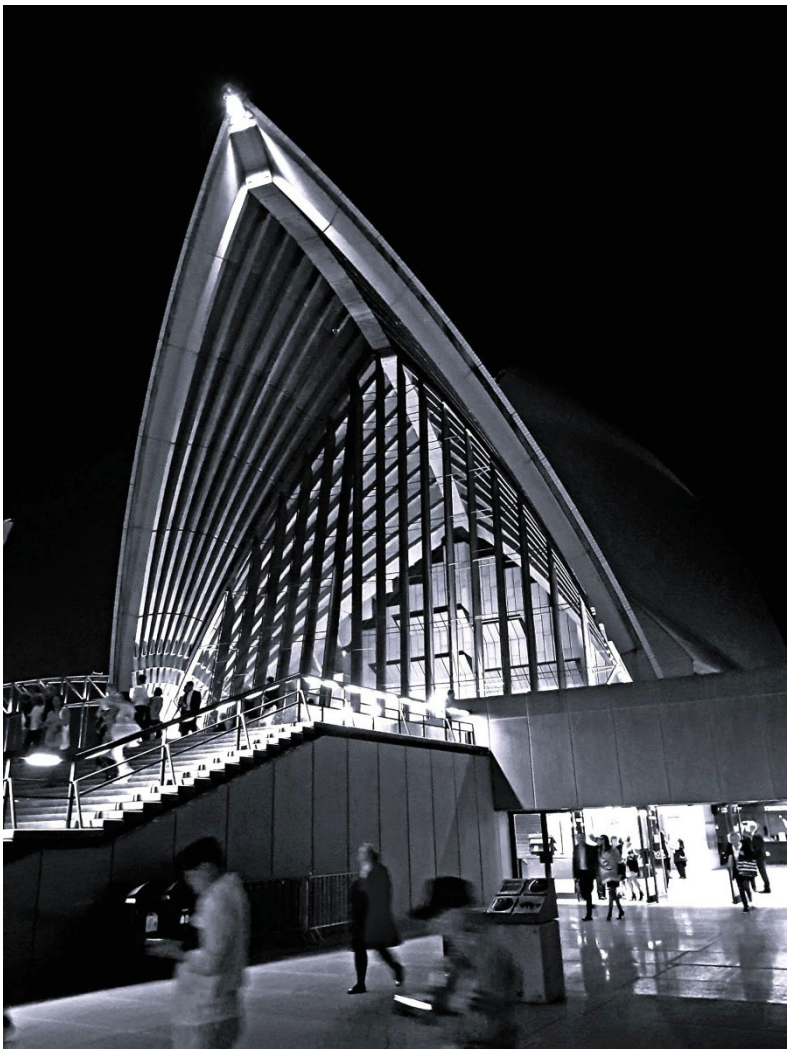
cattails



April 2026

cattails

April 2026 Issue

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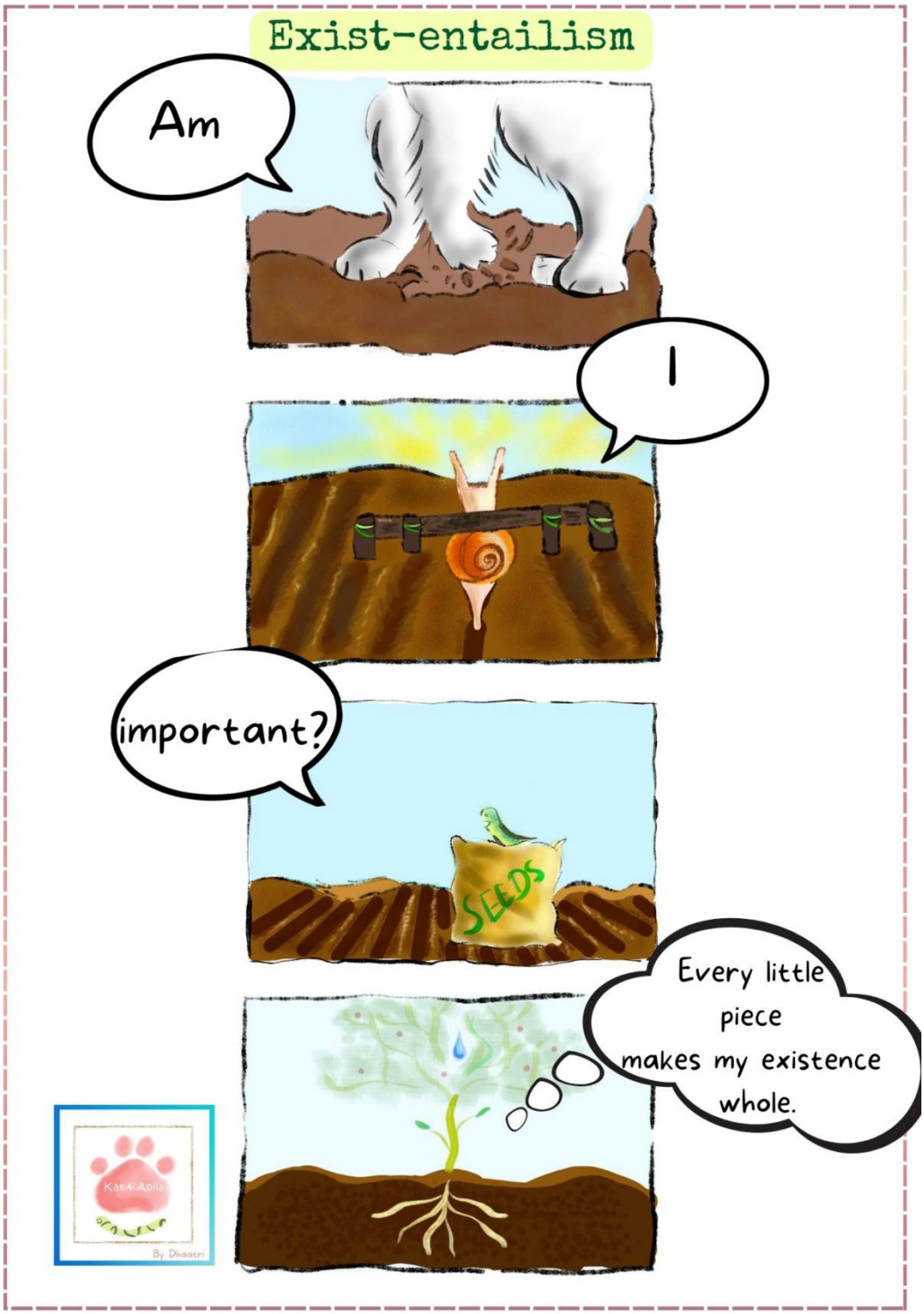
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Cover and Section Photos: Gavin Austin—Cover, 7, 49, 85, 119, 186, 221
Cover**:** Sydney Opera House

Gavin Austin is an artist and writer living in Sydney, Australia. His short form poetry is widely published, and he is currently one of the four editors of *Echidna Tracks – Australian haiku*. Self-taught, Gavin enjoys photography and has recently received awards for his work. The series of photographs appearing in this issue, he is titling 'Sydney in a Pocket', as all images of these Sydney city attractions were taken on his smart phone.

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Dhaatri Vengunad Menon

Introduction

In his study of Marcel Proust's theories of time, Samuel Beckett, the Irish playwright and literary critic (1906 -1989) * said that in the "haze" of "our smug will to live" we hold a "pernicious and incurable optimism" This seems particularly relevant given the belligerence-riven and volatile global situation. Have the hitherto-held universal conventions of dignity, equality and respect for all individuals and nations failed to counter this strident onslaught?

Celan's haunting words come to mind:

When the silent one comes and beheads the tulips: Who wins?
Who loses?" **

His poetry wrought out of the decimation of his family in the Holocaust gives some hope of the restorative potential of writing. Nietzsche said, "We have art that we may not perish of the truth." ***

Indeed, many poets in *cattails* have written with heartfelt eloquence of the dystopian undertows of our times.

This issue marks ten years since we relaunched in April 2017. Mike is the unobtrusive staying power behind the journal who retrieves lost submissions, updates and manages the website and ensures that every issue is brought out with the utmost attention to creative and literary quality. Geethanjali has been with *cattails* right from the time of the relaunch, imparting the haiku section with her inimitable quiet, knowledgeable and patient stewardship. David is an inspirational editor with his distinctive EC commentaries and dealing with the senryu submissions through the travails of connectivity during his work travels in South East Asia and South Africa. Lavana imbues the haiga selections with her passion and artistic insight. Jenny is unfailingly supportive, enthusiastic and helpful in her dealings with the poets. Shobhana has brought her own unique vision and style to haibun.

We're fortunate to have a young, talented artist, Dhaarti Vengunad Menon as the cartoonist. For this 10th year issue we proudly showcase Gavin Austin's black and white photographs of Sydney.

Sonam Chhoki

Notes:

* Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit, Samuel Beckett, 1987, Calder Publications.

** Chanson of a Lady in the Shade from Paul Celan: Selected Poem trans. M. Hamburger, Penguin Books, 1987.

*** The Will to Power by Friedrich Nietzsche, edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann, 1968.

Haiku



Chinese Gardens of Friendship

early plum blossoms—
the horseshoe above the door
a little crooked

Michael Dylan Welch, USA

snow melt trickle
a crocus muscles
into the world

Brad Bennett, USA

almond blossom . . .
the short memory
of my little boy

fiore di mandorlo...
la memoria corta
del mio bambino

Carmela Marino, Italy

bitter cold
bright red cardinals cheer
the lengthening days

Jon Hare, USA

between worms
another song
from the robin

Jeff Hoagland, USA **(EC)**

a sunburst
of golden wattle
early spring

Keitha Keyes, Australia

garden café –
next to our table
first violets

vrtni kafić
do našeg stola
prve ljubice

Mihovila Čeperić-Biljan, Croatia

cherry blossoms
I speak with my daughter
in two different languages

вишнев цвят
говоря с дъщеря ми
на два различни езика

Boryana Boteva, Bulgaria

spring morning
birds tidying
the garden beds

proljetno jutro
ptice pospremaju
vrtne gredice

Slobodan Pupovac, Croatia

you sigh softly
wild daffodils
light the river bank

Thomas Smith, USA

creek flow
each pine needle
channels its share

Agnes Eva Savich, USA

spring clouds—
smudges on
grandma's recipes

Martina Matijević, Croatia

tow zone
a cold wind
takes the blossoms

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

spring drizzle . . .
the horse cart loaded
with manure

बसंत की बूंदा-बांदी . . .
खाद से लदी हुई
घोड़ा गाड़ी

Neena Singh, India

shallow stream
kangaroos splash
through the dawn chorus

Gregory Piko, Australia

spring fever
two soaring eagles tighten
concentric circles

Nola Obee, Canada

dawn-lit water
mango pollen floating
on top of the pail

ਪ੍ਰਭਾਤ ਦੀ ਲੋਅ
ਬਾਲਟੀ ਦੇ ਪਾਣੀ ਉੱਤੇ
ਅੰਬਾਂ ਦਾ ਬੂਰ

Arvinder Kaur, India

delayed haying
the insistent whine
of fledglings

Sally Biggar, USA

the silence
after zazen—
blossom haze

Kanchan Chatterjee, India

lingering in
a spot of sunlight
shrine koi

Ravi Kiran, India

quadruplets on scan . . .
in my neighbor's garden
a fluffle of rabbits

Djurdja Vukelic Rozic, Croatia

churning
with turtles
the vernal pool

Ruth Holzer, USA

spring poppies
my voice dissolves
into twilight

Eufemia Griffo, Italy

scrutinizing
the child's lips
white carnation

Jerome Berglund, USA

a willow reflects
in the calm lake
spring zazen

nel lago calmo
si specchia il salice—
zazen di primavera

Nazarena Rampini, Italy

fresh cut grass
following me
until lilacs

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

sunflower seed—
the shell of her small self
cracked open

Julie Schwerin, USA

in uneven grass
fresh deer scat . . .
warm Easter

Anna Cates, USA

purple rain
the canal carrying
jarul blooms

बैगनी वर्षा
नहर में बहते हुए
जरुल के फूल

Govind Joshi, India

Note: jarul—lagerstroemia,
Queen's Crepe Myrtle in Hindi

butterfly collector
the tom cat
does a backflip

Rick Jackofsky, USA

clearing shelves
a ticket pressed
between two pages

Simon Wilson, UK

canyon dawn
the rocky walls begin
to chitter

sanjuktaa asopa, India

taped to the fence
of my son's school
monarch chrysalises

zalijepljene za ogradu
škole moga sina
kukuljice monarha

Goran Gatalica, Croatia

a path to the brook . . .
a toddler nibbles at bread
for the fish

putem do potoka
mališan gricka
kruh za ribice

Silva Trstenjak, Croatia
Translation: D.V. Rozic, Croatia

swifts on the wing
cattle cooling
in the tranquil loch

Tony Williams, Scotland

cherry picking the promise of spring

Katie Montagna, Ireland

agave flower—
the sound of the sea
on my words

fiore d'agave—
il rumore del mare
sulle parole

Cinzia Pitingaro, Italy

bright sun
the windshield crack
pulses gold

David Oates, USA

clouds collar
the topmost spruce
alabaster sky

Deborah Burke Henderson, USA

arms akimbo
their hula hips
become the sea

Matthew Caretti, American Samoa

yoga with ease . . .
touching her nose to her back
the sea lion

Catharine Summerfield Hāna, USA

joyride cycling through sky mirrors

Alexander Groth, Germany

forest trek
a bull ant pillaging
sweet dew

Gwen Bitti, Australia

digging the ground
to line it with silk . . .
spider tapestry

Sathya Venkatesh, India

waiting for its mate
in the lemon tree
mohawked bulbul

Vishal Prabhu, India

peach pit—
weaving ridges
on a soft palm

koštica breskve —
brazde se utkivaju
na meku dlanu

Amir Kapetanović, Croatia

hay moon—
a boy plays on the pan-pipe
to his girlfriend

lună de fân–
un băiat cântă la nai
prietenei sale

Steliana Cristina Voicu, Romania

each umbel
a complete sentence
Queen Anne's lace

Dylan Stover, USA

bindweed tendrils . . .
fleetingly your arm
under mine

vrilles de liseron
fugacement ton bras
sous le mien

Marie Derley, Belgium

the train pulls you away
doves coo
from the rafters

Ruth Kennedy, Canada

breadcrumbs—
a line lifting
north

Elliot Diamond, USA

a curlew's cry
haunts her dreams . . .
the empty crib

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

gifts offered
in memory of a child –
scattered elm seeds

doni offerti
in memoria di un bimbo –
semi d'olmo sparsi

Daniela Misso, Italy

graying dusk . . .
shadows of whitetail deer
fading into headlight

暮色苍苍…
白尾鹿的影子
隱入車燈中

John Zheng, USA

salmon in the valley sunset

Michael Lamb, USA

starless night . . .
navigating
on memory alone

Angela Terry, USA

no moon day
the fragrance of parijat
through the window

Ram Chandran, India

paddling in the pond
a mallard
brushes his ensō

Brian Kates, USA

murky lagoon
the mother's long neck
of a swan song

Randy Brooks, USA

cicada husks shimmer
on the adobe wall
midday silence

Alanna C. Burke, USA

long summer heat
an ant drags a seed
towards shadow

C.X. Turner, UK

barn fire
a cow still reaching through
a twisted stanchion

Edward J. Rielly, USA

fuzzy seeds
on pasture grass stalks . . .
summer frost

Diane Webster, USA

obscured mountains
the stink of wildfire
on my shirt

Stephen C. Curro, USA

wild thyme
back from the hospital
on the passenger side

Michael Henry Lee, USA

downed oak
all the smaller trees
it took with it

Bryan Rickert, USA

from sea
to shining sea
wildfires

Jay Friedenberg, USA

choke weed
a runaway river
altering course

Joanna Ashwell, UK

carrying the wild
in a dingo's cry
mountain wind

Gavin Austin, Australia

Sonata—
pizzicato of rain
on the pergola

Richard Kakol, Australia

fern fronds
feather the darkness—
needle points of rain

Jo McInerney, Australia

village monsoon
the aroma of frankincense
lingers in mother's room

ગામનું ચોમાસુ
લોબાનની સુગંધ
માતાના રૂમમાં રહે છે

Lakshmi Iyer, India

rainbow—
the forest shimmers
in a puddle

tęcza—
las mieni się
w kałuży

Artur Zieliński, Poland

farmers market
the crisscrossing wheel marks
on monsoonmud

Kala Ramesh, India

evening drizzle . . .
in the grocery bag
more potatoes

Bhawana Rathore, India

food insecurity
the empty throat pouch
of a nutcracker

Debbie Strange, Canada

a snail in my path broken moon

Wendy Cobourne, USA

dandruff
on the canopy
flowering gums

Rohan Buettel, Australia

an open space
for air to come and go
beaver lodge

Bill Cooper, USA

mum's song
dust moves
in the sunbeam

canzone di mamma
la polvere si muove
nel fascio di luce

Maria Concetta Conti, Italy

leste wind
between banana leaves
shifting light

Ben Oliver, England

riverboat man
with more teeth gone than not
moonless starlight

Cassady O'Reilly-Hahn (orha), USA

the silence
when swallows leave—
waning moon

il silenzio
quando le rondini partono --
luna calante

Mariangela Canzi, Italy

windless autumn—
the tower's old weathercock
quivers

bezwietrzna jesień —
stary kurek na wieży
drży

Eugeniusz Zacharski, Poland

hometown
the wistfulness
of oak trees

Timothy Daly, Italy

ramshackle barn
the heart-shaped face
of a ghost owl

Stephenie Story, USA

autumn wind
long sunlit waves
of grass

Emil Karla, France

sunlit hands
mom still
doesn't know me

Robert Hirschfield, USA

don't cry sparrow
we will share the sorrow—
autumn twilight

не плачи врапче
поделићемо тугу-
јесењи сумрак

Mile Lisica, Serbia

orange oak leaf
the lazy turn
of the stream

Dennis Owen Frohlich, USA

older chrysanthemums the stretch of many hues

పండుబారిన చామంతులపై ఎన్ని రంగుల చారలో

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, India

this last step to the infinite mackerel clouds

Joshua St. Claire, USA

gull cries
deep fog sinks its roots
into the

John Hawkhead, UK

evening smoke . . .
the day dissolves
into stars

Manoj Sharma, Nepal

winter migration
the lingering hope
of finding a home

Christina Sng, Singapore

moving day
how do I tell the birds
at our feeder

Dan Curtis

back home
the cat leaps
from my lap to yours

Neha Singh Soni, India

a winding stream
stilled by frost
wrinkles in the mirror

Robert Witmer, Japan

cedar bark
tangled with bear hair—
the test results

Nicholas Klacsanzky, USA

wild goose call . . .
grasses under frost
rim the lake

zov divlje guske . . .
jezero uokviruje
mraz na travi

Nina Kovačić, Croatia

bone pile
in a vacant nest—
what we leave behind

Curt Pawlisch, USA **(EC)**

new story
the cotton-wool silence
of falling snow

Olivier Schopfer, Switzerland

igloo silence
time slows
to white

Kathryn P. Haydon, USA

thinned icicles—
the old priest's shadow
grows smaller

ţurţuri subţiaţi—
umbra bătrânului preot
se micşorează

Mircea Moldovan, România

blizzard—
white noise broken
by the cat's purr

Ann Sullivan, USA

clasped hands
the eyes without gaze—
my mother

le mani giunte
gli occhi senza sguardo –
mia madre

Antonio Mangiameli, Italy

a cry from mom
in her sleep
winter wind

Frank Hooven, USA

late forecast
the wings of tomb angels
heavy with snow

закъсняла прогноза
огънати под снега
крилете на надгробните ангели

Radostina Dragostinova, Bulgaria

returning chill—
the queue shrinking
at the ramen shop

ラーメン屋の 列短し 寒のもどり

Keiko Izawa, Japan

power outage
cats have no word
for conversation

Jim Chessing, USA

one week sober
the low winter moon
paler

戒酒一周
冬日低垂的月亮
看起來更蒼白

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

christmas cactus if we could age like that

Pegah Rahmati Nezhad, Iran

winter sun garden stones sip the snow

Sondra J. Byrnes, USA

winter dawn—
fog blanketing the path
to you

Mohua Maulik, India

blue hour
first morning bus
breaks through the mist

Tim Dwyer, Northern Ireland/USA

winter frost
the slippery backs
of carousel horses

Mona Bedi, India

snow covered park bench
voices of summer
buried in wooden slats

Helen Sokolsky, USA

winter chill—
the gargoyle's mouth
stuffed with snow

سردی کی ٹھنڈ—
ایک شکلی پرنالے کا منہ
برف سے بھرا ہوا

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan

after the freeze—
the sparrow's chirp
so certain

Robert Lowes, USA

snow falling . . .
the world turning into
a handful of dust

Herb Tate, UK **(EC)**

winter's end—
the attic full of
butterfly souls

zima končí–
podkroví je plné
duší baboček

Hynek Koziol, Czech Republic

melting icicles . . .
broadcasting
a lost hymn

ţurţuri topindu-se…
parcă se difuzează
un imn pierdut

Cezar Ciobîcă, Romania

northern lights
the poems I have
by heart

John Pappas, USA

a pelican lands
in the Danube Delta
spring's return

Florian Munteanu, Romania

shell crater—
a new bud shining in rain
this morning

حفرة قذيفة
برعم جديد يتألق تحت المطر
هذا الصباح

Fatma Zohra Habis, Algeria

buttered toast
a halo of midges
in first light

Lorraine Haig, Australia

a new angle to consider an egret

Ian Willey, Japan

post-war march
he tries not to trample on
the little violets

powojenny marsz
on próbuje omijać
maleńkie fiołki

Urszula Marciniak, Poland

Editor's Choices (EC)—Haiku

The world is in a state of flux—war, violence, climate change, and food and energy insecurity. Yet, the number of poets engaging with haiku and the natural world is a matter of hope and a source of light. Thank you for sharing your moments with our readers. As always, the number of submissions is increasing and I face a very challenging time choosing haiku for each issue. What is presented is a fraction of the beautiful poems that we receive and are able to carry in this issue.

I hope you enjoyed the changing seasons, the playful interaction of human and natural elements, the layers that many of the poems have unfolded and the emotions that they spark in us—pain, frustration, joy, anticipation, fatigue, just being.

Here are a few poems that I have commented on from the many lovely haiku that we received.

between worms
another song
from the robin

Jeff Hoagland, USA (EC)

Jeff Hoagland brings us a scene from Spring where we hear the robin's distinctive singing. But what makes this haiku special is the bird's actions before and after the song – feeding on the scrumptious worms that also come out in the season. The haiku made me break into a smile (much needed in these times) – we cannot sing with our mouths stuffed full but definitely can in-between!

