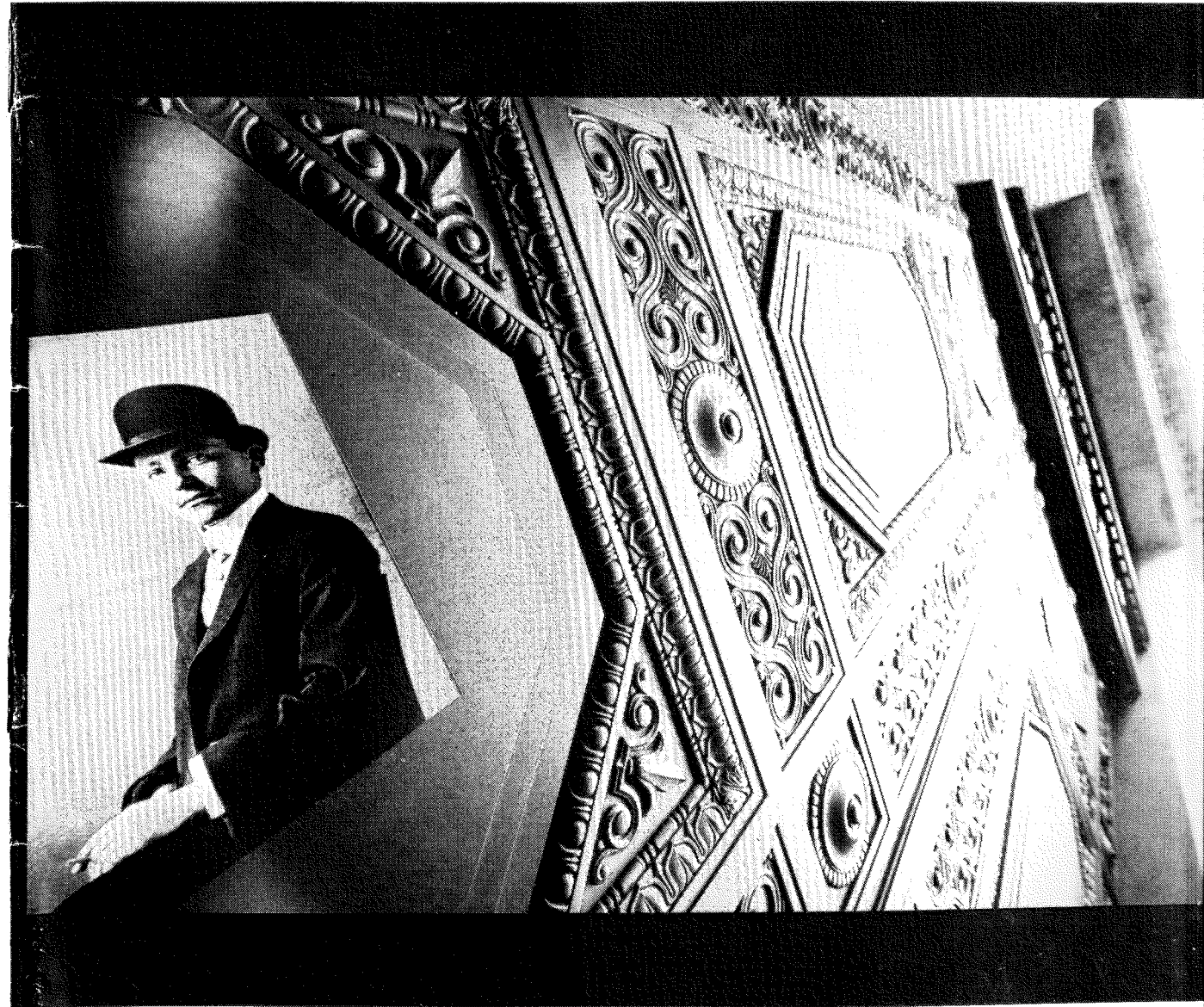


EDGE

international arts interface



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fiction

Sunrise

by Mitch Wieland

Dedicated to Alton Warrick

The sun rose framed by the open window, clean light thrown across the pastures, snowbound and frozen. I watched the old farm take shape out of the feathery half-light. From the chickenhouse, a thin trail of inky dark smoke was curling upwards, the small fire in its furnace trying to keep those miserable birds from freezing to death.

I slid down the window and settled into the stuffed recliner, put my feet back up on the sill. I lit my second cigarette of the morning.

The frost on the window was lit in orange, and I studied it through the smoke, noting if I moved my head just right I could make it sparkle and dance like a late night tracer trail.

This habit of watching the sun come up started about halfway through my tour. At first it was because I was already up on watch, and later it changed into something more—the sunrise over Vietnam became a little like the birth of the world all over again.

Now a jungle dawn was really special to see: first the tops of the trees would glow red, then the sun would pull up out of the mist so quietly it would make you ache with hope just watching it.

I crushed out my cigarette on the lock of my suitcase and stood. The spare bedroom was still dark, musty from being closed up all those years. When I opened the door, I remembered it was Christmas Day.

On the stairs, I sat down, and thought of the time the whole family was here, and still together, the old man putting in the extra leaf so we could all eat together.

I saw my wife and our first Christmas together in that bare apartment near the San Pedro Wharf, me carving up that poor bird, and Cath pouring the cheap wine our landlord had given us. I was unloading fishing boats then, and Cath was a waitress in town. That was a month or so before coming home one night to find her curled up on the bed, my draft notice crumpled tight in her hand.

Grandma was at the kitchen table with the *Reader's Digest*. She put the book down when she saw me, her glasses neatly alongside.

"Good morning, Jan," she said. "How do you feel?"

"Good, Grandma. Thanks." I kissed her cheek and sat down.

She got up and turned on the stove, dropped

butter in the big iron skillet. "How many eggs?"

"Two, please." I picked up the *Reader's Digest*. "Where's Grandpa this morning?"

"Oh, who ever knows. Out wandering around, I suppose, looking for something to keep an old man busy."

Grandma cracked the eggs into the sputtering pan. I glanced at the cover of the book: *What America Means To Me. Tips For A Happy Holiday. Ten Ways To Improve Your Marriage*. I set the book back on the table.

"Jan, your mother called last night. I told her you were here. She said she'd try again today, but to wish you a merry Christmas anyway in case the lines are tied up."

"Thanks, Grandma."

"She said she was worried when you took off like that. She said she hasn't heard from you in months."

"I know. I needed some time to sort things out. I'll be all right now."

I looked at her and tried to smile. She did too.

After coming home one night, and finding Cath had finally left me, I locked up the place and walked away. When I reached the highway, I stuck out my thumb and was gone.

That was five months ago.

It was only last week I'd gotten the idea of coming home, here to the farm. I was working at a lumberyard north of Portland, standing in the middle of a six-week rain, when the thought came at me. I used my last paycheck to buy a suitcase and a one-way ticket.

But getting off the bus in town, there was a moment where it seemed the same as most other places I'd drifted through, no better than things I'd left behind.

I was walking past the high school, heading out of town, when old man Simpson rolled down the window of his rusted Pontiac and called my name. I hopped in and he drove me all the way out home, the whole time talking about the time I'd worked at his station in town.

"I remember how you'd be working afternoons, always hitting the cars nice and fast, and the whole time be near bursting for when Cathy would walk by on her way home from school. I used to get such a kick watching you light up like a Christmas tree."

I nodded and watched the farmland roll by, all

the familiar places I used to know.

"Have you heard I lost the station, Jan? Lost her five years back. They took her from me plain as day."

Simpson looked over. "How is Cathy anyhow?"

"I lost her too, Mr. Simpson," I said. "A long while back."

The telephone rang as I was finishing the eggs, and Grandma went to pick it up. I wiped up the yolks with my last piece of toast, listening to the cups rattle in the china cupboard as she passed. I waited till I heard her talking to a Ladies' Aid friend and then pulled on my boots and coat.

The air outside was sharp, dark clouds heavy with snow drifting in from the northeast. I zipped my coat, taking the path to the barn, my boots loud on the crusted snow.

On the gatepost below the barn, I sat and watched the traffic roll down the hill toward town. I pictured the people in the cars, bundled up and smiling, maybe on their way to somewhere happy. My hands ached from the cold and I stuffed them in my pockets.

When I was over there, I used to think how much I wanted to be one of those smiling people in one of those cars when I got back. I would imagine Cath and I riding someplace, doing things we wanted to do, laughing.

Through a broken barn window, I heard a shovel scrape the concrete, and I slid off the post. I unhooked the side door.

"There you are, Janny." Grandpa held a shovel full of cow manure, steaming in the cold.

"Do you need some help?"

"Sure, you can help me unload the wheelbarrow outside. I'm just trying to get all the chores done before the big dinner."

Grandpa took off his cap and ran the back of his arm across his forehead. His clothes looked like they belonged to a bigger man, the baggy back pockets drooping low, his butt lost somewhere over the years.

I picked up the wheelbarrow handles. "Where to?"

"Just out the pasture door," he said, and shuffle-stepped ahead. "Let me slide her open for you."

In the raw wind blowing off the hill, we took turns with the shovel, each nestled down in our own thoughts.

"You looking forward to supper, Janny?" Grandpa said when the silence had stretched too long.

"You bet, and I appreciate you letting me stay here for awhile."

Grandpa studied my face, the creases of his weathered skin pulling up into a slow smile. He had never asked me a personal question in as long as I could remember, never asked me to explain

nothing about nothing to him. I was glad for that, now more than ever. Looking at him, there under the cold sky, I saw how he'd had enough sadness in his life to last him, and didn't really need to take on anymore. He put down the shovel and tugged at my sleeve.

"Come here, Janny. I want to show you something."

He led me to the haymow door and swung it open. The air inside was sweet, gusts of wind whistling through the cracks in the boards, lifting dust that swirled in the window light.

"Looky here what I found this morning."

In the corner, lying in a pool of dirty light, five newborn kittens huddled close on a broken bale. Grandpa picked up one by the nape and held it up to the window, its eyes still blind and shut tight.

"Here Janny." He dropped the kitten into my hands.

It cried out, the warm body shaking against my palm. I covered it with my other hand and the kitten purred quietly. Grandpa pushed up the brim of his hat, smiling.

I felt myself smiling back.

The snow began as we started back to the house, falling in big starch white flakes against the gray. Grandpa pointed to the strip mining scars leading down to the north border fence.

"Sure doesn't look the same, does it Janny? All torn up and stripped down like it is. Nothing but useless land's all they've left behind."

I looked over to the place where a corn field used to be, the place I'd played as a child, now a lunar landscape of piled earth, capped with snow.

"They just come in and take what they need, leave the rest behind."

"Doesn't the coal company have to come and put it back the way it was?"

We reached the house, Grandpa with his hand on the door.

"Oh sure, they'll reclaim it. Plant a few trees on it and say it's as good as new. But don't believe it, Janny. It'll never be what it was."

He stepped into the house, and I took one last look at the farmland. I turned and went inside.

The kitchen was warm, the smell of turkey strong in the air. Grandma turned from the stove, wiping her hands on her apron.

"Why don't you two wash up soon? Old Tom should be ready in about an hour."

Grandpa gripped my arm with a bony hand. "Let's build up the fire before supper, Janny. Then we won't have to bother with it after."

We creaked down the stairs in cool darkness till Grandpa screwed in a bulb over the stairs. The cellar was how I remembered it: shelves of Mason jars and dust, used-up toys and broken lawn chairs on the floor.

We worked our way around the junk and into

the dry heat of the furnace room. Grandpa tossed a chunk of deep black coal into the fire, then squinted hard into the dials.

"Janny, throw in a shovel full of the fine stuff, okay? That'll get her burning hot."

I scraped up some coal powder from the edge of the pile and threw it in, the fire hissing out.

"Bought this furnace back in '49 and only had to fix her once, a steam valve back in the winter of '67. I remember it clear cause you'd just gone over there. That was a real cold one."

Grandpa swung the furnace door shut and reached behind a stack of yellowed Life magazines.

"And now for a little treat," he said, holding up a bottle of whiskey, half-full, amber in the light.

"This'll warm us up just right."

He tipped back the bottle, then held it out to me, his lips shining wet. If the old man had only known how much of the stuff I'd run through my veins in the last ten years. I faked a quick drink, gave him back the bottle.

"Good stuff, isn't it?" he said. I watched him hide the bottle back on the shelf.

"Yeah," I told him. "Good stuff."

We closed up the room. I followed his baggy pockets up the steps.

I was dozing in the rocker, a book open in my lap, when the phone rang. It was Cathryn.

"How are you, Jan?"

"All right."

"Your mother told me you were there. She called this morning. We were worried."

"I had to go away awhile. It seemed like a good idea."

"Jan, I'm sorry we couldn't hold it together."

"I know."

"I'm sorry for us, Jan."

"Me too, Cath. Me too."

I thought about all the craziness, the old sadness pressing in.

"Merry Christmas, Jan. Take care of yourself."

"Merry Christmas, Cath."

I cradled the receiver, stared down into the book in my lap. I closed it.

In the kitchen, Grandma looked up from setting the table, a plate of her best china in her hand.

"Could you go get your grandfather?" she said. "Everything's ready."

I could hear the TV from the hall, Grandpa never did wear his hearing aid in the house. He was asleep on the sofa, a cartoon version of *A Christmas Carol* on the screen. I turned off the Ghost of Christmas Past in mid-sentence and woke him. Rubbing his eyes, he followed me into the kitchen.

The table steamed with all the dishes from the oven, hot and bubbling. Grandma placed the turkey at the head of the table and pulled out a chair for me. We sat down.

