

# cattails



April 2019

**cattails: The Official Journal of the United Haiku and Tanka Society**

**April 2019 Issue**

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Cover Photo: Australian Pelicans – Woy Woy, New South Wales

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## Introduction

There's an old Bhutanese saying: "Even a single enemy is one too many and a thousand friends too few." It is inspired by the Buddhist teachings that harmony is a fundamental need in human relations. What better way to forge conciliation and accord than by expressing and sharing our deepest joys, fears and concerns in poetry? Even when faced with the obliteration of his world, Celan offers a similar hope:

"... there are  
still songs to sing beyond  
humankind."

*(Threadsun by Paul Celan, trans. by John Felstiner, 1995)*

Lavana, Kathy, Geethanjali, Gautam and Kala have read and now showcase your poems with acuity and dedication. Behind the scenes Mike has worked with his inimitable patience and eye for artistic excellence. As ever, the UHTS team - Alan, Neal, Iliyana and Marianna have been unfailingly supportive. We have amazing images of Australian birds in this issue and for this our appreciation and thanks to Beverley George, Marietta McGregor, Vanessa Proctor, Michelle Brock and Rose van Son.

We carry a beautiful tribute by Marion Clarke to the prolific and inspiring English poet, Rachel Sutcliffe who contributed to *cattails* right from its inception.

Sonam Chhoki

## In Memory of Rachel Sutcliffe (1977 – 2019)



Former member of the British Haiku Society and the United Haiku and Tanka Society (UHTS), poet and linguist Rachel Marie Sutcliffe was born in Harrogate, North Yorkshire. A lover of languages, Rachel spent time working abroad as an English language assistant in Spain and a technical English lecturer in France. On her return to her native England, she became a lecturer and language tutor in her hometown of Huddersfield.

However, during her early twenties, Rachel was diagnosed with an incurable, immune disorder. Writing, which had once been a pastime, suddenly became a form of therapy. Although widely published in international haiku and senryu journals and on dedicated websites and forums, Rachel was a very private person; many of her writing friends with whom she corresponded on a regular basis were unaware of the extent to which her health affected her daily life.

Contributing to the UHTS's journal *cattails* right from its inception, Rachel's haiku and senryu were informed by her keen observation skills of both nature and people. Her

work resonated with readers from all over the world and the Yorkshire countryside and its changing seasons often featured inspired her poetry:

autumn stroll  
we pick blackberries  
out of the mist

*September 2014*

sunrise  
through my open window  
the sound of Monday

*January 2014*

shorter days  
every road ends  
in fog

*September 2016*

snow-filled nest  
the depth of silence  
before spring

*April 2017*

Despite being faced with many challenges, Rachel's quirky sense of humour was evident in poems such as:

after Christmas  
only the tree  
looking slimmer

*January 2016*

cattails ~ April 2019

dental check up  
the waiting room fish  
Open-mouthed

*October 2018*

... And she was not afraid of writing from a very personal perspective:

make up bag  
the many faces  
of me

*September 2014*

paving stones  
stepping round the cracks  
in our relationship

*May 2015*

another lie  
the crab digs deeper  
into the sand

*September 2016*

bitter lemon  
I swallow  
my words

*April 2018*

Rachel's work was often highly emotive, particularly when describing the pain of losing her beloved grandmother:

hospital ward  
the hum of machines  
she no longer needs

*May 2014*

now taller  
than your headstone  
our rose bush

*April 2018*

And I think her finest work reflected the loss and of the life she'd hoped to have had, before it was overtaken by her condition:

we talk  
about survival rates  
winter sky

*January 2014*

the leaf's descent  
leaving my best years  
behind me

*September 2015*

However, probably the most poignant poem that describes the sadness of losing her former self was the following:



atlas-  
all the life  
I once had

*October 2017*

Rachel's Facebook page featured several favourite quotes and these lines from Maya Angelou are particularly apt for the haiku poet:

*"Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away."*

reflecting Rachel's ability to find joy in small things, even when faced with such an uncertain future.

Finally, followers of Rachel's blog *Project Words* may have been surprised to discover that she had arranged for it to continue posting her work posthumously; the following haiku on St Valentine's Day no doubt raised a few smiles. I'd like to think that somewhere in the universe Rachel was also smiling at the reaction of her readers. She will be deeply missed by many.

speed dating  
my peachy lip gloss  
attracts a wasp

**Tribute prepared by Marion Clarke, Northern Ireland.**

# Haiku



**Rainbow Lorikeet - New South Wales**

power outage . . .  
a magnolia stellata  
undresses the moon

pană de curent . . .  
o magnolie stelata  
dezbrăcând luna

*Steliana Cristina Voicu, Romania*

the shimmer  
in her smile . . .  
full corn moon

*Jessica Latham, USA*

tatting  
by starlight  
an orb spider

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

a night swan  
unfurling to the wingtips  
moon feathers

*Mira Walker, Australia*

breaking drought  
the first drop strikes  
my shadow

*Quendryth Young, Australia*

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night meadow  
under a dome of stars  
feeling immortal

*Carol Raisfeld, USA*

no stone unturned moonbeams

*Matthew Caretti, USA*

the scent  
of wattle in bloom –  
winter moon

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

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

*Martha Magenta, UK*

pale moon  
fading into the silence  
a green heron

*Angela Terry, USA*

dripping  
from oars  
the quiet

*Lori Becherer, USA*

reeling in  
the evening tide  
moonlight's spool

*Joanna Ashwell, UK*

riding the wave  
of an endless moon . . .  
cicadas

*Mark E. Brager, USA*

lightning . . .  
for a moment  
a river in the sky

*Adjei Agyei-Baah, Ghana/New Zealand*

thunder . . .  
she touches my hand  
in her sleep

*Ashish Narain, Philippines*

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October rain  
on a cowbird's neck  
the only rainbow

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

a white blaze  
on the colt's forehead  
forked lightning

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

last drop of rain  
on the echeveria –  
words in tune

sull' echeveria  
l'ultima goccia di pioggia –  
parole d'intesa

*Margherita Petriccione, Italy*

passing storm  
the faith I've placed  
in rainbows

*Gregory Longenecker, USA (EC)*

waterfall near rocks –  
accepting more of itself  
sound of water

*Gillena Cox, Trinidad*

my same walk  
in reverse  
autumn equinox

*Julie Warther, USA*

poplar leaves rustle . . .  
choosing between  
myself and myself

*Nicholas Klacsanzky, Ukraine*

waterfall –  
it was different  
last year

*Michael Galko, USA*

the sky awash  
with apricot and indigo  
Cézanne sunset

*Gregory Piko, Australia*

swirling  
to Stravinsky's Firebird . . .  
autumn colors

*Eric A. Lohman, USA*

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autumn sun—  
the young hawk's  
vivid red shoulders

*Ruth Holzer, USA*

empty nail holes  
on the wall that needs painting  
autumn sunlight

*Craig Kittner, USA*

late autumn  
catching up with  
my breath

*Michael Henry Lee, USA*

autumn colours . . .  
forgetting the fragment  
before I get home

*Raamesh Gowri Raghavan, India*

dusk creeps in—  
the daylily prepares  
its final nod

*Bernard Gieske, USA*



oak woods . . .  
a woodpecker arranges  
the night silence

*Ivan Gaćina, Croatia*

learning  
what melancholy means –  
a curlew's cry

*Hazel Hall, Australia*

moon shaving –  
the carver's last stroke  
before full dark

*Nola Obee, Canada*

moonless night  
a raven alights  
without its shadow

*Simon Hanson, Australia*

wind chime . . .  
a dragonfly's wing  
shorn in the grass

*Cyndi Lloyd, USA*

gusty wind—  
dead leaves head north  
with the birds

*Bob Carlton, USA*

winter sun  
the wind blows shadows  
up the wall

*Nancy Rapp, USA*

empty farmhouse—  
the field's whistles now  
no longer human

*William Keckler, USA*

all day fog  
the white-bellied heron's cry  
almost fierce

*Sonam Chhoki, Bhutan*

opening  
to the black woodpecker  
a dying pine tree

*Ernest Wit, Poland*



**Silvereye - New South Wales**

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first frost  
the grey in her hair  
barely noticeable

*Andy McLellan, UK*

cold front  
in the damp straw  
whisper of starlight

*Goran Gatalica, Croatia*

waiting for  
snow clouds . . .  
slow moonrise

*Guliz Mutlu, Turkey*

impending blizzard . . .  
a combine spits out  
the last of the chaff

*Alan S. Bridges, USA*

growing log by log  
before the snowstorm  
Dad's woodpile

*William Scott Galasso, USA*

first snow . . .  
the silence of the hawk  
among the clouds

la prima neve . . .  
il silenzio del falco  
tra le nuvole

*Stefano d'Andrea, Italy*

cold morning –  
some snow on the beard  
of a schnauzer

студена сутрин  
сняг по брадата  
на шнауцер

*Vessislava Savova, Bulgaria*

cold silence  
a little girl wearing  
snowflakes in hair

hladna tišina  
mala djevojčica nosi  
pahulje u kosi

*Jasna Popović Poje, Croatia*

opening a bag  
of bird seed . . .  
snow flurries

*Edward J. Rielly, USA*

winter light  
shining through his tail feathers –  
collared dove

*Maeve O'Sullivan, Ireland*

goldenrod gall –  
snow covers  
the hemisphere

*Tom Sacramona, USA*

winter sunlight  
mother's smile  
in a yellowed photograph

*Robert Witmer, Japan*

long winter  
a gentle touch  
of her hand

долгая зима  
нежное прикосновение  
её руки

*Nikolay Grankin, Russia*

change of prognosis –  
from the edge of winter clouds  
a beam of sunlight

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*

pillow talk  
coming between us  
a low winter sun

*Susan Mallernee, USA*

a treed lure  
twisting in the breeze  
the dead of winter

*James Chessing, USA*

late winter  
the garden's breath  
shifts once more

*Mary Kendall, USA*

February –  
in an unploughed field  
the hunger of crows

*Adrian Bouter, The Netherlands*

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last exit taken  
the old dog is still looking  
for her

*Pitt Buerken, Germany*

funeral cortège . . .  
the leafless branch  
where the crow should settle

*Eva Limbach, Germany*

burial grounds –  
first into the grave  
our shadows

*Kwaku Feni Adow, Ghana*

country graveyard  
some of the facts  
carved in stone

*Rebecca Drouilhet, USA*

gaping  
at rush-hour rain  
a dead hawk

*Paul Chambers, Wales*



crow at dusk  
crossing from one world  
into another

*Keith Polette, USA*

a star  
fades away into darkness . . .  
plum blossom

*Norie Umeda, Japan*

flights of geese  
the freckled face  
of morning

*David J Kelly, Ireland*

bluebird  
between branches  
a bit of dawn sky

*Nancy Shires, USA*

cherry buds –  
a language yet  
to be spoken

*Stephen Toft, UK*

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the soft sway  
of grandma's wisteria  
spring mourning

*Rachel Sutcliffe, UK (EC)*

digging  
to bury the dead puppy –  
cherry blossoms

*Barnabas I. Adeleke, Nigeria*

rain on the pond  
between ripples  
a shimmer of tadpoles

*John Hawkhead, UK*

car windows down  
despite the chill  
spring peepers

*Kristen Lindquist, USA*

river song –  
beat of footsteps  
on the wooden bridge

*Billy Fenton, Ireland*

dawn chorus  
my daughter unearths  
mum's old records

*John McManus, England*

shallow creek  
all the secrets of  
small pebbles

*ayaz daryl nielsen, USA*

hillside crocus  
the deep reaches of the sun  
on my back

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

warbler song  
the spring vibrato  
of opening buds

*Jay Friedenbergl, USA*

a budding tree  
older than me  
fingerprint whorls

*Agnes Eva Savich, USA*

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spring rain . . .  
the changing pitch  
in an empty bucket

*Indra Neil Mekala, India*

morning stillness  
the tremble of  
tea leaves

*Ben Moeller-Gaa, USA*

thistledown floating  
on a summer breeze –  
azure blue skies

*Anne Louise Curran, New Zealand*

calla lily  
the scent of mother's  
freshly washed hair

*Veronika Zora Novak, Canada*

day moon  
I fold myself into  
a wind song

*Elisa Theriana, Indonesia*

valley railway  
the chuff chuff  
consumed in trees

*David Gale, UK*

glinting salmon  
my world briefly  
then his

*Roger Watson, UK*

foaming surf –  
one bright mussel shell  
cups sunlight

*Amanda Bell, Ireland*

no sky for snow  
a summer song crackles  
on the radio

*LeRoy Gorman, Canada*

wild Africa –  
an elephant carries  
the burning sun

*Justice Joseph Prah, Ghana*

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a bird flies  
between me and the sun  
– all these eclipses

*Richard Kakol, Australia*

late summer  
a coil of snakes  
scatters

*Brad Bennett, USA*

motionless  
on a moving bus  
the buddha

*Shobha Rao, India*

all the light  
in a nutshell –  
end of summer

toată lumina  
într-o coajă de nucă –  
sfârșitul verii

*Carmen Duvalma, Romania*

mangroves . . .  
the unflinching eyes  
of a crocodile

*Cynthia Rowe, Australia*

## Editor's Choice (EC) - Haiku

passing storm  
the faith I've placed  
in rainbows

*Gregory Longenecker, USA*

In this haiku, the poet evokes many emotions and meanings with just a few words. On the surface, the first line brought out (for me) all the rain and fury of a storm but it being qualified as a passing storm, indicated that there might not be too much permanent damage. This image of movement and action leads to the second half of the haiku which is a simple statement – ‘the faith I’ve placed in rainbows’. The second image in my mind was a calm and serene rainbow. But quickly, I realised that it isn’t the rainbow, it is the faith that the poet has placed in the rainbow. The informal tone of the second part (I’ve) drew me into the conversation- an ideal quality in any writing, drawing the reader in. The images evoke so many senses – the sight, the touch, the smell, the sound of rain-storms and then, the beauty of rainbows. Moving on to the deeper level, most of us go on through storms and some of them pass easily. What helps us move on is perhaps, our faith that there will be rainbows after the storm. Sometimes, what keeps us rooted is the belief that we will move on, despite a lack of rainbows. This haiku does not tell you what to feel. Depending on your own philosophy, you can take Gregory Longenecker’s haiku with you through the storms – do you focus on the storm passing, the rainbow or on your own faith and where you place it?

