

From Issue 1: Daniela Misso

From Issue 1: Kinetic

We've chosen to discuss Daniela Misso's gorgeous one-line haiku from Issue 1. While this poem employs technical tools we could discuss, to start quite simply, we are going to focus on what makes this work as a single line versus a multiple-line poem.

clouds slide away on the lake swans

- Daniela Misso

These seven words are slippery and yield at least as many related readings depending on where the breath pauses while reading it. Are the clouds sliding away? Are we? Are the swans on the lake or do we notice them nearby?

Some afternoons feel like this: a lazy drift while white clouds merge into white feathers. The poem is, in part, about this peaceful experience of floating with the lake and everything else. It's a feeling of wholeness in which the place where one thing ends and another begins no longer feels so important. The poem's single-line format is integral to conveying this experience to the reader.

If the poem were broken into two, three, four or more lines, one of the images would dominate while other images would be left behind. Any of the below duostich, tercets, or quatrains locks in a more linear and limited meaning and lessens the experience in which clouds and swans inter-are as we slide the lake together.

Here is the poem written in two lines:

clouds / slide away on the lake swans (focus on cloud movement)

clouds slide / away on the lake swans (focus on direction of movement)

clouds slide away / on the lake swans (split focus)

clouds slide away on the lake / swans (focus on swans)

On three lines, in most configurations, the poem begins to feel choppy and meaning begins to muddy:

clouds / slide away on the lake / swans

clouds slide / away on the lake / swans

clouds slide / away on the / lake swans

clouds slide away / on the lake / swans

Writing it across four lines, we observe further fragmentation of intention and context:

clouds slide / away / on the lake / swans

clouds / slide away / on the lake / swans

Interestingly, the fully vertical single-line format allows for multiple reads too. However, the vertical form does not contribute an additional layer or resonance to the reads. The vertical format, in this case, draws attention to itself as a device and away from the experience. With “clouds” at the top of the

vertical poem (y axis), we are focused more on the clouds being above us instead of the horizontal linear movement of the clouds/swans on the water (x axis) as is the observation in the poem. The vertical version, therefore, doesn't draw the reader in, and along the lake to share this experience. The reader is instead focused on trying to orient themselves to the imagery in the poem, leaving them to miss out on this magical moment.

clouds slide away on the lake swans

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Thanks for taking the time to read our thoughts! We hope perhaps it has answered questions or stimulated ideas for some new to one-line haiku. We'll be back after the next issue with more!

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