

THE STRIP HAY(NA)KU PROJECT



L/O/C/P

THE STRIP HAY(NA)KU PROJECT

**A collaborative experiment
in sequential graphic poetics**

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Foreword by Eileen R. Tabios

Introduction by Ernesto Priego

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The strip hay(na)ku included in this collection were first published online at *The Strip Hay(na)ku Project* blog, <https://thestripjainakuproject.wordpress.com/>; January and February 2008. "I ask the woman", "And then", "The body remembers", "A white page", "Last night we", "A wicked likeness" and "The things words" were first published in print in *The Chained Hay(na)ku Project*, edited by Ivy Alvarez, John Bloomberg-Rissman, Eileen R. Tabios and Ernesto Priego (Meritage Press and xPress(ed), 2010; pages 30; 36; 45; 59; 77; 93; 96). The Foreword by Eileen R. Tabios was first published in *Galatea Resurrects*; <https://galatearesurrects2018.blogspot.com/2018/11/featured-poet-ernesto-priego.html>, November 19 2018.

Available in print via <http://www.lulu.com/shop/ernesto-priego/the-strip-haynaku-project/paperback/product-24042993.html>

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Eileen R. Tabios

Foreword

In 2003, I created the poetry form “hay(na)ku” with the help of other Filipino poets, most notably Vince Gotera who gave the form its name. The hay(na)ku’s core is a tercet with the first line being one word, the second line two words, and the third line three words (variations to the form are welcome). Shortly on the heels of celebrating the hay(na)ku’s 15th birthday, I came to review this 10th anniversary edition of Ernesto Priego’s comic strip with other collaborators. I had seen some of these strips before, years ago, when I was more actively engaging with Ernesto whose intelligence and visionary perspective made him the first to write the first single-author collection of hay(na)ku, *Not Even Dogs* (Meritage Press, 2006). Through *Not Even Dogs*, Ernesto also presented “jainakú,” his translation of hay(na)ku as both the term and art form. Thus, I’ve always known Ernesto to be innovative as a thinker and artist, and proceeded to (re-)read and (re-)view his strips with much eagerness.

It is useful to note that the first strip (first word “windows”) is by Ernesto alone. From there, the rest of the strips utilize words and images by his collaborators with his role then summed up as “sampling and layout by Ernesto Priego.” No doubt Ernesto first tested whatever theories or thoughts he brought to this project with his own material to see what can happen. He then applied his “sampling and layout” skills to materials provided by others—in this project, his “collaborators” are Amy Bernier, John Bloomberg-Rissman, Sam Bloomberg-Rissman, Lola Bola, Horacio Castillo, Ira Franco, and Ginger Stickney.

Ernesto’s sampling and layout approach makes sense if one recalls that, earlier this year, Ernesto published with co-author Peter Wilkins the paper “The Question Concerning Comics as Technology: Gestell and Grid” (Priego & Wilkins 2018). Their paper is about how

the comics grid, the array of panels, can be understood as a specific technology of ‘revealing’ through ‘enframing’ and as such is the key element in comics technology. We propose Martin Heidegger’s conceptual framework (*Gestell*: literally,

‘the framework’), primarily discussed in his 1954 essay ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ (1982) as a strategy that can be used to engage critically with panel layout in graphic narratives, concluding that the role of the grid in comics and the way that new technologies put that grid to work both in the production and consumption of comics means that comics embody the relationship between technology, storytelling and materiality. In an age in which most of the screens that dominate our information-filled lives are rectangular, we argue that the purpose of the grid is to manage a potentially overwhelming sublime space.*

The first strip “windows” offers a deceptively-simple example of focus. The first image/line is what one might see through a window but not necessarily because one is looking intently at/through the window. This is why the word is the plural “windows” rather than the singular “window.” For the latter bespeaks a specificity of image and attention that doesn’t yet exist—for example, the image might surface (distractedly) from the corner of one’s eyes as one passes by a window. Vision begins to focus with the second line with its second image portraying a branch, followed by the third image portraying a discerned light.

The poetic *volta* occurs with the third line presenting various ways to present the light, nature, and landscape with the words “reflecting,” “shadow,” and “selves.” It’s notable that a large surface of water is presented with “reflecting” to emphasize how a reflection can occur through a watery surface; that the light is given top foreground emphasis with the word “shadow” as if to emphasize how a shadow cannot exist without light (in turn, a metaphor for how lucidity and understanding reveals literal and metaphorical darknesses); and that “selves” is presented with the seemingly contradictory focus onto a larger landscape and not the narrowed perspective of an individual to indicate, say, the plenitude of selves within a single individual, the larger context(s) which

* Priego, E. and Wilkins, P., 2018. The Question Concerning Comics as Technology: *Gestell* and Grid. *The Comics Grid: Journal of Comics Scholarship*, 8, p.16. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16995/cg.133>.

defines individual identity, and/or the non-fixity of identity that shifts akin to how images of nature don't always reveal the teeming creatures and elements within it. All of these interpretations are made possible by Ernesto's choices on "enframing."

