No.13 June 2012

featuring
haiku, tanka, haiga, haibun, linked forms & more
Welcome to Notes from the Gean the journal of haiku, tanka, haiga, haibun, linked forms & more.

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The Editors

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Editor-in-Chief/Resources, Colin Stewart Jones.
In Memoriam: Hortensia Anderson
June 24, 1959—May 21, 2012

Ah, Sunflower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the Sun,
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the traveller’s journey is done:

William Blake

Notes from the Gean felt that it was fitting that we dedicate our opening pages to the work of one of our contributors who recently passed away.

Richard Krawiec and Alan Summers both include Hortensia’s work in this issue and have written brief notes that celebrate Hortensia’s life and mourn her passing; and there is also a wonderful audio recording of a rokku by Barbara Taylor that Hortensia collaborated on. But as is only appropriate for a writer of Hortensia’s calibre her own words will provide the best memorial.

Colin Stewart Jones
Editor-in-Chief
Offering

I step gingerly in bare feet across the patio to a railing usually laden with seed. Although empty, a lone chickadee hops around, searching. I call out to him with a forgotten handful of seed. As I hold the offering, the feel of his toes presses into me while his beak pecks at my palm. Cocking his fuzzy head, he flies away.

I wonder if he will remember me.

summer sun—
a feather flutters
from a tree

Hortensia Anderson - USA
As A Wave

Sitting on the jetty, I can feel the stillness as a wave, having risen, crests - then, falling, is silent, rolled back into itself.

How I yearn to roll back into myself, to merge with the ocean as a wave.

indigo sky—
a full moon tugs
at the tides

Hortensia Anderson - USA
I only knew Hortensia Anderson through sporadic email and Facebook conversations, initiated mostly from soliciting her work for various publications. Even in those limited contacts it was clear she didn't just write poetry, she embodied it. She was generous, precise, lyrical, humble, confident, open to wonder, and intelligent intelligent intelligent. The last communication I had was an email conversation about haibun she had submitted to the Gean. With her passing, the phrasing of these 2 poetic pieces takes on a particular poignancy. She achieved her wish to merge. And she fed us with her poetry. Yes, we will remember her.

Richard Krawiec
Haibun Editor
The Rokku: Year’s First Hike

lead by eiko yachimoto

year’s first hike—
I can hear pebbles singing
in the clear stream                    Josh Wikoff

let us respond
reciting karuta-poems                  eiko

gold-tooled covers
of rare antique books
line library shelves                   Hortensia Anderson

in a basement cafe
sofas all taken                          e

the mouse hole
illuminated by a
marbled moonsky                          Barbara Taylor

hatless, scarecrows bow
from their field of stubble              J

***

a deep breath
of the blind vicar
just out of his dream                   e

our fingers touch,
as we fold the cool linens             H

sweet surrender
between doric pillars
of our ancestral home                   B

as if it were limitless
this windswept sea                      J
eternally
and on all the airwaves
rock and roll plays

..teenager’s “kind lecture”
on Blur vs Oasis

***

freshly fallen snow on the evergreens
concern about signposts
what a procession! ant ant ant ant
Ms Giffords uttered, “toast”
his brush absorbs sumi for a Daruma eye
a moon sees me

*****

how autumnal
the Kir Royale appears
in a crystal flute
quietly on the stone wall
a tawny frogmouth
wisps of smoke
gradated shades on clouds
a valley awakens
rototiller’s engine
clicks before it starts
apricot blossoms
spiral to the sidewalk
with whimsical breeze
at last,
a welcome break
for merry tea pickers

Notes from the Gean No.13, June 2012
footnote on "a Daruma eye":
When a wish comes true, a brush stroke of freshly-ground fragrant sumi-ink adds a black eye onto a one-eyed Daruma. A Daruma doll is modeled after the most determined Zen monk, but unlike hina-dolls, does not have any seasonal reference by itself.

*Verse #1, #11 and #20 are stone verses.

The composition by exchanging e-mails started on 24 January and ended on 14 February 2011.

Eiko Yachimoto, Japan
Hortensia Anderson, USA
Barbara Taylor, Australia
Josh Wikoff, USA
tomegaki for Year's First Hike (A Rokku)  
eiko yachimoto

Last Summer my daughter and I visited Lake Lotus in deep mountains of Mie prefecture. As a counter measure against the “No Concrete Dam Campaign” by naturalists and preservationists, colorful publicity leaflets on the necessity of Lake Lotus Dam have been direct-mailed to us, regularly from a branch office of the Ministry of Construction for some years. Over the time I developed a desire to visit this destination, which is unknown to the sightseeing industry.

The overnight trip turned out most memorable especially because we ran into footsteps of Yasujiro Ozuï, the movie director of international fame.

Our hokku is about a hike along the river. Yasujiro, the 19 year old unlicensed teacher could have hiked with his pupils along the Kushida river that flows from mountains around today’s Lotus Lake. The Kushida river must have been much nicer without the Lotus Dam... I remember a scene from one of his black and white films, a straw hat thrown from a bridge and flowing down the clear river reflecting the mountains. On New Year day, his pupils might have recited karuta poems they had learned by heart.

Those children are almost into their nineties now and some live in a school-turned- nursing home in their rural village where they keep Ozu corner, a mini museum. Ozu taught the village children only for one year after his turbulent high school days, which were saturated with movies he managed to see in theaters, braving school rules. He failed in the entrance examination and spent one year with those elementary school kids before moving to Tokyo. “Ozu Sensei grabbed our hearts with his love of life and freedom”, one of the nineties wrote.

We know another man born in Mie prefecture who grabbed hearts of many renju with his dedication to poetry and haikai: Matsuo Basho. In a Museum in Matsuzaka city where the Kushida river meets the sea, I learned that rich merchants of Matsuzaka have had a tradition to open their branch shop in Edo and keep the double lives back and forth between Matsuzaka and Edo. Yasujiroâ’s merchant father led such a life and Ozu was born in their Tokyo(Edo) house, but was raised in Matsuzaka, a castle town with curious cultural traditions and the congenial community spirit of a small town.

I started comparing the two great men and found similarities:
- both stayed single all their lives
- both good at leading a team in producing art
- both were from Mie and gained reputation in Edo/Tokyo

Basho did not know cinema, but Ozu knew Basho and must have read his renku too. It is known that Ozu tried composing renku with his assistant directors while waiting for some decision after Japan surrendered to the Allied Forces.

How would Ozu read Year's First Hike? The switch of the scenes from classical karuta cards to a library with rare antique books, namely the shift at Daisan verse has a movie flavor. A low angle camera could follow a tired student leaving the book shelves, taking an elevator to the basement café for a coffee break. Our first moon verse then is introduced by a basement mouse, which opens another reading of its cousin’s hole in the autumn field with scarecrows. Verse (n) read with verse (n-1) transforms when read with verse (n+1).
There must be a hat on the vicar’s bedroom wall when our camera takes the scene of a vicar’s bedroom. The film should begin gaining momentum through subtly sensual love verses to follow. The wind-swept sea fills the wide screen with sound effects; incremental volume of the sound of waves. Another shift at the rock’n roll verse is followed by a release of tension via a naïve teenager verse.

The Rokku progresses into an experimental folio of modern verses. I hope we can please Ozu with the succession of the overlapping scenes as if from a silent movie or from an ultra-modern documentary film. After all, Ozu started his career by making silent movies deeply influenced by oldest Hollywood movies. He could never have missed that four ants Are at the same time the four of us writing this renku.

Ozu believed in observing his composition rules. He once said, “I am like a tofu-ya who makes tofu every morning.” I wanted our final folio light-hearted to the level of freshly hand-made tofu with subtle taste and rich nutrition. The acutely aesthetic qualia of a crystal flute verse begins the last folio. The finale run of images starting from a quiet owl and the dawn scene to rather dynamic sketches of the spring season with the engine's click, spiraling blossom petals and merry tea pickers, can best be taken with the low angle camera too! The pun between haiku and hike would most certainly win his smile. The pun between rock and Rokku (six verses), and the pseudo-pun between “the” and za (session) is the zest of On Za Rokku, (this new renku form’s Japanese name in romaji), which is translated into English either to Rokku or On the Rock!

My bow to Josh, Hortensia and Barbara for writing with me. Yoko Ono said in a TV commercial today a dream seen alone is a dream, but a dream seen together is a reality”. My apologies for writing this rather idiosyncratic tomegaki.

***

Alas, “today” in the last paragraph is long gone! I wrote the tomegaki shortly before the tsunami on March 11, 2011.

sweet hortensia, look
the ball of hydrangea buds
shedding pale raindrops…. 

Eiko Yachimoto
Yokosuka city, Japan
May 30, 2012
It was a great shock to hear of Hortensia’s passing, and I was delighted when Eiko approached me about publishing this renku. Many thanks to the other participants for permissions, and to Barbara Taylor for her reading which you can hear on the audio file:

Alan Summers
Linked Forms Editor

Year’s First Hike

can be accessed here

http://www.youtube.com/user/NftGtv
Lingering voices of Hortensia:

Barbara, you have such a lovely voice and your intonation is beautiful.

I’ve been reading our Rokku repeatedly and I really like it. Our different writing styles are represented yet they come together so well. I have so much enjoyed this renku.

Thank you, eiko, for teaching what has yet to be translated into English! And thank you Barbara and Josh for your imaginative verses.

You make me a better poet.

Oh, eiko, renku is so good for the mind.

Dear eiko,

Your cinematic comparisons remind me of one of my heroines, Marguerite Duras. Often, a tomegaki simply explains the verses one by one. But you approach the renku with a global view, using the individual verses as a support.

Hortensia Anderson - USA
Terri L. French - USA
summer day
the dry rattle
of beetle wings

Andy Burkhart - USA

pillar to pill on a razor's edge

Andy Burkhart - USA

leaving me alone
in the dark
the tree of crows
fades into night

Marian Olson - USA

birding I see the hawk's eyes on me

Marian Olson - USA

bright wind
grandpa takes me
into his kiting day

Ramesh Anand - India
spring breeze—
a torn kite flows
with the river

Rita Odeh - Israel

white iris . . .
the redbud’s dark leaves
ringed in moonlight

Margaret Dornaus - USA

plum blossoms . . .
she recalls what it’s like
to love again

Margaret Dornaus - USA

just before the snow . . .
an empty bench
lit by street light

Ben Moeller-Gaa - USA

spring afternoon
two green pears
on a blue plate

Ben Moeller-Gaa - USA
where is she buried
the imperial nun I taught
at Jakko-in
the temple we once sat in
now boarded up and cold

Margaret Chula - USA

on her calendar
a record of telephone calls
from her five children
which one of us
loved her the most?

Margaret Chula - USA

corn silk
my baby hair
Mother saved
sealed up tight
in tiny white envelopes

Margaret Chula - USA
The Shaman

Still lithe and agile, the woman keeps stride with a chestnut stallion she’s owned for many years. Her gloved hands hold whip and lead. She stops, then signals. The aging horse halts, his body tense in a long-necked pose. His presence, like red smoke rising, ignites the crowd.

almost dusk
he reads
her body language

Lynn Edge - USA
Man with Sunburn

sunglasses—
so much hidden
behind them

sun flares—
words of our final
argument

midday sun—
shadows rest
between journeys

another sunburn—
the doctor says
melanoma

Jerry Dreessen - USA
blinded
by a glint of sunlight
from my jimmy—
the cash box opens
another day of IOUs

Brendan Slater - UK

suddenly
the rain picks up
I dissolve
into the sway
of the windscreen wipers

Brendan Slater - UK

with great skill
I dose out my day
increasing in strength
the bitter grey wind
passes straight through my ears

Brendan Slater – UK
Pastime

on opening day
seed husks, sunlight, mouse droppings
spill from a bat bag

hometown baseball game
kids prowl behind the dugouts
two bits per foul ball

dandelion seeds
rising up from center field
with the gloved line drive

pitcher fires a shot
a curve ball low and inside
the batter dances

pitcher makes his mark
recalling the last at-bat
batter takes the mound

the umpire bellows
the strike zone becomes larger
approaching twilight

pitcher nods the sign
catcher’s mitt pops approval
Blue punches the air

bottom of the ninth
at home the dust storm settles
Blue adjourns his court

at the county fair
home plate is the winning throw
in the cow pie contest

brisk October wind
leaves gather on the backstop
the final catch made
Note on Pastime

Blue is the nickname for the umpire in pee-wee/little league baseball, hence the capitalization. Speaking of peewee baseball, I also feel compelled to explain that the submitted verse revolve around the sandlots and local recreation leagues and not Major League Baseball. An example being the ‘two-bits’ verse where to keep costs down the sponsoring home team pays kids 25-cents if they return a baseball hit into foul territory, the joy being that the 25-cents is usually traded for candy or a hot dog at the concession stand.

Baseball is one of the great excuses on how best to 'pass time' on a summer's afternoon.

