

*This Week's Montage*

—*The Good Earth*

*Comparative Haiku*

selected by

*Allan Burns*

The first Earth Day celebration on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1970 makes a convenient starting point for the modern environmental movement. It galvanized activists advocating clean energy and sustainable growth and protesting against anthropogenic environmental disasters such as the extinction of species, the destruction of wilderness, pesticides and other pollutants, deforestation, oil spills, and climate change. "It was a gamble," said Earth Day's founder, US Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, "but it worked." Of course, environmental consciousness long precedes Earth Day. For instance, Arbor Day, a tree-planting holiday celebrated just two days after Earth Day, goes back as far as 1872. On the first Arbor Day more than one million trees were planted. Haiku, too, contain the seeds of environmental consciousness. Said to connect human nature with nature, haiku eventuate from a mindset that understands humanity as part of, rather than separate from, the natural world. If our lives were conducted in the true spirit of haiku, we would not be at odds with the health of our planet. For this week of Earth and Arbor Days, I have selected haiku by three fine poets with nature-oriented sensibilities: veteran haiku master Paul O. Williams, New Mexico's own Marian Olson, and *Heron's Nest* associate editor Paul MacNeil. These poems reveal in a mostly implicit manner different aspects of the deep, abiding connection between all creatures, including ourselves, and the good earth. Even when no attention is called to the observer, he or she was of course there, alive to the resonance of the moment and recording it for the rest of us.

*Paul O. Williams* (b. 1935)

*Marian Olson* (b. 1939)

*Paul MacNeil* (b. 1948)

thawing rain—  
from a high outcrop, a rock  
clatters down and stops

twilight—  
the hermit thrush  
fills the woods

from mud  
to sky  
the heron's feet

in the graveyard pine  
the quiet knock, knock  
of the woodpecker

winter wind—  
the last oak leaf  
forgets its branch

moonrise—  
in his lap  
the gardener's hands

a warm fall day,  
learning from this rock  
to do nothing

1-3 from *Tracks on the River* (Coneflower Press, 1982)  
4 from *Frogpond* 10.2, 1987  
5-7 from *Outside Robins Sing* (Brooks Books, 1999)

soft morning rain  
the island deer stretches  
for a golden plum

field of geese—  
in a nearby ditch  
the coyote paces

flashfloodallboundariesdissolveinseconds

quail eggs!  
my foot  
in mid-air

river's song  
a wounded turtle  
slips into it

sun boils  
over the mesa  
a cholla bud opens red

to the horizon  
mounds of snakeweed mimic  
white clouds

from *Desert Hours* (Lily Pool Press, 2007)

winter rain  
a farm pond flows  
through barbed wire

jacaranda flowers  
the twin tracks  
of a car

traffic wind  
in the black-eyed Susans  
a dead bear

light fades  
before the summer storm  
a finch cracks a seed

sunrise wind  
a solitary sandpiper  
walks the waterline

a flight of egrets  
in the chill of dawn  
faded Venus

stepping stone  
a hiker rests  
in the river's wind

1 from *Modern Haiku* 30.2, 1999  
2 from *The Heron's Nest* 2.5, 2000  
3 from *The Heron's Nest* 2.10, 2000  
4 from *Haiku in the Light*, February 2001  
5 from *Paperclips* (Press Here, 2001)  
6 from *Snapshots* 10, 2004  
7 from *World Haiku Review* 5.1, 2005

*Previous Montages*

*April 5: Play Ball*  
*April 12: Spring Migration*

*Next Week's Montage: Antipodes*

Janice Bostok  
Ernest J. Berry  
Ron Moss