

# failed haiku

*A Journal of English Senryu*  
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**michael rehling**

*'Failed' Editor*

[www.failedhaiku.com](http://www.failedhaiku.com)

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*convening in the woods the congress of the living and the dead*

WJR

# Cast List

*In order of appearance*  
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**Maeve O'Sullivan**

**Barbara Tate**

**Jesus Chameleon**

**Dave Read**

**Eva Limbach**

**Bruce Jewett**

**Rachel Sutcliffe**

**Angela Terry**

**Richard L. Ratliff**

**Garry Eaton**

**Christina Martin**

**Simon Hanson**

**Ian Willey**

**Louise Hopewell**

**Martha Magenta**

**Jackie Maugh Robinson**

**Nika**

**Nina Kovačić**

**Marianne Paul**

**Pris Campbell**

**Robert Witmer**

**Meik Blöttenberger**  
**Marshall Bood**  
**Debbie Strange**  
**Mykel Board**  
**Anthony Q. Rabang**  
**Adjei Agyei-Baah**  
**Ramona Linke**  
**Chen-ou Liu**  
**Elmedin Kadric**  
**Valentina Ranaldi-Adams and A. D. Adams**  
**Olivier Schopfer**  
**Angela Terry, *Julie Warther***  
**Gergana Yaninska**  
**Roberta P. Feins**  
**Munia Khan**  
**Valorie Broadhurst Woerdehoff & *Connie R***  
***Meester***  
**Susan Burch**  
**Rick Hurst**  
**A. D. Adams**  
**Celestine Nudanu**  
**Caroline Skanne**  
**Bryan Rickert**  
**Debbi Antebi**  
**Chase Gagnon**  
**Elizabeth Alford**

**Kunjana Parashar**  
**David J Kelly**  
**Elizabeth Crocket**  
**Tricia Knoll**  
**Guliz Mutlu**  
**Paresh Tiwari**  
**Zoran Doderovic**  
**Barbara Kaufmann**  
**Bill Kenney**  
**Rob Scott**  
**Rob Scott**  
**Jill Lange**  
**Margaret Jones**  
**Nicholas Klacsanzky**  
**Ola Lindberg**  
**Helen Buckingham**  
**Jens Petter Kollhøj**  
**Mark Gilbert**  
**Peter Newton**  
**Adam Rehn**  
**David Oates**  
**Mohammad Azim Khan**

Reeperbahn  
opposite the police station -  
'SEX FOR €39'

boat tour of the port -  
a drone generates  
the most excitement

his bed  
becoming a sofa once more -  
dirty dishes

**Maeve O'Sullivan**

white noise  
cicada chorus hums in  
b flat

snowmelt  
the aftermath of our closing  
argument

unclaimed baggage  
table for two  
dinner for one

centipede  
my collection  
of mismatched shoes

**Barbara Tate**

connections!  
my dog is tied to  
a big wheel

**Jesus Chameleon**  
**[@JesusChameleon](#)**

windswept leaf  
the train I missed  
in the distance

hair spray  
I comb my hands  
through the rain

withered rose  
I get a sext  
not meant for me

desert sky  
he shoots himself  
with a water gun

patio shade  
the cry of someone  
else's child



## **White Noise**

"Bells on the backpack," she says, "will keep the bears away." I listen, a little skeptically. They would also let them know we're here. I prefer the route of silence - slipping through the forest, ninja style.

coyote cry  
I stub my toe  
on a root

**Dave Read**

[davereadpoetry.blogspot.ca](http://davereadpoetry.blogspot.ca)

Masters of War  
summer grasses looking  
quite the same

battle tanks -  
we're looking for a place  
in the slipstream

drawn game  
the pros and cons of  
canned guinness



**Eva Limbach**

<http://evamaria-limbach2.blogspot.de/>

raking dry grass  
piles of black pellets  
deer nod their thanks

swept up by a heron  
the koi looks down  
hey, there's my pond!

**Bruce Jewett**

<http://brucejewett.wordpress.com>

before and after the silence rainstorm

last of the light  
leaving the hospice  
in silence

shifting sunlight  
on the unmarked grave  
a butterfly

cloudburst  
the sound of the river  
speeding up

evening fishing  
even the shadows  
escape my net

**Rachel Sutcliffe**

church supper -  
being thankful  
for green Jell-O

morning darkness -  
the daylight saved  
for happy hour

slightly down at heel the hunger moon

**Angela Terry**

So many dark clouds,  
Just a headache or migraine  
Thunder and lightning

**Richard L. Ratliff**

the hangman's  
wind chime  
collar bones

world hunger  
the billions of pounds  
in old spider webs

one woman show  
the artist walks around  
straightening pictures

**Garry Eaton**

flower light  
the way I feel  
on waking

5 a m  
I take out  
the bread machine

waitress  
so swift she  
forgets the sugar

**Christina Martin**



flashback  
grandma's blue budgie  
twirling in his little mirror

after hours  
time to loiter  
with my shadow

**Simon Hanson**

french fries or salad...  
he hungers  
for a third option

midday slump  
the secretary checks  
her arm flab

pitching an old belt  
it's been with me  
through thick and thin

can't find my Fitbit...  
whatever I do today  
doesn't count

bee on the windshield  
am I also  
a drone?

box of condoms  
confined for years  
in a cool, dry place

election news  
passing another  
used car lot

invalid password...?  
in cyberspace  
no one can hear you scream

**Ian Willey**

## **An Aussie in the USA**

Traditional welcome —  
'Ma'am, empty your pockets,  
walk slowly through the metal detector.'

