

GAIL SHER

PERIODICALS & ANTHOLOGIES, 1981-2022

- “Beginner’s Mind,” *Midwest Zen* 3 (December 2022), 26-30. Online.
- “Excerpt from *Blue*.” *Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here*. Eds. Beau Beausoleil & Deema K. Shehabi. Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012. 71. Print.
- “can’t touch you” [with David Rice]. *The Tanka Journal* 14. Tokyo: Nihon Kajin Club [Japan Tanka Poets’ Club], 1999. 10. Print.
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Midwest Zen

Issue 3 | December 2022



A publication of Great Wind Zendo
Danville, Indiana

Midwest Zen

Issue 3 | December 2022

Published 2022 by Great Wind Zendo

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The digital version of this publication can be downloaded at no cost from our website at greatwindzendo.org/MWZ.

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Printed in U.S.A.

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Beginner's Mind

"Beginner's Mind" is a term especially connected to Shunryu Suzuki Roshi because of his book, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. It's a term people casually use with the sense "everyone knows what *that* means." But I wonder.

Let's take a moment to consider what you think "Beginner's Mind" means. Can you articulate your relationship with it? Is it a principle by which you live? Is it something you hardly think about?

When Suzuki Roshi first saw the published copy of *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind*, he said: "It looks good . . . I didn't write it but it looks nice." It's true he didn't actually write this famous book. Suzuki Roshi arrived in San Francisco in 1959 to serve as priest for the Japanese Soto Zen community in San Francisco. While living alone in their large temple on Buchanan Street, he started sitting zazen in the morning and evening. Gradually people, curious about anything "Zen" (word spread quickly through the local art-scene grapevine) joined him and the sittings became more frequent and more formal. A few satellite groups also sprang up—in Mill Valley, Berkeley and Los Altos. Roshi would go there once or twice a week for zazen and to give talks. Eventually the woman who hosted the group in Los Altos, Trudy Dixon, began, with Roshi's permission, recording the lectures. After an extremely lengthy period of transcribing and editing, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* was published. People love it, but I'm not sure how many finish it because it is actually not so simple.

"Beginner's Mind"—the words—have become commonplace. Yet it's the fresh new breath—the "mind" of this phrase—that Suzuki-roshi so emphasized. Staying with this—first finding it and then how to bring ourselves again and again back to it, is at the heart of his legacy.

But it isn't easy. Not because IT isn't easy but because the cultural values with which it contends make it extremely challenging. I refer to setting goals, to winning, to achievement, to progress—these are all de-emphasized because the mind behind their direction is at cross-purposes with a beginner's mind.

Reb Anderson Roshi, a close disciple of Suzuki Roshi says that Roshi considered his main job as a Zen priest to encourage people to practice upright sitting. For him, Reb says, the most pure and direct way of sustaining the Buddha treasure was just to be fully himself in each moment. His way of protecting the Dharma treasure was to practice wholeheartedly with no gaining idea. And his way of protecting and sustaining the Sangha treasure (Buddha, Dharma & Sangha: the "Triple Treasures" of Buddhism) was what he called group practice—practicing together in harmony with others. When you consider that for Roshi, anyone being fully themselves means to be rooted in their fundamental Buddha-nature and that to do this one would have no gaining idea (because there is nothing to add to one's Buddha-nature)—THIS in itself would be Beginner's Mind.

When Roshi says "*In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few,*" by "beginner" he means our fundamental selves, and from there being anything the situation requires. The phrase has a kind of innocence and lack of calculation or contrivance about it.

It's ironic. Suzuki-roshi loved Americans because "they don't know anything about Zen so they're receptive to the teachings." Yet at the same time Americans are steeped in gaining ideas. If you talk about upright sitting, for many people their first thought is "I don't have time," by which they mean "I can't afford not to accomplish something

even for 15 minutes." Most of Roshi's first students were artists who were operating differently already.

"At first the effort you make is quite rough and impure, but by the power of practice the effort will become purer and purer. When your effort becomes pure, your body and mind become pure. This is the way we practice Zen."

Let me give an example. When I was seventy-five my husband gave me a banjo for Christmas. My back was weak. My hands were stiff. There were many obstacles, but I just thought, "Well, I have always wanted to play the banjo. If I practice every day, every day I will have the joy of the banjo. Even one tune will be amazing.

Before I started playing, I could hardly believe that I, Gail, would ever be able to play the banjo. But day after day I just did the things from my lesson and now, a few years later, I actually *can* play a few tunes. And it *doesn't seem special*. It is just me, nothing special. Day after day it's just me figuring out how to get the strap over my head and the banjo so that it doesn't slip. There are so many considerations, if I let them, they could get annoying. But I just say "Nevermind. This is what it takes." In the end I get my tune, which at best doesn't sound too bad. Deep inside I am very satisfied.

Beginning at seventy-five has many advantages. I am not thinking, "Boy, if I practice really hard I could win a competition." I'm not thinking, "Too bad I can't play fast like her." Instead I am thinking, "Every day I can try as hard as I can and since I can't do better than that, I will have done my best."

In this way it becomes a "practice." Every morning for half an hour. Practice is about HOW—how to simply stay with how—making sure I have the half hour, that I have what I

need with me, that I know what to do during that time, that I'm alert.

It's easier to have a beginner's mind at seventy-five than at fifteen. At fifteen one is full of fantasies, notions, looking around, trying things on. At seventy-five you can just be yourself.

Anyway, playing the banjo is not really about playing the banjo. Playing the banjo is about sharpening the Mind-That-Plays-the-Banjo. Correct Mind creates correct playing, whether that be awkward, faulty, kindergartenshish.

Correct Mind knows that there is nothing to know. This is important to understand. Knowledge (information) and Wisdom (spirit) are not the same. Playing the banjo is a Wisdom practice. You being YOU is the Wisdom practice of returning to the Source. Actually, when you think about it, it's the Source that plays the banjo.

Wisdom practice means NOT KNOWING. Suzuki Roshi calls it Beginner's Mind. If you want to do something fully you need the real you. The real you lives inside (behind or underneath) all of your knowing—touching the spot of JUST YOU—first recognizing it, then touching it and then *becoming* it in your stillness.

"Our 'original mind' includes everything within itself. It is always rich and sufficient within itself."

Roshi means that we have everything that we need to begin and continue with our practice.

"The goal of practice is always to show up and to keep a beginner's mind." It means that endlessly we stay with that fresh effort because boredom (laziness of mind) is always remediable.

The word "practice"—you can turn anything into a practice—means turning it into a relationship. In the case of my banjo it is a Self-relationship, with the banjo being a mirror. "Oh I don't really feel like practicing today," I may think but because it's a "practice" I get to see my mind when it is reluctant, but I practice anyway. If it were not a practice, I might just do what I feel like, risking the whole prospect which could easily fall away.

"Tell me about 'There is nothing to know' when it comes time to change the strings" you could rightfully ask. Because, while for big mind there is nothing to know, small mind needs lots of information. It's the way you hold the details, however, that makes the difference. The details are just details. Just as the waves of the sea are the "practice of the sea," so are the information and skills required to play an instrument—or to sit zazen.

"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities but in the expert's mind there are few" simply describes a way of holding these details.

BIOGRAPHIES

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Joshua St. Claire is a corporate controller from rural Pennsylvania. His haiku have appeared in several international journals and he believes that small poems can contain the universe.

Lisa Summers lives in rural Indiana and teaches in a women's prison. She enjoys capturing the world she wanders with photographs and in writing.

Daniel Thomas's second poetry book, *Leaving the Base Camp at Dawn*, was published in 2022. His first collection, *Deep Pockets*, won a 2018 Catholic Press Award. More info at danielthomaspoetry.com.

Jay Tuttle finds the mix of art and science in photography very appealing. Making photographs that others enjoy are a great pleasure in his life. Enjoy more images at jaytuttlephotography.com.

Poet **David Whyte** grew up with a strong, imaginative influence from his Irish mother among the hills and valleys of his father's Yorkshire. The author of eleven books of poetry and four books of prose, he holds a degree in Marine Zoology, and leads workshops and walking tours around the world.



Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here

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& Deema K. Shehabi

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Project website:

<http://www.al-mutanabbistreetstartshere-boston.com/>

Jaffe Center for Book Arts:

<http://www.library.fau.edu/depts/spc/JaffeCenter/collection/al-mutanabbi/index.php>

Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here

Edited by Beau Beausoleil & Deema K. Shehabi

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ISBN: 978-1-60486-590-5

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011939672

Cover designed by Tania Baban, based on a broadside printed by Suzanne Vilmain for the Al-Mutanabbi Street Broadside Project

Interior design by briandesign

10 987654321

PM Press

PO Box 23912

Oakland, CA 94623

www.pmpress.org

Printed in the USA on recycled paper, by the Employee Owners of Thomson-Shore in Dexter, Michigan.

www.thomsonshore.com

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Excerpt from Blue

Gail Sher

RARE BEAUTY IS BEGUN, he thinks, seeing into the room the limitation of my seeing where the dead person lingers.

It is myself, I muse, looking at the grass, seeing its kindness suddenly.

Food is offered, though a throat could disappear.

Every given moment that you perceive is the same thing, you say and I'm thinking, It's the bardo. It just arises and you see.

The flesh of the bird was broken that day.

Which wouldn't hold its feathers, as the flesh was keen. (Old ones said provoked.)

I see you on the edge, a fissure or cleft where a breach has been made and I think, Am I the breach?

The gestation of wrongness is not carried by wings nor the deep drop of cliff overhanging the swollen stream.

Rubbing the bird, stroking its hair so that it is soothed.

The old ones receive until they realize I'm dead now.

The hair is not an image of sky, though it has sky qualities and has come from the sky.

I am halfghost. I eat all of their hair, always.

Someone belongs here, she thinks, having the memory of her mother's hands. A bouquet of birds contains her mother's feeling for color.

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THE TANKA JOURNAL

ISSN 0918-7707

1999◇NO.14

NIHON KAJIN CLUB
THE JAPAN TANKA POETS' CLUB

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Vigil

Sue-Stapleton Tkach

(for Susan Alexis Tkach-Berg in
loving memory of her husband
Peter Robert Berg)

In the *Ink Dark Moon*
when the prince died, mourners wrote
their grief in verse;
now, in another century
those verses speak again.

Who could have guessed
with what suddenness he left
...not of his choosing.
she speaks aloud to him...
and the walls echo her words.

While she keeps a vigil
skies turn from light to dark
November fading
the long rains begin
obscuring the *Ink Dark Moon*.

can't touch you

Gail Sher and David Rice

waddling on your mossy rock
toward raging sea
and sheer cliff wall—
even their shadows
can't touch you

your camera
can catch the sun's birth
can coax
one last coat of light
from the demanding dusk

a tin horn sounds
the hoers' early tea
the cat sleeps
even the petals
of the side saddle flower droop

field trip
a Mariposa lily
thrills the class
at a stream-side lunch stop
everyone looking for newts

one continuous sorrel wave
its hush this summer night—
as the plougher recedes
across the hill
the loon's wild call

an owl
trumpets through the darkness
in the ensuing silence
each meadow mole
huddles deeper in its mound

GENERATOR 8

volume 1

GENERATOR 8 consists of 2 volumes

This is Volume 1

Editor: John Byrum

ISSN 0896-7431

1998

GENERATOR Press
3503 Virginia Ave
Cleveland OH 44109
USA

G E N E R A T O R 8

volume 1

a magazine of international experimental visual & language material

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Ann Erickson	untitled o how stale & unprofitable seem world the color of pale green darker
Lyn Lifshin	WASP WAIST THEY USED TO CALL ME I GET AROUND CRICKET MADONNA

Gail Sher

Lovers

Lovers I 1959

1.

dight à
jig
moon

2.

jabs gaffe
limn (gig) dilatory

3.

 dee-dum
corpuscle tho' A
mogul
(shine-on)

Lovers II 1960

(licit) pulque
churro rig. play-off

Tree 1965

au Eve
(hilltribe)

solto /ox
(our task)

Table I 1959

"musketo"
fracas
ice lock. had

Odalisque 1967

namu
Böd

snowbird

Tara Mater
cow
cow
cow

jooal
pea-pod (shy sly)

Embrace I 1979

tenement jai deer-basket
jai prow
(chew)
enchantress

Embrace

sparyard ... dog-earred

furl
ki: ne'er
cryer
entrain

seem '
spar seem: grey-dog

Garden Wall 1990

whip-o-will
(right by)

green grow
the rushes.
constable

green-o
fiddle (the rushes)
evangel-poem

Ashiya, October 26, 1998

Dear participant in the Haiku Festa:

It is with pleasure that we inform you that the Ashiya International Haiku Festa '98 came to a happy end having accomplished all of its aims, and we would like to extend on this occasion our most heartfelt thanks for your kind support throughout.

We are enclosing a collection of selected pieces as a memento of the event. We would also like to apologize for the tardiness in sending you this letter.

With our sincere wishes of happiness and success in all of your endeavors in the years ahead, I remain,

Yours very truly,

*Ashiya International Haiku Festa '98
Organizing Committee General Secretary*

7-6 Seido-cho, Ashiya, Hyogo 659-8501

Japan

*Ashiya Board of Education Secretariat
Lifelong Education Section*

Tel:(0797)38-2091 Fax :(0797)38-2089

谷間を行く汽車
川の中に木のように
釣り人が立ってひたすら待つ

稲妻一
暗闇の中で
息をこらす

the long long flight
across marsh after marsh
a flight of geese

USA Robert Henry Poulin

遠く遠く
沼また沼を
雁渡る

AUTUMN :
PETALS COVER
THE SPARROW'S BODY

USA Gail Sher

秋
花が覆いの
すずめの死

in this early light
shimmer of pale pink cosmos
and a haze of gnats

USA Elizabeth Searle Lamb

薄明に揺らめく
薄桃色のコスモスと
蚊柱

AS THE COFFIN LOWERS
SEVERAL WATCHES
SOUND THE HOUR

Canada George Swede

柩が下ろされるとき
いくつかの腕時計がピッと
時を告げる

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97

Judge
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USA

Tanka Splendor 1997

AWARD POETS

Pamela A. Babusci

Marianne Bluger

Janice M. Bostok

Margaret Chula

Ann Cooper

Cherie Hunter Day

Jeanne Emrich

Caroline Gourlay

Larry Kimmel

Anthony Knight

ai li

David Rice / Gail Sher

David Rice / Ebba Story

Carol Purington

Ruby Spriggs

David Steele

John Stevenson

Elizabeth St Jacques

Teresa Volz

Jeff Witkin

David Rice
Berkeley, California

Gail Sher
San Francisco, California

Against the longed-for clouds

dusk
a lingering scent of spring
behind the suddenly chill air —
a white sun hovers — then drops
in the shallow sky

honeysuckle blossoms
infuse the whole room . . .
this pot of white tea
would warm our conversation
if you were here

yellow grass bends
in the ocean breeze
a fog horn blows
a blackbird fades
in the swill of a white cap

just one spout all day
whale watchers disappointed —
on the way home
an albino starling
on a telephone wire

sparkling winter morning
icy waves caress my feet
crouched on a pole
a crow caws —
ceaselessly

a turkey vulture
circles with the summer wind
its white and black underwings
strikingly clear
against the longed-for gray clouds

JEAN M. HALE
20711 Garden Place Court
Cupertino, CA 95014

Gail Sher
2640 Telegraph Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94704

Dear Gail,

Congratulations! One of your haiku (fallout/a radio blares..) has won Honorable Mention at the Hiroshima Haiku and Tanka Competition.

The poems are going to be read by Jerry Kilbride on August 3 at the d.p. Fong Galleries, 383 S. First Street, San Jose. It would be wonderful if you could be present at this reading. Congratulations, again.

Sincerely,



Jean Hale

1997

Haiku

First Prize

Boiled
with screams
the river incinerates

Faye Aoyagi

Honorable Mentions

Atomic bomb--
the moment before
the moment after

Garry Gay

rocking the body
of her dead infant--
woman with no face

Margaret Chula

how this rose pricks
. . . her stories
of Horoshima

Kenneth Tanamura

fallout--
a radio blares
through the empty hallway

Gail Sher

half century after
space station rendezvous
above Hiroshima

Katsue Ingalz

ONE BREATH

**HAIKU SOCIETY OF AMERICA
1995 MEMBERS' ANTHOLOGY**

Edited by

Jean Dubois

Michael McNierney

Elizabeth L. Nichols

Haiku Society of America: New York

Haiku Society of America, Inc.
c/o Japan Society, Inc.
333 East 47th Street
New York, New York 10017

Design and typography by Michael McNierney

ISBN 0-9631467-3-4

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Each poem in this book was chosen by the editors from five published or unpublished haiku or senryu submitted by members of the Haiku Society of America in 1995. Each member who chose to submit poems was guaranteed to have one poem selected for this anthology.