The poem is light and puts humour to good use, without it being too direct or overstated. The image it conjures in the reader is tangible and vivid – a robin, perhaps well-fed, is feeding itself more and singing in-between. That little observation by itself is enough to bring on a smile. The wonder in small moments. Thank you, Jeff Hoagland, for bringing us this little robin with great potential to cheer up our day!

bone pile
in a vacant nest—
what we leave behind

Curt Pawlisch, USA (EC)

Curt Pawlisch brings us a sombre and serious scene – a bone pile in a vacant nest. The first two lines of the haiku are a neutral observation of what the poet has observed but it created a sense of foreboding in me. 'bone pile' is a phrase that is not often seen in haiku and yet, if seen in a nest, why do I feel this sense of discomfort when I read the haiku? I didn't have to wait for long for the answer, as the third line delivers a powerful blow – 'what we leave behind'. This is a classic example of the grey area between senryu and haiku but manoeuvred so adeptly by the poet. This works well as a haiku of observation – what the poet sees when he is leaving a place – the vacant nest with the bone pile. However, there are layers and layers here. The haiku isn't about directly indicting the human race, though as one who lives in these times, I felt that twinge of guilt when I read the poem. What are we leaving behind for the next generation? Thank you, Curt Pawlisch, for this nuanced haiku.

snow falling . . .
the world turning into
a handful of dust

Herb Tate, UK (EC)

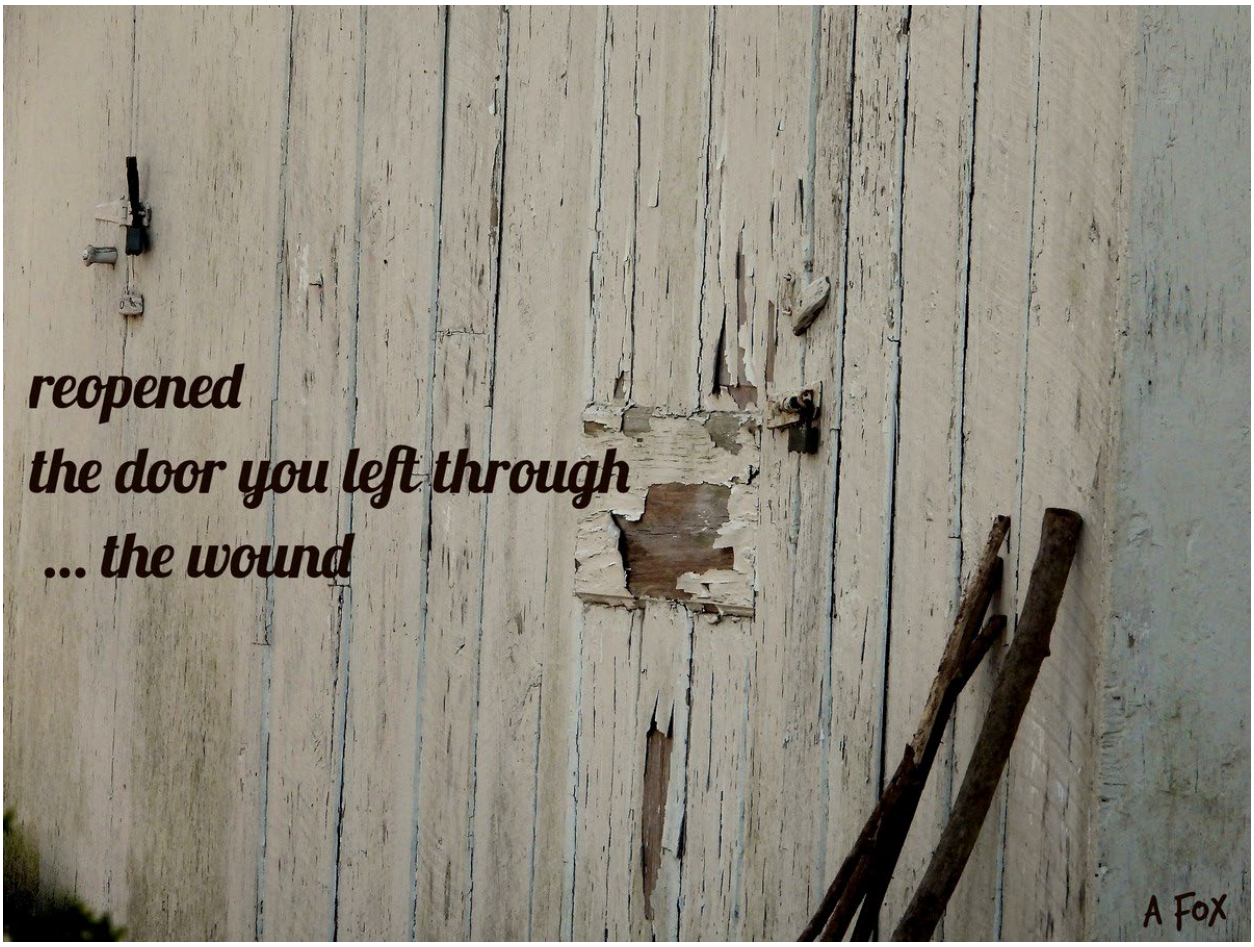
Herb Tate brings us a snowy winter in this haiku. The structure is traditional with the first line bringing us 'snow falling'. The second line, 'the world turning into', leads my imagination to a wonderland of snowflakes, people dressed in winterwear and perhaps, even Christmas lighting. Part of the third line, 'a handful of …' still managed to keep me eager and then, in the very last word, the poet delivers the message – 'dust'. Read on one level, the haiku is about one winter moment. How the scene completely changes with one word. However, on another level, the last word turns the poem deftly into a

larger and more serious issue—a reflection of our current state, of geopolitics, of all the human effects on this planet. The use of the word 'dust' perhaps alludes to 'from ashes to ashes, from dust to dust'. Thank you, Herb Tate, for this haiku that works as the very warning that we need to hear.

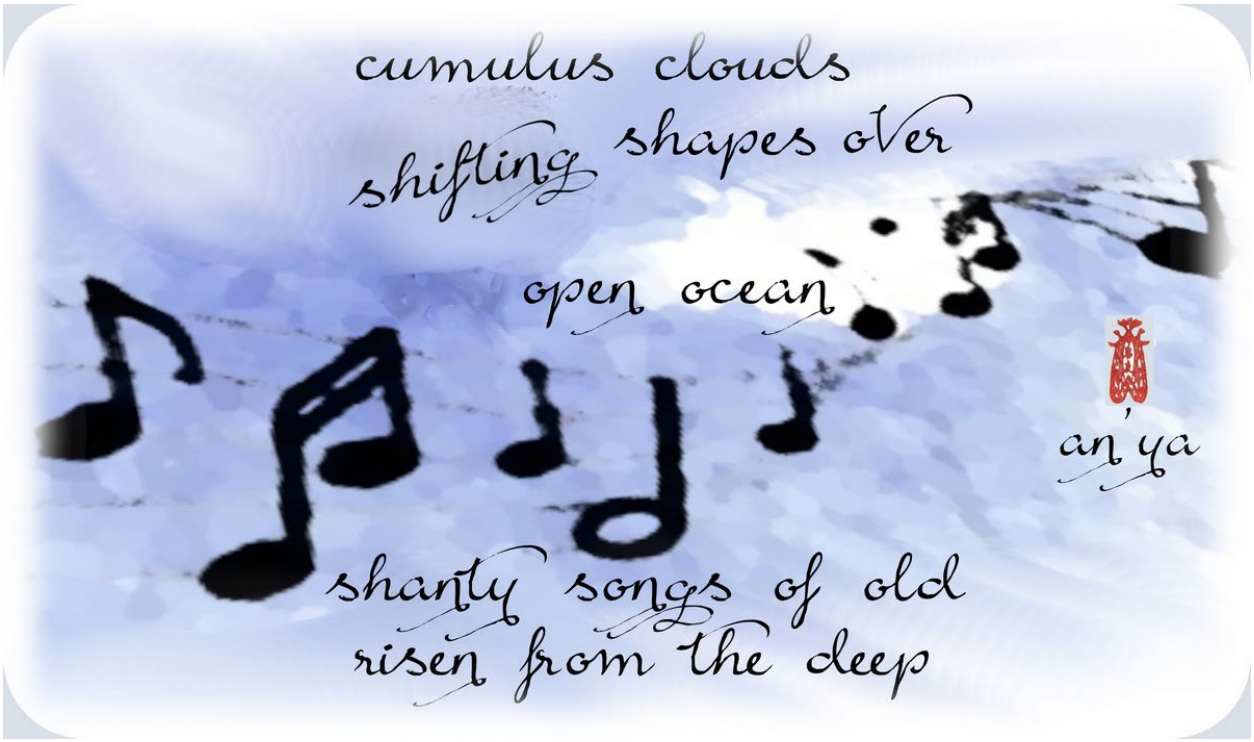
Till next time,
Geethanjali Rajan

Haiga – Part 1

Anne Fox—USA



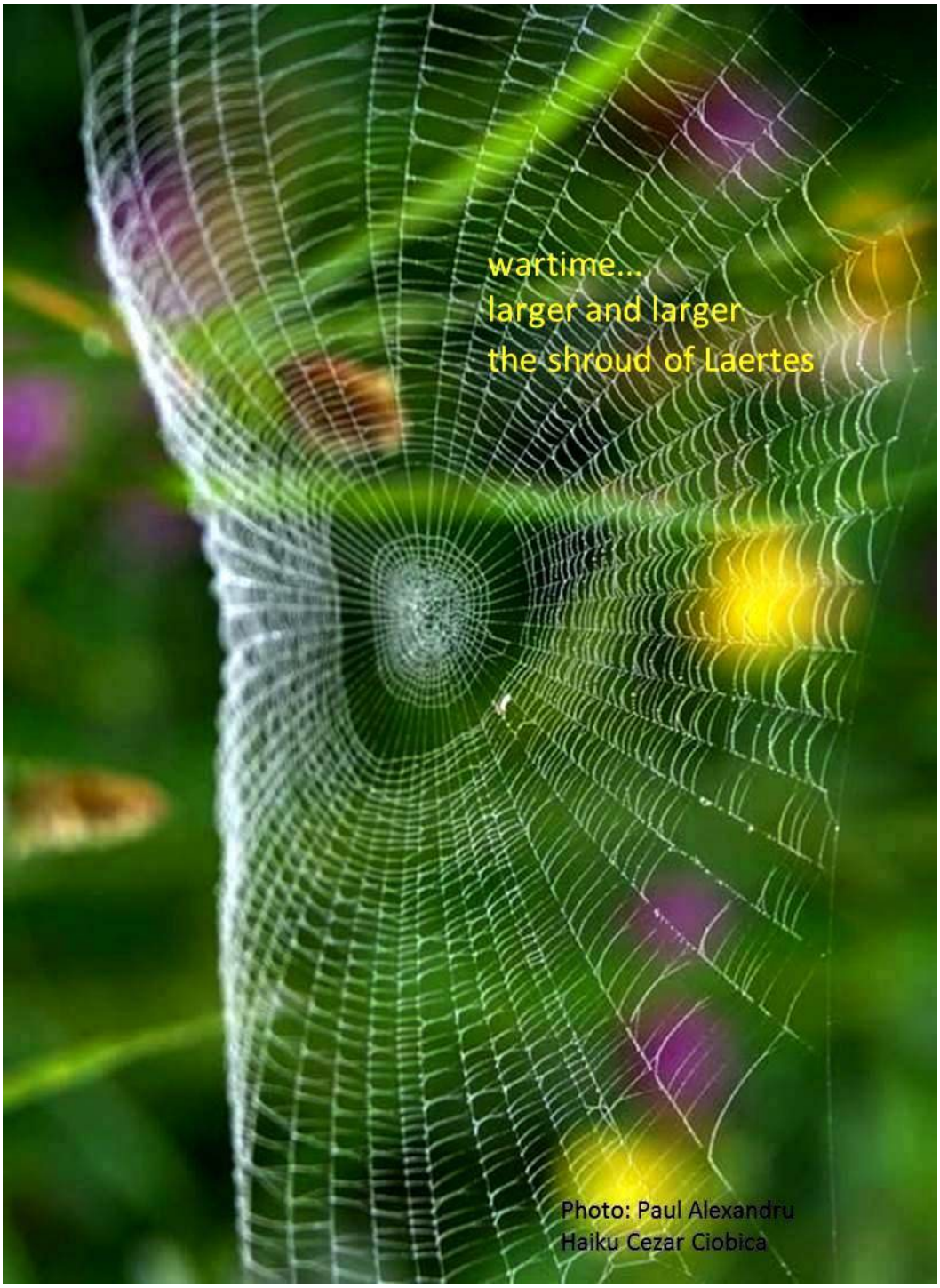
an'ya—USA


cumulus clouds
shifting shapes over
open ocean
an'ya
shanty songs of old
risen from the deep

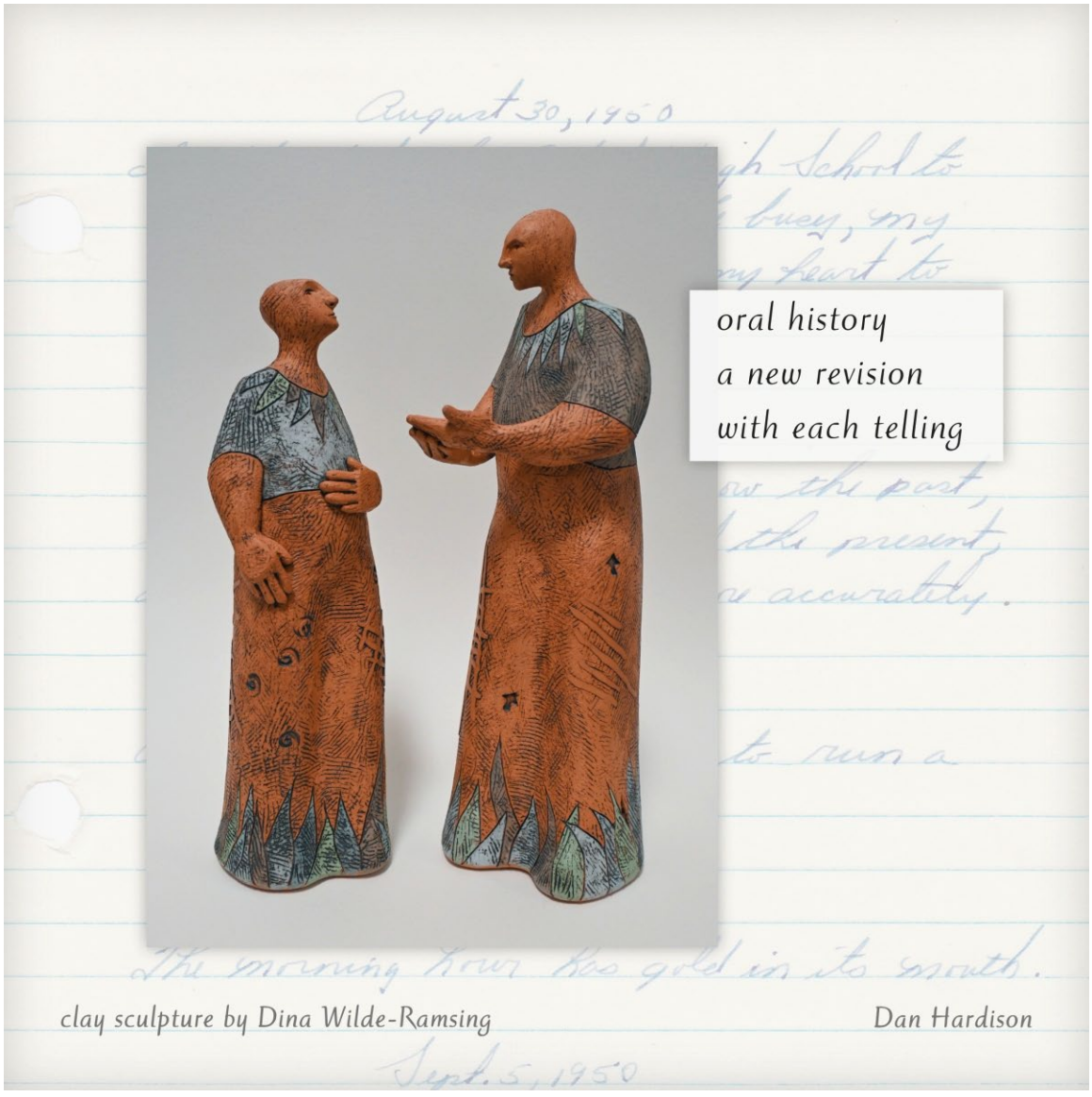
Capotă Daniela Lăcrămioara – Romania



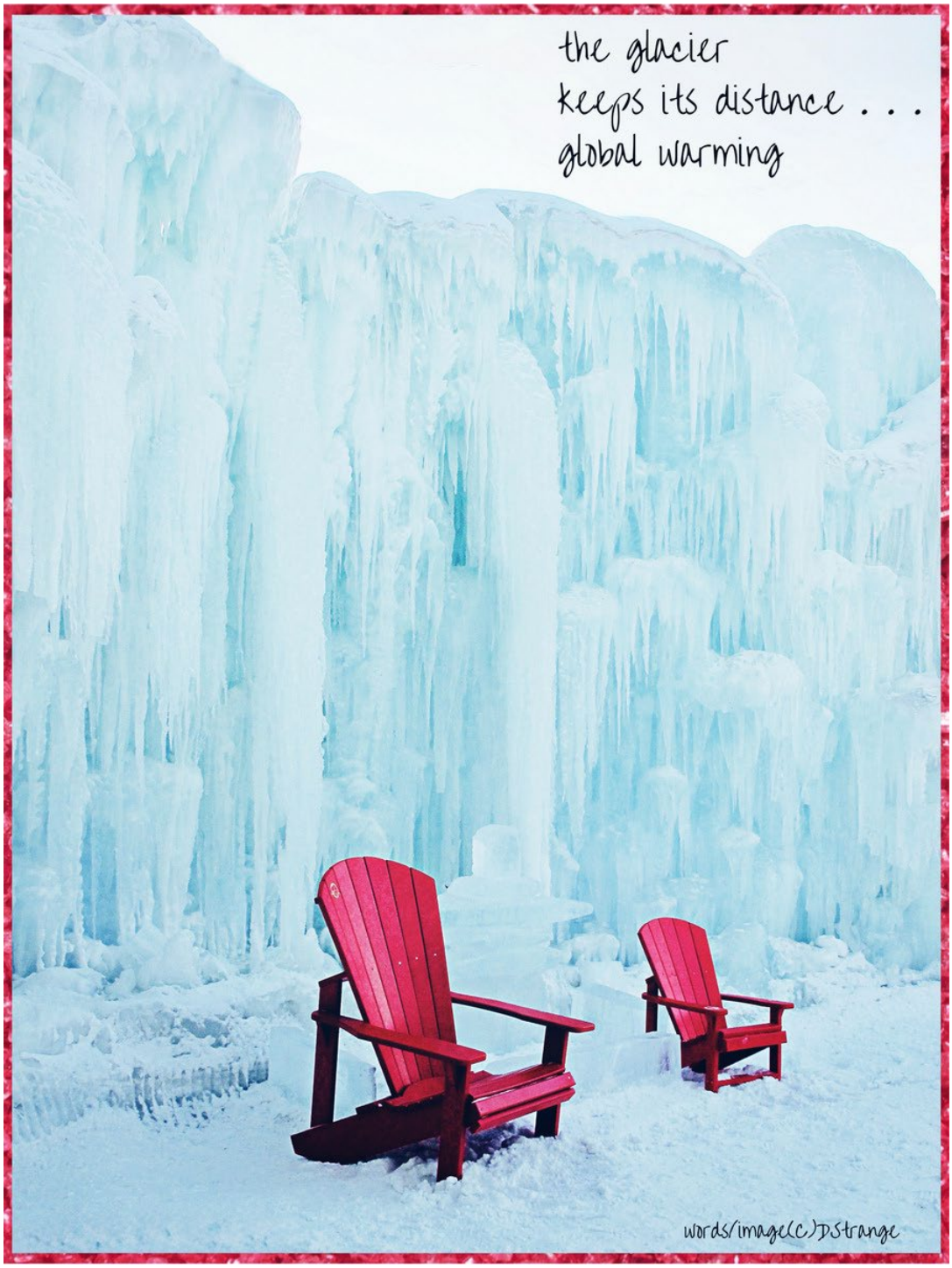
Cezar Ciobică / Paul Alexandru – Romania



