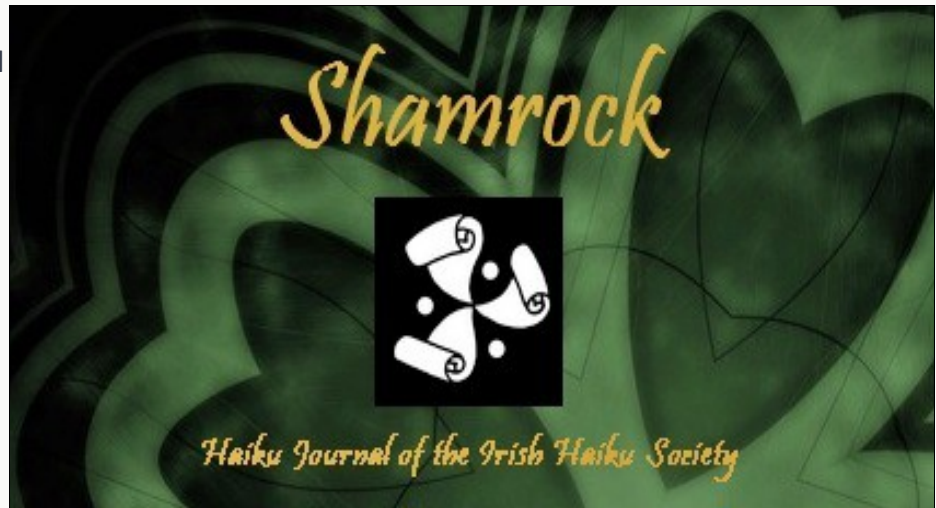


An international online journal
that publishes quality haiku,
senryu and haibun in English

irishhaikuisociety[at]gmail.com
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Shamrock Haiku Journal Readers' Choice Awards 2014

Seven haiku have been nominated as the best of the year by our readers and contributors. The following piece that appeared in our No. 27 was voted the **best haiku** published in Shamrock Haiku Journal in 2014:

morning
the slow silence
of a snail

-- *Gregory Longenecker (USA)*

The following haiku that first appeared in our Nos. 29 and 27 respectively were **runners-up**:

auction –
a smell of horse
where the horse has been

-- *Hugh O'Donnell (Ireland)*

back on the wagon
after Christmas
unsold trees

-- *Rachel Sutcliffe (England)*

Five senryu have been nominated as the best of the year by our readers and contributors. The following piece that was first published in our No 27 became the winner in the **best senryu** category:

a bowl of soup
the blind man lowers his face
into the steam

-- *John McManus (England)*

And the **runner-up** was the following piece that also appeared in our No. 27:

the first bite
is all I want
wild pear

-- *S.M. Abeles (USA)*

We congratulate the worthy winners, and express our sincere gratitude to each and every reader who cast a vote.

Irish Haiku Society International Haiku Competition 2014

The prize-winning haiku from this competition are available for viewing here:

<http://irishhaiku.webs.com/haikucompetition.htm>

There are excellent poems aplenty on that page; check them out!



arrowhead leaves
in the flickering wind
shoals of fish

emerald fish
break surface
a stippling glaze

wren song
filling the frozen valley
the ping of crystal

through the slush,
blades of grass
slicing light

-- Anton Floyd (Ireland)

late summer heat...
the prayer strip's reflection
flickers on the window

deep night
where the fireflies were
stars

cold August night
through the dark skylight
darkness

-- Bruce Ross (USA)

summer drought –
a can of worms
left on the dock

boarded-up cabin –
goose track
across the wet porch

a toast to the bride –
my reflection
in the wine glass

-- *Michael Dylan Welch (USA)*

apple tree branch
an inchworm
measures it's length

abandoned copper mine
an old mule grazes
among rust-colored rocks

gap in the forest canopy
a yellow sunbeam
becomes a cloud of gnats

-- *Jay Friedenbergr (USA)*

the sunset tints
a field of dry grasses
pink lemonade

a brisk wind
through his old knit sweater
uncut hay

wondering
what it means
five-leaf clover

-- *Seren Fargo (USA)*

new moon
mist drifting
through the trees

mist on the bay
a tinkling of masts
at the marina

station bridge
a florescent rainbow
of sprayed colours

-- Gavin Austin (Australia)

