

a
literary forum for Japan

T. Mura
1989

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Biodata on translators and artists: Michiko Hamada graduated from Kobe University of Foreign Studies in 1984 in Chinese and is the assistant chief of Customer Support Group 2 in the International Division of Toppan Moore Systems, Ltd. Her teacher, Zheng Jing, was born in Japan, then lived in Taiwan for 5 years and in Beijing for 25 years, and is an associate professor in Aoyama Gakuin University's School of International Politics, Economics, and Business. Xu Gang, author of "Rescue in May," is a well-known contemporary poet in China. Front cover artist Prescott Foster is from Long Beach, California; back cover artist Trudy Mercer is from Seattle, Washington. Echo Naito lives in Tokyo and is a regular contributor to *EDGE*. Catherine Buburuz is a freelance writer / artist / photographer living in Saskatchewan, Canada.

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Xu Gang

Rescue in May

Tonight on the Square
to fathers and mothers
your children say:
Mother, I'm hungry but I won't eat.
More than 3,000 people, the young,
pure hearts of more than 3,000
are steady and strong, smiling,
even while asking for the torment of hunger.

Under the monument of People's heroes,
the sun of broad daylight has left no warmth in the bricks.
The moon is as cold as ice.
Fifteen ambulances pass every ten minutes;
the sound of the sirens tears our hearts.
SOS! SOS! SOS!
Zhonguo! Zhonguo! Zhonguo! [China! China! China!]

The hot-blooded call the cold and indifferent
to awaken, but there is no reply.
Rescue in May,
from streets and alleys people go to the Square
to save the students who refuse to eat.
Their eyes are closed but their hearts are open
to the green wind of freedom blowing over the lawn.
Sacrificing their youth for the birth of a New China.

In fact, they have lost everything already. The rice
and meal tickets of those university dining halls, even
the chandeliers and tasty drinks of banquets have lost their allure.
The students' only nourishment is air, wind, and water,
as well as the numberless good-hearted people
who love them deeply.
Together sculpting the Chinese Goddess of Liberty!

Tonight on the Square
to fathers and mothers
your children say:
Mother, I'm hungry but I won't eat.
More than 3,000 people, the young,
pure hearts of more than 3,000
are steady and strong, smiling,
even while asking for the torment of hunger.

Not all the calls will be unanswered.
These thirty days that have shocked 3,000 years . . .
The brightest achievement of the Chinese people.
Things that should happen will happen without fail.
Things that should end will end without fail.
Cars and lights, people and flags . . .
History, spilling its lifeblood,
flashes by in minutes and seconds.
Rescue in May,
you are saving the whole of China!

民主

Delphi Without Oracle

There was a crevice here
and a woman's voice, Rhea, speaking
not from on high, from depths
of understanding.

Then came a great lofty
temple to the Sun, Apollo, the Reasoner,
greater than whom, we are told,
there is nothing.

Now, there is nothing
but tumbled down temple
stones, tourists,
and the crevice.

Devotion

Leaving my Tokyo dentist,
taking along some inevitable pain,
I stop at Noji *Jinja*,
Shinto shrine next door,
home once of the General who "won"
the Japanese-Russian war—
a fully programmed devoted man
who at the death of the Emperor took
of course up his sword,
wrapped in pure white linen,
to slice himself open and gut his wife;
then somehow managed to cut off her head,
to stop the inevitable pain.
And no one to stop his own.

Thomas Fitzsimmons is the publisher of Katydid Books, and editor of the book series Asian Poetry in Translation: Japan. His publications include the anthology A Play of Mirrors: Eight Major Modern Poets of Japan (co-edited with Makoto Ooka, 1987), Nihon: Awase Kagami no Okurimono (Iwanami Shoten, 1986), and his latest book of poetry, Muscle and Machine Dream, (Meadowbrook Art Gallery, MI, 1986).

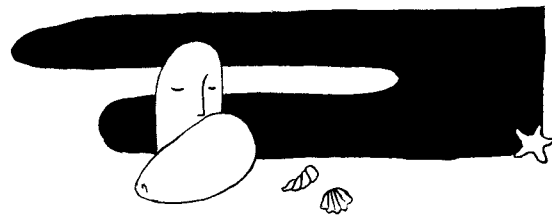
At Tower Peak

Every tan rolling meadow will turn into housing
Freeways are clogged all day
Academies packed with scholars writing papers
Cities people lean and dark
This land most real
As its western-tending golden slopes
And bird-entangled central valley swamps
Sea-lion, urchin coasts
Southerly salmon-probes
In the aromatic almost-Mexican hills
Along a range of granite peaks
The names forgotten,
An eastward-running river that ends out in desert
The chipping ground-squirrels in the tumbled blocks
The gloss of glacier ghost on slab
Where we wake refreshed from ten hours sleep
After a long day's walking
Packing burdens to the snow
Wake to the same old world of no names,
No things, new as ever, rock and water,
Cool dawn birdcalls, high jet contrails.
A day or two or million, breathing
A few steps back from what goes down
In the current realm.
A kind of ice age, spreading, filling valleys
Shaving soils, paving fields, you can walk it
Live in it, drive through it then
It melts away
For whatever sprouts
After the age of
Frozen hearts. Flesh-curved rock
And gusts on the summit,
Smoke from forest fires is white,
The haze above the distant valley like a dusk.
It's just one world, this spine of rocks and streams
And snow, and the wash of gravels, silts,
Sands, bunchgrasses, saltbrush, bee-fields,
Twenty million human people, downstream, here below.

Gary Snyder lived in Japan in the 1950's and 1960's. His book Turtle Island won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1975. This past spring he taught a seminar, "Issues and Problems in Nature Literature," at U. C. Davis which included, among other texts, readings from his work in progress, The Practice of the Wild. "At Tower Peak" first appeared in the San Francisco magazine Zyzzyva.

Eating Mangos

To eat mangos we bought about six
 that were bright and soft to the edge of the small porch,
 then leaned over a bit so that juice
 dripped from lips and hands
 onto the grass below. Sated and sticky,
 we could see down the slope
 a tangle of red roses just out of the giant
 mango tree's shadow. And farther below
 was the Kona coast splashed by the Pacific Ocean,
 deep and spreading out of sight, as unrealizable and mysterious
 as the ripe mangos, as a mind's remembering
 the outer skin's perfume and sunset colors,
 the inside's pulp of fibers with a flavor one might long for.



When On The Edge

When on the edge of ripened fields of rice,
 first the red lily, then later blue gentian,
 I too find land full; like dragonflies and crickets
 go unprotesting into the coming winter.

For wild ducks return here where snow scarcely falls
 and the late autumn flowering gradually turns
 to first plum blossoms and narcissus by the roads.

What had weakness is known as not weak,
 it endures like rocks, like mosses, like human urges,
 and even after storms raises up new leaves.

The bird that sips only from the rose
 blooms of camellia will come again,
 and in the summer heat with rain through pines
 a hundred herons will stand in rice-field water.



Illustrations by Echo Naito

While The Sky Is Blue

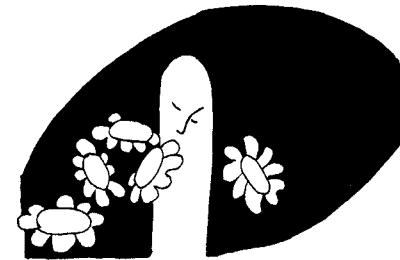
What can be done to startle you awake
 and still show calmness?
 Here, hold this frog a moment, feel its throat
 gulp as it lives.

Let that small bee pause on a fingertip
 and then fly off.
 Now for a gorgeous flower, a peony.
 Wipe your hands on fragrance.

And this small blade of grass, tickle nostrils
 with it and sneeze.
 And keep the sneeze
 while feeling the grass you hold.

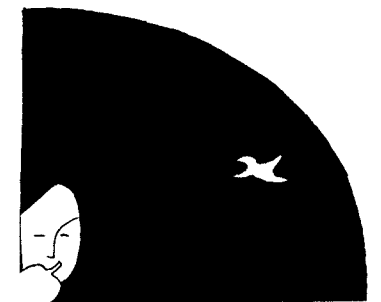
Now let's be quiet, sit awhile
 and speak however you wish.

White clouds are moving rapidly.
 The sky is blue.
 The frog goes hopping off into the shrubs
 and we are still—
 as though the world were quiet.



Apple In April

Apple in April, the birds are wild with joy,
 knocking each other off the second-storey
 window sill for the chopped bits.
 Desire abundant in all five *hiyodori*
 and the deliciousness of being fed fruit apparent.
 My desire for their gratification
 becomes an irresistible silliness
 as I cut up more, open the window, and put it out
 amid the pink new leaves of maples
 bouncing up and down from breezes
 and the moving weight of the birds,
 all of us innocents.



Edith Marcombe Shiffert (born in Toronto, 1916) has lived in Kyoto for the past 27 years. These poems are from her eighth book of original poetry, When On The Edge, forthcoming from White Pine Press. She has published thousands of items of poetry and prose world-wide, and has translated five books of Japanese poetry with collaborators. She studied poetry at the University of Washington (Seattle) with Louise Bogan and Theodore Roethke, and Noh drama with Dr. Richard McKinnon; but, never a follower, she lived and wrote her own way. She has always been busy—keeping house, gardening, teaching (Doshisha, Kyoto, Seika Universities), climbing mountains, wandering forest, field, and seashore—besides writing. Now, she and second husband, poet/artist Minoru Sawano, live a happy, semi-reclusive life on the lower slopes of Mt. Hiei.

Steven Forth

Haiku

Extended blank—
in the hotel window
identical lamps

In winter
the smaller crowds
resemble trees

Breakfast is
white rice a
salted plum

Looking at the window
not seeing past
the glass

Each year
sky shallower the
horizon flat

Steven Forth's book of poetry, Imitating Flight, was published in Tokyo where he lived for a number of years. He is well-known for his translations and his haiku, which have appeared in Poetry Nippon, the Mainichi Newspaper, and elsewhere. Now living in Vancouver, he has published work recently in Writing 19 and Riddle Moon 7. He is also producing a special issue on modern Japanese haiku for the Paris-based magazine Moving Letters.

Sheila E. Murphy

Sky

then just a fleck of sunrise light expounding on a theory
elbow room whose justice flounders
instant buildings sequence
alloy skin pressed all across thin surface
stretch athletic noun collective female breeze
extending to the retina until some sparks of hearing
fortify ephemera the larks the robin season
piecemeal rain the silence
or an edge of mountain seeping
into conscious view airplane and cars
arrest the block of tandem
long apostrophe absent possessive part of speech
the park the water somewhere meanwhile surface cloud
trimester glass the finely ground attachment
penciled to the very power of sight

Sheila E. Murphy's book-length With House Silence was published recently by Stride Press in the U.K. and her chapbook Loss Prevention Photograph, Some Pencils and a Memory Elastic (featuring selected poems and an interview with her by David Chorlton) appeared from Tape Books in Scotland. Published in numerous magazines including Paper Air, Panoply, Aerial, and Generator, Murphy is an executive with the world's third largest hotel corporation, headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona. She has made her home there since 1976.

D. M. Stroud

The Sea's Roar

*I loathe the twin seas
of being and not being and
long for the mountain of bliss
untouched by the changing tides.*

Manyoshu, trans. K. Rexroth

Pounding, it comes pounding
From the two sides of my hope.
Twin torrents
Beating on a single gate.

Now, at Onjuku,
Here comes the sound
I heard at Tambor.
An ocean away,
But the same sound running.

It is the basic sound.
The beginning of the word.
Rest your ear in my lap
And listen.

Pounding, it comes pounding
From the two sides of my hope.
Twin torrents
Beating on a single gate.

In the beginning,
the first sound we heard
Was this one,
The roar of motherly tides
Rushing to shore.

I will span this isolation
With a sound,
This empty water
With a song.

They cast us out,
And we ballooned towards being.

In every language I will sing it
That it knows,
In every language
That it knows.

Now we are sixty surfers
Lurking in the lap of the water,
Drifting in sun of late afternoon,
Waiting for a wave.

Rest your ear in my lap
And listen.
To the first sound we hear,
The basic sound,
The beginning of the world.

Hardly men more at all,
We float like a stranded school of cetaceans,
Waiting for a wave
To ride home.

D. M. Stroud is the founder of Saru Press. Born in the Year of the Monkey, he has lived in Tokyo for the past 14 years. A book of his own poems, Lines Drawn Towards, has been published (1986) as well as Poemario, a book of his translations of the Argentine poet, Dario Canton. Stroud's next book of poetry will be out shortly.

Honesty Pennies

Seven years old and not in a state of grace,
 I had stolen a handful of green stones from the graveyard
 And, worse, I had gone with a girl of my own age
 Out beyond the tombs where they filled the jars.
 Our crime was to pick the pods of honesty
 That hung on bony bushes near blackening nettles
 And, playing priests, receive them as hosts in our mouths.
 They were round and white and wrapped our tongues.
 Mauve clouds curled like chrysanthemums;
 There was a smell of decay, merely floral.
 But fear sprang up like a dusk wind to break our communion.
 A trinity of terrors: poison, the dark, mortal sin.
 We ran to our own roads.
 The weight of my transgressions rattled in my pockets.

Seventeen, shriven but not calm,
 Walking out of confession, watching my shoes,
 Black and pointed, my calves still feeling the strain
 Of kneeling with toes off the ground so as not to scuff them.
 My feet were together at the kerb, one glassy summit,
 Mount Inattention, perhaps, or the Heights of Frivolity.
 The priest was devout but he was not in my shoes.
 Suddenly, there was a taxi I could see my face in
 And, looking up to meet my own eyes, I met hers.
 Though they were reddened and stared through pale straws of hair
 I knew who she was. I knew she remembered our rites
 And understood that whatever you see from the window
 Of a gleaming taxi on the way to your father's funeral
 Sinks itself into your mind: reflections on black.

