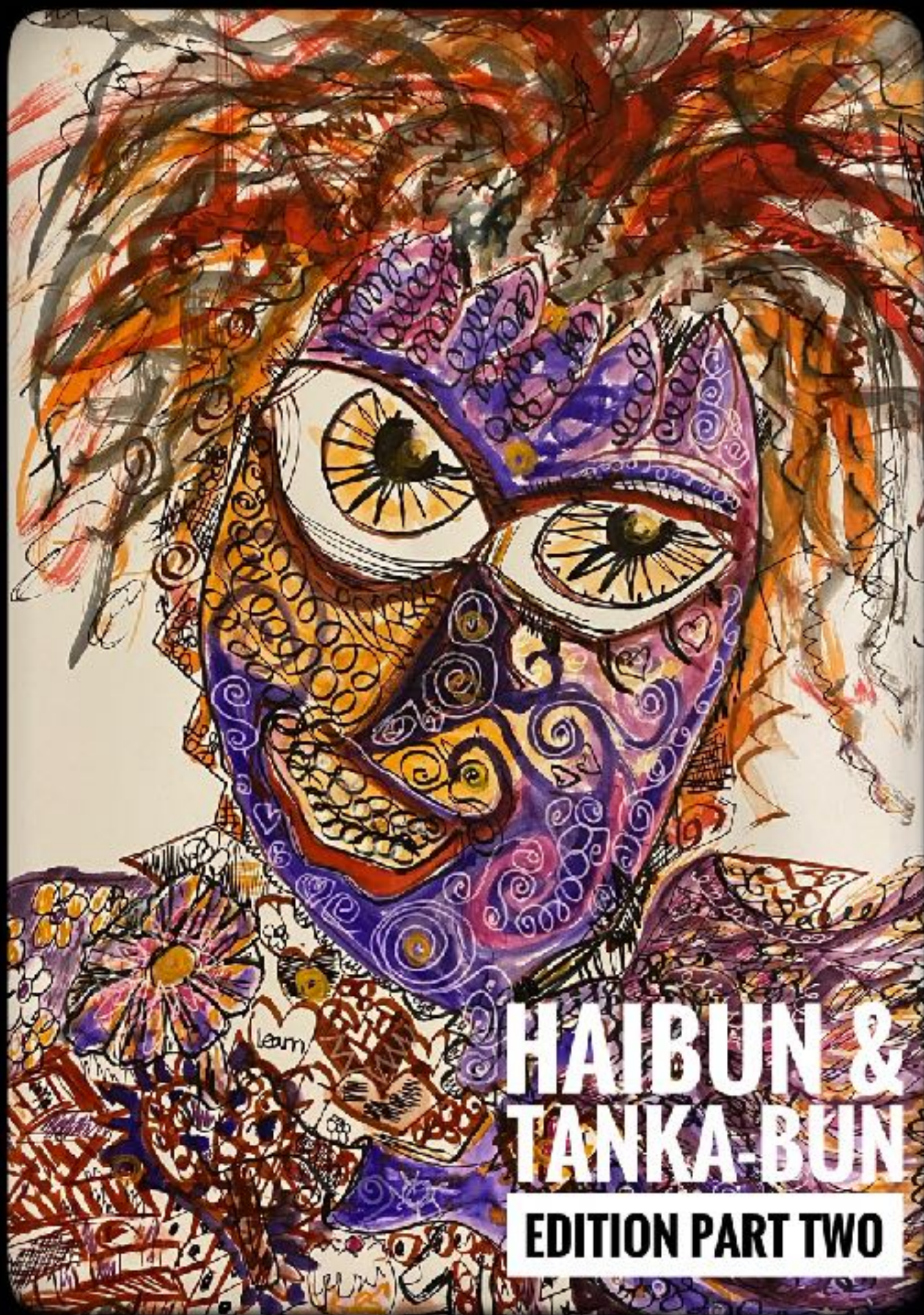


PAN HAIKU REVIEW 5



HAIBUN & TANKA-BUN EDITION PART TWO

EDITOR: ALAN SUMMERS

PHR5 SUMMER OF 2025

Pan Haiku Review issue 5

haibun & tanka-bun edition part two

Summer 2025

ed. Alan Summers

Cover Artwork

The cover artwork was created by Tim Roberts, and adapted as the cover. You can see the original as a haibunga in The Pan Haiku Review 5 Special Haibunga Gallery Supplement (Summer 2025) featuring Tim Roberts which is a separate document.

FONT / TYPEFACE

Carlito is a sans-serif font that is a metric-compatible alternative to Calibri, designed by Łukasz Dziejczak. Introduced in 2014, this neo-grotesque typeface evolved from Lato, and boasts a calm expressiveness:

<http://lukaszdziedzic.eu/>

“I have enjoyed reading The Pan Haiku Review. There really isn’t anything anywhere quite like it. The core ambiguity in the title says it all—is it a frying pan, a goat-footed dryad-chaser, the prefix “all”, a camera shot, a review—it’s all those and more.” – Mike

Next submission details re: 2025 Winter Edition (PHR6):
max. two haiku, any style will be considered.

Submission window: All of October 2025

Submission email address:
panhaikureview@gmail.com

Call of the Page, home of The Pan Haiku Review (PHR):
www.callofthepage.org

See more details at the end via The Blōō Outpost Report

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2. Adam's apple Lavana Kray / Romania
3. I I wanted love like a story to bring a dying man back to life (so stop running, dammit)
Maia Brown-Jackson / New York USA
4. Flash Lenard D. Moore / North Carolina USA
5. Healed femur Alan Peat / Biddulph, England UK
6. Best Intentions
Terri L. French / Alabama / Kelly Sauvage Moyer / North Carolina USA
7. golem Guy Stephenson / Donegal, Ireland

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- Review of *landmark status woman* (Kati Mohr) by Pippa Phillips
- Review of *Two Seasons in Israel* (Rick Black) by Penny Harter

- | | |
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| 8. En attendant Godot | Jenny Shepherd / east London, England UK |
| 9. "Fox Moon" / "Luna di volpe" | Stefano d'Andrea / Imperia, Liguria, Italy |
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| 11. In the blackbird's wake | Robert Kingston / Chelmsford, UK |
| 12. Fading Signatures | Nalini Shetty / Mumbai, India |
| 13. Null... and Void | Kimberly Kuchar / Austin, Texas USA |
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| 21. Herring Girls - Letters from Siglufjörð | Melissa Wold / Mobile, Alabama USA |
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Peg Cherrin-Myers (Southeast Michigan, USA) / petro c. k. (Nord-Ouest Pacifique) | |
| 24. No Password | Lorraine A Padden / San Diego, California USA |
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| 26. Bitter Melon | Jahnavi Gogoi / Ajax, Ontario, Canada |
| 27. EVERYTHING LEFT TO LOSE | Pamela Garry / Connecticut, USA. |
| 28. Gisa | Robert Hirschfield / New York, NY USA |
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| 31. Accept Cookies | Jerome Berglund / New Orleans, Louisiana USA |

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- | | |
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| 33. WOLF/ Mac Tíre | Gabriel Rosenstock / Dublin, Ireland |
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SPECIAL FEATURE
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This Is Just To Say: a quartetto of haibun
 Carla Schwartz / Meredith, NH and Carlisle, MA USA

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| 37. Will cupped hands hold the sea? | Lakshmi Iyer / Kerala, India |
| 38. Rethymnon on a Drachma a Day. | Ruth Holzer / Virginia, USA |
| 39. From the 4 th Dimension | Marilyn Humbert / Sydney, Australia |
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| 41. Unknown | Jo Balistreri / Wisconsin USA |
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| 43. The Refuge of Fleetwood Mac | April Woody / Virginia USA |
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| 45. Lingering shadows | Hifsa Ashraf / Rawalpindi, Pakistan |
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| 48. the intricacy of attachment | Reid Hepworth / Ontario, Canada |
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SPECIAL FEATURE

FOR THE RESPECT *and* LOVE of HAMSTERS

A tanka-bun trinitas

1. Alien Abduction by Hamsters
2. No more turns of the wheel
3. To earn the trust of a small, vulnerable soul

Alison Clayton-Smith / Bedfordshire, England UK

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| 53. Flirting Screwdrivers | Ed Higgins / Oregon USA |
| 54. Chaos Theory | Leon Tefft / Greenville, South Carolina USA |
| 55. Getting Out Alive | Cynthia Anderson / Yucca Valley, California USA |
| 56. Broken Bough | Kanjini Devi / North of Aotearoa, New Zealand |
| 57. Sultry Summer Day | Bonnie J Scherer / Palmer, Alaska USA |
| 58. Next | Lorraine Pester / south Texas USA |
| 59. Penblwydd hapus | Ann Smith / Pembroke, Wales, UK |
| 60. The Door to Reality | Pravat Kumar Padhy / India |
| 61. Heard in the Northern angle of the weathervane on Nansfield Park
Diana Webb / Leatherhead, Surrey, England UK | |
| 62. Backscatter | Neena Singh / Chandigarh, India |
| 63. Faded
Deborah Karl-Brandt / Sinzig, Ahrweiler, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany | |
| 64. Head Spinning | Adelaide B. Shaw / Somers, NY USA |
| 65. Shades of pink & umber | Ella Aboutboul / West Sussex, England, UK |
| 66. The Initiation | Arvinder Kaur / Chandigarh, India |
| 67. Speckled Turbulence
Jenny Fraser / Mount Maunganui, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand | |
| 68. See You in September | Stephanie Zepherelli / Hawaii USA |
| 69. Quasi una fantasia | Peter Jastermsky / <i>high desert</i> , Southern California USA |
| 70. First Allocation | Kristy Snedden / Georgia USA |

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|---|--|
| 71. The Puppeteer | Surashree Joshi / Pune, India |
| 72. Mario's Dozen | Roger Noons / Kingswinford, West Midlands, England, UK |
| 73. Oh, | Brigita Lukina / Zagreb, Croatia |
| 74. Other Homes | Pris Campbell / Florida, USA |
| 75. Window Walker | Joanna Ashwell / County Durham, North-East England, UK |
| 76. Kakureru | Kati Mohr / Nuremberg, Germany |
| 77. Self Portrait | Alanna C. Burke / Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA |
| 78. Taking Flight | Norma Bradley / Asheville, North Carolina USA |
| 79. Stuff like that | Barbara Anna Gaiardoni / Verona, Italy |
| 80. Chromatophotophobia | Joshua St. Claire / New Freedom, Pennsylvania USA |
| 81. They call me Gaz the Pedal...fuel injected, like... | Tim Roberts / Kapiti, New Zealand |
| 82. Pain is a romance novel | Christa Fairbrother / Tampa Bay, Florida USA |
| 83. Challenging Interpretations of Christina's World. | Karina Klesko / Albuquerque, New Mexico USA |

Feature:

So, what is tanka-bun?

Article and examples from the editor:

Tanka prose: *Paring down exorbitancy*

The Blōō Outpost Report : What's Next?

SUBMISSION DETAILS

End of List / Content / Titles

EDITOR: ALAN SUMMERS



Apologies for the delay of PHR5 as my accident messed up a lot of things from typing with one finger that exhausted me after only a couple of minutes, to severe fatigue and foggy brain and regular intense nausea.

Delighted that I'm on track and a loaded teaspoon of turmeric in my daily smoothies has really helped with joint and body trauma aches and piercing pain at times.

Six titanium screws are now my constant companions in my new augmented persona!

See below, *courtesy of my surgeon* who loved playing with shattered elbow bones!



EDITOR'S BACKGROUND

Alan Summers, *Pushcart Prize*, and *Best Small Fictions* haibun nominated writer; and mentor for *Call of the Page*. He's also been a guest haibun editor for the British Haiku Society's *Blithe Spirit* (2018).

Haibun-commissioned by the Bristol Old Vic theatre (2003), his very first haibun pre-dates back to Australia, 1997, republished in Japan, and then anthologised in *Journeys 2015*, *An Anthology of International Haibun* by editor Angelee Deodhar.

He has been a joint winner for haibun in two categories **poetry** (2017); and then more recently **flash fiction** (2024) for *Snow Hill to Selfridges* (Bournemouth Writing Festival Flash Fiction & Poetry competition, with Arts University Bournemouth, and Dithering Chaps publishing house) and published in *Lines in the Sand* (pub. Bournemouth Writing Festival with Dithering Chaps).

Alan founded *Blōō Outlier* journal (2020-2023) & *Babylon Sidedoor* (2022) which have both featured haibun, and now absorbed into *The Pan Haiku Review*.

HAIBUN COMPARATIVE ESSAY:

Two Favorite Haibun: Unsettling Clashes by Alan Summers
(December 2024):

<https://contemporaryhaibunonline.com/table-of-contents-20-3/articles-reviews-20-3/alan-summers-two-favorite-haibun/>

Alan Summers

founder, *Call of the Page*

Founder/Editor-in-Chief, *The Pan Haiku Review*

<https://www.callofthepage.org>

This issue, which is the second haibun / tanka-bun edition, is a train journey of tales, imagined, experienced, desired, and even unnerving.

While the memories remain, and perhaps live on, these haibun/tanka-bun follow their own tracks.

Catching the train *in four acts*

Act I

We start with generous seat pitch.

Travel and food are interesting companions. The concept of dining cars on trains dates back to the 19th century when introduced to enhance long-distance travel, with its navy-blue velvet seating, Art Nouveau flair, brass fixtures, and a prelude to the ultimate moveable feast. There is an origami folding wall panel for privacy and amateur artwork, with soft apple cinnamon mist through the ventilation system during Christmas.

A salmagundi of savoury or sweet senses channel through vents on other days from freshly baked bread, coffee brewing, bacon sizzling, and *just-created* biscuits to befriend goat's cheese, salmon and dill, or fruit compote, or decadent Strawberry Butter, even Southern Chocolate Gravy.

For one tall passenger, biscuits are for visiting wide-lipped coffee cups, with an Italian treat, the *Biscotti*, a double-baked biscuit perfect for dunking.

But we race ahead.

Act 2

There are menu items before we arrive at postprandial activities, and then later postprandial somnolence. The Big Baked Potato is reintroduced, its secret a pan of water added to the oven, while deeply piercing each end with an ice pick signed by Sharon Stone.

The Pullman Loaf is made available, a sandwich bread baked as square and straight so all sides were the same, no war or peace treaties signed. Cantaloupe Pie, rich shortcrust pastry, cantaloupe melon and a lime kick, while its cousin Key Lime Pie still exchanges postcards will be considered.

Before then...

Act 3

Chefs begin baking bread, roasting, prepping, both desserts and vegetables. Waiters set tables with Belgian linen from flax grown, and woven in Belgium's mills, railway company logo-driven plates and other china pop out of nowhere alongside silverware, and Riedel wine glasses, expertly crafted to elevate the aroma and flavour of each pour from a variety of shapes and sizes tailored to fit every wine, finally a fresh rose vase on each table.

Uniforms are spotless, serge for jackets designed for long service and hard use, with reinforced pockets edged with high-performance synthetic Lorica leather, and durable buttons.

Meals become jointly announced by an android waiter using chimes, plus posting menu in shorthand at each cabin.

To the diner upon arrival to the dining car, order forms and pencils as scenery passes large windows. Mark Twain and Huckleberry Finn exclaim their temporary freedom "from all sorts of cares and responsibilities," and Tom Sawyer solves crime between courses in an eternal challenge between Agatha Christie and her holographus ally, Poirot, searching for all kinds of elephants still trapped under railway rugs, and the ultimate Pear Pistachio Tart.

We digress.

The primo course will be hand-engineered pasta, a lighter kind, of cappellacci di zucca (pumpkin-filled pasta) embraced by sage.

The secondo course, saffron risotto, Risotto alla Milanese inspired by a prank. A team of glassmakers took saffron used to colour the stained glass windows of Milan's Duomo cathedral, and added it to a risotto dish at dinner.

Later, much later, the clickety-clack, rumble and chugging, whistle and honk of rail parallel in its historic timelines beckons for a nightcap, perhaps Hot Buttered Rum, or the ultimate freezer-prepared Night Train, a Bitter Manhattan Recipe of Manhattan-Boulevardier hybrid with overproof bourbon, Cynar, and Amaro CioCiaro, Cornish sea salt, and a quick dash of Angostura Aromatic Bitters.

Retiring.

Act 4

Opulence and comfort in our private cabin, and access to further augmented reality experience in its dynamic space. The book unfolds its classic bedtime stories, and each character says goodnight in the golden chain that ties us together.

St Pancras terminus est

romantic breakfast
I butter my toast twice
distracted by my wife

Alan Summers / Chippenham (England) about 2 hours from St Pancras

Postscript

breadcrumbs

The **Art Nouveau** architecture movement & design first appeared in **Brussels, Belgium**, the early 1890s.

The “**Great Big Baked Potato**” was a staple of the Northern Pacific Railway cuisine for decades. At a time when much smaller potatoes were the preferred choice, there was no demand for large spuds with leathery looking skin; some even tipped the scales at five pounds in weight.

These supersized potatoes that William McKenzie wrote about in his book “Dining Car to the Pacific,” states that the Northern Pacific created a lot of marketing merchandise: spoons, letter openers, inkwells, blotters, medallions, mechanical pencils, statuettes, aprons and postcards galore —and all featuring the railway’s signature giant spud, split down the middle with a spoon on one side, and a great big pat of butter on the other.

The line became known as the “*The Route of the Great Big Baked Potato.*”

<https://www.railstotrails.org/trailblog/taters-and-trains-the-great-big-baked-potato-and-the-northern-pacific-line/>

“*with an ice pick signed by Sharon Stone*” is a homage to the large metal spikes to internally heat/cook up these huge potatoes, and it’s also an actor’s famous/infamous role as someone whose preferred murder weapon was an ice pick, after making love.

"from all sorts of cares and responsibilities" is from a longer quote from **Mark Twain**, from his book *"Roughing It"* a semi-autobiographical book of travel literature written in 1870–71 and published in 1872.

Mark Twain's novels include *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and its sequel, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) followed by **Tom Sawyer, Detective** (1896).

Agatha Christie / her holographus Poirot / all kinds of elephants / Pear Pistachio Tart:

Agatha Christie is perhaps the most famous crime mystery novelist ever, created Hercule Poirot, her most famous and longest-running character. Trains were a frequent plot device in many of her stories including *4.50 from Paddington*, *The Girl in the Train*, and others.

Hercule Poirot (Belgian) showed a love of steam trains, despite his wife dying in a train accident, and he travelled off and on trains across thirty-three novels, two plays (Black Coffee, and Alibi) and fifty-one short stories from 1920 right up to 1975.

The three main train mysteries that involved Poirot were:

The Mystery of the Blue Train; *The Plymouth Express*; and of course perhaps most famously *Murder on the Orient Express*.

Holographus Poirot:

"Holo-Poirot" refers to the mixed reality experience of Agatha Christie's *"Elephants Can Remember"* novel (1972), with HoloLens technology, including recently discovered recordings of Agatha Christie reading from her novel "Elephants Can Remember" which focused on memory and oral testimony.

The Ultimate Pear Pistachio Tart and...

what does Poirot mean in French?

French: occupational name for a grower or seller of pears, from a diminutive of poire aka 'pear'...

Or

"Poirot" does not have a clear etymology, it's a family name invented by Agatha Christie, and is possibly a French word meaning *"little hare"* with a connection to his Belgian origins and quick intelligence.

