haibun’s best, therefore, would be one of many needed steps in preserving the genre. General articles and critical essays—publicity and education, if you will—are also essential, particularly in venues like *Modern Haiku* or *Frogpond* that appeal to the broader haikai community.

*Journeys*, in my estimation, accomplishes this task of attracting more interest in the genre. The anthology includes 122 haibun from 25 international poets; as such, it is a landmark achievement. I would have liked, however, to have seen fewer haibun included by each poet (five were accepted from each) and a larger selection of poets represented in order to expand the range of contributors. Perhaps this will be a future endeavor to “preserve the genre” as Woodward has suggested. Nevertheless, *Journeys* is the first anthology of haibun published in India and Nivasini Publishers should be congratulated for this; hopefully it will not be their last. The publication reading took place at SIES College in Mumbai where literature students were introduced to the haibun form in a workshop by

Dr. Angelee Deodhar and Sonam Chhoki of Bhutan. This brings me to one additional quibble: the introduction includes a definition of haibun by a collection of haibun writers taken from Jeffrey Woodward's website *Haibun Today*—word for word. I would have liked a more individualistic and personalized definition of haibun given by Dr. Deodhar and not something taken from the internet. That being said, there are some stellar haibun in this collection by respected and talented poets. Many are among my favorites, including Penny Harter's "Moon-Seeking Soup," Jeffrey Woodward's "The Sweet Wild Grass," Jim Kacian's "miles out at sea," Ray Rasmussen's "my reader . . .," and Bob Lucky's "Most Bones Never Become Fossils." Here is a short excerpt from "After the Blizzard" by Penny Harter; it is a haibun which touches the heart—if this is one of the necessary goals of haibun, the anthology *Journeys* accomplishes this task:

Tonight as deep snow presses against my windows, I remember  
slow-dancing, my head leaning on my love's shoulder, our arms  
wrapped around each other. I want to dance that way again.

mating, the monarchs  
seem one butterfly—  
wings upon wings

The other contributors are Roberta Beary, Sonam Chhoki, Glenn G. Coats, David Cobb, Angelee Deodhar, Victor P. Gendrano, Ken Jones, David Macmurray, Johannes Manjrekar, W.F. Owen, Patricia Prime, Kala Ramesh, Michael Rehling, Bruce Ross, Adelaide B. Shaw, George Swede, Pareshtiwari, Charles Trumbull, Michael Dylan Welch, and Robert D. Wilson.



*Marjorie Buettner lives in Minnesota and has written book reviews for Modern Haiku, Frogpond, Gusts, Raw Nrvz, Lynx, Moonset, Cattails, and North Stone Review. She has taught haiku and tanka at the Loft in Minneapolis and has given workshops throughout the state. Her collection of haibun, Some Measure of Existence, was published in 2014 by Red Dragonfly Press.*

**Sean Dougherty, director/producer. *remembering Nick Virgilio*.** Available from the Nick Virgilio Haiku Association. Contact Mary Heron of the NVHA: mhheron@verizon.net.

by Michele Root-Bernstein, East Lansing, MI

This short, well-crafted documentary should be on every haikin's to-watch list. Nearly as concise, and in its own way as revelatory, as its subject's life and poetry, *remembering Nick Virgilio* opens the door to the poet and his place in the story of English-language haiku. The documentary immediately draws us into Virgilio's creative process as a man and as a writer. We hear him speak of the Philadelphia church bell he heard striking the hours—and the twenty years it took him to render his experience in haiku. (Rick Black and Kwame Dawes refer to this poem in their conversation in this issue; see pp. 110–11.) As the poet puts it, he found the words to the haiku when he found the inner meaning of the moment—the experience of the bell was happening inside himself.

The Nick Virgilio we meet in the film pursued his inner life with dogged determination. Day in, day out, his routine included yoga, long walks, food markets, and about eight hours of writing at his manual typewriter. When asked why he didn't use a word processor, which allowed for rapid editing, he answered that "words shouldn't be so easy to change." What they should be is clean, clear, surprising, and focused on creating a picture, though the picture may not be pretty. Virgilio loved to buttonhole his friends and read a haiku or two to see what grabbed them. He loved to read the first two lines and ask, what did they expect in the third line?

A good haiku went somewhere else, pushing against expectation, whether linguistic, aesthetic, or experiential. In *the sack of kittens / sinking in the icy creek / increases the cold*, a poem featured in the film, Virgilio handled all three masterfully. Along with the oppositions of warm kittens and cold water, of life and death, the sound values throughout convey



the underlying emotional distress evident in the divergence of action in the final line.

