

Swarthmore College, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

Voyages

Volume VI, Fall 2011

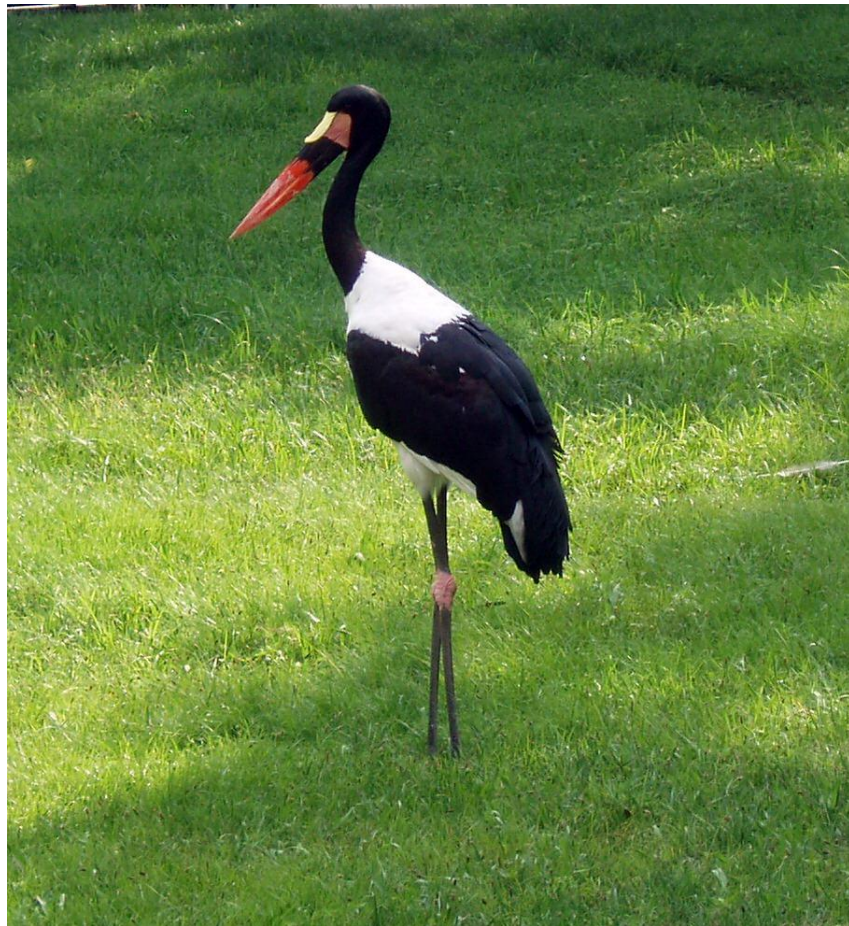


Photo by Alexander Rojavin

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About Our Authors

Daniel Browning '14 is a sophomore who has enjoyed this opportunity to translate. He is currently undecided as to his major, although he is certain that it will be on the Humanities and Social Sciences side of the academic spectrum.

Mary Jean Chan '12 was born and raised in Hong Kong. She first began penning poetry as a freshman in college, inspired by the film *Dead Poets Society*. In 2009, Mary Jean's poem *In Search of Paradise Lost* won a High Distinction Award in the Tom Howard / John H. Reid Poetry Contest sponsored by Tom Howard Books. Now a senior at Swarthmore College, Mary Jean looks forward to exploring the terrain of political poetry given her academic interests in Political Science and English Literature.

Reed Coke '13 is a junior Linguistics and Computer Science double major. He has recently decided to pursue his interest in natural language processing instead. He has taught French in the foreign language program at Swarthmore-Rutledge School several times over the past two years. His students are always full of surprises and he hopes that by sharing this story, he can encourage others to help spread the joy of learning a new language.

Alex Hollender '11 is a senior, studying Art History and Philosophy at Swarthmore College. He grew up between Vermont and Manhattan and for the past three years has been managing the clothing company Create Build Destroy (createbulldestroy.com) with two friends.

Marion Faber is an emerita professor of German language and literature at Swarthmore College, who has been auditing classes in the Japanese section for the last two years.

Sibelan Forrester is Professor of Russian at Swarthmore College. She has published translations of prose and poetry from Russian and Croatian, and of prose from Serbian.

