

HAIKU AND SUMI-E PAINTINGS
INSPIRED BY THE POETRY
OF MAGDALENA SZPUNAR



Elżbieta Perzycka-Borowska

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Introduction

With its form demanding condensation and precision, haiku is not only an artistic challenge for me but above all a space for deep reflection. Haiku captures spontaneous moments in nature, such as the changing seasons, the life cycles of animals, or the blooming of flowers. Each of these becomes a record of a fleeting moment or serves as a metaphor for broader human experiences. Moreover, the challenge of distilling complex emotions and observations into just three lines fosters a unique artistic discipline that encourages deep introspection and creativity. I appreciate the literalness in expressing what I see, hear, and feel.

Thanks to AI technology, I can experiment with various artistic techniques. I work with DALL·E and MidJourney. Since I paint using the sumi-e ink technique, which harmonizes perfectly with the essential nature of haiku – reflecting simplicity and minimalism while capturing the subtleties of emotions – I decided to explore how this technique would interact with haiku and AI-generated images.

The synergy between haiku and AI-generated images enables a visual representation of emotional subtleties, enhancing the overall poetic experience. The minimalist nature of both haiku and sumi-e art reflects a shared goal: conveying profound meaning through the reduction of elements to their essential forms. This approach not only honors traditional artistic practices but also embraces contemporary technological advancements, creating a dialogue between past and present artistic expressions.

The process of distilling words and images to their essence is crucial in this project. It reflects the inherent structure of haiku and the philosophy of sumi-e, where every brushstroke holds significance, and what remains unexpressed is just as important as what is visible. Each line, each stroke of the brush carries meaning. Poetry, including haiku, has the power to evoke profound emotional responses, as studies have shown that poetic language can influence physiological reactions, such as pupil dilation, which reflects emotional arousal (Niikuni et al., 2022; Hitsuwari & Nomura, 2023). This suggests that the act of writing and reading haiku engages both cognitive and emotional processes, making it a rich area for personal and artistic exploration.

Reflective haiku in AI-generated images marks a new phase in my creative work. Haiku, composed of only three lines, and minimalist AI-generated images inspired by traditional Japanese ink art aim to capture the essence of emotions and phenomena without unnecessary detail. In this way, both the haiku and the accompanying images become carriers of more universal content. The deliberate reduction of words to just a few syllables and images to a few delicate ink strokes is intentional; it is an attempt to provoke reflection on what is essential, on impermanence, and on the relationships between humans and the world around them.

Technology, often perceived as cold and impersonal, has become a tool for expressing subtle content. Fluid, expressive lines evoke the beauty of nature and human experience, both central elements of poetry. The space of emptiness, characteristic of sumi-e art, creates a contemplative atmosphere that invites reflection on the essence of existence and the individual's role in the modern world. These images do not merely illustrate the poems; they serve as their visual extension, encouraging the viewer to engage in deeper reflection and meditation on the themes presented. The simplicity and precision embedded in sumi-e art mirror the essence of haiku, where every element carries weight and meaning. The aesthetic appreciation of poetry may correlate with the ease of processing visual and linguistic elements, suggesting that the fusion of AI-generated art and poetry can amplify the overall emotional impact of the work (Obermeier et al., 2015; Wassiliwizky et al., 2017). Engaging with poetry through different artistic forms, including technology, can lead to more complex interpretations and a deeper understanding of emotional and cognitive responses (Jusslin & Höglund, 2021; Stanley et al., 2022).

The emotional power of poetry can also elicit distinct neural responses, setting it apart from other forms of artistic expression, such as music (Wassiliwizky et al., 2017; Belfi et al., 2018). Therefore, this project is not only a tribute to Magdalena Szpunar's poetry but also an artistic experiment demonstrating how simplicity expressed in poetry and imagery can reinforce each other, creating a new form of art. This art, operating within the realm of minimalism, opens space for contemplation and reflection on aspects of life that often go unnoticed in daily routines. Reflective haiku in AI-generated images is an invitation to meditate on the world, humanity, and art – in their most distilled and, therefore, purest form.

As I mentioned, the inspiration for this monograph came from the poetic works of Magdalena Szpunar. Her sensitivity, deep social engagement, and thought-provoking reflections on the condition of modern humanity and nature have an extraordinary impact on the reader. They have also found a place in my heart.

Magdalena Szpunar is a distinguished professor of sociology at the University of Silesia, exploring the most intimate and social aspects of life. As a poet, she embodies a unique fusion of scholarly rigor and literary sensitivity. The intersection of her academic and

poetic endeavors allows her to engage with both personal and societal aspects of existence, creating a rich mosaic of meanings that invites readers to reflect on their own experiences and social contexts. This duality is essential to understanding how poetry functions as a form of inquiry that not only comments on reality but actively engages with it on multiple levels (Cooms, 2023; Cormier, 2023). Her academic achievements, which include numerous publications on the digitization of culture and society, along with prestigious awards for both her scientific and poetic works, underscore the deeply reflective nature of her creativity (<https://us.edu.pl/instytut/is/magdalena-szpunar>).

Magdalena Szpunar's poetry serves as a testament to the times we live in while simultaneously offering an intense emotional confrontation with reality. Her poems raise questions about the essence of humanity, its fragility, suffering, and responsibility for the surrounding world (Miller, 2021). In exploring the human condition, Szpunar's poetry transcends personal narrative, placing individual experiences within broader social, political, and historical contexts. She does not shy away from difficult and painful topics, such as human suffering, the Holocaust, or contemporary conflicts, including the war in Ukraine and in the Gaza Strip. Her poetry, though deeply personal, simultaneously points to wider social, political, and historical contexts, making it a voice of resistance against injustice, destruction, and indifference. Her words carry not only artistic meaning but also establish a dialogue with the reader, urging reflection on contemporary moral and existential challenges.

This thematic engagement aligns with the idea that poetry can serve as a tool for protest and social commentary, as demonstrated by poets throughout history who have used their art to challenge oppression and advocate for social justice (Yakovenko, 2020; Miller, 2021). Szpunar's ability to interweave personal narratives with broader socio-political contexts not only strengthens her voice but also fosters dialogue with her readers, prompting them to confront modern moral and existential dilemmas. Moreover, her poetry illustrates the power of words as tools for social engagement and transformation (Manathunga et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2021).

Szpunar's poetry, shared on social media platforms such as Facebook, exemplifies the contemporary fusion of literary art and visual media, enriching the interpretative experience of her texts. This multimodal approach allows for deeper engagement with the material, as the accompanying illustrations resonate with the themes and emotions expressed in her poems.

As the next sunrise approached, my cats ran into the garden for their morning patrol. Sitting on the terrace with a cup of green tea in hand, I asked myself: "How can I capture this fragile beauty of the moment in the form of art while preserving the depth that lies within it?" Thus, the idea was born – to combine classical haiku poetry, rooted in the spirit of Zen, with modern generative AI technology.

Part I

Paths of Harmony:
Everyday Life Embraced by Art

1. In Search of Harmony in Poetry and Sumi-e Art

w oddali rzeka
z filiżanką kobieta
w ciszy poranka

in the distance, a river
a woman with a teacup
in the morning silence



Figure 1

W ciszy poranka / In the Silence of the Morning

Note. Created in DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024

In summer, when the sun generously bestowed its warmth upon everything around and nature whispered its stories, I felt that this was the perfect time for creative inspiration. The season felt like a suspended moment of happiness: pure, filled with harmony, infused with the closeness of nature and an inner sense of joy.

In the house, where the scent of freshly brewed tea blended with the aroma of August mushrooms, two small kittens, Felek and Syndi, were growing up. They had been adopted from a wild mother cat. Their presence brought elements of both chaos and joy into my life, perfectly aligning with my own journey of rediscovering myself. These moments, filled with laughter and sometimes the clumsiness of daily routines, reflected my soul, sensitive, delicate, and in a continuous process of self-discovery.

The sprigs of heather I brought from the forest felt like small talismans: beautiful, fragile, yet fully aware of the passage of time, filling my home with their gentle beauty. Their dried branches became a map of my emotions, a reminder of life's cyclical nature and of how every season, though fleeting, leaves traces that enrich our everyday existence. In this way, summer enveloped me in its warmth while also allowing me to prepare for the arrival of fall, which would bring new challenges and fresh reflections.

In the distance, like a quiet accompaniment, the river flowed. Its murmur was a balm for my soul, reminding me of the infinity of time yet also of its transience. Each morning, this sound awakened me to life, becoming the first step in my daily ritual. My days always began with a moment of stillness and contemplation, a time just for me when I could immerse myself in thoughts, emotions, and quiet reflection.

An inseparable part of this ritual was a cup of green tea. Its delicate taste and aroma filled my senses, becoming a symbol of inner peace. During these moments, I would read the poetry of Magdalena Szpunar, whose verses, though written at different times, deeply moved me with their sensitivity and depth. Each poem, regardless of when it was written, felt profoundly relevant, beautiful, and meaningful. Every word carried a richness of emotions that seeped into my soul, much like tea, subtly yet profoundly. These moments, filled with quiet contemplation, became a source of creative energy and a reminder of the delicate essence of life. I would read them over and over, absorbing the essence of the words, which, like tea, filled me with a richness of flavors and aromas, stimulating and enriching my thoughts.

Beside poetry, on the table lay tools for visual expression: ink, brushes, and rice paper, everything I needed to create sumi-e. The first strokes of the brush were hesitant, but I soon realized that the beauty of this process did not lie in perfection but in the fleeting nature of the moment. Every brushstroke became an expression of presence, an imprint of the now. Each painting, though elusive, became a manifestation of peace and reflection on the nature of the world. This process brought me a sense of inner harmony as well as a kind of purification, as if every stroke of the brush on paper was

a step toward greater clarity of thought. These images became the perfect complement to my haiku.

My initial attempts at painting were full of uncertainty and imperfection. But over time, I learned to see the beauty in the process itself. This art form, much like haiku, required me to focus entirely on the present moment, to appreciate simplicity and transience. Each brushstroke became an act of capturing what is inherently intangible. Every movement of the brush relaxed my thoughts and cleared my mind. Reflection on the impermanence of nature resonated with the concept of mindfulness, which energized me, encouraging me to focus on the present moment here and now (Chen et al., 2024). Every brushstroke of ink on the paper became an act of pausing time.

For this project, I decided to incorporate modern technology, using DALL-E to generate images based on my haiku. Each new work that appeared on the computer screen carried an element of surprise and joy. It was like discovering a new dimension of art, where emotions expressed in words transformed into images. I often shared these results with my family, and their reactions only amplified my sense of fulfillment. There was something magical about it. The process of creating through artificial intelligence put me in a state of relaxation and lightness, much like the rice paper on which I painted.

The Bory Tucholskie forest was my sanctuary, a perfect space for rest and contemplation. In its shadows, amidst the rustling trees and the scent of damp earth, I felt an overwhelming peace, as if nature itself was embracing me in a tender, soothing hug.

The monograph I created was born out of this experience, a fusion of daily rituals, nature contemplation, quiet reflection, and creative expression. Every word and every brushstroke was an attempt to capture that fleeting harmony between the outer world and my inner self. This is a story about the search for balance between words and images, between the present moment and that which is intangible and transient, yet deeply embedded in our everyday experiences.

Each day, in the morning silence, with a cup of tea in hand, I felt as if a door was opening before me, a passage into a world where poetry and imagery intertwined into a seamless whole. In these moments, time seemed to stand still, and I found meaning in my path, a creative journey, a spiritual journey, a journey filled with reflection and inner peace.

What I share within the pages of this monograph is not just a story about art but also a story about life, about the subtle nuances of everyday existence that often escape our attention yet are the very things that touch both body and soul the most.

2. The History and Significance of Sumi-e Art

Although sumi-e art has roots in ancient China, where it began developing around the year 300 CE, it is more than just a painting technique. It is a form of spiritual expression in which every line and brushstroke reflects the artist's inner state. Its minimalist nature aims to capture not only the external forms of nature but also its spiritual essence, making sumi-e an art of contemplation and meditation.

As early as the 10th century CE, when sumi-e reached its full bloom in landscape painting, artists began to recognize its potential as a medium for conveying spiritual truths. These landscapes, seemingly simple, revealed the infinite depth of nature and life. In depictions of mountains, rivers, trees, or mist, the artist did not merely strive to represent their external shapes but, above all, their inner *Qi* – the life energy that permeates the entire world.

In the 13th century sumi-e spread to Japan, primarily through traveling Zen monks who introduced the painting technique to their country. Sumi-e harmonized perfectly with Zen philosophy, which emphasized simplicity, spontaneity, and the presence of the here and now. For Zen monks, ink painting became a form of meditation in which every brushstroke expressed not only technique but also the painter's state of mind. There was no room for corrections or adjustments. Each stroke had to be decisive as it reflected the artist's inner harmony (Keene, 1999).

In Japan, sumi-e evolved and began to play a key role in the country's artistic culture, particularly in the context of Zen philosophy. Traditionally limited to black ink and various shades of gray, sumi-e symbolized the essence of minimalism. For a Zen artist, restricting oneself to a single color, black, was a metaphor for life and spirituality, where black and white represented the duality of the world: light and shadow, life and death, fullness, and emptiness. Each of these aspects coexisted in harmony, and through their work, the sumi-e artist sought to capture this balance.

In the Western context, the term *sumi-e* refers to both monochromatic and color painting, provided that traditional materials such as rice paper or silk are used. These materials are as significant as the technique itself. The delicacy and fragility of rice paper symbolize transience and impermanence, while the durability of silk alludes to the immortality of art and its ability to withstand the test of time (Addiss, 1989). For the artist, choosing the appropriate medium is not merely a technical decision but a spiritual one, adding deeper meaning to the work.

Sumi-e requires complete commitment from the artist, both physically and spiritually. The materials used, including the ink and rice paper, demand extraordinary precision. Once applied, the ink becomes permanent, and any mistake must be incorporated into the composition, which, in essence, reflects life itself, where every action leaves a mark and cannot be undone. For this reason, the process of creating a sumi-e painting is

often described as an act of meditation in which the artist immerses themselves in the present moment, accepting whatever comes without the need to control the final outcome (Berthier, 1995).

This art is not about technical perfection but about capturing the spirit that animates the depicted forms. Unlike more realistic forms of painting, sumi-e deliberately simplifies representations, eliminating details such as lighting, shadows, or time of day. The goal is to capture the very essence, that which is invisible to the eye but perceptible to the heart. As artist Chris Paschke noted, sumi-e is an attempt to capture the soul of the subject rather than its external form (Suzuki, 2004). For the artist, every subject, whether a landscape, a flower, an animal, or a human, has its own energy that must be preserved on paper.

The rituals associated with preparing materials for sumi-e hold deep symbolic meaning. The process of grinding ink by manually rubbing an ink stick on a stone becomes a meditative act that allows the artist to focus on their work. The ink, made from bamboo ash or pine soot, is considered the lifeblood of the painting, and its preparation is as essential as the painting itself. Creating one's own ink, rather than using pre-made products, adds a layer of authenticity and personal engagement to the artwork (Masuda, 1973).

The brushes, made of bamboo and animal hair, also carry symbolic significance. The choice of bristles, whether from goat, ox, horse, or wolf, influences the character of the brushstroke and the final appearance of the painting. The brush, like an extension of the artist's hand, becomes a tool that bridges the material and spiritual worlds, with each movement of the brush a conscious act of creation.

One of the key aspects of sumi-e is the concept of the Four Gentlemen, four symbolic plants: the orchid, bamboo, plum blossom, and chrysanthemum. These plants, representing the four seasons, also reflect the virtues an artist should cultivate. The orchid, delicate and ethereal, symbolizes purity and nobility. Bamboo, strong and flexible, is a metaphor for integrity and perseverance. The plum blossom, which blooms in early spring, represents renewal and resilience, while the chrysanthemum, the flower of fall, is associated with modesty, loyalty, and inner peace (Matsumoto, 1985). For the sumi-e artist, each of these plants requires a different technique but also serves as a reminder of values that should guide both artistic creation and life.

Although deeply rooted in Zen philosophy, the tradition of sumi-e is not confined to religious or meditative contexts. Contemporary artists in both East and West are increasingly exploring it as a tool for personal expression, a means of finding balance between mind and body, movement, and stillness. In sumi-e, the significance lies not only in the final visual outcome but, more importantly, in the journey the artist takes while creating.

The process of painting sumi-e is one of purification, both for the artist and the viewer. Looking at a sumi-e painting, one can see not only the beauty of simple forms but also the serenity that accompanied the artist in its creation. Each brushstroke and ink wash symbolizes the harmony between humans and nature, creating a space for contemplation that invites the viewer into a meditative experience.

Despite its minimalism, sumi-e is an intensely emotional art form. The seemingly simple lines and brushstrokes hold a vast reservoir of feelings, thoughts, and reflections. Every work, even the most abstract, is an expression of the artist's inner experience, their relationship with the world, and their attempt to capture the invisible thread that connects nature with the human soul. In a way, sumi-e resembles haiku, carrying a deep message within its simplicity. Both sumi-e and haiku convey the fleeting nature of a moment, the impermanence of the world, and the beauty of simplicity.

Sumi-e has also become a way to explore new paths of artistic expression in an ever-changing world. In the digital age, where technology dominates many aspects of life, returning to traditional, handcrafted art forms such as ink painting has become an act of resistance against the fast pace and superficiality of contemporary culture. Creating sumi-e demands time, focus, and inner stillness, making it a unique escape from the noise of everyday life. As the artist concentrates on each brushstroke, they return to fundamental questions about the nature of art, life, and their place in the world. Not only for the artist but also for the viewer, sumi-e can be a source of inner peace and reflection. Gazing at these minimalist, black-and-white compositions, the viewer can find a moment of stillness, a reminder of the value of simplicity and the beauty of nature. Though this art form was born centuries ago, it still has the power to influence, offering modern people something they often lack: a moment of pause and the realization that in the simplest forms can be found the deepest truths of life.

3. Haiku: The Art of Minimalism and Reflection

Haiku, one of the shortest poetic forms in the world, is at the same time one of the deepest and most refined ways of expressing emotions and reflections. It embodies the aesthetics of Zen, where minimalism serves as a medium for a deeper understanding of reality and a connection with nature (Shirane, 1998).

The history of haiku dates back to the 17th century when Matsuo Bashō, regarded as one of the greatest masters of the form, initiated a poetic movement that combined traditional literary forms such as *renga* and *hokku* with a new, minimalist aesthetic. As Bashō traveled throughout Japan, he described everyday events, the changing seasons, and simple observations of nature that carried profound reflections on human life and

the world. His haiku, including the famous verses about the frog jumping into a pond or dewdrops on leaves, reflect not only the beauty of nature but also its transience and impermanence, a key theme in Zen philosophy (Blyth, 1982).

A crucial element of haiku is *mono no aware*, an aesthetic concept that refers to the subtle melancholy evoked by the passing of all things beautiful. This sentiment, delicately present in haiku, reminds us of the fragility of life and nature, and encourages a deeper reflection on the present moment. Haiku is not merely about describing nature but about recognizing the connection between humans and the surrounding world and embracing the inevitability of change. It is this spirit that gives haiku its immense emotional and philosophical impact despite its brevity.

Bashō was not the only haiku master to enrich the form. Yosa Buson, both a painter and a poet, introduced a pictorial quality to haiku, describing nature with meticulous attention to visual detail. His verses have a more painterly character, capturing the nuances of natural scenes like brushstrokes on a canvas. Buson demonstrated that haiku could be not only poetry of words but also poetry of images, where each line resembles another layer of ink on paper (Higginson, 1985).

Kobayashi Issa, another outstanding haiku poet, infused this form with deep emotions, often drawing from personal tragedies. His haiku, while still rooted in nature, convey profound feelings of sorrow, compassion, and tenderness toward small, often overlooked elements of the natural world, such as insects, animals, or plants. More than any other poet, Issa revealed the human aspect of haiku, making it a medium for expressing empathy and an appreciation for what is fragile and weak (Henderson, 1958).

Despite its simplicity, haiku follows strict principles that give it a unique character. A fundamental rule is capturing the present moment, known as *ichigo ichie*, the awareness that each moment is unique and unrepeatable. Haiku also contains *kigo*, a seasonal word that subtly reminds the reader of nature's cyclical rhythm and how deeply human existence is intertwined with these cycles.

A structural element that adds depth to haiku is *kireji*, a cutting word that introduces an internal contrast within the poem, giving the reader a pause to reflect on two often contrasting thoughts or images. This structure, which acts as a kind of "cut," allows for a pause that functions like a silence in music; it is not empty but full of meaning. In haiku, the silence between lines is just as important as the words themselves. It is in this silence that the reader finds their own reflections and interpretations, making haiku a deeply personal form open to multiple meanings (Yasuda, 1957). Each word is carefully chosen to capture the essence of the moment.

Haiku operates on the boundary between literalness and metaphor, where every word, image, and pause between them creates space for reflection. The unsaid often holds the most meaning; it is a poetry of silence and contemplation, where simplicity serves as a path to discovering what is deeply hidden (Vilchynska et al., 2021, p. 6). The process

of writing haiku, much like Zen practice, requires full attention to the present moment, an openness to experience, and an acceptance of its impermanence. In this way, haiku becomes not only poetry but also a path to inner peace and understanding (Ueda, 1992). Haiku is not merely a record of experiences but a form that, through its brevity and ambiguity, engages the reader in the active co-creation of meaning. Much like the process of metaphorization, the haiku reader seeks hidden connections between images, finding rich metaphorical structures within simple words that allow for a deeper understanding of both the external world and personal inner experiences (Gutiérrez Escalante, 2019, p. 2; Rotari, 2022, p. 440). This is consistent with the aesthetic of *yūgen*, the subtle depth that suggests more than is explicitly stated. Haiku encourages an attentive listening to what is intensely present in the reader's experience (Takahashi, 2021, p. 12).

In the contemporary world, haiku has gained widespread popularity, transcending Japan's borders to become a globally appreciated poetic form. Different cultures have adapted haiku to their literary traditions, incorporating new themes and styles, yet its core essence remains unchanged. It is the art of capturing an ephemeral moment in its purest form. Modern poets often experiment with haiku, sometimes departing from traditional syllabic constraints, but its spirit of simplicity, minimalism, and deep reflection remains alive (McClintock, 2005).

Haiku has also influenced other forms of art, including painting, music, and theater. Sumi-e art, much like haiku, employs minimalism to convey the essence of nature and human emotions. In both haiku and sumi-e, what matters most is often invisible at first glance, requiring inner stillness and mindfulness to perceive the true beauty of the moment. Just as every stroke of ink in sumi-e holds significance, each word and syllable in haiku is carefully measured to express profound truths about life and impermanence.

Beyond its aesthetic and spiritual value, haiku also has great educational potential, making it a valuable tool in the classroom. Learning to write haiku helps students develop the ability to express themselves concisely and precisely while encouraging reflection on nature and personal experiences. The requirement to limit oneself to just 17 syllables teaches selectivity and the skill of choosing essential words and images, which supports language development and creative thinking. Writing haiku is also an exercise in mindfulness, helping students focus on the present moment, which can be a significant tool in emotional education and fostering sensitivity to the surrounding world (Laneve & Margiotta, 2022, p. 3).

The process of creating metaphors, as noted by Shapiro (1988), not only enriches language and communication but also enhances the understanding of complex ideas through their physical, embodied experience. In education, especially one based on the reflection inherent in haiku poetry, metaphors can help students not only develop

language skills but also build a more intuitive connection with the subject they are studying. What is experienced physically becomes the basis for forming new analogies and concepts, leading to more creative and profound ways of learning (Shapiro, 1988, p. 7).

4. The Use of DALL·E Tools in the Process of Creating Sumi-e Paintings

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly making its presence felt in the realm of art, acting as a new kind of “creative collaborator” endowed with the ability to process data and generate various forms of expression. This technology, based on deep learning algorithms and generative adversarial networks (GANs), is capable of producing texts, images, music, and even films, imitating human patterns and artistic styles (Anantrasirichai & Bull, 2021). However, what is significant is not only the act of creation itself but also the potential for collaboration between humans and machines, which is particularly evident in creative fields where the concept of authorship, originality, and the boundaries of human creativity are being redefined (Mazzone & Elgammal, 2019).

