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Volume 31:3, 2008



frogpond

**The Journal of the Haiku
Society of America**



**Volume 31, Number 3
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About HSA & *Frogpond*

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Frogpond Logo (title page): **G. Swede & A. Krumins**

Submissions Policy

1. Submissions from both members and non-members of HSA are welcome
2. Submissions must be original, unpublished work that is not being considered elsewhere
3. Submission by e-mail is preferred
 - (a) in the body of the e-mail (no attachments)
 - (b) with subject line: Frogpond Submission
 - (c) with place of residence noted in the body of the e-mail
4. A submission by post will receive a reply only if included are either:
 - (a) a self-addressed stamped envelope (with a Canadian stamp)
 - (b) a self-addressed envelope with one International Reply Coupon (IRC) for up to 30 grams; two IRCs for over 30 grams and up to 50 grams,
5. Only one submission per issue will be considered

The Submission May Include Any or All of the Following

1. Up to ten (10) haiku
2. Up to three (3) haibun
3. Up to three (3) renga or other short sequences
4. One (1) renku or other long sequence
5. One (1) essay
6. One (1) book review

Submission Periods

1. February 15 to April 15 (Spring/Summer Issue)
2. June 01 to August 01 (Fall Issue)
3. September 15 to November 15 (Winter Issue)

Acceptances will be sent shortly after the end of each period.

Note to Publishers

Books for review may be sent at any time

Submission Addresses:

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Postal: George Swede

Box 279, Station P

Toronto, ON M5S 2S8

**Museum of Haiku
Literature Award
\$100**

For the best previously unpublished work appearing in the
last issue of *Frogpond* as selected by vote of the H.S.A.
Executive Committee.

From Issue 31:2

rain settles
some of the pollen
some of the plans

Peggy Willis Lyles, Georgia

Haiku & Senryu

Japanese garden . . .
each firefly
a lantern

stroll through the carnival
my shadow
on stilts

Stanford Forrester, Connecticut

first frost
she says she'll walk home
by herself

C. William Hinderliter, Arizona

a stranger
pausing where I paused
. . . bees and lavender

autumn riff
aspen leaves a few notes higher
than the stream

Harriot West, Oregon

Haiku Society of America

half light
fat flakes of snow
melting into the birch

Mark A. Osterhaus, Wisconsin

first of spring—
new sneakers and
a green field stretching to sky

banking toward home
—wingtip touches the star
with my wish

Rich Youmans, Massachusetts

the first peepers
in an evening hollow
this longing

Bruce Ross, Maine

a shield bug
crosses an umbel
midsummer sun

John Barlow, United Kingdom

Frogpond 31:3

anniversary
a green recycling day
coincides

David Cobb, United Kingdom

at dusk
a tree of birds
so many stories

John Soules, Ontario

end of the day
these throbbing veins
clouds to ground lightning

Daniel W. Schwerin, Wisconsin

melanoma
the dermatologist's
southern drawl

Dana Duclo, Arizona

first date fishing
at the lake—
catch and release?

Marnie Brooks, North Carolina

Haiku Society of America

in the garden weeding away the day's events

closing one eye to pick up the liquor bottle hazy day

Curtis Dunlap, North Carolina

wood dust on the deck
the perfect round hole of
a carpenter bee

Kathe L. Palka, New Jersey

a brown moth
still on the back door
stagnant heat

Adelaide B. Shaw, New York

stillbirth
the heart eaten out
of the rose

Jo McInerney, Australia

Frogpond 31:3

summer's end
instead of love songs crickets
from ruby's roadhouse

argument over—
the crackle of dry leaves
outside the kitchen door

Wanda D. Cook, Massachusetts

under the dock,
waves count
the weathered pilings

Patrick M. Pilarski, Alberta

moonbright night
the sundial reads
half-past my bedtime

crunch of frost
a flurry of chickadees
swings the feeder

Carolyn Hall, California

Haiku Society of America

a little dirty
bit to nibble—
wild ginger

Michael McClintock, California

migrating geese,
out of date
address book

massive oak tree,
scars of
love

Beverly J. Bachand, South Carolina

summer rain
my old flame details
her new sex life

Matthew Paul, United Kingdom

fog filled valley
the shape of a dog's bark

Joe Robello, California

Frogpond 31:3

the smell of brimstone skids by after the plow . . .

Tyler Pruett, Maine

grapevinegaryield

misty dawn
body-fog
of horses

Emily Romano, New Jersey

first hot night
white drifts on the lawn
under cottonwoods

Elizabeth Hazen, Vermont

at sunrise chasing the shadow chasing me at sunset

Natalia L. Rudychev, Illinois

Haiku Society of America

she speaks of her ex
the pungent scent
of pepper trees

William Scott Galasso, Washington

spring is here
an intriguing face
in a crowded bus

Naranan Namby, India

green coconuts
tight on the tree
the glitter of water

Heidi George, Pennsylvania

a peacock dances
in full plumage—
rain clouds gather

Gautam Nadkarni, India

blue morning fog
he locates his glasses
in the mirror

Robert Epstein, California

Frogpond 31:3

after our argument
some water left
in the wrung-out rag

arguing again
in the the orchard a smell
of rotting apples

Megan Arkenberg, Wisconsin

first date
a starfish glistens
on the tide line

Ron Moss, Tasmania

off its hinges
the window frames
a blue larkspur

David K. Gast, California

the moon
seems larger tonight . . .
an unplucked peach

Chris Bays, Ohio

Haiku Society of America

sailing
the sun whitens
an old veil

Nana Fredua-Agyeman, Ghana

scenic stop—
the shadow only a shadow
can touch

Gary Hotham, Maryland

crisp afternoon
the long-ago crunch
in a leaf pile

Peggy Heinrich, California

Monday morning
clouds
bumper to bumper

dying sun
a sacrifice fly
holds the light

Rob Scott, Australia

Frogpond 31:3

Intermittent birdsong
as maples scintillate—
the work shift changing

As geese arc, the fog
closing behind them . .
the poem's false start

Rebecca Lilly, Vir-

pomegranate blossoms
twelve shades of scarlet
one hummingbird

Renee Owen, California

my shadow surfs
the boat's white water
summer memories

Allison Millcock, Australia

a shooting star
left it behind—
the dark

Jeffrey Woodward, Ontario

Haiku Society of America

private property
white lilac over
the high wall

Tomislav Maretic, Croatia

so light the rain the last magnolia flower

Diana Webb, United Kingdom

loud cicadas
my split smile in
her sunglasses

Francis Attard, Malta

pickup truck
deer in the rusty bed
a fine rain

Temple Cone, Maryland

Gypsy moth cocoons
in a canopy of trees—
sound of gentle rain

David Rosenthal, California

Frogpond 31:3

pussy willows in a vase
my grandfather's post-stroke
handshake

Andrew Riutta, Michigan

beach yoga
somewhere
the riot police

Terry Ann Carter, Ontario

with the torrent of my thought risen river

Dimitar Anakiev, Slovenia

look at nothing

any motion

mountain squirrel

red chipmunk

Marshall Hryciuk, Ontario

Haiku Society of America

stop sign—
one last look
at my father's house

Memorial Day—
washing dead cells
off my body

Yu Chang, New York

Memorial Day
a man from Japan
steals second base

David Giacalone, New York

sultry night
whispering leaves
in a light rain

Ruth Franke, Germany

empty
as the teapot
between us

Michele Root-Bernstein, Michigan

Frogpond 31:3

lingering fog . . .
rinsing starch
from the rice

Vanessa Proctor, Australia

light drizzle
lilac scent comes with me
to the doorway

Katrina Shepherd, Scotland

homesick tracing the stream to its source

distant thunder a crab hangs from the chicken neck

w.f. owen, California

a
moth
brushing
my
face
from
an
odd
direction
after
midnight

Burnell Lippy, New York

Haiku Society of America

rambling phone call
I count the drinks
in her voice

afterglow
aftersex
afternoon

Roberta Beary, D.C.

night train . . .
I meet myself
in the window

Martina Taeker, Australia

life stories . . .
the girls shucking corn
leaf by leaf

our estrangement . . .
the mimosa puffs gone
before I looked

Ferris Gilli, Georgia

Frogpond 31:3

again the crab apple
fails to blossom . . .
the phone call we dread

Dad and I planting
a weeping willow—
how little I know

Edward J. Rielly, Maine

footprints in sand
the impression we make
till high tide

Ian Marshall, Pennsylvania

full moon
one giant leap
for a water strider

Scott Mason, New York

one flash at a time
her sweat-covered body
revealed by the storm

Jeff Hoagland, New Jersey

Haiku Society of America

before and after the bell its ring

spring evening
my son wants a fairy-tale
not *Frogpond*

Johan Bergstad, Sweden

long homily . . .
tracking the chandelier
in my diamond

Joan Vistain, Illinois

using white-out
I think of my past
confessions

Tom Tico, California

Plaza de Tirso de Molina

the hiss of water
going nowhere
stone poet

David G. Lanoue, Louisiana

Frogpond 31:3

fog lifting
the tree
where it is

roller coaster
a high rise
where it used to be

Bill Kenney, New York

heat wave
the wind chime's
long silence

autumn funeral
the sound of forever
in the waves

Susan Constable, British Columbia

green miss
recycles paper, plastic, glass . . .
and boyfriends

Guy Sauterne, D.C.

Haiku Society of America

it has no worms
this dirt you peck
city bird

James Hausman, California

Indian corn
remembering
the old man's teeth

Sharon Stoneburner, Virginia

alone
on top of the ferris wheel
the moon

Cor van den Heuvel, New York

lights
into
ball
cheers
crack

Robert Moyer, North Carolina

Frogpond 31:3

Sunset upon the lake
the babble of the day
echoes in me alone

David Rodrigues, Portugal

the frog's pond
now a shopping mall—
sound of money

Anne LB Davidson, Maine

sickroom
a fly's repeating flight
into the mirror

Dietmar Tauchner, Austria

hammock at dusk
cradling sunset
and you

Margarita Engle, California

a few bees
left in the clover
afterglow

Peggy Willis Lyles, Georgia

lunch hour
the wrecking ball
dangles

Barry George, Pennsylvania

slow day
the barber cuts
coupons

Greg Schwartz, Maryland

fortieth birthday
I used to think nothing
of taking off my socks

Michael Dylan Welch, Washington

thin soup
another day
without a letter

Michael Ketchek, New York

prying the fortune
out of the cookie—
weight watcher

George Dorsty, Virginia

Frogpond 31:3

Rolling thunder
the tension of chain
against sprocket

tom painting, New York

deep relaxation
in my meditation hut
the bathroom at night

Dan Brook, California

two boys
one butterfly net
no butterflies

William Hart, California

the master ends
our ginko here
worn headstones

William Cullen Jr., New York

woman in a hat
under her umbrella
under a tree

Shawn Bowman, Ohio

Haiku Society of America

another spring . . .
 eyes of an old dog
follow the frisbee

Ellen Compton, D.C.

the ball of twine
my Mother used
memories unwind

Muriel Ford, Ontario

I tighten the belt
in my son's car
Father's Day

John Stevenson, New York

heat wave—
I catch my sleeve on the nail
where his picture hung

Alice Frampton, Washington

liquid twilight
the tilt of a water pot
on her hip

Kala Ramesh, India

Frogpond 31:3

from mirror to mirror trying to make the skirt fit

doctor's office
one origami crane hangs
feet up

Elizabeth Nordeen, Oregon

the children's perfect
circle—
boys brawling

Tyrone McDonald, New York

meeting my father
we both get there
too early

Jack Barry, Massachusetts

even the arms
of the wheelchair
deer hunter orange

PMF Johnson, Minnesota

Haiku Society of America

day one of the fast —
the image of Ganesha
stuck to my fridge

Helen Buckingham, United Kingdom

a book of
frog haiku—
I jump in

Kristen Deming, Maryland

my old friend
her deep cough
autumn night

Fonda Bell Miller, Virginia

the slant of sun
half of her
on half of him

Thiaga Rajan, India

snowy sidewalk—
footprints in a U-turn
at the army recruiters

John J. Dunphy, Illinois

Revelations: Unedited

Five Musings on Matters Haiku

by *Roberta Beary*, D.C.

The Usual Suspects

I've just returned from another haiku conference. These gatherings are good places to meet other poets known only through their haiku. Often a keynote speaker will spend an hour on matters close to his heart. I use the male pronoun advisedly. I have heard the same two or three haiku poets give keynote speeches at various conferences over the past several years. Of all the haiku conferences and meetings I've attended, I can't think of one where the keynote speaker was a woman. I hope I'm wrong and that the editors of this journal are deluged by women poets who have been keynote speakers. In case that doesn't happen and it turns out that there have been few, if any, women keynoters, I suspect the reason is a combination of two things. The first is the instinct of conference organizers to play it safe, which is why I have heard the same poet give more than one keynote address; the second is, as a rule, women do not ask but instead wait to be asked. Off the top of my head, I can think of a number of women whom I would love to hear give a keynote address at the next major haiku conference: Penny Harter, Anita Virgil, Alexis Rotella, Marlene Mountain, and Jane Reichhold immediately come to mind. Finally, I'm willing to give conference organizers the benefit of the doubt when it comes to picking keynote speakers. Perhaps women haiku poets are not purposely overlooked. Perhaps all that is needed is to give conference organizers a gentle push in the right direction; or a not so gentle push.

