

FROGPOND

XVII:4

WINTER 1994



FROGPOND

Museum of Haiku Literature Award
\$50 for the best haiku appearing in the previous issue

*bird shadow
from tree shadow
to fence shadow*

Christopher Herold

**Vol. XVII:4—WINTER 1994
HAIKU SOCIETY OF AMERICA**

HAIKU SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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Word from the Editor

I greatly appreciate having had the opportunity to edit *Frogpond* again during 1994. It was a pleasure to read so many fine poems from those of you who shared your material. I am grateful for computer help from Sunni Witney and Carolyn Lamb. Special thanks to William J. Higginson for much production assistance. I am sure *Frogpond* will flourish in the capable hands of Kenneth C. Leibman, and wish for him and for all of you a Happy Haiku New Year.

ESL

WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's been a wonderful experience to be President of the Haiku Society of America for these past two years. The expansion of the Society and participation by members from all parts of the country continue at high levels. Many thanks are due—specifically to Executive Board members Bruce Ross, Barbara Ressler, Doris Heitmeyer, Raffael de Gruttola, and Elizabeth Searle Lamb, and to the Regional Coordinators, Paul O. Williams, William J. Higginson, Mary Fran Meer, Kenneth Leibman, Darold Braida, Lawrence Rungren, and Clark Strand. Many of these dedicated people will remain in leadership roles to guide the Society.

The highlight of 1994, and cause for celebration, is the distribution of *A Haiku Path*, now available to us and the general public. The Twentieth Anniversary Book Committee deserves our thanks and gratitude. Every library should contain this definitive haiku reference source. (See a review elsewhere in this issue.)

One of the pleasant jobs of the HSA President is to receive the entries for Merit Book Awards consideration, before sending them along to the selected jurors. I would like to bring to your attention three books published in 1993 that were not submitted for consideration, but are worthy of special mention and recommendation: *Haiku Moment*, edited by Bruce Ross; *The Essence of Modern Haiku: 300 Poems by Seishi Yamaguchi*, translated by Takashi Kodaira and Alfred H. Marks; *Right under the big sky, I don't wear a hat*, Hosai Ozaki, translated by Hiroaki Sato. Not known to the judges was the fact that in the past books other than those submitted have been contemplated for awards. However, since it is impossible to be aware of all the books that might be eligible, it is best to send your work if you wish it to be considered.

The fine HSA 1994 Members' Anthology, *dreams wander*, edited by Kenneth C. Leibman, Peggy Willis Lyles and Nina A. Wicker of the Southeast Region, continues the plan of a yearly HSA Anthology, each year prepared and published in a different area of the country.

This is a national organization, and all members should have the opportunity to serve and have a say. It bears repeating that the Haiku Society of America rests on a firm foundation, built up carefully over the last twenty-six years by many devoted people. It's the willingness of its members that helps an organization run smoothly and grow.

Warmest regards,
Francine Porad
HSA President

Arctic midnight:
the snowfall melts in the blood
on the trawler's deck

Tim Happel

rising
with the moon:
red fox

Emily Romano

in the tall grass
a wolf howls elk scatter
into shadows

essell

outside the tent
rain and lightning—
your white face

last ski run—
following my shadow
down amethyst snow

Kaye Bache-Snyder

back tracking . . .
our footprints glisten
with frozen rain

Ellen Compton

I climb the mountain with my eyes never ending snow

Pamela A. Babusci

burnt out house
inside the chimney's voice
the cricket's

Frederick Gasser

Crows crowd the feeder
—in a birdless world
how I would miss them

Peggy Heinrich

After autumn rains,
finding at the garden's edge
her lost gold earring

Donald Holroyd

faded broom
against the door frame
—cold rain

Cherie Hunter Day

as they dig down
old parts of the city—
the newspaper soaks up the rain

Gary Hotham

winter rain—
women quarreling
in the kitchen

Patricia Neubauer

first snowfall—
not quite winter
where the car was

Mark Arvid White

these ancient maples
shade the tiny cottage
my five Buddhas

Jeffrey Winke

Strings
& their tea bags
the old archer's winter

Through four seasons . . .
one game of chess
on the oak board

vincent tripi

gilt-edged old book:
full of haiku, woodblock prints
and cigar smoke

Kay F. Anderson

emptying
warm bowl of rice
snow deepens

Ran Diego Russell

jar of India ink
spilled over today's paper—
winter dusk

Jennifer L. Lesh

rattle of hail
on the just-closed
cedar gate

Michael McNierney

HAIKU FROM KERALA, INDIA

early rain
umbrellas huddle
before a shrine

dawn
the old cow waits
by the village ghat

girls cut paddy
ignoring
the butterflies

hot afternoon
coconuts rattle
in the oxcart

nose in the air
the buffalo bathes
at twilight

light rain . . .
far off frogs
listen

vast night
crossing the River of Heaven
a single firefly

Kim Dorman

At the bottom
of a lotus pond
someone's flowered fan.

Alexis Rotella

the rhythm
of the swan's slow neck
. . . T'ai Chi

Elizabeth St Jacques

foreign monk
begging on the corner
his big feet

Kristen Deming

the new season's tea
green grounds left
in every porcelain cup

Yoko Ogino

blackbird
on the branch
. . . just the branch

alone
the pine measures
its own height

George Ralph

six moons
leaping on the water's
surface

Donald B. Hendrich

SHORTER RENKU

William J. Higginson and Tadashi Kondo

Introduction

The last issue of *Frogpond* carried an article on a format for “linked poetry” that was proposed as an alternative to the—in the opinion of the creator—tiring business of writing a linked poem in thirty-six stanzas, and including a wide range of subject matter. One of the main features of this new form, called “rengay”, was elimination of the diversity in subject matter that characterizes renku, or Bashō-style linked poetry. We believe that the creators of rengay have actually proposed a collaborative sequence of haiku- and senryu-like verses, which may be enjoyable and useful in itself, but bears little relation to renku.

