

MT. TREMPER HAIKU

drawings/IRWIN TOUSTER
poems/RONALD BAATZ

introduction/REED WHITEMORE



Flypaper Press, NYC

a division of Chelsea Mews Publishing

Flypaper Press, N.Y.C. 2000

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Introduction

A high critic might call the work that follows here an interdisciplinary study, but this critic is not high. Lowly he notes first that a talented American poet by the name of Ronald Baatz, who has done much work within familiar occidental verse forms, has in late middle age found himself writing haiku. And second the critic notes that a talented American artist by the name of Irwin Touster, who has worked with all the familiar forms of daub on canvas, ink on paper, etchings and sculptures, has in very late middle age joined Ronald. Why have these two talented minds done what they have done? Clearly and simply their aim has been to produce a duet! And they have done so.

Then too, aside from the possibly historic general human significance of their dueting (a word is needed to describe the accomplishment), its excellence is also unAmerican, since a mixed genre of this nature is not readily comprehensible by the narrow specialist knowers of our continent. Instead it reaches for the kind of comprehension that might be called the oriental ineffable—but does so boldly, deeply quietly, no sweat.

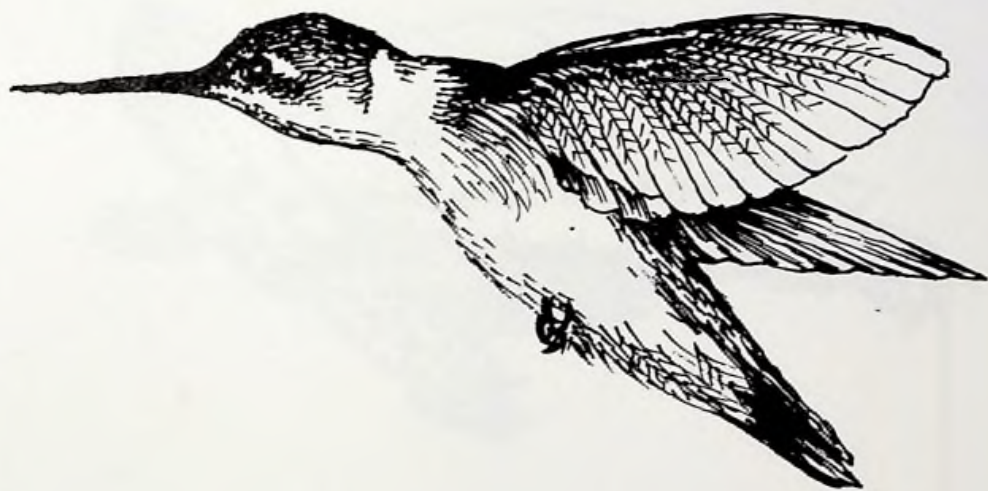
Yes, yet despite the unique nature of this Baatz-Touster aesthetic-philosophic duet, it is even now at home in our country for those who find themselves ready.