FOP Book Reviews

Have you ever read a rave review of a new haiku collection only to be disappointed once you've actually read the book? You're not alone. Usually these types of reviews are penned by people I term FOPs (Friend of the Poet). A typical *modus operandi* is that the author of a new collection asks a haiku poet-friend to review it. A close reading of an FOP review often shows a lack of critical insight—and an unwillingness to be fully candid. After an FOP review appears, the collection will make the rounds among fellow haiku poets. Each will cite the same three or four haiku out of 100. This goes on until some brave soul whispers, “I read the collection and I didn't think it was very good.” Were you to read any haiku journal, print or online, you would be certain to find at least one of these FOP reviews. They stand out by the unctuous praise with which the collection is anointed.

According to an Editor's Note to its readers in the *Washington Post Book World*, a reviewer signs an agreement which states that he or she has not “had any contact, friendly or otherwise, with the author of this book,” and is advised that “if there is any possibility of an appearance of a conflict of interest in the assignment of this review to you, please let *Book World* know immediately.” (See *Washington Post Book World*, 8/7/05; p.12.) Were this standard to be applied to haiku journals both print and online, it would certainly result in the dawning of a new age. There are two things that would help usher in this new age: The first, for journal editors to assign book reviews to people who are reviewers and not haiku poets; the second, for these same editors to refuse to accept unsolicited reviews. George Swede has written about this issue in a column called “Tracks in the Sand: Sand Fleas” in the online journal *Simply Haiku* (Spring 2007 vol. 5 no. 1). I wanted to see that column reach a wider audience so I nominated it for inclusion in an annual “Best of” series. I'm sorry to say that the col-

umn was not included.

Civility in Haiku USA

When I returned to the States from Japan in the mid 90's I found the haiku community to be very welcoming and open. Constructive criticism was encouraged as were opposing points of view. Somehow things have gotten less civil lately. I have noticed an increase in internecine strife among haiku poets. My email box is full of complaints about the mediocrity of haiku published in today's journals. While I agree that poets should not automatically be guaranteed publication in prestige journals by virtue of their past accomplishments, I see little benefit in going into an email attack mode. A more thoughtful approach would require a closely reasoned critique in a letter to the editor suitable for publication. That being said, each haiku submitted to editors should stand on its own, regardless of the name that appears below, no matter how exalted that name is in the haiku hierarchy.

Serial Presenters

Haiku conferences can be wonderful experiences. There are often fascinating workshops and interesting presentations with topics that are varied and innovative. Unfortunately for me, the more conferences I attend, the more I notice the problem of what I term "recycled presentations." These offerings often seem familiar because I've heard them before, by the same presenter at another conference. Presenters should not emulate community college composition instructors who use the same lesson plan year after year. If they are lucky enough to be chosen to present often, they should try to ensure that each presentation is interesting to both seasoned haiku poets and newcomers. Conference organizers who find themselves in the delicate position of deciding how to award coveted presenter slots would do well to follow the advice of Nancy Reagan to "Just Say No" when faced with applications from chronic recyclers. There is, however, at least one upside: The soporific effect of recycled presentations often eliminates the need for pre-

scription sleeping pills. So perhaps we have discovered at long last the First Lady's alternative to illegal drugs.

Book Blurbs by Dr. Who

If I wanted to appear more scholarly when writing a book blurb for a haiku collection I would add "Dr." before my name. After all, I do have a Juris Doctor degree, which technically allows me to use the doctor title. But the result would be misleading. Someone with a law degree should not be masquerading as a doctor of philosophy in order to promote the sale of books. The same goes for other types of degrees which allow the use of the word "doctor" as an honorific title. Those relying on these creative credentials might take a lesson from the long-standing custom of addressing faculty at Harvard's graduate schools as Mr. or Ms. on the theory that everyone teaching there possesses a doctorate—or doesn't need one. On the other hand, book blurbs are too often just another form of advertising. *Caveat emptor.*

On the subject of book blurbs, I am often amazed by the number of male-authored collections or books of haiku criticism with blurbs by men only. Wouldn't it be great if these authors recognized that women make up a substantial part, if not a majority, of the book-buying population? This woman would like to see more collections of haiku and books of criticism by male authors with blurbs that include women.



Renku

A Few Drops of Rain — A Nijuin Renku

by

Frank Williams, United Kingdom

Andrew Shimiield, United Kingdom

first day of spring —
in half light faint thunder
and a few drops of rain FW

I pick a daffodil
for my lapel AS

among the stones
at the river's low tide
a Celtic knot ring FW

cameras click as models
parade down the catwalk AS

the open-air stage
presents "Twelfth Night"
under a full moon FW

with the porch light
come the moths AS

as dad calls her in
Joe swallows hard
and asks for a date FW

in the B&B they push
the single beds together AS

(continued on next page)

Haiku Society of America

before leaving
she smashes all his
prized model planes FW

a skimmed stone bounces
across the water AS

fingers numb with cold
fixing new chains
on the tyres AS

found in the video slot
a letter to Santa FW

all that overtime
pays off with promotion
to the board AS

this year the swifts
are late departing FW

bonfire smoke
drifts across
the yellow moon AS

each beehive yields
about ten jars of honey FW

the venturer buys
a row of old houses
at a knock-down price FW

their visitor's handbag
is sprayed by the cat AS

during the night
cherry blossom turns
the avenue pink FW

Sami on snow scooters
follow the herd north AS

Missing Summer—A Solo Shisan Renku

by *Diana Webb*, United Kingdom

Halloween morning—
from the yew's silence
leaves pitting water

slipped down the grating
bronze and gold

left to dry out,
papier mâché pigs,
each one with a name

a full moon bathes
the Tower of Babel

from the plane
the sea shimmers
with my missing summer

do elephants go through
postnatal blues?

snail shell,
his spiral gift,
trampled to fragments

in the darker months
she retreats in knitting

nuns on Amazon
buy plumbers manuals
for the library

carbon fingerprints
on the giant's spanner

(Continued on next page)

pinwheels
awhirl, awhirl
with cherry blossoms

last year's hole still there
to plant the Maypole

Rengay

BONES OF OUR ANCESTORS

by

Carolyn Hall, California

Ebba Story, California

Holocaust Museum
my family
in every photo

*bones of our ancestors
lost on the Trail of Tears*

desert sand
cupped in the Buddha's hand—
Manzanar sunset

*echoing through
an Appalachian coal mine
a whistled jig*

so many stops along the way—
Underground Railroad

*highbeam search light
a migrant worker stumbles
into the Rio Grande*

SMALL WONDERS

by

Michael Dylan Welch, Washington
elehna de sousa, British Columbia

mother of pearl—
a button in the snow
beneath the redwood

*hidden in thick moss
a tiny tree frog*

shrinking in memory,
that afternoon we spent together
looking for buttercups

*in a corner of the shed
a dead hummingbird
still iridescent*

in my child's upheld palm
a small wonder

*giant kelp bed—
a seal pup at play
diving in, diving out*



Tan Renga

by

Ron Moss, Tasmania
Allan Burns, Colorado

meditation...
deep in a white forest
the sound of frost

an icicle holds
the colors of dawn

by

w.f. owen, California
Amy Whitcomb, California

mountain air
between each story
stoking the fire

the wood worn thin
from rocking chair nights

by

Robert Bauer, West Virginia
Ron Moss, Tasmania

meditating the afterlife—
a firefly lands
on my pulse

emergency lights
a life-line flickers

Sequences

CARNIVAL

by

Allan Burns, Colorado

Ron Moss, Tasmania

carousel music
the vendor swats a rag
at yellow jackets

the clown's red nose on the high wire

sizzling fajitas...
another beauty hits
the dunk tank water

*sudden downpour
cotton candy screams
on the ghost train*

a freckled boy eyes an ice-cream puddle

*freshly tattooed—
the sailor's red heart
still on his sleeve*

funnel cake...
untold cicadas
sing as one

a father knocks out the tent boxer

talk of the election...
our images
in the funhouse mirror
(Continued on next page)

Haiku Society of America

*shooting gallery
steel ducks through twilight
and bent sights*

stuck atop the Ferris wheel with stars

*tunnel of love
the carnival lights
shutting down*



TAKING TURNS

by

John Stevenson, New York
Alice Frampton, Washington

another drought year
we hold our breath
as it begins to sprinkle

*in and out the tide
takes the rain*

between parched
and sodden lands
an exchange of emails

*a rowboat turns
360 degrees*

we try to be glad
when we hear our prayer
has been answered elsewhere

*a smile from the child
at the hydrant*

Frogpond 31:3

Sleepless

by *David Gershator*, U.S. Virgin Islands

with the moon
without it
sleepless

with a pill
without it
sleepless

with love
without love
sleepless

with her
without her
the long
long night



Japanese Ink-Paintings

by *Marian Olson*, New Mexico

grinding my ink
I dream of koi
circling the pond

confident
sumi-e will come easy
first mistake

too dry
too wet
the beginner's brush
(Continued on next page)

weeks painting
orchid leaves
what am I doing here

my efforts
to load the brush
the master's kind eyes

don't worry, be happy
Marley's annoying lyrics
nag in my head

the sumi-e master
her blissful face
while she paints

the way
of the dancing brush
and singing ink

ink flows
bamboo leaves
blur in the rain

no mind
slow water curves
with the riverbed

hunter's moon—
out of the mist
a night bird



U. P. 200

(A dogsled race in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan)

by *Robert B. McNeill*, Virginia

the cheering fades
as the dogsled team
drains into the night

broken ice—
in deep water the light
of the musher's lamp

Karibu Kenya

by *Kathleen O'Toole*, Maryland

beside the shanty
three withered stalks
of maize

clouds of dust
wildebeest migration
fills the savannah

giraffe neck
on the savannah ridge
sunrise

Mombasa beach
Kenyan runners'
footprints

falling asleep
under twin mosquito nets
pillow talk

TEXT-KU

by *Michael Dylan Welch*, Washington

tulips bending
in the truck's breeze
FWIW

moonlight
after hot sex
VBG

this year
a higher fence
MYOB

smoky bar—
the new guy brags
about his RPG

TTFN
she croons—
the prostitute

OMG
the grand canyon
at sunset

BTW
the double-parked car
is a cop's

AFAIK
rain on both sides
of the house

tax day—
daffodils opening
ASAP

Frogpond 31:3

FYI

the cherries blooming now
in the far north

the fallen politician's
split pants

ROTFL

the neighbor's teen
too old for Halloween

LOL

IMHO

the crows louder
than the woodpecker



Glossary by the Editors

(for Non-Texters a.k.a. Old People)

AFAIK: As Far As I Know

ASAP: As Soon As Possible

BTW: By The Way

FWIW: For What It's Worth

FYI: For Your Information

IMHO: In My Humble Opinion

LOL: Laughing Out Loud

MYOB: Mind Your Own Business

OMG: Oh My God

ROTFL: Rolling On The Floor Laughing

RPG: Role Playing Games

TTFN: Ta Ta For Now

VBG: Very Big Grin

Haibun

A Pond At The Foot Of Mount Marshall

by *Michael Ketchek*, New York

In the reedy shallows, with its dinosaur legs, neck, beak, a heron stalks. Misty rain, fine as time glistens on leaf and darkens stone. I sit in a weathered lean-to made of rough-hewn planks with beams of logs.

the sound of me
sipping tea
is too loud



Chimney Mountain

by *Michael Ketchek*, New York

I am hiking up Chimney Mountain a few days after my fiftieth birthday. I have hiked here as a child, a teenager, and as an adult. Today I am hiking with my wife and eleven year old son. We have been coming to this mountain for five years. My son knows the path well. He is bounding down the stone strewn path. So am I. This is the first time that keeping up with my boy requires real effort on my part. I would like to believe that is entirely due to his being much faster this year than last.

some trail erosion
still the rocky peak
touches the sky

Conception: The Tao is Operating

The beginning is the most important part of the work. (Plato)

by *David Rosen*, Texas

Not knowing why, I kept going to Taos, New Mexico. When I was a boy, I went there with my family as part of a vacation. I recall visiting the same Pueblo that Carl Jung went to when he had his meaningful conversations with Chief Mountain Lake. I went to Taos as a young, middle-aged, and old man. I even attempted to buy property there. I remember spending time with a Jungian analyst and his lovely family. He had built a beautiful home there and I wondered if Taos would support another Jungian analyst. But why this eternal return to Taos, which ironically has Tao in it?

In preparing to write this haibun, I asked my 92-year-old mother to tell me about where I was conceived and what it was like. Nothing like attempting to go back to the moment when one of my father's sperms was penetrating one of my mother's eggs. Bottom line: I wondered if I was conceived in love. To my surprise (because my parents fought a lot in married life, and they were divorced from each other twice), I was the product of love, and this gave me a warm feeling inside. How wonderful! But the shocker was where I was conceived: it was the old Taos Inn in Taos, New Mexico. This is a place where I have stayed and made love to both of my wives and other women before I was married and after my two divorces. So all this love-making has a very meaningful history. My father, a Navy physician, was on leave from the Marines before being shipped out to the Pacific during World War II. My mother left my then 2-month-old sister in Kansas City, Missouri with my maternal grandmother, great grandmother, and aunt. She then drove the long way to Taos, New Mexico for a romantic interlude with my father. So I was conceived in love, when my father was truly himself, before he was injured in the war.

Flowering tree
showered with mist—
gleam in my eyes

Alleluia Whisper

by *Diana Webb*, United Kingdom

This Easter morning, the earliest since before World War One, I respond to a call from a distant garden, set out through falling snow towards a tiny spot of earth. Beyond the storm I find it, a small white bell of a flower, flecked through with green below the point of each of its six moist petals.

