

ATLAS
POETICA
A Journal of World Tanka

Number 20

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toki, editorial assistant

Keibooks, Perryville, Maryland, USA

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Atlas Poetica *A Journal of World Tanka*

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Atlas Poetica : A Journal of World Tanka, an organic print and e-journal published at least three times a year. Atlas Poetica is dedicated to publishing and promoting world tanka literature, including tanka, kyoka, gogyoshi, tanka prose, tanka sequences, shaped tanka, sedoka, mondo, cherita, zuihitsu, and other variations and innovations in the field of tanka literature. We do not publish haiku, except as incidental to a tanka collage or other mixed form work.

Atlas Poetica is interested in all verse of high quality, but our preference is for tanka literature that is authentic to the environment and experience of the poet. While we will consider tanka in the classical Japanese style, our preference is for fresh, forward-looking tanka that engages with the world as it is. We are willing to consider experiments and explorations as well as traditional approaches.

In addition to verse, *Atlas Poetica* publishes articles, essays, reviews, interviews, letters to the editor, etc., related to tanka literature. Tanka in translation from around the world are welcome in the journal. Complete guidelines are available online at: AtlasPoetica.org.

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Educational Use Notice

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Editorial Biographies

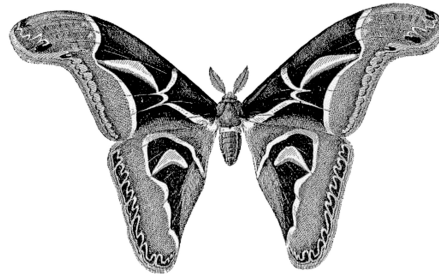
M. Kei is the editor of *Atlas Poetica* and was the editor-in-chief of *Take Five : Best Contemporary Tanka. Vols. 1–4*. He is a tall ship sailor in real life and has published nautical novels featuring a gay protagonist, *Pirates of the Narrow Seas*. His most recent book is *January, A Tanka Diary*.

toki is a published poet and recent addition to the Keibooks editorial team. Born and raised in the Pacific Northwest US, toki often writes poetry informed by the experience of that region: the labyrinthine confines of the evergreen forests, the infinite vastness of the sea and inclement sky, and the liminal spaces in between. toki’s poetry can be found online and in print, with work published in *Atlas Poetica*, *The Bamboo Hut*, and *Poetry Nook*.

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*.

Errata

In *Atlas Poetica 19*, we incorrectly listed ‘Iran’ as the location for Kath Abela’s ‘Monkey Business.’ It should have been India. We apologize for the error.



Journal of World Tanka

The new year rings in great changes here at *Atlas Poetica*. First and most noticeable: we have changed our subtitle from *A Journal of Tanka Poetry of Place* to *A Journal of World Tanka*. The journal has always been a journal of world tanka, but the change in subtitle makes that clearer. All sorts of tanka from around the world are welcome in our pages, from the traditional to the avant garde, however you want to define those terms. We are open to all variations of what is probably the words oldest continuously published poetic form. In addition to publishing tanka and its variations, such as kyoka and gogyoshi, we have also formally expanded to include sedoka, mondo, and zuihitsu—forms which rarely appear in other journals of Japanese-originated poetics.

Although sedoka and mondo are intimately bound up on the origin of tanka/waka, zuihitsu is a new addition. The zuihitsu, or ‘miscellany’ is a collection of short items of interest to the author. The most famous one is Sei Shōnagon’s *The Pillow Book*. Sei Shōnagon (c. 966–1017/1025) was a lady of the Imperial court of Japan during the Heian period when the aesthetics that dominated tanka for a thousand years were formed. Like all courtiers, she wrote tanka, but she is most famous as being what perhaps we would today call a “pundit” as she wrote her personal observations on a wide variety of subjects. If she were alive today, she’d be a blogger. In the modern era, Kimiko Hahn is known for her *Narrow Road to the Interior*, a zuihitsu that is part fiction, part fact, and composed of tanka, emails, and prose passages, the whole stitched together in a work of literature that engrosses the reader even as it bewilders the boundaries that conventionally separate literary genres. We hope to see more of it our submissions pile.

For years it was intended to bring *Atlas Poetica* out in an electronic format, but aside from the PDFs of back issues provided on the website, that goal eluded us. The internal layout was too complex. After the success of our experimental

anthology, *Bright Stars, An Organic Tanka Anthology*, we have decided to adopt the organic approach for *Atlas Poetica* as well. Thus the interior is simplified and streamlined with all works by a particular poet gathered together in one place, along with their biography. This will enable the reader to more fully enjoy the author’s voice and scope. Non-fiction continues and is found at the back of the journal as usual. The more compact form will allow us to publish more content without adding to the page count or cover price.

Unfortunately, one of the great innovations of *Bright Stars* proved untenable, and that was the inexpensive cover price. *Atlas Poetica* will continue at its old cover price. However, with the production of inexpensive ebooks, we hope to reach readers that could not otherwise afford the journal.

Things that do not change include our use of satellite images of the Earth to emphasize our world vision, and our welcome to poets new and old to be published without regard for fame or any particular orthodoxy. Always we seek to publish tanka that give pleasure, challenge our perceptions, and expand our understanding.

As always, it isn’t possible to bring out *Atlas Poetica* alone. For ATPO 16–19, Yancy Carpentier served as our editorial assistant. Starting with ATPO 20, toki takes over. toki is one of the avant garde poets we published in *Bright Stars*, but sie¹ is also a skilled proofreader and we are pleased to have hir as a member of the editorial team. We thank Yancy for her hard work on many of our projects here at Keibooks, and wish her well in her next endeavors.

~K~

M. Kei

Editor, Atlas Poetica : A Journal of World Tanka

The Cape Verde Islands. Cover Image courtesy of Earth Observatory, NASA.

¹ *sie*: nonspecific gender pronoun used in place of s/he. Sie/hir/hirs are accepted alternates to the gendered pronouns of the English language.

Al Ortolani

how many poems
can I write about robins—
with the backyard as inspiration
that's what I find—potted
plants and robins

eye doctor examining
my cataracts with his
blinding penlight—
morning tea hangs
like a curtain in his mouth

walking home from work
this evening
in the quiet rain, acorns
snap and pop
below my best shoes

after daylight
savings time ends,
sparrow silhouettes
turn like volume knobs
on the electric lines

the evening sky
yellow in November—
her penciled poems
from a college notebook
like a foreign language

morning cold—
the ice on the windshield
blossoms like a thousand stars—
caught off guard, I scrape
the glass with a can of Skoal

just like my father
—god rest him—
I have a row of pills
to swallow each morning
with black coffee and a cigarette

he died in dirty
underwear
while public speaking—
only an hour before
his root canal

still in morning shade,
the old roofer kneels
on a wedge of foam rubber—
yellow staple gun
balanced on the sunny peak

Al Ortolani's poetry and reviews have appeared in journals such as Prairie Schooner, New Letters, Word Riot, frogpond, Modern Haiku and the New York Quarterly. His fifth collection of poems, Waving Mustard in Surrender, was released in 2014 from New York Quarterly Books. Currently, he is teaching English in the Kansas City area and serves on the Board of Directors of the Kansas City Writers Place.



Allistair Wilson

after all these years
I still remember the tramp
with eyes
too beautiful
for this world

in the dead of winter
I find
I can only dream
with warm
socks on

his fishing rod
caught the rising sun
then pulled it
slowly
through the sky

bovver-boot crows
stomping about
the place
like they
own it

I am no hipster
but the other day in a cafe
writing poems
while looking out with what
I thought were eyes of wisdom

the well
is open
poems
pouring
from my palms

after winning
a good amount on
the lottery
she became very orange
in her old age

shaving
I swirl pieces of me
and yesterday
down the plug hole
daily

like great champs
we placed much emphasis on
swinging arms and stomping feet
but after the warm-up
we ran very slowly

my bookcase
full
of yearning
like a beggar
after truth

shooting
November's arrow
arching for a love
no human
can supply

each night
the petrol attendant
plonks down coins
heavy with
rattles of regret

and not for the first time
bricks in the throat
lead to
the echo
of a turning key

despite
being a
poet
I've yet to start
walking sideways

stranger on a platform
you slowly slew a shoe off
arching toes towards the sky
I pulse and sideways—
catch your little smile

‘on a hot date’ she says
adjusting her legs
then her dress
I turn the meter on
and drive—to the land of hope

every Sunday
the church bell tolls
beckoning the hopeful
every Sunday the same window
closes against the din

accidentally breaking your wings
I didn’t know whether
to set you free
or hit you
over the head with a hammer

I said
hello darlings
down a rabbit hole
and hoped they heard—
and that no one was listening

Allistair Wilson left school in 1976 without sitting for any formal qualifications. He is an ex-paratrooper, world traveler and long-term motorcycle courier. He is currently heading towards his declining years driving a London black cab. Between 1993/1998 he performed comedy poetry on the London circuit. He first discovered tanka—and the beauty of it—in August 2014. His first tanka was published in Bright Stars 7. In his spare time he creates sculptures out of ivy, and uses a lot of sandpaper. He lives in South East England.



Alexis Rotella

Kyoto alley way
the sound of barking dogs
could be
the dogs
from my hometown.

The sound of neighbors
at the July Fourth picnic
and I by the window
as the cherry tree
whispers me poems.

Sick with flu—
I may die
but still I read
Merwin’s translations
of Buson.

Lying in bed
too tired to move
through the space
between trees
a dozen geese pass.

Cherry petals
in the cuffs
of the sheriff’s khakis
as he reaches
for his gun.

Shinto priest
his wife
In fishnet stockings
kicking a tire
already flat.

Old kimonos
each with
its own story
never
to be told.

Old Tibetan couple
up at three thirty
chanting prayers
long before
the first butter tea.

At Three Logs swimming hole
the big rocks
where we dry our towels—
from where
did they come?

I cover the painting
of a fish
in a dish . . .
Rinpoche coming
to dinner.

Cherry pits
a mouse has drilled
a hole in each
before placing them on
a Russian tea towel.

~*United States*

Alexis Rotella is a popular poet. Michael McClintock referred to her collection LIP PRINTS as an outstanding example of modern tanka. Rotella practices acupuncture in Arnold, Maryland.



When You're Not Paying Attention . . .

Autumn Noelle Hall

a snowflake
with all six thumbs out
hitches
one last ride
on your left eyebrow

popcorn orchids
burst into blossom
to raspberry you
with a hundred-plus
spotted yellow tongues

one onion
transports itself
from the bin
on aromatic
emerald shoots

hands behind its back
a not-so-innocent
eighteenth syllable
whistles its way
into your haiku

that friend you've known
for half-a-lifetime
sweeps you off your feet
asking whether you might spend
the other half with him

~*Green Mountain Falls, Colorado, USA*

Kaiser Impermanente

Autumn Noelle Hall

—for Monterey

in celebration
of her 21st birthday:
her Dad's voicemail
announcing he's removed her
from his health insurance plan

“you're an adult now—
somebody's got to kick you
out of the nest”
he never did make space
for her beneath his wing

her blue eyes
bright with pixie twinkle
flatten and chill
till I see the way
he once looked at me

always one to laugh
at another's expense
a funny guy
my ex, a spotted hyena
devouring his young

rolling the word
motherfucker around
on my tongue
some medicine good for us
despite its bitter taste

~Green Mountain Falls, Colorado, USA

No Feint of Heart

Autumn Noelle Hall

—for K

HC SVNT DRACONES*
avast, venture not into these
surly seas
the cartographer's sole
initial, cutlass-carved

reluctant love
a subtle connectedness
revealed in layout,
satellite maps, aortic
rivers under skin

deep within
an ocarina's song
a point
currents that would uplift hearts
might bring about their fall

for all its darkness
January yet hails
a returning
of light through the cracks
these small notes of green

an old chief's heart seen
a refuge for hearts gone south
a heart changed
into heron and flown
by man's works is he known

**here be dragons, as first seen on the Lenox globe*

~Green Mountain Falls, Colorado, USA

Autumn Noelle Hall lives in Green Mountain Falls, Colorado, with her husband, two daughters, and one rapsallion Australian Shepherd. When not feeding the birds or hiking to photograph the mountains, she writes. A Pikes Peak Arts Council nominee for 2014 Page Poet of the Year, Autumn is honored to have her work included in so many fine Asian Short form publications. She is especially grateful to you, the readers, who bring her words to life.

Autumn Noelle Hall

unwilling
to take direction, you say?
consider that
my heron weathervane
never points toward England

my husband
dreams of zombies
consumed
by his work and the drive
to maximize retirement

at least once a day
on average, it falls off
my bulletin board
the greeting card reading:
You are extraordinary

Roadrunner *

Autumn Noelle Hall

They were wrong about the Big Indian; silence isn't just another kind of crazy. But there's a whole pack of Juicy Fruit in it for the Chief, if he'll just tell me how he knew when to break glass and leg it.

everywhere I turn
these lunatics running
the asylum
Nurse Ratchet, straightjacketed
. . . almost feel sorry for her

** roadrunners, natives of the Southwestern deserts of the US and Central America, are the largest members of the cuckoo family*

~Green Mountain Falls, Colorado, USA

for my brother Brian

Beth Zimmer Cunningham

I am beginning
to feel like Brian is gone
and yet
I still feel him waiting by the phone
for me on Indiana Ave

both feel right
and both feel wrong
at times,
I can feel Brian with me
him and my mom

I hope they know
I am happy they are together
wherever that is
I hope they know
my heart aches for them

I miss them both terribly
but they were suffering
and I could not help them
I would take them back tomorrow
and have them live with me

I would protect them
and make them laugh, sit with them
on my deck
watching the leaves change
from season to season

they loved my deck
It is quiet, peaceful
birds chirping
owls calling at night . . .
I will appreciate it more, now

~Peachtree City, Georgia, USA

for Brian Zimmer—from his
sisters . . .

*Beth Zimmer Cunningham & Brenda
Zimmer*

I never shared Brian's passion for poetry. I have always found poetry confusing and frustrating. But I remained so proud of Brian's work and loved telling people about my brother, the poet.

*I am broken
he is gone; my beautiful, loving,
compassionate,
funny as hell brother, best friend,
soul mate—is gone from this world*

Brian would be touched by the sentiment of what Beth has written, although he would have trouble believing it to be true. He would, however, draw much more satisfaction from the notion that in some small way he had opened her heart to poetry—perhaps his one, true love.

Beth has described Brian perfectly. He was truly beautiful, loving, compassionate, and funny as hell. He was also among the most sensitive and forgiving human beings I have ever known. I am comforted in the knowledge that he treasured his sisters and that he gave the very best of himself to us.

*he grounded me
he made me whole
he may never have known
how much I needed and loved him
he thought I would be ok without him . . .*

*he was wrong
it's not ok that he is not here
I'm not ok
my heart is broken into a million pieces
and I will never be the same*

Witness

Brian Zimmer & Joy McCall

Removed from my meds,
a temporary cleansing,
I sit quietly
by blooming water lilies
floating on the black water.

*All these dark purges
superficial, tentative,
never seem to last.
We return to the madness,
the comfort of our bleak homes.*

The poor dragonfly
swept from an opening bloom
dies in our glass jar,
our good intentions misplaced,
the creature requires live food.

*Bright wings lie limp, still,
and we weep for the small loss
of a living thing,
one more pure thing we have wronged,
like air, like water, like love.*

Where there is no peace
we must not tell ourselves lies
nor see death alone.
We have witnessed many times
the sudden surge of a nerve.

~United States / England



naming

Brian Zimmer & Joy McCall

*my hand
twenty-seven small bones
counting
twenty seven beads
in the red mala*

my mala
the color of midnight
invocations
of her flying fish
engraved on its ring

*measured breath
the counting begins:
the names of God
of lovers, of old poets,
of strange longings*

yes—
it's all in the naming:
stone, leaf, door,
bridge, fountain, gate,
keep it up to keep it going

*the name
of his long river
on the map
of a book on my shelf,
of a song . . . his own name*

~United States / England

the herd

Brian Zimmer & Joy McCall

it gathers
like vengeance
the sound
of distant hooves
pounding the plains

*I wait
in shadows
in dread
the dark herd
is closing in*

it widens
all muscle and sinew
wild-eyed
frothing, foaming
alpha and omega

*the fates
have broken loose
sparking
a stampede of evil
and where are the gods now?*

the shrine
has been breached
doors exploded
the holy in harm's way
is never spared

~United States / England

lost

Brian Zimmer / Joy McCall

*calm fields
of yellow mustard
a flash of fire
the awful whine, the crash . . .
the dead silence*

rescue
can only be too late
yellow flowers
in a gentle breeze
brush against the plane

*another field
another aircraft
shot down
roots and grasses
cover the wreck, the bones*

lost—
it happens sometimes
planes and people
the sudden disappearance
of those who cannot die

*that sense
of someone settling
in hollow spaces
the sound of breathing
in small fields*

~United States / England

witches

Brian Zimmer & Joy McCall

witches
surround the cauldron
hoping to catch
in its whistling steam
the deed without a name

*do not seek
that dark unholy word
there is peril
to eye and limb,
barbed gates, sinking paths*

to speak it
is to steal the coin
from the tongue
of the ancient seer—
there is power in a name

*the coin
lies on the seabed
dulling
the seer is silent
the black krait sings*

centuries
in the deeps
does the fisher
find the treasure
in his lucky catch?

*the old fool
tosses the coin aside
he goes home
to his wife and children
with nothing but fish*

late and limping
no king in his castle
the fish-wife asks
the wrong questions
his mistress none

*absent for days
his lame excuses
fool no one
avoiding his pale eyes
she goes on scrubbing the floor*

a smile tugs
as she sings to herself
“witch!”
he shrieks in impotent rage
“you have hidden my cup!”

*she smirks
with evil intent
“not just the cup . . .
I have drunk every drop
in the bottle too”*

~United States / England

Brian Zimmer died on November 5, 2014. He lived in St. Louis, Missouri, USA. A posthumous collection of his tanka is planned.

Joy McCall is a nurse/counselor, retired because of paraplegia following a motorcycle crash. She has written all kinds of poetry for 50 years, publishing occasionally here and there. She lives on the edge of the old walled city of Norwich, England, having spent much of her life in Canada. She treasures most her loved ones, nature, books, words and tattoos, life, and poetry. Keibooks have published her ‘circling smoke, scattered bones’ and ‘hedgerows’—and ‘rising mist, fieldstones’ is soon to be published. She thanks M. Kei.

wounded

Brian Zimmer & Joy McCall

wounded
the hare arrives wary
in her need
how soon her soft eyes
honor me with trust

*I tread my form
where he is planting
the wild grasses
he sets no snares
in his quiet fields*

clear a path
for the Lenten Moon
Sundays lift
the Fast for a day
the wild things must revel

*I keep
my wildness hidden
deep within
Lent creeps to the edge
of the open grave*

cold morning
but that is the way
of spring
winter’s coat unshed
warm in the midday sun

~United States / England

Where the Wolfsbane Blooms

Brian Zimmer & Joy McCall

in the end
this child's heart
is hedge-witch,
old cunning-man
living in the glen

*I mutter
sweet dark words
that taste of blackberries
and leave them, purple
on his doorstep*

spell for spell
he summons the pack
to show itself
and speak its name
in the chill moonlight

*naming a thing
can make it creep
out from hiding
in the deep earth
a dark thing waits*

do not move
what light reveals
howls
down the stream where
the *bean nighe* washes *

** The bean nighe (Scottish Gaelic for "washer woman"), is a Scottish fairy, seen as an omen of death and a messenger from the Otherworld.*

~United States / England



Bruce England

Isn't that
what we all want
a woman
to be quiet with
in bed

That mysterious
mist you sometimes feel
that's someone
in the afterlife spitting
to get your attention

Maybe
I need a pet
but not a parrot
I can't die
before it dies

The wife
of a famous man insists
the nanny be fired
because their child
runs to her for comfort

No stars
in the strange microclimate
inhabited by
teens dancing to the monotone
drone of a thumping bass

Pots and pans
good food and a stove
and I heat
a little box
in a microwave

You can cough
uncontrollably
fracture a rib
you can also laugh
and do the same

Around 3 am,
answering my telephone,
a fax machine shrieks
hello to the previous
machine with this number

Canute
tried to sweep
the ocean back
I prefer
to vacuum dust

I have tried
all kinds of drinks in bars
around this nation
but I always come back
to bourbon seven

An F5 tornado,
called "the finger of God,"
on the Fujita Scale,
is Gaia chasing us
on our blue-white ball

Ritchie Valens
all his imitators
sound like him
but, they all look like
Lou Diamond Phillips

Drowsy
on a sofa
below a window
the door is open,
a windy smell of rain

Back of my hand
touching the floor
just caught
a falling ice cream scoop
you want this back?

