

FALLING ASHES

Haibun, Haiku, Senryu & Other Poems



James Fowler

The Hobbleshush Granite State Poetry Series, Volume VII

HOBBLEBUSH BOOKS

Brookline, New Hampshire

Copyright © 2013 by James Fowler

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

Composed in Adobe Arno Pro at Hobblebush Books

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1-939449-02-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013948539

Cover photograph of *The Great Buddha of Kamakura*
(Kamakura Daibutsu) by J. Michael Moore

The Hobblebush Granite State Poetry Series, Volume VII
Editors: Sidney Hall Jr. and Rodger Martin

HOBBLEBUSH BOOKS

17-A Old Milford Road

Brookline, New Hampshire 03033

www.hobblebush.com

CONTENTS

<i>A Sailor on Weekend Pass</i>	1
<i>The Long Drive Home</i>	2
<i>Yosami, Japan</i>	3
<i>her embrace . . .</i>	4
<i>USS Worden off Vietnam</i>	5
<i>Constitutional</i>	6
<i>Reminder</i>	7
<i>Cyclorama</i>	8
<i>the rain-line . . .</i>	9
<i>married again . . .</i>	10
<i>hail on the window . . .</i>	10
<i>she tells me . . .</i>	11
<i>my father and I . . .</i>	12
<i>a taxi arrives . . .</i>	12
<i>Veteran's Day . . .</i>	13
<i>New Places</i>	14
<i>Mount Tug</i>	15
<i>Another Night Without Her</i>	16
<i>Husband</i>	17
<i>The Night Country</i>	18
<i>Relationship</i>	19
<i>Another Room</i>	20
<i>Tidewash</i>	21
<i>Evening Walk</i>	22
<i>Objects in the Mirror Are Farther Than They Appear</i>	23
<i>Freezeland Pond</i>	24
<i>the road . . .</i>	25
<i>ground phlox . . .</i>	25
<i>empty . . .</i>	26
<i>freewood pile . . .</i>	27
<i>lifting a redpoll . . .</i>	27
<i>Life by Any Other Name</i>	28
<i>The Return</i>	29
<i>a cousin asks . . .</i>	30
<i>clearing Mom's house . . .</i>	30
<i>strutting tom . . .</i>	31

<i>freight train . . .</i>	31
<i>setting sun . . .</i>	32
<i>moon . . .</i>	32
<i>passenger train . . .</i>	33
<i>Night Thoughts</i>	34
<i>Even Here</i>	35
<i>among the gravestones . . .</i>	36
<i>a country road . . .</i>	36
<i>planting moon . . .</i>	37
<i>the distance . . .</i>	37
<i>frosty morning . . .</i>	38
<i>her last day . . .</i>	38
<i>Yokohama</i>	39
<i>Norms</i>	40
<i>desert war . . .</i>	41
<i>A Poem Made in the Shape of a Burning Buddhist Monk</i>	42
<i>I have not plowed</i>	43
<i>I throw down my newspaper</i>	44
<i>Afloat in the Window</i>	45
<i>Between the Lines</i>	46
<i>Poem</i>	47
<i>Night Poem</i>	48
<i>Oriole</i>	49
<i>November Moment</i>	50
<i>below zero . . .</i>	51
<i>the cat shies . . .</i>	51
<i>hunters' guns echo . . .</i>	52
<i>returning . . .</i>	52
<i>after the rain . . .</i>	53
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	54

A SAILOR ON WEEKEND PASS

I met my blind date Friday afternoon on an underground street in Chicago where she talked the bouncer into letting me into the bar. Over PBRs she asked if I'd read Ginsberg or Snyder. I said I read Asimov and Heinlein. After shots of tequila, she told me of her nights in jail for protesting the war. I told her I was afraid she'd make me lose my clearance. She walked me back to the train station where the setting sun cast our silhouette on the wall as I kissed her, once. Two months later I was in Nam.—I'm still fond of the scent of limes.—I'd like to tell her that I've now read Ginsberg and can recite Snyder's *Turtle Island*.—Maybe she remembers when the sun went down.

car lights

flash through the bar windows

shadows

THE LONG DRIVE HOME

*On 11 July, 1979, 7 people died and 173 vehicles
were destroyed in a fire in Nihonzaka Tunnel*

The tollbooth attendant at the Komaki interchange says *Ohayo* as she hands me my ticket. I force a smile, reply *ohayo gozaimasu*, and merge onto the Tomei Expressway. Once a month for three years, I've driven from Yokosuka to Yosami for business. I know which rest stops have the best food, which the best views. After a business meeting and station tour, I always go to the Yosami Hotel. Sometimes my hosts pick me up and we go to dinner. Last night, over after-dinner-tea, they told me about the Nihonzaka Tunnel fire.

walking around
the village
everything closed

This morning, after another business meeting, I head home knowing that the Nihonzaka Tunnel lies three hours ahead. After driving through the Hamanana Tunnel, I pull off at the next rest stop, sit at a concrete table, and eat a bowl of udon noodles bought from a machine. I pass the Yaizu interchange, there's nothing but highway between me and the Nihonzaka Tunnel.

white clouds, blue sky
Mt. Fuji
on the horizon

I pull off at Fujikawa rest stop, use the men's room and stare up at Fuji-san. I should be home in forty-five minutes.

YOSAMI, JAPAN

I look down from the glass outer walls of the triangular elevator. This hotel is too large for such a small village. I can see the encircling rice paddies, the lights of the main street. Tomorrow, I attend a meeting five kilometers south, but tonight, I seek a ramen stand to get supper.

an artist's easel
outside a Shinto Shrine
another gaijin

He asks me to join him for the evening meal in the artists' enclave at the Buddhist Monastery. He wants me to talk about home to the Americans living there. I tell him that I'm in the Navy and haven't been to the states in fifteen years. He smiles. A new voice will do.

bowls of rice
vegetables and miso soup
Buddhist mantras

her embrace

I wake

from war