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Letter to the Editor

Dear –K–

On a plane again. Since the first time I read *Atlas Poetica* in flight, I’ve written you letters in this situation. The perspective is perfect for thinking about tanka of place.

I want to formally thank you for this issue’s unusual focus on Twitter. It was your influence in valuing Twitter as a place where the best of micropoetry was brewing that first brought me there. I was already publishing in print journals. I did not really realize at the time that Twitter meant “publishing”. But the fresh open space into which a poem goes, quickly into the world was exciting and an inspiration. I love that experience. So I was drawn to it. Once I realized I was publishing poems by doing it, I began to hesitate. Then you focused on Twitter in this issue, including a few of my favorite tanka I'd published on Twitter, and I enjoyed reading Christina Nyugen’s fine essay. This in fact brought me back to Twitter. But with more awareness.

One thing I would like to add to the thinking about Twitter and tanka is that Twitter is perfect for traveling, it allows a quick insight and sharing that might escape and never be written and shared if it were not possible to tweet. I feel that poets of all ages past wished for such a thing to be possible, and living now, we have this chance to realize it. Tanka of place and Twitter are a very special match, when anywhere in the world, anyplace, one can write a tanka and send it out into every other place instantaneously. This inspires more tanka of place.

Thank you for all your work and creative, thoughtful approach.

Kath Abela Wilson
In this issue we focus on responsive tanka—tanka written by two or more authors in a ‘call and response’ pattern. Dating back to the earliest times in Japan, collaborative tanka have been a staple of the genre possibly longer than tanka has existed. (Some scholars speculate that tanka arose from a song game in which one person composed a verse and another answered it.) Tanka has always existed in a social medium, whether it be notes between lovers, humorous poems for drinking games, commentary on state occasions, or in public performances, (often accompanied by music).

This is in contrast to the Western tradition which often depicts the lone poet laboring in a garret, only to be ignored or ridiculed when he at last brings forth his masterpiece. Ask the average Westerner if they think poetry would make a good drinking game, and most of them will answer, “No!” In fact, the average person is likely to start sneaking towards the door when they discover they are in the presence of an amateur poet.

By using vernacular language and everyday subjects, tanka can communicate more directly than the loftier expressions beloved by academics and formalists. What is more natural than that tanka poets should include tanka as part of their ordinary mode of communication? Responsive tanka sequences arise when one poet, moved to compose a poem, triggers a response in another poet. Sometimes the resulting sequences are spontaneous, but others are highly crafted works of mutual composition. Both have their charms.

Little attention has been paid to the techniques of sequences, and even less to the particular challenges and virtues that arise from sequences composed by multiple authors. We are pleased to present Dr. Carmella Braniger’s article, ‘Responsive Tanka Trios & Quartets: A New Twist on Collaborative Composition,’ exploring the dynamics of responsive tanka, along with several responsive sequences and a review of a book-length work, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow, by Amelia Fielden & Kathy Kituai.

The community of people writing and reading tanka is often jocularly referred to as ‘Tankatown’ in tacit understanding of the social nature of tanka. We hope all the residents of ‘Tankatown’ will enjoy learning more about the many and diverse neighbors tanka offers them.

~K~

M. Kei
Editor, Atlas Poetica

Mayn River, Siberia. October 25, 2000. The Mayn River, seen here with what is thought to be a portion of the Anadyr River, flows through the far northeastern corner of Siberia.

Cover Image courtesy of Our Earth As Art by NASA <http://eros.usgs.gov/imagegallery/>.
Carnival of Animals*

Tish Davis

on an adobe wall
various crosses
dimly lit
without Christ
the color of clay

Candlelight eases the fatigue. For the past week we’ve been crossing the border daily, leaving for Reynosa early and returning to McAllen before dark. Tonight, the head waiter escorts us. Here, uncluttered white tablecloths briefly clear the mind.

pianoforte—
a patron cradling his cabernet,
felt-covered hammers striking steel strings

I only notice the music when the pianist switches to movie themes. Suddenly I’m back in the company van, camera panning left, then right as we cross the Pharr Bridge. A row of shanties topples like dominos, cardboard and wooden slats mixing dilapidated shades of brown. The light changes. The focus is now, “The Columbus Room”—contemporary art, shades of scarlet and gray. When I ask the interviewee how he handles stress, he responds with a soliloquy about fear,

four months of drought
the white-fenced cemetery dotted with deep red
a statue of Jesus arms open

By now, my colleagues are telling jokes. They don’t hear me excuse myself.

“Can you play La Paloma?” I ask the pianist. He’s a small, elderly Mexican sitting on two cushions stacked on a wooden chair.

He complies and I watch his fingers, long and curved, noticing the flourish of his hands, how he transitions into the glissando.

“Pick another,” he says after finishing and noticing my delight. “You can pick two.”


He shakes his head apologetically. He hasn’t studied classical music. Maybe I can sing the tune? I lean over, closer to his ear. As we begin, the black pattern of sharps and flats pulls me back. I am thirteen again and, studying my mother’s hands for weeks, I learn this song.
~Carnival of the Animals, cont.

beyond short
and brittle grasses
gray-green foliage—
a field of sugar cane
rippling in the wind

~Reynosa, Mexico & McAllen, Texas, USA

*Title borrowed from “The Carnival of the Animals,” by Camille Saint-Saëns

river ripples
distort the tracks
left by wagons
grooved limestone at crossings
a submerged history

~Sabine River, Texas, USA

Bent’s Fort
refuge in the wilderness
roaring fires
mountainmen in rough buckskins
lounge in the poolroom upstairs

~La Junta, Colorado, USA

Lost West

Terry Ingram

off the caprock
on the dry staked plain
ancient fires
sealed with cover stones
smudged sparks of man

ghosttown’s cast iron stove
nickel plated and ornate
we packed it out
piece by piece from 9000 feet
it thanks us every winter

~San Juan Mountains, Colorado, USA

~Llano Estacado, Texas Panhandle, USA
The sign hangs askew, faded and shadowed by a shabby block of apartments that now obscures the sea-view.

banished
to the verandah he sings
old war songs
his medals festooned
on red climbing roses

. . . “and a nightingale sang in Berkeley Square”

He lowers himself into the orange vinyl chair, its innards spewing out the arms and tosses the empty beer bottle into the rosemary.

light grows dim
and a kookaburra cackles
at a sickle moon . . .
the sun goes down
in the west

~Sydney, Australia

He stops singing and steadies himself, grabbing a supporting post to wipe his nose on his sleeve.

“They’re not the birds I fought for and anyway what do these lily-livered fancy pants know about it? We were the rats of Trobuk, desert rats and gave them hell . . . won a few hearts too . . . they know nothing of it here in the ‘Ritz.’ Did I ever tell them how cold it was in the desert at night and how big the stars were?”

A car back-fires.

“Get down Les, down; gawd he’s taken it in the chest . . . believe me you’re better off now Les old fellow.”
spiral galaxies
carved into a threshold stone
by ancient hands
how close stars must have loomed
in the absence of light

airs currents
circles of water
and whorled fire
the life lines of a people
in earth’s open palm

obscured maker’s mark
embossed on obsidian
latent fingerprint
Loop, Whorl and Arch swallowed
by tomb and by time

moments of grace
unlocked in darkness
each cold solstice
a keyhole to the past
and a chamber filled with light

a narrowing beam
channeled ever upwards
to illuminate
a trinity of stone bowls
still waiting to be filled

fragments:
four pendants, seven marbles,
two beads, a flint flake
round the cruciform chambers
granite kerb-stones stand mum

of flint and bone
these gifts for the Mother
vessel to vessel
with blood from the sun
might dreams begin to dance

in our vesicles
as on the chamber wall
triskelion twists
triple-spiraled proteins
the twirling stuff of life

from then to now
bound by the double-helix
we gild the coil
living flesh and vellum
inked with Brighid’s fire

to the light box
from the bend in the Boyne
the dagger unsheathed
before bodhran, the heartbeat
before heartbeat, the sun

the full moon’s face
and the threefold beating
of the winnowing drum
come, you chieftains of Tara
to the cave of the sun!
~New Grange, cont.

Constructed over 5000 years ago in Ireland’s Boyne River Valley complex, the New Grange passage-mound is a Neolithic solar temple which predates both England’s Stonehenge and Egypt’s Pyramid of Giza. A light box constructed above its entrance allows a single beam of light to penetrate the inner chamber for 17 minutes at dawn each Winter Solstice, marking the beginning of the new solar year.

Community Service

Genie Nakano

traffic ticket in the mail
500 dollar fine
ran through the light
a sudden stop
to a pleasant day
I plead guilty your honor
give me the option of service
I’m a yoga teacher
but it doesn’t work that way
they choose what i’m to do

clean the parks
a Community Service
my mistaken choice
chain gang torture
no fun in the sun

I keep on
body aches and sleepless nights
fingers won’t open or close
I’m a criminal in combat
no one talks to me

a pigeon watches me
rake the redwood chips
it rests under a playground slide
for hours it does not move
the only spot I leave un-raked

6 thirty am to noon
I clean all the grounds
the pigeons are still at rest
the dead one I cannot trash
I call out for help

good behavior
cuts my hours in half
is it really true, I’m free
back to the soft pillowed life
a traffic ticket paid with time

husband says
“gamen”* don’t stop
a foreman master
steel in his heart
what happened to the gentle man

*Gamen means to endure.

~California, USA
Into his skin

Rodney Williams

With a cigarette forever in hand, his step-mother has been sitting out there on the back step for hours—as skinny as many a smoker—hogging the landline phone. Despite two and a half years of asking himself the same question, he still can’t work out how come she’s got so many friends.

In the kitchen all he can find are dirty dishes, as if she expects him to do something about this whole mess. Of course there’s no meal on the stove for dinner. With his dad to be paid tomorrow, there’s nothing much left in the fridge or larder either. Only this salad junk that the boy wouldn’t feed to a pet rabbit. And with his allowance money gone, his own wallet is so skinny, it’s anorexic. Just like that new girl in his home group at school.

His father is no doubt winding down from the pressures of work somewhere, polishing the corner of a bar with an elbow.

While his older sister stays at her new boyfriend’s place so much these days, she may as well be paying board to the lucky guy’s parents.

As ever, both his own best friends have either run out of credit on their mobiles, or are conveniently out of range. No network in more ways than one.

Even his own mother’s cell phone keeps switching straight to message bank, before it’s had a chance to ring, on one of these rare times when he actually wants to talk with her.

And as for making some kind of online connection now instead, why, their family laptop is so slow and out-dated—like his computer teacher always jokes, till everyone could kill him—it’s what Neanderthals used before they started painting pictures in caves.

If only he hadn’t let himself get caught listening to some Death Metal in History today—a bit loud, he must admit—with his headset confiscated. After that it might have helped, too, if he hadn’t accused the teacher of always picking on him, out of everyone there, just because they’re both so fat.

Yet across the whole evening the one thing to etch itself right into his skin, like a tattoo, has been what that counsellor asked him this afternoon, straight after this latest exit from class:

Yes, yes, there are all these others to blame, sure, but what can you do for yourself, if you really want to make things any different, any better? . . .

at the window
a mynah bird pecking
its reflection . . .
from facebook he deletes
that photo of his shadow

—Warragul, Victoria, Australia
Rehab

Johannes S. H. Bjerg

checking in
to a rehab
waking up in the middle
of a busy street—
again

how did it
come to this
lies
upon
lies

fighting d.t.
my shaking hand
can’t hold the cigarette—
all good intentions fades
in a sick yellow light

nausea
the pillow in the cover
stained with old blood—
we are garbage
and we know it

this smell
of vinegar and bleach
of old vomit and sweat—
a washed up actor tells me
how to drink through antabuse

~Copenhagen, Denmark, 1994

a torrent of sweat
and demon faces
fills the room
already inhabited
by wrecks like me
The City

T. J. Edge @ten_ten_ten

new snow
every house on the block
from a different fairytale

march downpour
my backyard becomes a temporary sea
i build dams to make dry land
as tiny kingdoms
launch ships of leaves

as cars
watch from ditches
a semi
makes angels
in the snow

maple
leaves
a child
spinning
clouds

jellyfish rain
their umbrellas rising
falling

~Midwestern United States

Autumn Rental

Gary LeBel

Since morning, an island blackout; now, the violet evening lights our way. The sea we left one block down drives its wind-borne sand along the vacant street, pelting our calves and ankles.

Inside the rental, loose panes rattle and quiet while she finds and lights a candle. As our children hover round it, their faces turn to ivory.

Stops to preen
its feathers, the young teal
whose blood and bone
has yet to feel
the ache for travel.

