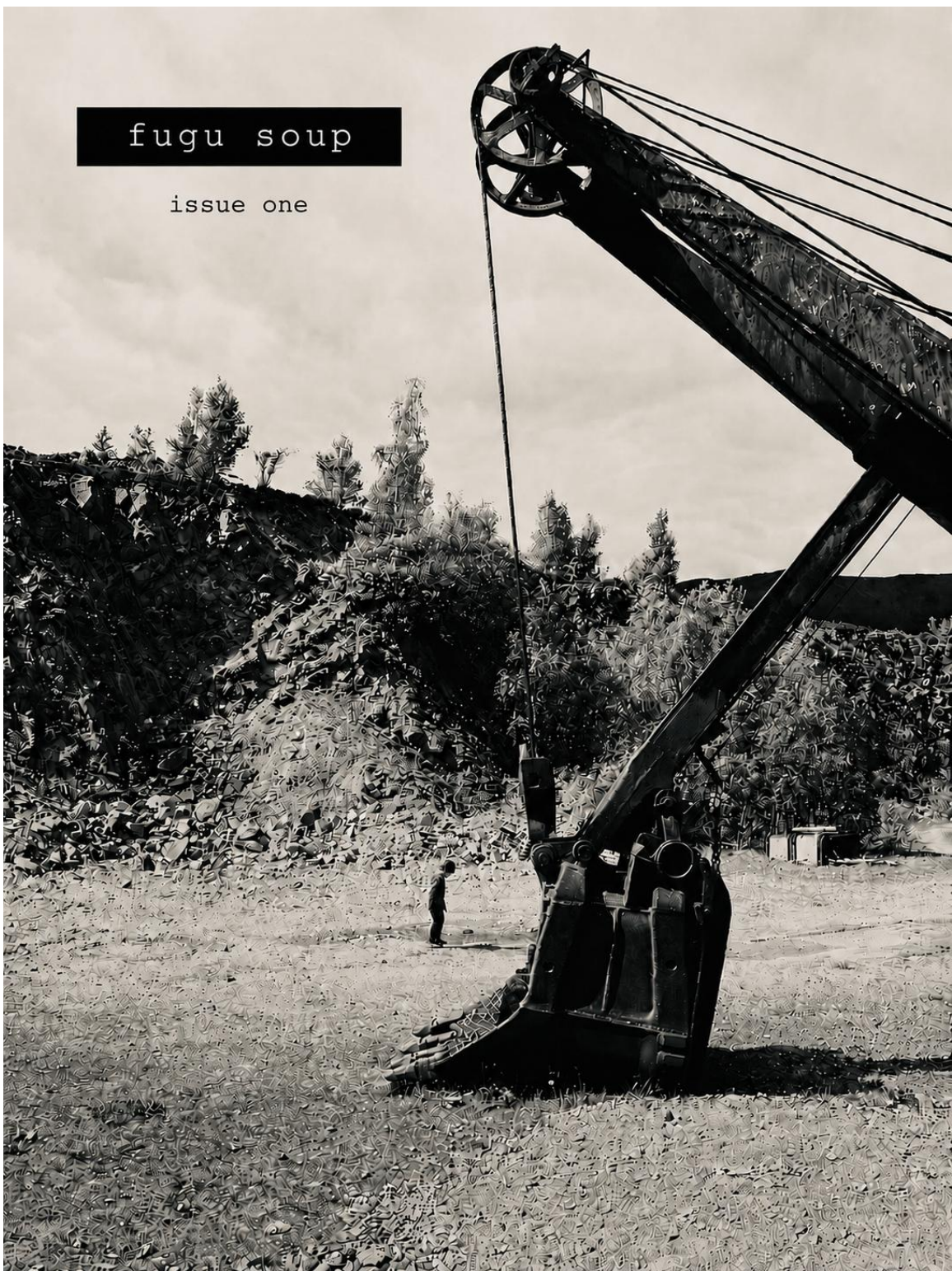


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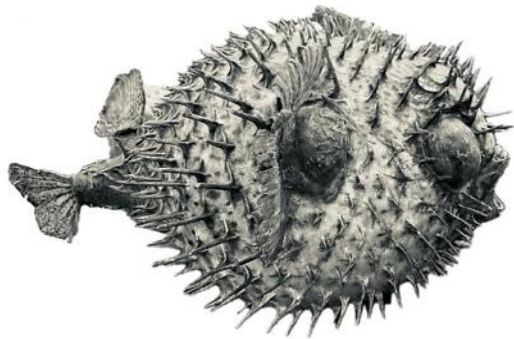
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Issue One

Autumn 2026

A journal of bold, urban & experimental haiku, tanka & minimalist poetry

Edited by Stephen Toft



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Front cover photograph: Stephen Toft

Introduction

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Fugu Soup.