"Do you want to say grace, Jan?" she asked.

I looked into her eyes. "I don't think I can."

"Then let's just say a silent one."

I watched them bow their heads, their eyes closed. In the quiet, Grandpa reached out and took my Grandma's hand, their fingers joining softly. I reached out and their rough palms slipped into mine.

I took their hands and gently squeezed.

Mitch Wieland was born in Dover, Ohio and has also lived in Seattle, Los Angeles, and San Diego. He's been in Tokyo going on four years now. Another story of his will appear in Fiction Forum in L.A. in early 1990. "Sunrise" was an entry in the 1989 EDGE fiction contest.

The Man Who Went Ritually into that Good Night

by S. Harrison Watson

In the blackness, lights on the bridge make a gash of existence. On each side of the bridge that spans the ravine a steel-wire fence stretches high. Long and narrow, the bridge. Below, the river wide and shallow, a long, cold bath, but not even a murmur now, not a child's cry. Not a dog's bark in the moist, quiet dark.

Headlights from the east, spreading out over a patch of road, revealing mossy, musty form of tree, halting at the roadside just before the bridge. The military at this dead time, but no: a microbus.

A microbus lacking no equipment: a P.A. system

with vibrato voice for crooning with eight-track tape musical accompaniment and television screen for music video; interior chandelier lighting and refrigerator for cooling beer and making ice for whisky glass. Passengers six drunken men and the driver drinking now that he put on the brake.

Three men spill out, stagger out to the middle of the bridge, urinate out through the fence down into the black ravine. Zippers up, grasping the steel-wire cyclone fence with six hot hands, looking down and seeing nothing, in meditative silence, these men in business white shirts, neckties pulled loose and

sleeves pushed up almost to the biceps. Left man and right man shake their heads no. Left shoves both hands into back pockets. He turns and returns to the party in the bus. The other looks at the man in middle, raising both hands, putting palms to temples and fingers through slicked-down black hair, looking, his black eyes full of deep expression, full of sayonara. He lights a cigarette. He exhales, watching the smoke. Back to the bus.

A song of a calm harbor for the heart. The melancholy passion of booze and microphone expands. Lyrics of noble-and-necessary raw-tuna heart-slicing samurai-sword cold and straight and hard beauty of innermost inexpressible fly-swatting blister of existence.

Hand-crushed can of Kirin on floor. The men strip down to their underpants. Two complete in nakedness. Handkerchiefs rolled and tied around the head. Saké in a big bottle passed around. Chan-delier out.

Now naked too, the one who was driver from under his seat removes an arm-length canvas bag. Unzip. Heavy-duty wire cutters. No more noise. Headlights out. Cigarette smoking in ashtray. Time.

Barefoot on the bridge with his cutters, he stands next to the man who was the man in the middle who is still standing with his hands holding onto the steel. Driver looks at the man, eyes trying to shut out all channels of thought.

The man clutching the fence isn't drunk anymore. Quite clearly he hears the chirping snip snip snip from driver's cutting. Cut out portion of fence falls away, leaving huge black rectangle open to night. Men in the bus looking on. Man once in the middle at the bridge takes off his shirt, steps up onto the rail, holding onto the fence. Driver returns to the bus. The cutters go back in the canvas and under the seat. From inside the bus come sobs, wails. Some cry out the name of the man on the bridge.

S. Harrison Watson was born on the first day of spring in the Philadelphia of 1954. He has been in Japan for eight years now. He currently lives in Sendai, where he is married, father of two sons, tranquil in hairy body, teaching, breathing, writing poetry and short fiction. A story of his won special mention in the 1989 EDGE Short Story Contest. Short fiction of his will appear in Collages & Bricolages in spring 1990.



artwork by David Chesnow

Cid Corman

EXCLUSIVE

Smaller than a gnat
it irritates. It
moves around and is

there—defining a
space you occupy
or had thought you did.

Nothing lost
is nothing
less—sand and

sea and sky.
Breath is the
horizon.

THE FLAG

Hoist and flaunt and flap.
Curtain patching wind.
Burn it—burn it—let

the blaze of glory
carry the air and
freedom vaunt nothing.

Here we are
yes and no.
Who needs a
mirror who
has the sky?

Congratulations to Cid Corman, our neighbor in Kyoto, who recently received The Lannan Foundation Award for Achievement in Poetry. A recently-published book, And The Word, is available from Coffee House Press, Box 10870 Minneapolis, Minnesota 55458 USA. More of his Kusano Shimpei translations appeared in the Spring, 1989 issue of Sulfur.

Elizabeth Balestrieri

Reading Heidegger, East to West

1.

O sweet prince of
philosophy—
“the writing faded, almost
indecipherable” in dream
but as dawn comes
with sharp fingers of light,
the many-tissued brain tenses
joins image to word,
thought comes self-directed,
slipping at the edges—
the yet-unconceived
emerges as desire of mind to burn
decipherable as a star
in full-bodied night.

2.

The mind is a burning bush,
first green, then scarlet,
then a labyrinth of twigs.
The spirit weaves through it
like a spider with a good name.
Birds sail
above it, color-blinded,
lovely though they cannot love.
When everything taken from the
body is given over to spirit,
such high rapture
breaks into words and
language sees itself as love.
Love is an unblinding.

3.

So much idle talk—
only action receives and
uplifts us.
the bodymind, a heavenly actor,
soaring beyond its skin,
is still an object of grave proportion,
subject to gravity: and “Spoken
language is merely a series of squeaks.”
A play of love is merely a play,
a staging of fantasy
so, Prince, you have written
with blood on your brow
of speaking across the abyss,
of the need of body and word.

4.

Sometimes
a face in a doorway
is held by the eyes so closely
it becomes
a lucid collision.
That face, those eyes
are joined in a unified field.
The walls fall away,
the door frame, the ceiling,
as your mind of spring
breaks into aquarian green,
a pool of watercress,
starry in its flowering. Then
laughter comes as a kindly amnesia.

5.

Tiger-eyed
watching is a form of caring,
Sorge
as when passion is young
and the eye is naked to its need.
Later, words need watching.
They slip without thought
into sinuous air, become black-tongued.
Why your blindness to that dark
collectivity?
Germany
and you sat like two men
in a duck blind
shooting tigers.

6.

The body is a hard place
to lodge the spirit. It
wants at any cost to caress
its desire, to leave
the spirit standing in the rain.
Poor little spider, weaving and weaving
a white pagoda, a paper umbrella
to catch the pearly sweat.
Then, the sun dancing across sky
whirls her red flamingo skirts,
leaves a golden trace, call it
one word—love—through which
the body without opening its mouth
takes up the spirit again.

O sweet prince, you are the stream
in which the pale moon of dawn is caught.

Elizabeth Balestrieri, born in Detroit, received a Ph.D. in English from the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee. She is the Foreign Lecturer in American Literature and Language at Toyama University. Her publications include poetry, fiction, and critical studies; she's now working with Machiko Okuda on a translation of tanka poet, Shuji Miya.

Ryokan

from Between Floating Mist

translated by Dennis Maloney
and Hide Oshiro

The water of the mind, how clear it is!
Gazing at it, the boundaries are invisible.
But as soon as even a slight thought arises,
ten thousand images crowd it.
Attach to them and they become real,
be carried by them and it will be difficult to return.
How painful to see a person trapped in ten-fold delusions.

My tiny hut is lonely
and all day no one visits.
Alone, I sit by the window
listening to the continuous fall of leaves.

How long has it been since
the teaching of the pure essence was swept away?
Students are carried away by the written words
and Buddhist priests are stubbornly obsessed with doctrine.
It's a shame that for a thousand years
no one has spoken seriously of this essence.
Better to follow the children and bounce a ball on these spring days.

Girls gathering lotus sing a pleasant song.
Beautifully dressed, their figures reflect in the water.
Suddenly white waves high as mountains rise up,
sending the returning boats scurrying back towards shore.

The flower does not invite the butterfly
and the butterfly has no intention of visiting the flower.
But when flowers bloom the butterfly comes
and when the butterfly comes flowers bloom.
I don't know those others,
and they don't know me, either,
but we are all followers of the Way.

Ryokan (1758-1831) was a Zen monk and hermit who lived for years in a one-room hut on Mt. Kugami near Niigata City in northwest Honshu, studying the Man'yōshū and the poems of Han-shan, Su Tung Po, and Saigyō. He begged for rice, played games with local children, and wrote poems in both Japanese and Chinese. These are examples of the latter, from a book published by Springhouse Editions.

Dennis Maloney, poet, translator, and landscape architect, is also the editor of White Pine Press. A number of volumes of his translations have been published (Neruda's *The House in the Sand* is forthcoming from Milkweed Editions), as well as books of his own poems, including *Sitting in Circles*, available from Blue Jacket Press in Niigata-ken (see the NETWORKS listing on page 36 of this issue of EDGE). *The Map Is Not the Territory* will also be published next year by Unicorn Press.

Hide Oshiro is a Japanese visual artist living in the U.S. He illustrated Bashō's *Back Roads to Far Towns*, and *Tangled Hair: Poems of Yosano Akiko*. He and Dennis Maloney have collaborated on a number of translation projects.

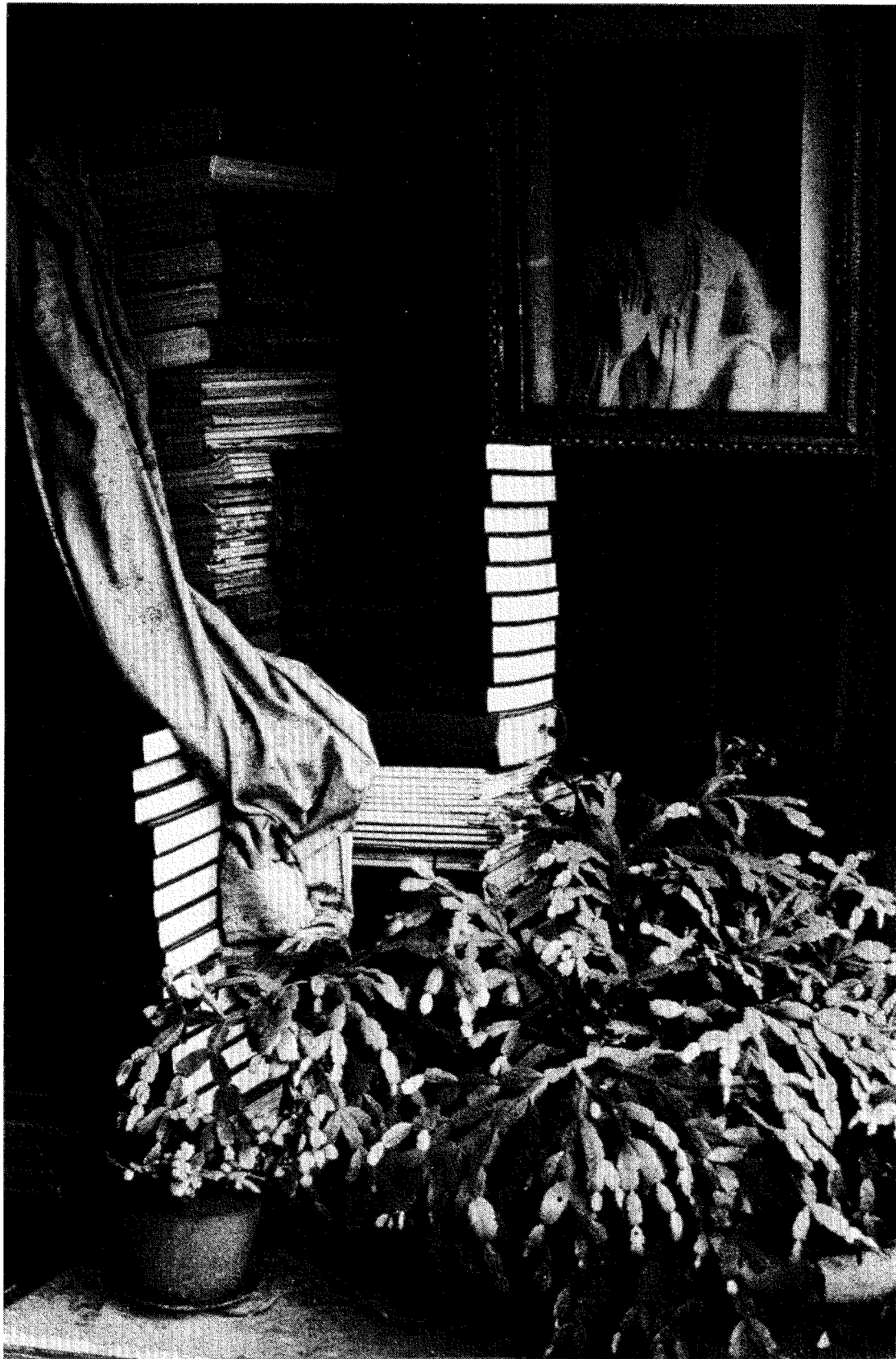


photo by John Einarsen

fiction

A Feminine Hand

by Michael O'Rourke

Before she spoke the archeologist took a long, thoughtful drink of her wine and, across the table from her, the others saw that a drop of the blood was slowly spreading through the red liquid, like smoke within smoke. She wet a finger with spit and dabbed at another spot already congealing on her cheek, making a small russet smudge.

"After all this?" Then she finished her wine and gestured at the others with the empty glass. She shrugged. "I don't see why not." More wine was poured.

