

voice of the peeper





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Edited by

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and
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Sumi-e artwork by Kaji Aso

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Introduction

A thoughtful reader could, perhaps, approach this anthology with a number of questions regarding the current state of haiku in Boston. Among them: After ten years of regularly meeting to share and critique each other's work, has any shared philosophy or aesthetic principle developed among the poets of the Boston Haiku Society? Are there hallmarks of a "Boston" style haiku that distinguish it from haiku written elsewhere? Are there any particular characteristics of these works that give them a uniquely local or regional flavor?

While there are common tendencies among some of these writers, these tendencies fall far short of crystallizing into a unified set of principles that might mark an aesthetic "school." Indeed, what marks these poems most distinctly is their diversity of style and viewpoint.

Some of this no doubt springs from the varying backgrounds of the poets. While a few are native New Englanders, others hail from as relatively close as the American Midwest or as far away as Russia and Japan. Each brings the different experiences that formed him or her to bear in approaching life in this particular corner of America.

That being said, there are at least a couple of artistic and philosophic tendencies shared by a majority of the group. On the aesthetic side, much of the haiku here is more traditional in flavor than at least some being written in other parts of North America. Not traditional in the sense of adhering to a 5-7-5 syllable count, but rather in terms of perspective, in the way they make use of the established subject matter of haiku (i.e., nature). Traditional, too, in being more conventional in form (something owing, no doubt, to the influence of Japanese artist and poet, Kaji Aso from the formation of the BHS, and more recently, to that of Tadashi Kondo). But tradition is a guide for the BHS, not a limitation. It is

not a straitjacket blocking originality or innovation. Witness, for example, the experimentation of a Raffael DeGruttola or Judson Evans.

Philosophically, a life lived close to nature is an important value for many of these writers. Elements of the local landscape and climate figure prominently in the poems here. Yet among these primarily urban and suburban poets, the haiku moment is often born not so much out of observing nature in its pristine state, but rather out of the interrelation of the human and non-human worlds. You are as likely to find yourself standing at a crowded subway stop in these poems as you are hiking a deserted White Mountain trail, as likely to be passing among the old mill workers tenements of Lawrence, Massachusetts as walking a Cape Cod beach at dawn.

In the end, what most closely links these poets (and these poems) is not so much a shared aesthetic or philosophy as a shared desire. Namely, the desire to explore and understand the essence of haiku and to make it part of their own lives and experience, giving it a "local habitation and a name" while staying true to the haiku spirit.

The poems you hold are the hard-won record of the explorations undertaken and the discoveries made so far. It is, in its way, both the record of months of solitary writing and of the occasional Saturday afternoons spent sharing work with the other members of the Boston Haiku Society.

I would, along with the rest of the poets of the Boston Haiku Society, invite you, to share a figurative Saturday afternoon with us as you read these poems. And I encourage you to visit in person should you be in Boston any third Saturday of the month.

