

cattails



April 2020

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April 2020 Issue

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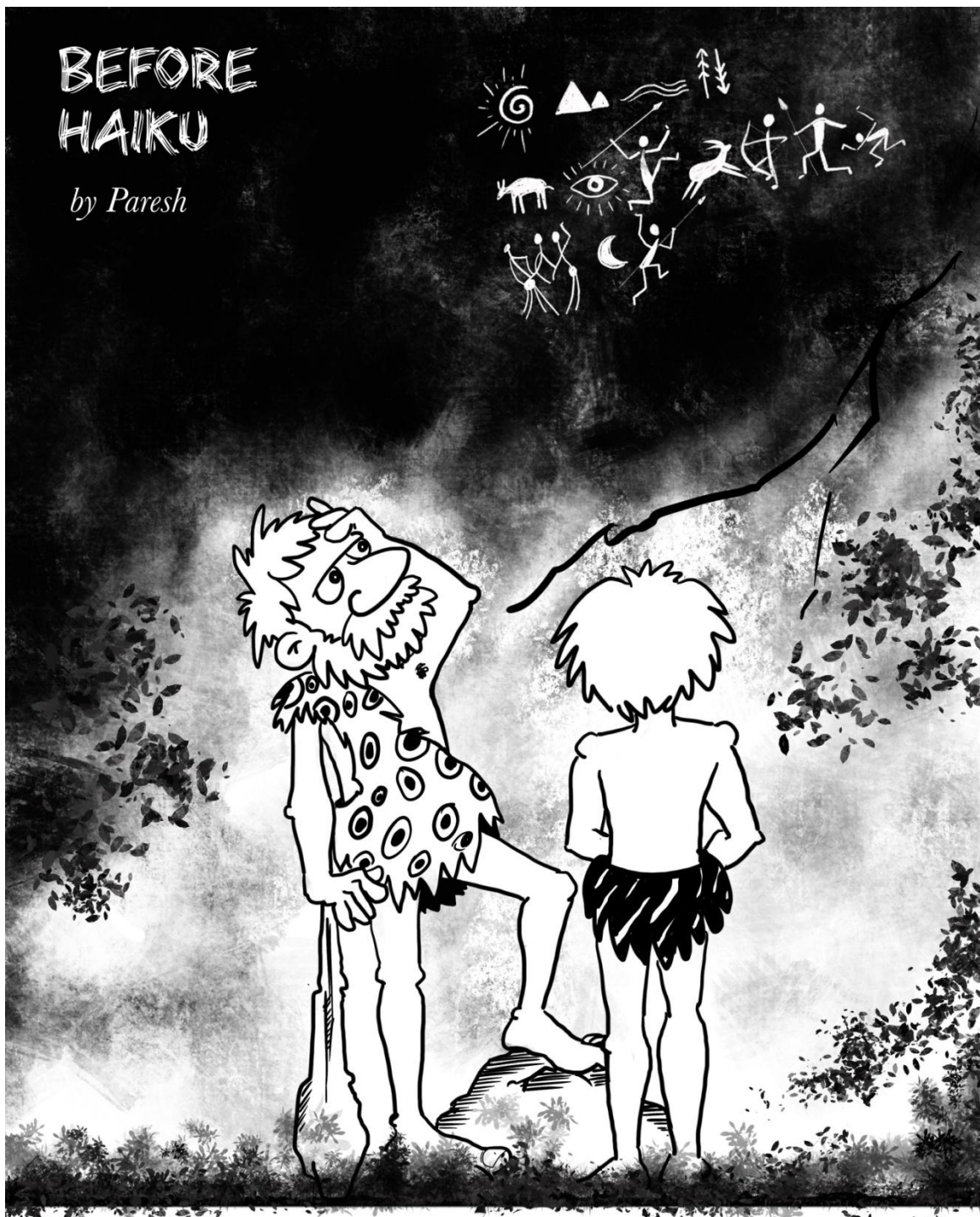
- Sanctuary Island Maungatautari, New Zealand

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BEFORE HAIKU

by Paresh



*It just might be the next big thing! Suppose we call it haiku?
The 5,7,5 will need to go though.*

Introduction

The news is relentlessly grim but when I talk to elderly neighbours, and friends, they are warm, calm and grateful for what they have. Paul Celan said, “Only one thing remained reachable, close and secure amid all losses: language. Yes, language. In spite of everything, it remained secure against loss.”

And so, it is with each and every poem in this issue of cattails. Whether evoking beauty, love, humor, loss, frustration or dreams, the voices of the poets are vibrant and reachable. This would not have been possible without the indomitable spirit and dedication of Lavana, Geethanjali, Gautam, Mike and Kala. The Youth Corner is a special retrospective overview of young haijins’ poetry from around the world.

This issue features Sandra Simpson’s fabulous photographs of New Zealand birds. Our grateful thanks to her for responding to our invitation. We are delighted to welcome Paresh back with the first cartoon of his new series.

There have been changes in UHTS and cattails. Iliyana, who was much appreciated has stepped down as Secretary. Kathy too stepped down as Tanka Editor. Here is her eloquent message:

Due to the fact that I have a backload of writing to attend to, I have stepped down (reluctantly) as Tanka Editor for Cattails, a position I cherished for four issues. It has been a privilege to read, edit and collate your work and I would like to thank everyone for trusting me with your submissions and to wish you all well with further Cattails publication. In particular I would like to thank Editor-in-Chief, Sonam Chhoki for not only her dedication to overseeing the entire publication but her commitment to teamwork, and the assistance I received during my time as part of that team, as well as Mike Montreuil for always being at-the-ready to attend to technical issues as they arose.

Kathy Kituai

Erin Castaldi has very kindly stepped in as Secretary and in autumn Susan Constable, a widely admired poet will be joining us as Tanka Editor.

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Alan, Neal and Marianna have been stalwarts of support and encouragement through all these changes.

Once more with deep sadness we carry tributes to Martha Magenta (England) and Johannes Manjrekar (India), who regularly contributed to cattails. A special word of thanks to Brendon Kent and Dr Brijesh Raj for their beautiful tributes.

"Spring: trees flying up to their birds" - Celan

Sonam Chhoki

In memory of Dr. Johannes Manjrekar (5th June 1957- 9th February 2020)



It was with shock that Indian haibuners heard the news of Johannes's passing early this February. He was a PhD in molecular biology from Tata institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, an activist for liberalism and environmentalism and had recently retired from Maharaja Sayajirao University, Vadodara, India where he taught post-graduate Biology courses as Associate Professor.

A uniquely gifted, widely published haibun with a wonderful eye, he had co-edited The First Katha Book Of Haiku, Senryu, Tanka and Haibun.

Soft-spoken, incisive and technically brilliant, he was also very approachable. I will always cherish the time he walked up to this fresher at a conference and complimented me on a ku I had written.

Twice I have heard him speak at different fora and he did so nonchalantly. He had an enviable way of converting the mundane into the 'aha'. Be it writing or photography, he was formidable

in both. I still remember gawking at the photo of an overlaid clothesline and wondering how he had made it look so spectacular. This last was at a talk on urban photography. Alas, it was the last I was to hear him speak.

Rest in Peace Johannes.

*drifting kite
yet another mooring
severed*

Dr Brijesh Raj
Mumbai, India



I would like to share a few of Johannes's haiku/senryu.

traffic argument
the camel's sneer
is impartial
india.tempslibres.org

shower of leave
a langur tugs another's tail
like a bell rope
india.tempslibres.org

slanting sunlight
two mynahs ignore
the peacock's display
Temps Libres, 2007

night walk
I slow down
near the jasmine bush
An Anthology of Indian Haiku

monsoon sky
the white cow
chews a milk carton

Haijinx II:1, spring 2002

moonless night
the silence deepest
around the cricket

Contemporary Haibun Online 2013, Vol 9, No. 3

The Toad

Johannes Manjrekar, India

A cricket saws out its steady song in defiance of the restless traffic sounds. From my chair on the back porch only a small patch of sky is visible, but it has the moon in it. The moon looks full, though I'm never certain about this—is it maybe just a day away from spherical perfection? A parade of comic book images of werewolves, howling canines and bat silhouettes claims my mind before I become aware of the toad. The toad is neatly positioned in a toad-sized patch of silver moonlight, sitting in the hunched-upright way of toads, unblinking, motionless. I know it will move when it needs to, yet I find its stillness a bit unnerving. "Do something, toad!" I say—not so loudly that the neighbours can hear—but the toad does not oblige. I wave a hand and jiggle a foot, but still the toad doesn't move. A breeze springs up. It sends a leaf skittering and scraping across the porch tiles. The toad hops off into the shadows.

full moon—
a leaf haiku
is blown away

***cattails* January 2014 Premier Issue**

Refuge

Johannes Manjrekar, India

Herr and Frau Mildner lived on the second floor. I knew they had come as refugees from Poland, but had no idea what they had taken refuge from. Almost every day after dinner I trudged up the creaking, brass-edged wooden steps to their apartment with my chess set. Frau Mildner would switch off the tiny black and white TV set as we men settled down to our chess game. Herr Mildner was well into his seventies and I was eight. "You cunning old Nepomuk", Herr Mildner would say to me at intervals, and though I didn't know who Nepomuk was, I loved it when he said it. I don't know whether Frau Mildner understood chess. She watched all our games in warm matronly silence, but never once groaned or sighed or clicked at a stupid move. I won almost every time. One evening Herr Mildner went into a fury, swept up the board and chessmen and threw them on the floor. "Take your bloody chessset and get out!" he yelled at me.

Frau Mildner helped me gather up the chessmen from the floor. As I was leaving she gave me a hug and said, "Don't be upset, he still likes you. He just had a bad day today."

But I didn't go up to the Mildners with my chess set for a whole week after that.

my back porch
a toad navigates
the square tiles

cattails January 2014 Premier Issue

Dr Brijesh Raj, Mumbai, India

**Before the Earth Falls Silent-a tribute to Martha Magenta
(March 13, 1949-January 14, 2020)**

by Brendon Kent



Martha Magenta was originally from Wales, UK before moving to Bristol, England, UK. Martha had a passion for herbalism, gardening, veganism, animal rights, earth and the environment. She had previously worked for [ActionAid](#), and [Friends of the Earth](#). Her poetry, haiku, haibun, senryu, and tanka have appeared in many journals, magazines and anthologies. She was awarded first, second and third prizes plus honourable mentions in contests for haiku, tanka and haibun. Martha is listed in The European Top 100 haiku authors, 2017 and 2018.

When I first came across Martha Magenta (a.k.a. Metra Adams) online in the G+ community early in 2014, she was successfully running a group called POETS. I joined this group, writing haiku, and straightaway Martha wanted to know more about this poetry form. I advised her to read Jane Reichhold's AHA website to study and to use as reference which she thoroughly absorbed and in no time was writing her own.

After inviting Martha to our haiku writing group on G+ called Haiku Nook, we all soon began to realise her potential and in no time she became part of our haiku *family*. Martha then joined

us in producing two Nook anthologies in tribute to Nook members who had passed away (Yanty's Butterfly and Half a Rainbow) also contributing to a third anthology called Desert Rain which is still in the making...this anthology will now be dedicated to Martha.

In the months before Martha left us, she was producing a collection of poems for her debut book called *Birdsong: Before the Earth Falls Silent* which I was privileged to proofread and offer my opinion on. Martha managed to complete and produce her book which is available from Lulu:

<http://www.lulu.com/shop/martha-magenta/birdsong-before-the-earth-falls-silent-a-collection-of-haiku-and-tanka/paperback/product-24330627.html>

In true Martha spirit, the book's profits go to charities involved in the preservation of birds. Her published work can be found archived at her blog: <https://marthamagenta.com/>

Martha was always compassionate and helpful towards beginners to this form and frequently offered a shoulder to those going through difficulties in life and health. She didn't ever let on that she was in third stage cancer herself until the final months...

These following haiku of Martha's were published in Cattails:

shooting stars –
I sow random
wildflowers

harvest moon
stardust in my
cider glass

day moon
we see the marks
of our imperfections

Cattails September 2016

cold moon –
moss covers his name
on the gravestone

Cattails April 2017

churchyard lichen
the living and dead
in symbiosis

Martha Magenta, UK (Editor's Choice)

"Martha Magenta's haiku balances many things and the first line itself is indicative of that. Lichens are a symbol of life and symbiosis between organisms, and are intriguing in their appearance. The churchyard is normally associated with the dead. These two images in the first line provide tautness to the haiku. Lines two and three turn the concept of symbiosis around – the mutually beneficial relationship of the living and the dead. The haiku is layered and each reading gave me new insight. Many images flash – of the living visiting the dead in the churchyard, of the hues and shapes of moss, of lichen growing in an environment that is nourished by the dead. The symbiosis in the last line links back to the images in the first line, especially the lichen. To me, this haiku also suggests an acceptance of the dead and death, just as we accept life and the living."

