PRUNE JUICE

Journal of Senryu, Kyoka, Haibun & Haiga

Issue 19, July, 2016

Editor: Steve Hodge

Cover Photograph: Michael Dylan Welch

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Prune Juice Journal of Senryu, Kyoka, Haibun & Haiga is a digital journal occurring tri-annually, dedicated to publishing and promoting modern English senryu, kyoka, haibun & haiga. It is edited by Steve Hodge. Please send all submissions and correspondence to:

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First Annual H. Gene Murtha Senryu Contest

2016 Winners

First Place:

wedding announcement
all those years we didn't ask
and they didn't tell

- Bill Kenney

Second Place:

peace talks
a tissue paper floats
in the limo's wake

- Joe McKeon

Third Place:

spring cleaning
I throw away
the blues

- Debbi Antebi

Honorable Mentions

just one beer
and English becomes
my second language

- Mike Keville

dementia symptoms...
in the garden
an elusive butterfly

- G. R. LeBlanc

leap year
once a year my brother dies
no matter what

- Bob Lucky

heading home drunk
the full moon
all over the place

- Rob Scott

letters from the war—
meeting my father
before he was

- Pat Tompkins

Dad's study
I can still hear
his silence

- Ian Willey

Editors' Notes

It was an absolute joy for me to read through the hundreds of submissions Michael Rehling and I received for the First Annual H. Gene Murtha Memorial Senryu Contest, sponsored jointly by *Failed Haiku* and *Prune Juice* senryu journals and judged by Michael and me. The shear number of entries might have been overwhelming had it not been for the extraordinary quality of the submissions. I'm confident that Michael will join me in thanking everyone who sent us their best work. I'm sure we could easily have chosen fifty winning poems and still wished we could have included more.

It was heartening for me to read so many poets' comments about Gene Murtha. Gene obviously touched a lot of peoples' lives and he is clearly missed by those who knew him through his poetry and his work within the haiku/senryu community. I'm honored to help keep his memory alive through this annual contest in his name.

When I told Michael that I thought Gene would have approved of our contest, he said, "He would have laughed at the idea – and at us!" Michael is right, of course. Gene would have found it amusing. But that just makes the memorial contest even more meaningful to me.

I had the pleasure of talking to Bill Kenney, who wrote the first place winning poem:

wedding announcement
all those years we didn't ask
and they didn't tell

Many successful senryu are appealing because they transcend borders and cultures, speaking to universal truths and emotions shared by people everywhere. I like the way Bill's poem addresses this unique moment in American history. I like to imagine what it would be like if we had senryu

from people living during the periods in American history when slavery was abolished or when women earned the right to vote – or when other peoples and cultures around the world found that the yoke of oppression had finally been lifted from their shoulders or the shoulders of their fellow countrymen and women. From that perspective, while Bill's poem does, indeed, address this moment in American history, it also represents the victories earned by people today and throughout history who have fought for their rights and overcome their oppressors everywhere around the world. And it does so in a very human way.

When I asked Bill how his poem came about, he said, "I wrote the poem on the day the Supreme Court released its decision legalizing same-sex marriage. The wedding announcement in the poem is fictional. When the news came down, my thoughts went immediately to J. and B., two men my wife and I had known for years and considered the sweetest, most devoted couple we knew; straight or gay. During the years when same-sex marriage was being debated, Pat and I always saw it in the light of our two friends.

"Sadly, J. died a few months before; there would be no wedding announcement from them. I think the poem comes from that place of sadness."

It's a powerful, beautifully understated poem which tells so little while saying so much. I think Bill has written a timeless classic.

Steve Hodge
Editor: Prune Juice

I echo what Steve said!!! It was a pleasure to see the entries in this contest, and to honor the memory of Gene Murtha.

Our Second Place winner was:

peace talks
a tissue paper floats
in the limo's wake

Joe McKeon

Joe has captured a moment that is, sadly, timeless. In our world today, as it has been from the beginning of civilization, we are seemingly hanging on to 'tissue paper' thin negotiations. In my lifetime this poem would have resonated with me during Vietnam, and any number of conflicts since that time. I don't know and don't need to know what prompted Joe to write it, but I know it has a resonance that gives rise to the 'hope' in all of us.

Our Third Place winner was:

spring cleaning
I throw away
the blues

Debbi Antebi

This poem by Debbi invokes the 'lightness' any fine senryu strives to attain. Many of us engage in the timeless pastime of 'spring cleaning'. Winter has ended, and time of reckoning for many of us is upon us. No matter if you are planting crops, feeding flower beds, or just moving the boots to the back of the closet and pulling out the sandals, it is a time of positive upheaval. There is work to be done for sure, but another season to look forward to. The 'blues' have no place in this moment of newfound

order and hope, so banishment seems the only appropriate approach for any of us to take.

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Thanks to each of the poets who entered this contest! You inspired me by your enthusiasm for this project and your artistic creativity. Most of all, you honored Gene with your senryu. Please take the time to read his work here: Biding Time, Selected Poems.

