

# cattails



April 2021

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**April 2021 Issue**

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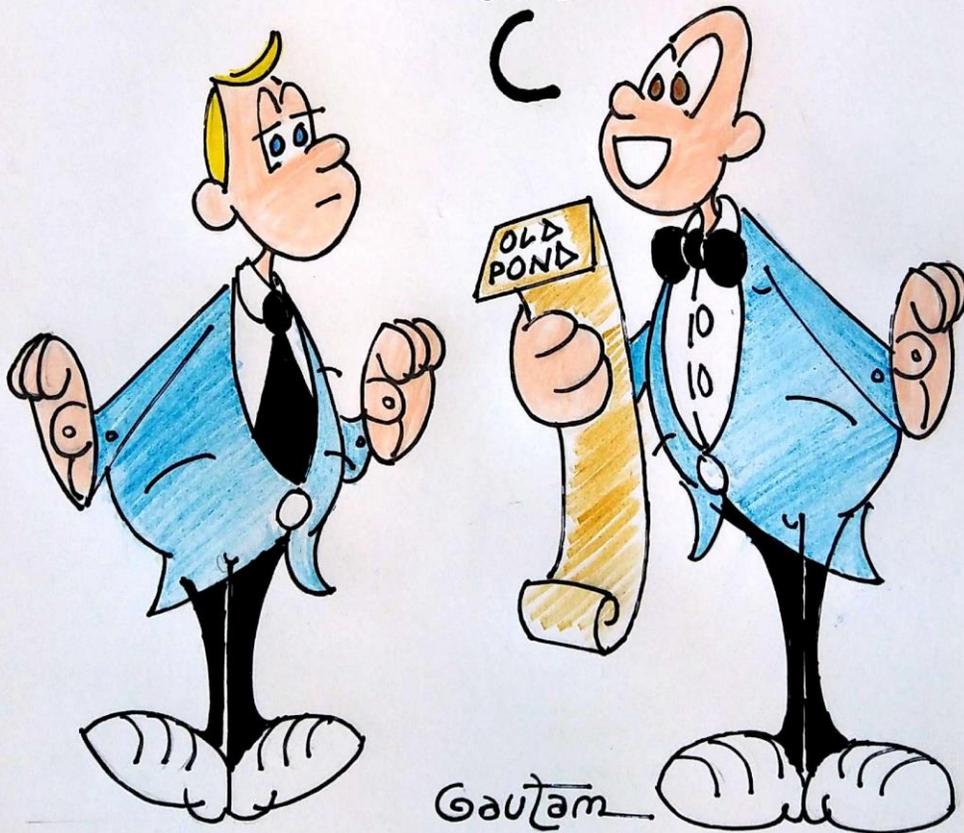
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# GETTING HAI ON THE KU

HERE'S A DIFFERENT TRANSLATION  
ooo THERE ARE TWO COMMAS  
IN ITooo



Gautam

## Introduction

Compassion, the deep sympathy for another, is a necessity “not a luxury,” the Dalai Lama says.

The care and thought with which Susan, Lavana, Geethanjali and Gautam have read the submissions and then gone out of their way to refine a poem for publication or locate a missing submission have been the driving force for this issue of *cattails*. The cancellation of her usual workshops and conferences has not deterred Kala and she showcases haikai poems and critique by the undergraduates of *Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts* (Symbiosis International University, Pune).

Starting with this issue we hope to feature artists from around the world. Our grateful thanks to Lavana for her amazing black and white images and also to Gautam, who makes his debut with a splendid cartoon.

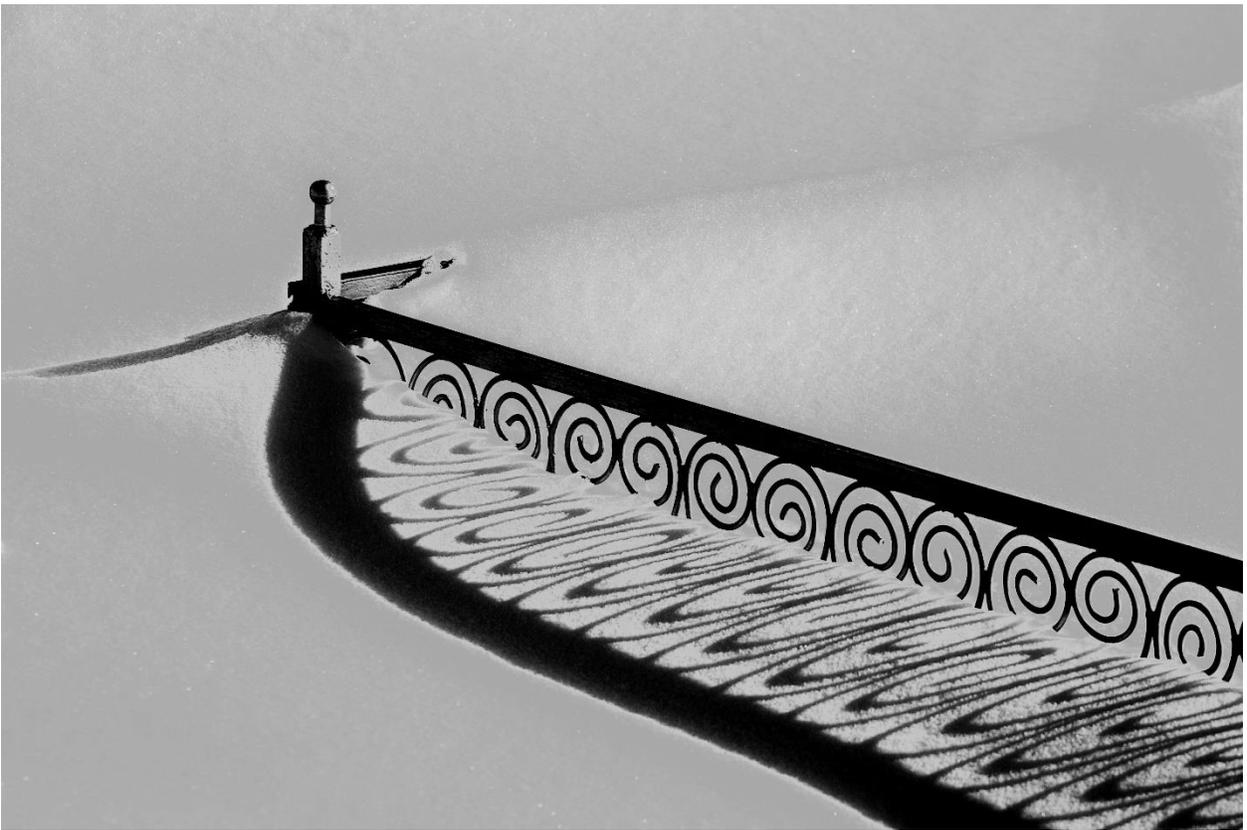
No issue would be possible without Mike’s commitment. He once more delivers another pleasing interface of poems and images on the pages.

In these difficult times, Alan, Neal, Erin and Marianna have been unstinting in their support and help.

Finally, to all the poets who sent us your work *cattails* celebrates your poetical spirit and trust.

Sonam Chhoki

# Haiku



Milky Way  
the first tadpoles  
wriggle free

Lorin Ford, Australia

red barn the cupola crows twice

Susan Beth Furst, USA

sunrise  
the yellow-red colours  
of the baby bird's gape

soluppgång  
de gulröda färgerna  
hos fågelungens gap

Marianne Sahlin, Sweden

festive dawn  
the thud of elephant feet  
through a temple street

பண்டிகை நாள்...  
மாடவீதியில் யானை நடை  
இடி முழக்கம்

(Tamizh)

Srinivas S, India

a ribbon of mist  
above the salt marsh  
the path ahead

Jon Hare, USA

today repeats  
in several versions  
clearing mist

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

yellow fragrance  
heralding spring  
cowslip primrose

Deborah P Kolodji, USA

a sudden blast . . .  
a cloud of cherry petals  
following me

внезапен вятър . . .  
облак от вишневи цветчета  
след мен лети

Diana Teneva, Bulgaria

spring winds—  
amid grass waves  
shipwrecked tulips

Rohan Buettel, Australia

my white cane  
tapping the sidewalk  
a map in my head

Richard Kakol, Australia

lake mist . . .  
swan silhouettes  
at the sedges

Gavin Austin, Australia

blooming poppies  
among the graves  
children play

Paul Geiger, USA

two-way track  
passing ants touch  
and go

Quendryth Young, Australia

an afternoon walk —  
somebody's blue eye  
in the fence knothole

popodnevna šetnja —  
u rupi na dasci plota  
plavo oko

D. V. Rozic, Croatia

forsythia . . .  
the color  
of birdsong

Anna Eklund-Cheong, France

whisk of fur  
the ginger queen crowned  
with sun motes

Mira Walker, Australia

the switch of scent  
between hay and cow dung  
countryside delivery

Adjei Agyei-Baah,  
Ghana/ New Zealand

how fragrant  
the fried spring onions  
village dinner

香りよき春玉葱のフライかな  
[tr. 中野千秋 Chiaki Nakano]

Christina Chin, Malaysia

caesarean section . . .  
the moon divided  
by a flight

cesareo . . .  
la luna divisa  
da un volo

Carmela Marino, Italy

from the cradle –  
the first loud discussions  
with summer breeze

z kołyski –  
pierwsze głośne dyskusje  
z letnim wietrzykiem

Zuzanna Truchlewska, Poland

chancing on a hyrax —  
the voice she never used  
for sons

Lysa Collins, Canada

so many ways  
to hear this world . . .  
the pluck of a petal

Cyndi Lloyd, USA (EC)

chatterbox  
the hedge on the corner burps  
a cloud of goldfinches

Lorraine Pester, USA

ten little fingers  
of my deaf son . . .  
swirling leaves

Agus Maulana Sunjaya, Indonesia

playful breeze  
the long lilac hair  
of wisteria

Cynthia Rowe, Australia

hemlock pollen—  
the scent of your hair  
in the wind

polline di cicuta —  
il profumo dei tuoi capelli  
nel vento

Margherita Petriccione, Italy

blue mountains —  
the Jhelum roars white  
over some rocks

Ashish Narain, The Philippines

the scent of chives  
in new-mown grass  
breath of summer

Nancy Shires, USA

cider on tap  
the paper cup brims  
with wasps

Paul Cordeiro, USA

A particular way  
of holding my pen—  
purple finches.

John Martone, USA

summer breeze  
the lighthouse keeper's pipe  
on and off . . .

ljetni povjetarac  
lula svjetioničara  
pali- gasi se . . .

Mihovila Čeperić-Biljan, Croatia

conch shell  
the rush of waves  
from all the seas

Mark Miller, Australia (EC)

the painter washes  
his brush in the stream: a school  
of yellow sunfish

Robert Beveridge, USA

mermaid shells  
the bioluminescence  
a breath away

Joanna Ashwell, UK

large pale sun—  
talking to the worm  
I place on the hook

Rp Verlaine, USA

afternoon heat  
a wood stork cooling his legs  
with guano

Bill Cooper, USA

clear blue  
the dip and dive  
of pond flies

Bryan Rickert, USA

birdsong the gardener mimics the August wind

Taofeek Ayeyemi, Nigeria

sunflower-seed feeder —  
shadows of squabbling finches  
dance over a worm

Amanda Bell, Ireland

change in the wind  
the farmer down the road  
manures his field

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

green veins  
in a fallen leaf  
meandering creek

Brad Bennett, USA

evening commute  
from field to lake  
sunlit gulls

Nola Obee, Canada

window seat  
a patchwork  
to the horizon

Susan Farner, USA

field of lilies  
so many lives  
come and gone

Julie Schwerin, USA

dysania . . .  
the fireflies set aside  
the lanterns

teško jutro . . .  
krijesnice su odložile  
svoje svjetiljke

Silva Trstenjak, Croatia  
(Tr. D. V. Rozic)

gathering rain into song waterwheel

Sandi Pray, USA

droplets from the roof  
leak into a calabash . . .  
tune of an old blue

Justice Joseph Prah, Ghana

blue  
where once was cloud —  
a love song

Elisa Theriana, Indonesia

after rain  
a begging bowl  
full of stars

Billy Antonio, The Philippines

eviction notice  
in a sidewalk puddle . . .  
a stray and its shadow

搬遷通知  
漂浮在人行道上的水坑裡  
一隻流浪狗和它的影子

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

illegal border crossing  
a killdeer feigns  
a broken wing

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

refugee camp —  
dented soup pots  
in the rain

Roberta Beach Jacobson, USA

kitchen window  
a currawong holds its peace  
on a pine branch

Madhuri Pillai, Australia

corn tassels  
the patience  
of a crow

Tom Bierovic, USA

a water strider's  
perfect geometry  
autumn equinox

Anna Cates, USA (EC)

incoming tide  
all boats  
rising

Frank Yanni, USA

ebbing sea . . .  
in a wide open shell  
the shrunken Moon

oseka . . .  
u otvorenoj školjci  
stisnuti Mjesec

Nina Kovačić, Croatia  
(Tr. D. V. Rozic)

senior village  
the meet and greet  
of pug and beagle

William Scott Galasso, USA

silver willow  
they have no word  
for willing

Silberweide  
sie haben kein Wort  
für Wollen

Helga Stania,  
Switzerland

solstice oak  
every crook festooned  
with lichen

Ben Oliver, England

home plains  
in this inkstone night  
the curlew's cry

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

forest trail . . .  
the moon shredded  
into beams of light

Kevin Valentine, USA

drenched . . .  
the sky now leaking  
moonlight

Jan Dobb, Australia

glowing embers  
the black limbs  
of forest ghosts

John Budan, USA

silent woods —  
ivy tightening  
around the oaks

Ruth Holzer, USA

full moon  
the cold touch  
of a bridge railing

полнолуние  
холодное прикосновение  
перил моста

Nikolay Grankin, Russia

autumn weariness  
a fiery oak  
refuses to dim

herfstmoetheid  
een vurige eik  
weigert te doven  
(Dutch)

Michael Baeyens, Belgium

90-foot drop  
a cushion of moss  
carpets each rotten beam

Jay Friedenberg, USA

barely enough  
to fill the chipped spots . . .  
mom's willow plate

Laurie D. Morrissey, USA

wind off the hill  
how long will I  
be here

Robert Moyer, USA

winter fog  
a crow stumbles through  
a broken song

John Hawkhead, UK

starlit night  
in the winter hay  
still some wind of June

sternenklare Nacht  
im Winterheu  
noch etwas Juniwind

Benno Schmidt, Germany

sweet potato vendor —  
a few snowflakes drift  
onto the cauldron

Richard Tice, USA

first snow  
the thrush ruffles  
its chest feathers

Marilyn Ward, UK

winter river . . .  
a long conversation  
behind a closed door

Kristen Lindquist, USA

sudden snow  
the slowing cadence  
of cars

Ben Gaa, USA

observatory ruins  
how bright the stars  
above the blizzard

Tim Gardiner, UK

silver moon  
the coyote swells the edge  
of his wail

David Watts, USA

sudden cold front—  
the struggle to believe  
I'm not a diagnosis

Joshua Gage, USA

night stretches  
the stillness of the room  
winter solstice

Erin Castaldi, USA

under blue skies  
the wind gathers  
a perfect snow storm

David Gale, UK

frigid weather  
a red rose shatters  
on impact

Debbie Strange, Canada (EC)

after the storm  
the rhythmic sound  
of her shovel

Janice Munro, Canada

midnight  
fills her footprints  
winter rain

Robert Witmer, Japan

ice-covered sidewalk  
my leg bends  
where it shouldn't

Edward J. Rielly, USA

the winter sea  
lashing against the shore—  
even here no forgiveness

Angela Terry, USA

withered bouquet  
a rose slips  
to Buddha's feet

వాడిన పుష్పగుచ్ఛం  
ఓ గులాబీ జారింది  
బుద్ధుని పాదాల చెంతకు

(Telugu)

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, India

mint leaves —  
his last breath  
deeper

foglie di menta —  
il suo ultimo respiro  
più profondo

Cinzia Pitingaro, Italy

winter blues  
one long lonely note from  
the midnight special

Michael Henry Lee, USA

cemetery wind . . .  
what else speaks  
of death?