"...goodnight in the golden chain that ties us together" is inspired by the quote *"Sleep is that golden chain that ties health and our bodies together"* by English dramatist Thomas Dekker (*The Guls Horn-Booke*, 1609) and highlights sleep with overall well-being.

The Various Acts

"Murder in Three Acts" (USA title) is a Hercule Poirot novel by Agatha Christie, also known by its original title, *Three Act Tragedy* (UK 1934): **Act I.** Suspicion, **Act II.** Certainty, **Act III.** Discovery.

Arrival (adventus)

St. Pancras International (train station):

An iconic London gateway to high-speed rail travel across the UK and Europe.

terminus est:

Terminus:

In Latin, this can refer to the end of a transportation line.

Est:

The Latin word "est" translates to "is" in English.

It's the third-person singular present active indicative of the verb "esse," which means "**to be**"

terminus est:

The place of parting, or greeting, or eating as in the case of St. Pancras International (train station).

Discessum?

(departure point/station/country)

The average journey time from Brussels-Midi/Zuid (Brussels South, Belgium) to London St Pancras (England) by train is at least 2 hours on the fastest services.

The Fourth Act

In a four-act structure, Act IV serves as the final act, similar to Act III in a three-act structure, and is where the story's climax and resolution occur. This act involves a tying up of loose ends. It's where the character's growth is finalised, and the audience experiences the emotional climax and the ultimate resolution of the plot.

A key element of Act IV :

Denouement:

The story winds down with loose ends tied up and the world returns to another new normal.

Character Development:

The protagonist's journey complete, personal growth and a late lunch.

Final Image:

The last scene for the audience should leave a lasting impression, ending in repast.

In essence,

Act IV concludes the story, and closure with a transformed protagonist eating well-buttered toast.

Breadcrumbs:

"breadcrumbs story" suggests the HC Andersen tale *Hansel and Gretel*, and also breadcrumbs mark out a path through the urban forest and its tricky twists and tales. It's also a metaphor for providing small pieces of information to guide participants, whether for breakfast, lunch, dinner and the late supper, which in themselves are a fine four act play.

completato

Adam's apple

For about two hours the skinny man has been looking at the yellow apple, as if he's found a new planet. He holds it on his lap for a while. He would eat it, but this is the only one he has, and it belongs to the worm that touched it first, which pokes its head out, now and then, so the old man has someone to talk to. I feel his dilemma becoming mine, so I let him wonder about cutting the apple into halves, or pair it up with the moon by sticking it on the wooden fence.

hooting owl –
a pair of helpless arms
in self-embrace

Lavana Kray / Iași, România (Romania)

I wanted love like a story to bring a dying man back to life (so stop running, dammit)

I wanted love like a story you could tell to bring a dying man back to life and I would rather be slowly gutted than admit that I dreamt, sometimes, about *more*.

Too many years of
acquiring the skills not to
touch reality,

But I understand now why I'm so tired all the time. I know the nightmares just lead to insomnia lead to constantly being on edge lead to more hypervigilance and exhaustion and everything feels so extreme when you're this tired—

eclipse the present
with disassociation,
rationalizing

Because my skin isn't safe and maybe if I run far enough I can get somewhere *he* can't haunt me, where I can't still feel *his* lingering touch. I hope that one day I can make peace with the body where *this* happened.

the worst as something
you deserved, and forgetting,
over time, that the

But I don't think I'm ever going to be *normal*. I don't understand how most people do it, live and breathe and *function* without being overwhelmed by their very senses.

heart is a precious
thing, and it is not meant to
face this world alone.

Still. I know now that if I can't stop running than at the least I have to stop running *from* and start running *to*.

I'm just not sure *to* what.

Now, sometimes, your heart
aches, so you think it might be
time for something *more*—

Maia Brown-Jackson / New York USA

FLASH

Yesterday, gale-force winds swept through the day. Carolina sky opened, drenched the whole region. Tornadoes dropped, tore down buildings, flung vehicles, ripped up trees, snapped telephones like toothpicks, and popped powerlines. Funnels stayed on the ground long minutes, left debris everywhere.

fall deepens
I turn off
cable news

Lenard D. Moore / North Carolina USA

Healed femur*

He's out with a hammer breaking legs. *It's a refreshing change*—that's what they say at first; that it beats beating around the bush and all that pussyfootin' stuff. Then he goes and breaks the neighbour's legs...*Well they've done some bad things, we're sure of that*—but somehow it sounds less convincing. Next day—real early—there comes a tap-tap-tapping at the front door. Then a thud and the crash of breaking glass.

blackbird
on a plane for its colour,
its song

- *Margaret Mead's alleged response to a question regarding the first sign of civilisation was a healed femur' —someone helped the injured individual to survive when they couldn't fend for themselves any longer.*

Did Margaret Mead Speculate About a Healed Femur?
Gideon Lasco, SAPIENS – Anthropology Magazine (June 2022)
<https://www.sapiens.org/culture/margaret-mead-femur/>

Snopes Fact Check
Nur Ibrahim (July 2023)
<https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/margaret-mead-healed-femur/>

Alan Peat / Biddulph UK

Best Intentions

What would God do with a hot-glue gun? Because, you know, those things are dangerous if you're not careful. You never know what angel wings could wind up stuck to. What if they ended up sticking to themselves and some unwitting seraph plummeted to the earth? Or landed with a thud within the very pits of hell? Even worse, God might get his own fingers stuck to, say, a toaster for all eternity. Then, Christ would have to stop whatever He was doing, get up and go sit at the left hand of the Father while the blessed lined up for their honey and jam.

spiritual evolution
another craft project
gone horribly wrong

Terri L. French / Huntsville, Alabama / Kelly Sauvage Moyer / Winston Salem, North Carolina USA

golem

The children spend hours, begging at neighbours' doors for old clothes, scouring our estate for materials until the outsize doll, its trouser legs stuffed with balled up newspapers, an old stocking filled with straw for a head, propped in a wobble-wheeled pram to be trundled from door to door, their rhymes importuning mothers, fathers and total strangers with the cry:

Remember remember The Fifth of November Gunpowder Treason and Plot

A penny for the guy mista

A penny for the guy missis

A penny for the

and

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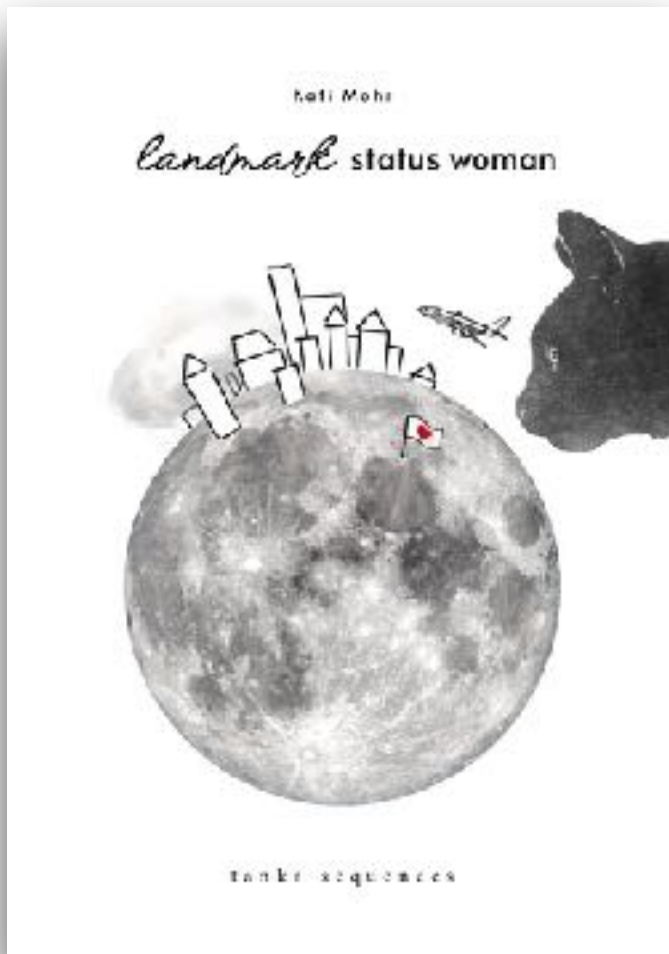
seventy a lot of years since burning cheeks flamed

Guy Stephenson / Donegal, Ireland

REVIEWS

Review of *landmark status woman* by Kati Mohr

Pippa Phillips



landmark status woman

- Publisher : Bod – Books on Demand (October 23, 2024)
- Language : English
- Paperback : 140 pages
- ISBN-10 : 375975208X
- ISBN-13 : 978-3759752086
- Item Weight : 6.2 ounces
- Dimensions : 5.83 x 0.3 x 8.27 inches

<https://piandannes.wordpress.com/books/>

<https://linktr.ee/landmark.status.woman>

Kati Mohr's *landmark status woman* is a collection of tanka sequences– including a sequence of cartoon haiga. The poems are arranged in chapter-like collections whose titles invite us to reflect on their themes in indirect ways. The work is lyrical but grounded– resonant emotions are punctuated with plainspoken colloquialisms. Although the poems in the volume stand on their own merits, they grow and reveal more in their relation to each other.

Kati Mohr is a prolific German poet whose intuitive, boundary-pushing work in micropoetry has appeared widely in poetry journals. She has previously published a work of tanka, *something with feathers*. Her work is subjective and observational, which provides a strong grounding for the author's tendency to experiment.

In Japanese micropoetry, the technique of linking to a verse while also shifting away from it is an important technique– Mohr elevates it to an ideology in *landmark status woman*. The relationship between title and sequences, to the images they are sometimes ensconced in, and of the sequences to each other, create crackling layers of energy. The complex yet genial language invites the reader to return to the book again and again, searching for a meaning that is elusive because it shifts from one reading to another.

Initially, the poems center on childhood and becoming. Mohr explores the tensions between coming to know your parents and coming to know the world, the line between oneself and one's world, one's significance to that world, to others, and to oneself. It is among these tensions that we catch glimpses of what it is to be human. The poems paint a picture of the emergence of a kind of consciousness, wistful, lonely, and yearning, as attuned to what isn't as to what is.

What does it mean to be oneself, what does it mean to be with another, how much of oneself comes from that, and how much is compromised by our connections? How much of our disconnection to ourselves has to do with our disconnection from others? Mohr's work is deeply humanistic, implicitly feminine and feminist.

To be a woman is to be unable to be only an individual– at points Mohr notes the ways that she compromises herself and grows smaller– but that is also what being human is. No man is an island. Women are not allowed the fiction of true individualism– but after all, it is only a fiction. None of us can divide ourselves wholly from our context:

the sparrows chirp wildly
in the overgrown garden
it's june again
with all that is thrown at me
what can i call mine?

The chapter titled *triangle construction* draws lines between self, lover, and that which houses them. At one end is the connection of romance, at its best expansive and at its worst limiting. At the other end is an onanistic level of self, a self split into two, I and Thou, the self that observes and the self that is observed. At its height, the author issues an imperative to find the world in herself:

hold it
isolate the sound
I close my eyes
the music stops
I can hear the blood river roar

Is one's world a kind of house, or is one's house a kind of world? Retreating into domesticity, Mohr explores the house as a sort of interface- between oneself and the other members it houses, between oneself and the external world, between one's family and the world. It also serves as a shelter, a way to create or preserve oneself:

silhouetted
in the doorway
something fierce
I'm going to open
as I am

In observations of the quotidian, Mohr explores the largeness of small moments, and the smallness of large moments. About religion, the author is unsentimental and skeptical; for her, spirituality lies in food, in a well-loved book, in spring flowers and morning mist, in a worn sofa.

on a scale of counting all red things to not finding words
we settle at a table for bread and Boursin.

By the end of the work, we have a picture of the poet poised at the moment of action, but not yet acting- consideration of action is itself an act:

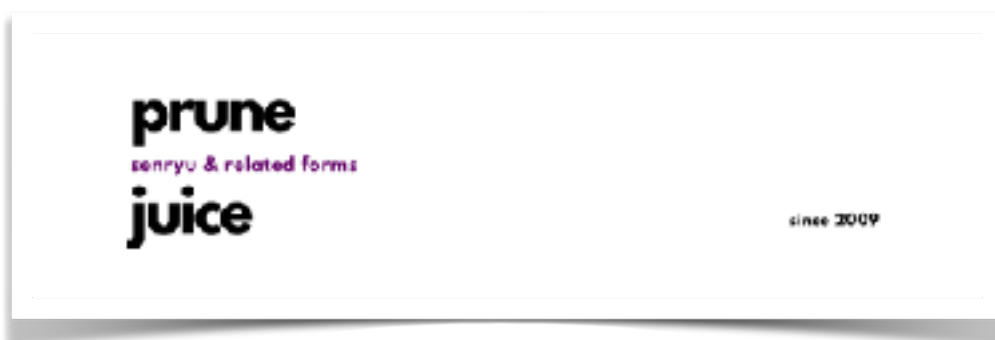
the sunlight dot dot dots the crests
just by thinking
I sweat

The poem is the Cartesian insight embodied in a transient moment- I think, therefore I am. The world impacts me like a wave, and my shore ebbs and flows. Fundamentally, I am connected. We all are.

Pippa Phillips

<https://www.tiktok.com/@pippaesque>

Pippa Phillips is the new editor of **Prune Juice** (*senryū and related forms*), and was guest co-editor for *Blōō Outlier Journal* senryu special New Year's Eve (Winter) 2022 issue #4 (editors Alan Summers & Pippa Phillips).



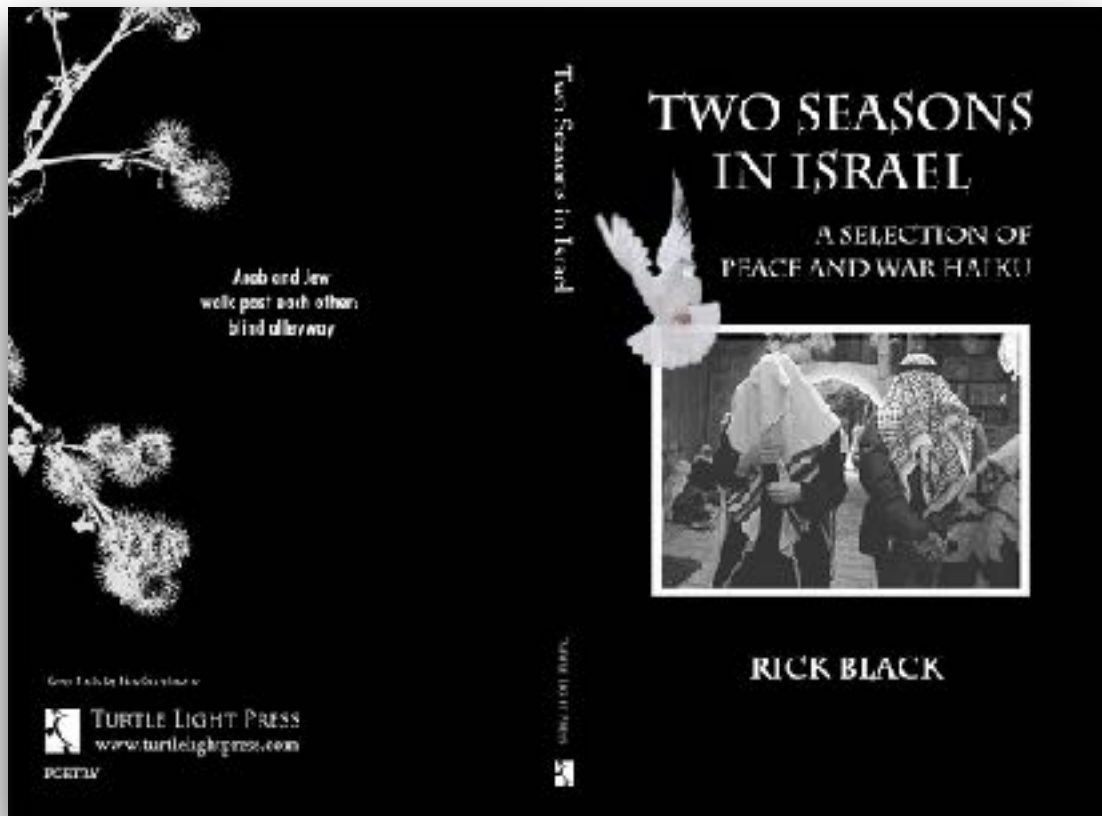
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Two Seasons in Israel

Review by Penny Harter



ISBN #978-0-9748147-7-3
Perfect binding. 167pp, 5.25 x 8 in.
200 poems
18 b&w photos

<https://www.turtlelightpress.com/products/two-seasons-in-israel/>

In his extraordinary new collection of haiku, *Two Seasons in Israel: A Selection of Peace and War Haiku*, Rick Black has distilled the essence of peace and war, both of which have been intertwined for centuries in the Middle East, especially in Israel.

In the Introduction to the collection, Rick states, "I strove to make connections between olive trees and refugee camps, military cemeteries and blossoming rosemary, great blue herons and F-16s."

Black has done all this, and more. In poem after poem, he alternates images of peace and war, sometimes juxtaposing them in the same haiku. And in the last section of the book, he deliberately uses English, Hebrew and Arabic words to “connect the striated layers of time.”

Black also shares with the reader his struggles to remain neutral in his haiku despite his sense of life’s injustice. He tells us “there are times to protest against life and times to accept it.” For both himself and us, through his inspired poems, he manages to walk a fine line that balances both protest and acceptance.

The collection is divided into five sections: I. “A Succulent Takes Refuge”; II. “The Nightmare of Battle”; III. “My Brother’s Prayer Slip”; IV. “Blind Alleyway”, and V. “*Birds of Paradise*,” followed by a “Glossary”, “Photo Credits”, “About the Author”, “Acknowledgments”, and “Colophon.”

The “Photo Credits” list acknowledges Black as the talented photographer of many of the haunting images that appear throughout the sections, and also cites the credits for work by other included photographers.

Although I find all of the haiku powerful and evocative, I am selecting several from each section that really move me.

From “A Succulent Takes Refuge”:

Wailing Wall
my sorrow so quickly
turns to stone

quiet again
at the war memorial---
forgotten dreidel

no air raid sirens—
just a seesaw creaking
in the night

piano concerto:
hear it coming from
the bomb shelter?

she kisses me
while I’m reading Isaiah—
September morning

still asleep:
the warmth of her breasts
against me

desert fortress:
a succulent takes refuge
in its ruins

These poems need little commentary, they are so complete in themselves; however, I choose them both for their power and for their coupling of peace and war images: sorrow turning to the eternity of stone; a war memorial and a dreidel; hearing a seesaw in the absence of sirens; a piano concerto drifting from a bomb shelter; refuge found in a kiss and in the sleeping warmth of breasts between lovers; and a succulent safe in the ruins.

Ending this first section, flowers join the succulent: pink bougainvillea, red hibiscus, red poppies, dogwood trees, anemones, olive trees, and even a late rose having lost most of its petals to the winds of war. And how hopeful, along with a kind of childlike belief that it might make a difference, is the following plea:

sign posted
at the Latrun Monastery:
“Don’t hurt the flowers!”