Mike Rehling
Editor: Failed Haiku

The Gerald Brady Senryu Contest

The Haiku Society of America is accepting submissions for the Gerald Brady Senryu Contest now through July 31, 2016. For cash prize and submission information, please visit:

http://www.hsa-haiku.org/hsa-contests.htm#brady

Tash Adams, Austrailia

autumn birthday
her foot the length
of a maple leaf

pine needles
all my secrets
you shared

today we praise
the high winds
kite flying festival

Francis W. Alexander, USA

web search
spotting the old obituary
of a long lost friend

political rally
I turn to watch
Dawn of the Dead

Debbi Antebi, Turkey

small casket-
the weight
of his dreams

Jo Balistreri, USA

Mother's Day
wearing her locket
for the first time

Johnny Baranski, USA

too loud
at Mass this morning
her spring kimono

used cars
the salesman's polyester
sports jacket

Coltrane
the old jalopy
hums along

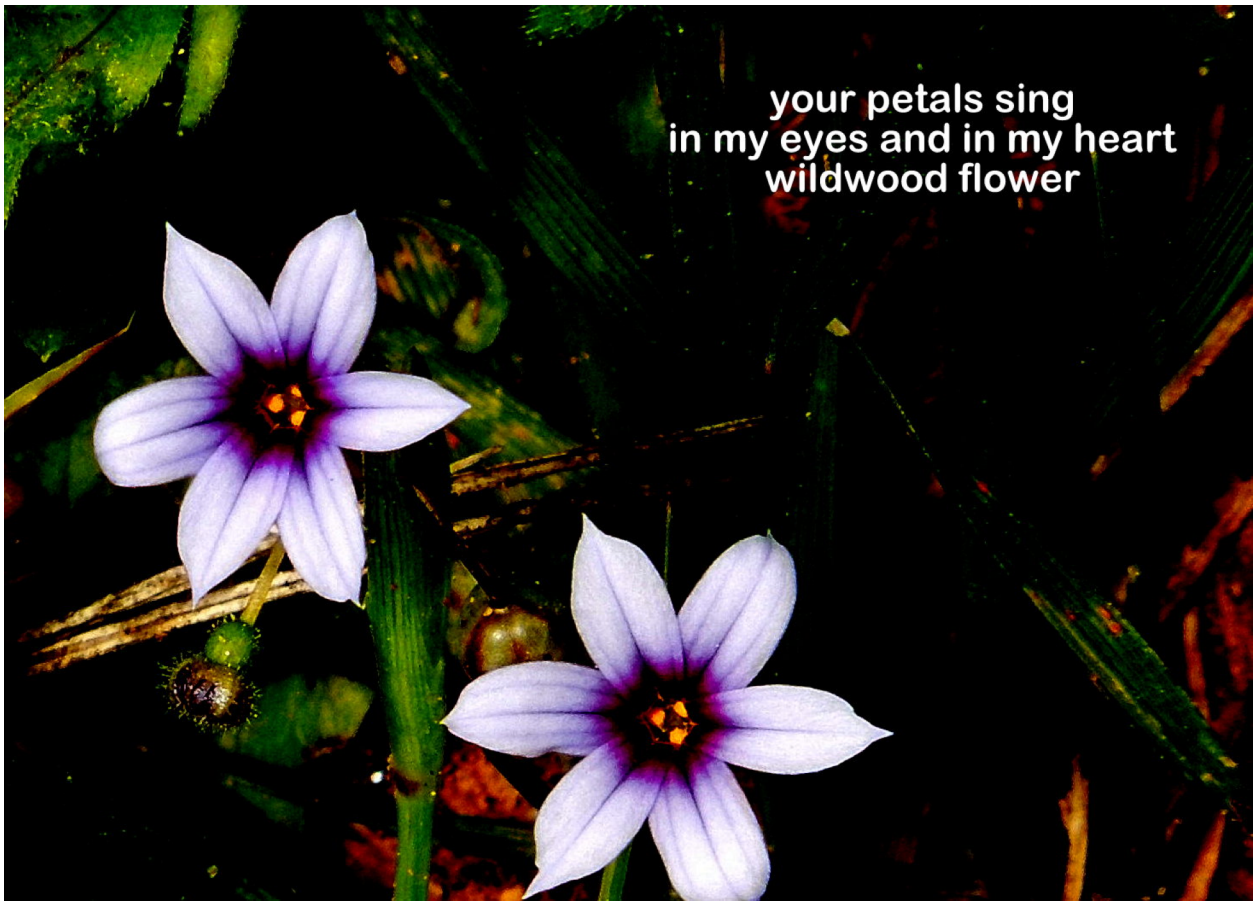
her sexy caboose a train whistle

Sarah Billington, UK

chickpeas in a stew
the evening forecast for
strong winds ahead

church bells
KARAOKE NIGHT
in full swing

Ed Bremson, USA



Sondra J. Byrnes, USA

at the gym
all the good friends
i really don’t know

alumni magazine
left somewhere
in the dust

moon goddess
I ask her to remove
her shoes

veneer
of moonlight
i change
my beneficiaries

wearing winter white my blue veins

Marion Clarke, Northern Ireland

steaming fusilli kisses rummaging for a corkscrew

harsh lighting
the cheek of that woman
who calls herself me

Tina Crenshaw, USA

blind date
his scorpion tattoo
a bad sign

Dan Curtis, Canada

all saints' day
the shoe repairman
mends my sole

Robert Epstein, USA

purple haze
stuck with a name
her hippie parents loved

happy hour
she notes the bags
under their eyes

Robert Forsythe, USA

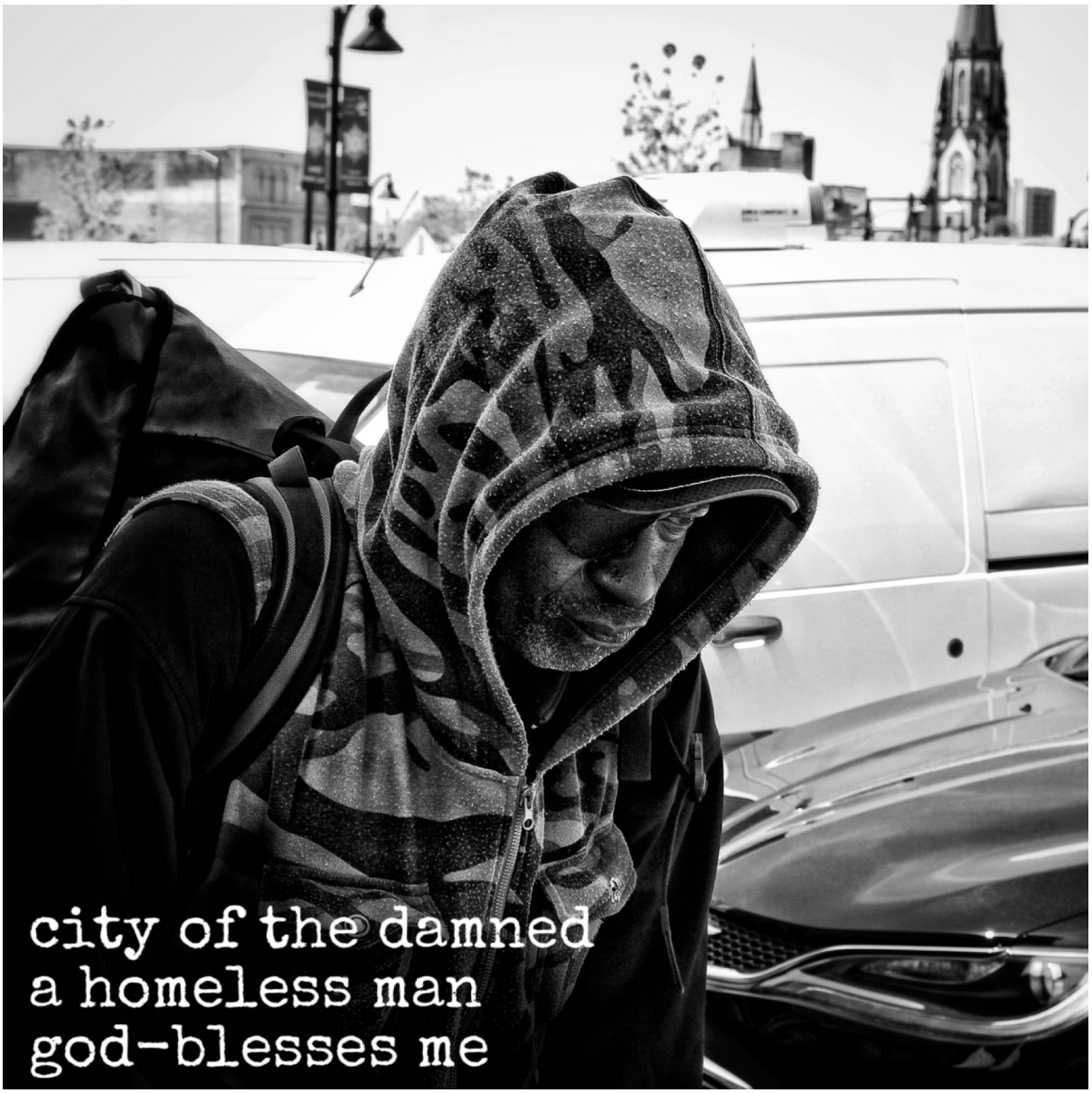
forty-two
it doesn’t feel like
the answer to anything

first date hike
as we crest this hill
the next grows taller

Chase Gagnon, USA