Cattails October 2017

lingering snow . . .
grandfather's silent
accordion

Cattails April 2018

house sparrow –
death of a neighbour
no one spoke to

Cattails October 2018

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last night's dream—
strands of broken web
in the wind

psychology teacher screaming in red ink

fuel price protest
we burn our placards
for warmth

Cattails April 2019

Martha will be sorely missed by many yet she will always live on through her legacy-her wonderful poetry...thank you my friend and poet Martha Magenta, rest in peace.

two pebbles
and the river's song
this willow
dancing the same way
you always did

Brendon Kent, BHS Tanka (Love) Anthology 2020, Desert Rain Anthology 2020

Haiku



kākāriki / Red-Crowned Parakeet - New Zealand

first day of spring
this longing to be
a butterfly

primo giorno di primavera
questo desiderio
di essere una farfalla

Eufemia Griffio, Italy

frozen lake . . .
school kids pick the song
a ferryman left

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, India

for a moment
our dreams touch . . .
white butterfly

Veronika Zora Novak, Canada

pond ice
the woodpecker's tap
says it's spring

Tim Gardiner, UK

before
your appearance
a light breeze

преди
твоето появяване
лек ветрец

Nadejda Kostadinova, Bulgaria

receding ice
sunlight quivers
in a cocoon

Meera Rehm, UK

spring rain . . .
the leftover bird seed
starts to sprout

Eva Limbach, Germany

marsh pond
day-old ducklings
swamped by rain

Nola Obee, Canada

blush of early sun
a mourning dove
sidles to her mate

Nancy Shires, USA

spring dawn
the fresh yellow
of window frames

Bisshie, Switzerland

March sunshine
the city starts to unwind
kids on park swings

Robert Erlandson, USA

sign of spring –
the confluence of river
scatters the dusk

znak proljeća –
ušće rijeke
raspršuje sumrak

Goran Gatalica, Croatia

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spring equinox
the whelk pries open
a clam

Bill Cooper, USA

plum blossoms –
my kimono has
a scent of spring

Diana Teneva, Bulgaria

a gust of wind
in the veil of cherry petals
child's laughter

nalet vetra
u kopreni od latica
smeh dece

Zoran Doderović, Serbia

dancing grasses . . .
our picnic basket
woven with memories

Brijesh Raj, India

spring equinox
the mirror image
of my palm lines

Agnes Eva Savich, USA

broken fence . . .
our puppy licks
a neighbor's toe

David He, China

late spring
on greening fields
snow blossoms

Lysa Collins, Canada

first day of school –
my daughter skipping home
in the sunshine

Ruth Holzer, USA

new playground
an ant scales
the slide

*Nathalie Buckland,
Australia*

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grandmother's fern
an ant inspects
each unfurled frond

Cynthia Rowe, Australia

child's drawing—
out of nowhere
all this smoke

Bakhtiyar Amini, Tajikistan - Germany

sketching
the bushfire's aftermath
charcoal sticks

Jan Dobb, Australia

dry lightning
a scrim of smoke
this summer

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

shredded leaves
the summer wind
that took you away

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

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after the heatwave
a painted lady
faded to yellow

Maeve O'Sullivan, Ireland

cattle field
the dwindling geometry
of a salt lick

Bryan Rickert, USA

losing its colour to the wind crepe myrtle

Madhuri Pillai, Australia

perigee
looking Jupiter
in the eye

Kristen Lindquist, USA

sand pies—
she carries the sea
in paper cups

Carol Raisfeld, USA

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hotter days –
a baby crab hastens
into its burrow

òsán pón ganrí –
ọmọ alákan náà yára
sínú ilé ẹ

Taofeek Ayeyemi, Nigeria

on his beat
fronting two suspects
the wren in blue

Mira Walker, Australia

interlocking tiles -
two mocking birds
share a worm

Gillena Cox, Trinidad

folded paper crane –
the boy blows gentle
on its wings

cocor de hârtie -
băiețelul îi suflă
ușor pe aripi

Steliana Cristina Voicu, Romania

osprey fledglings
lift from the nest —
a mother's cry

Jon Hare, USA

water's edge
bulrushes wading
through ripples

Quendryth Young, Australia

rainforest walk
through mossy stillness
bear-bells

Amanda Bell, Ireland

morning boat ride . . .
the slow ripples
of a missing echo

Rashmi VeSa, India

slow jazz
a line of geese
crosses the river

Sandi Pray, USA

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salmon run —
a bear sinks its teeth
into rainbows

Fractled, USA

the water's edge —
a western scrub jay
sips blue sky

Gary Hittmeyer, USA

October afternoon —
the summer garden gives
a last heave

Robert Epstein, USA

cuckoo's call . . .
I rewrite the end
of my story

Kanchan Chatterjee, India

somewhere
in the ocean
a roaming river

Bernard Gieske, USA

bringing everything
into focus
hibiscus blossom

Alan S. Bridges, USA

soap bubbles . . .
my plans to live
lightly

Sanjuktaa Asopa, India

crabapple blossoms
some things I like
about her

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

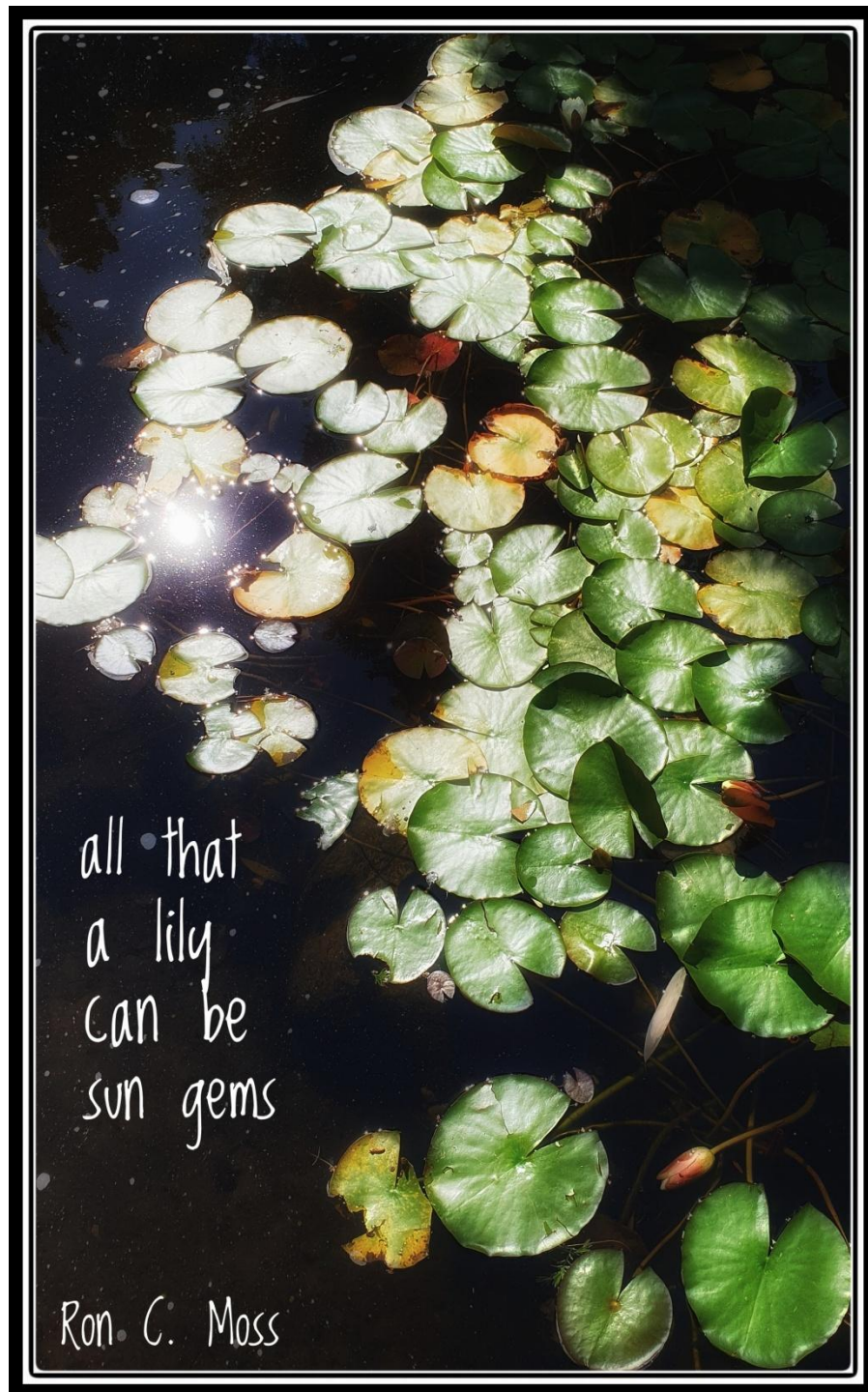
thundering sky –
how my sleep awaits
granny's lullaby

Gurpreet Dutt, India

the rain
from a seagull's wings
once more

kiša
sa galebovih krila
ispočetka

Dejan Paolinović, Croatia



Ron C. Moss, Tasmania, Australia

prairie evening . . .
the golden retriever's
almost camouflage

Hemapriya Chellappan, India

settling dusk –
a pelican scoops up
the last flutter

Isabel Caves, New Zealand

a gentle curl
in the marsh trail
crescent moon

Brad Bennett, USA

small village
the long sound
of a chopped log

маленькая деревня
долгий звук
расколотого полена

Nikolay Grankin, Russia

oil spot
across the parking lot
rainbow moon

Ben Moeller-Gaa, USA

small town night
the distant bark
of a stray dog

Jay Friedenberg, USA

first skinny-dip
the moon swims
in a pool of stars

Kevin Valentine, USA

paddy fields –
each terrace with its own
moon in water

rižina polja -
svaka terasa ima
lunu na vodi

Nina Kovačić, Croatia
Translated by Đurđa Vukelić Rožić

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under the oaks
the midnight breeze
scattering moonlight

Simon Hanson, Australia

moonlit beach –
lines of surf break
into star bubbles

Adjei Agyei-Baah, Ghana

last stars –
the bright dots
inside the gentian

Helga Stania, Switzerland

X-ray
all those shadows
on a cloudless day

Edward J. Rielly, USA

another
miscarriage
crumpled cherry blossom

Susan Beth Furst, USA

late stage four
the cicada transcends
its shell

Michael Henry Lee, USA

a wren
still warm in my hand . . .
the weight of hollow bones

Dan Curtis, Canada

these ravens
now old companions –
path through the cemetery

ovi gavrani
sada stari pajtaši –
staza kroz groblje

Dragan J. Ristić, Serbia

winter clouds
coming together
the mourners

Cyndi Lloyd, USA

country graveyard
wattle pollen
dusts his headstone

Gavin Austin, Australia

bereavement –
the scent
of a fresh bouquet

Anne Curran, New Zealand

all those times
I tried to leave –
heat lightning

Angela Terry, USA

silence at dusk
a heron's cry bounces off
the mirror of water

Ernest Wit, Poland

her absence
looming over me
super moon

Robert Moyer, USA

out of grey sky
to this wave-washed beach
one lone gull

Jill Lange, USA

rain rhythms -
I try to be the space
between drops

മഴത്താളങ്ങളു്
തുള്ളികളു് കിടയിലെ ഇടമാകാനുള്ള
എൻറെ ശ്രമം

Anitha Varma, India

new shoots
the cautious optimism
of a blackened tree

Ingrid Baluchi, Macedonia

pine needles
threading spider silk –
morning dew

Marilyn Fleming, USA

the burnt-out house —
a purple rhododendron
in full bloom

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

autumn leaves . . .
the enso swirls
of koi

Gregory Longenecker, USA

empty home . . .
the incessant chirping
of cicadas

casa vuota . . .
l'incessante frinire
delle cicale

Stefano d'Andrea, Italy

dotting my assertions
a fading sketch of
mom's camellias

Neelam Dadhwal, India

willow catkins . . .
the neglected garden
wall's edges

Adrian Bouter, The Netherlands

an empty homestead
how many pathways were there
under all these weeds?

ayaz daryl Nielsen, USA

deepening
my faith
storm's end

Tiffany Shaw-Diaz, USA

topiary bonsai
the shape of buddha
in an adenium

Christina Chin, Malaysia

the patina
of an old moon . . .
steeple bell

Debbie Strange, Canada

rusted tractor –
honeysuckle hides
the hour gauge

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA (EC)

antique shop . . .
the rain fills up
the emptiness

bottega antiquaria
la pioggia riempie
il vuoto

Maria Concetta Conti, Italy

bamboo grove
a leaning wilderness
weaves shadows

Erin Castaldi, USA

echoing gorge –
rock wallabies fading back
into ochres

Lorin Ford, Australia

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often dry
the creek now full
blue damselflies

Johnnie Johnson Hafernik, USA

tracing
the etched patterns
twilight swallows

Don Wentworth, USA

deep autumn . . .
still resisting the wind
dead leaves

duboka jesen . . .
još se uvelo lišće
opire vjetru

Ivan Gaćina, Croatia

a beach stone
streaked with rust . . .
years in exile

Chen-ou Liu, Canada (EC)

back home
a hazy snow moon
is quite enough

Natalia L Rudychov, USA

snow clouds—
wild turkeys gleaning
in the field

Elaine Wilburt, USA

jazz solo
the deep blue
of a winter sky

Robert Witmer, Japan (EC)

smile on my face—
same people with me
this Christmas too

osmijeh na licu
isti ljudi opet
sa mnom na Božić

Silva Trstenjak, Croatia
Translation: D.V.Rozic

New Year's Eve —
her cedar chest moves
to its next home

Susan Farner, USA

snow drifts
the river carves
a new shore

Joanna Ashwell, UK

snow bound
deer leaping . . .
we're not alone

David H. Rosen, USA

Editor's Choice

My heartfelt gratitude to the haiku community for having sent submissions in great numbers, despite the grim situation in the world around. It is perhaps, a way to mitigate our own experience of the distressing conditions. These little moments of haiku can make a difference to our apprehension of reality and our engagement with it. I am glad that poets world over are holding these haiku moments and treasuring them. With a wish and a hope for everyone to stay well, here are a few to engage with:



a beach stone
streaked with rust . . .
years in exile

Chen-ou Liu
Canada

The image of a beach stone streaked with rust is one of elegance in simplicity, of imperfection, of wabi, of sabi. This concrete image evokes a feeling of something missing, some nostalgia, even longing, when juxtaposed with the last line of 'years in exile'. The use of alliteration ('st') renders an auditory beauty to the haiku when we read it aloud and that heightens the feeling evoked in line 3. Thank you, Chen-ou Liu for sharing this haiku with the readers of cattails.



jazz solo
the deep blue
of a winter sky

Robert Witmer
Japan

The poet brings the beauty of a deep blue winter sky to the readers in this deceptively simple haiku. This visual treat would have remained an ordinary image if it didn't have

the music of a jazz solo lifting the haiku to a multisensorial experience. Adding to it is the 'cold' of winter. Much of what we take from this haiku depends on the jazz solo that was being played. Was it an improvisation? The reader can step in and decide.



rusted tractor –
honeysuckle hides
the hour gauge

Jenny Ward Angyal (EC)
USA

An image of a well-used tractor that has seen better days has a definite air of neglect. The hour gauge normally logs in the running time of equipment and helps to keep it in good shape as a reminder for maintenance. Here, wild but beautiful honeysuckle covers the gauge, heightening the image of lack of maintenance of the tractor. The irony of the hidden hour gauge links back to the first line of the rusted tractor. Again, the poet uses alliteration (h) and repetition of sounds (t) skilfully for auditory effect.