The poems I’ve selected from section II “The Nightmare of Battle” combine remnants of war with persistent signals from the natural world that life goes on.

by ancient roots,
the spent cartridges and
olive pits

Roots (with their double meaning) meet spent cartridges and olive pits—the olives eaten and enjoyed, their pits left behind, and cartridges the parallel spit-out pits of war.

Love endures in the midst of war, all kinds of love. The following haiku contain testaments both to love and to the survival of love, even in grief.

not yet abloom . . .
pink geraniums planted
in army boots

just buried soldier—
too soon for his mother
to notice the crocus

Yet, also sensual and playful love are evident in the following two haiku:

red hibiscus
by Galilee’s edge . . .
falling in love

rock doves
flirting by the soldier's grave
so joyously

Also, as with Black's earlier poems about the forgotten dreidel and creaking seesaw, children are planted in the midst of war:

a toddler
watches TV alone—
more wounded

Both soldiers and civilians are being wounded—as is the solitary, watching toddler!

after the sirens,
the sound of children
playing hopscotch

a discarded doll
stares at the Judean desert
so vacantly

The sound of children playing hopscotch after the sirens affirms that play can go on even in the midst of war. And that discarded doll embodies questions without answers: Did the little girl take shelter hurriedly and drop her doll, or worse? And why are the doll's staring eyes so vacant? Both the child and the doll have seen too much. The doll becomes an orphan without the child, and the child may be one, too.

In section III, "My Brother's Prayer Slip," Black leads us into more poignant fusing of peace and war images, even with some bitter humor here and there, as in these two poems:

a soldier's Uzi
targets the Beatles poster
above his bed

Ammunition Hill
pink tea roses blossom
at its bottom

As the glossary notes, Ammunition Hill was "the site of a battle in the Six-Day War between Israeli and Jordanian troops." Love surfaces again in a cemetery. We don't know how long ago the lovers' initials were carved—probably into a tree trunk or possibly on an adjacent grave marker.

soldier's grave—
lovers' initials carved
nearby

Contrasting sounds, as in earlier referenced poems, echo more often in these haiku. When the noise of war is muted, we can again see the hope in blossoms or hear the sustaining music of both the human and the natural world:

a capella
deep-voiced monks and
mourning doves

salt marshes
the sound of wings
in silence

Here, too, we find references to both natural and social landscapes bearing the scars of war:

Western Wall
my brother's prayer slip
next to mine
for B.

Nabatean ruins
a few tourists stop in
the living room

How ironic, the common term "living room" becomes in this haiku with present-day tourists visiting a site destroyed by time, war or neglect.

And now we listen again to the soft, repeated cooing of doves, a somber music calling us to join them in mourning:

dark celestial sky—
even the doves mourn
the dead

In the haiku below, the scent of baby powder—a sign of continuing life—ironically fills up a bomb shelter:

triplets fast asleep:
the scent of baby powder
in the bomb shelter

Closing this section, the following haiku demonstrates centuries of both relationship and conflict in this all too often upside-down world:

upside-down
from the monkey bars:
crosses and domes

In Section IV, “Blind Alleyway” we find images of time passing, yet war continuing. Some of the poems also depict more harsh images of war while still joining them with those of peace:

old veterans
revisit the battlefield
arm-in-arm

last clouds—
if only the violence
would drift away, too

scattered straw
in a neglected field
fallen soldier

rusted howitzer:
still targeting a pine
and its crows

Ammunition Hill
the cold, slanting rain pierces
hollowed-out rocks

Still, there are affirmations of the need for love, along with its taking us out of time and into savoring the moment:

bumper sticker
by the war memorial:
A Time to Love

after lovemaking,
sipping the mint tea—
its sweetness

Finally, we encounter thought-provoking irony in this section's title poem:

Arab and Jew
walk past each other:
blind alleyway

Blind to one another, or blind to each other as enemies? Trapped in an alley with each other, with no way out? Or merely that both are in the same alleyway not knowing what lies at the end? Black leads us to peer down this alleyway, and I am afraid to enter it, not knowing the answers to these questions.

In Section V, “Birds of Paradise”, the opening poem couples violence with blossoms. How ironic that wild blossoms go “rampant” after the inevitable rampaging destruction of war.

smashed Arab gravestones:
wild caper blossoms
go rampant

The next haiku offers a startling contrast between sacred and secular:

not yet dawn
the sound of a muezzin’s call
and disco music

Throughout many of these poems, we feel a sense of exhaustion coupled with time passing, when even prayer slips ascend in ashes.

diesel smoke—
the dark stone buildings
exhausted

wintry gust
the ashes of prayer slips
rise up

McDonald’s arches
where convoys perished
in 1948

Armenian museum:
a map of their genocide
graffitied over

Yet, as always, there is play:

Armenian Quarter
the shadows of girls
jumping rope

However, it is poignant and somewhat sobering to see the “shadows” of girls, rather than the girls themselves, at play.

In the following poems, joy finds us even in the midst of the sorrows and ruins war leaves behind on both landscape and person. If only war could be the dream and dancing the reality.

dancing with her
at the edge of the desert—
is it a dream?

just traipsing
along the cobblestones,
glad to be alive

I've quoted quite a few haiku in this review and could have selected even more. All the poems in this extraordinary collection move me—sometimes to tears, sometimes to quiet contemplation. They are especially relevant now when war has escalated in the Middle East yet again, growing more violent day-by-day.

In his opening paragraph to the "Colophon" at the book's end, Rick Black's heartfelt words are a powerful testament to enduring hope:

"So many years have gone by—and still war is a daily part of life in the Middle East. Hopefully, one day soon these poems will become a relic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a witness to years of suffering that have long ended."

And I join him as I pray, "From his mouth to God's ears." and "May it be so." Amen.

—**Penny Harter**, author of *Keeping Time: Haibun for the Journey*

<https://www.pennyharterpoet.com/post/1-18-23-1>

There is so much to Penny Harter we'd need several volumes for this exceptional writer and human being to fully encompass her presence in the poetry & haikai world.

Penny Harter is co-author of:

The Haiku Handbook: How to Write, Share, and Teach Haiku (Kodansha)
with William J. Higginson, which remains a must-have classic book,
and the one that shaped my own haikai years over three decades so far.

Her essays on teaching Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter and William Carlos Williams' Paterson are featured in books from Poets & Writers, Inc. Penny's awards include a number of Poetry Fellowships from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts; the Arnold Gingrich Award; the Emily Dickinson Award from the Poetry Society of America; a teaching-poet award from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation; and two fellowships from Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. In addition, her extended autobiography appears both in *Contemporary Authors* (Volume 172) and *Contemporary Authors Autobiographical Series* (Volume 28).

<https://www.pennyharterpoet.com/about>

En attendant Godot

Sunday lunch with friends (a bridesmaid over 40 years ago) in *Brasserie Zédel*.

Towards the end of the meal, as the waiter clears away our main course (my *soufflé au fromage* with a creamy mushroom sauce, was delicious) we see him show a young man to a table nearby, and place two menus on the pink linen tablecloth.

The husbands have their back to the scene, but we women have a perfect view, as we consider dessert options. (I choose the *tarte au citron meringuée*).

Minutes tick by, and the waiter returns to the other table several times, first to pour some water in a glass, then presumably to ask if the young man would like to order something to drink. We describe what is happening to our (*let's be honest, not terribly interested*) husbands.

Fifteen minutes have passed.

The jazz trio continues its love songs, my friend and I get increasingly anxious about the length of time the young man has been sitting there alone.

(We're both mothers of adult sons, after all).

He keeps looking at the door, while occasionally sipping from his glass of water, and ignores the menu, the size of a broadsheet newspaper...

It's been half an hour now. Even the men are discussing how long they'd wait for a date, before giving up.

We drink our post-dessert teas and coffees *extra slowly* (I go for the fresh *thé à la menthe*), hoping to see the arrival of the person the young man is waiting for. I tell the others of a heart-breaking story I once read in a biography of Jane Austen. She'd apparently met a younger man in Scarborough, while she was already considered beyond marriageable age. And even though he was from a noble and wealthy family, they'd fallen in love. When he had to leave before she did, he vowed to arrange for them to marry. She never heard from him again. Seemingly she found out later, he'd been killed in a coaching accident, on his way home from Scarborough.

We can't stretch it out any longer, and ask for the bill. As we pay, then stand up to leave, our husbands finally get to see the forlorn face of the young man. He has been waiting for 45 minutes.

melting wax
 down the candle
a lid slammed shut

Jenny Shepherd / east London, England UK

"Fox Moon"

After an exhausting all-day crossing of the immense Samson's Wood*, I have looked for the most panoramic place overlooking the vast surrounding valleys and mountains and I am preparing to bivouac in my sleeping bag, under the warm light of an imposing and creepy red-orange moon.

Deeply absorbed in this contemplation – flecked with startles at the noises and voices of animals rustling here and there in the undergrowth – I have just enough time to remember that, according to an ancient Taoist legend, the fox lives on the moon and I immediately fall asleep.....dreaming that the madness of Orlando, an ancient paladin “furious” for love, was caused by the beautiful hu-li-ching (the fox-spirits of Chinese mythology), and not – as Ludovico Ariosto narrates – by his beloved Angelica.

fox moon –
even Orlando's wisdom
fled up there

(* in the extreme western Liguria, on the mountainous border with southern France, between the Verdeggia area and the Roja valley)

* * *

“Luna di volpe”

Dopo una spossante traversata dell'immenso Bosco di Sansone*, durata tutto il giorno, ho cercato il luogo più panoramico dominante le vaste vallate e montagne circostanti e mi sto preparando a bivaccare in sacco a pelo, sotto la calda luce di una imponente e inquietante luna rosso-arancio.

Profondamente assorto in questa contemplazione – screziata di trasalimenti per rumori e voci di animali che frusciano qua e là nel sottobosco – ho appena il tempo di ricordarmi che, secondo una antica leggenda taoista, la volpe abita sulla luna e subito crollo addormentato.....sognando che a provocare la pazzia di Orlando, paladino “furioso” per amore, furono le bellissime hu-li-ching, (gli spiriti-volpe della mitologia cinese), e non – come narra Ludovico Ariosto – l'amata Angelica.

luna di volpe –
anche il senno d'Orlando
fuggito lassù

(* nell'estremo Ponente Ligure, al confine con la Francia meridionale.
tra la zona di Verdeggia e la val Roja francese)

Stefano d'Andrea / Imperia, Liguria, Italy

Period Piece

The trail climbs sharply through the cedar trees. I feel a stab of defeat but press on...

At a grove, the trail ceases:

swathes of Giant Sword Ferns are mimicking the restless Salish Sea below.

dawn chorus

jostles my memory...

Jurassic fantasy

Ellen Craft / Seattle, Washington USA

In the blackbird's wake

Sleep is not something I am good at. Listening to yet another dawn chorus is a commonality I share with the birds. Today is no different to yesterday as I read and tune into noise from others around the globe

whale song
weaving my way back
into a dream

Robert Kingston / Chelmsford, England, UK

Fading Signatures

The mason arrives after four weeks of promises. Says the lime wash will have to wait. The outer wall has cracked again—right where my father patched it last year. He'd insisted on doing it himself, even with the tremor in his hand.

I remember his fingers caked with cement, his thumb pressed along the fracture like he was trying to soothe it shut.

"Water always finds a way," he said, wiping his brow.

first thunder
a line of ants
leaves the wall

The new mason speaks in nods and gestures. He chips away the plaster; the sound reverberates through the house like an old argument starting up again. I sit on the veranda, tea cooling in my hand.

evening light
the shape of his hand
in the dust

Nalini Shetty / Mumbai, India

Null...

My fading flashlight barely lights the path. I keep walking and walking, and every so often, I pass a door. After the last one I opened, maybe an hour ago, it seems safer to just keep going.

their screams
turn to ash
I run again

Is there no end to this straight, narrow hallway? I stop to rest my aching feet, slumping down onto the cold, smooth floor. The water bottle's empty, and tears sting my tired eyes. As I blink and stare off into space, I suddenly focus on the emerald green doorknob across the hall. That one seems different from the others—it almost appears to be glowing. The flashlight flickers, and I take a deep breath and stand.

It's time to make a decision, any decision, before I'm trapped in total darkness. Walking over, I tentatively reach forward. The doorknob feels cool in my hand.

a rainbow
in the blue sky
a siren blares
through the streets
like last time

... and Void

Kimberly Kuchar / Austin, Texas USA

what caring looks like

Over thirty five years together, your second hospital admission.

First, viral meningitis from a trip through ancient Italy. Now, a disabling accident, thrown over your mountain bike into a state of permanent paralysis. It's April 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic raging.

Watching you interact each day with hospital staff, I am struck by the steady exchange of gratitude. A hushed understanding. Underneath, a quieter struggle.

call
of
duty
all
patients
at
heart

By circumstance, you opened up your medical practice in the West Village in 1983. Just before the AIDs epidemic. You took care of many infected gay men. Those first diagnosed don't survive—no matter how hard they fought—no matter how hard you fought for them. When patients were too weak to get to the office you travelled to them. Supported them to die at home, family often at their side.

the touch, tone, gaze of a mother...another Pietà

Watching you in your hospital bed, I recall the profound impact you made in the face of HIV/AIDS over three decades. To patients and clinicians in the trenches alongside. It moves me to see you now in comparable capable caring hands.

as darkness rages
fighting
medals of honor

Kirk Lawson / New York, NY USA

Still the magpie sings...

She returned after a month's absence . Sorely missed, this young, vibrant new spin class instructor for months had exhorted and prodded us to give out our best. We huffed and puffed to scale mountains and learned to glide downhill with equal equanimity, no terrain was left untraversed and unconquered.

Acknowledging the rousing welcome, she calmly faced the roomful of cyclists to announce that she had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. A general murmur of sympathy surfaced before it morphed.

Later, much later. . . I asked her why she felt the need to announce it to the world. With that indelible smile on her face, she replied, *that's the way life unravels for some* and she was determined to help others with similar afflictions. Brave words from a brave young woman.

Stepping out into the carpark drowned in autumn sunshine, for the first time the optimism in the air...

humming a pastiche
of old songs...
a medley
of vegetables tossed
into a salad

Madhuri Pillai / Melbourne, Australia

Afterwards

I grow up with duckpin bowling. In this version, the pins are smaller and thinner still set up in the 10-pin triangle. The bowling balls are about 5 inches in diameter and weigh under three pounds. No fingerholes. Sort of like cannonballs. There are up to three balls per frame. Our children's choir from church go to the Willow Lawn Lanes as a treat. The ball size and weight and having three tries per frame are perfect for us.

In college after a final exam we go to the duckpin alley to let out—even savor—whatever we are feeling: relief, frustration, anger. Rather than trying to get strikes and spares, the game is to see how far one can hurl the cannonball down the alley in the air before it touches the lane. The manager frowns on high arched lobs. A long, low throw is far more satisfying.

The skill in this duckpin bowling is the release.

tell me springtime
what will be next
haze over the Blue Ridge

Thomas Smith / Austin, Texas USA

Any Door

The painter conjures and I follow her through a portal to a calligraphy of candied trees where I find myself rocking in a handwoven hammock, a crib of tranquillity. As I doze, a book of poems slips from my fingers onto a mossy ring of toadstools while a shaft of June sunlight warms my toes. Within the fleece-like hush a bright-vanishing from shade to shade. Menthol throngs the air. Then a soft twittering and the child I once miscarried steps from behind a weary trunk.

Small fingers stroke my neck with a tender whisper—

*You can fit
through any door
you wish for.*

Rikki Santer / Columbus, Ohio USA

At Lincoln's Feet

He sits on the penultimate top granite step of the Lincoln Memorial, embracing the coldness and staring out into the early morning darkness across the reflecting pool, past the arches and fifty-six columns of the World War 2 Memorial and the lighted obelisk of the Washington Memorial in the far distance. Fifty lighted American Flags, one for each state, flex, and flap in the freshening northwest wind.

He ponders. Looking to the south just beyond the Ninth Street bridge, Robert E. Lee's former home, now Arlington National Cemetery, inters four hundred thousand, now equal in death: freedmen, Apollo and Challenger's astronauts, presidents, and soldiers. At the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the Old Guard keeps constant watch in the absence of spectators just before dawn.

Looking back east, he focuses on the woods to the left of the pool, knowing that in that slope beyond, obsidian panels descend and rise again etched with fifty-five thousand names, forgotten. On Panel 46W at shoulder height is the name of his boyhood hero who died trying to save one of his own pilots. He has stood there before, weeping the loss of one who honestly believed in his God and his country.

The morning twilight foreshadows the dawn to come. Lincoln believed in the Constitution and a United States. His words haunt the man as he realizes the fragility of it all; *that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.* As the pink dawn bursts into full day, a single tear falls and with a shudder, he fears for his country.

Freedom born, blood shed:
Republic, can you keep it?
Sunrise, a new day.

Robert B. Moreland / Pleasant Prairie (Carol Beach) Wisconsin USA

The Delilah Incident

“You know, they say that Samson’s long hair is what gave him his superhuman strength. But even after she cut it, I mean, the dude literally pushes the whole freaking temple down!”

wizened dahlia
combing
her last two twigs

Susan Beth Furst / Virginia, USA

Ankle-Deep in Elsewhere

For once, I stop measuring absence—the rise and fall of my father’s breath, the stagger of his steps. I exhale. A feather rests on the pillow. My first holiday without quarrelling—no gasping for space, no treading water. Still, everything tilts slightly off its axis.

rain on tin
my voice folds
into morning

I explain my asthma to the diving instructor, rehearse the signs for help. But as I descend, the warm current takes me in. My chest tightens—not from fear, but from the press of what won’t return.

saltwater rush
the world flickers
into light

Weeks later, the sea lingers in me. I sit in a striped deckchair in Hyde Park, watching the Weeping Beech—its branches sweeping downward like ink dissolving in deep water. A different kind of sinking, one I try not to resist.

barefoot chase
a spinning ball skims
the shifting tide

C.X. Turner / Warwickshire, England, U.K.

Herring Girls – Letters from Siglufjörð

traitorous terrain
clupea harangus teem sea
sacrificial rite

Dear Mother,

Arrived in Siglufjörður at dusk – sky sketched in lavenders and grays. Quite a jostled journey. Eleven hours on a bus rattling, coughing worse than consumptive lungs. I watched, waved as you, the house, the village of Hella shrunk and shrunk into nothingness. Terrain changed with each stop. Whoosh of the door squeezed out volcanic rock and moss mats along with departing passengers. Snowcapped crags, bilberry brambles bounded on board. I found your note when I unwrapped the food you packed. As I ate the taste of home, wind through open windows blew in aloneness, unknowing. The chatty woman next to me, patted my arm and gave me an all-knowing smile. My eyes filled, but did not spill. I slept; wakened by the driver announcing, “Next stop, Siglufjörður.” I turned to speak but the woman was gone. I gathered my bags, stepped off the bus.

Margrét

pebbles to boulders
earth blackened by lava flow
moss sows sanity

Dear Mother,

Settled in the dormitory, sharing a room with 6 other girls. They seem swell. We joke that we are packed in like herring in tins. A cedar cupboard houses clothes and shoes infusing the room with odors of fish and forests. My two books in a case tucked into the corner. In the washroom, drip-drying bras, panties, stockings hang like vines in a jungle. The kitchen is small and we eat on a paint-chipped table. The factory supplies food but we buy anything beyond the basics. A radio sits on the kitchen counter and Una brought her record player with a handful of 78s. Our favorite is *In the Mood* which get us all to dancing like fiends.

