

failed ~~haiku~~

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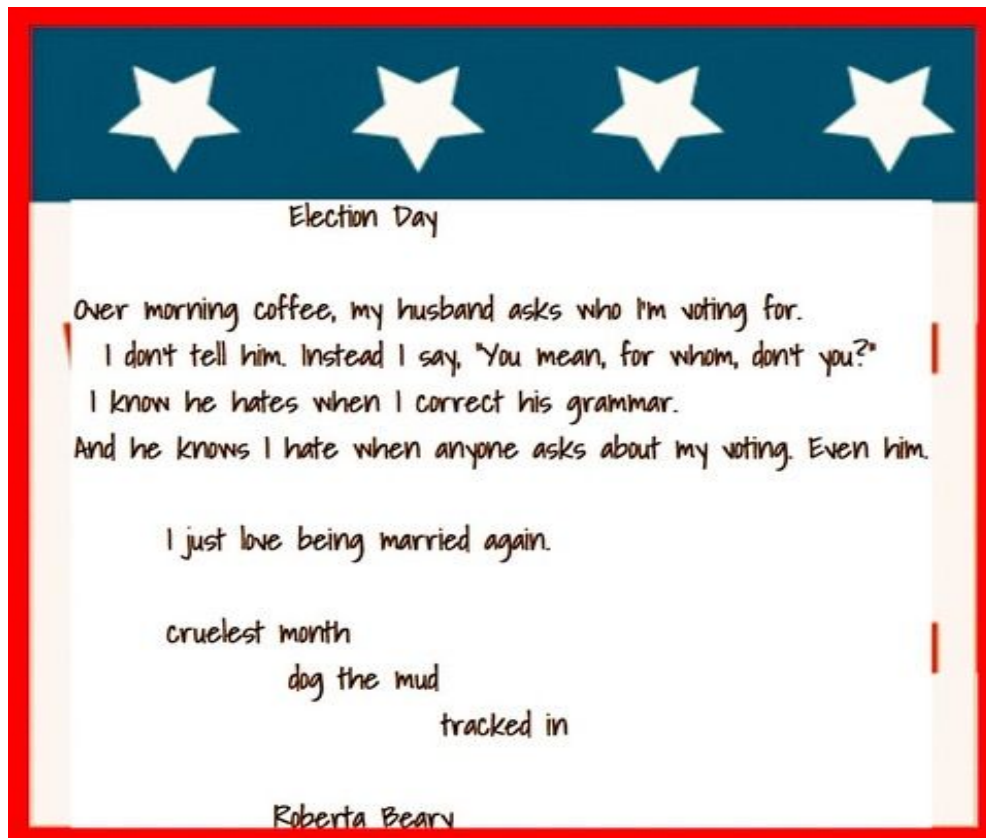
roberta beary

Guest 'Failed' Editor

www.failedhaiku.com

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Haibunga by Roberta Beary

Jane Reichhold Memorial Haiga Contest

Results

Thank you all who have supported this memorial contest. Especially I want to thank our two judges this year. **Sandi Pray** and **Ron C. Moss** are both known to all of you I am sure, but I have had the pleasure of meeting them both in person, and admiring their work for two decades. They are indeed friends but more importantly 'inspirations' to me and many others.

Click the link above and see what the judges saw in these fine works and read the commentaries that will give you insights into the haiga chosen. But, will also give you many hints to creating and understanding your own work.

I would be remiss if I did not also thank my friend and fellow editor **Brent Goodman** as he turns over the baton for [Prune Juice Journal](#) to **Tia Haynes**.

Also, **Roberta Beary** has provided an eclectic collection of Haibun in the issue. She is a repeat 'guest editor', and she will always be welcomed back!!!

I also welcome my newly minted 'co-editor' **Bryan Rickert** to Failed Haiku. He and I will cook up some fun for next year and he will be debuting in the next issue as a *full editor*!!!

Mike

Cast List

In order of appearance
(all work copyrighted by the authors)

Kristen Lindquist
Vera Constantineau
Michael Henry Lee
Charlotte Mandel
Bryan Rickert
Antonietta Losito
John Hawkhead
Ellen Compton
Cristina Angelescu
Lew Watts
Mary White
Barbara Strang
Bob Lucky
Maureen Weldon
Kala Ramesh
Paul Beech
Jim Kacian
Marilyn Ashbaugh
Madhuri Pillar
Robbie Porter
Diarmuid Fitzgerald