On someone's TV the Paschal celebration.

snowflake into snowflake—
through emerald windows
chinks of light



Security

by *Michael Dylan Welch*, Washington

The line through security moves slowly, but eventually we empty our pockets and doff our light jackets, place our belongings in plastic containers, and step through the metal detectors. The Parliament tour is busy, but now we're inside, just under the Peace Tower, in a waiting area as the tour guide describes the fire that destroyed the original buildings. Today, we're among the endless rounds of tourists who will visit the Hall of Honour, the library that survived the fire thanks to two iron doors, and the opulent senate chamber, with carpet and upholstery all in red to symbolize royalty. As we wait, a video screen repeats views of the rooms where we'll be walking.

last tour of the day—
the guide's shoelaces, and mine,
untied

Window

by *Diana Webb*, United Kingdom

dim sky with a few bare twigs in front of clouds, a roof, an aerial, a chimney against
dim sky with a few bare twigs in front of clouds, a roof, an aerial, a chimney against
dim sky with a few bare twigs in front of clouds, a roof, an aerial, a chimney against
dim sky with a few bare twigs in front of clouds, a roof

winter morning sun
lights up the chimney—
two jackdaws touching



Mother Soprano Goose

by *Michael Dylan Welch*, Washington

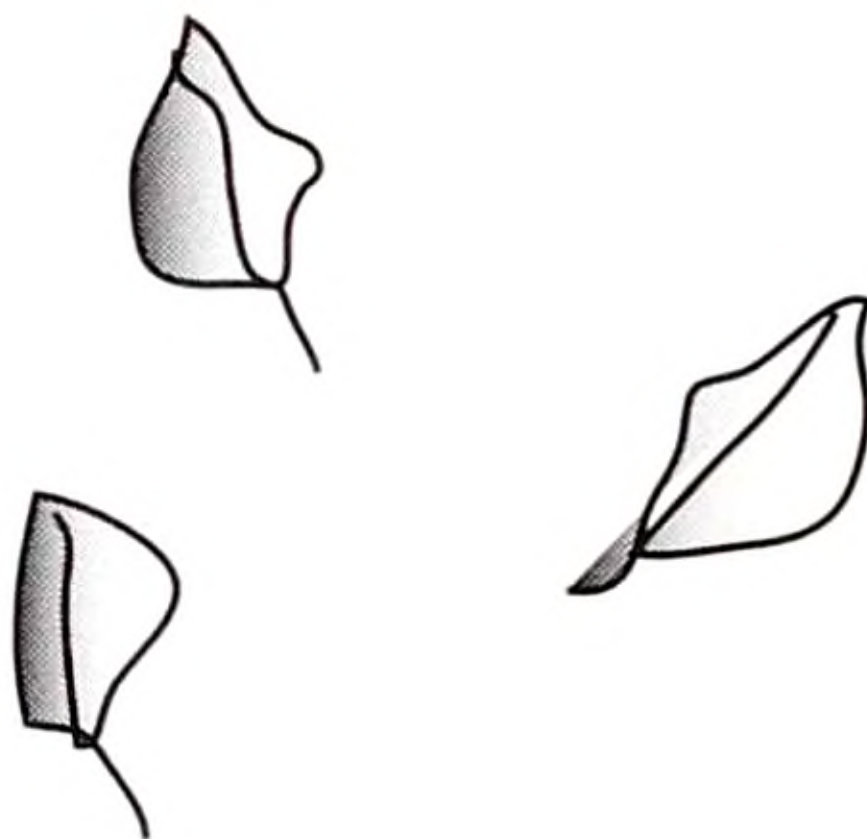
Howze you gonna 'splain dis to da Muddah Goose? Fa shoo-ah, she's gonna be pissed. Youze such doity bad kittens, how could ya dooo sucha stoopid sing? Now da Boss Muddah is gonna hafta find youze damn mittens fo youze guys. An' ya don't wanna piss off da Boss Muddah, dat's fa shoo-ah. Youze in big troubles now, busta. Howze you 'spect to keep youze Muddah Goose Actahs Guild membaship if youze gonna pull doity stunts like dis? Dere goes youze guyses next seven-figgah advance, doitboys. And don't go tinkin' da publicity's gonna help youze eedah. No suh. Who wants any o' us ta be front-page in da *Nursery Inquirer*? Youze all washed up now, ya dumb kittens. Youze gonna be sleepin' wid da fishes, kapische? Boy, none o' youze evvah gonna woik in dis town agin!

waking dream . . .
the TV timer
clicks off

The Changing Landscape
by *Johnny Baranski*, Oregon

The new housing development is not far from the edges of the monastery grounds now. Fortunately for the monks a good part of the abbey acreage is heavily wooded, so the advancing urbanization of the landscape beyond the perimeter can only be felt. Yet even within the confines of the priory itself, where strict routine as a way of life goes back generations, a new church building is under construction and renovations are being made to the cloister to better accommodate an aging population.

old and bent
beside the new bell tower
plum tree blossoms



Winter Apple
by *Charles Hansmann*, New York

The apple hangs on a branch we could not reach. We come to it again on crusted snow. Stark naked redder than ever. An apple the deer on hind-leg ballet still cannot reach.

a cardinal
grubbing for feed
in hoof thaw

The Old Ways

by *Johnny Baranski*, Oregon

“You must never forget the old ways,” the tribal elder tells his great grandson as they work another spotty spring Chinook run from the banks of the Columbia. But he knows the old ways are fading as fast as the salmon.

He sees evidence of this all throughout his homeland. Timber towns reinventing themselves in a silicon forest age, gambling casinos and high end resorts replacing the Native hunting and fishing grounds, the vanishing vistas, dwindling old growth, the push and pull of stubborn urban growth boundaries, the region bracing itself for the arrival of millions of newcomers over the next twenty years. He senses the numbers pressing in already.

Ironically, transplants of only ten or fifteen years ago complain to him, “ I wish this place was the way it was when I first moved here.”

bitter morning
idled logger splits the last
of the firewood

Vivian

by *Charles Hansmann*, New York

The V between her fingers— there are shouts from the rue de la Harpe. *Vive!* flies up to our third-floor window. Long live my marrow pressed in this wedge. *Vive* every part of me tightened in this vice.

raised wings
a sparrow
landing on the ledge

The Old Man

by *Patrick M. Pilarski*, Alberta

We're doing it for the old man. That's what I tell myself, arm deep in cleaning solution, polishing the large windows of our old apartment. Washcloth in hand, I grind them down to their silicon bones. The old man is moving in the day after we leave. With fading eyes, he'll dodder between our newly-scrubbed walls; would never know if there was dirt on our gleaming baseboards. I polish harder. Beneath my cloth, in every window's reflection, there is an old man looking back.

lilacs in bloom
a cool breeze
through the open screen

Come Spring

by *Janelle Barrera*, Florida

Periodic blasts of wind send puffs of smoke back down the chimney into the room where we are gathered around the fireplace. It is spring. I remember this because Mother has given us the winter Sears and Roebuck catalog to cut paper dolls from. There are six of us kids but the two boys have no interest. So I get my turn fairly soon and cut myself a handsome father, a smiling mother and two happy children. Tomorrow they'll be at home in a shoebox I've been saving. I'll cut windows in the walls and stand trees in the yard. When I grow up I'll have a wide window in my own bedroom with a beautiful garden outside.

woodticks—
no sooner spring
than the dogs find trouble

Finding Jack's Hill

by *Lynn Edge*, Texas

Car windows open, Jack Kerouac drives through the Texas Hill Country, the cedar breaks looking all the same at night: this is how I imagine him and his friend, Neal, traveling the Old San Antonio Road. While listening to an audio of *On The Road*, I discovered Jack passed near here on his way to Mexico. He wrote about seeing the lights of San Antonio from a "five-mile-long" hill. I now drive east, retracing that part of their journey.

dark clouds
across the moon
the night moves

Mobile home sales, RV lots, and used car dealerships slide by, then closer to the city, restaurants and strip malls, none of which existed in 1949. Jack would have passed only a few lights from farm house windows.

Four lanes of interstate slice through the Balcones Escarpment. To my right a short stretch of the original road rolls downward. Can this be Jack's "five-mile-hill"? I say ahhh as Jack might have done, then add my own yes when I take the exit above the maze of freeways, and see the Hemisfair Tower in old downtown San Antonio.

pink haze
between skyscrapers
the Alamo



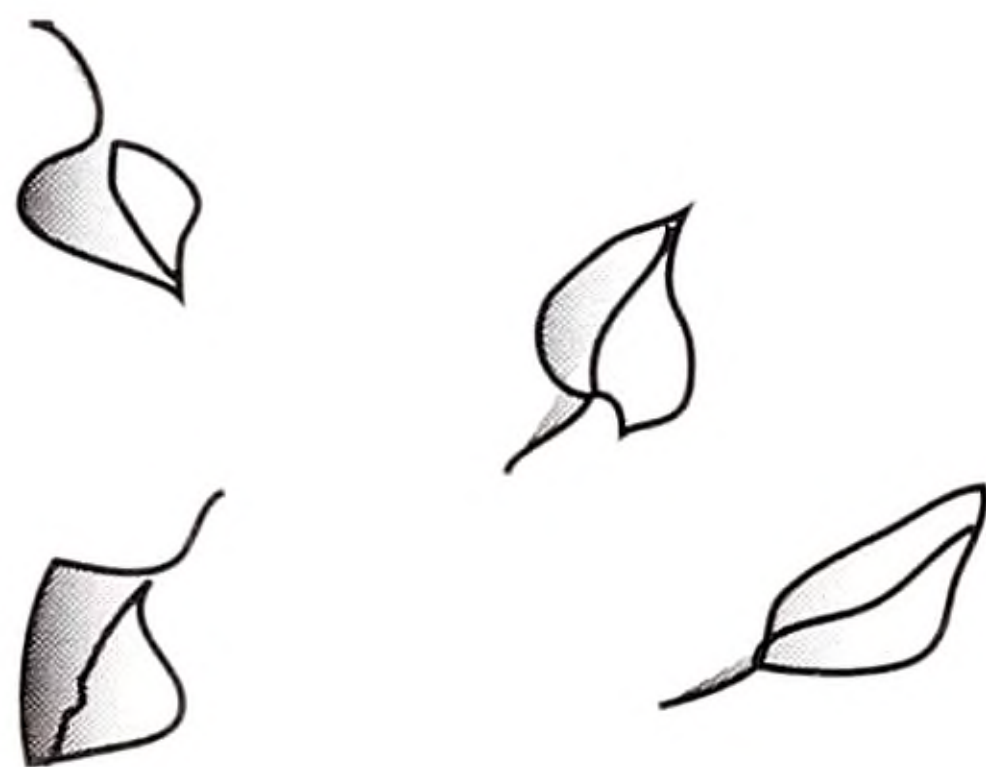
The Last Day of School

by *Bob Lucky*, China

It's the last day of school and I'm cleaning out my desk and packing up books. The seniors are milling about the classroom, forming and reforming groups as the boredom strikes them. Some are signing yearbooks; others share earphones to listen to music or read tattered copies of *Bone* they've borrowed from the teacher across the hall. One boy, a quiet but bright boy, the kind who makes an "A" but teachers have a hard time recalling his name, is at the dirty whiteboard writing something with his finger. All the markers and erasers have been returned to the storeroom. He slowly and methodically traces the letters over and over.

Later in the day, I walk by the board and notice that those perfect cursive letters spell out *fuck school*. No capitals, no punctuation. I resist the urge to correct it.

graduation night
the janitor feather dusts
the microphone



Sondrestromfjord

by *Robert Mainone*, Michigan

Walking east under an August sky, we feel the cooler air from Greenland's icecap, still a mile away. We hear a growing rumble as massive columns of ice topple in slow motion into a river of melt-water, and explode.

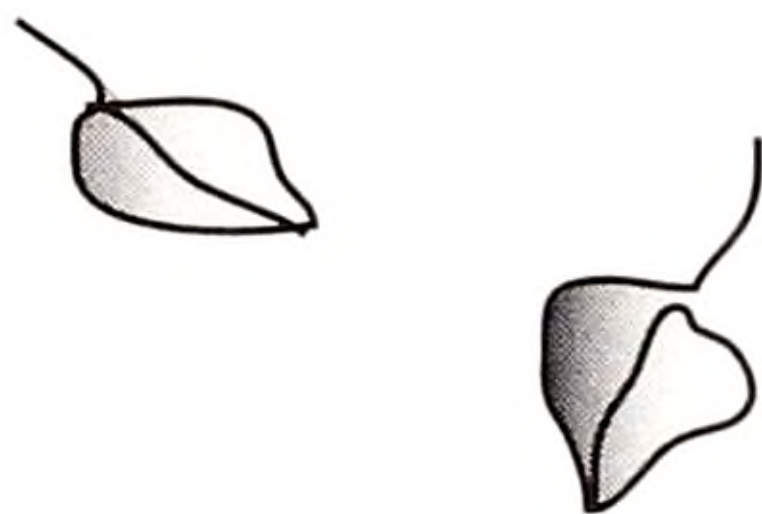
days
without end
glacial thunder

Gleaming snow-capped ice extends eastward to infinity. Here, at its western edge a wall of blue ice 200 feet high vanishes over low hills to north and south. At its center the ice mass lies two miles thick.