Lawrence Rungren

Kaji Aso

new snow
footprint of a pigeon
footprint of a rat

pigeon and sparrow
no food
no fight

spring snow
a little remains
on the stolen car

voice of the peeper
glides
on the spring breeze

firefly
you are so beautiful, but
I cannot see your face

swan buries neck
into her body
dream floats on the pond

John Bergstrom

thinking about wine
how slowly the moon travels
in the evening

right next to the moon
the smallest possible star
november evening

winter evening
a row of statues, arms folded
in bronze overcoats

holding a handful
of quarters in my pocket
february night

between the pine trees
nothing but gray overcast
and the sound of crows

out in the country
a stream you could step
across, in a long step

there is a snowman
a short distance off the path
early evening

September sun—
flowers carved into the stone
of an old doorway

again and again
his friends running their fingers
through her short hair

Raffael de Gruttola

lining up
the big and little dipper—
dark matter

from the manhole cover
steam lifts
into the morning fog

after the foliage
the weathered scarecrow
kneeling

after Shinkei

winter evening
thinking of nothingness
the depth of darkness

frozen gaze
the cat's head
lowers into sleep

bumper to bumper
the monarch changes lanes
uncontested

stuttering in the wind
turkey oak leaf
between two stones

pair of abandoned sneakers
in full moon light
by the river

thin wire
the paper angel
vibrates

Judson Evans

The Church of the Life-giving Spring

A garbage truck foiled the silence. I took refuge in the chapel with its smell of ancient wood and butterscotch beeswax candles. The space seemed intricately folded, here, line is not the shortest way between two points. The iconostasis was divided into a series of lozenges with saints, smoky landscapes, a freakish skull and crossbones. When I turned to see what filled the recessed panel to my left, I came face to face with a beautiful youth billowing out of the sky blue background. Only the wings marked his special status, but **Archangel** seemed too profound a name. He belonged, rather, to a carnival, as if children circling on pastel horses, might reach out for his lily...

*"When I was a child I spake as a child,/I understood as a child/
but when I became a man..."*

But the brown stain at his wing tip was a door knob.
Hovering there, I was of two minds: one, wanting clarity, guide book
explanations; the other, recalling the ancient Greek for *myth* and
mystery—
"Muo",
to close the eyes,
to close the mouth, to keep secrets secret...

I never opened the door.

* * * *

Back in Massachusetts, an evening phone call from my mother – her list of the sick and dying – family, friends. In the dream that follows, a long line of crouching, stumbling figures in black – the infirm, the lame, the blind – have come to the *Church of the Life-Giving Spring*, while I'm searching for the water bottle, the one with an insignia I only seem to see now: a leaping, golden dolphin. The bottle I'd tossed into the dumpster, like an old lottery ticket or mass-mailed sweepstakes entry, as I wandered off along my mortal way.

*angel soaring
by the hinge
of a battered door*

Agon

The salt water demagnetized my inner compass, took me where directions were redundant. Hiking back through the maquis, along the rugged peninsula: *Which path had brought me to the theater in the lemon groves?* Each looked equally probable – as if, after the plunge in the sea's amnesia, finding the way demanded ritual realignment, scouting each path in turn, lost in the mandala...

*running my finger
through the key pattern
on an ancient jar*

Driving, too, I lost my way in deep volcanic mountains, asked directions of old village women who hadn't ventured in a lifetime outside a circumference of thirty miles. Time rushed so I could hear it roaring through irrigation tanks.

Night fall.

This was dream and wouldn't translate into space/time. Remaining in place an extra moment could erase all that I'd transcribed.

*finding the film exposed
the images
drift:*

*white horses in the olive groves...
blue boxes of the beekeepers...*

As if I were wandering down a hall of oddly marked doors—on each a symbol: a cross, a torch, a lily, a tamata with two eyes. Behind one: a white washed shrine holding out its blue mailbox for the dead. Behind another, pulleys maneuvering Christo-like brick walls between mountain vistas, road signs hidden under ailanthus. Accents moved back precipitously along the spine of crucial words...

Folding thing within thing....needing a knot like Circe's to secure the cargo: the ticket from the hydrofoil inside the sweat-fingered map of Athens; the transcription of graffiti, the scrap of a child's homework picked up on a street in Rethymno, inside the glassine envelope from the Pharmakio, inside the film box, inside the brown paper bag containing tamata...

...summaries, epitomes, scholia...a pill of origami, tasting of ouzo
and lemon...my secret microfilm of Greece.