Acknowledgements

Some of the poems in this book have been previously published in the following: Modern Haiku, Cicada, Frogpond, HI, Haiku Happenings, Haiku Headlines, Woodnotes, Mainichi Daily News, Brussels Sprout, Iga-Ueno Bashô Festival Dedicatory Anthology, Fire, HSA Newsletter, Haiku Southwest, HI 1992 Anthology, Chimera Connections, High on the Wind, Dragonfly, East-West Haiku, Timepieces Haiku Week-at-a-Glance 1993, The Christian Science Monitor, The Honolulu Advertiser, Japan Airlines Anthology, Florida State Poet's Association Newsletter, South By Southeast, High-Coo, Azami, San Francisco Haiku Anthology, Virtual Images, Showcase. No Such Thing as Strangers (Hurleyville, NY: Julie Hagan Bloch, 1993). Penny Harter's poem is Copyright © 1994 Penny Harter in *Stages and Views* (Katydid Books, 1994). Reprinted by permission of the author. The HSA gratefully acknowledges these sources.

silent snow

silent house

I stand in the moonlit doorway

~Gail Sher

pencils sharpened

I stand distracted

the smell of cedar

~Randal Johnson

the snow

even deeper

beyond the temple gate

~Kohjin Sakamoto

shoveled out at last:

peeling an extra potato

just in case...

~Liz Fenn

black bough #8
7 Park Avenue
Flemington, NJ 08822

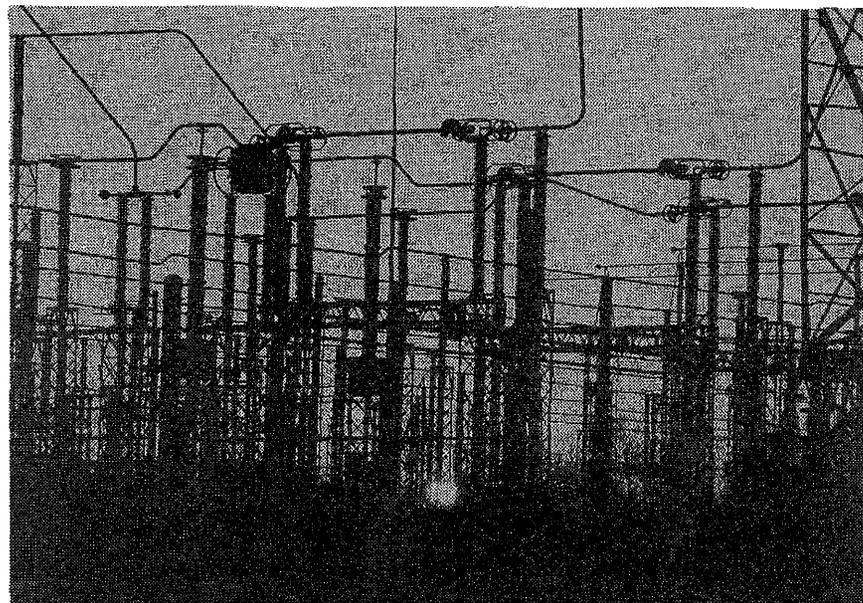
Single issues are \$5.00 a piece (\$6.00 outside the U.S. and Canada). A three-issue subscription is \$13.50 (\$16.50 outside the U.S. and Canada). Please remit International Postal Money Orders or check payable in U.S. currency.

Please send no more than 20 haiku per submission. Several haiku per page are preferred. SASE required. Payment for acceptance is \$1.00 for each verse, up to \$4.00 for a sequence or long poem. There are no contributor's copies.

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Editor: Charles Easter

ISSN 1079-6568



black bough

black bough publishes haiku and related poetry

rain wakes us before the alarm clock

John Sheirer

Basho

your rainproof paper hat
made with your own hands
the one imitating Saigyo's—
I too have felt desperately alone

Gail Sher

drying slowly
on the clothesline:
raindrops

Daniel Mills

after the heavy rain
she wants a fence
around the pond

Tom Clausen

From my hotel window—
walnut leaves dripping rain
a *Fraulein* walking . . .

Larry Kimmel

sweeping the walk
one blue shoe, dew covered
in the flower bed

Michael Ketchek

J U X T A # 4

1996

T A B L E
OF

CONTENTS: Bruce Andrews, Sheila Murphy,
Jake Berry, Tom Taylor, John M. Bennett, Dale
Jensen, Ivan Argüelles, Adam Cornford, Paul
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Robin Hoefler, John Noto, Jeffrey Little, Gail
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Barbiero, Clemente Padin, Larry Tomoyasu,
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Stefans / Judith Goldman

*
"The Paintings
of Social
Concern"
(last 9
pages)

cover by Rebecca Lasley

EDITORS: Ken Harris, Jim Leftwich

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Charlottesville, VA 22903-9707

E-MAIL: Juxta43781@aol.com

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Single copies: \$6 Subscriptions: \$12 per year

Gail Sher

The Paintings of Social Concern

The Subway 1950

nip atrium.
tip or are

femme wits "hoos-thief"
(washes Bartholomew)

Elle. yes

till assay
chitchat

Government Bureau 1956

a-ticket
Wenceslaus
um plateful

what/hoosier
sackcoat

Supermarket 1973

oops! · redbreast

Way or
(slicker) Cheapside

cowbell
tell new
wetlands
teary-eyed

Highway 1953

Túdor. wry by
plume Tibet
tri do

chrysalis aegis.
@ Asia kill
prescient

Balkan fjord.
Yeti señora
wolfskin

Men and Women Fighting
1958

Yantra huntress: congas tzaddik
golashes

Teller 1967

Yama
Yama: chedis

ojas Anschluss

clackity clack.

pin-the-tail
Abednego

Waiting Room II 1982

"ja ja"
sou'wester. [puzzlement]

"pulps" Shadrach
(Meshach) rocking yes

cowgirl Escene
mere (deeper)
gosling

Corporate Decision 1983

pins & once
tomboy
(shant)

puzzlement jaggery
the stargaze:

Terminal 1986

bohea
(thew) :
"endlessly rocking"

bluebell (four leaf)
mar Ophelia
"the two of them"

frogpond

one moment's fragrance . . .
petals in the wind

Marianna Monaco

Vol. XIX, No. 1 May 1996
HAIKU SOCIETY OF AMERICA

April showers
umbrella blows its top:
so do I . . .

Edith Mize Lewis

first day of spring . . .
the colors of bright umbrellas
reflect on the wet sidewalk

Lois Gregory

the *puka-puka*
of rain on a tarpaper roof—
a child's muddy boots

Kathleen Hellen

I stand in the rain,
seeing my life's reflections
pass before my eyes.

Junaid Khan

the storm passing—
over the painter's scaffold
another rainbow

Jack Lent

After spring showers
children playing hopscotch leap
rainbow to rainbow

Nancy A. Jensen

cloudburst . . .
drip-drying
all the way home

spring rain
a pink slicker bobbing
around its toddler

Carol Conti-Entin

spring storm
cat moves her kittens
one by one by one

Robert Gibson

wipers steady
"no vacancy"
again

Gail Sher

across the river
rainbow and swallow
arc

Cecily Stanton

shut tight
against the spring rain
windflowers

Mary Fran Meer

light rain
the violets you left
blooming again

Marian Olson

cold March morning . . .
dragging the trash to the curb
. . . pausing for crocus

C. Stuart-Powles

ring around the roses
the toddler stamping
each yellow crocus

Elizabeth Howard

office window
cannot open . . . outside
a crocus sways

Jim Mullins

in this field
beyond the lawn
wild daisies

Robert Gibson

Not quite hidden
by the junk in the yard—
lilies-of-the-valley

50th anniversary
we argue about planting
the Peace Rose

Carol Dagenhardt

clearing the garden:
discovering the first rose
and the first bee

hummingbird
canvassing
the crocuses

Ernest J. Berry

Tears of homesickness
a crocus bleeds onto snow
in my inner land

Clarissa Stein

Mountain trail:
two wild irises
five miles apart

Dave Sutter

my son asks
casually
what a tree costs

John Stevenson

a few snowflakes fall
yet behind the dark-blue pines
still the sun

Sheila Hyland

through the drizzle
spruce growing
bluer and bluer

anniversary
two acorns sprout two leaves
in an old crosstie

Nina A. Wicker

home at last
not a single leaf
on the crooked tree

Gail Sher

shadows of
windblown trees on the rose rug
we talk of travel

Ruth Holter

rushing across the rocks the felled tree's shadow

Susan Stanford

at last
the old oak has fallen—
the sky it left

Jeanne Emrich

moonlit shore:
only this leaning pine and
the old fisher's silhouette

Elizabeth St Jacques

spring night
this newborn moon
swaddled in haze

George Ralph

night's garden
sleepless petals
tossing

Judith Liniado

20

billboard:
the black hole
in her Colgate smile

Elizabeth St Jacques

Awake all the night . . .
I watch the green sun rise
through my third glass of tea

Chris Linn

in the street a batch of red strawberries
all smashed but one

Rick Woods

heat from the tug's stack
in passing wavers the shaft
of the Empire State

Paul O. Williams

Rain drops
From the crack in the ceiling . . .
getting out the pot

Lisa Pretus

late sunlight
climbs the wall
cigarette by cigarette

Larry Kimmel

waiting room
the early evening sky
threatens rain

James Chessing

Waiting . . . we listen
through electronic shadows—
how cold this house tonight!

Peggy Olafson

silhouetted tenements
cut the rising moon
into slices

Joseph DeLuise

full moon—
after hospital curfew
patients' shadows stirring

Yoko Ogino

telescope's tight field
surprise jetliner leaves
Saturn awash

David Nelson Blair

21

ing this, I can laugh at the chagrin of the jewel thief reaching for it until he realizes that all the glitter is in the name.

Although I do not approve of theft or of the greed of he who covets, I feel an affection for these thieves. It may be because the thieves of the first haiku are humble and naive, and the thief of the second haiku has played the fool. But I think it goes beyond this. Both poets have written with total objectivity; they have passed no judgement, and in this way they have slyly slipped me into the rôles of the thieves. I too have been enchanted by the falling star, and I too have laughed at myself for being hoodwinked by a name.

Patricia Neubauer

¹"A Small Ceremony." From Here Press, 1988. © Dee Evetts.

²"The Cottage of the Wild Plum." Modern Haiku Press, 1991. © Robert Spiess.

ERRATA, Winter 1995

Errors occurred in two sequences and in one haiku in the 1995 Winter issue. These works are printed correctly below. Furthermore, *Helen K. Davie* should have appeared as cojudge of the Nicholas A. Virgilio Memorial High School Haiku Competition.

After Surgery

after surgery
she feeds me ice chips
with a plastic spoon

visiting hours over
she sneaks back
with chocolate

her finger
traces the line
just above my incision

one week post-op
sign of recovery
first erection

wedding picture
how thin I was
two months after surgery

John Sheirer

Night Falls

night falls—
skin folds
around my bones

slouching toward the toilet
night wind sears me
to the bone

full moon—facing it
knees braced
beneath my robe

these fifty years
having accomplished nothing
I sail home

Gail Sher

camera light
news anchor's smile
off
off

Lee R. Seidenberg

Chain / 3

volume 1

Special Topic:
Hybrid Genres/Mixed Media

Edited by
Jena Osman and Juliana Spahr

Chain
Spring 1996

Subscriptions:

Chain appears annually.

Send orders to Chain at 107 14th St., Buffalo, NY 14213.

Make checks payable to UB Foundation.

\$10.00 for one issue

\$18.00 for two

This issue was made possible by a Gregory Kolovakos Seed Grant Award from the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses, as well as the Samuel P. Capen Chair of Poetry and Humanities (Robert Creeley), and the James H. McNulty Chair (Dennis Tedlock), both of the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Distributed by:

Bernhard DeBoer, Inc., 113 East Center St., Nutley, NJ 07110

Fine Print Distributors, 500 Pampa Drive, Austin, TX 78752-3028

Small Press Distribution, 1814 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, CA 94702

Indexed by the *Index of American Periodical Verse* (Metuchen, NJ: Saccrow Press) and by the *MLA Bibliography of Periodical Literature*.

Special thanks to Janet Zweig, Charles Weigl, and Geoffrey Wilson.

Editors: Jena Osman and Juliana Spahr.

Cover Art: Charlene Benson.

Marginal Art in front matter by Abigail Child.

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ISSN 1076-0520

Gail Sher
INNOCENT DIVERSIONS
FROM *GEORGE TOOKER: MARGINALIA*

Divers 1952

rudraksha wildwood
oink oink

Malachi
beadgame tongue & tongues ferry

Acrobats 1950-52

floozy
it slurp 'tis

Paschel Remus
pole water

twig twig (seem)
'til tail stone

Garden Party 1952

stone. old stone
caterwauling
bambina

In the Summer House 1958

peep-show
the Doges: sea-chair

priapie
chaws chaw

snickers cd.
bloodstock
"hit on"
Hiei Aeffic
"maybe I can"

Lantern 1977

swan. oral swan
(yew) *mani*
cartwheel

starry (do it)
mulatto/sea-language

Lanterns 1986

1.

Abiquiu
the jug.
the (seahawk)

2.

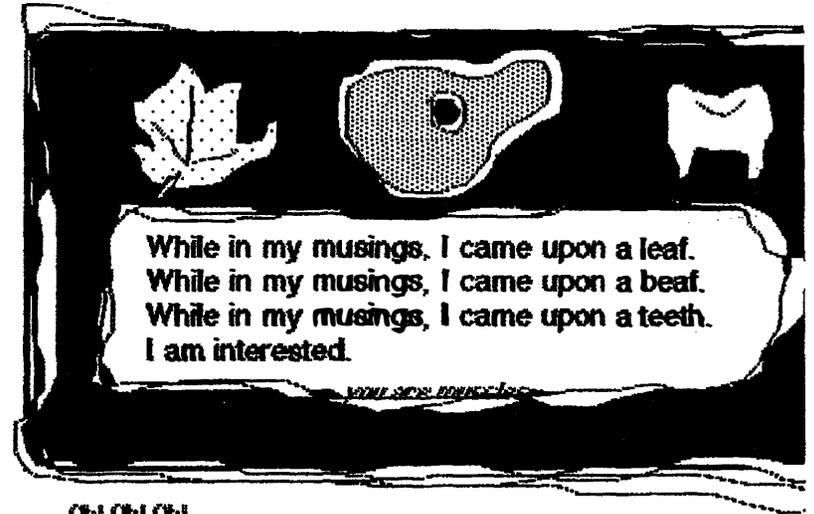
HOWL
plump
honeygrass
pipergrass

3.

lightfoot saluki
Enkidu
rose-leaves

4.

Ox free (nor)
rose



Oh! Oh! Oh!

"Talk poetry"
may994

Woodnotes

Spring 1996 – Number 28

Editor ■ Michael Dylan Welch

248 Beach Park Boulevard, Foster City, California 94404

Associate/Haibun Editor ■ Gail Sher

700 Heinz Avenue, Suite 310, Berkeley, California 94710

Tanka Editor ■ Pat Shelley

19223 Shubert Drive, Saratoga, California 95070

Art Editor ■ Cherie Hunter Day

15584 N.W. Trakehner Way, Portland, Oregon 97229

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ISSN 1050-4664

Submissions of poems, haibun, news, and articles are encouraged. Send submissions to the appropriate editor (addresses above). Only work accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) will be considered (or SAE with two IRCs internationally). You may also submit poems, articles, or news items via electronic mail to WelchM@aol.com. All work submitted must be the original, unpublished effort of the contributor unless otherwise noted. The editors assume no responsibility for contributors' views, for failure to give proper acknowledgment, or for copyright infringement. Copyright reverts to authors upon publication.

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Deadline for next issue (in-hand) – April 26, 1996

her footsteps
on the walk—
birds singing

Paul O. Williams

Canoeing down stream . . .
again at this bend, we flush
the same kingfisher

Donna Claire Gallagher

at the rifle range
swallow feeds her chicks
between volleys

Naomi Y. Brown

through measles and mumps
every eastern songbird
on the bedside wallpaper

Laurie W. Stoelting

Listening for worms . . .
the robin waits
for thunder's end.

John Laugenour

night falls
I watch—
door ajar

Gail Sher

Woodnotes

Summer 1996 – Number 29

Editor ■ Michael Dylan Welch

248 Beach Park Boulevard, Foster City, California 94404

Associate Editor ■ Gail Sher + pp. 10, 22

700 Heinz Avenue, Suite 310, Berkeley, California 94710

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Deadline for next issue (in-hand) – August 2, 1996

hideaway cove—
scribbling another haiku
on the bread wrap

H. F. Noyes

striking
the dust-covered globe
summer sun

Nika

the boy dozes . . .
perched on his fly rod
a red admiral

Gail Sher

Grimy store façade—
the clean silhouettes
of absent letters

Donna Claire Gallagher

cabinetmaker's shop
the dial scotch-taped
to NPR

Dee Evetts

the retired gardener—
his balcony filled
with plastic flowers

Brian Tasker

organizing the house
for weeks
suddenly nothing to do

James Tipton

staff lounge chess game—
a pawn on the verge
of promotion

Carlos Colón

To write a nature haiku
I flip the pages of
a flower guide

Fay Aoyagi

checking the driver
as I pass a car
just like mine

John Stevenson

waterfall—
the man with the booming voice
stops talking

H. F. Noyes

first yellow tulip
the click of cutting shears
in the winter sun

Lynne Leach

snowmelt—
the smell of a wooden door
all day in the sun

Jeff Witkin

winter sun—
pale wings
flutter about the woodpile

Gail Sher

at my approach
the sparrows fall quiet
winter dusk

Grant Savage

winter thaw—
sparrow at the spigot
waits for its drip

Nina A. Wicker

dove vanishes
from my windowsill . . .
morning mist

Jim Mullins

grey morning drizzle
falling softly into moss
camellia blossom

Ce Rosenow

Merton's essays
all afternoon
the steady rain

Cherie Hunter Day

late evening rain—
the row of parked cars
left sparkling

Gary Hotham

storm windows
stacked against the house—
spring sunset

Lee Gurga

soon after the child
the puppy
goes to sleep

Christopher Herold

big allis 7

BIG ALLIS

Issue Number Seven
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publication

ISSN: 1043-9978

BIG ALLIS is published once a year.
Two issue subscription: \$12
Institutions: \$15
Please make checks payable to
Melanie Neilson.
Address all orders, submissions,
and correspondence to:

BIG ALLIS
Melanie Neilson
11 Scholes Street
Brooklyn, NY 11206

Unsolicited manuscripts must be
accompanied by SASE.

