

WHITE ENSO

Inspired by Japan

Issue 6

Winter 2022



“You use a glass mirror to see your face. You use works of art
to see your soul.”

George Bernard Shaw

fiction

non-fiction

haiga

poetry

visual art

design

Cover art: Linda A. Gould



Welcome to the sixth issue of White Enso.

It's not possible that White Enso will celebrate its two-year anniversary in January, and yet, White Enso will celebrate its two-year anniversary in January. The quality of work from the first issue has been exemplary, exceeding my already high expectations, and this issue is no exception (wow, I managed to include four, count them--FOUR--words beginning with 'ex' in one sentence.)

Issue 6 launches the White Enso awards. Each issue will select one outstanding work in each of the fiction, non-fiction, visual arts, poetry, and Japanese-style poetry categories. This issue's winners are Brian Watson's "Bending Time" for non-fiction, Roberta Beary's "Timeline" for Japanese-style poetry (haibun), Anne Whitehouse's "Being Ruth Asawa" for poetry, and Elisa Teriana's two haiga for Visual Art.

The wonderful thing about White Enso, though, is that it is really hard to choose winners because all the contributions to the journal are extraordinary (another 'ex' word). Many took this issue's suggested theme of "Again" literally, writing about visiting Japan more than once, such as Sravanthi Challapalli's "Back to Japan," which includes a little toilet humor, and "Study Abroad," David A. Hewitt's sentimental essay. Others took a more subtle approach: Kit Pancoast Nagamura's atmospheric poem "Revisiting" summons those mysterious traces of others that we feel when visiting old sacred spaces, and Kartika Lestari's "Silent Witness" is an ode to the lone tree that survived the Great East Japan tsunami of 2011 and a warning to future generations.

Finally, with the holidays approaching, you're likely to have more time to read. I highly recommend Hiromi Ito's *The Thorn Puller*. I think you will find this book fascinating, unusual, and thought-provoking.

As I've recommended before, take your time with each contribution to White Enso, for each one is thought-provoking. Feel free to contact me with feedback to make the journal even better, and please sign up for our newsletter to learn of future deadlines. I'd love to see how Japan has inspired you.

Linda A. Gould
Managing Editor

All photos in White Enso by Linda Gould unless otherwise noted.

Contributor Bios & Table of Contents



Page 10

Brian Watson

Bending Time (essay)

White Enso Non-fiction Award
Winner

Brian Watson is revising and querying his first memoir, *Crying in a Foreign Language: The Deity That Answered my Plea*. Originally from New York State, he lives near Seattle after years in Massachusetts, Japan, and British Columbia. His essays and book reviews appear in *Brevity's* online blog and in *Hippocampus* magazine, and he also authored an article on marriage equality for *JETs* on Japan magazine. He lives online at iambrianwatson.com. You can follow him on Twitter and Instagram: @iambrianwatson. He is looking forward to the thirtieth anniversary of his first date with his husband Hiro in late November of 2023.



Page 13

Roberta Beary

Timeline (haibun)

White Enso Japanese-Style Poetry
Award Winner

Roberta Beary grew up in Queens, New York, USA and identifies as gender-fluid. Their writing awards include the Bridport Prize for Poetry 2022, Best Microfiction 2019 & 2021, and Best Small Fictions 2020 & 2022. Their work is featured in *The New York Times Modern Love*, *Rattle*, *Atticus Review*, *Litro*, and other publications. A trauma survivor, they write so that others know they are not alone. The longtime haibun editor for *Modern Haiku*, they divide their time between USA and Ireland. social media: facebook author page (<https://www.facebook.com/robertabeary/>) twitter @shortpoemz (<https://twitter.com/shortpoemz>)



Page 14

Anne Whitehouse

Being Ruth Asawa (poetry)

White Enso Poetry Award Winner

Anne Whitehouse's poetry collections include *THE SURVEYOR'S HAND*, *BLESSINGS AND CURSES*, *THE REFRAIN*, *METEOR SHOWER*, and *OUTSIDE FROM THE INSIDE*, the last three from Dos Madres Press. She is the author of a novel, *FALL LOVE*. She has published essays and lectured on Longfellow and Poe. Her chapbook, *FRIDA*, about Frida Kahlo, is forthcoming from Ethel Zine and Micro Press. She is from Birmingham, Alabama, and lives in New York City and Columbia County, New York. @anne_whitehouse



Page 22

Elisa Theriana

Two (Haiga)

[White Enso Visual Art Award Winner](#)

Elisa Theriana, a nerdy computer programmer from Bandung, Indonesia, embarked on her haiku journey in 2018. She loves dogs, pizza and chocolate, in that particular order.

Fb/Ig/ twitter : ElisaTheriana



Page 23

Richa Sharma

Haiga

Richa Sharma resides in Delhi NCR, India. She loves reading and writing poetry in her leisure time. Since 2019, her work has appeared in numerous online and print journals dedicated to Japanese short-form poetry like Frogpond, the cherita, Presence, Akitsu Quarterly, Modern Haiku, Whiptail Journal, Kingfisher, Failed Haiku, Drifting Sands Haibun, Under The Basho, Bones, Seashores, Wales Haiku Journal, #FemkuMag, Nick Virgilio Haiku Association, and others. Her work has also been selected as Honorable Mentions in Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival Haiku Invitational 2021, Africa Haiku Prize 2021, 3rd Star Haiku Contest, Japan Fair 2022, and Heliosparrow Poetry Journal's Semagrams Contest 2022.



Page 24

Debbie Strange

Haiga

Debbie Strange (Canada) is a chronically ill short-form poet, haiga artist, and photographer whose creative passions connect her more closely to the world and to herself. Debbie's work has been translated, anthologized, and widely published internationally. Her most recent book, *The Language of Loss: Haiku & Tanka Conversations*, won the Sable Books 2019 International Women's Haiku Contest and Haiku Canada's 2022 Marianne Bluger Chapbook Award. It also received an Honourable Mention in the Haiku Society of America's 2021 Merit Book Awards. Please visit her publication archive at: <https://debbiemstrange.blogspot.com/> and follow her on Twitter @Debbie_Strange and Instagram @debbiemstrange.



Page 28

Vipanjeet Kaur

Remembrance (poetry)

Vipanjeet Kaur is a poet from India. Her poems have been published online in the Lothlorien Poetry Journal, Five Fleas Itchy Poetry, Fevers of the Mind Poetry and Art Group. She started writing haiku in 2021. Her haiku poems have been published internationally in online journals - Scarlet Dragonfly, Haiku Dialogue, The Haiku Pond, Cold Moon Journal, Stardust, Black and White Haiga and Under the Basho. She has also read papers on Human Rights, Women Empowerment and English Literature at various International Conferences and National Seminars. Vipanjeet Kaur can be followed on twitter: <https://twitter.com/vjpoeticmusings>

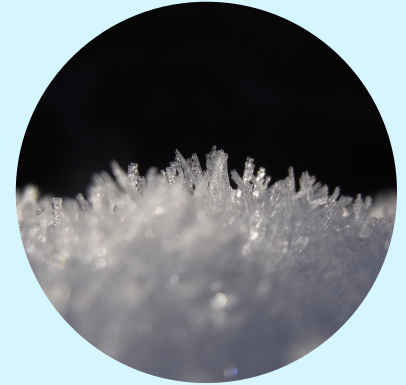


Page 29

Arlene Geller

Takayama Renewal (poetry)

Poet/lyricist Arlene Geller is passionate about writing. Her poetry has appeared in journals, including Tiny Seed Journal, Better Than Starbucks, Tiferet Journal, The Penwood Review, The Jewish Writing Project, and White Enso. Her first poetry chapbook, Hear Her Voice, will be published by Kelsay Books in 2023. Collaborations with composers include commissioned pieces, such as: Elusive Peace, which premiered as part of Service of Lessons and Carols at Vassar College; and River Song, featured in the world premiere of I Rise: Women in Song at Lehigh University and since performed in numerous national and international locations. Learn more at arlenegeller.com.



Page 30

A. A. Marcoff

Temple of Snow (haibun)

Tony (A A) Marcoff is an Anglo-Russian poet, born in Iran, who has lived in Africa, Iran, France and Japan. His tanka prose has appeared in magazines in the UK and also in 'Atlas Poetica' in the USA. Individual tanka are now being published in 'GUSTS' (Canada) and 'Ribbons' (USA) as well as the in the UK. Recent books include 'quiet gospel: a world of light' and 'the song of the sun'. He lives in the beautiful Mole Valley in south-east England, just near the river that still inspires him.



Page 32

Jessica McDonald

My Favorite Things (visual art)

Jessica McDonald is an Australian living in Tokyo for over five sakura seasons! Before that, she was enjoying the mountains and rice fields of Fukushima. She is an illustrator who enjoys drawing observational humour and word play, and specialises in caricatures and personalised imagery - commissioned and gifted. Living in Japan, and those unique experiences coming with that, often inspire her to sketch a cartoon on her phone whilst riding trains.



Page 35

Chris W. Gladden

A Sort of Stillness (non-fiction)

Originally from Southern New England's Connecticut River Valley (USA), Chris W. Gladden has lived in central Japan's Nagano uplands since 2004. He writes on themes of travel, culture, nature, and spirituality while running a freelance translation business and learning to help parent a newborn. He recently finished his first novel, a story of community and environmental peril set amid the ancient and unhinged Onbashira Festival. Find out more at www.chriswgladden.com.



Page 39

Diana Webb

Carved Thee For Her Seal (haibun)

Widely published in the haibun form, Diana Webb has received two first prizes for her work in the genre. She edits the print journal Time Haiku and has twice guest-edited the online journal Drifting Sands. Her most recent haibun collections, both published in 2022 by The Magic Pen Press in 2022, are Fragile Horizons and A Glimpse of the Gate. Diana enjoys devising and leading haibun workshops.



Page 40

Kartika Lestari

Silent Witness (poetry)

Kartika Lestari is a new writer and a former climate scientist. Years ago, she got to a point that recalled her youth's joy in writing. In the past, her letter was the best five in a provincial-level writing competition. Recently, she has dedicated more time to pursue her passion for writing. Her fiction has appeared in Potato Soup Journal. The other work has been accepted in Grande Dame Literary and Soul-Lit. Her stories were on the list in The Unsealed's Writing Contests. Connect with her on Medium, LinkedIn, FB, and twitter @rkartikalestari.



Page 42

Kit Pancoast Nagamura

Revisiting (poetry)

Kit Pancoast Nagamura completed a Ph.D. in literature shortly after moving to Japan permanently. She has co-hosted NHK World's HAIKU MASTERS for three years, and her haiku awards include Prizes of Excellence from Ito-en Oi Ocha International Contest and the Setouchi-Matsuyama International Photo/Haiku Contest, and first place in the 2020 Santoka International Haiga contest.



