

# Sun Through the Blinds

Montreal Haiku Today

Edited by

Maxianne Berger & Angela Leuck




# SUN THROUGH THE BLINDS

## MONTREAL HAIKU TODAY

EDITED BY

MAXIANNE BERGER and ANGELA LEUCK

Shoreline 

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## PREFACE

*Sun Through the Blinds: Montreal Haiku Today* was an idea that grew out of Haiku at the Garden (Haïku au jardin), an annual two-day celebration of haiku held for the past three years at the Japanese Garden of the Montreal Botanical Garden. Haiku at the Garden allowed Montreal's haiku poets, writing in English, French, or Japanese, to come together for the first time and present their work in a series of public readings and performances. The event was an opportunity for haiku poets to meet both the public and each other.

Anyone at all familiar with Montreal will know that it is a city of "two solitudes"—the French and the English. In the case of Montreal's haiku community, this concept can be expanded to incorporate the "three solitudes" of French, English, and Japanese poets. English poets, though aware of the existence of haiku poets writing in two other languages in the same city, have found it difficult in the past to bridge the linguistic and cultural gap separating the groups.

*Sun Through the Blinds: Montreal Haiku Today* is the cooperative effort of these poets to break down barriers and further the initiative that began with Haiku at the Garden. All the groups share a common fascination with haiku, a poetic form that in itself strives to explore the links between two separate worlds—the



world outside us and the world within. Whether writing in English, French, or Japanese, these poets all live in the same city; they share the same landscape and the same seasons, as captured through the precise and telling lenses of haiku. Haiku, brief by its very nature—the length of a single breath—uses language that aims at the greatest simplicity and clarity possible. Thus, it would seem to offer many possibilities for translation.

While a number of French poets were able to translate their own poems into English, others worked with poets from our English haiku group who volunteered to help with translations.

Local haiku poets writing in Japanese belong to the Satsuki Haiku Club, which has met once a month for the past 15 years at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre of Montreal. The Satsuki Club is a distinguished branch of the Kawachino Haiku Club of Japan, one of that country's largest and most traditional haiku groups. Prior to participating in this anthology, poets of the Satsuki Club had never considered translating their poems into English.

*Sun Through the Blinds: Montreal Haiku Today* is a collection of haiku written by Montrealers. True to this city's rich ethnic diversity, the anthology's poets actually come from an astonishing range of cultural backgrounds. In this book, readers will encounter writers of Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese, Egyptian, Italian, Greek, Russian, Polish, Hungarian, and Scottish descents. And



these poets utilize a variety of stylistic approaches in their work, from classic haiku poems about nature, to modern and unabashedly urban poems. These haiku poets are not bound by rules; rather, they create their own as they go along.

One of the goals of *Sun Through the Blinds: Montreal Haiku Today* is to challenge the notion that haiku is the voice of a select few. Poets who have been writing for over 20 years appear here alongside poets who have taken up the craft much more recently, yet each poet is given equal space. Poets were invited to contribute poems that they particularly liked, resulting in an anthology that is warm and personal—and one that is very much within the original haiku spirit of sharing poetry among friends.

What does all this variety tell us? First and foremost, it reveals that while we are all unique, with diverse perspectives of the world, we are also very much the same: we are all human beings in a world filled with fleeting moments of beauty and insight. It is through the art of haiku that we hope to preserve such moments and share them with one another.

Angela Leuck  
August 2003

## HAIKU TODAY

Several years ago, a good friend recited to me a few lines of her poem, something about picking up a stone on the beach. "Is this a haiku?" she asked. I repeated her poem, slowly counting the syllables on my fingers. Strictly speaking it could *not* be a haiku: it had the wrong syllable count. "No," I stated with ignorant conviction. "No."

I have learned a lot about haiku since then. Most importantly, I have learned that strict rules are made to be broken, and that a haiku, while remaining a very brief poem with one main image, need not be three lines long, with a concrete five-seven-five syllable count, as this collection reveals.

Formalism does not hold back Rod Willmot, one of the founders of the North American haiku movement:

another house of card players laughing  
another street of  
kicking through leaves

Marco Fraticelli, who has been writing haiku for over 25 years, knows not to add unnecessary syllables simply to rectify the count, as his three-word haiku reveals:

spring  
melting  
us

That's four syllables—only four syllables—with the idea of recitation in a single breath clearly met.

Certainly, haiku in translation cannot be forced into a five-seven-five mould; too often, attempts to confine or stretch them into shape destroy their very essences. So we happily accept the English version of Tsune Kitajima's Japanese haiku of four lines:

the first snowfall  
an immaculate road  
the first step warrants  
hesitation

With 19 syllables in all—only two more than called for in a strictly regimented haiku—the poem remains brief enough.

What words can one use in a haiku? The rule is to use only concrete terms—no abstractions, no similes, no metaphors. Pamela Cooper is strictly formal in her haiku:

in the murky sky  
clouds move over to reveal  
an orange half moon

Guy M  nard, on the other hand, takes this approach:

when red October  
sets on fire and paints in blood  
the Eastern Townships

Both of these haiku suggest autumn, which is in keeping with another rule of traditional haiku: that the season of the year be evident. The season can be explicitly named, as it is in Carolyn Rafman's haiku:

frozen minds open  
sun-splattered light destroys  
winter's closed white wall

But she actually breaks a haiku rule by using two different season-words in the same poem. C  lyne Fortin's haiku breaks another rule:

winter nearly  
spent the summer shameless  
in our garden

Her haiku mentions two different seasons, which tradition forbids. If that rule were followed, though, the whole point of her

observation would be lost. Technically, Jeanne Painchaud also violates the one-season rule:

tomato plant  
    leans against a hockey stick  
summer sport

Yet is our Canadian summer not defined by the absence of winter?