Seven days older, that strip of hedge was my home.
 I lay full length in hiding; she must come soon.
 I had watched a day—his flowers were sick in the sunlight.
 The pollen of nettles dusted the elegant black
 Of the shirt, the jeans and shoes I chose for our meeting.
 To have worn dark glasses would have dulled recognition
 But the honesty pods were there. I tried an experiment
 And placed them over my eyes; modishly small white glasses
 They broke my vision a little less than a tear does.
 I swept them off. The dream of a day had tired me.
 I knew she would not come to kneel by the grave
 And I could never emerge from the hedge to meet her
 Or ever escape the steady play of two memories,
 Reflecting each other, like barbers' mirrors or shoes.

Denis Doyle, an Englishman of fifty, teaches at a junior college in Saitama. After two sober, disciplined years in Japan, he is beginning to slip back into his old English habits, which include writing poetry.

Message From The Deep

Discover the cuneiform tablet
 hieroglyph'd with fossilized
 remains of tiny lives, shell lives,
 clams smaller than my little-finger nail
 embedded side-by-side,
 tossed up by Lake Michigan
 knowing I needed it, some special miracle
 to re-alert me to the miracle of Life,
 this tablet the size of my hand
 not written by Charlton Heston special effects,
 this tablet written by the only God there is,
 this tablet written in shell language
 tinged with rust-color'd sand,
 all-in-all in my hand, this gift from the Sea,
 this sea-whispered-me geological whisper,
 this whisper-echo of the eonic Earth,
 this heirloom from greatgreatGrandmother Earth,
 this oracular telegram from the Deep,
 this Deep Image washed up to my feet
 as if directed specifically to me,
 this many-million-year memento
 from the ocean that was here
 before Lake Michigan existed,
 this enigma this ancient rune
 this cosmos mandala this inevitable whatever-it-is,
 this rosetta-stone translating the past
 into the present and present into the past,
 this wordless dignity, this compact cemetery
 of lives whose tombstones are more immortal
 than the tombstones of humankind.

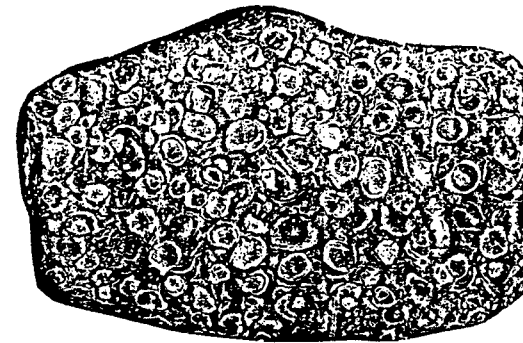


Illustration by J. Poniewaz

My Halo

fits firmly round my head
 like the hoops around a barrel,
 like the rubberband round a bundle
 of a blindman's brandnew pencils.
 It's a mist of evaporated brain tissue,
 a ring of baloney, a thundercloud
 of tears ready to irrigate my eyes.
 It flashes like neon when I'm aroused,
 turns red and buzzers when I'm tilted.
 I sic it on people who hurt me.

My halo's going bald, its inner tube
 has more patches than an old road.
 It's a smoke ring rising from my mind,
 a lasso to round up all my maverick ideas.
 There are only two things written on my halo:
 in big letters "RMS TITANIC",
 in small letters "Made in Japan".
 Like the plastic Jesus I kept beside my boyhood bed,
 it glows only in the dark. When I die
 there will be one more UFO haunting the skies
 causing parked lovers to pause a minute
 and gaze in amazement through windshields.

Jeff Poniewaz, like his fellow eco-activist and poet-comrade, Antler, strives to help catalyze an Ecological Revolution to temper the abuses of the Industrial Revolution. A collection of his eco-poems, Dolphin Leaping in the Milky Way, is available from Inland Ocean Books, 4540 S. 1st St., Milwaukee, WI 53207 U.S.A.

The Balcony

by Reeta Raj

The wind draped the city in a curious ochre red sky. Shanti looked up wonderingly. She was eighteen and hadn't yet begun to think in concentric circles. The only thought that came to her was that she had never seen anything like it.

"There was a sky just like this in 1924," said Dada. His voice, hollow with age, was like an echo from distant hills. He stood behind the half wall that falteringly separated the balcony into "ours" and "theirs", blinking into the horizon with watery grey eyes. "I was a young man then. It was terrible. What a storm! The wind blew for days." He leaned on the partition and nodded. "That's dust up there, you know. Red dust. From the desert. Whoof! The roof blew off our house. Everything went with it. I remember . . . Lila was one year old and Satish had already . . ."

"I have to go." Left unchecked the old man could dodder interminably through closets of fusty memories; all better, in Shanti's young opinion, in the rubbish heap than aired.

"Eh! Eh! What?"

"I have to go." Shanti said more loudly. "I have to . . . to . . .," she groped desperately, "to bring in the laundry."

"The clothes!" Dada looked stricken. "Yes. Bring them in immediately or they'll be blown away. Good thing. Good thing you remembered. I'll go and bring in ours." He shuffled back into his apartment, a human grasshopper with bent arms and flailing elbows.

Shanti was seven months into marriage. She had come prepared; meaningful innuendos from married sisters, housekeeping instructions from mother. But no one had prepared her for the hours between Bir's cheerful clatter down the stairs at eight and then up again at six in the evening. She tried as well as she could. She washed the breakfast things, cleaned the house, did the laundry, bathed, but that still left most of the day. So she switched on the radio just in time for "Sister's Programme" at eleven o'clock, and as she embroidered a large tablecloth listened to how she should pickle lime, protect clothes from mould and deal with recalcitrant children. There weren't any children—yet, but there were four and a half hours left to go before cooking dinner. Shanti loved her new life and still went breathless and silly

before Bir. But all those hours were annoying, like trying to play a serious game of ping-pong all by yourself. She felt obliged to do something about it—find a different game.

And so, in the natural course of looking, Shanti discovered the bazaar. She came to it rather late, for she had been properly brought up to shun public places like balconies. But each time she stepped out, albeit through portals of guilt, she found a magic world in the narrow street below. Rows of tiny untidy shops stacked to their ceilings; an unending sweep of shoppers coursing between shores of merchandise. It was as though the whole world congregated below: people limping by laden with heavy jute bags, gossips at street corners holding forth in stentorian voices, rickshaw men patiently waiting for fares, cycles jangling warnings as they leapt over potholes and swept around carts and beggars.

She would stand timidly at the back of the balcony, a mesmerized child drinking in a world that the high walls of her parents' home had made new to her. There was Lalain with her horse face animated by coquettish good humour perched on an upturned wooden crate who drew swarms of raffishly idle young men with her triangles of betel leaf and bawdy wit; their cackling hoots of laughter resounding like exploding string bombs. The photographer spent his day reading newspapers on a wooden stool outside his shop, cushioned against the breasts of a scantily dressed cardboard blonde roguishly holding a camera to one eye. He looked most displeased if customers disturbed his cozy arrangements. Next to him the grocer hummed like a well-oiled machine, weighing out lentils and spice, greeting passers-by; chief adjudicator of street altercations. The first roar of anger and he would rise like a helium balloon, abandon shop and head unerringly for the largest thicket of spectators. He was a big man who moved with regal grace even as he pushed through the human wall, physically hauled apart the combatants and sent them on their way. No one could match him, for other peacemakers would invariably be sucked into the vortex of flying limbs and add new dimensions to it. Shanti would cover her face with her sari and rush back into the apartment. She may have stretched the limits of *gentility*, but even she knew better than to be seen *laughing* on the balcony.

And then one afternoon Dada discovered her!

She listened to a story of a rabid dog and to another one about a train journey to Madras. The old man's spirits rose visibly with each narrative. When she left him his face shone as though his tongue and mind had recharged weakened batteries. He was not one to make light of opportunity. He took residence on the balcony and daily unwound from behind the brick wall to embark on another installment in the self-perpetuating saga of his life and times.

"I swear he crouches behind the wall in wait for me," she told Bir. "It's hard to understand him and . . . and now," her voice quavered with indignation, "he's started quizzing me about what he said. If I can't answer him he starts all over again."

Bir laughed. But Shanti was genuinely distressed. She wished she was older and more experienced. How could she tell him to stop bothering her? He was old enough to be her grandfather and there was no question of her being rude to an elder. It was impossible to complain to his son and daughter-in-law without seriously offending them. She asked Bir to have the partition rebuilt as high as possible, but Bir found the idea absurd; he said it would be just as rude, the landlord wouldn't permit it and it would cost a mint!

"What does he talk about?" Bir asked as he finished his dinner with a *gulab jamun*. She had wasted her afternoon making them; they were hard and lumpy and his spoon hit the plate with a loud clack.

"Oh, what he did when he was young, things like that. Yesterday he spent an hour telling me about how the milkman used to walk the cow to every house and milk it right in front of the customers' homes, in their own buckets. Can you imagine it? Milk twice a day like that!"

"Must have had lean milkmen and leaner cows in those days." Bir helped himself to more *gulab jamuns*. Shanti swung her braided hair, rope-like behind her shoulder, and smiled at him gratefully. Despite her uneven cooking he had begun a belly—indisputable proof, in mother's opinion, of a felicitous marriage.

"It might be interesting if he'd had an unusual, adventurous sort of life. But it was so ordinary. Why does he go on about it?"

"To kill time, I suppose. He's really doddering now. What with Bindu working now, the poor chap has nothing to do all day."

"But why me?" Her voice shook with self-pity. "Bindu always says, 'Yes, father, we know,' and Satish says, 'You're absolutely right, father,' even before he's said anything. And here I am! Surely he has some friends? There's a great big bazaar down-

stairs."

"Maybe they've all learned to say 'Yes, Khanna sahib, we know!'" She looked like a baffled child. So he touched her smooth cheek with his fingertips and said shyly, "Perhaps he likes you. . . ."

It never failed. Five minutes on the balcony and Dada would be beside her. Gradually Shanti stopped going out. She finished the tablecloth and started on a bedcover. She put together jars of lime pickles and wrote letters to everyone she could think of. She sat on her bed and wistfully heard the rickshaws tinkle, the urgent cries of the vendors and the powerful humming of the bazaar. And she wondered what she should do next.

By the time the sky turned red, Dada stood very high among the ranks of the most irksome, more hateful people she knew!

The storm started a little after four that evening. It wasted no time in overtures but went directly into a wailing crescendo. Shanti closed all the doors and shuttered the window. On the road the wind had the fury of an uncontrolled lunatic. It swooped and whirled around corners, raced through alleyways with heaving sheets of dust and sand. The city had become an open grave and the sky was closing the hole.

A door banged like an exploding pistol. Dada, grinning hugely with brown, broken teeth, clung to the railing and shouted, "What did I tell you? It's happened, hasn't it? Hasn't it? I was right wasn't I?" Shanti turned and her sari billowed behind her like a landing parachute. Dada looked exultant.

"Look at them run. Like goats!"

The bazaar, so sanguine till lately, was rushing helter-skelter to secure itself. Shutters slammed down. The streets were swept bare except for an odd rickshaw man bent urgently over the cycle bars, legs flashing like pistons, racing for shelter.

In the apartment the dust poured in through bolted doors and windows. It seemed as if the walls were batiked with invisible cracks. Shanti picked up her embroidery to calm herself, but it became dark and the doors shook violently as though most of the phantasmic world was hammering to get in. She pricked herself and sat staring at the wall, nervously winding skeins around her bleeding finger. The walls were going to collapse. She saw herself in clear detail lying crushed under bricks, blood trickling in a thin stream from the side of her mouth. Would Bir marry again? The thought was unpleasant and as she tried to erase it her mind took a new turn. Now it was Bir's turn to lie under a fallen tree; his head bloody, eyes staring. The picture was endless like a

film reel; she, dressed in white, head shaved. No, they didn't shave heads these days. But her arms and ears and nose bare of jewelry, face shrivelled and grey like a discarded grape. Nanny to her brother's children. . . .

"Oh God! I'll never watch those wretched family dramas again," she cried and rushed to the sanctuary of the kitchen.

Bir came in late, hair matted in dust.

"A real pot-banger! What a start to the monsoons," he cried joyfully. The ghouls receded and vanished and left the wind to rattle the doors.

The lights failed at dinnertime. Bir lit match after match as Shanti rummaged for candles.

"I'll ask Satish to phone Complaints."

He felt his way in the darkness and vanished in the gloom of the front door. Shanti cleared the table. The wind sharpened. She could hear faraway booming noises of a city under siege. She carried the solitary candle to the kitchen to wash up. Her oversized and twisted shadow covered the walls, leaning to preposterous angles and surrounded by strange creatures that danced in tune to the thunderous beating of the tin roof.

Bir came back. "They've lent us their spare torch."

"What about the electricity?"

"Oh, the phone lines are down." He flashed the torch from under his chin and made grimacing faces at Shanti. "They've had to sedate Dada."

"He's not sick!"

"Apparently he packed away half the house before anyone got home. Seems to have this strange notion that the roof's going to fly off."

"Bir, it won't!" Shanti turned from the sink with dripping hands, "Will it?"

"Of course not. This is brick and mortar."

"But this kitchen roof isn't." The roof rattled loudly in agreement.

"Dada didn't get as far as the kitchen."

The photographer's poster fell with a loud crash. The blonde tumbled away, smashing windows, clinging to the sides of the street, fighting her abduction every inch of the way.

"Oh," grieved Shanti, "the photographer is so unlucky."

They went to bed early. Shanti lay sleepless listening to the wind. It was violent and still in turns like a frenzied child near exhaustion. Around midnight it died down completely. The silence was unnerving. Bir turned in his sleep and sighed loudly. Shanti lay rigid, straining to hear. A soft sound came through the darkness, and another and then more. The air buzzed with gentle static.

Shanti raised her head from the pillow in wonder. "It's raining!" The wind had returned, but the rain held it in thrall. She sighed with relief. The rain quickened to a sharp insistent drumming. But she found it reassuring, unlike the formless terror of the wind. She fell asleep and dreamed that Dada was

hobbling down the street followed by an odd rag-bag of people. "It's a thief!" Satish cried running after them. "Call the police!" Shanti found herself chasing after them. Bir ran by. "It's called musical chairs," he murmured as he passed her. "Wait, wait!" Shanti called. "What's the prize?"