Reed Whittemore
College Park, Md., 2000

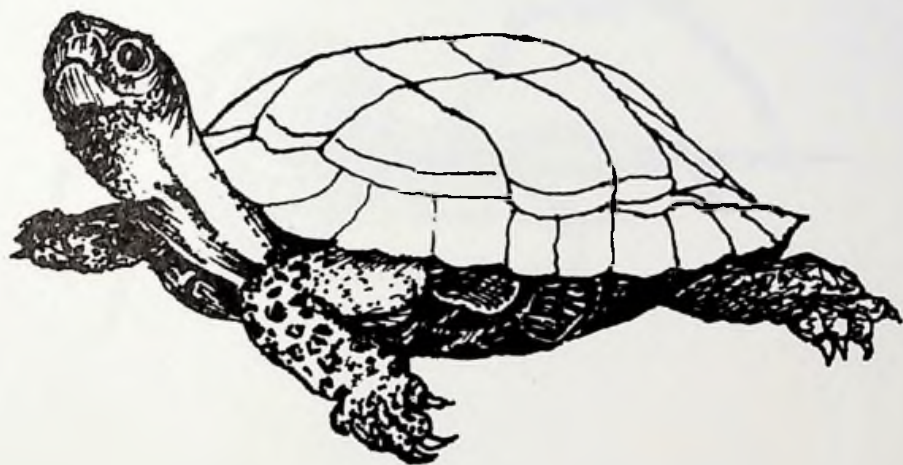
For
KAZUKO NAKAJIMA

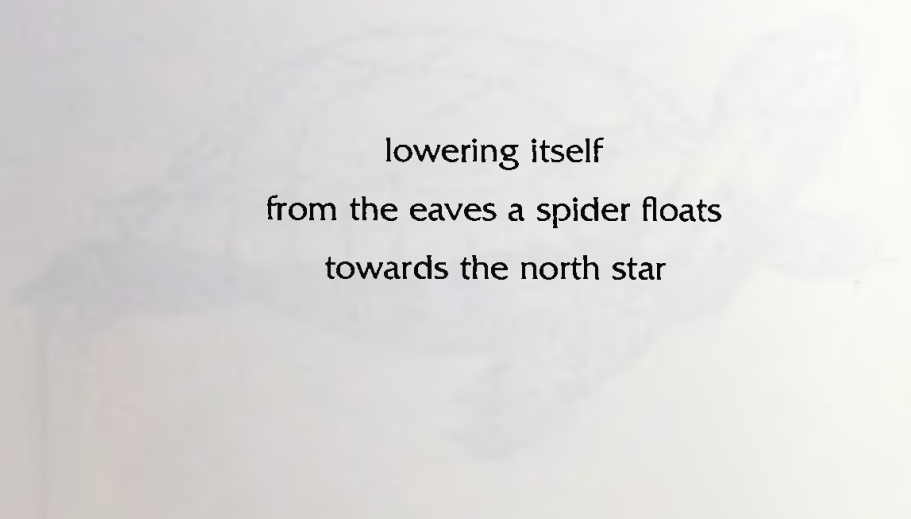


look at the red throat
of the hummingbird~then tell
your story again



watching a turtle
crossing a freshly paved road
crows hope for the worst



A faint, light blue illustration of a turtle swimming, positioned behind the text. The turtle is facing right, with its head and front legs extended forward. Its shell is visible, and its hind legs are also extended.

