

HIDDEN RIVER



HAÍKU

DENIS M. GARRISON

HIDDEN RIVER

Hidden River

by
Denis M. Garrison



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Hidden River

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Foreword

There was a time not that long ago when haiku was an art form practiced by only a few people in the English speaking world. That's changed, of course. Haiku, thanks to Robert Blyth, Gary Snyder, Jack Kerouac, and other influential writers and scholars, popularized the genre and made it accessible to "every man." Today, almost all students are taught the basic rudiments of writing haiku in American elementary schools. Because it consists of only three lines, haiku on the surface, appears to be simple to write and master. Most students are taught the following definition:

"A three-line poem about nature
adhering to a 5/7/5 syllable formula."

Haiku is easy to write but hard to write well. More than a formula, composing haiku is a path, a way of viewing life. Unfortunately, too few people understand this, and the by-products are sophomoric poetry that say little to nothing. As Managing Editor of *Simply Haiku*, I receive e-mails almost daily from well-meaning poets who tell me they are new to writing haiku, and would like to submit their haiku for publication. Most of the submissions I read are unmemorable; the products of ignorance, poor teaching, and a lack of study.

Denis Garrison is an excellent poet; a breath of fresh air. He understands haiku and, as an editor of literary journals and the owner of a small book publishing firm, he realizes that, like any art form, one must pay their dues; putting in time, study, practice, and hard work.

The result is *Hidden River*, a book of haiku, divided up into four sections: Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. With a fresh voice, Garrison writes poetry that resonates, doesn't "tell all," and lingers in the mind after being read.

Take for instance:

ancient gardener
not as old as
his adze

Garrison does not adhere to a strict 5/7/5 syllable formula. English syllables have longer tones than Japanese language syllables. Adherence to the 5/7/5 syllable formula makes for awkward, sometimes stacatto-sounding haiku, hindered by a formula indigenous to another language and culture far removed from western culture and linguistics. Instead, he writes verse in a three line format usually consisting of 14 or less syllables. Added to the haiku are good metre, more than one layer of meaning, and a unique way of viewing life.

budding hyacinth—
how lovely, dressed
for her first formal dance

Garrison, in this poem, utilizes juxtaposition, contrasting a budding hyacinth with a young teenager dressed up for her first formal dance. This contrast opens the door for multiple interpretations and brings to life the young girl's moment, experientially and visually. The poet says in three lines what

many Western poets take several lines to say without jettisoning metre and style.

old wisteria
straight only where
the trellis was

I see this haiku as a metaphor for an old man in need of a cane to stand up and be mobile. On the surface, this poem appears to be a description of an aged wisteria. This is the genius of haiku: using an economy of words to paint a multi-tiered painting without “telling all.” Garrison does this well. His poetic canvasses only look simple. Take the first two lines of this haiku:

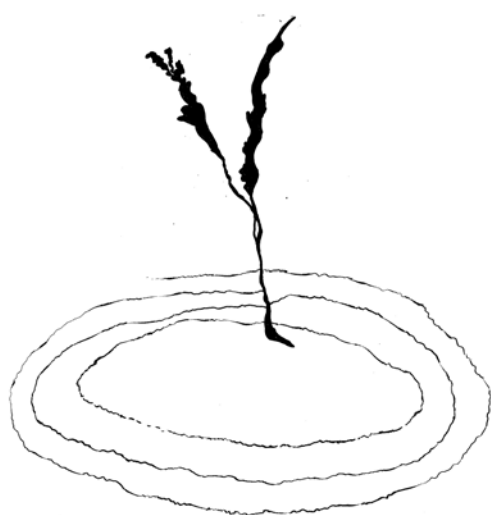
sparrow tracks
in the fresh snow—
reading tea leaves

They paint a picture of nature, which by itself, is not memorable. When contrasted with the third line, however, level after level of meaning unfolds, calling to mind the way tones, tints, and simple brush strokes bring to life a sumi-e painting.

Denis Garrison writes beautiful haiku. I recommend his new book, *Hidden River*, to all who appreciate the genre and to those who want a good model to emulate in their journey to becoming a better poet. His book will leave an indelible print in your mind.