The introduction of AI into artistic practices has sparked intense discussions regarding ethics and intellectual property rights, especially in the context of works co-created by humans and algorithms. These issues are gaining importance with the rapid development of AI models capable of generating increasingly realistic and surprising forms of expression (Chi, 2024). At the same time, doubts arise as to whether machine intelligence, despite its impressive capabilities, can convey the complex human emotions and intentions typical of art, particularly in areas that require subtle emotional resonance (Ashby et al., 2023). An example of this challenge is haiku poetry, which, due to its condensed yet highly symbolic form, presents an interpretative difficulty for machines (Shapiro, 1988, p. 7).

On the one hand, studies confirm the potential of modern language models (e.g., ChatGPT) in generating condensed poetry such as haiku or *pantun* while adhering to structure and certain genre conventions (Siallagan & Alfina, 2023, p. 62). Similarly, in the visual realm, AI can adapt its generated images to specific styles or cultural norms (Brown et al., 2020). On the other hand, artificial intelligence often struggles to capture more refined formal and symbolic elements, such as *kireji*, which forms the basis of deeper haiku experiences. The ambiguous, implicit imagery and the space of silence within haiku are difficult for algorithms to replicate. At times, though, AI is surprisingly capable of offering interpretations that enrich the creative process (Beheitt & Haj Hmida, 2022).

Considerations of originality and emotional depth in artistic creation become crucial when comparing human and AI-generated works in painting or poetry. Some studies indicate that audiences tend to value the “human element” in art more highly, even when they cannot distinguish between works created by humans and those generated by machines (Samo & Highhouse, 2023; Bellaiche et al., 2023). At the same time, AI can analyze divergent stylistic approaches with a speed and accuracy unattainable for humans (Hubert et al., 2024). This dual perspective of AI’s high formal potential alongside its limitations in conveying emotional depth marks a space for further research and experimentation in art.

In this context, DALL·E stands out not only for its ability to generate images but also for its potential to engage in an artistic dialogue with the creator. The adoption of AI as “co-author” provokes reflections on the definition of creativity and the role of the human artist as the primary interpreter, organizer, and inspirer of the creative process (Doshi & Hauser, 2024; Creely & Blannin, 2023). Observations suggest that while AI models depend on input data and learning from them, they are capable of generating surprising and original solutions that go beyond conventional human thought patterns (Magni et al., 2023).

Personally, I chose to use DALL·E not for generating new variants of haiku but for creating visual representations of my own short poems. My approach is based on the belief that the act of writing haiku, the moment of intense observation of reality, contains my deepest emotions and the unique instant I seek to capture. The *sumi-e* technique, where minimalism and economy of form allow for a focus on essence and the experience of the moment, has become a natural bridge to the intimate and reflective character of haiku. Every brushstroke in traditional *sumi-e* reflects the mood and intention of the artist, and the empty space on the canvas or paper is often as meaningful as the painted element itself.

By translating poetry into images, DALL·E can recognize these subtle nuances and leave spaces where, like the void in haiku, there remains room for suggestion, silence, and deeper engagement with meaning. AI’s ability to analyze abstract concepts is not limited to simply replicating words. In many cases, algorithm-generated images contain elements that naturally appear in traditional *sumi-e*, such as the compositional balance between fullness and emptiness or suggestive ink strokes that convey emotions. Research on the perception of AI-generated art (Grassini & Koivisto, 2024) indicates that audiences can experience similar states of admiration and reflection when engaging with AI-created works as they do with purely human-made art.

Experimenting with DALL·E, I realized that interaction with AI can be a crucial step in developing one’s artistic sensitivity. In this process, I open myself up to possible interpretations of my poems, receiving visual suggestions that sometimes align surprisingly well with the emotions embedded in the haiku. As a result, artificial intelligence

becomes not just a passive tool but a creative “partner in dialogue.” Some studies suggest that the more open an artist is to AI’s divergent visions, the greater the potential for generating unexpected and innovative ideas (Orwig et al., 2024). Interestingly, this relationship between the artist and the machine remains asymmetrical. The human artist brings the fullness of emotions, intentions, and cultural context into the process. AI, processing data based on recognized patterns, organizes it according to its own algorithmic logic (Neef et al., 2024). This dynamic raises further questions about authorship and agency, particularly when the outcome far exceeds the initial assumptions of the human creator (Gangadharbatla, 2021). Ultimately, DALL·E does not merely “visualize” haiku but enriches it with its own algorithmic perspective, requiring the human artist to engage in new forms of interpretation and reflection on the essence of the creative process (Millet et al., 2023; Neef et al., 2024).

The integration of AI with artistic forms such as *sumi-e* reveals its educational and research potential. As Carpino (2024) points out, AI’s application in analyzing and replicating traditional styles can enhance the understanding of the historical and cultural contexts behind artistic works. In *sumi-e*, where the spontaneity of brush movement coexists with a centuries-old philosophy of minimalism and contemplation, AI serves as a kind of metaphorical mirror through its generated images; it reminds artists of the essence of this form while simultaneously demonstrating that modern technologies can subtly reference the original spiritual foundations of art.

The unique convergence of haiku, *sumi-e*, and generative AI highlights the importance of dialogue between tradition and innovation. Bringing machines into the realm of such delicate artistic expressions raises essential questions, including: To what extent can humans trust AI to appropriately interpret the philosophical depth of emptiness and suggestion?

My experience working with DALL·E, combining my written haiku with AI-generated *sumi-e* images, opened a new chapter in my creative development. AI-generated art often demonstrates a high level of originality in a formal sense, but it remains debatable whether these systems can fully convey the inner experience characteristic of an artist contemplating the present moment (Hubert et al., 2024).

I have always appreciated *sumi-e* for the quiet, meditative space it creates between the brush and the paper. Meanwhile, AI, though seemingly “cold” and devoid of emotion, has unexpectedly evoked reflections similar to those accompanying the ink painting process. Each AI-generated image was a moment of surprise, sometimes stepping into the realm of the “new” and challenging my previous ways of interpreting haiku.

However, working with AI also raises questions about whether and to what extent an algorithm can “penetrate” the authentic experience of poetic creation, given that most of its operations are based on statistical correlations within vast datasets. In essence, such reflections lead to a broader discussion: To what extent does artificial intelligence

act as a creator, and to what extent does it remain a mirror of my thoughts and emotions, which processed return to me in a new form? My experience with DALL-E demonstrated that even in deeply traditional artistic practices like sumi-e, there is still room for experimentation and fresh perspectives.

5. The Poetic Experience of Summer

In my work, I use reflective autoethnography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010), understood as a research method in which the researcher's personal experience becomes the primary material for analysis and interpretation. As noted by Leavy (2015) and McNiff (1998), this perspective is particularly valuable in arts-based research, where artistic outputs (poetry, painting, AI-generated illustrations) serve not only an aesthetic function but also act as tools for in-depth research reflection.

I adopted the premise that the daily practice of writing haiku inspired by the poetry of Magdalena Szpunar, combined with the generation of corresponding images, would, on the one hand, develop my personal creative practice and, on the other, create a spiral of cognition (a creative and analytical cycle) in which I integrate artificial intelligence. As a result, two main research objectives emerged:

- Artistic-exploratory goal – to understand how the daily practice of writing haiku (inspired by M. Szpunar's poetry) and generating AI images influence the creative process and the perception of artistic works.
- Methodological-educational goal – to examine and describe how autoethnographic practice (recording experiences, reflections, emotions) can incorporate generative AI into poetry writing aimed at reflection and the development of creative sensitivity.

Every day, for two summer months (July–August), I began my mornings by reading a selected poem by Magdalena Szpunar. This ritual was a conscious attunement to the emotions and reflections arising from engaging with poetry. In the presence of a cup of tea, the morning silence, and the sounds of awakening nature, I found a moment to listen to my internal resonances – sometimes a clear motif emerged, while at other times, only a vague mood.

After a short pause that allowed my thoughts to crystallize, I would write a three-line sketch, a response to whatever resonated most deeply within me that day. This form of haiku sometimes took just seconds to compose, while at other times, it required a longer moment to capture the essence of my experience.

Example (journal entry, July 18): *Reading a poem about the dim light of morning, I felt a shiver at the thought of the approaching rain. I wrote a short note about dark clouds covering the sun, but I left space for that unspoken hope.*

Once I had noted down the haiku, I moved to the next stage, entering its content into an AI program (DALL·E). Following the premise of my artistic experiment (McNiff, 1998), I did not apply any additional modifiers or complex prompts; I was interested in the AI's initial response. Each illustration became a form of dialogue between my words and the statistical patterns embedded in the AI's training data.

Some generated images surprised me with their subtlety, resembling ink painting (sumi-e), suggesting that the algorithm somehow “understood” the intimate aesthetic of haiku. Others were disappointingly literal or even kitsch. Each case prompted me to reflect: to what extent had the algorithm captured my intention, and to what extent was it following its own logic, relying on common visual clichés?

My journal entries allowed me to observe patterns in the AI's responses and compare them with my own artistic imagination. This became a significant part of the research process, as I documented the algorithm's output and recorded spontaneous impressions (Reflective Autoethnographic Notes). These records allowed me to track how meaning emerged at the intersection of human thought and machine-generated content.

In my journal, I documented not only my reactions to the images but also my emotional states and technical reflections, using short notes structured as follows:

1. First impression
2. Key emotions
3. Associations with the poem

This helped me better understand each experience. For example, I noted:

- How accurately does the illustration match my haiku?
- Do I notice suggestive aspects in the image that I was unaware of while writing the poem?
- What emotions does the visual interpretation of my haiku evoke in me?

Example (journal entry, July 29): *The poem spoke of silence after a storm, but DALL·E presented a cheerful landscape with colorful rainbows. This surprised me – I felt that AI had not “read” my nostalgia, but does this mean that my interpretation is superior?*

Since I chose not to modify my prompts multiple times, each image remained the result of a single AI interpretation of the haiku. I refrained from making further adjustments or generating alternative versions, as I wanted to preserve the purity and spontaneity of the AI's initial reception of my poem.

From the perspective of qualitative research (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011), I collected 62 three-line records inspired by Magdalena Szpunar's poetry, each accompanied by at least one AI-generated illustration. This resulted in two layers of material: 1) a textual layer – a collection of short haiku, with creation dates and brief journal comments; 2)

a visual layer – AI-generated images, sometimes iteratively modified, accompanied by reflective notes.

This approach allowed me to compare how each poem functioned visually and to what extent the algorithm had contributed its own “interpretation,” sometimes surpassing my expectations.

My autoethnographic analysis focused on:

- Identifying recurring motifs (e.g., does AI consistently use certain color schemes when I mention “silence” or “nostalgia”?)
- Evaluating emotional reactions (to what extent does an AI-generated image alter my perception of the haiku?)
- Noting moments of insight and clashes of expectations, which acted as catalysts for my creative process.

Over time, my journal entries increasingly referenced Marshall McLuhan’s (1964, 1967) concept of synesthesia, which suggests that new media reorganize our perception and force us to “switch” between different sensory modalities. Using AI in my process made me more aware of these shifts, not only in my visual perception but also in my inner hearing (sensitivity to the rhythm of haiku) and emotional resonance. The unpredictability of the AI-generated images stimulated my imagination, encouraging me to write new verses. In my case, AI became a catalyst for this multisensory interplay; though it does not “feel” sensations itself, it produces images that evoke emotions and associations distinct from my original intentions.

This iterative interweaving of word and image, even sensory impressions (the smells and sounds of summer that surrounded me as I wrote) fits perfectly within the method of reflective autoethnography. It reveals how, from my subjective perspective, technology (AI) and nature (the surroundings of the Tuchola Forest) together create a shared creative environment.

As a result of this process, three key research questions emerged:

1. Which elements of M. Szpunar’s poetry and my haiku are easiest (or most difficult) for AI to transform into visual form?
2. What new meanings and interpretations emerge from AI’s “first reaction,” and what remains unexpressed or distorted?
3. To what extent is McLuhan’s synesthetic model – combining different modes of communication – realized in this research process?

To answer these questions, in the following sections of this monograph, I present selected examples of haiku and their corresponding images, along with an analysis of my reactions and insights derived from comparing them. From an autoethnographic perspective, this is not merely a record of my subjective experiences but also an exploration

of the dynamics of human-machine interaction. As it turned out, technology was sometimes surprisingly adept at “sensing” the minimalism and melancholy embedded in my poetics, while at other times, it leaned toward infantilism or overinterpreted symbols.

Although AI is increasingly used in the arts (Anantrasirichai & Bull, 2021), the daily poetic and algorithmic interaction documented through reflective autoethnographic notes is rarely discussed in the academic literature. My study fills this gap by providing a personal and creative account of experiencing artificial intelligence.

My summer process of poetic experience was filled with constant confrontation – with my own writing style, with the (un)predictability of AI, and with nature, which provided daily stimuli for mindfulness. The very ritual of reading M. Szpunar’s poem, writing haiku, generating an image, and taking notes embodied the core values of autoethnography:

- Personal engagement (the researcher as an active participant and observer),
- Reflectivity (constant analysis of one’s reactions and emotions),
- Confrontation with the “Other” (in this case, the AI algorithm),
- Openness to transformation (each step could alter the final form of the work).

Thus, the method became not just a research approach but also a way to develop my artistic and cognitive sensitivity. The results, presented in the following chapters, illustrate how the confrontation between the minimalist poetics of haiku and the digital sensibility of algorithms opens up entirely new interpretative contexts.

“Exploring one’s passion,” as I have phrased it, is not merely a casual pursuit but rather a deliberate artistic practice and a research tool that allows for an in-depth study of creativity at the intersection of human and technological interaction.

I am aware that my perspective is inevitably subjective and deeply rooted in my cultural context. Additionally, I did not use multiple iterations of prompts, which might have revealed alternative AI interpretations. Nevertheless, this single “first response” of the algorithm was a crucial aspect of my experiment, focusing on the spontaneity of the dialogue with the machine.

In the following chapters, I present selected pairs of haiku and AI-generated images. Each example is accompanied by journal reflections and an analysis of my reactions, allowing for a reconstruction and interpretation of the creative process at the intersection of human and machine.

Part II

Light and Shadow: The Synergy of Reflection Hidden in Haiku and Sumi-e

This summer it became my ritual, a moment of silence and mindfulness in which the world transformed into a space for poetry. The early hours held something extraordinary, a time suspended between sleep and reality, between personal reflection and opening up to the world.

Freshly brewed tea, the scent of the earth warming under the first rays of the sun, the slow rhythm of a summer morning – all of it resonated with my writing process. In the morning stillness, words arrived differently. They were not just a record of thoughts but a reaction to my surroundings: the soft rustling of leaves, the slow movement of light gliding across the floor, the distant song of birds that seemed to exist beyond time.

Szpunar's poems became my waypoints; they marked a path, but they did not define a single direction. Sometimes a single sentence, a single image, was enough to awaken something in me, something that demanded its own expression. I did not translate Szpunar's poetry into haiku; rather, I let her words awaken my own images, my own metaphors, my own verses.

It was an organic process; I read, absorbed the atmosphere of the poem, and then let my thoughts and emotions flow freely until haiku emerged from this almost meditative space. It was not always a conscious decision; often, haiku would emerge imperceptibly, as if from a mindful awareness of the moment. The summer atmosphere complemented this practice, allowing me to slow down, to notice subtle changes in light, to hear thoughts that are often drowned out by the noise of daily obligations. It was a time of pausing, not only over poetry, but over the essence of being itself, over what is happening here and now.

In this section of the book, I do not repeat the story of my morning ritual, but it is still present in every haiku, in every image.

AI-generated images became another point of reflection for me; they were not just illustrations but an additional layer of meaning that sometimes aligned with my intentions, while at other times diverged completely, provoking new insights.

Can an image capture what is contained in three lines?

Can AI grasp the fleeting nature of a moment?

Can haiku and technology co-create a space of meaning?

I do not answer these questions directly in this part of the book. Instead, I leave space for you, the reader, to step into the realm of interpretation, to discover what the fusion of haiku and sumi-e, words and images, human intuition and algorithm means to you.

The Journal Notes included here help deepen the understanding of the origins of my haiku. Let this section of the book be a space not only for my reflections but also for yours. Let it be a place where the silence between words and the emptiness in sumi-e become a space for your own interpretation.

Melodia strumienia / Melody of the Stream

strumieniolutnia
brzmi melodia potoku
pająk na straży

stream-lute sounds
melody of the brook flows
a spider on guard



Figure 2

Melodia strumienia / Melody of the Stream

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Na kumkofonach żabki grają* (Frogs Play on the Croakophones), Magdalena Szpunar, May 12, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's original poem, *Na kumkofonach żabki grają* (*On the Croakophones, Frogs Play*), the neologism "kumkofony" stands out. The word combines the croaking of frogs with a quasi-instrumental sound, suggesting that the sounds of nature can be perceived as a form of music. In a similar spirit, my haiku introduces the term "strumieniolutnia" (*stream-lute*) – a metaphor that combines the natural murmur of water with an instrument rooted in human culture. Though the two texts differ in form (free verse vs. haiku), they share the idea that nature "plays music," and the human listener can attune to these sounds.

The haiku tradition, particularly the work of Matsuo Bashō, often focuses on capturing fleeting moments, brief yet intensely sensory scenes. My haiku emphasizes the sense of hearing, signaling that the natural environment holds an acoustic potential, one that often goes unnoticed in the hurried pace of everyday life. The murmur of a flowing stream evokes subtle musical tones, while the presence of a spider, a symbol of both patience and predation, introduces an element of dynamic tension. Haiku must convey an entire spectrum of sensations in a few words – hence the absence of elaborate descriptions of color or surroundings, replaced by the suggestion that nature and music intertwine in a single fleeting moment.

After writing the haiku, I had AI generate a sumi-e illustration for me. The sumi-e style, based on a monochromatic palette, eliminates excess detail and highlights essential elements, such as a flowing stream that evokes the string of a lute or a musical score. The AI algorithm successfully captured the stream-lute connection but omitted the spider motif, suggesting that when generating images, the system prioritizes certain words while disregarding others that might be less visually distinct. From the perspective of my research into human-AI communication, this illustrates how automated models selectively process semantic information.

Throughout the writing and illustration process, I remained inspired by the concept of the soundscape, as proposed by R. Murray Schafer (1977). According to this theory, everything we hear in the environment can form a musical landscape, provided that humans assume the role of attentive listeners. The sound of a stream, the croaking of frogs, and other natural sounds acquire artistic value, aligning with ecocriticism, which has long advocated for recognizing nature as a source of creative inspiration (Bate, 1991; Kolbuszewska, 2007; Barcz, 2016; Tabaszewska, 2018; Hamerski, 2021). The neologism "kumkofony" thus expands perception, encouraging us to hear potential melodies in simple natural sounds.

In my haiku, the "stream-lute" resonates with "kumkofony," reinforcing a shared perspective that nature itself is an orchestra, provided that humans choose to listen. The appearance of the spider serves as a counterpoint, disrupting the soothing presence of

water. This small yet predatory creature, guarding its territory, reminds us that nature is not merely a gentle “background melody” but a space of tensions and interdependencies. The contrast between the harmonious water and the lurking spider highlights the complexity of the natural world and the layered nature of human perception.

Ultimately, both Szpunar’s poem and my haiku reinterpret ambient sounds as music. These works suggest that even the simplest sounds can be elements of artistic creation if we embrace them as nature’s own soundtrack. Translating this idea into an AI-generated illustration reveals how algorithms interpret language – sometimes capturing the essence of a theme, other times overlooking key elements. In this sense, the “omission” in the visual representation becomes an opportunity to expand the imagination, allowing us to mentally “place” the missing spider among hypothetical musical notes.

Światło dobroci / Light of Kindness

dobrzy ludzie
z cichym światełkiem w dłoniach
rozświetlają świat

good people
with quiet lights in their hands
illuminate the world



Figure 3
Światło dobroci / Light of Kindness

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Niech się sieją dobrzy ludzie (May Good People Take Root)*, Magdalena Szpunar, June 14, 2022. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Niech się sieją dobrzy ludzie* (*May Good People Take Root*, June 14, 2022), there is a message that simple acts of kindness, especially those done without seeking recognition, can gradually illuminate the world. In my haiku, I drew on this idea, placing "good people" at the forefront quiet yet unwavering in their inner glow. I focused on the "silent light in their hands" because this vision speaks of humility and perseverance in doing good. The flame is small and delicate, yet when carried by many, it transforms the entire landscape of the valley.

The AI-generated sumi-e illustration perfectly captures this atmosphere of collective yet unassuming strength. People standing in a line move forward in a calm rhythm, each holding a lantern. Around them stretches a shadowed mountain range, and in the background, a pale gray horizon suggests either dusk or dawn. Their lanterns illuminate the path, dispelling the darkness. The concentrated lights form a meandering river of brightness, unimposing from a distance, yet carrying a promise of clarity and hope.

As I wrote this haiku, I reflected on how small gestures of kindness are often overlooked. A smile, an outstretched helping hand, a simple act of support, although seemingly insignificant, can add up to a meaningful change. In the same way, a tiny lantern in a crowd might seem to fade into the dusk, yet in collective unity, it becomes part of a luminous glow that guides others.

I wanted to emphasize that "good people" stand at the heart of change not because they seek attention, but because their light, though silent, is constant. Haiku, like a frozen frame, focuses on those who do not proclaim their own value, yet leave a lasting impact. Visually, the illustration reflects the same theme through the procession of lanterns, the minimalism of black and white, and the subdued, ceremonial reverence of light.

Ultimately, the combination of the poem, illustration, and haiku serves as a reminder that "illuminating the world" does not require grand gestures. A small flame, if upheld by many, can dispel even the deepest darkness. This is the power of quiet goodness – it demands no attention, yet it refuses to let the world sink into blackness.

Ukryci w ciszy / Hidden in Silence

żyją pośród nas
ludzie dobrego serca –
ukryci w ciszy

somewhere they hide
people with good hearts –
hidden in silence



Figure 4

Ukryci w ciszy / Hidden in Silence

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Dobrzy ludzie (Good People)*, Magdalena Szpunar, April 1, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Dobrzy ludzie* (*Good People*, April 1, 2023), I was struck by the vision of individuals who act out of an inner calling, often remaining in the background of our daily lives. This inspired me to write a short haiku that highlights the idea of quiet, kind souls, frequently unseen in the rush of the day. In just a few lines, I wanted to capture that moment of realization that they live among us, yet do not seek recognition or praise. In the literature, this phenomenon is often referred to as "discreet altruism," actions driven by genuine concern for others, without the expectation of applause (see Batson, 2011; Eisenberg, 2002).

The AI-generated sumi-e illustration beautifully reflects this discreet presence. It depicts several blurred silhouettes fading into shades of gray, with one figure standing out due to a clearly outlined heart. The other figures blend almost entirely into the background, suggesting that such people exist around us, though they often go unnoticed. This contrast serves as a metaphor for hidden goodness, which is present but requires us to pause and sharpen our perception to truly see it.

In my haiku, the first lines reference an ordinary setting where unassuming individuals with kind hearts move among us. It is only in the last line, in keeping with the convention of three-line sketches, that I emphasize the role of silence in allowing this kindness to flourish. This aligns with the aesthetic of humility and contemplation, characteristic of East Asian art, including ink painting, where the minimalism of form allows for the recognition of subtle meanings.

This silence also carries a social message. Many people prefer to remain in the shadows and not draw attention to their actions. They support, help, and build relationships without wanting to be at the center of focus. That is why the foggy landscape generated by AI resonates with the idea of discreet kindness; the lack of distinct forms or details directs attention to the central light radiating from one of the figures. For me, this was a clear symbol – even in a crowd that often appears anonymous, one can find individuals filled with warmth and generosity.

While writing this reflection, I recalled personal experiences of encounters with people who help from behind the scenes. Their quiet gestures may seem imperceptible, but over time they become invaluable. Both the haiku and the illustration reinforce the idea that we should be more attentive to our surroundings; where many see only a sea of anonymous passersby, there are individuals with immense kindness. Their presence does not demand applause, but it enriches daily interactions and adds meaningful value to social coexistence.

Ślady na piasku / Footprints in the Sand

wesołość mewy
pośród śladów na piasku
i braku wiary

the seagull's joy
among the footprints in sand
and loss of belief



Figure 5

Ślady na piasku / Footprints in the Sand

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Małotkliwi (Not Easily Moved)*, Magdalena Szpunar, June 16, 2023, <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Małotkliwi* (*Not Easily Moved*, June 16, 2023), I was drawn to the subtle depiction of human presence, one that can easily escape the attention of others, much like footprints in the sand that disappear under the influence of wind and waves. This inspired me to write a haiku that, on one hand, features a cheerful seagull, and on the other, expresses "a lack of faith" or lost hope imprinted in the footprints left behind. This apparent contradiction between the carefree bird and human doubt highlights the fragility of emotions and, at the same time, the strength of nature, which has the power to redirect even the heaviest thoughts.