For those who may wish to experience renku for themselves, with all the excitement of its collaboration and diversity, but with less time spent on a particular poem, we offer the following shorter alternatives to the thirty-six stanza *kasen*. While visiting Iga-Ueno and Tokyo in October 1994, we had opportunity to experience writing in these formats with groups of skilled renku poets, and can highly recommend them for their genuine renku qualities.

Short: Twenty-Stanza Renku

The *nijūin*, a twenty-stanza format for renku, is the shortest format with a classical feeling in its overall structure and rhythm. With a clear “face”, two shortened middle pages, and a back page mirroring the front page, it provides for two moon verses, one blossom verse, and two groups of love verses, closely paralleling the structure of a thirty-six stanza *kasen*. And though twenty stanzas is little more than half the length of a *kasen*, the format provides enough room for the great diversity of a true *haikai no renga*. At a celebration of the 300th anniversary of Bashō’s death at the Bashō Museum in Fukagawa, Tokyo, this October, eight groups of Japanese renku poets each simultaneously completed *nijūin* (to anglicize the term) in under two hours, the sort of time readily available during an afternoon or evening without overwhelming otherwise busy lives.

Meiga Higashi, who is generally acknowledged as the top living renku master in Japan, invented the nijuin as a shorter renku format that still provides the formal characteristics and challenges found in the longer thirty-six stanza format, while giving poets the opportunity to complete a renku with less than a full day's investment in time.

For some years in Japan it has been common practice to make a chart showing the positions of seasonal, nonseasonal, and special verses in a renku, with variations for renku begun in each season. These charts simply demonstrate the results of applying such rules as "Spring and autumn must run for at least three but not more than five stanzas; summer and winter may have as few as one, but no more than three" along with the traditional positions of the moon, blossom, and love verses, to conditions that vary according to the season of composition. Such charts are not rigid structures that must be adhered to, but flexible guidelines to be adjusted for special circumstances and opportunities that no fixed structure can take into account. At the same time, they provide a capsule overview of what the seasonal aspect of renku is all about, and help poets to keep track of where they are in the midst of a renku session.

To further assist in composition, Meiga-sensei created a pocket-sized card with such a chart for the nijuin, plus a number of suggestions to further aid in composition and enjoyment. He has encouraged us to share this helpful information with American renku poets. Though the characteristics of the English language make it difficult to condense a translation of the Japanese card into pocket size, the following two pages accommodate a sheet of letter-sized paper, and can be copied and folded to yield a handy-sized card.

One side of the card consists of the basic rules, which are in a kind of rhythmical chant that we have expanded for the sake of readers unfamiliar with the Japanese tradition of such shorthand expressions. The other side has the seasonal chart and a list of sample topics that encourages the diversity so necessary to renku. We have added some notes to the chart for the benefit of those unfamiliar

Twenty-Stanza Seasonal Topic Arrangement

(Examples—see notes on other side)

VERSE POSITION	STARTING AT NY	STARTING IN SPRING	STARTING IN SUMMER	STARTING IN AUTUMN	STARTING IN WINTER
hokku	NY	SP } (BL)	SU	AU } (MN)	WI
waki	NY	SP } (BL)	SU	AU } (MN)	WI
daisan	ns	SP } (BL)	ns	AU } (MN)	ns
4	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
5	AU(MN)	WI/SU(MN)	AU(MN)	ns	AU(MN)
6	AU(LV)	WI/SU(LV)	AU(LV)	ns(LV)	AU(LV)
7	AU(LV)	ns(LV)	AU(LV)	ns(LV)	AU(LV)
8	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
9	SU	ns	ns	SU/WI	ns
10	SU	ns	ns	SU/WI	ns
11	ns	SU/WI	WI/ns	ns	SU/ns
12	ns	SU/WI	WI(MN)	ns	SU(MN)
13	ns(LV)	ns(LV)	ns	ns(LV)	ns
14	ns(LV)	AU(LV)	ns	WI/SU(LV)	ns(LV)
15	WI(MN)	AU(MN)	ns(LV)	WI/SU(MN)	ns(LV)
16	WI	AU	ns(LV)	ns	ns
17	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
18	SP	ns	SP	SP	SP
19	SP(BL)	SP(BL)*	SP(BL)	SP(BL)	SP(BL)
ageku	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP

*If "blossom" occurs among the first three stanzas, no blossom here.

Sample Topics and Materials

Gods Buddha Reminiscence Ghosts Illness Dreams Mountains Waters
Beverages Food Children Birds Beasts Insects Fish People Geography
Foreign Time Travel (& more)

Suggestions for Counting Stanzas

Spring and Autumn: from three to five consecutive verses; don't give up after two.

Summer and Winter: from one to three consecutive verses; often two.

The same season must not reappear for at least five verses; summer and winter must be separated by at least two.

Love may not reappear for at least three verses, but may continue from two to five verses.

Song of Topical Guidelines

Topics such as clothing or seasons, bamboo, field, boat, road, dream, tears, moon, pine, and pillow must be separated by at least five stanzas;

identical diction, religion, love, transience, night, or times of day should be separated by three or more;

heavenly phenomena, rising and falling things, human nature, famous places, and the names of countries by at least two;

fish and birds, beasts and fish, trees and grasses, grasses and bamboo, also by at least two.

Heavenly phenomena include moon, sun, stars; rising things are mist, clouds, fog, and smoke;

falling things include rain, dew, frost, snow showers, sleet, hail, and snow, you should know.

NOTES to the Seasonal Topic Arrangement: Abbreviations: NY=New Year, SP=Spring, SU=Summer, AU=Autumn, WI=Winter, (BL)=Blossom position, (MN)=Moon position, (LV)=Love position; ns=non-seasonal. Note that a set of verses marked WI/SU may be either, but that a following set marked SU/WI should then be in the season opposite the first set, and vice-versa. In a renku starting in spring or autumn, the blossom or moon, respectively, generally appears in one of the first three stanzas. The four sections correspond to the four "sides" or pages on which a renku would be written out formally. In this format, the overall structure is roughly: Preface (*jō*), first four stanzas; development (*ha*), middle twelve stanzas; fast close (*kyū*), last four stanzas.