Page 43

David A. Hewitt

Study Abroad (non-fiction)

David A. Hewitt was born in Germany, grew up near Chicago, and lived for eight years in Japan, where he studied classical martial arts and grew up some more. A graduate of the Stonecoast MFA program, he currently teaches English at the college level, but has previously worked as a translator, a martial arts instructor, a pizza/subs/beer delivery guy, and a pet shop boy. His verse has appeared in Three-Line Poetry and his fiction in Kaleidotrope, Metaphorosis, and Mithila Review. As a translator of Japanese, his credits include the anime series Gilgamesh, Kochoki: Young Nobunaga, and The Detective Is Already Dead. Facebook: David A. Hewitt, Author/Translator Amazon: David A. Hewitt Author Page



Page 46

Sravanthi Challapalli

Back to Japan (humorous essay)

Sravanthi Challapalli is a Chennai, India-based journalist and has been an independent writer and editor for the last four years. In about 26 years of working at newspapers, she has worked and written on subjects ranging from politics to business, including civic affairs, campus news, lifestyle and weekend features. She enjoys writing humour, fiction and non-fiction, about food, travel, quirky things and anything else that catches her fancy.



Page 48

LindaAnn LoSchiavo

(Visual art)

Native New Yorker LindaAnn LoSchiavo, a Pushcart Prize, Rhysling Award, Best of the Net, and Dwarf Stars nominee, is a member of SFWA, The British Fantasy Society, and The Dramatists Guild. She's Poetry SuperHighway's "Poet of the Week" [Sept. 12 - 18, 2022]. Elgin Award winner "A Route Obscure and Lonely," "Concupiscent Consumption," "Women Who Were Warned," and "Messengers of the Macabre" [co-written with David Davies], nominated for CLMP's **Firecracker Award**. Forthcoming: "Apprenticed to the Night" [UK: Beacon Books, 2023].

Twitter: @Mae_Westside
<https://linktr.ee/LindaAnn.LoSchiavo>
LindaAnn Literary: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHm1NZIITZybLTFA44wwdfg>
<https://messengersofthemacs.com/>



Page 50

Linda A Gould

The Thorn Puller and The Baseball Widow (Book Reviews)

Linda Gould is an American and long-time resident of Japan. Her fiction and non-fiction have been published in media outlets around the world. Gould is the editor of White Enso, an online journal of creative work inspired by Japan, and host of "Kaidankai," a podcast of supernatural stories.



By Brian Watson

Winner: White Enso award for non-fiction

Hiro sits beside me in the rented Altima. He sets the air-conditioning to maximum levels; the heat and humidity in Jersey City this morning are pitiless. I haven't lived through an East Coast summer since 1988, and Hiro left Tōkyō's brutal summers behind when he followed me to the Pacific Northwest in 1998.

Siri's driving directions frustrate as highways weave among each other. Which left? Wait, merge? It is miles before familiar landmarks in Fort Lee appear, and Siri guides me across lanes to the Palisades Parkway entrance. Hiro puts down his cell phone, alert as we travel north, ready to leave New Jersey behind for New York, the second of six states on our itinerary; he sits ready to read welcome to the Empire State.

Exits and place names conjure memories. Mr. G, my art teacher, lived in Stony Point. My family lived off Highway 303 in Tappan for two years. Hiro groans when I remind him how much six-year-old Kevin and eight-year-old me laughed in the Chinese restaurant in Orangeburg. Daddy's favorite appetizer was the pu-pu platter!

The hill before Marycrest and the Townline Road exit was where our car once struggled in the snow. It was the night in early 1970 that Mommy and Daddy had flown home from their one trip to Copenhagen. Too tired to panic, I had curled up against Mommy, drawing comfort from the Jean Naté scent within her faux leopard coat.

We take the exit for Highway 59 and I find Rockland Bakery. I look for parking in the scant shade before walking in to the production area for fresh kaiser rolls. Hiro grabs my arm. Are we really allowed in here? I nod and grab a brown paper bag, adding bagels to the haul.

Saint Anthony's cemetery waits, minutes from the bakery, and I find more shade in the far corner, near Daddy's headstone.

Why are there rocks on the grave? None of the other graves have them. Hiro's voice is hushed as we exit the Altima.

My cousins are Jewish, and that is their tradition, but this is a Catholic cemetery.

I bow before Daddy, Deacon Charles M Watson, 1942 – 1980, and Hiro takes my right hand in his left, watching for a moment as I fight the tears.

Gobusata deshita, otōsan.

Hearing my husband apologize for our long absence, hearing him refer to Daddy as his father too, lets loose my tears. I succumb to sorrow, feeling it swell. Hiro's grip on my hand grows a little tighter, and then he slips from my grasp. His hand rises up to caress my left shoulder, to embrace more of me; we stand before Daddy, waiting for the lump in my throat to diminish.

The tears pause, and behind the waning grief waits a small happiness. I look at Hiro and see him as he was twenty-nine years ago, when we first met. I sigh. Arigatō.

For what?

For coming with me.

Thank you for bringing me. A pause. Do you remember where the other graves are?

We stop before the graves of my maternal grandparents—Hiro had met them at my sister's wedding twenty-one years before. My cousins had visited them, Vincent and Mabel, too. Two stones and a seashell rest atop the glistening black headstone.

My fraternal grandfather, Frederick, died in 1955 and my fraternal grandmother, Mary, in 1990. I regret that Hiro never met her. Born to Irish immigrants in 1909, only to lose them both to the Spanish flu when she was ten, Mary was my first confidante when I was a child: she taught me the power of secrets.

As we return to the car, Hiro stops at the end of a row. Do you think we could borrow this watering can?

I think so. I wouldn't want to walk back here in the sun, though.

If we leave it by the faucet near your father's row?

There was one?

Yes. We don't have a brush, but we could still rinse the headstone.

I nod.

He lugs the full can, asking me to navigate back to Daddy. My cousin's stones beckon, and Hiro and I take turns, cascading the water over the warm granite. We bow, deeply, once more when done, my tears welling again. Hiro waits for my shuddering gasps to ease before prompting me. Mata kimasu.

Yes, Daddy, we will come back.

My dear friend Kaoru waits at my old day-school's entrance.

We walk past the little library, pointing up at the gabled second-floor room where I took computer science on an Apple IIe.

Photos are taken of Kaoru and me, Hiro and me, and my long arms let us laugh for a picture of the three of us. Kaoru waves as she heads back to work, and I turn to Hiro. Let's stop in Nyack.

Where you used to live?

I want to see what the house looks like now.

Siri chooses a route; I obey. South on Kings Highway. Before we pass into Valley Cottage, it strikes me. This is the way Mr. Eccles drove me home.

Who?

My day-school's headmaster. Daddy died while I was at school. Mr. Eccles drove me home.

So little has changed. The same houses, the same railroad crossing, the same traffic lights.

As we turn onto Christian Herald Road, Hiro's iPhone, connected to the car's speakers, selects a new song. I startle. Yellow Magic Orchestra?

Yes. Citizens of Science, from the Zōshoku album.

Didn't that come out in 1980?

I think so.

Such an odd coincidence.

Because it's the year your father died? Did you listen to YMO then?

No. I think I was in college when I first heard their music. I'm imagining you listening to them during middle school.

I smile as we pass Nyack High School. This used to be up the hill from my house. I wonder when they relocated it.

It's not the high school I'm smiling about, though, and my eyes suddenly glisten.

Why are you crying? Hiro's hand rests on my thigh.

I just realized something. Something that makes me very happy.

What is it?

My past is here, and my present is here. I quickly meet his glance. And my future is here.

Always here. With you.

Timeline

by Roberta Beary

Winner: White Enso award for Japanese-style poetry

When my husband and I arrive in Japan we promise each other it will be for three years. Three years turn into five. And for one of us, five years turn into forever.

*cherry blossom --
dusk slips in
uninvited*

Back in the United States, I cannot forget Japan and what I left behind. Now I am a single mother with two small children. How will I raise them on my own?

*winding road
face of a rabbit
in the moon*

In my struggle I recall a word I often heard in Japan. Gambatte. A word that is hard to translate. Some explain it as 'be strong'. Others as 'do your best'. To me, gambatte means 'keep going'. Over and over I say it. Gambatte becomes my mantra. I keep going. Little by little, pieces of my old life mingle with the new. My children's names in katakana on a scroll above their beds. I eavesdrop as they read side-by-side in tiny rocking chairs. First one story "Momotaro the Peach Boy," then the other "Kaguya-Hime the Moon Princess."

*sunlight
on the welcome mat
a pair of slippers*

Time keeps its own counsel. Children grow up and move away.
But always, with a sweet nostalgia, I remember Japan.

*red silk obi
how gently it drapes
the old piano*



Photos by Anne Whitehouse

Being Ruth Asawa

By Anne Whitehouse

*"We do not always create 'works of art,' but rather experiments;
it is not our ambition to fill museums: we are gathering experience."*

— Josef Albers

*"When I'm working on a problem, I never think about Beauty, I think
only how to solve the problem.
But when I have finished, if the solution is not beautiful, I know it is
wrong."*

— R. Buckminster Fuller

I remember sitting in the back
of my father's horse-drawn leveler,
dragging my big toe in the dirt path
between fields, making looping,
hourglass designs. This was in the 1930s,
outside Los Angeles, California.

My father leased land he couldn't own
because of the law against foreigners.
My mother was a Japanese picture bride,
betrothed on the promise of a photograph.
I was fourth of their seven children.

Our father built our house of board-and-batten,
with a paper ceiling and a tin roof.
He knew how to use water wisely
and grew beautiful vegetables from that earth.

We toiled alongside our parents,
planting, weeding, harvesting,
nurturing the soil.
But our father was cheated at market.
We were so poor we salvaged
nails from shipping crates.
We trapped gophers for meat.

Through persistence and perseverance,
our father increased his leasehold
to eighty acres. He hired laborers.
We owned two cars and two tractors.
He was a father to his brother's five children
as well as to us, after his brother died.

After Pearl Harbor was bombed,
he made a big hole in the ground
where he buried our Kendo swords and gear.
He burned the beautiful Japanese books
on the tea ceremony and flower design
and the precious dolls and badminton paddles
my sister had brought from Japan
just months before.

One Sunday in February 1942,
two men in dark suits surprised us
as we worked in the fields.
They took our father by the arm
and marched him to the house.
They watched him eat lunch.
He finished his meal with a slice
of my sister's lemon meringue pie,
and then they drove him away.

I learned later they were FBI
and suspected our father
of being a traitor.
He disappeared from our lives.
Four years passed before
we saw him again.

Soon, with thousands of others,
we were assigned to a detention camp
in Santa Anita. We lost almost everything
we owned. We lived in the stables
of a converted racetrack
surrounded by barbed wire.
Hair from the horses' manes and tails
stuck between cracks in the walls.
In the summer heat, the smell
of horses was overpowering.



The excuse for separating us
from our homes and livelihoods
was that the U.S. was at war with Japan
where our parents were from.
Yet there was no similar removal
of Italian or German Americans.

In the camp, I noticed three men
who liked to sit together high
in the grandstand of the racetrack,
balancing sketchpads on their knees,
drawing pictures with pieces of charcoal.
They didn't seem to mind the dust
that blew up from the track, or the sun,
or if I sat with them. They encouraged me.
That was how I learned I was an artist, too.

They were my teachers—
Tom Okamoto, Chris Ishii, James Tanaka—
Disney artists who'd drawn *Pinocchio*,
Fantasia, *Dumbo*, *Donald Duck*,
and *Mickey Mouse*—now suspected
of being “enemies of the people.”

Yet I saw how when they worked,
worry fled. In the midst of hardship,
their concentration made a peaceful space
where something unexpected
and beautiful might happen.