Will Gardner is associate professor of Japanese language, literature, and film at Swarthmore College.

Nick Gettino '13 is an English literature major and Psychology minor. He is especially interested in contemporary American poetry.

Billy Hamilton-Levi, '13 is a Linguistics major.

Ben Hattem, '12 is an English literature major and a Sociology and Anthropology minor.

David Lucas Hinojosa, '12 is a Japanese special major and computer science minor.

Joanie Jean, '11 is a Biology and Japanese double major. Her interests include Japanese pop culture, Korean dramas, fencing, and fly husbandry.

Susanna Mitro, '11 is a Biology major, Psychology and Japanese double minor. She also enjoys playing the cello.

Frank Mondelli, '14 is a sophomore with interests in translation, linguistics, Japanese, and cognitive science.

Nicholas Jackson Pietsch, '13 is a Japanese and Computer Science double major. He was a very prolific writer of haiku for English class in the second grade.

James Preimesberger, '11 is a senior Japanese special major, so it is no surprise that you would find him contributing some Japanese poetry! He is still trying to figure out what he will be doing with his degree in the next couple of months.

Alice Wong, '13 is a Chemistry major and Japanese minor. She became interested in Japanese language in High School. Since then, her interests in Japan have expanded to include poetry and contemporary culture.

James Wright (JW) '13.

Yan Zlatopolsky (1947-2006) lived in Kyiv (Ukraine), until 1996, when he emigrated to Germany. For many years he was a director at a studio for popular science films. After he met Iryna, the couple wrote plays for children and parable-like short stories (in Russian). He began writing poetry late in life, after he moved to Germany, and his poems are strongly original, not reminiscent of traditional Russian poetry.

Mary Jean Chan

Translated by **Daniel Browning**

*Inspired by a photo from the "Hard Rain Project" entitled "The Dark Side of Recycling"
By photographer Mark Edwards*



Child workers, Manila Bay, the Philippines.
Photo by Mark Edwards, taken from "The Hard Rain Project"
<http://www.hardrainproject.com/gallery/>

The Swimming Lesson

I.

Down into the water she plunged,
her delicate fingers brushing
the indestructible creation of the gods:
there they were, floating on the waves,
their translucent skin still exquisite,
unblemished in the water
that set her skin on fire.

Another child jumped in.
It was, after all, a public pool
of water that reeked of death and decay she
Gagged. The tears came, but she tried to cling
to the moment when the sound of a knock
would ring
throughout the bare house
like a tiny message of hope
borne by a man
who would leave behind
two shiny pieces of metal
in the dust.

He would leave with the plastic bottles and she
would be left with the ability to pay
for her next swimming lesson.

II.

This was his first swimming lesson.
Down into the water he plunged,
his tiny fingers brushing
rust-encrusted metal it was
gold to his eyes. He squinted
in the murky depths
eyes wide shut them opened them
so he could reach
for his reward.

There would be no punishment if he failed.
It had been given long ago
the day his father left for the mines;
the same day he was playing hopscotch
in the minefields.

*Inspirado en una foto del "Proyecto Hard Rain" titulado "El lado oscuro de reciclaje"
Por el fotógrafo Mark Edwards*

La clase de natación

I.

Dentro del agua ella se zambullía,
sus dedos delicados rozando
la creación indestructible de los dioses:
allí estaban, flotando en las olas
su piel traslúcida todavía exquisita,
sin mancha en el agua
que a su piel le prendía fuego.

Otro niño saltó en el agua.
Era, después de todo, una piscina pública
del agua queapestaba a la muerte y la descomposición ella
Hizo arcadas. Las lágrimas vinieron, pero ella trató de aferrarse
al momento en que el sonido de un golpe
resonaría
por toda la casa desnuda
como un mensaje minúsculo de esperanza
portado por un hombre
que dejaría
dos piezas brillantes de metal
en el polvo.

Él se iría con las botellas de plástico y ella
se quedaría con la capacidad de pagar

por su siguiente clase de natación.

II.

Esta era su primer clase de natación.
Dentro del agua él se zambullía,
sus dedos minúsculos rozando
metal incrustado de óxido era
oro a sus ojos. Entornó los ojos

en las profundidades turbias
ojos muy abiertos los cerró los abrió
para que pudiera agarrar
su recompensa.

