



**no. forty-six**

# prune juice

Issue #46

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**Cover Art:** Vidya Premkumar

Founded by Alexis Rotella in 2009, *Prune Juice Journal* is recognized as the longest-running international literary journal dedicated solely to exploring new directions in English Senryu and related forms, including Kyoka, Haibun, Haiga, and Rengay.

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## Editor's Note

After two and a half years at the helm of Prune Juice, we are stepping away from our roles as co-editors. This is our last issue. Since its founding in 2009 by Alexis Rotella, Prune Juice has been guided by a remarkable line of editors, and it has been our deep honour to contribute to its ongoing story.

Curating the best senryu and related forms of poetry from poets around the world has been an immense privilege. Each submission was a gift—a glimpse into someone's lived experience, sharp observations, and poetic insight. As William J. Higginson suggested in *The Haiku Handbook*, a haiku (and by extension, a senryu) isn't complete until it finds a reader. Which means, of course, that this form lives and breathes through community.

That spark of connection across distances has been at the heart of our editorial approach. We've tried to offer a space that embraces the full range of the human condition: the joys, absurdities, heartbreaks, ironies and paradoxes of being alive together on this planet. Across eight issues, we've tackled difficult subjects—war, injustice, identity, gender-based violence, racism, climate grief, AI, and more—not as provocateurs, but as poets lifting a creative lens to a shifting world. We've also resisted narrow definitions of what senryu ought to be, choosing instead to welcome the fresh word, the embodied word, the honest word.

We're proud of every poem we've published, from those that went on to Touchstone Awards recognition—including Brad Bennett's 2024 winner for Individual Poems (issue no. 42)—to those that may not have received formal accolades, but still moved us, challenged us, stayed with us. We're also grateful for the many strong submissions that didn't quite make it into the journal. Every poem we received was a sign of the form's continued vitality and the poet's trust in our process.

Editors don't stay forever. The average tenure of a Prune Juice editor is just over two years. When we took the helm from Thomas Haynes in 2023, we didn't know exactly how long we'd stay. We knew only that at some point it would feel right to pass the privilege on. That moment has arrived.

We are delighted to announce that [Pippa Phillips](#) will become the next editor of Prune Juice starting with Issue 47. Over the years, when Pippa's name appeared in our inbox, we eagerly opened her submission email. Her work always impresses us—her poems are evocative, fresh, and fearless. Now, as she brings her creativity, intelligence, and vision for the senryu form to the role of Prune Juice editor, we can't wait to see what lies ahead for this esteemed journal.

As you prepare your submissions for Issue 47, please join us in welcoming Pippa as the new steward of our Prune Juice senryu community.

With deep gratitude,

P. H. Fischer and Antoinette Cheung, co-editors

## Best of Issue

*Each issue of Prune Juice features a best-of-issue senryu chosen by one of the co-editors.*

undocumented  
a man without  
a planet

*Cynthia Anderson, USA*

In selecting our final Best of Issue winner as an editing team, we were drawn to the idea of timeliness. We reflected on the role that *Prune Juice* has played in our lives, and we felt that you, our wonderful community, have kept us attuned to the moments that matter right now. Through your submissions, you have pushed us to see fresh perspectives, moved us to understand the unfamiliar, and uplifted us with your humour and optimism despite all the present reasons for despair. And all of this was achieved by the choicest words. The significance of your individual moments has allowed us to catalogue the heartbeat of our time together over the past few issues.

Cynthia's poem is a stellar example of the role senryu can play in fostering connection and compassion. We are immediately pulled into a sense of discomfort from the bluntness of line one - we know we will be challenged in this poem. The unsympathetic tone of "undocumented" is key, particularly when it is juxtaposed with the humanity of the next lines. Cynthia dares us to question how a single piece of paper can capture the fullness and complexity of an identity, of a life. In turn, we must grapple with whether those who are "documented" are truly privileged by this status. Could it be that this "privilege" is just a way for us to be monitored and controlled?

As the poem unfolds, an image of not just one man, but a crowd of others, comes into focus. These are our neighbours, our coworkers, the familiar faces we see in the places we frequent, volunteers we stand shoulder to shoulder with to support joint causes. They are us. But through the machinations of fate, they are excluded from the arbitrary privilege provided by documentation. And this leads us to the provocative last line. Cynthia's gut punch is at once skilful and simple. The fracturing of home, identity, and self is conveyed in just three words - "without a planet". We feel the crushing weight and senselessness of this loss.