~Tybee Island, Georgia, USA
butterflies
flutter on impossible
vectors
their twirling tarantella
bees waggle dance

On clear days during World War II in Long Beach California, my brother and I would lie on our backs on the grass and watch newly manufactured P-38 Lightnings and P-51 Mustangs being tested in mock dogfights—long loud arcs and rolls across the sky.

twisting
on each other, swiveling
around
snarling, growling
snapping teeth

day dream
silver warriors
whirling
bright chargers
glint of spears

A quiet southern California afternoon in 1944 was broken by a whine that came from far away and grew into a deafening roar as a smoking P-38 Lightning passed over the house, the yard, the back fence all in a second, and crashed somewhere out in the cow fields half a mile away.

a Common Kestrel
broken
beside the road
the Kenworth’s windshield
smudged

My father had avoided the draft and was working at the Douglas Aircraft plant in Long Beach, inspecting wing rivets on B-17 Flying Fortresses. Where he ought to have climbed down, moved the ladder, and climbed up again, he saved time by jumping from one part of the wing to another. One day, he fell and badly cut his arm. The cut left a scar in the form of a single chevron on his right arm—an army private forever.

distant wars
on radio, Pathé News
at the movies
Van Johnson and Spencer Tracy
no plum blossoms over Tokyo

~California, USA
in the mail today
a postcard from old Blighty
the stony beach
at Brighton where we once rode
the railway along the seafront

a cutting
through the heart of Wales
where she told me
about books that would
one day change my life

walking to the park
with a posse of children
I throw them a question
about monarch butterflies
flitting in and out of trees

why the anxiety
when so much is right?
enough for today
I asked and received
the birds oblivious

it doesn’t take much
to remind me of worries
so I’m going
to hum an Anita O’Day song
‘let’s get away from it all’

a lazy afternoon
as the storm pounds —
what can I say
that Jackson Browne
hasn’t already said

no long goodbyes
no lingering at the airport
but maybe the swallow’s
melody will flicker
in our minds for months

that moment at the beach
sun in my eyes
sheltering on your shoulder
everything before & after
ceasing

‘Old Blighty’ is an old name for Britain and
was used by the troops in WWII.
Communion

Taro Aizu

One morning in a hospital
silently I towel
mother’s face in her bed.
She is paralyzed
by a brain disease.

But I can see
once lifeless eyes
shining brilliantly,
showing her spirit
once more.

After removing her pajamas,
slowly I towel
her slim legs,
her lean arms,
and thin sides.

I cry out
as loudly as I can
“Hey, Mom!
me, it’s just me
who shouted at you!”

Just then,
she suddenly cries out:
“Ahhh, Ahhh, Ahhh!”
I reply loudly in her ear:
“Hey, Mom! How are you?”

Mother tries to answer me
and cries out.
still
I can’t understand
what she wants to say.

As though my mother
just recognizes me
from my loud voice,
she replies more loudly
“Uhhh, Ahhh, Uhhh, Ahhh!”

Though she has many lines
on her face,
she’s smiling at me
without a word,
peacefully.

Though she shouts at me,
I’m sorry
I can’t understand
what she means
by it.

Yes,
it’s a calm moment
of communion
between a mother
and me.

~Japan
Widow

Pravat Kumar Padhy

The bright day is faded. Her dreams could live momentarily. Like night jasmine, she couldn’t see the beauty of the light.

the light
extinguishes with
turn of time
the sun sets well before as
eclipse darkens her journey

It becomes a tough time in India, losing better half at an early age, particularly in remote rural area. Glamour of life is shadowed under the veil of simple white cotton. She has to lead a lonely life. She tends to keep herself away from any auspicious ceremony as some people feel the physics of shadow of the widow is different indeed!

fate of life
sails in loneliness
talking to herself
she gathers the memories
as the echo lingers in silence

~India

Blue Notes

André Surridge

a cop explains
how their only son died
from an overdose . . .
in a corner the flash
of Christmas tree lights

thousands of years
of so-called civilisation
& yet in today’s paper
torture, rape and murder
in the name of freedom

first he lost his job
then the wife and kids left
he ended it all
in an old tin shed
with a single gunshot

upstairs
her murdered daughter’s room
undisturbed
last of her tissues
last shot of gin

neatly tucked inside
the locket around her neck
a curl of his hair . . .
today he would be twenty-one
had he not died of cot death

~Hamilton, New Zealand
Kingdom of Bhutan

Sonam Chhoki

dzong* courtyard—
the monk in Black Hat and Robe**
slays the demon-king
what colour, what violence
to tell of Buddha’s victory

sunlit window—
each vein on the dumb cane***
is clearly etched . . .
if we had watched him close
would he have overdosed?

World Peace Day—
lighting butter lamps
in the old temple
the chant of the monks drown
in a blitz of ringtones

immigration desk—
speaking slowly in English
the officer says
he has not heard of Bhutan
and I must be interviewed

Chinese guns track
Tibetans on the ridge
in a trail of blood
one by one the nuns fall
fleeing their occupied home

Notes:

*Dzong (ZONG with a silent ‘d’): monastic and administrative centre.

**Black Hat and Robe: This is the ritual garb of the monk who hid a bow and arrow in the folds of his sleeves to kill the Tibetan king, Langadarma, who persecuted Buddhists in his realm. This incident is dated around 842 A.D. The monk incurs bad karma to save the teachings of the Buddha. The Black Hat (Sha-Nag) dance (name derived from the monk’s garb) is one of the main enactments in the Mask Dance festivals in Bhutan and Tibet.

***Dumb cane: A house plant.
Crossroads Soliloquies

Charles Tarlton

Scene 1
In an alley behind a closed liquor store in Hannibal, Missouri
March, 1952

BACHELOR CALWOOD
There were five or six of them, Mexican kids; they were waiting for me. The leader, whose name was Hector Camus, glared at me from the hall, gave me the finger, and then punched his fist into the palm of the other hand. When the bell rang for lunch, I knew they’d be outside standing around. They would all want to see a fight, see Hector pound me. So, I ran. I went down the main hall, past the Principal’s office, and out the main doors, down the steps, across the lawn, and, by the time they’d noticed me, I was across the street and gone. My mother would know what to do.

ancient dramas
forged in the weaknesses
that all heroes
glimpse, political
yearning in the mother

his violence
the origins of peace
the other’s fear
talking the tyrant down
whispering in his ear

tsent Athena’s
wisdom and law
they intercede
in reason and justice
to use more careful words

Scene 2
On a staircase in the University Library at Ohio State, Columbus, Ohio
October, 1972

N. ROYALTON WADSWORTH
I was tired of teaching; my love of Joyce and his Ulysses was not the issue. If I retired, I could go to Ireland and delve even deeper into that whole literary world. There would be people to talk to, access to the real evidence, and I could visit the actual sites—Sandycove, the Burton Hotel, Davy Byrne’s, the National Gallery. But, not long after retiring and failing to receive research grants to study overseas, I was bored. When I approached the University about returning to teaching, they offered me only low paying adjunct assignments—composition and bonehead English. I wandered around the campus, ghostlike, hanging out in the faculty lounge and reading newspapers in the library.
rush to regret
how skill thus unmanned me
lost vanities
_objets de mon amour_
like wild dogs in the road

a savage pack
they snarl and show their teeth
no father’s milk
in soothing memories
to cool ambition’s burn

the president, O’Leary
cautioned me divorce
in multiples
suggested one’s own blame
debanned for excesses

they wrote in blood
left on leaves in the woods
brief messages
describing their motives
daring us to follow

so impatient
grabbing at the first
alternative
successful in little things
curling up in comfort

as if in Greek
secret messages flew
in the shadows
the glint of sharpened steel
words that cut to the core

---

**Scene 3**
_In the foyer of the Monroe County Courthouse, Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania_
_March, 1944_

SHAWNEE BUSHKILL

Of course, he told me he loved me, that we
would get married soon. So, I waited while
he cultivated friendships that, he said,
would help him in his career. He was
ambitious, but in a good way (I thought), so
I was patient and loyal. In the end, he just
sent me a short brutal letter saying he was
leaving and that he was engaged to Susan
Kaiser, the daughter of the Mayor. I waited
in the busy hall way to catch him on the
way to his work; I accused him loudly in
front of the drinking fountain outside his
office.

---

**Scene 4**
_From the stalled ski lift at Howelsen Hill Ski
Area, Steamboat Springs, Colorado_
_August, 1955_

DOWNIEVILLE LAWSON

I remember the day I got the letter and my
appointment to the Coast Guard Academy
in New London, Connecticut. That was
great, except that I would have to be away
from Kiowa Bennett. She was my first
serious girl friend and I thought about her
all the time. To make a long story short, I
went to the Coast Guard, but I missed her
so much I quit and came home. My parents
were embarrassed by that, and when my
father drove by the Bennett’s house and
saw me in the car with her he stopped, got
out, and caused a scene right there on her street. My mother didn’t like Kiowa’s mother; she thought the Bennetts common.

a hero made
not born; what we thought fate
coincidence
puncturing each bubble’s
single surface tension

it was not love
some emptiness in me
could not be filled
our moon’s waning gibbous
even before lights out

star hiatus
cold as the farthest light
a snuffed ember
went out. She said, “the end”
it was the same with me

KIOWA BENNETT

I had to get out; that was the thing. My parents were so boring; they just sat around watching television or my father would pound his fist on the kitchen table and rage about Eisenhower and the Russians. My mother never said anything. I came to the conclusion that the only thing to do was to get married; I thought I would just find a boy who wanted the sex thing enough to marry me. Downie Lawson looked like a real prospect for a time, but after his father got involved he quit coming around. When it turned out that Stansbury Tooele wanted me bad enough to get married, well, that was that.

give love away
sweet perfumed key to life
smoothness of neck
the long reach of an arm
soft sounds in a dark car

how long could it
last, this desperate move
his thick rough hands
free to roam wherever
crude longing determines

to die for love
I often dreamed of that
plunging daggers
harsh sensual poisons
imagining the wake

Scene 5

In the branches of a Fuji apple tree somewhere
near Prairie du Rocher, Illinois
April, 1937

MONTROSE TEUTO POLIS

Something in my nature, in my voice, made my father angry. I was, it seems to me on reflection, a kind of sissy. He was always trying to toughen me up; he taught me how to fight, he signed me up for various sports, and he loved to put me in difficult situations. He wanted to see how I’d react, I guess. But, nothing really ever came of it. I was just a softy, easily given to tears, and I
was often afraid. So, he yelled and sometimes hit me, he criticized and belittled me, all in an effort to make me into more of a man. He would call me momma’s boy—and I was.

uncertainty
makes us yearn for one-way
streets, the clear flow
in a single direction
the clear eyes of traffic

it was a girl
I saw in the men’s room
washing her hands
she rubbed her face to see
if she needed a shave

the smell of sweat
wet floors, slamming lockers
this is boy’s gym
older ones exhibit
unfamiliar manhood

Scene 6
Under a red and green umbrella at Osage Beach, Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri
April 25, 1971

SEDALIA MARSHALL

I was going to be caned for my part in defacing the wall under the stairway to the Home Economics room. Three or four of us had carried paint from art class and started a graffitti mural to commemorate ANZAC day. I just went along with the others; I had never heard of ANZAC day.

We were from New York and in New Zealand only for the one-year of my father’s visiting university appointment. At supper, I told my dad the headmaster was going to cane me tomorrow, along with the others. My dad went to the headmaster’s office the next morning and, they say, explained to him that if I came home from school the next day and told him that I had been caned, if that happened, then he was going to come down to the school and cane the headmaster. I think that must have been so, because I was never caned, though the others were.

Sister Agnes
could reduce the biggest
boy in the class
to tears. She held her own
hand out for him to hit

he’s the sheriff
in a western movie
walking in his
own shadow, the shadow
of his daydream Navy Colt

here comes the ghost
of Bozo Texino
smoking under
his infinity hat
tagging all the boxcars

Scene 7
At a gathering of alums at the big “C” on Box Springs Mountain, Riverside, California
June, 2009
This is a difficult story to believe. In our senior year at university, one of my roommates (who shall remain unnamed) "volunteered" to cook lunch for everyone when we got back from commencement rehearsals. He made a stew and grainy homemade bread. I shudder when I recall that, indeed, we all ate it. Later that afternoon, Dick Schoonover told us he had seen the "cook" putting floor sweepings, shredded toilet paper, and dead leaves from the yard into the stew. He put sawdust in the bread. Jesus, I was mad! I took a large can of Hershey’s chocolate syrup outside and poured it all over his little 1952 red MG-TD roadster. He didn’t discover it until the morning when the paint was permanently discolored.

