



Bipedal Verses

by
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Carole MacRury's NaHaiWriMo daily writing prompts for August 2020 first appeared on the Facebook page for National Haiku Writing Month. (<https://www.facebook.com/NaHaiWriMo/>).

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Foreword

While I had considered myself to be a poet since childhood, my poetic output was mostly confined to the “rag and bone shop of the heart”¹, where it eventually ended up as smoke and flames as did the paper on which they may have been scrawled.

I discovered English Language Haiku (ELH) for the first time in early 2011, learning much about this short-form poetry from Robert D. Wilson, founder and co-editor of *Simply Haiku*, and through workshopping my early pieces with Wilson and others. Here was a form of poetry that my life and circumstances could allow me to work with.

At about the same time a Facebook community page named NaHaiWriMo was created by Michael Dylan Welch for National Haiku Writing Month. In Welch’s words:

Write one haiku a day for the month of February! Why February? Because it’s the shortest month—for the world’s shortest genre of poetry. Join poets around the world who pledge to write at least one haiku a day for **National Haiku Writing Month** during the year’s shortest month. Or write haiku every day of every month, all year round, on the NaHaiWriMo site on Facebook, with daily writing prompts to inspire you².

Through my participation in the first National Haiku Writing month, making poems quickly resumed its role as an integral part of my daily living as my sensual perceptions were transmuted into verbal conceptions as haiku.

I have since read just about every haiku, and everything relating to haiku, that I could lay my hands on. Participation in various haiku-related groups on Facebook brought me into regular contact, via internet communications, with many new people. Most of you reading this are among them though there are also too many who have since died. All have left a mark on my poetic sensibilities and practice, and my gratitude to each is profound.

One cannot be part of the global haiku community without becoming aware of the seemingly endless arguments of what is and what isn’t a haiku. Arguments about form (e.g. layout of lines both in number and length), poetic techniques transplanted from original Japanese practice (syllabic counts, *kigo*, *kire*, *ma*, *yugen*, *makoto*, *zoka* etc., etc.), and content (nature/seasons), among others. These continue to perpetuate what may be called the haiku wars.

¹ W.B. Yeats, *The Circus Animals’ Desertion*

² <http://www.nahaiwrimo.com/>

Don Baird and I pondered these matters long into the night via live internet chat. As a consensus response to these ponderings we created the [Living Haiku Anthology](https://livinghaikuanthology.com/)³ and the [Under the Basho](https://underthebasho.com/)⁴ haiku journal in 2013.

The *Living Haiku Anthology* was planned to become an ever-expanding repository of haiku that have been published over the decades—since first being written in non-Japanese languages (and outside of the confines of Japanese culture). The purpose of the “Living Haiku” anthology remains not to dictate any rules about what is or is not haiku, but to assemble as many previously published haiku as would be made available for inclusion by the original authors or their estates, into one ever-expanding online anthology.

My own experience of writing within the broad spectrum of all that has been classified as ELH over the years has led me to the inescapable conclusion that *haiku* cannot be written in English with anything near the high poetic art that we know has been achieved within the Japanese cultural and linguistic traditions. The rich depths and resonances that we so admire in the work of the Japanese haiku masters eludes the writer of haiku in English as does the carrot hung tantalisingly in front of the donkey by its master.

Two documents in particular opened up before me a much wider and more attainable vision. The first was the *Matsuyama Declaration*⁵ of 12 September 1999 composed by:

Arima Akito, Japan Minister of Education.

Haga Toru, President of Kyoto University; Art and Design.

Ueda Makato, Professor Emeritus, Stanford University.

Soh Sakon, Poet.

Kaneko Tohta, President, Modern Haiku Society (Japan).

Jean Jacques Origas, French Oriental Language Research Institute.

Of particular relevance to me were these two paragraphs with my emphasis in bold font:

Haiku is part of world literature. Haiku is opening itself to various peoples of the world. **This short, 17-syllable poetic form is now on the verge of broadening the possibilities of a rich array of poetic forms in the world.**

In haiku, a thing of wonder is expressed as it is. Haiku is grasped with all 5 senses, not by logic. Things which logic could not explain might be expressed in haiku. **In order to jump over the gap between**

³ <https://livinghaikuanthology.com/>

⁴ <https://underthebasho.com/>

⁵ http://fukiosho.org/archive/reference/Matsuyama_Declaration_English.pdf

logic and the senses, unique Japanese rhetorical techniques such as *kireji* and *kigo* were invented.

