

ATLAS
POETICA
A Journal of World Tanka

Number 33

M. Kei, editor
Grunge, editorial assistant

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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, ryuka, and other variations and innovations in the field of tanka. We do not publish haiku, except as incidental to a tanka collage or other mixed form work.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.

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Trends in Tanka Literature

In this, our thirty-third issue of *Atlas Poetica*, we bring you tanka, kyoka, gogyoshi, ryuka, cherita, sedoka, tanka sequences, tanka prose, and non-fiction by sixty-two contributors representing fourteen countries, five continents, and four languages.

A new form in this issue is a cinquain sequence by Denis M. Garrison and Carol Raisfeld. Invented nearly a hundred years ago by Adelaide Crapsey, the cinquain and its variants, such as the lanterne, are the first variants of tanka to be created in English. About eighty years later they were followed by the cherita, invented by ai li. Cinquains have had their occasional fans over that time period; enough so that they have established themselves as English natives, but have never seen the widespread acceptance of their parental tanka. Garrison and Raisfeld with their text-message-like sequence give a very modern twist that stays true to the form. They avoid enjambment and fit the content and the form to each other to strengthen both.

By contrast, cherita has been very well received by tanka poets and has appeared frequently within these pages. Not only has cherita shown itself to have staying power over the last twenty years, it continues to grow. Although standard cherita is a story-telling poem, like a tiny flash fiction, written in a fixed pattern of one line, two lines, three lines, poets have experimented with different arrangement of the lines. Ai li has given the experiments her blessing and a new name: cherita terbalik. Cherita can be written not just in the standard 1-2-3 lines, but 3-2-1, 2-3-1, or any other variation. 'Terbalik' means 'upside-down' in Malay.

Kyoka, never truly mainstream in English, continues to be tanka's irreverent stepsister. Wordplay, humor, and parody are the antidote to too much self-importance. Shortly after this issue comes out you will see a special feature of Rhyming Kyoka online, edited by Michael H. Lester.

Still, while all seems well in Tanka Town, recent submissions reflect the flood of anxiety in

the United States as we confront the daily horrors of our politics. Racial discrimination, sexual assault, and insults to civilized life wear on us all. For our brothers and sisters of color, this is not news, but it pervades the public life of the United States in a way it has not done for decades. Poets respond to these problems as they always do: by bearing witness.

So much so, that although you will see some of these topics addressed in this issue, our next issue will focus on it. The theme for ATPO 34 will be inhumanity: genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, ableism, sexual harassment, fascism, war, violence—the mass misery that groups of human beings choose to inflict on each other.

Some poets have demurred, preferring a tanka that allows them to set aside their own personal suffering to escape into beauty. But everything is tanka. Even this. Especially this. We must protest while we can. The murder of journalists shows just how far the forces of evil will go to blot out the light.

As terrible as the burden of human malignity is, our situation is not hopeless. I have already received submissions of consummate grace that kindle the light more strongly than the darkness can extinguish. For some people, the trials of the soul illuminate a power within that they didn't know they had. Tanka poets have a special way of seeing more deeply into the heart of humanity than ordinary people. Let us now use our gift to stare unblinking into the abyss and fill it with light.

Please help me to expose and illuminate the darkness in ATPO 34.

~K~

M. Kei
Editor, Atlas Poetica

Winter in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, Canada.

Cover Image courtesy of Earth Observatory, NASA.
<http://eoimages.gsfc.nasa.gov/images/imagerecords/8000/8661/Canada_TM>

ai li

sandalwood fan
the memory of
being in
a confined space
with you

i want to
love you
and kiss you again
but you
still smell of her

wandering
through life
she finds him
hanging
from every tree

i now live alone
i count
every grain
of rice
before cooking

my imaginary friend is back
after all these years
she wants to play
and asks why
i am so slow

wait for me
i cry out
and try to catch up
but you have both
become headstones

a lake with blue lotus
wild peacocks, butterflies
and a Brahminy kite
owning the sky
this must be heaven

~heritance kandalama, dry zone, sri lanka, 2016

this afterlife
he believed in it
my lights flicker
whenever i think
of him

where you go to
i promised i will follow
looking up at the big sky
i sigh and
break my word

space was
and is
the final frontier
will we hear sinatra
on a star?

the chance
of meeting you again
in the snow
my lips
red

amber nights
too close
to you
and
the sap burns

the afternoon light
of my childhood
is long gone
i'm in the garden
becoming shadow

prayer shawl
i leave mine
where you last sat
healing all
your memories to come

it is nearly dusk
the first star
will be
on time
just for you

origami bird
i take you to the forest
and leave you
under the tallest tree
you are home you will fly

the train
going into a tunnel
i feel the brush
of a small wing
and i know it is white

just enough coins
to buy you a
sandwich and
a hot drink
my inner child

you play the piano
well into the afternoon
i arrive and there is
no one here
the keys still warm

i lived through borrowed rain
while you grew belladonna
who will haunt us
when the goblets
are emptied?

~Singapore and London, UK

cherita

ai li

is life a dream?

i'm quieter
after supper

wondering
who cooked tonight
the kitchen dark

he died

in a plane crash
young

the sky holds the moment
and we felt its impact
anniversary rain

footsteps

on fallen leaves
the familiarity

of the sound
i turn
and it is dusk

i am restless

on a wet night
someone's radio

playing bacharach's
a house
is not a home

memorial prayers

no one here knew you
as well as i did

our hearts
beating
as one

from your highrise

hearing
the late night train

i could sleepwalk
onto the terrace
and follow the wind

i am now asleep

you should leave me now
to my dreams

two wine glasses
runneth over
with memories

packing up

our old sheets
and moving on

the shadow of our bed
is all
that's left

it's lonely

at the top
but the view

from
your penthouse
is breathtaking

~London, England

ghost tanka

ai li

passing the old wharf
you wave
to the night watchman
who hasn't been there
in years

~London, England

mad about life

ai li

i got out of the car
on the wrong side
of the road
i'm surprised
that i'm still here

my shadow
wants to have sex
and i'm
too weak
to argue

the controlled growth of bonsai
i start loosening my belt
then unbuttoning my top
i will breathe
for both of us

you hurt me
after dinner
you had
the last slice
of cake

later
much later
i find
the old photograph
of you dancing nude

night is falling
i try
to catch
one of its
stars

sanctuary
i build a convent
in my mind
and make it an oasis
with singing fountains

aging
my hair grey
until
the salon
appointment

every table
has a red rose
for the ladies
who do not
come in anymore

may you be at one
with your breath
think zen thoughts
paint
an inkstone moon

~London, England

ai li is a Straits Chinese short form poet from London and Singapore who writes about Life, Love and Loss bringing healing and prayer to her poems. The creator of cherita, editor and publisher of the cherita, founding editor and publisher of still, moving into breath and dew-online, she is also an evidential spiritualist medium, an urban photographer, and a surrealist collage painter. Find her essence in the quiet of her inner rooms at: https://www.amazon.com/ai-li/e/B0080X6ROC/ref=sr_tc_2_0?qid=1469884842&sr=1-2-ent.

Alegria Imperial

unconcerned clouds
such indignity the way
winter ends
so unlike its blinding sheen
on our stained spirits

on the pond
a sparrow's shadow
aloft . . .
and mine among willows
hiding with the moon

somehow
the softened dryness
of your words
fade with the call
of a mourning dove at dusk

as a skylark
begins another song
i scoop
sparkle from the stars
and pour it into my heart

from its perch
the hummingbird sweeps
into my emptiness
finding a window
to infinity

~Canada

As Alegria Imperial continues her journey of self-discovery in writing Japanese short form poetry, of which a number have been published and awarded, she has been experimenting on ways of better expressing herself. In tanka, she has found an apt form for the lyricism quite inherent in her nature as a Pilipino, yet set against Canada, her new country, she has discovered her own uniqueness out of which she writes.

Chicago

Alex Jankiewicz

I hear the echoes of distant motherlands
through the sweet, polluted air of a restless
summer night. I witness the sounds that bind like
veins to the heartbeat of urban experience.

Streets and alleyways penetrate my eyes and
embrace . . .

under a street light
hookers sing a capella
on a corner
a butcher hangs a world map
in the window of his shop

~Wisconsin, USA

Alex is an ESL instructor currently residing in Wisconsin.

Alexis Rotella

Dreamer
at the Dollar Store
embroidered
on her jacket
wings of silver

~Maryland, USA

Alexis Rotella is a well regarded mobile artist and poet. She curated a MeToo anthology called UnSealing Our Secrets available on Kindle along with many of her other books.

Not All Roses and Chocolates

Amelia Fielden

Valentine's Day

birthday of my best friend—
wartime baby,
what would her future be
under Japanese rule

'we' won; she grew
and drew scarlet love hearts
on the card
for a rock 'n' roll boy,
dreaming *love me tender*

white wedding
to honour and obey
young bridegroom
as nervous as she
on their island honeymoon

they multiply:
one daughter, two grandsons
working, playing
happy families
in a seaside city

"*two to five months*"
collapses the house of cards—
her funeral
on November fourteenth
palely pink with gerberas

~*Australia*

Amelia Fielden is an Australian and her work is based on her life and experiences in Australia. At the same time her tanka are strongly influenced by her work as a translator of Japanese literature and the large amount of time she has spent in Japan.

When Andromeda Meets the Milky Way

Autumn Noelle Hall

the wink of a star
recycling itself
to reside
in the corner of your eye
as twinkle, twinkle

never could
get these two left feet
to trip-the-light . . .
but my eyebrows?
Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire

cosmic sneak-up dance
light behaving as wave
as particle—
this *look at me look at me*
that both might exist

last night
in the space of a gaze
we were timeless
kissing the lip of that black hole
poised to swallow us

Hubble Hubble
Arp 256—
two galaxies locked
in a 4-billion-year collide
— shall we make it a date?

~*the now-known Universe*

Autumn Noelle Hall watches the world from a small cedar cabin on the slopes of Pikes Peak, attempting to make sense of life's senselessness through her writing. She is grateful to the sun for rising each day, to her husband and the mountain's wild creatures for keeping her company, and to all those who so generously read and publish her work. She sincerely hopes it is possible to save the Earth one tanka at a time.

Bill Albert

woke up today
breathing life's sweetness
but thought death
as old, dystrophied
my broken body fails

in my garden
barren apple trees
violated limbs
oozing black cankers
disfigured angels smile

silver-haired
mistress of quiet
and still winds
I bow to your art
rippling deep waters

~Norwich UK

Bill Albert is a novelist, wheelchair user and disability rights activist living in Norwich. He grew up in California and has lived in the UK since 1964.

Billy Simms

traveling to take care
of my grandfather's estate
it's the first time
my father rides in a car
while I drive

hearing the will
and what my grandfather
leaves to his children
I finally agree
he was a nasty old bastard

sculpture exhibit
residing in modernism
a spider
has spun its web
in a Nevelson assemblage

returning student work
papers crumpled, wadded up, and shot
at the garbage can
teaching
such a rewarding profession

“Will WoRk FoR FooD”
declares the sign
of the sleeping man
sprawled across
the sidewalk

Coltrane's saxophone fades
as her thighs
slowly
press against
my ears

for joy mccall

adult video store
XXX rated
sitting on the stoop
a woman smokes
and chats on her cell phone

smirking
at me
as she enters the room
did she hear me
fart?

new glasses
in the mirror
the face
that stares at me
looks old

election year
the usual
rants, rhetoric, and recriminations
looking at my bank statement
it's hard to give a shit

ex-girlfriend
we chat
over dinner
she gives me
her knowing smile

staring into the bonfire
I think about my life
past, present, future
as flames transform logs into
ashes

~Hamilton, Ohio, USA

Billy Simms is an artist, poet, and educator. He lives in Hamilton, OH, with his wife and four cats.

Women and Famous Men

Bruce England

The famous man
married a younger woman
he is relieved
that his mother-in-law
is one year older than him

The famous man's wife
said Mrs. Obama asked how
she puts up with him
she flashed her huge diamond ring
"my hazardous duty prize"

Woman divorced
from a famous man
outside her pre-nup
the biggest asset
she retains: his last name

Despite ex-wives
and children with each,
the famous man
starts an affair with his
twenty-something nanny

The famous man loves
his ordinary mistress
not his beautiful wife
the mistress knows not
of her beauty, while his wife
does, and is not beautiful

~Santa Clara, California, USA

Bruce England lives in Santa Clara and works in San Jose, California as a public librarian. Retirement is planned for late 2018. In some years after that, he will cash out of Silicon Valley for a place to be determined. Publication in tanka anthologies includes: Fire Pearls 2 (2013), Bright Stars (2014), Neon Graffiti (2016), and Earth: Our Common Ground (2017). Also publication in various anthologies edited by Robert Epstein with tanka includes: Now This (2013), The Sacred in Contemporary Haiku (2014), Beyond The Grave (2015), Every Chicken, Cow, Fish and Frog (2016), and They Gave Us Life (2017).