Wire selected me,
not the other way around.
We had it on the farm,
and even as a child
I noticed how useful it is
and how transparent a barrier.

Wire starts out as a line,
a boundary between two places,
inside and outside, left and right,
But wire can also be transformed
into a three-dimensional object.

In the summer of 1947,
when I was an art student
at Black Mountain College,
I joined a public service project
to teach art to children in Toluca, Mexico.
In the market I noticed the wire baskets
made by farmers to carry eggs and produce.
They needed no tools but their own hands.

They taught me how to wrap wire
in even loops around a dowel.
Interlocking loops formed rows
which could be varied by size and shape
by adding loops or subtracting them.
It was like crocheting without a hook
or knitting without needles.

When I returned to Black Mountain,
my first sculptures were baskets
like the ones the Mexican farmers made.
When I joined the beginning to the end,
they became rounded, like fruits.
Next they stood up and took flight.
They asked me to consider,
what is inside, and what is outside?

I have spent my life finding out,
layering form within form,
voluptuous, swelling.
Was I thinking of motherhood,
of my own children? Yes, and no.
Making art is a different mental process.
Any artist will understand.

My great teacher, Josef Albers
taught the use of negative space,
beauty in repetition, and the cultivation
of a deep awareness.
He wasn't interested in feelings.
*If you want to express yourself,
do it on your own time, he said,
not in my class.*

Some of the students resented this,
but I come from a culture
where personal feelings are hidden.

Albers said, *Draw what you see,
not what you know.*
Even black will change.
Never see anything in isolation.
*Define an object by defining
the space around it.*

I understood this, too.
As a child, I studied calligraphy
where we learned to consider the spaces
between the brushstrokes
as well as the brushstrokes themselves.

Albers also said, *Art doesn't know
progress or graduation.* Year after year
he taught the same courses—
design, color, drawing and painting,
presenting us with the same problems,
concepts, and assignments,
but each time was never the same.

I learned that nothing is ever settled
in life or in art. Sometimes adversity
yields an advantage. It's like looking
for a light in darkness.
Your eyes will sometimes betray you,
but eventually you'll find a way out.
Our detention in Santa Anita was temporary.

After five months, we were sent
to the Rohwer Relocation Center
in the swampland of southeast Arkansas.

We shared lavatories, a laundry,
a kitchen, and dining hall.
The soil between the barracks
turned to black muck when it rained.
Cypress trees grow in the bayous,
and creeks snaked through fields
worked by sharecroppers.

The eerie beauty of that landscape,
half earth and half water,
has stayed with me,
the gnarled cypress knees
that grew straight up
from their hidden roots
through dark water.

We searched the swamps
for the most unusual shapes.
Sanded and hand-polished,
they became doorstops,
useful and ornamental.

My mother had brought seeds,
and we planted a garden.
We kept chickens and a pig.
At Rohwer, we went to school.
Every morning we pledged allegiance
to the flag of the United States of America.
When we came to the end,
“with liberty and justice for all,”
we added under our breath,



Living with my family on the farm,
I had been an obedient Japanese girl.
At Rohwer, I learned to question authority.
Imprisoned as un-American,
I became American. Living the way
we did, without our father,
our family ties loosened.
Students at Rohwer were allowed
to attend college, if the college
was in the middle of the country.
The Quakers provided assistance.
In 1943, my sister Lois left for Iowa.
Chiyo followed her. I was next.

I picked the Milwaukee State Teachers College,
because it was the cheapest
in the catalog. I boarded with a family
as a live-in maid. Three years passed—
my father was released, the war ended,
but I was told I couldn't graduate.
Because of my Japanese background,
no one would hire me as a teacher.

Before I left Rohwer for college,
our teacher, Mrs. Beasley, told us
not to harbor any bitterness
from what had been done to us.
It was wrong, but to dwell on it
would only hurt us and hold us back.

All I had strived for was destroyed
when I wasn't allowed to graduate.
But what seemed the collapse
of my hopes was the prelude
to my transformation.
There were two doors,
and I opened both. They seemed
to lead down separate paths
but, in fact, they intersected.

In the summer of 1945,
my Milwaukee friends Elaine and Ray
wanted me to come with them
to Black Mountain College
in North Carolina,
but I went to Mexico City
with my sister Lois instead.
I studied design with Clara Porset,
a Cuban artist at the University of Mexico.
Clara had also been to Black Mountain.
The next summer, I went there, too.

Some educational experiments
are destined to flower and fade.
Black Mountain College
had a brief lifespan.
I was one of the lucky ones.

College life was like detention camp
turned inside out. The college
was also land-rich and dirt poor.
We were encouraged to find ways
to do what we wanted
with the few resources we had.
Teachers and students ate together,
and everyone had to work.
I gave haircuts to students and teachers,
worked in the school laundry,
and woke in the early morning
to churn butter and make cheese.
How the Europeans loved soft butter
and buttermilk at breakfast!

Many of the teachers were refugees.
Their culture made the college what it was.
Without the war, it would not have happened.
For a brief time, while it existed,
it was a haven for those who had suffered
because of their race, religion, or skin color.

My parents' Buddhism consisted
of rituals they never explained.
At Black Mountain College,
we learned the precepts of Buddhism.
My studies gave me insight
into the religion of my ancestors.

There was harmony and affinity
between the principles of my college
and the values of my heritage.

Rising before dawn
to make butter for breakfast,
I would knock on Albers' door
to wake him on my way to the barn
so he could photograph the fog
lying low over the mountains.
He would snap a few pictures
and go back to sleep.

When the cold fog
from San Francisco Bay
comes rolling in
through the big windows
of the high-ceilinged living room
of our brown shingled house
on Castro Street, I sometimes
remember the early morning
mountain fog in North Carolina.

At Black Mountain College,
I explored the land around me
as I had not done since childhood,
observing the trees and bushes,
vines and wildflowers. One day,
after I'd been there a year,
I was walking on a forest path
when I felt someone's eyes on me.
I turned and found myself
looking directly into his gaze.
It was Albert Lanier.
He had been watching me
before I noticed him.

Our backgrounds and upbringing
couldn't have been more different,
yet we never had any doubts
about our love for each other.
We knew what we would be facing
as an interracial couple raising a family,
but Albert was an architect and builder
and used to finding a way,
and I knew how to work hard.
We weren't likely to give up.

On a rainy summer day in 1948,
Albert and I watched from a ridge
with the rest of the college,
while our teacher, Buckminster Fuller,
connected the designated points
of a dome he had designed
out of strips of Venetian blinds.
When it failed to rise, he didn't give up.
The next summer he returned
with different solutions,
and this time, the dome stayed up.
*There is no success without failure;
you succeed when you stop failing.*

At Black Mountain College,
Albert built a Minimum House
with cheap industrial materials
and what was at hand. He diverted
a creek to flow around the house.

The house took a year to complete.
There was a large room for living
and sleeping, a kitchen, a bath,
and closets. Albert constructed a terrace
of flat fieldstone and two walls
of brown fieldstone striped with lichen
that he collected in the woods.
I advised him how to place the stones
to make a pattern, side by side
and up and down.

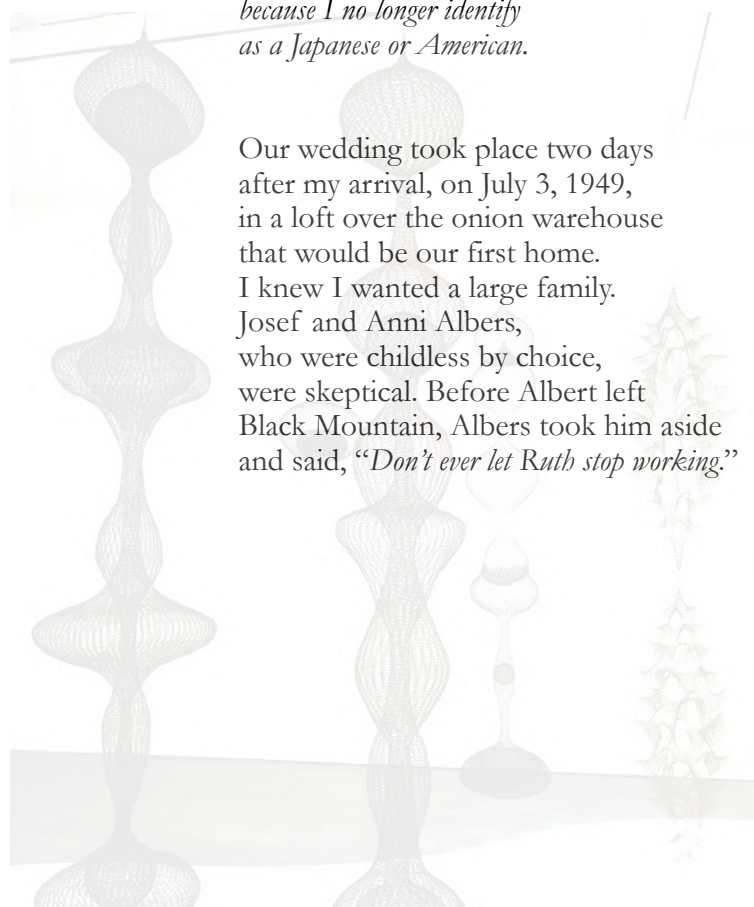
When Minimum House was finished,
Albert left to learn the building trades
in San Francisco, where it was legal
for us to marry. I planned to join him
in a year. Bucky Fuller designed
our wedding ring as his gift to us—
a black Lake Huron stone in a setting
formed by three "As" for "Asawa."

I felt I needed to warn Albert
what it meant to marry me:
*My parents dare to be tolerant
because we have all suffered intolerance.
I no longer want to nurse such wounds.
I now want to wrap fingers
cut by aluminum shavings,
and hands scratched by wire.
Only these things produce tolerable pains.*

*You will have to look at me
on the streetcar or bus when you
hear someone shout, 'dirty Jap.'
I hope we never have to experience it,
but expect it, do not fear it.*

*I've overcome most of the fear.
This attitude has made me
a citizen of the universe,
by which I grow infinitely smaller
than if I belonged to a family,
province, or race. I can allow myself
not to be hurt by ugly remarks,
because I no longer identify
as a Japanese or American.*

Our wedding took place two days
after my arrival, on July 3, 1949,
in a loft over the onion warehouse
that would be our first home.
I knew I wanted a large family.
Josef and Anni Albers,
who were childless by choice,
were skeptical. Before Albert left
Black Mountain, Albers took him aside
and said, "*Don't ever let Ruth stop working.*"



Albert's work made mine possible.
We had six children in nine years:
Xavier, Aiko, Hudson, Adam,
Addie, and Paul. Raising children,
growing a garden, and making art
were all connected for me.
I created my sculptures
with my children around me.
I wanted them to understand
that art does not have to be
separate from the rest of life.
It can be as ordinary
and essential as breathing.

Bucky worked by trial and error,
Albers was interested in ideas
that didn't have a shape yet.
My ideas come from nature.
I start with general principles
that apply to anything I do.
Instead of forcing a design
onto my material,
I try to become background,
like a supportive parent
who enables the child to express itself.

Each material has a quality of its own.
By combining it or putting it next
to another material, I change it
or give it another personality,
without destroying either one.
When I separate them again,
they return to what they are.
It's the same with people.
You don't change someone's personality,
but combined with other people,
a person will take on different features.
The intent is not to alter,
but to bring out another aspect.