Distributor:
Small Press Distribution, 1814 San
Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94702

Editors: Jessica Grim and
Melanie Neilson
Associate Editor: Deirdre Kovac

The editors would like to express
their thanks to Kevin Davies.

Design: Jean Foos
Cover image: Zoe Leonard, *Beauty
Calibrator, Museum of Beauty, Hollywood*
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State of the Arts



NYSCA

BIG ALLIS is made possible by
funding provided by the Literature
Program of the New York State
Council on the Arts and by the Fund
for Poetry.

With this issue my tenure as co-editor of BIG ALLIS will come to a close. I want to thank all those writers and friends who, over the last six years, have provided us with such wonderful support and creative efforts, and whom it has been my good fortune to get to know.

Jessica Grim

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GAIL SHER

from GEORGE TOOKER: MARGINALIA

The Early Work

Audience 1945

I I swan
Toltec Lumberyard
(blimp) Jesse
lilies

•

Dance 1946

pan ney Welsh
burl Wotan
la la la

Children and Spastics 1946

consuetude
see
see She

The Chess Game 1947

thy blue skull
sweet game

gyre gyre: sheltering
deer-piece

Self Portrait 1947

Pilate: dog bead
dharna Bristol
dray Merlin
(paw-paw)

Coney Island 1948

soeur Phillipa
tore Ali (Pure Land)

•

Bird Watchers 1948

dos-à-dos
not.
not aleatory

•

Festa 1948

piper (St.)
the they

elm nog:
Jinenjo (spriglet)

à alee
crepuscular

Market 1949

Judaeus flocks
at'a smithy (caryatid)

•

Cornice 1949

hip-hop. the sorrel
(so)
starlet
pointillist
Philoctetes

ant / ant / ant / ant / ant
a periodical of autochthonous poetry and other conundrums

number three summer 1996
four dollars no copyright

appearing as frequently as possible.
edited and published by chris gordon with the invaluable assistance of
erin casey, greg cucina, carol gordon, craig klapman, geoff manson, and
andrew young.

images: *only 1 of 1* and *prosiness* - guy r. beining, *your x 2* - john m.
bennett/aug '95, *rope and dust* - greg cucina, *palimpsest* and "*don't blame
it on the monkey!*" - a. daigu, *ganesh 23* and *64 ki id baal* - a. di michele,
watch it, mr. sun - cliff dweller, *two views of a tree* - chris gordon, *mosqui-*
to intently - dorothy howard/zéni b, *museum pond* and *bicycle* - andrew
young, *cover* - chris gordon & an unknown member of the u.c.l.a. art
department circa 1930.

many of these images were translated by andrew young.

versions of *dakotsu*, *kijô*, *ryûnosuke*, *seisensui*, and *sôjô* adapted from
makoto ueda's *modern japanese haiku*.

typographical equipment courtesy of ari davidow.
winter's afternoon indoors appeared in *raw nervz* (67 court street, aylmer,
quebec, canada j9h 4m1).

next issue: *the dalai lama's rifle* - gun dharma, buddhist militias, and the
coming social apocalypse.

every ten hours a 100 watt light bulb creates three pounds of carbon
dioxide; the ten warmest years on record have all been within the past
fifteen years.
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retains pattern
that covers an excellent
gray

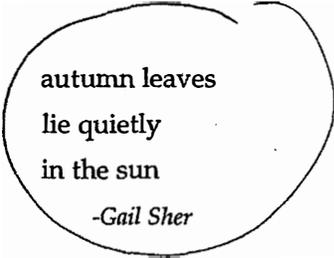
-Spencer Selby

LIGHTENING STORM
I STAND UNDER AN
ASH TREE

-Heather Titlestad

A man asks directions
hand over
his mouth.

-Alexis K. Rotella



autumn leaves
lie quietly
in the sun

-Gail Sher

cutting my orange
into slivers
watching the new moon

-Ernest J. Berry

RADDLE

MOON

15

R A D D L E M O O N 1 5

RADDLE MOON is published by THE KOOTENAY SCHOOL OF WRITING SOCIETY. Donations are tax-deductible (#068870-20-27) in Canada and are received promptly.

SUBSCRIPTIONS in Canada and the US are \$15 for two issues for individuals; \$20 for institutions and libraries. *US and int'l subscribers please pay in US\$.* All other international subscriptions are \$17 for individuals and \$20 per year for institutions and libraries. Single copies are \$8; back issues are \$6.

RADDLE MOON is grateful for the support of the Canada Council, our patrons and our subscribers. Thanks also to The Typeworks for mail runs.

DISTRIBUTED IN CANADA BY: The Canadian Magazine Publishers Assn., 2 Stewart St., Toronto, Ont., M5A 1H6 and by RADDLE MOON.

DISTRIBUTED IN THE US BY: Small Press Distribution, 1814 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley CA, 94702.

DISTRIBUTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY: Paul Green, Spectacular Diseases, 83b London Road, Peterborough, Cambs., UK.

DISTRIBUTED IN AUSTRALIA BY: the Collected Works Bookshop, 1st Floor, 238 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000, Victoria, Australia.

LIBRARY SUBSCRIPTION AGENTS: SMS Canada, P.O. BOX 2382, London, Ont., Canada N6A 5A7; FAXON, 15 Southwest Park, Westwood, MA, 02090 USA; McGregor Subscription Service, 2 South Seminary, Mount Morris, IL, 61504 USA; Ebsco, 17-19 Washington Ave., Tenafly, NJ, 07670.

EDITORS: Susan Clark & Lisa Robertson; SCOUT: Catriona Strang, KEYBOARDING: David Ayre; PROOFREADING: Lisa Robertson, David Ayre, and the authors; TYPE & DESIGN: Susan Clark.

PRINTING: Friesen Printing Ltd., Winnipeg

RADDLE MOON 15 is Vol. 8, no. 1. Contents copyright © for the authors.

MAILING ADDRESS: all correspondence should be addressed to: RADDLE MOON, #518-350 East 2nd Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5T 4R8 Canada

WEB: <http://www.wimsey.com/~ksw/pnet/publicat/raddle/rm.htm>

ISSN: 0826-5909

PRINTED IN CANADA

Your subscription helps support this magazine — thank you.

~1996

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Gail Sher

Resurrection

Supper 1963

[reach-me-down] scow
wu wei
baccarat

“kist” Lydia.
ululate

Girl Praying 1977

bluebird
Sarajevo
para Negro
Valhalla bitch cru

Landscape with Figures II
1985

tat
slow-boat
trough (queerly)

Rick
starling
starlet

osler
tamarisk
Oology

Embrace of Peace I 1986

mockernut
mockernut
"our maker". riverward

The Seven Sacraments

The Seven Sacraments
(A Celebration of Life)
1980

Clare (see fit)
Godpool

The Fourth Station of
the Cross: Jesus Encounters
His Holy Mother 1984

thru Him marigold
summertime
summertime

bluefish
(pokeweed)

WANTED

kept cups



RAW NerVZ

a quarterly of haiku & related material

Volume II : 4 — *winter* 1995-96

Editor : Dorothy Howard
Publisher : proof press
Front Cover : Marlene Mountain
Back Cover : LeRoy Gorman
Design : Dorothy Howard

Subscriptions : \$20 in Canada and the USA, \$24 elsewhere
Single copies : ppd \$6 in Canada and the USA, \$7 elsewhere

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Front cover illustration © 1990 Marlene Mountain, from her *Nature Talks Back*, book one: untamed one-line haiku. crone without a cause stuff #4, edited by Brian David Johnston. ©1994 Marlene Mountain

Copyright © 1996 by RAW NerVZ
ISSN 1198-4112

Submission deadlines (March 1, June 1, Sept. 1, Dec. 1) Sorry, no contributor copies

Submissions, inquiries & subscriptions to:

RAW NerVZ HAIKU

67 Court St., Aylmer (QC) CANADA J9H 4M1

Non-subscribers enclose Canadian stamps, cash or IRC (no envelope)

Season 10 taste.

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Larry Kimmel

leaning over
the muddy boot print—
a white flower

Michael Dudley

from a tin
I lift out with fork tines
the spine of a salmon

A. M. Forbes

forgotten letter
folded in my pocket
space bent by time

Francine Porad

first day of school
diesel smoke
in mom's eyes

not an obscene call
the baby's
breathy noises

Gail Sher

noisy city
the old woman
lost in her peach

okusan—
jabbering into your cellular phone
this windy day

Five Lines Down



a tanka journal



Five Lines Down is a bi-annual journal devoted to the art of tanka, featuring poetry, essays and book reviews. Submissions must be previously unpublished and not under consideration by any other publication.

All correspondence should be addressed to the editor: Kenneth Tanemura, 10 Wayne Court, Redwood City, CA 94063, or co-editor: Sanford Goldstein, Maison Dankuro #602, 11-28 Megumi-cho, Sekiya, Niigata-shi 951, Japan.

Subscription: \$10 USA and Canada; \$16 overseas, by airmail only. Canadian and Overseas subscribers should use International Postal Money Orders in US funds. All subscriptions include two issues of *Five Lines Down*.

All materials should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Persons submitting from countries other than the United States of America should enclose two international reply coupons for airmail reply.

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[Winter 1995]

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she knees me in the crotch
oh
so gently
this comely topless
table dancer

on the verge of
tearing my hair out
I realize
I haven't
any to spare

Zane Parks

How long has it been
since I've heard a cricket's chirp,
as now,
in the darkening
before a summer's rain?

D. W. Parry

winds blow briskly this evening
crickets are beginning to chirp
tell me—blue Jesus—
why do you pick now
to be silent?

Gail Sher

September
moon fades
one more love
leaves me behind
at dawn

George Ralph

Woodnotes

Summer 1995 – Number 25
copyright © 1995 Haiku Poets of Northern California
ISSN 1050-4664

A Note from the Editors

Woodnotes begins its seventh year of publication with this issue. As something new to try, we're interspersing pages of tanka among our haiku and senryu. Please let us know if you like this approach, or if you prefer tanka in their own section. This time we have 98 haiku and senryu, and a record 23 tanka.

Helen K. Davie has again supplied our cover and interior art. Shells are a wonderful reminder of summer, now upon us. Helen has set her sand dollars on the cover against a backdrop of an origami paper pattern, and has also provided us with other shell illustrations. Many thanks to Helen, and also a big welcome to her, following the resignation of John Schipper, as the new HPNC treasurer.

In addition to an article on the "ordinary" haiku poet (page 4), we have lots of news and announcements (page 35), a few book listings (page 42), a favorite haiku described by Tom Clausen (page 8), "The Unlocked Gate," a rengay read by John Thompson and Garry Gay at the spring HPNC meeting in San Francisco (page 34), and Pat Gallagher's informative minutes of that meeting (page 44).

Meanwhile, we have some tremendous haiku events coming up this summer. Please note especially the announcement for the national Haiku Society of America meeting over the weekend of June 24th, and a special HSA/HPNC meeting on July 11th featuring the new poet laureate of the United States, Robert Hass, in conversation about haiku and his most recent book, *The Essential Haiku*. And do consider attending Haiku North America, July 13 through 16, in Toronto, Ontario. These events are described on pages 35, 36, and 37. And we look forward, of course, to seeing you at our next HPNC meeting on August 6th. But that's not all! Don't forget the sixth reading in our Two Autumns series, coming up on August 27th. All good wishes, and we hope your summer isn't so busy that you aren't bountifully blessed with many new haiku moments.

Next HPNC Meeting, August 6, 1995

HPNC's summer meeting will commence at 1:00 p.m., Sunday, August 6, 1995. Meet in room C-205 in San Francisco's Fort Mason. Come early to stroll along the Marina Green or browse in the shops and galleries. Our featured reader will be Vincent Tripi. And on this 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, Lequita Vance will read from her new book, *White Flash/Black Rain: Women of Japan Relive the Bomb*. Bring summer poems to share too. Hope to see you there!

humming quietly
through my favorite grove . . .
the sharp snap of a twig

Elizabeth St Jacques

even in his company
seeing his grey hair
I long for his company

Gail Sher



Favorite Haiku *

by Tom Clausen

yesterday's paper
in the next seat—
the train picks up speed

Gary Hotham

The feeling and sense of this wonderful haiku have stuck with me for years. Being in this moment is to be touched by all that is constantly being left behind. The newspaper is a token of what was, not what is, and as such presents a potent reminder in concert with the train's picking up speed that the moment is fleeting and quickly lost. You have a sense of being alone and looking to the empty next seat and there's a random wonder about the person who left the paper and maybe a thought about whether yesterday's news is worthy of retrieving. The paper and the train's motion together fill you with a depth of recognition that captures perfectly the heart of loneliness, of leaving and of transience, creating at once the poignancy of an instant.

* From *As Far as the Light Goes*, La Crosse, Wisconsin: Juniper Press, 1990.

morning shade . . .
a woman in her garden
redirecting vines

Peggy Willis Lyles

the wind blows stronger—
old women rustle through
piles of free clothes

Gail Sher

yardwork:
some of the old tire water
on my shoes

Tom Clausen

quiet hum of the fan—
the Sunday sports section
lifts and falls

Donna Gallagher

snoozing
straw hat covers my face
still, glints of sun

Robert Epstein

ant : ant : ant : ant : ant

the magazine that simulates itself

number two summer 1995

four dollars no copyright

appearing sporadically twice a year.

edited and published by chris gordon with the invaluable assistance of
greg cucina, carol gordon, geoff manson, and andrew young.

images: *shoulder to point* - guy r. beining, *kelp* and *orchard* - greg cucina,
positional asphyxiation and *this is not a condom* - a. daigu, *in-fidelity* - paul
dean, *breached ensô* and *moon* - chris gordon, *forklift* - geoff soule, *bush*,
swings, and *square* - andrew young, *cover* - chris gordon & andrew young.
versions of hekigodô, shûki, and sôseki adapted from makoto ueda's
modern japanese haiku by chris gordon.

blessings to coleman barks, ozaki hôsai, and superchunk
typographical equipment courtesy of ari davidow.

ekphrases from *ekphrasis* by gregory vincent st.

(*semiquasi press* pobox 55892 fondren station jackson ms 39296).

a. daigu's *uncollected sayings* are as yet uncollected.

next issue: the contraspectacle subtext of simon and garfunkel's *big bright
green pleasure machine*.

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making our clothes.

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usa

I'd dance like a fool
if I could remember
the next step

-Steve Sanfield

Evening down a road where a car has gone

-Sam Savage

cross-legged I sit
with my back toward these
annoying birds

-Gail Sher

summer's eve
the pollution of advertising
this haiku detonates

-A. Daigu

cherry
peek prodding clubs
developed complete brawn
waiting for flesh

-Dan Nielsen

8

Friday, 5 Jul 1996

Dear 1995 Iga-Ueno Bashō Festival Contributors:

My sincere apologies for the delay in getting word to you about the fate of your 1995 Iga-Ueno submissions. The year 1995 became a difficult one for the two of us who were administering the English-language competition. First, I was distracted by the massive "Haiku Seasons Project", which was suddenly turned into two books by my publisher just about the time the Iga-Ueno results were published--right after the wonderful Haiku Chicago conference. In order to meet my publisher's demands on the first of the two books, *The Haiku Seasons*, I basically had to "drop everything" and concentrate all my efforts on that; then of course came the reworking of the second book, to be called *Haiku World*.

In the meantime, Kris Kondo was having problems of her own on the Japan side of things. Here is the text of the letter she asked me to send you all--last spring:

To those who submitted their haiku to the 1995 Iga-Ueno Bashō Festival Publication.

Dear Friends in Haiku:

It is with great regret that I have to inform you that there are not any copies left of the 1995 Bashō Festival publication. They sold out unusually early last year. It was entirely my fault that I failed to order enough copies early enough to ensure that there would be enough to make available to those who submitted their haiku in English. I apologize to all of you. And I have made sure that this will never happen in the future.

Sincerely,
//signed//
Kris Kondo

By the time I was beginning to be able to deal with anything other than my job and "the books", Penny and I had both come down with a bad case of the flu. Hers went into a strep throat; mine went into pneumonia. There went March and April. Penny is doing much better, and so am I, though at this writing we are both still under doctors' care--in my case two and three times a week--slowly trying to regain full energy, respiratory function, and muscle strength. To say the least, it has been a challenging year!

Well, the books are nearly done. Those of you who sent work for the Haiku Seasons Project should be hearing of the outcome very soon. And now it is time for another round of the Iga-Ueno Bashō Festival.

