

# *cattails*



April 2023

# cattails

**April 2023 Issue**

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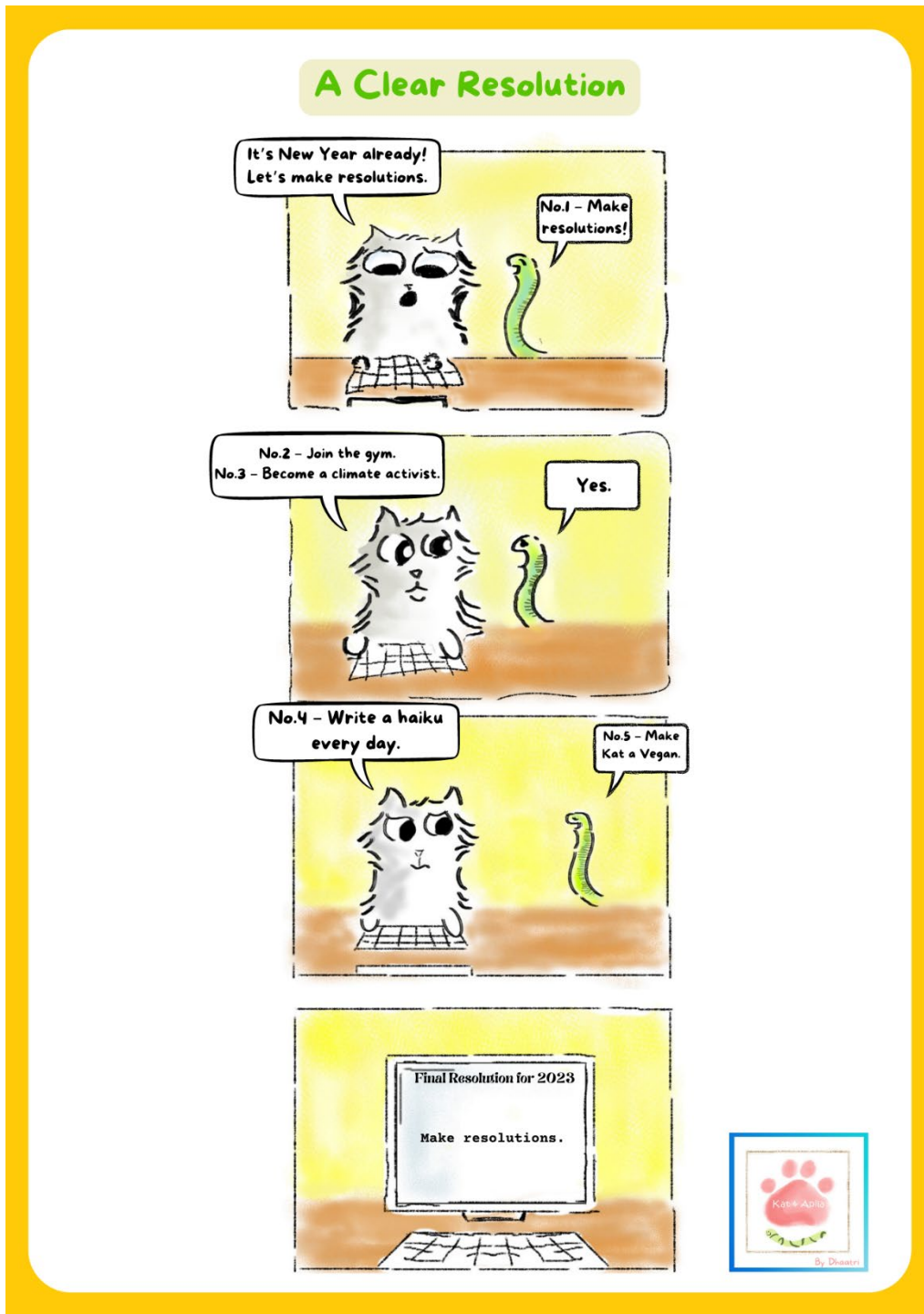
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Michael Kowalewski is of Polish origin, born and brought up in London, UK. He studied Anthropology and The History of Art at Cambridge and travelled widely in Asia and Europe. He has lived and worked in Ireland and Japan.

## *Contents*

Introduction	5
Haiku	6
Haiga - part 1A	22
Haiga - part 1B	38
Senryu	44
Haiga - part 2A	56
Haiga - part 2B	71
Tanka	77
Haiga - part 3A	88
Haiga - part 3B	104
Haibun	109
Haiga - part 4A	138
Haiga - part 4B	170
Tanka Prose	176
Haiga - part 5A	185
Haiga - part 5B	203
Index of Poets and Artists	209



Dhaatri Vengunad Menon



## Introduction

Byung-Chul Han (1959 -) the South-Korean born philosopher and critic living in Germany, describes how in our times data and information are readily available and yet our world is “symbol-poor”. Increasingly we have lost the symbolic practices or rituals which help us to make sense of our identity, environ, seasons, relationship, and aspirations. Ritual is often equated with empty repetitive action and conformity. However, Byung-Chul Han argues that it is in ritual “that the past and present are brought together into a living present.” Ritual requires time and effort to create a sense of commonality and a “common rhythm.” In the case of *cattails*, we meet in poetry twice a year, to write, read, discuss, and share our work. It is not mere consumption and processing of data and information. We reaffirm our shared inspiration and enjoyment of the Japanese short forms by a ritual acknowledgment of goodwill, appreciation, and gratitude.

This bring me to the current issue, which has been delayed due to Mike’s health. It is at a time like this that we appreciate how his indomitable and understated dedication have ensured the publication of each issue of *cattails*.

Mike’s recovery from Covid has been a long and exhausting one. Through it all, the editors have rallied with unstinted support. David stepping in to process some missing senryu. Lavana and Jenny, helping to clarify and correct several details in haiga and tanka. Geethanjali and Shobhana taking on the enormous tasks of proofreading the journal.

Our resident cartoonist, Dhaatri Vengunad Menon has created another thought-provoking cartoon. This issue features water colours by the UK Polish artist, Michael Kowalewski. To both, I would like to express grateful thanks and appreciation.

In the spirit of Byung-Chul Han, I reiterate my profound gratitude to Mike and the editors, whose commitment and perseverance have made this issue possible.

Sonam Chhoki

# Haiku



Husks of Stars

not yet dawn  
vireo-chitter  
fills the air

*B. L. Bruce, USA*

boar tracks  
in the potato field  
first day of spring

следи от глиган  
в картофената нива  
първи пролетен ден

*Vladislav Hristov, Bulgaria*

a soft sag  
of banana blossoms  
virga dawn

*Matthew Caretti,  
American Samoa*

morning silence  
a needle runs through  
the jasmine's neck

ప్రాతఃకాల నిశ్శబ్దం  
ఓ మల్లె గొంతుకలో  
గుండుసూది

*Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, India*

spring sunshine  
a foal kicks up  
its heels

*Kevin Valentine, USA*

thick maple syrup  
French toast webbed  
to tiny fingers

*Douglas J. Lanzo, USA*

first visit —  
a spring wind opens  
the gate with me

pierwsza wizyta —  
razem ze mną otwiera bramę  
wiosenny wiatr

*Zuzanna Truchlewska, Poland*

bullock cart  
and she walks alongside  
talking to the bull

*Kala Ramesh, India*

how hair feels  
as wind makes it dance —  
girl on a backyard swing

*Craig Kittner, USA*

cycling past  
the steam from ponies  
fresh spring grass

*Keith Evetts, UK*

sunlit magnolia  
a swarm of honey bees search  
for a home

*Johnnie Johnson Hafernik, USA*

metronome  
the robin sings  
from the tallest branch

*Joshua St. Claire, USA*

laburnum blossoms —  
spotting a goldfinch  
by its call

*Meera Rehm, UK*

the line of her throat  
touched by morning light —  
honeyeater

*Alice Wanderer, Australia*

a final scything —  
the tenderness  
of the nettle

*Shawn Blair, USA*

a prologue  
to homecoming —  
coconut cart

*Aishwarya Vedula, India*

broken window  
a butterfly carries in  
the sunset

*Anna Cates, USA*

Strawberry Moon —  
the sweetness  
of day's end

*Ruth Holzer, USA*

childhood grove  
the nightingale's song glistens  
instead of the stars

gaj djetinjstva  
slavujev pjev svijetli  
umjesto zvijezda

*Mihovila Čeperić, Croatia*  
*Translation: Đurđa Vukelić Rožić*



Earth hour —  
we meet in the garden  
to gaze at the stars

ora Pământului —  
ne-ntâlnim în grădină  
să privim stelele

*Steliana Cristina Voicu, Romania*

wispy clouds  
a trace of your ghost  
in wisteria

*Randy Brooks, USA*

inside  
the iris  
a deeper deep

*Brad Bennett, USA*

streak of lightning . . .  
the purple petunias  
glow brighter

बिजली की चमकार...  
बैंगनी रंग के पेटूनिया  
और भी चमकीले

*Neena Singh, India*

distant thunder —  
low moan  
of the gravid tabby

*John Pappas, USA*

just the ghost  
of bullhead tonight—  
millpond shallows

*Tim Gardiner, UK*

trail  
to a waterfall  
the spray's breath

पगडंडी  
झरने की ओर  
साँस फुआर की

*Priti Aisola, India*

the force of winged air  
on my face—  
veering sparrow

*Curt Pawlisch, USA*

raw mangoes  
in the courtyard  
grandma on a string cot

*Ashish Narain, The Philippines*

a circle of shade—  
the tangled branches  
of oleander

un cerchio d'ombra  
i rami intrecciati  
dell'oleandro

*Antonio Mangiameli, Italy*

picking  
from the colour chart  
blackberry summer

*C.X. Turner, UK*

desert dusk  
the soft padding  
of a camel caravan

*Sally Biggar, USA*

fireworks the startling faces of carnival toys

*Derek Sprecksel, USA*

heatwave  
a wagtail drinking  
at the brink of infinity

*Ivan Randall, Australia*

drought —  
a constellation  
of small ivory bones

suša —  
sazviježđe  
malih kostiju bjelokosti

*Goran Gatalica, Croatia*

wildfires —  
deer flee  
into an ambush

skogbranner —  
rådyr flykter  
inn i en felle

*Emma Alexander Arthur, Norway*

dusk on the plain  
the river falls asleep  
in its bed

*Ernest Wit, Poland*

more duckweed than duck sinkhole pond

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

along the shore  
into the roaring grey  
the kite dithers

am Ufer entlang  
in das rauschende Grau  
der Drachen zittert

*Beate Conrad, Germany*

buzzards wheel  
the scent of mown hay  
rolled into ton bales

*Dave Russo, USA*

glide flap glide flap  
dance moves  
of pelicans

*Thomas Smith, USA*

forever running  
from the ocean  
sandpiper footprints

*Heather Lurie, New Zealand*

rocky cape  
the beach trail ends  
inside a rainbow

*Angela Terry, USA*

the sleek skin  
of sunbathers—  
harbor seals

*Cyndi Lloyd, USA*

its name  
fills the aquarium  
Pacific spiny lumpsucker

*Richard Tice, USA*

war baby  
on its little back  
a sea turtle

*Adrian Bouter, The Netherlands*

estuary  
the tales told  
by the wrack line

*Edward Gilligan, Ireland*

marsh mirror  
the overhead raptor's  
black-edged white

*Nola Obee, Canada*

northbound starlings  
knocking sand  
off my shoes

*Thomas Chockley, USA*

afternoon light  
the river foliage fades  
to a gentler blue

*Jay Friedenbergl, USA*



gathering dusk  
a fusillade  
of crow caws

*Ryland Shengzhi Li, USA*

a cantaloupe  
sliced across the sky  
sunset rain

*Robert Witmer, Japan*

sweet apricots  
still warm  
in the blue-glazed bowl

*Kim Klugh, USA*

textured air  
the weave  
of riversound

*David Watts, USA*

trying to sit straight  
through boat turbulence  
humpback whales

*Deborah P Kolodji, USA*

its shadow  
slipping quietly ahead  
a gull's scream

*Mike Gallagher, Ireland*

sea food  
in the spray of fire  
the faces of ancestors

*Minko Tanev, Bulgaria*

dusk deepens  
the waves cradle  
a gull's squawk

*Ravi Kiran, India*

summer residents  
their all-night voices  
in the woods

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

orange moon  
the taste of citrus  
without seeds

*Kirsten G. Munro, Scotland*

long summer . . .  
the wind and waves  
in her eyes

dugo ljeto...  
u očima joj  
vjetar i valovi

*Ivan Gaćina, Croatia*

distant clangor  
the cranes taking summer  
south with them

odległy klangor  
żurawie zabierają lato  
na południe

*Eugeniusz Zacharski, Poland*

in unison  
the Sunday congregation  
at the bird feeder

*Christine Wenk-Harrison, USA*

dirt road  
along the ridge  
a healing scar

*Rohan Buettel, Australia*

monsoon evening  
breaking the drive  
for tea in a clay cup

बरसात की शाम  
कार यात्रा रोक़ी  
कुल्हड़ में चाय

*Govind Joshi, India*

thunderstorm  
on the scented path  
I hold my dog

temporale  
sul sentiero profumato  
tengo stretto il mio cane

*Mariangela Canzi, Italy*

glistening shoulders  
the garden Buddha  
our rain gauge

*Christa Pandey, USA*

zagging scars  
across the countryside  
the cyclone's path

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

helicopter throb  
a deer in the hunt  
for high ground

*Cynthia Rowe, Australia*

slanting rain  
the goodbye side  
of midnight

*Tony Williams, UK*

rescue shelter  
the basset's eyes  
non-committal

*Madhuri Pillai, Australia*

the elevator closes  
on another visit with dad —  
autumn leaves

*Eric A Lohman, USA*

losing my way  
the wonder  
of a halved red cabbage

*Ingrid Baluchi, North Macedonia (EC)*

# Haiga — Part 1A

Adelaide B. Shaw — USA



*skeletal tree  
knowing only  
half its story*

*Adelaide B. Shaw*



Anannya Dasgupta — India



aurora borealis  
I sit my joy  
in the front row

*Nika, Canada*

following the river  
a bull moose  
permits my passage

*Lysa Collins, Canada*

halved squash  
the split silence  
of autumn equinox

prepolovljena tikva  
rascijepljena tišina  
jesenske ravnodnevnice

*Silva Trstenjak, Croatia*  
*Translated by Đurđa Vukelić Rožić*

moon gazing —  
a transparent bird-call  
near venus

*Don Baird, USA*

stepping out —  
the confident stance  
of a mallard drake

*Hazel Hall, Australia*

mushroom partway a raccoon's eye socket

*Bill Cooper, USA*

silver morning  
through tattered shades—  
swallow's psalms

*Jerome Gagnon, USA*

home alone  
the chuckle of a gecko  
in my wall

*Quendryth Young, Australia*

wallaby track  
late sunshine lighting  
banksia candles

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

wheeled away  
in a gardener's barrow  
the leaves that swirled

*Jan Dobb, Australia*

stealing crimson  
from the trees  
autumn zephyr

*Deborah Burke Henderson, USA*

a chair at the table  
where he always sat —  
camellia blossoms

*Deborah A. Bennett, USA*

fog fading the trilling dolphins

*Richard L. Matta, USA*

drowsy night wind slurs through pine trees

昏夜風咕嚕松間

*John Zheng, USA*

a year of war  
the stone angel  
still in prayer

un anno di guerra  
ancora in preghiera  
l'angelo di pietra

*Carmela Marino, Italy (EC)*

dew drips drips . . .  
this autumn world  
of a migrant

露珠滴答滴答...  
一個移民  
的秋天世界

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*

harvest festival  
packing boxes  
for the food bank

*Ben Oliver, UK*

aftershocks—  
a beggar's bowl gathers  
more dust

*Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan*

full moon  
my shadow walks  
on the surface of the sea

puni mjesec  
moja sjena hoda  
površinom mora

*Slobodan Pupovac, Croatia*

autumn breeze  
the leaves that stay  
the leaves that don't

*Ben Gaa, USA*

already gone  
the evensong  
of geese

*Joanna Ashwell, UK*

her empty bedroom  
old stems of lavender  
in a drawer

la sua stanza da letto vuota  
vecchi steli di lavanda  
in un cassetto

*Eufemia Griffo, Italy*

sacred mountain  
how deep  
the scars

*Sondra J. Byrnes, USA*

thick morning fog  
the ferry whistle sounds  
within reach

*Jon Hare, USA*

the aches of being a being winter chill

होने की वेदना सर्द हवाएं

*Vijay Prasad, India*

shifting fog  
a puffin's beak  
emerges first

*Debbie Strange, Canada*



old black cat –  
years of fishy breath  
soft on my cheek

*Sandi Pray, USA*

the sharpness  
of a thin moon  
winter on the street

*Dan Curtis, Canada*

windchill  
pine needles pushing  
into grayscale

*Jamie Wimberly, USA*

biting cold  
the wheezing cough  
of a night watchman

*R. Suresh babu, India*

fresh kill  
the gyr-falcon mantles  
its shadow

*John Hawkhead, UK*

newly sown  
a layer of green  
on my sister's grave

*Edward J. Rielly, USA*

winter seclusion  
reindeer antlers turn  
toward a distant howl

*Beni Kurage, USA*

the graveyard  
so many dead  
stars in the sky

*LeRoy Gorman, Canada (EC)*

icy sun beams  
stretch through cemetery fog—  
tap dance on her stone

*Tyson West, USA*

winter without snow  
the distant memory  
of silence

*Laurie Greer, USA*

morning wind  
the space between  
my thoughts

vento mattutino  
lo spazio tra  
i miei pensieri

*Maria Concetta Conti, Italy*

face to the sun  
the pale of aspens  
before snow

*Tyler McIntosh, USA*

threadbare curtains  
the light  
that winter brings

*Frank Hooven, USA*

hunger moon  
wind-drift reveals the ribs  
of the forest

*Kristen Lindquist, USA*

snow blind  
driving the sharp curve  
by rote

*Marilyn Fleming, USA*

in a flash  
dawn thunders  
in silence

*Michael Flanagan, USA*

ivy trails  
renaming the cemetery  
flowers

*Herb Tate, UK*

flower seeds  
in the february wind . . .  
convalescence

semi di fiori  
nel vento di febbraio ...  
convalescenza

*Daniela Misso, Italy*

almost spring . . .  
the morning call for prayer  
is no more muffled

*Kanchan Chatterjee, India*

budding hyacinths  
more and more silence  
in my words

*Anna Maria Domburg-Sancristoforo,  
The Netherlands*

horned moon —  
a sleeping child grins  
from ear to ear

rogati mjesec —  
dijete se u snu smije  
od uha do uha

*Nina Kovacic, Croatia*

spring again  
a creek polishes  
the white stones

iar primavară  
un pârau lustruiește  
pietrele albe

*Mircea Moldovan, România*

## Editor's Choices (EC) - Haiku

Thank you for sending your haiku to *cattails*. This time too, there were a great many submissions and memorable moments of wonder. The geographies, the flora and fauna that poets experience are being conveyed to many other parts of the globe and readers are able to engage with, and enjoy the moments presented. When we are as interconnected as we are now, events in one part of the globe do not remain isolated but flow fluidly, and cause a flux or ebb elsewhere. I would like to bring to your attention, three haiku that point to extreme climatic events and disasters. I am (deliberately) not commenting on these powerful poems but instead, invite you to participate in these moments (of concern, of anguish) that the poets have shared.

drought—  
a constellation  
of small ivory bones

suša—  
sazviježđe  
malih kostiju bjelokosti

*Goran Gatalica, Croatia*

wildfires—  
deer flee  
into an ambush

skogbranner—  
rådyr flykter  
inn i en felle

*Emma Alexander Arthur, Norway*

helicopter throb  
a deer in the hunt  
for high ground

*Cynthia Rowe, Australia*

And now, here are three more poems that I hope you will reread with me.



a year of war  
the stone angel  
still in prayer

un anno di guerra  
ancora in preghiera  
l'angelo di pietra

*Carmela Marino, Italy*

Thank you, Carmela Marino, for this deep poem which is an example of how the art of suggestion can make for a powerful haiku. The poet brings to the reader the image of war, along with the helplessness of the situation.

The poem alludes to the unending violence with a matter-of-fact first line—a year of war. (There are no concrete images of war.) It is the second and third lines that take the reader deeper and onto reflection. A year has passed and the prayers continue unabated from a stone angel - what else can it do, but stand in prayer? It is one word that changes the tone of the poem— the word 'still' in the third line. The 'stone angel in prayer' is different from the 'stone angel *still* in prayer'— a sense of weariness has crept in. The use of the word 'stone' also makes for an image of hardness, lifelessness, and immutability.