A line can enclose space,
while letting air remain air.
My wire sculptures
are a continuous surface.
I begin from the inside,
and as it takes shape,
it comes out and in again
while remaining, essentially, itself.
What interests me
are the proportions.

I folded origami as a child,
but my folded sculptures
come from my work with Albers.
We folded paper in the European way,
which is structural.
We learned about the strength
of certain angles.
You can fold a sheet of paper
so you can stand on it,
as if it were made of wood.
With paper, you can easily change
the folded angle, but metal is rigid.
You fold metal just once.

My friends Paul and Virginia
brought a desiccated plant
from Death Valley for me to draw.
The gnarled trunk branched off
symmetrically, ending in feathery fronds.
To understand its structure,
I modeled it in wire, which led
to my tied metal sculptures.

I start with as many as a thousand
strands of wire in a single bundle.
Using a pair of pliers
to cut and twist the wires,
I divide the bundle into thirds.
I continue to divide each branch
until only two strands are left.
I tie each joint with the same wire.
No solder is used.
When I create the tied center,
I have already made a decision.

It interests me to work out
variations of the same idea,
instead of following different ideas.
My sculptures are meant to be
suspended from the ceiling,
mounted on a wall, or on a base.
Bronze wire stays green a long time.
Brass wire turns dark. Immersing it
in an electrically charged sulfuric bath
leaves a greenish cast. The ends,
dipped in resin, resemble raindrops.
I asked the plating company
to run the electric current backwards,
creating a rough surface.

One quiet Sunday morning,
scavenging for materials
on a San Francisco street,
I found coils of enameled copper wire
on a sidewalk outside a bar.
They came from the insides
of smashed-up slot machines
that the city had recently outlawed
and ranged in color from rust-red
to purple and blue-back.

To be alert to my surroundings
is to be aware of opportunity.
When I was a child on the farm,
I shaped wire into rings and bracelets.
At Black Mountain we were encouraged
to use what we could find and was at hand.
When I worked in the college laundry,
I made drawings using the BMC stamp.
Albers' concept of the meander
influenced my studies of sequences,
patterns and contrasts, curves and reversals,
and optical illusions that "swindle the eye."

As the last rays of sunlight
cast shadows across my living room,
I sit cross-legged on the floor,
with the wire in my lap
and my hands on the wire,
my children around me,
reading or doing their homework,
playing or practicing the piano.
Above us, my wire sculptures tremble
and sway, in a dance with the air.
I feel they are protecting us,
like household gods.

I am often asked how I can bear
the tedium of my artistic process.
Farm work is by nature
tedious and repetitive,
and I grew up on a farm,
planting a thousand seeds at a time,
pulling hundreds of weeds,
harvesting fruit and vegetables
by the bushel. As I work,
I fall into a rhythm,
and the tedium becomes absorbing.

At Rohwer, I was proud of how well
I strung my beans on the trellis I made,
working from the bottom to the middle
to the top. I often construct
my sculptures in the same way.

My process is about the cultivation
of patience and stillness,
of learning to be nonreactive
and sit with discomfort,
and it has made me a better wife,
daughter, mother, teacher, and friend.

I tell women who want to make art,
*Don't wait until it's too late,
and you don't have the energy.
You don't need long stretches of time.
Learn how to use your small snatches of time
as they are given to you, and they will add up.*

After the war, my parents never got back
the leases they lost. They started over
working for someone else in Arizona.
They were simple people.
They wanted me to be lucky,
not in money or honors, but in life.

When I work, I am at one
with the spirit of my material.
Don't be afraid of the unknown.
The unknown is what will free you.

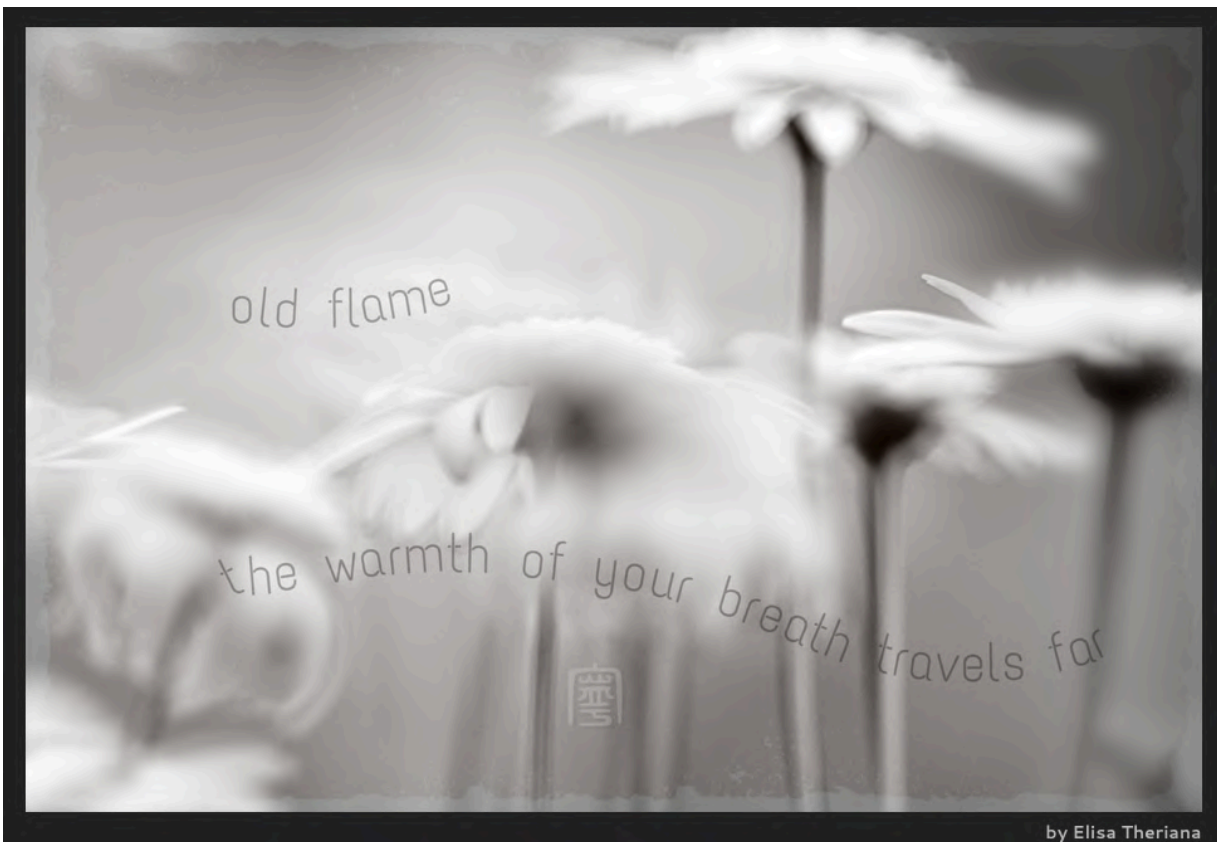


HAIGA

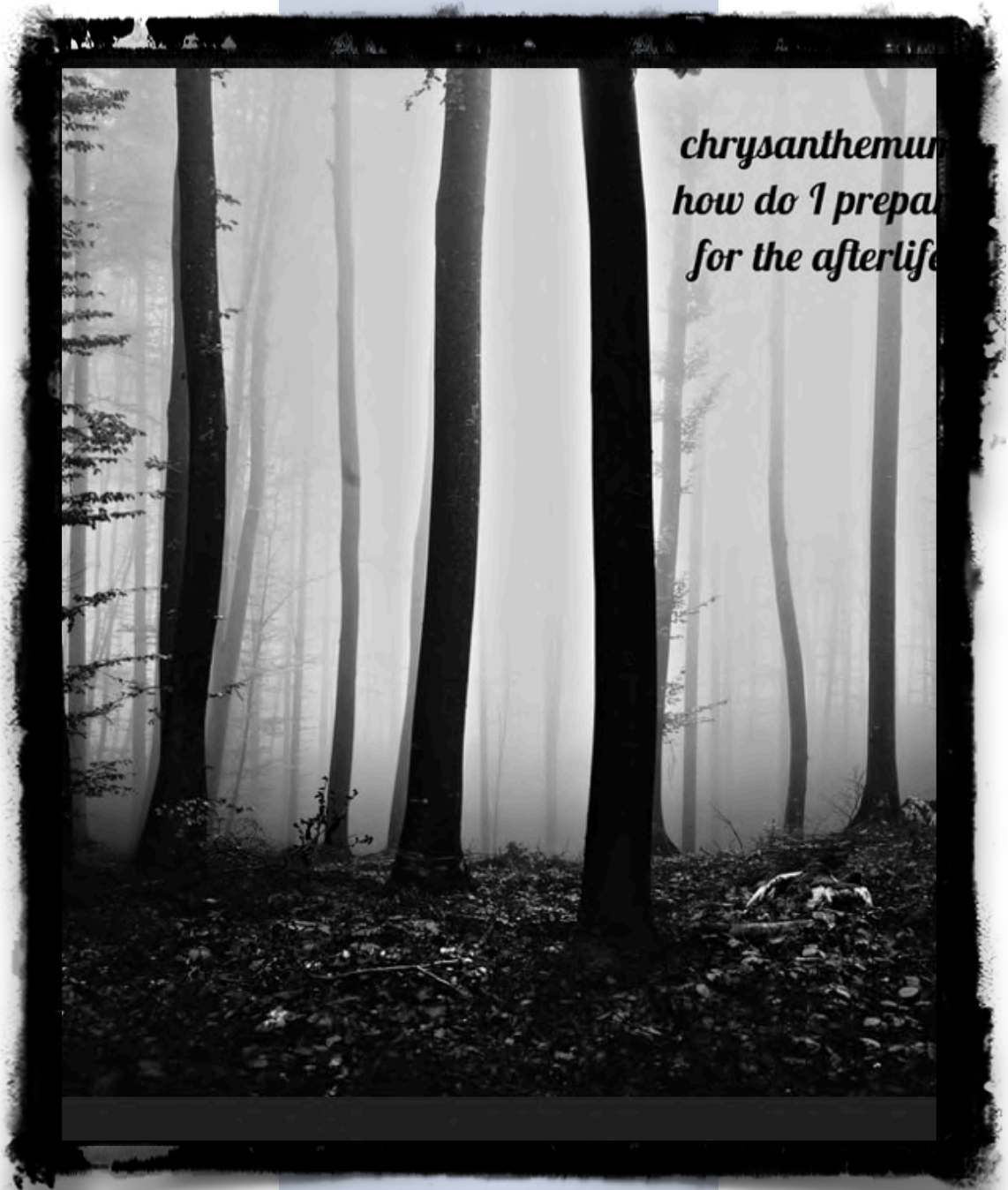
by Elisa Theriana



Winner: White Enso award for Visual Art



HAIGA



*chrysanthemum
how do I prepare
for the afterlife*

By Richa Sharma

HAIGA

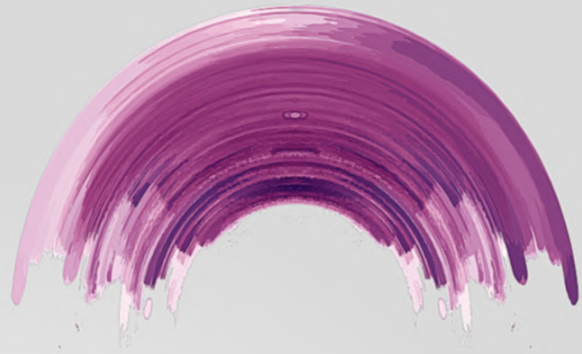
By Debbie Strange

snow again
I brew a second cup
of flowering tea



words/image(C)DStrange

I await
the rain's clemency



there is a time
for all withered things
to bloom again

the autumn wind
whispers a lament
of longing



I wonder again
why you let me go





a circle
of radiance cradling
the sun . . .



on this winter's morning
we are held again by light

words/image(C)DStrange

Remembrance

by Vipanjeet Kaur

I

Wish

To forget

Those who never

Remembered me. I adored

Those who never acknowledged me,

I feel that they will remain

Forever indebted to me.