"This is about Neifile, a Kazh princess. Ten years ago, I was doing research in the Great Mounds and I found some unusual writing on the wall of a lesser chamber in one of the burial labyrinths. It had been overlooked, and I was the first to decipher it. The hieroglyphs used were standard, but the style of the script—if I can use that word—was somehow different. It struck me as a feminine hand, but my colleagues dismissed the idea. There had been no female scribes, they said, for a very good reason: women who learned to write were put to death in the world of the Kazh. My scribe, they said, was either from another corner of the kingdom, or a visitor, a Semite of some kind, Phoenician or Assyrian.

"Neifile was not born into the royal house,' the text went. This first line was dynamite to any scholar familiar with the traditional theory of Kazh dynastic structure. 'She was the slave of Akha, who was daughter of the king, princess and designated wife of the heir to the Kazh throne, her brother.'

"Scholars argue about whether the Kazh truly married their siblings or whether they merely used the same words for 'brother' and 'sister' as for 'husband' and 'wife.' I don't think it really matters. There is more brother and sister in husband and wife than many people realize.

"The story went on to say that Neifile was the friend and confidante of the future queen of the Kazh. They were good friends, closer than sisters. Neifile slept in the princess's room, on a mat of felt at the foot of the bed, to be near her should she need anything. Many were the nights they spent in young Akha's bed, talking until dawn's red glow, when the fragrant morning light seeped through fronds and leafy branches outside the golden shutters and fell softly on their faces. They spoke of

their dreams and of events at court, and Neifile gave the princess advice in love and beauty, for Neifile was fairer than all the acolytes of the female sect of the Kazh, who were chosen for their grace and symmetry. She had a high forehead and spice-colored skin softer than chamois. She had eyes large and dark and slanted, the left one full of the mysteries of Africa, the right one deep with the secrets of the Orient. She had a soft red mouth like a ripe fruit. A bloodstained ripe fruit.

"The princess secretly learned to write from one of the scribes; Neifile didn't know how Akha had bribed him, except that beforehand the princess had asked her questions about kissing and had teased her, asking, 'Like this, girlfriend?' She'd convinced the scribe to teach her at his peril, for it meant death to teach a woman, even a princess, to write, and a literate woman was buried alive after her eyes were put out. The symbols of the Kazh were sacred and for men alone.

"But the princess did learn and she taught her friend, who burned with curiosity. They wrote in grain spread on the floor, or with the juice of pomegranates on their skin, always careful to scatter the grain or to rub out the signs with their spit before morning.

"The day came when Akha burst into her room, weeping; this shocked Neifile, who had known her only as a happy girl. 'I have to leave you sister,' the princess said. 'The priests have called me to become my brother's sister, I will be sleeping in his bed from the night after tomorrow.' Her hot tears fell on Neifile's shoulder. 'How I hate the thought of leaving you, and the thought of being with him.'

"Akha, I'll always be your servant and friend,' Neifile murmured to her. 'And I've told you all I know of love, so that you have nothing to fear from the new king. This is a happy occasion.'

"Neifile was mistaken. She would not see the princess again, according to Kazh custom. Princess Akha was becoming a woman, and part of the ceremony, she had just learned, was the immolation of her childhood. Everything from her days as a girl was to be ritually burned, including her slaves. Neifile was to be sacrificed on the same pyre as the princess's old toys. Akha was inconsolable. Neifile lay next to her and stroked her long, fragrant hair until morning when her weeping finally stopped.

Then they made a plan. It was extreme, and Neifile was against it, but the princess said she would otherwise die of grief and Neifile finally gave in to her will.

"At dinner Princess Akha begged of the prince that he darken his chambers that night, and he complied, laughing at the mixture of eagerness and prenuptial modesty in the young girl. Late that night, dressed in the jewelry and scents of the princess, Neifile went in her stead, and there in the dark, wordlessly, the golden bracelets she wore jangling like the bells of distant herds, she aroused his passion and desire, licking the undulating ridge of his backbone and letting him taste the salty, metallic taste of her armpits.

"I am the new king,' the prince said in the dark, his voice hoarse, 'and you must become mine tonight. I won't wait, I have to have you by my side forever, from this second.'

"As planned, Neifile demanded a blood oath from him, before all the Kazh gods and demons, and he agreed immediately, slashing their hands with a knife and pressing them together so that they became of one blood. He swore before Kazhal and Bemeda and all the others, in a voice husky with desperation and lust, to uphold the union for life and all eternity. And he was not surprised when the voices of Kazhal and Bemeda and Bemeda's half-breed demons returned from the walls and from the ventilation slats in the doors and windows, assuring him that he would be protected in his reign if he was true to his vows, and destroyed if not. Only Neifile recognized the screeching voices.

"The next morning, Neifile awoke to the first golden, breadcrust colors of dawn, and licked the salt of the previous night from her swollen lips. She watched her new lover sleep, and after a few minutes woke him with a kiss. Seeing her for the first time, he rubbed his bloodshot eyes, and then howled as he realized that he had been tricked.

"Neifile gazed at him softly, her soft skin still raw and burning. She knew that her sacrifices for her friend weren't over. "I won't disappoint you, brother king."

"In this way, the desperate princess saved her girlfriend Neifile, by cheating the laws of the court, and for this she was exiled to the lesser court in the eastern kingdom. It was a punishment she accepted gladly, consoled in the absence of Neifile by the knowledge that she was alive, and was now sister to the king.

"Neifile reigned wisely in a court of emeralds and copper and marble, with many slaves and exotic animals tamed and lounging at the foot of her throne. Her favorite pet, a gold-collared lion cub, she named after the friend she would never see again. She spoke to the young lioness as if her words, upon entering the animal's ears, were magically trans-

mitted to the mind of her friend in the eastern Kazh.

"I am very sad without you, girlfriend,' she said. She stroked the animal's head, and it closed its eyes sleepily. Its soft brown eyes.

"To ease her sadness, she wrote her friend secret letters. This she did at great risk. She gave them to her most trusted slave to carry. But she was found out when the messenger was eventually intercepted by a lieutenant of her brother the king, and she was brought before him.

"Who is the treacherous scribe who writes secret messages for my sister?" the king demanded of her. "Name him so that I may see him torn into four pieces and buried in each corner of the Kazh.'

"Knowing the penalty, Neifile still told the truth. "There was no scribe, brother. They are all true to you. That is my hand, I wrote the letters alone in my bed. And the one who taught me is long gone.'

"Before the entire court, the king immediately condemned Neifile to be buried alive. Because she was a queen, she would not be blinded.

"That night, he paid a final visit to her chamber, where she was being held under heavy guard.

"Remember your oath of years ago, brother, made in this very room. You are making a serious mistake.'

"You tricked me then; you deserve worse than this. And you have broken the Law of the Kazh, learning what only we men may know. I am tempted to blind you myself.'

"Neifile slept, and dreamt that night of a young lioness loping gracefully along the road to the east, causing flocks of sheep to scatter in panic and horses to rear in fright, throwing their riders, the expert horsemen of the Kazh. The lioness arrived at the lesser palace, and traced the steps and hallways, the black pads of her paws silent on the polished stones, until she came to a door. She pressed it open with her velvety muzzle and entered. Inside, Princess Akha lay on a couch, counting lapis-lazuli and garnet beads on a necklace. She showed no fear of the lioness, which reclined at her side, its head on the princess's lap. The lioness opened its blood-stained mouth, and spoke with Neifile's voice.

"Neifile awoke the next morning to the hysterical keening of mourners throughout the palace. The king had died in the night, his throat torn out by a wild animal.

"Later, she was taken by guards and accompanied with great pomp to the labyrinth where her brother was being interred. She was told that she would be buried alive, and then covered with a great mound, the execution of his sentence on her.

"Do I get food for the crossing?" she asked calmly.

"You're a condemned heretic; you get nothing. You will have to meet Bemeda on an empty stomach.'

"The day had been hot, but the bare stones deep inside the maze to which she had been shackled, naked and hungry, were damp and cold and she shivered. The iron cuffs were loose on her fragile wrists, however, and she was soon able to free herself. In the darkness she searched the labyrinth, tracing its smoothly quarried walls with her fingertips, until she found, after many hours, the cell where the body of the king was sealed.

"She broke the seal and entered, astonished by the beauty of the murals and the richness of the objects left to aid him in the next world. She took a small lamp still flickering from the hand of a freshly strangled warrior and lit a larger torch. She rammed it into a horn leaning against the wall, a snug fit. Then she sat down and helped herself to the food, honey and almonds and bread for his journey. She drank from a flask of wine, and bit into ripe pomegranates and dates.

"You are going nowhere brother, sad to say.' She spat tart pomegranate pulp, pink-stained. She broke the seal of his case and opened the lid. Inside the second case of clay which she soon cleft lengthwise was the body of the dead king, wrapped in long strips of felt. There was a crash as she tipped the case onto the floor, and his body sprawled stiffly. 'You won't have eternal life if your body rots, brother, but I'm cold here and as you can see, they have forgotten to leave me with clothes.' She unwound much of the felt from the corpse and draped it around herself until she had a garment of sufficient warmth.

"Ah, princess,' she sighed. 'I'm sealed in here forever, I fear.' On the floor beside the dead king she found a brush and small, flat bowls of pigment, intended for the dead man to write poems with in the next world, in praise of the gods and of his reign.

"Verses of praise,' she said insolently, and picked up the brush and pigments. In the eastern kingdom, the lioness raised her head from the lap of the banished princess and roared, and the sound carried far. Sealed inside the mound, Neifile believed she could hear it faintly.

"With the torch in one hand and the brush, pigment and a bundle of food in the other, she groped back to the small chamber where she had been shackled. Squatting, she wet the pigment with her urine, then stood and began to write on the wall.

"Neifile was not born into the royal house,' she wrote. 'She was the slave of Akha, who was daughter of the king, princess and designated wife of the heir to the Kazh throne, her brother.'

Fiction editor Michael O'Rourke divides his time between Chiba Prefecture, Washington State, and Lower Austria. "A Feminine Hand" is from the second novel he has written and was selected and edited for this issue of EDGE by Poetry Editor, Sherry Reniker.

Rhinoceros

by Peter O'Donovan

Amid a cloud of flies I made love to her, her son looking on indifferently, while hippopotami, at some distance, expelled muddy river noisily in their fashion. We were screened from the common view, mother and son and I, by a grove of cypress trees. Save for the flies it would have been idyllic. I recalled fertile idylls on the banks of long ago, where other seductions had taken place to the cruel hosanna of the flies.

Fornication is our struggle against death. We are born, we die, and all that we touch has the stink of failure, of futility. Yet we fornicate in legions, in a vain bid to cheat death, to oust for one brief moment of ecstasy the knowledge of our frail mortality.

How I am plagued with bad dreams! In one, a recurring anguish, I am making excrement without end. It falls in a pile beneath me and grows by increments to the dimensions of a great mound. This hardens and a thin crust forms. Then cracks spread through the crust and beetles emerge, struggling up through the cracks, forcing their hard bodies out from the mass of my droppings. There is scarcely more than a trickle of insects at first, but this turns into a steady stream and the dungy earth I stand upon is a shimmering matting of red and black.

With my whole being I yearn to be free. My will is concentrated in the effort to move my feet. To flee. But there is no end. I am rooted, like the giant baobab, to the spot. I can no longer decide if it is possible to put one leg in front of the other.

And while I stand immobile, the occupants of the dung heap are mounting higher and higher, climbing the one over the other, until they cover quite half my expanse. Then they are shoulder high. At last I can feel them scraping along my eyelids and scratching the insides of my ears. Only the tip of my horn protrudes above the writhing mass to mark my existence.

This is a fragment of a longer story, "An African Tale," entered in the 1989 EDGE fiction contest.

Peter O'Donovan is originally from Northern Ireland. He served time as an English teacher in Finland, London, and Italy before coming to Japan. He is happily incarcerated at present in a junior college in Saitama. A founding member of the Onigiri drama group, Peter is feverishly working on a comedy, Bumbum and Booboo, scheduled for production next year.

Shigehiko Yamano

Who

Who pulls the trigger?
Who presses the button?

With which finger,
In what clothes,
Having how big a family,
Thinking of what,
With what countenance,
What heartbeat,
and what eyes?

Who pulls the trigger,
Who presses the button?

Knowing The Distance

With a handbill in her hand
My wife took long
Making up her mind
To have a haircut.
Tracing on the map
She suddenly broke down,
Muffling her cries.
It was then,
Knowing the distance
To a beauty shop,
That we realized
Having come a long way
As a new couple:
Ourselves,
Two strangers.

At The Crossroads

Youthful communists
Handing out leaflets
Wearing red headbands

The ultra-rightists'
Black armoured car
Broadcasting aloud
Encouraging songs
For the Old Empire

Waiting for the light
Middle-aged women
Talking seriously
About the rising prices

In The Hospital

Through an oxygen mask
Father in his sickbed
Asked of the love
Already broken long before.
Mother strained her ears beside.
Looking at their sad smiles
When they told me not to care,
I thanked my old parents
and felt myself a bad son.

Shigehiko Yamano grew up in Osaka and now lives in Kyoto where he teaches English at Yawata Senior High School. He studied poetry writing with James Kirkup and Dr. Tsutomu Fukuda at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies where he completed an MA in 1985. He has been writing in English for six years.