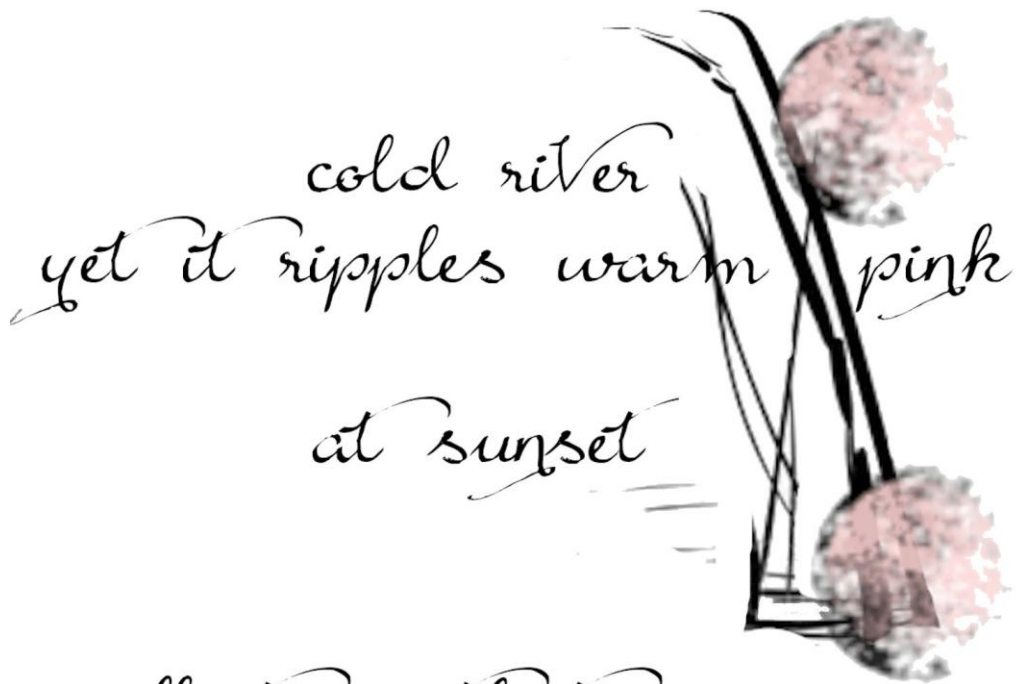
Geethanjali Rajan



Paul Callus, Malta



Adelaide B. Shaw, USA



cold river
yet it ripples warm pink
at sunset

reflections that mimic
a hue of nakedness

an'ya

an'ya, USA



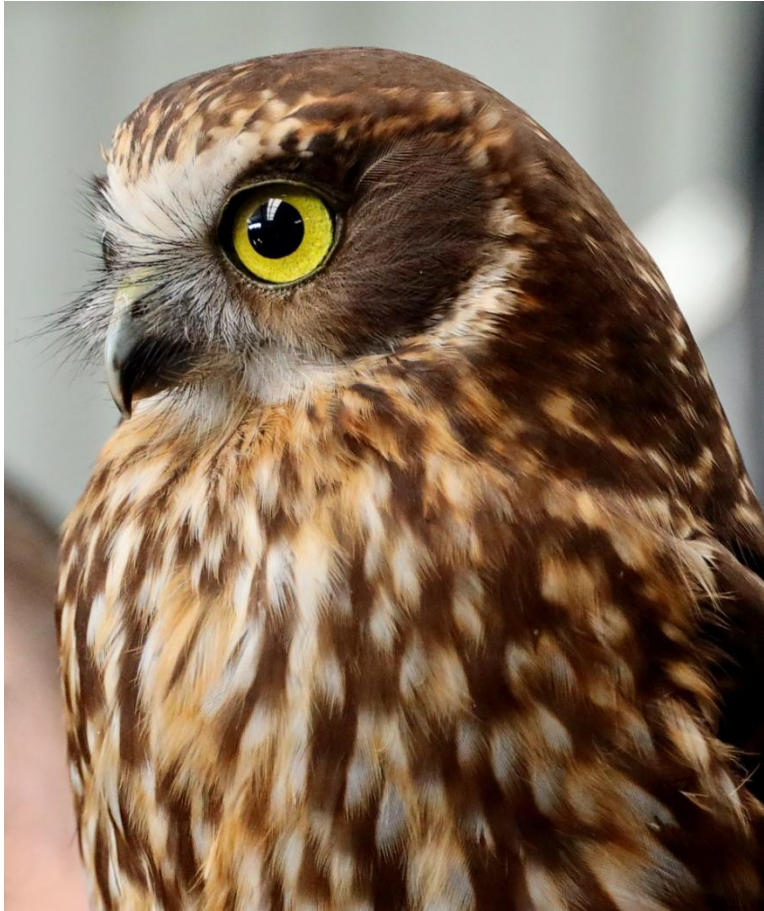
Barbara Kaufmann, USA



Carita Forslund, Sweden

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Senryu



ruru / Morepark owl - New Zealand

early on a date
adjusting my tie
from a silver spoon

Adjei Agyei-Baah, Ghana (EC)

ice cream parlor
little boys share
licks

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

blue Christmas
re-gifted with the gift
I'd given last year

Michael Henry Lee, USA (EC)

having tea with old friends
all the shades of
déjà vu

Djurdja Vukelic Rozic, Croatia

dinner date
you, I
and your cell phone

Olivier Schopfer, Switzerland

winter weeding . . .
now and then I uproot
a daydream

Srinivas S, India

community garden
no one there
at the same time

Nancy Shires, USA

double shot she stirs the night awake

Susan Beth Furst, USA

spare change
the bar band lengthens
their fiddle jam

Ben Moeller-Gaa, USA

explaining the earth
in her school essay
now we know

Roberta Beach Jacobson (USA)

coffee date
her bottomless cup
of stories

Bryan Rickert, USA

family reunion
taking the longer route
home

Sonam Chhoki, Bhutan (EC)

trainee barista
on her first day
the smile down pat

Angela Terry, USA

my eyes
now fit for them—
Mom's glasses

Neha Talreja, India

Sacristy
a preacher cleaning his glasses
with chasuble

Silva Trstenjak, Croatia

morning wash
still on my face
the trace of dreams

Eva Drobna, Slovakia

menu tricks
the waiter bends
over backward

dl mattila, USA

new electric toothbrush
longest two minutes
in the day

Susan Farner, USA

next morning's news
all aboard
still dead

Ruth Holzer, USA

the first section
of the old poet's new book:
death poems

Brad Bennett, USA

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steam train
bit by bit the wind
paints my face

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, India

how beautiful . . .
the wedding saree
on the salesgirl

R. Suresh Babu, India

new photo
with good lighting and touch-up
I still look the same

Adelaide B Shaw, USA

piano lesson –
raindrops plinking in
the downspout

Elaine Wilburt, USA

Parisian life
even the graffiti
is elegant

Roger Watson, UK

wheelchair outing
everybody
smiles

Lucy Whitehead, UK

New Year
the puffed-up Santa
deflated

Quendryth Young, Australia

meditation hall
her gentle cough
an explosion

John Budan, USA

street jazz
the rhythm
of her hips

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

above the tin cup
the blind man's eyes
glued to her cleavage

Carol Raisfeld, USA

sunbathing
Mother separates
our shadows

Richa Sharma, India

delayed train
two girls discuss
their cycle

Joanne Van Helvoort, The Netherlands

old wedding photos
younger than I remembered
mother of the bride

Debbie Scheving, USA

expecting
something different
TV reruns

Debbi Antebi, UK

candlelit dinner
the liver spots
on her hands

Ernest Wit, Poland

home alone
the dog rearranges
my bed

Madhuri Pillai, Australia

memory fog
where does it go
when it's gone

Debbie Strange, Canada

office meeting
only the free food
sounds special

Fractled, USA

Christmas morning
a little boy hugs
park statues

Radostina Dragostinova, Bulgaria

fresh laundry
the scent of a diluted
betrayal

Elisa Theriana, Indonesia

climate change
just another hashtag
saves the world

Hema Priya Chellappan, India

breakfast news
a fresh serving
of atrocities

Gavin Austin, Australia

mulling over
the strings on his racquet
three down six across

Mike Gallagher, Ireland

traffic light
the impatient honking
of migrating geese

Shane Pruett, USA

office identity card
the version of what
the boss wants me to be

Rashmi VeSa, India

spicy and hot
his smile smeared
with Tabasco sauce

Sanjuktaa Asopa, India

climate change
it takes balls
to be a snowman

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

sibling rivalry
your cloak
in my dagger

Marilyn Fleming, USA

nude beach . . .
a hot lady hides
under the parasol

Ivan Gacina, Croatia



Marianne Paul, Canada

cattails – April 2020

summer reruns
my dog
brings me the leash

Ronald K Craig, USA

end of year
my son requests a shave
for teddy

Adjei Agyei-Baah, Ghana

kneading dough
the way her tongue
balloons a cheek

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

approaching storm
the recurring dream
of a hole in my shoe

Michael Henry Lee, USA

cattails ~ April 2020

no one told
the buffaloes about it---
one-way street

Srinivas S, India

New Year's day
the scent of last year's
trash

Ben Moeller-Gaa, USA

break of day
dogs out walking
their people

Bryan Rickert, USA

traffic roundabout
the child knows by heart
Mother's favourite swear words

Sonam Chhoki, Bhutan

gale force winds---
nothing his teddy bear
can't weather

Angela Terry, USA

I burn a finger
on the stove
wildfire news

Neha Talreja, India

on a hill
overlooking the cemetery---
Leisure World

Ruth Holzer, USA

coldest day---
can't find the neck hole
in my sweater

Brad Bennett, USA (EC)

after the show...
the clown laughs
at his wife's jokes

R. Suresh Babu, India

iced-over driveway
risking life and limb
for junk mail

Adelaide B Shaw, USA

mistake
copy editor marks
insert coma here

Elaine Wilburt, USA

finally
finding my way
to the opticians

Roger Watson, UK

a condolence card
with a prewritten message
frost patterns

Lucy Whitehead, UK

life class
he inspects our work
naked

Quendryth Young, Australia

homeless beggar
a tourist
snaps a photo

John Budan, USA

therapy session
the clock's hands move
slow and slower

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

finally sharing
germs of endearment
third date

Carol Raisfeld, USA

lab test
my marital status
assumed

Richa Sharma, India

spring
red and yellow and purple and blue
umbrellas

Joanne Van Helvoort, the Netherlands

bottomless coffee
running out of
things to say

Debbi Antebi, UK

tourists in Luxor
the scent of the body balm
from an old lady

Ernest Wit, Poland

mammogram
same old poster
on the wall

Madhuri Pillai, Australia

daily vice
I'd give up migraines
if I could

Debbie Strange, Canada

cooking directions
I place my skillet
towards the east

Hema Priya Chellappan, India

three A.M. thunder
the neighbor's new baby
— Thor

Shane Pruett, USA

haute cuisine
everything digested
except the bill

Rashmi VeSa, India

after the movie
the time it takes to shrink
back to size

Sanjuktaa Asopa, India

Editor's Choice

early on a date
adjusting my tie
from a silver spoon

Adjei Agyei-Baah, Ghana

This senryu mentions an act which is so commonplace that it doesn't even strike us as ludicrous. If a man isn't adjusting his tie looking into a silver spoon then the female of the species is patting her hair in place and powdering her nose. The kind of poem which makes us want to laugh aloud and slap our thighs. There is no greater sap than the human sap.



Blue Christmas
re-gifted with the gift
I'd given last year

Michael Henry Lee, USA

Oh, the irony of it. This has happened to every one of us at some time or the other. Admit it! An occasion crops up where we are tempted to gift away something for which we have little use to some unsuspecting cluck. And just as we are congratulating ourselves on putting one over on poor Henry we find ourselves on the receiving end of the eyesore once again. One could weep. Copiously.



family reunion
taking the longer route
home

Sonam Chhoki, Bhutan

Finally, the much awaited family reunion comes up and we wish fervently we were elsewhere. Don't get us wrong. We love Grandpa, Granny and all our uncles and aunts but.... But we are getting a little tired of listening to Gramps telling us all about his piles in enchanting detail over the soup and starters. Or hearing out an uncle who lights his tenth cigarette while telling us it's such an awful habit and he really must consider kicking it.

Can anyone blame us then for taking the longer route home?

