

anita virgil



A brief historical if not somewhat hysterical view of senryu

"My heart leaps when I behold" <sup>1</sup> *some* things. Ironies, blatant duplicity--things disguised as one thing but actually another, e.g.

the wife who neglected him  
makes elaborate plans  
for his funeral

Anita Virgil <sup>2</sup>

Deceptive packaging, as it were. Body language that clearly contradicts what comes out of a person's mouth. Self-serving liars. (No indication their proliferation is endangered as we observe the political scene of 2016!) Even centuries ago, lying is portrayed in senryu:

'She may have only one eye  
But it's a pretty one,'  
Says the go-between.  
Anon . senryu <sup>3</sup>

There's so much senryu covers in dealing realistically with the human condition. Sexual matters, family relations—and the underlying pain we all experience of anguish, injustice, oppression, anger, disappointment. Speaking for myself, I believe they provide the wellspring for much of my creativity. It's the way to spin straw into gold. What marvelous sublimation the senryu offers!

From the bedroom or some hideaway, anywhere, sexuality is depicted extensively in senryu. No surprise there since its origins are in the Yoshiwara, the famous red light district of Japan. [See "The Floating World of the Yoshiwara" feature by Bruce Boynton, *Prune Juice* #11, 2013 .]

Last night,  
A lover's quarrel;  
This morning, a real one.

Anon. senryu<sup>4</sup>

(In the above 18<sup>th</sup> century senryu, the "lover" is a courtesan of the Yoshiwara; next morning, he catches hell from his wife.)

bleak morning  
I'd rather make love . . .  
I make coffee  
Anita Virgil <sup>5</sup>

The following 21<sup>st</sup> century senryu by versatile Carol Raisfeld hits us first with its dry humor. Then, its macabre underpinnings turn it into a double-whammy:

girls night out  
only the widow knows where  
her husband is  
Carol Raisfeld <sup>6</sup>

Raisfeld also gives us this *au courant* report on the world's oldest profession:

afternoon break—  
the hooker savors a hotdog  
before the evening rush

Carol Raisfeld <sup>7</sup>

There is nothing Al Pizzarelli does not bring us in his wide-ranging assortment of senryu:

in the supermarket  
the spinster smiles  
at the cucumbers

Alan Pizzarelli <sup>8</sup>

at the brassiere factory  
the busty receptionist  
says, "Can we help you?"

Alan Pizzarelli <sup>9</sup>

Lots of Japanese senryu deal with money-matters. Has anything changed since?

In this world,  
tied by parents  
And by money.

Anon. senryu <sup>10</sup>

"Make a profit  
On the next sale," she says,  
Haggling over the price.

Anon. senryu <sup>11</sup>

"After you're dead  
Your painting will be worth a lot,"  
He says cruelly.

Anon. senryu <sup>12</sup>

When he lends  
Or when he doesn't lend,--  
Treated as an ogre.

Anon. senryu <sup>13</sup>

But most haiku downplay the very presence of the poet. As in centuries of Oriental painting, man is represented accurately as subordinate to nature. Japan, for centuries an agrarian society and a feudal one, operates on the idea of how little one person counts in the scheme of things. Haiku are often referred to as the "selfless" poem:

no sound  
to this spring rain  
but the rocks darken

Anita Virgil <sup>14</sup>

Though the poet remains outside the scene, she is the observer who notices and records a "*keenly perceived*" moment. [Part of the haiku definition from the 1973 Haiku Society of America. *I know*. I was there helping craft it. Details in *A Haiku Path*, pub. by HSA, 1994.] But humans take center stage in senryu. If not the star of each senryu, then "mankind" remains the target through the employment of personification, anthropomorphism, metaphor or conceits that allow the poet to relentlessly point to human foibles, behaviors, characteristics, concerns. Senryu criticize hypocrisy wherever it turns up, religion included. And they do not deal in sentimentality.