The other document is *Beyond the Haiku Moment: Basho, Buson and Modern Haiku myths* by Haruo Shirane, Shincho Professor of Japanese Literature, Columbia University, published in *Modern Haiku*, XXXI:1 (Winter-Spring 2000). The conclusion of Shirane's article reads as follows:

The dilemma is this: on the one hand, the great attraction of haiku is its democracy, its ability to reach out, to be available to everyone. There is no poetry like haiku when it comes to this. Haiku has a special meaning and function for everyone. It can be a form of therapy. It can be a way to tap into one's psyche. Haiku can do all these things. And it can do these things because it is short, because the rules are simple, because it can focus on the moment.

However, **if haiku is to rise to the level of serious poetry, literature that is widely respected and admired, that is taught and studied, commentated on, that can have impact on other non-haiku poets, then it must have a complexity that gives it depth and that allows it to both focus on and rise above the specific moment or time.** Basho, Buson and other masters achieved this through various forms of textual density, including metaphor, allegory, symbolism and allusion, as well as through the constant search for new topics. For North American poets, for whom the seasonal word cannot function in the fashion that it did for these Japanese masters, this becomes a more pressing issue, with the need to explore not only metaphorical and symbolic possibilities but new areas - such as history, urban life, social ills, death and war, cyberspace, Haiku need not and should not be confined to a narrow definition of nature poetry, particularly since the ground rules are completely different from those in Japan.

How then can haiku achieve that goal in the space of seventeen syllables? The answer is that it does not necessarily have to. One of the assumptions that Basho and others made about the hokku (haiku) was that it was unfinished. The hokku was only the beginning of a dialogue; it had to be answered by the reader or another poet or painter. Haikai in its most fundamental form, as linked verse, is about linking one verse to another, one person to another. Haikai is also about exchange, about sending and answering, greeting and bidding farewell, about celebrating and mourning. Haikai was also about mutual composition, about completing or complementing the work of others, adding poetry and calligraphy to someone's printing, adding a prose passage to a friend's poem, etc.

One consequence is that haikai and the hokku in particular is often best appreciated and read as part of a sequence, as part of an essay, a poetry collection, a diary or travel narrative, all forms that reveal the process of exchange, linkage, and that give haikai and haiku a larger context. Basho's best work was *Narrow Road to the Interior* (*Oku no hosomichi*), in which the haiku was embedded in a larger prose narrative and was part of a larger chain of texts.

In Basho's day, haikai was two things: 1) performance and social act, and 2) literary text. As a social act, as an elegant form of conversation, haikai had to be easily accessible; it had to be spontaneous; it had to perform social and religious functions. Thus, half of Basho's haiku were greetings, parting poems,

poetic prayers. They served very specific functions and were anchored in a specific place and time, in a dialogic exchange with other individuals. **For Basho, however, haikai was also a literary text that had to transcend time and place, be understood by those who were not at the place of composition. To achieve this goal, Basho repeatedly rewrote his poetry, made it fictional, gave it new settings, added layers of meaning, emphasized the vertical axis (linking it to history and other literary texts), so that the poem would have an impact beyond its original circumstances.** One hopes that more North American haiku poets can take inspiration from this complex work.⁶

During 2017 three factors arising from my interactions with other writers had a significant influence on future developments in my writing.

The first was through ongoing friendships of like-minds with Richard Gilbert and Clayton Beach that deepened through lengthy online conversations. It was in this space that Richard's book *Poetry as Consciousness: Haiku Forests, Space of Mind, and an Ethics of Freedom*⁷ was being supported, and where *Heliosparrow Poetry Journal* edited by Richard and Clayton had its origins.

Clayton encouraged me to try my hand at collaborative linked verse that helped open up for me the social aspect of haiku's origins. We ended up publishing a book of our collaborations and solo pieces titled *Memories of the Future: Linked and Contrapuntal Poetry*⁸.