*along the wrong road to the wrong
ancient site to my first plunge—
thallasa.*

haiku

the car I borrow
from my father in a dream
fills with snow

two naked men
nothing between them
but baseball

Glenn Gustafson

above an open field
a flock turns back on itself
autumn silence

the meter maid
becomes still—
how like a mosquito

searching for the fuse box—
the basement cricket
is no help

the forlorn face
of the truant officer
in August

Sunday morning
balloons at the new car lot—
all that hot air

under apple blossoms
a four-year-old lookout
and his peeing pal

prison by the highway—
passing cars
passing clouds

winter rain
my father saws four-by-fours
in his good hat

comet watch—
in a dark bedroom
my parents' voices

Sarah Jensen

phoning her lover
she turns her sweetheart's photo
face down

afternoon swim—
our single rhythm and
the taste of salt

after our anger
we lie silent together—
the rising moon

January morning
incontinent cat
frozen to the porch

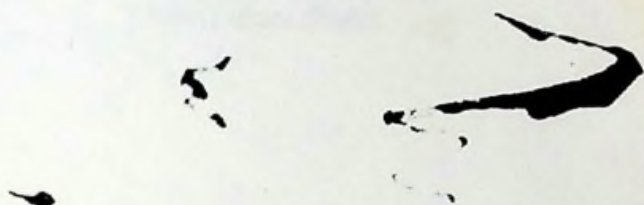
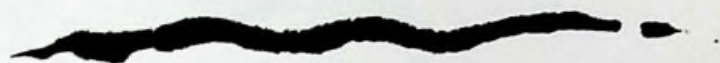
outside the ER
the storm rages and rages
and stops

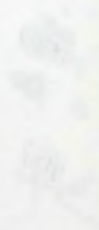
clown walks the tracks
toward the circus campground—
the smile in his frown

the same old story—
in her mirrored sunglasses
love at first sight

packing earth
around narcissus bulbs—
my mother's hands

fireworks burst and fade
above the cemetery—
a green light remains





Donald Kelly

Mesa Verde—
in the Far View Lounge
Kiwis order drinks

snowy day—
the TV chef
whips up a meringue

Autumn deepens—
wanting to start
on the mission trail

Karen Klein

river ice melting
two lovers open
each other's coat

merging with the slate
of the river
bluejay

sudden downpour
bathing suits
wet again

solitary studio days
sole companion
the same fly

hiker out of step
with pileated woodpecker's
rhythm

in the sidewalk
red-brown patterns
after-images of leaves

November skies
waves of greys
sweep past the crow's wing

a single aspen
surrounded by evergreens
quivers bright yellow

night walk
Orion guiding me
into winter

Tadashi Kondo

flying over
the mountains and plains
the cocoon of mist

how glad
to find a back road...
clematis in bloom

talking
to myself
in her sunglasses

masseur's fingers
from one point to another
lightning strikes

suddenly
Mt. Fuji gone
the great thunderstorm

a great burst of fireworks
the bridge I am standing on
also shakes

rising moon...
the light crosses the bay
up to my feet

morning after the party
dumping mussel shells
among forget-me-nots

fireweeds
tossing in the wind
a path to the lighthouse

Paul David Mena

overcast sky—
still feeling
last night's beer

restless night—
reaching for the pager
in my sleep

waiting for the train
the street musician
out of tune

decorating
the bare white window frame
a ladybug

the still pond—
tossing a stone
I shatter the moon

Veteran's Day rain—
an old man holds an umbrella
above the monument

steady snowfall
reading and re-reading
my daughter's letter

combing my hair
on a cool autumn day
--early frost

alone in Texas
the cold spot
on her side of the bed

June Moreau

after the blizzard
it's a wonder
any sky is left!

steady rain
and the cow
chewing her cud

waking in the meadow
the lark's nest
an arm's length away

I'm caught in it too—
the blossom loosening wind

do I have
a thousand ears
cicada!

pulling weeds
the mockingbird
swipes strands of my hair

just enough light
for one haiku
firefly

it even shines
on tips of pine needles
the winter moon

pale sun—
stranded in the meadow
an ice floe from the river

Lawrence Rungren

April wind
a ladder shadow
wobbles against the house

spring sky darkening
the charred smell
of a burned-out tenement

trash can's sudden clatter
a raccoon's eyes
fade back into night

in the sycamore's
deepest shade
autumn begins

October has come
fallen leaves
redden the dawn

snow ends
the coyote's fur
shimmers in the moonlight

art class over
eating the
still-life fruit

winter morning
a pine log rings hollow
against the frozen earth

on the walls
of the eye doctor's office
Impressionist prints

Natalia S.