the last dance --  
her cheap perfume  
don't matter

Carol Raisfeld <sup>15</sup>

These studies of married life:

the visiting mother-in-law  
rearranges the furniture

Alan Pizzarelli <sup>16</sup>

so miserable  
without her, it's almost  
like she's here

Carol Raisfeld <sup>17</sup>

Almost no senryu contain references to nature, but if they do, it cannot be presumed to indicate the work is haiku. Unfortunately, the contemporary Japanese have abided by a simplistic determinant for identifying senryu: "Senryu do not contain a season word." That precludes familiarity with two centuries of their own literature! Nonetheless, aficionados of haiku among us accepted it as dictum. *For too long*, e.g. in 1986, "All Japanese classical haiku, as well as most modern ones, contain a *kigo* (season-word: a word that indicates a season of the year) which ensures that nature will be in the poem; senryu do not." \* [Cor van den Heuvel declared in his own revised definition of haiku in *The Haiku Anthology* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.<sup>18</sup> It points to the "appeal to authority," for after all, *if the Japanese say it. . . .* " *But it's not true!* All depends on the *emphasis* of the entire poem.

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\* Cor heard from me about it. Our only *humungous* kerfuffle in all our years together! Happily, I report, those words of his do not appear in his 1999 W.W. Norton 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *THA*. Instead, he acceded to my insistence that the original 1973 Haiku Society of America definitions be reproduced. *For comparison's sake*. They are on pp. 329-332.

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Harking back to senryu's origins in 18<sup>th</sup> century Japan when poets frowned upon the inferior quality of post-Basho haiku, *a nature reference was indeed employed*. But it was treated satirically. It is common knowledge the moon is a major topic for haiku. Anthropomorphic handling in the next two poems runs afoul of post-Basho haiku :

The moon told her  
To get up and shut  
The skylight.

Anon. senryu<sup>19</sup>

Inanimate objects are personified in senryu, quite Disney-like, though such literary devices are eschewed in post-Basho haiku because that does not comport with portraying "things as they are," e.g. *sono mama*.

The new shoes  
Are frightened  
Of the rush hour.

Tairo<sup>20</sup>

In the Tairo senryu, the poet creates an imaginary scenario with this conceit. In an 18<sup>th</sup> century senryu, personification of a pea creates a perfect equivalent to a procrastinating human.

The tendril of the pea  
Is thinking:  
“Where will I go now?”

Kinjiro <sup>21</sup>

Laughing, it reminded me of a moment in the classic 1955 movie “Marty” by Paddy Chayefsky. The trailer to the film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMP-uD8F8tc> opens with “Whaddya feel like doin’ tonight? Oh I dunno. . . Whadda **yoo** feel like doing tonight? . . . Oh. We’re back ta that, eh?”

Because the senryu’s range is so all-encompassing (puns included), by various means it displays what people are. The bad

Wearing her  
“World’s Best Mom” T-shirt  
she wallops the whining kid.

Alan Pizzarelli <sup>22</sup>

the beautiful

the deaf girl  
saying too much  
hides her hands

Mathew Louviere <sup>23</sup>

and the ugly:

unable to explain  
why he banter with the waiter  
so cruelly

Anita Virgil <sup>24</sup>

Samuel Cooper's portrait of Oliver Cromwell [c. 1650] displays him "Warts and all"—and in need of a shave. Quite in keeping with the in-your-face honesty of senryu. These days, we have a different approach to such matters.



Jennifer V. Gurchinoff

thank god  
I didn't come here  
for a face-lift!

Anita Virgil <sup>25</sup>

Somewhere in the mid-1980s-- a sluggish time with the same old ho-hum haiku-- along comes something new! An entire fresh supply of areas for the haiku to explore. Rod Willmot of Canada offered his own USP [unique selling point]. Something to lift us all out of the doldrums! Chart new territory. His soi-disant inspiration was for haiku that break the constraints of that *man's-interrelatedness-with-nature* thing, those *here&now* shopworn things. He flung open the gates to bring us --*ta-da*-- new directions in haiku. "In Praise of Wild Horses" was one of his rallying cries [Frogpond Vol XI No. 2 May 1988] à la Delacroix's "*La liberté guidant le peuple*."