The images in the haiku led me to think of us, human beings. Do we continue to pray for the end of a war, the end of all wars? Do we actively pursue peace instead of all other options in our daily lives? As poets of haiku, I would like to believe that we all pray for, pursue and practise peace. Meanwhile, the beatific stone angel continues to pray.



the graveyard  
so many dead  
stars in the sky

*LeRoy Gorman, Canada*

LeRoy Gorman brings us a graveyard with so many of the dead – or so I thought, at first. But in a moment, the poem turns the images from the ground below us to the sky above (very deftly). The space that the poem offers is vast. The poet compels the reader to read the poem again. So many possibilities are offered to us in so few words.

Many readings followed and I explored the possibilities of travelling with the poem. Is it the graveyard that has so many dead or is it the sky that has so many dead stars or is it both? Do the dead from the graveyard become stars (a scene from Disney's *The Lion King* also made an appearance in one of my readings!) Or, probably the poet only wanted to state that there are many dead stars in the sky (literal) and not that so many (of our) favourite people are up there. In the end, space is as vast as we want it to be. It could be just a graveyard out there in the beyond too. Thank you, LeRoy Gorman, for also reminding me about the reader's responsibility of carrying a haiku's journey forward.





losing my way  
the wonder  
of a halved red cabbage

*Ingrid Baluchi, North Macedonia*

Ingrid Baluchi takes us on a path of wonder with this poem. Line 1, losing my way — I thought of old streets with names in a foreign language, mazes in ancient cities, forests, trekking on a trail, unknown and yet undiscovered dirt tracks. The haiku makes a turn from line 1 to the phrase that follows. And then, I was mesmerized by the halved red cabbage with its serpentine maze — what a beautiful image! The last line traces back to the first line as the intricate design would make someone lose their way. Thank you, Ingrid, for showing us the joy of close observation, of life's littler moments. The next time I cut a red cabbage, it is going to take some time to move on to the next task.

Warmth and gratitude,  
**Geethanjali Rajan**

# Haiga — Part 1B

An'ya — USA

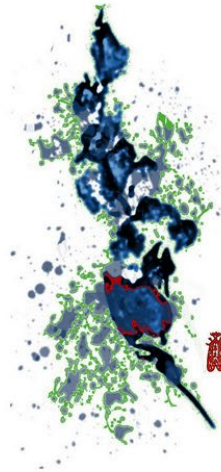
The Waltz  
an'ya

I should have  
known to thank you  
before now  
for bringing me  
nights of spring love

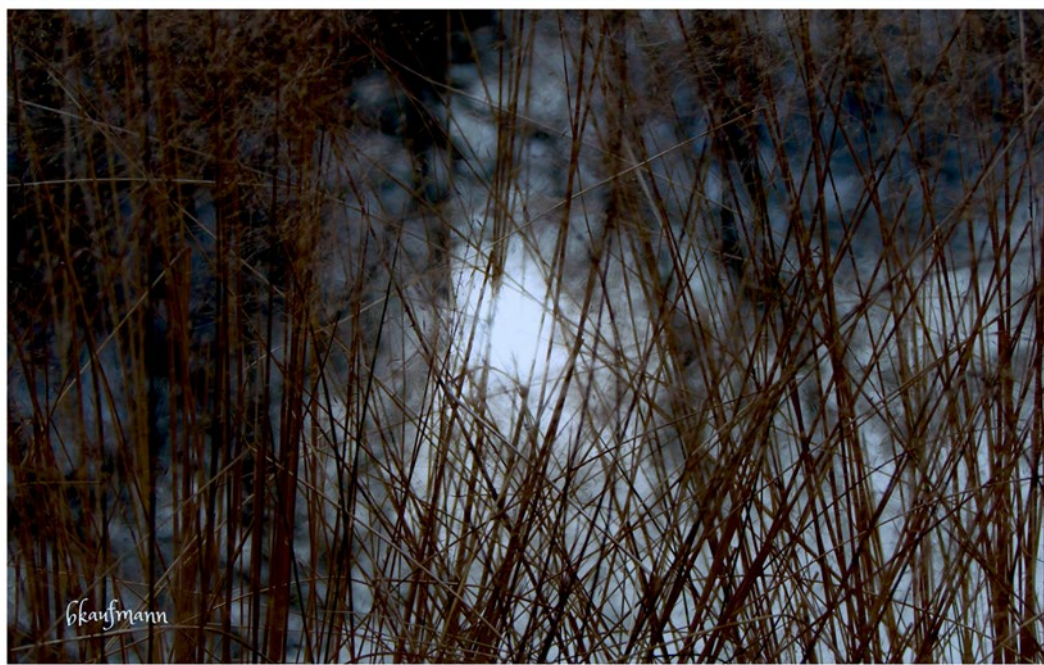
I should have  
known you'd be back  
in summer  
when grass grew green  
and sky stayed blue

I should have  
known life changes  
like the leaves  
lose chlorophyll  
to autumn's hues

I should have  
known in winter  
we would still  
dance the old-age  
waltz together...



Barbara Kaufmann — USA



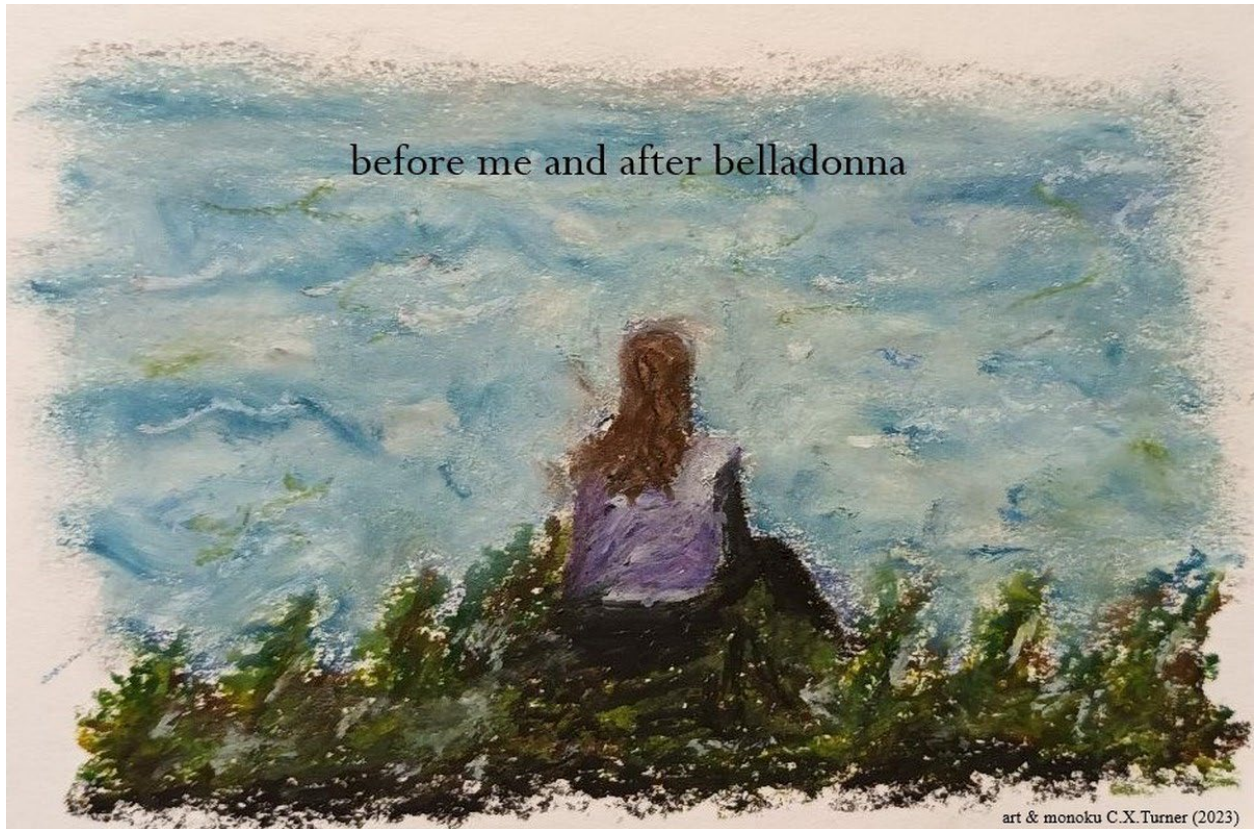
*a light in old age the muffled laughter of children*

Beate Conrad — Germany





C.X. Turner — UK



Cezar Ciobîcă & Paul Alexandru — Romania

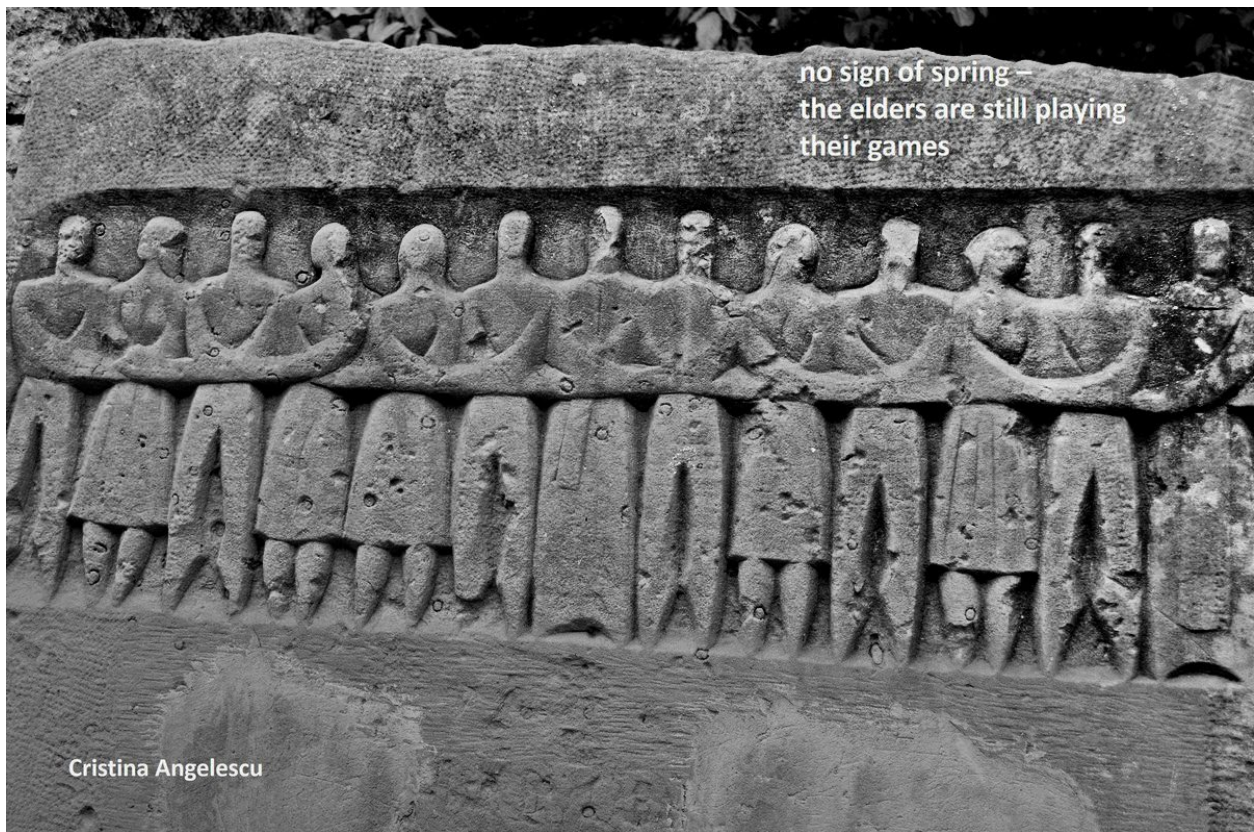
winter chill...  
that black spot  
on dad's lung



photo: Paul Alexandru

haiku: Cezar Ciobîcă

Cristina Angelescu — Romania





# Senryu



When we Meet



waning crescent  
your scar frowns  
with you

unheard whispers  
my mother's tears sink  
into the prayer mat

*Farah Ali, United Kingdom*

park lake  
an old couple  
treading water

parkdamm  
ett gammalt par  
trampar vatten

tai chi  
slowly slowly  
hitting a mosquito

tai chi  
sakta sakta  
slår en mygga

*Birk Andersson, Sweden (EC)*

family garden party  
a bumblebee fans  
the rumours

*Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan*

night fishing  
a search  
for elusive words

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

prairie wind —  
all I remember  
all that I don't

first rain —  
a drop of monsoon  
in my tea

*Mona Bedi, India*

an inchworm  
on her pinkie . . .  
they grow up so fast

morning light  
the Zen garden  
has me to itself

*Brad Bennett, USA*

monkey bars  
everyone on the playground  
upside down

*Randy Brooks, USA*

ferns glisten  
at the roadside —  
unscheduled stop

*Rohan Buettel, Australia*

molted crab  
learning to love  
the skin I'm in

*Susan Burch, USA*

court hearing  
her fury is  
in the files

Gerichtsverhandlung  
ihre Wut steckt  
in den Akten

*Pitt Buerken, Germany*

what we said  
what we didn't mean —  
editing yesterday

*Sondra J. Byrnes, USA*

glass after glass  
moonlight shrouded  
in night mist

gelas setelah gelas  
cahaya rembulan tertutup  
dalam kabut malam

*Christopher Calvin, Indonesia*

rose garden  
mother warned me his thorns  
would cut

*Pris Campbell, USA*

breaking the silence  
between us  
whistling teapot

*Alvin B. Cruz, Philippines*

off-white persimmon flowers  
my teenager's test  
turns pink

белезникав цвят от райска ябълка  
тестът на дъщеря ми  
порозовява

*Maya Daneva, The Netherlands*

long birth  
the way she utters  
daylight

дълго раждане  
начинът ѝ да изшепти  
светлина

*Radostina Dragostinova, Bulgaria*

confession —  
slowly opening up  
a magnolia

confesiune —  
deschizându-se încet  
o magnolie

*Ana Drobot, Romania*

bindweed  
digging up  
your infidelity

*Christine Eales, United Kingdom*

winter art class . . .  
students glossing over  
the model's goosebumps

*Anna Eklund-Cheong, France*

beach footprints  
the way we're going  
to see the way we came

*Keith Evetts, United Kingdom*

broken dreams  
the short end  
of the wish bone

*Marilyn Fleming, USA*

happy hour  
a nun adjusts  
her habit

*Ben Gaa, USA*

handshake—  
the beggar becomes  
a man

*Ben Gaa, USA (EC)*

the corpse waiting  
with eternal patience  
gravedigger's spade

*Mike Gallagher, Ireland*

eternity . . .  
the dirt  
under his fingernails

vječnos . . .  
prljavština  
pod njegovim noktima

*Goran Gatalica, Croatia*

BY APPOINTMENT  
will it be the same  
at heaven's door

*LeRoy Gorman, Canada*

bitter morning  
the koel's song  
sweetens the tea

கசப்பான காலை  
குயிலின் பாடல்  
தேனீரை இனிமையாக்க

*Elancharan Gunasekaran, Singapore*

the way we do things back to front his baseball cap

*Hazel Hall, Australia*

time to go  
flies start swarming  
at the bar

*Jon Hare, USA*

all night-ight  
two clocks tick-ick  
out of sync

northern wilderness  
a cross stands in memory  
of God knows who

*Lev Hart, Canada*



autumn's fall  
an old man and his dog  
slip into mist

continental drift  
far enough apart  
to almost touch

*John Hawkhead,  
United Kingdom (EC)*

bedtime poetry  
I ask him to be  
a frog in my dream

*Patricia Hawkhead,  
United Kingdom*

office donuts—  
our award-winning coverage  
of the famine

*Ruth Holzer, USA*

wolf moon . . .  
the dog and I howling  
a different note

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

closing time  
pouring shadows  
into the night

*Rick Jackofsky, USA*

guessing  
the sweet and sour sauce  
is

*Roberta Beach Jacobson, USA*

Pluto  
her favorite planet  
until it isn't

*Johnnie Johnson Hafernik, USA*

mountaintop proposal  
the raucous laughter  
of kookaburras

*Louise Hopewell, Australia*

over my head  
your corrugated  
irony

*Richard Kakol, Australia*

this morning  
a spoon's my brush  
ensō in my coffee cup

*Brian Kates, USA*

carved by the years  
what's between us  
finds its shape

*Ravi Kiran, India (EC)*

midnight  
I gaze at the stars  
as you once did

*Chris Langer, USA*

sleepless  
a midnight crowd  
of crows

睡不著覺  
午夜一大群  
的烏鴉

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*

# Haiga — Part 2A

Debbie Strange — Canada



Dimitrij Škrk — Slovenia



waiting to hear  
the words he hasn't said  
falling snow

*Heather Lurie, New Zealand*

watermelon days  
the sluggish fullness  
of a mosquito

*Tyler McIntosh, USA*

convalescence  
my unkempt garden  
blooming

*Ruchita Madhok, India*

*extinct bird*  
crossword clue  
more than one answer

*Dorothy Mahoney, Canada*

me, my wife . . .  
the to-and-fro  
of a mosquito

io, mia moglie ...  
il va e vieni  
di una zanzara

*Antonio Mangiameli, Italy*

milk thistle breeze  
forgetting when dad died  
from dementia

*Richard L. Matta, USA*

diagnosis  
counting the leaves  
from the hospital yard

diagnostic  
numărând frunzele  
din curtea spitalului

*Mircea Moldovan, Romania*

city visit  
he wants to see  
the skyscrapers

no nonsense  
the baby and I  
babbling

*Laurie D. Morrissey, USA (EC)*

black eye —  
the usual journey  
from rage to shame

*Ashish Narain, Philippines*

poetry notebook  
jotting down  
our takeout order

*Maurice Nevile, Australia*

sickle moon  
two displaced migrants  
share a blanket

*Nika, Canada*

spring afternoon  
pretending mum's diagnosis  
is not terminal

*Bernadette O'Reilly, Ireland*

Valentine's Day the invitation to 'an evening of hope'

Lá Fhéile Vailintín an cuireadh chuig 'tráthnóna dóchais'

last song of the night my gin-soaked orange segment

amhrán deireanach na hoíche mo scealláin oráiste lán le jin

*Maeve O'Sullivan, Ireland*



our twin grandsons  
the pitter-patter  
of a hail storm

*Curt Pawlisch, USA*

the circus closed  
he starts a flea market  
from scratch

*Carol Raisfeld, USA*

roulette wheel . . .  
betting on  
the real me

*Valentina Ranaldi-Adams, USA*

Mother's Day  
the faith we put  
in scattered seeds

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

waterfall tryst . . .  
birdsong rains  
on the rocky shelf

*Cynthia Rowe,  
Australia*

forever after her kintsugi smile

*Julie Schwerin, USA (EC)*

summer rue  
we marry  
without mother

*Richa Sharma, India*

light rain  
on my grandson's palm  
a tiny snail

हलकी बारिश  
मेरे पोते की हथेली पर  
एक नन्हा घोंघा

*Neena Singh, India*

home visit  
gran's pink lipstick  
on my cheeks

*Tom Staudt, Australia*

peach blossoms  
his words floating  
in the wind

*Stephenie Story, USA*

sedimentary rock  
they say I should be  
moving forward

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

midsummer —  
a white straw hat  
walks through high corn

*Ann Sullivan, USA*

first flight  
my child calls the cotton clouds  
a house of god

*R. Suresh babu, India*

red signal  
a little girl points to  
the arc moon

*Neha Talreja, India*

shoeshine man —  
even though I'm wearing flip-flops  
he smiles

*Angela Terry, USA*

energy crisis . . .  
an additional blanket  
for each bed

energetska kriza...  
dodatni pokrivač  
za svaki krevet

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

an anniversary passes  
the stone lion's  
silent roar

*C. X. Turner, UK*

nursing home visit —  
outside the window  
her son

*Tuyet Van Do, Australia*

pausing  
at the top of the escalator —  
first bifocals

*Joseph P. Wechselberger, USA*

winter blues . . .  
the brilliance of white  
in a cloudy sky

*Quendryth Young, Australia*

a child's arms  
too small to describe  
the bigness of sky

daydreaming . . .  
I drop my speed  
to drifting cloud

*Tony Williams, United Kingdom (EC)*

after the phone call  
she beats the batter  
even harder

*Wai Mei Wong, Canada (EC)*

diamond anniversary  
still saying yes,  
dear

*Susan Yavaniski, USA*

ghost town  
the remaining church  
pewless

鬼城  
教堂尚存  
長椅無

*John Zheng, USA*

## Editor's Choices (EC) - Senryu

One of the most obvious privileges of this job is seeing so much great work by so many great authors. I hope there are several pieces in this issue which will chime with you when you meet them. As ever, there were no shortage of candidates to choose for closer investigation. I've tried to select pieces which have opened out for me on rereading. Some offer "aha" and others "aah" moments. To my mind, each of them demonstrates the remarkable versatility of senryu. This serves as a reminder, to me, to continue to practice and strive for a better understanding of the form. There's something wonderful about capturing such precious moments.



