

#FemkuMag



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*revolutionary haiku
by women, trans, & gender expansive voices*

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International Women's Month Editor

Cover Haiga

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Edited by Vandana Parashar

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EDITORS' NOTE

First of all, we would both like to thank you for your continued patience and support as we have gotten the journal back up and running. You will notice that the entire format of the journal has changed, including added sections to differentiate poem types (haiku, senryu, tanka, kyoka, etc). This decision was made by the editorial team as a way to address the controversies surrounding the “definitions” of these forms and to help educate poets who might be misinformed as to which craft tools are necessary for each form. An essay by Rowan Beckett on the key differences between tanka, kyoka, haiku, and senryu is in progress and will be published in issue 36, July 2024. The essay was originally slated for this issue, but Rowan was out of commission for a month with a broken hand.

If you're interested in learning more in the meantime, please check out resources such as *The Japanese Haiku* by Kenneth Yasuda, *World Within Walls* by Donald Keene, *The Haiku Seasons* by William J. Higginson, and the essay “The Seasons of Place: The Potential of Chiboo Kigo in Western Haiku” by Joshua Gage from *Modern Haiku* 44.3. If there are any questions as to why your poem was placed in its respective category, please do not hesitate to contact the team and we will happily give personal feedback.

We hope you enjoy our relaunch of #FemkuMag, and especially this issue, which champions women from all walks of life.

CONTENTS

[Haiku](#)

[Senryu](#)

[Tanka](#)

[Kyoka](#)

[Cherita](#)

[Haibun and Linked Forms](#)

[Haiga and Visual Poetry](#)

[Book Reviews](#)