In my initial response to "windows," I thought the strip manifestation of the hay(na)ku is more effective—more evocative—than a 100% verse version of "windows / branch light / reflecting shadow selves." This means that, at first, it seemed that the challenge for the comics is to present the poems in a way where the comics enhances the poem without having that enhancing force be a constraint on a reader-viewer's subjectivity. I'm not sure this is possible.

It's the distinct possibility of the above impossibility that requires, it now seems to me, an acceptance of these collaborations as a single entity lacking separation between text, image, and enframing. That is, I was wrong (or reductive) to consider as I did in the prior paragraph the view of whether the hay(na)ku poem contains separate components of words and image—that the poem was, first, a verse that later was joined with images (or vice versa). I should just accept the strip-as-poem as a single entity, already unified and whole on its surface, in the way I would do so by considering, say, a three-stanza verse poem as a poem (fullstop!) rather than as a poem-comprised-of-three-stanzas.

As such, one then looks at these strips for a harmony between words, images and enframing, where one facet does not seemingly jar with another facet. Meeting this standard is one of Ernesto's achievements with this strip, and it is an achievement that then allows him to play. It's wonderful, for instance, how the second strip (that begins "Among / the greys / the breath emerges:") ends with a frame of the backside of a long-haired lady's hair with the words "unrooted passion." The long loose flowing strands of hair puns, it seems to me, off of "unrooted" in a way that can make one chuckle while still enjoying the lyrical romance of the visual poem.

As well, because these strips are poems—they are not called "strips" but "strips hay(na)ku"—they need to have the same characteristic of all effective poems by enabling inhabitation by the reader-viewer. This is where a deftness with space, including the in-between-ness, and silence

matters (in both words and images). While such deftness can be seen in the imagistically sparer strips like those that begin with “The sun feathers” and “the / promise of / a revelation forever,” this element can also be seen in visually busier strips like the strip that begins with the word “Certain,” let alone the raucous strip that begins “AND / THEN AS / I’M LYING DOWN.” Indeed, with the latter, I can honestly say that I have never seen a screaming man presented with such ... silence. The subjectivity of silence and space remains even when Ernesto introduces the din of color.

The hay(na)ku, unlike many other poetic inventions, reached its 15th anniversary with poets around the world still using the form and coming anew to the form. Part of the reason is the hay(na)ku’s welcome of variations off of its core tercet. I am glad that Ernesto has created the strip variation, and did so not by simply using his own words and images but integrating that created by others—as such, he also manifested one of the hay(na)ku’s integral traits: community. It exists through his collaborative approach. It exists through his nod to the reader-viewer’s impossible-to-anticipate but nonetheless real role. And it is community as well that aids “in an age in which most of the screens that dominate our information-filled lives are rectangular, [so] that the purpose of the grid is to manage a potentially overwhelming sublime space.”

That all of the strips, all of the poems, welcome the reader-viewer in determining the significance of the poetic encounter means that when Ernesto created his strips, he didn’t just lapse to the form of comics—he managed to still create new poems. What a gift! A gift Ernesto possesses as well as gives. Or,

*A gift Ernesto
Possesses and
Gives*

Thank you!

November 2018

Introduction

"The hay(na)ku's swift popularity would not have been possible without internet-based communication," Ivy Alvarez, John Bloomberg-Rissman, Eileen R. Tabios and I wrote in the introduction to *The Chained Hay(na)ku Project* (Meritage Press and xPress(ed) 2010). We had posted the call for contributions to that book on the project's blog on June 24 2007[†]. I may be misremembering, as more than a decade has now passed, but if the metadata from the media library of the Strip Hay(na)ku Project blog[‡] is correct, by February 2008 I had already co-created all the comics-poems/poems-comics in this collection. I remember first trying out one by myself, with my own images and words, and then realising the whole experiment could better be extended to become what we called on the project's blog "a collaborative experiment on sequential graphic poetics". It was all part of my own attempt to borrow the hay(na)ku experience, make it my own—I mexicanised it calling the form "jainakú", to refer to the way I'd pronounce it in Spanish, and to reflect the fact that this was a poetic form that had a sense of humour and resisted the rigidity of snobbish seriousness. In fact, the original file names for all the strips contained in this book included the term "jainakú" to identify them.

The Strip Hay(na)ku Project sought to extend the collaborative, sequential/chained nature of the hay(na)ku to the realm of comics, abstract comics if you will, repurposing writing and images created by what then was a creative online community, what was a mutual, reciprocal blogroll of poets and artists who were bloggers and bloggers who were poets and artists (no one remembers what was first—did the order matter?). I have had a long-time interest in the comics grid (the array or layout of graphic panels; the specific distribution of images on a comic book page) as a poetic force, as a space for poetic revelation. It took me years to be able to formulate that the comics grid reveals, and to suggest that what the grid reveals is enabled by the spaces between

[†] Available at <https://chainedhaynaku.wordpress.com/> [Accessed 18 November 2018].

