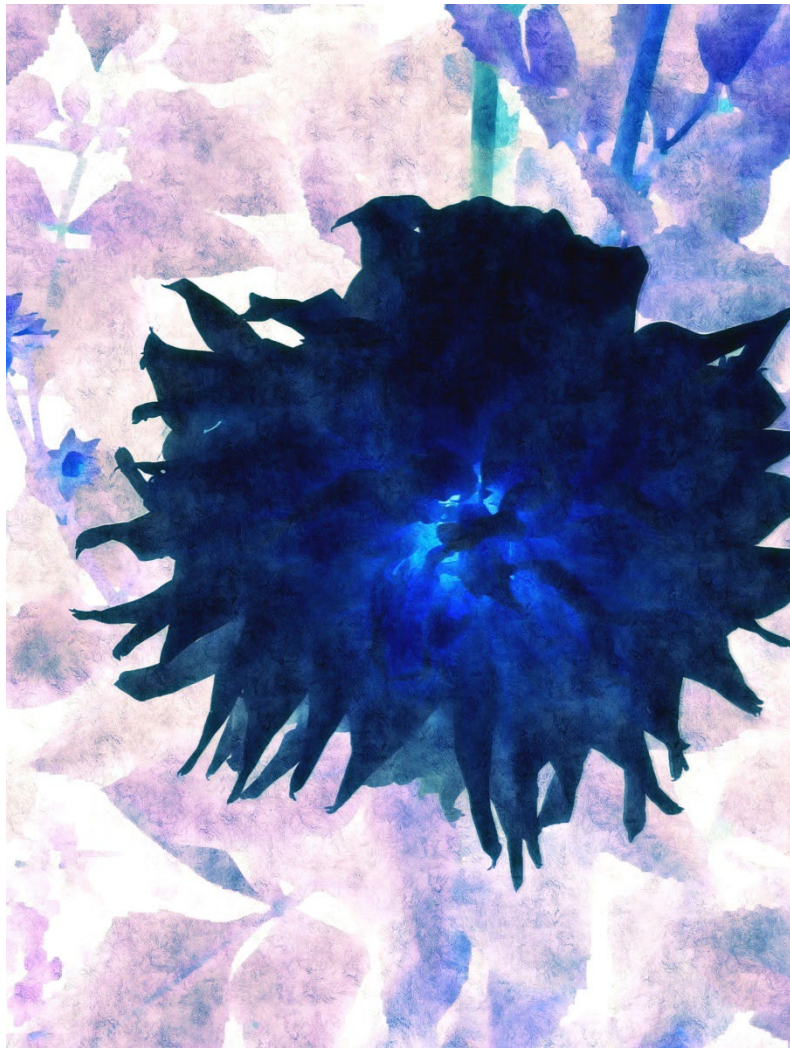


# *cattails*



October 2025

# cattails

## October 2025 Issue

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cattails is produced in association with:

### Éditions des petits nuages

1409 Bortolotti Crescent  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada K1B 5C1

ISSN 2371-8951

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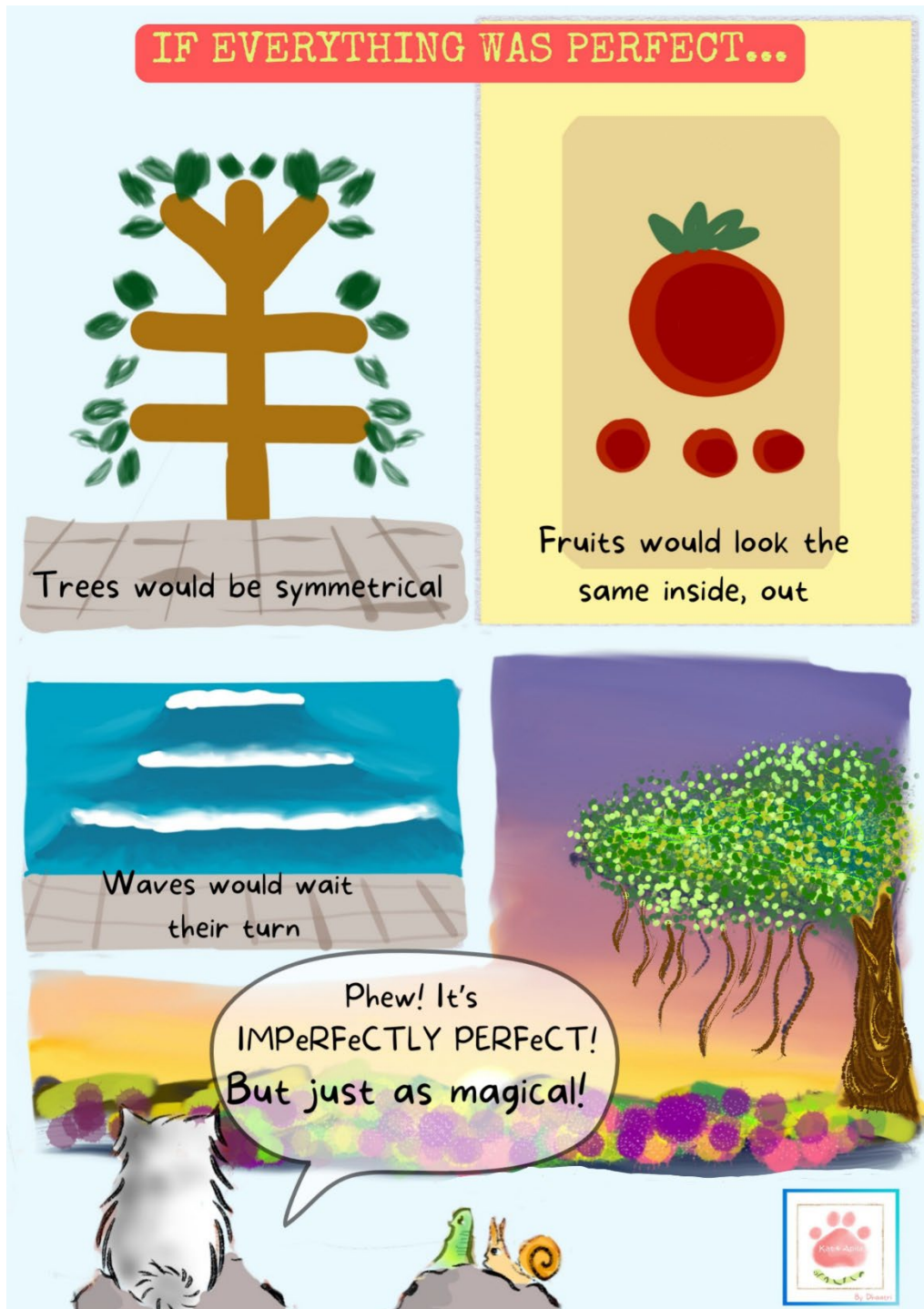
Cover and Section Photos: Dhaatri Vengunad Menon — Cover, 6, 42, 76, 110, 169, 199

### Cover: Smoulder

**Dhaatri Vengunad** is an artist and illustrator in Chennai, India. Her visual art style ranges from Indian folk and tribal art to abstracts. She is the resident cartoonist of cattails and speaks through Kat & Apila about topical issues. The art series in this issue is called “Flames of Autumn” and depicts the various forms of fire. This series was born from a partial digital abstraction process with flowers as the origin.

## *Contents*

|                            |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Introduction               | 5   |
| Haiku                      | 6   |
| Haiga — part 1             | 37  |
| Senryu                     | 42  |
| Haiga — part 2             | 71  |
| Tanka                      | 76  |
| Haiga — part 3             | 103 |
| Haibun                     | 110 |
| Haiga — part 4             | 156 |
| Tanka Prose                | 169 |
| Haiga — part 5             | 189 |
| Index of Poets and Artists | 194 |



Dhaatri Vengunad Menon

## Introduction

Greetings from the land of Elbows Up.

Of course, the preceding line could be a rant about the state of affairs in the world. And, it would be easy to do so. But what is important is our state of mind.

The first few lines from Allen Ginsberg's Howl still resonate.

"I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by  
madness, starving hysterical naked,"

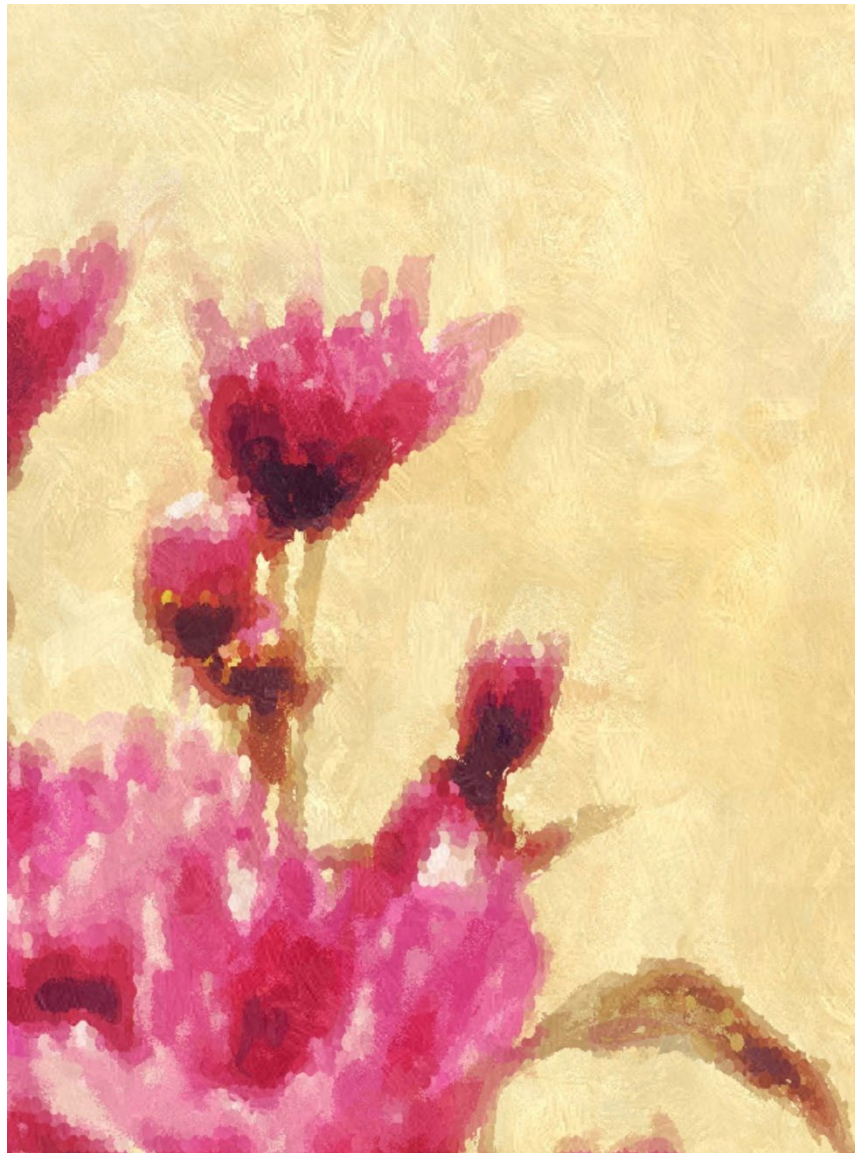
As a late pre-60's Boomer, I have had the opportunity to witness, by long distance, the events of the previous sixty years by listening, reading and absorbing those events.

It is a sad statement to what we are now living in a world . . .

I would like to thank Sonam for letting me use the cattails pulpit. Also, kudos to each of the section editors, Geethanjali Rajan, David J Kelly, Shobhana Kumar, Lavana Kray and Jenny Fraser. No words are adequate to express my appreciation for their dedication and passion. Dhaatri Vengunad Menon gives us another feature that is timely and eloquent. We proudly present the art of Dhaatri in this issue, as well.

Mike Montreuil  
Managing Editor

# Haiku



Sparkle

dagger hard dawn  
daylight starts to splinter  
along the ice road

*John Hawkhead, UK (EC)*

spring arrives  
a branch snaps beneath  
the cub

*Lev Hart, Canada*

meadow hiss  
a calf skirts the edge  
of the oak's shadow

*Paul Chambers, Wales*

spring blossoms —  
the pear tree  
hums

*Sondra J. Byrnes, USA*

the carousel  
cotton-candy fingers  
point the way

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

wobbly jelly –  
children's laughter at the festival

お祭りの子の笑ひこゑぐらぐらゼリー

*Christina Chin, Malaysia*  
*Translated by Mitunori Nagata, Japan*

cherry blossom rain  
a ponytailed girl  
pirouetting alone

櫻花雨  
一個綁馬尾辮的女孩  
獨自單腳旋轉跳舞

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*

garden excursion . . .  
tiny tots in red raincoats  
scamper laughing

*Gwen Bitti, Australia*

new blossoms  
the couple adds their lock  
to the railings

*Ibrahim Nureni, Nigeria/USA*

train platform  
empty of passengers —  
a cluster of butterflies

*Tim Dwyer, Northern Ireland/USA*

seed leaves . . .  
the young rook's voice  
not yet a rook

*Thomas Powell, Northern Ireland*

noisy miner —  
the dog's food bowl  
a motherlode

*Rohan Buettel, Australia*

banking up potatoes —  
broken filberts  
hidden by jays

*Amanda Bell, Ireland*

soft clouds  
this pillow  
of grass

*Timothy Daly, France*

a deep breath  
of cloudless sky  
bamboo flute

*Robert Witmer, Japan (EC)*

total eclipse  
of the pink moon  
wildfire smoke

*Alanna C. Burke, USA*

samoan starling  
a murmuration  
of one

*Matthew Caretti, American Samoa*

summer solstice  
carting off spring debris  
to air the garden

*Nola Obee, Canada*

turning me into  
a space opera hero  
northern lapwing song

pretvara me  
u junaka svemirske opere  
pjesma vivka

*Tomislav Sjekloća, Montenegro*

color wheel  
the plum hour swirling  
in the Susquehanna

*Joshua St. Claire, USA*

twilit meadow the blue songs of larkspur

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

disused factory —  
sunbeams warm dandelions  
where the door was

stara tvornica—  
sunce grije maslačke  
gdje su bila vrata

*Nina Kovačić, Croatia*

burial clothes  
a new dress  
for the lily

*Julie Schwerin, USA*

homeless  
between rubbish and rocks  
a dandelion

*Eva Limbach, Germany*

hovering around  
the bins again  
ghost butterfly

*Jerome Berglund, USA*

why?  
the summer wind gently blowing  
no answer

warum?  
Sommerwind weht sanft  
keine Antwort

*Pitt Buerken, Germany*

a flash of yellow whistling hornbills

एक पीली चमक सीटी बजाते धनेश

*Neena Singh, India*

summer heat  
a spider abseils  
off the brim of my hat

*Tony Williams, Scotland*

long day . . .  
held by the starch  
of her cotton sari

*K. Srilata, India*

early morning  
komorebi with a scent  
of lime

*Vessislava Savova, Bulgaria*

hillside meadow  
the rhythm  
of yellow rattle

*Florence Heyhoe, Northern Ireland*

lighthouse  
the stormy blue  
of our guide's eyes

*Lorraine Haig, Australia*

summer heat  
the scallop of turtles  
sunning on a log

*June Rose Dowis, USA*

wild roses  
full of sea breeze . . .  
resting place

*Dan Curtis, Canada*

books piled up  
on a washing machine —  
backstreet in summer

libri impilati  
sopra una lavatrice:  
stradina estiva

*Maurizio Brancaleoni, Italy*

fresh sheet  
on the washing line  
sleeping ladybird

*Melissa Dennison, UK*

windy weather —  
the lavender bush  
waltzes with me

*Richard Kakol, Australia*

summer-deep  
on the kitchen bench  
cut kabocha squash

*Mark Miller, Australia*

twilight smoke  
the cane cutter unbuckles  
a shin guard

*Bill Cooper, USA*

drought year  
each wheat grain  
heavier than usual

*Gauri Dixit, India*

deserted town —  
the noodle guy  
braving the heat

prkoseći vrućini  
zračni plesač  
prkosi vrućini

*Djurdja Vukelic Rožić, Croatia*

summer drought  
dusty footprints  
on the moon

*Jeff Hoagland, USA*

linen blouse  
wrinkles softened  
by summer drizzle

*Marilyn Ashbaugh, USA*

no coins  
in the artesian well  
day of war

*Mircea Moldovan, România*

bent shoulders  
by the end of the day  
sunflower past bloom

pognuta ramena  
do kraja dana  
ocvao suncokret

*Mihovila Čeperić- Biljan, Croatia*  
*Translation by D.V.Rožić*

lost-dog flier  
almost faded white  
summer heat

*David Oates, USA*

aperol spritz  
the wasp  
stops wriggling

*Alexander Groth, Germany*

a riff-blue sky  
falling on a rose  
the first raindrop

*Joanna Ashwell, United Kingdom*

whisper of rain . . .  
growing networks  
of mycelium

šapat kiše . . .  
rastuće mreže  
micelija

*Goran Gatalica, Croatia*

tent ceiling  
the silhouettes  
of rain patter

*Brad Bennett, USA*

summer dawn  
last night's puddle  
now a birdbath

*Ravi Kiran, India*

rain-wet black vultures  
kabuki wings outstretched in sun

*Catharine Summerfield Hāna, U.S.A.*

air sirens . . .  
gathering in my rearview  
thunderhead

*Joshua Gage, USA*

everyone  
going silent —  
campground thunder

*Ben Gaa, USA*

approaching cyclone  
all palms sway before  
the darkening sky

*Quendryth Young, Australia*

summer storm —  
I tell my daughter  
war stories

letnia burza —  
opowiadam córce  
wojenne historie

*Zuzanna Truchlewska, Poland*

the stream  
after the downpour  
crushed apricots

*Vishal Prabhu, India*

river in spate  
the swaying bridge  
of gull calls

*Laurie Greer, USA*

summer's end  
the stolen bicycle  
returned to our yard

盗まれし 自転車かへる 夏の果て  
nusumareshi / jitensha kaeru/ natsu no hate

*Keiko Izawa, Japan (EC)*

father's open study  
steeped in sun  
the aroma of words

*Joseph Chiang, Canada*

a caw the color of cornsilk darkening sky

*Kathryn Liebowitz, USA*

a rolling moon—  
the tangential slope  
of a power line

*Arvind Padmanabhan, India*

even the darkness  
has its scents—  
jasmine flowers

anche il buio  
ha i suoi profumi—  
fiori di Gelsomino

*Antonio Mangiameli, Italy*

coral dawn  
before the awakening crows  
temple bells

*Madhuri Pillai, Australia*

morning rain  
the glistening squares  
of bird net

*Nitu Yumnam, UAE*

school bus  
the first chrysanthemums  
also yellow

*Suraja Menon Roychowdhury, USA*

the wild rose plant  
is no more by the courtyard . . .  
childhood home

*Kanchan Chatterjee, India*

rust  
on grandpa's nameplate  
rain-wet petals

ਜੰਗਾਲ  
ਦਾਦਾ ਜੀ ਦੀ ਨਾਂ ਤਖ਼ਤੀ ਤੇ  
ਮੀਂਹ ਭਿੱਜੀਆਂ ਪੱਤੀਆਂ

*Arvinder Kaur, India*

forest trail  
the snake and i  
smell the air

*Billy Antonio, Philippines*

leaving the woods  
blackberry brambles  
won't let me go

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

marigolds  
all around the old lake  
our footprints

*Bhawana Rathore, India*

a bearded man's blush forest twilight

தாடிக்குள் பூத்த கன்னம் காட்டில் அந்தி மாலை

*Srini, India*

change of weather  
the wind finds a new place  
to moan

*Joanne van Helvoort, The Netherlands*

outback moon  
she-oak tales  
shape in the wind

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

felling a tree  
the wind loses  
its howl

ఈదురు గాలి  
గొంతు మూగబోయింది  
చెట్టు పడ్డాక

*Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, India*

totems  
usher the stars . . .  
whalebone night

*Elliot Diamond, USA*

harvest moon  
granny's collection  
of recipes

फसल का चंद्रमा  
दादी माँ का संग्रह  
व्यंजनों का

*Aparna Pathak, India*

broken  
by the roosters  
silent dawn

*Oana Maria Cercel, Italy*

sunrise moments—  
play of light and shadow  
among chrysanthemums

momenti d'alba—  
giochi di luce e ombre  
fra i crisantemi

*Nazarena Rampini, Italy*

riverwalk  
dragonflies and i rest  
on lily pads

*Deborah Burke Henderson, USA*

squirrel chatter  
the nest filled  
with acorns

*Heather Lurie, New Zealand*

aroma of wild grapes intertwined with bittersweet

*Jon Hare, USA*

scattered clouds . . .  
maybe that's all the answer  
I need

*Angela Terry, USA*

still evening . . .  
the scent boundaries  
between trees

*Ben Oliver, England*

brighter than  
the city's glow  
a mother-of-pearl sunset

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

evening fog  
ghosting the lake  
a merlin's mood

*Anna Cates, USA*

old trawler  
drifting towards Pisces  
rusty moon

stary kuter  
odpływa w stronę Ryb  
pordzewiały księżyc

*Dagmara Wieczorkowska, Poland*

moon halo —  
a disheveled woman  
minces the field edge

*Eugeniusz Zacharski, Poland*

resting  
in the belly of a gnome  
an overripe persimmon

*Bona M. Santos, USA*

nowhere to hide  
among the bare branches  
a red-tailed hawk

*Rick Jackofsky, USA*

belt askew  
Orion  
enters the night

*Katie Montagna, Ireland (EC)*

once again  
that same cemetery —  
winter morning

encore une fois  
ce même cimetière—  
matin d'hiver

*Marie Derley, Belgium*

mistral wind  
a forest of white sails  
changes tack

*Jay Friedenbergl, USA*

one-room schoolhouse  
the splat of a snowball  
on the window

*Randy Brooks, USA*

tea to my lips —  
a moment of steam  
fogging my glasses

*Michael Dylan Welch, USA*

flurrying snow  
on the tree line  
an inch of winter

*Gareth Nurden, Wales*

cold moon  
the cry  
from the slaughterhouse

*Michael Buckingham Gray, Australia*

winter evening . . .  
creating a mandala from  
pumpkin seeds

zimski večer  
od sjemenki tikve  
slažem mandalu

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

brother's  
last shave\_\_\_  
all the scattered hair

*Robert Hirschfield, USA*

our bench  
by the river—  
deepening snow

*John Pappas, USA*

winter ostinato  
cold gusting  
the prairie

*Kathryn P. Haydon, USA*

cemetery banyan  
the tangled roots  
of an old grief

*Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan*

crisp leaves  
the old grave  
marked BABY

*Rowan Beckett Minor, USA*

heavy snowfall  
the weight of your farewell  
in my bag

تساقط ثلوج كثيفة  
وزن وداعك  
في حقيبتي

فاطمة الزهراء حبيس / الجزائر  
*Fatma Zohra Habis, Algeria*

dusting  
the angel's wings . . .  
war dead

spolverando  
le ali di un angelo . . .  
caduti in Guerra

*Carmela Marino, Italy*

winter's end  
our voices soar  
through skeletal boughs

*Helen Sokolsky, USA*

last of the snow  
a mare's breath  
rises with the sun

*LeRoy Gorman, Canada*

morning thaw  
lotus petals cradle  
what the sky let go

*Ganesh R., India*

blurring the blues  
heart melt  
in the glacier

*Mike Fainzilber, Israel*

from time zone to time zone a different dawn song

*Sally Biggar, USA*

beach walk dusk  
our footprints follow  
rolling waves

*Thomas F Smith, USA*

## Editor's Choices (EC) - Haiku

I would like to express my gratitude to all the poets who submitted their poems and trusted me with their work. Even though we are unable to carry all of your haiku, reading and learning about your days and inspirations has been a privilege. Sharing, visualising and being part of a few moments of a poet's life is one way of acknowledging the presence of kindness and sensitivity in the world that we inhabit, and for this I am indebted to you for the opportunity.