The AI-generated sumi-e illustration captures this impermanence and transience. A vast expanse of sand is covered in blurred footprints that may soon be erased by the movement of water or a gust of wind. Above, a seagull spreads its wings in an almost triumphant gesture. The interplay of black and white creates a sense of motion: the dark brushstrokes suggest the rhythm of the waves, while the white highlights mimic the reflection of light on the water. This play of contrasts mirrors the essence of my haiku. Looking at the seagull, we feel lightness and joy, yet the footprints in the sand remind us of human uncertainties.

The motif of footprints leads me to reflect on what happens to our experiences and memories. The notions of "małotkliwość" (detachment, emotional distance) and "lack of faith" (as referenced in the haiku) suggest that we do not always recognize or appreciate another person's struggles. Just like footprints in the sand, it only takes a moment for them to be forgotten. And yet, in my three-line sketch, a spark of optimism emerges in the form of the seagull.

Nature remains unmoved by human hesitation, yet at the same time, it can offer us unexpected reassurance. In moments of doubt, when footprints begin to fade, a simple glance at carefree birds can remind us that life moves forward, sometimes in unexpectedly simple and joyful ways.

Looking at the AI-generated image, I see how the brushstrokes reflect the ebb and flow of emotions. Uncertainty, hesitation, the loss of confidence – all of these feelings can be swept away by nature's steady rhythm. The seagull, with its outstretched wings, feels like an invitation to release doubts and burdens. In this sense, the combination of the bird's lightheartedness and the fleeting footprints in the sand suggests that our fears need not be permanent. They can be seen as a passing phase, just like a footprint that disappears, making way for new possibilities.

For me, the most important aspect of this pairing is the balance between what is temporary and what remains constant in nature. Even if footprints and memories fade, nature continues to offer new gusts of wind, new winged dances above the water. Szpunar's poem *Małotkliwi* reminds us that human life, too, includes "unmoving" moments,

times when understanding or support feels distant. But these moments, however painful, do not define the end of the story. The landscape is always capable of renewal, just as the smoothed sand is always ready for new imprints.

Within this symbolism lies a lesson in hope: sometimes, all it takes is to look up and notice a seagull in flight to realize that even a mark of doubt can become the beginning of a new path.

Ciepło korzeni / Warmth of Roots

zakorzenieni
niosą ciepło przez zimy
ogrzewając świat

deeply rooted
they carry warmth through winters
warming the world



Figure 6

Ciepło korzeni / Warmth of Roots

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Ludzi słonecznych nam trzeba (We Need Sunlit People)*, Magdalena Szpunar, May 14, 2022. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

While writing another haiku, I was inspired by Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Ludzi slonecznych nam trzeba* (*We Need Sunlit People*, May 14, 2022), which highlights the importance of individuals who radiate warmth and a natural brightness of spirit. In my three-line poem, the motif of "rootedness" became particularly significant. I imagined people who resembled trees, firmly planted in the soil of their values, ready to carry inner warmth even in the coldest of circumstances.

The AI-generated illustration unexpectedly complemented this vision. In the foreground stands a monumental tree with sprawling branches, while in the distance, a group of figures walks along a winding path. Swirling streaks resemble snow or mist, and in the background, a disk representing the sun or moon emerges. I felt that these figures walking together, both focused and hopeful, symbolized people capable of spreading kindness and optimism, regardless of the season. It did not appear to be a purely winter landscape, but rather a metaphor for an ongoing journey where one person warms another. The chill of winter only reinforced the idea that true strength lies in what is often invisible on the surface, in deeply rooted convictions, relationships built on kindness, and mutual support that endures even through the coldest times.

I interpret "rootedness" as a strong foundation of values that allows a person to persevere in unfavorable conditions. Just as a tree draws strength from its roots, certain individuals collect inner warmth and share it with others. While writing this haiku, I recalled moments when I encountered calm and kind people who were steadfast even in the face of life's hardships. Their presence resembled a tree – one that does not immediately lose its greenery, but instead hides it beneath its bark, waiting for better conditions to flourish.

As a result, both my haiku and the AI-generated image emphasize the role of resilience and solidarity. The "sunlit people" Szpunar writes about are those who illuminate the daily paths of others with their warmth. I saw this reflected in the figures walking together in the AI illustration, as if the sun did not need to shine brightly in the middle of winter; what mattered was that each person carried warmth within them that could warm the space around them.

This image of rootedness in goodness is embedded in my haiku. Sometimes, a few words are enough to express the power of remaining true to one's values, which, like the strong roots of a tree, can withstand any winter.

W takt prezesa / To the Rhythm of the Chairman

rezydentura
w takt muzyki prezesa
dmucha balonik

residency
to the rhythm of the chairman's
tune blows up a balloon



Figure 7

W takt prezesa / To the Rhythm of the Chairman

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Rezydent (Resident)*, Magdalena Szpunar, November 7, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Rezydent* (*Resident*, November 7, 2023) examines hierarchical power and submission, where one person makes decisions while another, sometimes unthinkingly, carries them out. In my haiku, I expressed this dependency through a humorous yet subtly bitter image of "blowing up a balloon" to the rhythm of the president's music. The situation seems absurd, but it reflects a real power dynamic – someone is giving orders and controlling a "puppet" while a small passive observer watches in the background.

The AI-generated illustration, rendered in a black-and-white aesthetic, highlights the disparity in scale between the figures. The larger silhouette, holding what appear to be strings, seems to be pulling the threads of power, while the smaller figure is focused on the task of inflating a balloon. This seemingly playful motif takes on an ironic meaning. In the haiku, the balloon symbolizes inflated ambitions and increasing pressure, always on the verge of bursting. Meanwhile, the additional small figure in the background serves as a reminder that there is often someone merely observing the scene.

While crafting these three lines, I reflected on moments when people unquestioningly follow the orders of those in higher positions, even when these actions appear ridiculous or pointless. At the same time, I considered the role of the observer. Do they lack the engagement to intervene and break the cycle, or do they lack the courage to ask difficult questions? The AI-generated image captures this situation well – the resident follows the orders of the "president" while we watch the entire spectacle unfold from a distance.

This humorous take on power dynamics leads to a more serious reflection:

Is the balloon we obediently inflate merely an illusion destined to burst?

Where is the boundary between loyalty and blind submission to authority?

What role does the passive observer play?

Perhaps the bystander is society itself – perhaps it is each of us.

It is precisely this ambiguity, blending comedy with a critical perspective, that lies at the heart of my haiku. At first glance, the lighthearted scene of inflating a balloon becomes a metaphor for the inflated narratives of power, where reason and courageous opposition are often nowhere to be found.

Szczęście szyte na miarę / Tailored Happiness

zakładam szczęście
jak drugą skórę noszę
zawsze pasuje

I put on happiness
like a second skin I wear
it always fits

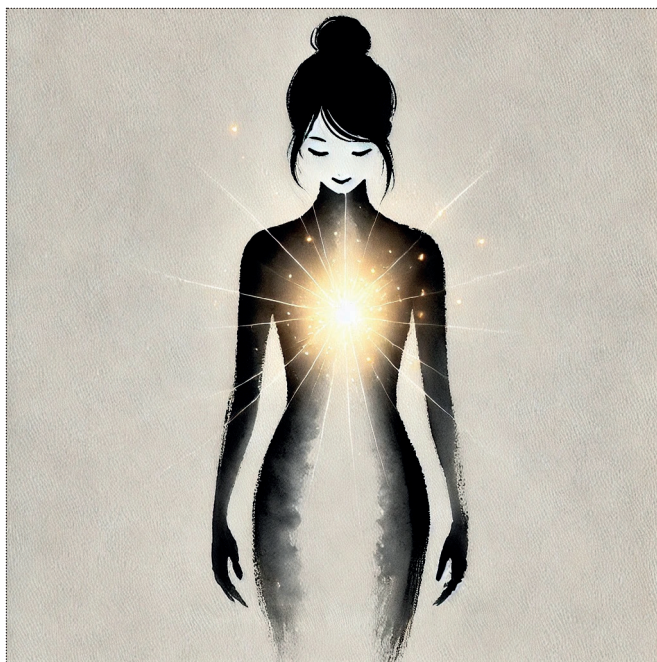


Figure 8

Szczęście szyte na miarę / Tailored Happiness

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by Przymierzam co rano szczęście (Every Morning, I Try on Happiness), Magdalena Szpunar, June 7, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Przymierzam co rano szczęście* (*Every Morning, I Try on Happiness*, June 7, 2024), I was most struck by the metaphor of "putting on" happiness like a chosen piece of clothing. The idea that joy is not a random gift of fate but a conscious choice inspired me to create a condensed haiku in which the first words, "I put on happiness," immediately convey the intentionality of this state. The second line, "I wear it like a second skin," suggests that it is something fused with us, natural, not artificially imposed. The last line, "It always fits," emphasizes the universality and unconditionality of happiness, as long as we do not seek it in external circumstances but instead draw it from within ourselves.

The sumi-e illustration shows the outline of a female figure with a gentle light emanating from her heart. Her contours dissolve into the space around her, as if the boundary between her and the world is only subtly marked. This simplified yet evocative form serves as a reminder that true radiance is something internal; it does not impose itself, nor does it need embellishments. The black and white composition, with soft gray transitions, reinforces inner harmony and serenity, while the light radiating from within carries special meaning: a symbol of a calm and positive outlook, capable of withstanding changing circumstances.

I reflect on how often we seek happiness in external things and people, hoping they will fill our sense of lack. Yet, as the poem suggests, "trying on" or "putting on" happiness is an act of personal choice. It is an internal attitude a set of thoughts, beliefs, and intentions that does not depend on external situations. The image of the woman seems to confirm that one can stand in the face of dark and difficult moments and still radiate light, as long as happiness (or more broadly peace and acceptance) is treated as an inseparable part of oneself.

When these two layers of word and image come together, they create a message about the daily ritual of setting an intention. The haiku affirms the belief that happiness always fits it does not require a special occasion or an elaborate outfit. The sumi-e illustration, in turn, shows that very little is needed to convey the essence of this feeling. A few strokes of ink, a single ray of light.

Just as we need only a simple decision to start the day by "putting on" a peaceful and joyful outlook, worn like a second skin.

Pod liściem / Under the Leaf

blisko pod liściem
serce szyje tęsknoty
nie uciekaj

close beneath the leaf
a heart stitches longing
don't run away



Figure 9
Pod liściem / Under the Leaf

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Myślałaś że uciekniesz (You Thought You Could Escape)*, Magdalena Szpunar, August 14, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Myslałaś że uciekniesz* (*You Thought You Could Escape*, August 14, 2024), I was particularly drawn to the idea of "stitching" longing into a quiet, hidden place as if essential emotions could be carefully tucked away and tended to later. In my haiku, I chose the image of a heart treated like fabric in need of repair, something that can be patiently stitched, mended, and protected from further wounds. This metaphor of a tailor's workshop came to mind as I thought about all those moments when confronting painful memories or loss feels overwhelming, making escape seem like the only option.

The AI-generated illustration beautifully captures this need for shelter. It depicts a hunched figure in a long robe, bent over a heart lying on the ground. Above them, a large leaf spreads out like a protective roof. This subtle detail conveys both the intimacy of the moment and the need for stillness in order to truly tend to one's wounds. I see in this image a quiet reference to nature's role as a refuge – historically, leaves were used to build shelter, and here the leaf serves as a barrier from the outside world, creating a private space to mend the fragile fabric of emotions.

In writing my haiku, I wanted to capture the tension between the need to stop and "stitch" pain and longing back together, and the strong instinct to avoid difficult emotions altogether. I expressed this conflict in the phrase "don't run," which carries both a plea and a gentle warning that unspoken feelings will continue to follow us unless we choose to confront them. The atmosphere depicted in the illustration, with its soft ink strokes, transports us to a world where one can tenderly lean over one's own heart in peace.

Looking at this miniature scene with the figure, the leaf, the heart, I reflect on how the process of "stitching" requires patience and gentleness, both with oneself and with the wound itself. Perhaps this is why the leaf is so large and protective, suggesting that a heart cannot be repaired in haste, under scrutiny, or in noise. Time, personal focus, and a safe, quiet place are necessary, even if the work and its results remain unseen from the outside.

Ultimately, this is an invitation to an intimate encounter with longing – instead of fleeing, one can try to sit with it, mend it, and gradually weave it into the heart so that in time it becomes a source of strength rather than pain.

Krzyki natury / Cries of Nature

świat woła o cień
pamiętaj o zwierzętach
które chcą przeżyć

the world calls for shade
remember the animals
that wish to survive



Figure 10
Krzyki natury / Cries of Nature

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Kiedy żar leje się z nieba (When the Scorching Heat Pours from the Sky)*, Magdalena Szpunar, August 20, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

The inspiration for this haiku came from Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Kiedy żar leje się z nieba* (*When the Scorching Heat Pours from the Sky*, August 20, 2023), in which the author highlights the impact of extreme temperatures on living beings. In just a few words, I wanted to emphasize that during unbearable heat, it is not enough to worry about our own comfort – it is equally important to provide shelter and water for animals. The phrase “the world calls for shade” evokes the image of parched earth, a silent plea from nature for a moment of relief. Meanwhile, the call to “remember the animals” serves as a reminder that they often cannot ask for help themselves, yet their needs become even more urgent than ours on scorching days.

The AI-generated illustration depicts a harsh, sun-scorched landscape, where a lone tree is the only source of protection. At its base, various animal silhouettes gather, each seeking shade, perhaps even the last traces of water. Dark clouds loom in the background, hinting at an approaching storm or possibly smoke, reinforcing the sense of an impending crisis. Looking at this drawing, I was reminded of drought scenes in Kenya, where I frequently saw cracked earth and exhausted animals during my research trips. In such places, a single tree can be worth more than an entire fenced field; whoever possesses it holds the power to grant or deny the chance of survival.

When paired with the haiku, the AI-generated composition takes on the tone of a warning: animals wander in search of shade, and humans are absent; all that remains are scorched lands and a single tree. Whether we show empathy depends entirely on us, and sometimes such decisions must be made quickly. The harsh weather conditions Szpunar describes become a test of our sensitivity. In extreme heat, we share water among ourselves, seek air-conditioned spaces, but forget that other beings do not have these luxuries. The haiku pleads with us: “Don’t look away when you can still help.”

For me, both the poem and the drawing serve as a reminder of solidarity with the natural world. Animals, who suffer even more from heat than humans, are often left out of discussions about extreme weather. Yet sometimes a simple bowl of water for birds or a bit of shade for a dog on a hot day can save a life. Just as a solitary tree on the savanna protects an entire herd, so too can a human become that “tree,” increasing another creature’s chance of survival under the scorching sun.

In the end, it is up to us to decide whether nature’s cry will remain nothing more than an unheard scream across a barren wasteland.

Niepełna radość / Incomplete Joy

miłość bez wiary
to jak radość bez szczęścia
nieznaleziona

love without belief
is like joy without fortune unfound
unseen



Figure 11

Niepełna radość / Incomplete Joy

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Biuro szczęść odnalezionych* (Office of Recovered Joys), Magdalena Szpunar, May 14, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

While writing this haiku, I had in mind Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Biuro szczęść odnalezionych* (*Office of Recovered Joys*, May 14, 2024), which draws attention to incomplete happiness, the kind that lacks one essential element to fully flourish. I recognized in it the thought that love alone is not enough if trust or faith is missing. In such cases, happiness remains elusive, "almost, but not quite." This is why I juxtaposed love and faith in my haiku. Without their coexistence, true fulfillment remains out of reach.

The AI-generated illustration portrays an unfinished heart formed by two ink-drawn arcs. At its center is an empty space, as if a single brushstroke were missing. Surrounding it, delicate branches and vines extend, evoking the potential for growth in emotions or relationships. This minimalist sumi-e style emphasizes that one does not need many expressive elements to convey absence – a simple white gap in the center of the heart is enough to speak of something left incomplete.

In my interpretation, this conveys the idea that faith and trust are what complete love, just as inner certainty allows joy to reach its full depth. When I recall moments of almost tangible happiness, I often find that a subtle internal barrier was present; a hesitation, a loss of belief that I had the right to fully embrace it. The empty space in the heart's shape speaks precisely to this resistance. One thing is missing: a bold gesture or a sincere decision to complete the image.

The combination of haiku and illustration creates a poetic suggestion that happiness may be within reach, but it requires more than just emotion. Sometimes, it is faith in the truth of feelings, sometimes the courage to be with someone fully, sometimes trust in fate. Without this missing element, the heart remains only an outline, and happiness remains "unfound," even when it is right beside us.

Plony bez oczekowań / Harvest Without Expectations

dojrzały sierpień
cierpliwie zbiera plony
nie czeka na deszcz

mature August
patiently gathers the harvest
doesn't wait for rain



Figure 12

Plony bez oczekowań / Harvest Without Expectations

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Dojrzały sierpień* (Ripe August), Magdalena Szpunar, August 28, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Dojrzały sierpień* (*Ripe August*, August 28, 2023), I was captivated by the serenity of late summer, that moment when everything that was meant to grow has already grown, and we no longer need to hope for a miraculous change in the weather. In my haiku, I emphasize this with "it doesn't wait for rain," underscoring that maturity means accepting the conditions we have and making the best of them. It is like the moment when a farmer walks across the last harvested field, knowing that the land has given all it can.

The AI-generated illustration, rendered in shades of black and gray, depicts winding fields and small hills shrouded in a light mist. In the background, I notice haystacks signaling the end of the harvest, as if the landscape itself has come to terms with its rhythm, accepting its yield without great expectations. This scene reminds me of August afternoons from my childhood in the countryside, when the air smelled of dry grass, and a drop of rain could no longer change the fate of that year's harvest.

While writing this haiku, I reflected on this August maturity that requires no spectacle. It is simple, free from illusions, untroubled by what is missing. Similarly, in the AI-generated image, there are no storm clouds, no sudden turbulence, no dramatic contrasts. There is only a wave of gentle fields, as if they whisper, "All is as it should be."

In this calm acceptance of the natural order, I see the essence of a mature August. This attitude of letting go of excessive expectations and embracing what is often allows us to truly appreciate what we have.

Medale w cieniu działaczy / Medals in the Shadow of Officials

sport czeka w kącie
na ochłap tłustych działaczy
medale w głowach

sport waits in the corner
for scraps from greedy officials
medals in their minds



Figure 13

Medale w cieniu działaczy / Medals in the Shadow of Officials

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Za krótka ławka* (*The Bench Is Too Short*), Magdalena Szpunar, August 12, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Za krótka ławka* (*The Bench Is Too Short*, August 12, 2024), I was struck by its bitter reflection on the state of sport. A field that should be about supporting athletes, celebrating passion, and fostering perseverance is often sidelined in favor of politics, media image, and the spectacle of "great" victories. Inspired by this poem, I wrote a haiku evoking "sport waiting in the corner," hoping for whatever financial scraps might be left over from the budget. On one side, we see the inflated egos and ambitions of officials; on the other, we see coaches and athletes struggling on their own, because in the end, what matters most is the medal, not the work that leads to it.

The AI-generated illustration captures this tension perfectly. Larger, sharply defined figures in suits dominate the foreground, while in the background, faint outlines of sports equipment – a ball, a racket, a pair of shoes – barely linger. The atmosphere of grand events and gold-medal ambitions is present, yet the subtle disorder hints at a deeper truth: the real needs of athletes are drowned out by political agendas and media spectacle.

I clearly recall a conversation with a friend, an athlete, who expressed frustration over how funding and attention are directed primarily to glamorous events, while the day-to-day necessities of training facilities, travel, and physiotherapy remain overlooked.

Looking at the black-and-white composition with its blurred figures, I sense that AI has deliberately emphasized the contrast. Sports officials bask in the spotlight, while the true essence of sport – the grueling effort, discipline, and sacrifice – remains in the shadows, relegated "to the corner." On one hand, there is talk of medals and success; on the other, training facilities deteriorate, equipment becomes obsolete, and athletes are left to fend for themselves. This is the bittersweet irony I sought to capture in my haiku a tribute to those who truly train and fight, rather than merely boast and perform.

I hope that readers of my haiku will recognize that athletes are often left behind, while officials revel in their own victories. That is why I wrote about "scraps" and "medals in their heads," a stark contrast between where attention is focused and where it truly belongs.

Chwila w trawie / A Moment in the Grass

bujamy w trawie
dmuchawiec uczy lotu
tylko przez chwile

we sway in the grass
a dandelion teaches flight
only for a moment



Figure 14

Chwila w trawie / A Moment in the Grass

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Jesteś tu tylko na chwilę (You Are Here Only for a Moment)*, Magdalena Szpunar, May 10, 2022. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Jesteś tu tylko na chwilę* (*You Are Here Only for a Moment*, May 10, 2022), I was particularly struck by the emphasis on the ephemeral nature of human experience in relation to nature. In my haiku, I sought to capture this mood through the image of "swaying in the grass" and the fleeting lesson in flight that a dandelion offers us. A seemingly simple scene, yet one that transported me back to a childhood state of carefree wonder, where for a moment I believed I could float away with the seeds carried by the wind.

The AI-generated illustration depicts a figure lying among tall blades of grass, holding a single dandelion seed, while more "parachute-like" filaments swirl in the background. This simple black-and-white sumi-e composition perfectly conveys the idea of momentary detachment from reality. At the same time, it draws attention to a single delicate detail – the fragile form of the dandelion, which needs only a light breeze to scatter into hundreds of tiny airborne dots.

I recall similar childhood moments, lying in the grass, picking dandelions, watching their seeds drift away, wondering where they would land. These memories are tied to brief but intense joy. Similarly, in Szpunar's poem, there is an underlying sense of the fleeting nature of the present, just a single second to grasp the wonder before everything returns to its usual rhythm. This is the very essence I wanted to encapsulate in my three lines, to emphasize that sometimes the smallest, most ordinary moments, like watching a dandelion seed float away, stay with us more vividly than life's grandest events.

The combination of my haiku and the illustration creates an atmosphere of gentle contemplation. The minimalist, slightly blurred shapes in the image evoke a sense of peace and freedom, almost allowing us to hear the rustle of grass and feel the soft tickle of the wind. This stillness invites us to smile at the fragility of our own existence, to appreciate fleeting moments that, though brief, become symbolic "flights" beyond the everyday.

And perhaps that is the greatest magic of the dandelion: it reminds us that sometimes, all it takes is a single breath of wind to experience something beautiful and unpredictably light.

Zszywanie miłości / Stitching Love

manufaktura
zszywają nicią serca
by mogły kochać

manufactory
stitching hearts with thread
so they can love



Figure 15
Zszywanie miłości / Stitching Love

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Manufaktura serc (The Heart Factory)*,
Magdalena Szpunar, July 21, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Manufaktura serc* (*The Heart Factory*, July 21, 2024), I was struck by the idea that love and human connections sometimes require a conscious "stitching together." They are not always purely spontaneous or a matter of fate; often, they demand care and deliberate effort to transform fragile fragments into a cohesive whole. In my haiku, I adapted this idea by depicting a scene in which hearts, like pieces from a tailor's workshop, must be carefully and patiently sewn together so that they can love again.

The AI-generated illustration shows a solitary figure sitting with a long thread in hand, stitching together large, outlined hearts. Surrounding them are light strokes and delicate ink traces, reminiscent of the sumi-e style. At first glance, one notices that the hearts do not appear to be solid; they consist of threads, curves, and areas that still seem to need reinforcement. This detail beautifully conveys the sense that love, like a complex fabric, is made up of various emotions and experiences, and at times, it must undergo a meticulous "repair" to restore its original cohesion.

As I wrote this haiku, I thought about moments when breakups, conflicts, or simply difficult experiences in relationships require careful "re-stitching." Sometimes, our hearts break in places we never even noticed before. The chance for healing lies in consciously picking up metaphorical "tools": honesty, admitting faults, empathy, or simply patience. In the illustration, in the slender lines and the quiet figure focused on the stitching, I see this very commitment – each movement of the needle represents another step toward rebuilding trust and closeness.

Both the haiku and the image emphasize that love is not always just passion, but often a craft that requires practice and effort. *The Heart Factory* may sound ironic, but in reality it reminds us that human relationships are an art that is both delicate and demanding. It is through this process that fractures can be healed and in some cases even strengthened, creating a new, more resilient bond.

And while this process is fragile, and there is always the risk that the thread will snap, the effort put into it offers hope for deeper, more enduring connections.