Spanish mixtures
of love and vengeance
I will not be
forgotten or unloved
my dead arms around you

vicious circles
once begun, unending
autos da fé
holding tight to hatreds
imagining it all

his curt remark
infuriating her
she turns away
making a grotesque face
for everyone to see

Scene 8
Standing in what will later become a Walmart parking lot, Colby, Kansas
March 1958

TONGANOXIE EUDORA

I went to a large urban high school in the 1950s; teachers and administrators had enough to do maintaining peace and order. Gang fights, racial brawls, and knifings were daily experiences. I learned little, and when I went to university I still thought and spoke like my father—I was prejudiced, sarcastic, and I covered up my lack of knowledge by speaking louder. Classes were a torment for me. I was tongue-tied in front of professors and students I knew were far superior to me. I wrote blunt simplistic essays and exams. I was for the first two and a half years a C+ student, right across the board. Still, I did the work and I listened (though pretending not to need to). One day, in the middle of my third year (and this is the absolute truth), I was in a group talking with a professor at an outside picnic table, talking about Dean Acheson’s foreign policy. I listened intently until an opening appeared, pregnant with expectation, and I began to speak—speak intellectually. I mean, like a professor, like all the best students. I heard it coming magically out of my mouth. I was delirious, but I could not stop.

out of the fog
a single yearling deer
in our backyard
he and I on the line
between two dimensions

my grand daughter
has become a woman
on the surface
but she loses traction
and slips back to pouting

I missed a step
on Bloomingdale’s staircase
my age caught up
I wasn’t any more
a guy in a hurry

Scene 9
Room 22, Haines Hall, UCLA
September, 1962

EFFINGHAM SIGEL

He was famous, this recently hired professor, bringing a new outlook to our politics program. Everyone signed up for his course; we were all waiting there the first day of classes. When the door opened and he came in, he was wearing an army surplus Eisenhower jacket, a steel pot helmet, and he carried a baseball bat. We all stared. He began well enough, talking sensibly about the importance of propaganda to the working of governments, but then, gradually, his words grew wild, “full of sound and fury,” plots, conspiracies, and murders at the highest level. Then, suddenly, he crossed the room, pushed up the large double-hung sash window, climbed onto the sill, and jumped out. We ran over and looked out. There he was, crouched between the hedge and the wall, now in full rant.

born all things well
insanity bestrides
his slow progress
counts accidents his luck
trembling before each sign

from the outset
phrensies leap fire to fire
his tragedy
wound suddenly too tight
then loosed upon the world

his ambition’s
on mysterious rampage
comes to an end
where he faces down his own
black devils come home to roost

Scene 10
In a rear booth at the Spudnut shop, San Bernardino, California
June 1955

STOCKTON HERCULES

It was Larry’s beautiful blue ‘52 Chevy. We were all drinking beer up in Lytle Creek Canyon and the car was parked on a road maybe fifty feet above the stream itself. As I said, everyone was drinking and an argument ensued between Larry and one of the Coburn brothers—Marty, I think. They got into a stupid fight; they were both
pretty drunk. Larry was a lot tougher than Marty ever thought of being, so he beat him up pretty good. The Coburns and their friends took off, or so we thought. We had slid and stumbled down the shale alluvium to the creek and were swimming and sobering up when we heard them. The Coburns had come back. There were six of them and they were rocking Larry's car back and forth, side to side, until finally the driver's side wheels came up high enough for it to tip over, and it rolled down the hill into the water. It made a rhythmic horrible racket as it rolled, and then nothing. The Coburn bunch were speechless. The car was upside down in the creek, the back window and the windshield were both shattered, and the stream was flowing straight through.

how wars begin
on an increase of fun
just boys at play
until someone gets hurt
and consequences mount

hunting Hotspur
in the rocky canyons
quests for manhood
and someone's bloody nose
shift to Hamlet, now revenge

boyhood stories
doomed to repeat themselves
in gray haired deeds
wherein few will survive
pranks unveiled in battle

Author's Note: It is called Crossroads Soliloquies, reflecting an imaginary cross country trip (imaginary, but a composite of the many times I have driven coast to coast) The character names in the monologues are taken from cross country road signs indicating a town in each direction, e.g. Stockton Hercules, two towns near here off East Route 80.
Coming Home : A Minnesota Song

Christina Nguyen and Lucas Stensland

Mississippi river
caressing the outline
of Harriet Island
two teenagers dance
in Lollapalooza starlight

~St. Paul, Minnesota

like hungover teenagers
at Perkins –
a single mom and her son
laugh at the song
they’re improvising

~Minneapolis, Minnesota

ditch framing
my aunt’s farm
this keyboard
has seen
so little

~Foley, Minnesota

jumping off the dock
I scare the minnows
into my brother’s net
grandpa on the cabin steps
drunk again

~Pequot Lakes, Minnesota

pelicans circle
over Niemack Lake
only mom’s cousin
knew where to find
the unmarked grave

~Herman, Minnesota

Bob Dylan
walking off the stage
I see him grin briefly –
coming home is usually
a little of everything

~Duluth, Minnesota
soft underside
of my pillow
stiff icicles
the two minds
in me

beneath fleecy blankets
enfolded
in your arms
will you keep me warm
until spring?

blue dawn light
over new snow
you turn to me
for a word
of encouragement

pearly frosted pane
between us
even now
you cannot undo
what’s been done

in last night’s snow
footprints
melting
my past
into tomorrow

all the way home
through arctic wind
the moon
whispers
soon

over the sink
i open
a pomegranate
oh my love
where did you go?

family recipe
the bubbling pot
not yet ready
i long for
home

half a stick
of gum
how you hurry
my answer
with a sigh

out the window
sun melts snow
i sip coffee
tasting
earth
puddled sidewalk
collects winter’s rubble
learning to live
with each other’s
tragedies

pulling out
what little hair
i have left
your king now
a wise old fool

i open my mouth
to sing
suddenly
the story
stuck in my throat

•

late morning sun
in our empty cups
i make excuses
to keep you
in the room

is it flu
or morning sickness?
all i know
is the tenderness
in your eyes

silence
in media res
i wait for you
to lose
patience

have they hurt you
again, my love?
i cradle you closer
to the sound
of falling snow

hat, then mittens,
your long red scarf
ah, here you are
cradling a cup
of chicken soup

heart-shaped
sugar cookies
in the distance
a train—
it’s going home

the bottom crescent
of the moon
afloat
we anchor
each other

Venus
nearly touches
the crescent moon
come back, come back
my love

dullest star
still there come morning
the moon
in her wisdom
laughs
~Green Tongues, cont.

snow slides
off the roof
sleepless
for you
are sleepless

lay me down
to sleep
i dream of daffodils
warming
our bare limbs

bright sun
thaws the ground
your promise to warm
the frigid air
between us

snow melt
you find me
in the park
with a dog
I’ve just met

•

February rain
soaks my shoes
your voice
can’t quite
calm my fears

you say i pee
too much, too often
i say it’s been too long
since i’ve settled
by the river

this winter afternoon
splashing pool water
at each other’s eyes,
abandoned
to each other
campus lawn
softens in sunshine
let go  let go
hurry up you motion me
to catch up
the rattle
deep in your chest
your scratchy voice
whispering
soon, love, soon
this morning
the sound of low thunder . . .
how can I want distance
when I can’t
let you go?
not too late
for more water
for another pot of dirt
I want to give you
a thirst for sunshine

starting basil
in the back sun room
can i grow
anything more worthy
than you, than us?
a caught kite
trembles
in sycamore branches
older, i find myself
clinging to my roots

winter won’t give up
i wait for warmth
to open my chest
into a prayer
for new life

buried alive
i close my eyes
wait to burrow out
ask for a glass of water
take back what’s mine

green tongues
rise up
speak warm words
that cannot be said
by just friends

open sky
a balloon between
floating and falling
and i, looking for
equilibrium


Atlas Poetica does not normally reprint poetry, but we made an exception in this case because ‘Green Tongues’ accompanies ‘Responsive Tanka Trios & Quartets: A New Twist on Collaborative Composition’ by Dr. Carmella Braniger, page 65.
Mel Goldberg

a woman jumps ahead of me
I touch her shoulder
corn stalks face the scythe
we all move
to the same destination

~at the bank in Phoenix, Arizona, USA

Melissa Allen

new scat
on a rock
tells me
who owns
these woods

~hike through red rocks near Sedona,
Arizona, USA

wintry woods
three elk
steam in the frosty morning
my memory
between dark and dawn

~early morning hike in California Rockies,
USA

mausoleum
secrets of the dead
whispered by a spider
to a fly
wrapped in silk

~at the cemetery in Chicago, USA

fifty years
my grandmother’s house
still with me
the smells of brown soap
and stale breath

~at my grandmother’s gravesite Los Angeles,
USA

skirting
the wings
of the effigy mound
I hold your hand to prove
it isn’t time to let go

~Lake Wingra, Madison, Wisconsin, USA

sky
the same color
as runway
why don’t I ever dream
about flying?

~O’Hare Airport, Chicago, Illinois, USA
Luminita Suse

Mike Montreuil, English-French translator

I kill an instant
each time I blink
out of the blue
this songbird
stiff at my feet

je gaspille un instant
echaque fois que je cligne des yeux
de façon inattendue
cet oiseau chanteur mort
à mes pieds

sunset’s debris
of all the answered
phone calls—
a belt of murmurs
surrounds the planet

débris du crépuscule—
de tous les appels
téléphoniques répondus
une ceinture de murmures
entoure la planète

~Ottawa, Canada

Bruce D. Reed

coral from the
Sargasso Sea forgotten
on my table
theater paperwork and
earthquake reports strewn like leaves

my friend’s
birthday gifts—
heroin
and a lap dance
that he slept through

all that I’ve learned
from nine years of marriage
is how to use
the word “feckless”
in a sentence

~Maryland, USA

off the French coast
young men in landing craft were
finding religion
I hold an old dog tag
say a prayer for the dead

~D-Day 2011
Lucas Stensland

text messaging
from the bathroom—
the lime wedged
atop the margarita
was quite Cheshire

~Miami, Florida, USA

loose
over one shoulder
her black t-shirt
works hard
for my tip

~Il Gatto, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

I was on The Sopranos
now I do voice work
for video games
my wife and I never
switched coffee brands

~Los Angeles, California, USA

vodka on the rocks
and a two-dollar kiss
I stirred things up
in a one-horse town
where I was just a visitor

~St. Cloud, Minnesota, USA

black bra across
my date’s shoulder
her three-year-old
studies the sports bar
and all its games

~Lyndale Tap House, Minneapolis, USA

weeds in the parking lot
I cross the picket line
established by ants
nobody’ll be home tonight
might as well get to work

~Foley, Minnesota, USA

Dawn Bruce

dark clouds
keep me company
at an outdoor cafe . . .
suddenly sunlight rainbows
a row of fruit juice bottles

~St. Leonards, Sydney, Australia

water sheens
in owl-dark all around us . . .
my island
breathes whispers
and I am afraid

~Central coast, Australia
Bob Lucky

record high
temperatures today—
an egret
sticks to the shadow
of a grazing cow

~Gulf Coast, Texas, USA

summer visit
to parents in Texas
every year
the thought of death
the heaviest bag I carry

~Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

this disease,
wanting to live everywhere—
on the ferry
seeing Topkapi Palace,
I feel at home

~Istanbul, Turkey

pot-holed
hell of a road
a herd
of fat-tailed sheep
stop to drink

the bakery’s
monthly supply of wood
dumped outside my gate—
the ring of axe on wood,
the smell of fresh bread

~West Sussex, England

Brigid Fayers

A heron hunches
grey on a telephone wire
waiting, sentry-like
over the still village pond
for fish to break the mirror.

~West Sussex, England
Lisa Tibbs

early arrival with no sleep
waiting at terminal three
parents at t2
if only I was a princess
someone would carry my bags

another inhuman hour
at the airport
falling asleep
dreaming of Spancill Hill
wanting to awake in California

~Manchester, UK

William Cullen, Jr.

Gettysburg’s quiet
in the grayish blue twilight
cool mist rounds hill tops
where regimental flags snapped
leaves fall one by one to earth

~Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, USA

tending the garden
the pregnant woman pauses
to touch her belly
feeling a heart beat stronger
under a moon almost full

~Brooklyn, New York, USA

sewing constellations
on a blue woolen sky
from Pasadena to Laneshawbridge
to renew the vow
i made to my love

~Laneshawbridge, UK

Victorian homes
at the inner city’s edge
have lawns like small parks
where the homeless sleep it off
next to the forget-me-nots

~Florida, USA

on All Souls’ Day
we’re in a hot air balloon
rising to heaven
but our ground shadow follows
like a dark soul left behind

~Florida, USA
S. M. Abeles

In Camouflage
he tucks in Harry Potter
at his fairy tale
destination and departs
at Pentagon Station

~D.C. Metro train, USA

You are cool water
cupped in the tender moments
between the day’s scrum
and revelation of
the damage done

~Sink

She is
the candle in the cave
eradicating
a million year darkness
in the flash’s instant

~Cave

Bruce England

In the median
Ryokan holds out his bowl
to the stopped cars
another beggar comes
takes his money and his place

~San Jose, California, USA

Coming downstairs
there was a weather balloon
in our living room
now I wonder how my dad
brought it home in the car

~Corpus Christi, Texas, USA

Tessa Wooldridge

my daughter returns
chocolate-laden from Belgium
her great-grandfather
bore the weight of Ypres’ mud
and gas-choked lungs

~Belgium / Australia
André Surridge

his mask shines
with the flesh of gods
smooth to the touch
the golden boy
Tutankhamun

~Cairo, Egypt

Altai Mountains
training his golden eagle
a young Kazakh
the bird snatches its first fox
receives the liver as reward

~Altai Mountains, Mongolia

Li River
our boat reaches the scene
depicted
on the 20-yuan note
today there’s more mist

~Li River, China

memories . . .
the lighthouse keeper’s daughter
remembers
fearful storms
& the songs of whales

~Cape Egmont, New Zealand

out of order again
the office laser printer
they christen it
Bob Marley because
it keeps jamming

Earth
showing the effects
of gravity
looks like a well loved
hacky sack

reflections
in the book store window
mystery novels
& the faces
of passing strangers

Japanese garden
a snow-haired man removes
a white pebble
lodged between rake tines
& slips it in his pocket

winter beach
I find a starfish
amongst shells
what do you know
of tanka?

