

# Haiku Canada Review



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# **HAIKU CANADA REVIEW**

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# Haiku Canada Review

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**Art:** Cover and interior drawings – Rebecca Cragg

**Sheets:** – roseaux tremblants/quivering reeds

    by Maxianne Berger

    – weaving scarlet roses by Luminita Suse

## From the Editor. . .

Greetings,

I'm kind of at a loss on what to write about and it seems that the world is heading along repeating last year's news cycle. Maybe it's time for everyone to re-read Gibbon.

Apart from that, I hope you enjoy this issue of the Review.

Mike



## Haiku Canada Review

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## The Boucherville Haiku Trail

*Micheline Beaudry and Micheline Comtois-Cécylre*

Translated by Maxianne Berger

In 2016, Micheline Comtois-Cécylre had the idea of installing haiku in a park in Boucherville, the city she has called home since 1963.

Conception to reality required several players: the reading committee (one of the six members is a landscape architect), the municipal library, and the city of Boucherville itself, which was in charge of this project. Delayed by the pandemic, the first phase came into being in autumn 2022 with seven haiku on one trail. No longer ink on paper, the poems are now three-dimensional. The text is laser-cut into a sculptured plaque of Corten steel mounted onto wooden supports which have been carbonized with the *yakisugi* method and anchored into a concrete slab. Light is able to play through the letters cut into the metal, giving words shimmer and shadow. It is a subtle poetic object that celebrates the time-space of haiku.

The Haiku Trail begins in the opulent green woods of *parc linéaire de Mortagne* where a furtive stream flows alongside. Each haiku corresponds to local flora or items in the park — cycling path, apple tree, light standard, and the like. A small garden of flowers and grasses surrounds the base of each of the seven haiku stations.

Walking and cycling paths make the Haiku Trail accessible in all seasons. Park benches enable people to rest while they listen to birdsong, wind, the surrounding calm, the silence of the snow, all the while meditating on the depth of this Japanese poetic genre.

je reviendrai  
abreuver mon cœur  
à ses ruisseaux

I will return  
to slake my heart  
in its streams

*Natacha Kanapé Fontaine*

About her marvelous achievement, Micheline Comtois-Cécycyre says, “this trail has been running through my mind since 2016. It isn’t perfect, but it is the only Haiku Trail in Quebec.”



*photo: Marion Olivieri*

## Parts of Speech in Haiku

*Randy Brooks*

Why would a poet want to talk about parts of speech in a haiku? When do people talk about nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositional phrases? What are the usual settings for these conversations? Let's see what haiku with references to parts of speech reveal about our human experience with language. I have found four broad categories of haiku that reference parts of speech: (1) haiku about students learning language in school, (2) haiku that address social experiences and uses of language, (3) haiku about or satirizing traditions of writing haiku, and (4) haiku about the abstract nature of language.

### **(1) Haiku about learning the art of reading and writing**

School is a common setting for haiku that reference parts of speech. Students take language arts classes to learn how to read and write. They discuss the parts of speech and our conventions for becoming an effective communicator. There are several English haiku about being in school, and some specifically address issues of parts of speech.

verbs  
their tenses —  
the back-row desks

Joyce Clement, *Bottle Rockets* 25 (2011), 7

The third line of this haiku provides a classroom setting for the haiku. The “verbs” are the restless kids in the back-row desks.

These over-active kids in the back row are the opposite of the teacher's pets. They are less likely to have their hands up with answers and more likely to gossip or pass notes to each other. In this case I imagine that the class is working on a grammar lesson ... related to verb tenses. Joyce makes this both a scene of kids struggling to get the worksheet done (correctly), and therefore the "tenses" is fitting to both the worksheet and the students in the back row.

- 

floating dragonfly adjective diving fishhawk verb

VN Rhoades, *Modern Haiku* 39:1 (2008), 80

Reading this haiku, I feel like I'm back in grammar class diagramming sentences. Maybe the teacher is using transformational grammar and trying to show us how we can generate multiple variations of any sentence. How many adjectives and verbs can we substitute in this haiku? So many possibilities. Did you notice how "ing" words are compound nouns, kind of a verby noun? Here's an example of each. Yes, it's funny that the dragonfly is floating and the fishhawk is diving. Ironic huh.

- 

in the old peppermint tin pencil shavings we argue about pronouns

Chris Gordon, *antantantant* 10, 2009

For me "old peppermint" refers to the white ball-shaped peppermint candy with red stripes. I like this candy and use to keep them on my office desk for visitors. The "pencil shavings"



are also an office reference for writers, editors, and students. Given that context it is not surprising that “we” argue about pronouns. This haiku is about writers or editors trying to get the text right. It’s about working with words. I like the passion “we” have about words and the interludes necessary to sharpen a pencil or enjoy an old peppermint.

•

night deepens  
a table of  
irregular verbs

John Martone, *Pompeian Figures* (2016), 11

This stair-step haiku moves us into the late night. I imagine that someone has been working late into the evening. The “night deepens” as it gets darker, and the narrator is growing sleepy. The second half of the haiku “a table of / irregular verbs” suggests that someone is learning a language, probably English since it has a lot of irregular verbs. These are hard to learn. The general guidelines and rules don’t work, so you just memorize them as exceptions. However, I admire this narrator’s determination and will power to stay up late working on it even though the “night deepens.” I also like how the word “table” has a double meaning. It suggests a kitchen table full of homework as well as the organized chart listing irregular verbs to learn.

## **(2) Haiku about our social experiences of language**

Several haiku feature the importance of language choices and parts of speech as part of our daily social interactions. These haiku highlight the care (or lack of consideration) evident in our

use of language. The haiku narrators for these social situations are noticing how language is part of building relationships.

•

Mother's Day  
most of our verbs  
in past tense

Susan Constable, *Modern Haiku* 42:3 (Autumn 2011), 116

Susan Constable focuses on a Mother's Day gathering. I imagine that the narrator is with family or friends, and that this is the first time this day has come after mother's passing. How do we celebrate Mother's Day without mother? As you may know from your own experience, there is an awkwardness in all of the promotion and related Mother's Day events. This same recurring feeling comes from other noted absences of a mother — mother/daughter banquets, weddings, anniversaries, and birthdays. But it is good to remember, even if "our verbs" have become past tense. With the context of a day of celebrating mothers, this is an evocative haiku of remembrance that is noticed in their shared past tense verbs.

•

canoe with dad  
the sound of chirping  
river nouns

David F Shultz, *Halibut*, Aug. 21, 2019

The opening line of this haiku sits us in a canoe with dad. The narrator is a son or daughter. This image conjures up times we

may have spent with a parent outdoors for a day of adventure. The following phrase, “the sound of chirping” lets us imagine the birds that can be heard from the canoe. For the child these are just chirping sounds. However, the dad is familiar with these chirps and knows the names of the birds or frogs or chipmunks they hear. The phrase “river nouns” allows the reader to imagine or fill in the scene with their own memories of birds or other possible sources of chirping. The canoe. Dad. River. The sound of chirping. All of these are present. They are the thingy-ness of nouns.

•

#### MY LIFE BEHIND GLASS

so lonely, the little verbs

Sabine Miller, *NOON* [Web] 9 (2015)

This micro-poem comes with a title, “my life behind glass.” The title is almost as long as the poem and provides a context for imagining the scene. Something is both trapped and on display for viewers. Perhaps it is a memoir of someone’s life? Or a letter they wrote years ago? Or a draft manuscript of a poem by a famous author? This museum piece is no longer useful or active in the world beyond the display case. As a former library worker, I imagine this to be an exhibit in the special collections room where they keep books most people can’t touch. We look at the words on the page, but there is no longer any vitality evident. These words were intended for a reader or readers who no longer exist. The narrator tells us that these “little verbs” are “so lonely.” Unlike most haiku narrators, this one interprets what we see behind the glass and tells us what to feel. Maybe these little verbs are an Emily Dickinson poem? No big happenings.

Nothing much to do. Not much to look forward to. All we see of this lonely life behind glass are the “little verbs” left behind. Makes me want to break the glass, give the writer of the little verbs a hug, and go outdoors to find some enlivening verbs. Breathe oxygen. Bask in the sun. Take in some forest bathing. Live a few big verbs!

•

introductions we exchange verbs

Julie Warther [Schwerin], *Prune Juice* 20 (2016)

In this short monoku the first word places us in the middle of a social interaction. We are meeting people and introducing ourselves. The simple “we exchange verbs” is straight-forward and yet highlights that this is a ritual communication, what scholars call “phatic communication,” where it doesn’t matter so much what you say as the fact that you are politely interacting with each other. As a common social ritual, we know exactly the kinds of verbs that are appropriate: pleased, happy, honored, glad to meet you. This haiku focuses on the language acts of greetings rather than identities.

•

homeless no personal pronouns

Ken Olson, *Prune Juice* 25 (2018), 47

In this senryu I imagine a homeless person sleeping on the street. There is a dehumanization that is apparent. Most of us keep our distance from the homeless. We stay safe in our cars, our lives, our identities. We see them. We don’t know who they are. We can’t tell their gender. They have nothing to call mine, their own.

They have “no personal pronouns.” They are the homeless. Them/they/theirs. The senryu is so sparse and simple. At first glance, I wanted a bit more of a sense of where we are or exactly what we are seeing in this haiku, but in some ways the absence of anything other than the fact of “homeless” emphasizes the point of how we don’t see them. It features our indifference. The narrator is us. Not them.

•

snow . . .  
the refreshing absence  
of verbs

Michael Henry Lee, 21st Mainichi Haiku Contest (2017),  
honorable mention

This is a delightful haiku. The snow has slowed everything down. Nobody is out and about much, yet. This is a new snow before the snowplows, snow shovels, sleds, people are out and about. Ah, just admire the new landscape of snow . . . the refreshing absence of so much to do. The snow refreshes the dirty parking lots and streets, the drab leaves in the yards, the tired urban landscape. Made anew, refreshed. The narrator of this haiku invites us to imagine the things not happening because of the snow. Yes, it is refreshing that the snow is just being, there, a noun, for now.

•

heavy dawn snowfall  
the coming day’s verbs  
changing tense

George Swede, *Bones* 15 (March 2018)

In this haiku, the narrator is noticing a change in language from others who are adjusting plans based on this unexpected “heavy dawn snowfall.” We can see the snow has drifted around the house and over the roads that will be closed until a snowplow comes through. Plans for travel or going to work will have to be adjusted. Suddenly “I was going to” or “I planned to” become part of the language of the day. Here “verbs” stands in for the day’s previously planned activities. What I was going to do. This wonderful haiku by George Swede draws attention to how our living contexts shape the language we use to navigate our lives.

•

Changing the pronoun  
in a karaoke song —  
the rainy season

David Burleigh, *Octopus Dreams* (1998)

The narrator of this haiku notices a deliberate language choice. It’s “the rainy season,” so friends have gathered for an evening of food and drinks. To lighten the dreariness of the day, they are taking turns singing karaoke songs. When it is the narrator’s turn, they change the gender of the pronoun in the song. Why does the narrator change the pronoun? Is it funnier that way? Does the singer want the song to fit their own gender identity? Does the song become less offensive? We don’t know for sure, but clearly this is a deliberate, socially aware choice.

•

between two moons our first person plural

Kelly Sauvage Angel, *Sonic Boom*, 2020

I enjoy the movement through time in this monoku. Unless we're on another planet, I assume that the time "between two moons" would be a month by the time we have made it to the second moon. And what a month it has been for this couple! I think of these as two full moons. At the first moon our narrator was first person singular: "I was moon viewing." However, by the second moon, the narrator has become "first person plural" and "we are under the moon." The use of the possessive "our" implies that this is "our first month" in a relationship. I enjoy the way the narrator lets us in on this growth and awareness of the relationship evident in their use of pronouns.

•

remarried  
still my pronouns  
need work

June Dowls, *Prune Juice* 12 (2014), 25

This senryu is written in the voice of a to-do list. The first line "remarried" suggests that the narrator has been through some tough times, gained self-confidence, and found a new lover to marry. That one word, "remarried," suggests a journey of self-care and recovery. However, the subsequent phrase "still my pronouns / need work" acknowledges that building a new relationship is a work in progress. There's more to be done, to learn, to avoid falling back into the same trap as before. Some of that work is noticed in self-referential pronouns. What are these "pronouns" that need work? These are the automatic assumptions about our things, our money, our lives, our house, our careers, our kids and my, mine, his, her, our things. With a second marriage, these pronouns will be carefully considered and addressed and agreed upon. It will take time.

