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Reading *Killer 'Ku*

The book *Body of Evidence* is a collection of crime haiku, or "Killer 'Ku." When editor Jessica Simon heard that a haiku group, Haiku Canada, would be gathering during National Crime Month, the idea of crime-themed haiku collection came to her mind. Thus, she approached KJ Munro: the organizer of the upcoming Haiku Canada weekend trip. Although poetry is not a common form of crime writing, they decided to collaborate to gather a collection of crime poetry. KJ Munro contacted members of Haiku Canada giving the guidelines for submissions, while Simon designed a display case at the location of the weekend getaway. Within the thirty days of the display case being assembled, they received 100 crime poems. When the exhibit closed, library staff asked if the haiku would be published in a more permanent manner, so they created the anthology *Body of Evidence*.

in the sniper's peripheral view sky

LeRoy Gorman, *Body of Evidence*, 3

I liked how this haiku used the one-line technique which related to a peripheral view. The one-line shape of the haiku is similar to the shape of a sniper's view: a straight line as they are focused on something. Furthermore, a sniper must have focused vision, most likely with squinted eyes, creating vision similar in shape to a straight line. In addition, as snipers are typically on top of a building or some other tall structure, the sky would be the only thing in the peripheral view. As the author used "sky" to describe the peripheral view, the moment was truly created of envisioning a sniper on a building, surrounded by the sky. Overall, I thought the shape of the haiku correlated to the sniper's peripheral view very well.

This haiku demonstrated a strong shape and message. In addition to the aesthetics of this haiku, it also relayed a strong message of the importance of a sniper's focus. In order for a sniper to successfully complete their job, they must be completely focused without exception. This haiku represented a singular moment when the sniper remains completely focused on an object or person. In order for someone's peripheral view to be one singular object, that person cannot be moving or focusing on multiple things, because then the peripheral would be changing. Therefore, by proclaiming the sky as the peripheral, the author demonstrated how still and focused the sniper was.

playing dead...
in a pool of blood
the one he missed

Pamela Cooper, *Body of Evidence*, 4

This haiku has vivid imagery and frightening emotion. When I first read this haiku, I immediately thought of a school shooting or some other sort of mass shooting. The absolute fear that one would feel in a situation like that is truly haunting and makes my heart race to think about. In addition, I think this haiku may demonstrate the emotions of many students affected by school shootings, and other victims of mass shootings. Overall, I think this haiku remains relevant to the violence that occurs so often in today's world.

This murderous haiku brings clear elements of fear and anticipation. Furthermore, through this haiku the author demonstrated a very specific moment that involved very intense emotions. Through the lines of the haiku, an image was painted in my head of many dead bodies lying, with a live person laying with them. This person, still living, fears for their life: hoping the murderer does not notice they are still alive.

Many emotions may rush to the reader through these lines. The author portrayed a moment of fear: fear of being killed like the other victims. There are also emotions including a sense of anticipation, indicating a

racing heart as the survivor waits for the murderer to pass through the room. I think the author did an amazing job of showing these emotions so clearly in such few words. Unfortunately, due to the increased number of mass shootings, I think the vivid imagery remains almost too easy to configure in one's head. Furthermore, the speed at which I thought of a school shooting from reading these lines is terrifying, as it demonstrated how prevalent this type of violence is in today's world. In addition, the use of "..." indicates the fear and anticipation of the moment in time. This "..." could represent just a few minutes, or hours of fear paralyzing the survivor.

moonless night
only my car
in the lot

Joanne Morcom, *Body of Evidence*, 15

I read this haiku as a demonstration of female fear in dark, secluded settings. This haiku is a part of the section "Violence Against Women and Children." In class throughout the year, we have often discussed the differences between female and male experiences, especially in settings like this. Most males do not fear (at least to the extent of females) walking in the dark alone at night. However, females typically are more threatened by the lonely night and the predators that may lurk in the shadows. Therefore, I thought this haiku shows a clear moment to the reader, allowing all readers to understand, to some extent, the fear women often have in parking lots and other setting similar to this.