Happy New Year!
an inch of frost
on the toilet seat

Five months of darkness will slow the glacier bulldozer. Winter will bring sundogs, ice fog and 100 mile per hour winds . . . temperatures too cold for mercury to record. At the weather station, we will count the days before we climb out of the fjord's 2,000 foot walls, and up Mt. Nakajanga to stand in the sun.

Aurora
goddess of the dawn
dancing



Haiku Society of America

New Horizons

by *Barbara A. Taylor*, Australia

blue jellyfish
stars glazed in aspic
at the water's edge

Wherever I walk, be it in the cedar forests, or striding on golden shorelines where tiny crabs scuttle to seek shelter in sandy mandalas, or when watching a brassy sunset slip into the horizon, listening to the swish of sea on shells, in my thoughts I hold her close, wish we'd never parted. Yet, today, no more confused nor vague, I welcome this new magic.

signals in sparkles
on speckled tree trunks
after the rain

The Pivot

by *Jeffrey Woodward*, Ontario

only the wind
in a wading pool
and yellow leaves

Neither a whisper nor a murmur really, neither a confession nor yet a secret alluded to, but only a slightly abrasive tick or dry rubbing, an indecipherable chatter of objects within that severe discrimination of light and shadow that marks late October, of objects suddenly animated and going about their business without interest in human presence or absence, the whole of matter one vertiginous flux and one act of change where the acrid smell of wood smoke, far from every pyre or offering, lies like lead upon the air.

the sound of a hammer
nailing something together—
leaves of autumn

A Rude Awakening

by *Michael Roach*, Idaho

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your submission to *The Journal*. We are pleased to inform you that we find your haiku uniformly brilliant; each a masterpiece, really. We would love in our next issue to publish all the pieces you've submitted, but that would mean leaving out too many fine works by our other excellent contributors, and, frankly, we do not feel that would be completely fair. Therefore, our editorial staff has made the unprecedented decision to publish a special edition of *The Journal* devoted entirely to your work. Congratulations! We especially liked

the heat the sun
the cold the moon
oh, and some stars

and hope we can fill an entire issue with similar such fine work. We here at *The Journal* are thrilled by the prospect of collaborating with you on this project over these next few months and will happily advance you any amount of cash so that you may dedicate all your valuable time to writing and, thus, complete the project in a timely manner. In addition, until you complete the project, we will supply you with an administrative assistant, and you will have at your disposal our corporate credit card and Lear-jet. We would hope you would find such an arrangement satisfactory. More details will follow. Again, thank you ever so much for your submission.

Sincerely,

...and then I awoke on that cold March morning and read the real letter again:

some consolation
the curt rejection letter
awkwardly worded

Food Fair

by *w.f. owen*, California

scraping something from my shoe this food varied as the people attending attired in creative colors and fabrics every ethnicity smells of concoctions intermingling wafting through the throng booths offering samples delivered with oversized plastic gloves hairnets never quite covering yet from the mimes to free magnets to cartoon characters to that guy on stilts with the constant smile everything fits.

puppet show she guides her husband into his seat



Deep Dusk

by *Renee Owen*, California

I sit facing into the woods behind the old one-room cabin. A few jays still call out. The trilling of a thousand insects. Distant gurgles from a rushing stream. In feathery branches of cypress, boulders crouch.

falling
under night's spell...
time dissolves

I startle and squint into the gloaming. A pair of glowing yellow eyes. Not thirty yards away he stands, shrouded in silence. Dog? Wolf? Ahhh, it must be, coyote. I rise, take two tentative steps forward, greedy to get closer to this wild creature. One final glimpse. His magnificent tail.

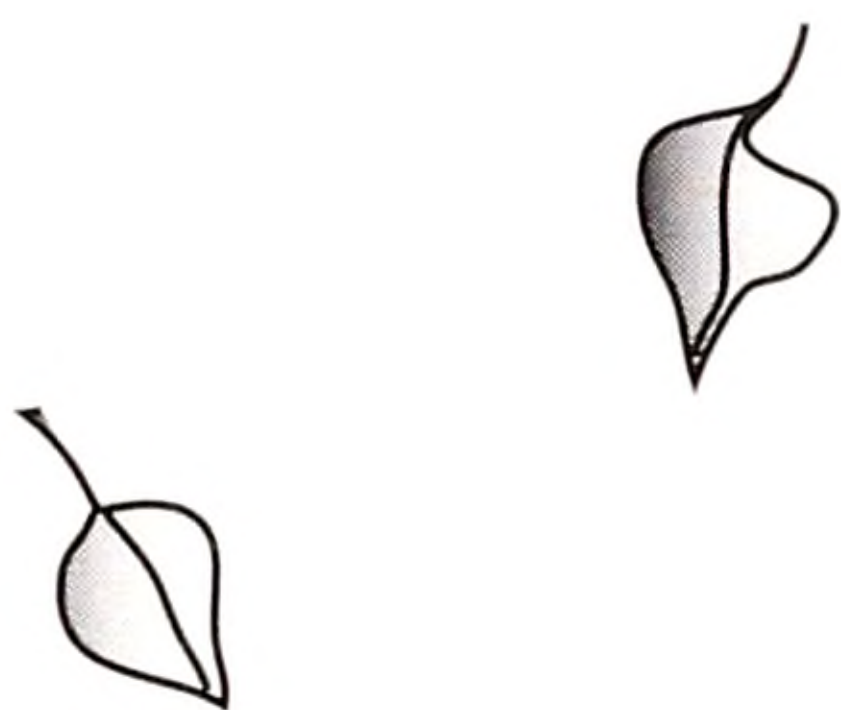
morning commute—
the wildness
wrung out of me by ten

Frogpond 31:3

It Seems Strange by *w.f. owen*, California

to be buried in spring with the blossoms popping insects
crawling flies buzzing but here I lie in deep dirt like a bulb
planted the coolness the voices of passing walkers laughing
sometimes scolding an errant child lovers walking hand in
hand creating their own light no light here comfort snug-
ness is snugness a real word are we there yet is it time for
bed mamma . . . awake the time it takes to realize it was a
dream.

sunset the long thread to the hanging caterpillar



California Wildflowers by *Renee Owen*, California

We rise early, hoping for a hike around the glittering moun-
tain lake before the afternoon heat throws down its weighty
blanket. In the hazy white sky, along the ridge line, smoke
from a hundred forest fires. Torched by dry lightning strik-
ing the parched land with a vengeance, after a spring with
little rain. On the path, the few wildflowers sparkle in the
tall gold grass.

Fourth of July—
shooting stars
enough of a show

Chrysalis

(For Charles Kennedy)

by *Doris Heitmeyer*, New York

He cupped his hands and enclosed a bumblebee. "See, they're harmless. They don't sting."

Charles had the face of an aging faun: prominent cheekbones, concave cheeks, short nose, long straggling beard. Rubber-banded pony tail; always the same faded plaid shirt and worn corduroy pants. His hands, used to contact with the soil and nature, were never quite clean.

He released the bee and went back to photographing the progress of a brood of Black Swallowtail caterpillars on the dill plants. His admirers gathered every afternoon in the Shakespeare Garden to witness the new miracle he had found. These caterpillars were the handsomest of their kind, bright green alternating with black-and-gold beaded stripes. On their heads were two jaunty pink horns.

Charles measured the caterpillars, noted the measurements, then lightly grasped one of them between thumb and forefinger. A pinkish fluid spurted from the pink horns. There was a powerful odor of licorice. "They do it to ward off predators," he said. "But they mustn't be tested too often. It depletes their resources and stunts their growth."

The caterpillars grew larger and plumper until one day they were gone. Charles said that they had probably crawled off to pupate. We found one clinging to a weed by the fence, an emerald green chrysalis dotted with gold. The photographic journal continued there until the chrysalis too disappeared.

Chrysalis
each day the butterfly's limbs
more distinct.

One Gun Salute

by *Doris Heitmeyer*, New York

A hot, lazy afternoon in Central Park. Ranks of infantry in khaki are drawn up just outside the Great Lawn. An old-fashioned cannon faces Turtle Pond, seemingly aimed at Belvedere Castle, high on its rocky outcrop. Some kind of war memorial is in progress, without an audience.

Endless summer day
the silent arc of a frisbee
over the Great Lawn.

The troops are awaiting the arrival of a small band of elderly veterans in faded Colonial uniforms, now straggling along the path to join the ceremony. I watch from a distance at the other end of the pond, as fish and turtles swim just visible beneath the surface. Dragonflies swoop and dip. Speeches drone on; then infantrymen recite in turn the names of the dead. The drone becomes part of the afternoon sounds, like the cicadas' chant.

An order must have been given to fire the cannon. The report echoes off bedrock and jolts the stone bench I am sitting on.

One gun salute
a stalking heron starts up
from the phragmites.



Ghostly Figures

by *Ron Moss*, Tasmania

The fatigue hits me now, as the adrenaline fades away.

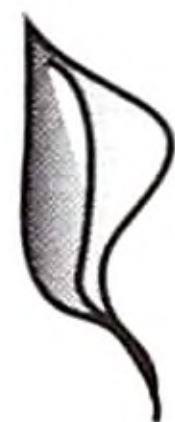
It's still early morning, and our brigade is at a house fire that started several hours before.

The old wooden farm house was almost gone when we arrived. Thankfully, we got the word quickly that everyone was out of the house and safe. The young family had been alerted to the danger by the sound of their barking dog.

red moon
an old chain glints
on the fence post

The stench of smoke and burnt household items is everywhere. The fire truck's lights reflect ghostly figures through the thick smoke. We roll up our hoses as the first rays of sunlight filter the ruins.

charred toys
tiny clothes hang
on the outside line



Essays

David Priebe

by *Brett Taylor*, Tennessee

It's been more than a year since David Priebe died. The newsletter he published from his home every month, *Haiku Headlines*, was just about three years shy of making it to twenty. He'd kept it going through a heart attack or two as well as the death of his wife from cancer. His newsletter had ceased to be published and I'd begun to suspect the worst. My fears were confirmed when his daughters sent out a letter to all subscribers saying their father had died a few months before. I wasn't too shocked, as I'd been expecting it, and I put it out of my mind for a while. But not long after I fell ill with the flu and had plenty of time to think about things like that. I was surprised at how hard his death was hitting me, considering he was someone I had never met in person. But I'd come to rely on his journal over the years. He published me when nobody else would, and on a monthly basis too. When you are a barely published writer it is a reassuring thing to have a monthly outlet for your works.

David tended to complain that certain high-minded haiku journals (he usually meant *Modern Haiku*) wouldn't publish him. The truth is that a lot of editors are better at editing than they are at writing, and David, or Renge, to call him by his haiku name, was one of those. His own poems tended to be sentimental, and he used an unnecessary number of quotation marks. Because of his sentimental bent, many of the poems he accepted for *Haiku Headlines* were on the corny side.

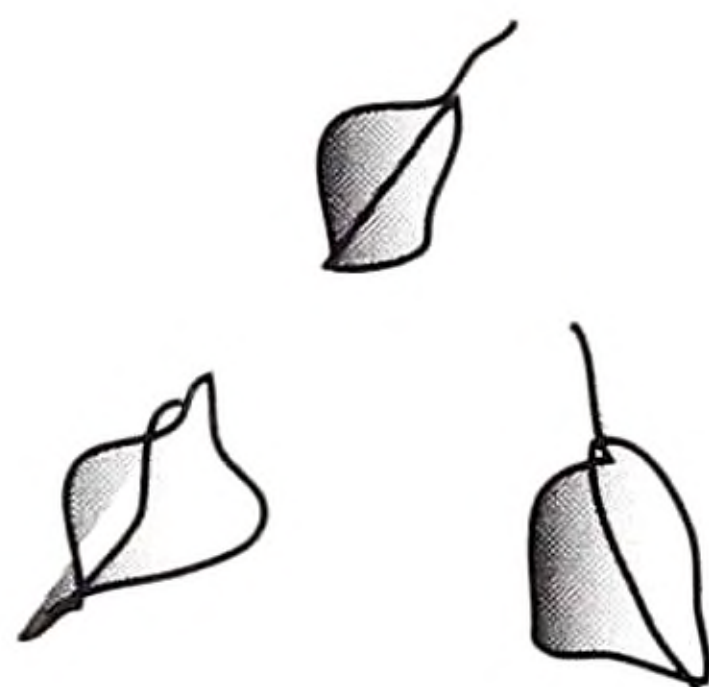
Haiku Headlines wasn't held in high esteem by a lot of haiku aficionados. The same thing that offended the haiku snobs was the same thing that I liked about the magazine. It was very democratic. The selections ranged from extremely well written to hopelessly amateurish. The poets were sometimes people

who'd been at it for decades, and sometimes people who'd just picked up a pen yesterday.

Priebe made a special point of putting a first-time author in every issue, giving encouragement to authors who otherwise might have waited years to see their words in print. In the later years David let the writers publish short autobiographies, leading to a sense of familiarity with the contributors that you wouldn't ordinarily have. One new contributor confessed that he was serving a prison sentence at Folsom for having affairs with underage boys. Some might have been skeptical about publishing a person like that, but David was resolutely nonjudgmental.

The wide net David cast hauled in a character actor who'd been in such Hollywood films as *They Live by Night*, *Mad Love*, and *Mutiny on the Bounty*, and who must have been pushing ninety. But the main thing I made note of was the presence of a number of poets from my own state of Tennessee, including Sidney Bougy, Pat Benjamin, Merle Taliaferro, and the ubiquitous Elizabeth Howard.