tai chi  
slowly slowly  
hitting a mosquito

*Birk Andersson, Sweden*

Birk Andersson offers us a comic moment in the day of a Tai Chi practitioner. Yet I keep finding more in this. Tai Chi is a martial art, but has been promoted for its physical and mental health benefits. I imagine the practitioner to be someone who is enjoying those benefits. The second line suggests their pace of life has slowed down. As a result, their responses to situations have slowed down too. Perhaps they are more mindful too. Working with this idea, the slow movement of the person towards the mosquito allows them an opportunity to reconsider their action. Although the word in the last line is "hitting," I see the mosquito escaping, as the person decides not to kill it. While the poem relates one action in a day of the practitioner, it is also an insight into their new life.



handshake —  
the beggar becomes  
a man

*Ben Gaa, USA*

Ben Gaa provides us with an opportunity to consider the power of a simple action. It's so easy to turn a blind eye to those in need. Here we see someone going the extra mile. Not just dropping some change into a coffee cup, but stopping to interact with the person. The "aha" moment is cleverly reserved for the last line — yet I wonder if there is more than one "aha" here. While the person has recognised humanity within the beggar, has the beggar recognised some humanity in the society which has failed them? After all, there is power in both giving and receiving. How remarkable to capture such an intricate interaction between people in so few words.



continental drift  
far enough apart  
to almost touch

*John Hawkhead, United Kingdom*

John Hawkhead provides us with a riddle of sorts. I wonder, if it were presented as a haiku, whether it would prove as interesting. Continental drift is caused by plate tectonics. While it's difficult to observe the movement of these plates, they remind us of their dynamic nature with earthquakes. The idea of continental drift was proposed by Alfred Wegener, having noticed the coastlines of Africa and South America would fit together to make a curious jigsaw. If we take that idea out of haiku and into senryu, it can bring us to strange places. When people break up, or are separated, do they leave impressions in one another? Or, do people drift apart because they are different? And

what if those people continue to change? Could they drift back together again? From another perspective, is it too difficult to meet an ex-partner until you have separated from them emotionally? There seem to be multiple layers to the reading, each with their own mystery. It's a real treat to find such depth in three short lines.



carved by the years  
what's between us  
finds its shape

*Ravi Kiran, India*

Ravi Kiran offers us a mystery with a cryptic solution. While it is tempting to assume that the thing “between us” is a good “thing,” it is equally possible that it is a ‘bad’ thing. So, we are left with a conundrum regarding time. Has it been bringing “us” closer or has it been driving “us” apart? Both readings offer intriguing stories, but I can't refute either. Perhaps this poem tests whether the reader is a “glass half empty” or a “glass half full” sort of person.



city visit-  
he wants to see  
the skyscratchers

*Laurie D. Morrissey, USA*

Laurie D. Morrissey shares a humorous moment. The inclusion of an unusual malapropism sets the mind racing. Who is this “he”? The word “skyscratcher” makes them sound like someone who's visiting from out of town. If they haven't encountered skyscrapers before, have they spent any time in cities at all? If not, what sort of a life have they lived? By ‘showing’ the reader a glimpse of a life, Laurie has opened the poem, and its subjects, to deeper investigation.





forever after her kintsugi smile

*Julie Schwerin, USA*

Julie Schwerin presents us with a small poem, even by senryu standards. A mere five words. Some specialist knowledge is required here, but it offers great rewards. Kintsugi is a Japanese term, which translates as golden joinery. It is a technique which highlights repairs to pottery, using golden lacquer. Philosophically, the technique serves as a way of embracing imperfection. Working with that knowledge, we learn that the “her” of the poem suffered a facial injury at some time in the past. I assume the narrator is sharing their happiness at seeing that once-injured person smiling. Perhaps it serves as a constant reminder that the smile and its owner have survived and prospered.



a child's arms  
too small to describe  
the bigness of sky

*Tony Williams, United Kingdom*

Tony Williams brings us into a family scene. Someone is talking to a child and asking them to describe the sky. The child throws its arms wide to convey how huge it is. Presumably there are other people present who could make the same gesture while offering a much larger size. I detect an aspect of innocence here; the child might use the same action to indicate a big dog, a car, a house, or a mountain. But there also seems to be an aspect of intellectual growth, as the child learns to fit ever bigger objects and ideas inside its head. These thoughts meet the idea of impermanence (*mujō*), as every child will grow and change.

after the phone call  
she beats the batter  
even harder

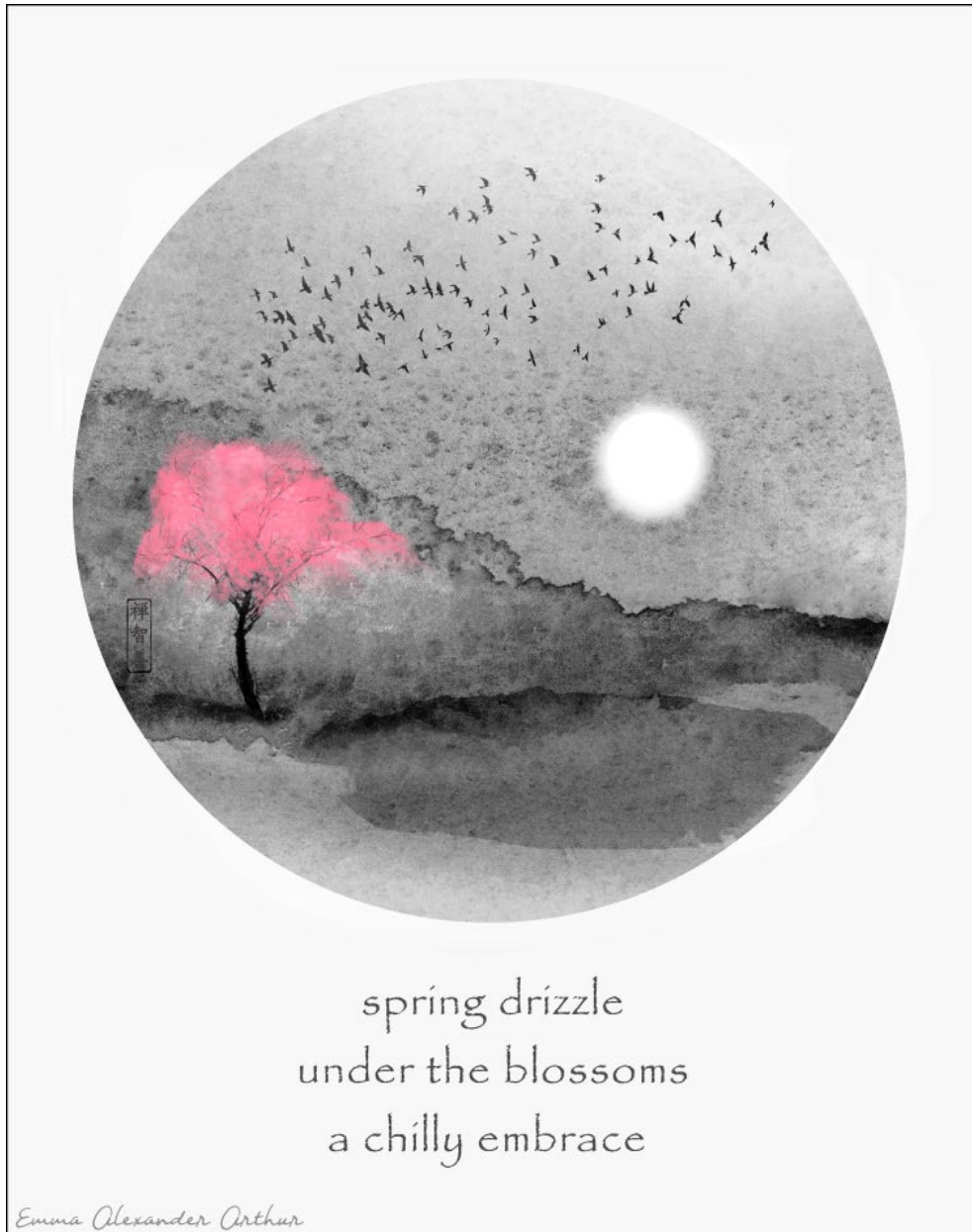
*Wai Mei Wong, Canada*

Wai Mei Wong provides us with a beautiful example of how to “show” rather than “tell”. We know there was a phone call, and we know there was some batter. Although we don’t know the nature of the phone call, we can guess that it didn’t go well, because the beating process has taken on a new vigour! What I find fascinating about this poem is that it suggests anger or frustration of the “she,” but ultimately it leads us to humour, as we see that anger transformed.

**David J Kelly**

# Haiga — Part 2B

Emma Alexander Arthur — Norway



Eric A Lohman & Giancarlo Bertozzi — USA



leaping for joy  
the fluid dynamics  
of sunrise

haiku: Eric A. Lohman  
photo: Giancarlo Bertozzi

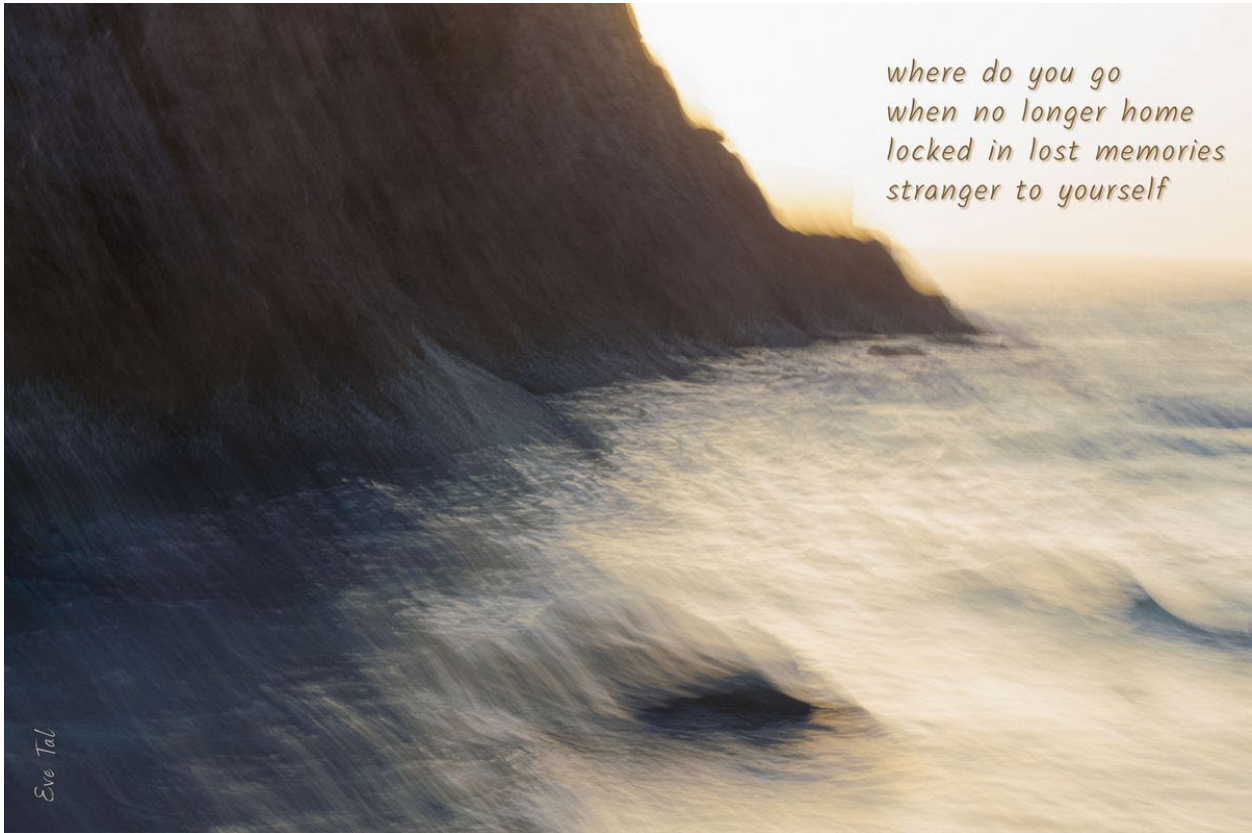
Eugeniusz Zacharski & Jacek Pokrak — Poland



painting: Jacek Pokrak  
haiku: Eugeniusz Zacharski

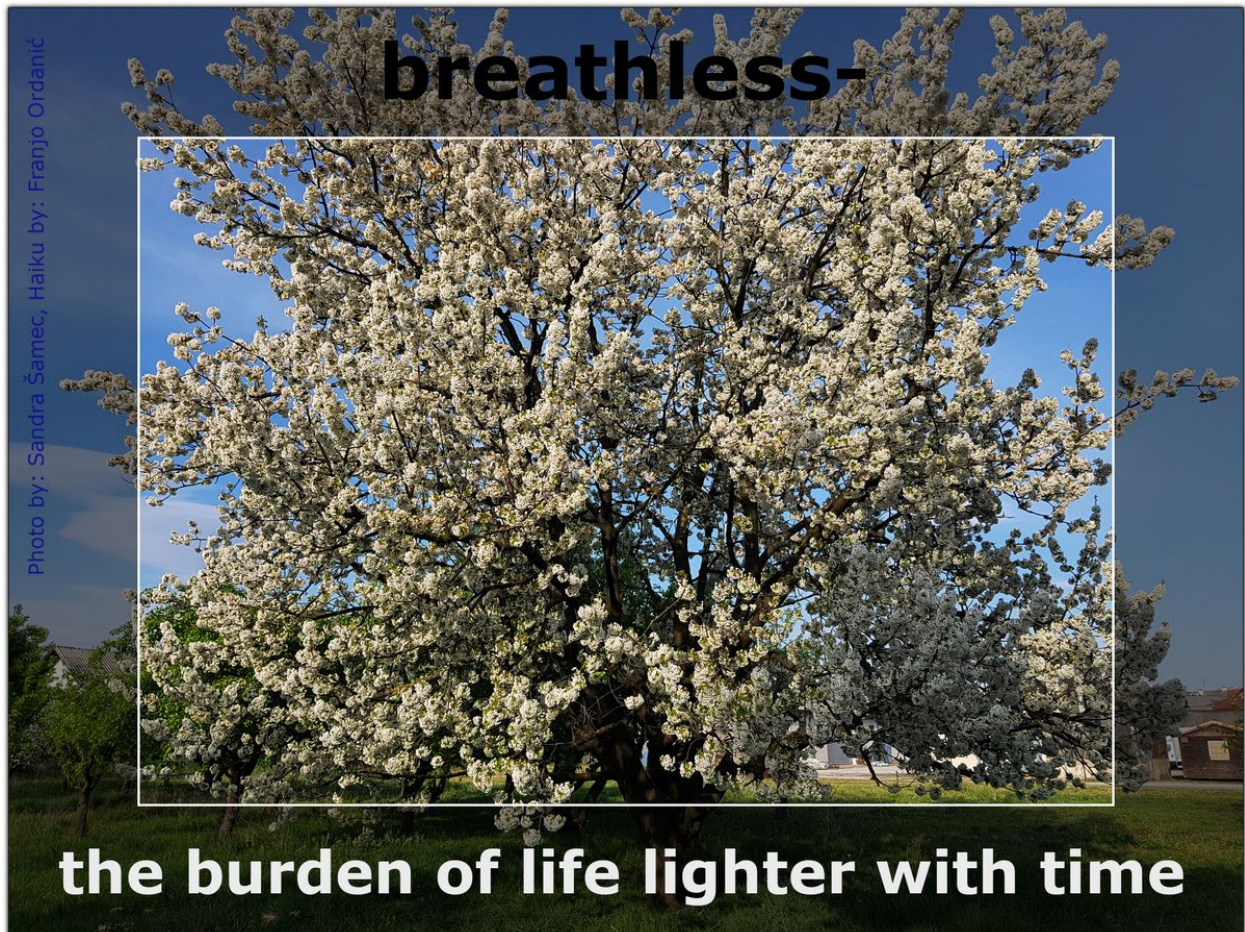
**spring awakening  
the sun enlivens our bones  
and theirs**

Eva Tal — Israel

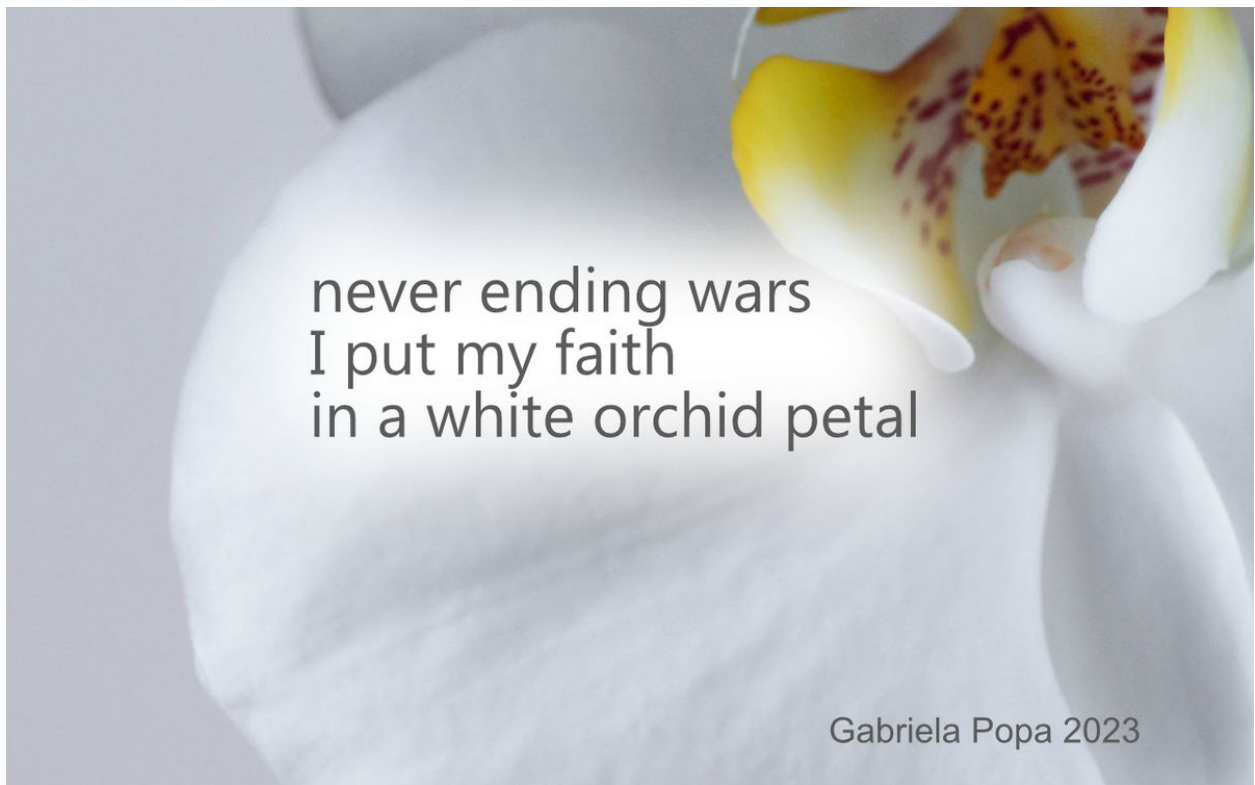




Franjo Ordanić & Sandra Šamec — Croatia



Gabriela Popa — USA



never ending wars  
I put my faith  
in a white orchid petal

Gabriela Popa 2023



# Tanka



The Alchemy of Shadows

share your secret  
with a sea breeze,  
it will listen  
without complaint  
and then blow it away

*Mary Davila, USA*

first light  
down the mountain  
the river  
trips over pebbles  
finding her lyrics

*Kala Ramesh, India*

river flute  
a small trout darts  
here and there  
a great egret  
lowers its neck

*John Zheng, USA*

little finch,  
your spark nearly hidden  
by falling snow . . .  
how nameless songs  
kindle the fire within

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

the dying wingbeat  
of a butterfly  
in amber  
all the things  
i might have been

*Frank Dietrich, Germany*

a sunbeam  
entered the garage  
in its gala garb  
a locked down fly  
as if a firefly

sunčeva zraka  
ušla u garažu  
izolirana muha  
u svečanoj odori  
kao krijesnica

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

a bumblebee  
nuzzles coloured flowers  
my mind alights  
on one thought  
after another

*Hazel Hall, Australia*

seen edge on,  
the way the breeze tickles  
the morning glory,  
lets her rest,  
then does it again

*Jim Chessing, USA (EC)*

Wang Wei wrote  
of the wind rattling bamboo  
I remember  
cottonwoods applauding  
the new day

*Michael Flanagan, USA*

in the blue eye  
of the hurricane  
silence  
learning to listen  
to my inner self

*Marilyn Fleming, USA*

intoxicated  
by jasmine  
the final piece  
of sky  
disappearing

*Joanna Ashwell, UK*

flax leaves glisten  
and fold in summer rains  
their black spears erect—  
this is the place  
I call home

*Anne Curran, New Zealand*

dry stones  
whisper to the creek bed  
as if  
I were the dam  
and you the rain man

*Marilyn Fleming, USA*

a lone boat  
floats on the lake  
suspended  
I dilute my thoughts  
in the morning fog

una barca solitaria  
galleggia sul lago  
sospesa  
stempero i miei pensieri  
nella nebbia mattutina

*Daniela Misso, Italy*

steam and leaves  
the darkening soil  
takes it all  
in different shades  
around the shoreline

*Daniel Robinson, USA*

letting the dog out . . .  
high in the ice night  
tundra swans fly  
white and ghost-like  
haunting the cold with their calls

*Curt Pawlisch, USA*

felled forest . . .  
the faint asphalt scent  
of canyon chaparral  
a turkey vulture  
circles and circles

*Richard L. Matta, USA*

their dream house underway —  
orange flags excavated dirt  
mounds heaped next to broken pines  
crushing trilliums  
severing deer trails . . .