I also participated in collaborative verse linked forms with Johannes S. H. Bjerg, Johnny Baranski, Michael O'Brien, and John McManus.

It was also in 2017 that I first learned of "parallels" from Johannes S. H. Bjerg⁹—these opened the possibilities of poems based on a wider interpretation of haiku techniques. "Parallels" is a form that Johannes describes as "two simultaneous instances, two trains of 'thought', in juxtaposition with each other while often with their own juxtaposition", which had grown out of an email exchange with Grant Hackett. I asked Johannes for his permission to adopt the form for my own writing, as I had sensed the poetic possibilities that could be realised. He readily agreed and wished me well.

The following piece is my first attempt at the form, written on 3 March 2017, to mark the point at which I was turning a little away from the old path and setting out in the new direction:

6

<https://www.thehaikufoundation.org/juxta/juxta-1-1/beyond-the-haiku-moment-basho-buson-and-modern-haiku-myths/>

⁷ <https://anarchicsanctuary.com/book-sanctuary/poetry-as-consciousness-2/>

⁸ <https://heliosparrow.com/publications/>

⁹ https://january-stones.blogspot.com/p/about_28.html

wiping
out
a blank slate
the last
traces
I redraw
of this
breath
*a butterfly's
flight*

I did not seek to publish any parallels until later composing a batch of 27 for submission to John Martone's monthly journal-blog in October 2018. John graciously accepted 26 of these for *Otata 35* commenting: "These are marvelous, just the sort of thing I've been waiting for."

Subsequent parallels appeared in a number of later issues of *Otata*, until the journal went into hiatus at the end of 2019. In accepting another submission, Martone commented: "[T]he parallels are just glorious". Of some pieces written at the time of the Mosque terrorist shootings in Christchurch, offered for *Otata 39*, he commented: "It is very moving work. The parallels are something new to ... world(?) poetry. The form will endure."

My parallels were also accepted by the editors for issues of *Bones*, *Sonic Boom*, *Failed Haiku*, *NOON*, *Heliosparrow Poetry Journal*, and *in behind the mask: haiku in the time of Covid-19*, and some are included in *Memories of the Future: Linked and Contrapuntal Poetry*, by Clayton Beach and myself.

As Bjerg recently reminded me, "perhaps the most important aspect of this kind of writing is the poems that arise in the reader as resonance."

In her introduction to *The Best American Poetry 2004*, Lyn Hejinian notes:

As the poet Jack Spicer once said, in a frequently quoted letter to Robin Blaser, "The trick naturally is what [Robert] Duncan learned years ago and tried to teach us — not to search for the perfect poem but

to let your way of writing of the moment go along its own paths, explore and retreat but never be fully realized (confined) within the boundaries of one poem.... There is really no single poem.” “Poems should echo and reecho against each other,” he continued. “They should create resonances. They cannot live alone any more than we can.”

The coming together of all these strands encourages me to continue work within the parallel form. With its clear connection to verse forms that have the life-blood of link and shift techniques, its roots in ELH, its ability to extend the *kigo* resonances of the Japanese haiku poets to a more mainstream English poetic, both historical and cultural allusiveness continue to beckon me along this path. The cutting of *kire* becomes a more integral part of the poem, as each “side” or voice creates resonances of sound, image and meaning—much like the resonating strings of a sitar.

he has
broken free
late summer kigo—
from the masters'
apron strings—
a poet
formally forsakes
dry cicada shell
both the tried
and tired

Pondering a Parallel

washed-out clouds
in a dreamscape
on the horizon
I witness
the leavetaking
washed-out lands
of Sylvia Plath's
ghost

This parallel had its origins in the afterimage from a dream in the early hours of morning that lingered before me for a moment as I woke from it and was rapidly losing contrast and definition. The left side hinges on the pivot of the middle line and is suggestive of the act of opening one's eyes blearily from a dream and blinking to make out, hold on to, or let go of the afterimage. The word for the afterimage of what could have been either clouds or landmasses on the horizon that came to mind was "dreamscape."