Each had its very own name in this daring, misbegotten new world of his: There was "erotic haiku," *Hot diggety!* . . . except for the fact that my mind assured me the subject of sex was relegated to stanzas within renga *other than in the hokku*. . . There was "metaphysical haiku" [far as I can tell, I think those were comprised of fig newtons of the author's imagination, abstract interplanetary surmises, complex as a John Nash theory!] But wait, there were also

“spiritual haiku “ (*I cannot figure out what they were*), and last, whew! “political haiku .“ *You mean (I mused) like this Japanese senryu?*

Losing his job  
he tries reading  
Marx.

Sazanka <sup>26</sup>

And my favorite of all marched in. The “psychological haiku.” Naturally, my mind shifts to this astute senryu by Pizzarelli:

after the divorce  
she fits back into  
her old dress <sup>27</sup>

and to these:

talking divorce  
he pours his coffee  
then mine

Roberta Beary <sup>28</sup>

Here, this innocuous image has a substratum like a scene from “Dead of Night,” the great 1945 British horror film!

charming at first  
the old man who still talks to  
his toy bear

Anita Virgil <sup>29</sup>

visiting the shrink—  
the maze of corridors  
leading to her office

Makiko <sup>30</sup>

Trying to forget him  
stabbing  
the potatoes

Alexis Rotella<sup>31</sup>

I am guessing the next creation of Willmot's (and a work I immediately admired) was one of his "psychological haiku" category?

humiliated again  
bar-smoke in the sweater  
I pull from my head

Rod Willmot *The Ribs of Dragonfly* (1984)

After years of absence from the haiku scene, in a *must-read* 2011 interview by Carmen Sterba for *Essence* #6, Willmot explains that same poem thus:

My early haiku ... were simple and easy to grasp for that reason. As I grew, my experience acquired more dimensions, emotional awareness joined sensation, the simplest moments were redolent with the complexity of human relations. [emphasis is mine]

Elementary, Watson--and there you have it! By the process of elimination, it *had* to be his "psychological haiku." I don't see it as erotic or metaphysical—and as for "spiritual haiku" I go flatline. Religious doesn't fit. Anyhow, it sure isn't any "political haiku" like that old Japanese senryu about Marx. Ergo, by dint of deductive reasoning, *surely* it must be a "psychological haiku"? Whatever you call it, it was unequivocally greeted by haiku poets and editors as a "modern haiku." *We poets were free at last!*

Or were we? There was a problem with all this intriguing theory he posited. A little history can explain. On his brief visit to me in '82, I asked Rod about senryu. He said he never bothered with it and went on talking. Shortly after his return to Canada, he wrote me in a follow-up letter June 9, 1982: "You must understand we North American poets are very serious; we don't have much interest in senryu."

Before Rod's visit, I had written a senryu about sex, one I *knew* was special. But there was nowhere I would send it. Months later Rod ran an "Erotic Haiku Contest." On a lark, I sent off my senryu. It won 1<sup>st</sup> prize. It appeared in his fancy book that foisted an embossed pink breast on the cover, *Erotic Haiku* (1983). Inside, was my senryu.

holding you  
in me still . . .  
sparrow songs

Not much interest in senryu, Willmot? How about *complete ignorance of it!* Speaking of his influences in haiku, Willmot stated in *Essence* #6: “Blyth’s translations were simply an encouragement to do what I would have done anyway, seek the bare essence in natural English. I did not get into the rest of Blyth—the four thick volumes of Japanese haiku.” There’s the recipe to cook one’s goose! Those only four were *Haiku; Eastern Culture* ( 7-1/4” books with little text per page). All are in my bookcase-- along with the rest of Blyth: *Zen in English Literature*, *A History of Haiku* in two volumes, *Senryu: Japanese Satirical Verses* (1949), *Japanese Humour* (1957), and in 1960, the huge 612 page *Japanese Life and Character in Senryu*.

