

# cattails



October 2021

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## October 2021 Issue

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Cover: Bhil folk art- Madhya Pradesh, Central India

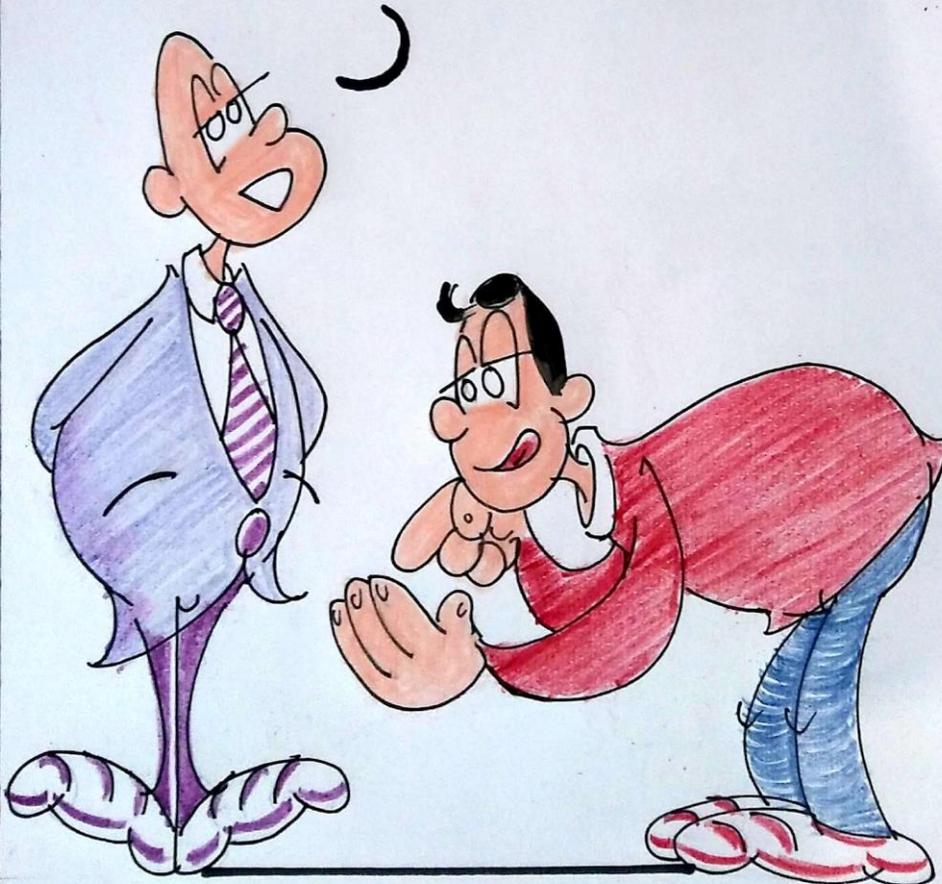
**Dhaatri Vengunad Menon** is an aspiring artist who loves a good cup of tea along with an easel to paint on. She paints abstracts in acrylic, doodles, illustrates and enjoys experimenting with photography and digital drawing. Art is and has always been her healer and she believes that the world can heal if we all help and contribute to keeping together what we have in common — this earth. In this mixed media series, she has worked on adaptations of Indian folk and tribal art which she believes is deceptively simple and, in some ways, perfectly imperfect.

## Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	5
<i>Announcement</i>	7
<i>Haiku</i>	9
<i>Haiga – part 1</i>	39
<i>Senryu</i>	46
<i>Haiga – part 2</i>	69
<i>Tanka</i>	76
<i>Haiga – part 3</i>	97
<i>Haibun</i>	104
<i>Haiga – part 4</i>	138
<i>List of Poets and Artists</i>	144

# GETTIN' HAI ON THE KU

STILL ON TRADITIONAL  
HAIKU ~ ARE YOU?



Gautam

## Introduction

In the past year or so, we have spent much of it in Covid isolation and faced unprecedented wild fires, floods and earthquakes in addition to political crisis. At times it has seemed the very leitmotif of our existence is in question. Faced with an existential dilemma in his times, Charles Péguy, (1873 - 1914) the French poet and essayist, posited not morality or psychology but spirituality as therapy. And of particular relevance to us, he advocated the “poem” as the instrument of this therapy. He celebrated the poem as a “hymn to hope”.

Carried by hope, despite their own personal predicaments, Susan, Lavana, Geethanjali and Mike have worked with dedication and passion to present their selections of poems in this issue.

One of the consequences of the pandemic has been taking stock of things and it is no longer feasible for Mike to continue to pay the costs of the UHTS website. Marianna is also stepping down from the contests due to health and other commitments. The closure of UHTS seems inevitable. During both felicitous and troubling times, Alan, Neal, Marianna and Erin have responded with kindness and generosity. For this I owe them a debt of gratitude.

Deep appreciation is also due to Kala Ramesh, who initiated the Youth Corner and with her characteristic energy and ardour showcased young haikin initially from India but later also from around the world. She is stepping down as Editor and I wish her every success in her haiku mission in India. Her farewell message follows in this issue.

For Péguy poetry draws us into the new light and Seamus Heaney observes how “lost faces” take on “New look” \* In the spirit of their words, I would like to say that Mike and I are committed to continue with *cattails* and we hope that you too will continue your poetical journey with *cattails*.

We are delighted to feature the work of the Indian artist, Dhaatri Vengunad Menon, Chennai and a cartoon by Gautam Nadkarni in this issue.

For the April 2022 issue we welcome David J Kelly, Ireland on board as the Senryu Editor and also look forward to featuring the art of Marion Clarke, Northern Ireland.

Sonam Chhoki

\* The Portal of the Mystery of Hope, Charles Péguy, trans. David Louis Schindler, Jr, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1996

\*The Play Way, Seamus Heaney, The Death of a Naturalist, faber and faber, 1991



Phad - Rajasthan, North India

## Announcement

### **cattails YOUTH**

*cattails* YOUTH has been so much a part of my life from the time an'ya invited me to join the editorial team in 2014. I did feel some mild trepidation at first, for no other journal focused on this age group, and starting off anything for the first time is always a challenge. We have nothing to fall back on. But now it's my 8th year.

Looking back, I must say submissions rarely came in from all parts of the world, except when I solicited poems from Tim Gardner and Tom Painting! Then I received some very good haiku and senryu from school kids in the US. My heartfelt thanks to them. But the fact that international submissions rarely reached my *cattails* YOUTH mailbox didn't worry me too much, because I had sufficient poems from India, which had by then opened out to haiku in a big way!

But all this didn't come to me on a platter. I'd worked hard since 2006. I approached dozens and dozens of schools and colleges, but at first, I couldn't get beyond the stern-looking front offices! Slowly, though, principals opened their doors, as did respected organizations such as Katha.org; Bookaroo Children's Literary Festival; The Hyderabad Literary Festival; Muse India - an online poetry site; and The Central Board of Secondary Schools (CBSE) all over India. And since 2012, the undergraduates from the Symbiosis International University opened not only their doors, but also their hearts to haiku. It was an exciting "haiku" time for kids in India!

I used to have a haikuWALL in almost all my workshops, where, along with the masters' haiku, the children's haiku would be pinned up on a huge make-shift wall. Excited parents would take pictures of their child next to their first haiku! Pune Biennale 2015 offered to paint the chosen haiku on our street walls. That was the start of another venture, where we have school children's and college students' haiku painted on city walls in Pune and Chennai. All of these activities meant that until December, 2019, I had plenty of children's work to publish in *cattails*, and I remember being very choosy!

Then all of a sudden, the scenario changed drastically – Covid struck and India reeled under long periods of lockdown. With kids now being pushed into longer hours of screentime, haiku and other extracurricular activities sadly took a back seat. And now, unfortunately, I'm stepping down from *cattails* YOUTH because I have practically nothing to showcase. Change is always good and I'm sure the next editor taking over from me will do a world of good for my favourite corner.

For India, change is coming in a big way – we now have our own website, Triveni Haikai India! I'm proud to say that my students, Rohan Kevin Broach, who designed this breathtakingly beautiful website, and Iqra Raza, Shreya Narang and Ishaan Singh who are heading our Youth Wing, have graced the corridors of *cattails* YOUTH for several years.

I wish Sonam Chhoki, who has been an affectionate and extremely professional poet, editor and boss, together with her whole team at *cattails*, the very best. *Cattails* has always done well and I'm sure it will surge further ahead in the coming years.

I wish the next *cattails* YOUTH editor the very best. Let those ticking moments, seen through young haikai eyes, leave an everlasting impression on the readers' minds. A Tamil saying, *siru thulli, perum vellam*, can be translated as *small drops, finally a flood*.

Here are Julia Carney's immortal lines, from her poem, "Little Things":

Little drops of water,  
Little grains of sand,  
Make the mighty ocean  
And the pleasant land.

On this note I bid farewell to *cattails* YOUTH.

Yours in haikai,  
Kala Ramesh

24 August 2021

# Haiku



Pichwai folk art – Rajasthan, North India

barn roof holes . . .  
racing mice plug  
and unplug sunrays

Adjei Agyei-Baah, Ghana/New Zealand

the highway's  
distant drone  
first crocus

Matthew M. Cariello, USA

spring sunshine . . .  
I leave a dream  
in the mattress

Tony Williams, Scotland

water droplets  
on a white cherry blossom . . .  
waiting for news

Jon Hare, USA

the effort  
to be light —  
butterfly

Maurice Nevile, Australia

spring sun  
a gleam in the eyes  
of the swamp

Brad Bennett, USA

nine-thirty  
the lovesick blackbird still  
serenading

Mike Gallagher, Ireland

high tension wire —  
a pigeon revels  
in his courtship

हाइटेन्सन !  
लौ पोथी रिझाउदै  
एउटा परेवा ।

Manoj Sharma, Nepal

spring rain  
the pull  
of a fiddle

Ben Gaa, USA

final boarding call  
a butterfly lingers  
on the airport sidewalk

K Srilata, India

empty playground . . .  
through talk tubes  
the sparrow's song

Anthony Lusardi, USA

weeding patches—  
I stumble upon  
a four-leaf clover

Sushama Kapur, India

spring night  
no louder  
than the stars

Ted Sherman, England

overnight flight—  
pools of sunrise  
in the dawn hour

Ellen Compton, USA

fresh country air  
the call of the cuckoo  
audible for miles

klare Landluft  
der Ruf des Kuckucks  
meilenweit hörbar

Pitt Buerken, Germany

staccato sound  
of the neighbor's sprinkler  
faux petrichor

Craig Kittner, USA

garden work  
the whirr of a hummingbird  
leaving her nest

Dan Curtis, Canada

slowly dripping  
from the watering can . . .  
spiderlings

Tom Staudt, Australia

family reunion  
more sparrows gather  
in the corner bush

Cyndi Lloyd, USA

the shore draped  
in seaweed and shells . . .  
beach party

Carol Raisfeld, USA

shapes of trees  
near the ocean  
harp music

Derek Sprecksel, USA

arm in arm . . .  
starbursts on the  
summer shore

腕を組む星降り注ぐ夏の浜  
[tr. 中野千秋 Chiaki Nakano]

Christina Chin, Malaysia

morning walk  
the plaintive cry of the dog  
left behind

Nika, Canada

watermill —  
the sky turning over  
in the river bed

młyn wodny —  
niebo obraca się  
w łózysku rzeki

Eugeniusz Zacharski, Poland

wind-swept dune  
the casuarina weaves  
a mat of sand

Cynthia Rowe, Australia

summer inlet  
a kayak's wake  
caresses the reeds

Michael Henry Lee, USA

trekking  
through the undergrowth—  
the heaviness of eyes

Lysa Collins, Canada

distant mountains—  
a butterfly lends wings  
to my gaze

monti lontani—  
la farfalla presta ali  
al mio sguardo

Carmela Marino, Italy

thump on the windowpane—  
the blue-eyed kitten  
munches a fly

Amanda Bell, Ireland

summer serenade  
with a castanet chorus  
. . . cicadas

Jan Foster, Australia

noon garden buzz —  
opening windows  
to summer strangers

zumzetul grădinii la amiază —  
deschizând ferestrele  
necunoscuților vara

Andreea Finichiu, Romania

rape fields —  
a skylark oscillates  
between yellows

Ben Oliver, England

the thump  
of another lemon dropping —  
sunbreak

Pippa Phillips, USA

another drive  
on a road we don't know  
a summer of COVID

Edward J. Rielly, USA

a blue milkweed seed  
carried away by the wind . . .  
lost love

un bocciolo di asclepiade blu  
dal vento portato via . . .  
amore perduto

Mariangela Canzi, Italy

eerie silence  
the spider weaves  
a death chamber

Rp Verlaine, USA

learning to walk  
shadow by shadow  
scorched earth

Sandi Pray, USA

lingering heat  
in crushed chamomile  
goats heading home

Ingrid Baluchi, Macedonia

drought—  
the parched whisper  
of a goldfinch

Padmini Krishnan, Singapore

food shortages—  
in a parcel for my aunt I put  
some garden flowers

nestašica hrane—  
u paket teti stavljam  
i vrtno cvijeće

Silva Trstenjak, Croatia  
Translated by D. V. Rozic

pranayama  
breathing in summer  
night sounds

Marilyn Fleming, USA

Sunday morning  
the ageless hymns  
of cicadas

Frank Hooven, USA

listening for gods  
in the summer grove  
great horned owl

Kristen Lindquist, USA

pilgrim town  
the sunshine  
of yellow robes

Srinivas S, India

a dry summer  
counting bridges  
we never crossed

Alvin B. Cruz, Philippines

empty playroom  
the scent of summer flowers  
still lingering

Eva Limbach, Germany

withered leaves  
shuffle about the pitch  
. . . season over

Jan Dobb, Australia

wind currents  
the osprey adjusts  
its fish

Nola Obee, Canada

river sand prints . . .  
cockatoos swaggering  
into sunset

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

wide open petals  
of a woodland aster  
goodbye hug

Agnes Eva Savich, USA

our farewell —  
the dolphin's leap  
buried in the sea

naš rastanak —  
skok delfina sahranjen  
u moru

D. V. Rozic, Croatia

leaving the dock  
intricate shimmer  
of braided sunlight

Dottie Piet, USA

sickle moon—  
the back of a fish  
above water

secera lunii—  
spinarea unui pește  
deasupra apei

Mirela Brăilean, Romania

thunderclap—  
a goose drops  
an octave

P. H. Fischer, Canada

overcast playground  
the slap of the rope  
on wet asphalt

Nancy Rapp, USA

drizzle day  
the weather report  
in puddles

Robert Moyer, USA

sheets of rain  
the musical score  
of thunder

Marilyn Ashbaugh, USA

harvesting  
monsoon waters  
rice paddy beds

Douglas J. Lanzo, USA

flooded farm . . .  
we cover our fancy hair  
with cocoyam leaves

Opeyemi Pamela Babafemi, Nigeria

swollen creek  
the intensity of  
dragonfly blue

Bryan Rickert, USA (EC)

tearing off  
the September page  
leaf fall

arracher la page  
du mois de septembre  
chute des feuilles

Marie Derley, Belgium

flowering linden  
the light  
that we turn into

цъфтяща липа  
светлината  
в която се превръщаме

Vladislav Hristov, Bulgaria

the song  
in the wind's breath . . .  
toss of fronds

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

sombre forest  
a medley of calls  
from the wings

Quendryth Young, Australia

twilight pond  
the cricket song cut short  
by a frog's tongue

Bill Cooper, USA

wedding anniversary  
the way moonlight  
hits this spot

anniversario di matrimonio  
come la luna illumina  
questo punto

Maria Concetta Conti, Italy

dragonfly —  
this life stuck in  
a holding pattern

Jonathan Roman, USA

autumn sky  
everything reflected  
in its stillness

cielo d'autunno  
ogni cosa si riflette  
nella sua quiete

Eufemia Griffo, Italy

last light  
a red-tailed hawk  
dives into tomorrow

June Rose Dowis, USA

the moon comes gently  
on the empty side of the bench . . .  
another autumn

luna vine molcom  
pe locul gol de pe bancă . . .  
altă toamnă

Steliana Cristina Voicu, Romania

memorial garden —  
remembering how  
to be with people

Laurie Greer, USA

not yet  
out of the mud  
lotus buds

Ryland Shengzhi Li, USA

a bend in the trail  
hides what's coming  
autumn dusk

Dian Duchin Reed, USA

deep meditation—  
how slowly the haystack  
leaves the smell

నిశ్శబ్ద ధ్యానం—  
ఎంత నెమ్మదిగా విడుస్తుందో  
గడ్డివాము తన వాసనని

(Telugu)

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, India (EC)

salmon run  
a way to return and die  
at the birthplace

John Zheng, USA

the weathered bench  
in mother's garden  
her young old voice

Adrian Bouter, The Netherlands

the cycles  
of war and peace —  
tree rings

Ruth Holzer, USA (EC)

bottlefly  
an oil slick  
puddles its thorax

Michael Galko, USA

last night  
of the kangaroo cull  
blood moon

Hazel Hall, Australia

low-hanging blood moon  
on both sides of the border wall  
rumours of war

低懸的血月  
在邊界圍牆的兩邊  
聽見戰爭的風聲

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

separations . . .  
the axillary buds  
of the tomatoes

separazioni . . .  
le gemme ascellari  
dei pomodori

Margherita Petriccione, Italy

rotting leaves  
the black-eyed stare  
of a dead possum

Jay Friedenbergr, USA

morning dew  
the full moon sets  
everywhere we turn

Robert Witmer, Japan

winter dawn  
the night drains  
from rooftops

Gavin Austin, Australia

a harbor foghorn . . .  
the hammock soaked  
with morning mist

Paul Cordeiro, USA

soft murmurs  
of the passing river  
mother's voice

Meera Rehm, UK

freckles on a quince  
we share  
our imperfections

Keith Evetts, UK

pink moon  
the friendships  
that surprise us

Claire Vogel Camargo, USA

the way of the wind  
tumbleweed finds its place  
in a cul-de-sac

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

crimson splashes  
from the artist's brush  
rosellas in flight

Mark Miller, Australia

crisp morning  
in the bird bath  
a hazy moon

Samantha Sirimanne Hyde, Australia

the blue lining  
of a cormorant's mouth . . .  
gap-toothed pier

Debbie Strange, Canada

winter creek  
as still as the photographer  
a waterfowl

Madhuri Pillai, Australia

breathing it in  
before it's gone  
moonlight

Kevin Valentine, USA

arrhythmia  
the flicker  
of an old star

aritmie  
het geflakker  
van een oude ster

Michael Baeyens, Belgium

waking alone —  
through the chinks  
cold mountain fog

Aron Rothstein, USA

this cold eve —  
how long ago  
the last hollyhocks

Jill Lange, USA

another death . . .  
gathering fallen apples  
for tomorrow's pies

Joseph P. Wechselberger, USA

rage of the bora —  
its gusts opening  
our old windows

bijes bure  
otvara naše  
stare prozore

Vilma Knežević, Croatia

crescent moon  
a tree branch too short  
to scoop mars

Richard L Matta, USA

frost-forest dawn  
needles of air  
stitching the light

John Hawkhead, England

winter sunset  
a bobber frozen  
in the pond

Julie Schwerin, USA

deep winter –  
so much easier to text  
than talk

Angela Terry, USA

after the last words are spoken stardust

Pris Campbell, USA

winter's end  
a geese 'V'  
zips up the clouds

Joe Sebastian, India

departing year . . .  
a smattering of stars  
and cinnamon

Anna Cates, USA

moving mosaic . . .  
marigolds and prayers  
in the Ganges

Gwen Bitti, Australia

**Editor's Comments (EC) - Haiku**

Another pandemic year is coming to a close and many parts of the world have seen much grief, trouble, and sadness. I am grateful to all the poets who sent in their haiku to *cattails*. Your sharing of haiku moments reaches many readers in all continents of the world, and helps to build bridges between spaces, moments and lives. I am grateful for the opportunity of reading your work and such a variety of it! I hope you enjoyed the mice, the rosellas, the dragonflies, the fly-munching blue-eyed kitten, the flowering linden, and the freckled quince just as much as the rivers, the forests, the ocean, the music from the fiddle, harp and casuarina grove.