Makoto Ooka

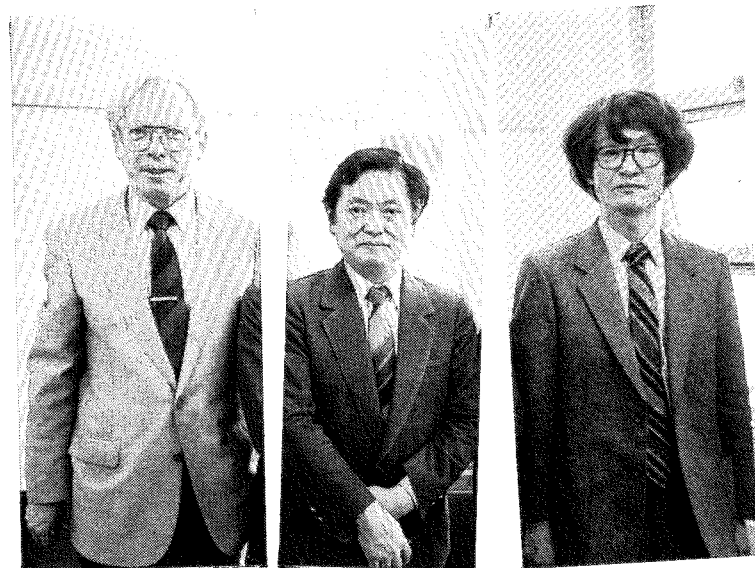
The Dawn of Birth

*translated by William I. Elliott
and Kazuo Kawamura*

The wind blows and a cloud appears high on its back
and dyes people's eyes.

A woman sings on a twig of time
that goes on splitting up like drops of water.
She sings of animals lurking in the sky
and of birth and death on beds that nightly become lakes and flames.

"Does time that lives and dies in the lives of flowers
have any relation to us?"
She laughed and embraced a glistening fish,
her arms on fire with falling drops of water.



Makoto Ooka is one of Japan's foremost critics and was recently elected president of the Japan P.E.N. Club. He currently teaches at Tokyo Geijutsu University.

Along with Ooka, William I. Elliott and Kazuo Kawamura are members of the board of directors of the Kanto Poetry Center in Yokohama. They have often translated together, including three volumes of Shuntaro Tanikawa's poetry—the most recent of which, Floating the River in Melancholy, won an American Book Award this year. William Elliott is also a poet in his own right and some of his work will appear in our next issue.

Makoto Ooka, flanked by translators William I. Elliott (left) and Kazuo Kawamura (right)

Steven Levi

their gizzards full of lead buckshot
they scavenged from the bottom of the ponds

shallowed by the drought of summer, the swans
began to die, shotgunned to death years after

the puff of gunpowder had spawned an acrid cloud
on a pristine fall morning, long after the wadding

had become padding in a blackbird nest and the
shell casings had floated out to sea in spring

floods. here the legacy of the sportsman lasts
until the ponds are more than neck deep or rust

eats itself out of a host.

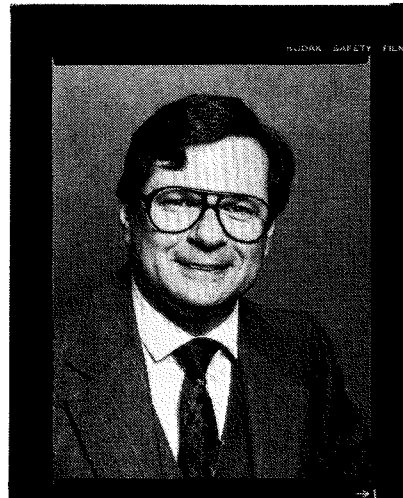
Parlo con Dio

He said it was the old world way,
the way it's been in Italy for years.
There were two ways to make money.
One was to work hard and pray
to the Madonna for long life
and good health. The other
he said was to "talk to God."

We gave him a quizzical look.

"You know," he said with a smile
"Parlo con Dio." He rubbed his
thumb and two fingers together
in the age-old sign for cash,
on the barrelhead, as they would say
in Kentucky.

It's the way to avoid taxes,
he told us in broken English. No money
earned is no tax owed. And no receipt
given is no money taken. Cash
makes no enemies.
"America will see," he snickered
over the lip of a glass
of watery Chianti.
"And when the Americans Parlo con Dio
they will find that God
speaks Japanese."



Steven Levi's book on Alaskan humor, *Sourdough Journalist (Parsnackle Press, 1981)*, appeared under the pen name Warren Sitka. A freelance writer in Anchorage, he has published more than 15 books, including adventure novels, textbooks, and poetry. In 1986, he won the Black Bear Publications International Chapbook Competition with *Our National Tapestry*. His just-published *The Alaska Traveler* is available from Miles and Sanderson (442 Marrett Road, Lexington, Massachusetts 02173 USA) for \$12 postpaid.

Jill Haas

English In Japan

Bits of my language
stare back at me, bereft

of sense, of music
and moorings. I wince each

time I see one. They
are nothing I've said or

would ever say—not
the words of any friend

I can imagine.
Yet they fly about me,

a silent confetti
of clothes-talk and satchels-

talk. Of poster-talk.

*The bits begin to stick in my eyes.
I blink. They spell the phrase 'iron-
clad' ships. Now they are orders for
ships' guns to fire so that other
things, called 'terms', can be pro-
claimed by strangers. I am witnessing,
in words, the arrival of English
into these waters. I see the ratio
of verbiage to tonnage; the way we
simply hauled it in.*

To my relief, words
vanish and the old bits

stare at me. I smile each
time I see one. They are

a fitting sentence.

Jill Haas is an American citizen who settled in England 15 years ago to write poetry. Her 45-minute dramatic poem, America—America was broadcast on Radio 4 a few years ago. Her poems have been published in many small press journals in England and in two books. This poem is from her mss. Japan—Poems.

Alex Shishin

Haiku

Nagoya bourgeois:
smug toad faces croak, croak, croak
in a turgid bog.

Fast trains scatter leaves
of discarded newspapers—O
seasonless subway!

Alex Shishin has an MFA in creative writing from the University of Massachusetts. He is married and teaches at a small college in Kyushu.

Carting Peat

by Tom Melchionne

There was a dead sea-leopard by the shearing shed. I had planned to spend the afternoon skinning it and scraping off the blubber. One of the roustabouts had shot it Friday because it had been scaring the little kids playing on the beach. After he killed it we dragged the carcass up from the beach with the farm tractor and left it a few yards from the shearing shed on the side near the dog kennels. Other kinds of seals are protected of course, but Government lets you shoot leopards if they come up on the beach because they like to eat people.

Uncle Marcus, the farm's leading shepherd had promised to teach me how to make horse gear from the hide. Marcus is the best gear maker in the Islands even though these days he's drunk half the time. I thought it would be great if I could make some traditional Falklands horse gear.

Sealskin is tough but soft and pliant; it can be crafted into the most elegant of cabarestos and riendas. This leopard was a young bull—maybe eight feet long—plenty big enough to provide me with a basal too. I considered myself quite lucky to have the hide to work with: sea-leopard skin is very rare; nobody's horse gear is made from it anymore. These days everybody uses cowhide, or even nylon.

When I got to the dead leopard, I had to chase some kids away because they were poking it with sticks. It was summertime, and the blubber was already starting to go rancid lying in the sun. If I didn't skin it today, I knew it would be a nasty job tomorrow.

I wasn't enthralled with the notion of skinning a rotting seal, but I did want to make that horse gear. I had already sharpened my knife and made the first long incision down the belly, when Rex came by. His wife followed a few feet behind him. He stood over me:

"Marcus showing you how to make a cabaresto, Che?"

"Yeah, he said he would, but I got to get this thing skinned first."

"Too right." Rex watched me for a couple of minutes. "Che, you sure you know how to skin that thing?"

"Well, I can't say it's anything I've ever done before, but I think I can figure it out."

He watched me a couple more minutes while I hacked off the flippers. I was making a pretty clumsy job of it too, getting goo all over my workshirt, but

Rex didn't criticize. He just said: "Skin's attached different to a seal than what it is to a sheep; it's more like the way skin's attached to a hog, eh Che? You can't just punch it off like you can with a cow. That regular sheath knife's no good for it neither; you need to use a flensing knife."

"I don't own a flensing knife. You got one?"

"You got to ask some old man who's been down on the ice."

Rex's wife Fiona was watching me too, but she didn't say a word about the leopard. She just looked a little guilty and said: "Now Jack, I know it's Saturday, and I know the store's not open. But could you do me a favor and open up just for a few minutes? There're a few things I need that I forgot to buy yesterday."

"Are they important?" I said this because I didn't want to appear too willing to open up specially for her. It's a bad habit for a settlement storekeeper to get into. Once you start opening during off-hours, people expect you to keep doing it. Fiona and Rex had been good to me though.

"Please Jack, won't you do it for me?"

"The store's not open on Saturday, but hell why not?" Although I didn't say it, I was pleased to have an excuse not to be skinning that leopard. My hands and shirt were already stinky with the smell of blubber.

As we walked to the store together Rex offered me a cigarette. I didn't smoke, but I took it anyway. He would have been offended if I hadn't. It was plain that something was bothering him. "You know Che, I should never have left the Northern Territory. I should have listened to my wife."

Fiona explained, "Rex had a good job as a slaughterman on a big cattle station, but now he wanted to come home. I told him he'd regret leaving Australia, but he wouldn't listen." At the store she plunked a bottle of gin on the sales counter. Then she started to eat a Mars Bar.

"Don't listen to her Schoolie. I was never a slaughterman. I was a mechanic, same as here. Slaughterman was only part-time."

His wife made a show of ignoring him, and examined the dishwashing detergent. "My my, how the cost of Fairy Liquid has risen!"

"I did it for my boys," he said. "They wanted to come home. Boys are always gonna fight, but I got tired of seeing my sons with bloody noses. The

Australian boys kept picking fights with them. Saying things like: 'What the hell are you? Go back where you belong. Go back to the South Pole.' I didn't want my boys to grow up like that. So we came home. Anyway, I got tired of killing innocent bullocks. Money isn't everything, Che."

"Jack, do you have any of that chocolate Angel Delight in stock? I only see strawberry on the shelf."

"It's over here, Fiona."

"I'll take two packs then."

As I started to tally up their order, the little bell over the door rang, and a man we didn't know entered the store. "Be with you in a minute," I told him. Then I asked Fiona: "How many candy bars have you got there?"

"Six Mars Bars plus the one I ate. That makes seven."

"Candy? There's no 'candy' in this shop. As storekeeper you should be aware of that." It was the stranger who said this. From his accent we could tell he was an Englishman, maybe he was a tourist.

"But there's plenty of candy. This is the candy counter, see?" I pointed to the rack of chocolate bars and chewing gum.

"There's no 'candy' in the Falkland Islands. Some people eat sweets, and other people eat chocolates, but certainly no one ever eats 'candy.' 'Candy' is a hideous word."

Rex and Fiona looked at the Englishman like he was the Man in the Moon. As for myself, I was so astonished to learn that "candy" was a hideous word that I didn't know what to say.

He continued: "You're the schoolteacher as well as the storekeeper on this settlement, are you not?"

"Yeah, I'm the schoolteacher."

"And would you agree that this is a rather British place?"

"Oh, sure."

"Fine then. Since this is one of Her Majesty's Crown Colonies, why do you persist in using American slang here?"

"Slang?"

"I hope you're teaching our British schoolchildren the proper British way of life, and not any of your horrid Yank vulgarities." Upon saying this he about-faced, and strode out of the store, slamming the door behind him. As he did Fiona laughed and Rex gave him the finger.

Then Rex put his hand on my shoulder and asked, "Want to help me cart peat this afternoon, Che?"

"What the hell." Now that I was doing something else already, I figured the sea-leopard could wait another day.

"There's no hurry, Che. We can start in a little while. There's a fair bit to do, but it will only take four or five hours all told."

Rex made extra money by cutting and carting peat on contract for the settlement. If I helped him

cart it for free, technically I'd be getting ripped off; but aside from scraping that blubber, there wasn't much else to do. I could play darts. I could watch Snake fall off his motorbike while he practiced wheelies. I could wash the loo in the school-house.

The two of us sauntered over to the cookhouse to kill time before turning to. Snake was in the galley listening to his big chrome tape player. Uncle Marcus was slumped over the kitchen table, passed out drunk. Carol the cook was bitching at Snake because he had the music turned up full volume. "Turn off that 'Bony Fingers.' You can't dance to it."

She was frying brain fritters on the stove, and at the same time was trying to dance the bump with Uncle Marcus. But since the old man was unconscious, he didn't make much of a dance partner; Carol was really dancing by herself. It was fun to watch her prancing around the galley, waving the spatula in the air.

Rex and I drank a cup of coffee with whisky in it. Then we drank a beer. We didn't want to start work.

Carol gave each of us a brain fritter to taste. The brains were fresh, nice and creamy in a fried batter. We ate them with salt before going out to hitch the cart to the tractor.

On the way to the tractor shed Uncle Marcus's brother Lew showed us two beautiful cauliflowers. I am not usually impressed by vegetables, but these looked really special. When he pulled back a leaf though, you could see that maggots had eaten up the inside, and the cauliflower was ruined. Lew's entire field had been destroyed by maggots. It was pathetic. They looked like such pretty cauliflowers from the outside.

Lew pulled me aside, rolling a cigarette as he asked, "Did Rex ask you to help him with the peat?"

"Yeah."

"I wanted that bloody bastard to share that contract with me, but he said no. He wanted to make all the money himself. So he asked you to go in on it with him, did he?"

"Yeah," I said noncommittally. I didn't want Lew to know that I was stupid enough to work for free. He would tell everybody.

Rex and I took off in the tractor. Twenty minutes later we arrived at the peat banks. Two hundred yards of peat had been cut with a nice neat edge. The peat had been heaped on the side of the bank in little piles. Some girls had carefully rickled the peat in December, so it was all dried nice.