Dan Hardison / Dina Wilde-Ramsing—USA



Debbie Strange—Canada



Deborah Bowman—USA



Senryu



Anzac Bridge

mother's cry
midway through the song
pickling onions

Gareth Nurden, UK

change of command—
the decorated colonel
wrangles his kids

Michael Lamb, USA

mending barbwire
with grandpa
uneasy words

Randy Brooks, USA

sea kayak--
I give up being graceful
and just crawl out

wine tasting
in the rain everything
tastes like wet dog

Angela Terry, USA

junior birder
declaring himself
a sapsucker

Peter Jastermsky, USA

eye to eye
a child and my mom
in her wheelchair

Pamela Garry, USA

finally accepting the truth childless aunt

Stephanie Zepherelli, USA

holiday season
avoiding the crowds
within me

Michael Henry Lee, USA

spring thaw—
his departing steps
enlarge

Sondra J. Byrnes, USA (EC)

curtain-call applause even for the villain

Robert Lowes, USA

visiting hours
a lizard settles
behind the curtain

मिलने का समय
एक छिपकली घुसी
पर्दे के पीछे

Neena Singh, India

weaving stories
into my daughter's braids
mother's hands

Ravi Kiran, India

winter sun
an old friend's wave
from a passing car

Nola Obee, Canada

grandma's shopping bag
sewn from kitchen curtains
I remember

Jennifer Gurney, USA

silence in the car
all the wrong turns
that got us here

no angels in the prison yard first snow

Bryan Rickert, USA

Delta blues
the muddy water
flowing from our faucet

Rick Jackofsky, USA

my dog bite wound
scarring over . . .
fox sparrow song

Anna Cates, USA

a piece of blue
from the wrong jigsaw
this longing for home

een stukje blauw
uit een verkeerde puzzel
dit verlangen naar huis

Joanne van Helvoort, The Netherlands

family photo—
everyone pretending
to be fine

Jacek Margolak, Poland

quiet morning
I check if she is
still breathing

Christina Sng, Singapore

old yearbook
the photography club
out of focus

Terri L. French, USA

old hearing aid
my father's dance moves
half a beat late

staré naslouchátko
tátovy taneční kroky
o půl doby pozadu

Hynek Koziol, Czech Republic

seventy-fifth birthday—
only one brush stroke
through the white

Nicholas Gentile, USA

empty Cathedral
a lone Soprano
singing Tudor Madrigals

ardeaglais bánaithe
–sopránó aonair
ag canadh Madragal Túdarach

Noel King, Ireland
trans. Ceaití Ní Bheildiúin

the iron bull
on her door
the ring
in his nose

Robert Witmer, Japan

early spring
within her cupped hands
a robin's egg

Jamie Wimberly, USA

painted lady
flits among flowers
maybe I'll get a tattoo

Janet Ruth, USA

newly strimmed graveyard
the scattered shards
of plastic flowers (EC)

clipping toenails
a crescent flies off
into the night sky

Mark Ritchie, UK

letting go
of the argument
ess curve of the exit

Laurinda Lind, USA

choosing an urn
the ashes we leave
for our children

death by a thousand cuts to healthcare

Julie Schwerin, USA

rainy graveyard
sharing news of my promotion
with Mom

Roberta Beach Jacobson, USA

rough landing
I can't read
my own writing

Rohan Buettel, Australia

holding my newborn
the change from
solid to gas

Bill Fay, USA

quiet dinner
without candles—
he bites into a crouton

Mary Ann Conley, USA

peace vigil—
making a noise
in the wrong place

Herb Tate, UK

school cafeteria
another lunch
of mystery meat

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

harvest over
Dad has time to shave
his stubble

Keitha Keyes, Australia

smoothing
nan's suit collar
last goodbye

Gavin Austin, Australia

drizzled away . . .
the hopscotch grid
we chalked in summer

Barrie Levine, USA

grandpa`s crossword
the word we are looking for
is love

krzyżówka dziadka
słowo którego szukamy
to miłość

Aleksandra Rybczyńska, Poland (EC)

wondering
how my eulogy will sound
blue tit's trill

Timothy Daly, Italy

breastfeeding . . .
I stare deep
into my sandwich

Tony Williams, UK (EC)

wrapping
the sari around me
6 yards of thought

Kala Ramesh, India

hark! the herald . . .
gran an octave closer
to God than us

Ben Oliver, UK

picnic date
letting the big ants
figure out our bodies

Dylan Stover, USA

revealing everything
you want to hide
sunglasses

Olivier Schopfer, Switzerland

your half-hearted promise
punched through the snow
the first crocus

половинчатото ти обещание
първият минзухар
пробил снега

Radostina Dragostinova, Bulgaria

the arguments
that I should have given
pouring rain

les arguments
que j'aurais dû donner
pluie battante

Marie Derley, Belgium

meeting you after years . . .
we share a sour cherry pie
on our old bench

ne regăsim după ani…
împărţim banca din copilărie
şi o tartă cu vişine

Steliana Voicu, Romania

the lecture hall
where we learned circuitry
school shooting

Bill Cooper, USA

Halloween night
a murmuration
of princesses

he's dead . . .
the wind this wind
pushed away

Brad Bennett, USA

wave after wave . . .
the calendar
fills with chemo dates

Ram Chandran, India

calving . . .
grief's gradual
release

Barbara Sabol, USA (EC)

day hospital—
my son's name
a barcode

day hospital-
Il nome di mio figlio
un codice a barre

Carmela Marino, Italy (EC)

the pet's floppy ears
waving from
the bicycle basket

klempave uši kućnog ljubimca
mašu
iz korpe bicikla

Slobodan Pupovac, Croatia

blithe breeze
in my loose dress
i feel free

Pegah Rahmati Nezhad, Iran

refugee camp
the children fighting
over an orange

driving by
the old house
missing myself

Ruth Holzer, USA

clearing out . . .
thirty-five years folded
into a linen press

Jo McInerney, Australia

hometown station—
the train whistle fades
into a chai vendor's call

— آبائی قصبے کے اسٹیشن پر
ریل گاڑی کی سیٹی مدھم پڑ جاتی ہے
چائے فروش کی صدا میں

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan

empty playground
granny tests her balance
on the hopscotch

Mary White, Ireland

temple ruins
finding the spire
inside me

Anne Fox, USA

womb breathing the ease in peace

Rita R Melissano, USA

divination
the gentle strokes
of her scanning wand

Sally Biggar, USA (EC)

camping trip
the fisherman hooks
his own finger

Valentina Ranaldi-Adams, USA

playing chess
my five-year-old niece
mimics grandpa

शतरंज खेलते
मेरी पाँच साल की भतीजी
दादाजी की नकल करते हुए

Bhawana Rathore, India

stitch one pearl one
the slow knitting
of bones

John Hawkhead, UK

fifth instar the nymph i once was

hospice window
the see-through skeletons
of by-the-wind-sailors

Debbie Strange, Canada

milestone birthday
fine tuning
her binoculars

Katja Fox, UK

rope swing
the old oak
let's out a sigh

Mona Bedi, India

wife's deathbed oolong
her best friend offers to help
me finish the pot

Tyson West, USA

onion season another month of tears

Patricia Hawkhead, UK

bin day
my granddaughter rescues
the one-legged doll

Ann Sullivan, USA

rehabyss

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

river in spate—
a pint of porter
settling

led blindfolded
I see the bluebell woods—
with new eyes

Lulu Sinnott, Ireland

student finance
another hole
in my bucket list

high school reunion
the class clown
parks his unicycle

Thomas David, UK

Christmas baking
cinnamon embedded
in her tiny palm

Agnes Eva Savich, USA

first date—
dad insists he come
to the door

Stephenie Story, USA

blood moon
mom speaks of my brothers
lost at birth

Kevin Valentine, USA

the tinkle of ma's anklets
as I walk . . .
temple stairs

मां के पायल की रुन-झुन
जब मैं चलती हूं. . .
मंदिर की सीढ़ियां

Neha Singh Soni, India

snail--
how fast
should i be?

Nitu Yumnam, UAE

rush-hour train
my smile
on standby

Nalini Shetty, India

toilet
AirPod
the sound of water

Curt Pawlisch, USA

first frost
when in doubt
make pickles

Mike Fainzilber, Israel

keeping the faith
on tiptoe she swiffers
the baby jesus

David Green, USA

stuck between
my teeth
great grandma's gap

Tré, USA

half-forgotten song
her fingers trace
piano dust

C.X. Turner, UK

"Can I come over?"
the sound of rain
over the telephone

Ash Evan Lippert, USA

training wheels
a young father learns
to let go

Wendy Cobourne, USA

lunch break
an accidental mouthful
of dead fly

Rowan Beckett Minor, USA

digging potatoes
my neighbour shares
his diagnosis

Mark Miller, Australia

rainbow streaks
reflected in the bus window
her smile

regenbogensprenkel
im busfenster gespiegelt
ihr lächeln

Alexander Groth, Germany

first prom—
inserting shoulder pads
in her bra

prvi plesnjak–
u grudnjak namješta
umetak za rame

Silva Trstenjak, Croatia
trans. R. V. Rozic

Editor's Choices (EC) - Senryu

The signs of spring have been with us for several weeks in the UK. It felt like we even had a false start to summer, as the weather warmed and butterflies braved March skies. Since then, temperatures have dropped back to seasonal averages, and the butterflies have sought shelter. However, birdsong is intensifying, and day lengths are extending beyond the balance of the equilux. The procession of spring's yellow flowers has reached cowslips and fields and woodlands are growing greener by the day. There's clearly plenty of material for haiku writers to work with. Yet, the human condition is subject to its own seasons, as well as being influenced by the seasonal patterns of the natural world. I can't help looking for patterns around me, whether they are in nature or literature. Having made my selections for this issue, I found a story arc to thread them together. No order of preference, just a seemingly innate order.

divination
the gentle strokes
of her scanning wand

Sally Biggar, USA(EC)

Families, both collectively and individually, experience profound changes when a child enters their lives. Sally encourages us to consider the magic and mystery of pregnancy with her skilful word choices. At the same time, we gain an appreciation of the care and assistance of others during pregnancy. This surely makes the experience of those many months a little more manageable.

day hospital—
my son's name
a barcode

day hospital–
Il nome di mio figlio
un codice a barre

Carmela Marino, Italy (EC)

Carmela presents us with a modern problem – the digitisation of data. But here, the transition seems to be even more extreme. While her son has probably already become a number in the medical system, he's now represented by a barcode. I imagine this feels like a new level of dehumanisation. While he can be recognised by machines, it's surely a challenge for people to distinguish between barcodes.

breastfeeding . . .
I stare deep
into my sandwich

Tony Williams, UK (EC)

Tony brings the idea of embarrassment to this poem. I don't see that human season very often, but it's one which offers plenty of scope. Now, I'm sure Tony would support the right of women to feed their children as they go about their daily life. However, holding such an enlightened view may not have prepared him for a situation where he is personally confronted with the presence of a breastfeeding mother.

spring thaw—
his departing steps
enlarge

Sondra J. Byrnes, USA (EC)

Sondra has given us a remarkable amount of space to explore her sketched outline. That's a wonderful gift, because it allows us to explore numerous ideas. We're certain there was a "he", and that they departed. Beyond that, there's not much to go on. And yet. And yet.

grandpa`s crossword
the word we are looking for
is love

krzyżówka dziadka
słowo którego szukamy
to miłość

Aleksandra Rybczyńska, Poland (EC)

Aleksandra has related a story which chimes with me, personally. I am a cryptic crossword fan and enjoy grappling with clues which nudge one towards an answer. It was something my father taught me and something which regularly reminds me of him. In Aleksandra's poem, it is her grandfather who is working on the crossword. I remember being in a similar situation, grappling with a troublesome clue, trying to find a short answer. If I had just stepped away from the convoluted codes, and thought about the people around me, I would have found the answer much more quickly.

calving . . .
grief's gradual
release

Barbara Sabol, USA (EC)

Barbara has found a spectacularly brief way of describing one of life's most complex emotions. The first line offers at least two readings. It could reference the birth of a calf, or an iceberg. But, whichever one I work with, it seems to make perfect sense with the rest of the poem. Barbara has also managed to remove herself from the poem. By that, I mean the poem is about the moment, and not the author. To my mind, that's the sign of a true master.

newly strimmed graveyard
the scattered shards
of plastic flowers

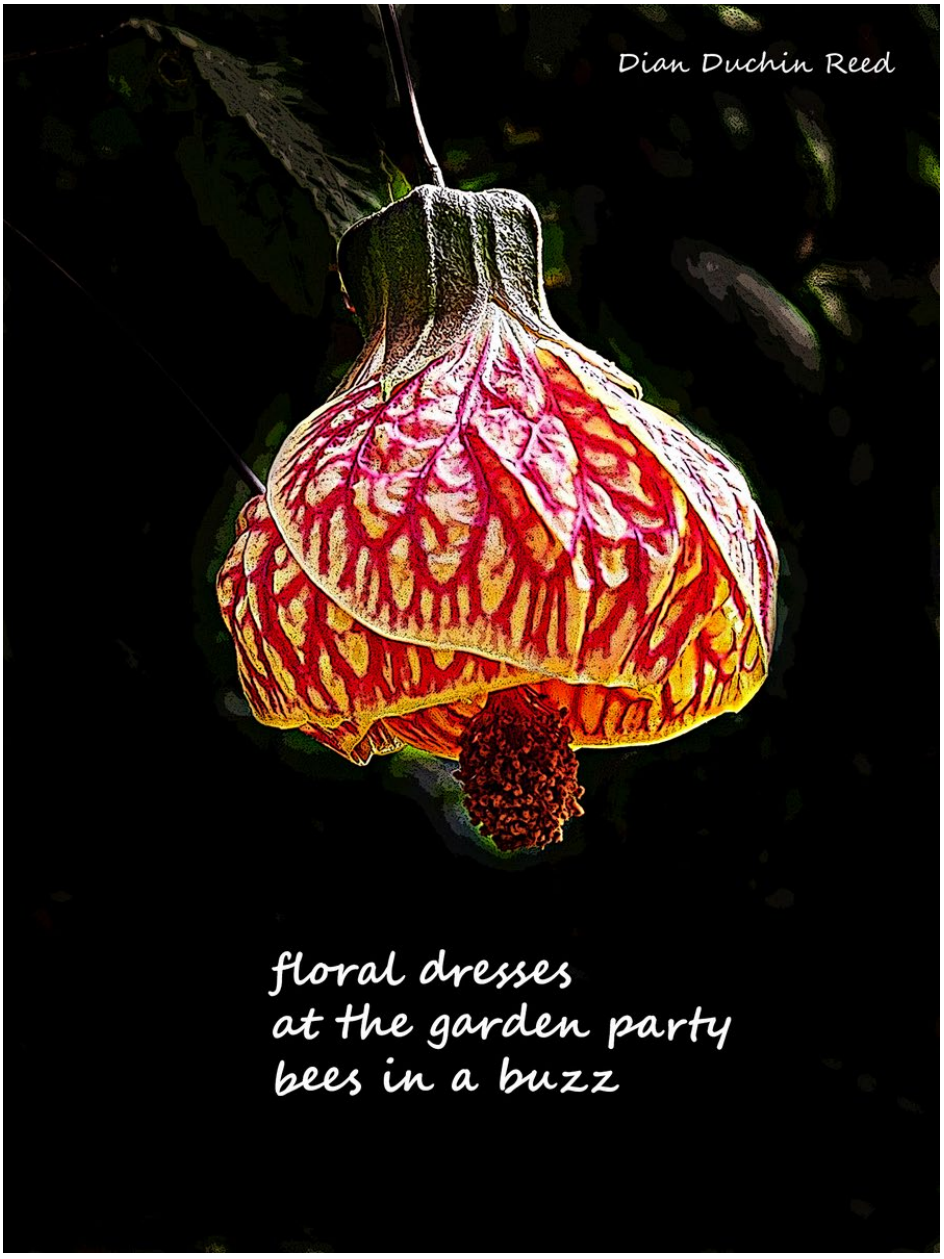
Mark Ritchie, UK (EC)

Mark has an uncanny eye for small details. Like so many great writers, he shows us a scene, without telling us what is important. He allows us the opportunity to explore and make sense of it. The setting in the first line is immediately one which provokes thoughts of transience and impermanence. The subsequent lines lead us into further contemplation, and complication, of these ideas. What a magnificent maelstrom of emotions lies waiting.