overcoat shouldered
by the kitchen chair
last night's warmth gone

October laneway
a planetarium
of fallen apples

time-jumping chipmunk
you were there
you are here

-- Paul Bregazzi (Ireland)

passing crows
the flap of ragged fabric
in a freshening breeze

morning prayer
kneeling at the altar
of her handbag

-- David J. Kelly (Ireland)

concrete wall
rusting shamrock
stains the flaking paint

of the billion stars
this one
the dawn-bringer

-- *Patricia Groves (Ireland)*

red fox
his gaze
through the glass

windy boreen –
cock pheasant puffed out
in search of his destiny

-- *Nora O'Dwyer (Ireland)*

Boreen: unpaved rural road in Ireland.

ripples along
the lough shore
a dunnoek's song

into the sun the wood pigeon foils the falcon

-- *Thomas Powell (Northern Ireland)*

fish supper
the tramp gives his chips
to the gulls

the curious gaze
of a caged ape
my son returns it

-- *John McManus (England)*

cold snap
a woodpecker
at the bird table

autumn wind
the yellowing leaves
of a diary

-- *Anna Maris (Sweden)*

sunset
in a field of wildflowers
a rusty red truck

between birdsongs
the wind
filling the spaces

-- *Michael Ketchick (USA)*

end of autumn
a jack o' lantern's smile
begins to soften

migrating birds
his flannel jacket
flaps open

-- *Brent Goodman (USA)*

silent fields
my breath wreaths
the waning moon

willow buds...
parsing the light
from long-dead stars

-- *Mark E. Brager (USA)*

crescent moon –
spider silk traces
a breeze

winter's edge –
a frozen waterfall holds
the stillness

-- *Theresa Cancro (USA)*

winter moon
passing through a crack
of an old grain silo

-- *Ben Moeller-Gaa (USA)*

a drift
of plum blossoms in the puddle
first stars

-- *Mike Dillon (USA)*

first freeze
pond fish puzzled
under glass ceiling

-- *William Ward (USA)*

chilly dusk
the taste of dark chocolate
in her kiss

-- *Chase Fire (USA)*

all day rain –
only at dusk do they emerge
sea plovers

-- *William Seltzer (USA)*

the patient
sniffing a crinkled leaf
ocarina tune

-- *Bill Cooper (USA)*

frosty morning –
the dragonfly's summer dream
at an end

-- *Kevin Valentine (USA)*

goldfinch
alight on a sunflower
painting the sky yellow

-- *Albert Schlaht (USA)*

rainbows
all over the road...
crash site

-- *Carl Seguiban (Canada)*

taking up their posts
in the water shed
great white egrets

-- *Devin Harrison (Canada)*

snowdrops
patch by patch
the sky grows bluer

-- *Louisa Howerow (Canada)*

tree-climbing supervision
briefly abandoned
dragonfly

-- *Richard Turner (England)*

spring thaw
shards of sunlight
shatter the pond

-- *Rachel Sutcliffe (England)*

garden wedding ...
the metallic wind chime
dances a tune

-- *Anne Curran (New Zealand)*

dusk thickens
bats disturb
choral evensong

-- *Noel King (Ireland)*

the midnight path
sparkles with frost –
fox crossing

-- *Amanda Bell (Ireland)*

retracted petals breeze flutters

-- *Sally Dunne (Ireland)*

textured pebbles
water whispering
stories

-- *Olivia Dunne (Ireland)*