The peat wasn't too good though. It was real crumbly. Peat has to be hard and black, almost like coal to burn a hot fire that lasts. This stuff looked like dried mud.

I stood on the back of the tractor wearing the goggles Rex had lent me. They made me feel like a World War One flier. Dry peat is dusty, and I didn't want it to get in my eyes. After working with peat

you look like a coal miner.

We chucked the peat in the cart. You bend down and pick it up with both hands. Then you swoop it with an easy grace into the cart. You pick up the next chunk and then the next. It's rhythmic, picking up peat and swinging it into the cart. Mound after mound; clump after clump; clod after clod. Yard by yard you eat up that bank of peat.

The individual bricks aren't heavy, but they get to feel heavy after a while. You have to keep bending down. The only better exercise than working peat is shearing sheep.

Rex turned the cart around. Now we piled the peat in the other side of the cart. This was so the peat wouldn't be piled unevenly and make it easy for the cart to tip over as we rode back to the settlement on the rough track. A couple of hours later we got the cart backed into one of the peat sheds. We stood in the cart and threw the peat brick by brick to the rear of the shed.

Two girls decided to help us with the next load, but they were useless. One of them was Carol's daughter. Snake drove them in a Land-Rover to the peat bank, but the three of them just sat in the Rover watching us chuck peat in the rain.

It was kind of funny, but it was also annoying. We were sweating in the rain working pretty hard while they just watched us and drank Coca-Cola. They didn't even offer to help. They didn't want to get wet.

The rain wasn't bad. Actually it felt good, chucking peat in the rain. The dust flies all over. You sweat and the peat sticks to the sweat and turns grimy. Then it stops raining, and then it rains again. My body trickled all over with salty grit. The goggles fogged up after the first few minutes, so I wore them on top of my head.

It would be awful to chuck peat for eternity, but for an afternoon it isn't bad. We chucked some more peat into the cart, and then we went back. By the time we got back to the settlement, the sun was out. You can have four seasons a day in the Falkland Islands.

Off on the north track I saw the farm manager's daughter cantering her five-year-old palomino gelding. In the sparkling sunlight, fresh after the rain, she looked lovely.

We dumped this load in a big heap to the rear of the cookhouse, kicking it with our feet. This is the way we did it: we inclined the cart, opened the trailer gates, and kicked it out. In the middle of the job we stopped for a beer.

Uncle Marcus had waked up by now. Carol had most probably kicked him out of the galley, because he gets to be a nuisance when he's awake. Marcus had never married, and he still lived in the bunkhouse, so he kind of looked upon it as his place. This was a concept with which the cook did not concur. After a minute of watching us unload the peat,

Uncle Marcus took upon himself the role of overseer. Marcus had always wanted to be a foreman, but he had never made more than leading shepherd. He sat on a lawn chair fanning himself and inspecting our work.

"Your contract says you're to put the peat in the peat shed, not in a pile out back."

"Bloody hell," says Rex.

"You're breaching contract, and I'll report it to the manager and the union."

"When did you read our contract old man?"

The mound of peat behind the cookhouse was big anyway. What difference did it make if we made it bigger?

"I know what your contract says. I know what a peat contract says." Uncle Marcus walked away muttering.

A few minutes later he was back. He had discovered his brother Lew sleeping on the bunkhouse lawn. Lew had been drinking whisky ever since finding all those maggots in his cauliflowers. Lew had been mighty proud of those cauliflowers.

Uncle Marcus was mad because Lew had taken his beret and black sport jacket and was wearing them.

"Help me get Lew upstairs, Che," Marcus asked Rex and me.

"Why should we?" Rex grunted. "You're gonna report us to the union."

"I won't report you if you help me."

We figured we'd be good guys. Lew could catch cold sleeping outside if it started to rain again. We'd finished carting the peat anyway, so Rex and I threw the old man's arms over our shoulders and mounted him up the stairs.

In his bedroom, Uncle Marcus thanked Rex and me with a can of warm beer. Uncle Marcus didn't like housework, and it showed: beer cans on the floor, army surplus blanket with boot prints all over it, whisky bottles sticking out from under a pillow, dirty sheepskin in the corner. I sat on a crate next to a smear of Coleman's mustard.

We managed to revive Lew sufficiently to get him up the stairs, but once in the warm room he passed out again, this time on his brother's bed. He slapped Lew's cheeks red trying to wake him up, but it was no use. There was no reviving Lew.

He wanted Lew to wake up because he had just then taken the notion to ride to Salvador, a neighboring settlement. There was going to be a big piss-up tonight. Marcus didn't want to go alone, though; he wanted his brother to go with him.

Now, it's two hours on horseback to Salvador in the best of times. With Lew unconscious, he wouldn't get under way till sundown. To speed things up Marcus wanted Rex and me to carry Lew out to the pony paddock and lash him to a horse, slinging him sideways over the back of one of the more docile mares: the same way you would trans-

port a corpse.

Rex and I said no, we wouldn't do it. Uncle Marcus drummed his fingers on the windowsill. He looked out at the inlet. He looked out at the shearing shed. He kicked the bed with his boot. He wanted to go to Salvador. He had made up his mind. All his friends would be there.

I was getting ready to piss out the window. It's crude to do this of course, but when you live in a bunkhouse you have to be crude sometimes or the other guys will think you're posh. I was just getting started when Carol the cook poked her head in the door, and I had to zip up quickly. I can be only so crude. I have my limits.

"Have any of you men seen my daughter?" she asked.

We shook our heads no.

"Two o'clock I told the girl. I want her home. What time is it?"

"Almost four."

"She said she was going out picking tea-berries. Not with Snake she's not. I know what's on that boy's mind. One thing. Watch, she'll come home without any tea-berries, and tell me she forgot to pick them. I know that girl. Jack, if you ever have children, don't let your daughter out of your sight. And never never trust a young man who rides a motorcycle."

"I'll remember that Carol."

"Lew don't want to wake up." Uncle Marcus was slapping his unconscious brother like a puppy with a rolled up copy of *The Penguin News*.

Carol shrieked: "Can't you see the poor man isn't going to wake up? Don't you have any respect for drunks?" She glared at me: "Tea-berries! Tea-berries! What teen-age boy goes picking tea-berries?"

Uncle Marcus' room was getting a little too stuffy with Carol there. Since I was filthy from carting peat and still had to relieve my bladder, I went downstairs to the toilet near to the shower room.

The bathtub next to the shower stall was full of dirty old water. Someone had been too lazy to pull the plug. Green stuff was growing on one side of the enamel. I also noticed that somebody had stolen the washing machine. I bet I know who it was too. This

was a bit annoying, because I had grown used to putting my clothes and towel on the washing machine while I showered. Now I'd have to find a new place for them.

While I was walking around naked looking for a place to lay my clothes, Carol's twelve-year-old daughter walked through the door.

"Oops, sorry sir." She giggled. It was the third time that week she'd walked in on me in the shower room, and I was determined to preserve my dignity this time. I noticed she wasn't carrying any tea-berries.

"Pick many tea-berries with Snake?" I asked.

"We forgot to, sir." She giggled again, and scuttled out of the room. Carol would not be pleased, but I didn't care much. Snake was a nice boy.

I turned on the hot water tap and lathered up, feeling the peat grit start to wash away. As the sweat and grime sluiced off my skin, the hot water made me feel clean and new. Carting all that peat had given me an appetite, and there'd be roast mutton with brown gravy and and potatoes for supper—chocolate cake for dessert, and maybe pie too.

From the window in the shower stall I saw the sun was still out, refracting light through ice crystals blown up from the Antarctic: the ice crystals made the sky look green.


I saw a stand of pines, and beside that the inlet, and beyond that the sea. There are dolphins in the sea, and when you take your boat out they like to play.

Beneath the pines Snake practiced wheelies on his motorbike: round and round he went, up in the air and down. Carol's daughter sat down on a fence and watched him.


Tom Melchionne was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1952. He lived on Falkland Islands sheep farms from 1981 to 1983. His Ph.D. in anthropology from Rutgers is based on that experience. He has also done archaeological fieldwork in Honduras and published in various fields including space science. He lives with his wife Kumi in the Hiroshima suburbs, where he teaches at Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's College.

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Featured Poet: Michael Castro

Them

I am an endangered species
yet I am human
& I am free
living in eternity

but also from birth
on this planet earth
in the system
of Them

Them been here
since the beginning of fear
Them dragged me wailing from the womb
Them'll bury me silent in a tomb

Them granted curiosity
& planted a forbidden tree
Them's tricky, full of mystery
Them writes the book of history

Them is nameless, Them is free
Shameless as authority
Them's blameless in non-entity
The same whatever century

Them calls me woman, calls me man
Them tells me what I can't & can
Them calls me nigger, calls me jew
Them's neat as a nazi, twisted as a screw

Them etches furrows in my head
& drives me from my marriage bed
to walk the furrowed path Them paved
lonely, weary, to the grave

Them makes me work
& sweat & sigh
Them brings me down
& gets me high

Them pits me against
my sister & brother
(not to mention
my earthen mother)

Them draws me close
to rend me apart
Them aches my head
& breaks my heart

Them runs amok
Them calls for order
Them signs the deed
Them lines the border

Them is rich
so I stay poor
Them says love
when Them means war

Them is the enemy
of all mankind
Them hides somewhere
in my mind

Them smashes the atom
The end is near
Soon Them or Us
must disappear

For Moise Gadol

(editor & publisher of *La America*, the first Judeo-Spanish language newspaper in America, 1910-1925)

Warrior for truth,
armed only with pen,
press, & knowledge
that language is power
the powerless don't know
they possess. *La America*,
your organ, vital
beat of a community body
politic, split into clans—
Salonika, Rhodes, Monastir,
Constantinople, Kastoria, Adrianople,
the Lower East Side, Harlem—*La America*
feeds all branches, nurtures
common root, transplants
ancient strength of language tree to immigrant
sidewalks, dreams. Moses
of the ghetto, tablets
in your pockets, your jobs
are countless, hours endless;
poverty is timeless.
In the beginning
was the Word, Moise. & in *La America*
we begin again. Touch
every neighborhood group, each
new arrival. Watch your watch,
pause, drink coffee, eat
okra at a cheap cafe, think, scheme
how to pay the bills; write notes:
this lunch
is research, remember
to mention the need for better food
in these Turkish corner joints in the next edition
(if you can get it out).
Then off to the next meeting, the next
argument, battle. Abuse & ridicule
your thanks. Bulgarians talk funny
they say. No matter.
Believe you/me. Sapharad
are clannish, proud
people, with good reason, say
ignorance, provinciality
the enemy; poverty
of mind, ego, selfishness, only to be
overcome, stress,
through Unity. *Unidad. La*
America, your organ, plays this song's
vital beat
over & over: Unity is Power.
Language is consciousness:
the media the message.

(Tell it
Ghetto Moe.
Don't mince
words. Remind us
of Babel. Demand
respect, reject
charity, speak out
eccentrically, know God
is one, too; in exile,
too.)

Dead in 1941,
Hitler stalking kin,
broke, half-nuts, buried
by your rival, who couldn't arrange
a grave site next to your wife's, or
even among our people.
Unity is Power. Is
anyone listening, reading?

You are remembered, Moise,
by a few, with wry smiles,
as that *meshugge* who claimed
Christobal Colon was one of us, hustling,
not knuckling under, discovering
yet another home, opening
La America.

Moonsong

the moon is full this shamanic night
& the neighborhood dogs are restless
You are in my arms or I am in yours in-
evitably yes drawn to this figure ground
enigma like the tides rising with the steady moon
the sun sinking into the swallowing sea
My tongue licks salt waves off the oily shore
of your skin & your hands busy themselves
kneading the knots below my spiny surface
opening them & the channel to eternity
we cohabit—The moon
a neon bone in the void
a living brain in death's ocean
shines up or down
& the dogs, unattended, bark
outside autumnal screens, I am a witness

to my mind, to the larger forces
of attraction filling this emptiness
this dank hairy hole of imagination
of yours, this San Pedro cactus of mine
we share, shining,
with the moon
through these windows,
with it
we are luminous & abandoned

New York City

traffic jamming at

Columbus Circle—gray birds

fly south in silence

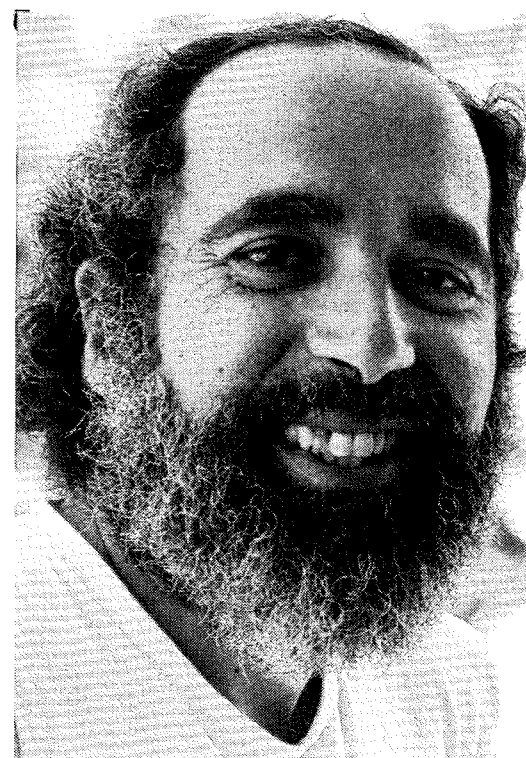


photo by Adelia Parker

Michael Castro, a native of New York City, has lived in St. Louis, Missouri for the last 20 years as a poet, teacher, and cultural activist. He is the founding editor of *River Styx Magazine* and two related community literary reading series, ongoing since 1975. His books include *Interpreting the Indian* (University of New Mexico Press, 1981), a study of the influences of Native American cultures on modern poets. Currently a member of the poetry and music performance group *Harmony*, with poets Eugene B. Redmond, K. Curtis Lyle, and Shirley Le Flore, he is also putting the finishing touches on a fourth collection of poetry, tentatively entitled *Point of Light*.



photo by John Einarsen

essay

Metaphysics of the Treeline

by Arne Næss

In many parts of the world, but perhaps most clearly in the far north, the treeline is full of symbolic value: enigmatic, mystical, threatening, liberating, alluring, repulsive, ominous. No single person or animal has the capacity of experiencing all these "tertiary qualities" of the treeline. The same holds true for the drama of crossing the treeline from above or from below.