*Curt Pawlisch, USA*

the year  
without a winter —  
camellia blossoms  
blanket the Earth  
like a shroud

*Jenny Ward Angyal, USA*

another day  
& another name  
gets added to the list  
of endangered species  
what about us

*LeRoy Gorman, Canada*

first snow  
melting into the fallen leave . . .  
autumn wind  
the voices of birds  
drift into silence 'till spring

*Peter H. Pache, USA*

sundown  
a narrow band of sky  
between earth and cloud  
between anger and despair  
a rich light gently spreads

*Katherine Raine, New Zealand*

no visible scar  
but something lost  
in Vietnam  
a moth fluttering  
in the cobweb

*Randy Brooks, USA*

remains  
of a ghost town  
on the estuary —  
a dock on the tidal flats  
emerges and submerges

*Richard Tice, USA (EC)*

a pallid moon  
coming and going  
migrant workers  
pause and consider  
what the season brings

*Anna Cates, USA*

a teen's hands  
touching her mother's . . .  
the train window  
dis/connects their hearts  
broken by blasts in Kyiv

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*



night crossing  
into no man's land  
young soldiers  
in goggles and camouflage  
the ghosts of themselves

*Ruth Holzer, USA*

no need  
to squabble over it  
the last slice  
of the orange sun  
disappears

*Ryland Shengzhi Li, USA (EC)*

picnic . . .  
mother's whispered prayer  
can't be heard anymore  
in a nest above us  
eggshells break

picnic...  
rugăciunea șoptită a mamei  
nu se mai aude  
deasupra noastră într-un cuib  
pocnesc coji de ouă

*Mircea Moldovan, România*

tiny droplets  
reach mother earth  
your tiny hands  
search for my warmth  
in the blanket

சிறு மழை துளிகள்  
பூமித்தாயை அடைந்தன  
உன் சிறிய கைகள்  
கம்பளியைத்தேடின  
என் வெம்மைக்காக

*Padmini Krishnan, United Arab Emirates*

cracked fingertips  
after years of scrubbing . . .  
she blows kisses  
to her grandson  
she dare not caress

फटे पोर उँगलियों के  
बरसों की सफ़ाई के बाद ...  
वह चुम्बन देती है  
अपने पोते को  
दुलारने की हिम्मत नहीं

*Priti Aisola, India*

stretching  
her mother's arm  
a little girl in yellow boots  
splashes through a puddle  
of sunshine

*Rick Jackofsky, USA*

as if yesterday  
our walks home  
from elementary school . . .  
the little store waiting  
with penny candy

*Jill Lange, USA*

he walked me  
through a photo journey  
my grandfather  
coughing more  
with every step

*Heather Lurie, New Zealand*

walking through  
my childhood home  
the huge backyard  
of my memories  
only postage-stamp size

*Claire Vogel Camargo, USA*

## Haiga — Part 3A

Johnnie Johnson Hafernik & Dorothy M. Messerschmitt — USA





Janet Ruth — USA



a darning needle  
in the armchair opposite  
mending woollen socks . . .  
open-fire sparks reflecting  
lifetimes lived in love

*Mike Gallagher, Ireland*

venturing  
out into a clear night  
of chilled breath  
I point out the star  
that was his mother's

*John Hawkhead, UK*

breath slowing  
your hands flutter free  
of the hospice sheet  
with the deepening dawn  
a butterfly finds flight

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

echoes of the breeze  
swallowed by the storm,  
then silence  
before the emptiness  
left by your passing

*Cynthia Rowe, Australia*

torrential rains  
nonstop for days now  
cold that's bone deep  
under this weighted blanket  
. . . sadness

malakas na ulan  
walang tigil ilang araw na ngayon  
ang lamig tagos hanggang buto  
sa ilalim nitong mabigat na kumot  
... kalungkutan

*Lorelyn De la Cruz, Philippines*

before the funeral  
a flurry of phone calls  
of sympathy –  
afterwards the grief stricken  
left forgotten in their sadness

*Keitha Keyes, Australia*

each day  
I place another rock  
on your cairn  
building a ladder . . .  
we will meet again

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

alone  
and recalling wounds  
unhealed . . .  
i still long for someone  
to ease the loneliness

*Kala Ramesh, India*

after her death  
the bowl I'd given Mother  
came back to me  
filled with fragrant petals  
to remember her love

*Margaret Owen Ruckert, Australia*

mother's orchid plant  
bulbs shared between siblings  
across gardens  
her memory revived  
each flowering season

*Gwen Bitti, Australia*

the faint outline  
of her breasts  
snug in a kimono  
intimacy served  
with my bowl of tea

*John Budan, USA*



fruits are ripening  
and the fish are getting fat  
tanka poems falling  
    like autumn leaves at Your feet  
    bend down, Belovèd, pick one

aibíonn na torthaí  
tá na héisc ag éirí ramhar  
tanka ag titim  
    ina nduilleoga fómhair romhat  
    crom síos, ardaigh ceann acu

*Gabriel Rosenstock, Ireland*

the remaining snow  
could muffle my footsteps  
but not my heartbeat  
the way I feel  
also shows in my red cheeks

zăpada rămasă  
mi-ar fi putut înăbuși pașii  
dar nu și bătăile inimii mele  
felul în care mă simt  
se vede și în obrajii mei roșii

*Ana Drobot, Romania*

escaping  
local zip codes in winter  
deep breaths  
of fresh mountain air  
intertwined legs by the fire

*Carol Raisfeld, USA*

breaking open  
the red chillies  
and frying them in the pan —  
our recipe  
for a long-lasting relationship

*Namratha Varadharajan, India*

stargazing  
a meteoroid burns up  
the atmosphere  
as I feel your hand  
curl into mine

*Cynthia Rowe, Australia*

seed fluff  
always in a state  
of falling  
how my heart won't settle  
for anyone but you

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

retreating  
ever faster  
a melting glacier  
reveals a gaping scar . . .  
deep but barren like our love

*Tom Staudt, Australia*

abandoned cat  
in the shadows  
I, too,  
have longed for a warm hug  
when nights grow cold

*Pris Campbell, USA*

I'll never be  
pretty enough  
for you  
the drooping petals  
of a snake head fritillary

*Susan Burch, USA*

she cradles the moon  
in a fetal position  
the vulnerability  
of a woman  
in unrequited love

*Pamela A. Babusci, USA*

written in scars  
and the wrinkles of time  
half-remembered  
in the throat of passion  
a story left unended

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

walking home  
a star above the roof  
of my house . . .  
turning dad's key in the lock  
i feel less alone

*Bernadette O'Reilly, Ireland*

softer than crickets  
the click of her knitting needles  
weaving the tales  
of winters long-gone  
and those yet to come

*sanjuktaa asopa, India (EC)*

the cat I buried  
is at the patio door  
his gold green eyes  
all through the long night  
wait for me to let him in

*Jim Chessing, USA*

a dragon plant  
cramped in its plastic pot  
solitary  
in this old brick house —  
I've put down my roots

*Richard Kakol, Australia*

touch the stone  
and strike a match —  
the hearth  
holds in its bones  
both *heart* and *earth*

*Jenny Ward Angyal, USA*

colorful confetti  
summer party leftovers  
autumn has come  
through that rustling path  
winter will also come

šareni konfeti  
ostaci ljetne zabave  
jesen je došla  
tim putem koji šuška  
doći će i zima

*Boris Deverić, Croatia*

water lilies  
pinpricks of soft colors  
ripple my paint brush  
flowing across white canvas  
shades of an impressionist

*Douglas J. Lanzo, USA*

ice flowers  
on the window pane . . .  
in the studio  
the nude model  
shivers from cold

eisblumen  
auf der Fensterscheibe ...  
im Atelier  
das Nacktmodel  
bibbert vor Kälte

*Pitt Buerken, Germany*

she slows down  
driving through the puddle  
quietly splashing  
less than the thirsty sparrow  
little disturbance of the peace

*Ron Scully, USA*

a single swan  
head tucked under its wing  
floating . . .  
our coupled hands  
tighter as we pass

*Jon Hare, USA*

a stray cat  
curled high on the pergola . . .  
a bit of home  
is all we look for  
wherever we wander

*Rupa Anand, India*

highway of winds  
*along his route*  
*the postman stoops*  
close to the ground  
blizzard snow

*Christina Chin, Malaysia*  
*M. R. Defibaugh, USA*

church bells . . .  
from the window  
I watch the sleepy port  
sinking into the sun's embrace  
through the scent of sea

crkvena zvona...  
s prozora promatram  
usnulu luku  
što kroz miris mora  
tone u zagrljaj sunca

*Ivan Gaćina, Croatia*

living on pills  
to keep the body moving,  
a cornucopia  
of capsules and tablets  
the new “staff of life”

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

a closet  
full of contradictions  
a wardrobe  
of non-conformity  
her piece of mind

*Eve Ozer, USA*

surnames set  
our grade school desk order —  
reunion seating  
osteoporosis  
hangs next to Parkinson's

*Tyson West, USA*

the brittle crust  
of day-old snow  
returning to work  
so soon  
after retirement

*Ben Oliver, England (EC)*



## Editor's Choices (EC) - Tanka

seen edge on  
the way the breeze tickles  
the morning glory,  
lets her rest  
then does it again

*Jim Chessing, USA*

I love the fun here. And although this is a human perspective, a delight arises in witnessing the moment that brings us into the “tickle.” A playfulness is captured that gladdens the heart. Our eyes brighten. The simplicity of this tanka is not to be underestimated. If we're able to bring our attention into this moment we are deeply rewarded. All it takes is our conscious attention. Jim's tanka does this for us. Thanks for sharing this moment, Jim. It becomes more delightful with each reading.



remains  
of a ghost town  
on the estuary —  
a dock on the tidal flats  
emerges and submerges

*Richard Tice, USA*

I am left with an emptiness, a picture of desolation. I see the “dock on the tidal flats” and witness the covering and uncovering by a tide. My mind is drawn into the loneliness there. The abandonment. I feel impelled to gaze at the loss. The silence is overwhelming. The people have gone. The “ghosts” are there and yet, not there.

Rereading the poem, the first word, “remains” becomes the word with the haunting. Thank you, Richard. As a Pacific Island Nation, we relate to this tanka and the extreme weather patterns bringing devastation.



no need  
to squabble over it  
the last slice  
of the orange sun  
disappears

*Ryland Shengzhi Li, USA*

A simplicity but depth draws me into silence, to ponder the implications. It’s as if we are the eternal children who wish to “squabble.” Yet the sun belongs to us all and although gone for the evening, it will return in the morning. Isn’t it a relief not to have to squabble over the sun? It’s out of our hands. For once humans can’t go to war over ownership. The poet’s humour, using the word “squabble” brings a lightness and a smile. However, simultaneously questions arise. What is being left unsaid? Thank you, Ryland.



softer than crickets  
the click of her knitting needles  
weaving the tales  
of winters long-gone  
and those yet to come

*sanjuktaa asopa, India*

There’s an enchanting rhythm in this tanka. I can imagine the ‘click of her knitting needles’ with the family gathered by the fireside. A comfort to those who know the

sound of “softer than crickets” in the contentment found at the hearth. Over the years the sound of needles is witnessed by those telling the stories and those listening. Woven into each garment is the presence of the knitter and loved ones nearby. In the stitch-by-stitch spirit of knitting is an intimacy, a remembering and anticipating of stories “yet to come.” Thank you, sanjuktaa for sharing this beautiful tale of the hearth.



the brittle crust  
of day-old snow  
returning to work  
so soon  
after retirement

*Ben Oliver, England*

I love the humour wrought, yet disappointment, the companion. This change could be precarious. The shock waves, devastating. It appears the “brittle crust” is a perfect analogy. Retirement, that looked so final, has become for the time being, a passing dream. Anger and exhaustion could be possible repercussions, yet the poet is able to make light of it with humour. We are left to wonder . . . Thanks, Ben for sharing this “slice of life”.

**Jenny Fraser**

# Haiga — Part 3B

jenny m fraser — New Zealand



Julie Schwerin — USA





Katja Fox — USA



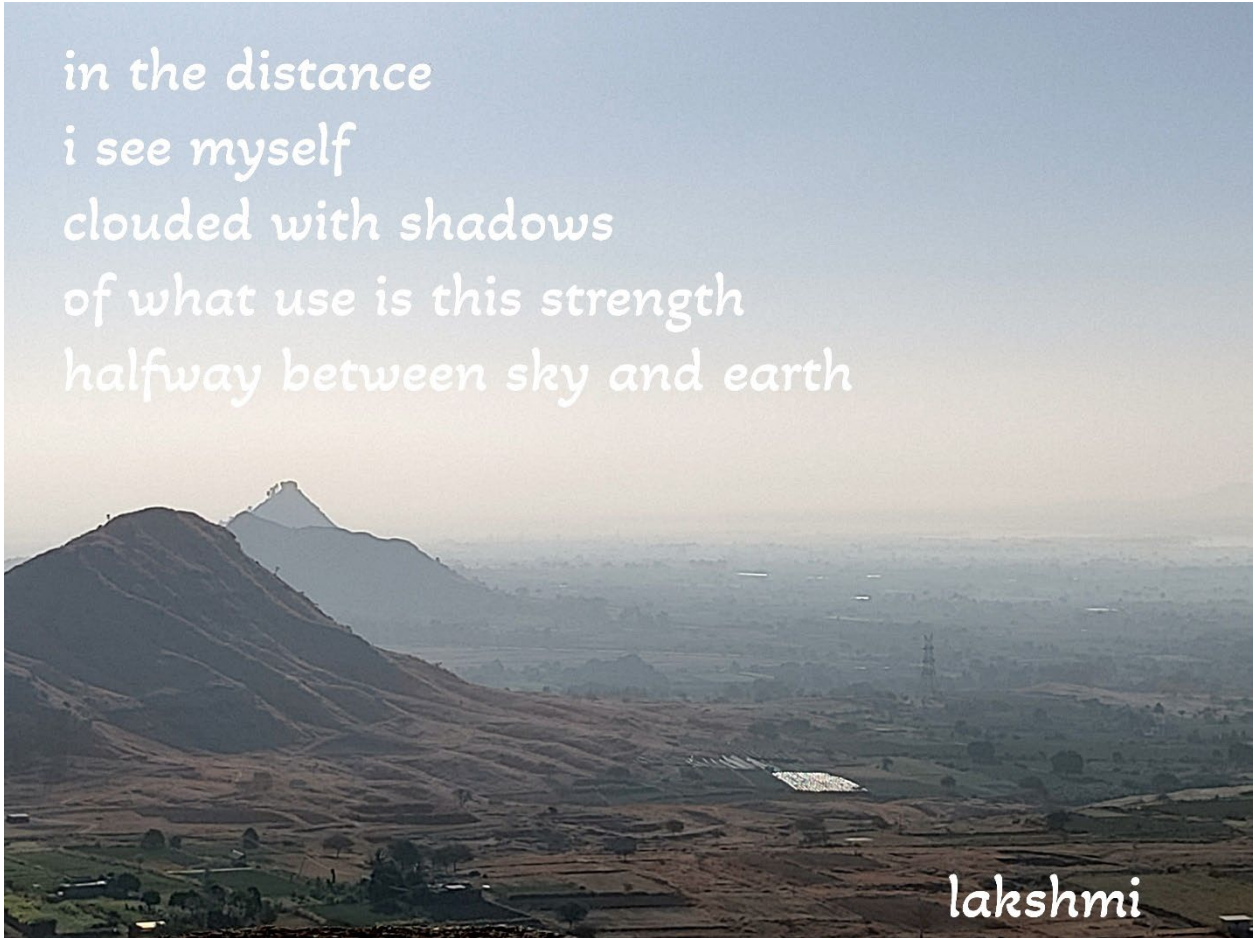
Krzysztof Mxchx (Macha) — Poland



cringed scroll  
another spring birdsong  
at dawn

Lakshmi Iyer — India

in the distance  
i see myself  
clouded with shadows  
of what use is this strength  
halfway between sky and earth





# Haibun



Drinking the Sun

## Vaguely searching for Lorca

Patrick Stephens, France

We walked along the dusty track, from shade to shade of the ancient olive trees that grew along the route. The summer's afternoon heat drapes the landscape in shimmering gauze; the buzz of the insects in the dry grass fields surrounding us punctuated by the sound of an old truck making its way up the other side of the valley.

Two old men, vaguely searching for an old stone cabin that the villagers had said once belonged to Lorca, his retreat for writing when he lived nearby. Two old men, not really caring whether we found it or not, stop to share a drink of water and a moment of easy intimacy under the Spanish sun.

Poets' dreams drift  
under the Spanish sun  
cicadas singing

## The Whisper of Souls

Ivan Gaćina, Croatia

A multitude of sparks in a V-formation leads me through the meandering labyrinth of ancient culture to recognize the deepest secrets of life.

Sumptuous corridors branch out like philosophical thoughts traveling on a giant bird's wings into infinity. Their structure is like a supernatural dream in which I have recently perfected the theory of relativity and chopped up my ego so that I can pass through the starry portal.

As the strange glow slowly turns to whisper, I wonder if these are the souls that tell the universe the transcendent stories on their way to eternity.

The soul of the cosmos is like a rose with an endless number of petals, scattered by a recursive algorithm into zillions of unknowns many of which will never be grasped.

I had no idea there were so many turning points and bends. A (living) being needs much more to solve a jigsaw puzzle of life.

Reflections of the inexplicable pass by the illusions of shadows, and the old times revive my memories, so that my suppressed emotions come flooding back.

I used to be an ordinary pedestrian, and now I explore my astral dreams from the perspective of the impossible.

As the distant echo returns to me like a boomerang, I cut the last connection with reality so that I can reach a higher meaning.

I may return when my unfulfilled desires suppress my dreams, and it's time now to cocoon myself in a myriad of entities so that I can illuminate the starry sky with my new cognitions.

starless night . . .  
climbing the pathway  
fireflies

## SUPERNOVA

Stuart Bartow, USA

To peer into its mirror,  
what brookies lurked  
in that brook, I lay on the grass  
where hundreds rose,  
ephemerals in a cloud vanishing  
as soon as they appeared.  
Mere specks, yet how clear  
it seemed, motion and spark  
through dew and grass disturbed,  
the most distant stars,  
the path a comet turns.

a busyness of midges  
a hundred years  
in a day

## Radura / Glade

Stefano d'Andrea, Italy

In the profound silence of a radiant glade—lying on the grass under a cobalt sky that looks like a porthole—I listen to the tenderness of the moss and the growth of mushrooms, the breath of the bark and the tricks of the spiders, the flutters of dragonflies and the shyness of salamanders . . .

while memories and regrets sink like blades.

still on the run . . .  
the sweet complicity  
of the raspberries

\*\*\*

Nel silenzio profondo di una radiosa radura—sdraiato sull'erba sotto un cielo cobalto, rotondo come un oblò—ascolto la tenerezza del muschio e il crescere dei funghi, il respiro delle cortecce e le acrobazie dei ragni, i frulli delle libellule e il pudore delle salamandre...

mentre i ricordi e i rimpianti affondano come lame.

ancora in fuga ...  
la dolce complicità  
di un lampone

## The river goes . . .

Tyler McIntosh, USA

bend by bend between the banks of our birth. Young and lost in love I come to its flow  
to ask questions about bare skin. As a warm spring rain falls, I slide my nakedness into  
snowmelt arms and the river tells me about the brotherhood of storm sweat soil sea  
softness

cough of an engine  
the lakebed  
full of stones

## Leafing Through

Andrew Taylor-Troutman, USA

A Brown female cardinal zips across the trail chased by two red males. Squirrels shimmy to their nests woven of sticks. White birches grow like complex sentences punctuated by pine tree exclamation marks. Rotting logs meld into the earth. Boulders return to dust. And a creek singing down the hillside as darkness, never hurrying, comes.

exploded stars  
the story of all  
that is

## Point of View

Tom Staudt, Australia

I silence the television. War. Earthquakes. Famine. Extinctions, all screaming at me.