In Painchaud's haiku, "hockey" is a season-word for winter; it is what we might call a *kigo*. Most of the time in haiku, the season is not named; rather, it is implied by the *kigo*. Shigeru Kido's haiku is associated with spring because spring is the season for planting:

seedlings—  
    did I buy them because of  
her beautiful smile?

Similarly, winter is suggested in Hannah Franklin's haiku:

gray-plumed pigeons  
    without arms for embracing  
hop on cold concrete

Nina Alexakis uses onomatopoeia to evoke the woodpecker, a kigo for spring (remember the splash of Basho's frog?):

tok, tok, tok, tok  
in the woods  
there are no secrets

Traditionally, the kigo is supposed to be a reference to the natural world, not to something man-made, like a hockey stick. Yet nowadays, haiku poets happily and felicitously use artifacts as kigos. And just as validly, they write haiku that contain no season-words. Consider this one by Micheline Beaudry:

at the antique store  
deep in the empty dresser  
the sun's rays

While it is definitely daytime in this haiku, the setting's season is not so clear.

In the world of haiku, a season can be one of five different periods of the year, for spring, summer, fall, and winter are joined by New Year's. In his haiku, Ikko Saito is quite explicit with his setting:



pushed in my wheelchair  
through the seniors' home, greeting friends:  
Happy New Year!

The great haiku masters addressed their own impending deaths, as well, if only through the use of suggestive imagery. Certainly Yoshio Masumoto, whose work appears in this collection posthumously, wrote within that tradition:

distant fireworks  
flicker, then disappear  
swallowed by the night

Death, part of the cycle of life, is also part of the haiku tradition.

A close relative of the haiku is the *senryu*, a poem that is more about human nature than Mother Nature. A senryu can be the perfect vehicle for conveying the ironies of being, well, human. Consider Robert Mélançon's mock exhortation to himself:

after this puff  
I'll quit smoking  
after just this one

André Duhaime takes a lighthearted approach:

her new job  
two newspapers on the table  
two cellphones

In her haiku, Ilona Martonfi describes one of the pleasures of summer:

ice cream  
enjoying every minute  
enjoying every lick

However, the label of *senryu*, rather than *haiku*, is merely that—a label. As it is, sometimes the line between human nature and Mother Nature is blurred, as we see in Hugo Dufort's haiku:

an image of harvests  
decorates  
the empty plate

The harvest is a *kigo* for autumn; the painted plate is as much a human artifact as is the haiku describing it. The surprise element in the third line, replete with irony, is another haiku tradition.

The evocation of hunger in Dufort's haiku can also be interpreted as being a political statement. Within the boundaries of haiku, room has frequently been accorded to political commen-

tary. Ehab Lotayef uses a turn in the third line of his haiku to convey the duality of a contemporary event:

which way do we run?  
is this the plane that drops food  
or bombs?

And Yves Désy gives nature a political twist:

nature's ghost appears  
in hot smog suit this morning—  
toxic souls are real

Another traditional subject of haiku that concerns human nature is eroticism, or love. Sherwin Tjia uses humour in this dramatic monologue:

call a taxi!  
you're too beautiful  
to walk in the street

Andrew Cook-Jolicoeur gives us the hopefulness of love:

i lean against wall  
as music blares  
is it me he glances at

Loren Carle is quieter in his approach:

over mute dunes  
sifting bare and sensuous  
the unfiltered moon

Whether using a first, second, or third person perspective, whether ironic, longing, or imagistic in their tones, all three poets are working within the erotic haiku tradition.

A much older relative of the haiku is the *tanka*, a poetic form that also incorporates sentiment. Thelma Mariano's poem illustrates the potential resonances with two additional lines—lines that shift from the outer life to the inner:

in the foliage  
white orchids are still  
tightly furled  
as if they know the risk  
of opening to the world

The *tanka* is not the only other brief form of poetry to be included in this collection. Hongmo Ren uses an ancient Chinese two-line form he calls the *duo-line* (a descriptive rendering in English of the term *duilian*, which roughly means “match-match”). In

this duo-line, Ren uses parallel constructions to juxtapose two separate images:

pine shadows sway on the wall  
plum blossoms burst in the snow

The result: a synergy, a poem more than the sum of its parts.

Synergy is present when haiku is linked to prose, as in *haibun*; to visual art, as in *haiga*, and to other haiku, as in *renku*, wherein one haiku poet responds to another. Claire Dé has managed to push the haiku series to its limits. In her pointillist novel, each of her haiku serves as a dab of paint in a larger painting, yet each one can stand alone:

through the rising light,  
there is a cawing of crows  
that chisels the dawn

When her book is read in its entirety, a story emerges.