~Hamilton, New Zealand

~Raglan, New Zealand
his father
had a terrible temper
he’s calmer now
the old volcano
white with snow

~Mount Taranaki, New Zealand

how quiet it is
standing here in the hollow
of a dead volcano
only a stone’s throw
from the seething city

~Auckland, New Zealand

David Edwards

N’orleans,
as seen from above,
in the wake of storm:
the hieroglyph of “city”
but city no more

~New Orleans, Louisiana, USA (late August 2005)

Marilyn Hazelton

I hear a woman
scream not knowing
what to do
40 years later
I hear her still

~St. Paul, Minnesota, USA

twinkle twinkle
politician it is true
you can deny
aid to the poor and
may Satan have you soon

~Washington, D.C., House of Representatives, 2011

muted voices
a tray of sandwiches
in the war room
fingering a rosary
before the strike

~Washington, D.C., White House Situation Room, the mission to kill Osama bin Laden

watching the news
recalling his hands
below my breasts
as she said, he said . . .
I cross my arms tightly

~7/13th Air Force, Udorn RTAFB, Thailand, 1970
Peggy Castro

Ben Laden
you chose
to carve your name
in drifting sand
with blood

~Saudi Arabia

calibrating damage
pieces of you
pieces of me
mosaic of memory
in a blood-stained cathedral

into the dark flower of chaos
I dive
risking all
to curl up with you
in the seed of destruction

I dive into
a dark pool
swallow a golden fish
only to rise
lost to god and man

~Alhambra, California, USA

Laura Maffei

yanking my sausage self
into what they call
a “body shaper”—
decades of progress
contracted and compressed

~Bedroom, 2011, USA

like icing
on a buttery cake
the well-made moldings
in an apartment
we cannot afford

~Three-Room Walkup, USA

perhaps if I
log on to the bank account
one more time
the number will be
magically higher

~Desk at Home, USA

from the trash
of the previous campers
I can sketch
the loud, boisterous men
who were here

~State Park, USA
for how long
can someone talk
about drinking?
the younger generation
so far across the table

~City Café, USA

John Daleiden

empty house—
the air conditioner
sold for scrap
the shattered dreams
of a foreclosed nightmare

after the wildfires
sifting ashes for rubies
and diamonds
near the chimney a cooled
lump of bright gold gleams

~Phoenix, Arizona, USA, in the Sonoran Desert

Brendan Slater

shivering
he fills the sink
with warm water
rolls up his sleeves
brings up his veins

~Stafford, England

despite these tracks
lead nowhere
I want to be
a foetus
growing inside you

~Stoke-on-Trent, England

scripted—
at the chemist
my jacket
ripped on the sleeve
dark as the assistant’s eyes

~Hardenberg, The Netherlands
Neal Whitman

back and forth
a dredger in the harbor
clears the clogged channel
my sister’s confession:
he hits her

~Bandon, Oregon, USA

Taco Bell one a.m.
street musicians pile in
and spill on the counter
loose change from a paper cup
minimum daily requirement

~Monterey, California, USA

“Get off my rock.”
a glaucous gull who could talk
in his beak a deed
though it looked to me like
someone’s old laundry list

~recreation trail along Monterey Bay, Pacific Grove, California, USA

Gary LeBel

staring down the barrel
of a .45 along the interstate
three almost-men
with their hands thrust up,
their palms and faces, Celtic blue

~Calhoun, Tennessee, USA

I woke up in a sweat
to find a train had dug
a long black slippery trench
thru the middle of a room
my heart tonight keeps poorly lit

~Cape Girardeau, Missouri, USA

oak-flamed light-bringers
their meadow-streamed flight-path
blush a song
there is moss-chatter and tall tales
Morning Glory! goldfinches

~Garland Park, Carmel Valley, California, USA

white space
around and between sounds
I hear a muffled brooo brooo
snowshoeing at twilight
there—a tundra ghost—maybe

~The Homestead Resort, Midway, Utah, USA
always immaculate
my old scoutmaster jumped off
the town bridge in wintertime—
while it snows today I wonder
if his pants were pressed

burned alive
in a seedy downtown hotel room
where he and his mother lived,
how easily like an ash
I let his agony slip from my mind

~Bath, Maine, USA

Jacob Kobina Ayiah Mensah

a taxi
merges
from
the
cloudstreet

measuring the distance
between my grandfather
and africa
i’ve found myself measuring
the tallest palm tree in the mist

in front at a door
looking for a new tanka poet
I don’t know
whether to enter or not
when I’m opened

~Ghana

Gary Severance

ragged smoke
in a Tenderloin flat
new lovers laughing
such stimulating sex
and desperate desires

~San Francisco, California, USA

Lorne Henry

brief social timing
over the estuary
we meet on the bridge
you, running to the mainland
I, running to the island

~Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, USA

the pelican
skids to a halt on water
breaking the mirror
will the next seven years
bring a meagre catch

~Central Lansdowne, NSW, Australia
Oprica Padeanu

Oprica Padeanu, Romanian Translator

Mother’s house . . .
from afar a shadow
in a fog—
a stray dog barking
at the full moon

On the mother’s gate
a great padlock hangs
in each season . . .
the echo of a horn
shakes the ripe quinces

In this summer heat
a poet shoulders the raven
of Edgar Poe . . .
how much loneliness
can pervade a man

〜Village Zvorsca, County Dolj, Romania

Raven in zigzag
over the old man with a bread
under his arm . . .
a rimed grape touches
the roof of his mouth

〜At the street corner
a beggar playing
the harmonica . . .
through the wide open window
I greet a butterfly

〜Bucharest, Romania

〜Atlas Poetica • Issue 11 • Page 46
Raquel Bailey

he always writes
to cherry blossoms
so tomorrow
I’ll change my name
to Sakura

in another life
I was
the freshwater spring
that quenched
your thirst

honeymoon—
my spirit
still holds on
to your whispers braided
into the coils of my hair

I will carry
the legacies of slaves
like a stillborn
hanging lower
than tonight’s moonset

~at the back of the bus, Virginia, USA

Leslie Ihde

the doorman carries my bag
into the hotel
a man with hair in dreadlocks
pushes his shopping cart
down the street

~Portland, Oregon, USA

during the flood
my patient called me
from a boat
to cancel his appointment
for marriage counseling

~Binghamton, New York, USA

Sherry Steiner

one cannot believe
the emotional impact
of to have or to
have not swinging around
the town of blue in a shoe

~outside the post office, Housatonic, Massachusetts, USA
Ignatius Fay

bag lady
smile full of rotted teeth
twisted fingers
lovingly stroking
her new used coat

in her care
a child murdered
alone
when the house is quiet
she hears a child crying

in profile
absent curve of my breast
mastectomy
too high a price
for a girlish figure

~Sudbury, Ontario, Canada

before the first session
of radiotherapy
she wears the clear plastic mask
of her face
and poses like a supermodel

anxious face
at the nursing home window—
my father still waits
for his little girl
to come home

I caught malaria
in the jungle
& missed out on Christmas Dinner
was all he ever told us
about the war

~Kent, England

each of these
tiny graves
covered with toys
then one
with nothing

~Buenos Aires, Argentina

Mary Hind

all his life
bone idle in the garden—
she scatters his ashes
around
an ailing rosebush

Stumbling across
the poet’s grave
do you think
any of us could recall
a single line he wrote

~Cornwall, England
reflection
in the eye
of a dead fish
the emptiness
of an empty sky

while searching
for my golf ball
suddenly
a black-shouldered kite
plummets into grass

~Cape Schanck, Victoria, Australia

when I die
I want to be
the morning breeze
that musses up
your hair

counting the dead
in an old address book
I was a fool
to think this sky-blue day
could last forever

preserved
between these pages
a silverfish
and the remains
of a love poem

~Melbourne, Australia

Eric Greinke

a bountiful blonde
slipped into the office
to steal all the keys
while one guard took a slow leak
the other stared enraptured

~New York City, New York, USA

a cop was in shock
after being beaten up
by a kung-fu boy
he never knew what hit him
after the boy flashed that grin

~San Francisco, California, USA

seven friends met up
at a bar on Bourbon Street
they had a few beers
each man told a sad story
so they each had a good laugh

~New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

one rainy morning
I took an elevator
to the thirteenth floor
of the tall Hall of Justice
rain testified for twenty miles

~Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA
Tracy Davidson

when he left
his suitcase bulged
with souvenirs
even the ‘Waldorf’ embossed
quilted toilet roll

~Waldorf Astoria, New York, USA

after the storm
buried beneath six foot
snowdrifts
the muffled sound
of a car radio

~Glencoe, Scotland

moonlight
catches the silvery scales
of salmon
making their way
upstream

~River Tay, Scotland

playground memories
my part-time father
pushing me . . .
the swings and roundabouts
of our relationship

memories
shiver through me
as I wait
clutching a handful of earth
by his open grave

faint stirrings
of life
in frosty grass
the vixen
takes her last breath

walking on eggshells
all that remains
of the empty nest
I kneel down
by his headstone

spring lambs
gambol in the bottom field
so sweet
especially
with mint sauce

~Warwickshire, England
Kath Abela Wilson

if only my childhood home
could look like that
completely covered with vines
the door latched shut
with morning glories

just for a moment
at day’s end
in this cedar forest
one side of the trees turn gold
as if to make a point

the observant waitress
builds a little screen
to protect me from the sight
of abalone squirming
on our tabletop grill

~Japan

Alexis Rotella

Alexis Rotella, Italian-English translator

L’America
e lontano
preferisco stare qui
dove le cose
non cambiano mai

America is far away
I prefer
to stay here
where things
never change

~Italy

Genie Nakano

there is
no fall
this october
golden leaves
reflect a Saturn sky

at night
our small black
dog snuggles between us
lies on his back
and snores

~California, USA

Marilyn Humbert

in the glade
beneath a full moon
bewitched rivals
cross swords—
the clash of stag antlers

~Wonaganatta Valley, VIC, Australia
Nancy Ellis Taylor

lily of the valley
in the damp garden
my heart begins to beat
in the steady rhythm of icicles
surrendering to spring

~Manheim, Pennsylvania, USA

eyeglasses in December
create a world of
frost maidens and
dragons’ breath
read only the snowflakes

~Manheim, Pennsylvania, USA

from September until June
I live a life of half thaw
messy skirts dragging
leaving trails of
crushed winter

~Manheim, Pennsylvania, USA

Jenny Ward Angyal

caged tigers
marking territory—
they too
believe the world
belongs to them

meeting the eyes
of a captive maned wolf—
sharing
a taste for watermelon,
the prospect of extinction

goats’ eyes
deep marbled spheres
of blue and gold
the cosmos
tugging at my zipper pull

~Natural Science Center, Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

my Thanksgiving
turkey carcass
feeding the vultures—
a blue holiday mood
lifts on outstretched wings

~Windy Knoll Farm, Gibsonville, North Carolina, USA
Steven Carter

against my better judgment
I send her an email;
three summers on,
no sugar water left out,
the hummers still come

sleeplessness,
dreams of sleeplessness,
wishing
I could take back that coin
from the wishing well

you bring me wine;
she appears ghostly in shadow
shaking her head sadly—
yes, the very one
who cut me loose

where that friendly star rose,
the day moon;
from nothingness
to me,
the cat turns her green gaze

LA lights at night;
the plane banks sharply—
knowing she can’t of course,
still hoping
she’s there to meet me

~Arizona, USA

James Won

my name
etched on back of
this tombstone
these in-laws
my extended family

~Shanghai, China

her daily struggles
in the English speaking world
send her back
to melodramas of
her homeland’s warring past

the spirit of Mao
lives in my other half
chores
equally divided:
me, myself, and I

this green feather
no more of use for flight
now waits
in my cluttered garage
for a future with purpose

~Temple City, California, USA
Review: *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow,*  
by Amelia Fielden & Kathy Kituai

Reviewed by Patricia Prime

Contact reiter@ipoz.biz for orders. ISBN 978-1-921869-08-2 pb.

Despite its unostentatious title, Amelia Fielden and Kathy Kituai’s responsive tanka diary, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,* is inextricably rooted in everyday life that nevertheless has the capacity to surprise. The book has a fine Introduction by Michael Thorley and Prefaces by both Fielden and Kituai.

