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HEALING THROUGH THE CREATIVE ARTS

Ric Masten, let it be a dance: words & one-liners,

Carmel, CA: Carmel Publishing Co. 2001 223 pp \$30

Ric Masten is an unusual person in many ways. He is a rare combination of a poet with a big heart, wry humor, intellectual insight and emotional intelligence. In addition, he has developed a form of art he calls "one liners." These are drawings that are created in a continuous line, without lifting pen from paper. I find them to be meditative visual labyrinths.



Dance in the now
 Even in this blight
 Infested place.
 This patch of weeds...
 This most holy place


From Lachman & Masten,
Parallel Journeys

DANCE BENEDICTION

yes!
 let it be a dance
 let life be a dance
 because we dance to dance
 not to go anywhere
 and let it be a dance
 let life be a dance
 because within the dance
 we move easily
 with the paradox
 knowing
 that for every step forward
 there must be a step back
 and anything else
 would have us marching
 away from the music

From Masten's On-line
 WORDS & ONE-LINER page

This series of Haiku like poems I dedicate to my Tai Chi teacher Catherine Elber Wenner. I have made the titles of the 19 movements the first line of each verse.

<p>T'ai Chi</p> <p>sunrise — sunset I gaze at the horizon breath sweeps mind</p> <p>the ancient wheel an old man works weeping with joy</p> <p>ocean currents the dark slow dance of kelp... a glimpse of stars</p> <p>sea waves a wash of reflected sky stolen footprints</p> <p>slow flight the condor dips and circles embracing the air</p> <p>daughter on the mountain tends her greenery the faint scent of sage</p> <p>daughter in the valley blanket of snow and a tea kettle singing</p> <p>seasons of change the sympathy of maples a mirror image</p> <p>the tides laden with treasure a hand written note</p>	 <p>From Masten's collection from his website postings</p>	<p>renewal midway between dawn and dusk peanut butter sandwiches</p> <p>two rivers meet together they leave Pittsburgh</p> <p>the waterfall against her misty apron a bird in flight</p> <p>the winding river from the window seat a long lazy blue ribbon</p> <p>where the river meets the sea in the froth of confusion steelhead leap</p> <p>light in the hidden temple a line of pilgrims shadow dancing</p> <p>silent strength pushing against the stillness giving way</p> <p>golden journey coins spill brightly from hand to hand</p> <p>passing clouds and the billow of sheets prayers in the wind</p> <p>unveiling the statue comes to life as day opens</p>
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Masten has risen to the challenge of having prostate cancer, writing of his experiences of diagnosis, treatment and questioning the meanings of life – sharing many of his inner and outer experiences through his poetry and art.

He co-authored a book on these experiences with Larry Lachman, PsyD, a psychologist who himself has faced the challenge of prostate cancer at a very young age. (See book review in this issue of *IJHC*.)

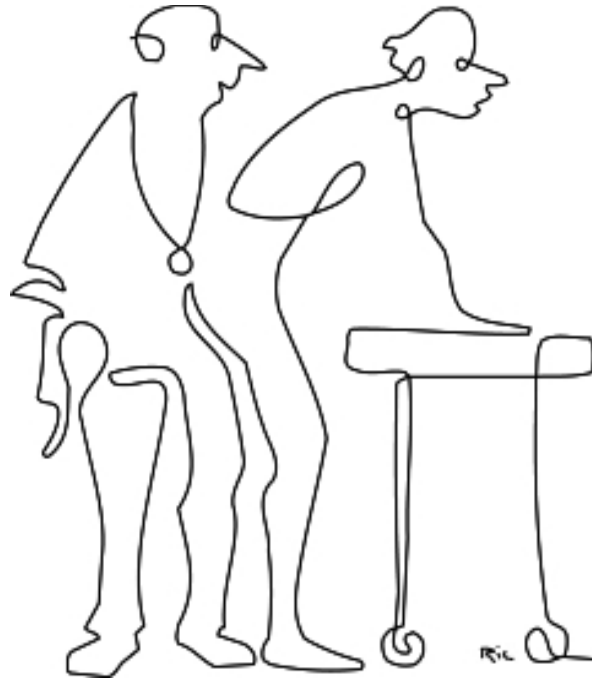
DIGITAL EXAM

digital was such a sanitary hi-tech word
 that is until my urologist sneaks up from
 behind
 and gives me the bird
 shocked and taken back
 I try to ignore the painful experience
 by pondering the conundrum of
 homosexuality
 there had to be more to it than that
 "You can get dressed now"
 was the good doctor's way of saying
 "Pull up your pants, Dude,
 and I'll see you back in my office."
 but his casual manner seemed to exude
 foreboding

"There is a stiffness in the gland
 demanding further examination.
 I'd like to schedule a blood test,
 ultrasound and biopsy."
 The doctors lips kept moving
 but I couldn't hear him through the sheet
 of white fear that guillotined between us
 CANCER! The big C! Me?

