



AN INTERVIEW:



AN'YA

DVR: A few days ago I received the last number of *moonset!* Fascinating, how it can be, feeling meriment that it arrived, and then the sadness; it's the very last issue. In his article, *The Very Last Word*, Peter the Publisher, your husband, writes about it. This changed the way of thinking here in Croatia, at least mine. Coming from a small country, in debts, with such political tabulations throughout centuries, one looks at the USA as a giant, powerful, country where everything is possible. And now, Peter's text. When I lived in the USA, from my lower middle class, immigrant view of a young and healthy person, America was America, indeed, some thirty years ago. It's not the same, is it?

an'ya: No, it is not the same as before ... the USA is still powerful insofar as wealth and education makes almost anything possible here, however, it is sadly changed from what many have perceived it to be in times past. Although I was born on America's West Coast, which was for the most part affluent and quite

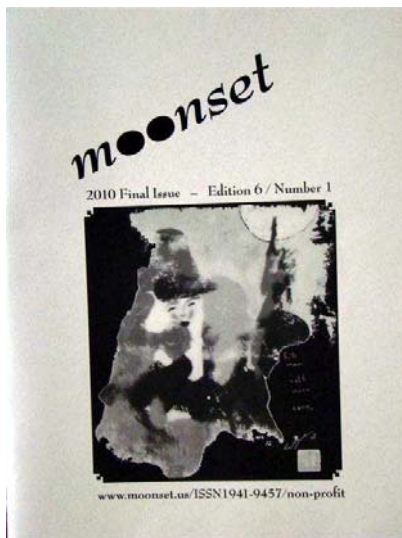
Americanized, Petar comes from Cleveland (the Industrial manufacturing heartland) that is no more. He watched immigrants from the former Yugoslavia and surrounding East European areas all leave, losing their heritage, occupations, culture, as well as religious and family ties to the USA mechanism.

ĐVR: If I may ask, Petar and you make a good team, don't you? Marriage can be a wonderful partnership if a couple works on it, enriches it with new and new interests and excitements! Years fly by as fast as one can imagine, yet they are so full of life and personal freedom. How do you see this Phenomena, since it hardly happens to most marriages nowadays?

an'ya: Yes, we have been a team for 40 years now ... and never really had to work at being partners as we are indeed one person and one srca, in two bodies. Personal freedom „is“ a very big item in any relationship, yet we have never become separatists. Very early on, Petar was a „womens rights and equality“ sort of person, and felt women can/must/will do anything males can do. So, he wholeheartedly encouraged me and always supported any of my endeavors completely. In return, I had to understand the male work ritual, spirit, and responsibility that came with upheavals in his Engineering career. It was a good trade-off; I learned how to drive trucks, manage ships crews, and make brandy. He learned how to clean house, change the baby, and bake bread.

ĐVR: Petar and you travelled, lived on several entirely different places, climates. How did that affect your writing?

an'ya: Yes, we spent 6-8 months in many locations, while Petar erected engines,(from Arctic to Equatorial), and mostly where we did not know the languages (Japanese, Spanish, Portugese, French, etc.) I believe this exposure to other cultures, plus the insecurity that goes with living in an alien land, teaches one to communicate, see other's customs/beliefs/terrain, and even eat odd things that impact your awareness of „life“ ... thereby enhancing your respect for it. You then return to your own home, and even the most simple family ties become more precious ... it is then you can respect your own beliefs, heritage, values, and expand on them in your writing, and be even more perceptive of your surroundings. Many of my haiku are composed after-the-fact from memories of old moments in our travels, that otherwise would have never have been written.



ÐVR: You have quite an unusual penname, easily remembered, very special. Does it have some special meaning?

an'ya: Okay, here is the long-story <s>: my given (birth) name was Andrea which is Greek, but I was named after my father (Andrew) who was Irish. My Serbian Christian Gipsie name is Andja in honor of my Grandmother on my Mother's side whose name was Zora which means „the dawn“, and my pen name is an'ya from when I taught school and the kids all called me „Miss An'ya.“ Nowadays, I don't use anything but an'ya, not even a last name anymore. an'ya (as most people already know) loosely translates to „a peaceful surprise light in the moonless night“, and was given to me by David McMurray of the Asahi Haikuist Network back when I first started writing haiku.