Veronika Zora Novak, Canada

cold snap  
a stray dog curls up  
with the bare oak

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan

between the ice  
and the stone  
In Memoriam

Laurie Greer, USA

in moonlight  
passing night clouds  
the pulse of him

Carol Raisfeld, USA

this life . . .  
fallen petals  
on my hands

questa vita . . .  
petali caduti  
nelle mie mani

Eufemia Griffo, Italy

melting snow  
how far can you trace  
my absence

ТОПЯЩ СЕ СНЯГ  
КОЛКО ДАЛЕЧЕ МОЖЕШ ДА ПРОСЛЕДИШ  
ОТСЪСТВИЕТО МИ

Nadejda Kostadinova, Bulgaria

winter moon  
a thin shadow  
follows me home

Nika, Canada

cat's claw moon  
the scar that remains  
after she's gone

Dan Curtis, Canada

all i've got  
this moment  
pink frozen moon

tutto ciò che ho  
questo momento  
gelida luna rosa

Lucia Fontana, Italy

jasmine flower —  
until your white returns  
a world of shadows

flor de jazmín  
hasta tu blanco regreso  
un mundo de sombras

Elías D. Dana, Spain

the ruins  
of a water mill  
early spring rain

Ernest Wit, Poland

both hands hold  
a half cup of snow  
yellow crocuses

Ron Scully, USA



## Editor's Comments

More people are taking to haiku and that's good news! We have had a very large number of submissions and I am grateful to all of you who submitted, as always. Unfortunately, I could not pick as many as I wanted. But I hope you enjoyed the walk as you joined in on this ginko – through seasons, through sensorial stimuli, through continents, through evocative moments that the poets have been kind enough to share with us. As many of us are still 'at home' and negotiating the world 'online', I am sure this is an experience to cherish. I particularly enjoyed wandering through mountains, beaches and lake mist, meeting the people of this planet – a hyrax, an elephant, a currawong, purple finches (especially since I have been sitting inside my home this past year).

Choosing haiku for the EC was challenging (as always) because all the poems that have found their way into this issue are beautiful. I present a few here for your enjoyment:



so many ways  
to hear this world . . .  
the pluck of a petal

Cyndi Lloyd, USA

This world and the ways of hearing it. In these trying times, the phrase in this haiku (the first two lines) has a lot of significance. Each one of us has been interacting with what is around, in our own individual way. The way the world around has affected us is also a unique story. Cyndi Lloyd makes us observe that through a flower. No, zooming in even more, through a petal or more specifically, the plucking of a petal. This close observation does not however bring about a stated or fixed response in the reader. The many layers in the haiku and the possible levels of engagement raised many questions in my mind. What is the sound of a plucked petal? Is it a soft sound or a harsh one? Or is it a troubled silence? Why was that petal plucked? A seemingly gentle image

by the poet that may not be what you originally thought it was. The fragment (line 3) raises this haiku to one that can create varied emotions in the reader. 12 words in this haiku, and yet, so many possible responses. What's yours?



a water strider's  
perfect geometry  
autumn equinox

Anna Cates, USA

This poem, with a clear season word, is a haiku of observation. Nature's perfect geometry in a water strider. The insect floats on the surface of water and doesn't sink. One of the reasons for this is that it balances its weight over a larger area with its splayed legs. That image is juxtaposed with the autumn equinox in the third line, which conjures up associations of the perfect day — night balance and more. Overall, a smile-bringer. Thank you, Anna Cates.



frigid weather  
a red rose shatters  
on impact

Debbie Strange, Canada

This haiku took me back to an educational video that I had seen long ago, where a rose shattered after being dipped in liquid nitrogen. A startling observation by Debbie Strange from Canada, where frigid weather is the norm for a good part of the year and the cold freezes the red rose enough to shatter it on impact. The poet uses a powerful and unique image here. On another level, the use of 'red rose' and its various allusions cannot be escaped by the reader. Thank you Debbie Strange, for the many possible readings.



conch shell  
the rush of waves  
from all the seas

Mark Miller, Australia

From a warm beach in Australia, Mark Miller brings us a beautiful conch shell. And when a reader puts it to the ear, the songs of the sea are playing. The poet talks of the rush of waves but deftly maneuvers us into the third line where one word makes the difference — 'all'. In the palm of my hand, next to my ear is a conch shell which has the rush of waves from all the seas. This brought to me the universality of existence, of human life- at one level, and yet, reminded me of how tiny a place I occupy in this magnificent world. Thanks Mark Miller, for that nudge.

With gratitude,  
Geethanjali Rajan

Adelaide B. Shaw



an'ya

a sureness  
of loss came over me



unembraced  
the shivers you always  
kept away have crept in

an'ya

Cezar Ciobica: haiku / Paul Alexandru: photo



bad dream  
crossing the border  
with my ex

Photo: Paul Alexandru

Haiku Cezar Ciobica

Christina Chin



Cristina Angelescu



cattails — April 2021

# Senryu



morning newspaper —  
she studies her horoscope  
and goes back to bed

Keitha Keyes, Australia

restaurant  
the bone in the soup  
and me

Pere Risteski, North Macedonia

art studio . . .  
a nude model  
wearing her mask

Djurdja Vukelic Rozic,  
Croatia

deep sea fishing  
fine-tuning the drag  
for his wallet

dl mattila, USA

super bowl  
quesco and chips remain  
an odds on favourite

Michael Henry Lee, USA (EC)

Miss Universe pageant  
the interpreter  
puts her spin on it

Lori Becherer, USA

dinner date  
pouring on  
the honey

Anna Cates, USA

driving test  
the examiner asks  
if I go to church

Quendryth Young,  
Australia **(EC)**

women's apparel  
side glancing the curvy new  
mannequin

Bryan Rickert, USA **(EC)**

wedding anniversary  
daughter gifts me  
a nodding doll

R. Suresh Babu, India

frosty morning  
a banana for breakfast  
bending the rules

Roger Watson, UK

ebb tide . . .  
a refugee clings tightly  
to her dreams

Srinivas S., India

wheels on the bus  
going round and round  
the chitter-chatter of children

Angela Terry, USA

first meeting  
the dimpled online lover  
with mouth odour

Oluwasegun Oluseyi Adesina,  
Nigeria

Sunday sermon  
the bare cleavage  
of the pastor's wife

Adjei Agyei-Baah, Ghana

steak house  
two politicians  
attack their lunch

Hazel Hall, Australia

summer's end  
finding we can't find  
what we abandoned

Rp Verlaine, USA

study hall shenanigans  
his pencil poking  
at her shadow

Ryland Shengzhi Li, USA

giving up  
on giving up  
banana cream pie

Nika, Canada (EC)

candlewick trimmed  
I take my attitude  
down a notch

Ronald K. Craig, USA

town clean-up day —  
we lug home  
one another's junk

Ruth Holzer, USA

long after New Year's  
the Christmas cards  
busy people send

Laurie D. Morrissey, USA

dancing in the kitchen  
she thinks  
nobody is watching

B. A. France, USA

more Covid days  
choosing what to wear  
to get the mail

Adelaide Shaw, USA

being a widow  
on the bottom of the closet  
her colorful pajamas

Silva Trstenjak, Croatia

wash day argument  
her bra and my underwear  
tangled up

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

mosquitoes  
I feel like biting  
back

Sherry Grant, New Zealand

a busker bows  
to the ancient oak  
leaf-drop

Janet Dobb, Australia

foreign land —  
they tell me I resemble  
another Indian

Ashish Narain, Philippines

salt and pepper  
another compliment  
from a friend

Madhuri Pillai, Australia

Sunday hymn  
the dance of the  
interpreter's hands

June Rose Dowis, USA

stropping his razor  
the punchline my barber  
never remembers

Tom Bierovic, USA

another statue the pigeons show their appreciation

Susan Beth Furst, USA

crisis meeting  
the homemade space cookies  
untouched

Eva Limbach, Germany

tested positive  
a street cat with the best  
poker face

Elisa Theriana, Indonesia

2<sup>nd</sup> miscarriage  
our “Baby On Board” sign  
loses its grip

Susan Burch, USA

old prom photo  
the same slant  
to my smile

Ben Gaa, USA

music school  
teachers leave through  
the Bach door

Carol Raisfeld, USA

neighbour’s passing  
Mother forbids us  
to play funeral

Ernest Wit, Poland

round-about  
running from you  
to you

Marilyn Fleming, USA

wedding anniversary  
in the seat beside me  
a memory

Frank Yanni, USA

spring morning  
my shadow joins me  
for a stroll

Gisele LeBlanc, Canada

sunset from the balcony  
the old lady  
on tiptoe

Benno Schmidt, Germany

sorting photos  
I gasp  
at the pile up of ex's

Tom Staudt, Australia

Christmas  
in Granny's cookbook  
now my stains too

Joanne Van Helvoort,  
The Netherlands

for my benefit  
the chiropractor  
cracks jokes

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

pram stroll  
a mother smiles  
at her mobile

Ingrid Baluchi,  
North Macedonia

lockdown  
my son rotates  
his joints

Cynthia Rowe, Australia

long dry spell  
the old farmer leans  
into his beer

Mark Miller, Australia

candle ice the way you blow hot and cold

Debbie Strange, Canada

those pictures, on that shelf . . .  
slowly I dust  
their last smiles

Anna Eklund-Cheong, France

new magnifier  
the birthday girl zooms in  
her father's stubble

Maeve O'Sullivan, Ireland

online yoga  
checking my email  
between asanas

Amanda Bell, Ireland

asylum denied —  
the depth of his story  
lost in translation

Jill Lange, USA

Chinese tea shop  
taking time to savor  
a new friendship

Robert Moyer, USA

medal polishing . . .  
the Vietnam vet squints  
through one eye

Gavin Austin, Australia

ambition—  
to take just one chocolate  
from the box

Keitha Keyes, Australia

naked rockstar  
in the shower stall  
soap opera

dl mattila, USA

picky  
the widow thumps  
each melon twice

Bryan Rickert, USA

curry pumpkin on threshold . . .  
the chef wards off  
evil eyes

R. Suresh Babu, India

sleepless night . . .  
even radio static sounds  
like music

Srinivas S., India

the hero's quest  
when you are almost four  
walking into school alone

Angela Terry, USA

solemn morning  
dressing for a funeral  
my one tie missing

Rp Verlaine, USA

double rainbow  
the bag-lady buys  
a lotto ticket

Nika, Canada

windy day  
my underwear  
has lofty ideas

Laurie D. Morrissey, USA

traffic hold-up  
the school bus and I  
swap funny faces

Janet Dobb, Australia

new social circle  
the nuances  
I pick up

Madhuri Pillai, Australia

little black book  
all his entries  
in pencil

June Rose Dowis, USA

online classroom  
getting a gold star  
in jpeg

Tom Bierovic, USA

first vacation  
asking for keys  
to the oarlocks

Carol Raisfeld, USA

a reeling world  
I steady myself  
with a drink

Ernest Wit, Poland

church potluck  
a prayer for the passing  
of casserole

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

pandemic back to reality TV

Ingrid Baluchi, North Macedonia

first day of school . . .  
faces a little longer  
old jeans too short

Anna Eklund-Cheong, France

morning news  
I walk in and out  
of the headlines

Gavin Austin, Australia



**Editor's Choice Senryu** – April 2021

super bowl  
quesco and chips remain  
an odds on favorite

Michael Henry Lee (USA)

The Super Bowl is the final game of American football after a year of fierce competition between the contenders.

Typically, apart from the frenzy with which the spectators cheer their favorite teams a great deal of money is made and lost by sportsmen who gamble heavily on the outcome of the game.

In this context we are informed by the poet with a straight face that the real odds on favorites are quesco and chips. No surprise there! I remember as a youngster watching the cricket match on television before getting down to the game the first thing I did was arrange for the snacks. Far better even than watching a thrilling test match on TV was watching a thrilling test match on TV while munching potato chips and gulping chilled Coke.

Yessir! I not only understand the poet's dilemma but can empathize fully too.



driving test  
the examiner asks  
if I go to church

Quendryth Young (Australia)

Believe me, there is no greater self confidence booster than a driving test examiner asking you just before the test whether you go to church. Makes you wonder whether it was a mistake not making your last will and testament prior to coming over. Perhaps coming clean with a confession to the priest would have been in order too.



women's apparel  
side glancing the curvy new  
mannequin

Bryan Rickert (USA)

First a brief peek at the psyche of the human male. The human male is always on the verge of laying down his heart at the feet of the first pretty girl who comes along, forgetting on the spur of the moment that he is already married and the father of a brood of kids. A minor slip, nothing more.

So when the above-mentioned gentleman sees a curvaceous young woman, he just cannot help side glancing her lecherously. Even if she turns out to be only a mannequin in an apparel store. So what of it! He doesn't let minor details bother him.



giving up  
on giving up  
banana cream pie

Nika (Canada)

This is one senryu which will find echoes in the minds of everyone who has ever been informed solemnly by his physician that he had better knock off a few kilos of bodyweight if he knows what's good for him. Oh, if only murdering doctors was not considered a crime! Especially doctors who keep peeking at your dinner plate.

A person starts the day with unbuttered toast and black coffee. Lunches on boiled carrots and cucumber slices without any dressing. Takes a tea-time snack of two cream crackers, only two, and green tea. Dines on lean meat and more boiled vegetables. And just as he is gloating in anticipation of a lower reading on the weighing scale next morning he spots the banana cream pie kept aside as dessert.

Gone is his determination to lay off the unwanted calories and he feels his iron resolve crumble as he reaches out with trembling fingers for the pie. He tells himself that he is not God after all and any mortal in his place would have done precisely the same. He feels much better as he places the last morsel of the banana cream pie into his mouth. And he goes to bed, his fingers crossed, determined once again to make up on the following day. Or perhaps the day after...

Gautam Nadkarni

Debbie Strange

rose-tinted the glasses you forget to wear

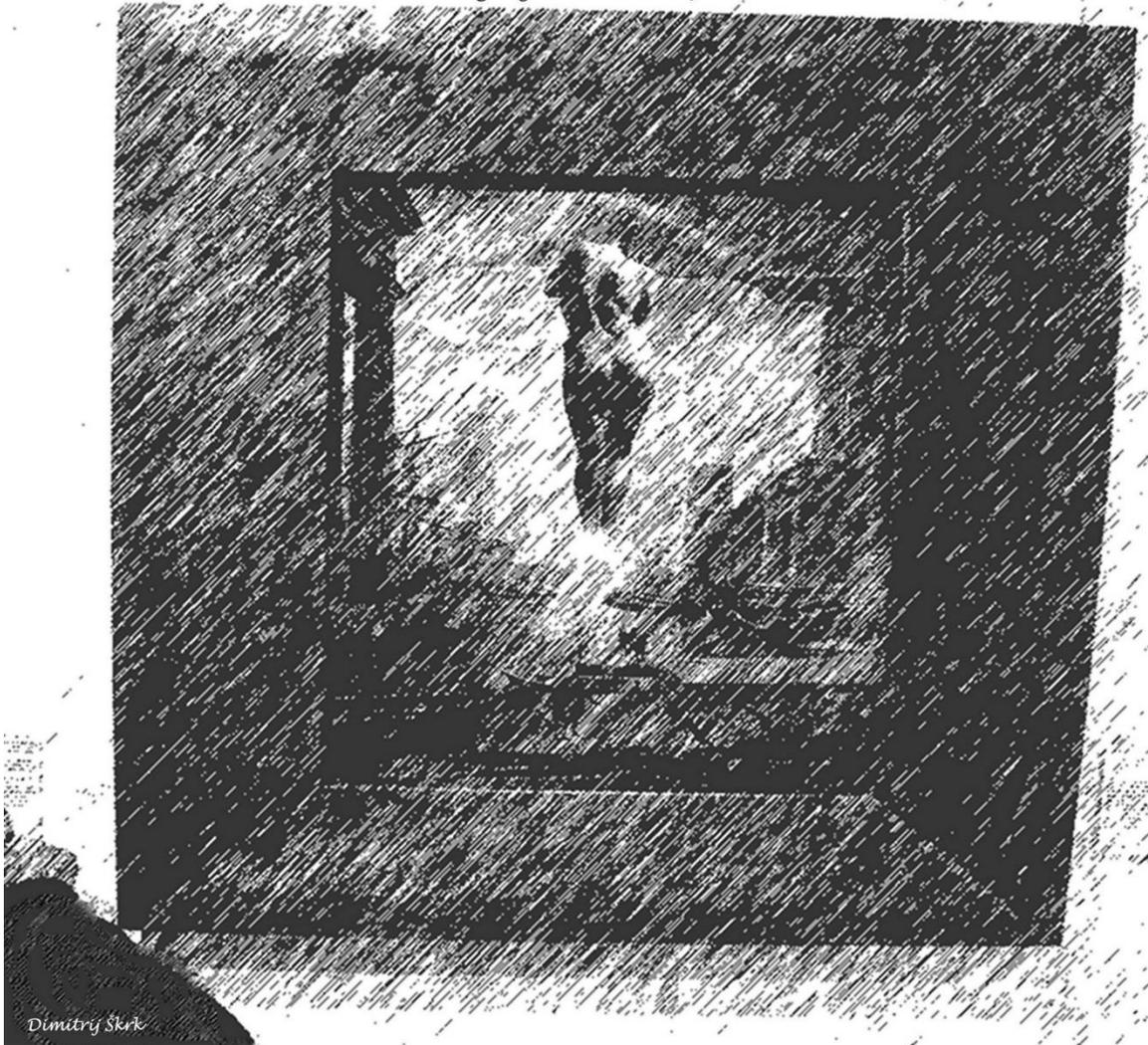


Dian Duchin Reed



Dimitry Skrk

*Figueres  
in the Dali gallery  
I gaze at the sky*



Dimitry Skrk

D.V.Rozic



Eugeniusz Zacharski: Haiku / Jacek Pokrak: painting



biological renewal  
the shoals of fish  
bask in moonlight

# Tanka



the hurt  
lingers in the air  
between us  
broken promises, words  
that can never be unsaid

