

Tony Quagliano: In Memoriam

As we were preparing this issue for the press, we heard of the death of Tony Quagliano on May 31, 2007 at age 65. On September 9, 2007, Laura Ruby wrote to us:

I am sending this new *KAIMANA 2007* issue to you along with this message of deep sadness. Tony passed away on May 31. We were the closest of friends and collaborators on both Tony's literary works and my artworks. He selected and edited the contributions to this issue and I completed the design these last two sorrowful months. I added "Between a Rock and Mahatma Gandhi" to honor him. Whenever possible, I asked Tony to conclude with this poem at his readings.

Tony was a poet and writer with a dedication to excellence. As an editor he always read with a critical eye. He was always honored to have his work including in *SPRING* and valued the continuing perseverance of excellence in your journal.

With aloha,

Laura Ruby

Tony is described in the very brief notice posted in the *Honolulu Advertiser* (August 8, 2007) as "an international poet and writer." Besides being the editor of *KAIMANA*, Tony published widely in literary journals such as *New York Quarterly*, *New Directions*, *Harvard Review*, *Rolling Stone*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Wormwood Review* and *Negative Capability—The Big Easy Crescent City That Care Forgot*. His work was also included in the anthologies *The Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses*, *The Poetry of Solitude: A Tribute to Edward Hopper*, *The Poet Dreaming in the Artist's House*, among others. Tony published three books of poetry: *Language Drawn and Quartered* (Ghost Dance Press 1975), *Fierce Meadows* (Petronium Press, 1981) and *Snail Mail Poems* (Tinfish Network, 1998). He also edited the *Small Press Review* special Bukowski issue (1973) and edited *Feast of Strangers—Selected Prose and Poetry of Reuel Denney* (1999).

Laura Ruby writes that though Tony believed in “poetry for the page not the stage,” he was nonetheless “a riveting reader of his and other writers’ poetry.” Some of Tony’s poems (with mp3 audio files) may be seen and heard at <http://www.hawaii.edu/lruby/artistwritercollab/artwritcolab.htm>. A chapbook of Tony’s haiku titled *pictographs* has recently been published by Red Moon Press. A volume of Tony’s collected/selected poems should appear soon. This volume will surely make clear to a wider audience what the “Contributor’s Note” in *KAIMANA* 2007 states: “He ‘spoke truth to poetry’ over all these long years.”

Some of that truth appeared in the pages of *Spring*. Tony was a good friend of *Spring* and the E. E. Cummings Society. He published poems in *Spring* almost from the inception of the New Series of the journal. In addition to his poetry, Tony also published a few lines of prose in *Spring*. “Tony Quagliano Presents Reuel Denney and ‘McSorley’s Bar’” appears in *Spring* 7 (146-47) and a “postscript” to his poem “The Night I Let Bukowski Live” appears in *Spring* 8 (135-36).

Another speaker of truth to poetry, E. E. Cummings, was once asked to contribute to a 1954 Dylan Thomas memorial issue of *The Yale Literary Magazine*. Cummings sent the following telegram:

FROM MY DOUBTLESS LIMITED POINT OF VIEW THE
ONLY THING TO SAY ABOUT DYLAN THOMAS IS THAT
BEING A TRUE POET HE’S ALIVE

The same could be said of John Tagliabue and Tony Quagliano. Their gentle, wise, and sardonic voices live on in their poems. We present here the last two poems that Tony sent to us.

The Sand Sculptor

Blake knew the indissoluble connectedness
of everything
innocence to experience
heaven to hell
and us here, somewhere
connected to both
he knew the sacred linkage
of each thing to all things
“the universe in a grain of sand”

as the sand sculptor orders and forms
his billion grains of sand
into a structure of universes

he links a child in Rhode Island
to Hawaii now
he links Atlantic and Pacific
the earth to the sea
even links the brute vandal
to the artful maker
the urge to create order
under the random wheeling sky

he links the passersby
to himself and to each other
links each of us
to all of us and each of us to ourselves

—Tony Quagliano

The Ancient Murmurs in the Blood Meadows

On Diamond Head
the morning rain has started
swept leeward by the daily trades
which certainly will later sweep
across the lava rock
the ghost trails the ancient
murmurs in the blood meadows
the spirit in the new steel
jet paths coral reefs
the tourist wash
the mainland asia polynesia
certainly will later sweep
some blue and white
amazing sky

—Tony Quagliano