

frogpond

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# Frogpond

The Journal of the Haiku  
Society of America



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## ABOUT FROGPOND

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HSA Logo (title page): Stephen Addiss

## ABOUT VOLUME THIRTY

IN OUR CONTINUING CELEBRATION of the thirtieth year of publication for the Haiku Society of America's journal, *Frogpond*, this issue contains a sprinkling of poems that appeared in these pages during the second decade of publication: 1988-1997. The editors during that period were: Elizabeth Searle Lamb (1988-1990 and 1994), Sylvia Forges-Ryan (1991-1993), and Kenneth C. Leibman (1995-1997).

## ANNOUNCEMENT

This will be my final term as editor of *Frogpond*. I am announcing my retirement at this time so that members of the Society may have some time to consider whether they wish to offer their services as editor for next year.

My final issue as editor will be volume XXXI:1, winter 2008 because the entire selection period for that issue, approximately mid August to mid December, falls within my term. By the end of this calendar year the winter 2008 issue will be ready for printing.

I'll say goodbye and offer any final thoughts in that winter issue but, for now, just wish to provide members with some notice. If anyone is considering offering their services for next year and interested in discussing the investment of time and other resources involved in editing *Frogpond*, I would be happy to consult with them. I do recommend this job.

*John Stevenson, Editor*

*Museum  
of Haiku  
Literature  
Award*

\$100 for the best unpublished work  
appearing in the previous issue of  
*Frogpond* as selected by vote of the  
H.S.A. Executive Committee

**From XXX:1**

From the A-bombed tree  
seeds start to fall  
this year also

*Yasuhiko Shigemoto*

haiku



Frogpond XXX:2

rain at dusk  
daffodils  
light the path

*Joseph Robello*

early spring  
shadows of treetops swaying  
on the shoji

*Sosuke Kanda*

redbuds in flower  
a coal train winds down  
pine mountain

*Ken Hurm*

early robin  
flakes of rust  
on the shovel

*Laryalee Fraser*

blossoms . . .  
the dog leap-curves  
toward the frisbee

*Kala Ramesh*

Haiku Society of America

rainy day—  
a glass of muddy water  
by the road

*Gautam Nadkarni*

rounded boulders  
the mountain torrent  
around them

*Ruth Yarrow*

New Orleans—  
waking to mourning doves  
and the ring of hammers

*Susan A. Wiley*

a girl  
rings his doorbell  
spring sunshine

*Marcus Larsson*

an overpass  
pauses  
the night rain

*Charlie Close*

Frogpond XXX:2

from Denmark  
the gulls follow the ferry  
back to Sweden

*Darold D. Braid*

sea salt  
my mother's  
freckled arm

*Patrick Sweeney*

gods replaced—  
light from the oculus  
straightens toward noon

*Peggy Willis Lyles*

gathering clouds—  
a border collie works sheep  
up the hillside

*Margaret R. Smith*

starless night  
the flicker of a moth  
in my hands

*Vanessa Proctor*

Haiku Society of America

cloud shadows  
pass over the bald hill—  
buzz of flies

*Rodney Williams*

the idling scooter's exhaust summer grasses

*Scott Metz*

the hiss of tires  
on asphalt lingers  
summer night

*Robert P. Moyer*

hot summer night the roll of her Spanish tongue

*Chad Lee Robinson*

campfire smoke  
around each other  
we tell stories

*Paula Fisher*

Frogpond XXX:2

a twilight longing  
for who knows  
what or where

*Christopher Patchel*

chin stubble—  
a sleeper  
among rose bushes

*Robert Gaurnier*

choir night  
I hang my coat  
on someone else's

*Marcus Larsson*

Years we were away—  
through driftwood  
the water's clarity

*Rebecca Lilly*

hard to say  
what's living or dead  
white lichen

*Richard Straw*

Haiku Society of America

old park bench  
occupied  
by lichen

*Robert Epstein*

wind from the lake  
the plain song  
of bottled water

*Robert Epstein*

this middle age  
moss on trees just in  
from the forrest edge

*LeRoy Gorman*

church graveyard  
the thin brown stones  
hunch forward

*Andrea Grillo*

night wind . . .  
turnstones  
shift the darkness

*John Barlow*

Frogpond XXX:2

dawn newspaper quest—  
fine mist  
in the flashlight beam

*Richmond D. Williams*

softly falling rain  
a storefront church  
boarded up

*Carolyn Hall*

antique harvester  
gear teeth  
clenching brambles

*Scott Mason*

an empty paper cup  
on a park bench  
autumn evening

*Michael Ketchek*

awakened by the concrete and its moon

*Marlene Mountain*

## Dissection of the Haiku Tradition: Wind

*By Fay Aoyagi*

When I was a small child, my grandmother told me the spring wind brought a wicked spirit. “Once this spirit enters your body, it will try to remove a plug in your brain. Then, you will become mentally unbalanced,” she said. “How can I protect my brain?” I asked. My grandmother advised me to wear a hat.

*muzugayuki tsubasa no tsukene nehan-nishi*

roots of my wings  
are itchy—  
west wind from Nirvana

*Yuko Masaki* <sup>(1)</sup>

Nehan-nishi (west wind from Nirvana) is a spring kigo.

Our ancestors had tails when they climbed down from trees, didn't they? I do not miss a tail, but sometimes I wish I had wings. Then I ask myself a question. If I can be something with wings, what do I want to be? A cicada? I do not want to spend seven years underground. A butterfly? I am not very thrilled about being caught in the spider's web. A pigeon? I would like to avoid becoming a scavenger in the city streets. A swan? I prefer a bird with a beautiful singing voice. A phoenix? I may lack the special courage to fly into a fire to be reborn, however a phoenix may not be a bad choice. I could enjoy several cycles of life.

*tsuwagochi ni sentakubasami hisshinaru*

in the strong east wind  
those clothes-pegs  
are frantic

*Minako Kato* <sup>(2)</sup>



## Frogpond XXX:2

Kochi (eastern wind), or a variation of it, is a spring kigo.

As a naturalized citizen of the United States, I am satisfied with my life here. San Francisco, where I live, has shops selling Japanese food. A public library has a good collection of books in Japanese. There is a video shop if I want to watch Japanese TV programs. What do I miss as an expatriate? The smell of sun on freshly laundered clothes. A dryer is very convenient. I will not trade places with a housewife in Tokyo who takes the laundry in and out several times a day based on the changing weather. Still, artificial scent cannot surpass the sunshine.

In the above haiku Minako Kato personified the clothes-peg. Without the word 'hisshinaru' (being frantic), I cannot have a vivid image of clothes-pegs in the strong wind. They are fighting for the clothes they are supposed to protect.

Early summer, around June, is the rainy season in Japan. Kurohae (black south wind) is the wind during this long spell of rainy weather. It is not a stormy rain as in the August typhoon season. Perpetual, steady rain goes on for days. It may cause mold in the furniture. Food goes bad quicker than usual. Japanese department stores keep umbrellas in a wide selection of designs and colors.

When the rain front moves north, the Meteorological Agency announces the official end of the rainy season. The sky becomes bright. Cicadas start singing.

*shirohae ya kesho ni moreshi mimi no kage*

white south wind—  
she forgets to apply makeup  
behind her ears

*Sojo Hino* <sup>(2)</sup>

## Haiku Society of America

Shirohae (white south wind) is the wind in high summer.

In the neighborhood where I grew up in Tokyo, there was a woman who used to be a geisha. My grandmother did not want me to be too friendly with this woman. My dream then was to become a singer or an actress. When I went to a public bath house, I spent more time in front of the big mirror than in the tub or at the washing area. My grandmother usually chatted with her friends, while I was practicing my act. But each time this woman came in, my grandmother and her friends started to leave.

“You don’t want to be a kept woman like her,” my grandmother lowered her voice, casting a cold glance towards the woman.

*uba hitori ironaki kaze no naka ni sumu*

an old lady by herself  
lives in the wind  
without colors

*Tenko Kawasaki* <sup>(2)</sup>

Some Japanese kigo are based on either Chinese poems or Japanese waka. The kigo in the above haiku, ironaki kaze (colorless wind) is based on the following waka.

*fukikureba minimo shimikeru akikaze o ironaki monoto  
omoikeru kana*

when it blows  
it penetrates my body  
I think this autumnal wind  
is a thing  
without colors

*Tomonori Kino* <sup>(3)</sup>

The concept of this kigo, ‘colorless wind,’ is not about be-

## Frogpond XXX:2

ing a rebel. But my mind wonders to the ancient aristocrats or emperors who were sent away to the lonesome islands as political exiles. There is a Japanese proverb about uniformity: a nail sticking out will be hit by a hammer.

*shinigami ni shirimochi tsukase kamaitachi*

a demon of death  
is fell on his buttocks—  
a weasel phantom in the wind

*Sho Hayashi* <sup>(1)</sup>

Kamaitachi (literally, kama means ‘a sickle’ and itachi ‘a weasel’) is a winter kigo based on an ancient Japanese belief. In the cold regions, a whirlwind on a winter day can cause a cut on human skin. Ancient Japanese believed a weasel-like phantom caused the problem by using its sickle.

Tsuyoshi Domoto, a contemporary Japanese singer in his twenties, wrote a song titled ‘Koi No Kamaitachi’ (Weasel Phantom for Love). His lyrics include the following phrase.

The weasel phantom in the wind tells me  
It is pointless to cut a heart  
That knows no doubt

The phantom in Domoto’s song is not interested in pure hearts. From time to time, we may need to bleed a little to speed recovery. Listening to this song, I ask myself why I am fascinated with the wind or wind-related kigo. I have been living in San Francisco for nearly twelve years. I have not changed my residence since 1997. I do not have any plan to move. I am settled here. I am comfortable here. Yet, I do not want to lose the spirit of a wanderer.

I wrote that having wings is not a bad idea. Why do I wish to have wings? Without wings, it may be difficult traveling in the wind..I do not want to be blown away as a fallen leaf. With

## Haiku Society of America

wings, I may have a better chance to win the fight against the wind than the clothes-pegs in Minako Kato's haiku. If I become the wind itself, some poets may call me colorless. As the wind, I may become playful with my sickle.