ÐVR: In our small town of Ivanic Grad, as haiku poets we meet hundreds of problems, the world recession being an excuse for most of them. As an editor, for many years I work voluntarily, my husband, a haiku poet at my side, receiving no fees for any of my work, but, even helping the cause from a small family budget of both poets being retired. It seems to be the cause and most haiku poets-editors do such enormous job very much alike, around the globe. It is not possible to live from haiku, but for haiku. Was (is) your situation similar?

an'ya: Oh my yes!, but the world's recession is really just a scapegoat, after all, both of our peoples have lived through far worse situations and with far worse problems than this! I think that many of us world-wide are hopeless volunteers who find a cause, (in this case haiku), and become almost too determined to have it

work (even at financial hardship); moonset you will remember was alongside our several other endeavors (haigaonline, WHC, Ribbons), so, it was all a time and energy stretch for us both. Now, after moonset, I am returning to generating haiku and working on my new website. Petar always has another crazed chicken in the coop, and is already off again on new ideas, but further „the woodbine sayeth naught.“ <s>

ÐVR: Ty Hadman, in his *Poets Profile of the Month*, writes you started to write poetry during childhood, continued in teen age. How and when have you met haiku?

an'ya: Yes I was writing mainstream poetry at an early age encouraged by my mother and my step Uncle from Switzerland. To date, even many of my European associates „only“ know of my haiku or tanka and haiga efforts, but few have knowledge of my mainstream poetry or epic poems. I first met haiku on the internet and then the works of Balkan haiku writers hit me so hard (emotionally and artistically) that I began to follow the lead of many FMR Yugoslav poets and their haiku efforts. I still believe that the best haiku comes out of the Balkans, and I am consistently inspired and impressed by them. Being born a Virgo, haiku with the succinctness of three short lines, suits me perfectly and I have not gone back to other poetry since discovering it. I did expand to tanka and still write some on occasion, albeit haiku is still my first love.

ÐVR: The prestigious awards you have won leave me without breath! It would take approximately two pages of IRIS just to mention all of them! For example, The Lynx [Tanka Splendor 2000](#) Awards Contest sponsored by AHA Books, the coveted Hackett Award with no runner-ups announced this past year, won the first place award in one of the monthly issues of *The Heron's Nest*, won the Valentine's award on *The Heron's Nest* for the best haiku voted on by the readers, and has quite impressively won or placed in several other haiku contests. Most of us received some kind of award in life, it's very exciting, we love to share our feeling and experiences with other poets ... give us your explanation, what do such awards mean to you?

an'ya: You know ... awards are gratifying, but indeed they are far over-valued by poets and society; all poetry is subjective anyway, and awards are given by one Judge or sometimes just a small panel of judges ..., so far more important and satisfying is the award of mutual „respect“ and friendship given by peers, beginners, and students who might look to me as a mentor. You ask „what do awards mean to me“, and I say they only mean I am dedicated, sincere, and enjoying the craft. However, my current plan is to virtually retire from entering

contests (save one or two yearly favorites perhaps) as I plan to share my haiku and haiga at my new website (still in progress.) It will finally be up sometime soon at: <http://sites.google.com/site/existencearts> and my new email address (already in use) is haikubyanya@gmail.com I do still however enjoy judging contests and am open to do this at any time anyone asks.

DVR: Throughout centuries, haiku has been of help to sensitive poet's souls. It helped me to return to the wonder of Nature I almost lost running after the so called values of modern, urban life. It helped me to mature, accept the transience of even the Space. Has haiku changed your life, enriched it, in which ways? What is haiku to you?

an'ya: Yes, simply knowing that haiku is a centuries old form „is“ the point which makes us old-souls, and as you said, able to „return to the wonder of Nature.“ Haiku has definitely changed my life and even the lives of my family members, husband, daughter, and son-in-law. May 2010, as the Oregon Regional Coordinator for the HSA, I put together our first haiku meeting. It was a perfect 72 degree day on an 18-acre ranch where we met in a yurt, went on a ginko and had a haiku workshop. However, the best part of the whole event for me, is that Petar, Larisa and son-in-law Jeff were all three there to support me. To answer your second question, haiku to me, is this Universe in all it's glory!