Shorter: Twelve-Tone Renku

For renku poets who may have only an hour or so to devote to producing a finished work, the renku master Shunjin Okamoto made the following suggestions in 1989, refining earlier attempts to create a renku in twelve stanzas. Our text is based on the explanation given by his widow, Seijo Okamoto, at the International Renku Session held in conjunction with the Bashō 350th Birthday Celebration at Iga-Ueno, Bashō's hometown, in October 1994. Seijo-sensei is the leader of the Haikai Sesshin, and president of the Haikai Kangikudo Renku Foundation.

Practical Guidelines for the Jūnichō Renku Form

1. A renku must have literary value and a sense of stylishness. This is what Bashō called "timeless and fashionable" (*fueki ryūkō*).
2. A twelve-tone renku consists of twelve stanzas. There is no front or back. One blossom stanza, which may be any flower in any season—it need not be cherry blossoms. One moon stanza, which may be any sort of moon in any season. About two love stanzas, in any position. About half the verses will be seasonal (a pair each for spring and autumn, one each summer and winter), and half non-seasonal, in a flexible order. About half with human focus, the rest on places, animals, plants, and the like.
3. Progression and diversity are the essence of renku. Accordingly, a wide variety of things in nature and the world of humans should appear.

Obviously, this is a much less structured form, and renku groups in Japan can generally complete a twelve-tone renku in well under an hour. The traditional elements of the seasons, balance between nature and human concerns, and extreme diversity are maintained, to the extent possible in so short a format. However, the maximum number of consecutive seasonal stanzas is compressed to two, and there is not room to observe the full *jo-ha-kyū*. Generally, the hokku, wakiku, and daisan—the first three verses—are similar to those in a longer format renku, involving the complimentary aspects of the first two and the break-away movement of the third. The hokku, of course, still reflects the season of composition.

Shunjin-sensei has responded to the greater restriction of length in the twelve-tone format by reducing the usual restrictions on moon and blossom stanzas, and eliminating the usual content restrictions for the opening six stanzas, thus making possible a greater diversity of subject matter in less space, and creating a format which many outside of Japan may find more comfortable to work with.

Is There a Shortest?

In Bashō's day it was not unheard of to complete only the first side of a writing sheet, the "face" of six or eight verses. He mentions leaving such an *omote* on the post of the cottage he vacates at the beginning of *Narrow Roads of the Interior* (*Oku no hosomichi*). The "six or eight" depends on whether one considers the base format to be a *kasen* in thirty-six stanzas with six on the first side, or one of the longer formats in which the first side has eight stanzas.

In the years from the beginnings of *haikai no renga* to the start of the Meiji Restoration (1867), people experimented with many different formats for *renku*. I have seen a list of about twenty in Japanese. Among them, sequences as short as the first three stanzas were used in some contexts, while others involved six-stanza units modeled on the first side of a *kasen*, but without the usual restrictions as to subject matter on the face. (Illness and death, love, religion, outlandish or exciting images normally do not appear on the face of a linked poem.)

As we understand linked poetry today, the "short linked poem" (*tanrenga*), that in fact is a *tanka* composed in two parts, is just about the shortest linked poem possible, though variants of *senryū* once involved supplying twelve sounds to fit with a previous challenge verse of five sounds.

While a six- or eight-stanza poem can certainly exhibit quite a bit of diversity, we have to question whether twelve stanzas is not the practical lower limit for a poem designed to include a full range of human experience and worldly phenomena. In fact, it will take an outstanding group of poets to successfully create such a sense of diversity without strain in only twelve stanzas, so the twelve-tone format seems in some ways more challenging than longer formats.

We would like to recommend that those interested in writing *renku* along the lines of the poetry that so engaged Bashō and his followers give the twenty-stanza *renku* and the twelve-tone *renku* a try. These formats should be brief enough to allow completion in a reasonable length of time, but substantial enough to give participants a true experience of *renku*.

A Note on the "Half-Kasen": For many years, both in Japan and among North American poets interested in *renku*, the half-*kasen* (*hankasen*) of eighteen stanzas has been a shorter alternative to the full *kasen* of thirty-six stanzas. However, the half-*kasen* does not lend itself to fulfilling the *jo-ha-kyū* rhythm—since it usually results from cutting a planned *kasen* session short. The twenty-stanza format noted here has been proposed as a better solution. Indeed, the twenty-stanza *renku* is a recognized complete poem, whereas the half-*kasen* today is viewed as simply an incomplete *kasen*. The key point is intentionally creating a poem with the *jo-ha-kyū* rhythm, rather than just cutting it off after so many stanzas.

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CHAMBER JAZZ

at her piano
one gold heel
swings high

the bass man
leaning
into her riff

she points
the drum beat
explodes

into the night
the sax man
shattering stars

Marian Olson

ruined monastery
one star
in the rose window

Jerry Kilbride

Roseliep,
tonight
is one of yours

Marian Olson

moonlit
shadows—darker than
night

Donald B. Hendrich

this warm apartment—
the snows of yesterday
deeper and colder

L. A. Davidson

St. Joseph's pastry
a light snow
powders the bakery

Anthony J. Pupello

solar eclipse—
the lamppost's shadow
more and more distinct

Bruce Ross

solstice:
along the fence row
Osage oranges

Timothy Russell

Winter solstice
sun barely clearing
my neighbor's chimney

David Elliott

Christmas Eve—
the last luminaria blinks out
in the rain

joan iverson goswell

Not finding the ring
her granddaughter thanks her
for the box

December sunset
putting aside her journal
to peel an orange

Peggy Heinrich

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Our house is dark
No Christmas lights
In the blue spruce

Brass flute players
Flicker on the menorah—
Light of one candle

Our neighbors
Line the wall with farolitos
We light our candles

Candles in the window
Branches' shadows
Move on snow

Eight candles
Dripping wax, longest
Night of the year

Silver menorah
My daughter lights each branch
Tree of Life.