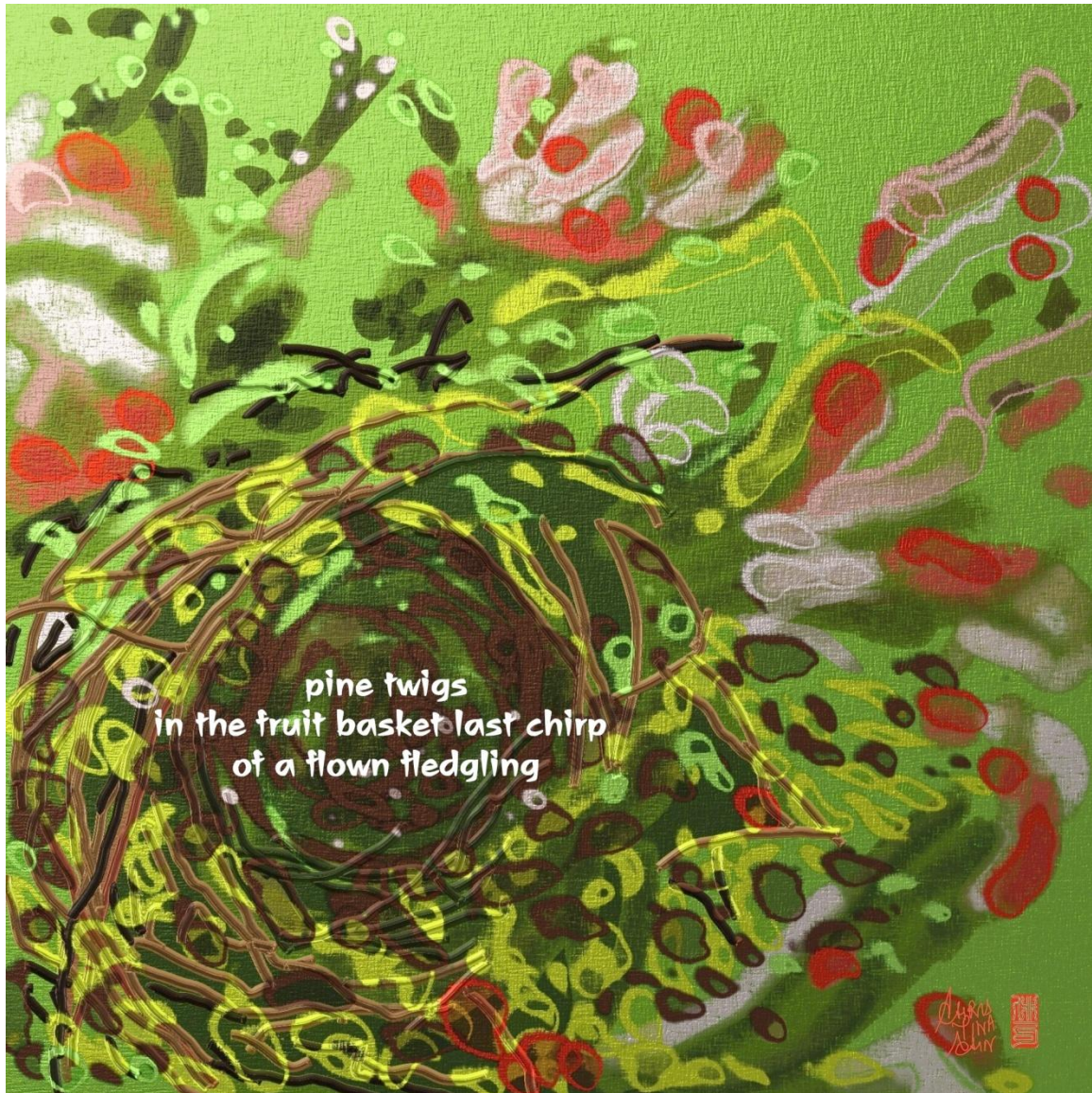


coldest day---
can't find the neck hole
in my sweater

Brad Bennett, USA

One of those things that happen to all of us all the time. How often have we pulled on a sweater with our hand coming through the neck hole and then searched furiously for it with the intention of shoving our head through it as well. If it isn't a sweater it could be inner wear like a vest. The despair and impotent rage are the same. And they call us an intelligent species. Oh, come on!

Gautam Nadkarni



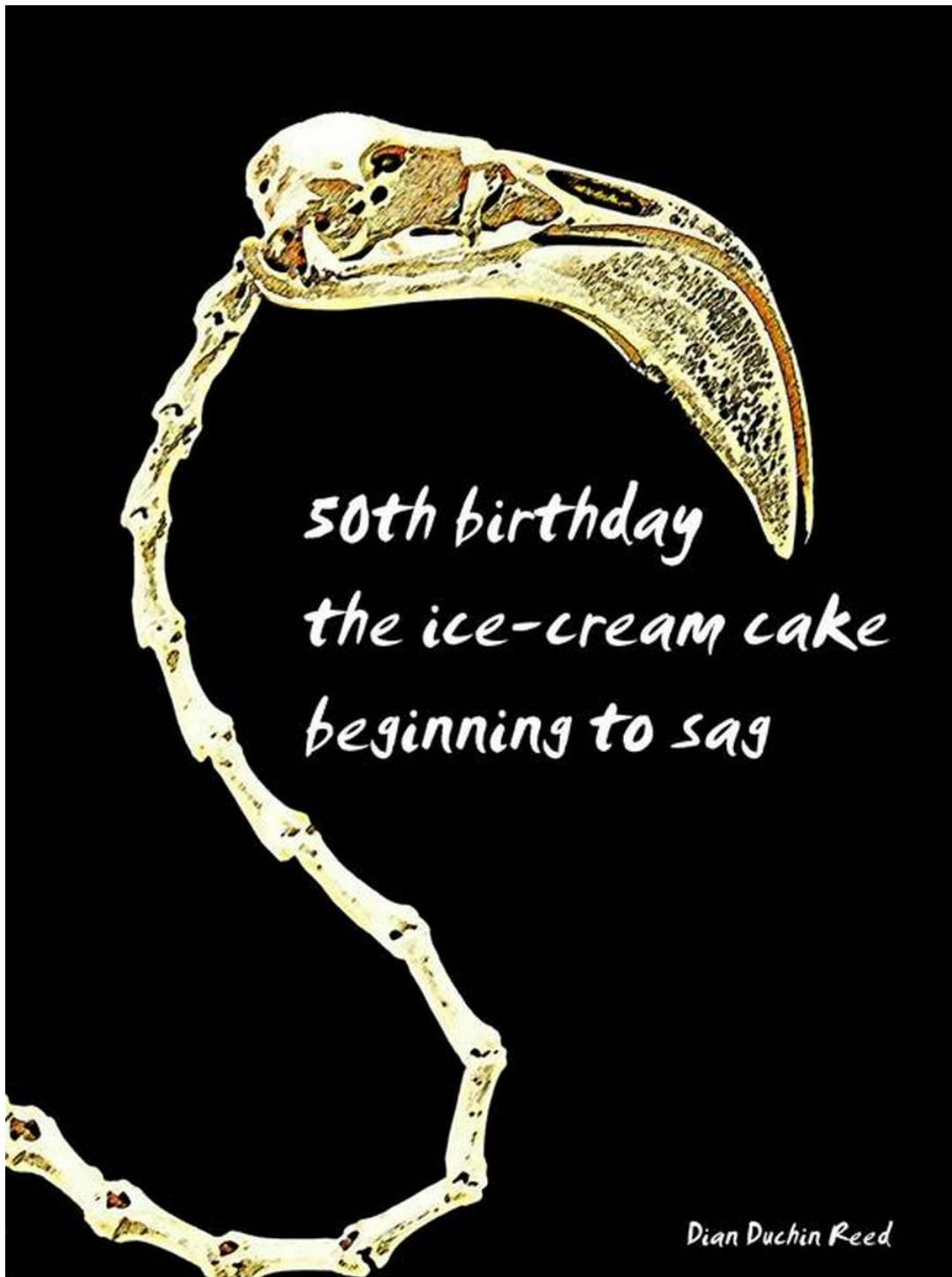
Christina Chin, Malaysia



Cristina Angelescu, Romania



Debbie Strange, Canada



Dian Duchin Reed, USA

Tanka



Kākā - Sanctuary Island Maungatautari, New Zealand

jasmine evening
kerosene lamps
light the marketplace
thin chickens
in a tiny cage

Robert Witmer, Japan

on the street corner
a homeless woman
covered in male gaze
we choose
to avert our eyes

Rashmi VeSa, India (EC)

humming
transformer on a pole
working
Eduardo – hums softly
sends his earnings home

Robert Erlandson, USA

they share
the grinding subway
with secret smiles
then plan each moment
for the escape to suburbia

Carol Raisfeld, USA

so many candles
to melt the icing
on your cake . . .
where were you when I was
young and fancy-free?

Cynthia Rowe, Australia

a man
old enough to be
old-fashioned
gives me
his seat

Maxianne Berger, Canada

alone
in a dead-end alley
the one-armed veteran
stumbles after
his drunken shadow

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

no matter
how you tell it
two skunks in a hotel bar
white stripes
where wedding bands were

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

revealing
the raven tattoos
on her neck
when I ask
about her insecurities

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan

when I'm with you
I swallow my tongue
the way
a red-necked grebe
ingests its own feathers

Marilyn Fleming, USA (EC)

wondering
whether to lie yet again
about my bruises . . .
I spot a road sign:
"No U-turn"

Vandana Parashar, India

I let
your special day
pass unobserved —
even the most devoted
must give up sometime

Ruth Holzer USA

a quick hug
and he's out the door . . .
what I said,
what I meant to say--
his old cat in the window

James Chessing, USA

my shadow
lengthening
down the mountain
I climb up
to my home village

David He, China

the last time
I saw father he boasted
about his new bride . . .
in the garden mother prunes
her loneliness

Kevin Valentine, USA

a thunderbolt
crashes outside . . .
in a comic book
I would catch on right off
you were leaving

Pris Campbell, USA

on the glass pane
one tiny feather
trapped –
the blurring smudge
of her memory

Marilyn Fleming, USA

my daughter
... her fairy wings
clipped
by unplanned
motherhood

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

rain blows in
across my windowsill
the scent
of blossoms opening
before the end of dreams

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

an old woman
beside the window
untangles her yarn
a skein of geese
knitting the clouds

Susan Constable, Canada

a fog horn
sounds the first crossing
of the harbour . . .
through restless waves I crash
onto the shore of morning

Gavin Austin, Australia

train whistle . . .
between scattered
fragrant gardens
I follow the childhood paths
from my granny's stories

Ivan Gaćina, Croatia

the sound
of granddaughter's snowboard
carving an arc —
on WhatsApp
closeness at a distance

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

new phrase
at the first law class . . .
i write
"without prejudice"
even in love letters

Taofeek Ayeyemi, Nigeria

dust settles
on the kitchen table . . .
all these surfaces
my memories
of your skin

Richard Kakol, Australia

a path
through the trees
the scent
of bay leaves
sweetens our first kiss

Gillena Cox, St James, Trinidad

her scent
in that torpid heat
now just
an ancient desire
its grip slipping away

Richard St. Clair, USA

at the hospice
every day my friend
feeds
grapes to her long-time,
now unaware, paramour

Cynthia Rowe, Australia

watching my heart
on a monitor
in the cardiac center
I think of politicians
I have called "heartless"

Edward J. Rielly USA

oh to die
as this tree frog
in the spider's web
where last heartbeats
pinwheel prisms of color

Linda Jeannette Ward, USA

his crematorium service
tea in the garden
the bushfire
over the mountain
rains down ash and debris

Laurel Astle, Australia

beyond cement stairs
and a rock-strewn beach
shades of grey
cloak ocean, islands, sky
I long for a splash of red

Susan Constable, Canada

November
finally a use
for Burnt Umber
I paint the landscape
of my final days

Bryan Rickert, USA

a pill
as orange
as the midday sun
I swallow
this yearning for spring

Dave Read, Canada

stained
blood red glass
our hearts
after the furnaces
of endless, August days

Mark Starling, USA

a song
summons the tanager
out of the forest
between us
the space of a breath

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

hurricanes
and earthquakes
drown the Earth
the sad, sad face
of this October Moon

Iliyana Stoyanova, UK

the maple with
red bark and early
green buds
each leaf - a love song
sung by a warbler

Mark Starling, USA

underneath
a stand of bracken
we discover
the blue sky inside
each tiny bell

Debbie Strange, Canada

soldiers' buttons
line the trail
I step alongside
the bowed heads
into dusk

Joanna Ashwell, United Kingdom

the small boy
watches a starfish
laughs when touching it
and gently swirls the tide pool
his reverence a born gift

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

water spurting
from a gargoyle spout . . .
I am drawn to
the gurgling of a baby
in his mother's arms

Paul Callus, Malta (EC)

our school bus
waxing and waning
over frosted hills . . .
we huddle together
in a herd of laughter

Debbie Strange, Canada

a pre-school class
weaves along the waterfront
their vests declaring:
save our shores
. . . warriors in training

Jan Foster, Australia

first day
at the new job—
the old lime tree
in the back yard
blooming again

Steliana Cristina Voicu, Romania

can you hear it?
it comes
from the hawk
circling
above you

Mike Montreuil, Canada

my concrete angel
tilted upwards
in this leafy mulch . . .
as if admiring
the oak's wide canopy

Janet Lynn Davis, USA

all the poppies
gone
soldiers
smoked them
every one

Jill Lange, USA

somewhere
along the bridge
the soldier decided
peace at last
peace at last

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

Editor's Choice

It has been an unexpected pleasure reading the tanka selection for this issue of *cattails*. I marvel at how new poets are trying the form whilst the more established ones continue to thrive. Here are three poems which have stayed with me.



on the street corner
a homeless woman
covered in male gaze
we choose
to avert our eyes

Rashmi VeSa, India (EC)

I was struck by this tanka by Rashmi VeSa in the light of the 23-year-old female physiotherapy student, who was beaten, gang-raped, and left to die on the streets of Delhi in 2012. I don't know if the poet intended such an allusion but the underlying menace to the woman is almost palpable and indeed sensed by the narrator. There is a journalistic aspect to the poem but this is transcended in the contrast of gaze and averting the gaze, the objectifying gaze of lust on a helpless victim. The homeless woman is uncovered to the gaze but also covered in the gaze in an image whose duality is shocking. Furthermore, gaze suggests gauze, a thin film that exposes as well as covers and which is used for wounds to suggest the pain of the woman.



when I'm with you
I swallow my tongue
the way
a red-necked grebe
ingests its own feathers

Marilyn Fleming, USA (EC)

In this tanka by Marilyn Fleming a beautiful but shocking image, totally unexpected, completes a common situation of embarrassment or shyness. Thus the distinct realms of nature and social feeling are brought together in a way that is both amusing and poignant. The red-necked grebe echoes the red cheeks of embarrassment and shame. What a skilful analogy for social awkwardness! This took me on a search for the red-necked grebe and I was fascinated to learn that the red-necked grebe ingests large quantities of its own feathers. I salute the poet's keen observations of a bird that probably nests in a lake near where she lives or visits.



water spurting
from a gargoyle spout...
I am drawn to
the gurgling of a baby
in his mother's arms

Paul Callus, Malta (EC)

The hinge of the poem by Paul Callus is a homophony - gargoyle and gurgle. The similar sound reveals a distinction between a hideous gargoyle and an innocent baby, but the baby if it cries - spouts water - can also look like a gargoyle. However, this is circumvented by the mother's care so the poem begins in the ugly but ends in Madonna-like serenity and centres on the implied but absent fountain - of tears or of life and love.