•

### (3) Haiku about the art of writing haiku

Poets have always liked to write about the art of writing. Sometimes the focus is about the struggles over choices made in writing a haiku. Sometimes these poems are satires about common advice, conventions, clichés, or known traditions related to the art of writing haiku. The audience for such haiku may be limited to other writers who have experienced these challenges and pitfalls of writing, but if you are an insider in the writer's club these are very fun.

•

ten frowning students  
unlearning 5-7-5  
remove adjectives

Madelyn Eastlund, *Frogpond* 12:2 (May 1989), 15

Adjectives have always been one of the ways to pad a line of poetry. Adjectives plagued the old 5-7-5 approach to haiku with authors adding unnecessary interpretative adjectives to their nouns and verbs. I love the way Eastlund characterizes the students' frustration as they learn that there is more to writing haiku than counting syllables. It was so easy, especially with adjectives. This can also be read as a comic frustration that comes after giving up on trying to write by syllable counting. Okay, so we can't use 5-7-5 syllables, and now you've got another rule banning adjectives?

•



frog  
(insert  
verb  
&/or  
prep)  
pond

Max Bash, *Haiku Canada Review* 6:2 (2012), 2

Basho's famous frog pond haiku has been satirized and rewritten more than any other Japanese haiku. Hiroaki Sato collected 100 of these in his book, *One Hundred Frogs from Renga to Haiku to English*, if you want to see lots of translations and variations of this poem. This satirical version by Max Bash represents a formula for writing another version of this exemplary haiku by Basho. The narrator of this haiku is essentially saying it is easy to write a frogpond-like haiku. The narrator gives us a "mad-lib" haiku with fill in the blanks. The usual verb to insert is "leaps" or "jumps" and the preposition would be "into" the pond. By abstracting this well-known haiku into its algebraic code, the narrator is asking us to look at the underlying syntax or expected linguistic formula.

•

blows from the dark sky –  
the pluvious night shudders  
strong nouns and strong verbs

Craig Hasbrouck, *Haiku Canada Review* 7:1 (2013), 5

I looked up the adjective "pluvious" which comes from an old French word meaning rainy, usually a heavy rain. This is a

wordy 5-7-5 haiku stating that we are in a very strong, strong rain storm. The haiku has lots of repetition and padding to reach the 5-7-5 pattern. We get both “dark sky” and “night”. We get “blows” and the anthropomorphic “night shudders.” In the last line we get “strong” and “strong”. This thick-handedly crafted haiku is more about the big and powerful words than the experience of the storm. Maybe this is a haiku satirizing the art of writing haiku demonstrating the overuse of big, exaggerated, strong words. Perhaps it is the 5-7-5 haiku equivalent to Charles Schultz’s comic strip character, Snoopy, who always starts with the cliché opening, “It was a dark and stormy night.”

•

pi moon . . .  
the six nouns of white  
on a canvas

Paresh Tiwari, *Bones 5* (Nov. 15, 2014), 41

This haiku starts with a mathematical view of the moon. Our narrator is all about numbers and describes the moon as a circle’s circumference. The second part of the haiku simply counts the variations of white on a canvas. When we bring these together, I imagine an artist, a painter, looking at the moon and considering all the shades and variations of white that will be needed to create a representation of it on the canvas. The white is not merely the blank canvas but the various shades, names, nouns of white that will become part of this attempt to capture the constantly changing perceptions of the moon, no matter how complex or simple our counting system may be. Circumference divided by the diameter of the moon? These represent two ways

of looking and thinking about the moon – a language of mathematics and a language of nouns.

•

mountain alone inevitable pronoun

Paul Pfleuger Jr., *R'r [Roadrunner]* 13:2 (2013), 44

Why would we want to ascribe gender or plural status on a mountain, alone? Or is the haiku narrator talking about being alone on the mountain? Can a mountain ever be alone, a single mountain? A mountain may seem round topped or rough and rocky, so why would we go with one or another gender? In this monoku the narrator asserts that there is an “inevitable pronoun” but I’m not sure we have enough to understand why this is “inevitable” nor what pronoun is being implied. I find myself wanting more than an adjective. In the world of English haiku authors, for me, the mention of “mountain” brings to mind Marlene Mountain. With her emphasis on feminist approaches to art, the inevitable pronoun would be she or her. Marlene clearly identified with mountain and loved to represent her self-given name as a monogram of double M’s. MM. As a tribute to Marlene Mountain, I like this poem and how the “alone” is both a reference to an artist as meditative hermit in the mountains with the independence to be true to her art.

•

just hens in the rain without a verb

Meik Blöttenberger, *A New Resonance* 10, 2017, 41

This monoku seems to be about someone struggling to write a haiku, to find a verb that fits the hens. Perhaps it is a reference to

a haiku strategy of trying to write a haiku without a verb? In a traditional haiku you don't need to say "without a verb," but by doing so, the narrator's focus changes from the chickens to the act of writing a haiku. Maybe this works. The hens are "in the rain" presumably not doing anything. I don't buy it. I've raised chickens and know exactly what they do in the rain. They get out of the rain and go into the hen house. If it is only lightly raining, they might just ignore it and continue doing what they always do. Walk around pecking at seeds and bugs, looking for something to eat. What they don't do is to just be, "without a verb." To me, this language poem represents an example of artifice. I don't believe our fictional haiku writer is trying to find a verb to go with the "hens in the rain."

•

poems  
without verbs  
the heat

Joyce Clement, *Modern Haiku* 46:2 (2015), 19

The first phrase of this haiku is a comment about "poems without verbs" which might be familiar as an approach to writing haiku with just nouns. This phrase is written as the narrator's observation or description of haiku. The narrator sees a poetry of "things as they are" or poetry about the "suchness of things". The second part of the haiku is simply "the heat" which is an example of "without verbs." The narrator names the context as simply "the heat," which is not much help the reader build a scene or situation. Where are we feeling or noticing "the heat"? While reading haiku poems without verbs? I can imagine "the

heat” as being uncomfortable. And poems “without verbs” might also be flat and boring, as if nothing ever happens.

•

sunny forecast  
I check my adjectives  
before clicking send

Yu Chang, *Upstate Dim Sum* 2009/II, 4

I love this playful haiku. The narrator is at the computer getting ready to send an email. Before sending the final draft of the email, he shifts into editor mode and checks his adjectives to make sure they are effective. He wants to be sure that his message fits a “sunny forecast.” Optimistic. Perhaps looking forward to an afternoon in the park or elsewhere. He knows that the adjectives will suggest mood or attitude, and although we don’t know what mood he is seeking to emphasize, presumably it is appropriate for the upcoming sunny forecast.

•

edgy wordsmith  
seeks single female to misplace  
prepositions with

Kempton Lindquist, *Adobe Walls* 2 (2011), 136

This haiku appears to be a “found poem” in the personal want-ads of a newspaper. The narrator is trying to be brief to reduce the cost of the advertisement by using clipped phrases. I like the way the narrator’s identity is expressed as “edgy wordsmith.” We rarely get such a self-described narrator in haiku. Often the narrator is only implied. This narrator describes themselves as a

“wordsmith” who likes to play with words. They are “edgy” as well, suggesting that they like to take risks with their words. Do things out of the ordinary. What kind of companion are they seeking? A “single female” who will get the joke about having fun “misplacing prepositions with.” Of course, ending with “with” is a big no-no for the grammar police, so this becomes a clever example of being “edgy” with this narrator’s wordsmithery. I’m married to a wordsmith, so I view this as a great senryu showing how misplaced prepositions can be fun to play with.

•

the room looking back the death prepositions

Paul Pfleuger Jr., *A Zodiac* (2013)

Here is another haiku featuring misplaced prepositions. Of course, we know that prepositions usually come before the object being modified. In this case the word “prepositions” comes after “death.” Therefore “death” itself is in a position of modifying the word “prepositions.” What kind of prepositions are we talking about in this haiku? Death prepositions. This haiku has a quirky Yoda-like syntax which makes it appear that the room is “looking back.” Usually, we would avoid this arrangement of phrases because we want to avoid an awkward anthropomorphic perspective. The room is not “looking back.” Pfleuger gives us a lot to unravel and sort in this haiku. But I like the outcome of this twisted syntax. Mostly, I get a sense of bewilderment after the death of a loved one. Things are out of place, out of the usual order, a bit confusing.

•

melting snow  
different verbs  
for the river line

Gary Hittmeyer, *Bottle Rockets* 42 (21:2, 2020), 6

This haiku begins with a clear seasonal fragment, “melting snow,” which is easy to imagine. Everything is wet and there are patches of dirty snow everywhere. The second part of the haiku is a phrase, “different verbs / for the river line,” which confuses me. Does this phrase mean that the narrator is thinking of “different verbs” or asking the reader to consider possible verbs that would describe the “river line”? I have no idea what “the river line” is, so no verbs are coming to my mind. Maybe I’m just reading this haiku wrong? Maybe it is about the difficulty of finding the right verb to describe the movement, actions, sense of being on “the river line” whatever that is. Maybe the river line is a train? If so, the haiku narrator is a commuter riding the train and looking out the window at the melting snow.

•

when pronouns fail the future of protostars

Robin Anna Smith, 2020 Marlene Mountain Memorial  
Haiku Contest, 2nd Place, *FemkuMag* 26 (2020)

“When pronouns fail” is a not just a hypothetical statement. It is a reference to common bias in traditional pronoun usage which forces people to be gendered in a binary system of he/she when the individual may not identify as either. A non-binary identity often prefers the third person indefinite pronouns they/them.

This preferred pronoun usage represents a new day in cultural sensitivity. If you don't know astronomy, like me, you probably had to look up what a protostar is. According to Wikipedia, "A protostar is a very young star that is still gathering mass from its parent molecular cloud." The new star forms and grows out of a molecular cloud ... from its antecedent but as a new thing. Out of this amorphous confusing mass of molecular clouds, a future star gathers mass. In this haiku, the protostar becomes an extended analogy or metaphor for the recognition and acceptance of a new star in the heavens and a new preferred pronoun identity in our society. They/them/their becomes a new shining star in our galaxy of stars now including indefinite singular pronouns. When traditional language fails us, it needs to change to shape our future social assumptions about identity.

•

preferred pronoun  
today, an ice cube  
for the orchid

Julie Warther [Schwerin], *Bones* 19 (March 15, 2020)

The opening line of this haiku seems to come to us out of the blue. I imagine a narrator who is simply thinking about the issue of designating your preferred pronouns. It's not really a question. Just something we need to consider as contemporary social etiquette. The second half the haiku seems to be this narrator's answer, for "today." The narrator has an ice cube to place in the dirt of an orchid. Does the orchid need a preferred pronoun? Does it need to be gendered? It is beautiful and needs to be watered, but not over-watered, to stay alive and to grow. One ice cube, melting slowly in time, is enough. What connections can



we make between the two parts of this haiku? How can we provide sustenance and nurture the beautiful orchids that will bloom again? A little loving care goes a long way. Preferred pronouns are important, and we should do our own small part to care for one another and provide the daily nurturing necessary to flourish with beauty in our own natures.

•

I slip again  
on their pronoun  
November rain

Susan Antolin, *Kingfisher* 3 (April 2021), 45

This haiku provides a mixture of lived experience and regret. And how naturally it brings in the social mistake. “I slip again / on their pronoun” reads like slipping on the ice. Not anticipated, but it happens. Did anyone see my slip up? The narrative voice of the haiku is self-confessional, talking to the self. “I slip again” is an admission that they want to do better. The ending “November rain” adds a bit of darkness and tiredness. Unlike rain in the spring or during a summer drought, this rain is just dreary. Another day. The overall feeling I get from this haiku is that of perseverance and genuine care. This narrator will make it through this dreary day and continue to try not to slip next time. They will do better. Good for them. Good for us.

•

#### **(4) Haiku about the nature of language**

There are some haiku that reference parts of speech to emphasize the symbolic nature of language. These haiku explore the

connections between language and reality. Such connections are often indeterminate.