Miriam Sagan

After Basho's "met with thieves":

New Year's Eve . . .
thieves have left my car open
in the falling snow

William J. Higginson

against
bare branches
bare branches

not far
from the scarecrow
the snowman

past midnight New Year's
the cat's still hiding
under the couch

David Carmel Gershator

Pond frozen
on New Year's—
skipping the stone anyway

vincent tripi

deep in the pine
two crows side by side
first snowfall

Wilma M. Erwin

dawn's silent flame
again the skirling crows
interrupt

Yvonne Hardenbrook

cut banana bunch light floods the nest's dark eyes

*

cat 'put down' his last cry unheard echoes

*

country airport wind sleeve limp through our goodbyes

*

winter's afternoon my flesh is washed with solitude

*

midnight the blink of an owl enormous

Janice M. Bostok

—one hell of a mouse!
a bat in the dining room
at dawn

Brent Partridge

watching the mouse watching me

Joanne Morcom

from the paper bag
close to his chest
a kitten peeping

L. A. Davidson

proud of the kitten's
first kill until I saw the
babies

Peter Yovu

CONTRAPUNTALS: A DOUBLE TANKA STRING

Sanford Goldstein and Pat Shelley*

I want
a music
that opens out,
that covers
all the lonely

silences
in the music
that allow us to hear
footsteps
down the hallway

I can curl
my Bach
in a red maple:
this music of give and take's everywhere
without strings or batons

melody
within melody
remembered . . .
in the Shakespeare Garden
I pause to name the flowers

Keats' incense
hangs upon the boughs—
oh, for me, for me,
tanka is an aesthetic maze,
an endless line of full-blown wavering dots

unheard melodies
are sweeter still
the soft lost voices
of the forest
the lost songs of the poet

*Poems on left by Sanford Goldstein,
poems on right by Pat Shelley.

WINTER RAIN

Renku by
Kenneth Tanemura
and
Jerry Kilbride

only the stone-smell
tells of it . . .
winter rain kt

at the thousand foot level
fog reaches a field of snow jk

starlit night—
jagged shreds of mist
shape the breeze kt

not sure of the source
of the nightingale's song jk

the full moon
submerged in a cloud
its light remains kt

the birch grove crimson
at dawn jk

the chinese farmer yawns "red is a lucky color" year of the rooster	jk
charlie chaplin lifts a wedge as the ship goes out to sea	kt
doors thrown open uneven gusts of spring air enter the theater	jk
a breathless kiss in black-and-white	kt
under a franz kline painting their differences emerge	jk
in renoir's <i>les parapluies</i> everyone looks alike	kt
argenteuil sunday rain on the river quiet as conversations	jk
moon resting on a cloud strangely comforted	kt
distant star the telescope cold against my eye	jk
standing on a hill city lights below	kt
faultline flowering fungus on rubble	jk
her footsteps fade . . . the sound of my desire	kt

the woman
who never married
hums a tune to herself kt

memory of a troopship
fading in the fog jk

my 5-year-old sweetheart
passes by
without a glance kt

if only the yellow brick road
led to a real wizard jk

a trace of sadness
in his voice
“we’ll always have paris” kt

the usual suspects smirk
at the siren’s sound jk

so taken by her
he walks off
the screen kt

the rattle of dice
on top of the bar jk

“... on the rocks”
he adds
with bravado kt

the tattooed braggart
jumps overboard first jk

this summer path
partially lit . . .
the full moon kt

from cassiopeia’s throne
a subtler light jk

cusps of seasons
the equinox
holds our moment

jk

we commune
with the silence

kt

after love
our whispers & the birds
of dawn

jk

the consoling
first song

kt

roses bend
toward the east
the sun also rises

jk

and a final
farewell to arms

kt

the pool balls
tightly racked—old hustler
waiting for a break

Michael Ketchek

rolling down the street
a paper bag
the shape of a bottle

a night of clouds—
the blinking “O”
of the Lone Star Motel

Michael Dylan Welch

stripper
yawning
rhythmically

Paul David Mena

in sin—
Amish child makes a face
on her doll

Pamela Connor

February blizzard;
small cactus garden
warming my desk

Edward J. Rielly

raw daybreak—
in the heart of town
streetpeople waiting

Tom Clausen

on my new
answering machine
the same old voices

Carlos Colón

nothing to say
saying it
anyway

station platform
waiting alone
he practices his smile

Cyril Childs

donating
complimentary textbooks
to use the boxes

Cliff Wood

upwardly mobile
he pulls up his socks
before the meeting

LeRoy Gorman

good to see you
he says
turning his head away

Cyril Childs

louvered light . . .
a lone office worker
sipping the last coffee

Jeffrey Winke

WHITE SWEET-CLOVER SNOW

First snow last night, some places with a wet, sticky coating. By the garage, a rubble of pea gravel and some run-off from the roof glint in the mid-morning sun. A bush with tiny white flowers on short racemes sticks up its sprangly branches there, about two feet tall.

sweet clover
still budding as the first
snow melts

Books say it blooms "May-October". The flowers are like sweet-pea blossoms, but only three or four millimeters, less than a quarter inch long.

in from the cold
the white sweet clover
gives scent

... like new-mown hay. How the seasons melt into one another.