There's wonder
there's pain in mystery
it's not alone
it rises on broken limbs
looks me straight in the eyes

No porn
no porn channel
get on YouTube
close your eyes and listen
to women's curling

~United States

Sedoka

Bruce England

Destiny's road
rock-strewn to the horizon
shrieking birds, dark clouds
lightning strikes
on serrated mountains
fading light behind us

Bruce England lives and works in Silicon Valley. His haiku writing began in 1984, and his serious tanka writing in 2010. Other related interests include haiku theory and practice. Long ago, a chapbook, Shorelines, was published with a friend, Tony Mariano.

Carmen Sterba

darting here
now there
this day
begins and ends
with hummingbirds

as a child
snapdragons
were my puppets
the space between twin firs
was my throne

five-fingered
maple leaves

once again

last year's mittens
no longer a pair

tree of life—
all the shades
of superiority
disappear
in the heavenly realms

adding perennials
to hanging baskets

my long hair

catches in a swirl
of leaf-bearing wind

unfolding
across the room

a brocade obi

students reach out
to touch a distant land

a slip of rainbow
creeps in, shines on
the inside of the rug
and gently colors
my broken toe

circling
blue koi
ready
to leap off the plate
into soap bubbles

~University Place, Washington, USA

as fireworks end
crowds head home

but a girl pauses

on the bare beach
and reels in a falling star

~Kamakura, Kanagawa-ken, Japan

*Carmen Sterba loved to be around people from other countries since she was five, so she took off for Japan during her junior-year-abroad and lived and worked there for 30 years. She graduated with a B.A. in Far East Asian Studies and an M.A. in Humanities. Presently, living in the U.S., she has been both the secretary and the first vice-president of the Haiku Society of America, an editor for the online haiku journal *haijinx*, and a co-founder of *Commencement Bay Haiku* in Tacoma. Her present location is University Place, WA, USA.*



3 Tanka Sequence

Carole Johnston

I tell her
pay attention to
muddy shoes
notice everything
ants in the honey

write your aches
love the pain in your knees
be here in
every ordinary moment
rain on your leaking roof

remember Keats
and Shiki on their death beds
writing poems to
startle us awake from our
bitterness and gloom

~Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Sedoka

Carole Johnston

teaching
stretches me out
when I
become bored with
my own redundant
brainwaves

phone banking
before the election
listening
old people speak of illness
can't get their voices out
of my dreams after we lose

~Kentucky, USA

Carole Johnston

homeless
gather at McDonald's
in rain
at their usual table
I take my laptop and leave
a scene as grey as drizzle

~Newburg, New York, USA

my fathers' trees
still stand steadfast . . .
I'm a stranger now
an old woman stares at me
across the familiar street

I tell the dog
we will go to the park
we will smell
fresh cut grass and horses
above it all the pine

cobalt blue
glass bottles illumine
the window
glow with my mother's ghost
alchemy of her tears

blood red
somberness of oaks
another
year remembering
falling leaves with you

fear is a trumpet
wail curling down alleyways
moaning in the streets
twenty four hours news
cacophony of voices

late for school
sailing paper boats
in puddles
found a dead rabbit
stuffed it in my desk

mother sent me
to the movies alone
nine years old
I rode the city bus
Godzilla didn't scare me

the first time
my mother told me
fix it yourself
I put a band-aid on
my own skinned knee

kindergarten
I fail shoe tying
time telling
excel at paper eating
paste tastes like mint

second grade
I fail everything
still can't read
colored chalk rainbows
save me day by day

my slow summers
reading Nancy Drew
in a hammock
watching clouds wander
through peach branches

kids call me
the walking dictionary
always reading
traveling to worlds
they can't even dream

~North Brunswick, New Jersey, USA

every day
ten year old mermaids
swirl the waves
seaweed in our hair
tasting the sun

~Jersey Shore, New Jersey, USA

two monarchs
dancing in the garden
and a goldfinch
among the pink zinnias
Crayola afternoon

my left hand
suntanned darker than
the rest of
my skin which sometimes
longs to be brown

dog and I
beneath a billion stars
thinking of
"The Hollow Men" and dread
picking turds from clover

all I can hear
are voices of congressmen
roaring for more
guns drones boots on the ground
shot down my wild crow heart

I meander
into wine red evening
burgundy haze
to soothe my sizzling brain
after the election

moon pops
up above my roof
shocking
out of a black dog mood
roaming the empty night

my neighbor
the hoarder moves away
curb lined with
bags of junk and treasures
dried leaves collect in my yard

I rumble
through closets
old clothes
for the homeless
mothballs and mold

~Lexington, Kentucky, USA

she gives me
a cracked coffee mug
a stained quilt
the wabi sabi nature
of our friendship

~Walden, New York, USA

her strong hands
on the potters' wheel
creating love
red ochre sienna
from the fires of earth

~Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

she weaves
constellations
in indigo
meditation of
warp and weft

~Asheville, North Carolina, USA

five women
pose for a photo
once a year
I with my goofy smile
everyone else so cool

~Woodstock, New York, USA

Carole Johnston is a retired creative writing teacher, poet and novelist. She enjoys driving around the bluegrass region of Kentucky and over the North Eastern United States with a notebook and a camera. She is a seeker, searching for those haiku moments. Her first poetry collection, Journeys: Getting Lost, will be published in January by Finishing Line Press.

Changming Yuan

White Spirits

Under the dark sky
I look up and ask high: *Why*
Not give a snowfall?

And a trillion butterflies
Start dancing as in a dream

Seeing a Shadow

In the dark no one
Is moving, a fairy form
Surely, an alien

Is standing still, and surely
Never will we remain so

Bound: A Karma Poem

No, you do not owe
Me anything, but you have
To pay me back with

All your love and labor for what
I lent you in your former life

7

you are lucky, though
you have turned L upside down
otherwise, you would

have been executed by
law, by light, by lucid thought

G

Gives us all the great
Glories of God, George, Godot
The gorilla amidst

The gamers, constantly re-
Minding us of the G-spot

O

a rope loop propped up
with hope to lasso wild words
running amuck, a

mouth reshaped, repositioned

to pronounce the roundest vowel

W

pecking around lions
only the chick knows the word's
worth as it create stories

of the world with its thin feet
stalking on the beach of history

Violet

you have degraded
yourself from the royal to
the common just as

yang red faded to yin blue

like gray between black and white

Changming Yuan, 8-time Pushcart nominee and author of 4 chapbooks (including Mindscaping [2014]), grew up in a remote village, began to learn English at 19, and published several monographs before leaving China. Currently, Yuan tutors and co-edits Poetry Pacific with Allen Qing Yuan in Vancouver. His poetry appears in Asahi Shimbun, Best Canadian Poetry, BestNewPoemsOnline, Ginyu, London Magazine, Threepenny Review and 959 others across 31 countries.

The (Lost) Love Song of Eric Liu

Chen-ou Liu

she whispers,
what does a poet do?
running her fingers
through my chest hair . . .
I moan, *makes love to the world*

the moon
soaking with wet light
our tangled clothes
on the sand . . .
one star, then many

she left me
for a woman in red
at the beach
I hear mermaids
singing each to each

~Canada



Chen-ou Liu

spring dewdrops
on a blade of grass . . .
curved eyelashes
slow the tears rolling down
her youthful face

Yes Means Yes,
the campaign heating up —
three winters ago
her screams of *No!*
muffled by a fleshy hand

winter rains
drowning the city
for a week —
she left, he crawls
into a bottle

an airplane
crossing the winter sky . . .
my immigrant life
cleaved
into before and after

on the way
to the divorce court
at twilight
her pit bull frowns at me
I frown right back

dear writers
the world is hungry
for amusement . . .
the word *profit* slips
from his fleshy mouth

~Toronto, Ontario, Canada

with a smile
I say with confidence
I'm a poet . . .
the face of my blind date
rearranges itself

the TV beams
one war after another
into my room . . .
silent night, holy night
drifting through my mind

the lingering smell
of loneliness . . .
my night punctuated
by the sounds of ice
cracking against glass

her whiskey breath
poured over me the story
of her first love . . .
sober now, face to face
with my shadow

winter fog
enveloping him . . .
my old neighbor
who once strolled with his wife
strolling with a dog

crows on the fence
squawking like academics
at a conference
my Lego-brick words
collapse on the page

on the far side
of the couch from her
in silence
I watch the finale
of Dual Survival

accompanying me

for fifty years
my shadow rants and raves
about everything
except saying goodbye

~*Ajax, Ontario, Canada*

for Roger Miller

the motorcyclist
riding down the main street
arms and legs
in an O shape . . .
howling, *King of the Road*

~*Pickering, Ontario, Canada*

Mom and Dad,
a few feet of twilight
between them
long shadows and I
in the winter wind

~*Taipei, Taiwan*

for Hilary Mantel

walking along
the line of doctors and nurses
Margaret Thatcher
whirls her handbag around
like an outboard vagina

~*Berlin, Germany*

*Note: this is a found tanka based on the Interview with Hilary Mantel:
'What's Happening in Britain at the Moment Is Really Ugly' —
SPIEGEL ONLINE, <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/hilary-mantel-in-an-interview-with-spiegel-on-the-britain-of-today-a-1002263.html>> author of *The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher*.*

*Chen-ou Liu lives in Ajax, Ontario, Canada. He is the author of five books, including *Following the Moon to the Maple Land* (First Prize Winner of the 2011 Haiku Pix Chapbook Contest). His tanka and haiku have been honored with many awards.*

Footfall

Chris Luck

I leave my car sweating on its MOT at a garage tucked away in a gaggle of industrial units, incongruous in this Downland setting, to wander in the late March mud and squalling wind toward skies and grassland horizon. On my right a quarry proclaims no entry. Men toil in the distance—earth moving over man's detritus.

plastic cicadas in tesco bags
fettered from the barb-wired winter
drum amid hedgerow trees—
theodolites scenting the spoor
of toxic encapsulation

I walk on glancing at my watch, wondering whether my old car is ready, hoping it has passed its test and no costly work will be needed. I stop to lean on a stile imbibing the spread of sea and sward. Away to my right the spire of Lancing College Chapel punctuates the sky.

Footsteps suddenly pass behind me.

another's path at Easter week—
hand held shoulder resting
cross of witness
trundling to a Golgotha village tip
Via Dolorosa on an edgelands path

~*Upper Beeding, West Sussex, UK*

Chris Luck lives on the south coast of England with occasional sorties to the Greek island of Skopelos. Much of his poetry features the fauna and flora of these locations.



Don Wentworth

for Brian Zimmer

dropping stars
for the next one by
to pick up
look, see, the sky
your legacy

~United States

Don Wentworth is a Pittsburgh-based poet whose work reflects his interest in the revelatory nature of brief, haiku-like moments in everyday life. His poetry has appeared in Modern Haiku, bottle rockets, bear creek haiku and Rolling Stone, as well as a number of anthologies. His first full-length collection, Past All Traps, was published in 2011 by Six Gallery Press and was shortlisted for the Haiku Foundation's 2011 Touchstone Distinguished Books Award. His poem "hiding" was selected as one of "100 Notable Haiku" of 2013 by Modern Haiku Press. A second full-length book, Yield to the Willow, is now available from Six Gallery Press.



Dave Read

snowflakes drifting
by the street light
my thoughts
come in
and out of focus

speeding through
the playground zone
he still
can't catch
his childhood dreams

over
the supermarket speakers
the music we
rebelled to
in high school

street lights read
like city stars
she navigates
her way
back home

fading like
the winter sun
I drift
between lanes
and sleep

the open fingers
of an aspen poplar
grasping a moment
the color
of dusk

in the shadow of
my cell phone
is not enough
space to change
into my cape and tights

her pretty eyes
in the rearview mirror
notice
that I'm not
watching where I'm going

driving into
the low
hanging sun
my eyes are
crescent moons

it's already
tomorrow in Australia
part of me
always
trying to catch up

knowing
it has to stop
somewhere
the rain that falls
on only half my yard

the lake closes
over my stone
gone forever
what was once
right there

a penny buried
in the yard
she kept her
thoughts to
herself

after you touch
my shoulder in laughter
I start to believe
many things
that aren't true

in morning light
shadows fall forward
he isn't happy
to face
the coming day

underneath
the early snow
still green
our memories
of summer

peering down through
the branches of the tree
I've started
to regret
this moment of courage

sipping club soda
with a squeeze of lime
the bitterness
he felt all day
starts to bubble over

my raft on
the middle of the lake
I happily go
where the still
wind takes me

plucking raspberries
through the fence
her father
never
wanted me around

sitting on the pier
I watch bottom feeders
wondering when Dad
will increase
my allowance

he feels
the wind
come and go
through the holes in
his chainlink fence

exhaling into
the icy air
a first draft
of a poem
about clouds

a second glance
at the pretty girl
who's yet to have
a first
thought of me

a growing list
of things
to discuss
when we start
talking again

for even less
than a late fee
the poetry
I read online
at the public library

snowflakes shoveled
in a pile
by the sidewalk
how we lose
ourselves in a crowd

the evening sun
casts a different light
I wonder
if he
recognized me too

run down
by a passing car
again
my shadow
leans into traffic

a broken watch
in a box of keepsakes
if only
for a moment
time stands still

an open line
to your thoughts
I spend
the morning reading
poems on my phone

a crackle of gum
cinnamon-flavored
she tries to
refresh her
feelings for me

wiping its droppings
off my sleeve
there's only
one way I'm
looking at a blackbird

searching the sky
for the new moon
she's never
been one to
tell me what she thinks

now a puddle
in the coat room
the snow angel
I brushed
off his toque and coat

his footnotes
longer
than his poem—
the words he couldn't
squeeze in 5 lines

doubting death
is a long sleep
I rise again
at midnight
to pee

we praised him as
a man of vision
unaware
he was only
looking away

cracking the shell
to extract the nut
I feel
the pressure of her
questions increasing

as heavy as
the winter sun
my afternoon
eyes drop
to the horizon

on the window ledge
in the living room
the fly's dreams
of the outdoors
died

he claimed
he knew his limits
loosening
his belt a notch
after dessert

the moon is
a boomerang
in the morning sky—
we carry on with
last night's fight

Dave Read is a Canadian poet whose work has appeared in many journals. You can read his tanka and micropoetry on his Twitter account, @AsSlimAsImBeing.



David Ishaya Osu

moonwalk—
i dream of owning
the earth
. . . a home for
butterflies

october—
celebrating
a tea
as soon as
the sea stills

a cherry
poem, too long
to forget
whether your heart
is a poem

rains
during dreams
of rain
i reach paris
before it stops

morning—
the lyrics of
a lark
. . . i follow my heart
into the sky

riverflow—
the breath of
my mother
in me, a flowering
face

birdview
i could only see
half her diary
all the years of
this moon

sunshine
the meaning of
a smile
is what she is
teaching

~Nigeria

David Ishaya Osu (b. October 27, 1991) is a Nigerian poet. His works have appeared in publications including: The New Black Magazine, African Writer, Gobbet Magazine, Elohi Gadugi Journal, The Kalahari Review, Ann Arbor Review, Sentinel Annual Literature Anthology (SALA 2012), Poetic Diversity, SOFTBLOW Poetry Journal, Helicon Magazine, Hedgerow, Undertow Tanka Review, Watershed Review, and elsewhere. David is currently exploring Japanese poetry forms, as well as polishing his debut poetry book. He is also a street photography enthusiast. He writes from Abuja, Nigeria.

Debbie Johnson lives in Nevada, Iowa, US, with a very spoiled beagle. She has written two books, 'The Disability Experience' and 'The Disability Experience II', and has been published in several journals. She has found writing to be therapeutic in dealing with her physical and mental disabilities. Her website and blog are www.thedisabilityexperience.vpweb.com.

Debbie Strange is a member of the Writers' Collective of Manitoba, and is affiliated with several haiku and tanka organizations. Her writing has received awards, and has been published in numerous journals. She is also a singer/songwriter and an avid photographer whose images have been published and exhibited. Debbie is currently working on a haiga/tankart collection. She invites you to visit her on Twitter @Debbie_Strange.



Debbie Johnson

dark clouds cover sun
as rain pours from the heavens
falling like
a mother's teardrops
when she loses her son

an icicle crashes
down from the eave
shattering
my aching heart
because I've lost you

autumn maple after frost
one side red, the other green
mirrors two faces—
our public display and
what we keep private

splendid peach rose
minus one petal
imperfection
does not erase beauty
of the disabled

maples stretch for sky
violet's faces turn toward sun
searching for warmth and light
in midst of cool darkness
I reach for you, my love

a pile of granite stones
gray and brown lay
cold, hard, impenetrable
as is my heart
when anger rages

Oceans of Prairie

Debbie Strange

setting sail
from desolate crofts
to prairie farms
Gaelic songs resounding
all the way to paradise

hardscrabble men
racing toy sailboats
across sloughs
for a moment, at home
once more on the water

*~Port Voller, Isle of Lewis, Scotland
~Rosetown, Saskatchewan, Canada*

Debbie Strange

her calves
crumpled around
thick ankles
we still hear the sssswish
of her silk stockings

red squirrels
on top of the cliff
I focus
on the polar bear
at the bottom

you opened
the cage in my chest
to freedom
every wilding answers
when wanderlust calls

~Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Dietmar Tauchner

multiverse
on a blue planet
religious wars
'cause some creatures
got the idea of god(s)

the place where i raised up
meadows & woods
within blue light
Doppler effect
of my wandering self

long long night
the winter sends dreams
guiding to quanta places
through times back to beginning
until the morning

in the city zoo
between a gorilla & me
3% DNA difference
the outcome of this is
war & poetry

long winter night shadow of time
at dusk in the mirror
the spectrum of light
i gather my thoughts
and comb my rainbow hair

~Puchberg, Austria

Dietmar Tauchner, born in 1972 in Austria, lives & works in Puchberg & Vienna, as a social-worker / counselor, author and lover. His work has been published in various magazines & anthologies worldwide. dietmar.tauchner@aon.at dietmar.tauchner@outlook.com.