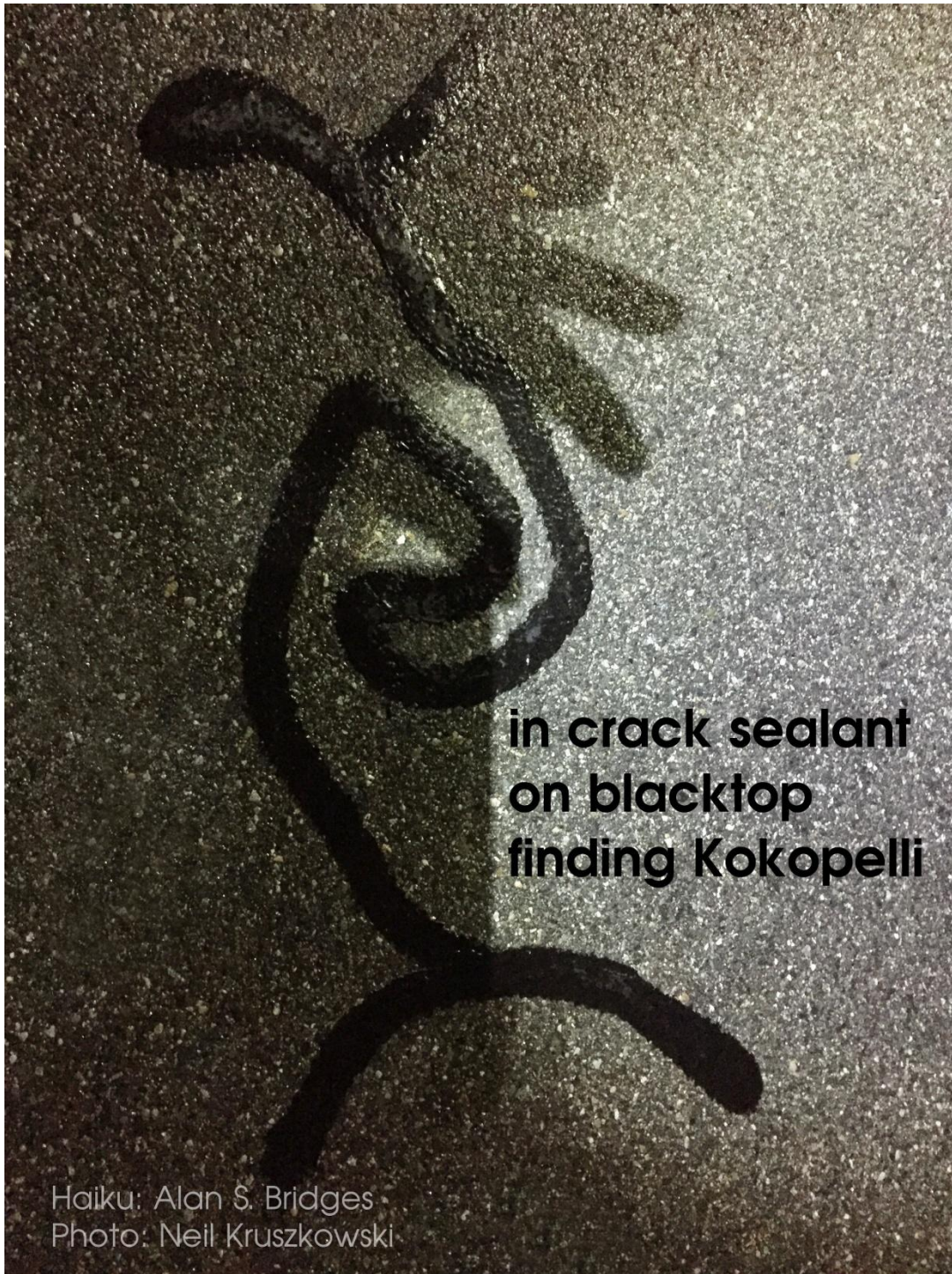
the soft sway  
of grandma's wisteria  
spring mourning

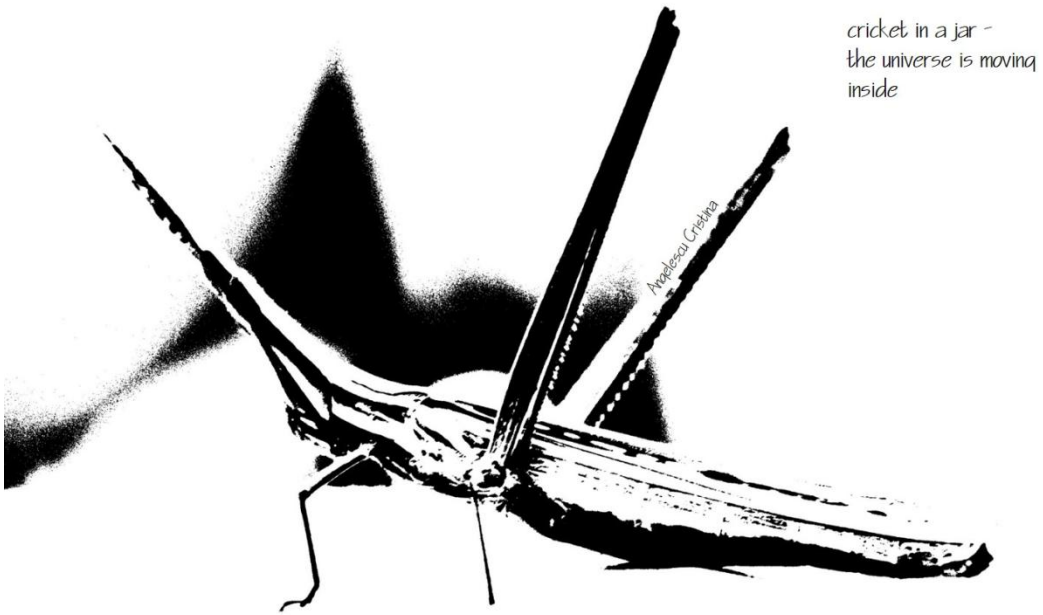
*Rachel Sutcliffe, UK*

Rachel Sutcliffe was a regular contributor of beautiful haiku to many journals. *Cattails* has been fortunate to be a journal that she regularly sent her work to. This time too, we were fortunate to receive some beautiful haiku from her. I present one of them to you. Rachel, we will miss your haiku submissions and your gentle ways.

Geethanjali Rajan

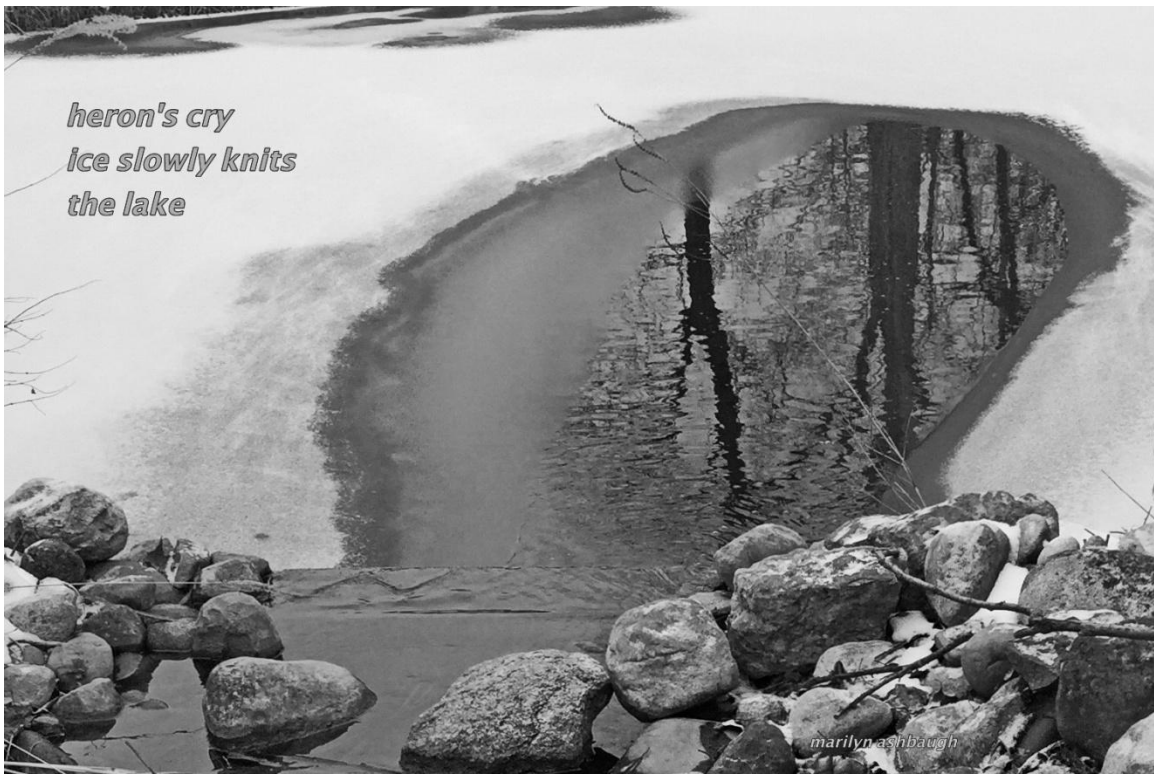






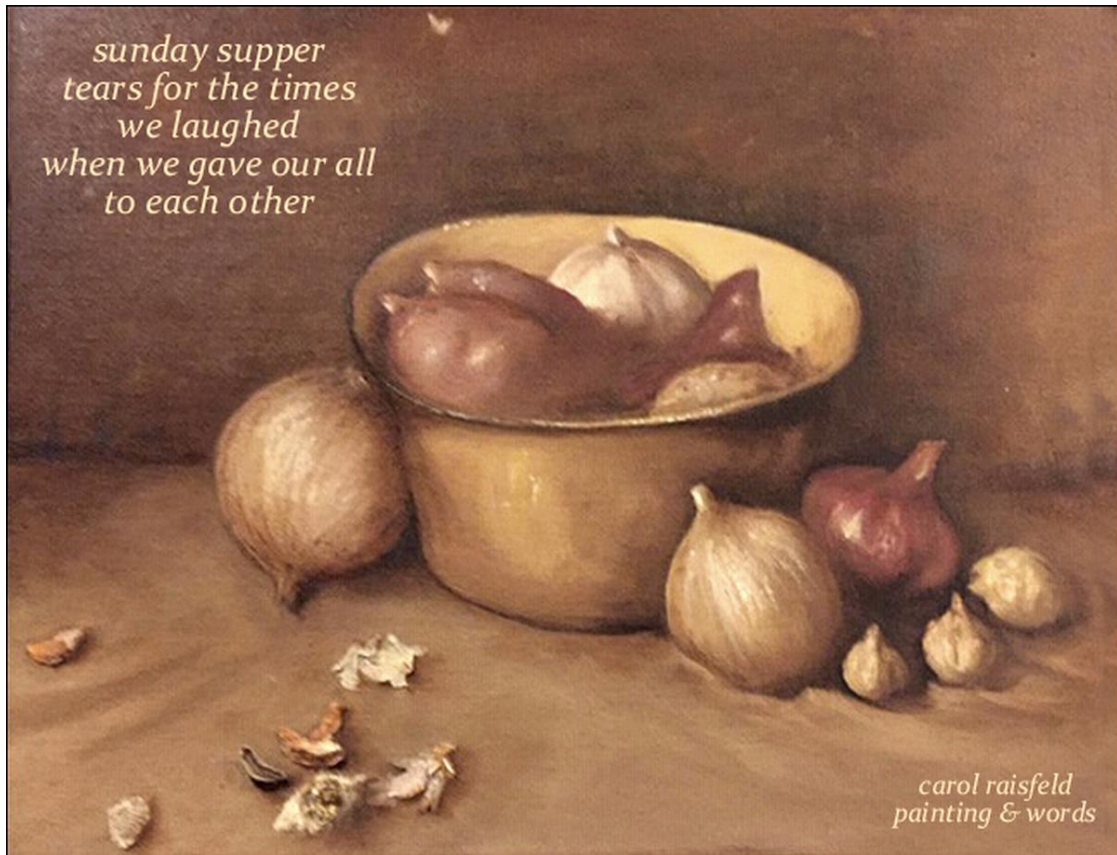
cricket in a jar -  
the universe is moving  
inside

Angelescu Cristina









*sunday supper  
tears for the times  
we laughed  
when we gave our all  
to each other*

*carol raisfeld  
painting & words*

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# Senryu



**Laughing Kookaburra**



the day I don't  
take a coat  
summer rain

*Rachel Sutcliffe, UK*

fork in the trail –  
the decision maker  
in my other jacket

*Angela Terry, USA*

Peter's Pence –  
the village priest arrives  
in a new luxury sedan

*Djurdja Vukelic Rozic, Croatia*

in her sleep  
the smile she keeps  
denying me

*Adjei Agyei-Baah, Ghana/New Zealand*

optician's bill  
unable to read  
the small print

*Roger Watson, UK (EC)*

caterpillar  
in restaurant salad  
almost my protein

*Nancy Shires, USA*

perhaps the last  
sunny day until spring –  
his funeral well attended

*Angela Terry, USA (EC)*

fire spike  
struggling to remember what  
I just recalled

*Michael Henry Lee, USA*

winter stars  
a navigation light  
going somewhere else

*John Hawkhead, UK*

clean table  
the day after  
guests leave

*Michael Galko, USA*



spring thaw  
the neighbor's long beard  
emerges

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

widow's garden  
the old shed held together  
by ivy

*Lucy Whitehead, UK*

cosmetic surgery –  
my selfie's wrinkles  
missing

*Hazel Hall, Australia*

my finger  
bruised  
by the friendship ring

*Ruth Holzer, USA*

our guests gone  
the misshapen soap  
back in its place

*Steve Dolphy, UK*

dictionary of epithets  
getting ready  
for mother-in-law's cake

*Irina Guliaeva, Russia*

move day  
untangling cords  
I no longer know

*Bill Cooper, USA*

factory  
not noticing the sound  
till it stops

*Quendryth Young, Australia*

Great Wall of China  
tourists dodging tourists  
at every turn

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*

sore thumb  
I find the way  
to get noticed

*Elisa Theriana, Indonesisa*

in the margin  
of a crossword  
a senryu

*Brad Bennett, USA*

grandma  
trying to text  
on her landline

*Carol Raisfeld, USA*

new expectant grandma  
she puts the sonogram  
on facebook

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

burst pipes  
I've always wanted  
an indoor pool

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

last day of summer  
Mother slips a pickle jar  
into my suitcase

*Indra Neil Mekala, India*

perplexing  
the inaccuracy of every  
bathroom scale

*Carol Raisfeld, USA*

summer auction  
the heat rises  
with each bid

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

slaying a dragon  
a child struggles  
with a piece of cake

*Ernest Wit, Poland*

*love me tender*  
what's a few scratches  
on old vinyl

*Simon Hanson, Australia*

male nurse---  
it's grandma's turn  
to wink

*Raamesh Gowri Raghavan, India*

bachelor party . . .  
after the fifth glass of brandy  
I speak Chinese

*Ivan Gaćina, Croatia*

next door's yard  
a peeing cherub  
tops up the pond

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

psychology teacher screaming in red ink

*Martha Magenta, UK*

Black Friday –  
every single mannequin  
without clothes

*Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan*

Earth Summit –  
everyone tweeting  
but the birds

*Ashish Narain, Philippines*

salary day  
the pockets stuffed  
with moonshine

*Barun Saha, India*

high spirits  
in the sanatorium  
infectious laughter

*Roger Watson, UK*

Earth Day  
recycling last year's  
poster

*Michael Henry Lee, USA*

chain smoker  
extinguishing another  
ember of hope

*David J Kelly, Ireland*

office party –  
the half-smiles of people  
I half know

*Ashish Narain, Philippines (EC)*



**Butcherbird**

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happy hours  
I order another glass  
of maudlin

