



Haiku & Senryu<sup>®</sup>

by Sydell Rosenberg

## On What Is Haiku

Now I go to what is there, and each time get something different. Sometimes I get what I want – and other times, perhaps more rewarding, I get what I didn't want, with pain.

Each time, discovery.

Haiku is that fledgling moment: when the wing strokes become sure – when the bird has staying power in the air.

Haiku can't be gimmicked; it can't be shammed. If it is slicked into cuteness, haiku loses what it had to give.

The split second one starts to touch a flower – real or plastic? – that's haiku. Before the hoof comes down, that's haiku.

Sydell Rosenberg (1929-1996)

Glittering-eyed cat  
with nothing to do but wait  
sitting under tree.

When the sun came out  
my turtle climbed on a rock  
and conjured a view.

Autumn rain ~  
fragrant in the brown  
paper of my groceries.

Holding umbrellas  
children like rows of mushrooms  
glisten in the rain.

Crossing the wide sky  
a blue jay is held briefly  
in the window square.

Against the blue sky  
a green parrot  
on a dead branch.

Boy on a mailbox  
perched like a solitary bird  
watching the sun set.

Following the course  
of the raindrop intently --  
still it disappears.

For a moment one  
circling round each other --  
two white butterflies.

In a quiet cove  
ducks abandon their formation  
swimming after bread.

In trees and sky  
a comical lost-and-found  
of park balloons.

In a fish window –  
Monsters! the children exclaim:  
green lobsters writhing.

Like that butterfly  
I sail through holes in the fence  
made of woven wire.

Munching on acorns  
squirrel sweeps up sunbeams  
with transparent tail.

Neon wings of moth  
exploding into headlights  
on a country road.

As the sun sets  
the old fisherman sorts out  
the fish he can sell.

Airless summer days  
iridesce the silver throat  
of my tea kettle.

Running in the rain  
little boy with pizza pie  
growing cold for lunch.

On the first warm day  
the old lady tells her tales  
from start to finish.

So pale – it hardly sat  
on the outstretched branch  
of the winter night.

The lawn with the rocks –  
even the dandelions  
know The Way.

A mad struggle out --  
the moth searches for a place  
where his wings can grow.

Library closing --  
the sleeping wino wakes up  
holding a shut book.

Before giving me  
her garden's peony  
my neighbor thinks twice.

Up and down the block  
homeowners mate the covers  
of gusted trash cans.

Adventures over  
the cat sits in the fur ring  
of his tail, and dreams.

Hurrying to catch  
the peacock's feathers  
spreading in the camera.

# About Sydell



Sydell Rosenberg was born Sydell Lorraine Gasnick in 1929 in New York City, the youngest of five children. From an early age, Sydell displayed a gift for evocative language and an eye for discerning the unusual in the everyday. She had a singular appreciation of nature and life, and she embraced them with a captivating passion.

In her early 20s, in one of her first jobs as a copy editor at a small publishing house, Sydell was unimpressed by the quality of the manuscripts that came across her desk. She told her boss that she could do better. “Prove it,” he said. Soon, Sydell had written a risqué novel, “Strange Circle” under the male pseudonym, Gale Sydney. It was published and sold a decent number of copies. While it would be considered quaint now, for its time, it had a hard-boiled, rather randy style typical of 1950’s pulp fiction. It’s hard to believe this novel was conjured from the imagination a demure young woman.

Sydell wrote original short stories and also translated from the Spanish (her minor at Brooklyn College). But her abiding love was poetry, especially haiku. She was a charter member of the Haiku Society of America, founded in 1968. Through the years, she contributed numerous poems to HSA’s literary journal, Frogpond, as well as many other poetry anthologies.

In the 1970’s, Sydell earned a Master’s Degree in linguistics from Hunter College. In addition to writing poetry and other works, Sydell was a public school teacher and a dedicated instructor of English as a second language who inspired affection from her students.

Married in 1955 to Sam Rosenberg (deceased in 2003), the couple had two children, Amy Losak and Nathan Rosenberg. Sydell died suddenly of an aortic aneurysm on October 11, 1996, leaving a void in the world of poetry and her children, who miss her to this day.