

# PruneJuice

*Journal of Senryu, Kyoka & Haiga* [prunejuice.wordpress.com](http://prunejuice.wordpress.com)



Issue Seventeen: November, 2015

# PRUNE JUICE

## Journal of Senryu, Kyoka, Haibun & Haiga

Issue 17 : November, 2015

Editor : Terri L. French  
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This issue is dedicated to the memory of poet H. Gene Murtha



*October 19, 1955 — October 9, 2015*

how useless  
these hospital gifts  
for a stillborn . . .  
a withered leaf,  
a fallen feather

*Prune Juice, Issue 11, November, 2013*

## EDITOR'S NOTES

Well folks, if you will allow me to string together a few idioms — it's time for this old girl to hang up her editor's hat, sing her swan song and pass the proverbial baton.

I started editing Prune Juice in July of 2013 with the tenth issue. I've had the opportunity and privilege to publish poets from all over the world. This has been a very humbling and gratifying experience for me and I want to thank each and every one of you who have submitted to and read the journal not only since I've been editor, but since it's Inception.

I'd like to thank my friend Alexis Rotella for starting this fabulous publication and giving senryu and kyoka poets a special place to showcase their work. And also thanks to Liam Wilkinson for his expertise as the second editor of Prune Juice. I hope that I have done them both proud in the time that I have donned the cap.

Also, thank you to Features Editor, Bruce Boynton, who has been with the journal since issue six. Bruce has brought us some great interviews with other poets and informative articles to better our understanding of the history and continued growth of senryu and kyoka as respectable genres. Bruce and I will both be bowing out with this issue to pursue our own personal writing and careers.

Thank you to my proofreader, Christina Nguyen. Her keen eyes caught typos, spacing problems and other things that my crossed eyes (which they usually were after days and days of reading submissions) never could. After the birth of Christina's third child my husband Ray gave her a much needed break and he took over the roll of proofreader. He has also been indispensable in helping me get the issues to your computer screens in a timely fashion.

I leave the journal in the very capable hands of Steve Hodge. Steve's haiku, senryu, haiga and haibun have been published in Prune Juice and many other journals and anthologies. His book of haiga, *The Sparrow's Dream*, was published in 2014. Steve is editor of the forthcoming Great Lakes Haiku 2015 Anthology.

*"I'm honored to be asked to take on the duties of editor of Prune Juice," Steve says. "Our first priority will be to carry on the tradition established by Liam Wilkinson, Alexis Rotella and Terri L. French of publishing the very best senryu and kyoka being written by poets around the world. We'll continue to publish features such as interviews and book reviews and try a few new things as well, such as producing short videos with a selection of poems from each issue to promote the Journal -- maybe start a Prune Juice YouTube channel to help expand awareness of the Journal and include audio and video of a selection of poets reading their work. Whatever we end up doing, our focus will always be to offer our readers the quality and variety they've come to expect from Prune Juice. This is an exciting time for senryu. I'm excited about the future of PJ and look forward to working with writers from around the world to help share their work."*

Steve and I will also be working together to put out a hard copy "Best of Prune Juice" with selections from Alexis, Liam, me and favorites of the readers as well. So, you haven't heard the last from me. Thank you all and welcome Steve.

Terri L. French  
November, 2015

**S.M. Abeles, US**

a knife slice  
deep inside the onion  
into another world

southbound train  
deeper and deeper  
into the past

a tiny hell  
in every breath  
this haiku life

**Tash Adams, Australia**

vacuuming  
the spilled contents  
of the vacuum

**Debbi Antebi, Turkey**

moving out —  
the weight of memories  
in cardboard boxes

obituary  
I cry over  
what is left out



## **Johnny Baranski, US**

crash scene  
a dragonfly  
at the wheel

ferry crossing  
St. Christopher medals  
for sale

truck rodeo  
his Ford Bronco  
pops a wheelie

**Collin Barber, US**

empty wine bottle —  
I've never felt  
so sick  
about a night  
I can't remember

Roberta Beary, US



## **Brad Bennett, US**

end-of-year letter  
details about the boil  
on his buttock

record snowfall  
adding up all  
my deductions

**Maria Bonsanti, US**

my senile mother  
asks me who i am . . .  
good question

he holds the bouquet  
upside down  
weighing her worth

**Mark E. Brager, US**

passing clouds the last thing on my mind

mountain road  
behind the logging truck  
counting the rings

breaking bread the priest's arthritic fingers

**Alan Bridges, US**

medieval reenactment  
a knight seeks  
his zipper

**Donna Buck, US**

downsizing  
already up to 'h' —  
husband . . . house . . .  
for the keep box:  
my Higher self



## **Helen Buckingham, UK**

towpath  
a kid spits  
at her own reflection

walls peel awaiting injection

**Susan Burch, US**

Fitbit —  
getting the skinny  
on you

**Alanna C. Burke, US**

coffee break espresso  
talk about the boss  
always turns bitter

surprise call  
from a former lover  
shaken not stirred

## **Sondra Byrnes, US**

taking  
their usual places  
arthritis

so many tattoos on his arms  
i couldn't hear what he was saying

another slice of cold pizza her love triangle

**Theresa A. Cancro, US**

hail pelts  
old garbage lids —  
leaving the projects

Halloween party —  
the pirate's patch  
catches my eye

## **Jesus Chameleon, The Mariana Islands**

he had his work  
cut out for her —  
Matisse

**Bill Cooper, US**

while supplies last fresh water

**Robyn Corum, US**

autumn —  
pumpkins in  
my hand soap



## **Angelee Deodhar, India**

### **Thanatos\***

The rites and rituals associated with death have always fascinated me. A lucrative business for some, such as the pandits in India, orchestrating the formalities at the funeral and later at the Ghats of the Ganges.