William J. Higginson
Santa Fe, 4 Nov. 1994

before light—
waking into the hush
of first snow

Suzanne Williams

first light
off Blue Mountain
... the field catching it

Robert Kusch

Snowing
—the white rooster
lost on the fence

Matthew Louvière

the creek in moonlight
creeps toward me
from the darkness of the willows

Michael McNierney

buttermilk sky
high in the blue spruce
voice of the wind

her last illness
shadow of the withered branch
on snow

Yvonne Hardenbrook

after her death
invading the privacy
of old diaries

Elsie O. Kolashinski

dusk—
“a terrible thing to be old,”
she says

Edward J. Rielly

shortest day
of the year—her long
diary entry

Joanne Morcom

these death poems—
grandson hearing Basho's
asks for mine

H. F. Noyes

icicles pend
from the bell clappers—
your silence

Jim Kacian

improbable morning
your earrings
on my dresser

Paul David Mena

empty feeder
bluejay
full of himself

Yvonne Hardenbrook

late afternoon
the soft curves of snow
and your voice

Marian Olson

White wedding balloon
floats into the backyard
full winter moon

Tim Happel

winter
eclipse
melting
shadows
of
the
beaver
moon

Ellen Compton

a shallow grave
in the ferns, gnats rise and fall
on a spoke of sun

Arizona Zipper

a copperhead
slowly from that river's mist
its length growing

essell

the footsteps
of a sparrow under
dead twigs

Donald B. Hendrich

with a twig she scrapes moss
from her grandfather's name,
letter by letter

Mark Rutter

with the wind
the shadow of the pine
moves too

Bruce Ross

Even a low hill
can bring to mind Elk Mountain
and Father's ashes

Charles P. Trumbull

distant thunder
the aged priest
lowers his voice

Anthony J. Pupello

toward night
we hitch a ride
gun on the seat

John Stevenson

with something or other
in its beak:
spring robin

beached boats
the parrot's owner
nowhere to be seen

Ty Hadman

Above the city
in a wilderness of sky—
the freewheeling hawk

Tom Tico

On second thought
not sweeping
the passageway

Michael Fessler

*Desnudo techo
extranos quehaceres
de la arana*

Bare ceiling
the strange household chores
of the spider

*Alfonso Cisneros Cox
Translation by Ty Hadman*

cloudgazing
I lose
my balance

LeRoy Gorman

even at home
I become homesick
gazing at the moon

Michael Ketchek

REVIEWS

A HAIKU PATH: THE HAIKU SOCIETY OF AMERICA 1968-1988, edited by the Haiku Society of America Twentieth Anniversary Book Committee. Haiku Society of America, Inc., 1994, paper, \$27.95, 402 pages, ISBN 0-9631467-0-X.

Six years in the making, *A Haiku Path* is part organizational history, part reference on the writing of haiku in English, and part tribute to those who founded and built the Haiku Society of America. While it admirably fulfills all its varied objectives, the real heart of the book—and the aspect that makes it much more than a mere souvenir for Society members—lies in the commentary and criticism that make up a significant portion of its 402 pages.

The book charts the growth and development of the HSA, and by extension much of the North American haiku movement, through a vital twenty-year period. The first two sections each cover a decade of the organization's history. The first, entitled "Finding the Way," looks at 1968-1978. An essay by Elizabeth Searle Lamb presents an historical overview, focusing on the beginnings of haiku in English with the Imagist poets of the early 20th century, the increased understanding of the form in the West that came with the publications of Harold Henderson and R.H. Blyth in the post-World War II period, and the birth of the Haiku Society of America in 1968. Much of this is familiar ground to those who have read the introductory material by Cor van den Heuvel in *The Haiku Anthology* and Bruce Ross' introduction to *Haiku Moment*. The pieces that follow, however, greatly expand these previously available histories, fleshing out the bare bones of the facts. The book uses the minutes of the original meetings along with correspondence between the various interested parties to present an in-depth account of the founding of the HSA. The minutes read more like verbatim transcripts, and it's fascinating to be a fly on the wall at these gatherings, listening in as the Society's original definitions of haiku and senryu are slowly and painstakingly worked out. It's also a bit of a shock for those of us who came along somewhat later to realize just how unexplored the territory of English-language haiku was little more than two decades ago.

Also featured in this section are discussions that explore basic issues surrounding haiku content and technique, including the use of punctuation, the role of nature in haiku and the concept of *sabi*. Especially interesting was a linguistic analysis of sound values in haiku in a 1978 *Frogpond* article by Michael Segers. The section concludes with a heartfelt tribute to HSA founder and guiding light Harold Henderson who died in 1974.

Part II, "On the Path," focuses on the North American haiku movement's coming of age between 1978 and 1988. Lamb's overview re-

counts the founding of *Frogpond*, the growth of national (Haiku Canada) and regional (North Carolina, Boston, Haiku Poets of Northern California, etc.) haiku societies, the histories of the haiku journals that appeared during the decade, and the burgeoning publication of haiku collections and related books. The articles that follow reveal an increasingly sophisticated knowledge of Japanese haiku in the West and a deepening awareness of the differences between the Japanese model and the path struck out upon by North American poets. Among the many notable essays, mostly taken from the pages of *Frogpond*, are Hiroaki Sato's discussion of the differing Japanese and American perceptions of the nature of haiku (primary among them, the greater preoccupation with Zen on the part of American haiku poets) and Rod Willmot's call for "psychological haiku." These essays work together quite well, ultimately laying out a kind of "poetics" of English-language haiku. Having them all together in one place is, in and of itself, worth the price of the book. (Might it be a worth-while project for the Society to take these essays—along with a few from Part I—and publish them as a separate volume of haiku theory and criticism?)

Part II concludes with tributes to Foster Jewell, Raymond Roseliep, and Nick Virgilio, three of the pioneers of American haiku now deceased. The tribute to Jewell, written by Geraldine C. Little focuses on aspects of his haiku, while the various pieces on Virgilio reveal the powerful personality behind the poems. The Roseliep tribute, consisting of two essays by Roseliep himself along with the text of an interview, is more theoretical in nature, projecting his clear-eyed vision of what American haiku should be.

The concluding section, "Toward a Peak," honors some of the best work the English-language haiku movement has produced, as judged by the Society's various contests, the Tokyo Museum of Haiku Literature Awards, and the 1987-1988 Japan Air Lines contest. A complete list of winners and their works is included. Following this are appendices, primarily organizational in nature, presenting a twenty-year list of the Society's officers and honoring donors to the *Haiku Path* project.

