

# GEPPO

*the haiku study-work journal*  
of the  
*Yuki Teikei Haiku Society*

Volume XIX:1

January-February, 1996

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## Members' Haiku for Study and Appreciation

- |      |  |      |   |
|------|--|------|---|
| 1557 | spray-soaked love-soaked<br>we pull on our jeans<br>at the waterfall   | 1566 | black cat<br>in the sunbeam his coat<br>of many colors                |
| 1558 | waiting for moonrise<br>the man on the yellow cart<br>whistles puccini | 1567 | coming to life<br>his aftershave<br>in from the cold                  |
| 1559 | full harvest moon<br>the kitchen table glows<br>gorgonzola pie         | 1568 | filled with snow<br>a plastic recycling bin<br>the only green         |
| 1560 | sitting on tatami<br>in the Japanese way<br>waiting for spring         | 1569 | swirling into the lake<br>bathed in moonlight<br>silvery snowflakes   |
| 1561 | the same seat<br>at the weekly meeting<br>days getting longer          | 1570 | feeling the tension<br>old man refuses to eat<br>forgotten grandson   |
| 1562 | slipped off<br>just as we exchanged greetings<br>spring shawl          | 1571 | old man slumps:<br>I look at his white hair<br>snow on the ground     |
| 1563 | stunted tree<br>my carved initials<br>covered with sap                 | 1572 | abandoned lot<br>half-finished garage<br>slippery sidewalk            |
| 1564 | a perfect day<br>the toilet seat cover<br>stayed in place              | 1573 | mother dances,<br>wild lilacs in her hair..<br>clouds across the moon |
| 1565 | rainy afternoon<br>holding hands under the covers<br>corner bookstore  | 1574 | lifting off,<br>dad's faded bandanna<br>caught in the kite wire       |
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|------|---|------|---|
| 1575 | ebb tide,<br>the long goodbye<br>I forgot to speak                                | 1586 | Autumn -<br>white oaks dance<br>beneath the full yellow moon...                 |
| 1576 | In the field of clover<br>the bees buzzing around me<br>JOOP eau de parfum        | 1587 | winter -<br>naked trees stark<br>against gray sky...                            |
| 1577 | Showing my wife, Jane,<br>the "Helen" I carved in the<br>oak tree in my youth     | 1588 | framing the gutted house<br>a tree's bare black branches<br>Bosnia street scene |
| 1578 | My frisky young cat<br>admires the visiting tom<br>as he eats her food            | 1589 | rigid geometry<br>of gray steel beams batiks<br>cloud crowned peaks             |
| 1579 | warm arid desert<br>ringed by snowcapped mountains<br>breeze rattles palm fronds  | 1590 | complaining<br>machinery grudgingly<br>moves off a trailer                      |
| 1580 | Thunder mumbling<br>we water the parched garden<br>black clouds move on           | 1591 | so delicious<br>plain tomato sandwich —<br>a mom's special touch                |
| 1581 | Graveside service<br>in sunny Phoenix<br>January chill                            | 1592 | waving goodbye<br>with disappearing hand—<br>melting snowman                    |
| 1582 | called in from snow play ...<br>I wake chilled ages later<br>about to answer      | 1593 | fading from view<br>without flapping a wing—<br>hawk rides the wind             |
| 1583 | New Year's invasion ...<br>neighborhood bikers' brigade<br>all with helper wheels | 1594 | icy storm<br>her body in<br>the candlelight                                     |
| 1584 | winding, unwinding<br>tattered tinsel in the wind ...<br>cast out Christmas tree  | 1595 | december rain<br>before the funeral<br>holding tight                            |
| 1585 | Christmas -<br>kitten in the window<br>raises a paw to falling snowflakes...      | 1596 | the crow<br>perched on a frozen limb<br>scratches his chin                      |