The term "treeline" is misleading: there is no definite line, rather a border area of varying width. Where the ground is almost horizontal, this margin is broad, perhaps several miles wide; where the terrain is steep, however, the line is narrow but never sharply defined. It comes as something of a shock, then, when, high on the side of a valley, one encounters a wood that has been planted by man, which comes abruptly to a halt in its straight and regular lines. Suddenly there is not a single tree—a mass of full-grown trees is transformed into a bare hillside. At such times, there is a feeling of some abnormality at work, that here something of decisive value has been destroyed, the landscape desecrated, a sense of personal loss.

Here I shall relate the immensely rich reality that millions of people have experienced. I shall start with simple, obvious experiences.

Moving up toward the treeline, there are signs of new challenges met by the trees. In the hard wind and thinning soil, trees become smaller and take on gnarled and fantastic shapes. Some have fallen over. As the distance between trees expands, they tend to clump together. Then there are only clusters of trees at particular spots or trees that are altogether isolated. They may be courageous, haughty, even triumphant. But these characteristics of trees are subordinate gestalts, lesser forms of what is real. The higher-order gestalts dominate. One gestalt is that of movement upward, as far as possible, overcoming obstacles, trying to "clothe the mountain." (Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson)

Some trees succeed in clothing the mountain. Compared with lowland trees, they resemble tiny bushes. They may be a few feet tall while their lowland kin soar 50 to 100 feet or more. Yet call them stunted and they ask: "What am I lacking?" These trees have produced cones. They've realized all possibilities, they've fulfilled essential functions. Mere size has nothing to do with quality of life.

Others simply survive, really stunted and deformed by the harsh environment. No cones, no ex-

pression of fulfillment, half-dead from exposure to winter after winter, and to summers that alternate from drenched to dry. And still others thrive in small ways by managing merely to survive. There are no harsh environments, only unsuccessful cases of *élan vital*.

Each tree has a different life experience from birth. The rough terrain and numerous variations in conditions have obvious consequences—no tree is identical to any other. The tree is a mighty presentation of the life drama. You are near some, far from others. But you identify, you see yourself.

Some people have the background to enlarge the high-order gestalts in the time dimension. These people will see the waves of cold and warm climates after the last ice age. They see waves further clothing the mountain or a retreat, leaving stubs clinging high on the open slopes. The treeline is seen as moving up or down, never resting, but never repetitious.

There are other higher gestalts. People living near thick spruce forests may see the forest density as a protective wall. Others feel that these trees block the view or even one's existence, hindering free expression of life and thought. If the trees are old with branches drooping, they may communicate resignation, sorrow, melancholy; their melancholy together with yours. Swayed by the wind, large trees move in slow rhythm, and the music can have the heartbreaking feel of a funeral march. Or they may express slowly something like "doomed, doomed, doomed. . . ." Through night's dimness, the wall of trees may invite merciful death.

The existence of the treeline somewhere high—reachable but far away—inevitably becomes a promise of freedom, a proof of limits to any sorrow, any prison, any doubt or guilt. Approaching the treeline, walls disappear. Trees shrink, gaps enlarge, light shines between them and between their branches. This is how to begin to seek reality.

When rich high-order gestalts contrast high/low, dark/light, they are apt to acquire metaphysical dimensions. Movement from low and dark toward high and light treeline strengthens this contrast. Lightness is further strengthened by the ease of movement at the treeline. Being at the treeline becomes an experience of reaching supreme freedom.

Those who live in the forest or feel at home there may have experiences that vary even more. The upper limit of the wood marks the end of security, the

end of the world we master, the start of the harsh world of wind-driven snow, dangerous precipices, useless expanse.

Above the treeline is cold and hostile, below warm and friendly. Even in these negative experiences there is a contrast of metaphysical dimension. The positive and negative gestalts attest to the supreme gestalt of a Janus-faced existence, comprising good and bad on equal footing, or emphasizing one aspect more than another, or sheer incomparability of good and evil.

How is this kind of metaphysics to be understood? What insight can it offer? It is a meta-metaphysical question that can't be entirely answered here, or perhaps anywhere. Certain essentials can be gleaned from three approaches.

The homocentrist: The power of human imagination is overwhelming. There's no limit to what human genius is able to project into nature. The richness of treeline symbols attests to this. Flights of imagination soar from the plane of brute facts: the leaves are green, stems grow upward . . . the rest is a wonderful projection of the human mind.

The spiritualist: Strictly speaking, the leaves are not green. Their atoms are colorless, not even gray, and the stem's electromagnetic waves or particles don't grow upward. There is a realm beyond the material world. The new physics confirms it—a spirit world beyond space and time, a spiritual realm. The human mind is in direct touch with this realm and "spiritualizes" nature.

The ecosopher: The richness and fecundity of reality! How overwhelming! The treeline's abstract geographical structure points to a seemingly infinite variety of actual concrete contents! More is open to the human ecological self than can be experienced by any

other living being.

The metaphysics of the treeline is a more serious affair for the ecosopher than for the two others. It lets us understand the spontaneous, immediate experience of the treeline as an experience of reality, beyond the division between subject/object, spiritual/material.

One of today's most chilling realizations is that "reforestation" does not really restore a forest in its biological richness and diversity, and with its metaphysical richness. With so many people reacting negatively to sham reforestation, a change in policy is necessary. Humans have not lost their identity and dignity.

Arne Næss is a Norwegian philosopher and one of the founders of the deep ecology movement. He came to Japan last May, touring various places of ecological interest, including the endangered Shiraho coral reef in Ishigaki. An interview with Næss appears in the summer 1989 issue of Kyoto Journal.



Arne Næss in Tokyo

photo by Rick Davis, Japan Environment Monitor

review

Kook Eyes in the Spiritual Supermarket

Morgan Gibson and Hiroshi Murakami, *Tantric Poetry of Kukai* (White Pine Press, 76 Center St., Fredonia, NY 14063 USA, \$7.00). Reviewed by Fil Lewitt.

This choice little book centers around a translation of ten tantric poems by Kukai (Kobo Daishi, 774-835), one of the most renowned and revered teachers in the history of Buddhism in Japan. Fortunately for both Gibson and Murakami, as well as for Kukai, who deserves as much, the authors are

convincing translators and Buddhist scholars.

They have blended their skills admirably and quite seamlessly to give us a slender but useful volume which not only presents the first modern English version of Kukai's *Poems That Sing Ten Images*, but puts the poems into a context that

makes them accessible and, as far as the paradoxes and abstractions and symbols of esoteric Buddhist philosophy can be, comprehensible.

The choice and order of the materials excel: we begin, logically, with five short introductory chapters which inform us of our exact location in the bewildering spiritual supermarket of the late twentieth century—which aisle, which shelf, which brand, which package, and finally, in the carefully chosen excerpts from Kukai's sources which follow the poems, a list of ingredients, additives, and expiration date (infinity).

A section called "Kukai and Shingon" (Shingon means True Word, which is the seed syllable and mantra "Ah") begins the book, followed by a brief recounting of Buddhism from the historical Buddha (Sakyamuni) to Kukai, then a piece on the life and thought of Kukai, and an explanation of mandalas (pictures for contemplation) and mantras (attention-focusing chants); this part of the book concludes with "An American's Discovery of Shingon," in which Gibson briefly, yet with much feeling, tells of his own brush with the power and intensity that Shingon Buddhism can still generate in today's Japan.

Next comes the heart of the book, the ten tantric poems by Kukai on the "singing image" of various kinds of ephemera like dreams, shadows, and reflections, all of which illustrate the basic Emptiness and illusory nature of what we think is the real universe we inhabit. The purpose of all this stuff and non-stuff is to help the Seeker to overcome suffering by getting rid of attachments and the resulting desires which create the suffering in an endless feedback loop.

The volume continues with excerpts from Kukai's basic sources, *The Mahavairocana* [Dainichi] *Sutra* (c. seventh century India) and *I-Hsing's Commentary on the Sutra* (c. early eighth century China). These materials really do help make sense of Kukai's poems; moreover, in this book both the poems and the sources contain copious notes by Murakami and Gibson, which make it possible for readers to understand what's going on without recourse to fat volumes of secondary reading. This is a great gift to readers who would like to learn something about Kobo Daishi and esoteric/tantric Buddhism without getting hung up on a ten-year search. The book ends with a short but fine bibliography, which will be useful to those who do wish to read more in English about Mahayana Buddhism.

Two problems: firstly, this is really not a book for casual readers-about-Japan, nor can it be recommended as an introduction to the spiritual path, being far too esoteric to support a beginner's practice; but it does fill a heretofore empty niche for both scholars and general readers who already have some degree of familiarity with Buddhist philosophy and/

or the rigors of Buddhist meditation.

The other problem can be summed up by the idea that the only thing lost when poetry is translated is the poetry: Murakami and Gibson have done a good job, but the poems have been translated from Chinese to Japanese to English, and I have the feeling that much of the sheer power of the original has gotten misplaced (probably inevitably) along the way. Thus the lines which contain concrete imagery are beautifully rendered by Gibson, but what can anyone do with a line like "The World of Truth and Mind Only are not separate"? Philosophy it certainly is; poetry it ain't. But in Chinese characters, which come originally from pictographs, even abstractions can be rich with very concrete connotations, dense with extended meanings which simply disappear in the English language and its alphabet. This can't be helped, and should not in the end detract from a fine scholarly contribution to the literature of Buddhism in English.

Two other recent books by Gibson are *Revolutionary Rexroth: Poet of East-West Wisdom* (Archon Books, 1986) and *Among Buddhas in Japan* (White Pine Press, 1988). The former is a major contribution to Rexroth studies and a great pleasure as it wends its way through Rexroth's dynamic and fascinating career. The latter is a spiritual autobiography detailing the author's relationship with three Buddhist teachers in Japan. Perhaps the inner necessity and personal desire which forced Gibson to write *Among Buddhas in Japan*, combined with the obvious pain (and ecstasy) which he experienced in his search, made it impossible for him to get the distance from himself necessary to tell that tale as well as it needs to be told. The result is a powerful but faulted book, though finally I want to recommend that those interested in foreigners on the spiritual path in Japan read it and decide for themselves: what with all the current books by Masters and Adepts whom we admire from our position far below, at least Gibson's work presents a person not unlike most of the rest of us, searching, stumbling, sincere, often confused.

Morgan Gibson—prolific scholar, poet, translator, seeker, disciple of Kenneth Rexroth, friend to many of today's famous, infamous, unknown American poets—has recently returned to the United States after another bout of teaching English in Japanese universities. Many of his poems (some published in EDGE) are delightful. So the next time you're shopping in the organic produce section of the spiritual supermarket, toss these three books by Gibson into your cart and cart them home for some strange and serious reading.

Fil Lewitt is a writer, teacher, and long-term resident of Japan. His poetry was featured in the Cynosure section of the last issue of EDGE.

Consommation mécanique

ill-fortuned
dreamer dispatched
to cut ball
bearings blue
petrol-vapor
haze clinging
his cheek

his legal
tender stretched
thin tissue strung
upon lines
dotted

silly tear
that's no
payment down

desperate
he borrows on
his sensibility
his children
invariably
prefer cherrios

his own
discomfort pleads
valium comatose
electronic
gas cheap

O Lazarus
take your place
next to
Edsel

Amputation

When
a friend
gives up,
it's not just
giving in.

A decision
must
be made;

a severing
gesture—
the farewell blade
—yet it's not
gone.

Feel
the fingers
touch
the hand.

Jackie T. Gabel's main work is as a composer in the classical tradition; his musical compositions have been performed on the west coast of the U.S. and recently in Tokyo. He has also won prizes with his poetry, and he has used his poems in traditional song and choral settings—as well as in sound text and electronic sound montage pieces. He lives in Kanagawa.

Aramoana series 1

The breakers smash their shoulders
into the beach a drowned boat
choked with sand
tired of the tides
the tops of the hills
blear-eyed with mist

* *

'cathedral caves' stand over
dug-outs, a few huts, a

completely different language/landscape
several centuries on it's a

pale and treeless
olive green coastline

* *

it's hard to see the water because
it's water and you are you
looking at the world
like an animal with no language
words pouring from their kennels
like tracking dogs

* *

to the green room with a blue vault
from the city in the throes of summer
come barbecues on trailers
boiling up dust
dusty yellow lupin flower
the implements bell

* *

crosslegged on eelgrass
at the edge of saltmarsh

beyond which is the thin
blue line of the harbour

where the background begins
like the wall of a room

Graham Lindsay was born in Wellington, New Zealand in 1952, and is presently living in Christchurch. He has three books of poems out, including Big Boy (Auckland University Press, 1986). The poems published here are from a manuscript entitled The Subject.