lowering itself
from the eaves a spider floats
towards the north star



through the tinder left
in a decaying woodshed
the green snake goes home

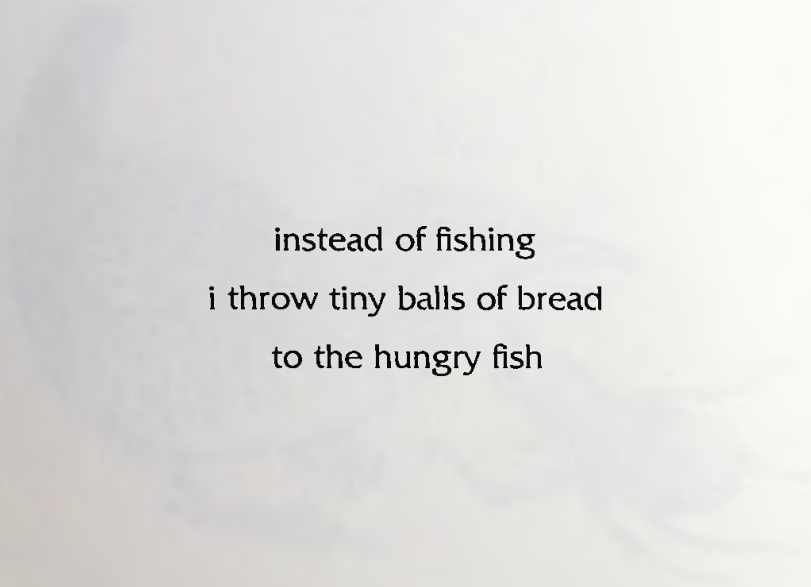


one hind leg missing~
an insect in the bathroom
clings to a towel

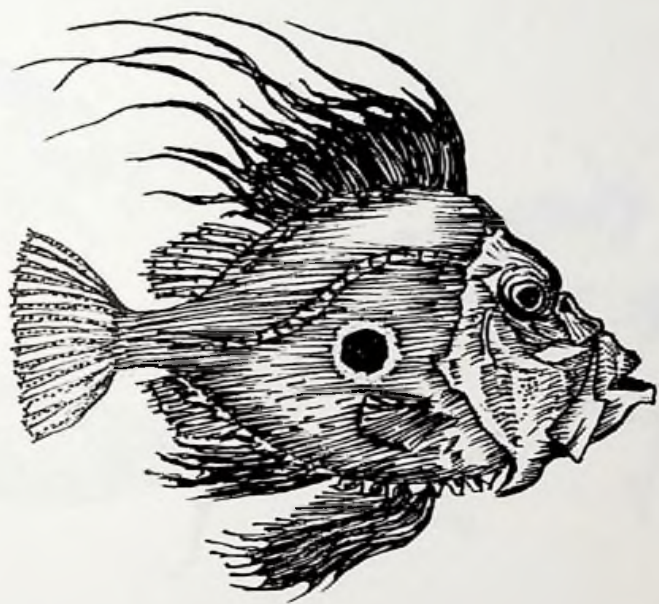


sometimes like the soft
feathers lining a wren's nest~
her intimate voice





instead of fishing
i throw tiny balls of bread
to the hungry fish



it remains so still
even in a sudden rain~
the praying mantis



the possum wary
of a cigarette glowing
on the dark fast road

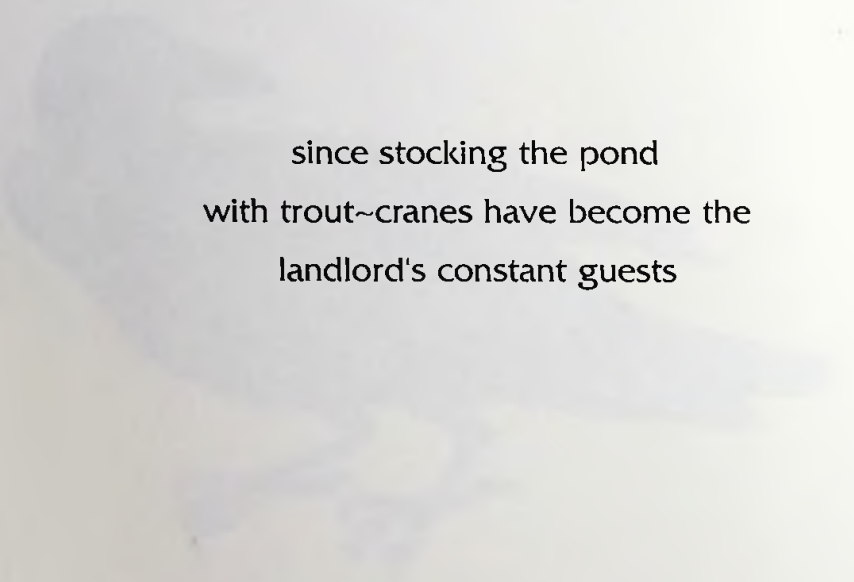


children running from
a dragonfly as though its
wings spanned some two feet



crows walking along
the road this morning as though
waiting for a ride





since stocking the pond
with trout~cranes have become the
landlord's constant guests



the mosquito that
lands on a watermelon
wastes such precious time



under my foot a
branch snaps and a bird above
leaves its tiny feet



still in bed staring
at the ceiling trying to
make a squashed bug move



the croaking frog just
seems to make her cool flesh more
satiny to touch



one bird complaining
loudly in the rain about
the coldness of spring



in the warm bathroom
ladybugs fleeing winter
die in the shower



scared~a mouse hides in
leaves at the bottom of an
empty swimming pool



a butterfly lands
on one of my sneakers but
the ants hurry by



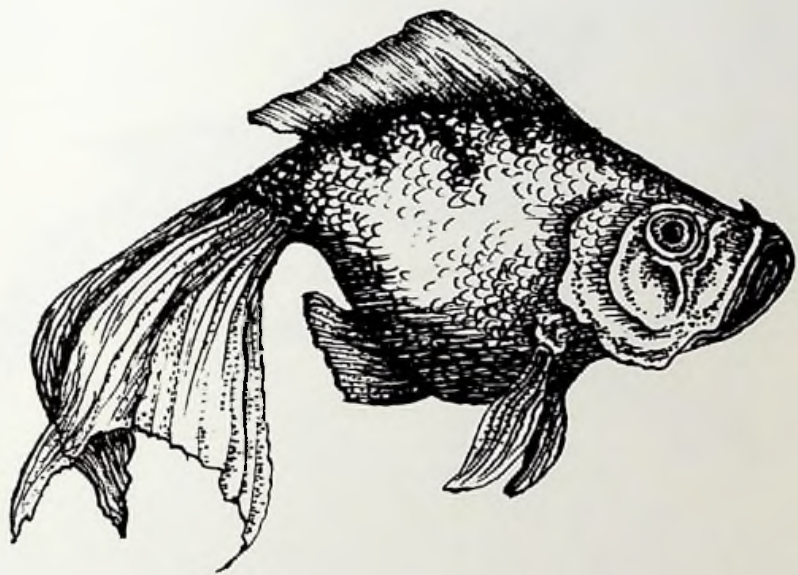
a beetle banging
loud against the bedroom screen~
it knows i can't sleep



there! a woodpecker
at the top of that dead oak
knocking in the mist



as i'm lost in thought
and pulling at chest hairs a
goldfish stares at me



carrying a crumb
away from a warm toaster
an ant stops to think



a chipmunk seeing
snakes drop from a rain gutter
quits stuffing its mouth



haiku that flutter
like moths around a new bulb
the poet screwed in



as though flying in
from some other part of the
universe~a bat



a lightning bug trapped
in the bedroom isn't drawn
to my reading lamp



grasshoppers collect
on my windshield and then turn
to look down the road



on the back porch i
light one stick match at a time~
the pause of the owl



the poor fly's coffin~
nothing more than a tissue
balled up in the trash