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|------|--|------|--|
| 1597 | frozen field<br>frightened crows rise as a flock<br>return one by one              | 1608 | late night re-runs<br>the bitter taste of grapefruit<br>under my thumb nail        |
| 1598 | morning sunshine<br>after winter rain even<br>the crows gleam                      | 1609 | clouded winter moon -<br>a seagull cackles outside<br>the silent tea room          |
| 1599 | sea gull<br>flat footed on a phone pole<br>far from the sea                        | 1610 | boys catching tadpoles<br>last year, this year new houses<br>filling the old marsh |
| 1600 | Fragrant blossoms<br>on the young lemon tree<br>a measuring worm                   | 1611 | hear that frog?<br>the rustle of the evening<br>newspaper                          |
| 1601 | Shearwaters<br>skimming along the shore<br>rising tides                            | 1612 | spring wind ...<br>ten thousand frog croaks collapse<br>a rain-soaked silence      |
| 1602 | Woodland meadow<br>one wild iris in bloom<br>out of season                         | 1613 | The whisper of flight -<br>a gull skims over the lake<br>unheard in the car.       |
| 1603 | Port's Lobster dinner<br>cold rain and ocean waves<br>dry town of Rockport         | 1614 | Laughter fading -<br>a leaf settles on<br>the swing.                               |
| 1604 | as if no teeth left<br>eating it wedge by wedge<br>icy tangerine                   | 1615 | My wife's arm circles<br>the child suckling at her breast-<br>I alone hunger.      |
| 1605 | four year old says<br>"Some day I'll invite you to my house"<br>the other kid cool | 1616 | Out of the strong<br>Chill wind —<br>My face burns                                 |
| 1606 | going to sleep<br>fly taking off from the switch<br>of the bedroom lamp            | 1617 | In my dead garden —<br>Three cold crows<br>Are rummaging                           |
| 1607 | the lone whale watcher<br>scanning a white capped sea ...<br>the cry of gulls      | 1618 | Driven mad by the wind<br>Bare crab apple branches flail<br>At the darkening sky   |

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|------|--|------|--|
| 1619 | after the flood<br>folded daffodils<br>slicked-back grass                                      | 1630 | sun rising<br>between Joshua Tree blossoms<br>first shadow of birds                |
| 1620 | croaking drainage ditch<br>falls silent when<br>heron folds her wings                          | 1631 | gaggle of turkeys<br>like a Greek tragic chorus<br>at the circle's edge            |
| 1621 | gray squirrel<br>tail arched against<br>pelting rain   | 1632 | dining room empty,<br>a crack in the plaster<br>—the winter wind                   |
| 1622 | Peddler selling mice<br>one keyed-up mouse, winding down,<br>running 'round his feet           | 1633 | one blue mitten<br>waves from the frozen<br>flagpole                               |
| 1623 | Rain falls all day long<br>flooding spreads out on the ground<br>...snails climb high on stems | 1634 | Rivers in fast flood<br>grey ice grinds against docks, boats<br>sumac candles pray |
| 1624 | My dog, Champion,<br>chases every frisbee<br>here's another ...CRUNCH                          | 1635 | Tree etched in grey sky<br>intricate skeleton bare<br>to Winter's touch            |
| 1625 | In the rippled surface<br>of the pond, clouds are strange<br>flags undulating.                 | 1636 | White dust coats cars<br>wheels grind salt into pavement<br>erupts, heaves in thaw |
| 1626 | The lonely dead tree,<br>as a sole virgin statue,<br>still stands up erect.                    | 1637 | caught in rainstorm<br>finch in privet gets wet too<br>not one green leaf!         |
| 1627 | I watch the quiet dragonfly,<br>but I cannot know<br>if it watches me.                         | 1638 | sweet peas climbing<br>the trellis higher<br>than the child                        |
| 1628 | he picks winter violets<br>for the breakfast table<br>our anniversary                          | 1639 | fluttering field<br>white with clover<br>and butterfly wings                       |
| 1629 | no one home<br>over-ripened banana<br>on the kitchen table                                     | 1640 | Early darkfall —<br>I linger in the lamplight<br>listening to Un bel di...         |