sunrise shadows
it's the dreams I've lost
that keep me awake


city of the damned
a homeless man
god-blesses me

Hazel Hall, Australia

lace maker
the intricate patterns
on her hands

Simon Hanson, Australia

piano bar
the warm glow
of melancholy

pageant fairy queen
archetypes and legends
in a little girl's eyes

tv evangelist
rattling in the jesus talk
money talk

Devin Harrison, Canada

leafcutter ants
the way my words
get misconstrued

dark matter –
more to you than
meets the eye

Jeff Ingram, USA

with every
lettuce head severed
I disturb a universe

raw kale fart
I cannot
not check my drawers

places we used to be
tacking up
old license plates

David J. Kelly, Ireland

our cat's fleas …
an embarrassment
of itches

Bill Kenney, USA

music in the park
the teenager rocks
her sleeping baby

eighty-third birthday
I read the directions
one more time

meat loaf
like mother used to make –
I order chili

Brendon Kent, England

bag lady
the way she carries
herself

S. M. Kozubek, USA

The Stranger

Father leaves home precisely at noon on his weekly subway trip downtown. Later the clock passes by his usual return, five o'clock. That evening the police call to report that father was found wandering shoeless in his home town miles away. Before this day, he has shown merely occasional memory lapses.

dust devils *chiindii* our specks of time

In the days that follow, father's Alzheimer's reveals itself in other ways. I am moving some clothes when he shouts, "You can't do that. Those clothes belong to my son." Weeks later as I drive, he threatens to jump from the moving vehicle to report his "kidnapping" to the police. I suddenly become a stranger to a parent.

oil spill
in the sun
a puddle rainbow

Ironically I feel closer to him now, recalling the years playing ball together in the park, being nursed through the illnesses, and comforted the day I was sewn with stitches after slashing my arm. He is the helpless one now.