— *robert d. wilson*

www.simplyhaiku.com



poems
written in dust
a windy day



Denis M. Garrison

SPRING

Hidden River

coffee at dawn
tastes best
in this old tin cup

Denis M. Garrison

found at last
the lost crocuses—
just the right spot

Hidden River

a cool wind
from the old oak
a loud crack

Denis M. Garrison

breeze moving
across the still pond
delicate ripples spread

Hidden River

with the darkness
rising in the east
ten trillion stars

Denis M. Garrison

dark farmyard
a faint glow in the east—
the old rooster sleeps

Hidden River

rising from my rest
drawn by the familiar
scent of hot iron

Denis M. Garrison

anvil music
drifting from the forge—
slow hammer tattoo

Hidden River

in curling woodsmoke
rising and falling like fate
the great hammer

Denis M. Garrison

great river grumbles
beneath a pink fog—
a rooster's crow

Hidden River

visitors
each one is announced
new spring on the screen door

Denis M. Garrison

I traced your features
with a new leaf—
no thought of autumn

Hidden River

a swift crossed the sky
that moment
she was gone

Denis M. Garrison

a warming breeze—
bulbs send up green tongues
to taste the air

Hidden River

pygmy wren
on the cedar branch
bonsai garden

Denis M. Garrison

hummm starts and stops
an early hornet
tests its wings

Hidden River

still sunlit
first sheet of rain
how it glitters

Denis M. Garrison

ash field
after the rains
new leaves

Hidden River

ancient forest
every green leaf
born this year

Denis M. Garrison

the stream
of my childhood
new water

Hidden River

koi pond—
the sound of fragrant
bubbles

Denis M. Garrison

ancient gardener
not as old as
his adze

Hidden River

moonless night . . .
dark valley waterfall
sings to itself

Denis M. Garrison

budding hyacinth—
how lovely, dressed
for her first formal dance

Hidden River

your face, in the
leafing orchard—
pearl amongst emeralds

Denis M. Garrison

spring forest
bare branches and blossoms
that awkward time

Hidden River

walking stick insect
on the cane handle
under a hickory tree

Denis M. Garrison

plowed fields—
an irrigator sends up
drifting rainbows

Hidden River

peahens cry out
the end of meditation
floors to scrub

Denis M. Garrison

a dark new field
freshly turned sod
alive with grackles

Hidden River

graying beneath
morning glories
old clay pots

Denis M. Garrison

cacophony
of spring . . . everything
calling out for love

Hidden River

fragrance of plowed fields—
chirping sparrows
still feeding after dusk

Denis M. Garrison

weeping cherry tree
fills the breeze with petals—
soft April shower

Hidden River

hidden river
the willows cannot help
but tell

Denis M. Garrison

the wind goes by
dressed in white petals
spring formal

Hidden River

old farmer's
hard hands so gentle
planting seedlings

Denis M. Garrison

end of day—
a slice of salmon-pink glass
where the pond should be

Hidden River

her coffin lowered—
sweet petals shower
from the dogwoods

Denis M. Garrison

free at last
bright against black storm
yellow balloon

Hidden River

black storm-swollen river
grinding its gravel bed—
sheet lightning flashes

Denis M. Garrison