In the West, more people are opting for cremation rather than burial. Recently, I came across a website offering a fantastic variety of cremation vessel options — music box cremation urns, glass and crystal urns, sports urns for fishermen and golfers. Today's Special Offer: a motorcycle tank urn marked down from \$250 to \$40 (hardly appropriate if the death occurred in a road accident).

I looked up the Golf Ball and Tee round crystal engravable cremation urn. Its description read: "this 1 cubic inch urn is designed for the loved one with a healthy weight of one pound or less before cremation . . ." Makes one wonder who was cremated, Thumbelina?

There is a woman who makes memorial-ash bead pendants who advertises: "If you are looking for a creative way to memorialize a deceased friend or relative, consider turning a piece of them into something you can wear every day." Shades of the Ancient Mariner cross my mind.

Then there is a service that shoots funeral ashes from self-firing rockets to create a mini fireworks display. Or, one's remains could even be launched into space, as this site advertises, "It is possible to honor the dream and memory of your departed loved one by launching a symbolic portion of cremated remains into Earth's orbit, onto the lunar surface or into deep space. Missions into space that return the cremated remains to Earth are also available." Family and friends can even purchase a ticket to the launch and a video of the event, as well as a certificate honoring the completion of the mission. The cost? Only \$1,990.

The latest funeral practice in Sweden: freeze-drying the corpse of your loved one using liquid nitrogen, then shattering it into a powder, picking out any metal or plastic bits, and using the powder as mulch in a garden. Bet the vegetables will taste a trifle off.

How do I want to leave? Perhaps I'll ask my son to charter a helicopter and scatter my ashes into the Ganges, with a trail of my haiku streaming behind from a banner . . .

petrichor . . .  
the life of three leaves  
in a blend of tea

*\*(in Freudian theory) the death instinct. Often contrasted with Eros.*

## **June Rose Dowis, US**

halloween night  
campaign signs and tombstones  
line the sidewalk

## Ana Drobot, Romania



**Robert Epstein, US**

old telephone poles  
weathered to the color  
of lonely

animal rights  
talked over  
chicken bones

tree stump  
I can't have more  
than a few years left

**Terri L. French, US**

another AARP invite  
in the mail —  
this is getting old

photoshop  
removing some rouge  
from an old aunt's cheeks

a bit of gravel  
left in his sneaker —  
abduction

**Jay Friedenberg, US**

a cut thread her memories unspool

web surfing  
all the time  
we never spend

## **Chase Gagnon, US**

busted knuckles . . .  
my father's blood mixing  
with mine

the burn  
of his favorite whiskey . . .  
a vigil for my father  
who's dead  
only to me

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

hospital christmas tree  
the last twitches  
of life in your hand

hospice . . .  
the young priest's eyes  
deader than yours

after the wake  
I relapse on painkillers  
prescribed to her name



**Tim Gardiner, UK**

crumpled  
on my desk . . .  
paper tigers

## **Samar Ghose, Australia**

### **The fcuk you say**

Tehy wree yeilling at ecah ohetr lkie feirdns often do owvr a fwe drniks  
ltteing teihr hiar dwon tryng to mkae teihr pnoit a ltitle luoldy, not taht it  
raelly matetred. I wnas't dirkning but the suftf was mkiang ltitle snese to  
me . . . but I kndia fegruid waht was bnieg siad whituot hivanq it seplt  
out for me; pahreps it was the msinisg aohlcol fug or mbyae I had been  
aawy too lnog . . .