I spent the rest of that day
 up to my genitals in the grave I was digging.
 Hamlet gazing full into the face of the skull
 "Alas poor Yorick, I knew him well, Horatio.
 Before scalpel took gland.
 Back when he sang in a bass baritone."

desperate to rise above my lower regions
 I channel surf HBO
 only to find that every selection that evening
 bordered on pornography
 so I turn to the illustrated brochure
 the informative flier
 detailing the upcoming procedure
 where in the ultrasound and biopsy probe
 resembled the head
 of a black water moccasin baring its fang
 "Dang!" says I jumping back



relief came 36 hours later
 something about the PSA blood test
 the prostate specific-antigen results
 leading the doctor
 to now suspect infection
 prescribing an antibiotic
 of course five weeks from now
 the FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT!
 and as the date approaches
 tension will build
 like in those Lethal Weapon Action films
 when you know there's a snake in the grass
 and Danny Glover isn't there to cover your ...

From let it be a dance; also in Parallel
 Journeys

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MOTHER'S VOICE AS PART OF THE ESTATE



thank god
 it wasn't me she doted on
 otherwise I'd have been the one
 chosen to inherit Birdy
 mother's irksome parrot
 that dubious honor was bequeathed
 to her youngest son... the pet...
 the one who could always get
 his way with the queen...
 got it in the end...
 the talking albatross I mean

the rest of us stifling a grin
 as we watched the two of them begin
 an ephemeral relationship
 that didn't make it through the fall
 but then
 I doubt if anyone could live
 with the disembodied voice
 of a dear departed mom
 still calling his name
 "Donn!"
 still ruling the roost
 cigarette hack and all

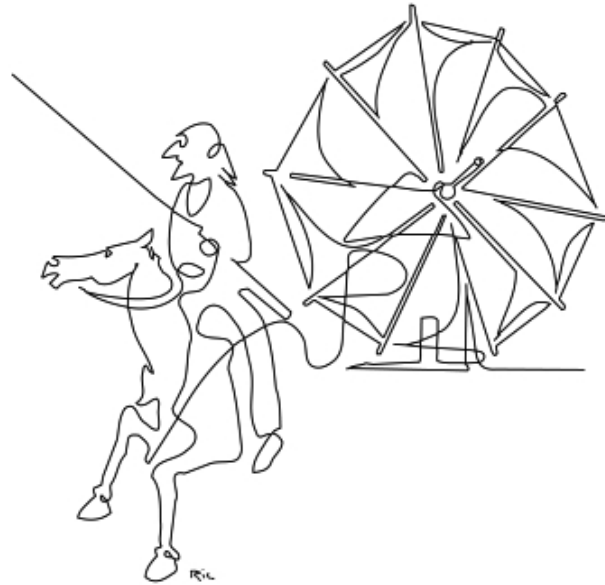
my daughter Jerri
 the Florence Nightingale
 of animal husbandry
 was next in line to take the orphan in
 and climb the wall...
 mother's prattling remains
 quickly passed along
 to an unsuspecting friend
 who out of desperation
 took the bird
 to see a pet psychiatrist
 and the fowl lobotomy that followed
 exorcised out every vestige
 of mother's zany sense of humor
 leaving Birdy
 well-behaved but spiritless
 enunciating
 with the generic inflection
 of a network radio nonentity

and now that it's over
 I kick myself in the pants
 for not seizing the opportunity
 to tape-record our family history
 while I still had the chance

ENDLINE

I've always been
 a yin/yang — front /back — clear/blur
 up/down — life/death kind of guy
 my own peculiar duality being
 philosopher slash hypochondriac
 win win characteristics
 when you've been diagnosed
 with advanced prostate cancer

finally the hypochondriac
 has more than windmills to tilt with
 the philosopher arming himself
 with exactly the proper petard
 an explosive statement
 found in an e-mail message
 beneath the signature
 of a cancer survivor's name
 a perfect end line wily and wise
 quote: I ask God:
 "How much time do I have before I die?"
 "Enough to make a difference."
 God replies



See also:

Mother's Voice

On-line WORDS & ONE-LINER page. <http://sun-ink.com/WordsOneliners.htm>

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