*Thus, on such ill-founded ground, Willmot affected the thinking about haiku.* One of his most talented early followers (who writes great senryu) slipped up recently, still describing one as “my erotic haiku.” Matter of fact, though Blyth’s books contain several senryu on sex, he states in one of his books that the *majority* of Japanese senryu are about it! (Of course, how would any serious haiku poet know that if they never read Blyth-- and Makoto Ueda-- on senryu!)

\*\*\*\*

When I first began writing haiku with next to no knowledge, I wrote the following experience. It was published [1969 or '70] in *Haiku Magazine* by Eric Amann, another Canadian.

After the child’s  
funeral—  
cake eating!

But I was *always* bothered for I could not understand *why* it was considered a haiku. Didn’t know enough to even question why. I just knew there was no mention whatsoever of Nature in it. Decades of poring over books on haiku and senryu, it finally dawned on me: *it wasn’t a haiku at all.* Its complete focus was upon humans and how we behave.

So, very gradually I realized the prevailing notion of senryu in the 1960s had limitations. Namely, that they are minor “funny ha-ha” poems in haiku format. The slipping-on-a-banana-peel stuff was only a part of it. ( Though many sight jokes can be *fabulous* in the hands of Alan Pizzarelli: “after I wax/ the kitchen floor / the dog runs in place” [*Frozen Socks*, House of Haiku Books, 2015] or Carol Raisfeld’s “reminder note —/to drop her pants/ at the cleaners” [*Simply Haiku* v4 n1 , 2006] . Or, centuries ago, in this anonymous senryu from R. H. Blyth’s *Senryu* p. 52 : “What’s this for?”/ Says the carpenter/ As he saws it off.”)

That said, my “child’s funeral” was serious. Back then, it never entered my mind it could be a senryu! Regardless, I felt that incident *had* to be written to disclose what humans often do to help ease the anguish of a death. Frail means, sweets, but a palliative.

Here I will state, while mired in the necessity of making certain distinctions, I write what moves me deeply. Craft it the best way possible. Never giving one thought what genre it may fit into—*if any*. That determination comes much later on. (In some cases, due to my own lack of information, it can take years!)

Like the funeral poem, another serious one emerged. It was spawned as I was wrapping up cups and saucers for the move to another place. A memory surfaced as I held one fragile cup in my hand, nestled in its bed of extra newspaper. The poem is a direct correlation to a human tragedy I watched next door. A hopelessly brain-damaged baby absorbed his mothers’ full attention year after year during which time he was never able to function. His older, healthy sibling, was ignored and spent much time at my house playing with my daughter. The poem is a metaphor capturing a sudden insight.

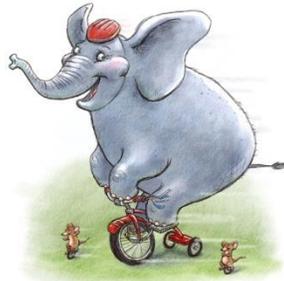
The cracked cup  
gets packed  
better than the rest.

Anita Virgil <sup>32</sup>

It was sent to Robert Spiess, editor of *Modern Haiku* (and the avowed mentor of legions of haiku poets). He wrote back thanking me for my haiku. I promptly wrote him and said (for by then I knew) “It is not a haiku at all. It is senryu.” Time passed. *Modern Haiku* arrived. He had placed the poem on a page of haiku. To compound my annoyance, Spiess *did* have a section in *Modern Haiku* devoted to senryu! But it was limited to the one-dimensional jokester ha-ha kind. (And yes, it is true enormous amounts of the least valuable Japanese senryu are of that type.) But this poem was something quite different—and presented another aspect of senryu. Spiess ignored my request to note in his next issue: it was erroneously placed amid haiku.

