

# *cattails*



April 2026

# cattails

**April 2026 Issue**

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Editor-in-Chief: Sonam Chhoki  
Managing Editor: Mike Montreuil  
Haiku Editor: Geethanjali Rajan  
Haiga Editor: Lavana Kray  
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e-newsletter and social media: Shobhana Kumar  
Cartoonist: Dhaatri Vengunad Menon

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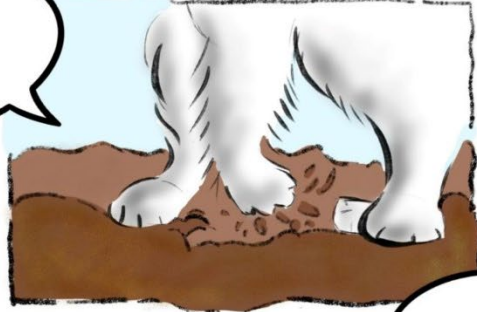
Gavin Austin is an artist and writer living in Sydney, Australia. His short form poetry is widely published, and he is currently one of the four editors of *Echidna Tracks – Australian haiku*. Self-taught, Gavin enjoys photography and has recently received awards for his work. The series of photographs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

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# Exist-entailism

Am



I



important?



Every little piece makes my existence whole.



Dhaatri Vengunad Menon

# Introduction

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

Celan's haunting words come to mind:

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

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

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

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

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

Sonam Chhoki

Notes:

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

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

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

# Haiku



Chinese Gardens of Friendship

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

*Michael Dylan Welch, USA*

snow melt trickle  
a crocus muscles  
into the world

*Brad Bennett, USA*

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

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

*Carmela Marino, Italy*

bitter cold  
bright red cardinals cheer  
the lengthening days

*Jon Hare, USA*

between worms  
another song  
from the robin

*Jeff Hoagland, USA (EC)*

a sunburst  
of golden wattle  
early spring

*Keitha Keyes, Australia*

garden café –  
next to our table  
first violets

vrtni kafić  
do našeg stola  
prve ljubice

*Mihovila Čeperić-Biljan, Croatia*

cherry blossoms  
I speak with my daughter  
in two different languages

ВИШНЕВ ЦВЯТ  
говоря с дъщеря ми  
на два различни езика

*Boryana Boteva, Bulgaria*

spring morning  
birds tidying  
the garden beds

proljetno jutro  
ptice pospremaju  
vrtne gredice

*Slobodan Pupovac, Croatia*

you sigh softly  
wild daffodils  
light the river bank

*Thomas Smith, USA*

creek flow  
each pine needle  
channels its share

*Agnes Eva Savich, USA*

spring clouds—  
smudges on  
grandma's recipes

*Martina Matijević, Croatia*

tow zone  
a cold wind  
takes the blossoms

*LeRoy Gorman, Canada*

spring drizzle . . .  
the horse cart loaded  
with manure

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

*Neena Singh, India*

shallow stream  
kangaroos splash  
through the dawn chorus

*Gregory Piko, Australia*

spring fever  
two soaring eagles tighten  
concentric circles

*Nola Obee, Canada*

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

ਪ੍ਰਭਾਤ ਦੀ ਲੇਖ  
ਬਾਲਟੀ ਦੇ ਪਾਣੀ ਉੱਤੇ  
ਅੰਬਾਂ ਦਾ ਬੂਰ

*Arvinder Kaur, India*

delayed haying  
the insistent whine  
of fledglings

*Sally Biggar, USA*

the silence  
after zazen—  
blossom haze

*Kanchan Chatterjee, India*

lingering in  
a spot of sunlight  
shrine koi

*Ravi Kiran, India*

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

četiri bebe na skenu . . .  
u susjedovu vrtu  
leglo kunića

*Djurdja Vukelic Rozic, Croatia*

churning  
with turtles  
the vernal pool

*Ruth Holzer, USA*

spring poppies  
my voice dissolves  
into twilight

papaveri di primavera  
la mia voce si dissolve  
nel crepuscolo

*Eufemia Griffio, Italy*

scrutinizing  
the child's lips  
white carnation

*Jerome Berglund, USA*

a willow reflects  
in the calm lake  
spring zazen

nel lago calmo  
si specchia il salice –  
zazen di primavera

*Nazarena Rampini, Italy*

fresh cut grass  
following me  
until lilacs

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

sunflower seed –  
the shell of her small self  
cracked open

*Julie Schwerin, USA*

in uneven grass  
fresh deer scat . . .  
warm Easter

*Anna Cates, USA*

purple rain  
the canal carrying  
jarul blooms

बैगनी वर्षा  
नहर में बहते हुए  
जरूल के फूल

*Govind Joshi, India*

Note: jarul – lagerstroemia,  
Queen’s Crepe Myrtle in Hindi

butterfly collector  
the tom cat  
does a backflip

*Rick Jackofsky, USA*

clearing shelves  
a ticket pressed  
between two pages

*Simon Wilson, UK*

canyon dawn  
the rocky walls begin  
to chitter

*sanjuktaa asopa, India*

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

zalijepljene za ogradu  
škole moga sina  
kukuljice monarha

*Goran Gatalica, Croatia*

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

putem do potoka  
mališan gricka  
kruh za ribice

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

swifts on the wing  
cattle cooling  
in the tranquil loch

*Tony Williams, Scotland*

cherry picking the promise of spring

*Katie Montagna, Ireland*

agave flower –  
the sound of the sea  
on my words

fiore d'agave –  
il rumore del mare  
sulle parole

*Cinzia Pitingaro, Italy*

bright sun  
the windshield crack  
pulses gold

*David Oates, USA*

clouds collar  
the topmost spruce  
alabaster sky

*Deborah Burke Henderson, USA*

arms akimbo  
their hula hips  
become the sea

*Matthew Caretti, American Samoa*

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

*Catharine Summerfield Hāna, USA*

joyride cycling through sky mirrors

*Alexander Groth, Germany*

forest trek  
a bull ant pillaging  
sweet dew

*Gwen Bitti, Australia*

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

*Sathya Venkatesh, India*

waiting for its mate  
in the lemon tree  
mohawked bulbul

*Vishal Prabhu, India*

peach pit—  
weaving ridges  
on a soft palm

koštica breskve —  
brazde se utkivaju  
na meku dlanu

*Amir Kapetanović, Croatia*

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

lună de fân—  
un băiat cântă la nai  
prietenei sale

*Steliana Cristina Voicu, Romania*

each umbel  
a complete sentence  
Queen Anne's lace

*Dylan Stover, USA*

bindweed tendrils . . .  
fleetingly your arm  
under mine

vrilles de liseron  
fugacement ton bras  
sous le mien

*Marie Derley, Belgium*

the train pulls you away  
doves coo  
from the rafters

*Ruth Kennedy, Canada*

breadcrumbs—  
a line lifting  
north

*Elliot Diamond, USA*

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

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

gifts offered  
in memory of a child –  
scattered elm seeds

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

*Daniela Misso, Italy*

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

暮色蒼蒼...  
白尾鹿的影子  
隱入車燈中

*John Zheng, USA*

salmon in the valley sunset

*Michael Lamb, USA*

starless night . . .  
navigating  
on memory alone

*Angela Terry, USA*

no moon day  
the fragrance of parijat  
through the window

*Ram Chandran, India*

paddling in the pond  
a mallard  
brushes his ensō

*Brian Kates, USA*

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

*Randy Brooks, USA*

cicada husks shimmer  
on the adobe wall  
midday silence

*Alanna C. Burke, USA*

long summer heat  
an ant drags a seed  
towards shadow

*C.X. Turner, UK*

barn fire  
a cow still reaching through  
a twisted stanchion

*Edward J. Rielly, USA*

fuzzy seeds  
on pasture grass stalks . . .  
summer frost

*Diane Webster, USA*

obscured mountains  
the stink of wildfire  
on my shirt

*Stephen C. Curro, USA*

wild thyme  
back from the hospital  
on the passenger side

*Michael Henry Lee, USA*

downed oak  
all the smaller trees  
it took with it

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

from sea  
to shining sea  
wildfires

*Jay Friedenber*g, USA

choke weed  
a runaway river  
altering course

*Joanna Ashwell*, UK

carrying the wild  
in a dingo's cry  
mountain wind

*Gavin Austin*, Australia

Sonata –  
pizzicato of rain  
on the pergola

*Richard Kakol*, Australia

fern fronds  
feather the darkness –  
needle points of rain

*Jo McInerney*, Australia

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

ગામનું ચોમાસુ  
લોબાનની સુગંધ  
માતાના રૂમમાં રહે છે

*Lakshmi Iyer, India*

rainbow –  
the forest shimmers  
in a puddle

tęcza –  
las mieni się  
w kałuży

*Artur Zieliński, Poland*

farmers market  
the crisscrossing wheel marks  
on monsoonmud

*Kala Ramesh, India*

evening drizzle . . .  
in the grocery bag  
more potatoes

*Bhawana Rathore, India*

food insecurity  
the empty throat pouch  
of a nutcracker

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

a snail in my path broken moon

*Wendy Cobourne, USA*

dandruff  
on the canopy  
flowering gums

*Rohan Buettel, Australia*

an open space  
for air to come and go  
beaver lodge

*Bill Cooper, USA*

mum's song  
dust moves  
in the sunbeam

canzone di mamma  
la polvere si muove  
nel fascio di luce

*Maria Concetta Conti, Italy*

leste wind  
between banana leaves  
shifting light

*Ben Oliver, England*

riverboat man  
with more teeth gone than not  
moonless starlight

*Cassady O'Reilly-Hahn (orha), USA*

the silence  
when swallows leave –  
waning moon

il silenzio  
quando le rondini partono --  
luna calante

*Mariangela Canzi, Italy*

windless autumn –  
the tower's old weathercock  
quivers

bezwietrzna jesień –  
stary kurek na wieży  
drży

*Eugeniusz Zacharski, Poland*

hometown  
the wistfulness  
of oak trees

*Timothy Daly, Italy*

ramshackle barn  
the heart-shaped face  
of a ghost owl

*Stephenie Story, USA*

autumn wind  
long sunlit waves  
of grass

*Emil Karla, France*

sunlit hands  
mom still  
doesn't know me

*Robert Hirschfield, USA*

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

не плачи врапче  
поделићемо тугу-  
јесењи сумрак

*Mile Lisica, Serbia*

orange oak leaf  
the lazy turn  
of the stream

*Dennis Owen Frohlich, USA*

older chrysanthemums the stretch of many hues

పండుబారిన చామంతులపై ఎన్ని రంగుల చారలో

*Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, India*

this last step to the infinite mackerel clouds

*Joshua St. Claire, USA*

gull cries  
deep fog sinks its roots  
into the

*John Hawkhead, UK*

evening smoke . . .  
the day dissolves  
into stars

*Manoj Sharma, Nepal*

winter migration  
the lingering hope  
of finding a home

*Christina Sng, Singapore*

moving day  
how do I tell the birds  
at our feeder

*Dan Curtis*

back home  
the cat leaps  
from my lap to yours

*Neha Singh Soni, India*

a winding stream  
stilled by frost  
wrinkles in the mirror

*Robert Witmer, Japan*

cedar bark  
tangled with bear hair —  
the test results

*Nicholas Klacsanzky, USA*

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

zov divlje guske . . .  
jezero uokviruje  
mraz na travi

*Nina Kovačić, Croatia*

bone pile  
in a vacant nest—  
what we leave behind

*Curt Pawlisch, USA (EC)*

new story  
the cotton-wool silence  
of falling snow

*Olivier Schopfer, Switzerland*

igloo silence  
time slows  
to white

*Kathryn P. Haydon, USA*

thinned icicles—  
the old priest's shadow  
grows smaller

țurțuri subțiați—  
umbra bătrânului preot  
se micșorează

*Mircea Moldovan, România*

blizzard –  
white noise broken  
by the cat's purr

*Ann Sullivan, USA*

clasped hands  
the eyes without gaze –  
my mother

le mani giunte  
gli occhi senza sguardo –  
mia madre

*Antonio Mangiameli, Italy*

a cry from mom  
in her sleep  
winter wind

*Frank Hooven, USA*

late forecast  
the wings of tomb angels  
heavy with snow

закъсняла прогноза  
огънати под снега  
крилете на надгробните ангели

*Radostina Dragostinova, Bulgaria*

returning chill—  
the queue shrinking  
at the ramen shop

ラーメン屋の列短し寒のもどり

*Keiko Izawa, Japan*

power outage  
cats have no word  
for conversation

*Jim Chessing, USA*

one week sober  
the low winter moon  
paler

戒酒一周  
冬日低垂的月亮  
看起來更蒼白

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*

christmas cactus if we could age like that

*Pegah Rahmati Nezhad, Iran*

winter sun garden stones sip the snow

*Sondra J. Byrnes, USA*

winter dawn—  
fog blanketing the path  
to you

*Mohua Maulik, India*

blue hour  
first morning bus  
breaks through the mist

*Tim Dwyer, Northern Ireland/USA*

winter frost  
the slippery backs  
of carousel horses

*Mona Bedi, India*

snow covered park bench  
voices of summer  
buried in wooden slats

*Helen Sokolsky, USA*

winter chill –  
the gargoyle's mouth  
stuffed with snow

سردی کی ٹھنڈ –  
ایک شکلی پر نالے کا منہ  
برف سے بھرا ہوا

*Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan*

after the freeze –  
the sparrow's chirp  
so certain

*Robert Lowes, USA*

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

*Herb Tate, UK (EC)*

winter's end –  
the attic full of  
butterfly souls

zima končí–  
podkroví je plné  
duší baboček

*Hynek Koziol, Czech Republic*

melting icicles . . .  
broadcasting  
a lost hymn

țurțuri topindu-se...  
parcă se difuzează  
un imn pierdut

*Cezar Ciobîcă, Romania*

northern lights  
the poems I have  
by heart

*John Pappas, USA*

a pelican lands  
in the Danube Delta  
spring's return

*Florian Munteanu, Romania*

shell crater —  
a new bud shining in rain  
this morning

حفرة قذيفة  
برعم جديد يتألق تحت المطر  
هذا الصباح

*Fatma Zohra Habis, Algeria*

battered toast  
a halo of midges  
in first light

*Lorraine Haig, Australia*

a new angle to consider an egret

*Ian Willey, Japan*

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

powojenny marsz  
on próbuje omijać  
maleńkie fiołki

*Urszula Marciniak, Poland*

## Editor's Choices (EC) – Haiku

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

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

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



between worms  
another song  
from the robin

*Jeff Hoagland, USA (EC)*

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

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



bone pile  
in a vacant nest—  
what we leave behind

*Curt Pawlisch, USA (EC)*

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



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

*Herb Tate, UK (EC)*

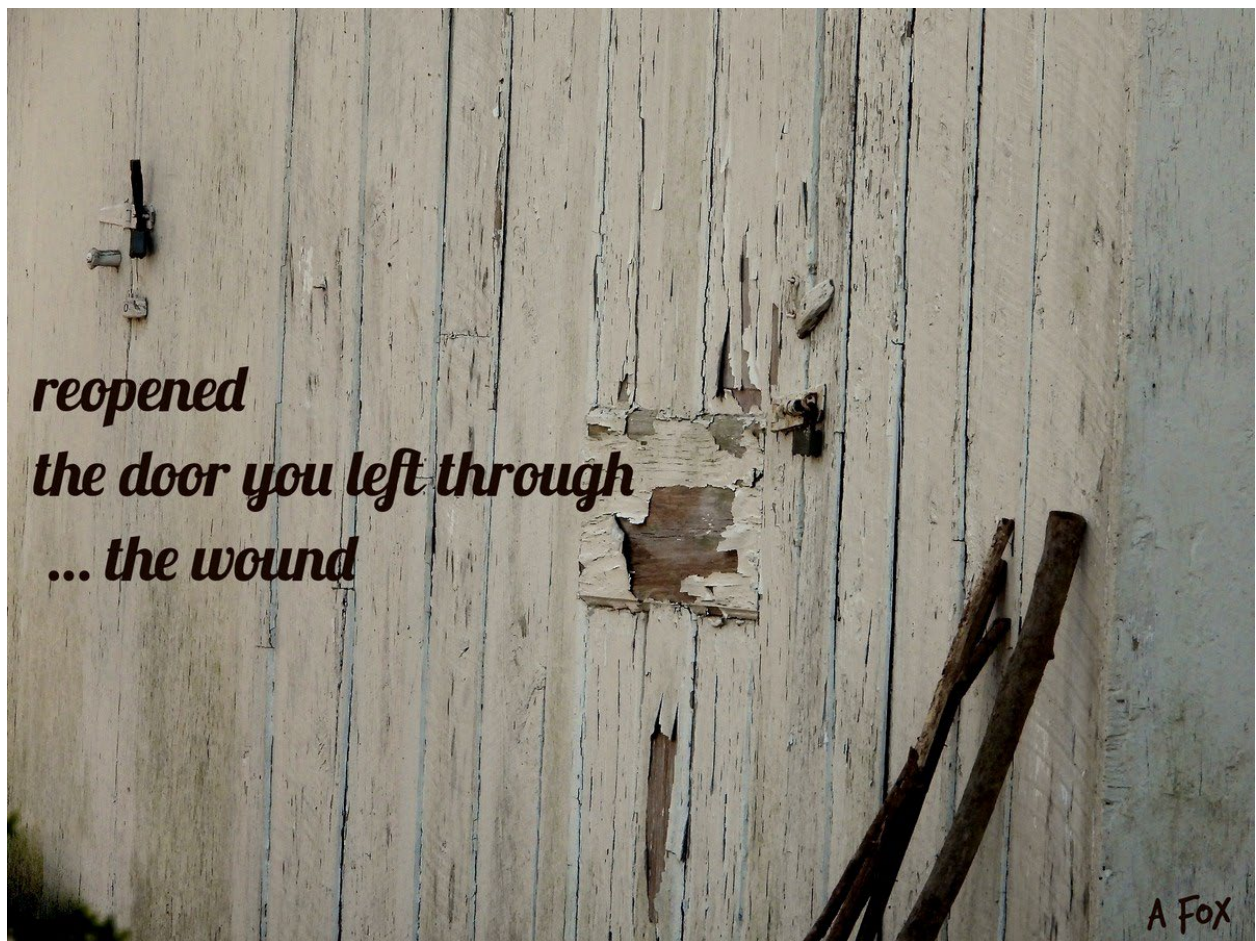
Herb Tate brings us a snowy winter in this haiku. The structure is traditional with the first line bringing us ‘snow falling’. The second line, ‘the world turning into’, leads my imagination to a wonderland of snowflakes, people dressed in winterwear and perhaps, even Christmas lighting. Part of the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