Phil Allen – USA
haiku matters

Between the Lines by Beth Vieira

Sometimes what happens between the lines stands out as much what happens in them. Haiku may not differ from other poetry in this regard, but its brevity and lack of completion heighten the effect of having to read between the lines. Other features of haiku work to enhance these effects; they often go by the Japanese words kire and ma. Kire refers to the idea of “cutting” between parts of the poem so that there is a juxtaposition of separate elements brought into relation not by something explicitly stated but by a space between them. That space in Japanese was usually filled with a sound called a particle, and in English it is often filled with a mark of punctuation such as a dash or an ellipsis. Often it is simply left blank. The more metaphorically blank space in the poem, called ma, creates an interval of in-betweness where the aesthetic effects can occur.[1]

Though so much more could be said about the Japanese terms, especially ma, they can lead to mystifications and misunderstandings that happen when foreign words and concepts are borrowed by radically different cultures. As I have argued in an essay entitled “Pearls of Dew: Transitional Phenomena and Haiku,” there are ways to be aware and respectful of the Japanese origins of haiku and yet still find useful terms that are more suitable to Western culture.[2] In particular, I’ve chosen the field of psychology with its emphasis on the workings of subjectivity. Since reading between the lines implies the interaction of one person coming to an understanding of something unstated by another, I want to use the term “intersubjective” to describe some of the effects of the interaction between writer and reader.

“Intersubjectivity” is a term that has emerged in psychology and philosophy to describe what happens when two subjectivities meet and interact. The emphasis is not on each subjectivity individually, but rather on something in between, whether a merging or a third that created out of the two. It is also a general theory that subjectivity is always already intersubjectivity in the sense that we remain open and related to others. Both components counter earlier theories that take subjectivity as self-enclosed and independent, and thus, more often than not, subjectivity creates objects out of other subjects.


[2] The essay appears in a journal called fort da (Fall, 2009), which is part of a professional psychological association, so it’s far more accessible via the internet at the following site: http://turtlereefs.blogspot.com.
Not all haiku work with intersubjective effects. As Randy Brooks pointed out in a lucid essay in Frogpond, you can create a taxonomy of different kinds of haiku.[3] His four categories—objective, subjective, transactional, and literary—describe poems that clearly wouldn’t have obvious intersubjective effects, but his category of the transactional haiku overlaps with intersubjectivity.

Brooks emphasizes the social construction of reality and the social function of haiku in transactional haiku “as a call and response process of creative collaboration between the writer and the reader.” Later on he goes even farther and calls the reader “a co-creative, collaborative partner.”

Brooks treats the interaction between the two as if it is happening before his eyes. The poem itself seems to dissolve from a written thing to a vehicle of connection between two people. This might be the fictional space we enter as we immerse ourselves in the poem, but we are always reading between the lines, not talking and not writing. A strong intersubjective effect might make the fiction of merging feel more powerful so as to create the sense that co-creation is the activity, but the cause of that effect is the poem itself, which was designed to leave room for the reader to step in and have the experience of being the creator of the poem.

Though the terms describe similar phenomena, “intersubjective” effects occur more broadly but since “transactional” is part of taxonomy, it is a particular type of poem. In fact, intersubjective effects are possible with the other three types of poems in Brooks’s taxonomy so that even a poem that uses literary allusion could evoke an interaction between reader and writer through shared readings of other texts.

Although the term “transactional” seems to celebrate collaboration, it still keeps the idea of separate and independent subjectivities in place. The poem becomes a kind of commodity that the two exchange. With intersubjective effects, the space between the lines comes into focus along with the lines themselves to exert enough pressure to temporarily dissolve the boundaries between the subjectivities.

To see this more clearly, we need to look at some examples. There are many ways writers create intersubjective effects. Usually, it is by leaving something out that the reader has to fill in. It can be as literal as missing words or as figurative as missing persons.

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3 “Haiku Poetics: Objective, Subjective, Transactional and Literary Theories,” Frogpond 34.2 (Spring/Summer, 2011). While I had intersubjectivity in mind before I read Brooks’s essay, I think his account of the “transactional” haiku is provocative, and it’s the first account I’ve read of this kind of interaction.

Notes from the Gean No.13, June 2012
Bad Grammar

亡母や海見る度に見る度に
naki haha ya umi miru tabi ni miru tabi ni

dead | mother | (emphasis particle) | ocean | see | time | (link particle) | see | time | (link particle)

departed mother–
every time I see the ocean
every time I see...

This striking haiku by Issa dares to start with the words “dead mother,” but the psychological effects are produced in what follows that. The repetition found in “miru tabi ni miru tabi ni” conveys the poignancy of his loss and longing. The grammar doesn't end. Instead, it trails off. Most translators don’t know what to do with “bad grammar” so they drop the second miru, “see” and just have tabi, “time.”

For instance, Robert Hass's translation reads:[4]

Mother I never knew,
every time I see the ocean,
every time–

While in a way Hass tries to show the grammar breaking off by repeating “every time” and following it with a dash, “every time” comes to a resting point slightly more comfortable than if he included the second “I see.” In fact, repeating “every time” just feels like emphasis of the previous line instead of what it is in Japanese, which is the start of a whole new iteration, one started but broken off.

A break in grammatical construction is a trope called anacoluthon. It occurs all over literature to convey powerful mental states. Just as he fills in the story of Issa’s mother, Hass wants to complete Issa’s sentence, in a sense registering the discomfort produced by the breakdown in grammar, which he nevertheless tries to erase.

Though the topic sets the tone, it’s the repetition and syntax that structure the experience of expectation and failure for the reader. The intersubjective effects are not located in a sense of sympathy that might be generated by the words “dead mother.”

Rather the intersubjective effects are found in the reader joining Issa in his attempt and inability to repeat his sentence.

Issa’s poem literally leaves a space open that the reader steps into, participating in the poem and to some extent in the experience. The exact content of that experience cannot be specified. In other words, it will depend on the reader whether the intersubjective effect is being overcome with grief or feeling futility in longing or even sensing some dejection in loss.

In fact, if the exact content were specified too concretely, we wouldn’t have an intersubjective effect at all. We’d just have another meaning to be gathered from the poem. It would become a kind of object (a feeling or sense or emotion) for our attention but with our subjectivity pushed away as separate no matter how sympathetic.

Richard Gilbert calls attention to “bad grammar” when he writes that “acts of ‘misreading as meaning’ are abetted by absent syntactic elements.”[5] “Misreading as meaning” is the way he describes the productive process of reading and re-reading that is forced with haiku in part due to its brevity and resistance to singular meaning. He adds that the style of “missing syntactic elements and semantic language gaps in haiku form has been described as katakoto: ‘fragmentary or “broken” language’ (lit. “baby talk”), coined by Tsubouchi Neten.” To keep the broken language from becoming nonsense requires reading between the lines and the willingness to allow intersubjective experience to unfold.

The example that leads up to Gilbert’s discussion is the well-known haiku by Nicholas Virgilio from 1963:

Lily:
out of the water…
out of itself

Since Gilbert takes pains to fill in the missing elements in this poem to show how it works, I won’t add my own reading. I cite it instead to point out another kind of “bad grammar” that haiku in both Japanese and English play with. It is what I’ll call “recursive” for lack of a better term. It’s when there’s a kind of repetition that refers to itself, even loops back on itself.

Another famous example of this kind of haiku is a poem by Jim Kacian:

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5 *Poems of Consciousness*, 40.
the river
the river makes
of the moon

The first river is actually the last river in the sense that it is the product of the activity of what the second river does with the moon. To put it first in the poem is to set up syntactical expectations that are then frustrated and have to be revised when we get to the end of the poem. In this sense, the poem can be said to be recursive, to loop back upon itself. But there’s a challenge with this poem because even when you figure out the differences between the two rivers, the placement of them in line with each other is so powerful that it overrides the ability to keep them separate. It’s as if the poem is a Möbius strip that sends us back to the beginning each time we think we’ve reached the end.

The intersubjective effects in this case do not occur in the realm of emotions strictly speaking, but rather they play with another subjective field, that of sensory impressions and the ability to distinguish appearances from reality. The poem’s recursive structure challenges that ability and even calls it into question, leaving behind a state of wonder and even bewilderment. Is the appearance of a river that the river makes of the moon less a river than the river in which it appears? The poem verges on the philosophical yet does so quietly because the images promote a sense of tranquility. That tranquility is somewhat disturbed by the grammatical force of breaking down usual expectations to create something that also breaks with common sense.

Gilbert notes the success of this poem by referring to all the translations in an article on Kacian’s work where he cites a similar poem that is even a stronger example of “bad grammar.” This poem was not published in the usual sense but was placed in New Zealand, written in stone:[6]

clouds seen
through clouds
seen through

This haiku has recursive qualities, but it also shares the sense that Issa’s poem has of trailing off, breaking syntax for effect. Here, though we might feel the pull of the lack of closure, we may not want to step in all the way because we might get caught between the lines in potentially endless repetition that stretches out before us, like a river that ends with the moon.

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Making a Scene

Haiku is too brief a form to be called narrative, but some haiku set up scenes that seem to imply more than the snippet of what they are able to say. The brevity and incompleteness invite the reader into the scene with a challenge to understand what’s represented and to place it in a larger implied narrative. Often the poem begins with the trope of in medias res for dramatic heightening and tension.

An example of making a scene with these effects is by Raquel D. Bailey:[7]

her finger curls
on the trigger …
   just a shooting star

Though we don’t know enough about what is happening to know why a woman has a gun ready, the description of the finger curling on the trigger brings us so far into the scene that we feel intersubjective effects ranging from fear to relief. Because we are drawn in so closely to the specific details of a larger and presumably ongoing scene, we may experience a partial identification with the woman in her close call with pulling the trigger or we may instead take on the reassuring stance provided in the last line.

In another haiku by the same poet, a similar close-up implies an unspecified yet alluring scene:

hunger moon –
the scent of whiskey
   on his finger tips

The strong effect of displacement of the scent from the mouth to the finger tips is unsettling and picks up on latent meanings of the word “hunger” in the seasonal reference. We sense that a desire has been unleashed and is running out of control without the possibility of being satiated.

Both poems make a scene. In the first, we wonder more about what led up to what we see while in the second the emphasis is more on what might happen next. We not only have to read between the lines. We also have to read beyond them.

With one foot given a toe-hold in such detailed depictions and the other foot reaching out to blank space, the reader’s stance is shaky and gives rise to vertiginous feelings that are highlighted by the content of a gun and alcohol. The unsteady feeling involved when asked to make a scene doesn’t have to be as overtly dramatic, as we can see in a poem by Lee Gurga:[8]

exploring the cave…
   my son’s flashlight beam
   disappears ahead

The effect of worrying about what will happen next is not only produced by leaving the scene incomplete. It is made more palpable because it is a father’s concern about his own son. This detail does specify the impact, but the poem stops short of closing down too tightly. There is room enough for the reader to enter the scene and make it happen just beyond the poem. If the poem had centered on a father’s response to seeing his son apparently disappear, it would have presented us with the subjectivity of a worried father in a way that wouldn’t have involved our participation in what I have been calling intersubjectivity.

Many examples of haiku shift our attention to subjectivity as an object of consideration rather than actively engaging us in mutual recognition of another subject. They tend to be too explicit about the kind of impact they want to have by attempting to write it in advance. They don’t leave enough space to read between the lines. To leave it open-ended might seem to take a risk, but haiku with its brevity and incompleteness already involves some degree of risk. The more open the poem the more powerful the intersubjective effects. That openness might already be present in between the lines with a juxtaposition that requires that there is a transfer of poetic interrelationship to an intersubjective one.

Beth Vieira - USA

---

milking hour
a whitish mist moves
past the moon

an’ya - USA
Cross Country

She’s endured the rocking of the train for days as it steamed its way south. Wobbling from her berth now, she doesn’t have the energy to notice the sticky Gulf Coast humidity, nor the mosquitos swarming her at the station.

She stumbles onto the platform and retches again. Nothing comes up, though. Her belly was long ago emptied.

He catches her arm and ushers her to a bench. She didn’t even see him as she got off the train, but he’s here. His hair has grown out since he left the navy. He looks a little different than he did the last time — the only time — they saw each other.

“You gonna be alright?”

“I think so.”

“The preacher and his wife are here. Momma sent him a letter while I was getting set up at the plant. She told them when your train would arrive.”

“The preacher?”

“Yep. He’s gonna marry us. So you can go home with me, y’know. His wife will be the witness.”

“Marry us? I don’t think I can even stand up.”