DVR: Give us haiku that is a favorite to you, written by an old Japanese master? Why is it so, how do you feel about this haiku?

an'ya: I can't really say that I have one particular favorite by an old master, (I admire them all in their own way), but recently (and published in the current issue of moonset) if I may say, is this fine haiku that I greatly admire, by a modern-day poet, Robert Epstein:

in pine shade
I forget for a while
this life will end

His haiku heavily reflects the transience of things like pine shade, memories, life itself. This haiku makes me live in and live for the moment, nothing more, nothing less. If man could master this feeling in life about everything, he would always be able to simply and truly enjoy each and every moment.

DVR: Most haikai remember the place and time of almost every haiku that happened to them, bringing those wonderful changes and learning. Is it possible

you pick one of your wonderful haiku and explain to us where and how it happened? That AHA- moment, as we sometimes call it!

an'ya: Being not only a haiku writer, but a Virgo (as mentioned above), I remember every single moment's time and place. The one haiku that struck me most as a „aha“ happened on a summer day while I was cleaning the house. I came across a spider that had wandered indoors and it was hanging from a long silk thread that it had spun to start a web. Of course, we don't ever kill any creatures, but they must be put back outdoors where they belong, so I took hold of the long silk strand with the spider dangling on the end of it and crossed the room to the front door where I stepped out onto our porch and held the silk strand over the porch railing. The spider was still dangling on the end of it ... and at that very moment, it occurred to me that this is what the Supreme Being (in whatever form you choose) must feel like when he orchestrates each of our daily lives. I suddenly felt like a puppeteer and the spider was the puppet, it's life was in my hands at that very moment in time, so I wrote:

silk strand

suddenly I've become

a puppeteer

ÐVR: How many books altogether have you published so far, Hope the list of haiku collections is not as long as the one with your great awards ...

an'ya: <s> As you know, Petar and I did our own books (hand-tied) and printed in-house for a very long time. moonless night and haiku wine (a collaboration with Ernest Berry from NZ) were my first publications. moonless night took a second place in the HSA Merit Books Awards. Diane Katz at Rosenberry Books is now my publisher and has already published my haiku book seasons of a hermitess and my tanka companion book which can be found online at <http://www.rosenberrybooks.com/bookinhandcatalog.html> In addition, I also published a couple of chapbooks myself, „behold the haiku sky, haiku in my apron pocket, and moonstruck (a tanka book), which are also all out-of-print now. Then of course one of my most memorable publications was „crosswinds“, with esteemed Balkan haiku writers. Currently, I am also doing what I call my „seasonal booklets“ which consist of only 5 haiku ie: spring, summer, autumn, winter and new years. Each is accompanied by one of my own haiga and these are free for the asking if anyone wants to contact me. To-date, I have finished 7 booklets, and am now working on the next one.

DVR: What are the plans, I can hardly imagine such an editor without doing this great job! I'd like to have this interview, for which I thank you, ended with optimistic sentences ...

after its first flight
the young gerfalcon's talons
tighter on my glove

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soft breeze
a bee's stinger lifts
in the air

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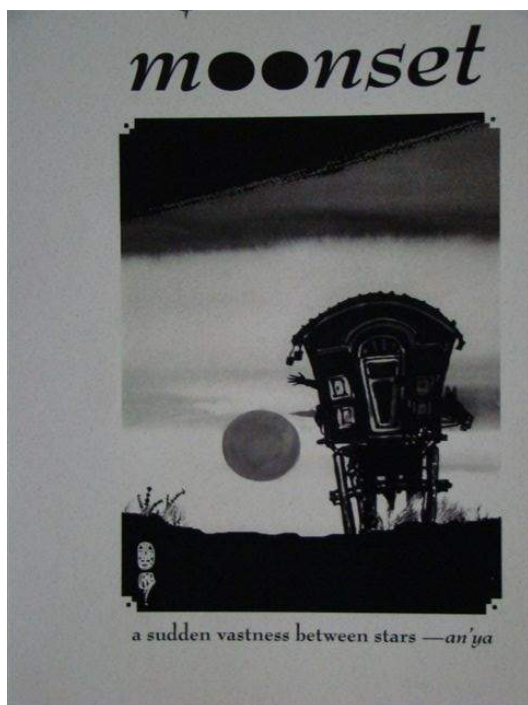
bitter cold
a juniper berry parts
the jay's beak

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polarized sky
the mixed melodies
of twilight birds

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june breeze
a hole in the cloud
mends itself



Summer 2010, Reviewed Spring 2012

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