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

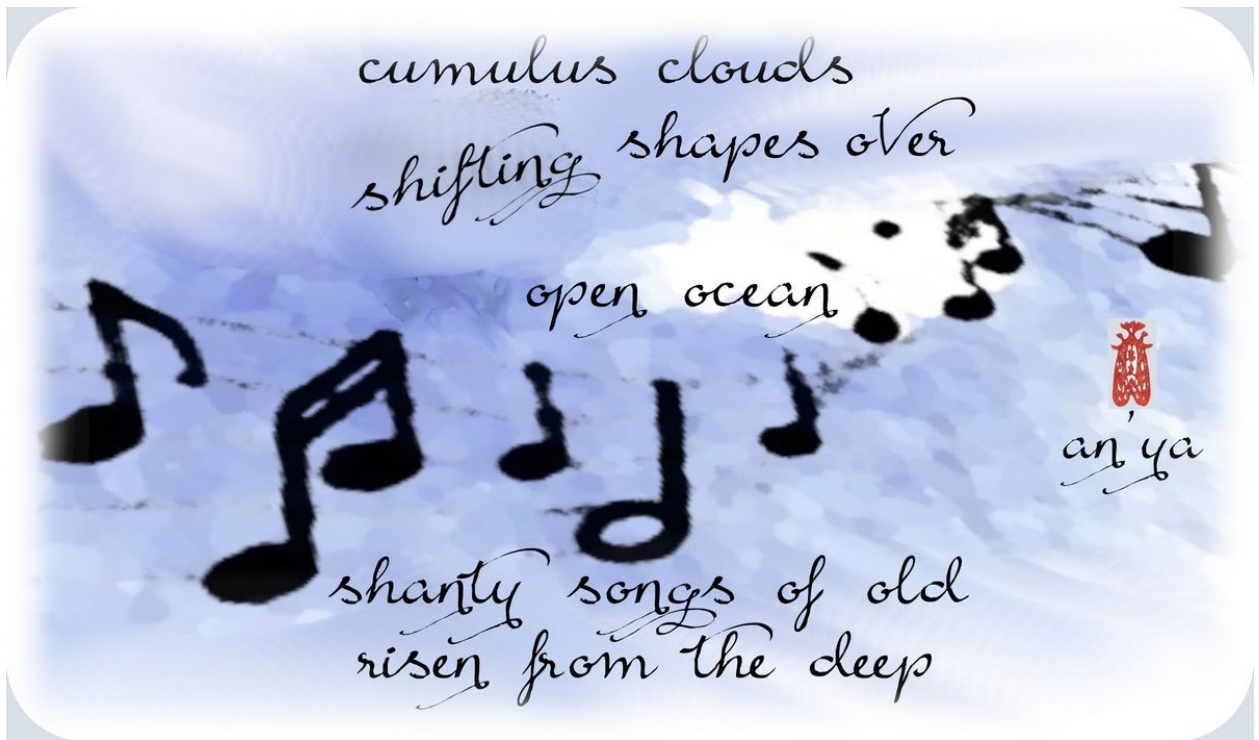
Till next time,  
**Geethanjali Rajan**

# Haiga - Part 1

Anne Fox - USA



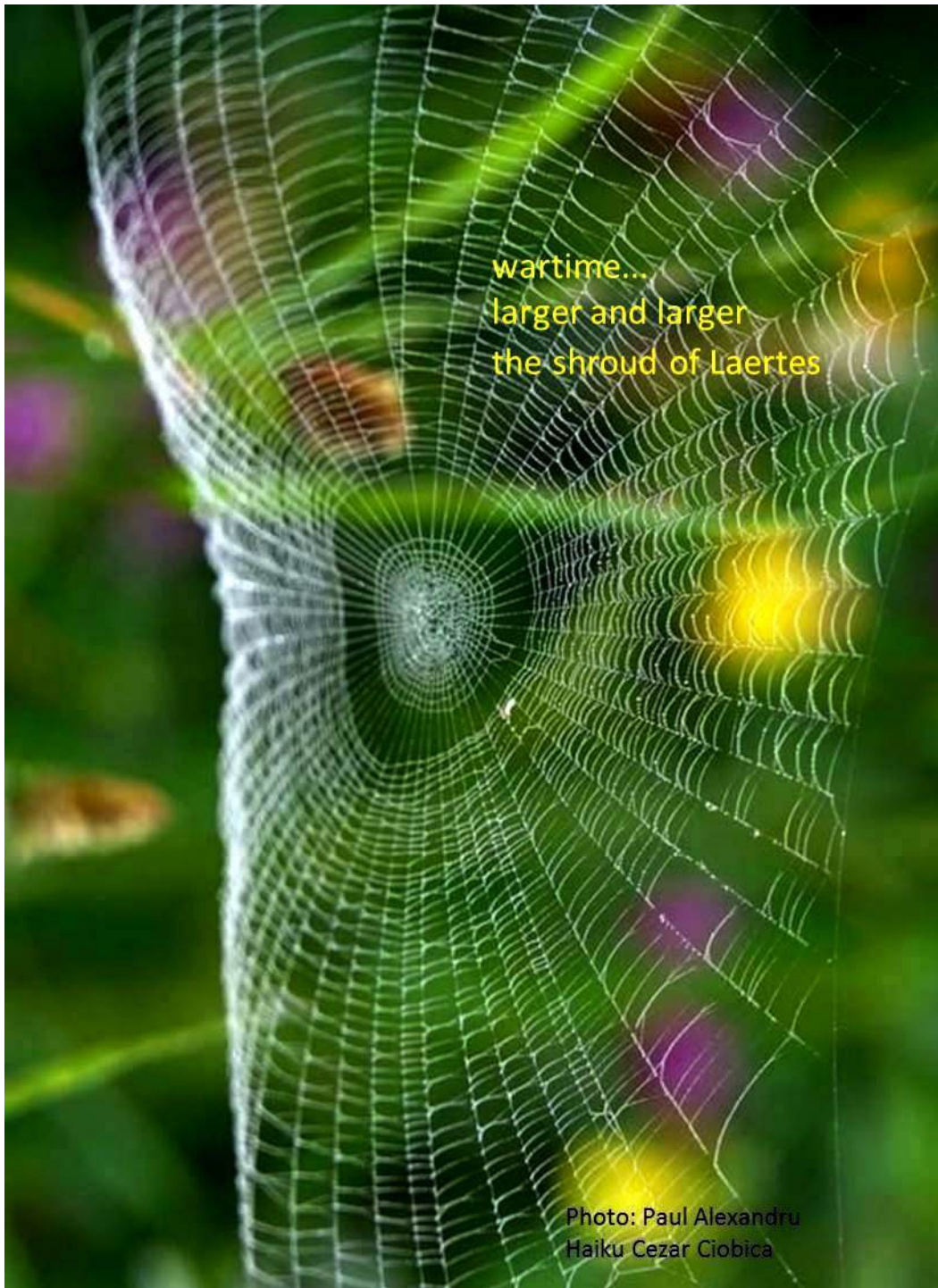
an'ya – USA



Capotă Daniela Lăcrămioara – Romania



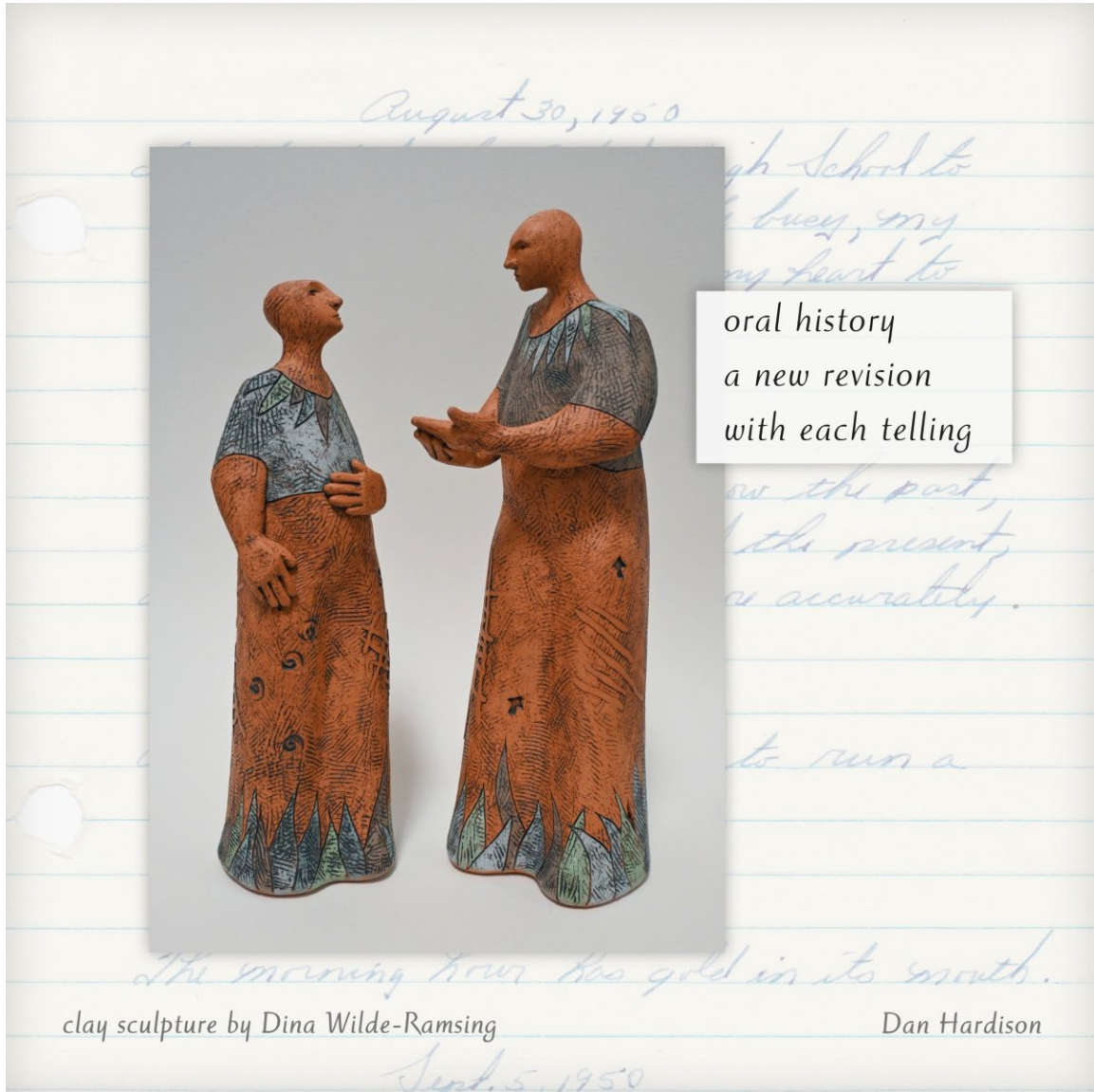
Cezar Ciobică / Paul Alexandru – Romania



wartime...  
larger and larger  
the shroud of Laertes

Photo: Paul Alexandru  
Haiku Cezar Ciobică

Dan Hardison / Dina Wilde-Ramsing – USA



Debbie Strange – Canada



Deborah Bowman—USA

**bird's eye view border wall brown out**



words/photo Deborah Bowman

# Senryu



Anzac Bridge

mother's cry  
midway through the song  
pickling onions

*Gareth Nurdan, UK*

change of command –  
the decorated colonel  
wrangles his kids

*Michael Lamb, USA*

mending barbwire  
with grandpa  
uneasy words

*Randy Brooks, USA*

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

wine tasting  
in the rain everything  
tastes like wet dog

*Angela Terry, USA*

junior birder  
declaring himself  
a sapsucker

*Peter Jastermsky, USA*

eye to eye  
a child and my mom  
in her wheelchair

*Pamela Garry, USA*

finally accepting the truth childless aunt

*Stephanie Zepherelli, USA*

holiday season  
avoiding the crowds  
within me

*Michael Henry Lee, USA*

spring thaw –  
his departing steps  
enlarge

*Sondra J. Byrnes, USA (EC)*

curtain-call applause even for the villain

*Robert Lowes, USA*

visiting hours  
a lizard settles  
behind the curtain

मिलने का समय  
एक छिपकली घुसी  
पर्दे के पीछे

*Neena Singh, India*

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

*Ravi Kiran, India*

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

*Nola Obee, Canada*

grandma's shopping bag  
sewn from kitchen curtains  
I remember

*Jennifer Gurney, USA*

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

no angels in the prison yard first snow

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

Delta blues  
the muddy water  
flowing from our faucet

*Rick Jackofsky, USA*

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

*Anna Cates, USA*

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

een stukje blauw  
uit een verkeerde puzzel  
dit verlangen naar huis

*Joanne van Helvoort, The Netherlands*

family photo—  
everyone pretending  
to be fine

*Jacek Margolak, Poland*

quiet morning  
I check if she is  
still breathing

*Christina Sng, Singapore*

old yearbook  
the photography club  
out of focus

*Terri L. French, USA*

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

staré naslouchátko  
tátovy taneční kroky  
o půl doby pozadu

*Hynek Koziol, Czech Republic*

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

*Nicholas Gentile, USA*

empty Cathedral  
a lone Soprano  
singing Tudor Madrigals

ardeaglais bánaithe  
-sopránó aonair  
ag canadh Madragal Túdarach

*Noel King, Ireland*  
*trans. Ceaití Ní Bheildiúin*

the iron bull  
on her door  
the ring  
in his nose

*Robert Witmer, Japan*

early spring  
within her cupped hands  
a robin's egg

*Jamie Wimberly, USA*

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

*Janet Ruth, USA*

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

clipping toenails  
a crescent flies off  
into the night sky

*Mark Ritchie, UK*

letting go  
of the argument  
ess curve of the exit

*Laurinda Lind, USA*

choosing an urn  
the ashes we leave  
for our children

death by a thousand cuts to healthcare

*Julie Schwerin, USA*

rainy graveyard  
sharing news of my promotion  
with Mom

*Roberta Beach Jacobson, USA*

rough landing  
I can't read  
my own writing

*Rohan Buettel, Australia*

holding my newborn  
the change from  
solid to gas

*Bill Fay, USA*

quiet dinner  
without candles –  
he bites into a crouton

*Mary Ann Conley, USA*

peace vigil –  
making a noise  
in the wrong place

*Herb Tate, UK*

school cafeteria  
another lunch  
of mystery meat

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

harvest over  
Dad has time to shave  
his stubble

*Keitha Keyes, Australia*

smoothing  
nan's suit collar  
last goodbye

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

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

*Barrie Levine, USA*

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

krzyżówka dziadka  
słowo którego szukamy  
to miłość

*Aleksandra Rybczyńska, Poland (EC)*

wondering  
how my eulogy will sound  
blue tit's trill

*Timothy Daly, Italy*

breastfeeding . . .  
I stare deep  
into my sandwich

*Tony Williams, UK (EC)*

wrapping  
the sari around me  
6 yards of thought

*Kala Ramesh, India*

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

*Ben Oliver, UK*

picnic date  
letting the big ants  
figure out our bodies

*Dylan Stover, USA*

revealing everything  
you want to hide  
sunglasses

*Olivier Schopfer, Switzerland*

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

половинчатото ти обещание  
първият минзухар  
пробил снега

*Radostina Dragostinova, Bulgaria*

the arguments  
that I should have given  
pouring rain

les arguments  
que j'aurais dû donner  
pluie battante

*Marie Derley, Belgium*

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

ne regăsim după ani...  
împărțim banca din copilărie  
și o tartă cu vișine

*Steliana Voicu, Romania*

the lecture hall  
where we learned circuitry  
school shooting

*Bill Cooper, USA*

Halloween night  
a murmuration  
of princesses

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

*Brad Bennett, USA*

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

*Ram Chandran, India*

calving . . .  
grief's gradual  
release

*Barbara Sabol, USA (EC)*

day hospital –  
my son's name  
a barcode

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

*Carmela Marino, Italy (EC)*

the pet's floppy ears  
waving from  
the bicycle basket

klempave uši kućnog ljubimca  
mašu  
iz korpe bicikla

*Slobodan Pupovac, Croatia*

blithe breeze  
in my loose dress  
i feel free

*Pegah Rahmati Nezhad, Iran*

refugee camp  
the children fighting  
over an orange

driving by  
the old house  
missing myself

*Ruth Holzer, USA*

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

*Jo McInerney, Australia*

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

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

*Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan*

empty playground  
granny tests her balance  
on the hopscotch

*Mary White, Ireland*

temple ruins  
finding the spire  
inside me

*Anne Fox, USA*

womb breathing the ease in peace

*Rita R Melissano, USA*

divination  
the gentle strokes  
of her scanning wand

*Sally Biggar, USA (EC)*

camping trip  
the fisherman hooks  
his own finger

*Valentina Ranaldi-Adams, USA*

playing chess  
my five-year-old niece  
mimics grandpa

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

*Bhawana Rathore, India*

stitch one pearl one  
the slow knitting  
of bones

*John Hawkhead, UK*

fifth instar the nymph i once was

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

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

milestone birthday  
fine tuning  
her binoculars

*Katja Fox, UK*

rope swing  
the old oak  
let's out a sigh

*Mona Bedi, India*

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

*Tyson West, USA*

onion season another month of tears

*Patricia Hawkhead, UK*

bin day  
my granddaughter rescues  
the one-legged doll

*Ann Sullivan, USA*

rehabyss

*LeRoy Gorman, Canada*

river in spate—  
a pint of porter  
settling

led blindfolded  
I see the bluebell woods—  
with new eyes

*Lulu Sinnott, Ireland*

student finance  
another hole  
in my bucket list

high school reunion  
the class clown  
parks his unicycle

*Thomas David, UK*

Christmas baking  
cinnamon embedded  
in her tiny palm

*Agnes Eva Savich, USA*

first date—  
dad insists he come  
to the door

*Stephenie Story, USA*

blood moon  
mom speaks of my brothers  
lost at birth

*Kevin Valentine, USA*

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

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

*Neha Singh Soni, India*

snail--  
how fast  
should i be?

