

Haiku for 16 Asteroids
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In 1921, C.G. Jung wrote concerning the self, “But inasmuch as the I is only the center of my field of consciousness, it is not identical to the totality of my psyche, being merely one complex among other complexes. I therefore distinguish between the I and the self, since the I is only the subject of my consciousness, while the self is the subject of my total psyche, which also includes the unconscious.” Jung also questioned on a separate occasion, “how, out of this present psyche, a bridge can be built into its own future.” Like the human psyche as defined by Jung, the Psyche Mission allows humanity an opportunity to learn of its past, our planetary core, by moving forward into the future and studying (16) Psyche.

The present moment is so powerful it lends us an opportunity to redefine both our future and our past. It is short moments of mindfulness which allow us to make the greatest connections, to see things for what they are, and to be innovative in our solutions to problems faced both as individuals in our daily lives and together as humanity. Writing haiku has been a practice that enables me to remain mindful during stressful times. I have no formal education in poetry, aside from one workshop in which my performance was mediocre. My introduction to haiku came separately, in a book by Gail Sher, *One Continuous Mistake: Four Noble Truths for Writers*. Along with other writing exercises and practices based on Zen Buddhist principles, Sher provides a brief and powerful introduction to writing haiku. The first section of this introduction is as follows:

A successful haiku works on three levels:

1. *the surface, literal level pleases and is enticing;*
2. *underneath, a deeper layer of meaning emerges;*
3. *finally, if a reader is receptive, the haiku will
create the space for a moment of enlightenment*

Using these three levels of functionality, I have attempted to write sixteen haiku, one for each of the first sixteen asteroids discovered in the asteroid belt, with Psyche being the last. Each haiku draws upon the history of each asteroid and emphasizes the inherent connection of scientific discoveries with our natural environment. The majority of these haiku do not adhere to the traditional definition, three lines of five-seven-five syllables respectively. Free-form haiku were popularized in the United States by Jack Kerouac and so I expect that many are already more comfortable with this free-form style than I am. Sher states, “Generally, it is more important to focus on capturing the *essence* of a “haiku moment” (the instantaneous *now*) than on squeezing your poem into a preset number of syllables. However, it is also acceptable to use seventeen syllables if that form helps you.” Many readers of these poems will likely create haiku much better than my own, but I share them as encouragement for the readers who may have never attempted writing (or any other activity) which encourages one to focus on a genuine “haiku moment.” Thank you for reading and I have included brief descriptions of each poem at the end.

*The four terrific agents of movement
are earth, air, metaphor, and water.
Norman Dubie*

(1) Ceres

sunrise
cornstalks swell
in dampened soil

(2) Pallas

lovers of the night
do not mourn the loss
morning birds unheard

(3) Juno

holding up the sky
as long as they can recall
the oldest tree in town

(4) Vesta

trees from the hillside
crackling by firelight
rest upon the hearth

(5) Astraea

a stream of stars
through the meadow—
reflection

(6) Hebe

he is still out there
that blonde boy with muddy cheeks
digging up earthworms

(7) Iris

green leaves
turn yellow and orange
then red
as
they
fall

(8) Flora

cloudy vase
on the windowsill
holding flowers to the sun

(9) Metis

pebbles on the shore
form a single narrow path
beneath seaward soles

(10) Hygeia

ice cubes in a glass
amber bourbon by the sea
old friends together

(11) Parthenope

cold wind
gives her a voice
not heard but felt

(12) Victoria

an open courtyard
where children laugh together
grandmother's empire

(13) Egeria

there is a clear spring
where she lives in the city
comfortably alone

(14) Irene

babbling brook
clashing and clamoring against rocks
flows peacefully still

(15) Eunomia

shadows of the cypress
drift across the sidewalk
telling stories of the sky

(16) Psyche

silent droplets on the glass
bokeh of distant lights
a kiss

Descriptions

1. Ceres is named for the Roman goddess of corn and harvests. The word cereal comes from the same name. I had originally intended for this to be a poem about cornflakes swelling in a bowl of milk as the sun rises.
2. Athena, often given the epithet Pallas, is a Greek goddess associated with wisdom, handicraft, and warfare. This poem is meant to serve as a reminder that wars, at least in some ideal sense, are not fought to oppose one thing but to preserve another.
3. Juno was the chief Roman goddess, the protector and special counselor of the state. This poem is a reference to the Chinese proverb "Women hold up half the sky." The tree is intended as a symbol of strength.
4. Carl Friedrich Gauss named Vesta after the goddess of the hearth and household in Roman mythology. When I began writing this poem, I imagined randomly forested hills sloping like Gaussian curves.
5. Astraea was the fifth asteroid discovered, named for Astræa, a goddess of justice named after the stars. The stream of stars through the meadow is a reflection on the water at night.
6. Hebe was named after a goddess of youth. This poem is a portrait of myself as a child. I imagine myself still wandering outside somewhere.
7. Iris was named after the rainbow goddess Iris in Greek mythology, who was a messenger to the gods. The fall leaves are colorful and bring us a message of the coming winter.
8. Flora was a Latin goddess of flowers and gardens.
9. Metis was the only asteroid to have been discovered as a result of observations from Ireland until 2008. Its name comes from the mythological Metis, a Titaness and Oceanid. This poem is dedicated to the Irish coastline.
10. The director of the Naples observatory, Ernesto Capocci, named this asteroid Igea Borbonica ("Bourbon Hygieia") in honor of the ruling family of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies where Naples was located. The poem is about two old friends sharing bourbon by the sea.
11. Parthenope was named after one of the Sirens in Greek mythology, said to have drowned herself after being unable to seduce Odysseus with her voice. This poem is intended to be slightly more empowering than the original story.
12. Victoria is officially named after the Roman goddess of victory, but the name also honors Queen Victoria who was known as the "Grandmother of Europe."
13. Egeria was named after the mythological nymph Egeria, who is often associated with a natural spring.
14. Irene was named after a personification of peace in Greek mythology. This poem represents the peace and stillness that can be found even during the most difficult times.
15. Eunomia was named after Eunomia, one of the Horae (Hours), a personification of order and law in Greek mythology. The cypress tree is symbolic of death. I wrote this poem as a representation of the inescapable laws of nature.
16. Cupid and Psyche is a story written in the 2nd century AD, concerning the overcoming of obstacles to the love between Psyche ("Soul" or "Breath of Life") and Cupid ("Desire") or Amor ("Love") and their ultimate union in a sacred marriage.