Finding Inspiration II

Don Miller

Handy Wipes

the Police Beat blotter said
he said
“I thought it was a secure site”
after being arrested
for his thoughts

who really coined
“Follow us on Twitter”
and look how easy
you make it
for CIAFBINSA

After reading
this airline napkin
“connect with us”,
“like us on face book”, “follow us on twitter”
I wipe my mouth then toss it

**Inspired by reading the Police Beat in the Las Cruces Sun News on August 25, 2014, and a commercial airline napkin.*

What do You See at 2:00 AM

I thought about buying
a mini barn for my mini tractor
and my many me’s
instead I shed my selves
in these tiny lines

all the different faces
all the same
reading his tanka
on Frankenstein
Day

I see the cliché

of blood-shot eyes, facial stubble
the return of my “group”
fear, anxiety
and paranoia

**Inspired by M. Kei’s tanka “I look like Frankenstein”; Bright Stars 3, 2014, pg 58*

Frozen Pie

for awhile her car floats as they try waist-
deep in the half-frozen pond to unlatch the belt,
but the pressure from the water is too great

delivering
an apple pie
on his birthday
her car
slips into darkness

In memory of Grandma Miller

**Inspired by Elizabeth Howard’s tanka “a year later”; Ribbons - Winter, 2012, pg 37*

Poet’s note: This series is the second installment of a continuing series that has been written during July, August, September and October of this year and was inspired in part by David Rice’s invitation to tanka poets in Ribbons “to describe his/her process when writing a tanka”, and Autumn Noelle Hall’s challenge in Bright Stars 3, pg. 7 to write “conversational response tanka”. As noted, each piece was inspired by something I read and mingled with my collective.

Don Miller lives in southern New Mexico, USA. He has been writing tanka since the early 1980s when he learned about the poetic form while attending Purdue University. Don has had a handful of tanka poems, tanka prose, other short-form poems and haibun published in various print and online journals over the past decade or so.



Words

Eamonn O'Neill

oh I try to write
all right
there are words
deep
the unsaid words

I cannot speak
these words
they do not have a meaning
more a feeling
they are heavy

these words
in my head
they are there
I hear them
I know them

is it
just the reaching out
or
the reaching in
the touching them that scares me

and if I
were born again
unafraid
would I ever know these words
and would sunshine make me cry

~Ireland

Eamonn is now retired after working almost 30 years in the Airline Industry. He has travelled widely both in America and Europe. In 2013 he was introduced to the many facets of Japanese poetry. Tanka is now his favourite style. His tanka have been published in The Bright Star Tanka Anthology series. Eamonn posts tanka regularly on Twitter as @nightslostsoul.

Leaf Litter

Gerry Jacobson

I am one who lies down in strange places.
The wooden floor of a dance hall. The grass
beside a road. Leaf litter on the forest floor. And
I sleep instantly. The sleep of the tired dancer.
The exhausted pilgrim. Barefoot. Boots beside
me. Or beneath my head. More frequently now.
Face down. Embracing the earth. The journey is
slow. The journey is all.

midwinter . . .
a cold wooden floor
dancer
wrapped in a blanket . . .
that dark inner core

~Canberra, ACT, Australia

Engraved

Gerry Jacobson

Walk in to a deserted village. Somewhere in
Gascony. Hot, noon hush. No one here. No
shops, no sign of life. A few shuttered houses.
Walk past. Something scurrying behind the
shutters? A silent church, locked. A graveyard.
Huge 1914 war memorial. Sixty names inscribed,
and I count six sets of brothers. Engraved on one
side is a mother weeping. For a hundred years.

morning news
a world awash
with hatred
the terrorists
have taken Fallujah

~France

Gerry Jacobson cycles around the suburbs in Canberra (Australia) where he lives. He grows vegetables in his backyard and in a community garden. Gerry writes tanka in cafes and may be writing a kind of autobiography in 'tanka prose'.

Gracy D'Souza

hunched
a shadow moves around—
such biting cold
I stop by the mirror
then straighten up

month of December—
I start to ponder
if it's just the cold
that makes these days
so punishing

I toss and turn
this way and that . . .
on this bed
all around me
the ghost of my dreams

this way or that
either way I go
I'm still lost
at not finding the words
to tag this enigma of life

spiraling
in its fall to the ground . . .
the last autumn leaf
even in decay
the colour of joy

will I toss
in my icy grave
incensed about
all my lingering poems
frozen in my pen?

shadows of the night
cut through deep silence—
the old house creaks
somewhere within
a wooden door groans

wailing all around
the icy wind
penetrates
through all the myriad cracks
of this lopsided life

auburn sun
in a smoky sky . . .
how many bridges
will I burn
before I cross?

piercing silence
bleeds into
the stark dark night . . .
so complicated
this one-sided love

to the mute moon
on this cold winter night . . .
I recite
all those lines
of my unborn poetry

~*United Kingdom*

Gracy D'Souza is an avid reader and a highly creative writer. She holds a master's degree in journalism and mass communication. She also holds a master's degree in linguistics. Professionally, Gracy works as an Editor in London, UK. She's also a featured writer for an online beauty network. Previously, Gracy worked as an Editor for an international refereed journal for four years. During her spare time, Gracy writes articles, blogs, short stories, book reviews, and poetry. Listed here are some of her published works: StyleCraze: health and beauty article, The Bamboo Hut Vol 1: No 3, IAFOR Journal of Literature and Librarianship, Bright Stars, An Organic Tankav Anthology, and A Hundred Gourds.

Will I Also Return

Jade Pandora

I was young as spring,
and held to autumn's wind
like pomegranates
in the highest branches,
before crows hollowed them

autumn flurries return
with the scent of fallen fruit,
dying leaves
crushed underfoot,
shelter for next spring

~United States

Jade Pandora, who resides in California, is the 2010 recipient of the Matthew Rocca Poetry Award, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. She has studied and written various forms of Japanese short poetry since 2007. A published poet, she can be found online at deviantART.



Janet Butler

a house haunts me
years later the street
still holds phantoms
I cross to the other side
shadows cloud my heart

a dried rose
falls from a book
I pick it up
and memory stirs
I almost remember his name

a crescent moon
traces itself on night
its dark bulk hidden
I glance at your hands
and catch a glimmer of ring

a birthday cake
glows in a circle of candles
stars I wish on
each flicker of light a hope
one eye on the front door

the coffee shop
rattles with new voices
I sit alone
the once heady aroma
now bittersweet

~Alameda, California, USA

Janet Butler became interested in Tanka recently, and since September has devoted her poetry reading and writing exclusively to this genre. One of her tanka has been chosen as an Editor's Choice for Cattails, January, 2015 edition. Others will be published by Undertow in an upcoming issue. She lives in Alameda with Fulmi, a beautiful Spaniel mix she rescued in Italy and brought back with her to the states.

Janet Lynn Davis

Gabcikovo Lock
filling and emptying . . .
how many
more feet must we fall
before the doors open?

~near Bratislava, Slovakia

the shift
in my disposition
when I notice
that train is carrying
The Greatest Show on Earth

~railroad crossing, Waller County, Texas, USA

shafts of granite
inserted in their eyes
so they'll twinkle—
sunlight reflecting
off a mountain of stone

~TV documentary, Mount Rushmore, S. Dakota, USA

nestled
in succulent leaves,
a sign:
*Don't water the plant
It needs a dry spell*

~office building, Magnolia, Texas, USA

a wrist band
IDs me with name
and age—
still, all these people
ask me who I am

~hospital, Katy, Texas, USA

I pop in
at my school reunion
online—
the familiar face
of the mean girl

~Facebook page

Janet Lynn Davis lives with her husband in a quiet rustic community north of Houston, Texas. Since childhood, she's had a strong interest in the written word as both art form and means of communication. Her poetry has appeared in numerous journals, anthologies, and other venues over the past several years. She currently serves as the vice president of the Tanka Society of America.



Jenny Ward Angyal

hot pink
handmade signs urge
Open Your Bible . . .
day lilies gone wild
bloom in the summer sun

preserve
our family values
on a billboard . . .
the homeless man's sign
reads *cancer in the bone*

seven hours
in the emergency room—
shackled,
a prisoner shuffles
through the door marked *No Exit*

two billboards
offering *Christian talk*
and *concealed carry . . .*
hidden in my pocket
a fistful of silence

~North Carolina, USA

border crossing—
at the foot of the wall
between *them* and *us*
a handmade ladder
and a child's torn shirt

~Mexico/US Border

an uzi
in a child's hands—
memories
of family fun
to last a lifetime

~Arizona, USA

the Great War
still killing
a hundred years on . . .
the unexploded ordnance
of the human heart

~Belgium & France

faceless
this corpse of an elephant—
the heft
of tusks that touched the earth,
the weight of ivory dice

~Africa

a sign
hangs cockeyed
amid rubble
from the earthquake:
carpe diem

~California, USA

eclipsed
by a smoke-colored burka
earth waits
for the shadow of mankind
to pass from her face

sea surges
over the drowned land—
the music
of human cities
submerged in primal song

~Planet Earth

Jenny Ward Angyal lives with her husband and one Abyssinian cat on a small organic farm in Gibsonville, NC, USA. She has written poetry since the age of five and tanka since 2008. Her tanka and other poems have appeared in various journals and may be found online at <http://grassminstrel.blogspot.com/>

Mirror Angels

Jessica Forest

my reflections and I
plot the points of our knees
scratched in the floor,
we cannot hold
summer in our flimsy hands

I lay my head against the point where two mirrors join together at a museum exhibit and suddenly I am one girl split into three. This is educational. This is a sacred division of self. I whisper softly to them but they do not answer my prayers for rescue, escape. I can only mimic their arms with my arms and try to decipher the secret within our bodies.

the rough stars
join constellations
Gaping-Mouth-of-Disbelief
with Grinning-Face-
That-Is-Not-A-Face

I look in the mirrors and there are girls who look like me but are not me. They wear my face but not my memories. I look at us and I am so happy that at least some of us are free. When I stand they turn their backs to me and greet their secret, intangible worlds. I cannot go with them when I walk away.

Jessica Forest lives in Arkansas, USA, and holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Goddard College. When she is not writing poetry she sometimes enjoys trying to find a day job, word searches, and walking by the river. She is the author of Wormwood (Ten Pages Press 2010), Don't-My Birthday (Unthinkable Creatures Chapbook Press 2).

where the wind has been

Jonathan Day

sitting
by the fire
talking
about how big
the world is

and about
those places you can go
in your mind
when there's
no one around

nothing
but sky and ocean
and wild things
and you can just sit
and be in it

and try
to take it all in
and feel
the wind
on your face

and try
to guess where that wind
has been
and what it might
be trying to tell you

~Alpine, Oregon, USA

Jonathan Day

for Brian Zimmer

he has sung his song
now I hear nothing
but I think of echoes
I think of ripples
spreading out forever

~United States

Jonathan Day was born in Austria, and toured the continental United States widely as an army brat, before settling with his family in Juneau, Alaska, at age six. He sees Alaska as the best possible place to grow up. He came to Oregon in 1972, and has lived there ever since, working as janitor, short-order cook, welder, furniture factory hand, baker, dishwasher, life-drawing model, chicken-shit shoveler, construction worker, electrical engineer, solid-state physicist, and other jobs better left for conversation over beer. Always, always, he has drawn and painted. He lives now in the wilds of Oregon, and earns his living as artist and maker of fine hand-made books. This year, he has taken up the writing of tanka, under the gracious tutelage of Joy McCall.

<http://jonathandayart.com>
<https://www.etsy.com/shop/jonathanday>
<https://www.etsy.com/shop/jonathandaybookart>



José Ángel Araguz

at the table
beer settles into my body
the leaves on the tree outside
keep lifting up
the sun

this breath
and the next
and my silence
under the shade
of elm leaves

waking
I hear birds
leave
her hair
by my face

mascara down
one side of her face
the colors of the day
pass, harden
into night

the letter
torn to pieces
the paper's
edges show
the smile

across her palms
a psalm
paper
the color of
lamps

between painter,
canvas,
and painted,
breath and light
passing

shaken from
rough sleep
her voice
rises
to the moon

sunlight breaks
past the trees
into a swarm of gnats
little life passes
little life

during an argument
freckles on her
face, neck, shoulders
I begin to count
words unnecessary

late summer
walking along the river
what country folds
and unfolds its flag
across the water

I follow
the changing
lines around
her face
at the salon

within the shade of her hair
fallen across her eyes
glints
a half moon
across water

black dog
in the snow
rolling
a word's ink
that won't hold it

driving early
the fog ahead lies blank
the trees begin
to sketch themselves
out of the margins

apricot slices
stick to the napkin
tonight in the valley
orange lights
take up the horizon

caught
in her work
knitting at the table
her hands stop
pull out a coiled hair

feathers
gathered
at the feet
of the stone
owl

a puff of breath
rises and blends
with the clouds
on the horizon
and fills the sky

grackles against
a watermelon sky
far enough
they are the seeds
spit from past summers

October wind
breaks off a branch
from the elm tree
silence sets another place
at the table

~Eugene, Oregon, USA

at the door
the dog gnaws on
a small skull he found
each clack of his teeth
bares a smile

seeing me off
the train begins
to make her smaller
her yellow shirt, a coin
I cannot pick up

finding one of her hairs
in my food
I smile
watch it
bend with light

cut grass scattered
on the track
on the wind
tell me:
will you see more going this way?

her hair
is the color of a soda
I'd like to drink—
you know, it just makes me
thirsty

April wind
moves the high grass
sounds thoughts of her hair
rustling in bed last summer
hard wind

considering
what to write next
the wind
shakes
the young flowers

dried leaves
at the tip of a branch
the crossed arms of a boy
who hears laughter
behind him

rain one hour
sun the next
clouds part
pressure within
her head

after spring rain
clouds part
the sky folds up
its tablecloth
until next time

rain clouds fold
into shapes
the sky a room
the furniture forgotten
under sheets

autumn sunset
red and purple
across the windowsill
these parting words
nobody hears

our hands
blue
in the half-light
the ink
of words

in bed
the storm goes on
the room
the color of
rain

running
my breath
clouds
mud flecks
cold against my skin

rain outside
the window
when we shift
in bed: is that
the sound?

I have had nights
the color of
her skirt
long and folded
on itself

houses on the shore
a light on
in one of them
when I look back
the waves keep breaking

~Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

José Ángel Araguz, author of three chapbooks including Corpus Christi Octaves (Flutter Press), is a CantoMundo fellow. He has had tanka published in Ribbons, red lights journal, A Hundred Gourds and American Tanka. He is presently pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Cincinnati (Cincinnati, OH, USA). He runs the poetry blog, The Friday Influence.



For Brian Zimmer

died November 5, 2014

Joy McCall

(Brian's poems in italics)

There are some people we just like by instinct; something about them, some way of being, and we think - yes, this is a friend.

It was Guy Fawkes Night (Bonfire Night) November 5th 2013, in Norwich when I first heard from Brian Zimmer, writing from St. Louis to say he liked my tanka.

That one chance email led to a year of deep and growing friendship.

We wrote tanka together, so many. We began to work on a co-written book of tanka.

We shared our different lives in every-day emails and poems and photographs and phone calls.

far away
by the Mississippi river
a man sits
writing small poems
about darkness and pain

Brian's life, because of what he called his 'madness' was often full of deep darkness, and yet, oh the flipside of that—the light, the love, the laughter, the courage.

he sat
in the Meeting House
holding up
all those he loved
to the Light

Brian wrote dark spells in bitter nights, the Samhain Lord, God of Death, weaving through them so often.

The Dark Lord pulled at his heart, as did the God of Light.

He sought help for his extremes, took the drugs the doctors gave him, prayed, took care of

the creatures, his birds, his dogs; did the culture thing—exhibitions, concerts, plays, readings. He went out for coffee or meals most days, with his partner, or alone, or with friends.

And he wrote to me, often in tanka, sometimes in long rambling emails, and I shared that life, as he shared my own struggles and my joys.

Empathy, he had it in spades.

Brian got deep into my heart. I fretted when his illness made him lost and sad. He worried for me when I was in pain.

He had a bright intelligence. He could pull wonder from the smallest things.

*the blue
of the morpho butterflies
is magic
I wish you were here
to see them shining*

and he could just as often make me laugh—

*woman
I want you caustic
insulting
salty as that sea
you live by*

or weep—

*she was known
to park her motorcycle
by stone circles
spending her nights
naming stars in five lines*

There was a high room at the very top of his tall house in St. Louis. He said it was mine. He said he would not dust the surfaces in case I wanted to write words in the dust. So I wrote them in emailed words and tanka by the dozen.

I made him a string of lapis mala beads and he wrote—

*by day
I carry you in my heart
by night
on indigo mala beads
I pray you in my hands*

He called himself the Mangian Man and I wrote—

*the mangian man
traffics in light
and shadows
an image-monger
dropping stars*

he called me many things, often the Witch, or the Hare—and he wrote—

*wounded
the hare arrives wary
in her need
how soon her soft eyes
honor me with trust*

Brian lived always on the dark edge of his illness. But he fought battle after battle, with courage like no one I have ever known.

My own slight shifting between the opposing forces like light and dark, joy and sorrow, was a small reflection of his swinging extremes of mood.

Yet even when he was most troubled, he cared, he loved, he listened. A gentle, kind, funny man. There may have been darkness in him, but the lovelight that shined from him was very great.

I grew to love him deeply. We said we would be friends forever.

But then . . .

Brian had been with with the same partner for 27 years and loved him with all his heart. But there were cracks as there are in all loves, and Jeff left.

Deprived of that safety net, Brian began to fall. So many middle of the night calls, both of us weeping. He sought help, had therapy. His friends and family and Jeff, were there for him.

But the nights in the big house were too lonely for him to bear. I begged him to come to Norwich, or go to his family. He would not leave the dogs, the birds.

My paraplegia meant I could not fly to him. For weeks my days and nights were filled with an aching helplessness, only eased when we talked and he seemed to be regaining perspective.

We spoke of finishing the book. We talked of a visit to Norwich in the Spring, to see a band we both loved.

We called ourselves the Mad Man and the Cripple. We wrote endless tanka. We danced to music over the phone, he in his high room, me in my holy room.

He sang evensong to me on Sunday nights and read from his Bible.

I thought he would always be in my life, alive.

Exactly a year passed. And in one mad moment, the pain overtook him and Brian hung himself. He was on life support for a couple of days, but in truth, he was already gone. And on Bonfire Night this year, with the skies of Norwich alight with fireworks and noise, the machines were turned off and my friend was dead.

he said

sleep—tomorrow we talk more
and the morning came
and the day and all the days
and he was not there

I will miss him as long as I live. I count myself very lucky to have shared one year with him. It was not enough. However long we had, it would not have been enough.

Brian was a fine, underestimated poet. Sometimes what he called his ‘madness’ made him write in a dark confused way. You will find his poems in many journals—please read them, treasure them, and wish him godspeed, wherever he has gone.