[‡] Available at <https://thestripjainakuproject.wordpress.com/> [Accessed 18 November 2018].

images, by the quality of the presence and absence of panel borders, of what they contain and what they exclude. As in poetry, in comics space and silence matter and communicate, express ideas, emotions, *stuff*. There was such richness in the materials created by the community represented in our blogrolls at the time—an intensity of creative feedback that the rise of social media dissipated and never managed to replicate. “I ask the woman”, “And then”, “The body remembers”, “A white page”, “Last night we”, “A wicked likeness” and “The things words” were indeed collaboratively submitted to *The Chained Hay(na)ku Project* call, with materials sourced from the contributors’ blogs, and were published in the collection (pages 30; 36; 45; 59; 77; 93; 96). That was the only printed record of this experiment until now: the present edition contains all the strip hay(na)kus we created during January and February 2008, and had never seen the light of the printed page before.

The strip hay(na)ku included here were not merely about exploring what happened when previous content was manipulated and rearranged in a specific panel layout that followed the rules of the hay(na)ku (1, 2 and 3 panels, or the other way around). The collaborative nature of the comic book (editors, writers, pencillers, inkers, colourists, etc) was definitely an inspiration to attempt a similar collective workflow, where there was not a single ‘author’ but a network of authors, each contributing an important element or process. And indeed in the Strip Hay(na)ku Project an important goal was to focus on process, on the spaces and relationships between people located in specific -distanced- geographical and temporal points, expressing themselves in changing modes, with words or images, and in my case here, with layout design and word and image editing. If I used the term “sampling” at the time, it is because I was inspired by electronic methods of music composition and remixing, thinking of forms of digital collage and curation as poetic practice.

With the hindsight of more than ten years, I think some of these pieces were successful in what I thought they should have achieved, and that was to repurpose messages and to create new ones. I suppose the goal was to propose the hay(na)ku as a poetic theory and practice of space, and more specifically as a grid structure, a network, an infrastructure for poetic revelation. In this sense I see the hay(na)ku, and the strip hay(na)ku in particular, as poetic expressions deeply rooted in Internet-mediated collaboration, poetry made with computers to be shared via

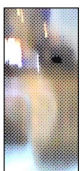
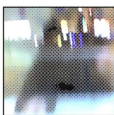
computers (and now mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets). At the same time, and I hope this is materialised in the fact this is meant to be a print publication, my own approach to the hay(na)ku as a collaborative, multimodal poetic form is also embedded in the tradition of DIY fanzine making that, though digitally-mediated, still aims to achieve the feel and should I say “aura” of mechanical reproduction.

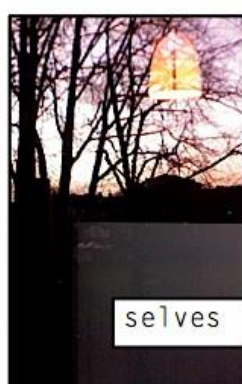
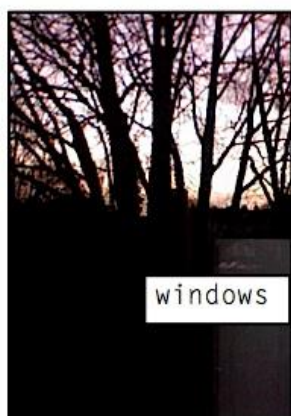
In creating the new pieces for the cover (also reproduced twice, in two sizes, inside) and back cover, words are missing on purpose, as an invitation to the reader to try to recreate it or augment it with their own lines. My hope, in rearranging my own work and the work of others in specific forms, was to reveal interconnections, juxtapositions, contradictions and new visions. I would most surely do things slightly different today, but if I’m honest not drastically different, so I am still proud of what we were doing those ten years ago, at that specific time and place. I am, of course, immensely grateful for the generosity of all those who collaborated in the strips, because the work is ours and yours, because they and I and you gave it away to the page and the future. The work included in these pages still speaks, and perhaps, sometimes, even sings, even in what it does not do or fails to do, in the framed and unframed blank spaces between the ones, the twos and the threes.

Acknowledgements

I’d like to give my most sincere thanks to Eileen R. Tabios, John Bloomberg-Rissman, Márton Koppány and all the contributors whose work is included here for their generosity and inspiration. Special thanks to Lucy Morris, for her support, encouragement and company in the search for meaning.

November 2018



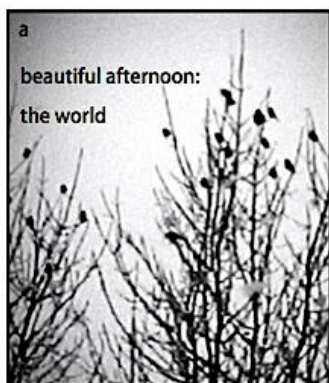
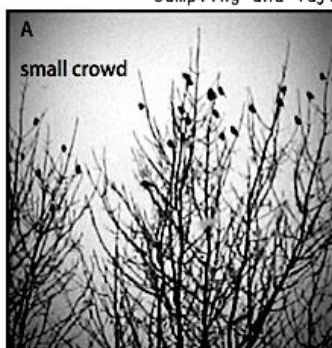


