

# failed haiku

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*'Failed' Editor*

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Cover haiga 'Found Senryu' by: Mark Gilbert

This issue is a 'retrospective' issue. I don't do 'Best Of' issues because what I personally like 'best' is irrelevant even to me, and most other folks if they are honest with themselves. If I chose your poem to appear in Failed Haiku then I think it is worthy and represents a part of the whole 'what is a senryu' discussion that will go on long after we have all left this earth!

The poems I have selected say something to me about the poet and display a voice of their own. I will comment on the poems, but my reasons for choosing to select the poem for this issue may not be yours. My personal observations are just that, and may not represent the poet's motivations for writing it.

In this new phase of Failed Haiku, I need to lessen the workload, so issues will be shorter and much more focused. We will still publish FOUR full blown issues a year, but the others will be shorter and/or edited by someone other than me.

I hope you continue to enjoy each issue, and as always, I welcome your comments and suggestions.

Mike

# Cast List

*In order of appearance*

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**Terri L. French & Susan Burch**  
**Garry Eaton**  
**Brad Bennett**  
**Jade Pisani**  
**Yesha Shah**  
**Michael O'Brien**  
**Roman Lyakhovetsky**  
**Olivier Schopfer**  
**Sharon Rhutasel-Jones**  
**Ian Willey**  
**Keith Woodruff**  
**Jan Benson**  
**Elizabeth Alford**  
**Christina Martin**  
**Frank Dietrich**  
**Debbie Strange**  
**Myron Lysenko**  
**Jayashree Maniyil**

**Nina Kovacic**

**Nicholas Klacsanzky**

**Ken Sawitri**

**David J Kelly**

**Malintha Perera**

**Brent Goodman**

**Roberta Beary**

childhood friend  
I bury my innocence  
with her

## **Rachel Sutcliffe**

It is hard not to be moved by this poem. It is deceptively simple and the revelation it contains comes to a crush in the final line. I came back to this poem many times. It is as fine an example of the senryu form as I have found.

mosquitoes..  
when frequency is not good  
for you

## **Jesus Chameleon**

You can get too much of anything, but the mindlessly annoying things of life are always best when minimized. A smile on your face is mandatory after reading this one.





**Barbara Kaufmann**

Well this one made me laugh out loud. I live in Northern Michigan where we get 80 to 140 inches of snow a year. The spring birds who return early have this same cruel awakening. The image contains the evidence of the panic of the robin in question but not the robin. I really enjoyed the choice of font for this one. It is meticulously neat

and and provides a striking comparison to the image.

devil's night  
the candidate takes the lead  
in the polls

## **Steve Hodge**

Two types of senryu are the toughest to pull off, sexual and political. This one handles a frustrating moment that occurs just after halloween every two years. Devil's night is a time of mindless destruction, this Detroit boy knows it well, but this adroit poem makes you smile in the midst of the 'mindless destruction' of our election process. As a voter the ability to see the humor in the sadness of our choices is somehow reassuring. A tour-de-force indeed!

at forty-five . . .  
his second  
first step

## **Julie Warther**

It is hard not to tear up at this one. On first reading I did not immediately get it. That is the genius in this one (and yes I used that word knowing it's full meaning), that at first the image is not clear. But on second reading the sadness and the triumph hit you hard. At seventy one myself I have witnessed this moment with family and friends. You don't need to 'tell' the whole story to create a toweringly powerful image. BRAVO!

in spring  
the leap from noun  
to verb

## **Hansha Teki**

If you are a student of language every observation on paper is worthy of ten other observations. Here a poet with a grasp of the art of language provides a poem whose focus is on labels while using eight syllables and no punctuation. I had to smile. Did you???

another layer  
of intimacy ...  
the surgeon's hand

## **Karen Cesar**

The intimate touch of another is fraught with permissions and limits. In this poem we are confronted with that most intimate touch, and one that most often sees us unconscious at the moment it occurs, but carries extreme awareness when we wake. You never 'felt' the touch, but you live with its results, sometimes for a lifetime. This is a poem as skillful as a fine surgeon in its construction.

moving day  
three family pets  
buried in the yard

## **Terri French**

If you know Terri, then you know this is a real moment. Our pets are no less important than our family. In fact they are our family. Trusting, mischievous, sometimes destructive, they mirror the humans in our life so exactly that we sometimes slip up and treat the humans like the dogs. This is a thought provoking and quietly sweet poem. I loved it on first read!

killing a mosquito  
with my suicide note —  
someone else's blood

## **Chase Gagnon**

What a time the last couple of years have been for Chase. This is one that made me smile. Yes, I know the topic of suicide should not make you smile, but I am not at all ashamed. When you write about a suicide attempt, you are by definition speaking of a 'divine' failure. The irony and humor in this one just made me happy for the presence of that mosquito, and they seldom bring out that response from me. That last line bangs home the 'hope' contained in this senryu.