“Forgive them”,

Thought

I.

I

Decide to

March forward again

And rejoice. Let me breathe

Again as life is short and complaints

Are untold. Don't give space to so many.

Those who care do not leave. Detach

Yourself from those who go,

“Let go of them”,

Thought

I.

Takayama Renewal

By Arlene Geller



I long to accompany the crane
as it glides above the glistening Miyagawa River
where it dwells alongside the Japanese
who have lived here for generations.

The crane swoops down and eyes the tangerine carp,
keeping its distance from the tourists who delight
in the river fish, iridescent in the burnished sunshine,
entertaining their admirers merely by existing.

Not so the crane as it strolls on the slightly submerged rocks
and bides its time, hunting and catching smaller game
until it tires of waiting, lifts, floats above the water, the carp.
It doesn't notice I admire its slender neck, its stately motion.

When it returns, as it will, after the tourists are gone
I hope to see it as I shop in the Morning Market along the river.
I, too, am part of Takayama—a village of peace and kindness,
a respite from a turbulent world.

Temple of Snow

By A. A. Marcoff



I left that place so long ago, so long, so long ago: the years have passed into the atomic, like consciousness, like time itself: snow falls into the moment: memory is light: white...

one dark evening, I walked through snow in the Taishakuten Temple, and spoke to a man I knew, an older man, long dead: he showed me an effigy, stone, of a human being, and a ladle and holy water, and he told me you were supposed to pour water over this figure to purify yourself, to be whole: the old wooden rooftops curved and sloped into the mind: that seemed to me to be pure Japan, a dimension into which I poured myself, my entire being, my life: the temple was a place of lanterns and stone and snow falling in flakes like snow-light, or nothingness:

*snow falls
in the temple grounds
like moonlight
the temple
of dreams*

Japan flows, the conductor, conductor of shadows and fire, conductor of dreams and the past: it appears as a stage from a Noh drama, all laden with snow and show and the shadow of snow, and those masks that glow with the mystery of being...



the snow still falls today – the snow of memory and moment: I am what I have become: I walk with swans as they glide on the river: I walk with their wings, their light, their presence on the mystic waters:

*swans appear
from a white mist
merging
with time
beautiful*

I have at last become myself, and go with time, with worlds, with the knowledge of that now, consecutive as light and moment, authentic with memory: Japan is with me still, the snow my space and reality, my meditation, my milieu, my song: Japan was the weather of experience and the catalyst of dreams, and I walk in that temple to this day, in the years that have become those moments of snow:

*winter light
I see the world
for what it is
snow falls
like memory*

I am metamorphosis, and my existence is now and poem and river and flame, and these swans pass by in a philosophy of wing: the landscape takes on the shape of snow: I am walking into snow now, and go like a pilgrim into the flow...



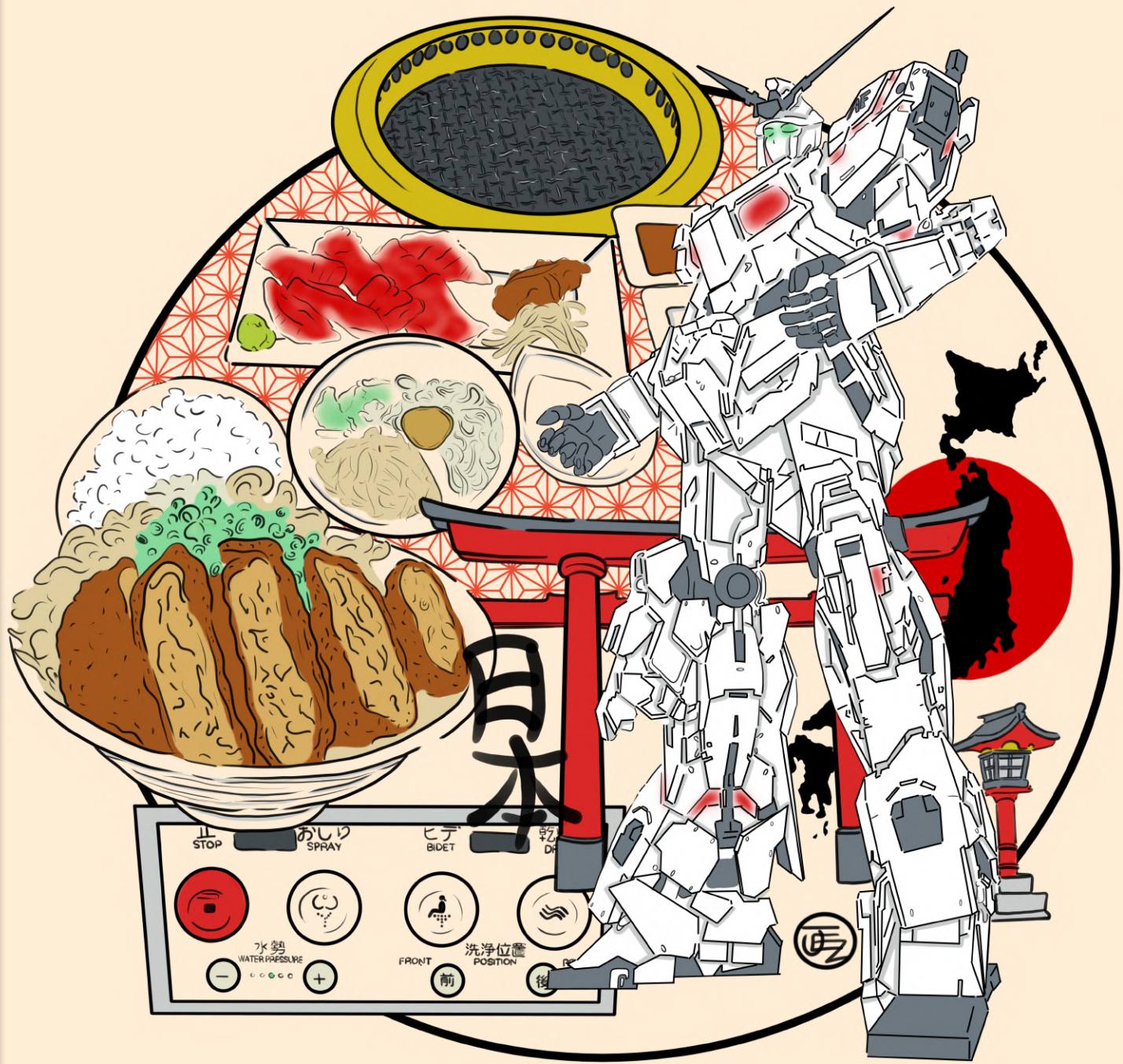
My Favorite Things

By Jessica McDonald



With Japan finally opening back up **again**, visitors can come enjoy all the things small and large that make this place amazing. This series was inspired by 3 tourists and their list of their favourite things when visiting Japan.





止
STOP

おしり
SPRAY

ヒテ
BIDET

乾
DRY



水圧
WATER PRESSURE

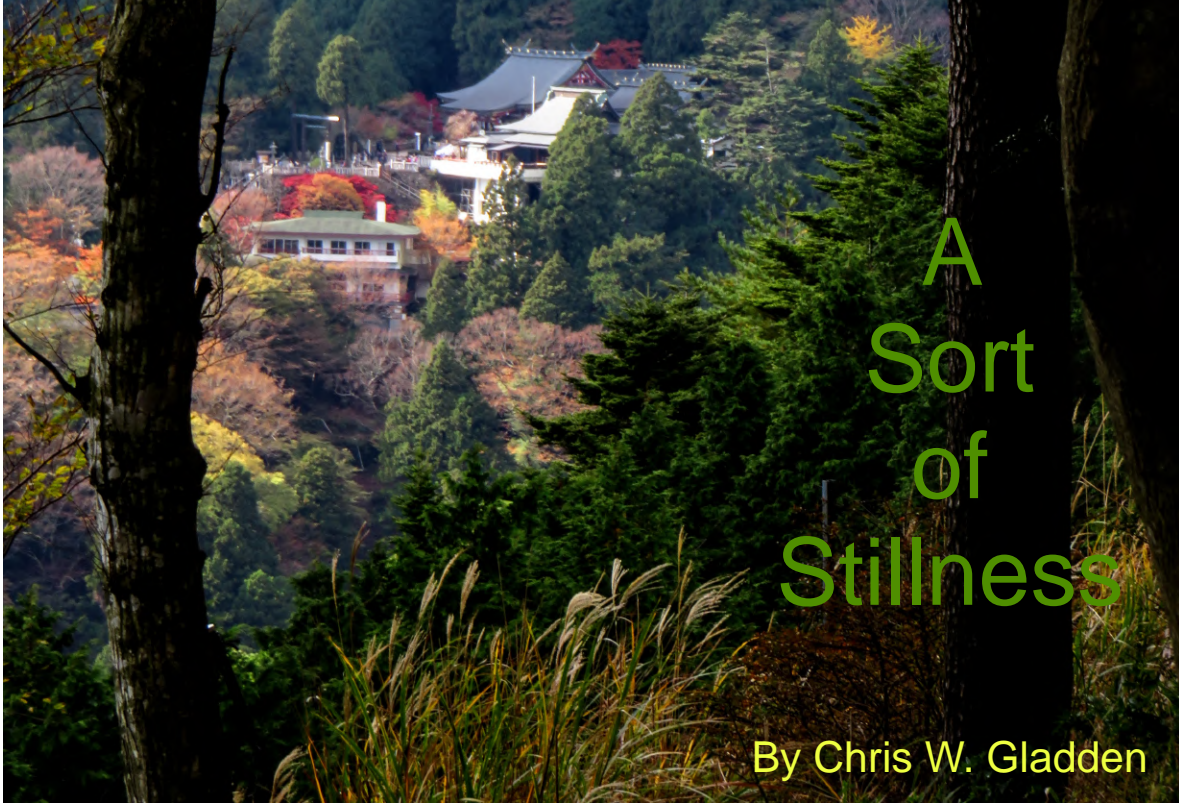
FRONT

洗浄位置
POSITION

前

後





Early one morning last summer, I sat on a floor cushion gazing out at the mountain village in Japan that I now call home. Lush rice fields stretched toward the river against the far green hills; a stream gurgled nearby; the sound of the temple bell drifted in on the breeze. I savored my coffee and the morning's tranquility.