I draw your attention to three haiku:

swollen creek  
the intensity of  
dragonfly blue

Bryan Rickert, USA (EC)

The poet, Bryan Rickert, shows us the power of close observation in this haiku. This verse gives me a strong sense of place and season without directly mentioning it. The 'swollen creek' conjures up a magical environment for me – the sounds of the creek, the gushing water (perhaps even splashing onto me), the place around the creek- all with just two words. The poet takes us along gradually to where he wants to be, pointing to the 'intensity of dragonfly blue'. The observation hones in on the dragonfly and on the blueness of it. The swollen creek may also refer to flooding and destruction, with the dragonfly hovering above it all, untouched. What did you see? I preferred to see it is a joyous moment of natural beauty, immersed in the intense dragonfly blue that the poet has shared with us! Thank you, Bryan.



deep meditation –  
how slowly the haystack  
leaves the smell

నిశ్శబ్ద ధ్యానం –  
ఎంత నెమ్మదిగా విడుస్తుందో  
గడ్డివాము తన వాసనని

(Telugu)

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, India (EC)

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi takes a moment of deep meditation in this haiku and links it to his unique experience. The second and third lines that form the phrase make this haiku unique and different. I would have expected the smell to leave the haystack but the opposite is what the haiku expresses – the haystack leaves the smell! Practitioners of meditation will agree that it is difficult to leave behind the troubles and distractions of the external world on our journey inwards. Sensory stimuli beckon just when we do not want them to. Sometimes, we struggle too much with our search of shunyata or 'emptiness'. The poet reminds us that the process is slow but the haystack does finally leave the smell. This poem infused some calm focus into my mundane life, slowly but surely. Thank you, Srinivasa, for this sharing of your journey and for the translation into Telugu.



the cycles  
of war and peace –  
tree rings

Ruth Holzer, USA (EC)

The world is fast changing and the waves of turbulence are jolting us, sometimes into a state of numbness. Ruth Holzer reminds us (in 9 syllables) of the cycles that the world and our individual lives go through. The cycles of war and peace are appropriate as reminders of the external world now, as well as our own internal scenery. Many parts of the world are open and life has gone back to whatever can be called normal but in many other parts of this planet, people have hunkered down. 'Cycles' took me to waves (of the pandemic), to violence and peace, and to our own mini-struggles with the everyday. And then, comes the second image of tree rings. Trees go on and as they age, slowly collect more rings (like I, wrinkles?). They record the age and the weather changes that they have seen. The poet deftly compares this very tactile, visual and organic image to the rather serious, abstract words- 'peace' and 'war' - in the phrase. So many comparisons come up in this poem - fast cycles of war and peace versus slow ageing, the natural environment versus problems created by human beings, the external world changing very quickly versus the tree that stands witness and perhaps, bears it all with an equanimity. The haiku also made me think - do we get to see the rings unless the tree is cut or a part of its core is bored through for a sample? Thank you Ruth, for this thought-provoking haiku.

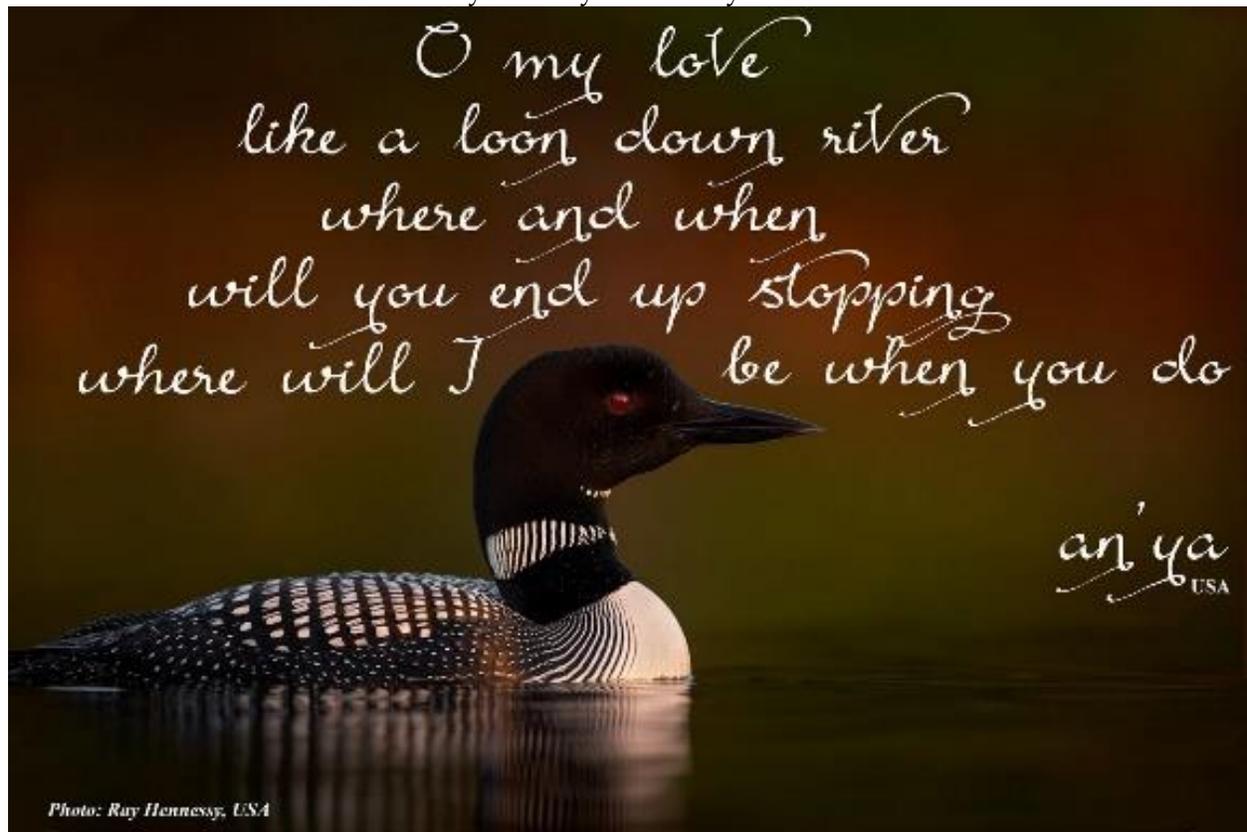


Sending everyone prayers of healing along with the hope that we shall all overcome this pandemic together.

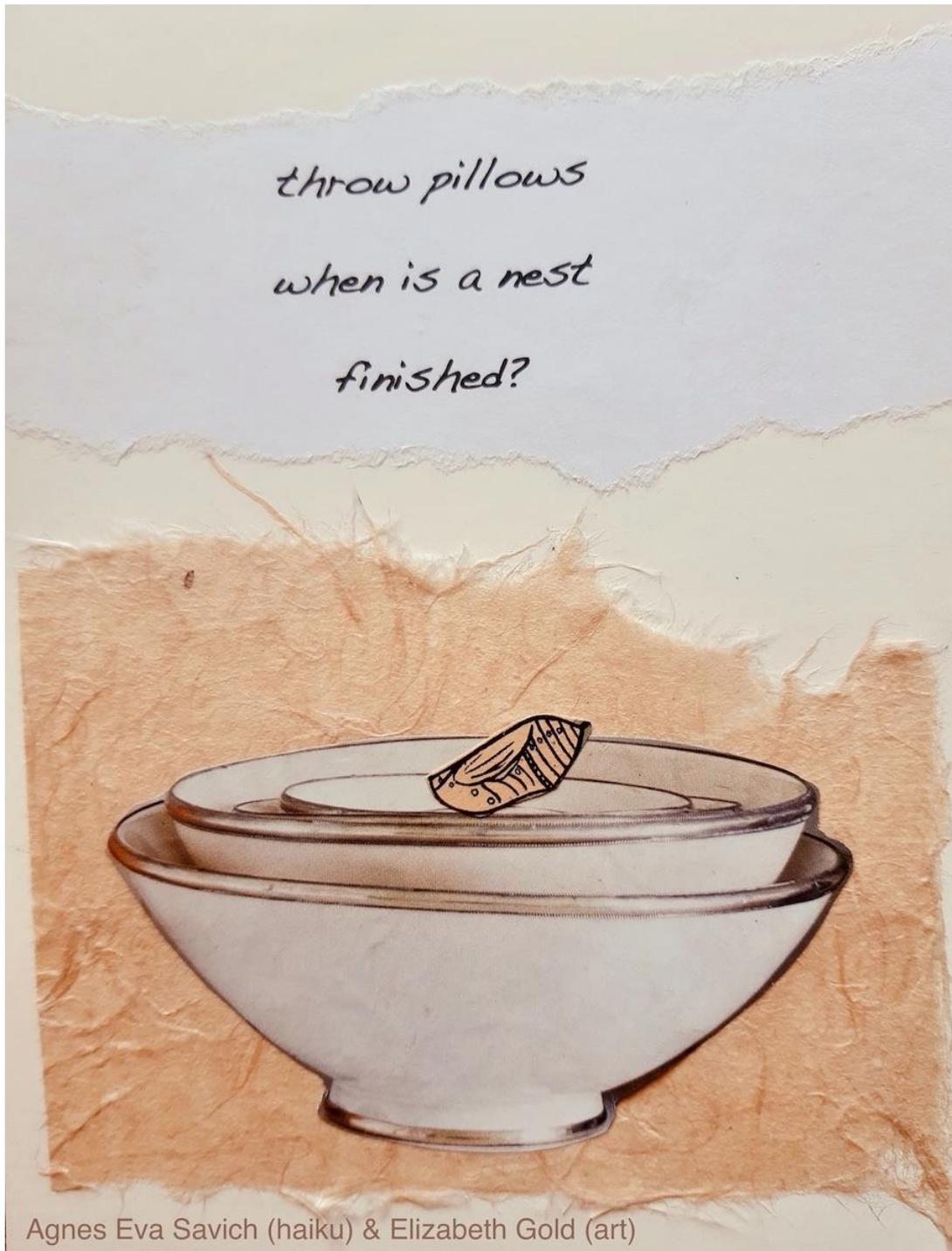
With gratitude,  
Geethanjali Rajan

## Haiga - Part 1

An'ya & Ray Hennessy - USA



Agnes Eva Savich - USA & Elizabeth Gold - Sweden



Florin C. Ciobica & Paul Alexandru - Romania



Haiku: Cezar Ciobica  
Photo: Paul Alexandru

Christina Chin - Malaysia

morning tea  
the house wren twits  
tea-kettle tea-kettle



Christina Chin Art Haiku

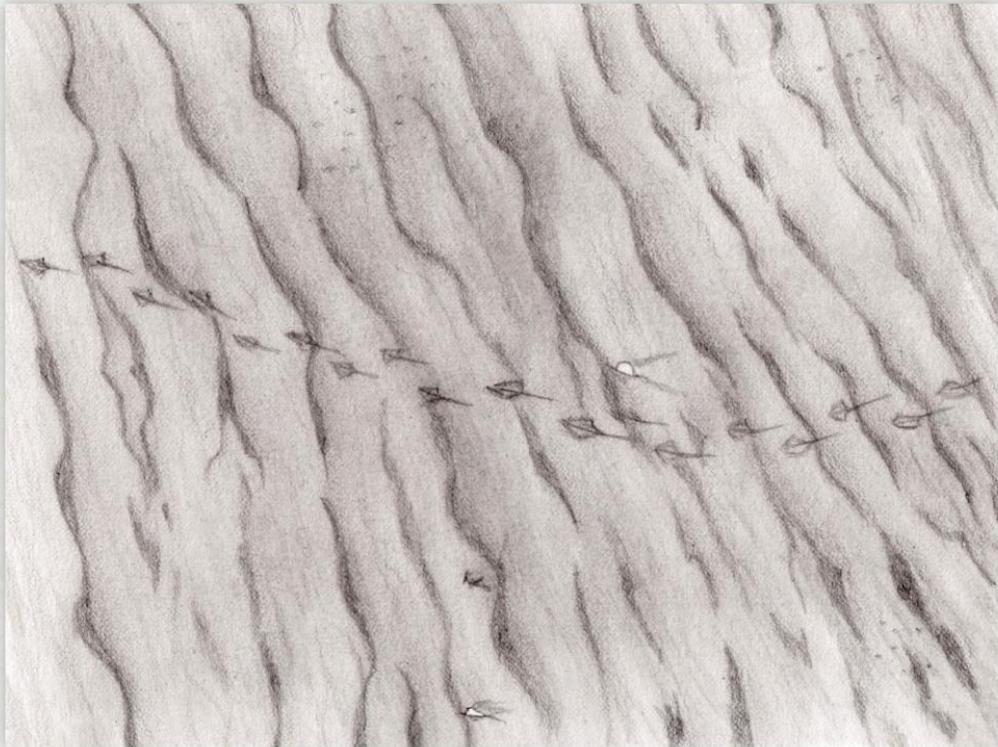
Cristina Angelescu - Romania



**ice burn scars –  
it will take a long time  
to trust people again**

Cristina Angelescu

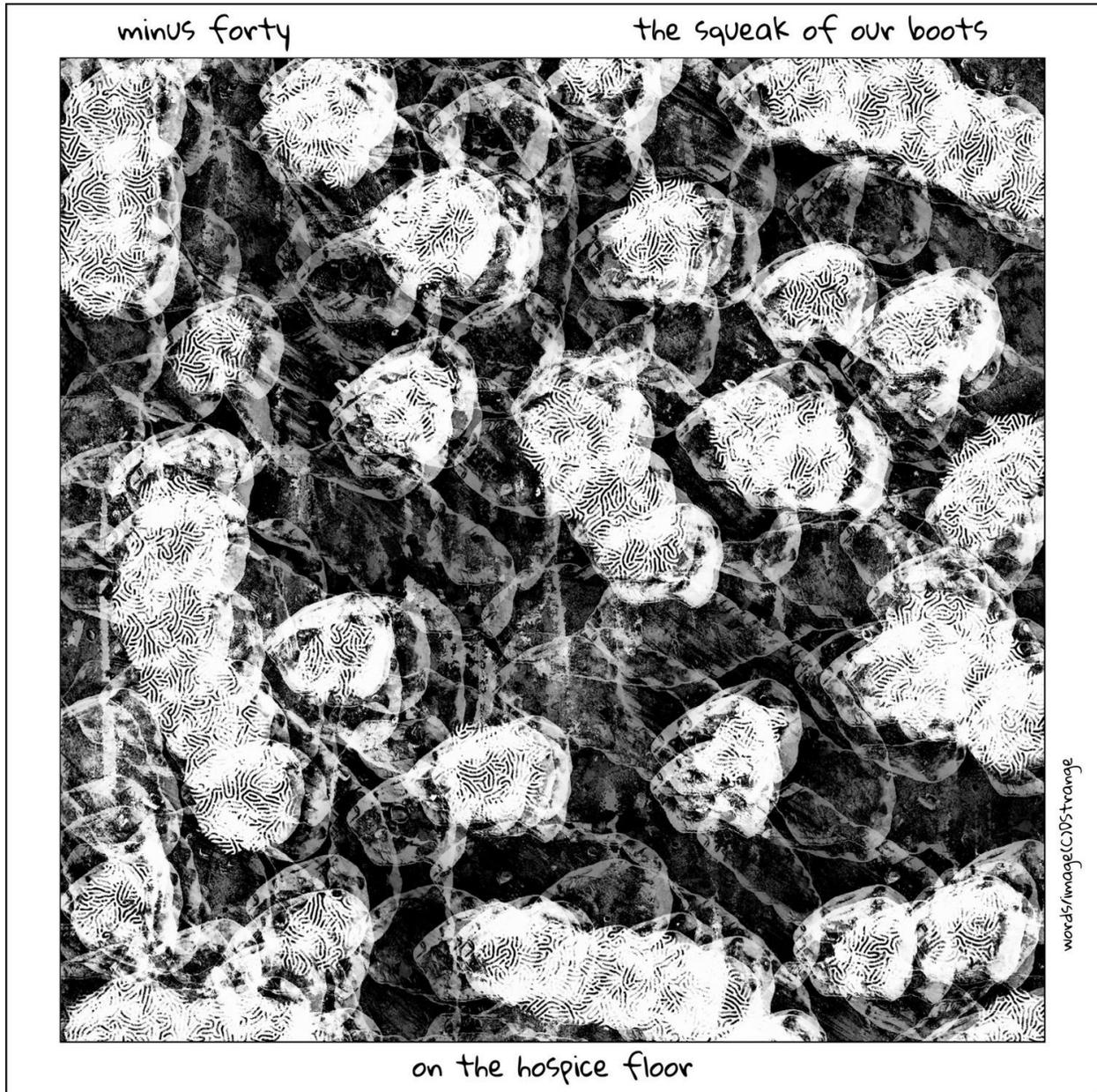
Dan Hardison - USA



*wandering  
unsure of a direction  
our paths cross*

*Dan Hardison*

Debie Strange - Canada



# Senryu



Warli folk art, Maharashtra, Western India

delivery room  
his calloused hands hold  
the newborn

Pitt Buerken, Germany (EC)