I believe in circles and cycles. I am happy to know that the earth is a sphere. The wind born in the Pacific Ocean may circle around the globe and touch my cheek some day.

gust—  
Zephyr steals the kite  
from a boy's hand

*Fay Aoyagi* <sup>(4)</sup>

When you surf the Internet, you will find sites telling the names of winds from all over the world; including the wind gods in Greek Mythology. California has Santa Ana and Diablo winds. Your region may have a unique wind name to use in your haiku. I am not seeking submissions from the readers. This suggestion is for your personal exercise.

Next theme will be 'inner landscape.'

(1) *Gendai Saijiki* (Modern Saijiki), edited by Tota Kaneko, Momoko Kuroda, Ban'ya Natsuishi, Seisei Shuppan, Tokyo, 1997

(2) *Dai Saijiki* (Comprehensive Saijiki) edited by Shuoshi Mizuhara, et al, Kodansha, Tokyo, 1982

(3) *Haiku Saijiki* edited by Fusei Tomiyasu, Kenkichi Yamamoto, et al, Heibonsha, Tokyo, 1971

(4) Unpublished

All Japanese translations by Fay Aoyagi.

Frogpond XXX:2

pounding rain  
the view  
from Sunday night  
*Deb Baker*

solstice sunrise—  
how many hermit crabs  
have camped in this shell?  
*CarrieAnn Thunell*

On the first day of school  
children hold pencils  
like flowers  
*Karina Borowicz*

under the afghan—  
reading Huck Finn  
by penlight  
*Michael Dylan Welch*

not yet dawn  
coffee absorbing  
the swirl of cream  
*Ian Marshall*

Haiku Society of America

toward my tomorrow milkweed seeds

*Marlene Mountain*

long gaps  
between cross-country runners  
autumn deepens

*Burnell Lippy*

Scoreless game —  
a sudden gust loosens  
showers of yellow leaves

*David Elliott*

wind-blown geese —  
the broken stitches of  
a baseball in the grass

*Peter Yovu*

leaf-burning time  
a crescent moon carries  
its own certain dark

*Marjorie Buettner*

Frogpond XXX:2

mountain trek  
each bluff of red leaves  
surely the summit

*Elizabeth Howard*

red burst  
of an umbrella—  
rising wind

*Lenard D. Moore*

long night  
pencil shavings  
on the station floor

*Tom Painting*

a lone boxcar  
stands on a prairie siding  
autumn evening

*Cor van den Heuvel*

in the cold  
just a few words  
and moonlight

*Richard Straw*

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teasing  
like a girlfriend  
first snow

*Michael S. James*

snowing  
all the way  
to the ground

*Tami Fraser*

before recess  
the excitement  
turns to slush

*Stephen A. Peters*

I welcome snow  
that seals the door—  
a pile of books

*Kirsty Karkow*

falling snow  
the hen's warmth  
in the egg

*Harriot West*



Frogpond XXX:2

a night of change  
the trees can't let go  
of the wind

*Jim Kacian*

the table set  
with heirloom china—  
winter moon

*Marianna Monaco*

blue ice  
on the rockface  
third funeral  
this month

*Andrea Grillo*

Christmas morning  
all the family  
that could be here

*Victor Ortiz*

snowfall  
warm smells  
creep upstairs

*Toni Calvello*

Haiku Society of America

year-end cleaning—  
regret escapes  
the broom

*D. Claire Gallagher*

New Year's Eve—  
music  
from another room

*Steven Thunell*

year's end—  
what made me think I needed  
a harmonica

*Carolyn Hall*

written in red ink,  
my new year resolution  
to eat more veggies

*Michael Dylan Welch*

cold beach—  
the days after New Year's  
crashing together

*Amy Whitcomb*

Frogpond XXX:2

alone  
with the diagnosis  
I hold my own hand

*hortensia anderson*

winter sun  
a brief sting of lemon  
on my lips

*Joyce Clement*

deep winter  
the sun is only  
another star

*Ann K. Schwader*

cold moon  
he covers a fray  
in his jacket

*w. f. owen*

snow falling on snow—  
an even deeper silence  
when it ceases

*H. F. Noyes*

Haiku Society of America

bitter morning—  
his leg brace  
cold to the touch

*Emily Romano*

purple thumbnail  
the slow advance  
of winter

*Robert Hecht*

friends sign her cast light snow falling

*Emily Romano*

menthol vapors  
from a cough drop  
Valentine's Day

*Victor Ortiz*

winter warmth—  
four kinds of apple  
in his birthday pie

*Deborah P. Kolodji*

Frogpond XXX:2

the child's cough  
cracking and loosening  
spring thaw

*Mathew V. Spano*

hopscotch—  
a few stones frozen  
to the first square

*Alice Frampton*

wind in the pines  
I reach past  
my fingertips

*Peggy Willis Lyles*

first warm day  
bare branches  
begin to sway

*Susan Delphine Delaney*

daffodils  
in the garden . . .  
Dad's approval

*Helen Buckingham*

senryu

Frogpond XXX:2

convalescent step—  
at the end of the legs  
my feet

*H. F. Noyes*

dressing room mirror  
the glint of a straight pin  
at my throat

*Eve Luckring*

failing sight—  
shadows solid enough  
to stumble on

*Helen Russell*

breakup—  
my daughter's voice cracks  
across two continents

*Roberta Beary*

passed down  
from my parents  
dust pan and brush

*Tom Clausen*

# Haiku Society of America

street clothes  
rubbing tender skin  
where the bandage was

*C. Avery*

rain falling  
through smoke  
maybe nothing matters

*Michael Ketchek*

memorial candle  
scent of sulfur  
as the match is struck

*C. Avery*

school for the deaf  
the echoes of my footsteps  
down the hall

*William Cullen Jr.*

after the funeral  
the weight of potato salad  
on a spork

*Andrew Riutta*



Frogpond XXX:2

a few words . . .  
the coarseness  
of cremation ash

*Steven Thunell*

end of the story  
I'll miss  
the characters

*Francine Barnwarth*

blossoms again  
finding myself replaced  
in the anthology

*Mathew V. Spano*

governor's reception  
we get to know  
the dogs

*Anne LB Davidson*

Wash day —  
bra in her son's  
pocket

*Alexis Rotella*

# Haiku Society of America

mid-flight snooze  
socks planted against  
a cool bulkhead

*Scott Mason*

Miami sales conference  
the hooks inside  
one shark's belly

*Joyce Clement*

New moon—  
the house painter  
doesn't show

*Alexis Rotella*

pitcher's duel  
the beer vendor's  
last call

*Dan Schwerin*

restaurant door  
the notice to robbers  
also in Spanish

*Carlos Colón*

Frogpond XXX:2

my parents' room  
two cigarettes  
talk in the dark

*Joseph Robello*

mellowed fruit cake—  
a catch in my voice  
after the first bite

*Adelaide B. Shaw*

rain-veil  
my wish over these little candles  
would surprise him

*D. Claire Gallagher*

after the handshake  
we sit down for pasta  
al dente

*Yu Chang*

Christmas eve  
the light at the tip  
of a stranger's cigar

*Pamela Miller Ness*

Haiku Society of America

face down  
at the curb  
TV set

*Robbie Gamble*

having dozed  
through the president's speech  
new snow

*Robert Mainone*

shop window  
reflecting the other side  
of the street

*Thomas Heffernan*

spinning our wheels  
on late winter snow  
the fifth year of this war

*Barry George*

a pear falls  
on its side . . .  
the evening news

*Marilyn Appl Walker*

Frogpond XXX:2

peanut butter sandwich glue of grade school memories

*V. N. Rhoades*

trial docket notice . . .

after school

behind the gym

*Timothy Mize*

bouncing a ball off the wall brings childhood back

*w. f. owen*

power hitter

fielders pull down

their caps

*Michael Fessler*

Veteran's Day

boys at the playground

take a hill

*Deb Baker*

Haiku Society of America

holiday mail—  
her letter  
opens me up

*David Gershator*

old snapshot  
taken when my wrinkles  
were young

*Dorothy McLaughlin*

he loved her  
but when she would stutter—  
not so much

*Janet Brof*

in his drunken scrawl  
a word resembling love—  
autumn mosquitoes

*Janelle Barrera*

karaoke night—  
a barfly dances  
with the wallflower

*Curtis Dunlap*

Frogpond XXX:2

a little girl  
admires the prostitute's  
shiny red shoes

*Sita Seng*

gasoline rainbow  
he asks if the puddle  
is a pot of gold

*Scott Metz*

cows, which outweigh us  
by a thousand pounds each  
fleeing as we come

*Paul O. Williams*

village in the hills . . .  
a monkey looks into  
the bike's mirror

*K. Ramesh*

scholarly convention,  
serious minds focus  
on the red dress

*Beverly J. Bachand*

Haiku Society of America

forced to face myself—  
medicine cabinet

*Tyrone McDonald*

nursing home  
another story  
I won't remember

*Marie Summers*

sympathy cards  
the children  
watch cartoons

*Lynne Steel*

flickering streetlight  
the place where the lovers  
were to have met

*Allan Burns*

The wind's sound again . . .  
a sense of nostalgia  
without remembrance

*Rebecca Lilly*



Frogpond XXX:2

deadline approaching  
my dreams display  
as a software interface

*Eve Luckring*

the old potter  
thoughtfully shaping  
an apprentice

*Chris Glutz*

early March  
the head of Mary  
above the snow

*Hilary Tann*

the cello  
plays  
a cellist

*Stephen Addiss*

one creaky stair—  
on my shoulder the faint  
imprint of her ear

*Peter Yovu*



Rengay

*Pages 41, 46*

Haibun

*Pages 42 - 45, 47 - 53*

## MIDNIGHT FEEDING

*Lana Hechtman Ayers and Michael Dylan Welch*

morning bath—  
my gentle splashes  
don't wake the newborn *Lana*

catching  
the infant's yawn *Michael*

strollers in a row . . .  
I nod off  
in the waiting room *Lana*

drizzle at the window  
a gentle snore  
from the baby monitor *Michael*

bouncing baby  
sleeping through the speed bump *Lana*

midnight feeding—  
my fingerprints  
on the snooze bar *Michael*

## A MORNING TOUCH

dawn  
the lilac's  
dithering bloom

I WAKE UP, my linen hanging loose. In my bedside mirror a ray of light shines upon my neck and bare arms. Breaking dream . . . . A little of everything, from the drop of nakedness to our daily clothes. An ache rises from inside, leaving a hollow spot—the thought of leaving home.

