

Flotsam Haiku

for Dilip & Lara

Sudeep Sen

*... and O that awful deep down torrent and
the sea the sea crimson sometimes like fire ...*

— JAMES JOYCE, *Ulysses*

kadal oru thilakunna chembu

sea, a boiling vessel

— ANONYMOUS KERALA FISHERMAN

Like wind-driven flotsam, haiku cover our oceans.

We've sailed the seas from land-locked terrains —

from geographies of imagination, we created waves,
sailing routes guided by the prevailing trade winds.

Yet, we stay inland in foreign cities, studying water —
art and science of *oceans* interlinking *as method* —

creative scholarship, *waka*-struck. Is *sea, a boiling vessel*
in Kerala's off-shores? Is poetry passion-soaked like

Natore's Banalata Sen — like a “deep down torrent”
rising from its seismic centre, churning wild currents.

Unhoused Memory

for Johan Thom

Sudeep Sen

The dead's hollow sockets have perfect vision.

Suspended in air with a tensile string —

a perfectly-proportioned brick balance

pendulum's torque-swing and its cranial arc.

Aerodynamics, theatrics, trance — collide

without collision. Evasion, a balletic art —

timing is everything. Brown, black, white —

focus, out-of-focus — perception is delusory.

Do we have cataract, or are we clear-sighted?

Whose gaze is it — skull, brick, your, mine?

What is concrete, are formed abstractions —

in that helix, there is pin-point sharpness.

Concerto

for Jill Richards

Sudeep Sen

Each soundwave, like breath-pause reverberation
is minutely calibrated — each movement, pitch-perfect.

Over time, these flurries morph into a slow-motion
canter, fingernails galloping in air — landing softly

on keys of glazed ivory-white and obsidian-black.
Music uncharted on sheets — yet instantaneous

as spontaneous birth-cry. You lie on the piano, your
hands dangling, limp as if in post-delivery exhaustion.

Memories past-present, adequacies-inadequacies —
vase-bottled — a bouquet of unexpected flowering.

Violet and red, hemp and chillies — these aromas fill
our lungs with sea-sonic magic, song and poetry.

Stein wines find their *way* into fossil-earthenware.
Unpeeling scales reveal inner chords —

silence, slowly unmuting orchestral strains —
echoes heard only by initiated ears. As you reach in,

and pluck the piano-hammers — a crescendo.
White piano's white noise in a bright white room —

our soiree's aria, word-stained and red-etched.

Poem Song

haiku for Senna Marie

Sudeep Sen

plaintive, emotive
strains — slow-rise in the highveld.
guitar sings poetry

Office: Memory

haiku for Mukulika Banerjee

Sudeep Sen

Indian carpet —
hoarding *sari*-draped smells of
scholarship, friendship