*Barun Saha, India*

track meet    my runny nose

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

smoke  
from my neighbor's BBQ  
uninvited

*Bernard Gieske, USA*

old typewriter –  
the creaks as her fingers  
press the keys

*Hazel Hall, Australia*

cooking channel  
the chef  
with salt-and-pepper hair

*Olivier Schopfer, Switzerland*



morning exercise  
I get a cramp  
In my double chin

*Terrie Jacks, USA*

incognito  
the comfort of unloading  
to a stranger

*Quendryth Young, Australia*

intimately mingled  
his books  
and mine

*Julie Warther, USA*

office party  
my female boss's coat  
on top of mine

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*

roadblock  
we steer away from  
the big issues

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

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before shop opens  
the shop owner dresses  
a mannequin

*Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, India*

the kettle's whistle  
turning Monday  
into a Monday

*Indra Neil Mekala, India*

World Peace . . .  
the spiritual leader argues  
with the cabbie

*Praniti, India*

silent night –  
wondering what the child  
is up to

*Raamesh Gowri Raghavan, India*

trespassing  
through the picket fence  
her neighbour's voice

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

fuel price protest  
we burn our placards  
for warmth

*Martha Magenta, UK*

identity crisis –  
she writes her name  
in abbreviation

*Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan*

debate club  
we take turns  
to disagree

*Debbi Antebi, UK*

morning coffee  
making sense  
of it all

*Rachel Sutcliffe, UK*

baby giraffe on TV  
thinking of  
my uncle Frank

*Djurdja Vukelic Rozic, Croatia*

where the two streams meet  
the color  
of my morning coffee

*Adjei Agyei-Baah, Ghana/New Zealand*

morning stroll –  
the town bore standing  
on the corner

*Ruth Holzer, USA*

watching  
the neighbors having fun  
New Year's Eve

*Olivier Schopfer, Switzerland*

missed call  
the rush  
to not answer

*Terrie Jacks, USA*

two weeks into school  
my little cousin picks up  
the f-word

*Barnabas I Adeleke, Nigeria*

bronze monument  
the snow-capped head  
of a revolutionist

*Nikolay Grankin, Russia*

acquired taste  
since when did I start liking  
the space between us

*Vandana Parashar, India*

lower back pain  
I shovel on  
ointment

*Tom Sacramona, USA*

vegan entree  
the sprig of parsley  
is overkill

*Brad Bennett, USA*

family meeting –  
I pilfer some ketchup  
from the kid's table

*Eva Limbach, Germany*

## Editor's Choice (EC) - Senryu

perhaps the last  
sunny day until spring –  
his funeral well attended

*Angela Terry, USA*

The importance of juxtaposition in senryu cannot be overstressed. Just as in haiku, in senryu too, juxtaposing two parts of a poem, which by themselves may seem unrelated, can result in a combination which is not only hilarious but so true, so true...

The first two lines of Angela Terry's poem and the last have little in common if viewed independently of each other. But when read together the reader's mind takes a quantum leap to a conclusion which is not of the writer's creation but the reader's own. The hilarious conclusion is only suggested subtly and not stated. This requires mastery over the idiom.



office party –  
the half smiles of people  
I half know

*Ashish Narain, India*

This senryu comes across as a universal truth. The smile which comes to your lips on reading it acknowledges it as such. How well we know the half smiles of those of our colleagues we barely recognize but feel obliged to reciprocate to with our own half smiles. A slice of urban life that is so familiar to most of us.



optician's bill  
unable to read  
the small print

*Roger Watson, UK*

What if the first line had been: grocer's bill? The result would have been a very mundane poem not worth committing to memory. But put 'optician's bill' instead and the irony hits you in the eye. Yet another senryu where juxtaposing two apparently unrelated images results in a whole which is funnier than the sum total of the parts.

Gautam Nadkarni





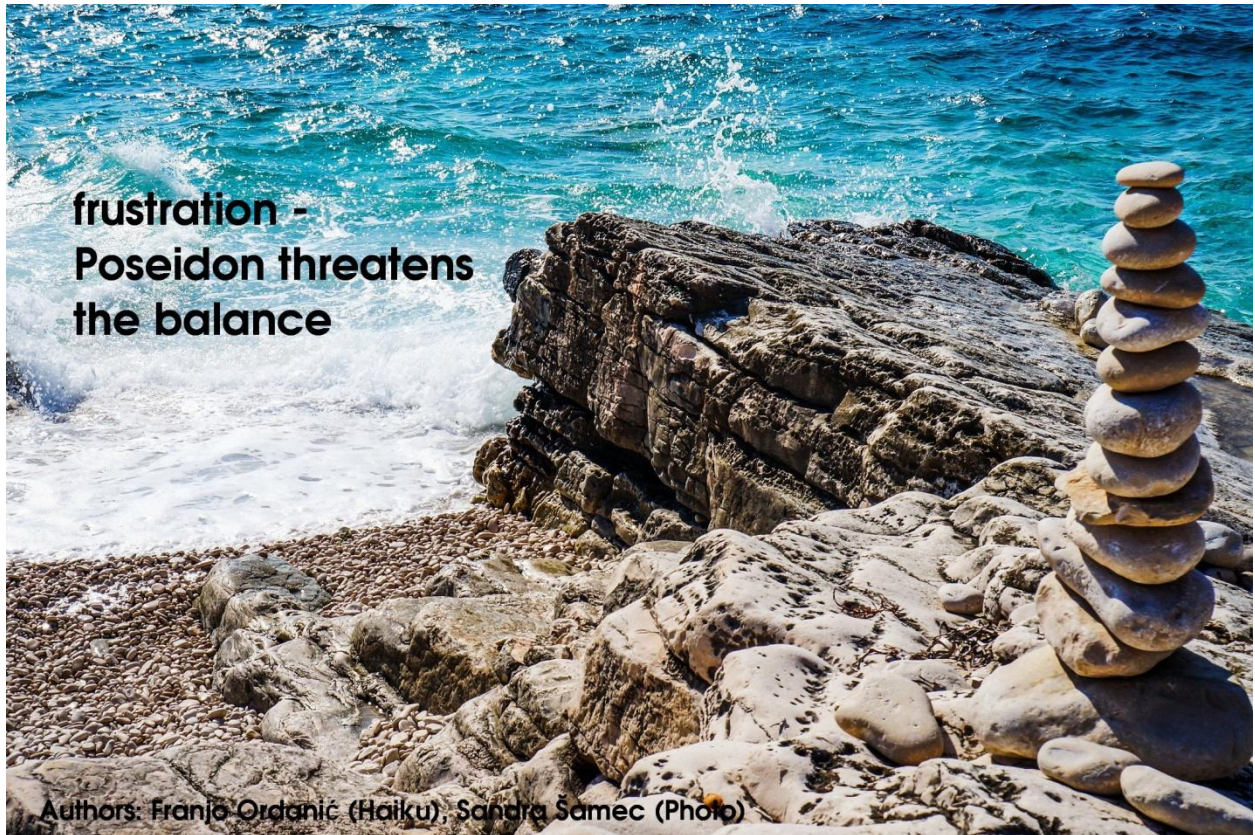


no  
greeting card --  
Valentine's day

Daniela Lăcrămioara Capotă

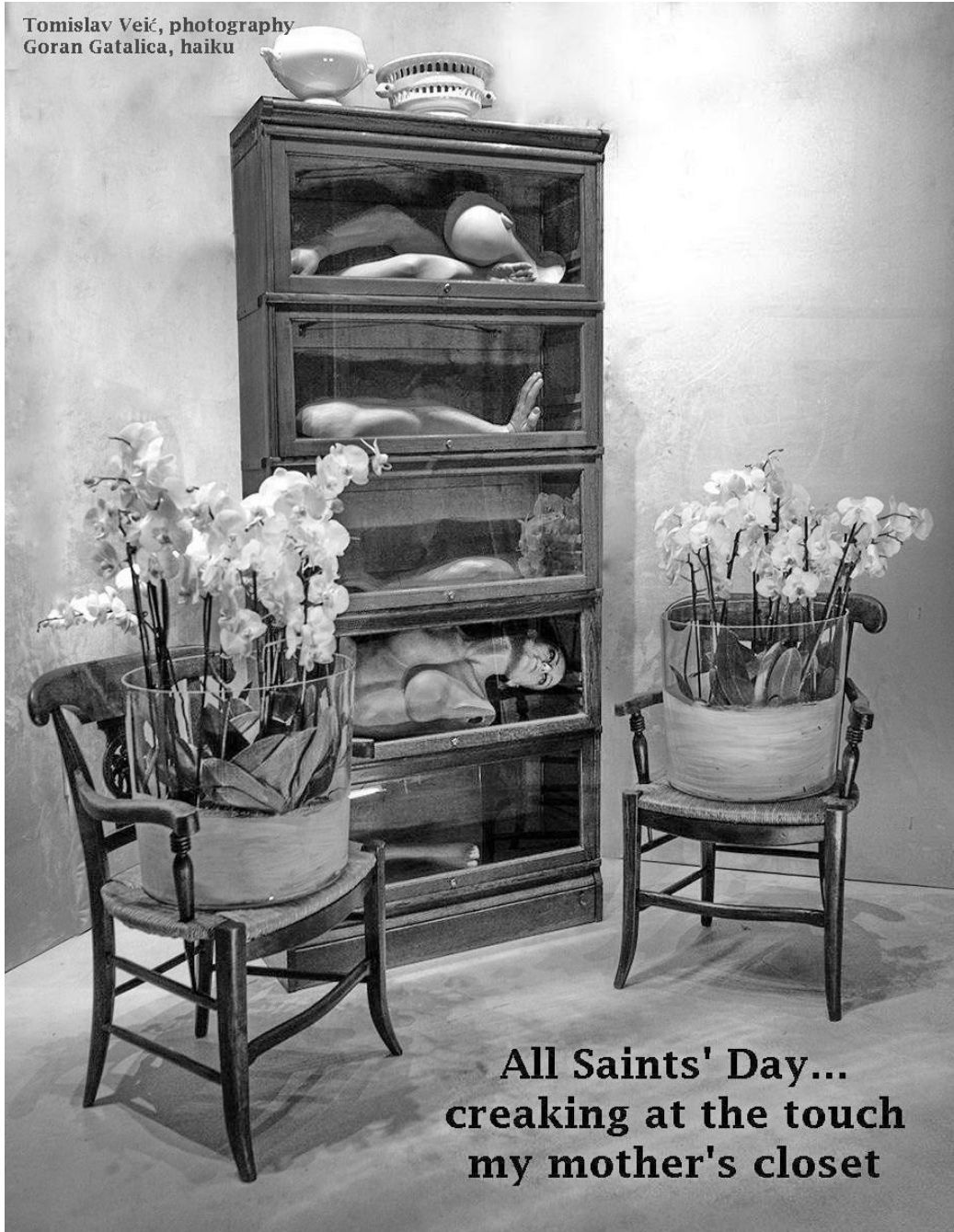






Authors: Franjo Orđanić (Haiku), Sandra Šamec (Photo)

Tomislav Veić, photography  
Goran Gatalica, haiku



**All Saints' Day...  
creaking at the touch  
my mother's closet**

cattails – April 2019

# Tanka



**Sulfer-crested Cockatoo**

blackening sky  
a storm is coming . . .  
this time  
she battens the hatches  
doesn't let him in

*Barbara Curnow, Australia*

the alpha breath  
of a far-north winter  
slamming doors  
this sting on my cheek, words  
thrown back in my face

*David Terelinck, Australia*

a door stands  
at the edge of a dream  
will it open  
to the fabric of my past  
or the threads of my future

*Susan Constable, Canada*

under the eaves  
an empty spider web  
she still clings  
to the skeleton  
of a perfect dream

*Michelle Brock, Australia*

I watch  
the balloon rising up into  
the blue sky  
another night and the same dream  
and not knowing when it will end

*Bernard Geiske, USA*

in a blink  
of an eye you've gone  
chasing dreams . . .  
a kite drifting  
on outback thermals

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

glaring at  
the evening clouds  
a refugee child  
who lost his way  
in search of Orion

*Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan*

on the border wall  
children lobbed by tear gas  
far from home  
a Kiskadee swoops over  
catches a fly in mid-air

*Linda Jeannette Ward, USA*



a startlement  
of waterfowl rises  
from the marsh . . .  
we gather cattail fluff  
as tinder for our fire

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

new arrivals  
in the thrift shop window  
her favourite hand-knits –  
another eulogy delivered  
in the tiny country church

*Michelle Brock, Australia*

surrounded  
by a jumble of shoes  
an old cobbler  
taps away content  
in his low tech world

*Keitha Keyes, Australia*

for a second  
the metal roof galumphs  
with possum feet  
alone once more with silence  
and the emptiness of night

*Jan Dobb, Australia*

my time alone  
on the porch with the peace  
of a country road  
    a bumblebee and I  
    keeping to ourselves

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

stretching  
from apartments to slums  
a rainbow –  
one end, a pot of gold  
the other, just the view

*Hazel Hall, Australia*

balcony view  
tempered by the impulse  
to throw myself off  
that I don't want  
to mention

*Owen Bullock, Australia*

sleepless –  
the things we aren't telling  
each other  
screaming all night  
in my head

*Ruth Holzer, USA*

I feel the truth  
and fiction in you  
never committing  
when a half-moon lights the sky  
is it waxing or waning?

