

tea's aftertaste

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Aubrie Cox

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To Wayne, who inspired me to give poetry a second chance.
And to Randy, who introduced me to my bliss.



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Preface

In this first collection of haiku, *tea's aftertaste*, Aubrie Cox gathers the best of her work that has been published in peer-reviewed journals and anthologies. Editors have recognized the quality of her haiku, including one published in a "best of the year" anthology, *evolution: The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku 2010* published by Red Moon Press. However, the significance of this chapbook is not merely the external recognition evident in the extensive list of journals and anthologies in the acknowledgements. The true significance is the many gifts of insight and awareness awaiting readers in her haiku.

Aubrie's haiku are not in a hurry. Her haiku take time to breathe and to fully contemplate the things being observed or remembered. Her haiku understand that they come from the human heart, even though on the surface her images may appear to be merely objective. Her haiku are authentic; they are not written from an "it's all about me" voice. She knows how to wear a narrative mask and how to take it off. Her haiku are not afraid of the dark, nor the spiritual depths of churchyard shadows.

She makes subtle allusions to well-known Japanese and English-language haiku. Her haiku are not about vanity nor wistfulness and rarely slip into self-pitying regret. Although she is drawn to Japanese culture and traditions, her haiku are not oriental knock-offs. They have deep roots in central Illinois. Aubrie writes with a certainty that comes from being in a community, knowing who she is in relation to other generations. When she attended the second Cradle of American Haiku Festival in Mineral Point, Wisconsin, she instantly became "everyone's granddaughter" because of the community's enthusiastic embrace of her as a young contributor to the art of haiku. She writes haiku about family, exploring connections to ancestors and childhood. Her haiku convey a sense of connectedness to the earth and to ancestors, both literary and literal.

It is not surprising to me that Aubrie has become a well-known contributor within the haiku community. I invite you to become one of her many readers. Enjoy the immediate imagination, and the lingering aftertaste, of visiting and revisiting the haiku in her first collection, *tea's aftertaste*.

Dr. Randy Brooks, Millikin University

Author's Introduction

When asked, "Why do you write haiku?" I feel that's like asking, "Why do you breathe?" Haiku has become so ingrained into my thought process that I can't imagine my life without it. In some ways, haiku is the genre I've spent my life looking for—a literary art that engages the reader as an equal contributor.

Haiku is a Japanese micropoem, traditionally consisting of seventeen *on* (sounds), that juxtaposes two images in order to evoke an emotional response from the reader. The poem does not tell the reader how to think or feel, but rather invites him or her to finish the thought started by the poet. Since its growth out of the linking tradition *renku* in the seventeenth century, haiku has spread across the world. Today, in English, we try to achieve the same reader response with two images, usually in three lines, within one breath.

When I began my first haiku course in January 2008 at Millikin University, I didn't know what I was getting myself into, or that it would completely change my worldview. My only memory of haiku was from my advanced humanities class in eighth grade when my friend wrote a "haiku" about gophers and Fresca. Maybe that made me more open to the idea that haiku are not 5-7-5. I didn't

expect anything, so it did not feel like my world was crashing down when I found out my previous, limited experience with haiku was less than accurate.

Around the same time as my brief encounter with haiku in middle school, I discovered a love of ambiguity. I remember classmates and teachers reading my fiction and asking for clarification into what happened at the end, to which I would reply, "What do you think happened?" It wasn't that I didn't have an ending in mind—I knew exactly how I would end it—but I was far more interested in hearing how others interpreted what I had written. Instead of handing everything to my reader, I wanted the reader to think. Thus, the co-creative relationship between reader and writer in haiku appealed to me. It provided me with everything I had been trying to accomplish in my fiction, but with fewer words and a more engaged audience.

Normally, once I have figured out how to do something, I grow bored and tackle the next challenge. However, I find a continual challenge in haiku. A poem so small holds countless possibilities and grabs hold of both the reader and writer. After my first class at Millikin,

I read everything I could get my hands on, and took additional haiku classes. I began publishing in the haiku journals, and even assisted teaching the same course I took as a freshman. I had become an active member of the community and would now consider myself living the art.