My daughter sleeps soundly. I caress her cheeks with the back of my fingers. I want to stroke her hair, but only kiss her lightly. Don't want to wake her and then have to go.

morning rush  
my little daughter's hug  
on my neck

*Jorma Loci*

## OPEN HOUSE

HE COMES TO THE DOOR holding a full wine glass never a good sign talking non-stop about the cold, the heat, politics, the ex, the girlfriend, time at work (too much), time at home (never enough), and through it all pours one glass after another without spilling a drop until we all stand there glass in hand waiting for a sign that this time it will not end badly

empty room  
a teacup holds  
the light

*Roberta Beary*

## DROWNING

WHEN I SAY, “Goodnight, be back later,” dad gestures from the bed and mumbles, “OK, be good.”

At midnight, dad’s breath is a slow gargle and is worse at dawn. Thinking it might help him, I ask the hospice nurse to suction the water from his throat.

“Are you sure?” she asks as she administers another strong dose of morphine.

Once the tube is in, his back straightens, his large, still strong hands grab her forearms, his eyes open wide, and he winces and grunts in painful anger. An aide and I hold his arms as the nurse quickly removes what liquid she can.

“That's how he’s going to have to die,” she tells me, “by drowning.”

My sister arrives, and we rub moisturizing lotion onto his dry, cracked arms, hands, legs, and feet. Dabbing with a wet sponge the dead, flaking skin from his lips and inside his mouth, I hear visitors talk about prayer’s healing powers and say nothing. Eyes now closed, dad lies speechless in the sheets, unaware perhaps of others, but he shifts his head and leans toward my hand as I swab his forehead and face with a damp washcloth.

Trying to remember who he is, I feel the sun’s warmth as it brightens his bloated hands and feet.

vacation photo  
a dad holds his son  
above the waves

*Richard Straw*

## SQUIRREL

CONTRIBUTORY STREAMS OF THOUGHT: a fragment from Roland Barthes, winding ways of words laid down by Herman Melville, observations by Rod Willmot upon the spiritual in haiku, images from Alan Pizzarelli of a blue bench on a merry-go-round and a rainbow of oil spreading from a piece of popcorn in a goldfish pond, my own whirligig duck flapping all summer in the breezes of Maine trying to get to the open sea or the grassy waterways of the salt marsh, the dreams of Thoreau and Emerson of coming to an opening where all is light forever, the pulsing throb of Whitman's universal heart beating among the stars like the roar of surf in the Milky Way, the swinging cascade of notes from Lester Young's saxophone as he turns a simple melody into a rippling masterpiece, the thought of no thought, in the silence of a Zen koan or in an immersion in the vibrations of Nichiren chanting, the travels of the mind into the emptiness of outer space or into the shadowy imagined corridor of a snail's shell—wherever the mind goes, it tries to find a place of its own, to make a place out of words, to make itself in words, to find itself in words, to lose itself in words.

It wants something pure and visionary, perfect in form and harmony, and is surprised to find it in a squirrel sitting hunched on a limb of the horse-chestnut tree outside the kitchen window, protecting itself from a heavy thundershower by curling its tail up and over its back, nestling its nose in its two raised forepaws, the tip of the tail sticking out over its head like the peak of a cap, and a little eye opening now and again to look up at it.

after the rain  
a few drops fall from the tree  
into the poet's notebook

*Cor van den Heuvel*

## THE LAPSE

THIS MORNING'S THE FIRST DAY of the year of the wild boar. The streets of this former capital are hushed before the throngs of tourists arrive to visit temples and shrines.

Nestled in the home of a friend, we talk, for some reason, about the tame deer that roam the park of an even more ancient city. My mind struggles to remember if I have seen wild deer in Japan. Then a recent image comes to mind: That doe I caught nibbling blackberries in a vacant lot. I see her hesitant backward glance before she enters the nearby woods.

But no, something corrects me before I open my mouth. That was in my hometown, in the autumn, on the other side of the world.

Did the wild deer follow me to Japan or was this a New Year's dream? In her unobtrusiveness, did she make it through the security lines, avoiding the check points, and curl up on the economy seat next to me? Did she hear the same baby cry all through the night? And, on arrival, was she carried along by the crowds on their way to Tokyo? Surely, she escaped to a deer sanctuary in the recesses of someone else's mind.

so colorful  
the long-legged girls  
in kimono

*Carmen Sterba*

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warmed by the fire  
not wanting to be older  
or younger

*Francine Porad*

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## LETTERS ON THE FLOOR

a frisky kitten  
jumps on the Scrabble board—  
letters cover the floor                      betty

those last few empty boxes  
in the weekly cryptogram . . .              max

learning to write  
his pencil breaks  
when he tries “a”                              betty

floating in the soup  
alphabet vermicelli—  
what does it say?                              max

National Spelling Bee  
she asks “what is the origin?”              betty

in the attic  
daddy’s old typewriter  
with its still missing                          max

*Betty Kaplan and Max Verhart*



## THE VELVET CORD

MY PARENTS were taking a rare trip together. I was to stay with my mother's friend, a spinster lady I was told to call Aunt Anansi. My mother said, "You'll love it there. She has a lovely house and yard."

My honorific aunt welcomed me to her home. Looking around the muted but inviting living room, I saw one chair just my size and rushed to sit in it.

"Oh, no! Not that chair, dear. It's an antique. We'll have tea on the porch."

garden pond . . .  
where the carp in winter stay  
very still beneath the ice

*Nancy Stewart Smith*

## SAFARI

"A HONEY BADGER!" The guy who has scarcely spoken since we first met stands up pointing in the jeep. Nothing has impressed him so far and, while the rest of our group have become friends, having seen so many great animals together, this guy has traveled in silence. Spotting the honey badger, an animal I've never seen or heard of, he changes completely. He beams and starts to explain how the honey badger can survive in this tough environment.

sunrise  
the tough guy tightens  
his prosthesis

*Marcus Larsson*

**“WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM . . .”**

SHE TOLD ME THAT SHE WAS LEAVING during an episode of “Tom and Jerry,” probably because we were less prone to argue during that time. How silly that a cartoon was our flag of truce — that we could put aside our differences, share a meal, and laugh at the antics of a cat and mouse pounding on each other.

The next day, after she had taken my son and left, I found myself wishing I were a cartoon.

a frisbee  
on the frost-covered roof—  
new year’s day

*Curtis Dunlap*

\*\*\*\*

**FULLY LADEN**

“TWO PEOPLE DIED TODAY, when a car swerved into the path of a fully laden log truck.” I flick the radio off, think, *if these people were war dead, there would be an outcry*. Memories of crashes I have seen as a firefighter start their reruns . . .

passing car  
a tiny hand opens  
to the rain

*Ron Moss*

## MOZART'S BIRTHDAY

JANUARY 27<sup>TH</sup>. It's the custom where I work to bring donuts on your birthday. I bring them on Mozart's instead and stop by colleagues' offices to let them know.

"Whose birthday?" asks a co-worker.

"Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart."

"Oh. Where does he sit?"

birdsong  
I rub the crust from my eyes  
over toast

*Zane Parks*

\*\*\*\*

## COMPANY IN CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

HAVING COMPANY IS A KIND OF TRAVEL. A friend from Japan is visiting. Tonight we plan to go down to the Ping River for the Loi Kratong festival. The river will be jammed with flickering candles adrift in banana-leaf boats, the sky above lit with thousands of airborne lanterns: prayers and gratitude going up and going downstream. Yesterday we went to a khao soi restaurant I've been meaning to check out for months. Afterwards, at the market, we bought an assortment of crickets, grasshoppers and silkworms to nibble on as we strolled home.

tropical twilight . . .  
the chicken griller  
fans her coals

*Bob Lucky*

## THE GASP

IS WHAT CROWDS MY MIND not pulling the trigger on my stepfather's Winchester 30-30 not the hole it made in the young doe or the blood and not that the man told my buddy and me that she was really too small to keep and we better just leave her lay because in the next day or two we'd both get a buck for sure but that final breath from life to corpse it crowds my mind . . .

cold snap  
a north wind  
fills my nostrils

*w. f. owen*

\*\*\*\*

## LIKENESS

SHE IS SO LIKE ME that when we quarrel it feels we're laying claim to what we'd disappear without. And when we thump the back seat like a bed I keep losing through my mind just who is doing what. Boundaries erode. There goes the territorial stalking. And there the pool that used to show my face. Here comes the woman looking out through my reflection.

a cardinal  
at the car mirror  
fighting or flirting

*Charles Hansmann*

## THE JUDAS KISS

SATURDAY at the Farmer's Market. Shoppers drift through the produce and craft stands clutching their purchases. Near the door, five gray-haired women dressed in black stand in a line. Their sign reads "Women against Violence." I recognize Jeanie in the line, an acquaintance I've not seen for several years.

The sign doesn't say "against male violence," but, still, I feel targeted. My mind spins through scenes; the beatings she took prior to her divorce; TV shots of the slaughter in the middle east; my own vicarious enjoyment of the violence in sports, films, and novels.

I approach her and say "Hi." She doesn't reply and I realize that it's a silent vigil. So, I open my arms for a hug.

chill wind  
she offers her cheek  
for my kiss

*Ray Rasmussen*

## CLOAKROOM CASANOVA

FIRST GRADE...I can't keep my eyes, or hands, off the girls. During storytime I sit behind Patricia and stroke her wavy blond tresses. Later there's a moment when we're alone in the cloakroom and I blurt out, "I bet I wouldn't be afraid to kiss you!" She laughs and plants one right on my lips.

