



## ***Flute Over Walden***

**—RAYMOND ROSELIEP**











## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author is grateful for permission to reprint these poems from the following publications:

Arts in Society, The Christian Century, Delta Epsilon Sigma Bulletin, Encore, Hawk and Whippoorwill, Recalled, Janus, SCOT, New World Haiku, Poetry Venture, South and West, Thoreau Journal Quarterly, Wind, and Yankee.

## FLUTE OVER WALDEN

**Thoreauhaiku**

by

**Raymond Roseliep**

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*Voyages to the Inland Sea, IV: Essays and Poems by Alvin Greenberg, George Chambers, Raymond Roseliep, edited by John Judson, Center for Contemporary Poetry, Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin—La Crosse, 1974.*

Special thanks are due to Wade Van Dore for his essay on my poems, entitled "Thoreauhaiku," *Thoreau Journal Quarterly*, October 1973.

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for Wally Vassilopoulos

Connecticut cricket

## **FLUTE OVER WALDEN**





## THOREAUHAIKU

The voice in these poems is sometimes the Walcott's  
sometimes mine, and I hope also my reader's. Sometimes  
maybe all three. Once it is the swamp frog.

for Willy Vassilopoulos,

Connecticut cricket

Christening the poem  
suggests what I am about. My footsteps dig native soil and  
whatever elements of the exquisite Japanese haiku and  
sennyu brush my muse I expect will be obvious. Though it's  
impossible to use the Japanese "syllable" or "on" unit  
count in English, I work a familiar pattern that loosely de-  
rives from its two foreign ancestors: an arrangement of sev-  
enteen syllables with the eighth falling seven in the sec-  
ond, and like the kind of being past-tense translation translatable  
oriental spirit and idiom I count the western spirit and tap  
American word-hoard. If indeed my western imagination  
travels beyond sacred and bounds of eastern haiku and  
sennyu discipline, I trust Thoreau's frog and mine are not  
distantly related to Bashō's.

R.R.



## THOREAUHAIKU

The voice in these poems is sometimes the Waldener's, sometimes mine, and I hope also my reader's. Sometimes maybe all three. Once it is the swamp gods'.

Christening the poems "Thoreauhaiku," Wade Van Dore suggests what I am about. My footsteps dig native soil, and whatever elements of the exquisite Japanese haiku and sennyu brush my muse I expect will be obvious. Though it's impossible to use the Japanese "syllable" or "duration-unit" count in English, I work a familiar pattern that loosely derives from its two foreign ancestors: an arrangement of seventeen syllables, with five in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third. Bowing past the non-transferable oriental spirit and idiom, I court the western spirit and tap American word-hoard. If indeed my western imagination travels beyond sacrosanct bounds of eastern haiku and sennyu disciples, I trust Thoreau's frog and mine are not distantly related to Bashō's.

R.R.



moon, find my bedroom,  
the sweet Walden ghost tramping  
its pine-needle floor



fish hawk on white pine  
by water: man with pencil  
waiting for the word



The first sparrow of spring! The year beginning with  
younger hope than ever!

fife-doodling redwing,  
bagpiping frog, off-key cow:  
Thoreau at concert

Henry's scrubbing floor,  
hence the furniture outside,  
velour bumblebee

fresh loaves on the sill  
coax a teakettle ditty  
from the song sparrow

ho, partner and thief  
hammering the flour bin,  
carpenter titmouse

sorry for stubbing  
my toe on you, homesteader  
tortoise Old Clubfoot!

prelate mud turtle  
served by three canopies: sky,  
my boat, your band shell

on his dancefloor hand  
Thoreau's sand cherry umbels  
whirl flower hoopskirts



fresh and tender bough  
of sumach, a perfect fan  
falling—Henry, whose?

dogwood shivering  
as a girl's dress is dogwood  
and is nothing more

lichen's for a nest,  
brown thrasher, not a trapeze—  
ask any white spruce

S

When my nose tinkled against the stones, that music echoed  
to the woods and the sky . . . It was no longer beans that I  
heard . . .