HAIKU

keeping pace with
a jasmine-laden braid
Benares sun

Rupa Anand, India

snowberry clearwing
the mouthfeel of a name
for our baby

Meredith Ackroyd, USA

hospice riding bareback into winter

Marilyn Ashbaugh, USA

Haiku

his dream
of returning to Western Kansas
a cemetery breeze

Shirley Brooks, USA

small window...
the candid awakening
of a hyacinth

Lucia Cardillo, Italy

blue hour wintering into neither nor

Antoinette Cheung, Canada

flowering cactus if given the chance

Antoinette Cheung, Canada

Haiku

avoiding sex
for another day—
snow in the air

Kirsten Cliff Elliot, England

not hot enough
for ice-cream
first date

Louise Hopewell, Australia

lend me your wings
to reach the ocean shore
early butterfly

Eva Limbach, Germany

that kind of mood indigo bunting

Kristen Lindquist, USA

Haiku

first snow —
she places his hand
on her belly

Mary McCormack, USA

first hot flash
the early autumn blush
of a burning bush

Debbie Olson, USA

ill winds of autumn i'm still spitting up leaves

Debbie Strange, Canada

he says I seem happy
a twist of snake
on warm slate

Mary Stevens, USA

SENRYU

caesarean section—
what it costs the river
to move a stone

Meredith Ackroyd, USA

leftovers
not enough of me
to go around

Cynthia Anderson, USA

unchained melody
the daughter I never had
still mine

Cynthia Anderson, USA

assisted living
the city pigeons
begin their rounds

Marilyn Ashbaugh, USA

midnight rain...
she whispers her dreams
to her daughter

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan

midlife crisis—
mopping my reflection
from the floor

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan

mammogram
the slayed dragon
only sleeping

Roberta Beary, USA/Ireland

belt too tight
to let in
the love

Shirley Brooks, USA

"life's a ball..."
her mother's
thinning yarn

Helen Buckingham, UK

man/na

Helen Buckingham, UK

moon landing
one small step
inside the women's refuge

Tracy Davidson, UK

raindrops
on the river...
I return to myself

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt, India

she's got
a bone to pick
adam's spare rib

Eavonka Ettinger, USA

strawberries and cream
tennis whites stained
by my first period

Adele Evershed, USA

Pleiades
the strand of silence
in our childhood braids

Laurie Greer, USA

wedding vows
what it means
to be his wife

Dorna Hains, USA

a village
across the sea
half of me still there

Betsy Hearne, USA

light hoarding her cart almost full

Reid Hepworth, Canada

ribeye
she licks the grease
off daddy's plate

Kimberly A. Horning, USA

B side—
my rapist hums
Funny Valentine

Kimberly A. Horning, USA

seeing through the b s lasses with glasses

Roberta Beach Jacobson, USA

these tired eyes in my morning mirror i do not know them

Eva Joan, Germany

oh baby
how quiet is your crying
I would scream if I could

Nadejda Kostadinova, Bulgaria

agni pariksha there then here now

Arvinder Kaur, India

black eye pencil
drawing the line
at fifteen

Kathryn Liebowitz, USA

hand-me-down dresses
a repeating pattern
of silence

Kathryn Liebowitz, USA

before pronouns my androgynous name

Barrie Levine, USA

empty desk
the girl who moved too far
to find

Barrie Levine, USA

the sagging corners
of our bedsheet
we don't fit anymore

Barrie Levine, USA

the need to please
her perfectly punctuated
life sentence

Sharon Martina, USA

thorn by thorn
the rose tattoo
sinks in

Mary McCormack, USA

gray matter thinking in black and white

Sarah Metzler, USA

Barbie party
another little girl
drinks the kool-aid

Sarah Metzler, USA

babbling brook –
waiting for an answer
to come

Daniela Misso, Italy

warp threads
we weave our dreams
on a borrowed loom

Kelly Moyer, USA

childlessness—
sharing all the reasons
why

Helen Ogden, USA

menopause...
no longer in synch
with the moon

Helen Ogden, USA

if only men too seahorses

Debbie Olson, USA

Chatty Cathy
a pull string assigned
at birth

Lorraine A Padden, USA

traffucking

Lorraine A Padden, USA

noyoumaynotleave sunset

Lorraine A Padden, USA

rolling stones—
he calls only when
he needs me

Basiliké Pappa, Greece

tailgating my mother's history mine

Dr. Vidya Premkumar, India

bread squeezing
in a panini press . . .
mammogram

Valentina Ranaldi-Adams, USA

and I
the only girl child
split seams

Jenn Ryan-Jauregui, USA

analyzing his handwriting —
his i
with a loophole

Kelly Sargent, USA

evening news sons of mothers mansplaining abortion

Julie Schwerin, USA

fishing with dynamite
so many strangers
in my womb

Julie Schwerin, USA

when the bough breaks
this child bearing
a child

Julie Schwerin, USA

evening shadows him as a husband

Richa Sharma, India

after the fight
all through the night
the tap drips silence

Neena Singh, India

healed over so long ago it almost wasn't me

Mary Stevens, USA

LGBTQIA I might be a +

Mary Stevens, USA

a punch in the gut

universe

kicking inside me

Bojana Stojcic, Germany

vesper flight

we were taught to keep

our feet on the ground

Debbie Strange, Canada

driving six hours
to leave you
dips in the country road

Ann Sullivan, USA

deposit on a dream refunded

Margaret Walker, USA

when no one tells the outcast is you

Margaret Walker, USA

intricate body issues beadwork on a vintage sweater

Marcie Wessels, USA

moonscape

I come

full circle

Katherine E Winnick, UK

as if my garden didn't have enough weeds chin hair

Nitu Yumnam, India

TANKA

going over
your miscarriage story
again & again . . .
pink clouds spreading
to follow me home

Kirsten Cliff Elliot, England

making plans
on this winter's night
I pause ...
what if a bird sings
in the light of the dawn?

Taylor Jo Kelly, UK

KYOKA

in the restaurant
bathroom
a skinny mirror
my cuteness gone
in 60 seconds

Susan Burch, USA

CHERITA

savoring shiraz truffles

your deep dark center
draws me

that night
discovering our love
of distant galaxies

wanda amos, Australia

looking
into the mirror
for the first time

growing up

the shapes we want
the shapes others want

Lakshmi Iyer, India

after one misstep

the silent treatment
lasts for days

I count the hours
tear-streaked and hollow
until you return

Julie Bloss Kelsey, USA

lacking boundaries
my therapist tells me
to visualize doors

I choose frosted glass
for friends and family, but you

oak with a deadbolt

Julie Bloss Kelsey, USA

HAIBUN AND LINKED FORMS

Collateral

Cynthia Anderson, USA

My mother used to give me baskets. She found them at yard sales, dirt cheap. I was baffled by them, as I had no love for, or need for, baskets—but, I thanked her and took them nonetheless.

Then came the pasteboard chest. It looked freshly pulled from a Dumpster, long past any pretense of shabby chic. I didn't want to touch it. Yet, I put it in my car to throw out later.

Other yard sale finds came and went. The only ones I still have are three baskets—castoffs that grew into usefulness.

years of letting things slide a crash landing

Hairdos

Norma Bradley, USA

Staring into a mirror in your tiny bathroom,
I watched you tease small sections
of your shoulder-length hair,
press them down with a comb three times,
and cover them with gooey hairspray,
leaving us in a dissipating mist—
your beehive three inches higher than mine.