Chen-ou Liu

on the edge
I spread out my arms
and fly
into a pool of stars
— first skinny dip

mannequins
in the window display
this sultry night
the unexpected urge
to see my ex again

the rush of waves
washing away my footprints . . .
in ten years
I'm single, married
and single again

stuck in traffic
for almost one hour . . .
my niece draws
a flight of wild geese
on the car window

snowflakes swirl
from the October sky
our talk drifts
from the weather
to minimum wage

crowded lineup
for Mega Millions
at twilight
old men before me
old women after

~*Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

after posting
a #DeleteFacebook tweet
I was relieved . . .
my night now becomes darker
and lonelier

the couple next door
married for thirty years
stir my night
with their moaning sounds
penetrating the wall

an alley dog
howling in the night . . .
I lie alone
in my attic room
among Monroe posters

lightning
on the horizon . . .
the years
before me
stretch thin

a stack
of could-haves
on my chest
I feel the weight
of her silence

my wife adds
one more item to the list
of what to do . . .
with my eyes closed, I hear
her laughter when we first met

eating alone,
one bowl of rice
after another . . .
the fatter I get
the less I am seen

on my way home
from the night shift
the talk
with my shadow
six beers deep

sunlight slants
through the attic window—
two caged birds
singing to each other,
my shadow and me

~Ajax, Ontario, Canada

Confession

Chen-ou Liu

old bartender
gone with the bar . . .
on the way home
thirsty for the things
I've never had

a glass
and a bottle of wine
in the dawn light
alone
with my demons

~Ajax, Ontario, Canada

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, 2011 Haiku Pix Chapbook Contest) and A Life in Transition and Translation (Honorable Mention, 2014 Turtle Light Press Biennial Haiku Chapbook Competition). His tanka and haiku have been honored with many awards.

Cynthia Rowe

fading light
mother's heart pills
neglected
on the floor . . . her sherry
decanter unstoppered

~South Yarra, Victoria, Australia

the sky drained of rain
a swim vest near
the quarry edge . . .
the curriculum vitae
of an unknown child

~Preston, Victoria, Australia

wishing on a star
the birthmarks of this baby
orange
the charged particles
of a much-loved infant

~Mt Eliza, Victoria, Australia

rhubarb pie
reminds me of you
piquant, feisty
and, before your chemo days,
mother made it expressly

~South Yarra, Victoria, Australia

Cynthia Rowe is Past President: Australian Haiku Society; Editor: Haiku Xpressions; Past President: Eastern Suburbs Branch (Bondi Writers) FAW NSW. She is a University of Melbourne graduate in French and Philosophy and has taught tertiary French and English. She was awarded a Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française by the French Ministry of Education and is a Writing Fellow of FAW NSW. Cynthia has published eight novels and three poetry books.

Fifty Words

Dave Read

the magnification
of light through
windows —
dreaming
of chinooks

another
dump of snow
this weekend —
fences lean
away from spring

describing
winter
in 4 letters —
fifty words
for snow

shovelling
a tunnel into
my driveway
a dying streetlight
fades to white

winter
stretches on
forever —
sparrow feathers
crusted with snow

~Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Dave Read is a Canadian poet living in Calgary. He primarily writes short poems with an emphasis on the Japanese genres of haiku, senryu, tanka, and haibun. He was a recipient of the 2016 Touchstone Individual Poem Award for haiku, as granted by The Haiku Foundation. His work has been published in many journals (including Atlas Poetica, hedgerow, Akitsu Quarterly and Acorn), and anthologies (including dust devils: The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku, (2016).

Dean Brink

Dean Brink, Japanese-English Translator

the older we get
the closer the screens
held divine
a darker world
of paths crossed
without crossing

年を取るぐらい画面の小さくて世の暗くな
る道に出逢わぬ

for Amiri Baraka

even now
in that distant land
the color of
a citizen's
spilled blood
is one

今もその常世の国に民の流す血の色みんな
に一緒

~Taiwan

Dean Anthony Brink is associate professor of comparative literature at National Chiao Tung University, Hsinchu, Taiwan. He is a member of the Taiwan Tanka Association (Taiwan Kadan) and recently completed a documentary about the group: Horizons of the Rising Sun: Postcolonial Nostalgia and Politics in the Taiwan Tanka Association Today (2017). His poetry has appeared in journals including Atlas Poetica, Exquisite Corpse, Going Down Swinging, Cordite Poetry Review, New Writing, Nimrod, and Portland Review (online), and a book, Japanese Poetry and Its Publics: From Colonial Taiwan to Fukushima (Routledge 2018).

Debbie Strange

our canoe
noses through mist . . .
a new day
opens before us
into possibility

~Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba, Canada

an old dory
grounded on a sandbar,
its faded flag
the listless reminder
of my pirate dreams

~Point-No-Point, British Columbia, Canada

a yellow leaf
lets go of the tree . . .
she held on
long past the time
for surrender

~Rosetown, Saskatchewan, Canada

ancient graves
sink into marshland . . .
the long bones
of our ancestors
wandering, still

~Saskatchewan, Canada

Debbie Strange (Winnipeg, Canada) is a short form poet, photographer, and haiga artist. She is a member of the Writers' Collective of Manitoba and is also affiliated with several haiku and tanka organizations. Her first collection, Warp and Weft: Tanka Threads was published by Keibooks in 2015, and the sequel, Three-Part Harmony: Tanka Verses published in 2018. Please visit her publication archive at <http://www.debbiemstrange.blogspot.ca>.

Hello?

Cinquain Sequence

Denis M. Garrison & Carol Raisfeld

Come home.
I want you here—
if you can love again.
Whenever that may be, you'll find
I'm here.

Denis

Please call.
I miss you so
and I need love again.
This time I know I'll find you there
for me.

Carol

Hello?
Yes, this is me.
I know it's been too long . . .
for me as well. Where should I start?
Come home!

Denis

Your voice!
Like yesterday.
The magic still so strong . . .
Tell me how you've been, I'm so far
from home.

Carol

Try to
see tomorrow;
the past can't hurt us now.
But I can't start to live 'til you
return.

Denis

The past
has haunted me.
Tell me how we begin
to live . . . before our tomorrow
is gone?

Carol

We have
today—that's all.
Tomorrow never comes.
Trust me today; please, give us both
a chance.

Denis

This is
a beginning . . .
If we can love again
I'll trust you today and give us
that chance.

Carol

A knock
at my front door;
my heart swells in my throat.
My lips trembling, I open with . . .
Hello!

Denis

Oh, yes!
Just as before
when you held me so close
and took my breath away, oh yes . . .
Hello!

Carol

~Baltimore, Maryland, USA / *Atlantic Beach, New York, USA*

Denis M. Garrison lives by the Chesapeake Bay in Baltimore, Maryland. Although born in Iowa, he spent most of his childhood in Japan and his youth in Europe, North Africa, and the western Pacific. His poetry is widely published in journals and anthologies. Garrison's books in print include First Winter Rain, Eight Shades of Blue, Hidden River, Sailor in the Rain and Other Poems, and Fire Blossoms: The Birth of Haiku Noir.

Carol Raisfeld lives in Atlantic Beach, New York, USA. Her poetry, art and photography appear worldwide in print, online journals and anthologies. Website: www.Haikubuds.com Twitter: @carol_red.

Will That be Patio Seating

Don Miller

out for a quiet evening
ordering
the soup d'jour
being served
an unruly stew

hearing his demand
to be reseated
from out of
the loud
and obnoxious section

as if
in a restaurant for one
requesting the waiter
detail
each dish

dishing out
his glare
at the maitre d'
and staff
serving other tables

the sparkle
in the cook's eye
serving him
the Chef's Surprise
topped with a fly

I'll
never eat here again
he declares
to a dining room
returning all smiles

~*New Mexico, USA*

Don Miller lives in the Chihuahuan Desert of southern New Mexico, USA. He has been writing tanka since the early 1980s, and has had his tanka, tanka sequences, tanka prose, and other short-form poetry published on a somewhat regular basis in various print and online journals since the early 2000s.

Elizabeth Howard

long years I fussed
scrubbing bat guano
off the picnic table . . .
now white-nose bats dying
only dust on the table

canned tomatoes
settling
on the windowsill . . .
a staccato explosion
the kitchen raining red

my pencil poised
I try to value
the hummingbird's
rubies and emeralds
as he sips sweet water

raptors riding the wind
hang gliders sailing
across the valley . . .
I choose a hot air balloon
float along easy as a feather

wandering jew
the vine a gift from his hand to mine
eons we have drifted separate ways
now come together
in this garden of eden

after a rainy week
sunshine in Chile . . .
we halt on a wooden bridge
with herder and cows
to view volcanoes with haloes

grandmother's hands
plucking feathers
the goose pinching flesh—
my favorite pillow
bought with blood

a storm booming and crackling
we crouch in the cellar
fearing creepy crawlies
in murky puddles
more than lights streaking the sky

when the last bird sings
what will we hear?
one clear note
echoing through time
or infinite silence?

July drought
unplucked corn
roasting in the shucks
undug potatoes
baking in the earth

in a foreign land
roosters crow at midnight
the crescent moon as bright
as a moon in Tennessee
I fall asleep no longer homesick

~*Tennessee, USA*

A Desperate Journey

Elizabeth Howard

we're riding home in the wagon
when a fierce storm bears down
howling wind, thunder, lightning
driving the mules wild with fear . . .
with brute strength father reins them in

Sis, take the girls home he says
we jump off the dizzy wagon
and stumble up the road,
rocks rolling under our feet
an ocean rushing toward us

winds pummel our bodies
little sister screams in terror
middle sister gasps for breath
I try to grasp her icy hand
but she pulls away

we are drowning, I fear
hair and clothes cling
gushers of mud scour our legs
our shoes slog, without them
our feet would be shreds

mother meets us at the door
eyes red from weeping—
we wait, our prayers breathless
till father comes home
mules stumbling, wagon wobbly

mother calls us to supper
in the middle of the table
the ham she's saved
for a special occasion . . .
the special occasion, she says

~*Tennessee, USA*

Elizabeth Howard lives in Arlington, Tennessee. Her tanka have been published in Eucalypt, red lights, Mariposa, Ribbons, Gusts, Atlas Poetica, Skylark, Moonbathing, and other journals.

One Moment

Gerry Jacobson

on the path . . .
a dozen pilgrims
walking down
into that dark tangled
forest of the mind

overgrown track
and fallen trees . . .
this mind
that seeks all problems . . .
climb over or duck under?

whip birds
and drizzling rain
weary walkers
silent in a forest glade
nibble trail mix . . . thinking

always thinking
thoughts of the past
the future . . .
of what is not
or what might be

seeking
this present moment
only this
one wandering
fleeting moment

~Lamington National Park, Queensland, Australia

Gerry Jacobson lives in a Canberra suburb. He has been writing tanka daily for ten years now, and enjoys the challenge of tanka sequences and 'tanka prose'. He loves how it enables him to write about his experiences, memories, and feelings. Gerry dotes on four young grandchildren and visits them in Sydney and in Stockholm.

Gregory Longenecker

tonkotsu she says
and hands me a stone bowl
the ground up
oracle bones of pigs simmered
and served in my soup

the old man
gathers up his dog
leash and hat
taking his thoughts
for a walk

midnight . . .
I hear him
in the kids' room
a hamster chasing
his dreams

a disturbance
at the top of the world
fish gather
to examine
the skimmed stone

for a time
I led the wandering life
walking down backroads
watching contrails
going nowhere

since his stroke
he's wheeled through the park
never looks up
at the garden
he loves

I hold
a fossil in my hand
its grainy texture
reminds me
of a forgotten dream

it's no longer
just the distance
between us
the time has grown
to decades

she and I knew
there was nothing left
between us . . .
faded daylilies
after their season

on my own
in winter
I watch
the wild parrots
fly in flocks

~Pasadena, California, USA

Gregory Longenecker is a Japanese short-form poet. He recently released his book, somewhere inside yesterday (Red Moon Press), whose title is taken from a haiku shortlisted for a 2018 Touchstone Award.

Jackie Chou studied Creative Writing at USC. She entered the poetry scene a few years ago and has been writing and submitting ever since. She writes both free verses and short form poetry. She has been published in Ribbons, Skylark, Atlas Poetica, Moonbathing, and the Cherita Journal. She is also a big fan of the quiz show Jeopardy.

Second Chance

Jackie Chou

we make up
trying to mend
broken egg shells
I've always walked on
around you

except now
the shells are more fragile
than the first time
around
cracking with every step

I try not to read
your every word
every breath
every silence
as condescension

I try to smile
only to burst into tears
my thin skin
no adequate armor
against your sharp wit

~California, USA

Jackie Chou

the older I get
the less I trust
my strength to love
without breaking
my own heart

spring rain
crowded patio
now empty
voices swept away
with winter leaves

~California, USA

Jeffrey Woodward

a gray shadow here
on the outskirts of town
before first light
the loping gait, the shifting
shape of the coyote

I like it simple
and primitive then
I prefer it plain
a sparrow twittering
in the January wind

farther and farther
out on Lake Erie's ice
this foggy evening
the shoreline first and then
the house lights vanish

living alone and
at one with the color
of dusk in autumn
I listen to the reeds
rattle in the wind

I want to ask
someone what
it all means
this bright confusion of color
this spicy spring air

~United States

Jeffrey Woodward founded and formerly edited the journals Haibun Today and Modern Haibun & Tanka Prose. He served in 2010 and again in 2011 as adjudicator for the British Haiku Society's Haiku Awards. His selected poems, under the title In Passing, were published in 2007 and he edited The Tanka Prose Anthology in 2008. In 2013, collections of his haibun and tanka writings were issued under the respective titles Evening in the Plaza and Another Garden.