“It’s alright. His wife’s stout enough. She’ll hold you up. If not, we ain’t got a place for you to stay.”

egrets wing
across black wisps
—smokestacks on the bayou

Shelly Bryant – Singapore/China
Attraction fades
as fights to change each other
invariably fail
then the slow, turning away
a longing for something else

Bruce England - USA

Just like me
my guests don’t want to go home
but I’m already home
so I close the bedroom door
and set the alarm

Bruce England - USA

He knew his wife
was restless in their marriage
and with their kids
so he bought her a sports car
and he died in her arms

Bruce England - USA
swans preening—
loops
of a lovers’ knot

John McDonald - Scotland

a son emigrates—
back in the garden
a trembling branch

John McDonald - Scotland

bluetit—
enormous
amongst the icicles

John McDonald - Scotland

dewlight spills
between the valley blossoms
we make our own path

Terry O'Connor - Ireland

plum blossoms
grad students discuss
emigration

Terry O'Connor - Ireland
from before the big-bang—
magnetism,
this longing for oneness

Mark Rutter - UK

chalk stream
two cygnets ride
their mother's back

Mark Rutter - UK

sleep's edge
my inner voice
someone else's voice

Mark Rutter - UK

my haiku floating
downstream in a paper boat
spring run-off

Neal Whitman - USA

under tall oaks
rootless shadows
the violet hour

Neal Whitman – USA
Blake's hourglass / Blake's timeglas

in Blake's hourglass a constant falling of tigers
i Blakes timeglas en stadig regn af tigre

in Blake's hourglass my watch becomes hands alone
i Blakes timeglas bliver mit ur til lutter visere

washed in the blood of hippos the saved in Blake's hourglass
vasket i flodhestes blod de frelste i Blakes timeglas

lies and truths in 64 dimensions fermenting in Blake's hourglass
løgne og sandheder i 64 dimensioner gærer i Blakes timeglas

in Blake's hourglass we exchange faces with gods
i Blakes timeglas vi udveksler ansigter med guder

entwined we regress to fluids in Blake's hourglass
sammenfiltrede bliver vi til væsker igen i Blakes timeglas

mentioning "soul" i become a jelly-fish in Blake's hourglass
jeg nævner "sjæl" og bliver til en vandmand i Blakes timeglas
mind your own a river says it's itself in Blake's hourglass
pas dig selv en flod siger den er sig selv i Blakes timeglas

high heels guilt becomes obsolete in Blake's hourglass
høje hæle skyld forældes i Blakes timeglas

not looking there's no up and down in Blake's hourglass
kigger ikke der er hverken op eller ned i Blakes timeglas

from Blake's hourglass a scarab rolls the outside world
fra Blakes timeglas ruller en skarabæ verden udenfor

to see the rhino in a world of dust we jam in Blake's hourglass
at se næsehornet i en verden af støv vi jammer i Blakes timeglas

up my nose the finger of God in Blake's hourglass
op i min næse Guds finger i Blakes timeglas

holding up the pants with hope & string in Blake's hourglass
holder bukserne oppe med håb og snort i Blakes timeglas

bite marks here and there jelly Buddha in Blake's hourglass
bidemærker hist og her vingummi-Buddha i Blakes timeglas
rocking the boat we have a singalong in Blake's hourglass
uro om bord vi synger en fællessang i Blakes timeglas

reviving snow angels we use our breath in Blake's hourglass
genopliver sneengage vi bruger vort åndedræt i Blakes timeglas

writing from were Janus' heads meet the poets of Blake's hourglass
skriver fra hvor Janus' hoveder mødes digterne fra Blakes timeglas

stuck in a birth canal species die out and return in Blake's hourglass
sidder fast i en fødselskanal arter uddør og vender tilbage i Blakes timeglas

building a house in Blake's hourglass we revise the manual for sand
vi bygger hus i Blakes timeglas og reviderer sandets håndbog

where Blake's hourglass spins camel's milk boils over
hvor Blakes timeglas hvirvler koger kamelmælken over

"it" on top "self" Blake's hourglass is a house of mirrors
"det" ovenpå "selv" Blakes timeglas er en spejlsal

soaking up everything backwards the joys of Blake's hourglass
suger alting baglæns op glæderne ved Blakes timeglas
as we become one we become all it's a ball in Blake's hourglass
mens vi bliver eet bliver vi alt det er en fest i Blakes timeglas

hoist the flag of cod and herring we bond in Blake's hourglass
hejs flaget for torsk og sild vi knytter bånd i Blakes timeglas

dressing up as drops of cream we float and burb in Blake's hourglass
vi klæder os ud som flødedråber og svæver og bøvser i Blakes timeglas

excreting photons the sand of Blake's hourglass is the new black
det udskiller fotoner sandet i Blakes timeglas er det nye sort

winged mountains and rooted clouds the physics in Blake's hourglass
vingede bjerge og skyer med rødder fysikken i Blakes timeglas

Johannes S. H. Bjerg - Denmark
the dreaming room

Hiroko Takahashi’s I am pregnant: a commentary by Sheila Windsor

I am pregnant
with the clown
of a snowy day

This haiku took up permanent residence in my mind the first time I read it, a couple of years ago, and has been in there playing ever since. First there’s the mirror between a heavily pregnant woman and a heavily pregnant snow-cloud: large, slow moving, bulbous. Clown is a metaphor too if she’s as comically ungainly as I recall being in late pregnancy. So, that’s the top layer.

Second layer: to be pregnant with the clown of a snowy day is, for me, to be human… pregnant with humanity. We are each in every moment birthing our next expression of what it is to be human, whether actually pregnant or not. There are broadly two sides to ‘clown’. There’s the red nose, big red mouth, huge shoes and squirty plastic flower of the circus clown. The fool we laugh at and are a little afraid of… never sure what’s real behind that put-on jolly face.

Next there’s the other-side-of-the-mirror, alter ego, Pierrot: white face, dressed in white (like snow, like loss: in Japan the colour of mourning is white). A painted tear just about to roll down his sorrowful face. The fool who bears our sorrows.

And finally we have the clown of Manga epitomised by Allen Walker, main protagonist of the D.Gray-man anime series. Hugely popular in Japan and beyond. This is ‘clown’ with history and context. He overcomes the unutterable sadness of being born disabled and unwanted. This clown is heroic for us.

And the snowy day? A kigo put to masterly effect. Who does not become a child, a clown, when the first snowflakes fall? Our inner-child runs out to play. Yet, snow is cold and the joy is tinged with melancholy for we know its ephemerality, even in our childlike excitement we know deep within that all mortal joy is fleeting… a snowflake. This is the clown of duality, the human experience.

Sheila Windsor – UK
for Hiroko Takahashi

Sheila Windsor - UK
What Remains?

Alone in the attic. On the desk, her farewell note stained with coffee.

“What matters isn't the fact of dying or when you die. It's what you're doing at that precise moment -- I'm ready to be loved.”

winter drizzle . . .
my smoke rings
drifting

Chen-ou Liu - Canada
Five Seasons

new year's day—
I open
a fresh ream of paper

Violet Rose-Jones - Australia
wattle blossoms
tangle in my hair—
spring dust storm

Violette Rose-Jones
my toddler places a pebble in my palm
calm summer day

Violet Rose-Jones - Australia
NOTHING
BRUSHES PAST ME:
AUTUMN TWILIGHT

VIOLETTE ROSE-JONES

Violet Rose-Jones - Australia
crunching across the frost
with bare feet
winter midnight

Violet Rose-Jones - Australia
Apple blossoms weighted with snow :: they ask me where we are going

Grant Hackett - USA

Slow death of a plum tree in one desert yard :: I give up my final blossoms

Grant Hackett - USA

silent classroom
a crash landing
on paper wings

Tom Rault - The Netherlands

unopened letter . . .
still close
this spring

Ernesto P. Santiago - Philippines

Easter Sunday . . .
Gran's chair rocking
with the lilies

Marion Alice Poirier - USA
endless rooftops
a sax player conjures
the moon

Mark E. Brager - USA

her laugh
extending the arc
of the tire swing

Mark E. Brager - USA

pond's center
the turtle a shadow
then gone

Alexander B. Joy - USA

night of stars . . .
a child tiptoes
in the shallows

Hansha Teki - New Zealand

by moonlight,
lovers' fingers mesh
into dreams . . .

Hansha Teki - New Zealand
shown a red patch
can I find
a poppy field

Jack Galmitz - USA

subterranean vaults
I follow a snake
down slippery stairs

Jack Galmitz - USA

last night’s heat
in my ash bucket
winters morning

John Byrne - Ireland

on the soccer pitch
eleven plovers
east wind

John Byrne - Ireland

early autumn
rose petals on the path . . .
my shadow

Nu Quang - USA
Her last garden
almost free of snow
she digs
a gritty mess of parsnips
to give away

Carol Purington - USA

After a winter
of snow upon snow
early daffodils
paler
than I remembered

Carol Purington - USA

they don't tweet	hey don't do Facebook---
my band
of faceless friends
with nothing to say

Janet Lynn Davis - USA
sinking deep
into memory foam
wondering
if most impressions I make
are as temporary

Janet Lynn Davis - USA

After the party
I slip into something invisible
a moonwalk
where my grandmother grew
flowers of pale fragrance

Carol Purington - USA

I think it was
his large Siamese eyes
shiny blue
and their steadfast gaze
that made me call him Buttons

Kirsty Karkow - USA
Above the murmur

(a tanka sonnet)

heron’s flight
above the murmur
of the river

drawn tall
poised at full alert
before lunging
graceful in its arc
the fly-fisherman’s cast

coolness—
the ocean liner bound
for its destination

cinook salmon
back in their spawning ground . . .
pink roses for her

Patricia Prime - New Zealand & Rodney Williams - Australia
"Pausing the Movie"

azaleas—
another netflix DVD
in the mail

the backyard garden's
first asparagus sprouts

through the privacy fence
incessant barking
from a neighbor's dog

emergency sirens
from the pier

seaside surf
washes over
sunburned feet

casting wishes
always an empty line

nearly full
the moon hovers over
a kissing booth

he leaves for college
promising to return

unpaid fines
I dump the book
into the depository

a quarter an hour
for the parking meter

I press
a river stone
in her calloused palm

pausing the movie
the snow lets up
Outline and hokku for "Pausing the Movie":

azaleas—
another netflix DVD
in the mail

(chibi - Spring blossom)

Aubrie - Spring event 2 lines (wakiku)
Terri - no season 3 lines (daisan)
chibi - no season 2 lines
Aubrie - Summer event no blossom 3 lines
Terri - no season 2 lines
chibi - autumn moon 3 lines
Aubrie - autumn love begins 2 lines
Terri - no season love ends 3 lines
chibi - no season 2 lines
Aubrie - no season 3 lines
Terri - winter 2 lines (ageku) links to both the previous verse and hokku

Background and Notes:

The renku, if memory serves, was conducted over the internet and was a 12 tone, junicho, April 2 - 17, 2011. We used the Renku Home link as a guide and I used a template provided to designate the types of verses as to season or no-season, love, moon, blossom, and human events/occasions.

Here are a few key links:
http://www.renkureckoner.co.uk/Junicho.htm
http://haikai.2hweb.net/renku/index.html

There was discussions over several emails about the “flow” and whether there should be “cuts” (kireji-like) in any of the three line verses after the hokku. There was no consensus. Terri and Aubrie were very responsive and cooperative, though.

I consider myself very lucky to have as my teacher, Shokan Tadashi Kondo, a Japanese renku master. I am but a beginner and always a student.

Shokan Tadashi Kondo Visit:
New Orleans Haiku Society blog:
http://neworleanshaikusociety.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/tadashi-kondo-visit-in-march.html

David Lanoue’s Haiku Guy photos:
http://haikuguy.com/march12.html
Terry O’ Connor - Ireland
Cutoff

She said she wanted peace, wanted to get away from all the hubbub around her. She thought she’d find it in the wooded community among rhodys and alders where shiny-eyed does and rabbits nibbled at tender green shoots. She said she wanted space, a place to call her own, living with her own stuff, sipping a brandy whenever she pleased, eating early, going to bed alone with a good mystery, and sometimes chatting with a friend.

day after day
she sits by the window
and smokes

Marian Olson - USA
to plunge  
seems suicidal  
naked  
the pause between  
a sauna and deep snow

Kirsty Karkow - USA

hand in hand  
we fled the flames of Rome  
side by side  
we served in Nelson's navy  
and now we meet on Facebook!

Kirsty Karkow - USA

wild strawberries  
and fields of poppies . . .  
I feel adrift  
like a character  
in a Bergman movie

Kirsty Karkow - USA
For Good Measure

on the sill, Ball jars
empty of all but sea-green
sunlight...
her memories of canning
slipping, like skin from a peach

damsons
blush-indigo to damask
gems from bough to jar
gifts from the Romans
to my mother, to me

bumblebee-dizzy
on fermented fruit perfume
she giggles
spreading pinafore to catch
what brother shakes from the tree

a fluted edge
and an apple pie smile
patting and pricking
I make-believe the trimmings
into something warm and sweet

tin cutters:
hearts, stars, gingerbread men
pressed into scraps
the way those days were shaped
and sugar-sprinkled

not quite big enough
each spoonful of her not quite
sweet enough jam
like a small surgeon, I watch,
be-gloved with shortcrust dough
upside-down in the
bowl of her silver teaspoon,
faces, time-tarnished
loosened wisps of hair curled
against steam-ruddied cheeks
down three steps
to the fragrant, red tiled chill
of Grandma’s pantry -
the love she could not show us
melted in our mouths
stuck to cellar shelves
green tomato marmalade
wreathed in cobwebs
her need to preserve even
labor’s unripe fruits
chopping mint
with a curved blade --
sickle moon,
all that she kept concealed
expressed in the details
on her hands
as on her old butcher block
visible scars
some pits resist removal
some stones cling to flesh
holding my breath
I remove the spine intact.
how weak this flesh
clinging to promises
just as easily broken
hogs head cheese
bits of brain and cheek meat jelled
in its own aspic
having to make do with scraps
learning to stomach this...
leftovers
simmering on the stove
this thin broth
fragrant with thyme, enough
to fill memory's childhood home

the scent of bread
rising from the oven’s warmth
fills the emptiness
all the little tricks she had
for leavening our lives

deep in the core
brown sugar, fruit and spices
fit to burst
slow-baking Bramley apples
while you tell me all your plans

leaving at first light
the kettle cold on the stove
you take only
your favorite wooden spoon
to stir up a whole new life

safely gathered in
“may you never hunger,
may you never thirst. . .”
how the years come and go
measured by place-settings

Autumn Noelle Hall -USA.
Claire Everett - England
For Good Measure – Commentary:

After learning from each of us separately how meaningful For Good Measure was to us, Alan Summers invited Claire and I to do something tanka poets rarely get the chance to— to “tell” exactly why that was. Excited to be offered such an opportunity, we had no idea how difficult answering that little question might be. As we’d known one another just a few months when this sequence began, having been introduced only through our work on Jeffrey Woodward’s Tanka Prose Group board, and having communicated solely through e-mails, it was difficult to separate the evolution of our relationship from the development of this sequence.