swirling breeze –
a hunting cormorant
skims the waves

-- *Patricia Stewart (Ireland)*

monastic silence –
a perfect order
of rocks

-- *Niamh Denise Griffith (Ireland)*

discarded feather
in withering grass –
breeze moves blades

-- *Philipp Herrmann (Ireland)*

village of seagulls
sails shaving grey
on grey

-- *Aoife Dwyer (Ireland)*

wind-billowed sails
docks gone
to seed

-- *Carol Jordan (Ireland)*

music class –
hail stones drumming
on the roof

-- *Shrikaanth Krishnamurthy (India/England)*

sparkling light –
crows shift darkness
from tree to tree

-- *Pravat Kumar Padhy (India)*



September park
dozens of soldiers
sweeping leaves

crosses buried in snow –
all I can say
about my homeland

-- *Adam Hlobus (Belarus; translated from the Belorussian by Anatoly Kudryavitsky)*

fog over the park –
footprints in the snow
show black

roadside cross
welcoming me
with open arms

-- *Uladzimer Sciapan (Belarus; translated from the Belorussian by Anatoly Kudryavitsky)*



High Water Marks

by Glenn Coats (USA)

That night, I thought about the man who came to talk to my father at the dock; how easily my father spoke to strangers. The man who introduced himself as Jim kept a boat a dozen slips away from my father's. He had grown up near the marshes, had fished and raked clams all of his life. Jim knew how to catch snapper blues and he threw anything silver into the bay and the blues could not resist. He caught gar and kingfish which belonged farther south in the Carolinas; hoisted eels onto the pier that were thick and long as his arms. The man was twenty-eight years old and engaged to a girl who could row a boat fast as any man, knew how to work a crab trap and swam for long distances under water. It seemed like Jim had lived a long full life and I prayed to God that I too would live until I was twenty-eight. It seemed long enough at that moment.

near the sea
houses
fill and empty

morning tide
the sand swept clean
of stories

Emergency

by Michael Dylan Welch (USA)

In my distraction, I mistakenly dial the wrong number, but hang up before anyone answers. My eyes grow wide in momentary mortification. Seconds later, the phone rings.

"This is 9-1-1 – did you have an emergency?"

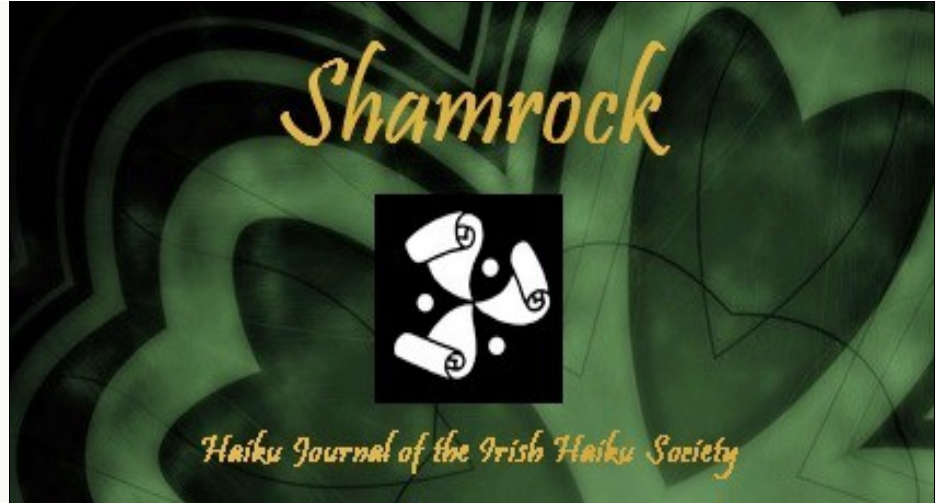
"No," I explain. "I accidentally pressed the wrong speed-dial button. My apologies, but I'm glad to know you called back."

I hang up the phone, and wonder why it's so hard to call you. And if I did, whether you would ever call me back.

pink buds
on the cherry
beginning to show

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Good luck to all!

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sunset on Gloucester Lane –
concrete bollards
in railing shadow twine

after rain
half a dozen pigeons
making ripples

shadowland –
around the ash
a circle of black leaves

a free-for-all
in the willow arch –
sparrow convention

heat wave –
in the pond tadpoles
simmering

hauliers –
birdsong winching up
the sun!