Carol Raisfeld
Marcyn Del Clements
Cynthia Rowe
Bruce Jewett
David J Kelly
Tim Cremin
Lorraine Carey
Maeve O'Sullivan
Tracy Davidson
Kath Abela Wilson
suraj nanu
Benedict Grant
Mike Gallagher
Tim Gardiner
Maria Concetta Conti
Marion Clarke
Terri L. French
Agus Maulana Sunjaya
Helen Buckingham
Adelaide B. Shaw
Mark Forrester
Elizabeth Alford
Adrian Bouter
B.A. France
Valentina Ranaldi-Adams
Robert Moyer

Suraja Roychowdhury

Eileen F. Connolly

Mark Gilbert

Roberta Beary

Mike Rehling

Strata

They first met in a college archaeology class and went on a dig together in Ireland. After she died, many decades later, he channeled his grief into poring over everything she owned, correlating boxes of old photos with the dates in her journals, reconstructing their life together before, and after, her new liver.

the lifespan of skin
where you once touched
now dust

Kristen Lindquist

Afternoon

There's a chill in the breeze through the open window as I sign my brother's weekly note. I'm told he's busy, that there's much for him to do. His regular barber's appointments, afternoon walks to the gazebo on the fringe of the property, walks to the mailbox and any other place he takes it into his head to go. And of course, there are the new people he meets every day. I place a stamp squarely in the corner of the envelope and seal the flap. Eighteen letters now. Sometimes a photograph or a poem he's always loved is included. What does he think when these notes with their tokens arrive, now that he's lost his mind?

near the fence
watching traffic
on a nameless road

Vera Constantineau

veraconstantineau.com

[@VeraConstantine](https://www.instagram.com/VeraConstantineau)

the Procedure

seemingly routine enough, a matter of course, no reason for concern,
or cause for alarm, literally thousands performed each day with the
same unfailing result

rhythm of the rain
a sense that all did not
go as planned

Michael Henry Lee

Spring Barometer

Spring enters with a nor'easter, the large hemlock swaying wildly past my window suddenly decorated with frost. Melted in an hour at 46 degrees F. Sunshine invites me to walk to the pond towards the waterfall sound of fountain spray. The water hits straight up from the fountain center, falls as an inverted fan of misty droplets. Low foam and concentric circles ripple to the green bank, ripples reflecting greens of woods, grass, my jacket. Fish glide together and apart. I sit down on the white bench. Breeze touches my cheek like the hand of a friend. Thrum of a plane engine overhead.

my habitat—
alone
with notebook

Charlotte Mandel
charlottemandel.com

Phantom

“My right foot itches and there’s not a damn thing I can do about it”

“But they took your right leg off below the knee two years ago?”

“I know they did. I know”

wildflower field
shadows fill the trench
from an old war

Bryan Rickert

Even The Flies...

The conversation has long pauses. There's no sound except our sipping of the hot tea served to us. Since the last time I saw her, she looks thinner and tired. She has dark circles under her eyes, and on a cheekbone, under the powder, I seem to notice a purplish tinge.

"Maybe you should change the air", I tell her. "You could take the children and come stay at my house."

She doesn't answer and nervously chews a lock of long hair. I notice her chewed-off fingernails.

So I tell her about the exhibition market of craft activities, the walks, bicycle rides, but she interrupts me.

"My husband thinks your house is too wet for us, and that the country is boring."

"My husband thinks...my husband says...my husband feels..."

I let the words remain suspended in the air. We say goodbye with a wave of the hand.

bitter cold —
the glazed look in the eyes
of a manikin

Antonietta Losito

The White Room

*It felt like betrayal; lifting a small body, its soft sack of bones and slung flesh,
into an old carry basket. She had deteriorated swiftly, legs buckling under her,
small dark stains where she had been unable to control functions. We were caught
in the jaws of a sharp choice, one where decision resulted in sadness and pain,
ending in the glare of a cold white room.*

*end of suffering
the vet sweeps away
a snippet of fur*

John Hawkhead

Memorial Day

Harleys, Hondas, Yamahas, gathering from the four directions, they come in twos, or fives, or fifties. Some ride alone, some with pillion riders up. Every year we promise we will see them. This year we do. The summer sun is high and the sky is clear, yet we hear thunder as ten thousand engines roll.

resonance—
reflections of faces
in a black marble wall

Ellen Compton

captcha

I remember precisely one night when I was camping with my parents in the mountains. I was fourteen. In the mountains the moon seems so big you can almost touch it. I told my father that if you could look behind, while situated outside our universe, you'll probably see nothing. He told me that even if this was a wonderful idea it would be probably better to keep it for myself. You never know what will people say about you!

From that moment on, I tried to figure out what was I doing on Earth. Who was I? Why was I here? So on and so forth... Yesterday the computer asked me if I am human...

colon, hyphen, parenthesis -
my daughter teaches me
to smile anew

Cristina Angelescu

Reflection

“My god, you’ve not changed at all!”