*Nitu Yunnam, UAE*

rush-hour train  
my smile  
on standby

*Nalini Shetty, India*

toilet  
AirPod  
the sound of water

*Curt Pawlisch, USA*

first frost  
when in doubt  
make pickles

*Mike Fainzilber, Israel*

keeping the faith  
on tiptoe she swiffers  
the baby jesus

*David Green, USA*

stuck between  
my teeth  
great grandma's gap

*Tré, USA*

half-forgotten song  
her fingers trace  
piano dust

*C.X. Turner, UK*

“Can I come over?”  
the sound of rain  
over the telephone

*Ash Evan Lippert, USA*

training wheels  
a young father learns  
to let go

*Wendy Cobourne, USA*

lunch break  
an accidental mouthful  
of dead fly

*Rowan Beckett Minor, USA*

digging potatoes  
my neighbour shares  
his diagnosis

*Mark Miller, Australia*

rainbow streaks  
reflected in the bus window  
her smile

regenbogensprenkel  
im busfenster gespiegelt  
ihr lächeln

*Alexander Groth, Germany*

first prom –  
inserting shoulder pads  
in her bra

prvi plesnjak-  
u grudnjak namješta  
umetak za rame

*Silva Trstenjak, Croatia*  
*trans. R. V. Rozic*

## Editor's Choices (EC) - Senryu

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



divination  
the gentle strokes  
of her scanning wand

*Sally Biggar, USA*(EC)

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



day hospital –  
my son's name  
a barcode

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

*Carmela Marino, Italy (EC)*

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



breastfeeding . . .  
I stare deep  
into my sandwich

*Tony Williams, UK (EC)*

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



spring thaw –  
his departing steps  
enlarge

*Sondra J. Byrnes, USA (EC)*

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



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

krzyżówka dziadka  
słowo którego szukamy  
to miłość

*Aleksandra Rybczyńska, Poland (EC)*

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



calving . . .  
grief's gradual  
release

*Barbara Sabol, USA (EC)*

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



newly strimmed graveyard  
the scattered shards  
of plastic flowers

*Mark Ritchie, UK (EC)*

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



**David J Kelly**

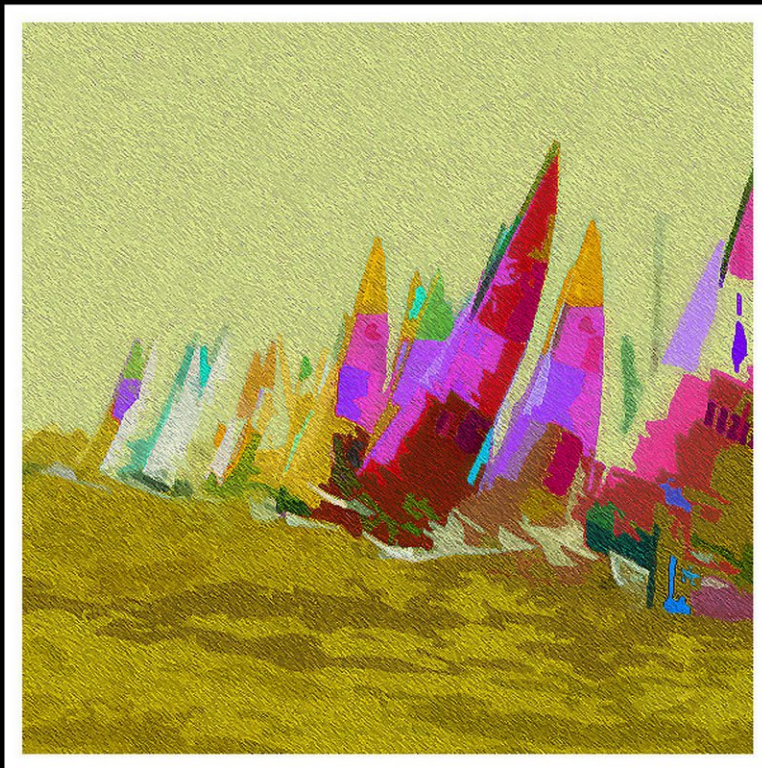
## Haiga - Part 2

Dian Duchin Reed – USA



Dimitrij Škrk – Slovenia

*Dimitrij Škrk*



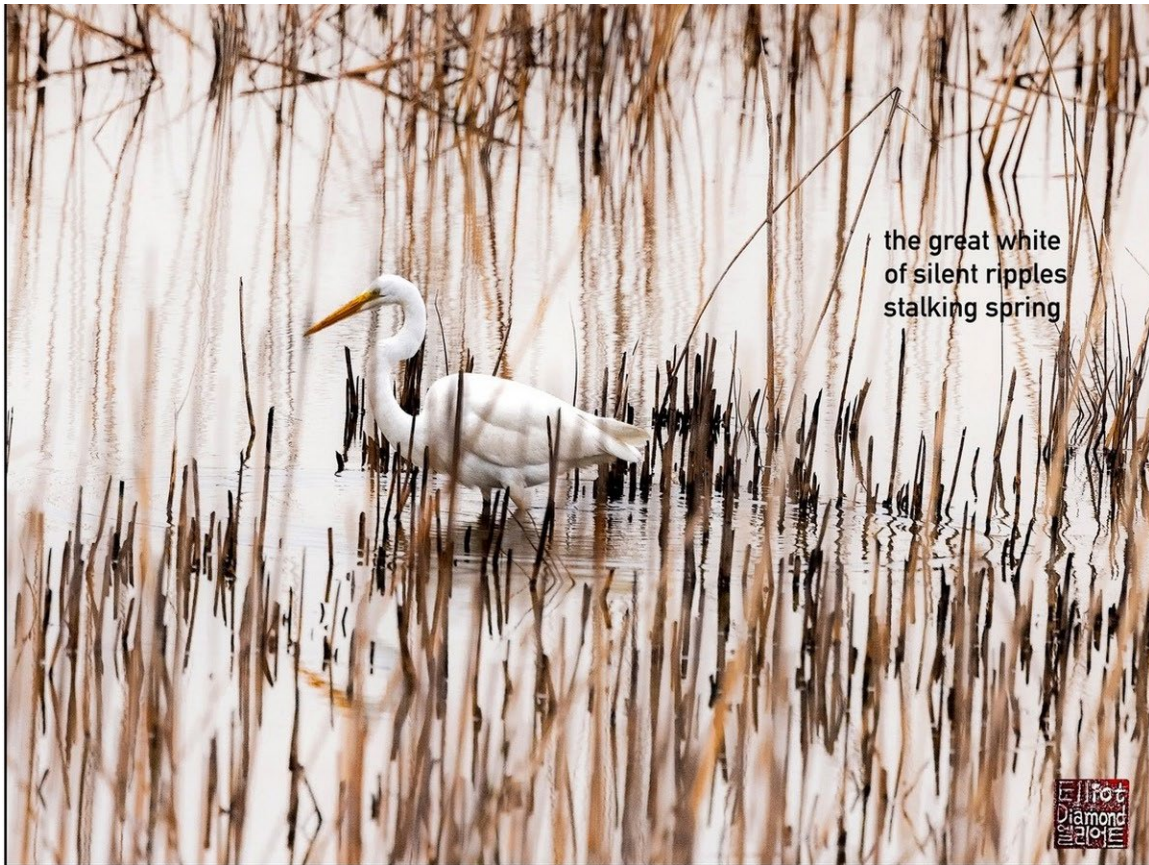
spring wind –  
her long hair dances  
around our kiss

Djurdja Vukelic Rozic – Croatia

*first date -  
a thumping heart  
while he waits  
hiding flowers  
behind his back*

*d. v. rozic*

Elliot Diamond / Matthew Cohen – USA

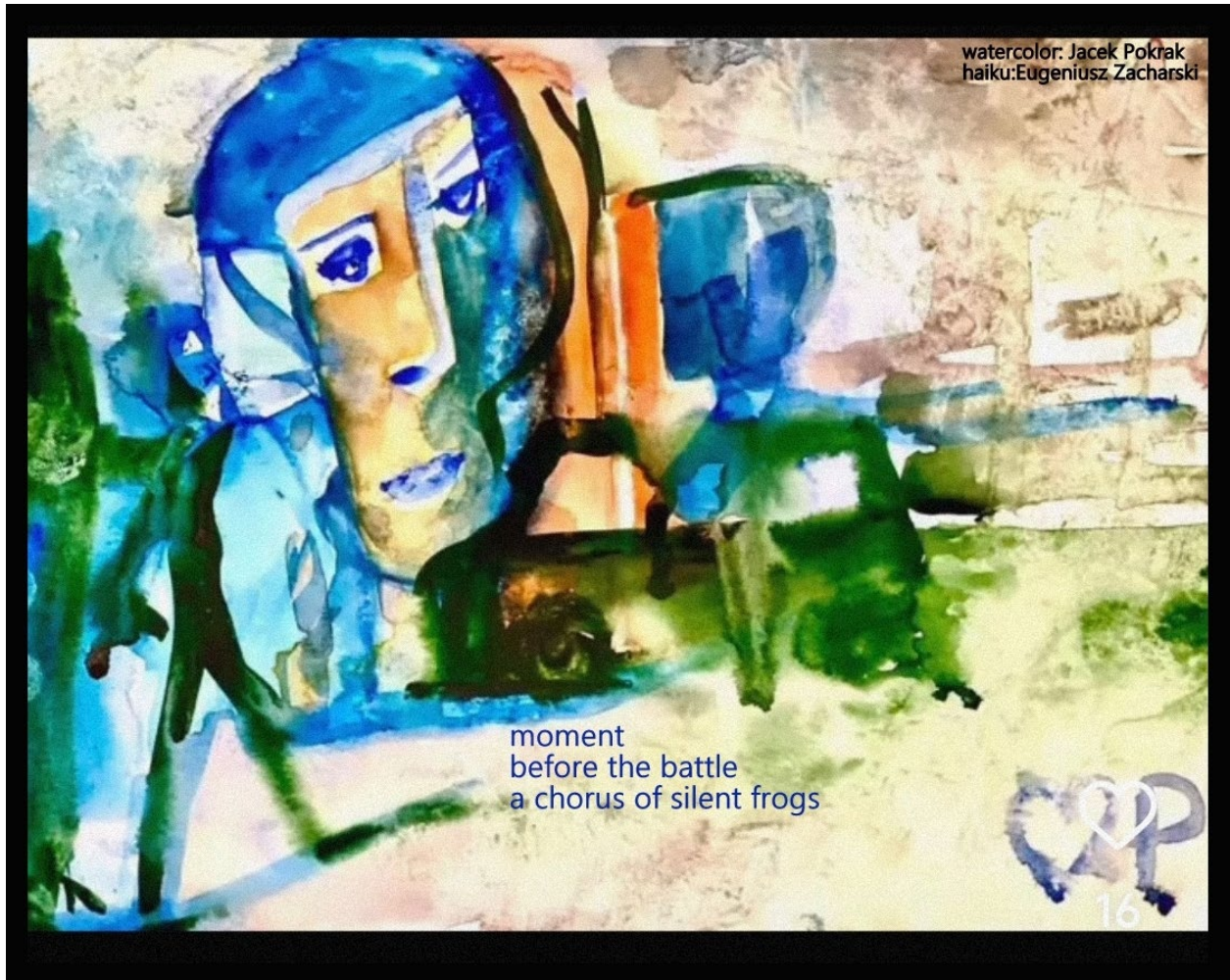


the great white  
of silent ripples  
stalking spring

Matthew Cohen: photographer

Elliot Diamond: haiku

Eugeniusz Zacharski / Jacek Pokrak – Poland

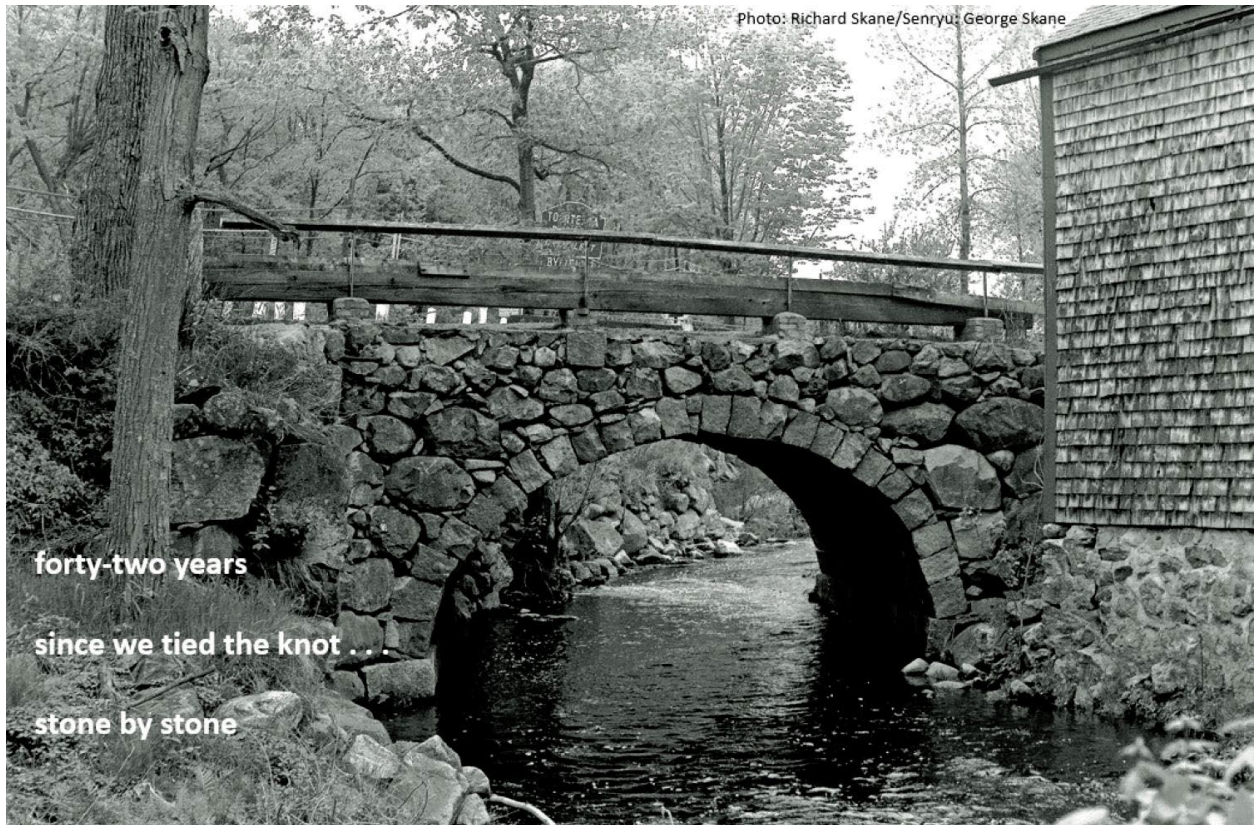


Gavin Austin – Australia



## George Skane – USA

Photo: Richard Skane/Senryu: George Skane



forty-two years

since we tied the knot . . .