Even as the gravity of this poem sinks in, we are reminded that the haiku and senryu community has proven to be a haven for people from all walks of life. We ourselves were welcomed so enthusiastically two and a half years ago as novice editors of this journal. And we depart from our role knowing that the spirit of empathy, openness, and speaking truth to power will endure under Pippa's leadership, and all of your continued explorations of what it means to be part of our shared existence.

Antoinette Cheung, Co-Editor  
August, 2025

## **Senryu**

undocumented  
a man without  
a planet

*Cynthia Anderson, USA*

still holding  
its balloon bouquet  
empty wheelchair

*Roberta Beary, USA/Ireland*

chickens  
playing the piano  
i need this

*Sondra J. Byrnes, USA*

hidden in  
today's news  
injured magpie

*petro c. k., USA*

soft s's in secret huddled sisters

*petro c. k., USA*

Monday train . . .  
no buskers to play  
the blues

*Joseph Chiang, Canada*

feeding the homeless cat lady

winter bus stop—  
switching the mitten  
to his other hand

*Wendy Cobourne, USA*

bomb shelter . . .  
the dry biscuits  
from our last time

*Maya Daneva, The Netherlands*

commencement day  
the circulation desk  
full of returns

*Mark Forrester, USA*

insomnia: dust in the dreamcatcher

church gossip  
a litany of  
bless-her-hearts

*Terri L. French, USA*

almost home  
stopping the pump  
on an even dollar

*Alex Fyffe, USA*

black ice  
we slip so easily  
into disguise

*John Hawkhead, UK*

too hot peri-perimenopause

(found) wanting a kind (of) man

*Patricia Hawkhead, UK*

I decide to leave  
the hostile women's group—  
beached whale

*Janet Ruth Heller, USA*

heavy book of diseases it only takes one

*Ruth Holzer, USA*

I'd rather stick needles in my AI

*Kimberly A. Horning, USA*

Dad's harmonica  
blues in the key  
of dust

*Edward Cody Huddleston, USA*

red shiso  
her silence garnished  
with bruises

*Jonathan Humphrey, USA*

drizzle  
adding a little frizz  
to my frazzle