Sonam Chhoki



Radostina Dragostinova, Bulgaria



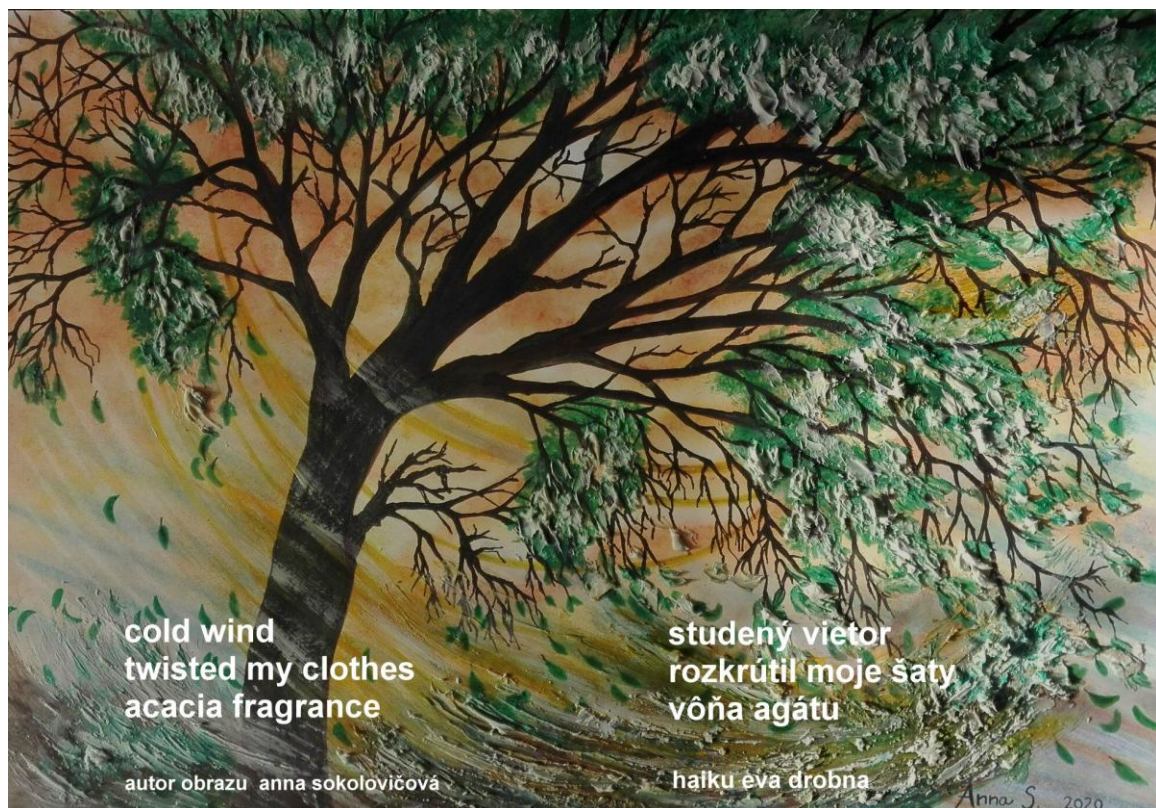
Jane Williams, Tasmania, Australia



Djurdja Vukelic Rozic, Croatia



Elisa Theriana, Indonesia



Eva Drobná, Slovakia

Haibun



kārearea / New Zealand falcon - Wingsan National Bird of Prey Centre

Desperado

Marilyn Ashbaugh, USA

He carries his bottle in his mouth, clenching the responsive rubber nipple to free his hands. Then a new girl moves into the two-story across the alley. For her, he tucks it next to the blue diaper pin holding up his nappy. A bottle at his side, never far from reach, gives him the swagger of a gunslinger.

giddy up . . .
a splintered sawhorse
his new ride

Departure

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan

It has been two weeks since you left this house and I still feel your presence all around. I inhale and exhale nothing but the loneliness in the morning. On the balcony, the birds peck into the bird feeder and fly away. The sunbeam through the bedroom window tries to warm my slumberous body and disappear. Some white fluffy clouds start gathering in the sky to cover the bright sun. The first half of the day passes and all these scenes make me ponder deeply about life that keeps on moving.

settling dust
on the window glass
afternoon thoughts

Sounding

Gavin Austin, Australia

Her mindless acceptance perpetuated the myth – she was comfortable in her discontent. Occasionally some vague notion stirred her to question, analyse, revise, so the future days may shape differently – no longer satisfied with unmet love ruling her moments. No longer a slave chained to minor things. Must her answers come from within? A barren search, possibly – sounding without touching the bottom – too deep to be measured, needing solid contact so a reading may be taken to gauge reality.

shipwreck coast
the ocean floor
strewn with treasure

The Beauty in Time

Babafemi Opeyemi Pamela, Nigeria

"How much is my fare?" I asked as I boarded the white minivan with my luggage. "Five thousand and five hundred Naira," replied the driver. I brought out my purse and made to pay. "Be fast!" He shouted while extending his hand towards me. I looked up and smiled, as I handed him some notes. "You women are always slow in everything!" He said. I chuckled briefly and looked away. Then he mumbled loud enough for my ears to pick up, "Even to push out a baby from your womb takes forever. Must everything be done with fanfare?" A music of laughter echoed in my ears. We soon took off and after a while, stopped at a station to fill the vehicle's fuel tank. The strong smell of petrol was starting to nauseate me. "And just how many liters are we buying that we have to spend all morning here?" I muttered under my breath – perhaps a subconscious rebuttal to the driver's earlier attack. A little over an hour into the journey, the hitherto smooth topography of the town gave way to an undulating terrain towards the outskirts. As the vehicle sharply ascended and descended the steep slopes of the well-tarred road, I felt knots in my stomach – some things can be rushed, but some other things take time.

rush hour–
blossoms by the sidewalk
unfurling

Naughty

John Budan, USA (EC)

My husband no longer notices my clothes or me anymore. I feel like I'm being smothered in soft hugs when I wear these fishnet nylons and when I wear risqué lingerie, I feel like I'm harboring a naughty secret. Only I no longer feel that way.

As I am attaching the black garter belt, I become aware of the young man peering at me with binoculars. I slowly put on my heels . . .

heat wave
my neighbor
opens a window

Swiping Right

Matthew Caretti, Malaysia

I point to a sliver of late day sky. A sudden blue amidst the grey. Ask them to have a look. The students pause their games. Their chats and apps. Contemplate with me, if only for a moment, the uneven orb floating there. A different sort of reality. Its beauty. And perhaps then an awareness of the silence here on the mountain. The breeze. The scent of rain.

tapping on
his new profile pic
monsoon showers

In the Wake

Glenn G. Coats, USA

A parade of vehicles drives slowly past the houses. There are trucks with out of state plates, station wagons with extension ladders lashed to roofs, and vans that have darkened windows. Signs are up with phone numbers to call in order to report fraud or vandalism. Strangers come from far and wide to exploit the vulnerable — ones broken by the tornado.

Charlene has her thick curls wrapped in a bandanna. She is building a pile of vinyl siding, metal fence, and shingles from those scattered across her yard. Faces stare from rolled down windows as she bends again and again. "Take a picture it lasts longer," she snaps.

Television crews set up on corners. Reporters direct questions at eyes that have been up all night. *What did it sound like? Were you able to find shelter? Was anyone hurt?*

Charlene tells a neighbor that she will have to move. "See my face," she says. "Only one this color on my block." She thinks Columbia will be better — a few hours from the sea.

Police set up barricades where the street begins. They tell one car after another that the area is closed. One policeman leaves his car parked near Charlene's house. She thinks that will help keep the riffraff out.

Night sets in and wind ripples blue tarps that drape houses as geese honk low across the sky. "At least they know where they're going," Charlene says.

receding waters
mosquitoes swarm over
what's left

prayers for the missing
a cormorant opens its wings
to dry

Addiction

Bryan Cook, Canada

serenity prayer
just dregs
in the coffee urn

It's 26 below. Horizontal snow drifts through the automatic doors at the psychiatric hospital. Another AA meeting is over. The hunched and hooded, walker-bound and gas-bottled trudge to a bus shelter butt box beyond the No Smoking Zone.

stone moon
a snow owl
drift dives mice

Cigarettes and roaches, baggies bought with welfare; faces etched by addiction hack and spit. Tattooed memories carry the weight of abuse, failed rehab, prison.

wind howl
a lone sparrow
pecks a butt

Life's a sad-go-round of endless pain. Smokes and coffee take the edge off without a hangover. Emphysema and pneumonia are never far away. Some return to the psych ward; some seek a warm street grate or the Mission.

a pigeon frozen
in snow grime
ignored by the crow

The bus never stops.

Crossing the River

Colleen M Farrelly, USA

The evening is still. A Wisconsin summer breeze rustles the wild grasses caressing the barn. Passing Perseids splatter across a porcelain sky, a Pollock painting abstracting eternity. The faintest stars shimmer like they did in uMzantsi's savannahs beyond city sprawl. A breath catches in the back of my throat, and I linger in the field a while longer.

Southern Cross
reaching for the horizon—
homesickness

I plop beside the bonfire pit, splitting a six-pack with our kindergarten clique. We reminisce on sweet sixteen's, sorority dances, and frittering away Friday nights in the fort tucked behind the river bend. The adults hang back like they did during *Sex in the City* slumber parties, when we snuggled under covers and whispered secrets. I always had a new crush. You always wanted new shoes.

It's late, but a few of us linger longer. Your bestie is beside me, breaking down as she hugs our uncle. She shudders and shakes against his shoulders under the strain of grief. Your funeral is in a few hours. I turn away from the bridge and stare . . .

last embers dying in the Styx

Vanishing Point

Jan Foster, Australia

In pre-dawn light, fog shrouds the surroundings. The bridge across the flood-swollen river below is somewhere nearby but in this eerie glow everything seems surreal. The small part of me that clings to courage whispers I need to step forward into this shifting mist to find it.

whir of wings
a feather drifts
in its wake

Pieterskerk

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

To walk the slow stones, imagining on the soft smooth polish the begone feet meeting mine. Souls soles . . . Noting 1574, 1602. Not wanting more than the worn edge of a carved letter or numeral. Open, to the trace of bygone worship.

flickering flame
the stillness
within

As long as the Strawberry moon

Susan Beth Furst, USA

Barefoot, she looks out to the horizon. Waves wash over the shore, soaking the hem of her white dress. The wind whips sand and water against her face. She can taste the salt. And still, just the ocean, and dawn beginning to break...

sea glass
she cuts herself
one more time

Lithium1

Tim Gardiner, England

I always come to a launch at times like these. Our separation has a ring of permanency, my mood swings have taken their toll. Pathological lying and countless affairs didn't help either, a fantasy existence is so hard to maintain. Those fucking pills had the most visceral side-effects, shaking hands, dry mouth and vivid hallucinations, so I stopped taking them. Still, at least I've got beers, dope and this grassy mound by the lake. Waiting for take-off, my mind drifts to the unspeakable panorama of earth, first step off the ladder, and the gut-wrenching desertion of the crater. After that the days seemed rather monochrome, the sky that much emptier. Waking from an intoxicated sleep, it's night-time at Cape Canaveral, the launch missed.

