CORNFLOWER

HAIKU MAGAZINE

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About us

The goal of *Cornflower* is to share and promote the pleasure and art of haiku, haibun and haiga.
We focus on publishing work that reflects the characteristic traits of haiku in a contemporary context: the use of objective images, sensory experience, season words, juxtaposition, and the implicit and layered conveying of meaning and emotion, allowing readers to read between the lines.
Haiku that appear simple and commonplace, like a cornflower, yet reveal depth and beauty to those who look closer.

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"Haiku is a way of looking."

Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694)

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Editor's Note

The second issue of *Cornflower* and the first themed around summer. Once again, we've received so many beautiful haiku, haibun and haiga, for which we're deeply grateful.

Yet, this issue isn't just about summer simply as a season or a general concept; it contains one hundred summers from all over the world, captured between the lines of the selected haiku.

Rather than just telling us about their summer — leaving us to take their word for it — the poets show and share it through written snapshots. Images of tiny, special moments or simple everyday scenes made special again by pausing and zooming in on them: the heat of day, the cool of night, colours, tastes, smells, sounds, birds, flowers, butterflies, people, …

Instead of having it spelled out for us, we see through the eyes of the poets. We get to experience the moments that moved them, along with all the implicit emotion, connotation and symbolism, while adding our own frame of reference. Showing what moved you or made you feel a certain way, instead of plainly stating it, is a powerful and intimate way of sharing and conveying. It is the way of haiku.

From among the many wonderful submissions, the editorial team has meticulously arrived at a final selection that truly captures the essence of the season.

We kindly invite you to step into this gallery of snapshots and let yourself be fully immersed in summer.

Michael Pappafava

Between the Lines

Commentary on selected haiku.

—

cumulus clouds …
a stray cat curls on
the curule chair

— *Saad Ali*

Commentary by David Cox.

I confess a recent guilty pleasure. I have been watching social media reels of domestic cats and wild cats doped up like Lysander on catnip. Like the audience of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, there is a strange voyeuristic pleasure in watching their mishaps. Similarly, the mountain lion who broke into a hardware store in Colorado Springs evidently made a beeline for the hard stuff. Staff arrived the next morning to find a rather mollified cougar, reacting exactly as our pet felines would do given the opportunity.

For me, the poem evokes the image of the personified brown smoke in T. S. Eliot's *"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,"* which curls around the house and falls asleep. Like the cat it is also a drifter for the moment, the cumbersome need to fend for itself is paused; the cat can rest awhile. The fricatives here are somehow not abrasive, as one might expect; like the "curled" cat, there are no hard edges to this poem. Moreover, the image of benign cumulus clouds in line 1 is directly juxtaposed with the cat in line 2: clouds which are ethereal and also soft, like the fur of a long-haired cat. The effect is mellifluous, a daytime lullaby. The echo of "curl" and "curule" (implying some sort of elevation for the cat) is playful in its anagrammatic wordfoolery.

Its flow is smoother than any cold brew I have had the luck to sip. It would almost be easy to forget that the cat is "stray." Although our pussy of no fixed abode has found this pleasure, it may well be short-lived; we do not know whether he or she has been adopted yet.

You do not have to be a cat person to experience vicarious joy from cats seeking out and experiencing pleasure, and this is also true of Saad Ali's poem.

———

summer wind —
the scent of time
on the hanging clothes

— *Guliana Ravaglia*

Commentary by Sharon Ferrante.

What a thought-provoking haiku. I read it and fell in love.
The first line of the natural world, the last line of the human world, simple, but in between that ephemeral middle line that changes everything. That provides an extra gift for the reader: contemplation.
A beautiful and intriguing haiku, that immediately became my favorite.

———

summer lily
her flower has withered
before I notice her

— *Isabelle Cauwels*

Commentary by Denisa Hanšutová.

Rather than depicting the beauty of summer, the poem's focus is on its decay. On the first reading, 'the summer lily' points out a fact how mindless we tend to be about things and people around us. On a closer look, the lily is apparently not just any flower we overlook – it's 'her' flower. The pronoun is where the questions start. What is the relationship between her and the speaker? (Why) Was the speaker meant to look after her flower? Have they forgotten to tend it

(or their relationship)? Or didn't they care about it at all (anymore)? Was the writer suggesting a sense of distance and indifference or rather a neglected responsibility and guilt? Is this all a poem about letting go or rather holding on to what's left even if it's just regrets? I like the way the haiku intrigues us into different scenarios. Which one did you choose?

———

cicada shell
one leg still gripping
the fence

— *Travis Park*

Commentary by Paul David Mena.

I have only experienced one cicada brood in my life, and it was an otherworldly experience. Out running errands, I drove my car into a deafening wall of noise, soon to be accompanied by swarms of large flying insects. I needed to focus to get to my destination and back, at one point pulling a still-live cicada off of my clothing.