In the photo, we are wearing formal gowns.
You in your favorite black, me in my favorite green.
Our hairdos perfectly matched.

Ten years later: blue skies, clouds drifting,
long straight hair falling over our made-up eyes,
we pile your three and my three
into the back of my Ford Country Squire
and head to Jones Beach
with pails, shovels, and blankets.

At water's edge, some sandpipers
stand on one leg, others tear around
like little marching bands.

Turning toward me, you
raise your sunglasses and announce,
I am going back to school.
Getting a divorce.

Haibun and Linked Forms

Sand castles grow into mountains
and sink into dark tunnels.
The surf rushes forward like the years.

On the phone, today, you say:

I am in the hospital.

My hair is falling out.

You say the unthinkable—

goodbye.

in the dark of night north star

Refrigerator

Susan Burch, USA

I bet more than 50% of my haibun are about food. Like wtf, why am I writing about food so much? I'm not even a foodie.

does it include
my mind
open concept kitchen

Haibun and Linked Forms

Susan Burch, USA

a sunbeam from heaven

how long

can I ignore

the call to come home

Unfinished Moon

Kathryn Liebowitz, USA

The young woman, my husband's former student, unwraps and sets the handblown bottles on a table in my painting studio. Each, no bigger than an infant's fist, contains a tableau of clay figures in nomadic dress rendered in moments of caretaking—carrying water, kneading bread, tending a child. Yet, a sense of impending danger and flight haunts these scenes. One woman is caught glancing over her shoulder; another gathers sticks, a child wrapped in a shawl at her hip; two exchange looks of warning. I catch my breath. As loose as my smock dress is, it suddenly feels constricting.

bottling up
all that's inside
first trimester

UNFOLDING ORIGAMI

Yesha Shah, India

there's an old black chair in my new home. it's worn out, the seams are unraveling and the lining underneath the seat is tattered. it hangs limply in fragments which disintegrate the moment you touch them. this new home has a coordinated aesthetic of earthy colors: the walls, the furniture and the tapestry. this old black chair is jarring and in all probability the designer would be aghast to find it here. i have a decade old history with this chair so its mere sight comforts me. i remember back in my old home it used to embarrass me and i wanted to have it replaced...

visiting hometown
a story
in every lane

Hide and Seek

Margaret Walker, USA

I have on my nightgown about to be tucked in. We can see it out our window. Right in front of my friend's house. "On a hill far away..."

A cross burning on the hill. A cross just like in Sunday School where we sing "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white they are precious in his sight..." almost every week. A cross just like in the church window where the sunshine comes in.

My friend doesn't come to school for a long time. I hear adults saying her daddy "helped that colored family". Nobody tells little kids anything, but we saw.

dunce caps white robes wearing fear

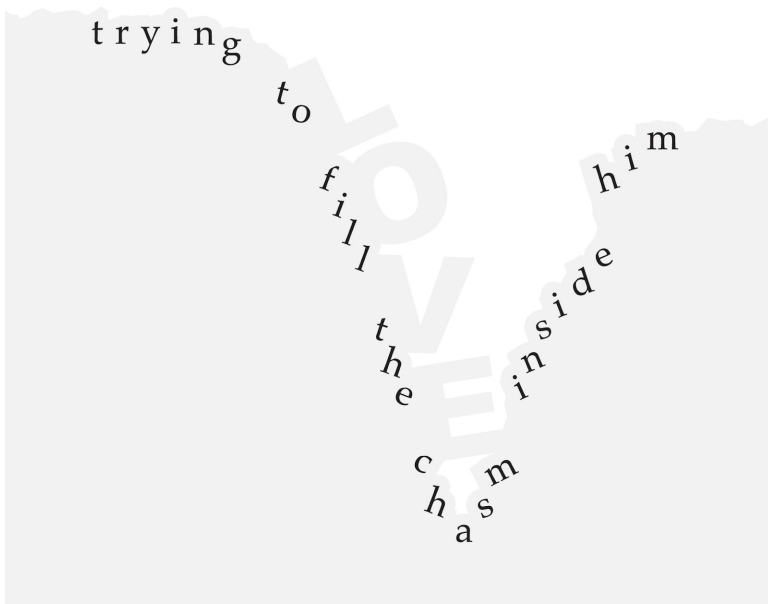
Reckoned

Laurie Wilcox-Meyer, USA

3:08 a.m. I hear deep thumps in my house. Now, dead silence.
Days later in 3:08 darkness the sounds return. After months
of this eeriness, I throw away his gray self-portrait. Sleep
returns. My friend asks me to buy chocolates for a children's
charity. I do.