## *Dating a serial killer*

I cannot possibly change my MO for you; she looks aghast and takes an extra large gulp of her beer. You have the wrong hair, the wrong skin colour, wrong body type and you were married, she ticks off on her fingertips. I definitely do not get involved with men who have tasted marriage. Plus this is my cooling off period.

I flip through her souvenir album while tracing a thumb over the rim of my untouched mug. The flip book is filled with small snips of hair (every colour except gray), carefully ziplock-ed and labeled with names and dates.

You seemed pretty interested till about five minutes back, I say reaching out for her hand. I am fine with poison, gun-shot, hanging . . . anything you can come up with except that. I raise a cold thumb to my ear and do (what I believe is) an accurate mime of slitting my own throat.

*late into the night  
thrashing the terms  
of our pre-nup*

**Paresh Tiwari**

This is a masterful haibun. We have all had relationships that seem 'rule driven' and pre-constructed to fail. With the ending senryu our

own relationships all becomes too clear in our mind. There is no regret, but the sudden feeling that they were preordained to fail. The voice of the poet thus becomes our own voice.

migraine  
the edge of the whirling fan  
disintegrates

## **Lynette Arden**

When you are in pain even your most common experiences become magnified in their expression. In this poem the impossible and the improbable merge. The piercing headache has taken apart at the seams the most reliable image. That fan whirring at a fixed speed suddenly explodes right at its edge. Does the shock of that image bring the poet back to their senses? We are left to wonder...

this zen garden  
voices asking where's  
the café

## **Duncan Richardson**

Well zen takes it on the chin once again! People often talk about 'zen' as if it were a 'thing', or a spiritual 'place' that can be possessed or visited. It can only be experienced is all. Poor sad zen, losing out to the Starbucks!

contrast  
the word 'juxtaposition'  
so wordy

## **Elaine Andre**

Well this one just hits too close to home. Many have heard me go on about the word in question. Why do poets of such a gentle and succinct form turn to such an unruly word? It adds nothing but syllables! Shall we banish it henceforth?!

not coming back---  
more room  
in the closet

## **Phyllis Lee**

This one falls into the category of 'looking at the bright side' of life! Strangely, and my apologies to the poet, but I could not help thinking of the Monty Python ending to "[Life of Brian](#)". Poets have a heavy streak of positive acceptance and this simple poem nailed that for me.

origami competition  
I am disqualified  
for improvising

## **Mark Gilbert**

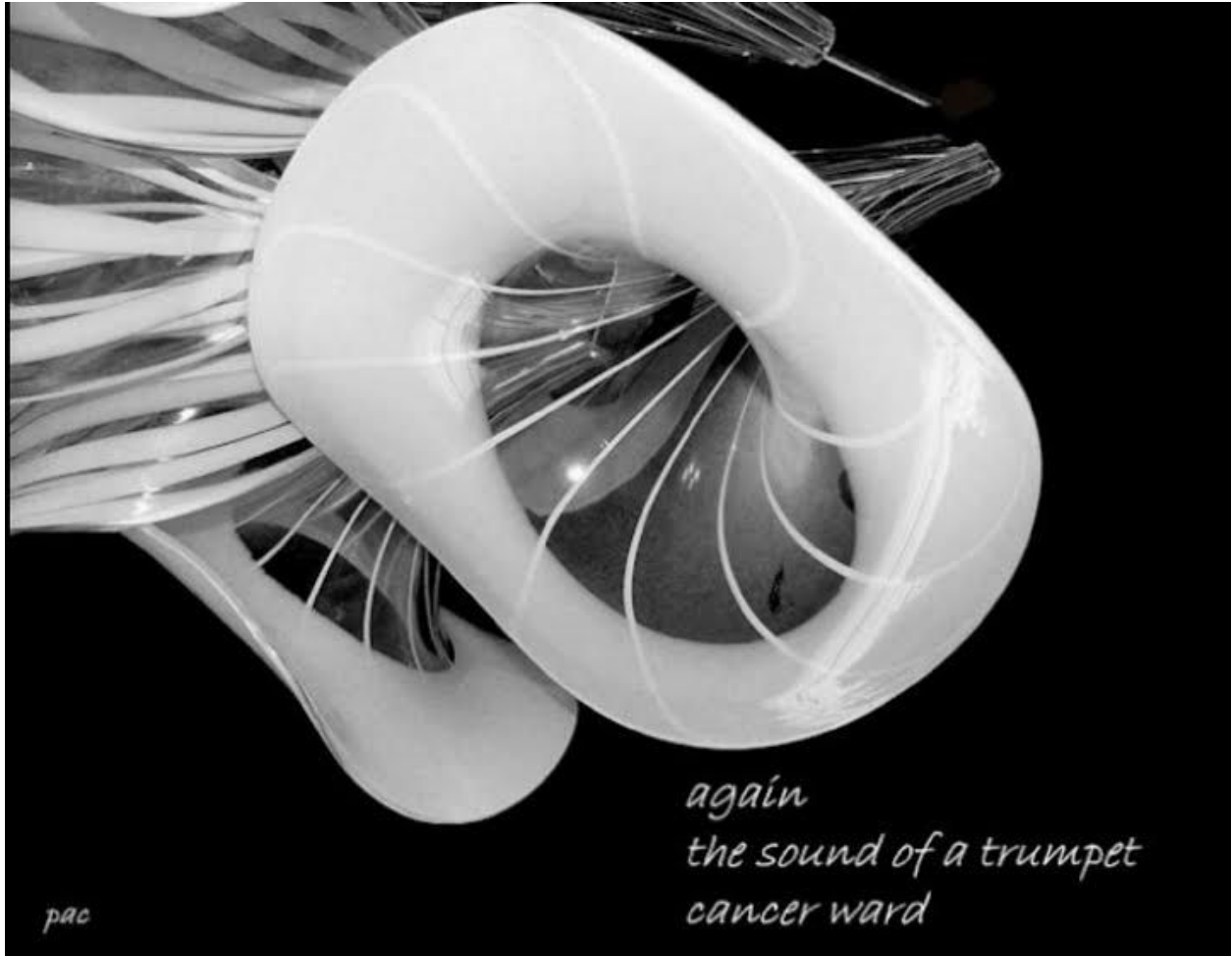
Not sure if this is a truthful recitation of a real event or a made up one. I just don't care! Lovers of Japanese forms of poetry many times try to adopt other forms of art from Japan. Often as not it ends in failure. Still makes me smile a sly smile when I read this one. I relate!