mirrored  
in the baby's eyes  
mom's smile

Joe Sebastian, India

Fatherhood  
things for myself  
I put last

Adjei Agyei-Baah Ghana/New Zealand

imaginary friends  
where do they go  
when we grow up

Nika, Canada

hide and seek  
Mom leaves a note:  
. . . Dear Son, I can't stay

Stephanie Alaine Newbern, USA

fast food restaurant  
kids in pyjamas  
eating happy meals

John Budan, USA

pigtails flutter  
in the breeze  
kite flying

Louise Hopewell, Australia

school report  
my pink-haired niece  
flies a plane

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

the length  
of a puppy's leash  
childhood

Brad Bennett, USA

remembering  
as we lower the casket  
her claustrophobia

Bryan Rickert, USA

passing storm  
her last session  
of chemo

Quendryth Young, Australia

absent kids  
a mother pile of salt  
at the port

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand (EC)

slouching  
in a snarl of shadows  
the street kid

Gavin Austin, Australia

shopping trolley  
still filled with his things  
. . . winter snow

Hazel Hall, Australia

fallen frond  
the cherub in his plaid shirt  
still missing in Quang Tri

Bill Cooper, USA

crows  
in the snowy field  
dad's abandoned chessboard

Radostina Dragostinova, Bulgaria

rich girl  
because my mother  
read to me

Jill Lange, USA

Mother's Day —  
dozing on the armchair wearing  
last year's gift

D. V. Rozic, Croatia

cheering  
my old aunt on the phone —  
the parrot cackles

Neena Singh, India

fishing with dad  
the silver rowboat  
on her desk

Claire Vogel Camargo, USA

first rain  
grandpas cheer their  
paper boats

Bhawana Rathore, India

grandmother's hands  
callused by the years  
of cotton

Justin Brown, USA

moths  
with holes in their wings  
nursing home

Scott Wiggerman, USA

two years on  
sometimes still reaching  
for two plates

Maurice Nevile, Australia

trimming  
his dream  
yew topiary

Helen Buckingham, UK

deserted shack  
finger paintings grace  
every wall

Debbie Strange, Canada

empty chairs  
how I long to hear  
them filled

Christina Chin, Malaysia

lockdown cicadas' chorus in me

Neena Singh, India

pandemic moments . . .  
remembering Bob Ross  
on our screens

B.A. France, USA

retired teacher  
days  
without feedback

David Kehe, USA

supper  
the bitter taste  
of solitude

Ravi Kiran, India

their open laughter  
thin clink of spoon  
in my teacup

Scott Wiggerman, USA

nightfall  
my reflection in the glass  
clearer as light fades

Keith Evetts, UK

finding myself again  
at the end  
of the book

Ben Gaa, USA

gigantism—  
my to-do list  
never stops growing

Susan Burch, USA

Christmas Eve  
forgetting where  
she hid the gifts

Elaine Wilburt, USA

all the tats  
I never got . . .  
clear blue sky

Brad Bennett, USA

art museum  
turning her back on Van Gogh  
on her cell phone

Wilda Morris, USA (EC)

Zen retreat  
expecting a lot more  
for the money

Michael Henry Lee, USA

hotel spa—  
dropping the used towel  
in a basket not mine

Maeve O'Sullivan, Ireland

QR code—  
checking my 'checking in'  
the checkout lady

Madhuri Pillai, Australia

cosmetics counter  
confidence  
on sale

Ronald K Craig, USA

dissertation feedback  
biting into  
a sour persimmon

Maya Daneva, The Netherlands

the yelling  
in the checkout lane  
tabloid headlines

Robert Moyer, USA

the vitriol  
of (un)social media . . .  
spittlebugs

Debbie Strange, Canada

fall geese  
hard to accept they leave  
all this shit

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

Sunday in the park  
even the old popcorn seller  
hypnotized by his phone

Nadejda Kostadinova, Bulgaria

city park  
stressed out faces  
behind each mask

Tom Staudt, Australia

picking the wild mushrooms  
we never will —  
trespassers

Joseph P. Wechselberger, USA

pauper's window  
the illusory gold  
of the sun

Mike Gallagher, Ireland

for dessert  
the sculptor orders  
marble cake

Carol Raisfeld, USA

charity gala  
the nibbles decorated  
with false caviar

Eva Limbach, Germany

timeshare kitchen —  
all the knives  
are dull

Angela Terry, USA

time capsule  
my past  
resurfaces

Valentina Ranaldi-Adams, USA

space race —  
all those flags on the moon  
bleached white

Michael Meyerhofer, USA

social distance —  
paper dolls  
holding hands

Richard Tice, USA

they have been  
social distancing  
Siamese twins

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, India

COVID craze  
the sidewalk  
shuffle

Susan Farner, USA

scattered leaves . . .  
all I know is the motif  
on her sari

Milan Rajkumar, India

deadheading  
blue daisies  
this desire for more

Dian Duchin Reed, USA

Himalayan pheasant  
all the colours  
she wasn't allowed

K Srilata, India

waning gibbous  
the coupe transmutes  
into a minivan

Joshua St. Claire, USA

miles and miles  
out of the way  
Billy the Kid's grave

Johnnie Johnson Hafernik, USA

cycling home  
the day's problems  
lost in the wind

Nika, Canada

drifting  
in the moon's wake  
our night cruise

Cynthia Rowe, Australia

a foreign land  
her smile  
just before I wake

Gavin Austin, Australia

her flowing hair  
how I long to feel  
what the breeze touches

Ravi Kiran, India

what he sees  
what she sees  
shifting dreams

Joanna Ashwell, UK

dead bouquet  
he asks to return  
between each girlfriend

Pris Campbell, USA

couples' counselling  
the darkness  
of winter pines

Ben Gaa, USA

elopement  
the couple marries  
on zoom

Jim Krotzman, USA

the bride's nervous smile champagne bubbles

Rp Verlaine, USA

stormy night  
first unplanned  
kiss

Sherry Grant, New Zealand

my birthday party  
all the greeting kisses rinsed  
with plum brandy

Silva Trstenjak, Croatia  
Translator D. V. Rozic

all the complaints what's left of your whiskey

Pippa Phillips, USA

morning argument  
yet for lunch  
his favourite pulao

Minal Sarosh, India

lunch break  
the life model sits  
a little apart

Helen Buckingham, UK

pop-up food van  
the living statue  
joins the queue

Mark Miller, Australia

three milk crates  
and a cardboard box . . .  
his bed tonight

Tom Staudt, Australia

spring again  
the man with an MA  
still a janitor

John Zheng, USA

rescue dog  
adding a new language  
to my résumé

Sushama Kapur, India

first hearing aid  
the sound raindrops make  
on a puddle

Mark Miller, Australia

rewriting senryu . . .  
my coffee cup adds another  
Olympic ring

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

on repeat  
'a kind of blue'  
and crows

Steve Black, UK

between  
a robin and me  
the worm

Keith Evetts, UK

emphysema  
the difficulty of one breath  
poems

Bryan Rickert, USA (EC)

date night  
the unnerving sway  
of a rope bridge

Dottie Piet, USA

all along the fence  
with his tickety-tock stick  
a dream-humming boy

John Hawkhead, UK

two years in advance  
reservations  
about our reservations

Julie Schwerin, USA

old poets' circle —  
a discussion  
of dementia

Ruth Holzer, USA

ancestral house  
the dust bunnies  
welcome me

Mona Bedi, India

## Editor's Choice (EC) - Senryu

It has been an unexpected pleasure for me to read the senryu submissions for this issue. Not only did I enjoy reading the poems but I also learned from my exchanges with the poets from around the globe, what moves and shapes their poetical intent and imagery. I am deeply grateful for the patience and understanding that you have all given me as I reacquainted myself with the senryu form and worked my way through the submissions.

Here are four of the poems which I hope will strike a chord with you.

delivery room  
his calloused hands hold  
the new-born

Pitt Buerken, Germany (EC)

*Pitt Buerken startles with the unexpected image of 'his calloused hands' holding the new-born rather than soft feminine hands. We are accustomed to images of a mother cradling a child as in the well-known depictions of Mary and the infant Jesus. Delivery room suggests a hospital. Has the father taken on a birth-assisting role? But the "calloused hands" could just as easily belong to a simple home birth. Are the hands rough-skinned due to the father's age or is it a description of a humble labourer?*

*I find this unexpectedness in Pitt's portrayal strengthens the sense of wonder at birth and is both tender and arresting.*



absent kids  
a mother pile of salt  
at the port

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand (EC)

*Jenny Fraser has created an unforgettable image of absence by an unvisualisable scene. Is the pile of salt an allusion to the Biblical story of Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt? Or is it a reference to salty tears? I don't know if Jenny intended the reference which I was reminded of – the absence of salt in the food of a mourner in Hindu death rites? For ten to thirteen days after the death of a loved one, salt is one of the important items forbidden to the mourner.*

*And why "a mother pile" and why are the kids absent - is the mother weeping for drowned children? Or are there no longer any kids in the area to play with the salt which has piled up? The poem haunts with its intriguing imagery.*



art museum  
turning her back on Van Gogh  
on her cell phone

Wilda Morris, USA (EC)

*Wilda Morris's amusing vignette of an art gallery neatly presents the contemporary dilemma of technical distraction and serious solitary contemplation of high culture. Van Gogh is the epitome of western art and his canvasses command millions of dollars. People travel thousands of miles to view his art. To think that an opportunity to see the Master is overshadowed by a cell phone is painfully familiar. I am reminded of how in the Louvre, a quiet moment before the Mona Lisa is futile as one fights for space amidst the constantly jostling sea of viewers wielding cell phones and cameras.*



emphysema  
the difficulty of one breath  
poems

Bryan Rickert, USA (EC)

*Finally, Bryan Rickert poignantly synthesises the spiritual “one breath” of poetry with the physical illness that makes each breath an agony. Suffering and beauty are locked in a single embrace. It calls to mind these words of Shelley in his To a Skylark:*

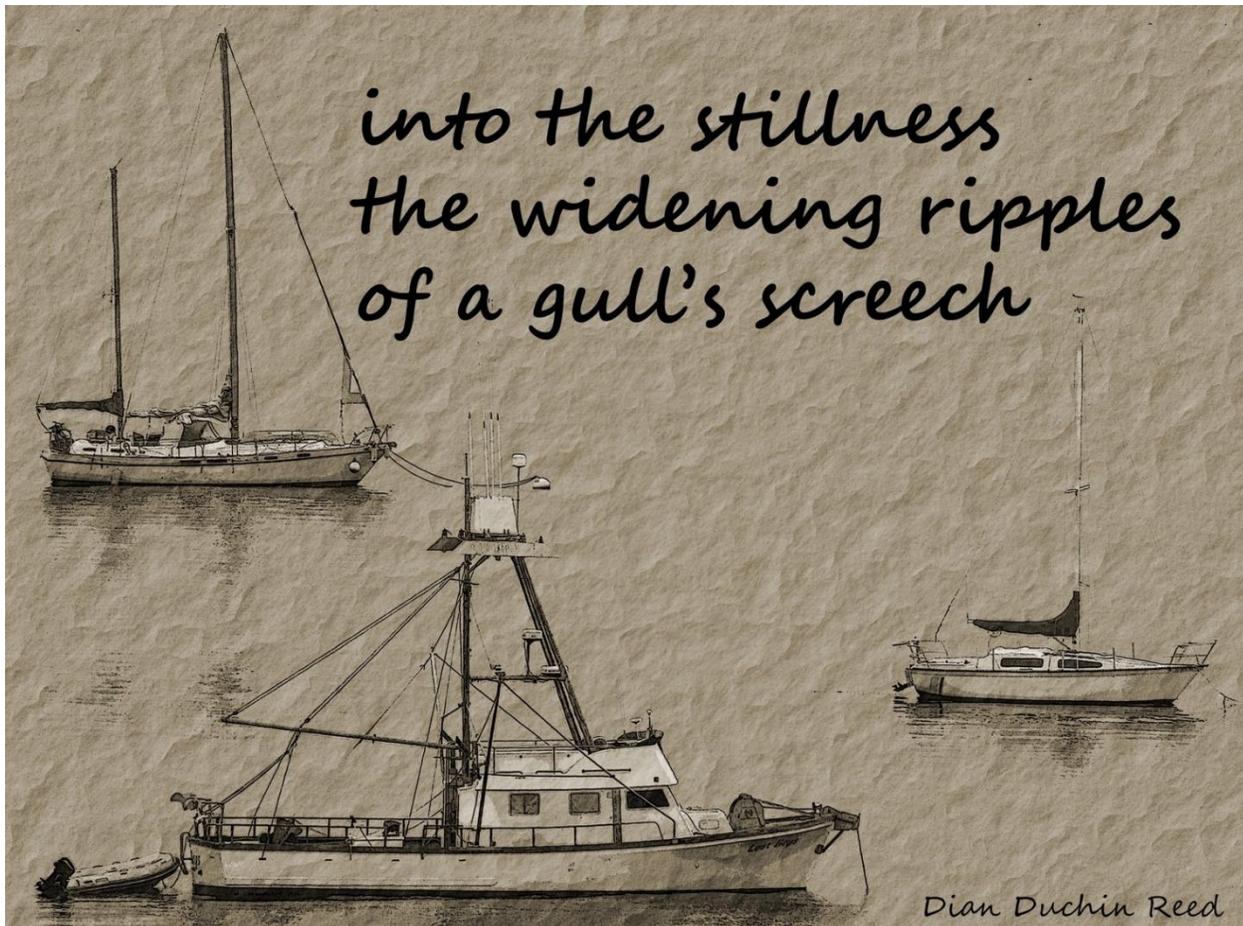
*“Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.”*

*In current times, given how the pandemic has made us all take stock, Bryan’s poem shows how what we hold dear and precious is fragile and yet in the sense of Péguy, I imagine a note of hope.*