After mating, cicadas don't live very long, abandoning their exoskeletons while the next generation begins the cycle anew. The image of the cicada shell clinging to the world it has recently departed is instantly poignant and "gripping," highlighting the brevity of life and the unrelenting instinct to survive.

———

last night's dream
a scribble of bramble
at the field's edge

— *John Pappas*

Commentary by Annie Wilson.

This poem stayed with me, on the edge of my mind, long after I first read it. It's often hard to hold on to the elusive threads of a dream once we're awake – but its mood sometimes lingers. The juxtaposition between the first line of this poem and the 'scribble of bramble' suggests tangled thoughts and unease. The sound of these words brings them to life (my local hedgerows look exactly like this). And in this transition between dreaming and waking, reality echoes the dreamscape. It's an effective concrete image, which also serves as a metaphor.

I imagine the poet out for a morning walk, either trying to recall last night's dream or finding threads still lurk in the back of his mind. It is relevant that this impenetrable, thorny thicket lies at the edge of the field. Each word here is important.

A sense of transience is conveyed by the fading memory of the dream. The poem captures a specific moment, while being open enough to invite the reader's own thoughts and experiences. After all, a fascination with dreams is universal.

———

Haibun

What She Did on Her Fabulous Summer Vacation

She is bored—again. Dad loves to drive and Mom lets him. Monotonous hours racing cross-country on I-80 toward Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks. Despite the words to songs in Dad's limited repertoire, she doesn't feel like anyone's sunshine or darling Clementine, isn't sure where the bear went and doesn't care who lost what on top of Old Smoky.

bug-splattered windshield
why did that old lady
swallow a fly?

At noon, they unpack the cooler. Lunch is served in meager shade on a gritty picnic table, clinging to the roadside in a rumbling slipstream of passing tractor-trailers. Today's dry bologna and cheese sandwich, carrot and celery sticks swimming in a Tupperware pool, and an apple are boring. She knows they are saving money, but it feels more like punishment for yesterday's escapade. A rare stop at a local diner. She shared a slice of coconut cream pie from the rotating glass display case with Dad. Back on the road, Mom caught her and her brother unloading piles of sugar packets, decorated with birds, trains and cars, from their pockets—lifted from a metal basket in the diner. Mom was unconvinced by their argument—*they were free—you're supposed to collect them!* Boy, had they been in trouble.

her brother
kicking the seatback
his buzz haircut

Mid-afternoon, she is hungry again. Disgruntled, she nibbles on a pretzel from the snack bag. Travel tic-tac-toe is boring—no one can *ever* find an all-white cow to put an X through! Acquiring more state license plates than her brother is B-O-R-I-N-G!

They pull off the highway into the trading post's pot-holed parking lot. A Sinclair brontosaurus towers over the gas pumps. Leaping from the car, she ignores the dinosaur photo op and pushes through a door with tinkling bell to search the bins, racks and glass cases for polished rocks, themed T-shirts and fake turquoise rings. Seeking the perfect souvenir to flaunt for show & tell in September.

beaded trinket
dangles over the dashboard
my rearview mirror

— *Janet Ruth*

———

Unseasoned

We camp in the Sangra de Crista end of the Rocky Mountains. It's dinner time, and it's not my turn to cook, so another guy and I go fishing instead. There's no luck catching any fish though. So when we get back to camp, I go over where they're cooking. A guy asks me if I'd get salt out of a cardboard box. There was a box upside down with a rock on it. I was quite naïve. I went over, took the rock off the box, and picked it up. Underneath was a snake, fairly long, probably napping. I put the box back, put the rock on top, and called out, "No salt".

trail food
served al fresco
mountain view

— *Thomas Smith*

———

Autumn of Life

On the hillside, a tumbling waterfall of Mexican bush sages. These fuzzy purple-and-white flower spikes, waving in the late afternoon light, keep me company. This is my first outing since being laid off in a 'restructuring'.

At fifty-five, I am stuck in a strange clearing. My hands are too smooth for retirement, yet today's tech jargon sounds like another tongue. It is too early to step back, yet too late to begin again.

lakefront quiet
standing still to hear
the boy I was

— *Chen-ou Liu*

———

Le Mirage

She planned the perfect wedding. A small chapel shimmering with stained glass and paintings of angels. An ivory silk charmeuse dress made by a theater costumer. The handsome blond groom. A French wedding cake. A strand of pearls from her father.