lonely hillside
follows the flooding river
the trees wave

Hidden River

a pale island
almost lost in the mist
the cuckoo's last call

Denis M. Garrison

after the storm
the wet fields
smeared with moonlight

Hidden River

rain-brimming
hoofprints glitter—
royal bridle path

Denis M. Garrison

last day of spring
sudden gusts of rain
the orchard weeps petals

Hidden River



Denis M. Garrison

SUMMER

Hidden River

a catbird calls—
the sumac thicket's
summer blush

Denis M. Garrison

slow and gentle
the touch of
morning sun

Hidden River

this dusty noon
in the spring-fed creek
our blue feet

Denis M. Garrison

barn before dawn
soft mutter and clomp
of sleeping horses

Hidden River

home from the coast
when the door opens
coffee scent and her voice

Denis M. Garrison

hour after noon
first still moment today
the river stones speak

Hidden River

dangling my feet
in this river once again
a turn of the wheel

Denis M. Garrison

late light sparkles
on the water droplets—
washing garden tools

Hidden River

velvet black night
pulsing with frog song
and fireflies

Denis M. Garrison

two tall cedars
swaying in the wind
wedding party

Hidden River

grandma's parlor
tintypes of grim couples
a silent victrola

Denis M. Garrison

red fox in the pasture—
cattle watch the passage
as one

Hidden River

sumac thicket—
with whirring wings
a bluebird alights

Denis M. Garrison

dairy cows
gathered in the creek
stooping willows

Hidden River

summer forest
the stench of carrion
beneath honeysuckle

Denis M. Garrison

silence
among the burnt trees
ravens pace

Hidden River

old wisteria
straight only where
the trellis was

Denis M. Garrison

faces watching
the fireworks show
suddenly starlit

Hidden River

old dry well—
a pair of sparrows
bathe in the dust

Denis M. Garrison

plains wind pulses through
vast acres of barley tops—
shrill of a blackbird

Hidden River

above the dam
cracked dry mud for miles—
dust brown willows

Denis M. Garrison

a high wind aloft
its faint voice does not disturb
the dusty road

Hidden River

distant clouds
we are so dry
come weep for us

Denis M. Garrison

scorched dirt
gusts lift a yellow cloud
before the coming rain

Hidden River

wind rising—
kite on a string
longs to fly

Denis M. Garrison

in the hill path
so worn, so old
my dusty feet

Hidden River

downpour done
steam streamers rise
hint of a chill

Denis M. Garrison

lightning strike
the day's heat had
risen gently

Hidden River

something there
crossing the road
heat shimmer

Denis M. Garrison

ancient cat
in the spot of sun
breathing

Hidden River

warm wind—
the ivy-covered elm's
slow sway

Denis M. Garrison

the moth
on the head of the dog
in my lap

Hidden River

after weeks away
over the garden wall
sound of the fountain

Denis M. Garrison

rotten old axe
buried in a stump—
moonflower vines

Hidden River

wind storm
inside a hollow log
butterflies

Denis M. Garrison

summer storm
the steaming road full
of hopping frogs

Hidden River

meadow in bloom
the tallest wildflowers
surround a carcass

Denis M. Garrison

old tomcat hunting
at meadow's edge
he waits . . .