Certain qualities and characteristics of haiku are prized if present. One of these is *wabi-sabi* (the closest definition of this term in English is “imperfect beauty”), with its strong, affective component of tranquility. The quality is easier, perhaps, to illustrate than to describe and explain, so consider Hwayap Lee Chung’s haiku:

autumn grass  
growing unhindered among  
the abandoned tracks

And this one by Loan Nguyen:

close, open one palm  
release a wounded sparrow  
invisibly

And this haiku from Jacques Boulterice:

slow on the water  
a hat dropped from the bridge—  
the wind dies down

Do these haiku convey the wabi-sabi quality? Appreciating the aesthetics of tranquility is a function of the observer, as is the Zen of describing without explaining. Yves Brillon observes,

the moon sways  
reflecting in the current  
where at dawn it drowns

Stasis, change, recurrence, death—there is always a cycle.



Haiku are written in many languages by people of all walks of life and all ages. These poets put into words what they notice, their visions, and their concerns reflecting their experiences. Every fall, Luana Boulanger packs up her country retreat with regret, and returns to the city:

my favourite picture removed,  
the blank wall  
keeps beckoning

This haiku speaks regretfully of packing one's belongings, moving elsewhere, and not wanting to leave. Yet seasonal displacement is a part of life for many people, whether they move for work or for pleasure.

There might well have been a camera inside Ellen Cooper's pen when she added these lines to her haiku notebook:

draped in freezing rain  
the long drooping branches of  
a weeping willow

As for age, Jacob Harris started to write haiku when he was six years old; he is now nine. He writes,

a frog resting  
among the reeds  
I play hopscotch on the rocks

Basho has already made the frog a classic subject for haiku.  
Shigeru Watanabe's frog also rests:

a skinny green frog  
jumps, then sits to think—did he  
forget where to go?

The boy sees a frog, then plays a game; the man sees a frog and continues to focus on the frog. Different lenses see the same things differently, and different lenses see different things. From hopscotch to thoughts, haiku can reflect varying realities—our realities. And any reality is fit matter for haiku.

Perhaps the only traditional haiku rule that prevails is that of breath, like the wind in this poem by Irving Lipman:

gray shirt  
missing from the line  
clouds heading east

The breath of wind is present, though unnamed.

The poems in this anthology illustrate a diversity of approaches to haiku, and the preoccupations of haiku poets. Years ago, when my friend asked me about her poem, I was wrong to think solely of form and syllables. The spirit of the moment is far more important. Were she to ask me again today, my answer would be, "Yes, it is a haiku."

*Maxianne Berger*  
*July 2003*

## NINA ALEXAKIS

Nina Alexakis is a writer and translator. She was the winner of the CBC/Quebec Writers' Federation Short Story Competition in 2000 and the Canadian Authors Association (CAA) Poetry Competition in 2001. Her favourite haiku poet is the eighteenth century Japanese poet Issa, whose work is infused with humour.

pastel sunset  
two empty chairs on the sand  
full of your absence

tok, tok, tok, tok  
in the woods  
there are no secrets

carmine and sable woodpecker  
high above the snow—just who am I  
in these woods?

on her palm a bird skull  
even lighter  
than when it flew



a train rattles by—  
yet another afternoon  
becoming distant

## MICHELINE BEAUDRY

Micheline Beaudry is a retired social worker. Her work appears in *Haïku et francophonie canadienne* (Éditions David, 2000), *Chevaucher la lune* (Éditions David, 2001), and *The 55<sup>th</sup> Basho Festival Anthology* (Basho Memorial Museum, 2001); in 2002 she won second prize in *Hopala! Journal's* Haiku Competition in France. Her renku with Jean Dorval is entitled *Blanche mémoire* (Éditions David, 2002).

spring breeze scatters  
magnolia blossoms  
she turns 19

end of August  
the cricket's chirrup  
one pitch higher

red rose bush  
its November bud  
before snow comes

asleep while  
the moon outlines trees  
on the snow

at the antique store  
deep in the empty dresser  
the sun's rays

Translated from French by Maxianne Berger

## MAXIANNE BERGER

Maxianne Berger is a clinical audiologist. Her poems, translations, and reviews appear in numerous Canadian and American literary journals and anthologies. From 2001 to 2003, she served as the Quebec representative for the League of Canadian Poets. Her book of poems, *How We Negotiate*, was published in 1999 by Empyrean Press.



your beard  
soft against my neck  
sun through the blinds

tonight's moon  
reflects on the river  
lying between them

lilacs in the air  
still the dog prefers walking  
her nose to the ground

one year later  
the grass completely grown in  
over her grave

outside  
moonlight on snow—inside  
an empty bed

## UANA BOULANGER

Luana Boulanger is an award-winning radio documentary maker. For 20 years, she was employed by CBC as a producer and broadcaster, and she also spent three years in Paris working for American National Public Radio. She currently resides for half the year in a log cabin in the Laurentians, where every August she hosts a haiku wilderness retreat.

chasing milkweed seeds  
blown by the wind  
I forget to go for a walk

my favourite picture removed,  
the blank wall  
keeps beckoning

swaying in the autumn wind  
the empty  
hummingbird feeder

the cold outside  
presses us together  
winter constellation



empty aquarium  
an old man  
plays solitaire

## JACQUES BOULERICE

For 28 years, Jacques Boulerice taught in the French department of the Cégep in his hometown of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. Since 1997, he has lectured in the Faculty of Education at the University of Sherbrooke on the topic of oral traditions. He has written a dozen books, including *Apparence* (Belfond, 1986), which won the Prix Québec/Paris; *Le vêtement de jade* (L'hexagone, 1992); and *Débarcadères* (L'hexagone, 1996).

wary of the cat  
lying on the leaves, winter  
turns in its tracks

stretching out along  
both sides of the riverbed  
the first snow

a child's hand follows  
the cat to the window  
milk on the ledge

tulips, caught off guard  
under May snow, call themselves  
crocuses

slow on the water  
a hat dropped from the bridge—  
the wind dies down

Translated from French by Andrew Cook-Jolicoeur.