David J Kelly

Haiga – Part 2

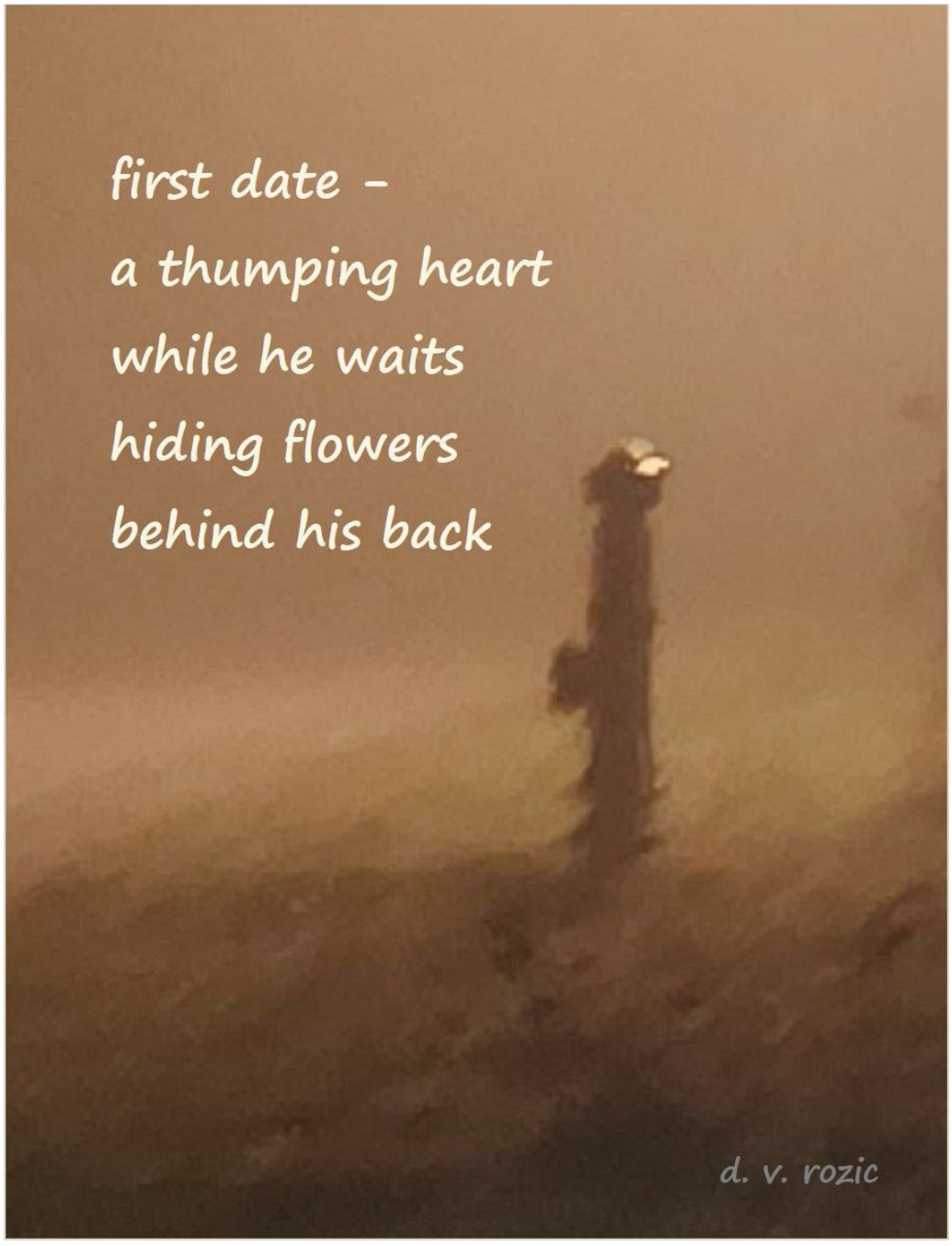
Dian Duchin Reed – USA



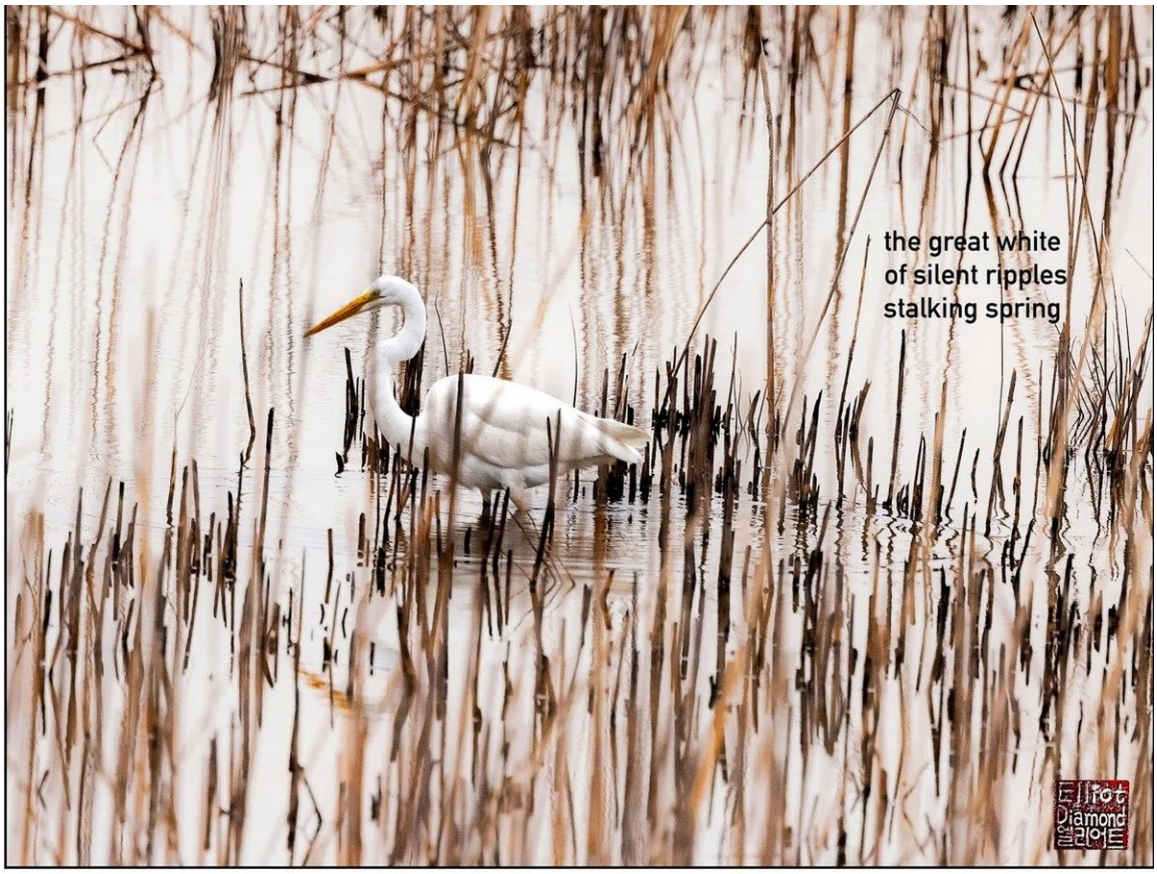
Dimitrij Škrk—Slovenia



Djurdja Vukelic Rozic—Croatia



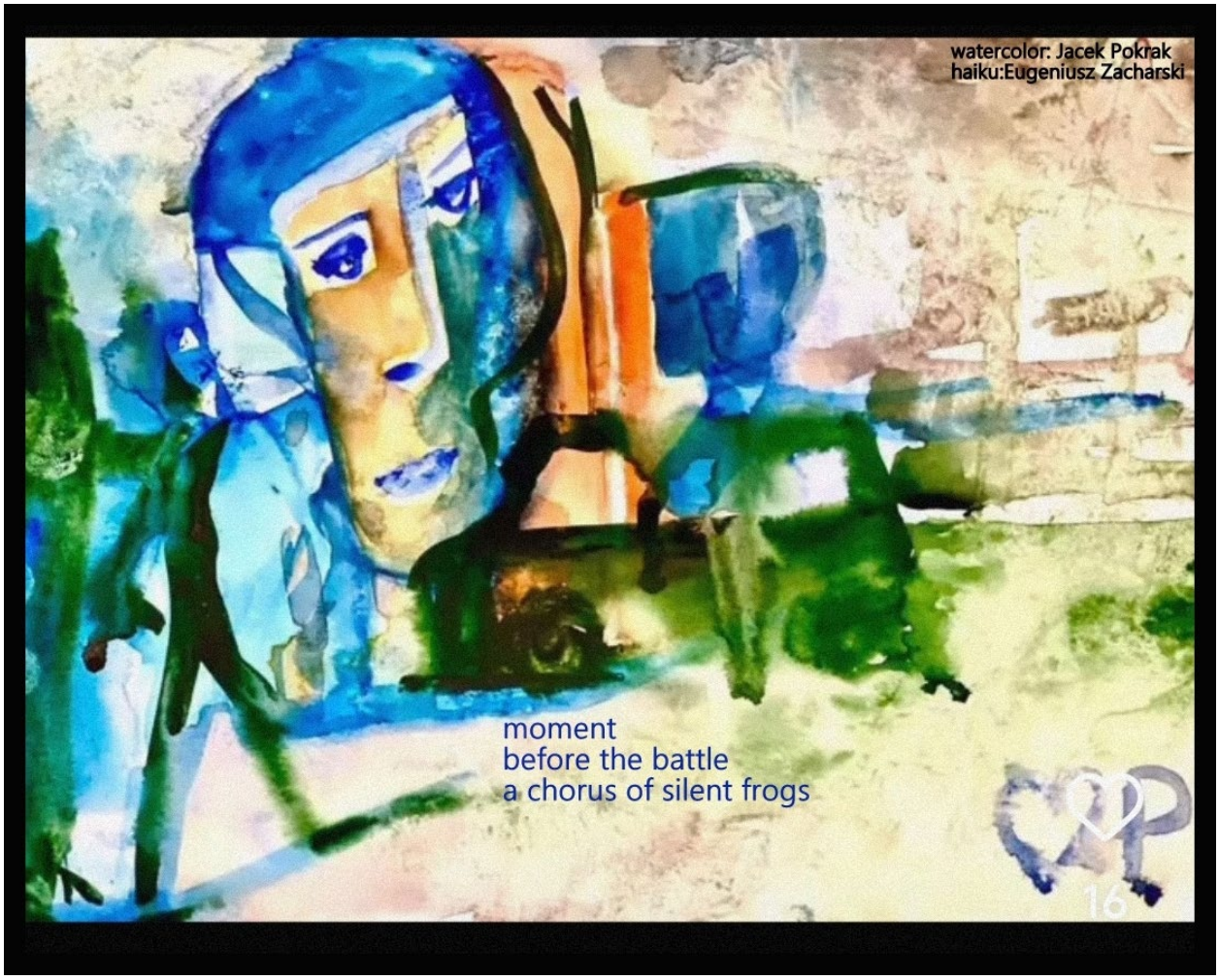
Elliot Diamond / Matthew Cohen—USA



Matthew Cohen: photographer

Elliot Diamond: haiku

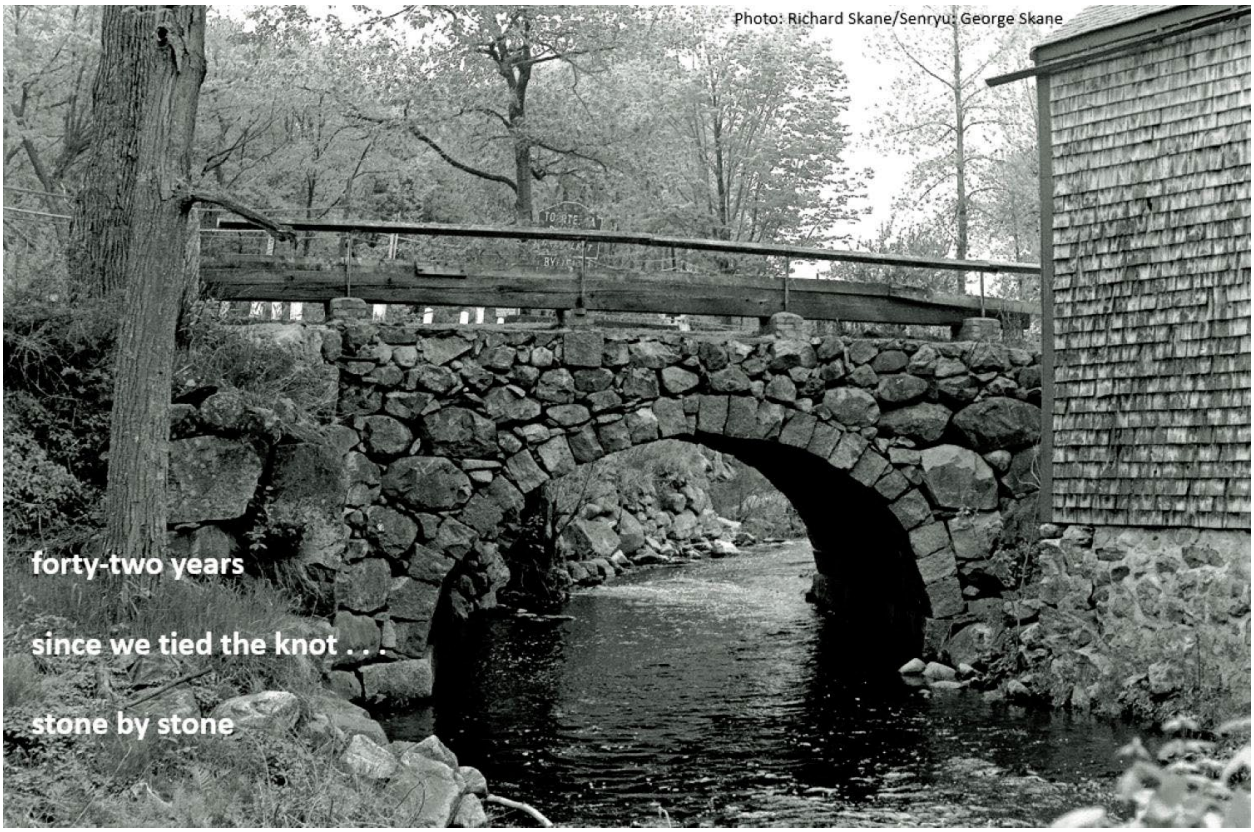
Eugenius Zacharski / Jacek Pokrak—Poland



Gavin Austin—Australia



George Skane—USA



Goda Virginija Bendoraitienė—Lithuania



Tanka



Queen Victoria Building

old fort
lovers scribble their names
on the walls
as if it was that easy
to have eternal love

Mona Bedi, India

scattered laundry
the man's shirt sleeve
touching a bra
lovers on their knees
in search of a cufflink

razbacano rublje
rukav muške košulje
opipava grudnjak
ljubavnici na koljenima
traže manžetni gumb

Silva Trstenjak, Croatia
Translator, D. V. Rozic, Croatia

cicadas' shrieks . . .
oppressive as this heat
his words
spark a conflagration
leaving me charred

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

twilight
mists my window . . .
the street littered
with jigsaw memories
as piece by piece I lose you

Gavin Austin, Australia

I forgot
to say thank you
for caring about me
I forgot
to care

Mark Gilbert, UK

all winter long
the catalpa's paired pods
cling to each other . . .
the comfort of weathering
the storms of life together

Sally Biggar, USA

young girls
with a flower in their hair
a sailor's song
on a warm summer night
resounds through the city harbor

Slobodan Pupovac, Croatia

a soft dusk
peonies on the cool breeze
you reading a book . . .
thoughts meander near and far
only to come back to you

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

romance
after all these years
the last piece of bread
slipped quietly
on the other's plate

Nitu Yumnam, UAE **(EC)**

browsing again
through our wedding album
you suddenly appear
in the fluffy snow
dressed in a bridal gown

răsfoind din nou
albumul nostru de nuntă
tu apari deodată
în zăpada pufoasă
îmbrăcată-n mireasă

Cezar-Florin Ciobîcă, Romania

spring, in fall clothing
arrives with golden forsythia
in youthful joy
the way we loved each other
even though in our autumn

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury, USA

the orange glow
of sunrise . . .
the river gives me
a trophy trout
and I give it back

Kevin Valentine, USA

I slip away
to a windswept wood . . .
lie down
to watch the treetops sway
yet feel the roots hold firm

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

forest bathing
in the breath of bark
i clothe myself
with the sounds
of bulbul, cicada and pine

Lakshmi Iyer, India

a red admiral—
majestically
it glides
over a sea
of flowers

ein Admiral
majestätisch
gleitet er
über ein Meer
von Blüten

Pitt Büerken, Germany

convalescence
my thoughts flow
with clouds
in front of the window . . .
plum trees in bloom

convalescenza
i miei pensieri scorrono
con le nuvole
davanti alla finestra …
susini in fiore

Daniela Misso, Italy

bare elms at dawn
in a pale magenta sky
fragility like lace
reminds me
to protect this earth

Linda Conroy, USA

oppressive heat
my palm full of blackberries
the flagstone in grass . . .
the farmer's grave
covered in dry cornflowers

ljetna zapara
moj dlan pun kupina
kamen u travi . . .
farmerov grob prekriven
suhim različcima

Senka Slivar, Croatia

hands sowing soil
rich with the promise
of new life
remembering how it feels
to begin again

Leon Tefft, USA

white wagtail
i wonder why
such lightheartedness
looks for food
just on the lowest grounds

Pegah Rahmati Nezhad, Iran

a cabbage white
into the mouth
of the snapdragon
one brushstroke
of Watteau's pink

Joshua St. Claire, USA

whirls of wind
spiral through the city
dry leaves
tumbling headlong
toward spring, like us

vrtlozi vjetra
kovitlaju se gradom
suhi listovi
bezglavo, zaneseno
ka proljeću, poput nas

Sanjana Zorinc, Croatia

the morning wind
scattered plum blossoms
on the snow
tonight among bare branches
more stars appear

Ruth Holzer, USA

the umbellifers
flowery scented breezes
in a landscape . . .
travelling out
a lace to lace expansion

Angela Porter, UK

the last tree
fell across the road
yesterday a forest grew
its image remains
only in my memory

ostatnie drzewo
przewróciło się na drogę
wczoraj rósł tu las
jego obraz pozostał
tylko w mojej pamięci

Artur Zieliński, Poland

listening
to New Mexico's weather
on the news
I set out tomorrow's clothes
snow boots, umbrella & shorts

Janet Ruth, USA

finch song
fills the garden
and my heart
a moment without
missing you

Joanna Ashwell, UK

at the end of the day
a hay roll unrolling
on the field . . .
how the Milky Way
takes shape

la finele zilei
rulou de fân rostogolindu-se
pe câmp...
cum prinde formă
Calea Lactee

Steliana Cristina Voicu, Romania

sprint to the tree line
nose in the air
barking—
what ambles toward us
hidden only to me

Patricia Nellene Deal, USA

plethora of gourds . . .
a purple martin arrives
at the village
in harvest songs
moments of joy

Anna Cates, USA

once again
in my driveway
must you remind me
of my chores to come
snowy egret

Anthony Lusardi, USA

calling
and recalling
the cry of a loon
a souvenir
from up north

Rick Jackofsky, USA

shafts of light
flicker across the floor . . .
my kitten
never quite captures
her elusive enemy

Debbie Strange, Canada

wild geese
perched
on my neighbour's roof
another day moon
viewing party

Edward Dewar, Canada

loneliness . . .
a quiet shine
of mid-autumn moon
through blinds
curls up on my bed

John Zheng, USA

ten years later
back in my home country . . .
by slanted moonlight
I drink to the old house
tucked warm within me

Chen-ou Liu, Canada **(EC)**

life's journey
half-believing
in small miracles
a line of stones
gathers light
in carved words

John Hawkhead, UK

Saint Brigid's Day . . .
by holy wells visited at dawn
snowdrops stir
pushing through darkness
towards the lengthening light

Marion Clarke, Northern Ireland

on the shoreline
fragments of glass
smoothed by time
an ancient wound
lets itself be caressed

sulla battigia
levigati dal tempo
pezzi di vetro
un'antica ferita
si lascia accarezzare

Nazarena Rampini, Italy

at my shoulder
a cottonwood seed
floated for a while—
was it only the wind
that took you, too?

Dylan Stover, USA

I harvest
mellow apples, lemons
golden fruit
in these autumnal years
sweetness mixed with sour

Richard Kakol, Australia

stand-off
stopping on my tracks
on a morning walk
I give the right-of-way
to a black cat

Bona M. Santos, USA

time passing . . .
by a broken clock
old photographs
stare from the mantelpiece
into an empty room

Robert Witmer, Japan

cat's paw raindrops
splatter on the page
the storybook
grows a new tale
written in its scars

Tim Cremin, USA

hearing
the diagnosis
how quickly
my cursive devolves
into a scribble

susan burch, USA

metro delay
inside the tunnel
no signal
our faces briefly
belong to the dark

Nalini Shetty, India (EC)

throwing clay
on a potter's wheel
is *only* an outward action
  centering happens
in my heart first

Kala Ramesh, India

soda bread
needs little kneading
my hands do not ache
as I shape it for the oven
and cut the cross

Simon Wilson, UK

the walk for peace
a line of Buddhist monks
in the snow
i lighten my footsteps
on yesterday's stones

Jenny Polstra, Aotearoa/New Zealand

my toddler
smiles in his dream
not knowing
he is my dream
coming true

moj vrtićarac
smiješi se u snu
ne znajući
on je moj san
koji posta stvarnost

Djurdja Vukelic Rozic, Croatia

I follow
the curve of the beach
smooth and photogenic
as the pregnant me who stoops
choosing one shell to cherish

Margaret Owen Ruckert, Australia

in the cancer ward
a child counts her stuffies
all needing care . . .
but where's
the magic unicorn

Betsy Hearne, USA

carousel bus
we have to watch them
look away
parents don't think about
the looks that will end

bus du carrousel
il faut qu'on les regarde
regarder ailleurs
les parents ne pensent pas
aux regards qui finiront

Marie Derley, Belgium

her first car
my daughter's in a hurry
to drive the world
the sun
is everywhere

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

tart green apples
yield sauce by the quart
harvest time
preserving the sweetness
of childhood

Bonnie J Scherer, USA

simmering
with the flavour
of generations . . .
kitchen laughter spilling
from the worn soapstone pot

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy, India

Acapulco honeymoon
lovers on the beach
with straws in coconuts
the grandkids love
that home movie most

Randy Brooks, USA

lost on my grandchild's
birthday—just in time I bring
the pinata . . .
I'd forgotten how sweets fall
and the joy in finding them

Tyson West, USA

I take a drive
to my grandparents' old house—
the chime
of their grandfather clock
timeless

Anne Louise Curran, New Zealand

lines etched
with passing time
on familiar faces
childhood stories still flow—
sisterhood, an unbroken thread

Gwen Bitti, Australia

her legacy
of keys
to unknown doors—
the mystery of Mom
forever locked away

Curt Pawlisch, USA

a new wave
of garlic vine flowers over
the withered ones
how dad's *hello* lingers
on the cordless telephone

Mohua Maulik, India

in the washing up
a teaspoon catches dusk
my mother pours tea
into the fading light
steam on the window

C.X. Turner, UK **(EC)**

the transition
from lover to carer
not easy—
the roses fade
and petals start to fall

Keitha Keyes, Australia

"forget-me-nots"
a bouquet from mom
delivered
on the day after her
Alzheimer's diagnosis

Robert Erlandson, USA

its silence
through the woods
winter fog
father's mind slipping
into the unknown

Bryan Rickert, USA

these hands that once
welcomed you screaming
into the world
now clutch yours
taking leave of it

Jim Chessing, USA

the bobby-pinned page
where she stopped reading
the night before she died—
a bookmark for one story
a bookend for another

Jennifer Read Hawthorne, USA

the elm
at my childhood home
moved on too . . .
in the afterworld
it shades other lost loves

Cynthia Bale, Canada

blood root
and wake robin—
do they still bloom
in the wildwood hollow
where your ashes lie

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

at breakfast again
in quiet moments
a glance seeks your chair
your soft morning glow—
only a faded shadow

Nicholas Gentile, USA

overdose—
at her funeral
childhood pictures
at what point
did it go so wrong?

Dennis Owen Frohlich, USA

troops marching
in the rhythmic lockstep
of a victory parade
on a graveyard alley—
cold echoing of boots

Florian Munteanu, Romania

a few crows
on the barbed-wire fence—
inside a prisoner's rucksack
a worn copy
'For Whom the Bell Tolls'

câteva ciori
pe gardul de sârmă ghimpată—
în interiorul rucsacului unui prizonier
un exemplar uzat
"Pentru cine bat clopotele"

Mircea Moldovan, România

rubble dust
on the land
settles in
what remains
after losing all

ملبے کا غبار
خطے میں
بس جاتا ہے
جو کچھ باقی رہتا ہے
سب کچھ کھونے کے بعد

حفصہ اشرف، پاکستان

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan

my feet yearn to roam
ancient alleyways—
searching for the past
in a war-scarred place
where destruction binds me

Fatma Zohra Habis, Algeria

ملبے کا غبار
خطے میں
بس جاتا ہے
جو کچھ باقی رہتا ہے
سب کچھ کھونے کے بعد

حفصہ اشرف، پاکستان

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan

Editor's Choices (EC) – Tanka

ten years later
back in my home country . . .
by slanted moonlight
I drink to the old house
tucked warm within me

Chen-ou Liu, Canada **(EC)**

This poignant tanka takes one back in imagination to early roots, capturing a sense of memory and emotional connection to the past. The words, 'back in my home country', touch a chord within. The phrase, 'by slanted moonlight', is striking. It's as if a narrow beam of light opens a window into the child's memory. 'I drink to the old house' brings thoughts of absent family and friends, a nostalgic reflection of those who shared company is rediscovered. The last line, 'tucked warm within me,' suggests a loving picture of mother and child. There is a sense of nostalgia and tenderness in this writing.

romance
after all these years
the last piece of bread
slipped quietly
onto the other's plate

Nitu Yumnam, UAE **(EC)**

Nitu's tanka has a touching simplicity. The contrast between the first two lines and the last three, an unexpected shift in thought. Is this romance new or old? If it is new, there may be implications of famine through war or drought. If it's old, it seems to hint that love still exists even after time has passed. The phrase, 'the last piece of bread,'

represents putting the other person first. The words "slipped quietly" are significant here as these shows it is an act of natural, habitual kindness. This tanka captures love and beauty through the simple act of sharing.

in the washing up
a teaspoon catches dusk . . .
my mother pours tea
into the fading light
steam on the window

C.X. Turner, UK **(EC)**

Tanka that 'leave room', invite the reader in to muse and stay awhile. The simplicity of this scene catches the imagination and allows us to enter and 'be' in the act of pouring. The images of 'a teaspoon catches dusk', 'mother pours tea into the fading light' and 'steam on the window', although small domestic moments, open into something larger—time passing, memory, and family warmth. This is a very quiet, evocative poem.

metro delay
inside the tunnel
no signal
our faces briefly
belong to the dark

Nalini Shetty, India **(EC)**

I like the simplicity and strength of this tanka, the way it leaves us in an unknown space. The opening lines, 'metro delay inside the tunnel,' quickly set up tension. The

phrase, ‘no signal’, may trigger fear, relating to our lives' reliance on wi-fi, and/or fear of the unknown. The power of the last line, ‘our faces briefly belong to the dark’, seems to expand after the reading is over. The darkness becomes metaphorical in the sense of ‘the darkness’ we all inhabit to some degree.

rubble dust
on the land
settles in
what remains
after losing all

ملبے کا غبار
خطے میں
بس جاتا ہے
جو کچھ باقی رہتا ہے
سب کچھ کھونے کے بعد

حفصہ اشرف، پاکستان

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan **(EC)**

This minimal tanka holds the power of loss. It speaks of devastation, what many have not witnessed nor would want to witness. In few words, the scene ‘rubble dust on the land settles in’, sums up destruction; loss of life, home, community, infrastructure and more. This unbearable pain has to be borne by those who are left when the shock fades, and survivors confront what has been taken away . . . The potency of the last two lines lingers, ‘what remains after losing all’.