I am enclosing a complete copy of the English-language pages from the 1995 *Bashō Festival Dedicatory Anthology (Bashō matsuri ken-ei shū)*--which is its formal title. It was published in 1995 by the Master Bashō Museum, Ueno City, Mie Prefecture, Japan. So here you have full and accurate documentation of the publication.

Also enclosed is a new entry form for the 1996 Bashō Festival Anthology, in connection with their 50th Bashō Festival. As Kris has promised, we will have anthologies this year, and I do hope you will join us for this round. Please note the deadline on the form.

Best wishes,

Bill Higginson

Cold windy morning :
curled in a sycamore leaf,
a smaller leaf

Gerald St Maur
Alberta
ジェラルド・セイント・モア

木枯らしやすすかけの葉が葉を包む

on the glazed snow
pine needles
pine needles' shadows
かた雪のうえに松葉の影生まれ

Zinovy Vayman
Massachusetts
ズィノヴィ・ヴァイマン

winter —
the unheated church
full of morning light
暖房のなき教会にあさ日満ち

Paul O. Williams
California
ポール・O・ウィリアムズ

new leaves —
a catbird sets forth
another call
新緑やまたたからかにつぐみ鳴く

Jeff Witkin
Maryland
ジェフ・ワイトキン

bitter night wind —
these new bedsheets,
their crisp white smell
夜風寒しかたきシーツのにおい白し

Rich Youmans
Massachusetts
リッチ・ユーマンズ

選者 ウィリアム・J・ヒギンソン
ベニー・ハーター
近藤 クリス
近藤 正
訳 近藤 正

blue jay
covering leftovers

Timothy Russell
Ohio
ティモシー・ラッセル

yellow elm leaf
青かけす残り物つつくにもみじ

even with
my eyes closed
the white lily

Grant Savage
Ontario
グラント・サベッジ

眼をとじていても目蓋の白き百合

stooping to look
for daffodil sprouts
fresh deer tracks

Sharon Lee Shafii
Kentucky
シャロン・リー・シャフィー

水仙の芽ぶくかたえや鹿の跡

home at last —
not a single leaf
on the crooked tree
ひさしぶり家にかえれば枯木かな

Gail Sher
California
ゲイル・シャー

a slight breeze
in the light between
spring leaves
新緑の光の中の微風かな

Ruby Spriggs
Ontario
ルビー・スプリッグズ

Woodnotes

Autumn 1995 – Number 26

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ISSN 1050-4664

A Note from the Editors

From the cover and interior illustrations by Helen K. Davie, to the haibun by Donna Claire Gallagher (see page 12), and in many poems in between, this issue of *Woodnotes* treats us to the sights and senses of autumn. So when you have a moment after your raking chores, set a fresh log on the fire, curl up in your favorite chair, and immerse yourself into this issue's autumn moments.

We are pleased to present 104 haiku and senryu (beginning on page 4) arranged in a seasonal progression beginning with autumn, plus 15 tanka (starting on page 28). We also offer a favorite haiku described by H. F. Noyes (see page 21), listings of many new haiku books (see page 46), plus lots of news and announcements, including reports of several recent events (page 38). Indeed, this past summer was a very busy one for haiku in San Francisco. One of the highlights was a national meeting of the Haiku Society of America, and another was the sixth reading in HPNC's annual Two Autumns series (a report on the reading and the commemorative book, *Paper Lantern*, will appear in our next issue). Ce Rosenow also shares her thoughts on *A Haiku Path* in her book review on page 54. And, as usual, our meeting minutes appear on the last page.

Finally, this issue shares some historic contest news—the results of the first-ever international rengay contest, sponsored by the Haiku Poets of Northern California (see page 32). We are pleased to present the two winners (tied for first place) and three honorable mentions, and look forward to the possibility of repeating this contest with even greater success next year.

As the Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas seasons approach, don't miss the fleeting moments of autumn—the colorful leaves, the pumpkin patches, the kids dressed up in ghoulish costumes. This is a cozy time of year. Watch the sparks fly up from your fire, and savor this issue's poems—brief sparks, but always warming moments. Enjoy.

Next HPNC Meeting, November 5, 1995

HPNC's autumn meeting will begin at 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 5, 1995. Please join us in room C-215 at San Francisco's Fort Mason. Ebba Story is our featured reader, and Pat Gallagher will talk about "The Oral Presentation of Haiku." We'll also have our usual open rounds of haiku reading, plus news and announcements. Bring your autumn poems to share, and bring a friend too!

Lunchtime shade oak
—the street paver
stretching out

Matthew Louvière

the sticky sound of tires
on noontime asphalt—
lemonade 10¢

Larry Kimmel

Sweltering twilight
a waft of cool air
from the graveyard

George Swede

the day cools off—
our leftovers
warming up

Gary Hotham

night falls—
curtains flap
in the shallow breeze

Gail Sher

Woodnotes

Winter 1995 – Number 27

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ISSN 1050-4664

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Woodnotes is published quarterly by the Haiku Poets of Northern California (HPNC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to writing, sharing, and studying haiku, senryu, tanka, haibun, and renku. Though HPNC is based in California, it welcomes members from anywhere. HPNC membership includes a subscription to *Woodnotes*. Submissions of poems, haibun, and articles by members (only) are encouraged. Send submissions to the editor or associate editor (addresses above). Only work accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) will be considered (or SAE with two IRCs internationally). You may also submit poems, articles, or news items via electronic mail to WelchM@aol.com. All work submitted must be the original, unpublished effort of the contributor/member unless otherwise noted. The editors and HPNC assume no responsibility for contributors' views, for failure to give proper acknowledgment, or for copyright infringement. Copyright reverts to authors upon publication.

New subscription rates take effect with all renewals due after this issue (see page 42). A one-year, four-issue subscription to *Woodnotes* is \$16.00 postpaid. International subscriptions are us\$19.00 in Canada, us\$22.00 elsewhere. Single copies of *Woodnotes* are \$5.00 in the United States, and us\$6.00 elsewhere. Please make all checks payable to "Michael D. Welch," and send them to the editor.

Deadline for next issue (in-hand) – February 23, 1996

winter morning
the cowbell clangs
new snow

Merrill Ann Gonzales

broken ankle
on a pile of pillows . . .
snow falling outside

Carol Conti-Entin

sn
snow buries
the leaf tips—
watch

Gail Sher

snow over ice
muffles the torrent:
mouse tracks

Ruth Yarrow

December mist
where he buried bones
burying our dog

R. A. Stefanac

last day of work—
cold wind
down the empty street

Ce Rosenow

ravens raindrops falling from the dead tree

Pamela A. Babusci



a train whistle blows—
perched in a tree
crow closes its eyes

Gail Sher

hawkshadow
a sparrow hops
twice

George Ralph

Gail Sher – Berkeley, California

Tassajara Zen Mountain Center: Summer 1969

Others may wear *monpe*, *jibon*, and *hippari* but Chino Sensei's are impeccable, his *tabi* spotless, and Danish schoolbag, though Danish, on him seems the epitome of Japanese elegance. He knows how to walk to the *zendo* without hurrying. He knows how to eat and how to manage a lover within the stringent monastic schedule. His pristine composure inspires absolute confidence so that when I go to him to mention my desire to write, that I sort of, sometimes write haiku, he immediately takes it up, "Write one a day. Make it a practice."

silent snow
silent house
I stand in the moonlit doorway

—Woodnotes #23, 1994

Ce Rosenow – Portland, Oregon

As I'm sure is the case with many Americans, I first learned of haiku at elementary school. The few days we spent on the form allowed me to become somewhat familiar with it when I re-encountered haiku in 1988 while producing a poetry program on KSCU radio in California and recording shows with Vincent Tripi and Jerry Kilbride.

Vincent and Jerry were so enthusiastic about haiku and the haiku community that I was immediately intrigued. Vincent also gave me a copy of his book, *Haiku Pond: A Trace of the Trail and Thoreau*, as well as information about the Haiku Society of America and a number of haiku journals. Hearing these wonderful poets read their own work and discuss the haiku form prompted me to learn more about haiku and to begin writing haiku myself.

Esther Bankoff – San Francisco, California

Adrienne Rich's admonition that "to enter into the order/disorder of the world is poetic at its root, as surely as it is political at its root" found a home in my heart. As a septuagenarian who began writing poetry two years ago, I found my way to haiku's juxtaposition of two-image unrhymed poetry on June 23, 1995, at the "Haiku City" reading at Border's Books, Union Square, in San Francisco. I'm looking forward to life with my beginner's mind and my political heart.



Modern Haiku

Kay Titus Mormino
Founding Editor, 1969-1977

VOL. XXVI, NO. 1

WINTER-SPRING, 1995

Robert Spiess
Wally Swist
John R. Reynolds

editor and publisher
book review editor
art editor

Other than as to the literary or artistic qualities of a work published in *Modern Haiku*, the editors do not necessarily endorse the view of the author.

Material submitted to *Modern Haiku* is to be the author's original work, previously unpublished and not have been submitted simultaneously to any other publication. Payment is made upon acceptance of the work.

All materials should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Persons submitting from countries other than the United States of America should enclose two international reply coupons for airmail reply.

Published triannually in February, June and October. Subscription: One year, \$14.85 in the U.S.A., elsewhere \$17.35 in US currency only (\$24.50 airmail). Single copy, \$5.25. Copyright © 1995, Robert Spiess. Mailing address: Modern Haiku. P.O. Box 1752, Madison, WI 53701.

ISSN 0026-7821

folding its wings
 a moth comes to rest—
 evening settles in
Gail Sher

the nightly jog—
 feet between the sidewalk
 and the moonlit sky
Barry C. Eitel

hazy ring
 around the new moon,
 gardenia scent
Gloria H. Procsal

invite the moon
 the illuminate
 our lovemaking
Maria Rewakowicz
Trns. from the Ukranian
by Paul Pines

morning moon,
 snowing only on the slopes
 of the ski resort
Jeanne Harrington

barred owl calling—
 I get up to look
 —only snow
Don Harrold

wet season~
 the boredom too is
 cool and clean
Hina

fast-food containers
 the weeds green from
 the warm rain
chris gordon

old Spanish mission . . .
 only abalone shells
 mark the graves
Rita Z. Mazur

coals white with ash—
 listening once more
 to the sound of the surf
Ce Rosenow

frogpond

how important
the crunch of fall's leaves

Ronan

Vol. XVIII, No. 3 Autumn 1995
HAIKU SOCIETY OF AMERICA

HAIKU SOCIETY OF AMERICA
333 East 47th Street
New York, NY 10017

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Subscription/Membership US\$20 USA and Canada; \$28 overseas by airmail only, in US dollars by check on a US bank or International Postal Money Order. All subscriptions/memberships are annual, expire on December 31, and include 4 issues of *frogpond*. Single copies (except 1992-3) US\$5 USA and Canada, \$6 overseas; 1992 & 1993 double issues US\$10 each US & Canada, \$12 overseas. If xeroxed copies of out-of-print issues are NOT acceptable, PLEASE SPECIFY when ordering. Make checks payable to Haiku Society of America, Inc. and send to Editor at his box number.

All funds for subscription/memberships, renewals, or donations must be sent to the Secretary at her home address, with checks or money orders made out to Haiku Society of America, Inc. In addition, all changes of address are to go to the Secretary. Send all editorial material (with SASE) to the Editor at his box number. Send all other correspondence to the pertinent officers at their home addresses. When a reply is required, SASE *must* be enclosed.

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Cover art by Robert T. Malinowski

ISSN 8755-156X

yyellow flag
signals
jellyfish roulette

Connie Brannan

the moon
caught on a
matagourie thorn

(Mazatlán)

(New Zealand)

Ernest J. Berry

Remembrance Day
billboard lips
too red

Leroy Gorman

sudden chill—
awaiting fresh tea
this empty cup

Nika

the loud silence
after
the cicada's cry

Peter Brady

a week later
Halloween decorations
even more cobwebbed

Gene Doty

breezeless night . . .
spider at the center
of its web

Cherie Hunter Day

napkin flower—a gift
carried the entire day

C. Michael Brannan

snow-capped Aorangi
not too big to overlook
the mountain lily

in the rain
the echo of a bugler—
Remembrance Day

Elizabeth St Jacques

sudden squall—
I wrap my hands
around the teacup

Gail Sher

not hearing
the temple bell
until that cricket

Anthony J. Pupello

sudden shower—
rescuing the bathroom spider
with a sponge

Suzanne Williams

October harvest
the orb-weaver
feasting on the moon

Matthew Louvière

haibun

I am amazed that Tosai, upon reading “the sound of an oar slapping the waves/chills my bowels through/this night . . . tears” has only to say “The poet, unable to go to sleep, must be pondering over time that has passed and time that is to come.”

misty rain
veils Mount Fuji
only to the eyes

Gail Sher

from the eyes of the soul
Two Haiku Favorites

An old bottlecap:
now just a little pool
of freshly fallen rain

*Tom Tico*¹

Tornado—
finding in the debris
an acorn with its hat

*Helen J. Sherry*²

The seeking-out of haiku that, for me, represent the inner spirit of the form has become a rewarding pastime. My criteria are: 1) Does the writer give attention to some seemingly insignificant detail of the moment, likely to be overlooked by us ordinary mortals? . . . and 2) Is the observation a purely natural one that any of us with healthy powers of imagination could make? Could make, that is, with an awakened “heart-mind,” which is the first essential to good poetry of any kind. One of the great Greek nineteenth-century poets, Solomos, wrote:

Always open,
ever alert—
the eyes of my soul³

H.F. Noyes

¹*frogpond*, Spring/Summer 1993

²*The Red Pagoda*, Broadside Series, 1986

³trans. by H.F. Noyes

frogpond

frigid night:
bare branches embrace
space

Ruth Yarrow

Vol. XVIII, No. 4 Winter 1995
HAIKU SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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ISSN 8755-156X

the wind gets stronger—
the air I breathe
hasn't been here long

some of the wind
gets in
with her

the wind slows down—
there's nothing
to hear

colder out—
the wind moves toward
another mountain

Gary Hotham

meditating . . .
the neighbor's caged bird
screeching

meditating . . .
a buzzing fly
in a web

meditating . . .
the neighbor's shuffle
through our fence

meditating . . .
behind me
the egret's squawk

meditating . . .
the iron lantern candle's flame
unwavering

Kay F. Anderson

Night Falls

night falls—
skin folds
around my bones

slouching toward the toilet
night wind sears me
to the bone

full moon—facing it
knees braced
beneath my robe
these fifty years
having accomplished nothing
I sail home

Gail Sher

Monday

Monday morning . . .
but the daybreak
just as clear

Monday morning . . .
a soccer ball still
in the cul-de-sac

Monday morning . . .
children left behind
at every corner

Thomas D. Greer

Woodnotes

Winter 1994 — Number 23
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ISSN 1050-4664

A Note from the Editors

In this issue of *Woodnotes*—our largest ever—we are again privileged to share artwork by Cherie Hunter Day. Why goldfish, for a winter issue, you may ask? Cherie explains: "In winter our focus goes inside to our homes and families, and there is time for contemplation. For me, watching fish swimming in a pond or bowl is the essence of calm. And besides... they're really neat. In the cover design, the black fish is a Moor, and the white one is a Veintail." The other fish illustrations are of a twin-tail, a single-tail comet, a pair of koi, and an angelfish. They really are neat, aren't they?

This winter issue also sports the results of HPNC's 1994 Haiku, Senryu, and Tanka Contest (see page 38). A deep bow of thanks to Donna Gallagher for coordinating this event, to the judges for sifting through the hundreds of entries, and to the 132 poets who entered their poems with care and enthusiasm. We hope you enjoy the winning poems, and find the judges' comments enlightening and informative.

In addition to this issue's record-setting 120 haiku and senryu (starting on pages 4 and 12) and 11 tanka (see page 33), we are pleased to share a haibun by Laura Bell (page 11), and a Christmas rengay (page 8). Many thanks to Carolyn Fitz for her calligraphy and illustrations on the rengay! We are also pleased to include "The Inside of a Haiku" by Christopher Herold (page 36). Chris originally presented his article as a meditation at the LitEruption Literary Festival in Portland, Oregon, on Sunday, October 23 (see page 47 for more news about this event). We also include news and announcements (page 44), book listings (page 48), and a final meeting summary (page 56) by outgoing HPNC secretary Tom Lynch. To Tom and all other retiring officers, many thanks. HPNC has thrived because of your service and dedication.

And now, as you begin to savor this issue's poems, we invite you to enjoy their brisk twists and lovely turns in the aquarium of contemplation.

Next HPNC Meeting, February 5, 1995

HPNC's winter meeting on Sunday, February 5, 1995 will be held at a new location. To get to the meeting at 22 Skylark Drive in Larkspur, California, drive north on 101 from San Francisco, take the San Anselmo exit (just past Lucky Drive), veer to the left on Sir Francis Drake, pass the Bon Air Shopping Center, continue to the third stop light then turn left past a church, turn right on Magnolia, then take the next left at Skylark Drive. Go up a steep hill and park at the top in open lots (not in garages). Then walk north towards the swimming pool and recreation center immediately on the right. Driving from the north, take 101 south to the Kentfield/San Anselmo/Sir Francis Drake exit. Join us at 1:00 p.m. for our winter meeting, with many rounds of haiku reading, announcements, much socializing, a featured reader, and more!

white-breathed hooker
looks in the window
at the wedding gown

Winona Baker

rain on the window
the same unopened present
under this year's tree

Marianne Monaco

silent snow
silent house
I stand in the moonlit doorway

Gail Sher

a swirl of snow—
she lifts her hair
out of her sweater

Michael Dylan Welch

the box everything was in—
another Christmas
without her

Gary Hotham

BIG ALLIS

Contemporary Writing

Issue Number Five

1992

BIG ALLIS
Issue Number Five
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ISSN 1043-9978

BIG ALLIS is published twice yearly.