Arms thrashing,  
I swim against the rip —  
Crowded subway.

Gucci umbrellas —  
His cardboard home  
disintegrates.

Broadway —  
My empty wallet  
stands centre stage.

School kids snap selfies  
on monuments —  
National treasures.

Unfamiliar birdsong —  
The radio plays  
the same old hits.

Orange-robed monks  
compete to sell blessings —  
Arms race.

Land of the free —  
Your feet stick out  
the end of the bed.

**Louise Hopewell**

another funeral  
I count the crows  
on the phone line

strawberry moon  
a paper cut  
from his letter

satellite  
my father's orbit  
around the family

red paper lantern  
his fat belly floating  
on the water

**Martha Magenta**

before it's forgotten  
poem on the back of an Rx  
I feel better

bad casting-  
fly  
in my soup

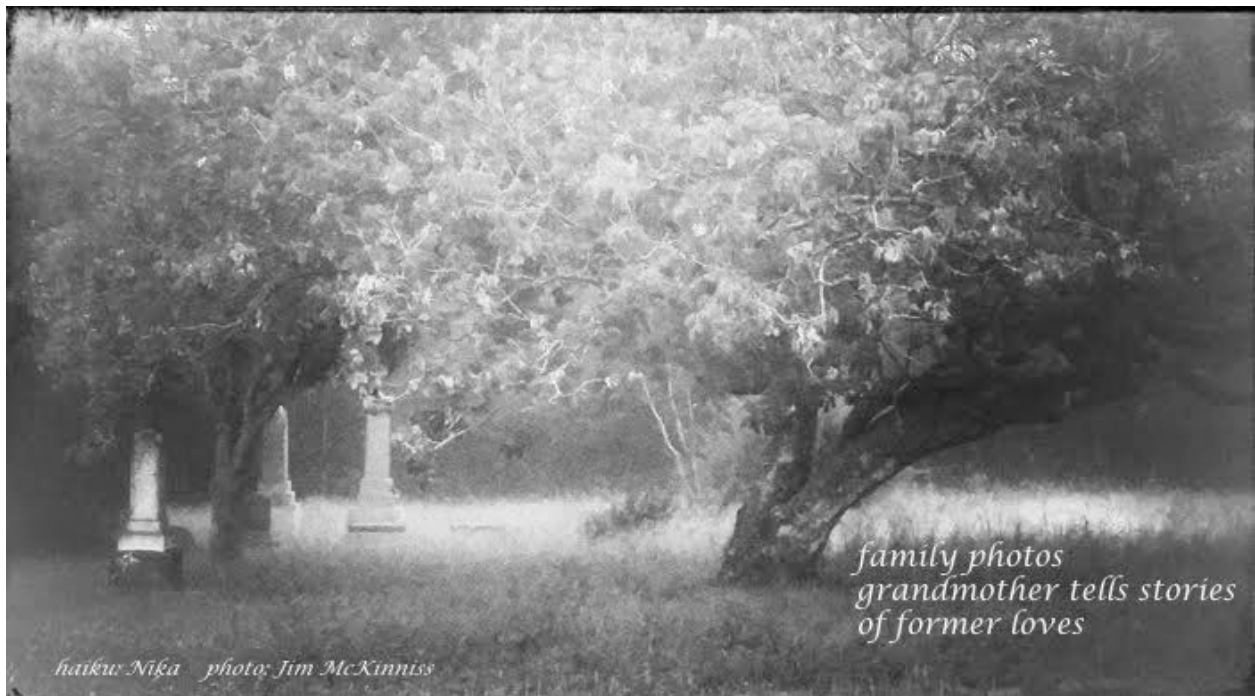
honeymoon toast  
burnt again  
undercurrent