Keitha Keyes, Australia

almost unseen  
among the shadows  
of secrets  
you shape and stitch denial  
to fashion your disguise

Gavin Austin, Australia

wondering  
who you will be  
today  
the ever-changing  
shape of a cloud

Bryan Rickert, USA

the sky drops  
a deflated balloon  
I chase it  
as if I can catch  
the joy it left behind

Jeanne Cook, USA

stones  
murmur here and there  
I kneel  
before the burbling brook—  
how holy is water

Marilyn Fleming, USA

don't be taken in  
by the soft gurgle  
at night  
the river tends to ask  
uncomfortable questions

Srinivas S, India

the moon touches  
my hidden dreams . . .  
light fragments  
of the things lost  
in the flow of time

Rosa Maria Di Salvatore, Italy

do unfulfilled desires  
die as we age?  
another sleepless night  
dreaming of giving birth  
under lapis stars

Pamela A. Babusci, USA

dim lights  
of the dead city  
I sing lullabies  
to the distant stars  
who lost their galaxies

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan

notes of *Love Me Tender*  
drift through the window . . .  
oh how we danced  
once upon a summer  
so moon-drunk, so young

Kathryn Stevens, USA

music flowing  
through the swirls and dips  
of cursive writing . . .  
this lost art  
of ballroom dancing

Mary Davila, USA

spring maintenance . . .  
there they go again  
with the rhythm  
of one hammer  
syncopating the other

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

daily news  
tolling the rising numbers  
of deaths  
. . . the sound of pool balls  
thudding into pockets

Jan Foster, Australia

final prognosis  
she won't make it  
to autumn  
    dear leaves, stay green  
    for pity's sake, don't fall

pronostic final  
elle nous aura quitté  
l'automne venue  
    cheres feuilles restez vertes  
    de grace, ne tombez pas

Maxianne Berger, Canada

ice storm  
in a time of plague  
each day  
encased in crystal  
until the heartwood shatters

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

the hush  
before sunrise  
even the colors  
lay quiet  
on the shore

Marilyn Ashbaugh, USA

this morning  
I'm sweeping up  
sunlight  
in the empty room  
which used to be yours

Richard Kakol, Australia (EC)

cloudy quietude  
only a twitch of the reed  
on the marsh  
then a flock of wild ducks  
covers the sky

D.V.Rozic, Croatia

in the poppy field  
a butterfly lands on my hand  
for a moment  
my thoughts intertwine  
on its colorful wings

Ivan Gaćina, Croatia

red lipstick  
on her cracked lips  
each night  
another dream  
catching fire

Elisa Theriana, Indonesia

he places  
plump red tomatoes  
into my hands . . .  
still warm, these  
everyday gifts of love

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

the pool fence  
doesn't keep us out . . .  
suits discarded  
our bodies brush then merge  
beneath the nosy moon

Pris Campbell, USA

the sudden warmth  
of her breasts  
hugging my back . . .  
the chilling click  
of a mouse trap

John Budan, USA

the midwinter sun  
heats the room  
near the window . . .  
I reflect on the warmth  
of illusions

Dave Read, Canada

simple things  
at the crossroads  
of peace and chaos  
dark eyes  
smile above a mask

Sharon Rhutasel-Jones, USA

left, right and centre  
the hissing soundscape  
of ventilators  
behind each mask  
a longing to be held

Tom Staudt, Australia

the smile  
drawn in condensation  
on the care home window  
dripping  
upside down

Steve Black, UK

wilted petals  
of cherry blossoms  
on the ward windowsill  
does it matter anymore  
what's beyond seeing?

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan

something else  
I will never see  
in this life —  
those famous white horses  
galloping over the waves

Ruth Holzer, USA

sandcastles  
we build and destroy  
over and over . . .  
do not say you never knew  
this too was going to end

Opeyemi Pamela Babafemi, Nigeria (EC)

we walked here  
where shoreline gulls wade  
by tide pools . . .  
life and death dealt out  
with the crash of a wave

Gavin Austin, Australia

a row of boats  
along the foreshore  
wood faded  
oars akimbo . . .  
the loneliness of a long wait

Margaret Owen Ruckert, Australia

when you're not here  
I drift through the day  
like a ghost  
there are no hard edges  
laughter settles like dust

James Chessing, USA

raindrops  
become a lullaby  
on my windowpane  
part of the falling  
or part of the dream

Joanna Ashwell, UK

a weed  
letting loose of the soil  
if only  
I could pull out  
the root of our doubt

Marilyn Fleming, USA

holding on  
letting go . . .  
who is to say  
there is strength in one  
weakness in the other?

Srinivas S, India

experience guides  
the old man to prune  
his rose bushes . . .  
wondering if, hoping that  
he'll live to see them bloom

Keitha Keyes, Australia

deadheading roses . . .  
a thorn smears blood  
on my finger  
the split between us  
ever further apart

Cynthia Rowe, Australia

in deepening cold  
bare trees raise arms  
and await renewal . . .  
when the call comes  
will I too touch the sky

Neena Singh, India

lithe as a deer  
she would streak past  
my window —  
not a long-distance runner  
she sprinted out of life too soon

Priti Aisola, India

a fireball  
illuminates the dark  
life streaks by  
before we know  
what to make of it

Debbie Strange, Canada

the scent of mint  
in the kitchen garden  
subtle  
the effect of your words  
lingering in the air

Richard Kakol, Australia

I have learned  
how to keep silent . . .  
these pebbles  
under my tongue  
seasoned with rue

Debbie Strange, Canada

inside his words  
there is a world  
running deep  
its beginning, its ending  
the cave of my heart

Richa Sharma, India

bereft among  
a myriad of cosmic colors  
realizing too late  
i should have loved myself  
unconditionally

Pamela A. Babusci, USA

sand flowers  
each cupping a bit  
of the tide  
your gentle embrace  
as we walk the shore

Bryan Rickert, USA

in faint light  
on the edge of waking  
I curl closer  
slowly, gently slipping  
into your dream

Carol Raisfeld, USA

the small escapes —  
an unanswered phone call,  
the quick excuse —  
if only we could return  
to such an easy world

Edward J. Rielly, USA

one hummingbird  
attacks another  
war  
even between creatures  
as delicate as angels

Sharon Rhutasel-Jones

I am not  
a wordsmith hammering gold  
into fairy dust  
I am hologram girl  
twirling images and light

Carole Johnston, USA

electric spark  
against winter's flint  
darkness lit up  
by a burnished  
kingfisher

John Hawkhead, UK

waiting for poems . . .  
titmouse, chickadee  
and wren  
come to the feeder  
and I am fed

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

a momma bird  
feeding her babies  
worms . . .  
what if I'm not  
a good mother

Susan Burch, USA

pale moon  
snagged in branches  
of a thorn tree . . .  
how can I leave  
this loveless marriage

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

when finally  
he passed  
she cried & cried  
until no one  
was looking

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

mud  
on her feathers  
too heavy  
the flight  
for heaven

fango  
sulle sue piume  
troppo pesante  
il volo  
per il paradiso

Lucia Fontana, Italy

streaks of crimson  
swallowed by the night sky  
yet still  
the rise and fall  
of a cicada's song

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

pneumonia  
has finally snuffed out  
his hatred  
almost serene  
the waiting

James Chessing, USA

sitting alone  
in the hospital  
waiting room  
a lump  
in my throat

Jon Hare, USA

after the storm  
an empty horizon —  
the heart  
of the fisherman's wife  
sinks with the sun

Priya Narayanan, India

angry roars  
and orange glowing  
night skies —  
Mt. Etna reminds us all  
we're living on shaky grounds

Tom Staudt, Australia

plastic bags  
washing ashore  
our latest  
evolutionary leap  
from sea to land

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

struggling to teach him  
the routes  
of explorers  
I draw him a map  
back to school

Dave Read, Canada

folding away a map  
inside my heart  
leaving you  
to count the cost  
of unseen feelings

Joanna Ashwell, UK

taking stock  
of what I have and have not  
the goods and the bads  
unbalanced lists  
with the tilt always changing

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

strangers when we met  
strangers again by morning . . .  
but for one night  
you touched me  
behind my mask

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

fresh coffee  
a secondhand book full of  
marginalia  
digging at the marrow  
of another mind

B.A. France, USA

the curiosity  
of your magpie nature  
missing nothing  
I tread warily  
through our conversation

Jan Foster, Australia

cruising the river  
see ducks flushed from reeds  
by the motor's roar . . .  
how many family secrets  
stay hidden forever

Margaret Owen Ruckert, Australia

whistling across  
a blade of grass  
memories  
of long-ago summers  
tickle my tongue

Kathryn Stevens, USA

roadside daffodils  
at every twist and turn  
as if just for me  
I keep their golden glow  
to lighten my dark places

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

outside the gym  
a bronze Olympic figure  
in a chair . . .  
with determined jaw  
you wheel a little closer

Hazel Hall, Australia

hundreds  
of colourful Ganesha idols  
how easily  
we forget the hands  
that mould the clay

Lakshmi Iyer, India

gargoyles stare  
at canna lilies  
in the courtyard  
old men  
on park benches

Jon Hare, USA

a dove  
on the church steeple  
lifts the sun . . .  
the fleeting whisper  
of your final words

Cynthia Rowe, Australia

the scar  
that others don't see . . .  
and yet  
the peach tree blooms  
this year again

cicatricea  
pe care ceilalți n-o văd . . .  
și totuși  
piersicul înflorește  
și anul acesta

Steliana Cristina Voicu, Romania

no thought  
worth the blemish  
of a moment  
this quiet space  
deep in spring grass

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

my body  
creaks and shrieks  
turning on itself  
yet I am springtime  
when I'm with you

Carol Raisfeld, USA

## Editor's Choice – Tanka

sandcastles  
we build and destroy  
over and over . . .  
do not say you never knew  
this too was going to end

Opeyemi Pamela Babafemi, Nigeria

Since I've lived most of my life near the sea, it's easy for me to relate to this tanka. Even as a young child, I knew my sandcastles wouldn't last forever. If I didn't knock them down—a liberating act if it's not harmful—the incoming tide or some other child would do it for me. There was always another day, another castle to build, and another one to destroy.

There's a smooth, easy-going rhythm to the tanka which reminds me of waves, and the repetition of "over" in line 3 has a similar effect. The assonance in do/you/knew/too/to in the closing couplet also rolls in like a long wave and the final word in this tanka seems very fitting.

Metaphorically, I see these sandcastles as various aspects of a rather shaky romantic relationship. Perhaps one problem after another has come up between these two people and the affair has finally come to an end. The narrator sees no reason why the "you" of the poem can feign surprise that the relationship cannot stand the test of time. No matter how often the two of them try to build an indestructible bond, nothing they do will keep it intact.

There's much to appreciate in this visually and thought-provoking tanka. Thank you, Opeyemi, for sending it to *cattails*.

this morning  
I'm sweeping up  
sunlight  
in the empty room  
which used to be yours

Richard Kakol, Australia

There may be people who read this straight through, but I find myself stopping on line three, just to enjoy this creative image.

As I resume reading, pleasure is replaced by an entirely different emotion for I suddenly feel the narrator experiencing the loss of a loved one. Immersed in grief, s/he may, however, receive some warmth and comfort in the sunlight as it plays off dust motes in this otherwise empty room.

Although I immediately thought of a death in the family, the room could be empty because a child has gone off to university or to a job that's in another city. Or perhaps a family member has been moved to a care home, due to illness or disability. The reason for the empty room is left for each reader to imagine – an openness which works well here in my opinion.

Visually, the s/l/s/l/l format looks good on the page and (in this case) reads smoothly. Without punctuation, line three becomes an effective pivot. There's a pleasing rhythm and cadence, and the tanka builds to a strong last line. Although it reads as single sentence, the emotional change between lines three and four divides this tanka into two distinct parts and deepens the poignancy of the poem.

Many thanks, Richard, for showing readers this room that looks empty, but is filled with a mixture of sunshine and sorrow.

Susan Constable

Franjo Ordanic: haiku / Sandra Samec: photo



Grozdana Daskovic



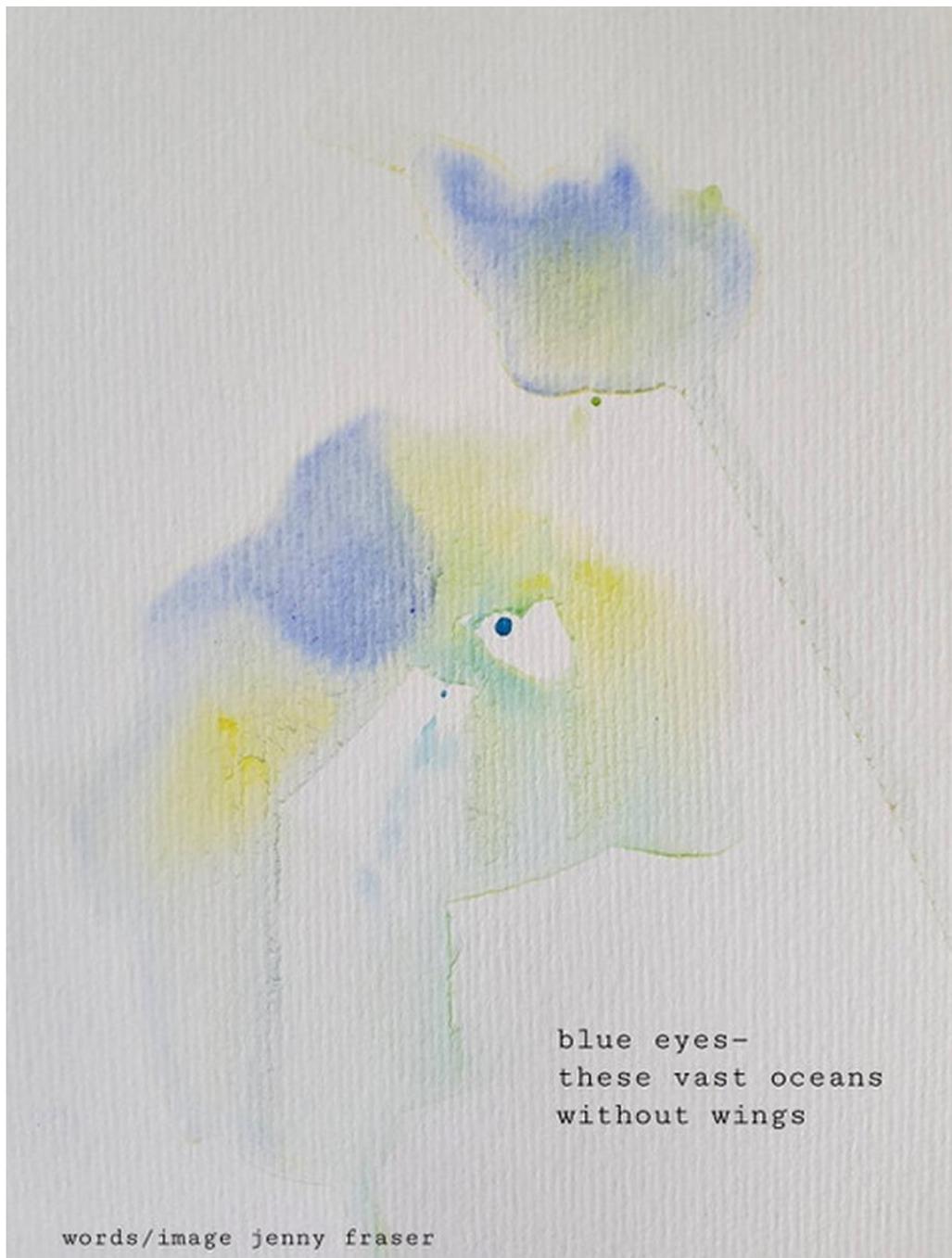
*idyllic advent  
shaking of the snow  
in a passageway*