Szelki ufności / Suspenders of Trust

szelki z ufnością
zakłada zapomnianym
chroniąc ich serca

suspenders with trust
are placed on the forgotten
protecting their hearts



Figure 16

Szelki ufności / Suspenders of Trust

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Szelki ufności do świata (Suspenders of Trust in the World)*, Magdalena Szpunar, June 5, 2022. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Szelki ufności do świata* (*Suspenders of Trust in the World*, June 5, 2022), I was particularly struck by the metaphor of "suspenders," which support those who need trust and a bit of faith in themselves. In my haiku, I transformed this idea by focusing on a symbolic "seatbelt" for the heart. In everyday life, suspenders keep pants from slipping. Here, they become a form of support that does not restrict freedom, but protects from falling and provides stability when we need it most.

The AI-generated illustration shows a heart wrapped in distinctive straps with buckles. The delicate ink strokes in the background give the image a sense of balance between strength and gentleness. The heart is held in place, but not trapped; it has space to beat and live, yet remains under the care of something solid and enduring.

As I wrote this haiku, I reflected on moments when knowing that someone trusted me and believed in my abilities acted like these metaphorical suspenders keeping me from losing my footing. This ordinary piece of clothing carries a universal message: it does not take much to offer someone a sense of security, to provide support while still respecting their autonomy.

The combination of word and image emphasizes the role of these "suspenders of trust": they provide protection without control or coercion. Szpunar's poem reminds us that those who feel forgotten, those who most need encouragement, can regain confidence if someone fastens these suspenders for them. Just as real suspenders hold clothing in place, these symbolic ones help sustain belief in the meaning of one's actions.

I imagine that each of us could offer such suspenders to someone through empathy, care, or just a few words of trust. Sometimes, that alone is enough to make a heart feel more secure in the world around it.

W labiryncie myśli / In the Maze of Thoughts

w uliczkach miasta
zagubienie smakuję
odnajduję się

in the city alleys,
I savor getting lost
and find myself



Figure 17

W labiryncie myśli / In the Maze of Thoughts

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *W zagubieniu odnajdywać (To Find in Loss)*, Magdalena Szpunar, May 11, 2022. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>

Journal Notes

While writing this haiku, I thought about all those moments when wandering through unfamiliar streets becomes a personal act of discovery. The opening words “in the city alleys” draw us into an urban labyrinth, full of unspoken stories and forgotten corners. The next phrase, “I savor getting lost,” expresses the paradoxical joy of not knowing the destination. The last line “I find myself” marks the moment when wandering takes on meaning, leading us to an internal point of orientation.

The AI-generated sumi-e illustration perfectly captures the atmosphere of this journey. At the center of the composition stands a solitary figure among misty streets, while light and shadow blur the outlines of buildings. This fog acts as a metaphor for the mind’s state – uncertain and unpredictable, yet inviting reflection. The figure moves with curiosity, and I do not sense fear or hesitation. Quite the opposite – a quiet calm prevails, as if getting lost itself is an invitation to discover something new, both in the city and within oneself.

In my haiku, getting lost is not a problem to be solved but a process that leads to transformation. This experience can be enjoyable if we let go of control and embrace the freedom of exploration. The illustration reinforces this idea – the blurred streets serve as symbols of transition, from chaos and the lack of clear reference points to conscious “finding” not just physically, but internally.

This short form, just a few lines and a minimalist graphic, reminds me that sometimes stepping into uncertainty is valuable. Perhaps it is within the city mist that we can best hear the echo of our own thoughts and feel intuition guiding us forward.

Ultimately, the meeting of word and image creates a story that suggests getting lost is not always about confusion or danger; it can be a necessary step on the journey back to oneself.

Cichy nurt śmierci / Quiet Stream of Death

śmierć płynie cicho
w szuwarach łusek błyski
życie z przyduchą

death flows quietly
flashes of scales in the reeds
life with suffocation



Figure 18

Cichy nurt śmierci / Quiet Stream of Death

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Śmierć płynie* (*Death Flows*), Magdalena Szpunar, August 16, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>

Journal Notes

In my haiku, I sought to capture the dramatic silence of death, which approaches slowly and almost imperceptibly. The opening phrase, “death flows quietly,” sets a melancholic tone; there is no struggle or sudden force, only a gradual and inevitable weakening of life. “Flashes of scales in the reeds” evoke a fleeting shimmer, the last signs of movement, as if the fish were making one final attempt to reflect the light before succumbing to stillness. The last line, “life with suffocation,” delivers the bitter conclusion – a paradox of being surrounded by water, the very element meant to sustain life, yet ultimately suffocated by it.

The AI-generated sumi-e illustration depicts a surface of water scattered with lifeless fish, drifting like shadows of former vitality. The reeds, typically symbols of shelter and renewal, offer no refuge here; they stand helplessly as more bodies settle near the shore. The surface of the water, broken by dark ink strokes, appears like a threshold between two worlds, one where breath still exists and another where posthumous silence reigns. While writing this haiku and reflecting on the illustration, I considered the phenomenon of suffocation not only in a biological sense, but also metaphorically. Humans, too, can experience this lack of oxygen, not necessarily physically, but emotionally or spiritually. In such a state, even the simplest actions become difficult, and gradual exhaustion does not always raise an alarm.

The haiku and illustration together convey how easy it is to overlook the moment when the ability to breathe freely, whether in nature or within us, begins to fade. This pairing evokes a meditation on the fragility of life. A quiet death, without spectacle or fanfare, is often the most haunting, revealing how delicate and imperceptible the boundary between existence and non-existence can be. Water, which should sustain life, instead becomes the site of its disappearance. The scales, once symbols of energy and movement, turn into lifeless specks of light against the darkening surface.

This could be a warning against neglecting nature, but also a reflection on how a person can, without realizing it, lose their ability to breathe fully in a world that is gradually overwhelming them.

Umierający świat / A Dying World

w brunatnej wodzie
łuski ryb bez godności
świat umiera

in brownish water
fish scales without dignity
the world is dying



Figure 19
Umierający świat / A Dying World

Note. Generated in DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Umarły ryby* (*The Fish Have Died*), Magdalena Szpunar, August 20, 2022. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Umarly ryby* (*The Fish Have Died*, August 20, 2022), I was struck by the evocative image of nature in decay, where brown water becomes the setting for a silent tragedy. When fish, often symbols of resilience and vitality, float lifelessly, it is impossible to ignore the impression that this world is slowly but inevitably sinking into decline. The haiku, built on spare words and stark detail, amplifies this atmosphere through its minimalist form and sharp imagery.

The AI-generated sumi-e illustration reinforces this sense of loss. At the base of the composition, murky waters stretch across the image, with koi fish suspended at various depths, some floating near the surface, while others descend into darker spaces below. Black-brown streaks of ink spill down from the top, seeping into the scene, suggesting pollution, decay, or an ominous shadow overtaking everything. Koi fish are traditionally symbols of strength and endurance, often associated with luck and prosperity in Eastern cultures. Yet here, suffocated, whether from a lack of oxygen or the moral decline of the world, they have lost their majesty.

On a deeper level, this image raises the question of the causes of this silent but profound collapse. Is it an inevitable consequence of natural cycles, an unavoidable passage of time? Or is it the direct result of human activity and environmental degradation? The haiku offers no answer, only the brief, unembellished statement, "the fish have died," leaving us with the unsettling realization that the old order of the world is dissolving into insignificance.

The juxtaposition of text and image can be read as both a warning and a reflection on humanity's connection to nature. When water, the source of life, becomes a site of decay, something fundamental has been broken. This can be understood both literally and metaphorically:

Literally, it speaks to real ecological crises – pollution, climate change, and rising temperatures leading to mass fish die-offs in rivers and lakes;

Metaphorically, it signals a collapse of societal values, where we have lost our sense of collective responsibility for the world around us. Have we become indifferent to warning signs, even when they manifest as the disappearance of life itself?

The minimalist aesthetics of sumi-e, with its fluid black strokes, remind us that the world can be both breathtaking in its simplicity and unsettling in its truth. The haiku and image together create a melancholic contemplation of endings, whether they are natural cycles or an irreversible consequence of neglect.

The final question remains: Is this simply a metaphor for impermanence, or is it a warning that, unless we change how we relate to nature and to each other, this process will continue until the day we find ourselves without water untainted by the murky darkness?

Bliskość na odległość / Closeness at a Distance

morza dalekie
serce wciąż blisko czeka
miłość nie znika

faraway seas
the heart still waits nearby
love does not fade



Figure 20

Bliskość na odległość / Closeness at a Distance

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Myślałaś że uciekniesz (You Thought You Could Escape)*, Magdalena Szpunar, August 14, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Myślałaś że uciekniesz* (*You Thought You Could Escape*, August 14, 2024), the theme of distance resonates deeply not just physical distance, but the futility of separating oneself from a strong emotional bond. Inspired by this, I wrote a haiku where "faraway seas" contrast with a heart that remains close in feeling. The juxtaposition of separation and persistence sends a clear message: time and space may seem insurmountable, but love endures even across distances.

The AI-generated sumi-e illustration mirrors this idea. The ocean waves form delicate, rhythmic lines, as if recording the breath of the sea, infinitely distant yet soothing in its constancy. Above them floats a subtly drawn heart, connected by a thin line to a distant shore. This simple black-and-white composition evokes a sense of duality: the water is constantly shifting, but the heart remains unwavering. The image reinforces the idea that memories and inner certainty provide stability, even when we are physically apart.

As I wrote this haiku, I kept recalling moments when it seemed that leaving a place would erase memories or release one from the past. However, both Szpunar's poem and my own short form suggest that some emotions follow us like a quiet echo, unchanging, untouched by the passage of time. Distance is like the waves, constantly moving, sometimes turbulent, yet always returning to shore. There is a melancholic certainty in this idea: if love is real, no journey can erase its presence.

On an interpretive level, this haiku is a lyrical meditation on longing, not as pain, but as an awareness of emotional permanence. The sea symbolizes both separation and the force of life itself difficult to cross, yet ultimately external. The heart in the haiku stands as an unshaken center, unaffected by the restless waves. It remains, waits, and continues to beat.

The thought that love is greater than distance brings a sense of peace and anchoring, no matter how far the waves of daily life may carry us.

Olimpiada na ostrzu szpady / Olympics on the Edge of a Sword

szybkie są jak wiatr
szpady Alicji i Oli
w olimpiady dzień

as swift as the wind
Alice and Ola's blades
on Olympic day



Figure 21

Olimpiada na ostrzu noża / Olympics on the Edge of a Sword

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Olimpiada jest kobietą (The Olympics Is a Woman)*, Magdalena Szpunar, August 11, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

In my haiku, inspired by Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Olimpiada jest kobietą* (*The Olympics Is a Woman*, August 11, 2024), I wanted to capture the dynamic intensity of fencing and the energy of two competing figures, Alicja and Ola. The opening line, "as swift as the wind," immediately immerses the reader in the fluid, elusive motion of their duel. Their steps and strikes seem more like a force of nature than mere human rivalry. The following lines emphasize the precision and finesse of their attacks; their épées become instruments of both expression and competition, intertwined against the grand backdrop of the Olympic Games.

The AI-generated sumi-e illustration reinforces this sense of movement. The vibrant ink strokes radiate in different directions, evoking the clash of blades and the sudden gust of wind from each attack. The faces are only suggested, emphasizing the symbolic essence of the scene: this is not just about two individuals, but about the spirit of the duel itself. The contrast between the dark ink strokes and the white background creates an expressive, electrifying effect. The duelists seem to hover in space, suspended in the decisive moment where anything is still possible.

Poetry and fencing share much in common: both demand reflexes, intuition, dexterity, and lightning-fast reactions. In my haiku, Alicja and Ola embody this fusion of harmony and uncertainty, where every move could determine victory. My intention was not to capture the result of the match but its sheer intensity – that split second of tension when blades meet in midair.

The illustration deepens this vision. Its expressiveness and vibrating strokes remind us that fencing is not just a fight but a dance, both aggressive and beautiful. This duel is also psychological: each competitor must attack and retreat, balancing confidence and doubt, belief in victory and the unknown of the final outcome.

In both the haiku and the image, these elements intertwine: speed, precision, and determination. On the Olympic stage, the fencers push beyond their limits, perhaps for a fleeting moment, to touch the very essence of perfection.

Łąki nadziei / Meadows of Hope

dobro zasiane
rozkwita w naszych sercach
nadzieją łąki

goodness sown
blooms in our hearts
a meadow of hope



Figure 22
Łąki nadziei / Meadows of Hope

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Niech się sieją dobrzy ludzie (May Good People Take Root)*, Magdalena Szpunar, June 14, 2022. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

The inspiration for this haiku came from Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Niech się sieją dobrzy ludzie* (*May Good People Take Root*, June 14, 2022), which highlights the power of goodness sown like seeds in human hearts. In my short form, I aimed to depict a process in which kindness grows quietly and unnoticed, yet ultimately blossoms into a hopeful "meadow." The first line focuses on the act of sowing, which is humble and silent, yet full of potential. The second line shifts attention to the heart as the space where this seed takes root and grows. The last line expands the perspective to include a larger community or society, where this growing goodness transforms into a flourishing meadow, filled with diverse life.

The AI-generated sumi-e illustration beautifully complements this vision. Delicate plant forms stretch upward, with a heart-shaped flower at the center, softly radiating a light that seems to energize the entire landscape. Surrounding tendrils and the background sunlight create a sense of harmony and natural cycles. This imagery serves as a visual counterpart to the haiku's themes: small acts of kindness, planted in the right place, eventually bloom, filling the world with warmth and hope.

Reflecting on this pairing of words and image, I am reminded that goodness often emerges unnoticed. Just as a seed sown in the earth requires patience before it reaches the light, human gestures of kindness may take time to bring about visible change. However, the illustration reassures us that this process is natural, cyclical, and inevitable with time and care, goodness takes root and flourishes, transforming once barren spaces into vibrant fields of life.

The synergy between poetry and imagery in this haiku serves as a gentle reminder that even the smallest seeds of kindness hold infinite potential, much like the richness of life that emerges across a blooming meadow.

Pod skrzydłami / Under the Wings

w cieniu ich skrzydeł
światło zapala się w nas
idziemy razem

in the shade of their wings
a light ignites within us
we walk together



Figure 23

Pod skrzydłami / Under the Wings

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Są ludzie, którzy* (*There Are People Who*), Magdalena Szpunar, March 10, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Są ludzie, którzy* (*There Are People Who*, March 10, 2024), I was particularly drawn to the suggestion of a delicate presence a sense of spiritual guidance that does not impose itself, yet provides quiet reassurance.

The first line of my haiku, "in the shade of their wings," introduces a metaphor of protection almost angelic, yet so subtle that it might go unnoticed unless we pay attention. The second line, "a light ignites within us," emphasizes that this presence is not passive; it awakens clarity, action, and inner strength. The last line "we walk together," reminds us that even when we feel alone, we are not truly walking this path alone.

The AI-generated sumi-e illustration reinforces this sentiment. Graceful, luminous figures seem to hover above those walking below. Their wings are outstretched, yet drawn so lightly that they blend into the surrounding white and gray tones, merging to create a dreamlike or spiritual atmosphere. Light radiates from the central figure at the bottom, as if emanating directly from within, symbolizing the potential for goodness and strength we discover through unseen support. The image evokes outstretched hands emerging from the shadows, perhaps angelic, perhaps human, subtle enough to let us take our own steps, yet ever present and ready to help.

As I wrote this haiku, I reflected on how often the memories, thoughts, and words of those we cherish continue to guide us long after they have left our daily lives. These "wings" can take the form of a kind word, a remembered piece of advice, an inner voice resembling conscience or inspiration. The phrase "a light ignites within us" reminds me that what we receive from others not only sustains us, but becomes part of our identity. The illustration deepens this message – the aura surrounding the figure at the bottom seems to extend upward toward the winged silhouettes, suggesting a continuous exchange of energy between giving and receiving.

Ultimately, both the haiku and the sumi-e image evoke a sense of peace. Even when we are unaware of the source of our support, all we need to do is accept it and trust it. The road may feel lonely at times, but there are moments when we hear "you are walking with us" or sense the quiet brush of wings overheard, and in that instant a light kindles within our hearts.

This is the beauty of the journey; nothing is certain, but nothing is entirely solitary either.

Tratwa/The Raft

TY w morzu nieszczęść
tratwa krucha, lecz silna
rozbitków rzesza

YOU in a sea of misfortunes
a raft, fragile but strong
a crowd of castaways



Figure 24
Tratwa/The Raft

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *W tym całym morzu nieszczęść (In This Whole Sea of Misfortunes)*, Magdalena Szpunar, April 18, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

The inspiration for this haiku came from Magdalena Szpunar's poem *W tym całym morzu nieszczęść* (*In This Whole Sea of Misfortunes*, April 18, 2024), which evoked in me the image of a fragile yet unwavering force of a single person facing overwhelming adversity.

I begin the haiku with "YOU in a sea of misfortunes," signaling that the central figure is surrounded by chaos and destruction, yet remains standing. The second line, "a raft, fragile yet strong," highlights the paradox that although the structure appears weak, it keeps others alive. The last line, "a crowd of castaways," reveals the universality of this experience: many need support, and yet, thanks to this one seemingly inadequate raft, they survive and move forward.

The AI-generated sumi-e illustration depicts a scene of people on a small raft, as if floating through clouds. This non-literal depiction reinforces the metaphorical nature of survival and the profound reality of the relationship between an individual and a group. Despite the sense of uncertainty, as the clouds might symbolize an unfamiliar, transitional space, the community remains together, providing security. The delicate, almost ethereal brushstrokes lend a poetic atmosphere to the composition. This is not merely a struggle to stay afloat, but a process of finding hope amid disaster.

While working on this haiku, I reflected on moments in my life when I have unknowingly been a raft for someone, even though I have felt insecure myself and have never seen myself as "strong." Yet sometimes, this "fragile" strength is enough to sustain someone else's tomorrow. The illustration encourages a similar reflection. The group on the raft has few resources, but they persevere together and stay afloat. In a way, this piece is a tribute to solidarity in times of hardship.

Ultimately, both the poem and the image convey that in life's greatest storms, even the smallest act of support can be enough to keep us from sinking. It is up to us to recognize within ourselves or others the "raft" that might seem too weak, but that carries the potential to save. We do not always need a grand ship – sometimes, a single plank of wood is enough to keep hope alive in uncertain waters.

Ciepło domu / Warmth of Home

dom pełen ciepła
serca biją dla innych –
świat ogrzewają

a home full of warmth
hearts beating for others –
heating the world



Figure 25

Ciepło domu / Warmth of Home

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Widziałam dom (I Saw a House)*, Magdalena Szpunar, March 10, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Widziałam dom* (*I Saw a House*, March 10, 2024), I deeply felt the message that the true warmth of a place does not come from its walls or a fireplace, but from the people who live there. In my haiku, I expressed this idea in three stages. First, I introduced "a home full of warmth" to emphasize the special energy created by its inhabitants. Next, I referred to "hearts beating for others," highlighting the sense of community and care that transforms a house into a home. Finally, I extended this meaning outward, showing how this warmth can "heat" the entire world.

The AI-generated sumi-e illustration captures this concept beautifully. It depicts a simple cottage with a soft glow emanating from within, in the form of floating hearts. The monochromatic background and delicate, blurred lines make the composition feel poetic and symbolic. Though the house is small, its light seems boundless. This stream of light detaches itself from the material world, rising into the sky and reinforcing the idea that love and kindness radiate far beyond their immediate surroundings.

As I was writing this, I recalled homes I have visited that were humble, yet filled with warmth and hospitality. It was in these simple gestures and quiet acts of care that I felt a unique atmosphere, one that subtly embraced all who entered. There is something deeply metaphysical about the idea that such a small space, filled with goodness, can ripple outward and create change. After leaving such a home, one carries that flame forward like a lantern to ignite warmth in other places.

Both the haiku and the illustration serve as reminders that a house is more than just a physical structure – it is laughter, conversation, friendship, and the warmth of relationships. When hearts beat to the rhythm of kindness, they create an atmosphere that every visitor can sense.

And though it may sound grand, it is in everyday moments that these small sources of warmth build connections between people, crossing invisible boundaries, and in their own way contributing to changing the world, even if only on a small scale.

Serce w oknie / Heart in the Window

choć daleko stąd
serce trzyma nas blisko
bo w oknie wciąż my

though far from here
the heart keeps us close
for in the window, it's still us



Figure 26

Serce w oknie / Heart in the Window

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Myślałaś, że uciekniesz (You Thought You Could Escape)*, Magdalena Szpunar, August 14, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

As I wrote these three lines of haiku, I distinctly felt two opposing forces pulling me in different directions, longing and closeness. On one hand, I was aware of the distance that separates us, whether physical or caused by time that has drawn us apart. Yet on the other, “the heart keeps us close,” awakening the realization that a true bond does not disappear so easily, even when life’s paths seem to diverge completely. This contradiction, this momentary tension between “far” and “close,” woven into the haiku, has always fascinated me.

The last line, “for in the window, it’s still us,” evokes an image that has long stayed with me. That moment when someone looks out of a window, waiting for another person to return, but at the same time becoming part of a nostalgic memory. The window becomes a symbolic space where two realities overlap the one where I am here, now, and the one where I once stood with someone who is gone or has been taken far from me by fate. This boundary between past and present is fragile, almost imperceptible; it takes only a glance to return to moments that seemed to have vanished forever.

Looking at the sumi-e illustration, I feel that the silhouettes in the window are both real and ephemeral, like shadows or ghosts of memories. The surrounding space is so abstract that we cannot tell if it is day, night, or perhaps a dream. I love this ambiguity because it reminds me that longing and memory have no single form; they shift, transform in our thoughts, and weave themselves into our daily lives, sometimes appearing unexpectedly in a laugh, in a passing scent, or in something that suddenly brings back an old moment.

Despite its economy of words, my haiku speaks of shared moments that remain alive, regardless of physical presence. That is why “the heart keeps us close” because bonds are born within us, in the inner landscape of emotions. Sometimes, all it takes is to anchor a memory in the window of our imagination to realize that even if you are far away, I am still with you.

And so, every time I stand at a window and gaze into the distance, the thought returns to me: distance does not have to mean separation. A fleeting moment of remembrance is enough and suddenly, in the heart, our story repeats itself, just that, and yet everything.

Wieczna chwila / An Eternal Moment

idą przez lata
błąd splata się z bezbłędnym
chwila wiecznie trwa

they walk through the years
error entwines with flawless
a moment lasts forever



Figure 27

Wieczna chwila / An Eternal Moment

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Poznali się przypadkiem* (*They Met by Chance*), Magdalena Szpunar, July 4, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

As I wrote this haiku, I kept returning to moments when an unexpected mistake turned into an opportunity, and when something meant to be fleeting stayed with me for years. The opening words “they walk through the years” carry the image of an endless journey, where each step, even one taken in uncertainty, ultimately becomes part of our story.

I reflected on the power of chance encounters and decisions, some of which felt like mistakes at the time, but later, unexpectedly, reshaped my entire path.

The line “error entwines with flawless” reminds me of those moments when only with hindsight do we realize that errors are part of a greater design. I have often thought a decision was wrong, only to discover years later that it led me to a valuable experience. Perhaps this journey is always woven with paradoxes, a little chaos, a little order, and we, standing in the present, cannot fully grasp the meaning of each event as it unfolds.

The last line, “a moment lasts forever,” evokes images of fleeting moments that, though physically gone in an instant, continue to live on in me for a lifetime. Sometimes, it is an exchanged glance, sometimes a small revelation during a journey.

The AI-generated sumi-e illustration features a winding path with silhouettes of people overlapping and repeating, as if they exist simultaneously at different points in time. This blurred effect makes me feel that each traveler is also a previous version of themselves, wandering, discovering, moving forward. Some have walked beside us, but now they are at a different point in their journey. The space in the illustration resembles fog or water, reflecting the traces of our footsteps; it could be a dream or another reality. For me, this is a fitting metaphor – our choices, whether right or wrong, leave echoes that resonate through different stages of life. Perhaps this is the essence of the journey – sometimes we walk with confidence, sometimes we stumble, but we are always moving forward, unconsciously weaving a sequence where no one piece can be removed without altering the whole.

The pairing of text and image reminds me to embrace the uncertainty of our experiences. Every “mistake” may turn out to be an essential piece of the puzzle, and every moment, no matter how brief, can expand infinitely in memory.

In the end, this unpredictable, surprising path, with its tangible blend of flawlessness and error, forms our personal life map. That is where its beauty lies. It is never obvious, yet always leads us exactly where we are meant to go.