The haiku section has always carried interesting flora and fauna specific to various areas that the poets represent and this time too, we have a plethora of images from diverse regions. From blackberry brambles and bittersweet, to yellow rattle and larkspur, the squirrel, the turtle, the she-oak, the tiny tots — all of these inhabit the pages and find their voices intertwined with the poets' own experiences of life. I hope these haiku resonated with you, the readers, and helped you find a connection with those across seas and continents, across geographical barriers and cultures.

Here are a few haiku for you to engage with:



dagger hard dawn  
daylight starts to splinter  
along the ice road

John Hawkhead, UK (EC)

This haiku from John Hawkhead is an ideal example of one that should be read aloud for maximum effect. The poet has carefully chosen the sounds and the words in the haiku. The repetition of 'd', a hard plosive, in dagger, hard, dawn, daylight and then ending again with road, gives a clear picture of the nature of the road. A plosive sound such as 'd' is strong and sometimes creates an effect that is sharply abrupt. This is in sync with the word 'splinter' (again, containing the plosive 't' in the word) in line 2. The use of the sibilant 's' in starts, splinter and ice brings a sense of slipperiness from the ice into the poem.

The images that the poet has chosen are strong too and form the backbone of a mesmerising scene. The description of the dawn in question is by itself edgy and not a picture of ease, nor pleasant – it is a “dagger hard dawn”, an unusual and unique choice of words. The image in the second and third line, a surprise, adds to the strength of the poem – what splinters is not the ice but daylight! The choice of words in this haiku brings in emotion through tangible images. When daylight itself starts to splinter along an ice road, what emotions do each of us encounter, what futures do we envision?

Thank you, John Hawkhead, for a lesson in choosing and weighing words and images, to make a haiku that works in multisensorial ways.



a deep breath  
of cloudless sky  
bamboo flute

Robert Witmer, Japan (EC)

This haiku combines so many sensorial images to make a unified whole that does not overwhelm, or crowd the reader. Robert Witmer deftly moves from one deep breath taken, to the vastness of the cloudless (blue) sky. This movement feels liberating, conjuring the elements of space and sky in the reader. The third line brings in the magic of music from a shakuhachi or a bamboo flute, allowing the reader to feel the bamboo in the fingertips while hearing the notes. Even though all of this is happening in the three lines, the poet has carefully kept the haiku light, simple and yet, vast. The poet also manages to capture the truth of that one single moment when the flautist inhales and readies to start the music. A meditative moment for many when all else stops. Thank you, Robert Witmer, for this beautiful meld-of-the-senses haiku.



summer's end  
the stolen bicycle  
returned to our yard

盗まれし 自転車かへる 夏の果て  
nusumareshi / jitensha kaeru/ natsu no hate

Keiko Izawa, Japan (EC)

Keiko Izawa's haiku brings us a simple story, one where a stolen bicycle is returned to the owner at the end of Summer. This story has a happy ending where the owner gets back what is hers. The simplicity of the incident (and the haiku) brings warmth to the reader.

By returning something that was taken without permission, does the thief absolve himself? After all, the person did return the bicycle! However, why was the bicycle stolen, who was the perpetrator, what did the person who lost the bike go through? Was the stealing just an innocent act? If yes, is it condonable if we take what isn't ours just because we can? So many questions are left unanswered and that is what made me go back to the haiku again. The possibility of carrying this story further opens up the reader's experience.

Thank you, Keiko Izawa, for the seemingly simple haiku that opens up a moral dialogue in our heads.



belt askew  
Orion  
enters the night

Katie Montagna, Ireland (EC)

In this haiku, the poet uses the stars to portray a nighttime scene. Orion is seen best in the winter sky of the northern celestial hemisphere. This locates the haiku in a season.

By referring to the stars of Orion's belt in an unusual way, the poem brings a smile to the reader. The three stars that are known as Orion's belt do look askew in their arrangement. A first read of this haiku that has the words placed like the belt stars of Orion, brought a smile. And then, the mention of Orion brings the story of Orion, the Hunter, from Greek mythology to our minds. Katie Montagna also leaves a lot of space in her haiku with the third line — 'enters the night'. Does the haiku have layers that the reader can access when the image is about entering the night, with the belt askew? The answer is probably a yes, if we read the poem deeper. Many things are askew in the darkness of now. But then, the stars of the Orion constellation are some of the brighter ones. A reason for hope.

Till we meet again,

Peace and gratitude,  
**Geethanjali Rajan**

## Haiga – Part 1

Ana Drobot — Romania

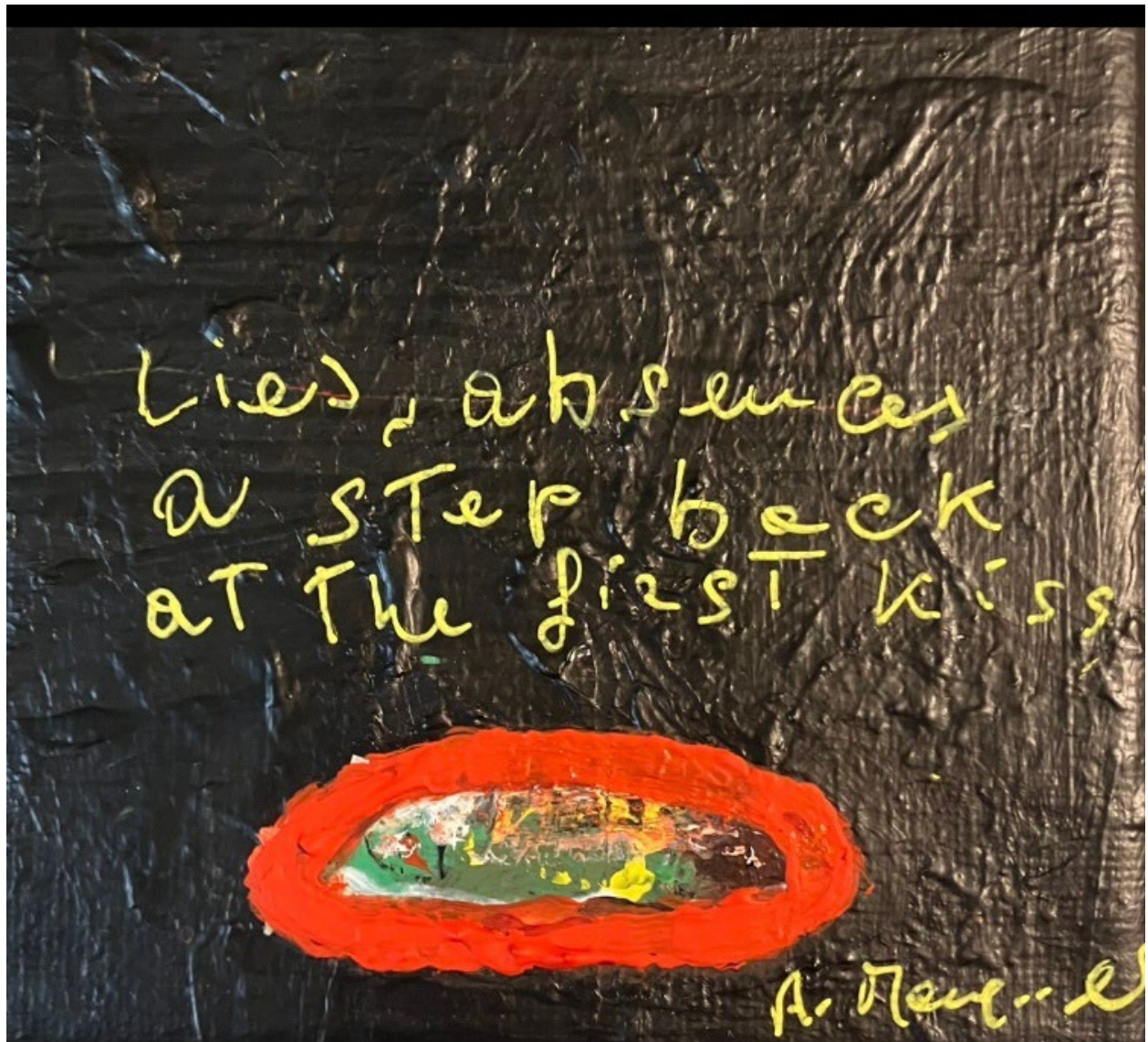


after the storm –  
the past flooding  
my hometown

Image: Pixabay

Poem: Ana Drobot (Romania)

Antonio Mangiameli — Italia



Bonnie J Scherer — USA



tossed about  
from sea to shore  
I remain  
this shell of myself  
barely hinged

Poem/Art: Bonnie J Scherer

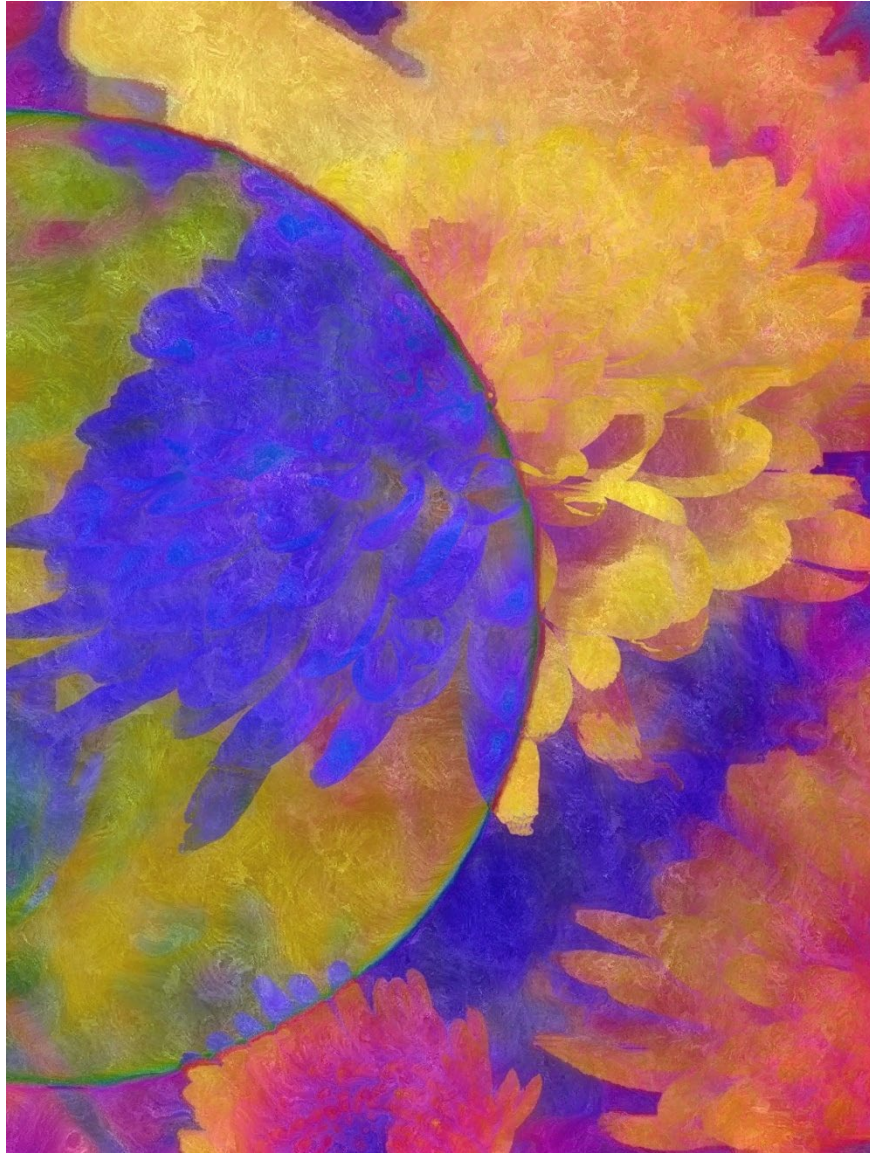
Cezar Ciobica & Paul Alexandru — Romania



Christina Chin — Malaysia



# Senryu



Starburst

still in the present tense his dead daughter

*Joshua St. Claire, USA*

hobbling downstairs  
the smooth  
hard handrail

*Robert Lowes, USA*

knowing  
where I come from  
cattle chewing their cud

*Mike Montreuil, Canada*

hot shower  
some of me floats  
to oblivion

*Quendryth Young, Australia (EC)*

wedding cake  
we meet at the edge  
of a strawberry

*Richard L. Matta, USA*

the stick lightens —  
carving away all but  
what it already held

der Stock wird leicht—  
schnitzen bis nur noch bleibt  
was schon darin war

*Benno Schmidt, Germany*

her smile  
riddled with doubt  
gorse ablaze

a gáire  
lán d'amhras  
aiteann trí thine

*Audrey Quinn, Ireland*

Sunday in the kitchen  
the air steeped in basil —  
mom too

*Nicholas Gentile, USA*

even now  
so much talk  
of her appearance  
silk-lined casket

nursing home worship  
he holds up the hymnal  
and his trousers

*Randy Brooks, USA*

waking to the alarm i never set

*Julie Schwerin, USA*

why art—  
a dead leaf  
is still a poem

Warum Kunst -  
ein totes Blatt  
ist immer noch ein Gedicht

*Deborah Karl-Brandt, Germany*

early morning walk  
his shadow patterned  
with dogs

*Nola Obee, Canada*

finger pier  
slipping into the lake  
the sound of moonlight

hand in hand . . .  
my eyes adjust  
to the stars' light

*Maya Daneva, The Netherlands*

wordless embrace  
the warmth  
of your tears

*Ravi Kiran, India*

wild fire season  
she cuts down  
her smoke bush

*Angela Terry, USA*

instant coffee  
in a styrofoam cup  
my turn to confess

*M. R. Pelletier, USA*

old folks home  
pieces of broken clock  
hidden in a drawer

*Janice Doppler, USA*

coffee froth I scare the dog

*Roberta Beach Jacobson, USA*

rusty spoon  
in a bowl of rainwater  
burnt out rubble

*Diane Webster, USA*

ER  
the blood on the floor  
not mine

*Ruth Holzer, USA*

her mind unravelling . . .  
the names of the stitches  
remain

*Jo McInerney, Australia*

sunrise  
instead of words  
tea leaves

изгрев  
вместо думи  
чаени листенца

*Vessislava Savova, Bulgaria*

haiku study group  
all they said was  
interesting

*Sondra J. Byrnes, USA*

womyn's shelter  
a man by the bushes  
the thoughts in his head

*Anna Cates, USA*

old Beijing  
roast duck  
delivered by robot

*Dennis Owen Frohlich, USA*

deforestation  
even my hairbrush  
starts shedding

वनोन्मूलन  
मेरे बालों का ब्रश भी  
झड़ने लगा है

*Neena Singh, India*

another birthday  
the flaccid skin  
of a days-old balloon

*Jim Chessing, USA*

evening news  
punctuated by gunshots —  
ceasefire

संध्याकाळच्या बातम्यांत  
युद्धविरामाच्या स्वरांमागे  
गोळीबाराचा ठेका

*Gauri Dixit, India*

whistling  
while I work  
the new tea kettle

*Rick Jackofsky, USA*

summer sunset  
the secret i whispered  
to a seashell

paglubog ng araw  
ang lihim na binulong  
sa kabibi

*Alvin Cruz, Philippines*

sunlit strand  
his bent shadow  
reaches shore

*Tim Dwyer, Northern Ireland*

forget-me-nots  
her blue eyes held  
within crow's feet

*Jamie Wimberly, USA*

survivor guilt  
the scars  
you cannot see

*Tony Williams, UK*

forest floor  
microplastics  
in the fallen nest

*Mark Miller, Australia*

mulberry stains  
from sock to sleeve  
mother's question

*Bill Cooper, USA*

moving day  
one last tune  
on dad's guitar

*Robert Witmer, Japan*

house finch's  
quavering song  
waiting for my test results

*Janet Ruth, USA*

pappy whistling  
in the night breeze  
barren branches

*Bonnie J Scherer, USA*

my first book  
dragons and dwarfs fill up  
the bedroom

pierwsza książka  
krasnorudki i smoki  
w moim pokoju

a seagull  
all the scream  
inside me

mewa  
cały ten krzyk  
we mnie

*Aleksandra Rybczyńska, Poland (EC)*

the ice-cream vendor  
has the last ice-cream . . .  
summer's end

*Srini, India*

afternoon sun—  
wise men change seats  
with the turning bus

*Arvind Padmanabhan, India*

after midnight  
yesterday's problems  
now today's

*Thomas David, UK*

summer romance this fling of migrating sandpipers

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

in the dark  
his new perfume —  
is it really him?

dans le noir  
son nouveau parfum—  
est-ce bien lui ?