No habría ningún castigo si él no lo consiguió.
Se había dado hace mucho
el día en que su padre salía para las minas;
el mismo día que él jugaba a la rayuela
en los campos de minas.



Photo by Marina Rojavin

Alexander Hollender

Translated by **Daniel Browning**

Our Nation

And you say I'm a troubled soul,
A cannibal amongst animals,
Two halves short of a whole,
I've heard all the stories
Telling has told
Will we move here, or there
Or will we move in
Move on, move out in a fury
Doors made to be slammed
And jammed, and boxes crammed
We built the holes into the fabric

We foster and fester, relish and relinquish
We we, we us, we this this that
If only the tears would stop the tears
My mind can't can't
And 96.7 says stop. Says listen
Listen and learn, learn to live
Live to learn, and learn to listen
Well fuck him, and all of them
Fuck it and this or that or whatever
Fuck when, fuck where
The leprosy of jealousy has infected our nation
Our nation?

Nuestra nación

Y tú dices que soy un alma agitada
Un caníbal entre los animales
Dos mitades menos que un todo
He oído todos los relatos
Que el contar ha dicho
¿Nos mudaremos aquí, o allí?
¿O nos vendremos a vivir
Sigán su camino. Váyanse con furia.
Puertas hechas para cerrarse de un portazo
Y atascadas, y cajas abarrotadas
Construíamos los agujeros en el tejido
Fomentábamos y nos enconábamos, nos deleitábamos y renunciábamos
Nosotros nosotros, nosotros nos, nosotros esto esto eso
Si tan sólo las lágrimas detuvieran las lágrimas
La mente no puede no puede
Y 96.7 dice ¡detén!. Dice escucha
Escucha y aprende, aprende a vivir
Vive para aprender, aprende a escuchar
Pues que lo jodan, y a todos ellos
Joder a esto o aquello o lo que sea
Joder a cuándo, joder a dónde
La lepra celosa ha infectado a nuestra nación
¿Nuestra nación?

Yan Zlatopolsky

Translated by **Sibelan Forrester**

Да будет мне позволено молиться.
Иначе как на свет явиться?

Да будет мне позволено родиться.
Иначе как смогу я умереть?

Да будет мне позволено писать.
Как явится иначе благодать?

Да будет мне позволено уйти.
Иначе как смогу вернуться?

Да будет мне позволено...

XXX

Молиться я хочу везде,
там, где свою необходимость встречу.
Молиться я хочу всегда,
когда непостижимое я встречу...
Молиться буду... Встречу!

2004

Let me be permitted to pray.
How else can I show up in the world?

Let me be allowed to be born.
How else will I manage to die?

Let me be permitted to write.
Or else how will grace appear?

Let me be permitted to go.
How else will I manage to return>

Let me be permitted...

Ненависть из страсти.
Из жизни – смерть.
И снова поворот.
Пространство вымысла
и вымысел пространства –
Лист Мёбиуса. Лист стихов.

Кровосмешенье:
свет и тьма.

2005



The Möbius Strip

A twist. A brimming meaning.
How smoothly truth falls into lying,
so as to twist into itself anew
and to turn smoothly into truth again,
in order to...

Love – out of hate.
Hate out of passion.
Death – out of life.
And another twist.
The space of invention
and invention of space –
A Möbius strip. A list of verses.

Miscegenation:
light and darkness.

2005

Вот только что
ленивцы городские –

три кошки пёстрые в лукошке солнечном,
плетённом из воздушных жарких струй,
на подоконнике моём
во сне напевно млели...

Вот только что
набросилась на дом мой тень.
Не лень ей каждый день, лишь солнце скроется,
менять окрас кошачьих лап...
Уже не пёстрые, все краски смыты,
Укрыты серым бархатным плащом.

... Как краски не надёжны!
Как мимолётен день!
Как солнце преходяще!

2006

Just this moment
the city idlers –
three calico cats in a sunny bast basket
woven of hot airy breezes,
on the sill of my window
were languishing musically in sleep...

Just this moment
my shadow was cast on the house.
Isn't it weary of every day, soon as the sun disappears,
changing the hue of the cats' paws...
Already not calico, all shades are erased,
Hidden by a grey velvet cloak.