Claire and I have many significant life events in common: we are nearly the same age, we’ve both lost our fathers, and we each went through difficult divorces during the exact same time. Nature lovers, we share compatible world views and spiritual outlooks. But perhaps most notable in relation to this sequence, is the fact that we are both stay-at-home mothers, descended from long lines of mothers who prioritized rearing their own children. Especially in these tough economic times, in societies where livelihoods are largely dependent upon dual incomes, this has often meant sacrificing in order to provide for our growing children’s needs. But it is a sacrifice borne of great love and commitment, one which generations of women have made before us; and it is that foundation upon which For Good Measure is built.

Within its talking tanka, there is a wistful sense of nostalgia, a conversation of inheritance and tradition passed grandmother-to-mother-to-daughter. Synchronistic discoveries emerged with each new link. When Claire wrote of the Romans’ gift, she had no way of knowing that my maternal great-grandmother and grandmother had emigrated to America from Rome, that they’d planted a damson plum tree in their new brownstone’s back yard. When I wreathed green tomato marmalade jars in cobwebs, I had no idea it might bring the same tears to Claire’s eyes that her favorite film, Fried Green Tomatoes, invoked every time she watched it. Swirling in the scent of baking bread and Bramley apples were shared recollections of our mothers’ care and kitchens. Pressed into scraps and simmering in thin broth was the idea not only of making do, but of making something special out of little-or-nothing—of making memories. And underneath it all was a growing sense that we were speaking not only for ourselves, but for generations of undervalued women who’d remained largely unrecognized; that in empowering ourselves through writing this together, we were somehow empowering them, too.

Looking back over our old e-mails, we remembered again the founding of a friendship we’d longed for with our mothers and wish for with our daughters. Memories have a funny way of slipping unexpectedly in, and just as unexpectedly away. It is our hope that this sequence will honor and preserve the memories of many women, along with their secret longings and unspoken dreams. In the end, like them, we bring to our tables what we are able, invoke blessings in the words we have, in the hope that our love and our families will continue to grow beyond ourselves.

—Autumn Noelle Hall
flow
A haiga shisan

by
Susan Shand

This presentation is best viewed by going to our dedicated NftGtv channel on YouTube by clicking on the link below.

http://www.youtube.com/user/NftGtv

There is also a storyboard and a detailed tomegaki on the proceeding pages.
new year draws untrod drifts flow in winds to follow

steep the journey lingers on old footsteps
far peaks arise to visions play the melody

in games of wordless wonder stars in birth
parade the ocean floor where blossom beauty glows

pours down tumbled streams to spring again
a leap to love but one be loved in secrecy

of summer passion led to deeper heat
for a triptych dance a dragon circles moor around

whilst walls dissolve reflect in vibrant glow
all in place returns the moon in mirrored light

to rest in fruitful space between where neutrons fly
Flow tomegaki

flow

new year draws untrod drifts flow in winds to follow
steep the journey lingers on old footsteps
far peaks arise to visions play the melody
in games of word less wonder stars in birth
parade the ocean floor where blossom beauty grows
pours down tumbled streams to spring again
a leap to love but one be loved in secrecy
of summer passion led to deeper heat
for a triptych dance a dragon circles moor around
whilst walls dissolve reflect in vibrant glow
all in place returns the moon in mirrored light
to rest in fruitful space between where neutrons fly

My intent here was to follow the scheme for a winter Shisan renga whilst using throughout single-line haiku in a haiga format. So this is a series of haiga composed with one-line haiku, constructed as a shisan renga. That is, it is a series of images with associated verses of text, which are constructed to the format and process of the poetic form of a Shisan. I also had in mind the idea that the work as a whole might also fit within the western aesthetic of a tone poem and I held this at the back of my mind during construction.

Renga is an ancient Japanese poetic form usually, but not always, constructed collaboratively. It is a form of linked verse poem written progressively, verse by verse, to a pre-formed scheme. The Shisan is a short 12 verse renga of alternating long and short verses. You can see from the scheme below that seasons and special verses (e.g. blossom, love, moon) are in set positions, interspersed with non-season verses.
Winter Shisan scheme

Hokku - long - winter
Wakiku - short - ns
Daisan - long - ns
--
4 - s - ns
5 - l - Spring Blossom
6 - s - spring
--
7 - l - ns Love
8 - s - summer - Love
9 - l - ns
--
10 - s - ns
11 - l - Autumn Moon
Ageku - s - Autumn

The scheme is extremely simplified within the text of this poem to allow for a shift in language register away from visual and concrete imagery into more somatic or semiotic language. I have purposefully utilized a level of abstraction as a means to reflect a flow in the language and in the sub-textual meaning. I wanted to allow for more 'dreaming room', and the language is deliberately chosen to drift between minimal points of concrete contact without defining the territory too closely. This language use is unusual in conventional English language haiku but is often used by more experimental one-line writers. One of the attractive features of the one-line is the technique of placing a word centrally such that it serves to make sense of the first half of the line and also the second half, doing double duty. In the punctuated version I have indicated these words with brackets. So in the ns-Love verse for instance "a leap to love but one be loved in secrecy", here "loved" does double duty when read as "...one beloved, loved in...".
Punctuated Version

New Year draws untried (drifts) flow in winds to follow.
Steep, the journey lingers on old footsteps.
Far peaks arise to (visions) play the melody
in games of word—less—wonder, stars in birth
parade the ocean floor, where blossom beauty grows –
pours down tumbled streams to spring again.
A leap to love but one be (loved) in secrecy
of summer passion led to deeper heat,
for a triptych dance, a dragon circles moor around
whilst walls dissolve—reflect— in vibrant glow.
All in place, returns the moon in mirrored light
to rest in fruitful space—between— where neutrons fly

In keeping with the language, the images are abstracted away from concrete imagery. I was lucky enough to have a number of failed photographs which, with judicious and sometimes extreme cropping and photo-processing techniques, gave me the level of light and abstraction I wanted. I began with 24 interesting processed images from which to choose the final 12. I was concerned to choose them for their emotional mood and their seasonal feel to match the shisan scheme. I then wrote the verses in order, working through the scheme; in keeping with the renga/renku process of writing to the last verse with a link but leaping or shifting away from it. I also had in the back of my mind a group of ideas which linked for me to ‘flow’ and which I wanted to include. So the process was to choose an image, write the verse to it from one of my ideas. Then choose the next image so that the link/shift between the images was pleasing and agreeable but which also allowed me to use another one of my ideas. Then write the verse to that one so that it link/shifts with the verse before. Then the third and so on, keeping in mind the poem as a whole as it grew and requirements of set position verses still to come. The last verse, the Ageku, not only closes the poem but also links back to the first verse, the Hokku. So the flow becomes circular and a mandala as a whole. This is conventional to the usual renga/renku process.

Finally, I wrote out the individual verses as a completed poem and checked that it worked as a whole, both for Japanese renku/renka, and western poetic aesthetics. Final processing involved standardizing the image and text sizes so that the work could be presented as a slideshow.

Creating a renga which fits within a prose-poem aesthetic is a departure from many modern renga. Many renga (to the unaccustomed western eye or ear) can seem disconnected and confusing, the links obscure and the shifts too great for easy appreciation. The simplification of the scheme within the text has the added benefit of exposing this link/shift technique. Modern renga writers, in keeping with their understanding of the aesthetics of the genre, avoid creating narrative. Each verse stands alone but with its linked connections to the verse before and also to the one following. There is no progressive narrative. In this poem, in order to follow the needs of narrative progression in a western aesthetic, the sub-textually themed ideas of ‘flow’ have allowed me to use disparate and diverse situated ideas as individual verses whilst still maintaining a level of narrative consistency in the prose-poem. Some shorter renga are sometimes ‘themed’, overtly or sub-textually, so this also draws from established renga practices.
How far I have succeeded in combining these elements remains to be seen. This is experimental in a number of areas and has very little in the way of precedence. The complexity of construction might have been onerous had it not been so intellectually satisfying and absorbing as an activity which filled a rainy early spring day or two. Refining it into presentable form took much longer.

Susan Shand - UK
Part I

The Romance of Primitivism: Tohta Kaneko’s Ikimonofûei
By Jack Galmitz

For those unfamiliar with Tohta Kaneko, he is the august age of 93 years and his career in Japan as educator, scholar, poet and critic spans 75 of those years. He is considered amongst the most important literary and cultural innovators of postwar modern haiku. He served as the President of the Modern Haiku Association from 1983 to 2000. Over his career, he was the recipient of amongst others, The Medal of Honor, Purple Ribbon (1988), The Order of Rising Sun, Fourth Class (1995), and Person of Cultural Merit, Japan (2008). He is also the author of fourteen books of haiku.

In 1999, Mr. Kaneko gave a speech before the Modern Haiku Association entitled “Poetic Composition on Living Things (translated as Ikemonofûei, the latter a word coined by Mr. Kaneko, published by Redmoon Press, 2011). Rather than beginning with an epigram, Mr. Kaneko began with a poem of his own, a poem that in its structure, images, and meaning essentially sums up all that follows in his delivery to the audience. Here is the poem:

splendid field of gravestones
labia uncovered
the village sleeps

Because the poem has specific references, allusions, and meanings related to Japanese history, the translators included end notes to elucidate the poem’s significance. The poem was written in 1958 in a small village in Nagasaki. It was a fishing village, and after the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, there were no fish as a result of radiation fallout and so the village was starved. The locale was filthy, squalid, women walked about without undergarments, their genitals exposed. The only pristine place was the graveyard with its “splendid” gravestones. The final line, “the village sleeps,” is meant to convey a zombie-like atmosphere of death in life.

What is central to this poem is its sense of what Mr. Kaneko calls shakaisei haiku (social consciousness-awareness in haiku) and taido, the importance of an author’s “stance” in relation to society (See Dr. Richard Gilbert’s Introduction for further elucidation). For Mr. Kaneko, haiku that lacks social awareness and an author’s stance vis-à-vis society is simply a vapid product, worthless, untrustworthy. Of the many points Mr. Kaneko makes in his address, this is one we as English language practitioners of haiku do well to bear in mind, because for the most part we have viewed these terms as
too polemical, too ideological to be included in our haiku (this will be discussed later in greater detail).

As Mr. Kaneko lived through most of the twentieth century, he personally experienced and participated in the hallmark shifts in the art of haiku in Japan. This lends an air of intimacy to the subject, as well as the strength of personal witness. Thus, Mr. Kaneko begins his address with opposition to long-held conventions in Japanese haiku, which were disseminated by Takaham Kyoshi, a student of Masaoka Shiki, and who edited *Hototogisu* after Shiki’s death; the three terms he opposes are *kachofuei* (poetic composition on birds and flowers), *kyakkanshansei* (an objective sketch), and *yuki teikei*, (“a fixed form with season words,” page 19, Ibid). Mr. Kaneko boldly says none of these long-cherished terms have much to do with content in haiku and are merely catchphrases.

Although it might seem to belabor the point, Mr. Kaneko makes clear that to write only of birds and flowers as representations of nature is too restrictive and unnecessarily narrows the view of a poet of what is nature. It excludes all other living things, including human beings, who, for Mr. Kaneko, are like other living beings (what he calls *ikimono*). And, oddly, he refers to this excepting of human beings in haiku as a corrupting influence of modernism, insofar as it separates man from nature, sets them at strife. While there is admittedly some truth to this interpretation, it is based on a view that nature preceded culture and at this time, this golden age, man and nature were united. However, as there must be a threshold at which culture is said to exist, it is really only at this moment that nature can be said to exist, since prior thereto there was no conceptual division. In this sense, it can be said that culture preceded nature and there was no nature prior when man and nature were in unison.

Mr. Kaneko charges Kyoshi with upholding “obedience to nature” as a condition of writing haiku of the old order (of birds and flowers). He points out that this privileging of “nature,” as one of the terms of the equation of nature versus man or other living things is an imbalanced position, a metaphysics, and one that distorts the parity of opposites (if, indeed, they are opposites). As Mr. Kaneko says:

I think this idea of obedience is the crux of the problem: we need not harbor any idea of obedience. Human beings are living things, cockroaches are living things, tigers are living things—there is no need to obey the other. Human beings have parity; that is, we are equal an equivalent as *ikimono* (living things, living beings). (Ibid, page 21).

Again, Mr. Kaneko attributes this mistaken view to modernism, which relies on “categorization” for the sake of knowledge. Needless to say, Mr. Kaneko is relying on what he believes to be an unmediated knowing that preceded language as a technology of categorization (and this subject will be discussed at length later on).

Mr. Kaneko’s introduction to the haiku world was through his father, who wrote haiku and held haiku meetings at their home. One of the members of this group was Mizuhara Shuoshi, a man who wrote an influential essay entitled “Truth in Nature and
Mr. Shuoshi’s position was that subjectivity was an important factor in life and should be included in haiku. This idea went against the grain of the dominant haiku culture, led by members of Hototogitsu Journal. In response to this seminal essay, Kyoshi advocated what he called the “objective sketch” (kyakkanshasei). And this is a momentous realization for those of use educated in the belief that it was Shiki, the inventor of haiku, who created the objective sketch-from-life theory of haiku. According to Mr. Kaneko, Shiki had just referred haiku to shasei, a sketch, rather than insisting on “objectivity.”