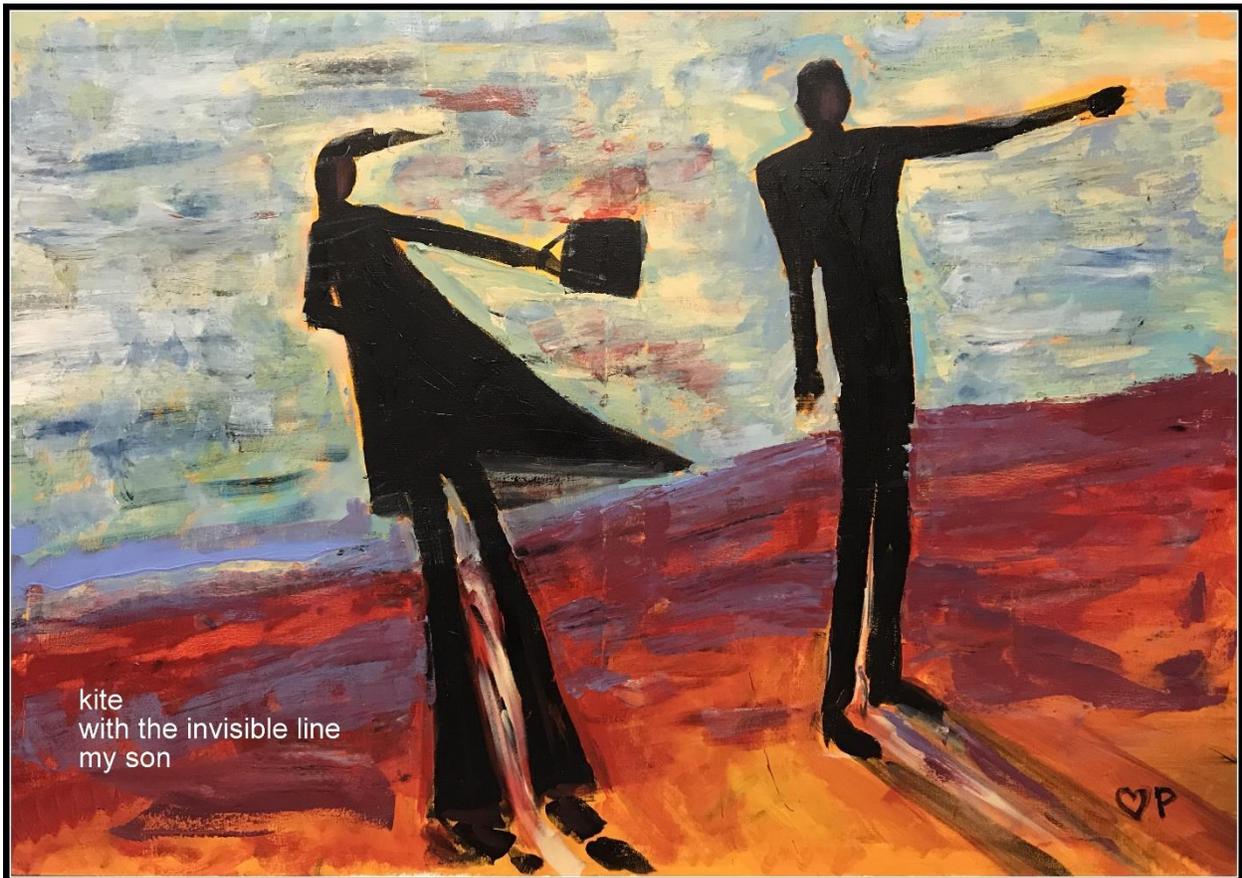
Sonam Chhoki

## Haiga - Part 2

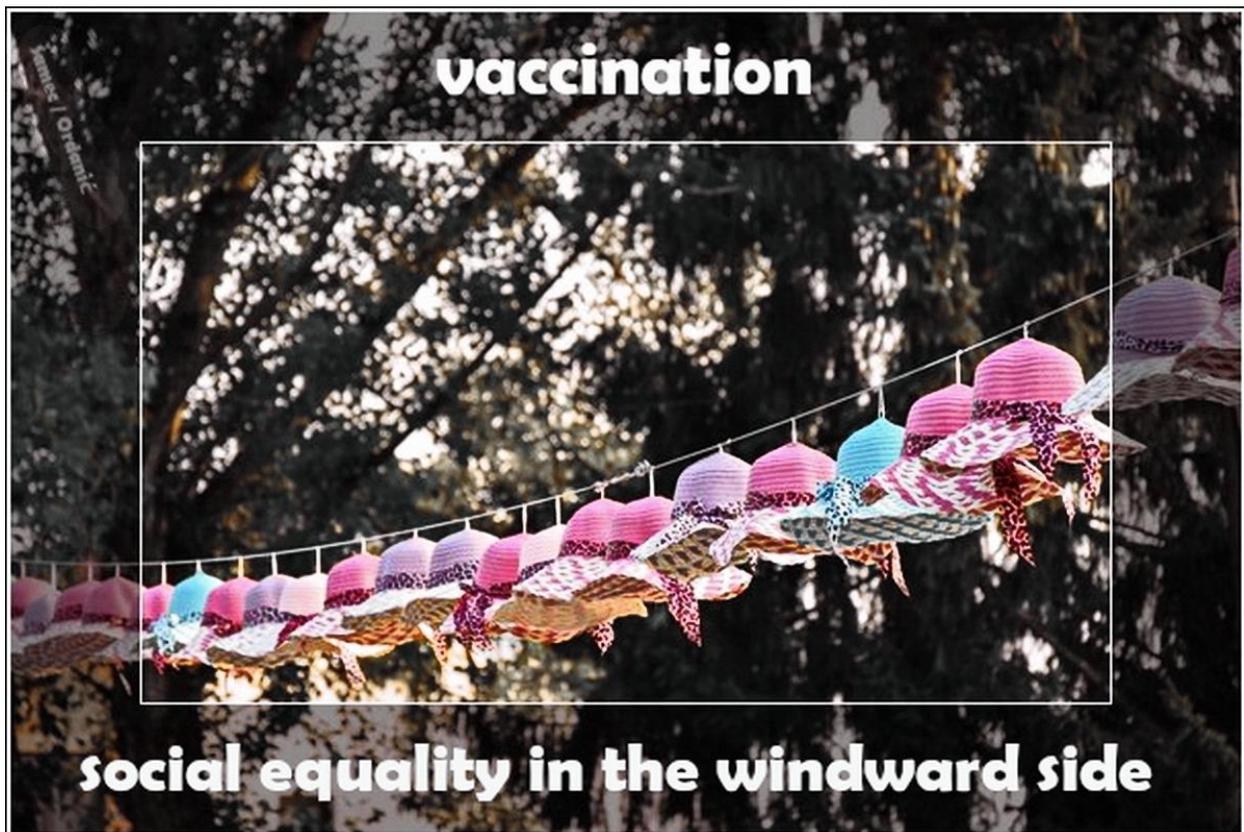
Dian Duchin Reed - USA



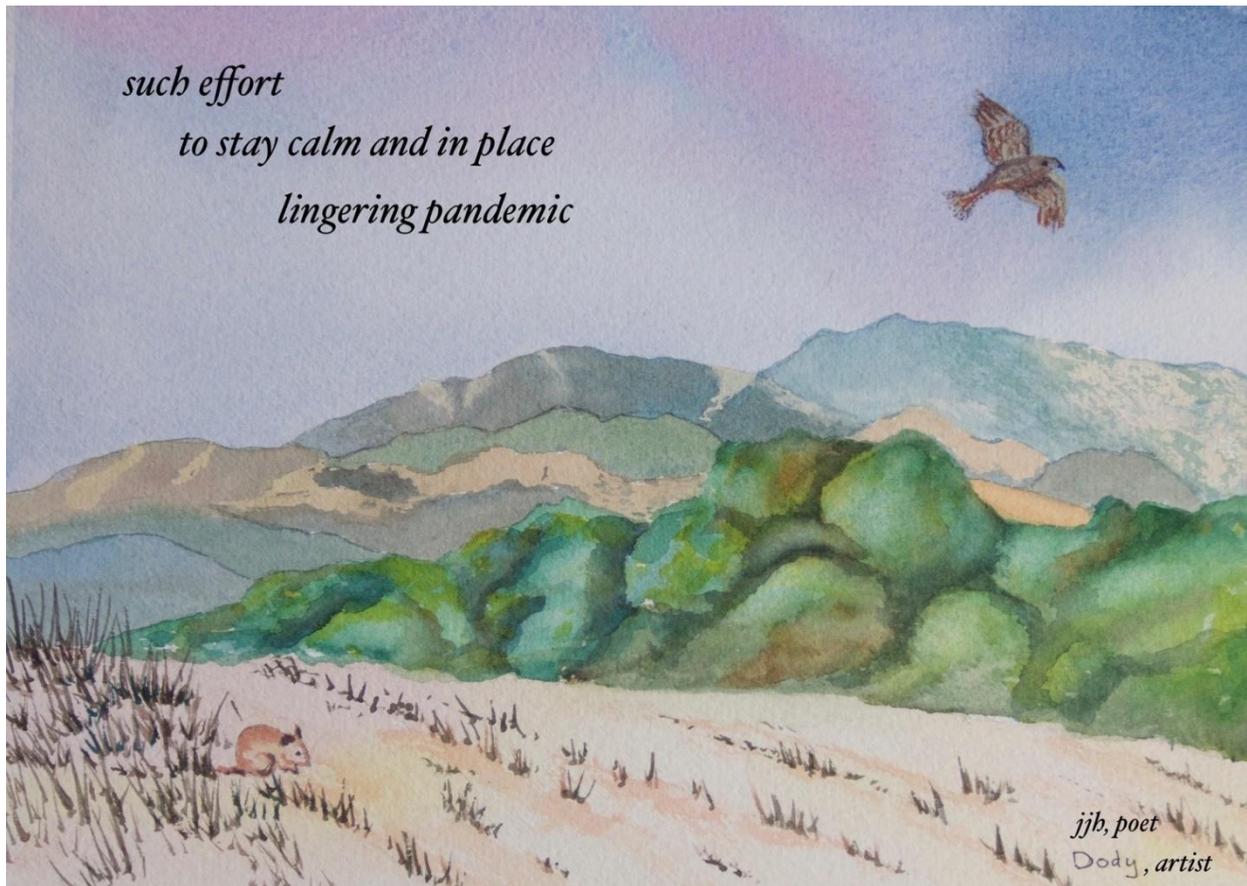
Eugeniusz Zacharski & Jacek Pokrak - Poland



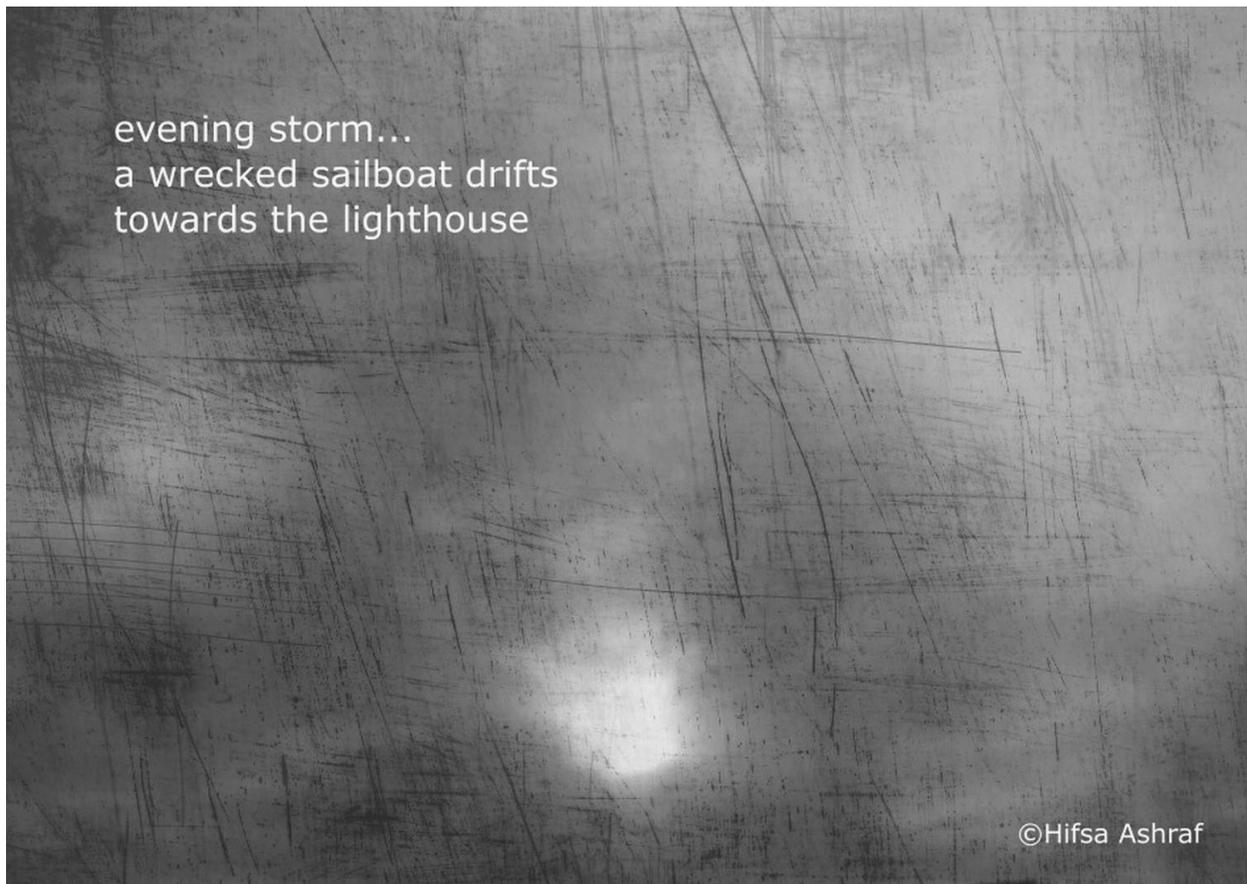
Franjo Ordanić & Sandra Šamec - Croatia



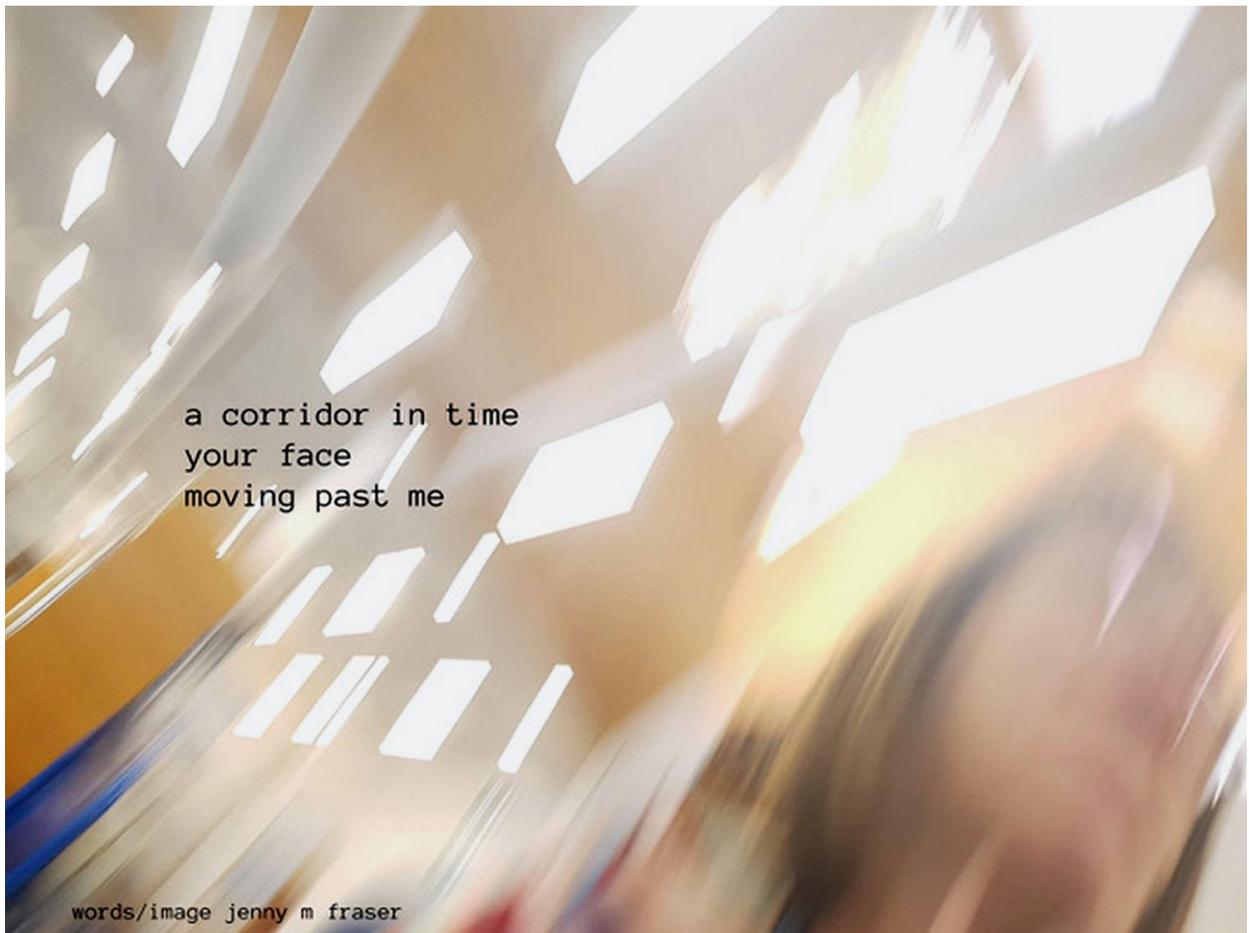
Johnnie Johnson Hafernik & Dorothy M. Messerschmitt - USA