*Julie Bloss Kelsey, USA*

a little louder  
than the clock  
tinnitus

*Ravi Kiran, India*

summer rain  
I download another  
weather app

*Eva Limbach, Germany*

seagull . . .  
another romance  
marred by random shit

*Bob Lucky, Portugal*

blind date  
a wildflower  
my app can't identify

*Anthony Lusardi, USA*

cold rain  
a custodian paints over  
*diversity integrity compassion*

*Hannah Mahoney, USA*

mom's recipe  
the dough stretches further  
after giving it a rest

acts of god and man the same rubble

*Sarah E. Metzler, USA*

me no pause

*Kati Mohr, Germany*

thoughts  
of an open marriage  
soaring kite

*Mary Oishi, USA*

war  
a backwards walk  
past  
all last days

*Victor Ortiz, USA*

(m)othering the short skirt eye roll

*Lorraine A Padden, USA*

jukebox favorite  
a cold beer held  
to his black eye

*John Pappas, USA*

Father's Day  
she calls me  
a sperm donor

cracked mirror  
still the ghetto  
in my eyes

*Jonathan Roman, USA*

dry January  
shots of whipped cream  
straight from the can

*Michelle Schaefer, USA*

minor collaterals  
spring breezes come  
from their apartments

*Dan Schwerin, USA*

on a loop  
the zen garden  
video

accumulating rumors of happiness greatly exaggerated

*Julie Schwerin, USA*

muscular dystrophy—  
the closet empties of my  
outside clothes

*Shloka Shankar, India*

hospital gown  
father forgets to cover  
his dreams

*Nalini Shetty, India*

ring finger  
she caresses  
the white space

*Neena Singh, India*

tsundoku  
we don't know what  
we don't know

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

wishing  
for grandkids  
the silence of stars

*Ann Sullivan, USA*

in the closet  
behind the camo  
their former habit

*Eric Sundquist, USA*

he sensed her luncheon plans on a quantum level

*Patrick Sweeney, USA*

meditation

*Nick T, UK*

morning cuppa  
the buttery crust nabbed  
with a kiss

*Mary White, Ireland*

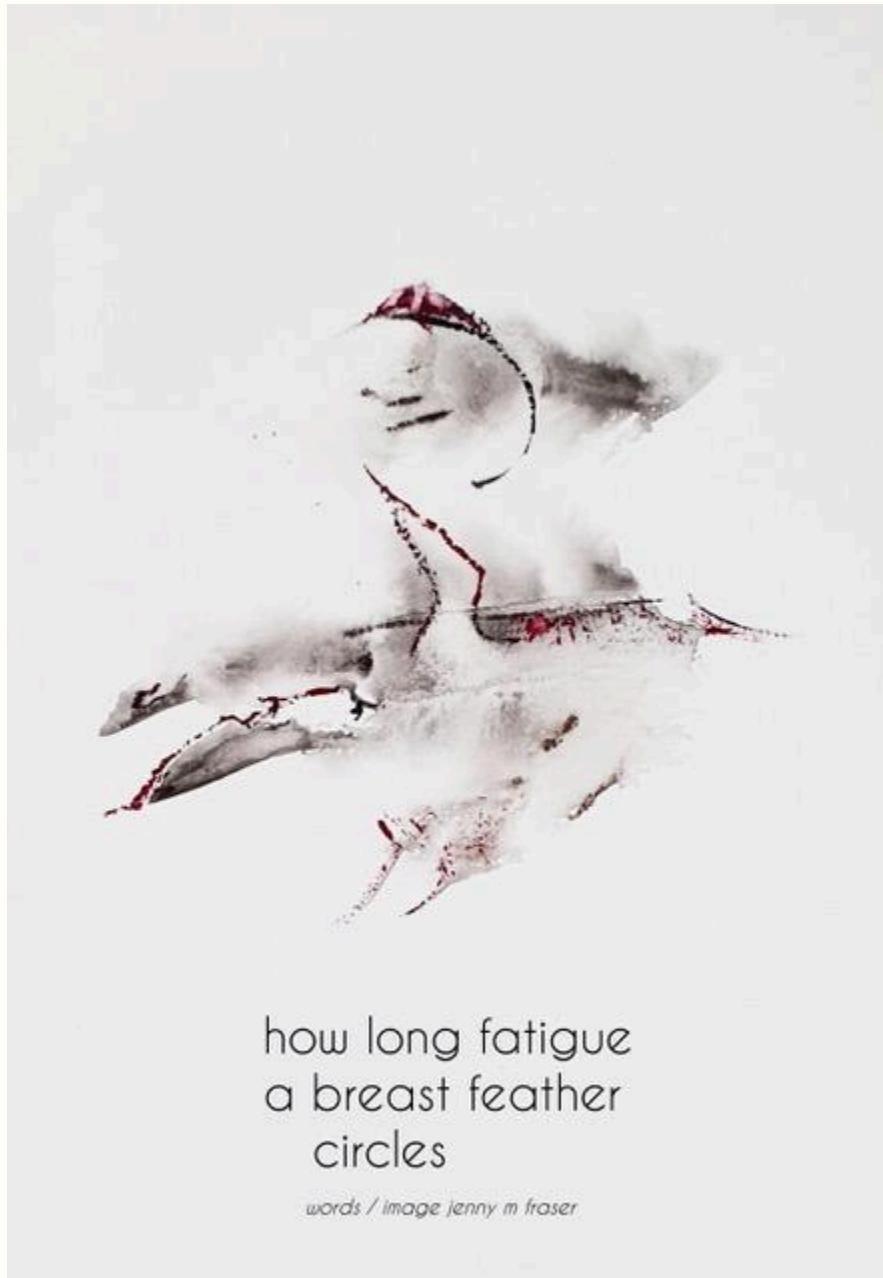
unannounced neighbors—  
our hoodies  
inside out