The constant tragedies overwhelm me. Trying to adapt some donate, others volunteer, and I try breathing exercises.

When I look at the bigger picture something becomes abundantly clear.

We are all living on a tiny spinning rock, hurdling around a flaming ball of gas, and racing through space faster than we can imagine . . .

rolling thunder  
an orchid's petal  
clings to the stem



## Heavenly Body

Edward Cody Huddleston, USA

I'm a constellation in progress; waiting for my stars to align, for the dots to connect themselves, for the things to come to take shape.

true north  
the needle digs into  
the grooves

## Goblin City

Anna Cates, USA

Dark are the skies above the goblin city  
Dusky towers toll with doom  
Deep are the dungeons, thriving without pity  
Dark are the skies above the goblin city  
Grim are the gazes, forkfuls greasy and gritty  
Dim are the troll patrols – festering gloom  
Black thunder booms above the goblin city  
Towers tolling, doling out doom . . .

Dusk – a hunchback hobbles across the bridge

## Unravelling

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

Moonrise is early, night falls pitch-heavy flecked with startled stars. It's the time of shadows and premonition beneath a round silver eye. I hurry along the track between clutching branches, potholes like gaping black mouths and slip-slide over grimacing corrugations. Wings flap nearby, a cry . . . . a curlew, my feet tangle roots snaking across cracked earth . . .

shifting umbra  
teetering on the rim  
of the abyss

## What is worth more?

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

*Art or life?* Shouting with her fist raised in the air, the pink-haired climate activist turns around, throwing one can of tomato soup after another at Vincent van Gogh's Sunflowers. A pin-drop silence envelops the gallery.

She glances around the room for a moment or two, as though interested in these confused but curious people. Then with legs crossed, she sits silently on the floor and glues her hands to the wall. The clicking of cameras becomes loud . . . and louder.

beams of sunlight  
a polar bear and her cub  
drift on an ice-floe

## Message to the Artist

Hazel Hall, Australia

I pick up the tissue box. It's the supermarket's "home brand" series, but tastefully designed in muted waves of blue and white with a strip of washed-out yellow. I press the perforations on the "open" tab.

ribboned ocean  
the tickle of breakers  
around the toes

The tab removed an oval cavity breaks the flow of lines. I pluck out a tissue between two clear plastic sheets beneath, wondering why I always choose the same design for a tissue box that will finish its days in the recycling bin.

caught in the surf  
of snuffles and sniffs—  
another wave

Turning the box over I look more closely. See, for the first time, your artist's statement. How could I be so blind? A competition winner. Did others shoppers notice your lovely art? Or, did they grab the box like I did? Shove it in the trolley. Rip out tissues without one appreciative glance at the container? But surely you must have known that art belongs to the public after it leaves the studio?

dabbling in fame  
the fate of creation  
after sale

Respect. I hope they paid you well. When empty I will snip the top of this box, making four diagonal cuts. Pressing the four segments inside the box and with the aid of four staples, I will create an attractive tray for holding future masks.

## Icon

Tim Gardiner, United Kingdom

I always knew your cold prose would land in my inbox, profile pic unchanged with its feral smile and wild eyes, the promise drowned in the reality of you . . . and me.

slow click

I cannot cheat

the mouse

No words left . . .

Mike Montreuil, Canada

Sandra is anxious. How do I know? I just know, as she is my first true love in a once upon a time fairy tale.

no anger, no tears

She called me twice today. In both cases, her anger was sent to voicemail while I endured an unplanned and endless meeting with an upset client. You could be one also, since you are reading this nonsense.

never a goodbye

Sandra must be climbing the walls. How do I know? I just know. It's Saturday night, and the boys are here for Hockey Night in Canada.

the door forever closed

A & O

Beate Conrad, Germany

locked in the room of the world  
leaving you all alone to seek  
out the promised land sometimes  
I myself will return to my room some-  
time I'll pass the bouncer on  
Jacob's ladder a petrified tree

spring wind the memory deeper than goodbyes



## Bedside Manner

Richard Grahn, USA

frosty hospital window —  
from this bed  
my reflection for a view

After spending a sleepless night listening to my ticker for the slightest irregularity — even the ones in my imagination — I finally doze off just before dawn. The cardiologist wakes me an hour later, accompanied by my favorite nurse, Carol, and tells me my heart is in good shape. It just pops out of me like air out of a balloon: "That must mean I have a good heart."

His glare could freeze anti-freeze. "Carol has your discharge papers," he grunts before swaggering out of the room.

code blue —  
"x-ray his funny bone  
for signs of life — stat"

## Penance (EC)

Iliyana Stoyanova, UK

It's not even 10 am but he downs a double whiskey. The shadow of a man he has become. I keep on stirring my coffee unable to even take a sip, unable to hold my tears, unable to accept and forgive.

Two hours turn into two days or two eons . . . time is indeed relative. At the doctor's appointment he starts telling stories about me as if I'm not present, as if that's not my name. I feel the weight of the doctor's gaze on me and dare not meet his eyes.

pigment  
on wet paper  
a grey heron in mist

## Then & Now

Robert Erlandson, USA

Laid off, depressed, and cleaning my office. I drop a ceramic bowl, 200 years old, given to me by my grandfather. Looking at it on the floor I identify with the shards.

all the broken pieces kintsugi

*Author's note: - Kintsugi is the Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold.*

## MEN IN DOORWAYS (EC)

Gerry Mc Donnell, Ireland

I used to walk home at night, past derelict tenements, to my home in the inner city. I would sometimes be coming from a drinking session in town. It was safe to walk home at night in the '70's. There was a man standing in the doorway of one of the tenements. He was always there, alone and silent. I never felt threatened by him. He had jet black hair which was butter pasted.

My father stood in our doorway in his shirt sleeves, smoking a cigarette. He was overseeing me cutting the grass in our front garden. We lived on a main road near a junction. Traffic would slow to a stop at our house. Drivers and passengers glanced our way. I felt self-conscious, like I was on show. It didn't bother my father. Maybe he was proud of his son, doing a good job, cutting the grass.

There was a man who was very aware of his physique. We were in the same weight-training, basement club. However, I was not in his league. He was muscle bound. He used to stand at his hall door, stripped to the waist. He took up a pose which would best show off his torso. He stood there at traffic peak times, craving the attention of the public.

Another man stood in the doorway of a pub. His hands were covered in faded tattoos. He was waiting for someone to come along and give him the 'entrance fee'. He was tall and stood straight, legs apart, as if waiting for a fight to break out. He appeared to me to be trembling, perhaps suffering withdrawal symptoms from alcohol, in full view of the bus passengers. He was glued to that spot. He had nowhere else to go.

around the feet  
of those on thresholds  
the rustle of dead leaves

## Depth

Subir Ningthouja, India

Grandfather had a habit, strange to a child. When he met friends on the way, they paid obeisance to each other saying, "Radhe Krishna." Then they cried, tears streaming down their faces.

When I looked at their faces, I felt the tears were not of joy or sorrow. What was it that made them cry? I still don't know.

village pond  
a folded lotus  
in the mist

## A Worn Eraser

Glenn G. Coats. USA

1972. My father's first classroom is down the farthest corridor — last room on the right — far from the main office. He has twenty-four students. His children do not walk in straight lines; talk too loud during lunch. They are not ready when buses are called for dismissal.

On sunny afternoons, after a spelling or science lesson, my father looks at their pale faces and says, "You all need some fresh air." The students follow him out the back exit where the forest borders school property. Sometimes the kids sit around as my father reads or tells a story. He teaches them how to play baseball and soon they are running from one cardboard base to another. At times, a borzoi will step from the woods and almost tiptoe up to the children. They stroke the dog's head as if he were a pony. No one ever tells my father that he can't bring his class outside, that he shouldn't skip a social studies lesson, or that a strange animal can be dangerous. The students and my father find their own way through that first year.

early autumn  
the hummingbird tries them all  
Mexican petunias

Time passes. There are behavioral objectives, skills arrays, after school meetings, administrators who come and go, years with Christmas plays, years without, retirements and transfers, years with contracts, years without, reciprocal teaching, feedback and mini-lessons, parent conferences and back-to-school nights, observations, evaluations, nights with sleep, and nights without.

Near the end, my father attends mandatory classes on the new Language Arts Curriculum. Learns about writing workshops and Venn diagrams; how to respond to paragraphs and poems. The coordinator describes all she has garnered from research.

“Some of you will still want to close your doors and continue to do what you think is best for the child.” The coordinator is looking straight at my father when she says that.

early dark  
a piece of yellow chalk  
on the sidewalk

## Déjà vu

Dan Hardison, USA

The old postcard is postmarked September 22, 1913. On the front is a picture of a boarding school for girls. The message reads: “Dearest, I got your letter this morning and sure did enjoy it. Will answer it real soon. Please be good and next Wednesday send me a package of chocolate cakes. If you send it then, I will get them by Friday. Am very happy up here. Love to all from the ‘noise of the family’.”

No matter the amount of planning and preparations we make for children, the child will ad lib all the way. It is always interesting how much children of yesterday and today are alike.

a new day  
the mockingbird’s  
old song



## What's Your Fancy?

Cyndi Lloyd, USA

The sounds of spring float through my desk window. Two girls walk on the sidewalk in front of my house. They giggle at something I can't hear. The younger one, maybe a first-grader, steps on top of the decorative rocks in the parking strip. She picks up an orange or purple rock. At first, I want to call out not to take it. Instead, I recognize myself in that little girl and wonder: *Which rock did she pick? Why did she choose that one?* They continue on their way. I whisper: *Always notice what your heart loves, what calls to it.* As she walks home, hopefully she won't toss the rock somewhere, but will keep it as a reminder to be curious.

gold flecks  
in her rock collection . . .  
childhood dreams

## Lullaby

Alice Wanderer, Australia

As I close my eyes, paperbarks. Dark domes covered in carrot cake frosting. Each twig tipped with flowers. Each floret tasselled. Each tassel feathered. A perfumed soufflé whorl.

As I close my eyes, paperbarks. From one bulked-up trunk, a strip of strudel-layered bark. It's cream with suede-like, pinkish under-skins. A pillow beneath my almost sleeping cheek.

How to make sense of it? Paperbarks are street trees here. I know them well. But not the one that haunts this waking dream.

It's massive. A trunk to fill a room. It grows out of the mirrored moonlit swamp they drained to build this town.

For weeks, it lifts me in its arms. It lifts those arms right through the roof which falls away, as fall away it must.

cheek on her knees

*The Faraway Tree*

on the radio

## Aftermath

Reid Hepworth, Canada

Today during math class, I watch Ralph, the kid in front of me, fidgeting with something inside his desk. He seems pretty preoccupied, which piques my interest and since I hate math, I just watch him instead.

Then I see smoke seeping out of his desk. It doesn't take long for the other kids to notice and then all heck breaks loose. The teacher yells "FIRE" and runs out to the hall to pull the fire alarm and we all line up like little robots, the way we were taught during fire drill practice.

After the entire school is evacuated and Ralph's desk is hosed down by the firefighters, we are given the "all clear" to head back inside. This is when my teacher pulls me aside and asks me to take Ralph to the office.

briar patch  
learning to tread  
lightly

## Not in the Cards

Bryan Rickert, USA

Dear Shayla,

Mom took away all my pokemon cards after I flunked the math test on tuesday so my friday night plans are ruined. I was wanting to give you the pikachu card when we played friday and was hoping to kiss you after that. Maybe I can still kiss you friday and give you the card later.

From,  
Kyle

young love  
not hating the player  
but the game

## Practical Solutions

Pitt Buerken, Germany

My grandmother has a mind of her own, which she is always able to assert vigorously. When, in her opinion the new dining table is too high, grandpa has to saw off a piece of the legs.

At the time when the apple tree grows too big for her, and she can no longer pick the fruits at ground level, grandpa has to shorten the trunk at the bottom and cut out a piece, which almost goes flooey.

summer delights  
enjoying the self-picked fruits  
in the tree's shadow

# Haiga — Part 4A

Linda Papanicolaou — USA



Luminita Suse — Canada



*dark spots  
on autumn leaves  
mammogram*

*Artwork and haiku by Luminita Suse*

## Some time ago . . .

Wiesław Karliński, Poland

As he entered the room, he sighed deeply and rubbed his hand over his unshaven face. The next day a nurse complained about him. He tricked her by recommending aging pork jelly to be breaded and fried. The neighbor on the left remembered him as an incomparable storyteller. I know his stories too. I know that at the end of the war, with an Italian Tyrolean named I, they were picking young crows from the nests. Soon after, I was very careful not to cut him while shaving . . .

rainy morning  
the scent of home  
in the hospital

\*\*\*\*\*

## Jakiś czas temu ...

Wchodząc do pokoju westchnął głęboko i przetrął dłonią nieogoloną twarz. Następnego dnia poskarżyła się na niego pielęgniarka. Oszukał ją, zalecając starzejącą się wieprzową galaretę panierować i obsmażać. Sąsiad po lewej zapamiętał go jako niezrównanego gawędziarza. Znam też jego historie. Wiem, że pod koniec wojny z włoskim Tyrolczykiem o imieniu I wyciągali z gniazd młode wrony. Wkrótce potem bardzo uważałem, żeby go nie skaleczyć podczas golenia...

dżdżysty ranek  
zapach domu  
w szpitalu



## The Garden

Gavin Austin, Australia

Christmas, and the city is ringed with flames. Glowing apocalyptic orange, the sky begins to rain ash.

In the garden of *The Sacred Heart*, beneath your window, I sit on the seat where we sat on your good days: your bony hand weightless on my thigh. Looking off into middle-distance, through birdsong and the hum of traffic, I gaze at the bougainvillea vine bleeding over the pathway.

Above me death stalks the corridors, waits silently in dimly lit rooms, or rattles at the back of pallid throats.

wooden bench  
the feather  
left behind

## Last Breath

Florence Heyhoe, Northern Ireland

rain on the pane  
the cat on my lap  
still warm

I promise to ring you back, I need a moment. The care staff place your cake on the table by your chair. I see you blow out the candles with one breath. I didn't think you'd have the puff. Ninety-eight years old today, becoming less and less.

withered leaves falling  
the darkness deepens  
I murmur a prayer

## Cogito, Ergo Sum

Dian Duchin Reed, USA

She picks out the perfect dress, puts on new stockings, slips her feet into her highest, shiniest heels. (She's always been a sharp dresser.) Sets out down the road. Walks and walks. (She's always been a walker.) Does she doubt for a moment? Decides to carry on anyway. Walks for miles, until her feet are blistered and bleeding. A kind fellow notices her distress, notices the address on her bracelet, escorts her to the senior community on the bus.

After the call informing me that she needs a different kind of care, I set out. (I've always been a calm person.) I sob the whole way there.

the *who's*  
of a great horned owl  
full of darkness

## The frog of Bashō

Carmela Marino, Italy

red sky  
walking for a bit longer  
with the sunset

I turn on the lights, the sound of the keys on the table, the children's laughter, the teapot whistles: it's the scent of home. I move the tent as the first raindrops fall and the bare garden announces autumn; tears fall into the tea and a small circle widens. The weight of pain holds me on the first step as the sky keeps changing.

autumn light  
sipping from the cup  
my reflection

Sucked by the whirlpool I dive into the past gathering the thought of faded scents and return to my Ithaca: The goat milk on the fire boils and Mom has just returned from the countryside and among the noises of the house I meet a little girl.

muscle pains  
a coin rolls  
on the floor

I can't remember what day it is, breathing deeply I open my eyes in front of the mirror. Again, the hair around the face, the tired look, the lost weight, how the disease has changed me inside, out. On the fogged glass I erase memories, the tap water continues to flow between my fingers

from star to star  
my soul belongs  
to no place

After having reached the bottom, I hear you saying my name over and over, which brings me to the surface in a great leap. I can't change my destiny but I can choose it in this infinite space of variations. My fingers glide gently along the scar, suddenly a ray of moonlight begins to project the film of my life: who I have been and who I am and that I will be stronger than the disease.

parallel worlds  
from one branch to another  
birds chirping

Lights out but I can't sleep, I look out of my fears, at the window of the tenth floor, I feel closer to my God. The night swallows everything even my thoughts, only a soft memory keeps me company

lunar orbit  
turning and turning  
my wedding ring

The rain has stopped. I stir the sky with my finger, who knows what my star is. A green color takes the night out of my eyes. It is a tiny toy frog that without croaking reminds me that I'm alive

fog in the morning  
paradise can wait  
a bit longer

## Aftermath

Lynn Edge, USA

The florist hands my daughter and me a loose-leaf binder filled with photos of funeral sprays. Turning a page, we know sunflowers are what my husband would want draped over his pine casket.

After his burial, I develop an aversion to anything decorated with sunflowers. Handbags, fanny packs, leggings — it is surprising where these golden designs appear.

what remains  
of the sycamore's shade  
a mound of sawdust

## In Memoriam: Fire flies on stage

Dr Brijesh Raj, India

The auditorium thrums with excitement. Before them, eyes closed, body rapt with the tension of her sitar strings, the artist waits with almost theatrical poise. The drummer and the others share the unbearable stillness.

Without warning, she bursts forth, fingers flying. She commandeers sun beams and dancing dust motes onto the night stage. The *morchang* lilts sharply, squeezed between the clarinet and sitar.

A crash of wild waves, the searing torment of callused hands, the plaintive cries of a young girl. One hears it, sees it all, breathless. Until hope seeps through. And a dream for a different tomorrow. A reunion of silver rain and sparkling waters, shimmering and dancing. In relief. Until the next time.

crescendo  
a caterpillar in the arms  
of the red ants

## Drifting Away

Richard Kakol, Australia

When you burn a piece of wood, what remains behind — the ashes, the wind-blown smoke — has the same mass as the original object.

Today I visit your grave again, with blue and white flowers . . . Twenty Christmases after that first season without you, the loss still weighs me down.

Moving closer to the headstone, I inadvertently step on a snail, its fragile shell crunching underfoot.

That would have upset you, believing in the principle of Ahimsa — doing no harm. All living things have the right to exist.

Life goes on . . . but I feel your absence. I talk to you still, but I can no longer hear the sound of your voice.

firecrackers  
on the summer solstice  
— smoke drifts away



## Close

Sean O'Connor, Ireland

There was always one on the window sill above the sink in our little bathroom, to the left, a bottle of sorts, not glass but a light metal, smooth, off-white, with a discreet logo in a light bluey – grey. Elegant and simple. Beside it, always, his metal razor. It looked complicated, the razor, hefty, mechanical, opened by turning a knurled part at the base of its handle.

new-mown grass –  
how I long to smell it  
my dad's aftershave

## Back to square one

Mircea Moldovan, Romania

I got home from the funeral more tired than ever. I'm glad I'm alone and nobody is around to bother me with meaningless words. A few days ago, I removed all the mirrors in the house, so that I do not even have to look at myself. I put on an old vinyl of Leonard Cohen, pour two measures of vodka and take my dad's old rifle down from the wall.

always  
the owl's voice  
crystal moon

## For My Cookie Lady

Francis W. Alexander, USA

I remember first seeing her on the city bus. Spunky and friendly, she'd include me in the conversations between her and the bus driver.

My friend driving me to the store is the reason I stopped riding the bus. One December I got a note of eviction from my apartment. The Covid epidemic stopped me from being thrown out on the streets. In June, I became a tenant in a high-rise building. The first day I moved in, I saw the woman but couldn't figure out where I knew her from. The next day, she helped me take parts of a bed to my apartment. That's when I realized that she was the "bus lady."

Weeks later, I started seeing cookies on my door. One day, she came and gave me some self-baked blueberry muffins. As the pandemic continued, I saw less of her. Recently, I inquired about her and was told that she had died two years ago during the isolation.

wisps of cloud:  
the cat's graceful leap  
from my seat

## Fully-fledged

Rupa Anand, India

I don't remember where or when I bought it. But the black printed sari with fronds of delicate red flowers was worn on many evening soirées both on board the ship and off it. I was young and slender back then and it draped so well. Wearing black was fashionable and chic, teamed with a string of grey pearls.

It languished in my cupboard for thirty-five years until the day I decided to bring it out. Giving it to my daughter, now in her early forties, I ask her to use it in her furniture studio. Later, seeing it fitted so well on the arms of a chair, I smile with nostalgia.

summer walk  
up the gravel road  
— mama's antique wrap

## Acoustic Night

Bryan D. Cook, Canada

Barren parking lot, snow sifting through pallid lamplight, a local bar with a few hardcore and reruns of the game on flat-screen.