We are sitting at an airport bar, slugging back slushy, weak martinis. My wife thinks they help her sleep on flights; I find them depressingly hydrating. It’s our annual anniversary trip. Standing before us is a large, bald figure cradling a briefcase and smiling inanely. He repeats the first two words. It is clear he is speaking to my wife.

“I’m sorry,” she says. “Do I know you?”

He turns away for a moment before looking back.

“It’s Jim,” he says. “Your ex-husband. We were married fifteen years.”

morning shave
another new lie
for the postnup

Lew Watts

Another Way

News of another Lockdown has us rattled. My husband is out the door for a walk like a flash. He walks 10k every day since the first Lockdown. Will he step it up this time? Wincing I put my foot to the floor and walk slowly to the kitchen. A painful bone spur which I developed from overdoing, it feels like a nail in my heel. Winter is coming. What can I do to relieve the tedium? A beautiful russet maple leaf falls from my neighbour's wall and lands on the windowsill.

slipping
through my fingers —
soft merino wool

Mary White

Relocation

Morning

Maybe you're too old for it.

You woke up too early. Even though you slept badly. Must've been the full moon glaring through thin curtains. Dawn came with the cicadas. They drown out the birds, if there are any in this city. It's already humming. A baggage train snakes over the airport. Car headlights through a distant highway. On the far headland, nameless to you, a light flicks on and off.

Looks like another steamy day. Six ranges of nameless hills picked out in purple light. Now the sun is rising behind. On each side of the highest peak a triangle of pink light is projected on the clouds. Wow – you've never seen anything like it before. But it's too soon to get up. You open some book you found in a sale bin.

“Claudine at School” –
back to the naughty
1890s

Noon

After getting the tickets you count your cash. Hey, still a bit left, all the same you decide to walk. The steps don't look that far away. It's getting steeper, the sun beats down hard. Your left knee is sore. You cross the sloping road anxiously. In this city the cars whoosh out of nowhere. You climb four flights of concrete steps. The paint on the rails is in bad condition. You know those little white flakes are lead – and poisonous.

Mount Street – a fitting name! Young students power past you. You're hot, and your throat is dry. At last, the Union building. Out of breath you toil up the slippery stairs to Student Job Search.

Jobs on the boards today:

Cleaner required, references and reliable car.

Leaflet Distributors – Female students willing to wear t-shirts.

Easter Bunny, at least 5'7" tall.

Parched and now exhausted, you drift along a corridor. You see a Pepsi machine. You succumb. The tab on the can gives way, suddenly.

trick of opening –
my new dress showered
with Mountain Dew

Night

A barbecue – in some remote suburb with a name you dare not pronounce. You have met only three of the guests before. Some people speak to you, but you can't think of a reply. It's easiest to just listen to these women, talking about their important jobs. You feel like you're from a different planet, not just the South Island. Will you ever get a job as a cleaner?

As night falls some creature, frog or cricket, chirps musically. You walk round the garden trying to see, but it's dark. You go inside again and listen to a young man saying witty and wonderful things about literature, to someone else. Will you ever be part of this scene?

local wildlife –
a sharp pain
in my foot

Barbara Strang

Life Model

Past my prime, more crumbling than chiseled, I have nonetheless
dedicated the rest of my life to being a muse.

the artist's gaze
not all of me
holds the pose

Bob Lucky

IN OUR FLAT

Back in the early 1960s we listened to Radio Caroline.
The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, Roy Orbison, The Kinks,
this was a night-time occupation on a crackly old blue
transistor radio.

We were daring, we were "with it."

lockdown

I lie on my back

and study the stars

Maureen Weldon

I Me Mine

Up in the sky, two kites flutter, one red and the other multi-coloured. They seem to gather the hues of twilight in their wake. *Oohs* and *aaahs* resound from the terrace — all from my own family, but they betray a trace of tension. A fight is on, not of bloodshed and vengeance but of two kites — one mine and one my brother's — competing for that wide expanse of the blue sky.

crossing decades
I piece together
a torn letter

Kala Ramesh

In Loco Parentis

I passed the spot again the other day, driving the old coast road. There on the left, that gap in the tangle of bough and briar...

Back in '62, this was where, having arrived by train, Joe and I would begin our heathland hike to the Great Hall.

Twenty minutes at a brisk pace would bring us to the Hall in all its faded Jacobean majesty. Whenever electrical work was needed here, Joe would be sent for. I was his apprentice, a 15 year old boy. Joe was entrusted with my care though he'd stand no messing, that was for sure.