alphabet soup  
making sense of this  
tone deaf life

## **Johnnie Johnson Hafernik, US**

store window  
the Virgin Mary  
in a lotus position

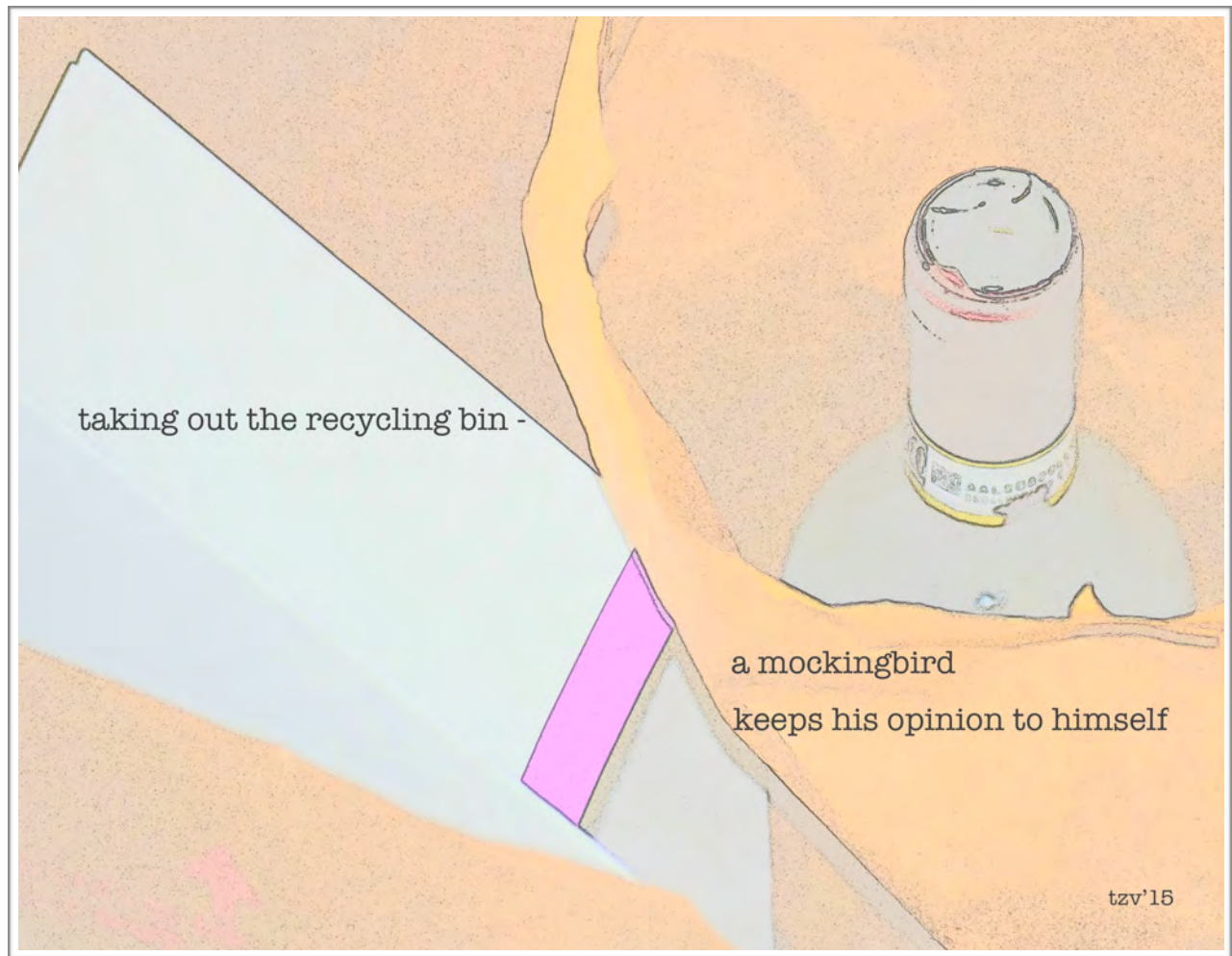
## **Steve Hodge, US**

tattoo shop  
the tattooist's wife reading  
the illustrated man

"Trick-or-treat!"  
a Cinderella Band-Aid  
on Frankenstein's hand

"Trick-or-treat!"  
the mime the only one  
who says thank you

**Tzetzka Ilieva, US**



## Tzetzka Ilieva, US



## **Elmedin Kadric, Sweden**

urban nightclub  
two cougars fighting  
over a young buck

**Barbara Kaufmann, US**





David J. Kelly, Ireland



Mary Kendall, US



**Nicholas Klacsanzky, Ukraine**

sunset in the slaughterhouse blood a color

**Deborah P. Kolodji, US**

**The Circle Unbroken**

I postpone picking the wording — should it say, “beloved wife, mom, and grandma” or “loving wife, mom, and grandma?” She was both loving and beloved. She once told me to put a horse on the marker, but should it be a prancing horse or a horse’s head? And, why now? We were supposed to go on a trip to Galveston. She was supposed to go fishing with my sister. We were all going to Alaska.

scent of lilies  
the final chorus  
lingering

Hoof after hoof, one horse sets the tempo. We wobble in our dress shoes as we follow the wagon. The horse is grey and the wagon is as white as the melody of white roses and lilies covering the wooden casket. Above us, a bright Southern California sun is oblivious to the rain inside all of us. Each step brings us closer to the inevitable and we can’t help but think that Mom, who rode bareback through Ozark forests as a child, would have really loved this horse.

grave dirt  
one swallowtail flies up  
and joins another

**Shrikaath Krishnamurthy, UK**

status quo . . .  
we are still talking  
through Post-its



# Prune Juice Feature

by Bruce Boynton

## The Many Faces of Carlos Colón



Carlos Colón is the Caddo Parish Poet Laureate and the author of 12 chapbooks, as well as *Haiku Elvis: A Life in 17 Syllables or Less*, which was shortlisted for the 2013 Touchstone Distinguished Book Award. Some of his many awards include First Place, San Francisco International Senryu Contest (2004), Second Place, Gerald Brady Memorial Prize (2003), and Finalist for the 16th Annual *Louisiana Literature Prize for Poetry*. He is currently the South Region Coordinator for the Haiku Society of America.<sup>1</sup>

I had always admired the senryu of Carlos Colón and jumped at the opportunity to interview him. I prefer to visit poets on their home turf to better know them but in this instance the tyranny of time and distance defeated these good intentions and we settled for a series of phone interviews and e-mails.

PJ: As you know *Prune Juice* is a journal dedicated to such serious subjects as senryu, kyoka and haiga, but I think what our readers really want to know is how you came to channel *The King*?

CC: You mean *Haiku Elvis*. It started about 13 years ago. I was a member of a library acting troupe that presented plays to encourage second graders to read. At a Summer Reading Festival I was asked to play Elvis. Someone purchased a wig and sunglasses for me and over the years I acquired a pair of blue suede shoes and a white jumpsuit. I didn't connect the character with haiku until later.

At the 2007 Haiku North America conference Johnette Downing and I performed an impromptu reading backed by a jazz band. We had a good time and the duet was a hit so I decided to play the character of Haiku Elvis at the 2009 conference. I was sick during the conference but was able to debut the character later that year. The performance was recorded and posted on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sybzgafBkvs>). Later, Haiku Elvis appeared at the Seattle Space Needle (HNA 2011) and again aboard the Queen Mary in Long Beach (HNA 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> Elvis yellow photo by Casey Jones (2011). Elvis profile photo by Henrietta Wildsmith (2009). Regular photo of Carlos Colón by Rose-Marie Lillian

PJ: It crossed my mind that Haiku Elvis may have started as a spoof but grew into something more. I believe you developed a sensitivity to the man beneath the jumpsuit.

CC: I guess so. As I wrote more and more poems I got into the deeper issues of touring, anxiety and the weight problems Elvis had, so I guess it did blossom into something more than the initial joke. I began to understand what people like Elvis, the Beatles and Michael Jackson go through. You can lose your real personality in some respects and become a caricature of what you used to be.

PJ: As you know, Alexis Rotella has also written a book on Elvis (*Elvis in Black Leather*) and Al Pizzarelli has written some Elvis senryu, so he appears to be a very attractive subject for senryu in ways that other performers are not.

