

Stephen Bailey has selected:

snowflake...  
the shape  
of your presence

Sanjana Zorinc  
Croatia

An inspired haiku is often a miracle of ellipsis and suggestion. An ellipsis acts as a cut (*kire*) in haiku for it cleaves the haiku into two parts. I prefer to use the word "cleave" rather than "cut" to highlight the word's dual actions of "clinging to" and of "splitting apart". The ellipsis (...) may be used to cleave a haiku by indicating hesitation and/or suspense. It invites the reader to enter the world from which the author has quietly withdrawn.

Paraphrasing Victor Hugo, suggestion is making in the minds of others a small incision where you plant a seed. The Japanese haiku poets use the term *yugen*, defined as "the art of suggesting a state without describing it." *Yugen* enhances the power to evoke, rather than the power to state things directly. It is based on the idea of highlighting "real beauty" solely by suggestion. Just a few words, a few brush strokes, to suggest what is not necessarily apparent, and so generate an iceberg of thoughts and feelings.

[snowflake...] – single ice crystal formed in a hexagonal structure "no two of which are alike" with a very ephemeral beauty as it melts to the touch or to climatic warming.

[the shape / of your presence] – *zoka* at work. *Zoka* is the creative action of the underlying becoming and breaking down of all things in the natural world – snowflake becoming ice becoming water – its momentary uniqueness lost. The word "your" is richly ambiguous suggesting the snowflake, or another being, or the detached observer/speaker addressed in the second person, and whose presence is in a state of flux.

I have not read any of the author's haiku before but, with this haiku, she has successfully represented a "peak experience" for the reader. Among all the many fine haiku accepted for Under the Bashō 2024, I nominate Sanjana Zorinc's for the Peak Experience Award.

Don Baird has selected:

Pris Campbell  
USA

lay lady lay  
the many memories  
wildflowers bring

*Lay Lady Lay* is such an embedded memory, reminding us of how powerful romantic anticipation can be. Jon Voight and Dustin Hoffman, one a male prostitute and the other a hustler, together, brought a taboo storyline to life. *Midnight Cowboy* was a raw movie that walked a fine line between disturbing and a masterpiece. Although Dylan tried hard, he was unable to complete the song in time for the movie; his timeline didn't match up with the producer's. As a result, he independently released his song; the rest, as they say, is history. This didn't lessen the impact the movie had on Dylan's song, however. The movie and his song remain intertwined today, though the story of how it went down might already be lost in the years.

Pris Campbell's haiku reaches deep into the nostalgic memories triggered by wildflowers. Were they gifts? Are they linked to a lover, a first infatuation, but not a prom? No one gives wildflowers for a prom or dance night in high school or college. The flowers are much more extravagant for such things as those. And then, "*Why wait any longer for the one you love? When he's standing, in front of you.*" The song weaves a story.

Of course, now the melody of this song is zooming through my mind; it's one of those songs. I wonder where I was in 1969 when the song was released? Was I seeing someone? Did I reach the thrilling place of anticipation? Was I too young? Vietnam called; dreaming was over. Riots rang out across the country. "*Lay Lady Lay*" was now a melody in the background of war.

Today, as my memories stream, the lyrics continue, "*I long to see you in the morning light. I long to reach for you in the night. Lay Lady Lay. Why wait any longer for the world to begin?*" And temptation dreams in the late-night shadows of long ago. Dylan later clarified in an interview that he wrote the song for Barbra Streisand and wanted to sing a duet with her. Streisand responded that she was flattered. She "**remembers receiving flowers from him with a handwritten note asking her to sing it with him.**"

All in a basket of flowers and hippies singing at the beach, memories wait their turn at nostalgia. Now, it has become my moment of nostalgia because Pris wrote this award-winning poem! Isn't this what outstanding haiku should do? The concise and elegant answer to this question is, absolutely!

Thank you Pris!

Marilyn Ashbaugh has selected:

wintry night  
the homeless withdraw  
into themselves

Vidya Hariharan  
India

Vidya's seven-word haiku, filled with pathos and mystery, allows the reader room to complete the poem.