*Marie Derley, Belgium*

colonial work  
we pass our history  
through a tea strainer

*John Hawkhead, UK*

after cremation  
her saree still sways  
on the clothesline

*Ganesh R., India*

reflecting pool  
a mallard swims  
through our legs

*Michael Lamb, USA*

a signature  
in the cornerstone  
trilobite

*Eric Sundquist, USA*

warm spring day . . .  
her black burqa brushes my knees  
as we pass

lá earraigh peata...  
a burqa ag scuabadh mo ghlúine  
agus muid ag dul that

*Maeve O'Sullivan, Ireland*

washed out  
from working overtime  
day moon

*Mohua Maulik, India*

moving day  
the parts of me  
I leave behind

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

nautical twilight  
fixing her position  
with the stars

*Govind Joshi, India (EC)*

disappearing act  
the scarecrow  
down to its last straw

*John H. Dromey, USA*

summer school  
the boys discover  
it's a stink bug

*Ben Oliver, UK*

southern night  
the air filled with jasmine  
and fried catfish

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

fjaka\* — my cat and I sitting zazen

fjaka — mačka i ja meditiramo

\*a moment of pure relaxation and rejuvenation (Dalmatia)

*D. V. Rožić, Croatia*

old friends  
the goodbye as big  
as the parking lot

cancer waiting room  
the many things we share  
with strangers

*Ben Gaa, USA*

guiding the horse  
with a click of the tongue —  
spirit trail

*Chad Lee Robinson, USA*

elephant trail  
a broken tusk  
fills with rain

*Nitu Yumnam, UAE*

Noh mask  
moonlight deepens  
the lines in her face

*Joanne van Helvoort,  
The Netherlands*

missing me  
mother darns  
my old socks

*Mona Bedi, India*

dark rain  
a seatbelt cushion  
for the chemo port

*Heather Lurie, New Zealand*

night market  
a sixty-minute wait  
for a ten-minute massage

*Louise Hopewell, Australia*

forced migration—  
the lingering warmth  
of mom's hugs

*Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan*

false memories  
putting in more creases  
than I'm taking out

*Mark Gilbert, UK*

pooja room—  
the cat auditions  
for the role of goddess

*Vidya Premkumar, India*

from the middle school  
to main street—  
candy wrappers

*Wilda Morris, USA*

mirror fog -  
whom  
i wipe away

*Vijay Prasad, India*

Veterans Day  
the protest  
almost a parade

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

trails of ants  
they seem to go nowhere  
my haiku scribblings

*Johnnie Johnson Hafernik, USA*

visiting  
my aging parents  
the exit's long off-ramp

*Brad Bennett, USA*

childhood school  
remembering stories  
the teachers never told

చిననాటి బడి  
గురువులు చెప్పని కథలు  
గుర్తుకొస్తున్నాయి

*Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, India*

church bombing  
the patter of rain on  
headless saints

*John Pappas, USA*

nudist beach  
a prudish gentleman  
covers his baldness

plajă de nudiști–  
un domn pudic  
își acoperă chelia

*Mirela Brailean, Romania*

tired  
of the being away  
another redevye

*Jon Hare, USA*

insomnia  
the sheep  
can count themselves

*Mike Fainzilber, Israel*

locker room  
who has a bra  
and who doesn't

second wind  
what dark chocolate  
makes possible

*Cynthia Anderson, USA (EC)*

before coffee  
the razor's dullness  
the hard way

*Joshua Gage, USA*

hot weather  
I sweat it out  
in the dentist chair

*LeRoy Gorman, Canada*

garage sale—  
walking a mile  
in her jimmy choos

*Sarah Lawhorne, USA*

end of the road  
a glimpse of the sea  
between two jeeps

*Mark Teaford, USA (EC)*

crowded sidewalk  
a homeless man  
spits out toothpaste

*Rowan Beckett Minor, USA*

tea at dusk —  
a few blond widows  
gossiping about the priest

ceai la amurg—  
câteva văduve blonde  
bârfesc despre preot

*Mircea Moldovan, Romania*

my music box  
the same melody  
for joy and sorrow

моята музикална кутия  
една и съща мелодия  
за радост и за скръб

*Radka Mindova, Bulgaria*

balloon seller  
he shifts the shadows  
over a sleeping dog

ബലൂൺ വിൽപ്പനക്കാരൻ  
ഉറങ്ങുന്ന നായയുടെ മുകളിൽ  
അവൻ നിഴലുകൾ മാറ്റുന്നു

*Lakshmi Iyer, India*

new diagnosis  
she monitors  
her mood ring

*Christine Wenk-Harrison, USA*

coming back to bed  
she sees he's curled around  
where she was

*David Oates, USA*

drawn to darkness  
my decade as  
an anti-moth

privučen tami  
moja decenija kao  
anti-moljac

my fear of change . . .  
a leafhopper catapults  
into the unknown

moj strah od promjene...  
patuljasti cvrčak se katapultira  
u nepoznato

*Tomislav Sjekloća, Montenegro*

doctor's lounge  
a plastic sturgeon  
on the wall

*Carol Raisfeld, USA*

dock leaves  
the gentle touch  
of Mum's memory

feuilles de rumex  
la douce caresse  
du souvenir de maman

*Timothy Daly, France*

clean dishes  
two wet palms  
on his bottom

piatti puliti  
due palmi bagnati  
sul suo sedere

*Oana Maria Cercel, Italy*

blue inbox  
I always keep  
my rejection emails

*Emil Karla, France*

end of the party  
the birthday girl's tiara  
upside down

*Katie Montagna, Ireland (EC)*

summer romance  
the sweet-tart flavor  
of passion fruit

*Valentina Ranaldi-Adams, USA*

stirring his tea  
with a pencil  
retired carpenter

*Simon Wilson, UK*

looking for nudists—  
pressed against the car window  
two little noses

*David Green, USA*

cleaning day —  
grandma wiping away  
stardust

zi de curățenie —  
bunica șterge  
praf de stele

*Ana Drobot, Romania*

out of oncology  
still alive  
his tamagotchi

in der onkologie  
noch am leben  
sein tamagotchi

*Alexander Groth, Germany*

zazen  
the ebb and flow  
of silence

*Beata Czeszejko, Poland*

## Editor's Choices (EC) – Senryu

I have been enjoying the ways in which this issue's short poems have been leading me on flights of fancy. It's not necessarily ambiguity that does that. Sometimes a poem can open a mental can of worms. I am continually surprised that poems of so few words can lead me in all sorts of different directions. I believe that if a poet can 'show' their readers images without 'telling' them exactly what they mean, it offers the readers a greater freedom to explore. I've selected a few poems, below, which took me on unexpected journeys. However, I want to thank all the poets who submitted work for consideration. It is a privilege to be able to read such an international and eclectic collection of poems. I am only able to select a small fraction of them for inclusion in the journal. I hope those who venture here will find an image, or a story, to transport them, for a moment, away from the here and now.



hot shower  
some of me floats  
to oblivion

*Quendryth Young, Australia (EC)*

Quendryth appears to offer us a straightforward story. Each time we wash, we exfoliate. Dead skin cells are removed to reveal new cells below. And yet this poem led me down a series of rabbit holes. There must be a remarkable number of potential destinations for those dead cells. While a drain may seem like oblivion, the water runs out into the world. And what happens to those atoms and molecules then? Following a different tack, our bodies are made of trillions of cells. As many of those cells are shed and replaced on a daily basis, the people we know are always going to be slightly different from one day to the next. It's unsettling to have such a clear example of transience to hand. And then, working backwards, what are the people we know made of? Where did their constituent atoms and molecules come from? We can think of food and drink, which originated on our planet, but where did our planet come from? What a remarkable series of journeys to be prompted by three lines.



locker room  
who has a bra  
and who doesn't

*Cynthia Anderson, USA (EC)*

Cynthia presents us with what appears to be an innocuous observation. I don't claim to be an authority on brassieres, but there must be multiple reasons for wearing or not wearing them. And, as one investigates those reasons, one has the potential to discover more about the lives and the characters of the people who have made those choices.



end of the road  
a glimpse of the sea  
between two jeeps

*Mark Teaford, USA (EC)*

Mark gives us an apparently simple scene to consider. What I found irresistible about this poem were the layers of ambiguity. The first line, "end of the road", can have multiple readings. It could be literal, or it could be metaphorical. Deciding which of these to work with appears to shape the rest of the story. If we consider the road to end as it reaches the coast, then a glimpse of the sea might be a good thing. It could easily be the destination we were aiming at. But what of the cars? Jeep has a delicious ambiguity. Is it used as an indicator of an SUV, or a brand name without a capital, or an army vehicle? Might the jeeps be preventing access to the sea? So, is that glimpse of the sea all that will ever be seen? I don't know what Mark had in mind for the readers, but this poem provided me with numerous adventures.



end of the party  
the birthday girl's tiara  
upside down

*Katie Montagna, Ireland (EC)*

Katie shows us a scene which should be easy to interpret. The use of “girl” suggests a child having a birthday party. However, my family is still happy to call a woman of any age a “birthday girl”. So, I’m suddenly faced with the question of age. Is our birthday girl, 7, 17, 27 or 70? I can make the poem work for all these ages. The story which explains the upside-down tiara may change, but the end point still works. For me, this poem is a celebration of parties. The age of the “birthday girl” is just a number.



a seagull  
all the scream  
inside me

*Aleksandra Rybczyńska, Poland (EC)*

Aleksandra offers us a bridge (or is it a canyon) between the natural world and the human world. Gulls appear to behave with such freedom. Their loud calls are familiar to many people. How often have we felt like crying out with the same abandon that a gull has, yet been constrained by social niceties? I know people who have gone to the sea and shouted at wild waves battering the shore. In those cases, storms drowned out almost all the sound, so they didn’t attract the attention of startled bystanders.



nautical twilight  
fixing her position  
with the stars

*Govind Joshi, India (EC)*

Govind transports us to a liminal space between day and night. Nautical twilight is strictly defined as a time when the sun is between 6 and 12 degrees below the horizon. The horizon is visible at sea, so sailors can still navigate by the stars. We are not told, but I sense the night is ending, rather than beginning. It feels like we are experiencing a parting from the “she” of the poem, as well as the night. I’m put in mind of the Japanese concept of *mono no aware*. The stars offer a way of remembering this absent person, but soon they will be gone too.

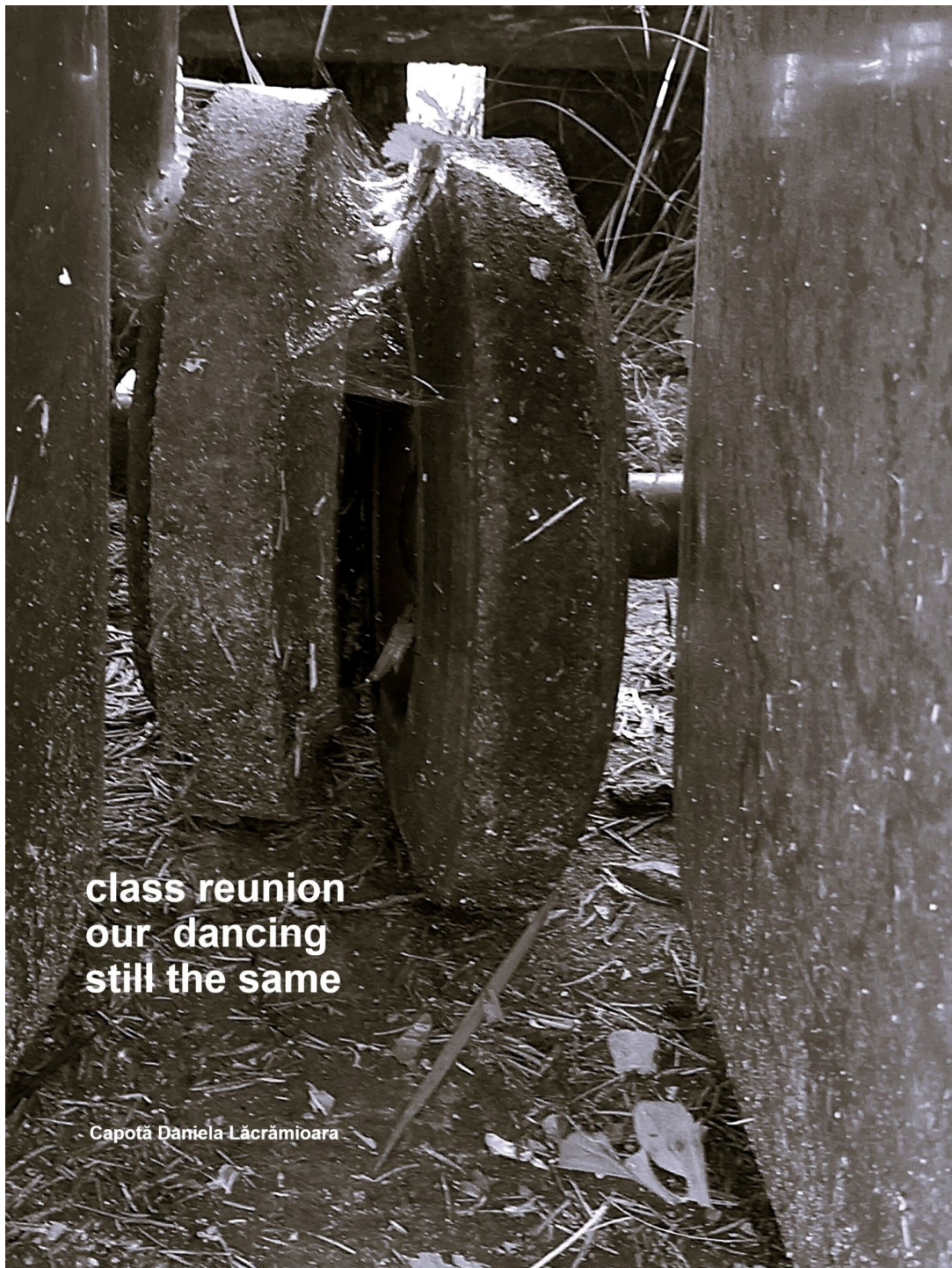
**David J Kelly**

## Haiga – Part 2

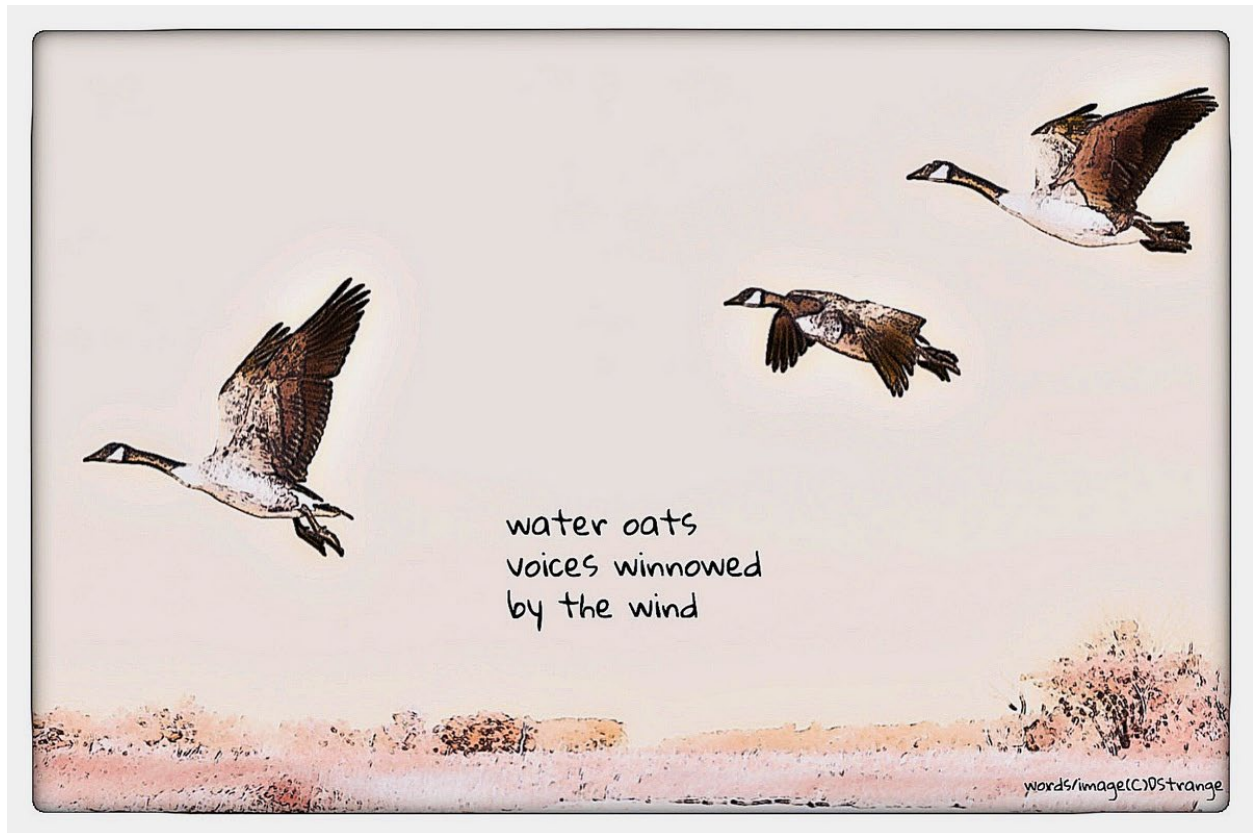
D. V. Rožić – Croatia



Daniela Lăcrămioara Capotă — Romania



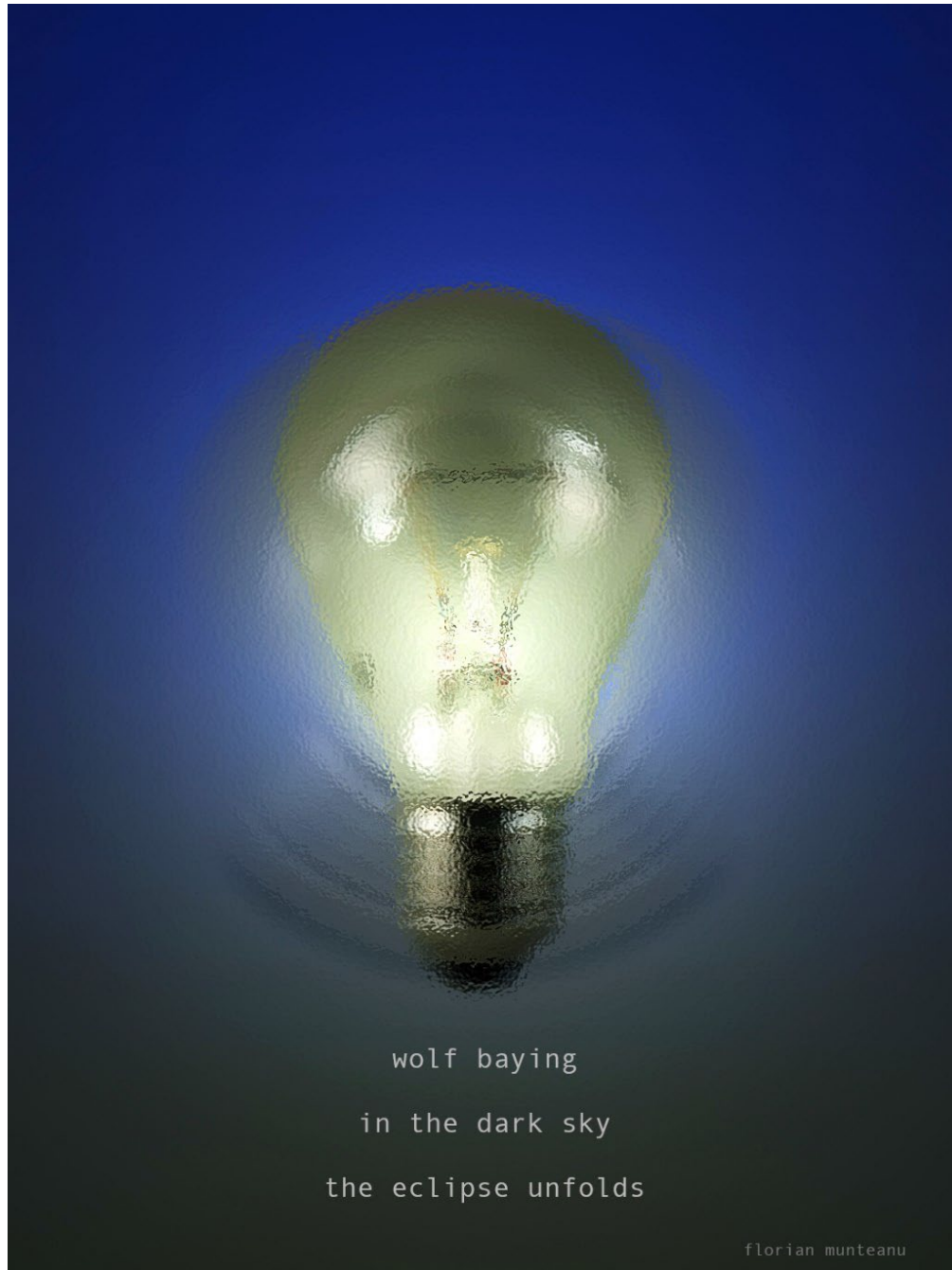
Debbie Strange — Canada



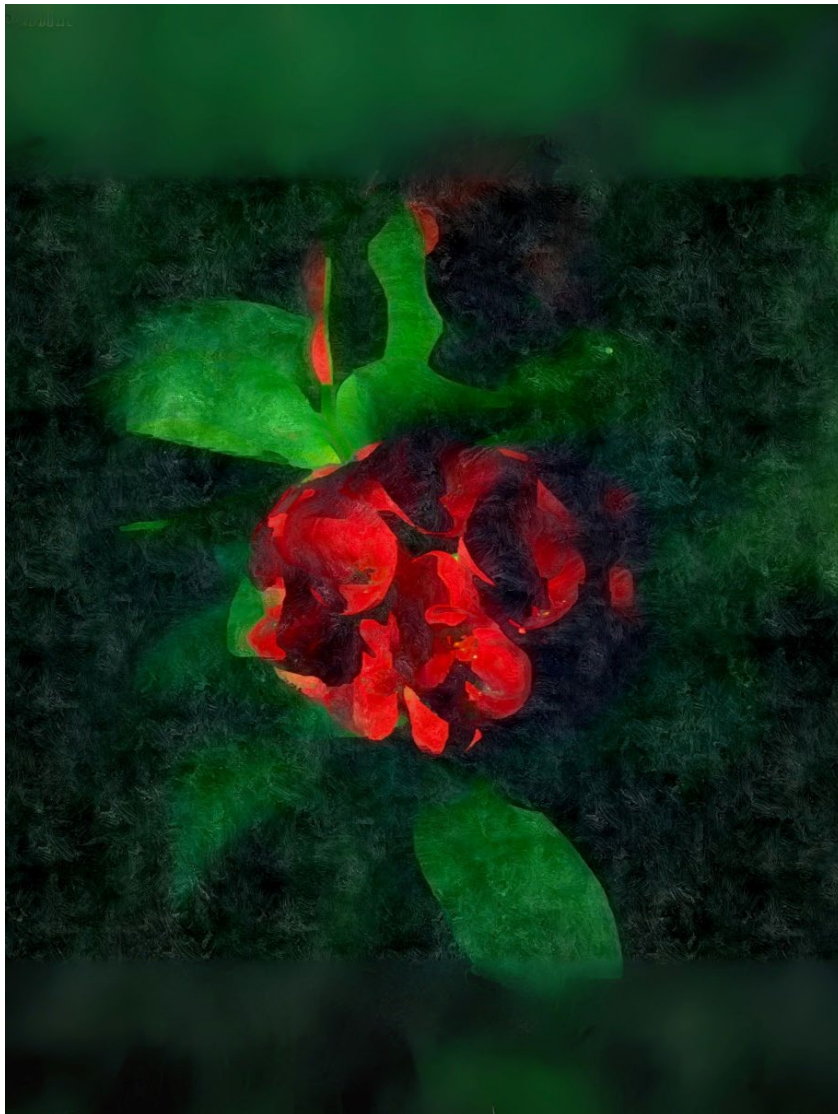
Eugeniusz Zacharski & Jacek Pokrak — Poland