It has been a grave mistake on the part of English language haiku poets to believe for so long that Shiki required “objective” sketches of nature. This misunderstanding has nurtured half-a-century of haiku poets. If we think of the word “sketch,” we have a better understanding of what Shiki meant by shasei; a sketch is quickly done-usually-and uses few lines to convey and capture the essence of something. Shiki, as Mr. Kaneko notes, wrote about all things that interested him, subjective and objective.

Hekigoto, a disciple of Shiki’s, traveled throughout Japan advocating that haijin should write what they directly felt and experienced. This is a far cry from the Shiki we have been used to reading about in the many Anglo-American journals of the past fifty years.

During the period in question noted above, when free-form haiku and subjective haiku appeared on the scene, it was an exciting time. Kawahigashi Hekigoto promulgated the form of free-rhythm haiku, and amongst his students was the avant-gard poet Santoka Taneda, while Ozaki Hosai was a follower of Shuoshi’s subjective and free-verse style.

Having had his tutelage in his father’s home where discussions about haiku were often heated, passionate, and though intelligent, somewhat wild, Mr. Kaneko always retained this understanding of haiku as the art of an ordinary human being, with the feelings of a human being. He was from the beginning indifferent to ideologies and polemics.

Looking for a poet to model himself on, Mr. Kaneko chose Kobayashi Issa. Issa fit his idea of what was most human; he believed that Issa, because he was not of a high enough caste to be a master of haikai-no-renga, and because he had suffered so much, having lost his ancestral home to the machinations of his stepmother, and having lost his wife and four children to death, Issa possessed the most developed sense of a living being (ikimono). Mr. Kaneko believed that Issa obtained the greatest degree of sensitivity to life, what Mr. Kaneko calls “raw perceptions of living beings.” (ikimono kankaku). In Issa, Mr. Kaneko saw the primeval image of a human being, a beggar on the streets of Edo, much as Lear saw in Edgar “Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow’st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Here’s
three on's are sophisticated. Thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more than such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art.

It should be borne in mind, that Issa, living in the 18th Century, was without formal education, and his haiku are written in unassuming, innocent, artless, unadorned fashion. This is his strength, as well as his limitation. Many of his poems are poignant, and many are sentimental as a result of direct, unstudied articulation.

Mr. Kaneko, however, was a scholar, who before choosing Issa as a model, familiarized himself with the Chinese and Japanese classics, from Iio Sogi to haikai and renga and through Basho. So, his decision to write in the wild, ordinary language of Issa was more of an adoption of a narrative style than a natural manifestation of an untutored spirit. And, as will shortly be seen, this poses something of a problem, something of an illusion.

Mr. Kaneko takes on faith the idea of a golden age of man, when he lived in the forest, where he could develop and did develop the raw perception of living beings. As he says, “to put it another way, there is a world of sensitivity nurtured in those places where we touch the earth, living in forests…I think there is a kind of instinctual raw perception.” (Ibid, pg. 40).

Mr. Kaneko goes on to suggest that life in the forest developed a “good nature” in human beings and he believes this is instinctive sensitivity. He contrasts this with the life that man developed in societies once he left the forest. Then, man became rapacious; from the innately good man degenerates to the defiled, where people harm others to get what they want.

The binary opposition that Mr. Kaneko creates between nature/forest and society/man-made is one in which he privileges the first and denigrates the latter. This is a thinking typical of the Western Metaphysical tradition. We are reminded in Mr. Kaneko’s analysis of the 17th and 18th century Western notion of the noble savage, where pre-civilized man was an idealized indigene, another, an outsider who bears none of the taints of culture. This idealized picture of “nature’s gentleman” was part of the period’s sentimentality.

“The idea that in a state of nature humans are essentially good is often attributed to the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, a Whig supporter of constitutional monarchy. In his Inquiry Concerning Virtue (1699), Shaftesbury had postulated that the moral sense in humans is natural and innate and based on feelings rather than resulting from the indoctrination of a particular religion. Shaftesbury was reacting to Thomas Hobbes’s justification of royal absolutism in his Leviathan, Chapter XIII, in which he famously holds that the state of nature is a "war of all against all" in which men’s lives are "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short". The notion of the state of nature itself derives from the republican writings of Cicero and of Lucretius, both of whom enjoyed great vogue in the 18th century, after having been revived amid the optimistic atmosphere of Renaissance humanism.” (Wikipedia on the Noble Savage)

By the 19th Century, with the scientific and technological advances made in the Anglo-American world, the idea of the noble savage began to wane as an alternative to
what was considered the inevitable progressive development of humanity within the confines of society. Actually, there was some question at this time as to whether the indigenous peoples of the earth would survive the expansions of the Western world due to colonialism. The idea of the gentleman of nature was replaced by the socially achieved modern human being to the extent that a rampant racism developed, even in anthropologists, whose aim was to study "primitive" societies without imposing Western civilization’s views on them.

A number of authors, including William Golding, the film maker Stanley Kubrick, Australian anthropologist Roger Sandall, and archeologist Lawrence H. Keeley, who has criticized a "widespread myth" that "civilized humans have fallen from grace from a simple primeval happiness, a peaceful golden age" by uncovering archeological evidence that he claims demonstrates that violence prevailed in the earliest human societies. Keeley argues that the "noble savage" paradigm has warped anthropological literature to political ends. (War Before Civilization: The Myth of the Peaceful Savage (Oxford, University Press, 1996, page 5).

For Mr. Kaneko, the desire to escape the impurities of society has led many haiku poets to be wanderers, “settled wanderers,” he calls them, because while they remain in society they do not adopt society’s values. Since many of the haikai and renga poets had patrons, this state of affairs could actually be achieved. The poets were freed to develop their sensitivities and their poetics, without struggling to survive.

It was different for Issa. He was unable to become a professional haiku poet and so lived on the meager coins he received from strangers. Yet, he maintained an equilibrium, a joy:

spring arrives-
not reduced to begging
after fifty years

Issa referred to himself as a wild, ordinary man, which Mr. Kaneko translates as arabonpu, which he took to mean vulgar or rough, but also free. For Tohta Kaneko, Issa, having grown up as the child of a farmer, kept that purity that comes from being in touch with the earth: Kaneko says, “to my mind, he grew up receiving the essence of the soil. (Ibid, page 51).

To demonstrate that Issa’s sensitivity remained with him throughout life as a result of being a “wild, ordinary man,” Mr. Kaneko sites two poems that illustrate Issa’s gentleness, even after a life lived in such hardship.

on a straw doll
a louse on its back
floating away
Mr. Kaneko reads this poem to mean that Issa had removed a louse from a young girl’s body, placed it on a doll’s back, and floating down river. Mr. Kaneko goes so far as to suggest that if those who seize markets and wage war were forced to read Issa’s gentle poems, their lust for power might diminish.

Tohta Kaneko summarizes his view of Issa by saying that his raw perception of a living being enabled him and would enable us, if we but followed his example, to connect us with all living beings. This is the world of haiku. This is Tohta Kaneko’s view of modern haiku.

“Begone, Kyoshi! Banzai, Modern Haiku Association!”
Shisō: The Embodied Thinking of Tohta Kaneko

In The Future of Haiku: An Interview with Kaneko Tohta (Redmoon Press, 2011), Mr. Kaneko introduces a word of his own coinage, shisō, which, while related to the English word ideology has the additional meaning of existentially (physically) embodied thinking. For Mr. Kaneko, ideology per se, unless it is lived bodily is deceitful, empty. As he explains, "no, not an 'ism.'" I am reminded by his remarks of a haiku by Paul Pfeuger, Jr, a haiku that corresponds quite closely to what Mr. Kaneko has in mind (that intellectualized ideologies are superficial):

Isms with our clothes on

For Mr. Kaneko, life moves by instinct and this he equates with freedom. It’s nama, a raw thing, or, perhaps better expressed a “fresh” thing, without forethought, without plan. It is a unfettered existence, and, in that regard, pure. Of course, living in such an unrestricted fashion can cause great harm to others and Mr. Kaneko acknowledges this fact. Yet, in describing the life of the poet Issa, Mr. Kaneko notes that while he was a man of earthy desires, when his instinct for wild, fresh life interacted with other living things, “an extraordinarily beautiful (sensitive) response is apparent.” (Ibid, supra, page 23). Mr. Kaneko concedes that he learned how to live by Issa’s example and like Issa he developed a sense that all things were on an equal level to him; from Issa, Mr. Kaneko learned not to discriminate.

There are a number of implications that arise from such a position as that noted above. Firstly, Mr. Kaneko learned from Issa to disregard the authority of the saijiki (an official volume of poems related to those written on the seasons) and their kigo (seasonal references) that was dominated by centers of learning in Edo and Kyoto. That Issa was able in the 18th Century to say I write as I please was quite unusual and enabled Mr. Kaneko to advocate writing haiku by choosing kigo of one’s own choosing, not accepted as handed down from on high. It also led Mr. Kaneko, as President of the Modern Haiku Association, to create haiku of mukigo (no-season words) as an alternative. This was a radical break from tradition, especially in so formalized a society as Japan.

Of course, the most obvious repercussion of a wild life would be, as Professor Richard Gilbert points out in the interview is that Westerners would view this as living like an “animal,” without conscience, anti-social. Mr. Kaneko clarifies wild, raw experience by including within its framework “an intellectual component, as well.” (Ibid, supra, page 31). For Mr. Kaneko haiku must be “graphic,” and “vivid,” and that would satisfy his terminology of the raw, visceral experience.
Mr. Kaneko offers three of his haiku that exemplify his idea of perceptually rawness. The first is stunningly sensual, blending the cover and color of night with the sliding and touching of carp: the words he chooses to describe the “scene” is vivid and lively.

valley, carp:  
pushing and jolting  
pleasure of night

The second example requires some explication. It expresses, in a elusive fashion, the tender tie between the poet and his mother and takes place in “mountain country”, which is where Mr. Kaneko grew up. While it apparently is critical of the poet, because he did not follow his father’s profession of medicine, but instead chose to be a haijin, the familiarity of mother and son is palpable:

summer mountain count  
mother there calls me  
“good-for-nothing”

The third and final example given of the poetry of an ordinary human being is explicit about birth and connects it closely to excreting. Again, it is raw, natural, yet loving.

My long-lived mother delivered me as if a shit

Mr. Kaneko is questioned as to whether, because of its brevity, haiku is limited in what it can express. He answers that the question is posed in a prosaic mind-set and in such a mind-set haiku cannot fulfill what prose can. However, he differentiates between this way of looking at haiku and suggests that if haiku is considered as a rhythmic form with a kire, or cutting word between the two parts of a haiku, then the cutting (in space and time) creates blendings of two images that can evoke all the multiplicity of meanings that prose achieves. In 1946, Kuwabara Takeo wrote a famous essay entitled “Haiku as a Second –class Art,” precisely because he believed it couldn’t convey the richness of ideas of other art forms and Mr. Kaneko decried this idea, assuming one had acclimated oneself to the haiku form.

As a corollary to the question of what it means to be a “wild, ordinary being,” there is the question of social consciousness and what part it plays in haiku. Mr. Kaneko associates social consciousness with what he calls taido (stance). It relates to what he discussed earlier as “ideology,” and partakes of a human being’s interaction with society, with how they face society. For Mr. Kaneko haiku is born in this inter-face, without preconceived notions of society or experience, by what he terms an “autonomous self.”
As the idea of an autonomous self is contrary to a human being as a member of a society, as a species-being, as the self can never be truly “autonomous,” dependent as it is on environs of all sorts, the definition given of this concept by Mr. Kaneko will be informative:

The autonomous self— an aspect of the zokei-ron theory which attempts to situate the self between subject and object; to reorient the haiku poet away from both kyakkanshasei—the objective sketch—and the radically subjective—which implies another form of self-dependence. To properly compose new haiku, one must be ‘positioned’ between subjective and objective: “The sense of existence is much more important than existence, because we should inquire as to the reality of the compositional expression of independent mind (independent-mindedness).” (Kaneko Tohta, Collected Works, IV, p. 261.)

The interview turns to Mr. Kaneko’s wartime experiences, when he was a naval accounting officer on the Truk Atoll (where he became a prisoner-of-war for over a year). During this period of his life, he saw how some of those who fought for the Japanese were either conscripted Koreans, or criminals, those without soldierly status. When the Americans bombed the Atoll, all the rice that was stored was burned and soon many, particularly the non-soldiers, died of starvation. Of course, Mr. Kaneko was against the war and described war straightforwardly as “slaughter on a massive scale. It is genocide (The Future of Haiku, page 82.

Mr. Kaneko wrote haiku while he was a prisoner of war and kept faith with those who died as the unfortunate dead. Here is an example of one of his poems, a fitting, poignant tribute to the fallen. The poem was written when Mr. Kaneko was returning by ship after release from a POW camp.

the disappearing wake-
leaving behind the scorched fire
of unmarked graves

Mr. Kaneko notes that the heat described refers to both tropical islands, as well as to “burning heaven.”