As I woke I recalled that I read somewhere that the word "dreamscape" may have been first used in a poem by Sylvia Plath titled *The Ghost's Leavetaking*. Plath's poem explores also the hypnopompic state between two worlds where one's rational waking cognition is trying to make sense of the non-linear images and associations of a dream. While in her poem the ghost is both the shadow of a dream after waking, and also the dreamer herself in a wakened world, the right side of my parallel identifies the ghost as Plath herself after she succeeded in ending her life by suicide.

The following Taoist parable also comes to mind:

Once upon a time, I, Zhuangzi, dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of my happiness as a butterfly, unaware that I was Zhuangzi. Soon I awakened, and there I was, veritably myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming I am a man. Between a man and a butterfly there is necessarily a distinction. The transition is called the transformation of material things.

Each reader is encouraged to become attuned to whatever resonances are awakened for them from their own reading of the parallel.

Prompts & Responses

The following pages each begin with a cut-and-paste from the prompts created by Carole MacRury as they appeared originally on the NaHaiWriMo Facebook page, during August 2020.

These are followed by my response poem and some of these with afternotes regarding my process in making them. I use the word “making” deliberately in accordance with this Wikipedia definition of the meaning of poetry:

Poetry (derived from the Greek *poiesis*, "making") is a form of literature that uses aesthetic and often rhythmic qualities of language—such as phonaesthetics, sound symbolism, and metre—to evoke meanings in addition to, or in place of, the prosaic ostensible meaning.

Generally, haiku is recognised as such by identifiers such as syllabic and linear form, brevity, poetic techniques derived from Japanese haiku via translation into English, or from English-language haiku influenced by such. Techniques that have come to be referred to by their Japanese names—*kigo*, and *kire*, among others. In the West, juxtaposition of images that trigger “the haiku” or “a-ha” moment is regarded by many as a key identifier.

Much as I appreciate the Japanese poetic qualities such as *wabi-sabi*, *karumi*, *yugen*, *mono no aware*, *ma*, and the many other words that become so relevant in the reading of and commentary on haiku, I am neither a Buddhist nor Japanese—I am a Catholic and a New Zealander, both from birth and by choice. The consequence of this is that I am rooted in the deep soil of a rich contemplative tradition and a rich literary tradition—I feel that it would be inauthentic not to allow these perspectives to inform my poetic output.

The parallel form allows me to develop my own slant on both form and techniques in a manner that is more authentic to who I am, while seeking to minimise the risk of unnecessary opacity— yet opening up the poems to meaningful resonances of deep and universal feeling in those who may read them attentively.

AUG. 1 BOOKSTORE. In a study published for *Brain and Language* in 2012, psychologists found that our brains process “tangible” (i.e. sensory) words faster than other words. Concrete nouns are nouns that you can see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. My prompts this month are all concrete nouns. Each word is wide-open to experience and interpretation. Use your senses to spark a single memory, moment, or experience of your own. You don’t need to use the word, unless you wish too, but instead go inside the word with your senses to find that specific observation, experience, or moment.

For instance, just this once I’ll give you an idea of how to approach the first prompt.

(Do you recall a favorite new or used bookstore? One in a quaint town, or a busy mall? Maybe you go inside to warm up on a cold day. Maybe in the heat of summer, you enter for air-conditioning and a place to browse in coolness. Can you taste the dusty stacks, feel the stiffness of a brand new book, or the worn or torn cover of an old book, the dusty smell of the interior, the creak of a wooden floor, the owner’s cat asleep on a stack of books, or any character’s you might meet inside? What does a bookstore connote for you? The possibilities are endless. Write it through what you see, smell, hear, touch or taste. Try to spark your memory through at least 2 of the senses. Memories, as we know, can be sparked by smell especially. Tune into your senses and let them ignite your writing through recall or imagination. Do this with each prompt and have fun!)

Sonnet 135—
the scent of Will’s dark lady
coils up through the script

A memory recalled, from my student days in Auckland, of popping into my favourite used book shop. On one occasion my eyes lingered on a facsimile copy of the Quarto edition of Shakespeare’s sonnet 135 reproduced below.