Grozdana Drašković

Hifsa Ashraf



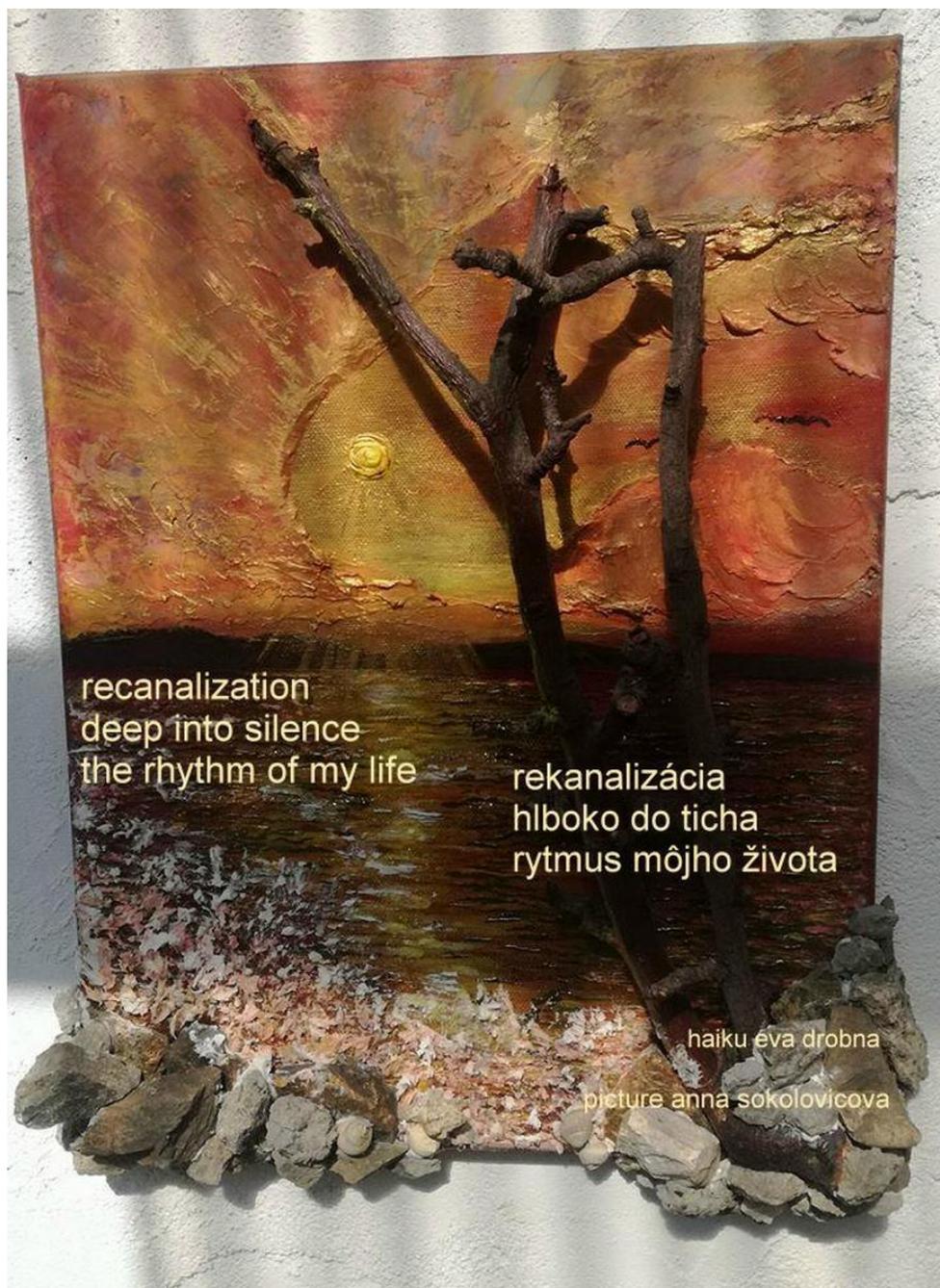
Jenny Fraser



blue eyes-  
these vast oceans  
without wings

words/image jenny fraser

Eva Drobna: haiku / Anna Sokolovicova: picture



John Hawkhead

*rain season*

*the gradual increase*

*in his son's height*



cattails — April 2021

# Haibun



**Anagram (EC)**

Lucia Fontana, Italy

Birds dance the sky like angels. They always come back where trees and dreams root and sprout entwine. They return to eat fruits and worms, to rest on a branch, mate and have their off springs. And maybe, maybe . . . to breathe and sing a rainbow, and praise the sun on scented lilacs in bloom. But most of all, to remind us that life is heaven, that we should take off and dare to fly, because it's too damn short for not to try . . .

To teach us that all is love, if only we could trust our winged chest. And since we are all impermanent, they too, belong to this humble worldly beauty . . . leave their hearts forever . . .

blueberry moon  
her feathers so close  
to heaven

## Footprints

Hazel Hall, Australia

Bit by bit, the ellipses have been disappearing from my poems. Recently the last of them wandered away leaving nothing but cluttered words.

I set off to find the lost diamonds. They must be hiding in a chimera. All night I search. Then slowly the sky changes from black to grey, amber and blue. Spent from the search I return home through the countryside of my dream, stopping to admire birds and little insects flitting in the grasses.

gaps left for wonder . . .  
the footprints scratched  
by a water hen

## Wayfarer's Gatha

Matthew Caretti, USA

On the road a kiss of cerulean presses supple into the horizon.

old contrails

Far from home a signpost in some foreign tongue confuses the senses.

finding my way

Before insistent footsteps bend toward a loving embrace.

home again

## Backpacks

Taofeek Ayeyemi, Nigeria (EC)

*"An unjust peace is better than a just war." –Cicero*

I log in to Facebook and I am welcomed by a picture of tombstones, beautifully aligned. I read the caption and realise they're not tombstones. They are 3,758 school backpacks arranged in coordinated rows at the United Nations headquarter. These backpacks represent thousands of children lost to Conflict in 2018. They represent buried dreams and aborted futures. They lie there as icons of war-torn stars. They represent children out of school—out of life, children whose ambition died inside the kabooms of bombs and the kra-kra-boom of gunshots. Children who, as their colleagues return to school, will have their names struck off during roll calls. Children who will be remembered when their friends return from school today dragging their water bottles on the ground. Children, whose seats will be banished to the back of the class to gather cobwebs. When an egg is broken, it can no longer be hatched into life but can be boiled or fried. But when a child is broken, s/he becomes food for the soil. Dust to dust. Ashes to ashes.

gusty wind . . .  
on the edge of a nest  
an eggshell

## Letting Go/Holding Tight

Bryan Rickert, USA

Our daughter had what they call a “nuclear stress test” to help further define a recently diagnosed heart condition. She’s 12. It hurts, but I’m belaying the pain with a beer that’s above my pay grade and some poetry. My wife is micromanaging every single Christmas decoration in the house and on the tree. We deal with things in our own ways.

shoveling snow  
halfway down the driveway  
hitting bottom

## Labyrinth

Jan Foster, Australia

We sit together on soft sand, in silence. I study you surreptitiously, despite knowing what I will see: nothing to reveal your inner thoughts, as always. Your face is blank of expression, shuttered, blocking entry to the maze of your mind.

The bonds of autism hold you, precious child of my child. Somehow, in your isolation, you need to know you are loved for who you are. I long to penetrate the darkness that holds you aloof from us, lay a trail to lead you out into the light.

stranded  
above the tideline  
two pieces of driftwood

## Likeness

Gavin Austin, Australia (EC)

Empty eyes wait to be filled by the bottle jammed beneath your arm. The bagging sleeve of your worn cardigan gapes. Grey threads tangle into a cobweb of neglect.

I count the lines framing your eyes as you squint into the light, face gathered into accordion pleats. Cracked, down-turned lips lie in shadows; watchdogs guarding against a smile.

Alone on the step in an empty doorway, you slump against graffitied walls steady as tattooed arms that may have once held you. Were those arms a harbour? Or a cage?

colours and shadows  
in a shop-front window  
the way light falls

## My Hall of Fame

Francis W. Alexander, USA

It's Black History Month and Lynn has sent a Facebook message asking when our high school had its first girls' basketball team and when black girls were first allowed on the team. Her question takes me back to my childhood days. Lynn was a speedster in the neighborhood. My chest burst with pride whenever I saw her mentioned in the city newspaper. Lynn always won her Jr. Olympics event, placed high in the state of Ohio. But unlike Robert "the Rocket" Lindsey, Dave Rather, and Scott May who are in the S.H.S Hall of Fame, we didn't have girls high school sports back then and so she isn't included.

howling wind  
the bird's altered flight  
to another tree

## En Femme

John Budan, USA

Every year we celebrate Her Majesty's birthday with an elegant luncheon. Fascinators, gloves, and etiquette are required and we do not discuss work, politics, or vulgar subjects. Last year, I wore an embroidered white satin dress that left everyone breathless. This year I hope to surprise everyone by wearing the epitome of elegant footwear, the Vivier Queen Sandals. These are the modern version of the gold pumps with hints of innate French naughtiness that were worn during the coronation. I special ordered the size twelve shoes with stiletto heels instead of the wide platform heels worn by HM. They are crafted out of gold leather with the fleur-de-lis motif, but lack the jewel encrusted heels of the originals.

ladies tea party  
all of the men  
wear dresses

## Work Song

Ruth Holzer, USA

Virginia in mid-August, over a hundred degrees at noon. The humidity is as high as it can get; you break into a sweat just blinking. The county road crew is out there resurfacing the street, pouring out the hot tar, spreading it smooth. It sizzles and stinks as the men move slowly forward. They're wearing red bandanas and wide-brimmed straw hats against the sun.

*Yeah, it hot, but it ain't that hot.*

*We be used to it, that why we here,  
white man can't withstand no heat!*

*Yeah, white man be turnin red and passin out.*

*White man be fallin down, break his sorry self.  
We doin the man's work, cause we stronger!*

*Give us some a that water.*

work song —  
all of us brothers  
moaning together

## Coil Pot

Diana Webb, UK

Always hopeless at art in school, she's pleased that her effort in the pottery group is not too bad, albeit in the wake of a serious breakdown. When she finally brings it home, she places it in the shadows. Not because she's ashamed but because she sees it as a sacred object. One that conjures spirals. Double helix. Secrets of her DNA.

ancestral home  
somewhere in an iron age fort  
a twist of clay

John Hawkhead, UK (EC)

**Sleet and Stone**

We walk through a light sting of sleet towards  
their final bed. Ranks of misaligned stones, badged  
with yellow-grey lichens, stud the lawns to a boundary  
of four-square hedges. We fill a watering can  
at a rust-skinned tap, falling silent as we move onwards,  
the can leaking a random diaspora of droplets on the path  
behind us.

drapes of sleet  
at my parents grave  
fresh snowdrops

## Ancestry

Dan Hardison, USA

The old photograph shows my grandmother and grandfather, now long departed, sitting on their front porch. A rain lily, one of my grandmother's favorite flowers, can be seen beside them. A descendant of my grandmother's rain lily now sits outside my front door.

tattered afghan . . .  
holding the warmth  
of memories and love

## Awakenings

Ray Rasmussen, USA

I peek at the clock, 3:24 a.m., try to settle back into sleep, and realize my partner is stirring.

“What’s up?” I whisper.

“Before I came to bed last night, I made the mistake of watching the news,” she says. “The U.S. president announced that all flights from Europe to the US would be prohibited after Friday.”

“We don’t have any travel plans, so I’m wondering why it’s on your mind.”

“It was the extremeness of the announcement. And when I shopped yesterday, the shelves were mostly empty. It’s brought the reality of the pandemic home to me.”

She curls into me and we chat about what the virus spread might mean for us and our families. And finally, we fall into restless sleep.

At breakfast, radio commentators are discussing the pandemic.

“Controlling the spread is the idea,” one commentator says. “Social isolation and testing are key,” another remarks. They talk on and on until we’re filled with troubling information: infection rates, numbers of deaths, controlling the curve, and the prospect of vaccines.

I’d recently been paging through “A Look into Our Ancestors’ Lives,” compiled by my sister, and I realized that I know very little about my mother’s parents, Gaetano and Guisseppa Alcamisi. Her maiden name was Terranova, meaning “new world,” apt since they had immigrated to San Francisco in 1906.

Like us, they likely had sat listening to news about the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918. I imagine them feeling anxious, as we’re feeling now. Guisseppa and their newborn son

died, some relatives said of childbirth complications, others said of the flu. My Grandfather Gaetano was left with my 4-year-old mother and her 8-year-old sister. He died a year later, some said of alcoholism, others, more kindly, said of a broken heart and poverty. Both girls were left parentless, were raised in an orphanage. The break in my mother's family line complete.

I wish I had known my grandparents and learned the rhythms of their language, the tastes of their cooking, the swirl of an Italian household. I love the musicality of their names, Guisseppa, Gaetano, Alcamisi, Terranova.

I open again my sister's book, show my partner the blurred image of grandmother Guisseppa holding my mother and her sister. There are no images of my grandfather. My heart goes out to the boy who would have been my uncle, known to us only as "male child (1918-1918)."

a darkened bedroom—  
my mother singing  
*fa la nana bambino\**

*\*go to sleep my little one*

## Sunshine Superman

Glenn G. Coats, USA

Daylight. Dimitri clears the walks of fresh snow while grandchildren buzz around the house, grab bites to eat, and gather armfuls of books. They rush past their grandfather who nods as the children make their way to the bus stop.

his posture  
in the twisted holly  
seventy winters

Mid-morning. Dimitri walks over to the workshop, examines tools hanging on the wall and loads what he needs in the wheelbarrow. The steps are two fingers thick so he needs nails twice as long. He sharpens the pruning shears and oils loppers.

First, he studies the trees, cuts branches that grow toward the center; removes ones that hang close to the ground. Dimitri stands back and studies the silhouettes, imagines them filled with leaves and flowers.

He shakes each tread on the stairs, nails down any ones that are loose, knocks on each riser to make sure it is solid. The paint has peeled over the winter. When the wood dries out, he'll paint the steps blue-gray like the sky.

what is left  
to ask of him?  
corn stubble

Afternoon. The day heats up and snow melts on the grass. Dimitri finds the Ukrainian newspaper in the post then sits down under a maple. He cleans his glasses with a sleeve, pulls the brim of his straw hat down; reads about crops in his homeland (vegetables and winter wheat) while a robin carries twigs to a nest.

A school bus squeaks to a stop. Dimitri hears the door open and the rush of voices. The sounds of children fill every inch of the farm.

half thirds half one day folds into the next

Note: Title from the song by Donovan which was recorded in 1965.

## Open House

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

Lonely they stood. A bird feeder and two suet cages. My open invitation, sent out in October, had no acceptances. Scattering seed on the walkway attracted chipmunks, not birds.

Snow is the game changer. They come, not in a flock, but one at a time, and not every day. Sparrow, junco, male and female downy woodpeckers, male and female cardinals. The total number of birds visiting. A select few. Perhaps they have other sources of food, other feeders somewhere, and they visit me, not for a full meal, but for a snack, a nibble between meals.

tasty buffet  
the old woman's guest list  
shorter each year

## The Thoughts That Surround You

Simon Wilson, UK

In the pictures, a honeymoon from over fifty years ago comes back to life. A young woman poses for photographs on a wooded hillside. It is early spring. The leaves are not fully out but the snowdrops are showing. She is dressed in the long boots and short skirt that was the uniform of the 1960s. In my mind Peter Sarstedt is singing. Like him, I am curious about her thoughts.

Time passes and fashions change. The modern photographs show the same bright eyes and the smile has hardly altered. The photographer still takes photographs with skill and devotion as he pictures her clearing leaves in the garden.

adjustments  
these days they walk up hills  
more slowly

## The Secrets We Hold Onto

Pris Campbell, USA

He kisses me in the star-filled, snow packed Harvard quadrangle where he's taking a yearlong sabbatical from my old alma mater, widowed and sharing a room in our Boston commune.

My heart rushes. He's 24 years older than I am but we both suddenly feel like we're twenty. We race to the sofa in his nearby office and throw off our clothes. I don't care about our age difference. He's more reluctant. He doesn't want to widow me early. Nevertheless, our affair continues. I never want to stop.

But no.

He never came to Harvard. He wasn't widowed. We never kissed. He was my prof and we stayed in touch after I saw him at a college reunion, finding myself irrationally drawn to him, craving more than his arm around my waist for the photo that my husband takes.

I see him for the last time when he's 90. We travel through DeLand on our annual foray to Daytona. His body is drawn, head plugged with dementia. He holds my hand walking me back out to the car. My hand tingles. He's still in there somewhere. I hear from his son that he died not long after.

Certain nights, when my mind travels back through the years, I wander over to that Harvard sofa, his kiss fresh on my lips, body lifting to meet his over and again.

Which version is real? Who can say?

a campfire  
fizzles after dinner  
my glowing eyes

## A Sea Glass Lullaby

Iliyana Stoyanova, UK

We are flying to Benghazi, Libya with an overnight stopover in Athens, Greece. It's the 1970s and direct flights to exotic destinations are a rare thing. I'm four and I've never been on a plane but I'm loving it. Everyone is so nice to me and I get a lot of candy. We land in Athens and after checking in the hotel, dad and I go for a walk around the ruins. I see a lot of colourful lizards but I fail to catch any as they are pretty fast and shifty. The hotel is right by the beach so after the walk dad agrees to let me play there for a while.

The pebbly beach looks golden in the late afternoon sun and each stone shape-shifts into magical creatures as I walk along. Then something extraordinary happens. Here and there across the beach, I see glittering objects. I pick up one and to my amazement it's a precious stone, polished, with round edges, almost perfect. And there's another one, and another . . . all sparkling with the last sunbeams. I start collecting them carefully – white, yellow, brown, green . . . I wonder why there's no red among them but it's not my favourite colour anyway. And then just before the last ray of sunlight disappears over the horizon, I find a blue one. It's flawless and second to none so I do not put it in my pocket with rest of my collection, I keep it in my hand. It's too precious to lose and I hold it as tight as possible. Tomorrow when we arrive in Benghazi, I'll give it to my mum and this is going to be the best present ever. Later I go to sleep with a smile on my face.

a ribbon of light  
floats out of the mist  
landing strip

## Doll

Slobodan Pupovac, Croatia

Ten-year-old Tia and her mother were walking along the city streets. They stopped in front of a toy shop window. Tia at once noticed a blue-eyed doll dressed in a ballet skirt. Their eyes met. Unfortunately, the toy was too expensive.