1641 Thanksgiving ramble—  
from your hand to mine, this sprig  
of fragrant cedar

1642 Yellow verbena  
poking through the boardwalk  
—my get-a-way weekend

1643 scribbled on spring air -  
the curious curlicues  
of the jay's topknot

1644 manzanita grove  
here and there on the damp ground  
waxy white blossoms

1645 there's that one bullfrog  
again with his broken up  
swamp two-step

1646 tree stump  
once part of an orchard  
in a field of sorrel

1647 from the pond  
hidden among the trees  
a frog calling

1648 in her hand  
the sound of the whole ocean  
from a spiral shell

**WINTER QUINCE BLOSSOM**

*Haiku with the challenge kigo "winter quince"  
or "winter quince blossom"*

still no one living  
after the landlady died  
winter quince blossom

Teruo Yamagata

garden wall  
shadows of quince blossoms  
the low winter sun

Laura Bell

for her front door  
a woven wreath of pruned  
winter quince

Yvonne Hardenbrook

uneven pink fringe  
borders the curving driveway  
winter quince blossoms

Louise Beaven

winter quince  
flowering tree orchard  
ripe for canning

Eve Jeanette Blohm

misty light;  
in the raccoon's hand  
a small quince blossom

Gloria Procsal

Pointing towards the sun  
flowering quince glow pinkly  
through icy covers

Richard F. Bruckart

In drizzle  
promise of deep pink to come  
winter quince in bud

Dorothy Greenlee

dwarf quince saikei  
two bright red, one white flowered ...  
Lilliputian fruit

George Knox

*Winter Quince Blossom ...Continued...*

catching my eye  
 in the new seed catalog  
 pink flowering quince  
 Lesley Einer

Waiting inside for  
 My cactus to bloom - outside  
 Winter quince does it  
 Irina Kolodnaya

"when you sick only"  
 in my grandmother's glass jar  
 winter quince preserve  
 Zinovy Vayman

the metronome's tick ...  
 a sprig of flowering quince  
 brushes the window  
 Ebba Story

sunshine through rain clouds-  
 a pink winter quince petal  
 in the mud puddle  
 S. B. Friedman

winter quince blossoms  
 pairs of silver squirrels race  
 in spite of white skies  
 Elizabeth Allbright

Near the old hut,  
 only a solitary  
 winter quince flowering.  
 Ertore José Palmero

sipping tea  
 outside the window  
 winter quince bloom  
 Naomi Y. Brown

Chill spring walk upstreet..  
 Blooming by picket fences ...  
 flowering quince.  
 Robert Major

winter quince blossom  
 in front of empty town house  
 moving van pulls up  
 Sheila Hyland

Nearly unfurled  
 this winter quince blossom!  
 a snail feeds on it  
 Donna Claire Gallagher

the flower seller's  
 first sprays of winter quince  
 propped against a wall  
 Alice Benedict

close to the twig  
 a winter quince blossom  
 flutters in the wind  
 Alex Benedict

.....  
**Challenge Kigo for March-April**

**SWALLOW**

*by Ebba Story*

How much easier to study and read, to hibernate through the dark, rainy days of winter. The smell of books and hot chocolate seem so natural and the papers get written on time, projects finished. Then the swallows arrive. They circle the lawns and ponds with exuberant, effortless grace. They quickly construct their amazing nests of mud and nearly at arms length, little bird faces peer down at us from above our own doorways. The world seems more open and inviting. Something calls for us to go outside and breathe in the silken air where the swallows glide.