-- Hugh O'Donnell (Ireland)

cooing pigeons
from the branches
bubbles of woodwind

wild geese
veering north
on the starmap

bluebell wood
footprint
of the sky

against the window
the fly's filigree wings
the gauze of rain

on dark foliage
jasmine flowers sip
the starlight

a sudden slit
in the papery sky –
golden ink spilt

-- Anton Floyd (Ireland)

rice picking –
grass carp
brushes ankle

dusk –
swallows weave
through bails of hay

walking to church –
the bells make the new air
colder

daybreak –
first wind
through the oaks

father's old house –
his voice both here
and gone

twilight –
waves breaking
with the fisherman's casts

-- Michael Andrew (Ireland)

moonlight
through thorny trees –
a scarlet tanager

evening lull
a seaside cave exhaling
butterflies

a moment's interlude
the young soldier staring
at his hands

weeping cherry tree
in the graveyard
the first to bloom

depth of autumn
horses bow before
the setting sun

-- *Anatoly Kudryavitsky (Ireland)*

coral trees
losing hearts
all day long

peacock spider adrift
in a gusty sea
of sunflowers

hovering peregrine
fixed above the cliff
fulcrum of shadows

drifting lotus root
breathing
the wet light

-- *Paul Casey (Ireland)*

spring frost
a puff of cirrus
swept from the moon's mouth

choppy waves
a young concertina player
juggling a hornpipe

last autumn's leaves
cartwheeling
through the still May dawn

winter solstice
the footsteps of a missing dog
return

-- Mary O'Keeffe (Ireland)

tide on the turn
estuary driftwood
chops and churns

dense forest floor
along the rotting trunk
a row of saplings

river divides
the island granted
right of way

last rook leaves
gleaned corn field
empty

-- Michael Scott (Northern Ireland)