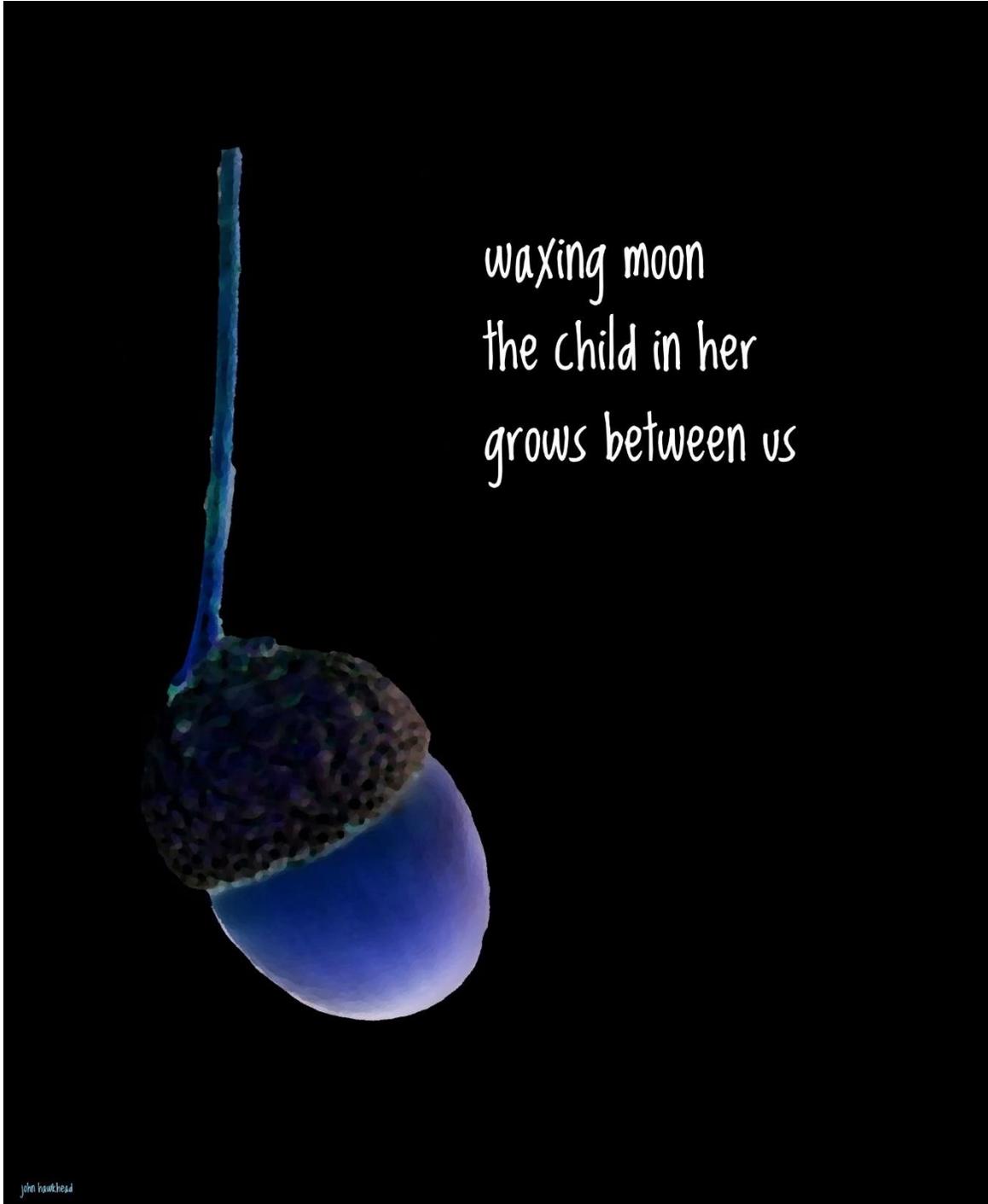
Hifsa Ashraf - Pakistan



Jenny Fraser - New Zealand



John Hawkhead - UK



# Tanka



Kalamkari Folk Art - Andhra Pradesh, South India

it does not do  
to ask the twilight sky  
whether it sides more  
with the morning  
or with the night

Srinivas S, India

your paint brushes  
still neatly arranged  
in the morning light  
*Phragmites*  
touched with frost

Jon Hare, USA

meeting break —  
a moment to watch  
Monet's *Sunrise*  
shining on the wall  
in the slanting sun

John Zheng, USA

a yellow leaf  
browning around  
the edges  
lands on my lap —  
another birthday

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

a whole day  
listening to the wind  
among green leaves . . .  
at night, an old lullaby  
emerges in me

un giorno intero  
ad ascoltare il vento  
tra foglie verdi . . .  
di notte, una vecchia ninna nanna  
riaffiora in me

Daniela Misso, Italy

from my window  
I watch russet leaves  
scurry past —  
this constant bustle  
to meet my deadlines

Hazel Hall, Australia

a rainbow-colored van  
rusting in the dump  
how many times  
did we rush so freely  
down that yellow brick road?

Pris Campbell, USA

on the road of life  
during the harshest downpours  
you're the overpass  
that for a moment shields me  
from the outside world

Amber Winter, USA

from a prison  
manned by thoughts  
even a rainbow  
appears like a confusion  
of suspicious colors

Srinivas S, India

double rainbow  
across the fence  
after rain  
who knows who sees  
the epiphany of light

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan

a billionaire pays  
for a voyage to space . . .  
we gaze  
at a night  
without stars

Dave Read, Canada

Mars and Venus  
a finger's width apart  
in tonight's sky . . .  
yet the distance greater  
between your heart and mine

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

slowly the snow  
falls upon the blossoms  
I never dreamed  
that I could leave you cold  
and you could leave me lost

Jeanne Cook, USA

indifference  
is how I now feel  
watching your lips part  
time and time again  
into more lies

Joanna Ashwell, UK

quietly  
you bag our dreams  
weight the sack  
with a rock of lies  
for the river of regret

Gavin Austin, Australia

hard rain  
beating on my roof  
the night  
is long & lonely  
& filled with regrets

Pamela A. Babusci, USA

in shock  
I let go of my glass  
it shatters  
as does my world  
hearing you're gone

Tom Staudt, Australia

for a moment  
a winter sunset  
caught  
between passing trains  
the color of loneliness

Mary Davila, USA

the ebb and flow  
of a stormy tide  
washes the shoreline —  
our shared memories run deep  
as the ocean currents

Anne Louise Curran, New Zealand

the distance  
between us bound  
by a karmic tie  
yet like a bottle adrift  
i trust the waves of destiny

Richa Sharma, India

the sailboat  
fading into a white cloud  
slowly, without sound  
you disappear  
from my world

Ryland Shengzhi Li, USA

to my vital question  
mum's ready-made answer  
*God is in the sky*  
another day on my back  
cloud-watching

Janet Dobb, Australia

a soft rain  
soothes my jangled soul  
. . . the memory  
of my mother's hands  
stroking me to sleep

Jan Foster, Australia

the weight  
of your sacrifice  
so heavy  
when they play  
the Last Post

Cynthia Rowe, Australia

resting alone  
on this country church pew  
I pick up  
my childhood beliefs  
then drop them off as I leave

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

the blood plums  
on the upper branches  
out of reach  
the long gone summer days  
when you would lift me up

Richard Kakol, Australia

if I could spend  
one hour back in my childhood  
I would skip  
to the far end of our street  
without treading on cracks

Janet Dobb, Australia

I never felt  
my grandmother's hug . . .  
a butterfly  
rests on the gravestone  
with her name and mine

Mary Davila, USA

her last gesture  
was to push my hands away  
not in rejection  
as I then thought, but  
to keep me from following

Ruth Holzer, USA

we knew  
each day was not forever  
yet I reach  
beyond myself, still holding on  
to the magic of possibilities

Carol Raisfeld, USA (EC)

suspended  
in logical space  
all possible worlds —  
the shine of a soap bubble  
before it pops

Pippa Phillips, USA

stem first  
a leaf spirals down  
into the pond  
how gently you pierce me  
how gently I bleed

Bryan Rickert, USA

fulfilling a wish  
this dandelion seed  
lands  
far from the fear  
in the child's eyes

Cynthia Rowe, Australia

teenage refugee  
soaring as high as he can  
on a playground swing . . .  
a childhood denied him  
in the country of his birth

Keitha Keyes, Australia

he sleeps  
in a crawl space  
safe from the wind . . .  
the side of the moon  
we can't see

Dave Read, Canada

she wakes  
in the dark before dawn  
. . . crippling angst  
for the heart unwilling  
to love for fear of loss

Gavin Austin, Australia

a sheaf  
of bamboo strips ready  
for weaving  
we bend to the task  
of shaping each other

Debbie Strange, Canada

the cucumber wall  
waiting for the bees  
on my balcony  
I'm touch-starved watching  
their intertwined tendrils

D. V. Rozic, Croatia

the dry spring ends  
water dances over stones  
and foam jumps from the river  
when did we become  
the old couple watching?

Simon Wilson, UK

a bowl  
of plastic fruit  
on our table—  
is this imitation of life  
as good as it gets?

Susan Burch, USA

the pied flycatcher  
flies non-stop  
across the Sahara Desert  
suddenly my challenges  
so insignificant

Corine Timmer, Portugal

a wounded crow  
pecks at our casement  
we open  
our shutters and invite  
the darkness in

Debbie Strange, Canada

embers in the hearth  
thaw the silence between us  
one by one  
we pick up  
our frozen conversations

Teji Sethi, India

yesterday  
you clearly said  
no to me  
I was too appalled  
to understand

Pitt Buerken, Germany

the neighbor's dog  
left chained up  
in the cold  
how you don't love me  
but won't let me go

Bryan Rickert, USA

we polish  
all our silverware  
for show —  
our marriage remains  
neglected and tarnished

Keitha Keyes, Australia (EC)

in the room  
with a view  
of blossoms falling  
the affair  
begins & ends

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

on the ceiling  
one creeping tarantula  
at midnight  
the size of my bedroom  
just enough for one

Margaret Owen Ruckert, Australia

spinning ceiling fan  
with eyes closed I imagine  
ocean breezes  
youthful days with sun and surf  
and plans beyond tomorrow

Adelaide Shaw, USA

legends  
about Phoenix  
end with beginnings —  
the day I left you  
my life began again

Tom Staudt, Australia

the dawn chorus  
light at the window  
gradually I remember  
I have things to do  
a person to be

Simon Wilson, UK

heads bowed  
hard at work  
the ants and i  
tend the peonies  
tend the earth

Marilyn Ashbaugh, USA

gone but not  
forgotten  
tree poachers  
who left us  
this lasting view

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

winter solstice  
waving as if  
to catch  
my attention—  
a blade of grass

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

prairie grass  
like earth whiskers  
sparse in some places  
beard-dense in others . . .  
the way words come to me

Claire Vogel Camargo, USA

the bits of sky  
between the tangled branches  
of a leafless oak . . .  
that quiet space inside  
where the word finds its voice

Jim Chessing, USA

volcanic hills —  
the glossolalia  
of stone  
my tongue carves out  
these crags of language

Richard Kakol, Australia

root and ruffle  
sand and stone  
the creek  
speaks in riddles  
calling me home

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

crescent moon —  
a nursery rhyme  
from Mother Goose  
tripping over my tongue  
driving home

Anne Louise Curran, New Zealand

the white scar  
beneath your eye  
a sickle moon  
in the solitude of night  
I consider my options

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

a trace  
of falling stars  
beneath the paper moon  
I gently touch  
your laugh lines

Elisa Theriana, Indonesia

the look  
on your face  
moonlit  
all the ways  
to fall in love

Marilyn Fleming, USA

the air  
alive with frogsong  
and flocks  
of blackbirds burbling . . .  
I add my lonesome whistle

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

velvet pajamas  
on this chilly morning —  
the butterfly still  
sleeping between the petals  
of a yellow rose

pijama de catifea  
în dimineața asta rece —  
fluturele încă  
doarme între petalele  
unui trandafir galben

Steliana Cristina Voicu, Romania

I lose all sense  
of time  
reading the tanka masters  
can I ever  
become one

Joe Sebastian, India

running out  
of ideas  
I walk slowly . . .  
watch a leaf going  
down the drain

Bhawana Rathore, India

## Editor's Choice (EC) — Tanka

By the time a submission period for *cattails* comes to a close and I finalize my selections for publication, I'll have noticed a number of common themes. There are those that focus on images or sounds. Others speak of beginnings and endings, birth, loss, and grief. Many tanka will deal with the natural world, be it the weather, our universe, or our flora and fauna.

In this issue, I couldn't help but notice how many tanka were about human relationships. Considering the pandemic and its resulting lockdowns and long periods of isolation, perhaps that's not surprising. Sometimes we couldn't get far enough away from strangers; at other times we were unable to get close enough to the people we love.



we knew  
each day was not forever  
yet I reach  
beyond myself, still holding on  
to the magic of possibilities

Carol Raisfeld, USA (EC)

The moment I finished reading this tanka, I had the feeling it would end up on my list of favourites for the October 2021 issue of *cattails*.

It's probably easy for most of us to relate to the opening couplet. Through the use of simple past tense in lines 1&2, followed by "yet" and the simple present tense in line 3, we are reminded of the transience of life and the inevitability of death.

We **know** we will die. It's just a matter of when and how. Despite this knowledge, however, the narrator (who I sense is a woman), is still reaching out. She could be

reaching for answers to internal questions, emotional support from friends and family, or a more positive outcome to her current situation. Perhaps she is facing the death of her partner or maybe she's recently widowed.

In line 4, we see her, paradoxically, trying to let go while still holding on – letting go of the relationship, her deeply-felt sorrow, even her love of life. At the same time, she's holding on to magic and possibilities. Holding on to hope and whatever will help her get through the loss and grief she's experiencing.

This tanka sounds very smooth when read aloud. There's nowhere to stumble; no need to go back to make sense of it. The combination of simple diction, easy rhythm, and natural line breaks – along with subtle alliteration and assonance – creates a pleasing musicality to the poem as a whole.

Thank you, Carol, for sharing this painful yet poignant and memorable tanka.



we polish  
all our silverware  
for show –  
our marriage remains  
neglected and tarnished

Keitha Keyes, Australia (EC)

My second Editor's Choice tanka also deals with a marital relationship and begins with the word 'we' followed by a verb – this time in present tense. We have a clear visual of silverware being polished until it's sparkling clean and ready – not for regular usage or out of necessity – but to impress others. If everything looks good, maybe friends and family won't notice anything amiss.

Line 4 seems to confirm our first impressions, but line 5 tells a different story. We discover we've been fooled. The relationship only **looks** good. At least one member of

this couple realizes that beneath this shiny exterior, the marital relationship is badly neglected and tarnished – just like the silverware.

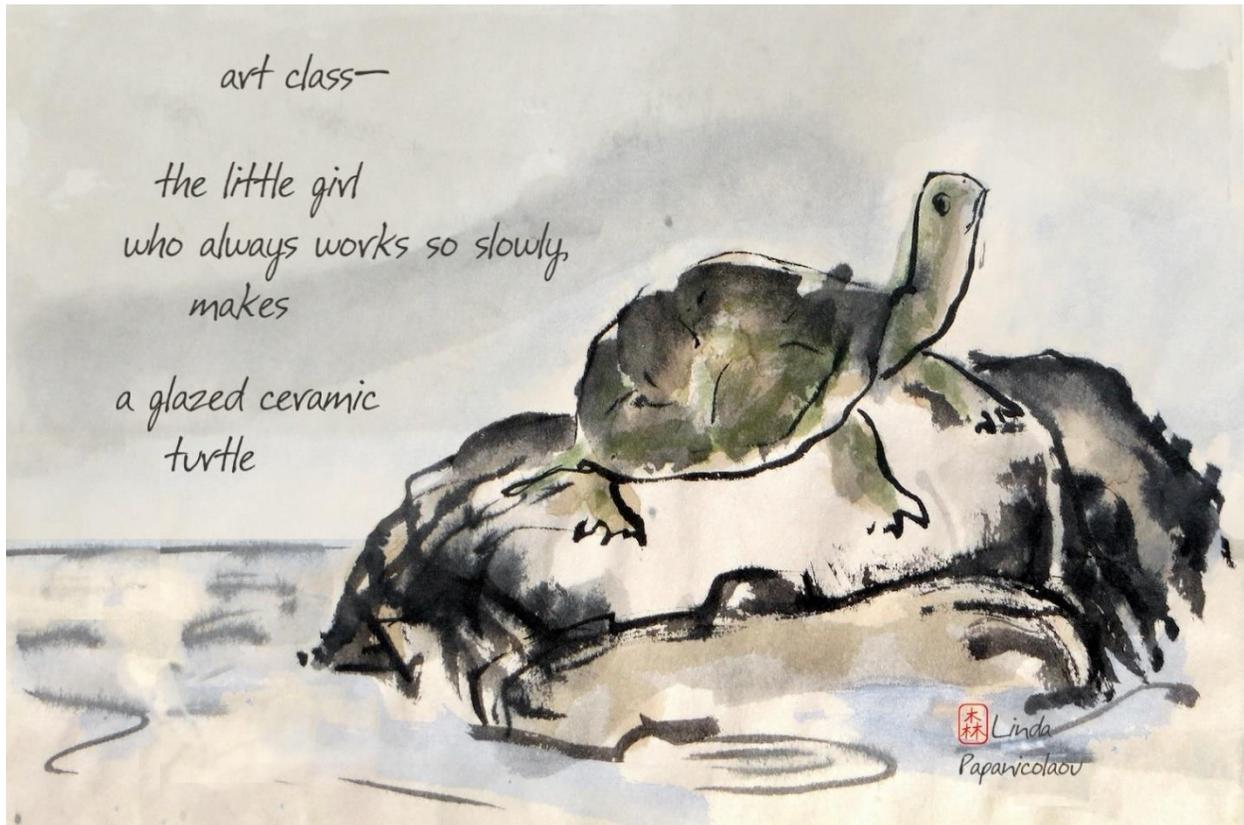
Although the tanka is composed of two complete sentences, each one reads smoothly and compliments the other. One sentence is all for show; the other reveals the truth. A small, natural pause can be felt at the end of each line. The em dash acts as an extended pause between the two parts of the tanka, and the familiar short/long/short/long/long lines present a pleasing rhythm.

This simple comparison (with both a literal and metaphorical component), helps to make this tanka very effective. My thanks, Keitha, for sharing your work with *cattails*.