## YVES BRILLON

Yves Brillon was a professor and researcher in the fields of comparative criminology, social sciences, and law at the University of Montreal. After retiring, he rededicated himself to writing, and his haiku appear in *Haïku et francophonie canadienne* and *Chevaucher la lune*. His Web site, *L'île de calliope* ([www.lapoesie.com](http://www.lapoesie.com)) features his own work along with links to other French poets.

leaves twirl in the wind  
a man leans on his cane  
winter's not far off

the moon sways  
reflecting in the current  
where at dawn it drowns



the trees are bare  
autumn so tired  
falls asleep under the snow

the sun flees  
to escape night  
hard on its heels

softly time  
has turned my hair to white  
it's winter already

Translated from French by Andrew Cook-Jolicoeur.

## LOREN CARLE

Loren Carle is the Director of Music at St. Barnabas Anglican Church in St. Lambert, Quebec. A graduate of the music department at Mount Allison University with a major in organ performance, he is also interested in musical composition, and has experimented with using haiku as a model for short pieces of instrumental and vocal music. He currently studies the harpsichord at McGill University.

over mute dunes  
sifting bare and sensuous  
the unfiltered moon

fallen tree  
speaks with stream voices  
dead leaves listen

sparrows play  
in the dripping air  
after summer's storms

last year's cattails  
restless in a new spring wind  
rattling in the fog

everything shrouded  
in a fine erotic mist  
searching arousal

## HWAYAP LEE CHUNG

Hwayap Lee Chung is of Korean descent, born and raised in Japan; she is now a Canadian citizen living in Montreal. A former dressmaker with five children and five grandchildren, she is currently pursuing her love of literature by writing both haiku and tanka. She joined the Satsuki Haiku Club of Montreal in 1999.



a terrifying sound  
echoes the whip  
of the thunder god

autumn grass  
growing unhindered among  
the abandoned tracks

the migrating path  
of a lone bird gone astray  
catches my attention

curled up in a ball  
inside this hammock  
I am a fetus again

I carry in my heart  
the growing diary of my five children  
on Mother's Day

Translated from Japanese by the poet.

## ANDREW COOK-JOLICOEUR

Andrew Cook-Jolicoeur likes both haggis and haiku. An advocate of Scots Gaelic, he first wrote haiku in that language, but now writes primarily in English. He views haiku as a spiritual exercise. In 2001, he co-authored and performed (with Loren Carle and Angela Leuck) a tribute to Basho, entitled *Sound Sculptures in Three Voices*.

bright gap store  
i circle hot, sexy clerk  
his leopard-spotted hair

thinning on top  
i wish 4  
hip mohawk cut

i lean against wall  
as music blares  
is it me he glances at

queen's jubilee  
incense and latin motet  
my flared-bottom trousers

old ladies walk  
into the night  
chuckling off age



## ELLEN COOPER

What first attracted math teacher Ellen Cooper to haiku was its connection to nature and the seasons. She soon found that haiku added a new dimension to her daily walks, and now no longer relies solely on her camera to capture “haiku” moments. In 2002, she won *The Gazette’s* Haiku Contest.

among broken shells  
the reflection of a seagull  
in the wet sand

a small butterfly  
flutters past my bicycle  
a leaf in the wind

draped in freezing rain  
the long drooping branches of  
a weeping willow

mango-coloured sky  
fragments of the setting sun  
drift among the waves

on a lily pad  
a bullfrog meets the gaze of  
its own reflection

## PAMELA COOPER

Pamela Cooper has been writing haiku since 2000. She finds poetic inspiration in both her travels and her native Montreal. She came to haiku as a writer of a rather different style of poetry—the limerick; she and her sister, Ellen, are the authors of a self-published book on this form, entitled *Prose and Lepracons* (1995).

droplets strike the pond  
resonating in waves  
the tolling church bells

dancing on the tail  
of a copper-coloured fox  
a ray of sunlight

splashes of colour  
in a pond of swimming carp  
rainbow-painted waves

in the murky sky  
clouds move over to reveal  
an orange half moon



the crest of a wave  
disappears in the sand  
only shadows remain

## CLAIRE DÉ

Claire Dé was born in Montreal during the 1950s. Winner of the Prix Stendhal in France, she is the author of seven books, including *Bonheur, oiseau rare* (XYZ, 1996), a pointillist novel that uses haiku to depict a mosaic of moments in a bittersweet romance. Lazer Lederhendler's translation of this novel, entitled *The Sparrow Has Cut the Day in Half* (Exile Editions, 1998), was nominated for a Governor General's Award.

is it making fun,  
the moon spying on us with  
its lopsided smile?

salty tornadoes,  
constellations colliding  
perfectly, a kiss

through the rising light,  
    there is a cawing of crows  
that chisels the dawn

a sudden warming;  
    underneath the cape of ice  
rivulets chuckle

(escaped from the cold,  
a fly, more than a little  
proud, rubs its front legs)

Translated from French by Lazer Lederhendler.

