

This Week's Montage

—California Dreamin'

Comparative Haiku

selected by

Allan Burns

What originally occasioned this gallery is the anniversary of California's statehood on September 9th. California became the 31st state admitted to the Union in 1850, just after the Mexican-American War of 1846 and, of course, the gold rush of 1849. This Montage still celebrates the work of three among the many haiku poets who hail from the most populous and third largest (behind Alaska and Texas) state. But I see the gallery now, inevitably, also as an elegiac tribute to D. Claire Gallagher, who passed away on July 17th of this year. Carolyn Hall wrote on The Haiku Foundation website that "Claire described herself as having been 'born a Californian in Wisconsin.'" Carolyn also notes that "Claire became interested in haiku in 1991 after reading Wes Nisker's commentary on haiku in his book *Crazy Wisdom*. Two years later she attended a meeting of the Haiku Poets of Northern California (HPNC) and quickly became active in that group, the Yuki Teikei Haiku Society, and the Haiku Society of America, and remained so till the end of her life." Her work won many awards and is collected in *the nether world* (Red Moon Press, 2009). Her haiku are flanked here by the work of two other eminent haiku poets. Like his exact contemporary Gary Hotham (Montage #21), Michael McClintock was born in 1950 and found his way into the haiku community at a precocious age in the late 1960s. Widely recognized for his haiku, senryu, and tanka, he recently published a highly acclaimed chapbook *Sketches from the San Joaquin* (Turtle Light Press, 2009), the title of which obviously emphasizes how strong a presence the landscape and culture of California are in his work. Jerry Ball has lived in San Francisco since 1939; he was introduced to haiku in 1977, founded the Southern California Haiku Study Group and Haiku North America, served two terms as president of HSA, and co-edited *The San Francisco Haiku Anthology*.

Michael McClintock (b. 1950)

D. Claire Gallagher (1941-2009)

Jerry Ball (b. 1932)

dead cat . . .
open-mouthed
to the pouring rain

tonight...wishing
the lightning were lightning,
the thunder, thunder

(from "Vietnam")

moonrise . . .
eyes of rock mice
rim the dry gully

letting sand fall
from my hand
countless suns

each there
for the other
moon and pine

a little inn
with a swinging sign-board . . .
the evening chill

high autumn days
the morning glories open
to whatever comes

1-2 from *The Haiku Anthology*, edited by
Cor van den Heuvel (Anchor Books, 1974)
3 from *Snapshots* 9, 2001
4-5 from *Letters in Time: Sixty Short Poems*
(Hermitage West, 2005)
6 from *The Heron's Nest* 8.3, 2006
7 from *The Heron's Nest* 10.3, 2008

the goose droppings
spattered on spring grass
full of spring grass

midnight breeze
through magnolia blossoms—
a sigh escaping

rush hour traffic—
feral parrots wheeling
between skyscrapers

mercury beads rolling
on the bathroom floor—
earthquake weather

a smear of stars
from horizon to horizon—
the loon's necklace

slicing apples
into the dented pan—
howl of the wind

perfume vial—
the unstoppable
memory

1 from *Modern Haiku* 33.2, 2002
2 from *The Heron's Nest* 7.3, 2005
3 from *Modern Haiku* 37.2, 2006
4 from *The Heron's Nest* 9.3, 2007
5 from *The Heron's Nest* 10.1, 2008
6 from *The Heron's Nest* 10.2, 2008
7 from *Frogpond* 29.2, 2006

Iris in her hand,
she talks of distant places . . .
without facing me

beautiful daughter
of a woman I once loved
ending of springtime

a long line of cars
at Santa Rita Prison . . .
Easter morning rain

heat of afternoon—
scrapes of a workman's shovel
against the pavement

shaking hands again
with the cardiologist
end of summer

autumn evening . . .
as we stare at the planets
a stranger joins us

winter evening
a light is burning
in the back of the house

1-4 & 6 from *The San Francisco Haiku Anthology*,
edited by Jerry Ball, Garry Gay, and Tom Tico
(Smythe-Waithe Press, 1992)
5 from *dust of summers: The Red Moon Anthology of
English-Language Haiku 2007* (Red Moon Press,
2008)
7 from *The Heron's Nest* 8.1, 2006

Previous Montages

August 23: *The Adobe Wall*
August 30: *One-Liners*

Next Week's Montage: *Fall Migration*

Carole MacRury
Martin Lucas
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