Mother, can you believe, I sleep alone in a bed. My own bed. No more sharing with sisters, older, younger – Gunna’s catawampus snoozing, often her foot flung in my face; Hekla’s grabbing my hand whenever a nightmare barged into her slumbers. These narrow slats, musty thin mattress – gifts from the gods.

Margrét

summer scented sheets
breeze through window left ajar
scrounged wood scraps for warmth

Dear Mother,

Roused again before dawn by the call, *get up, get up, the herring has arrived!* Rubbing sleep from my eyes, I dress and with haste wrap my fingers with flour sack strips for protection – fingers still stinging from yesterday's nicks and cuts. I hurry to the dock, watch the herring unloaded in baskets from the boats, and poured into the *fiskur trogs*. Another day of my sharp knife, making shallow incisions along fish bellies working from rear to head, scooping guts, sprinkling salt between the layers and packing them in my barrels. I repeat 700 to 800 times before my drum fills. Each full cask earns me a token tucked into my boot, which on Saturday, I redeem for *krona*. Father will be disappointed with the amount I'm sending. Please Mother, tell him I'm doing my best. The work is hard on backs, legs, arms. The sour stink of sweat and putrid odor of fish often turn my stomach, The others swear my nose will numb to these smells. Time taken to eat and trips to the toilet cut into my barrel filling. I know I must improve my pace to earn more money. Birna – an old hand, this being her sixteenth season – offered to school me on her techniques (something the other girls would not consider). Oh, they like me well enough, but at the troughs, I'm competition. My slowness means more fish for them. Shifts of 12, 18 and often 24 hours are gruelling, exhausting. I'm off to bed now in hopes of a long sleep before the next call of *get up, get up, the herring has arrived!*

Margrét

funk of fisheries
bunched bodies at troughs gutting
day's bookend postcards

Dear Runa,

Oh how I miss you and my sweet nephew. Please give him hugs. I know Mother shares my letters but this one is just for you. Sending Mother a more pristine version written with fingers crossed. Last week, rough seas harbored the boats. With the boys on shore, the town threw itself a party. Joy and music spill from open windows and doors. The Sveinsson sisters can-can in front of the mercantile. Skirts swish to the beat of stomping boots. Boys run dashes through the streets. Winners earn kisses bestowed by Una from her barrel throne. Girls tossed up and down in fishing nets. Ragnar juggles floats. A group of us grab a table in the tavern. A lad named Eldur plops down a tankard of ale and dares me to drink. I give him a stare. Swig. Pushing the mug away, I grimace from its bitterness. Friends laugh at my foam moustache. Katrin with her calloused thumb wipes it clean. Eldur holds out his hand to dance. For hours we juke, jive. He holds me close (not too close) during slow songs. His chin, a gentle touch on my ear. Walking home, my alto adds off-key notes to his baritone strain of *they greeted us with their merry song, the herring girls, and then the evenings were bright and long, but the nights were the sweetest . . .*

His goodnight, a kiss on my forehead. Through the closed door, I listen to his whistling fade.

Margrét

heels click in rhythm
joined in dance of hide and seek
the sea his mistress

Dear Mother,

Last week, rough seas harbored the boats. With the time off from work, we straightened our rooms, strolled through town, flirted a bit with the boys. I splurged on a meal of mutton and a mug of cider. Even sang a song or two. I know tomorrow I need to make up for the lost wages by working hard. But tonight, I am warm, rested and happy.

Margrét

*dawn breaks radiant
day of worry-free frolic
lies, guises, deceit*

Dear Mother,

Excitement and sadness swirl through Siglufjörður as the season nears its closing. Mornings break cold, rain carries droplets of ice. Soon, weather will prevent the boats from leaving harbor. My time here has been exhilarating and exhausting. I have made friends and perhaps lost one or two. My skills honed to where I hold my own at the troughs. In fact, yesterday the supervisor said he hopes I will return next year. I blushed with pride to be counted as a herring girl. We have begun packing. With all the sharing and borrowing, I know I'll return with someone's dress while a pair of my stockings will live in a distant village. The company threw us a party last night. I hoped a certain lad would ask me to dance, but his attention was on Christina, a snobby girl from Reykjavik. A story with no need to tell. Before leaving, we will scrub, scour stations and clean rooms. The boats will be hoisted from water and dry-docked over winter. Nets hung for repairs. I should be home two weeks from Thursday. I do have one favor to ask Mother. Please no fish for supper.

Margrét

*days shorten time drips
land slumbers into winter
while fox coats thicken*

*empty vessels moored
memories stalk silent streets
girls vanish by dawn*

Melissa Wold / Mobile, Alabama USA

Kinetics

We tend to die of thirst.

I recall the quote, "*Thirst kills men faster than hunger.*" It makes me feel worse.

We look up with keen hope that an airplane would drop water, it's too high.

They do drop some green corncobs instead. We fight each other to grab a few.

I halve mine in two.

Almost as if from nowhere one man snatches one of my halves. Despite this I try to quench my thirst with its milky juice.

first thing I do
as soon as I wake up . . .
running water

Tejendra Sherchan / Kathmandu, Nepal

Note:

Water contains two kinds of energy. The first kind of energy is called kinetic energy. Because of kinetic energy water can flow and waves can exist. Water can also contain potential energy: This is energy is stored in the water. Stored, but not used. This energy is useful when water starts to flow and transferred to kinetic energy and cause movement.

On November 4th, I Come Out to My 19-Year-Old-Son

Because I have a master's degree
in Avoidance, I bury myself
in softness on a blue velvet couch
Tuesday night and binge
episodes of *Shrinking* on Apple TV
until I fade. My iPhone nudges
me at 7:00 am, and I tap the orange
button every nine minutes
finally waking at 7:49. Standing

in front of the bathroom mirror, brushing
my teeth, I wonder if there's time to shower
before my push week writing session at 8 am.
When I realize it's not happening, I say, "*Fuck it!*"
and spray dry shampoo into my hair like a fire
extinguisher putting out an oil spill. I holler

downstairs to my husband, who has been up
for hours, asking if he'll bring me coffee.
He hands me a chipped mug without
saying a word because his master's degree
is in Enabling. I am let into the Zoom

and immediately see and hear the facilitator
crying, and wonder why. What has happened?
My daughters plan B's, my pride, and gentle queer
voice melt into a puddle of blue, and I know—
we have lost. I spend the last ten minutes
of the writing session clicking on CNN to confirm
why tears from Canada were flowing into
my American heart.

Out my window,
a young mother is walking her uterus
high daughter to the bus stop,
a Creamsicle comb-over is running
with his pink-collared Karst Shepherd on a short
leash, and white men build red brick walls
around a neighbor's home. It is just another day
moving—forward—outside, but in the orange,
red, and yellow trees, and in the blue-blue sky,
it is quiet, and the birds are nowhere to be heard.

the stinging sleet incoming reign of grievances

Peg Cherrin-Myers: prose
&
petro c. k.: monostich haiku

- Peg Cherrin-Myers: Southeast Michigan USA
- petro c. k.: Pacific Northwest (French: Nord-Ouest Pacifique)

No Password

People come bearing the weight of what they're willing to leave as an offering on the table next to a sign that says Library Book Donations.

counting ballots
the long life line
of an open palm

Lorraine A Padden / San Diego, California USA

Premonition

Sharp air shivers across my skin as I sit on a bench above the estuary. On the gravel beach below seaweed twists into foaming waves. From out of nowhere, Grief arrives, and sits casually by my side. He slides his body closer, offers a smoke and a light. When I shake my head, he pulls a sandwich from his pocket, and offers that instead. The rain slows, the wind grows calm. A seagull, jinking and looping above us, lets out a screech then turns and dives toward the distant flock.

picking oysters
the pail remains
empty

The sun slides out of a cloud. Grief reaches up to adjust a pair of sunglasses that are slipping down his nose; a nose far too short for such a long face. His bare toes dig holes in the sand. *What do you want this time?* I ask with a sigh, but when I turn for an answer the bench is empty. The sun dives back into the cloud as thunder rumbles through the sky. Looking out over the water, a movement catches my eye—on the horizon, an old wooden boat. I see my mother's younger self, waving gaily at the shore.

antique blue pearls
the frayed string
breaks

Amy Smith / Carson City, Nevada USA

Bitter Melon

all my questions
unanswered
the bulbuls
convene on
the fig tree

Grandmother stopped eating meat years ago. The aunts and older cousins tell me that it was because her husband died.

It was around forty years ago.

She was in her early twenties with two children when the man I had only seen in photographs had passed away. My mother whispers that it was grandpa's brother who let her eat fish.

"Wasn't that kind of him?"

I cannot bear this piece of information.

"Who was he to allow her? Why did she need permission?"

She had single-handedly raised her children, worked two jobs, and cooked feasts for us and extended family.

"Who made this rule for widows?"

I ask her at bedtime. She lets out an exaggerated sigh and tells me that I ask too many questions.

seasoning
her wounds with another
pinch of salt
she hosts another
family reunion...

Notes:

Bitter Melon:

A kind of vegetable usually stir fried in many Indian households and served as a side dish.

Bulbuls: A kind of bird famed for their songs across India.

Jahnavi Gogoi / Ajax, Ontario, Canada

EVERYTHING LEFT TO LOSE

Imagine no book-banning, no denying of narrators or truth. Imagine facts that are checkable and kept accessible to all. Imagine acts of kindness displayed for the long haul. Imagine free libraries connected as one. Imagine the world is just begun.

the library lying fallow

Pamela Garry / Connecticut, USA

Gisa

She was the first girl on the block to grow breasts.

She was the only girl on the block to have survived the Holocaust.

Those two details were mated in my psyche in their parareality. Like her father's gold tooth and mother's madness. Her family simply arrived one day from Belgium. The way it happens in storybooks.

If she were possible, anything was possible.

I'd watch her the way I'd watch a movie, imagining myself in love with any female to arise out of nowhere with secrets the size of my emptiness.

climbing the mountain
by the path
the blind man takes

Robert Hirschfield / New York, NY USA

Neighbors

until that moment
her grandma's parlor . . .
sweet lemon drops

Daddy why are those windows broken?
What are those words
someone wrote on the glass?
Daddy why is Mary's grandma saying
she can't take a chance
and rent anymore?
That she won't let you change her mind?
That this is what people will do?
Daddy why do you look so uncomfortable?
Where will Leroy live?
What does "Negro" mean?

Leroy becomes a close family friend who, when my dad is out of town, helps my mother by taking us older kids out for hot chocolate. Who lives in a cool apartment with a record player. Who comes over to take a Christmas photo of our family.

on the edge
of the city limits
Motown music

Years later, Leroy would move to Detroit and remarry. We would move to an all white suburb near Detroit. Miles away from one another. Miles away.

the grey areas of a mockingbird

Colette Kern / Southold, NY USA

Mandala

The spotted owl is feared to go extinct any time soon, due to its hardier invader cousin, the barred owl. A flourishing timber industry has meant a housing crunch for the owls and a fight for survival, of the fittest.

howler monkeys
holding a carrot
in each limb

Finding it necessary to maintain biodiversity and the weaker section, a plan to save the spotted owl has been drafted and is expected to be implemented by Spring 2025. The plan is to shoot half-a-million barred owls and bury them. Over a few decades. Only vetted trained shooters will be allowed to undertake the killings. This is expected to give the spotted owls a chance at surviving.

crows
foraging for their chicks
—cuckoo

Moving on from the USA to a town in Germany, fed up with pigeon poop, their learned council has decided to hire a falconer. They will *“lure the birds into a trap, hit them over the head with a wooden stick to stun them, and then break their necks.”*

The Kenyan government, on the other hand, intends to poison about one million Indian crows. The crows were originally brought to Africa to tackle garbage but because of their adaptability and intelligence, they have come out on top pushing away the others to the point of extinction.

Targeting bigger animals, since autumn 2024, Namibia and Zimbabwe have begun or authorized culling of elephants, hippopotamus and zebras.

ruined fort
the banyan tree at its gate
forms an enso

Mohua Maulik / New Delhi, India

Accept Cookies

*mountain cuckoo
a common cuckoo
when you cage it*

The account not following back is so witty! The account not following back is a victim of 'narcissistic abuse'. The account not following back is an influencer. The account not following back has a Ph.D. The account not following back is impersonating a celebrity. The account not following back has a song you should hear! The account not following back is elite. The account not following back advocates for service to others. The account not following back has a business. The account not following back is humanitarian. The account not following back makes zines. The account not following back you can trust. The account not following back is well traveled. The account not following you back does reiki. The account not following back has a clever handle. The account not following back has books for sale! The account not following back is empowering people. The account not following back is a Princeton/Cambridge alum. The account not following back is looking to connect with other up-and-coming writers. The account not following back is following their heart. The account not following back is a content creator. The account not following back likes exploring cultures. The account not following back is a sovereign citizen. The account not following back has a profound quote to share! The account not following back offers affirmations, love and optimism. The account not following back is an actor. The account not following back knows investing. The account not following back is a truth seeker. The account not following back has won awards. The account not following back is the author of the greatest fantasy ever written. The account not following back is an ally. The account not following back has tagged bylines! The account not following back is philosophical. The account not following back is committed to the community. The account not following back wants donations. The account not following back is a reader. The account not following back is motivational. The account not following back has a podcast. The account not fighting back is part of the Resistance. The account not following back is a christian. The account not following back has a blue check.

*kookaburra:
looking
the part*

Jerome Berglund / New Orleans, Louisiana USA

Spreading Haibun with Recurring Nightmare

Always it begins
this way, rhinoceros season
in the protected lands of my house.
Echoes of a fight, unscrambling itself
outside my front door. My mother recoiling
in that same t-shirt, the one mimicking a football jersey,
a glimpse from the top of the staircase, bare, sunburnt chest
of a man slamming open the threshold. Night and day combining.
Behind him, the freeway traffic groaning its dinosaur groans. I don't wait.
I stagger, naked, down the stairs, freeze halfway. I've stumbled into my birthday
party, gone sour, and my mother's hands are wound to her cheeks with fishing line.
She is long and truly gaunt as she explains to the guests, *He was—I swear—your father,*
forcing his way inside. The guests, my sister and aunt and bearded little children who
know me, but don't, chuckle. I count seconds between peels from the traffic's static.
Perhaps between them I'll find the right words, convince her finally that Dad is dead.
Fifteen years, the same story. But my thoughts are not my own, and the party goes laugh,
and my mother laughs too, the fishing line slackens, relaxes like a warm limb and falls
in a frantic silver halo at her feet. A bearded child with thick glasses, grins up at me,
my bare arms and legs sewn together with skulls. *Hey Dan,* she asks—and the party goes
wait for it—*are you dead?* Everyone snickers. A ticking, the tickling realization that, yes,
I *am* scared, a chilling slap of hand, a hand on my back, my own moaning of question—

midnight
a barn owl screeches—
their remembered faces

Daniel Schall / Pennsylvania USA

WOLF/ Mac Tíre

bloodshot eyes
of a wild animal
streamlets of ancient lava

súile sreangacha
ainmhí allta
srutháin laibhe ársa

His own generation still refers to him by his ancestral Gaelic warrior-name, Faolchú na Carraige Báine (Wolf of White Rock). Grandchildren refer to him simply as 'Wolf', but only among themselves. They think it's quite cool, Native American, almost! (To use 'Wolf' in his presence would be unthinkable, of course).

His great-grandchildren were coached to pronounce his name correctly in the ancestral tongue. Wolf himself insists that Faolchú na Carraige Báine must be intoned properly or not at all. He once snarled at a five-year old great-grandson who uttered his name in an American accent. The child fled the scene, crying hysterically.

'The ancient title,' he once explained, 'is like a mantra or prayer, a special combination of vowels and consonants which when intoned with the proper rhythm and exact emphasis, can empower a receptive person who may wish to become a warrior.'

He said no more on the subject. Maybe there was no more to be said. Or did he realise that none of us really knew what it all meant? Did he know himself what it signified?

We watch him, cautiously, as he grows increasingly more frail. We find it difficult to believe that lung cancer is capable of doing what his enemies failed to do over the years. His eyes still burn, his glance darting this way and that, as they always did when planning the bones of his next stratagem.

Are there any stratagems left? Any more battles to be fought? When had the last skirmish taken place? The world was changing. His eyes burn, not with the fire of a new, searching dawn but with that of a winter sundown.

He longs with an insatiable, wolfish hunger for the heady days of Empire when his ancestors, masters of the terrain, were the only clan in the whole of Munster who could outwit the Redcoats at each turn. It's said that his followers were not adverse to cannibalism, in am an ghátair (in time of need).

Who is left now? Not a sinner. In the name of Crom Dubh, how was he expected to test his mettle? Nobody left around here but the pale, misguided McCarthys, who have all but given up the ghost.

Something still courses in his greenish, protruding veins. What is it? A sense that the fight is, somehow, not yet over. What fight? He doesn't know. A long fight it was, or will be. Has it even begun? He grabs his bata draighin, his old blackthorn walking stick, ready to strike. At what? Ah, would you look at the patina on that sturdy stick!

There is none to wear the grey mantle of the clan, none of us worthy enough, strong enough, keen enough – none of us knowledgeable enough to identify the enemy, to take on the ancient title with all its hidden powers – Faolchú na Carraige Báine! Well he knows that. The party is over.

We pretend not to notice but we can hear a hoarseness now in his voice and almost a tremor, a voice that once was capable of giving the McCarthy clan surreal horrible dreams, dreams that forced some of them away to Canada, others into the priesthood, or the civil service – away, far away from the badlands of East Kerry and the creeping shadow of the Wolf of White Rock:

pockmarked face
mirror of a territory
as yet untamed

aghaidh bholgaí
scáthán limistéir
nár ainmníodh fós

Gabriel Rosenstock / Dublin, Ireland

Ankara, Turkey

Dad used to like to tell the stories of our days both on & off the army base in Ankara // him
throwing pillows at me i was three we'd laugh & laugh // once i bolted out butt naked rode my
trike around & round the building where we lived // same year a car hit someone's dog its
broken body lying in the street nice doctor floor above us jumped from balcony to ground
screamed *Toni Toni* yes he thought i was the one run over // yet another time i climbed a tree *a*
fig Mom said & going down i gouged my arm three bloody lines all parallel *who do you think you*
are some Adam

in the neighbors' house
splashed rosewater in my eyes
a new guest welcomed

Thomas Zimmerman / Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

A Night, Forever?

show me yours
you first, no, you first ...
wrapped in moonlight
you and I, teen explorers
undress each other mentally

three words uttered ...
our bodies listening
to moonlight
as the summer grass bed
holds the shape of our night

Drifting, drifting in and out of my dream.

My first love, now merely a number I can reach, and a door I can knock.

Chen-ou Liu / Ajax, a suburb of Toronto, Canada

Group 1: Shooting Stars

These six-year olds leap into the air for high fives every single early morning. Our favorite camp songs echo across the lake from pine circle to the archery range—*squeeze squeeze squeeze squeeze squeeze the orange!* By lunchtime, we drink half our weight in water. The best days, we combine groups for epic games. Have you ever played full-field trashketball with seventy six and seven year olds screaming for groovy group points and sun-drenched glory?

all these years
under the fishing dock
same snapping turtle

Gideon Young / North Carolina USA

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SPECIAL FEATURE
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This Is Just To Say: a quartetto of haibun
by Carla Schwartz

When all Else Fails, Dig Deeper into Self

Was it the weight that buckled my knees, my quadriceps as we finally descended?