Susan Constable

## Haiga — Part 3

Linda Papanicolaou — USA



Josip Kraljić, 11 age / Mentor: Mihovila Čeperić-Biljan - Croatia



Julie Schwerin - USA



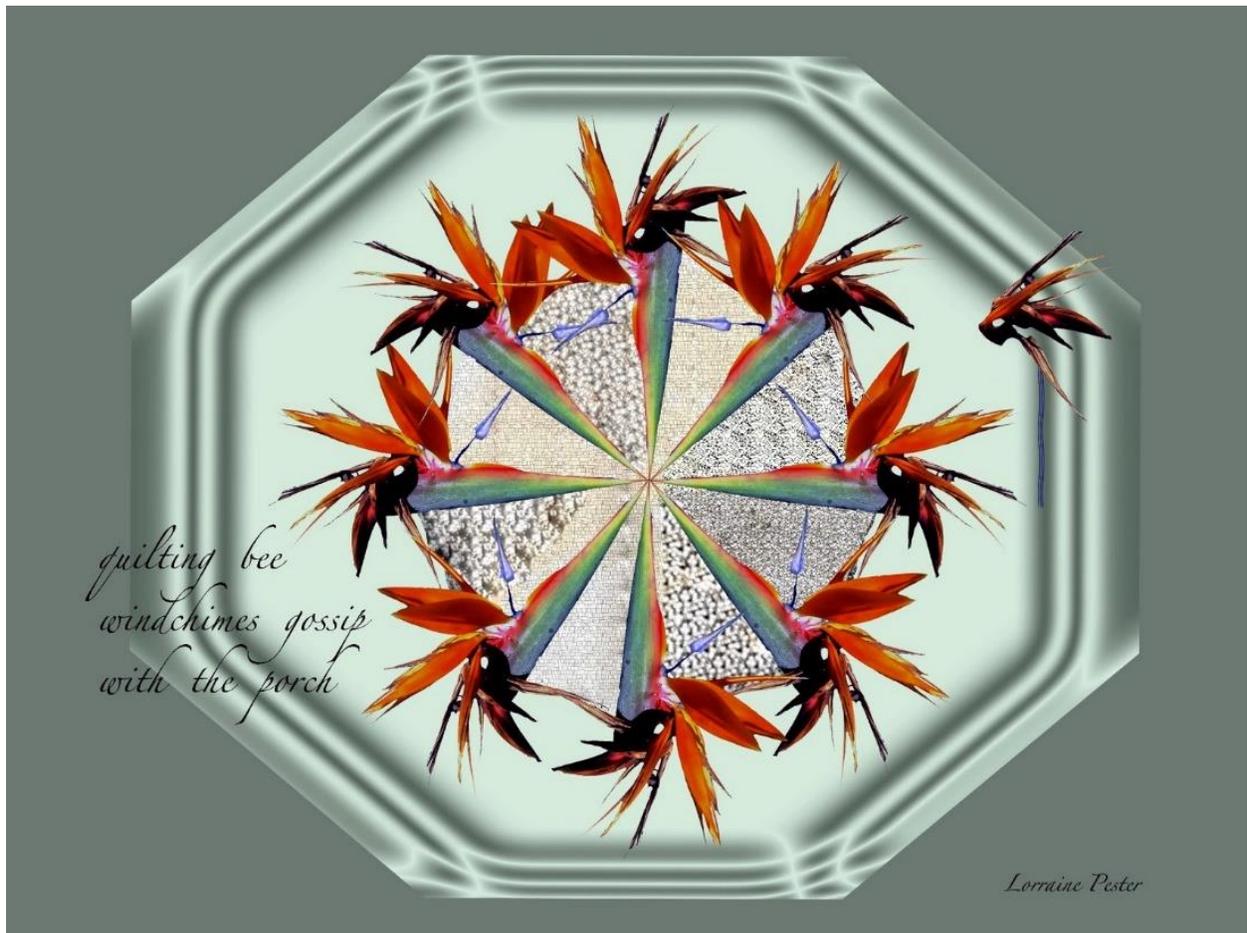
Julie Schwerin

Kristina Todorova & Ivo Gospodinov - Bulgaria



haiku: Kristina Todorova / photo: Ivo Gospodinov

Lorraine Pester - USA



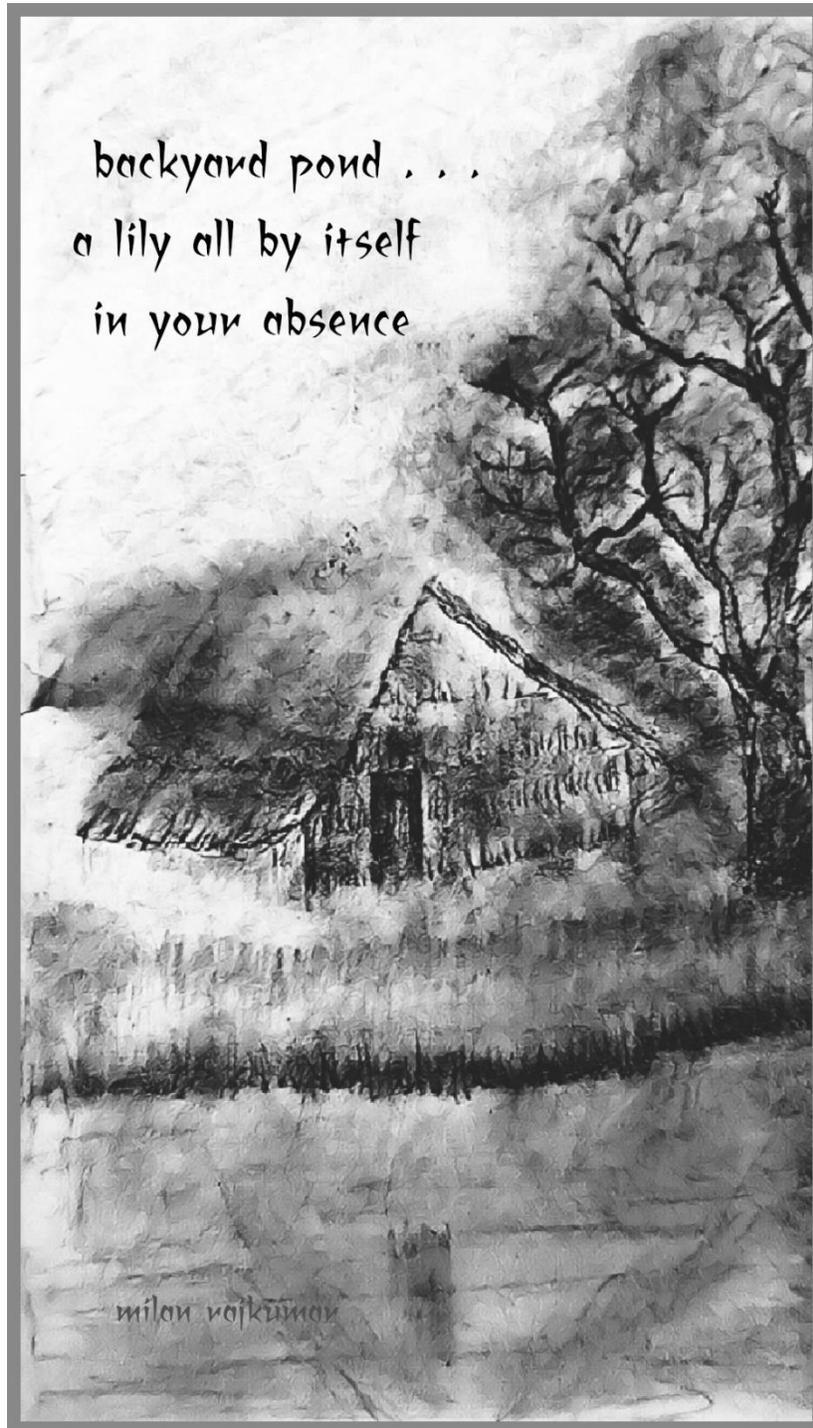
Mary Davila - USA



*pandemic life . . .  
month after month  
grandma's  
finely-flowered china  
at a place setting for one*

*mary davila*

Milan Rajkumar - India



# Haibun



Madhubani - Bihar, East India

## Assumptions

Joanna Ashwell, UK

How many times have I sighed when someone incorrectly calls me Joanne? I fail to see what is so difficult. I've even known it follow when I've introduced myself as Joanna. It's like a selective deafness. 'Joanne is a more common name' I'm told. 'It's only one letter, does it matter.' Yet why is it when someone else's name is wrong, it shocks them to the core. Am I over sensitive? How many times is it acceptable to correct a name? 'I thought you were Joanne.' Then there's the Miss, Ms. debate. 'I thought you were married.' 'Don't you want his name?' I stamp my feet in the shadows, boxing rogue vowels out of my name. What's in a name? I trail off into expletives repeating myself beneath a cloud.

catchpoint  
the open glove  
full of rain

## Flotsam

Gavin Austin

I try making sense of the phone call as a suffocating coldness grips me. Suddenly caught in a rip, I'm trashing, as I gasp for air. Why hadn't I been there for him?

He always was wily. Maintaining enough contact for me not to suspect something was wrong; sparing me the ordeal. How I loved and hated him for it.

end of holidays  
the carousel pony's  
fixed stare

Now, when I pass the terrace we once rented, I pause and fancy I can smell the old frangipani in the backyard. I think of him as one of its blooms: perfection tumbling in the still of night rather than growing withered on the tree.

I picture a wide blue Bondi sky; hear the rolling waves and keening gulls of those teenage summers. I see him smile and toss salt-crusted hair from his eyes. He found his answers there.

retreating tide  
his initials stitched  
with shoreline seaweed

\*

## Planning Ahead

Amanda Bell, Ireland

I have a legitimate reason to be here; several in fact. Both grandparents, one close friend, acquaintances, ancestors. I drop in so frequently it seems quite natural. So why do I feel this conspicuous, skulking in the Cyprus Walk. I'm only taking the pinecones strewn across the paths, on a mat of pale brown needles. Now all I need is some silver spray paint.

almost Christmas -  
raising their arms skywards  
granite cherubs

Note:

The Cyprus Walk is an avenue in a Victorian cemetery called Mount Jerome close to Dublin

## And Rabbits Do Multiply

Maxianne Berger, Canada

The head of the math department was also my professor of Advanced Calculus. Clearly, Honours Math was not where I ought to have been that year, and to switch out, I needed his signature.

“Hmmm,” he started. “Since you aren’t going to continue in math, I won’t fail you. I’ll give you a D.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Just one question. For all the assignments, tests and exams, you always set up the equations quite properly, and then you’d just leave them, unsolved. I don’t . . . understand.”

“Um, er, well, sir. I started university in second year, never took Introduction to Calculus, so, um, well, I don’t know how to anti-differentiate.”

∀ Nature ∃ dust | 2<sup>n</sup> dust ⇒ n! dust bunnies  
∴ Nature abhors a vacuum  
q.e.d.

## **Intruder**

John Budan, USA

He conceals himself under my bed, a sinister demon with a tail or a one eyed pirate; his disguises are many. But he always arrives cloaked in darkness after mother sends me to my room for the evening. Before getting into bed, I search the area underneath with a flashlight and walk backwards around my chair exactly four times. While Tubby Bear snuggles close to my nightie, I tuck the Pink princess gun under a pillow. And I never forget to say my prayers before closing my eyes.

summer breezes  
creating shadows  
an angel dreams

## Investigating

Pitt Buerken, Germany

Our editor-in-chief makes a joke of it. Because I've been divorced four times, he sends me to every golden wedding anniversary in the region. That's, because I find it incomprehensible, that people are married to each other for fifty years or even more. And he always tells me to get to the bottom of the mystery of these long-term relationships. Surely, I could learn from that. At this he grins cheesily.

Today I'm at Anne and Frank's golden wedding party, again with the crucial question: "How do you do it, staying together for so long?"

Frank thinks about it for only a moment, then he answers: "You mustn't separate!"

the stork pair  
every year they return  
back home

## Cockleshells

Glenn G. Coats

*The water is wide, I can't cross over  
And neither have, I wings to fly — Traditional*

Ernie Jones has the tools and the know-how, so we decide to build boats in his garage. Two prams. Each one, eight feet long. We draw the sides, bottom, bow, and transom on sheets of cardboard. Cut the templates out and trace them on plywood. Use screws and caulk to fasten pieces together. Add oar locks. I paint mine white with brown trim.

I buy a set of oars and a used motor. Air cooled. Pour the gas right in the top. No trailer. I carry the pram on the roof of my car. Want to try it out a few times before I take the boy out.

First time. I launch in the Rahway River. The water is shallow and gentle where it runs through the town of Cranford. I drift through shadows under bridges, and hear people talking in houses along the shoreline. So as not to tip, I sit dead center. Branches stretch from bank to bank and I navigate the space between them. The pram bottoms out in Nomahegan Park; I drag the boat to deeper water, start the motor, and steer back upstream.

The second trip is down to Toms River. An hour's ride south. I launch in the evening when there are few speed boats on the water. One rocks me close to the surface. In the distance, I can see a bridge; and the telephone poles that rise above Good Luck Point. Halfway across the river, the motor suddenly quits; I cannot pull it back to life.

I row slowly toward the shore. The oar locks squeak as I make my way. Gulls cry and flash near the jetties. It is nearly dark when my boat thumps the sand like a piece of driftwood. I step out into knee-high water; drag the pram up onto the beach. I think it best to sleep in the car, and wait until light to pack up.

I wake up to find that the pram is gone. Likely drifted off when the tide rolled in. Might show up but I'm not worried, never felt all that seaworthy to begin with.

downstream the drift of butterfly wings blue moon

after the storm  
a child sorts through splinters  
along the beach

blue of summer  
the tumble of leaf boats  
down a mountain stream

## The HMS Situationship (EC)

Colleen M. Farrelly, USA

Kneeling beside his bed, she grasped one of his tentacles, gently kissing it and murmuring her wish to stay on Ares V. He reached under her derriere, sucking her thigh with his tentacle and lifting her onto the bed as their lips locked. She deftly undid her bra and had started to dispatch her blouse when the watch went off again: two minutes until her life-support ring would wear off, suffocating her in Ares V's sulfur dioxide ambiance.

quickies and hickies —  
loving on an installment plan

1972

P. H. Fischer, Canada

*We do not remember days; we remember moments. ~ Cesare Pavese*

I'm in Ben's crib. The sheer curtains across the room flit in the breeze. I listen to the faint buzz of dragonflies or, perhaps, power lines zinging in the heat. Suddenly, a savage yank on my hair. I turn to see Ben's epiglottis rage like a little man who's hammered his thumb. His nails press into my flesh. Teardrops, his and mine, darken the lilac sheet.

Our mother clicks in wearing heels and a baby blue dress with large buttons that look like plump faces. Her dark hair is swirled high and tight. She purses her lips to hush, calm, and kiss two foreheads before leaving the room light on her toes. The draft teases the door in and out of its frame. I hear Tante Eva muffle a few words in German as coffee pours and laughter percolates. A teaspoon is set gently on china.

Ben's thumb is in his mouth. His lashes shudder. He's asleep now — chasing dragons. I feel his breath on my face, watch his chest rise and fall. Through the crib's white bars, I see a sliver of sunlight sizzle on the wall. It looks like a sword.

summer heat —  
snapped rhubarb in the sink  
Mom whipping cream

## At the Crossroads (EC)

Hazel Hall, Australia

*The Chords: "Sh-boom," 1954.*

At the crossroads a girl is watching the lights. Slung over one shoulder hangs a bulging backpack. Long brown hair tumbles down her back. She wears a short cotton dress revealing bare legs. Open shoes invite the wind to move around perfect feet. Vehicle after vehicle is whizzing past.

I remember standing on a corner like that when I walked to Teachers' College. *Sh-boom, sh-boom. Life could be a dream sweetheart.* Out of the blue comes an old song of the time. There weren't as many *sh-booms* in our lives then. The biggest one happened in Hiroshima before my recall. Then *boom* by *boom*, more and more arrived.

Now the world is full of *sh-booms*. Conspiracy theories, extreme weather events, military coups, nuclear missiles, terrorists, viruses. I wonder how many this girl will face in her future. Suddenly I fear for her. All those *do-roo-do-dos* like street dogs fighting over the meat of survival. Will the next *sh-boom* destroy her world for ever?

As if wild birds, time and sanity are flying away. *Sh-boom if I could take you to a paradise up above . . .*

future shock  
I find myself rushing  
into the past

Note:

James M. Salem & others. "Sh-Boom & the Bomb: A Postwar Call & Response." *Columbia Journal of American Studies* 7, 2006.

## Silent Night

Dan Hardison

It is a moonless night and I stand in the doorway as a streetlight flickers on and off. Somewhere in the distance is the lonesome sound of a train whistle. Wind chimes ring softly with the breeze. I contemplate the latest news on her medical treatment, “as well as to be expected.”

darkness  
and in time light . . .  
trusting

## Sound Bites

Vijay Joshi, USA

The talking heads from pompous think-tanks, citing factoid triggered polls, dispense prefabricated biased opinions. Plagiarized speeches, lies countered with more lies, manufactured accusations, false promises, trivial sound bites, and factoids, masqueraded as facts in robotic debates.

pierced by the wire-fence . . . a stray newspaper page

## Betrayal (EC)

Sushama Kapur, India

Turning the pages of the mislaid papers with a growing sense of doom, she pauses before the last page. The blank underside stares back. Eyes squeezed shut, the overheard phrase from last night plays over and over in her mind. Reluctantly, she lifts a corner of the page, turns it over and opens her eyes . . .

long road  
lightning splits  
the indigo sky

## Çis tavuk

Marietta McGregor, Australia

Your haircut is way overdue. The barber shepherds us into his hole-in-the-wall, points me to a stool, gestures at you to remove your shirt and flips a white cape round you. The trim is quick. It's the warm-up act. Then there's a cut-throat close shave, liberally splashed cologne, enthusiastic pummelling of head, face, neck and shoulders. Finally, the barber lights a ball of cotton on a stick. "Shish kebab, ha!" He waves the flame past our startled eyes then flicks it over both your pinnae. Burnt hair stench fills the shop. He laughs at his joke and the foreigners' faces. You pay and we leave. Your cheeks, neck and head are baby's-bum pink under a white short back-and-sides. Little black frizzles of hair stud your ears like tarnished piercings. "Better last till we get home."

lingering  
in a darkened alley  
attar of roses

## Dad Written

Stephen Nelson

We lost your poems, and now I need them. Specifically, I need to see your handwriting, and the smudges of ink on old, lined paper. Fading ink on crumpled paper. Your scent on ink and paper. Even more than words, I need the shapes you carved with a pen, the swirls and strokes of your mind. I need that tactile communication, a direct transmission of the energy I'm already wholly infused with.

I mourn your lack of opportunity, the limitations of a time and place you might easily have transcended if we hadn't arrived. The heightened sense I have of you now needs a locus; it's as if you're drifting nearby, like a feather, but won't drop down. You won't land. I remember you at a desk, in an office, in a city that still reeks of you; watching you in second hand bookshops, flicking through worn out editions of Victorian verse, taking notes on trains with a Parker pen as you spun synchronicities from Scripture.