*Eugeniusz Zacharski, Poland*

no wiggle room  
on a carny ride  
with the devil

*Stephanie Zepherelli, USA*

## Haiga



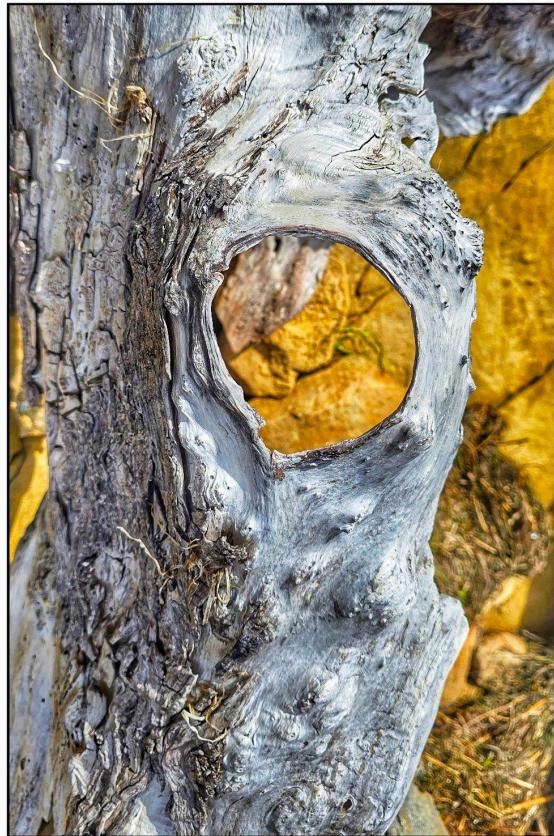
how long fatigue  
a breast feather  
circles

*words / image jenny m fraser*

*Jenny Fraser, New Zealand*



*Julie Bloss Kelsey, USA*



OLD WOODCUTTER  
HIS TOOTHLESS SMILE  
SHARPENS THE AXE

RON C. MOSS

*Ron C. Moss, Australia*



*Debbie Strange, Canada*

## Haibun

### Warp and Weft

Dad had polio when he was a child. The youngest of a brood of seven children left him unattended and with a permanent limp. I see his shoes lying next to the bed . . . the left one considerably higher than the right one. Mother tells me never to ask him about it. Dad also scribbles something in his little green diary late into the night. Maybe he has his insecurities too. I know I can ask him about his writings. He tells me he writes poetry, the romantic heartbreaking kind. I hope that when I grow up, he will share them with me. But as of now for me he is a jovial, happy-go-lucky dad who sneaks out to the medicine cabinet at night for a couple of pills that help him sleep well.

driftwood the time it takes to make a memory

*Mona Bedi, India*

## Mo(u)rning News

A young Palestinian interviewed as the *Gideon's Chariot* assault begins.

Gaza—  
we don't sleep we just  
lie down

*Tim Dwyer, Northern Ireland*

## Table Scraps

As children, my sister and I were never allowed to talk at dinner.  
Sit there, shut-up and clean your plates. No elbows on the table  
either and, for God's sake, sit up straight!

green jello  
fruit cocktail floating  
in another reality

Dad started the meal every night with the same sing-song  
refrain—*Salt! Pepper! Ketchup!* After which my mother would  
repeat—in case we hadn't heard his melodious demand—*Girls, go  
get your father the salt, pepper and ketchup.*

Why we didn't put it on the table in the first place is beyond me.

after dinner  
a cigarette butt  
in the instant pudding

*Terri L. French, USA*

## **I should have stayed in bed**

spooning myself into my husband's body. But worry has once again pulled me from the sheets and into the cold pre-dawn. The cat curls into my lap and begins kneading . . . kneading . . . needing . . .

long night's moon  
coaxing words into  
this frigid poem

*Terri L. French, USA*

## **Beckett's Hotel**

We meet in the room for the very sad, where the others say, *we know what you're going through*, but they have no clue, and neither do you, so you do your best to fit in with those who barely resemble themselves, yet hold out hope that one day they'll feel better, but it only gets worse each time they say *it's sad, so sad, you're still here.*

waiting for the mood  
to come—  
Godot syndrome

*Peter Jastermsky, USA*

## **What Goes Around**

One thing is certain: riding the bus plunks you down in reality. Today, two guys behind us are comparing their legal problems. One tells the other “that judge was the agent of your karma.” The other guy tries to clarify: “an agent of my consciousness.” Yes, they say, in unison, “karmic consciousness.” The two guys then exit the bus, laughing. We sit back in our seats, waiting for the next thing that’s supposed to happen.

new frontier  
the joys  
of pharmaceuticals

*Peter Jastermsky, USA*

### **... but enough about me ...**

One-by-one my virtual friends have flown the coop. Why? Where have they gone? A string of code must have been tweaked, a few variables altered in the secret algorithm and, just like that, they've been excised from my personal matrix. Why am I *persona non grata*, dialed-down and socially dissociated? Now just a lowly avatar, a digital pariah, I find myself in the binary hash bin—a meek beacon fading away into the ethereal pink-noise static of a billion clamoring magpies. Well, I suppose you can't really miss friends you've never even met.