While there will inevitably be quibbles about what essays were included and which weren't or about what aspects of English-language haiku were highlighted and which downplayed, there will likely be little disagreement about the value of the outcome. *A Haiku Path* is a treasure-trove of information and insight on English-language haiku. There are few readers who will not find their knowledge expanded or their appreciation for those who came before deepened. Put *A Haiku Path* on the shelf beside Henderson, Blyth, and *The Haiku Anthology*. This is one of the essential books on haiku.

Reviewed by Lawrence Rungren

BENDING WITH THE WIND: haiku and other poems by nick avis. Newfoundland Poetry Series. Breakwater, P. O. Box 100, St. Johns, NF A1C 6E6 Canada. 1993, not paged, inquire price.

WEEDING THE COSMOS: SELECTED HAIKU by John Brandi. La Alameda Press, 9636 Guadalupe Trail NW, Albuquerque, NM 87114. 1994, 111+xii, \$10 plus shipping.

Almost at opposite ends of the continent, Nick Avis and John Brandi have been writing and publishing haiku and senryu for some time, usually in small, ephemeral editions seen only by a few. Now we have the pleasure of seeing larger, representative collections from both.

Nick Avis's book *bending with the wind* is beautifully produced. It contains single haiku and senryu, haiku sequences, and "concrete" haiku. For me, the most successful poems in the book are the single haiku. Avis beautifully captures the moods evoked by nature with such poems as:

darkness peak to peak . . .
 echoing in the valley
 the woodpecker's knock

gazing at the stars . . .
the line on my fishing pole
 pulls with the river

I do have a problem, though, with the "ing" form which so often skews the grammar of haiku so that, even if one logically knows who is doing the gazing, it sounds like the "line" is gazing at the stars. It could just as easily begin with "I gaze at the stars . . ."

The first of these two examples follows the sequence "descending the mountain", appearing at the bottom of the opposite page, and if not a part of the sequence, is certainly in harmony with it. It is one of the more delightful sequences in the book.

descending the mountain

After making love
We descend the mountain
And its silence

we return
to the valley's warmth
 the smell of young leaves

quickly the fly bites
 its golden wings shimmering
 in the evening sun.

I like also those poems that have a sense of mystery about them, evoking a mood that reverberates after the reading:

downtown graveyard
the taxi driver's meter
clicks

mother and daughter
weave together on the loom
mist around the house

the telephone
rings only once
autumn rain

the young fisherman
calling his grandfather's name
only the echo

And I enjoyed the following senryu for its playful turns on "shortness":

a mini-skirted hooker
winks as she passes
this short summer night

On the other hand, I have difficulty with some of the visual games in *bending*. Many of them don't work for me. One that does is rather modest by comparison to the more elaborate ones:

liptoliptulips

The tulip petals themselves are like lips that open and close, and the texture of the tulip and the human lip are similar. And in this form they are folded together like both the flower and the mouth.

Here and there in the collection there are poems that I would term "so whats", ones that seem to me to be obvious or somewhat contrived. I think the book could have done without

opening the window
this first day of spring

his garden
full of leaves
my neighbor looks sad

midday heat
my cat on its back
y a w n s at the sky

Overall the book is a fine one and leaves the reader feeling in harmony with the poem that ends the closing sequence “the stone madonna”, about time spent in a Buddhist monastery:

mist begins to rise
we leave and no one
says a word

—because Nick Avis has said his words superbly and simply.

Weeding the Cosmos by John Brandi also contains more traditional haiku and related verse, in this case called three-liner “twists” by the poet. It, too, is a physically beautiful book. The title poem of the collection is one of my favorites, playing as it does with the actual flower “cosmos” and the larger implication of the universe:

Weeding the cosmos
a monk stops to answer
his cordless phone

How wonderful that the cordless phone can be carried anywhere one goes (within range of other phones, of course), and how delightful that the seemingly eternal and natural is juxtaposed with such a human connection.

As does Avis, Brandi captures the natural world in some lovely images:

Daybreak
pollen rising
from the unswept path

The rumps of the horses
darker
after the storm

Daytime moon
discovered
under a raven's wing

When he creates mystery, Brandi often does it by linking the startling human moment of experience with a natural image:

A cold morning
finally, the hat
fits my head

Making love
he notices all those cobwebs
that need to be cleaned

About to kill an ant
but no,
it's carrying a corpse

In a rented room
an inchworm crawls
across my chest.

A haunting sense of the passage of time, of inevitable aging, runs through this collection. I am moved by poems such as:

Arranging lilacs
he discovers
an age spot

In the mirror
the old man I was afraid of
as a child

Between his father's snores
he hears each wave
cover the beach.

Other poems on the same theme, however, sometimes seem a bit obvious:

Even my father
says I'm
looking old

Many births
many deaths
another sunrise

The influence of Zen on these poems feels sometimes very delicate and sometimes contrived.

Separated
by everything
he names

So many boards missing
the shed stands easily
in the wind

Before answering
my question, the old nun
looks at me and spits

—strike me as much finer than the more obvious:

The fiercest
territory of all
—daily life

Searching for the key;
there in my pocket
all the time

When he turns to writing about sex and love, sometimes Brandi falls into sentimentality:

Autumn haze,
under her robe
a shrine in a clearing

In love's ecstasy
our hands
drink their own fingers

Finally, there is a delicious thread of humor that runs through the collection as a whole.

First phonecall
in a week
"Is this the Bingo?"

What to write
about the girl checking
her make-up in a puddle?

Finally an answer
to a three-page letter:
"Phone me"

This is a book worth having. Many of the poems have the capacity to startle us into really "seeing" moments of our daily lives.

Both of these collections are far-ranging, encompassing fine images of nature, our connection to it and to one another, and the larger mystery of being on the planet at all.

Reviewed by Penny Harter

MJESECINA / MOONLIGHT, by Marijan Cekolj. Includes art work, introduction, biography, and afterword. Biblioteka / Series, Book 1. Croation / English. The Croation Haiku Association, Smerovisce 24, 41430 Samobar, Croatia. 1994, 70 pp, 5 1/2 x 8, perfect bound. ISBN 953-96157-0-4.