~Norwich, England / *United States*

once more, for Brian

Joy McCall

when first
we began to write
I would counter
his strange darkness
with light words

one day
he said—*walk with me*
in the dark
or I will always
be wandering alone

so I stepped
into the shadow
took his hand
and we walked the long
underground burrows

sometimes we saw
light in the distance
then, I was afraid
and wanted to turn back
or stop and stay and be still

resolute, he said
come with me, I have been
lonely for so long
I am going onwards
do not turn away

so we walked
stopping to write
on the walls
sleeping at night in that
dark echoing space

I woke late
that last morning
he stood far ahead
in the daylight
looking back at me

I ran
I could not catch up
and he stepped
over the edge of the dark
and was out of sight

~Norwich, England

trptych

Joy McCall

it is gloomy
in the musty church
the air is damp
we light the candle
and say the sad prayers

I try to pray
happy birthday
godspeed my friend
I can't speak, I cry
like a wounded animal

he reads the Psalm
and closes the Bible
we go outside
there are hyacinth shoots
all along the old flint wall

*Brian Zimmer's favourite was Psalm 40—he read it to me on the
Sunday before he died.*

screaming

Joy McCall

if you go
away from me
I will walk
off the beaten track
deep into the woods

I will lay down
among the dark trees
and scream
and scream until
my voice is gone

and I will lay there
until all the seasons
pass by
and the leaves cover me
and the ice and the snow

and I will lay there
until the beetles
burrow deep
into my bones
and roots grow in my hair

my eyes will stare
up into the treetops
sightless
while the many moons
circle overhead

and my mouth
will be wide open
and pine needles
and acorns will fall
and fill my throat

and the weight
of the moss and soil
will cover me . . .
and still, underground
I will be screaming, screaming

~Norwich, England

I dreamed

Joy McCall

*(for Brian Zimmer—Careless Love, sung by Janis Joplin.
was his favourite song)*

a sailing ship
way out at sea
one lone sailor
drawn by a campfire light
on an island cliff

he has drifted
far from his homeland
by the great river
plotting his course
by the constellations

the boat turns
toward the land
the full moon
breaks through the clouds
there is a ruin on the cliff

a woman
sheltering there
adds logs to the fire
flames leap, the sailor waves
and steers away

the boat turns
white sails filling
the wind is rising
the *Careless Love*
speeds towards the horizon

~Norwich, England

Indiana Avenue 2

Joy McCall

for Brian Zimmer

I wait
looking at the floor,
where he danced
laughing and singing
careless love

love, oh love
where have you gone
in the night?
the early birds
are calling your name

the rain stops
the sky grows light
I go on
rocking in the same chair
in the high room

traffic builds
in the street that runs
to the park
the leaves are bare now
the grass is brown

I forget
that you have gone away
and will not be back
*careless love, send a word
send five lines*

~Norwich, England

November rain

Joy McCall

for Brian Zimmer

slow dark death
the gentle creature
maimed, bloodied
left at the roadside
in the cold November rain

he said
sleep—tomorrow we talk
the morning came
and the day and all the days
and he was not there

bonfire night
in my England, the sky lit
with fireworks
and in far St. Louis
the machine stops, he is dead

Remembrance Day
for two minutes, the crowd
falls silent
I bow my head
remembering my own dead

he sits
in my mind and heart
wherever I go
his quiet voice saying poems
singing bits of songs

~Norwich, England

words

Joy McCall

there are
too many words
in my head
they stumble about
drunkenly, loud

they fall
onto the floor
and gather
linking arms, dancing
in crazy circles

I grab some
and they sit still
quietly
round the edges
just being words

the others
are not agreeable
they won't sit still
or stay in neat lines
they want to play, and sing

I give up
and I go and write
the poem
on the blackboard
with yellow chalk

five neat lines
I underline
each word
they stay where they are
on the board

I put my name
underneath the poem
and stand back,
hands on hips and say
'yes, that's good'

then I hear
laughter, scuffling
scrambling
singing : shanties
and nursery rhymes

I turn around
the words on the floor
look at me
with their mad round eyes
they dance over my toes

they bump
into my heels, I look down
I smile, I laugh
and give up on poems
and think about love, instead

~*Norwich, England*

Joy McCall is a nurse/counsellor, retired because of paraplegia following a motorcycle crash. She has written all kinds of poetry for 50 years, publishing occasionally here and there. She lives on the edge of the old walled city of Norwich, England, having spent much of her life in Canada. She treasures most her loved ones, nature, books, words and tattoos, life, and poetry. Keibooks have published her 'circling smoke, scattered bones' and 'hedgerows'—and 'rising mist, fieldstones' is soon to be published. She thanks M. Kei.

nightfall

Joy McCall

sitting
in the dim high woods
looking across
the small green fields
a dog fox by the hedge

the long pond
green water
in the sun
long thin snakes leaving
trails through the duckweed

clear water
running down the split log
into the ditch
croaking of frogs
somewhere out of sight

from the trees
high on the hill
crows rising
noisy black shapes
I look up, uneasy

their voices
pull at the dark places
inside me
I turn and head for home
before dusk, before nightfall

~*Upper Stoke Holy Cross, October 2014*

I howl

Joy McCall & Claire Everett

for Brian Zimmer

I howl
come back, please
into the night—
there is no answer
only wind, and cold rain

that black river
where the full Beaver Moon
keeps vigil
you cannot see her
but you know she's there

another month
and the Long Night's Moon
will be shining
on the Mississippi
and my heart will still ache

the leaf-rusted Swale*
comes swooping and swirling . . .
an old email
gifts me swallows' wings
and a fragrant Spanish sky

his indigo
in every rainbow
in his dark sky
his quiet voice
singing the blues

oh my friend
how the last note lingers
in this empty glass
. . . the Hunger Moon adrift
in a delta of blues

~Norfolk, United Kingdom / North Yorkshire,
United Kingdom

* Swale, Old English for swallow

the edges of the story

Joy McCall & Claire Everett

I glimpse
where you are sheltering
from the wind
at the corners of the backroads
at the edges of the story

and here's the sub-plot:
that down and out dream
sitting night and day
on the bones of its backside
is a secret millionaire

filthy fingers
counting the coins
a mad laugh
dancing down the road
words falling from her pockets

digging deep
for that last swatch of lace
or lucky heather —
my gypsy always finds me
beneath a threadbare moon

arm in arm
we dance down the days
foraging
gleaning, going home
with handfuls of dust

half a lifetime
not knowing the edgelands
now I thrive
on berries and birdsong
the betwixt and between

~England

Claire Everett is the founding editor of Skylark tanka journal and tanka prose editor for Haibun Today. She lives in North Yorkshire, England, with her husband and five children who are fledging, one by one.

danger

Joy McCall & Lynda Monahan

*we sit
at the volcano's edge
sipping wine
writing poems . . .
and the ground shudders*

you cupped
the rain in your hands
said *drink*
and I bent my head
to taste that falling

*from the depths
a hand reaches up
to me
a gentle hand
grasping, pulling*

all want
a pulse of light
and heat
a luna moth I was
heading straight for the flame.

*oh my woman
charred wings cannot lift
from the ground
the volcano rumbles
a thin smoke rises.*

~United Kingdom / Canada

Lynda Monahan is a poet who lives in the Nesbit Forest of Saskatchewan, Canada near the city of Prince Albert. She is the author of two poetry collections, 'a slow dance in the flames' and 'what my body knows'. Her third collection, due out in the spring of 2015 with Guernica Editions, is titled 'verge'.

Kath Abela Wilson

tinsel sky
as artificial snow drifts
over the old moon
our lucky stars garland
dark trees on a dark lake

I leave the door open
nothing worse can come in
only the good
is left, you and the gold
leaves of autumn

inside my dream
the heat of dandelions
one by one
floating as if there could be
words for love

we're shadows
on a fountain globe
this silent night
a coin we toss . . .
the moon drops into its slot

like a painting
a blue heron . . .
my heart lifts
like a brush
full of sky

~Pasadena, California, USA

biluochun
slow snail spring
between my breasts
first teatime
of the year

Kath Abela Wilson is secretary of the Tanka Society of America. Tanka Poets on Site, her online and local writing and performing group, was presented on the Queen Mary for TSA Tanka Sunday, 2013. She and her husband, who accompanies poets on shakuhachi and other world flutes, host live tanka readings at home and nearby Caltech. She loves publishing her work in Ribbons, Twitter @kathabela, Atlas Poetica, Bright Stars, Fire Pearls, Skylark, red lights, Eucalypt, Moonbathing, Kokako, and other places. She travels the world with her mathematician husband Rick Wilson. This summer marks their fifth trip to China and Japan.

Kat Lehmann

highways of sky
a measureless distance
how far
I have come
the journey ahead

after I trip
on the day
the balm
in looking up—
white poppy

labyrinth of days
stretched cleanly
I wonder
what a sibling
might have said

over the cliff
of clouds
a waterfall begins—
I am a fish
breathing bubbles

evening chill
I walk
a worn path
to the winter side
of the Sun

the time I thought
the emptiness was empty
and dismissed
the air
that lets me breathe

unsleeping toddler
we sing songs
about our love . . .
the ancient light
is finally home

blessed is the one
who finds
the bottom of the ocean
with nowhere to go
but up

morning house
the cat and I
speak silence
listening
to distant thunder

~*United States*

Kat Lehmann lives in Connecticut with her husband, two children, three cats, forty orchids, and the river where she writes, under a clear view of the Moon. She holds a Ph.D. in biochemistry and explores organic forms through her wheel-thrown pottery. She writes on twitter as @SongsOfKat. Her first book of poetry, "Moon Full of Moons", will be published in early 2015 by Peaceful Daily Press.

Lana Bella

There she was, sleeping
Under a mountain of sheets
In a stranger's home—
Careless in a stranger's bed
A brief love affair.

I would taste so well
in rum and Tequila Bay
Sharp and sweet as lips—
crushed of faint cinnamon spice
Down your throat unfurled.

A cascade of spice
Came fluttering down
my slumbering smiles—
I drank in her scarlet wine
with claw marks from Venus' trap.

Lana Bella has her diverse work of poetry and fiction published and forthcoming with Cecil's Writers' Magazine, Deltona Howl, Thought Notebook, Earl of Plaid, Kiki Howell for a War Anthology: We Go On, Undertow Review, Wordpool Press, Global Poetry, Family Travel Haiku, The Voices Project and now Atlas Poetica. She resides on some distant isle with her novelist husband and two frolicsome imps.

Lorne Henry

children
wading through a field
of dandelions
bigger than any I'd ever seen
golden Czech wildflowers

animal tracks
in snow in south Bohemia
children teach me
skating without railings
careful of that crack

in deep forests
a treasure in the snow
interlocking
carved pieces of wood
halo from a ransacked church

black butterflies
with blue and orange eyes
love citrus leaves
what native plants
did they eat before

the answer
six varieties
grow here
Australian citrus
may be the originals

who is she
that old woman
with long tangled hair
striding the streets
allowing no-one in

visitor
round black eyes staring
nose dripping
a pelican as tall
as the picnic table

slip of the tongue
flamingo music
announced
resulting flamenco
never so colourful

*if you're looking
for friendship
don't talk to me*
he opens his newspaper
I sip my apple tea

*This uninvited comment by an American in the old city of Antalya,
Turkey.*

double-decker bus
my father says the turbaned man
is a Sikh
very fine soldier
I wonder did he kill men

they warned me
new year's eve in Scotland
expect visitors
the door opened to a knock
back turned he throws up his kilt

country church
wattle in the windows
smeared with coal dust
graves of an old couple
their two sons killed in France

my uncle
blind in his later years
enjoys his garden
follows the perfumes
naming each flower

the gentle cheeps
of a mistletoe bird
belies its colour
a woman in black and red
with a baby doll voice

sun has set
crickets take over
from cicadas
kookaburras bid
their evening farewell

grey garden stork
carries a rusty crest
mating colours?
the cattle egrets' display
russet heads and necks

country post office
an old man tells me
he owned
an outback property
sang opera in Adelaide

Lorne Henry has been writing haiku for over twenty years and tanka for eight years. She has had quite a number printed in various magazines. She lives in the countryside in the middle of a large farm in New South Wales, Australia.



For Joy, on the death of her friend, Brian Zimmer

Lynda Monahan

I have no new words
for your loss
only the old ones
*startled I turned
to find him gone*

Your grieving
this gentle man's death
echoes in me
*she writes across the sky
a single syllable Why?*

Recalling
back the fury
the blame
*I wanted to lay white hot
into his hands*

Repeat
the guilt there is
the questions
*small things he said
small signs*

The way
he will always be
with you
*his name returned
from distant hills*

*where the music of him stays written
where there will always be his song*

Lynda Monahan is a poet who lives in the Nesbit Forest of Saskatchewan, Canada near the city of Prince Albert. She is the author of two poetry collections, 'a slow dance in the flames' and 'what my body knows'. Her third collection, due out in the spring of 2015 with Guernica Editions, is titled 'verge'.

School Sketches

tanka as sketchbook

M. Kei

blue walls
blue cubbies
blue chairs
school spirit displayed
only in the furnishings

Homecoming
the king and queen
reaching
what will prove to be
the high point of their lives

a small town—
football
the only thing
where excellence
is rewarded

arguing
whether the high school
football team
is tied for
last or next to last place

suspense
running high
for Homecoming,
neither team has yet
won a game this year

at school,
the hours ticking by
under the blank gaze
of a disconnected
Buddha's head

detachment—
the Buddha's blind eyes
tell me more
than I really want to know
about this job

in the midst
of these tattered textbooks
and worn out education,
one spot of glitter
shining, yes, shining

my handwriting
slants upwards
across the page
a graphologist would say
this indicates optimism

I look at it
this way:
I'm being paid
to write poetry at
an otherwise empty desk

the chill of
the air conditioner—
as if I needed
a reminder about
the world's endless cold

and then, when
I didn't expect it,
the piano next door
slow and soft
in the autumn's chill (1)

my neighbor
has no flesh
or face,
but a voice made of ivory
seeping through the walls

the music teacher
sits alone in his room
the piano's slow dirge
says all the things
he keeps inside

raucous voices,
the thunder of feet,
lockers slamming,
and beneath it all,
the piano's sad song

it's not compatible
with wealth or health,
but it's a job
his ambition as small
as the hole in his roof

barking
and chicken noises,
but it's not
considered bullying when
the substitute is the target

just half a day,
but that's all
I can stomach,
working in
the public schools

the herd will arrive
in a few more minutes,
trammeling
this quiet now,
this quiet me

a cold damp
seeping into
morning,
a grey sky heavy upon
the backs of dreams

a few more,
just a few more
words,
black upon
a dreaming page

they would
laugh like crows
students
with beaks and claws
and blackened hearts

petite
and shapely,
she wears
white angel wings
for school spirit day

auburn hair
pulled into a French braid
a freckled face
Irish pale under
autumn's blue sky

prim
in her French braid
and blazer,
she hardly seems at home
amid the t-shirts and bad dye jobs

my pencil strokes
fail to capture
her slim form
she is separate
from all that surrounds her

cheerleading skirt
so extremely short
red panties flash
even when she sits
with her knees together

the students hooting,
but the Christian girl
so innocent
she doesn't see
the phallic symbol in her art

and still,
the Buddha sculpture's
blank eyes
detached from all
that passes before it

in art class,
the autistic girl
distracted by
the paint stains
on her hands

the sad face
of the longhaired girl
her t-shirt
with an existential message
as bleak as her future

as precise
with her art as
she was
with her hair,
the quiet student

nothing
going for them,
this small town
high school without star
athletes, scholars, or artists

tie-dye in
blue and white,
the belly of
the pregnant student
an accidental bull's eye

Buddha,
maybe there's something
to detachment after all,
the same serene face
lingering this afternoon

~Maryland, USA

emergency!
she pops a pimple
and has to
tell the rest of us
all about it

(1) Previously appeared in Poetry Nook 3. December, 2013.

he discovers
the secret of
meeting girls—
the only boy
in the art class

M. Kei is the editor of Atlas Poetica and was the editor-in-chief of Take Five : Best Contemporary Tanka. Vols. 1-4. He is a tall ship sailor in real life and has published nautical novels featuring a gay protagonist, Pirates of the Narrow Seas. His most recent book is January, A Tanka Diary.

delicately
the gay boy
carves the wood,
the silver blade
shining in his hands



Las Momias de Guanajuato

Margaret Van Every

standing behind museum glass
they return our gaze
through absent sockets;
total transparency
between quick and dead

every man, woman, child's
mouth agape
gasping for air?
the Munchian scream?
a petrified yawn?

a portly cadaver
flashes all
through his open overcoat—
a friend knew
how he hated the cold

near two hundred years
in birthday suit and shoes
this reception line
for millions passing through
who pay the price of admission

from one corpse to another
in single file we move
engaged in our reflections—
this brotherhood of bones
and who is next

~Guanajuato, Mexico

Margaret Van Every

the passion
of that widow
who went broke
buying sugar water
for hummingbirds

the village rips out
its 500-year-old
stone streets
for a
smoother ride

singing
how great thou art
they send
him off
in an urn

~Ajijic, Mexico

under the Mexican
night sky
I seldom see
street
sleepers

Note: El Museo de las Momias de Guanajuato, MX, contains 108 corpses interred during a cholera epidemic in that area in 1833. They were naturally mummified by the high mineral content of the soil. The bodies were disinterred years later when descendants did not pay a tax required to keep them buried.

*Margaret Van Every enjoys the good life in San Antonio Tlayacapan, Jalisco, Mexico. She is author of one book of traditional poetry *Saying Her Name* (Librophilia 2013), and two books of tanka: *A Pillow Stuffed with Diamonds/Una Almohada Rellena con Diamantes Bilingue* (Librophilia 2011) and *holding hands with a stranger* (Librophilia 2014).*

Hands

Marilyn Morgan

mother walked
into a midnight dream
her hands . . . outstretched . . .
soft and loving
drew me close

stirring from the dream
I fell back into her hands
a safe house . . .
what I needed
as a child

I remember
other hands
rough,
hot and calloused . . .
father's hands

straying hands
held me close
so tight . . .
my inner child
blinked out

a tapestry of hands
unraveled
swaying, floating,
tossing
on a stormy sea

Marilyn Morgan

full moon rising
desire
spreading across
my open skin
 where are you tonight?

left my notebook home
he said
no poems today . . .
is this my sadness
tonight?

milkweed pods
burst open
spill their seeds
tumble
in the wind

in a grove
of bare poplar trees
walking alone
kicking
the leaves

much to talk about
you say
I listen, you talk
look
the reflections in the water

late September sun
a lone gull
on a rock . . .
together we
catch the fading rays

sometimes
I hear you
in the waves . . .
clamoring
against the shore

years ago
you carved
our initials
on a tree . . .
the only remains of the day

4th of July
fireworks
a field
of exploding blossoms
in the night sky

a heron
snatches a fish
swallows it whole . . .
I reach for a glass
of wine

a blanket of minced shells
chunks of crab claws
litter the dock . . .
remains
from the mink picnic

deer in the yard
grazing . . .
my dog
a plastic bag of ashes
I scatter over the ground

~*New York, USA*

October

Marilyn Morgan

When I was a kid and October rolled around, every year without fail dad announced, "The sun is marching south, winter is just around the corner." And so I dreamed up a giant, with big feet and expansive arms carrying the sun along the horizon south over the equator. Night arrived early, the ground froze, cold wind blew in from the north, leaves tumbled to the ground and shadows stretched for miles. As if a massive shade had been lowered over the land, suddenly the bright profusion of reds, oranges, and yellows turned into skeletal shades of grays and browns. Signs of life disappeared, not only from the land but geese honked south, and birds gathered in bunches, perched on wires, swirled in tumbleweed circles before vanishing before my eyes. Even the neighbors and their dogs retreated behind tightly closed doors.

October sun
wearing
his big ass shoes
trekking south . . .
don't leave me here

*Marilyn Morgan lives and writes in New Hartford, New York, USA.
Her poems have been published in Atlas Poetica, Bright Stars, red
lights, A Hundred Gourds, Inner Art, and American Tanka.*



Marshall Bood

the department store
complaining again about people
waiting for the bus . . .
a man spreads dirt
on the snowy sidewalk

a woman in layers
stares out the window
of the Money Mart
at autumn leaves
tossed around

she saw him dancing
with other girls—
pot smoke happiness
waved away
on an autumn night

he remembers when he saw
the city as a mirage
in extreme cold
and when he stopped
holding grudges

Marshall Bood lives in Regina, Saskatchewan. He has both physical and mental disabilities. His tanka are forthcoming in Presence 51 and More Grows in a Crooked Row.