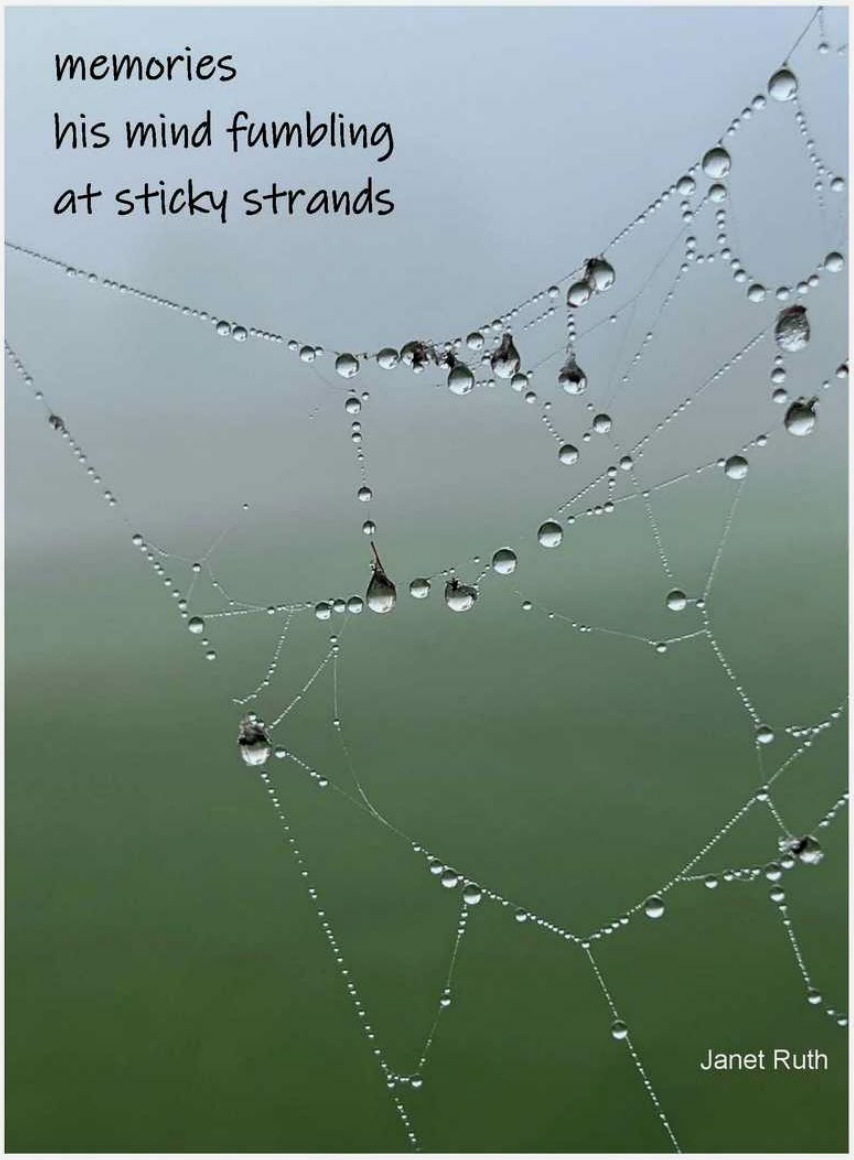
Jenny Fraser

Haiga – Part 3

Hifsa Ashraf—Pakistan / Shahid Mehmood—Norway



Janet Ruth—USA



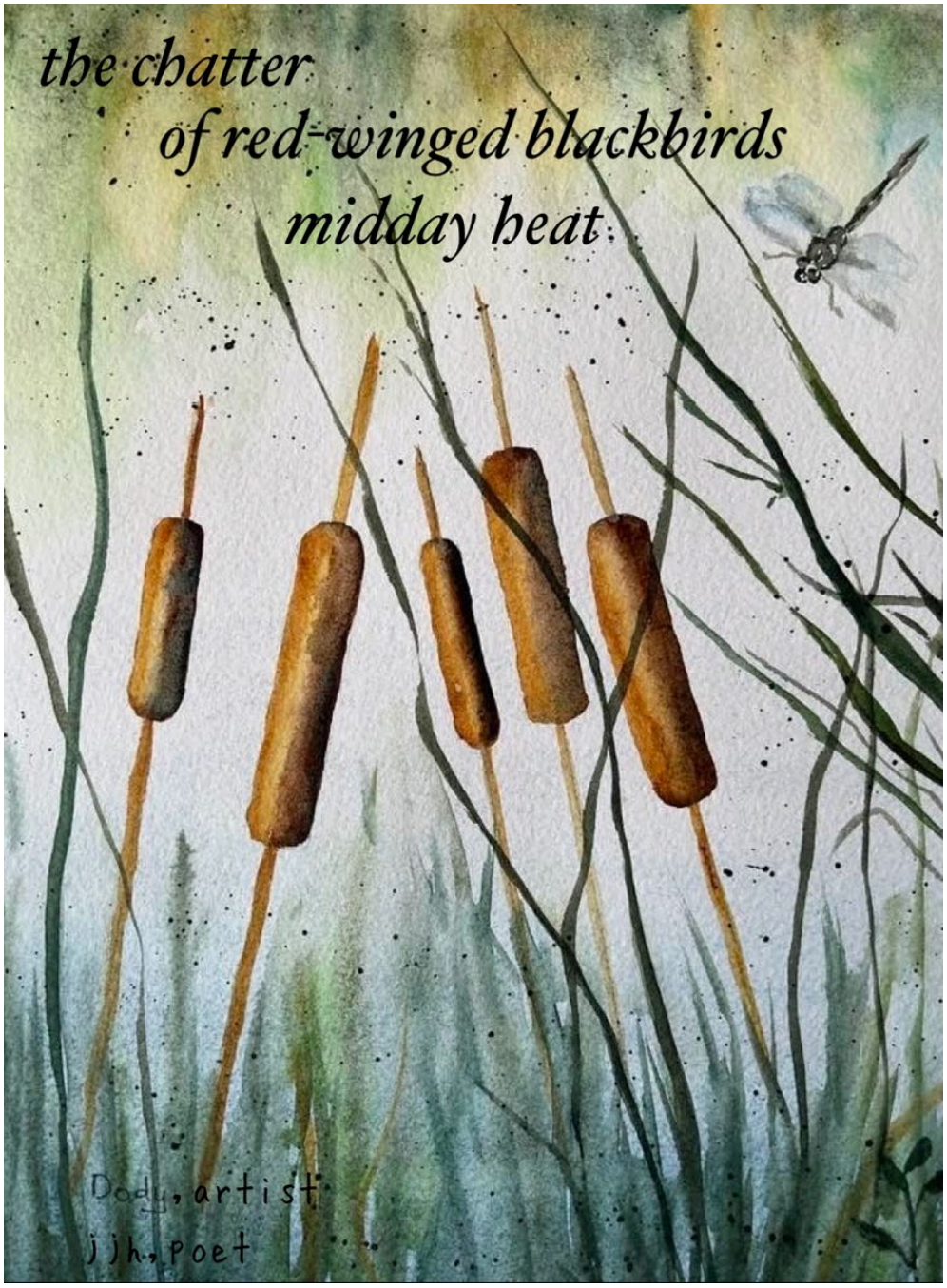
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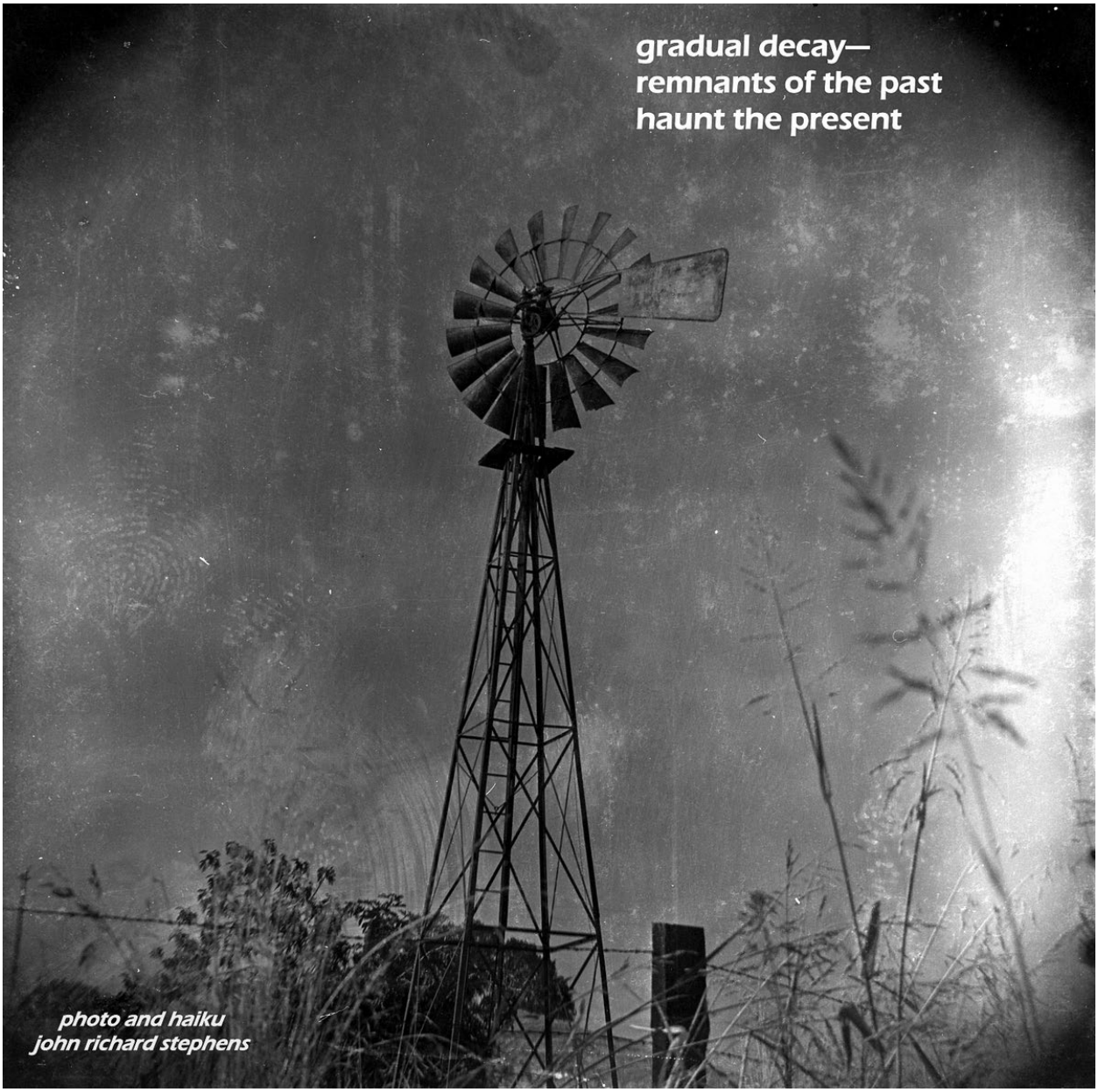
John Hawkhead—UK



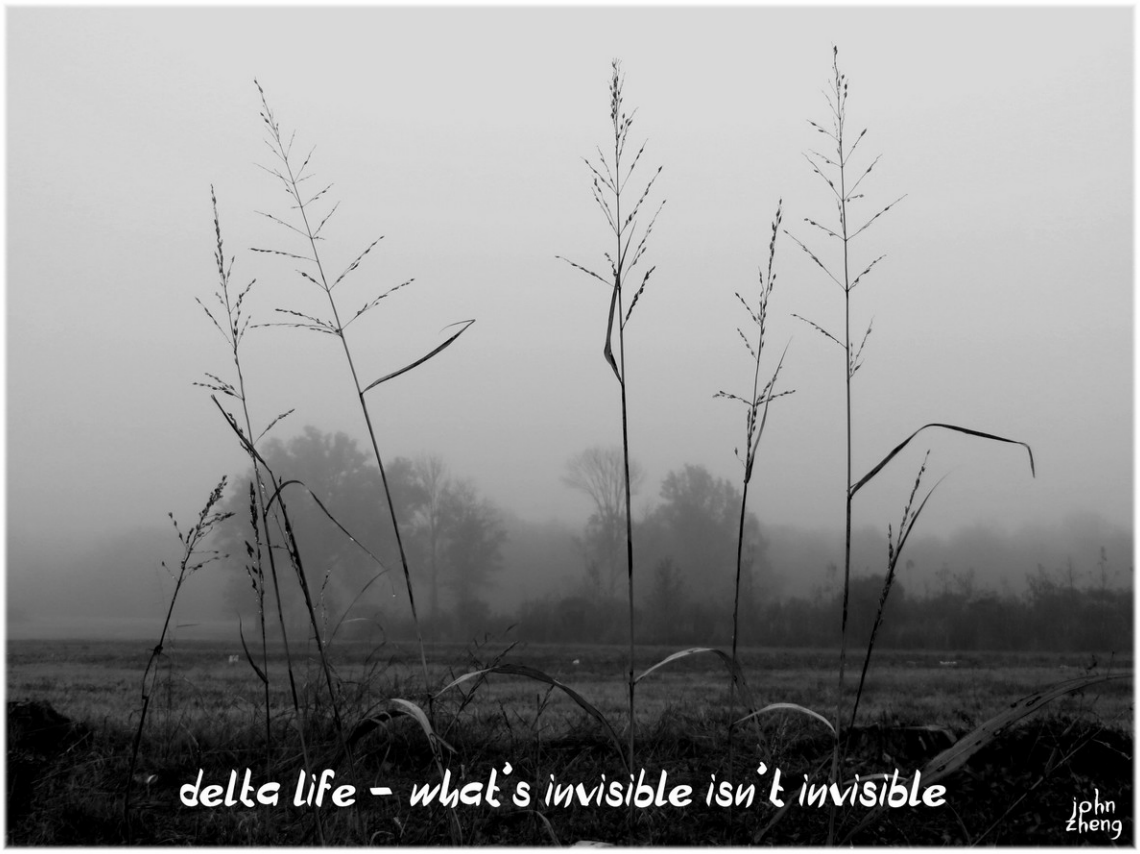
Johnnie Johnson Hafernik & Dorothy M. Messerschmitt—USA



John Richard Stephens—USA



John Zheng—USA



Haibun



Sydney Harbour

Family Ties

Jill Muhrer, USA

Upside down on the jungle gym, green corduroys, red plaid shirt, and cowgirl boots, she flips around until she can almost touch the sky, a cobalt blue.

Out of nowhere, her mother's voice breaks her rhythm— time to stop, prepare for the legacy portrait, a family tradition of an unspoken covenant of rules, standards, expectations—a frame she cannot abide.

Against her will. Trembling, the thinness of fake velvet, the weight of it. Sitting. The smell of oil paint, a child's still life. Every breath an effort.

single leg pose
silent wings unfold
a blue heron

Midnight

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

you walk me to my door but say no good night give me no hug no kiss just turn and leave me standing with no explanation no understanding and for days afterwards no word from you and when I call you have gone to parts unknown leaving me bereft and sick and sinking into blackness

widow's weeds
on a cold, cold morning
I wear the dream

Flow

Gavin Austin, Australia

The timber of the old bench is as weathered and granulated as my thoughts. In the niggling breeze I clutch my coat tightly about me. Leaning back into the wooden hold, I allow myself to drift, to float, to remember.

The sun sags low in the western sky. Shadows grow as the park is bathed in soft light. Colourful reflections dance on the harbour. Night is waiting once more. A spill of crimson stains the sky, like blood on guilty hands. Silently, I watch life ebb from another day.

Darkness embraces me as an old friend. The moon climbs from cloud as I listen to the night-sounds. The sirens have stopped. All I hear, as the bay settles against the seawall, is a soft sigh, like ours beneath those blankets of pretence.

lights across water
the distance
of another shore

Nosferatu

Anna Cates, USA

in memory of Sylvia Plath & Ted Hughes

I speak of he
seven years drunk
on her blood
craggy Heathcliff
Caliban
haunting silvan moors
hypnotizing the moon
goddess breaking
silver slivers
like the destroyer
Shiva
  S yl v
 i
   a

        in the heat
        of epiphany . . .
        a hissing bee

Mind Trap

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

Again, the footsteps, precise and heavy passing between rows of evenly spaced steel doors locked with sliding bolts. Light slants through bars set high above his head. He watches the black patterns mottle the concrete floor.

The cold seeps through the soles of his shoes, into the compressed thin foam mattress and his every breath. Voices ricochet between the grey walls like echoes of former occupants.

He trembles. A hand stretches to rest on his shoulder. Its weight feels almost familiar.

circling crows
shadow
the prison yard

Blue Light in the Shenandoah

Leon Tefft, USA

Manassas wind
once, only dogwoods
bled petals

The Shang Dynasty. Aztecs, Incas and Mayans. Celts and Vikings. Ancient Mesopotamians. Civilizations bound to gods, kings and deities. Blood spilled. Hearts torn from bodies. Souls burned alive. Appalling, yet accepted then, mere curiosities today. But they were people of their times, and times shape all people. We know because archaeologists unearth their relics and speak of their cultures long buried in history. But who speaks for the dead when they've been buried twice?

looming Wilderness
the sword I wield
in my soul

Silken Memories

Gwen Bitti, Australia

In Kyoto's Gion district, the geiko glide through narrow lanes. Their pigeon-toed steps tracing grace into the cobblestones. Silk kimonos shimmer in sunlight; hair pinned high, faces pale as porcelain. Under a lantern they pause at a temple gate, then, small steps take them up to the place of worship, to make offerings and pray for blessings yet to come—for art, for music, for the quiet joy of conversation.

behind train windows
morning light
folds away

On the bullet train to Hiroshima, the faint smell of incense lingers. The city's Peace Park holds the weight of August 6, 1945. Photographs, personal stories highlight relay events from 8:15 that morning. I strike the giant peace bell; its echoes are solemn and I hold it in my chest. At the Children's Peace Memorial, school children sing. Their voices drift through the air and for a moment, time seems to stop—pure, fragile they rise and I stand there, utterly stilled, a trickle down my cheek.

garden shrine
white butterflies
dust the sky

The West Mebon Reclining Vishnu Bronze, 11th Century, Cambodia

Caroline Giles Banks, USA

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to view
"Royal Bronzes: Cambodian Art of the Divine."

Larger-than-life, *Reclining Vishnu* invites
veneration, affirmation of art's mysteries.
Orange-clad monks place lotus flowers
around the base of the plinth, testimony
that *Reclining Vishnu* is more than "artifact."

the exhalation
of lotus blossoms
dawn breaks

Forged in fire, he reclines. His head in
his hands, he contemplates ways to make
and ways to take away. Cast in one-ton
of bronze his head, torso, and many arms
promise more tomorrows.

hands crossed
over the heart
fans of fortune

Standing still in the gallery, I pray for words—
my offering of devotion. His come-hither hands
wave for connection. A finger crooks for recognition.

Muse'em

The Tree of Dreams

Valentina Meloni, Italy **(EC)**

Valdichiana April 7, 2017

When I was a young child, I gave my father a violin for his birthday. I had put aside all my savings for a long time.

In the dusty old music shop, where I bought piano scores for my studies, I saw it shining in the case. I went closer and removed some dust with my finger and the warm smell of the wood stunned me.

The shopkeeper asked me who it was for, and I replied that it was for my father. He was quite impressed and told me that the tree from which the violin was made must be a magical tree, because that violin had been there for decades and no one had ever cared for it. It seemed it was certainly waiting for me.

I went out with the precious package in my hand and on the threshold of that shop, a thought began to take shape.

sea breeze—
a tree knows
even your dreams

My father didn't know how to play the violin and, perhaps, for this reason, it could be considered a useless and inappropriate gift. I have often thought that the tree from which the violin was made must have had a soul and perhaps even dreams.

gust of wind –
for a moment the leaf
returns to its branch

continued . . .

Even though the violin lay silent for some forty years I know that there is an inaudible melody still waiting to be played.

sound of music . . .
this longing
for infinite possibilities*

**I'm referring to the search for "fragments of light" by the contemporary mystic and poet Giancarlo Bruni, a monk of the Bose Community (1938). He joined the Order of the Servants of Mary and has spent his life between the monastic community and the university teaching ecumenism both in Italy and abroad. Currently, he lives at the Stinche Hermitage in Panzano, between Florence and Siena.*

L'albero dei sogni

Valdichiana 7 aprile 2017

Da bambina, per il suo compleanno, a mio padre regalai un violino. Misi da parte tutti i miei pochi risparmi e andai avanti ad accantonarli a lungo.

Mi recai nella vecchia bottega di musica polverosa, dove compravo sempre gli spartiti per pianoforte per i miei studi, e lo vidi, luccicante di caldo legno nella sua custodia. Mi avvicinai e tolsi un po' di polvere col dito, l'odore buono del legno mi stordiva.

Il commerciante mi chiese per chi fosse, e io risposi che era per mio padre. Egli rimase alquanto colpito e mi disse che l'albero da cui fu costruito il violino doveva essere un albero magico, perché quel violino era lì da decenni e nessuno se n'era mai curato, mi è sembrato proprio che stesse aspettando me.

Uscii con in mano il prezioso involto e un pensiero, sulla soglia di quella bottega, cominciò a prendere forma.

continued . . .

brezza di mare –
un albero conosce
anche i tuoi sogni

Mio padre non sapeva suonare il violino e, forse, per questo, poteva essere considerato un regalo inutile e inappropriato. Ma quarant'anni erano importanti e le sue mani grandi, troppo grandi per un violino delicato, non dovevano dimenticare l'anima di linfa e le foglie verdi che avevano abitato l'albero e i suoi sogni.

colpo di vento –
per un istante la foglia
torna al suo ramo

Anche se il violino è rimasto in silenzio per quasi quarant'anni, so che esiste ancora una melodia inudibile che attende di essere suonata.

suona una musica –
*nostalgia d'infinito**
nell'aria mite

**Mi riferisco alle parole del mistico e poeta Giancarlo Bruni, monaco della Comunità monastica di Bose e sacerdote, nato a Marina di Massa il 18 novembre 1938. Entrato nell'Ordine dei Servi di Maria, ha trascorso la sua vita tra la comunità monastica, l'università e la predicazione in Italia e all'estero. Attualmente vive nell'Eremo delle Stinche, a Panzano in Chianti, tra Firenze e Siena, dove dedica la sua vita alla ricerca di «frammenti di luce» e all'insegnamento dell'ecumenismo.*

Harmony

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy, India

A smooth roundness settles in my palm as he hands me a shell of alabaster. My eyes trace its spiral, following the curve from crown to tip, where it narrows to a delicate sharpness. Its surface shifts beneath my fingers, from cool hardness to the hollow that seems to hum beneath the touch.

He asks me to purse my lips, to let the vibration rise instead of blowing straight through. I lift the conch to my lips, heart steady, breath quiet—my first time.

Kanniyakumari
the OM fills
my silence

Trail's End

Colleen M. Farrelly, USA

I shuffle through the underbrush, stopping for a second as a Cuban bullfrog springs from the leaf-littered path once used by Miami's first villagers. He hops towards my dig site, one of the last unburied by high-rise park-and-rides, before he disappears into mangrove roots jutting through mud. I wonder if anything is left of the Tequesta, ancestors to many modern-day Miamians.

Dawn breaks—cool and clouded under the canopy. I pull my light jacket tighter and clutch my magnetometry equipment as I wade through the slough.

buried sign an arrowhead pointing home

Snowscape

Joshua St. Claire, USA

Not, as you first expect, no color. Rather, colors so multitudinous you lack the vocabulary to describe their manifold depths.

a palette knife again and again through the zinc white moon

A seeming seam

Diana Webb, UK

A cloud floats by like an angel's wing. I finger a feather. Such fine, fine lines drawn out from the centre. The space between where only a seraphic toe tip pierced by the poise on the narrowest needle would find the finesse to shine outshine and enshrine a word in a silver serum

lilt of a language
in licks of light
a timeline of flight

In That Which Lies Beyond, Will There Be Wings?

Janet Ruth, USA

—after Vincent van Gogh's sketch and painting "Giant Peacock Moth" (St. Rémy, 1889)

Vincent called it a death's head moth in his letter to brother Theo, although it was really a giant peacock moth (*Saturnia pyri*)—easily identified in his accurate rendering. He found it in the gardens of the Saint-Paul Asylum while recovering from the episode with his severed ear.

Perhaps the misidentification was a simple error—both species are found in southern France. Or was he thinking about dying? Perhaps. And yet, in his letter, he told Theo that he drew the moth because *to paint it would have meant killing it, which was a pity with such a beautiful creature*.* He created the painting later, from memory and his chalk and ink sketch—keeping it alive. A composition full of lift and wing-shapes—luminous arum flowers, leaves in olive-green and the moth. Those four glowing eye-spots.

blue shadows
with an edge of moonlight
what arises from the dark

My Garden

Robert Witmer, Japan

I sell fresh flowers at the cemetery. You'd be surprised how many people turn up empty-handed. The flowers I sell are fresh ones, not the artificial variety. They are, of course, cut, so, although they are fresh, they are not exactly alive; however, they are still bright with a semblance of life.

People pay good money to show a proper respect to the dearly departed. It's a thriving business. Don't run short is the watchword. And so, it is I often end up with an armload of freshly cut flowers that never make it to a grave. There is a waste bin on my way home, but I just can't bring myself to throw the flowers away. My apartment is small, but there is a big bay window. So, I reckon I have plenty of space to let my flowers fade away in the sunshine.