a hay(na)ku strip by ernesto priego ©2008

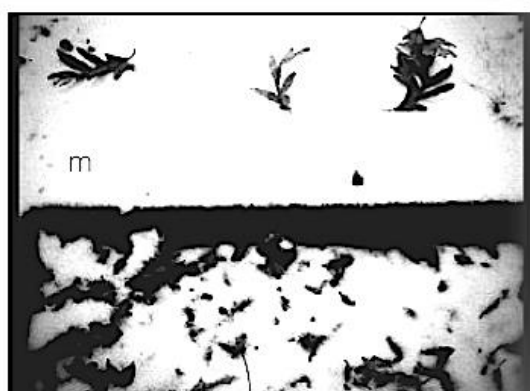
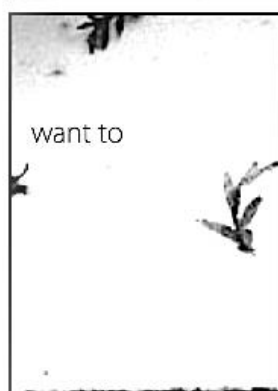
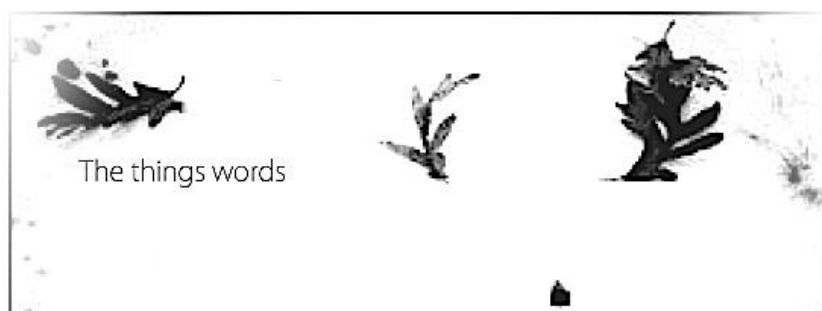
a strip hay(na)ku
images by amy bernier; words by john bloomberg-rissman;
sampling and layout by ernesto priego



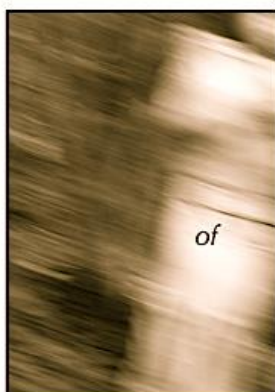
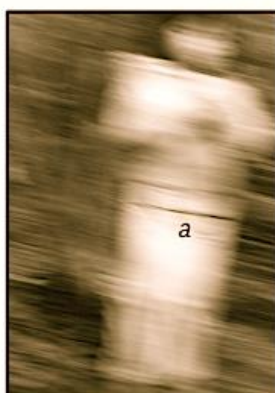
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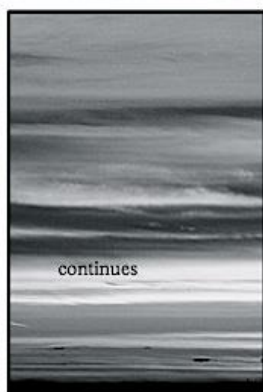
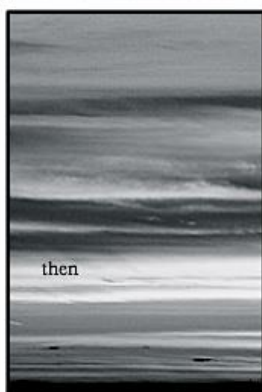
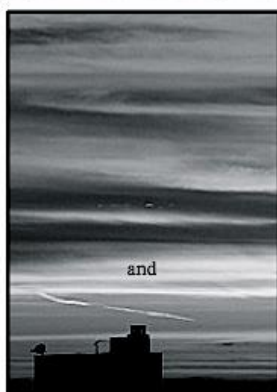
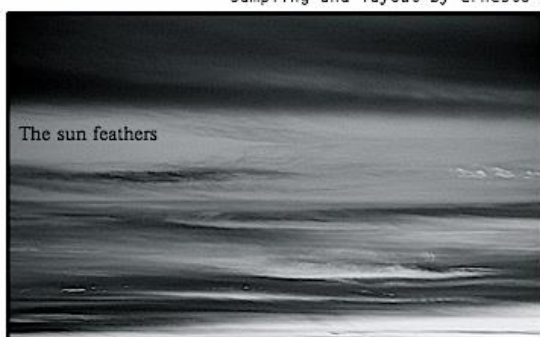
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images by amy bernier; words by john bloomberg-rissman;
sampling and layout by ernesto priego



a strip hay(na)ku
images by ginger stickney;
words by john bloomberg-rissman;
sampling and layout by ernesto priego