Perhaps it's a matter of taste. By the way, *The Encyclopedia of Bad Taste* (Stern & Stern, Harper Collins, 1990) lauds Elvis as an innovator in that genre.

CC: (Laughs) Bad taste, huh?

PJ: Of course, bad taste is everywhere but there's a different quality about Elvis than say, Lady Gaga. There is a certain earnestness, a wholesomeness, almost a patriotic quality to Elvis' bad taste that has made him an icon of Americana.

CC: He lived the American Dream of the time and was one of the first to succeed in having a career in the era of big money.

PJ: One thing that I often observe in poetry is that one will write a senryu with one intended meaning but the reader will read it with another, equally valid interpretation. And then I think, where did that come from? The poem begins to have a life of its own.

CC: Right, once you put the words out there it does. Sometimes someone from another culture doesn't understand and I have to explain, but usually I just let it go. The poem may be better the way you didn't mean it than the way that you did!

PJ: I think that is well said. The poem has to stand on its own feet, so to speak, without an accompanying interpretive crutch. In current parlance, it is what it is.

CC: I agree.

PJ: How did you begin writing haiku and senryu?

CC: Well, I learned the form of haiku in the seventh grade.

PJ: Did you learn to count syllables? (laughs)

CC: Yeah; I ran into my seventh grade teacher years later at a festival and she reminded me that she taught me haiku. She became a member of one of our local haiku groups.

I wrote a few poems in college, many of them related to Hawaii Five O. (laughs) After college I was eager to get published in some way and had written a number of concrete poems, some with internal rhyme, so I thought that trying to fit a poem into a shape was not unlike cramming a thought into seventeen syllables.

I got a copy of Poet's Market and looked through all the possible genres. I think one of the things that sustained me was how quickly you got a response from journals that published haiku and senryu. It took only 10 to 15 days for an answer rather than three months or longer. I submitted something to *Reader's Digest* and it was a year and a half to two years before I heard it had been accepted.

PJ: Yes, I've had the same experience.

CC: I used to submit poems to *Modern Haiku*, partly because the title explained what it was about, whereas if you published in *Red Pagoda* or *Frogpond* no one unfamiliar with the genre could understand what you were doing. I guess that was just an ego thing.

PJ: You write both haiku and senryu. How did you evolve from one to the other?

CC: I didn't even know about senryu until I began submitting my work, but I think more than 90% of the poems I've written throughout my life are senryu. I try to catch the reader's attention and I think it's easier to do that through humor, although I have written serious poems. Sometimes even a serious poem will have a humorous twist.

PJ: A frequent source of humor in senryu involves exposing underlying motives. One of your poems does this especially well.

pre-college shopping  
car salesman tells my daughter  
"This one'll do 100." <sup>2</sup>

As R.H. Blyth said, "In senryu we see, as in a flash of lightning, a picture of the life of man suddenly suspended, with every detail, every secret motive and every hidden thought exposed."

CC: Exactly! I've actually been in the front seat of a car going a 100. It was very scary! And I thought, that's something I never want to hear about a car for my daughter. (laughs)

PJ: Who are some poets who have influenced you?

CC: Probably Alexis (Rotella) and Marlene Mountain had the greatest influence. I had the pleasure of writing renku with both of them. When I read the second edition of Cor van den Heuvel's *Haiku Anthology* I was struck by a concrete poem of Marlene's in which the letters of the word *peacock* formed a picture of the bird. I had written concrete poems before but Marlene's typographical gymnastics fascinated me. Around 1993 I

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<sup>2</sup> pre-college shopping. *Prune Juice Journal of Senryu and Kyoka*, No. 1 (Winter 2009)



published a chapbook in which I included some concrete poems I had not been able to publish elsewhere and called it *Mountain Climbing* in honor of Marlene. I sent the book to her and she suggested that we write a poem together.

I was interested in Alexis' poems because of their psychological nature. I'm more interested in human nature than I am in nature nature. I had written to Alexis to buy any of her books still in print and happened to mention that I was writing with Marlene. She suggested that we collaborate on a poem and I ended up writing 20-30 poems with her. So I was very influenced by working with her as well.

PJ: Speaking of concrete poetry, there's a famous poem by William Carlos Williams called "The Red Wheelbarrow." I've always suspected it to be a concrete poem. Those look like four wheelbarrows to me.

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens <sup>3</sup>

CC: I don't know; I'll have to take a look at it again. We had a performance poetry event in which a couple of poets acted out that poem with a rubber chicken. (laughs)

PJ: I do need to ask you one more serious question; do you go by any other aliases or is it just Carlos and Haiku Elvis?

CC: At one point I sent a very long poem to *the Shreveport Journal* called "Ode to the Society Page." I pretended to be a spinster lady named Almira Gulch whose two goals in life were to get on the society page and to find a man. They published the whole thing in the society column; it must have run 50 lines. I published about 40 poems in the paper, mostly short rhymed pieces, until I had enough material for my first chapbook, which I named *The Worst of Almira Gulch*. The name Almira Gulch came from the Wizard of Oz. She was the old spinster who in Oz became the wicked witch.

PJ: Ohhhhh....she was the one who tried to carry off Toto!

CC: Right! I had a few other pseudonyms. In college I used the name Jeff Amoeba and wrote something patterned after Jonathan Swift, called *Immodest Proposals and other Pseudointellectures*. At some point people figured that I was the one making fun of

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<sup>3</sup> The Red Wheel Barrow. Williams, W. C. (1923). *Spring and All*. New York: Contact Editions / Dijon: Maurice Darantière.

everything. I ran afoul of the burgeoning feminist movement and in retaliation they sent me a subscription to *Ms.* magazine!