season of mist
mushrooms sprout up
in the city park

moss growing
without roots...
travellers

rainstorm
a daffodil twines
around the bare tree

heather bush
full of bees...
starless sky

-- *Alex Bramwell (England)*

gloomy morning
damp irises spark
in the garden

weeding
some sort of order
in the winding path

out from the ditch
and into the ditch –
a fox's tail

-- *James Burke (Ireland)*

September sunshine
buddleia abloom
with butterflies

through the mist...
beechnut burrs
crackle underfoot

morning frost
writing on the windscreen
in whorls

-- *Patrick Gerard Burke (Ireland)*

distant sirens
over the border bridge
a blood moon

spring dewdrops...
in my dead friend's room
the clock still ticks

floating in the pond
the frog
my drunken shadow

-- *Chen-ou Liu (Canada)*

a sparrow's
wandering footprints
late snowfall

spring rain
the cat's possession
of my chair

-- *Ignatius Fay (Canada)*

whimpering
the dog tied
to the hospital

frozen dawn
the runner recovers
in his own steam

-- *David Serjeant (England)*

lightning –
the spider slips deeper
into the bath

a caterwaul
sets off the dogs
spring moon

-- *Paul Chambers (Wales)*

traffic junction –
carrion crows hitch a lift
on the wind

debris strewn beach –
the fishermen
gather rubbish

-- *Juliet Wilson (Scotland)*

reflections quiver
in the pool
willow branches

icy path –
hesitant hops
of a thrush

-- *Michael Gallagher (Ireland)*

leaf by leaf
the oak's slow
opening to light

first sound
of the new year
a laughing gull

-- *Peter Newton (USA)*

loose thump
of the bullfrog's cello –
the moon ripples

copper beech leaves –
the dull glitter
of carp in dark water

-- *Kim Welliver (USA)*

last night's argument
in the morning air
wildfire smoke

lone mourning dove
follows the pair
cooler mornings

-- *Alanna C. Burke (USA)*

under moon glow –
sand waves
in the long jump pit

spring field –
each step an explosion
of grasshoppers

-- *Kent Travis (USA)*

dawn concert
a quartet of crows
debugging the lawn

-- *Adelaide B. Shaw (USA)*

rhododendron
the wren turns his head
from side to side

-- *Ann Magyar (USA)*

daybreak...
a fallow field lights up
in dewdrops

-- *Lolly Williams (USA)*

full moon
the black widow
keeps to the shadows

-- *Cyndi Lloyd (USA)*

garden gnome
cabbage leaves tickle
the white beard

-- *Kyle Craig (USA)*

polishing mirrors –
his children's faces shine
from a far-off hut

-- *Darrell Petska (USA)*

summer downpour
the cat's fur scented
with the neighbour's perfume

-- *Nola Obee (Canada)*

a muskrat
sequins of sun ripple
the silence

-- *Debbie Strange (Canada)*

window ice
the garden thaws
in sparkles

-- *Simon Hanson (Australia)*

local oval
a weekday wind whips leaves
into goal

-- *Jan Dobb (Australia)*

forked hay sheaf
coiling out of itself –
a brown snake

-- *Mark Miller (Australia)*

a watery sun
from the morning horizon
steam from the hog's back

-- *John Hawkhead (England)*

a still morning
the cuckoo naming itself
out of sight

-- *John W. Sexton (Ireland)*

just when I thought
my luck was turning
lone magpie

-- *Eileen Sheehan (Ireland)*

heat haze
a butterfly attempts
to land again

-- *Vincent O'Connor (Ireland)*

grey mist settles
in his very bones –
harsh winter

-- *Kara Craig (Ireland)*

sunrise
fish in shallow water
escape the darkness

-- *William Gibb Forsyth (Ireland)*

at the water's edge
marsh marigolds
spilling yellow

-- *Teresa O'Neill (Ireland)*

quieting the mind
between highways
a trimmed maple

-- *Nicholas Klacsanzky (Ukraine)*

black butterfly
flying through
a ray of sunlight

-- *Anna Klacsanzky (Ukraine)*

shadows of clouds
on the summer grass
drifting continents

-- *Ernest Wit (Poland)*

scent of hay –
beyond the old wooden fence
a red horse running

-- *Steliana Cristina Voicu (Romania)*



sparrows
the colour of last year's leaves –
my homeland

golden dandelions
in the sun –
domes

-- *Polina Pecherskaya (Russia; translated from the Russian by Anatoly Kudryavitsky)*

anxious times –
I can't recognise the shoes
left on the porch

-- *Ostap Slyvynsky (Ukraine; translated from the Ukrainian by Anatoly Kudryavitsky)*



New Ink
by Ignatius Fay (Canada)

Touring tattoo studios. The work I have in mind has to look real. When people get a glimpse of my arm, I want a reaction: 'Holy shit! For a second there, I thought...'

Not all tattoo artists are created equal. I need one who can design the artwork, draw it on paper, then do the tattoo. I firmly believe that, if the artist can't do justice to the artwork on paper, he/she won't be able to do the tattoo itself.

body art
doing each other's back
the shortest day

Entering the studio, I am immediately unsure. The walls are covered with drawings and photographs of tattoos. Not unusual. Most are Goth-skulls, snakes, Grim Reapers. Nothing unusual there either, except the sheer number. Resisting the impulse to leave, I decide to look at portfolios.

The second portfolio piques my interest. The book doesn't include any images like the one I want done, but elements in it indicate that he has the technical skills I seek. He is with a client, so I wait. When he emerges from his studio with her, she is obviously pleased.

coldest day
three elderly ladies
comparing first ink

He is friendly, outgoing and charming, but his enthusiasm for my project is the clincher. He loves the idea, and he is convinced that he can do it justice. He is even willing to tackle the drawings without a deposit.