•

gentle waves  
the nouns and verbs  
of my grammar

Jane Reichhold, *A Dictionary of Haiku* (2nd ed., 2013), 265

In Jane Reichhold's haiku the key word, "waves" is both a noun and verb. If you've ever taken a physics class, you have seen the teacher draw waves as an up and down line with the immediate explanation that waves are ongoing motion. Never singular. Waves represent an existence in constant flux, a rising and falling. In this haiku the narrator is trying to write with a grammar of living, of being alive. All nouns and verbs are ever changing in a relationship with each other. Here the adjective "gentle" adds a touch of human connection. The waves are not threatening but are comforting. I love this haiku by Reichhold and how it embraces the fluidity of language.

•

fly . . .  
from noun to verb  
and back

David J. Kelly, *Frogpond* 38:3 (Autumn 2015)

Although this haiku is mostly about the nature of words, I like haiku that make us do a double take on a word. The narrator of this haiku notices that a word changes from thing to action and

back. Named for its action, a fly is mostly known in the air by how it is seen. Even when resting we call it a fly. Nice to see how a fly embodies language as a thing and motion. The narrator's phrase "and back" suggests how quickly a fly changes from just being to flight and back. It fits. The nature of a fly is equivalent to the nature of language.

•

in the garden  
after last night's storm  
a dangling modifier

Sondra J. Byrnes, *A New Resonance* 10, 2017, 60

This haiku is structured with a typical fragment/phrase strategy. The fragment is a traditional opening in which the narrator puts us imaginatively "in the garden / after last night's storm." Based on this context, the reader would expect the last line to provide some particular point of focus. What does the narrator want us to see in the garden? What is the surprising result of "last night's storm"? Instead, the narrator directs our attention to a common mistake in writing, the dangling modifier. In case you need a refresher on dangling modifiers, here is the definition from the OWL (Online Writing Lab) at Purdue University: "a dangling modifier is a word or phrase that modifies a word not clearly stated in the sentence." Ironically, in Byrnes' haiku the dangling modifier is what's missing. We have the clearly stated garden after the storm, but we are missing any modifying phrase. This shift suggests that the narrator is really talking about writing a haiku. They have the first two lines but are missing something that will modify the scene. What is the dangling modifier we need to explain the aftermath of the storm? If our narrator is a

writer, this last line becomes a question . . . how can I find language that fits that it's not really over, how the devastation of the storm is still messing with me? As a haiku about language, the narrator illustrates how language sometimes doesn't keep up with what's happening before our very eyes.

•

i momentarily  
trade an adverb  
for fallen leaves

Scott Metz, *NOON* 15 (August 2019)

Here is another writerly haiku in which the writer seems to be talking to himself. Sometimes words can be beautiful, and we fall in love with them. Who cares about the fallen leaves when we have all kinds of interesting words like “momentarily” and other ideas that come to mind as we watch the fallen leaves? Here our lowercase “i” is trying to be unimportant, an egoless observer. But the narrator fails because he is in love with words, specifically all the possible adjectives that come to mind. Maybe we should read this the opposite way. The image “fallen leaves” is just standing in for the idea of “momentarily” and the narrator could care less about the fallen leaves. This narrator is a wordsmith and lover of words. Let's make the things, images like “fallen leaves,” just represent the idea more directly stated as an adverb.

•

beads of rain  
on the spider's web  
a pronoun climbs  
into my lexicon

John McManus, *NOON* 15 (2019)

This haiku begins with the image “beads of rain / on the spider’s web,” which provides a context and scene. The web is both beautiful and vibrant with fresh rain. The spider may not be too happy about the rain, but it’s a beautiful scene. The phrase, on the other hand, is a narrator’s comment about “a pronoun climbs / into my lexicon.” This is a playful metaphorical way of describing how someone’s storehouse of words, their lexicon, changes. Although we have traditionally used “they” and “them” as a third person indefinite plural pronoun, recently we have seen it more widely accepted as an indefinite singular pronoun for those who do not identify with the binary he/she pronouns. In the extended analogy of this four-line haiku, “my lexicon” is a spider web of language and the pronoun is a spider that “climbs” into its new home. “They” has found a new home in his lexicon-web. The phrase turns the initial image into part of an extended analogy, so it turns out we are not really interested in the traditional scene of raindrops in a spider’s web. Instead, the poem is about how language changes. This is not about things as they are, but rather about language and how it finds a home in our usage.

•

## (5) Haiku about the abstract nature of language

Poets exploring the abstract nature of language consider how it does not always connect to the world. Sometimes language is just in our heads. Some haiku and micro-poems emphasize the abstract nature of language. These haiku assert that even the most basic parts of speech are always a fiction, an act of imagination, a formula, an abstract code, created symbols, something we just thought up. Language is an artificial construct that we can play with as we please regardless of mimetic claims to reality or expressive claims to personal experience. Language doesn't have to make sense or be mimetic, expressive nor communicative. These poems like to remove the curtain behind the mysterious Wizard of Oz and show that we're all in a land of dreams, wishes, and make believe. We're in a world of language somewhere over the rainbow. You can click your ruby slippers all you want, but there's no place back home.

•

all the prepositions  
the veillances  
that await us

Peter Newton, *Bones 2* (June 15, 2013), 81

This haiku didn't work for me until I looked up "veillances" and found that it refers to ways of watching over or surveilling a prisoner or suspect. I've never thought of prepositions as threatening, especially not a group. Okay, to be honest, I resisted the narrator's absolute claim that "all the prepositions" are sinister perspectives for surveillance, to keep track of us, to place us exactly, to know where are at all times. I read this haiku as an

odd conceptual proposition that a part of speech, prepositions, is somehow related to the idea of “veillances.” I disagree that we are prisoners being watched over by all the prepositions. I like being in, under, around, near, from, so many possibilities that await us. We can use prepositions to connect or to watch over or to subvert, but they are not a means of omniscient oversight.

•

in  
a  
verb  
with  
after  
glow

Jacob Kobina and Ayiah Mensah, *is/let*, November 4, 2014

I don't know what to think about this one. As someone who loves haiku, I don't think much about it at all. I get no scene to imagine. I can't “place myself” in this poem. The narrator seems to be incoherent because all we get is a phrase. But let's give whatever it is a chance. Puzzle it out. What's “in a verb with after glow”? Usually what's “in a verb” would be some reference to an action or event happening. Glow was happening. A light source. A firefly has a glow. A light glows. The moon glows. Deep sea ocean fish glow. But who knows what glows here? And “after glow” there is darkness or the absence of “glow.” I don't find enough present in this haiku to want to puzzle it out. Too many unknowns, uncertainties ... my response is reduced to silly what-ifs. I guess this is just language about language.

•

tickled by the eyelashes of an adverb

Victor Ortiz, *Kingfisher* 4 (2021), 72

I like being tickled but a lot of people don't. Tickling can be done too intensely, too intimately, too uninvitedly, too aggressively, too vigorously, too abusively or especially too persistently. If someone won't stop tickling you after being asked to quit, do you give up or get violent or cry? In this haiku who is being tickled? Evidently, in this haiku we have a dangling modifier with an absent noun. Does this absent person or thing or noun like being tickled? Is this about vulnerability? The narrator's perspective is not clear to me nor is the tickled victim's perspective clear. Now, if the narrator is being tickled by someone's eyelashes, that could be very personal or intimate. Perhaps they are lovers? But wait a minute. The haiku says that these are "the eyelashes of an adverb." What? Adverbs don't have eyelashes. Why would adverbs need eyelashes? Is this some kind of grammar cartoon with dancing adverbs? Is "tickled" the verb being modified? Can an adverb be flirtily? Someone or some thing was flirtily tickled by the eyelashes? Gently tickled by the eyelashes? Can you tickle someone with an adverb? I don't know. I give up. Just tickle me, will ya.

•

no fitting verbs

Richard Gilbert, *is/let*, August 5, 2020

I will end with this one which is almost a wordless poem. Half a haiku? Maybe a third of a haiku? A micro-minimalist poem? No hint of the narrator. No juxtaposition, superimposition nor disjunction available that I can detect. Not enough here to



engage my imagination. If there are “no fitting verbs” then perhaps the opposite is true. There are only “unfitting” or “wrong verbs,” so perhaps this is about a failed search for “fitting” verbs? A slight hint of context would help me as a reader. But without that, I read this as a dribble of intentional inscrutable obscurity. No thanks. Not interested in this game of fill-in-the-blanks with whatever. If the goal is to be obscure and resist communication with readers, then these three words succeed.

• • •

## Works Cited

Note: journal citations are noted within the text of the article. Only books cited are included in this works cited list. Special thanks to Charles Trumbull who helped with finding some of the haiku related to this topic from his amazing haiku database.

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*cloud-shaped sometimes i am*

*Debbie Strange*

## Looking Back: A Conversation with George Swede

*Philomene Kocher*

George Swede is one of the most well-known, prolific, and awarded haiku poets in Canada. Not only was he a trailblazer, but he was one of the founders of what is now Haiku Canada: “When Eric Amann, Betty Drevniok and I got together in 1977 with the intent of founding a haiku group, we were like persons taking turns tossing a pebble into a pond. We had no idea how many skips each stone would make nor the extent of the ripples.”

(1) His comments on Amann’s haiku resonated deeply for me: “Yet like all good haiku they contain that mysterious element that sends the spirit outward in all directions.” (2)

George’s career as an academic allowed him to study the psychology of art and creativity. Alongside, he has edited haiku journals and anthologies, judged countless contests, and written several children’s books and psychology texts. Remarkably, he has published over 2,500 poems in over 7,600 places (3), and his work has been translated into over 20 languages.

In our weary world, I find that George’s words about connecting with nature provide invitation as well as consolation: “I have always nurtured a connection with the immediately perceived: in a forest, or in the centre of a large city, or in my study. It seems to give me the grounding necessary to not be overwhelmed by the suffering that surrounds us in its many guises.” (4)

I was curious to know more about him and his poetry, particularly in the days before the internet made connecting with other poets easier. And I wondered about changes in haiku since

he first began writing. This interview took place by email in early 2023, and I am grateful for George's willingness to share so personally about haiku and its place in his life.

### **How did you find your way to haiku?**

My journey to haiku would not have occurred had I not first started writing free verse in my late twenties (my first poem was published in 1969). The groundwork for this development was laid in two stages: during my teens and during my undergrad years at the University of British Columbia (UBC, 1959-60 and 61-64).

In my teens, I wrote a number of non-haiku poems, the awful kind that deal with unfulfilled yearnings for love and sex. To my relief, none remain in existence.

Later, at UBC, during the academic years, I was too busy with my studies and part-time work at two jobs. However, one of the jobs, at the UBC Bookstore, at least kept my interest in poetry alive. A couple of fellow workers were Jamie Reid, who in 1961 co-founded TISH (a student poetry newsletter) and John Newlove (who won a Governor General's Award for poetry). I became fascinated by their discussions about the Vancouver poetry scene – its publishing and reading opportunities. The result for me was that during summer breaks, when I worked at jobs out of the city, I would write in the evenings because there was little else to do except get drunk at a nearby tavern, if there was one.

My interest in writing continued to be nurtured in 1963-64 when I became friends with fellow fourth-year honours student, Alan

Marlatt. It turned out that he was married to Daphne Marlatt who was one of the editors of TISH and who was glad to answer my questions about poets and poetry.

I graduated from UBC in 1964; got married soon after to Bonnie (nee Lewis); and then we drove to Halifax where I earned a Master's in Psychology from Dalhousie ('65) and Bonnie finished her second year general BA. Then, in a twist of fate, we ended-up studying at Indiana University with Alan and Daphne who had already been there for a year.

Bloomington was the place my poetic sensibility changed from interest to passion when I had my first LSD trip there – legal in 1965. Starting late in the evening, on a hilltop in the middle of a park, Alan guided me (via the techniques described in the manual by Timothy Leary, et al.) to ensure I went through a joyous experience. At dawn, Daphne and Bonnie brought me what I was convinced was the best sandwich I had ever tasted – a BLT. This psychedelic experience eventually led me to start writing poetry. By the way, Daphne went on to a huge publishing and teaching career, receiving an Order of Canada in 2006 for her contributions to Canadian literature.

In 1975, Dean Tudor, the editor of *The Canadian Book Review Annual*, asked if I were interested in doing a review of an advance copy of Makoto Ueda's *Modern Japanese Haiku* (University of Toronto Press, 1976). The reason he chose to talk to me first was due to special circumstances.