Here is a haiku book of a "born" poet who, like Thoreau, loves to saunter, to keep "a broad margin" to his life, and like Whitman to follow the "open road." He's also president of the Croation Haiku Association, editor of the magazine *Sparrow*, and of the world-renowned anthology, *Haiku from the War*. At the end of *Moonlight* there's a biographical page opposite an extraordinary photograph portraying this man's depth to the full. We learn that he began writing poetry at 20, and that in 1988-90 he received the Prize of the Culture and Education Congress of Croatia. Along with his fellow Croatian poets, he has offered us fine and sensitive waka, as well as a remarkable selection of haiku.

While the translation into English is not always professional and is sometimes rather too literal, the lapses often enough lend to Cekolj's work an appealing original flavor. For example, this haiku is but the more true-hearted for its use of the seaman's "she" for the river:

A river flowing.
Just when she passes
here she comes again!

In his introduction, Marinko Spanovic writes: "The charm of haiku is 'poverty' . . . described in numerous religions, but ahead of that charm stands *wabi*, a spirit which finds the big in the small, the beautiful in the simple." he cites::

One shrivelled stalk
glistening in the snow . . .
The moonlight.

Luko Paljetak in his afterword says Cekolj's "immortalization of the momentary" is almost common, reminding me of the saying "The ordinary mind is Zen." He is content to share with us a living moment, free of afterthought or "message." There is a childlike clarity and wonder in his awareness and expression of the everyday, while his wartime impressions have the detachment and timelessness of a Zen monk:

Pretending to sleep
a little girl really
fell asleep!

In the air bomb
crater slowly falling
the withered leaf . . .

A small cat
goes round in the wide turns by
the puddles of rain!

Tanks on the
street—the Spring
advancing . . .

In an essay on "haiku communication," Cekolj writes that haiku "uncovers man's inner life through the living given of things . . ." Who cannot relate—in depth—to his magnificently simple

Through the opened
door the chilliness and
a man coming in . . .

Reviewed by H. F. Noyes

LIKE WATER: POEMS AND PHOTOGRAPHS of *in spring runoff & gifts from everywhere*. Richard Bodner, with additional photographs by Gita Bodner. Land of Enchantment Poetry Theater, 1329 Sixth St., Las Vegas, NM 87701. 1994, 36 pp, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches, \$7. ppd. LIKE WATER / IN SPRING RUNOFF: SUITES FOR GUITAR & POETRY. Carl Bernstein, guitar; Richard Bodner, poetry. Audio Cassette. Leaky Buckets Music, PO Box 101, Ocate, NM 87734. 1994, \$10. ppd. Note: Book and tape may be ordered together from Leaky Buckets Music \$15. ppd.

With many passages from Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* interspersed, the first halves of both book and tape ("in spring runoff") include some haiku linked with each other and with non-haiku poetry, prose, photographs (book) and music (tape) which flow together "like water". The second halves of both consist mainly of Bodner's versions of works by such others as Rilke, Rumi, Tagore, and assorted T'ang Dynasty poets (Li Po, Han Shan, etc.), again with a few photos or background music. Since the texts of book and tape are nearly identical, I found it most pleasant to listen to the hour-long tape while reading through the book (not getting hung up on those few places where, like most of us, Bodner slightly revises on the tongue). And a large part of that pleasantness was the guitar improvisation spun out virtually without stopping by Carl Bernstein, who seemed delightfully suspended between the classical tradition of absolute music and the apt abstractions of nature which the acoustic guitar makes possible.

Having heard Bodner read and spoken with him in person, I was prepared for the somewhat over-emphatic tone (Alan Watts minus Brit accent plus breathiness) of the recording. It is at times a little too self-conscious. Still, this work overall—the book and the tape—walks that dangerous edge between ripoff and homage without falling on the wrong side. Certainly we can and do rework the greats whom we admire into some semblance of ourselves, or of the selves we would like to be.

Bodner's own poems and most of his translations/adaptations of others sound rather alike, so that the effect of hearing the tape is relatively seamless. His renderings of Rilke and the T'ang poets remain close to their sources both literally and formally. He has shifted Rilke's tone in the third Sonnet to Orpheus, which was certainly not written to any "little one" though a youth is addressed, but still something authentic comes through.

In the haiku and near-haiku, Bodner often irritates by dropping a verse a bit too quickly for it to flower, jogging off to another, also let go before he settles into it, like a nervous bee. But some of these should simply be read as free-verse stanzas. And the book does contain some arresting haiku moments. A pair of my favorites:

snow under starlight
& brightest of all
—the path

last light
pouring up the slope
—and higher still

If you sense a slightly didactic tone in these, it is there, and a fragrance of Zen, too, for those who dig a kind of Beat looseness with it all. The longer poems, which make up a majority of the text, run to lists of nature images, and sometimes approach a kind of flowing haiku, one into another.

The last poems of this collection, before a page of thank-yous, are called "Squeezing sake"—which Bodner pronounces like any G.I., "saki" instead of *sa-keh* as it is in Japanese. These are apparently from a longer work called "Basho's Rag". One of the best pieces in it, seemingly the source for the name of the recording company:

spring runoff
flowing again from
leaky buckets

For those who think of New Mexico as a dry, desert place, this flowing collection may prove an ear-opener.

Reviewed by William J. Higginson

BOOKS RECEIVED

Listing of new books is for information only and does not imply endorsement by *Frogpond* or the Haiku Society of America. The magazine may carry reviews of some of these titles.

Basho Festival Dedicatory Haiku Anthology. 48th Annual Edition. Japanese, some English. Master Basho Memorial Museum, Ueno City, Japan. 1994.

Grinding my ink. Haiku by Margaret Chula. Woodwinds by Ken Ulansey. 55 minute cassette. Katsura Press, PO Box 275, Lake Oswego, OR 97034. 1995. \$10.95 ppd, U.S.; \$11.95 ppd, Canada; \$12.95 ppd, overseas by air. Discount package of cassette and book \$24.95 ppd, U.S.; \$26.95 ppd, Canada; \$28.95 ppd, Europe by air; \$30.95 ppd, other overseas countries. U.S. funds only.