my throat aches
until I hear
the warbler sing

HAIGA AND VISUAL POETRY



Mary McCormack, USA

Kristen Satkas, USA

Haiga and Visual Poetry



Susan Mallernee, USA



Debbie Strange, Canada

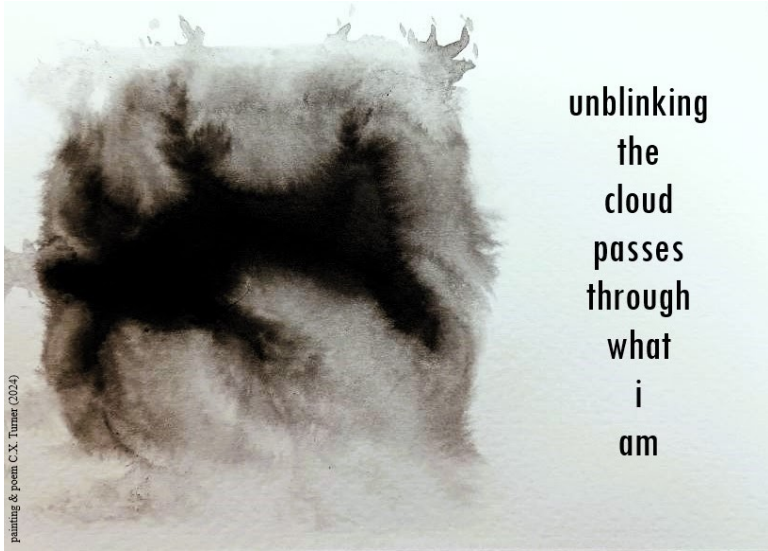
Haiga and Visual Poetry



painting & poem C.X. Turner (2024)

C.X. Turner, UK

Haiga and Visual Poetry



C.X. Turner, UK

BOOK REVIEWS

Bookmarks, by Kelly Sargent (Winchester VA.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 66 pages; 4.25" x 6.5". Perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-32-2. \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

Reviewed by Rowan Beckett

There are many poetry books that focus on love, loss, and everyday life, but it's not so common to read a haiku collection where only four of the senses can be utilized to their fullest extent. Relatively new to haiku, Kelly Sargent is a hearing impaired poet who was born in Luxembourg and currently resides in Vermont. Her work has been featured in several publication and award venues including: The Heron's Nest, Modern Haiku, Presence, Frogpond, the Golden Haiku Contest, and the 2023 Mukai Haiku Festival. She has previously published two memoirs in verse from Kelsay Books titled *Seeing Voices: Poetry in Motion* and *Echoes in My Eyes*. Sargent's debut haiku collection, *Bookmarks*, captures the essence of ordinary with extravagant technique and detail as she shares life's most difficult and transformative moments through language she's developed within herself.

As military children, Sargent and her twin sister, also born hearing impaired, were raised in both Europe and North America, which might have enhanced Sargent's attentiveness to seasonal variation and helped expand her use of kigo when writing haiku. In her collection *Bookmarks*, Sargent takes common images we read in haiku and extends the moment past what is expected:

snow angel
a sinner
repents

In this poem, Sargent has used tools like juxtaposition to convey the similarities between snow still fresh enough to make snow angels and a sinner repenting to come clean from sin. These striking comparisons are found throughout *Bookmarks*. It is not just through haiku in which Sargent is able to give her audience a unique view of universal moments, but in senryu as well:

baby's first steps
a mother's breath
on tiptoe

The language used to create this poem is both specific and clever. Several other senryu and haiku in *Bookmarks* follow similar structure, showing how quickly Sargent is becoming a master at grasping haiku and senryu craft tools and creating moments with a fresh, original perspective.

Another short form tool consistent with Sargent is her focus on brevity. The poems throughout *Bookmarks* are truly micro, most being less than 12 syllables and preserving the notion that haiku should be written so they can be said "in one breath." However, the way Sargent creates space within her poems is expansive and helps readers insert themselves into the moment. The following poem demonstrates this:

redthornsrose

failing to see
the signs

The pause created within this short nine-syllable poem is not just a realistic moment in which the speaker has failed to see the thorns when grabbing a rose, but a poem of introspection as well. “the signs” is specific enough that we know nothing good has come from the alluded situation, but ambiguous enough that readers are able to put themselves into a moment from their own life when they failed to see warning signs. We see this technique used again in the following poem, which is also just nine syllables:

without
my consent
pond reflection

This senryu, like the previous, has given readers all the necessary information without extra articles, adjectives, or other words, which would make the poem sound forced and unnatural. The structure of this senryu, as well as its straightforward and honest tone, are both stripped bare, which is part of the foundation of Japanese short form poetry. Sargent’s understanding of brevity and removing all unnecessary words from individual poems has made this collection feel carefully put together and polished, especially for an author’s debut.