Dean and I both worked at the former Ryerson (now Toronto Metropolitan University) – he was a librarian and I was a member of the Psychology Department – and we sometimes

met in the faculty cafeteria where he found out that I had published poems in a number of periodicals (*Canadian Forum*, *Quarry*, *Tamarack Review*, etc.) that were included in my first collection, *Unwinding* (a chapbook by Missing Link Press, 1974). Thus, for Dean this background meant that I was qualified to write the review in spite of having no experience with the haiku form. As for me, a poet's ego and everyday curiosity prompted me to say yes.

In his anthology, Makoto Ueda included twenty poets, each with twenty haiku. For me, all 400 were inspiring with how much they could say with so few words. But to write a proper review, I needed to educate myself on the haiku form. In a time with no Internet, I had to rely on libraries and bookstores. Eventually, I found four books that helped me do a decent job: K. Yasuda's *The Japanese Haiku* (1957); H.G. Henderson's *An Introduction to Haiku* (1958); W. Pratt's *The Imagist Poem* (1963); *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* by Bashō and translated by N. Yuasa (1966).

My first attempts at writing haiku were clunkers, but gradually with practice some publishable ones emerged. The love of my life and second wife, Anita Krumins, was instrumental. Used to helping me on my longer poems, she quickly adapted to evaluating haiku. Undoubtedly, her qualifications helped — a Master's in English literature and a Canada Council Scholarship for Ph.D. studies. I recall how she crumpled the sheets of paper with the bad haiku and threw them to the floor and how I then used to retrieve them and sneak them to my study for possible revision.

However, there was a problem — I had no idea of where to

submit the haiku that passed Anita's scrutiny. Today, one would simply go online and search for "haiku publications." Back in the '70s, it took me a while to discover that the Fisher Library at the University of Toronto had some haiku periodicals and books. It was there I discovered *Haiku*, the journal first edited by Bill Higginson and later by Eric Amann (1967-69). Also found was Claire Pratt's collection, *Haiku* (1965). I soon made friends with both and found out where to submit. My first haiku publications occurred in 1977 – *Bonsai*, *Cicada* and *Dragonfly*.

**Was there any aspect of your childhood / youth that you believe laid the foundation – so that when you found haiku, you recognized it as your way of expression?**

There were four aspects that seemed to lay a foundation.

The first was when my mother, stepfather and I came to Canada in March, 1947. We stayed with my maternal grandmother and step-grandfather at their home in Oyama, BC, which, prior to WW2, was mainly the hub for Japanese fruit farmers in the area who chose to name the village after a Japanese general famous during the late 19th century and early 20th. However, during the war, the Japanese in Oyama, as well as in the rest of Canada, were interned and, by war's end, many had lost their homes. A clear example of this was the abandoned farmhouse across the road from that of my grandparents. As a child of six and seven, I used to go to this house to peer into the windows, fascinated by the Japanese furniture, art works and the general layout.

The second aspect was the life on my grandparents' fruit farm. I did chores from 8-12 a.m. and then, after lunch and a nap, I had the afternoon off until five p.m. Because I had no playmates –

the closest child my age was four kilometres away — I spent a lot of time wandering the local mountainside with its woods (and black bears) and open land (dotted with cow skulls) accompanied by Laddie, a Newfoundland / Labrador mix, whom I loved and who made me feel safe. Now and then, we would go down to Woods Lake where, in the summer, I would swim and fish. This lifestyle made me very attentive to the moment, its movements of air, its sounds and silences, its flowers, bushes, trees, winged creatures, insects, as well as its wild and domesticated animals — all good training for a future haiku poet.

The third aspect was when my mother, stepfather and I moved to Kamloops. In 1948, my stepfather was diagnosed with a previously unnoticed case of tuberculosis and was forced to go to a TB hospital near that city. My mother got a job working in a jewelry store next to a dental office. She became close friends with the Japanese dentist and his family who lived nearby. One of the children was a boy my age who attended the same school as I did, and we spent many after-school hours playing at his house until my mother finished work. What struck me then was the similarity of the decor in his home to that of the abandoned farmhouse in Oyama, thereby reinforcing my interest in the Japanese sensibility. When my stepfather died in 1950 at the age of forty, my mother and I moved to Vancouver.

The fourth was my decision to major in Asian Studies at UBC in 1959. Looking back, I'm certain that my experiences with Japanese culture in Oyama and Kamloops led me to make this choice. After one year of Chinese and Japanese history, however, I changed my major to Psychology for I had discovered that there were limits to my interest in the Far East when I learned

that the final two years of the honour's degree would require the mastery of either the Chinese or Japanese language.

Nevertheless, I continued to be attuned to developments in both countries.

**What is most vivid for you about the evening in 1977 when the Haiku Society in Canada was created (with Eric Amann and Betty Drevniok)? Or any other reflections on those early years of the organization?**

Most vivid was the determination of the three of us to set up an organization to promote the haiku form. The ideas flowed as freely as the sake in the only Japanese restaurant in Chinatown at that time. The most important decision was to hold the first meeting of the Haiku Society of Canada during an autumn evening at Eric's house. At that gathering came the idea to hold an annual get-together with the first to be held at Betty's inn on a lake near Combermere, Ontario in the fall of 1978. At this Haiku Weekend two important anthologies were conceived: my *Canadian Haiku Anthology* (Three Trees Press, 1979) and Rod Willmot's *Erotic Haiku* (Black Moss Press, 1983). Both anthologies were featured at Toronto's Waterfront Reading Series with almost all of the contributors present each time.

**What has sustained your writing of haiku for so many years? Or, how has haiku sustained you?**

As you say, I have been writing haiku for many years — forty-eight from when I started and forty-six from my first publications. One of the things that has sustained me is that my haiku have continued to be published during all this time, that is, I am still being rewarded — like a rat getting a pellet of food for



pressing the correct lever. Another sustaining factor is that my writing keeps changing and I want to see what will happen next.

Of course, there are probably other reasons of which I am unaware. As Saul Bellow once said, “I am not an ornithologist — I am a bird.”

### **How has English-language haiku evolved from the 70’s to now (if at all)?**

The biggest change is the increase in the number of one-liners being published, both in print and online. Another change is that more haiga are appearing, especially online where, given the visual tools on all modern computers, it has become easy to apply a visual background, either still or moving, to a haiku. Finally, there is more widespread interest in stretching the metaphor distance, or disjunction between the two primary images. This is not surprising because repeated pairings, such as frogs with ponds or cherry blossoms with spring or love, can cause interest fatigue.

### **How have your own haiku evolved over the years (if at all)?**

The evolution of my haiku has been in concert with the general changes in English-language haiku.

### **Would you be willing to share a favourite haiku you have written, and why?**

I have too many favourite haiku, published during almost five decades, to be able to pick one without immediately changing my mind for another.

**Do you have any other reflections that you would like to add?**

I'm pleased that HCR finally became perfect bound. It has always been at the forefront of haiku developments and needs to be easily found on a library bookshelf.

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***gripping my childhood yellow submarine***

*Mariangela Canzi*

## Haiku Plus

family portrait  
glimpsing his melancholy  
behind their joy

*Michelle V. Alkerton*

moon jar  
holding onto  
dream dust

*Joanna Ashwell*

bright gold leaves —  
the artist chooses a color  
for sunshine

*Munira Judith Avinger*

autumn light  
the sharp slant  
of an oak

*Linda Anne Baker*

night sky gazing  
my conflicted thoughts  
subside

*Sheila Bello*

gloomy morning  
without bird song  
thoughts of retirement

*Daniel Birnbaum*

autumn harvest  
beneath the piñon  
potsherds

*Alanna C. Burke*

light snow  
clouds of breath  
before emptiness

*Christopher Calvin*

silence!  
the river whispers  
a song of peace

*Mariangela Canzi*

rose petals  
frozen to the pavement  
Valentine's Day

*Louise Carson*

a sparrow sings  
from a broken branch . . .  
war & wild roses

*Anna Cates*

All Saints' Day  
magpies send the squirrel  
back into the shadows

*Jean-Hughes Chevy*

Groundhog Day  
once more an agent  
puts me on hold

*Susan Colpitts*

dandelions  
the siblings vie  
to give more

*Jeanne Cook*

ebb tide—  
the full moon clings  
to a turtle's shell

*Pamela Cooper*

20 questions  
you ask me if  
I believe in God

*Alvin B. Cruz*

pacifier  
the doctor tells me  
I look spry

forest meditation  
the far-off sound  
of an ice cream truck

*Dan Curtis*

soft breeze . . .  
in the golden tree  
waltzing leaves

*Carole Daoust*

hiver lumineux —  
dans la sagesse des pierres  
l'écho de ta voix

luminous winter —  
in the wisdom of stones  
the echo of your voice

*Sandrine Davin*  
*English tr. Mike Montreuil*

sur la chasse d'eau  
tirer à maintes reprises  
toujours une à flot

flushing the toilet  
many times  
one still floats

*Diane Descôteaux*  
*English tr. Mike Montreuil*

whispering  
sweetening nothings  
one crow to another

*Ed Dewar*

diversity  
in the neighborhood . . .  
Shih Tzu owners mingle

*Charlotte Digregorio*

empty house  
a life left  
unsettled

*Christa Downer*

gnarled oak  
a face  
turned memory

*Hans Dringenberg*

November gale  
a gaping hole  
in the hockey net

*P.H. Fischer*

hair curler dreams  
the same worries  
going round and round

*Doris Fiszer*



drinking  
while folding laundry —  
four sheets to the wind

*Jay Friedenberg*

a skin of fat  
on the thin stock . . .  
moon sliver

blood moon . . .  
only the pop of the record's  
locked groove

*Joshua Gage*

stillborn  
words on a page  
no one will read

the silent spell  
of snowflakes  
grandma's eyes

*William Scott Galasso*

midnight feeding  
the faraway sound  
of sixteen

*Benedict Grant*

becoming seasonable  
another rose bloom  
in mid-November

*Jon Hare*

beech buds push  
winter weathered leaves  
from their place

*Arch Haslett*

rivers  
slowly flowing down  
to sleep

*Adam Haver*

the mountains'  
craggy outline  
all your rough edges

*Kerry J Heckman*

sunshine  
through a cracked window . . .  
chirping sparrows

*Richard He*

drying off the road  
what we heard of  
last night's rain

nightcrawlers  
the usual distance  
for the stars

*Gary Hotham*

funeral service —  
a column of dust  
in a sunbeam

courtship bench  
I leave a place  
for plum blossoms

*Louisa Howerow*

gust of leaf smacks a coasting monarch dragonfly

*Marshall Hryciuk*

struck match  
going where  
last night's stars went

*Cody Huddleston*

winter's deep snow  
somehow we all find our way  
to a New Year

*Harvey Jenkins*

out with the old  
pyrotechnic stars  
fizzle into the coral reef

*Hans Jongman*

what it once was  
what it is today . . .  
scent of old snow

*Deborah Karl-Brandt*

dusk  
the old porch swing  
mockingbird

*Brian Kates*

spider lily  
the length of wrongs  
and rights

*Nicholas Klacsanzky*

the sharpened lines of your critique mud dauber cocoon

*Deb Koen*

phantom suits and coats  
my mother's  
patchwork quilt

my son escapes  
his burning building  
Snakes and Ladders

*Angela Leuck*

dragonflies  
over the clouds  
over the lake

*Ryland Shengzhi Li*

snow on snow . . .  
the dog-eared pages  
of a motel bible

*Chen-ou Liu*

swarming the yard  
I thought was mine  
a flock of grackles

*Robert Lowes*

fossil hunting  
we find what we couldn't  
in the clouds

*Richard Matta*

melting snow  
I recycle  
sympathy cards

*Joanne Morcom*

jasmine tea  
another liver spot  
on my hand

*Nika*

the promise  
of eternal life  
Easter candy

*Roland Packer*

still life  
the taxidermist's  
pose

*Roland Packer*

a tinge  
in the smoking jacket —  
boxelder

*Lorraine Padden*

after his burial  
the silence  
of field stubble

left behind  
in the phone booth  
the last time we spoke

*John Pappas*

redhead bookseller —  
wonder if she ever wears  
blue stockings

*Brent Partridge*

Snowfall —  
the bark of a dog  
softened

*M. R. Pelletier*

Disney World  
I take a selfie  
with Goofy

supermoon  
enlightenment  
or was it the beer?