**Jackie Maugh Robinson**

again today  
I ease my body  
into old man skin

afterward  
she picks bits of hay  
from her jeans

morning moon  
why grandpa why  
a morning moon





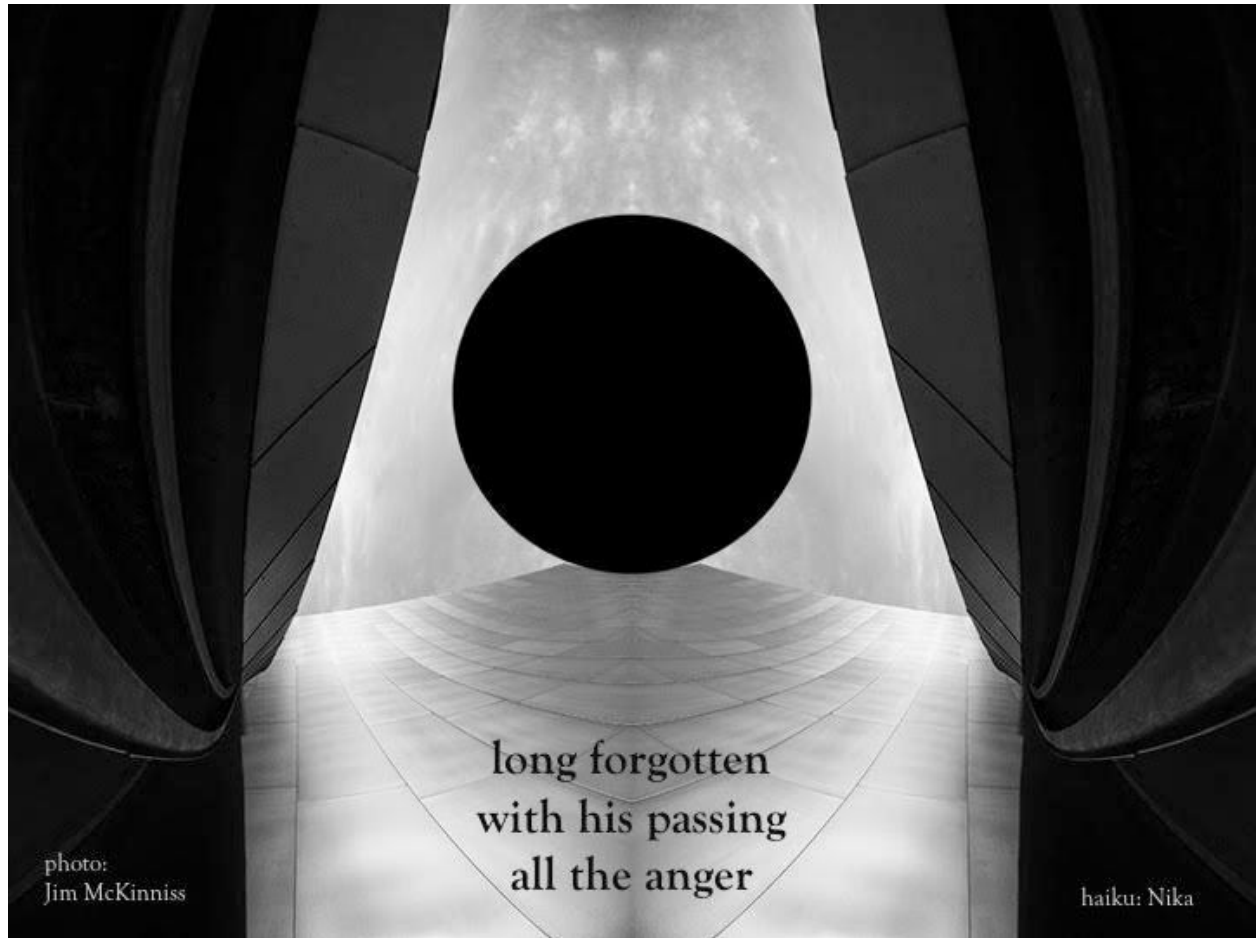
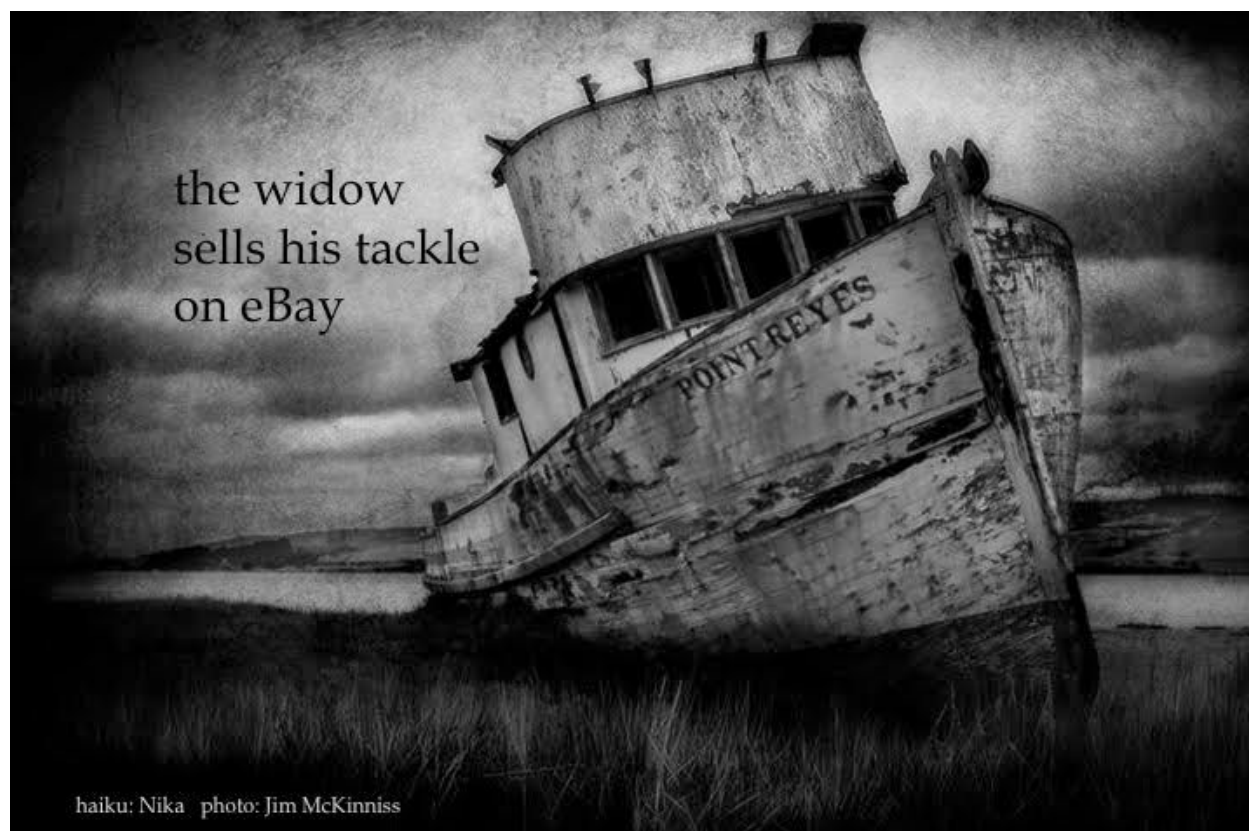


