

This Week's Montage

—Halloween Masque

Comparative Haiku

selected by

Allan Burns

We never—even in our wildest Hallowe'en moods—visited this cellar by night, but in some of our daytime visits could detect the phosphorescence, especially when the day was dark and wet. There was also a subtler thing we often thought we detected—a very strange thing which was, however, merely suggestive at most. I refer to a sort of cloudy whitish pattern on the dirt floor—a vague, shifting deposit of mould or nitre which we sometimes thought we could trace amidst the sparse fungous growths near the huge fireplace of the basement kitchen. Once in a while it struck us that this patch bore an uncanny resemblance to a doubled-up human figure, though generally no such kinship existed, and often there was no whitish deposit whatever. On a certain rainy afternoon when this illusion seemed phenomenally strong, and when, in addition, I had fancied I glimpsed a kind of thin, yellowish, shimmering exhalation rising from the nitrous pattern toward the yawning fireplace, I spoke to my uncle about the matter. He smiled at this odd conceit, but it seemed that his smile was tinged with reminiscence. Later I heard that a similar notion entered into some of the wild ancient tales of the common folk—a notion likewise alluding to ghoulish, wolfish shapes taken by smoke from the great chimney, and queer contours assumed by certain of the sinuous tree-roots that thrust their way into the cellar through the loose foundation-stones.”—H. P. Lovecraft, “The Shunned House” (1924)

Clement Hoyt (1906-1970)

Tomas Tranströmer (b. 1931)

Ann K. Schwader (b. 1960)

In that lightning flash,—
through the night rain—I saw it!
... whatever it was.

For a long moment
a nighthawk ghosts through the moonlight
overhead.

The cotton farmer
plows down the Indian mound
heedless of the bones.

A Hallowe'en mask,
floating face up in the ditch,
slowly shakes its head.

Through the cloud-burst's lull;
face down in a flooded field,
the drowned scarecrow.

In that empty house,
with broken windows rattling,
a door slams and slams.

Leaves moils in the yard,
reveal an eyeless doll's head...
slowly conceal it.

from *Storm of Stars* (The Green World, 1976)

A corrosive wind
blasts through the house in the night—
the name of demons.

Rugged pine trees
over the same tragic moor.
Ever and ever.

The sun disappears.
A tugboat watches
with its bulldog head.

Go soft as the rain,
meet the whispering leaves.
Hear the Kremlin bell!

Creeping of shadows . . .
we are lost in the forest
among toadstool clan.

A revelation.
The crooked old apple tree.
The sea is close by.

Man-bird creatures.
Apple trees were blossoming.
The great enigma.

from *The Great Enigma: 45 Haiku*, English versions
by Graham High and Gunvor Edwards (RAM Pub-
lications, 2005)

raven cries
at the top of the old tree
first yellow leaf

a beaded lizard
slips between rocks
the raven's shadow

morning fog
what the raven found
obscured

last bright leaves—
the black flap
of a raven

a raven
runs the light—
Santa Fe sky

snow field—
a raven rises
into its cry

razored through
to the void
raven

1 from *tinywords*, 18 Nov. 2002
2 from *Simply Haiku* 2.6, 2004
3 from *tinywords*, 24 May 2004
4 from *Frogpond* 29.1, 2006
5 from *Modern Haiku* 37.1, 2006
6 from *The Heron's Nest* 9.1, 2007
7 from *Roadrunner* 7.3, 2007, Scorpion Prize

Previous Montages

October 11: *Looking with the Universe*
October 18: *Three Poets of the UK*

Next Week's Montage: *The Europeans*

Max Verhart
Dietmar Tauchner
Dimitar Anakiev