Now I am waiting – impatiently – to see his preliminary drawings.

winter-pale skin
the tattoo artist's
red dragon logo

Edifice
by Raamesh Gowri Raghavan (India)

I have before me a tourist brochure. I think it is laughing at me, the way ink soaked into paper can laugh. A way that is silent, malignant. It seems amused. That I have come to gawk, to gape. Where my forefather once cut down other people's forefathers. Like that of the brochure writer's, perhaps. Or did not. I must trust the story the ink tells me. For the blood soaked in the ground isn't saying anything.

the last installment
of our home loan –
father's last sigh

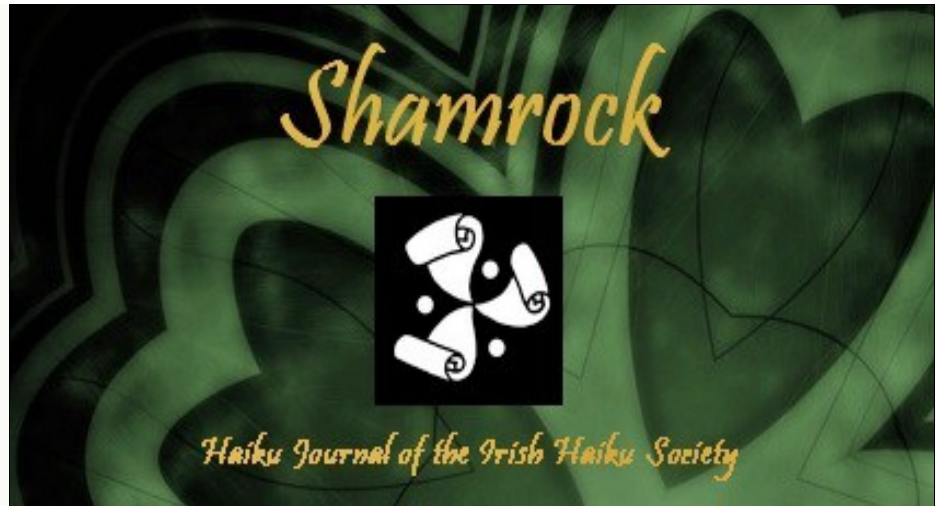
Shamrock

No 32

Haiku from Ireland and
the rest of the world

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News and
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Good luck to all!

World Children's Haiku Contest 2015-2016

A call for Irish entries for the World Children's Haiku Contest 2015/2016 (one three-line haiku + an artwork per child from the island of Ireland under 16 years of age) organised by Japan Airlines in cooperation with the Irish Haiku Society. The winning haiku will be published in the anthology "Haiku by World Children".

The Ireland Section: rules, the entry form and more information can be found on the Irish Haiku Society website:

<http://irishhaiku.webs.com/haikucompetition.htm>

All the entries shall be postmarked by 15th February 2016.

Shamrock Haiku Journal Readers' Choice Awards

We invite all the readers of *Shamrock Haiku Journal* to vote for the best haiku/senryu poem published in 2015, i.e. in the issues THIRTY to THIRTY-TWO (you cannot vote for your own poem, though).

To vote, send an e-mail to [irishhaikusociety\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:irishhaikusociety[at]gmail.com) with "Best haiku of 2015" or "Best senryu of 2015" in the subject line. Please insert the full text of the poem you vote for (only ONE poem in each category) plus the name of its author in the body of your e-mail. The deadline for vote is 31st January, 2016. The best poems will be named in the next issue of *Shamrock Haiku Journal*.



rising moon
the fine craters
on her skin

corner light
a slug hauls its shadow
up the wall

smoke obscures the stars
a mollusc begins
to open

midnight
crows begin
their calling hours

the lift held aloft
waiting for a dead person
to come down

shifting snow
the smell of summer
in the shed

-- Ian Willey (USA – Japan)

washing clothes
in the cold mountain stream –
buttons flash

an owl glides
over the black tree –
moon stands stock still

pilgrims on their way home –
rain falling
on the mud path

a thousand flags flapping
in the cool morning air –
monkeys climb the hill

under the Dhauladar rocks,
a stony path
to the market

down the Ganges
on an old wooden boat –
sun sinks under water

-- Siofra O'Donovan (Ireland)