ab workout --  
the word flat  
is  
  r  
  e  
  l  
a  
  t  
  i  
  v  
e

## **Carol Raisfeld**

Ahhh... I know this poem too well. We all strive for some form of 'perfection', but even if we attain it, it is only briefly held. You have to just get comfortable with what 'is' about you as a person. Here the poet 'owns it' in a way we all have experienced.





## **Pris Campbell**

Wow! The poet/artist has been doing WOW for some time now. This one pierced me to the heart. The first time I saw this haiga I had just lost my brother to cancer. This poem is so dramatic that the stunning image it is placed on seems almost too calm in comparison. This one earned my PERFECT label!

oh, sweet lord  
take me when you're ready--  
honeycomb

## **Ernesto P. Santiago**

You know those moments, that even if they are not really perfection, they seem like it! Well you have one here, and every child, and every adult has moments like this one when you think it just can't get better than it is! I went right where the poet was and enjoyed it with him...

bus stop all the strangers I know

## **Bob Lucky**

Sometimes we focus a lot on family, friends, and co-workers to define the relationships in our life. In this poem the poet has found those people we never really 'meet' who share large portions of our day with us every day. The eight o'clock bus riders, boarding together, standing together, reading our books next to each other. There are a dozen novels that could be written from this simple short poem.

## Oh! You Pretty Things

Our older sister's treasured Hunky Dory album once fell out of its sleeve onto a hard floor. The disc looked like someone had taken a neat bite out of it, and one track on each side was lost forever.

oh so carefully  
placing the needle  
onto Track No. 2

Bowie's Let's Dance, along with other tracks on that later album, backgrounded my college years.

We moved our young bodies to all of those songs. We could be anyone or anything. We could be heroes, despite the biting recession that prevailed in Ireland at that time.

high unemployment our dance jumps higher

**Maeve O'Sullivan**

The things that fill our memories of tough times! This reminds me of moments in my own life. No money,

little food, but they were, for reasons we can't fathom, the good times we remember most vividly. I suspect that the phrase 'money can't buy happiness' was uttered by a dancer from Ireland!

## **Aporia**

“Did you see that?”

“See what?”

“Never mind.”

“Can you not do that?”

“Do what?”

“Never mind.”

disk defragmentation –  
this need to become  
whole again

## **Shloka Shankar**

The actions of a disk drive approximate a random arrangement of thoughts in our mind. Putting a hard drive in order is easy and quick, not so easy as the arranging of our own utterances. So many meanings in our disjunctive words. The sense of the senseless.

reflection...  
the time it takes light  
to settle

## **Kate MacQueen**

Observations are sometimes underrated in senryu. Like we should just ignore the obvious, but real poets know that the obvious is the door to the hidden aspects of life and science. Light travels so fast, but our perception of it has it 'hovering' in this poem. Is this a mental reflection or an actual one. See, the door has opened! Step into the 'light'.

she explains the difference  
between a medium and a psychic--  
blizzard warning