## YVES DÉSY

Born in Joliette in 1951, Yves Désy has lived in Montreal for more than 20 years. His publications include *Le coeur signe le souffle*, self-published in collaboration with photographer Michel Blanchet (1980); *Un peu plus de poussière sur l'éternité* (Écrits des Forges, 1996); and *Tapage nocturne* (Écrits des Forges, 2001). He has also contributed to two haiku anthologies in French, *Haïku et francophonie canadienne* and *Chevaucher la lune*.

kid in the graveyard—  
on his T-shirt  
a skull's wink

on the sidewalk  
lost address book  
names of birds & trees



first of July  
national moving day  
cats go to war

sudden shower—  
as we rush to the subway  
worms slowly come out

nature's ghost appears  
in hot smog suit this morning—  
toxic souls are real

Translated from French by the poet.

## HUGO DUFORT

Hugo Dufort spent his youth in the haiku-rich town of Mascouche, where he learned to watch frogs jump into ponds; he now lives in Montreal. His work has been published in *Haïku et francophonie canadienne* and *Chevaucher la lune*. He also writes modern poetry in French, and has been published in the journals *Entrelacs* and *Pouët-café*.

abandoned road  
only the dandelions  
travelling

an image of harvests  
decorates  
the empty plate

a burning fir log  
whistles along with  
the lumberjack

newspaper fire  
my dirty hands  
hold the rest of the story

a peony  
carries on its neck  
the weight of the day

Translated from French by the poet.

## ANDRÉ DUHAIME

Born in Montreal in 1948, Andre Duhaime has lived in the Ottawa-Hull region since 1971. Duhaime is a true champion of the French haiku movement: he has produced his own haiku and tanka collections, as well as collaborative renku; he has edited various haiku anthologies, published essays, and conducted workshops; and he is the Web master of a French haiku Web site. In 2002-2003, Winnipeg's Les Editions des Plaines published his most recent work, four books of haiku for children: *Le soleil curieux du printemps*, *Chateaux d'ete*, *Automne! Automne!*, and *Bouquets d'hiver*.



the grays of autumn  
day after day then one day  
the whiteness of snow

into our gossip  
creep the living  
and the dead

vacation plans  
around a table with friends  
yellowing photograph

moving day  
the boxes from the liquor store  
so strong and free

her new job  
two newspapers on the table  
two cellphones

Translated from French by the poet.

## CÉLYNE FORTIN

Poet and fiction writer, Célyne Fortin is the co-founder of Les Éditions du Noroît. A visual artist as well as a poet, she has illustrated both her own books and those of others. Her work has appeared in literary journals in Quebec, France, Germany, and the United States. Her most recent collection is *Chanterelles* (Lancôt, 2000).

winter nearly  
spent the summer shameless  
in our garden

as I unfold  
the hydrangea's leaves  
out falls a white maggot

a goldfinch  
waits its turn for the feeder  
on a red hibiscus

tulip-peony  
or peony that splotch  
of shocking pink

this lilac  
blossoms on the table  
an indoor garden

Translated from French by Maxianne Berger.



## HANNAH FRANKLIN

Hannah Franklin's poetry has been published in *Fruits of the Branch: A Montreal Anthology* (Montreal Branch of the CAA, 2001). She works in two-dimensional painting and three-dimensional sculpture, and in the fourth dimension of poetry. Born in Poland, Franklin spent her childhood in Russia.

fragments of a thought  
like the fragrance of a poem  
a mint leaf floating

gray-plumed pigeons  
without arms for embracing  
hop on cold concrete

pale poet lover  
your pen is mighty—you say  
but what of your sword?

children play in sand  
red buckets with blue shovels  
dividing the land

deflecting ripples  
a yellow leaf floats on lake  
an umbrella sun

## MARCO FRATICELLI

Marco Fraticelli has been writing haiku for over 25 years. He is the editor and publisher of the Hexagram series of haiku books (King's Road Press), and he is an active member of Haiku Canada. His work has been included in numerous journals and anthologies, and his next collection of haiku will be published by Guernica Editions in 2004.

spring  
melting  
us

it's not me  
but the full moon  
that awakens her

by the graveside  
our shadows  
grow longer

after the argument  
pieces of myself  
in the broken mirror



funeral home  
he quiets his child  
with Easter eggs

## JACOB HARRIS

Jacob Harris wrote his first haiku when he was six years old. The youngest member of Haiku Canada, he attends Interact School and sings in the Christ Church Cathedral Treble Choir. His poetry appears frequently in the *Haiku Canada Newsletter*, and he is the author of a chapbook, *Dragonflies Arrive* (Winds of Haiku Press, 2002).

autumn  
in the subway  
bright red graffiti

snow piling up on the deck  
I pull the quilt  
over my head

fallen blossoms  
on my way to school  
street sweeper up ahead

a frog resting  
among the reeds  
I play hopscotch on the rocks

first day of camp  
so many people  
wearing raincoats

## SHIGERU KIDO

Shigeru Kido was born in 1909 in Fukuoka, Japan. A farm labourer before immigrating to Canada, he has worked at every type of job that uses one's hands—except fishing! He discovered haiku in 1988 at a drop-in centre for seniors. Now in his mid-nineties, he calls haiku “exercise for the brain.”

seedlings—  
did I buy them because of  
her beautiful smile?

swirling clouds—a jet  
zips through, into the stillness  
of the universe



hydrangeas  
for my bedridden wife  
brighten the room and her

heavy with snow  
gray clouds cover the sky  
yet again

a peony  
budding under a straw mat  
as if there were no winter!