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across the rice paper  
the teacher gently  
guides my hand <sup>4</sup>

taking my glasses  
the optician disappears  
into the wallpaper <sup>6</sup>

pointing  
my way home  
the starfish <sup>8</sup>

my daughter's eyes  
when I refuse  
the beggar <sup>10</sup>

haiku conference  
even the taxi driver  
has an opinion <sup>12</sup>

allthecoversonyoursideof      the bed <sup>14</sup>

TV censor  
her pursed lips  
drool <sup>5</sup>

in the middle  
of making love  
counting syllables <sup>7</sup>

remote control  
I absentmindedly try  
to mute my wife <sup>9</sup>

Paris -  
in my mouth  
a foreign tongue <sup>11</sup>

at the hazardous  
waste site  
an eight-leaf clover <sup>13</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> across the rice paper. *Clocking Out*. (1996) Shreveport: Tragg Publications.

<sup>5</sup> TV censor. *Haiku Elvis - A life in 17 syllables (or less)*. (2013) Abilene: Laughing Cactus Press.

<sup>6</sup> taking my glasses. *Clocking Out*. (1996) Shreveport: Tragg Publications.

<sup>7</sup> in the middle. *Haiku Elvis - A life in 17 syllables (or less)*. (2013) Abilene: Laughing Cactus Press.

<sup>8</sup> pointing my way home. *Clocking Out*. (1996) Shreveport: Tragg Publications.

<sup>9</sup> remote control. *Haiku Elvis - A life in 17 syllables (or less)*. (2013) Abilene: Laughing Cactus Press.

<sup>10</sup> my daughter's eyes. *Haiku Elvis - A life in 17 syllables (or less)*. (2013) Abilene: Laughing Cactus Press.

<sup>11</sup> Paris. *Haiku Elvis - A life in 17 syllables (or less)*. (2013) Abilene: Laughing Cactus Press.

<sup>12</sup> haiku conference. *Modern Haiku* XXXIII.1 (2002)

<sup>13</sup> at the hazardous waste site. *Point Judith Light* II.2 (1993)

<sup>14</sup> all the covers. *Haiku Elvis - A life in 17 syllables (or less)*. (2013) Abilene: Laughing Cactus Press.

**H T Landrum, US**

on the treadmill losing ground

**Michael Henry Lee, US**

happy hour  
a fog descends on  
the local pub

**Phyllis Lee, US**

casual housekeeper  
always cleaning  
her fingernails

**Chen-ou Liu, Canada**

a priest alone  
in the confession booth  
year's end

between street lamps  
a sex worker  
and my shadow

## **RJ Lucero, US**

street portrait artist  
drawing  
a crowd

second-hand store  
surrounded by Barbies  
a grinning Buddha

## **Bob Lucky, Saudi Arabia**

Caribbean beach town  
more than enough ass cheeks  
for a full moon

pistachios  
the one nut  
that never yields

warm spring evening  
my neighbor talks dirty  
to her plants



**Myron Lysenko, US**

what was  
his last haiku  
cremation

old jogger —  
I wave to him  
in my pajamas

anniversary stars covered by clouds

writer's block fog settles over the Black Forest

**Joe McKeon, US**

tenement roof  
the moon so distant  
so cold

el niño drought  
a migrant worker picks  
his nose

home from college  
she claims she always liked  
broccoli

tree house  
the boys make mom  
an exception

**Annette Makino, US**

sushi bar  
through fish tank glass  
they watch us feeding

new glasses      old dust bunnies

## **Anna Maris, Sweden**

### **Moscow**

The Park of Economical Achievement. Its name the ultimate paradox. Built to showcase the advancements of the glorious state. The golden lady statues with their sheaves of wheat. The pavilions of the regions of the Soviet Union. The gleaming platinum cosmos monument with its rocket reaching so far into the sky there is a feeling of falling backwards when your eyes follow it all the way up. And below it, the relief of Lenin, showing worker citizens the way forward. It was the most beautiful thing, walking around the park, eating Leningrad vanilla ice cream in the freezing temperatures. Classical music floated from hidden speakers, so faint, yet omnipresent. Along side this Park of Economical Achievement runs Prospect Mira — the road of peace. It was here, back when we were still living in the nearby student halls, that the tanks drove into Moscow that night.

Stalin's poplars  
under them, boys playing  
with matches

## **Anna Maris, Sweden**

### **Berlin**

Die Mauer. The Wall. Around the corner from Checkpoint Charlie an exhibition. Black and white portraits of those who lost their lives before the war began. The Communists. The Feminists. The Anarchists. The union men. Artists. Dissidents. Those who stood up. Those who dared to speak out loud about everything that was wrong. I find myself thinking: if now was then, we'd be the first to go. You and I, my love. Our photos mounted here, by the wall.

water colors  
in the wheat field  
a stroke of defiance

**Nishant Mehrotra, India**

cocktail party —  
her impression on  
the couch

## **Robert Moyer, US**

high school reunion  
basketball player peers  
above his rims

moon tunnel moon

**Guatam Nadkarni, India**

bookshelf  
termites finish the classics  
before I do



**Peter Newton, US**

stars and bars  
no changing  
someone's stripes

**Christina Nguyen, US**

the nurse says  
he has beautiful color  
my infant son  
half white  
half Asian

seven years  
after we move into this house  
the money tree  
from my in-laws  
dies

sticking  
to her guns  
the pacifist mom

inside  
the biodegradable bag  
a disposable diaper

## **Gabriel Patterson, US**

### **There's A Killer In My Head**

There's a killer in my head,  
an enraged, jealous one who acts without thinking,

there's a killer in my head,  
full throttle on the freeway, playing chicken with your rear bumper,

there's a killer in my head,  
holding a baseball bat, eyeing you while you read this poem . . .

xxxxlate night horror flickxxxxxxxxx  
xxxthe one where the nicest guyxxx  
xxxxxxxxkills everybodyxxxxxxxxxxx