A perfectionist he was, old Joe. And perfection is what he demanded of me. If I were an eighth of an inch out in drilling a wooden pattress block for a switch or socket, he'd fling it down to smash on the stone floor.

Often though, in quiet moments, Joe would burst into song. Trouble was, it would always be the same song, always the same verse too: 'The Floral Dance', verse 6. I'd even find the words on my own lips, unbidden.

I still do occasionally, passing that spot on the old coast road.

missile crisis
how we sweated through
those days of terror

Paul Beech

Hinagu

is the town which, after he had addled himself trying to understand the nature of addiction and his own personality by drinking himself to torpor — “*Sake* is my koan,” he wrote, “If I could understand *sake* — if I could learn the true way to enjoy *sake*, it would be my awakening, my breakthrough!” — Santoka adopted as his final home, and which is now (as then?) run by Yakuza. They stroll the mild evenings between hotel and *onsen* in their *yakata*, airing their hidden tats under cover of darkness, drinking openly, as throughout history the town has permitted.

Such a display would be appropriate and sufficient museum for this most dissolute of poets, but in fact there is more. The Santoka museum is being fitted into the rough lodgings where he stayed during his time here. It is easy, in these dim and low-ceilinged digs, to imagine the squalor and anxiety of fitting thirty men — and rampant lice and rats and disease — to a room, the lucky ones with their straw pallet, hard boards for the most. For a man far down the well of alcoholism, perhaps such didn’t matter to the poet, but one would need to be far more Buddhist than I to be indifferent to such circumstances. But such conditions, at a few *sen* a week, meant the remainder of his meagre funds could be dedicated to his awakening.

beating a dead horse with no stick satori

Jim Kacian

Waves

We walk dunes until our soles burn to swim until our lips turn blue.

stolen kisses
all the sand
in my shoes

Marilyn Ashbaugh

Beating Around The Bush

Slipping through the fingers
my broken string of pearls
sprinkle the vast expanse of the floor
swept and mopped to pristine silence

lockdown
a picket fence separates
her verbosity

Madhuri Pillar

Charity Shop Blues

'It's a bargain,' she said. 'Doreen had one similar. Look, it still has the original label.'

'It's a nice cardigan,' agreed her friend. 'I wonder why it was never worn.'

'It might not have gone with their outfit. Maybe it was a shop reject. It could have been an unwanted Christmas present. They might have forgotten about it, and then had a clear out.'

Neither said what they really thought.

She went home and put the cardigan in the wardrobe, with mothballs.

It hung there unworn for years until the day she died.

Then it went to a charity shop.

for the first time-

no welcome

to greet him

Robbie Porter

Camino

The road is quiet. The air is mostly still in the early morning with an on and off chatter of birds I cannot identify. A friend and I approach a small church. I push open the door and they do not creak. The hinges must be well oiled. I hear the soft pitter of my friend's shoes hitting the tiles. An old lady sits at a table and smiles and says something in Spanish that I do not get. I say, 'Buen Camino' and thrust out my passport, which crinkles. She lifts a stamper.

a whack
echoes from wall to wall
unsettling the air

The smell of wax comes to me. The candles are like asterisks flickering in the dark. Dust motes fill the air making the place old. I sit in the pew and say a prayer to keep us both safe. Roses festoon the altar and their perfume wafts around.

body and soul rested
a hint of polish
from the worn pew

A draft blows my hair around, inviting me back out. The sky is filled with a midday sun which warms my skin. After some miles I pick up the red sand near the path and let it pour through my fingers. My friend passes a bottle of water to me and it invigorates my body. My boots are now hot and tight from all the walking. I want to go barefoot over the heated gravel, but know that it will cut my feet badly.

hobbling
this way and that
a beetle and I

I see hills in the distance covered with trees. Many cars in different colours drive with speed. The road shimmers and looks as if it's bending in the heat. There are gaps in the tarmac from bubbles that have popped and oil trickles out. Some pilgrims turn a corner and disappear from view. We long to catch up with them and get through this day.

disappearing
in the sprinkler spray
a rainbow

As we pass by a hostel my friend catches a glimpse of a swimming pool. She immediately wants to check in but I protest over the cost. She offers to pay but I insist on paying my own way and reluctantly I agree we stay. We are served a large dish of paella. The tang of the spice hits my tongue. The local red wine is fruity and heady. There is plenty of chat and laughs from the company. Later I admit to my friend that she made the right call.

evening dip
releasing the journey
into the water

Diarmuid Fitzgerald
www.deewriter.com

MOVING ON

Beating a kid never made a bad kid good. He beat every hope she ever had out of her so she would become everything he said she would.