Translated from Japanese by Shigeru Watanabe.

## TSUNE KITAJIMA

In her native Japan, Tsune Kitajima worked as a music critic for various magazines and newspapers. After immigrating to Canada, she held the positions of announcer and producer for Radio Canada International. At present, she enjoys the country life in the suburbs of Montreal, where she works as a translator and business coordinator.

the first snowfall  
an immaculate road  
the first step warrants  
hesitation

the winter chill softens  
the passerby's shoulders  
stiffness is compromised

plants and trees competing  
rushing to sprout  
composing an early spring concert

in the midst of scorching heat  
upright  
Canna flowers in hot scarlet

from the neighbour's  
found a garden blessed with colours  
in my yard

Translated from Japanese by the poet.

## ANGELA LEUCK

Angela Leuck, a haiku, tanka, and renku poet, founded Haiku at the Garden in 2000. Her work appears in many journals and anthologies, most recently *Spinning Wheel I: Web Whirl Women Short Anthology of Poetry* (éditions ming, 2003). She is also a haiga artist, combining visual images with poetry, and in 2001 had her first solo exhibition.



have you found your home?

Jack pine  
in a Japanese garden

water lilies—

two women sitting cross-legged  
on the grass

drifting over  
the waterfall—  
sound of a gong

Hiroshima memorial  
peace messages on rice paper  
windblown clouds

nightfall—  
across the pond  
the silent ripple of carp

## IRVING LIPMAN

Irving Lipman studied chemistry and physics at McGill University. At the age of 20, he began practicing Zen, and subsequently discovered his main passions: drawing and photography. He believes haiku are like the bones of a beast: once you get the bones in the right place, then you can get the beast on its feet!

late morning light  
on my neighbour's face  
how sincere my backroom window

running shoes today—  
almost forgotten my winter boots  
covered with salt

gray shirt  
missing from the line  
clouds heading east

white-faced geisha  
your samurai broom clears  
the dust from my mind

tears of stone  
rocket through the universe  
dragons fly



## **EHAB LOTAYEF**

Ehab Lotayef is a computer engineer who works at McGill University. He started writing poetry in Arabic, in his native country of Egypt, at an early age. A resident of Montreal since 1989, he now writes in English in many poetic forms. His interest in haiku is recent, but profound.

will the road we never took  
be there  
for our trip back?

guns in their hands  
gunpowder smells pleasant—  
how would they find roses?

I can blame the wind  
for the mess in my hair—  
but my brain?

which way do we run?  
is this the plane that drops food  
or bombs?

the trip will finally be over  
when we return home—  
why leave?

## THELMA MARIANO

Thelma Mariano has won a number of poetry awards and regularly publishes tanka in literary journals around the world. She finds tanka helps her to fully experience her feelings and find poignancy in the moment. Mariano is a life coach, personal growth columnist, and writer of contemporary women's fiction.

it mocks me  
on this quiet night  
a half moon  
that's unabashedly yellow  
somehow whole, yet incomplete

a soft rain falls  
after our conversation  
I lie awake  
letting new possibilities  
stir up forgotten dreams

in the foliage  
white orchids are still  
tightly furled  
as if they know the risk  
of opening to the world

the urge  
to be a little reckless  
in my freedom  
above the waves a lone swallow  
swerves and glides in the wind



will my life  
always feel this unsettled?  
a flurry of pink  
peony petals scattered  
on the morning breeze

## ILONA MARTONFI

Ilona Martonfi produces the ongoing reading series at The Yellow Door, and co-hosts the annual Lovers and Others at Café Sarajevo. Her work has appeared in the literary journals *Soliloquies*, *Vallum*, and *Fire with Water*, as well as in *Fuschia Snowflakes* (The Wooden Basement Press, 2001), and *Fruits of the Branch* (Montreal branch of the CAA, 2001). She leads workshops on writing poetry, short stories, and autobiographies.

on the ridge  
field of wildflowers  
unaware of time

love  
a whole day is my wedding day  
from morning until night

in a spring dress  
walking to church  
at the entrance my father's coffin

a blue beetle  
blue-streaked hair on a boy  
and matching T-shirt

ice cream  
enjoying every minute  
enjoying every lick

## YOSHIO MASUMOTO

Yoshio Masumoto (1917–2001) valued everything authentic and principled in work, food, music, art, and friendship. He was among the last wave of the pre-war generation of intellectuals in Japan.

delicate fish for freshness  
blocks my consciousness  
living now in Canada

shadow on its edge  
by its darkness  
brightens a field of snow



a streak of lightning  
    reveals a church tower  
its cross etched in gold

cocooned with morning brume  
    there, a boat  
crossing through

distant fireworks  
flicker, then disappear  
swallowed by the dark

Translated from Japanese by Shigeru Watanabe  
and Takako Masumoto.