dust mote . . .  
one fleeting dance  
in a sunbeam

*Mark Meyer, USA*

## **Skipped**

The process of slowly erasing has begun. One day at a time. One room at a time. Taking one object which is mine, cluttered amongst what is theirs, I decide to either give it or throw it away. In some way, it's almost become a game. How far can I go? How small can I become before the people I live with finally notice that I am no longer there.

its splash done  
my thrown stone  
descends to darkness

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

## **Calling Hours**

Those who thought they knew him said he looked like himself. They were being polite. The room was filled with an undertone of resentment, because they cared unwillingly; of disappointment they could never voice; and for the sorrow his mother and father were feigning. The scent of the flowers covered it over, nobody needed to tell the truth.

benediction  
the detective takes pictures  
of the guest book

*Ron Scully, USA*

## The Best Years of Our Lives

Twenty-three years after I leave boarding school, I get a phone call from a member of the Old Girls' committee, asking if I'd be willing to speak at the funeral of our former headmistress: the headmistress, somehow fused with Mrs Thatcher in my memory. She gave me recurring nightmares for almost 20 years, until I had group therapy with Boarding School Survivors, which helps alumni, who have been traumatised by their experiences.

I pause, before telling the truth, and say that while normally I would not speak ill of the dead, I hated her when I was at school, and I'm unable to say anything positive about her at all. There is a silence at the end of the line, and then the woman says that they have been having terrible trouble finding *anyone* to give the eulogy.

I think back to when I was 15, when two friends and I made a voodoo doll out of clay stolen from the art room. We also stole pins from the needlework room, and, while whispering curses, pierced the soft clay with so many pins, that the figure was more like a hedgehog than a human doll. We hid it under the floorboards in our shared bedroom.

On our last ever day at school, about three years later, we asked the girls now sleeping in that room, if we could go in. We lifted the floorboard, and found the doll had dried out so much, the limbs and head had come apart from the torso. We threw the remains into a bin outside the school gates.

my appetite  
for chilled dessert—  
I lick the bowl clean

*Jenny Shepherd, UK*

## **Fire on the Mountain**

Jerusalem is burning—again, and at the rate of eight meters per second. Spreading like wildfire. It is Holocaust Remembrance Day, and we are lowering a survivor's grandson into the ground.

moving toward missiles  
the curious compass  
of a sparrow

*Sara Tropper, Israel*

## Wire Light

It was small, a little soft on one side—easy to hide under my shirt. Like my sister's cheek after she fell. I thought maybe I'd keep it for later, but the smell gave it away: sweet and sharp, like the wind when the trees turn yellow, before they brought us here.

I gave half to the boy with the shaking hands. We sat on dry grass. It only scratched my legs. He said thank you, but looked away as he ate. I don't think he'd spoken all day—or eaten.

Later, I rubbed the bruised part on my palm to see what would happen. Red, then brown. Then it broke apart. The same sky as when the trucks first came.

bitter wind  
he bites the stem  
to the core

*C.X. Turner, UK*

## **Hidden Currents**

The office smells of coffee and warm milk as I settle in. The heaters hum; someone mutters about opening a window. Across the room, Nick leans over his phone, voice low, gaze fixed on a child's crayon drawing pinned to his desk. Another call, yet another problem. He walks over, eyes meeting mine, feeling like a compass seeking true north. His shirt slightly rumpled, hair askew, the traces of a long night softened by his easy smile. I wonder if he ever lets himself feel the calm between calls, and if, in those silences, he thinks of me.

quiet drive home  
roses on the backseat  
already wilting

*C.X. Turner, UK*

## **Needed**

A few days after my birth, my grandmother calls to check on us. When she finds out my mother and father are about to give me my first bath, she says,

“You have no business giving that baby a bath. Come get me right now.”