It rains. Her mother, newly diagnosed, stays home. The horse-drawn carriage arrives at the wrong time and leaves. Her father fires the photographer. The groom's newborn niece cries. The crystal cake topper swans shatter. The priest forgets to add *for time and all eternity.*

It rains on their divorce day too.

swan song
the lies repeat
in our stories

— *Joy Hallinan*

———

The Longer Path

I leave the bicycle where the dirt road begins. The footpath between the fields is quieter than the road. A farmer rinses mud from his hands in the irrigation ditch before walking on. Crickets have not yet begun. Water keeps moving.

late summer
a white butterfly
crossing the canal

— *Kholida Basori*

———

Haiku

summer work
living from sno-cone
to sno-cone

— *Michael Henry Lee*

summer dusk
a swallow's shadow
on the river

— *Kholida Basori*

sea glass
a beach littered
with ghosts

— *John Pappas*

strawberry picking
the low sweep
of a starling

— *Joanna Ashwell*

temple festival
cicadas still singing
after the sermon

— *Mani Shanmugham*

two clouded sulphurs
landing on solidago
the east wind

— *Joshua St. Claire*

just outside
the foxes' den
Orion's dogs

— *Gordon Brown*

last mango —

the tapering tip

of a parakeet's tail

— *Vaishnavi Ramaswamy*

silver flash—

the heron strikes

as I cast

— *Jim Niffen*

summer romance...
a daisy
loses its mane

— *Julie Schwerin*

bakery window
three boys —
counting coins

— *Patricia Haddock*

double rainbow
teen girls with
matching tattoos

— *Joy Hallinan*

twilight river
salmon after salmon
leap at stars

— *Chen-ou Liu*

everything bagel
the homeless lady gives me
half of half

— *Randy Brooks*

meadow stream
every stone
part of the song

— *Joanna Ashwell*

flycatcher's belly
watching a white moon
in a blue sky

— *Kim Olmtak Gomes*

drying creek
minnows gathered
in one shadow

— *Travis Park*

catching fireflies
holes punched
in a jar lid

— *Mani Shanmugham*

big-moon night
moth wings
dusted gold

— *Christine Judd*

open family album —
cat curled
in a sunbeam

— *Patricia Haddock*

mountain colors
new trail shoes
dreaming

— *Keiko Izawa*

hummingbird
releasing my breath
into song

— *Anne Fox*

only guessing exact path of an owl

— *Roberta Beach Jacobson*

lavender sways –
an aroma of
hot sunshine

— *Sherry Reniker*

light rain
the paper label
fading

— *Jacek Margolak*

summer breeze —
I cross the road
for a two-toned hibiscus

— *Vishal Prabhu*

jasmine
even chaperones
need chaperones

— *Millicent Bee*

dianthus . . .
the zig-zag edges
of a memory

— *Valentina Ranaldi-Adams*

how he feeds her
through the tree slit
hornbill mate

— *Rupa Anand*

lightning strikes messages all in cursive

— *Roberta Beach Jacobson*

end of summer —
a frayed butterfly in
her folded hands

— *Dirk Dietvorst*

always rising
to the occasion
pond lilies

— *Jahnavi Gogoi*

tree canopy
playing hide and seek
with venus

— *Millicent Bee*

wizened on the briar
the brambles
no one picks

— *Tony Williams*

bewitching breeze
summer stars shining
in her jet-black hair

— *Robert Witmer*

forest light
fallen trees soften
into loam

— *Debbie Strange*

sunbaked fields
my one-sided conversation
with the crow

— *Bryan Rickert*

midnight lake
a mandarin duck
shakes out the stars

— *Lori Kiefer*

river water shaken loose from the heron's beak

— *Mark Forrester*

full moon -
in the fridge
the scent of melon

— *Francoise Maurice*

our garden's story
carried on