Cisza po zaszczytach / Silence After Honors

prawda jest naga
gdy spadają zaszczyty
zostaje pustka

the truth stands naked
when honors fall away
only emptiness remains



Figure 28

Cisza po zaszczytach / Silence After Honors

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *A jak już ściągniesz z siebie (And When You Finally Take It Off)*, Magdalena Szpunar, October 29, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

As I wrote this haiku, I felt both fascination and a certain fear of confronting truth in its purest form one that requires nothing beyond itself. The first line, “the truth stands naked,” felt like a sudden realization, almost a blow of clarity. Beneath it lies the thought that everything we carefully construct from titles, achievements, and recognition might be nothing more than a veneer that can be stripped away at any moment. I wondered what would remain if I had to face myself without the support of labels, roles, or external validation.

The second line, “when honors fall away,” brought to mind those moments when we hear about people suddenly losing their status or public admiration. And then it becomes clear that behind the façade, there was nothing truly supporting them apart from external praise. I also recalled times in my own life when I felt stripped of comfort and “glory” and yet, paradoxically, it was precisely then that I discovered what was truly authentic within me.

The last line, “only emptiness remains,” may sound bitter, as if it suggests a void without hope. But for me it carries a second meaning. When everything collapses, what is left is bare ground, an open space where we can plant new roots, this time in something real. The sumi-e illustration depicts one figure that appears to be dissolving, while another has already become just a shadow. This evokes a feeling of reflective acceptance. Not everything needs to be resisted; perhaps this dissolution is part of a natural process, one that allows us to see what lies within.

What draws me most to this idea is how easily we grow attached to our titles and external markers, yet how difficult it is to discover who we are without them. Sometimes all it takes is a small disruption to realize how much of our lives is made up of trappings and how little is left once they are gone. This does not have to be a catastrophe, however; it can also be a cleansing revelation, a rediscovery of what is most alive and authentic within us.

When I look at the illustration, I see moments of transition. The fragments of the dissolving figure do not scream in pain, but gently break apart, as if willingly released into the air. The second figure, now transparent, suggests that existence is possible even without the façade, that we can still be, just in a different way.

For me, this is the essence of the haiku’s message. The truth is naked, but it is also liberating. What may at first seem like emptiness can, in time, become an open space to build something truly our own without masks, without illusions, without the weight of borrowed identities.

Tkanka życia / The Fabric of Life

utkani ludzie
budują nas w każdej chwili
dotykem duszy

woven people
they build us at every moment
with the touch of a soul



Figure 29

Tkanka życia / The Fabric of Life

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Nasze życie to suma ludzi* (*Our Life Is the Sum of People*), Magdalena Szpunar, March 24, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

As I wrote this haiku, I imagined myself as a piece of fabric, woven with the traces of every person I have ever met.

The first line, “woven people,” immediately brings to mind all the small gestures, fleeting conversations, and shared moments that gradually weave their way into my life. Like colorful threads, they leave their mark through words, reactions, and beliefs, shaping the fabric of my experiences.

The second line, “they build us at every moment,” carries a sense of constant evolution. It reminds me that who I am today is not a fixed state but an ever-changing composition, shaped by a continuous flow of relationships and experiences. It makes me feel both excited about growth and slightly uneasy about the unknown threads that will continue weaving their way into my story.

The last line, “with the touch of a soul,” speaks to me the most. It suggests that meaningful connections do not always need grand gestures; sometimes a simple glance, a timely smile, or a few kind words are enough. In those moments, I physically feel how someone “touches” a part of my soul, leaving a trace of their energy within me. When I reflect on all the people I have met, I realize how diverse the threads are that make up the intricate pattern of my “self.”

Looking at the sumi-e illustration, I see blurred, intertwined figures connected by fine lines in a single fluid motion. It reminds me of moments when people’s paths briefly crossed with mine, yet those moments were enough to leave a mark. The ethereal silhouettes symbolize all the impressions and subtle influences we might not notice at first, but that still shape us.

This reflection leads me to ask: How often am I a thread in someone else’s fabric? Perhaps, without even realizing it, I am adding a new shade or pattern to someone’s life. I begin to see the world as a vast, interconnected fabric woven from billions of “soul touches,” silent and unnoticed, yet essential to the whole. This, to me, is the power of haiku: in just a few words, it reminds us of deep interconnectedness and the never-ending process of becoming. Both the poem and the illustration reinforce the idea that no one exists in isolation; every relationship, no matter how brief, can be a thread woven into our inner design. Every day, new colors are added to our fabric, making us more whole more deeply intertwined with the world.

Nieustępliwość/Persistence

gdy spada w dół
ręce ciągle unoszą
toczony ciężar

when it falls downward
hands still lift up
the rolling burden



Figure 30
Nieustępliwość/Persistence

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Toczymy choć wiemy że spadnie (We Roll It, Though We Know It Will Fall)*, Magdalena Szpunar, July 2, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

While I was writing this haiku, I kept returning to memories of moments when I felt like I was carrying something too heavy, although I never gave up.

The first line, “when it falls downward,” is not just about an object slipping from one’s grasp, but also a state of mind, a feeling of being weighed down, as if gravity itself symbolizes the pull of reality dragging me lower.

Yet in the second line, “hands still lift up,” I embedded perseverance and hope, the belief that one can keep trying, even when logic suggests it is futile.

The last line, “a rolling burden,” no longer describes a single effort, but rather a recurring struggle, a daily battle that repeats itself. I thought about all the hardships we face again and again, even when they seem like Sisyphean tasks. I imagined a person pushing a boulder uphill – a metaphor for our ongoing struggles with problems that inevitably return. And yet, we keep trying. After all, isn’t true strength found not in the certainty of success, but in the willingness to keep going?

The sumi-e illustration captures this feeling perfectly. Hands are raised toward the sky, struggling to hold something unseen. The invisibility of the weight speaks volumes: How many times do we carry burdens that no one else can see? The blurred, swirling lines around the hands resemble breaths of exhaustion or fleeting bursts of motivation, breaking against the immovable force of reality. Sometimes, I feel that even if I fail in this struggle, the very act of fighting is a statement, a declaration that I am still here, still refusing to give up.

As I write this, I feel a deep gratitude for all those who continue their daily struggles, even when it would be easier to give up. I think of small yet profound acts of resilience: getting out of bed despite exhaustion, trying to mend relationships that feel irreparable, chasing dreams that seem irrational. This is what truly inspires me. Our willingness to keep moving forward, even when we know as the title suggests that what we are fighting for can “fall downward” again at any moment.

For me, this haiku and illustration express the quiet courage of being human. Courage that comes not from the certainty of victory, but from the choice to stand up and try once more. Ultimately, in this gesture of raised hands defying gravity I see the very essence of being alive and the quiet determination to try again despite the doubts.

Krótki łańcuch / A Short Chain

czy mnie słyszysz
goniąc swoje człowieczeństwo
łańcuch zbyt krótki

can you hear me
chasing my humanity
the chain too short



Figure 31
Krótki łańcuch / A Short Chain

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Czy udomowiłeś mnie po to (Did You Tame Me for This)*, Magdalena Szpunar, July 23, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

Lately, I have been returning to the image of someone running after their lost freedom, as if chasing the version of themselves that existed years ago. Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Czy udomowiłeś mnie po to* (*Did You Tame Me for This?*, July 23, 2023) explores domestication and the loss of independence, and I felt that I needed to capture that mix of desperation and hope, fear and longing, in my haiku.

I imagined someone shouting, "Can you hear me?" as they break into a run, chasing something that defines their humanity, but the chain is too short to let them reach it. As I wrote the words on paper, my mind painted an image of dim light, trembling shadows, and broken yet still unforgotten bonds. I wondered, is this cry into the void also an attempt to break free from shackles? Or is this person calling out to the world that once tamed them, only to find that it no longer hears their plea for liberation? With each line, I felt more strongly that this is not just about a physical chain, but a psychological boundary that seems almost impossible to cross.

The second line, "chasing my humanity," came next because I wanted to capture that moment of pursuit. That desperate second when we try to reclaim a part of ourselves lost to time or circumstance. I imagined someone running, constantly glancing back to see if what they have lost is still in sight, or if it has already dissolved into the past.

The last line, "the chain too short," came to me suddenly, like a brutal reminder that no matter how hard we try, run, or reach forward, the cold grip of limitation still lingers on our skin.

The sumi-e illustration was incredibly striking to me. A figure runs toward broken chain links, and for a brief moment, it seems that freedom is within reach, yet the rest of the chain still trails behind. The broken links do not vanish into thin air, but hang in the air like a haunting memory of past confinement. This image perfectly encapsulated the mood of my words. It was a fusion of desperate hope and the lingering presence of shadows, as if freedom is always just out of reach, always entangled with something that refuses to let go.

As I reflected on this in my journal, I felt my own sense of inner conflict: on one hand, the desire to run faster, to break free from all forms of control, yet on the other, the fear that even a broken chain might still be too short to achieve true liberation.

Ultimately, my haiku contains these three moments: 1) the cry, a plea to be heard, 2) the run, a desperate pursuit of something essential; 3) the limitation, a constraint that remains even when we think we have broken free. Together they form a story about what happens inside a person when they realize there is something within them worth saving, but at the same time they begin to see that the road to reclaiming it may be longer than they are willing to admit.

Światło w ruchu / Light in Motion

bądź słońcem
dla tych, którzy cię widzą
unikaj przystanków

be the sun
for those who see you
avoid the pit stops



Figure 32

Światło w ruchu / Light in Motion

Note. Generated in DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Nie zabiegaj (Do Not Strive)*, Magdalena Szpunar, July 23, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

While writing this haiku, I had in mind the image of the sun moving across the sky without expectations, never apologizing for its brightness. In Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Nie zabiegaj* (*Do Not Strive*, July 23, 2023), I was struck by the idea of shining independently, without trying to please those who refuse to see the light.

The first line, "be the sun," is a call to action. It feels like an appeal to all of us to be a source of light in our own daily lives. I thought about how often I have tried to conform to the darkness of those who would never acknowledge my light.

The second line, "for those who see you," was added to emphasize that we cannot reach everyone. Perhaps it is better to focus on those who can truly appreciate what we have to offer.

In the last line, "avoid the pit stops," I wanted to encourage movement and detachment from places where our light is not valued. The sun does not stand still. It keeps moving across the sky, whether anyone notices it or not, whether anyone trusts, respects, or cares for it or not. In my mind, I pictured travelers who must avoid lingering in places that no longer nourish their energy. In other words, we should not waste ourselves where our "light" is ignored or unwelcome.

The sumi-e illustration that accompanied my writing helped capture this vision. A tree with dynamic, twisting branches looked as if it wanted to break free from the ground and reach for the sun, while next to it a bird was already in flight, leaving behind the safety of a familiar branch. I felt that this energy of movement expressed the essence of my thought. If we stop moving and shining, it will only get darker for us and for those who truly need our light.

Looking at the completed piece, I feel that this haiku contains a call to be courageous in being ourselves and to seek spaces where our presence and actions have meaning. Just as the sun always shines and the bird flies forward, why should we stay where no one is looking our way? It is better to keep moving, to keep shining, because somewhere there are people searching for exactly the kind of light we have to offer.

Milczenie poety / The Silence of the Poet

poeta milczy
słowa zgasły wśród świstów
kul z karabinu

the poet falls silent
words extinguished amidst the
whistling of bullets



Figure 33

Milczenie poety / The Silence of the Poet

Note. Generated in DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *No One Taught How to Write Death*, Magdalena Szpunar, January 9, 2024. /To Maksym Kryvtsov, Ukrainian Poet/
<https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Nikt nie mówił, jak się pisze śmierć* (*No One Taught How to Write Death*, January 9, 2024) is dedicated to the Ukrainian poet Maksym Kryvtsov. Silence lingers where the world of language collides with the roar of gunfire.

The first line, "the poet falls silent," came to me almost immediately because I sensed the complete stillness of a person accustomed to putting thoughts into words, now faced with something beyond the reach of language.

The following lines emerged from my thoughts on how, in moments when bullets whistle overhead, there is no room for the subtleties of poetry. As if every "word" could be drowned out by the sound of a gunshot. The second line, with its "words extinguished," came to me when I realized that in the chaos of war, everything that once held beauty and sensitivity can cease to exist. Even the most powerful sentence dissolves into nothingness when surrounded by the sound of destruction.

The last line, "whistling of bullets," evokes a raw and brutal end. The haiku shows that there are no other sounds left, only the clash of metal, the sound of gunfire, no room for metaphor. In this short poem, I wanted to capture the tragedy of the moment when a poet, someone deeply attuned to emotions and the weight of words, has nothing left to say. Silence, so unnatural to poetry, becomes the only response.

Later, when I looked at the sumi-e illustration, I saw exactly what I had felt while writing. A solitary figure stands in a barren landscape where the earth is scarred by war and the only certain elements are a dead tree and the smoldering wreckage of a tank. This figure seems to be someone who once created, who once existed, now standing in silence, stripped of the strength to speak or write. Instead of words, bullet casings are scattered around him, their harsh metallic presence contrasting with the delicacy of poetic thought and the fragility of life. Life that no longer exists because of the whistling bullets.

What moves me most in this scene is the realization of how powerless words become in the face of death and destruction. The poem and the illustration together tell the story of moments when the entire world of culture and language can be shattered with a single shot. A poet who is meant to interpret reality suddenly has no language left. Only silence remains, staring at the remnants of what was once life and hope.

Jak teraz żyć? / How to Live Now?

zabrała wojna
cztery serca kobiet
jak ma teraz żyć?

war took away
the hearts of four women
how can he live now?



Figure 34

Jak teraz żyć? / How to Live Now?

Note. Generated in DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Only Him, Only Him Alone*, Magdalena Szpunar, September 4, 2024. /To Yaroslav, Who Lost His Wife and Three Daughters in a Russian Missile Attack/ <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

As I wrote this haiku inspired by the story of Yaroslav and his family, I could not shake the devastating image of four hearts captured in Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Tylko on jeden tylko on* (*Only Him, Only Him Alone*, September 4, 2024). These were four lives stolen by war.

"War took away" – these words struck me with stark inevitability, a reminder that in the face of violence, even the deepest bonds can be severed in an instant.

In the next line, I wanted to convey the scale of this loss: "the hearts of four women," no longer a nameless statistic, but specific lives – a wife and three daughters. Each of them had their own stories, emotions, and dreams, and now all that remains is emptiness. This image overwhelmed me with a crushing reflection on the fragility of life and the way war rips away love and everyday existence from people.

The last line, "how can he live now?" almost wrote itself. What does a person do when they lose the very ones they lived for? I left this question unanswered because sometimes there are no answers.

The sumi-e illustration perfectly captured this sense of irretrievable loss. Four female silhouettes fading into nothingness highlight that their presence has become only a memory. Looking at the image, I noticed empty heart-shaped spaces, silent symbols of torn-away love, shattered dreams, and lost family rituals. What moved me the most was how the figures appeared blurred, as if they were slowly vanishing from sight, leaving behind only a quiet sorrow and echoes of the past.

The most haunting aspect is that so many war tragedies unfold beyond the world's gaze, not in explosions and headlines, but in the silence of empty rooms, where someone wakes up every day and tries to keep going, even though four of the people they loved most are missing. I wonder if peace can ever return when an entire world has collapsed. Can such an emptiness ever be filled?

Together, the haiku and the illustration form a stark reflection on what war truly takes away. It is not just numbers on a casualty list, but also unspoken words, unrealized dreams, unshared joys.

What remains is only a poet's question, left hanging in verse:

How does one continue living with a heart so emptied by war?

And how does one find meaning in a reality that can be erased in a single moment?

Tkając dorosłość / Weaving Adulthood

dziecięce dłonie
ścieg za ścięciem na krośnię
wielki dorosły

the hands of a child
stitch by stitch on the loom
a grown-up emerges



Figure 35

Tkając dorosłość / Weaving Adulthood

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Cztery wiosny Iqbal* (*The Four Springs of Iqbal*), Magdalena Szpunar, April 16, 2023. /Iqbalowi Masihowi. To the Boy Who Worked in a Carpet Factory in Pakistan From the Age of Four/ <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

While reading Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Cztery wiosny Iqbala* (*The Four Springs of Iqbal*, April 16, 2023), I imagined a child forced to carry the weight of adulthood far too soon. I pictured Iqbal Masih, a young boy forced to work in a carpet factory at the age of four. In my mind, he stood at a loom, his small hands weaving thread after thread, each stitch shaping his fate instead of his childhood. This repetitive, meticulous process immediately reminded me of the way we weave our lives, threading each experience into our identity.

I wanted my haiku to capture both the delicacy of a child's hands and the relentless labor that turns innocent gestures into the burdens of adulthood.

The first two lines, "the hands of a child," and "stitch by stitch on the loom," highlight this painstaking process, seemingly harmless yet filled with weight and responsibility. I wondered what happens to a child who learns the world in such a monotonous, exhausting way. Does this slow weaving of fabric strip away something essential from their childhood?

The last line, "a grown-up emerges," came to me when I realized that every thread has consequences. What we weave in childhood, we carry with us for life. Perhaps the "grown-up" looms large and overwhelming, especially when the foundation is built under pressure, at an age when it should not be.

The sumi-e illustration deepened my reflection. It shows a child weaving a rug, but the shadow cast is that of a grown adult. This shadow is larger than the child, symbolizing the weight of the consequences, the uncertainty of whether this child will become who they want to be, or only what they have been forced to be.

It was this contrast between small fingers and the enormous, undefined figure of adulthood that moved me the most. It reminded me that every stitch, every duty imposed, and every freedom denied shapes the future. The child, who should be playing and embracing innocence, is instead weaving reality, unaware that each thread is taking something from their childhood. As I looked at the image, I thought of how many children around the world are forced to "grow up" too soon, and how much this affects their future.

When I finished the haiku, I was left with a deep sadness. Every stage of life, even the hardest, has meaning, every experience weaves our identity. But it is heartbreaking that so often the role of "grown-up" is forced upon children too early, robbing them of the time of innocence that could nurture and protect them. Sometimes that "grown-up" becomes the executioner of childhood itself.

Codzienny rytm / The Daily Rhythm

gorące serca
w rytmie biją dla świata –
każdego dnia

our hearts all aflame
beat in rhythm for the world–
every single day



Figure 36
Codzienny rytm / The Daily Rhythm

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Widziałam dom (I Saw a House)*,
Magdalena Szpunar, March 10, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I thought about writing a haiku where hearts beat for the world, I imagined a home filled with warmth and care, a reflection of the sense of community and openness I remembered from Magdalena Szpunar's poem. I wanted to write about the energy that connects people in an endless rhythm.

Instead of viewing the heart simply as an organ that pumps blood, I saw it as a source of life-giving warmth, radiating into the world like pulsating waves. The first line, "our hearts all aflame," came to me almost immediately because it felt like the essence of fiery love and passion that fuels everyday life.

The second line, "beat in rhythm for the world," was a reminder that no effort, no heart-beat exists in isolation. Everything is connected, sometimes visibly, sometimes in ways we cannot see. I imagined people's hearts forming an orchestral harmony, where one person spreads warmth at home, another at work, and another through social action. Somewhere in this invisible web of connections, hope is created. Then I realized: this shared rhythm is the true source of strength.

In the last line, "every single day," I wanted to emphasize that this is not just a fleeting impulse but an ongoing process. It is the daily return to our source of vitality, our decision each morning to do something good, to pass warmth forward once again.

As this thought settled in, I looked at the sumi-e illustration of a tree whose branches form heart-like shapes. I reflected on how the roots of trees intertwine beneath the earth, while their branches touch and move together in the wind, a quiet symbol of constant movement and coexistence. I loved how the tree in the drawing seemed to flow, as if carried by waves of breath. The floating hearts among its branches felt like symbols of emotions set free into the world. This made me wonder: Do we notice these small currents of kindness in our daily lives? Do we acknowledge the tiny sparks that connect us into something greater? That was what I wanted to express in my haiku – the subtle rhythm in which human hearts beat, forming a community, even if we do not always realize it.

When I had finished writing, I realized that this seemingly simple poem was a reminder not to forget our role in the pulse of the world. Maybe our "hearts all aflame" will not change the fate of the planet overnight, but if they beat in harmony with what is good and meaningful, then every moment takes on significance. And that is the essence of "every single day," finding meaning in repetition, drawing energy from connection, and never losing faith in the power of our own inner flame.

Ślady za drzwiami / Traces Behind the Doors

przez zamknięte drzwi
zostawiają ślady
w ludzkiej duszy

through the closed door
they leave all kinds of traces
in the human soul



Figure 37

Ślady za drzwiami / Traces Behind the Doors

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Wchodzą i wychodzą (They Come and Go)*, Magdalena Szpunar, March 18, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

While reading Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Wchodzą i wychodzą* (*They Come and Go*, March 18, 2024), I pictured the people from my past who have left, yet still remain within me in some way.

In life, we do not always control who or what enters our soul. The first line, "through the closed door," expresses this idea. The most difficult part is not that sometimes people enter uninvited, but that even when we shut the door tightly, some will leave without using a key.

The second line, "they leave all kinds of traces," captures a simple truth: even the shortest encounter can leave a lasting imprint. Sometimes it is a source of inspiration, sometimes a painful memory, but there is always a mark left behind, something that cannot be erased. Such is the power of relationships and experiences – they seep through the protective layers of our daily lives and shape us even when we believe we are closed off. The last line, "in the human soul," shifts the focus inward. These marks are not physical, but rather inner movements, lingering emotions, or quiet memories that take root within us.

Looking at the sumi-e illustration of a figure disappearing into the mist while footprints remain on the ground, I felt the inevitability of this process. The person may disappear from our lives, but the traces they leave remain. Even if they are momentarily obscured by mist, we still remember them.

While writing this haiku, I kept recalling times when someone entered my life unexpectedly, sometimes uninvited. Sometimes it was a difficult relationship, sometimes a conflict. They left a mark on my soul that, over time, helped me better understand myself and the nature of human relationships. I also felt gratitude for brief encounters, so intangible and yet so profoundly influential. I wondered how many people I had unknowingly let into my inner world without even realizing it. I also began to see that the motif of "closed doors" speaks to what we try to protect from the world, and yet life is full of small openings, through which others slip into our hearts.

The illustration of the departing figure with footprints fading into the distance reinforces this truth: we do not need to see someone to know that they exist within us. What remains after them may become the foundation for future relationships or a lesson we carry with us for life.

This reflection stayed with me long after I finished the haiku. Human paths do not end the day someone leaves. Someone may walk away, but we still carry their echo inside us. And maybe, just maybe, that echo is sometimes more valuable than their presence ever was.

Niezauważana mądrość / Unnoticed Wisdom

stalowa siła
nic nieznacząca mądrość
kruchej kobiety

steely strength
insignificant wisdom
of a fragile woman



Figure 38

Niezauważana mądrość / Unnoticed Wisdom

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Ta bez której nie ma życia* (*The One Without Whom There Is No Life*), Magdalena Szpunar, March 8, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I sat down to write this haiku, I imagined a confrontation between steel-like power and silent, invisible wisdom. I was inspired by Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Ta bez której nie ma życia* (*The One Without Whom There Is No Life*, March 8, 2024), which speaks of feminine strength, often underestimated yet unbreakable.

The first line, "steely strength," came to me instantly. I envisioned something massive, cold, and unyielding, like a heavy iron monument.

The second line, "insignificant wisdom," was written with full awareness of its irony. The world often fails to recognize the value of wisdom, patience, or quiet resilience, believing that only brute force commands respect.

The last line, "of a fragile woman," acknowledges what is often perceived as "weak," but in truth is capable of withstanding things that sheer force never could.

The sumi-e illustration accompanying my haiku showed two figures one massive and imposing, the other delicate, almost translucent, yet glowing from within. I tried to sense how these two could coexist; was it a battle, or a silent dialogue? I imagined the moment their gazes met, a stillness heavy with tension, leaving the true source of power uncertain.

Does great size and weight always prevail, or is it inner strength that determines the real victor?

As I studied this scene, I recalled countless moments in history when weapons and violence seemed invincible, yet over time, thought, belief, and quiet determination prevailed. I wanted my haiku to serve as a reminder that what appears "insignificant" may in fact carry the essence of life and hope. Perhaps the woman in the illustration looks ethereal, as if she represents the very essence of wisdom something that cannot be shattered or broken.

When I finished writing, I felt as if this subtle energy, though vulnerable to destruction by brute force, held something unbreakable.

"Steely power," though mighty, remains only a hollow form.

