

## This Week's Montage

## —The Europeans

## Comparative Haiku

selected by

Allan Burns

This gallery continues a recent exploration of European haiku poetry, including “Three Poets of the UK” from two weeks ago and the translated work of Tomas Tranströmer in last week’s Halloween gallery. But that’s not all; earlier, Romania’s Ion Condrescu was featured (in Montage #24), and next week’s gallery will include work by Sweden’s Jörgen Johansson. There’s a lot going on in European haiku, both in English and other languages. This week’s continental European poets hail, respectively, from The Netherlands, Austria, and Serbia. Their poems may seem both similar to and different from North American haiku. Consciousness of war is a powerful theme, not surprising from so war-ravaged a continent just last century. The birds mentioned are familiar on these shores (sparrow) or not (chiffchaff). Such references as a clog dance and a village burial—in which the bones of ancestors are unearthed—evoke a distinctive Old World atmosphere, intimating imbricated layers of culture. Stylistic evolution may be rapid, as from 5-7-5 syllabic form to one-liners in the span of a few years. The old, the new, and the timeless intermix. We emerge from a metro station into the snow. This week’s occasion is the anniversary of the Maastricht Treaty on 1 November 1993, which established the European Union.

Max Verbart (b. 1944)

Dietmar Tauchner (b. 1972)

Dimitar Ananiev (b. 1960)

in the cloud’s shadow  
everything loses  
its shadow

how slowly they move  
the hands of the clock  
but ah! how fast

spring morning  
a willow speaks with the voice  
of a chiffchaff

red light district  
a sparrow collects  
nest material

village fair  
the clear clatter  
of a clog dance

falling apple  
the branch sweeps into  
a new balance

out of the haze  
the dog brings back  
the wrong stick

1 from “some breath” (radish 12, 1999)  
2 from “not a word too much” (radish 21, 2000)  
3–7 from *only the white* (t schrijveke, 2008)

deep inside you no more war

just before dawn—  
the snowplow clears  
my nightmare

spring longing  
following animal tracks  
as far as I can

my key  
turns in the lock  
lilac scent

strange voices  
I open the door  
to the stars

escalator  
out of the subway . . .  
snowfall

war for water in the future i sip my beer

1–4 from *A New Resonance* 5 (Red Moon Press, 2007)  
5 from *Frogpond* 31.1, 2008  
6 from *The Heron’s Nest* 10.1, 2008  
7 from *Presence* 34, 2008

Spring evening—  
the wheel of a troop carrier  
crushes a lizard

Summer funeral—  
border stones of my village  
sunk deep in the earth

Drop of well water—  
the gravediggers unearthing  
my ancestors’ bones

A summer star fades  
in the lightning dawn sky—  
my father now dead

from the balcony unreachable mountains

in a glass of brandy: violets

thick fog I jump from stone to stone

1 from *Knots: The Anthology of Southeastern European Haiku Poetry* (Prijetelj Press, 1999)  
2–4 from *At the Tombstone* (Red Moon Press, 2002)  
5–7 from *balcony* (Red Moon Press, 2006)

## Previous Montages

October 18: *Three Poets of the UK*  
October 25: *Halloween Masque*

Next Week's Montage: *With a Smile*

Yu Chang  
George Swede  
Jörgen Johansson