Towards the end of the film, we hear Virgilio talk of his effort to become “a tight little package of humanity” in order, he says, to have something to offer. Crack open the phrase and what is on offer clarifies: an unpretentious self, stripped of all that is extraneous; a self that is deliverable; a self that is universal in its purpose: to express, to share, to connect, to make a mark worth making. Virgilio not only mailed himself to the world, he recommended the essential exercise to us all. Watch the film, study the man and the poems, love the poems, and prepare your own parcel.



## Briefly Reviewed

by Michele Root-Bernstein, East Lansing, MI  
& Francine Banwarth, Dubuque, IA

**Abigail Friedman, ed. *I Wait for the Moon, 100 Haiku of Momoko Kuroda*.** Berkeley, CA: Stoner Bridge Press, 2014, 144 pp., softbound, 5.25 x 7.25 inches. ISBN 978-1-61172-016-7. US\$14.95 from [www.stonebridge.com](http://www.stonebridge.com).

Despite her popularity in Japan, the haiku poet Momoko Kuroda has had few of her works translated into English. This handsome volume remedies the situation and more. Friedman introduces us to the woman and her passions. She provides “literal” (her word) renditions of a wide range of poems that read well in colloquial English. And she engages the reader, too, in the task of translation, discussing where relevant the meanings, rhythms, and associations at play in Momoko’s ku. The 100 haiku presented here are drawn from six collections, the first published in 1981, the last in 2013. Their arrangement, though not strictly chronological, allows readers to trace the poet’s evolution, from *shasei* to an increasingly personal and subjective style of haiku. Momoko is very much a *gendai* poet, yet one who has purposefully revisited perennial concerns, literally as well as figuratively. Her poems speak to years of pilgrimage among famous cherry trees and ancient spiritual sites, to years of immersion in the haiku tradition, with a woman’s touch. *one by one / they fall asleep— / the crickets at the inn; I open a fig— / my violet mother / opens to me; end of the year that thing called moonbathing . . .* ~MRB

**David G. Lanoue. *Issa and the Meaning of Animals: A Buddhist Poet’s Perspective*.** New Orleans, LA: HaikuGuy.com, 2014, 292 pp., softbound, 5.25 x 8 inches. ISBN 978-0-9912840-2-3. US\$12.99 from [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com). Also available in eBook format.

Kobayashi Issa, Japanese poet of the late 18th, early 19th centuries, wrote many haiku about animals. In this book David Lanoue, current president of the Haiku Society of America and Issa scholar, writes a lot about Issa's poems through the lens of modern concern for the ethical treatment of animals. In chapters addressing relevant ethical, religious, and scientific issues, he argues that Issa's thousands of animal ku sketch the poet's deep understanding of insects, frogs, and birds as fellow travelers in an interconnected universe of beings. Often presented in anthropomorphized terms, his animal portraits satirize and admonish their human counterparts. They also express the kind of communion possible for those humans who would reach enlightenment. *gambling in the field— / from the pot / a little butterfly; the buck looks / at cherry blossoms . . . / shedding his antlers; will I grow old / like you? / autumn butterfly.* ~MRB

**Roberta Beary & Lenard D. Moore, eds. 7.** Durham, NC: Jacar Press, 2013, 52 pp., softbound, 5 x 7 inches. No ISBN. US\$15 & \$3 postage @ [www.jacarpres.com](http://www.jacarpres.com).

The preface to this small chapbook opens with a great set of questions posed by the publisher (and writer/poet/teacher) Richard Krawiec—among them: Can someone publish too many haiku? Is there a point where the poems become craft rather than art? How many good haiku can anyone write, anyhow? This last question proved the impetus for the book, 7 representing the number of poems a poet might reasonably expect to outlast his or her lifetime. Krawiec's process for selecting poets and poems (described in the Kanterman Book Awards 2014, Best Anthology honorable mention, this issue) tells us much about an enterprise meant to sift out the best of both. It is largely consensus driven and safe: it features fourteen outstanding poets highly regarded by the haiku community as a whole. It is not inclusive nor particularly prescient: it ignores any number of brilliant outliers, poets whose idiosyncratic or experimental styles have garnered them fewer fans among contemporaries. Yet the annals of creativity suggest that an unexpected mix of folks from the mainstream and the

hinterland will eventually make the canon. (I might also add that creative individuals don't always understand their true contributions, a thought which may bring readers solace when personal favorites or arguably iconic poems fail to appear in these pages.) 7 is no crystal ball; it is, rather, a crystallographer's best guess x-ray of the epitome of haiku practice now, today. Featuring Fay Aoyagi, Tom Clausen, Garry Gay, Ferris Gilli, Lee Gurga, Carolyn Hall, paul m., Marlene Mountain, John Stevenson, George Swede, Michael Dylan Welch, Ruth Yarrow, Roberta Beary, and Lenard D. Moore. As Krawiec advises, "Read. Rave. Discuss. Disagree. Enjoy." ~MRB

**John Martone. *mantram*.** samuddo/ocean, 2014, 38 pp., softbound, 5.75 x 8.75 inches. ISBN 978-1-312-23608-0.

**John Martone. *thrip*.** samuddo/ocean, 2014, 88 pp., softbound, 4.25 x 7 inches. ISBN 978-1-312-38714-0.

**[John Martone.] *monera*.** samuddo/ocean, 2014, 96 pp., softbound, 5.75 x 8.25 inches. ISBN 978-1-312-43841-5. Contact johnmartone@gmail.com.