...How undependable are pigments!
How ephemeral the day is!
How transient the sun!

2006

Слова

Выгрыз огонь свечу,
 облизнулся. Аминь.
Зачем глазам моим видеть слова.

xxx

Слово
 глаза продирает
и тихо-тихо затихает стихом.

xxx

Слова устали талые мои
смотреть... Устали видеть (меня видеть)

xxx

Слова.. Их голос врёт...
Мнёт мой язык.

xxx

Я не придумываю слова
Слова придумывают
 для меня
меня новым...
 (Когда пишу я старые слова)

2005

Words

The flame bit out the candle,
 licked its lips. Amen.
Why should my eyes need to see words.

xxx

A word
 tears holes in the eyes
and softly-softly falls quiet in verses

xxx

My melting words are weary
of looking.... Tired of seeing (seeing me)

xxx
Words. Their voice tells lies...
presses on my tongue.

xxx
I don't think up words
Words think up
for me
a new me...
(when I write old words)

2005

Two Renga Collaborative Poems

Renga or “linked poetry” is a unique form of collaborative poetry that developed in medieval Japan. Renga composition follows a very specific set of rules, so a bit of explanation may be helpful. Classical Japanese 31-syllable tanka, the most common poetic form for centuries in Japan, are composed of five groups of syllables, in the pattern of 5/7/5/7/7 syllables. Tanka became a collaborative or discursive poetry when one poet would write the first “half” of the tanka—5/7/5—and another poet would complete the tanka with the last two lines of 7 syllables each. However, true renga were born when several poets began composing long strings of poems, with each poet adding a new verse or “link” of either 5/7/5 or 7/7. (The first link (5/7/5) in a renga was called the “hokku,” and this important opening link was the origin of the haiku as an independent poetic form.)

For example, in the following two verses translated by Steven Carter, Sôchô (1448-1542) adds a link of a 5-7-5 verse to a 5-5 verse by Shôhaku (1443-1527).

行く水とほく梅にほふさと
yuku mizu tôku / ume niou sato

Flowing water, far away—
and a plum-scented village.

川風に一むら柳春見えて
kawakaze ni / hitomura yanagi / haru miete

Wind off the river
blows through a clump of willows—
and spring appears.¹

In the first line of his link, Sôchô picks up on the idea of water from the preceding verse, as well the wind carrying the scent of plum blossoms. However, to this springtime scene, he adds the element of the willow trees, whose early green foliage becomes visible

¹ Steven D. Carter, *Traditional Japanese Poetry: An Anthology* (Stanford University Press, 1991) 307.

for the first time when the wind blows through the branches. The next poet in the renga chain would then re-imagine Sôchô's verse, and add a new element to it. Rather than creating a single long poem with a unified narrative thread, however, each new verse would "link" only to the single verse in front of it, thereby reinterpreting or prizing the previous verse out its existing context. This created an effect of constant development, variety, and movement.

In addition to studying collaborative poems by masters such as Sôgi (1421-1502) and Bashô (1644-1694) and their disciples, our class on Japanese Poetry and Poetics undertook creating our own 36-link renga, in the spirit of "haikai" or less formal, renga. We worked in teams of two, with each team contributing a new link within a 4-minute time limit, and attempting as best as possible to preserve the structure of 5/7/5 + 7/7 in English syllables. While we were unable to follow all the conventions of classical renga, we did try to preserve the frequency of certain set topics, such as love, the four seasons, cherry blossoms, and the moon, which for the sake of both structure and variety, are stipulated to appear at certain spots in the renga sequence.²

In the first renga, each verse is written twice in order to highlight the effect of each new link reinterpreting the verse before it. In the second, each verse is given only once. The contributors to the renga were students in the course "Japanese Poetry and Poetics," Swarthmore College, spring 2011: Marion Faber (MF), Will Gardner (WG), Nick Gettino (NG), Billy Hamilton-Levi (BHL), Ben Hattem (BH), David Lucas Hinojosa (DLH), Joanie Jean (JJ), Susanna Mitro (SM), Frank Mondelli (FM), Nicholas Jackson Pietsch (NJP), James Preimesberger (JP), Alice Wong (AW), and James Wright (JW).