Matthew Caretti

underpass
the hell's angels
wait out the storm
their chromed bikes
reflecting rainbows

the dissident in
existential limbo
mending old socks
a new pastime
to pass the time

at the laundry
her finest linens
in spin cycle
the winter moon
in each phase

worker ants
single file
along the root
tractor traffic eases
mid morning

sparrows gather
chaff from the wagon
to a high perch
she asks about
her midterm grade

fading
october
crickets
the first frost
stills the garden

In the Company of San

Matthew Caretti

The flats are just that. Scrub and sand, nothing more. The sky paling blue like the national flag. Beside the empty stretch of road, creekbeds parch and burn during the day. Cool into our camps as night falls. Wake us roughly before dawn.

shadows stretch
long on the road to Ghanzi,
the Kalahari
gathers gloomy bushmen
for the local bus to town

~Botswana, March 2006

Devotion

Matthew Caretti

The father ruled his children with kindness. He would see each one forsake his Dharma. They even claimed a deathbed conversion, a new faith his last wish. So after forty-nine days, only one comes to honor him.

last oblation
at the temple shrine
his tears
wash away sins
steeped in karma

Influenced in equal parts by his study of German language and literature, by his Zen training in the East, and by the approach of the Beat writers, Matthew Caretti's work has appeared in numerous print and online journals, as well as Contemporary Haibun, Atlas Poetica, something out of nothing: 75 haiga and other anthologies. In 2014, his "That Which Binds Us" was selected for Broadsided's Haiyan Response special feature and "Renunciation" was named Honorable Mention in the Genjwan International Haibun Contest. Matthew currently teaches English and directs the Writing Center at Mercersburg Academy, a college preparatory school in Pennsylvania.

Yelling To The Sky

Matsukaze

in night shadows
with the 'pushaman'
trading kisses
darker than
the life we both live

pile of concrete
serving as a street marker—
treading
a pile of leaves
quietly yelling to the sky

. . . dash of nutmeg
over
a bowl of ice cream,
from outside
an evening cloudburst

after 3am, he returns home disoriented;
stumbling upstairs leaving a small trail of blood

another text that reads: "I love you babe . . ."
outside the air crisply cold; his intent's all wrong

a night of mild constipation . . .
the only laxative used, is cold apple juice

an opened bottle of water on the counter
small puddles from where it sweated during the
night

found dad on the commode holding his head
cut, and bleeding from some bar room fight

looking up at me, in a drunken haze
a bright red gash across his left temple . . . my
father

one of those nights: from behind the desk
a parking lot filled with cars—people i don't
know

on the floor, next to the bed a crumbled up towel:
a souvenir from one of dad's drunken fights

grabbing his grey terrycloth robe, heading
downstairs
for another cup of that damn English tea

night after night, in the recliner; he sits
nursing glass after glass of turkey whiskey

drunk father and daughter in the bathroom
holding silence while he sews up a gash in his
head

attending a winter concert at Alice Tulley hall—
in the foyer a vase of rhododendrons and
carnations

it's the same thing night after night
he arrives home, cold, distant; then we make love

down an old alley way
hearing the footsteps
of a father i never knew

in some of my dreams
i run away quickly from dad's
Scottish brogue

leaning against the door post
watching you
shave your face

a random guest asks for cream—
he grabs the morning news and
heads to his room

nothing but a cold wind—
i'm behind this desk needing
to read torah

a group of us gather downtown
near the old tracks
to discuss activism

in the counselor's office—
the future i desire suddenly
seems bleak

at 4:22am, finishing up some paperwork—
then a quick reading
of YHWH's word

passing some old
'off-duty cab' parked in our front drive—
down the street a house fire

this late afternoon
confronted by a dark orange sky
and the memory of his laughter

in the fitting room
a portion of my life mirrored
in these name-brand high heels

you and i on the waterfront
bathed in wind and cold, sterile light—
casino lights in the distance

sitting against a damp wall—
you ask questions and i respond
with 'i don't know' gestures

this morning, behind the desk
again i pull out
Tawara Machi's 'Salad Anniversary'

to me, there's something charming
about writing tanka
in three lines

knapsack on the ground
he stood there, waiting
for me at the drug store

night ride, through a quiet city—
purchasing you and i
a warmed croissant

not really concerned about the taste
of your egg sandwiches
just the closeness of your body

for a few days, too busy
to write tanka—
another few hours before i get off work

over another glass of apple juice
discussing the trinity
and other doctrines

from the kitchenette,
fragrant coffee and Belgium waffles—
lying in bed, smiling

another time, in the confession booth
waiting on Fr. Santa Vostro
the smell of furniture wax

on Hilton Head Island Beach
taking your picture
brown skin against blue sky

is there anything more?
more to give, more to take?
sprawled across my sister's bed

absently . . .
Carmex spread across
chapped lips—soon this shift will be over

fat oval moon . . .
distorted shadows litter a too-quiet
cemetery this Thursday morning

under an inky-black sky
i snuggle up to you
my lover; ten years my junior

a gentle wind
lapping against aloof buildings—
this casino city impervious to change

moonspill

Matsukaze & Joy McCall

afternoon cool—
in conversation
with a friend, i step away
for a moment; hearing
a Norwich maiden's blood-waka

*a dark pain
through all my bones
my voice silent
I hear low wild songs . . .
a brown holy man, chanting*

just awaking,
images from Akiko's waka
on my mind,
i smell the dampness of pain
in that woman's bones

*the matted grief
of a cold lost love
is as hollow
as this torn body
that will not heal*

this damp soul,
dressed in damp, cold
brittle leaves
a disjointed, out-of-tune
folk song in these pores

*the strings
of the violin
have snapped
there is no music
in this sullen night*

dappled moonspill
across harp strings
in a thick silence
what little music is left
i hoard in soil

*laying my head
on the hard ground
a low humming
rising, falling, fading
into the distance*

~Louisiana, USA / Norfolk, England

Matsukaze was born in Texas and now resides in Louisiana. He is a full time hotel administrator/auditor, while pursuing his passion as a budding classical vocalist and stage actor. His introduction to Japanese short poetic forms began 10 years ago after discovering haiku and tanka by way of activist, playwright, and poet Sonia Sanchez. He began practicing Haiku primarily. After re-connecting with M. Kei, editor of Atlas Poetica: A Journal of Poetry of Place in Contemporary Tanka;

he turned his complete attention on making tanka. Since then he has found the 31 sound-pattern/5 unit form to be his choice of expression. In addition to Tanka; He composes sedoka, zuihitsu, and free verse.

Joy McCall is a nurse/counsellor, retired because of paraplegia following a motorcycle crash. She has written all kinds of poetry for 50 years, publishing occasionally here and there. She lives on the edge of the old walled city of Norwich, England, having spent much of her life in Canada. She treasures most her loved ones, nature, books, words and tattoos, life, and poetry. Keibooks have published her 'circling smoke, scattered bones' and 'hedgerows'—and 'rising mist, fieldstones' is soon to be published. She thanks M. Kei.



In Another Country

Natsuko Wilson

the shining
green ocean is
spread out
I sink into a beach chair, becoming
a child of the summer in November

sleeping the sleep
everything is so far away—
a land
of temporal
euthanasia

deceived
by the calm ocean
I am
upside down
drowned almost

no salary raised
for fourteen years
a waiter serves
the food and the drink
singing "A Happy Tourist"

during a day trip
our minibus breaks down—
we wave
when the passers-by honk
for the "special" occasion

I pass
a bar of soap, my old clothes, etc
to a stranger on the street
to share the pieces
of my Canadian life

a French tourist
of dietary discipline
eats
only a roll of bread at the buffet dinner
as if she lives on food stamps

a night guard,
wearing a military uniform,
stands on the beach—
watching nothing but the dark water,
he can be a Zen monk

seven days later
returning home
everything
is covered in pure white—
am I still drifting off?

~Varadero, Cuba

Natsuko Wilson lives in Ontario. She published four non-fictions in Tokyo, Japan. Currently she writes for the online Japanese newspaper on travelling

Patricia Prime lives in Auckland, New Zealand. She writes haiku, tanka, haibun and tanka prose and has published her poetry worldwide. She is co-editor of the New Zealand haiku magazine, Kokako, reviews/interviews editor of Haibun Today, and is a reviewer for Takahe and Atlas Poetica, and for several Indian magazines. She has interviewed poets and editors for Takahe and for the online magazines Haiku NewZ, Simply Haiku, Haibun Today and Stylus. She co-edited, with Australian poets, Amelia Fielden and Beverley George, the tanka collection 100 Tanka by 100 Poets. She and French poet, Giselle Maya, are now working on a collection of their tanka sequences to be called Shizuka.

Viral Signs

Patricia Prime

the oyster-grey sky
enhances a day when the street
smells of rain
punctuated by traffic noises
very unlike the birds singing

my friend and I
stroll through the park
skimming over
disturbing items in the news:
murder, a family slain, hostages

past tidy houses
with newly-mown lawns
and lavender hedges
and a dog-walker who releases
her labrador to roam

he chases a gnawed-on
tennis ball into the shrubbery.
How anxiety is released:
one friend's terminal tumour,
the other's marriage ending

while our answers
to life's problems go unsolved
we still smell
the lavender and rejoice
in our lasting friendship

Patricia Prime

dispersed for months—
one to Northland, one
to Australia
yet that last evening holds me
still, an island in the flow

white faced moon
around the dining table
I sit apart
going back to those years
when they were all babies

I slip away
while talk chinks like ice
in tall glasses
steadying myself to the laughter
vexing the sunlight through the door

sending-out day
I scribble messages
in cards
while the window brings light
to my airmail envelopes

on the river bank
a slight southerly
stirs the catkins
sending them skittering
across our path

whirling overhead
the blades of a police
search helicopter
rising and descending
makes circles in the sky

on a country road
half-buried in the mud
horses' hoof-prints
the grandchildren pull us
over to examine them

on the pillion
of their new motor-bike
my daughter
clutches fearfully
at her partner's back

country town
on a balmy summer's day
the clock tower rises
in the middle of the square
its hands stuck on twelve

at a used book fair
the vendor only accepts
twenty cent coins—
he hands me a pile
of paperbacks for one dollar

on a long car journey
we stop to admire the view
from the top of a hill
overlooking the joining place
of two oceans

my daughter and I
have an early summer picnic
on Hone Heke Hill
down in the valley we count
the number of historic churches

in a night café
facing the shore
we listen to music
while the owner's dog
wanders from table to table

after the eulogy
my neighbour's grandchildren
recite a poem
they've written for her praising
her goodness and humour

summer colours
trickle through the bi-fold doors
with the fragrance
of roses floating in on the breeze
as the room fills with sunlight

Payal A. Agarwal

he advised
me not to marry him
but did i listen?
of course not; now
i'm always painted blue and black

all my life
living in golden bubble with nodding heads
today not a soul
on the day i close my eyes
this new year morning . . .

autumn evening
strolling a deserted beach
tears running down
i unshackle artificial love
which mother showered over years

spring morning
i lay red roses
on your tombstone;
the sky rumble
reminding me you hate color red . . .

Sedoka

Payal A. Agarwal

winter
i stand in mama's garden
all barren and stark
come summer i spring
to life like fragrance of roses
blanketed by his love

Payal A. Agarwal, a resident of Delhi, India, dabbles in free verse poetry especially Japanese forms : tanka and haiku. Her poems have appeared and are forthcoming in various international journals, both online and print.

Five Candles

Peter Fiore

for Greg Bottari, 1950–2008

February—
life is short
serve
fresh
cheese

in the afternoon
an open casket
at night
a grandson's birthday—
just as it should be

the priest intones
prayers for the dead—
but that horse fly
buzzing
in the lilies!

after the funeral
our last goodbyes
on the sidewalk—
this day too
is ending

do the dead
ever repent
of having previously
loved
cherry blossoms?

PA postcard from Aunt Teti

Peter Fiore

the old barn
is gone
but no longer
suffers
of a broken pane

3 poems in search of a title

Peter Fiore

I can hear my father
say
watch where you're going—
mom and dad's ashes
scattered in the Atlantic

watch where you're going
I hear my father say—
purple petunias
flaming out
in pale November

watch where you're going
I take off
my glasses
and see the dark earth
waiting patiently . . .

A Farewell To Arms

Peter Fiore

she says no
then she says yes
they escape to Switzerland
she delivers a stillborn
then she dies

he volunteers
he gets wounded
he fucks his nurse in the hospital
they go out for dinner
he walks out into the rain

Hemingway's prose is lovely
his dialogue serious
the trees and snow are eternal
so is the war
the book has five parts

our first time together
I last 2 minutes you get pregnant
fifty years later
we have 7 grandchildren
and live 5000 miles apart

Peter Fiore

traces of a dream
trailing into the afternoon
I'm trembling you say
the first cherry blossoms
fluttering in the wind

on your 50th
surrounded by your friends
we meet in smiles
then turn back to conversations
we'll never finish

I came
in two languages
you say later
and then the last
was in my native tongue

November—
walking
beneath
dripping
trees

holy cards from the dead
postcards from Timbuktu . . .
ghost lovers hover
on the smoky edges
of the outer rim

punched holes in the Lincoln's muffler
to make her sound like a hot rod—
told my father
I'd run over
a stick

all of us conspire
wives and ex-wives
brothers and sisters
to keep the gold
taken from the red people

new neighbors
after 20 years
of a ghost house—
first they build a rock wall
then erect an iron fence

instead of voting
I lent the record peddler
on 112th Street
\$300 to buy a collection
and stay in business

afterwards
I say *am gonna go home*
and watch Thursday night football
good luck you say
it's Wednesday

at the wake
Nonno pointed a bony finger in my face
and said
women will take your time
your energy and your money

I've cheated on you
she tells me
then puts her arms around me
and says
don't let me go

without you
this first winter night
I flip on another blanket
click on the heat
and snuggle with your pillow

and if I should die
tonight
without you
what will all the elections
add up to?

he holds the umbrella
shielding their faces
her white dress clings to her thighs
his tennis shoes
slosh thru rivers along the curb

just like when I was nine
my first molar so loose
my tongue wants to push it out
only this time
I'm seventy-two

your skin is too dark
they told you
and your lips too thick
but your hair
so long, so black

all night
our bodies tangled at all angles
can't stop you flying
off to Rome
in the morning

what to do?
nipples rising
pussy wet
Yanks
tied in the 9th

we have sparrows nesting in the eaves
two kittens born under the crawl space
camped out on the deck . . .
with 15 years left to work
more spiders than money

~*United States*

Peter Fiore lives and writes in Mahopac, New York, USA. His poems have been published in American Poetry Review, Atlas Poetica, Bright Stars, red lights, A Hundred Gourds, among others. In 2009, Peter published "text messages" the first volume of American poetry totally devoted to Gogyohka.

Ramesh Anand

a warbler pair
dissolves into mist . . .
i see
how far we have journeyed
into the space of fall

how long
can a robin hold its song
in autumn
my late father's words
stirring the soul

leaving my child
in a classroom
in june
my mother returns
with my first day cry stories

wind shivering
through the bazaar street
at solstice twilight
the pushcart wallah chews
his hot and salted groundnuts

giant wheel
rolls me to the top
in the darkness
the whole beach silences
into surfing waves

chill breeze
spluttering drizzle on our face
in safari
we clung our eyes
to a tiger's long moan

december sun
across the lonely sky
at 4°C
the crow's shadow awaits
at McDonald's

~Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Ramesh Anand, an award winning haïjin, authored Newborn Smiles, a book of haiku poetry. His haiku has appeared in 16 countries and translated in German, Serbian, Japanese, Croatian, Romanian, Chinese, Telugu and Tamil. He blogs at ramesh-inflame.blogspot.com.

Rebecca Drouilhet

a rainy Sunday
snuggling under my quilt
with artists and thieves . . .
there's almost no place I can't go
between the pages and dreams

first frost
stiffens the jack o' lantern's grin
what's left now
of summer promises
fading with the year

out of the void
ten billion stars that vanish
with the dawn . . .
where did he go, I wonder
the old man who died today

~Picayune, Mississippi, USA

Rebecca Drouilhet is a 59 year old retired registered nurse. Her haiku and tanka have appeared in numerous print journal and e-magazines. She enjoys playing word games and spending time with her large family in Picayune, Mississippi.



Insights and Outsights: A Tanka Sequence

Richard St. Clair

as the days
of bitter cold
approach
the bitter heat of lust
maintains, sustains

how many times
have I been
through this routine
born again
and over again?

wondering
when this life
of sad illusion
may come to an end
and how

the bush's leaves
half green
half sere
half scattered
to the ground

through the fog
o'er the fetid pond
the will-o'-the-wisp
seems to be
calling me

fading sunlight
fading heat
fading desire
this life of crescent hope
and lingering fear

afraid to speak
the angry words
that come to mind
from where
I do not know

what world
awaits the children
of the children
of the children
of this world

I feel it
the anxiety
riling against
the pills I take
to quell it

amidst dead leaves
swept by wind
the pecking
of the sparrows
camouflaged

touching
a frosted leaf
transferring my warmth
to its lifeless
veins

in the chill
of the first day of frost
body memories
returning nameless
unidentifiable

high tide
an uneasy calm
overseen
by the hazy sliver
of the moon

the southward vee
of shrilling geese
their movement
across the smear
of clouds

autumn chill
a quickening
in the air
a desperation
that knows no words

another day
of calm
why does it make me
only more
uneasy?

how few my friends
will I outlive them
and die alone?
will they be near me
when I pass over?

namu amida butsu
words I live by
in hope and fear
what they mean
let me tell you

returning pain
what is the time stamp
on this body
what is
its expiration date?

ever so slowly
the darkening days
creep in
their familiar
cold refrain

some days I ache
to cross over
to the Pure Land
while other days
I ache all over

so easy to recall
pain best forgotten
it lingers
under the surface
of my mind

clacking in bottles
the sanity pills
the survival pills
the tintinnabulation
of the pills

I have stopped
all my striving
for enlightenment
and live naturally
my foolish self

what kind of fool
am I
I ask the void
like all the others
bound in this flesh

in my mind
going nowhere
nothing special
to do but call
the buddha's name

pent-up grief
and old anger
only the dharma
giving me
a veneer of peace

talk
talk
and more talk
what will it avail
this dying world

it seems
at times
that hells
and heavens
are at war in me

wanting to rest
wanting the world
to leave me
alone
for a while

tell me
truthfully
what have I said
what have I done
worth remembering

buddha
loves me
no strings attached
knowing this
is my life's stanchion

the crowds
walking from place
to place
the brownian motion
of so many ghouls

I have found this life
a melange
of joy and pain
that seems to be
unending

cast my ashes
where you like
I won't be coming
back for them
any time soon

Richard St. Clair (b. 1946) is a native of North Dakota but has lived most of his life in New England. He has written tanka for 15 years and is also a published haiku and renku poet. A classical composer academically trained at Harvard where he holds a PhD, he has written well over one hundred musical works including a symphony, solo and chamber music, choral music, and an opera. He has set many Japanese and Japan-influenced poems to music. He is a Shin (Jodo Shinshu) Buddhist in the Pure Land tradition.



To the Rock

Ruth Holzer

departure lounge—
a pair of house sparrows
quickly
picking up
whatever falls

a black-robed
black-turbaned
fellow passenger—
at takeoff
crossing himself

another airport
where twenty bucks
buys next to nothing—
the security guard
spills out my pure water

my thumb
slammed between the chute
and the metal tray—
a gout of blood
on the ticket

what could be better
than sipping coffee
bound
in grubby glory
for old St. John's

the stocky man
in the window seat
nods, *how ya gettin on*—
holes in the heels
of his socks

craning to see
the first sparse lights
of the south coast—
a little cheer rises
from the port side

two a.m.—
in that welcoming crowd
at the bottom
of the escalator
no one for me

shaking
the cabbie's hand—
now I know
the name
of somebody here

on the corner
of Duckworth and Kings
I will stand tomorrow
among the same rubble
this time not stumble

~D.C., USA—Toronto—Newfoundland, Canada

Ruth Holzer of Herndon, Virginia, USA has had tanka published in journals including red lights, Ribbons, American Tanka, Eucalypt, and bottle rockets. Her work has also appeared in the Bright Stars and Take Five anthologies.

Word Leaf

Ryoh Honda

Reel and roll
the whole road you
are going,
then let the heaven's fire
burn and extinguish it.