The Grove

Jenny Ward Angyal

out of the wind
in a winter wood
I wait
for the magic to commence —
the slow chant of oak and holly

I strip away
the muffler from eyes and ears
and heart —
cold sings in my veins
like mulled wine

sunlight playing
on graybeard bark
dances
like a vagrant goddess . . .
the stream begins to flow

~North Carolina, United States

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. She is Reviews and Features Editor of Skylark: A Tanka Journal. Her tanka and other poems have appeared widely in print and online journals and may also be found on her tanka blog, The Grass Minstrel <http://grassminstrel.blogspot.com/>. Her tanka collection, moonlight on water (Skylark Publishing), appeared in 2016.

A Life

Jim Doss

father and husband
dead on the same calendar day
thirty years apart —
my mother's mission to keep us
out of the orphanage of her youth

what's a normal childhood —
the love of parents
and grandparents
like a cold shower
on a winter morning

which of her father's friends
abused her and did he know —
answers I'll never have
staring at their old clapboard house with its dirt
floor
as it slouches a little more each year

Roosevelt's voice on the radio
promises a new deal
yet little changes
her one doll's skin unravels like burlap
the more she plays with it

her father dead from Brights —
the car taking her to the orphanage
churned up such clouds of dust
the white dogwood blossoms of home
appeared to be bleeding

who paid the lapsed dues
at the Odd Fellows Lodge
while her father lay on his deathbed
what good samaritan
saved her from abject poverty

the girls dormitory
with its rows and rows of beds
lined up like headstones —
a place where childhoods
came to expire

rise at 5 am
knead the dough
collect the eggs
slice the bacon
for 150 people every day

nobody cared
about anything but the work
making a profit off the farm
the report cards left unopened
silence the only encouragement

two dresses
almost the same color
for alternating days of the week —
the cutting comments of old-moned kids
in the school hallways

her father's final letter
written from Lynchburg General
tucked into a hidden pocket in her dress
his last wishes always with her
everywhere she went

the visits a handful of times each year
her mother and whatever relative would drive
the small gifts they bought
stolen by bullies
before their car even turned onto the highway

happiness is security —
but can it be a boy
who keeps showing up
who wants to talk
whose lips taste like ice cream

what is joy —
a large church wedding
a house in the suburbs
two small kids
a faithful husband struggling to pay bills

Parris Island in August
gives way to Miami in December
the Korean war
revamping corsairs and panthers
while weekends they tanned on the beaches

he built roads and bridges
out of steel, concrete and asphalt
he made friends with his humor
the glow of a smile
that shielded her darkness from others

Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome
a term not even known in 1966
red ambulance lights dotted the walls
as the doctors told her no explanation
for what happened to her husband

a wife and two children
in front of the coffin
like the images of Jackie K.
and family on TV we saluted
kept the eternal flame burning inside

she kept books, balanced ledgers
in the morning while
we attended school—
the pennies stored in a tin can
waiting for off-season sales

peanut butter and sardines
salmon cakes—
culinary delights
fit
for the gods of poverty

no charity here—
only homemade clothes
always a little too long
or too short
or so wide they kept falling down

how can one become two—
both mother and father
now in a single person
bearing the rod
and spoiling the child

her children gone
she sits at the dining room table
alone—
the silence an ocean
that slowly sweeps her away

what she could have been
what she became
the opportunities denied
forced upon her kids
to make herself whole

her hair now silver
and thin as a bad wig
we find excuses
on our visits
to dine out every meal

depression-era thinking
a scarcity mentality—
she hordes everything
clothes, shoes, toilet paper, tissues
prepared for the next tragedy

20 years of living alone
we hear her whispering instructions
to herself in the kitchen
as a cricket chirps somewhere
in the house searching for a mate

confused by numbers and bills
the normal chatter of life
she tells me
she's ready to return to "the home"
that demolished gothic building of her childhood

during the interview
with the assisted living coordinator
she gets all the questions right
she couldn't answer
just an hour ago

morning of the first day
it is always morning
of the first day
in this episode of *The Twilight Zone*
that has become her life

her mother's signature
on the letter
assigning away parental rights—
we found it next to the china
her most precious possession

I see her in the chair
beside the nurses station
Miss Havisham in her favorite outfit
waiting for her groom
to load up the car for Virginia Beach

the progression —
unable to dial the phone
unable to answer the phone
unable to cut the TV on
unable to bathe and dress

I've faded into the third person
the abstract son
who isn't present
as I stand in front of her
offering the sweater she requested

"we must be related somehow
are you from Allen's Creek
maybe one of my cousins
there's no way you could be a Doss
you look nothing like my first husband"

her suitcase packed
nowhere to go
she pauses by the closet
lost
half in this world half in the next

~Sykesville, Maryland, USA

Jim Doss lives with his wife and three children in Sykesville, Maryland, and earns his living as a software engineer. He has previously published two books of poems: Learning to Talk Again, and What Remains. In partnership with Werner Schmitt, he also published a book of German translations entitled The Last Gold of Expired Stars: The Complete Poems of Georg Trakl 1908 - 1914. In his spare time, he is an editor for the Loch Raven Review.

The Zodiac Trail

Joanna Ashwell

apart, yet together
running adjacent
the two streams
of Gemini spark
across the sky

an upturned pitcher
catches the fall
of runaway splinters
the bearer of Aquarius
an overspill of constellations

headstrong and tight
stars cluster together
the upturned triangle
herds the bull
Taurus, blazing a trail

that forks
in many directions
Virgo's strands
light up the sky
offering justice

where a tight stitch
of a star's beam
points to
the ram's golden fleece
that unravels in darkness

to a triangular blaze
as Capricorn joins angles
horns in the pitch black
holding a mount
high above

then Leo stalks proud
pride scattered
blinking stars
behind cloud
waiting to shine

a dense sprawl
of Sagittarius mesh
the many stars
of half man, half horse
arched between two

Libra spills above
an upturned vessel
where stars split
day and night
upon equal threads

then Scorpio tangles
a tail of comets
where luminous stars
drip continually
mercurial light

that splays to Pisces
fish swimming across
a plethora of stars
burnt scales dazzle
with the clarity of hope

where Cancer's pincers
pinch the night sky
firmly in darkness
night's weave
wrapped in earth's orbit

~*United Kingdom*

Joanna Ashwell, a writer from the North East of England. Enjoys reading and writing tanka, haiku, cherita and other related forms. Published in Atlas Poetica, Eucalpyt, Moonbathing, Skylark and others. Enjoys peace, quiet, good wine and chocolate.

John Gilbertston, living in Greenville, SC, traveled extensively in Japan and written poetry over the last thirty years. A book poetry has been published: Two Ends of a Loose String

John Gilbertston

I love, do not love;
murmured words fall to the floor
as you pick each up,
one has meaning in your hands
repeating loses others

~*Greenville, South Carolina, USA*

Jon Baldwin

late summer
all day the smell
from the breakfast pan
a varicose vein blooms
like a question mark

irreconcilable indifference
a wife smiles more confidently
now that her husband reads less
and has grown fat
their child smells like a goat

hilltop sheep
stand their ground
slow cattle
come down to drink
I have nothing left to offer

cows moan
the morning through
it's early spring
the colour of slugs
and I'm frozen

~*Horse Island, Lough Erne, Northern Ireland*

The Lotus-Eater (from an episode in Homer's *The Odyssey*)

Jon Baldwin

dig, dig, digging
we dig spears into the chests of men
dig spades burying our brothers
dig oars into the sea
to bring him home

why does he bother
Penelope will be as full of pricks as her tapestry
we should have voyaged on Nestor's ship
been one of Ajax's crew
or chartered with Menelaus

savvy Agamemnon
for him I'd have straightened the sail
Clytemnestra would never
be on show at the market
next to stale wine and slaves

sod Zeus
when you suck this fruit to the stone
you see the chords he plays on Odysseus
and the strings the gods themselves
are hung up upon

all for Helen's cuckold
they'll sing that bird song but not our melody
of galloping waves and ruddering reef
while the skipper sleeps off
a bellyful of wine

for what?
more wind battered bouncing midst islands
with sea foam like the blood foam
dying men spit
inside their helmet

he won't dine
with my eater friends
rather crawl inside his olive tree bed
and finger acrochordons on her neck
like he aimlessly traces these isles

here he comes
seek a mirror not a sword
he advised Achilles
ten years of memories won't weigh
the heartbeat of a sparrow

I'd prefer not to
I'll hunker down with honey fruit
within hours of home there'd be another
command
before our women's wet thighs
have embraced us

he lulls me
from my lullaby
once more into the wine-dark sea
that doesn't taste of wine
dig, dig, digging

~Isle of Thanet, UK

Jon Baldwin is from the UK and edited the Atlas Poetica special edition 25 Tanka Poets from Great Britain and Ireland.

the ten thousand things

Jonathan Day

In a classic Chinese work, when they wanted to talk about the stars or the flowers or anything that might be beyond counting they called it ‘the ten thousand things’ and that is washing over me —the different bird calls, the growing flowers, the stages things go through at this time of year; the places large and small—

I get to a point
in all of this . . .
I bring myself
to a point
where I can’t talk

I run through a garden
densely overgrown
overcultivated
with concepts
and words and language

if I follow
the path through,
it might lead me
to where the garden opens up
to the space between things

and then . . .
it would open out again
and I would run out of garden
and come into the open
where there’s nothing to say

~Alpine, Oregon, USA

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

October

Joy McCall

1.
the first day
of the gentle month
leaves and berries fall
and the land begins
to settle and sleep

2.
they sat in the low coracle
at the water’s edge, and slowly
the boat began turning, drifting
past the rushes, downstream

3.
American eyes looking out
over my green fields and gravestones,
their feet walking Roman roads . . .
dancing with the Iceni

4.
the shaman said
rabbits will come
and sure enough
they ran in the wind
on Boudicca’s hill

5.
bitter cold
the October wind
the ice-cream van
passes, playing
you are my sunshine

6.
my wheelchair ramp
impassable
strewn with red berries
windblown from the hawthorn,
and blackbirds feasting

7.
how strange
this new sleep med—
I stay awake
all night long, bemused
by its magic

8.
awaiting
the judge's sentence
for affray
how gently he holds my hand
when the pain hits hard

9.
my daughter sends
a little pot of balm
to soothe the pain
I fall asleep
smelling of herbs . . .

comfrey
St John's wort
capsicum
lavender, juniper, sage
rosemary and ginger

10.
today's work
is cut out for me
slow to start
I thread the needle
and begin sewing

11.
in pain
all night I swore
at the gods . . .
no one heard
they were asleep

12.
the cards fall—
Outsider, Trust
The Master
I lean, musing,
against the wind

13.
I read a book
of old sorrows
lost on the isle
poems . . . and yet
a song of songs

14.
Ophelia comes closer now
screaming across the western coasts—
Ireland, North Wales, the Scottish isles
but here, she whispers, low

15.
chiff-chaff singing
its strange song
at dawn and dusk
telling me its name—
chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff

16.
a hedged field
of barley and marigolds
the quiet sounds
of brown-faced shaggy sheep . . .
and the night passes

17.
all night
while I slept
and the wind blew
she spun and wove and caught
and stole my dreams

18.
the doctor
running out of options
says, *try pot*
then I'm back in the sixties
singing and dancing

19.
it's her birthday, I see her name
with my father's, on the grey stone
it makes no sense, I still hear them
laughing, praying, singing

20.
out of the blue
storm Brian hits
the wind howls
the spirit of my first love
comes knocking at the door

21.
so long away from my island
I settled my boat on the shore
the tribe came running to meet me
the hermit lit the fire

the poet sat in the ruins
the crumbling tower was roofed and dry
there were candles and quilts and hay
I slept till break of day

22.
I said— *the Bear's old and rheumy*
she stared at me— *a Rumi bear?*
and ever afterwards I see
Shams, hand-in-hand with Pooh

23.
the special food
I laid along the hedge
for the field mice
gone in a flash—
a tribe of thieving magpies

24.
research says
we should daydream
part of every day
I take it to heart
hour after hour . . .

25.
choosing words
what to leave in
what to leave out
the seesaw tips
up and down

26.
my heart
behaving like a child
on the way to school—
running, ambling, skipping
stopping to pat a dog

27.
the bell that hangs
on my wheelchair
rings softly
he is thinking of me
in his own quiet way

28.
the clocks go back
the evenings grow dark
it is the time
for reading of books
and stringing of beads

29.
in the night house
a scrabbling and scratching
a creature I can't see
for when daylight breaks
it hides . . . somewhere

the doctor
says *rest*
my table fills
with post-it notes
and unpaid bills

I watch instead
the chestnut leaves
in sun and wind . . .
I smile,
and sleep

— no, I don't know how that got in

30.
there are clouds across the half-moon
a barn owl is hooting, swooping
field mice hide in the fallen leaves —
almost All Hallow's Eve

31.
I'm blowing the wolfbone whistle
from the door of the holy room
while overhead, swooping, shrieking —
witches, riding the broom

~*Norwich, England*

more limpet than woman

Joy McCall

Limpet—from Old English *lempedu*— ‘to lick the stone’.

