

This Week's Montage

—Three Women

Comparative Haiku

selected by

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On 25 November 1960 the three Mirabal sisters (Patria Mercedes, Maria Argentina Minerva, and Antonia Maria Theresa), political activists in the Dominican Republic, were brutally assassinated in a sugarcane field on the orders of dictator Rafael Trujillo. The date has been marked by women activists since 1981 as a day against violence. In 1999 the General Assembly of the UN designated 25 November as International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and invited governments and international organizations to organize activities designed to raise public consciousness about domestic violence, rape, genital cutting, and other forms of gender-based violence against women around the globe. In honor of this day and the memory of the Mirabal sisters, I would like to offer the work of three women haiku poets. Virginia Brady Young is a classic figure in English-language haiku, who began publishing haiku in the second issue of *American Haiku* (1963). She was deeply involved with the North American haiku community, serving twice as president of the Haiku Society of America (1974 and 1984–85) and establishing the annual Gerald Brady Memorial Award for the best senryu, in memory of her brother. Her work is flanked by that of two newly emergent voices: Eve Luckring of Los Angeles, California, a video/installation artist, and Sandra Simpson of New Zealand, which, it's worth noting, was the first country in the world to give women the vote, in 1893 (27 years before the U.S.!). Some of this work speaks to violence, actual or latent, and some to nature and nurturing.

Sandra Simpson (b. 1958)

Virginia Brady Young (b. 1918)

Eve Luckring (b. 1962)

dry season—
rock paintings
by a vanished people

southerly change
my daughter's cheek
hot against mine

camellia moon
in pieces on the floor
her first ballgown

bird song
between blows
of the axe

photos of her father
in enemy uniform—
the taste of almonds

through the dome
of the hammam—
bullet-sized pieces of sun

summer's end
only dead grass
shows the circus was here

1 from *The Heron's Nest* 7.1, 2005; 2 from *Simply Haiku* 6.2, 2008; 3 from *Kokako* 11, 2009; 4 from *The Heron's Nest* 9.3, 2007; 5 from *Notes From the Gean* 1, 2009; 6 Commended, New Zealand Poetry Society Haiku Contest, 2009; 7 from *The Heron's Nest* 8.1, 2006

Across raked pebbles,
a praying mantis . . . crawling
toward the temple.

fallen birch leaf
vein-side
to the sky

The silence
in moonlight
of stones.

swollen raindrops
on the breast
of the dead robin

In a dry season
she moved away, leaving her
parched ailanthus tree.

Midnight:
the wind
blowing itself
away . . .

It isn't the cold
nor the dying leaves, just
that the birds have flown.

1–4 & 7 from *Circle of Thaw* (Barlenmir House, 1972)
5 from *American Haiku* 1.2, 1963
6 from *shedding the river* (1978)

crescent moon
in a dream I climb
into mother's lap

the toddler nestles
into my lap
meteor showers

blazing sun
I tell her
what I really think

open scissors beside a vase of water

behind the camera
I face
my family

we fight
about heading deeper
into the storm

untethered
mid (my swelling eyes) sentence

1 from *Mayfly* 40, 2005
2 from *Frogpond* 30.1, 2007
3–6 from *A New Resonance* 6 (Red Moon Press, 2009)
7 from *Modern Haiku* 40.3, 2009

Previous Montages

November 8: *With a Smile*
November 15: *THF*

Next Week's Montage: *Confessions*

Nick Avis
Roberta Beary
John Stevenson