When he hits her mother it's a horror movie and she can't get out, nor block the sound and the agony. She wants to kill him and herself sometimes. There is a monster in the house. She calls him 'father'.

the pastor's daughter
her Sunday dress
the color of bruises

Carol Raisfeld

twitter: [@carol red](https://twitter.com/carol_red)

SALMON FISHING
HAIDA GWAI, British Columbia, Canada

There's bravado in these fishing guides. "How will you know it's a King before we get it in the boat?" I ask. "I'll know," he says, in his spare Canadian clip. "Just keep yer tip up."

through fog-clamped waters
my excited
YAHOO!

Marcyn Del Clements

I'm playing

a virgin tape, mesmerised by white noise, thinking of you, of our
black-and-white existence, rarely on wavelength, at the whim of
revolutions -- I'm scrutinising white noise, lowering the hiss, alert to
our paths' pitter-patting, fast forwarding from time to time, hell-bent
on rewind

our son's birth
postpartum the hospital
knocked down

Cynthia Rowe

www.cynthiarowe.com.au

Words

That moment screaming to be written.

pen but no paper
a large white moth
settles on my hand

Bruce Jewett

kaleidoscope

Today is the first day of autumn. Not in any official capacity, just by my own definition. It's the first time I've seen a breeze manage to steal leaves from the trees. With each gentle gust handfuls of them trail out, to leeward, behind their parents. The gutters aren't blocked, the pavements aren't slippery, but the process has started. There's no turning back.

barber visit
the floor's coiffure
more salt than pepper

David J Kelly
[@motto sakura](#)

Summer Pageant

Performances are given daily throughout the season. Just show up any time and you become part of the cast, playing a version of yourself. And the cast is also the audience. There's no director and the script is improvised, but everyone seems to know what to do: toddlers dig right in at the tidepools; the arcades are streaming with older kids.

beach pizza
not much flesh left
to tattoo

Tim Cremin

Golden Years

I decide on Wexford this time as our holiday destination and organise accommodation, pack everyone's clothes, toys, books and DVDs for the car journey. Our first day is glorious, so we decide on Hook Head, Ireland's oldest working lighthouse. There are pirates, stalls and entertainers among hoards of people looking for the same experience as ourselves. The children love it and are enthralled by the guided tour. They play chess on a giant board, meet other kids, spend their money in the gift shop on trinkets, keyrings and souvenirs and all the stuff children love. They disappear to go rock climbing and exploring. Just as I take a sharp intake of breath to shout about the dangers, I see myself a long time ago, jumping from rock to craggy rock, throwing slimy seaweed into the tide and left alone to do it. I remain quiet, watching them from a safe distance.

holiday coins
frittered
on fool's gold

Lorraine Carey

Valediction

Dublin's Christchurch Cathedral on the last Tuesday in May. We prepare for their arrival: gowns, colours and safety pins at the ready. A string quartet, made up of students from a sister college, plays sweetly. The students troop in at the appointed time, accompanied by family members of varying ages. Most are barely recognisable from their classroom selves: more glamorous, more grown-up. There are hair extensions, microscopic skirts and high heels. Heavy makeup. Hijabs. Exotic nail designs. False eyelashes. Lads appear in black trousers and white trainers. Tattoos. Man buns. Number one haircuts. Football shirts. Smiles break out at the moment each of them grasps their scroll. Awards. Speeches. Shout-outs.

the supine Strongbow
looks up from his dark tombstone
unmoved

It's all over in an hour or two. After the group photos, we descend stone steps into the crypt, drink wine and chat to our graduates. We shake hands and exchange knowing glances with parents, many of them younger than ourselves. Classmates hug each other in delight, their screams bouncing off the low ceiling. A few of them even insist on hugging some of us, joking that we too have scrubbed up well. We marvel at the mummified cat, eternally chasing the mummified rat. Both were retrieved from a single organ pipe and are now behind glass, like an ancient freeze-frame of Tom and Jerry. After a while, the graduates drift off. We migrate across the road to The Lord Edward, take over the small first-floor bar and squeeze together onto soft seats and low stools, lifting our glasses to toast the end of another academic year.

limits on gatherings:
getting their certs in the post
class of 2020

Maeve O'Sullivan

Twitter: [@writefromwithin](https://twitter.com/writefromwithin)

New Beginnings

So, there I am, minding my own business, all quiet and comfy. When, suddenly, hell breaks loose! Seismic waves, deafening noise, blinding light... all disturb my zen state. Gloved hands tug me through the open sunroof, a giant smacks me on the bottom. Cheek! A rough rubbing over, then I'm dropped on someone's ample chest. "Hello, baby," says a warm, familiar voice. "Hello, milk!" thinks I.