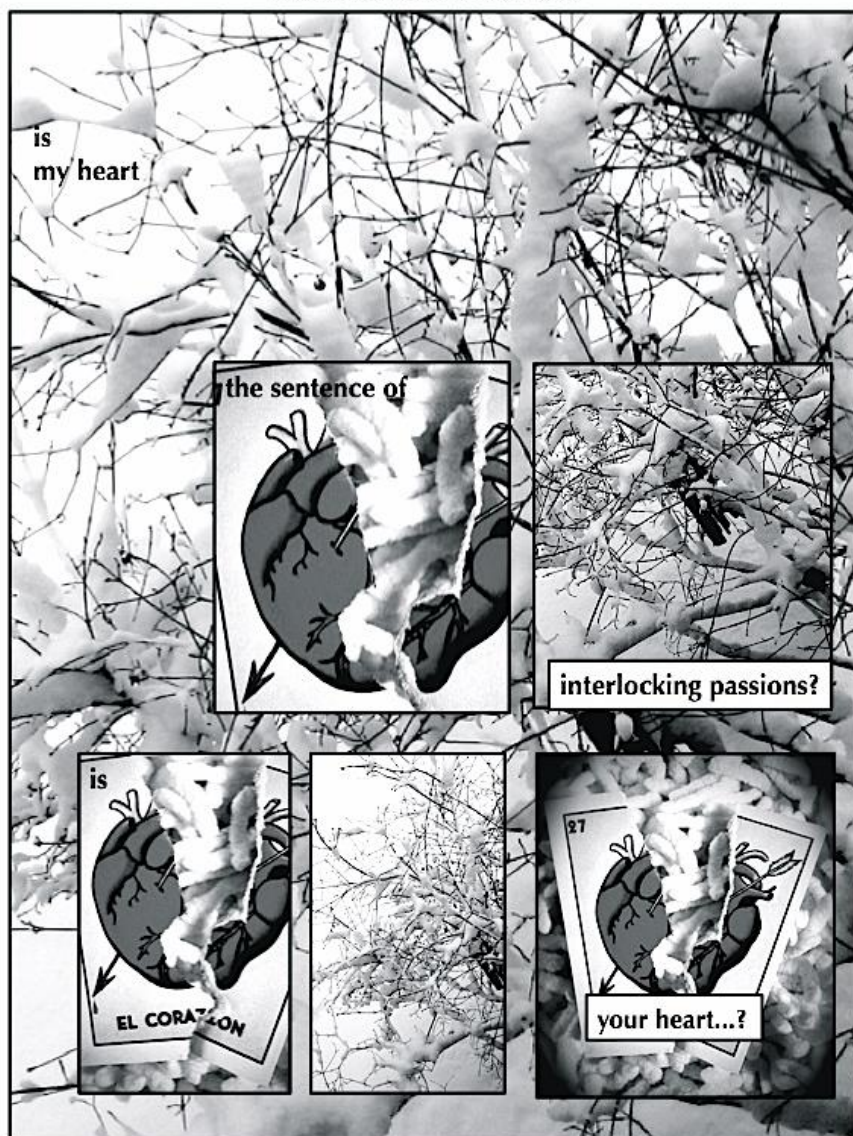
a strip hay(na)ku
images by lola bola;
words by john bloomberg-rissman;
sampling and layout by ernesto priego



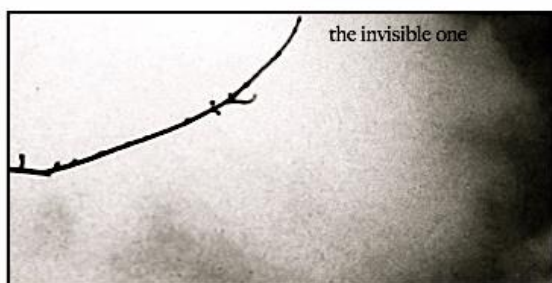
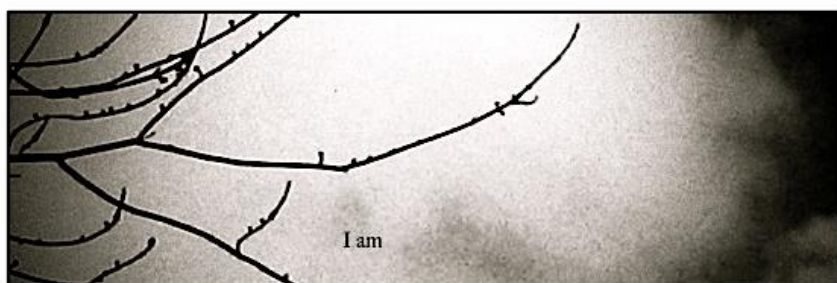
a strip hay(na)ku
images by amy bernier; words by john bloomberg-rissman;
sampling and layout by ernesto priego



a strip (broken) hay(na'ku
images by amy bernier; words by john bloomberg-rissman;
sampling and layout by ernesto priego



a strip hay(na)ku
images by amy bernier;
words by amy bernier and john bloomberg-rissman;
sampling and layout by ernesto priego

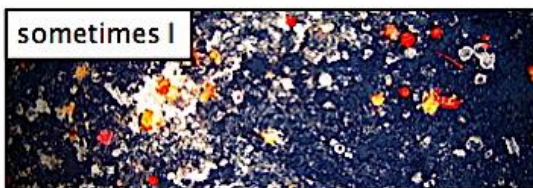


a strip hay(na)ku
images by amy bernier; words by john bloomberg-rissman;
sampling and layout by ernesto priego