Hidden River

storm after the storm
in the shore reeds
bluegills chasing crickets

Denis M. Garrison

a bridge to nowhere
lost in the rising stream
an old tree topples

Hidden River

owl in grey dusk
gliding silently . . .
distant thunder

Denis M. Garrison

vacant farmhouse
wooden walls glow red-gold
at day's end

Hidden River

dead cacti slumped
in a moldy clay pot—
rusty garden tools

Denis M. Garrison

skylarks sing
above the pillaged plains
fair sky

Hidden River

above dark cottonwoods
the bright river of stars—
a nightjar calls

Denis M. Garrison

breaking the long silence
woodpecker's vibrato
a new silence begins

Hidden River

thousands
of pieces of sky
blue in the treetops

Denis M. Garrison

first chores in the barn
milking a guernsey
I see my father's hands

Hidden River

moonless night
in utter darkness
a blind poet writing

Denis M. Garrison

in the emptiness
you faded away, pale moon—
merciless white sky

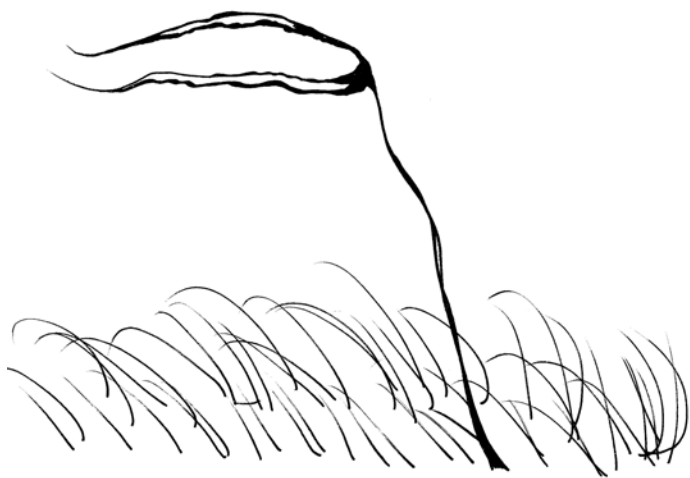
Hidden River

stronger than bricks—
these bundled broken reeds
so tightly tied

Denis M. Garrison

in fading daylight
farmhands in silhouette
the fragrant hay bales

Hidden River



Denis M. Garrison

AUTUMN

Hidden River

over prairie graves
arcs that brooding cobalt sky—
a sole blackbird shrills

Denis M. Garrison

deep in the woods
a ruined stone wall—
sunlit cinnamon ferns

Hidden River

around the waterfall
mist drifts through the pines—
the river's muffled roar

Denis M. Garrison

mountain town in flood—
from every window
a waterfall

Hidden River

home at last
our valley yet more lovely
through tears

Denis M. Garrison

frosted maples
blush in the heat
silent sunrise

Hidden River

October rain—
the boulevard paved
in red and gold

Denis M. Garrison

field of ripe pumpkins—
the black cat catches
a mouse

Hidden River

inside the kiln
a new pot bakes
sky-blue glaze

Denis M. Garrison

peak of the heat
the woods are quiet—
sharp scent of leaf rot

Hidden River

among the tombstones
dead leaves ankle-deep—
wind in the treetops

Denis M. Garrison

pond covered
with sleeping geese—
our dogs pace indoors

Hidden River

sun shafts
in the elm woods
scent of sawdust

Denis M. Garrison

her frail hands
tracing the fragile veins
autumn leaf

Hidden River

family cemetery
raked perfectly clean—
not a leaf in sight

Denis M. Garrison

on a cemetery bench . . .
an old man gets to know
the neighborhood

Hidden River

in his favorite chair
the shape of his body
cool to the touch

Denis M. Garrison

great oaks creak
in the wind
no birdsong

Hidden River

ashes scattered
leaves float higher
on the pond's gray face

Denis M. Garrison

the old man rakes leaves
from place to place—
scent of cold in the air

Hidden River

woodcutter's cabin
smoke drifts down the mountain
empty white sky

Denis M. Garrison

the more pebbles I drop,
the looser my grip—
the river grinds on

Hidden River

harvested field
faded mouse trails
follow the rows

Denis M. Garrison

deep night
the barred owl talks
to the moon

Hidden River

November wind
the sexton rakes leaves
off his own plot

Denis M. Garrison

last year's
new rail fence—
grey in a still dawn

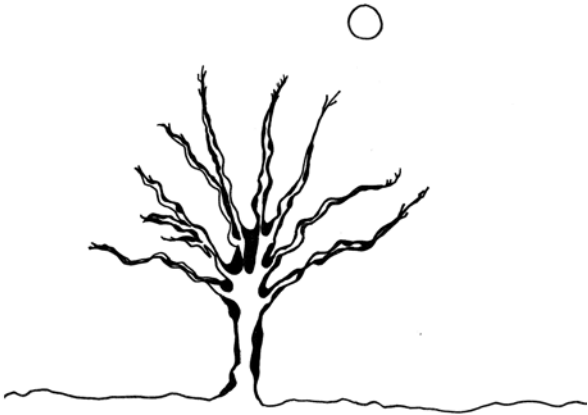