*Tony Williams, Australia*

contemplating  
near the border  
a constellation  
that connects the stars  
at both sides

*Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan*

keeping vigil  
she wears a hijab  
I hold a rosary  
our tears come  
carrying the same sting

*Patricia Pella, USA*

reunion –  
this night-blooming  
waterlily  
by the same lake  
on our very first date

*Cynthia Rowe, Australia*

you woke me  
this morning with a kiss  
a habit  
I've sadly missed  
since your death

*Jan Foster, Australia*

security  
less certain late in life –  
enough that he asked  
on bended knee  
then stood up again

*Hazel Hall, Australia*

he bakes  
metaphors for love  
as I sleep  
this man of few words  
perfumes the dawn with cinnamon

*Barbara Curnow, Australia (EC)*

a love song  
from the mariachi band  
at our table  
chili peppers  
heat our lips

*Cyndi Lloyd, USA*

a cascade  
of silver spills down  
the mountain . . .  
your fingers tremble  
as you unpin my hair

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

memories boxed  
and love letters bound . . .  
she smiles  
with wonder at a second  
blooming of the rose bush

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

the way a woman  
can send out her man  
on a bicycle  
on Christmas Eve  
to get cream

*Owen Bullock, Australia*

by 8:15  
the new parking lot  
is full  
not a car or sapling  
out of line

*James Chessing, USA*

in the graveyard  
the roar of a leaf blower  
sweeping the stones—  
who can hear the wind  
singing through the hazel

*Jenny Ward Angyal, USA*

sun-drenched  
mornings bring the rush  
of birdsong  
dogs pull heavy-eyed owners  
on the street to the park

*Carol Raisfeld, USA*

I pack ten years  
of my immigrant life  
into fifteen boxes . . .  
my old dog follows me  
from room to room

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*

small grey moths  
flutter from rose to rose  
restless  
for adventure  
she backpacks town to town

*Kate King, Australia*



**Bush stone-curlew - Cairns, Queensland**

wind chimes  
belling autumn freshness  
over the porch –  
too soon to travel  
to cherry trees in bloom

*Amelia Fielden, Australia*

the sign read:  
watch where you step  
in the garden  
then I noticed as I took a step  
those snapdragons close by

*Bernard Gieske, USA (EC)*

my walking group  
now in their senior years  
today's topic  
the falling leaves and how long  
they can still keep their colours

*Thelma Mariano, Canada (EC)*

from black and white  
our family photo album  
turns to colour –  
we never caught those moments  
when life was not so rosy

*Carmel Summers, Australia*



the photograph  
on your funeral card . . .  
who you were  
before I knew  
who you were

*Kathryn J. Stevens, USA*

posting photos  
titled: 'Dad and me'  
on Father's day  
. . . before I get back  
to my screaming son

*Raamesh Gowri Raghavan, India (EC)*

old enough  
to be called grandma  
and still learning  
what it means  
to be a mum

*Anne Benjamin, Australia*

my grandson  
climbs the weeping cherry  
pretending  
its fingery limbs are his own –  
may he always remember they are

*Jenny Ward Angyal, USA*

my grandchild's tiny hand  
tucks into mine  
will there come a season  
when I need  
to lean on his arm

*Patricia Pella, USA*

with care he prunes  
the old bonsai  
she nurses back to health  
the spring  
in his footsteps

*Shobha Rao, India*

a narrow pass  
through the mountains  
five spires  
point to the sky  
each to a different god

*Alan S. Bridges, USA*

contained  
inside the puzzle  
of the water sculpture  
the eternal question  
of sky

*Terry Ann Carter, Canada*

a fisherman  
counts the stars  
by the lake  
a wind sighs  
through tall grass

*David He, China*

river pirates  
in suits & senate seats  
what lies  
beyond the curve  
of the Murrumbidgee . . .

*David Terelinck, Australia*

leaving behind  
this tangle of anger  
I follow  
a river of stars  
rowing my own boat

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

almost an hour  
to do a crossword  
yet only  
a second to say one  
six across: REGRET

*Susan Constable, Canada*

struggling  
to keep my balance  
with river songs  
I find currents  
I shouldn't step into

*Raamesh Gowri Raghavan, India*

picked over  
chicken bones  
from Sunday lunch . . .  
so much untouched  
and left unsaid

*Gavin Austin, Australia*

October frost  
a blackbird loiters  
on the asphalt . . .  
how we strut with pride  
pecking at crumbs

*Anna Cates, USA*

on this wooded ridge  
eucalyptus saligna  
stands so proud  
yet in midday sun  
it casts its shortest shadow

*Carmel Summers, Australia*

how difficult  
to be anonymous . . .  
even as  
the butterfly flies  
the golden dust disappears

*Diana Teneva, Bulgaria*

one crow  
and a clutch of chickadees  
at the birdfeeder –  
that simple need  
to fit in someplace

*Mary Kendall, USA*

red fox  
slinks through long grass  
an outsider  
in this digital world  
I press ink to paper

*Kate King, Australia*

pen poised  
to write another poem  
for you . . .  
instead I watch a raindrop  
squiggle down the pane

*Jan Dobb, Australia*

from the sale  
of my books  
I buy a sweater  
my words  
keeping me warm

*Terry Ann Carter, Canada*

that feeling  
when we walk into our house  
after a long vacation  
dust motes dancing  
in a stream of sunlight

*Mary Davila, USA*

## Editor's Choices (EC) - tanka

A sweltering summer, the hottest on record 'down under', and a colder one north of the equator; thank you poets who have submitted tanka regardless of the weather.

I'm not writing as many tanka as I have over the years since 2005 when I began. Are you? And if so, do you feel that there's only so many times one can write about love, loss and longing? I'm not suggesting that we don't write about such things. Tanka is the perfect form to express grief, sorrow and ecstasy. The trick is to catch oneself in the act of expressing something too similar to tanka already published. Not always easy. Pain can linger longer than we expect. Writing them out of our system important. Why not explore different angles or techniques?

There are touching and amusing moments on love in this issue, in particular Debbie Strange, Hazel Hall, Owen Bullock's tanka for example. What takes the eye is the uniqueness and humour with which they are written. It's with this thought in mind that I've picked tanka for the Editor's Choice.



the sign read  
watch where your step  
in the garden  
then I noticed as I took a step  
those snapdragons close by

*Bernard Gieske, USA*

What is it that sets this one apart? It's the *way* it is said. In other words the *voice*, which in this case is deceptively simple, but assured along with language that leads us into the mood and scene the poet is experiencing (did you for a split-second glance down at your feet -- your mind bringing an image of a step in view? Mine did). Strangely enough this is written in past tense. Present tense, as we know, usually brings us into

the present moment. It's almost as if the poet is still standing beside the snapdragons marveling at the event that took him there. And what a surprise the last line is. We literally stumble, not physically, but mindfully into a moment of awareness.



he bakes  
metaphors for love  
as I sleep  
this man of few words  
perfumes the dawn with cinnamon

*Barbara Curnow, Australia*

This is a most unusual tanka. Instead of naming what is baked, the poet states they are metaphors for something else. We are not only left to dream our way into what's cooking in the kitchen, but also what's occurring between the chef and the poet. The use of smell aids us all the way. I found myself breathing in as I read this, almost expecting to smell cinnamon in the air as I inhaled. The language is not only beautiful, it's so in keeping with the spirit of tanka we all endeavor to express -- the unsaid -- for isn't love, real love, often shown not so much in words but action? It must be said also that 'as I sleep' is a brilliant pivot line. How evocative this is of a Sunday-sleep-in, memories ticking over of the night before.



my walking group  
now in their senior years  
today's topic  
the falling leaves and how long  
they can still keep their colours

*Thelma Mariano, Canada*



Could it be that I like this one because I could slip into this walking group with ease and not stand out? While facilitating *Read Around Canberra* workshops in four ACT libraries years ago, I noticed that where participants became emotionally involved in what they are reading is the point where it touches or echoes our own life experiences. It becomes clear as I age, how important it is to keep active. And although the poet has not used those exact words, it is inferred in the last line. This is today's topic, and likely to be tomorrow's as well. Science is concentrating on this.

However there's more than one thought to dream into the last two lines. Such sorrow as our loved ones close down, lose vitality along with many shades that make them who they are. The sensitivity in what is not expressed outright attracts and satisfies most of all in this tanka. Even the pace of the poem is slowed to a walking speed.

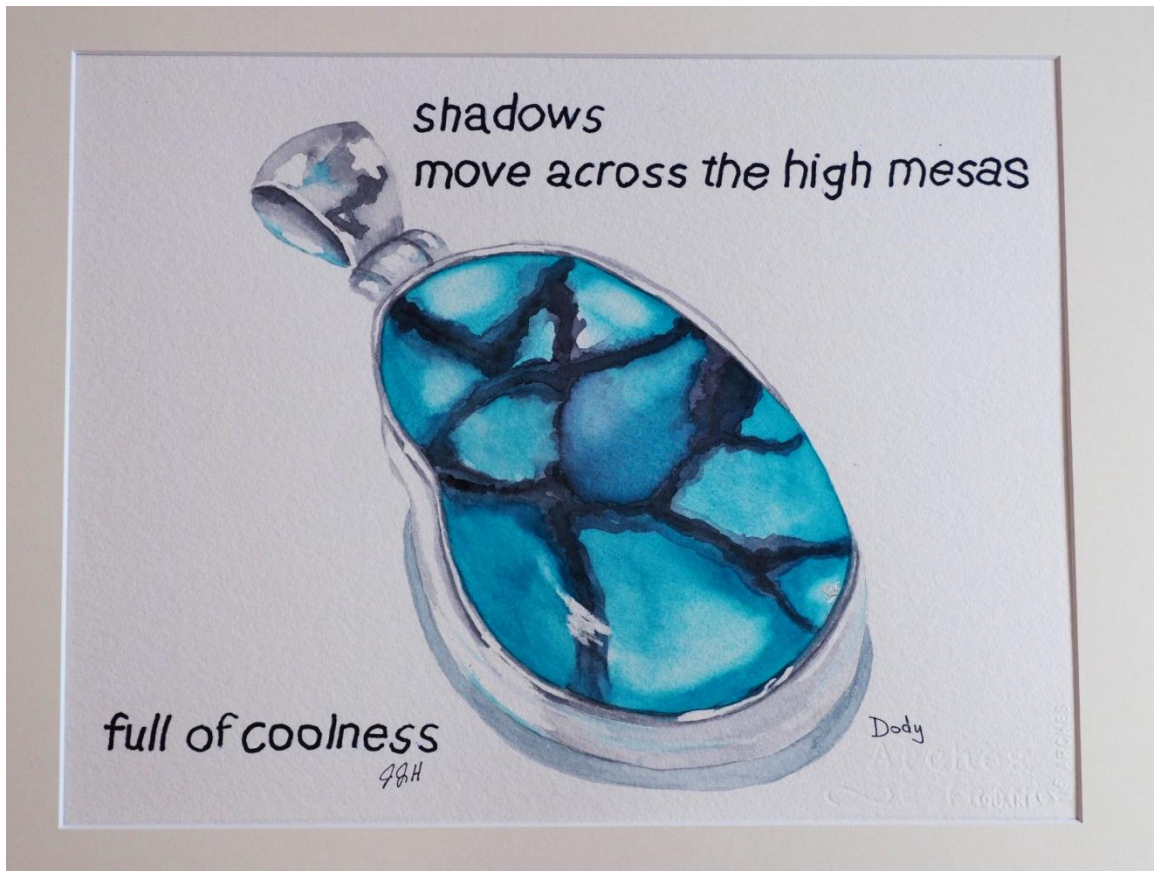


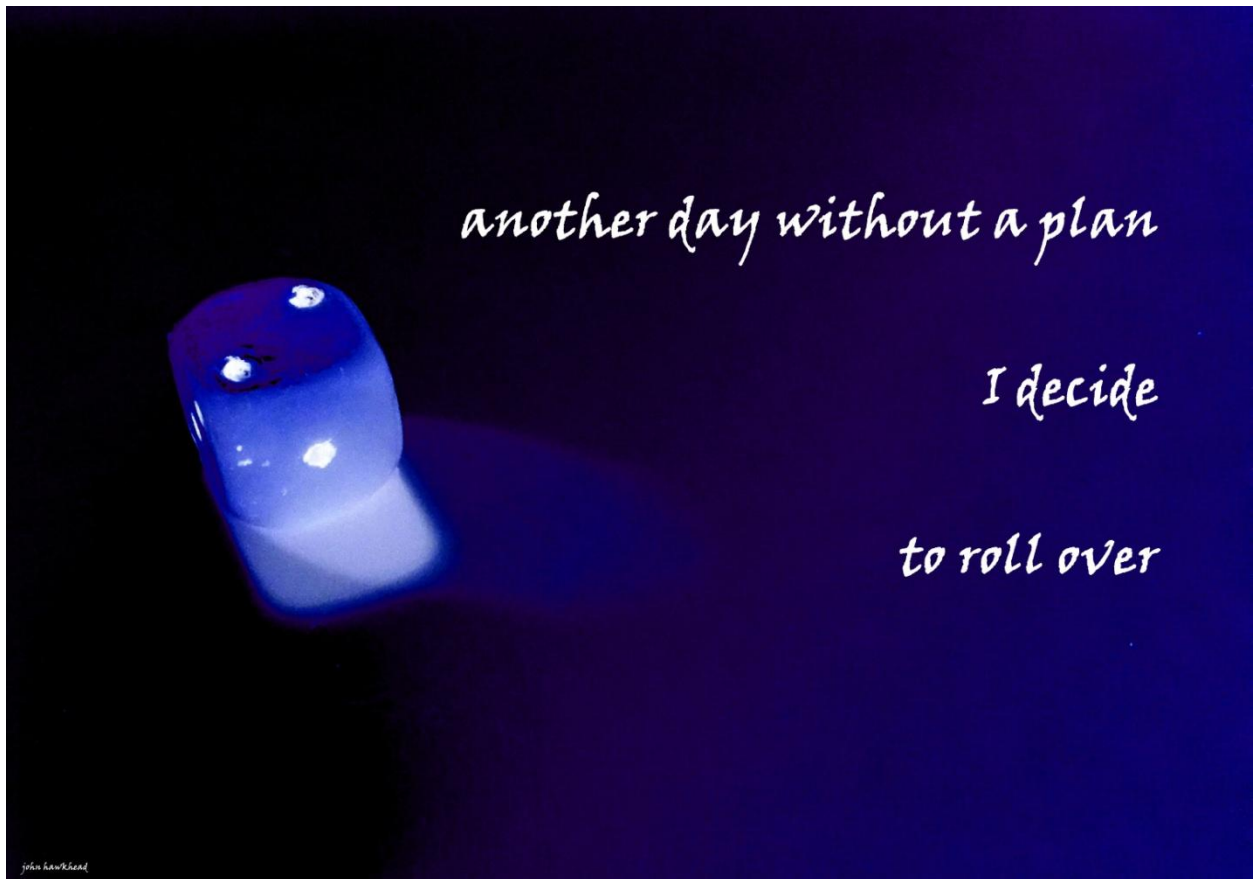
posting photos  
titled 'Dad and me'  
on Father's day  
. . . before I get back  
to my screaming son