Scheduled here for a gig, we haul gear and chill over a pitcher of Molson. Then one-by-one they straggle in. Paunchy old “hippies” and care-creased “Woodstock” gals. Hugs and fist bumping. Wings and nacho platters arrive. More beer and a growing buzz of expectancy. House muzak replaced by amplifier hum. Instruments drawn lovingly from oddly-shaped black cases. The Mike is Open.

A petite lady with the lungs of Janice, the Crosby double rocking his bass, Tiny Tim with ukulele ditties, spacy Brushman Steve swishing time. Decades of practice, picking Taylor acoustics and banjo riffs. Our Calumet River Band being Trampled by Turtles. A psychedelic bass in jazz harmony with dueling alto and tenor saxophones. Mouth harps wailing the blues.

Four hours of nostalgic talent, then they Drift Away, just like the song.

telephone pole  
tattooed with staples  
of forgotten gigs

Molson: Canadian beer

Janice Joplin: (1943–1970) American rock-blues singer

David Crosby: (1941–2023) American folk-rock singer

Tiny Tim (Herbert Khaury) (1932-1996): American singer/ukulele player

Brushman... Stephen Szawlowksi of Musicians Without Borders playing a lap held drumskin and an electric bass

Taylor: world famous acoustic guitars

Calumet River Band: garage acoustic trio in Orleans, Ontario, Canada

Trampled by Turtles: American bluegrass-folk band

Drift Away: song by Matthew Shafer (aka Uncle Kracker) (1974-present), American singer and musician.

## In the Drunk's Eye

John Zheng, USA

A beer can rolls in the middle of the blacktop and leaps up to tap-dance like Fred Astaire. It slips, loses balance, tumbles to the curb, and lies there like a drunk. Soon it climbs up, staggers back to the road, and raps with backward rolls, pitch-tucks, and front somersaults. After bowing, it wobbles away, eyes bulging like Homer Simpson's. Then it returns to perform drunken boxing: swaying, hitting, dodging, grappling, fainting. Before it bounces away like a dancing piggy, an ambulance, sirens blaring, crushes it flat.

midnight juke  
the saxophone wails  
a rueful tune

## Music Critics

Gail Oare, USA

It's one of those spring evenings when we open the kitchen window and turn up the volume of the music mix. Several turkeys are weaving through the trees at the edge of the woods on their way to check the dregs of the bird feeder. They hesitate briefly when they hear a violin, but then continue toward the house cautiously. The subsequent Sousa march with trombone, drum and trumpet seems to embolden them. The flock steps further forward. Some light rock, a short folk ballad. Then as they reach the middle of the yard, Willie Nelson's voice abruptly slices the air. *In the twilight glow I see them, Blue eyes cryin' in the rain...* With one swift pivot, the birds turn and run as fast as they can into the underbrush and out of sight.

rose bush  
a lingering thorn  
beneath the blossom

## First Chilly Day

Elizabeth Shack, USA

Beauty in the goldfinch that flutters to walnut perches under a flat sky. Beauty in the yellow leaves that cascade in a memory of butterflies. Beauty in bright goldenrod dancing to the drone of a cricket. Beauty in the rabbit that flashes across the path to become a trail of waving grasses.

fat bee  
on a thistle head  
for how long



## Storm Update

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

the sky a heavy gray dark covering that dulls the morning light becomes gloomier as the day moves into dusk the lamps I turn on walking the rooms intensify the contrast of a night-filled day of quiet with snow coming down in soft and delicate flakes falling in profusion accumulates in mounds and stacks building as the hours pass into dawn of the next day with an expanse of whiteness and a silence broken by the exuberant voices of crows exhorting me to move my stiff arthritic bones to window after window to look and believe again in magic

giving in  
the permission of snow  
to be lazy

## Harvest Dreams

Farah Ali, UK

I wrap fleece around the tree to protect it from frost. During the long winter I imagine that first succulent bite and make plans for the windfall. Months pass, delicate white flowers appear and slowly, ever so slowly, the fruit grows.

a single tree  
who needs  
an orchard?

Almost every day I prod and squeeze, but not yet, not yet. And then it happens: the heavily perfumed, sun-engorged plums yield to my touch. A few have already fallen onto the grass, but no matter. I return to the kitchen, sweat prickling my neck, a full basket in my arms.

half-eaten plum  
in its core  
a moth caterpillar

## Nocturnal Hunt (EC)

Emma Alexander Arthur, Norway

As the sun dips below the horizon, a feeling of serenity falls across the fjord. The vibrant colours of pinks and blues diffuse into a deep indigo as the moon rises, bringing a mystical and ethereal energy to the night. I sit peacefully atop a mossy rock, feeling the chill of the evening air and gaze at a heron's graceful flight. It glides silently over the still waters, its wings outstretched in search of prey. Diving suddenly beneath the surface, it re-emerges with a fish wriggling in its beak. Its graceful silhouette then slowly disappears into the fading light of the dusk sky.

rising moon  
gentle ripples lap  
against the shore

## A Ride in the Desert

Padmini Krishnan, United Arab Emirates

Camels nibble on the sparse grass covering both sides of Dubai's hot streets. They stare curiously at the giant cars that roll through the roads. We dust the wind-blown sand on our clothes and wonder about the humidity. "This is nothing," laughs our cabbie. "Wait until July comes!" We shudder at what July and August hold for us, but the other family accompanying us to the desert safari seem carefree.

The Toyota Land Cruiser, while sailing through the sand, jumps unexpectedly. The women and children cry out, but the men remain silent, seemingly unexcited, or perhaps pretending to be brave. After a lot of dune-bashing, we reach our banquet hall to taste some Arabian coffee. A couple of camels stroll outside the hall. I ask the trainer, "Can my daughter have a ride?" He nods and the camel sits obediently in front of him. The trainer looks as dry as his animal. If only camels could eat sand and drink wind.

salinized water  
a hint of madness  
in each step

## Magic

Carol Raisfeld, USA

We hear cicadas in the trees of Provence as wavy lines of lavender stretch to the horizon. A tandem bike ride takes us off the beaten path to brilliant sunflower fields as wide as the sky. Resting in the shade near a flowing stream, with birds singing overhead.

And then . . . the gift of walking through Monet's Garden of flowers knowing its sweetness will wrap me in comfort for many nights to come.

On the Sorgue River, beneath a canopy of majestic thousand-year-old oaks, we float by village walls as church bells toll.

in and out  
of dreams  
Monet's water lilies

## Reverence

Ryland Shengzhi Li, USA

*(Written at Hueco Tanks, West Texas)*

After you hike onto the rock, stay on the rock. Don't touch the rock art. Don't step on the soil. Definitely don't step on the huecos. There lie the eggs of brine shrimp just waiting for the next rainfall to resurrect for the billionth generation.

another aoudad

shits on the ground . . .

shining wind

## Tagaloa's Hook

*On Occasion of the Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai Eruption, January 2022*

Matthew Caretti, Pago Pago, American Samoa

The old myth says it was so. Is so. How these islands have been created. Continue to be created. But no talking chief to tell the tale now. The doves have gone silent. The cocks, too. Only the occasional bay of a stray imitates the sirens. The sirens. Near and far. The cars stream at their insistence away from the coast. The drivers remember the last. Its coming. The wave. The waves.

death poems  
learning from the sea  
how to mourn

Something more mistaken for a thunderclap. My own insulation of not understanding. Of distance. Of hope. A healing in time lost somewhere out at sea. The deeps and shallows. Shallows and deeps. The Bikini Atoll mushroom clouds have become those of the Tongan Trench. The sea floor bending at the insistence of His hook. Then the plume. The lightning strikes. The wave. The waves.

sonic boom  
when old gods  
roar again

The new year's babies quake in their cribs. Quake beside mothers and fathers and grandparents. Are later lulled by a gentle rocking. Then a tangerine sunrise after a long night. The ships here return safely to port. The port once more sets the stevedores to their work. Yet harbors more distant remain closed. Awaiting still the wave. The waves.

tsunami warning  
fruit bats circling  
back circling

## Ground Zero

Caroline Giles Banks, USA

As a child in Japan Arata Isozaki (1931-2022) saw the utter destruction of Hiroshima. In a flash the city, devoid of buildings, became an emptiness asking for possibilities. How does an architect who knows the transience of cities and the eventuality of their decay design for the future? I consider Isozaki's sublime Art Tower Mito, completed in 1990. This iconic 100-meter-tall structure is comprised of many triangular pyramids stacked in varying orientations. Like a jazz riff of seeming contradictions the titanium tower appears to twist and turn, a shiny silver megalith reflecting that and this, after and before.

dreams

sift

fissures

between

memories



## Blue

Joanna Ashwell, United Kingdom

The blue sky, the blue sea, the bluebells, the blue crystal, the blue pen, the blue notebook, the blue jumper, the blue ribbon, the blue scarf, the blue balloon, the blue carpet, the blue rose. Obsessed you say . . .

blue jay  
a bell jar of song  
in forest light

## Editor's Choices (EC) – Haibun

*A big thank-you to both the first-time haibun-poets and the stalwarts who have chosen to entrust cattails with your work. It is your passion and inspiration that will keep this form alive. Here are three poems which I hope will touch you the way I have been moved.*

### Penance

Iliyana Stoyanova, UK

It's not even 10 am but he downs a double whiskey. The shadow of a man he has become. I keep on stirring my coffee unable to even take a sip, unable to hold my tears, unable to accept and forgive.

Two hours turn into two days or two eons . . . time is indeed relative. At the doctor's appointment he starts telling stories about me as if I'm not present, as if that's not my name. I feel the weight of the doctor's gaze on me and dare not meet his eyes.

pigment  
on wet paper  
a grey heron in mist

*It is the haiku that drew me to **Penance** by Iliyana Stoyanova. It leads the reader into the narrative. The ephemeral quality of the "grey heron in mist" is mirrored by the "pigment on wet paper." Both conjure up fleetingness or "impermanence" a basic tenet of Buddhism. It reminded me of the waka-verses that the protagonists in *The Tale of Genji* pen to their loved ones as the morning dew, the blossoms or the dawn moon fade. A profound sense of longing and loss pervades in the haibun. "The shadow of a man he has become" parallels the evanescence of the "heron in mist" and the "pigment on wet paper." The "whiskey" adds another layer of haze. Furthermore, the narrator is reduced to a "shadow" in the way the "man" tells "stories about me as if I'm not present." The miasma also encompasses time: "Two hours turn into two days or two eons . . . time is indeed relative."*

*It is as if the veil of illusion (maya) lifts and the poet/narrator sees the stark reality of the person, who the man is. The loss of what the narrator and the man once shared: love, mutual admiration,*

*respect, friendship: makes the haiku all the more poignant. Has it all been so momentary? Is the "grey heron in mist" a symbol of this? Or is it a representation of the narrator's longing of transcending the mire of reality?*



## Nocturnal Hunt

Emma Alexander Arthur, Norway

As the sun dips below the horizon, a feeling of serenity falls across the fjord. The vibrant colours of pinks and blues diffuse into a deep indigo as the moon rises, bringing a mystical and ethereal energy to the night. I sit peacefully atop a mossy rock, feeling the chill of the evening air and gaze at a heron's graceful flight. It glides silently over the still waters, its wings outstretched in search of prey. Diving suddenly beneath the surface, it re-emerges with a fish wriggling in its beak. Its graceful silhouette then slowly disappears into the fading light of the dusk sky.

rising moon  
gentle ripples lap  
against the shore

***Nocturnal Hunt** by Emma Alexander Arthur is a delightful example of classic nature writing. Like the previous haibun, this poem too features a heron, albeit in a more precise and palpable way. Yet it still encapsulates a mystical mood of the poet's immersion in nature. The aggression of the heron's search of prey is swallowed up in the peaceful womb of nature. Light fades, the heron vanishes but the colours are still vibrant in this gem of a poem. The poet uses a rich and varied range of sensory descriptions: the pink, blue and indigo hues contrasting with the glow of the rising moon, the mossy rock, the growing chill in the air and the heron's noiseless skimming of the fjord. It makes for an enchanting and immersive read.*



## MEN IN DOORWAYS

Gerry Mc Donnell, Ireland

I used to walk home at night, past derelict tenements, to my home in the inner city. I would sometimes be coming from a drinking session in town. It was safe to walk home at night in the '70's. There was a man standing in the doorway of one of the tenements. He was always there, alone and silent. I never felt threatened by him. He had jet black hair which was butter pasted.

My father stood in our doorway in his shirt sleeves, smoking a cigarette. He was overseeing me cutting the grass in our front garden. We lived on a main road near a junction. Traffic would slow to a stop at our house. Drivers and passengers glanced our way. I felt self-conscious, like I was on show. It didn't bother my father. Maybe he proud of his son, doing a good job, cutting the grass.

There was a man who was very aware of his physique. We were in the same weight-training, basement club. However, I was not in his league. He was muscle bound. He used to stand at his hall door, stripped to the waist. He took up a pose which would best show off his torso. He stood there at traffic peak times, craving the attention of the public.

Another man stood in the doorway of a pub. His hands were covered in faded tattoos. He was waiting for someone to come along and give him the 'entrance fee'. He was tall and stood straight, legs apart, as if waiting for a fight to break out. He appeared to me to be trembling, perhaps suffering withdrawal symptoms from alcohol, in full view of the bus passengers. He was glued to that spot. He had nowhere else to go.

around the feet  
of those on thresholds  
the rustle of dead leaves

*There's something arresting and disquieting in Gerry McDonnell's **MEN IN DOORWAYS**. The image of a doorway is of the threshold between interior and exterior space, like those exquisite courtyards in Dutch paintings opening to the street and to domestic intimacy and*

*privacy. Dutch Master Pieter de Hooch is noted for his portrayals of interiors with open doorways, leading from a scene of an intimate dark enclosing interior with a female figure to an open space, garden or street, frequently with a male stroller. The men in doorways in McDonnell's haibun both reiterate and invert the tradition, beginning with the male who is blocking rather than opening the interior, making a frisson of the interior and external transition. Here the thresholds are the abode of haunted, abandoned figures as the haiku's image of dead leaves seems to suggest. The atmosphere created is one of loss and estrangement. The male keepers of doorways both protect and violate a space of safety allowing the unease of the streets to pervade the idea of home. Are these custodians of the doorways in a state of liminality themselves, betwixt a kind of lost equivalent to St Peter and the gates of heaven?*

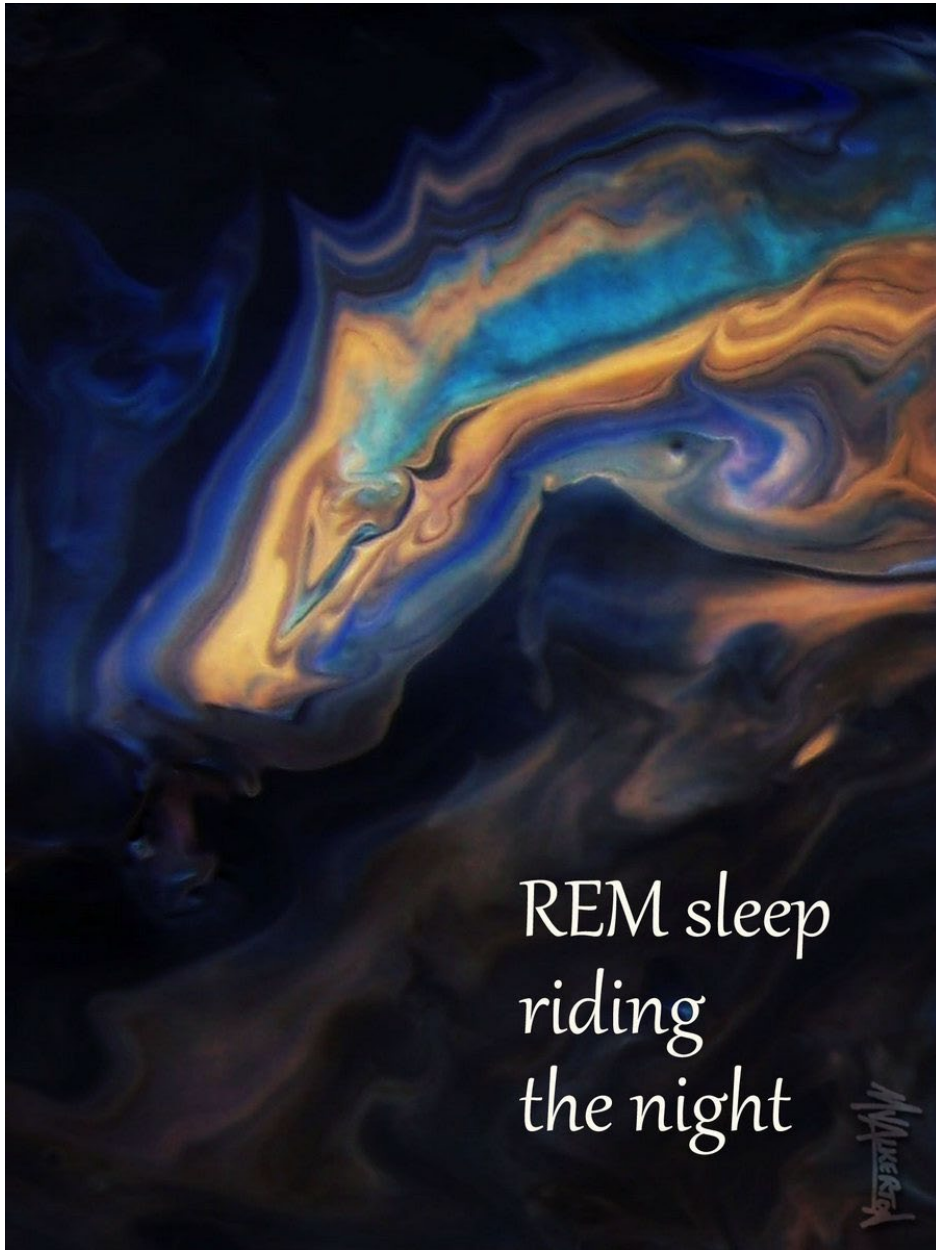
*In addition to these three poems, I would also like to mention a few others. Matthew Caretti's **Tagaloa's Hook** is a powerful description of the Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai eruption in January 2022. The tone in Joanna Ashwell's poem, **Blue** is playful and engaging and works well with the theme of her haibun. Another noteworthy haibun is **Acoustic Night** by Bryan D. Cook. I must confess that I am ignorant of the kind of music scene Bryan writes about. Yet I was taken by how vividly he describes the event with memorable sketches of people. His footnotes are wonderfully informative and the image of the "telephone pole tattooed with staples" in his closing haiku is one I will not forget.*