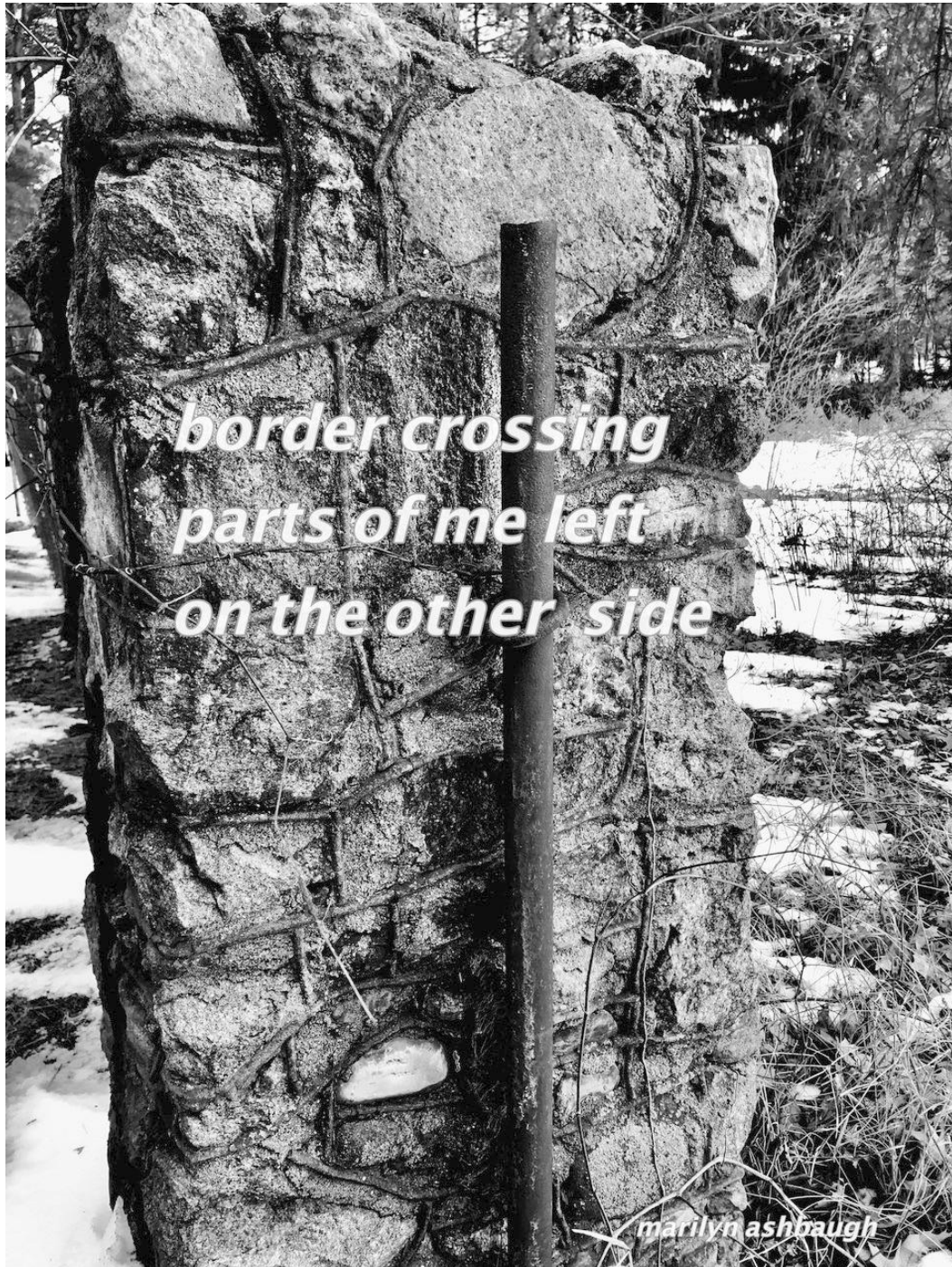
walking on the moon mayfly

Going Out, In Style

Tia Haynes, USA

My mother's makeup was immaculate. I would watch as she meticulously applied her eyeshadow, mascara, lipstick, until she was almost satisfied with her beauty; the penultimate goal of life. This morning as I was putting every hair into place I saw my own daughters watching me. In my heart I set down the curling iron, mussed up my hair, and asked who wanted waffles. In reality, I picked up the hairspray and kept going.

crooked river
her chemo
takes over



Marilyn Ashbaugh, USA

L'Enfer Cabaret, 53 Boulevard de Clichy, 1898

Ruth Holzer, USA

(Eugene Atget photograph)

A stucco frieze of voluptuous, tormented bodies being dragged into the flames of damnation decorates the front of the Cabaret of Hell. The gaping portal is a monster's fanged maw. Imagine the acts performed inside, the depraved travesties arousing unspeakable desires. And upstairs, in the Hotel de la Place Blanche, a continuous clientele of infernal couples.

evidently
a horse
has passed this way

Dilemma

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

Every night, the same dream. I'm surrounded by trilling birds, nets of vines. Assaulted by musty fungi and rot. Each step disturbs burrowers, scrabbling nearby. Moisture drips from ferns and the canopy of trees reaching for light. The rainforest trail ends at a sandy beach, my feet immersed in cold waves and my voice tied in a knot of sibling whispers... *how best to look after our elderly, unwell mother.*

tidal flow . . .
broken shells
beneath bladderwrack

The Lies We Say

Padmini Krishnan, Singapore (EC)

It is late in the evening and we prepare to leave Changi Beach. Our toddler wants us to make a bigger sandcastle, her eyes on a girl sitting next to her. "Let us go. It is late." We get up. There is a stubborn flash in her eyes. "No, I want to stay here." We point to a random man wearing a waist pouch, "See there? He is a security officer with a gun. He will arrest those who stay late at the beach." Our daughter stares at him and gets up to leave. We get home and tell her to arrange her dolls. She protests. "Or else, the night monster will take them away." She obeys immediately. "Brush your teeth or the cavity monster will get hold of it," we warn her earnestly before she hits the bed. She opens her eyes wide and nods. We go to bed, smiling, but there is a chill deep in our hearts when we think of her looming pre-teen years. We presume that no threats will work and the innocence will be long gone.

lasting memories
Barbie doll's
painted hair

Fuel

Cyndi Lloyd, USA (EC)

In my dream, the wind blows all night, the bush scraping against our house.
Electricity shut down—for good. Cell towers down. Glaciers gone. Rivers dried
up. Fires raging. From the open window, a baaing lamb.

What does one take when it's the apocalypse? I look at all my books, the Kindle.
Photographs of family, pets, Nature. There's my writing—in notebooks, folders,
flashdrives.

And food. How will I eat? Nearly everything contains gluten.

Big Sky Country
dark clouds shroud
the sun

The Tooth Be Told

Gautam Nadkarni, India

When I had my teeth extracted by the dentist, prior to going in for implants, my nephew Raju was all envy.

"Gee, Uncle! Think of the gifts you can get from the tooth fairy..." he said. Dreamily.

I didn't see eye to eye with the lad on that score. I would have willingly traded a dozen tooth fairies for teeth to sink into succulent sheesh kebabs. Or even barbecued chicken. Such was my state then.

"You can ask the tooth fairy for a sports car," suggested Raju brightly. "Though I would much rather prefer a space shuttle," he added thoughtfully. "Imagine zooming through space at supersonic speed."

For the next several minutes we discussed the pros and cons of space shuttles as against a Maserati. Or a Lamborghini. I finally concluded that a sports car was fine for me. I wasn't very sure I could hold my food down in a shuttle. Besides I was positive it would cost a fortune in maintenance and fuel.

"Alright," said Raju with a sigh. "Ask for a sports car then."

The matter finally settled I prepared for bed for it was late. All night I tossed and turned in my sleep trying to decide on the model of the automobile I should ask for.

Starbucks . . .
the astronaut cribs about
the cost of coffee

Crustacean

Maeve O'Sullivan, Ireland

I can hear it scratching and scrabbling in a bucket in the corner, as one claw rubs against the other. The curtains are drawn and that's the only sound in the room. The others are at the beach and I'm stuck here in the annex due to a bad case of sunburn. Mum has put *Sudocrem* onto the parts of my back that I can't reach but I still can't lie comfortably. I feel shaky and headachy. Later my skin will itch like crazy and I will worry it with my nails; for now I am simply scorched. I'd prefer to be outside: counting the spots on ladybirds, playing hide-and-seek in the dunes or walking all the way down to The Burrow where the old shipwreck is half-submerged in the sand.

resting on the shore
of Darwin's volcanic island —
red cannibal crabs

The Ask

Ray Rasmussen, Canada

*My lover asks me:
"What is the difference
between me and the sky?"*

~ Nizar Qabbani

After reading Qabbani's poem together, my lover smiles and asks: "What's the difference between me and the sky?"

The difference, my love, is when in spring; you guide me to view the purple crocus poking above winter's leaf litter.

And when in summer, you put your canoe paddle aside to pick up your camera, and my eyes follow your gaze to a tiny bonsai-shaped spruce growing from a sawn stump in an Algonquin Lake.

And when in fall, you see ATV tracks that have scoured the forest path we love to walk, and I see your eyes flood with pain.

And when in winter you hush me and stop to gaze at a deer's tracks on a skein of snow.

And when today, you gasp and your face lights up when a red fox gracefully crosses a creek on an inches-wide log that no human would dare walk.

And when minutes later, a second fox follows, bark-yips, receives a bark-yip in return, and together they cavort in spring's warming sun.

All that, my love, is how you are of the Earth, and different from the sky.

warming sun –
her hand slips
into mine

The epigraph is the first line of Nizar Qabbani's poem, "My Lover Asks Me," translated by B. Frangieh & C. Brown. The haibun was modeled on Qabbani's short poem, but with my content in answer to the question posed by the poet's lover.

Why?

Bryan Rickert, USA

Someone burnt down the playground. The kindergarteners cried, but the bigger kids weren't even fazed. They all speculated that it was rival gang members from a different neighborhood.

"It's so sad for the little ones" an eighth grader told me. "They're still soft but this will help. This'll toughen 'em up."

Someone asked me why I quit teaching. After a long pause, all I could say was, "Hell, I'd just like to remember why I started."

ditch lilies
for a week or two
their beauty

What is Destiny

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

A pause between problems. Maybe a short pause, maybe a long one. After days of rain and cloudy dampness the sky is an azure blue; the air is fresh and sweet; the few cumulous clouds are pillows of cotton. The birds seem to have a new repertoire; the songs are gayer and lighter. Even the crows have moderated their complaints.

a swallowtail
from blossom to blossom
the folding darkness

Graduation

Desirae Terrien, USA

The world was my oyster, and I didn't like seafood. Everyone begged me to eat.
Instead, I grew thin. The world opened wide — I just kept shrinking.

late spring
the scent of oleander
already too sweet

French Bread

Allyson Whipple, USA

I was jealous but told myself to be grateful. On your first try, you baked a loaf better than 75% of the bread I've ever made in my whole life. Magazine-ready. What do I have left that is truly my own? But then, all the habits I've picked up from you in return. Brake repair. Well-stocked first aid kits. Knowing how to start and feed a fire. When you love someone long enough, everything becomes permeable; transference takes place without anyone noticing. When you love someone long enough, habit becomes collective. Even their filler words enter your lexicon, and even your unusual pronunciations fill theirs.

Dusted with flour,
still warm from the oven.
Desire, dripping.

Editor's Choice (EC)

It took awhile to decide on Editor's choices for the haibun section. In the end, I decided to complement the actions of men and women in this time of the Coronavirus. We may be following the restrictions or counsel from our leaders, good or bad, but in the end we are unique individuals, just as the haibun are.

While I have chosen the following three haibun as Editor's Choices, I should mention that Matthew Caretti's *Swiping Right* and Tia Haynes' *Going Out, In Style* also fit in the discussion.



Naughty

John Budan, USA

My husband no longer notices my clothes or me anymore. I feel like I'm being smothered in soft hugs when I wear these fishnet nylons and when I wear risqué lingerie, I feel like I'm harboring a naughty secret. Only I no longer feel that way.

As I am attaching the black garter belt, I become aware of the young man peering at me with binoculars. I slowly put on my heels . . .

heat wave
my neighbor
opens a window

In his haibun, Naughty, John Budan take the persona of a middle aged woman looking for something else. And while some may complain about a man taking on a woman's persona, it is done quite a lot in fiction. I might add that many haibun are works of fiction. Yet, the underlying theme is human nature and all our real and imagined wishes and foibles.



The Lies We Say

Padmini Krishnan, Singapore

It is late in the evening and we prepare to leave Changi Beach. Our toddler wants us to make a bigger sandcastle, her eyes on a girl sitting next to her. "Let us go. It is late." We get up. There is a stubborn flash in her eyes. "No, I want to stay here." We point to a random man wearing a waist pouch, "See there? He is a security officer with a gun. He will arrest those who stay late at the beach." Our daughter stares at him and gets up to leave. We get home and tell her to arrange her dolls. She protests. "Or else, the night monster will take them away." She obeys immediately. "Brush your teeth or the cavity monster will get hold of it," we warn her earnestly before she hits the bed. She opens her eyes wide and nods. We go to bed, smiling, but there is a chill deep in our hearts when we think of her looming pre-teen years. We presume that no threats will work and the innocence will be long gone.

lasting memories
Barbie doll's
painted hair

The same is true of Padmini Krishnan's haibun, The Lies We Say. Parents announce, to their child, that they must leave the beach. There are many ways of to entice/force our daughters and/or sons to come along; it's time to go home. Despite all the good wishes and counsel, in the end our children and us, the parents, do rely on fiction and lies to get through life.



Fuel

Cyndi Lloyd, USA (EC)

In my dream, the wind blows all night, the bush scraping against our house.
Electricity shut down—for good. Cell towers down. Glaciers gone. Rivers dried
up. Fires raging. From the open window, a baaing lamb.

What does one take when it's the apocalypse? I look at all my books, the Kindle.
Photographs of family, pets, Nature. There's my writing—in notebooks, folders,
flashdrives.

And food. How will I eat? Nearly everything contains gluten.

Big Sky Country
dark clouds shroud
the sun

Cyndi Lloyd's Fuel presents an interesting case of being prepared for the end of the world, as her character knows it. Despite all the preparations and the feeling that her character will survive, a feeling of dread comes with the realisation that being gluten intolerant becomes the proverbial stick-in-the mud.