pushing through
the dead of winter
snowdrops

where the meadow
becomes a ravine
chiffchaff's call

chilling breeze
a coot stays close
to the lough shore

fallen slates
the little owl's eyes
through the mist

graveyard's edge
the damsons close
to falling

-- Thomas Powell (Northern Ireland)

hiding in the vine –
grape-green eyes
of the white cat

cloud shadows scudding
on foothills above the bay –
mottled blue lobsters

white haze
of frost-laced windows –
cashmere layers

darting bird's foot –
the green clawed grapevine
grapples the trellis

Nollaig na mBan –
winter sun redecorates
the undressed tree

Nollaig na mBan: Women's Christmas in Ireland

-- Amanda Bell (Ireland)

pond's edge...
the budding limbs
of polliwogs

evening calm
a spider webbing
the breeze

bumblebee
I, too, am drunk
with wild azaleas

after the storm
a cricket then
crickets

the white
of the white koi
summer clouds

-- *Ben Moeller-Gaa (USA)*

colder days...
walnut trees yet in leaf
in the dying light

sun low in the sky –
warm grass swarms
with grasshoppers

against sunset wall
autumn brushwood stacked
away from the wind

small shrine
a blue prayer flag among
stubbles of thistle

-- *Barbara Morton (Northern Ireland)*

river shadows
his fishing rod leaning
against the willow

river's edge
the rippled shapes
of acacias

moonset
pale light skimming
the ridge

-- *Gavin Austin (Australia)*

fading light...
the shadow of Slieve Martin
longer than itself

harsh sunlight
a crow's caw
cuts the ice

-- *Marion Clarke (Northern Ireland)*

spring light
the shivering ivy
spits out a wren

nesting time –
the magpie returns
the branches to the tree

-- *Paul Bregazzi (Ireland)*

the weathered face
of a mussel shell
autumn beach

his one good eye
keeps watch on me
tourist store cat

-- *Gregory Longenecker (USA)*

Veterans Day
in the flower bed
fresh loam

cloister bells...
an upturned turtle
treading sky

-- *Mark E. Brager (USA)*

winter's end –
our cat scratches through
the window sheeting

late winter fog –
warming the oldest cat's
insulin syringe

-- *Brent Goodman (USA)*

curled lily pad –
a water-strider spans
the sun

switchgrass –
the silent strokes
of a luna moth

-- *Theresa A. Cancro (USA)*

clanging buoy
a frog leaps from mud
to sand

a tidepool
of rippling sunset clouds
reddish egret

-- *Bill Cooper (USA)*

a swamp robin
vanishes into twilight –
yellow moon

cherry moon –
for the last time an old steer
lies down in the meadow

-- *Kevin Valentine (USA)*

a man's shadow
rousing other shadows –
shallow stream

the kingfisher's cry –
a ginkgo leaf spinning
in the eddies

-- *Melissa Watkins Starr (USA)*

city morning
sound of daylight
revs up

summer winds
the puppy chases unseen
into the magnolia

-- *Perry L. Powell (USA)*

crawfish
at the pond's edge
seeking sink holes

in the cattails
two gator hunters
swapping fish stories

-- *Kevin Heaton (USA)*

more peace talks...
a monal hen startled
by our approach

prayers at nightfall
a thrush crushes snail shells
on the temple step

-- *Sonam Chhoki (Bhutan)*

blossom time...
a different song
from the apple tree

surfers' beach –
riding the same wave
seven seagulls

-- *Grace Galton (England)*

summer night
in the white bath
the dust of moths

-- *Richard Turner (England)*

hanging on the edge
of darkness
winter moon

-- *Rachel Sutcliffe (England)*

breathless evening
every reed head bowed
at the dusk chorus

-- *David Kelly (Ireland)*

alzheimer woman
wandering nude
picking blackberries

-- *Noel King (Ireland)*

everywhere
but the road I'm on...
moonshine

-- *S. M. Abeles (USA)*

my echo swallowed
by the valley...
the silence of stones

-- *Jay Friedenbergl (USA)*

stopped at the light
a droning man stares
out into nothing

-- *Tyler Pruett (USA)*

mulberry leaves
evening rain soaking
cricket song

-- *Anna Cates (USA)*

desert twilight
white-winged doves deeper
into the canyon

-- *Devin Harrison (USA)*

