

JUDITH ROITMAN (1945 -)

Judith Roitman has lived in Lawrence since 1978. Besides being active as a poet, she is professor of mathematics at the University of Kansas. She is Guiding Teacher at the Southwind Zen Center and an active member of the Jewish community in Lawrence. These multiple roles inform her writing. In addition, she is a voice among poets like Ron Silliman who comment on contemporary experience of poetics (<http://ronsilliman.blogspot.com/>). Clarity of vision is a hallmark of her writing, but the logic is unreliable, as chaos theory shows how random events are the rule, not the exception.



"As a Leaf" is a poem about the motion of falling leaves, perhaps set in the autumn season. Here, focus is on each image as it occurs, and not the expected connections among them. Readers must fill in stories, if there are any. This poem is also about perception itself, as real images are copied on our retinas ("Copy to copy") and "transformed" into human experience. I also find this poem to be about poetry itself, which is like "turning the wrong corner" and finding new ways to perceive reality. A lyrical image is "suspended wasp motion" as time itself continues to move forward like heartbeats and like the slow, floating wasp's flight. The ending thought, about the tension between immobility and action, resolves with the "& so on" of continuing creation as our galaxy continues to spread outward across the blue sky. This kind of poetry asks the reader to participate fully.

AS A LEAF

**Copy to copy as a leaf falls transformer to transformed
light on glass moving as hands denied & flight**

**suspended from wings but without looking
all things against blue the blue room blue house**

**we find it this way every so often turning the wrong corner
the right one filling up all gone against blue**

**covered within light the heart the sign of it steady
the wire angling up into vision**

**things ready to fall
& others spinning up suspended wasp motion**

**within derelict acts & clarity of motion
stillness within motion & so on.**

Education: Judith Roitman graduated from Bayside High School in New York City (1962); Sarah Lawrence College with a BA in English (1966); University of California-Berkeley (1974).

Career: This poet has published poems various journals, including *First Intensity*, *Black Spring*, *Locus Point* (on the web), *Bird Dog*, and *Wakarusa Wetlands in Word & Image* (Lawrence: Imagination and Place, 2005). She has published these chapbooks, or books under 50 pages: *The Stress of Meaning: Variations on a Line by Susan Howe* (Morris, Minn.: Standing Stones Press, 1997); *Diamond Notebooks* (Buffalo, New York: Nominative Press Collective, 1998); *Slippge* (Elmwood, Conn.: Potes and Poets Press, 1999); and *No Face: New and Selected Poems* (Lawrence, First Intensity 2008).