As the swallow flies to and fro,  
 Its shadow is cast  
 Upon the old door.  
 - Shoha  
 (from R.H. Blyth, *Haiku vol 2: Spring*)

a nest of swallows  
 beneath the library eaves -  
 the wide campus green  
 - Ebba Story

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**Season Words for early spring**

*selected from the lists in the 1994 Members' Anthology.*

**Season:** *early spring, beginning of spring, lengthening days*

**Sky and Elements:** *spring moon, haze or thin mist, spring breeze, march wind, melting snow, spring frost*

**Landscape:** *flooded stream, muddy road, spring hills*

**Human Affairs:** *balloon, grafting (plants), spring cleaning, soap bubbles (blown from a pipe or wand), swing, windmill, St. Patrick's Day, April Fool, Easter.*

**Animals:** *abalone, butterfly, cats in love, baby animals (lamb, colt, baby birds, puppy, kitten, etc.), frog, crane, swallow, soaring skylark, robin, wild birds' return.*

**Plants:** *asparagus sprouts, camellia, crocus, flower or leaf buds, parsley, pussy willows or willow catkins.*

**Submissions to GEPP0**

**Deadline for the next issue is April 15!**

- Print your name, address and all your poems and votes on a single, full size sheet of paper. You can include:
- **Haiku** - send up to three haiku appropriate to the season. Poems must be in three lines; they will be printed as submitted.
- **Challenge Kigo Haiku** - send one 3-line haiku with the current issue's Challenge Kigo. Try to use just the one season word. This poem will be printed with your name.
- **Votes** - Write the numbers of up to ten poems from the current issue you especially appreciate. Circle or otherwise indicate up to three poems to receive 5 points each; the others will receive 1 point each. Poems with the top number of votes are reprinted with the author's name in the subsequent issue.

Send to:

**Jean Hale**

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**Challenge Kigo Challenge!** Members are encouraged to submit candidate Challenge Kigo essays, to include a season word for your area, a 1-paragraph description, and 1 to 3 haiku (at least one of which should be your own) using the word. Send your Challenge Kigo essay to:

**Alex Benedict**

.....  
*The Art of Haiku* is an invited series of articles by accomplished haiku poets, edited by Christopher Herold. If you have an idea for an article, please contact him directly:

**GEPP0**

*the bimonthly study-work journal of the Yuki Teikei Haiku Society. Haiku are published as submitted, and members may cast votes for haiku from the preceding issue. In this way we learn by studying the work of others, and by the response to our own work. Subscription is \$15.00 per year, which includes membership in the Society.*

**Yuki Teikei Haiku Society**

*1995-96 Officers*

Alex Benedict, President • Patricia Machmiller, Vice President  
 Kiyoko Tokutomi, Treasurer • Alice Benedict, Secretary

**1995 Members' Anthology**

**In-Hand Deadline April 30, 1996**

Please send last year's best haiku for the 1995 Members' Anthology, which will be edited by Patricia Machmiller.

- Haiku must have one season word, and be in three lines of close to 5-7-5 syllables. Haiku without a season word, or with more than one season word will not be published. A copy of the season word list published in the 1994 Anthology is available upon request, to help you in selecting poems.
- Submit up to five haiku, preferably composed in 1995, typed or neatly written on a single 8.5x11" sheet of paper. Indicate the season word by underlining it.
- Poems must be unpublished and not under consideration elsewhere, except those previously published in GEPP0. Please include the issue in which your poems appeared. Poems that received enough votes to be republished will be noted as such in the Anthology.

Send submissions to arrive by April 30, with \$2.00 (for mailing costs) to:

**Yuki Teikei Haiku Society  
 Members' Anthology**

Members who submit haiku will receive one copy of the Anthology. Additional copies can be ordered for \$5.00 each.

**The Kiyoshi Tokutomi Memorial  
 HAIKU CONTEST**

**In-hand Deadline APRIL 15, 1996**

**1<sup>st</sup> Prize \$100 • 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize \$50 • 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize \$25**

**Honorable Mention-Gifts**

for haiku in English in a seventeen syllable form, arranged in three lines of 5-7-5 syllables. The contest is open to anyone. Each haiku must contain one kigo, or season word, from this list:

New Year: *New Years' morning, first haiku meeting, first crow call*

Spring: *remaining snow, grafting, spring evening*

Summer: *early summer, suntan, shade*

Autumn: *autumn butterfly, hunting red leaves, autumn lake*

Winter: *winter rain, frost nipped, heater*

Entries must be original, unpublished and not under consideration elsewhere. No previous winning haiku are eligible. Current officers of the Society may not enter.