“*Cheer up, as the limpet said to the weeping willow*”—
Edward Lear

while the waters
of the great sea
wash over her
the common limpet
clings to the rock

When limpets are fully clamped down, it is impossible to remove them from the rock using brute force alone. The limpet will allow itself to be destroyed rather than stop clinging to its rock.

As hard times and high waves come, I too hide in the shell and stick to the rock.

the limpet
has but one leg
to creep
across the rocks
slowly, slowly

the limpet
has a beating heart
vesicles and veins
its half-hidden eye
sees light and dark

its scores
of teeth like iron
scrape the rock
eating algae
vegan, like me

when the seas
were first parted
from the land
the limpet was there
clinging, dreaming

somehow they know
the time, the seasons
all the limpets
letting go their gifts
of egg and sperm

I would gather
the empty shells
at the tideline
and make a necklace
for myself

I would pray
to the limpet gods
*help me cling
to heartbeat and rock
while the waves crash*

I have one leg
and a hidden eye
and I know
the changing of the seasons
the time for loving

I am common
like the limpet
and I am stubborn . . .
in the heaviness
of time and tide I cling

~Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England

an' it harm none, do what ye
will

(the witches' creed)

Joy McCall

hiding in hedgerows
is a wise thing to do
for there are those
who would cast onto the fire
every kind of witch

I have learned
to borrow the shape
of berries,
leaves and thorns
and the pale tangle of roots

I hold quiet
my breathing
when men pass by—
their heavy sticks
are hawthorn and hazel *

such sticks ache
to beat the living hedges
to drive out
those who harm none,
but take the blame

the danger passes
the lane grows quiet
nuts and berries fall
food and peace enough
for one more day

**most Norfolk hedgerows are hawthorn and hazel, sometimes with
blackberry brambles and beech.*

~Norwich, England

Spring

Joy McCall

After the strange English snows of the last weeks, suddenly there are signs of spring everywhere in the garden. I was watching the birds beginning to gather twigs and moss for their nests and thinking of my father who used to read a piece of the Bible to us at all kinds of occasions when we were kids, so much of it still plays in my head.

*the voice
of my beloved
behold, he cometh
leaping upon the mountains,
skipping upon the hills*

*my beloved spake
and said unto me
rise up, my love
my fair one
and come away*

*lo, the winter
is past, the rain
is over and gone
the flowers
appear on the earth*

*the time
of the singing of birds
is come
the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land*

*the fig tree
putteth forth
her green figs
and the vines
their tender grapes . . .*

Song of Solomon Chapter 2

~Norwich, England

Leaf

Joy McCall

Is there a way
to know the being
of a green leaf
that clings to the branch
fed by the rising sap?

It's the life I dream of after death:

I the leaf
he the tree
and the white roots
spreading
holding fast to dreams

~Norwich, England

After the Accident

Joy McCall

slowly, slowly
my soul begins
to unfurl
her emerald wings

written with my daughter Kate

tanka written shortly after my motorcycle accident

earthbound I lie
and dream a curious thing:
a thousand butterflies
dancing, whirling, stream
upwards toward the moon

then comes a distant tune
my heart begins to sing
the ancient ancestral song
fraying are the fragile strings
I will not be here long

~Norwich, England

Joy McCall

midnight
I'm lost in deep thought
out on the marshes
a night owl is calling
my heart longs for wings

watch out for them —
the little darkish gremlins
treacherous, sly,
they will steal your magic bag
and run laughing into the night

the old sanitarium
casts shadows
on the meadow
where frail ghosts walk
among the grazing sheep

how dark are these woods
how the trees crowd in on me
whispering
strange arboreal words
I cannot understand

their rough bark
leaves tracks on my skin
I lean against them
their falling leaves
gather in my hair

~Norwich, England

tan-renga

Joy McCall & Don Wentworth

*a bent old pine tree
on a high desolate cliff
a broken rope, hanging
near a gathering of signs
some sticks, leaves, feathers and skin*

*a heron so still
among the rushes
prehistoric bird
below, a fish's fins flash
wings quickly crossing the sky*

*even in winter
enough new grasses to bring
rabbits from their burrows
nibbling at brilliant green
these songs of moss, songs of stone*

*noisy herring gulls
at the landfill site, pulling worms
from the dead cats
bowing at the corpse's feet
the origin of all worship*

*there are low voices
on the wind singing
evening vespers
with each full note an echo
in an ever-changing key*

*~Norwich, England / Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,
USA*

Don Wentworth is a Pittsburgh-based poet whose work reflects his interest in the revelatory nature of brief, haiku-like moments in everyday life. He is the author of three full-length collections: Past All Traps (2011), Yield to the Willow (2014) and With a Deepening Presence (2016). He is the long-time editor of the small press magazine, Lilliput Review.

Joy McCall lives in Norwich, England, where she was born, a place with a long dark history. She is growing older but not much wiser.

easy touch

Larry Kimmel & Joy McCall

“Buster,” I said,
“the days of wine and roses
are over,
you bite
and love is conditional”

*easy to see
who’s the boss
and it’s not you
that cat knows
you’re an easy touch*

~Colrain, Massachusetts USA / Norwich, England

Larry Kimmel lives quietly in the hills of western Massachusetts. His most recent books are “shards and dust,” “outer edges” and “thunder and apple blossoms.”

Joy McCall suffers but her soul is full of love and dreams and poetry.

Cherita

Judi Diggs

I am a leaf

twisting and turning
in the wind

traversing roads
and open fields
destination unknown

~Pennsylvania, USA

Judi Diggs

neighbor’s chimney
sending smoke signals
to the sky
secretly
among the clouds

the wind
gives voice
to the pines
I hear you now
I understand

standing outside
alone
in the darkened night
I wear a crown
of a thousand stars

as sunflowers
begin to fade
their golden torch
is passed upward
to hills of aspen

I see warmth and love
and apple pie
thru glowing winter windows
no matter
what’s going on inside

~Pennsylvania, USA

Judi Diggs is interracial married, with one son . . . and a vegetarian. After retirement she began writing haiku for her own enjoyment. From there a passion for language art grew into more versatile forms of expression to include tanka and cherita. She is published in Atlas Poetica 30. Nature has always been Judi’s sanctuary, often reflected in her poetry.

Swimmers

Joyce Futa & Kath Abela Wilson

I'm not a strong swimmer
when I'm in a pool
I imagine drowning
but out of water
I swim like a fish jf

in my dream
I backfloat
out to the blue
and wave to the whale watchers
as they go by kaw

~Pasadena, California, USA

Kath Abela Wilson hosts writing workshops three times a week with her husband Rick Wilson, who plays flutes of the world for their inspiration. She recently published a chapbook "The Owl Still Asking, Tanka for Troubled Times," and won 1st place in the Japanese Fujisan Grand Prix Contest 2017, English Language section.

Joyce Futa is a Pasadena poet who writes free verse and Asian forms. She recently published her first book of tanka prose and haibun called "Lit Windows".

Kat Lehmann (New Haven, Connecticut, USA) is the author of Small Stones from the River (2017) and Moon Full of Moons (2015). More than 125 of her poems have been published in journals since 2014. In her "Ripples of Kindness" project, she leaves signed copies of Small Stones from the River in public spaces for strangers to find, believing we all have the power to put good things into the world, just by doing it.

Kat Lehmann

compassion
no longer the policy
I remember
the times we were us
the times we were them

having everything
except what matters most
a rich man
with enormous power
heartless and soulless

butterfly
in my open hand
it is refuge or risk
this momentary rest from flight
this soft place to land

searching
the ageless atmosphere
adrift
on a moonless night
I fall into fireflies

shiny bubbles
popping
one by one
where do the days go
when they are over?

morning coffee
like a lover's kiss
I sip
on the bitter-sweet
of perfect love

white gull
against the blue sky
a black shadow
below and behind
trying to catch up

awakening
to the power of pink
I swoon
for sleeping branches
that brought me these blooms

I cannot count
the raindrops in a cloud
yet
something in me dances
to the rhythm of the rain

~Connecticut, USA

Dynamic

Kat Lehmann

Gravity is sticky. Things are made to come together to join in a new fullness, crowded as a reef. Eventually matter overflows, ruptures, and cracks the coalescing until it spills of too much unity and bursts forth like star fire, pieces scattering, ants without a trail, firecracker worlds blown apart and blooming, waiting for an invisible syrup to ooze them back to joining, compact as atoms. The fluidity of matter holds change as its essence, with just enough time for me to plant a garden.

letting go
of a long winter
the seeds
of wildflowers
opening to sunshine

~Connecticut, USA

Becoming

Kat Lehmann

Let the process be the process. Forget the notion that a defined path can be negotiated. Stumble through the trees if you must, but keep the light in sight to guide you where you need to be. Perhaps the light leads somewhere you never expected, like home.

let us meet
in the lush forest
of our becoming
the wildflowers of us
unfolding

~Connecticut, USA

Reality

Kat Lehmann

We discuss whether the day sky or the night sky more accurately depicts what a sky is, as if we were trying to explain an Earth sky to someone who had never seen one. Does the reflected light of the atmosphere in the day or the infinite spectacle of the universe at night portray our experience more accurately? Are we sheltered? Are we a tiny spot in the vast eternal? Or can both be true, like a sheltered tiny spot among many.

let us leave
the boat of words
on the shore
its oar broken
by hard paddling

~Connecticut, USA

Keitha Keyes

on this island
there are no streetlights
to distract me
from gazing at the stars
and thinking about you

~Magnetic Island, Australia

Grandma's secret—
she sewed a pocket
in her bra
and stashed her cash . . .
a good safe idea, actually

~Stackpoole, Australia

a butterfly
conceals its beauty
with folded wings . . .
your modesty tonight
makes me want you more

lost
in the mists
of Google
who knows
where we'll end up

afraid
to write the truth
in case
it gets published
and my ex will read it

~Sydney, Australia

Keitha Keyes lives in Sydney, Australia, in a small house decorated with ship models, antique irons and trivets. And a cocker spaniel. Her retirement would be very empty without the lure of writing tanka, haiku, cherita and other poetry.

Kira Lily

sunday has moved
faster than i
but gentle falling rain
quietly reconciles
our differences

clay roof tiles
neatly lined
in golden sun
cherry steps under
her crown of blossom

little red squirrel
in a black shadow coat
climbing up, up, up
to greet the sun
from a canopy of pine

with swallows' return
i rejoice in life—
that we have lived
from spring to spring—
that they have made it home

in a blossom bed
peach-pink glow
cupped in tiny hands
lighting her way
to morning

grey outside, and still
air hung with droplets
that have yet to fall
i long to join them
in peaceful suspension

~France

Kira Lily is a writer/editor and artist, living gratefully under the stars on the southwest coast of France. She finds joy in cups of tea with her husband and cuddles with her cat, sometimes both at once. When the water is warm enough, she surfs; the rest of the time she walks, and talks to trees. They usually reply.

Lavana Kray

Lavana Kray, Romanian-English
Translator / Traducătoră română-
engleză

white salon
and the same pianist
like back then —
I have time for a waltz
maybe you'll come

salonul alb
și același pianist
ca atunci —
mai am timp pentru un vals,
poate vii

abandoned horse
in a snowy field —
I hear
the loneliness galloping
softly around

cal abandonat
pe-un tăpșan cu zăpadă
împrejmuităh —
aud însingurarea
galopând în surdină

boat facing the sky
from the bottom of the sea —
your lost shadow
and mine
awaiting each other

în adâncul mării
o barcă întoarsă
cu fața spre cerh —
două umbre se-așteaptă
a ta de ieri, a mea de

black clouds
chasing a muddled bird
with no mate —
if I turned around
you might think I'm crying

s-au strâns nori
hăituind o pasăre
fără perecheh —
daca m-aș întoarce
ai putea crede că plâng

black oil slick
washed up on the beach —
looking
in the dead dolphin's eye
I see a part of me

mareea neagră
s-a întins lăbărtat
pe plajăh —
în ochiul delfinului mort
văd o parte din mine

~Iași, Romania

Lavana Kray is from Iași, Romania. She has won several awards, including WHA Master Haiga Artist 2015. Her work has been published in many print and online journals. She was chosen for Haiku Euro Top 100, 2016. In 2018 she joined the United Haiku and Tanka Society, as Haiga editor of its journal Cattails. This is her blog: <http://photohaikuforyou.blogspot.ro>.

Lavana Kray este din Iași, România. Ea a obținut diferite premii la concursuri de haiku și tanka. În 2015, World Haiku Association i-a acordat titlul de Master Haiga Artist. Lucrările ei au apărut în diverse publicații printate și online. În 2016, a fost în Top 100 autori de haiku europeni. În 2018, este cooptată în echipa editorială a United Haiku and Tanka Society, ca Haiga Editor al revistei Cattails. Acesta este blogul ei: <http://photohaikuforyou.blogspot.ro>.

Sunshine

Liz Lanigan

the first time
I saw *portokali* groves
in Lesbos . . .
the distance navels travel
to be in our fruit bowl

mum taught me
how to peel *tapuzim*
from Jaffa
score the Arctic Circle
six cuts to the South Pole

when they're cheap
Seville *naranja*
plopping
in her copper pot
for marmalade on toast

juicing
sweet valencias
in summer
I slice through the equator—
sunshine in a glass

~*Australia*

Liz Lanigan discovered tanka four years ago through her writing group, Friday Writers, where members were already hooked. She has now joined Limestone Tanka Poets who meet monthly in Canberra. Born in England, she has lived in Australia most of her adult life. Her recent retirement gives her more time to focus on writing, dancing and being a grandma.