*kimi ga yuku
michi no nagate wo
kuritatane
yakihorobosamu
ame no himo gamo*

~Sano no Otogami no Otome

If in the sky,
also on this earth,
no gods found,
I would die before
meeting my sweet again.

*ametsuchi no
kami naki mono ni
araba koso
a ga mohu imo ni
awazu shini seme*

~Nakatomi no Yakamori

Forbidden,
but they did sing,
did not care
their class difference,
the boundary
blocked their way.
The tragedy of
a pair of lovers in the
mid 8th century
was memorized in *Man'yōshū*,
the collection
of ten thousand leaves,
the first waka anthology.

Sky and earth,
nowhere in the universe,
nobody,
except me, could ever
love you so deeply.

*ametsuchi no
sokohi no ura ni
a ga gotoku
kimi ni kohu ramu
hito wa sane araji*

~*Sano no Otogami no Otome*

The leaves of words
sprout from the seeds
of human hearts,
their songs could move
the sky and the earth
without putting power,
so the preface
of the Old and New Anthology,
Kokinshū
proudly manifested,
eleven hundred years ago.

Winds of heaven!
Blow clouds and close
all their path.
May the maidens stay
with us for a while.

*amatsukaze
kumo no kayoiji
fukitojiyo
otome no sugata
shibashi todomemu*

~*Bishop Henjo*

Yet survived,
even during the era
of disorder
in the medieval age.
The 6th Shogun
of Kamakura shogunate
was forced
to sing so miserably,
but successfully
the shogun exchanged

his heart
with the leaves of words
after his deposition.

Sky and earth
must be controlled by
my word leaves,
once upon a time,
had I believed so.

*ametsuchi wo
ugokasu michi to
omoishi mo
mukashi narikeri
yamato kotonoha*

~*Prince Munetaka, Shogun*

Then thrived,
in the Edo period.
Sakoku-rei,
the closed country edict
closed Japan
and the time there
fermented, thus
its exuberance made
the ideal soil for kyoka.

All waka poets
should be awkward.
Unbearable,
if they'd truly tumble
our earth and sky.

*utayomi wa
heta koso yokere
ametsuchi no
ugokidasshiteha
tamaranu monowo*

~*Yadoya no Meshimori*

Eliminating
all barriers of languages,
waka opened
and metamorphosed
into tanka,
the universal poetic form
to share
all hearts and feelings.

Here's the world
for all participants
to express
our universe and
to share songs
with all tanka poets
all over the globe.

Sky and ocean
its boundary is melting
spring afternoon
leaves of words, freely
have started to dance

*sora to umi
sakai tokeyuku
haru no hiru
kotohoha tokare
odoridasunari*

Everything
should be shared, only
hoping so
no one ever knows
the heart of water

*wakachi au
monotoha omohu
mononaredo
mizu no kokoro ha
shirubekumo arane*

~Tokyo, Japan

*Ryoh Honda is a tanka lover in Japan. He is enjoying and feels more
than happy to share this language-free poetic form with all tanka poets
all over the world.*



Sandi Pray

frost flowers
in a spiderweb
yesterday
there were dandelions
and we were so free

moon-washed path
even my thoughts
have shadows
the weight on my mind
of a million stars

blue autumn day
such small things
you give me
sunlight in the shallows
a heart-shaped pebble

five days
with a grey-eyed sky
talking to cats
i open the door
to the wind

tiny frog
on a lily pad
still summer green
and me with autumn eyes
and heart of winter

across the valley
another rainbow weeps
southward
and once again i try
to paint you into words

garden party
drawing cloud faces
on my wineglass
until a songbird comes
to take me away

sparks
igniting my poem
from faraway
the laughter of children
roasting marshmallows

as if an egret
i recall flying home
open winged
wet with the pleasure
of a setting sun

late november
an uncertain rain
brings a sadness
almost undone by
the trill of a wren

wind with us
a flock of storks turns
homeward
feathers of my hair
rippling in their wake

sparrow like,
i've become the brown
of an autumn field
the grey of still water
on a cloudy day

i quit again
in night's darkest heart
I quit again
forever, this time . . .
until the dawn

in the garden
my way petaled pink
with camellias
i hold the white purring
of another stray cat

winter light
I follow a deer trail
far enough
until i'm no less
than another shadow

rainbow rising
the silverine arc
of a fish
brushed by an egret's
falling shadow

rays of light
shining from the corner
of my eyes
how else could i see
through the darkness

do you hear
the sound of a leaf
falling . . .
i wonder how it was
i became autumn

barefeet
as if i need
a reason
the scent of concrete
warm with rain

among bats
and sounds made by trees
i wander
mountains of starlight
and sleepless nights

drinking
what's left of summer
does she wonder
at being alone,
last butterfly

a tea party
wearing rainbows
in our hair
we talk of plum blossoms
and faraway war

you ask me
to write a poem . . .
instead
i place your fingertip
on the Milky Way

the shape
of what i know . .
morning mist
a sparrow drinks
from a turtle shell

*Sandi Pray is a retired high school media specialist living in the wilds of
the North Carolina mountains and forest marshes of North Florida.
Living a vegan life, she is an avid hiker and lover of all critters.*

Sandra Renew

the missing
one million bones
dead air
we all want someone
to know our death

road trip north west
through villages with no names
signs with no village
at each empty crossroad
we cross fingers should we go on?

open the windows
one last corroborree frog
the last frog
when you steal away in your socks
will I sleep untroubled until morning?

air standing still
the street crystallised
smoke plumes straight up
this moment only exists
thanks to the Big Bang

coiled ropes
oil and water
rancid fish
catch of the day
you slip from the net

you hold my hand
they outlaw gay marriage
headlines smudge skin
do we queer their pitch?
increase their fear?

politicians
pompous word spinners
have the wind up
wind turbines on blue hills
stand motionless in still air

this cold Spring morning
porridge and coffee chill
in bright pale sunlight
we wait for the old words
to emerge from sleep-warmed blankets

making mine yours
do you breathe in smoke
or spit out blood?
is love that is so hard won
worth chasing the dragon?

~Australia

*Sandra Renew worked in war-affected and conflict areas of
Afghanistan, Sudan, Indonesia and Sri Lanka for eleven years. From
her home in Australia her poetry now raises contemporary issues and
questions about war, language, translation, dislocation, border crossings,
dissent. She is a lesbian feminist who has been an activist in politics
and education for forty years.*

Chernobyl Twenty-Eight Years After

Sanford Goldstein

the Russian film
I saw gave me the dates,
I add 1986 and 28.
yes, the arithmetic's
right since it's 2014 now

only a few
Japanese came to see
the Russian film,
this isolated me
the only foreigner

the viewers
mostly elderly and middle-aged men
in the small room,
surprised am I to find two women,
both elderly, speaking up

in the discussion
one young woman to my right
spoke up,
how deficient I am in Japanese,
of course almost no one speaks to me

I see that immense
limestone coffin built over
the ruined atomic plant,
radiation never ever dies,
and the huge coffin rusted

after the disaster
many Russian children with
thyroid cancer,
their immune systems
broken down and down

even today
a few Russians have returned
to Chernobyl to live,
one man said he's healthier now,
at his retreat he was always sick

after the Japanese
melt down at Fukushima
many have remained,
living there despite the radiation,
home is where the heart is

thyroid disorders,
immune systems collapsing
and more,
the Russians had no remedies
and had to invent their own

in today's Russia,
how the children exercise
and play,
people abandoned Chernobyl
for clean places, healthy food

now Japan
reopening its atomic energy
sites.
has the world gone berserk?
that thought runs through my mind

at Fukushima,
entire families stay,
young and old,
and this foreigner me
remains in Japan, Donald Keene too

a sudden image
of a very young Russian girl
blood flowing in her hair,
a handkerchief is applied
and still the blood flows

once a mother
who left Fukushima
with her child
spoke of the dandelions
closing in on themselves

on my walks
in Shibata during spring
and summer,
our dandelions
remained healthy

I raise
my hand in the after-film
discussion,
the first time in twenty years
that I spoke at such meetings

I talked
about being hit by a car
when I was six,
so many stitches in my head
during my three-week stay

now at 89,
I have been dizzy
for two decades,
and I feel those early stitches
did something to my skull

once ill,
I think that earlier condition
lies buried in one's body,
yes, radiation persists,
radiation never ever dies

our dandelions
in Shibata, Japan,
are healthy,
still I wonder since radiation
drifts into our water, rice, food

when I drink water,
when I eat the meat, rice, vegetables
my help-mate serves me,
I feel some abstract strangeness,
something unknown centers there

~Japan

Sanford Goldstein has been writing tanka for more than fifty years. In addition, he has co-translated many Japanese writers —those in poetry, to cite a few, are Akiko Yosano, Mokichi Saitō, Shiki Masaoka, and Takuboku Ishikawa. It is to Takuboku that Goldstein feels most indebted. Takuboku believed that tanka is a poem involving the emotional life of the poet. Goldstein's poems focus on what he has experienced, suddenly seen, suddenly reflected on—they are not imagined.

Sasha Kasoff

One leaf above all
Alone—last touched with sunlight
This one floats above the crowd
No rustling communion
Against the dark sky

As you drift away
I am anxious for your heart
Please listen instead
Some men have hidden daggers
Lying handsome smiles can kill

Stay on the red road
Where the eagle shadow falls
Feather in the dust
Listen to the soul drumming
Blood will follow the sound home

Ireland
Vibrant rolling hills
Wooly sheep and sweaters
Grey blue skies raining
Music, alcoholism
Even rainbows, it's all true

Our next-door neighbor
Whom I never met or saw
Was taken today
From his family, by death
And I did not even know

~Stockton, California, USA

Sasha Kasoff is a published poet, fantasy writer, and aspiring teacher. Having recently returned from studying abroad in Ireland, she is currently attending University of the Pacific earning her BA in English with plans to continue her studies in creative writing as a graduate next year. Her poetry can be found in two self-published books as well as in anthologies, magazines, and other literary presses. Look for her on Goodreads.

Sonam Chhoki

Coronation Bridge*—
stopping to pay our respects
at the roadside shrine
a family of langurs snatch
our basket of offerings

** Coronation Bridge, Teesta valley in the Himalayan foothills on the Indo-Bhutan border. The bridge was built to commemorate the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1937.*

emerging
from cold fog of the hills
the Toy Train*
chugs along tea plantations
on the Mahananda plains

**The Toy Train also known as the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway is a 2 feet (610 mm) narrow gauge railway built by the British between 1879 and 1881. It runs along a 78 kilometer route between Darjeeling (2,200 meters) and New Jalpaiguri (100 meters).*

monsoon nightfall
market in R K Puram*—
the vendors' carts heave
with capsicums, bitter gourds
and rajaniganda** garlands

** R K Puram is a residential sector in south New Delhi*

*** rajaniganda: also known as tuberose is a night-blooming plant with a heady perfume.*

Kalighat* at dawn—
amidst conch shells, temple bells
and cries of Jai Maa!
we jostle for a glimpse
of the golden-tongued Kali

** Kalighat temple in Kolkata, West Bengal is dedicated to Kali, the goddess of dissolution and destruction who puts an end to all illusions. She is also worshipped as the Supreme Mother (Maa). She is usually depicted with wild eyes and hair standing on a corpse wielding a blood-dripping sword and holding the severed head of a demon. Her image in this temple is quite unusual in that she is not shown with her customary red tongue but with a golden one.*

autumn shadows
lengthening in the fields . . .
I startle a cow
how quickly it is composed
while I lose my thoughts

~Punakha valley, north-western Bhutan

for so long
I have hated to pray—
mist swirls through firs
like the incense
of spectral censers

~Sukhia Pokri, Darjeeling near Indo-Nepal border

reverberating
across the cobbled courtyard
toll of a brass gong
and deep-throated chant of monks—
Tashichodzong* at dusk

** Tashi-Cho-Dzong (TA-SHI-CHOO-ZONG): main monastic and administrative centre in Thimphu, capital of Bhutan.*



Teesta River

Sonam Chhoki

it snakes
from the Himalayas
past verdant slopes
of trees in hundreds
casting deep long shadows

looping
under arched brows of bridges,
it meanders along
gamboge rice fields
in the Indian plain

the pale jade waters
carry votive offerings
of flowers and coins
and ashes of the dead
from pyres lit on its bed

in deluge
in searing pre-monsoon heat
it peregrinates
to the great Brahmaputra—
screaming mirror of untold space

The Teesta River originates in the Himalayas and flows through the Indian states of Sikkim and West Bengal along the Indo-Bhutan border and into Bangladesh where it joins the Brahmaputra river. Its banks are dotted with shrines of Hindu and Buddhist deities and several cremation sites are situated along its length of 393 kilometres.

Born and raised in Bhutan, Sonam Chhoki finds that the Japanese short forms resonate with her Tibetan Buddhist upbringing and provide the perfect medium for the exploration of the country's rich ritual, social and cultural heritage. She is inspired by her father, Sonam Gyamtsho, the architect of Bhutan's non-monastic modern education. Her tanka has been published in journals and anthologies in Australia, Canada, Germany, India, Ireland, Japan, UK and US and included in the Cultural Olympics 2012 Poetry Parnassus and BBC Radio Scotland Written Word program.

Spiros Zafiris

this fancy
apartment, the elderly cat
getting used to me,
finds us come morning
eager for next time

drink from my well
and take some with you
nary a cloud
will darken this transaction
take, stranger—it will please me

O mountain,
let us negotiate
merely thus:
my admiration will grow
if you offer a secret or two

childlike,
she briefly wept
in my arms
the change of seasons,
she confessed, saddens her

by the fountain,
I attempt to write
a tanka
but I'm wildly distracted
by my love's toenails painted red

stand on your head
and cajole your hair to walk—
even up
and down the stairs
next lesson: running crew cut

Spiros Zafiris will have turned 65 by the time 2015 rolls around. He is a Montreal poet published in quite a few online/paper periodicals and one or two anthologies.

Susan King

Black Friday . . .
our civilised ways
are but a myth
the veneer wafer thin
has cracked

all it takes
to lift
a humdrum day
pyracantha berries
a sudden burst of sun

winter deepens
this need
so compelling
to rest
in twilit rooms

“Lost at Sea . . . ”
thirty years on
flowers again
in memory
of her fisherman son

lost for words
I stand accused
day after day
how unforgiving
the empty page

Susan King lives in North Wales, United Kingdom. She has been writing haiku since 2002 and has now decided to “spread her poetic wings” and try her hand at tanka.

Tim Gardiner

arching thorns
line labyrinth tunnels
a boy retraces
her faint footsteps
to the shore

we peer through
museum windows
old cobwebs
a few seashells
the only exhibits

the kingfisher darts
across grey saltings
passing an upturned boat
a pleasure unknown
to distracted lovers

chopping wood
by the derelict hut
a mosquito bites
I remember her kiss
so soft on my neck

boots caked
in pungent mud
leaving the island
the sweet scent
of her perfume lingers

~*Skipper’s Island, UK*

Skipper’s Island is situated in Hamford Water in Essex, UK. Its habitats include salt marsh, grassland, dense scrub thickets and a disused heronry. The Island is most notable for its large population of the rare Fisher’s estuarine moth and its larval foodplant, hog’s fennel. A derelict lodge is found on the Island along with a wonderfully dilapidated museum hut.

Dr Tim Gardiner is an ecologist and poet from Manningtree in Essex, UK. His haiku and tanka have been published in literary magazines including Blüthe Spirit, Frogpond, and Presence while longer poems have appeared in Poetry Quarterly and Salopeot. His first collection of poetry, Wilderness, is due to be published by Brambleby Books. He has published many scientific papers on natural history and several books, including one about glow-worms.

Review: *Beatitudes— Saligprisninger*

Reviewed by Patricia Prime

Beatitudes—Saligprisninger

Johannes S. H. Bjerg

2014

Johannes S. H. Bjerg's *Beatitudes—Saligprisninger*, published in English, followed by the Danish translation, are not written strictly in the tanka form as some of the tanka contain only four lines. I think it is the quotidian quality, not the provisionality that attracts me to his tanka: a celebration of dailiness. These poems have clearly been worked on, yet they also have a freshness and unforced quality that is immediately appealing. As one might expect from an experienced tanka poet, there is less breathless energy, more meditative reflection, but the passive quality is the same: this is what is happening here and now. For instance, one tanka describes a woman knitting socks for a child she does not possess:

blessed be she who knits
woolen socks her make-
believe children will
never grow cold

*velsignet
være hun som strikker
uldne sokker for hendes
fantasibørn skal
aldrig fryse*

Perhaps the length of the tanka form is significant: pre-eminently, tanka is keyed up to a two-line conclusion, with a volta in the middle. This regularity suggests continuity, the passage of seasons, events and emotions. Even though there may be a sense of thoughts' flow line by line, it is all contained and regularised by the shape of the poem. Rather than the tentative or half-completed thoughts of traditional verse, Bjerg is interested in sculpting his thoughts into five lines or less. In the following poem, there are five lines

in the English version but only three lines in the Danish poem:

blessed be the child who
puts its fingers between
its toes
it will teach us to treasure
every gap

*velsignet være
barnet som flette sine
fingre og tæer det*

Whereas in the following poem, the English version contains only four lines and the Danish verse, five:

blessed is she who wrecks
a jigsaw puzzle of 10,000
pieces for she shall remind
us that no time is wasted

*velsignet er hun som
odelægger et puslespil på
10.000 brikker for hun skal
minde os om at ingen tid er
spildt*

These poems, along with their genuine intense lyricism and narrative, get down to some real business here. Blending ordinary and unusual visions, they give a disturbing pleasure that both comforts and challenges. Linked by a series of ideas, these small instances echo hauntingly across cultural boundaries. Bjerg presents a world in which he passes on his blessings to those around him, both to the child and to the adult:

blessed be she who
prefers happy endings
for she shall be
a lighthouse for
shipwrecked mice

*velsignet være hun som
foretrækker lykkelige
slutninger for hun skal
være et fyrtårn for
skibbrudne mus*

Again and again, Bjerg demonstrates his ability to find significance and transformation in the simple things of life—from the knitting of socks to the child learning to write:

blessed is the child that learns
to write and don't give up in
helping it we learn to choose
our words with care

*velsignet
er barnet som lærer at skrive
og ikke gi'r op når vi hjælper
det lærer vi at vælge vore ord
med omhu*

With its surprising array of subjects conceived and handled as 'blessings', *Beatitudes—Saligprisninger* proves Bjerg to be a poet on whom nothing is lost, whether he turns his attention to a jigsaw puzzle or a lighthouse.

Review: *Bright Stars, An Organic Tanka Anthology*

Reviewed by Larry Kimmel

Bright Stars, An Organic Tanka Anthology
Edited by M. Kei
Keibooks, 2014
US Letter format
7 Volumes, 98 pages per volume
8.5" x 11" Perfect Binding
\$10.00 USD, per paperback volume
\$5.00 USD per Kindle volume

M. Kei's 2014 grand experiment, *Bright Stars, An Organic Tanka Anthology*, is now complete and a complete success. To review this achievement it is also necessary to say something about 'akarui.' The Japanese aesthetic of 'akarui' is best described as bright, loud, energetic, urban, exciting, and experimental. But first, a quick

overview of 'Bright Stars.'

As stated in the submission guidelines,

"Bright Stars is an experimental project from Keibooks that will run for one calendar year (2014). As an anthology, it will publish both new and socially published tanka literature . . . By "tanka literature" we mean tanka poetry and any experimentation or innovation based on tanka, including but not limited to: tanka, kyoka, gogyoshi, waka, tanrenga, tanka sequence, collaborative tanka, tanka prose, shaped tanka, acrostics, and anything else.