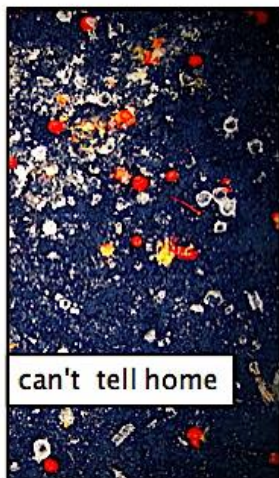
and



sometimes I



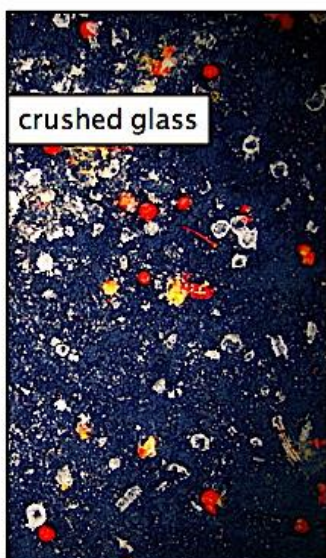
can't tell home



from

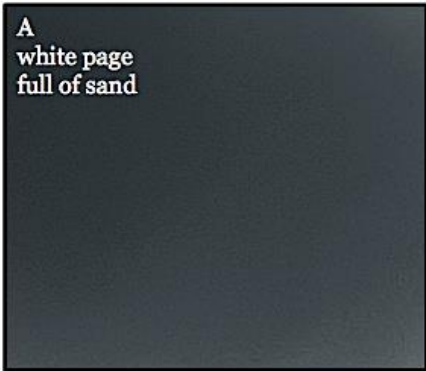


crushed glass




a strip hay(na)ku
images by sam bloomberg-rissman;
words by ernesto priego & john bloomberg-rissman;
sampling and layout by ernesto priego

A
white page
full of sand



gets
in there
like a desert




rough
and dirty
in your throat.



Espinas,
la piedra,



maybe the cactus.



(I
am totally
perishing for you)



A STRIP WAY(NA)KU
IMAGES FROM HORACIO CASTILLO'S BLOG
WORDS BY JOHN BLOOMBERG-RISSMAN
SAMPLING AND LAYOUT BY ERNESTO PRIEGO

AND
THEN AS
I'M LYING DOWN



TO
SLEEP
(AMONG THE GREYS)



I HEAR

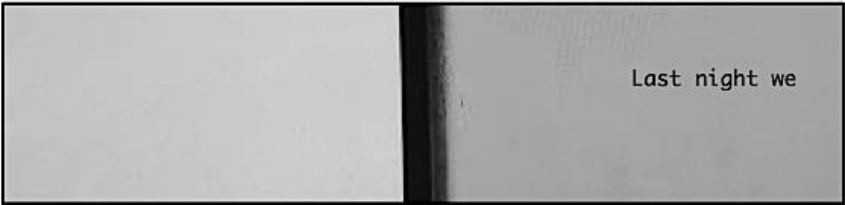


A HAIR-RAISING GRRR....

a strip hay(na)ku
images by amy bernier; words by john bloomberg-rissman;
sampling and layout by ernesto priego



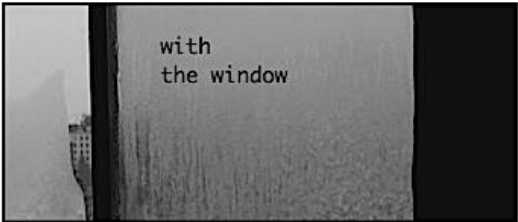
a strip hay(na)ku
images by lola bola;
words by john bloomberg-rissman;
sampling and layout by ernesto priego




Last night we




discussed it



with
the window



does not
rot?



do
you know
why the soul



open:

a strip hay(na)ku
images by lola bola;
words by john bloomberg-rissman;
sampling and layout by ernesto priego



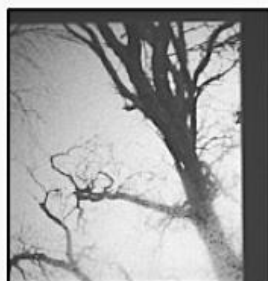
a strip hay(na)ku
images by amy bernier;
words by john bloomberg-rissman;
sampling and layout by ernesto priego