*John Quinnett*

fruit fly's last flight  
apple cider vinegar

*Joan Marie Roberts*

weather alert  
a blizzard rises  
from our rolling pins

*Sandra St-Laurent*



winter rain . . .  
the untold stories  
in his obituary

*Jacob Salzer*

hammering nails  
into the cherry wood porch  
sunshowers

*Derek Sprecksel*

witching stick  
we discover something  
invisible

*Debbie Strange*

karst caves—  
a cell phone  
winks from the darkness

*Richard Stevenson*

braiding  
grandma's silver hair  
the good days first

*Luminita Suse*

eons before  
and after  
Fibonacci galaxies

*Luminita Suse*

power-washing pavements  
mowing the drought-dead  
prison grass

*Jack Vian*

October getaway  
fading roses  
on the bedroom's walls

*Joseph P. Wechselberger*

village by the sea—  
salted fish swaying  
on a laundry line

*Wai Mei Wong*

fixed smiles  
those silent judgments  
on the mantelpiece

*Robert Witmer*

autumn handful  
her little pumpkin  
grown from seed

*Genevieve Wynand*



## **Errata**

Some days, it just doesn't make sense to get out of bed. The day I put together the haibun section for the October 2022 issue was one of them.

My apologies to the following authors

Roberta Beary AND NOT Roberta Berry  
Robert Witmer AND NOT David Witmer  
Chuck Brickley AND NOT Chuck Brinkley

I guess it's time to listen to some Humble Pie.



## Les cimetières

Haïkus réunis par *Claude Rodrigue*

=====

sur le GPS  
impossible à trouver  
le cimetière rural

*Sandra St-Laurent*

cimetière marin  
bien alignées face au vent  
quelques croix couchées

*Nicole Pottier*

cimetière marin  
les tombes englouties  
sous le crachin

*Minh-Triêt Pham*

cimetière innu  
sur la tombe de kukum<sup>(1)</sup>  
une perdrix picore

*Claire Du Sablon*

cimetière montagnais  
dans une forêt de pins noirs  
ces croix inclinées

*Monique Lévesque*

chant d'un merle  
dans le cimetière vide  
elle n'est plus seule

*Micheline Aubé*

sur la vieille croix  
couchée par la tramontane<sup>(2)</sup>  
se pose une pie

*Jean Gualbert*

tombe brisée  
je trace le nom gravé  
de ma babusya<sup>(3)</sup>

*Louisa Howerow*

pluie gel neige  
aux pieds des stèles délavées  
l'herbe pousse encore

*Daniel Langlois*

une pierre tombale  
envahie d'herbes folles  
l'ancêtre oublié

*Carmen Leblanc*

première neige  
mon papi enseveli  
une deuxième fois

*Jean-Philippe Rivest*

soir du réveillon  
les pots de chrysanthèmes  
recouverts de neige

*Charline Siciak*

premier novembre  
le vieux couple se recueille  
sur la tombe du fils

*Géralda Lafrance*

vieux cimetière  
entre deux croix blanches  
un coquelicot

*Françoise Maurice*

armistice  
au cimetière en paix  
avec mon père

*Yael Zrihen*

dans le Tiergarten<sup>(4)</sup>  
mémorial aux Sintés et Roms  
je ne savais pas

*Claude Rodrigue*

champ de croix blanches  
le gardien me demande  
de partir

*Yann Redor*

chambre funéraire  
pour la première fois l'ami  
bien peigné

*Éléonore Nickolay*

chaleur écrasante  
le fossoyeur accablé  
au frais sous un arbre

*Laurence Wagner*

les pleurs de la mère  
sous son voile de dentelle noire  
dernier voyage

*Anne-Marie Joubert-Gaillard*

en pleurs  
pour l'enfant à ses pieds  
un ange de pierre

*Geneviève Rey*

sur la sépulture  
un bouquet de larmes  
de bébé

*Monique Paré*

douces berceuses  
mon bébé est endormi  
dans son coffret de bois

*Sandra Forlini*

mes mains sur ta tombe  
plus jamais mes mains transies  
au creux de tes mains

*Chantal Clément-Demange*



fleurs fraîches  
je lui parle des enfants  
à travers la pierre

*Laurence Faucher-Barrère*

longue procession  
à la vue d'un visage amical  
mes larmes redoublent

*Anne Dealbert*

un chat va et vient  
dans l'allée du cimetière  
j'en oublie ma peine

*Micheline Boland*

sous les feuilles mortes  
sur une stèle de granit rose  
nos deux noms gravés

*Coralie Papillault*

sur sa pierre tombale  
mes nom et date de naissance  
l'autre date plus tard

*Micheline Comtois-Cécylre*

pour leur congrès  
un noctambus<sup>(5)</sup> lâche mille feux follets  
au Père-Lachaise<sup>(6)</sup>

*François Calonne*

proche du cimetière  
la peur au ventre  
il cueille un coquelicot

*Léna Darriet*

Chapelle des Os<sup>(7)</sup>  
l'architecture délicate  
des vanités

*Marcellin Dallaire-Beaumont*

grève  
au cimetière  
les morts en otage

*Liette Janelle*

Sartre et Beauvoir  
philosophant sans fin  
dans le même tombeau<sup>(8)</sup>

*Anne Brousmiche*

mur du cimetière  
à l'arrière du vacarme  
un homme pisse

*Iocasta Huppen*

cimetière auto  
notre petite Skoda<sup>(9)</sup> attire  
avec ses phares bigles

Rodica P. Calotă

**NOTES :**

- (1) En langue innue : grand-mère.
- (2) Vent du nord-ouest qui souffle sur la côte méditerranéenne.
- (3) En langue ukrainienne : grand-maman.
- (4) Parc à Berlin, situé près de la Porte de Brandebourg.  
500 000 Sintés et Roms exécutés lors du Porajmos durant la  
Deuxième Guerre mondiale.
- (5) Offre de transport d'autobus nocturne dans différentes villes  
d'Europe.
- (6) Cimetière parisien.
- (7) Chapelle dans la cour arrière de l'église du Carmel, à Faro  
(Portugal) où les os et les crânes des moines couvrent chaque  
surface de la chapelle.
- (8) Création du cimetière Montparnasse, en 1824, dans le 14<sup>e</sup>  
arrondissement, à Paris. Les deux philosophes occupent le  
même tombeau décoré de baisers aux lèvres rouges.
- (9) Marque d'automobile tchèque créée en 1895.

*« Chacun porte au fond de lui comme un petit cimetière de ceux qu'il a aimés. »*

Romain Rolland  
(1866-1944)

Prochain thème : **Les fenêtres, les portes**

(maximum : 3 haïkus)



## Au delà de ces pages...

Une nouvelle année nous propose santé, curiosité, inspiration, enthousiasme et sérénité. Nos lectures nous permettent de sortir de notre quotidien, et de flotter dans une myriade d’imaginaires, d’ici et d’ailleurs, de maintenant, d’autrefois et d’avenir. Je remercie les poètes qui nous offrent ces aventures de l’esprit en partageant avec nous, par leurs écrits, ce qui attire leur attention.

Maxianne Berger

coordonnatrice des recensions pour Haiku Canada  
recensions@haikucanada.org

## Recensions ...

*fuJitifs suivi de lorangéens*, tankas par André Duhaime, avec photographies par Raymond Aubin. Éditions des petits nuages, 2021. 978-1-926519-71-5.  
éditionspetitsnuages@gmail.com

Voici un nouveau recueil de tankas par André Duhaime, un recueil, mais deux « livres » bien différents. *fuJitifs* réunit 40 poèmes personnels, suivant les saisons, le regard de Duhaime focalisé sur ses alentours. *lorangéens*, avec ses 47 poèmes, offre de son côté un regard « tanka » fort intéressant sur deux recueils de Jean-Aubert Loranger.

*fuJitifs* commence en hiver, et nous nous retrouvons bien dans notre réalité.

hockey sur la rue  
en bottes des garçons jouent  
avec un puck de glace  
faire du slalom  
entre les nids de poule (p. 11)

Dans ce prochain tanka, le poète observe la pluie printanière à l'extérieur de lui et l'effet rythmé sur sa pensée intérieure.

les gouttes de pluie  
éparpillées sur le pare-brise  
forment des ruisselets  
le poème sera  
le poème ne sera pas (p. 30)

Comme Duhaime nous le signale dans son Avant-propos, les photos de Raymond Aubin qui agrémentent ce recueil sont elles-mêmes des « tankas photographiques ».

Ces photographies répondent aux deux strophes du tanka. Celle du haut fait voir un paysage ordinaire et fuyant ; celle du bas montre des yeux fermés. (p. 3)

Ces yeux fermés représentent le regard intérieur, cependant l'œil observateur du poète ne manque rien du paysage : « une citrouille abandonnée / coiffée d'un bonnet de neige » (p. 12) ; « le v changeant / des bernaches criardes » (p. 18) ; et tout le charme de « miss météo / [qui] vouvoie les nuages / et tutoie la pluie » (p.45).

Dans ses tankas, Duhaime révèle aussi les préoccupations d'un homme vieillissant

instant d'indulgence  
rêver qu'un jeune homme relit  
ses poèmes de vieillesse  
apprendre à vieillir  
membre par membre (p. 48)

Ce jeune homme, est-ce lui-même, ou sa postérité ? Peu importe. Nous, lecteurs, nous sommes ici maintenant et pouvons nous-mêmes lire et relire ces poèmes.

Le deuxième volet de ce recueil, *lorangéens* est très différent. Duhaime explore la prose dans *Les Atmosphères* (1920; *LA*) et des poèmes dans *Poèmes* (1922; *P*) pour retrouver les tankas dissimulés. Il nous explique dans l'Avant-propos l'ascendance créative dans laquelle il s'insère.

les tankas « lorangéens » ont été composés selon la technique ludo-poétique du poème « Le jeu » de Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau (1912-1943), une technique ultérieurement formulée en poème et non étrangère à Loranger [...] (p. 2)

Or, souvent ces tankas révèlent les mêmes préoccupations que Duhaime exprime lui-même dans *fuJitifs* – par exemple, la vieillesse.

l'inquiétude de ce qu'il allait être  
devint sa pensée fixe  
il eut peur non pas de la mort  
mais de ce qu'il allait être  
avant la mort (p. 61)

Duhaime a trouvé ce tanka dans le texte « Le passeur ».

Ainsi donc, à toute la longue vie que l'homme reconnut avoir été, quand il en apprit la durée, vint-il s'ajouter un peu de mort avec **l'inquiétude de ce qu'il allait être. Il eut peur, non pas précisément de la mort mais de ce qu'il allait être avant la mort**, de ce qu'allaient devenir ses bras, ses uniques bras, ce qu'il avait toujours été. L'énergie de pomper la vie comme d'un puits était encore en eux ; mais il advint que l'idée de ne pouvoir pas toute la pomper, jusqu'à ce que le trou fut tari, **devint sa pensée fixe.** (*LA* p. 10)

On voit que ce dernier syntagme devient le deuxième vers du tanka. Si ce processus de création ressemble au caviardage, le résultat en devient une distillation concentrée de l'impact émotionnel du texte d'origine – le « honkadori », autant « un rappel de l'œuvre et un hommage » (p. 3).

Il serait intéressant pour les lecteurs de suivre les pas créateurs du poète. Les deux recueils de Loranger sont disponibles en pdf à La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec :

[beq.ebooksgratuits.com/pdf/Loranger-atmospheres.pdf](http://beq.ebooksgratuits.com/pdf/Loranger-atmospheres.pdf)

[beq.ebooksgratuits.com/pdf/Loranger-poemes.pdf](http://beq.ebooksgratuits.com/pdf/Loranger-poemes.pdf)

Je termine cette lecture avec un tanka préféré, un que Duhaime a repéré dans « Images de poèmes irréalisés » (*P*, vers 1, 2, 4, 10, 11, p. 62).

une horloge grand-père  
ô ce cercueil debout  
une face qui n'a plus d'âge  
et le pendule se balance  
comme une hache à deux tranchants (p. 82)



Somme toute, d'André Duhaime un recueil inspiré et inspirant.