Reading the haiku drew me back to my first trip to Washington, D.C., and my first experience of the crisis of American homelessness. I was a teenager.

Snow falls heavy and wet as the wind bites cheeks and hands. The capital's traffic inches along embassy row with its high gates and tall palaces. In front of the Department of Justice, the homeless exit the shadows to lie on sidewalk grates where steam surrounds them. Specters of the Supreme Court float before me as shrapnel of injustice sears my soul.

Where does Vidya's haiku take you?

Clayton Beach has selected:

Fatma Zohra Habis  
Algeria

waiting for the pen  
to break the silence  
winter night

The clever use of sound in this haiku accentuates the solitude of winter and heightens the sense of anticipation of the arrival of the creative spark. There is a spacious silence and still darkness that resonates with what is lacking, exhibiting a strong use of the concept of negative space.

Pravat Kumar Pradhy has selected:

rain boots ...  
the child is jumping  
from cloud to cloud

-Katica Badovinac, Croatia

The haiku by Katica Badovinac captivated my attention because of its simplicity, subtle elegance (*shibumi*) and lightness (*karumi*). The poem is characterized by the basic attributes of the aesthetic beauty of haiku tradition: kigo, kireji, juxtaposition and haiku spirit. There is a visual delight as we witness a child jumping over the rainwater. Jane Reichhold once wrote: "Poetry is vision of what is here and now and what it can be." Rain symbolizes a sense of purification. The cloud manifests the metaphor of transformation: clouds to rain and beyond. Children enjoy the abundance of happiness under drizzling rain. At the same time, the snapshot intimately connects the readers with renewed joy and reminds them of their memorable childhood days. It reminds me of Alan Watts's quote: "A good haiku is a pebble thrown into the pool of the listener's mind, evoking associations out of the richness of his own memory." Thus the horizontal axis of haiku interweaves an associative connection of the childhood ecstasy of the viewers through the vertical axis of the string of time. Without detailing (*show but do not tell*), it rejuvenates the essence of the haiku spirit. I thought of mentioning Shelley's beautiful line from the poem "The Cloud" (1820) where he portrays:

"And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smiles,  
Whilst he is dissolving in rains."

The word 'cloud' is a non-seasonal topic and is categorized under 'The sky and heaven (*tenmon*)'. Skillfully, Katica introduces the 'rain boots' with an implied seasonal resonance. The punctuation mark in the haiku in the form of an ellipsis (*kireji*) renders enough white space (*ma*) for the readers to contemplate. It is interesting to make an analogous comparison with Alan Summer's haiku "Cloud kigo/ a light rain patters across/ your nightingale floors" (Asahi Shimbun 2013) with the introduction to seasonal reference 'rain patters' to associate with the cloud.

The usages of literary devices such as repetition of words (cloud to cloud), visual imagery and alliteration of consonant sound 'd' add beauty and resonance to the haiku. The depiction of "jumping from cloud to cloud" is an experience of blissful

feeling and rhythmical flow of melody. With poetic wisdom and creativity, Katica perhaps portrays patches of water as clouds. It could be the child jumping over the potholes or a rain-filled area with the reflections of clouds. Does Katica seek to manifest a symbol of mystical enlightenment or metaphorical meaning through the innocence of childhood? In its naive expression, the poem stirs my mind, recalling Issa's haiku: "How quiet—/ at the bottom of the lake/ peaks of clouds"

The simplicity, placid cadence, tonal variation (a shift from the fragment "rain boots" to the idyllic depiction of nature) and textual manifestation elucidate the sobriety of the poem. The haiku is endowed with semantics and sublime sound. The present continuous tense (the child is jumping) exudes a lucid flow of the child's curiosity. The jumping sound remains as an implied imagery in the form of poetic intuition. The transformation of materialistic elements like "rain boots" into the boundary of ecstasy has been manifested by incorporating nuances of nature and the human psyche. The skillful juxtaposition reminds me of Lee Gurga's observation on the haiku method as "primary techniques of juxtaposition of images and disjunction of language."

James Hillman once wrote: "*Mind is fundamentally poetic in nature*". *Soul is "that which deepens."* Magically in the haiku, Katica transcends the music of the joy of living.