Then the cutting of grass commenced. A weed eater nearby rumbled awake, then another farther away. Soon the entire village was awash in a two-stroke engine roar. With the meticulousness of urban lawns and golf courses as the modern ideal, rural Japan wages a relentless battle with its grass from spring through fall when it stops growing. Along rice fields and roadsides, in yards and long abandoned vegetable plots, the grass seems to never be quite kempt enough. Villagers tell me that maintaining it accounts for 50 to 70% of their copious amount of outdoor work. One result is that this idyllic landscape sounds like a Cessna landing strip for part of the year.

I've learned to cope. But that morning, with the peace of moments before still in my mind, I longed for some genuine quietude. But where? Throughout Japan's recorded history, sages and hermits have escaped the hubbub of town or village life by heading to the mountains. While I'm no sage, as the weed eaters roared, this suddenly seemed like a fine idea.

So I loaded the car with camping gear and set out for Togakushi, a rugged mountain range in northern Nagano Prefecture that has been an object of veneration for over a thousand years. Togakushi roughly translates to "The Hidden Door," in part, a nod to a remoteness that implies few will ever find it. I could only wonder what stillness might await on the other side of the door.

One of the best-known myths of Japan's Shinto faith involves Amaterasu, the sun goddess who spun the heavens and mountains and waters with her divine loom and kept the rice fields verdant. One day her ill-tempered brother Susanoo flew into a rage and rained havoc on her fields, throwing a dead pony into her loom for good measure. In despair, she fled deep into the Earth, sealing the cavern with a tremendous boulder, vowing never to return. The whole of creation fell into utter darkness. With the world on the verge of extinction, the rest of the gods gathered to devise a plan. After much discussion, they threw the greatest party the universe had ever seen before the entrance of the cave. When Amaterasu cracked open the stone door to see what the ruckus was, she gazed into her own visage in a mirror of the gods' making. Mesmerized, she stepped from the cave, returning her light to the world. At that moment, one of the divine revelers flung the cave's great stone door to the heavens, ensuring Amaterasu would never retreat into

eternal darkness again. Where the stone crashed to earth, the myth says, it formed the Togakushi range.

An old pilgrimage trail runs along the foot of the mountains, visiting various Shinto sites on its way to Okusha, the innermost shrine and final goal for many seekers. I set out early the next morning at Hokosha, the first of these sanctuaries. Legend says Hokosha was founded in 1058 when a celestial light shined in the trees delivering a message: build a shrine here for worshipers year-round. Okusha is a further 10 kilometers in and a challenge to reach in the winter.

Hokosha's towering shrine gate marks a boundary where the pilgrim symbolically leaves the regular world and enters the realm of the divine. At the top of a flight of ancient stone steps, I paused before the main sanctuary. Wooden and weathered bone gray, the eaves are intricately carved with mythical beasts and a flowing dragon with mother-of-pearl eyes gazing downward. I stood dappled in morning light as birdsong floated from the age-old cypress grove.

Then the roar of a vehicle overwhelmed the birdsong. This was my first indication that a road parallels the historic trail in some places, including directly below Hokosha Shrine. A truck growled past. It was time to head further into the forest.

At the rear of the grounds, a signpost reading Kanmichi—the path of the gods—marks where the pilgrimage continues. The well-maintained gravel track eventually turns to earth and winds through a mixed woodland of chestnut, cypress, and oak. Occasional lichen-covered stone deities and diminutive shrines dot the way. Eventually, the trail reaches Chusha Shrine halfway along the route. As I ascended its stairs, a single drum's ritual beat reverberated gently through the grove. Next to the sanctuary falls a cascade with a sacred rope draped before it and a stone carving of the dragon deity Ryujin to the side.

Togakushi Shrine is rooted in a blend of Japan's native Shinto faith and Buddhism.

In ancient times this was the case throughout the land, with Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines often occupying the same precincts. This syncretic tendency continued until the faiths were forcibly separated in the late 1800s at the start of Japan's modern age. Since that time, Togakushi has been officially designated as Shinto. Yet Buddhist elements, like the esoteric dragons and the sacred waterfalls once used by pilgrims for purification before ascending the mountain, speak to a different age. Today, benches allow visitors to rest and contemplate the waterfalls, which I took full advantage of, allowing the shrine's ambient noise to wash over me and the dance of the falls to fill my ears.

The crunch of gravel soon snapped me out of my tranquil reverie, as a Lexus crept past through the shrine grounds and made a K-turn among the worshipers.

I returned to the trail and soon left the last vestiges of town behind. After a time, the drone of a conch shell wafted in on the breeze. And then... a temple of the Shugendo sect... a blend of mountain worship, ancient Shinto, and esoteric Buddhism. The faith's practitioners, known as yamabushi—those doing prostrations in the mountains—were the first to come here on pilgrimage and make Togakushi a locus of spiritual practice. Only the murmurings of the natural world and the drone of their conchs announcing their presence would have punctuated the silence. The thirty-three grottos that they used for ascetic training dot the Togakushi mountains. The trail that accesses the caves is part of a wider network that forms a mandala over the landscape with other mountains in the range, a replica in the physical world of the Dharma realm of esoteric practice. This extended pilgrimage survives today.

Near the Shugendo temple, I saw my first clear view of Togakushi's jagged peaks, rising like teeth from a dragon's jaw. From there, just another half hour remained before reaching the woodland entrance to Okusha. The innermost shrine marks the most prominent grotto on the mountain, and the first reached via the pilgrimage trail. I took a deep breath of the still highland air. Those

yamabushi had it right, I thought and continued on, the broadleaf forest glowing in the late morning sun. Another blow of a conch shell filtered through.

And then, from parts unknown but all too close, the familiar rumble as a weed eater started up and was soon whining with abandon.

The map of the area indicated there was a parking lot near the approach to the inner shrine. Given Togakushi's "hidden" status, I assumed it would be one of the compact roadside affairs found at trailheads. The sudden traffic inching past as I descended from the forest disavowed me of that notion. Many of the historic locations throughout the Togakushi region are what modern Japanese refer to as "power spots," natural areas imbued with healing Earth energy that purportedly provide a range of benefits. As it turns out, Okusha is considered the most powerful and lucky of them all.

The parking area was jam-packed, but I was soon back on the pilgrimage route, now a broad gravel path leading to the Zuishinmon, a thatch-roofed vermilion gate built in 1710. Beyond it, the approach that runs the last 500 meters to the inner shrine is lined with a magnificent cedar avenue of 400-year-old giants. And now I was truly in the thick of it. The "hidden door" had been discovered long before; I proceeded at a crawl through the throng filling the grove. Deeper in, the trail narrowed, and the foot traffic grew thicker still. Near the inner shrine, visitors jostled for spots to snap selfies before a small cascade that the yamabushi once used for austerities. A man strolled past in a T-shirt reading, Are you serious? Do it quickly.

And then, at the foot of a cliff, Togakushi's most sacred spot at last came into view. The Okusha Shrine sanctuary was founded in the 800s, just as Japan's mountain asceticism was taking root. Approaching this holy of holies nestled in the midst of an ancient forest, for an instant I sensed the promise of my journey could be at hand.

And there I stood, gazing up from the melee at

Okusha, now a modern structure with precisely none of the atmosphere of the rest of the Togakushi shrines.

I briefly considered joining the sightseers waiting to toss a coin in the offering box to pay their respects. The line snaked down the trail into the woods.

Beside the Okusha sanctuary, an interesting, yet understated sub-shrine resembling a weather-beaten mountain hut marks the entrance to another grotto. It is dedicated to Kuzuryu, a nine-headed dragon deity of esoteric Buddhist lore. Local legend says it awoke when the stone door from the sun goddess tale crashed to earth. Kuzuryu was seen as a protective deity of the region, an elemental force of water and rain who the yamabushi called on to bestow wisdom. According to the sign planted in front of this sub-shrine, the deity also provides "the miraculous boon of healing toothaches," an apparently more recent discovery.

Heading back down through the scrum, I noticed a branch off the main path. The map said it led to a historic stone carving of Fudo Myo-o, one of esoteric Buddhism's most revered deities. He's often depicted as a raging figure in an aura of fire, holding aloft a sword used to cut off the roots of ignorance. At the start of the trail was a sign with a laminated poster of one of the area's moon bears, with bold, red script warning of the potential dangers ahead.

Soon, the noise of the masses slipped away, and I found myself hiking beneath the peaks on a neglected trail that was not part of the official pilgrimage. As such, I suddenly had a whole portion of the mountain to myself. For the first time, the going grew steep and rocky, and before long the trail nearly vanished in thigh-high sasa bamboo. Eventually, the trail arrived at a cliff with a small cascade. There, about 15 feet up the rock face, was the ancient carving of Fudo Myo-o. Heavily weathered and covered with lichen, it stood in a three-meter wreath of flame.

Sitting on the woodland floor, the only sounds

the tumbling of the stream and the wind passing through the forest, I ate a tuna sandwich and contemplated what one has to go through to find a bit of quiet. The often omnipresent roar of our times was all but unknown to humankind until recent decades. Now the countryside booms. The sacred peaks crawl with climbers. I wondered how the modern-day yamabushi manage to find the solitude needed for their devotions. No sooner had the thought floated across my mind than the scream of motorcycles, a mile off down in the valley, sliced through the peace. Fudo gazed on unperturbed.

The wail of the bike tribes continued unabated as I began the return hike down the mountain. Then another sound floated from below. The drone of a conch. Before long, a pair of yamabushi jostled up the trail in my direction. They were dressed in traditional white: a hakama and suzukake—a short, kimono-like jacket and baggy pantaloons—tabi shoes, and a cotton headcloth tied like pigtails that fell on either side of their heads. Their conch shells hung across their shoulders in a woven net and tanuki-pelt sacks were tied to their waists. This was just who I needed to see.

As we neared each other, I paused and hailed them. They were heading up for training, following a rarely used path that ascends from near the Fudo carving to the grottos among the peaks. The Togakushi range is composed of precipitous crags, and I thought the zeal of the bikers would certainly reach them, too.

“Too bad about all the noise,” I said to these masters of the mountains.

They gave me a curious look. “What noise?”

I pointed down the path towards the valley and the now oppressive whine. With puzzled expressions, they tilted their ears. “Oh yeah!” one said with a sudden flash of recognition. “What a racket.”



The other yamabushi drew a smartphone from his fur pouch.

“It doesn’t bother you?” I asked.

His head tilted ever so slightly. “Well,” he said, “it’s a busy world.”

Checking the trail map on their phone, they continued on toward the mountain peaks.

I made my way back to the valley and to the village, hoping to appreciate whatever moments of stillness I might find.



Carved Thee For Her Seal

by Diana Webb

Even as she lies there, the image made three score and ten years back is shifting. The image that will appear on future documents to signify the monarch's approval. Yet in the minds of millions, her image lingers, imprinted forever. Nature had made her for that role and people of many nations file past to honour her, the way she stood fast and never faltered. On the screen this September morning, one of the figures moving silently, taking her turn, stands out, as she turns to face the dead queen, her long black hair cascading, while she bows low, bows low, bows low in reverence. Does she also have her personal hanko with which she'll mark her recollections of this moment?

*a red leaf
pressed to a paving stone
step after step*

The title is taken from William Shakespeare's Sonnet 11.