## **Gabriel Patterson, US**

### **End All Be All**

Burger King coffee is shitty. Of course they use Seattle's Best Coffee, so maybe "Seattle's Best Coffee is shitty," would be a truer statement. Still, I must have it with my breakfast because it reminds me of when you would let me sneak sips of yours, back when I thought tea was the end all be all . . .

but really, YOU'RE the end all be all, and this shitty coffee is just another excuse for me to brag about you.

new thong panties  
the difference  
in her walk

**Vandana Parashar, India**

barren womb  
flowers bloom  
on her saree

**Marianne Paul, Canada**

one bite less of a full moon crazy

**Marianne Paul, Canada**

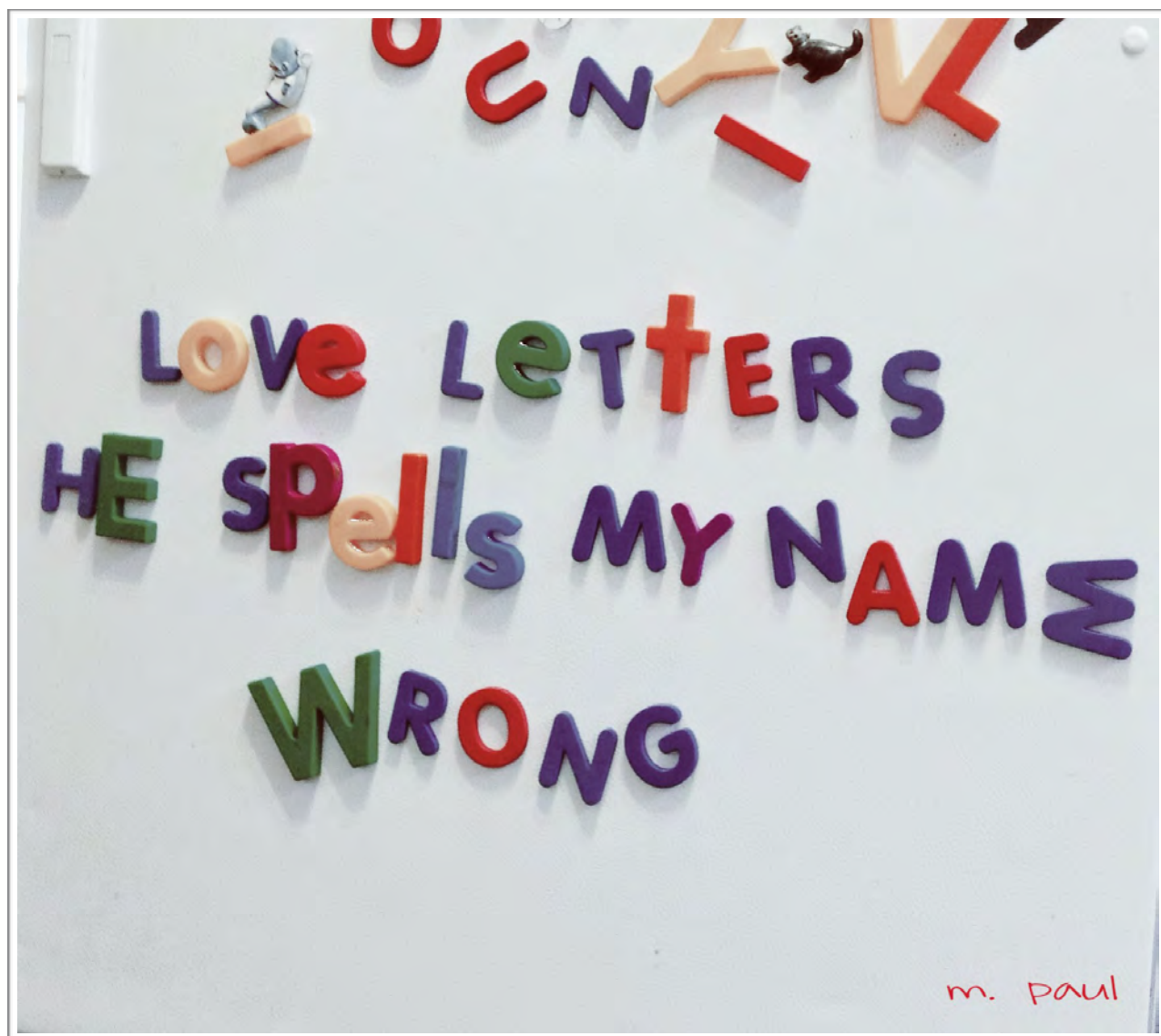
## **Psychoanalysis**

the bogeyman —  
those happy family  
photos

When the two children bent over the fire to warm themselves, the old witch gave them a push. Gretel grabbed her brother just in time before he fell into the flames. She reached for the poker and stabbed the witch through the heart. Then Gretel emptied the pantry of food and stuffed her pockets with a stash of money she found under the mattress. The brother and sister set out at first light to find their parents and to live happily ever after... perhaps.