I'm stunned at my success—will it always be this easy?

A year later at a new school I have a wild crush on Kathleen who's a grade ahead of me and to whom I have never spoken. On the playground I walk up to her and try the exact same line.

"Get away from me you nincompoop!" she says.

thwack of the ball  
in the catcher's mitt—  
I go down swinging

*Robert Hecht*

## ULTRA LIGHT

A NEW GENERATION of backpackers is set on decreasing pack weight and increasing hiking speed and distance. This breed weighs its gear in ounces. A base pack weight of six pounds, not including food and water, is considered ideal.

For this seven-day trek into the Sierra Nevada, my base weight is about thirteen pounds—heavy by ultra light standards but still less than what many backpackers currently carry. John Muir's book *The Mountains of California* accounts for 9.3 ounces of my pack's weight.

More than a hundred years ago, Muir trekked all over the Sierra, topped its peaks, and threaded its valleys. He traveled lightly, with his notebook tied to his belt, and bread and tea for food.

high country —  
I blow the dust  
from a feather

*Lane Parker*

## VISITING MOTHER

AFTER A RAINSTORM a flock of blackbirds gathers in the elms. Mother and I sit on the patio and discuss the past. Before we're finished with my first husband, the blackbirds sweep on to another set of trees.

change of wind  
fragrance of mint leaves  
from my cup

*Marilyn Appl Walker*

## SPRING CITY

N.Y. PORT AUTHORITY BUS TERMINAL spring week-  
end free theatre free dance free crowds oops sorry I'm in your  
way — a group of hare krishnas hare hare rama rama ramamama  
rama drums tambourines ramalamadingdong thanks gang you'll  
never know what an inspiration you've been I'm heading for  
the mountains free air free pines free streams goodbye krishnas  
hello Ramapos hello Ramapoems. Get me outta here.

Spring —  
running up the escalator  
I miss the wrong bus

my bus pulling out  
your bus pulling in—  
what could've been

goodbye, New York  
Oh for that first whiff  
of skunk

*David Gershator*

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fading sun at low tide—  
teeth marks  
in an old frisbee

*Michael Dylan Welch*

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# Essays

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## RENGAY THE ART OF PARTNERING

*Carolyn Hall*

THERE'S PROBABLY NO FASTER, EASIER WAY to get to know someone at a distance than to write a collaborative piece with them. A delightful vehicle for accomplishing this is the rengay, a six-verse linked poem on a single theme (or two concurrent themes—see below) invented fifteen years ago by haiku poet Garry Gay. He envisioned two or three poets alternately penning verses—either in one another's company (indoors or out) or via post. With the advent of the internet and subsequent ubiquity of e-mail, it has now become common for haijin across the globe to e-mail rengay verses to one another and receive almost immediate responses from their partners. Sometimes it is only a matter of minutes or hours between the time links are submitted, discussions ensue, and edits are made that are satisfying to both partners. The tenor of these discussions and negotiations is often very revealing about the personalities of the poets. I see it as the haijin version of pen pals, and it can be terrific fun.

From conversations with Garry, I know that once having given birth to this new genre he is happy enough to watch its form evolve and become enriched by the imaginations of those who have taken it up. From his perspective, the two incontrovertible “rules” of rengay are (1) more than one participant, and (2) adherence to a theme. I know that solo rengay have been attempted by some (including myself). But what makes rengay exciting is two or three brains working in concert. Though I may know where I'm headed with a verse and can easily imagine a link to it, I am unlikely to come up with anything as interesting as the associations my verse stimulates in someone else's brain. It's very exciting to open my partner's e-mail and think, “Wow! I never would have thought of that!”

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Now of course that “Wow!” might be either positive or negative. What if you hate that link that seems to come out of left field and that you can’t wrap your head around no matter how hard you try? If your partner is an old friend, it’s easy enough to say “Whatever were you *thinking?*” without destroying the friendship. It’s a different matter when you’re writing with a new partner. Here diplomacy comes into play. But it’s safe to assume that a rengay partner is just what it says—a partner. And it’s safe to assume that a partner is willing to work with you till you agree you’ve got it right. No doubt my partners occasionally gnash their teeth at my suggestions and/or rejections (just as I sometimes do at theirs). But usually they come back with a much better verse (just as I sometimes do), grateful for the kick in the pants. A personal failing on my part is a tendency to try to rewrite my partner’s verse—but that puts me back into the danger zone of solo rengay. Better to just send your partner back to the drawing board and see what emerges.

### THEME

So you have a partner who’s eager to work with you. Now how do you go about establishing a theme? In my practice I have tried a number of schemes. There is the obvious tack of engaging in a discussion that results in an agreement to write about death and dying, or perhaps to incorporate spices in each verse. Or one partner may announce a desire to write on a particular theme, and the other agrees to go along for the ride. An equally valid approach is to simply begin with a verse presented by one player. The second player links to the opening verse. The nature of that link begins to suggest a theme. It may, in fact, determine the theme. But sometimes it is not until the third verse is linked to the second that the theme becomes apparent to both partners. (This is the point at which a secondary theme may also become apparent. E.g., “This is obviously a rengay about art, but it looks like we have atmospheric conditions in each verse as well. Let’s carry that throughout.”) I’ve found that no one of these schemes is superior to another.

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Each can result in very satisfactory rengay so long as you are in agreement.

### GROUND RULES

Some ground rules to establish up front: Is it OK to send your partner back to the drawing board? (Some people are uncomfortable being asked to give it another try.) Does your partner expect you to send just one link, or does s/he prefer to be given two or three verses to choose from? There's no reason partners can't differ in this approach. One can choose to send only one at a time; the other may be more comfortable sending three or four and leaving it up to his/her partner to choose.

Another issue that may come up is the form of the verses. I have a partner who feels very strongly that the two-liners should be strong, stand-alone haiku, complete with caesura. Others treat the two-line verses more like the two-line component of a traditional three-line haiku ("the delicious tickle / of a lady bug") with no break. I find that a hard break in every verse tends to make the finished poem feel a bit choppy. But if that effect can be avoided, either way works.

An aspect of rengay that I struggle with is the relative importance of the individual verses. Should each be the strongest haiku you can write on the subject? (I.e., would you submit it to a journal or to a contest?) Or is it more important to write the strongest verse you can under the circumstances, taking into account the necessity of linking to the previous verse and sticking to the theme. I tend toward the "strongest verse under the circumstances" school. If that turns out to be a very strong stand-alone haiku, so much the better. But in rengay, each verse is in service to the poem as a whole.

On this same topic, I sometimes will offer up an opening verse that is not the strongest haiku I have ever written. For example, "summer dusk / blurred colors of the freight train / on the opposite track" is an adequate haiku, but no contest

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winner. Yet it works well as a rengay opener because there are any number of associations an imaginative partner may bring to it and which might make interesting themes, e.g., opposites, trains, travel, fading light. In fact, my partner (Billie Wilson) responded with “vesper bells / a scatter of bluebirds,” and the theme soon established itself as “blurred colors.” The rengay was published in *Mariposa*.

Another issue to be agreed upon is whether verses must link to the preceding verse, or only to the general theme. In traditional renku, both link and shift are essential. Rengay doesn't insist upon the shift — in fact it discourages it. But I think linking to the previous verse is half the fun and results (generally) in stronger rengay. One must be a bit cautious, however. When focusing only on the linking aspect, it is easy to shift so far from the previous verse or verses that the poem loses its coherence. As an extreme example:

swelling quince buds  
a wild turkey teeters  
on the fence

the town drunkard  
makes his way home

The obvious link is between “teeters” and the stumbling drunk. (Or perhaps between the drunkard and Wild Turkey!) But the subject matter of the two verses is so disparate, and the shift in mood so abrupt, that it is impossible to intuit from them what the overall theme might be. In a long renku, linking and shifting balance each other out and make for an interesting journey. Rengay is too short to accommodate such shifts and they leave the reader perhaps feeling as if she is stumbling from one verse to the next. As a general rule, the shift should be neither so weak nor so strong that it calls attention to itself.

This leads us to the issue of variety. Once you've chosen a theme, can you come at it from all possible directions? Can

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you skip around from one season to another? (Garry would say no, though I have seen successful rengay that do this.) Is it alright to move from indoors to out and then in again? Sometimes it's fun to stay "in the neighborhood" or "in Hawaii." My partner and I once took second place for a rengay in which we never got out of grandma's kitchen. But she is the same partner who will often remind me that "it's time we had some sound," or "it feels like we need something moving upwards at this point." I am always grateful for her suggestions because those considerations don't often occur to me — and I think they always make for a stronger poem. My answer to the questions I've posed above is that I have no right answer. The most I can say is that it is important that the verses hang together; that they are innovative while all the while sticking to the theme. And, as with haiku in general, it is never a bad idea to engage several of the senses.

### TITLE

OK, let's assume you have six verses (whew!) and you are both pleased as punch with the outcome. The last hurdle is the title. The title should be related, obviously, to the theme. And when the theme is subtle and may need to be teased out from each verse, the title is an excellent opportunity to guide the reader. My own preference is to choose a line (or a portion of a line) from the rengay to serve as the title. (But it's important not to give away the punch line if there is one at the end.) I also prefer to hint at, rather than spell out, the theme. (I.e., I'd choose "Once in a Blue Moon" over the more obvious "Colors.")

### REWARDS

I have found collaborating with rengay partners extremely rewarding. If you haven't already done so . . . try it, you'll like it. You never know where it might take you!

**IMAGINING EVE\***

fig leaves  
in April moonlight—  
imagining Eve

*first date . . .  
he helps me see Orion*

Himalayan dawn  
through open tent flaps  
a yeti sighting?