## ROBERT MÉLANÇON

Robert Mélançon's haiku have appeared in numerous anthologies. The author of four books of longer poems, he received the Governor General's Award for Poetry in 1979 for *Peinture aveugle* (VLB Éditeur). His most recent publication is *Exercices de désœuvrement* (Les Éditions du Noroît, 2002), a collection of notes on poetry.

a sheet of newsprint  
flies, flips, flutters, lands  
among the pigeons

the blue shirt  
waves, waves with both arms  
from the clothesline

after this puff  
I'll quit smoking  
after just this one

bikini-clad girl  
runs laughing above the snow—  
billboard

the bird swims  
through air and light  
you stay at the bottom

Translated from French by Andrew Cook-Jolicoeur.

## GUY MÉNARD

Guy Ménard was born in Granby in 1948. A professor of Religious Anthropology at UQAM since 1982, he has published numerous essays; two novels, *L'accent aigu* (Leméac, 1983) and *Jamädhavie* (Boréal, 1989); a poetry collection, *Fragments* (HMH, 1979); and two books of haiku, *Hiéroclicps* (Ex-libris, 1998) and *Les cloîtres* (self-published, 2000). A third, *Lune des vents*, is forthcoming.



moon rising over  
Hochelaga-Maisonneuve—  
a Byzantine night

Saint Michael's steeple  
deep in the heart of Mile End  
pretend minaret

when red October  
sets on fire and paints in blood  
the Eastern Townships

moonbeam  
tucked in the crook of its wing  
snowy owl

red moon  
on a samurai's honour—  
then a moon in tears

Translated from French by Maxianne Berger and Angela Leuck.

## LOAN NGUYEN

Loan Nguyen was born in Vietnam and came to Canada as a refugee in the "boat people" era. She has published several essays, numerous poems in children's literary journals, and one novel in her native country. She now lives in Montreal, where she works in the field of international taxation.

fresh tea leaves  
so green in baskets  
on young girls' backs

each year on Mother's Day  
buds of colourful flowers  
bloom to white roses

a bird tips her head  
eyes reflecting sunshine  
no voice comes singing

happiness or pain  
always the same face  
have tears ever run upward?

close, open one palm  
release a wounded sparrow  
invisibly



## JEANNE PAINCHAUD

Jeanne Painchaud was the organizer of the French events for the haiku weekends at the Montreal Botanical Garden. Her work appears in several anthologies, notably *Haïku sans frontières* (Éditions David, 1998) and *Chevaucher la lune*. She has published two collections of her poetry, *Je marche à côté d'une joie* (Les heures bleues, 1997) and *Soudain* (Éditions David, 2002).

on a park bench  
big-bellied old man  
ordinary buddha

tomato plant  
leans against a hockey stick  
summer sport

between two tombstones  
a flower grows  
for nothing and no one

luminous sidewalk  
one-eyed passerby gives alms  
to a blind man

a puddle aches  
how many circles in it  
during the storm?

Translated from French by Maxianne Berger.

## CAROLYNN RAFMAN

Carolynn Rafman coordinates a learning-in-retirement program at McGill University. Her poetry is inspired by her Zen practice, her travels, and her daughters, Kate and Patricia.

frozen minds open  
sun-splattered light destroys  
winter's closed white wall

blushed gray-blue ashes  
paint her daughter's raven eyes  
heat swarms loose bodies

cows in the zendo  
dual mind clogs the gazebo  
tears becomes laughter

indigo goddess  
surrounds empty toy houses  
owl follows me home

invisible she  
    mounts the red-runged sky ladder  
no one greets her There



## HONGMO REN

Hongmo Ren holds a PhD in Linguistics from UCLA. A calligraphic artist whose work has been widely exhibited, he has developed a form of calligraphy for English and French based on Chinese and Japanese styles. He has similarly adapted the ancient Chinese duilian, and composes duo-lines in English and French.

pine shadows sway on the wall  
plum blossoms burst in the snow

the morning dew shines; my ink dish moistens  
the neighbour's flute sounds; my rice paper vibrates

the breeze rests in a dense maple forest  
the moon slips through a partially opened door

the cold river rushes forward with broken ice  
the spring grass rises up against the melting snow

a village darkens between bare trees and gray clouds  
a road vanishes into silent fields and evening mist

## IKKO SAITO

A long-time member of the Kawachino Haiku Club in his native Japan, Ikko Saito founded the club's Montreal chapter at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre in May 1988. He served as its first President until moving to Toronto, where he currently resides.

the tweed cap I wear  
on my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday  
suits the cool spring air

Japanese garden  
cherry blossoms fill the pond  
a soft, pink bedspread

fresh green of new leaves  
reflecting on my wife's cheeks—  
how young she looks now!

only May  
but the surfers are out  
riding the oncoming waves

pushed in my wheelchair  
through the seniors' home, greeting  
friends:  
Happy New Year!

Translated from Japanese by Shigeru Watanabe.



