

MONTAGE

This Week's Montage

—Quotidian Moments

Comparative Haiku

selected by

Allan Burns

The extraordinary arrests our attention, but the everyday often eludes it. We tend to take for granted what's constantly before us and so miss the strange improbability of it all. July 12th, the day this gallery goes live, happens to be the birthday of two iconic American artists who were influential, stimulating celebrants of the homely, taken-for-granted world before our very eyes: Henry David Thoreau and Andrew Wyeth. The work of the three outstanding and well-known haiku poets featured in this gallery operates, it seems to me, along similar lines. These are poets who excel at making poetry out of, well, almost anything. Reading them, we often feel a shock of recognition—along with an accompanying pang of “Why didn't I think to write about that?!” As anyone who has tried to do it, however, well knows, it's hard to do well. It requires perceptiveness, determination, and knack. As Thoreau confided to his journal on 11 March 1856: “I wish so to live ever as to derive my satisfactions and inspirations from the commonest events, every-day phenomena, so that what my senses hourly perceive, my daily walk, the conversation of my neighbors, may inspire me, and I may dream of no heaven but that which lies about me.”

Dee Everett (b. 1943)

John Stevenson (b. 1948)

Carolyn Hall (b. 1941)

morning sneeze
the guitar in the corner
resonates

on the freeway
discussing the chocolate bar
in the trunk

cigarette break
a huddle of umbrellas
on Fifth Avenue

winter commute
my hand finds a warm spot
on the handrail

loud applause
for the last speech
before lunch

after Christmas
a flock of sparrows
in the unsold trees

his fury
pulled up short
by the payphone cord

from *endgrain* (Red Moon Press, 1997)

old slippers
the comfort
coming apart

revising poems,
a third cup of tea
from the same bag

goblins at the door
in the darkness behind them
a cigarette flares

curling tighter
a leaf
catches fire

last piece
of a jigsaw puzzle . . .
filling in the sky

evening light
a loaf of bread
on the cutting board

late night—
a waitress repeats
the list of pies

1–3 from *Some of the Silence* (Red Moon Press, 1999)
4–5 from *Quiet Enough* (Red Moon Press, 2004)
6 from *The Heron's Nest* 7.3, 2005
7 from *The Heron's Nest* 8.1, 2006

spilt milk
spreading along the grout lines
morning chill

morning shower—
finding just the word
I was looking for

twilight
the poultry truck returns
with empty cages

summer solstice
the measuring tape reels back
into its case

dog day afternoon
a lemon seed
up through the straw

starless night
the first bite
of black bread

so suddenly winter
baby teeth at the bottom
of the button jar

from *Water Lines* (Snapshot Press, 2006)

Previous Montages

June 28: Birthdays
July 5: Transience

Next Week's Montage: Moonstruck

Natsume Sôseki
Margaret Chula
Taneda Santôka