

Labyrinth of Vilnius—An Abundantly Ablaze Appearance

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Labyrinth of Vilnius, articulated in print by Ban'ya Natsuishi pen name Masayuki Inui) accomplishes three tasks. First and foremost, it gives a general impression of the Baltic regions. Secondly, it affords anyone to feel within great sympathy for Lithuania. Additionally, it allows a person to sing about the Estonian forest with euphoria as Ban'ya has done.

Ban'ya Natsuishi is the founder and director of the World Haiku Association (WHA) located in Japan. He graduated from Tokyo University with a Master of Arts in Comparative Literature and Culture. He serves as the President of *Ginyu Press* and has attended many haiku poetry festivals worldwide. He has authored countless publications including *A Future Waterfall* (USA, 1999 & 2004) and *Flying Pope* (India and Japan, 2008). He is also a recipient of the *AZsacra International Poetry Award* from *Taj Mahal Review* (2008).

The first section of this book is regarding the Baltic regions, which allows him to express these words in the following haiku poem:

*Wings of cloud
stack up immediately
over the Baltic Sea*

One is able to visualize clearly the climatic conditions in this poem just by knowing what clouds represent in a weather forecast. The cold and dreaded Siberian winter land exists in this region; therefore, if the imagination is allowed to stray; correspondingly, images will develop immediately regarding the drastic and chilling weather especially that which descends from above based on billowing clouds.

Another historical haiku poem in this section pertaining to the age of the region and the people is as follows:

*Full moon—
the country is young
its songs are old*

This poem in actuality reflects an inversion. Naturally, this region has existed for thousands of years, and its population is primarily younger than older in biological age as in relation to

chronological age. Based on this principle, the haiku flows naturally well regarding the singing of songs by the population; thereby creating a philosophical inversion.

Section two regarding sympathy for Lithuania sends a different theme. This first poem speaks well of an overarching principle regarding life and theology:

Older than Christ
a cross
made of wood

This imagery tells a lot about the country and its historical values, which include for example, its age, condition, remnant, keepsake, and value system. Naturally, the residents value what's in their hearts and closer to God. Note that the haiku didn't make mention of guns and bombs or armies for internal strength and growth. Naturally, the breadth and depth of theological interpretation is of essence in this haiku, which is embedded in the hearts of the people.

Section three addresses the forest of Estonia. The first haiku poem in this section speaks highly of this region as follows:

Parliament of the Forest:
every raindrop
is its member

The assemblies of parliaments in the forest represent nature. It also reflects things that are naturally linked to that which stems from nature to be evident in this haiku poem. The gathering is awesome for trees of a forest to match the raindrops across the land. It appears that everyone has achieved some form of representation metaphorically by nature in parliament. This is similar to the hue and cry of liberty based on "no taxation without representation"

The ending poem in this section takes the opposite position as in relation to the first. The juxtapositioning of these poems by Ban'ya is quite excellent. This poem reads:

Parliament of the Forest
dissolved by
a bear's roar

Naturally, the scattering here is obvious as a concept of "everyman for himself," unlike the coming together in an opposite fashion of metaphoric representation in parliament by the drips of the rain which is cleansing. The roaring sound of a Russian bear is a clichés which flows off the

tongue of many people. It strikes fear in the hearts of many as a scene they would not like to confront at anytime—thus things fall apart!

Finally, keeping the best part of this wonderful book for last is like having icing on the cake. The title of this awesome book, *The Labyrinth of Vilnius*, is reflected by a series of haiku, which links together in an excellent manner from section to section. The first haiku in this section is just awesome, which reads as follows:

Labyrinth of Vilnius
a ghost of rain
following me

This is the good Kami some places in the world are dying for to bring about a relief of thirst, quenching harmony in relief from drought, and the soothing of parched lips. Obviously, there is plenty to drink in Vilnius. While I was there I saw no thirst and each lady carrying a fancy purse. The next haiku states:

Labyrinth of Vilnius
cloudy sky
reflected in a puddle

The circulatory nature of life is ever present will all life forms. The elements are with and shall be with us as a part of the circle of life. Without a corresponding reflection, an element of the equation regarding God, nature, water, earth and fire is missing. When the circle is complete it's similar as in the form of looking into a stream and seeing the reflection of the father in the face of the child looking back. What an awesome design of creation in His own image!

This wonderful haiku poetry book, *The Labyrinth of Vilnius*, was written and distributed at the Joint 5th World Haiku Association and 20th Druskininkai Poetry Fall Conference held in Vilnius, Lithuania. It's an excellent haiku poetry book which reflects interesting thoughts and images by Ban'ya Natsuishi as a great tribute to the convention. Arigato Ban'ya!