suckled breast
already he takes
after his father

Tracy Davidson

Twitter: [@tracydavidson27](https://twitter.com/tracydavidson27)

Dream House

Hamilton Avenue spews sputters roars shoots them out in the cellar
one after another the dandelion machine black oil burner labyrinth
pipes gold circles to the upstairs bedroom parents bed full of
repeating blooms syllables watch fish mouthing it over and over in
the attic climbing thin ladders propped against white walls the
ancient wood trap door pushed open light spills widely into a dark
room jewels on every shelf cut and tumbled into what changes into
the roar up the driveway take-away Victorian house full of medics
working hard with long needles out with all of them post haste and
deep sigh they jump out space suited

on the van
it reads : bad dream
moving company

Kath Abela Wilson

An evening lullaby

Daughter's home in the misty ranges of the western ghats. Not as a guest nor as a visitor. Brought in by her to cool down a loner. Loneliness and solitude, not the same bird but in the same guise. Sharing days and sharing nights the winter sundown.

five minutes late
my watch says
I am right

I used to be a teacher and they know the twins of my daughter. Used to be a writer too. Used to be a little bit. Aides de camp they are the knights to make me chill. A rhythmic drum, not so far not so near. Full moon of shraavana. Weaving through the hamlet of gabled hats a circular dance clockwise and reverse to the rhythm of repeated beats. Maybe some ritual or so they become. Nobody seems to notice me. Suddenly there is a drizzle. Trailing back with the knights one left and the other one right. With unassuming silence.

scent of saute
she murmurs
an old hymn

suraj nanu

RUNNING ON EMPTY

Towards the end, when he'd begun his descent, he would call me up in the middle of the night and question me on love and loyalty. Direct and unswerving, he'd wait on the other end of the line for answers, and in those drawn-out silences I would rack my brains for what I thought he wanted —needed— to hear. It was never enough. Four years on I still hear his voice, thick and close, questioning, questioning, the dark spinning out in the silences that follow. And always in the background, as a kind of mocking accompaniment, the lap and clink of ice cubes in a glass.

the wing's shadow
as the plane banks
final approach

Benedict Grant

Milestones

After that first kiss at the crossroad dance, they parted, Tom cycling towards Ballymac, she to Kilmorna. Thirty years and four kids later, she kissed him goodbye.

Today, another thirty years on, unkissed in this time of pandemic, her neighbours line the crossroad, its dancehall long turned to dust.

granite
the distance between them
lichen covered

Mike Gallagher

It was always about Henry

Gotta clean up. This flat is a fucking mess. His little red face greets me as usual; pathologically happy, psychotic even. What's he smiling for? Plastic bastard.



vacuum it's not you it's me

Tim Gardiner

Tim Gardiner
twitter [@timgardiner3](https://twitter.com/timgardiner3)

A Sunday in October

I awake at dawn. The sky is cloudy. The mountain looks blurred, its colours unnatural. Smoke comes out of the main crater. Everything is stuck behind a grey cloud. Later in the morning the coloured lights of bars, shops, and glass office buildings appear. But the clouds keep coming.

smoke rings
the shortness
of my breath

Maria Concetta Conti

The Phone Call

Back in the early eighties, if the BBC weather forecast promised sunshine on a Friday across Northern Ireland, my parents' house phone would ring twice, then stop. This potentially suspicious signal was not a mystery to me, as I knew my friend Mary was the instigator of the calls.

Christmas chatter . . .
my twin brothers receive
walkie-talkies

Although we attended different schools, both were located in the same town around twenty minutes from our hometown of Warrenpoint. Mary's call would confirm that we would be bunking off classes at the news of good weather the following afternoon. This was a random pattern, as unbroken sunshine is rare in this part of the world. We'd meet at the Ulsterbus Station, flash our school bus passes and travel all the way to the terminal in Kilkeel, further along the coast. We had to duck down as we passed through our hometown of Warrenpoint, in case anyone recognised us. When we arrived at our destination about half an hour later, we'd enjoy a huge slice of lemon meringue pie with a dollop of fresh cream in the small café tucked up in a corner of town.