A cacophony of giant cymbals and drums shocked them out of their sleep. Bir picked up the torch and raced towards the kitchen. He unbolted the door and stood rooted in bewilderment. Through the darkness and clouds of dust the torch lit up shards of crockery gleaming like shells through a jumble of dark graceless shapes. Above it the tin roof rose and fell frantically, revealing pieces of sky.

"Look out!" Shanti screamed. Bir jumped back and slammed the door shut. A second later they heard the deafening crash of the last of the beams in the kitchen.

Later, even after the Khannas, Sonis and Banerjis had left their beds and came to investigate, and had talked in low voices about the storm and the damage, the kitchen continued to tinkle as though it couldn't stay still.

The landlord made an awful fuss as though their carelessness had caused the damage. But he sent in workmen who carried away the rubble in tin cannisters, put new beams over the kitchen walls and bolted on sheets of corrugated iron for the roof. Shanti watched anxiously, "Have you tightened it?"

Good naturedly they feigned an extra twist and grunted loudly over it.

"This will last you fifty years, little sister," the foreman told her. "The beams on the last one were completely rotten. It would have fallen anyway. If not this year the next."

That first week Bindu lent them some plates and glasses and came in several times after work to visit Shanti. She'd lower her bulk into a chair, drink scalding tea and offer all kinds of consolations in platitudes. "Life's not meant to go smoothly. Always some problems." And, "Thank God, it was only 'things'. What if you both had been sleeping under that roof?" And, "Ah! This is your first blow of reality. Ask me what I *haven't* been through!" Shanti would make fresh tea and draw comfort from the fact that she sounded just like mother!

"Didi, I never ever used the dinner set. It was so expensive and I thought I'd take it out only for special occasions. And all those glasses! Father got them specially from the factory."

Bindu sighed and pressed Shanti's shoulder as she stood up to leave. "Life is uncertain enough, what can one say about crockery."

Bir brought something new for the kitchen every day. Shanti put everything on freshly folded newspaper, well apart from the dented, handleless veterans of the roof. But her eyes now saw their bright paint and shining aluminium overpowered by shad-

ows of vulnerability.

A week after the workmen had left, Bir gave Shanti a saucepan wrapped like a birthday present and said cheerily, "Good thing the kitchen's all done. Just in time. The paper says the monsoons are going to hit this week."

Shanti brought Bir his tea in a glass and picked up the package listlessly.

"Come on stop moping! Your parents didn't teach you much, did they? Go on, open your present. Don't you see, people need excitement in their lives. Think of it. If the roof hadn't come down we'd be doing the same boring things we do every day. What a boring, uneventful life we'd have if nothing ever went wrong." He nudged Shanti, "I'll bet, ten months from now you'll be telling this like a joke. Twenty-five years down the road you'll gather our grandchildren around you and tell them how Grandmother's roof fell in. Now go on, open your present."

Shanti looked dazed. "What? What did you say?"

"I said many things," Bir said accusingly. "You didn't listen."

"No. I heard everything. But, but. . . ."

Shanti's hands fluttered around the package as if searching for some clue to unravel it. She looked at Bir and burst out tragically, "Bir, it's useless. They'll never listen!"

Bir slapped his forehead a few times and drank his tea in noisy vexation. There was certainly something, he thought, to be said against marrying a child.

The papers were right. The monsoons stood just beyond the horizon and the afternoon was quagmired in humidity. Even Lalain handed out her pans in silence. Shanti glanced up at the grey haze and wiped her face with the end of her sari. The back of her blouse was drenched and prickling beads of sweat oozed like warm oil between her breasts, dripped over her stomach and into the folds of her sari. She had waited on the balcony for half an hour like this. The bazaar was dull and rheumatic with torpor, and for once she would rather have been indoors lying under a ceiling fan in her petticoat and blouse.

A rickshaw man cycled sluggishly down the road pulling an empty rickshaw. A little way down the road he drove right into a woman skewed down by a large candy-striped bag. The woman's howl ricocheted through the bazaar, cracking its thick shell of sluggishness. Dessert pink stripes lay on the road, humping gayly through a pristine bed of sugar and rice. She gave tongue to her deepest feelings for she came from the slums that lay between the bazaar and the cotton factory and suffered no inhibitions of privacy. She dragged her sari ferociously around her waist and charged, scrawny outstretched arms and jangling glass bangles, straight for the rickshaw man. Unresisting, he fell on the road, half prone—a

suppliant of shrill curses. A delighted audience materialized out of nowhere and pressed around them. The grocer left his weighing scales and began putting on his shoes.

"What's happening? What's that white stuff on the road?" Dada had joined her unnoticed. He stood swaying, hands hooked to the railings. On the back of his head his hair stood like quills, circling a patch of yellowed scalp.

"Rations. The rickshaw man knocked her over."

Dada said bitterly, "These fellows drive any old way they like. They're a public nuisance."

Shanti hadn't seen him for days. His face looked desiccated with parched, furrowed grooves of exhaustion.

"Dada. Are you well?"

"Yes. Yes." She strained to hear him. "I'm just a little tired. This heat."

Below them the public nuisance dragged his pockets and handed all his money to the woman. She promptly flung it on the road.

Dada turned to go.

"Dada. Maybe some hot milk. Of course," she added with some cunning, "these days it's mixed with water. But. . . ."

Dada stopped and looked at her vaguely. Had he heard her?

"Your kitchen. Is it fixed? Bindu said there was a lot of damage."

Shanti moved forward till her legs hit the wall. "Yes. Yes. We lost most of our kitchen stuff. Still, it was nothing like what happened to you! I mean, imagine the whole house! And the children—so young."

Like a flare deep in the dark, not the flame, but the altered rings of night around it, Dada's eyes contracted and saw shapes, colours, moments that were his alone and no one else's. He came back to the balcony railing and rested against it.

Below them the grocer scattered the crowd as abruptly as it had collected. The woman and the rickshaw man squatted companionably on the road, scooping up snowy handfuls, sharing it carefully according to some mysterious peace pact the grocer had authored.

Shanti looked gravely at Dada and said, "Dada, how did it happen?"

"Ah," said Dada, "what can I say! It was terrible. We lost everything. It all seems like yesterday. I remember . . . Lila was about a year old and Satish had already . . . I was quite a young man then."

Shanti listened and looked down at the bazaar and discovered to her surprise that she could do both.

"The Balcony" won second prize in the 1989 EDGE Fiction Contest. Reeta Raj is a writer living in Tokyo.

Black Water Angel

by Sally Ito

I met him on a hot July afternoon. He wanted some translations of titles done for a small exhibit he was going to hold in a gallery on the Ginza. A mutual acquaintance had told him I could translate French into Japanese. He was from Paris. An artist.

He lived in a small studio in Asakusa near Sensoji Temple. You had to walk down a long narrow lane to get to it. The studio was in the back of the building at the end of a hallway. The place was cluttered and in disarray. Canvasses lay stacked against the wall and piled on the floor. A large unfinished sculpture sat on a pedestal near the door.

I found him sitting on the floor by the veranda, his leg stuck out of his kimono into the garden. He was fanning himself.

"Ah—you must be here to do the translations!" he said, getting up. The blue cotton of his kimono rustled into shape as he stood up. He took my hand and introduced himself.

A dank wet smell came from his neck where his kimono lay open. A V-shaped patch of chest hair glistened with sweat. It was unbearably hot.

He gave me the sheets to translate and showed me a place where I could sit down to do them. The door opened and a young girl came in with a tray of ice tea. She set it down on the table and bowed. He nodded. Dismissed, she left quietly.

"So, tell me again, where are you from?" he asked.

"Canada," I said.

"Rather cold there, isn't it?"

"Yes," I replied, "quite cold."

"I see," he said. He picked up his fan and gently waved it back and forth. The corners of my sheets began to flutter. I put out my hand to push them down. His hand landed on mine.

"Sorry," he said. He took away his hand and put down the fan.

I turned to the sheets at hand.

Cicadas buzzed noisily. The occasional bee droned by. He had turned away and was looking at the garden.

I began translating the titles. There was one—"Black Water Angel"—I tried to imagine the painting. Then I looked at the next title.

"I can't read this one," I said, pointing at it.

He looked up. Slowly he drew up beside me, his blue kimono rustling on the tatami. He strained to

look at the letters. His neck, long and thin, tightened as he said, "Alphonsine. It says 'Alphonsine.'"

I wrote it down.

"My dead sister," he added, "but don't put that down."

"Oh," I said, "I'm sorry."

"Nothing to be sorry about. She died years ago when we were children. Drowned."

I hung my head. It was hot, very hot.

"She was gifted—liked to paint, like me," he said.

"Oh," I said. He seemed unbearably close. I could see the sweat gathering like small pearls on the stubble on his cheeks. A faint odour of blackness tickled my nose. It seemed a butterfly was trapped in the window. I could hear its wings beating like the soft drumming of rain. But it was really his fingers marching across the edge of my skirt. His arm, slow and graceful like a train edging along the shoreline, disappeared into a tunnel. A dark gulp of air and the soft flutter of arms against the tatami, a wash of blue cotton over my eyes and nose—the rank smell of salt and dead fish.

When I came to, I was lying on the floor, my head propped on a pillow. A small electric fan buzzed by my ear.

I could see him across the room. He was standing, working at the sculpture by the door. His back was to me, bare and exposed. He had slipped out of the top part of his kimono where it hung at his sides, strapped to his waist by the obi.

"Oh, you're awake," he said, turning to me. "You fainted."

"I see," I said sheepishly. I got up and returned to the translations.

"You needn't do them if you're not feeling well," he said, putting down his chisel.

"No, no—there's only a few left anyway," I said, hurrying myself along.

I finished the last few titles and got ready to leave.

"Would you like to stay for tea?" he offered.

"No—I must get going," I said. I hastily picked up my things and made my way out. It was dusk. The streets were noisy and crowded. I hurried off to the subway station.

When I arrived at my apartment, I felt tired and hot. My clothes were damp with sweat. I bent down to take off my stockings when, strangely, I noticed I wasn't wearing any. Had I even put them on that day? Suddenly, I could not remember.

"Black Water Angel" received special mention from the judges in this year's EDGE Fiction Contest. Sally Ito is a writer and real-life translator living in Tokyo.

Featured Poet: Fil Lewitt

To Wit, To Won: A Modern Sonneteer

Big River Farm Birthday Sonnet to Marilyn Mount (1967)

Now you are too
old for hawks, young for buzzards, much for mountains.
In your head things ferment like fallen apples:
get up off the ground and into the bucket,
lady, turn into winter wine.
Oh, the taste of possible cider!
hard as the crazy goat's horns,
knock you over, laughing.

God damn. drunk with love on the front porch again!
slap my thigh like a fly on a rock,
scratch the sheep's thick skull,
swear at the dog for eyeing chickens,
ducks, geese, a fruit falls splat
on your head, wake up!
you! keep ageing, you taste so fine
and the trees get mellowier each season.

Deep End (1972)

all the energy into women
all ages, the swelling & the folding
from seed rock sun
endless grass thighs, our kind!

divine mother, flat on your back
from whom comes the water fall
heft of the mountain shoulder
sheer cliff bulk empty

my man head buried in you
life's thirsty circle
the roots drink the creek falls
we rise & rise & rise

swallows in the cliff nest
the balance of your slope, sister



Artwork by Prescott Foster

On The Death of My Uncle Ben

(13 Dec 1892 - 26 Jan 1979)

measured against the insistence of the lone fly
determined to light on the winter kitchen table's
meager offerings, this is a long season,
the end barely in sight at the other end
of a long white corridor, a pin-point of green,
even that seeming to waver in the white light
lingering even after the drone of the buzzing has ceased

still things disappear and fold into the mass
of the great cliff: bird, bone, pine, footprint,
all manner of things lost and yet not quite
lost one could fall and fall and disappear
like a fierce stoop and plummet only to recover,
having missed the still point poised there this time round,
to soar again, to hover, outstretched, almost forever

At Last Spring

(1981)

long ice surrenders to her hot breath
flat fields quicken & steam
green pokes up in last years reeds
frogs talk softly on the lakes edge

small birds gather on stiff brown reeds
green sticks up around the lakes rim
the last ice steams blue skyward
long fields feel her quick breath

frogs poke around damp brown fields
small birds quicken skyward
green comes her steamy breath
old reeds surrender to the blue lake

quick brown birds small green steaming frogs gather
her damp stiff long soft poking breath



Universal Gear

(1981)

fat grass crackles in meadows
thick moss flickers in shadows
drowsy flies buzz rocks
crickets the color of branches

seed fuel works wings
limbs radiate from trees
spiders spin like galaxies
birds sing in delight of morning

what a world & just in time
in turn a tone becomes a tune
so moons tides rains winds tease
mountains sliding slyly into streams

snap of fingers pulse of stars
steamy planets circling other suns

Sonnet at a Certain Time of Life

(1986)

Every mother's son who ever lived died
but still it's a hell of a thing to accept in the end—
I'll miss the stream, the earth, the breeze, the birds, the sky,
worse yet, I'll miss what happens next forever.

Ah, these middle years are not an after-dinner sleep,
nor do I, waking, dream of youth nor age,
but, as it is, find such intensity
in quietude sometimes it scares me witless,

such damned beauty waiting in the wings,
while seedy circles manifest as buds
and bugs and wavy fronds and frogs and stars,
then speechless, waiting, heart-throb, how I care!

To live again, but not to know it, what's
the matter, what's the use, of all this light?

While his main work is as a poet and teacher, Fil Lewitt has also been a cook, gardener, factory worker, builder, designer, and jazz musician. He directed a Zen meditation community for a decade in California, and has been living mostly in Japan for the last dozen years.

7 am My 46th Birthday

(1987)

Snow was falling steadily, steadily,
snow was steadily falling, falling,
wind none, sound none, snow fell straight down,
one crow flew through silently, silently,
one thrush perched on branch and watching, watching,
softly, softly, all had vanished underneath but nonetheless
the eye encodes a record of the gesture,
still this, so still, and cold, so cold, and lovely yet.

No meaning other than the thing becomes,
the bird, the branch, the eye, the snow, the code,
no purpose other than the manifesting act,
the dance, the swirl, this heavy white embrace,
such richness resonating emptiness,
the hush of what it is, and was, and will be still.

