1982

THE HAIKU SOCIETY OF AMERICA

JAPAN HOUSE

333 EAST 47TH STREET

NEW YORK, N. Y. 10017

Sept. 20, 1982

Dear Friends:

In this year's Harold Henderson Memorial Award Contest, 135 people submitted 346 haiku. Bill Pauly was the judge. His report on the contest, with commentary, follows:

First Place: $100.00

horizon
wild swan drifting through
the woman's body

Raymond Roseliep

Second Place: $50.00

deserted wharf
the mime bows
to the moon

Chuck Brickley

Third Place: $25.00

a spider's web
across the windharp
the silence

Elizabeth Searle Lamb

In addition, Mr. Pauly singled out the following haiku for Honorable Mention, in no particular order:

under the back steps
catfish still flop in the pail--
the long August night

Rita Mazur

horns fold
at my shadow's touch;
brown slug

Darold D. Braida

early April rain
the woman fills every jar,
seals them forever

Sister Mary Thomas Eulberg

dead mynah bird . . .
with each passing car
its wing flaps

Darold D. Braida

Picking cotton - -
the memory
of birdtracks in the snow

Edward P. Willey

Old tea bag;
tints the moon
slightly.

Garry Gay

blackened walnut
left unopened --
winter solstice

David E. Evans

Distant woodchopper
inside the cabin
axbite echoes

Thelma Murphy

The grey cranes --
bending in a line along
the crooked fenceposts

R. M. Bodner

checking for water
the woman finds a full moon
trapped in the cistern

L. A. Davidson

Mr. Pauly's commentary on these poems follows in attached pages.

For those writers not as involved in the "haiku world" as some others, the Haiku Society would like to suggest two fine books, by Professor Harold G. Henderson, for study:

An Introduction to Haiku, Doubleday/Anchor
Haiku in English, Charles E. Tuttle Co.

Volumes by R. H. Blyth are well-known classics in the field.

The Haiku Society warmly thanks all participants and hopes you will join us again in the celebration of the haiku "moment".

Cordially,

Geraldine C. Little

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COMMENTS ON 1982 HENDERSON AWARD-WINNING AND HONORABLE MENTION HAIKU BILL PAULY

FIRST PRIZE: "horizon"

This stunning prize winner enchanted my heart and eye and imagination from beginning to end. I find it clearly the best of all the submissions. There is a dramatic serenity in the intersection of human life and the natural world here. The image itself is magnificent, reminding me of a freeze frame from a Bergman film like Cries and Whispers. Beyond that, though, it has depth and suggestion--what I like to call resonance--that brings me back to it again and again. Without ever mentioning a reflection, the poem makes it clearly visible; I cannot help thinking of the Leda and the swan legend when I read it. The typography here also reinforces the beautiful image--above, we have the horizon; then, the long second line literally pictures the swan drifting through, joining the horizon with the woman's body. Sound values add further dimension. The echoes of "n," "w," "s," "r," and long and short "i" help unite the sound and sense of this superb haiku, in which no word is wasted.

SECOND PRIZE: "deserted wharf"

I remember smiling when I first read this haiku, for it, too, touched me deeply. The writer's economical word use helps me visualize the scene: the mime, perhaps just finishing a performance, bowing to a captive audience of one. The implied reflection of mime and moon on the calm water adds depth here. This simple, effective image really works for me and on me, suggesting melancholy or sabi, and calling forth overtones of the mysterious man in the moon. I think those acquainted with the moon can easily put themselves in the place of the mime, which is part of how I define good haiku.

THIRD PRIZE: "spider's web"

I find this still-life study in comparison and contrast tremendously appealing. Here is a stillness visually defined: no music on the windharp, no movement of the spider's web, another kind of windharp or windcatcher. This interplay of human and natural world creates in me a quiet, meditative mood. Strangely enough, the sound values here, especially the numerous "s" sounds, almost belie the silence painted movingly with words.

HONORABLE MENTION

"catfish"

In this poem I feel a smothering heat and restless movement in both the would-be sleeper (only implied) and the catfish, gasping for air and flopping eerily in the pail. Marvelous sounds in the carefully chosen words and their repeated letters underscore a tension here, maybe a kind of mystery or desperation that leads the reader to ask questions. Incidentally, this well-crafted haiku is one of only two 5-7-5s I found effective.

"horns fold"

A simple haiku moment, this poem offers close observation and a small drama of man and animal touching. The homely image of the slug recalls Issa, but the writer remains so objective that we are left to decide if the man and his shadow are kind or menacing. The sounds of "touch" and "slug" unite the action of the scene, and even the semi-colon might suggest the shape of a slug.

M O R E

HONORABLE MENTION (CONTINUED)

"early April rain" This is a touching, delightful moment. Imagine a woman collecting and "canning" perhaps the purest rain of the year after a long winter of hungering for the return of green and living things. Her spring ritual is not to gather rainwater for hair washing or drinking, but simply to have it forever as a kind of elixir. The image of rebirth is likewise "sealed forever" in a stunning haiku enriched by resonant sounds and overtones.

"Picking cotton" The implied metaphor in this haiku caught my attention immediately--the strong contrast between the hot job of picking cotton and the memory of cooling snow is the heart of the poem. Then I went to my dictionary and the picture of a cotton boll flew out at me--precisely bird tracks in the snow! Such perception is the stuff of which good haiku are made, and in this case it turns even the abstract word "memory" into something quite concrete.

"Old tea bag;" Understatement always makes haiku stronger than wordy pronouncements do. This economical rendition of a time-worn moon-reflection theme is delivered with an appealing freshness. In the austere mood suggested here we can imagine a man holding not only weak tea in his cup, but also holding in his hands the moon. For no explainable reason, I am reminded of this classic haiku:

Since my house burned down
I have a better view
of the rising moon

"blackened walnut" So much is suggested here, though little is said. On the shortest day of the year (around December 22nd.), when the sun is "standing still" at its farthest point from the equator and we head into the teeth of winter, no one or no thing has opened the blackened walnut, perhaps lying half-buried in snow. The tasty nutmeat still lies inside like a gift unwrapped. A strong trochee rhythm and skillfully repeated sounds give this haiku additional texture.

"woodchopper" Built on simple contrast and subtle dramatic irony, this haiku makes us almost feel the axbite echoes inside a cabin we sense is made of logs. The reader can detect a kinship between the dwelling and the trees which makes the sound of chopping--though distant--rather foreboding. The rhythmic words of the last line help us hear the echoes more sharply. Somehow I am even more sensitive to trees after reading this poem.

"moon/cistern" Here is another haiku that reminds us always to relish the unexpected, to be open more fully to the world of nature that helps shape us. To look down into the face of the moon, perhaps to see one's own face reflected there (woman in the moon?), is literally a moment of enlightenment. The author has chosen the traditional 5-7-5 form here and has made it work effectively without being wordy or dogmatic.

M O R E