WHo euer hath her wish, thou hast thy *Will*,
And *Will* too boote, and *Will* in ouer-plus,
More then enough am I that vexe thee still,
To thy sweet will making addition thus.
Wilt thou whose will is large and spacious,
Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine,
Shall will in others seeme right gracious,
And in my will no faire acceptance shine:
The sea all water, yet receiues raine still,
And in abundance addeth to his store,
So thou being rich in *Will* adde to thy *Will*,
One will of mine to make thy large *Will* more.
Let no vnkinde, no faire beseechers kill,
Thinke all but one, and me in that one *Will*.

AUG. 2 CAFÉ (many sights, sounds, scents and tastes to be found in a café.)

after gardening
earthen tones enrich
my coffee

For a year or two after my student years, I found employment as one of the gardeners employed by the Devonport Borough Council, on the picturesque north shore of Auckland. We tended all the public gardens in the area and gave special attention to a rose garden that had a small café looking out onto it.

Once a week we tended this rose garden to be rewarded with a most welcome cup of coffee from the café staff. That is how I like my coffee to this day: earthen tones, rich and strong.

AUG. 3 HORN (ferry, fog horn, wind instrument, brass horn, animal horn...sound/touch) Anything!

urban rap
the performers sound
so horny

I say it as I hear it (and as I see it) from within my old man body.

AUG. 4 CLOCK (the tick-tock of time, or timepieces...where does it take you?)

the plowman's

rhythm sprung

slow

iambic feet

from a metronome

plod on home

winding down

Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* may have been the first poem that I learned to recite by heart aided by the iambic rhythm echoing the poem's sense of inevitability.

Sprung rhythm refers to Gerard Manley Hopkins writings while the metronome picks up on one of Ezra Pound's statements on what makes imagist poetry different.

AUG. 5 GALAXY (nebulas, stars, dark matter, milky way, planets, space debris, and more. How can we bridge our earthly lives to something out there?)

dust motes

black holes

our origins

red-shifted

my eyes

sieving light

through

the stars

from

the milky way

AUG. 6 FARM (Bring all of your senses and your hearts to this one. Livestock, berries, dairy, fruit; farm life, horses, combines, tractors, farmstead, auctions, locusts, success, failure, family, food...what does it mean to you?)

idylls of childhood

milk-heavy

cows

a future

passing

hauling

back home

bowls across

the

end of days

the paddock

AUG. 7 BELL (cat's bell, church bell, tower bell, jingle bell, brass bell, antique, bell shaped, clappers, gongs, hollow bell, alarm bells, nautical bells, peals, tolls, chime...how have bells played a role in your life?)

a butterfly

at the words

stilled

of consecration

on the altar

a gong sounds

This alludes to a Buson poem but the likeness ends there.

AUG. 8 FISH (Smell, touch, taste, even sound....catch it, cook it, paint it, from goldfish in a bowl to roaming the ocean...write about an experience, memory, moment that involved fish)

childhood

rock pool eyes

the tug

my fingers

explore

of a sea

anemone

the tidal life

AUG. 9 FOREST (Beyond trees, there is the dark understory rustling with life, the canopy letting in light, lichen's, moss, roots, forest bathing, paths... write about something you see, smell, taste, touch, or hear or experience in your forests)

wood ear fungus

underfoot

the rainforest's

the Isaiah Scroll's

prophetic words

dead sea of leaves

My Polish ancestors settled in the rain forests of Taranaki in the 1870s. The abundance of wood ear fungus on their land served to generate a much needed income from Chew Chong's enterprise exporting the fungi back to China.

The Isaiah Scroll is one of the more complete Dead Sea Scrolls. The image of scrolls as leaves alludes to a haiku by Tomas Transtomer.

AUG. 10 MARKET (Around the world markets are rich in smells, touch, taste, sounds. Busy, crowded, tiny, local, specialty, exotic, seller or customer, what market moments of significance can you recall? So much happens around a market.)

winter sky

two widows

in the market for

haggle over

the price

bright colours

of living alone

AUG. 11 BONES (We gnaw on bones, dig up bones to study, bury bones, our bones ache, break, we sip bone soup, we are made of bone, hip and knee replacements, bones that ache when the weather changes, so much of our lives, past and present are related to bones.)

my parents too
howling storms
reduced to
the anonymity
unearthing
the phenomenon
of just bones
of man

My father and I at one time had a good discussion on *The Phenomenon of Man* by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the French Jesuit anthropologist.