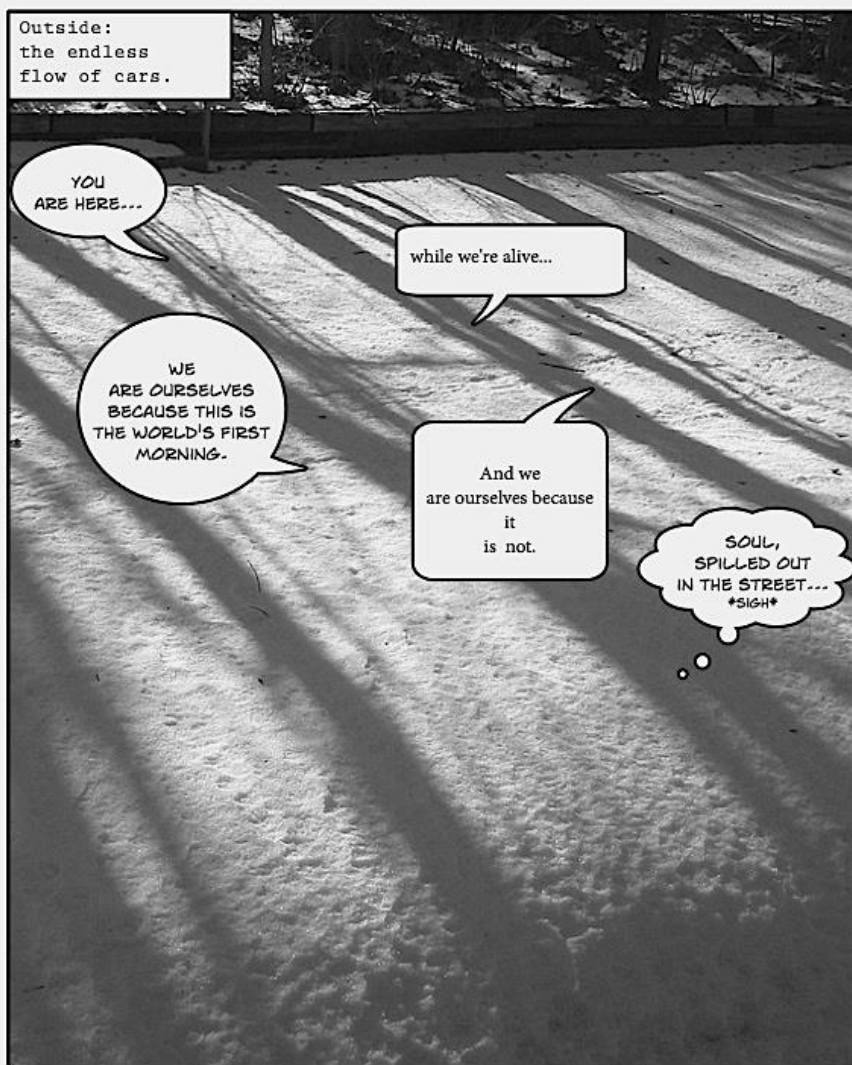
She could not
understand
and softly
answered:

who?

THE
NIGHT IS
LONG, ARE YOU
DORMANT?



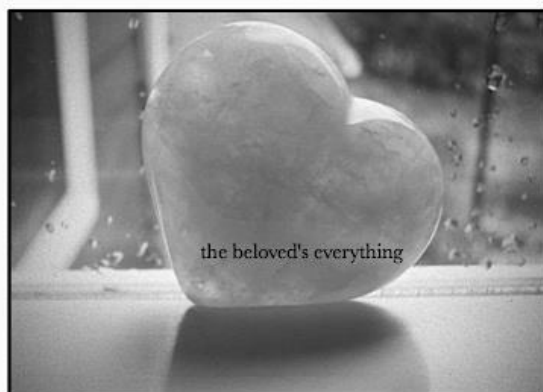
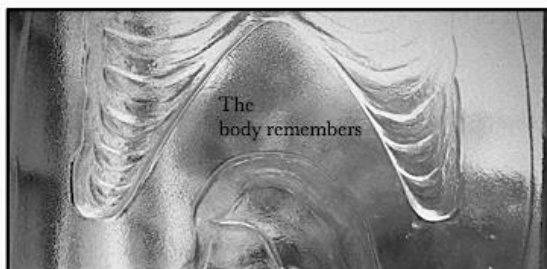
a strip hay(na)ku
photo by amy bernier
words by john bloomberg-rissman & ernesto priego
sampling and layout by ernesto priego



a strip hay(na)ku
images by amy bernier
words by john bloomberg-rissman
sampling and layout by ernesto prigo


"Come shadow, come, and
take this shadow up"

-William Shakespeare,
Two Gentlemen of Verona




a strip hay(na)ku
images by lola bola
words by john bloomberg-rissman
sampling and layout by ernesto priego

At the window
of the
university
psychiatric hospital




one red geranium




just after blooming



suddenly wilts



with a thud.



(Fade out)



a strip hay(na)ku

images:

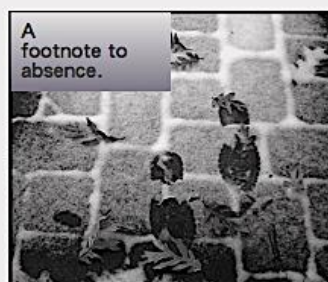
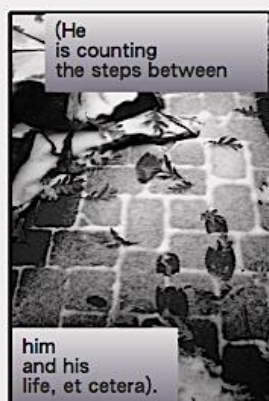
amy bernier and lola bola

words:

john bloomberg-rissman

sampling and layout:

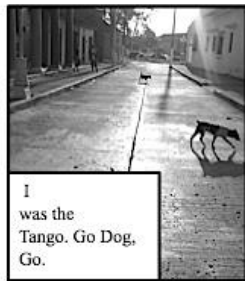
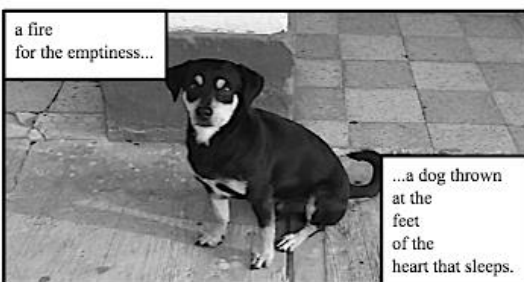
ernesto priego




a strip hay(na)ku
 images by ira franco
 words by john bloomberg-rissman
 sampling and layout by ernesto priego

"All I ask for when I
 pray/Steady rollin'
 woman gonna come my
 way."