Lorne Henry

hospital
a pregnant mum
walks by
holding her baby
as she shuffles

uncovered
through years of weather
and cattle hooves
under the black bean tree
the concrete floor of the outhouse

from a distance
the sound of a train
carries under clouds
I hear its toot
as it passes three crossings

a man
of social standing
flicked his fingers
down my bottom
how old must one be

splashes of white
across the paddocks
crocuses
out of season
like everything else

even
with the approaching
storm
kookaburras laugh
announcing the time

she wondered
at the number of red lights
in the suburbs
those were days when doctors
showed them at their front gates

too hot earlier
to put out the rubbish
now there's a storm
the road's a long way off
I'll wait another week

when I see
the bullet holes in the flag
I fold it
back in the plastic bag
among the gooseberries

~Czechoslovakia

yes
I kept my phone
by me all day
but it was not turned on
must read that booklet again

shadows
on the cliff face
create a crone
eucalyptus trees
her frizzled hair

they park
beside each other
two men
noticing their new cars
are the same — new friends

on the river
fishing boats drop their traps
at each step
alighting on the water
a flock of pelicans

the snake
a six-foot eastern brown
no birds
at the bird bath
they come every day

bang in the night
the rat is caught
next morning
I place it on the fence
a feast for butcher birds

I thought
I had few friends
but now
when I need them
there are so many

a young boy
pointing to my dog
said 'shih tzu'
his mother thought
he was swearing at her

~Australia

Black Swans

Lorne Henry

two black swans
so long since I've seen them
my memories
take me back a long way
to the Maroochy River

Maroochydore
home of the black swan
on the far side
where seagrasses grew
the water black with birds

a large farm dam
where swans came annually
to safely
moult their flight feathers
out of reach of predators

~*Australia*

Lorne Henry started writing haiku in 1992 while living in Czechoslovakia now Czech Republic, and tanka in 2005. She writes the occasional haibun and tanka prose. Lorne now lives in countryside Australia.

Home Is The Ship

M. Kei

the first salt wash
of the season —
the tall ship
drinking deep
of her reason for being

white foam skirts
of the great ship
flourishing around her
as she makes her way
along the diamond road

dolphins off
the port bow
a grey dorsal fin
breaks the surface
then gone again

sailor's cradle —
a wooden ship
rocking in the swells,
warm winds and
a lullaby sea

sitting
on the sheet bitt timber,
two crewmen
writing poetry
about the Delaware Bay

mid afternoon
in the summer Atlantic
the idle crew
napping on deck
cats included

old ladies
are famous for
their cats,
but shantymen
have their strays, too

doldrums—
the roll gauge
as still
and motionless
as the crew

sparkling sea and no wind,
so we send
the youngest crewman
to scratch the backstays
and whistle for the wind

one knot—
at this speed,
Cape Cod Bay
might as well
be an ocean

the sea cat
sound asleep
in the shade
under the port
quarterdeck ladder

bored,
the crewwoman
rolls over
and starts
doing pushups

home sweet ship
the smell
of baking bread
wafting up
from below decks

partners in grime
an old hand
and a new
washing dishes
in the galley sink

foot of the mainmast—
the ship rolling easily
heading south
on a spring day
with winter left behind

twenty-four sailors
in a tall ship
a whale
the only company
in the empty sea

evening watch
sailing into
the western sun
the cradle-like rocking
of a calm sea

sweat drying
on my lavender skin
the evening breeze
carrying the sea
through my veins

tall sails
against a midnight sky
the mast
drawing circles
on Heaven's floor

fog
moonlight
a silent sea
we are
a ghost ship

the sea
is a grey desert
without habitation
or signpost—
a single ship plowing her course

the mystery
of night
split by
the wake
of a tall ship

the silence
of the empty sea
life was born
in a primeval fog
like this

the coo
of pigeons
in the dawn
pink water all the way
to Cape Henlopen

migrating
horseshoe crabs
ferries, tourists,
and sailing ships—
always the urge to travel

at the helm
the ship's cat
sleeping,
unworried by
the novice steering

a charleyhorse
that won't quit
in my right calf
all morning
at the helm

the sun
nothing but
a white glare
in the heavy fog
off Assateague Island

no rain
but fog
drenches the sails
and sprinkles
the deck below

windward rail—
the cold white lace
of salt water,
thunderhead building
on the horizon

east of Bermuda
a gale roils the seas
a thousand miles north
we rock and roll
through a rising swell

a tall ship
sailing south towards
a hurricane,
a crewman's t-shirt says,
"Don't Panic"

at sea
the immensity
of the sky
looms overhead
a storm about to strike

bow watch
staring into the canyon
of the waves,
bracing myself
for the inevitable fall

the white wings
of sea gulls
blown off course
amid spindrift
and boreal winds

the tall ship
sends up spray
from her bow,
for a moment,
our own personal rainbow

full and by
a great ship
her sails
belly full
of wind

nine knots
the tall ship
throws spray
all the way
to the quarterdeck

nine knots
bodychecking
the helm
to make it mind
and keep the course

topmen
aloft in a gale
shoulders aching
as they battle
the mainsail

the dampness
of a summer evening
lightning
still prowling
the horizon

flickers
of lightning
above the York River
the current roaring past
a ship with a storm spring set

the state flag
of Delaware
a blue ghost
in a stormy night
at sea

the ship murmurs
to water, wind,
and sky,
prayers full of spume
for a safe anchorage

at the mouth
of the Chesapeake Bay—
water the color
of green slate
and looming wind

the distant red
of a caisson lighthouse
coming into view
once a man lived there
with no company but the sea

the old lighthouse
solid, stolid, and
faded red,
a wallflower behind
the gaudy new light

Cape Henry Light
at the mouth of the Chesapeake
a stiltwalker
with skinny black
and white striped trousers

ten days
at sea
a bell buoy
rings us
home

green trees
and brown roofs
a white steeple
as seen from
the bow of a tall ship

freighters
at anchor
in a long line
outside
Norfolk harbor

the clatter of
great steel ships
the slow swing
of the crane
warships under repair

a wedding cake
tugboat
as deep below
as above
the surface

early morning,
the yachties still
sleeping
while tugs and freights
go about their business

feeding the line
to a starboard bower,
slowly
the sailing ship
comes to her anchor

dock watch instructions:
check mooring lines
check fenders
don't lose the ship's cell phone
and repel boarders

tired, but finding
myself singing
as I go about
my duties
aboard ship

dejected again
the ship's cat
leashed
to prevent him
from jumping ship

~Atlantic Coast, USA

M. Kei is a tall ship sailor and award-winning poet who lives on Maryland's Eastern shore. He is the editor of Atlas Poetica : A Journal of World Tanka and the forthcoming anthology, Stacking Stones, An Anthology of Short Tanka Sequences. His most recent collection of poetry is January, A Tanka Diary. He is also the author of the award-winning gay Age of Sail adventure novels, Pirates of the Narrow Seas (blogspot.narrowseas.com). He can be followed on Twitter @kujakupoet, or visit AtlasPoetica.org

Mark Hurtubise

searching distant stars
breathless Sun and Moon embrace
a solar eclipse
later your eyes eternal
reflect their kiss into me

~Spokane, Washington, USA

in the valley an aspen grove
a solution for peace
one living organism
now to learn
what aspens do

~Leavenworth, Washington, USA

Mark Hurtubise lives in Spokane, Washington, USA. In the mid-1970's, his poems and haiku were accepted for publication. Then family, teaching, two college presidencies and CEO of Inland Northwest Community Foundation. Recapturing poetry's euphoria and appreciation for the authors he read four decades ago, he is attempting to compose again by balancing on a twig like a pregnant bird.

System Shock

Mark Jun Poulos

it was a shock to my system
when mother first told me
that both her parents were Okinawan —
I who for decades
thought I was Japanese

a blow to my heart
to my pride of self
to hear I was not truly Japanese
but a descendant of people
who were looked upon as subhuman

not regarded as Japanese
by those of the main islands
my grandparents
migrated to Osaka
in the wake of WWII

by my memory
and mother's testimony
they were humble, industrious
an olive-skinned, small-built couple
who must have been looked down upon

how sad to hear
that the house and factory
her father built
had burnt to the ground
along with all our family photos

almost treated as slaves
by the Japanese army
who occupied their land
they spoke a language
incomprehensible to those of the main islands

I read
that the daimyos of Kyushu
centuries before
had enslaved the natives
to toil and sweat on their sugar plantations

what is your mother's last name?
she asked me
a middle-aged Japanese woman —
Tsunami, I replied
no, she said, *that's not Japanese*

what to make of mother's pleasure
when an old white man
recognized her as Japanese —
she who had often been mistaken
for being Chinese, even Philippina

feeling cut off
from my own heritage
ashamed at times
by my mother's humble origins
how am I to reconstitute my identity?

self-knowledge
we all need
for our spiritual growth and development —
yet how it sometimes
deeply wounds the heart

these trusting, docile people
who have been mistreated
exploited for centuries —
to know that I am one of their descendants
deeply humbles me

Okinawan men
I was told by mom
are handsome
though swarthy and hairy —
now I share their blood

my sweet mother
who regards herself
as wholly Japanese
did not understand how such a disclosure
could leave such a wound in my heart

knowing that my mother
along with her three sisters
see themselves as Japanese
I didn't tell her
Okinawans were not viewed as such

from my mother's own words
I know she harbors
no shame regarding her ancestors
that she does not carry
a painful secret

when I told this sweet
woman from Kyushu
that my grandparents were Okinawan
a sneer showed on the lips
of her lovely face

~Albany, New York, USA

One-Line Tanka

Mark Jun Poulos

wrinkled as crepe the last sad blooms on this
orchid

hushed at the table, a family eats their fill of fried
chicken, rice

lonely, no one to share my life with, I buy some
goldfish

fast asleep, this little pooch's butt is right in my
face

gazing at beautiful altar paintings, I forget I'm at
a funeral

sweaty, panting after a walk, I feel the weight of
my body

all around me the low hum of insects unseen in
deep grass

eating a mango, hands wet, bright with cool
sticky juice

startled by footsteps, a lizard skitters under the
boards of a plank bridge

eating raw tuna with vinegared rice, my body
feels nourished for the first time

mom's face looks youthful in the sunlight off
grandma's headstone

from the window of a bathroom warm with
steam, a view of misty trees

apart from me, her son, for a year, mother looks
younger, calmer

~Albany, New York, USA

Sensitive

Mark Jun Poulos

how I long
to have slept with Anne Sexton
when I saw her picture
read her poem about bathing nude
with her lover off Capri

my co-worker
a lean, neurotic old woman
who has no peace in her heart—
sometimes when I see her
I think about the futility of being old

just having one pretty face
look my way
is enough
to dispel all the gloom
that oppresses my heart today

looking at the faces
of old women all day
I'm filled with gloom—
seeing how time blots out
the beauty that once flowered there

young and attractive
this woman
somehow looks sad, pensive—
I long to know her
fathom the depths of her heart

sensitive, delicate, introverted
all these I am unfortunately—
yet there are times
when I think these words describe
someone with a beautiful soul

my sensitivity
is a double-edged sword
a curse and blessing—
making me alive to the world's beauty
yet capable of the deepest suffering

you're as sensitive as a woman
mother told me
in a tone of criticism—
yet secretly I was pleased
with myself for being so

you think sensitivity is beautiful
mother continued—
detecting in my heart
a sentiment I had striven
to conceal from others, even myself

they were almost female at heart
Murasaki's men—
nobles moved to tears
by the sight of a withered garden
lit up by the autumn moon

a male sensitive to a fault
I know I am
a type often the butt of mockery—
yet in the world of the Shining Prince
I might have fit in

why should I be mocked
for being weak, unmanly
by those who've done violence to,
extirpated every last vestige
of the feminine in themselves?

in my teens
though I did not lust after them
I was drawn to gay men—
admiring their softness, sensitivity
their unabashed femininity

though I live in a world
hard for men like me
I don't regret being what I am—
attuned to the transient beauty,
the *mono no aware* it abounds in

~Albany, New York, USA

My Own Time

Mark Jun Poulos

whoop your ass, house nigga!
shouts an old, dark-skinned
black woman
seated in a wheelchair
at a young security guard

oh, he's brown!
says an old white woman
sounding disappointed—
as she looks at an old painting
of John the Baptist

these Manyō tanka
so full of love and longing—
they make me
sicker and sicker with desire
for a woman I now barely see

closing my book of Manyō poems
I reflect on how
lovely, pure they are—
yet they have left a wound
only seeing her can heal

so many homeless
live in this city
you think you grow numb—
yet not a day passes when
the mere sight of them saddens me

so many lost souls
endlessly stream into this city—
some wandering the streets
gibbering like the tormented shades
in Dante's inferno

where do they come from
all these broken, blighted souls?
like Dante
I look on them
with mingled disgust and pity

ferried into hell
across the Styx
were Dante's shades
no hope of turning back—
these homeless too have nowhere else to go

when I told a woman
how much the homeless
affected me—
she looked at me like I was crazy
someone from a different planet

these homeless
I often try to avoid—
seeing in them
the despair, the madness
that have scarred my own mind