## **Sondra J. Byrnes**

Have you ever asked a question and immediately regretted asking it? I have, and the poet here has put herself into the fire. Some folks will hold back their feelings and you have to pull them out, but others... Well you can feel the torrent coming with the first deep breath they take before speaking.



gallery—  
the artist's signature too  
an abstract

## **Gautam Nadkarni**

**This is just too funny! We have all seen this at galleries and art museums. What is there about 'foolish consistency' that keeps artists from just 'spelling' it out for us! Van Gogh was a self promoter and signed his finished works with a 'Vincent' boldly. The artist in this poem could use some coaching from the master.**

wind quintet  
the circular breathing  
of our lives

## **Debbie Strange**

The wonderful symphony of our lives. The music of our breaths is in the tight sounds of a quintet for this poem. You don't need a hundred people to make a life, the few that we have and hold dear can make the most dramatic sounds that carry our heart. I love the thought behind this, and it makes a wonderful subject for a 'short poem'.

hearing aid  
mom tells dad  
what I said

## **Dave Read**

They are called 'helpmates', and when one of them needs an 'interpreter' one is always available. This poem also conveys in a tender way the poet's part of this transaction between family members. A long pause between thoughts seems part of the process here.

spreading  
the hay  
between my legs

## **Reka Jellema**

Ok, putting aside double entendre this is a simple moment in a barn. The fresh hay and add the light through the busted knots of the barnwood and the picture is complete. Now, if we allow our minds to wander other images may appear. For further thoughts on the inspiration for this poem I refer you to the poet.

father's funeral..  
the burden of pallbearers  
for awhile

## **Mohammad Azim Khan**

The contrast in this one is intense. The pallbearers have the weight of the coffin, but the weight of the loss of a father falls on the family. A very complete image with many interpretations. Is the burden financial, spiritual, or familial loss. We can't know, for the poet has set parameters without real boundaries for this moment.

zen workshop  
the roshi answers a question  
with a question

## **Chen-ou Liu**

This is a fun one that made me smile. If there are 'no answers' then why ask a question? If the Buddha is within you already you don't need to 'look' for enlightenment. Sometimes a senryu is just a senryu. No kigo here, and no answers from the roshi.

block party  
i end up  
with the dog

## **Sandi Pray**

I love this one. Sandi loves animals, I know that about her, but is that what this is about? Sometimes we enter the world of strangers and the wrong stranger latches on to us. The 'strays' in our lives come in many forms. Nine simple syllables, an image we can all relate to, but lots of things to read into this one. A good poet who can use brevity leaves a lot of meat on the bone.

bonsai --  
pruning another word  
from a haiku

## **Martha Magenta**

The poet has mentioned a haiku in a senryu! I loved it!  
We all prune our poems. I have failed at bonsai  
several times, but the concept of removing a single  
word, or many of them, is part of the art of haiku!



without you  
I often wake up  
on the wrong side

## **Ola Lindberg**

The poet has made an observation. It can't be more simple you think, but is it? Is it with regret or longing that she finds herself on 'that' side of the bed? What is the 'wrong' side of a bed? I am left with more questions than answers for the meaning of this one, but it kept me mentally busy and engaged. How about you?

fourth of july  
she wants to lose  
her independence

## **Catherine LoFrumento**

**Who does not want 'independence'? The subject of this poem wants to lose hers, but is it the poet? I don't think so. It could just be the observation of the actions of someone in a crowd. It is something we all do, projecting ourselves into the actions or moods of others. Maybe it is about the poet after all. Maybe it is.**

photosensitivity  
I blink he snaps

## **Helen Buckingham**

Out of synch or in synch? This is a small wonder.  
We have lots of pictures of family and friends and  
the twisted face, the odd stance, and the closed  
eyes are all over our collection of memories. Here  
the poet has found the humor in her synchronicity  
with the click of the photographer's shutter. Blame  
it on the sun I say!



## **Maya Lyubenova**

**I am sad the Maya will not be able to read what I have to say. We lost a thoughtful, kind, and elegant human being a year ago when she left this world.**

**This piece, like much of her work, sparkles with a creative genius that I could never fully fathom. She took turns in her work that seemed to spring from something supernatural. This is from a series of 'Ice Painting Haiga' that she submitted to Failed Haiku. I only wish that I could 'gather again' her creative spirit in the flesh. Peace**

in the rapids  
at its own risk  
a swimming duck

## **Nina Kovačić**

This is an engaging image. A duck can fly, and it can swim with the best of them, but rapids are perilous for any living thing. This duck had a choice or did it? If you let your awareness lapse you risk the rocks in the rapids. Perhaps caught in the rush of the rapids the duck no longer has the choice to fly or swim. It is a compelling image that leaves the reader to resolve it for themselves.