AUG. 12 SMOKE (smoke conceals, smoke alarms us, distant chimney smoke draws us to speculation, pipe smoke can be full of memories, what are the smoky moments you recall in your lives?)

it's dead certain

lung cancer

a substantial

change

I watch a friend

go up

in the wind

in smoke

AUG 13 PHONE (Our hands are all over phones (touch), our ears are tuned to them, they ring, ping, we speak, we call, we miss calls, we ignore ... or we gaze mindlessly at them at times. What does this word bring to mind in your life?)

cosmic

loneliness

while we sleep

a dandelion

enfolded

the ever-present

blue

under

the milky way

of smartphone

light

AUG 14 BUCKET (What's in your bucket? A list? Berries? Well water? Is it full, empty ... being filled? How does it sound? Buckets have so many uses, hold so many things, unless, of course they have a hole. Have fun with this one)

the moonlight!

the holy grail

it is the water

at the very heart

in the bucket

of becoming

AUG 15 OWL (So many types of owls, barn, hoot, great horned, so many sounds that come in the night that invade our sleep, our dreams. Are they really wise? So many myths. Is there an owl in your life?)

self-announcing

into darkness

the morepork's

the onomatopoeia

two-tone call

of identity

The New Zealand Morepork is a small native owl heard by its call, more-pork, more-pork.

AUG. 16 TRAIN (Trains arrive, leave, we board, we get off, the sounds invade our dreams, their whistle and clickity clacks move over landscapes, through all seasons, to far distance places, or simply a commute to work ... what does the word mean to you?)

words for

what is

ear to the rail

trained along

parallel lines

I listen for

the sound

to their vanishing

points

of whispering

death

For a time, I worked for New Zealand Railways involved in the acquisition of land for track work and maintenance in the more remote parts of the main trunk line of the North Island. While walking along and inspecting the condition of the railway land we would often put our ears close to the steel rails to listen for the sound of any trains on the section of line. The distinctive sound we called the whispering death.

AUG. 17 ZOO (a controversial word these days, yet they exist, we visit, we marvel at up close encounters, cringe at confinements, cages, notice the smells, the sounds. Otters play in watery worlds; tigers pace their tight spaces. Sometimes we too, feel we are in a zoo. Let us feel your zoo experience.)

my image

not seeing

eye to eye

caged

in the panther's

heart

another part

of us

ceases to be

dies today

This poem recalls and ponders on *The Panther* by Rainer Maria Rilke.

AUG. 18. MUSIC (A wide-open prompt as we hear music in so many things, and music is created through so many means, and our responses to music are legion: sadness, romance, allegiance, war, eulogy, joy. What does the word music bring to your mind?)

pure soundlessness

musica universalis

I listen beyond

the sounds

after-images

of the sublime

of my listlessness

dance along

my pulse

AUG. 19 OCEAN (a word that encompasses so much, a body of water with an unseen far shore, or an up-close sound of the surf lapping your shore, and everything that happens in between like oil tankers, whales, kayaks, dolphins, fishing and other lifeforms. Delve into your ocean in a sensory way.)

as it was
in the beginning
albatross
of light
is now
Christ
I am
and ever
shall be
Ocean

The left side has some of the words from the Catholic prayer of praise “*Glory be to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen*”

The right side alludes to Coleridge’s poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. This poem possibly contemplates the mystery of the Trinity as an indwelling experience and reality.

AUG. 20 CAVE (man cave, animal cave, natural cave, prehistoric and geological wonders, something we explore, something we shelter in, something we get lost in, something that can cave in. Dank, dark, dripping or lit up with lights, cavernous or a hole in a hill, how does a cave figure in your experiences?)

climate change

all my poem folders

I cave-in to

are renamed as

my survival

instinct

"Qumran Caves"

Again I allude to the Dead Sea Scrolls.