I thought the phrase a "moonless night" was a very interesting idea. All though there are very few instances when the moon is not physically present, I think that there are many instances when people may be in the dark alone outside and feel that there is no moon. When the moon is covered with clouds, or the sky seems particularly dark, the night may seem "moonless." This type of setting is very unsettling, especially when combined with the nature of being alone.

loose earth
in the distance
vultures at their work

Vera Constantineau, *Body of Evidence*, 28

Although this haiku does not have such a murderous tone like many of the other haiku of this book, I still love it for many of its aspects. I enjoy the subject of "vultures" as this still brings a violent tone to the haiku. To me, vultures tend to bring a very aggressive predator denotation, which allows this haiku to be interpreted in various ways. Overall, I love this haiku as it used an animal in nature to describe a murderous scene, fitting to Killer 'Ku.

I thought the idea of "loose earth" was a very well-chosen phrase. These two words create such a vivid moment of imagery. It caused me to picture loose dirt, having been dug up by some sort of animal scurrying about attempting to avoid the aggressive predator of the vulture. This idea of loose dirt does a great job of demonstrating feelings of a frantic and fearful behavior, as the animal's claws must have been digging as it was running or digging to try and escape completely.

In addition to "loose earth" I also enjoyed the phrase "at their work." this made the aggressive predator behavior seem like a task that must be done. And for vultures, or any other predator in nature, killing other animals does really *need* to be done. However, as this haiku is in a book about murder, I cannot help but compare the vultures to real murderers. Therefore, I think this idea of "their work" remains relevant to murderers too. Many serial killers are clinically insane, so killing people could be, scarily enough, considered "their work." These killers find a terrifying satisfaction from hurting other people and having

other people's lives in their hands. This really seems very similar to vultures, as both vultures and murderers' toy with the lives they hold in their hands, understanding the sheer fear of the prey.

drops of blood
 on snow
 bloom

Charlotte Hrenchuk, *Body of Evidence*, 31

I thought the structure and imagery in this haiku were very effective. Although the idea of drops of blood on snow is very unformattable and upsetting, I think the design and word usage of the haiku is brilliant. Furthermore, the lines spread out perfectly demonstrate how drops of anything would fall on the ground. In addition, I think the idea of red drops of blood on snow created a very vivid image of a specific moment. Snow, and the color white in general, is often seen as pure and peaceful. However, red is considered to be a violent color, often associated with pain or aggression. Therefore, these two colors together, are very contrasting in appearance, but also in the message that comes along with them.

The shape of this haiku correlates well to the message of the poem. When I think of drops of a substance, I picture scattered drops across a surface. The indented lines display this very well. I believe that if the haiku was all aligned left, the haiku would not be nearly as powerful or creates such a strong picture. Therefore, I think the shape of this haiku is very attractive to the reader.

Each technique used by the author in this haiku contributes to creating a moment for the reader. The shape remains very influential to picturing drops across the snow. The order of lines also creates the most vivid image possible. Furthermore, by stating "drops of blood" first, and then the surface on which they are dropping, and then finishing with "bloom" the reader is able to imagine this specific picture very easily. In addition, the shape remains very influential to picturing drops across the snow too. The idea of "bloom" is also a very interesting technique. Drops of blood on snow could definitely appear to look like a blooming rose or another red flower. Therefore, I think the word bloom accurately describes how blood may look on the snow.

cold case...
nothing in the nest
but broken eggs

Carole MacRury, *Body of Evidence*, 32

I thought this haiku was based upon the criminal investigation side of crime. I am very intrigued in crime shows and other topics involving crime cases. Therefore, this haiku immediately grabbed my attention. I also love the topic choice of a cold case. Cold cases are actually very common unfortunately and there are many people's lives who are affected by this. Furthermore, when crimes happen and are never solved due to the numerous suspects that are cleared or the lack of investigation by the police department victims' families are affected for the rest of their lives. Thus, cold cases in crime are very interesting to me, so I was particularly intrigued by this haiku.

The use of "broken eggs" was a very interesting idea to me. Eggs are very fragile and once there is a slight crack, the entire thing is ruined. This is similar to suspects in a crime case. If just the slightest thing goes wrong with a suspect, they must be let free because investigators cannot keep a suspect without valid evidence against them. In addition, without valid evidence, suspects will not be brought to court. Thus, when there are cracks in the evidence against a suspect, cold cases are often formed.

