

1. Fixed Forms, Third Place

The Innocent (*Pantoum*)

I want to write about the boy,
A boy on the edge of a still gray pond.
Imprinted then on my innocent mind,
His arm thrust forth, splitting the sky,

A boy on the edge of a still gray pond
Unclenched his fist, released a rock,
His arm thrust forth, splitting the sky.
I rounded the bend just in time to see.

Unclenched his fist, released a rock
Aimed at the duck paddling near shore,
I rounded the bend just in time to see
That arm, the bird drifting in gray.

Aimed at the duck paddling near shore,
The rock glanced his head and sank away.
That arm, the bird, drifting in gray,
Bobbed his beak up, down, up, down.

The rock glanced his head and sank away;
I watched the duck, glad he had escaped,
Bobbed his beak up, down, up, down
And pecked at ripples for silver fish.

I watched the duck. Glad he had escaped,
A child, I dreamed he searched for food
And pecked at ripples for silver fish.
The boy yet loomed, a statue in the reeds.

A child, I dreamed he searched for food
Until the bird slowly stopped his head.
The boy yet loomed, a statue in the reeds;
Before my eyes the duck turned over, dead.

Until the bird slowly stopped his head,
I had missed the rage crackling in the boy.
Before my eyes the duck turned over, dead;
I shivered inside though I was not cold.

I had missed the rage crackling in the boy;
Now, a body floated on the silent pond.
I shivered inside though I was not cold,
For I buried my youth as I mourned the bird.

Now a body floats on the still gray pond,
Imprinted always on my grownup mind;
For I buried my youth as I mourned the bird.
I want to cry about the boy.