Entry Fee: \$5.00 for one page of three haiku. No limit on entries. Please keep a copy of your entries since entries cannot be returned. Make check or money order payable to the Yuki Teikei Haiku Society. Overseas entrants please use International Postal Money Order, in US Currency only. For a list of results, include SASE marked "CONTEST WINNERS".

Submit 4 copies of each page with your name and address on only one copy, typewritten on 8 1/2" x 11" paper.

Final selection will be made by a distinguished haiku poet. Awards are announced at the Society's Retreat at Asilomar in September, 1996.

Send entries and requests for further information to:

**Ruth Schofield, Contest Chair**

## News and Notes

### February Meeting

The meeting on February 10 at the Saratoga Public Library was a celebration of early spring : the library is set in a remnant apricot orchard maintained by the city - the trees had not yet blossomed, but the ground underneath, was carpeted with yellow sorrel or oxalis, an early-blooming flower of the long spring season. An hour wandering among the trees yielded rounds of haiku on oxalis, as well as poems on frogs, Valentine's Day, and other spring topics. The next meeting will be at the Campbell Library on Saturday, March 9.

### Haiku in the Teahouse - April 13

The Annual Haiku in the Teahouse Reading in Kelley Park, San Jose is scheduled for April 13th at 1:00 p.m.. Featured readers are June Hymas, Jerry Ball, Ebba Story, and Alex Benedict. Roger Abe will lead a ginko through the delightful garden, which is built around a series of interconnecting ponds. There will be opportunities to write and an open reading after the featured readers. Meet at the Friendship Garden at 1:00 for the ginko. The reading will begin at 2:30. Parking is \$3.00.

### Laura Bell's Reading at Borders - March 9

Laura Bell will read her haiku to saxophone accompaniment at Borders Books, 3rd floor at 7:00 p.m. Jerry Kilbride is also featured. Bring poems for the open reading that follows. Borders is at 400 Post St. at Union Square (park in the Sutter St. Garage, 444 Stockton St.)

### Workshop at Hakone Gardens - March 10

A haiku workshop focusing on the five senses as a means to appreciate the natural world will be led by Michael Dylan Welch at Hakone Gardens, Saratoga on Sunday, March 10. A beginning workshop starts at 11:00, and continuing students join at 1:00. Cost is \$35 for beginning and \$20 for continuing students. For more information, contact Michael at 248 Beach Drive, Foster City, CA 94404, or call (415)571-9428.

### New Look for the Geppo

With this issue, the Geppo has been redesigned. Not a radical change - but we did want to add (or re-introduce) a few things to help make the Geppo more readable, and to make it easier to locate poems, news, and features. Thanks to Alice Benedict for her work on this. Your comments and suggestions are welcome - please let us know what you think.

Jean Hale remains as our poetry editor - she continues to receive our poems, and to deal with printing and mailing. We are indeed fortunate that so many people contribute to keeping the Geppo coming out - a huge thank you to everyone - contributors and editors alike.

Alex Benedict

## Calendar of Events

- March 9 Regular Meeting, Campbell Library, 1:30pm  
 March 9 Haiku City Reading, Borders Books, 7pm  
 March 10 Haiku Workshop, Hakone Gardens, 11am  
 April 13 Haiku in the Teahouse Reading, 1pm  
 May 11 Regular Meeting, Hakone Gardens, 1:30pm

## Deadlines

- April 15 Geppo Submissions  
 April 15 Tokutomi Contest  
 April 30 1995 Members' Anthology