*recension par Maxianne Berger*



***À quelques pas de l'aube* par Jimmy Poirier, Éditions David, Ottawa (Ontario), 2022, 113 p. (coll. Haïku) ISBN 9782895978442- (\$ 14,95 CA).**

*À quelques pas de l'aube*, 4<sup>e</sup> recueil de Jimmy Poirier, est composé de 5 parties (92 haïkus) : « Au cœur de la pinède », L'ombre du jeune tilleul », « Le bleu de l'aube », « Parmi les passants » et « Engranger la lumière ». Dans chacune, il y a 3 haïsha ou photo-haïku. Les 15 photos (chacune sur 2 pages), en noir et blanc, sont de Johanne Poirier du Bas-Saint-Laurent.

« *Au cœur de la pinède* » est une promenade dans son « grand potager / [où] un enfant sème / de petits pas » (p. 21). Il replonge dans sa rêverie éveillée lorsqu' « en travers du chemin / un bouleau mort / [le fait] enjamber sa lumière » (haïsha, p. 16-17). Il émerge de sa contemplation avec le « bruissement des feuilles » (p. 20) et redevient attentif aux sons et à la lumière. Cette dernière lui joue un tour, car « j'avais cru entendre / un haïku » (p. 29).

Ensuite, avec « le premier café / le chant d'un merle / peaufine le jour » (p.34-35) et la section « L'ombre d'un jeune tilleul ». Il compare le temps à une brise tiède. L'automne marque un court « temps d'arrêt / [avec] l'enfance dans le vol / d'une samare » (p. 38). Qu'en est-il de marcher en « octobre / [lorsqu'] un vent fou / sculpte les arbres » (p. 40-41) et les dénude.

La section « *Le bleu de l'aube* » doit son titre au deuxième haïku. Celle-ci débute par la lumière incertaine des « premières lueurs » (p. 52-53) au réveil. Par le toucher et l'odorat, la sensualité s'éveille avec « nos draps au sol / pour seul vêtement / le bleu de l'aube » (p. 55). La journée évolue. Le lecteur découvre qu' « elle remet sa robe / moi ma chemise / [et] la pluie a cessé » (p. 61). Le romantisme se poursuit. En un haïku, Poirier évoque la séparation avec la photo « Lumière du Cabouron<sup>1</sup> » par ce haïku. Il craint pour son couple avec « *J'avais quel âge / quand tu as laissé maman?* » (p. 64-65). Dans son besoin de réconfort, « parler de mes larmes / à ma mère » (p.68) semble l'apaiser. La peine est, symboliquement, suggérée dans le « bureau du médecin (...) [par] un ficus se meurt » (p. 69). L'amour grandit et a besoin de lumière; en contrepartie, peut-il être toxique comme cette plante?

Dans « Parmi les passants », le lecteur se fait badaud. Le quotidien s'illustre par l'humour quand « les premiers pas hors du lit / une de mes pantoufles / ronronne » (p. 79). Il devient tristounet par un « sombre après-midi » (p. 80-81) ou quand « un homme invisible / tend la main » (p. 77). On relie la situation avec « cet arbuste échevelé devant / le salon de coiffure » (p. 78) tout comme nos pensées le sont parfois. À la maison, ces rencontres se transforment en « insomnie / à quelques pas de l'aube » (p. 80). Des images surgissent, celle « d'un homme sans chien / [qui] promène son ombre » (p. 82-83). Est-ce la sienne?

Enfin, « Engranger la lumière », pose le regard sur des instants que l'on oublie. La lumière est alors présentée sous différentes appellations : aube, midi, ciel, juillet, etc. Le mouvement s'annonce en « juillet / l'œil perdu dans les vagues / d'un champ d'avoine » (p.93) doré. La promenade se poursuit. La lumière se renouvelle par « ce caillou gris / soudain si précieux / dans sa

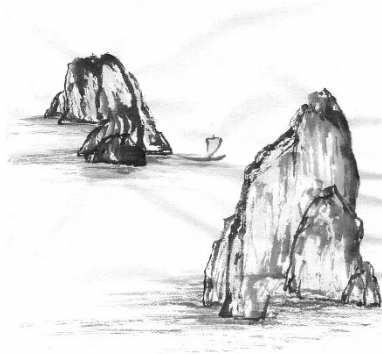
petite main » (p. 97-98). En l'espace de deux haïkus, nous sommes projetés dans une « allée de cimetièr / [où] un papillon / prend tout son temps » (p. 99) en voletant comme une âme en peine. Des enfants, dans quelques haïkus, regardent le ciel. La paréïdolie<sup>ii</sup> naît : « *un cheval!* / dit l'enfant en pointant / les nuages » (p. 102-103). Tout ce parcours conduit à la « fin de l'été / [où] face au fleuve j'engrange / la lumière » (p. 107-108). Ce pourrait être autant l'auteur que le lecteur qui regarde les vagues.

Enfin, la lumière attire l'œil. Voilà le champ d'action dans lequel Jimmy Poirier gravite, parfois avec humour, parfois avec sensualité, parfois dans un réalisme cru, mais toujours sincèrement et fraternellement dans *À quelques pas de l'aube*.

*recension par Claude Rodrigue*

<sup>i</sup> Colline émergeant de la plaine, du genre inselberg, dans la région du Kamouraska, résultant de l'érosion glaciaire.

<sup>ii</sup> Tendance instinctive à trouver des formes familières dans les nuages, les constellations, etc.



# Haibun

PEPÉ

*Bryan Cook*

There's an overpowering stench in the garden. Our neighbor's wife heads frantically to the shower. A skunk, lured by musky cantaloupe, is in the live-trap. It's a big sucker with machine-guns for anal glands. What to do now?

There's good advice on YouTube from others who have learnt the hard way. "Sing calmly to your skunk so it's not surprised as you approach behind a damp towel which you will then drape over the trap." I suggest modifying Sheldon's lullaby\*: "Soft skunky, soft skunky, stripy ball of fur, nice skunky, nice skunky, do not squirt." However, neighbor Fred can't sing, so he just tosses on a wet blanket.

There's no way it's going in our SUVs, so we use the tin boat. The fat critter needs two of us to gingerly load it aboard.

We make our way to the bushland behind the grocery store parking lot. As I reverse the boat to the curb, a trucker quips "You ain't gonna catch fish there!" He quickly leashes his hound when he learns there's a skunk on board.

Opening a spring-loaded trap is no easy feat. Sticks and a hoe fail. Fearing for the worst, Fred depresses the spring and I hold the door open. Nothing happens, the skunk won't leave. We resort to a vigorous "shake and bake". A black and white head appears followed rapidly by an erect tail and a fully loaded, pink rear-end. We beat a hasty retreat and smoke the tires. An odious perfume shrouds the parking lot.

Back home and several days later, the whiff of skunk still lingers. We tell party guests to drink more wine and pretend they're at the cottage among the wild-life.

*smoking weed  
in a summer breeze  
yet another skunk*

Pepé Le Pew is the amorous cartoon skunk in Warner Bros., “Looney Tunes”.

Dr. Sheldon Cooper’s cat lullaby is from the TV series “The Big Bang Theory”.



## Ghosts

*Ulrike Narwani*

The new home is smaller, less work, but not without heirlooms. Ghosts accompany me, inhabit me, thrive along the golden fields above the pond beyond the old house, the pink blossoms of the wild plum tree, the blueberry bushes beginning to bear fruit and the espaliered apple tree next to the kitchen window. I hear them play old family tunes on the piano and their excited victory shouts in badminton games. How they chatter like my grandchildren as they search for Easter eggs among the lilies.

I would miss them  
if they vanished—  
family reunion

## Homebodies

*Prose – James Rutley and Sidney Bending*

*Haiku – Margaret Rutley and Sidney Bending*

Sprinklers, water hoses, outside furniture. All put in the garage for the season.

This is the first time squirrels have ripped big patches in the patio umbrella to pad their nest. The sign of a long, cold winter.

hoar frost . . .  
asleep in a hollow tree  
the old porcupine



## date pinwheels

*Dorothy Mahoney*

We sit on either side of her wheelchair. She studies us but has forgotten who we are. “It’s been so long,” she smiles, “How are you?”

When I answer, “no complaints,” she takes our hands and says, “Let’s go find some!”

old country  
my aunt’s cookies never  
like hers

## Linked Verses and Sequences

### Festival

Sidney Bending & *Terry Ann Carter*

spirit awakening  
a monk paints the eyes  
of the dragon

*red and gold flames  
of a fierce face*

in the lead  
twenty paddles  
slice the sea

*racing through clouds  
such sleek scales  
on the teak boat*

a drummer keeps the pulse...  
pounding sun

*almost a tie  
the crowd cheers  
across our harbour*



amber alert bees begin fanning their nest

*Debbie Strange*

## Reviews . . .

*Last Summer Pear*, haiku by Angela Leuck. Yarrow Press (imprint of Shoreline Press), Hatley, Q.C., 2021, ISBN 978-1-1-990657-00-9, 87 pp, 5” x 7”, softcover, \$12.00. [shorelinepress.ca](http://shorelinepress.ca)

This delightful haiku collection written by author, editor, publisher, and teacher Angela Leuck is divided into four sections with the following titles, “Last Summer Pear,” “Water Dripping,” “Divine Mystery” and “From the Buddha’s Raised Hand.” In her acknowledgement, the poet credits her Haiku-a-day group in the Townships for their comments on the poems and for joining her to write haiku from November 2020 to December 2021. None of the poems (except for one) have been previously published, which makes the collection even more noteworthy. Also notable are the charming cover art by Diana Baldwin and the back cover author photo by Carolynn Rafman.

In the following haiku from “Last Summer Pear” the winter season is encapsulated using intriguing imagery.

winter fields  
we slip between  
white flannel sheets

Winter fields and white bed sheets seem to have little in common aside from colour. Unlike the chilly fields, the flannel sheets are warm and inviting, with a subtle hint of eroticism. As well the alliteration achieved through the repetition of the “w” sound lends an expressive note to an already lyrical verse.

Here’s a haiku from “Water Dripping” that illustrates a change of seasons in a unique way.



St. Patrick's Day  
finally taking down  
the Christmas wreath

The change from spring to winter is welcomed by the poet, although it seems to catch her slightly by surprise, as it does for many of us living in the northern hemisphere. We know it's coming, yet we're still unprepared when it finally arrives after months of cold weather. I can't help but wonder if the Christmas wreath was replaced with a St Patrick's Day wreath or some other harbinger of spring.

Some of the poems showcase the poet's sense of humour, as in this one from "Divine Mystery."

driving my husband  
around the bend  
then the road straightens

I laughed when I read the third line, in appreciation of a figure of speech that becomes the literal truth and the punchline of a clever joke.

An autumn themed haiku in the fourth section appears to be all about loss.

falling leaves  
I add my old doll  
to the giveaway pile

It's actually about gain because both the gift giver and the receiver benefit from the act of generosity. Furthermore, the old doll ends up in a giveaway pile instead of a garbage pile, which

shows environmental responsibility. This is a heartwarming and uplifting poem like the entire collection, and I greatly look forward to reading Angela Leuck's next book of poetry.

review by Joanne Morcom



***The Inevitable***, by Dorothy Mahoney, Red Moon Press, 2022. 978-1-958408-05-6. 120 pp.\$20. redmoonpress.com.

*The Inevitable*, by Dorothy Mahoney, is a flash fiction journalism version of haibun. If the seas inside of you are frozen by contentment, boredom and doldrums, here is a set of axes. As Marie Howe put it, "Poetry holds the knowledge that we are alive and that we know we're going to die." By speaking to and of death, we gain a measure of the illusion of control.

The *Inevitable* could be triggering to some audiences for subjects of suicide, abuse, violence, miscarriage, and religion. Not advisable for the depressed. The book is safe from nudity, drug use, taxes, sex and profanity for those who check for trigger warnings.

As was her previous collection, *Ceaseless Rain*, (Palimpsest Press 2020) *The Inevitable* is a meditation on grief. By compression, immediacy of point of view, an eye for telling details, and by order of reveal Mahoney makes vivid stories. By literary skill she ups the voltage on what in other hands would be generic tales.