The haiku and senryu in *tea's aftertaste* chronicle my first years with the haikai arts, and contain a little bit of everything: humor, *shasei*, fiction, zen, and a dash of obligatory angst. I have selected and arranged the poems on the basis of their resonance and interaction with one another as a collection. Each one of these haiku have received recognition from editors through publication and from classmates in *kukai*. Furthermore, each one has personal significance to me as a poet and reader. I still remember when I wrote them, why I wrote them, and still enjoy them after nearly a year of sorting through my work, adding and cutting just as many poems as are in this book. So take a moment to pause with each poem, breathe, but don't wait for me to tell you how it ends. Enter the moment and uncover it for yourself, using your own memories and experiences.

Aubrie Cox





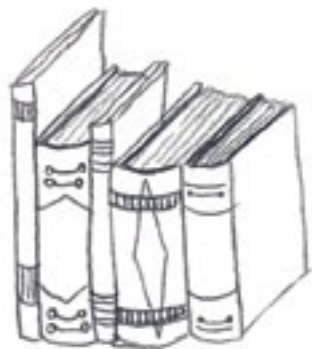
old moon
we talk about
the next life

no phone call
the weight
of dawn



pink petals
she chooses
a lighter lip gloss

wilted lilacs...
your hand
slips from mine

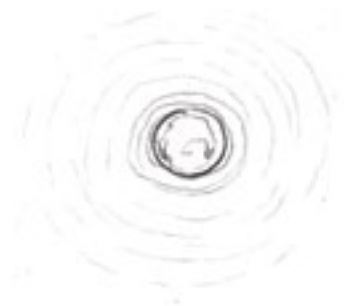


used bookstore
with love
from no one I know