photo:  
Jim McKinniss

long forgotten  
with his passing  
all the anger

haiku: Nika



**Nika**

this annoying fly  
tasted my breakfast  
before me

Sunday morning  
my neighbor's alarm clock  
wakes me up

**Nina Kovačić**

**translated in English by Mrs. Đurđa Vukelić Rožić**

Blade Runner  
thanking the automated teller  
for her time

Venn diagrams  
those topics we don't dare  
to touch

dead relatives  
nobody left to take  
the blame

purple prose  
looking for the poem among  
the #hashtags

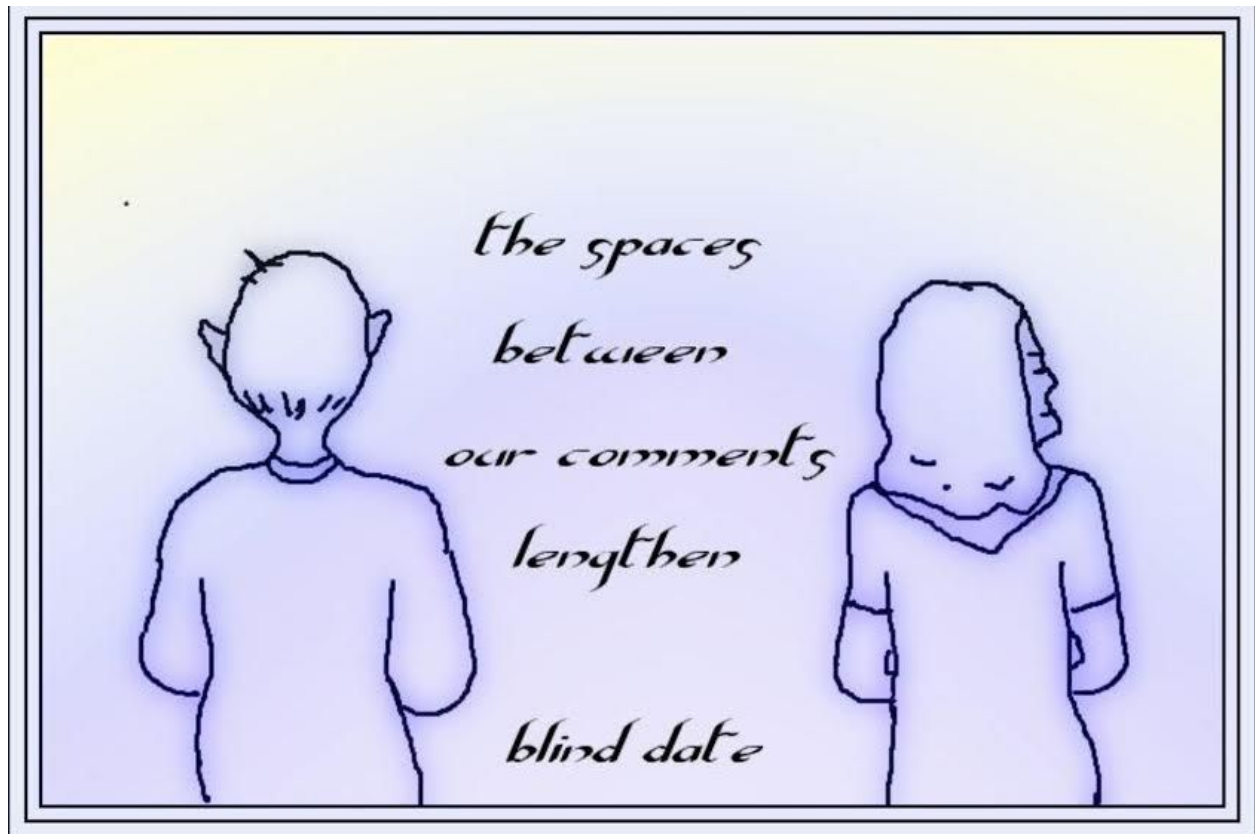
**Marianne Paul**  
[www.literarykayak.com](http://www.literarykayak.com)