A Kiss On It

Fukiko's Fortieth (1988)

When fish begin to fly and insects swim,
will you still love me then?
when oceans dry, and elephants grow thin,
and girls mourn men?

When satellites explode and roses blow,
will you still share my bed?
when lovers' code is broken, words don't know,
and deserts spread?

Sweet kiss to face the morning light and fill
until this world's undone,
though Time, dark child of Space, holds lovers still
we burn to run.

When towering cedars lie in graves like men
and cities sink will you still love me then?

In Tanga

by Stephen Forster

The motionless state had never tasted so sweet. It was a condition to be enjoyed at length, eyes closed, arms folded, for a whole minute of unassailable bliss. As the noise of the engine stuttered into silence she savoured the physical stillness. After two hours of continuous jolting forward and backward, to the right and left, having undergone, it seemed, every feasible degree of pitch, yaw and roll, whereby various parts of her anatomy had been brought into sudden and violent juxtaposition with various others, Mary was now ready to revel in inertia.

The bus had arrived at the station and she was able to stretch out on the seat that had previously been occupied by the vast bulk of the Indian beside her. After taking his seat several hours earlier at the border he had fallen into an immediate deep sleep, which had remained unbroken until the bus rattled into the station, whereupon he awoke instantly as if he had been summoned, emitted a loud noise somewhere between a gargle and a cough and dragged himself heavily out of the seat. He nodded down amiably at the small, astonished Arab occupying the seat in front, whose shoulder had been clutched and wrenched in the process of rising, and he waddled serenely off the bus, magnanimously deaf to the round condemnations of the Arab that followed in his wake. Half a minute later the Indian was followed by what Mary took to be his mother and wife; the one dignified and dominant, in bulk not unlike her son; the other timorous, anxious for the approval of the mother. The mother straightened the silk scarf over her head, her plump fingers pulling smoothly along the seam, and the wife was quick to do likewise.

Mary stretched her legs out over the seat and rubbed the life back into them. She felt weary as if she had just walked a great distance. The Indian beside her had been a problem from the start. Upon falling asleep, his head had shown a particular affinity for her shoulder, and it was only with persistent pushing that she was able to shift it. The head would then roll slowly back up to the vertical, where it would hang for a while, nodding in agreement to the motion of the bus, before slipping back down again, with first the chin digging into the chest and then the head swaying over until it reached the point it found satisfactory on her shoulder.

With the exception of the much more expensive, though hardly more reliable, means of travelling by

plane, the international buses were, she had been informed, the luxury mode of transport in the region. They owed their status to the few delays at the border, that is, apart from the inevitable and interminable ones caused by the customs and immigration officials. The international buses were also able to offer a reasonably good chance that somewhere along the route there would be a supply of petrol to take the bus on to the next stage of the journey. Mary had heard stories from people travelling on the cheaper routes who had been stranded for days on end in the middle of nowhere simply because their bus had run out of fuel and there had been no more available. She had also heard from the same sources that here 'middle of nowhere' took on entirely new, unimaginable dimensions. The facility of the international Cat Bus Company in providing its service lifted it beyond the pockets of most natives, and it was largely Asians who made up the passengers on Mary's bus.

She lifted the travelling bag from its place of security between her feet and stood behind the other passengers who were waiting to get off. Like the Indian beside her, many of them had somehow contrived to sleep during the past few hours on what, and here she was in no doubt, was the worst road she had ever experienced. She was the last of the passengers getting off and at the top of the steps asked the driver as he was climbing out of his seat how long they would be stopping. The question brought him to a sudden halt in the middle of his manoeuvre and he settled back into his seat. He stared ahead of him and gave the question careful consideration before declaring, "Don't know. Twenty-five minutes," and then he slid out of the vehicle.

Stepping down from the bus, it was movement now that felt as great a luxury as the lack of it had done a few moments earlier. Mary caught a glimpse of the large figure of the Indian before he disappeared into the crowd with the two women still following in his train. She slipped the strap of her bag over her head and noticed at the back of the bus a group of young men standing and talking loudly as a couple of them siphoned petrol from a large blue plastic drum into the petrol tank. For the next part of the journey, it would seem at least, their petrol was assured.

She looked about her. The town was Tanga, and

the country Tanzania. The road they had just taken had brought them from Kenya, the rich neighbour over the border that could afford tarmac on its roads and, what is more, keep its tarmac in a reasonably fit state of repair. Though the notion of precisely what she was doing now would have appalled her only a few months ago, Mary was travelling by herself in East Africa. The friend she had planned to be coming here with had suddenly taken ill a couple of weeks before they were due to leave, and for the friend the illness had put the trip completely out of the question. Frightful though the initial prospect of travelling alone had been, Mary found that it soon faded into insignificance at the side of simply losing all the money she had spent on the ticket. And so, after a short period of uncertainty, she decided to go ahead with the trip, to the great surprise of her friends, who had never thought she would do such a thing, and the great dismay of her mother, who had never dreamed she would.

The sickly sweet smell of rotting and fermenting fruit hung in the air over the bus station. Large numbers of people were stretched out asleep on the hard concrete benches of the waiting area, which was covered over by a high metal roof. The shelter had walls on two sides, being open at the front and rear. The walls had been painted a drab shade of blue to an arbitrary point a little above shoulder height, with the paint now peeling away in large flakes and exposing the underlying plaster, which was black with grime. Four fluorescent bulbs attached to brackets suspended from the roof threw a harsh light on the area and added to the general bleakness. Around the bus where she was standing a few of the passengers were walking around eating oranges or drinking brightly coloured liquid from bottles. A few emaciated dogs were hanging around near the shelter, standing, walking a few steps and then stopping and yawning.

Mary picked a path between the dirty, discarded half-shells of oranges and realized that she was quite thirsty. She approached the small wooden hut which served as a ticket office and held up her hand to the feeble light from the window. It was almost two in the morning.

She noticed a couple of Masai tribesmen sitting motionless in a corner. The elaborately braided hair, dropping down in long queues to just below shoulder length, was dyed a rich, chocolate red, the same colour as the Kenyan soil. Mary had seen Masai a few times from the bus, walking over the open grassland, maroon shawls wrapped around their shoulders, leading their white, humped zebu cattle. The two Masai here were both sitting in the same bolt-upright manner, head erect and holding a long-bladed spear. They gazed blankly ahead of them, oblivious to those around and likewise ignored.

As she looked at the tribesmen she became

aware of someone talking to her. She turned and saw an African boy of perhaps sixteen or seventeen speaking to her very fast in Swahili. She listened patiently, hoping that she would be able to make some sense of what he was saying. He didn't look at her directly but seemed to be addressing a point somewhere below her chin. As he spoke he interjected a short laugh between the words, and his mouth was fixed in a permanent grin.

"I'm sorry I don't understand," and she shook her head, "do you speak English?" He continued to stare with his grin, then he looked around him, at the bus, at the shops and then back at her chin. He was dressed in filthy shorts, a tattered and greasy shirt and his feet were without the cheap sandals cut out of old tyres that many were wearing. He then uttered a short phrase and ran his forefinger repeatedly in and out of his mouth. Mary didn't like the look of the gesture and was about to walk away when the Australian girl came up, "He's trying to tell you he wants a bloody cigarette."

"I couldn't understand a word," said Mary.

"Well he was saying 'tobacco' over and over and sticking his finger in his mouth. What do you want? Charades?" She spoke as if she were addressing an idiot.

"But I don't smoke."

"Me neither," and the girl strode over to one of the shops and came back a few seconds later with a cigarette, which she gave to the boy. He took the cigarette and put it in his mouth, still grinning. He then turned and walked away without saying another word. The Australian girl did likewise.

Generally, Mary was not given to taking an immediate dislike to people upon first acquaintance, but she had made an exception in the case of the Australian. She was called something like 'Darlene' or 'Charlene' and she had been travelling in Africa for several months. Her hair was blonde and had been plaited African style, with brightly coloured beads at the end of the braids. She was the only other white on the bus and had seemed unwilling to talk to Mary at first. When they did get talking it was, inevitably, about the various places they had visited. Darlene or Charlene had adopted a manner of natural superiority over Mary where everything to do with travel and impressions of the continent were concerned. She was aghast when Mary told her how much she had been spending on accommodation and food. Up until then Mary had been feeling reasonably pleased with her efforts at coping with solo travel in East Africa. Mary listened to the details of how she could have experienced so much more for half the amount she had spent, but she failed somewhat to grasp the utility of the information now that she had already been to the places in question.

Mary continued her stroll around the station; there were no signs of any action near the bus. The

station was situated next to a fairly large open space, which might enthusiastically have been termed a square. It contained a few trees, several dogs, a couple of sleeping figures and some battered old cars in addition to small groups of people standing or squatting as they talked. She walked towards a few of the vehicles, old Peugeots and approximately the same dirty green colour. They were drawn up in a rough line and she realized they were the local taxi fleet. The drivers were sitting on the bonnets, looking tired and bored, talking to one another in desultory tones. Only one of them was able to offer her an unconvincing "taxi?" as she went by.

Mary turned back towards the bus, and as she approached the smell of oil mixed with that of the fruit and dust. An old African woman was walking towards her, her mouth moving as if carrying on a silent conversation. Her hair was short, unusually grey, and it rose in thin strands from the scalp. As she came closer, part of the red print dress she was wearing dropped away at the shoulder. An old, dry breast came into view, dangling on her chest like a triangular flap of dark, scored leather, and ending as a black pearl at the nipple.

Mary felt her thirst again. There had been nowhere at the border for her to buy Tanzanian shillings, and there appeared to be no money-changing facilities here. She thought of using the dollars she had smuggled with such pains into the country. Doing anything that involved even a trace of illegality demanded enormous efforts on Mary's part, and earlier at the border the experience had been harrowing and she had almost given up. There she had been standing in the long, tedious wait together with the other passengers, shuffling from small office to small office in what was almost complete darkness, broken only by the feeble smoky light of a couple of hurricane lamps. The final wait outside the door of the customs house was the longest, and as she edged closer to the rough wooden building, the worry began to mount. In her hand she held her currency declaration form, the paper that testified to the fraud she was about to commit. Right up until the last minute she was debating within herself the wisdom of the act. Smuggling hard currency was certainly a common enough practice by all accounts and was apparently done as a matter of course by most of the travellers she had met. But as the number of people in front of her dwindled to a couple, all manner of dire punishments flashed through her mind, and she wondered what on earth she would do if the undeclared dollars wedged uncomfortably in her bra were discovered. Her turn came and she advanced uneasily into the room and lay the form and her other papers on the high desk. The customs officer scowled

at her with uncommon severity, and she experienced something approaching panic. She was convinced that the man would notice her disquiet and have her searched. But she hadn't been aware that the look he gave was as much a part of the job as keeping the people waiting for hours and checking the forms in darkness. He merely took the form, glanced at it without interest and stamped it. He then dropped it back onto the desk as if it had been handed to him by mistake, noisily cleared his throat and beckoned impatiently with his forefinger at the next person to enter.

She was walking towards the shop, still deciding whether to part with a dollar. She passed a couple of young Indian men she had seen on the bus and one of them spoke to her, "Hello, hello, how are you?"

"Tired."

"We have a very long wait. It is terrible. You want a cigarette?"

"No thank you, I don't smoke."

"You know that's very dangerous; you must put that away please," the one who spoke suddenly frowned and motioned with his head down to the region of her breasts. She was at first unsure what he was referring to but then realized he was staring at the small pouch that was hanging around her neck. She had bought it to hold her valuables, but when she noticed that all the other foreign travellers in Kenya seemed to have the same type of pouch she decided that it would be more sensible to store the real valuables elsewhere and just use the pouch as a pocket.

His face was becoming severe, "Put it away now. They will steal it." Mary had had her fill of advice from the Australian girl and was not disposed to receive more from the Indian now.

"Thanks, but I think it'll be OK here." She smiled pleasantly, "There are plenty of people around."

But his manner became more insistent and the voice sounded irritated, "No, no, put it away now. Please, it is no good. It is not safe. It was the week before last we had the boy from Italy, and he got his money, passport, camera, everything stolen." He shook his head decidedly. "You must put it away now." It was late and she no longer felt like contesting the point and resignedly slid the pouch into her shirt.

"Yes that is much better." He nodded and beamed, "And did you sleep back there?" And he indicated with his thumb the direction from which they had driven. She thought at first he was joking, but the question appeared to be serious.

"Er, no, not really," she admitted.

"Me neither. I had the stomachache," and he

patted the area in question, "the Kenya food it's no good." And he shook his head decidedly at the thought.

"Do you often take this road?"

"Oh yes my brother and I," and he gestured towards the man standing beside him, "we come along here two, three, four times a month." Mary glanced at the brother, who seemed to be taking no interest in the conversation but was staring at the square. The two were completely dissimilar: the one talking was short; his face was quick to fall into a smile or a frown. He was heavy of build, and gold rings flashed on his thick fingers. The brother was much darker, gaunt, with a Roman nose and keen, deep-set eyes, and he had the intense, fixed look of a bird of prey.

"What's the road like from here on?"

"Oh worse, much worse."

"What, all the way to Dar es Salaam?"

"Oh yes. Isn't it?" And here he turned to the brother for confirmation, but the other ignored the question and continued staring ahead.

"Gets worse? Are you sure?" She showed surprise, but her experience had taught her when travelling to treat most of what she was told with skepticism.

"Oh yes, all the way."

"And what is it that you do in Mombasa?"

"We are businessmen."

"What kind of business?"

"That is very interesting, we sell fancy goods, we sell shoes and we sell the items for ladies. Last month we travelled. . . ." He stopped abruptly to listen as his brother began speaking to him earnestly in some Indian language. Mary waited patiently for a while, listening to them as they spoke rapidly about something. She slipped her thumb under the strap of her bag and turned casually to look at the groups of people standing behind her. Turning back a few moments later she was astonished to see the two Indians walking away without having said a word. Indignant at having been ignored she strode away herself.