stone by stone

Goda Virginija Bendoraitienė – Lithuania



a soft sigh -  
the snow fortress loosens  
into angel wings

photo and haiku by Goda V. Bendoraitienė

# Tanka



Queen Victoria Building

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

*Mona Bedi, India*

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

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

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

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

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

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

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

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

*Mark Gilbert, UK*

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

*Sally Biggar, USA*

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

*Slobodan Pupovac, Croatia*

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

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

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

*Nitu Yumnam, UAE (EC)*

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

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

*Cezar-Florin Ciobîcă, Romania*

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

*Suraja Menon Roychowdhury, USA*

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

*Kevin Valentine, USA*

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

*Jenny Ward Angyal, USA*

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

*Lakshmi Iyer, India*

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

ein Admiral  
majestätisch  
gleitet er  
über ein Meer  
von Blüten

*Pitt Buerken, Germany*

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

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

*Daniela Misso, Italy*

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

*Linda Conroy, USA*

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

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

*Senka Slivar, Croatia*

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

*Leon Tefft, USA*

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

*Pegah Rahmati Nezhad, Iran*

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

*Joshua St. Claire, USA*

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

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

*Sanjana Zorinc, Croatia*

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

*Ruth Holzer, USA*

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

*Angela Porter, UK*

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

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

*Artur Zieliński, Poland*

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

*Janet Ruth, USA*

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

*Joanna Ashwell, UK*

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

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

*Steliana Cristina Voicu, Romania*

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

*Patricia Nellene Deal, USA*

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

*Anna Cates, USA*

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

*Anthony Lusardi, USA*

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

*Rick Jackofsky, USA*

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

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

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

*Edward Dewar, Canada*

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

*John Zheng, USA*

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

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada (EC)*

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

*John Hawkhead, UK*

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

*Marion Clarke, Northern Ireland*

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

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

*Nazarena Rampini, Italy*

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

*Dylan Stover, USA*

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

*Richard Kakol, Australia*

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

*Bona M. Santos, USA*

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

*Robert Witmer, Japan*

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

*Tim Cremin, USA*

hearing  
the diagnosis  
how quickly  
my cursive devolves  
into a scribble

*susan burch, USA*

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

*Nalini Shetty, India (EC)*

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

*Kala Ramesh, India*

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

*Simon Wilson, UK*

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

*Jenny Polstra, Aotearoa/New Zealand*

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

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

*Djurdja Vukelic Rozic, Croatia*

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

*Margaret Owen Ruckert, Australia*

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

*Betsy Hearne, USA*

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

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

*Marie Derley, Belgium*

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

*LeRoy Gorman, Canada*

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

*Bonnie J Scherer, USA*

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

*Vaishnavi Ramaswamy, India*

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

*Randy Brooks, USA*

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

*Tyson West, USA*

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

*Anne Louise Curran, New Zealand*

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

*Gwen Bitti, Australia*

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

*Curt Pawlisch, USA*

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

*Mohua Maulik, India*

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

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

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

*Keitha Keyes, Australia*

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

*Robert Erlandson, USA*

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

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

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

*Jim Chessing, USA*

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

*Jennifer Read Hawthorne, USA*

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

*Cynthia Bale, Canada*

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

*Jenny Ward Angyal, USA*

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

*Nicholas Gentile, USA*

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

*Dennis Owen Frohlich, USA*

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

*Florian Munteanu, Romania*

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

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

*Mircea Moldovan, România*

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

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

حفصہ اشرف، پاکستان

*Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan*

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

*Fatma Zohra Habis, Algeria*

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

حفصہ اشرف، پاکستان

*Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan*

## Editor's Choices (EC) – Tanka

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

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada (EC)*

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



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

*Nitu Yumnam, UAE (EC)*

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

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



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

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

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



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

*Nalini Shetty, India (EC)*

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

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



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

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

حفصہ اشرف، پاکستان

*Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan (EC)*

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

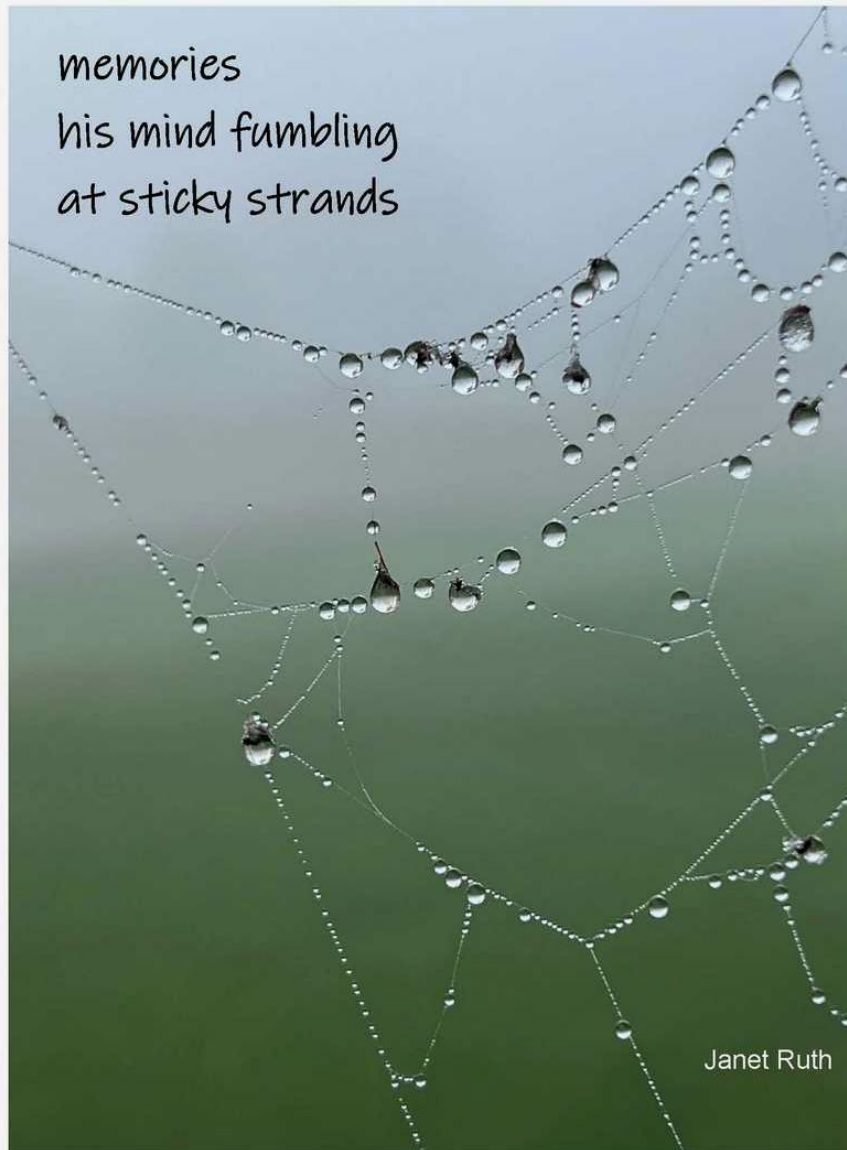
**Jenny Fraser**

# Haiga – Part 3

Hifsa Ashraf – Pakistan / Shahid Mehmood – Norway



Janet Ruth – USA



Jenny Fraser – New Zealand



John Hawkhead – UK

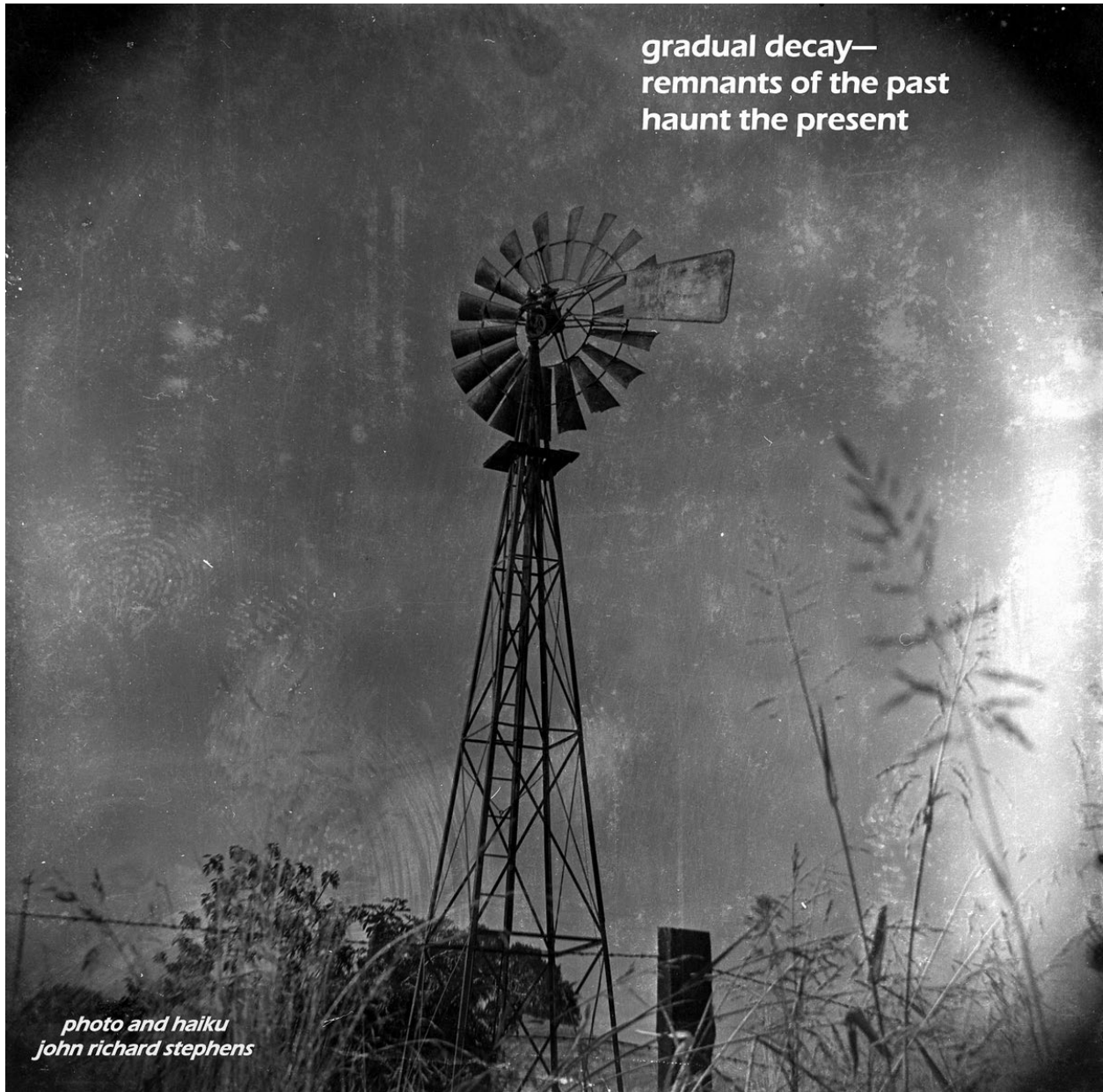


*john hawkhead*

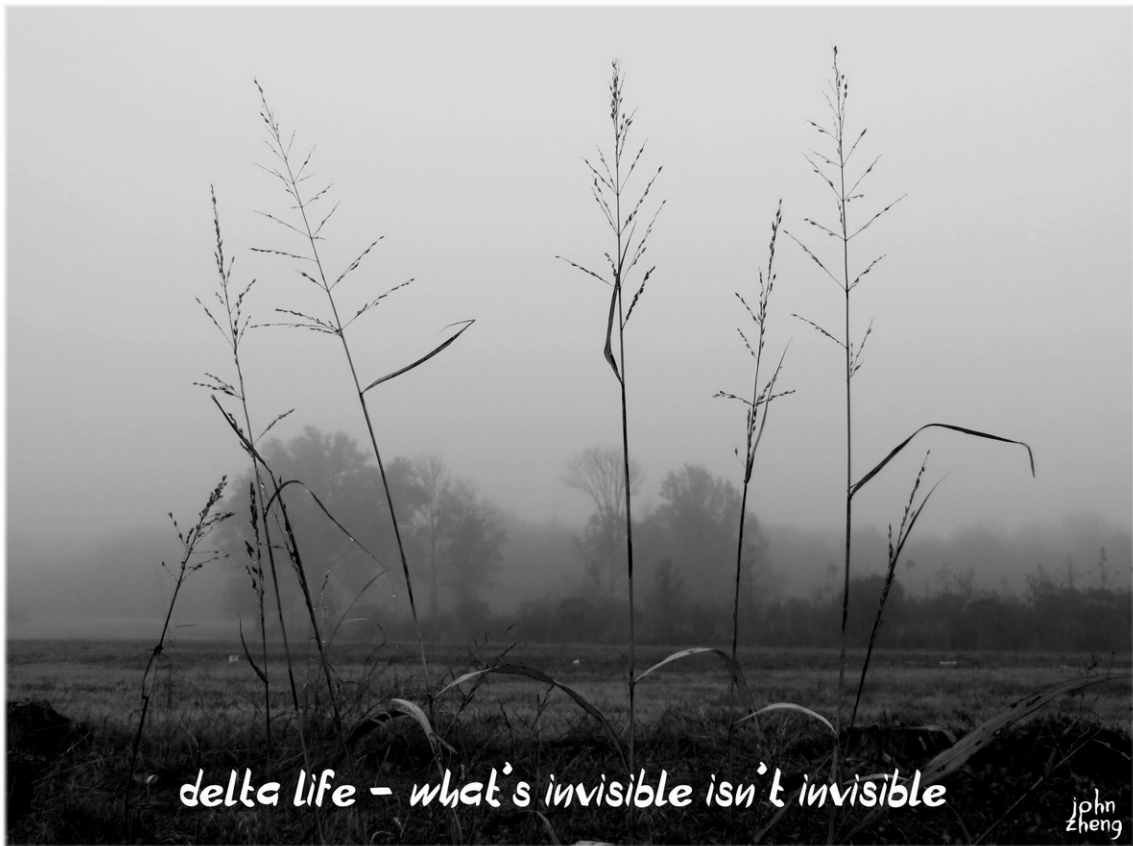
Johnnie Johnson Hafernik & Dorothy M. Messerschmitt – USA



John Richard Stephens – USA



John Zheng – USA



# Haibun



Sydney Harbour

## Family Ties

*Jill Muhrer, USA*

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

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

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

single leg pose  
silent wings unfold  
a blue heron

## Midnight

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

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

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

## Flow

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

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

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

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

lights across water  
the distance  
of another shore

# Nosferatu

*Anna Cates, USA*

*in memory of Sylvia Plath & Ted Hughes*

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

in the heat  
of epiphany . . .  
a hissing bee

## Mind Trap

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

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

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

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

circling crows  
shadow  
the prison yard

## Blue Light in the Shenandoah

*Leon Tefft, USA*

Manassas wind  
once, only dogwoods  
bled petals

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

looming Wilderness  
the sword I wield  
in my soul

## Silken Memories

*Gwen Bitti, Australia*

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

behind train windows  
morning light  
folds away

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

garden shrine  
white butterflies  
dust the sky

*The West Mebon Reclining Vishnu Bronze,*  
11<sup>th</sup> Century, Cambodia

*Caroline Giles Banks, USA*

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

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

the exhalation  
of lotus blossoms  
dawn breaks

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

hands crossed  
over the heart  
fans of fortune

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

Muse’em

## The Tree of Dreams

*Valentina Meloni, Italy (EC)*

*Valdichiana April 7, 2017*

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

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

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

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

sea breeze –  