**Sonam Chhoki**

cattails — April 2023

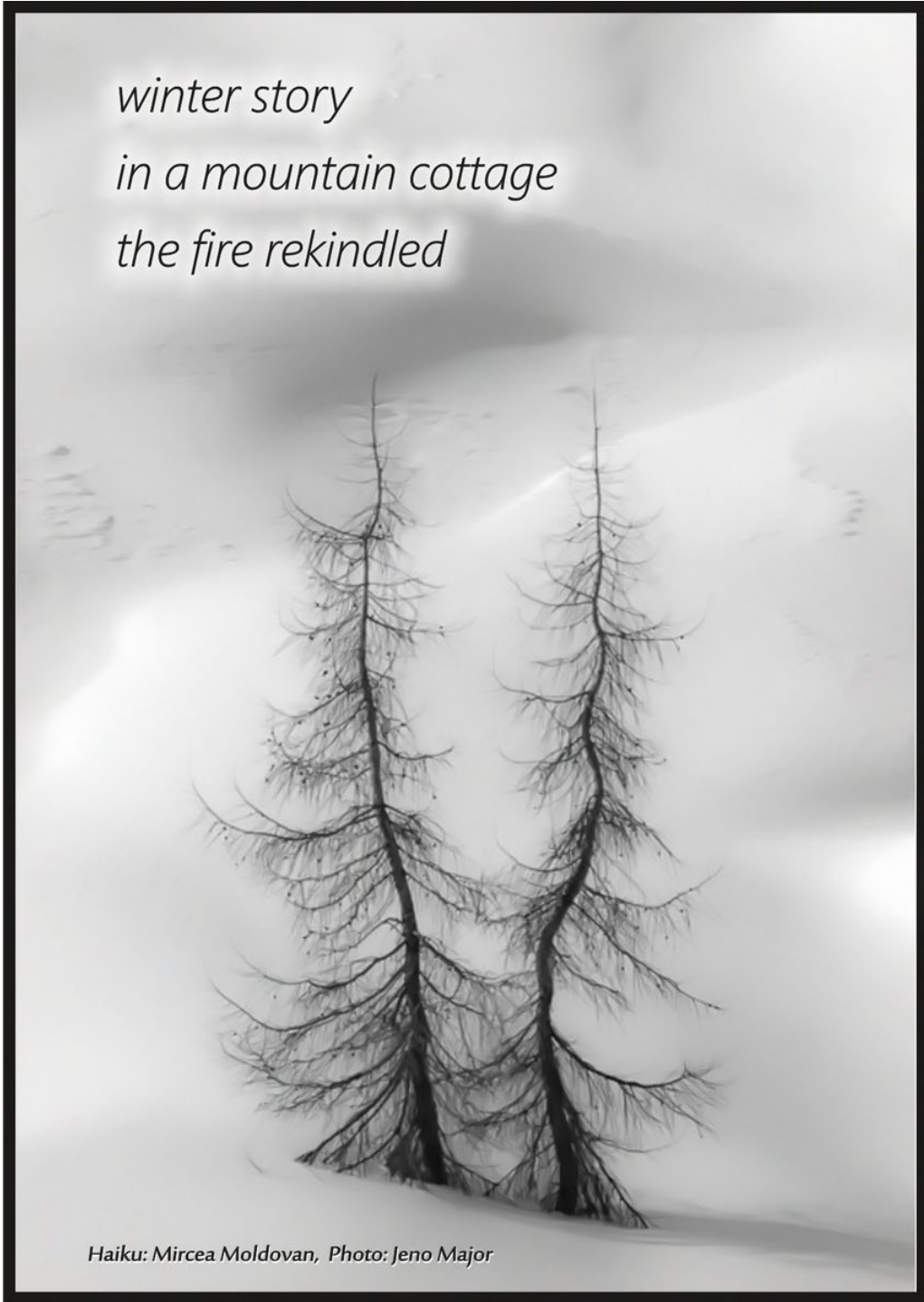
# Haiga — Part 4B

Michelle V. Alkerton — Canada



Mircea Moldovan & Jeno Major — Romania

*winter story  
in a mountain cottage  
the fire rekindled*



*Haiku: Mircea Moldovan, Photo: Jeno Major*

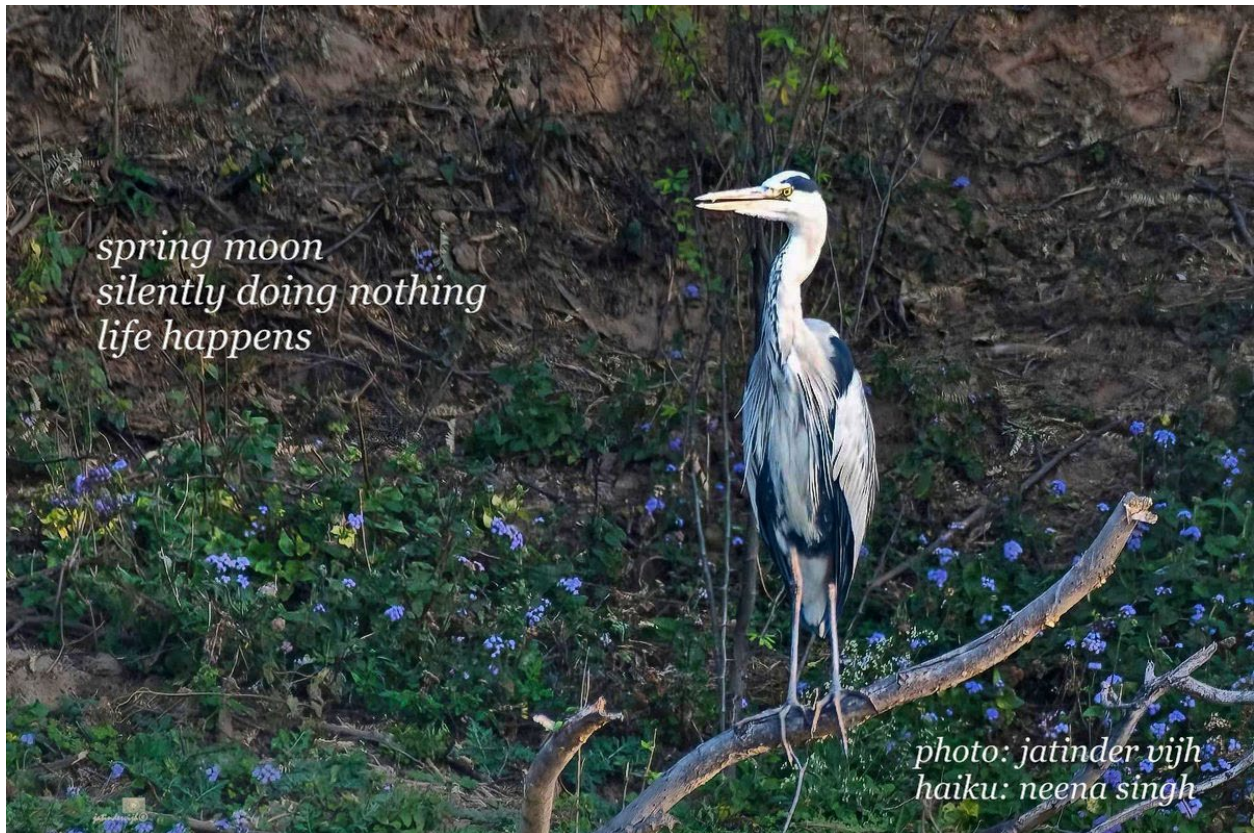
Myron Arnold — Canada

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mourning cloak  
fluttering in the warmth  
of a shed window



Neena Singh & Jatinder Vijn — India



Neha Talreja — India





Nika — Canada



cast in bronze  
all the love  
she never gave

- Nika

# Tanka Prose



Stowed Away Dreams

## Creation

Tom Staudt, Australia

Water cascades over my shoulders. The gushing stream forms little bubbles, that excite the nerve endings in my skin. After a few minutes I turn around and turn off the taps. Wrapped in my towel I look up and see you through my skylight.

We both love showers. You can do magic, using the life-giving liquid and sunshine to make the air we breathe. Creatures big and small can find shelter, and on a hot day I like sitting in your shade.

fleeting streams  
flow and change  
never the same  
we cling to certain moments  
precious in our journey

## The rosemary

Ryland Shengzhi Li, USA

Did I give it too much water? Or expose it to too much cold when I left the patio door open last week? Or maybe it had simply met its appointed time.

I nibble on a leaf. The aroma is still there. It stands more or less as it once was, branches sweeping gracefully in the mid-morning sun. But now the leaves are a pale sea green, and the branches the color of dry sandstone, as though it were some Permian fossil or modern artwork.

I wonder, did I ever think so much of it while it lived? But what is life and what is death anyway?

photobooks  
and memories  
and this soul  
that you formed  
. . . laolao\*

*\*Mandarin for grandmother*

## All American Boy

Gail Brooks, USA

Saturday afternoons in 1952 the movies showed double-features and lots of cartoons. At eleven years old, my parents tasked me with taking my younger brothers Michael, 8 and Stuart, 6. Armed with 25 cents each, we bought a ticket and our favorite candies: Dots, Milk Duds, JuJubes, Good and Plenty, Mary Janes.

moaning  
in the back row  
of the theater  
awkward teenagers  
wet lips to wet lips

The movies varied from Buck Rogers space travel to musicals like *Some Like It Hot*. The old horror movies like *Frankenstein*, *The Werewolf and Dracula* played frequently. Though today horror movies are my least favorite genre, I recall sitting transfixed as the *Werewolf* began to change and the tension grew. Suddenly I noticed that Stuart was gone. In the dark theater, I began to panic, unsure of what to do. Moments later, I felt a small hand touch my leg. Stuart was hiding under the seat, frightened not by the scary images on the screen, but by the music!

a trimaran  
tossed by the South Seas  
bathed in sunlight  
steered by a brother  
no longer afraid

## Our City

Ana Drobot, Romania

As I was going by bus, I was watching the parks and streets where we had been walking together. They were not only familiar now, but I could associate them with a certain look I got from you, with certain words you told me, with our whispers, with our daydreams. I felt sad when I saw the places without us. They looked so empty. Nothing could fill them. There was nobody like us.

your absence  
next to me  
the cherry blossom  
fills the sky  
with no stars

I only heard my own footsteps back home. When we walked together, we did not hear our footsteps. They were muffled by the sun, the sky, by the smell of spring.



## Questions & Coffers

Anna Cates, USA

Once, when my brother and I were in grade school, my mother asked us a rather silly question: “If you had all the money in the world, what would you do with it?” The inquiry left us both huffing with exasperation.

“Jesus Christ, woman, what’s wrong with you?” her partner at the time lamented, “Jesus Christ” his favorite expletive (not a prayerful utterance in any respect, for he found all religion not relevant to his life).

My brother and I painstakingly tried to explain that money would be meaningless if only one person possessed it. We were in the car at the time, headed who knows where, perhaps local social services for assistance. My mother suggested a new diversion, a guessing game. And the day’s journey, and time, wore on . . .

her hand’s warmth  
her breathing tubes  
full flower moon  
leaving behind  
the way we were

## SINGALONGS

Amelia Fielden, Australia

Mother's Day  
by great-grandma's cliff-top grave  
her six daughters  
harmonising Galway Bay —  
the Pacific sighs below

Lots of songs, lots of singing, in my childhood. Gran crooned lullabies to the littlies, hummed and sang as she went about her chores.

In my house, always music from the radio and from records Dad collected.

I never learned to play an instrument. But I could pedal a mean pianola. There were several pianolas among our extended families. And in the apartment of great-aunt Clara stood a baby grand. That was the centrepiece of numerous clan gatherings.

Every occasion called for a party. Every party called for Clara's son-in-law, Keith. He would play by ear anything from How Much Is That Doggie In The Window to The Moonlight Sonata, ragtime to waltz time. Not a lot of room for dancing, but some couldn't resist The Blue Danube. Requests were Keith's forte; if you could hum the first bars of a piece, he could play it. Lyrics no problem either; prodigious recall, my relatives.

a warm wind  
ruffles songs of yesteryear  
through my hair —  
I still remember the words  
and how you all sang them

## Contours

Gavin Austin, Australia

How readily you brandish lies wrapped as promises.

I sit and watch as you dress to leave, framed in my bedroom window, naked against a virtuous sky. You are another shape on the horizon of morning. Alluring as the tethered geranium in the window box — scarlet, perfect, incarcerated.

Guilt drives you behind intangible bars where I cannot reach you. I say nothing, my thoughts scattered like clothes across the floor. Hope kicked into dark corners to brood with lost socks.

the way raindrops  
pool before sliding  
on glass panes  
the many shapes  
we take on

## Shepherd Howe

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

The warm spring sun is a welcome friend accompanying my father's early mornings, midday and late afternoon rounds checking the flock for orphans to bring home and hand raise.

Even now, sometimes I fail to grasp the brutality and ethos of nature's survival of the fittest.

crows gather  
darkening the skies  
their dirge  
before gorging on the eyes  
of newborn lambs

# Haiga — Part 5A

Oscar Luparia — Italy



words: hissa atiradi/phot: oscar luparia

**still dawn—  
overshadowing  
this inner chaos**

Radka Mindova & Irina Skenderska — Bulgaria



## The Way

Richa Sharma, India

When the broken parts of someone's story fell upon me as snowflakes, I realised that not many people get to choose the land where they'd prefer to die. I now remember a poem written for such a gentleman who came into my life as a body of poems. So was I to him. And he ended even before I could say, "May his shadow never touch my coffin."

unrecoverable  
that which doesn't matter . . .  
from my uncombed hair  
I smooth out knots  
of a winter mistake

## A Brainteaser

Susan Burch, USA

I was about to enter a brainteaser contest where you pick 2 images that are alike out of 6, when I decided to quickly check the contest rules before I hit “Enter.” Well, I’m glad I did because the organization takes all rights and can send my answers “. . . throughout the universe, in perpetuity . . .” Then I couldn’t stop thinking about why. Why would anyone, anywhere, care what my answer was?

alien email

good news: the crop-dusting

is still working

the humans remain

as dumb as ever



## A Deadly Obsession

Chen-ou liu, Canada

In his repeated court filings against the condo board, these lines appear again and again: "beneath my unit the electric room is not properly constructed, resulting in the emission of electromagnetic waves which have caused me pain and suffering over the years."

The condo board now decides to file a restraining order against his "constantly harassing, abusive, and sometimes even threatening behaviour."

new snow on old snow . . .  
this silver-haired gunman  
shot dead by police  
after killing five  
and wounding a sixth

## Hermitage

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

The snow moon rises over the pond, pouring its silvery light through ragged clouds and the bare branches of an elm. I take a picture of it through the dining room window. In the photo, a ghostly city appears, drifting below the tree limbs. There is no city there, only the winter-brown grass, the trees, a low stone wall, the meadow sloping down to the pond. The camera has captured what I did not see — the reflection of books standing on the shelves behind me, their spines arrayed side-by-side like narrow townhouses floating above an invisible street.

a knock comes  
at the half door  
no one  
stands in the shadows  
. . . I invite her in

That night, I dream of crossing a lake in a small wooden canoe, which has sunk beneath the surface. Standing on the prow with only my head above water, I pole the boat toward my destination, where I am supposed to give a talk on the subject of “poetry.” Having prepared nothing, I decide to speak instead about my journey, deeply immersed in the lake . . . but the audience has vanished.

only the creak  
of the windlass  
as the bucket  
slowly descends  
into a river of stars

## Steps to Writing Well

John Zheng, USA

The teacher wears a sunshine smile on the first day of class. She goes over the syllabus about teaching methods, learning outcomes, weekly assignments, and grading procedures. Then she raises her voice that our assignments must meet her requirements. If the deadline for a paper is March 1, we can't put February 27 on the title page if we submit our assignment two days earlier. Otherwise, we lose 5 points. A student has the guts to ask whether he should never turn in his assignment before the deadline, but the teacher replies decisively that we must follow her guidelines closely. Time slides away week after week, and the teacher's sunshine smile looks like a cloudy moon since we keep losing points. When the semester ends, grievance forms swarm into the dean's office.

Well Done  
written in red ink —  
does it mean  
a grade or  
barely read?

## THE DIG

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA (EC)

Day 1:

An orange earth digger, jack hammers, men with shovels in orange vests and orange hard hats — all here to replace a faulty water line. Get my car out of my garage and park in the visitors' parking, I'm advised. No need. Decide to cancel plans made earlier. Will go out tomorrow. Bad decision, that. As holes gets deeper, dirt mounds get higher. No way into my condo, no way out. After some hand wringing, a path is cleared. Can now get to mailbox across the road. However, there is no mail because the mail truck cannot get past the equipment and barricades. At the end of the day, a gaping hole at the bottom of my driveway covered over with a flimsy board and blocked by orange and white bars attached to orange cones. Oh, my! How they do love orange.

lives lived,  
long before memory,  
deeply buried  
till a random hoe or spade  
frees a shard of mystery

Day 2:

More digging. A new area under my window. Out comes the grass. Out comes the spirea bush. Out come my white lilies which took two years to bloom. I look down and see only an orange hard hat. China appears to be the destination. The earth digger extends its teeth, bites into new territory, chews its way along the road past the next condo unit. Clunk, clunk. clunk. The show is only minimally mesmerizing. Time for a relaxing cup of herbal tea. Choking sounds from the faucet. Water has been turned off.

Fortunately, I have a kettle full of water. With my tea and a book, I retreat to the living room and a comfy chair away from the clunking of the earth digger. At the end of the day, there are two deep craters and a long trench, but I have water.

digging through time  
finding bits of this and that  
trash and treasures  
writing tales of how it was,  
how we think the pieces fit

Day 3:

The hole under my window is filled in. The hard hats move down along the trench. The earth digger returns to crater number one. It gets wider, deeper. A workman tells me water will be off. I fill the kettle. I will have my tea. Didn't think about the cleaning woman due in a couple of hours. Should have filled buckets. She arrives, having walked from visitors' parking. Turns on faucet. Sputters. Spits. Hisses. Water still off. Just dust and vacuum I tell her. She takes two buckets and talks to the hard hats. One stalwart fellow leaps the trench, takes the buckets and goes down the road, past the trench, and returns with water. Cleaning of my condo continues. Meanwhile, hard hats take a lunch break. Begin to wonder how long will my driveway end at the lip of a canyon. Begin to wonder if I should send out a SOS to my family. Three o'clock. Hard hats have been moving rapidly this past hour. No need to alert family. The driveway crater is filled and dirt leveled. I can take my car out. The trench under my window is covered with boards and marked with orange cones. Piles of rocks are loaded into a truck and hauled away. The earth digger is parked and the road is quiet.

tagged and labeled  
each item in a ledger  
nothing left ignored  
history in a bowl,  
a trinket or a cup

Day 4

All quiet on the cul-de-sac. No earth digger, no hard hats. Nothing. Nada. The dig is a work in progress, and progress is slow.

showcased in museums  
photographed and discussed  
the past brought forward  
to question and to learn  
and find a better way

## Kafka with Grammarly

Sonam Chhoki, Bhutan

When Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning from troubled sleep, he finds he has become a flickering desktop screen. His bed is a workstation, dull-white with a pull-out panel. His legs have transformed into a black cable that winds down to a shelf covered in dust, where his feet are attached to an Epson printer. His face, now an ocean-blue celluloid surface, lights up the corner of the room, which has no windows and he can feel the ping-ping of messages piling into the in-box. Where his eyes and nose would have been is a Marine Aquarium screen-saver; his mouth is a long line of desktop icons.

The door opens. A young woman walks up to the workstation carrying a bag. She unzips it and carefully places a New Lenovo Quad Turbo laptop on the workstation. She pats Gregor Samsa and says almost ruefully, "It will be strange without the old thing."

'What is happening to me?' Samsa wonders as she unplugs the flicker out of him.

50,000 years  
since the last green comet  
still learning the basics  
how to scan, text, block, delete  
how to live with apps

## Litmus Test

Richard Grahn, USA

She wastes no time.

> *Tell me something about yourself.*

> Uh, I have a green nose . . .

> There's a truck in my bed . . .

> Just shaved my toes . . .

> Gonna buy a used rowboat . . .

> Drive it across the salty sea . . .

> And fish.

> *Are you healthy, organized? What is your diet like?*

> I can account for all my elbows . . .

> Cat's wearing my socks . . .

> I'm all pens and knitting needles . . .

> Hard-boiled eggs for breakfast . . .

> Scrambled breakfast for brains . . .

> Supper of scrambled brains.

> *How do you feel about technology?*

> Cell phone's almost dead . . .

> I'm texting it to death . . .

> Maybe I'm boring it to death . . . row, row

> I'm a bored-to-death phone-killing omelet . . .

> Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily . . .

> Life's a railroad train.

> *Do you have any past relationships I should know about?*



- > Once upon a time . . .
- > In a far off land called Evanston . . .
- > I was a young man . . .
- > Met a girl named Pam . . .
- > Gave her a string of beads . . .
- > And off she ran to the Philippines.

> *She just left?*

- > Eeny meeny miny moe . . .
- > All the things . . .
- > she forgot to bring . . .
- > Like me . . . my shoes and socks . . .
- > My shirt, my pants . . .
- > And baseball cap.

> *What did you do?*

- > Swam all night . . .
- > Naked as a fish . . .
- > From head to toe . . .
- > Realized . . .
- > After flopping ashore . . .
- > I swam to the wrong island.

> *I don't know; it's a crazy story.*

- > Acorn squash for a heart . . .
- > Butter in my veins . . .
- > Mash me up; I'll fill your plate . . .
- > Look, it's not that bad . . .
- > It all makes perfect sense, you see . . .
- > My upside-down, inside-out turned world.

my id  
left to its own devices  
speed dials  
the International  
Date Line

## Repentance

Eve Ozer, USA

Secrets are a powerful aphrodisiac; mysterious, alluring, potentially dangerous depending on the secret and with whom you share it.

Growing up in a Catholic home, I witnessed another kind of secret, a mass said in an arcane language and an advocacy for confession.

Entering the confessional, the subtle aroma of orthodox incense gently assaults your sense of smell. Your eyes attempt to adjust as you move into a dimly lit closet size room where you kneel on a cantilevered piece of wood that has been wrapped in velvet. You settle yourself in piety as a small, screened window quietly slides open to reveal your absolver, a stand-in god.

You whisper your sins into the profile of a man earnestly leaning in towards the breath of your words with the sacred knowledge that what you confess will be held like executive privilege, never to be pried from his mind nor lips. He passes down his judgement through a series of penances and you rise with your soul once again bleached clean — if your conscious stays mute.

a velvet cincture  
hands cuffed  
in unspoken prayers  
wild thoughts  
cascading darkness

## Trapped

John Budan, USA

An abandoned mannequin stands out in contrast to its stark surroundings. It reminds me of my lover who worked here before the fatal fentanyl rush. Pink breasts are indecently exposed, casting shadows from the last rays of sun. It peers at me through a soiled display window, and I imagine hearing a faint pleading voice. I want to break the glass and set it free from the world of despair it is confined in. A piercing scream echoes through the corridors of the deserted mall.

since childhood  
her moist pillow  
stained by tears  
of a girl called  
classroom ska

## A Broken Circle

Priti Aisola, India

After a walk in the city centre, they pause before a shop window.