Mr. Kaneko wrote another haiku referencing the war, but this one is personal, a reproach to his father, who was right-wing and a war supporter.

my father’s pro-war stance
I won’t admit even today-
living in the summer

Tohta Kaneko also discusses his visit after the war to Nagasaki and surprisingly informs us that not only was there the atomic bomb’s devastation to cope with, but there was also the persecution of hidden Christians, who lived on Amakusa (nearby Nagasaki)
that he had to absorb. For him, it was a double and deep tribulation. Here is the haiku he penned to describe this double torment:

of my home country
the statue of Maria's tears-
A-bomb memorial

In the final question posed to him, Mr. Kaneko is asked to comment on the future of haiku. He notes that modern technologies—texting, blogs, and the like naturally lent themselves to brief expressions and so he thought the future of haiku, as the briefest of poems, had a bright future, the only future, perhaps. He even goes on to say that young people may prefer the stylistic of Tsukeku and Tsukeai (short form poetry of call-and-response); or, twitter, which he says is similar to renku. Finally, as young people like music, Mr. Kaneko surmises that perhaps they will be drawn to the rhythmic aspect of haiku. For him, there are numerous possibilities open for the future of haiku and he is most optimistic in this regard.

To get sense of the depth of feeling Mr. Kaneko is capable of, I offer here one of his poems celebrating the sacrifice of the unfortunate dead of WWII:

island of martyrdom-
in twilight
a rusting ax
an’ya - USA
Shades of Blue

three strings
and a bottle of Jack—
slowly
your disapproving words
begin to fade

must have been born with
a cigar box in your chest
I could swear
I saw you playing
a three string heart

cigar box blues --
three chords
is only
two
too many

taken in again
by your hollow promise...
all I need
to make my soul sing
is within arm's reach

blues harp --
every broken part
of me
begins to find
a home

rain
on a rusty tin roof
your heart and mine
taking shelter
in a ramshackle song
even the rain
has stopped to listen --
hearing my name
in every word
of your song

finding the bend
in the blue river
a taste
of forever
in your cupped hands

rewriting
the blues–
the music of your touch
runs through me
like a river

wind in the reeds...
three string fretless
cigar box river
just me and my shadow
from here to there

Paul Smith -UK & Claire Everett UK

Anyone new to cigar box guitar can find out more here

http://www.cigarboxnation.com/
cold butter
tears the bread . . .
redundancy

Jon Baldwin - UK

basement window . . .
a pile of sea-sculpted stones
on my desk

Chen-ou Liu - Canada

those eyes
of a cornered dog
... merging with mine

Chen-ou Liu - Canada

Nagasaki sunrise
their shadows tell
the story

Johnny Baranski - USA

empty field
no matter which way I turn
pissing in the wind

Johnny Baranski - USA
cry of a red-tail
the knot of sticks
that forms her nest

Michele L. Harvey - USA

farmer's market
the accent
of her birthplace

Michele L. Harvey - USA

Do I live here?
checking each room
after a trip

Bruce England - USA

After her stroke
father and sons talked directly
to each other

Bruce England - USA

smiles with smudged foreheads
a rush of boys emerges from
Ash Wednesday mass

Armando Corbelle - USA
playing hide and seek
in the sunlit playground
the child i can’t have

Rachel Sutcliffe - UK

drifting to the dark
the chameleon
pausing mid-climb
rainbow eucalyptus

Bill Cooper - USA

boat lantern
the green glow
of a moon jellyfish

Bill Cooper - USA

winter night
the dog crawls deeper
under the covers

Annette Makino - USA

following us
all day on the trail—
the mountain

Annette Makino - USA
DANCING PARTNERS

Still waiting on the dance floor, Jane!
Do I hear a waltz?
Strauss. I think. Perhaps it’s not the done thing in Vienna but how about we make our own moves and see where the music leads.
If the world were flat we could go to the edge and jump off.
Before we leap into another reality, first dance me to the end of love.
Any love is another reality, isn’t it.
And yet even nothing always means something when said by a woman!

the steep hillside
wanting to give all
and let go
one foot follows the other
but I hear clouds beckon

I had to get out of bed early because the grass was talking to me.
Return O night and let your whispers take me softly into a dream.
Why do I feel you sleep with a Dylan Thomas book under your pillow?
Perhaps the bottle by the bed gave me away.
I’ve often wondered if alcohol makes a better writer.
Though the slur is hard to translate to the page it certainly makes for more interesting reading.
None intended. Now I am wondering why you see my comments as a ‘slur’.
And none taken. Yet see how we stagger when we involve the drink.
I often feel I would be a nicer person if I occasionally loosened up.

Play it Sam!
but first you must
part your lips

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WELL READ WORMS

You started it.

But you started first.

Are you sure?

How come your words are above mine?

I recognise that look when I see it . . .

Only because language on your tongue becomes a smokescreen.

You're right. I'll stop smoking. . .tomorrow!

Ah, that place where evil comes to lick its wounds and plan the next mischief.

Enough! When is the next bus outta this town?

a silver path
crosses the winter sea
the moon

The delicacy of your words bring me back to the table...should we pour a glass and listen to some Leonard Cohen, then?

“Suzanne takes you to the river, where she feeds you tea and oranges” Would you let me do that? Or let play it for you on the autoharp?

Yes, I am both hungry and thirsty.

I’ll flip you for the right to say something outrageous here.

Ok, but I warn you, I like my eggs over-easy.

Your eggs easy over what?

Heads, it is!

That makes you a king incised on a coin of ancient copper.
young rabbit
my ears follow it
down a hole

What do you want on your hotdog?

A nitrous oxide kit, twin carburetors and go-faster stripes!

Those gourmet restaurants will ruin your taste.

And my waistline, to boot.
How do you get your boots up over your middle?

Like most things it started out innocent enough, just the odd tongue, a little bit of leather now and again but nothing serious. Before I knew it though I was up to my neck in shoe laces...and to think it was only ever supposed to be just for kicks.

Now we are cooking. Would it help if I got out and pushed?

Yes keep pushing, by all means. But please don't leave the delivery room just yet...I have run out of clean towels.

So I get the image of you out jogging in a dirty towel. I think you should explain the impulse to run.

Well one could go into the mechanics of adrenalin: the fight or flight chemical; or the need to remove yourself from a situation in a hurry but usually, like the tortoise, I get there in the end and if I do get caught I always have the option of my hard exterior.

I'm staring at this photo by James Tipton on the cover of Ribbons and wonder what this has to do with you. Where are the tanka under your shell?
and water
breathing wind
the sun shapes
my words of
straw and dirt

And this all started because we have bodies!

I'm mindful of that. All our lives we're conception fed a line—this life is only a lease. Shall we go past that limit so the elastic tying us to our bodies breaks?

cemetery robins
pecking rain-softened earth
heads cocked
listening to the biographies
of satiated worms

Colin Stewart Jones - Scotland  Jane Reichhold - USA
hot spell
the confusion
of everything

Cynthia Rowe - Australia
The dream & the circle

The picnic lunch is over. Sitting on a blanket my daughter tells me about her daughter’s recurring nightmare while the kids are away playing. The dreamer is 9 years old and very sensitive. In the dream she and her younger sister follow their mother across a bridge. Under the bridge runs a stream of water of unknown depth but it's dark and foreboding. As they cross the bridge it gradually begins to fall apart. First the boards they're walking on starts cracking and fall into the water. Then the boards ahead of them falls down and the gaps get bigger. Mother is still leading them on. After a while only the two wooden arches going from one bank to the other is left and the mother chooses the thinnest and most fragile one to walk on. The dreaming girl shouts and shouts at her mother to come to where she and her sister are on the wider and stronger arch . . .

Then my granddaughter comes back for a drink and a snack. My daughter hides her eyes behind sunglasses and changes the subject.

May day we avoid talking about the pains I caused her

Johannes S. H. Bjerg - Denmark
a silver flash
in the deep -
night fishing

Jay Friedenberg - USA

trying to forget -
the weight
of a heavy quilt

Jay Friedenberg - USA

bringing home stones --
whispers of texture
and the sun's light

CaroleAnn Lovin - USA

octopus kite:
looping over
the merry-go-round

CaroleAnn Lovin - USA

above the bleat
of newborn lambs
late March snowfall

Jean Jorgensen - Canada
spring dawn
the outline of a hawk
leaves the maple

Tzetzka Ilieva - USA

wolf moon--
what could be safer
than a red hoodie

Helen Buckingham - UK

shortest day
the snowman up to his waist
in snow

Helen Buckingham - UK

a butterfly
my daughter for the first time
catching her balance

Dorota Pyra - Poland

asking direction
on my husband's glasses
an unknown girl's face

Dorota Pyra - Poland
barbecue summer
he peels away
the blackened flesh

Tracy Davidson - UK

dawn chorus
hunting for breakfast
he finds my nipple

Tracy Davidson - UK

red moon
her goodnight kiss
tastes of watermelon

André Surridge - New Zealand

zenith sun
the dazzling song
of a skylark

André Surridge - New Zealand

taking up the bass
in his sixth decade
all that jazz

Beverly Momoi - USA
D.O.A.
medic alert bracelet
in his desk drawer

photo: colin macdonald

haiku: ignatius fay

Colin MacDonald & Ignatius Fay - Canada
I was first drawn to haiku and its depth of feeling because of Nick Virgilio and his poems about the death of his brother, Larry, in Vietnam. A pioneer of American haiku poetry, Virgilio began writing in the 1960s and penned some of the country’s most elegiac and memorable haiku.

Essentially, he was my teacher even though I never met him. For three years, I had reported on war in the Middle East for The New York Times and needed a way to deal with everything that I had seen from suicide bombers to SCUD missiles. I had felt very limited by the parameters of the newspaper trade because, essentially, editors aren’t interested in the olive tree that just got blown to smithereens – or that was still blossoming despite the explosion – they just want the “facts” – who, what, when, where, etc. And there was so much more to the story than the so-called “facts.”

When I got back to the States in 1992, I discovered haiku poetry – and Nick’s haiku in particular – and began to write them myself. I found that they gave me a way to come to terms with some of the horrors that I had seen in the first Palestinian intifada and the Persian Gulf war. Once I had started Turtle Light Press and found out at a haiku conference in Ottawa in 2009 that there were 100s if not 1,000s of unpublished haiku by Nick, I was slightly incredulous.
“‘You must be kidding me?’ I said to myself at the Haiku North America haiku conference back in 2009. ‘One of the best poets that the U.S. has ever produced and his stuff has gone unpublished for more than 20 years?’

In Ottawa, I had breakfast with four people who had come to give a presentation about Nick’s work: Henry Brann, Robin Palley, Kathleen O’Toole, and Raffael de Gruttola. When I returned home to central New Jersey, I arranged to meet with Tony Virgilio, Nick’s surviving brother, in Camden, N.J., which was about an hour and a half drive away. We talked about the possibility of a new book of poems and subsequently I visited the archives at Rutgers University in Camden. With a feeling of reverence and awe, I looked through the boxes of Nick’s papers kept in a black cabinet in the English Department. Randomly, I pulled out a handful of sheets and couldn’t believe what I found:

summer nightfall
dazed, all I heard from the Major
“...killed in Vietnam...”

down the dusty road
dragging bamboo pole and line
secret fishing hole

Easter alone
leaving her aged mother
in the nursing home

When I read these unpublished poems, I knew that there was another book waiting to be done. Soon thereafter, Raffael de Gruttola, a haiku poet and former president of the Haiku Society of America, volunteered to edit the new collection and began the task of reading through multiple versions of thousands of poems.

“After a while, it was like Nick was looking over my shoulder and guiding me,” said de Gruttola, who lives in Natick, Massachusetts. “He would tell me, no this one over here, not that version. And vice versa. I developed a system, classifying poems into definite, maybe and no. Whenever I got tired, my wife would bring me another espresso to keep me going!”

Other people stepped forward, too. I wanted the book not only to be a book of poetry but to provide readers with a sense of Nick’s life and what he was like as a person. Father
Michael Doyle sent numerous photos that found their way into the book and also offered to write a tribute to Nick that describes his daily routine of taking long hikes, returning to Sacred Heart Church to “hit” him with two haiku, and his dedication to the craft despite – or because – of his life’s course.

Kathleen O’Toole, a friend of Nick’s who knew his work extremely well, signed on to do the afterword. And somewhere in between I found out about an interview that Nick had done with Marty Moss-Coane on her show, “Radio Times,” on WHYY in Philadelphia, an extensive interview in which he talks about his life and writing haiku. A few phone calls later, I had negotiated the reprint rights to include it in the book, too. I wanted readers to experience Nick’s voice in a variety of ways so they’re able to do so through his poems, the interview and a couple of his essays on haiku that I found in the archives and included in the book, too.

Designing the cover was not as easily done. A lot of photos had been taken of Nick but either they weren’t good enough or I couldn’t find out who owned the rights to them. By chance one time when I was down to visit Tony, I decided to drive around Camden – one of the poorest cities in the U.S., many of its houses and businesses boarded up – to look around. I came across a street mural of one of Nick’s poems near his house and snapped a picture of it. Still in need of a cover illustration, I went back through all of my pictures and that’s when I rediscovered it. But would it be possible to track down the artist? And would they grant permission to use it?
I opened the photo of the mural in Adobe Photoshop and blew up the corner of the mural so that I could try to see the signature of the artist, L. Delengowski. How could I ever track down L. Delengowski? I opened up the phone directory www.anywho.com and typed in L. Delengowski, Camden, N.J. Bingo! Linda Delengowski, Camden, N.J. I hesitated before I dialed her number and then decided to try it. Before too long, we were talking like old friends and she had agreed to allow me to use the image on the cover of the book in return for a small donation towards the establishment of the “Nick Virgilio Writer’s House” in Camden. It turns out that she is a high school art teacher in Camden and not only knew Nick but had prepared the flowers for his funeral.