late fall
a boy bikes home
carrying skis

-- *Brad Bennett (USA)*

autumn rain
stippling the pond
a dart of minnows

-- *Louisa Howerow (Canada)*

getaway
the difference:
trees

-- *Elizabeth Crocket (Canada)*

the garden goose
fans her wings...
shower of white petals

-- *Anne Curran (New Zealand)*

liquid garden –
sprinkles of sunlight
on coral blossoms

-- *Pravat Kumar Padhy (India)*

Llangernyw Yew
a different moonbeam
for each grave

-- *Rajandeep Garg (India)*

paper boat...
what kind of dream has he launched,
that immigrant child?

-- *Massih Talebian (Iran)*



snowflake
frozen to the windowpane –
looking through it

swallow's
fast and easy flight...
which means she's hungry

-- Andriy Gagin (Ukraine, translated from the Ukrainian by Anatoly Kudryavitsky)

winter cherry
lying next to rubber bullets –
no time for songs today

-- Igor Gusev (Ukraine, translated from the Russian by Anatoly Kudryavitsky)



Wrist Slap

by Al Ortolani (USA)

My first grade granddaughter learns self-defense in taekwondo. Her assailant is startled by her sudden scream as she swats his hand and falls free to the mat. Bowing perfectly at the waist, she returns to the sidelines. Already, she has snapped her first piece of pine like a quick blow to the throat. During practice, she spars with another giggling seven year old. "Come at me like a

kidnapper," they laugh – yellow belts snug around their tiny waists.

flowers bloom
in broken
bottle light

Strange Tugging

by Sonam Chhoki (Bhutan)

Leaving the rumble of traffic in the full glare of an August sun, I step into the cool interior of Musée Guimet, Paris. In the Tibetan Art section I am drawn to the Black Hat Dance costume in a wall-mounted glass case. Only the long black apron is displayed like a large painting. I wonder what became of the main brocade robe with wide sleeves. The accompanying plaque describes it as: 'Tableau Rituel, Le Thibet, XIX siècle.'

Ceiling lights trained on it reflect off the glass panels creating strange optical effects. The three-eyed wrathful deity embossed in the centre of the apron looks perplexed, rather than awe-inspiring. The primal scream of its fanged mouth appears stifled by what seems like its swallowing of a statue of the Buddha on a near-by plinth.

The Black Hat Dance apron is accredited as a gift of the estate of Alexandra David-Néel, a French woman, who travelled extensively in Kham, eastern Tibet in 1921-22, often disguised as a beggar. This is one of many ritual artefacts she brought back.

A group of Brazilians crowd around the display. I retreat to the side. Back in Thimphu dzong*, the Black Hat Dance costume is kept in the darkened chambers of the protective deities out of public view. The performer who dons it at the Tsechu mask dance undergoes intensive training in religious choreography and music. A high-ranking monk initiates him through rites of purification and empowerment for the annual festival. Each gesture of his hand and his facial expressions symbolise different aspects of the Buddha Mind. To the clang of cymbals, the blare of long horn trumpets and the ululations of accompanying dancers he swirls and leaps in a haze of juniper and roasted barley incense sanctifying the dzong courtyard as a hallowed space for pilgrims who come to be blessed.

Here, in a thermostat-controlled room under security cameras and primed alarms the applique apron hangs pristine, free from the smoke of incense, the dust of a monastery courtyard and the sweat of the monk-performer. I fight an impulse to prostrate before it. There is a jostle of cell phones honing into the costume. I walk out of the building into the warm street, my lens misting.

Paris nightfall
flashing cameras dim
the Eternal Flame

full-chested moon
the cruel solitude
of a long haul

* Dzong (pron. zong): a fortress that serves as both a monastic and a secular administrative centre.