

Year of Moons

Haiku, Senryu and Sijo



David Jibson

Year of Moons: Haiku, Senryu and Sijo

David Jibson

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David Jibson

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Introduction

My project for poetry month of 2022 was to have a deep look at the forms of contemporary haiku, senryu and sijo in English; to read, study and learn to write them, not a simple task, as I already knew.

As a lit journal editor, I have often been in the position of needing to evaluate submissions of claimed “haiku”, many of which had little to do with the actual spirit of the original Japanese masters and which were often simply poems written in the 5-7-5 syllabic pattern that most of us were erroneously taught by well-meaning but misinformed teachers in high school or earlier. I often didn’t feel confident in judging them on their merits as haiku.

To begin, I read dictionary definitions, moved on to the more complex descriptions of several supporting organizations and journals, then looked at the results from writing contests.

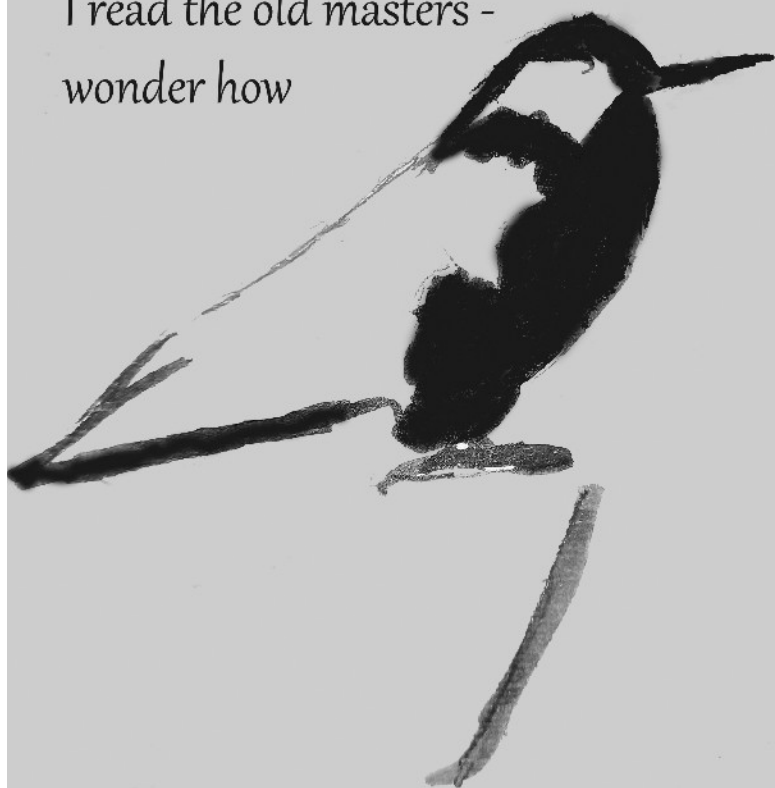
I cannot, in this small space, present everything I learned in my brief study of short Asian poetic forms. Anyone can read about *on* and *morae*, *kiri*, *kireji* and *kigo*, all the elements that make the complex puzzle that are haiku. I encourage the reader to undertake the same journey if they are curious. It’s a worthwhile pursuit.

I read and read and read. Then I wrote and wrote and wrote. Then revised, revised and revised. The following pages represent the best of my work during the poetry month of April, 2022.

Oh, I’ve included some black and white photos of a few of my original watercolors, some of which are presented as *Haiga*..