Whether every small poem in John Martone's most recent books does or doesn't qualify as bona fide haiku is absolutely beside the point. In all three collections, we are called to witness the poetics of obsession.

In *mantram*, the poet dons the mask of junkman/dreamer/seer meditating on the stuff of this world and of the inner life. Fifty or more poems include the words, "little dream." Like so many mantra, these variations on a theme are meant to enable the poet and the believer in us all to cross the sea of the mind.

For Martone that sea is most visibly observed in the petri dish, as in *thrip*, or on the microscopic slide, as in *monera*. In the former, the biologist's equipment becomes the poet's instrument for metaphoric exploration: at close range, the petri dish becomes a mandala, the pipette a "fine-boned birdsong," and beneath the magnifying glass the cell walls of a flower

petal become ocean waves. The “junk man w / his microscope” embarks on a “shaman’s voyage” fueled by empathic communion with the least among us—tiny insects (thrips), pinworms, chloroplasts, and other “little ones.”

In *monera* the same journey settles into a somewhat more focused contemplation of unicellular organisms such as bacteria and blue-green algae. Nearly every page of the book carries a photographic image of some microbial being, described or evoked or addressed verbally. Though often lovely in a dreamy sort of way, these images are blurred and pixelated, precluding any visual precision that might match poetic concision. Nevertheless, the poet seeks a conjoined language for probing microscopic lives, translating back and forth between daily discourse and scientific idiom. Next to a translucent ovoid figure shimmering in a light green sea can be found the cryptic words “dragonfly / telomeres”; under a globular green mass floating in a translucent jelly, “blue-green algae / the great sun / flower.” The poet settles most frequently on the vernacular of sailing the many weathers of water drops: “bobbing / in // a life / raft // dream.”

These poems challenge. They do not resolve in the mind at first glance or even at tenth glance, which is exactly the point:

*nature*  
poems are  
codons                      (*thrip*)

Like strands of DNA, Martone’s acts of minimal language carry elemental information, the kind that can, under the right circumstances, unlock mysteries. One needs to sit with them, repeat them over and over, puzzle out the connections, and bit by bit code the evolution of their meaning. That some poetic sequences make for unnerving, exhilarating haiku is only a bonus. *this spiritual being a junkyard* (mantram); *a bee sting’s / searing all in / timacy* (thrip); *un / tethered // drifting / out / at last // become / that / micro // scope / astro / naut* (*monera*). ~MRB

**Robert Epstein, ed. *The Sacred in Contemporary Haiku.*** CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014, 266 pp., perfect softbound, 6 x 9 inches. ISBN 978-1-500993-01-6. US\$19.50 from online booksellers.

In this carefully assembled anthology of haiku, tanka, and haiga nearly 300 poets explore the sacred nature of the “unassuming moments in church and temple; meadow and mountain; on the train and on the trail; . . .” As much as physical space, these poems realize a place inside where awe, wonder, humility, beauty, sensuality, sorrow, humor, and even doubt have the potential to waken spiritual awareness. Robert Epstein’s publishing background with previous anthologies and collections of grief and death, loss and recovery, renewal and change prepared him well for this endeavor. A fine selection from contemporary haiku practitioners is represented with one to six poems apiece that inspire the reader to search for the sacred in this world we call home. *following the hearse / as far / as I can go* (Donna M. Bauerly); *snowy night / rabbit tracks lead / to the chapel service* (Gretchen Graft Batz); *rabbit in the moon / in our broccoli / small buddha voices* (Raymond Roseliep); *this autumn light / the third eye becomes / a rose window* (Ebba Story). ~FB

**Tanya McDonald, et al., eds. *No Longer Strangers.*** Bellevue, WA: Vandina Press, 2014, 152 pp., perfect softbound, 6 x 9 inches. ISBN 978-1-887381-27-7. US\$15 + postage from [wwwcreatespace.com](http://wwwcreatespace.com).

The title for this anthology is taken from a haiku by one of Haiku Northwest’s most beloved artists and writers, and founder of the group, Francine Porad: *poolside, we chat / about reincarnation; / no longer strangers*. The collection of haiku, senryu, and haibun by 78 past and present members, living and deceased, celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Washington State region of the Haiku Society of America. It is a celebration of community with contributions by both novice and seasoned haiku poets who share a sense of place, time, and interaction with the human and natural worlds.