Florian Munteanu — Romania



# Tanka



Iridescence

bittersweet  
that last look in your eyes  
knowing all  
the might-have-beens  
are now truly gone

*Carol Raisfeld, USA*

alone  
on a park bench  
once again  
I hear your sweet voice  
gently carried on the wind

*Gwen Bitti, Australia (EC)*

loving you  
tenderly and truly  
much easier  
after  
our divorce

voljeti te  
iskreno i nježno  
lakše je  
nakon  
rastave braka

*D. V. Rožić, Croatia*

rereading  
our old love letters  
a butterfly  
marks the loneliness  
of the blank pages

rileggendo  
le nostre vecchie lettere d'amore  
una farfalla  
scandisce la solitudine  
delle pagine bianche

*Daniela Misso, Italy (EC)*

fallen leaves  
pile  
the compost  
the fear of knowing  
you more

गिरी हुई पत्तियां  
लाद देती है  
खाद  
तुम्हे और  
जानने का भय

*Aparna Pathak, India*

my baby  
suckling mum's ring . . .  
I watch  
circles widening  
in puddles of rain

*Jo McInerney, Australia*

pantomimist  
his bent head rests  
on his arms  
in the yard across the street  
an infant in the stroller

pantomima:  
ruke položene pod  
nagnutu glavu  
u dvorištu preko puta  
beba u kolicima

*Silva Trstenjak, Croatia*  
*Translator- D. V. Rožić, Croatia*

by the condemned home  
overtaken by pokeweed  
a discarded doll  
hiatus  
from a story left to tell

*Anna Cates, USA*

sun on sand  
and the laughter  
of children,  
plastic buckets filled  
with unmade castles

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

spring blossoms  
on the playground  
two girls vying  
for the attention of a boy  
who doesn't deserve them

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

imagining  
prayer books in their hands . . .  
silent schoolboys  
cradling smartphones  
as the morning bus arrives

*Tim Dwyer, Northern Island/USA*

star gazing  
thinking of my daughter  
faraway . . .  
a solitary dingo and I  
howl to the moon

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

filled with family  
the old house comes to life  
once again  
I wake up alone  
not knowing where I am

*Ruth Holzer, USA*

in a yellowed photograph  
grandmother's toothless smile  
remembering the old country  
a new moon  
at the edge of night

*Robert Witmer, Japan*

sun glinting  
textures on the sea  
a pathway  
lit bright to the west  
to the horizon — to home

*Jon Hare, USA*

wistful days  
in another life before  
Kathabela  
dad would sing I'll take you  
home again Kathleen

*Kathabela Wilson, USA*

the warmth left  
by my late father's hand  
holding mine . . .  
half asleep and half awake  
to this false winter dawn

已故父親的手  
握著我的手  
所存留的溫暖 ...  
半睡半醒面對冬日黎明  
前一小時的短暫光亮

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*

an empty table  
echoes of shared laughter . . .  
mother's gone  
the center thread pulled  
a family unravels

*Gail Brooks, USA*

Canada geese  
on a cemetery lawn  
down south  
stopping by my dad's grave  
to pass along my love

*Cynthia Bale, Canada*

torn silk scarf  
salvaged after your death  
a little more time  
to possess your loveliness  
maternal grandmother

*Eve Castle, USA*

the scent of linden  
slips into the house  
an evening for two  
with the aroma of tea  
and warm words

mirosul de tei  
pătrunde în casă  
o seară în doi  
cu aroma ceaiului  
și cuvinte calde

*Ana Drobot, Romania (EC)*

mid-winter  
the hours are not enough  
just ironed some shirts  
and the crows are already  
flying back to roost

*Sonam Chhoki, Bhutan*

this winter  
a little colder than most  
I press  
my empty palm  
to the kettle's whistle

*Nalini Shetty, India*

wind out of nowhere  
through the open window  
a scented silk veil  
gently covering  
an old shamisen\*

*Florian Munteanu, Romania*

\*shamisen is a traditional Japanese musical  
instrument

summer clouds  
lying on my back  
finding pictures  
a no hurry time when worry  
was not a word I knew

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

wave after wave  
after wave, the wind  
turns the pages  
of the book on the beach . . .  
a mystery

*Ron Scully, USA*

all by herself  
on her board on the edge  
of the breakers  
hunting that first wave  
worth standing up for

*Jim Chessing, USA*

whistling  
at the old surfer  
wrapped in a towel  
the sun sets  
behind a rainbow VW

*Mark Gilbert, UK*

on the wallpaper  
the yoga postures  
motionless  
my mat hasn't moved  
since last summer

sur le fond d'écran  
les postures de yoga  
immobiles  
mon tapis n'a pas bougé  
depuis l'été dernier

*Marie Derley, Belgium*

road fog  
fills the depressions  
my life patched  
by soothing words  
and promises

*Lorraine Haig, Australia*

I'm not used to  
life pampering me  
and making me happy . . .  
I still wonder  
what it would be like

nisam navikla  
da me život mazi i  
usrećuje...  
još se uvijek pitam...  
kako bi to bilo?

*Brigita Lukina, Croatia*

spontaneity  
I walk to the hairdresser . . .  
a Chinese beauty  
with blue hair and red nails  
knocks a decade off me

*Katherine E Winnick, UK*

winter night  
flames dancing over logs  
'The Nutcracker' playing  
the Sugar-Plum Fairy  
dances in my wine glass

*Robert Erlandson, USA*

gardenias  
poke through a picket fence  
to find new light —  
browsing through bookshops  
I'm drawn to self-help

*Margaret Owen Ruckert, Australia*

stuck in traffic  
on my way to work  
I turn on  
the windshield wipers  
to clear my mind

blocaj în trafic  
în drum spre serviciu  
dau drumul la  
ștergătoarele de parbriz  
pentru a-mi limpezi mintea

*Cezar-Florin Ciobîcă, Romania*

eyes dulled  
by life on the streets  
a homeless man  
immune now  
to the scorn of tourists

*Keitha Keyes, Australia*

a healthcare worker  
in hefty garbage bags  
sealed with duct tape  
holding hands with the dying  
gently making believe

*Pamela Garry, USA*

elections-  
always same politicians  
and their parties . . .  
history repeats itself  
when will it get better?

izbori-  
uvijek isti političari  
i njihove stranke...  
povijest se ponavlja  
kad će biti bolje?

*Glorija Lukina, Croatia*

the future pivots  
around me, muddies  
all certainty  
can I finally lean into  
the joy of not knowing

*Richard L. Matta, USA*

cavalier attitude . . .  
the walking sticks toddle  
next to each other  
living their sweet memories  
while the moustaches smile

kavalirski gard —  
gegajući štapovi  
jedan uz drugi  
žive svoja sjećanja  
ah, dok smiješi im se brk

*Senka Slivar, Croatia*

dog training —  
Cavalier spaniels  
wriggling  
their brains out  
through their tails

*Tony Steven Williams, Australia*

regrets  
the old song reappears  
and circles in my thoughts  
a turning buzzard  
rides the wind

*Simon Wilson, UK*

Cape Disappointment  
sea wind ripping off the layers  
that weary us  
at the cusp of this river  
a wide and vast beginning

*colin sandberg, USA*

a bit of sand  
in a clam  
turns into nacre  
becoming  
our better selves

*Bona M. Santos, USA*

ibis evening  
the scent of salt sinking  
into the indigo west  
the waves I know  
only by their sound

*Joshua St. Claire, USA*

the soft chitter  
of tiny migrating birds  
surrounds me . . .  
quite suddenly they're gone  
and I am alone again

*Sally Biggar, USA (EC)*

exotic feathers  
of every colour  
fill the sky  
a writer's mind  
reconfiguring flight

*Joanna Ashwell, UK*

this season  
a thousand-petal lotus  
blossoms  
I yearn for forgiveness,  
quietude and humility

આ ઋતુમાં  
હજાર પાંખડીઓવાળું કમળ  
ખીલ્યું  
હું ક્ષમા, શાંતિ અને નમ્રતા  
માટે ઝંખું છું

લક્ષ્મી ઐયર, ભારત  
*Lakshmi Iyer, India*

monsoon breeze  
in the birdsong  
through the jasmines  
reaching out to me  
this endless circle of life

*Bhawana Rathore, India*

monarchs lost  
to lost meadows  
like ghost buffalo  
haunting prairies  
no longer there

*Curt Pawlisch, USA*

autumn wind  
a silent fire  
inside my chest  
with red maple leaves  
my youth is fading away

vento d'autunno  
un fuoco silenzioso  
dentro al petto...  
con foglie d'acero rosso  
se ne va la giovinezza

*Nazarena Rampini, Italy*

across the field  
sun sets behind long grasses  
pale silhouettes  
two yearling deer  
in alders empty of their leaves

*Linda Conroy, USA (EC)*

outdoor amphitheater  
the rising moon  
steals the scene  
crickets chanting  
all night long

*Tim Cremin, USA*

a shaft of moonlight  
in the spider's web . . .  
what will be caught in it  
and what will pass through  
like the autumn wind

*Jacob D. Salzer, USA*

still with me  
a childhood of dreams  
a golden oats field  
waving cornstalks  
hay on a hot humid day

*Edward J. Rielly, USA*

last winter moon  
the first ducks  
return to old nesting grounds  
building new nests  
covered with old feathers

*Anthony Lusardi, USA*

green wind  
fresh through the maple  
dancing leaves  
on the bedroom wall  
the music we made

*Florence Heyhoe, Northern Ireland*

by the garden's pond  
wildflowers tended by bees  
carefully gathered —  
a breakfast table  
dressed in petals

*Nicholas Gentile, USA*

feeding breadcrumbs  
to sparrows  
watching from their perch  
I also wait  
on my window seat

*Anne Curran, New Zealand*

rotten yellows and pinks  
of flowers past their prime  
as spring winds down  
I think of how much time  
I wasted indoors

*Dennis Owen Frohlich, USA*

paddling  
slowly across  
the mountain lake  
a muskrat  
stirs the stars

*Rick Jackofsky, USA*

the slow deep wingbeats  
of an owl in moss-clad woods  
buff with grey speckling  
I slipstream its flight  
until we hover, our legs dangling

*Philip Davison, Ireland (EC)*

where you end  
and I begin  
the fluid boundary  
between flowing water  
and the stony riverbank

*Richard Kakol, Australia*

walk with me  
where the waves meet  
the sand  
how many more sunsets have we  
until there is no sunrise

*Suraja Roychowdhury, USA*

resetting my clock  
to Atlantic Time  
I worry about  
how much longer  
the right whale has

*LeRoy Gorman, Canada*

seismic blasting  
in the birthplace  
of whales . . .  
the empty singing  
of a shell against my ear

*Jenny Ward Angyal, USA*

space  
where they wheeled away  
your bed pre-op . . .  
prayer flags in the window  
no wind

*Betsy Hearne, USA*

the spotlight  
of the lighthouse pans  
over the waves  
gray seals blink  
on the sandbank

der Scheinwerfer  
des Leuchtturms schwenkt  
über die Wellen  
Kegelrobben blinzeln  
auf der Sandbank

*Pitt Buerken, Germany*

after a funeral  
I walk in silence  
through dry grass  
a wisp of smoke rising  
to the mountain peak

nakon sprovoda  
koračam u tišini  
uvelom travom  
diže se pramen dima  
prema vrhu planine

*Nina Kovačić, Croatia*

in that old photo  
two among the roses . . .  
what if we  
had known someday  
I would write her elegy

*Carole Johnston, USA*

a hibiscus bud  
fails to bloom  
mourning  
for the one, who would  
have been an adult by now

*Mohua Maulik, India*

red poppies  
wild in the field beyond  
the graveyard  
with the soft breeze  
a small nod for the living

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

i struggle  
to find your smell lingering  
in your shirts  
a crescent moon  
reminds me you are here

*Celia Hope, Aotearoa/ New Zealand*

your breath stops  
and the moment echoes  
in my mind forever  
like the hush that follows  
a deeply moving symphony

तुझा श्वास थांबला  
आणि तो क्षण  
मनात घुमत राहिला  
जशी गहिन्या सुरावटीच्या  
शांत शेवटाची साद

*Gauri Dixit, India*

the stones  
lean into each other  
sheltering silence –  
how grief learns  
not to echo

पत्थर  
एक-दूसरे से टिके  
चुप्पी को थामे –  
कैसे शोक सीखता है  
गूँजना नहीं

*Nitu Yumnam, UAE*

white elders  
leaning over  
the stream  
touch—  
this loneliness

*Jenny Polstra, Aotearoa/New Zealand*

a migrant  
looks at the horizon  
a tear falls  
on a coin, shining  
among shore's pebbles

câteodată  
o reuniune de familie  
cu clinchetul paharelor...  
zâmbete și lacrimi  
la sfarsitul zilei

*Mircea Moldovan, România*

in my quiet space  
thoughts and words  
weave soft shelter—  
from chaos outside  
I learn how to prioritize

تتشابك الأفكار والكلمات  
كملاذٍ آمن  
يحجب فوضى العالم  
ويعلمني ترتيب الأولويات  
فاطمة الزهراء حبيس/ الجزائر

*Fatma Zohra Habis, Algeria*

## Editor's Choices (EC) – Tanka

alone  
on a park bench  
once again  
I hear your sweet voice  
gently carried on the wind

*Gwen Bitti, Australia (EC)*

the scent of linden  
slips into the house  
an evening for two  
with the aroma of tea  
and warm words

*Ana Drobot, Romania (EC)*

the soft chitter  
of tiny migrating birds  
surrounds me . . .  
quite suddenly they're gone  
and I am alone again

*Sally Biggar, USA (EC)*

across the field  
sun sets behind long grasses  
pale silhouettes  
two yearling deer  
in alders empty of their leaves

*Linda Conroy USA (EC)*

These four tanka speak of grief, comfort, emptiness and changing beauty. They suggest a focus on simplicity, emotion and an acceptance of imperfection and the unknown, aligning with the Japanese aesthetic of *wabi-sabi*. They evoke feelings and allow the reader to connect with the moment and embrace ambiguity, to ponder for a while rather than to seek resolution.

*'alone'* brings thoughts of reminisce, of savouring memories and feeling the grief  
*'the scent of linden'* carries feelings of cheer and restfulness, reminiscing about the simple heartfelt pleasures of home  
*'the soft chitter'* stirs pathos, there is a momentary lift followed by an emptiness  
*'across the field'* speaks of beauty but also hints at change, calling for courage and resilience

\*Wabi-sabi, is a Japanese concept that finds beauty in imperfection, impermanence, and the natural cycle of growth and decay



The slow, deep wingbeats  
of an owl in moss-clad woods  
buff with grey speckling  
I slipstream its flight  
until we hover, our legs dangling

*Philip Davison, Ireland (EC)*

This fine tanka holds one long after the reading is over. It's as if we are in the slipstream, being magically carried all the way, beat by beat. The slow pace of wing beats in the first line, caught by five single-syllable words, sets the pace. The detail in the description of the 'owl in moss-clad woods, buff with grey speckling' draws us in and delights. The enchantment increases in the last line as we, too, 'hover, our legs dangling.' The surprise at being carried together in the 'slipstream' uplifts spirits until we too are rising above the mundane and ordinary.



rereading  
our old love letters  
a butterfly  
marks the loneliness  
of the blank pages

rileggendo  
le nostre vecchie lettere d'amore  
una farfalla  
scandisce la solitudine  
delle pagine bianche

*Daniela Misso, Italy (EC)*

This tanka draws empathy. It allows us the space to reflect, ponder, puzzle and gather the pieces. There seem to be extremes, one of love and one of loneliness, yet within this is the surprise presence of a butterfly. Whether the butterfly is alive or is sketched, the symbol suggests beauty and transformation. Yet, simultaneously, the butterfly brings to the forefront the current emptiness of the pages without writing. However, the effect of the multiple use of the letter 'l' creates a soft, flowing sound that is soothing. Perhaps with the butterfly, a new promise is in the air. It will be left to the reader to muse.