Hidden River

giving thanks
so much to say
one day won't do

Denis M. Garrison

late autumn
pale morning light
fills the fog

Hidden River



Denis M. Garrison

WINTER

Hidden River

warm winter breeze
hollow without
blossoms' scent

Denis M. Garrison

harvesting
the winter wheat—
honking geese pass over

Hidden River

ceaseless creaking—
the dry woods moan
in the night wind

Denis M. Garrison

before dawn
the scream of a rabbit—
our old hound whimpers

Hidden River

rabbit spoor ends
in the middle of the field—
winter rapture

Denis M. Garrison

after the blizzard—
below the woodpecker
wisps of snow

Hidden River

expectant hush—
so calm and bright the sky
this silent night

Denis M. Garrison

a decorated home
twinkles in the snowdrifts—
its warmth reaches me

Hidden River

sparrow tracks
in the fresh snow—
reading tea leaves

Denis M. Garrison

the woodcutter's path
still wider this year—
bark-littered snow

Hidden River

hunger dreams—
emptying the traps
takes hours

Denis M. Garrison

cattle clatter down
the frozen pasture path—
clanking cowbell

Hidden River

huddled herd—
their breath rises
and drifts

Denis M. Garrison

bitter stillness
steam rises and twists
from the cowpies

Hidden River

scratching the glass
the spitting sleet
wants in

Denis M. Garrison

fierce night wind
makes this old house
its flute

Hidden River

brushing snow from her headstone—
a bitter wind rattles
in the trees

Denis M. Garrison

shifting its weight
lake ice booms in the night
the owls applaud

Hidden River

snow outside
a deeper cold
in my bones

Denis M. Garrison

the dog sleeps
his back to my leg
that hurts in a draft

Hidden River

grave-silent
these long nights—
mute swan in winter

Denis M. Garrison

a still, starry, night
from across the pond
the bark of a fox

Hidden River

hunger moon rises
from all quarters
the coyotes' howls

Denis M. Garrison

farmer's careful wife
drops some millet again today—
lucky sparrows

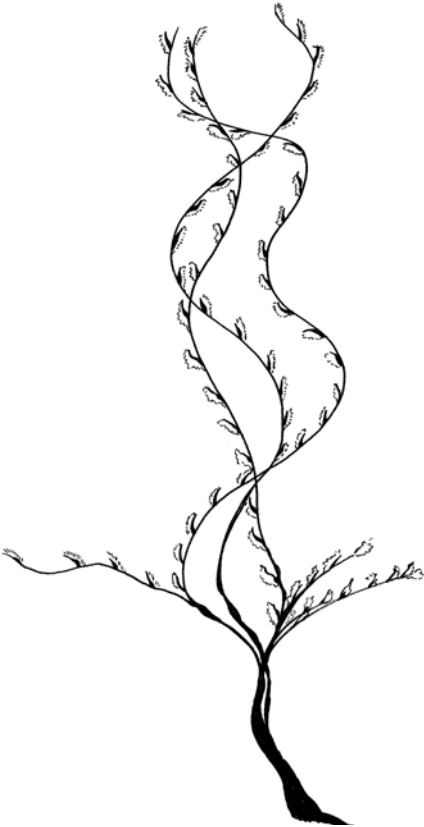
Hidden River

all day
trickling snow melt—
noisy teapot for company

Denis M. Garrison

the revolution
ends as it began—
and begins again

Hidden River



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“koi pond”, “summer storm”, “meadow in bloom”, and “spring forest” were first published in *Simply Haiku*, May 2006.

“home at last”, “ancient forest”, “the stream”, and “old farmer’s” were first published online in *World Kigo DB Homeland* (furusato), 2006.

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“thousands” was first published in the online anthology, *a procession of ripples*, edited by Laryalee Fraser. November 2006.

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Hidden River

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“among the tombstones” was first published in *Paper Wasp*, Winter 2006.

“coffee at dawn” was first published in *Nisqually Delta Review* - Summer/Fall 2006.

A number of haiku included in this collection have appeared in Denis Garrison’s poetry website at www.flyingfishes.net and blog at haikuunchained.blogspot.com.

The fine drawings in this volume are all by Aurora Antonovic of Ontario, Canada—a fine poet in her own right.