Mary decided to get herself a drink and went to one of the two stalls, where the shopkeeper showed surprising reluctance to accept the valuable dollar. She moved on towards the shelter to drink the sugary, lukewarm juice. Nearby, a man in a white embroidered cap was sitting behind a low wooden table, upon which he had built a small pyramid of peeled oranges. A woman with a child came up to buy one, and the seller selected an orange judiciously from the pile and offered it to her, taking the coins in one hand while selecting the next orange from the box beside him with the other. With his knife he

stripped the new orange of its skin, the bright green peel curling away as a neat spiral before it fell and collapsed on the ground. The last act was slicing across the fruit so that it hinged upon itself by a small length of the pale inner skin. The orange then took its place in the gap in the pile and, hands folded upon his lap and gazing down at the completed pyramid, he awaited the next customer.

A light rain was now falling and felt slightly cool against her skin. They had already been here an hour, and there was still no sign of departure. Mary finished her juice and felt weary. There were three more weeks of travelling in East Africa before she could go back. She inspected her black fingernails and realized that she had grown tired of the travelling and thought longingly of home. She imagined being at home, having a hot bath, reading the paper, having a hot dinner and sleeping in a clean bed, and the thought of that simple domestic evening suddenly held an attraction beyond words.

But she was interrupted in her thoughts by a loud commotion emerging from near the bus. People were moving towards the vehicle to see what was happening and Mary followed them. She could hear a couple of voices raised above the rest and screaming out something. She was able to push her way through the crowd and get almost to the front just as a boy was being dragged out of the vehicle. She recognized him as the one who had spoken to her before. Part of a cigarette was dangling stupidly from a corner of the still grinning mouth.

He was pulled out of the door and over to the side, where one of the men holding him slapped him hard across the head. His head thudded against the side panel of the bus and remained there, as if stuck, until he was pulled away and a fist drove into his abdomen, followed by another to the head. There were five of them, young men standing around in a rough semicircle, beating him in turn. The youngest of them was about the same age as the boy; his features were twisted into a face of terrifying anger as he plunged into him with his feet and fists.

Mary looked on aghast and wondered why nobody was stopping the fight. The beating went on and she anxiously looked at those around her to see if there was anyone who was going to step in, but there was no sign of action or even of involvement. The men and women standing around were gazing with blank expressions of detached interest as if this were no more than some idle spectator sport.

The remains of the boy's shirt were ripped off his back, and the thin, black flesh shone with sweat. There was something sickening about the sound of knuckles slapping into soft flesh, and she began to feel nauseous. His shorts were dragged off and one

of them drew back his leg and lunged hard into the naked genitalia. The boy collapsed onto the ground and as the man continued kicking Mary realized that it was the Indian, the brother she had been speaking to. She felt weak and had to look away. She could not bear any more and was about to leave when she heard with immense relief the sharp voice of authority behind her, and the crowd began to shuffle back to make way.

There were two of them, an older officer and one who looked about the same age as a college student, and they approached unhurriedly. The kicking gradually stopped. The older policeman gave a brief, weary glance at the prostrate figure of the boy on the ground and snapped out a question. An old woman came up and began explaining something in a thin, high voice. The officer glanced round at the bystanders, and his eyes rested on Mary and he stared at her. She found the stare uncomfortable and looked down at the bent-up figure of the boy on the ground. He wasn't moving. His hands were clutched over his stomach and groin, and there was a dribble of blood running from his nose into his mouth.

The older officer asked another question in his tired voice. The old woman answered again and pointed at the bus. Someone came up carrying a small bundle and placed it at the feet of the policemen. It was a square of cloth on which there was a small pile of objects, and Mary then understood what it was all about. She realized now why it was that the boy had been beaten up and looked at the small, pathetic collection—two pens, a T-shirt, some biscuits, a couple of toys, a radio—that the boy had been trying to steal while the passengers were asleep or out of the bus.

The senior officer spoke again, and a couple of people standing next to him bent down and roughly pulled up the boy. He still appeared to be conscious, though only just; his eyes were rolling and his mouth was opening and shutting. She realized then that during the whole time he was being beaten he hadn't uttered a sound.

Suddenly the bus rattled into life, and the noise was unfamiliar and alien. Everybody began to disperse; most followed the escorted boy and policemen towards the police station. Passengers started filing onto the bus. The Indian was still standing where he had assaulted the boy and he noticed Mary. He gave her a grim look and shouted to her, "You see that is what we must do. This is what we do in Tanzania. You want photos?" Mary turned quickly and walked around to the other side of the bus to try and calm herself down. The sick feeling of before had now given way to anger, though it was an anger without focus. It was not just the violence, the indifference of the crowd, the impassiveness of the police, the contemptible Indian. It was the place itself, it was the people, the poverty, the brutality, the society, the

ignorance and everything she had encountered. She wrung her hands and hated it all.

She climbed the steps onto the bus with reluctance and clambered over the bags and bodies to her seat. There was no alternative but to go on; she couldn't stay in Tanga. The road to Dar stretched out tortuously into the night.

The fat Indian was already asleep in the seat next to hers, and it was only after much effort that she was able to wake him, and only after even greater effort on his part that he was able to haul himself out of the seat and let her pass. The travelling bag went back to its place between her feet and she sat down exhausted.

Mary could see the police station, it was not far away, and there were a large number of people standing outside the building. She could see inside the building to a single naked bulb that dangled from the ceiling and threw a thin, yellow light onto the walls. She rubbed her eyes, which were aching with tiredness, and her throat felt dry.

Just when she thought they were finally about to leave the bus shuddered into silence. The driver shouted angrily to someone outside the bus, and the Arab in front began complaining in a loud voice. The windows were up but it seemed so much hotter now, and she wiped the sweat from her forehead. There was the drone of a mosquito nearby and she flapped irritably with her hand around her face. With the shelter almost to themselves now, the two Masai were still in the same position as before, spears in their hands, black and red figures under the white, hard glare.

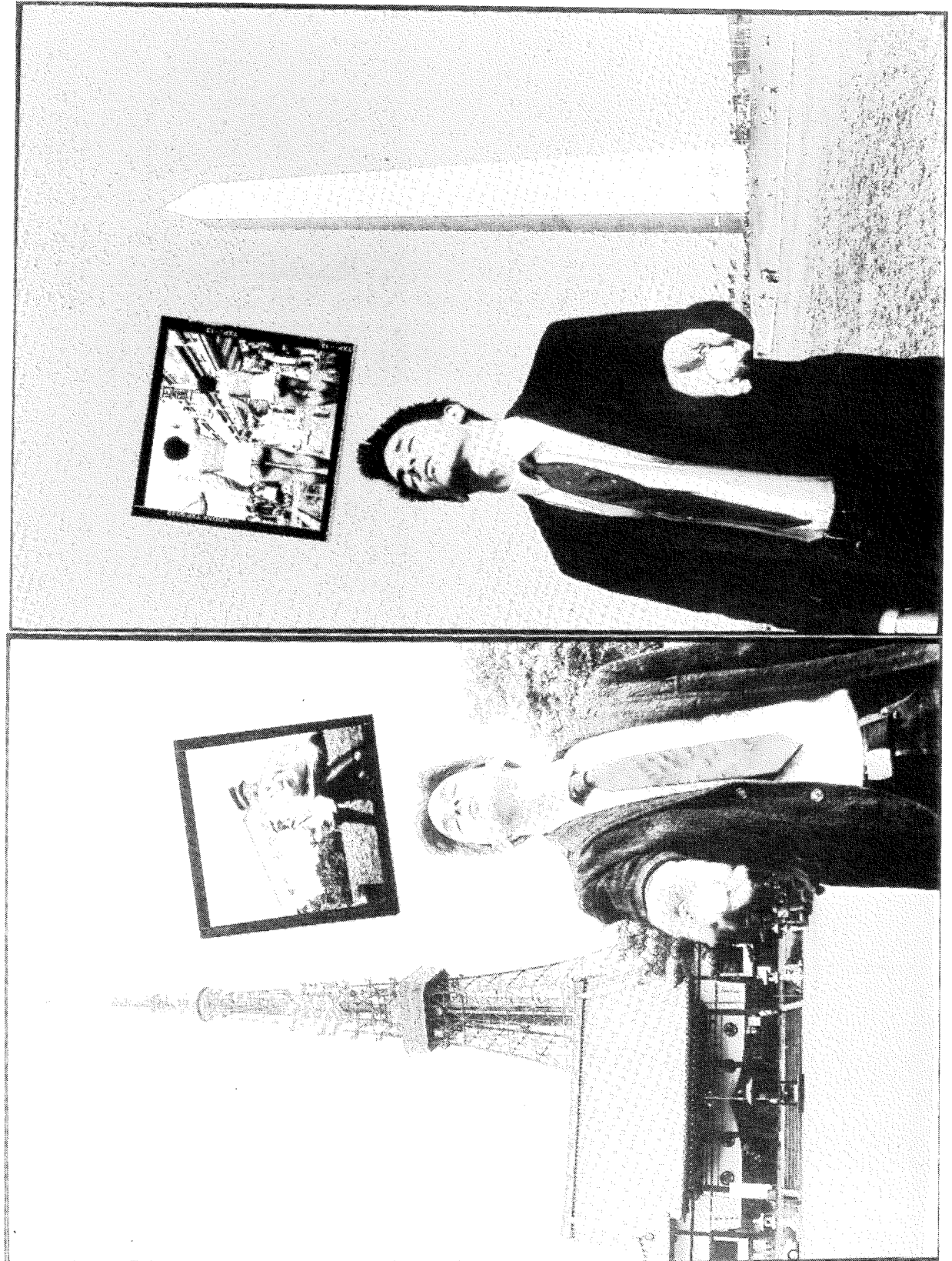
It was then that the scream shot through the night. The driver stopped his chain of abuse, and the Arab his complaints. There was no question as to where the scream came from. The crowd outside the police station swirled and pressed in tighter around the yellow light that fanned out of the doorway. Heads were craning and arms were pushing in an effort to see what was happening inside the room. Mary looked at the naked bulb, hanging as before and spilling the same light, and wondered at the scene that was taking place beneath. She could feel the muscles of her stomach draw together as the same sickness welled up inside her again, and she closed her eyes and leaned her head against the warm side of the bus. The silence of the bus had finally been broken. Her fingers dug into her leg. The police had succeeded where the crowd had failed.

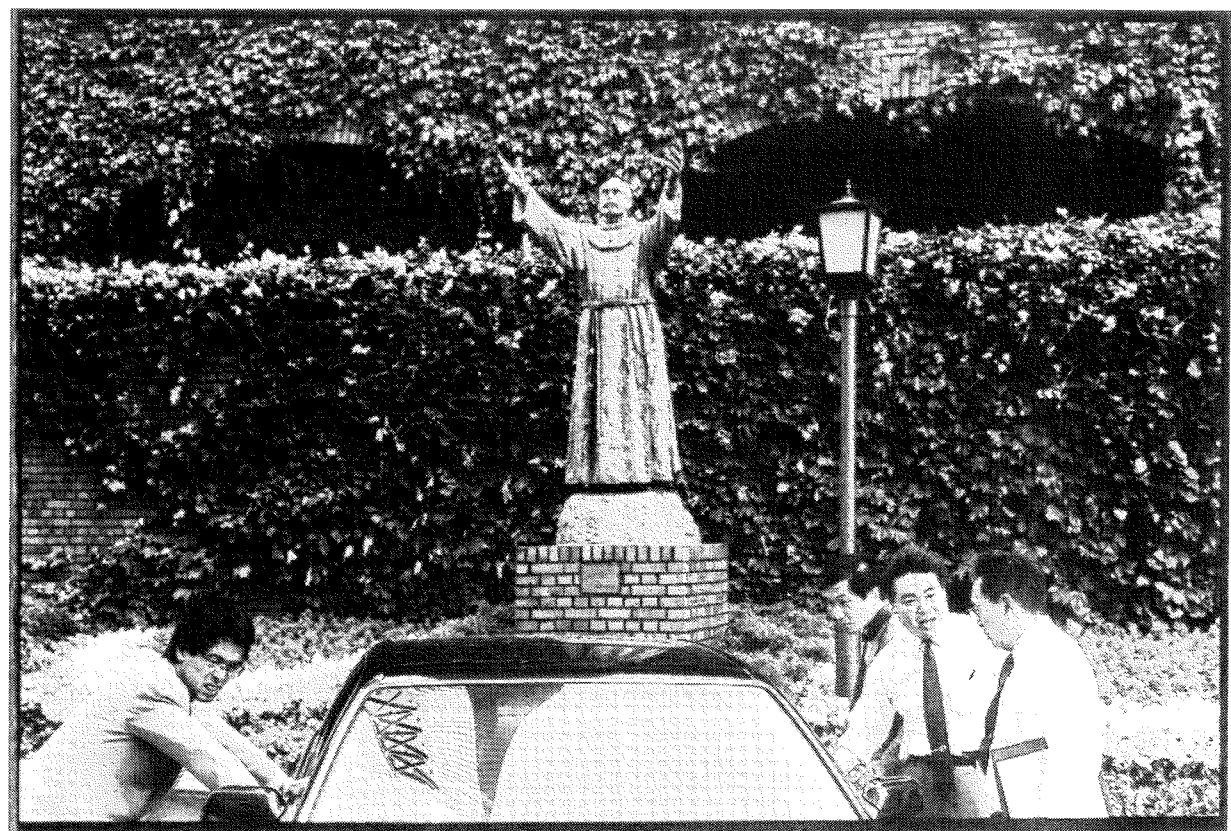
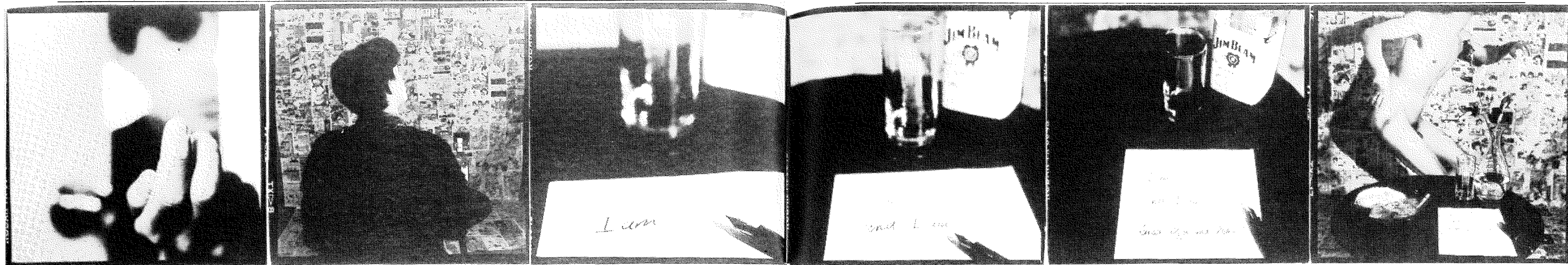
The scream rang out again.