The next day in school, Tia's friend bragged about a gorgeous doll she got as a gift. It was the same blue-eyed doll Tia noticed in the shop window.

Tia was inconsolable. Her mother gave her an old teddy bear. Unwillingly, Tia accepted the gift. Night after night, she slept with a plush toy and dreamed about the doll in the shop window. Over time, she became fond of the teddy bear and took good care of him.

Years after, Tia, now a grown woman, met her childhood friend. They reminisced. Tia wanted to know what happened to the blue-eyed doll dressed in a ballet skirt. The friend couldn't remember.

Back home, Tia put her two-year-old son into bed together with the good old teddy bear, the guardian of a child asleep and his dreams.

dusty attic  
doll in an old cabinet  
waiting for a friend

## **Busted**

Marilyn Ashbaugh, USA

The news fills me with joy: my father broke the shop window at my teacher's family's shoe repair business. Before this parent-teacher conference, I know nothing about my father other than his sullen presence at our dinner table. Now, my father is all smiles as he recalls how his boyhood game of catch ended in a strike.

homework . . .

a basement window

propped up by a book

## cheap thrills

Lorraine Pester, USA

I watched a little boy under a ramada by the sea wall with his parents. He held up a slice of white bread for the gulls to see.

“Do you want it?”

They swarmed in close. Came to a dead stop in front of him. Arranged themselves in rows. Like movie theater seating. Waiting.

street birds

fighting over scraps . . .

conch song

## La Paloma

Pitt Buerken; Germany

Sometimes in the evening I sit on my balcony, listen to my favorite music, and feel melancholy. I mourn my old house with a garden in the colliery settlement, where I kept my beloved racing pigeons under the roof. I sat there many an evening waiting for my pigeons to return. During these hours I always listened to my favorite record: La Paloma.

I had to give up this home, and move into my current rented apartment, because the old settlement was demolished to build new profitable apartment blocks. I could not take my pigeons with me, but I still have my vinyl.

La Paloma . . .  
the miner's white dove  
keeps on circling

## Time lapse

Lakshmi Iyer, India

The tiny bells across the cradle rings at each move of the child. Her eyes compare to her father's; her smile to her mother's; her feet to grandpa's . . . a roller coaster ride.

thunderclap!  
on the cake for her  
one candle

Dancing around the trees with silver anklets she lives and breathes nature.

thirteen springs  
in her basket of hibiscus . . .  
she grows

Father hurriedly signs off his portal. She remains in the rain shadows of the Western ghats. Wedding bells beckon in the distance. She leaves on the train. With the rising sun on her forehead, she parts with a new hope.

Kali Bari . . .  
the ululation ringing  
on her horizon

**What I took home . . .**

Michael Hough, USA — prose / Christina Chin, Malaysia — haiku

I think something just broke in me . . . oh, that hurt. But I am traveling. Just a memory (while I staunchly keep my speed) . . . like a sudden fist. Here and quickly gone, pain remaindered, but still real from so long ago. Now I take a breath . . . breathe in good, breathe out old blue . . . every breath a gift.

How many others on this road, blind with it, stupidly steering through?

fading light  
the broken fountain  
in glints of silver

## **Intrusion**

Carol Raisfeld, USA

Grief is a strange companion as it comes and goes at will. It has a life of its own. Arriving abruptly at inappropriate times it will grip me, in the middle of a dream or at the end of a sunset. Even a breeze on my cheek like a gentle caress causes a visit from Grief — filling me with untold emptiness.

Alone in a crowd or within the walls that held our lives, through tears I want to cry out, "what happened to our always and forever?"

waking early  
I wait for the sun  
to warm me

## Queued

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

more than anything she is a traveller, journeying from before to now and at some point,  
leaving for the *hereafter* – not governed by time yet temporarily sectioned – within it

spring tui  
a chick's flight  
over and over

## **An Indigenous Mother of Seven**

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

Tied to a gurney, she pleads for someone to get her out. Her cellphone video is live-streamed on Facebook as dusk gathers outside the hospital. Nurses dismiss her worries that the medication she's receiving could aggravate her heart condition.

"You're dumb as hell," one nurse yells at her, then mutters, "You're better off dead. Better to f\*ck than for anything else." Another nurse scolds her for making poor choices and getting sick, adding, "and we're the ones paying for it."

She dies alone that same night. Silence shrouds the room until an orderly finds her the next morning. She was 37.

candlelight vigil ...  
another hardcover report  
on racism

## Master

Colleen M. Farrelly, USA

The golem's eyes are clay — dull and void of life — and his movements are robotic as he breaks through the window to grab a television. He wanders the dark and empty alleyways, weaving in and out until he finds his master waiting with another scroll.

fresh ink  
the needle  
piercing his vein

## Desperation

Sharon Rhutasel-Jones, United States

She sits on the median, hunched over a puppy. A blanket drapes over the two of them.

No "Need Help" sign. Just terrified eyes. I give her my lunch and the little cash I have.

huddling  
against the church door  
silent night

## Over the Hill and Far, Far Away

Robbie Porter, UK

When I was little my pet goldfish died. Mum told me it had gone to live over the hill.

Lots of people we knew 'went over the hill,' usually without much notice. This was inevitably followed by The Party, which they never even turned up to.

The hill seemed far away; I wondered how the goldfish managed to get there.

after the storm —  
the rainbow's smudged edges  
begin to fade

## the sky is falling

Michael Henry Lee, USA

In 1962; the world was perilously close to nuclear war. Although eleven years old at the time it remains a frightening memory to this day.

For thirteen days, the US and the then Soviet Union vigorously sparred over a nuclear missile base that was discovered in Cuba, only ninety miles from American soil. It was repeatedly pointed out that such close proximity allowed their warheads easy access to any and all major American cities they might choose to target.

President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev dominated the news for an agonizing two weeks that would influence a generation of kids to become peaceniks worldwide. Sanity prevailed, the Russians dismantled their missile base and life went back to what could never be called normal again.

I suppose each generation has its watershed moment when things appear dire indeed and destruction lurks just outside the door. One of our greatest advisories these days come from domestic terrorists, folks armed to the teeth who just plain hate everyone and would like nothing better than to start another civil war.

It's been written " Woe to those who call evil good and good evil who put darkness for light and light for darkness ". Isaiah 5:20

acorn season  
the harder they come  
the harder they fall

## Wilting River

Scott Hicks, USA

The salty taste lingers and the missing snow melt has left streams dry. How long can the sun wait behind the mountain to slow the shrinking lakeshore before it can hold its breath no longer? A northwest breeze reaches the fading shallows where reeds still launch dragonflies.

water's edge

fresh deer tracks

two inches deep in the mud

## Time and Relative Dimension in Space

Stuart Bartow, U.S.A

William Blake believed that we perceive reality inside out, that the physical universe is a mental construct. When we look out at the stars, we are really looking into our own minds, and the imagination is the infinite universe. After years of watching Doctor Who, whose Tardis is bigger on the inside than the outside, I may get the concept better. Is not consciousness, beyond dimension, vaster than the finite body that contains it?

the language of the crickets no linguist can crack

## Rhythm

Kala Ramesh, India

the lullaby soft  
as always . . . in perfect pitch  
she croons the rhythm

but today  
she lets loose a breath-full  
of swinging notes  
cascading down the hillside  
    shadows in and out  
        of chinar trees  
the scampering dog, the child  
and her laughter echoing  
    in intermittent spaces  
    as if to catch a rush of breath

the earth  
in cupped hands . . .  
first light

## The Street

Carmela Marino, Italy

a robin's song  
the part of the garden  
always in the shade

Setting out to go to work, it is still dark outside, hands in my pocket, the mask on my face. The street begins to flow under my feet, the sky over my head, the smell of the leaves and of the night rain.

The starry sky covers all, even the garbage shines in a shimmer of frost. A sense of peace floats in me and this seems to slow down my walking.

bitter cold —  
a piece of the moon  
in the dirty water

A street lamp turns on and off on the odds and ends, arranged with great care by illegal sellers on dirty cloths on the sidewalk. One step further, in dim light, curved into himself, a tramp sits on a wall, with his companion, a bottle of beer.

Nothing escapes my gaze, I feel each instant of life around me.

the last star —  
a stranger prays  
to his God

At the pedestrian crossing I catch the eyes of a passerby smiling. What she is thinking? I begin to walk uphill: the blades of grass move together and at the whisper of my mantra under the mask: "thanks thanks thanks" the screech of a seagull.

winter fog —  
the breath of the world  
joins mine

**the abbey above**

Tim Gardiner, UK

Whitby. Ruins on their precipice, the elements claw. The shore has new headstones,  
sarcophagi litter grey waste. A skeletal arm protrudes from the cliff. Your voice is  
unexpected. Digits ripple. Beckoning.

even if I could escape nightfall

## Terra Murata

Marietta McGregor, Australia

After a blazing afternoon the gloom in Procida's abbey of San Michele Arcangelo makes it hard to see until our eyes adjust. The vaulted ceiling recedes into shadow. 'School of X' paintings in worn gilded frames line smoke-smudged walls. Along one side stands a rustic altar made of shells, sponges, driftwood and coral, looking like a garden grotto built by an eccentric beachcomber. The baptismal font is an alabaster bowl dating from pagan times, re-purposed with angels' wings carved beside its original Dionysian mask. In the dimness, I come upon three children standing on a wheeled wagon. They turn out to be a half-life-sized painted wooden Christ and two disciples from feast day parades.

Underfoot the marble floor is a checkerboard of incised squares. One has holes drilled through its four corners. A leaflet explains it's a trapdoor for lowering the dead faithful of noble families into crypts beneath the abbey. The corpses were suspended to drip fluids until they became mummies, before burial in the catacombs. We're at a high point of this anchovy fishers' island, once a walled stronghold against marauding pirates. On one side cliffs plunge vertically into the turquoise Bay of Naples. My husband wonders if the trapdoor might lead to a chute straight down into the sea. He conjures a linen-wrapped corpse on a last voyage to Neptune accompanied by chanted prayers.

crown-of-thorns plant  
when our differences  
no longer matter

## Stockton Dunes

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

Today we are participating in a four-wheel drive day at Stockton Dunes on the Lower North Coast of New South Wales.

four-low  
the grind of tyres  
through sand

following the instructor's wheel-tracks to the top of the dune, edging to the lip. Looking forward, its steep, I'm unable to see the previous wheel tracks beyond the ute's bonnet. Keep your wheels straight, foot off the brake, the instructors commands.

That micro-second moment . . .

free-fall  
how to spot  
the horizon

and we begin to inch down the slope picking up speed, milling through soft sand, bouncing over harder packed sand up the other side.

breath out  
that giddy feeling  
breath in

All morning, up and down the dunes, taking turns, honing skills, gaining confidence. Relieved we don't get bogged, sand to the axles like other participants who must be dug out.

Late afternoon following the leader along the beach, the dunes on one side, the sea on the other back to the highway.

starry night  
an onshore wind  
covers our tracks

## The Lure

Ashish Narain, Philippines

There is a long queue to enter Kathmandu airport. A young man stands ahead of me. He has the prayer scarf, shiny new suit and vermilion mark on his forehead that clearly shows him as an emigrant. We reach the gate beyond which only passengers are allowed. Before entering, he quickly turns around and touches his parents' feet. A tear trickles down the mother's eyes. They hug. The father blesses him and mumbles something about checking the papers again. But he is already looking beyond.

rusted swing —  
a mynah forages  
in tall grass

**Encounter**

Djurdja Vukelic Rozic, Croatia

We met in the metropolis, six years after our break. I recognized his eyes between a French cap and the medicinal mask. His arm around a beautiful woman. His smiling gaze drowning in my eyes.

heavy snow fall—  
a goose down duvet  
too heavy this night

## Temporality

Oluwasegun Oluseyi Adesina, Nigeria

One of us is like harmattan, the other is like fire. We meet at the crossroad of ignition and burn boredom into ashes of liveliness.

Scorching a paper into ashes gives a permanent change. But life has taught me a different chemistry that no condition is permanent. Helen and I are now like two houses opposite each other. We see the other online without needing to hit the keyboard.

after the storm  
boiled Jan yaro roots  
in the waste bin

## Lists

Joanna Ashwell, United Kingdom

I love a good list. I make one then it snowballs into another, then another. The satisfaction I get when I can strike out a completion from not one, not two but three lists. The duplicity of reaching a goal. Maybe it's a writer's quirk or it's just me. Striking through a collection of pending, in progress, almost done, to complete.

running through  
a red light  
flood water

## The time it takes . . .

Tom Staudt

The scene is chaotic. Splatters on the floor, walls, and even the ceiling. Sticky tools and containers everywhere. 'I'm not cleaning up yet' I think and collapse on the couch. Suddenly; the phone alarm goes off. I jump up; Damn, I dozed off!

I throw everything into the dishwasher, take the sweet treat out of the oven. Maybe, some icing? I wonder.

I run upstairs have a quick shower, and get dressed. Doubt creeps into my mind. I normally don't do this.

The doorbell rings. I take a deep breath, and open the door.

teary eyes  
in the mirror . . .  
an empty bed

## A Gamble

Cyndi Lloyd, USA

I stand on top of the toilet seat, checking my outfit in the mirror. All the pearl-colored buttons on my black sweater and those on the paisley print skirt line up.

My high school sweetheart picks me up, and we drive to Wendover (Nevada that is), from Utah, passing the Morton Salt factory in Grantsville. Cassette tapes of The Cure, David Bowie, and Prince play on the stereo. We're getting married before the local judge—he's also a pit boss at the Peppermill Casino, which is where we find him. Do we really need to go all the way to Reno for a marriage license? (Ugh!) We stay in Wendover. Play blackjack, drink free vodka and Sprite (even though we're only 18). Get excited when nickels clink, clink, clink into our plastic bucket. Enough coins pay for the gas home and breakfast at Village Inn.

Two months later, we get married (okay, elope) before a Salt Lake City judge. (We tell our parents two hours before.)

Nine years go by, and on our way to the casinos in Nevada, we drive past Morton Salt one last time. Pull off of I-80. View the sculpture: *Tree of Life*.

salt flats—  
the wedding rings  
in a pawn shop

## The Gift

Antonio Mangiameli, Italy

There's an advertisement on a social network page. I read it and the memory of a gift I gave 10 years ago comes back to me.

anniversary  
my wife's silicone boobs  
expire today

## The Cutting Edge

Gautam Nadkarni, India

It was late in the evening when I finally entered the salon at Mangalwadi for a haircut. The visit was overdue by weeks and I was beginning to look like someone who has been cut off from civilization for years. As I pushed open the door and stepped in. A red-faced coiffeur who looked like a beetroot in human vestment beamed at me and ushered me to his chair. Well, I do like friendly barbers, you know, including beetroot-faced ones, so I seated myself and made myself comfortable.

election rally . . .  
the sudden brisk trade  
in spoiled tomatoes

No sooner had the trimming operation begun when the conversation veered towards politics. Good old beetroot had strong views on political ideologies and every time he criticized a politico he emphasized his statement with his shears. I didn't give it much significance, of course, because I knew just how he felt. I was once acquainted with a tabla player who used to underscore his political comments with a teentaal or ektaal beat drummed furiously on the arms of his chair depending on his emotions at the moment.

And finally, the session was over. I studied my hair in the looking glass and was pleased by the cut. It was only when I inspected the back of my head in the mirror he held up that I was appalled to see a huge bald patch which hadn't been there earlier. When I looked askance at the coiffeur his beetroot face turned redder, which I had once foolishly dismissed as impossible, and he blamed it on the idiotic ideology of the ruling political party and the rampant corruption in the system. He pointed out that any barber would have done precisely the same thing when faced with an opposition party full of nincompoops who couldn't tell the right end of a scissor from the wrong. I had to concede the point. There was definitely something in that.

However, I am now in self-imposed exile in my third storey apartment and step out only under cover of darkness. I have been using hair growth lotions, which promise a rich, dark growth in days, on my scalp by the cartons and measuring the hair length at the back of my skull with a scale. After five days I am sure there is a growth of 0.001 centimeters but I wouldn't swear to it.

Also, I have completely stopped subscribing to newspapers with political news and columns. There couldn't possibly be anything more dangerous. I now only read tabloids full of murder, mayhem, abductions and other harmless stories.

revenue service . . .

the former pickpocket's son

sees possibilities

## Editor's Choices Haibun (EC)

In each of the haibun commended here, I am reminded of the words of Ibn Arabi (1165–1240) the Sufi mystic, poet and philosopher of Andalusian origin: “God sleeps in the rock, dreams in the plant, stirs in the animal, and awakens in man.”