Walden Pond idles,  
its lord reads by kerosene,  
a hawk of train screams

a man wakes, listens:  
bean sprout hacks away darkness,  
song locks in the throat



## 2

When my hoe tinkled against the stones, that music echoed  
to the woods and the sky. . . . It was no longer beans that I  
hoed. . . .

bean on the beanstalk,  
in a man's accurate hand,  
bean song overhead

silver arc of perch  
over blue Concord water  
photographed by eye

velvet butterfly  
on your cobweb trampoline,  
patience!            here's Henry

thumbnail on thimble-  
size blossom: half-moon of dirt  
crossing a white star



cornucopia:

pitch, pine, birch, alder, aspen  
and a paddling duck

we Swamp Gods bid you  
grace our toadstool Round Table,  
Lord Druid Thoreau

sunset gilds the wings  
of the marsh hawk and my back  
where wings are sprouting

double note *che-wink*,  
Homer's rhythm of four-time,  
now punctual night

Big Dipper out there,  
my thin dish of gruel lit  
by a candle stub

wassailer bullfrog  
in need of a tuning fork:  
tonight's small music



this fife and drum corps  
riles my yankee blood—at ease!  
fall out, mosquitos!

wait, will-o'-the-wisp  
in the marshes, till I come  
with my walking stick

pale blue butterfly  
lifting diaphanous skirts  
above skunk cabbage

on the mink's footprint  
an asterisk of daisy:  
shadow and substance



fox, spare the partridge  
 on your huckleberry path  
 brimful of new wine

woodchuck leveling  
 my beans, cricket sawing, ant  
 whirling wee auger

Narcissus, rescue  
 from friendly White Pond's mirror  
 the staring blue flag!

Orion \* \* \* wonder  
 what that Emerson's thinking  
 up \* \* \* on such a night

## 3

I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself  
than be crowded on a velvet cushion.

frost freckled johnswort,  
pumpkin sun, inkblot of geese:  
whistlestop Walden



tingle the palate,  
grape twilight, applejack wind:  
delicious evening

cricket wing cymbal,  
goose throat horn, bee mouth organ:  
ready!      Henry's flute

Walden Pond quiets,  
a man reckons his account,  
a bullfrog *tr-roonks*

in a thought of light  
birds weave a roof of music  
over beast and man

tingle the palate  
grape twilight, applejack wind  
delicious evening

inscribed walnut leaf  
for calling card: that Shakespeare  
who writes on his shoe

Walden Pond: quiet  
a man reckons his acreage  
a bullfrog it roars



sh, by George! imp eyes  
of red alder berry glow  
where a hoot owl shat

lovers, steal away  
before Walden screech owls sing  
suicide of sleep

cricket invading  
my autumn dream and bed  
with your noise of silence

wake up, Henry! up!  
—artist whippoorwill, barn dance  
caller: “. . . *pur-ple RIB*”

monarch butterfly  
throned on my letter, banning  
private matter—*pfft!*

one leaf-fall, bough limp  
and empty, sky coffin gray:  
my fingers, unlock



country and town fool  
bumbling an old tavern tune:  
horsefly at my ear

The snow lying deep on the earth dotted with young pines  
and the very slope of the hill on which my house is placed  
seemed to say "forward"

unsaddle me, dream!  
wind song and scale of cricket,  
outride the damn mare!

## 4

The snow lying deep on the earth dotted with young pines,  
and the very slope of the hill on which my house is placed,  
seemed to say, "Forward!"



welcome-mat of snow  
with readable small type set  
by a meadow mouse

The snow lying deep on the earth dotted with young pines,  
and the very slope of the hill on which my house is placed,  
seemed to say, "Forward!"

Concord visitors  
  drink the wine of morning air,  
  break the bread of words  
  
wood words shaping air,  
  me here—can these draw Matthew  
  from the countinghouse?  
  
the Pond's blue enough  
  to bring a man to his knees,  
  gold insect skater

drop that corn nugget  
you stole from Bob Squirrel's bank,  
Joe Fancypants Jay!



looping frosty air  
our old home Christmas tinsel—  
glad rags of sparrow

bird! the cigar store  
Indian in moccasins—  
Tomahawk the cat!

spirited lantern  
on snowcrust cutting diamonds  
—ho, shiny dime eyes!

wasp and mole bed down,  
Thoreau's firewood makes faces,  
the Ice cracks and whoops

the fireside mouse sleeps,  
stirs with a Walden woods dream—  
peace! ne'er-do-well cat



by gorry, wood nymph  
sweeping the pine needle harp  
—oh!—the Concord bell

dirt-freckled poet,  
burlap mouse, hearth-born cricket:  
winter bedfellows

RAYMOND ROSELIEP, a priest of the archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa, has an M.A. from the Catholic University of America and a Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame. He was a member of the English department at Loyola College for twenty years, and is now resident chaplain at Holy Family Hall, Dubuque. In the summer of 1964 he was post-residence at Georgetown University, and he has given readings of his poems in colleges and universities. He received the Kenneth F. Montgomery Poetry Award from the Society of Midland Authors in 1968. His poems have been shown in thirty anthologies and one hundred and seventy periodicals such as *Poetry*, *The Nation*, *Shenandoah*, *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *The Nation*, *Schoolroom*, *The New Yorker*, *The New Yorker*, *New Letters*, *Modern Age*, *Chicago Review*, *Art in Society*, *The Georgia Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *The Carolina Quarterly*, and *The Art Journal*. His poetry collections are *The Living Bonds*, *The Small Barn*, and *Love Makes the Air Light*; he is one of three poets represented with poems, an essay on poetry, and a bibliography in *Voyages to the Island Sea, IV*.