— David Jibson

learning to write haiku
I read the old masters -
wonder how



D
K
J

A Year of Moons

wolf moon –
sounds of hunger
fill the sky

worm moon –
smoke from the chimney
shifts direction

flower moon –
a warm evening
iris in bloom

snow moon –
beneath the ice
a creek burbles

pink moon –
new crop of stones
turned by a plow

strawberry moon –
empty lawn chairs
fill with light



thunder moon –
war over the horizon
heat lightning

sturgeon moon –
volume knob
of the night sky

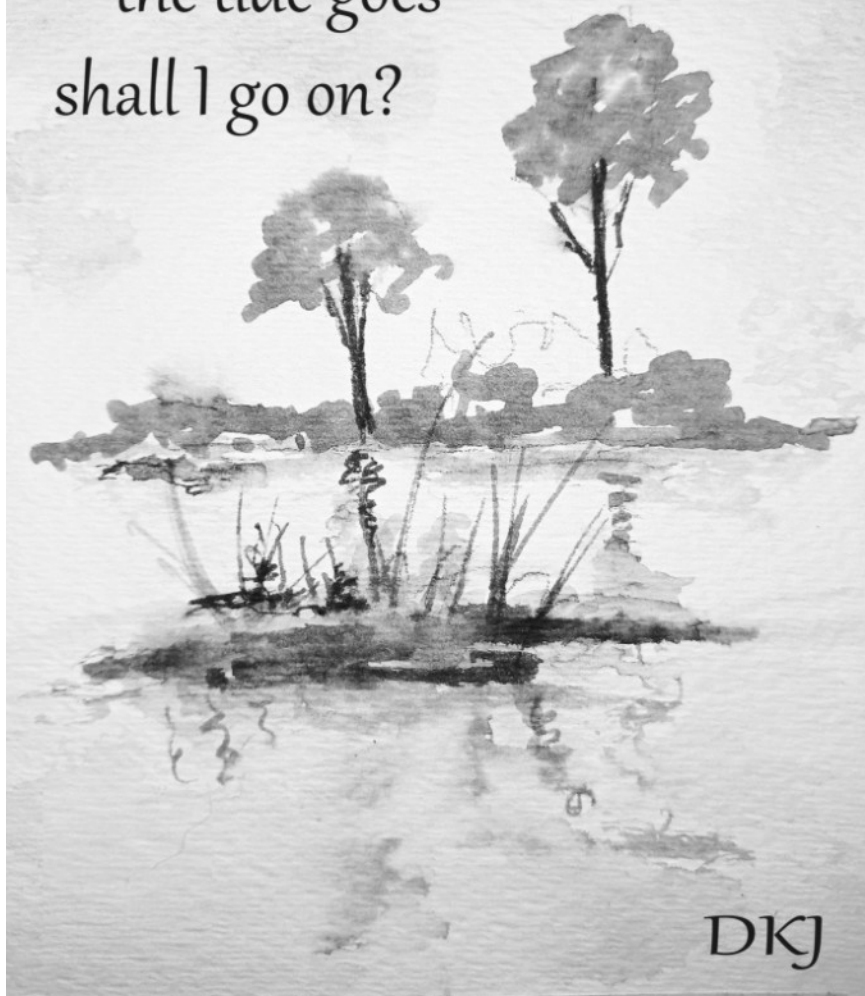
full corn moon –
the heavier comforter
onto the bed

travel moon –
the bird bath fills
with leaves

beaver moon –
frost lies heavy
on the heart

long night moon –
oaks hold tightly
their last few leaves

the tide comes
the tide goes
shall I go on?



DKJ

Losses

an azalea
blossoms in a tiny pot –
watered by grief

frayed leash
on a hook by the door --
no more walks

corroded silence –
grandfather's old bugle
in the attic

she no longer has a word
for that thing in the car
that keeps the sun from her eyes

at the funeral --
we pretend
our grief

pile of old National Geographic magazines –
your inheritance

the tide comes
the tide goes –
shall I go on?

Mason jar
full of quarters –
her life savings

we put off the call,
already knowing
the test results

new address book,
not many names
to transfer

the war goes on
and on and on
and on



that shade of blue
belonged to her –
always will

on his knees
pulling what would have been
her weeds

at their favorite restaurant
a table for one

grandmother's old recipe cards – no measurements

following the hearse –
a single pick up truck
driven by an old man





A Box Unopened

near midnight
in the middle of nowhere –
check engine light on

learning to write haiku,
I read the old masters
and wonder how

ursid meteor shower –
another year burns bright
then dies

covered in snow –
chairs on the sidewalk
in front of the coffee shop

moss roses
in a crowded window box –
no social distancing

city crew –
four men watch
a fifth dig

rock paper scissors – three out of five?

drip, drip, drip –
each moment falls
into the last

restless night –
I try to escape
your dream

re-reading this poem,
her lips move
but no sound

just a phase
she's going through –
gibbous moon

one stroke
of the watercolor brush –
sometimes enough

Dunes



at the end
of a dark country road –
the Milky Way

footsteps
on a wooden bridge –
whose?