Each haibun began as a flash fiction response to news and became a grim, hard hitting, heartbreaking vignette torn from the news. Like CNN it moves from one point of disaster and

destruction to the next. Here, a flood, a flattened encampment, an earthquake with wounded. There, someone self-immolating at a shrine and cut over to little girls being killed in a farm accident. In this case, however, all the stories have had scrubbed from the record: names, faces, cities, countries, and melanin.

Halfway through there are surviving refugees settling to start again. The moment's reprieve is deceptive. The macabre dance of death restarts by streetcar, in revolution, through family members. Finally, music is overheard but the piano is tempered by hands that were in death camps. A woman prays and has a stillborn.

The collection is internally coherent. For impact, the one collective human story is made as stories often transposed to first person, present tense. The Inevitable collates how humanity is a despicable, contemptible, and wretched beast. It underscores how we are all ephemeral whether we live for a century or an hour.

Absent are happiness, (except when clawed by tragedy), indigenous people, recovery, healing, pets, humour, or connection. Class remains reflected in suburbia, brickyard, or therapy session. And although no particular deity is mentioned, prayer is often referenced suggesting a theist point of view that gives life meaning.

The haiku after each paragraph have a lot of work to do to restore equilibrium, in cooperation with the work of a blank page between each slow reading.

p. 79 has a haibun "offering" that closes with the downbeat position in the world,

roadside shrine  
how constant  
the weeds

On p. 91 a haibun called “survivors” insists that for every shard of light lost, there’s more than a countering darkness. There may be a new day, but it is lesser than the ones before.

fireflies  
extinguished  
by morning

The collection, by existing, raises the question: If the stories enter us, are they ours? What we vicariously witness we list and must process. Where are the lines between evoking empathy, between historical fiction and who’s right it is to tell the story? As a culture we consume entertainment trauma for breakfast. Urban haiku and senryu have traditionally brought forward the jangly bits of culture. This book goes further in that direction.

*review by Pearl Pirie*



***The Way a Poem Emerges: A Haiku Trinity & Beyond***, by George Swede. Toronto: Lett Press, 2022. ISBN 978-0-98811179-3-8. 84 pp; 5.0 x 8.0 in. CAN\$20.00 (within Canada) and USD\$20.00 (outside Canada); price includes postage. Order at [lett.press@yahoo.com](mailto:lett.press@yahoo.com); send cheque or money order to George Swede, 70 London Street, Toronto, ON M6G 1N3.

A new book by George Swede is cause for heightened anticipation if not rejoicing. I first encountered Swede’s work at

the 2005 Haiku North America conference in Port Townsend, Washington, where he was the Saturday night feature reader. At that time he had almost 30 years of haiku involvement behind him – and he continues to produce relevant, thoughtful and artistically gobsmacking work. His 2016 collection of haiku, tanka and haibun from Red Moon Press, *Helices*, earned a Haiku Society of America Merit Book Award, and *Arithmetic* was a 2019 Snapshot Press e-chapbook award winner.

Now the octogenarian poet has published, as principal of Lett Press, his latest offering, *The Way a Poem Emerges: A Haiku Trinity & Beyond*, which takes its title from this 2020 haiku: “creekside turtle / the way a poem emerges / from its shell.” The book collects 124 of Swede’s poems into three sections defined by his concept of a “haiku trinity,” and a fourth section for poems that don’t fit into his “tripartite scheme.” The haiku were previously published in journals and anthologies from 1978 through 2022, with the majority from 2000 onward.

Since his 1976 dive into Makoto Ueda’s *Modern Japanese Haiku*, George Swede has been a significant voice in the perpetual discourse about haiku in English. He has repeatedly visited, revised and communicated his ideas about what makes a haiku – in his 1981 primer *The Modern English Haiku*, in prefaces to anthologies and to his own poetry collections, and via essays in haiku journals.

The investigation that structures *The Way a Poem Emerges* hearkens to a hot topic in the earlier decades of North American haiku: the distinctions between haiku and senryu. The debate was ever inconclusive due, Swede says, to the “subjective elements” ascribed to both terms. In this book, he proposes a schema using only “objective criteria”; that is, simply identifying the nature and/or human-nature content of a poem.

Swede proposed a “three-part typology” in his 1992 essay, “Elite haiku: Hybrids of nature and human content” (*Modern Haiku*, 23:1). This was based on his analysis of haiku in major anthologies of the day, which showed that 60% contained elements of both nature and human nature, 25% just nature, and the remaining 15% just human nature. An informal assessment of recent periodicals found that nature-human nature haiku continue to be most popular.

These three types comprise the haiku trinity presented in *The Way a Poem Emerges*. Here are two poems from “Section One,” which contains 24 haiku said to involve only the natural world (n-haiku)—the first trinity “variant”:

bear scat  
a whole  
blueberry

prairie heat  
grazing heifers bunched  
under the lone cloud

Per the latter poem, I can’t help thinking of the domestic overtones of heifers in a pasture, of the ‘human’ creeping in . . .

Let’s look at three from the second-variant section, which contains 32 haiku that focus on human interaction and/or human artifacts (h-haiku):

yearly medical  
unnoticed  
my swollen ego

singles night  
the loud chatter  
of loneliness

after the cremation ice cream

Swede says that the h-haiku variant is, in its purest form, the “baggage-laden term, ‘senryu.’” And I say that Swede’s singular voice and vision has long shone very brightly through the human nature in his haiku. These three poems exhibit many features of his artistry: the humorous self-deprecation, the catch-you-off-guard third line that is unnervingly funny or that plunges you into empathic sadness; and the monoku – five words that are fun to say, while loaded with pathos around loss and a need to self-soothe, often with something sweet.

The third and largest section, with 44 poems, contains the haiku variant about nature and “us” (n+h-haiku):

rain thrum  
the child asleep before  
the lullaby

dry riverbed  
the son who thought he had  
found his way

The first, “rain thrum,” is a satisfying example of nature (sound of rain) plus human interaction (child and implied caregiver) and a human-created musical artifact (lullaby). It’s lovely that the nature aspect pre-empts the intended lullaby effect, while the poem has its own pleasing sound.

In “dry riverbed,” the nature fragment interacts with the human-nature phrase to, for me, induce a profound identification with a poet-parent worried about their possibly despairing adult child. There’s a big, invisible “but” at the end of the third line, which catapults me back to the first line and the reality of a dry-

riverbed life: emptiness, hard-to-penetrate surfaces, no flow, and no revitalization.

So, does this objective construct of the haiku trinity further clarify the distinctions between haiku and senryu? Not really. Swede has replaced these two categories with the three trinity types, and I'm already having discussions with myself about whether some poems belong in the variant type to which they've been assigned—the n-haiku seemingly the least 'pure' category. Take, for instance, the following poem classed as n-haiku:

rainforest beetle  
it scuttles back among  
the undocumented

Might a case be made for considering “rainforest beetle” to be an n+h-haiku? The word “undocumented” evokes much about human nature: notions of our role as stewards of the planet and related scientific activity such as species mapping and creating taxonomies. In a backhanded way, it also evokes unease about how documented and tracked we humans are in today's world. Then, also from the n-haiku section, there's:

roadside flowers  
seeds sailing to  
a better life

The last line is not objective sense image, but a very human judgement call—and about something even humans are not necessarily good at managing, let alone predicting—which strikes me as very cynical or senryu-like.

Swede acknowledges that the variants “form an inseparable trinity—thinking about one leads inevitably to thoughts about the



other two.” He also suggests that the prevalence of nature-plus-human-nature haiku may be responsible for the largely faded-away senryu versus haiku discussions.

The fourth section, “Beyond,” contains 24 poems that are “less grounded in reality” than haiku. Swede asks, when does a haiku become a short poem? and vice versa. Though I find the poems in this category to be less accessible overall, here is a “beyond” poem that powerfully stirs up a sense of the primitive, evolutionary forces in our subconscious:

in a dream  
from another phylum  
i uncoil hissing

Note that this poem has nature (serpent) and human-nature (first-person voice; dreaming; and another taxonomic word, *phylum*) content.

It is in human nature to seek meaningful structures and guideposts — the seeking, particularly in the crucible of a community or field, is meaningful in itself. Thank you, George Swede, for your decades of tracking — and undoubtedly influencing — the progress of haiku in the West.

One last Swede poem, from *Helices*:

after defining haiku  
each of us at our  
own urinals

*Vicki McCullough*



***the sexy woman on my cruise ship has sailed***

*Robert Witmer*

*Bature! West African Haikai*, by Richard Stevenson, Mawenzi House Publishers Ltd., 2022. 978-1-774150-79-5. 128 pp. \$20.95, mawenzihouse.com.

*Bature! West African Haikai* is an *utaniki* or poetic travel journal. Through hundreds of haiku, senryu, tanka, kyoka, zappai and sequences, its author, Richard Stevenson, takes us along on a retrospective look at his 1980 journey through Nigeria in a Volkswagen. With a unique voice and compelling subject matter, Stevenson describes his experiences in the West African nation. While the book touches on a wide variety of themes, this review will focus primarily on Stevenson's examination of language, culture, and food.

One of the major themes running through *Bature* is language. Stevenson frequently integrates phrases of Hausa and pidgin English into his English poems. For the most part, he provides no translations. This decision helps authenticate his travel experience: just as Stevenson was left to rely on his own devices to gain understanding, so too is his reader. An extreme example comes from the following senryu where the first two lines are written in Hausa:

*Sannu, bature*  
*Barka da rana*  
hope I dig the Doog (p 6)

For Stevenson, the language barrier can be humorous. He describes how some locals try to take advantage of his perceived ignorance based on race:

there's the right price  
and there's the white price  
learn to haggle (p 38)

However, the inability to communicate can have potentially dire implications, such as when Stevenson's son fell ill:

high fever  
we get Chris in the tub  
gather ice cube trays  
next day track down a doctor  
who speaks English for a pill (p 32)

Stevenson also examines culture, and frequently highlights the differences between Nigeria and Canada:

two-lane roundabout—  
three lanes of traffic  
a Mac driver  
sideswipes my brand-new Beetle  
doesn't stop to swap pink slips (p 11)

After an accident, Canadians typically stop, swap information, and prepare to deal with insurance. In his mishap in Nigeria, Stevenson is left roadside, watching as the Mac driver continues.

In a similar vein, Stevenson wryly observes how some westerners refuse to properly adjust to the African environment . . .

why would expats  
build cement block houses  
with tin rooves here?  
no air con  
just fans to stir the broth (p 110)

. . . or how others do not adjust socially:

buy a babe a beer  
you've just clocked in  
your Sask macho moves  
are useless here  
get with the program, Holmes (p 58)

*Bature* also has many poems about food. Nigerian food is typically much hotter than that of Canada. Stevenson speaks of spice in a kyoka about eating on the road:

splayed on a stake  
the chicken so spicy  
it takes a good  
five hundred k  
for the heat to dissipate (p 12)

Similarly, one of the pitfalls of travel is having food or drink to which your stomach is not accustomed. Stevenson addresses this scenario in the following poem:

instant coffee here  
gives you the shakes, mate  
two cups, you're  
like that dog out there  
shakin' and shittin' razor blades (p 34)

Finally, Stevenson details, with levity, how an experience from home can influence a culinary decision on the road. In this case, he is charmed by a menu item that shares the name of a Rolling Stones' album:

the menu offers  
goat's head soup  
gotta have it, right?  
what self-respecting  
Stones fan wouldn't? (p 53)

*Bature* is an engaging and well-written poetic travel journal. Utilizing a range of Japanese short form poetics, Stevenson is effective in capturing his Nigerian experiences across a variety of themes including language, culture, and food. This is a unique and compelling book, one to be recommended to all readers of poetry.

*review by Dave Read*



***Eggplants & Teardrops: A Haiku Collection***, by Aaron Barry.  
Illustrated by Eunbyul Kwak. Independently published, 2022.  
978-1-7386339-0-6. 118 pp. ±\$14 amazon.ca

*Eggplants & Teardrops* is a romp through language, playful, unexpected, energetic, and thoughtful, all bundled together into its very own breathlessness. There are times when the contemporary phrasings and references are beyond me, and I am tempted to suggest the inclusion of a glossary at the beginning of the book. That, however, is simply a reflection of my age, and my ignorance of contemporary lingo. But a little research proves the appropriateness and import of each term — from DM and wyd and fs through to the “simp” and “beta” personality types.