### Anagram

Lucia Fontana, Italy

Birds dance the sky like angels. They always come back where trees and dreams root and sprout entwine. They return to eat fruits and worms, to rest on a branch, mate and have their offspring. And maybe, maybe . . . to breathe and sing a rainbow, and praise the sun on scented lilacs in bloom. But most of all, to remind us that life is heaven, that we should take off and dare to fly, because it's too damn short for not to try . . .

To teach us that all is love, if only we could trust our winged chest. And since we are all impermanent, they too, belong to this humble worldly beauty . . . leave their hearts forever . . .

blueberry moon  
her feathers so close  
to heaven

*The Nuer of Sudan have a saying: twins are birds, by which they mean they are connected to heaven, to the great spirit, Qoth. Lucia Fontana makes the same equation in her haibun. “Birds dance in the sky like angels”. She finds beauty not just in heaven but in the impermanence of “humble earthly beauty”. thus her haibun weaves together heaven and earth through its bird imagery -“her feathers so close to heaven”.*

*With Italy in lockdown this spring, the longing in this haibun becomes all the more poignant.*



## Backpacks

Taofeek Ayeyemi, Nigeria

“An unjust peace is better than a just war.” — Cicero

I log into Facebook and I am welcomed by a picture of tombstones, beautifully aligned. I read the caption and realise they're not tombstones. They are 3,758 school backpacks arranged in coordinated rows at the United Nations headquarter. These backpacks represent thousands of children lost to Conflict in 2018. They represent buried dreams and aborted futures. They lie there as icons of war-torn stars. They represent children out of school — out of life, children whose ambition died inside the kabooms of bombs and the kra-kra-boom of gunshots. Children who, as their colleagues return to school, will have their names struck off during roll calls. Children who will be remembered when their friends return from school today dragging their water bottles on the ground. Children, whose seats will be banished to the back of the class to gather cobwebs. When an egg is broken, it can no longer be hatched into life but can be boiled or fried. But when a child is broken, s/he becomes food for the soil. Dust to dust. Ashes to ashes . . .

gusty wind . . .  
on the edge of a nest  
an eggshell

*“Backpacks” by Taofeek Ayeyemi has a startling opening: he is “welcomed” by what appear to be pictures of tombstones “beautifully aligned”. Closer inspection reveals something grimmer yet innocent, the backpacks representing the thousands of children lost to conflict. one does a double flip from tombstone to backpack and back to death. The backpacks are a UN symbol of lost childhoods. “they lie there as icons of war-torn stars” he says in a fine image and then continues with a litany of how the children’s absence is shown, for example in their empty seats gathering cobwebs.*

*The concluding haiku underlines this fragility in the image of an “egg shell” on the margins of a nest in the “gusty wind”. Has the fledgling hatched or has it been destroyed? Taofeek Ayeyemi’s haibun seems to fulfil what Yves Bonnefoy (1923– 2016) called the quintessential “function of poetic language” to give “access to the truths of existence.”*



## **Sleet and Stone**

John Hawkhead, UK

We walk through a light sting of sleet towards their final bed. Ranks of misaligned stones, badged with yellow-grey lichens, stud the lawns to a boundary of four-square hedges.

We fill a watering can at a rust-skinned tap, falling silent as we move onwards, the can leaking a random diaspora of droplets on the path behind us.

drapes of sleet  
at my parent’s grave  
fresh snowdrops

*John Hawkhead in “Sleet and Stone” uses exquisite language with a layering of imagery:*

*“Ranks of misaligned stones, badged with yellow-grey lichens”*

*“a rust-skinned tap”*

*“a random diaspora of droplets”*

*The effect is that the reader walks in his footsteps on a visit to his parents’ grave. The sleet becomes a metaphor for tears, and the snowdrops emphasise the tears of things. The images are thus imbued with an elemental charge that makes a personal grief universal.*



## Likeness

Gavin Austin, Australia

Empty eyes wait to be filled by the bottle jammed beneath your arm. The bagging sleeve of your worn cardigan gapes. Grey threads tangle into a cobweb of neglect.

I count the lines framing your eyes as you squint into the light, face gathered into accordion pleats. Cracked, down-turned lips lie in shadows; watchdogs guarding against a smile.

Alone on the step in an empty doorway, you slump against graffitied walls steady as tattooed arms that may have once held you. Were those arms a harbour? Or a cage?

colours and shadows  
in a shop-front window  
the way light falls

*“Likeness” by Gavin Austin has an electrifying use of imagery which gets under the wrinkled skin of its subject, a down-and-out alone in a doorway. His grim destiny is expressed by his lips being “watchdogs against a smile”, while his lined face is “gathered into accordion pleats”. Such unexpected and original language captures our imagination and sympathy. The torment of suffering and loss is made powerfully palpable for the reader. The haiku changes the focus to a shop window, of impossible desire, objects which the ‘empty eyes’, like a skull, would drink like the bottle in the opening line.*

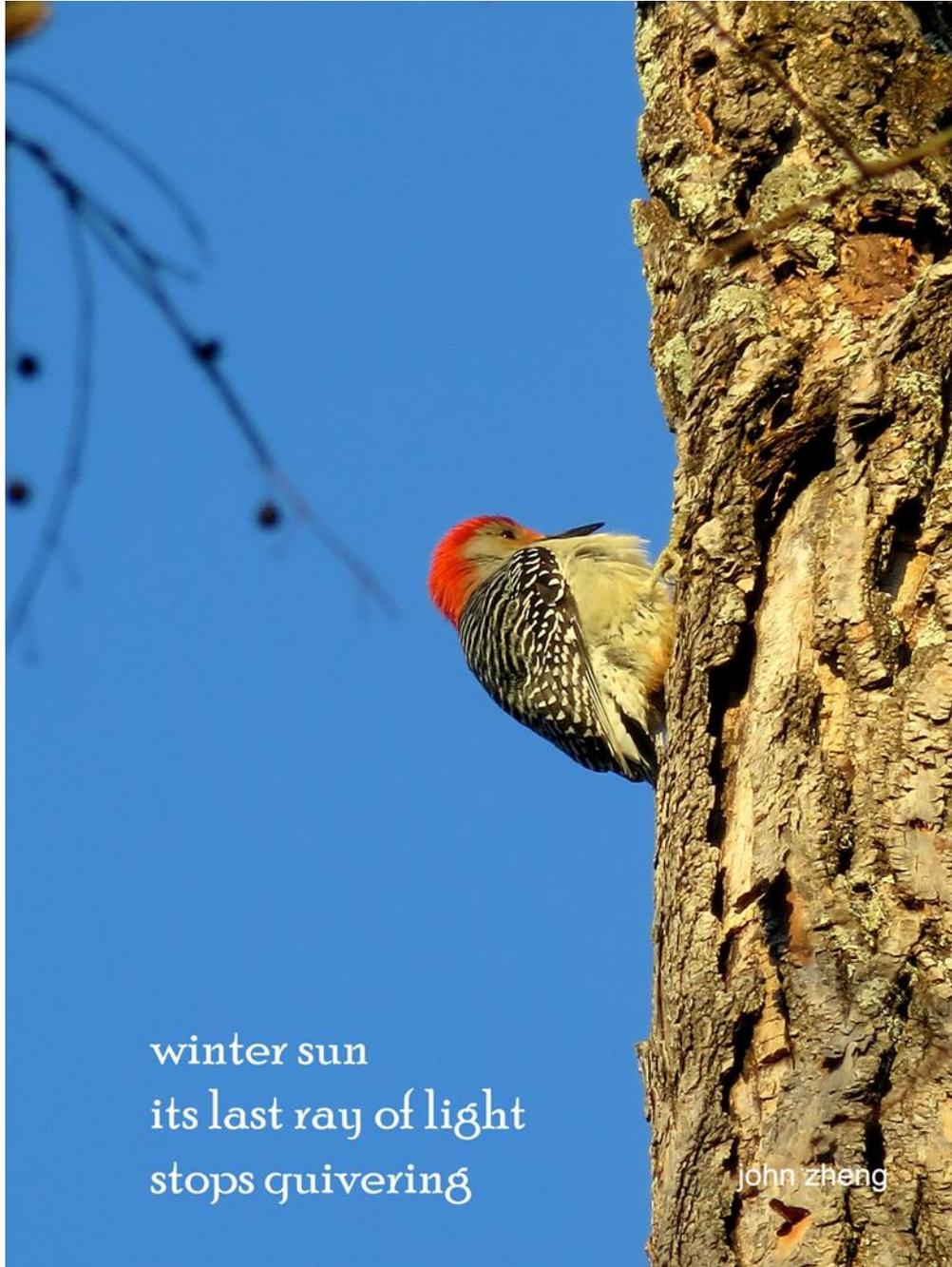


*Finally, both Gautam Nadkarni and Antonio Mangiameli are carving a niche in humorous haibun. Maintaining a consistently witty and engaging narrative without being offensive is quite a feat and I would like to commend their work.*