Will Gardner, professor of the course "Japanese Poetry and Poetics"

² Following the template provided by William J. Higginson on the website "Ideal Order of the Seasons in a Kasen Renku." <http://www.2hweb.net/haikai/renku/kasen/seasons-in-a-kasen.html> (accessed 4/14/11).



Photo by Marina Rojavin

Cracks in a dry bulb

1. Spring (hokku), AW & NG

Cracks in a dry bulb
The tulip tucks through the mulch;
After rains, buds show

2. Spring, DLH & BHL

*Cracks in a dry bulb
The tulip tucks through the mulch;
After rains, buds grow
Inspiring in me feelings,
Surely spring has finally come*

3. Spring, SM & FM

*Inspiring in me feelings,
Surely spring has finally come
I lay in the fields
Insects dance on blades of grass
Birds fly and tumble*

4. NJP & JW

*I lay in the fields
Insects dance on blades of grass
Birds fly and tumble
The alarm's shrill birdsong
Pulls me from the grassy sheets*

5. Autumn, moon's place JP & JJ

*The alarm's shrill birdsong
Pulls me from the grassy sheets
Startled awake,
Moon sitting high in the sky
No longer can I sleep*

6. WG & MF

*Startled awake,
Moon sitting high in the sky
No longer can I sleep
Autumn winds have chased storm clouds away
Deer still hiding in bare woods*

7. Autumn, AW & NG

*Autumn winds have chased storm clouds away
Deer still hiding in bare woods
A red leaf clinging
To a branch; wind knocks it down
Crunchingly deers step*

8. BHL & DLH

*A red leaf clinging
To a branch; wind knocks it down
Crunchingly deers step
Enshrouded, I rest my head,
My mind wandering the trees*

9. Love, SM & FM

*Enshrouded, I rest my head,
My mind wandering the trees
Years since I last saw
Her hair matted at noontime
Like glorious birds*

10. Love, JW & NJP

*Years since I last saw
Her hair matted at noontime
Like glorious birds
Though I yearn to hear her song
A cage would not allow flight*
.

11. (Love) JP & JJ

*Though I yearn to hear her song
A cage would not allow flight
Somber canary
Retaining her sullen silence
I open the door*

12. WG & MF

*Somber canary
Retaining her sullen silence
I open the door
Though he sings in chorus each night
Alone his heart is dark and mute*

13. Summer, moon's place, AW & NG

*Though he sings in chorus each night
Alone his heart is dark and mute
Moonlight spits curtains
And runs across the table
His sake is warmed*

14. Summer, BHL & DLH

*Moonlight spits curtains
And runs across the table
His sake is warmed
The men raise their full glasses
Drinking to the longest day*

15. SM & FM

*The men raise their full glasses
Drinking to the longest day
Weekend approaches
Yay! My spirits lift up high
My roommate's balloon!*

16. NJP & JW

*Weekend approaches
Yay! My spirits lift up high
My roommate's balloon!
Tonight, candles, we all sing
A page torn off the calendar*

17. Spring, blossom's place, JJ & JP

*Tonight, candles, we all sing
A page torn off the calendar
Soon the cherry trees
Will bloom; can the president
See them from her house?*

18. Spring, MF & WG

Soon the cherry trees
Will bloom; can the president
See them from her house?
Along the wandering path
Mist creeps to the meeting house

19. Spring, AW & NG

Along the wandering path
Mist creeps to the meeting house
Watering the trees
The dew beads grow on the leaves
Nurturing beneath

20. BHL & DLH

Watering the trees
The dew beads grow on the leaves
Nurturing beneath
Small life growing in a pot
Every day I water it.