The two poets take us through a year of tanka that ponder questions of life and death, pain and reflection, and observations on nature and human nature. The first thing these poets do is foreground the language and rhythms of tanka. Underpinning the poems is their knowledge and experience of writing this form. The poems in the collection open in January 2009 with the theme of the beauty of nature, the joy of writing and the passage of time. In the following quote Kituai’s tanka appears first, followed by Fielden’s verse:

New Year’s Day  
I cut zinnias  
planted last year . . .  
seeds of poetry  
ripe for the picking

ripeness is all . . .  
perhaps so for peaches, but  
ah! Those green years  
experimenting  
careless of time’s steady tread

The poets foreground the way selves are constantly formed and re-formed by experience. It is experience, or as close as one can get with words, that is
represented. Although this common ground in experience is something that links these two poets, this is not to suggest that they are in any sense lookalikes. In terms of tempo and style of writing the two poets are quite different. For instance, here are two tanka from March 2009 in which both poets write about their neighbours, but with a different perspective. Fielden’s verse first:

the roof gutters  
of our unpleasant neighbour  
are turned to gold  
by the setting sun,  
like something out of Proverbs  
Midas’ touch . . .  
he carries her groceries  
over the threshold  
so young that woman next-door  
he’d no other way of meeting

Fielden’s tanka are often domestic and urban in content, centred round relationships within the family and friends. The poet is a faithful recorder, not averse to detailing that she might one day lose her memory of her loved ones:

all those good years  
of family life, friends, work  
travel—  
what if a lose the key  
to my memories now

Kituai, on the other hand, writes with aplomb about her sons:

japonica  
flowering far too soon  
easy to be fooled  
into thinking it’s spring—  
two impetuous sons ring

Every successive impression, word, line, tanka, provides a range of new opportunities, each of which is then capped by the following poet. The poets here function as releasers of ideas, in the sense that just reading a fellow poet’s work closely can itself trigger a change in one’s own perception. It’s the unintended, unsought-after that humanizes, as in the following examples from Kituai and Fielden:

over lunch  
I share my latest news,  
shadows  
fold into the tablecloth,  
sunlight highlighting the weave
watching the play
off light on cobalt waves
under azure skies
I feel like Monet
minus an easel

The extremes of the Australian landscape are also brought to the fore in many of the tanka: from the devastation of fire and flood to the ‘roadkill kangaroo corpses’. Here is an example of this theme from Fielden:

Those who’ve survived
bushfires’ death and destruction
how do they sleep?
to sleep perchance to dream
aye, there’s the rub

Kituai’s focus often reflects on what she is feeling about a loved person:

scars embossed,
the ribbon bark tree glows
at sunrise
unable to comfort you
I ring anyway

Here are notable tanka from two established and world-renowned poets which are immediately relevant to the concerns of most readers. We can take heart that there are such able practitioners of the art of tanka among us who demonstrate the skills and techniques of collaborative writing and pass them on for us to enjoy.

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**Review: Tanka Calendar**
by Beverly George &
David Terelinck

Reviewed by Magdalena Dale

Tanka calendar, published by Beverly George and David Terelinck, is a great idea. In fact it is a dialogue between two great poets with their own photos. Each poem completes the photo and enriches the image in other ways.

The cover photo is a sunset from Matsushima Bay, Japan. It’s the end of the day at the river bank. The old year has gone on the wavy water of time that flows continuously. For David Terelinck the past time is like dried cicada wings but at the same time a distant bell tolls and this hints at the New Year.

how translucent
this dried cicada wing
upon my palm . . .
a distant temple bell tolls
in time with my breathing

For Beverly George this is a moment when we listen in peace and silence. Hear the rustle of turning page and tea leaves hinting the New Year.

space and silence
what is space, you ask
magpies at dawn,
tea leaves sinking in a cup,
rustle of a turning page

---
Then tanka flows in a poetic chaining accompanied by photos. January and February are months with walls and stones. But we may say it is a calendar of the heart’s season.

the moon has passed from full to full once more . . . the perfume of a night blooming lotus reminds me of you

David Terelinck

strictures of childhood carried through life barriers that keep you safe and those that break your heart

Beverley George

A nightjar call is a love call in David Terelinck’s tanka.

the pearls of Cassiopeia spilled across the sky . . . a nightjar calls from the tree where we carved our initials

In Beverley George’s tanka we meet rustle of oak leaves and the heart rustle hidden in a hand-written letter.

rustle of oak leaves and drone of bees in lavender; a hand-written letter . . . secret places of the heart unleashed and flying free

Tanka Calendar by Beverley George and David Terelinck is a wonderful work, a calendar with little jewels, both photos and poems. It warms our heart and gives us a good mood to pass through the time flow.

***

Review: Casting Shadows — Collected Tanka, by David Terelinck

Reviewed by Owen Bullock


David Terelinck’s collection is a rich source-book, comprising 126 tanka, nine sequences and three tanka prose. Something I noticed early, in terms of tone, was a self-effacing attitude, almost to the point of belittling the self, and certainly seeing it as less than the other:

in the stillness of a sitka spruce stand I look to you and know some can only grow in the shadow of others

the moon will devour the sun for ten minutes during this darkness I will be your equal
But, there are other sides to this self-deprecation. The first tanka still speaks of growth, and the sense of veneration is surely honourable; a hint of change pervades the second tanka.

Terelinck is fearless in his choice of topic. I like the way he is able to leave the power of a certain single word to complete its task, such as in this tanka where the last line is loaded with difficult meaning, delivered at a surprising time:

autumn sunlight
strikes the stained glass
during prayer
you whisper
‘malignant’

Though cycles of pleasure in various poetic techniques may revolve and return, I’m usually bored by metaphor. But it’s really a question of quality; I am excited by examples of metaphor where the allusion fits the setting, as in this nautically-themed poem:

by the bay
the fog lifts—
my mother
no longer marooned
by alzheimers

Occasionally, I wish the writer were less explicit about the emotion and let the situation do the work, which more commonly is the case. Consider this tanka:

casting shadows
a Moreton Bay Fig tree
towers over me
spreading its arthritic limbs—
how I miss my father

I can’t help feeling that the relating of some specific detail of his father’s habits would be a more effective remembrance. On more or less the same topic, this next tanka works more poignantly, as the sense of reverence in the daughter’s behaviour shows emotion in action:

she turns the key
in father’s mantle clock
. . . every week
stroking the oak case
as if it were he

A comparison between the next two tanka might also be of interest:

rock pool treasures
visible at low tide . . .
rare glimpses
of the emotions
you hide so well

velvet moss
on ageing oak trunks
what treasures
will I cultivate
when I learn to stand still

In the first tanka, the writer spells out the emotional situation, instead of giving an instance of an emotion at what is, presumably, a crucial time. In the second
example, the middle line would seem to be very explicit, but the poem is still building in its range and emphasis, so that it forms a nice bridge between the observation and the inward reflection of hope.

A number of Terelinck’s tanka have a strong tactile sense; this one merges that sensitivity with a deeply emotional human experience.

the crackle
of frosted grass underfoot
she steps lightly
into her grief, as if it were another season

These next tanka convey the power of memory in complementary ways:

the fecund curve
of your belly, the swell of your breasts
these ebbing memories leave me breathless

your fragrance
rich on satin sheets
days later
I imagine
my hands are yours

I find myself easily able to relate to the idea of a memory leaving one breathless; and the transference of energy from hand to hand, and from the distance of time, is weighty, and still erotic.

Terelinck makes some experiments with layout, some left, some centre, some right-justified. I found the right-justified choices refreshing; this one perhaps makes the most effective use of it, the last line confirming the solidity that the other brings:

I created
castles in the air
*he’s* mad they said
you said nothing
and built foundations

I did sometimes wonder at the sagacity of a ‘collected tanka’ whilst reading this book, partly as it’s this author’s first collection, and also because I think it would have been stronger with a few less inclusions; but I found decidedly different tanka to enjoy with each re-reading, so this is a minor niggle.

Of the sequences, ‘Mother’s day,’ ‘Too Soon to Know’ and ‘Moments’ resonated strongly with this reader. Almost every link of the last of these is profound. One gets a sense that much loss has befallen the writer, but there’s no self-pity in evidence, rather he “inhales deeply / searching for memory.”

The tanka prose pieces are each well-focussed. ‘Venetian Masque’ also manages to be multi-dimensional, ranging from personal reflection to pure enjoyment of language; abetted by Italian phrases, with elements of travel writing, and still able to reflect on weighty matters, including death. The conclusion to ‘Unlocked’, a poem about looking for answers from a box of keepsakes belonging to the writer’s deceased mother, is one of freedom; he no
longer has to think about the search he’s
had in mind for so long:

I leave the chest
unlocked:
the treasures
I thought it contained
buried with her

I’d like to end by quoting some
favourite individual tanka, one of which is
this evocation of the past’s influence on
the present:

decades later
I cannot bear to take a bath
always third
in the same grey water
in some dusty outback town

If I had to pick a single favourite, it
would be this tanka with a classical air:

no cheap tinsel
or plastic trees this year
I have seen
garlands of moonlight
on the pines of Matsushima

***

Review: *Carving Granite*,
by Julie Thorndyke

Reviewed by Patricia Prime


*Carving Granite* is Julie Thorndyke’s second volume of tanka. It is a polished collection, beautifully produced with the tanka spaced three per page. The front cover reproduces a photograph of carved granite—a striking work which complements one of Thorndyke’s tanka near the end of the book, where we see the decay of the body contrasted with the permanence of rock:

will the rock
now clenched in my hand
crumble at last
some distant decade
when my skeleton is dust

Many of the tanka in this collection have been previously published in journals and anthologies. Thorndyke brings a contemporary feel to the form that encapsulates the qualities of timelessness, simplicity and humour that can bring a sense of empathy to the reader, whether memory is being evoked as in the title poem:

at seventeen
we chose each other—
how could we know
our lives were already
carving granite

or with the sense of a child’s
wonderment exhibited in the following:
a shoebox
full of mulberry leaves
and silkworms . . .
a child’s hand
lifts the lid

Thorndyke’s voice is restrained, clearly
suffused by her background in Australia,
but persuaded by her sense of rhythm and
apt use of words, as we see in the following
tanka about a vision of an Australian tree
which epitomises the rent in a relationship:

a ghost gum,
in a vision, by lightning
rent in two—
our separated lives
reflect the dying light
or this, about a snake:

diamond python
coiled beside my path
half-hidden
my feet thrust the texture
of shadowed paving stones

She revels in simplicity, connecting the
small moments of domesticity and
relationship, without needing to elaborate.
Her poems speak in clear, natural tones
that demonstrate control of her material:
mood, subject matter and experience are
perfectly modulated. She inhabits her
world clearly and calmly, engaging the
reader with her personality and deft use of
a minimalist form:

post-op, wrapped
in a new gown
soft blue
her young eyes
peering into mine

Like many tanka poets, Thorndyke
addresses the everyday concerns of her
pets, children, family, nature and love. Yet
she dares to voice deeper ideas that others
may falter over, and several of these tanka
have subject matter that may not be
familiar to people outside Australia, as in
this poem

an echidna trundles
across this country road
children
in the back seat
stop needling each other

Reading a collection such as this, we
gain a sense of who the poet is. Especially
in poems like the following with its sense
of lost youth:

all the places
we didn’t visit, those sights
our youth ignored—
we walk in the shadows
of ruined cathedrals

The subtlety of feeling in this tanka is
understated, yet it is all the more powerful
for its simplicity.

Thorndyke’s collection may be
celebrated for its poetic imagery; for her
ability to make the ordinary extraordinary;
and, not least, for a sense of humour all
her own. Gathering much of her material from the minutiae of experience, Thorndyke’s tanka shifts effortlessly to moments of clear vision and intense poetic revelation.

***

**Review: A Pillow Stuffed with Diamonds : Tanka Sobre La Vida Mexicana, by Margaret Van Every**

Reviewed by Claire Everett


Margaret van Every’s *A Pillow stuffed with Diamonds* takes the reader on a journey through Mexico, seen through the eyes of a self-proclaimed gringa. The poet spent most of her adult life in Tallahassee, Florida, but in 2010 settled permanently in a small village near Chapala in Central Mexico. Through her association with the haiku and tanka poet, James Tipton, Ms. Van Every found tanka to be the perfect medium for sharing her experiences of a vivid land—and its people—which she is clearly delighted to call home. We share in the countless celebrations (there are in excess of 60 feast days in the Mexican calendar) and we find ourselves rubbing shoulders with cowboys (*charros*), along with thieves, children, beggars and snapping dogs. Even the humble mosquito makes its presence felt in this colourful weave of human experience.

Bite if you must,
winged torture machine,
but don’t serenade me first.
Your music
is insincere foreplay.

*Pícame, si debes,
máquina alada de tortura,*
*pero no me des serenata.*
*Tú música es*
*coqueteo instíntico.*

Margaret has translated her English tanka into Mexican, as she explains, not aiming for literal word-for-word translation, but to retain the flavour of the Mexican-Spanish idioms, what she calls the *mexicanismos*. I found myself wishing I could speak the lingo!

Van Every describes the frustration with thievery so prevalent throughout Mexico, but adopts a philosophical stance. We are told that “Theft does not exist in the Mexican lexicon. The goods in question are merely liberated or redistributed.”