a tree knows  
even your dreams

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

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

*continued . . .*

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

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

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

## L'albero dei sogni

*Valdichiana 7 aprile 2017*

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

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

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

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

*continued . . .*

*brezza di mare –  
un albero conosce  
anche i tuoi sogni*

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

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

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

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

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

## Harmony

*Vaishnavi Ramaswamy, India*

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

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

Kanniyakumari  
the OM fills  
my silence

## Trail's End

*Colleen M. Farrelly, USA*

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

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

buried sign an arrowhead pointing home

## Snowscape

*Joshua St. Claire, USA*

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

a palette knife again and again through the zinc white moon

## A seeming seam

*Diana Webb, UK*

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

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

## In That Which Lies Beyond, Will There Be Wings?

Janet Ruth, USA

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

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

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

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

## My Garden

*Robert Witmer, Japan*

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

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

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

spaces  
where old pictures hung  
water in a net

## Warming Up

*Doug Sylver, USA (EC)*

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

so long covered in ice  
her childhood memories  
of the orphanage

## The Surf at Del Mar: A Token of Remembrance

(for Brad Crager)

*Jeffrey Streeby, USA*

Summer morning  
wearing the ache of grief  
like a cheap suit

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

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

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

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

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

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

*continued . . .*

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

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

This summer sun  
perfecting  
another California afternoon

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

How much can we know anyway . . .

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

## Of Mercy

*Glenn G. Coats, USA*

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

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

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

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

*continued . . .*

water  
and swim  
like a frog  
back  
to the surface.

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

deep in the dark of river the answers

## Stroke Of Midnight

*Kevin Valentine, USA*

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

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

## Hiraeth

*Timothy Daly, Italy*

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

creaky stairs  
holding on to  
memories

## Scrimmage

*E. C. Traganas, USA*

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

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

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

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

## Leaving

*Pamela Garry, USA*

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

surviving ice closed crocuses

## Casualties

*Edward Cody Huddleston, USA*

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

upturned helmet –  
trench rats lapping  
rainwater

## Faceless

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

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

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

one lifeless body becomes another Gaza

## The Weight of the Unknown

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*

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

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

## Close Closer

*Mark Gilbert, UK*

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

WWIII

and then I woke  
myself up

## Civil Disobedience

*Andrew Pineo, USA*

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

zero dark thirty  
in my wallet  
deployment papers

## Darkness

*Curt Pawlisch, USA*

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

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

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

Alone I look out the window into the long night.

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

## From the Ashes

*Richard Kakol, Australia*

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

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

shards of glass  
the eruption  
of the volcano

## Wood Pile

*Andrew Grossman, USA*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

herd on the slopes  
cascading  
snow melt

## Cleaning Day

*Joanna Ashwell, UK*

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

Missed rainbows

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

A luminescent cloud

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

Ready to burst

## Different Same

*Dr. Brijesh Raj, India*

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

you and I  
entwined  
even in thoughts

## Gateway

*Melissa Dennison, UK*

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

Yesterday I saw a magpie carrying a twig.

deep roots . . .

the ash

cradles stars . . .

## Midnight Shelter

*C.X. Turner, U.K.*

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

on darkened glass  
the trace of a moth  
washed away

## Late Afternoon Under the Red Sun

*Beverly A. Tift, USA*

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

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

slack tide  
the moment between  
here and elsewhere

## Earth Tides

*Kevin Browne. USA*

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

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

sifting the night  
a slight breeze  
slips the veil

## Blink

*Bona M. Santos, USA*

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

day moon  
watching me  
fade away

## My Life as an Insect

*Simon Wilson, UK*

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

organ music

a fly climbs

the stained glass

## Nothing is Black and White

*Suraja Menon Roychowdhury, USA*

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

still here  
and yet the flashing lights  
of another world

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

a chilly gust  
the winter wind  
never in a straight line

## Dismissed

*Susan Burch, USA*

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

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

the speed of light losing my mind

## Taking No Chances

*Lynn Edge, USA*

a din of hammers  
up and down the street  
evacuation notice

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

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

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

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

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

TV on mute  
the comforting crunch  
of Cheetos

## Sweeping

*Ruth Kennedy, Canada*

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

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

## never say never

*Reid Hepworth, Canada*

the sun beams  
on my upturned face  
first draft pick

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

sometimes magic runt of the litter

## Spreading My Wings

*Rick Jackofsky, USA*

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

cicadas to crickets  
the segue  
of day into night

## Hayride

*Gayle Worthy, USA*

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

adolescence . . .

grasping at straws

in the dark

## Splinters of Light

*Jenny Ward Angyal, USA*

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

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

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

Kintsugi . . .

thin lines of gold

before a winter sunrise

## People Watching

*Matthew Caretti, American Samoa*

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

middle seat  
we haggle our way  
to smiles

## I'd Know Your Name

Terri L. French, USA (EC)

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

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

nightingale  
as close as I'll get  
heaven\*

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

## The Meaning of Becoming

*John Zheng, USA*

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

swaying grasses  
the half-hidden headstone  
of a blues legend

J'accuse !

*Mark Meyer, USA*

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

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

## Editor's Choices (EC) - Haibun

### The Tree of Dreams

*Valentina Meloni, Italy (EC)*

*Valdichiana April 7, 2017*

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

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

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

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

sea breeze –  
a tree knows  
even your dreams

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

*continued . . .*

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

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

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

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

## L'albero dei sogni

*Valdichiana 7 aprile 2017*

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

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

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

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

brezza di mare –  
un albero conosce  
anche i tuoi sogni

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Warming Up

Doug Sylver, USA (EC)

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

so long covered in ice  
her childhood memories  
of the orphanage

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



## I'd Know Your Name

Terri L. French, USA (EC)

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

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

nightingale  
as close as I'll get  
heaven\*

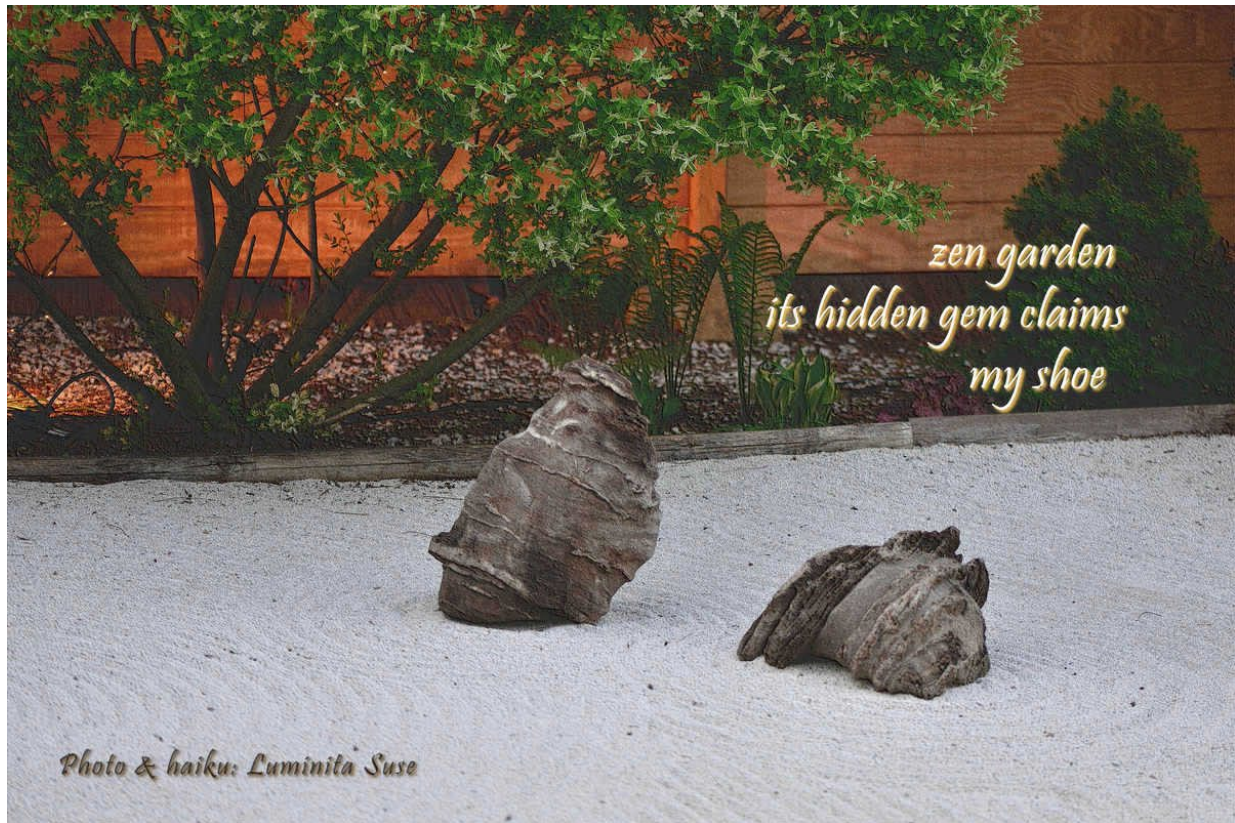
\* Eric Clapton, *Tears in Heaven*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JxPj3GAYYZ0>