Thanks to Jean Foos, Harryette Mullen, and Shelby Warrens - and to our good friend Rod Smith.

Funding for this issue is provided by the Literature Program of the New York State Council on the Arts.

**Cover design: Jean Foos.
Cover: Niagara Falls. Photo from the collection of Julie Weiss.**

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Edited by Melanie Neilson and Jessica Grim

**Distributed by: Segue, 303 East 8th St., New York, NY 10009
Small Press Distribution, 1814 San Pablo Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94702**

Subscriptions \$10 for individuals, \$15 for institutions. Make checks payable to Jessica Grim.

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GAIL SHER

from La

**Yamulke twilight
Marlena Ya'
Sobranje**

Ippolito tsampa

**Purine Missouri
to divestment
Bönpo**

**Pater Kailas
Dargo islet
dri boa portent**

**Mazurka sarong
cum yang
telos oui ja dos Gongora**

Alhambras d'arc
Attila je june
paschal Hum summoner

Da episcopal
Sisyphus: natter bolus
Canaan

Rose à ion
Figurine
gare emergent knifer

Celebes Arle
Adonoi pucker

Chatelaine tic
shiktza capstan
purr daya Jersey

piazza Sancta bellwether

**Integument vedettes
Veronica excision
Quaternary**

**Aureate cabal
tho'
gendarme container**

**Sutlej coracle
Losar
claret demesne**

**Pyrhonwaa Kye
aeries litters
Arahat bok Öpame**

**Monlam fenestre
Apu dom palms**

**Wence Ali beth Momo
nuestro ream
deafness**

end

49 + I
NOUVEAUX POÈTES AMÉRICAINS

*Choisis par
Emmanuel Hocquard et Claude Royet-Journoud*

Un bureau sur l'Atlantique

Action poétique

ROYAUMONT
1991

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ISBN 2-905271-42-6
ISSN 1144-7583

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GAIL SHER

EX-VOTO

En est consciente comme d'un acte social que la présence d'un autre exige.

Utile égale drôle dans ce code. Ce qui s'en tient au féminin attire vers le dedans. Le trait d'une paille au fond d'un verre. Sa quille rétive.

Se promener devient pénible quand l'air se rafraîchit.

Parlant des plantes son ton est évasif comme s'il s'agissait d'une relation lointaine. Plus tard ils gravissent la colline, sa flore obstinée à faire l'angle.

Le factice d'autrefois vaguement tenu à l'écart. La chambre est sans lumière, sans fond pour cette rencontre.

Elle ouvrit la grille, la ferma soigneusement, ainsi plusieurs minutes passèrent.

Cela n'était qu'un souvenir, et la désolation un événement passé la concernant. De même elle examina le trottoir en notant les motifs marbrés qu'y faisait le soleil.

Une radio dans une autre chambre, circonscrite en un sens, laisse le même espace vide. Dans cette circulation une voix s'élève et baisse.

Manque d'identité comme l'eau qui bout manque d'identité.

Traduit par Pierre Alferi et Joseph Simas



GALLERY WORKS EIGHT

Editors Jeanne Lance and Peter Holland

Typography Michael Ballen

Paste-Up Janice Tetlow

Address GALLERY WORKS
218 Appleton Drive
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Gallery Works issues One to Eight are available for \$5 each from the above address. Please make checks payable to Jeanne Lance.

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GAIL SHER

From KUKLOS

*

Osiris co rider.

Hanuman cup.
Cam floatation
shiksa.

Okasa askari.

Ganjha blouse
Goth zydeco
salaam.

GAIL SHER

Piper fra
Galilee.

Ashkenazi traps.

Well furze.
Tapes pique
trumpeter.

Goby gnu
assize.

Lo cod.

Sabine the reichstag.

GAIL SHER

Tivoli wight.

The atone sri.

Joseph angus
lassitude.

BIG ALLIS

Contemporary Writing

Issue Number One

1989

BIG ALLIS
Issue Number One
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ISSN 1043-9978

BIG ALLIS is published twice yearly

Immense gratitude to Judith Zvonkin and Julie Mellby, without whom this magazine would not have been possible; thanks also to Jean Foes, Dirk Rowntree, Jeff Preiss, Claire Gabriel, and Michael Amnasan for their invaluable help.

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Edited by Melanie Neilson and Jessica Grim

**Distributed by: Segue, 303 East 8th St., New York, NY 10009
Small Press Distribution, 1814 San Pablo Ave.,
Berkeley, CA 94702**

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from KUKLOS

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ABACUS

ISSUE NUMBER
THIRTY - FIVE
July 1, 1988
\$2.50 or \$17/year

from Potes & Poets Press Inc, 181 Edgemont Avenue, Elmwood CT 06110, Peter Ganick, editor.

GAIL SHER

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Gail Sher's latest book is Cops (Little Dinosaur Press, Berkeley, 1988). She has published four other books and has appeared widely in journals. She lives in Berkeley California and is on the staff of the Mills College Counseling Center.

A'BACUS

Potes & Poets Press Inc
181 Edgemont Avenue
Elmwood CT 06110

FIRST
CLASS
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The Fasting Spirit

Andersen, Arnold. "Fasting Saints and Medieval Asceticism: Forerunners of Anorexia Nervosa?" In *Contemporary Psychology*, vol. 32, no. 7, 1987.

Bell, Rudolph. *Holy Anorexia*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Brumberg, Joan Jacobs. *Fasting Girls*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1988.

Bynum, Caroline. *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987.

Spignesi, Angelyn. "Starving for Salvation." In *The Women's Review of Books*, vol. 3, no. 12, 1986.

Reviewed by Gail Sher

I.

In 1985 Rudolph Bell, a historian from Rutgers University, published *Holy Anorexia*. By examining autobiographical writings, letters, confessors' testimonies and canonization records of 261 Italian holy women (saints and others recognized by the Catholic Church as venerable) Bell posits a similiarity of unconscious motivation between contemporary anorexics and fasting medieval saints: both seek liberation from a patriarchal family and society.

Bell's claim has met with sharp criticism. Arnold E. Andersen, Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Johns

Hopkins Hospital and Director of their well-known Eating and Weight Disorders Program, faults Bell for making unprofessional diagnoses. Angelyn Spignesi, a Jungian analyst who has explored the rich and paradoxical ways food can further women's accessibility to unseen worlds, criticizes Bell's methodology. Joan Jacobs Brumberg, historian and author of *Fasting Girls*, questions Bell's four underlying assumptions: 1) that there is certainty about the etiology of anorexia, 2) that there are complete, verifiable case histories available on historic subjects, 3) that a particular sequelae of symptoms automatically indicates anorexia, and 4) that the psychology of women is fixed in time, as if past and present cultural conditions were alike. Finally, Caroline Bynum, historian and author of *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, says that medieval attitudes toward food are far more diverse than those that modern researchers have found in anorexics.

Nevertheless, Bell's instinct to compare *anorexia mirabilis* (miraculously inspired loss of appetite) with *anorexia nervosa* is understandable. Twice in the course of Western civilization non-eating has loomed as an important motif in women's experience: during the predominantly Catholic 13th-16th centuries and throughout the present postindustrial age. There is of course a difference, as Bell's critics have been quick to point out: in the earlier era, control of appetite was linked with piety and faith. The medieval ascetic strove for perfection in the eyes of God and, on the whole, achieved it. Today's diet-conscious young woman emerges from patterns of class, gender and family relations established in the 19th century. The modern anorexic, while striving for perfection in the eyes of a glitzy youth-oriented culture, cannot, even when successful, overcome the suspicion that something essential is missing from her life.

For her, there is much to be learned about anorexia from the religious issue that Bell has raised and forced his critics to examine. Even though the parties to this debate end up talking around the spiritual issue that I believe is at the heart of anorexia, they have come closer to this core of meaning than most have. In particular we can be glad this dialogue has raised the following crucial questions: (1) To what extent is the anorexic's hunger spiritual? (2) Can her healing be accomplished without including a spiritual component? (3) What is the difference between a spiritual path and a psychological path and what bearing does each have upon the anorexic's

healing process? Perhaps a fourth question could be, What is the nature of the anorexic's inner longing? I will try to provide an experiential base for a consideration of these questions in the following pages, before I offer my own evaluation of Bell's thesis.

I am a recovering anorexic, and I am aware that most of the literature on anorexia (aside from the genre of gory self-confessionals) is not written by anorexics but by "healers" of anorexics. Anorexics, however, do not always reveal themselves to their healers. Often an anorexic won't entirely trust her healer because she senses that being intent upon his own agenda, he will not see her. In the earliest cases, described by Brumberg in *Fasting Girls*, the healer is typically a male physician who consults the anorexic's mother for accurate information, suspicious of any input the girl herself might make. The logic is that anyone who will so craftily conceal her true motives can't be expected to be anything but crafty to the doctor. This failure to hear from the psyche of the sufferer is ironic because the diagnosis of anorexia "nervosa" by definition excluded a physical explanation. Yet, having determined upon the diagnosis of anorexia, the first doctors proceeded to treat the physical symptoms only. The anorexic's state of mind and underlying feelings about not eating were not of sufficient interest to warrant investigation. Even today, what is missing from the much more sophisticated psychodynamic literature, the quality that most eludes the reader waiting for it, is the soul of the anorexic. By focusing on saints, noted for the greatness of their souls, Bell comes the closest of any modern writer to including this aspect, yet even Bell, I think, finally misses the point.

Bell misses for the same reason that the 19th century doctors were blinded to the nature of the anorexic's pain: a superior stance and an inflexible agenda. In his efforts to explain what in fact is inexplicable (one can barely conceive much less explain a saint's experience) Bell positions himself against the saints as a wiser equal who with his modern knowledge will situate and codify them within the broader framework of their socio-political environment. By so doing he cuts himself off from the one venue available to him to truly understand—his heart.

Interesting though they are, even the questions that Bell and his critics raise about anorexia come from perspectives outside the experience of the anorexic. "How much of her hunger is spiritual hunger?" "Does her healing need to include a spiritual compo-

ment?” and “What is the difference between the psychological and the spiritual vis-à-vis the anorexic’s healing process?” are questions one can mull over, explore, deliberate and conclude about, but they are finally thinking matters. The right question, “What is the nature of the inner longing of her soul?” is a matter of feeling. One is let in by it and if one’s heart is open, one “gets” an answer. One may not be able to describe or even comprehend what he “got.” But without at least a sense of the anorexic’s soul (or psyche) any discussion of anorexia is bound to miss the point because it is precisely her soul that is in need of healing. Physically anorexics are quite healthy. They rarely get sick. And, according to Andersen, the mortality rate from anorexia is “often as low as 1%.” (Andersen, A., et al. “Inpatient treatment for anorexia nervosa” in D.M. Garner & P.E. Garfinkel (Eds.), *Handbook of Psychology for Anorexia and Bulimia*. New York: Guilford, 1985, pp. 335-336).

II

It is in the spirit of offering a clearer view of the anorexic’s interior life that I present the following autobiographical material, taken from a partly theoretical, partly autobiographical work in progress. My purpose in presenting these excerpts of that work is to describe (rather than explain) the displacement, hollowness and spiritual craving ravaging the anorexic’s soul. Here, then, are some passages which describe my own spiritual hunger.

AGES 7-12

There was always a slight feeling of discomfort, a lack of gracefulness in my relationship with activities. As a child, during long summer afternoons, I would lie on a cot on our upstairs porch feeling astray, a foreigner to the porch—that it didn’t belong to me. Or I would go across the street and up the block always to a lot where I caught butterflies. There were Monarch butterflies and Yellow Tails and also grasshoppers and other interesting bugs. I lay in the sun and captured one or two with a little net I made, feeling out of place. The idea of catching butterflies sparked my imagination. I could think, “I’ll go across the street and catch butterflies” and then when I got there I could think, “It’s a beautiful sunny day and I am catching butterflies” but there was a gap. I could belong to the idea which was lovely, with many provocative nuances, and I could belong to the feeling of containment in a specified

activity, but I was disrupted in myself and could not enter the activity, offer it enough of myself to make it come alive. Like everything else, it did not glow for me. I returned home dissatisfied and lonely, in reality trying to catch what would allow me to rest.

*

An image that recurs in my adult dreams captures my earlier disheveled existential stance—that there is no room for me in my life, somehow I don't belong to it. I dream I have to go to the bathroom. I go into a public stall and there is urine all over the floor and on the toilet seat and I cannot find a clean place to stand. Usually I end up standing in the urine which soaks through my shoes. I hold myself poised above the wet seat, relieving myself physically but I come away feeling filthy, contaminated and wrong, just as I have always suspected I am.

*

We also had a downstairs porch. It was screened in on two sides and had brick walls on the other two. The bricks were painted pink and from them, in pots, hung artificial red geraniums. A couch and several chairs as well as a table with its dining chairs were black wrought-iron with pink upholstery. The table was glass and when you looked down another pot of red geraniums appeared below you in the center. Although this was a prettier world than my urine-soaked unconscious one, it was too precious and again didn't leave room for me. The furniture took up all the space. I felt I would trip over it or bump myself trying to get in and out.

*

I liked to bake cookies; I liked to read in my green chair and be in bed writing in my diary. I liked to knit. These activities involved my hands. I have a lot of "hand energy" which must be expressed or I feel at loose ends.

*

As I was then, I am a very slow reader. The words need to capture my heart, be vitalized by my heart before my mind will accept them. For this to happen I must be relatively undistracted. Because I was already so distracted, I was vigilant to the possibility of something more imperative coming along.

*

I rocked incessantly. I rocked in my desk at school, I rocked in bed at night. In my room I had a rocking chair and

I rocked and rocked. My all time blissful childhood memory happened in my room rocking to a record of the Uncle Wiggily Stories (Peter Rabbit and Brèr Bear) and the theme from *The Third Man*.

*

I loved my grandma. We would sit on her glider and talk. She told me things about organizing my closet and my clothes and I began to think this was extremely important. Suddenly I had a picture of myself being in control. I could choose the kind of clothes I wanted to wear and I could order my environment so that I knew where things were and what condition they were in. I fantasized a lot about my clothes and about my grandma who always wore black and white, usually black and white check, and how “together” it was to have things narrowed down like that. I was in awe of her simplicity and self-knowledge, which is how I interpreted her modest wardrobe. She knew she didn’t like jewelry. She was always neat and clean, which I believed was a kind of containment. I started wanting to restrict myself too, to have just a few things. My mother’s outrageous clothes-buying sprees baffled and repulsed me. To a large extent my relationship to clothing has been shaped by combat against this—establishing precautions, so that my mother’s influence is kept to a minimum.

*

I was in junior high, perhaps seventh grade. Each day I walked to school, which took about half an hour. In the winter it was bitterly cold. Bundled up so that I could hardly move, I left home numb in my being for lack of love or enthusiasm for anything. On my block lived another girl who was in my grade. I went by for her and if she was ready we would walk together. One morning her front door opened just as I approached, so I waited on the sidewalk. As she and her mother were saying goodbye, her mother leaned over and whispered something in her ear. I froze. I thought, “Her mother just told her something bad about me.” As I walked I was aware that she “covered up” with chatter her secret knowledge of my badness.

*

One day when I was about twelve, I came home from school and found my mother sitting dejected in her red chair. “What is it, Mother?” I asked, horrified that the crisis one could feel unremittingly swelling in our household had finally erupted. She was crying and said what I understood to imply that

everything was meaningless to her, that she had missed all her chances to be something in life and was miserable. Eventually the idea of her returning to school came up. Here was a ray of hope. “Yes, Mother, why don’t you do that? That would be wonderful!” I felt nervously excited, as if everything depended on this. She said, “I would, but you know I always get a headache when I have to read something. If it’s assigned, I get a headache making myself read it.” I stood there and racked my brains for an answer. At that moment I felt that it all rested with me. If only I could . . . but I knew there was no chance. She’d get a headache. The only thing I could really do was join her in her deadness—or outdo her in her deadness, rendering her alive by comparison. For example, I could become ill (as I later “got” anorexia) so that she would have to care for me. Somehow I knew that if she projected care into the world, she could become alive in it.

AGES 27-32

I decided to go to Tassajara. I allowed what I had heard about this magic place to camouflage its potential hardships. Everything I owned fit into a back pack. I arrived at summer practice period carrying no extra weight. My first task was to sit *tangaryo*, a five-day period of practicing *zazen* continuously from early in the morning until late at night instead of the usual practice of walking meditation between designated forty-minute periods of *zazen*. This initiation stemmed from a tradition in Japan whereby a suppliant is asked to wait outside the monastery doors for an unspecified time before being allowed to request entry. The long wait is a test of the suppliant’s sincerity. Then I was assigned to work in the kitchen. Our small group of four or five cooked, served and cleaned up three meals a day. As soon as the *zendo* students finished their food, we ate, often in the *zendo* but sometimes informally. These meals were difficult. I was exhausted. The effort required to serve ourselves in the *zendo* was almost more than I, a new student, could bear on top of our excruciating work load. The majority of the kitchen staff, my exclusive eating partners, were rigid and somewhat puritanical macrobiotics, though they disguised these qualities (i.e., made them harder to confront) by their conviviality. My eating practices, the quantities I accepted and so forth, were subject to much observation and remark. If I took a little too much salad (usually made with tomatoes and dressing—very yin), or was lax about chewing every bite of rice

fifty times, the wrongness of my behavior was conveyed to me. Eating was petrifying. Grains became the only food about which I felt fairly safe. Grains, however, did not fill me.