"An organic anthology, also called a 'serial anthology,' differs from a journal in several ways. First, it has no fixed schedule, so there are no deadlines. It's first come, first serve for quality tanka literature. Because it has no fixed number of volumes, there is no pressure to pad a volume with mediocre work . . . and likewise, no . . . cutting [of] deserving work due to space restrictions. Although it does not have a fixed schedule, it does have an end date, unlike journals which expect to publish indefinitely."

Now that the December end date has come and gone, it can safely be said that 'Bright Stars' has admirably accomplished its aims. In its entirety it spans seven volumes. There are 1000 tanka in each volume, with an average of 60 to 75 poets per volume, a truly international anthology, with voices from, not only North America, England, New Zealand and Australia, but from France, Japan, Greece, Ethiopia and more.

Each volume's contents page reads like a Who's Who of contemporary English-language tanka-poets. But there are also many new names. In quite a few cases *Bright Stars* has recruited poets from the online social media and brought them to a more permanent format than Twitter, Facebook and other social media sites can provide, they being much too ephemeral for 'high quality' short form poetry. This decision to consider tanka and related forms already disseminated on social media is, indeed,

fortunate. We have come to know a number of new names that are seldom seen in the standard journals, such as: Grunge; toki; Debbie Strange; gennepher; Marianne Paul; Peter Fiore; Roary Williams; Tzod Earf.

Other recent voices that have significantly developed through *Bright Stars* are: Matsukaze; Eamonn O'Neill; Nilufer Y. Mistry.

Among the new names, new to this reviewer at least, is Joy McCall, a prolific writer and writer to watch. (Her tanka collection, *Hedgerows : Tanka Pentptychs* has recently been published by Keibooks.) There is a feeling of the mythical essence of all things underlying McCall's themes, as in these tanka from her sequence, 'spirits,' in *Bright Stars 5*:

there are
restless creatures
among the trees
they wander, their feet
unsettling the night

there are dreams
animal, human,
they meet
where the grass grows tall
on the edges

This wealth of tanka literature in *Bright Stars* is to be found in an 8.5 by 11 inch perfect bound, paperback format. With nearly 100 pages per volume there is ample room to accommodate large layouts, sometimes of chapbook length. Its letter-size pages also allow for the satisfying presentation of one-line and three-line tanka. Here are examples taken from *Bright Stars 2*:

One-line tanka by Matsukaze:

in the middle.of an evening freeze.making
tanka.in 5, 3, and 1 lines—this city quietness
frozen

after a dinner.of risotto.a glass of
cabernet.and your hesitant but sensual
touch.loud in the dark

Three-line tanka by Matsukaze:

trip to the beach front
over macadamian cookies things seemed
surreal
even staged between us

my daughter—
formerly a southern Baptist, has returned
from the east
a practitioner of zen and lesbian

Another practitioner of one-line tanka is the very experimental Danish-born poet, Johannes S. H. Bjerg—this from *Bright Stars 2*:

and a tree falls in the supposed darkness of a
fridge in the meantime my knee itches and
I'm taming a monster of phone calls

Bjerg writes in both Danish and English.

The covers for each of *Bright Stars* seven volumes incorporate stunning astronomical photographs, courtesy of NASA/JPL-Caltech. A choice of cover image both attractive and apt to the forwarding looking philosophy behind *Bright Stars*.

Besides the two-columned paper edition of *Bright Stars*, the anthology can also be purchased in Kindle format. While poetry often does not transfer well to Kindle, leading to broken and/or scattered lines, Keibooks has done an excellent job of keeping its poems intact as they progress in a single column from page to page.

Here ends the quick overview of *Bright Stars*. Now, the promised discussion of *akarui*—the aesthetic permeating the whole of the seven volume *Bright Stars* anthology. I, again, quote from the call for submissions:

Bright Stars focuses on the Japanese aesthetic of *akarui*—bright, light, illuminated, brilliant, shiny, brassy, active, energetic, noisy, loud, happy, drunk, passionate, wild, playful, vivid, and boundless. That doesn't mean that there are no dark poems in *Bright Stars*—black is a color too—but it should be an active darkness, not a hand wringing, genteelly sighing darkness.

In an email exchange with M. Kei, I learned that he first realized the value of the *akarui* aesthetic in the success of ‘The Garage, Not the Garden : Tanka of Urban Life’—(an online project well worth a look <http://atlaspoetica.org/?page_id=904>). It was this project which caused him to go ahead with the *Bright Stars* experiment. He went on to say that it was something Alex von Vaupel and he had talked about earlier on, giving Alex credit for helping him come up with the title.

Two tanka from ‘The Garage, Not the Garden,’ that exemplify the *akarui* aesthetic—its boldness, its avoidance of gentility—are:

Carole Johnston, USA:

once I followed
the popping red sunset
off the chrome wheels
of a screaming fire truck
down hot city streets

Fiona Tsang, Australia:

Venus incarnate
from a distance, her pink heels
look like scallop shells
a goddess in mortal flesh
striding down Fifth Avenue

While *akarui* is the predominant aesthetic of *Bright Stars*, there are the experimental features of the anthology, too, which make it important to any tanka or short form poet who has a need to find and test the possibilities of a 21st century tanka literature. Besides such forms as the already mentioned tanka, kyoka, gogyoshi, tanrenga, and so on, there are two six-line haikai related forms to be found in *Bright Stars* of which I’d like speak.

First, the sedoka.

“Sedoka is a short lyric poem originally from Japan composed of six units of prosody and meaning. They are often subdivided into two parts with the upper part forming a call and the lower part forming a response; when two voices are made explicit (as when the two parts are written by two different poets), they

are called a mondo. Sedoka were obsolete early in Japanese literary history, so they lack the intensive development of tanka and its corresponding literary problems. (from *Atlas Poetica’s* guidelines.)

Sheila Windsor and Brendan Slater appear in *Bright Stars* with ‘Snowflakes, A Sedoka Sequence.’ By way of example, here are the ending two poems:

another pinch
from who knows where,
I’ll be glad to get out of Rome!
but when in
how in Hell
to get out?

6 days
6 pills
6 chances:
in the shiny rim
of the roulette wheel
every face there ever was

Another six-line form that has been added to *Bright Stars* is the cherita, created by ai li, the London-based poet and editor of *still: a journal of short verse*. Cherita [pronounced CHAIR-rita] is a Malay word meaning “story” or “tale.”

Cherita are a Western invention derived from the Japanese tanka and sedoka. The first line forms a verse, the second and third lines form a verse, and the fourth, fifth and sixth lines form a verse. Each verse is a coherent statement and the three build the story of the poem. (from *Atlas Poetica’s* guidelines)

I might add that cherita are more anecdotal, or nano-narrative, in nature than are tanka, though it is easily adaptable to lyrical expression. It is imagistic and depends on conciseness and suggestion for its effect.

This example, written by ai li, was taken from the Cherita Wikipedia entry:

4 pm

a cuckoo clock
bringing forest into afternoon

the crumbs I leave
sitting on
their own shadows

Some of its earliest practitioners are: Sheila Windsor; Ed Markowski; Ron Moss; Larry Kimmel and, of course, ai li. One of the more recent writers of cherita who understands and uses well this highly flexible form is Matsukaze. One such cherita by Matsukaze is:

another of those walks—

those lonely walks
down a unfriendly street

closing my eyes
i often wonder
where am i . . . really?

To sum up, *Bright Stars* is the place for experimental tanka, as well as traditional, and M. Kei is the go-to editor; scholar; and, of course, tanka-poet, for the developing tanka scene and its writers—writers who, in some cases, would have no other printed journal as an outlet. And though *Bright Stars* has fulfilled its stated mission, this reviewer is excited, no, ecstatic, to learn that the discoveries made in this bold and unique experiment are to be continued in Keibooks' already well established *Atlas Poetica*.

Not to forget the prime mover of all this bounty, a tanka by M. Kei:

sailor in a sea of stars,
I see what no landlubber ever will,
night as black as forever
and stars as bright as
the hearts of young men

Review: *Slow Growing Ivy*

Reviewed by Patricia Prime

Slow Growing Ivy

David Terelinck

Illustrations by Sylvia Amoedo

Cedar Press, Pyrmont, Sydney, Australia. 2014.

Pb 111 pages

114 individual tanka, plus tanka prose and sequences

ISBN: 978-0-646-9428-2

Order directly from David Terelinck:

tanka_oz@yahoo.com.au

Slow Growing Ivy is David Terelinck's second tanka collection and it is beautifully illustrated by Sylvia Amoedo's artwork.

Gaining admittance to Terelinck's tanka it is useful to read Beverley George's fine Introduction in which she explains the traditions of tanka and the complex emotional and personal sorrows of the poet's life. Terelinck's tanka, while personal are also "elastic" as, while these are things one immediately perceives, you can't be sure of their significance, fixed, as they are, in the poet's life. For this is serious material, about illness, death, hope, despair and love:

without you
fear is just a word . . .
when my time comes
embalm me with moonlight
and westerly winds

What we must look at are precisely the things that can't be identified by the eye: ambiguity in all its forms, where ideas are paired, conflict and coexist:

only the moon
understands my grief
waxing, waning
sometimes so complete
it cannot be ignored

Concerns voiced in the tanka are carried from one poem to another like threads on a

jacquard loom, often as threads of language-use or images. So in this fine tanka

a rainbow
arcing over cedars—
still I trace
the shape of your back
in monochrome dreams

he experiments rather joyously with the description of a rainbow and the shape of his lover's back.

Terelinck's language may be enjoyed for the unlikely, sometimes surreal, ways it makes ordinary things happen, indeed, a little beyond the ordinary. Look at the pertinent detail in

the lure
of fishnets and neon—
Amsterdam's trees
with just enough leaves
to stir the senses

The tanka in this collection are generously people, action-packed vignettes that bring life to life and death. It is the right-size collection to read in a sitting, entertaining, rich in character, evocative of times past, memories and image. His feel for the thumbnail sketch is as good as it gets. Terelinck's tanka may be thought of as small rebellions against the mundane, spreading their delight among his readers as he mingles sundry details. Thus he writes in this poem for Kathy Kituai:

with practised hand
she lightly flours the fish
her poems, too
delicious with that same
delicate touch

In a book full of personal experiences, we meet his family, friends and lover, his love of nature and birds, his locale and his grief at another's illness:

you choose not to
tell me of your cancer—
the bowl of evening
overflowing
with darkness . . .

I'm impressed by Terelinck's tanka which wear their rhythms lightly, and that conjure a torrent of images, invigorating the reader, making every image fresh.

Review: *Tanka To Eat*

Reviewed by Patricia Prime

Tanka To Eat

Themed tanka masterpieces by modern poets selected by Noriko Tanaka

Translated by Amelia Fielden & Saeko Ogi

Australia. Ginninderra Press 2014

Pb. 72 pp.

ISBN 978-1-74027-846-1

Ordering information is direct from Amelia Fielden at anafielden@gmail.com

Price \$15 + postage

In this collection of tanka, on the themes of vegetables, fruits and fish, Norika Tanaka's wish, as she expresses it in her Preface, is to "try to understand what alterations tanka themselves have undergone as the world has been changing."

The book is divided into the sections Vegetable Tanka, Fruit Tanka, Side-dish Tanka, Fish Tanka, and contains an Afterword, two appendices, biographical notes on the poets and biographical notes on the selector of the tanka and the translators. Several of the tanka are headed by an explanation of the vegetable or fruit, following by the tanka and an exposition of the tanka.

The first section on Vegetable Tanka mixes memories of the agricultural tanka written by

evacuees to the countryside during and after World War II with contemporary Japanese cuisine. It opens with Kogure Masaji's tanka:

there were vegetables
and we ate vegetables—
no rush
to draw the conclusions
of a lifetime

Given the “framing” of this section, the poets turn to humour, as we see in Aoki Yukari's tanka on the pumpkin:

cutting into a big pumpkin
my chopper has
got stuck—
someone come and
help me, please

Sometimes, only one tanka is referenced, but the section on the “tomato” has nine examples. One of my favourites being Satō Kiyomi's:

the night is filled
from the depths
of Chagall's indigo—
peeled in hot water
bright red tomatoes

Many of the fruits chosen for the section on fruit will be familiar to Westerners, but one I hadn't discovered is ‘oleaster’—the wild-olive. There are examples of fifteen varieties of fruit, from grapes to pears. We are told that “As Homura Hiroshi writes in the *Iwanami Tanka Dictionary*, grapes do not appear in classical tanka.” However, in contemporary tanka grapes are used as symbols “to describe the poets' inner consciousness.” We are given five examples from “black grapes,” - “luscious grapes,” the greenness dribbling from grapes, grapes which cherish a brief life to Umeuchi Mikako's fine tanka comparing grapes with jewels:

they have the same
gentle yet cruel shape
as jewels—
rolling in my hands
the grapes as I eat them

The headnote to “Apple” is as follows:

Apples have a very long history. The fossilised remains of apples from about 6,000 BC have been discovered in Turkey. The name ‘apple’ appears in the ancient Chinese book *Sōsho*. Apples were brought to Japan from China. They are mentioned in Japanese compendia of the Heian period, the tenth and eleventh century. But tanka featuring apples only became numerous in the modern era.

Kitahara Hakushū's delightfully romantic picture of a lover walking home in the snow, made fragrant by the scent of apples:

I send you back
in the morning the path
crunching under your feet
oh snow, full with
the fragrance of apples

The tanka on the strawberry also has five examples, from “scarlet strawberries,” “morning strawberries,” crushing strawberries, mashing strawberries, to Ozaki Saeko's winter strawberries:

with a spoon
I'm crushing winter strawberries—
on and on
from our separation
my long, lonely, mourning

Kurose Karen's tanka about the oleaster:

like a finch
the youth held in his mouth
the oleaster he'd stolen
with his tongue—and now
I will rob him of it

is followed by this note:

An orchard landscape, and the painful image of a beautiful youth, like the hero of a famous manga, floats before one's eyes. This piece of writing, which more than anything overflows with aestheticism, is admirably suited to the poet's world view.

Side-dish Tanka contains four tanka which all have fish as their subjects—broiled, alive, dead and angling for spring fish. Mizuhara Shion's tanka

when I eat fish
does my body
become the fish's grave?
I put it to my mouth
like an offering to the dead

is probably the most powerful of these tanka, as the poet says that when you eat a fish, your body becomes the fish's tomb.

The final section on Fish contains two tanka by Takagi Yoshiko and Ishikawa Kei. In Takagi Yoshiko's tanka—one in which the poet discovers a 'whitened bone' which turns out to be a 'leaf vein' as she eats fish and she doesn't know whether it's a fish bone in her mouth, or the skeleton of a leaf, so she feels anxious. The second tanka is on the topic of 'smelt fishing,' also called 'hole fishing' or 'ice fishing':

lit like lanterns
a group of tents
for smelt fishing . . .
and the shadows
of people moving

In the book's Afterword, Noriko Tanaka writes about the history of tanka, from the oldest collection, the Man'yōshū (*Ten Thousand Leaves*) to the fact that the fixed form of the tanka's rhythm (5/7/5/7/7) remains with us today. Appendix 1 gives the original tanka in Japanese and Appendix 2 the names and biographical notes of the poets. Finally, we have the biographical notes of the selector of the tanka and the two translators.

It will become clear from the above quotations that this is a particularly innovative book in terms of style and interesting summaries of the many varieties of vegetables, fruit and fish that are available to us. It is the work of competent tanka poets who know how to explore the possibilities of the food we like to eat and whose verse and explanations are skilfully structured.

Review: *The Prism of Mokichi: From the Collected Tanka of Mokichi Saito 150 Tanka*

Reviewed by Patricia Prime

*The Prism of Mokichi From the Collected Tanka of
Mokichi Saito 150 Tanka*

Translated by Fusako Kitamura, Reiko

Nakagawa and Aya Yuhki

Editorial Supervisor William I. Elliott

Japan. (2013) Pb. 182 pp.

ISBN: 978-4-86023-858-2

Enquiries to Aya Yuhki

The Prism of Mokichi is a welcome addition to a western reader's tanka library as it may serve as new territory, for the tanka in this collection are drawn from the work of Japanese poet Mokichi Saito, and here, admirably translated by Fusako Kitamura, Reiko Nakagawa and Aya Yuhki. The book opens with an excellent Preface to the English translation by Shiro Akiba, President of the Saito Mokichi Memorial Museum. There's a brief survey of Mokichi Saito's Career by Fusako Kitamura and a Postscript by Aya Yuhki. The tanka are printed in English, Japanese and kanji.

The structure of the book is interesting; sections and translations from Mokichi's tanka composed throughout his entire life, which continued from his early collections, such as *Sakkō* (*Red Light*) and *Aratama* (*Uncut Gem*) to his later collections, *Shiroki Yama* (*White Mountain*) and *Tsukikage* (*Moonlight*).

The tanka poet Mokichi Saito was born in Meiji in 1882. He spent his life as a doctor, while he was also absorbed in writing lyrical poems called tanka. This collection brings his work to the attention of Western readers.

The book opens with tanka from *The Mogami River*, translated by Fusako Kitamura. The first poems are from *Shakkō* / *Red Light* and describe not only nature but human nature:

the infant
on a tatami mat
stands
for the first time
this little one stands!

There are two tanka from *Tsuyujimo / Dewy Frost*, describing a Chinese temple and the silence of a wood. *Noboriji / Ascending Road* and *Shimo / Frost* have one tanka each, while *Shōen / Small Garden* contains the largest section of 12 tanka on the subject of autumn: pinecones, chestnuts, the shortest day & snow:

when it snows
ceaselessly
my whole being
grows calm
—such calmness!

Shiroki Yama / White Mountain has several tanka about the Mogami River and we see the river at sunrise, in the evening, in spring, as a raging torrent and even the life of its fish:

at all times
I think of carps living
in the Mogami River
are they growing calm now
after gasping?

Tsukikage / Moonlight concerns growing old, unable to escape illness, neglecting the beauty of a butterfly, and life gradually coming to an end:

unnoticed
the sun is sinking
so I, too,
a living creature,
will come to an end

The tanka from *Meanderings*, translated by Reiko Nakagawa, begin with 11 poems from *Shakkō / Red Light*. The poet's mother, nearing death, is recalled in several of these tanka, but the poet also reminisces about his young wife:

I always had in mind
my very young wife.
So even now when I see
a red dragonfly flying
I am moved.

But even in his sadness, he sees beauty in a fallen blossom:

As I came home
this evening
feeling sorry for myself
a persimmon blossom
fell upon the narrow path.

In *Aratama / Uncut Gem*, the poet's thoughts roam from a morning firefly, a shower of rain, a foghorn to a winter field. *Tsuyujimo / Dewy Frost* opens in moonlight:

Moonlight leaves nothing unlit
here on this mountain
with a hot spring.
It shines on a silver clock
bedside.

The tanka in this section focus on sunlight, evening darkness, eating oak seeds, dawn, the sinking sun and the Louvre Museum.

En'yū / Travels Abroad has only one tanka about an eruption, while *Tomoshihi / Lights* has six tanka on the topics of a child, valleys under moonlight, clouds, a fire, a red frog and dawn:

Oh! At dawn
on Shinano Road
plaintains are
yellowing,
already frozen.

Takahara / High Plateau, *Shiromomo / White Peach*, *Gyōkō / Crimson Dawn* and *Shōen / Small Garden* each contain only one or two tanka. *Shiroki Yama / White Mountain* has 11 tanka, whose focus is on the Mogami River:

Mountains all around
are snow-white.
But March rain
is falling upon
the Mogami River.

Tsukikage / Moonlight contains two tanka and this section of translations ends with the beautiful minimalist poem:

Thrushes tonight
on this mountain
gradually
sang me
to sleep.