I used to pity
the sufferings of the insane—
now I know that lucid minds
reflective, self-aware
suffer the greater agony

hard-hearted
my boss roared
do it on your own time!
when I tried to comfort a vet
who wandered into his store

this young vet
who came into the flower shop
face streaked with shrapnel scars—
he crouched at my feet,
shaking from a flashback

my wife and mom drive me nuts
they say I spend
all my money away—
he said breathing heavy
hands clutched to his ears

I never had a father—
I don't know if you know
what it's like
to be raised by
a single mother

unable to help
I called the cops—
who were at first skeptical
this Filipino man was a vet
looking so youthful

when the vet and cops left
my boss looked relieved—
business could resume
as normal
now that the problem was removed

how petty-minded, callous
owing a business
can make a man—
my boss showed no love
even to his wife and three sons

those lovely orchids
my boss offered for sale—
even they were stained in my memory
by his single-minded
pursuit of profit, gain

his eldest son
spoke angrily
against political correctness—
did he think he could freely use words
like *fag* and *nigger*?

never a help-wanted sign
on the window—
did they not want someone from the
neighborhood
mostly black and Latino
to work for them?

many business owners seem
to feel empathy only for their own kind—
people who toil
single-mindedly
in pursuit of the American dream

my boss
who owned a tourist agency
in L.A. in the 90's
blamed Blacks, Latinos for ruining his business—
hatred toward them ran deep

he made a lot of money
by spending a little of it
as any businessman would—
I toiled amid his flowers
paid next-to-nothing in wages

how my boss's eyes
burned with hate toward that Latina
as he gave her change—
she must have kindled
memories of the L. A. riots

*I want to move my store
to the Pacific Palisades
where real white people live—
I'm sick of these Jews, Persians
he said wrathfully*

owning your own store
can make you hate
the very people who keep you in business—
it kills your peace of mind
while fattening your pockets

those lovely orchids
I worked amid
I still see in my mind's eye—
yet even they can be loved
solely for the wealth they bring

despite my boss's failings
his stinginess, racism
there are many people
who would regard him
as a decent, honest man

I sometimes think too
he was a decent man—
irascible as he was
his heart was not void
of affection towards me

there were moments
when we bonded
when he treated me like a son—
his heart would open
when I spoke of tanka and haiku

this Japanese woman
my co-worker
loves rap and hip-hop
but doesn't like black people—
who instilled in her such racist nonsense?

most young Japanese women
I've known
don't harbor such hate—
later I learned it was her
Sicilian-American in-laws' who corrupted her
heart

like my mom
many of them
came to America
looking for a new life, for romance
naive, sweet, impressionable

my co-worker no doubt
was the same type
of woman—
without a heart
yet misshapen by American racism

her husband, in-laws
with whom she lived
were Orange County Republicans—
all day she heard them
disparage blacks and Latinos

a motorcycle racer
her young husband
tragically died in an accident—
leaving her alone
with two small girls

a young Japanese woman
in America
she must have desired to fit in
as much as possible—
is that why she adopted her in-laws bigotry?

did she hope that
by adopting their hate
she was somehow
preserving, honoring
the memory of her deceased husband?

yes, she said
I really like dangerous men—
maybe without detecting
the irony
of her preference

telling me that
her older daughter
spoke fluent Spanish
she said, *yeah she speaks that language*
frowning contemptuously

I know many Italians
feel utter contempt for Greeks
even those of the South—
how sad to hear it
echoed in the words of this Japanese woman

foolishly
I imitated Rocky
to show her how painful hate is—
she replied with venom
“at least I'm not a Greek”

even I
a biracial liberal
have been corrupted with racial hate—
that no effort of will
can completely expunge

one great difference
between a liberal and conservative
is that the former views racism
as a blemish on his heart
while the latter does not

freedom, freedom
I often hear uttered
by conservatives—
but are they free
in the moral, spiritual senses of that word?

how can a person
free of self-deception
debate with one prone to lying to himself?
in such a case
no real exchange of ideas can occur

St. Augustine, Montaigne, Proust
they implanted in me
a desire
to probe my own heart—
they opened the eyes of my soul

forming a circle
under the tree they fell from
little blossoms
tinge pink a sidewalk
glazed smooth with morning rain

yet there were times
when her words didn't seem
to reflect her true beliefs—
as if she were merely parroting
what her in-laws said

when I first came to L.A.
I was stunned to see a baby
half-black, half-Japanese—
I made a face like this, she said
frowning with disdain

~California, USA and Japan

Half Okinawan-Japanese and Greek-American, Mark Jun Poulos has lived most of his life in Los Angeles. He loves reading haiku, classical Chinese poetry and Whitman as well as ancient and modern tanka, especially those of Saigyō, Shotetsu, Saito Mokichi and Goto Miyoko. He thinks the best advice given to a tanka poet was that given to Goto Miyoko by her teacher: "Be broad, deep and yourself."

Marilyn Morgan

dinner with old friends
wine
and ailments . . .
 in the morning
 playing tennis

the next day . . .
 entering your room
you were standing
 behind me . . .
outside it was snowing

Norma Winstone singing
soulfully . . .
and I'm
 dancing
 with the dog

heard
the answer
in the surf
 washing onto shore
 and back out to sea

lopsided moon
tonight
why
do I want to
squeeze you round?

below zero
bitter wind blowing . . .
in the old graveyard
tombstones
 sculpted in snow

still . . . and
the fire
in the hearth
warms the loneliness
 within

sometimes
I reach out
to catch your sleeve
 as you dissolve
 into the shadows

your voice
whispering
on the wind . . .
come home
to your unfinished story

snowbirds flocking south
blue skies and restless palms
 a fool's paradise
 offering drugs
 in God's waiting room

hot and humid
a gaggle of old women
cackle and stand
flapping their arms
 in the heated pool

~New York, USA

Sequence

Marilyn Morgan

carry
in the logs
pour a glass
of wine
 turn up the jazz

and drift away
where
the sun is shining
wildflowers tremble
 in the field

~New York, USA

Marilyn Morgan is a retired English teacher. Marilyn's poetry has appeared in Atlas Poetica, Bright Stars, Skylark, Ribbons, American Tanka, A Hundred Gourds and others. Her prose has been published in Edge, Motif, Minerva Rising, Thrice Fiction, KYSO flash and others. Marilyn lives in New Hartford, New York, USA.

Sequence #1

Martin McKellar & Billy Simms

The last oranges are ripe.
I hold the scent in my hand
And squeeze, listening
To juicy blues records
And forgetting there's a world.

*the ripe tomatoes
lie ravaged by rabbits
those generous bunnies
leave the ones on the vine
for us*

Camellia blooms
Cascading into my arms.
Things people don't need
Because they have no use, yet
I live on what others leave.

*living
with so much stuff
the clutter of first world life
if I threw it away
would I miss it?*

Wasp nests. Persimmon
Fruit. Pink snail egg clusters. She
Missed everything
In her excitement to show
Us the flooded prairie.

*videotapes
dvd's
slides
flooded with excitement
exploring the library*

A videotape
With no machine to play me.
Should I spruce up my
Package and hope people will
Feel curious to know more?

*the spruced up
packaging
has the feel of nostalgia
why does the past
feel better than today?*

I save my walnut
Shells to recycle into
Paper packaging,
While my chapped hands finger
Fall's oily bitter taste.

*bleeding chapped hands
composted coffee grounds and eggshells
funny
someday I'll end up
composted as well.*

A bleeding red leaf,
Such an attention getter.
While in blue shadows
Butter colored leaves, aloof,
Twist and turn with precision.

*safety orange
ocean blue
sunshine yellow
the autumn colors
of furnace repairs*

Wet iron skies.
Wisps of mist from the compost's
Weak inner furnace.
A warm teacup, held tightly,
Coaxes my spirit onward.

*my spirit
buoyed by holiday lights
my mood
fills me
with warm memories*

Colors of wet leaves
Stuck together underfoot,
Glistening veins of
Sweet fruit in the memories
Of a moist holiday cake.

*cats scurry
underfoot
holiday memories float to me
on the scent
of a pine tree*

She fed the stray cat.
Now it waits for her return,
Unwilling to eat.
Birds squirm amidst berry-laden
Branches, pinned by its stare.

*squirrels alarmed
as my cat bolts
from window to window
all this excitement
interferes with cooking dinner*

I see criss-crossed cold
Wet branches as I walk from
Window to window,
Or is each a mirror that
Reflects my soul's weariness?

*checking the temperature
on my phone
my plans change
as the mercury drops
weary of the weather*

Icy gold palm trees.
The pool's water feels warmer.
I swim back and forth
Across dreams of *Snow Country*,
Weather wrapped in blue silence.

*claws ripping my skin
I bathe my cat
cleansing her lost night
did she dream
of foreign lands*

I run a hot bath,
Heat coffee and cook more food.
I may lose power,
But some part of this winter
Storm will take my breath away.

*a hot bath
takes time
to penetrate this winter's biting cold
I feel I'm sinking
back into the womb*

My snowy body
Glowing like the maple's leaves.
If you close your eyes,
A hot bath can change many
Things, reversing the seasons.

*snowy street
black asphalt peeks
through holes in the white blanket
like a cat's eyes
in the night*

I tug the blanket
Up to my chin, aware that
My fingers leave holes
In the lustrous peach-pink wool,
Worn thin from decades of use.

*poking holes
in the snow
with numb fingers
the dry skin flaked and cracked
like an autumn leaf*

Carrots with black dirt,
Radishes, rutabagas.
The winter root crops.
I poke holes in the white toilet
Water with beet red piss.

*sorting through slides
images of art's history
time
takes its toll
history is red*

"Did the frost kill it?"
Newcomers question us old
Gardeners. We say
"Time will tell", but we know they
Always come back in the spring.

*grey skies
icy cold
moody winter blues
my better mood
always come back in the spring*

Diffuse light from a
Grey sky baths each object in
Gentle clarity.
I cradle my hand-made mug,
Slowly turning it, looking.

*looking at
Chinese art on plastic slides
ancient objects
surviving
on ancient technology*

Endlessly pulling
Out the non-native plants,
Am I the last one
To believe surviving means
“Keep everything the same”?

*sameness
every ten miles
the same shopping center-stores
why should everything
look so much alike*

The heirloom lilacs
Are blooming. Why do I keep
My gardens static
Yet champion immigrants
With new palates and culture?

~Gainesville, Florida, USA / Hamilton, Ohio, USA

*Martin McKellar tends a Zen-style dry garden, collects vintage men's
Japanese kimono and photographs people responding to contemplative
spaces.*

*Billy Simms is an artist, poet, and educator. He lives in Hamilton,
OH, with his wife and four cats.*

Cherita

Maryalicia Post

awed by the moon

the child
wakes me

to look
I see it again
for the first time

winter days

of black
and white

then spring's
ambiguity
sets in

heart flutters

bird trapped
in a chimney

faces
looking down
are you alright

we flew down

through tumbled clouds
landing safely

I believed
we'd never
quarrel again

~Dublin, Ireland

*Maryalicia's long-form poem, 'After You', was published as a book by
Souvenir Press UK. Her five line tanka and six line cherita have
regularly appeared in online and print journals. Other work has been
published by Ogham Stone and Poetry Quarterly. She is a travel writer
based in Dublin, Ireland.*

Sesshin

Matthew Caretti

I have come to meet the Master.

sun
then shadow
a late winter day
becomes
what it is

Sitting alone with many.

wall gazing
to unbind
boundlessness
the great journey
into now

The mind leans this way and that.

a triple chime
announces kinhin
with each step
the rise and fall
of everything

Half-lidded eyes settle.

in a blink
sweeping away
the collected dust
so many lives
between now and then

The walls fall away.

in a teardrop
the reflection of
my True Self
offering one last bow
at sesshin's end

~*Malawi*

Kinhin is the Japanese term for walking meditation.

Sesshin literally means "collecting the mind," but is used in monastic communities and Zen centers to denote an extended period of meditation.

Influenced in equal parts by his study of German language and literature, by the Beat writers, by his travels, and by his Zen monastic training, Matthew Caretti's work has appeared in numerous journals, as well as several anthologies. After leaving the Seo-un Hermitage near Yangsan, Korea, in 2016, Matthew made a pilgrimage through India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar before returning to Africa, where he served with the Peace Corps from 2003-2005. He remains on that continent, serving as principal at Amitofo Care Centre, an orphanage and school of five hundred children, in Mapanga, Malawi.