Your ring that’s missing,
don’t think of it as stolen.
It has a new life now
on someone else’s finger.
Like your love, it’s travelled
Tu anillo que ha desaparecido,  
no pienses en él como robado.  
Tiene una nueva vida  
en el dedo de otra.  
Como tu amor, ha viajado.

And then there is the sheer delight of watching children play the ‘beautiful game’:

Like ocean waves,  
swells of children’s laughter,  
rising, falling.  
They kick the ball around the field,  
scoring incidental.

Como olas del mar,  
la risa de niños,  
subiendo, bajando.  
Patean la pelota en el campo,  
los goles incidentales.

We may contrast the glitz of such images:

In a cowboy suit  
bedizened with silver,  
the mariachi  
croons us to tears.  
His schmaltz measures up to the suit.

En traje de charro  
adornado con plata,  
el mariachi nos canta  
hasta las lágrimas,  
su sentimentalismo a la altura del traje

with the surprising tenderness of tanka like this:

The horse’s day is long,  
tethered roadside,  
grazing, breathing fumes.  
At day’s end he gallops home,  
infant asleep in his rider’s arms.

El día del caballo es largo,  
atado al lado de la carretera,  
pastando, inhalando humos.  
Al fin del día galopa a casa,  
bebé dormido en brazos del jinete.

Ms. Van Every has a rare gift for kyoka and even though I have never visited Mexico, there are scenes and characters aplenty to which I can relate:

Blissfully myopic,  
he craves no distance vision.  
His eyes are level with her tits,  
an odd couple attempting tango.

Miope y felíz,  
el sin ganas de ver a distancia.  
Sus ojos están al nivel de sus pechugas,  
una pareja dispareja,  
intentar bailar tango.

These contrasted with the deliciously sensual, such as:

Only at night  
the Queen of the Night* opens  
to seduce one moth,  
her blossom spent by dawn  
whether or not he comes.

*Spanish name for Night Blooming Cereus
Sólo en la noche
se abre la Reina de Noche
para seducir a una polilla,
su florecer gastado al amanecer,
venga o no él.

The woman from Madrid
undulates her hips slowly
to the salsa beat,
insists los mexicanos
don’t understand this dance.

La madrileña
ondula suave las caderas
al ritmo de la salsa,
insiste en que los mexicanos
no comprenden este baile.

By the end of the book, I did, indeed,
feel that I had been on a journey. A
number of Margaret Van Every’s tanka will
stay with me for a very long time and the
quality of poetry throughout the collection
is consistently high, in fact, worthy of its
title.

The gringa protests
she has no fear
of the thief who comes in the night,
but why does she sleep
on a pillow stuffed with diamonds?

La gringa protesta
que ella no teme
al ladrón que por la noche viene,
pero ¿por qué duerme
sobre una almohada rellena con diamantes?

Japanese Arts Fusion at
the Pacific Asia Museum

The Pacific Asia Museum presented an
innovative afternoon of Japanese cultural
arts performance conceived and produced
by Linda Galloway, Ph.D. The program
included contemporary poetry, dance,
music, and art, with collaborative and solo
performances by the artists. *Best
Contemporary Tanka, Volume 2* and 3, CDs,
and DVDs featuring the performers was
available for purchase and signing. The
program was followed by a reception with
light refreshments.

Performances included:

Tanka Poetry by Linda Galloway, an
internationally established and respected
tanka poet, and has placed in prestigious
international haiku and tanka
competitions. She accompanied herself on
the Japanese percussion instrument, the
hamon.

Shakuhachi flute performance by Karl
Young, who has played the shakuhachi for
over 20 years and also performs with his
own traditional Japanese music troupe in
the greater metropolitan Bay Area.

Butoh dance world premiere by Don
McLedo, who is an internationally
celebrated movement artist. He studied
mime with Marcel Marceau in France and
lived in Japan while studying butoh.

Hosted by the Pacific Asia Museum,
Pasadena, California, February 26, 2012.
Responsive Tanka Trios & Quartets : A New Twist on Collaborative Composition

By Dr. Carmella Braniger

For several years, Randy Brooks and I have been collaboratively writing tanka with students at Millikin University. Together with Natalie Perfetti, we published our first “tanka trio” entitled “Night Owl : A Trio of Summer Tanka” in Modern English Tanka (Winter 2008). Since then, we’ve published several more both with Natalie and others. The most recent issue of Atlas Poetica (Number 10) featured a trio by Aubrie Cox, Randy, and myself entitled “Cicada Chorus : A Tanka Trio.” Our responsive tanka collaborations challenge the boundaries of the tanka sequence and string, as defined by Sanford Goldstein, but more importantly, they have helped us rethink the relationship of co-responsibility between writers—as readers—of collaboratively composed tanka poetry.

Communicating the inner life continues to be essential in defining the poetics of tanka. In this spirit, each tanka in any one trio or quartet demonstrates a lyrical quality, expressing a wide range of emotional responses to scenes, events, situations, and aspects of the human condition. Michael McClintock remarks, in his introduction to The Tanka Anthology, “Contemporary tanka in English reflect all the themes and most of the subjects found in more than a thousand years of Japanese tanka” (xlii). Contemporary English tanka writers engage questions appropriate to themselves and their audiences. The best tanka reflect the time, location, and values of the poet’s culture. From love, to home and family, to nature and death, to longing, loneliness, connection, and
regret, our trios and quartets explore correspondences between self and other, self and nature, and self and world. Taken together, our tanka move through the seasons in which they are written and open imaginative and emotional spaces for the reader to encounter and enter as the call and response seeks resolution through recognition of something new, something previously unthought, something that wasn’t there before.

Contemporary English tanka has its roots in Japan’s ancient *waka* and modern tanka traditions. The exchange of tanka (or *waka*) among poets can be traced back to Japan’s tenth century court nobles and twelfth century samurai warriors, who, as Makoto Ueda points out, were “expected to be skilled not only in military arts but also as . . . poet[s]” (*Modern Japanese Tanka*, xiii). During this time period, *waka* were commonly exchanged between family, friends, lovers, “and even enemies who met on the battlefield” (xiii). In the fourteen and fifteenth centuries, Japanese poets shifted their focus from the genre of *waka* to that of *haikai no renga*, or what some scholars call *renku*. Taking root in the call and response of *waka*, *renku* composition involves a team of participants who, using a set of writing rules, collaboratively create varying sequences of up to one hundred stanzas. In “Link and Shift: A Practical Guide to Renku Composition,” William J. Higginson and Tadashi Shōkan Kondō offer several techniques for creating relationships among stanzas in the *renka* response tradition. Many of these techniques are useful for discussing the reader/writer relationship that develops when modern English tanka writers collaborate.

Unlike links or stanzas in the *renka* tradition, individual tanka in a trio or quartet must stand alone as poems in their own right. But they must also “link” and/or “shift” from the previous stanza, as is the tradition for stanza relationships in *renka* or *renku* collaborations. Higginson and Kondō define the *link* as “the connections or relations between adjacent stanzas” (n.p.). And the *shift* has to do with “the diversity of topics and materials” (n.p.). Ueda calls the creation of this link-and-shift movement in a sequence “the art of association and progression” (xii). These two techniques—link and shift—are the main tools necessary in collaborative composition for shaping the materials of the tanka poet’s world into poetic responses.

The balance between the link and the shift is challenging to strike, much like the balance necessary for the poet to engage in the creation process simultaneously as both reader and writer. For in order to write the next link in a tanka trio or quartet, one must read, interpret, and respond to the previous one. The writer, in reading the previous stanza to which he or she must respond, becomes a reader. In doing so, he or she generates an initial associative reaction, which must then be transformed in an organic response that will advance the structural arc of the trio and allow it to continue to unfold as the stanza is passed to the next reader/writer. For example, in the following three tanka,
which start the trio “Dream Walk: A Summer Tanka Trio” (Atlas Poetica, Number 6), notice the way in which we use the sun as an object for linking. Yet, as each writer takes his and her turn reading and responding, new directions are introduced, from the “porch swing” to the bike’s path and “our changing faces:”

jar of sun tea
warming on the step
so sweet, so patient
barefoot
on a porch swing
rb

early afternoon sun
new bike tires
you push forward
my hand resting
in the small of your back
eb

back home for now
in the neighbor’s pool
sun dappled waves
scatter rays of light
across our changing faces
np

The season—summer—provides thematic connection and structurally holds together the stanzas in this trio, while the rich and diverse details, or materials for shaping, are gleaned both from the poet’s own particular surroundings and from the reader/writer relationship established through linking.

As each poet takes a turn being first reader then writer, the composition expands beyond any one poet’s contribution. Meaning is created in the interplay among stanzas as they are composed. Each stanza is transformed and takes on new significance as the readers/writers stretch, extend, and expand the internal and external landscapes of the composition during each contribution. Reading one’s own composition in the context of others’ responses to it affords each poet a brief window of opportunity to view the self as “other.” The space of collaboration creates a reflective silence that provides the distance necessary to see outside one’s own worldview and to read one’s own work in a new light. By the time we conclude a collaboration, we are ready to re-read, revise, and reshape its movement through the places created by these silences, the shifting and linking spaces between tanka.

The concepts of space and place have become increasingly important to creating links and shifts in our collaborative compositions. Tanka poetry of place embodies the community and environment, both human and natural, through which the poet travels. Groups and places are profoundly important, forming the substance and boundaries of the poet’s psyche. Our tanka trios also reflect the values of an “other” traveling through foreign locations, sometimes finding a sense of familiarity and other times struggling with the unknown, which often surfaces inside ourselves.
Each collaborative tanka composition embodies a meditative movement between inner and outer landscapes, reflecting how we each encounter the spaces in our respective worlds. “Dream Walk,” for example, was written in 2009 through email exchange over summer months, after everyone had dispersed from campus off into various directions and different locales. Our travels took us from Decatur to Greece and Rome to Washington D.C., Indiana, Ohio, Florida, Kansas, and Oklahoma. When writing our responses, we found that the landscape we inhabited would often inform the shifts or new directions taken in the composition. Traveling through many locales gave occasion for the reflective suspension we were able to hold in “Dream Walk.”

A link I wrote while visiting family in Oklahoma created the opportunity for another trio, “Night Owl” (MET 3.2, Winter 2008), to discover a necessary imaginative space—a suspended moment in time—before finding a new direction toward closure:

thick red dust
into wide skies
crescent moon haunting me
in a land his, mine
now hers

The dandelion daydream is quickly disrupted as we are reminded, in the next stanza, of “summer’s end” and “the long road / back.” A sudden recognition of “everything / that’s undone” brings the trio to a close. This recollection is brought about by another shift in location: the “return / to campus.” The dreamy mood evoked at the close of the trio echoes back to the “timelessness” of the opening stanza:

I wake to birdsong
as sunlight filters
through the leaves
awakened to this forest,
its timelessness

Randy turns from the previous links, which focus on nature and self, and he shifts out into third person, taking on the persona of a child on Papa’s lap in search of a story resonating with memory. It’s almost as if the trio slips into a daydream for a moment as the next reader/writer responds with another childhood recollection:

shake
dandelion
air thick with seeds
white barbs
suspended
cb

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dandelion
air thick with seeds
white barbs
suspended
cb
The tanka in this trio explore the notion of an extended suspension of the moment—the dart of a robin across the lawn, a stranded turtle, bent sunlight, a prayer, a dance in the garden, and even the cosmos stands still for a moment. These subjects, along with the seasonal references throughout the trio, provide the associations necessary for the reader and writer to connect each single poem to the ones before and after it. And at the same time, we leave ample room for the composition to move forward.

The trios and quartets written during the summer months contain some of the most seismic and often tangential shifts. However, the trios and quartets written during the winter months, with everyone in approximately the same locale, tend to be more cohesive with much clearer narrative arcs. For example, “Green Tongues : A Trio of Tanka” (The Dirty Napkin 2.3, Summer 2009), written along with Randy Brooks and Natalie Perfetti, was started in January of 2009. [Reprinted in this issue for the convenience of the reader.—Ed.] We finished a few weeks before Natalie graduated in May. Written over the course of five months, with little to no editing during those months, this composition accomplishes a correspondence unlike any of our other projects, for it maintains a point of view continually shifting between self and other. Emotions of doubt, regret, patience, nostalgia, irony, and finally hope not only provide links but also allow for the necessary shifts to accomplish the final recognition—the need for balance, for equilibrium. Such emotional states and inner landscapes of mind and soul provide the materials for shaping lyrical narrative movements. The trio begins with internal conflict: “the two minds / in me.”

The following 38 tanka correspond with and respond to various emotions associated with such internal paradox. This correspondence shifts back and forth between the subjective “l” and the responsive “you,” spiraling into a tango that explores self/other relations, then culminating in the final stanzas, which resolve the conflict as we catch a glimpse not only of a single balloon suspended in the open sky, but of a renewed search for identity and stability: “and i, looking / for equilibrium.” The trio is organic, with a beginning, middle, and end, and it moves chronologically from the cold winter months, with “stiff icicles” and “frosted pane[s],” to the thaw of “February rain” and the “low” roar of March “thunder,” until finally spring arrives “not too late” for “a caught kite [to] tremble. . .” or “for warmth / to open [our] chest[s].” This trio is an excellent example of the balance of shift and link needed in responsive tanka, and it stands out as a composition whose parts, taken as a whole, tell a greater story than any one part standing alone. The story-like
nature of this *rensaku* brings it closer to the origins of a tanka sequence than any of our other collaborations.