21. Love, SM & FM

Small life growing in a pot
Every day I water it.
In vain, the ink flows
My love poems go unanswered
Awkward in Sharples

22. Love, JW & NJP

In vain, the ink flows
My love poems go unanswered
Awkward in Sharples
The tray left in fallen snow
Forgotten like my love

23. (Winter) JP & JJ

*The tray left in fallen snow
Forgotten like my love
Mountain pheasant soup
All that is remaining of
Hitomaro's love*

24. Winter, WG & MF

*Mountain pheasant soup
All that is remaining of
Hitomaro's love
Snow so deep it pulls on boots
Up the foot-dragging banks of Crum*

25. (Winter), AW & NG

*Snow so deep it pulls on boots
Up the foot-dragging banks of Crum
Brittle leaves fall in
Swift currents create strong winds
Where are all the fish?*

26. BHL & DLH

*Brittle leaves fall in
Swift currents create strong winds
Where are all the fish?
A fisherman, feet raised up
But not a thing was biting*

27. SM & FM

*A fisherman, feet raised up
But not a thing was biting
"Land of Yamato!"
Houses seen from every peak
Shinkansen runs through*

28. NJP & JW

“Land of Yamato!”
Houses seen from every peak
Shinkansen runs through
In my one-room apartment
Empty beer cans strewn around

29. Autumn, moon’s place, JP & JJ

In my one-room apartment
Empty beer cans strewn around
Light on a window pane
Beset by myriad moons
Reflected by cans

30. Autumn, MF & WG

Light on a window pane
Beset by myriad moons
Reflected by cans
Insects appear in my room
Drawn to the dancing flame

31. Autumn, JJ & BH

Insects appear in my room
Drawn to the dancing flame
But when I open
The window, air makes a breeze,
Papers go flying

32. BHL & DLH

But when I open
The window, air makes a breeze,
Papers go flying
A warm, sunny day makes this
Studying seem like dying.

33. FM & SM

*A warm, sunny day makes this
Studying seem like dying.
Heat turns green to brown
Freshman pear plant on the sill
The long stalk now droops*

34. (Spring) JJ & BH

*Heat turns green to brown
Freshman pear plant on the sill
The long stalk now droops
Outside my room, the spreading green
Among this growth, one still fades*

35. Spring, Blossom's place, NJP & MF

*Outside my room, the spreading green
Among this growth, one still fades
Cascades from the air
Scented flakes of cherry pink—
A veil for the loner*

36. Spring, Ageku. BHL & DLH

*Cascades from the air
Scented flakes of cherry pink—
A veil for the loner
In the cracks of the cement
Proudly, a tree begins life*

Drops of morning dew

1. Spring (hokku), BH & JW

Drops of morning dew
clinging to uncovered grass
echo the bell's reveille

2. Spring, JP & JJ

Butterflies balanced on an
afternoon stalk; daylight fading

3. Spring, WG & MF

Trembling parchment
Wings poised in the softening air
preparing for first flight

4. NG & AW

And reaching wet limbs outward:
security in wingspan

5. Autumn, moon's place BHL & DLH

Reaching up through tears,
the moon is just beyond me
but I long for her

6. Autumn SM & FM

The sake hot within me
Grasses wither under hooves

7. Autumn JW & NJP

The path vanishes
under leaves and twisting trees
A sip, and I go

8. JP & JJ

Leaving behind my textbook
I lay out my party clothes

9. Love, WG & MF

When I appear
decked in my finery
will absence greet me?

10. Love, NG & AW

Or will grasshoppers emerge
as I frolic in Crum creek?

11. (Love), BHL & DLH

Finding my lover
the pearls on my wet clothing
Can finally be dried

12. SM & FM

At dawn SEPTA pauses here
mist rises off the long lawns

13. Moon's place, summer, NJP & JW

No one waiting here
Carriages are empty now
Filled only with moonlight

14. Summer, JP & JJ

Lonely Philly ghost tour guide
fans himself in summer heat

15. WG & MF

Dogs sleep in the shade
of spindly locust trees, while
Bricks exhale the heat

16. NG & AW

Customers bustling their carts
in the Target parking lot

17. Blossom's place, spring, BHL & DLH

Weary, I look down
buds push up through pavement
Nature's resilience

18. Spring, SM & FM

Thunder echoes from the paths
Droplets speckle the bare stone

19. Spring, NJP and JW

Rain comes in the window
Wetting my sophomore paper
Storm of the new spring

20. JP and JJ

why must I reflect when the
future holds no jobs for me?