AUG. 21 VILLAGE (we hear of our global village, or, it takes a village to raise a child; how do villages represent themselves? Through fishing, the arts, what they produce, the festivals they honor, the people, the community, the children they raise, why we leave our villages for greener pastures. What does the word village mean to you?)

a spring storm

less than

a village

the sounds

of belonging

the distance

separating

back as new

awake and asleep

AUG. 22 TUNNEL (a passageway through earth or rock, or beneath sea or river, or beneath a bustling city. Or perhaps a mole or gopher's subterranean highway, or a tunnel of love. Deep or shallow, whether a dark journey or the light at the end of a tunnel, what does this word suggest to you?)

which

comes first

glaucoma—

herd immunity

my tunneling

vision

or my death?

looks to the end

AUG. 23 BREAD (Is there anything like the smell of fresh baked bread, or the mindful practice of kneading dough, or the act of 'breaking bread', or the idea of bread being the staff of life, or earning your bread and butter, or writing about bread in your country; Irish soda bread, French baguette, Italian loaf, or Grandmothers famous cornbread. So much surrounds bread as a staple food and metaphor. What does it mean to you?)

so much depends

upon

panis angelicus

a little red hen

fulfilling

all metaphors

earning

her crust

we become

what we receive

Contemplating the centrality of the celebration of Eucharist in my daily living.

AUG. 24 FIRE (Fire is heat, blue or red flame or white hot, we can smell it, hear it, and hope not to touch it. It burns, consumes, roars, crackles, sends out smoke and reduces itself to embers then ash. Whether a wildfire or a campfire, or a fire in the hearth, we ignite them, we fight them, we douse them, we cook over them, we warm ourselves by them, we daydream, tell stories lost in their flickering flames. What fire memories do you have?)

amorous night

I name fire;

fire

conjuring

neither fire

from the dark

memory

nor brimstone

of eons

and tribes

AUG. 25 JEWELRY (Man has adorned himself for thousands of years beginning with bones, beads, shells, gemstones, diamonds, crystals, gold, silver and other metals. Jewelry acts as clasps, as pendants, as amulets to protect, as signs of commitment, as heirlooms to be passed down generations. Jewelry can have spiritual significance. Indicate tribal identification, commemorate special dates. It can be bought, gifted, found or stolen. It can be a sign of wealth or found at art fairs. In what way has jewelry played a role in your life?)

the pearl
within

with bright eyes

the all
for which

an unadorned bride

I go
without

above rubies

The left side refers to a parable from the New Testament of the Bible in which Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a pearl of great price. The right side refers to a passage in the Old Testament in which a bride centered on the wisdom of God in all her ways as more precious than any jewelry.

AUG. 26 STRAWBERRY (Not only a flavor and a fragrance but a color, a symbol of sensual pleasures according to Freud and represented in art throughout the ages. It can be wild or cultivated. Or a wine! It is also a name for the summer moon. We grow them in a patch, pick them in the wild, cook with them, and smell and taste them in many products like lip gloss. Of course, let's not forget the strawberry blonde! Its heart shape can symbolize love, especially dipped in chocolate. How does strawberry figure in your life?)

in her absence

not seeing

I bed down

the wild strawberries

with silence

my old man eyes

An allusion to a film by Ingmar Bergman is included here.

AUG. 27 CELLO (Maybe one was played at a wedding, on a car radio on a rainy night, or as part of an orchestra, or a child's musical event, or a rock concert, or maybe you've watched a cellist perform a solo in a subway. The sound is low, distinctive, beautiful, even melancholy. The shape curved, the instrument played standing or seated and put between the legs. The bow movements, the sound, the intensity, the passion, the preparation, the resin, the bow, and the hours of practice. In what circumstances have you heard, seen, or experienced a cello?)

Elgar concerto . . .
I am
well-practised
did I fall then
for du Pré
in the silence
of my craft
or her cello self?
or sullen art

In this poem I contrast the dedication to her art that I witnessed in a cello performance by Jacqueline du Pré and the unseen and secret intensity of the poetic art that I pursue.