The following works occupy a space where tradition and innovation meet. Rooted in the aesthetics of haiku, this issue explores contemporary experience through experimental approaches, urban environments, and unexpected acts of perception. Alongside moments drawn from the natural world are poems shaped by cities, technology, memory and the shifting realities of modern life.

The issue opens with Alan Peat's essay, *Why Reading Martian Poetry Matters*, which considers the value of defamiliarisation and its relevance to contemporary haiku practice. It feels like a fitting introduction to a journal that embraces fresh perspectives, formal experimentation, and the enduring power of close observation.

My thanks to all the writers who have entrusted their work to this first issue of Fugu Soup.

Stephen Toft

Editor

Autumn 2026

The Martian school of poetry was a short-lived but highly influential British poetry movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s, kick-started by Craig Raine's 'A Martian Sends a Postcard Home' (1979). It also happens to be the first poetry collection that I bought...and one that I still return to. And it has much to offer to writers of short form Japanese poetry.

The central approach of the movement is defamiliarisation - the presentation of the everyday in an unfamiliar way, as if something is being seen or experienced for the very first time. Raine didn't coin the term - that honour goes to the Russian literary critic Viktor Shklovsky - but he certainly applied the technique.

In Raine's collection, mundane objects and behaviours are described from the detached viewpoint of an alien visitor - the Martian. The result is that we are coaxed to look closely at the everyday. Raine makes the humdrum vital again.

The connection to Japanese short-form poetry—haiku, senryu, and haibun—is profound. Raine achieves precisely what the greatest masters of these forms achieve: he forces us to look again, uncovering the extraordinary hidden within the ordinary.

By separating objects from their given names/ labels, Raine assumes an observational approach that 21st-century haikai can directly leverage, in order to avoid repetitive mundanity. Though stylistically distinct, both Raine's poetry and haiku rely on hyper-focused observation to challenge our habitual perception.

I would also argue that this honours the tradition of haiku. Basho, in his famous frog pond haiku certainly defamiliarised the everyday.

Defamiliarisation is, without a doubt, a concept that can be applied in our own poetry, as a tool that helps us avoid cliché. Raine's Martian perspective might even function as a mechanism for achieving the Zen ideal of shoshin (beginner's mind).

While Raine views the world through the lens of Martian metaphor, haiku strips away such conceits to reveal the extraordinary within the thing itself. Ultimately, what Raine reminds practitioners of Japanese short-form poetry is that an alien landscape lies just beyond our doorsteps - we simply need to look long enough for it to reveal itself.

The poems

gauze remodeling the bullet's speech to birth carnations

I spread my knees in the pasture once a day the crows return

autumn stars
he exhales smoke
into my mouth

Roman Beckett Minor

yr heart on yr sleeve nailed to yr chest

Patricia Ann Nelson

diff(rent) (king)s the parade snack choice trail blood

darkest corner I crawl into (another universe) deadly nightshade kigo

Alan Summers

no handle
but a key rusted
in the lock

a marked man
turns his coat
fur side out

cloud cover
the hacker who stole
my name

Mark Harris

d adbeat

every moment lived up to this one stops a siren

no one home
at the
estate

behind
the dilapidated
white picket fence

the *American Beauty*
my wife
deadheads

may
this bouquet
as it passes

from my hand
to yours
say

come
what may
peace will prevail

*ekphrastic: *Le Bouquet de la Paix*, Picasso, 1958, lithograph for a peace demonstration in Stockholm

Chuck Brickley

near the crater's warm water

several cats began to glow

yet we see the moon and want a fresh name

David Boyer

Genesis Redux

While the moon was in production, the Sombrero Galaxy crossed wires with a chorus of tree frogs. I knew long before it was a thing, but mushrooms figured out how to talk. In the end, verbs will take you only so far. I once ate a pomegranate and dreamed about a five-legged octopus. The static of its thoughts woke me up right before the flood. Only minor gods remember pay phones. Now they won't stop talking. Out there in the cold, an ear lies on its side and an old chant slips in, but the truth lies somewhere between the solar plexus and next week. The mushroom said so.

old phone cord
spiraling up three legs
from now

Coda

undersong
in the blue of your tattoo
my palimpsest

undersong
 lurking
 in the back of your mind
 to the beat
 of the night train
you've heard the words
 but you can't seem to learn them
 by heart.