*they toss  
ball after ball*



*pac*

*dog day afternoon*



**Pris Campbell**

spring training  
rookies compare  
tattoos

dust to dust  
the fuzzy logic  
of dandelions

outside the ethics classroom  
a row of wet umbrellas  
locked in place

**Robert Witmer**

river cruise  
from every angle  
shallow conversation

low fog at sunset the ease of that thick accent


**Meik Blöttenberger**



vape shop ...  
a loonie Krazy Glued  
to the sidewalk

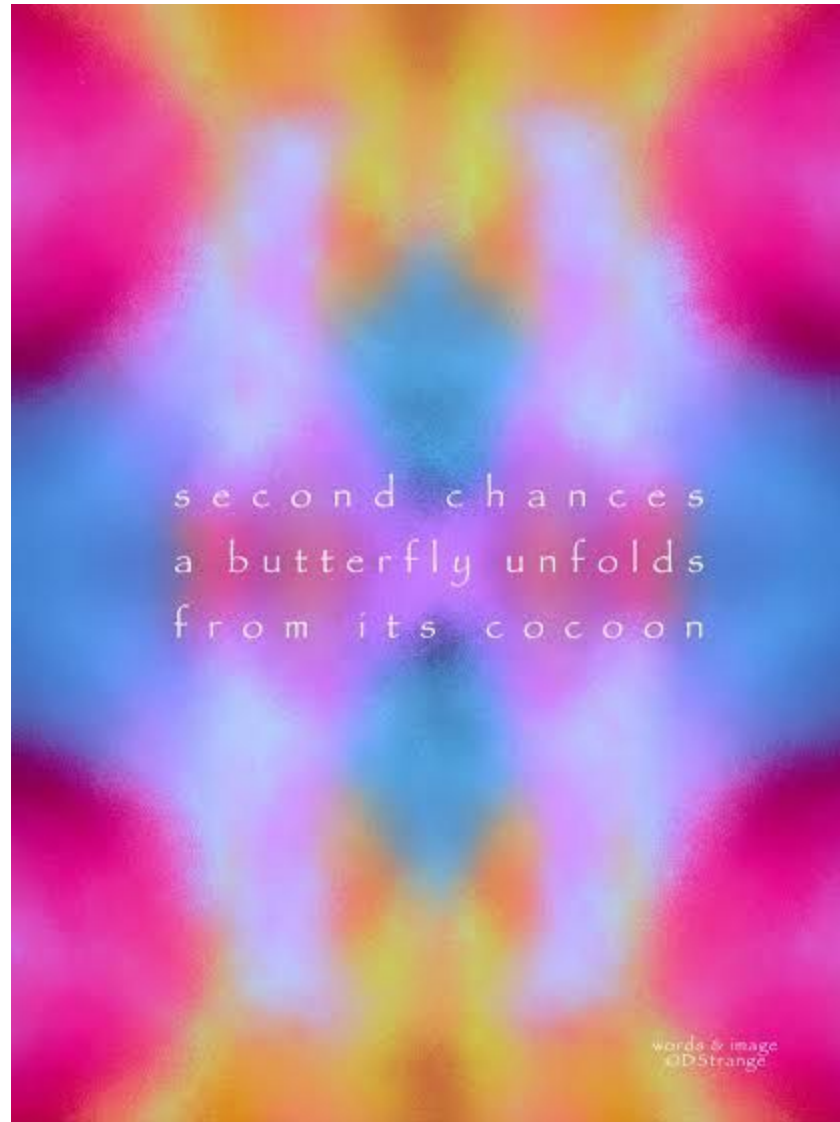
losing battery charge ...  
I pretend  
to occupy myself

**Marshall Bood**



intensive care  
I stir another cloud  
into my tea

words & image  
"DStrange"



**Debbie Strange**  
[debbiemstrange.blogspot.ca](http://debbiemstrange.blogspot.ca)

down the block from the  
gastroenterologist--  
a new McDonald's

**Mykel Board**

deep of night –  
the printer paper jams  
at the middle of

as we talk about  
our future  
afternoon fog

**Anthony Q. Rabang**  
[@bigbangthony](#)

first lover  
lost in the woods  
of my hairy chest

**Adjei Agyei-Baah**

Brautigan's  
twelve red strawberries

. . .

bucket wheels  
the places of our ancestors  
translucent

**Ramona Linke**

<http://haiku-art-rl.blogspot.de/>

<http://www.haiku-art.de/home>

I feel  
something aroused  
naked mannequin

tourist attraction  
the beggar's cup fills  
with sunlight

constipated...  
I scrawl a few senryu  
on toilet paper

**Chen-ou Liu**

<http://chenouliu.blogspot.ca/>



first date  
a red carpet  
in her hallway

**Elmedin Kadric**



**Valentina Ranaldi-Adams and A. D. Adams**

rainstorm

I turn the music  
down

all the things you say  
not to tell  
the truth

mixed couple  
drinking pints of  
pale and dark ale

**Olivier Schopfer**

## Red Hightops

dropping into  
the color wheel with a splash  
basic black

*with her wedding dress  
red hightops*

all the greens  
in the spring rainbow  
dreaming in Technicolor

*head in the clouds –  
blinded  
by white light*

deep in memory  
those smoky blues

*eyes misted . . .  
gently sliding off  
a band of gold*

**(Angela Terry, *Julie Warther*)**

cocktail dress  
the lace becomes part of  
her back tattoo

**Gergana Yaninska**

Sudoku puzzle – if only  
life's solution were also to be found  
on page eighty-four.

Disdainfully,  
the waiter serves me  
at a table set for two.

So old I have to ask  
the name of the hit song that's playing.

**Roberta P. Feins**

unknown path-  
flight of his pet bird  
guiding her

**Munia Khan**

**[Goodreads](#)**

## ONE MORE

Connie R Meester and *Valorie Broadhurst Woerdehoff*

long customs line  
two small faces beyond the glass  
they see me!