*close of day—  
in the center of the fairy ring  
bluebells*

searching the heavens  
for Heaven

*newfound love—  
a rainbow from one pot of gold  
to the other*

Carolyn Hall  
Billie Wilson

\* *Frogpond*, XXVI:1 (2003)

\* \* \* \* \*

**RENGAY FORMAT**

All rengay consist of six verses composed in the following formats:

For two people (Poet A and Poet B):

3 lines/Poet A, 2 lines/Poet B, 3/A, 3/B, 2/A, 3/B

For three poets (A, B, and C):

3 lines/A, 2 lines/B, 3 lines/C, 2/A, 3/B, 2/C

## HAIKU AWARENESS

*Adelaide B. Shaw*

WHEN I WAS YOUNGER I took a class from the artist Sister Corita Kent on art appreciation. The class was more of art awareness, rather than art appreciation, and it prepared me, years later, for writing haiku, a poetic form I knew nothing about at the time.

In that class, less time was spent on studying the old masters than on finding art in everyday life. Natural beauty/art can be found anywhere: soapy water forming streams down a driveway, a grasshopper on a leaf.

To illustrate that anything and everything has the possibility of art, we were asked to write 50 things about a bottle of Coke. Working in small groups, each with a full seven ounce green bottle, we began to describe the shape, size, color, feel, sound. We studied the bottle full and after every sip, studied it in the light and in shadow. We tapped it, clinked it, blew into it, and shook it. This was an exercise to open our senses.

Another activity was to write on the lined side of a 3 x 5 card a daily observation and to decorate the blank side. The decorations could be in any manner we chose: a pen and ink sketch, a drawing with water colors or crayons, a cut-out picture from a magazine, a geometrical design, a collage made with fabric. Anything our imagination produced was allowed, and the decorations need not be in any way connected to our observations.

The recording of daily observations increased my ability to sharpen my senses, and the decorations made me concentrate on producing something pleasing in a small area and with simple materials. All of these activities formed the foundation for writing haiku later on.

These class exercises in observation became a daily habit. I began to notice more in my environment. Several years later, after reading a small book of haiku, I knew this was the only way to express what I had been seeing for years. This was the way to convey in words the art, the beauty of the ordinary as well as the extraordinary and to do so economically.

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It isn't easy to write a good haiku. Too many words spoil it; too few make it obscure. And the words have to be just the right choice. The experience of any particular moment can never be repeated in exactly the same way. Even if it were repeated five minutes later the poet is five minutes older, the light has changed, the wind, the odors, everything. It becomes a second experience. The first was unique in that it was a single moment of awareness. Call this an epiphany or, simply, keen observation and perception. The difficulty is in capturing that perception in words that show, not tell, and do so in three lines of no more than 17 syllables.

There are a number of guidelines as to form, but before a haiku poet can address the form, he needs to prepare himself to experience the haiku moment. Being open to all that you experience with your senses is, perhaps, the first step in learning to write haiku. Relax and let your senses speak to you. Accept everything and dismiss nothing as possible material for haiku—the grandness of mountains, the smallness of an insect, the freshness and loveliness of a rose, the dilapidation of an old warehouse, the worn look of old shoes.

One of my early haiku was sparked by nothing more than the sound of walking in the autumn woods. A simple observation, yet it became a published poem.

between mossy trunks  
red leaves squishing underfoot  
smelling of dampness <sup>(1)</sup>

Old, worn out holiday ornaments inspired another successful haiku:

another year gone—  
packing my mother's ornaments  
with mine <sup>(2)</sup>

A destroyed house had something other than rubble to offer:

still standing  
just a chimney  
girded with vines <sup>(3)</sup>



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Then there is the absurdity of an image:

spring mist—  
the baby hippo  
fills the puddle <sup>(4)</sup>

Another published haiku inspired by an insignificant incident that could have been ignored:

fallen cigar ash—  
the lead ant pauses  
and reroutes the line <sup>(5)</sup>

With practice you will be aware of more detail in your surroundings, and you will often observe in a single location or situation several images worthy of remembering and turning into haiku.

Since I can't always rely on my memory, I carry a small notebook and jot down any observations I think could later develop into a poem. Some observations never become poems, or become only mediocre ones, but recording the observation is useful. When I find that I haven't written anything of value for a few days it is usually because I have been neglectful in my note taking. This record of observations aids in keeping my senses sharpened.

Haiku awareness can be developed and, with it, a new world will open up, a world often missed, a world of small beauties.

Acknowledgments:

(1) *Modern Haiku*, III:1, 1972

(2) *Acorn*, #9, Autumn 2000; *New Resonance* #3, Red Moon Press, 2003

(3) *Yellow Moon*, #17, Winter 2005

(4) *Heron's Nest*, VI:5, May 2004

(5) *Frogpond*, XXVIII:2, Spring/Summer 2005

## LOOKING BACK ON FROGPOND

MY IMMEDIATE RECOLLECTION and appreciation is drawn toward the haiku checklist that appeared in the late 90's, I think by Michael Dylan Welch. As a novice, I found it a helpful tool for answering questions of aesthetics and improving haiku. I hope it has softened the peril inflicted on the eyes of the journal editors. I have appreciated so many things, but the *Re:Readings* has been most fascinating, and I confess, the place I stop first. It helps me see what kind of haiku affects readers and practitioners the most. I enjoy the dialogue, and it brings to mind the questions raised by Lee Gurga in the haiku community on haiku that matter. As always, thanks for the questions.

*Dan Schwerin*

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Here are a few words on *Frogpond's* first 10 years from a relative "rookie." I am eager to hear from poets who were active in haiku when these issues came off the presses. I'm lucky to have a nearly complete collection, and it's been a splendid journey following the evolution from a journal that apparently published everything submitted, regardless of merit, to one of the most respected journals in print today. I was especially touched by the 1974 letter from Harold G. Henderson to Tadashi Kondo (printed in Vol. II, No. 1). It is common for an expert in any field to defend everything they've ever written. But Mr. Henderson had a refreshingly humble response to a criticism of his early translation of Basho's "old pond": "As to the 'plash of water when a frog jumps in' that was written 40 years ago and was one of my many errors . . . Yes, it was in the 'Bamboo Broom' but please forget it." What a fascinating and heart-warming view this is more than 70 years after this beloved pioneer first attempted to help open up our treasured haiku world for so many.

*Billie Wilson*

## THE PLAYFUL MIND (What Makes American Haiku Different)

*Dietmar Tauchner*

English haiku poet Martin Lucas once said, about the differences between the American haiku and the English, you don't find any worse poems in *Frogpond* or *Modern Haiku* but all are quite similar, or follow the same pattern; but, though you'll find some quite poor poems in the English magazines, they also have a broader individual range and taste.

In recent times we've been given many narrow definitions of haiku. We should be careful with any definitions. If we only follow an established method of how to create a haiku, we will be in danger of losing the aspect of freshness, an important requirement for writing haiku. In Gary Snyder's words, "The path is whatever passes."<sup>(1)</sup>

But what has this to do in particular with the American haiku? What are its main features? Bruce Ross wrote in his anthology *Haiku Moment*: "The fourth generation of American haiku [is characterized by] consistent lack of seasonal references, surrealist techniques and figurative expression . . . regular prosody is eliminated, and human, rather than nature, subjects are more emphasized, [as are] eroticism, psychological expression, and political and social commentary."<sup>(2)</sup>

This might be quite significant for the American haiku, although you find all these in European haiku too, though not to the same great extent, and only recently. The so-called "urban haiku," which has become more common in Germany, for instance, only recently, with its, roughly said, modern subjects of sex and psychological, political, and social expressions, seems to be an offspring of the American haiku movement.

Another offspring, in general, was and still is a willingness to try new forms as well as nontraditional content and a strong ability to adapt the idea of Japanese short poetry and to develop it further. Poets like Marlene Mountain have found a way to combine American literary style with the Japanese

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forms. Marlene once pointed out that, in her way of thinking, there is no “Japanese haiku.” Very different Japanese haiku suggest references to an era, a date, a poet’s name, and so on. Also the well established techniques used for writing haiku are nothing more than techniques. The Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote: “My sentences are only a ladder to climb up; if you [have] reached the point of meaning, you have to throw it away.”<sup>(3)</sup> The same is true for writing haiku.

When I encountered North American haiku for the first time I found something, which I would like to call “the playful mind,” a mind related to the meaning of haiku, which, literally translated, means “playful verse.” German poets, for instance, are more used to following fixed patterns. This is a generalization, but I consider it a valid observation.

It is almost impossible to speak about the European haiku. Every country has its own history and language, and we only very recently have started to examine other countries’ haiku scenes—during the First European Haiku Congress in Germany. But one can say that in Europe it is still very uncommon to write, for instance, a one-liner, or a poem that is not related to the traditional subject of nature linked to human nature. Though this is changing rapidly, and has already changed in the moment of writing down this observation.

For a long time, the German haiku tended either to strictly imitate the few available translations of the ancient Japanese masters, or tended to be written with almost no relation to the origins of the genre. In those countries where German is spoken it was, for a long time, impossible to find acceptance for a haiku not composed in the 5/7/5 pattern, and that is still the case in my native Austria. So the aspect of “atarashimi” (newness) was absolutely ignored for several years. Now a period of change approaches, or has already approached, because more and more poets are glancing at the international haiku scene as well as that of America, and feel attracted by new subjects and new forms. To say it with the words of Ruth Franke, a haiku poet from Germany, “The new generation of European haiku poets has become aware of the chance of this literary genre: grounded in the cultural background of each nation, it is ca-

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pable of connecting people all over the world by sharing something like a universal human truth.”

Conclusion: It is still very useful to study the Japanese origins, but also to experiment with the form and subject; to integrate our own historical background in form and content, and also to glance regularly at the international haiku movement. Nothing has to be avoided and nothing especially has to be revealed. It is most important to be open to everything in our daily lives, to allow the open and playful mind, because: “The path is whatever passes.”

Notes:

A version of this essay was originally presented as a speech at the Haiku North America Conference in Port Townsend, Washington, USA, September 22, 2005.

Many Thanks to Kilmeny Niland and Prof. Horst Ludwig for their great support.