black ice  
no need to be  
somebody else

## **Eva Limbach**

When you walk on 'black ice' you are 'on your own'!  
The poet does not give us the punchline for this one,  
we have to invent it for ourselves. Whenever you can  
engage the reader in the search for meaning you have  
all the hook you need for a great senryu. For those  
who might be curious I saw myself looking up at the  
stars in my version of the ending. It was all me in the  
horizontal!

colonoscopy  
putting on my makeup  
anyway

## **Marianne Paul**

They say you only get one chance to make a first impression, but is the poet taking that advice too far? It seems she has decided to take no chances. I just think this observation of her own vanity in a 'no win' situation is fantastically funny! It says something about all of us that we need to be reminded of, simply priceless this one!

billions of galaxies  
... my computer warns  
I' m out of space

## **Keith Woodruff**

Ironic surprise is a perfect tool for any senryu poet. In this senryu the poet relies on our dependence on computers to tell us the unvarnished truth. The warning of the loss of 'space' is presented by the computer as a casual truth, but as the first line reminds us there are 'billions of galaxies' so the poet leads us to ponder the trust we should have of advice delivered by computers. As a geek I got a real kick out of this one.



retirement party  
the cake knife slices  
through my name

## **Joe McKeon**

This image is funny because it carries a lot of truth in it. The people you worked with for years, when you retire, can be distant from you almost instantly. The moment when your name disappears from the cake it also is stricken from the payroll as well. A stark recognition of the speed of change retirement creates is both disconcerting and funny.

bucket list—  
a theory full  
of holes

## **Mary Kendall**

I don't have a 'bucket list' myself because they create unreasonable expectations. The poet here has discovered this flaw only after the fact. But somehow I think this was a good discovery to have made. It seems she has reconciled with what is and has left the future to unfold naturally. She has 'drained' the bucket list herself by relegating it to 'theory'.

fundamentalist  
coffee addict  
doesn't believe in decaf

## **Elizabeth Alford**

Just a wonderful dose of irony and truth. Clinging to a 'single way' has become a habit for this person, and the poet has spotted it. Alas, her 'fundamentalist' friend is unable to see the humor in their rigidity. The human condition is better for having senryu poets in my book!

dark matter--  
a new look  
at what I can't see

## **Jill Lange**

Scientists are often obtuse. They speak about theory as if it were 'fact' and leave the rest of us with nothing to bite into. The fact that 'matter' can be both present and invisible and undetectable even to the scientists that theorize about it is funny in itself. It turns out 'dark matter' is over a quarter of our universe by current estimates, but then over sixty percent is 'dark energy'! Suddenly I know what the poet was thinking, and it makes me smile. Such precise measurements for what is 'not there' does make for a belly laugh in the face of the 'facts' of science.

my 79<sup>th</sup> year  
the recycling bin  
nearly full

## **Jerry Dreesen**

There is a wry humor in this poem for me. Yes getting old has its challenges but experience is a great teacher, so many responses in your life have now been studied and practiced. The repetitive events in our life are legion and this senryu brings that to mind. There is a calm that fills you when you have 'seen it all' before.

don't call her 'it'  
she says firmly  
stroking the street dog

## **Kala Ramesh**

**This one rang the bell for me! I am not sure the poet is the one speaking or if she is the observer and reorder of the event. Anyone who does not see animals as deserving of respect in most cases can't be trusted to see humans any differently. Simple, direct, but not preachy this one attracted me the first time I saw it.**

third slug of whisky  
they're bombing  
somewhere

## **Rob Scott**

I have to say I am not a big drinker, but like the poet here I break out the scotch bottle at moments of war or personal loss. This one struck me because most often we have no control over the events that cause the most destruction in the world. Although other actions may be called for the calm of a whiskey going down your throat is some small comfort.

marriage vows  
i swear on buddha's  
testis

## **Emmanuel Jessie Kalusian**

If you don't laugh at this senryu than you may not laugh at any of them. Here the presumed bridegroom has let his eyes leave the sacred moment of the ceremony to find his hand resting indelicately on the Buddha's anatomy. It goes to show that sometimes when we strain to 'look good' we can find ourselves subliminally straying from decorum. I think this one just frosts the cake!!!



milk carton  
the smiling child missing  
a tooth

## **Dave Read**

We have all seen this milk cartons with 'missing children' on them. We think to ourselves it would be so nice if we could help return them to their parents. But the keen eye of the poet may have spotted something. Is the 'missing tooth' a natural or unnatural occurrence? On some occasions the merciful and correct wish would be to keep that child hidden. I can't know this was the poet's purpose in writing the poem, but it struck me this way immediately. That deep ambiguity is what attracts me to this poem.

outside the zoo  
a family of refugees  
feed the pigeons

## **Elmedin Kadric**

There is a wonderful set of contrasts in this one. That sometimes puzzling contrast is what puts the 'shine' on a fine senryu such as this one. The first line provides the setting, but it also provides the first of three contrasts, each with their own line in the poem. The animals in the zoo are themselves 'refugees' kept in polite and clean cages with three square meals. The family in line two are 'human' refugees free but far from 'home', and in line three we have the despised 'pigeons', technically 'free', but given little regard or position in the family of birds found in our cities. This is a lesson in fine senryu. BRAVO!!!