The knife edge, its craggy jagged pile of stones that you floated on, I stumbled over. By the time we got to the edge and began to walk down, my leg muscles were gone. The sun, beginning to descend. I was 21, inexperienced, and lacked muscle.

I couldn't handle all that weight, and now each stone, a barrier to the next level down with jelly muscles from butt to foot. Somehow I crawled my way down. At the bottom, in the hollow, the sun already below the horizon, the air temperature dropped rapidly, as did that of my body. Relieved to have arrived, shivering uncontrollably, I crawled into my sleeping bag and waited for warm food.

The lesson I was learning was many-fold. I would need to build more strength, and in the end, I would be alone and could depend on no one else.

almost died can't wait to tell my mother

Gift Oysters

When the guy from Duck Creek offered me oysters in Burlington I couldn't say no. We had met him at the Burlington Marina the day before, and gave him and his wife a tour of our solar-powered houseboat, the 128 square foot cape with full kitchen, bedroom, and composting toilet, with bamboo flooring, and paneled in knotty pine. We were happy that day. Happy to show off our marvel. Our tiny house that could. But that day you were still with me on our adventure and you mother was still alive. That next day everything had changed. You flew off to your father's home, and left me alone in Burlington. Luckily I had lots of friends nearby. But, with oysters in hand, I felt at a loss. No oyster knife. No experience with one. No you.

However, determined, I walked up to a kitchen store on Church Street and purchased an oyster knife. I stared at the knife for a long moment. Turned it in my hand. I knew I would never use it, even though I should have eaten these oysters, so fresh and plump, raw, as soon as possible. Instead, I gave up the idea of shucking, and pulled out the induction hot plate and a pot, filled it with a bit of water, and started to steam.

commitment
swallowing love
whole

Free Range

If good fences make good neighbors, what do bad fences make? Flimsy fences? None? While driving up the driveway, not one, but two squirrels canter across my path. I think of my peaches, dense stones dangling from branches, no way protected from yard sparrows flying into the crown, or chipmunks or other climbing rodents. What of the berries ripening in planters, not fenced in at all?

I check
the strawberries

bare calyxes

not
seeing red
seeing red

Lake House, September

At the golden hour, Six-Mile Island is lit lemon. At our dock, I'll miss the scene that draws deep pink curtains behind our house. During today's swim, I stopped to speak with three different neighbors. We talked swimming, we talked closing up. We talked about the beauty of the lake. Our tiny house on its pontoons, tied to the dock, can't be as lonely as I am. The boulder at the head of our cove looks like a deer lying down. The tupelo tree glows an autumnal tint. I'm thinking about the salad I'm going to make. I'm feeling lazy. Indecisive. Thirsty. I have a pen and paper by my side, and the paper is blank. The rocks stick up much higher at the end of season when the lake is so low. To load my kayak, I have to make a long jump down into it, and load up from the boat. I'm nervous about leaving the island. It's so peaceful here.

thinking of the sky the lake glows pink

Most of the trees still cling to their green leaves. The lake tempers a chill, so hopefully we won't see frost for a while. The dock garden is waning. Even the peas seem to have lost their zest for life. Now that the tomatoes have dropped and dried, the Thai hot chili peppers I grew from seed emerge bright red. As I sit at my desk, a boat passes in front of my window. The evening is descending, so they have their navigation lights on. My neighbors, the ones I don't stop to speak with too often. The lake surface wriggles with the breeze. Once a Mallard sat on the back of my kayak, behind the seat, using it as a place to watch the lake and poop. Now the leaves of the huckleberry plants bend with the wind, as if ruffled by the duck on his way to my boat.

twilight

rustling branches
an imaginary duck

Carla Schwartz / Meredith, NH and Carlisle, MA USA

Carla Schwartz is also a filmmaker, photographer, and blogger who lives half the year on an unbridged island in Lake Winnepesaukee, and the other half in the Boston area. She's a long distance swimmer, paddleboarder, cross-country skier, cyclist, hiker, and haphazard gardener.

Carla has a Ph.D. in electrical engineering from Princeton University.

Her poem, "Anthem," won the May 2019 *Lunch Ticket Twitter* contest. Her poem, "Wormageddon," appears as a model poem in *The Practicing Poet: Writing Beyond the Basics*, edited by Diane Lockward. Her poem "Gum Surgery" was anthologized in *City of Notions, A Boston Poetry Anthology*. Her poem, "Pat Schroeder Was Our Mother" won the *New England Poetry Club, 2023 E.E. Cummings Prize*.

Learn even more at <https://carlapoet.com>, or on all social media @cb99videos

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Will cupped hands hold the sea?

I decide to stand in knee-deep water, feel the breadth of the tides cleaning my soles. I shift my feet and find a shell in the shape of 'Om'. No wonder, we are at the Om Beach of Gokarna. I clean the shell and walk the stretch to find more and more in different shapes. My pockets fill with sea as I remember my geography teacher advising us to let go the shells for tiny lives need them more.

stormy weather —
a crow picks the twigs
from a fallen nest

Lakshmi Iyer / Kerala, India

Rethymnon on a Drachma a Day

In the crowded waterfront restaurants the waiters fawn upon German tourists. Maybe they're hoping for generous tips; maybe they secretly despise them. Ancient history. I hurry past and turn toward the Old Town.

blue harbor
beyond the breakwater
a fin

Shaded by palm trees in the Public Gardens, I stop for lunch—a handful of fountain water. Across the way is a rundown zoo where I watch a golden eagle and a raven fight over the dead mouse I had found under a bush and thrown into their cage.

occupied city every man a war hero

Ruth Holzer / Virginia, USA

From the 4th Dimension

Suddenly after an intense period of sunspot activity, news breaks, we are not alone among the stars.

rhythmic blips
flashing from afar
undecipherable
peaceful explorers
or armed antagonists

The alien armada's approach is not silent. Our shock, gun-toting, boggle-eyed demons swagger down gangplanks, horns shaking, cloven hooves gouging Freedom's Field.

early afternoon
the old stone steps
glow golden
they lock and load
their gleaming blasters

With the klaxon's continuous warning, we descend into caves far below Freedom's Field. Above our heads reverberating explosions and collapsing buildings as the last bastion's thick concrete and metal doors are sealed shut. Safe for now buried in the catacombs.

setting aside
petty differences
our petitions
for survival remain
unanswered ...

Marilyn Humbert / Sydney, Australia

Two Ways to Say “I Love You, Mom”

She nips with razor-sharp teeth. Never hard enough to draw blood. A love bite, nothing more. I recognize it for what it is. And give in. To the warmth. To the softness. To her claws on my skin as I cradle her like a baby.

motherless
on Mother’s Day
the pleasure and pain
mothering
my inner child

Marcie Wessels / San Diego, California, USA

Unknown

whistling kettle...
the window cloudy
with steam

It turns out my friend Judy is dead.

I don't know this when I put on my coat, and pack her favorite gluten-free chocolate cake, and a tin of black tea. Nor do I know this as I call the nursing home where Judy lives. I don't know this when the Receptionist says she isn't available. Or when I ask if Judy will soon be back in her room. When the woman hesitates, then asks if I know anyone in Judy's family, I realize I've been holding my breath. I blurt out the one name I know, Judy's oldest friend, Diane. I'm given her number. With my coat still on, I grab a drink of water and dial—*again and again and again*.

Hours later, Diane answers the phone in a breathless voice as if she had rushed from another room. It takes a few minutes for her to put it all together—my concern at not being able to get hold of Judy, the nursing home's lack of answers. I know, just know, what she's going to say, and she affirms the fact.

the hiss
of wet firewood
sudden chill

Judy died.

Three days ago, this past Friday, Judy died. Her memorial was today. I thank Diane and put the phone carefully in its cradle. Stunned, I slump into the kitchen chair.

No one thought to let me know she died? Or even that there was a memorial? How is that possible? We'd had tea and cake a week ago—the tea and cake I bring every week. She even offered some to the nursing staff. Did she die alone? Her sons didn't think to call?

blank days...
roaming in a field
of clotted snow

Jo Balistreri / Wisconsin USA

Walkway 8

every morning if you watch and listen. if you feel the change in the air as it softens and see the ghost crabs scuttle over the new turtle nest filled with eggs. if you sit on the worn boards no longer there deep in memories, you too may remember

when the day is still a promise kept.

Margaret Walker / Nebraska, USA

The Refuge of Fleetwood Mac

In the early 80's, my mother embraced a variety of New Age pursuits. As her teenage daughter, I rejected past life readings and the study of crystals. After we moved to an old farmhouse, some guests reported being held down on the bed by invisible hands or feeling spooked in the middle of the day. I was exasperated by this corroboration of my mother's supernatural beliefs. One evening, I was alone and headed up to my room. I felt an icy column of air on one of the steps. I turned around and passed through it again. I wasn't scared but could sense a quiet, undeniable presence. I moved through it one last time, went upstairs, and turned on the stereo.

swirl of fog
even the birds
stop singing

April Woody / Virginia USA

Replacing Trebor Black Jacks with Choo-choo bars

Our first summer in Australia is a scorcher. Hats and sunscreen not customary in 1967, English skin learns the hard way. We play on the burgeoning housing estate jumping between beams of half constructed houses. There's lots of other migrant kids and Aussie kids moving to Mooroolbark on the eastern frontier of Melbourne. Jackie's Dad sets up a sprinkler on their lawn and we're invited to join in — running and laughing under the cold water. Sally teaches me the local lingo. Lollies instead of sweets. Chips instead of crisps. Gumboots for wellies. I love the apt term *Stickybeak* and *Out Woop Woop* sounds inviting.

midnight full moon-struck magpies sing

I have no answer for '*Who d'yer barrack for?*' when school resumes. I quite like cats, but Geelong is over the other side of Melbourne. Tigers are tempting. I hate bulldogs. The football season is nearly over when my new home gifts a flying enlightenment.

We're walking home from school, Jackie, Sally and me, when Ronald Dickman, a fellow grade three boy, sneaks up from behind misappropriating my schoolbag. He runs off, but only made it a few house blocks when a magpie shoots swift and sure as an arrow, beak plunging into the boy's temple.

He lets out a piercing howl, falling to the ground holding his bleeding head. Cool and collected, I retrieve the liberated bag and continue on my way. The magpie is my hero. Collingwood my team.

magpie choir sweet water tinkling over rocks

Julie Constable / Victoria, Australia

Lingering shadows

The cold wind shrinks me within the pashmina shawl during my morning walk in a park. I am not ready for this unexpected weather in Spring. I walk carefully on a curved cobblestone trail that is half covered in moss. In the distance, cumulus clouds are brewing the storm deep in their bellies. Some old fears resurface from my mind, freeze my steps, and hold me back. The sudden cawing nudges me back to my senses. I sit down on a nearby rusty bench for a while before I go back home.

distant thunder—
a white feather clings
to the fence

Hifsa Ashraf / Rawalpindi, Pakistan

North end of a manicured corporate park

Where lies a federally protected wetland, looped by a walking path. No one told us it was there, but one by one, each employee's been lured to take part in this circle. Altering my usual power-walk routine, I set about counterclockwise at the pace of a wandering coyote. I shouldn't have left the office hungry. With borders of *breezy idyllic* on either side, I'm witness to the patter of orange butterfly weeds, the blink of brown-eyed susans. Daisies weave leaves through spindles of purple coneflowers, and blue lobelia basks in beams of prairie blazing stars. Such visuals are challenged only by the soundtrack of six roaring lanes of traffic unbuffered by an earthy berm 100 yards away. Wading among lily pads, a white egret stretches her neck. Meanwhile, a dirty Peterbilt semi idles in the nearby tollway oasis. I pretend stale pretzels I find in my tote bag taste of wild sunflower seeds. The Chicago Bears training camp is pitched around the bend, but you can't get in. Between tall reeds, I still see a three-story pharmaceutical company with its laundry lists of caveats locked in legal cabinets. Signs along the way warn me not to alter land or vegetation.

from trail chips
hewn from company Christmas trees
mushrooms arise

Cynthia Gallaher / Chicago, USA

Dreams

A child runs towards a lady in white, waving a purple flower,

rows of green she sees her mother sfumato

as she comes nearer.

Lakshman Bulusu / Princeton, NJ, USA

the intricacy of attachment

after the breakup i cry myself silly and stop eating and bathing and my friends are bored with the whole shebang but don't actually say so other than there's more fish in the ocean and you can do better and how lame she is for not wanting you and i try not to think about the new girl in her bed doing things with her that i used to do and force myself to stop pacing the back alley of her street hoping for a glimpse of her as she passes by a window.

untethered a ship adrift in space

Reid Hepworth / Ontario, Canada

From Michigan to a New Junior High in Texas

When I get the call to come to the principal's office, I start sweating but shuffle my way to his door. A gingerly knock, a *Come in and close the door behind you*. My eyes focus on the wood paddle sprawled across the desk, the rows of drilled holes at its wide end.

green switch
learning lessons
the hard way

Then I spot the mute boy, hands clasped in front of him as though in prayer. The command: *Bend over and hold your ankles*. He does so with a brief plea-glance at me, as if I can offer him a reprieve. But I, guilty and ashamed, am only here as an adult to witness the swats.

goal posts
in a sun-baked field
the salve on scars

Scott Wiggerman / Albuquerque, New Mexico U.S.A.

Watch Out

Many eons and eons ago, Death wasn't having any fun, and frankly she was being a bitch about it, so The Powers That Be decided to grant her a modicum of power, provided she get off her lazy ass to use it.

Bunsen burners lighting a fire under us

So the deal was she could set up traps that could change someone's fate at a moment's notice. These could be big things, like a tornado, which took lots of planning, or little things, like someone's alarm not going off, which changed the outcome of a person's day and life.

bridge collapse
the guy who called in sick
counting his blessings

Of course Fate hated this because it was so much extra work for him, but he agreed knowing Death's attitude, which was that everyone's time comes anyway, so why bother?

race day –
the marathon runner
coming in last,
still crosses
the finish line

Most of the time Death didn't think much about this power. But every once in a while she got bored with her job, which was in essence picking up souls, and in her words, "ferrying them around like a goddamn taxi service."

tugboat a monotony of water

So then she would get her shit together and arrange for a deathtrap. Once everything was in place, she would sit back and watch, with a smile on her face, as people's fates went haywire. The more change and havoc, the better.

a job well-done
my fiery car accident
now yours

susan burch / USA

Palate Cleansing

During toddlerhood, my twin sister and I create our sign language. She—born profoundly Deaf—and I need to communicate in a hearing family that does not learn to sign. Though I'm hard of hearing and learn to speak, I still consider sign language my mother tongue.

At age 11 years, my life changes dramatically when my twin leaves me to attend a residential school: I do not talk for one year.

Four decades later, I not only miss my twin sister's presence in my life, I miss my voice that used to be. There is no longer anyone in my daily life who communicates with me in my first language.

Sometimes, I find a way.

*my bubbly self
still inside me
somewhere
signing to myself
in the shower*

Kelly Sargent / Green Mountains of Vermont, USA

SPECIAL FEATURE

FOR THE RESPECT *and* LOVE of HAMSTERS

A tanka-bun trinitas

4. Alien Abduction by Hamsters
5. No more turns of the wheel
6. To earn the trust of a small, vulnerable soul

Alison Clayton-Smith / Bedfordshire, England UK

Alien Abduction by Hamsters

now you are here

then you are there
when does there

become here —

are you home?

Have you ever wondered what pet hamsters think when they move to a new home?

I do.

It's not like cats and dogs who get to move around from indoors to outdoors. Who look out of windows and see life changing even when they are curled up contemplating their next snack.

No, pet hamsters go from their birth home to being transported through the air in a box, to eventually finding themselves in a completely new world with different strange tall creatures who make noises at them.

Some hamsters adjust quickly to the change, others are so frightened by the sudden difference in sounds and smells (their eyesight is poor) that they stay hidden for as long as possible.

When my foster hamsters are adopted I hope that they trust their new world will be a good one, but do they remember their old one? Many hamsters end up passing through several homes in their very short lives.

What must it be like to have your whole world changed over and over again?

Alison Clayton-Smith

No more turns of the wheel

nibbling cauliflower
she reminds me of myself
what is it
capturing my heart
the softness of her soul

Mention that you're a mature adult with a hamster and people laugh (let's be honest, I even feel silly saying it myself sometimes). And yet we don't normally laugh when people say they have a dog or cat. We don't laugh when people write about wolves and wild geese. What makes us think hamsters are any less than?

Marketed as easy and cheap first pets for children, hamsters often find themselves discarded and ignored as children realise they aren't a toy to play with, don't get up till late, and can draw blood. In veterinary terms they are classed as exotic animals and only Exotic Vets receive the proper training on their complex and specific needs.

losing strength
bone without muscle
should I hold you close
or let you be—
is today another dandelion day?

They aren't domesticated in the same way that dogs and cats are. Syrian hamsters were only brought from the wild to laboratories in the 1930s and only started to be pets in the 1940s*. They aren't programmed to enjoy human company. Some do, others prefer to hamster, and many others are too scared of humans to interact.

Thankfully research into hamsters' needs has resulted in an interest in ethical care practices but sadly most pet shops and books and forums still adhere to the tiny barred cage with a thin layer of sawdust and a wheel if lucky. We still aren't at the point where a 100x50x50cm minimum size enclosure is the norm, where they have enough substrate to dig in to recreate, at least a little, the complex burrow systems of the wild. Even then, how can a wild creature be truly happy in a confined space when naturally they would roam for miles?

in her nest
a still sleeping body
roaming done—
sowing the seeds
of this year's losses

In the last two years of adopting and fostering I have had the privilege of looking after:

Rogue, who was an expert radiator climber until her access to radiators was revoked. She would get behind the back and have her left paws on the wall and her right paws on the radiator and work her way along from one end to the other, spider-ham style. She also once (and only once) climbed about three feet up an (internal) exposed brick wall when I took my eyes off her for a moment.

Lexie, who loved to eat spider plants and had one not fully formed front paw, which didn't stop her from clambering all over me.

Valentina, who loved to hang out on her wheel sitting facing outwards watching the world go by. She arrived really shy but by the night before she was adopted, climbed on my lap and looked up at my face as if to say 'thank you'.

Mastermind, who was so terrified I barely saw her for the time she was in foster with me.

Road, my Tom Cruise stunt-ham foster who gave me some grey hair, defied the 'male Syrians are more chilled than female Syrians' rule, and could leap considerable distances and hang on to an edge with determination.

And Nutty, who loved her wheel and had a penchant for biting anything soft as her way of exploring the world, including hands, legs, trousers, socks, and blankets.

Every hamster an individual, not a toy.

grief takes
the softness away
hides it
in places
yet to be found

Alison Clayton-Smith

To earn the trust of a small, vulnerable soul

- 1) Give them space
- 2) Move sloth-ly
- 3) Whisper kindnesses
- 4) Offer an appropriate delight, **e.g.** *a sunflower seed*
- 5) Listen closely for their hopes and fears

speaking in gestures...
no one is voiceless
only unheard

Alison Clayton-Smith

Alison's Note:

There's a hidden tanka.