When friends see my crinkled posies, they smile. Some say that artificial flowers are better because they last longer. A fresh bouquet dries up within a few days, whereas artificial flowers keep looking good for up to a year. Moreover, artificial arrangements are significantly less expensive than real flowers. Others, however, remind me that all things must cease to be, each in its season, a time to keep and a time to pass away. I am grateful for their wisdom and concern. But the flowers' beauty's brevity is life itself to me. Silent signs, the soul's farewell, a sweet sad scented sigh. What night does not destroy, day puts to sleep. We know what we might have when it is gone.

spaces
where old pictures hung
water in a net

Warming Up

Doug Sylver, USA **(EC)**

Five red rose buds in a white vase reaching toward the framed Chagall bouquet as if they want to join in. I cut them from the front yard a few days ago, shivering in the November rain. They're opening up, slowly, not all of them, but most of them, so far.

so long covered in ice
her childhood memories
of the orphanage

The Surf at Del Mar: A Token of Remembrance

(for Brad Crager)

Jeffrey Streeby, USA

Summer morning
wearing the ache of grief
like a cheap suit

The sun rose over Del Mar today like always. No hesitation. No drama. I'm sure this is pretty much like the hundreds of other mornings you witnessed for yourself around here—the sea in perpetual motion, the beach punctuated with colorful umbrellas and pop-ups, the sun brilliant and totally indifferent to its processes, its own slow burning out.

God dammit, Brad. And all I can do is receive it here, its heat and light, and try to turn it into some silly funeral metaphor.

It is only 9:00, but it's July again so of course, it's already hot as your last date from Match.com. No wet suits today. Crowds are at least as immodest as always-- lots of string bikinis—but a little extra pale and touristy.

The water has warmed up, and the summer swells are arriving from the south. According to the surf report and the beach cameras, waves look good from the river mouth to South Beach.

Back and forth
wave after wave
whether you catch one or not

For whatever reason, whenever something brings you to mind, I always think of the story you told me about how you paddled out beyond the sand bar one April night,

continued . . .

high as a kite, hoping to catch a few good spring waves. About how under a full moon half the size of heaven, all at once the black and white bulk of the orca silently slid up out of the water an arm's length away. About how you lay there motionless on your board for five minutes or more, barely daring to breathe. About how his eye caught just enough moonlight to let you know he was looking back at you.

Then how he disappeared as suddenly and quietly as he arrived and how in the same instant the wave lifted you and sent you, exhilarated and invincible, on your way back to the beach.

This summer sun
perfecting
another California afternoon

Yesterday, I tried to figure out where your mother's house had been, but I couldn't much tell—all I had to go on was a half-remembered conversation about your fight with the realtor and a vague description of what kind of place had gone up there after the developer tore it down.

How much can we know anyway . . .

The surf at Del Mar . . .
all those logistics
of goodbye

Of Mercy

Glenn G. Coats, USA

You don't
check the clasp
after a night
of tossing and turning
to see
if she's still there.

You don't think
to polish
her tarnished hands
worn smooth
like bone
like nickels.

You don't consider
losing her
as you wade in
around midnight
near the boat ramp
where the skeletons
of guide boats
and bicycle rims
litter
the channel.

You don't pray
with her
(Blessed Mother)
as you slip
under the black

continued . . .

water
and swim
like a frog
back
to the surface.

You don't ask why
as you drip
by the shoreline—
moonlight shining
on a bare chest,
with a sudden
awareness
of what was lost.

deep in the dark of river the answers

Stroke Of Midnight

Kevin Valentine, USA

For eight nights I slept in the hospital bed next to hers, moist face cloth at the ready to wipe her chapped and blistered lips. She craved water. A drink. Or even just a sip. The nurse cautioned me about too much water. I imagined she was dreaming of an oasis. An oasis where butterflies played among the lilies as dragonflies darted above. An oasis where rainbow trout would leap for the sheer pleasure of leaping. An oasis where a young man took her hand and kissed her before slipping the ring on her finger just as it had been so many years ago. Then a whispered moan would shake me from my revelry and I would gently wipe her chapped and blistered lips. Oh, how I wished that man from long ago, my father, would beckon her into the light where he waits now beyond the oasis, beyond the stars where peace is all there is and the birds sing forever.

last breath . . .
the colors of sunset
slowly fade away

Hiraeth

Timothy Daly, Italy

I google the name of my Nain, and the only result is her funeral notice. There is no obituary, no biography, no mention of her contagious chuckle and unrequited generosity that brought me such joy as a young boy.

creaky stairs
holding on to
memories

Scrimmage

E. C. Traganas, USA

Dull thudding knocks against the wall,
a drumbeat pulsing in the dead of night.
A muffled mewl chills my spine, the blade
of an icicle scraping against raw skin.
The feral cats must be at it again, I think,
and nestle deeper under the shelter
of my blanket while the full wolf moon
clashes like an angry copper gong.

Tufts of rust red hair and drops
of fresh young blood glisten
on the virgin morning snowdrifts.

The kingpins have dropped by
to pay my neighbor a visit.

through the dawning haze
a shock of crimson
late rose in bloom

Leaving

Pamela Garry, USA

Before the exodus, the mother prays for her family to be transported. Upon arrival, her prayers turn to returning home.

surviving ice closed crocuses

Casualties

Edward Cody Huddleston, USA

Wounded soldiers cry for their gods. Dying soldiers cry for their mothers. That's how you know.

upturned helmet—
trench rats lapping
rainwater

Faceless

Bryan Rickert, USA

The deer's headless corpse does slow circles in the swollen stream. I spent a few minutes theorizing all the possibilities on how it got here. Hunted then beheaded. Struck by a vehicle then beheaded.

Checking the forecast on the phone, I see that tonight will bring another round of rain and with it, another surge of water to this stream. Washing this corpse away and possibly into the life of another hiker who will ask this same unanswerable question.

one lifeless body becomes another Gaza

The Weight of the Unknown

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

The shift from “is” to “was” hangs in the air. On the table, the tea cools, untouched.

anniversary
ice crystals on the window
of her son’s room

Close Closer

Mark Gilbert, UK

Through the window I could see striped blue-and-white dirigibles floating on the end of cables like lollipops in a sombre cloudy sky, one then several, lined up across the land, I went outside to get a better look, then saw a huge and incredibly noisy transport plane flying low, and a strange blue-black plane like a Christmas tree with baseball-sized baubles attached to all its surfaces on thin stalks giving it a prickly appearance, flying with peculiar precision. Hovering. One minute disappearing from view then reappearing from behind the roof of a neighbour, its vacuum buzz a constant. Other unexpected shapes suddenly visible in the sky, as if they'd always been there. The sounds of other jets I couldn't see louder and harsher than any airliner. Closer. This was it.

WWIII
and then I woke
myself up

Civil Disobedience

Andrew Pineo, USA

One late summer night at the railroad trestle: Eight of us with shoulder length hair wearing bell bottoms and t shirts. Listening to War Pigs repeat on an 8-track tape. Talking about the Kent State shootings. Drinking Schlitz beers from bottles. Burning our draft cards while yelling, “Hell no we won’t go!”

zero dark thirty
in my wallet
deployment papers

Darkness

Curt Pawlisch, USA

It's 1978, I'm twenty on a slow train to Madrid, finding my way.

In the hallway, I meet two guys my age. We take turns drinking wine from a leather pouch. The wine is red and cheap and awful. I don't know Spanish; they know snippets of English—Chicago, gangsters. Wine and laughter take care of the rest.

Politics is a keen interest of mine, so I ask, "You communista?" A wall drops between us; their laughter stops. Handing my pouch back, they whisper, no no no. They leave, returning to their assigned compartment.

Alone I look out the window into the long night.

Franco's Spain—
somewhere in the night
a bell tolls

From the Ashes

Richard Kakol, Australia

He likes to stockpile bundles of good news, like cigarillos in his silver case, to be enjoyed later, perhaps on a cold, rainy winter's afternoon. The epiphanies of his grandchildren are such fragments of joy which he keeps in that silver case, examining them from time to time. Also, he likes to receive good news about other people, his friends and neighbours, even perfect strangers. Schadenfreude is a foreign concept to him. He has been to the well of sorrow many times, has drawn out bitter bucketsful of that water; he finds no delight in the suffering of others.

He hears about the Buddhist concept of *Mudita*: sympathetic joy, or pleasure in another person's well-being.—The Hungarian wins a tidy sum playing baccarat, Milan's younger daughter finds her ginger cat who's been missing for three days, Mr Schwarz's son is going to university to study mathematics . . . These are the morsels of good news which he likes to savour with his evening cup of tea.

shards of glass
the eruption
of the volcano

Wood Pile

Andrew Grossman, USA

I hammer boards in place for the spring wood rack. The river drowns out the sound.

I bring a few sticks from the remnants of cords behind the house, and set them between the frames. In winter, I brought fifteen or twenty pieces at a time to pile beside the stove.

Now, I only need the breeze through the open windows, and a fire at night.

I intend to ask Nancy to marry me. In the smallest pocket of my tool belt is a ring. I check myself often: is this desperation, or am I in love forever?

She is in Tokyo for a week on a work assignment. She tells me of the crowds in the fish markets, on the streets and the subway.

I have become attuned without panic to sit alone on the porch, listening to the crickets, watching the darkness.

The Holstein cows wander down the pasture hills. The grass grows thickly between my back porch and the river, even up through the scattered pieces of bark.

When the cows reach my yard, they eat until the farmer calls. I will dance here with Nancy.

herd on the slopes
cascading
snow melt

.

Cleaning Day

Joanna Ashwell, UK

It seems there is never enough time for you to sweep away everything. Just as you finish, a dust mote shadows your retina.

Missed rainbows

I suggest there is nothing left to polish. How dare I be so bold.

A luminescent cloud

I try to coax the cloth from your hand. The way a bandage is ready to be removed after a wound.

Ready to burst

Different Same

Dr. Brijesh Raj, India

Nearly everything I have experienced and want to say, seems almost like the ink-prints of strangers. Is there, was there, anything ever uniquely mine? My gaze shifts to your dishevelled locks dripping sleep. Still warm from the night. Still cool to the touch.

you and I
entwined
even in thoughts

Gateway

Melissa Dennison, UK

The sky is a featureless grey just as it's been for weeks. It's late winter and the pace of life seems slow. Yet much is happening. We are on the cusp. Robins chase their rivals through yellow willow branches, whilst blackbirds scurry amongst lengthening shoots.

Yesterday I saw a magpie carrying a twig.

deep roots . . .
the ash
cradles stars . . .

Midnight Shelter

C.X. Turner, U.K.

The storm begins without ceremony. Each drop finds the tin roof, the windowpanes, the hollow in the garden where water gathers. I lie awake. The sound fills the dark. Beyond the house, the fields take it in.

on darkened glass
the trace of a moth
washed away

Late Afternoon Under the Red Sun

Beverly A. Tift, USA

Seagulls freewheel like untethered kites— soar, glide, and dive against the bright sky, flying . . . flying . . . flying. With outstretched hand, I reach up to trace their flight as they take off and land.

Now the grounded gulls and I shift back and forth across the sand flats—timeless, braided with light.

slack tide
the moment between
here and elsewhere

Earth Tides

Kevin Browne. USA

The ferret-faced woman at the bus station gives me a weaselly look and points in the direction of the hostel. On a whim I decide to go rogue and head out of town into the high desert dry grass scrub. In the twilight I find a semi-level spot free of rocks, lay out my sleeping bag and watch the sun go down, the moon rise, and the stars come out. When I awake the first thing, I notice is my senses are very strong. I appear to be hunting, snuffling my nose along the ground. The night is full of delicious smells and sounds I have never smelled or heard before and I am hungry. I can hear the grubs and insects working away in the soil, and the idea of eating them, or even digging out a juicy gopher, seems wonderful. Somehow I know other larger creatures such as the very big one lying nearby are likely to avoid me.

When I wake up again sometime later, I know instantly that something has fundamentally changed. I put my nose to the earth but all I can smell is dry grass. I can't hear much at all beyond the buzz of some night insects. Feeling both confused and bereft, I soon find myself back on the road to town, and I ignore the bus lady giving me the mustelid side-eye. There's nothing for it but to take the night's last bus out of here.

sifting the night
a slight breeze
slips the veil

Blink

Bona M. Santos, USA

Waking up, I feel each of my joints hurt today. I stagger out of bed and hear creaking sounds. Is it my bones? The bed? Or floor boards? These days, I am not sure of anything anymore.

day moon
watching me
fade away

My Life as an Insect

Simon Wilson, UK

In Kafka's story Gregor Samsa woke one morning to find he had been transformed into a monstrous insect. It's much the same for me, though not as sudden. First, in middle age, I found that I clicked as I walked. Then, white-haired, I found that medical professionals were peering at me like a specimen, speaking to me louder and slower. A little older, the joints began to grate and seize and, slipping from a chair one day (it had castors and I misjudged it as I stooped to pick up a piece of paper that I dropped) I found it difficult to rise, kicking my legs in the air and thinking I must look like a beetle on its back. Finally, I woke one morning to find I had developed an air of fragility that I wore like a shell, moving hesitantly, dried out and sometimes cracking under pressure. Dreaming of the beautiful butterfly that might emerge.

organ music
a fly climbs
the stained glass

Nothing is Black and White

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury, USA

It was to be a routine eye exam. I am a stable myopic. As in- I am short-sighted. In more ways than one. Grudgingly taking a couple of hours out of my busy day, I rush to the ophthalmologist only to wait, while the pupil-dilating drugs take effect. The doctor looks through his scope. A little longer than I remember. Again, and again. Then he shines a bright light into my eye and makes me look in all directions.

still here
and yet the flashing lights
of another world

'I can't believe it', he mutters under his breath. 'What is it, doctor'? I ask. 'You have a tear in your retina. This is an emergency. You need to see a retinal specialist immediately'. I feel myself pale in the dark . . .

a chilly gust
the winter wind
never in a straight line

Dismissed

Susan Burch, USA

"You don't have Temporal Arteritis. You're too young to have it. And even if you did, there's no cure for it."

I look at the doctor, not quite believing him. Because I swear, I can feel a blood vessel tightening on the side of my head. And I feel like that should mean something, at least be a clue to my migraines. But according to him, it doesn't mean anything.

the speed of light losing my mind

Taking No Chances

Lynn Edge, USA

a din of hammers
up and down the street
evacuation notice

My son has been saying, "Wait and see," but now I hear his car in my driveway.

"Mom, you are in line for a direct hit. The depression is predicted to strengthen, so I made motel reservations in Beeville. We'll leave early in the morning."

He heads to the storage building for plywood to cover my windows. After Harvey, we know the devastation of hurricanes first hand. In addition to wind, a second concern is lost power—a house without air conditioning can be deadly in this heat. My neighbor, also a widow, has someone boarding up her windows, so I walk over and ask about her plans.

"I want to stay here, but my daughter insist I come to Houston and stay with her."

At sunup, my son and I begin our journey south through sixty miles of endless ranch land. In Beeville we check into a motel with frayed carpet and calking over holes in the drywall. This is oil field country and roughnecks stayed here during the boom. Yet the room is clean and better than being in a hurricane.

TV on mute
the comforting crunch
of Cheetos

Sweeping

Ruth Kennedy, Canada

The moment I detect something is wrong it's too late. I go down hard, the thwack of my helmet on ice burrows into memory. I immediately try to get back up, worried I will melt the surface, but my fellow curlers insist I stay down until ready. I am no judge of ready. My brain is injured. I have no idea how badly. Gratitude surges first, a survival response, followed by regret that my first spiel has ended so abruptly.

the rumble of granite
a curler's dream
in pebbled ice

never say never

Reid Hepworth, Canada

the sun beams
on my upturned face
first draft pick

He calls me Ace as I reach for the bat and even though I'm no good his words appear to have a miraculous effect when my bat cracks the ball with surprising accuracy yet still I stand stupefied as the ball spins across the playing field then beyond the outfield till my feet take off running and my ears fill with the whoops and cheers of my classmates

sometimes magic runt of the litter

Spreading My Wings

Rick Jackofsky, USA

On a moonless summer night, I lay awake listening to a swarm of mosquitoes buzzing in the darkness. Tossing and turning, I imagine them as a cauldron of vampire bats waiting for me to fall asleep so they can suck the blood from my senseless body. After what seems like an eternity but in reality, is probably a little less than an hour, I roll up my sleeping bag, unzip the tent, and make a run for it. Sneaking in through the back door, I find a glass of milk and a plate of cookies waiting for me on the kitchen table.

cicadas to crickets
the segue
of day into night

Hayride

Gayle Worthy, USA

No one told me that hay bales are prickly. No one told me not to wear shorts. This is nothing like the movies. The hay pokes into my bare legs. The tractor driver seems to aim for every bump of this well-used pasture. I don't know anyone here except the friend who brought me along, and she has hightailed it to the other side of the trailer. As the daytime heat of late August gently gives way to fragrant coolness and dusky dark, I find myself sitting next to a boy named George, who seems to be wooing me. Following sporadic stabs at making conversation, I sense that we are heading for a kiss—my first—and when it comes, I'm shocked by how bristly his upper lip is, how awkward the kiss, how risqué I feel doing something so intimate with a stranger. I sleep fitfully that night, worrying, "Could I be pregnant now?"

adolescence . . .
grasping at straws
in the dark

Splinters of Light

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

Beneath a gray sky heavy with impending snow, I trudge through icy slush to the mailbox. Nothing but junk mail. A white car slows to a stop and the driver rolls down his window, greets me, and asks if I own the farm stand across the way. I don't, but I point out the house it belongs to. The driver announces that he, too, is my neighbor—he lives in the trailer park down the road—and launches into a rapid-fire discourse on neighborliness.

"Don't nobody say 'fine' no more when you ask 'em how they is," he complains. "Folks got to take care of they neighbors, not just people away far off in California or someplace. But folks can't seem to get along. Why, I got in a argument the other morning with some fellow right in my own bathroom—seen him in the mirror. And darned if the bastard didn't turn his back on me and walk away!"

Hardly pausing to draw breath, he goes on. "You know, I can't *wait* to get to Heaven. And when I get there, I'll prob'ly point to some dude and say 'I can't *stand* that guy.' And they'll ask me, 'How'd *you* get here? 'Cause if you can't get along with folks, you ain't where you think you is!'" And with a lightning grin, he's gone.

Kintsugi . . .
thin lines of gold
before a winter sunrise

People Watching

Matthew Caretti, American Samoa

The concourse courses with the weary and those sitting too easily in the gate-side bars. Some hold hands while others touch down with a soft kiss. Prayer room crosses and salah mats mingle with meditation cushions. Here difference is a science fiction of obsolete impulses ignoring our capacity for kindness, even among the travesties of travel. And so, we wait in our many languages for the call to board. For the chance to finally move on.

middle seat
we haggle our way
to smiles

I’d Know Your Name

Terri L. French, USA **(EC)**

He serenades me on the ukelele from 8,000 miles away. Singing Clapton in a Nepalese accent. Four years ago, this young man carried my backpack in the Himalayas.

Now, he is without work, recovering from COVID, a bus ticket he cannot afford away from his family. But, as a gesture for the small amount of money I’ve wired him, he sings his heart out to me. His voice cracking at the chorus.

nightingale
as close as I’ll get
heaven*

* Eric Clapton, *Tears in Heaven,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JxPj3GAYYZ0

The Meaning of Becoming

John Zheng, USA

Stars
shoot
across
the dark sky—
strings of aahs exclaimed
by ghosts of the delta seeing
the array of city lights dense like tacks on the map
of Memphis—home of the blues—where luminaries fade in and out while the music stays

swaying grasses
the half-hidden headstone
of a blues legend

J'accuse !

Mark Meyer, USA

I can no longer bear the shame and must confess: I borrowed (well, make that swiped) a book from the San Antonio public library in 1965 and I still have it to this day. An unassuming little black book from way back in the stacks on the 3rd floor—seldom checked-out and mostly long overlooked: now obviously long overdue. It was just an old, worn-down mass-market copy of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*, from which bloomed my lifelong petty criminal career of butchering diction and writing lackluster poetry.

one more rejection
but this time in French—
ça ne fait rien !

Editor's Choices (EC) – Haibun

The Tree of Dreams

Valentina Meloni, Italy (**EC)**

Valdichiana April 7, 2017

When I was a young child, I gave my father a violin for his birthday. I had put aside all my savings for a long time.

In the dusty old music shop, where I bought piano scores for my studies, I saw it shining in the case. I went closer and removed some dust with my finger and the warm smell of the wood stunned me.

The shopkeeper asked me who it was for, and I replied that it was for my father. He was quite impressed and told me that the tree from which the violin was made must be a magical tree, because that violin had been there for decades and no one had ever cared for it. It seemed it was certainly waiting for me.

I went out with the precious package in my hand and on the threshold of that shop, a thought began to take shape.

sea breeze—
a tree knows
even your dreams

My father didn't know how to play the violin and, perhaps, for this reason, it could be considered a useless and inappropriate gift. I have often thought that the tree from which the violin was made must have had a soul and perhaps even dreams.

continued . . .

gust of wind—
for a moment the leaf
returns to its branch

Even though the violin lay silent for some forty years I know that there is an inaudible melody still waiting to be played.

sound of music . . .
this longing
for infinite possibilities*

**I am referring to the words of the mystic and poet Giancarlo Bruni, a monk of the Bose Community and a priest, born in Marina di Massa on November 18, 1938. He joined the Order of the Servants of Mary and has spent his life between the monastic community, university, and preaching both in Italy and abroad. Currently, he lives at the Stinche Hermitage in Panzano, between Florence and Siena, dedicating his life to searching for "fragments of light" and teaching ecumenism.*

L'albero dei sogni

Valdichiana 7 aprile 2017

Da bambina, per il suo compleanno, a mio padre regalai un violino. Misi da parte tutti i miei pochi risparmi e andai avanti ad accantonarli a lungo.

Mi recai nella vecchia bottega di musica polverosa, dove compravo sempre gli spartiti per pianoforte per i miei studi, e lo vidi, luccicante di caldo legno nella sua custodia. Mi avvicinai e tolsi un po' di polvere col dito, l'odore buono del legno mi stordiva.

Il commerciante mi chiese per chi fosse, e io risposi che era per mio padre. Egli rimase alquanto colpito e mi disse che l'albero da cui fu costruito il violino doveva essere un albero magico, perché quel violino era lì da decenni e nessuno se n'era mai curato, mi è sembrato proprio che stesse aspettando me.