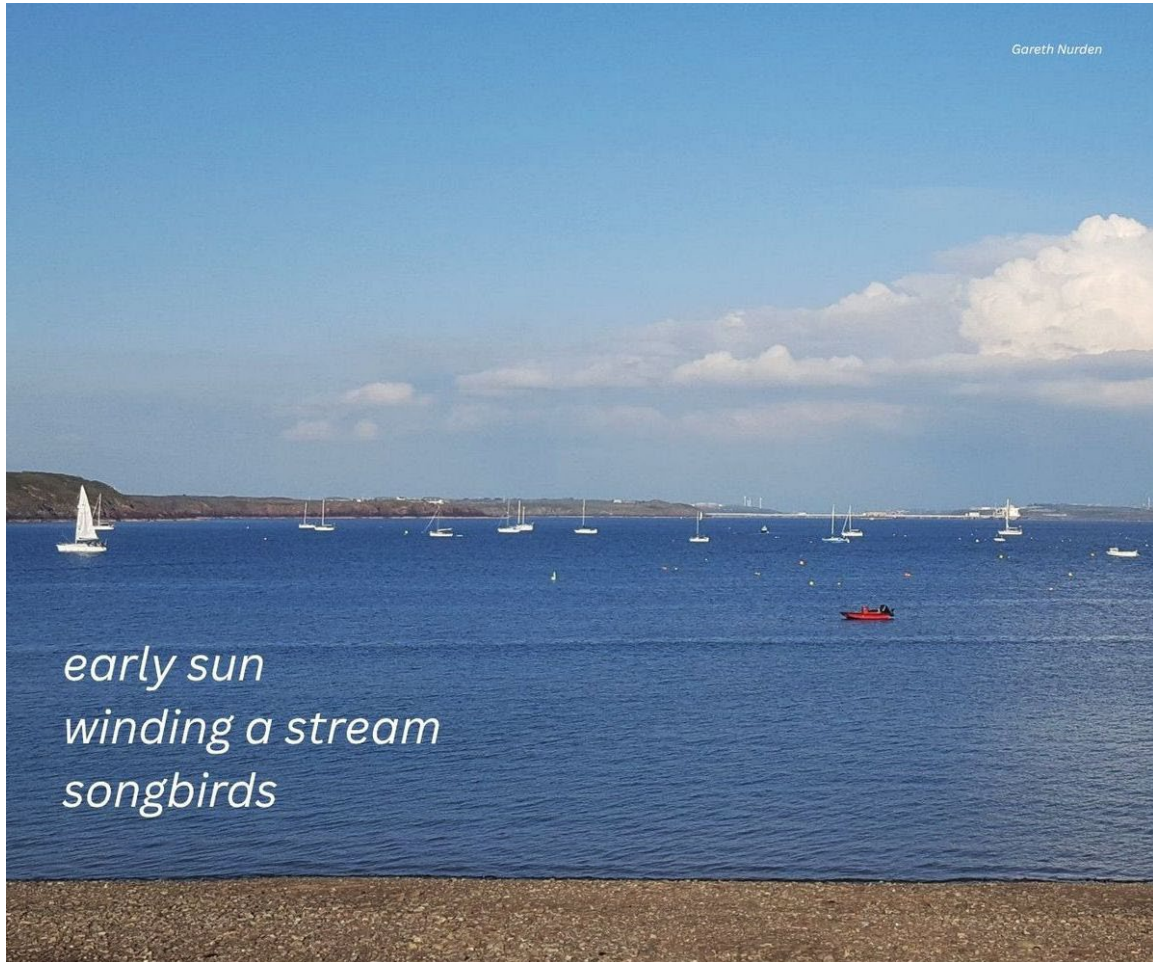
**Jenny Fraser**

## Haiga – Part 3

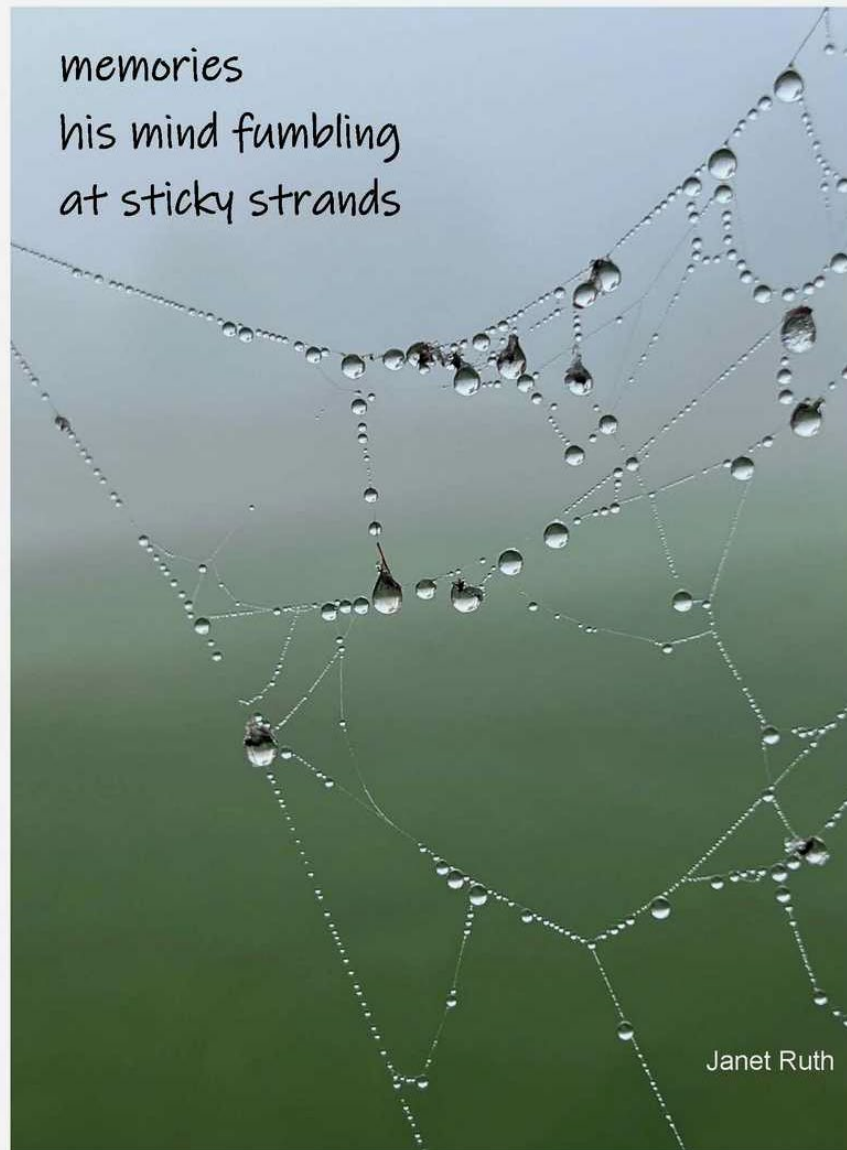
Franjo Ordanić & Sandra Šamec – Croatia



Gareth Nurden — Wales



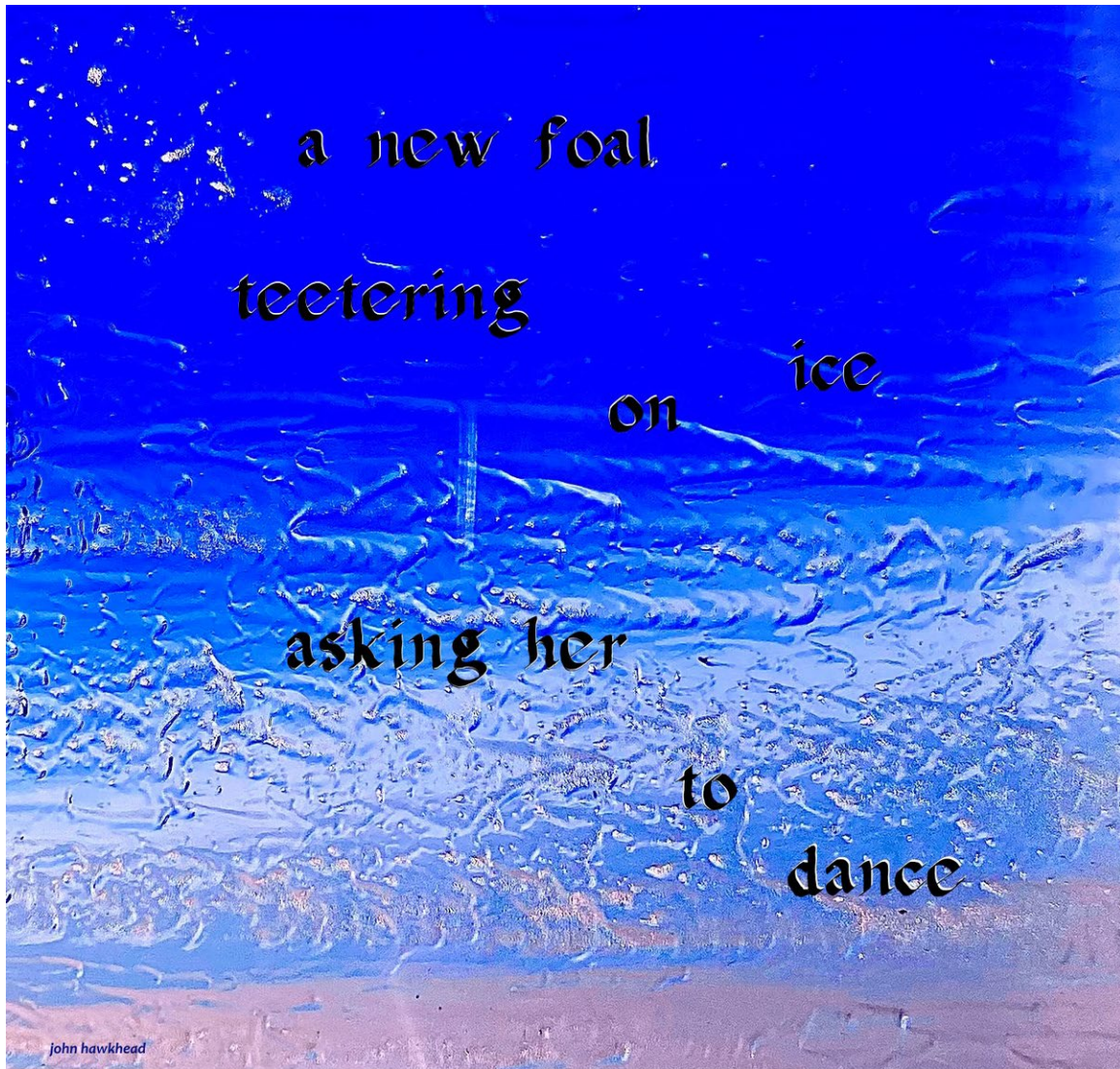
Janet Ruth — USA



Jenny Fraser—New Zealand



John Hawkhead — UK



Johnnie Johnson Hafernik & Dorothy M. Messerschmitt — USA



# Haibun



Glimmer

## Surprises

*Thomas Smith, USA*

We live a mile above sea level; the air is thin and the humidity hovers around 20%. Water boils slower, so we drop glass beads into the pot and cover it, hoping to trap some of the heat and add a little pressure.

Our dining table is a casualty of the dry air. The glue holding its legs dries out, and one night, mid-meal, a leg falls off. We chase dishes as they slide toward the edge.

My guitar case, too, becomes a makeshift humidifier; an apple inside keeps the neck from pulling off the body. Outside, we have to tend to the lawn, watering it religiously while bagging the clippings. A third of our yard is devoted to desert landscaping — cacti surrounded by colored rock.

We entertain ourselves with static electricity. Rubbing balloons on our clothes charges them, and we make them stick to each other or make the kids' hair stand straight up. After shuffling our feet on the carpet, we flick a spark in the dark to find the bathroom light switch.

It's a game for the kids. "Son, stop shocking your sister!"

ZZZap! He shocks her anyway.

high country life  
snowcapped mountains  
watch in stillness

## Shenandoah

*A.J. Johnson, USA*

In the morning chill, the fog boils up from the warm river and hangs low over the bottom lands. Mist beads on the cornstalks and silvery spider webs droop with heavy droplets. Standing on the old trestle bridge, I watch the river flowing by, fresh and clean over boulders and gravel. The fog lifts and parts to reveal the upstream shallows and a heron silently taking flight.

raising young  
under the old bridge  
cliff swallows

## Unfinished Business (EC)

*Ganesh R., India*

La Paz feels like the love child of a carnival and a board game where the rules were invented mid-play. Every alley buzzes with a story so bizarre, it could've leapt from a fever dream. You can buy almost anything here — bicycles, USB drives... love potions.

And where would one go for such enchantments? The infamous Witch Market, of course — less “market” and more “museum of the surreal, curated for the brave.” Shelves brim with llama foetuses, neatly wrapped and sold for ritual burials beneath new homes as offerings to Pachamama, Mother Earth. If your house is more than three stories tall, though, legend says you'll need something bigger. No, not a grown llama. A human.

The tale goes that a shaman is hired to find someone who won't be missed — a homeless person, an addict. They're drugged, buried alive beneath the foundations to “keep things in balance.” Some say bodies have turned up decades later, interrupting the skyline with skeletons.

And then there are the miners. My guide tells us they believe a human sacrifice might bring a vein of gold or prevent the next accident. Locals won't go near the mines alone — not out of superstition, but survival. No one wants to end up beneath someone's home, holding up luxury tiles with their bones. They go in groups, like friends on a strange, morbid pilgrimage.

I ask, half-joking, “What about tourists?”

He smiles. “Not unless you stay too long.”

stories over mate  
old ways  
woven through threads of time

## Winter's Day Moon

*Pamela Garry, USA*

It was a northern Maine winter, before climate change was on the tip of the tongue. The oblivious little one was briefly swinging in subzero sunny weather. Sparkles on the frosted a-frame caught him off guard.

His screech reached his mom's ears; and she flew to his rescue. For life and limb, with bated breath, he froze, obeying her every command. There was no time to debate fate, as the tip of his tongue stuck to the metal swing-set. Posthaste, his mom returned with warm water to gently melt the frost and set him free.

geared up  
for kindergarten  
a kitten on each snowshoe

## Hanoi

*Shiva Bhusal, USA/Nepal*

*Are you married?* The Grab driver asks. *No.* I say. *Then you should get a massage, man.* He replies. And then he utters something in Vietnamese and laughs. I do not understand. After a twelve-hour flight and a fifteen-hour transit, it's not that I didn't want to get a massage. But the more he tries to convince me, the more un-convinced I become.

winter wedding  
the train of her gown  
tangled on his shoe

## Glances in the Wind

*Stefano d'Andrea, Italy*

It's not yet dawn, in the narrow streets of the pink and rough stone villages of  
Provence, and the screaming is already starting . . .

the scream of the Mistral wind that freezes, ruffles, tears, rips, sharpens passions,  
enhances illnesses, upsets souls . . .

and doesn't abandon you even at night . . .

ripe wheat —  
between the wings of crows  
Vincent gives up\*

## Sguardi nel vento

Non è ancora l'alba, nelle stradine strette dei villaggi di pietra rosa e scabra della  
Provenza, e già comincia l'urlo...

...l'urlo del vento di Mistral che gela, scompiglia, strappa, dilania, affila le passioni,  
aguzza le malattie, sconvolge le anime...

e non ti abbandona neanche la notte...

grano maturo —  
tra le ali dei corvi  
s'arrende Vincent\*

\*Vincent Van Gogh

## Waiting

*Lynn Edge, USA*

An email from the cemetery society concerns a funeral for a woman I don't know. She must have been a distant relative of my deceased husband because only his family's descendants and their spouses can be buried there. In 1860 William B. Edge came to Texas and accumulated ranch land in the hill country. When his daughter died, he buried her on his property. Of the vast surrounding land, only the cemetery still belongs to the family.

my name  
on the double headstone  
. . . date pending

## Therapy

*Dr. Brijesh Raj, India*

breakfast crumbs  
the crow cedes ground  
to a squirrel

The meerkat cocks its head at the sound of shoes, stands tall and hurries to a vantage atop a rock. It poses, looking straight ahead, then turns and presents an imperious profile, its little snout pointed just a touch upwards. Suddenly, it frowns down at an entourage of little upstarts trooping out from their den. Scrambles down, glancing to check if it still has our attention, and starts digging the sand furiously with one little paw at a time – as if to reveal some rare treasure only for our eyes, in return for a small consideration of course.

Not twenty yards away, in the reptile enclosure, a lizard scrambles down the small rock face towards the front. Pretending to ignore us completely, it violently snatches a mouthful of dried hay off the glass floor and climbs up to a safe distance. It begins to chomp down furiously, glaring at anyone daring to eye its lunch.

The star attractions at Taman safari though, are sans doubt the two giant pandas. And a smaller red one, all three of whom are enjoying siestas in separate enclosures. Some beautiful albeit less glamorous sightings later, we circle back to try our luck. One of the giant pandas sits hunched over a large clump of bamboo leaves, placed strategically in front of the viewing area. She placidly tears out a sprig sized bite, her little black ears keeping the proverbial 'eyes open'. Reclining backwards, she then stretches an arm lazily for another culm. Suddenly she feels the need to brush and repeatedly scrapes the leaves against her yellowing teeth. Then returns to her vegetarian repast. Luncheon complete, her hips sway slowly and deliberately to her log-bunk for another round of shut eye.

*continued . . .*

Her partner one level below is being offered 'panda cake' alternating with carrot and speared by a long, narrow stick. At first, he ignores the keeper's Pavlovian clicker. Then reluctantly rises to free up storage in his massive abdomen. And ponderously walks the twenty steps to the proffered treat. He straightens to his full length slowly, hooks the treat and guides it into his mouth. Then settles to chew 20 times, in his favourite hunched over pose. Until the next one.

dinner with dogs  
a doberman's nose  
nudges me daintily

## When it's all good

*Anannya Dasgupta, India*

The living room is exactly as it was yesterday, and the day before, and the one before that, all the way back to the day I set it up a year ago. Couches and chairs set up face to face. Plumped up in cushions, bright in colour – who can sit here and not feel comforted? Bathed in the yellow light of soothing lampshades, I sit in each of the five seats on different days. Sometimes to read, sometimes to drink tea, sometimes to put my feet up and doze off.

grown  
into a forest of many years ...  
abandoned land

Guards let down, the nightmares have returned, and worse. These don't need me to be asleep. They catch me awake. This time they come in bouts of seething, mute, rage. I sit down spent. Pretty cushion covers. Comfortable couch. I am glad I picked this shade of green.

weeding the garden  
only to weed it again –  
living the dreamlife

The cycle of birth and death over and over again in one lifetime alone. No wonder the saints call for the intervention of Gods.

## Unyielding

*Kathleen Tice, USA*

I was at a local frame shop recently, and the owner lent me a book of abstract Japanese art by the female artist, Toko Shinoda. She was born in 1913 and died at the age of 108. In 2016, Shinoda was honoured on a Japanese postage stamp. She was the only artist to have been celebrated in Japan in this manner while still alive.

I love her stark and bold abstract paintings, which are usually streaked with a red mark, in protest against the calligraphy instructor, who crossed out her calligraphy as a young girl. The frame shop owner has one of her original paintings, which he says is valued at \$30,000.

“and I don’t want to miss a thing” watching the moon turn red

## Disappearing Act

*Richard L. Matta, USA*

"Why didn't you give the yearbook your toddler photo?" Mom asks. That begins the excuses.

"Maybe the camera steals souls — I saw that in a movie once." I prefer to take the photos.

Avoid the flash. Be the one a keen observer might say, "But, who took the picture?" Once I told a friend, "Maybe I'll be a spy one day — best to stay clear of cameras." She laughed. "Anyone can read you like a book," she said. "And you're not a very good photographer."

floating barge  
amidst seagulls and seals  
instagramming me

## Memento

*Neena Singh, India*

The first real downpour comes mid-afternoon. No thunder, no warning — just a sudden burst of rain that sends two squirrels darting up the pine tree. From the window, I watch puddles form along the garden path. Within minutes, a bevy of street children are out — barefoot, shrieking, arms flung wide to greet the rain.

Their laughter brings back a monsoon afternoon from my childhood — the terrace over-filled with water, an upturned black umbrella that we fill with coloured glass marbles, a swirl that sends marbles flying in the water. We five friends scramble on hands and knees to hunt them — clothes soaked, hair dripping, muddy feet slipping. The sparkling glee of the victor who finds the most marbles. Papa's loud call beckons, "Come down! You'll catch a cold!" and I yell back, "Just five more minutes!"

flickering light  
on the closed gate  
a lone crow

## Scales of Love

*Joanna Ashwell, United Kingdom*

Terrain — rain forest, desert sands, tropical island, then shifting ice. The way we collide and separate from each other.

Emotion — sunshine, rainfall, hail, tornado, bomb cyclone, thundersnow, squall line, waterspout, monsoon... the push and pull away again.

Habit — we keep on returning back to the start.

two islands  
darkness and light  
refracting the soul

## Unguarded

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

Somewhere between the shores of consciousness and the indigo jaws of daybreak, you come to me. Silently, you step from a drunken haze.

A drowning man, I clamber to grasp your steady hand. I cling, fearful of the pale fingers of day that will soon find their way through the shutters. Reaching deep within my helplessness, you haul me from the clutches of darkness. Freeing me for moments.

Morning mocks with its growing, harsh light. Shedding hope as a tree loses leaves, this heart slowly dies.

a place  
death comes to dream  
the blue of night

## Dream

*Ana Drobot, Romania*

The path guides my steps toward a cooler area, by the lake, where other stories await — the kind tied to a sky disturbed by the slightest ripple on the water's surface, or to the disappearance of an entire world with the leap of Bashō's frog. This time, however, nothing happens — it's just quiet.

sun rays  
cooling off in the lake —  
a walk for two

Here, though, my shadow turns playful. Sometimes it hides, other times it reappears. Still, I know it's there, and it will follow me down other sunlit paths, as well as on the road back home. The greenhouse with exotic plants and the path covered with dry leaves from last autumn, which I once called the Autumn Alley, will have to wait for another time.

Today, I wanted to spend more time in what I call the summer zone — which otherwise seems abandoned once the roses disappear.

## Changeover

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

loose windows  
listening in the darkness  
to the winds of March

Another night with sleep being coy, bashful, a tease. Comes in, stays a while, disappears, leaves behind a heavy sluggishness. I feel cold and wrap a blanket over my robe. With hot milk, a muffin and a deck of cards I play solitaire and wait. At 5:01 in the morning winter clocks out and spring clocks in. The thought is cheerful, but it is still dark and the wind is still blowing and lashing trees against the house. Feeling warmer and with hunger satisfied, I return to bed and hope maybe now... may ...be now... now...

mourning doves  
cooing lullabies  
at dawn

## Awakening

*Erin Castaldi, USA*

Some nights, after the babies awaken, have had their fill of milk, their tiny bottoms changed and patted back to tranquil slumber; I step outside. I go out hunting. I tiptoe down our creaky Victorian stairs and walk to the kitchen door, still high stepping. On my way out, I snack hunt. Sometimes culling the broken bits of my husband's Oreo's or grabbing a handful of salted cashews and step out into the hot, sticky, dead of night. My eyes strain heavenward as this northeast humidity overwhelms me. Often, I don't bring my glasses out with me. As that would require another pass over noisy floorboards through my antique bedroom. Without them, I notice streaks that I cannot neither confirm nor deny in description.

meteor shower  
the neighbour's cat pees  
in my tomato garden

## Pay back

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

a crow's caw  
calls the murder to order . . .  
day moon

They waited for twilight. Boot scuffs rattle the gravel sidewalk. A neighbour's dog growls, barking as they pass, ghosts keeping to the shadows.

harvest moon  
blood pooling  
in the alley

## The Wailers

*Bisshie, Switzerland*

Driven by a blinding headache and severe hunger, I volunteer to go for a short walk to the bakers to get some breakfast for us.

It's on the London Road. It occurs to me as I walk, that this stretch of road has never in my lifetime been free of dirt and grime. A place about which nobody cares.

stultifying heat  
the overweight bulldog  
squirts out a turd

Finally at the front of the queue, I get a panicky call from my sister.

"You'd better get back. Mum's breathing has become very erratic," she tells me.

"Ok," I reply, but my head is telling me that this does not compute. Mum was breathing fine just ten minutes ago when I left.

I order sausage rolls all round and head back to the hospital at a fair old clip.

As I enter Mum's room, it's clear my sister is right. Mum's breathing is very uneven.

Hopefully keeping the alarm from my voice, I tell her, "I'm back Mum. Got some sausage rolls, even a vegan one for Nate. Didn't think you'd fancy one yet, but I can go back if you want."

None of us has an appetite now. I put the bag of sausage rolls on the windowsill and return to my blue plastic chair with the loose screw.