AUG. 28 HOSPITAL (All five senses are found in hospitals with smells, sounds, tastes, touch, sight. We have all experienced them whether we work there, visit there or have been patients ourselves. There is birth, death, joy, sadness and hope, along with waiting rooms, cafeterias, chapels, hospitals have it all including green walls. It's a world in there, not just for the pandemic, but for all the happenings of life. Candy stripers bring flowers, volunteers man the gift shops, medical students sleep in closets. How have your senses been engaged in a hospital setting?)

twilight zone

time

passes by

the familiar

drifts away

with inaudible

whispers

while shifts

change

and

artificial light

AUG. 29 EGG (We came into being through a fertilized egg, we collect eggs from a hen house, eggs are laid by birds, reptiles, amphibians, a few mammals and fish. We eat caviar, collect roe, fish spawn in rivers. Eggshells are fragile, painted at Easter, beaks break through eggs ... Eggs fall from nests. An egg is the start of life, and whether they start your morning as breakfast or have you rescuing turtle eggs, or questioning your ancestry, what role have eggs played in your life?)

an original

silence

words

by which

eggs me on

to crack through

an imaginative

leap

my limitations

is seeded

AUG 30 BIRD (Birds of paradise, raven myths to songbirds, big birds to small birds, a flock or a single bird. Caged birds. Birds sing, dance, nest, mate, migrate. Some are endangered. There are birders and bird houses. There are bird songs that wake us. There are wings that thump through the fog, the bird unseen. What role has a bird or birds played in your life?)

spring
awakening

*a godwit
returns*

a tevatevaaq's
flight

*with the wisdom
of both sides*

to become
kūaka

of the veil



The return of the bar-tailed godwit from its breeding season in Alaska to its feeding season on New Zealand's many estuaries has become one of the more potent signs of spring for us who inhabit the coast lines. Tevatevaaq is the Yup'ik peoples of Alaska and kuaka is the Maori name in New Zealand for the bar-tailed godwit that migrates between Alaska and New Zealand each year on the longest non-stop flight of any other bird or airplane.

In Maori lore the return of the kuaka from Alaska is generally seen as a harbinger of good things and the arrival of spring here are also darker metaphors. The sound of the kuaka taking flight *en masse* from estuaries around New Zealand in autumn calls to mind the spirits of the dead as they follow the setting sun to the world of darkness.

AUG. 31 HOUSE (Is there a difference between a house and a home? A house is a place of dwelling, a refuge, a den for wildlife. Is it a hut, a hovel or a mansion? Do you wander down streets at night looking at the lights in other people's houses? Do you see a house as a place of worship? Or a place to 'house' things like a museum. We build houses, we live in houses, we revisit the houses of our childhood. Houses can be filled with the love and laughter of a family, or the silence of a widow or widower. What memory does the word 'house' arouse in you?)

a night wind

on the wall

rages against

the walls

unaccommodated man

of domestic

bliss

on a cross

This prompt called to mind the scripture "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" as well as King Lear's dramatic realisation of the lowest common state of humankind when he beholds Edgar naked on the heath.

Afterword

Over the past few years I've received a number of comments and questions about the parallel form—how to read them, how to write them, where to find out more about the form.

In the manner of Blaise Pascal's method in writing his *Pensées*, I will jot down a number of "thoughts" here. My aim is not to create anchor points from which anyone may choose to define this poetic form and thus impose what could be limits on its future evolution. It is merely the form that I choose to write in for the present.

The making of a parallel is wholly a function of the imagination given a form in a structure of words—the imagination not only of the writer but also of the reader. The structure aids to call forth the activity of the human imaginative faculty and give it form for the purposes of sharing or recall.

Imagination is the ability of the human psyche to integrate the totality of the mind's faculties, conscious and unconscious, to create novel objects, peoples and ideas in the mind without any immediate input of the senses.

The mind's faculties include (but are not limited to) things such as will, desire, instinct, intuition, memory, dreaming, emotion, language, and all manner of accumulated or infused knowledge.

Imagination serves to integrate experience and the learning process even to the extent of forming experiences in one's mind, whether re-creations of past experiences or wholly invented scenes achieved through the disordering of retained sensory data.

Imagination is the creative stimulant for all our activities and is not exclusively or merely a cognitive activity because it is also embodied in its physical expression to the world beyond our inner world.

I decline to dictate how to read or write parallels. That is because I am still discovering all that the form can bear the weight of being worded and the resonances created therein.