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- (1) Gary Snyder, *Turtle Island*; NDP Books; 1969
- (2) Bruce Ross, *Haiku Moment - An Anthology of Contemporary North American Haiku*, Tuttle Company; 1993
- (3) Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, Suhrkamp; 1963

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learning too late  
he didn't like bubinga wood—  
sun strikes the urn

*Elizabeth Searle Lamb*

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## Re:Readings

*Peter Yovu on Collin Barber* (“autumn morning / I still have the tooth / I lost in my dream”) “Something about teeth. I dreamt every tooth in my head was loose or crumbling, gum-sockets gaping, my tongue a desperate shepherd trying to restore order to its fragmented flock. I dreamt I was lying on a beach, the surf breaking into my mouth, my teeth tumbling like pebbles, like dice in a cup. The same dream, different each time, and the sweet relief of waking to the known contours of molar, incisor and trusted cuspid firmly rooted in reality. And yet . . .

‘Death,’ said Wallace Stevens, ‘is the mother of beauty.’ Among its other progeny, I’d say, is imagination. Though etymologically unrelated, I find myself indulging a connection between death and teeth. How much effort goes into scrubbing them, once, twice, three times daily, to applying whiteners and brighteners all for a gleaming smile, the hardware of a happy face? They are the one thing visible in life which will also be visible in death, down to the bones of us.

Am I alone in imagining death’s grin when I see ten bowling pins along with their reflection? (Oh the joy of wiping that silly look from the end of the alley). Alone in seeing golf as a kind of surrealistic dentistry in which the player-dentist, with his bag of metallic tools, attempts to chase a rounded tooth back into its socket? Not, at any rate, alone in how I dream, and in how I too sometimes wake up on an autumn morning.”

*Christopher Patchel on LeRoy Gorman* (“old vinyl / ‘In My Life’ / is the B side”) “Having just written an oldie senryu of my own, with a similar then-and-now theme, I was taken with the understated poignance of this one. As a teen, I naturally had a lesser appreciation of ‘In My Life,’ much preferring the catchy rockers, with the proverbial ‘good beat.’ But while most of those hits became dated over time, ‘In My Life’ (John Lennon’s first mature lyrics by his own account) is a ballad that grew increasingly meaningful with age. This senryu manages to document all that emotional history simply by showing us an old 45 record.”

*Merrill Ann Gonzales on John J. Dunphy* (“art studio / a visitor admires / the window frost”) “Every artist knows the feeling of a patron admiring the frame. But there is more going on in this haiku of John Dunphy’s. Ending it as he does with the word ‘frost’ carries the full impact of the put down. Also, a studio so cold that frost forms on the windows certainly begs a more attentive kindness and you see so vividly the way art in its search for ‘beauty’ can ignore a greater human virtue. I’ve just been reading about ‘THE “NOT FOR SALE” ART EXHIBITION’ (at P.S.1 in New York) which questions placing a monetary amount on a work of human creativity. Yet in our world artists have to eat, and buy fuel to heat their studios, not to mention paying the rent. The very act of taking art to the market place leaves the artist open to comparisons with ‘the real thing’. . . yet is not the exploration of the creativity of mankind also the real thing?’ There are many such questions this haiku begs us to explore.”

*Kirsty Karkow on Christopher Patchel* (“aerial photograph . . . / my house / with its skylight”) “A simple observation. The reader can picture the poet studying this picture, maybe with a magnifying glass, looking for his house. We have all done it. BUT, here is the house or the people in it, looking back; looking up through the skylight at whoever and whatever took that photograph. This idea is captivating and intriguing.”

*Kirsty Karkow on Ferris Gilli* (“he is the first . . . / bobwhites explode / from tall grass”) “This is SO good. The passion and explosive joy crafted into this haiku is awesome. The first lover. A field. Warmth. An explosion of ardor which reflects in the disturbance of the birds. How’s that for a metaphor to knock your socks off! OR, there could be a simpler explanation as with a hunter being the first into a field. BUT, I like my version and the ambiguity only adds to the perfection of the poem.”

*Emily Romano on Tom Clausen* (“old friends talk / each holding / car keys”) “After a long interval, old friends meet and attempt to ‘catch up’ on their interests. Both have places to go and things to do, yet the desire is strong to fill in the missing months (or years?). They stand with car keys in their hands,

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needing to go, yet reluctant to cut short their time together. This senryu has a pathos, reminding us of how short our time on earth may be, making us wonder which has the higher priority: a time with an old friend, or daily commitments?”

*Patricia Neubauer on Sosuke Kanda* (“winter evening / spreading out my dreams / on a world map”) “Dreaming over a map, a lovely way to travel: no fuss over passport, visas or security; no grounded planes, no missed sleep, meals or trains. A French woman I knew took a course on Shakespeare. She was utterly fascinated by the play *Macbeth*, and the study of that character was all she could think about or discuss for several days. I told her that legend says that Macbeth was buried with other ancient kings of Scotland on the island of Iona of the Inner Hebrides. Indeed, I had twice gone to Oban (where one gets the little boats to the islands) planning to visit Iona, not to look for Macbeth’s grave, but to see the ruins of St. Columba’s monastery. Unfortunately, both attempts were canceled by severe rainstorms that haunt the highland seaports in summer.

So Suzanne decided that she would go to Scotland. She pored and dreamed over maps. Whether or not her dream journey would have become a reality, I cannot tell for she died a few months ago. I can only hope that in her new life or whatever comes next, she steps ashore on this tiny island of three square miles to find a gravestone labeled Macbeth.”

*Marcus Larsson on Curtis Dunlap* “I liked the Haibun titled ‘Cusp’ a lot. I have read it at least ten times already and will for sure return to it many more times. The author’s struggle becomes everyone’s and so does his fortitude and decency. A truly wonderful piece!”

*Jim Kacian on Joseph Robello* (“midwatch / dark port and starboard / without and within”) “A first reading of this poem might elicit, as it did from me, a “just what we would expect.” But i found i didn’t forget it. Rubello has caught that moment every seafarer knows, the perfectly private moment shared with the universe when all is the same on the great flat sea, all permeated with what Borges called “the unanimous night.” No-where is that unanimity — that one-spirit — more apparent than at sea in the dark of a midwatch, without and within...”



## FROM SYLVIA FORGES-RYAN

(Editor's Note: When I saw former *Frogpond* Editor, Sylvia Forges-Ryan at a regional H.S.A. meeting in New York I asked if she would care to share with readers some reflections on changes that took place in the journal during her terms as Editor. Here is her reply.)

WHILE I WAS EDITOR I did make numerous production changes, such as going to a perfect binding, using full color artwork for the covers, and arranging the haiku on the page in a way that gave a feeling of more surrounding space. I also tried to encourage more international submissions, and was the first to accept Ion Codrescu's work, for instance. To save mailing costs I also went from four issues a year to three, while still accepting the same number of poems per year. I also tried to use poems pertinent to the time of year, holding poems for future issues according to their seasonal subjects. That's all I can think of off the top of my head.

*Sylvia Forges-Ryan, Frogpond Editor (1991-93)*

Frogpond - Second Decade

Up in the sky  
hardly heard, hardly seen:  
migrating birds

*Ion Codrescu*

Volume XIV:2 1991

*BOOK*  
*REVIEWS*

**By Jim Kacian**

Pages 73 - 75    *Hailstones / Ziarna Gradu*  
Rozmus, Lidia

**By Bruce Ross**

Pages 76 - 77    *Swamp Candles*  
Barry, Jack

**By Zinovy Vayman**

Pages 78 - 80    *Office Haiku*  
Ragauskas, James

Rozmus, Lidia *Hailstones/Ziarna Gradu* (Deep North Press, 2634 Prairie Avenue, Evanston IL 60201, 2006). ISBN 1-929116-15-2, 33 unbound fascicles + 3 unbound introductory booklets in original unique art wrapper, 5.75" X 8.5" fine art edition. \$50 from the publisher.

Art is as much a response to art as it is to life: Bach may have been moved to create the sublimity of the B-minor Mass by the grandeur of God, but he was probably equally prodded by pride to top the sonorities of Palestrina and Dufay, not to mention contemporary rival Vivaldi. In fact, this is one of the ways that we know art matters: it is capable of inspiring its own creation, and the worlds that are created can be absorbing.

This production is such a response. John Stevens' translations of Santoka's haiku have been around for a long time by English-language haiku standards: *Mountain Tasting* first appeared from Weatherhill in 1980. It was one of the most important books in my personal coming to haiku, and I have a special fondness for it, as well as for the translator, who was gracious to me with his time back in my early days. So there is much for me to like going into considering this new "fine art edition."

On the other hand, there is no shortage of competition to this volume, either. Though *Mountain Tasting* is now out of print (and the price of buying a used copy approaches the cost of this new edition), Santoka's work has proven virtually irresistible to translators of Japanese short poetry, and each of these translators (Sato, Watson, Corman, et. al.) have their merits. So this new edition, featuring as it does a scant 33 poems, had better be something pretty special to be able to compete in such a crowded field.

The particular tack which Rozmus has taken has been to respond to Santoka's poems through sumi-e, creating, or co-creating, a haiga for each of the chosen poems. Each fascicle consists of a single folded sheet. The exterior faces of this sheet are printed with a grayscale photograph, quite muted in tone. In the center of the front face, a small square section is left in

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its original sharp intensity, heightening the image, focusing our concentration there, and permitting us to see more clearly into the depths of what is present. These two effects can be taken, then, as paradigms for both the usual state of human awareness as well as the practice of haiku. We are usually merely passing through the world, the photos suggest, busy with our projects and importances, and reality loses color and focus for us. But moments of concentration are available to us, indeed can be chosen at will, and when we permit ourselves this luxury of being present, we see clearly what is to be seen.

