North Lake

by Ce Rosenow

Mountain Gate Press
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Afterword © Phyllis Walsh 2004

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Printed and bound at Swamp Press
For my brother, David
Spring

thru birdstart
wingdrip
weed-drift

of the soft
and serious —
Water

—Lorine Niedecker
the water’s surface
broken
a fisherman casts in the rain
thinning mist —
more of the heron
revealed

lake shore reeds —
the stillness
of the heron’s legs
clear and cold —
the reverberating splash
of the coor’s dive
my yard
my neighbor’s yard
camellia blossoms fall into both
morning drizzle
falling gently into moss
camellia blossom
crocus
bud
its
tremble
beneath
rain
drops
floating
in the flooded yard
first cherry blossom
widening with the sun break
sky-blue reflection
on the lake’s surface
shoreline breeze —
curls of green paint
on the wooden lawn-swing

shaking out the throw rug —
sweet gum leaves
turn with the wind
garden gloves —
last year's grass stains
in their creases
early heat
steam where the sprinkler
hits the patio
twilight stroll
garden violets
becoming more so
still unopened
single tulip
beneath the waxing moon
in shadows out of the heat not waiting for word

—John Martone
mini
a
ture
rose
dew
drop
on
its
petal
pulling weeds
from the azalea bed
rising smell of damp earth
rolling waves —
otter’s head
bobbing between them
billowing clouds
head to its chest
the sparrow’s stillness
limbing the fir —
eagle’s perch
falls to the ground
afternoon breeze
brushing the water lily
dragonfly
first time this year
  easing my body
  into the lake water
baiting the hook,
his fingers gleam
with fish oil

cleaning trout
in the late day heat —
blood beneath his nails
last rays of sunlight —
savoring the taste
of a salmon berry
deepening with nightfall  
waves  
against the fishing boat’s bow
Fourth of July
sparks and reflections of sparks
shower North Lake

star gazing—
the floating dock creaks
beneath our weight
dog’s bark
filling the night air
scent of honeysuckle
single cloud
half the moon
below it
Water is a shrine

Earth is a shrine

Air is a shrine

Fire is a shrine

We are offerings

—Cid Corman
lingering heat —
grebe’s empty nest
rising, falling
slicing peaches
with the old paring knife —
her arthritic hands
year after year
the patch of wild mushrooms —
the same woven basket
wind in the pampas grass
    the rowboat strains
against its mooring
wooded path
  cool breeze stirring
  the snake skin
rustling leaves —
the flock of sparrows
reverses itself
rain drops
softly to the ground
fir cone
striking a match
to another candle —
All Hallow’s Eve
whiff of sulphur
from the cold hearth —
distant thunder
chopping onions
on Thanksgiving Day
hard rain against the window
after the storm —
my neighbor’s empty boat
adrift on the lake
autumn chill —
drawing the axe
against the whetstone
starry night:
  the Shetland bites into
  another apple
on the tree
on the ground
apples in moonlight
pinioned between the firs
harvest moon
No paths. Just remembering that the geese return.

—vincent tripi
icy wind
the crow flies
toward dawn
light snowfall
scattered white
of the ring-necked duck’s bill
with each wind gust
bonfire smoke
trails after the skater
power outage —
vanilla candles
dripping wax
reminiscing
late into the night
warmth from the wood stove
Christmas Eve —
hanging her ornaments
without her

missing you —
windows rattle
with the wind
withere reeds
in the frozen lake,
the year ends
first
sky
stars
fading
into
dawn
adding a pine log
to the year’s first fire —
distant fire crackers
retracing my steps
on the snowy path,
bird tracks in my boot print
New Year’s Day
shoveling the walkway —
his worn-out coat
lake’s melted center
from it the last buffleheads
taking flight

the shoreline at dusk—
another day passes
without Canada geese
waning moon
the slow drip
of icicles beneath the eaves
North Lake, a collection of haiku which follows the seasons, conveys the feel for a place which has shaped the poet, Ce Rosenow. She is not only a sensitive observer—star gazer, birdwatcher, wildflower enthusiast—but interacts with the natural world she inhabits there.

She swims in the lake, gardens, discovers bird tracks in her boot prints. It is often the dailiness of activities in this place that creates the poet’s bond to it—pulling weeds, shaking throw rugs, fishing, preparing food. Her senses remain responsive to its sights, flavors.

Although her haiku reflect distinct moments, there is a sense of continuity here, the sense that some of these moments recur: the patch of wild mushrooms, last year’s grass stains on the garden gloves. Some of the moments take on the quality of rituals, especially those of holidays. Warmth from the woodstove, All Hallow’s Eve, firecrackers.

While there is a quiet love for what is experienced in this place, it is not idealized. There is recognition of losses and the pain they evoke. From the sparrow’s stillness to the loss of a loved one, and Christmas Eve without her, we sense the poet struggling for acceptance. It is the ongoing rhythm of the seasons that sustains this haikuist; that she invites us to share.

Her personal sense of place is identified in specifics such as the flavor of a salmon berry and buffleheads taking off from the lake’s melted center. Yet it is this very uniqueness experienced at North Lake which creates universal feelings of joy, ordinariness, loss, and renewal.

Poems quoted by other poets (Cid Corman, John Martone, Lorine Niedecker, and Vincent Tripi) reinforce the sense of place in this collection.

The reader comes to feel North Lake is not only an appealing place to visit in these haiku, but to embrace in one’s own inner space.

— Phyllis Walsh
$15.00

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—from the Afterword by Phyllis Walsh