Denis M. Garrison

About the Poet



Denis M. Garrison is the editor and publisher of *Modern English Tanka*. He lives near Maryland's Chesapeake Bay with his wife, Deborah. A 1974 Towson graduate in English literature, he edited Towson's literary magazine and taught creative writing for Johns Hopkins University's Free University. His poetry is published in *Poetry Scotland*, *Nightingale*, *Verse Libre Quarterly*, *Simply Haiku*, *Ribbons*, *Lynx*, *Nisqually Delta Review*, *Moonset*, *Wisteria*, *Roadrunner*, *Stirring*, *World Haiku Review*, *Haiga Online*, *Paper Wasp*, *Short Stuff*, *Full Moon*, *Clouds Peak*, and others, in his chapbook, *Port of Call and Other Poems*, and in his books, *Eight Shades of Blue* (haiku) and *The Brink at Logan Pond*. He has edited the webzines, *Haiku Harvest* (2000-2006; digital & print), *Ku Nouveau*, *Haiku Noir*, *Templar Phoenix*, *Haiku Cycles*, and *Gunpowder River Poetry*. Garrison's poetry is published in several anthologies, including: *May Dazed*, *Poets Gone Wild*, *Fire Pearls*, and *The Five-Hole Flute*. In 2002, he was a founding editor of *Amaze: The Cinquain Journal*. In 2005, Garrison was a founding editor of *Loch Raven Review*. In 2006, he was the haiku editor of *Simply Haiku*. He has led several online haiku poetry elists including two named *Haiku Unchained*. Email : editor@modernenglishtanka.com. Websites: www.FlyingFishes.net www.TankaCentral.com

Eight Shades of Blue

These exquisite poems by Denis M. Garrison prove once again that the best things come in small packages. From awesome beauty to stark terror; from the heights of joy to the depths of despair; all in gem-like tiny poems! Treat yourself to these traditional haiku, fascinating haiku noirs, and lovely crystallines. Also included are four articles on haiku and the prosody of crystallines. Denis M. Garrison, the longtime editor of *Haiku Harvest*, *Haiku Noir*, and *Haiku Cycles*, and co-editor of *Ku Nouveau*, is the creator of the crystalline form, a western haiku in a seventeen-syllable couplet.

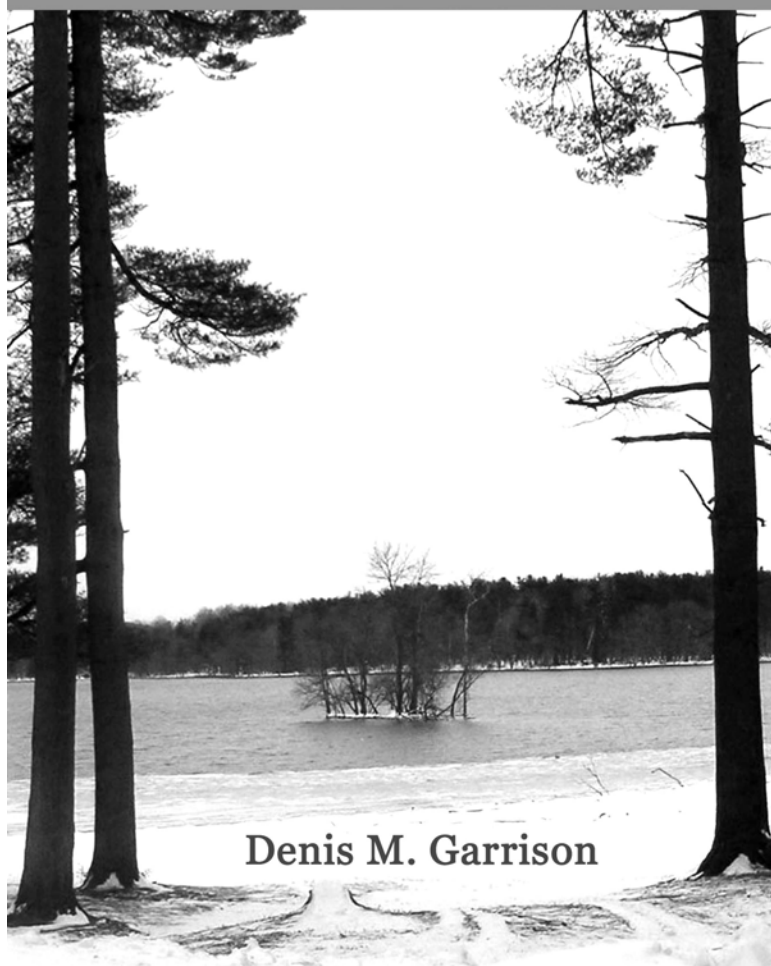
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Eight Shades of Blue



Denis M. Garrison

Also from **MODERN ENGLISH TANKA PRESS**

The Five-Hole Flute

Denis M. Garrison & Michael McClintock, Editors

THE FIVE-HOLE FLUTE affords the reader an impressively compact and rich overview of modern tanka, cinquain, and haiku, and of the changing shape and power of these forms when arranged in sets and sequences.