Also there was a time factor. The "kitchen" ate together. We chanted at the time for chant, ate after the clackers indicated "begin," and washed our bowls in unison. I couldn't get enough.

I grew thinner. At first I was glad. Some months earlier I had tried to lose weight. (When I arrived at Tassajara I weighed 92. When I left I weighed 78. I am 5'3".) For a brief time my energy peaked. Then the incredible heat, flies, intense schedule, and, perhaps most important for me, the lack of a kindred spirit (soul mate) prevailed. I lost consciousness. On a mat on a porch high over gurgling Tassajara Creek, I lay in a coma. When I awoke, above me were the first red leaves of autumn.

Suzuki Roshi was just there. He was joyful and simple like a boy, but his compassion was that of a great man. So long as he was present, I could not die. At the very end of summer during our Shosan Ceremony, a formal ceremony during which each student presents her understanding to the Master in the form of a public question, I asked, "When I awoke from my illness I saw the first red autumn leaves. Is that *zazen*?" Suzuki Roshi smiled warmly and approved. I felt cleansed. My whole being shined.

*

After my summer at Tassajara I moved to the Berkeley *zendo*. I was given my own box-shaped room with high walls lined in burlap. It had a tall narrow window facing an exquisite monkey tree, hard wood floors and my harpsichord. I felt contained but very unhappy.

The *zendo* was in the attic. Two other students lived below, like me, in single rooms. Mine was the middle in the line of three. Adjacent to our rooms in a parallel line was a living room, dining room and kitchen. It was a big old house with a huge rambling yard.

I ate almost nothing. After *zendo* in the morning (often it was still dark) I went up to the U.C. cafeteria and had tea. I put many lemons in my tea and ate the lemons but that's all. I had more tea at noon, and at night I tried not to eat dinner. Sometimes I would read in my room instead, drinking something warm and eating some small suckable thing. Other people were having dinner in the dining room right outside my

door, but I refused. When I did eat, I needed to be alone. People and noise disturbed me. Of course I was starving. Around midnight when everyone was asleep, I would go to the refrigerator and scavenge through the leftovers. Or else I would stand in the pantry and dip raisins in peanut butter and eat them right there, compulsively, for a long time. A bout like this held me three or four days.

*

I awakened at 4:15 to a certain kind of quiet that only occurs in the early morning. No one stirred. I felt that the world—all parts of it that I needed and nothing more—was entirely available to me. I arranged a kettle of water to boil while I washed and put on something warm. Then I made the best coffee I knew how, hand-grinding the beans, and so on. When it was done I turned off the lights and took my coffee into a large bare room. I could see above and into the quiet streets. It was this particular minute to which I felt I belonged. I was alone. I realized how utterly precarious was this one minute. How so many factors needed to come together and what tremendous energy this took. I knew definitely that I was alive. And I knew that I had to work hard (strain psychically) to stay alive. I listened intently to the silence, to the lack of anything stirring but the slight creak of the blades of my wooden rocker against the hardwood floor.

*

I moved to the San Francisco Zen Center. My room was tiny and spare. A gigantic rubber tree grew by my window, blessing my space. When I left it I felt assaulted by people's endless questions and greetings.

During low periods I binged, which brought me much lower. Binges are virulent and have their own life span, their own arising and falling. Mine would click on and I was utterly at their mercy. Efforts to control them were fruitless and took away the pleasure of mindlessly eating for hours and hours. It had to be mindless and it had to be "endless," otherwise it didn't really satisfy. Part of the joy was leaving one's consciousness and entering a sphere where one is uncondemned.

There is also the iniquity, the barbaric and primitive grasping with which one is shameless before the urge to fill one's mouth. And it is the mouth, not stomach, that is the highlighted region. Quantities of food are washed through the mouth—often food which in a different frame of mind would be unpalatable, crude or disgusting.

Once in motion, the progression of my binge was absolutely regular. I ate mountains of whatever tipped it off. This was invariably followed by anything I could lay my hands on, first that was rich (with butter or cheese), second that was starchy, and lastly that was sweet. A typical finale might be a box of filled chocolates. Curiously, these stages were irreversible. It seems as if it would hardly matter, but once I had entered stage three, for example starchy foods, foods from the previous stages were unappealing.

Afterwards I would sleep. I would sleep as if passed out sometimes till late in the afternoon of the following day.

Waking from a binge one feels sluggish, toxic, putrid. I wanted to sleep more, to drown out the rest of my life too. That day I rarely ate anything. Two days later I would be fairly stable, though ashamed, humiliated, and aware that it was not over. It would happen again. I was not in control. I would see to it—nay—look forward to and prepare for it again. The mere thought of it made me tingle with excitement.

III

Though anorexia existed before mass cultural preoccupation with dieting and slimness, today it is found predominantly in the middle and upper social classes of developed countries. This suggests a relatively leisured class, leisured in the sense of not living on a survival level and therefore not constantly distracted from ultimate questions by survival concerns. Anorexics deliberately keep their life at a survival level, and though they act out of compulsion, it is a different kind of compulsion from that of being compelled to starve for lack of provisions. In her role as psychopomp the anorexic asks, "What is this life?" "Who am I?" If one really doesn't have enough to eat, such questions are too abstract. However, if one is surrounded by glitz, even choked by glitz, then these questions bring one back to reality.

Starvation by choice traditionally has served a soul-regenerative function. In a passage about Jung's attempt to understand the source of the healing process, Groesbeck refers to the writings of Mircea Eliade about Eskimo shamans, the earliest healers.

Eliade noted that with some Eskimo shamans their initiation involved the making of a long effort of physical privation and mental contemplation directed to "gaining the

ability to see himself as a skeleton.” By thus seeing himself naked he is “freed from the perishable and transient flesh and blood and thus can consecrate himself to this sacred task.” To reduce himself to the skeletal condition was equivalent to “reentering the womb of his primordial life to complete a mystical renewal and rebirth.” (C. Jess Groesbeck. “The Analyst’s Myth.” *Quadrant*, vol. 13, 1980, p. 45)

Bell’s *Holy Anorexia* is the first book, however, to hit upon the idea of comparing fasting girls with fasting saints. Why did Bell choose saints and other highly developed religious women? Hunger strikers fast, even to the point of death, yet Bell wasn’t called to draw them into comparison. There is a commonality, and it *is* spiritual in nature, but it isn’t as obvious a one as Bell implies. Bell’s critics, both when they are correct and incorrect, help elucidate the subtleties involved in the comparison.

As for the female religious, Brumberg in *Fasting Girls* tells us that her capacity for survival without eating meant that she found other forms of food: prayer and the Eucharist. 17th and 18th century physicians called this *anorexia mirabilis*. Medical writers and some historians (Bell) claim that *anorexia mirabilis* and *anorexia nervosa* are the same. Brumberg’s rebuttal is in four parts.

1) “Advocates of this view naively adopt and apply the biomedical and psychological models of *anorexia nervosa* as if there was absolute certainty about the etiology of the disease and as if there were complete, certifiable case histories available on historic subjects.” (*Fasting Girls*, p. 42) Documentary evidence, she says, is extremely weak and often rests on interpretive acts of faith or on inconclusive clusters of symptoms like loss of appetite and ceasing to eat and menstruate. These, Brumberg says, need not necessarily indicate *anorexia nervosa*.

2) Proponents of the theory that *anorexia mirabilis* and *anorexia nervosa* are the same ignore what Brumberg has so perceptively identified as the anorexic’s two-stage process: the first, “recruitment,” stage is that in which a girl may begin to restrict her eating because of aesthetic and social reasons related more or less normally to gender, class, age and sense of style. Many of her friends may also be “dieting.” Brumberg says an individual’s dieting goes from normal to obsessive because of other factors: emotional, personality issues, personal physiology and body chemistry. If refusing food happens to serve these needs, she may continue to do

so as an efficacious strategy. After weeks or months her mind and body are acclimated both to feeling hungry and to nutritional deprivation. This marks the beginning of the second stage in which, Brumberg says, there is evidence to suggest that hunger pangs decrease and that the body adjusts to a state of semi-starvation. Starvation may even become satisfying or tension“relieving.” At this point, anorexia becomes a “career” and includes physiological and psychological changes that condition the individual to exist on a subsistence level. This is the stage of concern to medical and mental health professionals because it is historically invariant. Only stage one involves the historian who can trace and name its particular evolving formative circumstances.

3) “In order to understand fully the long tradition of female food refusal, one must do more than merely ‘lay-on’ psychological constructs drawn from modern life or search out look-alike symptoms.” (*Fasting Girls*, p. 43) Brumberg also points out that much of what is taken to be the true or hidden history of *anorexia nervosa* does not discriminate between primary and secondary loss of appetite.

4) The medieval woman’s pattern of renunciation and austerity is not the whole story. “Some pious women did deny themselves ordinary food in order to become receptacles for the food that was God, but power and service to others, through ‘holy eating,’ was the ultimate goal.” (*Fasting Girls*, p. 45)

Brumberg’s attitude on the question of *anorexia mirabilis* vs. *anorexia nervosa* may be summed up as follows:

Although Catherine of Siena and Karen Carpenter do have something in common—the use of food as a symbolic language—it is as inappropriate to call the former an anorectic as it is to cast the latter as a saint. To describe premodern women such as Catherine as anorexic is to flatten difference in female experience across time and discredit the special quality of eucharistic fervor and penitential asceticism as it was lived and perceived. To insist that medieval holy women had *anorexia nervosa* is, ultimately, a reductionist argument because it converts a complex human behavior into a simple biomedical mechanism. (It certainly does not respect important differences in the route to anorexia.) To conflate the two is to ignore the cultural context and the distinction between sainthood and patienthood.

Once we understand the special meaning and significance of *anorexia mirabilis*, we can assert the following: the modern anorectic is one of a long line of women and girls who have used food and the body as a focus of their symbolic language. Although there are some important biomedical continuities in female fasting behavior, *anorexia mirabilis* and *anorexia nervosa* are not literally the same. (*Fasting Girls*, pp. 46-47)

Angelyn Spignesi's scathing review of *Holy Anorexia* entitled "Starving for Salvation" criticizes Bell's stubborn and at times unconscious adherence to scientific methodology. Although she applauds Bell's venture into the subject of how food and fasting were integral to religious women's visionary experience and agrees with Bell that the behavior of these female ascetics has implications for modern anorexia, Spignesi shuns Bell's "two-part hypothesis . . . that holy anorexia was caused by woman's quest for personal autonomy in a 'contest' to win freedom from the patriarchy and also by her desire to war against bodily urges." ("Starving for Salvation," p. 15) Spignesi raises the following questions:

1) Bell insists on using biosocial factors to explain "holy anorexic" behavior. This is reductionistic, and though Bell himself admits it he does it anyway.

2) Bell's approach commits him to causal determinism (patriarchal social structures cause holy anorexia), naturalism (spiritual phenomena are explained by functions of culture) and to overly generalized predictions (similar 20th century patriarchal structures provoke similar symptoms).

3) Bell is so intent on explaining self-starvation according to his power/mastery hypothesis that he selects material from the biographical texts explicitly to prove himself correct. He never mentions the saints' miracles, the social impact of their visions, or even the precise relation of food to their spiritual lives. He consistently refuses to see the saints' psychic forces as autonomous.

4) In the end Bell presents the saints as sick instead of the modern anorexic as possibly visionary.

5) "Translating possession into self-mastery in order to argue that these women used their ascetic practices for personal or social power, reduces what is a very complicated phenomenon to the mere whim of a stubborn ego." ("Starving for Salvation," p.17) At other times, contradicting himself, Bell admits that ascetic behavior lies beyond personal will.

6) Bell's understanding is that holy women saw their bodies as an impediment to being Christ's bride whereas we know that no other period of Christian spirituality valued Christ's humanity as physicality so highly. Fasting was flight *to* physicality. (Bynum's work confirms this. In *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, she writes "Into her body, as into the eucharistic bread on the altar, poured the inspiration of the spirit and the fullness of the humanity of Christ." (p. 20)

7) Bell ignores the saints' interior lives and thereby ignores the secret of how Catherine of Siena, for example, could be "completely satiated" (*Starving for Salvation*, p. 17) seeing a host or even a priest who had touched one. Her effort was not to suppress bodily urges. It was to become one with God. Biosocial explanations lack the scope to include this kind of information.

8) The stories of these women call us to take more (as opposed to less) seriously our own interior lives. Spignesi asks

What if we listened to the women who are still flagellating themselves in modern ways? We need to create a 'convent' rather than a clinic, a protected place in which to listen. We need to help these women reach a better relation with those demons; but the demons themselves will not be eradicated, nor do I think they ought to be. ("Starving for Salvation," p. 17)

9) Bell neglects the works of in-depth psychology written by women. Spignesi says that his bypassing the psyche is naive and dualistic, making intuition, emotion and unseen forces inferior to mind, politics and men.

10) In fact Bell does not linger *long enough* at a descriptive level. Though his theses are on the surface somewhat feminist, actually they are removed from the women and their contexts. Instead he "uses his women as data." ("Starving for Salvation," p. 18)

In his review of Bell, Arnold Andersen notes that "Fundamentally, asceticism as a spiritual goal differs in its very essence from self-induced starvation in the pursuit of thinness to accomplish purposes related to resolution of crisis in development." ("Fasting Saints," p. 663) Andersen, however, mistakes the issues involved on several counts. First, asceticism is not a spiritual goal. Asceticism is a spiritual means as is the so-called "pursuit of thinness." Second, the pursuit of thinness is a description of a symptom and cannot be understood psychodynamically as part of the origin of anorexia. Admittedly, the anorexic's symptoms are fascinating, but the more

we focus on her appearance, her persona, the less we see of (i.e., the more protected is) the motivating force of her core self, her fragile, incipient, "shameful" search for God. Third, the main difference between holy anorexics and modern anorexics is that holy anorexics were conscious of their deepest psychic self, i.e., the image of God within. The medieval church contained these elements and made them visible. Holy anorexics merely internalized what was evident to all. Modern anorexics are not conscious of their deepest psychic self. They are consumed in ceaseless effort, but their purpose, i.e., contacting the soul, remains unacknowledged. Indeed, their ceaseless effort is psychically and spiritually stagnant. It is the opposite of living in a state of trust and receptivity. Bynum tells us, "In the chapter on fasting in his *Summa* for preachers, Alan of Lille argued that abstinence must be inner and outer, that mere obedience to the law is not enough. Simply going without food, as the sick do, is morally indifferent." (*Holy Feast* p. 44) For an anorexic, who fantasizes about food constantly, the ability to have a spiritual practice, to manifest, in other words, "correct striving," is tantamount to cure. This is because a true spiritual practice would involve turning her tight control of externals into inwardly attuned responsiveness, accessing the image of God in her and releasing her life from there.

According to the March, 1988, "Clinician's Research Digest," 61% of anorexics show a poor outcome in therapy regardless of treatment modality. We know this. Anorexics are notoriously hard to treat. They prove recalcitrant and try the patience of many an exasperated therapist. Jack Engler, however, clinical psychologist in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, relates the following story of a non-recalcitrant anorexic:

I once had the good fortune to overhear a fascinating discussion between a clinical psychologist and an Asian meditation teacher concerning their respective treatments of an anorectic patient . . . The meditation teacher was visiting the U.S. for the first time and was very interested in Western psychotherapeutic approaches to mental illness. The clinical psychologist was describing a very difficult case of an anorectic woman who was proving refractory to treatment. The teacher quickly became engrossed in the case and asked many detailed questions about the illness and the treatment. When the psychologist finished, I asked him why he was so interested. He said a woman had once come to the meditation center in Burma

where he was teaching with the same presenting problems. In addition she was suffering from chronic insomnia. She wanted to learn to meditate, presumably believing that might bring some relief. I asked him if he taught her. To my surprise, he said "No." For six weeks he merely let her come each day and pour out her complaints against her husband, her children, her parents and the injustices of life in general. He mostly listened. He also talked with her but he did not describe precisely how. This first part of her "treatment" then was conducted in effect through the medium of a special kind of interpersonal relationship. He also encouraged her to sleep. Within a short time she began to sleep 4, 8, 12, 14, 16 and finally 18 hours a night—at which point she came to him and said "I have slept enough. I came here to learn meditation." "Oh," he replied, "you want to learn meditation. Why didn't you say so?" I interrupted to ask if he taught her Vipassana, the type of insight meditation practiced in his Theravada lineage. "No," he said to my surprise again, "no Vipassana. Too much suffering." What she needed was to experience some happiness, some joy, some tranquility and relief from so much mental agitation first, before she would be able to tolerate the deeper insight that all her psychophysical states were characterized by change and were associated with suffering, not simply the obvious vicissitudes in her personal life history. Since concentration forms of meditation lead to one-pointedness, serenity and bliss, he instructed her in a simple concentration exercise of following the breath instead. She began to sleep 16 hours a night, then 14, 12, 8, 4 and finally two hours a night again, this time because two hours was all she needed. Only at this point did he switch her over to Vipassana and have her observe the moment-to-moment flux of mental and physical events, experiencing directly their radical impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and the lack of any self or subject behind them. Within another three weeks her mind opened and she experienced the first stage of enlightenment (*sotāpatti*). The anorectic symptoms disappeared. She has not been anorectic since. (Jack Engler. "Therapeutic Aims in Psychotherapy and Meditation: Developmental Stages in the Representation of Self." *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 31-32)

Several features of this woman's "treatment" are striking:

- 1) The Burmese meditation master recognized her need for an empathic selfobject, i.e., "a special kind of interpersonal relation-

ship” and gave her this when he provided her with a safe place to talk and then “mostly listened.”