And how perfectly newer words convey age-old emotions:

marriage proposal...  
I'm feeling so many  
emojis right now (p. 71)

If my age and lack of technogloss is an impediment for me, there are some, er, raunchier phrasings I do understand as they are also retro, referring to younger days of the poet and his elders (likely of similar vintage to me).

the talk...  
dad actually uses the word  
gazongas (p. 36)

Barry is adept with the wordplay of ordinary language, such as a plain, punful euphemism — “send pussywillow pics” (p. 45) — as well as paradox, calligrams, and the simple play of font — “anXIETY” (p. 18).

The collection is delicately illustrated by Eunbyul Kwak whose line drawings complement the poems of their page. One of them, helpfully for this reader, confirms the meaning of the pun.

weed  
to put it  
bluntly (p. 9)

There are riffs on contemporary concerns mixed into relationships.

he / hymn / his  
she / her / slurs (p. 31)

I realize the phrasing is informed by rhyme, but as a double-X human, I might be more comfortable to see “purrs” at the end there. But then, the relationship might well be as described.

Often enough, Barry shows how plain ordinary language can convey so much with just a few aptly chosen words:

belt holes  
then  
and now (p. 106)

Of course, the title poem shows, deliciously, how word choice impacts on ambiance:

depending on the time of day  
aubergines  
or eggplants (p. 52)

Aaron Barry has so many ways of being contemporary, and I cannot quote examples of each of these. Let’s just say that if you love dextrous poems, you’ll enjoy Eggplants & Teardrops.

*review by Maxianne Berger*



*this small singing*, haiku by Pearl Pirie. phafours press, 2022, 16 pages. \$25 plus shipping from the author: pearl@pearlpirie.com. <https://pearlpirie.com/books/chapbooks/>.

As a child I enjoyed reading Choose-Your-Own-Adventure books. The ability to make choices that led where the story would go was intriguing. Sometimes, my selections resulted in tales that ended with the turn of a page. Other times, the

adventure would carry on for an extended reading. Either way, my ability to participate created a level of engagement that did not always exist reading typical books.

In *this small singing*, Pearl Pirie has applied the Choose-Your-Own-Adventure concept to haiku. Pirie's chapbook has one haiku per page, is 14 pages long, and each page is cut in three sections corresponding to the haiku's three lines. In this manner, Pirie has created a flipbook where the reader can turn each section of the page as they see fit to Choose-Their-Own-Haiku. Self-published and homemade (Pirie literally made the paper used for her chapbook's cover in a process she describes on her blog, [pearlpirie.com](http://pearlpirie.com)), *this small singing* yields a total of 2,744 haiku, all based on the choices of the reader. The interactive nature of this book takes the old haiku cliché that "the writer and reader co-compose the poem" to a whole new level.

Here are a handful of haiku that I "chose" in my reading of *this small singing*. For demonstrative purposes, I have kept the first line the same for this selection:

from city without horizons  
our breath is a music  
thunder in me

from city without horizons  
lightning. 1, 2 –  
her raised chin

from city without horizons  
pausing mid-phrase  
this small singing



from city without horizons  
eclipsing the war  
what I hide inside

Pearl Pirie has fulfilled a very creative concept in her writing of *this small singing*. I would recommend this chapbook for all readers of haiku, and for anyone who is inclined towards interactivity in their reading.

*review by Dave Read*



p b  
g r d n  
i n  
n c  
w e t h

*Roland Packer*

**'no trace of another vehicle April blizzard**

*Marshall Hryciuk*

## Journals of Interest

See web sites for information on subscriptions, single-issue purchase, and submission guidelines.

**Modern Haiku, An Independent Journal of Haiku and Haiku Studies.** Paul Miller, Editor. [www.modernhaiku.org](http://www.modernhaiku.org)

**Frogpond, The Journal of the Haiku Society of America.** Jacob D. Salzer, Editor. [www.hsa-haiku.org/frogpond](http://www.hsa-haiku.org/frogpond)

**bottle rockets: a collection of short verse.** Stanford M. Forrester, Editor. [www.bottlerocketspress.com](http://www.bottlerocketspress.com)

**Kō.** Kōko Katō, Editor. 1-36-7 Ishida cho, Mizuho-ku, Nagoya, Japan 467-0067, \$20 US (no cheques or money orders) for two issues.

**HI.** Haiku International Assoc., 7th Floor, Azuma Building, 2-7 Ichigaya-Tamachi, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, 162-0843, Japan. Membership: \$50 US. [haiku-hia.com/index\\_en.html](http://haiku-hia.com/index_en.html)

**Haiku Presence: Britain's leading independent haiku journal.** Ian Storr, Editor. [www.haikupresence.org](http://www.haikupresence.org)

**Kokako**, a biannual journal of haiku, tanka, haibun and linked pieces by New Zealanders and others. Info: Patricia Prime, Editor. [kokakonz@gmail.com](mailto:kokakonz@gmail.com)

**Ribbons: Tanka Society of America Journal**, Christine Villa, Editor. [www.tankasocietyofamerica.org/ribbons](http://www.tankasocietyofamerica.org/ribbons)

**GUSTS**, biannual publication of Tanka Canada. Kozue Uzawa, Editor. [www.tanka.a2hosted.com/g-u-s-t-s-homepage-3.html](http://www.tanka.a2hosted.com/g-u-s-t-s-homepage-3.html)

**Star\*Line**, newsletter and network instrument of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association. Vince Gotera, Editor. [www.sfpoetry.com/starline.html](http://www.sfpoetry.com/starline.html)

**International Tanka**, Journal of the International Tanka Society. Mari Konno, Editor. [www17.plala.or.jp/ITS117/English%20index.html](http://www17.plala.or.jp/ITS117/English%20index.html)

**Kingfisher**, biannual journal of haiku and senryu, Tanya McDonald, Editor. [www.kingfisherjournal.com](http://www.kingfisherjournal.com)

## **Net Briefs**

a short list of online publications of interest.

**The Asahi Haikuist Network; a selection of seasonal haiku from poets living around the world.** David McMurray, Editor. [asahi.com/ajw/special/haiku](http://asahi.com/ajw/special/haiku)

**Autumn Moon Haiku Journal.** Bruce Ross, Editor. [www.autumnmoonhaiku.com](http://www.autumnmoonhaiku.com)

**Bear Creek Haiku – poetry, poems and info.** ayaz daryl nielsen, Editor. [bearcreekhaiku.blogspot.ca](http://bearcreekhaiku.blogspot.ca)

**bones – journal for contemporary haiku.** Aditya Bahl, Melissa Allen, Johannes S. H. Bjerg, Editors. [www.bonesjournal.com](http://www.bonesjournal.com)

**cattails – the journal of the united haiku & tanka society,** Two issues yearly. Sonam Chhoki, Principal Editor. [www.cattailsjournal.com](http://www.cattailsjournal.com)

**Charlotte Digregorio's Writer's Blog.** Features "Daily Haiku" of submitted, previously published haiku and senryu.  
[charlottedigregorio.wordpress.com](http://charlottedigregorio.wordpress.com)

**Failed Haiku – A Journal of English Senryu.** Mike Rehling, Editor. New issue monthly. [www.failedhaiku.com](http://www.failedhaiku.com)

**The Heron's Nest,** John Stevenson, Managing Editor.  
[www.theheronsnest.com](http://www.theheronsnest.com)

**is/let,** Scott Metz, Editor. [isletpoetry.wordpress.com](http://isletpoetry.wordpress.com)

**Juxtapositions: The Journal of Haiku Research and Scholarship.** Peter McDonald, Sr. Editor. Online & print.  
[www.thehaikufoundation.org/juxta/about-juxta](http://www.thehaikufoundation.org/juxta/about-juxta)

**NeverEnding Story: First English-Chinese Bilingual Haiku and Tanka Blog.** Chen-ou Liu, Editor/ Translator.  
[neverendingstoryhaikutanka.blogspot.ca](http://neverendingstoryhaikutanka.blogspot.ca)

**tinywords – haiku and other small poems.** Kathe Palka & Peter Newton, Editors. [www.tinywords.com](http://www.tinywords.com)

**Wales Haiku Journal.** Paul Chambers, Editor.  
[www.waleshaikujournal.com](http://www.waleshaikujournal.com)



*for the love of the goddess Venus fly trap*

*Marianne Paul*

## Et Cetera . . .

**Red Iron Press**, Karen Sohne, Editor. Red Iron seeks poetry, fiction, concrete to be published generally in a folded paper format (8.5 x 11 sheet folded and cut into 12 panels). For details, contact Karen at [imagorediron@gmail.com](mailto:imagorediron@gmail.com).



## International Haiku Organizations

Below is a short list of English and French language Haiku Societies and organizations. Please consult their websites, for further information.

Australia Haiku Society. [australianhaikusociety.org](http://australianhaikusociety.org)

British Haiku Society. [britishhaikusociety.org.uk/](http://britishhaikusociety.org.uk/)

Haiku International Association. [haiku-hia.com/index\\_en.html](http://haiku-hia.com/index_en.html)

Haiku Society of America. [www.hsa-haiku.org](http://www.hsa-haiku.org)

New Zealand Poetry Society.  
[poetrysociety.org.nz/affiliates/haiku-nz/](http://poetrysociety.org.nz/affiliates/haiku-nz/)

Association francophone de haiku.  
[association-francophone-de-haiku.com](http://association-francophone-de-haiku.com)



# Haiku Canada Review

## Submission Guidelines / Soumissions

The *Haiku Canada Review* welcomes haiku, other Japanese forms, as well as articles, from both members and non-members. For reviews, do query first. Please send up to 10 poems maximum. For linked forms and haibun, no more than 2 pieces can be submitted. All work submitted must be the authors' original work. Submitted work must not be under consideration elsewhere and not be previously published. Work accepted may also be used on the Haiku Canada web site or on social media such as Twitter or Facebook, and submission to *Haiku Canada Review* is taken as acceptance of this condition. If submitting by postal mail, kindly include a return envelope.

### English submissions:

Mike Montreuil, Publications Editor,  
1409 Bortolotti Cr., Ottawa, ON K1B 5C1  
[publications@haikucanada.org](mailto:publications@haikucanada.org)

Issue	In-hand Deadline	Publication Date
Winter/Spring	December 31	February
Summer/Fall	August 31	October

### Soumissions en français :

– haïkus, selon le thème proposé, **trois haiku maximum**  
Claude Rodrigue, [haikufrancais@haikucanada.org](mailto:haikufrancais@haikucanada.org)  
– autres formes japonisantes  
Mike Montreuil, [publications@haikucanada.org](mailto:publications@haikucanada.org)

Numéro	Date limite	Date de publication
hiver/ printemps	le 31 décembre	février
été/ automne	le 31 août	octobre

**Haiku Canada Sheets** are open to members only, or non-members by invitation. Published and unpublished work is considered for sheets. Sheet payment is 10 copies.

**Haiku Canada E-News** issues news provided by members and others in a timely manner. All news such as conferences, contests, deadlines, and regional news should be sent, copy ready, to:

Carole Daoust, Haiku Canada E-News Coordinator  
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**Book Reviews:** poets and publishers to contact Dave Read, book-review coordinator: [reviews@haikucanada.org](mailto:reviews@haikucanada.org). Depending on the book and the timing of the request, accepted reviews will either be posted on the Haiku Canada book review blog at [HCshohyoran.blogspot.com](http://HCshohyoran.blogspot.com), or published in *Haiku Canada Review*.

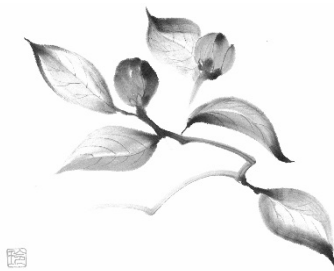
**Recensions :** poètes et éditeurs doivent communiquer avec Maxianne Berger, [recensions@haikucanada.org](mailto:recensions@haikucanada.org). Selon le livre et la date de la demande, les recensions acceptées seront soit affichées au blogue des recensions de Haïku Canada au [HCshohyoran.blogspot.com](http://HCshohyoran.blogspot.com) ou bien publiées dans le *Haiku Canada Review*.

## Membership & Subscriptions

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Please consult the Haiku Canada website for payment details.

<http://www.haikucanada.org/membership/join.php>



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inbox obituary  
the old palaeontologist's  
bones

*for Ignatius*

Hans Drigenberg

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