21. Love, MF & WG

No use for mirrors
Gazing instead at my love
In the moment now

22. Love, NG & AW

And my love gazing, tender
In the mirror's reflection

23. (Winter), BHL & DLH

Though we have now split
Like the winter's white snow drops
Again we will bloom

24. Winter, SM & FM

Islands of freshly-plowed snow
Soon dirtied by the traffic

25. (Winter), NJP & JW

Storm clouds gathering
When we see the ground again
Half a year is gone

26. JP & JJ

My coat left behind at home
I venture into the day

27. WG & MF

The cicada steps
Outside its shell, a fragile
Home left on tree bark

28. NG & AW

In a grove that dips downward
As light glitters on Cheng Hing

29. Autumn, moon's place, BHL & DLH

Downward the moon glares
Your grievance will be avenged
Oh unknown body

30. Autumn, SM & FM

When I awake, frost greets me
Outside—leaves not red, but brown

31. Autumn, JJ & BH

Already fallen
And more still drifting down—
Rainfall from the trees

32. NJP & MF

Even though the rain is stopping
Feet still stepping in puddles

33. AW & NG

My rainboots are worn
From use, water seeps inside—
My toes chill in streams

34. (Spring) BHL & DLH

I hide underneath a tree
Seeking shelter from the rain

35. Spring, Blossom's Place, FM & SM

Sakura Sunday
Clouds and petals etched in white
I rise among them

36. Spring, Ageku. NG & AW

Like grass pushing through the snow
Green shoots heavy with dew

Reed Coke

“You’re not a teacher!”

“You’re not a teacher!”, one of my 7-year-olds told me during the third week of a six-week French course that I taught after school at the Swarthmore-Rutledge School on College Avenue. It made me question many of my initial assumptions about teaching. Why was it that she didn’t see me as a teacher? Was it my age? Was it that she did not believe me to be knowledgeable about French? To better understand this girl’s outburst in week three, one must think briefly about the course that I had taught up to this point.

My first mistake, I’ve come to believe, happened right out of the gate. Naturally, on the first day of class we learned how to say our own names. For simplicity’s sake, I introduced myself by my first name. In my head, this meant that the kids would have less to learn and would understand the lesson more quickly. However, this was based on the assumption that they understood that even though I was younger than their regular teacher and the class was meeting after school, I was still a teacher and thus as worthy of respect as any of their other teachers. However, for a group of 6 to 11 year olds, this choice to use only my first name was a grave error.

Now we get to the fun part, why my credentials were doubted. In the classroom there was a rocking chair. Last year, the teacher in the room had given me an ultimatum, “Nobody is allowed in this chair.” She never specified whether I was included. Regardless, I never dared to sit in it. This year, then, when I started off the class, I explained verbatim that nobody was allowed in the rocking chair. However, after observing the class and seeing that discipline was not one of my strengths, the teacher encouraged me to sit in the chair. I did, and it was then that the girl asked me why I was allowed to sit in the chair. I explained that I was the teacher and so I was allowed to, at which point she responded, “You’re not a teacher.” My instinctual response, perhaps not the most socially correct, was to make eye contact with her and launch into an improvised speech about nothing in particular, so long as it was wordy, fast, and French. She was intimidated enough to be quiet, but I don’t think I really addressed what she was getting at.

I’m more certain now that the kids did not see me as equivalent to any of their school time teachers. The heart of this problem is that I don’t see myself that way either. I’m very aware that I’m just starting to learn how to teach, but much like bears, first graders can smell your fear. The observing teacher, in fact, remarked that I had all the instincts but lacked the confidence. This in mind, I returned to my class the next week determined to not only teach them French, but to be a teacher.

For the next Monday I put more time into preparing to give my lesson. Previously, I had only prepared the lesson itself, not the execution. This time I came confident and

ready to present, rather than mumbling and bargaining my way through the day. I discussed potential disciplinary techniques with the teacher who had observed a few of my classes, and above all I continued to sit in the rocking chair. The results were striking. Every single one of my students behaved much better, allowing us to get through far more material that day than we ever had before, with much more retention. This progress got my students excited just in time for them to face, and eventually conquer, grammar. This was surprising to me, as I had been sure before the rocking chair incident that the grammar lesson would devolve into chaos. Instead, by carrying myself with more authority, I was able to help the kids achieve more. All in all, I would say this semester of teaching taught me how easy teaching can be, so long as the teacher creates the correct environment for the students. In other words, the actual teaching is the easy part of being a teacher, at least in the situation that I was in. Next year, I'm sure that I'll spend a lot more time in the rocking chair.