*Raamesh Gown Raghavan, India*

Oh the reality of being a parent. Not to mention the irony in the poet's words. Kyoka (tongue-in-cheek tanka) is a pleasurable and what a reflection this one is on the foibles of human nature. Did you recognize yourself in what is written? Were you able to laugh? Did you cringe --- hopefully only for a moment? We all have moments when our actions are not as faultless as we might like them to be. What could be a better way to finish than with the celebration of imperfection in a tanka that sends up the way we can get carried away with the romance of idealism.

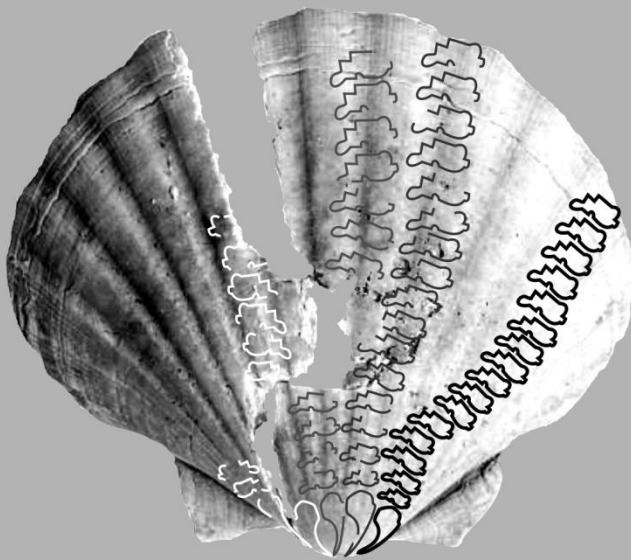
Kathy Kituai





John Hawkhead

osteoporosis –  
I'm dusting more carefully  
the chipped shell



Haiku: Ioana Dinescu  
Artwork: Constanța Erca





storm wind . . .  
rose petals  
suddenly homeless  
— Keith Polette



cattails - April 2019

# Haibun



Noisy Miners - Sydney

## **How High**

*Diana Webb, UK*

A snatch of music just a few bars long. First taste of Mozart many moons before I knew his name. An accompaniment to a sequence of steps in my childhood ballet class.

As I hear it now I see the barre I see the mirror.

glissade jete pas de chat pas de chat the milky way



## **The Butterflies**

*Slobodan Pupovac, Croatia*

In the break of day my friends and I used to run out into the yard to hunt butterflies. We would pick huge leaves and put them on butterflies that flew down on flowers. We collected them in cardboard boxes and prided ourselves with our catch.

Today I wonder where did such cruelty come from? How to redeem myself, what worth is my repentance, how to explain my behaviour towards the ancestors of those life-rejoicing creatures? I wish it had never happened.

a butterfly flees  
the shadow  
of a grasping boy

## Playmate (EC)

*Barnabas I. Adeleke, Nigeria*

The first thing we do when we return from school is race to where Aunty Aisha is lying on a mat, propped up against a wall. She picks up our voices as soon as we step into the gate of the big compound. She jerks her head up and her eyes light up. We gather around her as she struggles to salute us: "Tò-ó-pé . . . Ní-í-kè-é . . ." We cut her short as we stuff her mouth with bọ̀lì and roasted groundnut bought on our way home. Then we run into the arms of our waiting mothers, eat lunch and soon return one by one to sit by her to play and do our assignments. Apart from Alhaja who comes to sit on the mat with her often, we are the only friends she's got. We regard her as our big friend as well as a bona-fide member of our little group. She even struggles from time to time to recite with us the rhymes we have learnt at school.

Aunty Aisha is the daughter of Alhaji, our landlord who is also a local politician. Alhaja, his first wife, has had the misfortune of having only one surviving child. All five she gave birth to died leaving only Aunty Aisha – a quadriplegic since childhood. Alhaji married three other wives, as he wanted a large household.

A month ago, Alhaja died. Today, the Alhaji's men are burying Aunty Aisha. They say she had a high fever overnight and passed away before daybreak.

spring-cleaning . . .  
a hand-me-down  
set alight

## **Battle Lines**

*Jan Foster, Australia*

My first teaching post is to an inner city boys' High School. My subjects are French, English, and history. I am 19 years old. It is a rough area; many of the students have English only as a second language.

icy winds  
rattle the windows  
. . . inner chill

The school is housed in an old church building, which has been decommissioned. My classroom entrance on the first day is greeted by a startled silence, followed by a slow clap from the boys.

no sanctuary  
– faltering steps  
to the stake

This senior class become my champions in the challenges of life at an all-male school. Only two years my junior, they take proprietary interest in my wellbeing.

solitary rose bush  
. . . companion plants  
of garlic and chives

## Tipplers (EC)

*Glenn G. Coats, USA*

Our backyard is small, fenced so the dog and my little sister can't slip away. There is a swing set, brick fireplace, three dwarf fruit trees, and my mother's garden.

George is one of our neighbors, retired now, spends most days tinkering in his garage. He sharpens mower blades and scissors, changes points and plugs on his car. A quiet man except when Sam is over. They are like fire and gasoline – not a good combination.

My mother wears a halter top and cut-off shorts when she works. Her hair tumbles from her shoulders as she crouches to weed between rows or stoops to pick tomatoes.

George and Sam open the backdoor to the garage in order to see my mom. They giggle and laugh like children, hide in the shadows. Mom ignores them when they whistle like wolves as she carries her basket to the gate.

My mother turns and stares at the two men in the doorway. That alone is enough to silence them as they hide like insects in the dark. "They can't help themselves," she will say as the latch closes behind her.

hum of crickets  
laughter pours  
from an open bottle

## **To The Mat**

*Bryan Rickert USA*

When I was a little boy I would get beat up every Saturday by a girl. She was cute, brunette, with a sweet little smile and we were about the same age. My parents thought it would benefit me to take judo lessons so that one day people might stop picking on me. Every week this little girl would toss me around like a rag doll and grind me into the mat. We were the only students our age at the dojo. After class one day my father took me aside and explained that I need to start trying harder. "We are paying for this, after all." Without missing a beat I said, "But dad, you always told me never to put my hands on a girl."

Women's lib  
I hold the door open  
for the wind

## Untitled

*Antonio Mangiameli, Italy*

When I was a child an old man who always coughed lived in the yard in front of mine. He spent his days sitting on the balcony of his house. During the day he wove baskets out of reeds, in the evening, by candlelight, he cut tobacco that he never smoked. These memories come back me now because for many days I have a persistent cough and I never smoked, just like that good and hard-working man.

cigarette papers  
in the candlelight  
this dry cough

Quando ero bambino nel cortile di fronte al mio abitava un vecchietto che tossiva sempre. Trascorrevano le giornate seduto sul ballatoio di casa, di giorno intrecciava giunchi per preparare ceste da lavoro, di sera, a luce di candela, trinciava tabacco, preparava sigarette che non fumava. Mi tornano questi ricordi perchè da parecchi giorni ho una tosse che non mi lascia ed io, proprio come quel vecchietto buono e laborioso, non ho mai fumato.

una candela  
le cartine per sigarette  
la tosse secca

## **The Binding String**

*Matthew Caretti, USA*

The orphan's old sweater becomes one long strand of yarn. Becomes the towline for his makeshift car. Of wire, bottle caps, cardboard and saliva glue. Then abandoned, becoming attached only to the wind.

evening sun  
wondering where  
the contrail goes

## Winter Berries

*Carol Pearce-Worthington, USA*

This morning in the light of dawn we swim in a cloud the shape of a fish that paddles past the edge of this window but never fades and you swim off, always so far away while I wait and float where I can. Barely morning. You contact me to say whatever you do, don't buy the porch. People try hard to get me to the buy the porch (you were right) not knowing why I refuse.

For us that day in new haven at the outdoor table under an umbrella a slight breeze a warm day almost Caribbean you wished would never end I think that day has never ended.

So our summer house has no porch. Just green grass and tall windows and love that means forevermore. As in our fairy tale we remain together in this cloud so long as it lasts. It narrows. Slowly we drift south with a plan that has no hope of lasting, your vision of the summer house binds us tightly in the comfort of sunlight you and me. Swimming.

in need  
of a schedule  
winter winds



## **Atlantis**

*Robert B. McNeill, USA*

In 1955, construction began on a hydro-electric dam that would eventually flood the town and valley of Northfork, Montana (USA). It was a hard time for those being forced to leave their homes, their way of life.

The movie *NORTHFORK* (2003) tells the stories of several of those who refused to leave, their reasons, and their outcomes. In one scene, an "extraction team" finds an old grandpa on his front porch, dead, sitting upright in a rocking chair holding a long gun (which can tear a man apart), with his feet nailed to the floor . . .

sailing the reservoir –  
briefly, in the depths below  
our old church steeple

## The World Left Behind

*Rebecca Drouilhet, USA*

Children don't explore the woods the way I did, riding my bike for miles and then melting into the woods to find and bend over in awe at the sight of a blooming lady's slipper.

Few of them visit their grandparents' farms, feed baby calves or spend an afternoon in the loft of a barn jumping onto bales of hay until they've exhausted themselves and must stop to contemplate the quiet while dust motes glitter in the sun filtering through the cracks.

Ecologists warn us the natural world is disappearing at an alarming rate and tell us that those now in their mid-sixties will have lived to see the extinction of half the species who ever lived

the sweetness gone –  
an empty candy wrapper  
blows down the road

cattails - April 2019



**Australian Magpie**

## **A Moment of Joy**

*Padmini Krishnan, Singapore*

I shuffle my legs colliding with the lady sitting in front of me. She scowls at me, before turning back to her cell phone with a smile. The school kid behind me, engrossed in Extreme Car Driving Simulator angrily chases someone, bending sideways to get sharper focus. At the next stop the train lets out a couple but admits a huge crowd. They all immediately latch on to their cell phones. Just then, I notice a man in the corner seat, smiling He has no device in his hand. He murmurs something. Many turn around and I spot a huge lemon-colored butterfly fluttering near the train door. Some whisper, their cell phones forgotten. Many smile.

daily commute  
bespectacled eyes dreaming  
of virtual world

## **Porth Nanven**

*Lucy Whitehead, United Kingdom*

Grey granite and honey coloured rocks glow in the warm summer sunshine, their creases and fissures softened by the salt air and time. They stretch up in tall cliffs, upon which seagulls, birds of prey, and tourists occasionally alight. The cliffs are gouged open in places with cavernous holes – abandoned mines, leading to a network of dark tunnels deep in the granite.

Huge oversized 'egg pebbles' cluster at the base of the towering cliffs. They are bleached bright white like giant sugared almonds and flecked with quartz so that they sparkle in the sun. Most are firmly nestled down having found some sort of order over the millennia, but the occasional one rocks precariously when you tread on it.

Leaping across the beach, rock by rock, was one of my favourite games as a child. Today, I hurl myself across the beach one last time. It has to be done in bare feet and the rocks are baking hot. Clutching my sandals in one hand, I aim for the larger, more solid rocks at the far side. When my feet find an unstable boulder, I have to balance my weight on it just right and leap off before it lurches too much and tips me off with a loud cracking sound. I must keep up the momentum. I can't go backwards.

red anemones  
cling to green rock pools  
going . . . staying

escaping  
from my shadow  
a fleet of silver fishes

the tide goes out  
leaving my childhood  
home

## Hawkesbury River

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

Early summer, the river is alive, blue and green waves playing with the wind. Our boat ambles by Lion Island, stark and black against the skyline, guarding the entrance to the sea. We pass under the rumble from the iron arch bridge of a major highway heading north south. Steer into a feeder creek where the steep-sided shore is heavy with eucalypts and banksia, tangles of bushy undergrowth hide groves of dancing grass trees and red waratah. Float by primitive rock carving hewn in exposed cliffs. We drop anchor in one of the small sandy bays littering the rocky waterline.

shell middens  
bleached white . . .  
lingering shadows

## Manjushri

*Raamesh Gowri Raghavan. India*

Walking out of advertising after a career of ten years, I spent the next two trapped between regret and elation. Much of the regret was about money, and the ambitions left behind: a bigger house, a bigger car and bigger savings. The elation was about the long days not spent in meetings, nor the cold commutes home in the small hours. But like an earlier regret, of not finishing that PhD that would have won me a Nobel Prize or two, this too will fade, and the perfection of the wisdom of being the moment, death and breath alike is setting in. Sometimes the lack of ambition is itself an ambition.

Wind Horse—  
how far do I go  
from myself

## Glory, With or Without, The Morning (EC)

*Christy Burbidge, USA*

I never learned to cook. As I grew, I learned to be less embarrassed by this fact, and came to wear my reality as a cloak of gratitude. Black bean hummus and pickled kale stems will likely never come from these boxing-blistered, keyboard-tapping hands. Yet, there's an appreciation I have for cooking that knows no rival.

