

THE CINQKU — A Five-Line Haiku Analog

Haiku Harvest has long promoted the development of innovative haiku, including haiku noir, zips, shinku, and even American Cinquain.

In 2001, I developed the crystalline, a seventeen-syllable couplet form, for which euphony is a critical concern. Many poets now have essayed the crystalline form, creating some beautiful poetry.

In 2005, I developed the cinqku, a 17-syllable cinquain form of haiku, to be a closer analog to haiku than the 22-syllable American Cinquain (Crapseian) can be. The cinqku maximizes the utility of the line break technique, much as American Cinquains and free verse do. The technical side is rather simple: a cinqku is a 5-line poem (cinquain) with a strict syllable count (2,3,4,6,2), which has no title and no metrical requirement. Cinqku may use haiku style free diction and syntax and may have a “turn” similar to kireji or an American Cinquain turn. A sequence of cinqku may be titled.

Five poets, collaborating on the *Haiku Unchained* list, have written a 35-cinqku sequence entitled, *Broken Hearts*, which was published by *LYNX October 2005*. See in this issue (*of Haiku Harvest*) the cinqku, in Romanian and in English, by Cristian Mocanu; see also the cinqku, including cinqku noir, by Michael L. Evans. Another early success in this new form is John Dalieden’s 5-cinqku sequence entitled, *The Haunting: Echoes*, which won the poetry “Editor’s Choice” for the August/September ezine, *Scorched Earth Publications*.

Following is a short sequence of my own (cinqku #s 5, 6 & 7) entitled “Gone.”

GONE

salt scent
ocean air—
cliff-side cabin
door swings slowly without
a sound

fire-rose
cloud fanned out
on twilight sky,
low moaning tide—your last
letter

far off
 Chevrolet
 speeding inland—
 from exhaust and window
 smoke trails

The first cinqku written, my # 1, included in *Broken Hearts*, is an exemplar of the form:

buried
 five cold years
 but never gone—
 our bedroom's fragrant with
 her scent

Following are my most recent cinqku, #s 30, 31 & 32.

midday
 broiling sun—
 horses and I,
 the spring water trough, all
 sweating

drenching
 July storm
 writhing steam lifts
 through the downpour—falling,
 rising

stifling
 afternoon
 tiger lilies
 scent the air—Mother brings
 iced tea

Haiku Harvest is interested in publishing fine cinqku. If you write in this form, you are invited to submit several of your best for our consideration.

— Denis M. Garrison, Editor

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See this editorial online at pp. 237–239 of *Haiku Harvest 2000–2006* at

https://tankainenglish.files.wordpress.com/2019/06/haikuharvest_fullreviewcopy.pdf

“Broken Hearts” Cinqku sequence was published in *Lynx XX:3, October 2005*,

<https://www.ahapoetry.com/ahalynx/203sym.html> — Symbiotic Poetry page;

<https://www.ahapoetry.com/ahalynx/203HMPG.html> — Home page.

Following are my cinqku published in the sequence “Broken Hearts” and as numbered therein.

#1

buried
 five cold years
 but never gone
 our bedroom’s fragrant with
 her scent

#4

... almost
 was happy,
 nearly found bliss—
 you came and stole away
 my heart

#6

too long
 without you
 season of grief
 a time of storms—my tears
 unheard

#10

To earth
 now returned,
 from sight escaped,
 but in our hearts you shall
 remain.

#15

Break? You
will some day.
Remember me
and we can compare our
pieces.

#17

Gravel
riverbed ...
how softer here,
and warmer, than our bed
became.

#21

Set free,
I wander.
Captive so long
to your control, I am
my cage.

#23

Again
and again,
“what if’s” torture—
was this lonely path meant
to be?

#25

Love passed
while I slept;
or as I worked,
sometime when duty called.
My fault.

#27

Fledglings,
where are you?
The vacancy
fills this empty nest like
darkness.

#29

The porch
swing barely
moves in the wind—
I haven't sat there since
you left.

#31

Away
so long now,
your memory
is turning a fine shade
of rose.

#33

By day,
I can smile
but when night falls,
I see your eyes again,
weeping.

#35

Support
from good friends,
sympathy, too ...
it all turns to ashes.
Alone!

Prosody of the Cinqku

January 2020

This very brief edit of my original 2005 prosody of the cinqku is my last word on this matter. I developed cinqku as a haiku analog, hence the 17-syllable requirement. However, after much experience with this form, I found it to be intrinsically a set form variety of minimalist tanka. Inasmuch as minimalist tanka written originally in English had long been practiced, the innovation in this form consists in the strict form requirements. It is my considered opinion that the inherent advantages of strictly formal verse operate maximally in the most radically brief forms. That is to say, the risk of formulaic excess present in all formal poetry is minimized by the skillful practice of radical brevity.

PROSODY

DEFINITION: The cinqku is a minimalist tanka analog; a seventeen syllable cinquain that assimilates as much as possible from the Japanese haiku and tanka traditions into the English poetic tradition. A primary concern for the cinqku is the effective use of the line break. Cinqku is a cinquain [i.e., five-line] form of tanka that is a closer analog to tanka than is the American Cinquain (Crapseian) and that maximizes the utility of the line break technique.

A cinqku has:

- A strict syllable count (2,3,4,6,2) making 17 syllables on 5 lines.
- No title. [Single cinqku generally are not titled but may be numbered for the sake of making references. A poem consisting of several cinqku may be titled. Linked sequences are excellent natural forms for cinqku.]
- Tanka style free diction and syntax.
- No metrical requirement.
- A turn that may have some similarity to a tanka or American cinquain turn, a haiku “cutting letter/word” (*kireji*), or even a sonnet *volta*. [The nature and placement of a cinqku turn is not prescribed; it may be very subtly nuanced.]

— *Denis M. Garrison*
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The Piedmont Plateau, Maryland, USA