Haiku Northwest has a rich and lively history and it continues to thrive. In a section titled “The Inside Story” Connie Hutchinson chronicles the group’s inception and evolution and the dynamics that have fostered its growth and vitality. Many of the members have served (and are serving) the larger haiku community as well. The reader who spends time with *No Longer Strangers* will come to realize that it is not only a celebration of the poems, but also of the poets themselves. *woodpecker— / the silence when my shadow / touches the tree* (Cindy Zackowitz); *forgotten words / we brush eraser bits / off the table* (Carmen Sterba); *fresh gingerbread— / I reread my sister’s / coming-out letter* (Tanya McDonald); *numbers on his arm . . . / a grandchild asks / how he got them* (william scott galasso); *dark moon my escape hatch* (Karma Tenzing Wangchuk). ~FB

**Elizabeth Crocket. *not like Fred and Ginger*.** Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2014, unpag. (21 pp.), perfect softbound, 4 x 5.25 inches. No price given from [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com).

The cover of this small chapbook containing 17 short haibun is an eye-catcher: a black and white photo of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in full swing. Delightful! The contents, however, are sobering, as the subtitle “recovery haibun” suggests. Elizabeth Crocket survived cancer not once but twice and somehow found the strength and inspiration to share her journey. How does one write when one is in the eye of a storm? Crocket doesn’t just write, she speaks to us as if we are there with her in the chemo unit, on the surgical table, in intensive care, in the kitchen waiting for the phone to ring with results of the latest diagnosis or prognosis. There is a sense of calm observation on the pages, too, as Michael Rehling expresses in the foreword: “But the haibun contained here have a strange delicacy that you would not expect, and poetry has been created from the crisis, and it calms rather than disturbs.” I believe a measure of calmness is achieved through the skill with which Crocket handles the capping haiku. In all but three she turns her eye toward nature, as if to find respite there in some state of grace. *after the storm / branches / cradling branches*. ~FB

**James G. Brueggemann.** *After the Night Rain.* Oberlin, OH: Dankworth Publishing, 2014, 102 pp., perfect softbound, 5.5 x 8.5 inches. ISBN 978-0-9855676-2-0. US\$12.95 from [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).

The personal perspective on where haiku come from shapes the way a writer approaches the art. For this author, a physician and international volunteer, “Haiku are rooted in the concept of place. They are snapshots of personal experience, emotional instants, images of nature mirroring daily life. In them, dual observations may be connected by a single thread.” “Place” may be his home in northern Minnesota, hospital rounds in Europe and China, or time spent with a grandchild. The book cover and the sketch art that precedes each section are moments in themselves and give insight to the author’s sensibility and approach. Some of the haiku may benefit from a little word trimming and less commentary in line three, a different capitalization style, and a stronger break between the parts, but overall it is apparent that the author lives his haiku moments, in addition to recording them. The thread that holds this collection together is the way Brueggemann embraces the experience of being fully aware in the moment, of “noticing chance circumstances” and how it is the little things that make us human. *Turning away from / The sick woman’s bedside; / Wild iris in a cup; The crabapple tree— / shedding blossoms / on two yards.* ~FB

**David Grayson, ed.** *The Half-Finished Bridge.* Alameda, CA: Two Autumns Press, 2014, 32 pp., perfect softbound, 5.25 x 8.5 inches. No ISBN. No price given, from Haiku Poets of Northern California, [www.hpnc.org](http://www.hpnc.org).

This collection features four members of the Haiku Poets of Northern California, whose work was selected for publication in conjunction with the annual Two Autumns series of haiku readings. All four are seasoned practitioners who bring a diversity of voices to the pages. The editor selected twelve poems from each, haiku or senryu that reflect his taste and represent a little of what each poet has to offer. Some of his favorites,



and mine, too: *condoms: / the checker asks me to slide / my card more slowly* (Rich Krivcher); *fish in my lungs — / news of his impending / deployment* (Tanya McDonald); *heartwood— / the old log's cavity / fills with snow* (Linda Papanicolaou); *my parents' room / two cigarettes / talk in the dark* (Joseph Robello). *The Half-Finished Bridge* marks the 25th publication of the Two Autumns readings (see next review). ~FB

**Garry Gay, ed. *One Song*.** Santa Rosa, CA: Two Autumns Press, 2014, 72 pp., perfect softbound, 5.25 x 8.5 inches. ISBN 978-1-63443-616-8. US\$10 from [www.hpnc.org](http://www.hpnc.org).