The interior of each card holds the poem and the sumi-e image. The poem appears thrice, in English translation, via Stevens; in Polish translation, via Rozmus and Wioletta Laskowska; and of course the Japanese of Santoka (in romaji). The images combine Rozmus' brushwork with calligraphy by Masanobu Hoshikawa, framed within an inverted version of the outer photograph. The overall effect is somber and authoritative (the hint of color from the two artists' *han* intensifies, rather than negates, this muted aspect). It is evident that these prints are reductions from the original sizes (the *han* and size of the calligraphy enforce this), and certainly a bit of the power that is to be had from original versions and size is lost as a result. But these are considerable enough to have a sense of the impact of the originals.

Rozmus adopts two distinct attacks in these works. Some are more or less literal, what I have elsewhere called "representational iterative" haiga\*. These are usually pleasing and appropriate, but as in most representational iterative haiga, what really is noted is the relative weight of each of the components. Since the title poem, "hailstones, too / enter my begging bowl" and the graphic element, a sumi-e bowl suggestive of an enso with variously sized "stones" included (and one without) seen from above, have the same content, we will not feel that they are adding to that content so much as are making different stylistic comments upon it. This is not an easy path to choose, since the given element here is the poem—it is no small matter to compete with what will be considered a classic. It is sufficient to say that Rozmus' work is strong enough to stand

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side-by-side comparison with these slight poems—in fact, her work is perhaps the bolder in some ways, using thicker lines and the occasional departure from literal response: her accompanying road, for instance, to “this straight road, / full of loneliness”, is anything but, incorporating a telling jaggedness in its fetch.

It is in the “nonrepresentational iterative” style, however, that she is most distinctively herself. Her fritillated figuring of mountains in “waking from a nap, / either way I look: mountains” is original and playful. The watercolor wash technique she employs in her accompaniment to “going deeper / and still deeper— / the green mountains” embodies the feeling of immersion attendant to the poem without a hint of repetition of content. And perhaps most striking, her recurrent use of a shrimp-like, coiled figure, fetal in aspect, to represent the poet is perfectly consonant with the overall effect of these poems.

At this price, this will not be the most popular version of Santoka’s poems, nor should it be. To get a more complete grasp of the poet’s sensibility, one needs to turn to a volume with all or at least the bulk of the poems. But as an artistic response from one sensibility to another, across centuries and cultures, this is a compelling creation, well worth the investment of time and money. Recommended.

\* For a complete discussion of haiga styles go to [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com) and click on the link called “Looking and Seeing.”

*Jim Kacian*

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this white sapphire  
in a certain light  
reveals its star

*L.A. Davidson*

Volume XX:3 1997

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Barry, Jack *Swamp Candles* (Down-to-Earth Books, P.O. Box 488, Ashfield, Massachusetts), 413-628-0227. ISBN 1-878115-22-7, 85pp., 5.5" X 8.25" perfect bound. No price. Inquire with the publisher.

*Writing haiku is not that human mind catches nature; nature has caught the human mind.*

*Akira Oomine*

The contemporary haiku master Akira Oomine has set up a standard for haiku in line with traditional Japanese thought about the form. If one were to examine most Japanese haiku published today, by far the majority follows such a definition. This is not the case in contemporary American haiku while a majority of the non-Japanese world haiku follows the traditional line.

Akira Oomine cites Basho on what haiku is essentially: the way of haiku follows the revolution of nature, including human life and death.<sup>1</sup>

Although Jack Barry has apparently been publishing haiku for the last ten years I have only recently begun to see his work in major print and online journals. He is squarely in the traditional line of haiku, what he calls "a nature-based art form." He lives in the rural area of Western Massachusetts and his haiku reflect the agrarian surroundings there.

Haiku was formulated in an agrarian culture whose spiritual ideology was based on the revolutions of nature and their enacting agents. Look at a contemporary Japanese listing of annual celebrations and rituals for the truth of this.

So unlike the traditional Japanese tanka that centers on the mind (emotion) as does most other forms of Japanese poetry, traditional haiku is centered on nature (feeling). Nature is felt in some way by the poet. They are drawn in some way to feel a given moment. As Barry states in his introduction:

“. . . haiku is for saying what is, before that moment disappears . . . every lost moment, every fleeting interaction that disappears without notice renders our world

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that much less interesting, that much less vital, that much closer to being trampled by feet that aren't watching."<sup>2</sup>

He is clearly disturbed by what he perceives as the mutation of (American) haiku into "(yet another) human-based reflection."<sup>3</sup>

Is he another extension of the Agrarian Movement in last century's American poetry or has he picked up the available path in the natural world that is the essence of haiku? Unfortunately, one would have to examine the whys and wherefores of American poetics (as opposed to haiku poetics), the postmodern condition, and the distinctions of thought, emotion, and feeling (and, dare I say, politics) to unravel why there is a question here or why such nature-based poetry is declaimed as reactionary.

But the keenness of Barry's openness to the moments in nature speak for themselves, many times in ways not seen in haiku before.

New Year's morning  
starting the fire  
with last night's coals

almost dark  
blinking snowflakes  
I can't see

warm cat  
sniffs the cold cat  
coming in

thunder passes  
without rain  
waiting for you

red sunrise  
the great blue heron's  
muddy knees

the beaver's wake  
touches both shores  
first drops of rain

Overall, the haiku in this volume are like this. And they reflect the developing of a fine nature-based haiku sensibility.

*Bruce Ross*

1. Personal email from one of his disciples.
2. "Introduction," p.i.
3. Personal letter from Barry.

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Ragauskas, James *Office Haiku (Poems Inspired by Daily Grind)* (Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York City, 2006) ISBN 0312-3524-4.

Mr. Ragauskas announces that Kobayashi Issa is his favorite poet and bows to Robert Haas as an author of the book on three haiku masters. And he proclaims:

You too can haiku—  
It's simply the syllables  
All printed to fit.

Hmm! I have some doubts about this new definition of haiku but let's read on.

Would I prefer to  
Be here, or have bamboo shoots  
Thrust under my nails?

The presence of bamboo is not comforting and “to” is split off its verb, but thou should forgive because the poet uses “I” so often. Latest research shows the more “I” in writing the more suicidal an author is.

Barbaric, really—  
Normally I would not be  
Awake at this hour

This Procrustean five-seven-five haiku bed is not for dynamic writers like Mr. Ragauskas.

The broken stapler  
Bear this soldier away from  
The field of battle

With glee I see that 5-7-5 syllable count is observed only by using the dubious diphthongs. My mood is further improved



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by the final note in the text:

Company Christmas  
Parties—passive aggressions  
Taken to new heights

And “mainstream haiku” are taken to new heights too. A season word-kigo “Christmas” made its way into the senryu-like sequence of this book on vellum paper and created a haikuish ambiance. But what can one do about the break of sentences forced into 5-7-5 rigidity? Let's doodle in our cubicle.

company's parties . . .  
Christmas passive aggressions  
taken to new heights

Adherence to 5-7-5 is not compromised and many years of workshops allow me to avoid the forced fitting. We also get an additional boon: we succeeded to limit passive aggressions to the Christmas period only. Alas, it changes the author's entire attitude.

Let's try again.

taken to new heights  
office passive aggressions—  
ah, Christmas party...

We got it! It is singular but it can be easily stretched to the multitudes of offices and companies. It also got a poetic incantation by sacrificing the word “company” and adding “ah” instead. The readers may choose for themselves their version. Write me what you prefer.

Our author composes a tightlipped three liner:

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I asked a simple question.  
I do not really need  
Your whole life story.

But to make a haiku out of it he hems it in like this:

I asked a simple  
Question—I don't really want  
Your whole life story

You see, Mr. Ragauskas has become a haiku (senryu) poet without Haiku North America, without haiku societies and without too much gleaning of the Internet. It is that easy.

I recall a Grubb Street Writers advertisement in 2003 “Well, you mastered haiku in a high school. Isn't it time to move on to poetry with rhythm, plot and, perhaps, rhymes?” I mastered my verses in a kindergarten, OK? OK, grubbies? But, wait, their prospectus with its red flowing calligraphy on the professionally balanced pages had a nice feel of silky paper from a good printing shop. The same feel as a perfectly jacketed James Ragauskas book which is, in addition, pleasantly heavy with its solid and lightly embossed front and back covers.

*Zinovy Vayman*

### **Recently Received:**

Galmitz, Jack *A New Hand* (Wasteland Press, Shelbyville KY 2006). ISBN 1-60047-0004-1. 68 pp., 5” x 8” perfect softbound. \$12 from the publisher at [www.wastelandpress.net](http://www.wastelandpress.net).

Baranski, Johnny *just a stone's throw* (tribe press, 42 Franklin Street #5, Greenfield MA 01301 USA, 2006). No ISBN. 4” x 4.5” “pinchbook”. \$4 ppd. from the publisher.

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Dixon, Melissa *Slow Spring Water* (sowspringpress, 213-2075 Milton Street, Victoria BC V8R 1N8 Canada, 2006). ISBN 0-9780815-0-1. 64 pp., 5.25" x 7.375" perfect softbound. \$10 ppd. from the publisher.

Cobb, David *Business in Eden* (Equinox Press, Sinodun, Shalford, Braintree, Essex CM7 5HN, UK, 2006). ISBN 0-9517103-5-4. 88 pp., 5" x 6.75" perfect softbound. \$18 ppd. from the publisher.

Jones, Ken *The Parsley Bed: Haiku Stories* (Pilgrim Press, Troedrhiwsebon, Cwmrheidol, Aberystwyth, Wales, SY23 3NB UK, 2006) ISBN 0-9539901-4-1. 114 pp., 5.5" x 7.75" perfect softbound. \$15 from the publisher (dollar bills only please).

Bover, August *Mojave* (Sitges, Papers de Terramar, llibresdeterramar@telefonica.net, 2006) No ISBN. 20 pp., 6" x 8.25" saddlestapled softbound with foldouts. No price. Enquire with the publisher.

Yarrow, Ruth *Haiku Note Cards* (self-published, 2006). Eight 4.25" x 5.5" folded cards, no message. \$10 ppd. from the author at 4417 Cascadia Avenue South, Seattle WA 98118. All profits to the Washington Chapter of Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Hull, Grace Lazell *White Dandelions* (self-published, 2006). No ISBN. 36 pp., 5.5" x 8.5" saddlestapled softbound. No price. Enquire with the publisher.