years later
in the toy store window
my reflection and his

Shrikaanth Krishnamurthy, UK

cherry blossoms
the dog sniffs them
and cocks a leg

Michael Henry Lee, USA

summer school
fractals in
the pimento cheese

election year
nothing could be
further from the truth

unseasonal warmth...
two flies
walk into a bar

Phyllis Lee, USA

three men
in a booth
their noses related

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

family reunion:
passing a divorce story
from cousin to cousin

factories closed
a snaking lineup
for lottery tickets

her middle finger
marks the silence between us ...
I remember
she grabbed my leg years ago
as if clinging to a lifeboat

a camper
bends over the fire
to warm herself ...
the moon growing
fuller and rounder

Bob Lucky, Saudi Arabia

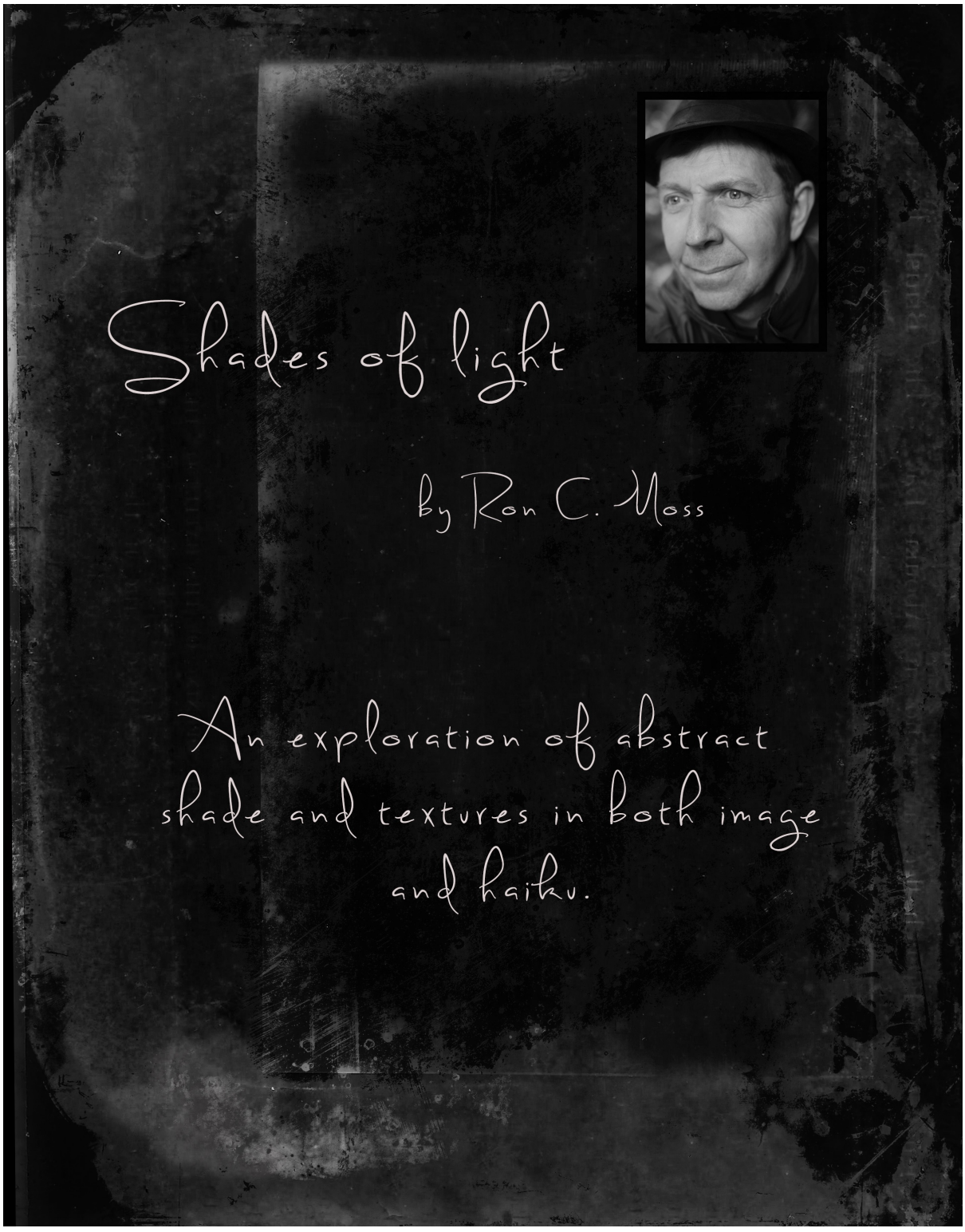
arpeggios
        on the accordion
the accordion
        the accordion