a box unopened
years after the move –
the good china

sliver of moon
hooked in the top of an oak –
lost fishing tackle

whispered hope
ripples across
a still pond

weather report – smell of wet dog

wasted effort –
a walk to the mailbox
for third class mail

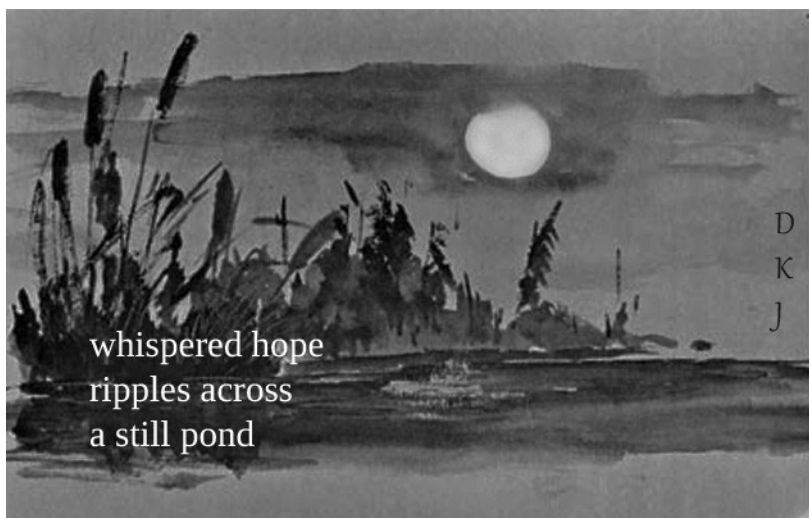
new Facebook friend – have we ever met?

poetry without borders...
waiting for the host
to open the zoom room

my fondest memories...
things that never happened

footprint
in hardened mud –
I recognize those shoes

rusty barbed wire –
theirs on one side
ours on the other



morning beach walk –
ashes from a driftwood fire
a lacy red thong

forty years of work – no trace left behind

in on the secret –
the moon hides its face
behind a cloud

I thumb through
the pages of an anthology
I'm not in

water drips
from a leaky faucet –
a lie exposed

empty champagne glass
time to recycle last year's
resolutions

a fish breaks the surface
moon stitches itself
back together

sharing secrets –
a rabbit I talk to
in the garden



A Small Town

summer art fair –
every driftwood sculpture
looks like a duck

marking where
the house once stood –
a lilac bush

old orchard –
a single red apple
refuses to drop

neighbor's yard,
69 Plymouth on blocks
engine hangs from tree limb

broken oyster shells
so many miles from the sea –
old button factory

still a small town – nobody wants to move here

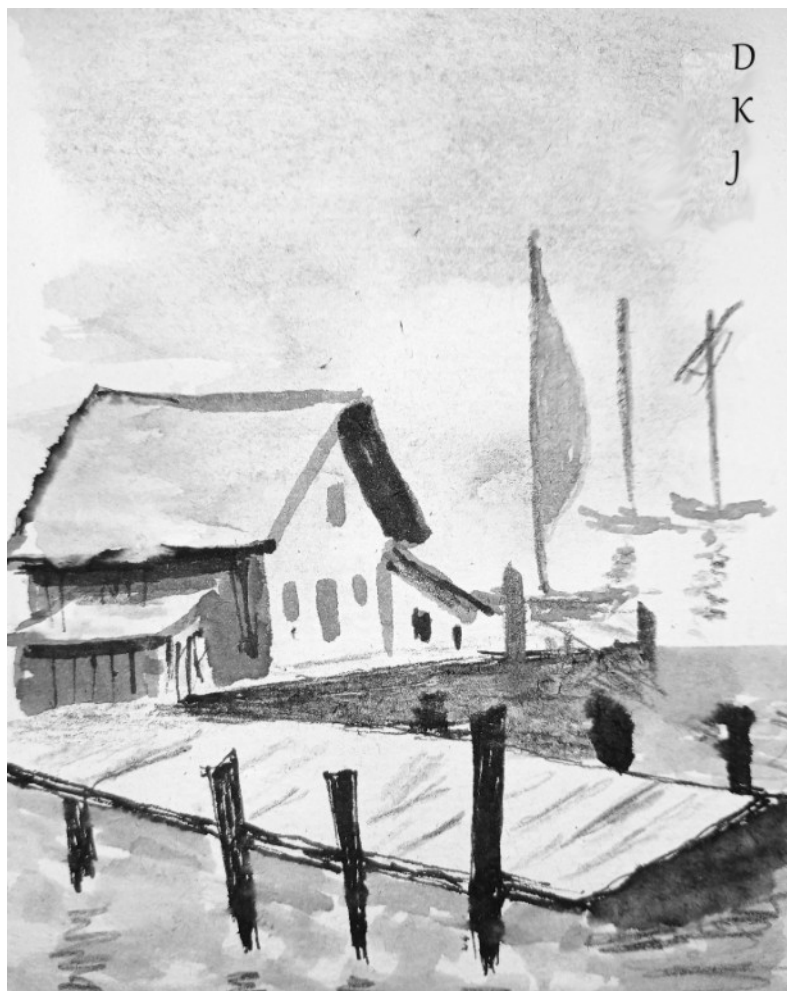
double feature
at the abandoned drive-in –
nettles and queen Anne's lace