When I smell a Morning Glory muffin in the local coffee shop, every shred of carrot and chunk of misplaced walnut gets due reverence.

beaten down raisin  
hiding in salty batter –  
tell me your story



## Shoveling Thoughts

*Cyndi Lloyd, USA*

my to-do list . . .  
bindweed takes over  
the rosebush

The wooden fence I painted seven years ago leans, with broken slats and holes, battered by high winds and the neighbor kid's baseball. I've patched it with Gorilla glue and string, propped it up in one place with a defunct birdbath. It wavers in the breeze.

Last night the wind gusted and gusted. This morning that old fence still stands.

Despite the pain around my shoulder blades, I shovel dirt into the holes my puppy dug in the grass. I'm tired of dealing with a missing camera cord, crumbs on the counter, a car that won't start, extra charges on the cell phone bill, the confusion of health care coverage, dust on top of the doorframes . . .

What if I let these non-matters topple? Would it matter?

tulip rain . . .  
a poem blooms  
on the page

## Nothing So Novel

*Gautam Nadkarni, India*

It isn't everyone who is fortunate enough to come across a living, breathing novelist in one's lifetime. I used to think they were like museum pieces to be viewed from a distance with stern instructions on placards not to touch them.

The man-of-letters I came across sat in an overstuffed armchair with a furrowed brow and a gel pen dangling from his right hand. Occasionally he would raise the pen to his mouth and chew on it. I was beginning to understand what made for successful novelists: Overstuffed armchairs, furrowed brows and chewy gel pens obviously. I also noticed that he wore shapeless tees and shorts, which once may have been trousers before they shrank. But then, whoever heard of well-dressed intellectuals? Another thing I observed very keenly was that this great man kept closing his eyes and breathing hard. Courting the muse, I was convinced. Until I realised that he was snoring. Well, everyone needs a nap.

When I went home that evening I told sis all about the famous writer I had just met and how he had influenced me forever. I would henceforth stop wasting my life chasing will-o'-the-wisps and do something really concrete and worthwhile like sitting in armchairs, chewing at a gel pen and taking a snooze.

I still cannot understand why sis had an unlady-like horselaugh and slapped her thighs.

museum tour . . .  
everyone gapes at  
the old watchman

## **My happy future**

*Nikolay Grankin, Russia*

My grandson says, when he grows up, he'll be a moonshiner to make good cheer for his grandpa. Now I'm optimistic for my future.

children's art  
all faces  
smiling

Моё счастливое будущее

Внук говорит, что когда вырастет станет самогонщиком, чтобы дед всегда ходил навеселе. Теперь я с оптимизмом смотрю в своё будущее.

детский рисунок  
на всех лицах  
улыбки

## John

*Anna Cates, USA*

He dreamed of being devoured by pigs, from seriously fat "squashers" to girls simply greedy for him, porcine noses snorting as they fought to get enough of him, a task at which he hoped they'd never fully succeed.

3:16

scrawled in the sand  
the tide takes it all

## **Bedazzled One**

*Hazel Hall, Australia*

Braxton chooses the stone as if it were skin.  
Eyes it with purpose. His critical fingers  
dawdle over the surface  
assessing its smoothness.  
Zig-zagging and  
zag-zigging. Now, he carefully  
lays on paint, creating an exquisite image,  
enough for her to breathe its mystery,  
drawing her into the moment's bliss.

outgoing tide  
nothing but willpower  
ebbing away

## **Uphill climb**

*Gregory Longenecker, USA*

My father was a prickly man; charming on his good days, full of verbal abuse on his bad. No wonder that we often clashed as I grew into manhood. But one thing he always gave me as I grew older was room to be me. He might begin to push me on something, and then back off when he saw I was set on my way.

hat in hand  
an old man climbs  
the graveyard hill

## Visiting Home

*Adelaide B. Shaw, USA*

It's been years since she passed away, yet I think of her often, especially in May, the month of her birth, when warmer days have turned the brown earth into a green baize and the air is sweet with lilacs and peonies. I remember her smile and the welcoming cup of just brewed coffee and the enticing aroma of chicken roasting in the oven for dinner prepared for my visit with cool white wine and strawberries soaked in marsala for desert accompanied by crisp biscotti. I remember I am a guest, company from three thousand miles away, fussed over and pampered.

my old bed  
in the sheets the freshness  
of sunshine

## **A sign from heaven**

*Susan Beth Furst, USA*

Her leg hurts  
like the devil,  
behind barrack 22  
she hides  
with Dorka,  
between the straw mattresses,  
with the lice,  
until it is dark . . .

Bashert  
the lines on mother's hands



## Old Sparky

*Tim Gardiner, United Kingdom*

The darkness is literal. I hear the shuffling of feet, a rasping cough, and the final prayer of the pastor. Sweat merges with the sponge drips trickling down my cheeks. Leather lacerates taut wrists, scars still present from the alleyway struggle. I wait for the officer's command. One, two, three . . .

morning sun  
another widow spider  
under the chair

## Nemesis

*Praniti Gulyani, India*

You sit at the sleek tables of the five-star restaurant and eat fish. You don't know who catches that fish for you. You just enjoy it.

I sell nets. And, they're not just "any other " nets. They are stitched together with shadows. The ones left lingering in the corners. They spill out of the cracks in the ceiling. I collect them all. And then, I stitch them together. Do you want to see what I've made? I've made one with interlinked shadows — an old woman's shadow knotted into an old man's shadow and a soldier's shadow. It looks as though the old woman has lost her balance. She is clinging onto the soldier. Her finger is tightened around the trigger of his gun.

weighing the vegetables  
against a clump of stars  
. . . night bazaar

## Editor's Choices (EC) – haibun

### Playmate

*Barnabas I. Adeleke, Nigeria*

The first thing we do when we return from school is race to where Aunty Aisha is lying on a mat, propped up against a wall. She picks up our voices as soon as we step into the gate of the big compound. She jerks her head up and her eyes light up. We gather around her as she struggles to salute us: "Tó-ó-pé . . . Ní-í-kè-é . . ."

We cut her short as we stuff her mouth with bọ̀lì and roasted groundnut bought on our way home. Then we run into the arms of our waiting mothers, eat lunch and soon return one by one to sit by her to play and do our assignments. Apart from Alhaja who comes to sit on the mat with her often, we are the only friends she's got. We regard her as our big friend as well as a bona-fide member of our little group. She even struggles from time to time to recite with us the rhymes we have learnt at school.

Aunty Aisha is the daughter of Alhaji, our landlord who is also a local politician. Alhaja, his first wife, has had the misfortune of having only one surviving child. All five she gave birth to died leaving only Aunty Aisha – a quadriplegic since childhood. Alhaji married three other wives, as he wanted a large household.

A month ago, Alhaja died. Today, the Alhaji's men are burying Aunty Aisha. They say she had a high fever overnight and passed away before daybreak.

spring-cleaning . . .  
a hand-me-down  
set alight

*Playmate* by Barnabas I. Adeleke is an evocation of an African childhood filled with descriptions of the family structure and network. The personality of Aunty Aisha, "a quadriplegic since childhood" emerges through the poet's use of some vivid details as in this opening account:

*“ She picks up our voices as soon as we step into the gate of the big compound. She jerks her head up and her eyes light up.”*

*The children’s acceptance of her as one of their own underlines the poignancy of Aunty Aisha’s death. The closing haiku suggests memory, loss and remembrance. The overall impression of the haibun is of affirming the saving role of memory.*



## Tipplers

*Glenn G. Coats, USA*

Our backyard is small, fenced so the dog and my little sister can’t slip away. There is a swing set, brick fireplace, three dwarf fruit trees, and my mother’s garden.

George is one of our neighbors, retired now, spends most days tinkering in his garage. He sharpens mower blades and scissors, changes points and plugs on his car. A quiet man except when Sam is over. They are like fire and gasoline – not a good combination.

My mother wears a halter top and cut-off shorts when she works. Her hair tumbles from her shoulders as she crouches to weed between rows or stoops to pick tomatoes.

George and Sam open the backdoor to the garage in order to see my mom. They giggle and laugh like children, hide in the shadows. Mom ignores them when they whistle like wolves as she carries her basket to the gate.

My mother turns and stares at the two men in the doorway. That alone is enough to silence them as they hide like insects in the dark. “They can’t help themselves,” she will say as the latch closes behind her.

hum of crickets  
laughter pours  
from an open bottle

*Glenn Coats is an adept haibun writer and in **Tipplers** he portrays well a child’s realization of how his mother is seen in quite a different way by the neighbour, George and his friend, Sam.*

George is a “retired” “quiet man”, who “spends most days tinkering in his garage.” This contrasts with the ogling and wolf whistling and sets up an ambiguity in the narrative. The mother’s nonchalant, “They can’t help themselves” seems to echo “they know not what they do.” In the haiku, the juxtaposition of the sound of the crickets to the ‘laughter’ further enhances this ambivalence. One wonders if the laughter is just fun or drunken folly.



### **Glory, With or Without, The Morning**

*Christy Burbidge, USA*

I never learned to cook. As I grew, I learned to be less embarrassed by this fact, and came to wear my reality as a cloak of gratitude. Black bean hummus and pickled kale stems will likely never come from these boxing-blistered, key board-tapping hands. Yet, there’s an appreciation I have for cooking that knows no rival.

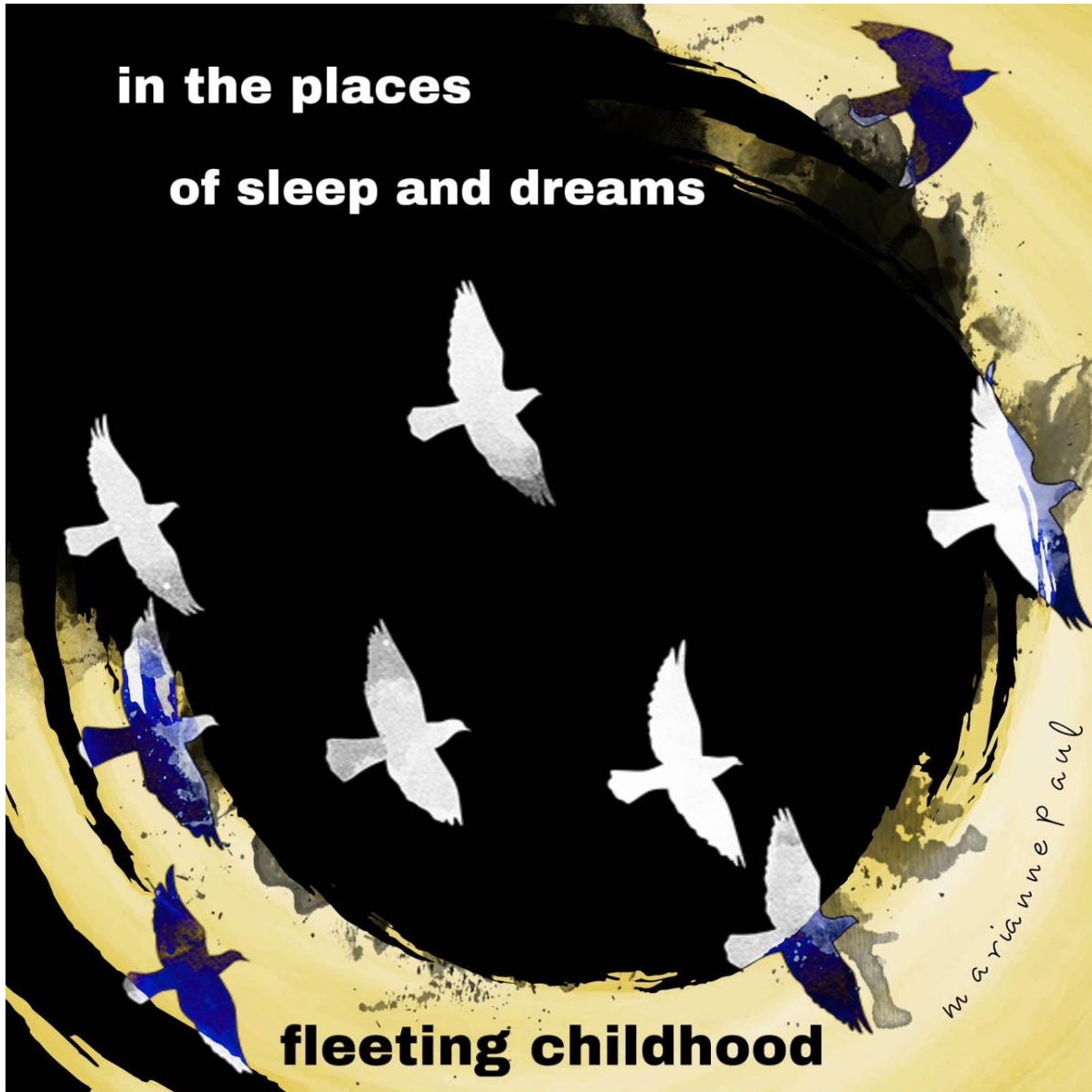
When I smell a Morning Glory muffin in the local coffee shop, every shred of carrot and chunk of misplaced walnut gets due reverence.