"Of a fragile woman" evokes something both delicate and unyielding.

Through this reflection, I realized that sometimes, the most valuable things in life are not grand in appearance, but they radiate endurance and an inner light that no sword or steel can ever extinguish.

Iluzja szczęścia / Illusion of Happiness

zachłanni ludzie
budują swoje szczęście
iluzorycznie

greedy people
are building their happiness
out of illusions



Figure 39

Iluzja szczęścia / Illusion of Happiness

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Coraz więcej coraz mniej* (*More and More, Less and Less*), Magdalena Szpunar, February 29, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

I returned to Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Coraz więcej coraz mniej* (*More and More, Less and Less*, February 29, 2024), which explores the endless pursuit of something that never truly brings relief. I began to reflect on how often we become "greedy people," not necessarily in the sense of accumulating wealth, but in our constant desire for "just a little more."

The first line, "greedy people," came to me immediately. It conjured up an image of those who can never stop, always feeling unsatisfied. I thought about how often I have wanted more achievements, possessions, recognition, only to feel an emptiness that keeps pushing me further.

I then added the second line, "are building their happiness," with a touch of irony. I questioned whether we sometimes convince ourselves that our activity, our constant accumulation, will eventually lead to fulfillment. Yet what we build often turns out to be fragile, based on illusion, because we rarely stop to ask if it really changes our inner sense of contentment.

The last line, "out of illusions," came to me when I realized just how many of these accomplishments and possessions are nothing more than a façade. External success can feel hollow if not aligned with real needs and values.

The AI-generated sumi-e illustration reinforced this idea. It depicted figures with eerily elongated hands, as if their greed had distorted their bodies. I thought about how unfulfilled desires can similarly warp the human mind. While writing the haiku, I pictured a contrast between, on one hand, ceaseless striving, building, and accumulating what is supposed to be happiness, and on the other, the hidden emptiness and futility.

In the end, my three lines were meant to reveal how this frantic activity can be nothing more than a mirage, one that eventually fades, leaving a person even more depleted. Only by stepping away from this greed can we find true reflection. The real answer lies in rejecting the endless pursuit of "more" and learning to appreciate what we already have.

Looking at this haiku now, I feel a quiet relief. Sometimes, just a few simple words serve as a reminder that no amount of gold can replace peace of mind. I wonder if the figures in the sumi-e illustration will ever stop, if they will find a moment to take a deep breath and realize that "more" does not always mean "better."

Perhaps that is the greatest realization, that the happiness we constantly chase can often be nothing more than an illusion. This is why the poem and the image align so well – before we become shadows of our own greed, maybe we should pause and acknowledge how much we already carry within us, without needing to acquire anything more.

Dusza w drewnie / The Soul in Wood

dłuto w drewnie śpi
człowiecze sęki kryje
głęboko w duszy

the chisel sleeps in wood
human knots are hidden
deep within the soul



Figure 40

Dusza w drewnie / The Soul in Wood

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by Coraz więcej coraz mniej (More and More, Less and Less), Magdalena Szpunar, <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

I turned to Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Coraz więcej coraz mniej* (*More and More, Less and Less*), which evokes the idea of constant transformation through addition and subtraction, and led me to envision a chisel resting in an uncarved block of wood. I immediately saw this as a symbol of potential, a reminder that change, like sculpture, can begin at any moment, even though it remains dormant for now.

The first line, "the chisel sleeps in wood," felt like a quiet anticipation, suggesting that something is about to begin, something waiting to take shape.

In the second line, "human knots are hidden," I focused on the knots in wood, which reminded me of the swirls and imperfections in tree rings so much like the complexities within us. Every person carries scars, scratches, and memories that create a unique pattern. Some are barely noticeable, while others hurt with every touch. A sculptor may choose to smooth them out or emphasize them, but they will always be part of the wood, impossible to erase entirely.

The last line, "deep within the soul," translates this process into the emotional realm. We carve into ourselves every day, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. At any moment, we can make a deep cut, reshaping our identity, or we may hesitate, fearing that altering even one part might damage something essential.

Then I looked at the sumi-e illustration, a block of wood with visible rings, and beside it a chisel with a sharp tip. It seemed motionless, yet full of tension, as if at any second it could plunge deeper and transform the form before it.

As I wrote this haiku, I reflected on how much control we have over our own minds, yet how many "knots" remain hidden within us, shaped by past experiences. Do we always want to smooth them out, or is it better to accept them as part of our unique design? Perhaps these "flaws" are exactly what make us original. Sculpting often seems like an aggressive act of peeling off layers, carving away what is unnecessary. But it can also be a delicate unveiling of beauty. I think our inner world is the same.

When I finished, I studied the illustration again. The chisel and wood remain still, yet within them lies the potential for a profound transformation. I thought about people who carry emotional wounds for years like knots in wood until something, a single spark, pushes them to start reshaping themselves. Sometimes, all it takes is a moment of realization to pick up the chisel of self-awareness and begin sculpting a new version of the self. In the end, our knots make us unique, but it is up to us whether they remain hidden scars or become visible lines of depth and resilience.

Bez słów / Without Words

czytała bez słów
w twardych oprawach myśli
ludziom kartki drżą

she read wordlessly
inside people's hardbound thoughts
the pages tremble

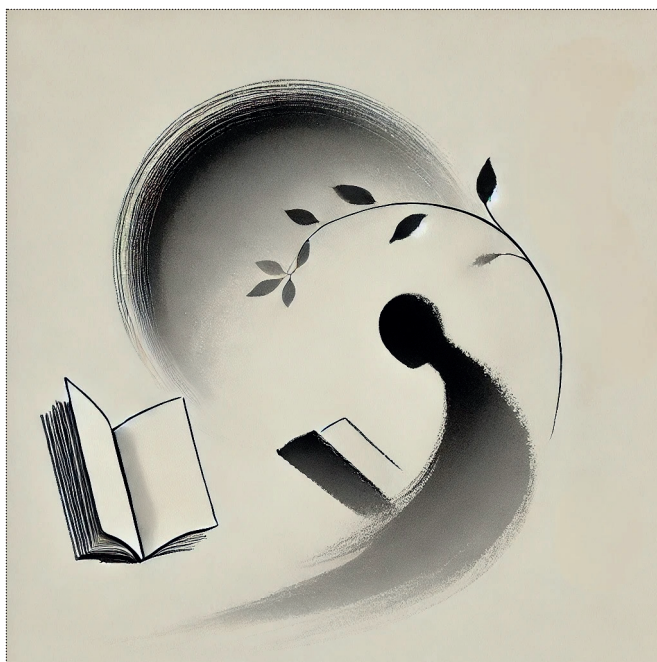


Figure 41
Bez słów / Without Words

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Czytała ludzi jak książki (She Read People Like Books)*, Magdalena Szpunar. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When reading Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Czytała ludzi jak książki* (*She Read People Like Books*), I envisioned a scene of quiet understanding, one that requires no words or grand declarations.

In the first line, "she read wordlessly," I wanted to capture that moment when someone deeply observes another, sensing their emotions and hidden intentions, even when nothing is said aloud. I wondered how many "texts" exist within us that we never reveal, yet someone perceptive can read them in our gestures, tone, or gaze.

The second line, "inside people's hardbound thoughts," came to me as I imagined how each of us carries an invisible "cover" around us, much like a book protected by its binding. A book is shielded by its cover, just as we are protected by our behaviors, our distance, sometimes by a smile, sometimes by coldness. I thought about how this is often necessary to feel safe, but it can also make it harder for others to access our true selves. Perhaps these "hardbound covers" form over time, shaped by experiences that teach us to guard the delicate "pages" inside.

The last line, "the pages tremble," serves as a reminder that beneath every cover lie delicate emotions and vulnerable stories, just like the thin pages of a book that quiver at the slightest touch.

When I looked at the sumi-e illustration, I saw a figure nearly blending into a pile of books. It seemed to be a silent testament to the idea that reading is not just about words on paper, but also about immersing oneself in the souls of others – sometimes gently, sometimes invasively, depending on whether a person wants to be "read" at all.

I reflected on how many books exist within a single person – every story we read, every individual we meet, becomes part of our internal library. At the same time, we ourselves are books that others may want to read. But are we always willing to let others turn our pages? Or do we sometimes prefer to keep certain chapters closed?

I ended this haiku with the realization that reading – both books and people – is one of the most intimate acts we can engage in. We do not need words to uncover someone's fears or joys, we only need sensitivity and the willingness to notice the trembling pages that may never be spoken aloud. I also wondered whether, in our fast-moving world, we truly know how to "read" another person, or do we merely skim their headlines? Looking at the illustration, I felt that the real art of reading – both of literature and people – requires stillness, careful attention, and silent understanding.

Pola wspomnień / Fields of Memories

wokół ściernisko –
gdzie podziały się kwiaty
w kolorach tęczy

stubble all around –
where have all the flowers gone
in rainbow colors



Figure 42

Pola wspomnień / Fields of Memories

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Nie zabierajcie łąk* (*Do Not Take Away the Meadows*), Magdalena Szpunar, May 6, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When reading Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Nie zabierajcie łąk* (*Do Not Take Away the Meadows*, May 6, 2023), which speaks of the disappearance of meadows, I realized how many of those green landscapes, once full of colorful flowers, no longer exist around me.

The first line of my haiku, "stubble all around," came to me as I thought of places that once thrived with plants and insects, now leveled, dried out, and stripped of their former colors. These words filled me with a sense of loss and longing for what once was.

In the second line, "where have all the flowers gone?" I asked a question that feels like an echo lost in time. As I imagined a vast, yellowed field, I missed the white daisies, purple cornflowers, and bright red poppies that once decorated it. I wondered what had happened to these small, irreplaceable lives. Had they been uprooted, trampled, erased under the weight of urbanization? Or are they still waiting, hidden in seeds underground, longing for the right moment to bloom again?

The last line, "in rainbow colors," was my way of emphasizing the profound loss of diversity. The rainbow represents hope, a spectrum of colors that brings lightness and beauty to life.

The sumi-e illustration captured this vision – a gray, barren landscape, where in one corner, a few determined flowers still grow. Though they are few, and most of the land is dull and lifeless, their presence is a reminder that all is not lost. Looking at the image, I recalled childhood memories of running barefoot through meadows, picking wildflowers, and hearing the hum of bees. Today, in many places, all I see are scorched fields and over-mowed lawns devoid of flowers. I asked myself: Do we still recognize the magic of meadows? Do we understand what we are losing when we erase these natural mosaics?

For me, this is the heart of my haiku's message: even if most of the landscape seems barren, a single burst of color can remind us of the beauty that can return. I like to believe that nature is resilient; sometimes it just needs a chance. Perhaps, if we choose to, "in rainbow colors," life will bloom again where only stubble remains. Because what appears dried and lifeless may still be the foundation for future flowers, if we do not take away their last chance to return.

Zapach kwiatów w ciepłe lata / The Scent of Flowers in the Summer Heat

zapachy lata
lśniące w słońcu kwiaty
powoli mijają

the scents of summer
flowers gleaming in the sun
slowly fade away



Figure 43

Zapach kwiatów w ciepłe lata / The Scent of Flowers in the Summer Heat

Note. Generated by DALL·E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Żegnam upojne lato* (I Bid Farewell to the Blissful Summer), Magdalena Szpunar, August 29, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl/>

Journal Notes

When I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Żegnam upojne lato* (*Farewell, Blissful Summer*, August 29, 2023), in which she bids farewell to a summer filled with warmth and intoxication, I immediately saw images of sunlit days imbued with nostalgia.

In the first line of my haiku, "the scents of summer," I tried to capture the aroma of sun-warmed grass, the scent of ripe fruit, and the slightly acrid smell of wood heating up on a terrace. Each time I recognize these familiar notes, I am transported back to moments of carefree joy, when time seemed to slow down.

The second line, "flowers gleaming in the sun," was meant to reflect how summer often reveals life at its fullest. Petals shimmer in vibrant colors, their delicate edges pulsing in the sunlight. Sometimes, I find myself unable to look away from these sun-drenched landscapes, feeling as if even the air itself is saturated with golden light.

The last line, "slowly fade away," is a gentle reminder that summer, though intense, does not last forever. At first, I considered writing about a sudden end, but I realized that summer fades gradually. The days grow shorter, the evenings cooler, the colors softer. Suddenly, we wake up to the presence of fall, and all that remains is the memory of summer's scents and glow.

In the sumi-e illustration I envisioned, I saw a slender branch of flowers in soft tones, on the verge of vanishing. The sun is still shining in the background, but its light is retreating beyond the horizon. This subtle transition moved me – the flowers feel like echoes of summer, while the emerging shadow in the lower part of the image signals the quiet arrival of fall. This contrast between light and darkness serves as a reminder that nothing lasts forever, especially the most beautiful moments.

As I finished my haiku, I could still taste the sweetness of August's cool fruit-flavored ice cream, the summer breeze that sometimes feels warm and sometimes carries a crisp edge. I realized that this fleeting nature is precisely what makes summer so precious. Saying goodbye to summer need not be sad, but rather an invitation to appreciate and cherish each golden moment. For what is temporary often leaves the deepest imprint on the heart.

The cycles of the seasons do not take summer away from us; they simply give us time to long for it and welcome its return next year.

Smaki lata / Tastes of Summer

konfitury smak
zboża, gorące dni
powrócą za rok

sweet taste of preserves
cereal crops, the hot days
will be back next year



Figure 44
Smaki lata / Tastes of Summer

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Żegnam upojne lato (Farewell, Blissful Summer)*, Magdalena Szpunar, August 29, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Żegnam upojne lato* (*Farewell, Blissful Summer*, August 29, 2023) reminded me that summer has many faces. I let myself daydream. I imagined the taste of sweet preserves, sealing inside a jar the very essence of a sun-drenched summer.

In the first line, "sweet taste of preserves," I wanted to capture that sensory moment when flavor blends with memory, when each bite recalls the warmth of the sun and the vastness of golden fields. The memory of ripe fruit and the burning heat of the afternoon lingered on my lips.

The second line, "cereal crops, the hot days," was meant to evoke the sight of golden wheat swaying in the wind. These fields have always symbolized the height of summer for me. I wanted the image to convey a sense of boundlessness and serenity, a moment when nothing matters except the warmth of the earth and the scent of ripening crops. I hoped that reading these words would transport someone back to a time when only summer filled their world.

The last line, "will be back next year," was my way of bringing reassurance. I knew that summer was fading, but not gone forever. It lingers in jars of homemade preserves, in the memory of sun-heated soil, and in the certainty that nature follows its cycles.

In the sumi-e illustration, fields stretch beneath soft, warm tones, capturing that fleeting moment between the end of one season and the quiet promise of another. The wheat, though ready for harvest, still seems alive, as if recalling the scorching days. This ambiguity between fading and renewal touched me the most: summer dims, yet in the silent afternoons of winter, a single spoonful of preserves can bring back its taste. Like a small portion of sunlight stored in a jar for colder days. The warm hues of the illustration made me feel a gentle sadness for the departing summer, but also a deep sense of peace, because next year we will once again welcome golden fields and the touch of the sun on our skin.

While writing this haiku, I realized that the feeling of impermanence does not have to be sorrowful; if we see it as part of a continuous cycle, then nothing is truly lost. Perhaps the most profound realization is that nothing lasts forever and that is precisely what makes the taste of each summer so precious. By embracing this truth, I have learned to find joy in the fleeting moment, knowing that what departs will return in another form through memories, scents, or jars filled with sunshine.

Zmierzch wakacji / Dusk of Summer Holidays

czaromarowy
szum lasu pośród wrzосу –
gasną wakacje

an enchanting dusk
the forest hums in heather
summer fades away



Figure 45

Zmierzch wakacji / Dusk of Summer Holidays

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Pachnie las jesiennym przemijaniem* (*The Forest Smells of Fall's Passing*), Magdalena Szpunar, August 29, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

Sensing the change of seasons, I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Pachnie las jesiennym przemijaniem* (*The Forest Smells of Fall's Passing*, August 29, 2024), where the melody of fading summer intertwines with the scent of fall. Inspired by this, I wanted to capture in my haiku the moment when the world still breathes the warmth of sunlit days, yet heather and the murmur of the forest begin whispering that summer is ending.

The first line, "an enchanting dusk," came to me spontaneously, as I tried to convey the slightly mystical aura of late summer. The vivid colors of the heather, the lingering warmth in the air, and a hint of something intangible, as if the entire landscape invites us to step beyond the ordinary.

The second line, "the forest hums in heather," was written with an image of purple shrubs stretching along the edge of the forest, their soft hues blending with the whisper of the trees. This scene has always felt bathed in light, but it also holds the first hints that the sun is setting lower, shining warmly but less fiercely. I wanted this line to evoke a moment of stillness, sitting in a meadow, hearing the trees sway in a slow, reflective breath, no longer the restless buzz of summer, but a quieter, more contemplative presence.

The last line, "summer fades away," adds a touch of melancholy, but also serenity. I did not want to evoke regret, but rather an awareness that time moves forward effortlessly, like a fire gently dimming, leaving its last warmth in the air.

In the sumi-e illustration, the trees had slender, blurred trunks, while the misty background emphasized the feeling of transition. There was a soft glow in the distance, but just above it, a shadowy outline hinted at something approaching, perhaps fall itself, or merely its lingering afterimage.

Looking at this scene and reading my own words, I realized that I had captured a moment of suspension; summer is not quite gone, but its presence is already disappearing. What remains is the sweet air, the scent of heather, and a gentle calm that knows everything will soon change. For me, the beauty of this threshold lies in its fleeting nature, that bittersweet instant when we absorb the last golden rays of summer and allow a new season to quietly slip into our thoughts, carried by the soft murmur of the autumn forest.

Ciężar szkoły / The Weight of School

idzie z plecakiem
wypełnionym po brzegi
szkoła nie pyta

walking with backpack
almost bursting at the seams
but school doesn't ask



Figure 46

Ciężar szkoły / The Weight of School

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Idzie do szkoły chłopiec* (A Boy Goes to School), Magdalena Szpunar, September 30, 2022. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Idzie do szkoły chłopiec* (*A Boy Goes to School*, September 30, 2022) about a boy walking to school, images of children weighed down not just by books but by unseen burdens immediately came to mind.

The first line, "walking with backpack," was meant to evoke an everyday, familiar scene. But even as I wrote it, I was already thinking about how a backpack, though so ordinary, can be a symbol of something much heavier, something invisible to others.

With the second line, "almost bursting at the seams," I wanted to capture the feeling that this backpack holds more than just textbooks and notebooks. It holds the fear of failure, difficult family situations, unspoken anxieties. Every child carries not only academic materials to school, but also an emotional weight that can be far more overwhelming than the weight of the books.

The last line, "but school doesn't ask," comes from memories of my own school years, moments when I felt unseen and misunderstood. Grades and performance were the priority, but no one asked what lay behind my exhaustion or lack of concentration.

In the sumi-e illustration, I saw a hunched-over student, a figure clearly outlined yet disconnected from the background, emphasizing isolation and a lack of support. The loneliness of a child is what moves me most. Even though they walk down school corridors surrounded by people, no one asks the simple question: How are you coping with the weight you're carrying? The metaphor of the ever-growing backpack getting heavier with each day with each new worry, reminds me that sometimes, just a few words of kindness can lift an immense burden from someone's shoulders.

Writing this haiku made me realize how crucial it is for schools to see students as more than just "learning subjects." Behind every grade, every absence, every nervous walk to the front of the classroom, there are stories that never make it into any school record. I wanted these few lines to carry a gentle plea to all of us to look beyond what is visible and to see what children and young people carry within them, not just what they carry on their backs.

Głębokie ślady / Deep Traces

ocena jak cień
wryta głęboko w twarzy
pamięta szkołę

a grade, a shadow
etched deep into our faces
remembers schooldays



Figure 47
Głębokie ślady / Deep Traces

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Przykleiła się do twarzy (It Stuck to the Face)*, Magdalena Szpunar, June 12, 2022. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Przykleiła się do twarzy* (*It Stuck to the Face*, June 12, 2022), which speaks of how judgment and evaluation can stick to a person, I immediately recalled countless school experiences. I knew I had to capture this in haiku – simple, yet sharp.

The first line, “a grade, a shadow,” was my way of saying that grades are not temporary. They are meant to be momentary feedback, yet many of them linger for years, like a shadow following us, reminding us of what a teacher once wrote in a school report.

The second line, “etched deep into our faces,” made me realize that these grades go far beyond a piece of paper. They can shape our self-worth or plant doubt in our abilities. They are not just external numbers or letters; over time, they become part of our identity, like a mark on the skin that is difficult to erase. I thought about how many people still carry the echoes of the grades they received as children.

The last line, “remembers schooldays,” came from the realization that the education system rarely considers the long-term impact of grading. Schools ask about results, curriculum completion, and standardized performance, but rarely about how students feel about themselves and who they become in the process.

In the sumi-e illustration I envisioned, I saw a person wearing a graduation cap – an adult, seemingly accomplished, yet their face remained blurred. It was as if they still bore the imprint of all the grades that once defined their worth.

As I wrote this haiku, I asked myself: Can we ever truly break free from this? Is it possible that a assessment made in childhood (“You’re bad at math,” “Writing isn’t your forte”) eventually stops mattering? In my case, some of them have stayed with me for years, still echoing when I try something new. This haiku became a silent warning – we should not treat grades as absolute truths, because they can shape our sense of self for far longer than we expect.

Over time, I realized that the strongest part of this haiku lies in the image of the shadow – a silent, invisible burden left by the grading system. It is a reminder that regardless of diplomas or certificates, deep inside, we may still carry those judgments, and they can take longer to unlearn than our formal education itself. And that leads to the ultimate question: Do we still allow grades to define our potential? Or is it time to finally see ourselves without that shadow – and remember who we really are?

Wrześniowe wahanie / September Hesitation

wobec bogactwa
w rozkroku stoi wrzesień
jesień czy lato?

amidst abundance
September stands in between
fall or summer?



Figure 48

Wrześniowe wahanie / September Hesitation

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Zagubił się wrzesień (September Got Lost)*, Magdalena Szpunar, September 7, 2022. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Zagubił się wrzesień* (*September Got Lost*, September 7, 2022), I asked myself what this month means to me as I return to work after the summer break.

The first words, "amidst abundance," came to me as a reflection of a world still rich with ripened fruit, late-blooming flowers, and the lingering warmth left behind by August. Despite this abundance, something shifts, something trembles in the air, like a quiet signal that a transition is beginning.

The second line, "September stands in between," was born from the realization that this month is like a person hesitating between two choices, one foot stuck in the past, the other reaching for what comes next. It is still warm, but no longer carefree, still summer, but not without question. September is a state of suspension, where everything remains possible, but nothing is certain.

The last line, "fall or summer?" was my way of expressing how September never provides a clear answer. Some days are filled with sun and summer lightness, only for the evenings to be soaked in fall's quiet melancholy.

The sumi-e illustration generated by AI perfectly reflected my own hesitations. One side of the image brims with vibrant greens and warmth, while the other is tinged with browns and rusty hues, foreshadowing fall's inevitable arrival. At the center stands a lone figure, much like all of us, wondering whether to reach for a sweater or to tilt our faces toward the lingering sun one last time.

When I finished the haiku, I looked out the window and noticed the same contrast, the golden afternoon still carrying traces of summer's heat, yet touched by a crisper breeze. This is how I feel about September. It is uncertain, suspended between the fullness of summer and the transformation of fall. And though it can be hard to accept that summer is truly ending, there is something captivating about this gradual transition a moment when nature still hesitates, and we hesitate along with it.

Barwy września / Colors of September

dwie pory roku
nicią splecione trzyma
barwny wrzesień

it binds two seasons
held together by a thread
vibrant September



Figure 49

Barwy września / Colors of September

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Śliwkowy wrzesień (Plum September)*, Magdalena Szpunar, September 6, 2022. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When Magdalena Szpunar's poem evoked the image of a plum-colored September *Śliwkowy wrzesień* (*Plum September*, September 6, 2022), I immediately saw it in shades of transition between late summer and early fall. I realized that, for me, September has always been a month "in between": it still holds the warmth of August, but it also begins to breathe with fall's cool air.

The first line "it binds two seasons" came to me as I thought of how nature seems to exist in two different states at once, yet remains a single entity.

In the second line, "held together by a thread," I envisioned a delicate yet unbreakable thread that binds seemingly separate things. I imagined summer, still full of sunlight and ripe fruit, meeting fall's first whispers seen in the golden light reflecting on the leaves of maples that are just on the turn. For me, this "thread" represents the gentle rhythm of nature, which never shifts overnight but always transforms gradually, in a quiet and organic way.