*down the waterslide with my grandson  
neither of us mind his mother*

one more book  
before lights out  
I fall asleep first

*retelling  
his mother's baby stories  
retelling*

grandson counts three more  
darknesses before I leave again

*just the phone  
and that little voice  
saying he'll call again tomorrow*



**Face of Wind**  
*for our daughters*

**Valorie Broadhurst Woerdehoff and *Connie R Meester***

after she'd gone  
making her bed  
the sheets still warm

*in her mask collection  
the face of wind missing*

drawing on the sidewalk  
... chalk the color of her eyes  
when she was born

*father meeting fiance  
the humming bird flies  
at his own reflection*

trying on wedding dresses  
... the cry of the morning dove

*breathless  
seeing her face  
through the nursery window*

# Making New Rhythms

Valorie Broadhurst Woerdehoff and *Connie R Meester*

walking alone into daybreak  
all pink  
the sky and me

*a new shadow appears  
just like you*

morning alone  
catching myself  
laughing out loud

*settling down  
into my nap  
these honking geese*

the same path  
today all different

*making  
new rhythms  
these loose hips*

GPS –  
I have no idea  
where I stand with you

unmade bed -  
the stains  
he won't talk about

counting stars  
instead of sheep  
lawn chair astronauts

**Susan Burch**

cold front  
the abrupt snap  
of her purse

crossword breakfast  
they chew over  
a four letter word



the neighbor's cat  
running through  
my mind

**Rick Hurst**

closed open  
open closed  
road construction hell

**A. D. Adams**

insomnia

I pick up the sound  
of a fallen leaf

noonday heat

the priest's words  
drip on his cassock

**Celestine Nudanu**

cleaning day  
another cup of tea  
does nothing

inner calm  
i fold myself  
into a lotus

egg & spoon race  
slow moving  
clouds

**Caroline Skanne**

internet down–  
the distance  
between us

a swarm  
of midair gnats–  
family reunion

sumi-e bamboo–  
I turn a coffee stain  
into the moon

wondering  
what he sees in me–  
identity thief

date night  
once again  
leftovers

**Bryan Rickert**  
[@bcrickert](#)



shoe shopping  
this urge to walk  
barefoot

paper-thin walls  
the smell of garlic  
on my tongue

politics

as the coffee cools our heated debate

**Debbi Antebi**

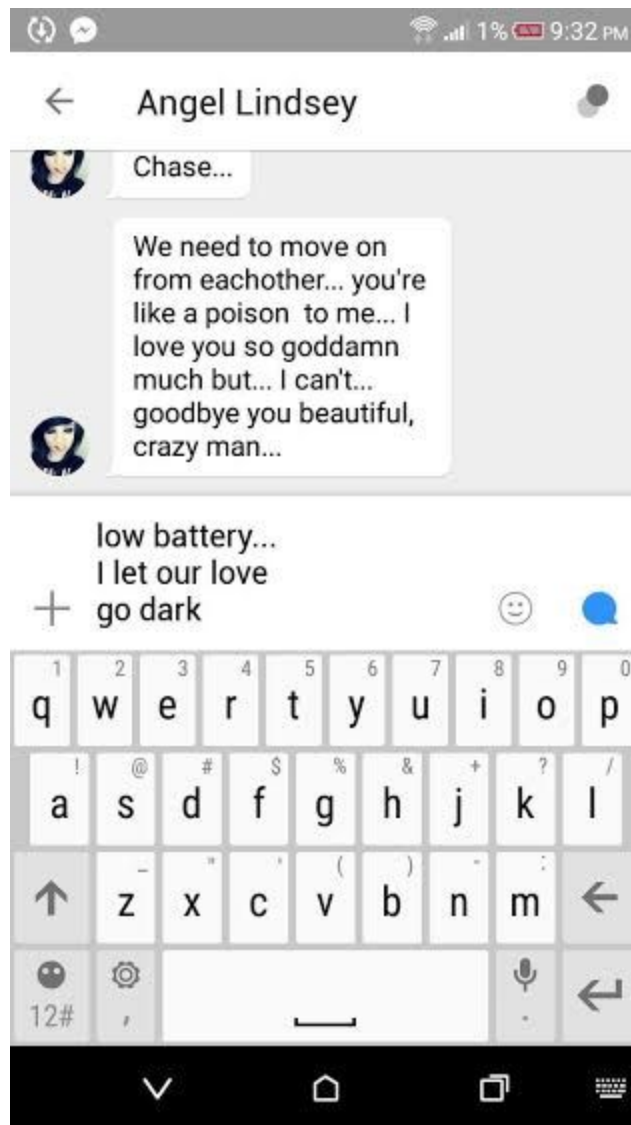
crisis of faith  
the crucifix tattoo  
fading in my flesh

southern diner  
folks making small talk  
about the apocalypse

## **Parting Clouds**

If Jesus were alive today, he'd be a dropout with dreadlocks and a tie-dye t shirt rolling blunts in Mother Mary's basement, telling folks to chill the fuck out. I can see him now – surrounded by hippies, punks, skinheads, Bloods and Crips – in a dimly lit room filled with smoke and empty bottles, flashing a smile that could melt the ice from even the angriest man's eyes. I see them passing a flask around: a man with a swastika tattooed on his shaven head taking a swig of white rum, then handing it kindly to the gay black man sitting beside him.