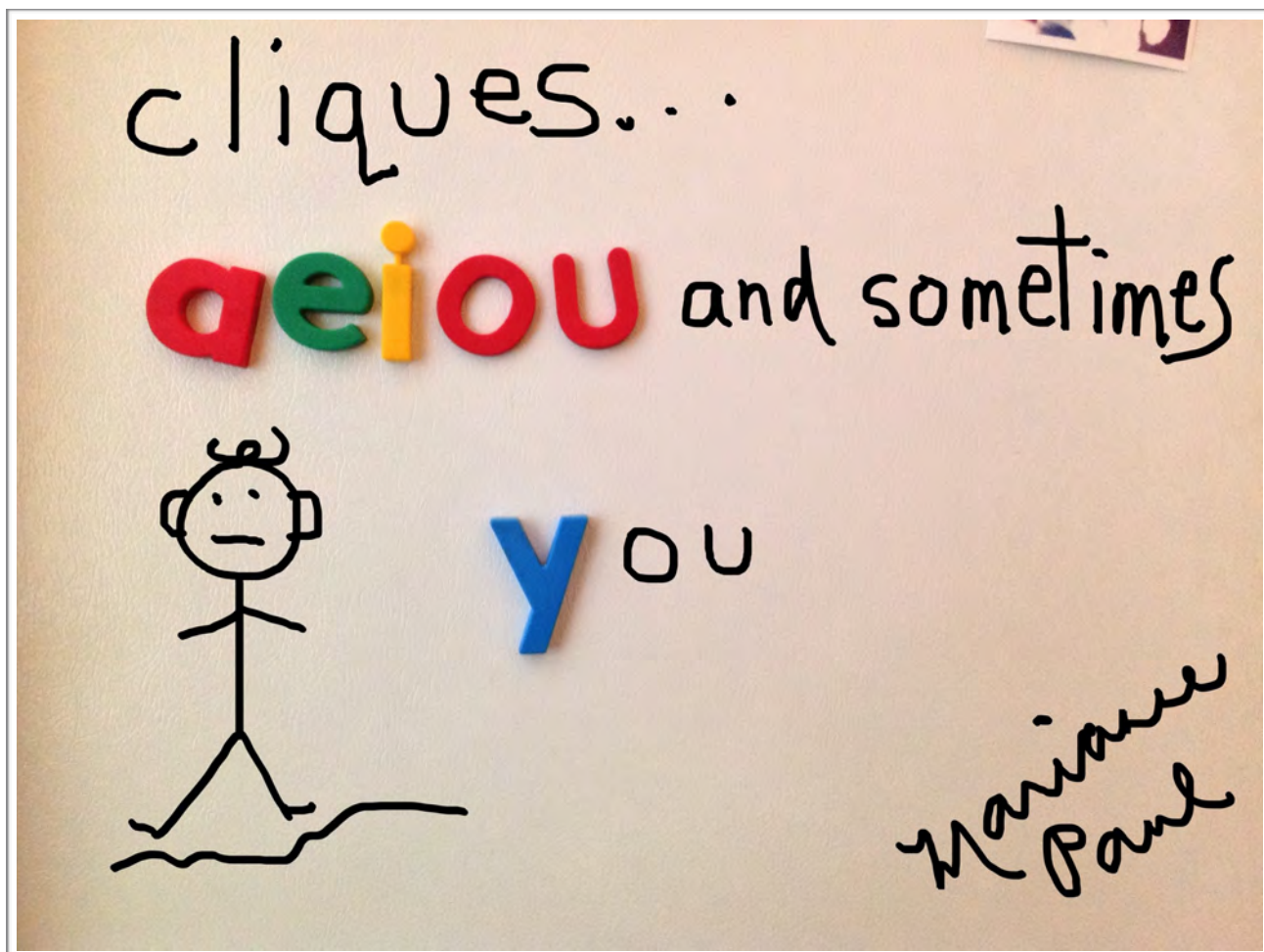
serial killers —  
everyone starts out  
as a child

Marianne Paul, Canada





Marianne Paul, Canada



**Patricia Pella, US**

you  
so many secrets  
me

**Madhuri Pillai, Australia**

untuned piano  
a prop for photographs  
of happier times

**Jade Pisani, Australia**

a billion stars  
three decades dead  
and I still need her

**Geethanjali Rajan, India**

thunderstorm —  
caught in the downpour  
of your indifference

**Kala Ramesh, India**

daylily  
worries drag on  
into the night

**Ivan Randall, Australia**

stumbling through  
the pumpkin patch  
pissed out of my gourd

## **Boris Ratnikov, US**

good will —  
trying on  
someone else's shoes

memory foam  
something  
to re-lie on

small talk  
not easy  
with a big mouth



**Dave Read, Canada**

financial times  
the red light district  
in the black

night fishing  
he casts a line  
at last call

silently  
she hangs up  
my shirt

**Michael Rehling, US**

satellite internet  
encrypting a text  
to my wife

sleep walking  
i trip over five hundred  
sheep

**Bryan Rickert, US**

home late —  
the look I get  
from the cat

working on the marriage —  
an unmatched sock's  
mate turns up

tattoo artist  
his body  
of work

street side bar —  
the long line  
of ants

**Olivier Schopfer, Switzerland**

from flower to flower  
unfaithful too  
the butterfly

**Yesha Shah, India**

## **SPECTRUM**

Strong emotions release impulses. Absorbed as energies, the database of our memories is all around, in the elements of our world.

The lush green grassy carpet must have been created with a toddler's peals of laughter; the red coastal soil with colors of passion and the seashell scattered sands designed in the texture of matrimony. Roses were soaked in the truest of love and sunflowers steeped in friendship. Genocidal crimes caused the earth to tremble. Volcanoes erupted in the lava of a woman's rage. Forest fires spewed the wrath of a spurned love and the sea surged toward the clouds in the bitter tears of a mother . . .

Even my whimsical thoughts are buried somewhere in layers of sediment. Hundreds of years from now some geologist or archeologist will unearth and caress the myriad layers that was . . .us.

blue moon . . .  
the rattle of a tin can  
on cobblestone streets

**Shloka Shankar, India**

updating  
my resume  
i add  
another language  
i barely know

split pomegranate  
I fall a little more in love  
with myself

**Debbie Strange, US**



## **Hansha Teki, NZ**

the stillness  
after the birth  
unravelling star charts

crescent moon  
a smile of benevolence  
goes awry



**Jari Thymian, US**

strawberries planted  
removing my ex-husband's jeans  
from the scarecrow

## **Paresh Tiwari, India**

### **Life Like**

With my coarse grease-stained fingers, I unwrap you under the watchful gaze of the bedside lamp. You do come with an instruction manual and when I am done putting you together, you know exactly what I want.