Once I had that image, the rest of the cover fell into place. I am particularly appreciative of the generosity of J. Kyle Keener, a former photographer for The Philadelphia Inquirer who allowed me to use a picture of Nick at his typewriter on the back of the book. After I completed the design, I wrote the copy, registered the copyright, set up printing and distribution through the Turtle Light Press website store and www.amazon.com, and organized two book launches in Camden, one at Rutgers University and the other at Sacred Heart Church.

About 150 people turned out between the two events, people who either knew Nick or have been moved deeply by his poetry, whether it be about nature, life in Camden or the loss of his brother in the Vietnam war. So far, we have gotten some great publicity for the book, too:

**Radio:**

WIP – Philadelphia (610AM and 94.1FM) – The Peter Solomon Public Affairs Show – Interview with Rick Black on the new Virgilio book

WKYW 1060AM

WHYY – NPR public radio story – Philadelphia (90.9FM)
Print:

The Philadelphia Inquirer

The Philadelphia City Paper

Rutgers Today, an in-house online publication that reaches 30,000 university faculty, staff and students

I hope that the book, *Nick Virgilio: A Life in Haiku*, will serve as a guide for aspiring writers as well as an inspiration for others who already know Nick’s work and the powerful emotions that he packed into three, short lines of a poem like this one:

autumn evening
rereading his last letter
from Vietnam

Rick Black is the publisher of Turtle Light Press which just released *Nick Virgilio: A Life in Haiku* in April to coincide with National Poetry Month.
on the verge
of recalling my childhood
I dip into sleep
trying to get that straight line
to curve into a circle

Kala Ramesh - Pune, India

I find ways
to cushion the walls
of my mind . . .
else the shock of thoughts
would echo for days

Kala Ramesh - Pune, India

a single cicada
ushers in the summer
once again
making the calendar
one of empty squares

Kala Ramesh - Pune, India
the night sky
filled with snow
bright and restless
like my father
used to be

Luminita Suse - Canada

in the glow
of a dim light bulb
sorting bills
and piles to go before I sleep
and piles to go before I sleep

Bob Lucky - Ethiopia

last link
to the old country
no one else
in the family
can read grandpa’s poems

Lesley Anne Swanson - USA
DISCARDED

a passerby
looks in shop windows
she digs in rubbish

junk food
half a cheeseburger
saved from the bin

shoulders hunched
she begs for spare change
a stray mongrel whines

the smell
of her unwashed clothes
leaves in the gutter

street lights
throwing out shadows
her gaunt cheeks

she puffs on
a mangled cigarette butt
a sign flickers

naked limbs
she climbs into
a goodwill bin

sallow moon…
yesterday’s paper
blows away

Allison Millcock – Australia
DISCARDED: Commentary

There has been too much inspiration in my life for this sequence. I have never personally been homeless, but as a teenager I watched my older sister couch surf and become hospitalized after being beaten almost to death. During those years, I was scrourning cigarette butts out of the gutter and smoking them. Later, as an adult I worked for two years in a Youth Shelter for homeless teenagers run by the Salvation Army. Those kids touched me deeply with their vulnerability and their struggle to survive in an insane world where children get abused instead of nurtured. Afterwards, I worked for another ten years as a Youth counsellor in rural Australia. At the same time I was raising my daughter, along with my Indonesian foster daughter and my Australian foster son. I travelled to Indonesia with my foster daughter shortly after the Bali bombing, to change her visa, and was emotionally devastated by the poverty and the street children existing alongside incredible wealth. Years later after the Global Financial Crisis, I travelled to San Francisco with my husband and foster son and was heartbroken by the number of homeless living on the streets. Over the years, a thousand stories and a thousand faces have touched my heart and brought me a thousand tears. The greatest honour for me would be knowing that by sharing these images I have inspired people to reach out and make a difference in other people's lives.

Regards, Allison

Unicef, Caritas, Swags for the homeless, and The Salvation Army:

http://salvos.org.au/
Thief of Dreams

High on the Mountains of Ireland live the Fairies. Within this community is one called the “thief of dreams” who steals all the dreams of the world, except those in Ireland because the Irish know when the thief of dreams is coming.

It is said that just before darkness descends a will ‘o’ the wisp cloud is seen above the mountain, on seeing this sign the Irish refuse to dream that night, thus denying the thief his bounty.

late spring
above the bracken
an angry lark sings

John Byrne - Ireland
No Exit

You can't hide from anyone anymore. Not even an old boyfriend. He can track you down. He can call. When he does, you don't say to yourself, what did I ever see in him.

You know what you saw in him. It was the reason you saw him. Whenever you could. The reason you lied to your parents about where you were going. With whom. Most of it's a blur thank god. Most of it. There's that one memory you can't shake. One that doesn't show you in the best light. Sneaking out of the house at 2 am. His father almost catching the two of you. Not the kind of thing to share with the husband or the kids. You haven't been that person in a long time.

Still you miss her a little bit. So you don't hang up the phone. Not right away.

starry night
the plaintive cry
of a house cat

Roberta Beary - USA
pigment (a study)

Dear Vincent,
night terrace viridian green cold cold
white ash burning bones bone white
vermillion
    wrestlers
falling meadow flowers
into each other’s necks
black marks bone black silence
on his belly quiet stains
    the starry sky all over it
blown ochre whispers of an afterlife
still
life :
broken chrome yellows
the day Hiroshima was bombed
cobalt blue squeezed from an ocean turning deep blue
in the lamplight
the bookshop now
pink and gold
umber where the moth was
at all at all and yet
I expect to see a fish
among the irises

Scott Terrill - Australia
Evacuation Protocol

train whistle—
a poppy parachutes
off the platform

a woman waves
to the rescue chopper

after removing
the splinter
a bead of blood

a monk on fire
5,000 mi. away

even at daybreak
the stars never
really leave

the good china
gone from the cabinet

over the phone
your voice breaks
on goodbye

shell shards left
behind at low tide

sound swells
from the French
horn section

a helicopter seed
captured in the updraft

laminate
evacuation protocol
circa 1963

first drops of rain
on freshly set concrete

Aubrie Cox - USA
invisble presence u may disturb her

Brendan Slater - UK
on the sailboat
with my father
gliding past
the math teacher
whose class I cut

Leslie Ihde - USA

meteor shower . . .
we name the falling stars
for loved ones
who pass again before us
this bright cloudless summer

Margaret Dornaus - USA

take me
to the moon
where I am . . .
already watching
the unimaginable

Saša Važić - Serbia
between spikes
of the barbed wire
butterfly eggs

Polona Oblak - Slovenia

new snow
old haunts
come to light

Susan Murata - USA

star gazing
a distant rhythm of
train wheels

Jan Dobb - Australia

moving to a warmer clime
I pack the coat
that smells of woodsmoke

Seren Fargo - USA

grayish sky-
only her blue eyes
twinkle

Janak Sapkota - Nepal
slow rain
all the small green
tips unfurl

Ann Schwader - USA

the quiet
where crickets were
Orion

Ann Schwader - USA

the geese
gone where they go
brown leaves

Ann Schwader - USA

wild nights —
Emily Dickinson asleep
on my nightstand

Melissa Allen - USA

battle site
children run back and forth
across the bridge

Melissa Allen - USA
all day  
on a drip  
autumn rain  

Ernest Wit - Poland  

the smell of the sea  
from all directions  
I am an island  

Ernest Wit - Poland  

El Teide  
almond blossoms circle  
snow peaks  

Maire Morrissey-Cummins - Ireland  

angelus bells  
pealing  
in heartbeats  

Alegria Imperial - Canada  

feather  
half-buried in sod  
shifting sun  

Alegria Imperial - Canada
Seven Rengay

Fresh Puddles

spring river
it all becomes
new again

picking out wallpaper
with a waterfall theme

light showers
ducklings
drop into the pond

a sailboat for his birthday
sea fever

fresh puddles-
stepping over earthworms
on the sidewalk

drying out - upstream
beavers add to the dam

Opening the Locks

river rising
with snow melt
again the swallows return

the sound of birdsong
and branches dripping

morning sun
around the pond
thawing frogs

opening the locks –
first pleasure boat of the season

ginko walk
we stop to drink
at the water fountain

the ball fields flooded
with players
The Chrome Lure

gathering clouds  
the spring stream overflows  
with gray  

a silvered willow  
skims the water  

his favorite fishing spot  
casting out at dawn  
a container of ashes  

a reflection in the lake  
of salt and pepper hair  

silver scales  
returning chinook  
swim upriver  

the darting dance  
of the chrome lure  

Pink Punch

first warm day  
the old pond already covered  
with cherry blossoms  

earthworms in puddles  
on the sidewalk  

overturned umbrellas  
floating in pink punch  
baby shower  

a craving for  
cinnamon salt water taffy  

under the birdbath...  
a cat pauses  
to groom himself  

flamingos knee-deep  
in the fish pond
The Steady Drip

evening chill
only the sound
of the river rising

the steady drip
of the kitchen tap

riding the rapids
of a scheduled dam release
raised voices

only your silence
as the rain hits the waves

whistling tea kettle
I warm my hands
on the sides of my mug

from the marsh
a chorus of spring peepers

Sudden Silence

spring tide
the moment before
it ended

the sudden silence
after the rain

above the river
a wreath of daffodils
on the guardrail

facing the windblown sea
again I hear your answer

cloud cover
the darkened trunk
of the Japanese maple

rush of debris
to the storm sewer grate
Rolled Up Pants

spring puddles –
the little girl
I was

skimming stones
ripples within ripples

rolled up pants
tadpoles swimming
in a mason jar

fly fishing with Dad –
not even a nibble

beach walk
the dog runs in and out
of waves

emptying rainwater
from the tire swing

All seven rengay composed simultaneously by Angela Terry (Washington), Cara Holman (Oregon), and Julie Warther (Ohio) by email, between March 2 and March 29, 2012.

Cara: Angie, Julie and I met at the 2011 Haiku North America Conference in Seattle, Washington, when we attended “Celebrating 20 Years: Rengay Workshop”, presented by Garry Gay. Although I had written online renga with others once or twice, I was still fairly new to the form. One thing I remember Garry saying was that a rengay should not only adhere to a particular theme, but that it also needed to progress through space and time, with shifting points of view. Afterward, over lunch, five of us began writing a rengay (using the 3-person form).

Julie: I was the new kid on the block, attending my first ever haiku conference. Before Garry’s workshop, I wasn’t even sure what rengay was. Garry explained that all moments were like crime scenes with all the witnesses seeing things in a different way. Rengay allows each witness to bring their own perception to the chosen theme. So at lunch, unsure of adding my own words, I suggested general ideas and senses that I hoped would spark words for the others. Fortunately, Cara spoke up and suggested a first stanza. With this first rengay, however, we didn’t really follow the format of each person adding a verse. Instead, we all chimed in on each verse, tweaking it until we were satisfied.

Angie: We weren’t able to finish the rengay over that lunch, and decided to meet up again before the end of the conference, but only the three of us were able to find the time. After a bit of tweaking, as we refocused the theme a bit, we had a rengay we thought worked. That was the end of phase one.
Two months later Cara and I attended a workshop on rengay put on by Michael Dylan Welch at the annual Haiku Northwest Seabeck conference. After working on a rengay with Michael, Cara and I decided to see if Julie wanted to join us for another try. She did, and we worked on our first e-mail rengay, which Cara started out.

**Cara:** In many ways, taking the first slot in writing a rengay is the easiest. I chose a general theme, and then wrote a haiku to pass on to Julie. I was a little nervous about whether it would work for her, but figured we knew each other well enough by this time, that she would say if it didn’t. Actually, things proceeded very smoothly from there. Our styles are different enough that we continually challenge each other, but similar enough that we find much common ground.

**Julie:** Angie and Cara weren’t sitting beside me for this rengay. I was alone in front of my computer in Ohio. No more making general suggestions. I needed to find my own words. I sent five possibilities for the next verse, hoping one would be acceptable. Angie surprised me by coming back with multiple responses for each of my five verses. We now had sixteen different directions we could go with this rengay. Oh, what a tangled web we were weaving! And, oh, what fun we were having!

**Angie:** My recollection was that Julie sent her possible verses right before I was leaving for the opera. So I printed it out and took it along, thinking maybe I’d think about it during intermission, and somehow the music provided a serendipitous meshing of words and rhythms. I admit I may have gone a bit overboard. Poor Cara now had to unravel that web, but came back with solid suggestions that got us grounded again with her 2 line links.

**Cara:** I’m not sure how other people go about writing rengay, but the three of us do it with lots of communication between each other as we pass the stanzas around, and plenty of choices. Sometimes, though, the choices do get a little bit out of hand, as Julie and Angie mentioned. When we wrote our latest rengay together, Angie headed it off, and chose for the general theme “bodies of water in springtime”. I went next, and because I thought all her choices were so lovely, on a whim, I responded with a couplet to all seven, and suggested the following subthemes: (new, winter/spring transition, the color grey/silver, the color pink/red, sounds, loss, childhood). I fully expected Julie to select one or two of them to continue with, but to my surprise (and delight) she produced multiple possible threads for each of the original seven.

**Julie:** Once Cara suggested the subthemes, each start took on a life of its own. I know I wasn’t willing to abandon any of them at that point. I think we each expected one or two of them to fizzle out before completion, but that didn’t happen. Each rengay contains three perceptions; Cara’s, Angie’s and mine. But now we also had one theme, “bodies of water in springtime” branching out in seven directions with three viewpoints each. Aaahhh, the possibilities!