His new wife  
speaking  
for two

## **Alexis Rotella**

The poet has discovered the 'end' of the marriage right at the beginning. Having been married for over forty five years myself I find my gregarious self in this one. I have learned to rein myself in often, and if this 'new wife' does not find the tools to control speaking over her new husband trouble will come, soon or late depends of the patience of her husband. Only seven syllables, but I got the message loud and clear finding both myself and others as personal examples.

morning yoga--  
graceful,  
for forty minutes

## **Janet Patton**

This is a wistful and funny moment. The poet shares her own view of her yoga practice. Does she feel capable of 'graceful' actions after yoga is over? I think not, but sometimes we judge ourselves so harshly, but when we 'put our mind to it' we can achieve so much more than we allow ourselves in the rest of the day. There is, just maybe, a gentle scolding the poet is giving herself in this poem.

rainy afternoon  
the flute player tackles  
arpeggios

## **Agnes Eva Savich**

Often poets focus on their own lives, but here the poet has deftly focused on the 'flute player'. She has observed this mysterious musician has taken the 'easy way' out of practice time. When you match your task to the weather there is peace that comes more easily, and fighting the rain is pointless anyway. I swear I heard the flute when reading this one. There is calming peace in the acceptance of your immediate circumstances, and the poet has instructed us on this point masterfully.

long night  
the grass grows  
with ease

## **Pravat Kumar Padhy**

So simple, and so profound. If the humans stay off the grass, then it grows on its own and 'with ease'. The sunlight strains the grass, and humans pound it down, but in the cool night we have the perfect environment. Grass like humans need quiet spaces to grow effectively. Simple observations of nature might be thought to be a haiku and not a senryu, but the poets speaks of 'ease' and that brought this one to me personally. Nature has no idea such as easy and hard. If we can just accept the moments of our lives we can grow 'with ease' as well. It is the absence of humans in this one that puts them into the picture for me.

## Not my monkey

Up since 4 -- my brain is like a 3-ring circus. The lions ate the lion tamer, the trapeze artists have no net, the elephants have run amok (which they are entitled to do) and the ringmaster was run over by a tiny fire engine full of clowns who have never put out a single blaze in their lives!

zen garden  
I rake the sand  
into circles

prose by **Terri L. French**  
haiku by **Susan Burch**

Collaboration is a wonderful thing, and this haibun provides the perfect example. The insanity of the prose carried me away. Up early and already projecting the entire day into a three ring circus is Terri! And then along comes the simple serenity of Susan's senryu. I love zen gardens, although they are a feature of the monk's work ethic and not a part of the practice or the attainment of enlightenment. The senryu poet just opts for the simplicity of circles. You

can start at the center of the garden and just 'rake' yourself out. You don't have to hunt for the contrast here, and yet I think both the poets have achieved their own peace at the end of this one. One by releasing their panic into prose, and the other with the gentle sweep of the rake into a poem.



escort service  
the grimy edges  
of the ceiling fan

## **Garry Eaton**

Well, the first question I came up with is "what is the position of the poet in the poem"? Is he a quiet observer through the transom? Or is he a direct participant in the details of the poem? You can trick your mind and avoid any moral confusion in difficult circumstances simply by changing your focus. The grime on the edges of the ceiling fan did the trick in this one. The most banal offerings are good to cling to when the wide angle view proves too troubling. Escort services are too often 'grimy' bits of the world, but ignoring those facts and keeping your eye on the ceiling fan does the trick, if I can make a poor pun!

New Year's Eve  
the waitress asks  
if we want change

### **Brad Bennett**

Deceptively simple this one, and timely as well. It is the beginning of the New Year, and as the friends talk the waitress interrupts. The double entendre of the poet is clearly intentional, but the resolution to the mystery is left unsolved. Is it the 'money' or the more difficult nature of 'change' that the waitress is inquiring about? I would say that the poet is not the only one using double entendre in this poem! Brilliantly executed senryu leave us with more than one mystery to solve.

midlife crisis  
and finally the smallest  
pony tail ever

## **Jade Pisani**

Oh how we love to dwell in the 'midlife crisis'! Here the poet has opted to change her look. Is she happy with it, we don't find out in this poem. We do get a 'tiny' hint that she has left herself with less of a 'pony tail' than she might have hoped. Isn't that just like midlife crisis management? After you have made the change 'regret' is not a real option, so we just embrace the new us. Once you get to midlife you have learned that time is indeed on your side. After all you made it to midlife!