somebody by my window
only the Christmas gift-wrap
tossed by the icy wind

Cathedral square
two clock towers
one late--
the other stopped

a passing girl
hair late autumn color...
more and more fallen
leaves between us

David Schuster

the snore of the drunk
pierces
the screams

after the blizzard
under streetlights
frozen cars

Coltrane floats
through an open window
summer solstice

Zinovy (Zeke) Vayman

in the moonlight
the star-spangled banner sways
its stripes black and white

I turn her light off
and leave the door half-open
my ailing mother

when I wave back
Russian kids wave even faster
at my passing train

dinner for one
after the first course he takes
the adjacent chair

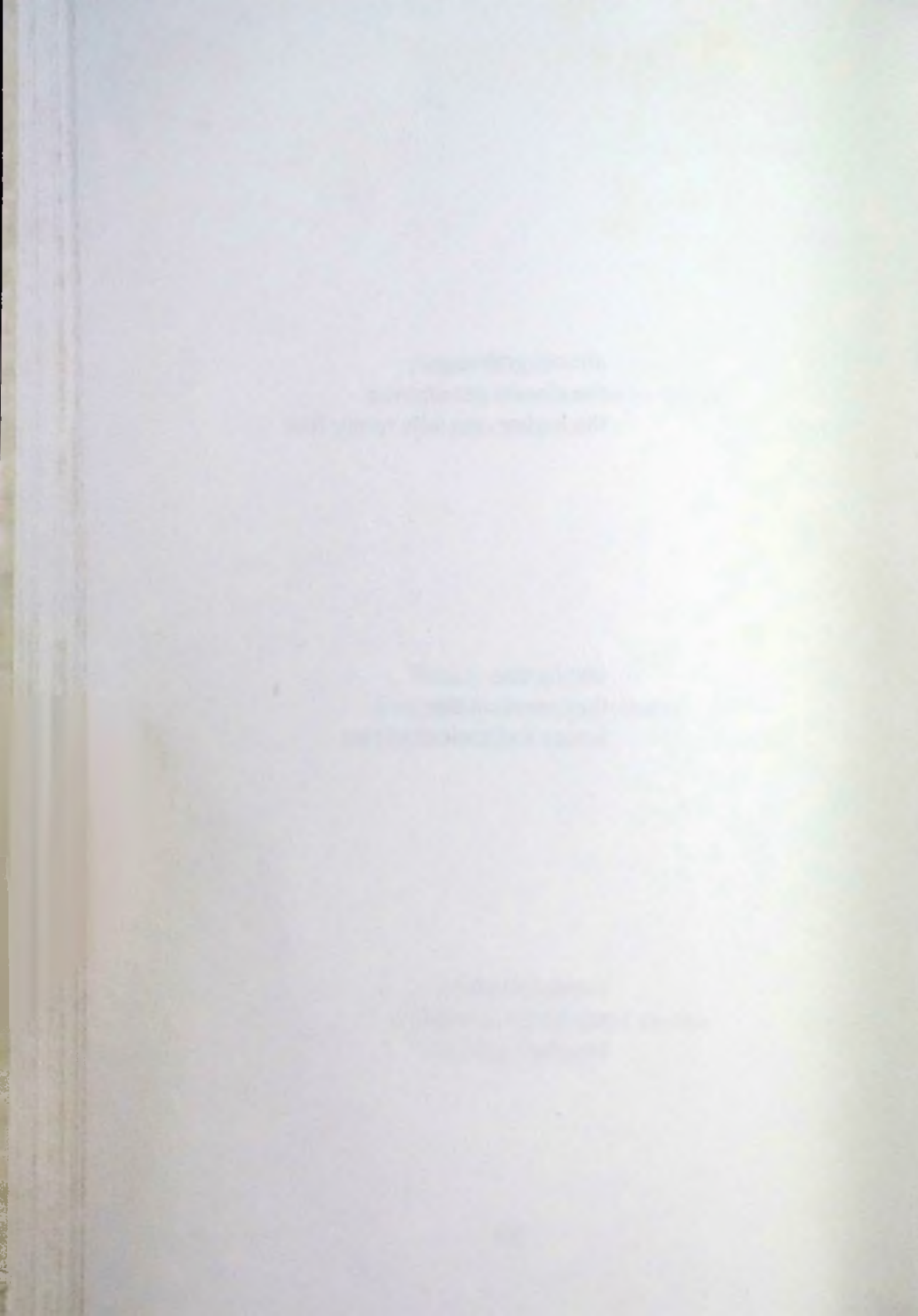
Basho's shrine
graffiti on peeling plaster
and under it too