*continued . . .*

yellow washed sky  
bars of redemption song  
come and go

Silently I count the length between breaths, until I don't.

hotter than hell  
the doctor's hacking cough  
cuts the silence

## Visitation

*K. Srilata, India*

Sister Selvi glances at the doctor's notes: "Aditi. 14 years old. Terminal brain cancer."  
And beneath that, the scrawled afterthought:

"Refuses to speak. Loves birds. Amateur ornithologist."

Turns out Aditi has been here a while. Her mother sits beside her, eyes vacant and already grieving.

Day 32: First visitors, two friends from school. Aditi turns her face away.

Day 33: In pain. They up the morphine.

Day 34: Sister Selvi places a feeder outside the window.

Day 35: A rare blue tit appears. First sign of interest. *That's cyanistes caeruleus*, whispers Aditi. Emerging briefly from her grief, her mother smiles.

Soon there are other flashes of wing. Before she goes, she identifies seventeen species. Between her mother and Sister Selvi, they have kept track.

doing time in birds time takes flight

## Ephemera

*Carmela Marino, Italy*

late winter  
the narrowed eyes  
of a stone Buddha

It's been a week since a diagnosis petrified me, just a thousand thoughts keep moving, they seem to race in the mind. I try to suffocate them by drawing attention to beautiful things: my children, my husband, reading books, but it is not easy. I find myself lying half-naked on the table and staring at the ceiling of a windowless room waiting for the doctor.

emergency exit  
the sky on the computer  
desktop

Accompanied by my long sigh, the door opens: a head of blond curls and the white of his movement bring me the wind. A long needle pierces my skin. I try to decipher his gaze as he visits me — in the meantime it has taken thirty minutes to shrink and embark on a long journey inside myself: like Alice in Wonderland, I go from room to room in my life.

anaesthesia  
the shirt moved  
by my heartbeat

A tremor in my hands makes it hard to get my bra back on. My gaze passes from the ceiling to his lips. I ask to repeat the diagnosis twice. Disbelief, a wall of mist falls before me until I don't feel the pain in my breast.

*continued . . .*

clouds of March  
from my carcinoma  
the tip of a star

The road runs in my eyes, I steal every moment before it becomes a distant point — a homeless man folds the dawn in a cardboard in the indifference of people's coming and going. On the bare branches the first buds seem to open. I ask forgiveness from my inner child.

spring- miracle  
my shadow walks  
on the river

## Reverberation

*Zachery May, USA (EC)*

I know what it's like...

to feel your joints burn away, to run your hands under warm water willing the needles  
in your knuckles to melt, to beg your chemo-ridden mom to open the peanut butter lid,  
to grip your baby too tight in your arms terrified you'll drop her

sunset

to have a diagnosis carve years off your headstone, to waste months playing the  
insurance game, to feel your mouth split open with sores from side effects, to pray to a  
god you don't believe in anymore that you didn't pass this on to your kids

on the cherry's skin

to be kissed by someone who loves you anyway, to appreciate a day with good bones,  
to walk the wooded trail with your children, to drink the stars on a glassy night

I eat the light

## Woodsy Notes

*Bonnie J Scherer, USA*

He still likes it when I pack his lunch. Never mind that all he wants is an assortment of fresh fruit, some veggie sticks and a small baguette if we have one on hand. He's not one to eat much when he's chasing clay targets in the birch forest of the local Izaak Walton League range. But he does need to keep the juices flowing when he's shooting competitively.

Maybe it's how I carefully pack those red globe grapes he likes, rinsing and layering them on a paper towel to soak up excess moisture. Maybe it's how I julienne slice those Alaskan grown carrots into perfect matchstick size. And that sourdough baguette. Perhaps it taps into the memories of the days we hitchhiked across Europe as young lovers snacking on bread, wine and cheese.

But then there's the little love messages I slip into his bag whenever I pack him a lunch to go.

collecting sweetness  
when the sap flows  
love bites

## Invisible Web

*Simon Wilson, United Kingdom*

Sitting in a Garden Centre with a cup of tea, my sister and I look at the backs of our hands and discuss whether we really know them that well. It strikes me, as we do this, that the distance from one side of my head to the other is much the same as the width of my hand. It is alarming that in that distance I can lose a thought. I mention it to my sister, who tells me that thoughts don't travel in a straight line, and they probably have to make a thousand twists and turns as they swing from neuron to neuron. It's an interesting theory but though she was an excellent accountant, and is a first-class sister, I'm unconvinced of her credentials as a brain surgeon. It would not be the first time in the last sixty years that she has told me something that proved to be convincing but untrue.

My wife appears, clutching a bulging bag. She overhears my sister's last words.

"I think," she says, "that thousands might be a flattering estimate."

the universe  
in one small skull  
the scent of coffee

## Making Peace

*Caroline Giles Banks, USA*

starts at the kitchen table.  
Worried awake, tangled  
in lacy bedsheets,  
images of the absent other  
rumple my dreamscape.  
Ghosted. No texts for days.

Hair unknotted and unkempt,  
I grasp the teacup, glazed in truce-white.  
The handle, its fissures and cracks  
cemented with lacquer and gold,\*  
firmly enclasps its bowl.  
The kettle whistles high notes.

how beautiful —  
the ring finger indent  
not yet faded

*\*Author's Note: Kintsugi, known as 'golden repair,' is the Japanese art of reconstructing broken ceramics with lacquer and gold powder. The eye-catching seams symbolize imperfection, acceptance, and resilience.*

## Hourglass

*Carol Raisfeld, USA*

I remember him from the years when everything sparkled with new light. There may have been a hint of love as we shared adventures, grains of sand in our clothes and laughed until dawn. Then, in the dancing crowds we came apart. We slipped off into the world leaving little marks, bits and pieces of each other for each other.

And now a voice from the past calls, thinking I'd like to know, and tells me he's died. I'm grieving for a little twig of love that never blossomed. It joins the debris on the sidewalk of my journey.

sleeping city  
rivulets find their way  
in the rain

## Even as Dusk Falls

*Vidya Shankar, India*

“Deepam! Deepam! Deepam!”

My Paati walks out from the puja room with the lamp, holding the stem of the small brass vilakku with her right hand and shielding the flame with her left. We stop whatever we are doing and rise. She walks to the front door and makes a gesture of lending glow to the deepening darkness. This is the cue for one of us to turn on the porch lights. She then walks back into the house all the way to the back door and out into the courtyard, to the sacred tulsi pedestal. We follow her as she circumambulates the shrine three times before placing the vilakku in the lamp alcove.

Today, my 1 BHK flat does not hold space for a tulsi shrine but old habits die hard.

lotus petals  
folding with the sun  
daily prayer

## Full Son (EC)

Dylan Stover, USA

*For mom, who made the garden grow*

|                                |                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| April sunlight warms           | a bed of black                   |
| soil and dust between          | the brick wall and our cracked   |
| cement path, the same          | plot where the pansies           |
| failed last year.              | <i>She pointed to a packet</i>   |
| <i>in a drugstore display</i>  | <i>and said, "Easy</i>           |
| <i>to grow, see?" Sow</i>      | in full sun, keep moist;         |
| wait one to three              | weeks until the seed             |
| leaves spear loose soil.       | Blooms attract butterflies.      |
| <i>"C. sulphureus: It says</i> | <i>the Spanish conquistadors</i> |
| <i>discovered the species</i>  | <i>while searching for gold</i>  |
| <i>in the New World."</i>      | Better than coming home          |
| empty-handed, I've come        | to realize, as I squeeze         |
| the trowel handle              | to part the dark earth.          |

*joining you the border of orange and yellow cosmos*

## The Fireman's Lift

*Glenn G. Coats, USA*

Before  
the climb up Big Squaw,  
my parents  
did not know  
each other very well,  
just a handful of barn dances,  
a few fishing trips  
to Bud Lake, and a restaurant  
when they could afford one —  
work kept them  
apart.

Before  
they rested  
at the old fire warden's cabin —  
there had been  
a wedding  
at the wooden church  
and a long drive  
up to Maine.

Before  
my mother and father  
reached the rock  
staircase,  
there had been glimpses  
of the Bigelow range;  
the big lake shimmering  
down below,  
and a noticeable limp  
in mother's stride.

*continued . . .*

Before  
my father pulled my mother  
over his shoulder,  
she had slipped  
off her sandals,  
and revealed the blisters  
on her ankles.

Before  
my father carried my mother  
seven and a half miles  
down the mountain,  
even before they sank  
into the soft bed,  
they knew they would  
be together —  
for a long, long time.

a changing sky  
in the long arms  
of a sycamore

## Creaky Floorboards

*Janice Doppler, USA*

Four-year old Gwen sees something at night that scares her, keeps her awake. Her sister, Morgan, sees it too. She is unafraid. Keeping a hallway light on doesn't help. Neither does a nightlight in their room. Daddy spends a night watching for whatever it is, but detects nothing.

He and the twins go for a walk. Each selects a small stone for a special ceremony. Daddy burns sage in every part of the bedroom, sprays the stones and two small brooms with lavender-scented magic. The girls tuck the stones under their pillows then sweep the scary thing from the room, down the steps, and across the front porch. The children decide a second sweeping is called for in case they missed something.

That night neither child has trouble sleeping, but Daddy does. Something keeps him awake even after he gets out of bed to confirm all the doors are locked.

rock garden  
pussy willow buds  
prepare to bloom

## Reborn

*D.V. Rožić, Croatia*

Washed with a night rain, my suburb street shines under the lanterns.

No tenseness whatsoever.

When did all those trees overtake the town?

And I inhale the petrichor deeply.

The strength of primordial, just returned from the universe ...

behind the fence  
a gaze of a huge and wet  
watch dog

## Who's Who

*Nola Obee, Canada*

I live several hours away and arrive at the long-term care home unexpectedly. They tell me he chose not to get up and dressed, but now he will.

When he comes out, he tells me, "One of our parents has killed the other."

How to respond to this one? "I'm sure that's just a rumour," I say.

"You think so?"

"Yes, I'm sure. It's just a rumour."

"Well, if you say so."

His breathing steadies and he relaxes.

I add, "Besides, one of my parents is sitting right here."

A long pause. "I guess that's right."

pacifier  
for the old ones  
television

## Winter

*Margaret Mahony, Australia*

in the park still strewn with autumn leaves, sun shadows  
cast patterns, a lone fountain bubbles nearby and the busy  
magpie collects wood bark in its beak  
the Japanese maples, just past their best create warmth in  
red and orange

I think of you  
with me  
your aging face in repose

you left in summer, escaping the cold, I hope you can still hear birdsong

## Lilies of the Field

*Orense Nicod, France*

In the shop the neon light blunts colors, racks of clothes arranged in a piercing spectrum. Two teenagers gush over a pink silk number I saw an influencer wear on my feed.

Among the floral prints, why can't I find one thing that feels like me?

autumn fields  
the scarecrow wears  
a sunbeam

## "That's Amore"

*Bryan D. Cook, Canada*

The pet food store's empty on this cold, sleety day. A young shop assistant breaks her boredom with a smile. Generations separate us . . . I could be her great grandpa! Nevertheless, she confides that she would like to marry and is in love with a fellow student.

"I'm so happy I met him organically and not electronically!"

Such a modern distinction in this age of social media, chat rooms, and dating services facilitating contact at a cost, with just a possibility of finding love. Fraught with the dangers of artificial intelligence, scams, identity theft and trolling by marketeers, fortune hunters and abusers.

Her "organic" is that old fashioned happenstance . . . instant chemistry. A smile across the classroom or coffee shop, a hello on a beach or park bench, or mutual karma at a party or rock concert. There are so many ways to find true love if you're patient.

Sixty years ago, I went really organic, romping in haystacks. Eventually, she found me in a forest and we're still hitched!

first date  
just kissing goodbye  
at her door

## Absolution

*Anna Cates, USA*

I feel it in his bones, my dear cat, Freddie, is growing old, no longer jumps as high,  
some favourite roosts abandoned now.

One time, he tried to run away from home, slipped into tall grass beyond the backyard,  
pursuing some important business with the crickets, late season butterflies, and bees,  
and, silly old me, I thought of nothing else but fleas!

I tried to snatch him up, bring his mission to an end . . . the bite came out of nowhere,  
the cut to my thumb not quite as thrilling as Plath's onion hinge but deep enough for  
that "red plush." In truth, the pain was more than physical. But I knew it was my duty  
to forgive.

blindweed . . .  
a long line of ants  
to the bowl

*In memory of my beloved little hon (March 2012-May 7, 2025)*

## Dog Years

*Matthew Caretti, American Samoa*

All that time ago, the foundling in the dead man's house.

feral moon tumbling in the night

She learns my moods. Doggie trots ahead.

tail wagging dayspring wet again

Then does what island dogs do.

bump in the night six new puppies

Too soon, she'll leave me.

long walk her sea-salt coat gone grey

## What Remains (EC)

*Richard Kakol, Australia*

*'To have another language is to possess a second soul.' — Charlemagne*

As a child, sponge-like I absorb my grandparents' stories about things which take place in another time, on another continent. — They endure war and many harsh winters in Poland.

My grandfather goes to the front line, and having passed through that liminal space, becomes a prisoner of war. In those lost years, he works as a slave on a German farm. In time, he emigrates to a country on the other side of the world, though it might as well be the dark side of the moon. A decade later (years shrouded in mystery) he arranges for the rest of his family to join him in Australia.

My grandmother's experience is somewhat different. She doesn't go into battle, like the wives of Norse warriors. Instead, she remains at home, raising her son on her own. Decades later, she tells me stories of those war years, while she knits jumpers and scarves for her grandchildren. She is a master storyteller, hooking me in with an intriguing titbit — 'Before the war there was a Jewish orchestra in the village,' she says. Smiling, she recalls the enchanting melodies which the musicians weave with their violins, clarinets . . . 'But after the war, there was no longer an orchestra. All the musicians were gone, most probably transported to the death camps.' The orchestra is silent — a silence which says so much.

I visit Oswiecim (which the Germans call Auschwitz) with my parents. Seeing the images of emaciated figures attired in striped prison clothes, I think of those musicians in my grandparents' village, before the war. Bilingual, I am part Polish and part Australian. The Polish half of my soul is haunted by all these stories of the war, and the gas chambers.

at midsummer  
still some patches of snow  
in the mountains

## Race Results

*Jill Muhrer, USA*

Loss unthinkable yet . . . November 8th haemorrhages, blinding those who stare, who  
linger in why. Bare trees blanch crimson.

red, white, blue

Mumbling voices rise, absorbed by a brisk wind. The sun, brilliant and warm, stretches  
into pink sky marbling blue. Clouds lighten and expand.

women for freedom signs

Katabatic winds flow south navigating through earth's gravitational pull, transforming  
light into cobalt and indigo. Along the boundaries of stars, they settle — silent and still.

into the recycling bin

## Give me your tired, your poor . . . (EC)

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*

the Stars and Stripes  
in my migrant friend's wrinkled eyes  
the spring that once was

American dream  
somewhere over the rainbow  
detention camps

A group of protesters, mostly gray-haired, gathers at the steps of the Statue of Liberty. They reclaim this public space as a site of memory and denunciation. Helped by her granddaughter, a civil rights activist reads out loud, one by one slowly, the names of the unlawfully disappeared.

Each name is a breath of life, a wound of heart, and most importantly, a warning for the country whose "greatness" will be built on the silence of everyday Americans.

## Expectations

*Deborah Strong, Northern Ireland*

His last email fires another rant over the Atlantic.

*There is a random attack every week round here. Drugs is a big part of it; you have to be careful of these types.*

He protects the salmon in the creek, regular counting and water testing. His machete accompanies him every time he fulfils his duty.

*The junkies and pushers live here in tents, hiding out in the woods.*

There is no one around when he comes across the camp. Having given up on the authorities he lifts the machete, swings and slashes until all lies in tatters.

brother  
thorns on the roses  
draw blood

## Shannon's Entropy

*Colleen M. Farrelly, USA*

I encrypt our communications on strips of paper like spies in World War II. It's nothing classified, but teachers intercept notes, nonetheless. We scribble in Morse--a 'y' or 'n' denoting data that either fits or doesn't for our fox observations--or Braille--my favorite for haiku and bubbled-in test boredom. When I teach him Morse, he calls it "snakes and turtles."

turtle tracks  
he signs his trail  
with a Braille "t"

Codes can be more complex than dots and dashes. The intersection of curve sets forms an alphabet. Some curve sets are harder to crack than others. Redundancy reduces randomness. Growing up, the world is random enough without them.

dots and dashes  
I decode the why  
in his obituary

## August Surrender

*Andrew Grossman, USA*

Wind comes with a chill new tail. The roses wither — *is beauty measured by longevity?*  
Blooms on the dogwood tree, my neighbor asks 'Why don't we cut a trail through the woods? You hack it out from your side, and I'll come from mine.'

Each family intends to spend nights together grilling by the sound of the stream. We imagine it, but have never heard or seen one here, except in the idea of a boundary marker.

The summer passes and we never cut a trail to each other.

So much happens — emergencies, depressions, unsuccessfully blocking out the lower world, many days wasted inside.

Many planes fly low over the oak trees. We hear the overwhelming engine sounds in the afternoon and evening. With the leaves gone, the pilots will be visible. We will know the power in the sky.

our child-like selves  
planting a box with jasmine  
rumors of water

## Editor's Choices — Haibun (EC)

### Unfinished Business (EC)

*Ganesh R., India*

La Paz feels like the love child of a carnival and a board game where the rules were invented mid-play. Every alley buzzes with a story so bizarre, it could've leapt from a fever dream. You can buy almost anything here — bicycles, USB drives... love potions. And where would one go for such enchantments? The infamous Witch Market, of course — less "market" and more "museum of the surreal, curated for the brave." Shelves brim with llama foetuses, neatly wrapped and sold for ritual burials beneath new homes as offerings to Pachamama, Mother Earth. If your house is more than three stories tall, though, legend says you'll need something bigger. No, not a grown llama. A human.

The tale goes that a shaman is hired to find someone who won't be missed — a homeless person, an addict. They're drugged, buried alive beneath the foundations to "keep things in balance." Some say bodies have turned up decades later, interrupting the skyline with skeletons.

And then there are the miners. My guide tells us they believe a human sacrifice might bring a vein of gold or prevent the next accident. Locals won't go near the mines alone — not out of superstition, but survival. No one wants to end up beneath someone's home, holding up luxury tiles with their bones. They go in groups, like friends on a strange, morbid pilgrimage.

I ask, half-joking, "What about tourists?"

He smiles. "Not unless you stay too long."

stories over mate  
old ways woven  
through threads of time

*A faraway land comes alive as Ganesh R., zooms into the goings-on in what appears to be a touristy affair. Who thought one could actually walk into a market and buy love potions – Ganesh uses this perfect hook for the reader in the very second line. And as he walks through the market, we walk with him, slipping deeper into a blend of folklore, fantasy and reality showcased with ample wit. A good haibun works when the writing reveals just enough to intrigue the reader without relying too much on intricate literary devices. ‘Unfinished Business’ does just that. The closing senryu is a clever pivot from the prose and ties together the elements beautifully.*



## Reverberation (EC)

Zachery May, USA

I know what it's like...

to feel your joints burn away, to run your hands under warm water willing the needles  
in your knuckles to melt, to beg your chemo-ridden mom to open the peanut butter lid,  
to grip your baby too tight in your arms terrified you'll drop her

sunset

to have a diagnosis carve years off your headstone, to waste months playing the  
insurance game, to feel your mouth split open with sores from side effects, to pray to a  
god you don't believe in anymore that you didn't pass this on to your kids

on the cherry's skin

to be kissed by someone who loves you anyway, to appreciate a day with good bones,  
to walk the wooded trail with your children, to drink the stars on a glassy night

I eat the light

*Empathy. And a haiku that offers a glimmer of hope. Zachery May's work in this haibun tugs at the heartstrings in many ways. I loved the manner in which the prose gently breaks into a line of*

*the haiku... a reprieve that allows the reader to soak in the depth of emotions, the collective*

*suffering and being pulled back into a moment of wonder. In the first line of the haiku, there is just one word – ‘sunset.’ And it left me anticipating something dismal. But in the next line, the beautiful image of a setting sun lighting up the skin of a cherry makes for a beautiful image of a hope of returning to ‘the pink of health.’ The allusion to the aliveness of the moment in ‘I eat the light’ stayed with me for a long time. Perhaps in this is the answer to life’s plaguing question – how do we hope? By turning towards light.*



## Full Son (EC)

*Dylan Stover, USA*

*For mom, who made the garden grow*

|                                |                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| April sunlight warms           | a bed of black                   |
| soil and dust between          | the brick wall and our cracked   |
| cement path, the same          | plot where the pansies           |
| failed last year.              | <i>She pointed to a packet</i>   |
| <i>in a drugstore display</i>  | <i>and said, “Easy</i>           |
| <i>to grow, see?” Sow</i>      | <i>in full sun, keep moist;</i>  |
| wait one to three              | weeks until the seed             |
| leaves spear loose soil.       | Blooms attract butterflies.      |
| <i>“C. sulphureus: It says</i> | <i>the Spanish conquistadors</i> |
| <i>discovered the species</i>  | <i>while searching for gold</i>  |
| <i>in the New World.”</i>      | Better than coming home          |
| empty-handed, I’ve come        | to realize, as I squeeze         |
| the trowel handle              | to part the dark earth.          |

*joining you the border of orange and yellow cosmos*

*I love how haibun writers constantly push the form without sacrificing the elements that make the art form what it should be – revelations from observation without allowing the mind to take*

*flight on a different plane. In this concrete haibun, Dylan Stover offers the image of a flowering stalk bending, possibly towards light. The haiku is neatly laid like the soil beneath this stalk. The prose breaks in poetic form and tells a story that spans two generations. There is an urging from another voice from another time, and the doing. Is it to keep the memory alive? Is it to continue a tradition for ritual is how we make sense of the present? The haiku leaves the reader to wonder where is this person joining the other? Where does the border of orange and yellow cosmos lead to? The garden slowly comes alive in the reader's mind.*



## What Remains (EC)

*Richard Kakol, Australia*

'To have another language is to possess a second soul.' — Charlemagne

As a child, sponge-like I absorb my grandparents' stories about things which take place in another time, on another continent. — They endure war and many harsh winters in Poland.