Sachio Itō, a modern Japanese tanka poet and novelist, was the first to use the word *rensaku* to describe a group or chain of connected tanka, but it was Shiki Masaoka who first published a modern tanka sequence in June 1900 (Goldstein, “Tanka String,” 19). Mokichi Saitō also contributed to extending the tradition of writing sequences of tanka, selections of which appear in the collection *Red Lights*, translated and introduced by Goldstein. In describing our collaborative compositions and composition process, I have deliberately tried to refrain from labeling the finished products as either “strings” or “sequences.” These definitions are useful in describing a single author’s grouping of tanka, but it’s much more difficult to apply these terms to the compositions which arise through the call and response, round robin process in which we’ve engaged. However, these definitions provide an important framework for thinking about connectivity, narrative, and time in our collaborative work.

Our compositions contain many of the qualities of the “tanka string,” as described by Goldstein in his article “Tanka String and Tanka Sequence: A New Twist.” Goldstein explains that groups of poems “clustered around a single subject” might be called a “tanka string” (17). In such a chain, not only should there be a clear connection between the previous and following tanka, but the association should come full circle, as we’ve seen in “Night Owl,” with the closing tanka connecting back again to the first. In fact, the nature of our collaborations, perhaps, allows even more full exploration of what “string” or “sequence” can mean with regard to tanka.

All of our collaborative compositions, including those written as quartets with Jackson Lewis and Joseph Bein, qualify as strings or groups of strings. This quality of connectivity is something we began to recognize and deliberately mark in our revision process. For example, in our collaborative quartet “What Luck: A Summer Tanka Quartet” (*Atlas Poetica*, Number 8), written along with Randy Brooks, Joseph Bein, and Jackson Lewis, we made six responsive chains, or strings, with seven tanka apiece, each string with its own subject for exploration. The overarching subject that holds the strings together is the tension, or, as Goldstein calls it, the “gaijin aesthetics” (*Four Decades on My Tanka Road*, 80) of innocence and experience, of old and new, of a spirit both whole and broken. Each string in the quartet explores some aspect of this gaijin aesthetic, moving back and forth between childlike moments of awe and glee and more desperate moments of despair and lost innocence.

In the first string of seven tanka, the poets move from the old superstitions of grandmother’s remedy for loneliness to isolation, that can be found in technological devices such as cell phones and GoogleEarth. The second string explores the variances between childhood and adulthood, while the third, echoing
back to the first string, explores the hurt and pain of growing up, causing a regression back to images of childhood innocence. The fourth string explores the tension between dark and light, wet and dry, and hot and cold, while the fifth string introduces hope and despair. The sixth echoes back to five, revealing the disenchantment of teenage romance and the struggle of maintaining more sustained relationships into adulthood. The closing tanka suggests that, like objects in a rearview mirror, things aren’t always as they appear. There is no clear resolution at the end of the quartet. Instead, the reader is left with a set of impressions and must draw his or her own conclusion about how best to encounter people, places, and things in the ever-changing world around us. This series of reverberating strings, echoing back on one another and exploring a single subject from various angles and perspectives, becomes more than a chain of connected tanka gathered under one subject. The series, with its loose chronology, still contains a unified movement in time and meaning and bounds off toward new awareness at the end, as all that has been remembered is reflected upon. Taken together, the six strings become a sort of enhanced sequence, not bound by a particular chronology or narrative, but, instead, celebrating the multiplicity of stories within us all.

To confidently call our collaborations sequences requires more than connectivity. There also usually needs to be a narrative movement that guides the unfolding of each tanka. While this kind of narrative arc is much more difficult to accomplish when writing collaboratively, as opposed to creating in isolation, interesting things happen to narrative and time which might not receive full development in the work of a poet composing alone. With just one composer, the story can emerge and one mind can follow through on the emergence. Writing round robin, each poet gives up authority and control of the text the moment he or she hits the send button. Even if the notion of a particular narrative arises in the mind of one poet, there are always two or more rounds of progression out of the poet’s hands before the composition returns. Only in one of our collaborative editing sessions do we have the necessary distance and perspective to begin thinking about the narrative shape and movement of the collaboration and its relation to tanka strings and sequences. The compelling aspect about the round robin style of composing, though, involves the continual release of narrative or thematic control to the others: when it is time to shape the collaboration, the space and distance inherent in our writing practice leaves room for multiple variations of strings and sequences within a single trio or quartet.

Goldstein differentiates between tanka strings and sequences, calling the string “less organized,” chronologically loose, and lacking a conclusion (“Tanka String,” 18). On the other hand, the sequence is “organic, has a beginning, middle, and end, and comes to a strong conclusion
about the world or society or about a
dramatic change or a new awareness in the
poet writing the sequence” (“Tanka
String,” 18). While each of our
collaborations genuinely takes up
Goldstein’s call for the sequence to find
resolution, not every trio or quartet
accomplishes this task. “Green Tongues” is
the exception. As described earlier, this
sequence meets all the criteria for a
sequence. Truly, the sequence is as organic
as the collaboration that effected its result.
Japanese tanka poet Mokichi Saitō, famous
for his eloquent and cohesive sequences,
 wrote : “Chronology is the easiest way to
make a sequence of tanka” (Red Lights,
284). The sequence moves chronologically
from January to May and maintains a
consistent shifting first and second person
point of view, allowing for the exploration
of conflict and resolution and drawing
larger conclusions about the relationship
between self, other, and world. The
sequence is full of tension and change, as
the subjective “I” moves about in the silent
terrains of expectation, longing, hope, and
awe.

The final revision process resulted in
our intentional division of the stanzas into
three groups, or strings, of 13 tanka, with
each chain focusing on a particular
emotional landscape : doubt and regret,
searching and releasing, embracing and
hoping. Through the links and shifts of
these strings, we create an imaginative
narrative arc, a space for the development
of a story, as we move in and out of
landscapes, perspectives, and points of
view. Taken together, the three strings
move toward an alteration of the poets’
worldviews. With the final tanka in “Green
Tongues” comes the weight of discovery, as
the point of view shifts outside the self and
to the world beyond “you and me.” This
new awareness of the self and the world
recognizes the poems’ and the poets’ gaijin
aesthetics, the duality of “the two minds / in
me,” and it reaches toward a space in
which these conflicting opposites may co-
exist.

In his recent article “Not Again! Yes,
Tanka Strings and Tanka Sequences” (Atlas
Poetica, Number 5), Sandford Goldstein
gives an update on his 2004 journal article
on strings and sequences. In this re-
envisioning, he concludes, “[t]he world of
tanka is extending beyond its clear
definitions of tanka sequence and tanka
string” (65). Our collaborations are a
perfect example of such extension.
Reaching beyond the categories of
“sequence” and “string,” responsive tanka
trios and quartets stretch toward a blended
genre, which consists of an integration of
the two forms. The tanka trio “Green
Tongues,” a sequence of tanka strings, is a
new twist on the collaborative composition
process and the poetics of tanka sequences
and strings.
Works Cited


Enter the Wonderland: Writing Tanka (haiku and renga)

Mira N. Mataric

Read poetry, stories, essays, memoirs; observe nature, flowers, people and their pictures; listen to music or visual art; dream . . . listen to your inner voice and remember. Then write. Poetry will flow like a fresh spring or a powerful river. Some write and then remember. The sensation and the memory will last and stay in the form of your awareness and a permanent message shared with others.

If you do not choose real nature and life for inspiration, opt for the imagination approach as a start. Let yourself fly, thinking “what if . . .” Unleash your dreams and wishes. Soar. Take the time to relax, go with the flow and poetry will flow spontaneously. For some, walking offers the right rhythm and cadence, for others peaceful meditation and dolce far niente (sweet idleness, loafing) sparks the creative fire. Even dreams and half-awakened state. Steal the time from the everyday rush, empty your mind and fill it with poetry. Most likely short and wise proverbial statements will follow: philosophical and precise. This form then will be applicable to prose and other forms of creative writing (alone or in haibun: prose plus a short poem as illustration), even treated and developed through other art forms (paintings, photography and music).

Some people, on some days, will turn a solitary walk or washing the dishes, riding on a train, as an opportunity for personal expression like a ritual of some sort. Try it. It is wondrous and wonderful.

Mira N. Mataric
email: mira016@hotmail.com
miramataric.net
California, April, 2011
ANNOUNCEMENTS

* * *

**Multiverses founding announcement and call for submissions**

It is my honor to announce the launch of *Multiverses*, a new online journal dedicated to publishing modern English haiku and related forms of Japanese poetry, as well as to make an initial call for submissions for our first issue (due out in Spring of 2012). From our editorial statement:

"Each moment of our lives is a haiku waiting to happen. The unique way in which we experience these moments creates an authentic and personal reality known only to ourselves—our own little universe, so to speak. Yet we are all part of the same sum. By sharing our individual experiences and observations, we gain perspective and insight into the world of others, therefore becoming better attuned and more intimate with our own. It is with this idea in mind that Multiverses happened into existence."

We are so excited and pleased to have an incredible team of editors, including:

- Paul Smith, Tanka Editor
- Melissa Allen, Haibun Editor
- Alexis Rotella, Haiga Editor
- Johannes S. H. Bjerg, Features Editor

Please feel free to share this post and spread the word about our launch. For
more information about *Multiverses*, including details on submitting your work (deadline for our inaugural issue is February 15!), please visit <http://www.multiversesjournal.com>. We’re all looking forward to reading your work!

John Hawk
Founder, Haiku Editor
*Multiverses*

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Editorial Changes at Haibun Today

*Haibun Today* is pleased to announce the following changes to its editorial staff and submission guidelines. These changes will take effect upon the release, on December 1, 2011, of the winter issue of Haibun Today.

Jeffrey Woodward, General Editor: Queries about matters other than manuscript submission should be directed to the General Editor at haibun.today@gmail.com

Patricia Prime, Reviews Editor: All proposals for articles, interviews and book reviews should be directed to Patricia Prime, Reviews Editor, at: haibuntodayreviews@gmail.com

Glenn G. Coats and Ray Rasmussen, Haibun Editors: Submissions of no more than three unpublished haibun that are not currently under consideration elsewhere should be forwarded to Glenn G. Coats and Ray Rasmussen, Haibun Editors, at haibun@gmail.com

Claire Everett, Tanka Prose Editor: Submissions of no more than three unpublished tanka prose that are not currently under consideration elsewhere should be forwarded to Claire Everett, Tanka Prose Editor, at tankaprose@gmail.com

For more detailed information on the submission policies of *Haibun Today*, consult our Submission Guidelines. □
BIOGRAPHIES

Alexis Rotella has been writing haiku, senryu and tanka for 30 years. Her work has appeared internationally in hundreds of publications. Her books include Lip Prints (a collection of tanka 1979-2007), Ouch (a collection of senryu 1979-2007) and Eavesdropping (a haiku collection, Modern English Tanka Press, 2007).

André Surridge - Born in England, André lives in New Zealand. His work has been published in: Atlas Poetica; Modern English Tanka; Presence; Magnapoets; Tanka Splendor; Eucalypt; Kokako; Simply Haiku; Prune Juice; The Heron’s Nest; paper wasp; Notes From The Gean; Sketchbook & Take Five.

Autumn Noelle Hall lives and writes in Green Mountain Falls, Colorado. Her work has appeared in Poetry While You Wait and Messages from the Hidden Lake, and in the Colorado Vocal Arts Ensemble’s Voice Verse and Vision production, and online in Haibun Today and Contemporary Haibun Online.

Bob Lucky is an English and History teacher with a fondness for poetry, ukuleles, and spicy food. His work has appeared in various journals and anthologies. He currently teaches at the Community International School in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Brendan Slater is a father from Stoke-on-Trent, England. He has been writing tanka since early 2010.

Brigid Fayers is a member of Slipstream Poets in West Sussex England.

Bruce D. Reed is a Writer, Poet, Musician and Actor who lives in Western Maryland.

Bruce England began writing haiku seriously in 1984. Other related interests include haiku theory and haiku practice and the occasional tanka. A chapbook, Shorelines, was published with Tony Mariano in 1998.

Dr. Carmella Braniger, is a graduate of Muskingum College, Johns Hopkins University, and Oklahoma State University. She teaches creative writing at Millikin University, Decatur, Illinois. Her poems appear in Syenmore Review; Poems and Plays, The Dirty Napkin and MARGIE: The American Journal of Poetry. Her chapbook, No One May Follow, is forthcoming from Pudding House Publications. She enjoys gardening, walking and cooking meals with her husband and daughter.