So, yes, it's true he wasn't a very critical editor. If he'd been more critical of people's work I wouldn't have gotten published for many years. He was the first person to publish me and throughout the nineties pretty much the only one. I'm sure a number of others can say the same thing. Giving hope to aspiring writers who may or may not deserve it is not the worst crime a man can commit after he dedicates his spare time to the art of haiku. Surely, it counts for something.



A Gift of Freedom:
**An Insight into *Poems of Consciousness* by Richard
Gilbert, Red Moon Press, 2008**
by *Dr. Dimitar Anakiev*, Slovenia

Richard Gilbert's *Poems of Consciousness* represents the first voice in Anglo-American haiku criticism to bring to an international readership democracy instead of authority. This anti-dogmatic book tears down the prejudices which have been built up and culminated over decades of English-language haiku theory. In this work the genre is rescued from overly complex ideologies and refreshed by concepts inspired by simple and common poetic truths.

In what way has this been possible? Gilbert's point of departure for this book is not that of cultural differences—which for many decades have made of international haiku a Procrustean bed—but rather the work is rooted in a common poetic ground which liberates and demystifies Japanese haiku. The author, a poet himself living in Kumamoto for over a decade, in seeking the truth of Japanese haiku has avoided the tutorship of known ideological concepts, through discussions with and translations of contemporary poets. A number of crucial elements concerning poetry, genre, poetic names, artistic secrets, terminology and the life of haiku poets in Japan are revealed.

The answers discovered, among them the most important principles in Japanese haiku, are shown to be surprisingly well-known and common to poets and poetry from all parts of the world: the power of poetic language (*kotodama*), the importance of rhythm and mythology, the associated meanings of words (the “true” intention of words), ellipsis in expression (*katokoto*), *licentia poetica* in the interpretation of genre, and nearly all topics pertaining to haiku poetics in Japan are some of the most important key-points in these exciting conversations.

Gilbert is capable of putting the reader into the very heart of haiku and offers a spiritual understanding of its core, which enables the reader to feel immediately familiar—it becomes possible to comprehend the heart of haiku from ancient times to the present. The multi-focal documentary method is convincing and intimate to the reader. Along with the revolutionary approach of letting Japanese poets speak for themselves about their poetry, in what is in my opinion the most important aspect of the book, Gilbert successfully adds his own unique critical contributions and corpus of translated haiku poems. *Poems of Consciousness* has found its inspiration in authentic documentary material (a DVD with subtitled video interviews, included with the book, makes it possible for each reader to hear the living voices of Japanese poets!), scientific work, quotations from major critical works, and informal conversations—these are important subjects for haiku. The book is pioneering in many ways, including its multi-dimensional concept and postmodern atmosphere.

The first goal of the book has been overcoming the provincialism in understanding Japanese haiku, and haiku in general. It has been in this direction that the author has put most of his efforts. Due to this overarching goal, perhaps certain significant aspects of the work are not readily apparent at first glance, for instance the excellent translation work—a result of a cross-cultural, collaborative team effort. As an example, I would like to focus on a poem of Hoshinaga Fumio which has impressed me, both for its poetic qualities and its expert translation:

squid peppermint
Red-detective arson
marigold (p.177)

Surprisingly simple, this poem opens a complex field for the the interpretation and analysis of rhythm, mythology, style and philosophical context. The most interesting detail is a technical phrase used by the poet: “red-detective.” It seems to be a “deconstructed” term (in the manner of Jacques Derr-

ida) of “rebel” created by the poet just as a visually covered “gap” in the logic of the narration. The deconstructed terms in poetry of Hoshinaga Fumio open new levels for interpretation and, along with strong dispersion of the poem created by numerous caesuras (“uncovered gaps”), create a very specific poetic language. All these subtle things are to be found in the translations of Gilbert & team presented in the book.

Among the many interesting haiku topics discussed by Japanese poets—bringing new light to many of the persistent dogmas of Western haiku—this book offers a new conceptual and terminological footing to the Western reader with a spiritual insight given by Gilbert and his collaborators. The work also brings a new understanding to the broadly discussed haiku technique of *kire* (caesura) miraculously opening its exotic curtain, and thereby allowing this profound concept to be seen anew as a universal tool inherent in any language.

As a part of a broader re-coding of culturally specific terminology into common meanings, this is perhaps the most important scientific contribution to a cross-cultural knowledge in poetry from the birth of such studies. As a poet, Gilbert, in *Poems of Consciousness* is able to separate poetic and cultural elements and treat haiku from a universal point of view.

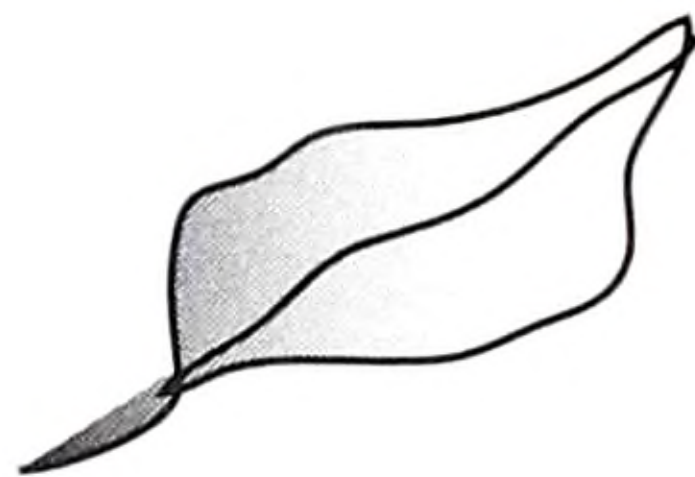
Another of the most significant issues in haiku, the *kigo* (seasonal reference) is addressed, moving it from the realm of the poetic field into the arena of culture. Gilbert has here performed a final step in understanding haiku as a poetry existing beyond cultural differences. Via paradox, the role of haiku is broadened, keeping alive twinned possibilities: practicing haiku as a pure form of poetry and practicing Japanese culture through the poetry.

Along with the author’s authentic scientific interest and his poetic needs there is no doubt that *Poems of Consciousness* is also the result of a collective frustration, broadly speaking,

in the practice of international haiku, which in the last decade has faced numerous obstacles, as it has been rooted mainly in an established cultural politics which treats haiku as a kind of conceptual hostage. I am positive that haiku, liberated from such tutorship, as with any poetry, can only provide an aid to cultural exchange and cultural richness. Perceiving haiku as a cornucopia of poetic and cultural democracy, Gilbert's voice, established in *Poems of Consciousness*, speaks in the name of these efforts—this work is a founding stone of the genre of International Haiku, a genre located beyond conceptual and cultural differences. This is why the great achievements of the book are not the last word in understanding haiku but rather a new and exciting beginning of a coming haiku era.

Let me also stress here: International Haiku is not a name for a new concept in haiku but the result of democratic practice, which began its official life as a form of organization in the Tolmin Haiku Conference 2000, and has now found its theoretical footing in Gilbert's work, and its real home in the democratic haiku practice of the Kumamoto poetic circle. It is my great hope that the democratic practice of International Haiku be influential, at both the national and international level.

As with most great works, *Poems of Consciousness*, a book which operates with a large scale of meaning, is at the same time familiar and intimate to the reader, speaking as modestly as haiku poetry itself: from the hearts of authors and poets. This achievement makes the mission of the book a mission of poetry: a gift of freedom. Needless to say more.



**Unsung Heroes and the Question of Zen in Haiku Poetry:
Part One**

by *Mankh* (Walter E. Harris III - New York)

Both a treasure trove and a can of worms opened when a poet-friend gave me two books by Paul Reps, *Zen Telegrams* and *Gold and Fish Signatures*.

The treasure trove is the phenomenal spontaneity and originality of Reps' haiku (which he avoided calling haiku) along with his playful brushwork calligraphy. The can of worms is that this world traveler, this nomad monk, has been seemingly shunned by the modern haiku community.

In all the books on haiku I had read before discovering Reps, he was barely (if at all) mentioned. This is probably because his bent for the avant-garde goes beyond the intellectual, literary and academic norms that tend to shun childlike spontaneity and meditative states.

I had read Reps' classic collection of stories and teachings, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*, but why hadn't I heard of him as one of the fathers of American haiku?

One of my favorites of Reps:

crane: "my way is best"

worm: "my way is best"

stone: "stone"

Called variously "picture poems," "poems before words," and "zen telegrams," in Reps' exhibits, the poems, on rice paper of various sizes, were scotch-taped only at the tops to horizontal bamboo poles strung from the ceiling at different levels, and electric fans were made to blow them gently (from "editor's foreword" *Zen Telegrams*, Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959.) Reps also studied with spiritual teachers in Asia.

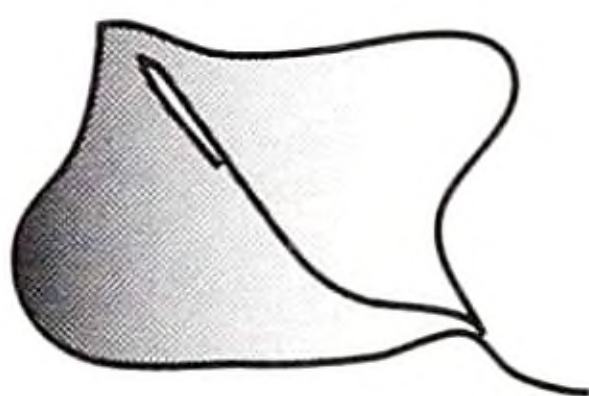
One of the best stories I have ever heard about the power of words and art revolves around Reps' haiku:

drinking
green tea
i stopped the war

In the early '50s, Reps, who was in his forties, had traveled to Japan en route to visit a respected Zen master in Korea. He went to the passport office to apply for his visa and was politely informed that his request was denied due to the conflict that had just broken out. Reps walked away, and sat down quietly in the waiting area. He reached into his bag, pulled out his thermos and poured a cup of tea. Finishing his tea, he pulled out a brush and paper upon which he wrote a picture poem. The clerk read the poem and it brought tears to his eyes. He smiled, bowed with respect, and stamped Reps' passport for passage to Korea. (excerpt from *Living in Balance*, by Joel & Michelle Levey, at: <http://www.paulreps.com/Main.asp>).

A haiku is like a bird call, and whether a raucous crow or a delicate chickadee—it can stop you in your tracks and change your direction.

Paul Reps was highly influenced by another unsung haiku (and haibun) hero, Zen Master Soen Nakagawa, who will be the subject of part two in this series.



So:ba: Part One

by *Jim Kacian*, Virginia

(First presented at the International Haiku Poetry Conference & Festival, Plattsburgh, NY, July 30, 2008)

So here we are.

You've heard that one before. It's a common expression, so common we might hear it a hundred times and not think twice about it. But common though it is, there's something glad about it, something that cheers us and makes us feel at home. Its knot of language holds its energy tight within it in a way that we can't quite exhaust. And so we might use it, again and again, without tiring of it.

I'd like us to consider this expression a moment, piece by piece: *here* = in this designated time and place; *we* = the conjoined mass of like-minded men and women; *are* = have existence. And binding this together, *so* = as a consequence of what has happened before; or, more colloquially, with knowledge of the situation. Every part of this phrase, and its order, matters: how different would it be if we were to say "we are so here," or, "we are here, so," or simply, "we are here."

So here we are. And to the "hereness" and the "weness" and the "areness," the "so" is *ba*.

If you look up *ba* in any Japanese-English Dictionary you'll find it means "place" or "site" or "occasion." And these are all true in the most general sense — *ba* is a pointer to a kind of awareness that something of importance is happening in time and space. Everything, properly considered, is of importance, but we, being the limited and biased creatures we are, can know the significance of only a few of such things at a time, so we need a way of saying "this one — this one's important." And this is true for each of these meanings — this place, this site, this occasion — and in a way that

is especially pertinent to such a group as ourselves, haiku poets, preternaturally interested in “this one.”

Take “place,” for instance: just now, Plattsburgh is *ba*. Elmira is a place, but it’s not *ba*, not to us, not now. Plattsburgh is where it’s happening, Plattsburgh is where, as a consequence of what has come before—like-minded men and women—exist. Plattsburgh is the “so” of that phrase. Elmira is very nice, but Plattsburgh is *ba*.

And Wednesday at 10:30 A.M. is *ba*, and the Plattsburgh International Haiku Conference is *ba*. There are many other candidates that will emerge today and in the ensuing days of our lives, places and times and occasions that will want to be and will actually be *ba* for us, but for today, here it is, and we are in its midst.

This *ba*, this knowledge of the situation, can take so many shapes and directions that it’s impossible to list them all, but you can gather that at its largest, it signifies a grounding of who we are right now, in this place, at this time, the whole package that we might sum up as our awareness, our consciousness, our reality.

So here we are. *Ba*. Now what?

The answer is, perhaps not surprisingly, now *everything*. *Ba* is the basis for pretty much everything we do in haiku. In fact, *ba* is the message of haiku: so here we are! Of course haiku is not message-driven, and I don’t mean to suggest that the value of all haiku can be reduced to this simple mantra. But I do wish to argue that *ba* is the jumping-off point, without which we wouldn’t really know what or how any particular haiku means. And in fact we depend upon it in all instances to ground our poems, to make them mean something to others—in fact, acquiring *ba* was the “learning curve” we all experienced when we first came to

haiku. *Ba* is the place where haiku reside, and while it is possible to write poems in haiku *form* or on haiku *topics* without a sense of it, one cannot be said to have written *haiku* until one finds this place and dwells there. Further, the specific sense of what *ba* might be has come to us in a very definite way, for historical and political reasons, and I think it might be of interest to explore these reasons, and the powerful effect they have had on the conception and practice of western haiku.