That sorry tale is but one example of how the confusion over haiku and senryu has been allowed to persist. It affects an analysis of a poet’s works. It is nearly endemic in anthologies. Readers presume a book called a haiku anthology contains haiku—even with an offhand tip from the editor’s Introduction that “within are some senryu. . . “ In other words, “Dear Reader, go figure!” So it is, I wearily observed on entering the 21st century, the *scope* of the senryu was not adequately understood. The good news: there is lots of progress. Even so, the senryu has been systematically appropriated and repackaged in many instances and displayed as “*modern haiku*.” Or “*gendai*,” which, being a Japanese word, sounds more authoritative.

However, poets should be reminded it means no more than *new, modern, modish, contemporary, avant-garde, innovative*. Pick one. Personally, I favor “The Anything-goes School of Haiku.” Trouble is, everything on any subject, handled in any fashion gets crammed onto a vehicle far too delicate to hold it.



The would-be creators of this kind of “modern Eng. lang. haiku” as far back as the 1980s have added exponentially to the confusion of many poets. This freeing up, this expansion of haiku’s domain --*as they like to think*-- can be written anyoldway about anyoldthing. Wowser! *Whatta load!* What a boon this new, modern, modish, contemporary, avant-garde, innovative -- *and don’t forget gendai*--adds for old-guard haiku poets running out of gas on *What fresh thing can I come up with?* This appeals equally to “newbies” who know next to nothing of the centuries-long history of haiku or more likely don’t care to learn about it except by a quick fix from the misleading if not outrageous smorgasbord online. Easy to jump right in, half-cocked, *et voila!* They get their blurtings published. *Affirmation!* Proliferation. Thus, *I kid you not*, we end up with

vows jump their past-perfect membranes Eastertide

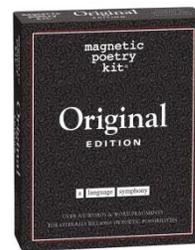
Susan Diridoni, [ *RoadRunner* 10:3 (2010)]

as an and you and you and you alone in the sea

Richard Gilbert [ *RoadRunner* 11:2 (2011)]

Both selections appear—*Baal knows why!*—in Jim Kacian’s 2013 W. W. Norton *Haiku in English (et al but me: I refused to be in it)*. Ms. Diridoni, a new name in the game, bought right into that no-boundaries notion and ended up with the above display of cognitive dissonance. No

accident, it is typical of her work. Fine, if that's your bag. But I think it has no place in haiku. The second sampling from Kacian's book of current events in haiku comes from one with the impressive label: Professor Richard Gilbert, Ph.D., Kumamoto University. His entrée dates back about two decades when he introduced the term gendai. Kacian and a couple of others hopped aboard, captivated by the novelty that label offered. They began to promote it. (After several years of slamming into these works, I became curious as to what contemporary *Japanese* poets were writing under that classification. I googled Japanese gendai poets. *Same problem.* Aimless odd stuff! Neither fish nor flesh-- but to me, foul.) Regardless of my disdain based on seeing the hodgepodge these gendai adherents keep cranking out, the puzzle of *What* are they thinking? haunted me. Until I came up with this sheer foolish idea: Bet dollars to donuts they're using that *Magnetic Poetry Kit* with "over 300 word & word fragments for literally billions of poetic possibilities."



An afterthought: my Japanese/English copy of *An Anthology Haiku Ancient and Modern* was published in 1932 by Asataro Miyamori. It's an on-going urge, this *claim* to be "modern." It sells new books. Today we recognize it as hype.

In my old age now, I allow myself a minute to wax nostalgic. Don't you recall the simply beautiful quiet Japanese poems about man&nature? And the affirmation they impart: that some of the smallest moments can have enduring value as a complete poem. One comprised of essence, pure and simple. That is what drew me to this unique genre of poetry. Now take a look at how it evolves of late. This ungainly and not-so-new-anymore-guy, still hanging around town with a bunch of adherents seems driven to efface the dignity and beauty, the literal *exclusivity* of the other. (That tricycle.)