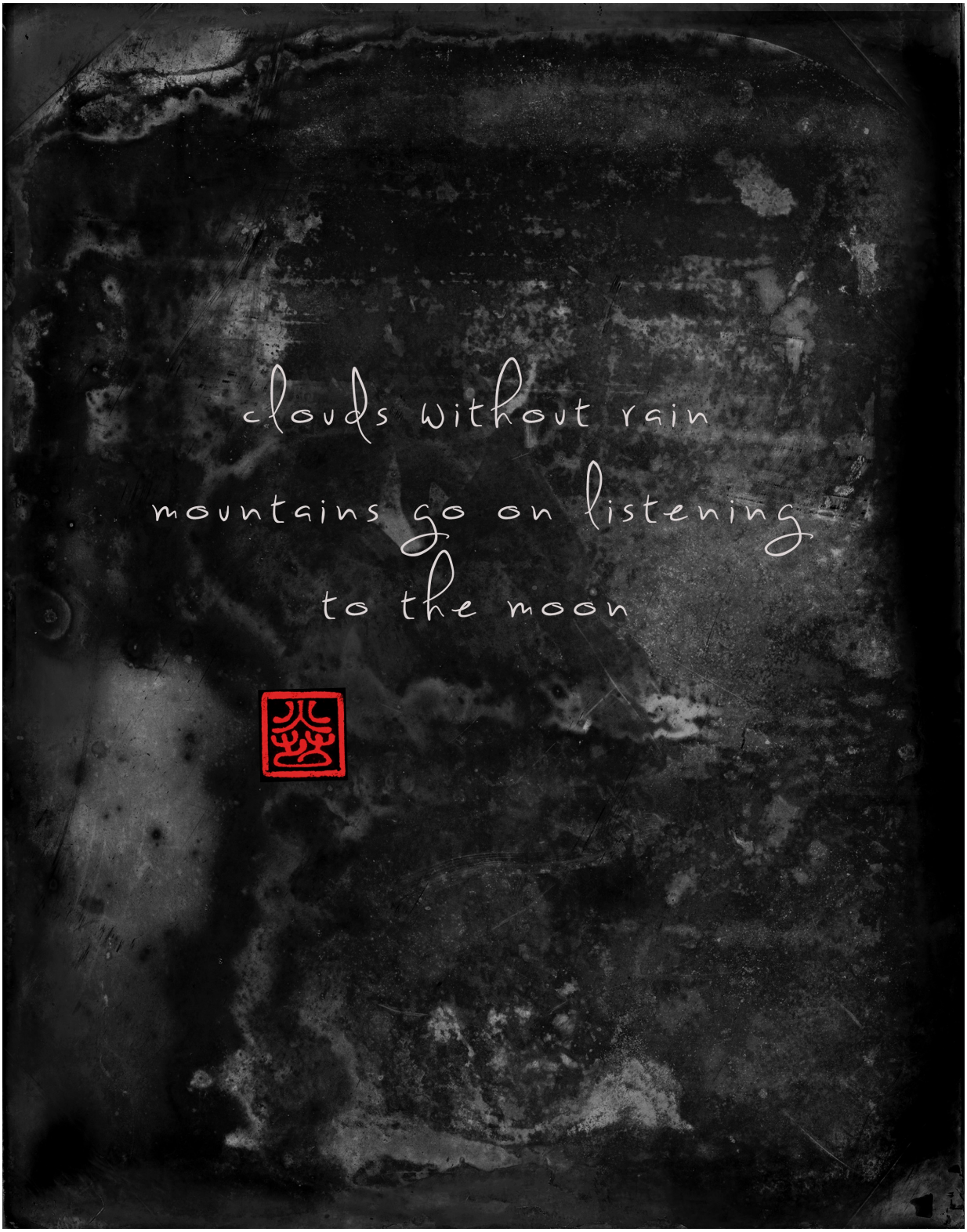
foreclosure
a homeless cat
on my doorstep