Like Raisins in a Pack

Matsukaze

to the man with the indulgent daddy eyes
i surrender all of my adult-ness

smoothing pineapple syrup lotion over my body
i meet your eyes in the mirror

of course he has somewhere to go he says
bit of sun across his strong chest

off somewhere watching a river meander
home — i curl up and read Zora Neale Hurston

in this unorganized city — landing around 2 pm
down the stretch of highway a mule bone

washing clothes — another warm day
watching you assaulted by monarch butterflies

your hand on mine is definitely enough
you feed me slices of ripe tomatoes

we could see all the city's rooftops
in that cloistered place where we first touched

in this winter sun like raisins in a pack
taking our children to the heated pool for fun

~*Texas, USA*

A Single Lantern Burning

Matsukaze

a single lantern burning this cold cold night
lying in bed i vacillate between Netflix and Hulu

we become close like golden apples in a pie crust
spending my first night at your place

on the phone—we piece together our pasts for
fun
in the distance a few sirens then silence

we slept and slept and slept
where we lie only a bit of a left-behind shadow

closing out the world—in a strange bed
i touch you you touch me it is hot within the
earth

~Texas, USA

Soap Into Softer Places

Matsukaze

thinking—putting two and two together
i rub soap into softer places

“shut up” you shout then clear your throat
the sadness captured in an overcast sky

ignoring my wedding band he still flirts
a car pile up outside is the future of this thing

thinking—in a Sunkist soda there’s a lot of love
no returned phone calls or text messages

~Texas, USA

Behind My Eyes

Matsukaze

behind my eyes raw thoughts and red neon lights
in this bed i dissolve into shadow

fresh cicada shell on the wet ground
no one says anything on this long bus ride

downtown there’s another sale
i reason there are many things i actually need

windblown this cold cold morning
in his laughter a hint of summer and seduction

on the bedside table a corkscrew and wine bottle
cork
being black—under your gaze i sizzle

intently turning in the corkscrew
it really doesn’t matter if you smell like her

tree in the yard stained with blackish moss
i talk nonsense into the dark—you’re there
listening

away from the shambles of family life
i’ve forgotten to call mother today

~Texas, USA

In Waiting Room Sun

Matsukaze

immersed in waiting-room sun
your departing train hasn't been announced yet

lost in thought i completely ignore the indolent
girl
"you don't even care about me!"

passing a lonely dog moving down the street
ahead of me a large elm tree with knowing eyes

too much soda in my daily consumption
only 36 years old but i feel stiffness in my joints

passing your sacred gate there 'arms' open wide
i have no words for your return letter

on a particularly chilly night listenin' to 90's rock
remnants of chocolate stain my white tee

85th birthday comes before the coldness
how many things have your aged eyes seen?

*"Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus.
Our bodies are our gardens to the which
our wills are gardeners."*

— *Othello, William Shakespeare*

~Texas, USA

temples and prisons

Matsukaze & *Murasame*

her words to me
unearth some fountain
of warm feeling —
are the candles still lit
at Horyuji temple?

*I hide
from ancient lightning
and old fires
in the hall of dreams
bidding farewell to winter*

prison industrial complex . . .
watching inmates
lose
their very
minds

*is there
much of a difference
between madness
and the levitation
of monks?*

in therapy
thinking
will this floating world
ever
right itself?

*my gloves
worn ragged
with wear and tear
like Ryokan's sleeves
are wet with tears*

dose of reality
i too
desire to escape
into
Lady Shonagon's world

*rest easy
on that pillow
brown man
Langston said
'hold fast to dreams'*

~Dallas, Texas, USA / Norwich, England

*Matsukaze is a classical vocalist/actor/poet living in Dallas, TX. He
has been writing short verse since early 2006.*

*Murasame (Joy McCall) lives in her birthplace, old Norwich in
Norfolk, England. She too grows old and her mind is full of ghosts and
poetry.*

Untitled

Michael H. Lester

tanka poets
fondling cherry blossom
teacups
in pink silk kimonos
recycling tired old phrases

I shall
conquer the tanka
world
from my desk
in a bloodless ku

I toss
a kyoka in the garden
rhyming, no less
just to watch them scatter
through the mess

~United States

*Dedicated to Autumn Noelle Hall, hidden in a mountain hut somewhere
in the remote forests of Pikes Peak where the idea for this sequence must
surely have originated.*

The Mitten

Michael H. Lester

my car
stuck in an ice rut
at the curb
a child's mitten
on the sidewalk

the only color
in an otherwise drab day
red and white
like my bloodshot eyes
thick with morning tears

I decide to walk
I have nowhere to go
anyway
I pick up the mitten
stuff it in my pocket

somewhere perhaps
there is a little girl
hand in pocket
her footsteps crunching snow
looking for the mitten

if I see her
how I will rejoice
at such good fortune
as I slip the mitten
on her cold little hand!

~a suburb of Detroit, Michigan, USA, circa 1962

Even a Monk Like Me

Michael H. Lester

I will not
betray the teachings
of Buddha
for a few
meager crumbs

tread lightly
on these hallowed stones
worn smooth
over countless centuries
by generations of holy men

the stone path
leading up to my hut
obscured by snow
we are lonely together
the moon, the owl, and I

it is time
for me to leave
the monastery
the pampas grass turns brown
in the dry wind of autumn

I watch
the bees flit from flower
to flower
what else can a mournful monk do
when there is no moon

somewhere
from the village below
come mournful tunes
from the strings of a lute
I listen to the wind through the pines

naked me
watching you while you sleep
unseen
even a mournful monk like me
can imagine such things

since you left
I have become mournful
resentful
even of this vivid moon
moving always to the west

on nights
when I cannot see
the moon
your face vanishes from my thoughts
like the colors of the mountain

I am confounded
by those whose promises
remain unkept—
the young persimmon tree
bears no fruit again this year

~a mountain hut in 18th Century Japan

Michael H. Lester

I am heathen
when I hear the name
of God
spoken in reverence
my skin burns

*~Emergency room, St. John's Hospital, Santa Monica,
California, the year of our Lord*

I cannot stop
these tears of joy
anymore
than I can stop the rain
and why would I?

*~Hoag Memorial Hospital, Newport Beach, California
— cutting my newborn daughter's umbilical cord, 1987*

all the things
that happen to a boy
when a girl
puts her hand
on his thigh

~In my dreams, 1959–1963

left alone
a boy in a parking lot
I remember
that feeling of emptiness
even the crows had flown

~a park in Rochester, New York, USA, circa 1950

that hot summer
the sidewalks burned my feet
a bee stung me
my parents got divorced
I've never been the same

*~a quiet residential street in northwest Detroit, Michigan,
USA, circa 1960*

the sparkle
in an otherwise drab
sidewalk
little chips of mica
the girl coming my way

*~a quiet residential street in northwest Detroit, Michigan,
USA, circa 1960*

a wicked storm brews
I am on my bicycle
too far from home
checking newspaper stands
for dropped pennies and nickels

*~entrepreneurship in the wind-whipped suburbs of
Detroit, Michigan, USA, circa 1956*

my first slow dance
in the middle school gym
she smells of milk
skin as soft as corn silk
the song ends much too soon

*~in the trembling arms of Michelle W. Schulze
Elementary School gymnasium, Detroit, Michigan, USA,
circa 1958*

I'll admit
I've always been afraid
of horses
they are so big and strong
but I'm petrified of spiders!

*~Uncle Bill's horse ranch in Toledo, Ohio, USA, circa
1959*

for sixty years
I have been afraid to tell her
how I feel
on the other hand
she never bothered to ask

*~everywhere on earth—she's always on my mind, but
presently Los Angeles, California, USA*

before
I can ask her name
she is gone
only now do I notice
how bare the trees are

*~a camp in northern Michigan, USA, this vision on a
horse, circa 1958*

March hares
run in circles past the hedges
thick with bud—
these trips grow ever farther
I dream of returning home

~as I imagine Norwich, England, 2018

snow and sinkholes
confine her to the holy room
her humble abode
surrounded by songbirds
who show the way

~as I imagine Joy McCall in Norwich, England, 2018

the past
inhabits the air and the light
it is with us
as much as the present
only the future we cannot touch

*~waxing philosophic in my office in Los Angeles,
California, USA, on a Saturday, March 10, 2018, when
I should be working*

The Whole Equals the Sum of Its Parts

Michael H. Lester

A series of tanka sequences inspired by Joy McCall

the nervous tinker
finds a sleeping hedgewitch
they feed each other—
what strange new taste this is
something pleasant on the tongue

the whole
is the sum of its parts
which is why
on this dark and rainy day
I simply fall to pieces

I strip the bark
from the ancient pine
to see it naked
though I am rough of skin
I bleed just like you

Guilt by Birth

my mother tells me
I was a difficult birth
even then
before I take my first breath
I carry the burden of guilt

she still suffers
the pain of the stillborn
a heart defect
claims my older brother
after one short inglorious day

to remember
she gives me the stillborn's
middle name
the next child comes quickly
he takes the stillborn's first name

now we are three
including my older sister
a dark-haired beauty
she takes me to movies
introduces me to paper

then comes another
a little while later
one more
conceived to save a marriage
but failing miserably

*~New Grace Hospital, Detroit, Michigan, USA, October
24, 1945*

The Devil Must Have His Due

father snores
on the living room chair
mother sleeps upstairs
the unwashed children stumble
from room to room unaware

mother tells us
she is not coming home
anymore (echo)
take care of each other
I will see you when I can

as the eldest child—
a dumbstruck fourteen years
it falls upon me
to feed the young ones
clean their soiled bottoms

father works two jobs
to make unreachable ends meet
in purgatory
the devil must have his due—
enter the psycho-nanny

she belches
reads the horse racing forms
looks for hidden clues
the two-year-old crawls out
the second story window

~18481 Appoline, Detroit, Michigan, USA, circa 1959

Basic Training

they want to touch me
they have never seen
a Jew before
where are my horns?
do I drink baby's blood?

the staff sergeant
tells the men on the upper bunks
be careful
do not jump on your bunkmate's head
my bunkmate forgets

at 6 a.m. sharp
reveille plays and wakes us up
in 10 minutes
we're dressed and out the door
ready to march to breakfast

we line up
like the hundreds of crows
on the wires
above the mess hall
will they eat us before we get inside?

I learn about
hominy grits, shit on a shingle
and powdered eggs
you can get used to anything
when you don't know who you are

*~Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, USA,
November 1965*

The Chapel

I don't believe in God
not since I was a boy
not even then
what has God done?
the universe is not his

On Sabbath morning
we line up to go to chapel
34 airmen head east
I head west alone, barking commands
column half left . . . march!

I tell the rabbi
I don't belong here, I'm homesick
can you help me?
he hands me a glass of red wine
here, drink!

my friend and I
join the Air Force
on the buddy system
I am an L, he is a W
I never see him again

they tell me
I am not so stupid I can't be
a Russian linguist
it's a good thing, I think . . .
I am no good with a gun

*~Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, USA,
November 1965*

The Bartender

I think
women are drawn to scoundrels
and thieves
I want to steal something
make trouble somewhere

she looks past me
to the wild-eyed boy
with brown curly hair
he smiles at all the girls
keeps his mug filled with beer

one waitress
dark and exotic tells me
she is a sadist
I want to go home with her
to see her whips and chains

they argue
over the sandy-haired girl
I like
she ignores me in favor
of those wild-eyed drunks

a lesbian
sits next to the gay man
at the bar
she says I have nice eyebrows
I wonder what she wants with me

*~The Traffic Jam and Snug, a Campus Bar and
Restaurant near Wayne State University, Detroit,
Michigan, USA, circa Winter 1971*

Making Ends Meet

I know that look
of rank perturbation
and annoyance . . .
I can't afford
the expensive cat food

he sniffs the dish
from this angle and that
finally giving up . . .
shoulders hunched, eyebrows lowered
he buries the entire room

I wait him out
when he gets hungry enough
he'll eat . . .
after a few days he refuses
to rub against my leg

I open
a fresh can of ten cent
Daily cat food . . .
did I just see him
bare his teeth at me?

I'm not sure
I can use my food stamps
for cat food . . .
for nine times the price
I buy the Friskies Deluxe

I eat 20% fat
ground beef mixed with crackers
for lunch and dinner . . .
Moses rubs against my leg
and the world is right again

*~An apartment building in Detroit, Michigan, USA,
circa 1972*

*Originally from Detroit, Michigan, Michael H. Lester recalls all
manner of slights from all sorts of well-meaning creatures from all over
the globe. It seems there is no respite for the star-crossed, breach-birtherd
blunderbusses among us.*

To Spend a Day with Ryōkan

Michael H. Lester

leave your sorrows
with me in my mountain hut
Gogo-an
in the dense forest
of Mount Kugami

we are lucky
someone brings us sake
we read
Buddhist poems by moonlight
watch the ivy grow longer

in the morning
we listen for the song
of the woodcutter
the woodcutter does not sing
we walk to the village

the village children
shout with joy when we arrive
we play ball
where the grass grows wild
the children laugh and sing

strangers come
to ask why we are so foolish
we just smile and bow
what do passing strangers know
of the life of a monk?

this cold evening
the lonely cuckoo calls
before you left
only the sound of your voice
found its way to my ears

nothing to eat
but three-day-old rice
in this fool's hut
I hope I don't crack a tooth
under tonight's crescent moon

~Los Angeles, California, USA

Tanka Conversation

Michael H. Lester & Sanford Goldstein

this weary day
I wish to stay in bed
even the sun
tucked behind fluffy clouds
seems to enjoy its pillow

*I wake
with my usual
back-pain,
and still, I try to think
about Michael for a few seconds of relief*

I too
wake with back pain this morning
like a rowboat
in rough waters I toss and turn
hoping I will hear from Sanford

*a lovely poem
reading
a friend's poem
once again,
and I remember*

imagine
the two of us walking
side by side
stopping here and there
to write down tanka

*reading
your poem
put me
in a brave and
new world*

listen to the hum
of a bumblebee
in flight
this morning I am
happy enough for a duet

*I wake
with my back
in pain,
thinking of you
makes me feel better*

my back pain
makes me think of you
as I try
to help my wife get dressed
over her broken wrist

*guests came
and stayed for
hours
how clean our
home when they came*

my father
comes to visit today
in spirit only
his grave is too far away
for my feet, not for my heart

*poem
after poem
on and on,
my back aches
and so it goes*

*terrible back pains
worse and
worse
and still
life goes on*

I wish
I were Wong Tai Sin
God of healing
I would come to fix
your aching back

every day
I hope my friend's
back pain
will disappear
like the morning fog

*up and again
dizzy,
my eyes are blue
these days of
spring*

as I inhale
the fresh spring air
in Niigata
for a moment
I feel young again

*aware
of this aching
back
and still, still,
Michael's poems help me*

thinking
of my new friend
I steal
two persimmons
from the farmer's tree

~Los Angeles, California, USA / Niigata, Japan

Originally from Detroit, Michigan, Michael H. Lester now lives in Los Angeles, California, where he practices business management and writes poetry. You can find his first book of poetry, Notes from a Commode, Volume I, on Amazon.com.