Gluing a new designation onto something does not alter its content. And what for too long has been described as new haiku, *if* you find a good one, likely it's a senryu! As Shakespeare pointed out "by any other name. . ." I pondered: If these trendsetters were ever to admit that nowadays much of what they write is senryu, it would effectively remove the struts from under the wings of their flight of fancy. . . that soaring predominance these guys crave. Kinda "*L'état, c'est moi.*" Well I say it's been one damn messy state for too long. *But it is rapidly changing* now that poets are gaining a clear understanding of the span of senryu. Otherwise, I would not ever stick my oar in these bothersome waters again. I've fought to have its

dismissive definition altered back in 1972, [in “The Definitions” podcast at *Haiku Chronicles*, 2009], discussed it when questioned in interviews as far back as 1989 [*On My Mind*, Virgil and Tripi, Press Here Books] and in 2005 for *Simply Haiku*, put forth rebuttals when I reached my breaking point for tolerating gibberish, wrote long essays, did a 2013 podcast at *Haiku Chronicles* “Parodies” on senryu and its earliest origins. This year, offered a simple solution: identify each senryu with (s) wherever they appear in anthologies or elsewhere. In my own collection *One Potato Two Potato Etc* (1991) my Authors’ Note states the senryu are in italics. Like this:

*even with the mikes on  
the politician  
shouts*

Familiarity with the origins and diverse content of senryu precludes subsuming such material under the aegis of haiku. Despite that, esteem is heaped upon those few who have latched onto the idea that there should be no limitations on the content of haiku. But freedom is not license--though it sure broadens the *market* for this type of writing for those who sell any kind of book and dub it haiku! Violent topics, sex, abstract ideas, suppositions, war, opinions as in protest-poems (no matter their obvious good intentions)--have infiltrated haiku. For one thing, they are ignoring that the haiku we [ *certainly I* ] derive our inspiration from dates to the late 1600s when Basho urged his followers to “return to nature” in their poems, e.g. “From the pine tree, learn of the pine tree.” That was a move away from the earlier *haiku no renga* where much of its material is in figurative language.

As for war, like the rest of the Japanese people, samurai warriors wrote haiku. (It was not solely in the hands of poets which accounts for so much mediocrity.) Yet when to the teahouse the samurai would go, swords were left outside. To recapture that time, read the classic tiny book by Okakura and Fenollosa, *The Art of Tea*. It is about spending peaceful restorative moments in a tiny teahouse. One is again attuned to the world of nature, the seasons, the sounds of water boiling--to appreciating a humble raku cup. Restoring equipoise, a calm state, ease, comfort. Most assuredly the intimate teahouse offered an escape from war. And instills that contemplative, self-effacing quiet to the haiku. With haiku’s indirect, somewhat veiled approach to things, in large measure it is an avoidance of the harshness of life. But the senryu confronts life head-on and writes boldly about what *is*. Circumstances of Tokugawa Japan brought matters to a head and a truly new genre of poetry emerged. The senryu. First as subversive protest--and then, so much more. Eyes were opening wide to the human condition.

The samurai code ( the spirit of Bushido), was ingrained in the Japanese. Even the terminally ill young Shiki [d.1902] let loose with a singular “haiku” extolling the glory of the Japanese invasion of China in 1894. This particular nationalistic huzzah of his did not exemplify *for me* the marvelous ways he *did* refresh, advance and constructively *modernize* the writing of haiku. Adding some contemporary subject matter--especially in that era of industrialization. Yet all the while Shiki retained a purity and simplicity, employed the subtle indirection and the implications which the finest haiku can generate. What Shiki brought that was new was not arrived at by his bellicose yawp.