Deborah Barbour Lundy, USA

wash day
her fingers remember
folding cranes

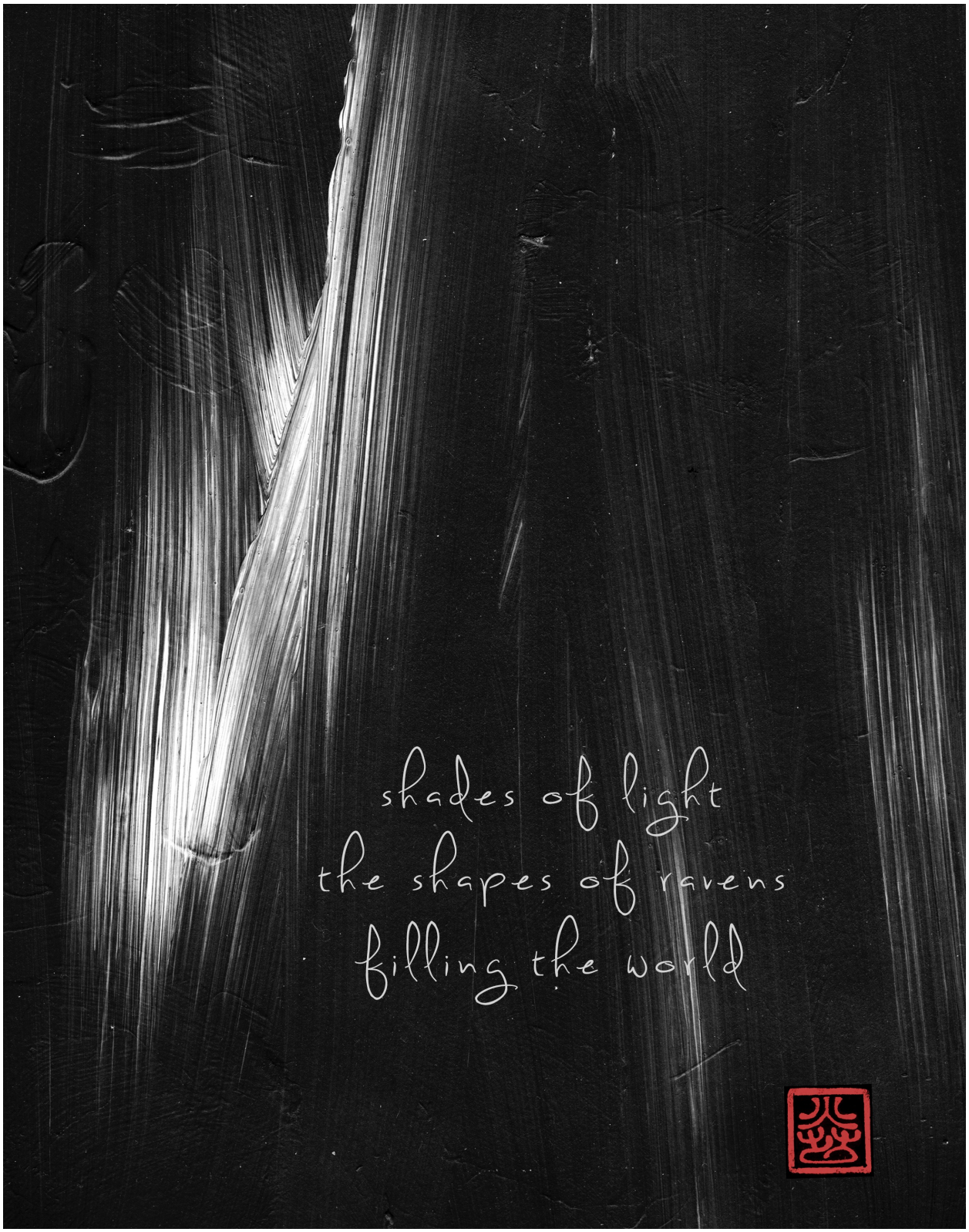
Ron C. Moss, Tasmania, Australia




clouds without rain
mountains go on listening
to the moon


gospel of souls
the purpose of a river
that flows through us


grasshopper shells
a darkness with no eyes
for the fallen


shades of light
the shapes of ravens
filling the world

Nika, USA

family reunion
grandfather's smile
in every cousin

David Oates, USA

tattooed granny
butterflies, flowers, and a ball of yarn
with needles

though she's been gone for years
he still puts the toilet seat back down

all-sizes burlesque
the big women are the ones
who really work it

prom night
the girls hitching up
strapless gowns

Ken Olson, USA

class reunion
checking for
first name changes

Aparna Pathak, India

manthan of curd
granny and mom
in sync for once

Alan Pizzarelli, USA

home service
the electrician
with the wild hair

66th birthday
a new wristwatch tossed
in a drawer of wristwatches

The dentist
Straddles me in the chair, --
It was a deep root.

(After Ginko)

Dave Read, Canada

work shirt
he irons out
his attitude

autumn dusk
we sit in the darkness
of each other

sweet tooth
a cavity forms
in the candy dish

Passing Lane

The policeman pulled me over. He probably thought I was texting when, in fact, I was typing some verse. Happy to clear his misunderstanding, I rolled down the window and held up my phone.

"It's OK officer," I explained, "I'm a poet."

blood moon
on the cell wall
graffiti

Tin Basin

My Dad grew up on a farm in the 40s. Once a week, they hauled water from the creek for a bath. "Everyone bathed", he explained, "whether we needed to or not". Which I found funny. I couldn't imagine not needing to.

summer heat
we run upwind
of the barn

Michael Rehling, USA

photoshop
i add the day moon
to my selfie

in the mind
of someone else
a version of me

pulling
the twilight around me
turning seventy

waxing zen
i mention that we are all one
the room empties

looking
out the window
the window looks at me

filling the barrel with my thoughts spring rain

Alexis Rotella USA

Lady from Oaxaca

On hands and knees she scrubs the floor while on the shelf above a priest and two altar boys bless a bride and groom. I hope they bless her, too. She has been here all afternoon dusting away the winter crud from all my art-filled rooms.

On a watermelon plate
the patron saint of bugs –
first ladybird of spring

The Visitation

When daffodils shoot up like arrows he'll slither up the railing, stretch out on the sun-warmed wood and I'll wonder if it's my father coming to check on me. Last year I offered the king snake jonquils in a pickle jar as if that would make up for my absence when he left this world kicking and screaming.

Phone call
the no one there
is someone

Bananas

When will you realize I'm 21? You treat me like I'm elderly. Do you enjoy watching blind people eat? Why are you strangling me--I just want you to wash my hair. And why did you give me a banana for breakfast? I don't like them, says my aunt who has gone bananas.

Its head
falls off
crystal Kuan Yin


At the top
of the Ferris wheel
cotton candy scent
Alexis Rotella

Jacob Salzer, USA

flight departure
father talks about
his baggage

Night Route

Riding the bus, I see the faces of generations, and young souls speaking foreign languages, but I remain quiet in the midst of their conversations.

There is the bus driver yelling in his interrogation, demanding to know why I was on the bus *again*, and his face boils in his anger as I get off the bus without a sound.

There is the sound of the bus engine, and the sound of an accordion door closing with a sense of urgency.

On the long, dark road, there is nothing left but the sound of rain. Between each step, even the “I” thought comes and goes. At night, all the trees disappear into each other, under the star-filled sky.

moonlit alley
a large shadow engulfs
my own

Yesha Shah, India

Incandescent

thunderstorm…
I wake up to
rumblings of a poet

I am given to monologues with myself. And this makes me wonder: what if we could read the thoughts inside human mind?