The 3-line senryu is inspired by the book ***Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation***, by Sunaura Taylor (2018 American Book Award Winner):

"How much of what we understand of ourselves as "human" depends on our physical and mental abilities how we move (or cannot move) in and interact with the world? And how much of our definition of "human" depends on its difference from "animal"?

Drawing on her own experiences as a disabled person, a disability activist, and an animal advocate, author Sunaura Taylor persuades us to think deeply, and sometimes uncomfortably, about what divides the human from the animal, the disabled from the non-disabled and what it might mean to break down those divisions, to claim the animal and the vulnerable in ourselves..."

<https://sunaurataylor.net/books/beasts-of-burden-animal-and-disability-liberation/>

looking up

suddenly
bright neon over dull green
the orchid tree

in the garden startles me as i sip my morning cup of earl grey in the company of an indian summer
that continues to warble with an arresting chorus of voices in varying shades of basil and apple

in an unfettered sky
baby birds take a swipe
at singing

so loudly i don't hear the wrought iron gate swing open and soft palms grab me from behind with a
voice i can't recognise saying guess who

Rupa Anand / New Delhi, India

Flirting Screwdrivers

A lonely male Philips screwdriver is flirting at Finnigan's Bar & Grill with a Slotted-blade female screwdriver in a dimly lit corner, both sitting at a small green faux-marble table. They are drinking, not surprisingly, Smirnoff screwdrivers. But after a couple of rounds (in which the female Slotted screwdriver insists on paying for her own drinks) the Philips screwdriver, warming to the rising flirtation between them, says, "Say, why not the next round, on me, eh? And let's say we do a Sloe Gin screwdriver this time around?" Which is puzzling to her. "But I don't know what Sloe Gin is?" she says. Pronouncing it "Slooow Gin" wondering if this is a hint from Philips-blade that things are maybe moving too fast between them. But she smiles anyway, enjoying the building buzz of their second regular vodka-orange juice screwdriver. Philips-blade sensing a bit of Slotted-blade's slight pullback says, "Well it's still a screwdriver but with two parts of Sloe Gin, one part Southern Comfort and then filled with orange juice: It's called a *Slow Comfort Screw*." Slotted-blade screwdriver giggling with hilarity, blushing slightly, says to Philips screwdriver, "Ok, I'm all for it, let's do it!" The Philips screwdriver senses an opening here.

considered
desire
coupled

Ed Higgins / Oregon USA

Chaos Theory

My physics teacher, Miss Bellum, has the best chalkboard cursive I've ever seen. She holds chalk as an extension of her elegant fingers, gliding smoothly through flourishes of perfect lines with proportionate curves in all the right places. Difficulty choosing a subject for my term paper was met with her insistence on remaining after class to help. Later, pressed against the blackboard in a sinfully deep kiss, we consider magnetism, fluid dynamics and biophysics, ruling out thermodynamics since there's no interest in resisting heat. Ultimately, we agree on astrophysics.

*moon phase
 revealing a side
never seen before*

Leon Tefft / Greenville, South Carolina USA

Getting Out Alive

If I keep hiking the ridgeline, there's a place where people will help me. That parking lot at the trailhead. I can see it now, far off but reachable. What story to tell about why I'm alone, broken and bloody? Best to say as little as possible. An unlucky hiker who slipped and fell. Faint strains of guitar and harmony waft from a campsite, a tune I recognize, steeling me for the long climb—eyes straight ahead, no longer mesmerized by mountains without end.

fire and rain
the backcountry
in pieces

Cynthia Anderson / Yucca Valley, California USA

Broken Bough

He wraps his arms around me, the warmth of words near my ear. It's been a breath-taking hike, we are spent, I could not say No when he requested a piggy ride on the return trail. We have such deep conversations I forget he's nine years old. We arrive back at The Sanctuary as the sun dips to dusk.

"There you are!" his dad yells out. "Wasn't too much trouble, was he?"

"Not at all," I reply as Luke hops off my back.

"Will you tuck me in tonight?" I had told Luke I'll be on the first longtail boat in the morning.

"Luke!" his dad looks at me apologetically.

I met them at the juice bar after yoga earlier today, and Luke, he latched on to me from the moment we spoke.

We have dinner at the long table with other travellers from around the world, each one on a soul-seeking journey. Blue-eyed with blond hair, Luke reminds me of my childhood hero. I was also nine when I wanted to be a Jedi.

Luke gets walked back to the bungalow where he's staying with his dad. I wait in the living room while he changes into PJ's and then calls when he's under the covers.

I sit on the side of his bed softly singing Gayatri.

He starts to nod off, asking if we'll meet again. I reply as a tender kiss on his forehead, thinking of my baby who would be nine too. Luke's dad is at the front door, mouthing *Thank You* as he reaches out to shake my hand.

Bathing in stardust, I wander back to my bungalow.

the hollow
of an empty womb
fallen plum

Kanjini Devi / North of Aotearoa, New Zealand

Note:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gayatri>

Sultry Summer Day

couples cuddle
stealing kisses in the park
a flutter of blue wings

Street artists and tourists crowd a renowned Madrid boulevard. A short distance from the Prado Museum, the Paseo is a favorite promenade for young lovers. A twenty-something painter, with a scruffy mop of hair and well-worn sandals spots a young girl approaching his booth.

Blonde hair. Probably a foreigner. Walking with head lowered and faltering steps, she looks up for a moment. Their eyes lock.

Introducing himself as Juan, the artist directs the girl to his Cubist-style paintings. Speaking in idiomatic Spanish, Juan reveals his heart's desire.

thorny artichoke
young bud to trim and steam
¡Qué corazón más tierno!

Bonnie J Scherer / Palmer, Alaska USA

Translation: *What a tender heart!*

next

the only getting-ready
a port in your vein

i wish
christmas wouldn't come
this year
i don't think
abbey schnauzer's
going to make it
until christmas
blue christmas
 a silent scream
i realize
what life will be
without you

my hand strokes
your fur-and-skin
bag of bones
counting
emaciated ribs
rising
falling
a skeleton
your head
flung back
in a snore
as you lie
across me
for hours

i untangle
twigs and leaves
that litter your coat
how you landed
trying to walk

scoot
scoot
scooting
on your belly doing
the job of muscles
no longer working right
i swear (good dog that you are)
you're trying
a disguise

you are wearing it
so am i
my pants and shirt
covered like you
(and the floor)
in pee and poop
sometimes
several times a day
or spaced out over many
i am greedy for those
in-between times
that let me say
not yet

my stomach holding back sick tears

you lay there
so woebegone
don't turn away
when i declare
my always-love for you

you're breaking my heart

i love you so

(i feel like dad and i should
just choose a day and end your life.
i'm through with having animals)

Your breath whispers in my secrets ear

muzzling nuzzles
on my face;
i kiss your nose
all to say goodbye

quiet-like
some still day
you're just going home

the shot is given

(intermission: a performance poem for seven voices in the spirit of John Cage compositions. the speakers are scattered about the stage, moving, as a murmuration. each speaker in his turn stops as he speaks; determines the pace and rhythm of his word(s) assigned to him; harnesses their authority and intention in that moment)

(begin)

opening. . .

. . .closing. . .

. . .coming. . .

. . .going. . .

. . .in. . .

. . .out. . .

. . .out going. . .in coming. . .

. . .coming in. . .going out. . .

. . .coming out. . .going in. . .

. . .coming out. . .going out. . .

. . .coming in. . .going in. . .

. . .in going. . .out going. . .

. . .coming. . .going. . .

. . .in. . .out. . .

. . .in coming. . .out going. . .

. . .going out. . .coming in. . .

. . .going in. . .coming out. . .

. . .going out. . .coming out. . .

. . .going in. . .coming in. . .

. . .in coming. . .out coming. . .

. . .out. . .

. . .in. . .

. . .going. . .

. . .coming. . .

. . .closing. . .

. . .opening

(end)

dad cries and kisses you
dear small abbey
your leave-taking complete
my whole body convulses
i bathe in tears
you and i,
we've always shared life,
but now
you've gone
where i cannot
and i have

no rhyme nor reason
to be or not

momma!
it's me!
it's me abbey!
i met God!
He says hi!

butterflied tummy
missing you little one
i don't stop crying

i just had you killed

looking back
you started leaving
in september
and i coaxed you
(good girl that you are)
into staying 4 months
longer than you intended

i was selfish

i'm remembering
december 22nd:
too weak to stand
i put your dish
where you lie
your hard slap
sends dinner
where you want to be. . .
away!
i hear you loud and clear
sweet girl: i need
to go, momma!
i can't do this anymore!
i'll wait for you, momma
at the rainbow bridge!

the shop signage:

cute short tail bakery at the bridge
molly schnauzer proprietor
established september 2007
call 1-800-BISCUITS

on the sandwich board today's news from molly schnauzer:

let's give a big welcome to abbey schnauzer who arrived at noon 12/23/2024.

come in and get your free WELCOME SACK filled with a bridge mix of treats.

remember, you have teeth now so you can enjoy these biscuits while we wait for momma and dad.

remember how i came to you abbey in a dream. october 2009. you had been in rescue four months. i whispered that my mom and dad were ready for another schnauzer to take my place and they'd give you a forever home. but you had to be patient. they'd find you. and they did. they gave you a wonderful life just like they'd done with me.

so now you and me, we'll wait for them together. i'll introduce you to cricket. she's one of the biscuit makers. she makes three of us awaiting our momma and dad.

((i made up this story
about molly choosing abbey
to ease abbey's way
into my heart
back in 2009
and now
my two schnauzer girls
at the bridge together
waiting
on me
to join them
(where's the comfort now?)
i keen today
just as i did in september
those gulping sobs
scaring abbey
i call out to her,
her urn just across the room
beside her plaster pawprint
when will i find peace
in her absence

and i quail
remembering
little crickey
wire-haired fox terrier
finding her bled out
by the back door
when i came in from work that day
. . .we buried her out back
while Sunday's clouds cried witness. . .
every evening
that june, july, august
i'd sit beside her grave
sing to her

cry myself numb
and the raw scabbed over

when will the raw scab over abbey
like crick, like molly,
she went so fast
from healthy to dead
i was never ready
with any of them

listening to
david arkenstone essentials. . .
the apple album guaranteed
to soothe abbey's restlessness
is my go-to these days))

no reason
two months ago
to celebrate
el dia de los muertos
. . .today,
the one week anniversary
builds a shrine
over in the corner
for sweet abbey schnauzer

come, come close
even closer yet
our we-ness
unchanged
by death

you're not far
just close by
through an open door

walking
my steps
your steps
walking
our steps

today
I retell the story
about our winter
in that tucson apartment:
you on the patio everyday,
nose under the wall

watching lizards dart;
for the first time since september
I smile
it's what you'll always do for me

Lorraine Pester / south Texas USA

NOTE:

Words from Stephen Foster's use of "*going home*" paraphrased

Penblwydd hapus

I spend the day baking, filling the house with the scents of chocolate and citrus. Outside, rain drums on the windows. My dad will be 93 tomorrow.

I get ready to leave for the party.

magnifying mirror

I swear by the hairs
on my chinny chin chin

I pack the cakes into a wicker container together with candles, cheeses and quince jelly and slowly, slowly this grandmother shape-shifts into
Little Red Riding Hood.

on the balcony
succulents drip
in the basket
lemons drizzle

Ann Smith / Pembroke, Wales, UK

The Door to Reality

Interestingly, a life-sized cat figure is seen in the garden of Huttenstrasse 9, Zurich, where Erwin Schrödinger, the Austrian Physicist, lived from 1922 to 1926. The caption adds, 'depending on the light conditions, the figure appears to be either a live cat or a dead one.'

Schrödinger's imaginary cat experiment in 1935 consists of a hypothetical cat inside a sealed box containing a flask of poison and a radioactive source. The thought experiment enumerates that the cat remains in a quantum superposition state of being dead and alive until one consciously opens the box and sees it.

It is a sunny yet drizzly afternoon. My granddaughter cheers loudly about the possible magic of colours. I open the door, step outside, and look up in surprise as she claps and jumps around.

$i\hbar \frac{d}{dt} |\Psi\rangle = H^\wedge |\Psi\rangle$

an enlivened arch of colours
up in the sky

Pravat Kumar Padhy / India

Author's Note:

Line one of the haiku is the Schrödinger equation that established the landmark development of Quantum Mechanics. Inspired by the classic book by Nobel laureate Roger Penrose, "The Road to Reality", I titled the haibun "The Door to Reality."

Heard in the Northern angle of the weathervane on Nansfield Park

A stone exterior within which are lounge, dining room and master study, all in shapes to satisfy the aesthetically sensitive. Windows, casement sash and bow whatever you will, look out on a treasury of greenery. Ideal as a granny annexe.

out-house
a rusty padlock
creaks in the wind

Agnes happens to look from the window of the humble curate's cottage where she and her spouse the Rev Giles Smith reside, and cannot help but notice the conveyance laden with the contents of what was formerly the Reverend Henry Green's place of dwelling, from where his mother Hortensia, widow of his late lamented father the rector, is in the process of moving to something more suitable for her new status of grandmama to Henry's child. Giles, the spouse of Agnes, had frequently paid visits to the parsonage and reported back on what lay within but never on anything quite like what she now beholds.

caught by sun and wind
in a flick of a dark cloth corner
a jar marked poison

So tell me about how you got these items.

When I became priest-in-charge we moved into the recently vacated vicarage.

That needed work.

We are poets and felt a bit of manual work might balance us out a bit.

So we went to work on the attic.

And up there we found these.

Look. A puzzle of a box. A mystery box.

Which no one could open. So must hold a secret.

My mother thought it came from far far back.

A place we don't talk about any more. A place of danger.

We shook it and shook it. We pushed on the lid and the base and the sides.

Then I banged it down in frustration.

And this fell out. We have no idea where from.

a key not a click
 in the head
for space of a lock

Hmm. All my expert friends are uncertain. Hard to put a price on this. To be realistic £100.

And we found this too.

Ah. So it's a

Can't you hear it singing. I'm a little teapot short and stout.

Yes indeed. So let's tip you up and pour you out.

Do you hear her spout?

hush
all that brewed
inside

Henry! This place really needs some improvements, both to the house and to the garden. That tree should go for a start. And that one too. Too much shade.

They took hundreds of years to grow, Mama.

Yes. They're old. So they should go.

Anna (*aside*) They're not the only ones.

Henry (*aside*) Just humour her.

So I can recommend Baynes. He can give your garden the makeover it needs. Affording more room for a better conveyance.

wheel marks
 dried in the mud
furrows for tears

So how about doing a bit of *am dram* while Mama is away, getting her sciatica fixed in that spa place for the not so young any more? She says she's dug up all her savings to do it. At least a month we'll be free of her disapproving meddling.

Good thinking. I've always had a thing about releasing my inner Lawrence O. *Maximilian de Winter*.

Surely he was *now is the winter*.

Both. Equally sinister.

I knew those velvet curtains I got at the car boot would come in handy.

So what shall we play? Now is not the winter. It's summer.

The Importance?

But not too *Earnest*.

So Jack, Archie, Cicely, Gwendolen, Prism, Chasuble and Bracknell. Who shall be who?

Bags I Worthing!

And three of us can encompass a chasuble.

Ok. Let's do it.

Three weeks later

To lose one parent is careless but to lose...

Mama!

What is going on here? And what are you doing with my best velvet curtains? And why are you doing this without me?

thousand and one nights
of different ways of saying handbag
nothing suspicious

Diana Webb / Leatherhead, Surrey, England, UK

Backscatter

The train hums across the plains. As I lean against the window, my forehead brushes the cool pane. Wheat fields blur, rippling in the wind. In the glass, my face flickers in and out, overlapping with light and shade.

The mature woman across the aisle knits quietly, her fingers nimble and unhurried. I envy her certainty—each knit, each purl held firm by pattern. My thoughts wander without a destination: lyrics of a song I haven't heard in years, reminiscing a friend's laugh lost forever, the former home I haven't visited in so long...

dust trail—
a stray dog
chases another

The train slows and comes to a halt, my eyes strain to name the station. On the railway platform, a boy runs alongside the tracks. A large aluminium kettle in one hand and plastic glasses in another, calling out in a sing-song voice, "*Chai, chai garam!*"

harvest festival
the wide open arms
of the scarecrow

Neena Singh / Chandigarh, India

Note:

"Chai, chai garam!" (Tr. – tea, hot tea)

Faded

The crying of the dog. A group of nine people. Nobody speaks. The crying of the dog. Then the ambulance slowly leaves the driveway in front of the retirement home, enters the nearby traffic circle, passes the house once more before disappearing into the distance without hurrying. The crying of the dog.

still light

stars long since extinguished
in the darkness of the night

Deborah Karl-Brandt / Sinzig, Ahrweiler, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany

Head Spinning

Where do we go when we are gone? Nowhere. We become nothing. Zero. Zilch. Nada.

Not so. We become spirit, like a wisp of fog, suspended in space, in a universe of stars and planets and man-made spacecraft. Heaven this is. The heaven of lightness, of no gravity, of freedom from pain, sorrow and worry. A forever gentle floating existence.

What of Hell? Are the bad not punished?

Hell is in the dungeon of the earth, hot and fiery. Dante got that right.

Ummmm... You seem so sure.

To be Nothing is unthinkable. Can you think of Nothing? As you think of Nothing you are thinking of something, You are thinking about thinking of Nothing.

You're spinning me around. I know what I can see, smell, touch, hear and taste. Give me proof.

Poof on proof. Go on and live your life expecting nothing when it ends. What's the point of living then? Why are we given life? Why? Why? Why?

the shortest day
a clear illumination
in the night sky

Adelaide B. Shaw / Somers, NY USA

Shades of pink & umber

first light
cooling walls
my drenched nightie

When I first watched the 60's movie '*Un Homme et une Femme*', I wanted to be that kind of 'Femme'. Although, I couldn't quite imagine myself replicating the perfect Frenchness which permeated the screen, like the erotic suffering on a rainy day, or knowing how to nonchalantly tie a trench coat's belt. Mostly I adored the actress's jawline. It said – I know who I am, although he doesn't.

mom's secret drawers
her absence

The danger for a woman of a certain age (who never had children) is to encapsulate herself in one of myriad selves, like a favourite season in a matching landscape. Or, applying the triple goddess archetypes in broad brushstrokes – I choose the maiden in early autumn for as long as I can get away with it. I might add lipstick and a mac. Perhaps there are no endings in winter, after all.

Anouk Aimée
she died in June
thinning branches

Ella Aboutboul / West Sussex, England, UK

The Initiation

"Poetry is the main line. English is the train." — Nikki Giovanni

Being the youngest in the family is fun in many ways. You are doted on by one and all. Also, one is the sum of everyone's choices and easy clay to mould.