First, though, let's consider how *ba* has affected us in our own writing. Think back to those early days of our haiku apprenticeship. Remember those poems that we wrote in the throes of our first infatuation? How we carefully counted syllables, neatly arranged our three lines—flush left, staggered or indented one and three? How we toyed with this adjective or that—I'd like to use "malleable" but "perverse" has the two syllables I have left. And when it was done, how pleased we were, we'd done it, and it was surely one of the best things ever done in the form, how pithily it stated the profundity of my vision, how deftly it married the melliflousness of the language with the wisdom of ages. And we mailed it off to *Modern Frog Nervz* with our self-addressed stamped envelope looking forward to our dollar's return—we don't do this for the money, of course—and when it did come back, it contained no dollar but a terse note saying Not Quite or Are You Serious or Have You Considered Taking Up Golf Instead. And we were convinced that haiku editors were idiots if they couldn't find the artistry, the craftsmanship, *the deep sense* of our little gems.

Obviously this did not discourage us—or at least not enough—so here we are! And now, in hindsight, we might look back upon those times and admit, grudgingly, that perhaps yes, those editors did know a thing or two, that maybe there was a thing or two about haiku we didn't

yet fully possess, and that yes, perhaps the language was a bit stilted, and perhaps the lines padded out, and just possibly we were trying to make a point through abstraction or philosophizing. Okay, let's admit it, maybe they were right. I hate it when that happens . . .

And now we can look back on those times and perhaps we can smile. We have come over to the other side, and if it were our lot to have to evaluate those same early poems, or others just like them, we'd have to admit that we'd reject them as well. What's happened to us? Have we simply given up and given in, merely kowtowing to the prevailing notions of haiku in order to get published once in a while? Maybe some of us feel that way. But I'm guessing that for most of us, we recognize that we've learned a few things along the way, some things that make the writing of haiku more difficult, more challenging, more artful. What we've learned, in fact, is *ba*.

T. S. Eliot, in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," wrote "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone." By which he meant that no artist invented himself in a vacuum—rather, all artistic meaning arises from both an understanding of, as well as a break with, the tradition that is the ground of that art. And for proof we need look no further than ourselves: what did we make of the first haiku we saw? Even if it came clear to us, how could we evaluate it other than to say whether or not we liked it, whatever that might mean at the time. And if we looked at this same poem again today, knowing what we know now, would we not regard that poem differently? What has been added? Our knowledge of haiku, its practices and practitioners—in short, *ba*: "that which is a consequence of what has happened before." Eliot again: "Some one said: 'The dead writers are remote from us because we know so much more than they did.' Precisely, and they are that which we know."

Now it is *true* that every one of us, and every poem, contains its own *ba*. So it's not so simple as to say either you know everything you need to know about haiku and so are included in the group, or you do not, and so are not. What is significant about Eliot's realization is that at least some part of what we are doing as poets must find its breath and life within the tradition of poetry. If I were asked to write a poem and took out a chisel and carved a figure out of stone, you might say that's very nice (or not) but what I wanted was a poem. To think that a sculpture would be an equal swap suggests my lack of understanding of the history of poetry, where no poems have previously come in the shape of sculpted stone. This doesn't mean they won't in the future, but for the moment we have no means of communicating with each other, because I haven't spoken intelligibly within the tradition, that is, within *ba*. And if I argue that that's what I mean by poem, well, that's fine, but I'm going to have trouble communicating with others who have a more historically accurate sense of what's usually been meant by the word.

So it is with less extreme distinctions as well. I may well have my idea of what poetry is or ought to be—that's fine, that will help the art grow, if I'm any good and I can manage to say something important interestingly and well. And we can call this my personal *ba*. But if none of my readers is able to connect with it—that is, if it doesn't line up with the historical and communal *ba*—then we will all end up frustrated and nothing will be accomplished. So while no poem can come completely outside of *ba* in the personal sense, it is ultimately the communal sense of *ba* that we measure it against.

And we know this to be true. Poems that come from outside *ba*, even when witty or poetic or poignant, are often laughable from within it. We all know poems written for the popular market, such as:

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I wait for you to
Clean the rugs. Hack! Hack! Here: my
Best hairball to date.

Deborah Coates, *Cat Haiku*

We can, of course, find the story in this, and even with a casual glance ascertain that it's been written according to the formula. But even with the aid that the book's title supplies, we can't find *ba*, and for a good reason: it's not present. Not that the poem doesn't have a context—it's just not haiku's context, but rather that of the poet. When a poet has come to terms with *ba*, he or she might make these two contextual ideas coincide—in fact, that's what it means to be accomplished. What haiku poet is more idiosyncratically herself than Marlene Mountain? And yet so here we are:

pig and i spring rain

Why does Marlene's pig possess more *ba* than Deborah's cat? Is it just that we know Marlene (or know the part of herself she exposes in her work) or is it something else here? After all, we're talking about five words, five syllables—how can this be enough to create a world and an empathy? And the answer is, it isn't. What makes it whole, what makes it resonate, is *ba*: knowledge of the situation.

This is old news in the haiku world. The significance of *ba* has been critical to the understanding of classical Japanese haiku for centuries. It was the discovery of and implementation of *ba*, in fact, that elevated haiku from a punning leisure activity to a serious literary pursuit. Consider, as an example, this poem by Teishitsu (1609-1673), chief pupil of Teitoku, who founded the Teitoku school, the dominant school of haiku just prior to Basho:

suzushisa no katamari nare ya yowa no tsuki

Frogpond 31:3

coolness
condensing in the air—
the midnight moon

It is obvious this style of poem comes from an earlier understanding of what was possible in haiku. It is what at one time was termed a poetic conceit: that is, an overdriven metaphor which in this case is intended to be a bit of a witty surprise as well. And we can appreciate it—there is something interesting in the notion that the air might gather itself into a solid block of coolness, especially after a hot day. And then, there it is, its refreshing whiteness shining down on what had been parched and hot before, the other side of day, the goddess of the night, the moon. So as these things go, this is pretty good. But if it's so good, why did it disappear?

(Readers will find the answer to this question in the winter issue, 32:1, which will feature part two of this series of four)



Reviewed

Raffael de Gruttola & Carlos Colón. *Wall Street Park: A Concrete Renku*. Upton, Massachusetts: piXeLaRt Press, 2007, 16 pages, 8.5 x 11 inches. \$8.00 postpaid from Carlos Colón, 185 Lynn Avenue, Shreveport, LA 71105-3523 USA, or from Raffael de Gruttola, 4 Marshall Road, Natick, MA 01760 USA.

By *Michael Dylan Welch*, Washington

I've just had the pleasure of reading *Wall Street Park*, by Raffael de Gruttola and Carlos Colón. It's an entertaining, passionate, and inventive "concrete renku," a 36-verse collaboration using concrete poems instead of haiku. Of course, this is not their first go at this, as this book follows *Circling Bats*, published in 2001, which I believe to be the first concrete renku ever written. And they've done it again. Starting with a verse written about Wall Street the day after September 11, it's no wonder that the twin towers should appear in the second verse, by Carlos:

tnt ntn
wiw iwi
ini nin
nen ene
tot oto
ono non
wew ewe
eoe oeo
rnr nrn
ses ese

thesquarerootofgroundzero

It took them almost four years to complete this new collab-

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oration, finishing in July of 2004. After an insightful introduction by Nick Avis (himself an aficionado of both concrete poetry and haiku), *Wall Street Park* weaves together the playful and profound, as in the first poem here by Carlos, the second by Raffael:

brief blizzard sn*wing g*ing g ne

m n
o a
o o
n/m

A serendipity to this collection is a four-page insert, written three years after the renku, in which the authors explicate their influences, their verses, and the links between them. In these notes, Carlos reminds us of his indebtedness, in his verse above, to Marlene Mountain's "sn wfl k" and Raffael points out that the autumn moon (here in its traditional position as fifth verse in the renku) signifies waning and the beginning of decay and death.

The renku includes cultural references such as Carlos's use of "unhalfbricking," the title of an album by 60s band Fairport Convention, followed by Raffael's reference to a Cirque du Soleil show. Inventions include Raffael's transposing of "wabi sabi num lock" from roman text to a font that presents only symbols in place of letters, in this case symbols of sport and transport, following, as it does, after Carlos's brilliant triangular traffic sign that spells the word "EGO" vertically under the middle of the word "YIELD." Other verses include shapes and graphics, an I Ching hexagram, a maze, and various fonts in various point sizes. Some verses are just text, some even just conventional haiku-like poems, although

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usually with at least some concrete aspect. Another (by Carlos), within a single verse, presents three upside-down question marks hung on a diagonal string or line next to the following text, creating a haiga-like effect:

for a moment
the setting sun rides
a ski lift

Links between verses range from the two enlarged vowels at the end of “ballOOn” being echoed by “ee” of “peeper” with eyes drawn in the letters, to the criss-crossing of a DNA helix in one verse morphing into a large letter “X” marking the spot of gold released from the earth. For the most part, the links between verses are not so obvious as these examples, which makes the insert helpful, but here’s another pair of favourites (first by Carlos, then by Raffael) where the link is clear:

my mozart term paper

i n t h
e
k e y
o
f

G e n g
e n
e i
s r
t

The way I read this inventive book, which stretches the possibilities for renku, was to just read the verses individually the first time. Then I read them again, looking for the links between

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the verses, whether a repetition of shape or a tonal echo, or sometimes a contrast. Then I read it again, reading the notes about each verse. Each reading brought fresh insights and admiration, and some verses revealed slightly hidden meanings by this process.

Traditional renku, of course, is a highly social art form, and so often the finished results can be tedious to read, even if you were a participant yourself. Not so with this renku, which unfolded in new and surprising ways, and rewarded multiple readings. As Marlene Mountain proclaims of *Wall Street Park* on the back cover, "It's a wonderful book. Just look at it." I'll leave you with the following additional favourite, by Carlos:

j
e u
s d
u a
s
i
l
v
e
r
l i n i n g



Briefly Reviewed

by *George Swede* (Ontario)

Borrell, N. & Butterworth, K. (eds.). *the taste of nashi: New Zealand Haiku*. Wellington, New Zealand: Windrift, 2008, 125 pages. ISBN: 978-0-473-13300-9. Perfect Softbound. \$25 NZD. The selection process involved almost 1,000 submitted haiku that were judged anonymously by four of the finest Kiwi poets: Ernest Berry, Cyril Childs, Catherine Mair and Barbara Strang. Also, the editors selected a few haiku outside this process — from writers who had died and from those living overseas who had not made submissions. The result is 200 haiku by 60 of the best haiku poets of this beautiful down-under nation. The poems are arranged in five original themes: ones dealing solely with nature; those that describe nature and coexisting humans; haiku that delve into human interaction with nature; others that focus on human emotion; and finally, poems which set their sights on humour and irony. How will readers from the rest of the world react? They will love this anthology — fine to look at and easy to handle.

Chicoine, F., Carter, T. A., & Fraticelli, M. (eds.). **Carpe Diem: Canadian Anthology of Haiku**. Ottawa/Nepean, ON: Les Éditions David/Borealis Press, 2008, 195 pages. ISBN: 978-2-89597-094-1/978-0-88887-356-9. Perfect Softbound, \$18.95 CDN. The first anthology of haiku by Canadian poets was edited by yours truly in 1979; the second by Dorothy Howard and André Duhaime in 1985; *Carpe Diem* is the third, and long overdue. Since I wrote the introduction for it, my comments will be purely descriptive. The 80 contributors are divided equally among English- and French- Canadians and each is represented by four haiku in his/her native tongue. Only six contributors have appeared in all three anthologies; 14 in two. The rest, 60 in number, are fresh faces, suggesting a healthy change in the Canadian haiku scene.

Friedman, S.B. *it has been many moons*. Northfield, MA: Lily Pool Press, 2008, unpaginated. ISBN: None. Letter press, sewn binding, \$20 USD. Available from the author at 119 Nevada St., San Francisco CA 94110. Moon haiku, 35 of them, are arranged into 12 pages according to the months of the year. Preceding each page is another page of semi-transparent paper on which is printed the month and the cultures responsible for the names Friedman gives to the moon for that lunar period. The reason for the see-through paper is that readers can see, in conditions similar to those of moonlight, each poem referred to on the following page. Here, for instance, is one such set of two pages. The semi-transparent page has three entries: “(September; Chinese), (September; Celtic), (September; Cherokee)” that serve as captions for three poems on the subsequent page: *chrysanthemum moon / behind clouds, another guy / claims he’s a master.; indian summer: / is she hot too, / singing moon sliver?; it has been many moons . . . / you, the nut moon, / & me basking in it*. A pleasing match of haiku and book creation.