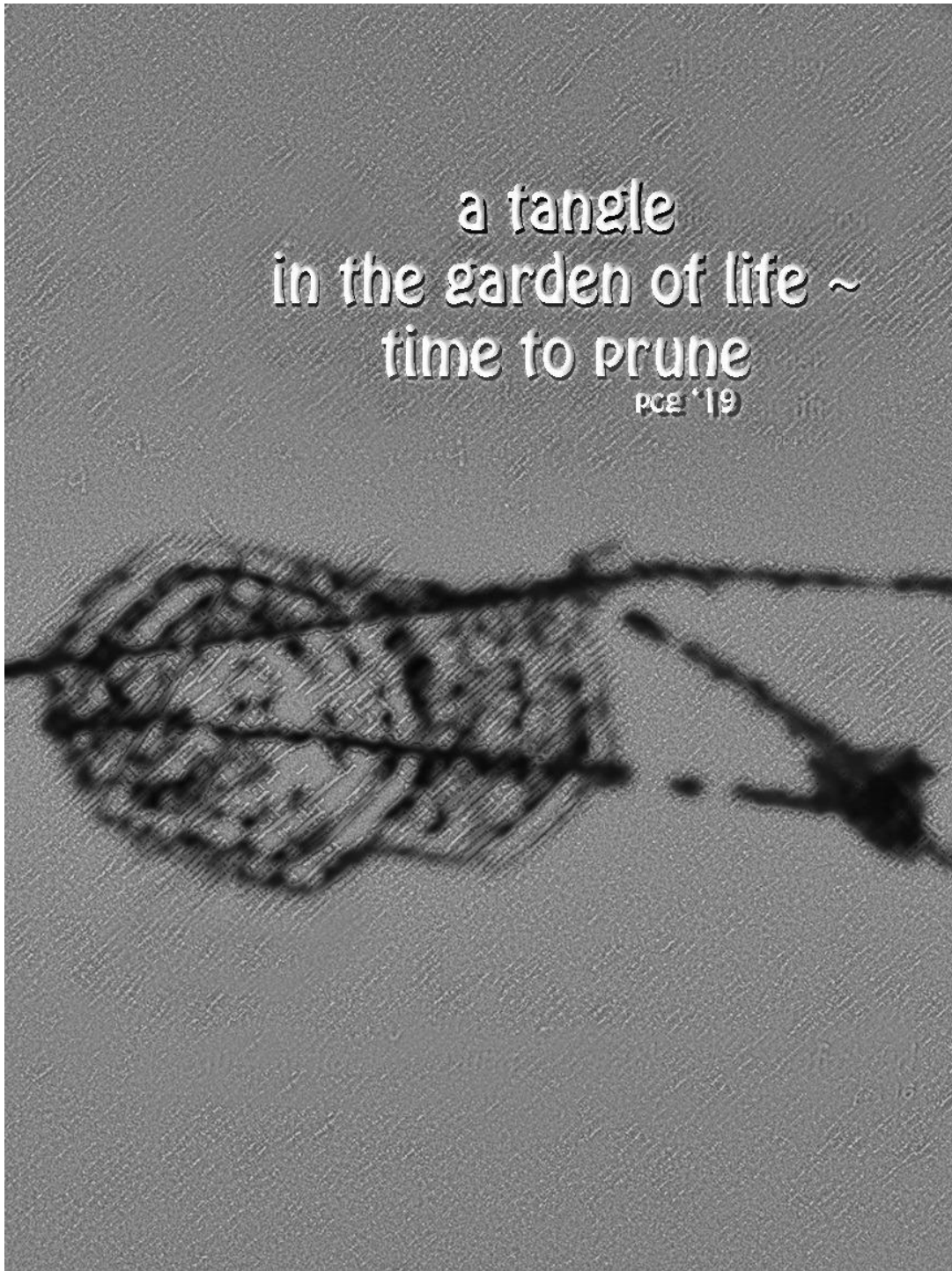
beaten down raisin  
hiding in salty batter -  
tell me your story

*Finally, **Glory, With or Without, The Morning** by Christy Burbidge is a heartfelt and heart-warming appreciation of food despite a lack of culinary skills. The muffin becomes a Proustian Madeline opening up both memory and a warm conceit about the life of a humble raisin that could be a metaphor for the self. The concluding poem is original and amusing.*

Sonam Chhoki







Pat Geyer

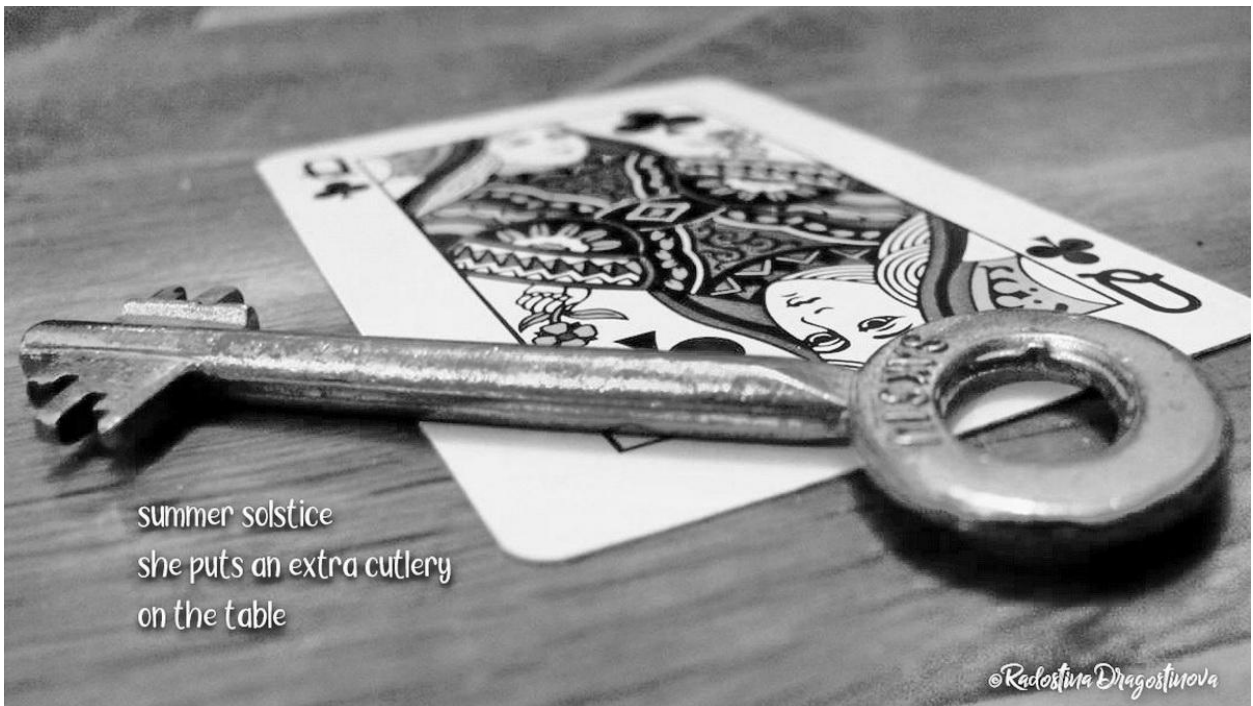




shifting sand...  
they attempt to rebuild  
old dreams

pris campbell







# Youth



**Frogmouth Parent and fledgling**

The focus of this issue's "Youth" is: *Will haiku, haibun and tanka workshops stand up to children's understanding and expectations?*

Haiku and tanka were taught at the year-end Katha Creative Writers' Workshop. Here is a copy of the invitation that Katha.org sent to us, the mentors!

Celebrating story!  
KATHA NATIONAL WRITERS UNWORKSHOP  
THE CHALLENGE GROUNDS  
26-28 December 2018

*WHO'S YOU?* You are 400 students from across the country . . . from Changalang to Kuchh; from Leh to Kanyakumari have your say as an awesome wordsmith!

*What do we want badly?* To invite you to participate in the most exciting three days under the sun

*What should YOU bring?* Bring in your walk-tall ideas and hot-blood words to make your Classrooms UnClass! Rooms; learning areas poised to take you to the most imaginary places in the 21st century. And yes, please bring your mobile phone if you have one, with a camera, preferably. We have BIG secrets up our sleeves :)

*What will YOU do?* Listen, think, debate and ACT! Leave with more exciting, doable action ideas to take with you! To change your world and own it! Come share your ideas to make India a free and fun for all, a fair and fearless world! And show the way for 300 Million children in India's many schools to say so, using the power of story!

Following this invite I enter with my pen drive loaded with the haiku and tanka of Japanese and contemporary masters, wanting to teach these experiential poems to my batch of school kids.

I had mild trepidations, for haiku doesn't really fit into this invitation style. I had 43 pairs of eager eyes looking straight at me. After 30 minutes, two wanted to change their class and I allowed them to go – for doing something not to one's interest is actually detrimental to what I was trying to teach.

I discovered that disclosing each haiku in all its beauty was the trick! And on the second day, I took the same approach with tanka . . . showing the way each bud unfolds, until

the whole blossom is before the child. Without fail, this method worked each time!

Now, let's read the children's haiku, senryu and tanka.

Kala Ramesh

The Tejas Award (*Tejas* in Sanskrit means "fire" and/or "brilliance") goes to: *Nikhil Gupta and Ustat Kaur Sethi for the haiku.*

spring night  
a hawk cuckoo dips  
into its tune

Nikhil Gupta (age 14 yrs)  
India

This is an amazing poem. Those of us who practice this art form say that, along with *makoto* (poetic truth), craft should also be employed . . . and that is what Nikhil has done in his nine-word poem! All I can say is, *I wish I had written this.*

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

Ustat Kaur Sethi (age 14 yrs)  
India

As haiku poets, we have read and written enough ku on dewdrops and raindrops! Still here is one ku fresh from the eyes and imagination of a 14-year-old school girl. For a school student to understand the concept of brevity, conciseness and simplicity is not easy. Well done, Ustat. The best part of these two-day workshops is that I come to know the students quite well and along with them revel in their joy of discovering haiku!

\*\*\*\*\*

Considering it was a first exposure to haiku and senryu for them . . . every single poem 'showcased' here can be considered an *Editor's Choice!*

I like to present several haiku written by each student during the workshop, just to show that it's not an accident that kids do understand and grasp the art of haikai poetry in a day or two!

foggy evening –  
I watch people turn  
into silhouettes

\*

leaves change colour . . .  
I scour the horizon  
for Siberian cranes

\*

white sheet  
the cushioning  
of a polar bear's bed

\*

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

V.K. Sai Gayatri (age 14 yrs.)  
India

The seasonal reference – *kigo* – and the cut – *kire* – are most beautifully employed. I would say even the (punctuation) cut-marker – *kireji* – or lack of it is effectively done. Children amaze me each time.

~~

cattails ~ April 2019

morning mist  
a cuckoo's call  
awakens the forest

\*

blink of an eye  
a sleek black movement  
and the mouse is dead

\*

rubber boots  
with one step  
I shatter the sky

Sriradhaa Satishkumar (age 14 yrs.)  
India

Read these haiku aloud and see how well they roll off your tongue! So musical and rich with internal rhythm! Can all this be taught or was it lying dormant ... until haiku came along into her life!

~~

mirror on the wall . . .  
all I see  
is me

\*

glass window . . .  
I see the world  
it carries within

Sukanya Tamuly (age 14 yrs)  
India



These paired ideas and the way Sukanya has folded in the difference between a mirror and the glass window is masterful. Children surprise me with their talent and I keep getting clean bowled!

~~

dead forests . . .  
metal towers take over  
a little plant

\*

wet grass . . .  
a slithering coil rushes  
past my feet

Riddhiman Deb (age 15 yrs.)  
India

I vividly remember that when I had a round of rapid questions at the end – a fun exercise, which also served as a quick review of all that they had learned in the workshop – Riddhiman had all his answers at the tip of his fingers!

~~

blossom cool –  
a cardinal touches  
the last cloud

\*

foggy night –  
the rooted logs become  
distant shadows

Kalaiselvi Ashokkumar (age 14 yrs)  
India

~~

cattails – April 2019

cotton candies –  
a fluffy horse gallops  
across the sky

\*

falling snowflakes –  
I snuggle into the warmth  
of my mother's hug

Nandini M Prakash (age 13 yrs)  
India

~~

choking smog –  
it takes an hour  
to move an inch

Nandika Rohith (age 14 yrs)  
India

Classic! Look at the words she has used ... *choking smog* in L 1 sets the scene for Ls 2 & 3. Pollution is everywhere and how well Nandika has expressed it. I felt like I was being strangled.

~~

orange skies  
a pack of birds fly into  
the fading universe

Niranjana Prasad (age 14 yrs)  
India

What a poignant L 3 . . .  
Beautiful!

cattails ~ April 2019

~~

our search  
for newspapers begin . . .  
kite season

A. Harini (age 14 yrs)  
India

This ku took me to my childhood days, when we used to make paper kites at home, with newspaper ... there's arithmetic involved in that! The string that holds the corners must be correctly measured and knotted. Even adding glue to the paper kite needs a sensitive hand. If we add too much, the kite will become heavy and won't take off and if we use less, then the tail will detach and the kite won't be able to fly.

What agony!  
What ecstasy when things turn out just right!

~~

dewdrop world . . .  
peeping into the pond  
I see my mother's face

V. M. Nihilaa (age 13 yrs)  
India

~~

after the thunderstorm . . .  
a little boy waits  
for his dog

Ananya Saraf (age 14 yrs.)  
India

~~



**Bowerbird fledgling**

cattails ~ April 2019

dense forest  
light seeps through  
the gaps in trees

Rhea Shah (age 14 yrs)  
India

~~

rainforest . . .  
the sounds  
birds leave behind

Shaarad Jarandikar (age 14 yrs)  
India

~~

study table . . .  
I play around  
with a pencil

Akash.G.C (age 14 yrs)  
India

~~

deep in thought . . .  
sea waves wash over  
my feet

Lakshmi R Menon (age 14 yrs)  
India

~~

cattails – April 2019

dirty puddles –  
young shipmen navigate  
paper boats

Ustat Kaur Sethi (age 14 yrs)  
India

~~

summer dusk  
birds dive into  
the orange pool

Nikhil Gupta (age 14 yrs)  
India

~~

thick smoke –  
tall trees dissolve  
into nothing

Pranav Raj (age 14 yrs)  
India

~~

Thanks to Diana Teneva from Bulgaria, who sent her students' haiku. It's amazing how at the age of eleven, children are able to bring their thoughts around to write haiku. Not easy at all. It's tough for both, the mentor and the kids.