Senryu can also deal in irony; in contradictions where another kind of humor arises.

super market:  
the fat broad reaches for  
DIET SELTZER

Anita Virgil<sup>33</sup>

The back cover of my *Japanese Life and Character in Senryu* by R. H. Blyth states “the world is tragic, the world is comic,--not alternately, but simultaneously . . .” A cosmic humor, bemusement at the way life is. Rotella excels at all types of senryu. Riotously funny ones, psychologically piercing observations, the sexual, the witty and this beautifully serious senryu:

Once this box  
of toys  
was my whole life

Alexis Rotella<sup>34</sup>

Some give us an exquisitely tender moment of desire tinged by poverty like this 18<sup>th</sup> century senryu:

Picking up the grapes  
So gently,  
She asks the price.

Anon. senryu<sup>35</sup>

There are so many too-common scenes that senryu makes us notice. This one evokes our great shame for one misery little children are exposed to:

arguing downstairs  
she shuts the window  
in her dollhouse

Carol Raisfeld <sup>36</sup>

And centuries ago, the neglect of another:

The step-child,  
All day long  
With his nose running.

Anon. senryu <sup>37</sup>

In commentaries scattered through the haiku print magazines and e-zines, a few Authoritative Voices tried to dismiss the senryu from consideration as a vital and independent genre. But when the trend favoring it built, begrudgingly some admitted its existence--*with utter disdain*. (A bit of face-saving in operation here.) On my own, I'd been puzzling over senryu, trying to figure out what it was all about, and ultimately came to grasp it. Wrote about it with the awareness that one needs to place it in historical and societal context. Then can you begin to see the purposes behind its evolution. And understand what they really spoke about due to the cross-cultural divergence. But now that I see our poets producing spot-on great senryu, written in full awareness that they *are* these poems, the term "senryu" becomes an honorific.

Two timeless favorites of mine by Dee Evetts. What an utterly fatuous remark:

how come  
whatshisname  
never speaks to me <sup>38</sup>

Then this study of all a gesture tells:

with a flourish  
the waitress leaves behind  
rearranged smears <sup>39</sup>

This one from the 1700s is a veritable hymn of praise to such dedication :

The brocade-weaver:  
A single dragon,--  
And the day comes to its close.

Anon. senryu <sup>40</sup>

Everyday things, seemingly not worth mentioning, become utterly delightful in a senryu that shows how our busy synapses tie things together! Henceforth this lax gardener [me] adopts the mnemonic “urinal” as a reminder.

at the urinal  
I remember  
my plants

John Stevenson <sup>41</sup>

In 1988 I wrote about haiku poets of that time: “ How natural that those of the Me Generation need to express [themselves] in their poetry. ” [“Horse Sense” A.V. *Frogpond* Vol XI No. 3.] From India in 2007 we get what I was talking about. This fine haiku poet is twice blest with the addition of senryu to her collection of gems:

Saturday night dinner---  
the guests all-consumed  
with their own stories

Kala Ramesh <sup>42</sup>

Lately, I rejoice at finding hundreds of great new senryu! But memorable *new* haiku? They seem to occur in inverse proportion to senryu. Could this point to how exceedingly self-absorbed we have become at the expense of the very earth that sustains our increasing wants?

After all my edgy rants (what I call my “Crusader Rabbit Adventures” --*and they are not exclusive to the poetry world*), I am *hugely* encouraged by what has begun to happen with the senryu. Let me add a final note to counter a red herring often dished up by haiku poets: “How *difficult* it is to tell a senryu from a haiku!” (Ergo, let’s not even deal with distinctions! ) Once in a blue moon, there are a tiny handful of poems we call borderline haiku/senryu. Some of the loveliest, most poignant, can be read either way. Quite a balancing act--and double your investment.

The blind horse  
Opens his mouth  
When the straw-coat touches him.

Anon. senryu <sup>43</sup>

Some further reading on senryu:

Virgil, Anita. "Interim." *Simply Haiku* Autumn, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2005)  
Virgil, Anita. "Senryu." *Simply Haiku* Autumn, Vol. 3 No. 3 (2005)  
Interview Anita Virgil *Simply Haiku* Spring vol 3 no1 (2005)  
Virgil, Anita Featured Poet; Senryu, *Simply Haiku* vol 4 no3 (2006)  
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## NOTES

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