Overall, *Bookmarks* is an elegant book of haiku and senryu. Get your hands on a copy and it will not disappoint, provided cost is not a barrier. With the book marketed on the higher end of average, it is interesting that a collection celebrating

Book Reviews

life's most transformative moments through the voice of a disabled author wouldn't be more accessible. Regardless, it would be a delight to see Sargent and *Bookmarks* get the recognition they deserve. Perhaps even a book reading accompanied with American Sign Language would increase accessibility to *Bookmarks* and allow readers to better connect with Sargent's poems from her perspective, as well as encourage more people in the hearing impaired community to write haiku and senryu.

Bookmarks is only the start for Kelly Sargent as we get to witness her haiku journey first hand. The poems in this collection have both depth and transparency. With notes of Julie Schwerin's ambiguity and abstractions, and the subtlety, honesty, and poignancy of Debbie Strange, this collection is something new for even the most experienced haiku reader. Not only does Sargent show exquisite technique and craftsmanship, she proves you don't need all five senses to write brilliant haiku poems.

Vital Signs, by Deborah P Kolodi (Cleveland, OH.: Cuttlefish Books, 2024). 96 pages; 4" x 6". Perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1735025780. \$10.00 from www.amazon.com

Reviewed by Vandana Parashar

Deborah P Kolodji's book *Vital Signs* is a poignant and potent collection of poems that artfully explores the profound

Book Reviews

emotional journey of her battling cancer. The poems in this book navigate through the various stages of cancer, from the initial diagnosis to the arduous process of treatment, the unwavering support of family and friends, and ultimately, the triumphant spirit of survival. Kolodji has very vividly painted a picture of both the physical and emotional landscapes of the cancer journey.

The book starts on a beautiful note with this haiku– before she even suspected that her body cells have gone rogue. The uncertainty can feel unnerving, the statistics impossible to bear.

the blush of dawn
through a hospital window
vital signs

As the book progresses, the reader can sense her loneliness and the feeling of loss as if they were with her in the hospital.

cold drizzle
windowless room
in the ER

hearing loss
my daughter's voice
turns into ocean

Every word hits hard and the heart goes out when she is there alone in the hospital on festivals. Even the coldest heart can't help but want to give her a warm hug.

if only my IV fluid
tasted like turkey
hospital Thanksgiving

From time immemorial, breasts have been considered a female's most prized physical possessions. They are like badges of femininity and losing them makes a woman feel incomplete. This intensely personal moment of revelation has been so perfectly and sadly captured in this poem. I am in awe of her ability to convey complex emotions so beautifully through her poems.

embarrassing moment
the nurse acts as if
he's seen it before

Even after your hair grows back and your scars start to fade, the fatigue and fear continues. The hardest part of survivorship is the struggle to keep these feelings from taking over each day.

From the dread and uncertainty of diagnosis to the strength found in the support of loved ones, Kolodji takes the reader on a powerful exploration of the multifaceted nature of the human experience with cancer.

away from all
I've ever known
fallen camellia

house finches
at the feeder

cancer support group

Kolodji's balancing act of the space between light and dark, hope and despair is commendable. It takes courage to embrace a cancer-free attitude after staring down the dark tunnel of a life-altering disease.

She ends her book with these poems which show her undefeatable spirit. She makes a point that cancer is only one part of her story.

mallard ripples
my troubles fade
into a lake

forest stillness
condors return
to the Redwoods

In the end, I'll say that *Vital Signs* is a moving and thought-provoking collection that explores the emotional landscape of cancer through the lens of these short poems. It is a testament to the strength of the human spirit. While emotionally intense, the book ultimately serves as a celebration of resilience, hope, and the indomitable will to live.

Remaining Publication Schedule:

July Issue

Edited by Rowan Beckett & Vandana Parashar

Open to women, non-binary, & trans-identifying poets only

Submit: May 1-31

2024 Marlene Mountain Memorial Contest

Open June 1-15, 2024

November Issue

Edited by Rowan Beckett

Open to women, non-binary, & trans-identifying poets only

Submit: September 1-30