"In Tanga" was an entry in the 1989 EDGE Fiction Contest. Stephen Forster is a writer and editor from Sheffield, England, now living in Tokyo. He also recently signed on as a new contributing editor to EDGE.

images:

Paul Takeuchi





Paul Takeuchi is a photographer and filmmaker from Washington D.C., who lived in Switzerland before coming to Japan last year on the big search.

The Oubliette

by Angela Jeffs

Yasuyuki was excited when the dig began. He usually spent so much time looking skywards that it made an interesting change to stare down into the bowels of the earth.

His parents, having sold half their garden for a company dormitory, had been dutiful (though complaining of inconvenience and delay), informing Kamakura city office of the plan. Work began late March, with the expectant air full of scents and the ghostly confetti of cherry blossoms.

Day by day—it was spring holiday so no school—a machine purred, spiked by the warbling of *uguisu* and the regular rattle of the Yokosuka line, sucking up the fine black soil and depositing it into a heap that soon came to resemble Mt. Fuji in miniature.

The old women, in *monpe* and sunbonnets, and the breeched and split-toe be-booted workmen, grew used to the boy sitting on the sidelines, his eyes widening as the outlines of an ancient temple began to blur the surface. Within weeks the outer walls, inner divisions of stone and rotted corner posts, quarters and kitchen, and finally the inner sanctum, all lay revealed.

As expert fingers brushed and caressed these features, pulling gently from the shadows and curved fragments of a former life, Yasuyuki began to feel almost afraid that he had played in such ignorance among grass and flowers, stone lanterns and old persimmon trees. All that time, he thrilled, there had been spirits and treasures beneath his feet.

Periodically, two men from the archeological division arrived in a white Toyota. They took off their raincoats, pulled on boots, and while one held a ladder, the other, atop, took photographs. When this happened, everyone took a break, the neighbours all crowded round to peer and comment, and the site became a focus of local interest.

"They found a strange hole today, right away from the main wall," Yasuyuki's father announced one Saturday morning. He had become quite interested in local history over the weeks.

"I don't care!" sighed his mother, the mud being tramped around the house really beginning to get on her nerves.

It was near dusk, while peering into the pit that the director of the excavation had identified with some excitement as an "oubliette", it having been a

rumour for years, that Yasuyuki noticed a tiny imperfection—maybe a crack, more likely something protruding from the wall—down in the darkest corner of the secret dungeon. He knew he shouldn't, but the piece of pottery proved quite easy to extricate.

He wasn't able to wash it until after dinner, when everyone swivelled to watch sumo. Using going to the toilet as an excuse, he quivered with excitement as the soil oozed and flowed away to reveal an aeroplane etched lightly into the glaze.

"How old is the hole where they found the bones?" he asked later, as he and his father soaked together in the tub.

"Eight hundred years, give or take a beer or two!" (Mr Suzuki's face and neck were scarlet from the combined effects of alcohol, bathwater and his own giddy wit.)

"But why would they put someone down there and forget him?"

His father shrugged. How would he know?

"Was it because he designed the aeroplane? Did they kill him because of that?"

It was a joke for weeks. In the family, on the site, at school (his younger brother was such a tell-tale), around the whole neighbourhood. That young Suzuki and his fancies, they nodded and smiled, or whispered and condescended. Lived for planes, his head in the clouds, that one.

Yasuyuki never showed the shard to anyone, not even his own wife and family, twenty, forty, sixty years on. It was his secret knowledge that aeroplanes existed centuries before the world awoke, defined their image and put them in service.

It was lucky perhaps that he could never remember the recurring dream (but never a nightmare) of the recalcitrant monk, who kept madness at bay by tracing with his fingertips the figure of an angel that he had scratched so crudely on his long-empty waterpot, to keep his spirit and beliefs flying high and free, while the darkness slowly closed in.

"The Oubliette" was an entry in the 1989 EDGE Fiction Contest. Angela Jeffs is a freelance writer living in Kamakura, a former writer for The Magazine, and a columnist for The Japan Times.

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Poetical Space

by John Ashbery

The following is the text of a speech given by John Ashbery at Shirayuri Women's University in Tokyo on May 19, 1989. The original title, suggested by the hosting moderator, Junichiro Takachi, was "Poetic Phenomenology and Ashbery Himself." © 1989 by John Ashbery.

I have been asked to discuss two topics I know very little about: one is "poetical phenomenology;" the other is "Ashbery himself." It is true that I might be expected to know something about them since poetry is a kind of phenomenology ("a branch of science dealing with the descriptions and classification of phenomena," according to Webster's dictionary), and I am probably a poet. In addition to which, I am also "Ashbery myself," if not "himself." But it is also true that I know relatively little about poetry, despite or perhaps because of having been a poet for almost half a century. How can this be? I am not sure. Perhaps somewhere I have a superstitious dread of knowing too much about what it is that I do—a fear that if I can explain it I won't be able to do it. Or perhaps—and I somewhat incline towards this view—being a poet or making poetry somehow precludes the most intimate knowledge of what poetry is, of how it affects people other than the poet. In fact, being a poet seems to disqualify or disequip one for so many of the practical aspects and tasks of life. In my case, it is very difficult for me to answer letters or pay bills or even make plans for the immediate future, not because I am so very busy or even because I am immobilized by continually waiting for a poem to happen, like a fisherman sitting for hours on the bank of a stream. It is simply that poetry, in granting one a kind of power no poet would willingly give up, also disempowers, in ways that are ill understood. The resulting situation for the poet has been brilliantly defined by John Keats as "negative capability."

The painter Barnett Newman, when asked once to characterize his painting, replied in words to the effect that "birds don't make good ornithologists." And though this is more or less my view regarding my own poetry, I recognize that there are occasions—such as this one—when it becomes necessary and even decent to do so if one wants to remain on good terms with one's audience. This is something

every poet ought to do, since a poet without an audience, or at least a potential one, is nothing: that is, poetry is not a stationary object but a kinetic act, in which something is transferred from somebody to somebody else. (No doubt this is true of all writing, though I have heard of, but never met, writers who claim to write "for the drawer," i.e., for themselves, and desire no other public.) So I shall try to deal in my fashion with the topic at hand, with the hope of at least ending up slightly wiser myself, if not illuminating you on a subject that remains dark to me.

Dr. Takachi had originally proposed another topic to me, since I have for much of my life earned my living as an art critic (in an attempt to support my "poetry habit"); this was "Poetic Space in Contemporary Painting." And as I thought about this topic, it occurred to me that I am a somewhat unusual case since I originally intended to be a painter, and when I was young thought of myself as a painter—well, as a potential or future painter. I read poetry as a child and as an adolescent, but at that time poetry didn't interest me as it does today; that is, I enjoyed but felt no desire to make it. When I was eight years old I wrote a rhyming poem about a snowstorm which seemed excellent to me. I felt I had achieved what I set out to do, and the result was so perfect that there would be no point in pursuing this branch of the arts any further. So I returned to my crayons and watercolors and wrote no more poetry until several years later.

As I thought about this it occurred to me that there was something strange in my early imperviousness to poetry, and in my gradual indifference to visual art later on after I had found myself becoming a poet. When I use the terms "indifference" and "imperviousness," I am referring to my feelings as a creative person, not to my attitude as a consumer of art and literature, since I have at all times enjoyed both forms of expression, and music as well, perhaps even more so—as a spectator. But that particular feeling of close involvement, which makes one want to create something and in doing so chases away other urges or at least demotes them to secondary status, has been different for me at different times. The reason for this may be hidden in the topic that was proposed to me—the poetic space in contemporary painting. Let me see if I can figure out how.

What strikes us all immediately in painting is

space, or rather the illusion of space, or rather how the artist has tried to convey that illusion. This has been a primal concern from very early on, and the desire to communicate a sense of space must have been for primitive artists one of those all-consuming but seemingly impossible-to-satisfy urges, like man's attempts to fly. Some of the Roman wall painters were pretty good at it and discovered techniques of perspective and the coloristic rendering of distance that would be perfected by artists of the Renaissance. For several centuries, however, these techniques would be lost, as they are in Byzantine art and so-called Italian Primitive painting. Of course, work of these schools is often deeply moving, sometimes even because of the artist's inability to render the illusion of space. Particularly so are works of Giotto and his contemporaries, which strive to tell the story of a saint's life, for instance, showing him at different positions in a landscape, which correspond to different stages in his career. Here, the artist appears to confuse the rendering of space with that of time, as the Surrealists would do purposely in our time—Dali's *Persistence of Memory* is an example. Or the incorrectly rendered space would turn out to be something far more enchanting than space in the world could ever be, as in Chinese landscape scrolls, where we are permitted to glimpse vast expanses of mountains and rivers which would scarcely be visible from a single vantage point in the real world.

It is not until fairly recently, however, that artists have sought to alter traditional, received notions of what space actually looks like, first in the interests of a more scientific objectivity, as with the Impressionists, who tried to second-guess the eye's irregular ways of taking in information, but later gradually leaving these attempts at a "new realism" behind. In Cézanne, for instance, we feel at first that he is grappling with an urge to express space more accurately (both for the eye and the mind) than has ever been done before. But, gradually, it seems as though he is leaving this "objective" goal behind as he embarks on new adventures in which space becomes distorted, not out of an urge for more exact description but in order to express something, a feeling no doubt rather than an idea. Suddenly, tabletops that should be lying down peacefully under their assortment of jugs and apples are rearing up on their hind legs like a horse. The effect now is not one of greater naturalism, but of nature twisted out of shape by the artist in order to make a point, or perhaps just to satisfy an unnamed urge which, strangely, strikes chords within us. We realize that we have always wanted to see things this way without knowing why. It makes us glad. We are free from the slavish description of former times; at the same time, this seeming waywardness also tells us something new about how the visible world feels, if not how it looks.

I am not going to summarize the permutations through which twentieth-century artists have put space, for they are common knowledge—so common, in fact, that we are sometimes in danger of losing sight of their originality. A landscape by Soutine, for instance, in which trees and houses dance upside down and mountains roll over like kittens waiting to have their belly scratched, no longer seems novel; it may even seem perfectly straightforward and prosaically descriptive, so accustomed are we to seeing its like in museums and reproductions. We have indeed grown accustomed to inhabiting bizarre spaces and finding them sane and comfortable. We are "corner dwellers," in Gaston Bachelard's phrase. The paper-thin layers of space in an "analytical" Cubist still life (and let us not forget that such works analyze nothing, despite the scientific sobriquet, but are sheer fantasy) are as comfortable and habitable as an overstuffed easy chair. The seeming distortions please us; if they didn't, we wouldn't have responded to them as legitimate—and supreme—modes of expression, almost as remote from us in time now as nineteenth-century realism, and constantly elaborated on and stretched even further by new kinds of expressiveness breaking over us like the waves of a sea with increasing frequency.

Poetry, however, isn't bound even by the tenuous veins of advanced painterly expression but is even freer than the visual arts to make up its own universe and then make up the laws that govern it. At least, it has been so for the last sixty or seventy years, always following the visual arts a little but then making even greater strides once it had assimilated the changes there. Unlike a picture, a poem can "put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes"—even technology has a hard time keeping pace with that. Yet, at the same time, it needs the tethering influence of comparing itself with the other branches of the arts in order to keep from running amok and losing the patience of audiences, who may tire of following it in all its transformations. That is where the concept of "poetical space" as observed in painting, sculpture, or even music comes to rescue poets when they are in danger of leaping the track. As art grows more fantastic, poetry has to ballast itself using the discoveries the artists have made. One artist who used the two forms of expression to modulate each other is Giorgio de Chirico, a great poet as well as a great painter, though hardly anybody knows his long poem-novel, *Hebdomeros*. It is, however, full of useful observations on the character of space drawn from his experiences at the easel, and as such helps illustrate how the two disciplines can cross-pollinate each other. Here are two examples taken from *Hebdomeros*: "The sea of stars stretched into the distance, as if the sky no longer seemed to be a dome but a ceiling instead;" and again: "At noon in

those transitional seasons, autumn and spring, the sky was as blue as a piece of taut paper; it was no whiter near the horizon; it was blue all over from top to bottom; a veritable ceiling stretching over the town."

How satisfying to feel that one lives in these flattened spaces, as flat as the café terraces of Analytical Cubism. But why? One would have thought it more inspiring to feel one was living in a dome, where depth would equal freedom, rather than under a claustrophobic ceiling of stars. I can offer no explanation, for painting or for poetry, except that seeing things turn out differently from what we had been expecting is often a liberating experience, even when the resulting situation isn't what we had hoped for. And poetry, following in the wake of painting (if I insist on this point and perhaps distort it just a little to serve my own purposes, it is because in my life poetry followed painting), offers the same unnerving satisfactions. To limit myself to just one example, from Eliot's "The Waste Land":

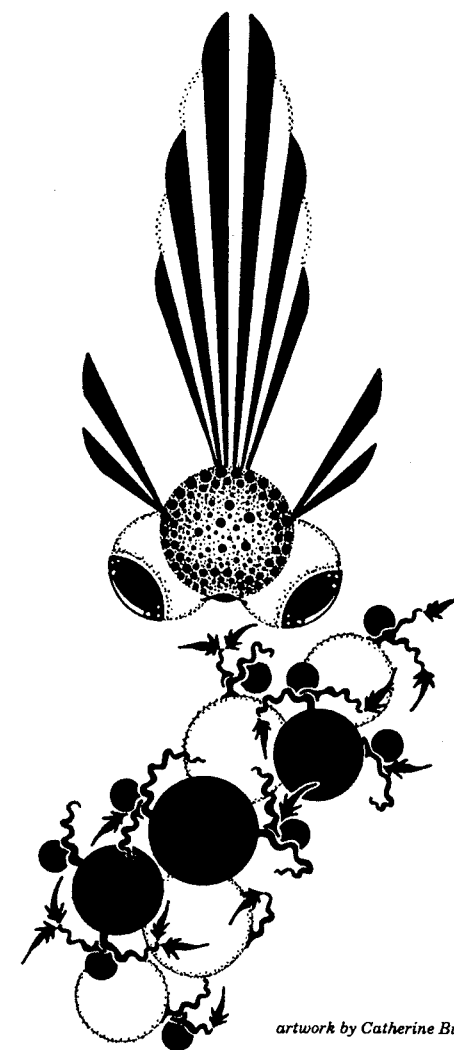
The river sweats
Oil and tar
The barges drift
With turning tide
Red sails
Wide
To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.
The barges wash
Drifting logs
Down Greenwich reach
Past the Isle of Dogs.