And yes, those poems! Some lines remain but they're not redeemable, because they need your hand. What you wrote needs rewritten in a pamphlet; needs typed, needs ribboned, needs read. We're living in a time that would have martyred you, but we're lingering in ink and type and handmade paper because screens are resistant to melancholy. You would have wholly enjoyed my wordplay, and Dawn's dada. I think you saw my first attempts at concrete poetry. I need a tattoo of your handwriting of the word "holy", so I can carry your promise into Paradise, where there's a stone, with my name etched in chalk. I know you wrote it before we were born.

hot, wet ink  
spinning pigeon feather  
writes the air

## Clarity

Sean O'Connor, Ireland

over endless karst  
an ocean of sky  
filled by a bird

The voice of silence called me to this expanse of stone, with rumoured shallow graves and charnel grounds from days of famine and neglect, to wander happily and hopeless through this landscape of futility and loss.

It speaks to me, the emptiness, the wind that's in this moment dead, and creatures hidden, too quiet for my ears that strain for music held in silent and still air; the light above a distant ocean.

I should die here, give passing nourishment to frugal life who can sniff out my decay and be satiated for an hour or two, perhaps a day. Foxes, rodents, twisting maggots, turn towards my flesh to feast, leaving only the pile of my bones to be nudged for years by travelling storms, rivulets from sudden rainfalls, or strolling clumsy beasts.

Should my skull rest sideways, what creature will see my foramen magnum as their doorway, and rest and birth, and feed and rare and nurture in the space that was my brain? And what young will see the world through the sockets of my eyes where I saw everything and nothing?

The call of a single bird, with all its threats and promises, amplifies the silence I seek, the solidity, and I take a step. One step. Into a falling world.

light on limestone  
through the depth of a cave  
a dustless beam

## The Artefact

Shalini Pattabiraman, Scotland

Out of the fire, the urn holds winter's gift — golden wheat, the colour of the sun setting low and hungry over the ripening corn. Praying for its safe yield — this precious offering made to a pagan god, carries belief — something more powerful than this evidence, now, dug from underneath layers of soil, and put inside a museum at Orkney.

I hold the urn in my sight and think about faith; how it has lasted over three thousand years. I mull over its absence inside my heart — shaped like the urn, a gaping hole holding a few kernels of wheat that never saw the sun, but sat in meditative silence listening to a whole world talking about it.

gaudhuli . . .  
the dancer's silhouette  
bends into a tree

\*Godhūli (गोधूली). — 'dust of the cows', the time of sunset or evening twilight (so called because cows, which generally return home at about sunset, raise up clouds of dust by their treading on the earth).

## Shipping forecast

Robbie Porter, UK

“Northerly gale force 8 expected soon. South-easterly 4 or 5, occasionally 6. Moderate, occasionally rough. Rain or showers, fog patches developing. Moderate or poor, occasionally very poor.”

splash pad —  
the delicate mist  
hides his tears

## A Talk with Thelma

Marilyn Potter, Canada

Thelma is the middle-aged dark-haired woman tending the gravesite of a carefully manicured plot of someone noteworthy, given the prominent marble marker and the exotic shrubs and flowers. According to the carved date, he died three years ago. Thelma is carrying a watering can to refresh the plants. For three years I have observed her doing this. Today we talk.

She confides her worry — the grass beside has not been cut. Continues how she looked after him for nine years. Assured him she would always do so, would never let him die alone. Repeats that he was good to her, took care of her too. Claims neither his daughter nor wife is interested anymore, both having insisted, *“Once you are dead you are dead”*. Yet says she doesn’t believe that. Adamant, she asks me twice, *“What about the soul?”*

Today is the beginning of June. Cherry petals have passed; there’s a fragrance of white orange blossoms. Again, I watch Thelma drive away in her black Mercedes.

midnight star  
searching for something  
without a name

## Blessings

Ray Rasmussen, Canada

*There are strange things done in the midnight sun*

*By the men who moil for gold*

*~ Robert Service, "The Cremation of Sam McGee"*

Ding! An email arrives from the Rev. Fr. Henry Wadsworth who claims to be the executor for the Margaret Thatcher Estate.

Dear Beneficiary,

Greetings from London. Is this contact still valid? There is a bequest that must be transferred to you or your inheritors. If someone has received this request as your executor, please let us know. If alive, please get back to me as soon as possible as we have a check for you.

Remain Blessed,

Rev. Fr. Henry Wadsworth (SDS)

I hesitate, my finger poised over the delete key . . . but instead, I decide to reply:

Dear Reverend Father Wadsworth,

You reached me, but alas, I am dead. In case you're wondering, I am writing this through my favourite medium, the lady who's known as Lou. She conducts séances at the Malamute Saloon in Dawson City.

My spirit is presently residing on the marge of Lake Lebarge, and not "down there" – the place religious folks refer to as one of two ultimate destinations. There were no vacancies, for reasons you can well imagine, so I've been placed in the boiler room of a rusting steam ship serving as a satellite residence.

I'm sure my executors will be pleased to receive the bequest. I do hope Ms. Thatcher won't mind that my will directs all funds to the United Kingdom's Green Party.

In appreciation of your executorship work on my behalf, when you arrive in the hereafter, please join Ms. Thatcher, who we affectionately call “Maggie,” and the rest of our gang for our weekly wiener roast.

I do hope you like hot dogs, which we eat for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. There are lots of just-right coals here, and, when not being used for other purposes, pitchforks make handy roasting sticks.

Since you’re a churchman, I’m sure you’ll want to join our choir. We sing “Roasting While We Work,” adapted from the seven dwarfs’ well-known song. Grumpy is the only dwarf who made it to our residence, so he serves as choir director.

And please direct your own executor to put bottles of mustard and catsup and a bag of marshmallows in your pockets when your time arrives – we’re sorely lacking condiments and sweets.

As for your closing salutation, “Remain Blessed,” I remain, not exactly blessed, but in good company with the likes of Sam McGee, Dangerous Dan McGrew, Maggie and Grumpy, who are shoveling coal right beside me.

Looking forward to your visit,

Ray Rasmussen  
(Signed for Ray by The Lady Known as Lou)

lunch break –  
the smell of roasting wieners  
and singed hair

warm musings –  
the deep freeze  
of winter

Note:

The epigraphs, quotes and characters from are from Robert Service, “The Cremation of Sam MacGee” and “The Shooting of Dan McGrew,” in *The Spell of the Yukon and Other Verses*, Barse & Co. New York, N.Y.

## Protective Services

Bryan Rickert, USA

Rain washed most of the blood down to the sewer in the parking lot after it happened. The policeman mentioned how hard it was to collect evidence in that type of weather. But it didn't matter. They had the shooter in custody. "Open and shut case," he said. For him maybe. But for us, the case had just started. The case of her three children left behind.

parent-teacher conference  
window light fills  
an empty chair

## Childhood

Djurdja Vukelic Rozic, Croatia

When a young man knocked at the door of our family farm in search of help for his broken-down car left on the country road nearby, I saw my sister Ana's rosy cheeks and the sweetest smile ever. That night I realized our childhood was over.

As time went by, my sisters got married and left our home, taking a part of my heart with them. My brother married Julie, our neighbor and they stayed on the farm, expecting their second child then. I had no idea what to do with my youth, so I entered the Liberal Arts studies at a college several hundred miles away. A big step for a country girl. As time went by, I was hoping I'd know what to do next. Whoever said it was easy and nice to be young, lied.

subsistence agriculture  
a lecturer speaks of  
the three sisters\*

\*Crops of corn, beans, and squashes sown and grown together

## A Call to Arms

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

Zillions of ants. Tiny ants. In my kitchen. Not there when preparing dinner. An hour later. There. On the floor. In a circular mass the size of a dinner plate, moving out, spreading in lines across the red tile floor.

Could be sugar ants, odorous ants, pharaoh ants. I'm not about to get on the floor and check the size and color. They shouldn't be here. My outside perimeters are protected, sprayed with an invisible shield. The barricades are in place. All openings secure.

I've been careful. Diligent. Been on guard. So why. . .? Then I see the why. Crumbs on the floor. Dropped earlier and ignored, intended to be swept up later. Bad decision that. I follow the line to where it begins. A breach in the baseboard on an outside wall. A scout ant must have discovered that opening, entered, smelled food and sent out a signal, a bugle call to summon the troops.

No time to waste. I leap into action.

fearless in battle  
with a can of Raid  
I am Samurai

I gather the bodies. Bury them en masse in the trash. Sweep up the crumbs. Mop the floor and plug up the baseboard hole with a toothpick. With barricades secure again, I wonder what Issa would have done.

## Lost Love

Tom Staudt, Australia

“Hey, nice jacket.” “Thanks.” Doing a one eighty turn I say. “I got it at my special boutique.” Troy knows that means a second-hand shop. He checks out the fabric, when he finds a folded piece of paper in the pocket.

“What’s that?” “No idea, I didn’t check the pockets.” He hands it to me. “It’s a letter!”

*My darling,*

*I love you. I will leave him, we belong together, and if you feel the same way, meet me tomorrow morning nine o’clock at central station.*

*We run away. We can be together for ever, in a place where no one knows us.*

*Forever yours*

*M xxx*

We look at each other. “That sounds like scene from a movie.”

After a long pause Troy says: “That’s so sad. I bet he never found this letter! I wonder what happened?” ...

deer tracks washed away  
the fawn halts and looks  
left, right, left again . . .

## Peruvannam

Vidya S Venkatramani, India

oil lamp—  
the space between me  
and the deity

As a child I prided in having what only a few other children had, a great grandmother. She was a bird-like woman in her nineties, swathed in layers of nine-yard sari, smelling of Ayurvedic oils and Tulsi and with a skin like parchment paper. She was a relic from the bygone ages for me. If great-gran was hoary, then the temple she went to everyday was even hoarier, at least eight hundred years old as per archeologists. For me and my cousins, besides reading books from grandfather's collections and pottering around the kitchen with grandma, there was nothing much to do during our holidays in this remote village. And so, we would accompany the venerable old lady every evening to the temple. A ten-minute walk and we would be at the temple grounds. Leaving our footwear at the entrance, I would always wait for the moment when my feet would touch the coarse gravel first and then the soft grass and lastly the granite walk-way for circumambulation.

temple path—  
the warmth of the sun  
on every stone

We would chase each other and run around the seven-acre temple grounds. All around, encircling the temple stood huge peepul trees with out-spread canopies---sages in meditation, great-gran whispered. She also told us about the huge temple festivals when rows of caparisoned elephants stood, crowds thronged and the orchestra would be heard a mile away. Now all was silent. There was hardly a soul except for us.

Besides the main shrine, there was a flight of steps where there was an idol of Siva depicting the Lord on Mount Kailas. Great-gran would be saying her prayers down

while we girls would race right to the top of the steps. From there, we could see the mossy red-tiled rooftops of the temple, the huge peepul trees and the blue sky beyond. There was no sound except for the cooing of the doves nestling in the eaves and the soft murmur of great grandmother's prayers punctuated with "Shiva! Shiva!". This, I thought to myself, was the most peaceful place on earth.

Now, standing here many years later with my family, everything is the same, the red rooftops, the great circle of trees and the sky beyond. But in between the cooing of the doves, there is no great-gran murmuring her prayers. Coming to think of it, grandmother and grand father are also not around. Why even, father is no more! I can hear the crackle of dry leaves as the wind scatters them over the rooftops.

morning glory –  
my baby's fingers curl  
around mine

*Notes: Peruvannam- a village in Trissur district of Kerala State, India*

## The Daily Grind

Simon Wilson, UK

Listen to the roar of the exhaust, watch the Porsche streak away from the traffic lights. And watch him put his brakes on to hold it down to forty. All the horsepower in the world doesn't make you fast enough to beat a speed camera.

It smells like the start of a Grand Prix - the tang of petrol mingles with the scent of burnt rubber as he streaks away again. This time a white van blocks his progress and we end up side by side in a queue. It's a great car, and I would swap for a day or two if I had money to burn and women to impress. However, my life has taken a different course to his, and I have shopping to collect and kids to take training.

overview  
a line of ants glistens  
my commute

More lights. He looks in his mirror to see me back with him once again.

"My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings," I shout at the back of his head. "Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

Noise, smoke, action! The car leaps away from the lights, a little old lady, peering over the top of the steering wheel in a silver Toyota, baulks him this time. I slip past them and leave him fuming as he is forced to stop at the next set of lights.

in time  
all buildings crumble  
a magpie nests

## Benares

Robert Witmer, Japan

What to make of memories of death. Twice gone. And yet the light in the temple by the holy river and the dirge of the harmonium go on. Antyesti: The body burned in final sacrifice. Go to the waters the scriptures say. Cold ashes fall into the holy river, where they flow away to the sea, the gold in the teeth caught in an untouchable's wicker basket. What remains. Untouched. By death. Or music's memories. Of light at night. A river of dead stars shining overhead. Even life when one was young. Was old. The gods made the river. We made it holy. With our ashes, our music, our gold teeth, and our memories.

moonlight  
on a passing river  
love trembles

## Editor's Choices (EC) - Haibun

As I went over the haibun in this issue, I remembered that it is always a difficult task to choose the Editor's choices. The common theme in these three choices is life in the past, present and future.

The first of these is:

### At the Crossroads (EC)

Hazel Hall, Australia

*The Chords: "Sh-boom," 1954.*

At the crossroads a girl is watching the lights. Slung over one shoulder hangs a bulging backpack. Long brown hair tumbles down her back. She wears a short cotton dress revealing bare legs. Open shoes invite the wind to move around perfect feet. Vehicle after vehicle is whizzing past.

I remember standing on a corner like that when I walked to Teachers' College. *Sh-boom, sh-boom. Life could be a dream sweetheart.* Out of the blue comes an old song of the time. There weren't as many *sh-booms* in our lives then. The biggest one happened in Hiroshima before my recall. Then *boom by boom*, more and more arrived.

Now the world is full of *sh-booms*. Conspiracy theories, extreme weather events, military coups, nuclear missiles, terrorists, viruses. I wonder how many this girl will face in her future. Suddenly I fear for her. All those *do-roo-do-dos* like street dogs fighting over the meat of survival. Will the next *sh-boom* destroy her world for ever?

As if wild birds, time and sanity are flying away. *Sh-boom if I could take you to a paradise up above . . .*

future shock  
I find myself rushing  
into the past

Note:

James M. Salem & others. "Sh-Boom & the Bomb: A Postwar Call & Response."  
*Columbia Journal of American Studies* 7, 2006.

*Hazel Hall brings us in to a time when the Cold War between the West and the East was raging almost 70 years ago. A-Bombs and H-Bombs and long-range bombers. I suspect that most of us reading this journal were not alive in 1954 when the song Sh-Boom was recorded. But, what Hall reminds us is that tensions between West and East have eased, yet this planet is in grave danger from many more threats. Perhaps, Paradise above will be our escape.*



The second haibun is Betrayal by Sushama Kapur.

## **Betrayal (EC)**

Sushama Kapur, India

Turning the pages of the mislaid papers with a growing sense of doom, she pauses before the last page. The blank underside stares back. Eyes squeezed shut, the overheard phrase from last night plays over and over in her mind. Reluctantly, she lifts a corner of the page, turns it over and opens her eyes . . .

long road  
lightning splits  
the indigo sky

*Sushama Kapoor begins the haibun with papers mislaid. Perhaps a first glance at the papers caught her by surprise. A sense of doom enters. It doesn't matter if it's with the second or a third read. A part of her life is gone. I have my own interpretation of what lies ahead. Other readers will no doubt have their own.*

*Yet, she will survive to begin a new journey on a long road.*



My third choice is:

### **The HMS Situationship (EC)**

Colleen M. Farrelly, USA

Kneeling beside his bed, she grasped one of his tentacles, gently kissing it and murmuring her wish to stay on Ares V. He reached under her derriere, sucking her thigh with his tentacle and lifting her onto the bed as their lips locked. She deftly undid her bra and had started to dispatch her blouse when the watch went off again: two minutes until her life-support ring would wear off, suffocating her in Ares V's sulfur dioxide ambiance.

quickies and hickies —  
loving on an installment plan

*I'll admit it, this haibun is over the top, way over the top. Some of you may argue that it is not a haibun. Many of you know that there are no set rules in haibun. Some are rules because editors choose to make their own.*

*Does it matter that it is a Sci-Fi vignette. But aren't all stories made up of fact, fiction and memories. Like all stories, whether placed in the past, present or future, we can only imagine what might be. Oh yes, and have a bit of a laugh reading it.*