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

**Sonam Chhoki**

# Haiga – Part 4

Luminita Suse – Canada



Mike Montreuil – Canada / Marc Santa Maria Rubert – Spain

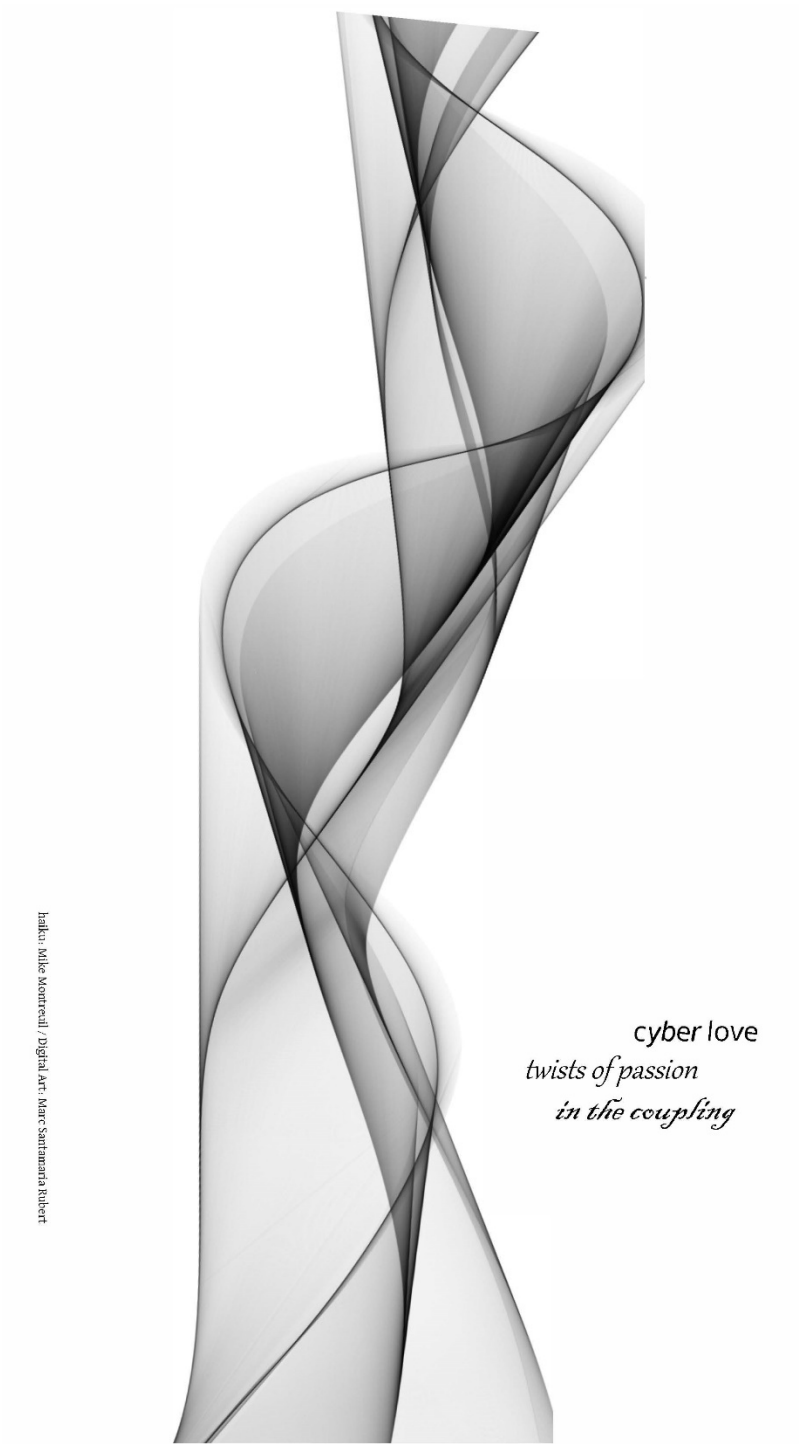


Illustration: Mike Montreuil / Digital Art: Marc Santamaria Rubert

cyber love  
*twists of passion*  
*in the coupling*

Marilyn Ashbaugh—UK



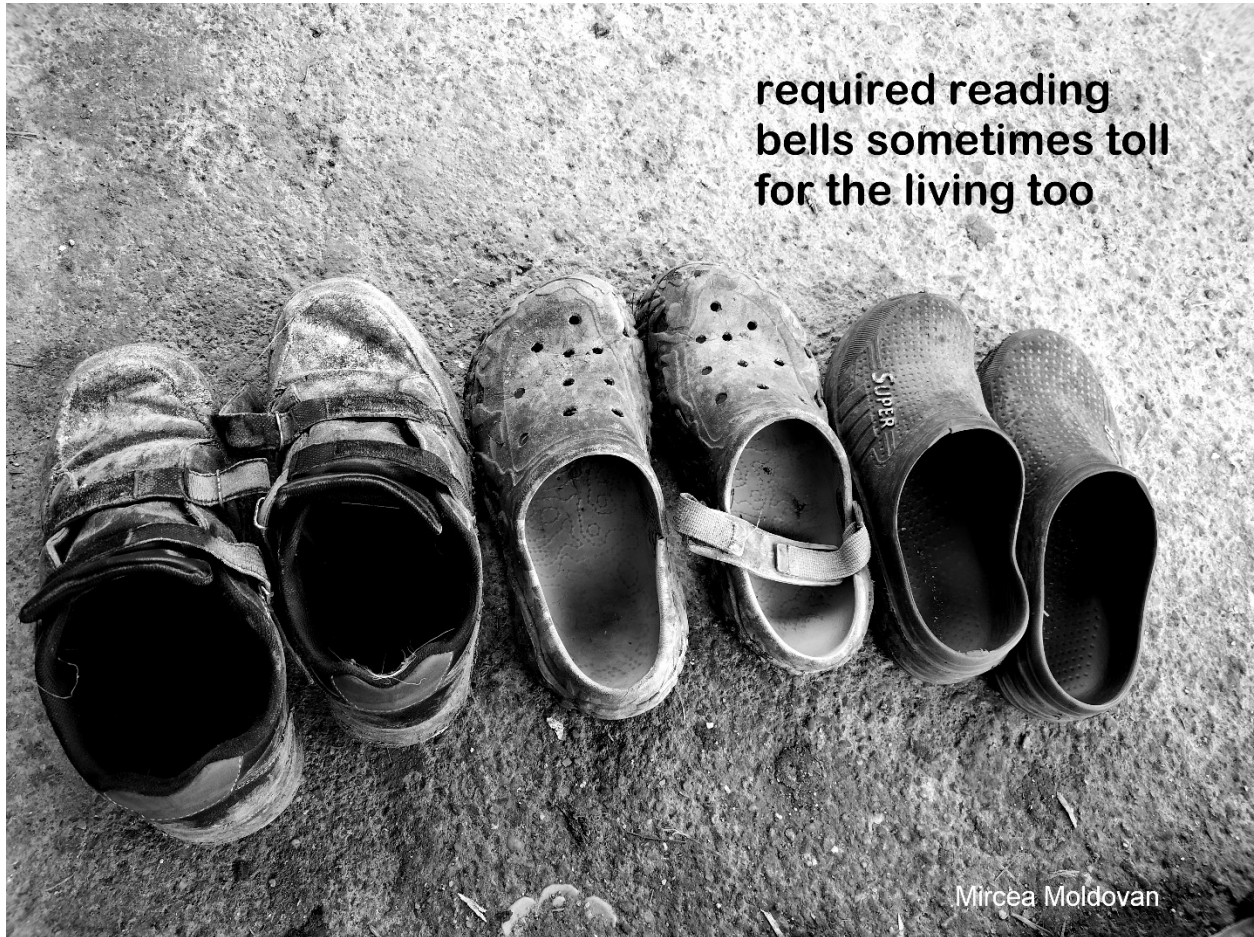
marilyn ashbaugh

winter bridge  
the sway in her song  
halfway across

Marion Clarke – Ireland



Mircea Moldovan – România



Nalina Shetty – India



Oscar Luparia – Italia



*winter ghosts I'm not afraid of getting lost*

poem & photo: Oscar Luparia

# Tanka Prose



Towers — Barangaroo

## Elemental

*Jenny Ward Angyal, USA*

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

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

## Space to Dream

*Joanna Ashwell, UK*

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

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

## Law of Nature

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

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

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

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

## Built to (b)Last?

*Susan Burch, USA*

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

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

## Freddie

*Anna Cates, USA*

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Naming

*Ivan Cole, Australia*

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

Name them

Mazzikin, Lilin, Abaddon

know they have come before

filled my soul with grief

placed a pit in my gut

## Hope Chest

prose: *Sandra Horton, USA*

tanka: *Robert Erlandson, USA*

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

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

## Apex Predator

*Dennis Owen Frolich, USA (EC)*

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

The patrol kills 60 seconds.

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

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

## Undone

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

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

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

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

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

## Self-Discovery

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*

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

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

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

## Hiding and Seeking

*Sangita Kalarickal, USA*

Walking down Purgatory Creek shores

I *hop, skip, and try*

to avoid crushing

the carpet of grasshoppers

underfoot.

A *skip* and a *jump* away

is a time travel into

the far past when

my aunt sticks

fresh red ixora

into my curls.

A shower of flowers

from my hair as I

play hopscotch.

*hop,*

*skip,*

*jump.*

golden frangipani

how the fragrance

lingers forever

how traces of time dissolve

like contrails through the sky

## Presence

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

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

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

## Standing Meeting

*Joshua St. Claire, USA*

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

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

\*Famously quoting Ed Koch.

## The Course

*Jenny Sharpe, Canada*

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

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

## Once Upon A Time

*Adelaide Shaw, USA*

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

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

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

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

## Breaking News

*Neena Singh, India*

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

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

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

## Overlooking

*Doug Syster, USA*

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

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

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

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

## The Spring and the Summit

*C.X Turner, UK*

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

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

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

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

## The Lint of Time

*John Zheng, USA*

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

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

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

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

## Finding Flight

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

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

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

## On Johannes Vermeer's *Girl with a Veil*

Joshua St. Claire, USA

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

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

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

## One of a Kind

*Adelaide Shaw, USA*

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

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

## What Slips Through

*C.X. Turner, UK*

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

winter light  
the dream returns  
in fragments  
my hands  
empty

## For a Moment, His Silence

*Vaishnavi Ramaswamy, India*

a chapter  
of my childhood –  
in the peacock's cry  
my father's quiet  
answers stir within

Forty years later, I move through the sacred halls of the shrine, still seeking the peacock feather I have yet to find.

The head priest carries a rose garland, a few ripe lemons, and slips into the dim interior. An ornate lamp flickers on the tall idol of the Lord, revealing a face serene and radiant – eyes half-closed as if in quiet contemplation, lips curved in a hint of an eternal smile, the high forehead and gentle arch of brows bathed in soft, golden light. For a moment, in that calm, glowing presence, I sense my father's quiet patience, his counsel reflected in the subtle gleam of the idol's eyes.