Charles Tarlton is a retired university professor currently living in Oakland, California with his wife. After a long career writing about the history of political theory, his interests now are focused entirely on Tanka, particularly the mixtures of verse and discourse in tanka prose.

Christina Nguyen is a writer and poet living in Hugo, Minnesota. She plays with words and poetry on Twitter as @TinaNguyen. Some of her work appears in Ribbons, Gasts, red lights, American Tanka, Frogpond, Prune Juice, Moonbathing, tinywords, and other journals.

Claire Everett lives in County Durham with her husband and five children. Her work has appeared in Simply Haiku, American Tanka, Magnapoets, red lights, Lynx, Moonbathing, Eucalypt, Presence and Magnapoets anthologies. Claire loves to be out walking, in the Lake District or the North Yorkshire Moors.
David Edwards was born, and continues to live, in Muncie, IN (USA). As of January 2012 he was 44 years old. His life has been so mundane and uneventful as to make further description a waste of the reader’s time.

Dawn Bruce an Australian poet living in Sydney, is a creative-writing teacher, the Vice-president of the Australian Haiku Society and member of the Bower Birds tanka group. She is widely published in Australia and overseas, a winner of many writing and haiga prizes and author of books containing free verse and haiku—Stinging the Silence, Tangible Shadows and Sketching Light.

Eric Greinke is a 63-year-old poet from Rockford, Michigan whose magazine credits include The New York Quarterly, The Pedestal Magazine, The South Carolina Review, Abraxas and many others.

Gary LeBel is a poet/painter living in the greater Atlanta, Georgia area. He earns his bread as an industrial consultant for a company he co-founded.

Gary Severance lives on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. His poems have been published in Atlas Poetica.

Genie Nakano is a writer and dancer. Currently she teaches Dance, Gentle Yoga and Laughter Yoga in Southbay, California and is a journalist for Gardena Valley News. Her haiku and related forms have been published in Contemporary Haibun Online, Heron’s Nest, Atlas Poetica, tinywords, Ribbons, Moonbathing, Modern Haiku, Frogpond, and the Red Moon Anthology.

Ignatius Fay is a retired paleontologist who has been writing short poetry in various Japanese styles for twenty years. The brevity of the forms and the focus on keen observation continue to intrigue and attract him. He continues to endeavor to refine his art. He lives in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada.

Jacob Kobina Ayiah Mensah is a vegetarian, poet, artist, translator, journalist and teacher. He edits The Rough Sheet Tanka Journal and manages Kofi Edofo Gallery and Kukubenkuka. He lives in the southern part of Ghana.

James Won participates in local haiku and tanka writing groups. His writings have been published in red lights, Kokako, Atlas Poetica, and haiku anthologies.

Jenny Ward Angyal lives on a small organic farm in Gibsonville, NC, USA, with her husband and one Abyssinian cat. She has written poetry since the age of five. Since retiring, she has given more time to poetry and has become enchanted with tanka. Her poems have previously appears in Lynx, Moonbathing, Ribbons, and Tanka Splendor. Her poems may also be found online at <http://grassminstrel.blogspot.com>.

Johannes S. H. Bjerg. Male Dane trying to communicate with the haiku, tanka, gogyoshi community outside Denmark where these poetry forms live a poor life.


Kath Abela Wilson is the creator and leader of Poets on Site in Pasadena, California. Closely related to poetry of place, this group performs on the sites of their common
inspiration. She loves the vitality and experimental micropoetic qualities of twitter (@kathabela) and publishes in many print and online journals, as well as anthologies by Poets on Site.


Leslie Ihde lives in upstate New York with her husband and their golden retriever. She works as a psychotherapist and as an artist, writing poetry to mark moments of insight and gratitude. She is the editor of *Inner Art Journal*, an online journal devoted to using tanka writing as a practice for self-discovery. She obtained her bachelor’s degree in Creative Writing and Literature from Binghamton University in 1981.

Lisa Tibbs was raised in a small village called Laneshawbridge in Lancashire, UK, where she could write poetry. However, she felt the need to move to a city so she chose Manchester. After meeting her husband there he was offered a job at Caltech, Pasadena Ca. Where she found the time being a housewife to resume poetry and start writing Tanka. In her spare time she has a love for art and cooking.

Lorne Henry lives in the rural area of Central Lansdowne (a dot on the map) in the mid-north coast area of NSW Australia.


M. Kei is the editor of *Atlas Poetica* and editor-in-chief of *Take Five: Best Contemporary Tanka*. He is a tall ship sailor in real life and recently published a series of nautical novels featuring a gay protagonist, *Pirates of the Narrow Seas*.

Magdalena Dale has published in *Haiku, Albatros, Dor de Dor, Ribbons, Guts, Kokako, Magnapoets, Modern English Tanka, Atlas Poetica, Ambrosia, moonset, Taj Mahal Review, Ginyu, Hekia, Fire Pearls, Among the Lilies, One Hundred Droplets, While the Light Holds* and several bilingual Romanian anthologies. She has published a bilingual tanka book *Perle de rouă / Dewpearls*, with the poet Vasile Moldovan and a bilingual renga book *Mireasmă de tei / Fragrance of lime*.

Margaret L Grace pursues "Found Object Sculpture" and painting. Writes free verse, tanka, haiku and short stories. Her work has
been published in Australia, USA, UK, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Japan. Margaret practices Ki Harmony meditation.

**Marilyn Hazelton** is a poet and essayist in Allentown, Pennsylvania. As a teacher, she thinks about why writing poetry is an act of self-liberation, how creative acts inform the soul and how to raise those issues within a broader community. She is the editor and publisher of *red lights*, an international tanka journal. Her haiku, haibun and tanka have been published in *Modern Haiku, bottlerockets,* and other journals.

**Marilyn Humbert** lives in the outer Northern suburbs of Sydney surrounded by bush. Her work appears in *Eucalypt, Kokako, Moombathing, Simply Haiku* and *Atlas Poetica.*

**Mary Hind** was born in the UK and now lives in Melbourne, Australia. She writes mainly haiku and, lately, tanka. Her work has appeared in Australian and overseas journals. Her poetry has also appeared on Melbournetrains for the Moving Galleries project. Recently she won the British Haiku Society’s haibun competition and is a member of HaikuOz.

**Mel Goldberg** earned an advanced degree in literature, then taught literature and writing in California, Illinois, Arizona and as a Fulbright Exchange Teacher at Stanground College in Cambridgeshire, England. For seven years, he lived in and traveled in a small motor home throughout the US, Canada, and Mexico. He lives in Jalisco, Mexico with his partner, professional artist Bev Kephart, but he maintains a Texas, USA, mail address for convenience.

**Melissa Allen** lives in Madison, Wisconsin with her teenage son and is a graduate student working toward a master’s degree in library science. She writes the blog *Red Dragonfly*<haikuproject.wordpress.com>.

**Mike Montreuil** lives in the old city of Gloucester with his family and their cats. His English and French haiku, tanka, and haibun have been published online or in print throughout the world.

**Mirjana (Mira) N. Mataric,** Ph.D. has 31 published books of poetry, prose and translations. In over 50 years of writing and translating, she has received more than twenty international awards. She taught English, Russian, Special and Continuing Education. She still teaches Creative writing for adults; organizes, facilitates and participates in public poetry readings; and is active in the international book fairs and literary gatherings on both continents.

**Nancy Ellis Taylor** is an L.A.-based poet who grew up in the Amish country of Pennsylvania. Currently, she is active in Poets on Site (group giving poetry performances focusing on art in galleries and museums) and with the Southland Poets of the Fantastic (science fiction, horror, and fantasy). Her work has appeared in the *L.A. Flood Project, Illumen, Echoes,* and the anthology *Jack-o’-Spec.*

**Natalie Perfetti** studied literature and writing at Millikin University where she graduated in 2008. She grew up in the small town of Lowell, Indiana, where she first learned to love reading and writing. Natalie has received multiple offers to attend graduate school where she can continue her study of language. When not immersed in a book or a poem, Natalie loves to swim, bike, and travel.

**Neal Whitman** lives in Pacific Grove, California where, he and his wife, Elaine, are
docents at the Robinson Jeffers Tor House in nearby Carmel. They collaborate on publishing haiga that feature the Monterey Peninsula: her photography and his haiku, and her photographs also grace his 2011 Haiku Pix Review first prize chapbook, Blyth’s Spirit. Neal has published tanka in Simply Haiku plus his haiku and haibun have been published in several journals.

Oprica Padca\u0163u is a Romanian writer. She has published both prose and poetry books. Her books Dragonfly’s Play, Blackbird’s song (haiku) and Mother’s Smile (tanka) had success in country and abroad. Among her prizes for haiku: the second award at the Mainichi Daily News Haiku Contest (2010) and the first award at the International Contest of the Romanian Society of Haiku. Also, her name is in Top 100 (2010) of the best European haijinns.

Owen Bullock has published tanka in Atlas Poetica, Eucalypt, Kokako, Moonset, Presence, etc. He recently published his first collection of haiku, wild camomile. He lives in Waihi, New Zealand.

Patricia Prime is coeditor of the New Zealand magazine Kokakos. She has published poetry in collaboration with fellow NZ poet, Catherine Mair. Ongoing work includes an essay on African poetry and an essay on haiku by Indian poets.

Peggy Castro has been writing poetry for almost 50 years. She publishes in various print journals and currently works as a case manager dealing with the homeless. She lives in Alhambra, California and participates in Poets on Site.


Raquel D. Bailey is originally from St. Andrew, Jamaica, and is a proud mother, Executive Administrator, Event Planning consultant & child advocate. As an F.S.U English graduate, she is the Founding Editor & Publisher of Lyrical Passion Poetry E-Zine. Her poetry works appear in The Heron’s Nest, Simply Haiku, Modern Haiku, Ribbons, Frogpond, The Aurorean, (EPN), Shamrock, Wisteria, Chrysanthemum, Red Lights, Taj Mahal Review, Presence, Other Poetry, Mainichi Daily News & Cider Press Review. She resides in Florida.

Dr. Randy Brooks is Dean of Arts & Sciences at Millikin University where he teaches courses on publishing and the global haiku tradition. He is editor of Mayfly magazine and publisher of Brooks Books. He was introduced to modern tanka in 1976 by Dr. Sanford Goldstein and has been writing haiku and tanka ever since. He is the web editor for Modern Haiku magazine and the Haiku Society of America.

Rodney Williams’ tanka—often featuring birds—have been published in Australia (especially in Eucalypt); in America, New Zealand, Austria and Canada; and on international websites. Before editing Snipe Rising from a Marsh, he had tanka appear in other ATPO Special Features, plus Take Five and Catzilla! (USA), Grevillea and Wonga Vine, and Food for Thought (Australia).

S. M. Abeles returned to creative writing over the summer following a lengthy layoff. His poems have since been featured in the
inaugural issue of Railroad Poetry Project and Tuck Magazine. He lives in the Washington D.C. area with his family and writing partner/Beagle. His witness is the empty sky.

Sherry Steiner was born in the Bronx New York but now resides in Housatonic in the Berkshires in Western MA. Arts educator, visual artist and writer of eclectic Spoken Word pieces. For more information please visit: <http://www.sherrysteiner.com>

Sonam Chhoki was born and brought up in Bhutan. She has been writing tanka for about 5 years now. The Japanese short forms of haiku, tanka and haibun resonate with her own Tibetan Buddhist upbringing. A few of her tanka have been published in Eucalypt, Magnapoets, Ribbons and SimplyHaiku.

Steven Carter is retired emeritus professor of English, having taught for 38 years. His haiku, tanka, and haibun have appeared in Frogpond, Shamrock Haiku, Contemporary Haibun Online, Taj Mahal Review, Haibun Today, Lynx, Whirligig, and others. In 2010 he was awarded the Eric Hoffer Foundation’s Montaigne Medal grand prize for his book of essays, Devotions to the Text.

T. J. Edge ••• (ten ten ten) grew up on a farm in Appalachia and is self-employed as a designer / programmer.


Terry Ingram is a retired advertising writer-producer-director. Writing Haiku, Senryu, Haibun and Tanka since 2002. Born and raised in southern Illinois. Attended the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. Now resides in Texas, USA.

Tessa Wooldridge lives in the rural city of Queanbeyan, New South Wales, Australia. She has worked in the fields of education and librarianship, and has been a long-term indexer and researcher with AustLit: The Resource for Australian Literature. Tessa’s reviews, poetry and prose have appeared in Australian and international journals.

Tish Davis lives in Dublin, Ohio. Her work has appeared in Modern Haibun and Tanka Prose, Modern Haiku, Frogpond, Haibun Today, Presence, bottle rockets, and Simply Haiku.

Tracy Davidson lives near Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, England. She enjoys writing poetry and flash fiction. Her work has appeared in various publications and anthologies including: Modern Haiku, Mslexia, Ribbons, A Hundred Gourds and Notes from the Gean.

Our ‘butterfly’ is actually an Atlas moth (Attacus atlas), the largest butterfly/moth in the world. It comes from the tropical regions of Asia. Image from the 1921 *Les insectes agricoles d’époque.*