« Tu n'es pas prof ! »

« Tu n'es pas prof ! », c'est ce qu'une de mes élèves de sept ans m'a dit pendant la troisième semaine d'un cours de six semaines de Français que j'enseignais à L'Ecole Swarthmore-Rutledge sur College Avenue. Cela m'a fait beaucoup réfléchir sur ce que je pensais être l'enseignement. Pourquoi est-ce que cette petite fille ne pensait pas que j'étais un enseignant ? Etait-ce à cause de mon âge ? Pensait-elle que je ne savais rien en Français ? Pour mieux comprendre cette assertion, il me fallait réfléchir au cours que j'avais enseigné jusqu'à ce moment-là.

Ma première erreur, j'ai tendance à le croire, est arrivée immédiatement après le commencement du cours. Naturellement, le premier jour du cours, nous avons appris à dire nos noms. Pour plus de simplicité, je me suis présenté seulement par mon prénom. Selon moi, cela signifiait que les jeunes devaient apprendre moins et retenir mieux. Bien que je sois moins âgé que leurs autres professeurs et bien que le cours se passe après l'école, je méritais le même respect que leurs autres professeurs. Cependant, pour un groupe d'élèves de six à onze ans, ce choix était une grave erreur.

Maintenant nous arrivons à la partie amusante. Pourquoi cette petite fille avait-elle douté que je sois professeur ? Dans la salle de classe, il y avait une chaise basculante. L'année d'avant, la professeur de la salle m'avait donné un ultimatum : « Personne n'a le droit de s'asseoir dans la chaise basculante. » Elle n'a pas stipulé si j'étais inclus. C'est possible que j'aie le droit, mais je ne me suis jamais assis dans la chaise basculante. Cette année, quand j'ai commencé le cours, j'ai expliqué aux élèves mot pour mot que personne n'avait pas le droit de s'asseoir là. Cependant, après d'avoir observé la classe et constaté que la discipline n'était pas ma qualité la plus forte, la professeur m'a encouragé

à m'asseoir dans la chaise basculante. Je l'ai fait, et c'était à ce moment-la que la petite fille m'a demandé pourquoi j'avais le droit de m'asseoir dessus. J'ai expliqué comme j'étais professeur, j'avais la permission. Alors elle m'a dit, « Tu n'es pas prof ». Ma réponse instinctive a été de croiser son regard et de commencer un discours improvisé plein de vite mots français. Elle était assez intimidée de se taire, mais je ne crois pas que j'ai touché au fond du problème.

Je suis plus certain maintenant que les jeunes ne me considéraient pas comme égale avec leurs autres professeurs. Le cœur de ce problème est que je ne me vois pas ainsi. Je suis très conscient que je suis en train de commencer à apprendre à enseigner, mais comme les ours, les jeunes de six ans peuvent sentir ma peur. La professeur qui m'observait de temps en temps remarquait en fait que j'avais de bonnes intuitions mais je manquais d'assurance. C'était dans cet esprit que je retournais la semaine prochaine fermement décidé à être leur « vrai » professeur de français.

Pour le lundi suivant, j'avais préparé la leçon et la façon de l'enseigner. J'ai discuté des possibilités de discipline avec la professeur qui m'avait observé un peu, et le plus important, j'ai continué à m'asseoir sur la chaise basculante. Les résultats étaient incroyables. Chacun de mes étudiants améliorait sa conduite, et cela nous permettait de faire beaucoup plus de progrès qu'avant. Ce progrès poussait mes étudiants à conquérir la grammaire. Cela me surprit, parce que j'étais sûr, avant l'incident avec la chaise basculante, que les leçons de grammaire se passeraient dans le chaos. Au lieu de cela, en me comportant avec plus d'assurance, je pouvais aider mes élèves à progresser. Globalement, je dirais que ce semestre m'a appris que l'enseignement peut être facile si le professeur respectent les attentes des étudiants. En d'autres mots, l'enseignement lui-même c'est la partie facile à apprendre si on se trouve dans ma situation. L'année prochaine, je suis sûr que je m'assoierai plus dans la chaise basculante.