Uscii con in mano il prezioso involto e un pensiero, sulla soglia di quella bottega, cominciò a prendere forma.

brezza di mare—
un albero conosce
anche i tuoi sogni

Mio padre non sapeva suonare il violino e, forse, per questo, poteva essere considerato un regalo inutile e inappropriato. Ma quarant'anni erano importanti e le sue mani grandi, troppo grandi per un violino delicato, non dovevano dimenticare l'anima di linfa e le foglie verdi che avevano abitato l'albero e i suoi sogni.

colpo di vento—
per un istante la foglia
torna al suo ramo

Anche se il violino è rimasto in silenzio per quasi quarant'anni, so che esiste ancora una melodia inudibile che attende di essere suonata.

suona una musica—
nostalgia d'infinito *
nell'aria mite

**Mi riferisco alle parole del mistico e poeta Giancarlo Bruni, monaco della Comunità monastica di Bose e sacerdote, nato a Marina di Massa il 18 novembre 1938. Entrato nell'Ordine dei Servi di Maria, ha trascorso la sua vita tra la comunità monastica, l'università e la predicazione in Italia e all'estero. Attualmente vive nell'Eremo delle Stinche, a Panzano in Chianti, tra Firenze e Siena, dove dedica la sua vita alla ricerca di «frammenti di luce» e all'insegnamento dell'ecumenismo.*

Tree of Dreams *by Valentina Meloni is a haunting account of memory, love and the innate human yearning for "infinite possibilities" of spirit to borrow a quote from the Italian mystic and poet,* ***Giancarlo Bruni****, who is the inspiration for Meloni's haibun. There's poignant irony that the violin which embodies beauty and is a powerful expression of affection for the poet's father remains soundless. This silence does not negate the value of the poet's gift to her father or diminish her deep regard for him. Rather it inspires in the poet the thought that latent in the violin's muteness is the soul and longing of the tree from which it was crafted. The three interweaving haiku impart a strong sense of what Yves Bonnefoy (1923 – 2016) described as the human aspiration for something peerless beyond the mundane. Keats tells us "Heard melodies are sweet but those unheard are sweeter".*

Warming Up

Doug Sylver, USA **(EC)**

Five red rose buds in a white vase reaching toward the framed Chagall bouquet as if they want to join in. I cut them from the front yard a few days ago, shivering in the November rain. They're opening up, slowly, not all of them, but most of them, so far.

so long covered in ice
her childhood memories
of the orphanage

Memory also features prominently in Doug Sylver's ***Warming Up****. I was rather taken by the interplay of the real roses picked by the poet and the roses in the painting of Marc Chagall. It's well-known that Chagall's art was a homage to his beloved wife, Bella and this haibun seems to play on this motif although Sylver does not overtly mention his wife. There is pathos in that as flowers blossom after winter so also memory returns out of the ice of forgetting. That the memory is of an orphanage enhances the keenness of loss of parental care and love.*

I’d Know Your Name

Terri L. French, USA **(EC)**

He serenades me on the ukelele from 8,000 miles away. Singing Clapton in a Nepalese accent. Four years ago, this young man carried my backpack in the Himalayas.

Now, he is without work, recovering from COVID, a bus ticket he cannot afford away from his family. But, as a gesture for the small amount of money I’ve wired him, he sings his heart out to me. His voice cracking at the chorus.

nightingale
as close as I’ll get
heaven*

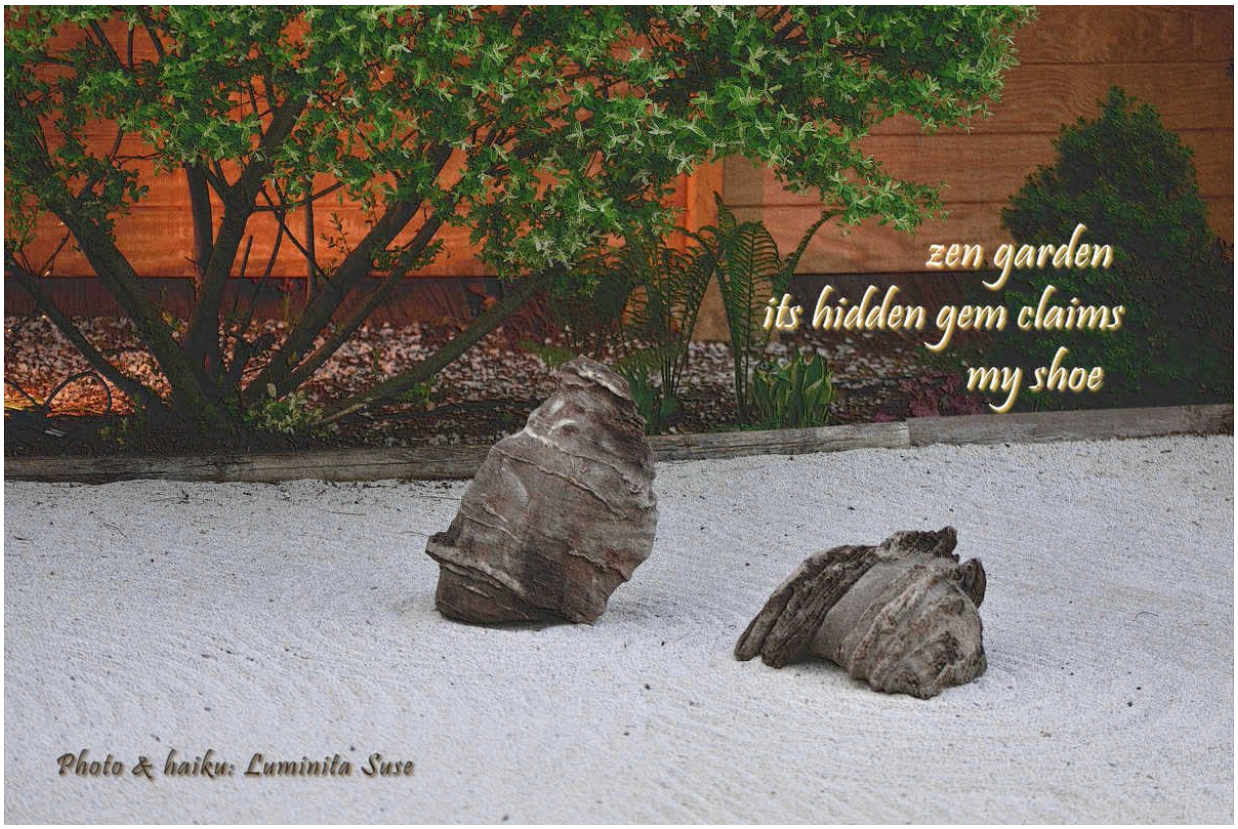
* Eric Clapton, *Tears in Heaven,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JxPj3GAYYZ0

I’d Know Your Name *by* Terri L. French *accesses memory through music. The ’nightingale’ singer of Eric Clapton’s song on a ukulele is a young Nepalese porter, whom the poet met four years ago. This opens up not only the memory of a time gone but also an unexpected closeness during the universal Covid isolation. His song in gratitude of the poet sending him some money seems to close both time and distance.*

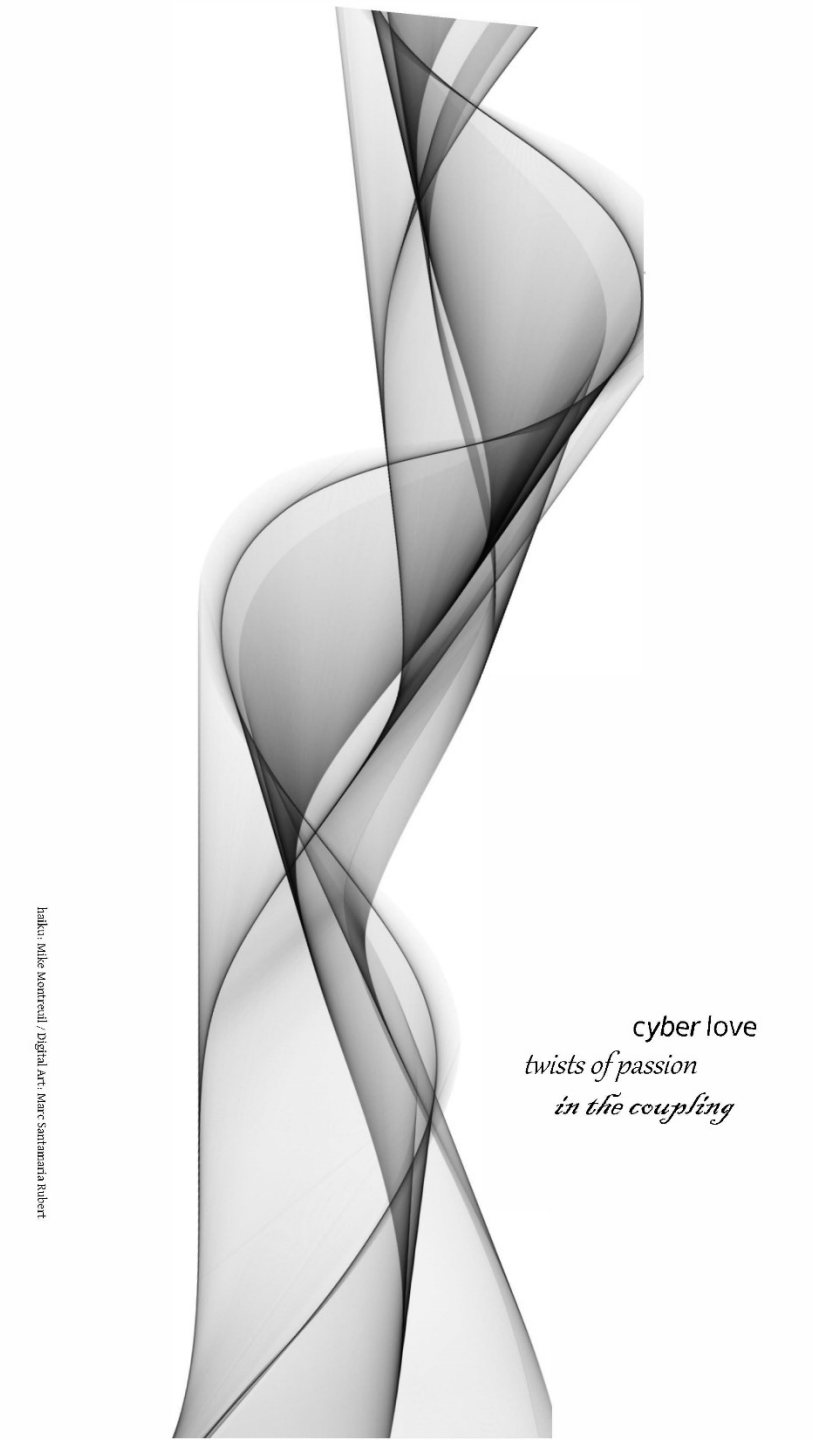
Sonam Chhoki

Haiga – Part 4

Luminita Suse—Canada



Mike Montreuil—Canada / Marc Santa Maria Rubert—Spain



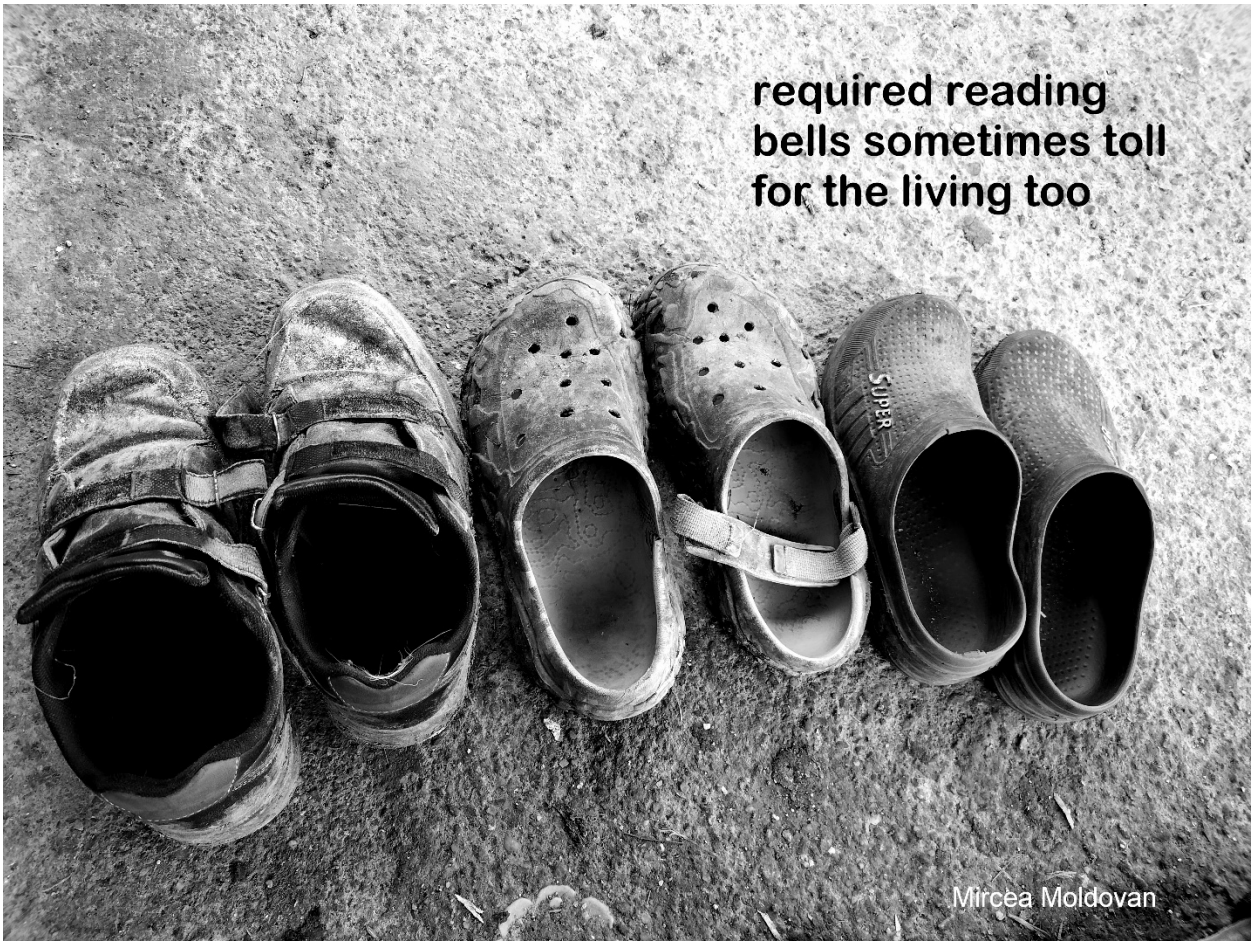
Marilyn Ashbaugh—UK



Marion Clarke—Ireland



Mircea Moldovan—România



Nalina Shetty—India



Oscar Luparia—Italia



Tanka Prose



Towers — Barangaroo

Elemental

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

Long ago, my mother gave me a pair of handmade earrings shaped like the sun and crescent moon, one with a face of hammered gold and the other polished silver. With hooded eyes, they gaze unmoved across the eons.

at the doorway
into the next bardo
we say *farewell . . .*
what would morning be
without the shadowlands of dusk

Space to Dream

Joanna Ashwell, UK

What is it about the name? The holiday cottage that has aligned itself with alchemy. Spider Cottage. It rolls around my tongue. The expansion. The ideas. I've only glimpsed inside vicariously. This is all that is needed to activate my creative juices. The peacock bathroom, the winding stairs, the coloured glass windows, the views, the history, the fireplace and the spider web gates into the living room. Yes, this is what has lifted my soul. The thought that a tiny spider is spinning in a corner a transient web and there are these magnificent gates permanently featured within the walls. As you step through the web, imagine yourself in another world.

all it takes
to blend the blue
of a different sky
a splash of ocean
gathered with hope

Law of Nature

Gavin Austin, Australia

How do I tell her that she has grown old. How do I take the housekeys from those hands that gently bathed and fed me. They sit still and gnarled now, in her lap for safekeeping. I remark on the morning being unusually cold. She nods, unfocused eyes staring somewhere beyond the curtains. Perhaps she will tell me again her stories of Paris. I will embrace them today. But she remains silent.

How do I take the independence from this woman. She let me run barefoot through the fields, fall from a pony, ride a billycart without brakes. And counselled me through every childhood trauma, loving me always. I shuffle my feet and sigh too loudly. It ricochets off the magnolia walls where a gallery of lifetime memories hangs.

the howl
of a trapped dingo rings
into dawn
her pack close together
melting into snow gums

Built to (b)Last?

Susan Burch, USA

In 2017 Apple admitted to slowing its iPhones. And years before that, they started planning their devices to fail, beginning with the iPod. Instead of lasting decades like the computers they had been building, it was designed to fail in two years. It's a strategy called engineered obsolescence. It's batteries that can't be replaced, software updates that slow your phone, and device sabotage to make you buy more of their products and spend more of your money.

no more
gun powder . . .
what a shame
when you used to be
the bomb

Freddie

Anna Cates, USA

When I made the difficult decision to put him to sleep, Freddie was thirteen, still with a lot of life in him but with a variety of medical problems. Afterwards, the house felt so empty and quiet, even with my other kitty, my "baby girl," Fifi.

I found myself net-surfing the cost to clone a cat: $50,000. I put the thought aside. Besides, a clone wouldn't actually be Freddie, having the unique personality he acquired from his kittenhood.

I ran into a casual acquaintance on the bike trail. He also euthanized a pet, a dog, before the animal was absolutely incapacitated, with eyes all glaucomatous and unable to walk, etc. He told me a year and a half had passed, and he still calls for "Gunner" to come in at night like he used to.

Years ago, I exchanged messages with someone on a dating site shortly after he'd lost a cat. He told me that I didn't understand his grief, which upset me. But honestly, I probably didn't back them.

These days, I remind myself—it's not that Freddie had to die. It's that time had to move on. The Era of Freddie, like a beautiful golden age, simply came to an end.

on the nightstand
his ashes in a box
silent stars
little hon
I miss you

Naming

Ivan Cole, Australia

My therapist is big on awareness. Identify your trauma, your demons, feel it in your body, name the feelings. I have learnt to trust again my insects in therapy, to once again to listen to the images that my body throws to my mind. To stop denial, to stop that part of me that claims all is Ok, that I do not cry in supermarkets, that I do not fear sleep because of my nightmares and that there is not an abyss in my gut. So, I revert to my mum's family and give the demons their original Jewish names—

Name them
Mazzikin, Lilin, Abaddon
know they have come before
filled my soul with grief
placed a pit in my gut

Hope Chest

prose*: Sandra Horton, USA*
tanka: *Robert Erlandson, USA*

I know my grandson and my daughter will use these items, so carefully cared for by myself and my mother. However, after I die, I wish I could somehow know where the dishes and glasses will travel. I hope they stay with the family. Maybe some great grandchild will hear stories about me or my mother as they gather for a family dinner in 30 years. Thinking of my mother's "hope chest" I hope these items will continue to enrich the lives of all those who come to own them.

roast beef
served on grandma's platter
along with smiles
on all the cousin's faces
as the stories start

Apex Predator

Dennis Owen Frolich, USA ***(EC)***

The alpha wolf sets out on patrol, his pack following in a line. He sniffs the air, then stops, alert. His eyes dart to the trees, ears cocked to the sound of a car. When it passes, he continues, padding over the snow. He's walked this path many times, the route slick. He noses over a stump with casual disinterest. He turns, heading toward the sun, hidden behind winter clouds. Today he climbs atop a rock, only for a moment, then turns again, heading back. The pack moves silently, tails hung low. The leader reaches a small wooden shelter and climbs to the roof. From here, he can survey his entire territory. He lays down, muzzle resting on his paws.

The patrol kills 60 seconds.

With nothing else to do in this cage, he closes his eyes.

staring
into the yellow eyes
of the gray wolf
nothing but a pane of glass
separates us

Undone

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

We emerge from our tent as night gives way to morning. The air is damp and cool. Shivering, I wrap my scarf tighter. Our eyes are drawn east across tall reeds as the low mist begins to dissipate above the lake.

across the sky
mandarin ducks
rival dawn
mingling colours
confound our sense

In early sunshine we follow the track beside the lake. You meander ahead as I lose myself among the tree roots and rough bark trunks and continue my search for caroling magpies, chiming bellbirds between the shaggy branches. Abruptly the birdsong stops…

underfoot
forest litter snaps
an intruder
amongst the greenery
pretends to blend in

Self-Discovery

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

Each poem I write begins with a jolt—words that strike like warning thunder. Writing with serious intent feels like stepping over a threshold: every line opens a door I've kept closed.

As I write, I remain a seeker, following the faintest glimmer of truth through the darkness. The stars now blur into distance; the only compass is the low, steady throb beneath my ribs.

I look up
after a night of writing
to the full moon …
each poem a silver trail
deeper into what's hidden

Hiding and Seeking

Sangita Kalarickal, USA

Walking down Purgatory Creek shores
I *hop*, *skip*, and try
to avoid crushing
the carpet of grasshoppers
underfoot.
A *skip* and a *jump* away
is a time travel into
the far past when
my aunt sticks
fresh red ixora
into my curls.
A shower of flowers
from my hair as I
play hopscotch.
hop,
skip,
jump.
golden frangipani
how the fragrance
lingers forever
how traces of time dissolve
like contrails through the sky

Presence

Bryan Rickert, USA

After a parent dies, there is a long series of things that get relegated to donations over time. First, the clothes you'll never use, then the clothes you think you'll use, but never do. Next, the books you think you will read that never leave the shelf. Father has been gone nearly ten years now. Looking around the house, I can see no trace of him at all. That is, until a pipe under the sink breaks. Opening the old tool box calls back his familiar scent and pulling out the hand-me-down wrench makes me realizes that he never left at all. As usual, my father was simply waiting around to help with work that needed to get done.

the tallest
oak in the woods
every branch
supporting me
on my way to the top

Standing Meeting

Joshua St. Claire, USA

Grinding my teeth, clenching my fist and, suppressing, with every fiber of my being,
my desire to shout, "BUT I CAN'T COMPREHEND IT FOR YOU!"*

a smile
that doesn't reach
the eyes
fluorescent lights
24-7-365

*Famously quoting Ed Koch.

The Course

Jenny Sharpe, Canada

Now clear of ice, all the rivers rage towards the shore of Lake Superior. It's been on the local news: the smelt run is underway. For old times sake, I grab a bucket and head to the creek, now more than twice its normal size. My mouth waters. I just want a few of those small, silver fish as they rush upstream to their spawning grounds. Soon, my runners are soaked, a minor inconvenience. I kneel on the bank and dip my pail. It fills with fish and springtime memories.

fragrant kitchen
mum's frying pan sizzles
we hear
our first robin
its sweet song

Once Upon A Time

Adelaide Shaw, USA

The road to Mt. Pinos in the Los Padres National Forest curves upward through a semi-desert area. Sage brush is in bloom, blessing the otherwise monotone hills with small, pale-yellow flowers. Manzanita shrubs, with their evergreen leaves and twisting red bark, give more splashes of color. A Spanish word, manzanita, meaning little apple, is so named because of the small red berries in summer months. Few remain now in early autumn.

Hot, but not oppressive. The sky, an unblemished blue canvas, free of the pall of smog in Los Angeles.