This seems to me an example from among thousands I might have chosen from twentieth-century poetry of the kind of anti-descriptiveness forced to do the work of description that I have pointed out in modern painting. To me, the river scene as Eliot describes it is very hard to see. Lines like "The barges wash/ Drifting logs" are strangely out of focus; how indeed does a barge wash a log? Nor do the limp, static rhythms conjure up the movement of a river flowing; we are far from such an onomatopoeic tour de force as Tennyson's "Lady of Shalott" of exactly seventy years previous, whose rippling meters convey the sight and sound of a swiftly flowing stream in a way that seems almost alchemical. Yet Eliot's ungrateful rhythms do convey something, something perhaps more to the point for us today: the blotchy, out-of-focus scene, the river refuses to roll, the awkwardly laid on oil, tar, and sweat add up to a picture of crisis that is mental, but just as surely takes in the visual world, transforming it as it does so into a blurred copy that is all the more meaningful for being imprecise and out of focus—accurate in its inaccuracy.

This is perhaps close to the poetical phenomenology that I was asked to address: a process of description and classification that succeeds in its twin tasks precisely by shirking them. The river

miraculously caught in the Lady of Shalott's mirror is a wonder, but the semi-coherent daubs laid down over Eliot's Thames are of more value to us, for they point a way in which our own inexpert and falsifying accounts of the truth can eventually ring true, describing and classifying all the more searchingly even as they seem to abdicate this task. "You too can be a phenomenologist," he seems to be saying, "if only you'll abandon the task, let it work through you, let the river carry you where it wants to rather than trying to immobilize it." At which point, the truest kind of description has become merely naming, and classifying merely counting. Unpalatable to the savants among us, perhaps, but to the poets the only real way of getting the job done and moving on.

John Ashbery has been quietly but persistently carving a place for himself as one of the most significant American poets of the twentieth century. His books of poetry include The Tennis Court Oath (1962), Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror (1975), A Wave (1984—includes haiku and haibun), and Selected Poems (1985, published by Viking Penguin).



artwork by Catherine Buburuz

Bringing Poetry Back to the People

Editor's note: Somewhere along the way the notion developed that poets who write for an audience—any audience—must ultimately be forced to compromise their own highly individual poetic vision. Since (some believed) the masses could only understand greeting card verse and doggerel, unintelligibility became a desirable aesthetic norm and esotericism a way of insuring that poetry only reached an exclusive group of the properly initiated. Obscurantism was in. No matter that the poetry more

often than not ended up in the poet's drawer; it was art. Against this notion of poets as isolated individuals who must resign themselves to the inevitability of being "misunderstood," reappears the idea that poetry is an act of communication between people and that it is poets—those who have something to communicate—who must take the initiative for building interaction with appreciative audiences. Grassroots Oracles, a foursome of poets based in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia, Canada,

not only write for an audience—they take their poetry on the road to be heard by people from all walks of life. Now in its second year, the group tours the Vancouver area giving performances in small towns and communities as a lively antidote to the imagination-dulling entertainment of the video age.

"People go to movies, they go to plays, they go to concerts without giving it a second thought," says Grassroots Oracles poet Arthur Joyce, "but they have the feeling they can't go to a poetry reading without a college degree."

"Poetry was never intended to be holed up in dark, quiet academic corners," adds fellow-poet Chad Norman, who sees himself as a poet who hasn't lost the feel of the street. "We want to make it accessible to the guy who farms or the guy who works in a restaurant—the way poetry is supposed to be."

In the ethos of Grassroots Oracles there's no reason why poetry should be just for intellectuals, snobs, and other poets. Nor does it have to be a puzzle. Rather than write complicated, ambiguous poetry which does little more than spark infinite literary debates (and bore people), the group relates their own personal experiences in ways which an audience can identify with, thereby allowing people to open up their own imaginations.

Art is not compromised as a result, but fulfilled. Poetry becomes meaningful not only to the individual poet, but also to others, to a community. Whereas elitists may fear the vulgarization of poetry if it is brought "down" to the people, Grassroots Oracles uses poetry to uplift.

"I would like to see poets resume the role of prophets in the community," says Norman. "We have to break down the barriers that society has formed about poetry."

Chad Norman inoffense

the importance of living can be read here in the stain on my tie on my pants on my shoe on the floor

personally i'd rather drink coffee and discuss Lin Yutang or Liz Smart or Rexroth or Al Purdy

personally it's far too early and quiet to bother with reasons of why

some meals they claim are meant more for eatin than thinkin

Chad Norman organizes readings of his own and other locals' work in the Chilliwack, B.C. area. The above selection is from his 1987 book, on the urban prairie and other shorter poems, published by Clover Press.

Poetry revived in Chilliwack
There was a time when poets were looked upon by a Hollywood movie stars. But poetry writers today television requires little use of our imagination, added Joyce. On the other hand, Joyce said listening to poetry readings can be a real therapeutic.

Oracles embark on poetry tour
Grassroots Oracles will hold a second poetry tour in the Slesac Room at Evergreen Hall on

Grassroots poetry reading set
The poetry movement across Canada is in full flow at this time of year with contests, with quarterly publications accepting submissions and with numerous public readings. Oracles was formed by members from the people, but had become a closed, stuffy elite only for those involved.

Poetry reading back in style
Poetry and poetry readings started in the Maple Ridge Art Gallery six years ago when a few interested

Poets are coming with popular tales
Six local poets will drop by Burnaby Art Gallery next Sunday hoping to bring poetry to the people. Norman calls his group Grassroots Oracles and his tour. The

Grassroots Oracles: Making headlines with poetry

Linda Wikene Johnson Pisces

the black ocean comes to a churn at full moon dorsals skim whales sound and the whistles of the water mammals echo on bare stars every creature comes up hungry to view the fat moon and its glittering fry knowing they are succulent phosphorescent fish in a distant deeper sea

Linda Wikene Johnson has a master's degree in creative writing from the University of British Columbia and now lives in Aldergrove. A collection of her poetry, Showcase Animals, has been published by Press Porcupin in Victoria.

David Emmonds kristallnacht

we are all nationalists in our hearts as we pursue private interests at the expense of others in the foreign territory of their hearts on the borders of their being

dragging our flags in after us pouring on the rhetoric and dogma

inventing the slogans and claptrap to oppose defeat

and ultimately assimilate that which we love most of the foreign body

making it a state of province of the greater union

or at best a colony kept submissive by our gestapo of the spirit our ministries of repression and unmaking shock troops held ready for any infidelity

David Emmonds was born in Liverpool and moved to Canada in 1977. He has worked in the criminal-justice system for twenty years and is now marketing a poetry manuscript called "criminal code."

Arthur Joyce Man Without Telephone

The spiny netherworld of wilderness that buried alive our buckskinned forefathers we have strung like a beast from pole to pole, ocean to ocean—our lips the sharpened axe that cut and carved away the horizons of silence from one to the other until no frontier of deadly stillness remained untouched by our ravening throngs of tongue.

And beneath the buzzing wires of chatter sits a man without telephone composing a quiet and outcast eloquence of being, waiting alone for the barbed fences to fall.

Arthur Joyce has published extensively in Canada and the U.S. His first collection of poetry, Visions From The Razor's Edge, is tentatively scheduled for publication in 1990 by CaCanadaDada Press.

Winners of the EDGE 1989 Fiction Contest

Of the 166 stories received for the EDGE 1989 Fiction Contest, which ended April 30, the top stories were

¥25,000 1st prize (donated by Tokyo Weekender):
"After the Typhoon" by Rosalind Bedlow

¥10,000 2nd prize (donated by EDGE):
"The Balcony" by Rita Raj

Honorable mentions:

"The Tiger of Nanking" by Leonard L. Levenson
"The Mistake" by Barbara Summerhawk

Other stories receiving special mention from the judges:

"Get in Gear for Friction" by S. Harrison Watson
"Black Water Angel" by Sally Ito
"Salaryman Blues" by Gary Scott Fine
"Ghost Traveling" by Patrick Fulmer

The judges were Joyce Taniguchi, writer and professor at Aoyama Gakuin University, Corky Alexander, publisher of *Tokyo Weekender* (co-sponsor of this year's contest), and EDGE fiction editor Michael O'Rourke.

The first-place story will be published in *Tokyo Weekender*. "The Balcony" and "Black Water Angel" appear in this issue of EDGE (pages 10 and 14). Watch for details of the EDGE 1990 Fiction Contest in the press and in future issues of EDGE.

events

Bill Shively in Tokyo

I'd never heard anyone recite poetry while beating their own chest, or mix song with verse in a way that didn't end up as predictable "lyrics," or chant words to the rhythm of a cymbal-crashing windup Teddy Bear. Heard of it, but never actually heard it. At least not in Tokyo. And then I heard Bill Shively.

His reading at Petite Rue on July 30 brought a fresh voice from Kyoto to a city where there's something of a tendency for poets to get so wrapped up in technique and mechanics that they forget what poetry is all about: voice, song, sharing, enjoying. *Enjoying!* Shively is a serious poet. But he doesn't take himself too seriously. Even when he gets heavy, as with "Sayonara"—"You could be killing, you could be killing folks in Manila, in Nicaragua, in Ethiopia, in Indochina. . . ."—it's the unexpected light touch that drives the message home: "You could be killing old people, or people wearing neckties, or people of the opposite sex, or people who don't like sex, or people who voted for Nixon. . . ." Sometimes it is we who take ourselves (and our prejudices) too seriously.

Shively lived up to his billing as an "oral poet." There are poets who write poems and then read



Oral Poet Bill Shively

them. And then there are those who take their cue not from the black and white of the written page, but from the color and timbre of the human voice. During the reading I never felt I wanted to interrupt Shively in mid-poem and say, "Um, excuse me, could you please repeat that last stanza, I'm not sure I followed you." Instead, I

simply wanted to sit back and follow the voice wherever it led. Which, of course, is exactly what I did.

The program also featured renku by Kris Kondo—including an audience participation renku with people reading links in succession—and open mike performances by Drew Stroud, Charles Aschmann (who came all the way from Hiroasaki!), Peter O'Donovan, and John Evans. The event was sponsored by EDGE and held at Petite Rue, which has been hosting a number of arts-related events this summer including an art exhibition by Peter Comaroff and music presented by *International Rockers*.

For those who missed the reading, info on how to get Shively's tape *Taxi, Taxi* is on page 36 of this issue of EDGE.

—Richard Evanoff

reviews

Magic Mountains: Adnan and Corman

Etel Adnan, *Journey To Mount Tamalpais* (Post-Apollo Press, 35 Marie Street, Sausalito, CA 94965 U.S.A., \$10.95 plus postage) and Cid Corman, *The Faith of Poetry* (Longhouse, Jacksonville Stage, Brattleboro, VT 05301 U.S.A.). Reviewed by Sherry Reniker.

There are books which create magic in our lives. I remember distinctly from childhood, and occasionally since, the wonder of being transformed by the words of a book. Words that *spoke*, a literal Voice that penetrated my mind/heart, that set the body cells all vibrating in synch. Words that took me somewhere, showed me, and then brought me back to Center.

Ah, but sadly the nerve-endings of our buy-now, "post"-War, post-industrial, post-Atlantic, post-modern "civilizations" have frayed, and we are left with language in bestseller after sitcom after news-live-anytime which is poured like cement and which has hardenedus. In our 15-year-long world pop culture movie, *Planet of the Concrete Junkies*, even the Poetry Muses have got the habit. Oh, shadows on the walls of this cave of a world!

How rare, then, and how profound when numinous words appear! Two such illuminations in hand in the same season, and you must prepare for the end of the world as you've known it; the real message of Art having always been: change your life. . . . So, proceed with caution, for the following have Voice, Vision, or, if you prefer, *edge*.

Etel Adnan, Beirut-born painter/poet/philosopher, was once asked in a TV interview to name the most important person she had ever met, and when she answered "A mountain," she discovered that Tamalpais was at the center of her being. *Journey To Mount Tamalpais* (Post-Apollo Press, 1986, Sausalito) is a booklength essay which portrays that centrality in an amphibious style (to flip James Agee's coin) that flows back and forth between poetry and prose, never wholly either, always mostly both. It can be read most accessibly as the story of an experiment, the Perception Workshop, that the author and her artist friends in Mill Valley participated in for some years, "living with a mountain and with people moving with all their senses open, like many radars. . . ."

The reading of the book becomes a rite into which one enters, changing Perception. Dreams, journal entries, conversations, daily observations, Indian myths and astronaut quotes are but some of the stuff which Ms. Adnan has arranged on her canvas. Like painter/poet Ashbery, she speculates on differing modes of expression:

Poetry, it is believed, is the revelation of the self. Painting, the revelation of the world. But it could also be the other way around.

Eighteen reproductions of her paintings and drawings of Tamalpais are interspersed throughout, for

Painters have a knowledge which goes beyond words. They are where musicians are. When someone blows the saxophone the sky is made of copper. When you make a watercolor, you know how it feels to be the sea lying early in the day in the proximity of light.