сняг вали . . .  
мога да чуя  
даже дъха си

it is snowing . . .  
I can hear  
even my breath

Fatme (age 11 yrs.)  
Bulgaria

cattails ~ April 2019

~~

коледни сладки —  
бисквитките се топят  
като снежинки

Christmas sweets —  
the biscuits melting  
like snowflakes

Krastyu St. (age 11 yrs.)  
Bulgaria

~~

зимен ден . . .  
слънчевата усмивка  
на снежния човек

winter day . . .  
the sunny smile  
of the snow man

Jasmin Sel. (age 11 yrs.)  
Bulgaria

~~

топъл шоколад . . .  
чета книга  
на дивана

hot chocolate . . .  
I'm reading a book  
on the couch

Niya D. (age 11 yrs.)  
Bulgaria

~~

първи сняг . . .  
чувствам студ  
дори в новия пуловер

first snow . . .  
I feel cold even  
in my new jumper

Niya D. (age 11 yrs)  
Bulgaria

~~

## TANKA

Teaching an art form is never easy. One needs to give structural information and still leave “dreaming space” for each person’s originality and creativity, so that by the end of the session, the student feels she has learnt something that will stay with her for the rest of her life. In developing a way to teach tanka, after having taught haiku, I realized there is a similarity in how the two forms handle the two images – which is the spark plug effect! The gap between the two images (top and bottom) must be neither too wide nor too small – just the right amount of space needed for the “spark” to happen, which ignites the poem. I showed sample poems with the two images – and explained how the poem may be divided into 2/3 or 3/2 image patterns. Later I explained the pivot or door hinge. I kept it very simple.

Considering it was a first exposure to tanka for most of them . . . every single poem ‘showcased’ here can be considered an *Editor’s Choice!*

I've this memory  
of my bestie losing her brother  
a few months ago . . .  
the little heart he left behind  
still beats in her

Niranjana Prasad (age 14 yrs)  
India



Showing the extraordinary in the ordinary . . . the above tanka is a strong example of this aesthetic nuance which is often quoted when teaching haikai poetry. I could see the joy in Niranjana's face when I told her that this tanka was beautiful! One more from her:

taking little steps  
with food all over your face  
speaking baby language  
now you have your own little wings  
my darling sister

Niranjana Prasad (age 14 yrs)  
India

~~

I remember  
making paper boats . . .  
how do you wrap  
a raging thunderstorm  
in such a feeble float

Praniti Gulyani (age 15 yrs)  
India

This tanka is most deftly handled. I love the way the top image pairs off with the lower image - the resonance is startling. This is what makes a tanka click!

~~

a stick lying  
with thorns all over . . .  
my father's frown  
comes to my mind  
making me smile

\*

cattails – April 2019

looking out  
through the window I see  
the bare tree –  
a bunch of hair  
covers my bed linen

\*

I flip  
through an old album . . .  
a little girl  
peeps  
through the pages

Lakshmi R Menon (age 14 yrs)  
India

This set of three tanka poems read like a tanka sequence . . . something that I didn't even talk about in the workshop!

~~

a woodcutter  
hacks at the roots  
of an ancient tree –  
a nestling bird chirps  
for its mother

Saumya Mishra (age 14 yrs)  
India

~~

I've this memory –  
bidding goodbye to  
the best of my friends  
who will always be  
there, though, in my heart

\*

I walk along  
a curving  
path—  
old memories race  
through my mind

Trishna Shah (age 14 yrs)  
India



Hearty congratulations to *cattails* Youth Corner's regular contributor - Lakshay Gandotra, for winning the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grand Prize at the 23<sup>rd</sup> International "Kusamakura" Haiku Competition 2018.

silent sun  
girl child collects her ruined  
books after the flood

太陽は黙して語らず  
洪水の後 女の子は  
台無しになった本を拾い集める

Lakshay Gandotra  
India (インド)



Finally, here is a letter of appreciation from a student:

Dear Ma'am,

I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for the time you spent teaching us about haiku and tanka. It was an amazing experience learning about how the simplest of words can convey such deep things about life.

cattails ~ April 2019

I live in Surat, so if you ever drop by, please do tell me. It would be wonderful to meet you once again.

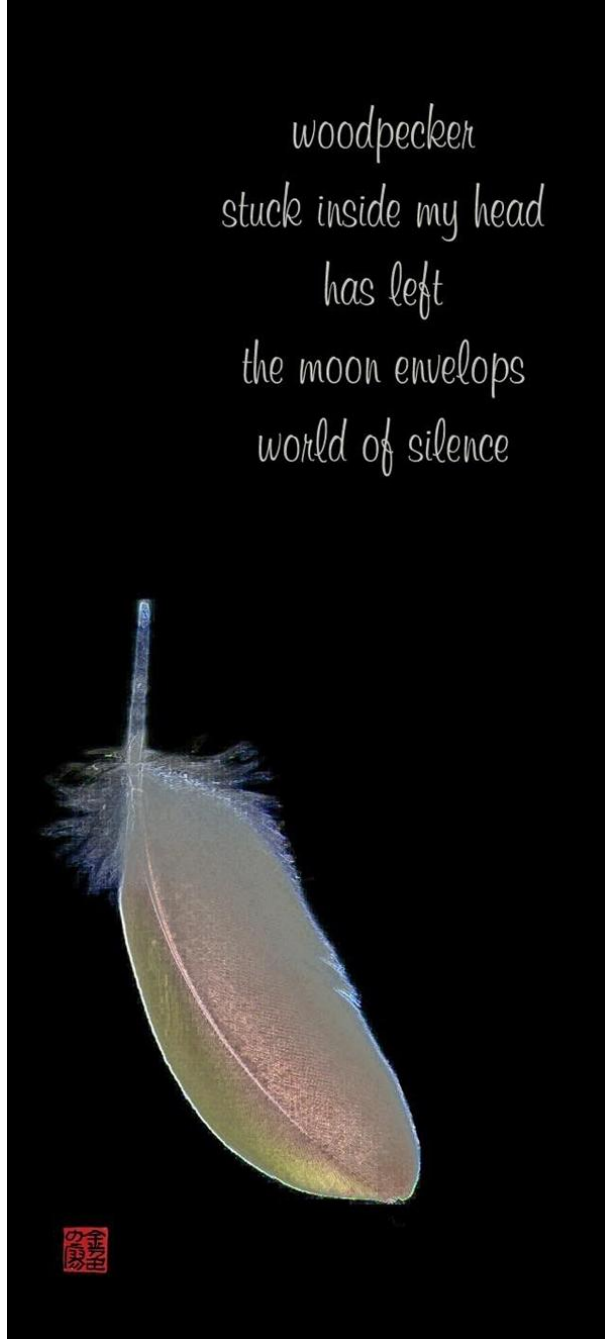
Also, I've sent you another email with my haiku for cattails.

Once again, a great big thank you to you, and to my stars for having given me an opportunity to meet you.

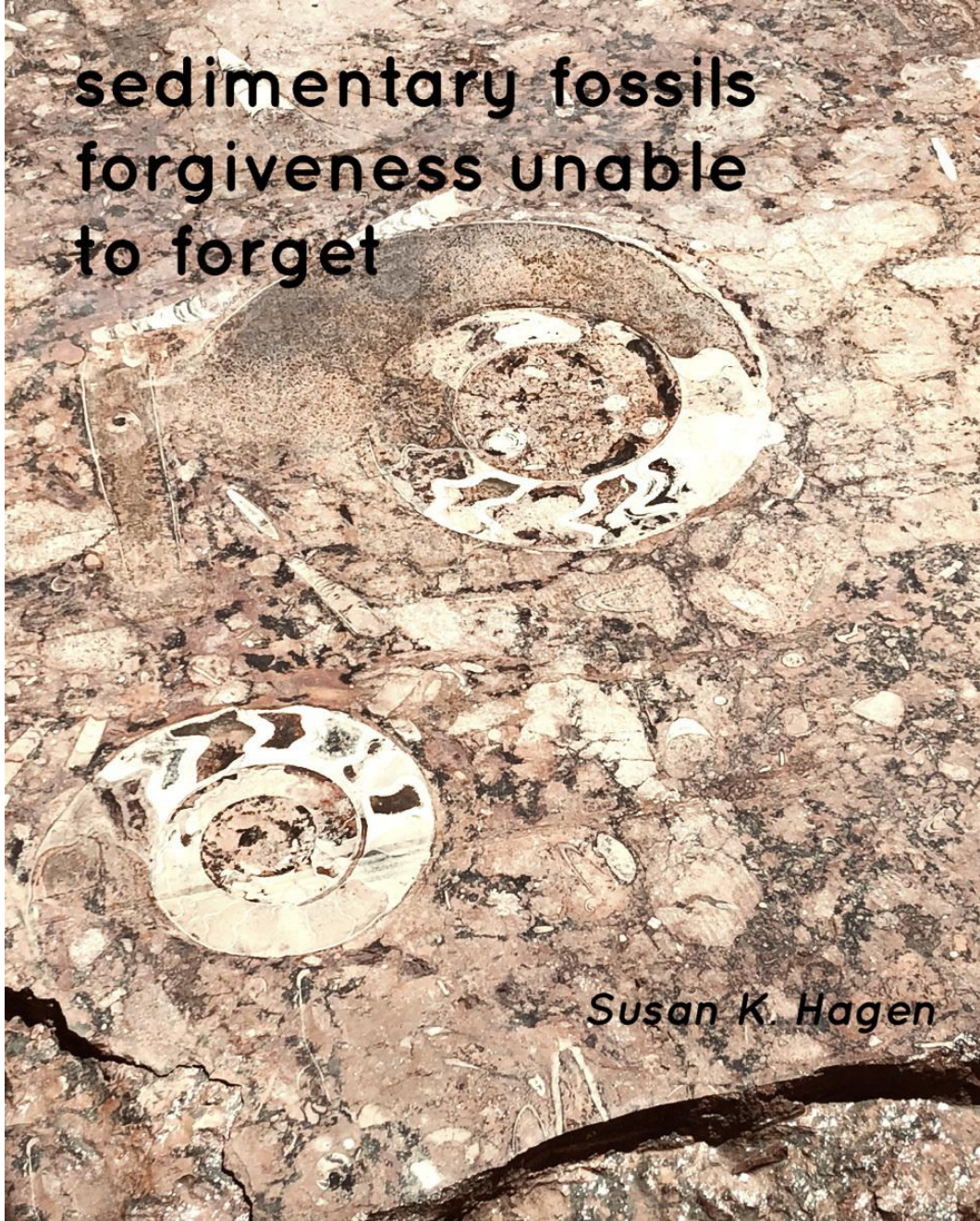
Thanking you,  
Saumya Mishra

~~

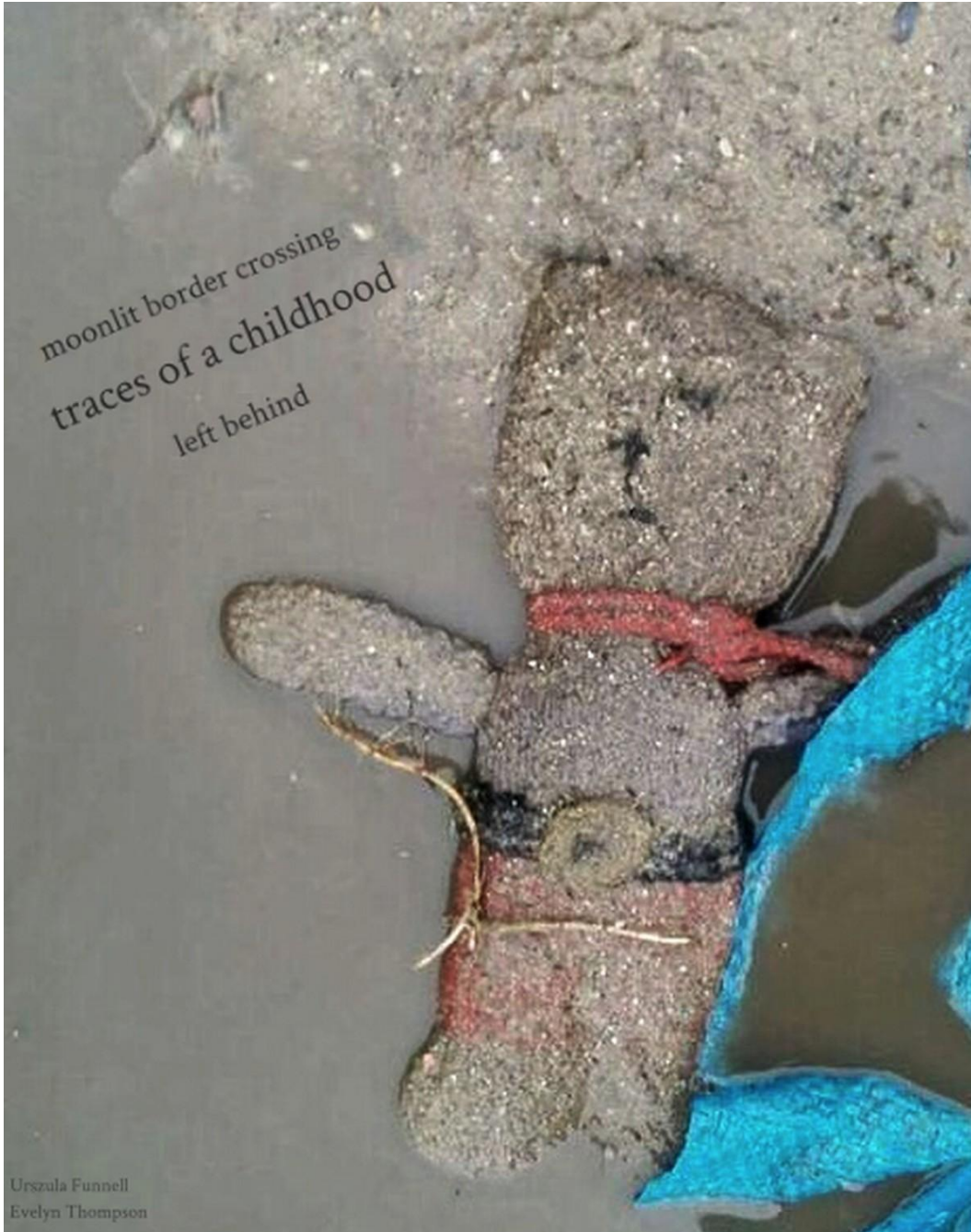
woodpecker  
stuck inside my head  
has left  
the moon envelops  
world of silence



*Natalia L Rudychev*









*first contact -  
will my smile  
hide the flaws*

senryu by Valentina Ranaldi-Adams  
photo by A. D. Adams





***klikće mi galeb  
odobrava mu jato  
-čistim ribu***

***prije finog objeda  
čarolija trenutka***

***seagull jeers at me  
encouraged by the flock  
i'm cleaning the fish***

***before a delicious meal  
a fascinating moment***

vladimir šuk



**White-faced Heron - Swan River, Burswood, Western Australia**

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