on the sidewalk
shadows of cigarette smoke
departing spring

almost grabbing
the closest persimmon
the higher one falls to my feet

one by one
they meet on the road
leaves and their shadows

autumn evening
my hospital window
becomes a mirror





花
月

Rich Youmans

building sandcastles—
the blind boy carves
another row of windows

seatbelt sign lit—
below the wingtip
a dolphin leaps

from the coiled
garden hose:
last
drops
of
sun

John Ziemba

forest stream
a leaf becomes
the stone's skin

through
the
spider's
web
to
the
sea's
darkness

toddler gazes wistfully
at the wheelchair

during their embrace
his desperate eyes
glance about

the dark meadow
I hold
a glow worm's glow

the cat's bliss—
his kneading claws
into my chest

I am something standing
in the path of
the March wind

the heft of an apple
disappears
as I eat it

inside the breaker
a tunnel of light
is crushed

Robert Zukowski

tar smell
from the railroad ties
waking copperhead

a moorhen's cry
from the moss-hung cypress shore
the drifting hyacinths

sawgrass
an alligator slides off the mudbank
through the clouds

two crabs
grappling with locked claws
taken by a wave

low clouds flaming red
a cottonmouth's ripple
among cypress knees

looking for lice
in ma's hair with a flashlight
the evening cool

tidepool
a crab with ponderous claw
touches its reflection

meteor shower
the cockle shell wind chimes

cicada
the trail hidden
beneath fallen leaves

water in the lake

(a twenty stanza kasen renku)

the water in the lake
higher than usual
the summer moon k

at the edge of the yard
loosestrife crowding e

chasing the frisbee
to the fifty yard line
the dog's tail wags d

on the tractor's seat
a folded jacket g

tall snow piles
in the airport parking lot
wind sock limp e

Christmas homecoming
with a nervous girlfriend k

Saturday night
approving of her dress
from the other room g

through the microscope cell division	d
President expands the medical aid program in Nigeria	k
the wary French teacher a political refugee	e
at Voltaire's statue a flurry of falling leaves children back to school	d
waiting at the red light beneath the gibbous moon	g
from every window of the dark back street the mute offers	e
condom machines out of stock	k

hotel hallway
when she sighs
she smells of whiskey e

smoke
from the billboard's lips d

my budget in yen
suddenly devaluates
by a quarter k

this morning the roar
of the herring run e

heart's flower
monarchs
usher in the sun d

at dusk a mallard
rests by its mate g

Poets: Raffael de Gruttola, Judson Evans, Glenn Gustafson,
Tadashi Kondo, July 11, 1998 at the home of Judson Evans.

branches still bare

(a thirty-six stanza kasen renku)

branches still bare
two white doves nesting
in one cage kk

dismembered mannequins
preparation for Winter clearance ns

how bright
buds on trees buds on grass
completely naked ka

the flash of a trout
as it leaps from the water lr

in the jet-liner
ordering another martini
full moon jb

empty plastic bag
soars and flies away zv

wind rattles the leaves...
over the reflecting pool
the rainbow comes and goes rd

carhood ornament
dead monarch gg

in each facet
of the crushed rear view mirror
October weeds je

picking out a tune
on a one-string uke jb

late November
a yellow jacket buzzing
in a light fixture je

a narrow metal cot
hard to keep the springs quiet jb

small break in the clouds
the red flash of a cardinal
against the yew lr

alive in paper folds
cherry blossoms rd

her great-grandfather's Civil War letter crumbling to dust	lr
<div> <div>wind howl</div> <div>above Walt Whitman's tomb</div> </div>	rd
small town library rain in the street green with pollen	gg
<div> <div>back from the allergist</div> <div>her arm full of holes</div> </div>	rd
in the deep grasses someone's lost bracelet I try it on	kk
<div> <div>his dog tag number</div> <div>RA 112 51562</div> </div>	rd
white collar gal in sync with steps her cheeks jump	zv
<div> <div>dribbling down the court</div> <div>the forward's pass</div> </div>	kk