The works in this exemplary collection offer a glimpse into the extraordinary diversity and sometimes startling richness of the modern short poem in English, and disclose a fascinating but hitherto concealed dimension of literary creativity: the integration of autonomous short poems into new, coherent, interactive patterns that break free of the conventional stanzaic forms of longer narrative, epic, and lyrical verse. Several techniques are illustrated—including anaphora, thematic linking, antiphonal response, and more—demonstrating the manifold possibilities for grouping tanka, cinquain, and haiku in compositions that convey an expanded poetic experience, a compound literature having broad scope and unlimited potential for dealing with the many layers and complexities of human experience, thought, and emotion.

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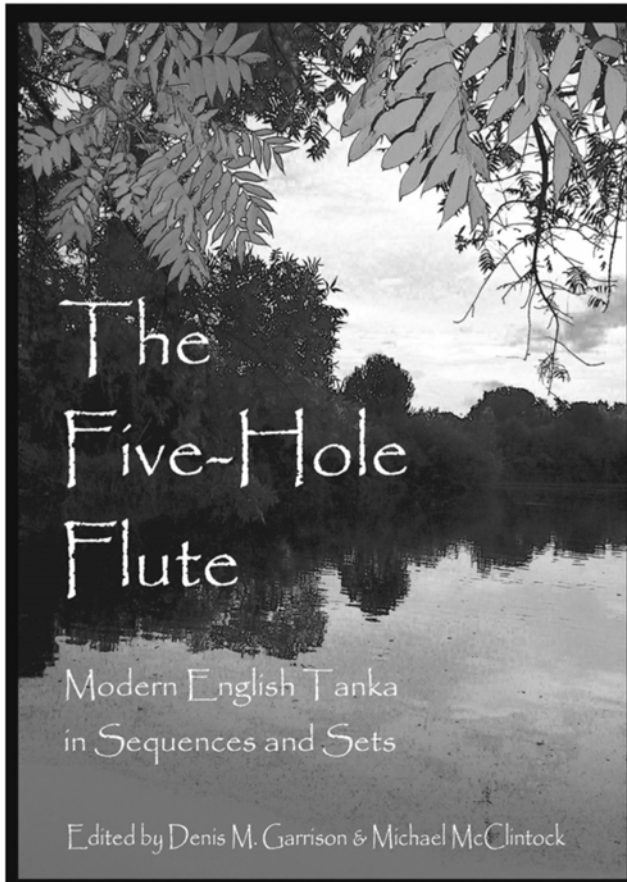
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are to be found in the pages of ***MET***.
Visit the ***MET*** website at www.modernenglishtanka.com.

Modern English Tanka Press maintains an online presence at
www.modernenglishtankapress.com.

One wonders when they read the name of a man
or even if they see his picture, what is he truly like?

In my opinion, the best way to know a man
is to study in depth what he puts down on paper.

Denis Garrison would easily be recognized for
the outdoorsman that he is by his haiku.

Words and phrases such as: “hidden river,
plowed field, leafing orchards, hunger moon,
old tin cup, rabbit spoor, river stones, bridle paths,
spring-fed creek, woodpecker’s vibrato, fragrant
hay bales, sparrow tracks in fresh snow, field of
ripe pumpkins, scorched dirt, cowpies, frog song
and fireflies, woodcutter’s cabin” and so forth,
appear throughout his book. Denis skillfully gives
readers a strong but pleasant taste of nature
in this fine presentation via the many
outstanding haiku found around
every bend of his
“Hidden River.”

— *An’ya*,
Editor of *TSA Ribbons*
and *moonset journal*.



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