## Unburdened

Often her kids were late at the school bus stop. Since they were unescorted, one of the other parents rushed them to the next bus stop. At the pick-up time too, generally, no one came to collect the boys. Again, someone took them across the busy street and dropped them off home. There were never any *thank-yous*. When she did turn up to drop off or pick-up her kids she chose to stay aloof. We, the other mums became quite pally. In the evenings the boys were seen playing with their dog in the campus of our housing complex.

Soon they shifted, a couple of blocks away. Her younger son was in the same grade as my daughter and I occasionally saw her at the school Parent-Teacher Meeting. One day my daughter told me that the boy had come to school after a long absence. His head was tonsured. Kids in the class said his mum had passed away.

*noose knots*

*what the obituary*

*doesn't say*

## Yesha Shah

This one is as close to perfect a haibun as you will find. The story seems so plainly told, but once we read the poem the deception is made clear and the stark contrast made all too clear. Only a small part of the story is in the prose it turns out. The poem leaves us volumes of options to fill in the real details. The denouement is the poem it turns out, but filled with

even more plot twists for the reader. So complex, like the topic itself.

temple cat  
without precepts  
eating off the floor

## **Michael O'Brien**

By now most of you know that I love animals, and especially cats. They know no rules, except their own made up 'in the present moment'. So interesting to me is the fact that all the teachings of the temple are being ignored by the cat, while the key principal of 'being present' is being fulfilled completely. In my mind I can see and describe this cat.

nightclubbing  
the sparkle of lip gloss  
off a cigarette butt

## **Roman Lyakhovetsky**

Lip gloss is meant to 'attract' the male, and in this poem the task is completely fulfilled. The poet has followed the gloss from the lips to the cigarette butt without missing a beat. I love the whimsy contained in this image. It is flawless to me about the way traps often catch something beside what they are set for. There becomes a larger message about the value of just being yourself, and let the attractions be more gentle and real than temporary and artificial.

one-sided relationship  
a stray dog gnaws  
at a meatless bone

## **Olivier Schopfer**

Things attract all of god's creations. In this poem a 'stray dog' has found the bone, but alas it is bereft of meat. Yet, the gnawing continues. The best of bone is found in the marrow anyway, so the stray has the potential of a reward after all. In any case the act of trying his to make something out of the find is worthy of a Sisyphus award for the dog.



in the mirror  
the cost of living

## **Sharon Rhutasel-Jones**

Oh if this were only true! Appearances are always deceiving, the poet has provided us with a lot to think through in this short poem. If you put a question mark at the end of line two you have one meaning, but without it we are left to ponder the value of mirrors as well. A famous photographer once said "A photograph is always accurate, but it is never the truth!" We live in a 3D world, in a 4D or 5D universe. Best not to judge the past or future based on a flat image.

a productive meeting  
no one showed up  
but me

## **Ian Willey**

I was a banker in another life. This would have been my 'dream meeting' many a time. On the other hand even the meetings that drone on can have 'teachable moments' for the participants, at least those ones with a creative spirit. I echo the words of an Archibald MacLeish poem: "Take heart poet!"

small blood smear  
inside the library book  
... it's a mystery

## **Keith Woodruff**

The poet leaves us with a mystery in the construction of this poem. Is the 'blood smear' the mystery, or is the book a mystery book? Either way it works for me, and just like a poet to take a 'mess' they discover and turn it into a senryu. Lots of unanswered questions in this one, but after all it is a 'mystery' senryu!

post election --  
tell-all books  
discounted

## **Jan Benson**

If you think this is about our recent election in America, you may be mistaken. This is a much more universal occurrence in my lifetime. Winners and losers pose questions, posit rumors as fact, and lies as truth wrapped in shiny paper with glitter on top. All of them, and I mean 'all', find themselves on a discount table or a wastebasket someday. I smiled at this poetic reminder of one of the few 'facts' coming out of elections lately.

*smoking in the car...*

*the lingering odor*

*of carelessness*

Facebook.com/ElizabethAlfordPoetry

## **Elizabeth Alford**

The poem is perfect in the simple truth it elucidates. One of the richest words in English is 'carelessness'. Smoking is not good for us, and as if to press that reminder into our consciousness it carries a particular 'odor'. The olfactory and intellectual clarity of the risk is present for us, and yet there is something about this habit. I quit in 1974 but every single day I think about smoking. The visual clue in this haiga is far from superfluous for me. I see the danger clearly also, and yet the poet is 'careless' in the midst of the act.



## Christina Martin

Now this is a wonderful painting and a senryu that puts the poet in 'the place' she needs to be at that moment. When you are 'blue' a 'place to remain' is the perfect place to be. As readers we are 'painted' into the picture by the poem. I feel better for letting the poet take me here with her. I am not blue anymore, and I wish the same for the poet.

a man walks  
into a bar:  
ouch!