above the lighted	
clock tower	
midnight moon	lr
white petals scattered	
relentless spring wind	ns
waves hiss	
on the pebbly beach	
--a sail on the horizon	jb
watching steam from the	
manhole cover disappear	rd
whistling tea kettle	
interrupts their embrace	
sudden snow	kk
icicles grow	
lovers sleeping back to back	kk
day after Valentine's	
unsold hearts	
half-price	lr
hideaways in Maine	
all booked up	tk

The Boston Haiku Society Poets:

Kaji Aso is a professor of painting at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts School and is founder and artistic director of the Kaji Aso Studio. He has received many awards for his work as an artist and is considered one of the foremost calligraphers and sumi-e artists in the world today.

John Bergstrom lives in Boston and works in a bookstore. He has been writing haiku for several years.

Raffael de Gruttola is a Boston area poet. He is a past President of The Haiku Society of America and its current Treasurer. He has one book of haiku, *Recycle/Reciclo* printed in 1989. He is presently working with Western style haiga and international renku.

Judson Evans is Chair of Liberal Arts at the Boston Conservatory, where he has taught for the last thirteen years. Widely published, two of his haibun appeared recently in Bruce Ross's anthology *Journeys to the Interior: English Versions of Haibun* from Tuttle.

Glenn Gustafson lives on Blueberry Hill Road in Dedham, MA. and is a student of drama, Japanese, and haiku.

Sarah Jensen's inspiration for many of her haiku comes from an idyllic childhood spent in northern Michigan. Her poems have appeared in several publications.

Donald Kelly lived in Massachusetts from the early '70s until 1991, when he returned to his native Illinois. His haiku have appeared in several haiku journals.

Karen Klein has pursued a dual career as visual artist and teacher of literature. Her drawings and artist's books have been exhibited nationally in juried and invitational shows, including five solo exhibitions. Reproductions of her drawings have appeared on book and magazine covers. Her publications include **from the Haiku Year** (1995).

Tadashi Kondo is an internationally recognized renku scholar and poet. He has edited and translated many important works from the Japanese in the field of literature. He is presently a visiting scholar at Harvard University working on an Almanac from Thoreau's Journals.

Paul David Mena is a financial advisor with Fidelity and a poet who has published three books of poetry. His most recent book of haiku is *the brewpub chronicles* which has been published by Haiku in Low Places, Ltd., Nine Cormans Lane, Cochituate, MA 01778.

June Moreau is a poet who lives in Lexington, MA. Her poems frequently appear in haiku publications. She has won many awards for her haiku and other poetry.

Lawrence Rungren grew up in Illinois and now lives in Andover, MA. He is the Northeast Regional Coordinator for The Haiku Society of America.

Natalia S. lives in Boston, MA. She has studied painting and renku at the Kaji Aso Studio.

David Schuster is a physician who lived and worked in Boston. He presently is practicing in North Carolina.

Douglas Sherman is an assistant professor of English at Massachusetts Bay Community College.

Rich Youmans lives in North Falmouth, Cape Cod Massachusetts. His haiku and haibun have appeared in many magazines and books in the United States.

Zinovy (Zeke) Vayman was born in Moscow and has written poetry since the age of eleven when he lived in Siberia. He holds three American high tech patents.

John Ziemba was born in Rochester, NY. He studied and taught at the Kaji Aso Studio for several years, and presently is living in Japan where he is continuing his graduate studies in Japanese language and literature from the University of Pittsburgh.

Robert Zukowski is a poet who lives in Panama City, Florida. He is a frequent visitor to the area and has a brother who lives in Massachusetts.

All poets who are members of the Boston Haiku Society have had their haiku and other Japanese poetic forms published in various haiku publications throughout the United States and Canada. Many of the poets also have their haiku in the Museum of Haiku Literature in Japan.

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