*One Song* celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Two Autumns reading series, founded by Garry Gay. The collection features 100 poems by HPNC members represented in the twenty-five anthologies published since the first reading in 1990. Many of these voices have influenced the landscape of North American haiku and reading their poems felt like time spent with old friends and mentors, some of whom are no longer with us. Stunning cover and inside photographs by Paul McKown enhance the atmosphere of the collection, and a conversation between Garry Gay and David Grayson recounts the history of the HPNC and Two Autumns series. *out of the hermit thrush / out of the valley / one song* (Laurie W. Stoelting); *winter plum branches / a comet's only visit / during my lifetime* (paul m.); *Summer twilight— / a woman's song / mingles with the bath water.* (Patricia Donegan); *River baptism / for those of us not sure / the rain starts* (Garry Gay). ~FB

**Jim Kacian, Bruce Ross, Ken Jones, eds. *Contemporary Haibun, Volume 15*.** Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2014, 116 pp., perfect softbound, 5.25 x 8.25 inches. ISBN 978-1-936848-25-6. US\$17 from [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com).

This annual anthology presents the best in English-language haibun and haiga from around the world, as selected by the editors. Writers and artists who are striving for excellence in these haiku art forms will find inspiration in the 79 haibun and 16 haiga included in the 15th volume. ~FB

## *Correction*

### **From *Frogpond* 37:3**

Our apologies for the misalignment of line 3 in Tom Tico's haiku on page 48. The line should be centered:

in this little part  
of the solar system  
dust motes

## *Call for Designs*

Help stock this pond with frogs! We welcome frog designs in black and white for inclusion in the pages of this journal. We hope to choose a different frog design for each issue, so please e-mail your submission of high-quality .jpeg or .tiff files to the editors of *Frogpond* at [frogsforthepond@gmail.com](mailto:frogsforthepond@gmail.com).

## *The Haiku Society of America Annual Contests*

Thank you to the judges and contest coordinator, Mike Montreuil, and congratulations to the winners of the 2014 Mildred Kanterman Merit Book Awards. The deadlines for HSA-sponsored contests are:

- Bernard Lionel Einbond Renku Contest: February 28, 2015
- Nicholas Virgilio Haiku Contest: March 25, 2015
- Mildred Kanterman Merit Book Awards: March 31, 2015
- HSA Haibun Contest: July 31, 2015
- Harold G. Henderson Haiku Contest: July 31, 2015
- Gerald Brady Senryu Contest: July 31, 2015

# 2014 Kanterman Merit Book Awards

*For Books Published in 2013*

## Judges

Deb Baker, Concord, NH  
Adelaide B. Shaw, Millbrook, NY

As with judging every contest the first reading is usually quick with only tentative selections made. Subsequent readings reinforce some choices, omit some, and add others. It's a narrowing down process requiring rereading, careful repeated analyses, and frequent e-mails between judges. After doing all of that, here are our choices.

Congratulations to the winners and thank you to all the poets for contributing their work for this contest.

## First Place (\$500)

*Laughing to Myself* ~ Tom Clausen

Rochester, NY: Free Food Press, 2013, unpag., perfect soft-bound, 5.25 x 8.25 inches. No ISBN. US\$12.50.

As editor Michael Ketchek says in his introduction, “Tom [Clausen] was a pioneer in the haiku movement that let haiku not only roam through the natural world, but let it into our cities, homes, and other aspects of our modern world. . . . [Tom] . . . has so openly let the reader into his life and into his heart.”

The haiku span 24 years of writing, but many are characteristic of recent developments in haiku—*gendai* haiku with no *kigo* or reference to nature, and, as such, the difference between haiku and senryu becomes blurred.

in the tent  
talking ourselves  
to sleep

Ketchek also writes, “Tom, while retaining his individual voice, manages to convey the aspiration and angst of all of us who live in this modern world and does so with a wry and whimsical smile.”

quiet evening  
a spider walks its shadow  
from where it fell

Some poems are senryu and are hilariously true:

staff meeting  
I identify  
with the last donut

Clausen can summon a lot of emotion in a few words as in

standing at this window  
I remember mother  
standing here

There are personal poems and poems attuned to the elements of nature:

river walk  
the silence  
between rapids

reading into it  
as much as I can  
my life

and his family poems are beautiful little gems as well, especially

next morning  
her yawn doesn't sound  
angry

The best thing about this book is that rereading it is as much a pleasure as the first reading, and that's an unusual treat. In all these poems we see something of the poet as a man who can

understand the worries we face and laugh at some of them. In the minds of the judges there is no doubt *Laughing to Myself* was the best haiku book in this year's contest.

## Second Place (\$100)

### *Noise of Our Origin / Rauschen unseres Ursprungs* ~ Dietmar Tauchner

Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2013, perfect softbound, unpag., 4.25 x 6.5 inches. ISBN 978-1-936848-27-0. US\$12.