Poetry—Who Needs It?

Martin Jack Rosenblum, *The Holy Ranger: Harley-Davidson Poems* (Ranger International Productions, P.O. Box 71231 Shorewood Station, Milwaukee, WI, USA, \$14.95).

Reviewed by Karl Young.

In December 1988, Martin Rosenblum published a small book of poems about his new hobby: owning and riding a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. A dozen books by Rosenblum had been published in the two preceding decades. They'd earned him some recognition among other poets, but none of the books sold in large numbers and he didn't expect this one to be much different. To his surprise, the edition was bought out almost immediately by motorcycle enthusiasts. By the summer of '89, he had a considerable following among bikers, the full support of Harley-Davidson, and an investor ready to finance a 20,000-copy mass market edition of an enlarged book. While the book was going to press, a line of tee-shirts and other paraphernalia was launched, and plans for "The Harley Boys" TV series, which includes a character based on Rosenblum, were initiated. *The Holy Ranger: Harley-Davidson Poems* came off the press in August, just in time for Harley's annual trade show. Three thousand copies were sold during the next two months, and, if Harley's sales promotions are accurate, this year's Christmas sales season should move the book into a second printing, which could make it the best-selling book of poetry by a living American author to be published during the 1980's.

Since I set the book's type and supervised production, I won't act as literary critic, but I would like to discuss the publication of this book as an event. Perhaps that's where its greatest significance lies—and I have had a ringside seat. I think this event says some interesting things about the audience for poetry in America and about the publishing business.

There are a lot of people who'll tell you that the postulation and, at times, the resolution of apparent contradictions lies at the heart of poetry. The notion is alive and well among American literary critics and I assume you'll find a number of *haijin* who'll agree.

From a sales point of view, the contradiction between motorcycles and poetry has been important. It fascinates impulse buyers, and it's something that every reviewer and TV commentator has picked up on—and often run into the ground. This apparent contradiction leads directly into another. Many uninformed readers think of biking as something lurid and expect the book to be the equivalent of an arty Mad Max movie. What they find is a reflection of the extreme conservatism characteristic of the

majority of bikers, even those whose dress and demeanor fit popular stereotypes. To some this may be a disappointment; to others it may be informative.

For Harley, Rosenblum seems the perfect ward healer for two important but opposing markets: the yuppies who want to catch some of the gusto of biking but don't want to be associated with the dirty, nasty belching Hell's Angels types, and those who wanted to be dirty, nasty belching Hell's Angels types ten or twenty years ago but have since grown up and now crave respectability. What could please both groups more than a soft-spoken, mild-mannered, fastidiously dressed, and immaculately polite poet and professor?

Though these groups represent a significant number of bikers, the majority of Harley owners don't fit neatly into either camp. Most defy easy classification, though the majority fall into the lower economic brackets, which usually means the lower educational brackets. This leads to the most important contradiction in this event. Rosenblum's poetry is a fusion of objectivism, projectivism, and cubism; it is not easy or familiar outside literary circles. It is the sort of thing that just about anybody—from drugstore clerk to marketing analyst—will tell you is not suitable for a mass market of any sort, certainly not one made up primarily of bikers. However, as unacceptable as Rosenblum's modernism may seem, the bikers, even the high school dropouts, are not put off by it. Some say it takes a bit of getting used to, but they're willing to make the effort.

This seems to call for a reassessment of poetry's place in the general marketplace. It suggests that large numbers of Americans aren't as stupid, as hostile, as closed-minded, or as unwilling to read poetry, even formally difficult poetry, as critics and publishers have maintained. You can find plenty of pundits who'll claim that poetry is an anachronism in the twentieth century, but the intense enthusiasm and loyalty the book has generated among bikers suggests that poetry is not only something they want but something they need.

The book was published by Ranger International, an independent company set up for the book and related paraphernalia. That is, it is outside not only the trade publishing and university press spheres of influence, it is also outside the small-press world. Whether or not it becomes the best-selling poetry

book of the decade, it has already been successful, and it has done so in an area of the publishing business that simply did not exist before. This suggests that successful poetry publishing can be done outside existing networks and it may urge others to try new publication strategies.

For me, the most pleasing contradiction involves what we might call class struggle. That bikers—a group almost universally despised as sociopaths or patronized as noble savages—should prove to be the most devoted and sincere new audience in recent times for poetry is gratifying. That they should choose a verse form as astringent as Rosenblum's instead of Rod McKuen in Angels colors or even the good but romanticized motorcycle poetry of Michael McClure or Harvey Bailey is grounds for optimism. That new approaches to publishing can be found is a relief.

The unusualness of the venture allows for all sorts of fringe benefits. I've pushed the use of recycled paper for some twenty years, often against strong opposition from nearly everyone involved. I

wanted the book printed on recycled paper and this time response from everyone was favorable, even though recycled paper costs more than virgin pulp stock. That put Ranger ahead of many environmental groups in the area of industrial responsibility.

To some, all the hoopla raised by the book may seem the crassest sort of commercialism and Rosenblum a traitor to his art. That would be a reasonable claim if Rosenblum were insincere in what he was doing or if he had sized up his target customers and written his poetry in order to sucker them into buying something they didn't want. The tee-shirts, badges, posters, etc. may seem indecorous to some. But the bikers—Rosenblum's core constituency—like these things, and this is their party.

Karl Young started his own press some twenty odd years ago as an experiment in urban anarchism along the lines of Kropotkin's Fields, Factories, and Workshops. He lives in Kenosha, Wisconsin, a factory town between Chicago and Milwaukee. A stubborn pluralist, he usually works in several modes at once.

selections from *The Holy Ranger: Harley-Davidson Poems*

At Milwaukee Chapter
Harley Owners Group
Meetings
We Will

often marvel
at the chance
meetings & when
one is arranged
possessing that
element of pure
acausal shock
the intimacy

defines luck :

as though a tattoo
upon chrome values
tales of the rides
are spun around an
evening's pleasure
& unwound on roads

where luck
is hardened
not always by
helmets but in
the rush of wind
there are omens of
divine protection.

Legacy: EvoPoetic Confessional

for Rob Kaleta,
Caballero

an eagle mind
an even road will suddenly twist
a wolf heart
a straight shot can quickly ricochet

:evolution thunder balance
while heading through poetry territorials:

let me admit that my hands
get windburn when I prowl
& cold stiffens them but
win hot lose or draw I
slap leather & hang
onto power that cycles primitive need for the ride
which turns & crooks unleashing
wild pacts made with tight grip
upon buckhorns thrashing as
though wounded in this hunt for significant wind
but if so then healing glove fringe rolls out in
the reach for brake levers only
when crossroads give hesitation

For the Earth Poetry Reading and Concert

Joe Cozzo

Whale Business

Whales come in three sizes: Big, Bigger, and Unmistakable. Basically,

a whale is a floating filter system with a penchant for diving, a great sluice moving broad jaws through plankton, brine shrimp, flotsam, driftwood, through blue-green reflections that float and glow.

When whales copulate, they do it *ménage à trois*, with one male whale lending his back to support the female whale in upright position, while another male whale penetrates.

Barnacles are filters too, they too made mobile by courtesy of riding a whale's back. In the great commotion of that mating ritual, barnacles are dislodged, swirling upward in a brinestorm of sea gulls above, diving for the boiling agitated surface.

This pen moves through plankton, looking for whales. It moves through brine shrimp, flotsam, smelt and herring, its broad belly keeping above deeper waters of the deepest past, spitting whale blood.

If you were to isolate the action of gulls diving down to dine upon barnacles boiling up from explosions of whales rolling beneath, a cutaway shot of the surface might appear the same as sea gulls diving up from the bottom of the churning seawater, while barnacles got flung across a sky streaked dawn and grey.

A ship might appear upside down, floating in from a corner of the picture: it could move through the seawater's churning, looking for whales. One male whale could lend his back for support of the bevy of bright harpoons recoiling, reflecting greywater, reflecting redwater, reflecting whale spouts in the sunset.

Herman Melville wrote *Moby Dick* by whale light.



top to bottom: Joe LaPenta reading Larkin, Alan Booth reading poems for the earth; violinist Ichio Kishimoto of *Voice from Asia*

photos by K. Odani, International Rockers Infozine

Raises Funds, Consciousness (and the Roof)

The music was definitely worth dancing to, but there wasn't much space for dancing at Crocodile in Shibuya on Friday, November 10 as more than 260 people packed the place (designed to accommodate 200) wall to wall for the "For the Earth" poetry reading and concert. The benefit event raised about ¥360,000 for the Japan Tropical Rainforest Action Network (JATAN), an environmental group based in Tokyo which is working to protect the rainforests of Malaysia, the Amazon, and elsewhere. High consumer demand in industrialized nations, such as Japan, for rainforest products—and the corporate strategies which are being used to satisfy that demand—are contributing to the rapid, and perhaps irreversible, destruction of the world's rainforests.

The evening at Crocodile combined music from some of Tokyo's best-known musicians with readings of poems from the recent "For the Earth" poetry contest sponsored by EDGE and *Printed Matter*. It was a rare conjunction of the stars to see so much talent gathered together all at the same time and all under one roof. And all for a good cause. Judging from the number of heads bobbing up and down on the rolling (and sometimes rocking) sea of sound, no one had trouble getting into the music. And to see how attentive everybody was for the readings seemed to indicate that people had no trouble getting into the poetry either.

The music ranged from the straight-from-the-heart folk tunes of Anja Light and Dave Budimir to the sophisticated jazz chords and vocals of Choo Choo and Joshua Popenoe (with Kyosuke Yamamoto on bass); from the back-to-the-basics music of The Addicts to the polished rock of Alan Kidd and Masato Minami; from the melodic English folk tunes of The Dirty Harries to the rhythmic musical orgies of Voice from Asia. The amazing thing was that all this variety came largely from acoustic instruments: folk guitar, violin, accordian, mandolin, bazouki, harmonica.

The "For the Earth" poetry contest, which wrapped up last summer, awarded a first prize of ¥20,000 to Denis Doyle of Tokyo for his poem "The Grasshopper Warbler," which has been published in the *Tokyo Journal*. "Whale Business" by Joe Cozzo (published here in EDGE) and "The Gravel Man Relents" by David Silverstein tied for the ¥10,000 second prize. Stephen Forster's "Laurel Forest" won the third prize of ¥5,000. Honorable mentions went to Fil Lewitt for "Dry Island," Gloria del Vecchio for "Wormwood," and Charles Aschmann for "Landfall."

Poems from the contest, as well as poems from other well-known writers such as Philip Larkin,

were read by Alan Booth, Doreen Simmons, Peter O'Donovan, and Joe LaPenta between the musical sets. Alan Booth also read a piece of his own fiction, "Words Like Torn Leaves," a humorous piece about a lady of a certain profession who proved to be more poetically earthwise than the corporate clients she entertained.

Special thanks to Charles Stewart of One-Heart Productions who helped to organize the event, to *Kyoto Journal* and JATAN for putting up additional prize money for the contest, to *Japan Environment Monitor* for offering to publish additional poetry from the contest, and to all who helped organize and perform for the event. And also, of course, very special thanks to everyone who came out to show their solidarity with both the earth and the people who are working to save it for ourselves and future generations.

—Richard Evanoff

Poetry Society of Japan Holds Annual Poetry Fair

The Poetry Society of Japan held its Poetry Fair '89 on November 11 at Yamato Gakuen, Shinjuku, Tokyo. Poetry was read by Neal H. Lawrence, Shigehiko Yamano, Scott Watson, Toshimi Horiuchi, Charles Aschmann, and Mitsuru Ohike. Linked poems were presented by Horiuchi, Naoshi Koriyama, and Marion Zoboski. There were also lectures by Marie Philomène ("Emperor Akihito's Poetry") and Peter Milward ("From the Heart of Hopkins to the Heart of Japanese Poets"), and a symposium on the work of the late Tsutomu Fukuda, which included Aschmann, Koriyama, Amy Horiuchi, and Yorifumi Yaguchi as panelists. During an hour-long "tea break" William Moore read excerpts from a play he is writing about Walt Whitman, and Yamato Gakuen Students performed a scene from the Noh drama "Shoujou." A dinner party was held at the Shinjuku Park Hotel afterwards.

The Poetry Society of Japan has been in existence more than twenty years and serves as a link between Japanese and foreign poets living in Japan who write in English. More information about the society can be obtained by writing to Atsuo Nakagawa, Executive Secretary, The Poetry Society of Japan, 5-11 Nagaike-cho, Showa-ku, Nagoya 466. Jose Civasqui is president of the society and Suketaro Sawada is treasurer.

Bumbershoot

Many Poets, One Umbrella

GOT A MATCH? POEM

If we poets were as good as _____,
we'd be in _____.

Graves	Majorca
Rod McKuen	Trouble
Ezra Pound	St. Elizabeth's
John Ashbery	The New Yorker
Friends	Touch

Bill Shively
from *Poets. Painters. Composers. No. 1*

table skirts
hide the vendors'
restless feet

reading T-shirts
credo across his chest
JUST SAY NO

haiku display
prompts a quiz
on bonsai

lull in the crowd
a salesman winks
and pantomimes sleep

let's face it!
the book on sex
gets the biggest play

Francine Porad
editor of *Brussels Sprout*



graphics by Trudy Mercer

LANDINGS

The world lets you down,
The world lets you down.

Certain artists surpass your ideas of art. Besides their intensive creative efforts and ordinary hard labor, they comprehend how things are around art, and with how much difficulty if at all, real change arrives.

