

HAIKU POETS OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

2013 Rengay Contest Results (with judge's comments)

Rengay Judge: Ebba Story

First Place

Moonflowers

John Thompson, Santa Rosa, CA
Renée Owen, Sebastopol, CA

petals tightly closed
I dream the poppy's dream
until this fog lifts John

forsythia
heartbeat of this tiny finch Renée

on the border
of becoming a weed
forget-me-nots John

after chemo
marigolds glow on her
Butsudan altar Renée

just when everything's wrong with this world
cherry blossoms John

moon or flower—
my thoughts drift
into wisps of white Renée

“Moonflowers” especially appealed to me given its feeling of intimacy and gentle subjectivity. Each link offers an immediate closeness to private pain and suffering, to freedom and grace. “Moonflowers” captures the alternating voices of the two poets and deepens it with a feeling of intrinsic wholeness. Each link flows easily into the next with the last link echoing back to the first. For me, the overall ethos holds this rengay together even more than the theme of “flowers.” So beautifully done!

Second Place

Recess Bell

Michael Dylan Welch, Sammamish, WA
Garry Gay, Santa Rosa, CA

great expectations—
a Muslim transfer student
raises her hand

Michael

the scarlet letter
passed between friends Garry

a secret garden
outside the window—
unfinished quiz Michael

the only crayon
not broken
the color purple Garry

a boy's homework
gone with the wind Michael

call of the wild
the children all waiting
for the recess bell Garry

“Recess Bell” is a delightful venture into childhood. Each link incorporates the title of a classic piece of literature and by “incorporate” I truly mean the words in the chosen title are intrinsic to the meaning of the verse. Too, the details of this classroom experience are wonderfully authentic. I've been there, and through this vivid rengay, I'm there again.

Third Place

Coming to Light

Seren Fargo, Bellingham, WA
Sheila Sondik, Bellingham, WA

camouflaged moth—
I turn down
the party invitation Seren

an early snowfall shrouds
what remains of my garden Sheila

moonlit snow
I feel the need
to whisper Seren

misunderstanding
brings peals of laughter
playing telephone Sheila

finding out he hurt her too
the mixed emotions of gossip Seren

spring cleaning—
my stash
of stale chocolate Sheila

The theme of “Coming to Light” is very satisfyingly revealed. I appreciated the friendly dance, the spin between the poets. Each verse answers a possibility in the preceding link while guiding the rengay into new territory. And, the choice of words makes my ears happy. For example: down, shroud, snow, phone, motion... How beautifully the sounds cascade through this rengay.

Honorable Mention (not ranked)

Autumn Deepens

Michael Sheffield, Kenwood, CA
Susan Antolin, Walnut Creek, CA

mushrooms—
I ponder the virtue
of thyme or sage Michael

a 2-for-1 deal
on canned pumpkin Susan

glint of light
the sound of steel
on the honing stone Michael

breathing
before the guests arrive
red wine Susan

cooking steam
drips from the window sill Michael

new food stains
on an old cookbook
autumn deepens Susan

Starlings Rush

Michael Dylan Welch, Sammamish, WA
Terry Ann Carter, Victoria, BC, Canada

thunderclap—
starlings rush
from the coast madrone Michael

sun through clouds
the pine’s overhang Terry Ann

clear blue sky—
a boy loses his balance
on the driftwood spruce Michael

our paddles at rest
in the cedar-dappled cove—
gathering mist Terry Ann

a little rain
in the bonsai cypress Michael

storm warning—
swirling arbutus leaves
in the seaside café Terry Ann