Round the Pond/Ocolind iazel An Anthology/Antologie by Ion Codrescu. Translations by Miahaela Codrescu. English/Romanian. Muntenia Publishing House, Constanta, Romania. 1994, 272 pp, 5 1/4 x 8 1/2, perfect bound. ISBN 973-5-6. Lei 2500. Available from Ion Codrescu, Str. Soveja No. 25, Bl. V2, sc B, ap. 331, 8700 Constanta, Romania.

A Haiku Alphabet in Celebration of Spring. LeRoy Gorman. First presented at Haiku Canada Weekend, Toronto, Canada, May 21, 1994. proof press, 67, rue Court, Aylmer, QC, Canada J9H 4M1. 1994, n.p. [32], 4¹/₄ x 5¹/₂, paper. ISBN 1-8957787-16-6. \$5 (3 for \$10), ppd Canadian or U.S. funds.

30 Zen-Haiku of J. W. Hackett. Translations by Gabriel Rosenstock. Gaelic/English. A.I.S., 31 Fenian St., Dublin 2 Ireland. 1994, 4 x 7, 32 pp, paper. ISBN 1-874700-427. \$8. plus \$2. postage, surface mail.

dreams wander. Haiku Society of America 1994 Members' Anthology. Editors: Kenneth C. Leibman (Managing Editor), Nina A. Wicker, Peggy Willis Lyles. 1994, 52 pp, 5¹/₂ x 8¹/₂, paper. ISBN 0-9631467-2-6. \$7 ppd (U.S. & Canada), other countries add \$2. per copy. From Kenneth C. Leibman, PO Box 767, Archer, FL 32618.

Woodshavings. Spring Street Haiku Group, Dee Evetts Coordinator. 1994, 4¹/₄ x 5¹/₂, n.p.[24], paper. \$2.50 ppd from Dee Evetts, 102 Forsyth St. #18, New York, NY 10002.

The Light of Elizabeth Lamb: 100 American Haiku. Translations by Haiping Gong. Chinese only. 1993, 82 pp, 4¹/₂ x 7¹/₄, paper.

The Wasp In The Wind: Collected Haiku, Steve Luttrell. The Cafe Review, c/o Yes Books, 20 Danforth St., Portland, ME 04101. 1994, 35 pp, 4 x 5¹/₂, paper \$5.00.

landings soft: haiku, Elizabeth St Jacques. Amelia, 329 E. St., Bakersfield. CA 93304. 1994, 16 pp, 5¹/₂ x 4¹/₄, paper. ISBN 0-936545-21-6. U.S., Canada & Mexico \$5.50 ppd; foreign mail \$7. ppd.

A White Chrysanthemum. Paul Williams, editor. Two Autumns Press, 478 Guerrero St., San Francisco, CA 94110. 1994, 20 pp, 5¹/₄ x 8¹/₄, paper. \$5.00 ppd.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Copy of talk available

"In Dubuque, Light Meets Dark, as Haiku and Longer Poetry Link," the talk delivered to the Haiku Society of America in San Francisco, March 5, 1994 by Alexis K. Rotella is now available. To cover cost of xeroxing and postage, send \$4.00 to Alexis K. Rotella, 16651 Marchmont Drive, Los Gatos, CA 95032.

Contest Winners

Winners of the 1994 San Francisco International Haiku, Senryu, and Tanka Contest, sponsored by Haiku Poets of Northern California, have been announced. Haiku: 1st, Kohjin Sakamoto; 2nd, Virginia Brady Young; 3rd, Robert Spiess; HMs (unranked): Jim Kacian, Patricia Neubauer, Joan Iversen Goswill. Judges: Ruth Yarrow and Tom Clausen. Senryu: 1st, Garry Gay; 2nd, Helen K. Davie; 3rd, Glenna Holloway; HMs (unranked): Emilie J. Roth, Leatrice Lifshitz, Garry Gay. Judges: Ruth Yarrow and Tom Clausen. Tanka: 1st, June Moreau; 2nd, Alexis K. Rotella; 3rd, Pat Shelley; HMs: Elizabeth Searle Lamb, Yvonne Hardenbrook. Judge: Dave Sutter.

Canadian Writer's Journal has announced the following winners in its 1994 International Poetry Contest:

Free Verse Category: 1st and 2nd: Mary Hoy Schmidt; 3rd: Cathy Yeomans; 1st HM: Marian Olson; 2nd HM: John B. Lee; 3rd HM: E. Harris.

Haiku Category: 1st: Joan Woodward Larsen; 2nd: George Knox; 3rd: Kohjin Sakamoto; 1st HM: Winona Baker; 2nd HM: Joan Woodward Larsen; 3rd HM: Kohjin Sakamoto.

Patterned Poetry Category: 1st: Sandra M. Morgan; 2nd: Hannah J. Main-van der Kamp.

1995 International Poetry Contest, sponsored by Palomar Branch, National League of American Pen Women

Categories

1. Free Verse: 30-line limit
2. Rhymed Verse 30-line limit
3. Haiku: Traditional or Contemporary

Judges: Poetry, Yvonne Hardenbrook. Haiku, Jerry Kilbride

Contest Rules

Poems must be original and unpublished. Open to all poets.

Prizes: \$50, \$25, \$10, HMs (each category). Winners will be notified by mail. Winning poems to be published in a chapbook. All rights revert to authors after publication.

Send a SASE or SAE with IRC for list of winners or additional information.

Mail two copies, typed on one side of 8 1/2 x 11" paper.

Name, address and phone number on ONE copy only; category must be typed on each.

No poems will be returned, so keep a copy.

Deadline: in hand March 15, 1995.

Fee: Poems \$5.00 each. Haiku 3 for \$5.00. No limit.

Checks: payable to Palomar Branch, NLAPW.

Entries: Helen J. Sherry, 11929 Caminito Corriente, San Diego, CA 92128, USA.

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GARY HOTHAM

Scaggsville, Maryland

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