I adjust your voice to the right pitch of temple bells, the colour of your eyes to the precise shade of summer skies and the taper of your nails to the third night of crescent.

It's not just about sex, like the traditionalists would have one believe. So I let you be and you settle down on the duvet, like you belong there.

Wrapped in nothing but a starry sky, you swig charcoal filtered verses. We talk of poetry in existentialism and the mundane in art. It might have been how God felt had he loved Eve. We kiss, tentatively at first and then with hunger. Your taste lingers on my tongue, long after I peel my skin from your latex body, layer by layer.

second date . . .  
tuning the intensity  
of first rains

## **Paresh Tiwari, India**

### **Burning bright**

The transmogrification isn't easy. For one it starts with a multiple-choice test. It grades you on the names of rivulets and expects you to know every cave in a thirty mile radius. It checks your knowledge on the call of langurs. You have to study the family lore going back nine generations (that's particularly difficult given all their names are just a variation of throaty rumbles). You have to know when the mahua blooms and when the water patch dries up.

Once you clear that, you are allowed in their territory but only after you cast your clothes away at the edge of the jungle. You have to learn to walk on all fours, feel the grass under your paws (of course you can't call them hands and feet anymore; that's just too human).

You get to share the kill, but it still is mostly bones you know. And you tear it off the carcass with your teeth. Fire is a definite no. Forks and knives are really frowned upon and so is salt.

You have to grow your nails long, the longer the better. Then you have to learn to camouflage yourself. Breathe with the trees and be one with the shrubs. Fall like a wildflower and sway like the tall grass. Your teeth are weak and they know you can't kill even if you go for the jugular, at least not now. There's time for that.

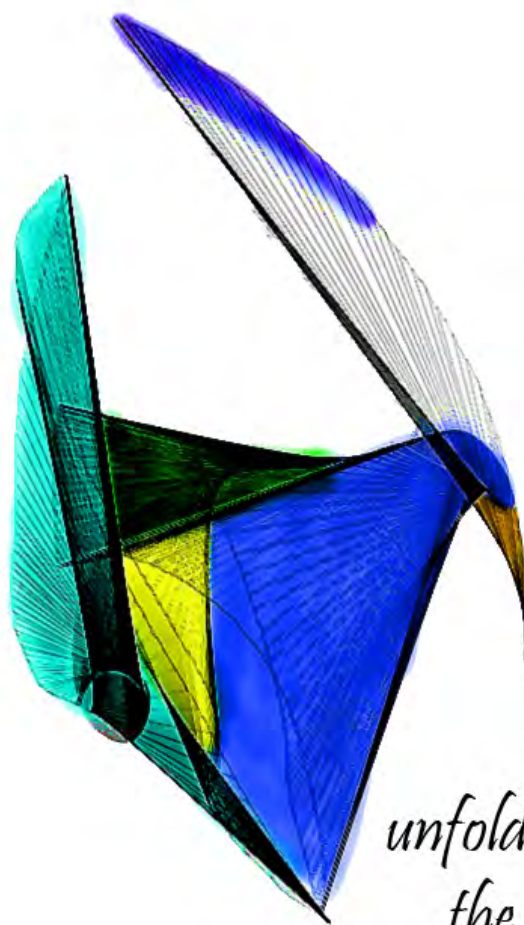
But slowly you do learn to hang on to the stag's throat. To run around in concentric circles and mark your terrain. But it's only when your eyes begin to burn a hole in the moonless night that you are accepted as a member of the pride.

corporate ladder  
starting at the bottom  
of the food chain

**Maria Tomczak, Poland**

*Maria Tomczak*

真理也



*unfolding peacock's tail  
the widow tries on  
a colorful dress*

**Kevin Valentine, US**

buzzard shadow —  
the mother-in-law's flight  
touches down

**Kevin Valentine, US**



**Kevin Valentine, US**





**Christine L. Villa, US**

missing bookend  
my life falls apart  
without you

cannelloni —  
the stuff he adds  
to his stories

brittle bough —  
how I break in two  
without warning

**Julie Warther, US**

**A TURKEY AND SOME MISTLETOE**

feeding  
the construction crew —  
gingerbread

sugarplums . . .  
it's hard to dream  
of what you've never known

lull in the conversation  
I admit my fondness  
for fruitcake

a turkey  
and some mistletoe —  
recipe for disaster

## **Bill Waters, US**

### **Bam!**

The mourning dove slammed into the glass patio door hard enough to leave a ghostly imprint of its body and wings. Those birds may act the buffoon strutting around the bird feeder, but they're tough as an old army boot! This one shook the impact right off and flew away while I stared in amazement.

who has the  
nine lives now?  
cats in the window

**Ian Wiley, Japan**

bits of beef  
in her veggie dish  
she has a cow

Think outside the box —  
on the wall  
of his cubicle

their second date  
the moon reveals less  
of itself

## **Ernest Wit, Poland**

empty nest  
two scrambled eggs  
for dinner

universal education  
the pizza man  
quotes Shakespeare

**Keith Woodruff, US**

the bare flagpole —  
a middle-finger under  
all that South Carolina sky

**Ali Znaidi, Tunisia**

empty room . . .  
even flies  
get bored

# Plum Pickin's

editor's choice

***busted knuckles  
my father's blood  
mixing with mine***

***Chase Gagnon, US***

This “dark” senryu gains more impact with every read. First of all, I love the harsh sounds of the hard consonants in the first line. But, it is the irony in the last two lines that make this emotionally disturbing poem.

***surprise call  
from a former lover  
shaken not stirred***

***Alanna C, Burke, US***

This senryu was very relatable. I think we can all imagine getting such an unexpected and undesired call and the feelings such a call would illicit. Great play on words.

***Burning bright***

***a haibun by Paresh Tiwari, India***

This magical haibun builds up momentum from start to finish. Only after reading the senryu do we realize it was all a creative analogy for learning how to be a team player in our corporate world.