We'd see people moving about with a dialogue cloud floating over them. Imagine the lines over everyone's heads on a busy street — a clean Calibri font in the cloud above the teacher's head, a classy Italic of the glossed-up socialite, a big bold one of that betel nut chewing businessman, a Freestyle font of that cool teenager, a Bookman of that Bohemian poet, the underlined words of a mother dropping her kid for an exam…

The fonts could have colours too depending on the intensity of the emotions experienced in the thoughts —deep shades of red in the mob, greens around that black Limousine, flashy pinks near an only-girls school, somber greys of the passing funeral procession, pristine whites near a Guru's *Satsang…*

And then, what happens when outrageous ideas could be deciphered— a man fancying other man's wife; a student making fun of their fat professor's behind; the lies of a promiscuous wife; the speech of a corrupt politician before election? A ruckus of catastrophic proportions…

candle stump
the lengthening shadow
of graphite

Sandra Simpson, New Zealand

Christmas night
the lights on the house opposite
blink blink blink blink

playing pirates –
I fight my son
for the eyepatch

dictator's tomb –
rose petals stick
to the soles of our feet

Michael Smeer, The Netherlands

skipping
puddle to puddle, she follows . . .
my madness

tattoo shop . . .
a boy on hands and knees
reads the comics

Christina Sng, Singapore

telling her I love her
every hour
dementia

snowed in
the doll hospital
opens for business

Debbie Strange, Canada

frogspawn
the way you wriggle
out of lies

a fox
in the hen house
your affair

blood-streaked
arms and legs flailing
we relearn
the complicated steps
of the *mosquito Macarena*

Rachel Sutcliffe, UK

that look in your eyes
dark clouds
gathering

fighting the fear
I ask
another question

not thinking
about the rest
I take the first step

spring cleaning
I free the sun
from the spider's web

Kevin Valentine, USA

homeless camp
an abandoned shopping cart
gathering dusk



Julie Warther, USA

open sax case . . .
the song that's more
than a song

entering into
the public domain
amazing grace

stacked on top
of get well cards
sympathy

autumn equinox --
the widower sleeping
on her side of the bed

company --
the doors
I close

bottom of the bargain bin
a stone engraved
with *hope*

Michael Dylan Welch, USA

election-day hike—
as much fog on the left
as on the right

December commute—
I catch the yawn
of the driver beside me

dark alley—
the street bum gives me
a wide berth

economics lecture—
my pen balanced
on its clicker

Ian Willey, Japan

the new guy's
Toy Story mug--
you've got a frenemy

conjugating
with old friends
drink-drank-drunk

morning seminar
another acronym
reflecting great hubris
(AARGH!)

unlikeable candidates...
smoke rising
from the toaster

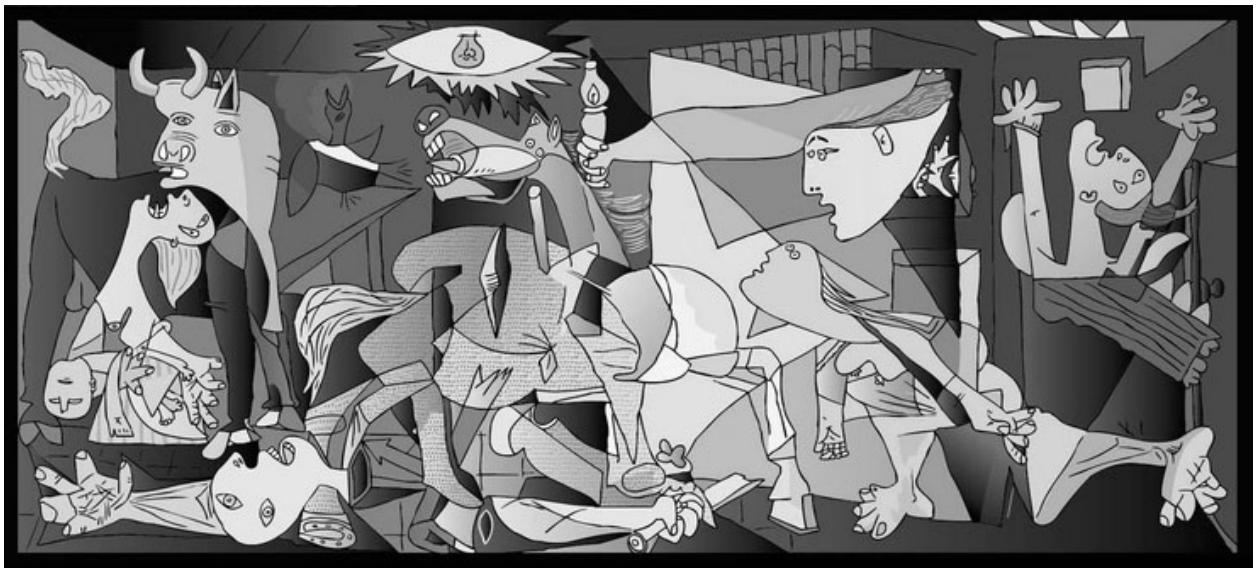
John Zheng, USA

delta tour—
a cellphone's blues ring
in a tourist's purse

Moon Festival
the moon
still the moon

Special Feature

WAR



Ana Drobot, Romania

during the war -
the cherry blossoms
beyond my reach

wartime -
holding the cloudy sky
a church cross

blurred boundaries -
moving with the rapeseed field
a train with refugees

fallen soldiers -
the cherry blossom petals
on the ground

Terri L. French, USA

Ca Dao Mẹ*

It was 1971 and I was 11-years-old. Many of the kids at Madison Junior High wore Army jackets and POW bracelets, basically because it was the thing to do. It looked cool and we all wanted to look cool. But the stainless steel band I wore around my wrist was more than a status symbol. I prayed for the person inscribed on it every night. Sgt. Gary LaBohn. The date that the letters MIA were ascribed to his name — 11/30/68.