Gay, G. & Thompson, J. *The Unlocked Gate*. Santa Rosa, CA: Rengay Press, 2008, 64 pages, including photos & an appendix. ISBN: 978-1-60643-017-0. Perfect Softbound, \$20 USD. Available from the authors at 1275 Fourth St., PMB #365, Santa Rosa, CA 95404-4041 or 4607 Burlington Place, Santa Rosa, CA 95405-7405. This collection of 24 rengay is the result of a 16-year collaboration by the well-known authors, Gary Gay and John Thompson, after one of whom, of course, the form was named. Each masterful rengay appears on the right-hand page and is accompanied by an evocative photo on the left by Gay. The conception of the book is such that it could (and should) serve as a primer for the rengay form. It contains an introduction that encourages others to write in the form; a detailed and clear definition of the rengay; a description of the possibility of a three-person rengay with an example that includes Michael Dylan Welch as the third author; as well as other useful information. Picked at random, here

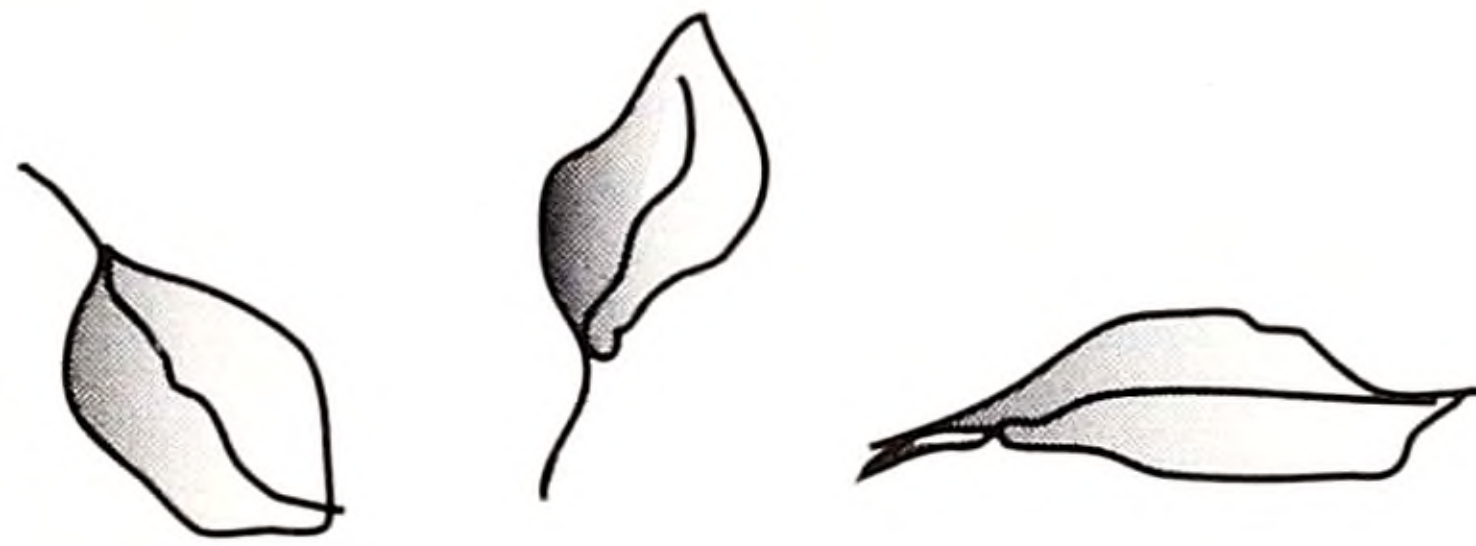
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is a Gay/Thompson rengay called “December”: *leafless trees / the grayness of the soul / through the fog // unfinished spider web / beaded with dew // weather vane / points again / toward winter // late tomatoes / that may never ripen— / last year’s resolutions // the dream remembered / among forget-me-nots // rock garden / changing colors / in the rain.* Gay wrote verses 1, 3 and 5 while Thompson composed 2, 4, and 6.

Miller, P. *Pilgrim Stone*. Self-published, 2008, unpaginated, ISBN: None. Saddle-stapled mini-chapbook, free. Contact by post at 31 Seal Island Rd., Bristol, RI 02809-5186; by email at pauldmiller@fctvplus.net. Miller, widely-known as Paul M., has created his second give-away mini-chapbook in a row (the first was *Flotsom/ Jetsam*). Why? Because, as he said in an e-mail to me, “it’s a good way to get the word out.” A brief introduction tells the reader the meaning of the title—an homage to Rhode Island’s stones, which for Miller evoke the pilgrims who settled there: *quick running brook . . . / a stone from the bottom / lighter than imagined.* Of course, many of the 19 haiku only refer indirectly to stones: *bulbs dividing underground / we talk of children / we cannot have.* Why not send for your free copy today?

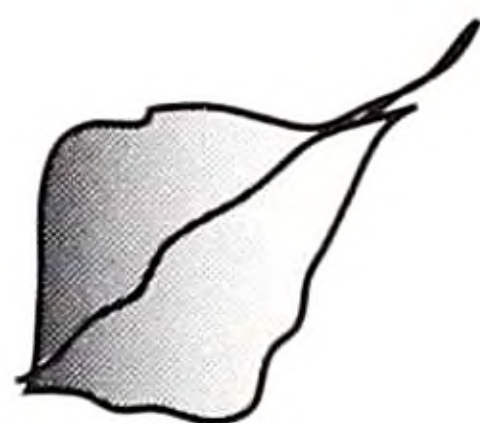
Shaw, A.B. *An Unknown Road*. Baltimore: Modern English Tanka Press, 2008, 61 pages. ISBN: 978-0-9817-6910-3. Thermal binding, \$11.95 USD. Contact www.modernenglishtankapress.com. Adelaide Shaw has been publishing haiku in all the major periodicals off and on for over 30 years. This, her first collection, gathers the best 200 from her body of work. On any page to which one turns, fine haiku such as these appear: *spring equinox— / taking the first step / down an unknown road; the longest day— / along an avenue of trees / shadows connecting; a shift in the wind— / all my neighbor’s leaves / are now mine; snow-covered hills— / the random placement / of trees and rocks.* With this book Shaw will finally have the greater readership she deserves.

Verhart, M. *only the white: haiku & haiga*. Hertogenbosch, Netherlands: *'t schrijverke*, 2008, 48 pages. ISBN: 978-90-809482-6-6. Perfect Softbound, no price listed. Contact max@verhart.org. Max Verhart is one of those rare individuals who can write well in two languages— his native Dutch and also in English. This collection is entirely in English (with only a few errors) and features 86 haiku (in center alignment) and 15 haiga. The glossy cover and pages are not typical of haiku publications but serve the content well, especially Verhart's color photo collages for the haiga, for which he uses 12 of his own haiku—the remaining three being by Marlène Buitelaar, Taneda Santoka (translated by Hiroaki Sato) and Jim Kacian. An eye-catching haiga solely by Verhart has an Andy Warhol page-filling repetition of two bare-breasted blondes, standing head-to-head, both right-side-up and upside-down. Against this background, Verhart has handprinted in lower case: *dreary morning ~ / again my mailbox / full of spam*. From the haiku section, here are three picked at random: *lone walk— / a curlew calls / a curlew; haiku conference / a poet waving coolness / into the room; bank holiday / business as usual / at the anthill*. As these choices reveal, Verhart's haiku rival those of prominent haiku poets for whom English is the first language.



Yarrow, R. *Whiff of Cedar*. Self-published, 2007, unpaginated, illustrated by the author. ISBN: None. Sewn binding, mini-chapbook, no price listed. Contact yarrows@riseup.net. The pages in Ruth Yarrow's fifth collection have two different colors: the ones in green (15 haiku) deal with "the wilderness watershed of the Swiattle River" while the ones in tan (16 haiku) deal with "the homes and streets of Seattle." An example of the first is: *mid-torrent / I balance on a sparkling rock / fool's gold!* and one of the second: *food bank line— / a pigeon picks up crumbs / too small to see*. A resonant small collection, sure to please Yarrow's many admirers..

Zheng, JQ. *minis*. Itta Bena, MS: Yazoo River Press, 2008, 40 pages. ISBN: None. Saddle-stitched chapbook, \$5.00 USD. Contact by post at 14000 Hwy 82 West, #5032, Itta Bena, MS 38941-1400. Only sequences occur in this chapbook, 36 of them. Jianqing Zheng's style is to title each one and then number the stanzas, which range from five to eight with all flush left. But two sequences vary to include two haiku under one number and with the second indented. Also, one sequence contains five-line haiku in this format: two lines, space, one-line, space, two lines. No matter their structure, most of the sequences work well and a few are excellent. Space considerations decree that the shortest, "Fall #2" be given as an example: 1 *autumn sunset— / red maple leaves drift / down the mountain stream*; 2 *a tiger lily / blooming in the backyard / covered with oak leaves*; 3 *autumn breeze: / a snake slithering / over dry leaves*; 4 *a ripe pear thudding / in the backyard; its smell / carried away on wind*; 5 *long after the fall / acorns are still falling from / the trees by my house*.



Re: Readings of 31:2

Janelle Barrera (Florida) on **Bruce England** (California):

Dear Mr. England,

You really had me going for a while on your “Proposal for an Alternative Haiku Membership Anthology.” I was interested, baffled and incredulous all within a few minutes. I completely understand for the first time, well, maybe not precisely the first time, the old saying, “The joke is on me.” Thanks for the entertaining article!

Allan Burns (Colorado) on **Robert Mainone** (Michigan): Robert Mainone offers an homage to Robert Spiess with some telling differences: *a night of fog—/ the smell of a passing/ meth lab*. Way back in the third issue of *American Haiku* (1964) Spiess had published: *Night fog on the farm—/ the passing skunk’s pungency/ is not unpleasing*, which received a “Special Award” and was later collected in *The Heron’s Legs* (American Haiku Press, 1966). Stylistically, one notes in Mainone’s variation an avoidance of capitalization, of 5-7-5 form, and of commentary—all indications of how English-language haiku has evolved over the last 44 years. Most significant, though, is the alarming, ironic substitution of “meth lab” for “skunk.” The animal has been crowded out by a human artifact, and there is no temptation to call it “not unpleasing.”

John Stevenson (New York) on **Stanford M. Forrester** (Connecticut) and his *snowmelt . . . / the scotch tape left / from a paper snowflake* and on **Connie Donleycott** (Washington) and her *rain all day thoughts repeat*. These are two of the poems from the spring/summer issue that I wish I had written. Both seem deeply resonant while leaving plenty of creative options for readers. Both are well crafted but

manage to keep the mechanics out of the way. Particularly pleasing are the subjects of “residue at the point of transition” in the first poem and “sameness” in the second.

Corrections to Issue 31:2

p. 08 + p. 93: the author’s name is *Dana Duclo*, not Ducio

p. 22: the first haiku is by *Yu Chang* (*New York*), not Dru Philippou

p. 54: the second line of the tan renga by *Robert Bauer* and *Ron Moss*, should read “*she* bruises a sprig” (not he)

p. 55: in the second tan renga by *Amy Whitcomb* and *w.f.owen*, the second line should read “your *hug*” (not jug)

p. 93: *Dunlap, Curtis* is the correct spelling (not Dunlop)

p. 94: *Pendrey, Jeremy* is the correct spelling (not Pendray)

p. 94: *Shaw, Adelaide B.*, appears on p. 44 (not 45)

The following are corrections to places of residence; *Deb Baker* (p. 40) is from New Hampshire; *Robert Bauer* (p. 54) is from West Virginia; *Allan Burns* (p. 58) is from Colorado; *Alice Frampton* (pp. 36, 48) is from Washington.



**2008 Nicholas Virgilio Haiku Contest
Judges' Report**

by

Tony Pupello, New York

Pamela Miller Ness, New York

We would like to express our appreciation to all the young poets who submitted to this year's contest and to the teachers who instructed them in the craft and special characteristics of haiku. It was a privilege to be invited to enter their haiku moments and a pleasure to share their imagery and language. Each of us first read and re-read the 85 submissions numerous times; we then met to discuss our preliminary selections and to undertake the challenging task of selecting six poems (unranked) that we consider most exemplary of fine haiku. And it was a challenging task. Many of the entries were sophisticated in their use of imagery and juxtapositions, and were proficiently crafted. As with very fine haiku and senryu, many were layered and functioned on multiple levels. Of course, while any finalist must exhibit many of the salient characteristics of haiku, we also looked for poems that surprised and delighted us and expanded our experience through imagery, language, and/or emotional resonance. As R.H. Blyth wrote, "A haiku is the expression of a temporary enlightenment, in which we see into the life of things" (*Haiku*, volume 1).

winter stars
my father paints over
the old white walls

Asha Bishi, age 18
School of the Arts, grade 12
Rochester, NY

The poet subtly creates multiple layers of juxtaposition: interior and exterior; the white of snow, stars, and walls; and a single human being within the vast universe. S/he captures essential elements of classical Japanese haiku, *yugen* (mystery)

Haiku Society of America

and *sabi* (essential aloneness) and leaves the reader with an unfinished narrative. It is the reader's job to enter into this powerful and mysterious haiku to complete the story.

autumn night
one brick
darker than the rest

Gracie Elliot, age 12
School of the Arts, grade 7
Rochester, NY

This poet also sets the scene with a *kigo*, autumn night, suggesting the various connotations of autumn: a time of change, shorter days, and the onset of cold weather. S/he effectively juxtaposes the vastness of a night sky with a single human-made brick and the darkness of the night with one dark brick. The combined imagery of the night sky and the fact that all the bricks are dark give this poem a deeply melancholy mood. There is no light except for the illumination of the poet's keen observation and beautifully crafted language, the crispness of the night so carefully reflected in the repetition of the letters t and k.

first kiss—
the tingle of coke
down her throat

Lauren Fresch, age 17
Perkins High School, grade 12
Sandusky, OH

This is an excellent example of a contemporary senryu: ingenuous, humorous, and at the same time, deeply moving. How perfectly the poet captures first love through such specific sensory imagery, a kiss shared over a coke, both of which tingle in his/her throat. This poet should also be commended for his/her carefully crafted language: the alliteration of kiss and coke, the onomatopoeic use of kiss and tingle, and the assonance of coke and throat.