A tree remained while tens of thousands of pine trees were uprooted, carried away by tsunami during the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. The tree is the silent witness. I immerse my heart in the tree, helping reveal its emotion through three pictures and short poems.

Silent Witness

By Kartika Lestari

SO YOU SEE ME

I am alone, so you
see me and remember
when the water rages.
Never... never bring again
your home here.
Let me alone, so you
always see me and remember
to never build again
a life by the sea.



SURVIVAL

The rampage came. People
had nowhere to run.
Water tantrum. Ocean
as if moved to the land.
Screams—things floated.
My pine friends dropped
off. The earth
and water shook me.
Minutes felt like years.
As the turmoil ended
and the ground came
back to the sight,
nothing left but me
and the bent concrete
behind.



MEMORY

Leaves had chitchatted
from thousands of pines.

Birds had perched
on the branches,
tweeting.

They have gone.

Never come again.

There's only
me, standing alone
in the twilight shadow.

Lonely.



Photo by Kit Pancoast Nagamura

Revisiting

By Kit Pancoast Nagamura

in remaindered shadows
behind the abandoned shrine
the damp earth yard
has the shiny skin
of a water mammal

someone has dropped here
an empty crumpled pack
of Peace cigarettes,
and the metal top of
a One Cup sake container

who was it who stood here
behind the smell of wood rot,
where the mosquitos
slowly scout one out
in a squadron of retribution?

walking around to the front
of the shrine, the vaguely leaning
mossy yawning entrance
holds only remnant shreds of
the former hanging bell rope

a breeze soft as soot
twirls a yellowed leaf, cherry,
(autumn's first to fall)
and drops it right beside the
frail ribs of the offering box

on its spotty bug-nibbled spine
the leaf cradles back and forth
each time the wind sweeps by
and eddies near the altar
impulsive as a forgotten god



Study Abroad

By David A. Hewitt

Thursday, May 23 - Friday, May 24, 2019

Five years since my last Japan visit to see my in-laws; nearly twenty years since I lived there. I'm returning as co-leader of a ten-day study abroad program for community college students. It is the first year of the Reiwa era. At the time of the last Imperial succession, to Heisei, I was a first-year college student myself, crazy in love with my just-beginning studies of Japanese language, culture, and martial arts.

Our journey takes the long way to Tokyo via Hong Kong, a novel route for me. According to the flight-tracking map on the seat back, we fly due north from Baltimore over Canada until there's no north left, then south through Russian airspace, passing over Lake Baikal. Regrettably, I see none of this, squeezed as I am into a middle seat in coach for this fifteen-hour journey; and what's more, as a group leader I'm even abstaining from the glass of wine or whiskey that might smooth out those hours.

*Late-spring night journey--
Flying, high as high can be,
over the North Pole*

*Long overnight flight:
No window, can't read in this light;
to float free—I write.*

*

**

Our home base for a week in Tokyo is a hotel in Asakusa, walking distance from Sensōji Temple. Busy day follows busy day, co-coordinating a group of twenty through subway on-loadings and off-loadings, tours, museums, culture culture culture. Foods, sights, experiences, all familiar to me from my long-ago eight years in Japan, but seen anew and afresh through the eyes of students taking their first tentative, yet enthusiastic steps abroad.

Checking in with them during breakfast, weathering the record-breaking May heat wave, talking down those who grow agitated, and managing their health exigencies, both physical and mental... I'm reminded of why I chose not to become a parent, but also feel twinges of what I've missed in so choosing.

Tuesday, May 28

A free day. Students are going their separate ways, mostly in small clusters. Some are intent on summiting the looming Sky Tree, others on exploring Asakusa's countless stalls and shops, still others on venturing over to Akihabara for the vast selection of all things anime-related. I offer to steer this last group in the right direction, and we make our way to the subway and board a train. When I was about their age and new to Japan, the allure of Tokyo, this most scintillating and inexhaustible of metropolises, was not lost on me; nor was the allure of boisterous nights with newfound friends, both expat and Japanese. But beneath and behind it all for me was the deep pull of classical martial arts, of Zen and Shintō, of tradition and ritual and, at the core of all these, the gravity of abiding silence. I fret, as is the right of the middle-aged, about "kids these days," in whose minds anime is the alpha and omega of Japanese culture . . .

*Young college students
on sacred pilgrimage to
Anime-Mecca*



After navigating the labyrinthine Akihabara station, I point them in the right general direction(s). Tempting as it is to wander and lose myself in the bustle, neon, and noise, the longing to put words to paper is stronger. I find a quietish café with a 2nd-floor counter table overlooking a plaza.

The day before, our group chanced upon Asakusa's Bentendō temple, on whose grounds is a polished stone memorializing Matsuo Bashō's verse:

*Clouds of spring blossoms--
Is that bell-toll from Ueno,
or Asakusa?*

Drawing inspiration from the master himself, I plunge pencil-first into a blank notebook page, tinkering with a humble late-spring verse of my own, in homage to the students' consumerist zeal:

Minds clouded with goods--
Jingle that cash in Akiba,
or Asakusa?

Friday, May 31

Tomorrow night will be a final group dinner, but tonight, at last, a wide-open evening! I venture out into the humid dark for some solitude. I've walked the gravel-and-paving-stone grounds of Asakusa's iconic temple numerous times, but never before at night.

*Seeking kindred souls
in their fierce wood-carved faces--
temple guardians*

*The temple's silence
soothes and stills my sloshing mind--
night at Sensōji*

Asakusa, so packed with humanity in the daytime, is surprisingly quiet tonight. Wandering the well-lit, narrow streets, I find a ramen shop that's nearly deserted. Near my first apartment in the suburbs of Tokyo—more than a quarter-century ago—just outside the station was a cozy ramen shop consisting of a counter bar and three tables. Hopeless at cooking and hungry for good food, language practice, and company, I'd become a regular there, usually ordering ramen with pork slices, gyōza, and a large bottle of Kirin Lager. Tomorrow, we'll have a last group tour and a farewell dinner, then back on an airplane, back to the States, back to college work and yard work and . . . life.

It's not my old haunt, but this shop's atmosphere strikes all the right, resonant chords. After ordering I make only perfunctory small talk with the master; more than anything I simply want to immerse myself in the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes.

*Memories of youthful years
in Japan simmer, bubble up--
eating gyōza alone.*



Back To Japan

by Sravanthi Challapalli



My niece and I are watching videos of hi-tech toilets in Japan. She is six, and curious about many things, including subjects we giggle about or speak in whispers, such as bums, poop, farts and private parts.

“Atta,”* she says, climbing into my lap. “Show me! Show me videos of Japan bathrooms.”

I settle her down, pick up my phone and launch one video after another, videos made and uploaded by dazzled tourists and expatriates. To a child who knows only the varieties that come with a flush and a hand spray connected from the outside, watching gizmos that are warmed, fitted with water jets at various speeds to wash you off in the front and the back, that mist the bowl before use, sanitize, and deodorize is nothing short of witnessing a wonder.

When I told her about these toilets for the first time a year ago, her first reaction was one of terror.

“Chee, I will never go to Japan!” she said, eyes widening, then immediately shutting before hiding her face in my stomach.

“But why not?” I asked, “It’s not as if you have to use tissue paper.” Most Indians are disgusted by the use of toilet paper; we believe nothing cleanses like water. She shakes her head but doesn’t say anything further. An avid watcher of cartoons that feature superheroes, supervillains, zombies and sundry creatures mythical, magical and mechanical, maybe she imagined a sinister hand reaching out from inside the toilet bowl.

Despite her protestations, we do plan to visit Japan when she is older. In preparation, we watch some Japanese language videos, and my niece greets us in Japanese morning, evening and night for some time after that.

In 2008, I visited Osaka. An earlier opportunity for Indian journalists to visit Tokyo had fallen through when the hosts canceled the event. Soon enough, I got another opportunity to visit when an electronics company invited media persons to visit its factory and other facilities. State-of-the-art potties—even hand sprays— were not common in India then, but there used to be a Toto showroom near the gym I used. At over Rs 100,000 apiece, it was not something I even considered exploring.

In my hotel room in Osaka, though, I came – well – face-to-face with one. Unaccustomed to winters, I was cold enough that January night to appreciate a warmed seat. Like a child, I laughed in disbelief and delight when I experimented with the various fittings. The water was warm and I could control the force of the flow. It wasn't all fun and games, though. After the whole process was over, there came a rather peculiar odor from the toilet. It was nothing like the citrus or floral smells of cleaning products I was used to. I still do not know what it could have been – it was a chemical smell and rather unpleasant.

The toilets, of course, were not all I enjoyed on my trip, or all that I remember fondly. It is still a thrill just to have made it to Japan. Just a few days before my toilet experience, I had tripped on the flare of my new trousers, giving my right foot a hairline fracture. I would not miss the Japan opportunity a second time, though, so I went ahead, bandaged foot in tow.

I was so captivated by my experiences on that trip that I don't remember my injured foot bothering me. I was intrigued by the digital traffic signs which gave updates on the traffic ahead and the weather, replete with emojis. I got a taste of the famed Japanese hospitality. Most media junkets I had been on lasted only three or four days and the hospitality varied. Some hosts provided us a tour of the city, others didn't offer any extra touches. Some stuffed us with the same food everyday ("you listed it as a preference"), even when we were on our knees begging for something different. Some bluntly told you that you had no 'free time'. Others just expected you to show up and left you to explore alone.

In Osaka, we had a chaperone from the moment we entered the airport and up to the moment we boarded the plane back to India. The solicitous guide pointed out every aspect of Japanese life that she thought would interest us, and she took questions patiently. Every meal was unique, giving us a taste of various Japanese menus, such as the hot pot and the Bento box. Our hosts arranged for vegetarian versions, allowing many of my colleagues to be included in the experience. There was Indian food as well as pizza, pasta, and sandwiches. Knowing how difficult it is for vegetarians to find food abroad that is more than subsistence fare, such as bread or fruit, this struck me as not just polite but painstakingly caring. Someone had gone the extra mile!

There was a trip to Kyoto entirely for sightseeing. We saw a persimmon tree, orange fruit on its branches, on the way to the Kinkakuji temple, and we met a geisha at one of the restaurants where we ate dinner. She was just 18.

I came away enamored by everything I saw. Just as in India, there was an array of shops outside the temple selling souvenirs. I bought a few cups painted with landscapes. I kept one and gifted the rest.

I must look for that cup I kept. It has come to be hidden among other souvenirs accumulated along the way. Maybe holding it, savoring my tea in it, and gazing at its silhouettes of trees and mountains will keep my memories intact and push me to go back. I have only dreamt about it till now, but done little except drool over many things Japan on Instagram. It's time to plan a trip or two, ride a bullet train, pluck persimmon off a tree, see Mount Fuji, savor minimalistic meals that often look like works of art. And I will visit again with my niece when she grows up if she remains sufficiently interested in Japanese toilets. And to ensure she does, I must locate a store here that stocks these wondrous toilets and take her there when she visits me next.

*Atta = Paternal aunt (in Telugu)

L
I
n
d
a
A
n
n

L
o
s
c
h
i
a
v
o



Digital art has become my stop-and-go bodega. Whenever possible, I prefer to collaborate with illustrators, talented artists who do this fulltime. However, nowadays, a poet is forced to multi-task, asked to read a poem on camera or via an MP3 file -- and sometimes provide an illustration overnight.

