

This Week's Montage

—Around the World

Comparative Haiku

selected by

Allan Burns

Like the English language itself, English-language haiku is a global phenomenon. The opening of Japan in the mid-nineteenth century and the first translations of haiku into English set in motion an inexorable fascination with this tiniest of literary genres. After the pioneering efforts of the Imagists, the post-World War II Occupation hastened the pace of cultural assimilation as the work of translators and explicators such as Blyth, Henderson, Suzuki, and Yasuda helped inspire the “haikus” of the Beats and others and finally led to the founding of a viable North American haiku “movement” with the publication of *American Haiku* in 1963 and Eric Amann’s *Haiku* (in Toronto) in 1967. Although the post-war destinies of Japan and the U.S. were particularly intertwined, haiku did not remain strictly a North American phenomenon. By the seventies it was starting to flourish also in the U.K. and Antipodes. Nor has it stopped there. This week’s Montage focuses on English-language haiku poets from Romania, India, and China. Ion Condrescu, born in Cobadin, Romania, studied ink painting and haiga in Japan and went on to found both an international haiku journal (*Albatross*) and an international haiku festival; he has published poems, essays, and articles in eighteen countries. K. Ramesh, of Chennai in southern India, is, globally, one of the best-known Indian haiku poets; he credits a boyhood that afforded “the opportunity to spend most of the time outdoors” with priming his devotion to haiku (*Presence* 36, pg. 38). Bob Lucky was born in Green Bay, Wisconsin, but has spent recent years teaching at international schools in Thailand and China while gifting our journals with poems exemplifying *karumi*. In this season of vacations and study abroad, there should be world enough and time for haiku

Ion Condrescu (b. 1951)

K. Ramesh (b. 1966)

Bob Lucky (b. 1956)

at the opera
a moth flying
in the spotlight

as in my childhood
I stay in the rain
to eat fresh blackberries

sitting all alone . . .
the lights of a distant hamlet
under Orion

flute playing allegro
the squirrel’s movements
stop and go

elections over—
the defeated still smile
from their posters

hot day—
a fly interrupts
the president’s speech

falling leaves
accompany
Chopin’s music

1 from *Constantza—International Haiku Anthology* (Muntenia Press, 1992)
2–3 from *Mountain Voices* (Ami-Net International Press, 2000)
4–7 from *Unsold Flowers* (Hub Editions, 1995)

meditation over . . .
the crickets
still chirping

twilight...
the banyan tree’s
silence

village in the hills...
a monkey looks into
the bike’s mirror

dawn . . .
the rooster for sacrifice
calls in the temple

Vedic chants . . .
a heron glides to a rock
in the misty lake

evening drizzle . . .
ducks linger on the steps
of the temple pond

a yellow leaf
touching the green ones
on its way down

1 from *The Heron’s Nest* 7.4, 2005
2 from *Presence* 28, 2006
3 from *Frogpond* 30.2, 2007
4 from *The Heron’s Nest* 9.3, 2007
5 from *The Heron’s Nest* 10.2, 2008
6–7 from *Presence* 36, 2008

spring dawn—
the beggar dumps a spider
from her cup

drought
the river bed
runs through my fingers

heat wave
the mailman fans himself
with my bills

rain clouds
a tour group
drifts off

steady rain
the pumpkin’s
dark smile

mid-afternoon
monsoon puddles
meet up

new moon
finding an owl pellet
in my pocket

1 from *The Heron’s Nest* 9.1, 2007
2–6 from *New Resonance* 6 (Red Moon Press, 2009)
7 from *Presence* 36, 2008

Previous Montages

August 2: *Lifefulness*
August 9: *The Haiku Capital
of the Midwest*

Next Week's Montage: *The Adobe Wall*

Elizabeth Searle Lamb
Marian Olson
Edith Bartholomeusz