This collection is written in German and English, with the German translated by the author. The author writes about time, space and distance, our relationship and position relative to each of these, the known world and the unknown. Here is a poet trying to understand his presence in the universe. The haiku show concern, joy, hope, and much more. They provide thought-provoking material, but are rooted firmly here on earth in everyday human experience. Falling in love, losing one's parents, taking a walk, going to work, tasting a beer, noticing a budding flower—all of these things inspired Tauchner to juxtapose the ordinary with the fantastic, the galactic, the awe inspiring. For example:

dark energy  
father leaves  
the earth

where the weather ends,  
light on its way  
to the end of time

first warm day  
the toy cup fills  
with sunlight

opening buds  
the tender odor  
of beginning

Sometimes the human presence is simply the mental interplay between writer and reader:

5% cosmos  
the anonymity  
all around

columns of creation  
dreams back  
to the first man

One of the judges felt that the arrangement of the poems in this collection is a drawback. The one-liners stretching across two pages over the seam of the volume and the inconsistent placement of the English and German versions were a distraction. Despite that and despite a few poems the judges didn't "get," the beauty and power of Tauchner's writing ultimately urged rereading and further savoring his work. In the final haiku the poet gives an apt summing up of where we are in the universe and how we got here. For some, it is just noise; for the poet the noise is a challenge he is trying to understand.

new radio  
noise  
of our origin

### **Third Place (\$50)**

#### ***A Five-Balloon Morning ~ Charles Trumbull***

Santa Fe, NM: Red Mountain Press, 2013, unpag., 5.5 x 5.5 inches, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-0-9855031-3-0. US\$16.95.

The haiku in this book, as Trumbull himself points out in the introduction, are "bits and pieces" from his childhood home, from his leaving and his trips back. Although a few of these haiku could have been penned anywhere, many others are imbued with a strong sense of place—the Southwest and specifically, New Mexico.

With all the haiku, including a section, "Trinity," inspired by a 2011 trip to the site of the first atomic bomb explosion, Trumbull's poems take the reader through the Land of Enchantment and also through a range of universal emotions:

raking into piles  
leaves from the tree  
I climbed as a boy

cloudless plains sky  
my soul completely  
exposed to God

bend in the trail  
a juniper branch  
worn smooth

ponderosa pine  
reaching to the cliff tops  
winds of the ancients

heading and heeling  
a cowboy loses his hat  
in the summer sun

sunrise  
over the Sandias—  
a five-balloon morning

The haiku in the “Trinity” section are calmly objective with images as the site is now, providing a chilly contrast to the events of 1945.

scraping the dirt  
with my toe—  
a grain of green glass

This section, with its own introduction, is like a separate chapbook within the collection and could have been set apart more distinctly, perhaps by placing it at the end of the book.

## **Best Book of Haibun**

### ***Welcome to the Joy Ride ~ Peter Newton***

Winchendon, MA: Imaginary Press, 2013, 52 pp., perfect soft-bound. ISBN 978-1-628906-30-1.

Peter Newton takes us with his haibun along on his journey through life, his appreciation of poets, his resilience, his hopes and expectations, the people he meets, his connections and disconnections with friends, neighbors, strangers, with life in a small town. These observations are presented sometimes in a lighthearted tone, sometimes in a cynical tone, and all presented in sharp detail. Whether or not the poet is writing about himself or as another person doesn't matter. What matters is that the prose and haiku fit together smoothly. These haibun

show us life as it is, not as we always want it to be. There is both suffering and joy. Peter Newton's prose is accessible to all readers, regardless of their experience with reading haibun. The haibun in Newton's collection manage to combine wisdom, humor, and simplicity—such as “The Deli Clerk,” “Unspeakable,” “Simple Folds,” and “One Thing.” Newton's observational skills, his clear, well-crafted prose, and his ability to write haiku that enhance rather than repeat the themes he's addressing make this collection a fine one.

### Honorable Mention

*from the journal of a perpetual dreamer* ~ Mike Montreuil

Charleston, IL: Northing, 2013, 46 pp., perfect softbound.

Montreuil uses a concise, almost enigmatic prose in these poems. There are no titles in this collection, just journal dates, and some poems seem to be no more than that, the personal notations of a diarist. The prose is natural, as if the poet is talking to the reader, recounting his day of nothing special. Yet, we want to read on, to know what the poet will do tomorrow and the next day. The haibun have one or two haiku which provide a deeper understanding, move the narrative a step further, or increase or change the mood. Although each haibun is marked with a date going in chronological progression during a year, the year is not given. It doesn't matter whether or not these haibun are from the same year or different years. They hold up individually and do not require a continuity with the previous one. They reveal a responsiveness to the world, poems in dialogue with the human condition. April is an especially strong section.