Frogpond 31:3

scent of spring
my sister paints
the rising sun

Asha Bishi, age 18

School of the Arts, grade 12

Rochester, NY

This is an excellent example of how what might be a trite *kigo* expression, “scent of spring,” is used as a springboard to a delightful, lovely and spare moment. A moment of fragrant breezes combined with the lightness and brightness of the rising sun — a moment that may be overdone — is turned into a real moment of spring bursting forth, found in the act of “sister painting.” This poem turns on the unselfishness of the author — sharing this moment of creation with her/his sister, and sharing sister’s creation with us. And, this glorious moment of rebirth and renewal is presented in very simple, understated terms.

silent graveyard
one tombstone
with a crow

Alexa Navarez, age 12

School of the Arts, grade 7

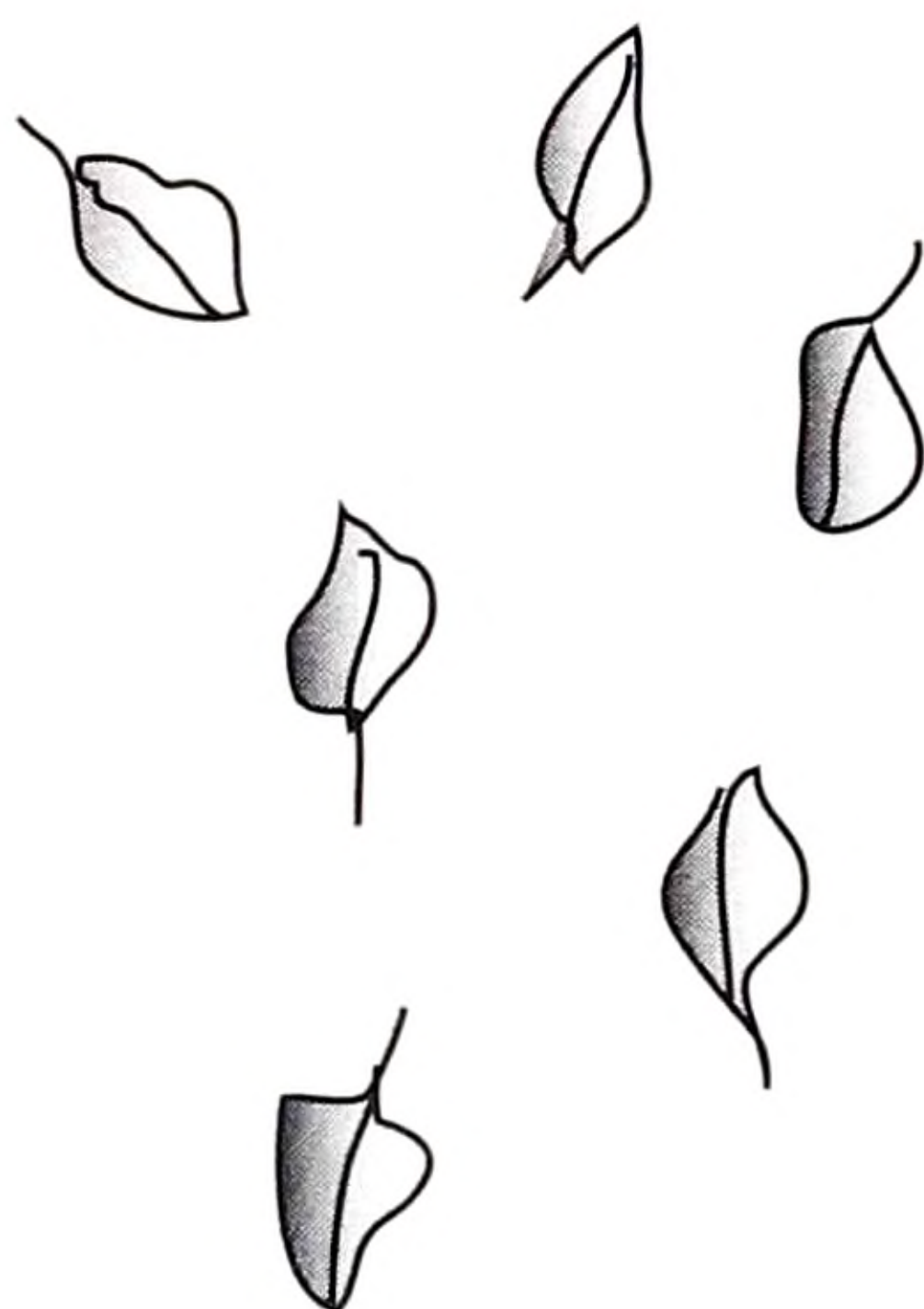
Rochester, NY

A deeply evocative poem, this piece resonates in the absence of sound. A “silent graveyard” is a commonplace perhaps overdone image. After all, what is a graveyard if not silent, if not the absence of sound and the activity of life? Yet oft-times we, the living, disturb the graveyard’s silence with our own intrusions. Perhaps uncomfortable, we chatter, we joke, we stir. In this piece the poet has succeeded in capturing and reinforcing the disturbing silences. The normally rambunctious and extremely loud crow sits silently in stillness atop a tombstone — forcing us, the readers, to put aside all and become part of that most uncomfortable silence.

light footsteps
across the snow
his alcohol breath

Desire Collier, age 12
School of the Arts, grade 7
Rochester, NY

The lightness of the snow, and the heaviness of alcoholism. These are two elements the poet deftly weaves together for us in this finely crafted poem. At first, we are confronted with an air of untruth, anathema in haiku. How could anyone who's drunk step lightly? Drunks are heavy, have uncontrollably heavy movements, and are not graceful in the least. Aren't they? Once again the reader is called, pulled, into the narrative. This is not an attempt at a desktop haiku, an image written because it fits right in the author's imagination. This is a sad piece about an all too-common disease. The author is painfully aware of how graceful, how light an alcoholic can appear on the surface. Yes, the drunk passes over almost unnoticed, certainly his light footsteps do not give him away — but his breath does.



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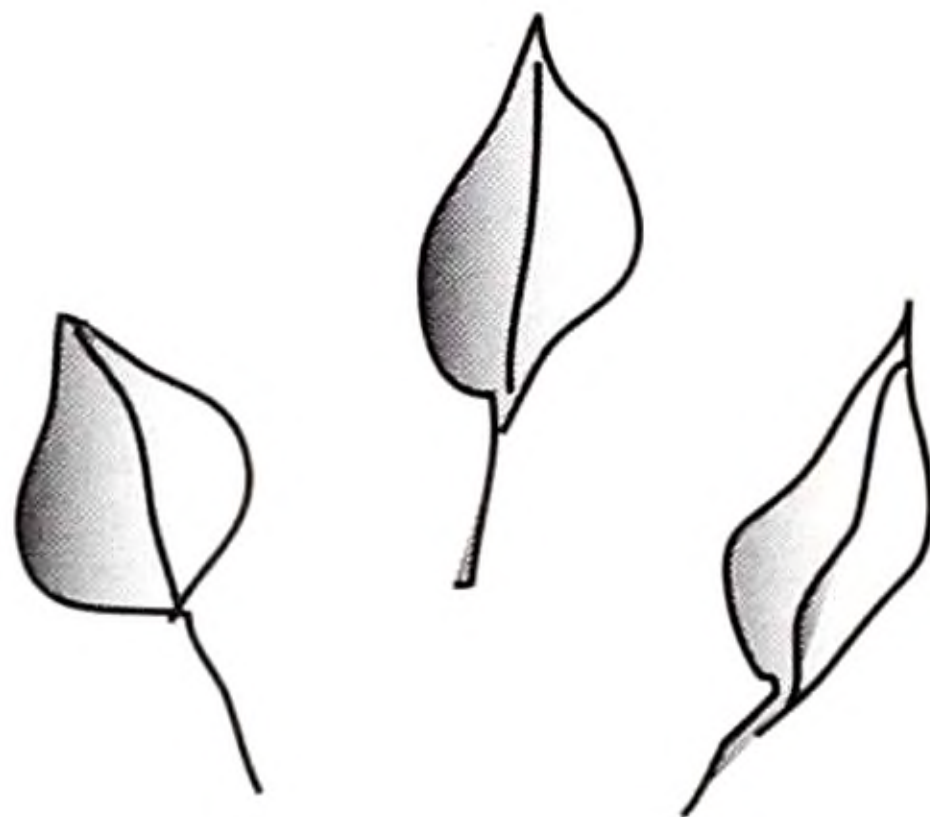
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From the Editors

For our first issue as editors of *Frogpond*, we asked for feedback on our many changes to layout and design and readers reacted much like diners at a favorite restaurant that had undergone a renovation. Most found the new look exciting, but a few missed the old decor. Others suggested even more modifications and for this, our second issue, we acted on many of these ideas.

On the title page, we added color and a logo for *Frogpond*, which we hope you'll like. As well, we eliminated all of the divider pages plus added four extra pages to make more room for poems, haibun, articles, reviews and the various kinds of linked verses. Finally, we put haiku and senryu together instead of keeping them in separate sections. By doing this, we reverted to what *Frogpond* editors did before 1990, thus allowing readers to decide for themselves which form is which.

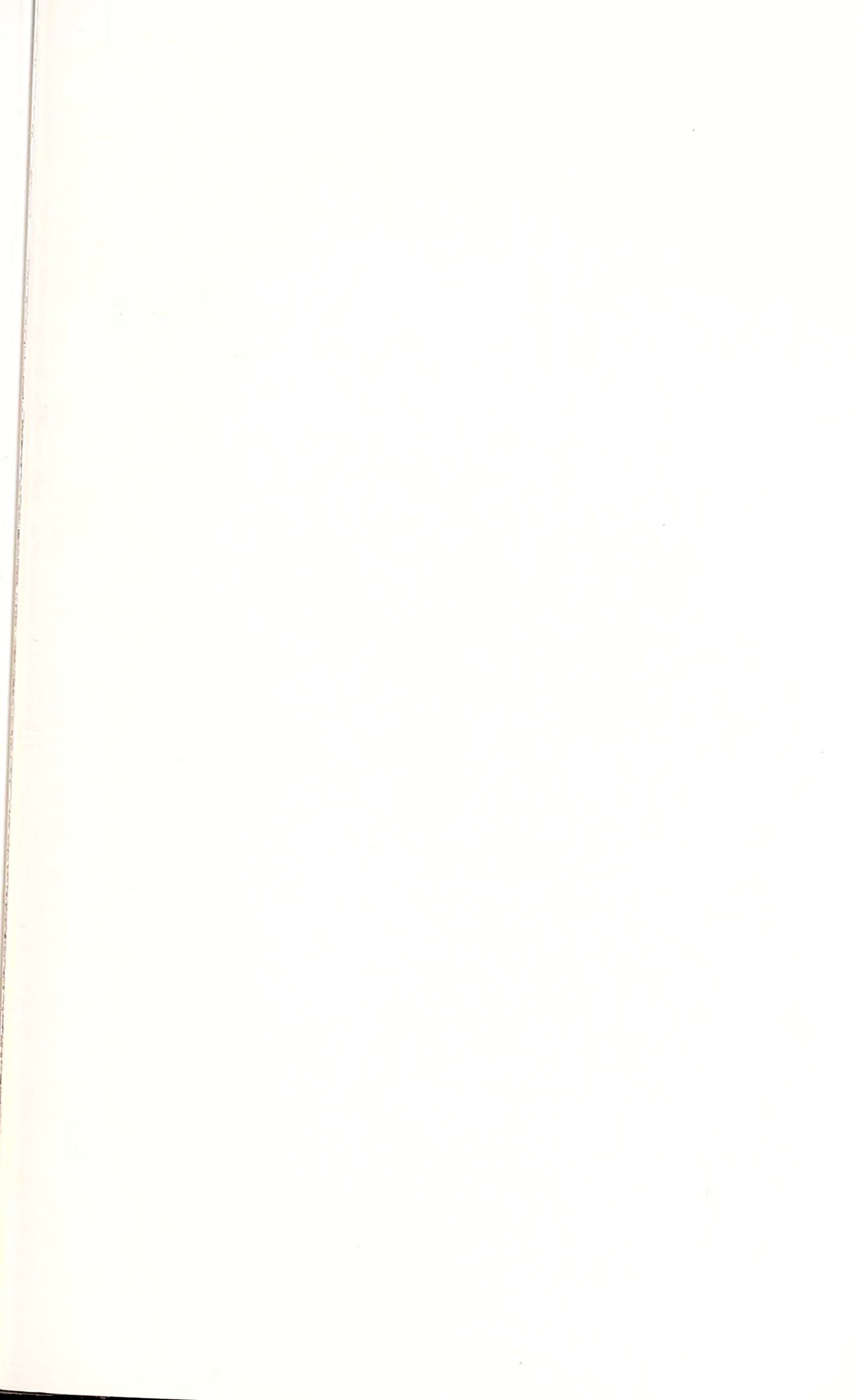
We have also made two alterations to the submissions policy. The first involves e-mail submissions—that they note “place” of residence. The second concerns acceptances—they will now be sent only at the end of each submission period. This change will enable us to make sure we pick the best work available for each issue.

We hope that you find this issue as exciting as we did when putting it together.

Please give us your feedback on 31:3. We are always searching for ways to make improvements.

George Swede, Editor

Anita Krumins, Assistant Editor



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