The final section, *Silent Grapes* is translated by Aya Yuhki. *Shakkō / Red Light* is comprised of 8 tanka: their subjects ranging from sand moving in water to an incident in Shanghai. The tanka in *Aratama / Uncut Gem* are concerned with emptiness, a buzzing fly in the dark and light dimly leaking from the door. In *En'yū / Travels Abroad*, the reader is taken to the Elbe:

in this country
on the Elbe, I am
much moved—
dew faintly forming
on the riverside grass

and, in the second tanka, to see “lemon juice / dripping on shucked kurogai.”

Henreki / Travels takes the poet from his moving to living in a gloomy room. The poet then journeys to distant countries, where he finds Nietzsche’s grave, wanders in Berlin and he and his wife dip their hands in the Rhone. Rain blurs the fields of France and he sees “a trail of clouds / over the Indian Ocean.”

Tomoshihi / Lights, Takahara / High Plateau and *Shiromomo / White Peach* have one tanka each. *Gyōkō / Crimson Dawn* opens with

as if
pushing my body
against the desk,
I tried to compose
my frustrated mind

Kan'un / Cold Clouds, Noboriji / Ascending Road have one or two tanka while *Shōen / Small Garden* has 8 tanka, ranging from life in a village at the age of sixty-four, seeing geese heading south, a winter evening, black grapes, listening to a soldier’s story, seeing a mantis, the fine tanka:

I’ll never forget
the sounds of the bell
tolling
over this village
close to the end of the War

and a final tanka about reliving time.

Shiroki Yama / White Mountain is comprised of 10 tanka, mainly on the subject of the Mogami River:

flow down
along with the stream
of the Mogami—
my barren heart unable
to find a destination

Though Mokichi’s tanka often deal with such impossible abstractions as memory, sadness, love and regret, they are always grounded in the moment, in the place, in the person. These tanka are, for the most part, quiet and reflective, but they are infused with sparks of language that capture our imaginations, as we see in the final section, *Tsukikage / Moonlight* which includes the following tanka, in which the poet wisely says that death comes to us all:

in the morning twilight,
I sometimes think
of death—
the death that comes
without exception

There are many quotable lines and memorable tanka in *The Prism of Mokichi*. It is a book one can read time and again.

Patricia Prime is co-editor of the New Zealand haiku magazine, Kokako, reviews/interviews editor of Haibun Today, and is a reviewer for Takahe and Atlas Poetica, and for several Indian magazines. She has interviewed poets and editors for Takahe and

for the online magazines *Haiku NewZ*, *Simply Haiku*, *Haibun Today*, *Stylus*. She co-edited, with Australian poets, *Amelia Fielden and Beverley George, the tanka collection 100 Tanka by 100 Poets* and is currently editing, with Dr. Bruce Ross and others, the world haiku anthology *A Vast Sky*. Patricia writes haiku, tanka, haibun and tanka prose and has published her poetry worldwide.

Review: *rising mist, fieldstones* by Joy McCall

Reviewed by Sanford Goldstein

rising mist, fieldstones

by Joy McCall

Keibooks, Perryville, Maryland, USA, 2015

\$US 15.00 ppb / \$US 5.00 Kindle

ISBN: 978-1502920263

For three years I have been writing e-mails each day to Joy McCall. We have become tanka soulmates. During those years we occasionally decided to write tanka strings, alternating first hers or first mine and continuing alternating to usually five tanka, though there could be more than five tanka in a string.

When M. Kei brought out *Hedgerows* by Joy in 2014, I read it rapidly, for its subject matter seemed foreign to my interests. But having been asked by Kei to write a review of her forthcoming book, I read *Hedgerows* again. In my rereading of *Hedgerows*, I found myself suddenly lured into Joy's world and found it was much more personal than my first impressions, and I could understand her world view better. In *Hedgerows*, M. Kei in his comments on page 13 writes:

To write tanka requires an eye for meaningful detail and the ability to evoke a connection: good tanka are pebbles thrown into the mind of the receptive reader. Joy has that eye, and

added to it, a compassionate soul that meets others without judgment. She takes a keen interest in everything from her children to the local crooks and drunks, artisans, madwomen, and ghosts. The supernatural is as real to her as the material world and the dead populate her poems along with the living.

These same comments could be made for *rising mist, fieldstones*. I found out that Joy sent him new poems written after *Hedgerows*, but many of the poems in this third book edited by M. Kei echo the same world we entered before. I may be wrong, but I think in this forthcoming book of poems, *rising mist, fieldstones*, there are more personal poems including poems on love.

One of the poems in *Hedgerows*, "que será, será" p. 91 is a song Doris Day sang in an old movie where her son asks her what he will be when he grows up, but the mother wisely says, "whatever will be will be," exactly as Joy says in the last tanka in this series five tanka:

I do not sleep
through the long loud night
such waste hours
it is pointless to be fretting
what will be, will be

This is Joy's perpetual way of facing difficulties, the pains of her physical disabilities. At 58, while riding her motorcycle, an elderly driver had a sudden brain attack and plowed his car directly into her. The result—a left leg amputated and paraplegia. My e-mails encouraged her, and yes, she wants to live despite all the difficulties of her life. We find in many of her poems in *rising mist, fieldstones* this personal element of encouragement to others and to herself.

Especially memorable in *rising mist, fieldstones* is Joy's love of her mother, who died in 2014. Entitled "her new voice," this group of five tanka is filled with love (page 14). The three most moving to me follow:

calling out
for my dead mother
I hear rain
dropping on the ground
wind blowing through the leaves

she sings
bright new songs
about the sun
and the midnight moon
and how they talk

the land
where she lives now
is gentle
she hums quiet songs
about the rivers in her veins

Joy's love of nature is immense. When I myself see a bee, I run to protect myself—Joy's attitude is of course the opposite in her tanka section entitled "bees," p. 27:

I want
the feel of their feet
on my bare arm
so small and light—
would I notice?

not knowing
the old way to call bees
from the flowers
I drop honey on my skin
and close my eyes waiting

Joy's tanka series entitled "apples," p. 24, is also about bees, but added is Joy's passion for the beekeeper:

I dance
in my pale skin
naked
in the orchard
in the late sun

the bees
settle sleepy
on the apples
they rest, so small
and beautiful

I want to touch
the bodies of bees
and the apple skins
and the tawny face
of the beekeeper

his fingers
bring honey
from the hive
there are bees
in his tangled hair

it is dusk
we have eaten bread
and drunk cider
and made love
we smell of apples

The physical aspect of love comes into Joy's imagination, real enough, but painful, for we know that kind of activity is imagined. One of her most personal series of tanka in *rising mist, fieldstones* is on her being a paraplegic, her foot amputated at the knee and kept in place by heavy bolts because of the horrible accident. For the first time she speaks of what her being a paraplegic means in a series of tanka titled "conversation," p. 15:

you think
paraplegia is just
not walking?
let me tell you
it's much worse than that

it's not doing
anything much
no sex,
no holidays, freedom
or independence

it's tubes
draining organs
and worry
pressure sores
kidney injections

stop me
this could go on and on
it's boring
let's talk about trees
and skies and books and you

There are many tanka about fieldstones readily identified by readers. But "rising mist" troubled me until it occurred to me that this may be symbolic of clarifying through the vagueness of mists her real self. As we know from other works, she loves the outcasts, the elderly, hags, demons, the unexpected, devils who dance, a universe of other-worldly experiences. They can be found in any of her books. The last section *rising mist, fieldstones*' is a series of single tanka, all revealing aspects of her painful yet joyous life:

p. 97

do poets
who write
put two and two
together
and make five?

p. 98

deep down
the pine roots hold fast
old bones
the gypsy smiles
my people eat roots

p. 99

three deaths to mourn
since the year began
I can bear no more
and yet, a thousand in a day
in the lands torn by war

p. 112

her plane
just leaving
newsflash
another plane
down in the ocean

p. 125

the old pub
rough around the edges
the barmaid the same
men come for the real ale
and stumble home alone

p. 139

the door shuts
he is out of sight
then come
creeping fast into the room
those dark, unruly ghosts

p. 141

small note
in the will box . . .
dear loved ones
place the hare at my head
the pine cones at my feet

p. 145

we are
who we once were
no more
and yet deep inside
the child plays, the girl laughs

May all be well with my tanka soulmate,

Sanford Goldstein

Sanford Goldstein has been writing tanka for more than fifty years. In addition, he has co-translated many Japanese writers —those in poetry, to cite a few, are Akiko Yosano, Mokichi Saitō, Shiki Masaoka, and Takuboku Ishikawa. It is to Takuboku that Goldstein feels most indebted. Takuboku believed that tanka is a poem involving the emotional life of the poet. Goldstein's poems focus on what he has experienced, suddenly seen, suddenly reflected on—they are not imagined.

Review: *Tanka Left Behind* :
Tanka from the Notebooks of
Sanford Goldstein

Reviewed by Larry Kimmel

Edited, with an Afterword, by M. Kei.

Keibooks, 2014

\$15.00 USD

ISBN: 978-0692258897

Trade paperback. 208 pages, 6.00" x 9.00".

Perfect Binding.

What impressed me most, the first time I reviewed a book by Sanford Goldstein, was his unsparing honesty, even toward himself.

In *Tanka Left Behind: Tanka from the Notebooks of Sanford Goldstein*, we find all his major themes: the tanka life; his kids, expressed through the joys and heartaches of single parenting; the desires and aloneness of an “unwifed” man; his remembrance of “the dead one;” and his philosophical world-view, suggested through his dual experiences of Zen Buddhism and Jewish tradition. His world-view is, also, found between the lines of his tanka concerning home, work and the necessity of keeping his life moving, no matter the harshness of the human experience.

If you are new to tanka, or for some reason you have missed Sanford Goldstein’s tanka, you could not go amiss by beginning with *Tanka Left Behind*, a collection of unpublished tanka from the notebooks of Goldstein’s early through middle period. *Tanka Left Behind* is divided by years and groups of years from 1976 through 1996. There are a goodly number of tanka in this collection of 208 pages. The book is available in print and ebook. The cover art is a photograph, ‘Two Bottles,’ by Kazuaki Wakui.

Much has, rightly, been said about Goldstein’s honesty; his directness; his minimalism; his spontaneous method of composition; his refusal of artifice; and his use of the tanka as diary (originally inspired by Takuboku Ishikawa). In short, there is little I could add to the literature of his oeuvre. So I will attempt only to give a taste of *Tanka Left Behind* by giving examples of the predominant themes, as

they, in a kind of braiding, appear, disappear and reappear, throughout *Tanka Left Behind*.

To begin, his openness and self-awareness:

nude
with all these clothes on,
so much
exposed
in poured syllables

One of Goldstein’s ongoing themes is his “five line down” obsession:

all this talk
of liberation,
not easy for those
who have been chained
even to these five lines down

He often laments the brevity of the tanka form and its limitations:

too harsh am I
on tanka,
still knowing those five lines
cannot solve the mystery
of Basho’s untranslatable pond

I know
I know
these tanka
are nothing
. . . and still

the two-fold
tanka movement
never stops—
what I want
and what this limit wants

There is an equal praise and delight in the form and this tanka-way of experiencing life:

so many tanka today
as if this flow
of line
exploding
into red sound

these tanka
continue
like a light
going on
in the dark

tanka,
never abandon me,
never leave me,
so many the hours
of hopeless need

As well as a loyalty to his chosen art form:

succulent
epigrams
sweeter—
still,
five lines down

I could burn
every book,
every line,
and still still,
this tanka me!

Another theme found throughout Goldstein's work is the ever present awareness of his wife's early death.

the days climb
toward anniversary
and her death cry,
how all that has passed
returns to damage this now

Or something more than the poignant memories of her passing, as express in this stark statement of fact, that hits with the suddenness of shock.

soon
the seventh long year
since I rushed home,
there I found
my wife had died

And the surprise that happens when the past is thrust upon us through some personal artifact:

strange
coming across
a letter
to the dead one—
it was mine

In the late '70s and early '80s, I note that Goldstein's lines are often longer, the tanka fuller, as once again we visit his "tanka" theme:

tanka,
you must be silent music
in your short breath,
lines may be truncated
or full-blown to syllabic count

And, of course, the ache of parenting without a partner:

being
mother and father
to my kids,
sometimes want to come home
to a kitchen of smells

Often he mentions his harsh words to his kids, but always the bitter aftertaste of this impatience:

I recall
that one-sentence
rebuke
to my daughter,
how long the lousy penitence

The above, another example of his unsparing honesty, even with himself. But there is so much love, I suspect, harsh sentences could not have been as dominant in his household as in his books:

my kids
all excited
about cokes and cash—
I give them a tip
at the Saturday football game

and Jewish-mother-
like,
did I hover,
insisting they eat,
filling glasses, piling food on?

There are also poems of his profession as a professor of English literature and the awareness of his “campus kids,” even in his most personal moments:

always
near the surface
of this whirlwind mind,
my distant
campus kids

There are many references, especially in these early years of his widowerhood, to his chronic solitude, even in the midst of an active life:

no love letters,
no women
to court,
I sing my bare song
without a lute

strange
this fusion
of desire and emptiness
in the September
half-light

all night
desire
circled
like a bird
of prey

A solitude frequently portrayed through the dailiness of life:

floor scrubbed,
house in order,
I prepare
the getting-through
for the weekend

trying to delay
this almost last act
before the climb
upstairs—
I floss late

Of his philosophical and spiritual world-view, there is in this collection more about his Jewish tradition than usual, but, as always in his work, there is his underlying awareness of the Zen life:

oh, I could say
such things!
instead I *zazen*,
I face
a bare wall

another Jewish new year
and the image of that hard
synagogue bench
faded under the sound
of the ram’s horn

there is a texture
in Zen paper,
Zen ink,
and these I know
are beyond content

one piece
of cake
and lo!
this twenty-four-hour fast
never was

It should be noted that these themes on which I am hanging this review, often merge within a single tanka. Here his “kids” and “the dead one:”

and what
if she had lived?—
would my three kids’ scope
have widened?
narrowed?

His kids, their family traditions:

we break open
the delight,
mouthing-Jewish
pastry
after the fast

at the end of this long table
my kids giggle,
talk,
all the Passover ceremony
over their heads and mine

Again, his “kids” and “the dead one:”

telling my kids
about loads of
farewell gifts
at the Japanese train,
my wife’s ashes carried too

And yet again, his deceased wife combined,
this time, with the Zen theme:

Zen master
with your eternal
black sleeves,
I tug at them
even after a decade of death

I would suggest, here, that in any collection of tanka, though each individual tanka is complete in and of itself, a right sequencing of those tanka can also be considered a single poem. In this sequence of short poems, Goldstein has achieved, remarkably, the long-poem, the life-poem, in short “the poem,” for which so many western poets have yearned. This is true of *Tanka Left Behind*, as well as his life’s work. Now, in his 89th year, Goldstein states in his Introduction that *Tanka Left Behind* may well be his last book. Who knows? We’ve heard such statements before. But one thing is certain, Goldstein has made the tanka his own. He is unique, there is no one like him and yet he speaks to and for all of us.

and will my kids
finger
these notebooks
to discover
my tanka life?

Larry Kimmel
Colrain, Massachusetts, USA

Larry Kimmel is a US poet. He holds degrees from Oberlin Conservatory and Pittsburgh University, and has worked at everything from steel mills to libraries. Recent books are “this hunger, tissue-thin,” and “shards and dust.” He lives with his wife in the hills of Western Massachusetts.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Atlas Poetica will publish short announcements in any language up to 300 words in length on a space available basis. Announcements may be edited for brevity, clarity, grammar, or any other reason. Send announcements in the body of an email to: AtlasPoetica@gmail.com—do not send attachments.

Keibooks Announces *rising mist, fieldstones* by Joy McCall

Joy McCall’s latest book is a witchsong of magic and grace. By now regular readers of McCall’s work are familiar with the standing stones and misty fields of her Norwich home, but there are still mysteries unexplored, with the greatest mystery of them all creeping ever closer. The door to the other world has opened and she is lingering on its threshold, a witch between the worlds. She sings our sorrows and our joys. Nothing escapes her notice, not the ancient yews nor the bodies of bees. In sequences of various lengths and individual tanka, she has once again mapped the world of shadows found among the cobblestones of day.

three small stones
will work just as well
as one large one
for enticing
curious witches

I buried
a dead fishfly
under petals
even the smallest death
deserves mourning

“Tanka poetry pours from Joy McCall. Short songs or one life long song. Wild poems of pain and sorrow and the joy of living. My hair stands on end. Her world of shadows and the sound of the wind and ‘seeing the transient beauty in all things.’ Intimate and universal. Praise God for the poetry of Joy McCall. For dark nights and church bells. For bright mornings in fields and gardens. For candlelight and the sake bowl.”—Gerry Jacobson, writer

“To read *rising mist, fieldstones* is to enter the holy room of Joy McCall’s wild, pagan heart. Expect grace and reverence, but also witches and ghosts, and even a little magic. Here there is ‘a madness of pain’ and a blood-borne longing for ‘another kind of home.’ Here there are pine gods, gods of the hills and the wind, winds that rush and scream through an increasingly frail body: ‘—how else can I keep breathing?’ Here there are rivers and that boatman with whiskey-breath who says ‘come my dear, we must go now . . .’”—Claire Everett, Editor of *Skylark*

rising mist, fieldstones

by Joy McCall

Edited by M. Kei

ISBN 978-1502920263 (Print) 162 pp

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Keibooks

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<AtlasPoetica.org>

Ethiopian Time
by Bob Lucky published by
Red Bird chapbooks

Gravity

Gravity was strong today. My feet barely left the earth. The sky was bird-less. Pied crows, wattled ibises, kites, all the birds, gathered on the soccer pitch and pecked at the turf. Clouds crashed around me, sank underground, giving me the impression, in spite of the effort needed to drag my soul all the way to dusk, that this could be heaven on earth. So I began to pay attention.

This is the last poem in Bob Lucky’s chapbook *Ethiopian Time*. On my first read through the manuscript I was struck by the breadth of the experience Bob relates. Then I read “Gravity,” and I began to pay attention.

Just how does one balance the familiar with the foreign? And just how different is ordinary depending on climate and culture?

The poems in *Ethiopian Time* are Haibun-prose poem and haiku or prose poem and tanka combinations. Bob uses this form effectively to contrast his observations and insights on everyday life in a foreign place. Bob uses and stretches the form to fit his experiences, providing another means of conveying the flexible necessity of life no matter where one lives.

Read *Ethiopian Time*, decide for yourself if there isn’t more familiar than foreign in its pages.

To order, visit:

<http://www.redbirdchapbooks.com/>

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Publications by Keibooks

Atlas Poetica : A Journal of World Tanka

Collections Edited by M. Kei

flowers to the torch, by Peter Fiore *forthcoming*

rising mist, fieldstones, by Joy McCall

Hedgerows, Tanka Pentaptychs, by Joy McCall

circling smoke, scattered bones, by Joy McCall

Tanka Left Behind : Tanka from the Notebooks of Sanford Goldstein, by Sanford Goldstein

This Short Life, Minimalist Tanka, by Sanford Goldstein

Anthologies Edited by M. Kei

All the Shells : Tanka Society of America

Members' Anthology 2014

Bright Stars, An Organic Tanka Anthology (Vols. 1-7)

Take Five : Best Contemporary Tanka (Vols. 1-)

M. Kei's Poetry Collections

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Slow Motion : The Log of a Chesapeake Bay Skipjack
tanka and short forms

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tanka and short forms

M. Kei's Novels

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Pirates of the Narrow Seas 3 : Iron Men

Pirates of the Narrow Seas 4 : Heart of Oak

Man in the Crescent Moon : A Pirates of the Narrow Seas Adventure

The Sea Leopard : A Pirates of the Narrow Seas Adventure

Fire Dragon