poetry reading
a creaking door shuts
between poems

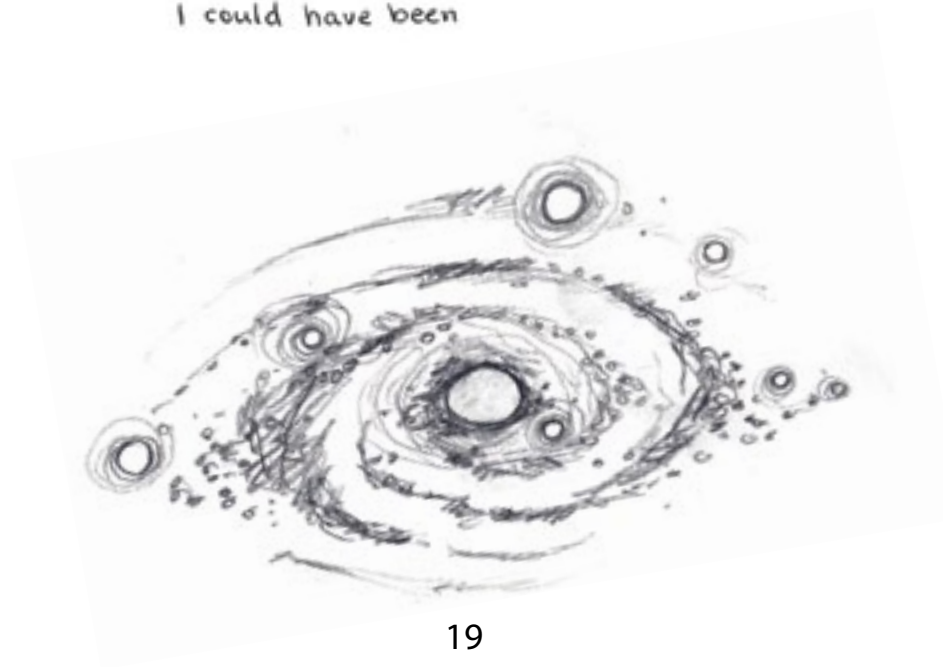
calling for the dog
at 2 am
wind chimes



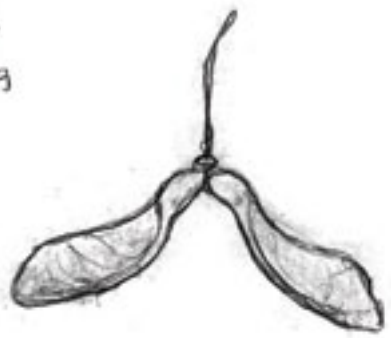


class on the quad
my eyes drift
to the afternoon moon

distant galaxies
all the things
I could have been



helicopter seeds
my life spiraling
out of control



day before Easter
I learn something
about my father

stone lotus
the buddha's hands
crumbling



confessional
alcohol breath
from his side of the grate

folding laundry
a sock
I don't know



22



rest stop
cyclists asleep
in the grass

country highway
I brake
for a field mouse



23

first serial publication
grandma asks
when I started drinking



24



father-daughter talk
my fishing lure
caught in the moon

25

up the mountain
the dog brings
his own ball



haiku conference—
I'm everyone's
granddaughter

endless conversation
the river runs
through my fingers



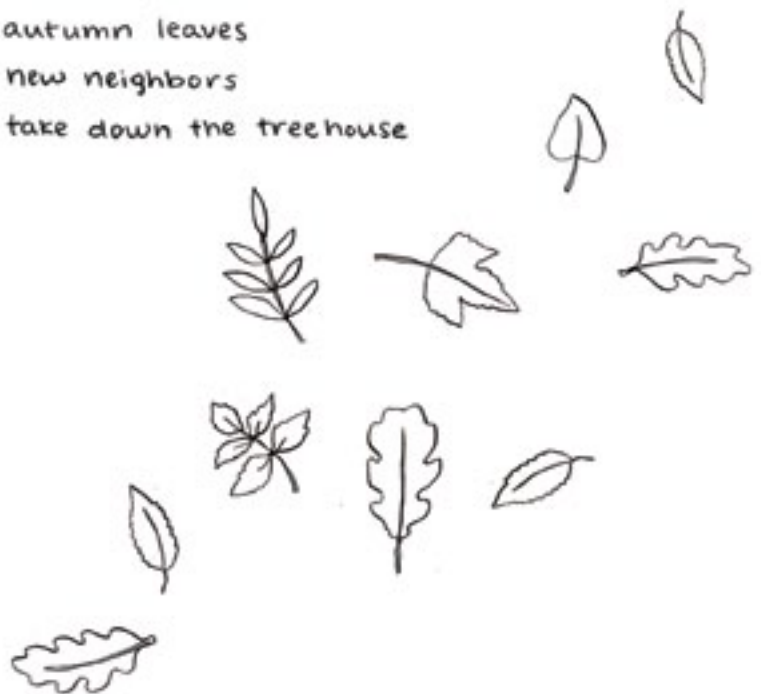
old lady dies
everyone comes
to the estate sale

sunbaked gravestone
a drop of sake
evaporates

a little drink
moon wobbles
in my teacup



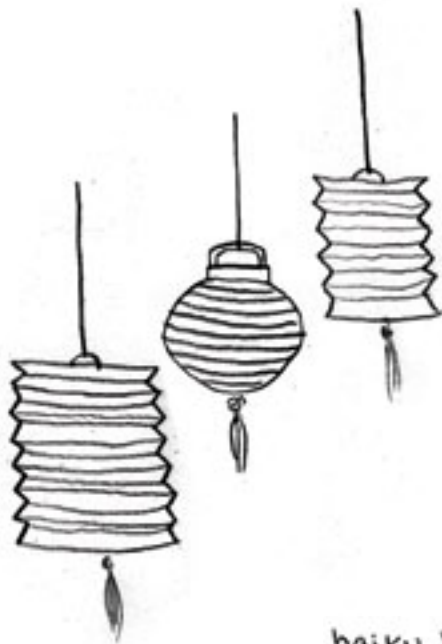
autumn leaves
new neighbors
take down the treehouse