'A teashop with a range of fruit, herb, and black teas! Shall we take a look?' she asks, excited.

'Not interested,' says he and looks away.

afterglow  
of the setting sun . . .  
if only we could linger  
in the soft light  
of our shared moments

## Twisted Tree

Bryan Rickert, USA

My wife peppers the counsellor with questions and concerns about our daughter. Her lack of friends. Her unwillingness to reach out and talk to peers. Her inability to open up to anyone but her journal. And ultimately, the deep melancholy our daughter feels because she does not yet understand any of this either.

the newness  
of spring blossoms  
I hold my newborn  
hoping she'll turn out  
better than me

## Editor's Choice (EC) -Tanka Prose

### THE DIG

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

Usually, we include the EC in the Editor's Choice. As you have read, the Dig, by Adelaide Shaw is a bit too long to include here.

Adelaide Shaw's four-part diary entries brought me back to my childhood, where I would watch the town crews clear snow or dig up a neighbour's front yard because the water shut valve was hidden by a couple of feet of fill and topsoil. Actually, my family's from yard. Dad never said anything about that. Also, it made me think of the book I bought at a discount book stall in our local mall way back in the early 2000s.

Then, I remembered a used book that I bought about twenty years ago. It was "Outside Lies Magic" by John R. Stilgoe." The premise is what can be found or observed as you take a walk along a park, a nature trail, and sometimes along an old abandoned railway line. It was a great and, in some ways, influenced my writing.

Adelaide Shaw's "The Dig" is a perfect reminder of watching a city "water works project." What will the orange hard hats find in the trenches, as if unearthing a WW1 trench. Then, in the tanka entries for each day, we are brought back to an archeological site, where pieces of a past civilisation are found. Pottery sherds, being a prime example. I still remember my daughter's emails from Greece, while on a dig uncovering a Mycenaean site.

Now, how many of us will admit to being a bit more than curious as to what we observe as our children or grandchildren begin their own exploration and digs?

**Mike Montreuil**

## Haiga — Part 5B

Richa Sharma — India

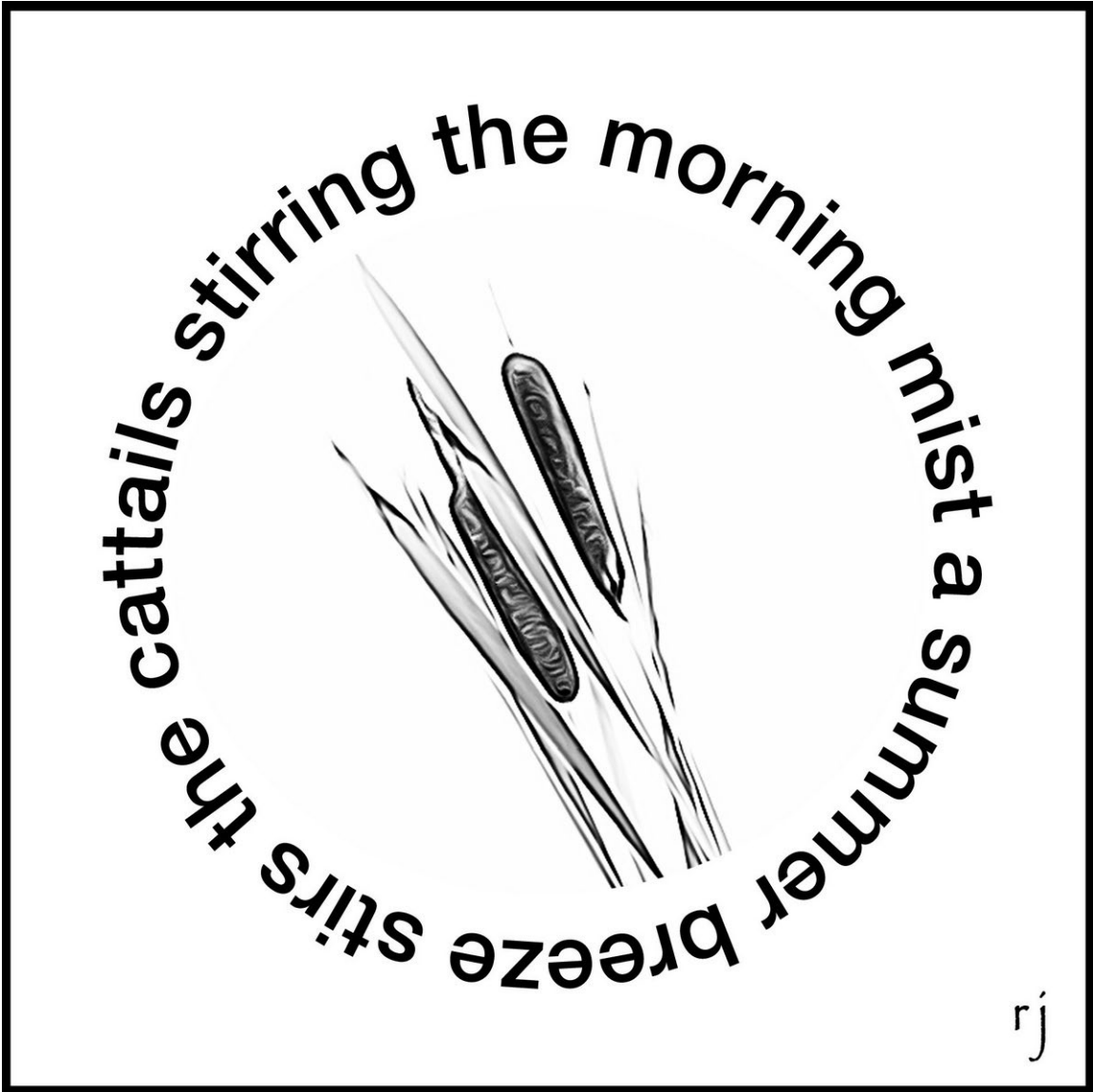


Richard Grahn — USA

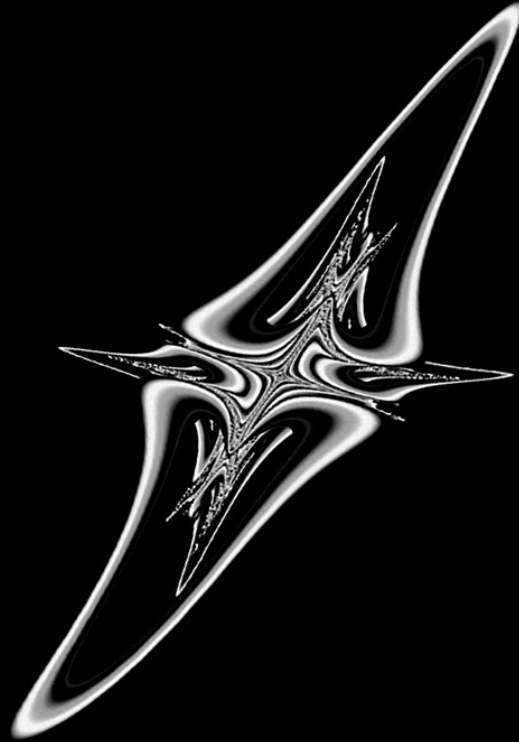




Rick Jackofsky — USA



Robert Erlandson — USA



*eagles soaring  
diving when they see the prey  
missile drones*

*R Erlandson*

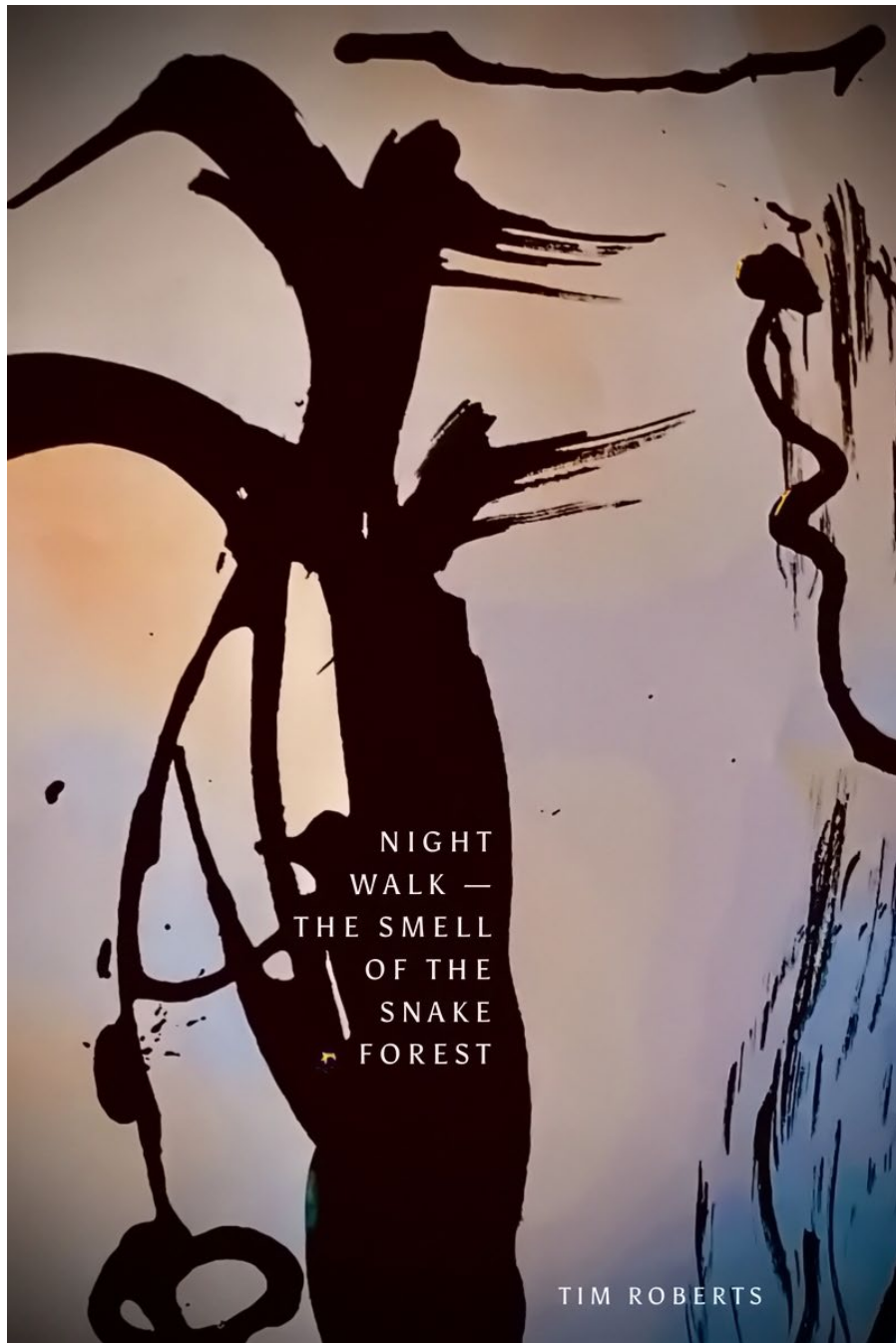
Silva Trstenjak & Tadeja Ciman — Croatia



Haiku: Silva Trstenjak  
Image: Tadeja Ciman

expectation ...  
in her eyes glistens  
blue baby clothes

Tim Roberts — New Zealand



NIGHT  
WALK —  
THE SMELL  
OF THE  
SNAKE  
FOREST

TIM ROBERTS

## *Index of Poets and Artists*

### **A**

Priti Aisola, 12, 86, 200  
Francis W. Alexander, 151  
Paul Alexandru, 42  
Farah Ali, 45, 158  
Michelle V. Alkerton, 170  
Rupa Anand, 99, 152  
Birk Andersson, 45, 66  
Jenny Ward Angyal, 83, 97, 190  
Cristina Angelescu, 42  
An'ya, 38  
Myron Arnold, 172  
Emma Alexander Arthur, 14, 34, 71, 159, 167  
Hifsa Ashraf, 27, 46  
Joanna Ashwell, 27, 80, 165, 169  
sanjuktaa asopa, 96, 102  
Gavin Austin, 25, 46, 90, 96, 141, 183

### **B**

Pamela A. Babusci, 95  
Don Baird, 24  
Ingrid Baluchi, 21, 37  
Caroline Giles Banks, 164  
Stuart Bartow, 112  
Mona Bedi, 66  
Brad Bennett, 11, 46  
Deborah A. Bennett, 26  
Giancarlo Bertozzi, 72  
Sally Biggar, 13  
Gwen Bitti, 92  
Shawn Blair, 10  
Adrian Bouter, 16  
Randy Brooks, 11, 47, 84  
Gail Brooks, 179

B.L. Bruce, 7  
John Budan, 92, 199  
Pitt Buerken, 47, 98, 137  
Rohan Buettel, 19, 47  
Susan Burch, 47, 95, 188  
Sondra J. Byrnes, 28, 48

### **C**

Christopher Calvin, 48  
Pris Campbell, 48, 95  
Mariangela Canzi, 20  
Matthew Caretti, 7, 163  
Claire Vogel Camargo, 87  
Anna Cates, 10, 84, 118, 181  
Mihovila Čeperić, 10  
Kanchan Chatterjee, 32  
Jim Chessing, 80, 96, 101  
Sonam Chhoki, 169, 195  
Christina Chin, 99  
Thomas Chockley, 16  
Tadeja Ciman, 207  
Florin C. Ciobica, 42  
Glenn G. Coats, 130  
Lysa Collins, 24  
Beate Conrad, 14, 40, 124  
Maria Concetta Conti, 31  
Bryan D. Cook, 153, 169  
Bill Cooper, 25  
Alvin B. Cruz, 48  
Anne Curran, 81  
Dan Curtis, 29

**D**

Stefano d'Andrea, 113  
Maya Daneva, 49  
Anannya Dasgupta, 23  
Mary Davila, 78  
M. R. Defibaugh, 99  
Lorelyn De la Cruz, 91  
Boris Deverić, 97  
Frank Dietrich, 79  
Anna Maria Domburg-Sancristoforo, 32  
Jan Dobb, 25  
Radostina Dragostinova, 49  
Ana Drobot, 49, 93, 180

**E**

Christine Eales, 50  
Lynn Edge, 146  
Anna Eklund-Cheong, 50  
Robert Erlandson, 127, 206  
Keith Evetts, 9, 50

**F**

Amelia Fielden, 182  
Michael Flanagan, 32, 80  
Marilyn Fleming, 31, 50, 80, 81  
Katja Fox, 106  
Jenny Fraser, 103  
Jay Friedenber, 16

**G**

Ben Gaa, 27, 50, 51, 67  
Ivan Gaćina, 19, 99, 111  
Jerome Gagnon, 25  
Mike Gallagher, 18, 51, 90  
Tim Gardiner, 12, 122  
Goran Gatalica, 13, 34, 51  
Edward Gilligan, 16  
LeRoy Gorman, 30, 36, 51, 83  
Richard Grahn, 125, 196, 204

Laurie Greer, 30  
Eufemia Griffo, 28  
Elancharan Gunasekaran, 52

**H**

Hazel Hall, 24, 52, 79, 121  
Johnnie Johnson Hafernik, 9, 54, 88  
Dan Hardison, 132  
Jon Hare, 28, 52, 98  
Lev Hart, 52  
John Hawkhead, 29, 53, 67, 90  
Patricia Hawkhead, 53  
Deborah Burke Henderson, 25  
Reid Hepworth, 135  
Florence Heyhoe, 142  
Ruth Holzer, 10, 53, 85  
Frank Hooven, 31  
Louise Hopewell, 54  
Vladislav Hristov, 7  
Edward Cody Huddleston, 117  
Marilyn Humbert, 20, 53, 91, 119, 184

**I**

Lakshmi Iyer, 108

**J**

Rick Jackofsky, 54, 87, 205  
Roberta Beach Jacobson, 54  
Govind Joshi, 20

**K**

Richard Kakol, 54, 97, 148  
Wiesław Karliński, 140  
Brian Kates, 55  
Barbara Kaufmann, 39  
Keitha Keyes, 91  
Ravi Kiran, 18, 55, 68

Craig Kittner, 8  
Deborah P Kolodji, 17  
Nina Kovačić, 33  
Padmini Krishnan, 86, 160  
Beni Kurage, 30

**L**

Jill Lange, 87  
Chris Langer, 55  
Douglas J. Lanzo, 8, 98  
Ryland Shengzhi Li, 17, 85, 102, 162, 178  
Kristen Lindquist, 31  
Chen-ou Liu, 26, 55, 84, 120, 189  
Cyndi Lloyd, 15, 133  
Eric A Lohman, 21, 72  
Oscar Luparia, 185  
Heather Lurie, 15, 58, 87

**M**

Ruchita Madhok, 58  
Dorothy Mahoney, 58  
Jeno Major, 171  
Carmela Marino, 26, 35, 144  
Antonio Mangiameli, 12, 58  
Richard L. Matta, 26, 59, 82  
Gerry Mc Donnell, 128  
Tyler McIntosh, 31, 58, 114  
Dorothy S. Messerschmitt, 88  
Radka Mindova, 186  
Daniela Misso, 32, 81  
Mircea Moldovan, 33, 59, 85, 150, 171  
Mike Montreuil, 123  
Laurie D. Morrissey, 59, 68  
Kirsten G. Munro, 18  
Krzysztof Mxchx, 107

**N**

Ashish Narain, 12, 59  
Maurice Nevile, 60

Nika, 24, 60, 175  
Subir Ningthouja, 129

**O**

Gail Oare, 155  
Nola Obee, 16  
Sean O'Connor, 149  
Ben Oliver, 27, 100, 103  
Franjo Ordanic, 75  
Bernadette O'Reilly, 60, 96  
Maeve O'Sullivan, 60  
Eve Ozer, 100, 198

**P**

Peter H. Pache, 83  
Christa Pandey, 20  
Linda Papanicolau, 138  
John Pappas, 11  
Curt Pawlisch, 12, 61, 82  
Madhuri Pillai, 21  
Gabriela Popa, 76  
Jacek Pokrak, 73  
Vijay Prasad, 28  
Sandi Pray, 29  
Slobodan Pupovac, 27

**R**

Katherine Raine, 83  
Carol Raisfeld, 61, 94, 161  
Brijesh Raj, 147  
Kala Ramesh, 8, 78, 92  
Valentina Ranaldi-Adams, 61  
Ivan Randall, 13  
Brijesh Raj, 14  
Dian Duchin Reed, 143  
Meera Rehm, 9  
Bryan Rickert, 14, 61, 94, 136, 201  
Edward J. Rielly, 30  
Tim Roberts, 208

9

Daniel Robinson, 82  
Gabriel Rosenstock, 93  
Cynthia Rowe, 21, 35, 61, 90, 94  
D. V. Rozic, 10, 24, 64, 79  
Margaret Owen Ruckert, 92  
Dave Russo, 14  
Janet Ruth, 89

## S

Joshua St. Claire, 9  
Sandra Samec, 75  
Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, 7  
Julie Schwerin, 62, 69, 105, 211  
Ron Scully, 98  
Elizabeth Shack, 156  
Richa Sharma, 62, 186, 203  
Adelaide B. Shaw, 18, 22, 100, 157, 192, 201  
Neena Singh, 11, 62, 173  
Dimitrij Škrk, 57  
Thomas Smith, 15  
Derek Sprecksel, 13  
Tom Staudt, 62, 95, 116, 177  
Patrick Stephens, 110  
Stephenie Story, 62  
Iliyana Stoyanova, 126, 166  
Debbie Strange, 28, 56, 63, 78  
Ann Sullivan, 62  
R. Suresh babu, 29, 63  
Luminita Suse, 139

## T

Eva Tal, 74  
Neha Talreja, 63, 174  
Minko Tanev, 18  
Herb Tate, 32  
Andrew Taylor-Troutman, 115  
Angela Terry, 15, 63  
Richard Tice, 15, 84, 101

Silva Trstenjak, 24, 64, 79, 207  
Zuzanna Truchlewska, 8  
C. X. Turner, 13, 41, 64

## V

Tuyet Van Do, 64  
Kevin Valentine, 8  
Namratha Varadharajan, 94  
Aishwarya Vedula, 10  
Jatinder Vijh, 173  
Steliana Cristina Voicu, 11

## W

David Watts, 17  
Alice Wanderer, 9, 134  
Joseph P. Wechselberger, 64  
Christine Wenk-Harrison, 19  
Tyson West, 30, 100  
Tony Williams, 21, 65, 69  
Jamie Wimberly, 29  
Ernest Wit, 14  
Robert Witmer, 17  
Wai Mei Wong, 65

## Y

Susan Yavaniski, 65  
Quendryth Young, 25, 64

## Z

Eugeniusz Zacharski, 19, 73  
John Zheng, 26, 65, 78, 154, 191





The Shape of Hope