## Members' Votes:

### November-December 1995 Issue

Gloria Procsal - 1463-12 1464-0 1465-10  
 Robert Gibson - 1466-26 1467-13 1468-14  
 Eve Jeanette Blohm - 1469-0 1470-0 1471-6  
 Dorothy Forman - 1472-0 1473-1 1474-0  
 Echo Goodmansen - 1475-8 1476-5 1477-26  
 George Knox - 1478-3 1479-0 1480-1  
 Teruo Yamagata - 1481-0 1482-0 1483-7  
 Tom Smith - 1484-0 1485-5 1486-1  
 Mary Ann Henn - 1487-1 1488-3 1489-0  
 Steve Bertrand - 1490-1 1491-1 1492-0  
 Ertore José Palmero - 1493-0 1494-11 1495-0  
 Dorothy Greenlee - 1496-1 1497-0 1498-0  
 D. L. Bachelor - 1499-0 1500-7 1501-0  
 Joan Zimmerman - 1502-7 1503-6 1504-1  
 Louise Beaven - 1505-0  
 Sheila Hyland - 1506-1 1507-0 1508-1  
 Richard Bruckart - 1509-2 1510-9 1511-0  
 Robert Major - 1512-25 1513-6 1514-9  
 Edward Grastorf - 1515-0 1516-7 1517-0  
 Naomi Y. Brown - 1518-14 1519-5 1520-2  
 Susan Riordan - 1521-1 1522-1  
 Laura Bell - 1523-4 1524-8  
 John Sheirer - 1525-2 1526-10 1527-4  
 John Tabberrah - 1528-0 1529-0 1530-1  
 George Ralph - 1531-8 1532-13 1533-8  
 Ebba Story - 1534-18 1535-9  
 Zinovy Vayman - 1536-3 1537-5 1538-0  
 Yvonne Hardenbrook - 1539-2 1540-12 1541-1  
 Donna Gallagher - 1542-8 1543-21 1544-15  
 S.B. Friedman - 1545-0 1546-19 1547-1  
 Shahid Iqbal - 1548-0 1549-0 1550-0

#### \*Editor's Note:

Poems 1435, 1436 and 1437 (Sept/Oct 95) were Zinovy Vayman's (I ultimately found the post card, but, alas, not until after the issue had gone to the printer). Poem 1436 earned 22 points and is reprinted in this issue.



**November-December Haiku**  
**Voted as Best by the readers of *Geppo***

She is gone yet  
 a row of pencil marks still  
 march up my wall

Robert Gibson

this morning  
 morning glory's tendrils  
 locked the back gate

Naomi Y. Brown

in a slit of sky  
 between clouds and sea  
 a winter sunset

Echo Goodmansen

a rice paper world  
 a delicate willow sketched  
 on the milky sky

Robert Gibson

Half-lit basement shelves.  
 Gleaming among the preserves ...  
 the gold of peaches

Robert Major

whitened driftwood:  
 a constant wind ripples  
 the withered grass

George Ralph

Another dog day –  
 three brown-spotted bananas  
 scenting the kitchen

Donna Gallagher

on the river bank,  
 an empty kayak  
 in patches of snow

Gloria Procsal

Grandpa's stories  
 about crossing the prairies -  
 the bitter wind

Alex Benedict

writing a check  
 to save the rainforest —  
 chainsaw nextdoor

Yvonne Hardenbrook

New Year's snowstorm -  
 a heaping bowl of rice  
 for breakfast

S.B. Friedman

windy cold evening.  
 A sad forsaken dog seeks  
 someone who fondles it.