2) The Burmese meditation master recognized that meditation was not enough. I am reminded of the following journal entry of a Zen student and compulsive overeater. Having attained a certain amount of control over her binges, she yet again found herself back in a pattern of having one a week:

This week I wanted to avoid it. It's the week before a *sesshin*. For just this one week I thought I could avoid it.

I did avoid it in my office all day. I was conscious and I made it. At dinner at Zen Center I was filled with a nervous energy that made me very funny. I went on for an hour with several people being very funny and making them laugh and laugh.

Then I realized I was very agitated. I didn't want to go home. I was afraid to be alone. I was about to sit down in Zen Center and read newspapers. But I did better than that—I summoned up the control to go to the 8:30 p.m. *zazen*, to which I felt much resistance because it seemed to call for most consciousness and calm, and I was so agitated.

I went and sat 40 minutes. Good. I went home. Immediately I had a binge, a big one, with worse effects than my daytime ones because I threw myself into bed with the last of the food and slept with it/on it, with no break of consciousness and effort before bed as I've had in previous weeks when I had “office binges.”

I ate practically a quart of old ice cream, left over from a party last week, then toast and butter. Fell asleep. Now house a mess. I am weak, quivering, stumbling. Can hardly control pen. Body-mind wiped out.

Meditation is not the answer for these crucial times. Expression and release are.

Her discovery does not surprise me. The fact that the Burmese meditation master already knew it, does surprise me. Meditation goes a long way in calming and stilling the mind and body, but for significant healing to occur, an anorexic needs an attachment to another person. The divine comes to her via the divine in someone else, a loving person.

3) The meditation master recognized “too much suffering.” He saw that the anorexic needed happiness, joy, tranquility and relief from mental stress first, before she would be able to tolerate

deeper insight. He understood that without this relief, she would be likely to experience a serious meditation practice simply as more stress, instead of as a way of centering herself to prepare her mind for enlightenment.

4) The meditation master recognized and responded to what Jung calls the “most important of the fundamental instincts, the religious instinct for wholeness.” (C. G. Jung. *Civilization in Transition*, Collected Works. Vol. 10, p. 344) Once he saw it, he mirrored it and fostered it nonintrusively. Unfortunately, in the treatment of anorexia, the fundamental instincts that are focused on are usually sex and aggression. This of course follows the thinking of Freud. Because Freud’s thoughts are so influential to psychoanalytic literature, it is important to say that Freud was simply wrong about the nature of anorexia. He spoke of the anorexic’s disgust for food instead of her obsessive control of her appetite. Although both lead to non-eating, disgust implies repulsion for food while obsessive control implies such a strong attraction to it that limits must be set to avoid total merger with the object of desire.

Perhaps the greatest Freudian misunderstanding of anorexic experience is in the realm of sexuality. For a long time anorexics were considered asexual because of their adolescent/preadolescent figures. By today’s standards of beauty, however, this figure increasingly represents the height of sexuality. While our standard of beauty grows increasingly younger, the standard anorexic grows increasingly thinner. Movie stars, models and ballerinas, those who set our precedents of beauty, are sometimes strikingly anorexic. This being the case, it is not so easy, as in the Marilyn Monroe days, to accuse an anorexic of “fear of womanhood.” Women with less control over their eating envy, nay, imitate her. Indeed there is a whole new generation of “me-too” anorexics, those who copy the anorexic’s “beautifying” tricks.

IV

A spiritual path has to do with union with God. A psychological path, at its best, might lead to individuation, the process of becoming whole. It is not surprising that the two are sometimes confused. Jung tells us that for those who experience God as dead, dead means unconscious. Thus, in order to awaken the transcendental self, which awakening must precede even a curiosity about a spiritual path, one must first get in touch with one’s unconscious.

But we must not lose track of the forest as we explore the trees. Finding God is the forest. In practice, getting a taste of the Godhead in oneself frequently leads one to take an interest in oneself psychologically. One is intrigued by the sense of one's higher self and motivated to explore the psyche. But such an exploration, no matter how exhaustive, ultimately is insufficient. One can be thoroughly analyzed and still not have transcended the cycles of birth and death.

I have come to believe that the role of the spiritual in the anorexic's healing must be equal to that of the psychological. It is not enough, as Spignesi posits, to enter with an imagining eye the regions of the anorexic's persuasive demons. Entering these regions releases these images and unlocks the anorexic's tightly bound psyche, but her longing is more profound and more intense. In an epilogue to *Holy Anorexia* William N. Davis, M.D., Director of the Center for the Study of Anorexia and Bulimia, describes the anorexic as expressing "a powerful urge to feel deeply, intensely, and consistently connected in a way that is beyond the abilities of most human relationships." (p. 183) When I first came across this sentence, I found it the most provocative and impelling statement I had ever read about anorexia. My own life story dramatically exemplifies it. I am constantly searching for a place to belong: my early idea of catching butterflies, my overly furnished childhood home, my compulsive hand activities, my rocking, my newly discovered sense of organization, my "illness," my spiritual community, in the end all left me feeling stranded. Eventually I found a spiritual practice that reflected my deepest needs. My heart became engaged and I began to open. Once I entered therapy, my efforts at connection became more conscious, but excruciatingly so because what I wanted so desperately seemed ever to evade me. Soon I realized that my therapist's caring for me was genuine and my heart opened even more. Only then could I enter into a loving and meaningful relationship outside of therapy.

Part of an anorexic's healing is experiencing connectedness on more than one level. She has lost her way in the first place by being denied a primary connection (typically her parents were unavailable to her). Relationships of any kind become impossible so she creates a relationship, an incredibly intense one, with non-eating. Here is yet another difference between the anorexic and the saint: for fasting saints, the primary relationship was with God. They strove

for a distinctly physical identification with Christ in his humanity, with flesh in its suffering; and food, Eucharistic food as nourishment, was the medium of this connection. Their longing for God was expressed in pangs of hunger (holy eating), not in control of hunger (self-induced starvation). They sought to redeem their souls with and through the body, not to free their spirit from fleshly enclosure. For fasting girls, on the other hand, the primary relationship is with non-eating. To their bewildered and harassed spirit this relationship, more genuine and penetrating than any they have thus far achieved, becomes and end in itself.

Jack Engler's solution, to position Buddhism and psychodynamic psychotherapy within an integrated model of therapeutic intervention seems at first glance an ideal program. But a word of caution is in order. Finding the right spiritual path is a long and personal process. There is no "formula" spiritual path. All my spiritual hunger couldn't be satisfied in the midst of a deeply serious Zen community. It took eleven years for me to accept that Zen Buddhism and I were a mismatch; but that admission was spiritually my most significant step forward. I learned that instead I had to find what was right for me, follow the path which was my own, and offer myself entirely to my chosen way, so that I am one with it in principle and carry it everywhere, endlessly in my heart.

ARCHIVE NEWSLETTER



BOB PERELMAN



LAURA CHESTER



GAIL SHER

NEW WRITING SERIES FALL ♦ 1987

BOB PERELMAN
OCTOBER 8, THURSDAY
TCHB 142



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THE ARCHIVE NEWSLETTER is published tri-quarterly by The Archive for New Poetry.

Editor: John Granger

Reviews, interviews, and announcements of poetry events in the San Diego area are welcome. Submissions should be sent to EDITOR, Archive for New Poetry, Central University Library, C-075-S, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, CA 92093.

LAURA CHESTER has published a number of



books, among them Tiny Talk (Roundhouse, 1972), Prima-gravida (Christopher's Books, 1975), Chunk Off & Float (Cold Mountain, 1978), Watermark (The Figures, 1978), My Pleasure (The Figures, 1980) and Lupus Novice (Station Hill, 1986). Chester has been editor of Best Friends and Stooge magazines, of The Figures press, and of the

first anthology of twentieth-century American women poets, Rising Tides (Simon & Schuster, 1974).

GAIL SHER is the author of From another point of view the woman seems to be resting (Trike Press, 1981), (As) on things which (headpiece) touches the Moslem (Square Zero Editions, 1982), Rouge to beak having me (Moving Letters Press, 1983), and most recently, Broke Aide (Burning Deck, 1986). Of Broke Aide, Beverly Dahlen has said that "time and location are as elusive as the site of an atom, [but] the subject exists infinitely."



GAIL SHER

COPS

Only to play wet.

Less so honey.

Unlike my flowers
they are mine.

They stick to me
& are wholly
like me.

Equivocal in this
sense.

A saucer. A
saucer.

The potty the
maker even
the harrowing
blossoms.

My tilt blacker
this time.

Stillball. The attacker
comes parroting.
Who are two.

My beauty
on two.

Many forks have
broken.

They have kissed.

The wasp will play
happily.

Indeed her beauty
is gone.

The thread is
awkward resting
on my ankle.

Its mandible done.

Mixed with this
state of mind.

In two through
our wave.

My dharma gripping.

Being instead the
same.

We pass candles.

Find my mass
surlily surlily.

Lay by me
a hundred
jellos.

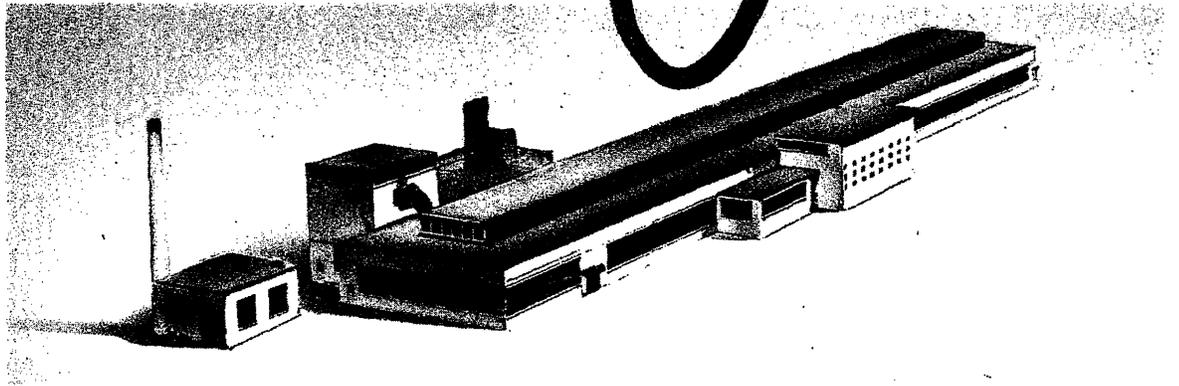
A sound is watched
alone.

In essence alone.

Blade of fork
thus denied

its own violet
teams.

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Unsolicited MSS to WRITING are welcome and must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Contributions from outside Canada must include Canadian stamps, cash, or International Reply Coupons to ensure return.

Current and back issues of WRITING: \$3. Subscriptions: \$12/4 issues, institutions \$16/4.

Copyright © 1987 WRITING for the authors. Typeset by Claudia Casper and West Graphika. Printed by First Folio Printing Co. Ltd. ISSN 0706-1889. WRITING is a member of the Canadian Periodical Publishers' Association. Second Class Mail Registration pending.

We gratefully acknowledge the ongoing financial support of The Canada Council and the Government of British Columbia.

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Gail Sher

Cops

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Who are two.

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They have kissed.

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My dharma gripping.

Being instead the
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We pass candles.

Find my mass
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teams.

GALLERY WORKS SEVEN

Editors Peter Holland and Jeanne Lance

Editor Emeritus John Yurechko

Typesetting Diane Lubarsky

Address GALLERY WORKS
25 Carlin Street
Norwalk, Connecticut 06851

Gallery Works issues One to Seven are available for \$5 from the above address. Please make checks payable to Jeanne Lance.

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Even can horses
are dead
inside me.

GAIL SHER

**Nor is it
Mongolian downs
that is
castigation.**

**Darkened green
men onto whose
mechanical
window.**

GAIL SHER

Unified dolls
bing-bong freely &
discount spherical
merchandise.

GAIL SHER

Night becomes
a braid.

Worn & elaborate
coitus.

GAIL SHER

Or burst of grass
intending her
mirror-
ing fellowship.

Honey see them bake.
Hard & sweet as
you will see.

A sire melts
us. One two
three us.

GAIL SHER

Be near somehow.

Make the division
small.

Regress inside
where there is
no memory of me.

Each prune is
a monument
such as captivity
is a monument.

GAIL SHER

Connubial mines
such & such.

Long salubrious

wait asking why
the jillion
emblems.

GAIL SHER

Its fleece repellent
& sadness.

Like a hood
leaps to
me.

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cover by ANN MIKOLOWSKI

The cover of this issue was created by Ann using pen and ink. For years Ann has been known for her miniature oil portraits; however, more recently, she has also been working with large canvasses of rolling waves and turbulent skies. The idea for the cover of *Notus (otherwind)* evolved quite naturally as it captures the power and essence of an unseen *otherforce* moving and molding the elements.

Ann is currently teaching in the Michigan Council for the Arts funded "Artist in the Schools" program in Port Austin, Michigan near her home in Grindstone City, where she and Ken run The Alternative Press. Her work has been reviewed by John Yau in *Art in America*, and will be shown this fall by two galleries: the Allen Stone Gallery in New York City, and the Feigenson Gallery in Detroit.

NOTUS new writing

ISSN 0889-0803

published semi-annually by OtherWind Press, Inc.

Editor: Pat Smith

Business Manager: Marla Huber Smith

Art Director: Jan Detlefs

Subscriptions: individuals \$10/yr. (U.S. & Canada)
\$14/yr. (outside U.S. & Canada)
institutions \$20/yr.

Enclose SASE with submissions.

Address correspondence to:
Marla & Pat Smith, 2420 Walter Dr., Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48103

Calligraphy for this issue: Mary Maguire

Printed at Partners Press Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan 

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Edmond Jabès, *Le Livre Du Dialogue*, Copyright Editions Gallimard, 1984.

GAIL SHER

The Lanyard

To layer the bike.
Slowly cracking
mama's chestnut
dynasty.

Poised to
ax in half
a totem common to
hissself.

Tries winter.
Here a hog
crows the
fugue.

Pale courteous
deaf.

Fish sweat rice.
These wheat high
& brightly yellow
backs.

Daylights our homestead.
Opens earth whose prone
earth. Liver discs repeat
can eat the gay
door.

Such as rivers.
The shore-raising
nun.

Feet to pedal
farther bays.
Herring bond
agree to blade.
Stroke one
gramophone.

Joust papa. Mouth
fuck sweet organic
lye-powder. She sheeps
whereas lunch *per se*
bunches &
hackneyed.

Like watchwords.
Goes chiseling wildwood
horn. Try gaberdine
bodies.

The wing deem which she
said.

Bees inhale dust.
Browns the
nipple.

Birdies spay.
Lilies checkers
breaks often surfers
tattle to
her.

My dixie. My smell
case.

High-priced cobs play &
play.

Say tart. Moues
equal to
it.

Salmons link forests.
Piracy mops what
little has
gone.

Pulls my crony
jacking popes in an
afternoon.

Keeling on
him.

Foreruns err. Rant errs a little
card.

Fox cycles see.
Pink birds rule
the sweeter
pole.

Oral lads has
potions horseshoes
waiting with my long
neck

Grins pounding & pounding.
Coils sound
caged with its
partially prerequisite
seductiveness.

Chicks beat chicks.
Throats vend
not to eat
me.

Face child nor
places to swim
rigorously walking
ahead.

The tulip throws
its head strip
back.

She licks cars.
Yellow mommy towns.
I want floors to
saturate my hate for
her.

Lawns snow sound.
Succumb gnats press
such as whirlpool
gnats.

Concubine yarns strap
and yet a
fool.

Figs croon see
& its bastard
repetition.

Insects cream
preciously.

Pidgeons swell.
Bullion are hollow
nesting somewhere peaked
frittering.

Boots tart in.
Skirts have feathers
each yielding
something.

The lubricant which
they have
races.

Drought that the
bird has. One even
foot passes
away.

His mouth deeply
explosive cult
spots.

Or heron intrusion
wandering at
her.

The only snout
indefatigably.

Wiggling apart.
Smothering the
mover.

A clinging queen
infra
queen.

My lot is small &
dainty stucco
graze at the
edge.

GALLERY WORKS SIX

Edited by Peter Holland, Jeanne Lance and John Yurechko

Address GALLERY WORKS
1465 Hammersley Avenue
Bronx, New York 10469

Gallery Works appears yearly. Submissions should be accompanied by a stamped return envelope. Issues One to Five are available for \$4 from the above address.