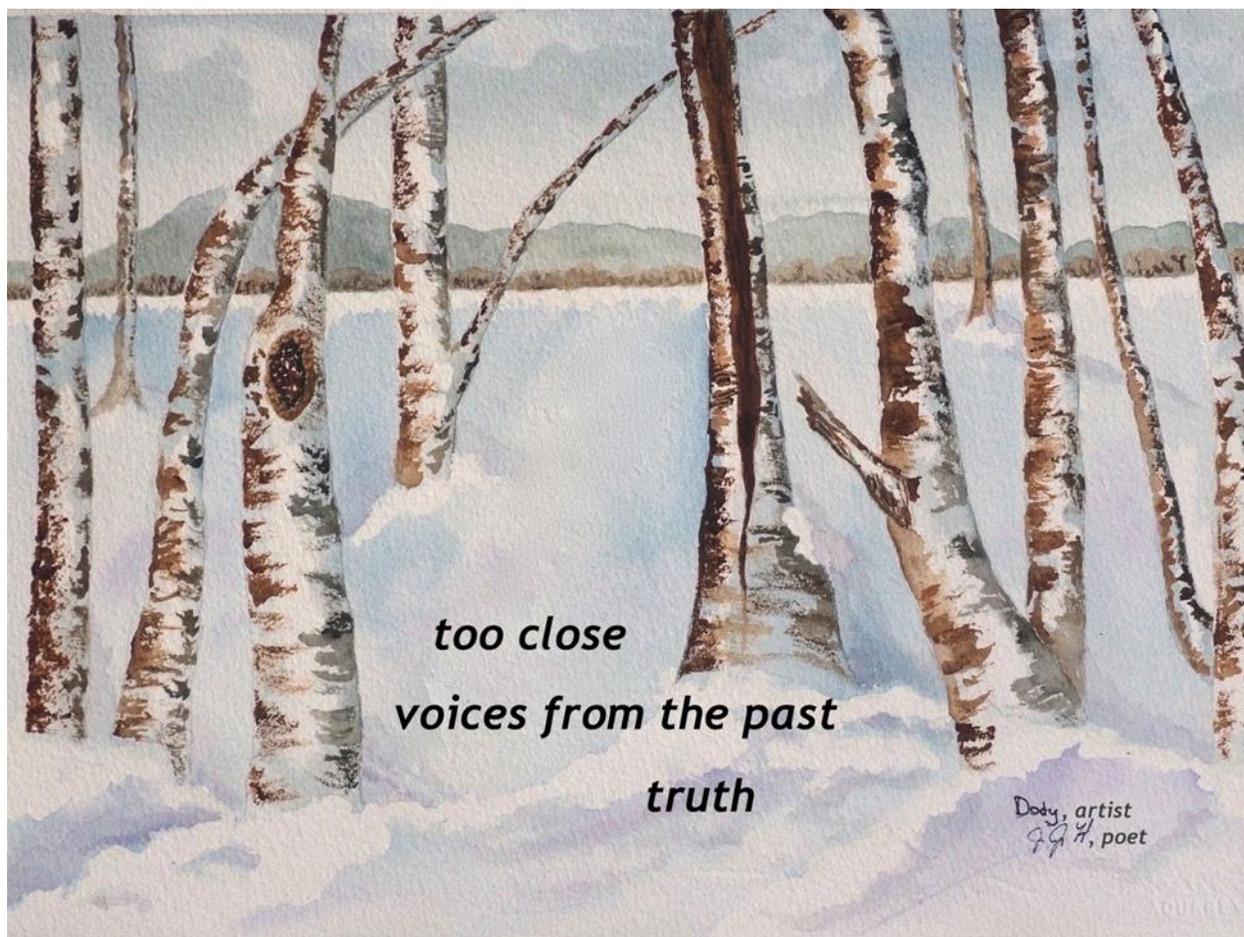
Sonam Chhoki

cattails — April 2021

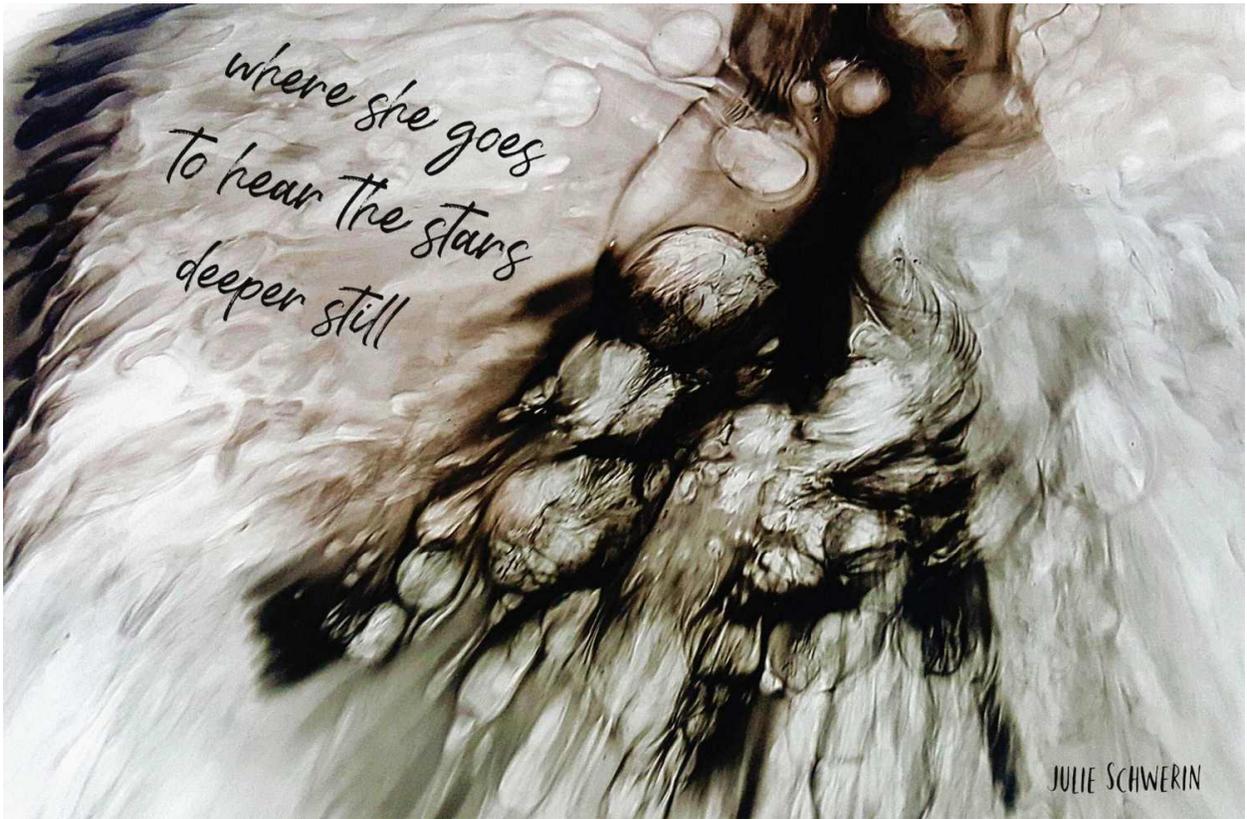
John Zheng



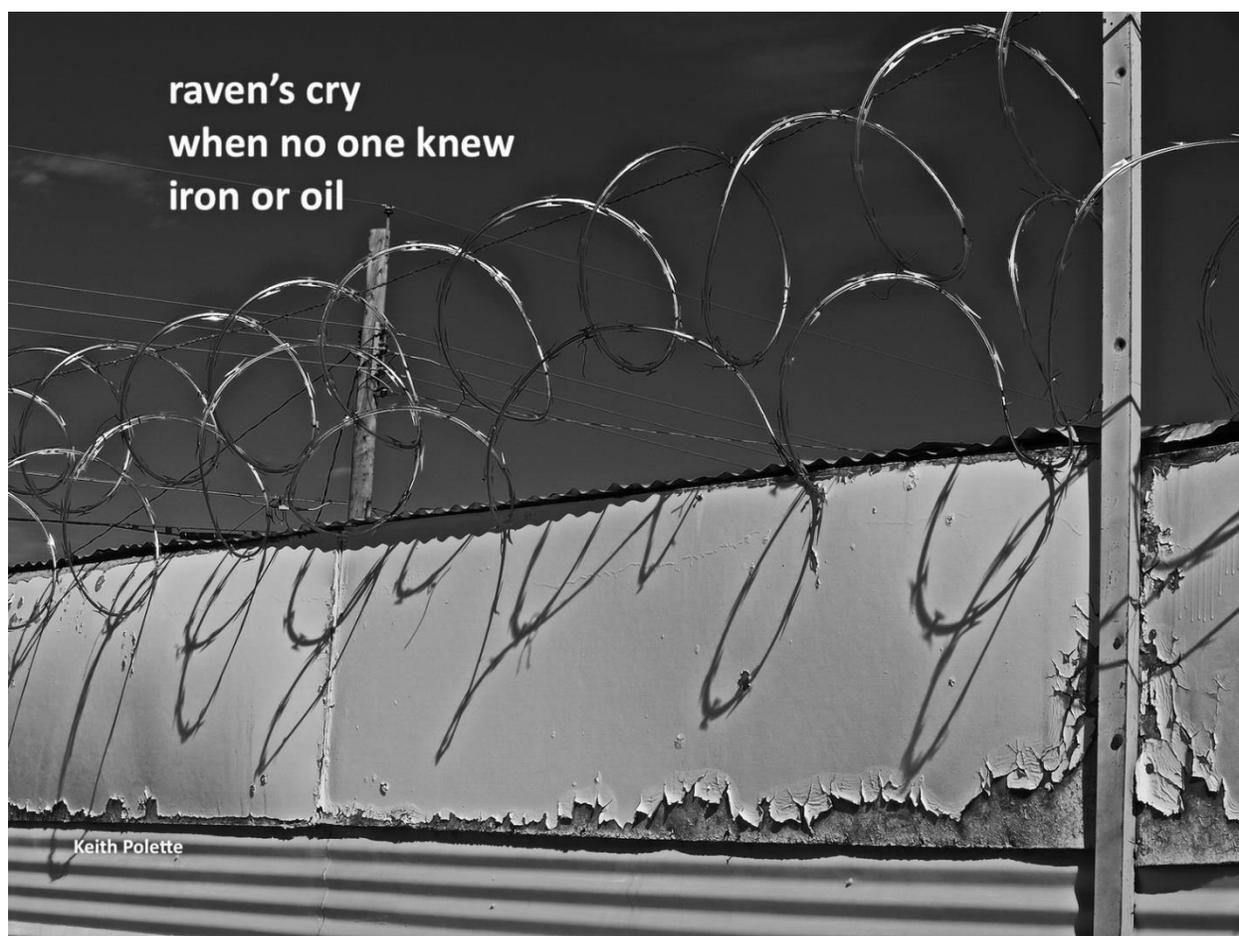
Johnnie Johnson Hafernik: haiku / Dorothy S. Messerschmitt: Artwork



Julie Schwerin



Keith Polette



Lucia Fontana



*veil of snow  
a sparrow sings out  
the budding moon*

*lucia fontana*

# Youth



**Welcome to the April, 2021, edition of cattails “Youth Corner.”**

Lockdowns and Covid-19 have severely affected the time students have for games, treks and all such outdoor activities. In contrast, unfortunately, this pandemic has increased their screen time considerably. Kids are having their exams now and they are having too many online hours and are far removed from the haikai world. In short, *Youth* haikai has suffered due to lack of time *to stand and stare*.

A month back, I suggested to Sonam Chokki that perhaps the age limit of *cattails Youth* be lifted to include 20-year-old students so we could have the work of undergrads from the *Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts* (under the aegis of the Symbiosis International University Pune), where I’m now teaching the 60-hour haikai course.

Sonam promptly replied, saying, “given the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic I don’t have any problem.” So here it is, my friends — a special feature from freshers who have chosen ‘Haikai’ as one of their electives in their 4-year liberal arts degree course.

My sincere thanks to Tom Painting for sending his students’ poems and to a few other regulars who, in spite of being hard-pressed for time to complete assignments and tests, managed to send me their poems.

This time I’ve moved away from having the Editor’s Choice poems, and I’ve introduced a feature I call ‘Showcase’ to highlight the imaginative flow of ideas and imagery through the windows of *cattails Youth!*

Fasten your seat belts — you are on a roller-coast ride through ‘life’, sensitively portrayed through the eyes of young people.

Kala Ramesh  
Editor: UHTS cattails Youth Corner

**Haiku & Senryu:**

sunrays —  
a new mandala  
on the white wall

lichens grow  
on the stonewall —  
a woven carpet

my earthen pot  
crumbles into dust —  
chokehold

*Ustat Sethi, age 16*  
*India*

shooting star . . .  
the weight  
of my wishes

*V. Krishna Sai Gayatri, age 16*  
*India*

lonely night . . .  
the moon becomes  
my only witness

*Lakshmi R Menon, age 17*  
*India.*

dreary night  
I listen to an owl  
talk to the darkness

*Catherine Dwyer, age 14*  
USA

spring morning  
the song of a bluebird  
sets the tone

*Gus Critz, age 14*  
USA

whispered rumors  
my ear  
the only one left out

new sister  
suddenly my spotlight  
shared

*Fiona Cutchins, age 13*  
USA

\*

new batteries  
the old toy car  
comes back to life

*Andre Nahai, age 13*  
USA

\*

hospital bedsheets  
the smell  
of dead foetus

*Kakul Gupta, age 13*  
*India*

\*

snail's path . . .  
I cross  
a ropeway

*Kakul Gupta, age 13*  
*India*

\*

**Youth Special : Featuring the Undergraduates of the Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts.**

**Haiku . Senryu . Haibun.**

13 undergraduates have opted for this 60-hour elective course, spread over four months. The course began on 7<sup>th</sup> January and ends on 13 May 2021. The students are enthusiastic, brilliant, and sincere when it comes to understanding the subtleties and nuances that haikai literature demands. The course covers haiku, senryu, haibun, tanka, renku and haiga.

**Haiku & Senryu:**

stormy night . . .  
one by one  
candles melt away

playing cards with family  
another round  
of childhood stories

*Sayali Sarode - age 19,  
India*

I walk  
amongst the trees . . .  
birds sing for me

cabin in the hills —  
from my window I watch  
a dusting of snow

*Mehr Saigal - age 20,  
India*

curry stains  
on my shirt . . .  
I am home again

long road trip  
Mom massages Dad's neck  
while he drives

ocean breeze —  
hands clasp around  
the metal gate

dried rose —  
the book she could  
never finish reading

cats in love —  
she leaves a bouquet  
on his grave

*Anisha Das - age 20,  
India*

softness of her fur  
rubbing against my cheek —  
a childhood memory

busy street —  
a biting taste of coffee  
on my tongue

*Tanisha Dey - age 19,  
India*

a dew drop  
on the beak of a redwing—  
hundred colours

I see him  
happy with her  
atelophobia kicks in

they hold hands  
and smile  
I wish I was her

*Gauri Kulkarni - age 18,  
India*

forgetful hands—  
her biscuit drowns  
in the cup

a garden wedding  
butterflies  
in her stomach

high tide—  
Mother's grip tightens  
around my wrist

*Raghavi Agarwal - age 19,  
India*

garden stroll . . .  
the sound of scissors  
clipping roses

*Raghavi Agarwal – age 19,  
India*

ground mud  
a worm pokes holes  
in a peach

changing clothes  
I no longer wear  
my heart on my sleeve

the autowala  
drives me through  
his past

Diwali dinner  
Grandfather brings in  
a bowl of stories

barefoot on grass  
blades gently prick  
my soul

*Khwahish Vig – age 18,  
India*

winter morning—  
a sparrow chirps  
the silence away

*Khwahish Vig - age 18,  
India*

drops of treacle—  
a fly tracing  
the spill

wafting aroma—  
butter melts into  
the pores of my toast

sunset—  
shadows making grids  
on the ground

*Lakshmi R. Pillai - age 20,  
India*

switching sides  
as the sun makes an entrance  
through my window

*Zeal Shah - age 20,  
India*

first light . . .  
a dewdrop holds  
the world

evening lull —  
lying on sand  
I listen to the waves

sitting alone  
on a park bench —  
a leaf settles beside me

*Zeal Shah - age 20,  
India*

lightning and thunder —  
the shadow of a dagger  
against the wall

love letters  
written in my lover's diary  
for another woman

every cell  
comes into being —  
my lover's touch

*Nidhi Vaidya - age 19,  
India*

skeletons uncovered —  
the ancient river  
once hid secrets

trekkers rest . . .  
the steam from the cart  
smelling like hunger

lights turn off  
in her front window  
he never turned back

*Anirved Despande – age 20*  
*India*

bonfire night . . .  
roasted marshmallows  
on a stick

a flash of light  
brightening the stormy night . . .  
mother's face

*Khushi Hemnani – age 19,*  
*India*

Vishwajit Parthare shared this feeling with the class:

“I'm struggling a bit with mokoto. I want to write the truth but I've not been in nature that much... Ah, I guess that just means I must take a ginko walk.”

And then, he sent me this haiku:

half light—  
the scattered twinkle  
of forming dew

booming applause  
a shaky me  
trying to be me

a cup for physics  
two for chem  
and three to wake up

*Vishwajit Parthare – age 19,  
India*



### **Showcase 1 :: International Bimonthly Kukai from India - February 2021**

As part of the 60-hour course, my class was asked to participate in the Indian Kukai conducted by Kashinath Karmakar and Aparna Pathak. The prompt was 'letter'. The competition is stiff, because a great majority of our well-known Indian and International haikai participate in this kukai conducted every two months.

Raghavi Agarwal came fourth in the February Kukai. Not a mean achievement for someone who was just a month old in haiku when they were asked to participate.

our letters . . .  
a paper boat  
carries me to you

*Raghavi Agarwal – age 19,  
India*



Haibun sessions were exciting and all the students have written good thought-provoking poems, struggling to understand how a stand-alone haiku should be joined to the prose to create one composite poem, richer than its individual parts. Not an easy concept to grasp in two months!

The first prompt was ‘Grandparents’, and I was not disappointed!  
And the second haibun was part of their second ginko walk (to observe people.)

Let’s read a few now:

### **Small World**

I used to fight with my friends and come back crying. My grandma would have none of it and would scold me.

Years later, I asked my mom, “How did I get my name?” and she tells me the day I was born how my grandma picked me up and announced "Vishwajeet" to the whole world. She wanted a name which will never know disgrace. Even now, something I never really heard, lingers.

river chuckles . . .  
a flamingo  
shifts its long leg

*Vishwajit Parthare – age 19,  
India*

## Heirloom Collection

One Sunday morning I woke up to the smell of freshly fried *kachoris*, the sizzling sound of boiling oil as my grandma made some *samosas* . . . all my senses heightened as I walked to the kitchen. “Do we have visitors today?” I asked. “It’s for you, my love,” grandma replied.

I waited till she finished her kitchen chores. We sat in the garden, sharing smiles and many recipes as she sipped on her tea and I, my coffee.

dusting shelves—  
a picture falls out  
from an old book

*Zeal Shah – age 20,  
India*



## Showcase 2: HAIBUN:

Note the title, the prose and the poem: the way they link and shift, creating a huge canvas on which a complete poem comes together – not an easy technique for beginners to implement.

## Second Childhood

My 84-year-old grandfather comes to my room every morning, asking me to take a walk with him in the garden. After his surgery, he has been so weak that even a 5-minute walk leaves him exhausted. A man who has spent his entire life teaching students in different parts of the country now sits all alone under the trees, waiting for someone to talk to him. It’s funny how he used to chase away all the birds who used to

sit near our windows, now they are the only ones keeping him company. He looks up at them and imitates their sounds, one by one they fly away.

summer breeze . . .  
unsteady hands hold up  
the newspaper

*Sayali Sarode - age 19,  
India*

### **Haibun in Verse:**

#### **My Home Town**

carrots  
rolling down the street  
the vendor  
runs behind his livelihood  
while a little girl  
holding her mother's hand  
points at the mud-ridden vegetables  
and lets out  
an infectious laughter

local market  
ants fighting over  
the freshest meat

*Anisha Das - age 20,  
India:*

### Saturation Point

postcard from Puri . . .  
my mother's blessings  
and the ocean breeze

Work was exhausting today. My eyes are red and watery from staring at my computer screen all day and my back is aching a lot. My stomach is growling with hunger but there is nothing in the fridge. I close my eyes and place my throbbing head in my hands, trying to calm the noises in my head.

A ping on my phone. Another task needs to be done. Another deadline added to the long list of deadlines. I sigh, straighten my back and get down to work.

breaking barriers . . .  
waves crash against  
the gate

### Rite of Passage

Looking out from the window, everything seems minuscule but as the plane gets closer to the ground, I start looking out for familiar buildings, familiar roads. I try to spot my house from more than a thousand feet above the ground but fail miserably.

I can feel my heart rushing as the plane tires screech against the asphalt of the runway. I grab my luggage and exit the airport as fast as I can and there he is. My father, dressed in the suit I bought him last year, waiting to pick me up with a proud smile on his face.

short day . . .  
brother wearing  
my hand-me-downs

*Khwahish Vig, age 19*  
*India*

## Bittersweet

Everything reminds me of you. From a fallen fruit, to a single paper flying out of a child's notebook, I keep thinking about how you left me, forever. We had a pact, a pinky promise. "We'll be with each other always! Till death do us apart!" you linked your finger with my 7-year-old one as I giggled in joy.

Today, at the age of 19, I sit here at the very place you made me that promise. Caressing my finger, I can't stop my tears, because you kept your promise.

We were always together.  
Till death tore us apart.

roses in a vase  
with withered petals . . .  
the thorns

## Old and New

Sundays were special. Grandma always made her special *aloo-ke-parathe* for breakfast. On that one day of the week, all family members finished their morning chores quickly, spurred on by the delicious aroma of food coming from the kitchen.

But one Sunday was different.

I woke up that morning to see the kitchen empty. "No special today?" I asked her. She furrowed her eyebrows and asked "Is it Sunday today? Oh! I must have lost track . . . never mind, I'll make it right now," she smiled at me.

Grandma's special wasn't easily forgotten by people, but her Alzheimer's made sure she forgot both, her special recipe and our names.

spring breeze —  
a petal separates  
from the flower

*Sayali Sarode - age 19,*  
*India*



### **Showcase 3: A Four-fold Ginko Walk:**

Due to Covid 19 and lockdown restrictions, we could not conduct the ginko walk that has always been a huge hit with my students.

Instead, I used the next best idea possible:

### **A Mix of Asynchronous & Synchronous Sessions:**

#### **Asynchronous**

##### **Part 1:**

Listen to a video talk explaining the concepts of Ginko, Shinrin Yoku (Forest Bathing), and Earth Grounding.

##### **Part 2:**

Take a Ginko Walk.

A nature walk (60 min) on a specified weekend.

Find a garden, an avenue, a forest area or some open space convenient for you.

You don't have to walk the whole hour!! Just soak in the open spaces, with your five senses tuned in.

##### **Part 3: Writing of haiku and senryu, based on the Ginko walk:**

After the ginko walk, write any number of haiku on the experiences gathered on the walk.

#### **Synchronous**

##### **Part 4: A Zoom Meet**

During the meet, students shared their experiences and their poems.

Just to add a fun element, we had a simple quiz on the video talks I sent!

It went off extremely well.

Khwahish Vig writes:

I took the Ginko walk on an early Sunday morning, the 19th of January 2021. Having lived in Aarey Colony, Mumbai made me indifferent to the simple beauties this luscious forest had to offer. To me, it was a patch of green that would appear outside my car window on my way to school, but only after this walk did I realise how wrong I was.

My mother drove me till we reached a path in the forest and I took my walk from there. For the first time, I was observing, not just seeing. I observed the trees, their movement, their smell, their feel. In that moment, I was made aware of my disconnect with a marvel which is quite literally in my backyard. The time flew. My walk lasted for about one and a half hour. Feeling overwhelmed with the entire experience I completely forgot to make notes.

Once I came home and tried writing haiku, I simply couldn't. The environment had changed and just like the four walls of my bedroom my mind went blank, I felt constricted. All day I could not stop thinking about the feeling of being with nature, something I don't do very often. Energized and wanting to do more, I went to a different patch again in the evening, at around six thirty. In order to do Earth Grounding I walked the path barefoot while going there. Instead of walking for a while, this time I found a bench in front of a large tree and sat on it. Lost in the magic of nature I sat there till eight, writing my haiku.

The experience left a deep mark on me, and I think I'm going to write most of my haiku in that spot – which has already become my favourite spot. Thank you ma'am, for this wonderful activity!



#### **Showcase 4: Critical Appreciation:**

**Critical Appreciation** is an important part of the 60-hour course.

I sent ten haiku the students and asked them to choose one and write about it.

It was in a way a test to see if my students had assimilated what was being taught in class.

Please do remember they were just 45-days-old in haiku when they submitted this paper.