Additionally, if you have a You Tube channel that features your writing (as I do), where's the visual art going to come from?

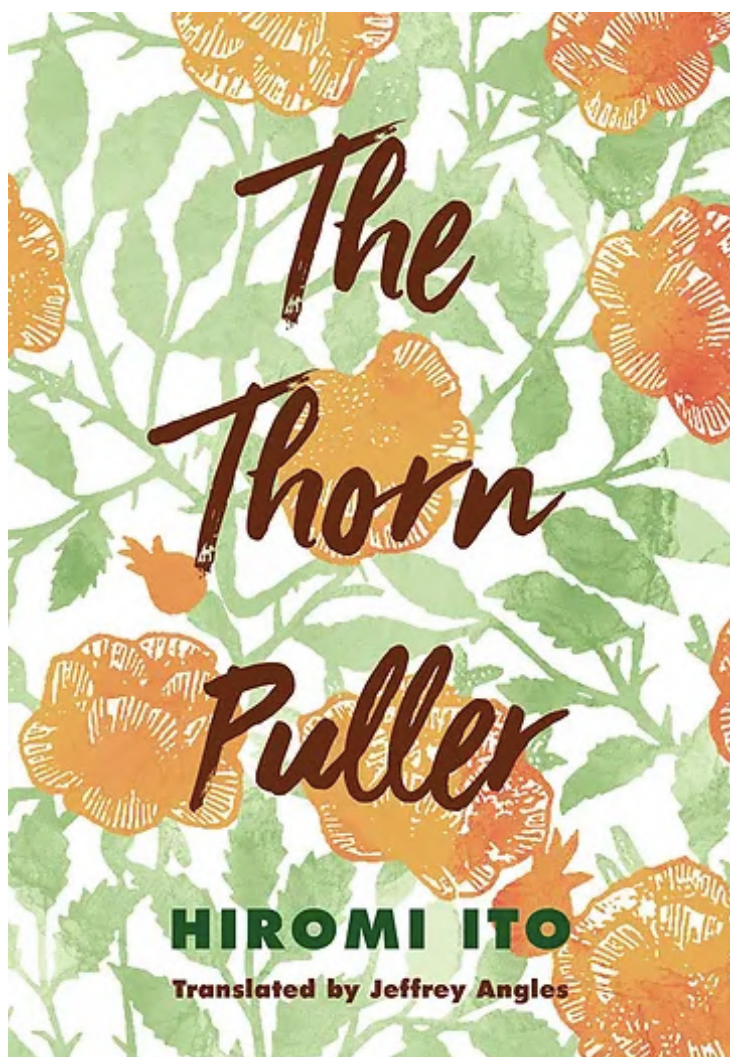
Thus a deadline and a demand are the stringent parents of artistic invention.



As to live models, I enjoy having yet another reason to stare at my pure-bred Siamese cats, descended from a long line of temple guardians in ancient Siam.

Cats demand to be examined, worshipped, and immortalized.

Creating cats on paper permits me to share their ineffable beauty with others.



Book Review By Linda A. Gould

Sitting down with *The Thorn Puller* is like hanging out with your best friend and having one of those conversations that wend and wind and digress before coming full circle. You don't have an agenda or talking points, you just know that your friend will say something outrageous about your most intimate and serious problems and that you'll both end up laughing at whatever shit life throws at you. After hours together, you'll have talked about magic and sunrises, lions eating gazelles, brain dysfunction, politics, gardening, family, your sex life, foreign countries, a childhood memory, spiders, your aging body, and whether hell exists—in that crazy, disconnected, but natural order. You may not remember all that you talked about, but you'll feel rejuvenated and happier for just having been in your friend's company.

Sitting down with *The Thorn Puller* is like reading someone's innermost dialogue, complete with rambling reasoning, neuroses, digressions, regrets, fears, ideas, obsessions, curiosities, distractions, loves, desires, guilty pleasures, and mean-spirited thoughts, all of which paint a portrait of an endearing, irascible, loving, caring, irreverent, troubled middle-aged woman under inordinate amounts of stress.

And you love her, because *The Thorn Puller* is one of the most honest books you will ever read, even though it is described by Publishers Weekly as autofictional, which means you don't know what parts of the story to believe.

You don't believe her account of watching a poet friend transform from a bent and crooked old man who needs a walking stick for support into a living, robust Jizo (an enlightened being known for protecting lost souls, travelers, and children). Yet, Ito unloads her burdened soul to him, he listens with such care, then offers such profound advice, that it's irrelevant whether he is an old friend or god-like figure. It's real. It's believable.

You certainly do believe much of her story: the multiple trips—emergency and planned—between the US and Kumamoto to care for sick and infirm parents, her back and forth between love and resentment towards

s her husband, and her newfound interest in Jizo. Ito's storytelling is about things any middle-aged woman is experiencing, but her wit and honesty, her life experiences, and her curiosity are uniquely hers, so when her mother suffers a stroke and Ito writes, "When I was little, she'd scolded me countless times for not eating my food properly—cut it out and eat right, she'd say. Now, she was the one eating strangely. No one had said a thing, but I could hear her words echoing in my ears, and a mean-spirited part of me wished I could say, now who's eating funny?" you know it's wrong, but you can't help but laugh at her irreverence and sympathize with her sentiment.

The Thorn Puller is a benchmark book. Some reviews compare Hiromi Ito to Haruki Murakami and Yoko Tawada, but make no mistake, Ito is her own person, with her own style, and she sets her own standard for storytelling that will be a measure for aspiring authors.

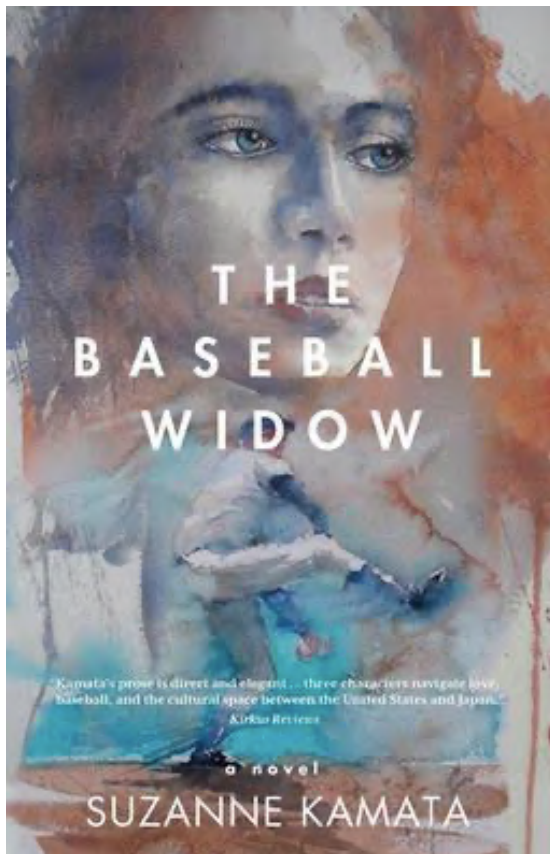
The interplay between poetry and prose is seamless, setting a pace and tone that resembles stream-of-consciousness writing without the confusion that often arises with that technique.

The interchange among literature, folktales, haiku, legends, and Ito's life experiences is a lesson in the importance of art in our lives and how written art is not just entertainment, but holds lessons and examples, references to better understand our world, ourselves, our experiences, and emotions.

But those things are secondary to the strength and impact of this book. Read The Thorn Puller to learn for yourself the significance of the title. Read The Thorn Puller because this story is about dealing with stress (and who isn't?). Read The Thorn Puller because it is ultimately about dealing with death—of loved ones, pets, your own—but is not morbid (except when it is) or depressing (well, sometimes it is) or hopeless (which it never is). It is a dialectic journey into the human spiral towards death as seen through the joys and travails of life. And that journey is fun, wild, funny, educational, sad, thought-provoking, personal, and relatable.

Note: White Enso received an advance copy of this book for review. The review is unpaid and Linda A. Gould's personal opinion.





Book Review

By Linda A. Gould

One bit of advice that writers often hear is, “Write what you know,” and Susanne Kamata seems to have taken that advice to heart. She provides insight into the life and culture of Japan that only a long term resident of that country can offer. She is in an intercultural marriage, and can, therefore, reveal details of relationships with spouses, in-laws, and neighbors that even people like me, who have lived in country for more than 20 years, can never fully understand without a Japanese family. Kamata is the mother of two children, and she writes with authenticity about life with a deaf child living with cerebral palsy because it is the life her own daughter lives.

The Baseball Widow is fiction, but it so deftly includes elements of Kamata’s own life that it is hard to see the story as anything other than a memoir. From the first chapter, Kamata’s characters are as real and alive as if meeting them at a house party she is hosting, and it is obvious that she cares deeply for each character, unfolding the depths of their natures, as if carefully and respectfully unwrapping a gift from a valued friend.

The story centers around Christine and Hideki. Hideki manages a high school baseball team, and it is his dream, no his obsession, to have the team win Japan’s national baseball tournament. As is so often the case in Japan, Hideki devotes more and more time and energy to his work, straining his marriage and leaving Christine to care for their disabled daughter and sensitive son. The scenes where they do interact are often tense, with them disagreeing about how to raise their children. But Kamata tells the story from the viewpoint of both characters, revealing what is so often missing in stories about troubled relationships; namely that every incident in every relationship is seen through different perspectives, and both perspectives are accurate. Hideki is not simply a foil for Christine’s story, although she is the main character. Instead, we learn in detail about the difficulties he faces with fellow coaches, frustration with having a foreign wife, his love for his family, and why he disagrees with his wife. We come away from this story with a fondness for each character, even if we disagree with their actions.

Kamata develops a subplot between Daisuke, a teen returning from the United States, and Nana, a teenage outcast with big ambitions. By choosing a Japanese returnee to highlight the cultural differences between Japan and the US, Kamata is able to provide commentary about the difference between the two countries regarding schooling, freedom of expression, individualism, self-confidence, and even marriage. She even manages to seamlessly include social commentary on the Japanese hierarchical system that prevents social mobility. Nana, whose father left her family and whose mother works in a bar, has aspirations to escape her

poverty and become a singer. She has the talent, she has the drive, but, without giving away the ending, we learn she has many more obstacles to overcome than the more well-off students at her school.

The Baseball Widow is a good read. If you know Japan, you'll recognize a lot of Kamata's details and perhaps feel a little 懐かしい. If you are unfamiliar with Japan, you'll learn about a culture that is notoriously difficult to see behind the tatemae (the public view). For that alone, Kamata deserves kudos.

Note: White Enso received a copy of this book for review. The review is unpaid and Linda A. Gould's personal opinion.



Thank you for reading White Enso. It was our pleasure to review the submissions and offer you the best.

If you enjoyed White Enso, please consider donating. The journal is self-funded, which means the artists receive only a small honorarium, although we would love to offer more. Our PayPal ID is whiteenso@gmail.com.

Submissions will open soon for the next issue. If you would like to join our mailing list, get advance notice of future deadlines and receive future issues of the journal, please contact us at whiteenso@gmail.com.

We also would love any feedback about the journal, so please send us constructive criticism at the same email address.

Thank you for your support.

Linda and Ellen