**Angie:** By the time it got back to me, I was filled with both “shock and awe” at what we were doing. You would have expected one or two of them would stand out and the others be sort of also-rans, but each subtheme stood totally on its own, and acted as a single themed rengay. No way could I just choose one or two and move forward, so I worked with all seven of them, sending them on to Cara, who may at that moment have been regretting her earlier whim. I think we all realized we had something special going, and none of us wanted to be the one to back off.

**Cara:** We’re so pleased that Alan decided to publish all seven rengay together. It will be interesting to see if writing multiple rengay in parallel will become our new modus operandi.
Finish the Crossword

chattering voices
soft footsteps
across the room

the ladies wait
on level 2

with bright smiles
they inspect make up
& smooth dresses

finally the summit
a pause for breath

exhausted police
on his trail
slide into the ditch

bathtime bubbles
go pop

the doorbell rings
no time
to finish the crossword

the woodpecker
leaves its mark

lighting up
the path home
forest fireflies

schoolkids at the bus stop
discuss infinity

to prove their point
radio enthusiasts
extend their aerials

the torn flag
neatly folded away

Participating poets and verse allocation:

Steve Mason 1, 4, 7, 10
Annie Bachini 2, 5, 8, 11
Sandra Mason 3, 6, 9, 12

London UK Started March 2012 and completed April 2012
Gabrielle Reinhard & Ramona Linke - Germany
this sea is writing
the story of its life
with all its fingers
& what it gets wrong
it whites out

André Surridge - New Zealand

locked up for years
in the damp basement
of her heart . . .
now, I wake to see
a thread of winter light

Chen-ou Liu - Canada

on a spring night
he pointed his finger
to the moon . . .
I will myself to chase
the ghost of his words

Chen-ou Liu - Canada
giant red lips
perched on a billboard
high atop
a beauty clinic . . .
this cold Easter Sunday

Chen-ou Liu - Canada

She could have been
anything at all;
smart as a bee sting
and shrewd enough to know
when to say no

Marian Olson - USA

No God?
when the wood thrush
warbles through
the evening trees
say what you will

Marian Olson - USA
**But to Each Other Dream**

This is the blue hour, when the blackbird drinks its fill of fading stars. I can no longer recall when I first sensed her gentle hand was at the latch. Perhaps, even before I learned the words by which she makes herself known I could hear her morning-step upon the stair?

A breeze parts the curtains, lets slip a chink of light; *I must taste the blossoms that unfold.* Or else, I wake to the music of her laughter, lift my eyes from a dream to catch a glimpse of her *smile through an indoor lattice, all delight.* Soft, her tread closer until I feel the circle of her arm, the warmth of her cheek, her fingers, still stained with the dawn. She lifts her knee, rests her foot upon the *prie-dieu* and gathers me into her swoon. Of all her gowns, this is my favourite, with mackerel skies in the hang of the folds and a train that carries the scent of pines. *We share the inward fragrance of each other's heart.*

where have you been?
not far, not far…
I have come, swift
as a hen-bird on the wing
to breast her eggs again

She says *she forgot the stars, the moon and sun….the blue above the trees.* Did I forget them too? They were not the same without her near… If I should die…if she… Let us speak, then, only of now. The cool cascades of her ink-dark hair, the sweetness of her tears. One hundred, one thousand years from now, it will not matter what became of one without the other.

what is my mind
in this pot-of-basil day?
fragrance
my dark-eyed muse
Isabella

Claire Everett - UK

The title and all text in italics excerpted from ‘Isabella, or The Pot of Basil’ by John Keats (1795-1821)

Isabella and the Pot of Basil (1868) by William Holman Hunt:
http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/whh/paintings/7.html

Notes from the Gean No.13, June 2012
stolen glance--
the wind blows her
new tattoo

Wahyu Basjir - Indonesia
tree swing
ten bare toes touch
the midday sun
an'ya

an'ya - USA
how lucky the moon
just the right size for this
eclipse

Scott Owens - USA

centuries old
even the ocean
unravels

Scott Owens - USA

scent of rosemary
on my fingertips
summer sunlight

Angela Terry - USA

how low the sun
in the winter sky
incoming swans

Angela Terry - USA

our power
to name things
common merganser

Angela Terry - USA
ambling down Main Street
as if he owns it
coyote

Johnny Baranski - USA

starless night the sky's geometry a mind game

Johnny Baranski - USA

not satisfied
until the last tomato seed
white chopping board

Scott Terrill - Australia

dreaming in another language
an oyster dies
beside an oyster

Scott Terrill - Australia

slipping moon
a rock pool blooms
jellyfish

Scott Terrill - Australia
tsunami aftermath . . .
the air heavy
with cherry blossoms

G.R. LeBlanc - Canada

resounding rain
I keep on murmuring
your last word

Pravat Kumar Padhy - India
The Old Garden Gate

coming of spring —
a squirrel darts across
the old garden gate /kala

such scoundrels! digging
our blue iris bulbs /sprite

three colours
in the swirling waters
where the rivers meet /rohini

rare sunbeams set ablaze
the cavern's stalactites /valeria

with perfect poise
she lifts, then balances
in sirsasana /moi

on winter's breath
I pace the shore alone /kathy

the snow moon,
just the moon and nothing
but the
moon! /linda

in the evening light
a pacific loon's cry /jim

etched in the stillness
of silence
a forest hilltop /kala

watering the withered garden
every third day /jim

down from its rock
the chuckwalla
dodging raindrops /linda
excited by his glance
but I mustn't let him know /kathy

by candle light
at a table set for two
she dines da sola /moi

we will all die one day
but tomorrow - the dentist! /valeria

thank you for calling
emergency, all our
lines are busy /rohini

that empty nest now
letting in patches of sky /sprite

I lift my hands
filled with parijaat blossoms
as an offering to Japan /kala

as he rakes the leaves
his mind wanders far /jim

Imachi –

Composed from 3rd March to 2nd April 2011 on The Renku Board

Contributors:

Kala Ramesh - India (sabaki)
Claire Chatelet - UK
Rohini Gupta - India
Valeria Simonova-Ceccon - Italy
Moira Richards - South Africa
Kathleen Earsman - Australia
Linda Papanicolaou - North America
Jim Swift – USA
Throwing acorns: an autumn shisan

moonlit stroll
along the river bank
scent of evergreens / pp

an old man rakes the oak leaves
his grandsons throwing acorns / rw

secondhand bookshop -
an unknown signature
on the flyleaf / pp

ice patterns on the window
I drink tea in solitude / pp

a cleft
in the valley
fork-lightning / rw

above the distant mountains
green-to-midnight shifts of sky / pp

a spinebill
in the apple blossom . . .
sipping her earlobe / rw

swollen by springtime floods
the creek covers stepping stones / pp

morning smile . . .
musk lorikeets chirping
high in our gum tree / rw

arm in arm around this bay
their footprints crossed by seagulls / rw

on the phone
as she leaves for Thailand
her good-bye kiss / pp

moths flutter towards the lamp
his fingertips on her skin / rw

Patricia Prime - New Zealand & Rodney Williams - Australia
A year later
we meet again;
while we look the same
maybe I don’t talk as much
maybe you talk more

Marian Olson - USA

time
passes everything
but time . . .
the face in the glass
no longer my own

Brendan Slater - UK

tossing handfuls
of soiled tissues
in the recycler
one for sorrow
balanced on the rim

Brendan Slater - UK
a current
when we touched
lit the room—
I read John Clare
in the dark

Brendan Slater - UK
Brendan Slater - UK
nightfall…
this rain carries me

Then, as quickly, trees drop coldness.

The night of rain passes into a day of stiffening joints. Ruby forces himself to get up to open a window. As he does snarling traffic catches between echoes. The world pours in. Tightness of the clouds in his chest loosens into drowsiness as a breeze reaches him.

Pale gray slumber on the window made of whispers.

gnarled tree—
the Bushtits' flutters
cling to clouds

Louis Osofsky - USA
Buffalo Robe

Tuesday, October 19, 2055:

It should be a good hunt tomorrow with the promise of clear skies and a hunter's moon: Bolas are still maintained, blades sharp, the nocks on the long bows and arrows are checked.

All of the states are united. The tribes followed the herds and flocks south, until the northern part of South America was breached, after the floods and earthquakes destroyed the coastal plains of both the Atlantic and Pacific. The winters have been harsh, since the ice age began. We don't know what is going on in Eurasia, after contact was lost.

The shaman chants as she waves her prayer fan; I lie motionless, wrapped in a buffalo robe, wearing my best brain-tanned buckskins. The chamber fills up with sage smoke while everyone waits for the six councilmen to carry my body away.

At moonrise I would have been one hundred.

burnt field . . .
a blind man describes
the color of rain

H. Gene Murtha - USA
A review by Colin Stewart Jones

In her introduction Fielden tells us the one constant in her life as she moves and lives around various parts of the Pacific Rim has been water. The title, *Light on Water*, may serve as a metaphor for her busy life—it is my view, however, that there is a more significant meaning to the title. Light may sometimes penetrate the water to a given depth, indeed, it may often seem to skip the surface giving the appearance of resting on it, but it does not settle.

There is no doubting Fielden’s accomplishments as a translator and editor but there is an uncertainty in the voice of the poet which permeates throughout *Light on Water* which I found to be unsettling. There are many questions still being asked one would have hoped to have found answers for when one has past retirement age.

awake still
listening to the dark
gusts of wind,
hoping to hear rain
hoping to make up my mind
In fact this uncertainty and questioning is perhaps the constant theme of the book as Fielden never quite seems sure which voice to listen to:

accompanist
or competition –
violin solo
at the outdoor concert
in cicada summer

in the following, I believe the unvoiced answer to be a resounding no, yet Fielden still asks the question:

he’s dead I hear
that man I slept with
for six years…
should I send his wife
a sympathy card

When Fielden does seem to have certainty her tanka come across as authorial statements which I found to be too forthright:

brave new world:
three tall young fathers
with three prams
pushing along lake paths
perfumed by plum blossoms

Don’t get me wrong, the poet may have been reading Huxley by the lakeside and witnessed this scene which has been rendered with precision and alliteration, but her assertion remains paramount and overpowering.

Consider the poem below which is basically selfish statement and is the type of mantra you may see on a novelty card or a note on a fridge held in place by a magnet:

I read that
tigers live alone
mostly
self-sufficient, except
for mating…oh, I wish

Notes from the Gean No.13, June 2012
And yet within *Light on Water* we can find a few gems. In the following poem the phallic images resound with a sexually charged energy which is palpable:

icicles hung
from the Eiffel Tower
at dusk
lusting after the heat
of our hotel room

And the following delight on the senses:

cicles hung
from the Eiffel Tower
at dusk
lusting after the heat
of our hotel room

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In her foreword, Julie Thorndyke, comments on Fielden’s strong Australian voice and I do believe Fielden’s poems are at their best when she is inspired by her homeland. I must disagree, however, with Thorndyke applauding Fielden’s ‘impulse to collect, and make available to a wider readership, her poems which have previously appeared only in journals and anthologies.’ *Light on Water* should be a book of poetry and not an historical record.

I found the information containing place of publication and editors’ details at the top of the page to be distracting, annoying and unnecessary. A better way of organising the tanka would have enhanced the collection. The repetition of images such as one magpie for ‘sorrow’; and green valleys for youth I found to be hackneyed. Credits should have been placed at the end of the book and the author could then allow the poetry stand alone. It is as though one is forced to give credence to the poetry because we have already been told who accepted them and where they were published. Apart from the odd gem I was disappointed by this collection.

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*Light on Water*, Amelia Fielden
Ginninderra Press (Port Adelaide, Australia, 2010)

ISBN 978-1-74027-632-0
Mortality is a favourite subject of classical poetry. Writers exist within the temporal and are very much aware of this aspect of the human condition. It is highly unusual to find a collection of haiku which predominantly deals with this subject but Marisova knew she may die from her tumour and this advance notice, if you will, seems to have given her greater focus and lust for the moment.

Marisova trained as a nun and her faith, spirituality *and* doubts run throughout this collection. If the title, an excerpt from Psalm 46, suggests anything apart from the spiritual aspect, “do not worry and trust”, it is that we should take each moment, savour it and learn from it. Of the two poets, I see Marisova as the better poet and van Zutphen as her encourager.

Faith is a funny thing—it is like a muscle built by testing doubts. In the poem below we see a person praising God even through the shadow of death. And yet there is still doubt:

up stretched arms . . .
the winter cloud still
unknowing

As one would expect from with religious training is a predominance of religious symbolism that runs throughout Marisova’s poetry.
spring awakening –  
the sound of water  
in the mist

Spring speaks of new life and awakening of a fresh infilling of the Spirit. Water and even 
mist are also symbolic of the Holy Spirit in biblical texts. Van Zutphen also uses this 
imagery when he writes the following encouragement:

a stream  
below the ice . . .  
spring whispers

I do not often pick a favourite poem from a collection but I found the following by 
Marisova to be exceptional for its multiple readings:

rose petals –  
the ceremony  
of blood

Death; marriage; communion; menstruation; fertility; blood tests; it is all in there—and 
in only ten syllables.

There are many good, even great, poems in this collection but I do feel that emotion has 
influenced some of the reviews. Marisova’s talent was sadly cut short and she may have 
become a great poet. Though she did not write haiku for long she was certainly no 
ovice but she was not yet a master either. Recommended!

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“Be Still and Know”, Svetlana Marisova & Ted van Zutphen  
Karakia Press (New Zealand, 2011)

Colin Stewart Jones - Scotland