

Wordfield's Haikai Pub

Haiku Canada Review, 2:1 (February 2008).

26 April 2008 by [wordfield](#)

(...) One of the things piling up is haikai periodicals, of which there are now more than a score to report on—that's a score of different titles, a lot more than a score of individual issues. So, I'll take up the most recent issue in a minireview, and create lists of additional issues, so that we can get—I can get—an overview of what's happening as quickly as possible.

(...) So, to the matter at hand: *Haiku Canada Review*, 2:1, contains a great mix of poems, mainly haiku/senryu and tanka, haibun, and linked verse, along with a note from the editor on current developments in Haiku Canada, a couple of fine essays (more on them below), pithy book and magazine reviews, and other commentary.

(...) And, what makes this a “review” rather than just another haiku magazine: following the poems, **a major article by Janick Belleau**, translated into English by Dorothy Howard. (The article first appeared in the magazine *Haikai*, in French, December 2006.) In English the title reads “Canadian Haiku Women Pioneers from Sea to Sea (1928–1985)”. The article provides its own overview in the first paragraph, noting that it concludes its survey concurrently with the landmark book *Haiku: Anthologie canadienne/Canadian Haiku Anthology*, edited by Dorothy Howard and André Duhaimé, published in 1985. (I'll note here my gratitude to the editors for sharing proofs with me as I was putting the finishing touches on my *Haiku Handbook*, published the same year.) Belleau continues:

We shall see among these women, women who have devoted a good part of their creativity to the writing and publication of haiku, and women who spent great creative energy in haiku promotion through critical studies, journal publications, mentoring and leadership in haiku associations. (20)

The article goes on to feature:

- a poet who published haiku in an award-winning poems in French, including haiku in 1928 (Simone Routier)
- “the first author in English Canada to put out a collection of haiku”, in 1965, a book I remember well for its striking wood-engraving illustrations (Claire Pratt)
- a “haiku theorist” who published *The Haiku Form* in 1974 (Joan Giroux)
- three poets from Saskatchewan (Catherine M. Buckaway, Mildred A. Rose, and L. Pearl Schuck)
- and poet, essayist, illustrator, and co-founder of the Haiku Society of Canada—now Haiku Canada (Betty Drevniok)

Toward the end of her article, Belleau mentions a number of women whose major activity and influence reach far beyond 1985, right up to a couple of living folks that I might liken to “national treasures” of Canadian haiku, Anna Vakar and Dorothy Howard. For each of these and

others unnamed here, Belleau provides brief biographical info and a synopsis of their contributions to the haiku community, in many cases embellished with poems.

As elsewhere today, haiku in Canada is neither a women's nor a men's world, but a world richly intertwining the work of both. Perhaps someone else will undertake a similarly instructive survey of men's contributions to the genre in Canada, but in the meantime, it is very good to be reminded of these leading ladies and their contributions.

Bill Higginson