We see a wide area along the shoulder of the road and pull over. We spread a blanket in the shade of a gnarly pinyon pine, the ground layered with needles and fallen cones. I set out lunch, an impromptu picnic suggested that Saturday morning before spontaneity was curtailed by babies and busy days. Slim pickings from a small fridge. Chilled lager, bread, cheese, and grapes. And, of course, love. Lots of that.

scanning old slides
the years fall back
I pause the process
hesitant to move on
and see myself age again

Breaking News

Neena Singh, India

Chaos erupts as a car burst into flames and there is a huge explosion. Dust settles in my hair as I jot down another casualty count. Across the street, a child's backpack lies open. The call to prayer begins, broken by the wail of an ambulance. I lift my camera—the lens fogs, my hands shake, but still the shutter clicks.

The facts are here, but my pen trembles; the line between witness and mourner blurs with every word I record. I write down the day and time: Monday 19:01.

the press badge
heavy around my neck—
tonight's report
holds the silence
of heartbeats

Overlooking

Doug Syler, USA

Every morning, from my eleventh-floor hotel room in Hue, Vietnam, I look east. No clear sunrise today; cloudy, hazy, maybe smoggy. In a building across the street from my hotel, five or six floors below me, the same young woman as everyday, rocking back and forth. She sits near the ledge of the open room, a corrugated metal roof covering her, wearing red today, white yesterday, with a small stack of papers in her lap and a cellphone in her left hand.

A wide-open concrete floor, stained with mold and moss, a coiled-up rope beside her and maybe folded and rolled-up posters in the corner. Laundry hangs along a pole running down the middle of the room, swaying in the warm wind.

Placing the phone in her lap, she pushes her black hair back with both hands, pulls her hands inside her long sleeves. She leans forward to gaze at the street below, left and right, as her hair falls back in front of her face. She leans back into her chair, rocking back and forth, and starts reading from the stack of papers.

something I was
supposed to do
crucial then but
forgotten now
did you call?

The Spring and the Summit

C.X Turner, UK

barefoot I step
into the cobbled stream
warm air pressing
against my shoulders
calm in the current

The water runs red with iron, cool against my palms. I drink slowly, a little more than the seven drops the guidebook prescribes. The garden is still; sheep bleat somewhere below, their sound thinning against the slope.

Later, climbing the hill, the wind presses at my back. The path loosens into scree. I steady myself and keep moving.

rising thermals
my shadow
lifts from the path
and settles again
among the sheep tracks

The Lint of Time

John Zheng, USA

When you picked cotton, its sharp dried burrs pricked your fingertips. That physical experience showed that pain was the weight of a full sack. As the sun dipped out, you trudged out of the field silent in a faded red.

chewing the fat
by a candle
our beautiful future
crackling
till daybreak

Five decades have passed like striking a match, but those farming years still shimmer before eyes, like bales of cotton to be ginned, measured for length, and spun into yarns of memories.

sleepless night
the katydids
weaving songs
into the warp and
woof of a dream

Finding Flight

Gavin Austin, Australia

From his suspended cage in the bay window, Rufus sings a winsome tune to the dying day. Listing rays filter through lace curtains, steal through bars of the wire cage to stroke the burnished feathers of his golden breast. He throws back his head and lowers his eyelids as he trills insistently. Perhaps a song of freedom.

I hold the photo
of us smiling as we hug
before your news
the treatment that's failing
and a decision to be made

On Johannes Vermeer's *Girl with a Veil*

Joshua St. Claire, USA

Most humans couldn't stand them, but, if you wanted to be a spacer, you had to get used to them. They couldn't exactly read our minds, we were too alien, but they could grab edges of thoughts and snatches of memory—which they used to stitch together their appearance. We never could be sure when we saw their true form—or if they even had a true form—because they would change constantly based on what they sensed from us. At first, it was shocking, but they really just wanted us to be comfortable around them. I realized long ago they have more in common with cats than anything else. Curious, intelligent, with a big heart underneath all the sulking, preening, prancing—and hunting. The one I met on the Alcubierre to Gliese 581c was different from all the rest. She (I never knew what pronouns to use, but she seemed like a she and never objected to it) always had the same Sphinx face—thin lips with a whisper of a smile. A face that knew something—knew it knew something—and wanted you to figure it out. No eyebrows or lashes, but bright hazel eyes with pupils that constantly shifted and swirled. Dark hair, with a high knobbly forehead. That nose, too small for her face—and ears too big. A tiny wisp of a thing, four feet or so tall. Always dressed the same—swathed in fine white cloth and a golden veil—from each of those strange ears, hung an enormous pearl—well not quite a pearl—but the idea of a pearl. Sometimes, when we'd talk at night (but it always seems like it was night) alone, on the space deck, I could swear I could see myself—or, rather, memories of myself in those pearls. How they were white and gold and silver all at once, and other colors, too—ones I had no names for. Even years later, I remember that face, the veil, and the pearls against the blacker-than-black inside the Alcubierre Bubble. How those unblinking eyes would change. How the cloth would shimmer in the light. How that tongueless mouth might open, from time to time, to sing.

chiaroscuro
the lead white moon
rising above
the line of mountain
into a line of clouds

Reference work: *Study of a Girl* aka *Girl with a Veil* by Johannes Vermeer, circa 1667, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York

One of a Kind

Adelaide Shaw, USA

They sit on pedestals, their soulful eyes pulling me closer. Pet me. Love me. Three Labrador retrievers, one yellow, one black, one chocolate, the best from a breeder specializing in hunting dogs. Their value? Thousands of dollars each, these well-trained dogs. The pups, should you want to order one . . . perhaps a mere thousand. They allow me to pet, hug, stroke, rub, make a fool of myself. In my mind I give them names: Taffy, Licorice, Cocoa.

a pound puppy
of indeterminate breed
some lab, some pointer;
with one yip he called my name
and chose me as his friend

What Slips Through

C.X. Turner, UK

Overnight, the first frost settles across the garden. The bramble stems bow under its weight, each leaf holding a thin shimmer that will vanish by mid-morning. I stand at the back door with builders' tea cooling in my tired hands, watching the cold draw everything quieter. At the edge of the undergrowth, small shapes flicker and retreat into the brambles.

winter light
the dream returns
in fragments
my hands
empty

Editor's Choices (EC) — Tanka Prose

Apex Predator

*Dennis Owen Frolich, USA **(EC)***

The alpha wolf sets out on patrol, his pack following in a line. He sniffs the air, then stops, alert. His eyes dart to the trees, ears cocked to the sound of a car. When it passes, he continues, padding over the snow. He's walked this path many times, the route slick. He noses over a stump with casual disinterest. He turns, heading toward the sun, hidden behind winter clouds. Today he climbs atop a rock, only for a moment, then turns again, heading back. The pack moves silently, tails hung low. The leader reaches a small wooden shelter and climbs to the roof. From here, he can survey his entire territory. He lays down, muzzle resting on his paws.

The patrol kills 60 seconds.

With nothing else to do in this cage, he closes his eyes.

staring
into the yellow eyes
of the gray wolf
nothing but a pane of glass
separates us

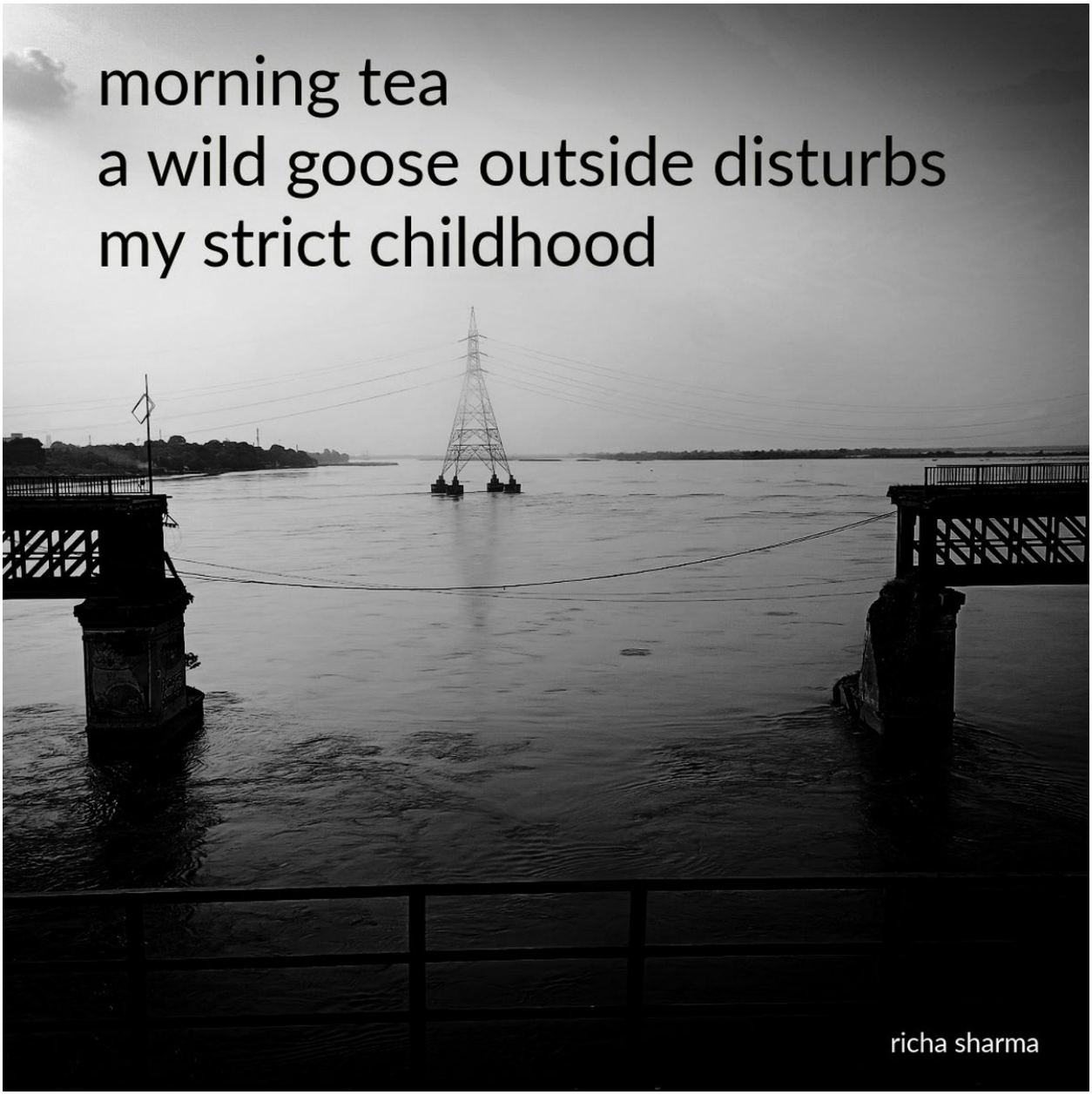
As I was reading Dennis Frolich's tanka prose about a wolf living a "modern" zoo cage. I immediately thought of the zoo pictures I had seen in books and magazines, during my childhood years. Dennis and I exchanged a few emails about iron bar cages and the enclosures that give zoo animals a bit of room in the large outdoor viewing areas that dot the 'modern' zoo. But upon reflection, there really is no difference between an iron bar cage or a few acres of habitat since the animals in those enclosures would have ranges kilometers in sizes and in the case of wolves, it can be over 100 kilometers.

Yet, I remember a book my children read where a lion who looks out of his cage to the people who wonder if the lion is dreaming of the African Savannah, not knowing that the lion was born at the same zoo.

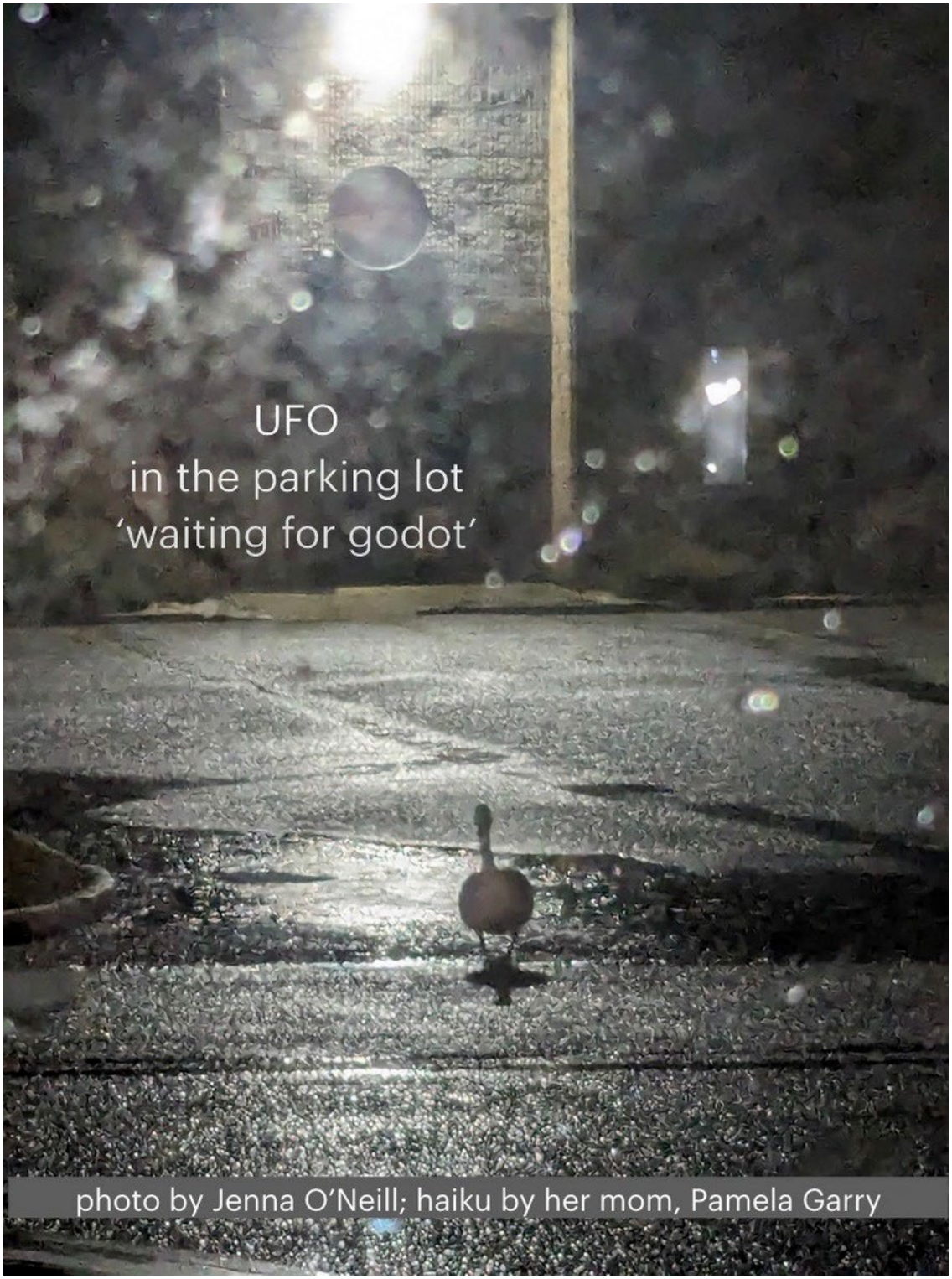
Mike Montreuil

Haiga – Part 5

Richa Sharma – India



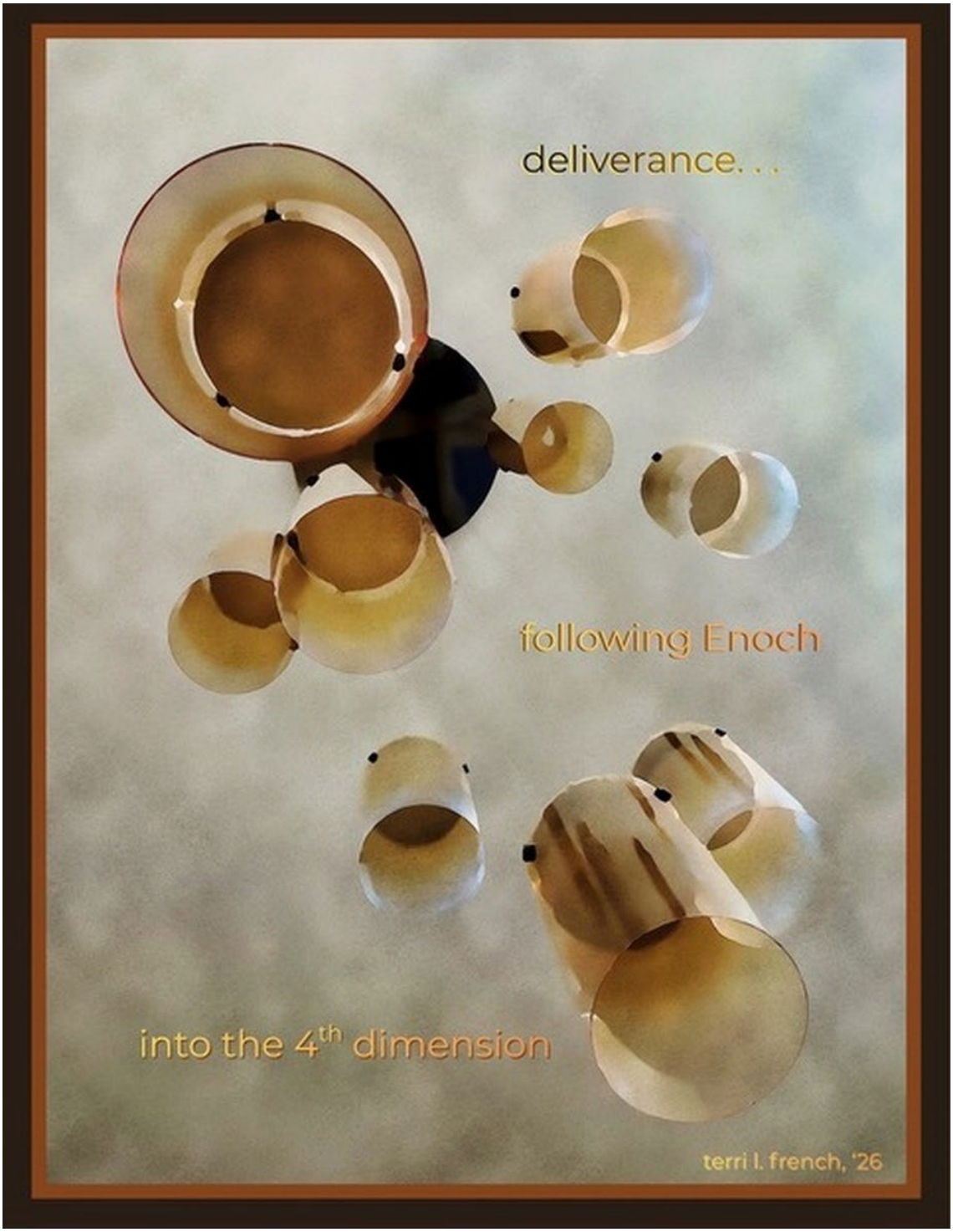
Jenna O'Neill & Pamela Garry – USA



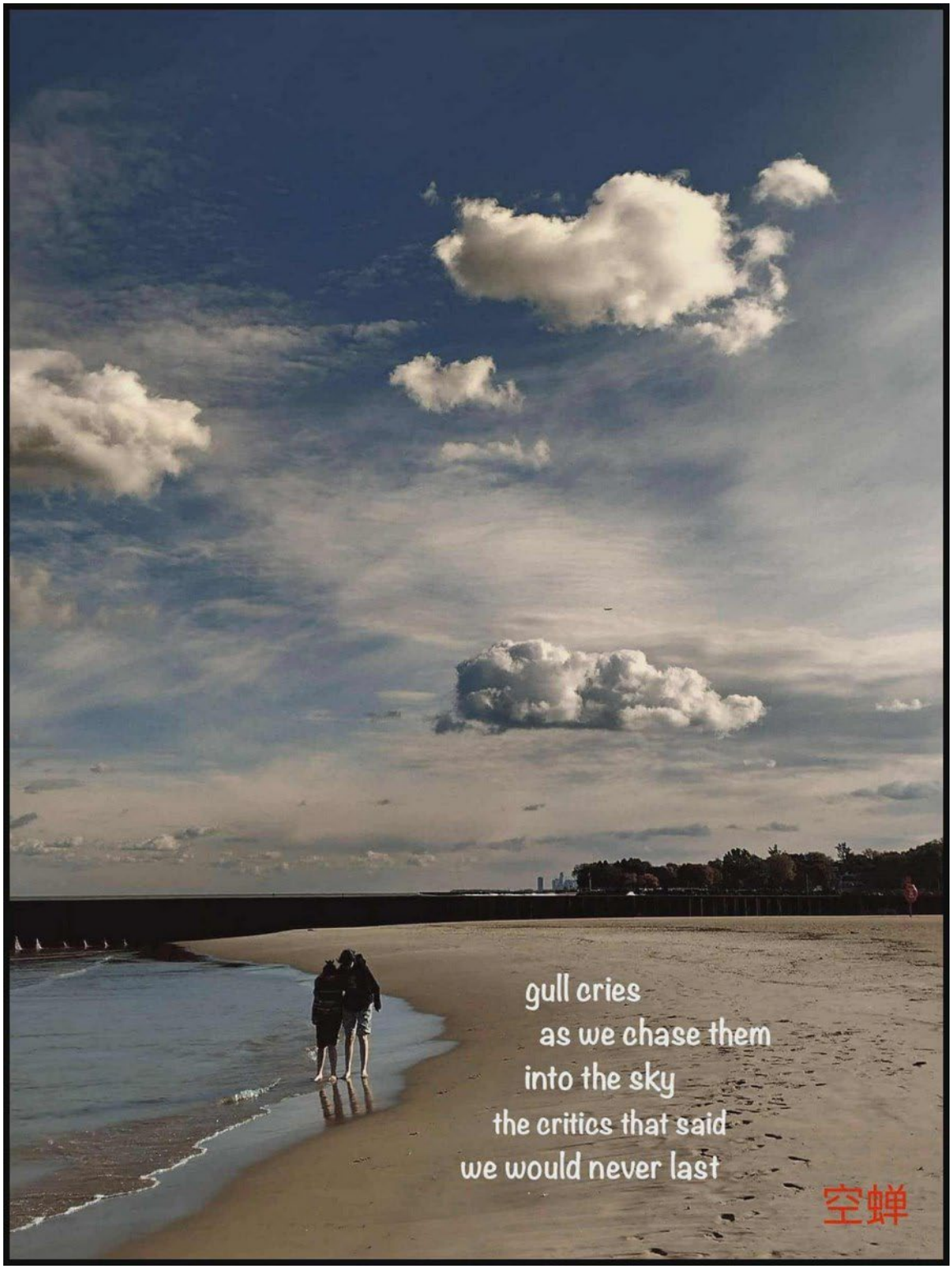
Silva Trstenjak & Mihovila Čeperić-Biljan – Croatia



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utsusemi – USA



Valentina Meloni—Italia



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City Skyline-from Hyde Park