bible to the sky...  
the curbside preacher's  
angry tone



**Chase Gagnon**

motel ceiling...  
how much harder  
can it get?

the nature of god  
knowable by the grass  
between my toes



Elizabeth Alford  
[Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ElizabethAlfordPoetry)

crabgrass  
the hair  
in his nose

late bloomer  
at forty  
wisdom teeth

masquerade  
under the suit  
Marx tattoo

**Kunjana Parashar**

breakfast bagel  
the filled hole  
filling a hole

waterboarding  
... my teabag reappears  
at the surface

dogpond ...  
the sound of a stick  
hitting the water

summer evening  
thoughts condense  
on a cold beer glass

**David J Kelly**  
[@motto\\_sakura](#)

resetting the clock  
a longing  
for the old me

birds bouncing  
on the telephone wire  
news that it's a girl

**Elizabeth Crocket**

nations fall apart  
and the blueberries  
come on

the withering  
end of day lilies  
your tired, your poor

wrong turn on the way  
to get the marriage license  
a beginning

**Tricia Knoll**  
[@triciaknollwind](mailto:@triciaknollwind)  
[triciaknoll.com](http://triciaknoll.com)



a simple life...  
entering my mind  
nothing to lose

just friends  
our nearness  
no big deal

the long distance call  
I only remember  
mom's goodbye

everything happens to me  
my feelings in the closet  
I ask myself why

japanese garden  
I wonder who left behind  
the tree house

**Guliz Mutlu**

## *Agnosia*

The poems have chosen to recount the story of their lives. They confide how they were conceived in moments of utter desperation or times of languorous love-making. How they grew up on hunger or abundance and the way they abandoned the empty husk of their poet to search for something more fulfilling.

The prose poem next to me links her arm with mine. She peers deep into my eyes and confesses that no one has ever really understood her the way I do.

The sonnet across the room bristles and lets out a snort. 'Haven't you already used that pick-up on every reader you ever met?' The room bustles with agreement. Some louder than others, till a ghazal - old yet graceful hushes them into silence.

'I see a poet in you too reader. Don't you wish to pour a few heartaches of your own into this world?' asks a quatrain from the shadows.

I do. And I did write a poem once. But the words flowed like the cadence of her naked body. It smelt like her and tasted like her. For a while it even rested on my chest just like she did in our afterglow.

*juxtaposing  
the absence of her voice  
the voice of her absence*

---

## ***More or Less***

‘I have placed carbon-papers and ink-pads at every entrance to the bedroom’ she declares with a triumph in her voice. ‘I am sure they are getting in through the window overlooking the ocean, yet just to be sure – at every entrance! There’s a stack under the doors and the windows. I have even placed them around the kitchen sink, the plumbing and my bed’.

I don’t really know what to say about this new elaborate scheme, except that they may have lighter feet than she assumes.

But then, do I even care where they come from? I have only ever wondered where dreams vanish the moment you open your eyes.

*beer café . . .*  
*someone else chooses*  
*our song on the jukebox*

---

## ***Moving on***

The poet has a stash of moons in the attic; tucked away in thick layers of bubble-wrap, packed neatly in boxes lined with blue velvet, clumped away between folds of white silk and old parchments, and pressed between pages of poetry books.

In the evenings, he likes to wear one around his neck and wait for the ocean to rise in crescendo. He moves around a lot. And sometimes he leaves a moon or two behind – as souvenir; probably as an apology.

There is one at his home in the village. His old dog now curls around its brittle chill when the nights get lonely. His thirteen year old son keeps a sliver next to his pillow. The ex-wife feels less lonely when she has a pair of shards on her ears. There is a half-moon at his mother's grave. It has begun to get moldy, a bit jagged at the edges.

He even slipped one in the letter-box of the lover; whom he one day just stopped calling.

*receding cloud . . .  
no more words to string  
the mad-hatter*

**Paresh Tiwari**

lunch break  
workers and ants  
on the same path

**Zoran Doderovic**

## Great Uncle

I am four or five. It is warm and the fragrance of the blooming privet hedge tickles my nose. Visiting Grandma, which happens often, she lives only blocks from our house, my mother's Uncle Willie is at home when we arrive. He is old with a surprisingly full head of gray hair and a round, fat belly. He always makes us laugh and today he is taking my sister and me for an ice cream cone.

hopscotch  
the soft feel of chalk  
on my hands

As we set out on our stroll, Uncle Willie holds each of us by the hand. He is walking slowly and there is no reason for my short legs to hurry. As we amble, his grip tightens on our hands until we squeal with delight. We know the game. He will not stop squeezing until we say, 'uncle.' We play this game until we arrive at the soda fountain.

church bells  
just the right amount of music  
at noon

I try to eat my ice cream quickly, before it drips down my arm. It is a losing battle and Uncle Willie helps keep it from getting messy. I taste the cold sweetness of Butter Pecan and the crunch of the sugar cone. I laugh and lick and lick and laugh. He teaches us how to push the ice cream down into the cone. I finish my cone and begin our walk back. In spite of sticky fingers, he holds my hand tightly and I giggle once more.