George, Beverley *Spinifex* (Pardalote Press, 44 Bay Drive, Lauderdale, Tasmania 7021 Australia, 2006). ISBN 0-957843609-0. 64 pp., 7" x 5" perfect softbound. No price. Enquire with the publisher.

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*HSA*  
*NEWS*

*Pages 83 - 90 Einbond Awards*

# The Bernard Lionel Einbond Renku Competition 2006

*Judges: William J. Higginson  
hortensia anderson  
Johnye Strickland*

## **First Place: Chinese New Year**

*Yu Chang, David Giacalone, John Stevenson*

clearing the table  
for a party of twelve  
Chinese new year *John*

the tea kettle whistles  
under a leaky roof *Yu*

dueling pistols  
recovered from  
the riverboat *John*

cattails sway  
and sigh *David*

her warmth  
penetrates  
my down jacket *Yu*

we much prefer  
candlelight *David*

the antipope's  
retaliatory  
excommunication *David*

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cloud shadows  
on orange blossoms *Yu*

vanity plates  
tell me it was a doctor *John*  
who didn't stop to help

the bathroom mirror  
has secrets *David*

harvest moon  
as full as *John*  
it ever was

room for all  
on the hayride *Yu*

## Honorable Mention: Dappled Light

*Andrew Shimiield, Diana Webb, and Frank Williams*

### *A Nijuin Renku*

dappled light—  
coolness under the branches *AS*  
of a riverside tree

she paints the poppies  
in the style of Monet *DW*

British museum,  
the oriental gallery full *AS*  
of oriental tourists

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on the rock face a relief of the Buddha	<i>FW</i>
trying to meditate, distracted by bonfire night they fix on the moon	<i>DW</i>
she presses his gift of a fallen maple leaf	<i>FW</i>
every year hand in hand on Blackpool sands	<i>AS</i>
cloaked in shadows the Martello Tower	<i>FW</i>
their secret hideout, the children take in bears and table cloths	<i>DW</i>
silver cutlery set out with military precision	<i>FW</i>
frosty morning a line of fir trees dusted with snow	<i>AS</i>
the quarter moon frozen in the pond's ice	<i>FW</i>
a cat waits by the open cage for the bird to fly	<i>DW</i>
the sound of an arrow striking its target	<i>AS</i>

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picture in the paper  
for their anniversary *DW*  
they've both lost count

a feeling of comfort  
sitting in his old chair *FW*

rescued from the tip  
the worn-out rocking horse *DW*  
finds a new home

umbrellas on the bank  
at the start of the boat race *AS*

mini whirlwinds  
of blossom and confetti *FW*  
outside the church

a sleepy fawn trots  
after its mother *AS*

### **2006 Bernard Lionel Einbond Renku Contest Judges' Report**

We received six anonymous entries for the renku contest this year, two each of thirty-six stanzas (*kasen*), twenty stanzas (*nijuin*), and twelve stanzas (*junicho*). We found much to like in at least one of each length, despite a number of problems. At first, we felt that a *kasen* is more work, being longer and requiring more time, but we also considered that the shorter forms can be more challenging, since the verses must cover a range of topics comparable to that in a longer *kasen* while maintaining a sense of continuity. Ultimately, we felt that one of the twelve-stanza works offered the most enjoyable reading experience while exemplifying the renku ideal of linking and shifting. And we found a twenty-stanza work worthy of an honorable mention.



**Winner: “Chinese New Year” (junicho) by John Stevenson, Yu Chang, and David Giacalone**

The twelve stanzas of “Chinese New Year” move easily through the seasons, starting with the title verse in early spring and a second verse on the mid-spring topic of a “leaking roof”; in the second group of three stanzas we have a “down jacket” of winter. The “orange blossoms” of the third three-verse sequence indicates early summer while providing a lovely blossoming fruit-tree image, a neat haikai twist on the usual blossoming fruit tree of spring in longer renku that makes up for the felt omission of a flower stanza among the opening spring verses. (In fact, the requirement in a junicho differs from that in other renku; any flower in any season fulfills its rubric.) The thoroughly Western orientation of the season words while maintaining the traditional seasonal calendar shows up especially well in the final two verses on autumn, mentioning the “harvest moon” and a “hayride.” The phrase “room for all” in the last verse provides a particularly salutary, optimistic note for the conclusion.

Perhaps the greatest strength of “Chinese New Year” is the variety in its linking. As usual, the first and second verses link simply and closely, from the setting for a meal to a tea kettle. But the third verse, the *daisan*, moves dynamically away from this peaceful scene, from “leaking” to a boating catastrophe, a sunken riverboat. The “dueling pistols” recovered from same both suggest a reason for the boat having sunk, and a possible death by violence. (Note that in a junicho, no topic is excluded from the first “page,” the first three stanzas. This is one of the significant traits that sets the junicho apart from its longer cousins, the *nijūin* and *kasen*.) Responding to the disasters of the third stanza, the next moves to the riverside with its sighing cattails, which then turn into lovers’ sighs. The pleasure of the lovers’ candlelight, however, turns dramatically toward religion, exemplified by feuding popes. The brief historical visit fades in “cloud shadows” to reveal the lovely orange blossoms, which suddenly transform into those on a new Florida license plate, revealing another side of human vanity

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and lack of concern for our fellows. The brilliant leap from the doctor to the privacy of a bathroom mirror sets the stage for another play of light on the face of the harvest moon, with its reassurance that while many things come and go, that moon returns. Finally, the moonlight becomes a simple setting for the final hayride.

There are a few problems with “Chinese New Year” which kept us from moving it to the Grand Prize level, as can happen in this contest. While “cattails” is a nice link from the riverboat in the previous stanza, it is also a summer season word, in both Japanese *saijiki* and American wildflower guides. As such, it grates against the wintry “down jacket” in the following verse. This points up the need for expanded season-word lists being available to *renku* writers, as including season words that go unrecognized by one’s colleagues can undermine the flow of a poem for other readers who do notice them. Meanwhile, though each verse works very well in its context and shifts beautifully away from immediately preceding materials, the “retaliatory excommunication” of the popes in verse seven might be construed as somewhat of a throwback on the same theme as the “dueling pistols” in the third verse; this probably would not bother most Japanese *renku* masters, but some Western *renku* writers would feel a pinch. Also, “Chinese New Year” could use more attention to person-place, both in avoiding throwbacks and in increased variety of person verses. Having both the first and last stanzas “public” verses—that is, showing undetailed groups of people rather than clear-cut individuals—seems a large percentage for so short a *renku*. In shorter *renku*, such problems may stand out more than they would in longer poems.

These comments should not discourage the authors, however, as “Chinese New Year” reads well and was enjoyed by all three judges.

### **Honorable Mention: “Dappled Light” (nijuin) by Andrew Shimield, Diana Webb, and Frank Williams**

The twenty stanzas of “Dappled Light” have a sense

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of cohesiveness that most of the other entries lack. Some high-quality runs of successive stanzas help in this regard; for example, the run from the Buddha to meditation and a “fix on the moon” to the love verse beginning “she presses his gift” moves very nicely, though a first person or “self” verse would have been welcome for variety of person-place at #5, and “fallen” tends to give the autumnal maple leaf a wintry touch. (Some careful editing after-the-fact can help with problems like this that may not be evident during composition, but are easily repaired.) In the latter half, a “frozen” moon links well with the waiting cat, and the arrow’s sound suggests the release of the tension we see in that previous verse.

“Dappled Light” also contains a number of technical problems that keep it from placing above honorable mention. There are three proper nouns in the opening page or section, one of which involves religion; while this would be acceptable in a twelve-stanza junicho, it runs against the grain in longer renku forms, where such things are restricted to later in the poem. There’s also a throwback between the painter in the second verse and a “relief” sculpture in the fourth, both referring to visual art. A run of five consecutive “place” verses slows things down as the poem moves past the middle, and indeed, seven of the last ten are place verses. The seasonal work seems a little unsure. A run of autumn verses including the British holiday “Bonfire Night” (October) and a maple leaf drops away after only two verses, while autumn normally continues for three verses in a twenty-stanza renku. The only reference to summer seems to be mention of “Blackpool sands,” evidently a vacation destination, but not a clear reference. (In renku composition, if the collaborators agree on the seasonality of a verse, it may stand as such; as a competition entry, however, seasonality should not be in question for other readers.) The two successive winter stanzas contain, respectively, “frosty” and “snow” in the first and “frozen” and “ice” in the second—surely repetitive use of similar language over and above the frowned-upon inclusion of multiple season words in single stanzas. In its favor, “Dappled Light” does have a three-verse spring sequence at the end.

## Haiku Society of America

We hope our comments will help all who read renku to enjoy them even more, and those who write renku to deepen their art. We enjoyed reading this year's entries, and encourage renku authors to prepare poems in all three lengths for next year's contest. Though the shorter forms may seem less impressive than the full-length kasen, in fact each length offers particular challenges. Perhaps in the next year or two we can have winners in each division, for 12-, 20-, and 36-stanza renku, with a "best of show" Grand Prize.

*Hortensia Anderson*  
*William J. Higginson*  
*Johnye Strickland*

Frogpond - Second Decade

gone from the woods  
the bird I knew  
by song alone

*Paul O. Williams*

Volume XII:2 1989

## ERRATA

In Doris Heitmeyer's haibun "A Chance of Pop-up Thunderstorms" the first paragraph reference to "Hellcat" should have read "Hellgate."

\*\*\*\*

her dragonfly sketch  
from when she was seven—  
my niece marries

*Cherie Hunter Day*

\*\*\*\*

In Tom Tico's essay "The Spice of Life" the following errors occurred: the second paragraph reference to "current journals" should have read "current haiku journals," the second sentence of the last paragraph includes a comma after the word "And" that does not appear in the original manuscript, and the final sentence reference to "varied approaches" should have read "more varied approaches." These errors are deeply regretted.

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snow forest

^

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I

such heavy light

*Ruth Yarrow*

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