We should have done that on this particular day in 1983. However, for a change, we had planned to watch a horror movie in Mary's house while her parents were at work, so we got off the bus in our town square. We decided to go to the nearest phone box to make a call, just to make sure no one was home. As we strolled along the dock wall, we were puzzled to find that all streets exiting the square had been cordoned off. Almost three decades later, I struggle to remember why we decided it would be a good idea to eat our packed lunches in

the phone box and plan our next move, but that's exactly what we did.

get effin' out of there!
a British soldier screams
. . . post-blast silence

Marion Clarke

Blog: <https://seaviewwarrenpoint.wordpress.com>

Twitter: [@MarionSClarke](https://twitter.com/MarionSClarke)

Call from my son

So get this — this guy cuts me off so I speed up and get around him then we are stopped at a red light and he's behind me right on my ass and when I go to take off I back up a bit just enough to barely bump his car so he throws open his door and gets out and I get out to see if there's any damage and he starts yelling at me "do you know you just hit a \$150,000 car?" and then he starts choking me and fortunately there is a cop there and I'm yelling "he's choking me!" and the cop gets out and breaks it up and there's no damage to the car and the cop asks if I want to press charges. . .anyway, that was my day. . .how y'all doing? Enjoying your vacation?

a plus mark
on the pregnancy test
and so it begins

Terri L. French

Morning Coffee

Every morning you always come whenever I prepare coffee.
I know this sounds crazy, but it's like a gift to me.
I love your presence and your scent that mixes with the aroma of my
coffee.
It's okay even if it's all just my imagination.

longing for her
I warm a beach pebble
in my hand

Agus Maulana Sunjaya

THE RESTAURANT AT THE END OF EUROPE

Tectonic plates beyond smashing was our anthem.

picnic blanket

moth banquet

Helen Buckingham



SUMMER CAMP

an ekphrastic haibun inspired by Bathers in the Forest, by August Renoir

At last! Back again at Totally Nude and Not Afraid Nudist Camp. Two weeks of freedom from the toil of work, the stench of the city, the constraint of clothes. Here in this secluded wooded glen, this tranquil pool, here where birds sing, is perfect paradise. Here is where I can breathe.

"Henry! Stop that! You know the rules."

Look at Louise. She's put on some weight since last summer. Well, she's tall enough to carry a few more pounds. Janine and Marta are very close. Hmmmmm...I wonder. That's fine. If they're happy, that's what matters. Live and let live.

"Henry! I mean it. Quit that."

Wonder what young Paul is dreaming about so quiet over there. Girls? Getting rich? Wonder what the school board would think if they knew I was here.

"Miss Richmond, what did you do on your summer vacation?"

I could give them an earful. Those fudd-dudds would have a stroke.

"Henry! Enough! What's that? You say this is a nature camp and we should follow our nature? You should set a good example for the others, for young Paul. Observe the nature around you, think lofty thoughts and write a haiku. You'll feel better in the morning."

cool waters
splashing away
the heat of desire

Adelaide B. Shaw

Reckless

Waking from anesthesia, my wife is groggy. The nurse cautions her not to drive for twenty-four hours. No important business or legal decisions. No shopping on Amazon, she says with a smile.

driving home
hitting each pothole
cherry blossoms

Mark Forrester

Crush on a Poet

The poet knows it. Not about the crush. Knows IT — the kind with italics, all capital letters, or rarely, a pair of asterisks.

This poet knows how to fold words over like origami paper; how to metamorphose memories into a crane before me. How to unfold cranes into a story.

Knows how to bring the streets of life together like intersections, signpost sentences guiding the way, bridging one stanzaic highway to another and another.

Like an illusionist on the stage—
here one moment, gone the next — he keeps me entranced with his sleights of hand and turns of phrase. And however much I may keep my eyes on the ball, the magic of it remains a mystery.

leaf pile
jumping into
a new relationship

Elizabeth Alford

MY MOTHER'S NAME

It's autumn, and the last rose in the yard seems to hide
from wind and rain. Obviously this flower is about to wither,
but still she recalls the scarlet color she was born with.
Who could possibly forget such comforting beauty,
the hue she showed in earlier days...

These are confusing times. But is not our fate like
the rose's? Good things come and go, and nothing's clear
in the end.

more and more
mom's thinging
through her days

Adrian Bouter

Scaping the Land

the rattle of the two-cycle engines and high-speed grind of the neighbors' backpack leaf blowers. incessant. they alternate back and forth between equipment, too loud and grating for my brain to dismiss as white noise in the background of the waning afternoon. landscaping over gardening. instilling order over tending nature. asserting dominance. scaping their land. whacking instead of weeding. forcing it to conform to their television and catalog dominated vision of suburban human perfection. birdsongs gone. crickets gone. and I'm left wondering, wouldn't a rake give them a better workout?

wind in the trees
the howling goes on
even after it fades

B.A. France

[@b a france](#)

Numbers

I learned arithmetic in grade school. The teacher used bundles of tongue depressors to illustrate the ones' place, the tens' place and the hundreds' place.

one million , , ten million
and still counting
coronavirus

Valentina Ranaldi-Adams

A MIGHTY FORTRESS

She raises her head from the pillow to ask, Do you remember what my voice sounded like, her sweet soprano that made her the star of every operetta in her small town, that married and buried scores of people, she sang in so many choirs, some of them together with me, perched behind the preacher, the organ thundering ecclesiastical chords through our very bones, her voice soaring above that of other mediocre moms into the sanctuary.