Shadows drift across the walls, incense hanging like mist in the air.

a temple bell rings  
in quiet rhythm –  
my father's gaze  
lingers still  
within my childhood

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

### Apex Predator

Dennis Owen Frolich, USA (EC)

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

The patrol kills 60 seconds.

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

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

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

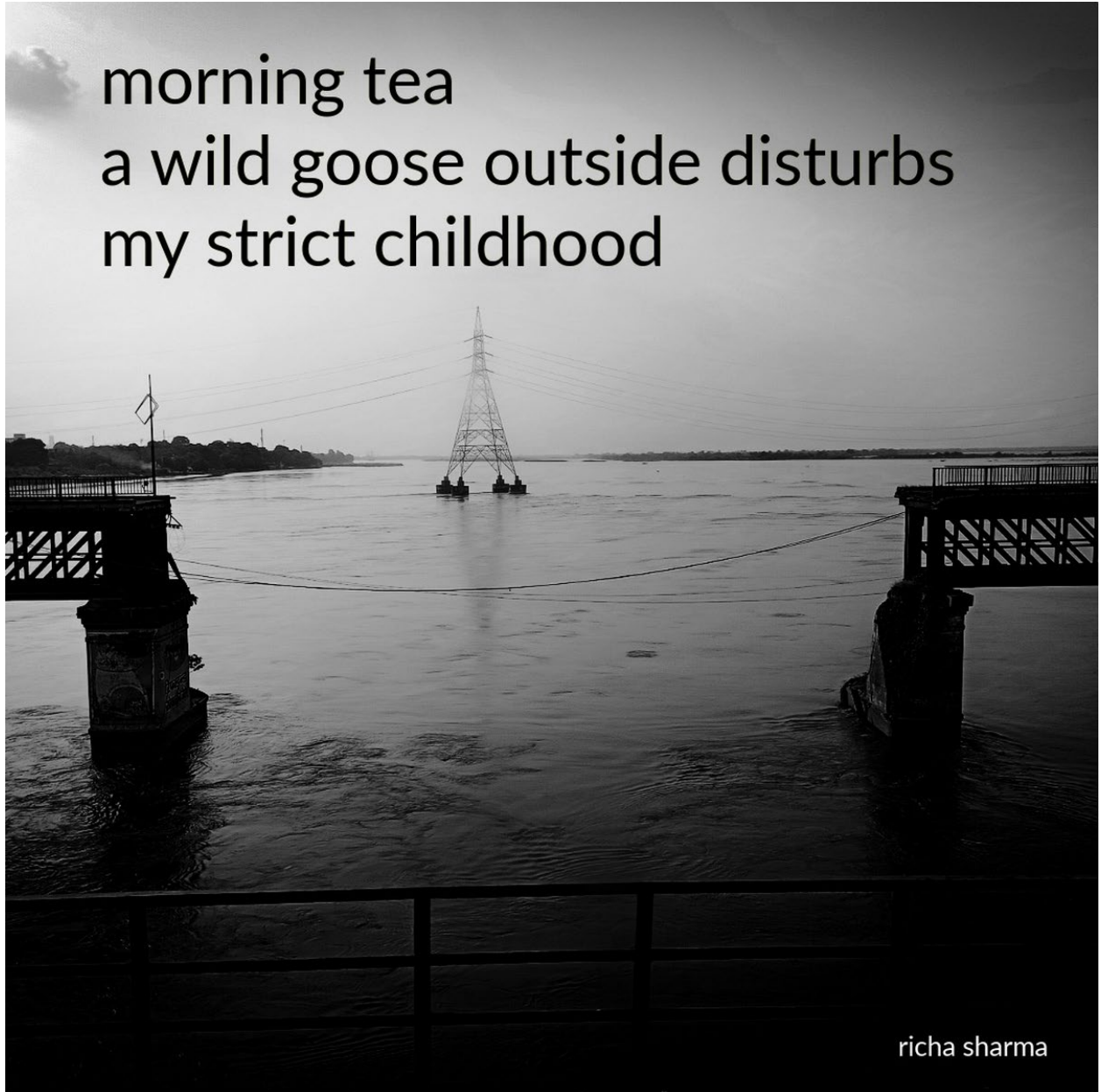
*Yet, I remember a book my children read where a lion who looks out of his cage to the people who wonder if the lion is dreaming of the African Savannah, not knowing that the lion was born at the same zoo.*

**Mike Montreuil**

# Haiga – Part 5

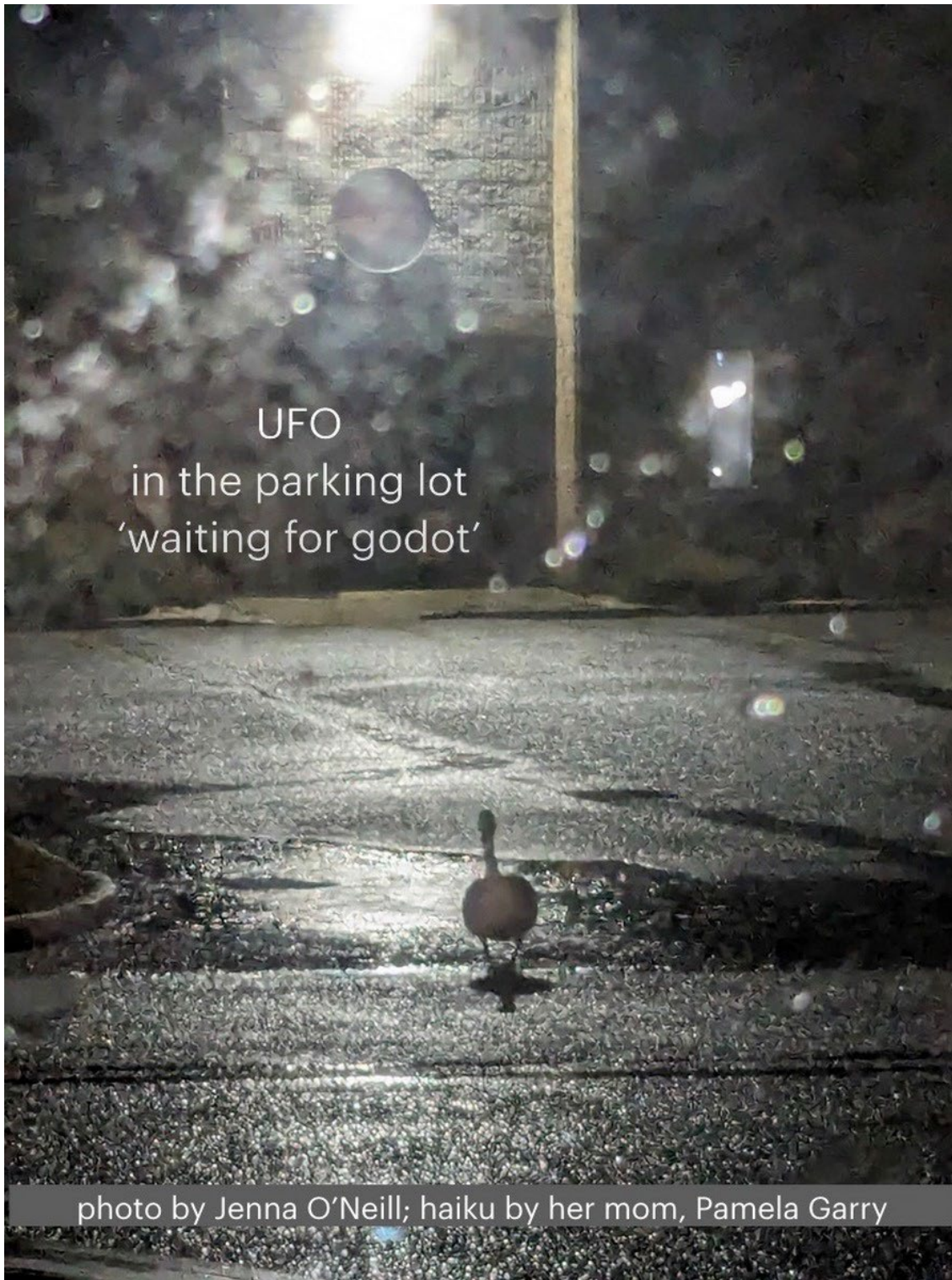
Richa Sharma – India

morning tea  
a wild goose outside disturbs  
my strict childhood



richa sharma

Jenna O'Neill & Pamela Garry – USA



Silva Trstenjak & Mihovila Čeperić-Biljan – Croatia



*clearing the sky  
a crane holds  
the rainbow  
on the promenade echoes  
of a walking stick*

*Haiku: Silva Trstenjak*

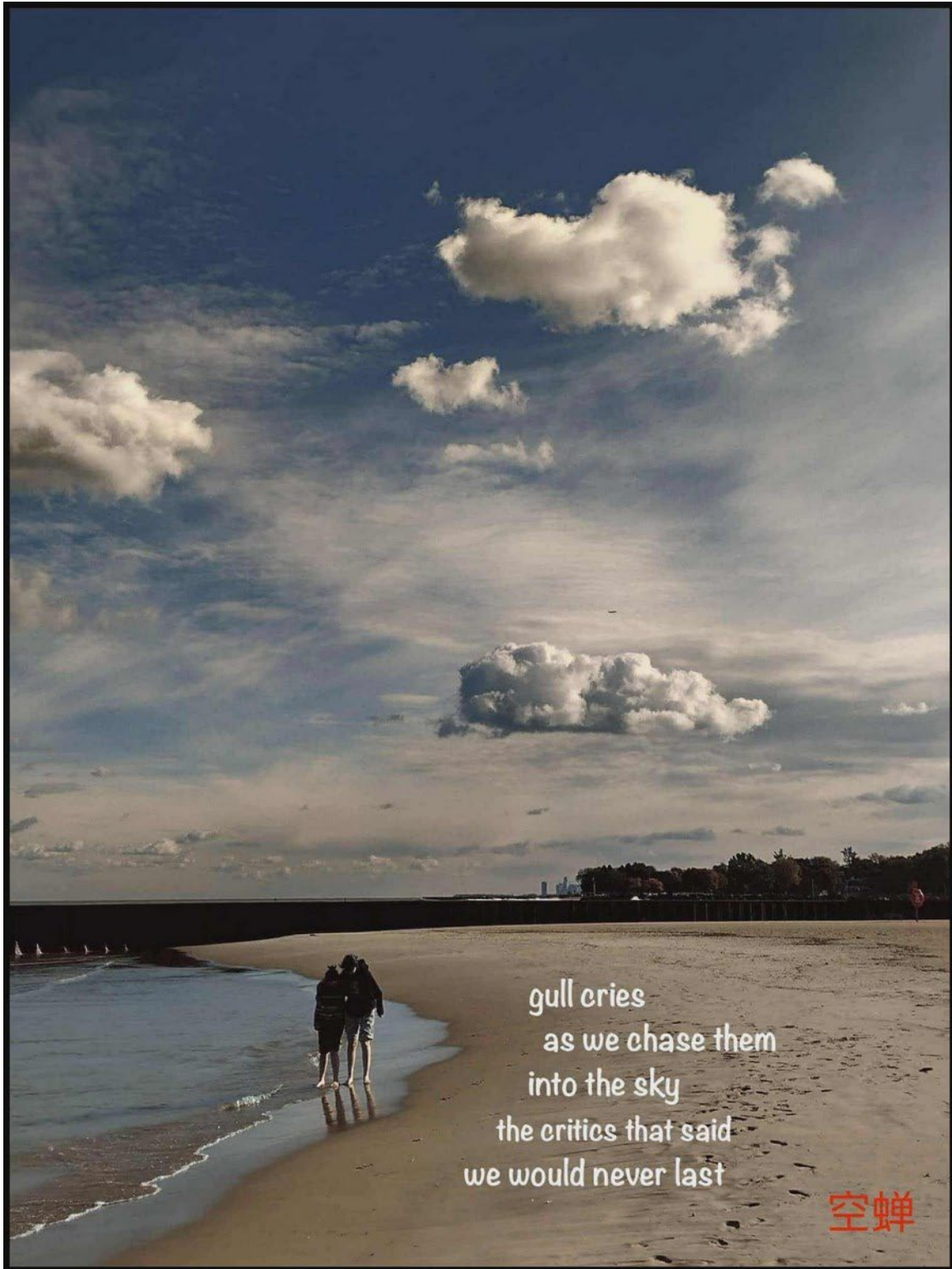
*Image: Mihovila Čeperić-Biljan*

mcb

Terri L. French – USA



*utsusemi – USA*



Valentina Meloni – Italia



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City Skyline-from Hyde Park