April 10

And that was Easter weekend . . . Another four days of violence  
in the world . . .

walking towards me  
in the grass  
abandoned cat



## Best Anthology

### ***Where the River Goes: The Nature Tradition in English-Language Haiku ~ Allan Burns, ed.***

Ormskirk, Great Britain: Snapshot Press, 2013, 480 pp., hard-cover, 5.25 x 7.25 inches. ISBN 978-1-903543-36-8. £12, US\$45 (includes shipping and handling).

Allan Burns presents English-language haiku and its celebration of nature since the beginnings of the English-language haiku movement in 1963. He identifies, as suggested by George Swede, three types of haiku: “nature-oriented haiku with no reference to humans or human artifacts, haiku that explicitly reference both humans or human artifacts and the natural world, and human-oriented haiku with no reference to the natural world.” With well-written and informative essays in the introduction and literary biographies introducing each writer’s work, this anthology is perfect for both informed haiku readers and those who know nothing about the form. The writers are mostly well known and the work included is top notch. This book is accessible, edifying, and delightful, everything an anthology should be, and should be included in library and school collections throughout the world. If, as a haiku poet, you wish to “get back to nature,” this is the book to read.

## Honorable Mention

### **7 ~ Roberta Beary and Lenard D. Moore, eds.**

Durham, NC: Jacar Press, 2013, 52 pp., softbound, 5 x 7 inches. No ISBN. US\$15 & \$3 postage @ [www.jacarpres.com](http://www.jacarpres.com).

In the preface to this small anthology, Richard Krawiec explains, “At a meeting of the North Carolina Haiku Society the subject of numbers came up. Can someone write and publish too many haiku? . . . I asked Lenard D. Moore . . . how many of his published haiku he thought would survive beyond his

death. He considered it for a while then answered, ‘Seven.’” Hence the title and the premise of this book. Krawiec went on to contact editors and asked them to send a list of the best haiku poets. He culled a list of one hundred suggested writers to fourteen and asked for their ten best haiku, and then the editors, Beary and Moore (whose own work is included), chose seven for each poet. Despite this somewhat convoluted selection process, which conjured memories of school elections, the work in this volume is certainly very good and it’s interesting to know the authors themselves chose what they feel is their best work. The haiku resonate with familiarity and the universal appeal of the experience and/or the image.

### **Best Chapbook**

*lonely together* ~ **Stanford M. Forrester, ed.**

Windsor, CT: nut wagon press, 2013, 38 pp., hand stitched, 4 x 4 inches. ISBN 978-163173-47-3. US\$12.

This chapbook is both lovely and thematically pleasing. We all experience some loneliness in our lives, sometimes often, sometimes only occasionally. The five contributing poets all address the idea of loneliness, particularly the sense of being lonely in our interconnected contemporary world.

### **Honorable Mention—Essay**

*The Disjunctive Dragonfly: A New Approach to English-Language Haiku* ~ **Richard Gilbert**

Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2013, 132 pp., perfect soft-bound, 5.25 x 5.75 inches. ISBN 978-1-936848-30-0. US\$17.

This treatise is an updated and expanded version of an earlier paper in which Gilbert identified seventeen disjunctive modes. In this version he identifies twenty-four. With several haiku as examples, Gilbert illustrates each disjunctive mode and explains how it works. The author is thorough in his analyses

and one wonders if the poets who composed these haiku were aware of what disjunctive mode they were using. Sometimes knowing too much about how something works lessens the enjoyment of it. If the haiku poet or reader wants to know how to analyze a haiku, this is the book to read.

### Honorable Mentions—Design and Aesthetics

**Lidia Rozmus.** Art and Design, for *moondance* by Marian Olson. Santa Fe, NM: Deep North Press, 2013, unpag., perfect softbound, 5.5 x 7 inches. ISBN 978-1-929116-19-5. US\$18.

In the book, different hues of dark blue keyed to the phases of the moon form a perfect background to the haiku by Olson.

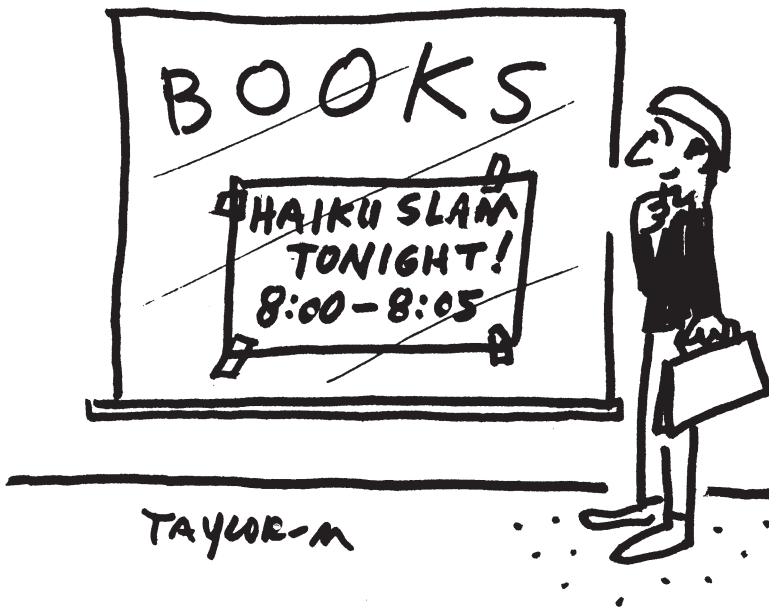
**Bob Arnold.** Book Design, for *Our Waves Meet the Ocean Waves* by Gary Hotham. Green River, VT: Longhouse, 2013, letterpress/accordion folded, 3 x 4.5 inches. No ISBN. US\$12.