a bee's wing

— *Melissa Dennison*

power cut—
a bamboo *punkah*
becomes the breeze

— *Rupa Anand*

ringing
the sky's blue bell
indigo bunting

— *Cynthia Anderson*

perfect day…
the way the rowan berries
hang

— *Tony Williams*

a blackbird
between sky and earth -
hydrangeas

— *Mauro Battini*

new growth
on our tomatoes…
the robin's song

— *Joshua Gage*

rolling hills —
beneath the harvest moon
chimney smoke

— *John Richard Stephens*

fading sunset one by one black swans

— *Gavin Austin*

firmly anchored
to traditions —
lilies in the lake

— *Paul Callus*

crab-walking
across the parking lot
dried maple leaves

— *Wilda Morris*

a gum tree
snags the fog —
morning coffee

— *Julie Parker-Kinsey*

thunder of wings
the Swan takes a run up
across the night

— *Dagmara Wieczorkowska*

growing…
in the compost
bluebonnets

— *Joan C. Fingon*

milkweed blooms
among the purple
an orange flutter

— *Tom Bierovic*

wild river moon
the calls of a kingfisher
turning the blues

— *Deborah Karl-Brandt*

parched
the yellowing grass
still sways

— *Melissa Dennison*

still air…
the firefly's light hesitates
before it fades

— *Fatma Zohra Habis*

will-o'-the-wisp
a cloud sprite skips across
the firmament

— *Cynthia Anderson*

summer moon —
water slips away
from cupped hands

— *Mauro Battini*

black bees
buzz the basil…
smoke on the wind

— *Joshua Gage*

rustling hedgehog
among the blackthorns —
honing of spines

— *Paul Callus*

delta drought
each mudhole
a cracked sun

— *John Zeng*

another hot day
the thready cry
of a swift

— *Erica Ison*

empty boardwalk
I fish some ocean
out of my ear

— *David Green*

proof
that they are visiting us ...
green tomatoes

— *Deborah Karl-Brandt*

after the wildfires
breathing in
all the loss

— *Joan D. Stamm*

thick hot air
even the slightest cloud
comforts

— *Scott Wiggerman*

sunset shadows
longer and longer
the blackbird's verse

— *Dagmara Wieczorkowska*

dead calm
spider mends its web
under the tiller

— *Christer Hansson*

two fat robins splash
in a clear sidewalk puddle
no flood here, no drought

— *Joanne Grumet*

inside my shell
I am the first to hear
the sea

— *Ralph Stott*

symbiosis
a peony nudged open
by an ant

— *Jahnavi Gogoi*

home from vacation —
first to pick the
ripened plums

— *Anne Curran*

summer house
we reconnect with
vinyl records

— *Jagasit Salam*

safflowers blooming —
a teacup ring
almost dry

— *Elliot Diamond*

vine tendrils
I make a promise
to myself

— *Marie Derley*

a cricket
under pine shadow
what I cannot say

— *Joshua St. Claire*

lingering heat
lining the back fence
empty water tanks

— *Tuyet Van Do*

cicada's cry —
the dust on
an unsent letter

— *Martina Matijević*

last drop —
the sun goes down
in a wineglass

— *Annemie De Waele*

a quick trip
to the cabin...
his pine candle

— *Julie Schwerin*

condensation
we drink iced coffee
in the semi-dark

— *David Green*

past curfew...
a sugar maple
ahead of schedule

— *Loraine A Padden*

patio chatter
a swallow settles
under cover

— *Lukas Hermans*

trembling blue
forget-me-nots
in the summer rain

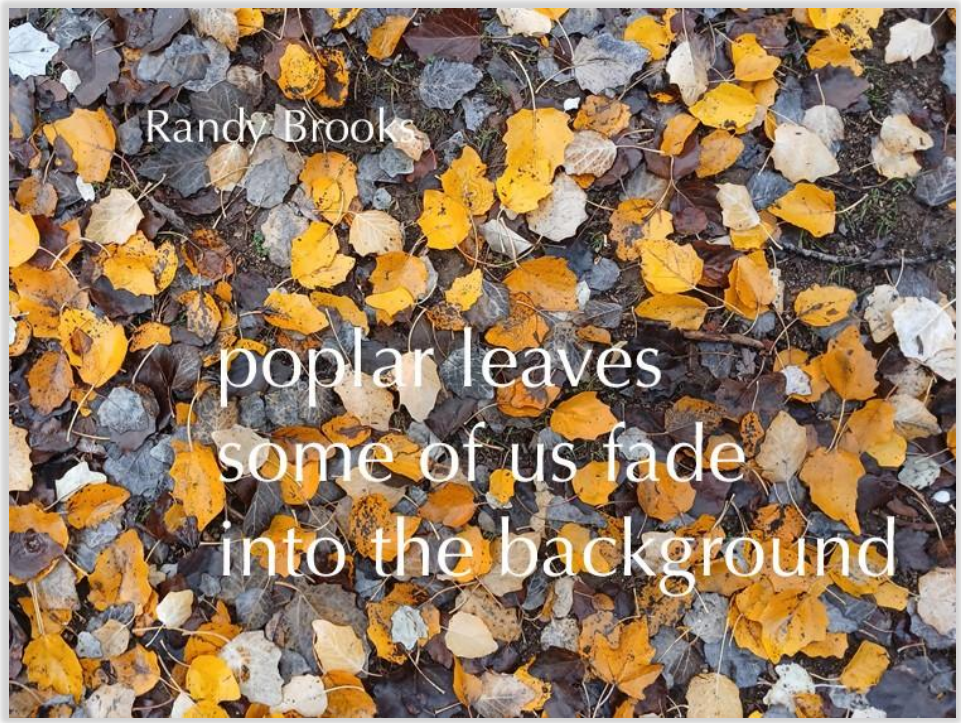
— *Michael Flanagan*

Haiga

moon-drift a jellyfish swims to the surface
--- Sheikha A.
artwork by Josiah

— Mona Bedi

summer breeze
the scarecrow's hat
tilts again
kholidah basori


Randy Brooks
poplar leaves
some of us fade
into the background

— Elliot Diamond

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