**hot afternoon  
the squeak of my hands  
on my daughter's coffin**

— Lenard D. Moore

In this haiku, Lenard D. Moore employs the 'show, don't tell' technique to express his sorrow. In this first line, he gives us an idea about the atmosphere and time of the day to establish a background for the content of the haiku. In the next two lines, he evokes the senses of touch and hearing. This creates an image of a devastated man touching a coffin on a summer afternoon which makes a squeak, forming the horizontal axis.

The kire is present after the word 'afternoon' in the first line but it is not marked by a 'kireji'. The lack of punctuation creates a subtle sense of continuation which connects the two images in the haiku. There is no kigo word in the haiku but 'hot afternoon' implies that it might be during the days of summer.

There is no use of personification and the only adjective used in the haiku is 'hot' which is necessary to suggest the weather to help the reader create a mental image while reading the rest of the lines. The genius of this haiku lies in the haikin's ability to turn an ordinary situation into an extraordinary moment as he brings out the minute details of an experience that many people face in their lives in a subtle and truthful way, using makoto, forming the vertical axis.

*Sayali Sarode- age 19,  
India*

**between the sky  
and the spin of the earth  
this falling leaf**

— Laryalee Fraser

This poem follows the short-long-short format that's followed by the contemporary world haiku poets. It follows the perfect format of a haiku poem since it incorporates references to nature without personifying the same and uses no adjectives. The words used are simple, comprehensible and lack heaviness, hence substantiating the usage of 'Karumi' as a tool. The imagery in the haiku is such that it creates a lateral space and resists from overcrowding the poem as a whole, hence enabling the audience to visualise the haiku clearly.

While there is no actual punctuation or cut marker/kireji in the haiku itself, the poem is a good example of the presence of a strong kire or cut. The cut can be seen after the second line and the two images are clearly placed side by side, yet have a distinction, hence creating the effect of the continuation of the story and the separation of both the images. The poem in itself describes the images in a way that makes the falling leaf seem extraordinary in the context of the poem. In my opinion the poem has a good qualitative value in terms of the horizontal axis.

While the poem has a strong horizontal axis, it does not appeal to me as much in terms of a vertical axis. The poem creates a beautiful image that seems larger than life; however, it does not prompt the reader to think of it as a personal or a socio-economic reference with a deeper meaning.

*Nidhi Vaidya- age 19,  
India*

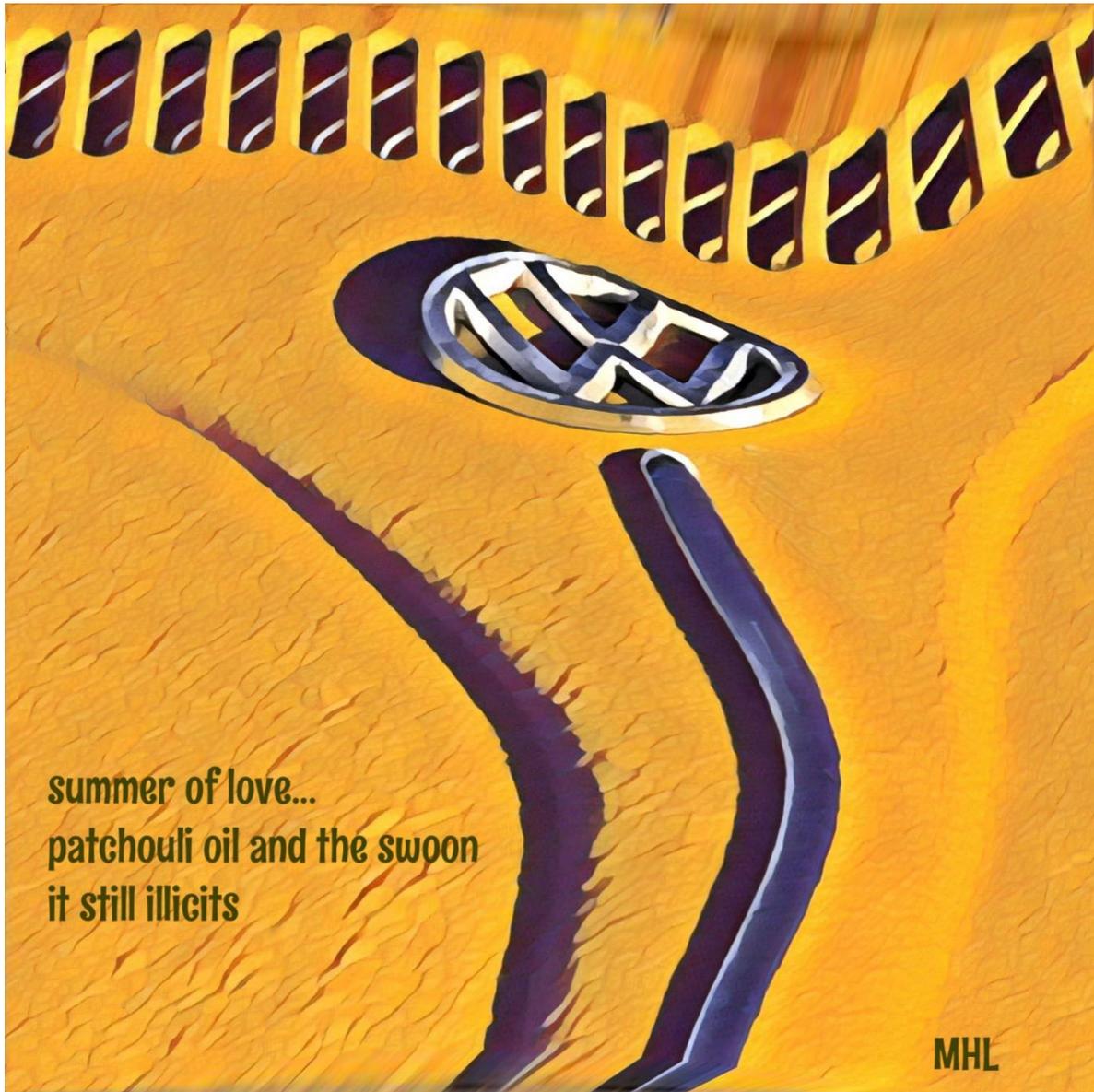


Mark Meyer

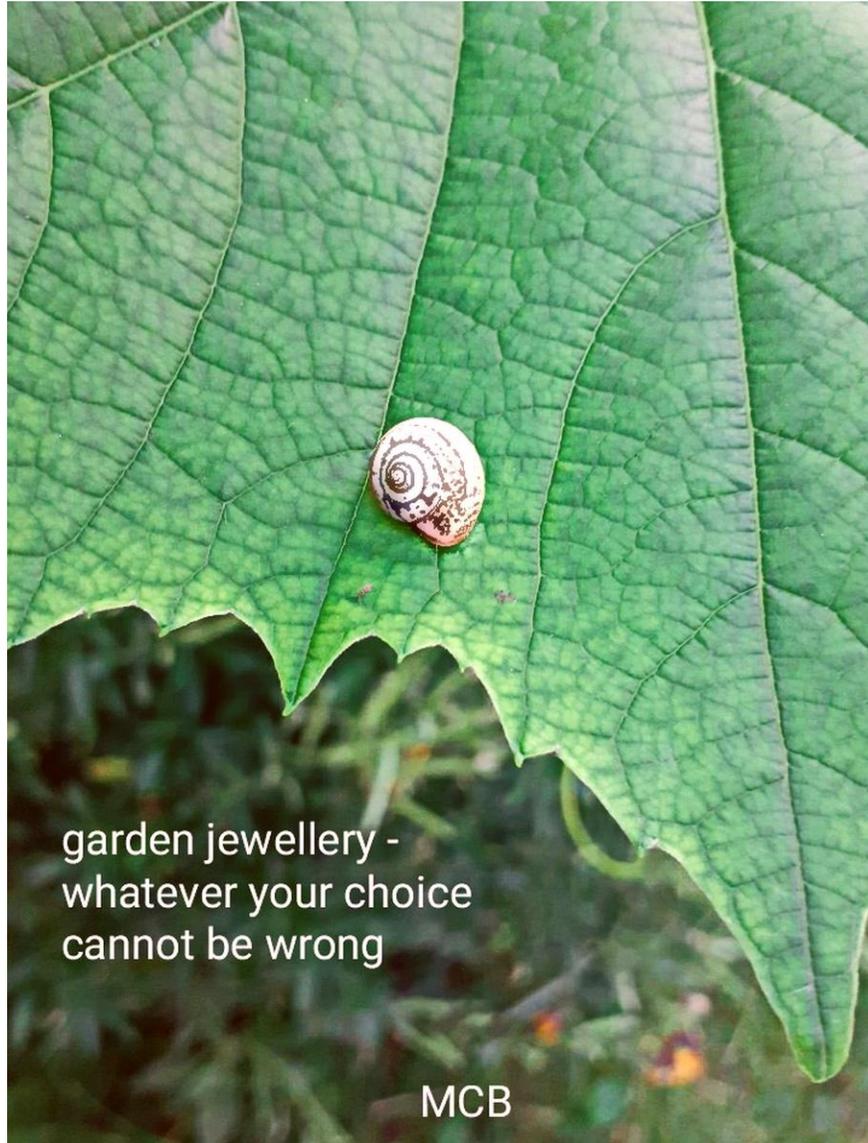


*half a century  
season after season  
the plum tree and I*

Michael Henry Lee



Mihovila Ceperic-Biljan

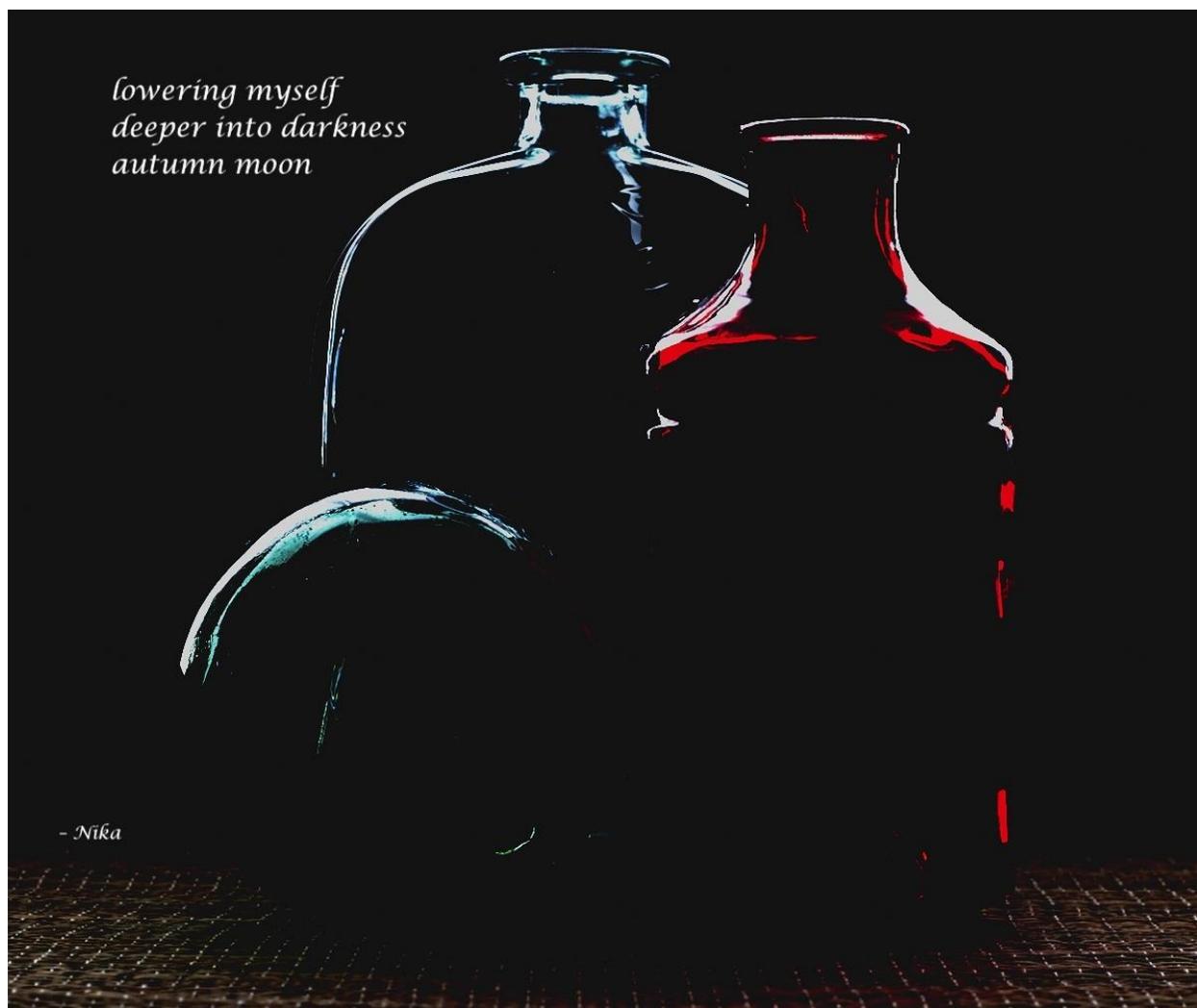


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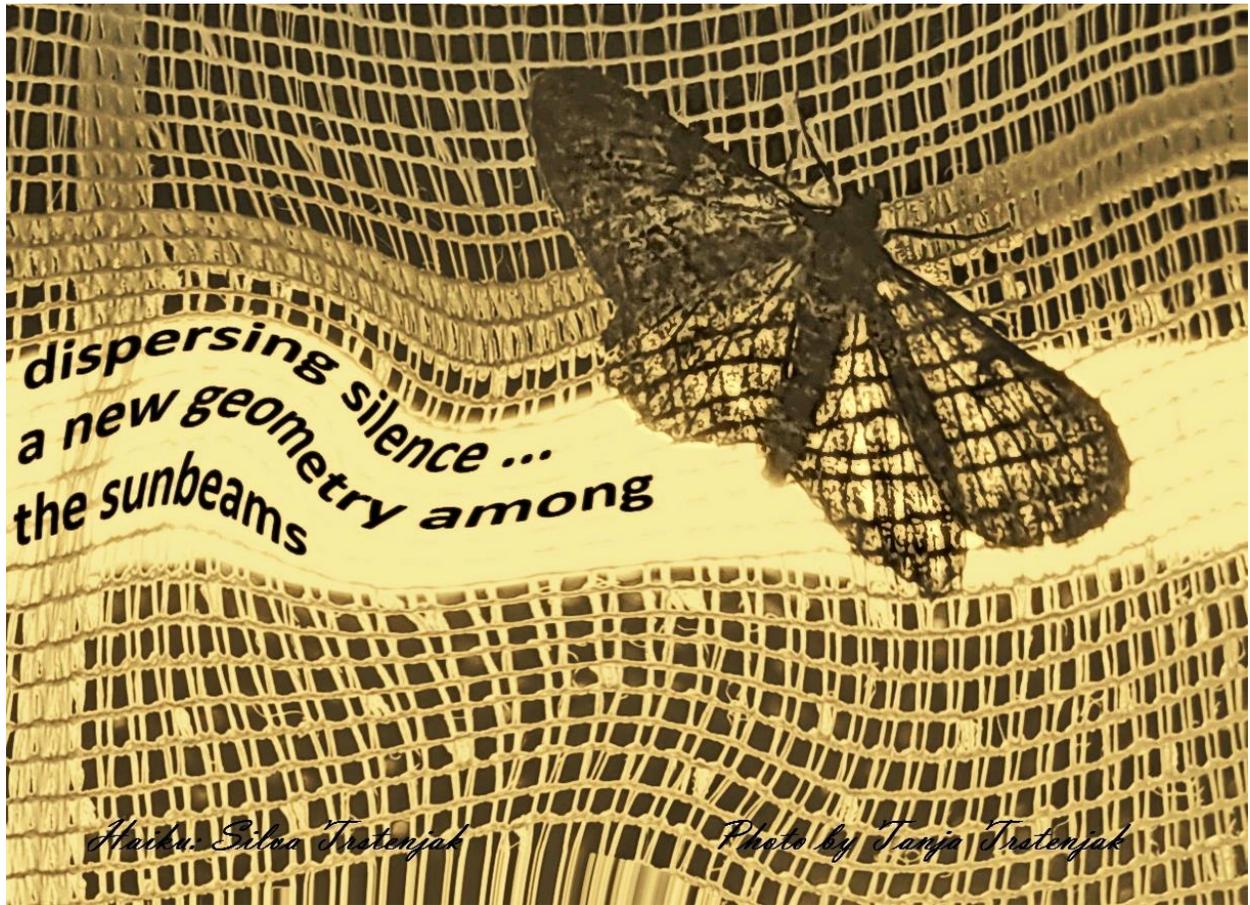
Milan Rajkumar



Nika



Silva Trstenjak: haiku / Tanja Trstenjak: photo



dispersing silence ...  
a new geometry among  
the sunbeams

*Haiku: Silva Trstenjak*

*Photo by Tanja Trstenjak*

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