My grandfather goes to the front line, and having passed through that liminal space, becomes a prisoner of war. In those lost years, he works as a slave on a German farm. In time, he emigrates to a country on the other side of the world, though it might as well be the dark side of the moon. A decade later (years shrouded in mystery) he arranges for the rest of his family to join him in Australia.

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I visit Oswiecim (which the Germans call Auschwitz) with my parents. Seeing the images of emaciated figures attired in striped prison clothes, I think of those musicians in my grandparents' village, before the war. Bilingual, I am part Polish and part Australian. The Polish half of my soul is haunted by all these stories of the war, and the gas chambers.

at midsummer  
still some patches of snow  
in the mountains

*At a time when the world is submerged in wars and the slaughtering of a large number of people, forests, animals and what have you, we turn to art for solace. Artistes, then, become keepers of our conscience. They draw our attention to the fact that history always repeats itself. And that the repercussions of trauma are felt across time, space, place and generations. Reading Richard Kakol's haibun reminded me of the true purpose of us all as writers. The title with which he begins the haibun is prophetic – 'What remains.' And I had to ask myself what really does remain after wars and genocides have been committed? What is it that we are left with? This is a haunting piece where the personal is instantly made universal. And yet, despite all the horrors of what the war stories left him with, Richard ends on a note of hope. If there is still snow on the mountain tops in summer, is there still hope?*



Give me your tired, your poor . . . (EC)

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*

the Stars and Stripes  
in my migrant friend's wrinkled eyes  
the spring that once was

American dream  
somewhere over the rainbow  
detention camps

A group of protesters, mostly gray-haired, gathers at the steps of the Statue of Liberty.

They reclaim this public space as a site of memory and denunciation. Helped by her granddaughter, a civil rights activist reads out loud, one by one slowly, the names of the unlawfully disappeared.

Each name is a breath of life , a wound of heart, and most importantly, a warning for the country whose "greatness" will be built on the silence of everyday Americans.

*Chen-ou Liu is again another artiste who shows us that only in asking will we find the path – that only by daring can we truly reclaim what we have lost. He tells us of a history that is easily forgotten and warns us of what is, and what is in the coming. The prose is stark, focussing on the intergenerational emotion that resonates with freedom. As I read this over and over again, it dawned on me that in writing, Chen-ou dares us too. It is at once a warning and a beseeching. The haiku are placed at the beginning – a necessity to draw our attention to the immediacy of the moment.*

**Shobhana Kumar**

## Haiga – Part 4

Maxianne Berger — Canada



Mircea Moldovan—Romania



Nitu Yumnam — UAE



Oscar Luparia — Italy



*still image another summer fades away*

poem & photo: Oscar Luparia

Richard West & Alexander Mychko — USA



# Tanka Prose



Ignite

## We all know how this ends

*Simon Wilson, UK*

The noise of squabbling birds draws me to the window. Three magpies, a crow and a rabbit form a group which reminds me of one of those grotesque Victorian taxidermy tableaux. The crow, bigger than the others, struts like a black-clad priest, lunges, tries to take a beakful. Scandalised magpies call and flap, and try to block the bigger bird. The rabbit, which in modern medical terms, is unresponsive, takes little part in the proceedings. It has, to use a modern euphemism, passed. It is an ex-rabbit, says a voice from my past.

It is a small rabbit, young and inexperienced with cars. It was probably the one I saw sunning itself on the verge the afternoon before, both of us unaware of what the future held. A second crow descends, A car draws up, the crows withdraw and the district nurse emerges. It is that time again.

little by little  
I become my father  
his hands  
his smile  
my own regrets

## Starlit Ripples

*Jenny Ward Angyal, USA*

A beaver comes to the old pond. In two nights, he strips the bark from the ash tree that shades my favorite bench. We could hire a trapper to get rid of him, but a narrow trail up the far side of the earthen dam shows that he comes from the neighbors' pond below. Who knows how many of his kin may follow? So, we fence the red maples, oaks, and sycamores, the pistachio and persimmon, the tupelo and Chinese elm. We leave the black willows and the sweetgum saplings unfenced, because the beaver seems to favor them.

one golden leaf  
spinning and spinning  
on a thread  
in the stillness of dawn  
. . . *thou art that*

## Forester

*Joanna Ashwell, UK*

That should have been your name. The sound beyond the wind. The light within a star.  
The shifting vibrancy of green. The perfume within a flower.

wider still  
the open arms  
of a sycamore  
where the dance  
becomes only sky

## Hidden

Gavin Austin, Australia

As he lets the door close with a dull thud, she lies back and frees corseted thoughts. A flight of memories flutter, circling her. The carnival is in town. A young couple walk hand in hand, oblivious of the smell of doughnuts, or barking spruikers at the sideshow stands. Smiling as they ride the giant Ferris wheel, they kiss atop its giddy heights.

She sheds her cocooned past between twisted bedsheets, and pads to the bathroom. Leisurely, she showers, then carefully applies her makeup. She is mindful of the date she must keep and quickly checks the time. Dabbing her throat with *Chanel Misia*, she blots a little extra to enchant her collar.

She unlocks the cupboard door in the spare room. The suitcase bulges with expectancy as she hauls it to the front door. At the kitchen table she writes the note she has drafted over and over in their bed. Carefully, she props it against the fruit bowl on the benchtop.

Her heart leaps wildly at the blunt knock on the front door. Quickly, she checks her appearance in the hall mirror. Turning the door handle, her face collapses. A delivery boy smiles on the doorstep as he thrusts a bouquet of red long-stemmed roses into her arms. Clawing the card from the cellophane, she reads *Happy anniversary, darling! I love you more with each passing year.*

*Funny*, she thinks, as she places the suitcase back behind the cupboard door, *change is a mysterious stranger who never seems to show*. She clears the kitchen bench and again tears up a handwritten note.

a cry breaks  
night's recurring dream  
... escapes  
to wander the ragged  
back lanes of morning

## A Vision

*Gail Brooks, USA*

When non-invasive treatments fail, doctors recommend surgery for my extremely precocious two-year old. He was born with strabismus, often called a lazy eye. My anxiety about such a surgery is heightened when friends tell me that they remove the eye from the socket to perform the surgery. This turns out not to be true, but it doesn't matter.

Surgery over, his dad and I are escorted to the recovery room where he is sitting up in bed. The first words my son says to me are,

"Mom, I can't see."

I hold my breath as he continues, this time more emphatically, "Mom, I can't see...you're blocking the television!"

yoga class  
breathe in, breathe out  
chanting  
I transcend this moment  
and see only wholeness

## November Snow

*Anna Cates, USA*

Some years, first snow arrives in November, frosting away the final traces of garish heat. The sweetest things nook into catnip warmth, oblivious to weather's worst — never judge you, never finger back dusty drapes and spy on you through the window, imagining what's worst.

Down the block, somebody's neighbor weirds-out his lawn's 20-foot-high Halloween werewolf with a cardinal red Christmas cap. The heavens fracture into dreary and bright. Cathedral bells freak out.

But who's to say? Some cardinal sins emerge from cardinals and others from ordinary folk, who may or may not count the advent days when life falls short of bourgeois Kincade picturesque . . .

Further down the road, on the outskirts of town, a solitary figure is not counting — trains humming through the mantlepiece, exciting tiny cracks, rattling through the ears — has no calendar and is not counting, like the hobos of yesteryear, without a beanie for their baldness or a single sock, on some cold November night, moon blushing pink as rare steak, threw themselves upon the tracks.

cold wind tousling  
pampas grass plumes  
autumn vespers  
feeding a hungry soul  
the solitude

## Another View

*Sharon Cohagen, Germany*

Wandering the wooded area on the mountain, I can look through the trees, down to the valley. It is soft underfoot, pleasantly cool, with a faint scent of pine. Soon I'll reach the tree line. From there it becomes steeper, the path narrower and stony. My strides are shorter and slower now, and I'm getting short of breath. This is much more strenuous than my gardening.

Inching my way up the mountain, I reflect on outdoor activities as a child. My parents certainly did not set an example. They were not sports-minded. Even for a golf game, they rode in a golfcart. An outing with them was a drive up to Lake Simcoe, a short walk from the parking lot to the water, a shorter walk along the shore. On warm days, they would watch me swim. It was never long enough for me. This was followed by a leisurely restaurant lunch—inside, away from “bothersome insects”, and then a car ride back to Toronto.

My stomach is grumbling after thinking about food. However, it will be a while before taking a break. I have to keep going. While walking, I extract a few raisins from my pocket and savour their sweetness. A yellow butterfly flutters past, leading the way to full sunlight. Finally, I see the alpine panorama before me. I wish my parents could have experienced this.

bright yellow roses  
clinging to the wooden slats  
the old trellis bends  
    straining forward, upward  
    my scissors clip wilted blooms

## First Blood

*Gauri Dixit, India*

He turns on the television. The anchor's voice sounds shrill in the quiet of the morning. Behind her, images loop — wreckage, red sirens, a cricket score, a grinning politician, a beheaded corpse. The coffee turns cold.

come dawn  
cock crows again  
and again  
this dusty hill and bare trees  
blur into thickening smog

## Which Aisle? (EC)

*Robert Erlandson, USA*

Our local grocery store is part of a national chain. I had my list and was prepared for the walking around trying to find stuff. I was not alone and kept crossing paths with others doing the same wandering. As we passed, we would laugh, make some comment or ask did you see “whatever?” As I went by the manager's office, I noticed he was there, so I popped in and, nicely, made a comment about finding things as they were frequently moved around. He acknowledged my concern and then asked if I had downloaded their Store App? I had in fact done so. He then showed me how I can use the App to locate things in the store with a built-in location finder. Every store has free Wi-Fi. You just need to verify the store you are at and then use search – enter the product you want and up pops the aisle.

as a kid with Dad  
shopping was an adventure  
people & places  
meat at the butcher's shop  
veggies here and baked stuff there

## Storm Warning

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

My restlessness is disturbed at sunrise by a crow's insistent cawing. I lift the canvas flap and count 15 rooks. Some on the sparse dewy grass, some perched in the surrounding bloodwoods dead branches. You sleep on unperturbed by last night's differences of opinion.

the still air  
of this morning  
shattered by  
beady eyed crows,  
a gathering storm

## Myths

*Keitha Keyes, Australia*

just you and me  
under the stars tonight  
a billy is boiling  
a damper is in the ashes  
camping in the outback

This is the romantic image I have brought with me on our first camping trip. But now, in the middle of nowhere, sitting on an uncomfortable log, reality seeps in.

Are we really alone? The dry grass around us seems to move. I feel sure there is a snake or a spider or something out there just waiting to attack us. The stars are mostly hidden by cloud cover. We don't have a billy, just an old saucepan. The twigs we collected for the campfire create a lot of smoke and not much heat. And no ashes. I put my version of a damper in the saucepan to cook. Half an hour later we get it out. Hard as a brick, inedible.

Cold, hungry and disappointed, we decide to abandon our hammocks and sleep in the car.

## An Immigrant Poet's Reflection on Writing the Suffering of Others

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*

"Merely to say, to see and say, things as they are," grows loud . . . and louder in a corner of my mind as moonlight slants through the study window.

[decades-long  
inhuman occupation compressed]  
to one-day attacks  
responding with the red glow  
of missiles in Gaza's night sky

this endless loop:  
October 7, October 7 ...  
[and yet  
the decades BEFORE  
and the day AFTER] blood shedding

each bombed-out house:  
an album with no photos  
but with people  
living, wounded and dead  
pressed between its pages

anything new  
under Gaza's smeared sun?  
smoky rubble  
beyond smoky rubble, and yet  
again smoky rubble

I etch each pain with a borrowed tongue, then every word becomes a betrayal; but all the silence will turn into a heart wound. Turning my gaze from writing, then looking out the window at the moon, its fullness, I mutter, "what is the use of useless poetry when it cannot stop the killing?"

## Cruising

*Jenny Sharpe, Canada*

After university in 1969, I visited Yugoslavia, a country that no longer exists. Arthur Frommer's *Europe on Five Dollars A Day* suggested I visit Dubrovnik, known as the 'Pearl of the Adriatic'. I arrived in Rijeka and bought a deck-class ferry ticket along with finger-foods, before boarding in the late afternoon. The idea of sleeping under the stars seemed romantic and adventurous. As the ship began its journey down the Dalmatian coast, hitchhikers from around the world and American conscientious objectors settled in.

The wind snatched snippets of conversation and swirled them around me. Backpackers spoke about friends and family at home, while draft dodgers railed against the unjust war in Vietnam. For these young men, to follow their conscience meant self-imposed exile or jail. No glory waited on those battlefields. As always, the losers were civilians and soldiers. Only politicians, generals, and arms dealers gained from the war.

we share  
cherries, wine, conversation  
lust for power  
death to others  
enigmas haunt me

## War & Peace

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

Peace on a grand scale between countries. Peace on a smaller scale between individuals. Between neighbors. Between siblings, a brother and sister. They live next to each other across from the ocean. She is older. Has no children. Tends to be bossy. Has fixed ideas on how to live, on following the old country ways, on whom he should marry, on how to raise his children, run his household. He is easy going. Doesn't follow customs. Marries outside his culture, outside his religion. Lets his four children be like untamed puppies running free with the chickens, the dogs and cats, getting brown as berries as they romp in sun and surf. Brother and sister bicker, argue, don't talk. A fence goes up between the properties. A chain link fence. Cold, hard, the kind of fence that says back off, stay away.

acceptance and love  
a two-ingredient formula  
to let someone in  
a smile, handclasp hug or kiss  
family, friend or stranger

They cool off. A truce. A gate is installed in the fence. Over the years, the gate is sometimes open, sometimes locked. It is only after his children are grown and left and he is a widower and she a widow and there is nothing left to fight about that the gate remains open.

the quickness of years  
brings a softness  
ice melts, tempers cool,  
peace returns  
and love blooms

## More Than Spaghetti Sauce

*Richard Tice, USA*

I used to make tomato-based sauces. It took hours for the tomatoes to cook down to a usable thickness. My homemade spaghetti sauce turned out tasty but always a bit runny, too watery. I was more successful in making chili and salsa from scratch. My paternal grandmother, however, was an expert, a *sugo di pomodoro* queen. When we visited, we immediately picked a bucket of Roma tomatoes, bell peppers, and Spanish onions from her garden. I learned from her how to slip the skins off tomatoes. The magic brew would simmer all day, sending its aroma throughout the house and into the backyard. She had to boil a couple of packages of noodles because we ate so much. Grandma also bottled her spaghetti sauce and always gave us some — along with pickles and jellies. Such a rich red inside the jar; when opened, such a rich fragrance. She made spaghetti sauce until she could no longer cook, but I gave it up by my forties. Store-bought brands are cheaper than buying the ingredients, consistently have a better texture, and taste as good as I ever made. No one has missed my sauce.

still on display  
the five-generation photo  
that baby  
on grandma's lap  
married now

## Struggling Through

*Simon Wilson, UK*

After several attempts I give up, push myself away from the desk and straighten my back. No matter what I do I cannot fold the words “mobility scooter” elegantly into a tanka. It should be simple, after all, it is only six syllables, but whatever I try, the rhythm stutters and stalls. My wife enters the room, bringing a cup of tea and a new perspective.

electric scooter  
I tried so hard so many  
times  
then once again  
you showed a better way

## Why Change Is Unnecessary and Electronic Payment Is Preferred

Robert Witmer, Japan (EC)

In an epigram in his philosophical polemic *Beyond Good and Evil*, Friedrich Nietzsche writes: "Memory says, 'I did that.' Pride replies, 'I could not have done that.' Eventually, memory yields."

We hide ourselves from ourselves.

*nay*  
rein in your horses  
let the sheep  
pull the wool  
over your *ayes*

\* Friedrich Nietzsche : *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Helen Zimmern, 1906, reprinted in Courier Dover Publications, New York, 1997.

## Editor's Choices (EC) – Tanka Prose

### Which Aisle?(EC)

*Robert Erlandson, USA*

Our local grocery store is part of a national chain. I had my list and was prepared for the walking around trying to find stuff. I was not alone and kept crossing paths with others doing the same wandering. As we passed, we would laugh, make some comment or ask did you see “whatever?” As I went by the manager's office, I noticed he was there, so I popped in and, nicely, made a comment about finding things as they were frequently moved around. He acknowledged my concern and then asked if I had downloaded their Store App? I had in fact done so. He then showed me how I can use the App to locate things in the store with a built-in location finder. Every store has free Wi-Fi. You just need to verify the store you are at and then use search – enter the product you want and up pops the aisle.

as a kid with Dad  
shopping was an adventure  
people & places  
meat at the butcher's shop  
veggies here and baked stuff there

*Robert Erlandson perfectly captures what we feel when grocery shopping in a Supermarket here in North America. Perhaps elsewhere in other countries, but I have no knowledge of what the 'customer experience' is in those foreign lands.*

*Moving products to different aisles is really annoying to us old timers wandering the aisles. Mind you, it is a bit of exercise. So now, I have to find a store employee in order to find the sauerkraut I need for my next supper. Good luck to me!*

*Long live computer-generated product placement! Ya right!*

**Mike Montreuil**

## Why Change Is Unnecessary and Electronic Payment Is Preferred (EC)

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*nay*  
rein in your horses  
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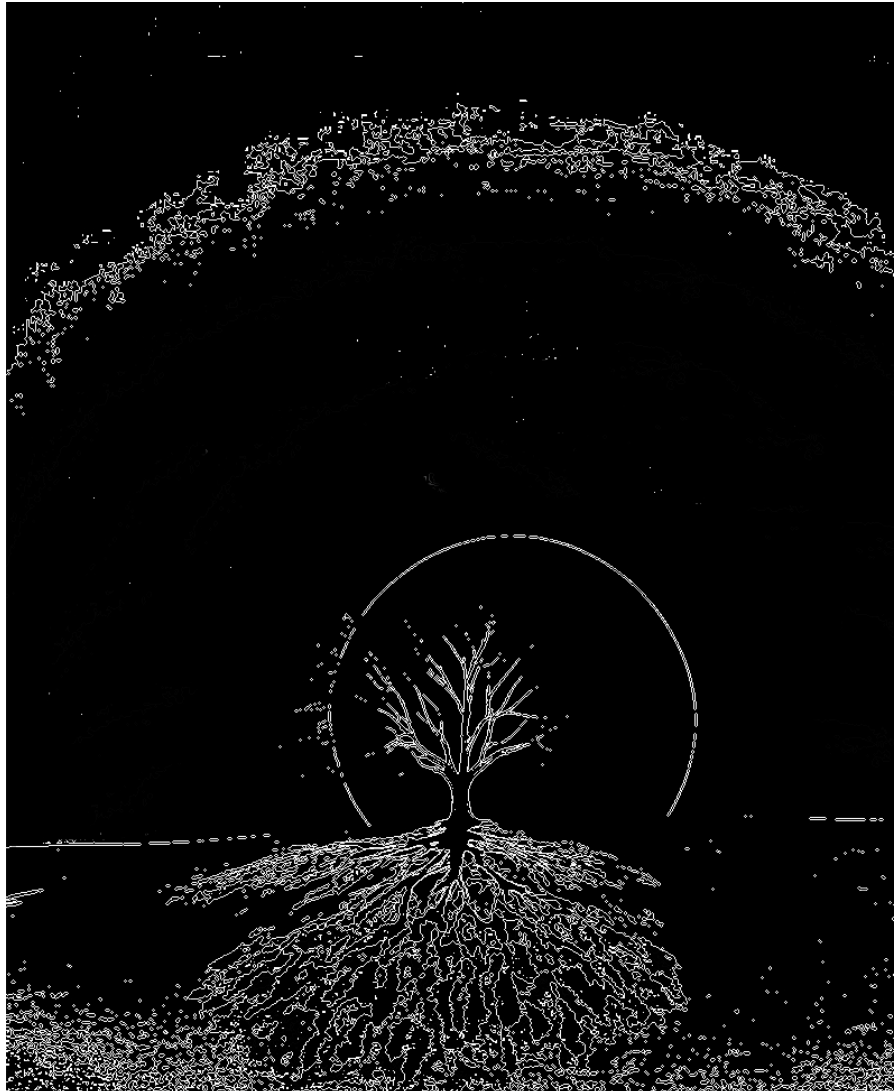
Note: This piece by Robert Witmer was originally submitted as a haibun. In the end, however, we felt that it fit better as a Tanka Prose. The EC given to the piece when it was in the haibun section has been retained.