It all started with daddy when he told mamma not to insist on me acquiring embroidery or knitting skills. *She is meant for something much more.* Hence, at an impressionable age, I was left to my world of books. And then, one day, the eldest amongst us, brought home a turntable and an amplifier. So we began swaying to the beats of Joan Baez and The Carpenters. In my more "desi" moods, I fell in love with the lilting lyrics sung by Jagjit Singh. As a preppy, I began reading Keats, Wordsworth, and Yeats. My brother even fantasized about fine women *who eat crazy salad with their meat* and about the one *sitting carelessly on the granary floor, thy hair soft-lifted*. To this day, decades later, I am irresistibly drawn towards the song of the nightingale and the *rosy hue of a soft-dying day*.

grain by coffee grain
the adventure of measuring life

Arvinder Kaur / Chandigarh, India

Speckled Turbulence

My life, a maelstrom of moments. There is no ground to stand firm

Only
fluctuation.

sun pools on a puka leaf
a cumulonimbus
throws a tantrum

Closing in, clouds lower themselves as if they know water is binding.

Soft drops
indent an ocean.

rain
I bike back
spotted

Jenny Fraser / Mount Maunganui, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand

See You in September

Yup, that's me in the photo . . . standing second from the left. It's Easter break. My mom takes us five girls on a camping trip to Leo Carrillo Beach. We're celebrating our upcoming graduation from junior high. The blonde on the right actually wears curlers at night.

Summer arrives, hotter than usual. I discover illicit activities and switch to the high school of artists and rebels. The other girls attend the high school of cheerleaders and jocks. The blonde becomes the homecoming queen.

cinching their corsets
one of them
slips away

Stephanie Zepherelli / Hawaii USA

Quasi una fantasia

Is this where I should feel something?
You lose me when you play Haydn.
Is this where you feel otherwise?
Surely the sky will fall for you.
You saved me your best afterthought.
Not to be bought, sold, or otherwise eaten.
I play Beethoven but I don't play you.

making do
the light from
a subpar moon

Peter Jastermsky / *high desert*, Southern California USA

First Allocation

I have spent the past five years traveling the globe, by which I mean my brain. The only map looks like a frame with curved edges, and the carpenter insists that I create at least half of it. I wonder if we both recall the cliffs and the meadows in a ratio approaching the hurricanes and ice storms. There were so many birds. Some raucous. Don't be bored. Read my poem.

stay awake and listen
through frames and curves
god in the vines

Kristy Snedden / Georgia USA

The Puppeteer

I recently read two vastly different takes on Adam and Eve. According to one writer: “What if it was Adam who bit into the apple first? What if Eve just took the blame and now the apple is stuck in men’s throats forever?”

The other take was that perhaps Adam ate the apple because he loved Eve unconditionally. He bit into the apple because he couldn’t not do it. It was his unending love for and trust in Eve that eventually doomed humanity.

As a result, some blame Eve; some blame Adam; and the remaining blame the serpent. What if we think of another candidate here? How about we ask the creator about putting these thinking, feeling beings in the garden with the tree? Why can’t we, just for a brief, tiny moment, blame Zeus for giving Pandora the box along with insatiable curiosity?

kobayashi maru
did we really frown
when Kirk cheated?

Surashree Joshi / Pune, India

Mario's Dozen

Food about flavour, texture ... appearance, si ... (shrug) ... interfere a little possible. Must be attractive in all senses.

sliced salted almonds
beside coconut scrapings ...
ciabatta crumbs

Everything fresh, we grow all we can, under glass or beneath the sky. Suppliers same, they only allowed one mistake. I have much choice.

kiwi sorbet
on icicles of lime juice ...
caramel cornet

Drinks? For sure drinks. I serve wine match each dish, ten centilitres. We do not want drunks in the restaurant. Alcohol take away taster food.

tuna shavings
with caviare in pasta shell ...
samphire salad

I train all my people, bad habits not welcome here. Two weeks after start, I interview, invite demonstration, perhaps they stay, perhaps ... (shrug) ... I hope stay.

mallard egg
in nest of blood orange peel ...
wilted watercress

No staff, assistants male, female, have no preference. Only qualification, must love food and wine, (smile) have desire to serve and please guests.

blanched basmati
above a balsamic puddle ...
feta filaments

We have best equipment, everything primary. Utensils, mixers, fridges, worktops ... and clothing. All satisfy Food Inspector, visit every three months, we always 5*.

salami slices
over disc of black pudding ...
tomato tapenade

Dining room not overcrowded, chairs, you say ... comfy? Table drapes, white, cotton, napkins same. Curtains and carpets, no click clack from servers' heels.

onion heart
with cubes of bobby calf liver ...
bacon bites

Moster female, also I train. Students doer language course at Università. Must have easy smiles and beautiful hands, no bright finger polish and NO tattoos.

garlic bruschetta
surrounded by morel risotto ...
shredded sage

Si, no showing ink. (Stern look) I no check, trust my people. Ruler is clear when they start.
Signorinas no want ugly.

asparagus tips
laid across steamed striped bass ...
curried cashew

Customers no, we say diners, this not McDonald's. When booking made, payment taken on card.
How much? (Broad smile) Make a booking, you find out.

minted jus
hiding slivers of roasted lamb ...
rosemary rotini

All nations. In my time we have people from fifty seven differen countries. No problemer, when reservation done, told of dress, first page of brochure is behaviour.

custard spots
on lemon jelly tartlet ...
jack fruit julienne

I been here fiver anno ... in this time, three Michelin stars. Who else done tha? Next year, home to Puglia, (smile) Perhaps a Mario's in Porto Cesareo or Bari.

Parmigiano-Reggiano
sliced on sweet chestnut leaf ...
prune phyllo

Roger Noons / Kingswinford, West Midlands, England, UK

Oh,

I'm so disappointed.

I won't write what you asked because I don't write it. I obviously didn't understand, and I tried very hard.

the enthusiastic look
of a white butterfly
we look into each other's eyes...
do you see how I immerse
myself in the infinity of it?

Oh,

Tako sam razočarana.

Neću napisati ono što ste tražili jer ja to ne pišem. Očito nisam razumio, a jako sam se trudio.

entuzijastičan pogled
bijelog leptira u mene-
gledamo se u oči...
vidiš li kako uranjam
u beskraj ljepote?

Brigita Lukina, Zagreb, Croatia

Other Homes

I knew the moment life entered my body. I felt it. My partner told me I was just nervous. I had eight hour work days plus more than two hour daily commutes and was living in a commune, not the place to raise a baby. And where would I board a baby starting at dark and lasting through sunset? Six weeks later I went to the women's clinic and yes I was pregnant from that night. After my abortion I felt the spirit of a young Chinese boy following me for weeks.

He asked why I gave him away.

I explained why and that I loved him.

When he eventually disappeared, I knew he had been born to a woman in China. I stopped worrying about abortion. We're spirit before we arrive and spirit when we leave. Somewhere I have a son living in China. He would be in his forties unless he moved on.

fallen nest
the lawn man lifts
it to a new tree

Pris Campbell / Florida, USA

Window Walker

I am fascinated by this cornucopia of colour. How such a small space can cram in such splendour. It strikes me as an act of defiance. How to make the most of the lack of outdoor space, balancing a box with an array of flowers that halts onlookers in their stride.

bloom by bloom
the instant static
from pylons

Joanna Ashwell / County Durham, North-East England, UK

Kakureru

cat and I
are not
very nice

things are not
that easy
the girl hugs her legs

across the stripes of sunlight
to find
the shop is closed

at least the store owner's cat
sells
yawns

Kati Mohr / Nuremberg, Germany

Self Portrait

Frontal eminence
Frontal part of epicranium
 Parietal eminence Parietal eminence
 Temporal fossa Temporal fossa
 Superciliary crest Glabella Superciliary crest
Corrugator Corrugator
 Zygomatic process Zygomatic process
 Orbit Procerus Orbit
Orbicularis oculi Nasal bone Orbicularis oculi
Levator palpebrae Nasalis Levator palpebrae
Orbicularis oculi Orbicularis oculi
Quadratus labii superioris Quadratus labii superioris
 Zygomatic bone Zygomaticus Canine fossa Canine fossa Zygomaticus Zygomatic bone
 Nasal spine
 Caninus Maxilla Caninus
 Masseter Masseter
 Ramus of mandibula Upper dental arch Ramus of mandibula
 Mandibula Orbicularis oris Lower dental arch Orbicularis oris Mandibula
 Angle of mandibula Angle of mandibula
 Triangularis Triangularis
 Quadratus labii inferioris Mandibula Quadratus labii inferioris
 Mentalis Mentalis
 Mental tubercle Mental protuberance Mental tubercle

 not myself
 the lady
 sawn in half

Alanna C. Burke / Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA

Taking Flight

A quiet day
the breeze gentle,
raising wave upon wave,
crashing

like a cracked tune

she stood
with the heron
on the top
of the sand dune

gazing at the waves
the riptide sweeping her out

without another thought

She turns toward him:
I am leaving.
We each need
to live our truth.

His dark eyes:
What are you talking about?

Of course he didn't understand,

he never did

Never understood

her joy

her wonder

of being
captivated by Picasso

her word as a poem
that even she
did not fully understand.

I can paint better than that, he said,

Or laughing asked,
what is that poem about?

He wanted to know

how many grains of sand
were under his feet.

how high the sand dunes were

She wanted to feel
the wind in her hair

Her spirit drowning

She turns and walks
the sand dune

tension in her body

slipping away
sliding off her skin

as the heron
spreading its wings.

old voices left behind...stars glimmer

Norma Bradley / Asheville, North Carolina USA

Stuff like that

They asked me to sing my favorite song so when I did, they said I was ruining the mood.
So... it's always night, depending on how hard you look.

it's just
a little rain
stop whining
don't be such
a drama queen

Barbara Anna Gaiardoni / Verona, Italy

Chromatophotophobia

The doctors kept saying that I had a problem with light. The first symptom I noticed was—one night—after midnight—straight above me on my bedroom ceiling—two dim violet circles—light beams pouring from my eyes. Within days, a changeable warm glow came streaming out of my ears and nose. Rainbows gushed forth from my mouth each time I spoke. Soon, even my skin couldn't hold back the light. Kaleidoscopic rays showed my blood vessels—spiderwebbing red and blue—through my skin. The light grew brighter and hotter—and more painful each day. As the force of the light became unbearable, the doctors said I needed surgery. They placed my glowing form on the bed. As they wheeled me back to the operating room, the nurses shied away. My skin had grown hot to the touch. The doctors wore black sunglasses to protect their eyes. They began to cut my chest and—hastily—removed a burning object which they threw—still shimmering—into a waste bucket.

so strange how light the light

Joshua St. Claire / New Freedom, Pennsylvania USA

They call me Gaz the Pedal...fuel injected, like...

My mam said, all serious like, *"Here's the thing, you've got a club foot."*

I said, "I know mam. I've had it 16 years. It's got special shoes and all. Everyone calls me club foot Gareth. People mock me all the time."

"Was that why you came home early last night?"

I nodded.

"Cariad do you know what your clubfoot is for?"

"Club foots are not for anything! Girls see only the foot and they Quasimodo me in their minds. So I just spin the waltzers at the fun-fair. So I know I've got a club foot!"

"Yes cariad but here's the thing.....I've never told you who gave it to you"

"Obviously you or my dad—whoever he was..."

"Everyone thinks your dad was a fling in the haunted house but that's not true. Your dad was the love of my life. His name was Idris, Idris Jones, from Mochdre. He was a farm labourer but on his days off he was the best getaway driver in the Conway Vally. He and his mate robbed sub post offices between here and Denbigh. People called him Idris yr Olwynion yn Troelli—Idris the Wheelspin—out of respect. They looked up to him. He had a club foot...his right foot too. He called it his anvil. It never stopped him. He just went at things harder."

"You mean my dad was Idris yr Olwynion yn Troelli?"

"Yes."

:...never heard of him."

"He looked like you, cariad, only rugged. He died just after I fell pregnant. He knew about you. He lost control of his tractor and it rolled on the hill. No cab in those days."

She paused, under her breath she added, *"Knackered that day he was—exhausted. I blame his partner in crime."*

"Who was that?"

"Me" she said."

He could see into her eyes.

She changed tone, *"Which foot is your clubfoot?"*

"Bloody hell! You're looking at it! It's my right foot."

"Just like your Dad! You've got some slam in that foot Gareth bach. If you stamp the world shakes. Are you destined to be a great wheel man? Only you can find out. Here's the thing, you don't need to be club foot Gareth or Quasimodo from the waltzers. You can be Gaz the Pedal another great Welsh wheelman and son of Idris yr Olwynion yn Troelli."

Now get out and earn the respect you want.

across the glyn
carrion crows call
hulk of a dead tractor

through breaking light
where sycamores slant
an old tin, rusted car keys
musty bank notes
and a safety pin

We sing the song of Idris yr Olwynion yn Troelli.

anvil sole these shoes to fill
destiny of a life
the club falls where it will
both wound and gift
strive or strife

gwadn einion yr esgidiau hyn i lenwi
tynged bywyd
mae'r clwb yn syrthio lle mae'n ewyllysio
clwyf a rhodd
ymdrech neu gynnen

Tim Roberts / Kapiti, New Zealand

Cariad is a Welsh for darling
Bach is a Welsh term of endearment
Glyn means valley or body of water

Pain is a romance novel

Slippage, plunging toward a state of undress. Page-turning, breath-holding, racing towards *will they, won't they*. Cheap, with a cracked spine, the first in a series. The real mystery, written into the soulmate search, the pain who crosses continents to court you, has swam in the depths of your darkest places, and loves you anyway.

time wasted
pining
pain will come calling
whether you're ready
or not

Christa Fairbrother / Tampa Bay, Florida USA

I honor the stewards of the Seminole, Miccosukee, Mascogos, Calusa, and Tocobaga people who originally protected the land I currently call home.

Challenging Interpretations of Christina's World

Andrew Wyeth painting – "Christina's World"

(Narrator – takes on the viewpoint answering as Christina
as a woman in the present day vision, speaking to an onlooker)

Held hostage, framed forever handicapped in a barren landscape, this is the light in which
the world has seen me and will see me for centuries to come; pathetic, disheveled and twisted
yearning to go back home.

green praying mantis
camouflaged in tended fields
am i in the midst
of a battalion of soldiers
in peaceful protest

My face turns away from you as I gaze at the house on the hill; you... withdrawn behind
me holding the sun within your hands, always imagining what I see, what I am thinking, feeling
longing.

I am sprawled at the bottom of the hill, my torso raised, my head forward looking up to an
old waning farmhouse—disfiguring the horizon.

I am the point of view—my pink dress symbolizing femininity, happiness and love—my plain shoes
on feet positioned as if struggling to change direction.

I yearn for beauty, the scent of flowers, for the sun's warmth, for the wind blowing through my
hair.

who lives in that house now? If people are there, do they see me down here, as I crawl in this
meticulous grass?

how long does it take
to paint a perfect thousand
blades of grass
and I, birthed with so many
imperfections all at once

Looking back:

I once dreamed and crawled alongside caterpillars, observed grasshoppers high jumping, worker bees tending their hives and ants busy in their mounds of pyramids.

Skyhawks scour for field mice.

I saw a brown leaf amid autumn reds, stand, change into a ghost mantis and walk from each window inside the farmhouse—looking out; a perfect horizon.

That's the real "Christina's World."

Karina Klesko / Albuquerque, New Mexico USA

NOTE:

Christina's World is a 1948 painting by American painter Andrew Wyeth. A tempera work held by the Museum of Modern Art, in New York. The woman in the painting is Anna Christina Olson (May 3, 1893 – January 27, 1968). She had a degenerative muscular disorder, possibly polio or *Charcot-Marie-Tooth disorder*, which left her unable to walk. She was firmly against using a wheelchair, and would crawl everywhere. Wyeth created the painting when he saw her crawling across a field.

Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease is an inherited neurological disorder that affects the peripheral nerves responsible for transmitting signals between the brain, spinal cord, and the rest of the body.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christina's_World



So, what is tanka-bun?

Article and examples from the editor

The tension (linea tensio) in a tanka and its prose companion carries a song (carmen) to its own pulse yet carries the world's words beneath its surface like a beat, and sometimes raising letters (*litterae*) that beckon to us as fully formed as possible.

Gormfhlaith

Before the High Heat of the morning, a humble visit to pay tribute. Both rescued lurcher dogs and close family enter the fabled grove at the place where paddocks end and legends shimmer.

Foregoing words and other speech we hear the sizzling and buzzing of non-bird type wings.

a walk through
the bluebell forest
seeking fairy lore
what are ripples in humans
and a distant bell calling

Alan Summers

CHO 21.2 (August 2025) guest editor Margi Abraham

<https://contemporaryhaibunonline.com/table-of-contents-21-2/tanka-prose-21-2/alan-summers-gormfhlaith/>

NOTE from Alan:

Gormfhlaith is an Irish-language feminine given name meaning "blue princess" and is also a compound of the Irish words gorm ("blue") and flaith ("sovereign"). It's also a Gaelic mythological personification of Ireland. The Irish name Gormflaith (Gormfhlaith) is pronounced roughly as "GUR-muh-lah" or "GUR-muh-luh" in English. The "Gorm" part is pronounced like "GURM" with a short "u" sound, and the "fhlaith" part is pronounced like "lah" or "luh".

Steps

Not just any steps, but Covent Garden underground tube station
when the lifts don't work.

It's not just the slow rumble of different sole thicknesses
absorbing the trains as we climb:

It's more than humanity, it's those bloody steps,
those stairs are in love with us, they must be, don't you think?

the moon
at my shoulder
a child cycles
across the Sea
of Tranquility

Alan Summers

Publication Credit: Blithe Spirit 26.2 (May 2016)

NOTES:

Covent Garden station is one of the few stations in Central London (England UK)
with an emergency spiral staircase of 193 steps.

<https://www.walks.com/blog/covent-garden-history/>

untitled
untitled

The different changes in a human looking at the sky over the years,
relationships lost and won...

a long walk
to the pirate's plank
now dusk segues
as if I'm contracted
with the night

Alan Summers

Contemporary Haibun Online 20.1 (April 2024 issue)

tanka prose section ed. Tish Davis

<https://contemporaryhaibunonline.com/cho-20-1-table-of-contents/alan-summers-untitled/>

Tanka prose:

Paring down exorbitancy

by Alan Summers

Tanka-bun

Tanka = short poem/short song

Bun = story or sentences

Tanka+Bun aka Tanka-bun

The prose part of tanka-bun:

Tanka prose, the non-tanka verse part, can be a balancing act, perhaps, between almost *reported prose* and *biographical prose* and of course *lyrical* and *poetic prose*.

Where lyrical and poetic prose uses heightened, evocative language, imagery, and rhythmic qualities, much like traditional poetry, we move it via paragraphs and of course sentences rather than stropes, stanzas, stichs:

Stropes are song or poem sections akin to stanzas though often via recurring refrains or something more elaborate if it's part of a musical structure.

A **stanza** is a grouping of lines in a poem or song.

A **stich** (or *stichos*) is a single line of poetry or verse.

The tanka prose of a tanka-bun needs to sidestep the exorbitancy of some formal poetic or song-writing which can at times have accentuated emotional intensity, though not sacrificing personal emotional accounts. It's a high-wire act of just enough.

What is day-to-day prose in general?

Prose is a vehicle that various jobs demand of people, and are often simply factual statements using grammar and sentence constructions for legal reasons. We have poetic license of course, as poets, in our hybrid prose/poetry.

The tanka (verse or verses, aka poems) of tanka-bun may well replace actual and/or alleged facts of various professions, that transform into the security of poetic argument instead.