Mike Montreuil



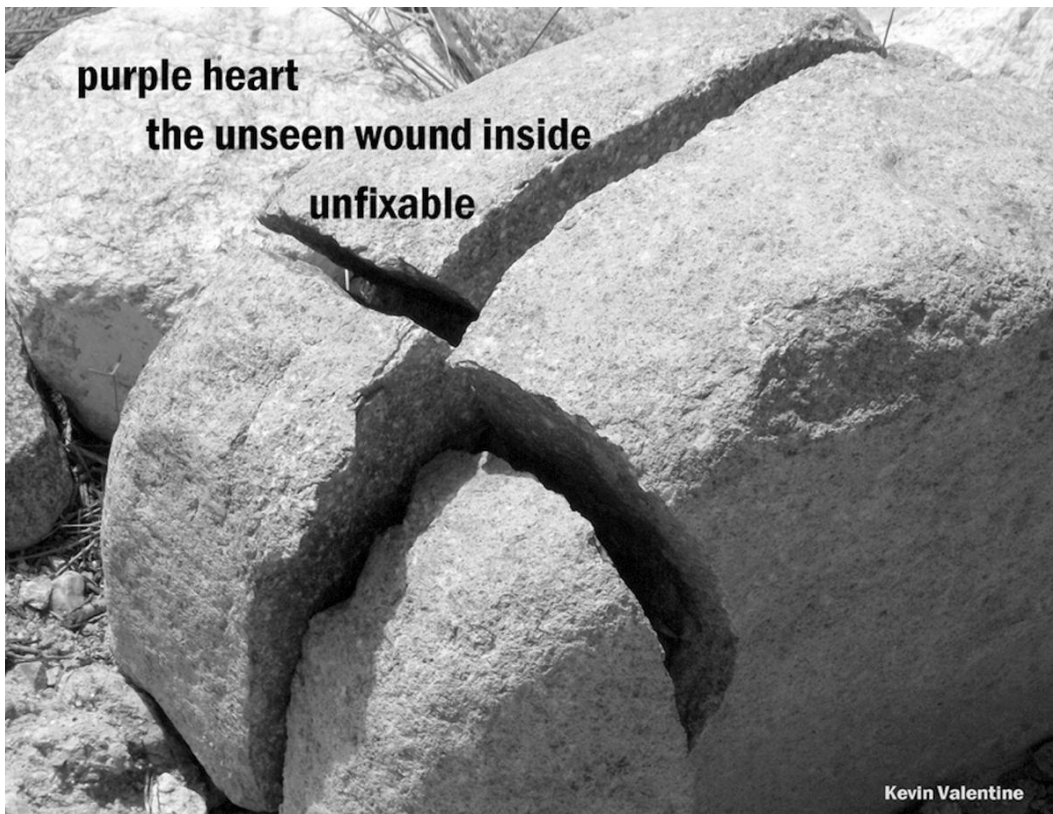
Jenny Fraser, New Zealand



John Hawkhead, UK



Julie Warther, USA



Kevin Valentine, USA

cattails ~ April 2020

Youth



tauhou / Waxeye, New Zealand

Retrospective Selections 2014 - 2019
selected by Kala Ramesh

"Haiku is essentially a recognition of the miracle of existence and our gift is to report in words anything that can help another person feel this too."

— Tom Clausen

The focus of this issue's Youth Corner is 'Retrospective Selections,' *celebrating the past contributors over the last* six years!

Once in a while it's nice to look back and see the path we have taken and also see the progress we have made on the way. The poems you'll be reading below are all haiku & senryu written by children below 18 years of age. Of course, by now many of the students will have graduated and some may even have taken their first job! Some of our school kids may be in college now. If and when I see them, I'm sure they'll be towering over me!

An'ya saw promise in youth haiku and introduced Youth Corner in the first issue of cattails! Premier Edition: January 2014.

To quote her: "For this Premier Edition of cattails we have added a "Youth Page" to encourage more young poets, and although we have only three haiku for this edition, all very good haiku, two sent to us from India, and one from the USA. Well known poet Kala Ramesh has been workshopping with students from the Katha-CBSE initiative to improve their haiku, and it's most definitely working. All it takes is a good, patient and devoted teacher like Kala to make the difference. We hope to follow their lead and develop our own youth writing programs here in America, with the help of Chase Fire, our UHTS Youth Ambassador for the USA."

Sonam Chokki continued this beautiful tradition after she took over as editor. As I mentioned above, we have finished six solid years, starting from Jan 2014. With this issue, we are entering our 7th year of promoting haikai literature in young minds!

Join us as we enjoy the fresh and child-like approach to life that haikai literature demands, which children get so naturally. I always say, children take to haiku like fish take to water! It gave me immense pleasure to go through all the issues, year after year! I would like to have picked every ku that was featured over the years, but unfortunately I couldn't do, for then I would have usurped this whole issue!!

Kala Ramesh

yawning wide . . .
I watch the leaf settle
on a bed of brown

R. Hariharan, (age 14), India
January 2014

dry leaves rise
as if winged . . .
a sprinting deer

A. Jenita Annline (age 10), India
May 2014

grocery shopping
my mother still gives me
the lightest bag

Harshavardhan Sushant (age 17), India
May 2014

people everywhere
amongst them I walk
finding my own silence

Ritaj. K (age 15), India
May 2014

as if the moon
had a hundred moons . . .
lantern festival

Chase Fire (age 18), USA
May 2014

bombers moon
once here once gone

Pruthvi Shrikaanth (age 7), UK
May 2014

stilted forest
sunlight fades into mist
where trees begin

Francesca Cotta (18 yrs), India
September 2014

bloody Sunday –
he cuts the rooster
to make a living

Prateek Malhotra (18 yrs), India
September 2014

cattails ~ April 2020

bright blue sky . . .
shades of green
paint the fog

Hana Masood (18 yrs), India
September 2014

cool ankles . . .
tadpoles dart
through the moon

Devin Meijer (17 yrs), USA
September 2014

sunlight
catches a ride
tide pool ripples

Emma Jones (14 yrs), USA
January 2015

long journey
pausing for water
I drink the moon

Iqra Raza (17 yrs), India
January 2015

five rupees
saved in a bargain sale
my aunt feels rich

Rohan Kevin Broach (17 yrs) India
January 2015

midnight-
the koel's voice
lost in black

Shubhangi Jagdev (18 yrs), India
January 2015

windy day...
the pages turn
to the last line

Sneha Mojumdar (15 yrs), India
May 2015

frozen pond
a frog jumps in
and breaks his nose

Siddharth Mungale (13 yrs), India
May 2015

Christmas eve . . .

a child gazes sadly
at the lighted homes

Meha Prabhu (13 yrs), India
September 2015

summer holidays . . .

my brother and I fight
for the window seats

Paridhi Sharma (17 yrs) India
September 2015

flower garden

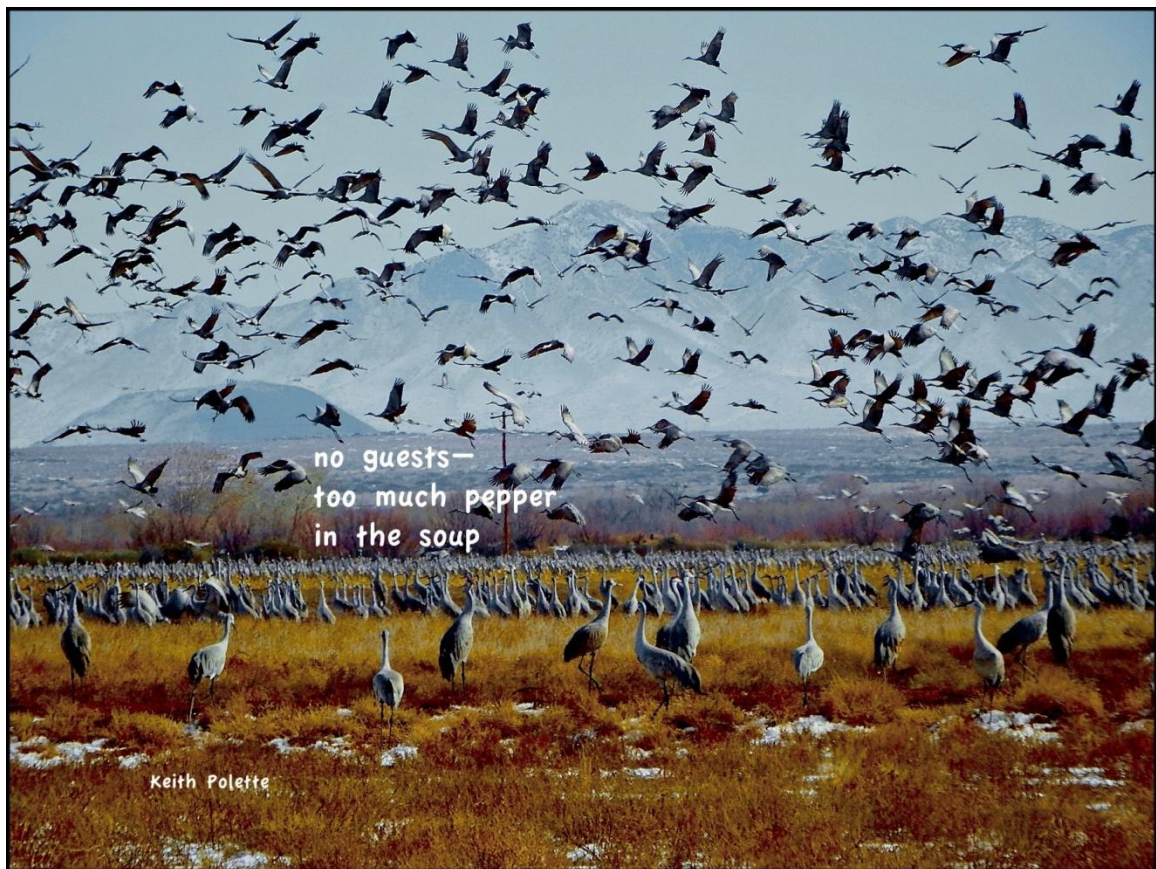
a lady claps her hands
without knowing

Betty Tariku (9 yrs) UK
January 2016

evening walk –

with each step his shadow
overlaps mine

Dhruvi Lakhani (18 yrs), India
January 2016



Keith Polette, USA

glass of whisky
frost bitten fingers writing
thank you notes

Azade Aria (18 yrs) India
January 2016

sunrise . . .
all of the world
crowding a road

Sparsh Agrawal (10 yrs), India
May 2016

soaring eagles
this winter afternoon
i wish i had wings

Ceya Davis (14 yrs), India
May 2016

a bindi
on my mom's forehead...
morning sun

Aashna Goyal (age 16), India
September 2016

first light . . .
the tall shadows
of little Buddhas

Iqra Raza (age 18), India
September 2016

dad's kurta
on the backyard clothesline...
a flying superhero

Parinidhi Sharma (age 18), India
September 2016

butterfly
unfolds its wings...
school assembly

Lakshay Gandotra (age 13), India
September 2016

sunlight hangs
in the rain droplets...
dusty window

Emma Jones (age 16), USA
September 2016

power outage
the house lit with
cell phones

Sadie Holcomb (age 14), USA
September 2016

the sea slowly
dissipates into the sand
magenta waves

Laieh Jwella (13 years), India
October 2017

darkened insides
in Mama's saucepan
the moon fries

Praniti Gulyani (13 yrs), India
October 2017

huge car showroom—
I can't buy
even a pen

Jitesh Tandon (16 years), India
October 2017

the komodo dragon
purrs after a drink –
YouTube

Aryan Bakshi (10 yrs), India
April 2018

Mumbai attack
souls linger around
for justice

Shreya Narang (17 yrs), India
April 2018

boarding school –
I create a family
away from home

Shubhangi Anand (18 yrs), India
April 2018

he sits
with a pipe in hand
complaining of pollution

Ishan Ashpreet Singh (14 years), India
April 2019

tree bark
dinosaur scales
from prehistoric times

Eleanor Parsons (14 yrs), USA
April 2018

rainy afternoon
five-thousand jigsaw pieces
litter the table

Amit Kamma (14 yrs), USA
October 2018

rainbow —
the places i have
never been to

Preet Acharya (10 yrs), India
October 2018

rain taps my window
I no longer
cry alone

Daisy Solomon (15 yrs), India
October 2018

hot day
the sweet excuse
for a milkshake

James Russell, (13 yrs), USA
October 2018

spring night
a hawkcuckoo dips
into its tune

Nikhil Gupta (age 14 yrs), India
April 2019

midnight showers . . .
I greet a jewelled world
at dawn

Ustat Kaur Sethi (age 14 yrs), India
April 2019

umbrellas . . .
the smell of roasted corncobs
fills the air

V.K. Sai Gayatri (age 14 yrs), India
April 2019

blossom cool —
a cardinal touches
the last cloud

Kalaiselvi Ashokkumar (age 14 yrs), India
April 2019

choking smog —
it takes an hour
to move an inch

Nandika Rohith (age 14 yrs), India
April 2019

orange skies
a pack of birds fly
into the fading universe

Niranjana Prasad (age 14 yrs), India
April 2019

damp green grass
summer stampedes
my way

James H (11 yrs) USA
October 2019

the country roads call my childhood

William B (11 yrs), USA
October 2019

*stretching up
reaching down
the sorrows of the weeping willow*

Ollie J (11 yrs), USA
October 2019



The Bullseye!

Part 1:

In *Illusions*, Richard Bach says, *The original sin is to limit the Is.*

Don't. Children are capable of so much if we open the windows and doors for them.

As haiku poets, we all know that kire – the cut – is vital to haiku and the kigo – the seasonal reference – gives depth and resonance to a haiku! But, have you ever thought of creating a kigo word that you've experienced – try to! It's never too late!

Create your own kigo!