Some artists wish to remain anonymous or pseudonymous. Their names invent and at the same time invalidate authorship and ownership. Some artists want more than accolades, more than grants, more than status, more than markets. In fact, they want nothing from you. Everything you have is worthless.

from BORDER BRUJO

I'm a child of border crises
a product of cultural cesarean
I was born between epochs & cultures
born from an infected wound
a howling wound
a flaming wound
for I am part of a new mankind
the 4th World, the migrant kind

Guillermo Gomez-Peña
from the *Documented/Undocumented Series*, a
part of which appeared in Bumbershoot's *Ergo*

Joseph Keppler
from *Poets. Painters. Composers. No. 3*

#416

outside the post office
in the snow,
a Christmas bow

#470

past tense:
freckles on a dead man
curtain won't open

#498

moonset/trump card

M. Kettner
editor of *Catalyst*

Bumbershoot is the Seattle Arts Festival, an annual Labor Day Weekend bash that hosted a quarter of a million people this year, its nineteenth. Mostly outdoor ethnic food and music interspersed with booths hawking handcrafted what-nots, it also has its literary arts part where invited luminaries from around the country, such as Jerome Rothenberg, perform and discuss, along with Seattle talents selected by a special jury—not to mention the open mikes, Mixed Media, and Word Works. (EDGE's own international correspondent, Bill Shively, ran a four-day Renku Project, with prize money for winning links!)

The Bookfair hosted an amazing array of small presses, including *Opinion Rag* (Box 20307, Seattle, Washington 98102 USA) which won the "Best" prize and is now accepting material for its next issue on the theme of "screams," Francine Porad's "new" *Brussels Sprout* (PO Box 1551, Mercer Island, Washington 98040 USA) featuring haiku, *Calyx* (PO Box B, Corvallis, Oregon 97339 USA) which sponsored the Forbidden Stitch Reading of poems from its recent Asian-American women's anthology (look for Tina Koyama in our next issue), and *Poets. Painters. Composers*. (10254 35th Ave SW, Seattle, Washington 98146 USA), a unique production which appears in different forms and whose "editor," Joseph Keppler, is a talented POPACO and aesthetician himself.

Do Bumbershoot for inspiration, edification, and fun! Next year's twentieth will feature an expanded literary component. Seattle's various poetry tribes are generating one of the most "together" regional poetry scenes in the USA.

—Sherry Reniker

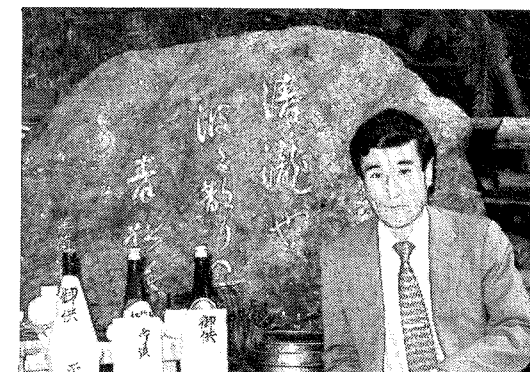
Basho's Last Poem?

Basho's haiku, "fallen ill on the journey," is regarded by many scholars as the last poem Basho ever wrote. Masahisa Fukuda, a scholar of Japanese literature at Kokushikan University, however, holds the controversial position that Basho's last poem was actually a revision of "Kiyotaki River." Fukuda organizes the annual Basho Ochiai Festival in Kyoto at the site of a stone on which the poem is written. This year's festival, which also commemorated the 300th anniversary of Basho's Oku-nohosomichi (Back Roads to Far Towns), was attended by more than fifty scholars and poets, including Cid Corman, who wrote the definitive translation of Basho's famed travel diary; William Higginson, former president of the Haiku Society of America; poet Penny Harter; and artist Robert Reed, who walked the entire route of Basho's journey and wrote his own account, entitled *Boku-nohosomichi*. The following short essay, translated by Tadashi Kondo, gives Fukuda's version of how Basho's last poem came to be written.

Basho was sick in bed the night of October 8, 1694 (the seventh year of Genroku), when he made the poem: "fallen ill on the journey / my dream runs around / the withered field".

The following day, that is, October 9, Basho said that one of his haiku, "Kiyotaki [Clear Cascades] River / no speck among the waves / summer moon", which he had written in the summer in Kyoto, was analogous to another one, "white chrysanthemum / a careful look catches / no speck", which he had composed at Sonojo's house in Osaka. He said he wanted to change the former poem as follows:

Kiyotaki River . . .
falling into the waves
green pine needles



Prof. Masahisa Fukuda at the stone near Kyoto on which he believes Basho's last poem may be written

Although this haiku was presented as a revision, its motivation and material are new. It projects a realistic image and expresses a deep ideality. "Green pine needles" symbolizes the poet's life which is about to end.

This haiku is very important in terms of showing that the "attachment [to the poetic life]", which he had the previous night, has disappeared and that he has attained the state of the deep, clear religious world.

On October 10 Basho wrote his final letters to relatives. On the morning of October 12 he put himself into the care of his disciple, Mokusetsu, a physician, and in a room filled with the light of Indian summer he was amused to find that one of his disciples caught flies better than others. He breathed his last peaceful breath at about 4 p.m. It was indeed a calm death of spiritual peace.

This revised haiku, consequently, is actually the last haiku by Basho. It is significant because it exemplifies the clear state of his mind, appropriate to the death of the haiku saint.

NETWorks: English-language litmags in Japan, part II.

Blue Jacket, Blue Jacket Press, c/o Yuichi Seki, 1-5-54 Sugue-cho, Sanjo-shi, Niigata-ken 955; ¥500/\$4 per copy. Edited by Yusuke Keida, translator and Beat enthusiast. Number 24, Spring 1989 was a one-year labor of love as Keida translated 50 pages of poems (Knight, Walsh, Solt, Antler) and essays (Hamill, Christy) into Japanese himself. The 20 pages in English include original poems (Bakowski, Winans), translations into English, info on books, mags, and presses. Keida's worldwide connections make for a lively mix of the "hip, Beat, and antic."

Kyoto Review, c/o Kyoto Seika University, 137 Kino, Iwakura, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606; no price listed. Edited by Yuzuru Katagiri et. al. Spring 1989, the thickest issue to date, includes an interview with Allen Ginsberg, translations by Harold Wright, a few poems and reviews, and two must-reads: Katagiri on Japanese folk song improvisation and Gavan McCormack on Japan's construction plans for a prototype 21st-century city somewhere in Australia. All in English, strong cover graphics. While somewhat uneven in quality from article to article, *Kyoto Review* has been a forum for free-thinking non-conformity since it was started in the early 70's.

Japanese Literature Today, Japan P.E.N. Club, 265 Showa Residential Hotel, 9-1-7 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo; annual English-language publication of the P.E.N. Club, Tokyo; price varies yearly. Contains an excellent introductory article surveying what was going on in Japanese literature during the previous year and includes an index of recently published translations in English, along with a representational sampling of short stories, poems, reviews, and articles.

The Abiko Quarterly Rag, 8-1-8 Namiki, Abiko, Chiba 270-11; quarterly; ¥2,000 per year. Edited by Joyce-enthusiast Anna Livia Plurabelle, who takes both her name and editorial style from *Finnegans Wake*, the *Rag* is an alphabet soup of original and borrowed writings, cutouts and clippings just this side of literary sanity, sometimes hard to make sense of but playfully put together by people who are obviously enjoying themselves.

Kyoto Journal, 35 Minamigoshomachi, Okazaki, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606; quarterly; ¥2,000 per year. Probably the best all-round city mag in English being published in Japan. *Kyoto Journal* has the honed look of a mainstream publication and a sizeable circulation to match, but the content is definitely alternative—a mix of grassroots politics, culture, and art related to Japan. Poetry and fiction do not occupy center-stage, but the work is nicely presented and worthy of the aspirations of any serious writer wishing to see her/his work in print. Insiders tip: Editor John Einarsen says he's currently awash in poetry submissions.

Origin. The most recent issue of *Origin* appeared some time ago, but many back issues are still available from Longhouse Press, Jacksonsville Stage, Brattleboro, Vermont 05301 USA—write for a catalogue. Editor Cid Corman, who continues to live in Kyoto, has hopes of publishing *Origin* Press chapbooks soon. *Origin* is an important original source of contemporary American poetry, having published a significant number of significant poets, including Creeley, Olson, Duncan, Lev-ertov, Enslin, Snyder—and on and on and on. The best of the best has been compiled in an anthology, *The Gist of Origin*, published by Grossman and also available from Longhouse.

The Leading Edge

Dear EDGE,

Good luck with EDGE and don't let it get too stiff. The last issue had some good names, but I don't find that it really has a bite in the sense that I associate with the name "EDGE." It should either be on the cutting edge or have an edge of risk, danger (in Japanese, *doku*, poison) which it seems to lack. It should hopefully not just be conventional bland entertainment. It seems from the title page that the editors are all volunteers. So why the walking on eggs? Playing it safe for what? Literature that lasts

is usually elsewhere, lively with ideas not afraid to stir up controversy. Don't let EDGE become a parody of those Japanese haiku mags.

John Solt, Arlington, Massachusetts, USA

Edge is interested in hearing from its readers and welcomes letters relating to all aspects of the magazine and its contents. Letters for The Leading Edge will be published at the discretion of the editor and may be edited for reasons of space or clarity.

Marginalia: literary notes on Japan and abroad

The Second International Tanka Contest (in English only) is being sponsored by The Poetry Society of Japan, with awards totaling US\$300. An entry fee of ¥200 in Japanese postage stamps or two International Reply Coupons per entry will be charged to non-PSJ members. Deadline is March 31, 1990. For complete rules, send an SASE (or SAE and one IRC) to The Poetry Society of Japan, 5-11 Nagaikicho, Showa-ku, Nagoya 466.

The Onigiri drama group wishes to apologise for any inconvenience caused by the advertisement printed in the last issue of EDGE. Due to illness, *Bumbum and Booboo* could not be completed in time for the scheduled October performance. The play is now scheduled for performance in summer 1990.

Poems From the Earth, an anthology to be published in celebration of Earth Day, April 22, 1990 has a deadline of December 31, 1989 for submissions of 5-10 poems on nature and environmental themes. Send to Ray Gonzalez, Editor, P.O. Box AA, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305 USA.

The International James Joyce Foundation will hold its next European Symposium in Monaco, June 11-16, 1990. For more info write to Morris Beja, President, Department of English, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210 USA. Local Joyce enthusiasts can check out the Abiko James Joyce Parlor, which welcomes contributions of anything related in any way to Joyce. Contact Anna Livia Plurabelle at 0471-84-7904.

White Pine Press (76 Center Street, Fredonia, New York 14063 USA) has the following books by writers featured in EDGE: *When On The Edge* by Edith Shiffert, \$7, *Among Buddhas in Japan* by Morgan Gibson, \$10, *Tantric Poetry of Kukai* by Gibson & Murakami, \$7, *Tangled Hair: Poems of Yosano Akiko* by Maloney & Oshiro, \$7.50, and *Sky* by Bob Arnold, \$4. Send \$2 (postage & handling) for the first book, and \$.50 for each thereafter.

Biodata on Artists

Malcolm Jones was born in Belfast in 1955. Though the artistic calling began at an early age, he worked for many years in physics. He is now a successful commercial photographer whose work has appeared in a large number of magazines, including this issue of EDGE (front cover).

Thomas Hojnacki is an artist working in a variety of media who has lived in Tokyo for the past ten years. Originally from Indiana, USA, he was actively involved in the recent exhibition by the All Japan Artists' Cooperative (AJAC) at the Ueno Metropolitan Museum. His picture on the back cover of this issue of EDGE is from his 1988 series, "Prima Materia."

David Chesanow is a freelance copy editor and illustrator living in Hokkaido. His political cartoons have appeared in the Asahi Evening News.

Now in his eighties, J. B. Holland is still living in his birthplace of Topeka, Kansas. J. B. has worked in a variety of professions, ranging from wheat farmer to school teacher. He has published two novels and his verse has appeared in a number of magazines.

John Einarsen is a photographer and the founding editor of Kyoto Journal.

Happenings

Oita

Oita's first poetry reading was arranged this past November by a group of writers hoping to expand their activities. To get in touch with them write to Jeanne Belisle, Beppu Daigaku Shokuin Jutaku 12, Sakuragaoka 4-kumi, Beppu-shi, Oita-ken 874.

Kobe

Writers meet monthly (at various times and locations) to discuss fiction and poetry. For more info contact Alan Fisher at 078-821-6527.

Tokyo

Tokyo Writers' Workshop has canceled its January meeting but otherwise meets at the Shinjuku Bunka Center every second Sunday of the month for poetry from 1 to 3 pm and fiction from 3 to 5. For directions call John Evans at 044-987-4337.

Kyoto

Kyoto Connection is in the process of changing venues but continues to meet on the last Sunday of each month from 8 to 12 pm. For info or to arrange a performance contact Ken Rodgers at 075-822-0898 or Ian Ropke at 075-561-7557.

A group of poets meet with Cid Corman on a regular basis to discuss their work. More participants are welcome. For details contact Barry MacDonald at 075-712-7445.

Chiba

Informal workshops for writers in the Chiba area are being held regularly. For details call Michael O'Rourke at 0473-55-3136 or Mary Fujimaki at 0472-57-9308.

Anna Livia Plurabelle's Rag Party gets together for literary discussion and socializing in Abiko the third Saturday of every month from 6 pm until it ends. All are welcome. For directions, call 0471-84-7904.