midsummer  
old elms fill the playground  
with shade

## Boot Camp

Neurosurgery rotation. All the older students say it will be depressing. We arrive on a Monday morning in October, not knowing what to expect. Orientation includes a tour of all the rooms. Most are occupied by patients who do not respond to 'verbal stimuli.' "The patients may not be able to answer you when you speak to them, but they may be able to hear you. Talk to them," the head nurse says.

falling leaves  
cold winds arrive  
on time

I am assigned to a patient who is comatose and unresponsive, even to painful stimuli. I am told he is a policeman named Patrick who fell down a flight of subway stairs chasing a criminal. His Irish face is swollen and bruised ...from the fall or the surgery...I don't know. His head is swathed in white dressings and he has tubes from almost every orifice.

breathing lessons  
I swim  
into deep water

Gathering all the supplies I will need for his care, I return to his room. I look into his face for a long time. I take his vital signs and begin his morning care which involves a complete bath....eye care... mouth care. ...tube feedings every few hours, turning him from one side to the other... skin care....suctioning. Before I begin each procedure, I explain what I am about to do and, if true, I assure him that it will not hurt. There is no response.

digging deep  
to find my father's  
gift of gab

I tell him about the weather and the view out the window. Eventually, I talk about myself. I wish, for some reason, that I could sing. Alas, I can not carry a tune. Still, it is a skill I wish I had at this moment.... to comfort myself, I

think. No one comes to visit him during visiting hours and since he is my only patient, I stay with him through the afternoon, until the end of my shift.

vespers  
someone lights a candle  
for me

I am surprised at the depth of feeling that I have for this man who never utters a word, who I know virtually nothing about and who may die soon, according to the head nurse. Still, I hold on to the possibility that somewhere in his damaged brain there is some cognition. I feel compelled to honor that as long as he is breathing. My heart space opens to this possibility of shared compassion.

chrysalis  
a thin membrane  
lets in the light





**Barbara Kaufmann**  
[Wabi Sabi - Website](#)

MBA

he wanted to be a fireman  
when he grew up

summer vacation . . .  
the tour guide tells us how  
to deal with beggars

skinny dipping  
we hide behind  
our words

skipping stones . . .  
not the man  
I thought I was

**Bill Kenney**

Monday morning  
a sigh exits  
the lift

minding my own business  
the graffiti screams  
“Fuck you!”

following me  
into the bedroom ~  
her absence

**Rob Scott**  
[@haikubobb](#)

heat lightning  
he didn't hear a word  
she said

undulating  
in the breeze  
her pears

he so loves his troubles locust sky

depression on one side of the bed—mine

**Sondra J. Byrnes**

new generation  
blue jay fledglings  
learning to pilfer  
cat food

Lake Erie's gift  
to the RNC  
a taste of global warming

her opinion  
on the DNC platform ...  
Mother Nature ratchets up  
the temperature

**Jill Lange**

cup to saucer  
just so  
her haviland hands

not quite out  
cake's last candle

### **Seniors Day**

County fair: the wheelchair tilts and whirls. Her spirit says yes to this outing; her body remains undecided. "You, too, Grandma!" propels her up to share the carousel with children now, again, her size. She commits her walker to steadying the red pony on which her (favorite) boy sits, smiles coming off him like popcorn. The brilliant chargers bolt and plunge, the music insistent, all the turnings of all the wheels spinning her, marking her. When did everything speed up so? She spares no time for regret, beloved faces blurring, circling in and then out of view.

time stop memory as concrete

**Margaret Jones**

Abraham Lincoln's  
f a c e  
the train track sings

heatwave  
the wrinkled wrestler  
stares into it

National Geographic  
smell of grandmother's apartment  
in its pages

blackberry tea father's tale about a grizzly

**Nicholas Klacsanzky**

I never saw the shoeshiner's face

I pick up  
the woman at the roadside  
and the man behind the tree

down the street - your back  
neither of us  
turns around

**Ola Lindberg**



city gulls'  
estuary  
timbre

flea market  
a job lot of vintage  
uranium orange flasks

OMniPOTent

coffee steam  
fills the van...  
his unseen hand

**Helen Buckingham**

halloween  
sneezing in their  
candy

snowflakes  
you talk so  
my roof falls in

**Jens Petter Kollhøj**  
[@dglvd\\_txt](#)

with a sudden gust  
her sun hat  
escapes to Ireland

dob dob of sunscreen  
on eachother's pink bits  
a memory of foreplay

after the vote  
my Italian friends  
look at me differently

**Mark Gilbert**

soup  
from a can  
our tin anniversary

outside  
the all-inclusive resort  
villagers

in the hands  
of the highest court  
my right to be forgotten

**Peter Newton**  
**[@ThePeterNewton](#)**

your foreign tongue  
always welcome  
beside mine

**Adam Rehn**

after all these years  
watching the old dog's  
last breath

through hotel wall  
the sounds of a shower  
and singing

all this exercise  
his tits aren't gone  
but higher and tighter

**David Oates**

**<http://davidoatesathensga.com/>**

freezing wind ...  
the icicles sharpens  
their teeth

ancient temple ...  
a selfie with the  
god

mock execution ...  
suddenly it becomes  
real

**Mohammad Azim Khan**

garage sale  
on the one dollar table  
a wedding picture

reading li tai po i remember that it is raining

not waiting  
to read it in a book  
i tweet my poem

**Mike Rehling**  
**'Failed' Editor**  
[editor@failedhaiku.com](mailto:editor@failedhaiku.com)

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