The last line, "vibrant September," was my tribute to the season's vivid contrasts. September is a tapestry of colors on one side, the deep purple of ripe plums, and on the other, golden fields, already a fading memory of summer's harvest.

In the sumi-e illustration, human figures or plant-like shapes seemed to hold onto both worlds at once – one still warm, the other already infused with fall's crispness.

As I wrote these lines, I felt that September is not just a boundary in nature, but also in life itself. It often symbolizes the closing of one chapter and the quiet arrival of another. This month feels like a pause, with one foot still rooted in what is familiar, and the other sensing the rustle of approaching change. It is incredible how nature teaches us to exist within this simultaneous "yes" and "no".

I ended my haiku with the thought that "vibrant September" invites us to savor both the last fruits of summer and the gentle breath of fall without feeling pressured to choose between them. Perhaps this is the true beauty of this moment accepting that, in nature (and in ourselves), two opposing feelings can coexist, one slowly fading, the other just beginning to awaken.

W centrum szkolnej rzeczywistości / At the Center of School Reality

szkolne oceny
podzielone na części
z człowiekiem w centrum

all those school reports
divided into sections
a human at the center



Figure 50

W centrum szkolnej rzeczywistości / At the Center of School Reality

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Świadectwo szkolne (School Certificate)*,
Magdalena Szpunar, June 22, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Świadectwo szkolne* (*School Report*, June 22, 2023), I once again pictured grades that, instead of being a guide, often become a verdict defining who someone is.

The first line, "all those school reports," came naturally, as I recalled all the report cards my son had brought home and how they had shaped the way teachers, and even I, saw Piotr. These grades were supposed to reflect knowledge, but in reality they often acted as labels, too narrow to contain the full complexity of a child's character.

The second line, "divided into sections," came from the realization that grades fragment a person. One grade in math, another in literature, and yet another in biology, as if a student is broken up into separate subjects rather than seen as a whole, multifaceted individual. But our skills, passions, and personalities cannot be confined to numbers or letters.

In the last line, "a human at the center," I wanted to highlight the paradox. The student should be at the heart of the education system, yet they are often treated as an object of assessment rather than as a person experiencing learning as an adventure (or a struggle).

The sumi-e illustration reinforced this idea, with a human figure at the center, surrounded by symbols resembling report card grids and graphs, as if the system determines the shape and worth of the individual, rather than the other way around.

As I was writing this haiku, I paused to reflect: What is left in us after years of being graded? Do these grades help us develop our talents, or do they force us to accept an external standard that disconnects us from our true potential? I remembered how, for years, a number on a report card could overshadow the joy of learning itself. It often felt as though grades mattered more than actual growth. Now, looking back, I see in these haiku lines the image of a person surrounded by categories, and it reminds me that education should be about discovery and collaboration, not division and judgment.

I wanted these three lines to be thought-provoking, especially for parents. Can a system support growth without breaking a person into pieces? I believe it can, but only if we remember that at the heart of education is a human being, not just a number on a report card.

Dary roku / Gifts of the Year

każdy dzień to dar
smakuj płatkami śniegu
w tęczęch miesięcy

each day is a gift
relish the taste of snowflakes
in the months' rainbows



Figure 51
Dary roku / Gifts of the Year

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *12 miesięcy* (12 Months), Magdalena Szpunar, January 1, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

Recalling Magdalena Szpunar's words about the twelve months, I wanted to capture in my haiku the idea that each day is a small gift, inextricably woven into a greater whole.

The first line, "each day is a gift," came naturally as I realized how easy it is to forget the present moment while chasing future plans. Only when we pause for a moment can we truly see the beauty in daily life and feel gratitude for the time that flows through us.

The second line, "relish the taste of snowflakes," came to me as I pictured a winter stillness, where individual snowflakes land on the skin and gently dissolve on the tongue. I saw this as a subtle metaphor for the joy that we can find in small, fleeting moments, whether in the cold of winter or in any season, if we remain mindful and open to experiences.

The last line, "in the months' rainbows," was intended to remind us that a year is not simply divided into four seasons, but is rather a continuous cycle of shifting hues, each bringing its own charm.

In the sumi-e illustration I envisioned, I saw a circle symbolizing the ongoing motion of the seasons, surrounded by blurred bands of color – cool winter blues, soft spring pastels, bright summer yellows and reds, and deep autumn browns and rusts. This vision blended into a single harmony, as if each color naturally gave rise to the next.

As I wrote these three lines, I realized that we often chase a single, grand goal, but life is really a collection of small moments that form an unbroken cycle. Each of them, like a snowflake, ephemeral yet beautiful in its transience, reminds us that every day, every fleeting experience, contributes to the full spectrum of our existence. This perspective helps me appreciate everything, from the first awakening of spring to the coldest winter morning. These brief moments, this "relishing of snowflakes," are the essence of our journey through time, where each month, like a distinct color in a rainbow, completes the rest.

Szkolna tablica / The School Blackboard

stoi samotna
ofiara przy tablicy
bez odpowiedzi

she stands all alone
a victim at the blackboard
without an answer



Figure 52

Szkolna tablica / The School Blackboard

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Wdeptany butem w szkolny parkiet* (*Trampled by a Shoe on the School Floor*), Magdalena Szpunar, September 3, 2022.

<https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Wdeptany butem w szkolny parkiet* (*Trampled Into the School Floor*, September 3, 2022), I immediately envisioned a child standing alone at the blackboard, unable to speak. I started imagining that moment when all eyes are fixed on one person, waiting for an answer, while the child's mind remains blank.

The first line, "she stands all alone," was meant to capture that feeling of isolation, even when surrounded by classmates and a teacher. The child is present in the room, but completely detached, trapped in silence.

The second line, "a victim at the blackboard," emerged as I realized this was more than just a momentary struggle to recall an answer. I saw it as a forced performance, a trial rather than a simple test of knowledge. It was not enough to understand a subject; one had to prove it under pressure, exposed to judgment. I remembered childhood moments when I trembled with fear, dreading that I would not find the right words, afraid of the harsh remarks or the silent but equally painful ridicule.

The last line, "without an answer," expresses the weight of that silence, when lack of knowledge, fear, and shame converge in a single, paralyzing instant.

The sumi-e illustration reinforced this emotion: a solitary figure in front of a dark blackboard, standing out so distinctly that everything else pales into insignificance. The shadow of the blackboard looms over the child, as if silence and uncertainty are the true forces controlling the room.

Through these lines, I wanted to show that silence does not always mean ignorance; sometimes it is the crushing weight of pressure and fear that prevents words from forming. I started reflecting on how often we experience this same feeling as adults, standing "at the blackboard" in professional settings, within families, uncertain of what the world expects us to say. That moment of waiting, expectation, and self-doubt can feel just as isolating in adulthood as it did in childhood, even when surrounded by people.

Writing this haiku made me realize that education, meant to foster growth, can sometimes turn into a stage for judgment. I wondered: How often do we mistake silence for lack of ability, rather than recognizing it as a sign of someone feeling alone under the weight of expectations? This haiku became a reminder of the power of empathy, a plea to look beyond silence, to see the hidden fears behind hesitation, and to remember that not every unanswered question is proof of ignorance. Sometimes, it is simply proof of being alone in the face of expectation.

Głowa przeciw sercu / The Head Against the Heart

serce mówi cicho
głowa nie słucha, milczy
konflikt emocji

the heart speaks quietly
the head is not listening
conflict of emotions

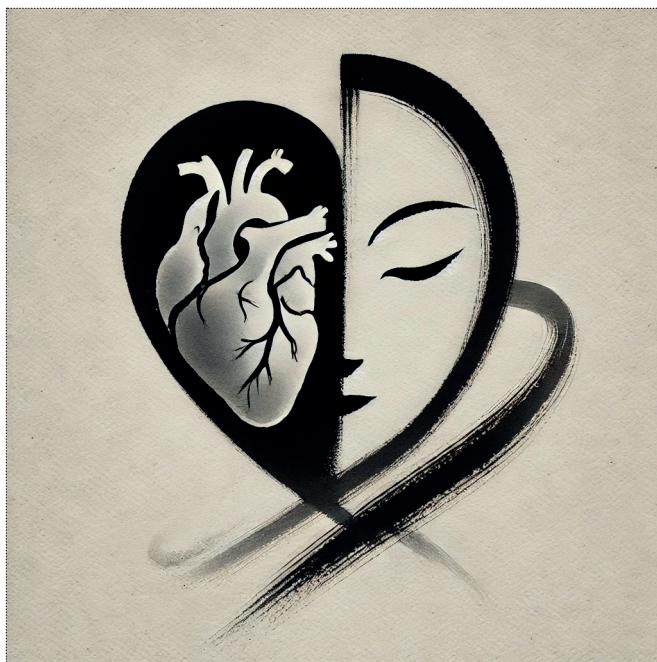


Figure 53

Głowa przeciw sercu / The Head Against the Heart

Note. DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Kiedy serce mówi* (*When the Heart Speaks*), Magdalena Szpunar, April 14, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem about how the heart speaks softly (April 14, 2024) while the head refuses to listen, I felt a deep need to capture that internal dissonance in haiku.

The first line, "the heart speaks softly" came naturally as I imagined how emotions rarely scream their truth. Instead, we often feel only a whisper within, a subtle nudge telling us, "this is important," but the head frequently dismisses it.

The second line, "the head is not listening," came to me as I recalled moments when I knew what I really wanted, but my rational side resisted. I saw how logic, which analyzes everything in cold calculation, often robs us of the courage to act on what we feel. I wondered: Does this silence truly mean a lack of reasoning, or is it merely a defense mechanism that refuses to accept the truth of emotions?

The last line, "conflict of emotions," encapsulates the tension between the head and the heart. It is a struggle not easily resolved.

The sumi-e illustration I envisioned depicted an anatomical heart intertwined with the outline of a face – two distinct forces, yet forming a single being. I saw in this a paradox: although reason and emotion seem separate, they must coexist, even when momentarily at war.

While writing this haiku, I realized that inner conflict is familiar to me, and I face it daily. Whether choosing a career path, navigating relationships, or making simple decisions, I often find myself torn between the quiet truth of emotion and the firm grip of logic. It is this duality that defines human experience – we are neither purely rational nor entirely driven by impulse.

Now, with these three lines written, I feel I have captured what matters most to a human being: both emotion and reason. And though the heart speaks softly, it often speaks the deepest truth.

The real challenge is teaching the head not to silence that whisper, but to listen and perhaps, at times, to admit that the truth we seek in logic has been waiting quietly in emotion all along.

Ogrzani dobrem / Warmed by Kindness

w zmarzlinie serce
na przebudzenie czeka
rozgrzewa dobro

in the frozen ground
the heart waits awakening
kindness warms it up

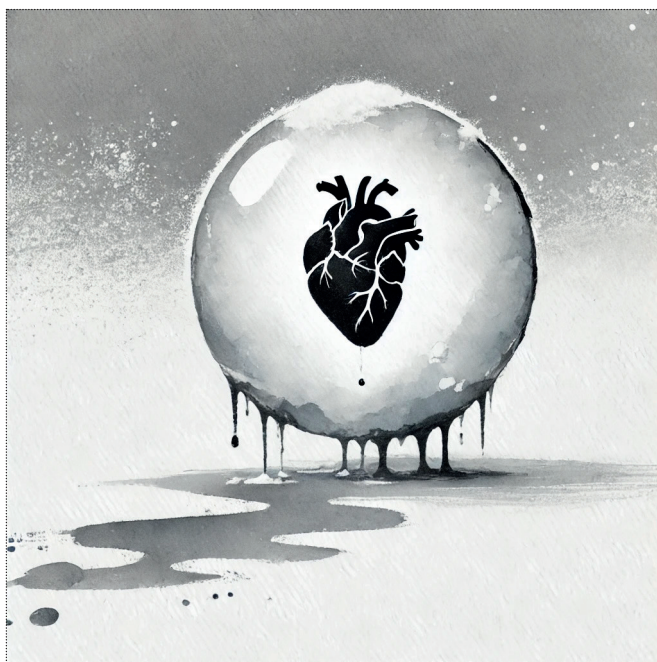


Figure 54

Ogrzani dobrem / Warmed by Kindness

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *W kraju wiecznej zmarzliny uczuć* (*In the Land of Eternal Emotional Permafrost*), Magdalena Szpunar, January 13, 2023.

<https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem *W kraju wiecznej zmarzliny uczuć* (*In the Land of Eternal Emotional Permafrost*, January 13, 2023), I immediately envisioned a heart encased in ice, frozen in stillness, yet still alive inside.

The first line, "in the frozen ground," came to me almost automatically, as I wanted to illustrate that even in the deepest cold, the heart still exists, waiting. I imagined a heart that has remained untouched for years, impervious to warmth or light from outside.

Then I added "the heart waits awakening," because I wanted to express the hope that it is never too late to thaw from this frozen state. It seemed to me that within this icy shell there was still a spark, small but enough to awaken one day. I wondered what could serve as a catalyst, perhaps a gesture, a word, an act of kindness, or a moment of understanding.

In the last line, "kindness warms it up," I found my answer. The warmth of human goodness is often the only key that can melt even the most frozen emotions. At that moment, I thought of all the people who carry pain, fear, and disappointment within them; sometimes all it takes is a simple act of kindness to begin thawing their inner world.

When I finished these three lines, I imagined a sumi-e illustration where a heart is encased in a transparent sphere of ice. It is surrounded by coldness and darkness, yet droplets of water have begun to form on its surface. It suggests that the thawing process has already begun, perhaps due to light, warmth, or the gentle touch of kindness. Not much has changed yet, but the ice has softened enough for a glimmer of hope to appear.

As I reflected on these verses, I realized that each of us may unknowingly experience such a phase of inner permafrost. But it is small acts of kindness, understanding, and friendship that can warm a heart that has been locked in coldness for too long. This haiku reminds me that even when everything seems frozen, deep inside life remains, waiting for just the right impulse of kindness to begin melting, to return to warmth once again.

Raniące słowa / Wounding Words

oskórowało
wypowiedziane słowo
ciało w pogardzie

almost flayed alive
by a single utterance
the body distained



Figure 55

Raniące słowa / Wounding Words

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Nienawiść zaczyna się od słów* (*Hatred Begins with Words*), Magdalena Szpunar, March 5, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Nienawiść zaczyna się od słów* (*Hatred Begins with Words*, March 5, 2023), I recalled moments when a single sentence was enough to inflict a deep wound.

The first line, "almost flayed alive," came to me as a visceral, almost physical expression of how words can strip away the protective layer we hide behind. I wanted to capture the brutality of an experience where language turns into a blade that rips away our sense of safety.

The second line, "by a single utterance," was a clear signal that not all wounds come from actions. Sometimes, what hurts most is what someone says, and how those words echo inside us long after they have been spoken. I thought about those moments when someone's words burrow deep into the mind, clinging to the skin, as if they have truly peeled away our sense of security.

The last line, "the body distained," was meant to show that this kind of wounding is not just psychological. When words dehumanize, when they strip away dignity and the body itself can feel discarded, as if it no longer has the right to exist with pride.

At that moment, I pictured the sumi-e illustration, a figure seemingly torn from within, invisible thorns piercing both body and soul. To me, it symbolized how verbal wounds leave scars not only in our thoughts, but in the way we inhabit our own being.

Language holds the power to create and to destroy. A single phrase can alter our sense of self, shake our confidence, or unravel our sense of belonging. A verbal "blow" can be just as painful as a physical one, even if its marks remain invisible. I wanted this haiku to serve as a warning that any word, any phrase, can seep under the skin and wreak havoc.

Now that these words are written before me, I see them as a reminder: Before we speak words that might wound, we should consider how deeply they might cut. Because sometimes, even a single phrase can "flay" a person, leaving them exposed and defenseless, feeling as though their own body has become a place of shame instead of strength.

Jutrowanie/Tomorrowing

dzisiaj jutrałam
bo czas płynie powoli
na łące kwiatów

today I tomorrowed
for time flows more slowly in
a flowery meadow



Figure 56

Jutrowanie/Tomorrowing

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Pomyślę o tym jutro (I'll Think About It Tomorrow)*, Magdalena Szpunar June 11, 2022. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I saw Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Pomyśl o tym jutro* (*I'll Think About It Tomorrow*, June 11, 2022), I felt the urge to capture that suspended moment when the future feels close, yet hasn't quite arrived.

The first line, "today, I tomorrowed," came to me instinctively, as it best expressed that state of lingering between now and what comes next.

Then I added "for time flows more slowly," as a reminder that this moment stretches, offering us a chance to pause, breathe, and resist the rush toward the next day.

When I wrote "a flowery meadow," I envisioned a vast, fragrant field where thoughts could drift freely, where one could soak in the scents without worrying about schedules and deadlines.

In the sumi-e illustration, the flowers seemed to hover in the air and everything, from the colors to the outlines, was softly blurred as if the landscape itself was dissolving into a state of gentle stillness.

Looking at this scene, I felt that in such a space, the boundary between "today" and "tomorrow" fades. The word *jutrałam* (a playful verb derived from *jutro*, tomorrow) took on the flavor of carefree relaxation, a lighthearted defiance against the structured world where everything is measured in increments of time.

I thought about how often we impose a linear structure on our lives – today, tomorrow, the next day, as if time moves in rigid, consecutive steps. But sometimes we can exist in between, in a space where not everything is meant to be measured or planned. It is like the movement of flower petals, falling or swirling in the wind with no clear direction, yet in this chaos there is beauty and meaning. This fleeting instant, when "today" and "tomorrow" merge into a soft haze, felt worth capturing in three simple lines.

In the same way, we can embrace all of life's transitional moments, those times when one stage hasn't quite ended, and the next hasn't fully begun. Instead of rushing for clarity, perhaps we can give ourselves permission to "be in tomorrow," to savor what is, even as the future gently knocks on the door.

Chwytając dzień / Seizing the Day

zachłannie jeść dzień
łapczywie chwycić chwile
wiatr zabierze ból

greedily eat the day
hungrily seize the moments
the wind will take the pain



Figure 57

Chwytając dzień / Seizing the Day

Note. DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Zachorować na życie (To Fall Ill with Life)*, Magdalena Szpunar, June 17, 2022. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Zachorować na życie* (*To Fall Ill with Life*, June 17, 2022), I immediately imagined a person consumed by the passionate experience of every moment, as if life itself were an adventure too exhilarating to step away from.

The first line, "greedily eat the day," came to me naturally, expressing the intensity of devouring reality without hesitation, without postponing desires for later.

Then I added "hungrily seize the moments," because often all we have are fleeting instances, but their cumulative power is what gives us the sense of truly living.

The last line, "the wind will take the pain," was born from the idea that movement, time, and the sheer energy of life can alleviate suffering. I pictured someone throwing themselves into a whirlwind of experiences, allowing the wind of passion and commitment to carry away the cares of everyday life.

In the sumi-e illustration, I saw a figure in motion, surrounded by blurred strokes, symbolizing the flood of sensations and the fluidity of the world as if life were a stream, and all it takes is to dive in to momentarily forget pain. Reflecting on this, I realized that "falling ill with life" might mean consciously embracing experience, fully tasting it, and constantly seeking that tiny spark that fuels action. Sometimes, this approach seems intense, even reckless, but within it lies the strength to resist being overwhelmed by difficulties. The phrase "the wind will take the pain" is not a promise that suffering will never come, but rather a suggestion that in the constant rush of life, there is potential for release, for renewal.

Now, rereading my haiku, I see it as a tribute to daily courage. All it takes is to choose to devour the world each day as if it were a dish full of different flavors, seizing every moment before it vanishes. There is no guarantee of endless lightness, but perhaps allowing ourselves intensity and passion will make the pain feel lighter, and the wind, symbol of change and freedom, will carry it far away, leaving room for another day, full of flavor, waiting to be lived.

Koło ratunkowe / Lifeline

ile jeszcze szans
życie człowiekowi da
po złej diagnozie

how many more chances
will life grant to a person
after a wrong diagnosis



Figure 58

Koło ratunkowe / Lifeline

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Koło ratunkowe (Lifebelt)*, Magdalena Szpunar, September 6, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Kolo ratunkowe* (*Lifebelt*, September 6, 2024), I immediately saw a person standing on the edge of life and death, first condemned by a mistaken medical diagnosis, then suddenly discovering that the diagnosis was wrong.

I wrote this haiku in an attempt to capture that fragile moment between loss and renewed hope.

The first line, "how many more chances," posed a question that lingered in my mind: How many times does fate allow us to start over?

The second line, "will life grant to a person," was my way of suggesting that survival is not just about chance; sometimes it is about sheer willpower, the determination to move beyond what once seemed like a final judgment.

Only the last line, "after a wrong diagnosis," introduced the medical context, highlighting how decisions, emotions, and an entire future can be built on false information.

The sumi-e illustration deepened my reflection. I saw a solitary figure standing in a vast, undefined space, with only a faint horizon line in the background. The air seemed to pulsate with light and shadow, as if the entire scene was infused with uncertainty. I sensed that this person carried a weight, the trauma of fear, the acceptance of something that turned out to be untrue, now standing in silence, wondering where to go next. The light above them could be the sun, symbolizing a new beginning, or it could be the cold glow of the moon, indifferent to human dilemmas.

I thought about how deeply unsettling such uncertainty can be. First, accepting a devastating diagnosis, then realizing it was an error. Can someone return to their former state of mind after such an experience? Can they recapture the lost days spent in fear or resignation?

My three lines attempt to capture this fractured moment of gratitude for a second chance, but also the realization that this second chance is marked forever by the experience of a false diagnosis. I wondered if this experience could be liberating, awakening a renewed passion for life, or if it would instead leave behind an irreversible mistrust.

When I finished writing, I felt that I had captured this liminal space between two realities, the one in which a person was condemned and the one in which they return, but never quite the same. Like a lifebelt thrown at the last moment, it keeps you afloat, but you will always remember the terror of drowning. Perhaps this is the true cost of sudden "salvation after an error": the gift of life is given again, but it never truly returns to the way it was before.

Ja tu zostaję / I'm Staying Here

fiolety w zieleniach
hipnotyzują smakiem
nie z tego świata

some purples in greens
mesmerizing with flavor
just not of this world



Figure 59

Ja tu zostaję / I'm Staying Here

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Niebo winogronowe (Grapevine Sky)*, Magdalena Szpunar, September 7, 2024. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Niebo winogronowe* (*Grapevine Sky*, September 7, 2024), I immediately imagined a fusion of purples and greens so intense that it felt almost infused with scent and taste.

I wrote my haiku as three short lines, trying to capture this extraordinary blend of colors that evoke the richness of ripe fruit, as if sight and taste could merge into a single sensation. I was fascinated by the idea that colors could "mesmerize with flavor," as if transporting us beyond the ordinary, into a world where sensory perceptions defy logic. The sumi-e illustration reflected this vision: a spread of liquid purple and green ink blots, resembling clouds but pulsating with movement and life, as if glowing from within. I thought of it as a view of an alien planet with an unfamiliar atmosphere, or perhaps just a fusion of natural flavors of different grape varieties blending in the imagination into one striking phenomenon. Either way, I wanted the image to convey the fleeting, ambiguous quality of this scene; that it is more of an emotion than a literal vision.

As I wrote, I realized how often we search for simple associations, when in fact the world surprises us with moments that feel as though they belong to another realm. I like to think that such experiences add color to our lives, like an unexpected taste we cannot quite define, or a sunset in impossibly surreal hues. It reminds me of the forgotten sensation of trying something completely new, struggling to find words for the overwhelming mix of impressions it leaves behind.

Ultimately, when I looked at my three lines and the sumi-e illustration, I felt that I had captured something delicate and ephemeral: the moment when senses merge, and what we see seems to carry scent and taste along with it. The purples and greens blend not only in the landscape but in our perception, pulling us out of the routine of ordinary impressions and offering a fleeting sense of experiencing the world in a way that is richer, deeper, almost beyond reality.