This publication is made possible in part by a grant from the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines, CCLM, with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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A part of "from A READING" was first published in "Potrero Hill Literary Supplement," San Francisco, Spring, 1982.

GAIL SHER

WHICH COLLATERAL BENDS THE SEA

Which collateral bends the sea
as face
co-ordinates time.
Lovingly is
(lovingly) holocaust
though the fault
lay
somewhat peacefully.

DEFT AND RESILIENT

Deft and resilient
hovered or pierced
(as the pair was cold).
For air often as a plan
presses the associate.
Can on not
to loss
spares off.
Each one
too far
(as) though
sand
bent
the village.

CREDENCES

**A Journal
of
Twentieth Century Poetry and Poetics**

CREDENCES:

A JOURNAL OF TWENTIETH CENTURY POETRY AND POETICS

New Series, Volume 3, Number 1 — Spring 1984

Editor:

Robert J. Bertholf

Editorial Board:

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Business Manager:

Sharon Schiffhauer

Editorial address: 420 Capen Hall, State University of New York, Buffalo, New York 14260. CREDENCES is a publication of The Poetry/Rare Books Collection of the University Libraries, State University of New York at Buffalo, and is issued three times a year under the sponsorship of the Friends of the University Libraries. The publication of the magazine is, in part, made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. All Manuscripts should be accompanied by return postage; essays and reviews should conform to the latest MLA style sheet. CREDENCES is indexed by the Index of American Periodical Verse, and the PMLA Bibliography.

Subscription: Fifteen dollars a year. Single issues: Five dollars.

Back issues available.

CREDENCES is free with full membership in the Friends of the University Libraries. Subscription orders and remittances may be sent to: Ms. Sharon Schiffhauer, 434 Capen Hall, State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, New York 14260.

ISSN 0740-4182

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Cover

Pen and ink drawing by Laurence Housman, entitled "Cain." Reproduced with the permission of the Executors of the Laurence Housman Estate.

Gail Sher

Que. This would be it
shining internal switch
back.

Sway perhaps. Edits toward
the cripple boy.

Hard places timing eight.

Tap its suggestion. Or across
town maybe daylight on the
synagogue.

Vacuous poise how to.
Stretched with implentitude
nurse makes up.

Others scant attention.
Brink one. Two.

Necks the truth. Three
angry children and how the
car would yield to them.

Reined bones. Dip here.
One after pink.

Look through death does.
We eat again.

Somehow behind tongues.
Would cruise behind.
Blocks allowed swallows
at.

But buzz or which aperture.
In and out. Bubbles climb
under.

Hugging rations. Joints of
growth swell with speed.

Deer over the counter. Doing
my part. Tearing them out.

This or that wand arm.

Satisfaction sinks as
I sit on. Shoes and multiple
army strata urging and
bumping the sabbath.

The jar worth. Forcing
and chewing.

Angular scribes knowing
angularity.

These cow shadow. Stout
fiction say. How to shuffle
them reading and waiting
heard softly at the zoo.

Flourishing. Slowly the
human teethe.

Housing it all in a
little room. Containers
despair here.

Crunches through the deer.

Que. This would be it
shining internal switch
back.

Thursday node attune in
dogs which again promise
enough

Reprieve told mouths.
Her deanery over the
stove.

Gliders form a screen
duality.

Here a door there
apart.

Movement after sleep in
the forenoon crust.

Certain richness as the

legs fold up. Size mounts
an evening.

Cowboys these. Yes
withheld from lower scars.
My size for once
touched.

Interchangeable numbers
bearing down hard. Which
forehead she always thought
when pain was intense. Bands
or ribbons or anything.

Black adjoining walls
whose door swings.
Knives and one parakeet
with a possible baby
engrossed in black.

Or mirrors frozen.
Be exact.

Couches again home
elapse.

Tones of your.

Amusing through so tired.

Listen. Priests emerge.
Lined up as a queen.

Surrogate (kites) from
infancy. This penal
being.

Separates or rub here
before the tree.

Ladders lay flat to rub
before the dog.

Tomorrow is next week say
bearing another Friday.

To lug. Beauty enough.

Ripe eye. Pick up
the waltz.

Tears are a record. Utterly
corn tears.

Participates looking
uncluttered. Belong while the
arms move. Once alive
olives gift.

Curls imprints beef. Raise
your arms sweetie.

Geering unsafety. Or curl again
in the back part.

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*FROM ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW
THE WOMAN SEEMS TO BE RESTING*

Naive or feelings of isolation
and at the same time naive.

The same woman only a feeling
of sun now arrested on the floor
near her chair. Rocking and
making various gestures in
concentrated posture.

From another point of view the
woman seems to be resting. Perhaps
this resting is what brings the
fields into play. Figures appear.
The sky and the woman each
unsurrounded. The sound (of no
concern to anyone else) into
which she feels drawn suddenly.

This scene gives the impression
of fields. Separated from fields
by a porch.

Settles in watchful
gesture.

Gradual ability. Settles
in place for reading and
life of reading as
insisted internal thing.

Speaks about it softly.
Volition as a kind of
thought. Attributes of
body (sun) and muscles
of body. (Also light in
marked relationship.)

Somewhat confused sense or
some boastfulness coupled
with something else.

Time and also clouds.
Texture of clouds
and so forth in a
continuous line or
pattern.

Landscape and trees.
(Haze of trees.)
Shoulders arms or
occasional repetitive
thought.

Now reads. Images
herself in the dark
room.

Something recognized
as dark. Shouts for
the little girl.

Presses forward to
some extent.

Moments held clean and intact
now appears as a wall. (Method
and exposure to first thought.)

The expression fixed.
Points of softness
absolutely seen by
someone else.

Seeing heavily or seeing
effects of known sedentary
person. (Inclusive of her
in an early period.)

Provides a certain luminosity
of detail. At the same time
balance.

Suggestions in this vein.
(Objects) existing in
unheard sound. (Both color)
and the boundaries of all
objects hitherto mentioned.

Trees but basically the
house is the same.

Reads with attention on
trees shifts entering into
balanced reading.

Or woman lying reading.
Paraphernalia of mind seen
as objects coming to a
complete rest.



HAMBONE

Editor: Nathaniel Mackey

Hambone (ISSN 0773-6616) is published in the Fall and in the Spring. Subscriptions are \$8.00 a year (two issues) for individuals, \$12.00 a year for institutions. Single copy price is \$5.00. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscriptions, submissions and other correspondence should be addressed to *Hambone*, 132 Clinton Street, Santa Cruz, California 95062. Make check or money order payable to *Hambone*.

The publication of this issue was made possible in part by a grant from the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines.

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Edward Kamau Brathwaite's "Manchile" is reprinted with the author's permission from *Black & Blues* (Havana: Casa de Las Américas, 1976).

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Gail Sher

Suppose deeply offers up

Crop us. Touches peak
hope.

So stares back (slowly)
as her vowel.

Chants some. Some. Not
all these wisp surface.

Where son is concerned.
New on this machine.

Cars pass. Realms of trees
beat hugs song (you pick).

Solicits (other) impression
dependencies.

Profusely whispers (means)
whispers any amount.

Up on each knee. Nine ten
the mind thinks.

What the friend thought
at once the image. Traveling
as a family.

No here. Verbal (remodeled)
nights (wants) the human.

Despise her circle circles.
Give back her.

(Animates. This might.) Oh
give. As there. Just
discouraged and gives.

•

Sings around (and so forth).
Compare her around. Very
telling.

Arrives in thin tangible
thigh. (Waits) from the inner
group. Inherits (shield) for
this.

This oh want or cost of
what penetration. (Neither)
her kin. Why wait saying this.

•

Does it. This intelligence.
Some with hair toward the
chair.

(Slaughter some off as it
actually was.) I would
care.

Hambone

When clings the head to
the bed seam. The brother
wears this description also.

Also over the telephone.
Cherishes knee (very
impressed).

•

Pins it on. (Insemination)
of the proud her. Now the
me (so) street and I flesh.

In which newspaper figures
here. Some joined thing.
(Oh) she understands all
right.

This much hand life
acknowledged through the
hand. (Dies) afterwards for
just her.

•

Makes death. (Shrieks) fat
(I) am one.

Gags or with. (Here) are
words.

Can't screams would or not.
Not as no (love).

•

Not dry. Not this couch
hatch (hopes) like food.

To shell it (us) no less.
Neglects all other species
contempt.

Spans the girl where she
straight (shouts) this
can love.

•

Supposing deeps (explore).
Barely pleads & retreat.

Caught. Flushes & bends.
Entitles it "Oh sweet
boy".

Resembles him too. Retells
year her.

The sleep position. (Of
absolute person.) How art
waits (fails) eyeing depth
and depth's loss.

•

Man her ins. Stresses
chair and bush (lust).
Simply her life redness
depressed on in.

(Was) going to say (cry)
touch.

Hambone

(Picks) eyes talks about
addresses. She was
spellbound.

Solves our knowledge.
Formulates this suction
or what must practice
from space.

•

Suppose deeply offers up.
Licks and picks. (Come on.)

Pick one. Moved per force
(exquisitely) pertains cries
or wants.

Dark (exiguous) tree. Junks
dream (said I'd come).

Youngs girl. Creates sight
independently.

GALLERY WORKS FIVE

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This issue was made possible in part by funds provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts.

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GAIL SHER

RIVER THE OFFICE MY OWN

deep pan swallow
harbinger tries
 the note/ of
brown
deepens

otherwise
 fingers
curve/ and not to be
 this
hardened
fall

common mouth curve
 interjects/ sue
the meditation
even
so

GAIL SHER

LORD AND GIVE THE NECKLACE CHILD

race dozen dozen
 sceptered/whereby the
under-morning

sandwiched alone nickels
crease
 the tidy/rabbit
tilted and
shy

salvage carrot
 whooped and prac-
tically nest/the brown
rood
tassel

recurrent inhere inhere
inner crown/ All
 will the
estuarial

**GNOME
BAKER**

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&

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Back issues are available, please write



Gail Sher was born in St. Louis. She works as a poet and lives in San Francisco.

fifty-five or five owing him nickels

tricky-tricky talk
to goblin
Nautilus/

He
hawker-walk

on
lemon
sand

remarkable
(him him)
where-to/

Somersault
daddy

heaving and
sighing

fish no mind steak tuna tuna

to
licked/
for
she wasn't

my eyes
(her and her)

belly-needle
up

no
kiss

diamond shally late

come
o mama/
settle
in my
cup

lovely
this the
squawk
squawk
iron-tried
firmament
tree

extend
bold
sensation-father

great
knowledgeable
rain

folded bloom to heaven legal

to to/
the
hunter

fringe
noise: the
downer
blooms

vulgar fish

livelier
the man/
hawk-
like

eagle door on sainted

whistle
this promise

her red bud

bible live
(no fool)/
I
talked

O' dear no the Proserpine

to find
the/
(for one thing)
reformation
in
hat

curly mountains
all
up-to-up

wants/
to feel
how
much
love

how
awakened intense
ducks

aunts no vibration

her mouth
Oh I

her soda bear

iron
burn
parchment/ pass

light and
air

adobe cheese

praises
blossoms

hot
stork
white

something

leaning
on
silk

whiskered mannequin lay

laugh laugh laugh

on
her/
 ghoul
cousin

(likely as not)

cotton
chest

frozen pawn jelly

cat-up
her/
mama-
blood

dipped
in
true
pink

o lovely

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Robert Creeley
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Production Manager:

Stephen Roberts

Business Manager:

Sharon Schiffhauer

Design:

Joan Manias

Editorial address: 420 Capen Hall, State University of New York, Buffalo, New York 14260. CREDENCES is a publication of The Poetry/Rare Books Collection of the University Libraries, State University of New York at Buffalo, and is issued three times a year under the sponsorship of the Friends of the University Libraries. The publication of the magazine is, in part, made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. All manuscripts should be accompanied by return postage; essays and reviews should conform to the latest MLA style sheet. CREDENCES is indexed by the Index of American Periodical Verse, and the PMLA Bibliography.

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Designed and produced at Open Studio in Rhinebeck, New York, a facility for writers, artists, and independent publishers, supported in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts.

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It gives me great pleasure to present the first issue of *Credences* as a publication of the Poetry/Rare Books Collection of the University Libraries at SUNY/Buffalo under the sponsorship of the Friends of the University Libraries.

It is certainly appropriate that *Credences*, which has already had considerable impact as a forum on modern poetry, should henceforth be affiliated with a collection internationally renowned for its focus on the development of poetry in the twentieth century. I am confident that this new relationship will be welcomed by the scholarly community and that it will greatly enhance the quality of this already innovative and artistic journal.

Saktidas Roy
Director of University Libraries
SUNY/Buffalo

Gail Sher

#1

She stood all divine in her lash.

Grand her very presence look voice the mere contemporaneous fact of whom multiplied by sudden magical amounts the accuracy with which he heard what he had said just as she had heard it. Various. Fifty women. Her young eyes bred like linen for a wedding the effort of an age awaiting that ceremony. They unwrapped him.

#2

The infelicity and confusion of his arm now bent around her eagerness.

Like a bride and always about her the breath almost of happy wonderful special. All this about-to-be wait-and-see she wore in her blonde hair and the lilt with which she tip-chinned shook it back behind her an asset the measure of her wealth taken thereby by what she took so displayingly for granted. Her pretty perfect teeth her very small too small nose deferring with count-onable ease a deference he most assuredly counted on counted more than he could say on its ready assignation. This quantity the crease of his lambswool jacket confident and loose hang of tie collected so completely that her tea-table vitality pleasant public familiar served and radiantly settled over him an altogether different an altogether self affirmation.

#3

He fancied them liked them and passing through them with her more slowly now.

Her room was high and cool and bare and opened on another room bare to fullness with sun. Here leaning gently pressing her cheek against the side of the recess she saw flowers a miracle of cheapness an exposure kept in durance as an approach her primary furniture to what she can have thought a full and formal air. Produccible. Amazing.

#4

Saying nothing with his lips all the while pressing you so with his face.

Instantly she was all there. Forgiving and from the way she managed to invest the little cubes of embossed butter the table-linen starched and pressed indeed the very violets in their dish between them reeked so sudden a violetness that it was all before him in a flash what forgiveness was for her and how it was tremendously was what she did best. She forgives and would forgive anything and as she sat with the demureness of a child her grey eyes moving in and out of their talk his quick large gratitude had so immediate and intense effect on his perception as to devolve it entirely. Strange and beautiful it was to him as he saw as he saw that he could see that he would now wondrously see always instantly by her acuteness.

#5

There to be laid in the watery English sunshine.

It was a mild day and as they rowed the long afternoon sun cast over boats and ripply water its own fine spray one through which he saw her seated straightly refreshed refurbished. Her pinkness translucent refined flaired even more pinkly pressed against black German velvet and her long loose triple strand of waist-length pearls. These she fingered like a rosary keeping pace with a rhythm so feminine so private that he hearing it darkened. What unheeded prophecies this Cassandra uttering and he her harlequin held as by a beat of air.

#6

Haunting so in her tigerish the visual.

She was so happy and in her white dress and softly plumed white hat sprang into the day. Something not as yet traceable (words he couldn't catch?) some such loose handful of bright flowers fell by her as she along the plush air now loosely now arrogantly tripped. What was it that bold high look some form of merit some consecration breathlessly fresh. Even he in this resemblance it even did something for his own quality marked now as lo and behold nice in this gayness in these new conditions at large. The day was so soft so soft. And yet as black in its certain location can seem light and transparent so this softness against which he daren't push claimed in yes didn't he feel it the very whiteness of its bones colossal reserves.

#7

He wanted her verve her other star.

She knew. The dark room rode her recognition bearing in its wake a dim parenthetical vocabulary. For it wasn't directly or with a freedom that she surrendered shyly extending as it were a timid hand. This process articulated by its givings out took place in her heart like a habit with all the handsome formalities of a habit which it then fell to her to sacrifice. Burn she thought she pleaded for the light and warmth of it for the cool soft drift of it. Here was a location. Here was an other spot to which she could ride without flame. Free-hand she could ride this memory a constellation bright and new and airless.

#8

Her lungs the sperm of air too tropical.

Luxuriant on the crest of whirling silver sapphire her life like a carousel poised at high speed. Realization massed like a wave and softly rocked the soft wooded air the too colorful shadow in which she too at once too vulnerable. What she had as part of her own process been avoiding rose as a dread the merest allusion to which exhilarating ineffable stripped her to the account of a new nakedness. So it was that she admonishing what had become for her a vigilance reproved even more mildly the sense in which he surrounded everything that touched him with an elegant permission an indifference she could just now barely make out as that which rendered him above all merciful or even it began to gleam brilliantly beneficent. Its consecration dawned on her there flushed for all its intimacy and conferred on her as a forest of august shade the umbrageous protection of her own derivation.

#9

Planting trees not out of politeness.
Two in winter.

The day had turned to heat and eventual thunder as he lay along the river bank old old old. His thoughts blue and in the pebbly water trembling deepened with the tone of the sky as he lay concentric halos of waves lapping every ounce of foamy ooze somehow a syllable in this dream. This dream this blue-grey dreamy rocking the slight rock of a couple of small boats bumped against the landing undressing in their long cool tired line the willows with no waist. Too old. Too tired in the sandy bottom of this special shade of speech the talk was it chatter of the darkening.