## SHERWIN TJIA

Sherwin Sully Tjia is a Montreal-based poet, painter, and illustrator. He is the author of *Pedigree Girls* (Insomniac Press, 2001) and the poetry collection *Gentle Fictions* (Insomniac Press, 2001), and his work has appeared in numerous journals, including *Geist*, *Quarry*, and *Queen Street Quarterly*.

call a taxi!

you're too beautiful  
to walk in the street

stuff I wrote  
on my palm  
fading, faded

everyone needs  
someone to look at  
them with longing

sorry, I  
thought I was  
whispering

nothing  
all  
day

## SHIGERU WATANABE

Born in Vancouver in 1935, Shigeru Watanabe lived in Japan from 1941–1956. Upon his return to Canada, he settled in Montreal, where he currently works as a lab technician. A member of the Satsuki Haiku Club since its founding in 1988, he has served as the club's President for the past five years.

cherry stone on my tongue  
chilly country wind  
locked in a tiny seed

criss-crossing darkness  
fireflies chase their mates  
till the short night ends

a skinny green frog  
jumps, then sits to think—did he  
forget where to go?

day and night  
huge, wet snowflakes cover up  
the city's sights and sounds

a faint track  
    etched in the vast wintry field  
road from nowhere to nowhere

Translated from Japanese by the poet.



## ROD WILLMOT

Born in Toronto in 1948, Rod Willmot is one of the pioneers of English haiku: after having discovered haiku in Quebec in the late 1960s, he contributed as both poet and critic to a number of anthologies, journals, and textbooks. He now lives in Sherbrooke, Quebec.

the lane a jumble of holes and cracks  
a skater clatters through  
a pigeon settles

beyond the hedge  
my neighbour  
paces around his pool

skater whirrs past  
and black cat crouches  
deeper in grass

damp on my belly  
as into the dark  
the bus takes you away

another house of card players laughing  
another street of  
kicking through leaves

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Versions of some of the haiku included in *Sun Through the Blinds: Montreal Haiku Today* have been published in the following books, anthologies, and magazines:

*ARACHI—Le temps qui devient tourmente*, by Micheline Beaudry (Éditions David, forthcoming).

*Beyond Spring Rain*, edited by LeRoy Gorman (Haiku Canada, 2002).

*Bonheur, oiseau rare*, by Claire Dé (XYZ, 1996) and *The Sparrow Has Cut the Day in Half* (Exile Editions, 1998), Lazer Lederhendler's translation of Claire Dé's work.

*Chevaucher la lune*, edited by André Duhaime (Éditions David, 2001).

*Le dessinateur*, by Robert Mélançon (Les Éditions du Noroît, 2001).

*Fuschia Snowflakes*, (The Wooden Basement Press, 2001).

*Haïku et francophonie canadienne*, edited by André Duhaime (Éditions David, 2000).

*Lynx*, (October, 2003).

*On Her Lips*, by Maxianne Berger (Over the Moon, 2001).

*Soudain*, by Jeanne Painchaud (Éditions David, 2002).

*Voyage parallèle / Parallel Journey*, by André Duhaime and LeRoy  
Gorman (Asticou, 1989).  
*Voyeur*, by Marco Fraticelli (Guernica, 1992).  
*The World is a Heartbreaker*, by Sherwin Sully Tjia (2002).

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I am grateful to Lazer Lederhendler for allowing us to use his translations of Claire Dé's poems.

I would like to thank those poets in our English group—now expanded and renamed Haiku Montreal—who participated in the initial stages of selecting poems and deciding on a title. *Sun Through the Blinds* manages to convey so well what *Haiku Today* is all about.

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deepest thanks go to Monique Lauzon, then cultural agent at the Japanese Pavilion, who responded to my initial proposal with such openness and interest. Her vision led to Haiku at the Garden becoming more than any of us could have imagined.

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devoted to haiku. It was at this event that we first became acquainted with a number of other local haiku poets whose work would ultimately be included in this anthology.

Mention must be made of the role of the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre of Montreal. Home to the Satsuki Haiku Group and an invaluable library, they have been helpful in providing information on haiku and the Japanese community.

I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Haiku Canada, which recently celebrated 25 years of promoting haiku in Canada. I would recommend that anyone interested in haiku start by contacting <<http://pages.infinit.net/haikucanada.htm>>.

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We are fortunate in Montreal to have the Rosa Pauline Leuck Haiku Collection, the first of its kind in Canada to offer haiku books, journals and related materials to the general public. I would like to thank the Fraser-Hickson Institute for establishing and maintaining this unique collection. My gratitude goes in particular to Frances Ackerman, Chief Librarian, library staff and

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*Angela Leuck*

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chez Ginette Nault et Daniel Beaucaire  
à St-Félix-de-Valois, Québec



POETRY

No "solitudes" here as Montreal's best haiku poets present work as vibrant and alive as the city itself.

-Marianne Bluger, author of *Tamarack & Clearcut* and *Early Evening Pieces*

As well as familiars André Duhaime and Marco Fraticelli, meet wonder kid Jacob Harris, who wrote his first haiku at age six, and wonder senior Shigeru Kido, who composed his first haiku at age eighty. Basho would have approved of this wonderful collection of one-breath poems!

-Winona Baker, author of *Even a Stone Breathes: Haiku and Senryu*

Some real gems, from the erotic to the wabi-sabi sublime.

-Bruce Ross, editor of *Haiku Moment*

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