No, I say, I can hardly remember her voice, I only remember the smiles on the faces of the congregation.

in the living room
covered with dust and pictures
her piano

Robert Moyer

The Enemy Within

I am the predator, hunting, seeking, my eyes darting back and forth as I move slowly, attentively. And then I see it. Yes! With a swift move, a twist of the wrists, heart racing, I move in.

parking garage
gunning past the others
into an empty spot

Victory! I am not going to be late for my 'networking' appointment after all; in fact I am early. Clutching my file (resume, papers, just-in-case-you-never-know), I walk through the swinging doors into the lobby. It looks like a posh hotel. The occasional white coat walking by, the occasional patient in a wheelchair with an IV line attached being wheeled through—the only clue that this is in fact, a hospital. A famous cancer hospital.

I sit in the waiting area of the clinic and look around. And then it suddenly strikes me. At least half the people around me must have some sort of cancer. I cannot tell—just a growing unease.

Cancer Center
the sour flavor
of crab apples

Unbidden, an image flashes of an angry tumor, riddled with blood vessels, mutated cells refusing to die, the body turning on itself in some strange self-destructive act of violence. A search for immortality gone wrong. And the defence, the army of cells deployed by the body's immune system to fight, to contain this self-turned-enemy. Is it compassion, that they cannot completely kill one of their own? I

imagine the growing tumor, spreading its tentacles, in a mad spiral towards evermore, choking the very body that keeps it alive. And a different sense of awe envelops me as I realize that I am, in fact, sitting amidst one of the greatest battles of life. One of the greatest battles FOR life.

eternity
the roadmap
strewn with bypasses

Zoom out. I'm shaken from my reverie as a nurse calls out a name. And I recognize this other battlefield, where human minds strive to understand and treat this insanity, this overblown zest for living that paradoxically results in death. Anti-cancer drugs; surgery; radiation; nutrition; prayers and on and on and on. All waiting behind that door, that the patient walks through when their name is called. The miracle of life—I experienced it each time I gave birth. Joyful, profound, marvelous. But never, in all my life, have I understood the enormity, the magnificence of this struggle that is health—of body and spirit—so profoundly, so dramatically, as I do now.

caressing my breast
the memory of shadows
on a mammogram

The door opens and my name is called.

Suraja Roychowdhury

A meeting in June 2003

I once had the pleasure of meeting John Moriarty, the amazing Kerry writer, mystic, philosopher, and poet of extraordinary talent. He was also a college lecturer, a gardener and a labourer. John was a tall man with a head of bushy white hair and heavy white eyebrows. He had a commanding presence but spoke in a quiet North Kerry accent. He was bright-eyed and always wore a smile. I recognised the occasion as a privilege for me on that Saturday afternoon. He called into the library in Killarney, where I worked. I can still picture him coming down the steps into the juvenile section, to shake hands with me. We talked about the view from the library and traffic congestion in Killarney at the time. As he moved away, up the steps, he reminded me of a Santa, affable and unassuming, determined on some benevolent mission.

children's voices
in the library —
philosophers

Eileen F. Connolly

Desserts

just one raspberry passive aggression

We had argued the previous day. She was still angry with me. She said she usually does aggressive aggression.

Mark Gilbert

Dick and Jane

Dick says, Look, Jane. Look. See Stalker. See Stalker playing.

I cannot see Stalker, Jane says.

He is hiding, Dick says. Stalker likes to play hide and seek.

Oh no, says Dick. Stalker is caught, Jane. The virus caught Stalker, Jane.

Oh no, says Jane.

schoolbus

an old man coughs up

black butterflies

Jane says, Look Dick, here is the hospital. Stalker will like a visit from us.

Where is his room, Dick? Where, where, where?

Ask Nurse, says Dick. Nurse knows everything.

Dick, Nurse says Stalker is dead, dead, dead. Stalker is dead, Dick.

Remember when Fluffy died, Dick? I was sad. But I am not sad now.

Are you glad, Jane, says Dick.

No, Dick, I am not glad, says Jane. I am not sad, says Jane. I am nothing.

We have to go home, Dick says. Mother is waiting.

Goodbye, hospital, says Dick.

Goodbye, hospital, says Jane.

street dog watering an unmarked grave

Roberta Beary
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damn right ive got the blues

as soon as i get into my own head i go outta of my mind. subtlety is a thing to be sought but is seldom achieved.

nothing to lose
singing offkey
in the shower

Mike Rehling

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