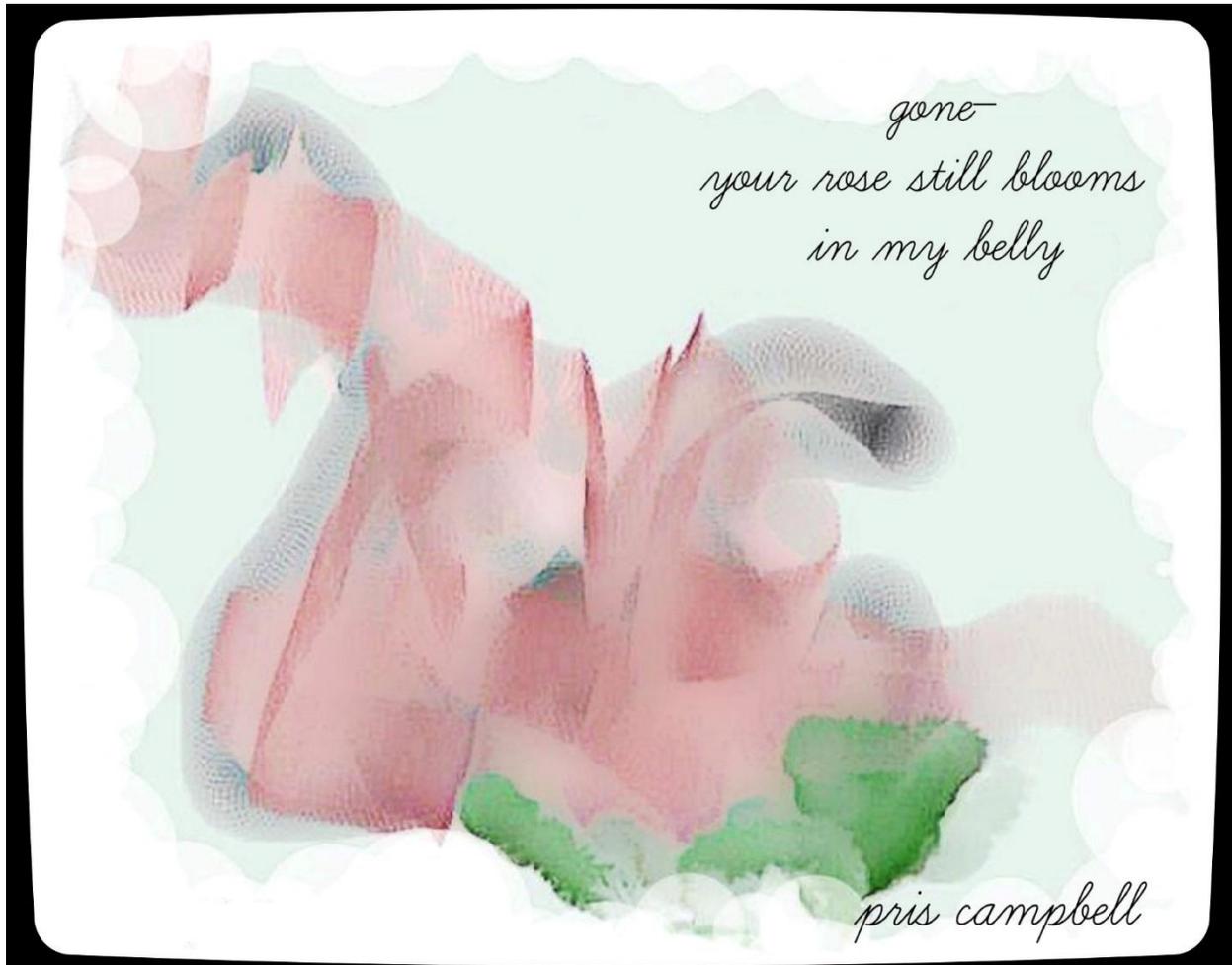
Mike Montreuil

# Haiga - Part 4

Nika - Canada



Pris Campbell - USA



Sasha Palmer - USA



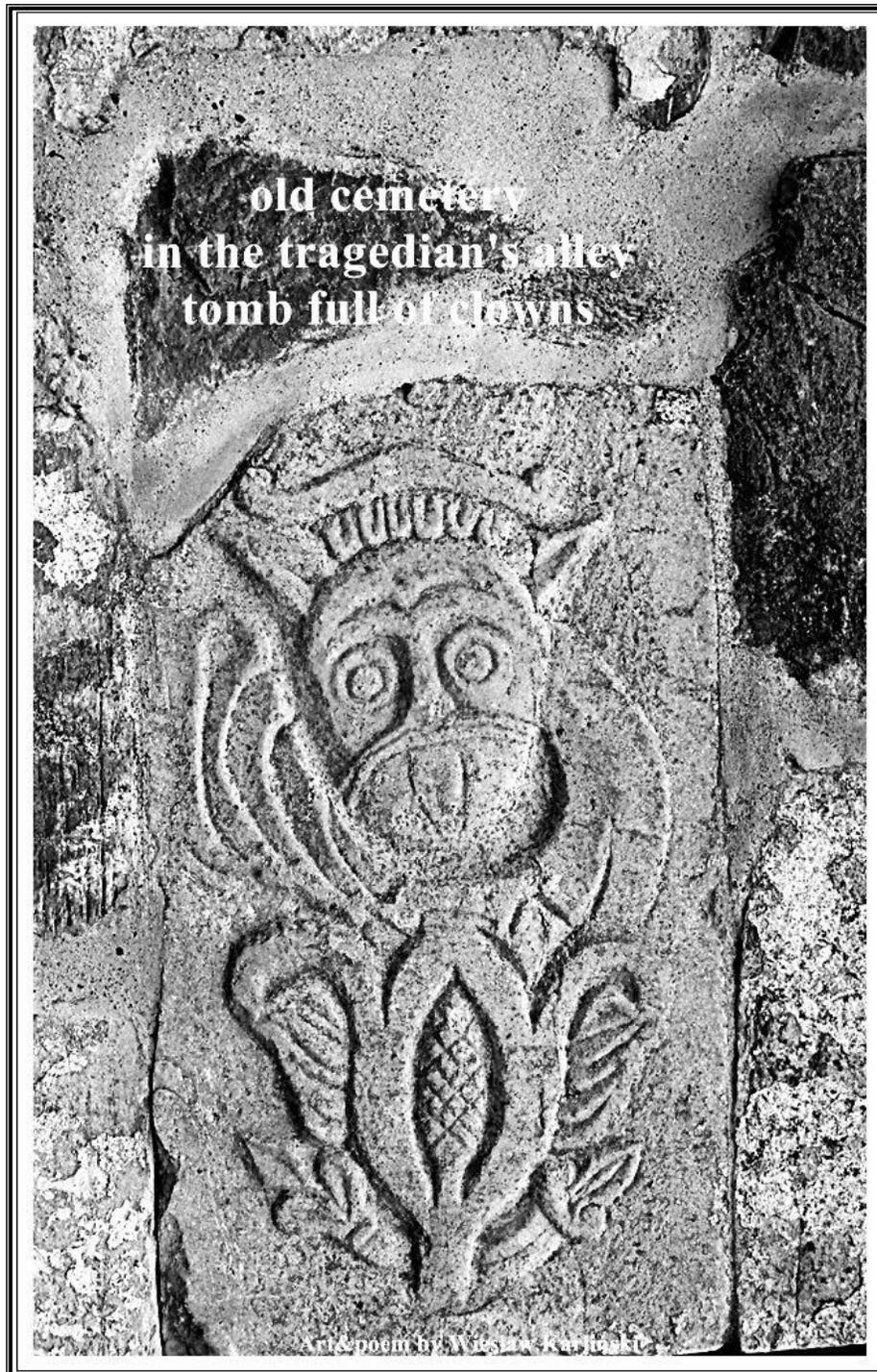
Silva Trstenjak & Tanja Trstenjak - Croatia



late autumn ~  
shall I see your flight  
my butterfly?

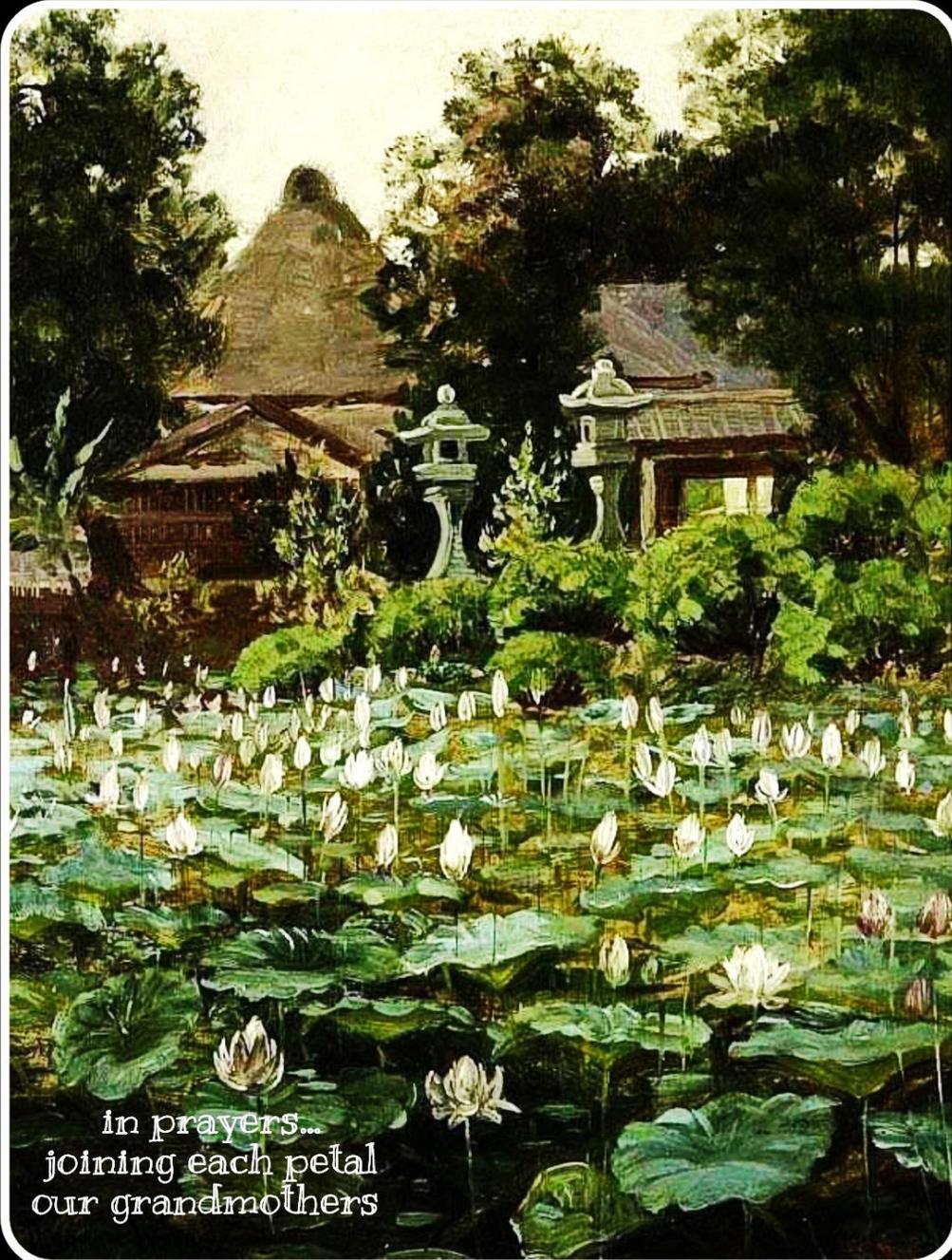
*Silva Trstenjak*

Wiesław Karliński - Poland



Zeenat Khan & Theodores Wores - India

Painting: "Garden of Buddha, The Lotus Garden", ca. 1892-1893, by Theodore Wores



in prayers...  
joining each petal  
our grandmothers

Zeenat Khan, India

## List of Poets and Artist

### A

Adjei Agyei-Baah, 10, 47  
Paul Alexandru, 41  
Cristina Angelescu, 43  
Jenny Ward Angyal, 91, 92  
An'ya, 40  
Marilyn Ashbaugh, 23, 90  
Hifsa Ashraf, 73, 79  
Joanna Ashwell, 60, 80, 105  
Gavin Austin, 30, 49, 60, 80, 86, 106

### B

Opeyemi Pamela Babafemi, 23  
Pamela A. Babusci, 81  
Ingrid Baluchi, 18  
Michael Baeyens, 32  
Mona Bedi, 65  
Amanda Bell, 16, 107  
Brad Bennett, 11, 48, 54  
Maxianne Berger, 108  
Gwen Bitti, 35  
Adrian Bouter, 28  
Mirela Brăilean, 22  
Helen Buckingham, 51, 62  
John Budan, 48, 109  
Pitt Buerken, 13, 47, 66, 88, 110  
Susan Burch, 53, 87

### C

Claire Vogel Camargo, 31, 50, 90  
Pris Campbell, 34, 60, 78, 139  
Mariangela Canzi, 18  
Matthew M. Cariello, 10  
Anna Cates, 35

Mihovila Čeperić-Biljan, 97

Jim Chessing, 91  
Christina Chin, 14, 42, 52  
Florin C. Ciobica, 41  
Glenn G. Coats, 111  
Lysa Collins, 16  
Ellen Compton, 12  
Maria Concetta Conti, 25  
Bill Cooper, 25, 49  
Jeanne Cook, 80  
Paul Cordeiro, 30  
Alvin B. Cruz, 20  
Anne Louise Curran, 81, 91  
Dan Curtis, 13

### D

Mary Davila, 81, 84, 102  
Marie Derley, 24  
Jan Dobb, 20  
June Rose Dowis, 26

### E

Keith Evetts, 30, 53, 64

### F

Colleen M. Farrelly, 113, 137  
Andreea Finichiu, 17  
P. H. Fischer, 22, 114  
Marilyn Fleming, 19, 92  
Jan Foster, 16, 82  
Jenny Fraser, 24, 49, 66, 67, 74, 77, 90  
Jay Friedenber, 29

## G

Ben Gaa, 11, 53, 61  
Michael Galko, 28  
Mike Gallagher, 11, 56  
Elizabeth Gold, 39  
LeRoy Gorman, 31, 56, 88, 90  
Ivo Gospodinov, 99  
Sherry Grant, 61  
Laurie Greer, 27  
Eufemia Griffo, 26

## H

Hazel Hall, 28, 49, 78, 115, 135, 136  
Johnnie Johnson Hafernik, 59, 72  
Dan Hardison, 44, 116  
Jon Hare, 10, 77  
John Hawkhead, 34, 65, 75  
Ray Hennessy, 40  
Ruth Holzer, 28, 37, 38, 65, 84, 145  
Frank Hooven, 19, 145  
Vladislav Hristov, 24  
Marilyn Humbert, 21, 92  
Samantha Sirimanne Hyde, 31

## J

Vijay Joshi, 117

## K

Richard Kakol, 83, 91  
Sushama Kapur, 12, 63, 118, 136  
Wiesław Karliński, 142  
Keitha Keyes, 85, 88, 95  
Zeenat Khan, 143  
Craig Kittner, 13  
Vilma Knežević, 33  
Josip Kraljić, 97  
Padmini Krishnan, 19

## L

Jill Lange, 33, 50  
Michael Henry Lee, 15, 54  
Douglas J. Lanzo, 23  
Ryland Shengzhi Li, 27, 82  
Eva Limbach, 20, 57  
Kristen Lindquist, 20  
Chen-ou Liu, 29, 48, 63, 80, 83  
Cyndi Lloyd, 14  
Anthony Lusardi, 12

## M

Carmela Marino, 16  
Richard L Matta, 33  
Marietta McGregor, 119  
Dorothy M. Messerschmitt, 72  
Mark Miller, 31, 62, 63  
Daniela Misso, 78  
Robert Moyer, 23, 55

## N

Chiaki Nakano, 14  
Stephen Nelson, 120  
Maurice Nevile, 10, 51  
Stephanie Newbern, 47  
Nika, 15, 47, 59, 138

## O

Nola Obee, 21  
Sean O'Connor, 121  
Ben Oliver, 17  
Franjo Ordanić, 71  
Sasha Palmer, 140  
Linda Papanicolau, 97  
Shalini Pattabiraman, 122  
Lorraine Pester, 101  
Margherita Petriccione, 29

Pippa Phillips, 17, 62, 84  
Dottie Piet, 22, 64  
Madhuri Pillai, 32, 55  
Robbie Porter, 123  
Marilyn Potter, 124  
Jacek Pokrak, 70  
Sandi Pray, 146

## R

Carol Raisfeld, 14, 57, 84, 94  
Milan Rajkumar, 58, 103  
Kala Ramesh, 8  
Valentina Ranaldi-Adams, 57  
Nancy Rapp, 22  
Ray Rasmussen, 125  
Bhawana Rathore, 51, 93  
Dave Read, 79, 85  
Dian Duchin Reed, 27, 58, 69  
Meera Rehm, 30  
Bryan Rickert, 23, 36, 48, 64, 67, 68, 85,  
85, 127  
Edward J. Rielly, 17  
Jonathan Roman, 25  
Aron Rothstein, 32  
Cynthia Rowe, 15, 60, 83, 85  
D. V. Rozic, 19, 21, 50, 61, 86, 128  
Margaret Owen Ruckert, 89

## S

Srinivas S, 20, 77, 79  
Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, 27, 37, 58  
Sandra Šamec, 71  
Agnes Eva Savich, 21, 40  
Julie Schwerin, 34, 65, 99  
Joe Sebastian, 34, 47, 93  
Teji Sethi, 87  
Manoj Sharma, 11  
Richa Sharma, 82  
Adelaide B. Shaw, 89, 129

Ted Sherman, 12  
Neena Singh, 50, 52  
Derek Sprecksel, 14  
K Srilata, 12, 59  
Tom Staudt, 13, 56, 62, 81, 89, 130  
Debbie Strange, 31, 52, 55, 86, 87

## T

Angela Terry, 34, 57  
Elisa Theriana, 92  
Corine Timmer, 87  
Kristina Todorova, 100  
Silva Trstenjak, 19, 61, 141  
Tanja Trstenjak, 141

## V

Kevin Valentine, 32  
Vidya S Venkatramani, 131  
Rp Verlaine, 18, 61  
Steliana Cristina Voicu, 26, 93

## W

Joseph P. Wechselberger, 33, 56  
Scott Wiggerman, 51, 53  
Tony Williams, 10  
Simon Wilson, 86, 89, 133  
Amber Winter, 79  
Robert Witmer, 30, 134  
Theodores Wores, 143

## Y

Quendryth Young, 25, 49

## Z

Eugeniusz Zacharski, 15, 70  
John Zheng, 28, 63, 77



Gond style - Madhya Pradesh and adjoining areas, Central India