## **Frank Dietrich**

**This one is a miracle of punctuation. That colon in line two is perfect. The reader is stopped short just as the 'man' in the poem has been, and that makes the third line resonate in more ways than one. Never underestimate the value of the little things in short poems!**



## Debbie Strange

The movement of light, in any occurrence, is always a miracle of change. That is even more powerfully on display at sunset. If I would correct the poet I would only say that light has no 'lines', but then the poem says just that more eloquently. No correction required. The image demonstrates the openness of light in all its wavelengths. This haiga



is a lesson in art and astrophysics. Reminding us of the beauty of change and the variety in nature in the image drives home multiple layers of the poem.

a wave  
crashes into the cliff  
cunnilingus

## **Myron Lysenko**

Ok, if you want to accuse me of publishing a gratuitously sexual poem, go right ahead! In my defense (although I don't believe a defense is necessary) language is rich, and to waste any word by banishing it from poetry is not the job of an editor or a poet. If they exist then they have a firm sense of purpose. Oops, just committed a double entendre there! Anyway, this poem just rolls off the tongue, don't you think?

tea leaves  
I uncurl slowly  
in your arms

## **Jayashree Maniyil**

So sweetly written. Tea is known for the sweet scent carried to our nose by the steam from boiling water, but the poet has chosen the image of the tea leaves themselves. Open to the romantic moment there is a scent released by the lovers that is sweet. I love the merging of these two images. It is the lack of contrast in this one that brings it the strong flavor of a fine senryu.

muddy puddle  
- a cawing baritone  
washing its feathers

## **Nina Kovacic**

Few of us would step into a muddy puddle intentionally, but this bird has jumped right in to clean up no less. Singing in the shower created by its own feathers there is a lesson for us of the utility of every single gift from nature. As a reader I felt a lesson in the 'use' of the 'useless' and the mundane in this poem. Not at all reluctant to splash in the mud this bird has a lesson for all of us.

duty free shop  
I come out smelling  
like all the colognes

## **Nicholas Klacsanzky**

Many of us have done this. When you are in the shop the merging of all those fragrances seems natural, but when we get out into the walkways again we catch whiffs of twenty scents. Some have been absorbed and others self inflicted by our own curiosity. At that moment we feel that when we sit down on the plane we should start with an apology!

reunion  
the old knots  
untied

## **Ken Sawitri**

Once again the dagger of a short poem appears. Reunions are almost always unscripted and often graceless, but this one seems to have taken another turn. There is no 'ending' implied here so the reader is on their own. Is this a romantic reunion, or the end of a misunderstanding between old friends. We have had our interest and imaginations stimulated by a few short syllables. The poet has 'untied' his knots, but the reader is left in knots of possibilities all their own.

desperate  
for a way out  
exit wound

**David J Kelly**

**Wow! This one has an intentional spin to it. To look at a gunshot wound from the point of view of the bullet took be aback! That bullet has a destiny to fulfill too it seems. Every act of our life has a 'path' to follow. We sometimes forget that too much of our life is a confluence of the intentions of events out of our control. That meteorite just happened to land on 'that house', and this bullet just went where it was told. A strong lesson on acceptance and clearing the dust from our own intentional acts.**

orphanage  
an artificial tree  
for Christmas

## **Malintha Perera**

There is real power in simple truths. To be alone in a totally 'artificial' world, and the Christmas tree and emblem of 'hope' in the world is 'made up' too is crushing. Sometimes I am proud to be human, but other times I am left wishing to be a stone. At least if I were a stone I would have some excuse.



beyond  
the buddha  
no shadow

## **Brent Goodman**

Ahhh... The true buddha is not tangible hence has no shadow. But we look for the bronze buddha, the golden buddha, or in my case the 'plastic buddha'. They are satisfying as reminders, but mere 'shadows' of the real buddha. The poet has manifested the spirit of the true buddha in this poem.

## **The Three Stages of Grief**

generic sunlight  
the embryo's broken  
apostrophe

reading huck finn  
i imagine a raft  
of runaway wives

everyone's taken  
i chacha  
with myself

### **Roberta Beary**

The poet is demonstrating rather than 'telling' the reader about grief. The word 'generic' is instructive for me. When relationships begin to die they become prescribed in their behaviors that stifle and demean both participants. As the rot moves on escape is just a dream. But when you are free, you are free to dance with yourself and make up new ways to move through your life. If you never did the cha cha before, now might be the time. Partners become optional at

that point as the self regenerates again. The progression of this sequence moved me. Keep it new and spontaneous, or get a new life, preferably one with your own 'dance'.

haiku lecture  
the formula  
for disaster

This one is mine. Do I have to explain it? One more explanation of what a haiku or senryu is and I will have that heart attack my cardiologist calls 'sudden death'. Any death will seem too 'sudden' to me, but when the lecture on haiku is going on you can look for me at the cafe or the sunset. I love company! Oh, and I am buying!

Peace

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