-Led Zeppelin,
 "Black Dog"



a strip hay(na)ku
images: amy bernier
words: amy bernier and john bloomberg-rissman
sampling and layout: ernesto priego



Disappearing is not
an option:

A
word mingling
with another word...

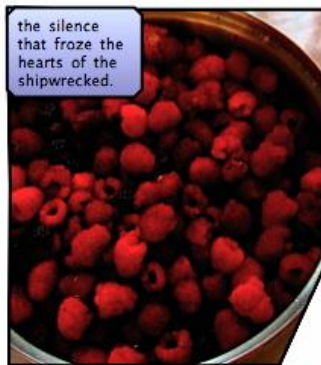
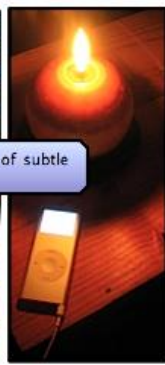
the vulnerable protuberances
marching in
clouds...

a
text wrapped
in leaves when
the wind
blows.

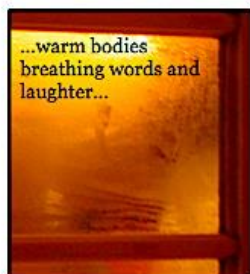
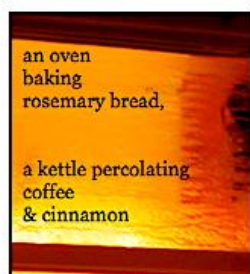
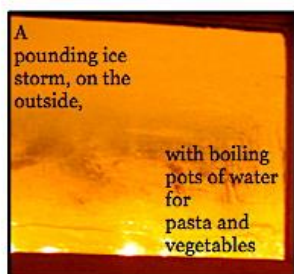
A STRIP HAY(NA)KU
IMAGES AND WORDS: LOLA BOLA
SAMPLING AND LAYOUT: ERNESTO PRIEGO



a strip hay(na)ku
images: amy bernier
words: john bloomberg-rissman
sampling and layout: ernesto priego



a strip hay(na)ku
words and images: amy bernier
sampling and layout: ernesto priego



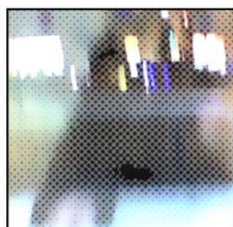
A STRIP HAY(NA)KU
IMAGES: LOLA BOLA
WORDS: JOHN BLOOMBERG-RISSMAN
SAMPLING AND LAYOUT: ERNESTO PRIEGO



Contributor Biographies

Ernesto Priego is a lecturer at the Centre for Human-Computer Interaction Design, City, University of London. He is the founder and editor in chief of *The Comics Grid: Journal of Comics Scholarship*. He co-curated, with Ivy Alvarez, John Bloomberg-Rissman and Eileen R. Tabios, *The Chained Hay(na)ku Project* (Meritage Press and xPress(ed) 2010). He is also the author of *Not Even Dogs. Hay(na)ku Poems* (Meritage Press, 2006); *the amazing adventures of Gravity & Grace* (Otoliths 2008); *The Present Day. The Mañana Poems* (Leafe Press 2010); *Ahí donde no estás. De nombres propios y otros fantasmas* (Instituto Veracruzano de Cultura 2013); and, with Simon Grennan and Peter Wilkins, the non-fiction comic *Parables of Care. Creative Responses to Dementia Care* (City, University of London, University of Chester and Douglas College, 2017). He posts things online whenever he is able to on his blog, epriego.blog, and on Twitter [@ernestopriego](https://twitter.com/ernestopriego).

Eileen R. Tabios has released over 50 collections of poetry, fiction, essays, and experimental biographies from publishers in nine countries and cyberspace. Her 2018 poetry collections include *HIRAETH: Tercets From the Last Archipelago*, *MURDER DEATH RESURRECTION: A Poetry Generator*, *TANKA: Vol. 1*, and *ONE TWO THREE: Selected Hay(na)ku Poems* which is a bilingual English-Spanish edition with translator Rebeka Lembo. Forthcoming is *WITNESS IN A CONVEX MIRROR* which will inaugurate Tinfish Press's "Pacific response to John Ashbery." She also invented the poetry form "hay(na)ku" whose 15-year anniversary in 2018 is celebrated at the San Francisco and Saint Helena Public Libraries. More information about her works is available at eileenrtabios.com.



memories
(be careful)
all gets blurry