In the 60-hour haikai poetry course I conduct for undergraduates at the Symbiosis International University, one of the assignments I give my students is for each student to "find/create" one kigo word from their own experience, and one that resonates for them. It is tough and not all students are able to tackle this task. However, I received several exceptional entries, including one by Nayaneeka, which I've decided to share here with our readers at the *Youth Corner* in this retrospective selection.

Kala Ramesh

My Own Kigo Word

Nayaneeka Dutta Choudhury, India

The kigo word I have chosen to create, using a term used in Indian culture, is Mango Chutney. The word “chutney” has been derived from the Sanskrit word, catni which means “to lick”. In general terms it is a pickle of Indian origin, made from a family of ingredients such as fruit, sugar or spices, among others.

Chutney is a relish that can be made all through the year, using different ingredients, as and when they are available. Hence, “chutney” in itself is not a kigo word as it is not restricted to a particular season. This is why I have chosen to specify which chutney I am speaking about so as to be able to indicate the season I wish to classify it under.

Mangoes, in India, are available in massive quantities during the summer season when the tremendous heat and seasonal characteristics allow it to grow and ripen. Mango chutney is therefore, a seasonal word, as I am referring to the fresh mangoes available only in summer and not the processed or canned mangoes found all through the year.

I think it is a good kigo word because it clearly defines the season which I wish to highlight. Even though “chutney” is an Indian term, and a pickle of Indian origin, it is known to people all over the world by the same name and is consumed in foreign countries as well. Hence, it is easily comprehensible. Along with that, the word “mango chutney” also allows me to bring forward an age old tradition and introduce to the world the culinary culture of India.

Published in cattails Youth September 2016



The Bullseye!

Part 2

In the 60-hour haikai poetry course I conduct for undergraduates at the Symbiosis International University, the second assignment I give my students is that each student has to choose one haiku or senryu and talk about it – substantiating it with the nuances that were taught to them during this course. A very big challenge!

Kudos to Azade Aria for her delineation of this one-line concrete ku.



jampackedelevatoreverybuttonpushed

John Stevenson, USA

Critical Appreciation

*by Azade Aria, (age 18) India
April 2017*

I chose this haiku because it is a strange one; one that is very different from the standard form of a haiku. It has to do with human nature rather than the nature around us and therefore is a senryu rather than a traditional haiku. For obvious reasons it can be seen that this is a one-line ku and therefore doesn't follow a short long short format.

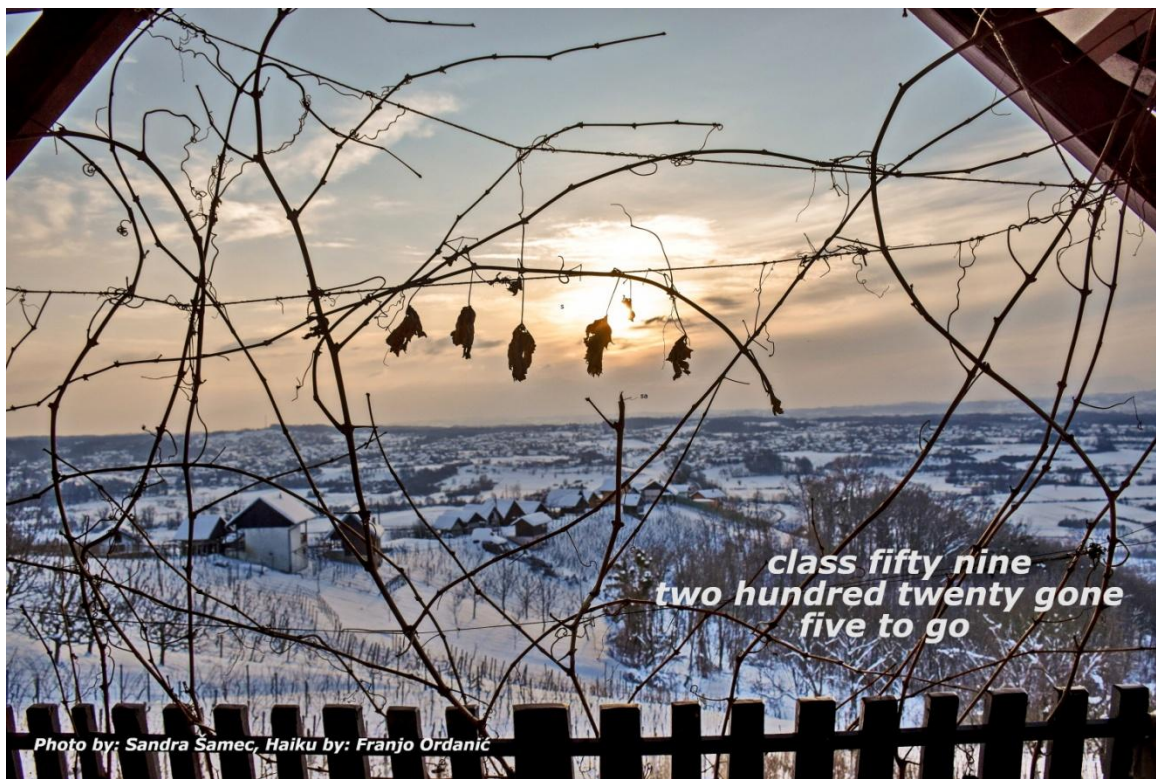
The words have been written without any spaces. This is actually a positive point for this particular ku since it emphasises the meaning behind it. From what can be inferred it shows how full the elevator is that the buttons for the floors are either all pushed

because of the people pressed up against it or because there is at least one person for every floor. So this ku is therefore interpretable in two ways.

Another positive point of this ku is that it is a completely concrete poem. This ku produces a very vivid image that can not only be imagined or pictured but can actually be drawn on paper. This makes the horizontal axis strong. On the other hand the vertical axis has many interpretations. My interpretation is the following; the “jam packed elevator” is not restricted to just an elevator, it can be extended to the world. In my opinion it explains the concept of population explosion; how the population has increased so vastly and so rapidly that the world’s resources are depleting faster and faster. The concept of “every button pushed” refers to the stress of the burden of 7 billion people that the Earth has to withstand. Every resource is being pushed to its limit and one day they will run out and the people on this Earth won’t be able to survive.

The image appeals to me and I feel would appeal to several of the readers because it can be experienced in regular day-to-day life. The way in which the poet has put down the ku has brought out the extraordinary from the ordinary. The poet could have simply stated that he was stuck in an elevator full of people, but the format and the words used bring a smile to my face because I immediately see myself surrounded by people in our college elevator; a whole mix of people from different walks of life.

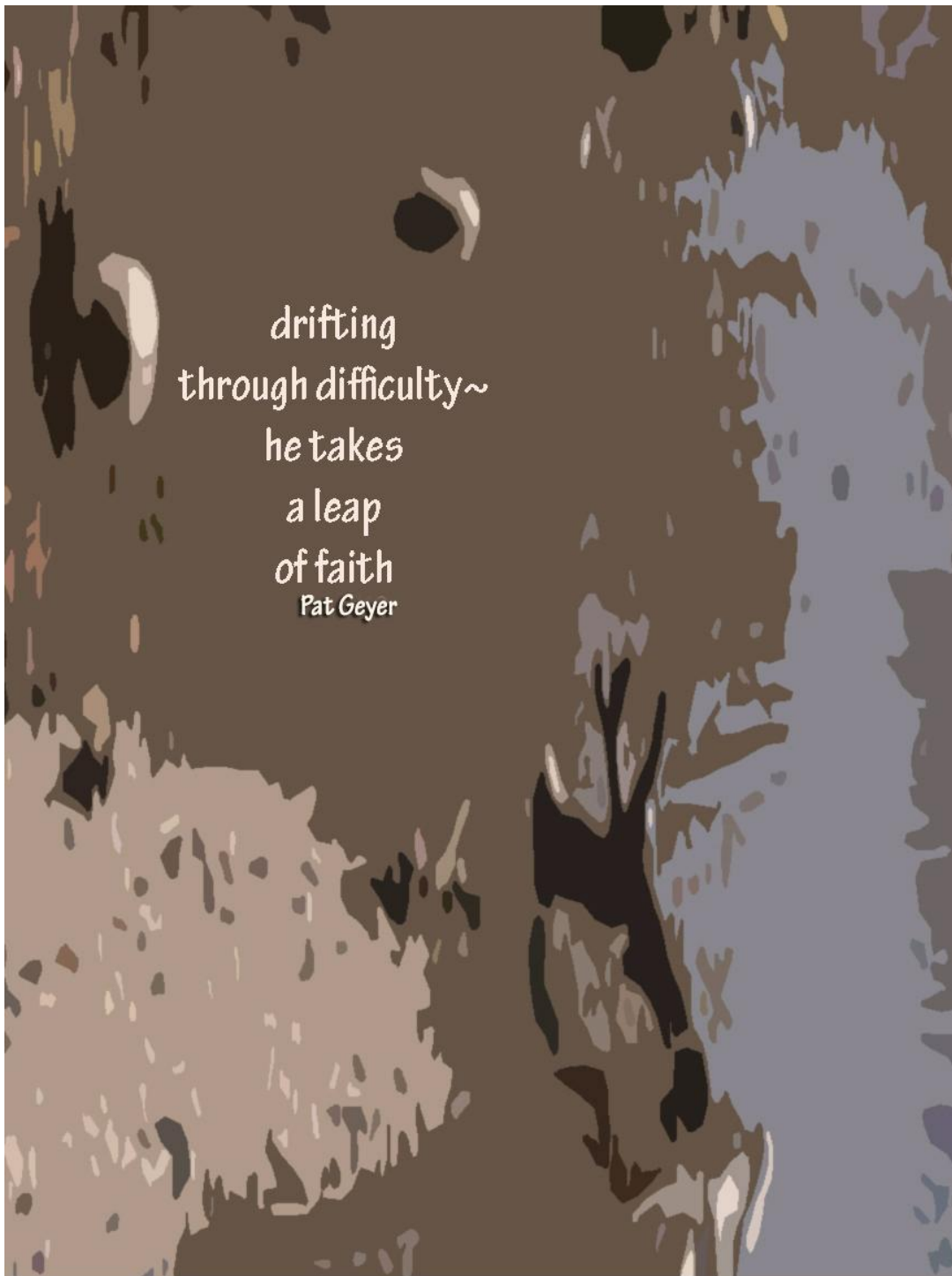
Hence, I like this ku and chose it because of its unique features. While it does not use the regular tools and aesthetics that traditional ku do, it appeals to the modern man and hence is relevant and relatable with the people today.



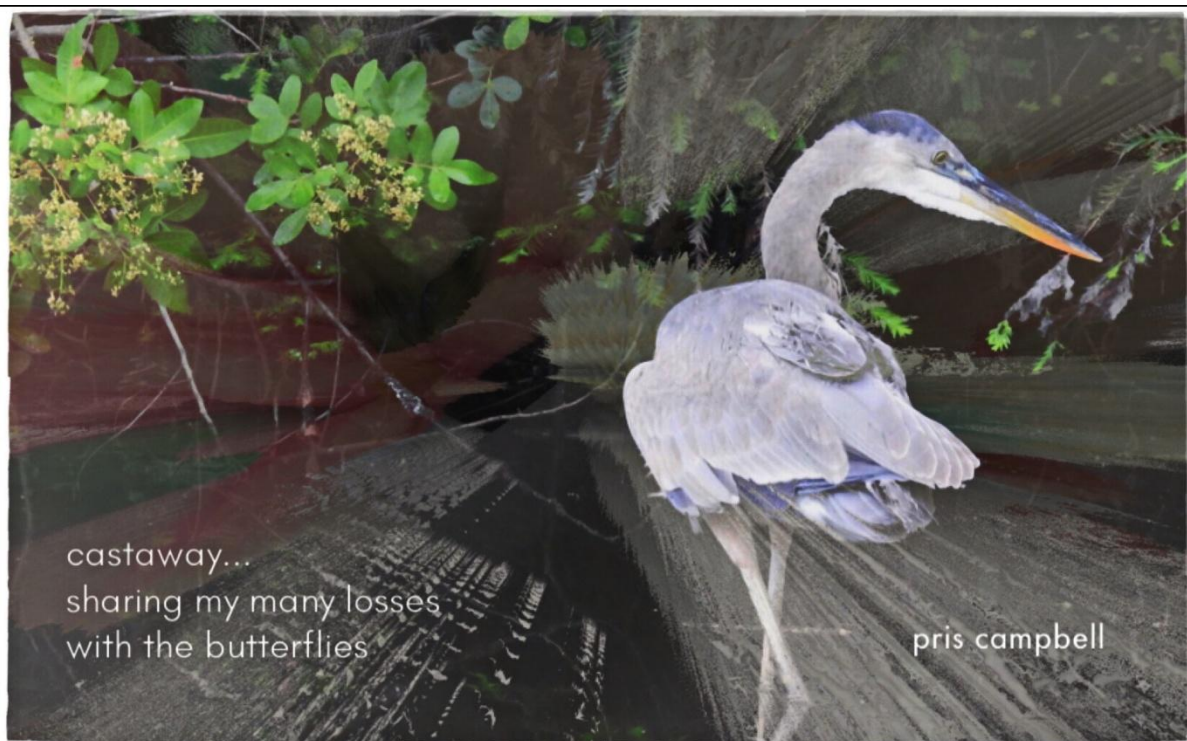
*class fifty nine
two hundred twenty gone
five to go*

Photo by: Sandra Samec, Haiku by: Franjo Ordanić

Photo: Sandra Samec – Haiku: Franjo Ordanić, Croatia



Pat Geyer, USA



castaway...
sharing my many losses
with the butterflies

pris campbell

Pris Campbell, USA

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