This poetic testimonial evidence, designed to be read, and ready, for everyone on the planet without prejudice, could be a main difference between 'official' prose such as bureaucratic or criminal process, and our 'country of poetry' process. The poet lays down their evidence with even no need to seek a guilty or not guilty plea or final decision, other than from an editor or editors of a creative writing journal, of course. To pass that boundary, readers can quietly make their own personal decision, become their own judge and jury of our personal and creative efforts.

biographical prose, a narrative that recounts the life story of an individual, typically focusing on key events, relationships, and achievements.

There is a fine line in haibun or tanka-bun prose where it adheres to conventions of written language, of grammar, punctuation, sentence structures of syntax and diction, and yet uses those in rebellious manner at times too.

We, as poets, are creating our own *witness language* into a readable and understandable product heard, seen, understood, and recognised. The Language of the Witness (the public as solely population aka publica multitudo: Latin for "the public multitude" or "the multitude of the people": the body of citizens or general population within the State) is where we are heading heedless of fortune or favour!

We can combine Speech/Witness Language aka Witness-Speak to 'Informed' Writing: Live spoken or whispered language can have natural hesitations, incomplete constructions, informal and local/colloquial phrasing. Reported prose requires converting these into socio-politically correct and well-structured sentences that may or not so echo and mirror the original source. Well, okay!

Maintaining the actual Heart and Meaning:

While editing for clarity, the core meaning of what the speaker intends is to convey and preserve outside of government and corporate accounts. We have our own accountability.

The tanka prose may, or should, contain a clear statement of course yet maintain a humanity rather than a lawyer-filtered controlled narrative of statement.

Let's go back to participated or overheard conversations, and how they need not run smoothly in both social situations or indeed as 'reported speech' in the prose of tanka-bun, just as often even a police statement might contain our funny and odd *ers and ums* etc...

Example:

What if someone actually and truthfully said, "Er, well, like, I, ah, bought a car. Ummm, I took it out for a spin, put the radio on, and a news report said a window got smashed, gosh, and at a house of some, like, so called important politician or some z-list celeb to do with a political party, er, in power."

In reported prose, this could be rendered as: "A political rival stated that they saw a car driven erratically down the street, and into the front window of a house, and there were three males inside who all absconded. The window and front lounge of the governing political party leader was destroyed."

Of course we could use pompous language as a quote or poking fun at what can be fanciful and dense legalise.

We tell our truth making use of all approaches to language if we so choose, in our prose sections including metaphor, simile, personification, alliteration, and other devices that can proliferate in creative writing.

Of course, again, we need and require lyrical quality in our tanka prose more so than in our haiku-driven haibun prose. We can take off the handbrake a little for our tanka prose sections to contain and evoke emotion to a greater extent than 'haibun' and embrace more musicality even within the prose and not just the tanka verses.

An example of great poetic prose:

Tender Buttons by Gertrude Stein:

Short pieces play with language and perception, within paragraph form.

<https://poets.org/poem/tender-buttons-objects>

Tanka carry the impulsiveness of 'the line' and the power of both its shorter neighboring genre of haikai verse (haiku, hokku, senryū and various renga or renku verses), as well as sharing "impact" as a miniature song, and just like the sonnet: Tanka is translated as 'short song' just as the sonnet (from Old Provençal word sonet "a little poem," which is from son song, from Latin sonus "a sound.") is also an aural 'form' as well as a written for the page form or genre.

As tanka are often two parts, so are sonnets, both containing a 'narrative' or 'argument'. The sonnet originally used the first part as a proposition, describing a problem or question, followed by a resolution. The sonnet's ninth line would double as a 'turn' also called a 'volta' shifting the problem to a solution phase. Regardless of changes in line numbers and other newly created ways, it appears that the sonnet retains the ninth line signalling a change in tone, or mood, or 'stance'.

Many thanks to Wikipedia regarding the basics of the sonnet, and please do give a donation as so many of us poets use them as an initial source!

Tanka, ever evolving, is its own poem, even if there is sometimes a whisper of 'haikai' or 'sonetto' about it, although of course tanka is much older than the sonnet.

I really like the 'stance' that project out from many tanka, and the impulsiveness of 'the line' in tanka can be anywhere, and even hidden as a line within a line, or across two lines, or threading through all the lines.

Content derives from various internet sources, including wikipedia, and from one of my United Haiku and Tanka Society President's reports.

Why Use Poetic Prose and even continue to stretch it in tanka-bun?

Haiku and tanka are not the only types of poems to break conventions, although both have done so successfully across decades even centuries. Haibun and tanka-bun should both be enticing for a reader and yet challenge actual or perceived traditional notions of what prose and poetry, separately and together, are in reality, and continue to play with blurring the lines between these two.

Strong writing always needs new audiences and it's not enough for editors and publications to be custodians, but rather the ordinary human who might reach for a poem one day, in sore need of respite from controlled truths. Prose+Poetry hybrids might also be useful for those who have been intimidated since school or college days, or just bemused in general. Haibun and tanka-bun may well act as a gateway to poetry at a later time. Fewer people read novels, or even short stories, though more may be involved in Flash Fiction due to its brevity and it's only a leap and a frog away from embracing our tanka-bun (and haibun)!

We need to be accessible and yet conjure with, and juggle with, chemistry and enchantment, and mystery.

Not to leave out something said about haibun, although do read both *"Is haibun a mistake?"* and *"The Blōō Report"* in *Pan Haiku Review* issue 4 a-bun (Winter 2024), as well as "Two Favorite Haibun: Unsettling Clashes" at Contemporary Haibun Online: <https://contemporaryhaibunonline.com/table-of-contents-20-3/articles-reviews-20-3/alan-summers-two-favorite-haibun/>

Plus, for fun:

Haibun are almost *unrequited* love or an impossible *romance* with *pastries* in the morning and a choice between bitter black coffee, and *Ristretto*:

Haibun Manoeuvres

A short type of espresso, typically around two thirds of
a regular espresso.

—Alan Summers

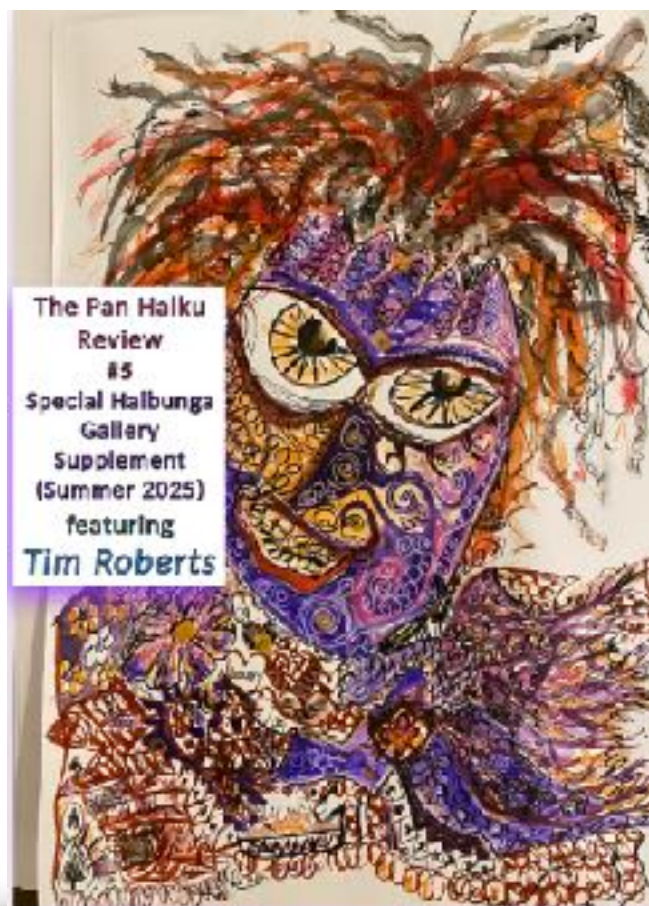
This issue also included as a separate feature:

photohaijin: the shahai journal

as a supplement:

SEE:

Special Haibunga Gallery Supplement (Summer 2025) *featuring* Tim Roberts



The Blōo Outpost Report: **What's Next?**

SUBMISSION DETAILS:

The Pan Haiku Review issue 6 *aka* PHR6

PHR6 will be a haiku-only issue
but will include an additional and long-intended haiku
journal project called:

L o n g H a i k u *Journal*

Next submission details re: 2025 Winter Edition (PHR6)
max. two haiku, any style will be considered.

Submission window: All of October 2025

Submission email address:
panhaikureview@gmail.com

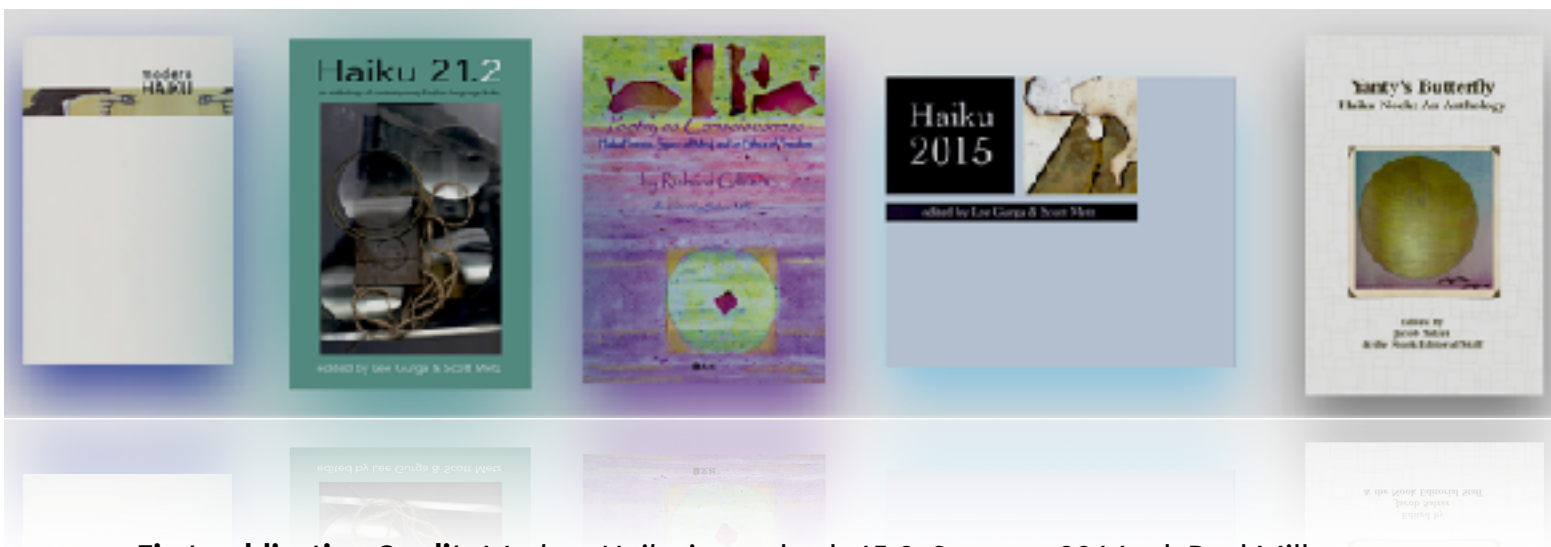
PHR6 will embrace many approaches to haiku through mindful of syntax, diction, lyrical line, and prosody. This is where a 575 haiku, a monostich haiku, and all the way to 4-lines, and even five lines somehow can co-habit!

1. monostich
2. duostich
3. tristich
4. tetrastich
5. pentastich

For example a 575 haiku (pentastich):

night of small colour
a part of the underworld
becomes one heron

Alan Summers



First publication Credit: *Modern Haiku* journal vol. 45.2 Summer 2014 ed. Paul Miller

Anthology credits:

1. **Haiku 21.2:** an anthology of contemporary English-language haiku
ed. Lee Gurga and Scott Metz (Modern Haiku Press 2025)
2. **Haiku 2015** (Modern Haiku Press, 2015) ed. Lee Gurga and Scott Metz
3. **Poetry as Consciousness - Haiku Forests, Space of Mind, and an Ethics of Freedom**
Author: Richard Gilbert Illustrator: Sabine Miller. ISBN978-4-86330-189-4
pub. Keibunsha (2018, Japan)

4. **Yanty's Butterfly Haiku Nook: An Anthology** (2016) ed. Jacob Salzer & Nook Editorial Staff

Feature and Interview:

- *Meet... Alan Summers* (interview by Gilles Fabre) Seashores Issue 9 (November 2022)
- Brass Bell Showcase: Alan Summers (July 2015) curated by Zee Zahava

Essay:

Haiku Sanctuary, Between Living and Dreaming by Richard Gilbert (February 2019)

Published: Kumamoto Studies in English Language and Literature 61 (March 2019, Japan)

Reproduced: *Under the Bashō* (2019) Don Baird, Editor-in-Chief

lullaby of rain
another pinch of saffron
in the pumpkin soup

Alan Summers



Award Credits:

- **Editors' Choices**, Heron's Nest (Volume XIV, Number 4: Dec. 2012)
- **Runner-up**, The Haiku Calendar Competition 2013 (Snapshot Press, 2013)

Publication credits:

1. *The Heron's Nest* (vol. XIV no. 4 December 2012)
2. *The Haiku Calendar 2014* (Snapshot Press, 2013)
3. *Flying Fish Haiku Journal* Inaugural Issue (January 2025) ed. Ranice Tara (Richa Sharma)

Features:

- The Haiku Foundation *Per Diem* (18/7/2014)
- *Lyrical Passion* showcase curated by Raquel Bailey (Jamaica/USA)

- *The Amazing Glass House: A Haiku Storybook* (Susan Beth Furst, Purple Cotton Candy Arts, 2019)
- Brass Bell Showcase: Alan Summers (July 2015) curated by Zee Zahava
- Analysis in French: <https://www.tempslibres.org/tl/tlphp/dbhk03.php?id=4603&lg=>

Anthology credits:

Another Trip Around the Sun: 365 Days of Haiku for Children Young and Old
ed. Jessica Latham (Brooks Books 2019)

The Wonder Code ed. Scott Mason (Girasole Press 2017)

Winner: Touchstone Distinguished Books Award (The Haiku Foundation)
Merit Book Award (Haiku Society of America)

naad anunaad: an anthology of contemporary international haiku

ed. Shloka Shankar, Sanjukta Asopa, Kala Ramesh (Vishwakarma Publications, India, 2016)
(Haiku Society of America Merit Book Awards, Best Anthology [tie] 2017)

Rough examples of a long haiku

by Alan Summers

beyond the gold leaf signage
of a just opened wine bar launch . . .
the weaving night summer wind

beyond the gold leaf signage	= 7
of a just opened wine bar launch . . .	= 8
the weaving night summer wind	= 7

crumbs and croissant dipping
around the black mirror-calm coffee
the harvest rain turns up

crumbs and croissant dipping	= 6
around the black mirror-calm coffee	= 9
the harvest rain turns up	= 6

Monostich = the single line haiku

gunshy the blue excluded by Picasso

Alan Summers

Hauling the Tide: Haiku Society of America Members' Anthology 2024 ed. Edward Cody Huddleston

endless rain from a paper cup the scent of cedar

Alan Summers (August 2025)

Original lyric: "endless rain into a paper" is from Across the Universe (Lennon-McCartney)

From the 1970 album *Let It Be*, the Beatle's final released studio album.

legerdemain snow the red scarves of robins in tree crevices

Alan Summers

whiptail journal of the single-line poem issue 13 · June 2025

From the haibun: *The Forest of Pining*

safety off blue dove down

Alan Summers

Kingfisher #11 (April 2025) ed. Tanya McDonald

forest each Shakespeare a windflower we evade gods

Alan Summers

The Moon is in my Torch

Rattle Spring 2025 **Tribute to the Haibun** issue #87 March 1, 2025

Feature: haibun plus audio recording (June 2025)

<https://rattle.com/the-moon-is-in-my-torch-by-alan-summers/>

night jigsaw the vowels of another apology

Alan Summers

tsuri-dōrō Issue #19 Jan/Feb 2024 ed. Tony Pupello

"It has more immediacy and more of a possible story ('another'), and people do emphasise vowels when they apologise quite often. This one seems to have a base in actuality, which I think the best 'surreal' stuff does."

—AB

The monoku is an example of innovative use of language. The subtlety of phrasing 'vowels of another apology' portrays intellectual twist. There is an inherent space for the readers to invent the social behaviour. Haiku is indeed an extension of world of language and innovative creation in literature.

—Pravat Kumar Padhy (March 2024)

Duostich:

See **"Duostich: Navigating Unicorns"** by Alan Summers

The Pan Haiku Review issue one ed. Alan Summers (Spring 2023) 1-line & 2-line haiku special

winter's end
a wardrobe slaps closed

Alan Summers

Tinywords issue 21.1 March 2021

night clouds
the pull of the sound-fox

Alan Summers

hedgerow a journal of small poems #108 (2017) ed. Caroline Skanne

into the evening a tractor harvests
willywagtail song

Alan Summers

Azami Special Edition ed. Ikkoku Santo (Japan, 1998)

vee of a gumtree
four egrets black against the sky

Alan Summers

Award credit: Commended, New Zealand Poetry Society International Poetry Competition 1994

toy hospital
lonely songs fix the cry box

Alan Summers

The Pan Haiku Review issue 1 (May 2023)

heavy tattooed neck bending
the inscription

Sheila Barksdale

The Pan Haiku Review issue 1 (May 2023)

Quartrains (tetrastich) :

the blue
of the **aubergine**
a spider is caught
in the netsuke

Alan Summers

Snapshots Seven (2000) ed. John Barlow

my ink death moon
of
darkling blue
kimono

Alan Summers

With this quatrain haiku I had thought I had made up 'darkling blue' which is also a colour of ravens to me, but it's a poem by Denise Riley (THE CASTALIAN SPRING) and a song too.

nascent puddles
how the rain
empties, and fills
and leaves again

Alan Summers

Editors' Choice:

publication credit: haikuKATHA, Issue 22 August 2023

Editors' Choice Commentary by Vandana Parashar

*"Four-line haiku, as a concept, was an ambiguous area for me that I was learning to embrace, and then I read this particular one by Alan Summers. **The first line**, "nascent puddles" is fresh and unique and draws the reader's attention to the subtle change in the surroundings. It must have rained when the reader was probably asleep or buried in work. The word nascent suggests that it didn't rain much.*

***The mere mention of rain** is bound to raise the spirits. After all, who doesn't like to enjoy the rain with their loved ones — be it indoors enjoying a hot cuppa or feeling adventurous and going out on a long drive with soft drizzle playing background music over the car roof? The feeling that it won't rain forever and one should make the most of it is on everyone's mind. **L3 and 4** not only echo that feeling but attenuate it. This haiku is a beautiful reminder that we cannot stop what is bound to happen. The seasons change, the rain falls, the sun rises and sets, and life goes on.*

*The most striking thing about this haiku is that it hits differently when read in different moods, just like the rain. Depending upon the reader's mood, the rain might appear to be playful, filling and emptying the puddle, or it might make the reader contemplative about the ephemerality of life. This haiku draws the reader in with its inherent movement and makes the reader feel one with nature. The use of "and" in **L4 and L5** provides a tempo, and the result is an exquisitely evocative, fluid, and rhythmic four-line haiku."*

—Vandana Parashar



www.callofthepage.org/the-pan-haiku-review/