This is a cream sheet of paper folded into a sage green heavier cover wrapped with a strip giving the title and the author's name. This little package is about twice the size of a credit card and would be a charming gift inserted in a greeting card.



*Deb Baker's poetry and essays have appeared in journals in Europe, North America, and Japan. She's a librarian and author of The Nocturnal Librarian (<http://thenocturnallibrarian.com/>) and bookconscious (<http://bookconscious.wordpress.com/>) blogs and "The Mindful Reader" column in the Concord Monitor.*

*Adelaide B. Shaw lives in Millbrook, NY, with her husband. She has been writing haiku and other short-form Japanese poetry for over forty years and has been published widely. Her haiku book, An Unknown Road, won third place in the Kanterman Awards for 2009.*



(Mike Taylor, San Francisco, CA)

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## From the Editors

*The beauty of the butterfly is . . . it is like a haiku that piercing image  
. . . then it disappears.*

~Sonia Sanchez

*If you have a good haiku it really means you're getting to another  
place, another level or enhancing your consciousness.*

~Bruce Ross

*Being alive and being able to capture it in a few words. That's the  
true haiku tradition.*

~Randy Brooks

*Haiku makes us stay alive and breathe with that one breath.*

~Sonia Sanchez

To edit a journal like *Frogpond* (for that matter, to read or submit to *Frogpond*) is to be keenly aware of conversation. There is the conversation, of course, between one poem and another, or between haibun prose and capping haiku, or between linked thoughts and experiences in a renga or renku. There is also the conversation between poets about the art and its purposes in our lives and in human culture. Witness the talk above about the small poem we all know and love. There's a certain logic to the flow of these thoughts, though they've been plucked at random from the many words spoken at a single conference. (The quotes all come from Tazuo Yamaguchi and Randy Brooks, eds., *Haiku, The Art of the Short Poem* [a film by Tazuo Yamaguchi], Film Haiku Anthology, Decatur, IL: Brooks Books, 2008.) Yet there are gaps, too, between one utterance and another—and into this gap eavesdroppers and other readers may slip in their own questions, answers, and concerns. In this issue we are pleased to present additional conversations—essays, reviews, and two interviews, which we hope provoke lively curiosity, attentive listening, and expressive response. Indeed, should you feel so inspired, we invite you to join in the haiku conversation with re-readings for future issues of *Frogpond*.

For this, our ninth issue of the journal, we've begun the work of a new year. Countless hours are spent collecting, editing, correcting, condensing, and organizing material, and we couldn't do it without all hands on deck paddling in the same direction. There aren't enough words to express our appreciation to all of our contributors, especially those who were open to suggestions for improvement; to our proofreaders, Charlie Trumbull and Bill Pauly, for their careful attention to detail in finding what we miss; to Noah Banwarth for his unwavering patience and help with the InDesign program; and to those of you who provide feedback and support after the issue is in your hands. Thank you!

A new year has also brought changes to the executive committee and regional coordinators of the HSA (see officers' list on p. 146). We are deeply indebted to Paul Miller, who served as treasurer from 2004 through 2014. We miss his presence on the board, as well as that of Sari Grandstaff, who served as second vice president for two years. We welcome Bill Deegan and Charlotte Digregorio, who have stepped up to fill these positions, and we extend our gratitude to the regional coordinators, past and present, as well as the entire executive committee for their dedication and support.

For eight of our nine issues, frog designs by various artists bring a touch of whimsy to the pages. We were delighted to select a seal engraving on plexiglass design by Charles Baker for the winter issue and hope that you like it as much as we do.

And finally, we've come to the first thing you see when you take *Frogpond* from your mailbox: the cover. "Charming," "Elegant," "Inspiring," "Exquisite," "Delightful"—these comments reflect some of those received in response to each season's design by Chris Patchel. The covers of a book serve as an introduction to and a frame for the material presented within. For this issue, Chris started with something quite ordinary—a handful of yarn—and from it, created something quite extraordinary. May all of us be inspired to do the same with our words.

Francine Banwarth, Editor  
Michele Root-Bernstein, Associate Editor