Niestale serce / Fickle Heart

słońce jest po to
by przez cały rok ogrzewało
niestale serce

the sun is there to
warm up all throughout the year
our inconstant heart

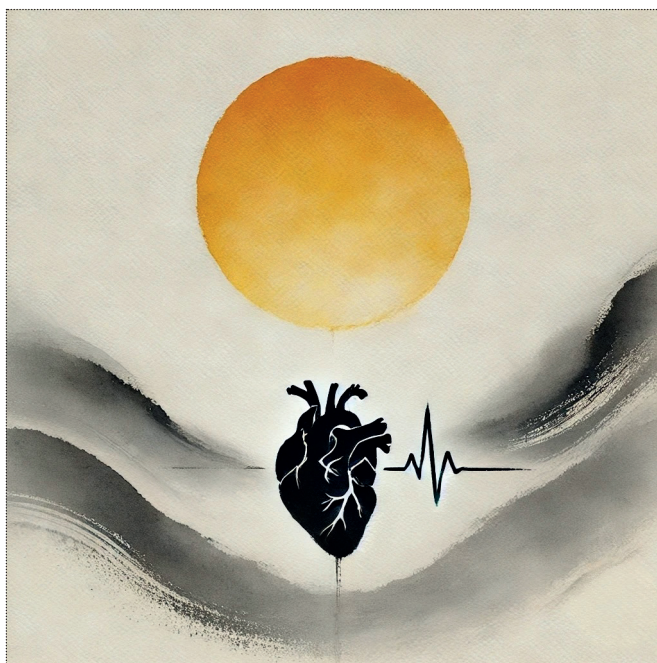


Figure 60
Niestale serce / Fickle Heart

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Nie pozwól sercu zamarznąć* (*Don't Let Your Heart Freeze*), Magdalena Szpunar, December 8, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Nie pozwól sercu zamarznąć* (*Don't Let Your Heart Freeze*, December 8, 2023), an image of the sun immediately came to mind, a force that rises every day, no matter what, ready to warm what is fragile and vulnerable to the cold.

I began my haiku with the thought that "the sun is there for a reason," as if its existence had a defined purpose, not only to illuminate the world but to keep watch over human hearts.

The second line, with its "throughout the year," came to me naturally. The sun does not depend on our moods; it does not stop shining simply because we have lost hope.

This realization led me to the last line, "our inconstant heart," a reminder that while the sun remains steady, our emotions are anything but. They shift in an instant, leaving us feeling lost or consumed by grief. I found meaning in this contrast: the sun and the heart exist in the same space, yet they could not be more different in nature.

In the sumi-e illustration, a small, dark heart stands beneath a vast, glowing circle; whether it represents the sun or an elemental force of nature no longer seemed to matter. I thought about how often we believe that there is no escape from our own sadness, forgetting that the sun never stops shining. Even on cloudy days, it remains above us, unseen but always present.

I saw this as a beautiful metaphor for the people who support us – friends, family, or even our own belief in ourselves, sometimes shining quietly from behind the clouds. If we let this warmth reach us, it can thaw even the most frozen emotions.

When I stepped back to reflect on the completed haiku and illustration, I realized how easily we overlook the steadiness and strength that surrounds us. In our daily struggles, we often feel alone with our doubts and fears. Yet the sun, however we choose to see it, is always there, waiting to warm our uncertainty and restore our hope.

Usłyszeć ciszę / To Hear the Silence

cisza drży w słowach
niewypowiedzianych szeptach
czy ją słyszysz?

silence trembles in words
in our unspoken whispers
can you hear it?

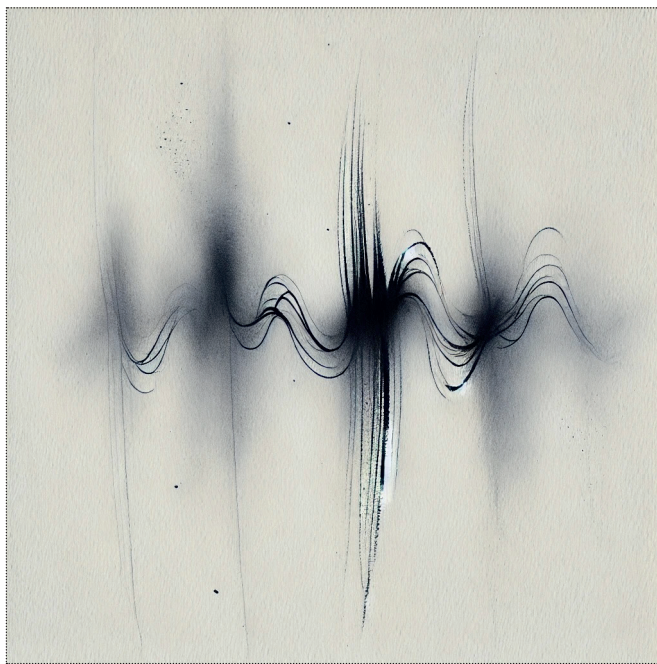


Figure 61

Usłyszeć ciszę / To Hear the Silence

Note. DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Wysłuchując się w ciszę* (*Listening to the Silence*), Magdalena Szpunar, June 16, 2022. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

When I read Magdalena Szpunar's poem *Wsluchujac się w ciszę* (*Listening to the Silence*, June 16, 2022), I imagined how even within words, something unspoken can tremble just beneath the surface. I wanted to capture this subtle ambiguity in my haiku, the silence that exists within spoken sentences, in invisible whispers, where the most fascinating things truly happen.

The first line, "silence shakes in words," came to me instinctively, as I wanted to express the feeling that what remains unsaid can still stir the air, can still evoke emotions. I thought of moments when the most important things are not said aloud. Sometimes, a single paused breath says more than a whole sentence. A glance can convey everything in a space where no words are spoken. That is why I wrote "in our unspoken whispers," creating a paradox, a whisper that is not heard, yet exists in the space between people.

In the last line, "can you hear it?" I posed a question. It is a doubt, a challenge: Can we truly perceive that delicate pulse of silence that is sometimes louder than a scream?

The sumi-e illustration I envisioned contained abstract lines that resembled sound waves or the faint traces left behind by a vibration in the air. I did not want a defined landscape but rather a suggestion that silence is both ethereal and deeply tangible. The lines blurred and dissolved, as if they were trying to reveal that silence always carries something within it sometimes fear, sometimes longing, sometimes an unspoken, "I'm sorry," or "I love you." When I placed the three lines alongside the image, I felt that together they conveyed a quiet, profound connection between people where words are not the most important element.

In such moments, silence has its own melody, and all we need to do is listen more carefully to understand what is trembling within it. I realized that silence is not always the absence of communication sometimes, it is the space where true openness happens. But only if someone knows how to hear that subtle, inner voice.

Niechciane spojrzenia / Unwanted Glances

wzrasta niepokój
zło rośnie w milczeniu
nie chcesz zobaczyć

anxiety grows
evil thrives in the silence
you don't want to see



Figure 62

Niechciane spojrzenia / Unwanted Glances

Note. Generated by DALL-E, OpenAI, 2024. Inspired by *Kiedy patrzysz na zło (When You Look at Evil)*, Magdalena Szpunar, November 8, 2023. <https://swiatopatrzenie.pl>.

Journal Notes

I started with a feeling of unease, one that seemed to grow without a clear cause, something I was aware of but avoided looking at directly. This led me to write the first line, “anxiety grows,” to capture that subtle but undeniable sensation of something slowly building in the background.

Then, with “evil thrives in the silence,” I wanted to emphasize that the most terrifying things often do not arrive with a bang, but instead expand quietly, taking advantage of our reluctance to acknowledge them.

It was only when I wrote the last line, “you don’t want to see,” that I realized my haiku had accurately described the human tendency to ignore the warning signs of an impending storm. We look away, as if pretending that something does not exist will make it disappear.

In the sumi-e illustration, I saw a dark, undefined figure emerging from the mist, not attacking, not striking, but simply existing, growing unnoticed in the silence. Its hands are barely visible, just the outline of claw-like fingers, reaching out not in an immediate assault, but in quiet anticipation, waiting for the moment when those who have ignored its presence will finally realize the threat too late. The surrounding landscape is blurred and undefined, as if the entire space is an echo of our fears and unspoken anxieties.

As I wrote this haiku, I realized how easy it is to overlook the slow emergence of danger. Evil does not always arrive as a monstrous force; more often it is a shadow that quietly expands when no one dares to look its way. In those three lines, I encapsulated the truth that sometimes all it takes for something to grow unchecked is mere indifference, a passive willingness to let it unfold in the belief that it will resolve itself without intervention.

I felt that in daily life we often prefer not to examine difficult realities, hoping they will go away on their own. I also realized that part of the problem is our fear of confronting the uncomfortable. It is always easier to focus on something pleasant than to admit that destruction is taking root in the shadows. Perhaps this poem is meant as a warning to stay vigilant, not to be lulled into complacency by the quiet presence of evil. For it grows strongest when we stop paying attention.

Be Still to Hear the Silence

The conclusion of this book serves as a reflection on my academic and artistic journey. It is also an invitation to further contemplate the creative potential of poetry, imagery, and the dialogue between humans and technology.

This is not merely a closing statement, but rather a way of suggesting possible avenues for continuation and deeper exploration, both artistically and academically.

zwolnij, odetchnij
w słońcu twarz – serce bije
cisza daje siłę

slow down, take a breath
in the sun a face – heart beats
silence gives us strength



Figure 63
Siła ciszy / The Power of Silence

Note. Generated by DALL·E, OpenAI, 2024.

Slow Down, Breathe – I Repeat These Words Like a Mantra

These words guided me through the process of writing this book. They returned to me in moments when I lost my sense of distance from the world, from the text, from myself. In a world filled with constant bustle and endless stimuli, has pausing for a moment become an act of courage?

Creating this book was not only an intellectual journey but above all a deeply personal experience. Each haiku, each AI-generated illustration, each immersion in Magdalena Szpunar's poetry opened new interpretive and emotional spaces for me. I explored the boundaries between the analog and digital worlds, between contemplation and algorithmic precision, between my own inner rhythm and the output generated by artificial intelligence.

As I wrote the haiku, I entered a state of mindfulness where technology was not just a tool, but a conversation partner. Sometimes, it interpreted my words with uncanny precision, but at other times it completely missed my intentions. That was when I understood that this dialogue was not only about searching for beauty, but also about searching for myself in a rapidly changing world.

Each day, before dawn, with a cup of tea in hand, I would open up another of Szpunar's poems, allowing her words to resonate within me. This routine became my ritual, not to create text, but to exist within it, to breathe it in before writing my first haiku lines. I was both researcher and a creator, an interpreter and a participant.

This process became a form of autoethnographic introspection, reflecting not only on how AI co-creates images but more importantly on how I, as a researcher and artist, responded to this process.

My experience showed that AI can generate images that sometimes capture mood with astonishing accuracy but sometimes miss my sensibility entirely. That's when I realized that the key was not in the machine's response, but in my response to it.

Interpretation was born within me.

The tension between image and word was born within me.

The question pulsed within me: Is what I see truly what I feel?

There were moments when I felt fascinated by how AI had transformed my words into visual narratives, revealing subtleties I had not anticipated.

But there were also times when I felt that everything invisible, everything that escapes systems, remained unexpressed within me, beyond the algorithm's reach.

That's when I realized:

Art, whether haiku or sumi-e, lives in the space between intention and omission.

Silence was my ally in this process.

Not the noise of technology, but the emptiness between sounds.

Not excess, but limitation – the very thing that makes haiku so powerful.

In sumi-e, silence is not absence, but the space where meaning emerges.

In haiku, what lies between the lines carries the deepest significance.

As I worked on this book, I became aware of how much unnecessary noise fills my daily life.

The flow of information, the algorithms telling me what I should see and read, the constant anticipation of the next notification.

Yet silence does not demand a response, nor does it expect a reaction; it simply allows us to be.

Can AI generate silence?

My experience has shown that it cannot.

The algorithm processes, analyzes, suggests but never leaves empty space.

AI always adds, fills, completes, enriching the image, making the text fuller.

But haiku is about something entirely different.

It is about removing the excess.

It is about capturing the moment where nothing more needs to be said.

There were days when the AI-generated images felt overloaded, too explicit.

They lacked breath, the characteristic emptiness that defines sumi-e and haiku.

That's when I understood interpretation is born within me.

That's why reading and writing haiku became my way of resisting the algorithmic over-production of content.

The fewer the words, the more intense their meaning.

The fewer the images, the greater their impact.

I began to treat silence as an active part of my creative process.

It was not a pause from writing, but part of writing itself.

I listened to silence.

I waited for images to emerge naturally, without force, without an excess of stimuli.

And it was in those moments that the deepest reflections appeared.
Not when I tried to force something,
But when I allowed it to simply happen.
In a world filled with stimuli, silence is a luxury but also a challenge.
Do we know how to accept it?
Or do we rush to fill every empty moment with something “productive”?
Haiku taught me that it is worth allowing ourselves moments of emptiness,
A space where we can listen to ourselves.
Just like in sumi-e what is left unpainted is just as important as what appears on the paper.
Just like in haiku what remains unwritten is as meaningful as what is written.
Silence is not emptiness.
Silence is the place where art begins.

The Metaphorical Rhythm of Nature and Art

My research and creative process for this book have been a constant synthesis of art, nature, and technology; haiku and AI; silence and expression; solitude and dialogue.

I could not treat them separately, because as I worked, each of these spaces began to merge with one another. Each haiku, each brushstroke in sumi-e, each AI-generated image became part of a larger whole a dynamic, fluid process.

The Bory Tucholskie (Tuchola Forest), where I spent time reflecting, became a natural laboratory for my thoughts. There, among the trees, I learned to notice what often goes unseen in the daily hustle and bustle, a rhythm of life that is beyond our control and yet still defines our existence.

The forest does not operate by imposed rules, it does not follow algorithms, it does not accelerate its cycles, nor does it succumb to the pressures of time. Nature is simply constantly changing, yet always true to its own order. Just as the forest cannot exist without its rhythm, art cannot exist without its own inner cycles.

I began to realize that creativity is not a linear act, that it cannot be confined to structured progress, fixed steps, tables, or rigid plans. What mattered in my work emerged not from controlled productivity, but from allowing the process to flow naturally to let some ideas mature while others disappeared before they could be written down.

The cyclicality I observed in nature was reflected in my creative process.

When summer turns to fall, and when fall turns to winter, the world does not stop; it transforms, adapts and rests before the next phase of growth. Creativity works in the same way.

You cannot stay in a constant state of production.

Creation is a constant movement between expression and withdrawal, between intense activity and quiet contemplation. Just as in nature sometimes we have to wait for the seasons to change, so too in the creative process a pause is necessary, a time for reflection, for looking back, for understanding what has already been created before moving forward.

Sometimes, you have to stop writing in order to understand what has already been written.

I felt this deeply in the Tuchola Forest, standing among the trees, listening to the leaves rustle in the wind, hearing the raindrops patter on the ground, watching the light change on the surface of the river.

These moments required no action; they were pure presence.

And then I understood that science and art, like nature, need space to breathe.

AI and the Absence of Creative Pause

Working with AI taught me something else: algorithms follow an entirely different logic. They do not experience cycles of rest, they do not step back before a new phase, nor do they need a pause to renew themselves.

What we call “creative block” or “a time for regeneration” does not exist for AI; it can endlessly generate new versions of images, new responses, new content.

But does that mean that it creates art?

Creativity is more than production.

It is this rhythm, the rhythm of pause, of hesitation, of waiting for thoughts to settle, that distinguishes human creation from algorithmic output.

The most important work does not always happen in moments of action, but often in moments of uncertainty.

Silence as Resistance in a Technological World

In a world accelerated by technology, where the pace of content production seems to be a value in itself, silence, pause, and the rhythm of nature can become acts of resistance. Just as nature teaches us that there is a time for everything, that we cannot rush the growth of a tree or force the leaves to fall before they are ready, so creativity demands patience.

Just as creativity does not exist apart from life, what we write, paint, or generate is shaped by what we experience, perceive, and reflect upon.

Each haiku in this book was a response to something that was happening within or around me.

Each sumi-e image, whether created by my brush or by an AI algorithm, was not just a product but part of an ongoing process.

Even the AI-generated images, though based on algorithms, began to create a new rhythm.

They were not merely technological outputs, but a part of my own journey.

Can AI learn this natural rhythm?

Can it understand silence, pause, hesitation?

I do not know the answer to this question.

But I do know this – the artist is never truly alone.

Just as trees in a forest do not grow in isolation, art is never created in a vacuum.

It is always a response to the world, to experience, to the ever-changing rhythm of life that surrounds us.

And it is this rhythm, constant, unpredictable, alive, that makes art real.

Like a forest, like a haiku, like a human being standing still for a moment of silence, to see more, to feel deeper.

Haiku as an Open Space

Haiku is not simply a poetic form, It is a space where the world and the individual meet, where experience merges with suggestion. It is an act of attentiveness, but also an invitation to contemplation, not only for the one who writes it, but also for the one who reads it.

Haiku does not close meanings – it leaves them open. It is not poetry of explanation, but poetry of capturing a moment in its purest, simplest form.

This openness is the essence of haiku; the words serve only as a guide, a trail leading toward personal interpretations, personal images, personal emotions.

As I wrote my haiku, I noticed that each one felt like a window, slightly ajar, letting in light but never fully revealing what lies beyond. A window through which the reader can peer and sense that more remains unseen, beyond the first glimpse.

I did not try to lock my thoughts into words, but instead I arranged them in a way that left space.

A space where each person can find something of their own, something that resonates with their experience.

The Silence Within Haiku

Haiku does not demand an immediate answer.

Haiku pauses, and in that pause, it opens space.

A space not only of emptiness and meaning, but also of light and shadow.

It is poetry that allows the reader to discover themselves in it.

This is why the technique of sumi-e, so rooted in minimalism and suggestion, harmonizes so well with haiku.

Haiku not only describes the world but forces us to see the world differently.

It is not just an aesthetic form but a way of being in reality.

It requires a different kind of attention, a different rhythm, a willingness to stop, to notice the fleeting, to look beyond the surface of things.

I experienced this many times while writing this book.

Before I could write a haiku, first I had to live it.

Haiku is not just a record of observation; it is a form of being present.

That is why haiku cannot be forced.

It is not the language that dictates the words, it is reality that arranges them into verses.

And perhaps this is what makes haiku so extraordinary.

It cannot be forced, programmed, or rushed.

You have to let it happen.

Haiku and AI: A Creative Tension

In writing this book, I discovered that haiku and AI exist in a certain tension.

Haiku opens space, AI tries to fill it.

Haiku suggests, AI seeks precision.

Haiku embraces ambiguity, AI attempts to fill in the missing pieces.

But can they coexist?

During my experiments with AI-generated images for my haiku, I noticed something interesting – sometimes the algorithm captured the essence of a poem in a way I had not expected.

Did this mean that AI “understood” haiku? No.

But it did mean that in the tension between what I had created and what the machine suggested, a new space had emerged – a space for interpretation, for surprise, for creative dialogue.

And perhaps this is where the future of haiku and technology lies – not in one replacing the other, but in learning to function within this open space between them.

Haiku as an Ongoing Process

Haiku, like all art, is never finished.

It is a process, one that never fully closes.

Haiku is never the final word.

It does not conclude a story; it opens it.

That is why, at the end of this book, I do not offer answers.

I Leave Space.

A space for you, Dear Reader, to fill with your own haiku.

Perhaps you already have one – perhaps a moment exists in your memory that could be captured in three lines.

Or maybe you will find it later in a quiet moment of the everyday, in the way light falls through a window, in the shade of a tree, in the footprints left by rain on the pavement, in the words of someone’s poem, story, or painting.

But if there is one thing I have learned in this process, it is this:

Haiku already exists within us.
We only need to learn to notice it.
And allow it to stay open.

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Abstract

From the Poetry of Magdalena Szpunar to Haiku and AI-Generated Sumi-e

From the Poetry of Magdalena Szpunar to Haiku and AI-Generated Sumi-e represents a synthesis of traditional Japanese art forms and contemporary technological advancements. The author explores the minimalist aesthetics of haiku and sumi-e painting, drawing inspiration from the profound and socially engaged poetry of Magdalena Szpunar. Szpunar is a distinguished sociologist and poet renowned for addressing the intimate and societal dimensions of life, encompassing human suffering and social injustices.

The book is organized into two primary sections. The first part, *Paths of Harmony: Daily Life Embraced by Art*, explores the search for harmony in everyday life, the history and significance of sumi-e art, and haiku as an art of minimalism and reflection. The author references Zen philosophy, emphasizing the importance of simplicity and the pursuit of inner balance. She also describes her own creative experiences and daily rituals, which serve as sources of inspiration for her artistic works.

The second part, *Light and Shadow: The Synergy of Reflection Expressed in Haiku and Sumi-e*, presents a collection of 62 haiku poems accompanied by images generated using artificial intelligence programs such as DALL-E and Midjourney. These images draw inspiration from the traditional sumi-e technique, seeking to encapsulate the essence of emotions and phenomena through the use of minimal brushstrokes. The book poses questions on the relationship between humans and the world, transience, and the essence of existence, reflecting the contemplative nature of haiku and sumi-e.

Throughout the book, the author explores how the integration of AI technology with traditional art forms fosters a dialogue between the past and the present, enhancing the emotional impact of the poetic experience. By distilling words and images to their essence, the work reflects on themes of transience, the human relationship with the world, and the nature of existence.

This book functions as both a tribute to Magdalena Szpunar's poetry and an artistic experiment, demonstrating how simplicity in poetry and imagery can complement each other. It invites readers to meditate on the world, humanity, and art in their most reduced and purest forms, thereby highlighting the transformative power of poetry and art in fostering deep reflection, emotional resonance, and social engagement. The use of modern tools, such as artificial intelligence, allows for creative explorations of new forms of expression and unveils hitherto unexplored interpretative pathways for contemporary art.

Keywords: Haiku, Sumi-e, Artificial Intelligence in Art, Minimalism, Magdalena Szpunar.

Streszczenie

Od poezji Magdaleny Szpunar do haiku i sumi-e
generowanych przez sztuczną inteligencję

„Od poezji Magdaleny Szpunar do haiku i AI wygenerowanych obrazów sumi-e” to połączenie tradycyjnych japońskich form sztuki z nowoczesną technologią. Autorka zagłębia się w minimalistyczne sztuki haiku i malarstwa sumi-e, czerpiąc inspirację z głębokiej i społecznie zaangażowanej poezji Magdaleny Szpunar—wybitnej socjolożki i poetki, znanej z poruszania intymnych i społecznych aspektów życia, w tym ludzkiego cierpienia i niesprawiedliwości społecznych.

Książka składa się z dwóch głównych części. Pierwsza część, „Ścieżki harmonii. Codzienność objęta sztuką”, przedstawia poszukiwanie harmonii w życiu codziennym, historię i znaczenie sztuki sumi-e oraz haiku jako sztuki minimalizmu i refleksji. Autorka odnosi się do filozofii zen, podkreślając znaczenie prostoty i dążenia do wewnętrznej równowagi. Opisuje także własne doświadczenia twórcze i codzienne rytuały, które stanowią źródło inspiracji dla jej prac artystycznych.

Druga część, „Światło i cień. Synergia refleksji wyrażona w haiku i sumi-e”, to zbiór 62 wierszy haiku, którym towarzyszą obrazy wygenerowane przy użyciu programów sztucznej inteligencji, takich jak DALL-E i Midjourney. Obrazy te są inspirowane tradycyjną techniką sumi-e, a ich celem jest uchwycenie istoty emocji i zjawisk za pomocą minimalnych pociągnięć pędzla. Książka stawia pytania o relację między człowiekiem a światem, przemijalność oraz istotę egzystencji, co wpisuje się w refleksyjną naturę haiku i sumi-e.

Autorka przez całą książkę bada, jak integracja technologii sztucznej inteligencji z tradycyjnymi formami sztuki tworzy dialog między przeszłością a teraźniejszością, wzmacniając emocjonalny wpływ doświadczenia poetyckiego. Redukując słowa i obrazy do ich istoty, dzieło reflektuje nad tematami przemijalności, relacji człowieka ze światem oraz istoty istnienia.

Książka ta nie tylko oddaje hołd poezji Magdaleny Szpunar, ale również stanowi artystyczny eksperyment, który pokazuje, w jaki sposób prostota w poezji i obrazie może wzajemnie

się uzupełniać. Zaprasza czytelników do medytacji nad światem, człowiekiem i sztuką w ich najbardziej zredukowanych i najczystszych formach, podkreślając transformującą moc poezji i sztuki w wywoływaniu głębokiej refleksji, emocjonalnego rezonansu i zaangażowania społecznego. Wykorzystanie nowoczesnych narzędzi, takich jak sztuczna inteligencja, pozwala na twórcze poszukiwania nowych form ekspresji, a także na otwieranie nowych ścieżek interpretacyjnych dla współczesnej sztuki.

Słowa kluczowe: Haiku, sztuka sumi-e, sztuczna inteligencja w sztuce, minimalizm, Magdalena Szpunar.



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