farewell, citizens  
of wood and pond—my work done,  
my house in order



*hush, Walden spirit,  
helicopter hummingbird,  
my grasshopper blood*

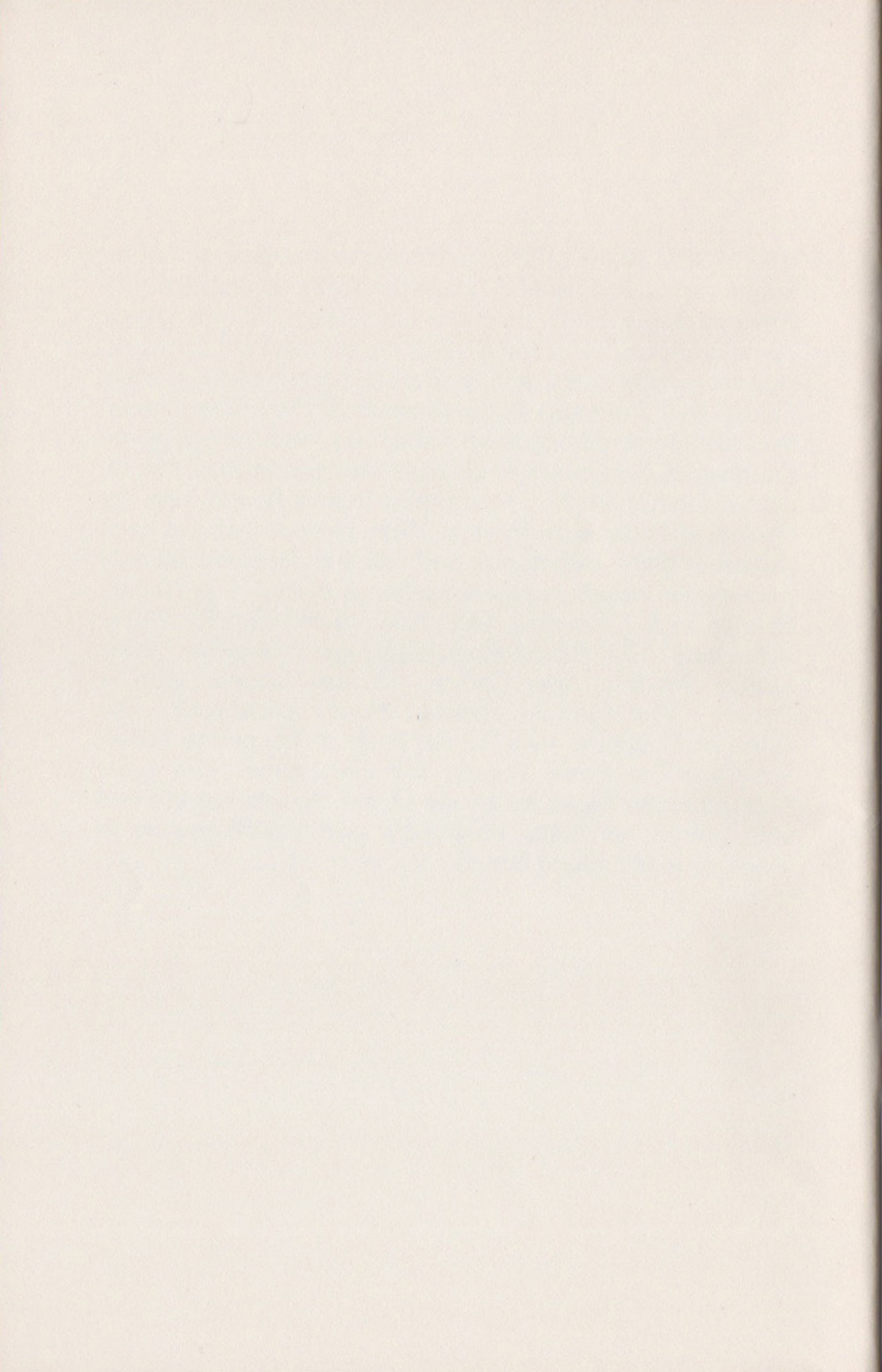
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drawing by  
Renée Travis

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