*This tanka prose is an example of a master at work. In a few brief lines, Robert Witmer summarises the plight of modern living and our modern lives, succinctly captured in the title. The haiku is a brilliant conceit to the main premise with the word-play pointing to mastery of the form. The prose limits itself to drawing a quote from literature with just a small note on what the writer thinks of it. This is a reading that is endlessly giving, layers peeling like slices of an onion.*

**Shobhana Kumar**

## Haiga – Part 5

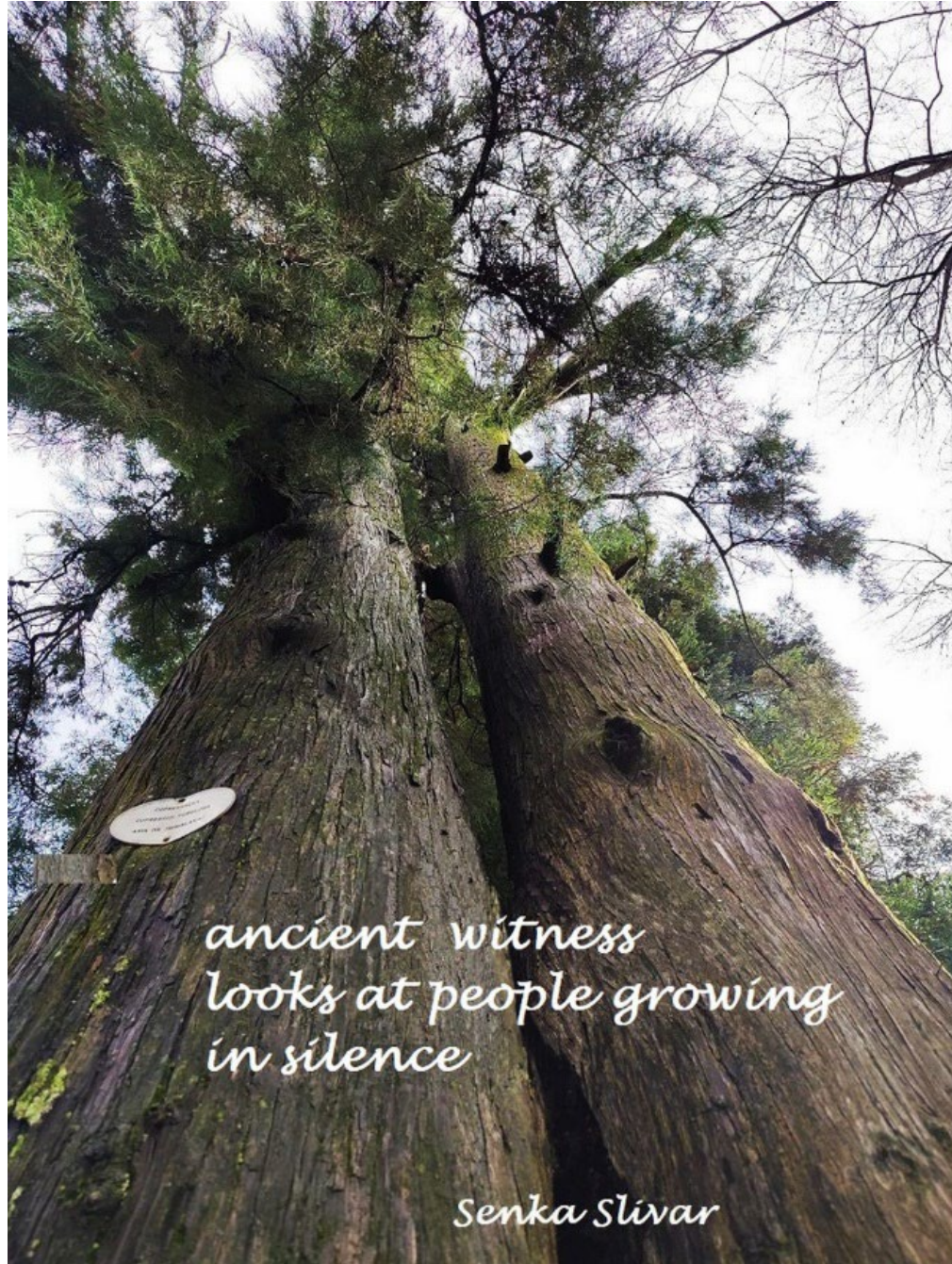
Robert Erlandson – USA



*chaotic times  
shaken ... disoriented  
but rooted*

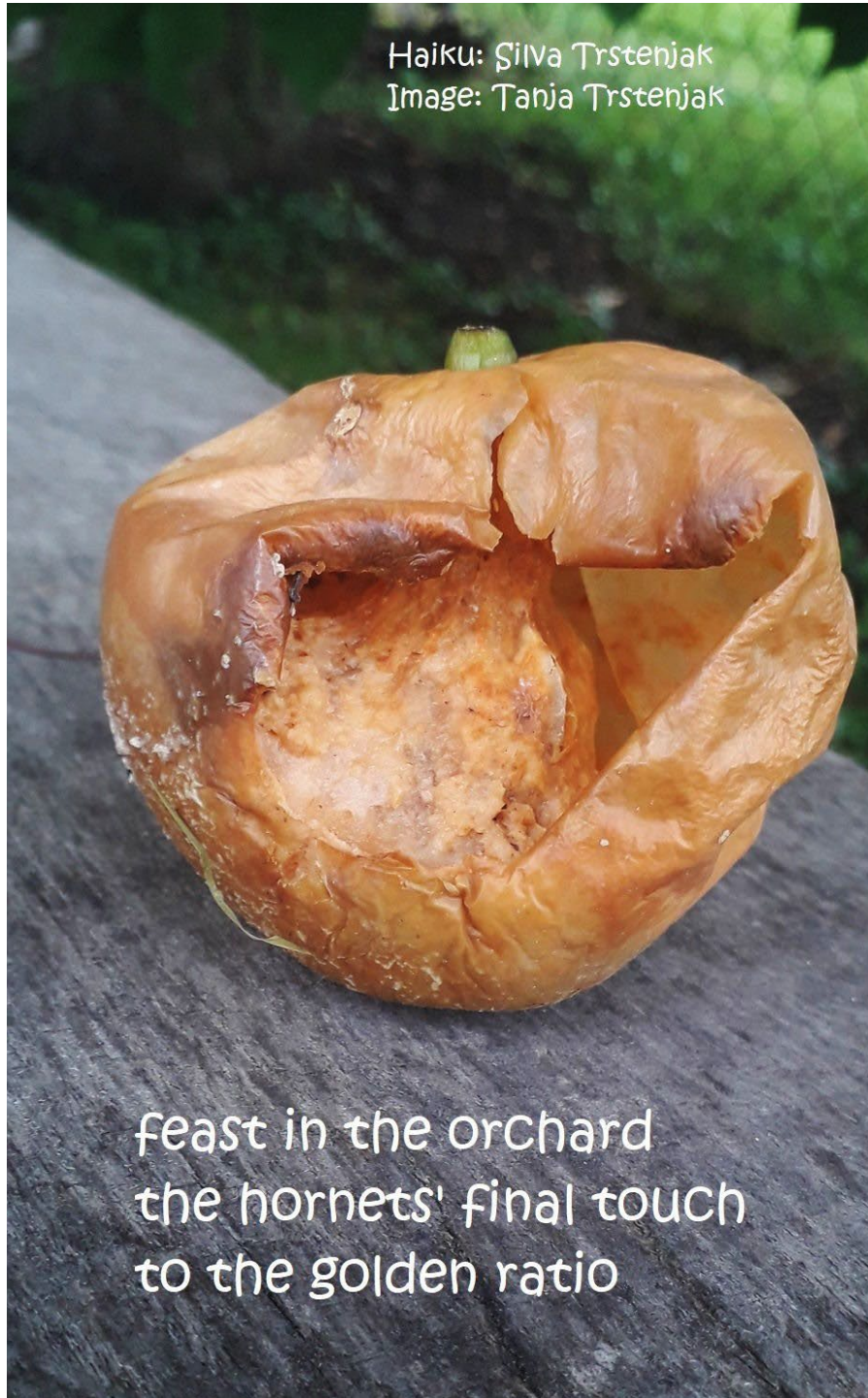
R Erlandson

Senka Slivar — Croatia / Translation by: D.V. Rožić — Croatia



Silva Trstenjak & Tanja Trstenjak — Croatia

Haiku: Silva Trstenjak  
Image: Tanja Trstenjak

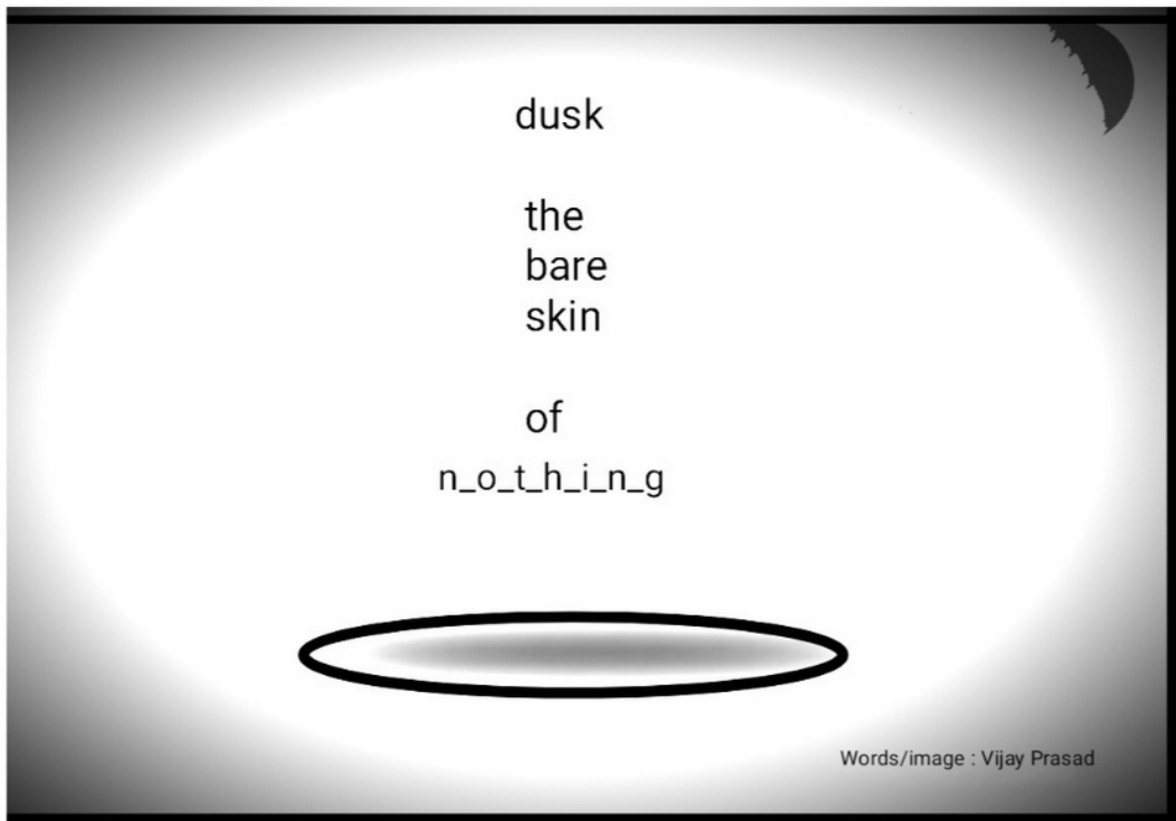


feast in the orchard  
the hornets' final touch  
to the golden ratio

Slawa Sibiga — Poland



Vijay Prasad — India



## *Index of Poets and Artists*

### **A**

Paul Alexandru, 40  
Jenny Ward Angyal, 96, 171  
Billy Antonio, 22  
Marilyn Ashbaugh, 16  
Hifsa Ashraf, 30, 57  
Joanna Ashwell, 17, 91, 124, 172  
Gavin Austin, 23, 55, 98, 125, 173

### **B**

Cynthia Bale, 82  
Caroline Giles Banks, 138  
Mona Bedi, 57  
Amanda Bell, 9  
Brad Bennett, 18, 59  
Maxianne Berger, 164  
Jerome Berglund, 12  
Shiva Bhusal, 115  
Sally Biggar, 32, 91, 101  
Bisshie, 130, 131  
Gwen Bitti, 8, 77, 101  
Mirela Brailean, 60  
Maurizio Brancaleoni, 14  
Gail Brooks, 82, 174  
Randy Brooks, 28, 45  
Rohan Buettel, 9  
Pitt Buerken, 12, 97  
Alanna C. Burke, 10  
Sondra J. Byrnes, 7, 48

### **C**

Daniela Lăcrămioara Capotă, 72  
Matthew Caretti, 10, 151  
Erin Castaldi, 128  
Eve Castle, 83  
Anna Cates, 26, 48, 79, 150, 175

Mihovila Čeperić-Biljan, 17  
Oana Maria Cercel, 25, 64  
Paul Chambers, 7  
Kanchan Chatterjee, 22  
Jim Chessing, 49, 85  
Sonam Chhoki, 83  
Joseph Chiang, 20  
Christina Chin, 8, 41  
Cezar Ciobica, 40,  
Glenn G. Coats, 142, 143  
Sharon Cohagen, 176  
Linda Conroy, 93, 101  
Bryan D. Cook, 149  
Bill Cooper, 15, 51  
Tim Cremin, 93  
Alvin B. Cruz, 50  
Anne Curran, 94  
Dan Curtis, 14  
Beata Czeszejko, 66

### **D**

Timothy Daly, 10, 64  
Stefano d'Andrea, 116  
Maya Daneva, 46  
Thomas David, 53  
Anannya Dasgupta, 120  
Philip Davison, 95, 102  
Melissa Dennison, 15  
Marie Derley, 28, 53, 85  
Elliot Diamond, 24  
Gauri Dixit, 15, 49, 99, 177  
Janice Doppler, 47, 144  
June Rose Dowis, 14  
Ana Drobot, 37, 66, 83, 101, 126  
John H. Dromey, 55  
Tim Dwyer, 9, 50, 80

## E

Lynn Edge, 117  
Robert Erlandson, 87, 178, 187, 189

## F

Mike Fainzilber, 32, 60  
Colleen M. Farrelly, 156  
Jenny Fraser, 107  
Jay Friedenberg, 28  
Dennis Owen Frolich, 48, 95

## G

Ben Gaa, 19, 56  
Joshua Gage, 19, 61  
Pamela Garry, 88, 114  
Goran Gatalica, 18  
Nicholas Gentile, 44, 94  
Mark Gilbert, 58, 85  
LeRoy Gorman, 32, 61, 96  
Michael Buckingham Gray, 29  
David Green, 65  
Laurie Greer, 20  
Andrew Grossman, 157  
Alexander Groth, 17, 66

## H

Fatma Zohra Habis, 31, 100  
Johnnie Johnson Hafernik, 59, 109  
Lorraine Haig, 14, 86  
Catharine Summerfield Hāna, 18  
Jon Hare, 26, 60, 81  
Lev Hart, 7  
John Hawkhead, 7, 33, 34, 53, 108  
Kathryn Haydon, 30  
Betsy Hearne, 96  
Joanne van Helvoort, 23, 57  
Deborah Burke Henderson, 25  
Florence Heyhoe, 13, 94  
Robert Hirschfield, 30  
Jeff Hoagland, 16  
Ruth Holzer, 47, 81

Celia Hope, 98

Louise Hopewell, 57  
Marilyn Humbert, 26, 80, 129, 179

## I

Lakshmi Iyer, 62, 91  
Keiko Izawa, 20, 35

## J

Rick Jackofsky, 27, 49, 95  
Roberta Beach Jacobson, 47  
AJ Johnson, 112  
Carole Johnston, 98  
Govind Joshi, 55, 69

## K

Richard Kakol, 15, 95, 152, 161, 162  
Emil Karla, 65  
Deborah Karl-Brandt, 45  
Arvinder Kaur, 22  
Keitha Keyes, 88, 180  
Ravi Kiran, 18, 46  
Nina Kovačić, 11, 97

## L

Michael Lamb, 54  
Sarah Lawhorne, 61  
Kathryn Liebowitz, 20  
Chen-ou Liu, 8, 82, 154, 162, 181  
Eva Limbach, 12  
Robert Lowes, 43  
Brigita Lukina, 86  
Glorija Lukina, 88  
Oscar Luparia, 167  
Heather Lurie, 25, 57  
Anthony Lusardi, 94

## M

Margaret Mahony, 147  
Antonio Mangiameli, 21, 38  
Carmela Marino, 31, 133

Richard L. Matta, 43, 89, 122  
 Mohua Maulik, 54, 98  
 Zachery May, 135, 159  
 Jo McInerney, 47, 79  
 Dorothy M. Messerschmitt, 109  
 Mark Miller, 15, 51  
 Radka Mindova, 62  
 Rowan Beckett Minor, 30, 61  
 Daniela Misso, 78, 103  
 Mircea Moldovan, 16, 62, 100, 165  
 Katie Montagna, 28, 35, 36, 65, 69  
 Mike Montreuil, 43  
 Wilda Morris, 58  
 Jill Muhrer, 153  
 Florian Munteanu, 75, 84  
 Alexander Mychko, 168

## N

Mitunori Nagata, 8  
 Orense Nicod, 148  
 Ibrahim Nureni, 9  
 Gareth Nurden, 29, 105

## O

David Oates, 17, 63  
 Nola Obee, 10, 45, 146  
 Ben Oliver, 26, 55  
 Franjo Ordanić, 104  
 Maeve O'Sullivan, 54

## P

Arvind Padmanabhan, 21, 52  
 John Pappas, 30, 59  
 Aparna Pathak, 24, 78  
 Curt Pawlisch, 92  
 M. R. Pelletier, 46  
 Madhuri Pillai, 21  
 Jacek Pokrak, 74

Jenny Polstra, 100  
 Thomas Powell, 9  
 Vishal Prabhu, 20

Vijay Prasad, 58, 193  
 Vidya Premkumar, 58

## Q

Audrey Quinn, 44

## R

Ganesh R., 32, 53, 113, 158  
 Carol Raisfeld, 64, 77, 139  
 Brijesh Raj, 118  
 Nazarena Rampini, 25, 92  
 Valentina Ranaldi-Adams, 65  
 Bhawana Rathore, 23, 92  
 Bryan Rickert, 23, 58, 80  
 Edward J. Rielly, 93  
 Chad Lee Robinson, 56  
 Suraja Menon Roychowdhury, 22, 96  
 D. V. Rožić, 16, 17, 29, 56, 77, 79, 145, 190  
 Margaret Owen Ruckert, 87  
 Janet Ruth, 51, 106  
 Aleksandra Rybczyńska, 52, 69

## S

Joshua St. Claire, 11, 43, 90  
 Jacob D. Salzer, 93  
 Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, 24, 59  
 Sandra Šamec, 104  
 colin Sandberg, 90  
 Bona M. Santos, 27, 90  
 Vessislava Savova, 13, 48  
 Bonnie J Scherer, 39, 51, 136  
 Benno Schmidt, 44  
 Julie Schwerin, 12, 45  
 Ron Scully, 84  
 Vidya Shankar, 140  
 Jenny Sharpe, 182

Adelaide B. Shaw, 7, 55, 84, 127, 183  
 Nalini Shetty, 84  
 Slawa Sibiga, 192  
 Neena Singh, 13, 49, 123

Tomislav Sjekloća, 11, 63  
Senka Slivar, 89, 190  
Thomas Smith, 111  
Thomas F Smith, 32  
Helen Sokolsky, 31  
K. Srilata, 13, 132  
Srini, 23, 52  
Dylan Stover, 141, 160, 161  
Debbie Strange, 11, 53, 73, 80  
Deborah Strong, 155  
Eric Sundquist, 54

## T

Mark Teaford, 61, 68  
Angela Terry, 26, 46  
Kathleen Tice, 121  
Richard Tice, 184  
Silva Trstenjak, 29, 79, 191  
Tanja Trstenjak, 191  
Zuzanna Truchlewska, 19

## W

Diane Webster, 47  
Michael Dylan Welch, 29  
Christine Wenk-Harrison, 63  
Richard West, 168  
Dagmara Wiczorkowska, 27  
Tony Williams, 13, 50  
Tony Steven Williams, 89  
Kathabela Wilson, 81  
Simon Wilson, 65, 90, 137, 170, 185  
Jamie Wimberly, 50  
Katherine E Winnick, 86  
Robert Witmer, 10, 34, 51, 81, 186, 188

## Y

Nitu Yumnam, 21, 56, 99, 166  
Quendryth Young, 19, 43, 67

## Z

Eugeniusz Zacharski, 27, 74



Ember