Memorial Day—
a locker combination
fading on my palm

Sgt. LaBohn and seven other men boarded a helicopter that day. Their team was being transported to their reconnaissance mission area in Laos. It was a classified mission, not one they could talk about with their families. At 4,000 feet, the helicopter was struck my anti-aircraft fire, went into a spin, crashed in a mass of flames ten miles outside of their destination, and exploded. No ground search was initiated as it was a denied area. An air search indicated there were no survivors. Still the men were listed as “Missing in Action” and their families held on to hope for the next twenty-one years.

deep in the jungle
where no eyes see—
bamboo orchid

In March 1989, the area was excavated. Human remains of 17 teeth and 145 bone fragments were found. The remains are buried in a mass grave in Arlington National Cemetery.

here and there
two grandmothers
point to Orion

* Mother’s Lullaby in full sun



Sgt. Gary LaBohn

the soldier's boy
aims his magnifying glass
one by one
melting army men

the bruises
you don't see—
purple heart

in a cedar hope chest
her daughter's uniform
laid to rest

JOANN GRISETTI, USA

LAOS CRISIS

Soon after we arrived in Sasebo in February 1959 the Army of North Viet Nam invaded Laos. Adult conversations and whispers were full of a new word – Laos. Tensions ran high in all areas of life in Sasebo. I suppose there were sympathizers among the Japanese, especially among those who wanted all foreigners out of Japan. Small acts of sabotage against military facilities occurred more often. Post war Japan was host to political turmoil I did not comprehend at age seven, eight, nine, ten. I recall the voices of my parents and their friends discussing such matters with concern. They used words I did not know: communist, pacifist, demonstration, reactionary, subversive. I played games with the Japanese children and learned their songs.

broken conversations
words drift
out the window

By October of 1959, more ships and personnel assigned to Sasebo began arriving. This affected many areas including housing and the school. While in second grade, the number of students required one teacher in each of the grade levels. By third grade, many grades had two classes. A majority of the newer teachers were young, just graduated teachers, or older, retired teachers. Both categories thought they would find adventure in a foreign assignment.

seeking that
which is unknown
evening walks

By the fall of 1961, the crisis in Laos had escalated yet again. This newest crisis affected our departure, my father's next posting and promotion. As more men drew assignments to Laos, men waiting to be relived in Sasebo had longer to wait. My father went to Japan expecting to be there two years followed by promoted and reassignment to Washington, DC. His orders arrived on schedule; however, he then spent ten months waiting for his relief to arrive. The new duty station was Groton and submarines as the nuclear navy expanded. I know he felt much pressure during these years to perform well and get the subs completed and launched to protect the other armed forces in Laos and Viet Nam.

Laos
a new postage stamp
a new word to fear

Brendon Kent, England

memorial day
a child
with his father's face

Mohammad Azim Khan, Pakistan

war widow...
how quickly her hair
changed

Gregory Longenecker, USA

forgotten medal
how seldom I speak
of the army

overseas duty
the look of the locals
when I near

the way the locals
look at me
stateside

Michael Smeer, The Netherlands

The Return . . .

In 1940, at the start of World War II, there were 9 million people in Holland, out of which there were some 140.000 Jews. 102.000 Jews did not survive the war. Only a few of them did not die in the Holocaust or fell victim to the oppressor. With the help of a very brave few, some managed to stay underground throughout the war...

coal shed . . .
the dark little hole
in a hidden door

After a long and exhausting journey, most of the holocaust survivors returning found their family home, if they even were still there, had been 'redistributed'. They were hardly ever welcomed with open arms. Most of them were the only survivor of entire families and had lost all earthly possessions...

upon his return . . .
this strange face
at his family home

Even now in 2016 there are 17 million people in Holland but only 30.000 Jews. many of whom consider leaving Holland due to the deteriorated social climate...

Europe is once again being tested. This time by millions of refugees mostly from Islamic countries.

dark clouds . . .
the remaining Chanukah
candle flickers

sand fleas . . .
this constant urge to scratch
her missing leg

camp memorial . . .
my warm pebble settles
on granddad's name

(For my grandfather, Aron Smeer,
1911 Amsterdam (NL),1941 Mauthausen - Gusen (AUT))

War Memorial at Ice-Cream Parlor Koco, Amsterdam NL *

a lady recites
the ice salon plaque . . .
sparrows gather

silence
answers the last post . . .
only two minutes

national anthem . . .
memories drown
in tears

* This plaque is placed at the former location of Koco ice cream Salon. Every year at this location there is a small memorial service to honor the fallen and those who dared to fight oppression and fascism.

My mother, who was seven months old at the time of this raid, lived only a few hundred meters away from Koco.

My grandparents lived there and in close proximity as long as they lived.
My mother grew up there and left the area after she got married to my dad.

The plaque says:

Wednesday, Feb. 19th,1941

Here established was
Koco ice cream parlor,
a shop which was owned
by German-Jewish refugees
E. Cahn and A. Kohn.
Along with regulars
they had formed a gang,
which actually engaged in
the fight against the Nazi
occupiers on Feb.19th,1941.
Cahn was arrested and
became the first Jew
in Amsterdam to be
executed. This event was
followed by large scale
raids in the Jewish quarters
of Amsterdam on Feb. 22nd
and 23rd, 1941. These events
led to the all-out February-
S*trike on Feb. 25th, 1941 as*
a mass protest against the
persecution of the Jews in
Amsterdam and the rest
of Holland.

COMMEMORATE THE
FIGHT AGAINST NAZISM
AND FASCISM!

CHRISTINA SNG, SINGAPORE

at the cemetery
watching an execution
wartime children

night bombings
when she learnt
to hold her breath

war stories
a haunted look
in my grandmother’s eyes

after the war
a traitor executed
before his neighbors' tombstones

Prune Juice has posted a video with a selection of poems by H. Gene Murtha on our Facebook page. Please follow the link below if you'd like to watch the video:

https://www.facebook.com/PruneJuiceJournal/



H. GENE MURTHA

1955 - 2015