She speaks of Klee ("his drawings are mountains regardless of their subject matter"), and of Cézanne and Hokusai's relation to their mountains. *Her* Tamalpais is her space-ship. It is a great white mushroom, the miracle of matter, the Old Woman. It is clear; it is empty. It is the stem of the balance. Etel Adnan is a genius of Perception who has made a pilgrimage and who has brought back a revelation:

Through the long night of the species we go on, somehow blindly, and we give a name to our need for a breakthrough: we call it the Angel, or call it Art, or call it the Mountain.

Journey to Mount Tamalpais, like the *I-Ching*, opens to wisdom on every page.

Temperamentally different, and yet strangely similar in intensity and commitment, is Cid Corman's *The Faith of Poetry* (Longhouse, 1989, Vermont) a short essay consisting essentially of a selection of poems pivotal to the poet and to his declaration of faith. The "faith" is in the religious sense—"poetry is the last faith," Corman asserts. And he defines it:

Only as the word draws from and brings with it the spirit of being in community and communion with all that there is and has been and will be is it poetry.

It's worth reading that sentence again. Tu Fu, Dante, Shakespeare, Blake, Kafka, Corman, you and I—all existing *now*. Such belief gives one a different sense of who one's contemporaries are, and leads to a much different "poetry" than what most

people are writing today.

One of the poems that thunderstrikes begins like this:

There it was, word for word,
The poem that took the place of a mountain.

He breathed its oxygen,
Even when the book lay turned in the dust of his table.

A poem that replaces a mountain and sustains life! Believable, for Cormen goes on to prove his case with poems that carry us farther and further into the art and the religion of the Word. In another poem, in

a dream "he" is let in under the wire and led along to

where the nerves kept, exposed, a syllable-reef

of anything possible focused
there, in the shapes—

Perhaps it is to that reef that all True Poets must journey. When we enter Cormen's world/Word, where all times and places exist at once, we may find the poetry we have been dreaming of. His is a Faith that moves mountains. Let us listen with disbelief suspended!

Labor in Progress

Paul Wadden, *Labor for the Wind* (Dawn Press, P.O. Box 3, Ouda-cho, Uda-gun, Nara 633-21, ¥1,200). Reviewed by Bill Willis.

A telling point in this first collection by American poet Paul Wadden occurs in the middle of the book in the poem "Mirror". The poem closes with the unanswered question, "Does the eye in the image discern itself, / the bare play of light illumine or obscure?", and in many ways the poems that precede and follow work very much as attempts to examine aspects of this question. In terms of style, the voice of the poet comes across reasonably well in the following poem, the shortest in the collection, "Prayer for the World's Conversion", quoted here in its entirety:

I lean against the window:
the door into silence
narrows in the cat's eyes.



Paul Wadden: first-person epiphanies

Like quite a few of the poems it begins in the first person and offers a moment of particular significance to the poet, some epiphany, which, though obviously of importance to the writer, does not come across with tremendous clarity to the reader. After reading the poem what remains is the image of the man, standing perhaps in a room, and the room reflected indifferently in the eyes of the animal; as to what else is happening—the nature of the prayer, the form of conversion, why the door is now silent, and so on—the reader simply has to guess.

Many of the other poems are similar in their impact: Wadden's element is chiefly the visual, and

several of the poems deal explicitly with paintings or mirror images, like those cited above. At times, the poems descend into some dubious lines though, and one might question the inclusion of, for example, one of the "Three Questions", which asks, "Is the man / inside the child / or the child / inside the man?" and in "Love Song" we are given the edifying observation that "Furs are dead animals' skins".

At their best, however, the poems examine other areas and the material is the stronger for it; as in "Whitewater Park", where "the slow river of fumes / rising in the tent, channeled from the car / through a makeshift hose" leads to "If I forget you, / . . . let my pleasures turn brittle as winter grass", drawing the reader directly into the sense of loss at the suicide of a friend. "Nocturne" is another of the better poems with a simple lyrical elegance, reminiscent of the second of Goethe's famous "Wandrer's Nachtlieder", opening with, "Tonight the wind is a tired beast / padding homeward through the pines", with its echoes of the volume's title, and concluding with, "Close your eyes . . . / When you reach the harvested field, / you will be asleep."

The final poem of this collection opens with the lines "That of which we cannot speak / we must be silent". The words here are taken from the closing proposition of Wittgenstein in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and their presence here at the end of the book is significant; they work very much as a statement of what has gone before. In this collection Wadden has quite clearly defined the province over which he feels he should express himself and the result is this set of, often, very personal poems: at the end the reader is bound to wonder if the collection would not have been better with a broadening of its compass.

NETWorks:

English-language litmags in Japan, part I.

Ko, Ko Haiku Group, 1-36-7 Ishida-cho, Mizuhoku, Nagoya 467; biannual, \$10/year (for reasons best known to themselves payable only in American currency!). Edited by Koko Kato. Contains haiku, translations of haiku, thoughts on haiku, reviews of haiku, essays on haiku, and signatures of famous poets. Almost all the haiku and minimalist verse the haiku aficionado could ever want.

Pandora's Box, Yamasaki AP, 380 Sakamoto-machi, Nagasaki-shi 852; noncommercial. Features work by Nagasaki writers and is edited by Masanori Yoshida. There's an English section of about 40 pp, with up to 20 pp in Japanese (original and translated from English). The accent is largely on fiction/prose, with varying styles.

Printed Matter, 3-31-14-207 Ikebukuro Honcho, Toshima-ku, Tokyo 170; bimonthly, ¥3,000/year (includes 2 "specials"). Previously the publication of the Tokyo English Literature Society (now defunct, although workshops in Tokyo continue as the Tokyo Writers Workshop), *Printed Matter* continues independently, with smaller pages, but more of them. Mostly Tokyo poets and fiction reprints from All Nippon Airway's inflight publication *Wingspan*, which *Printed Matter's* editor, Matthew Zuckerman, also edits. The same writers often reappear, but the work is of fairly high quality.

Poetry Nippon, 5-11-2 Nagaike-cho, Showa-ku, Nagoya 466; quarterly, ¥3,500/year. Edited by Onsey Nakagawa. *Poetry Nippon* is the official publication of the Poetry Society of Japan (but not,

as it claims, "the only poetry magazine published in English in Japan") and contains poetry, essays, and reviews by both Japanese and non-Japanese writers. The magazine tries to encourage poets of all ability levels, so the quality is sometimes uneven, but many of the better writers living in Japan have published here, including James Kirkup, Fil Le Witt, and Yorifumi Yaguchi.

Poetry Tokyo, c/o Takachi Office, Obirin University, 3758 Tokiwa-cho, Machida, Tokyo 194-02. \$4/copy. *Poetry Tokyo* is published once or twice a year by Junichiro Takachi and contains mainly English translations of well-known Japanese poets, with one foreign contributor per issue. While *Poetry Tokyo* gives a good mini-tour of contemporary Japanese poetry, not all the stops will necessarily be of interest to the average Western reader. An essay from Takachi's own idiosyncratic perspective rounds out each issue.

Poetry Kanto, Kanto Poetry Center, Kanto Gakuin University, 4834 Mutsuura, Kanazawa-ku, Yokohama 235; noncommercial. Published annually in August by the Kanto Poetry Center, whose editorial board consists of Shuntaro Tanikawa, Hisao Kanaseki, Makoto Ooka, Kazuo Kawamura, and William I. Elliott. Their work appears along with that of other international poets in a neatly designed bilingual edition. Highly selective and an all-round excellent source in Japan for original and translated poetry. Future issues will focus on poetry in languages other than Japanese and English.

The Leading Edge

Dear EDGE,

I really enjoyed Hiro Kanagawa's review of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, the first I've read. It's strange how the media had nothing to say about the book itself in the midst of all the hullabaloo over religion and politics—a real gap you filled with an intelligent, interesting discussion. I especially liked your remarks on the encounter between "modernism" and totalitarian regimes, since I previously taught in China. It's funny how Khomeini's attempt at universal censorship almost worked, thanks to a sheeplike press. I can't say whether I agreed with Kanagawa's interpretations or not since I haven't read the book yet, but certainly will, in part due to the review.

James Dalglish, Kanagawa

Dear EDGE,

I was glad to see in your last issue that you're paying attention to the environment. It would be a good idea to let readers know what they can do to help, how to contact different groups, associations, etc. Protecting the environ-

ment is damned important, more important than most people realize. When I see "intellectuals" using *waribashi* [disposable wooden chopsticks] I want to stuff them up their noses.

Scott Harrison Watson, Sendai

Editor's note: Future issues will continue to bring literary perspectives to environmental issues. For a good overview on what's happening environmentally in Japan and specific info on active groups, we would recommend the Japan Environment Monitor, published at 18-11 Saiwai-cho, Kofu, Kofu-shi, Yamanashi-ken 400.

EDGE is interested in hearing from its readers and welcomes letters relating to all aspects of the magazine and its contents. Letters for The Leading Edge will be published at the discretion of the editor and may be edited for reasons of space or clarity.

Marginalia: literary notes on Japan


Taxi Taxi, a cassette tape of lively oral poetry by Bill Shively to the accompaniment of Portrait Music is available in Japan for ¥1,000 from Kimio Noro, Akoya Mansion 1301, Takatsuki-cho 21, Ichijoji, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, or in the U.S. for \$10 by writing to Bill Shively, 1600 N. W. 32nd, Portland, OR 97210 U.S.A. Highly recommended—a poetry tape to be listened to for the sounds and music alone.

Interested in film and film production? Quantum Leap Pictures is looking for people to fill the following positions in a full-length amateur motion picture: camera assistants, gaffers, sound people, technicians and musicians. Also, one North American actor under 35 and many extras (Japanese). Only enthusiasm, not experience is necessary. Nobody gets paid; everyone has fun. Write to Quantum Leap, #105, Copo Iwatatsu, 1-192 Nishi-waseda, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169, or leave your number at 03-202-5951.

Abiko Rag, a litmag published in Chiba, is having a short story contest. Deadline: November 30. First prize: ¥30,000; second and third prizes to be announced. No restrictions except that the story must be under 5,000 words. Submit entries to Anna Livia Plurabelle, 8-1-8 Namiki, Abiko, Chiba-ken 270-11. For more info call 0471-84-7904.

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to the continent and back, a collection of poems by Fumiko Tachibana about her recent trek through Asia is available for ¥600 from New Leaf Press, 2-16-3 Takadanobaba, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160. The poems aren't quite as consistent as her previous work, but like the Himalayas, there are quite a few peaks.

Happenings

Chiba

Anna Livia Plurabelle's Rag Party gets together for literary discussion and socializing in Abiko (33 minutes from Ueno) the third Saturday of every month from 6:00 p.m. until it ends. All are welcome. For directions, call 0471-84-7904.

Informal workshops for writers in the Chiba area have started up and are being held regularly. For details call Michael O'Rourke at 0473-55-3136 or Mary Fujimaki at 0472-57-9308.

Kyoto

A group of poets have made arrangements for meeting regularly with poet Cid Corman for discussion and feedback. More participants are welcome. There's a fee, but the more people involved, the lower the fee. Interested persons should contact Barry MacDonald at 075-712-7445.

Kyoto Connection will resume regular performances at Studio Varie in October on the last Sunday of each month from 8-12 pm. For more info or to arrange a performance, contact Ken Rodgers at 075-822-0898 or Ian Ropke at 075-561-7557.

Tokyo

Tokyo Writers' Workshop meets on the second Sunday of each month at the Shinjuku Bunka Center. Poetry 1—3 p.m., fiction 3—5. For info and directions phone John Evans at 044-987-4337.

Poetry Fair '89 will be held on November 11 at Yamato Gakuen in Shinjuku in conjunction with the 21st General Meeting of The Poetry Society of Japan. Symposiums, lectures, readings, and performance. For more information contact The Poetry Society of Japan, 5-11, Nagaike-cho, Showa-ku, Nagoya 466.

Poets who previously congregated at Richard's Books have regrouped and are planning readings at various locations. For info, call 03-991-7483.

Kobe

Writers of poetry and fiction interested in sharing work for discussion and feedback are invited to contact Alan Fisher at 078-821-6527.

ON THE OCCASION OF THE BICENTENNIAL OF
THE DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND THE CITIZEN
AND ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF MAN'S LANDING ON THE MOON:

THE DECLARATION OF HUMAN, ANIMAL, AND NATURE RIGHTS

When the Apollo 11 Mission, in July 1969, landed on the moon, it opened up a new dimension to our consciousness. It transformed our vision and knowledge of the relations of the physical world.

The conquest of this fifth dimension had its spiritual counterpart. It was a breakthrough for the human spirit.

In this Post-Apollonian age, or definitely New Age, we have to define a new human perspective on the Universe, and on our place in it.

The new reality in which we live requires space-age morality, a new Declaration of Rights:

- ♦ The planet Earth is part of the Universe and like the Universe exists by itself and for itself.
- ♦ The human, animal, vegetal, and material world, share in the oneness of things and share in the dignity of Being.
- ♦ Everybody and everything which exists is entitled to its life, to this Earth, and to the Universe, being part of everything that is. Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, are to be extended to everything that is, in ways appropriate to each kind and species.
- ♦ Poverty and disease are the responsibility of all.
- ♦ It is evident that population movements throughout History, conquests, intermarriages and religious conversions, have created, a long time ago, a genetic pool in which we all share. The purity of a race is a delusion and the new Morality will have to relegate racism to its archaic past. On the other hand, cultural diversities are positive values and feed civilizations the way rivers feed oceans.
- ♦ In a world where national interests interconnect with other national interests, and where influences of nations upon each other are difficult to determine, we can say that wars among nations are to be, from now on, considered as civil wars within the human nation. And given the power of the armaments which are available, these possible future wars could only lead to genocide and be contradictory to the Declaration of Human, Animal, and Nature Rights.
- ♦ Ecology is the new science of Earth: in the new brotherhood of Being we say that if God is the father of some, Earth is the mother of All.

EL Adnan

Etel Adnan is a poet and the author of Sitt Marie Rose, The Indian Never Had A Horse and Other Poems, Journey to Mt. Tamalpais (reviewed in this issue of EDGE), and The Arab Apocalypse. EDGE publishes "The Declaration of Human, Animal, and Nature Rights" in the spirit of reacknowledging the poet's role as an unacknowledged legislator of the world.