My mother tells her there’s no need for that and ends the call.

nursing home

Maw Maw has never driven a car, never learned to swim, never had a paying job. She only went as far as third grade in school. But these things don’t stop her. She knows what she knows and that is how to take care of children.

waiting

As my mother begins to lower me into the warm water of the kitchen sink, she hears a car door slam and looks out the window to see Maw Maw emerging from the town’s only taxi.

for someone to come

*Gayle Worthy, USA*

## Linked Verse

### Renku

#### **Hands on a Planchette**

(1)

sunny afternoon  
in a church basement  
poets congregate

(2)

summer coronation  
a new queen bee

(3)

around the table  
hands on a planchette  
spirits rising

(4)

she kicks the tires  
of her new used car

(5)

Cinco de Mayo  
pretty women  
waving from the floats

(6)

a crack of the bat  
the crowd roars

(7)

aged tulip petals  
fall softly  
into my hands

(8)

after evening news  
the empty bottle of Tums

(9)

broken globe  
seeing the world  
in pieces

(10)

the turn of a head  
the wisp of a smile

(11)

divorce court  
hands and hearts  
meet at the water fountain

(12)

two lumps of coal  
and a shriveled carrot

(13)

refugee camp  
their tent's thin walls  
against winter

(14)

basket of fruit  
*ars longa vita brevis*

(15)

new hip  
even the grandchildren  
are grown

(16)

varied thrushes  
wearing October colors

(17)

moon light gleams  
the water reflecting  
fallen democracy

(18)

leaves in piles  
the rakes stashed away

(1) Sheila Sondik, (2) (16) Elaine Miller Bond,  
(3) (14) Eileen Coughlin, (4) Luke Brannon,  
(5) (7) (13) Joan Stamm, (6) John S Green,

*(8) Gwen Stamm, (9) (15) Bob Brunttil,  
(10) (12) Bob Zaslow, (11) E. Janae Byrd,  
(17) Carla Shafer, (18) Patrick Gallagher (Sabaki)*

*All poets from USA*

## Rengay

### **Business As Usual**

morning meeting  
a donut sprinkle  
in the boss's beard

*an hour  
to transcribe minutes*

another meeting  
that should be an email  
crow chatter

*team building  
the group leader  
playing favorites*

working lunch  
every bagel stale

*exit survey  
not one question  
concerning DEI*

Bryan Rickert, USA

*Terri L. French, USA*

## **Hopes**

June wedding  
the hawk  
over a nest

*choosing between  
two blue ties*

red flags  
or not  
wild horses

*grooms' side  
an usher's  
concealed carry*

round bales  
right where they are

*bubble send-off  
the clank of cans  
comes along*

Dan Schwerin, USA  
*Julie Schwerin, USA*

## Tan-Renga

too much water here  
not enough there  
Neptune fades away

*everything must go  
while supplies last*

petro c. k., USA  
*Jerome Berglund, USA*

## Sequences

### **Little Havana**

the tango dancer slicks back his already slick hair (AR)  
a plastic rose between her teeth (TF)  
on the downbeat my two left feet (BR)  
canasta women complain about their corns (AR)  
alfajores served on a porcelana platter (TF)  
rumba rhythms the cafecito in her kiss (BR)  
he accepts half of my hug (AR)  
last notes filtered through the jacaranda (TF)  
sticky heat a bare bulb lights the way home (BR)

*Alexis Rotella, USA*

*Terri L. French, USA*

*Bryan Rickert, USA*

## **Bloodline**

underground

potatoes, turnips, beets . . .  
chewing my way  
through my grandmother's starch

where the heat cannot reach

maybe it was  
just yesterday  
when the bottom fell out

ancestral dreams

on the butsudan  
the mandarin  
shriveled

*Isabella Mori, Canada*

## **On the Eve**

### **prom night**

smoothing deep wrinkles  
in the satin

### **shoulders**

the distance  
between cheek bones

### **at full pearl**

next day moon  
running a shade deeper

*Lorraine A Padden, USA*

## **Surfacing**

in-

*side a wrist fading scars*

in breaking-

*sideways slide out of a headlock*

in breaking her-

*a tornado spawned from damp*

in breaking her silence-

*the deeper lotus magenta*

*Lorraine A Padden, USA*



**Next Issue:** December, 2025

**Submissions:** Open October 1st – October 31st, 2025

**New Editor:** Pippa Phillips

**Pippa Phillips** writes short things and long things, poetry and prose, fiction and non-fiction. A traveller who has lived in a number of countries, Pippa is interested in the issue of translation, the tension between the traditional and the experimental, and the pursuit of the utopian in dystopian times. Her work has appeared in *Prune Juice*, *The Heron's Nest*, *The Asahi Shimbun*, *The Drabble*, *Frog Pond*, *Whiptail*, *Heliotrope*, *bones*, and numerous other journals. You can follow her on a number of platforms under the handle @pippaesque.

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