

First 1999 HSA Quarterly Meeting

[as reported in the *HSA Newsletter*, Vol. XIV, No. 2, spring 1999]

The first 1999 HSA Quarterly Meeting was held on March 20, 1999 (vernal equinox) at the University of Richmond's Frederick Rehearsal Hall, Modlin Center for the Arts, hosted by the Richmond (Va.) Haiku Workshop.

The prelude to the meeting took place the previous evening, when Currents (the new music ensemble in residence at the university) gave a concert of haiku music. Included were various settings of two haiku that were also to be seen on Japanese scrolls in the exhibition "The Art of Twentieth-Century Zen," on view at the Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond:

wherever he goes
he carries his home —
the snail

Deiryu

alone, silently
the bamboo shoot
becomes a bamboo

Santôka

On the morning of the 20th, Angier Brock (a member of the Richmond Haiku Workshop) led a haiku walk through various areas of the university, including an amphitheater, a lake, and a hillside, all showing the beginnings of spring renewal.

The official program began at 1:00 p.m. with a brief statement by HSA President Paul O. Williams and then a round of haiku by all present, totaling about 35 people including HSA members from California, Illinois, and Washington, D.C. These haiku included some that had been written that morning on the walk, and they set a marvelous mood for the meeting. Next, since Claire Gallagher had brought special slips of decorated Japanese paper, all present were invited to write down a haiku and then hang it on a budding branch to make a "haiku tree."

This was followed by an excellent talk, "Tell About the Truth as if It Were False" by Patrick Gallagher, continuing and enriching a topic that had been discussed at the Tokyo meeting of the HSA and the HIA last year. After some enthusiastic discussion, D. L. Lliteras gave a lively reading of "The Renga Party," a section from one of his novels entitled *In the Heart of Things*. He then participated, along with Charles Trumbull and Lee Giesecke, in a panel and discussion on "What's So Zen about Haiku?" It was the consensus that Zen in a specific and Buddhist sense did not inform all haiku, but that "universal Zen" (the focused attention experience) was an integral part of the continuing haiku tradition.

The meeting then moved across the hall to the Marsh Art Gallery, where co-curator Stephen Addiss led an informal tour of the Zen exhibition. This included several examples of haiku and haiga, among which the monk-poet Santôka's poem was a favorite:

No money
no things
no teeth
just me

After a short break, while some visitors examined the Zen garden created to accompany the exhibition, we gathered in a nearby painting studio to try our hands at haiku-painting (haiga), with Japanese brushes, ink, and paper provided. We then brought down examples of our work, put them on the wall gently with masking tape, and enjoyed a mini-exhibition of our own. Judging from the results, haiga has a very promising future in North America.

Richmond Haiku Workshop member Phil Rubin led a group discussion of the works and the painting experience. He also explained how the RHW works, sometimes severely dismembering poems brought in for discussion! He commented that members had to leave their egos at the door, but that we all gained a great deal from the serious and careful examination of our poems. We then discussed several haiku brought in that day, and ended the meeting with each person taking a poem from the haiku tree and reading it aloud. Among the poems on the tree, several had come from the haiku walk, or from other sights and events of the day:

spring dawn —
mallards swim through
the stillness

Fred Donovan

marsh walk
a white butterfly
shows me the way

Charles Trumbull

a withered leaf
falling now
with cherry blossoms full

Lee Giesecke

vernal equinox —
this first creeping mist
changes everything

Claire Gallagher

spring woods
before the wildflowers appear
our honeymoon

Patrick Gallagher

Zen garden —
afternoon shadows rake the stones
one last time

Kristen Deming

After the meeting, a dozen people were able to join together for an informal dinner at a local Vietnamese restaurant, where subjects were discussed ranging from the exciting plans for Haiku North America (coming this summer), to Civil War battles, many fought near Richmond. We also invited everyone — and we invite all now reading this notice — to send poems to South by Southeast, which the Richmond Haiku Workshop is now editing. Josh Hockensmith is in charge of editorial matters, and Angela Detlev oversees the subscription lists and other technical matters.

South by Southeast
PO Box 5628
Richmond VA 23220

As well as the usual submissions, we are now inviting haiku on the spring themes of “pollen” and “forsythia.” All poems on these subjects received in time will be forwarded anonymously to the entire subscription list for voting; the winners will then be printed in a forthcoming issue.

We are hoping that the combination of haiku, music, and art that this national meeting featured will continue to be developed in the future, and we thank all who attended.

— Stephen Addiss