The techniques used in this haiku add to the overall message. Furthermore, I really enjoyed the use of "..." in the haiku. This correlates perfectly to a cold case. Cold cases are cases lacking sufficient evidence and are

therefore just unsolved cases that could potentially be reopened if new evidence were to be found. Therefore the “...” demonstrates the potential future of cold cases. I also enjoyed the author’s technique of lines very similar in length; I think this structure is a very attractive and bring a good rhythm to the poem.

footsteps
in the early morning street
sirens come closer

kjmunro, *Body of Evidence*, 41

This haiku could generate multiple interpretations of who’s footsteps are being portrayed. When I first read this, I imagined a killer’s footsteps walking away from the crime scene, like the end of a horror movie. Furthermore, I imagined someone just committing a crime and casually walking down the street with the sirens blaring past them, headed to the crime scene while the person who committed the crime casually walks away. On the contrary, someone could view these footsteps to be an average neighborhood walker, just observing the sirens having no idea that someone was murdered, or that a serious crime was committed.

I thought it was interesting how the author decided to pick “early morning.” I actually really like this choice, as I think it paints a great image of a very specific moment. The author could have chosen a dark night to create a scary, creepy, dark moment but I think the early morning is even better. If the author were to have chosen a dark night as the setting, I think that it would have limited the interpretations for the reader. The choice of “early morning” truly creates more opportunities for the reader’s vision of the haiku and allows for a specific setting that I believe holds more of an impact than if the setting was a typical dark, scary night.

I also liked the author’s technique of starting the haiku with a one-word line. I think this technique typically creates a deeper impact on the reader. Furthermore, using one word as the beginning of this haiku created an emphasis on the footsteps, causing the reader to question whose footsteps the haiku is referring to. Therefore, by isolating the word “footsteps” the author caused me as the reader to heavily focus and attempt to figure out who the subject of the haiku was, and who was walking away from the crime scene.

too pretty
for his own good
new convict

Johnny Baranski, *Body of Evidence*, 55

This haiku reminded me of the many prison/crime shows I have watched in the past. I love this haiku because of these shows it reminded me of. Many of the shows portray the “pretty boy” to be one of the older inmate’s servants. This concept is truly terrifying, knowing that people in prison are taken advantage of because of physical aspects like being a “pretty boy.” Also, this idea of being “pretty” negatively affecting one’s life in prison demonstrated the heavy influence of physical attributes and intimidation factors on the ranking system within prison inmates.

I thought the aesthetic of this haiku was very pleasing. Furthermore, I enjoy haiku that has similar length lines as it reads well and is pleasing to look at. I also thought it was a good choice of words with “pretty.” This word demonstrates the victimization of the new convict based upon his looks. In addition, the word “pretty” gives a clear picture of an intimidated new convict with good looks.

I like the technique used by the author with the first two lines forming a sort of sentence, and then the last line being the subject. I think this is a great technique that haiku authors often use. It created a moment for me as the reader, and it allowed me to easily picture the specific instance of a new convict walking into a prison, clueless that his “pretty” looks would actually become very dangerous for his well-being.

street thugs
behind prison walls-
choir boys

Johnny Baranski, *Body of Evidence*, 58

This haiku is interesting because of the transformed characters. I think the haiku shows the moment of street thugs, who used to be choir boys, in the first days in prison. Therefore, this haiku shows the options people have in life. Although many times, people do not have as clear or positive options, much of the time people can choose different paths for their own lives. In this haiku, I see the new prisoners having chosen a dark path. As they are described as "choir boys" I imagine city teens who used to be involved in their church and choir, were family oriented, and living a more positive lifestyle. Unfortunately, often in city life of teenagers, what seems to be the best option may be joining a gang or participating in some other violent aspect. Therefore, I think that this haiku demonstrated a picture of prisoners who used to be choir boys, but their lives were turned upside-down by gang violence.

I like the technique the author used with the first and last lines both being different phrases describing the subject of the haiku. I thought this showed the transformation that occurred in their lives, while still remaining focused on one moment. Therefore, I think the unknown author of this haiku did a fantastic job with the techniques in order to say so much in such little words.

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Works Cited

Munro, Katherine (kj) and Jessica Simon, Editors. *Body of Evidence: A Collection of Killer Ku*. Carleton Place, Ontario: Catkin Press, 2017.