Ertore José Palmero

adding a volume  
 to the tightly-packed shelf  
 winter solitude

Ebba Story

evening solitude;  
 after the blizzard  
 a window full of stars

Gloria Procsal

The gliding kestrel —  
 a knot of manzanita roots  
 catches my boot

Donna Gallagher

warm from her pocket  
 the coins she gives me  
 to buy hot chocolate

John Sheirer

winter evening  
 puddle lights shattered  
 in gusts of rain

Robert Gibson

one by one  
 they meet on the road —  
 leaves and their shadows

\*Zinovy Vayman

## The Art of Haiku

### *By Falling Down*

*Christopher Herold*

Heart thumping, I edge through the doorway and find a seat at my first-ever haiku meeting, clutching the notebook that contains my perfect, seventeen syllable nature poem, the one I wrote yesterday when I watched the sun rise behind a spider web bejeweled with dew drops. Now I get to share this masterpiece with a group of real, live haiku poets.

What a let-down! When my turn comes, my words seem to evaporate in the silence. Where are the gasps, the applause, the excited whispers? Well . . . maybe it wasn't such a hot poem after all. That's okay—during rounds of reading, the poets discuss all sorts of fascinating aspects of haiku, all sorts of nagging pitfalls. It seems the impact of my poem was diminished because I wasn't aware of some of these subtle nuances, and there are many. I had no idea what to strive for, what to avoid. The challenge is more apparent now, more exciting, more profound.

Gradually I give up hopes of writing a perfect haiku. It's the process that counts; it consumes me. I spend longer periods digging into each experience, attending carefully to the words that come to the surface. Through the process, I learn to live more consciously, more conscientiously; it wakes me up. What seems most important is that revelations are being embodied in me, whether or not the poems that come from them satisfy my expectations, or the expectations of others, and regardless of the rules I choose to employ for writing the poems. Haiku are by-products of the struggle; symptoms of the human condition.

Several months pass. It's late at night, and perfectly dark outside . . . absolutely still. Inside my small study, the candle flames keep me company and provide light to write by. I sit at my desk, struggling to say in words what cannot be said with words (how the space between a squirrel and me was measured by its flicking tail).

long past midnight  
yet another revision  
of that one moment

John Lennon said "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans." Practicing haiku is a great way to be ready when life "happens to you." While striving to reproduce in words the emotion of a particular moment (communing with the wildness of nature through eye-gazing with a squirrel), it becomes obvious that a departure from rules and priorities will be necessary to make further progress—I ease my grip on what I think I know. How far do I stray from tradition? Far enough to make the poem clear, to make myself clear. But the further I go, the more those who read my poem will feel that it isn't a haiku, and perhaps they'll be

less inclined to go deeper into it. I puzzle over how to proceed. Suddenly, out in the darkness, a leaf falls from branch to branch . . . here I am again, present.

by falling down  
it finds its way into words  
eucalyptus leaf

Working on a poem has heightened my awareness, and this sensitive state has allowed other poems to come through. When did that leaf unfurl? How long did it hang there? Through how many storms? Somehow it reached the moment of letting go. I fell too, letting go of preconceptions about what a haiku should be, becoming present enough to hear the leaf, to intuit our interrelatedness. What an amazing mirror, this world! And all of it while we're "busy making other plans."

A teacher of mine said that if a snake is put into a length of bamboo it soon finds its true nature<sup>1</sup>. Haiku form is the equivalent of a length of bamboo; haiku spirit (the experience) is the snake. Using form as a means to realize spirit is tantamount to inserting the snake into the bamboo. The struggle, the sheer effort to communicate in a medium as cumbersome as words, helps us to assimilate our experiences consciously.

Basho instructed his students "To know the pine, go to the pine." To know haiku we must go to haiku, to its roots. Japanese haiku tradition is both a touchstone and a point of departure.

When writing, I begin there, catch a revealing glimpse of myself, and then search for ways to release that ineffable spirit from my own language.

*Uma shikaru koe mo kareno no arashi kana*

shouting at the horse  
the voice from the moor  
is part of the storm

Kyokusui<sup>2</sup>

a squirrel flicks its tail  
between us the span  
of attention

<sup>1</sup> *Shunryu Suzuki*

<sup>2</sup> R. H. Blyth. *Haiku, Volume 4, Autumn-Winter*, Hokuseido Press, 1982. Re-translation by C. Herold

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