

Sketches from the San Joaquin



Michael McClintock







Oranges

Plums



Grapes

Lettuce

Dear Gov —

This is for you
From your eternally
grateful,

Michael
McClintock

April 2009

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Turtle Light Press

2009

Ab initio, ad fontes . . .

Back to the beginning, to the sources

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ISBN 978-0-9748147-1-1

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Turtle Light Press

P.O. Box 1405

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To the memory of my parents,

Robert Lloyd McClintock and La Dona Valencia McClintock

1871-1872

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not green itself
but a hint of it—
the slanting spring light

above the trees
a mountain has melted
into haze

having no thought
we've come to see them —
dogwoods in bloom

rain . . .
the small mouth
a flower opens

a shining world—
dewdrops for the duckling
and the beetle it eats

all day in spring,
the deer cross the high meadow
into the clouds . . .

done for the day
my dad brings to supper
the smell of turned earth

Easter morning . . .
a woman with an axe
walks to the chicken house

with no kites in the sky
the wind
moves on

April funeral—
the weeping mother neatens
her son's perfect hair

all there is
between heaven and earth—
towering clouds

hearing the dog
drink from its bowl
I feel cooler

crescent moon . . .
moths come touching
spikes of the iris

first light . . .
the wide-awake hats
in the lettuce field

the day heats up—
I make the dog's grave
deeper by a foot

walking home
by a new path
mint leaves

that lonely thing
silent lightning
on a prairie

muggy night . . .
the child's moon drawing
taped to the fridge

this is how life is—
hearing the cricket at dawn
just as it ceases

I'm here to be with you
I say to the willows
pushing in among them

a year's rain —
little pits hardened in
the sun-baked earth

sucking seeds
from pomegranates
our faces like fish

where three drowned
the lake water
sparkles in the morning

the fruit pickers
seem glum about it—
a record crop

hefting a plum —
I know by heart
my father's orchard

left to die . . .
the apple tree grown gnarled
on the sway-back hill

a cricket at dawn
blending back under leaves
fallen in the forest

the full moon:
I love a night
that simple

sketching in pencil
an old face
a thousand rivers

high autumn days
sweet female voices
echo in the fields

starless night . . .
from the bar-room a love song
about red lips

prayer ribbons
fluttering, fluttering
autumn evening

October clouds . . .
one with a dragon's tail and
stars in its mouth

straightening my back—
the gong from a bell
on a distant hill

foggy rooftops . . .
I write my mother's elegy
in bold, black ink

a winter day
turned warm—
the smell of haylofts

eating a pear—
how small the seeds
in this modern variety

lingering over an egg
warm in its shell
winter deepens

drawn to the train
in the toyshop window
. . . snow flurries

vanishing snows . . .
the old ways back to the fields
water remembers

tall pines —
I'll never be ready
to go home

About the Author

Michael McClintock lives in Fresno, California, in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley. He has been cited as a master of contemporary English language haiku and tanka poetry, and has been a major contributor and critic in these genres for more than 40 years.

Other collections of his haiku, senryu, tanka and haibun

Meals at Midnight, Modern English Tanka Press, 2008

Letters in Time: Sixty Short Poems, Hermitage West, 2005

Anthology of Days, Backwoods BroadSides Chaplet Series, 2002

Maya: Selected Poems, Seer Ox, 1976

Man With No Face, Shelters Press, 1974

Light Run, Shiloh Press, 1971



Acknowledgments

The author is grateful to the following publications where many of these poems, or versions of them, first appeared: *Acorn*, *Basho Festival Anthologies* [Japan], *Clouds Peak*, *Frogpond*, *The Heron's Nest*, *The Mainichi Daily* [Japan], *Modern Haiku*, *Moonset*, *Raw Nervz* [Canada], *Roadrunner*, *Still* [United Kingdom], *Tundra*, *World Haiku Review*, and *Upstate Dim Sum*.

A few poems won awards in the following competitions

2006 Harold G. Henderson Haiku Awards, p. 2, bottom

2006 Basho Festival, p. 24, bottom

2003 Basho Festival, p. 19

2002 Basho Festival, p. 20, top



Colophon

The poems are set in Goudy Old Style; other fonts used include Rage Italic and Papyrus. Cover and interior design by Rick Black (with a few pointers from Sarah Stengle), using Quark XPress 6.0. The book was printed on an Okidata 8800 color laser printer. The cover stock is Murano Honey 160 gsm, the flyleaf Thai Mango in brick red, the text stock Classic Crest Millstone 24#.

Many thanks to Kwame Dawes for serving as a judge with Rick Black for this chapbook competition. A special thanks to Karen McClintock for her title page and back cover illustrations. Cover photograph is reproduced by permission of Gordon Welford; photo of grapes purchased from *istockphoto.com*.

This book was completed during a drought in the valley that added to the loss of jobs and livelihoods already caused by the economic downturn.

First Edition - 200 copies



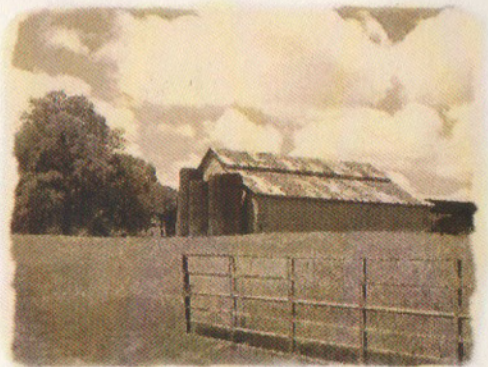


the book is a beautiful example of the art of bookbinding. The cover is made of a rich, deep red velvet material, which is both soft and durable. The spine is bound in a dark, textured material, possibly leather or a high-quality cloth, which provides a striking contrast to the velvet. The edges of the pages are slightly worn, giving the book a sense of age and history. The overall design is simple yet elegant, reflecting the classic style of the publisher.

Many thanks to the publisher, who has made it possible for me to have this book. The book is a beautiful example of the art of bookbinding. The cover is made of a rich, deep red velvet material, which is both soft and durable. The spine is bound in a dark, textured material, possibly leather or a high-quality cloth, which provides a striking contrast to the velvet. The edges of the pages are slightly worn, giving the book a sense of age and history. The overall design is simple yet elegant, reflecting the classic style of the publisher.

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2008 TLP Haiku Chapbook Competition Winner



A poignant collection of haiku that reflects McClintock's abiding attachment to the San Joaquin Valley, the flow of its seasons and his remembrances of life there. It will be savored for a long time to come.



Turtle Light Press



2009