in the blue of your tattoo
 a drifter lines the shadows
feels his way
 alone
 rising through a minor key

my palimpsest
 like a fingerprint
 forgotten
but always there
 in the skin you wear
 as we fall
 off the bone

Jennifer Hambrick

downpour—
the cursive notes
of a diagnostician

first hot night—
dust sighs
from the vent

Hijra Asbraj

how the dealer did it empty syringes

a week in the wetlands closed casket

noir afternoons black bra

Peter Jastermsky

Cnut

I have been thinking long and hard about relationships; particularly the relationship between space and scale. It began when I eclipsed the day moon with my thumb. A little later my forearm obliterated a whole range of snow-capped mountains. For a moment I felt I was fit for a causeway. Then the rain began to fall and my powers failed me.

daybreak —
frost-bitten fingers
ten fathoms black

Faith

She believes in them...feathers and all. As if they are just outsized doves. Kelloe church, once a week on a Sunday - that's all that's needed. When the time comes they will stand at the foot of her bed; enfold her in their warmth; gather her up. And she will see her Father. And she will see her father.

clouds below
in a holding pattern
heading home

After Giusto de'Menabuoi's 'Annunciation' (1376-78)

Multi-chambered

Six days to make our world; six more to strip you from it. There is no separation now - light and darkness merge into a murk. Along the way I come across a flightless owl. A circle of mice mock him with proximity.

I have no power to gift you wings.

It's not what he wanted to hear. Soon he will give up the ghost entirely.

Why did you open that door dad? The one with the long stone stairs beyond it. The bulb was shot.

And you never went down there.

It is a cold place, fit for nothing but summer-picked fruit.

a heart
beating in the black hole
of an apple

Alan Peat

indigo you twilight me

deep reading the em-dash between us

a beautiful day in the neighborhood chatbot

Jennifer Hambrick

phantom limb another song about september

trash can fire
in the shadows
a crow's eye

twombly clouds a pocketful of plosives

moonflowers
I chat with her
deadbot

John Pappas

brewing discontent star-wind

bleeding still the fiction of my exit wounds

Shloka Shankar

Buses

1)

in
the
zone
fare
di

vide
of
sea

&
gull

2)

in
the
contra

flowing
lane
the

urban
salmon

samsara reinventing the wheel

un-
folded
my

lost
sky
map
gaze

the
breath

held
sky

less
blue

SUP Trail

paddleboarding out
to where I
don't know where

a sea turtle
will otherwise be

just sea . . .

A translation:

Yol

Düzdür.
Üzerinden tramvay geçer.
Adamlar geçer
Kadınlar geçer

Ekim 1937

The Way

It's level.

And over it the trams go by.

Men go by

Women go by *

October 1937

by Orhan Veli Kanık

(translated from the Turkish by Joseph S. Aversano)

* In 1934, women in Türkiye were granted full national suffrage.

Joseph Salvatore Aversano

Milwaukee Melody

The *clack-clack-clack* of rusted train tracks. The *clang-clang-clang* of our building's new drain.
The *bang-bang-bang* of the neighborhood gang...

siren's trill
the eight-track
of my blues

Colleen M. Farrelly

Urbanicana: A Braided Haiku Prose

A cloudless sky cooks cracked concrete where neighborhood girls skip Double Dutch. Gray buildings abut gray parking lots, treeless until a patch of park reclaimed by residents. A respite from honking horns and city smog.

a caterpillar into the spring morning

on the garden path

I walk at a slow pace

maiden flight of a butterfly by the breeze of colors

a caterpillar

on the garden path

maiden flight of a butterfly

into the spring morning

I walk at a slow pace

by the breeze of colors

Pravat Kumar Padhy (Braided Haiku; Pattern: 1-2-1-3-3)

Colleen M. Farrelly (Prose)

the centrifuge poem

the song
swallowed by

the mountain

Ron Scully

more or less more than expected frogspawn

nothing
in the mailbox
but a poem
about emptiness

What the —
What the oracle says

the world's gone to the dogs won't take it

blood diamonds more and more in demand

untranslated dog barking

Crosstalk

neither of us happy
at midnight
bathroom mirror

*the two quiet
reflecting
electric toothbrushes*

Bismajit Mishra

war again the growth of summer grasses

brown(ian) branches in the wind(ow) autumn loneliness

Kat Lehmann

more elm seeds got off the bus night rain

Sondra J. Byrnes

rain aging on the tongue dying on every hill

petro c.k.

piercing the lesson plan bullet holes

the luxury
of sky

Roberta Beach Jacobson