at the hardware
a nun from the school
buys a pipe wrench

Amy's Diner –
old men talk of the foolishness
of young men

summer heat
at the farmer's market
gossip ripens

mother's 22 rimfire –
shooting rats at the dump
she never missed



Live and Love

the nape of her neck
when she lifts her hair for me
to unhook her necklace

candlelight dinner –
our shadow puppets
contemplate dessert

she looks up from her book – no need to speak

morning light
slips between the blinds –
a note on her pillow

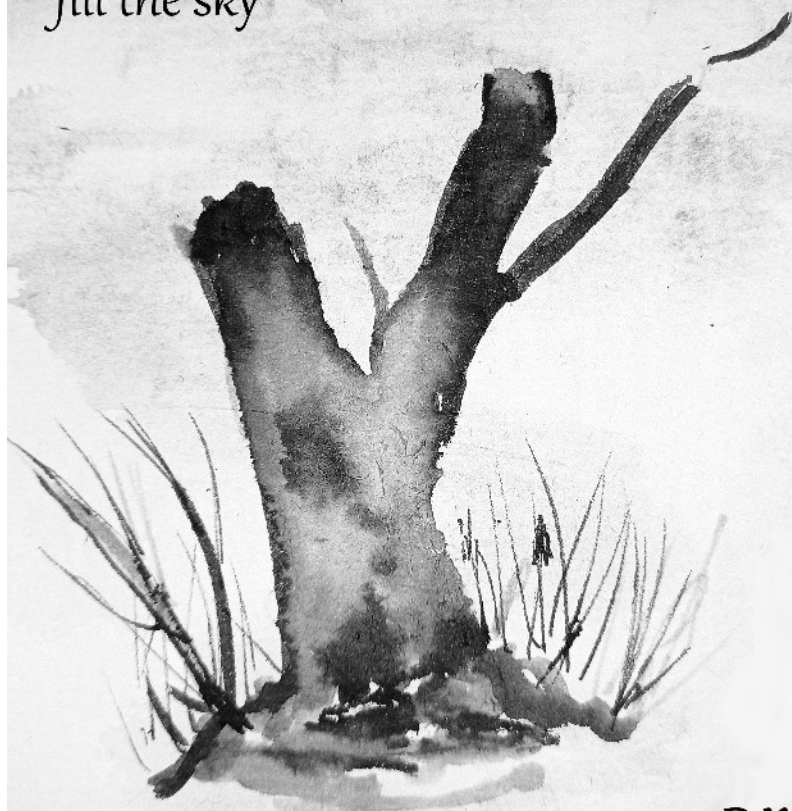
anniversary –
she takes her time
getting dressed

from the kitchen –
clatter of dishes in the sink
song out of tune

the embers
cold in the fireplace–
the other marriage

on one side of the bed – nearly all of the covers

wolf moon -
sounds of hunger
fill the sky



D K J

Sijo

Sijo (short song) is a Korean form comprised of three lines of 14-16 syllables each, for a total of 44-46 syllables. Each line contains a pause near the middle, similar to a caesura, Contemporary Sijo are often printed in six lines.

Way of the River

As a young girl
 my mother learned the way of the river;
what a ripple might mean, how currents
 and eddies are alive.
“Don’t fight the river,” she’d say.
 “Make it take you where you want to go.”

Sunday Dinner

“I hate football,” grandmother told me,
 “but I miss the sound of him
watching his favorite team
 while I make Sunday pot-roast,
so now I keep the television on
 in the empty living room.”

Last Night The Moon

Last night the moon and Jupiter
 appeared so close together
it was if a tiny tug boat
 was towing a huge liner
bound for the antipodes
 into the blackest ocean.



Enlightenment

Siddhartha sought enlightenment
in the shade of a banyan tree.
His followers claim he found it
after years of meditation,
but what he really found was that
he couldn't uncross his legs.

On A Long Drive

On a long drive I sometimes imagine
you sitting next to me.
I look at you in the passenger seat
and you are young again.
You look over at me and you say,
"How long until we're home?"

A Flash of Lightning

The lights have gone off in a thunder storm
and there are no candles.
We can only wait in the dark
for the lights to come back on,
me, and the silhouette I imagine
in a flash of lightning.



About the Author

David Jibson is the author of the poetry collection *Protective Coloration* (Kelsay Books, 2020) and of the chapbooks *Michigan Gothic* and *Poem Noir* (Third Coast Press). He is retired from a long career in social work, most recently with a hospice non-profit. He is a graduate of Western Michigan University (BA) and Michigan State University (MSW).

David is the editor of *Third Wednesday Magazine*, a quarterly journal of literary and visual arts, a coordinator of events for *The Crazy Wisdom Poetry Circle* in Ann Arbor, Michigan and a board member of *The Poetry Society of Michigan*.

His author website is at <https://davidkjibson.com/>. There, you can download free digital copies of this chapbook and of *Michigan Gothic*.