every place taken
on the finch feeder
September rain



Wal-Mart
an old man
also talking to himself



haiku history lecture
doodling
paper lanterns

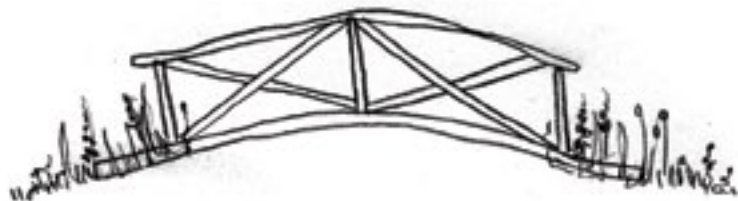


harvest moon
rises above the branches
tea's aftertaste

34

overgrown bridge
I tread lightly
through my childhood

indian summer
steam rises
off the pond



35

churchyard shadows
the priest confesses
to an empty room

blue snow
moonlight sonata
out of tune

old jazz record
grandpa taps his finger
to the static





moonlight filters
through the branches
rabbit tracks

warmth leaves
my teacup—
a child's cry



footprints in the snow
monkey's mask
cast aside

clouds of breath
drowning
in the Milky Way

sundown
the river melts
into the woods



school desk
one name carved
deeper than the rest



About the Author

Aubrie Cox graduated in 2011 from Millikin University with a degree in literature and writing. At Millikin, she first encountered haiku in 2008 through Dr Randy Brooks' Global Haiku Traditions course and has been writing and studying it and related forms ever since. She has served as the senior editor for the student owned and operated publishing company Bronze Man Books, and editor-in-chief for the university's literary and fine arts magazine *Collage*. She intends to continue her studies of creative writing at Ball State University.

Aubrie's poetry has appeared in online and print journals, including *Modern Haiku*, *The Heron's Nest*, *bottle rockets*, *Acorn*, *Frogpond*, *tinywords*, *Eucalypt*, *Moonbathing*, *Sketchbook*, *Prune Juice*, *Chrysanthemum*, *hajjinx*, *mango moons*, and *Notes From the Gean*.

In her free time, Aubrie also enjoys bookbinding and photography.

About the Illustrator

Katie Baird graduated in 2011 from Millikin University with a B.F.A. in graphic design/computer art. She served as the art director for Bronze Man Books and designed for Pipe Dreams Studio Theatre, a student owned and operated theatre company. She was also the resident artist at Blue Connection for summer 2010. Katie has a passion for illustration, printmaking, and mixed media artwork. Her newest project is her graphic design, letterpress, and silkscreen business, Neon Kitchen Design & Press.

Acknowledgments

"autumn leaves"

Modern Haiku 42.1, Winter-Spring 2011

"blue snow"

Chrysanthemum #8, October 2010

"calling for the dog"

Notes From the Gean 2.1, June 2010

"churchyard shadows"

Prune Juice 5, January 2011

"class on the quad"

The Heron's Nest 13.1, March 2011

"clouds of breath"

Notes From the Gean 1.4, March 2010

"confessional"

bottle rockets 11.1, August 2009

"country highway"

Sharing the Sun HSA Members' Anthology 2010, 2010

"day before Easter"

bottle rockets 12.2, January 2011

"distant galaxies"

evolution: The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku 2010, 2011

Modern Haiku 41.3, Autumn 2010

"endless conversation"

Notes From the Gean 2.4, March 2011

"every place taken"

The Heron's Nest 11. 3, September 2009

"father-daughter talk"

tinywords 10.2, Summer 2010

"first serial publication"

bottle rockets 11.2, February 2010

"folding laundry"

Prune Juice 5, January 2011

"footprints in the snow"

Chrysanthemum #6, October 2009

"haiku conference"

Wet Cement: The Cradle 2 Anthology, 2011

"haiku history lecture"

tinywords 9.1, March 2010

"harvest moon"

bottle rockets 11.2, February 2010

"helicopter seeds"

Notes From the Gean 2.4, March 2011

"indian summer"

Modern Haiku 42.1, Winter-Spring 2011

"no phone call"

Chrysanthemum #7, April 2010

"old jazz record"

bottle rockets 13.1, August 2011

"old lady dies"

bottle rockets 11.2, February 2010

"old moon"

Notes From the Gean 1.4, March 2010

"pink petals"

Modern Haiku 40.3, Autumn 2009

"poetry reading"

Wet Cement: The Cradle 2 Anthology, 2011

"school desk"

The Heron's Nest 12.2, June 2010

"stone lotus"

Notes From the Gean 2.1, June 2010

"sunbaked gravestone"

Sketchbook 5.6, January 2010

"up the mountain"

The Heron's Nest 12.4, December 2010

"Wal-Mart"

bottle rockets 12.2, January 2011

"warmth leaves"

Frogpond 33.1, Winter 2010

"wilted lilacs..."

Collage 38.1, Fall 2008



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Bronze Man Books published two editions:
100 regular and 25 collector's. Collector's editions
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All books were bound by the Bronze Man Books team
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