Sanford Goldstein is now 92 years old. He has been writing tanka for more than fifty years. He continues to live in Japan with his friend Kazuaki Wakui.

time and tide

Murasame & Matsukaze

*he was satan's slave
and now he plays
the one string
rocking in the chair
'the wind that shakes the barley'*

in between the
pause of blues notes
my hymn
unsung
and deep

*I was awake, and yet
the nightmares came
cutting sharp
across the day
spoiling, despoiling*

in dark dreams
seeing the ancestors
in ships
jumping
into thick foam

*all night, sitting
on the rocks
hearing voices
I light a small fire
the tide is coming in*

against
a bonfire
listening to
the priestess of Bastet
chant —
a cold moon

*I am torn
with a longing
for sailors
and the wild sea
and the hearth, at home*

dense downpour
along the freeway
patches
of dead grass
then there's my life

*some days
the tides of loss
overwhelm me
I let go of brick and tree
and drift . . . and drift*

reading
old Ryokan's poetry
the temperature
continues
to
drop

~Norwich, England / Dallas, Texas, USA

*Matsukaze is a classical vocalist/actor/poet living in Dallas, TX. He
has been writing short verse since early 2006.*

*Murasame (Joy McCall) lives in her birthplace, old Norwich in
Norfolk, England. She too grows old and her mind is full of ghosts and
poetry.*

Pat Geyer

as i look into
the murky depths our eyes meet
reptile and me . . .
lots of bumps along the way
still, i dream of kissing his snout

afternoon moon . . .
almost forgetting
the time of day
a sundial shadows twelve
to help me remember

beetle, your work
abstract
unframed . . .
drip painting
in pale tea

lasso my dreams
Orion's belt, please,
pull me tighter . . .
knowing you're there
dreaming of being closer

we pass on the street . . .
as this meeting is foreign
i look at your fez
you notice my lamb poncho
we turn to exchange smiles

our breakfast table . . .
five Mongols, three Kurds, three Turks
a Pole and me
all women, all sharing
stories accented by life

~*New Jersey, USA*

*Pat Geyer lives in East Brunswick, NJ, USA. Her home is surrounded
by the parks and lakes where she finds her inspiration in Nature.
Published in several journals, she is an amateur photographer and poet.*

The Suspended Coffins of Bo

Patricia Prime

Our trip to China ends with a day's trek at sunrise up to a peak. By the time we are nearing our destination the sun makes the rocky trail easier to follow. Farmers and women with bundles of firewood appear from nowhere, warning us of the hazards ahead.

We have come to visit the remnants of the Bo culture. While the Bo flourished, tens of thousands of their caskets were here, suspended in mid-air. Now, on the cliffs, only a few hundred remain in clusters above Crab Stream. Cut from a single piece of hardwood, each weighs several hundred kilograms. While some are found in natural caves on rock crevices, others hang mid-way between heaven and earth by scarlet wooden stakes fastened in holes bored into the cliff face, 20 to 100 metres above the ground.

We ask our guide: Why are the coffins hung from high cliffs? Do some of the Bo people still exist? Where might they be? His answer is a mere shrug of his shoulders.

ancient times
wooden coffins adrift
in the nests of trees
birds fly down to the rocks
strolling on dilly-dally feet

~*China*

Black Crows

Patricia Prime

bordering
the driveway
to the cemetery
weeping angels
wings outspread

We enter the iron gates and the cemetery unfolds before us, uphill to a stand of pines and downhill to a stream. The main drive leads straight to the chapel, an old garden, and a memorial commemorating the soldiers who died in World War II. It's a serene, leafy place.

A young woman holds the hand of her partner. They are here to find the grave of her father who died when she was ten. She hasn't been back since the day of the funeral. They meet a pair of amiable gravediggers who point them towards the Cemeteries Office where a map is produced, and they are directed to a path near the chapel. A flock of black crows flies out of the trees as they approach a shady corner of the cemetery. There in front of them, not far off the path is the grave they seek.

The granite headstone bears his name in full—we never knew his middle name—with the dates 1939–1980. Below the name and dates is a poem written by her mother, the words incised in five lines:

the rest is silence
moon drifting closer
a lovely wind
fragrant with blossom
rocks you to gentle sleep

Small, spiky succulents grow in the pebble bed of the grave itself. There is a small vase at its foot, which stands empty. She wishes she had brought flowers.

~New Zealand

Patricia Prime

walking home
here are the trees and hills
moving out of time
towards the centre of town
and the line of the river

drinking tea
from a child's two-handled cup
the old lady
who once served tea
in bone china cups

as I lift my bag
from the car trunk
a porch light glows
in its yellow basket
to welcome me home

spring sunshine bathes
the Auckland veranda
mottling its timbers
as the scent of Irish coffee
drifts up from my cup

the eels come to life
beneath the Japanese bridge
at Western Springs
heads swaying in unison
as they curl about each other

at the lookout point
above the Grey River mouth
we watch
as a fishing boat
battles its way across the bar

the calendar says
April, but the weather
is stuck in winter
so I prepare pumpkin soup
with lashings of pepper

I feel nothing today
except the loss of a friend
dead too soon
I can't forget those hours
she spent in the hospice

moths perch on the white walls
tiny as fingernails
or large as a daisy
they take turns hovering
around the outside light

I throw flowers out
wash the cloudy vase
gather daffodils
to replace the withered tulips
with light and sunshine

in the autumn sunshine
nasturtiums beside the fence
grow golden
their green leaves like palms
outstretched to receive warmth

a foggy morning . . .
in the doctor's waiting room
his Chinese patients
dressed in pink puffa jackets,
gloves, hats and fur-lined boots

a parcel in the post —
does it contain sweets or chocs?
no, it's a painted rock
of a Japanese lady
sent to me by a friend

~New Zealand

Cherita

Patricia Prime

crouched in the yard

the builders
remove the broken concrete

all day
the roar of the slabs
tumbling into the truck

a gecko

creeping down
a tree trunk

pokes out
his long curly
tongue

I walk
in an orchard
under apple trees

where the sky
disappears beneath leaves

the apples ready for picking

sun flickers
through the grass
casting shadows

on a sunny slope
children ride bicycles

I walk a pebbly track

all week
words have pestered me
for a poem

like a locked-in
mosquito

I escape to the computer

I wade through water
where a bittern's
foghorn bill

prods a muddy
root of raupo

before he flies off

autumn
mute swans
haunt the lake

descend from the sky
and skid across the water

their beaks scarred by winds

~*New Zealand*

Patricia is the editor of Kokako, reviews /interviews editor for Haibun Today and selects tanka for Gusts. Her poetry, reviews, tanka, haibun and haiku have been published in many journals. She regularly writes for Indian magazines and has work published in the World Poetry Almanac, Mongolia.

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Beste Hans en Wim

Paul Mercken

Paul Mercken, Vertaler Nederlands-Engels

Beste Hans en Wim,

Pallas Athena
met uil, symbool van wijsheid
't jong een uilskuiken
laat de jeugd zelf uitvinden
wat voor haar belangrijk is

Ik heb goed nieuws en slecht nieuws en het is hetzelfde.

Het goed nieuws is dat mijn stok terecht is; het slecht nieuws dat hij nooit weg is geweest.

het kraaienveld van
Theo van Gogh voorspelt dood —
maar 't baby' tje kraait
niemand heeft eeuwig leven
maar 't leven zelf kent geen eind

Het slecht nieuws houdt tevens in dat mijn geheugen totaal onbe-trouw-baar is geworden. Ik stel namelijk vast dat hoe zekerder ik ergens van ben, hoe meer kans er is dat ik het verkeerd heb. Een soort koppigheid van niet te willen weten dat ik het verkeerd heb. Neem nou die stok. Ik had er mijn hand voor in het vuur gestoken dat ik die mee had genomen en hem dus ergens in *Huize ten Oosten* had laten staan. Gelukkig dat ik die wedding-schap niet ben aan-ge-gaan, want dan liep ik nu met dikke blaren op mijn hand.

Het is wel ironisch. Thuis gekomen keek ik toch voor alle zekerheid naar een van de twee hoeken naast mijn voor-deur waar ik hem pleeg te zetten en kreeg meteen de verzekering: zie je wel, daar staat ie niet.

zonder wortel krijg
je geen ezel aan het werk —
ezelsbruggetje
naar Pythagoras' stelling
en Archimedes' ἠὺρηκα

Toen ik echter enkele uren later voor zeg maar een nachtelijke pitstop weer mijn slaapkamer uitkwam, stond ie mij in de andere hoek uit te lachen.

Ik buig diep in het stof voor de onnodige trips die ik jullie dus heb doen lopen.

De ironie wil echter dat ik aan deze en soortgelijke ervaringen niets heb.

mijn wenkbrauw's 'on fleek' *
dank zij teenager filmer
Peaches Monroe,
niet voor 't ding, dat is van mij —
voor 't bedenken van de naam

* Voor de uitdrukking 'on fleek' zie beneden de Engelse versie.

Ja, mijn geheugen laat me soms schrome-lijk in de steek, maar dat wist ik al. Dat mijn subjectieve zekerheid een lachertje is, ook. Maar wanneer heb ik het dan verkeerd, en wanneer niet? De ironie wil dat ik dat niet weet en niet kan weten, en dus heb ik aan deze over-we-gin-gen niets.

Rest mij alleen me bij jullie te verontschuldigen, zoals ik hierboven al heb gedaan.

En verder roeien met de riemen die ik heb, al is het vervelend dat ik nooit weet of ik een riem in de hand heb dan wel droom of de illusie heb dat ik aan het roeien ben. Het zij zo.

Gelukkig heb ik vrienden en twee toegewijde dochters om mij ook in deze te ondersteunen, woon ik in een woon-groep, heb ik al voor praktische zaken professionele hulp, en ga ik toch maar een geriater raadplegen. Misschien weet die wel raad, zo niet om mijn geheugen te helpen, dan toch om te leren ermee om te gaan en onnodige stress te vermijden.

~Bunnik, Nederland

Dear John and William

Paul Mercken

Paul Mercken, Dutch-English Translator

Dear John and William,

Pallas Athena
with owl, symbol of wisdom
its young a nitwit
let youth itself discover
what they may find important

I have good news and bad news and they are the same.

The good news is that my walking stick is back; the bad news that is has never been away.

Theo Van Gogh's field
with crows forecasts death's coming
still our babies crow
nobody lives forever
though life itself knows no end

The bad news implies that my memory is no more trustworthy. I notice that the more I'm sure of something, the more it's likely I'm wrong. A kind of stubbornness not to recognise I'm wrong. Take now my walking stick. I'd put my hand in the fire that I'd taken it into *Home The East*, hence had left it there some-where. Fortunately I did not make that bet, for then I would have a hand with blisters.

It is ironic though. Coming home I looked for certainty's sake in one corner next to my entrance door, where I usually put it and immediately was assured: see, it's not here.

without a carrot
you don't make a donkey move —
a memory aid
for Pythagoras' theorem
and Archimedes' ἠὺρηκα

When I got out of bed a few hours later for let's say a pit stop and came out of my bedroom again, there he was laughing at me in the other corner.

I humble myself deeply before you for the many trips I forced you to in order to find it where it was not.

Irony decides however that this and similar experience are of no use to me. Yes, my memory fails me from time to time, but I knew that already. That my subjective certainty is a laugh, equally. But when am I wrong and when not?

Irony decrees that I don't know that nor can I ever know that; hence these reflections are no use to me.

my brow's on fleek, thanks
to teen film maker Peaches
Monroe, not for
the thing, that's mine — but for its
handle, which she invented

“In June 2014, a sixteen-year-old teen named Peaches Monroe made a six-second video in which she called her eyebrows ‘on fleek,’ meaning ‘good’ or ‘on point’. In November, just five months after Monroe posted her video, nearly 10 percent of all Google searches worldwide were for ‘on fleek’.

My colleague Emily interviewed Monroe for a blog post and asked her where ‘on fleek’ came from. Was it family slang, a play on ‘on point’ and ‘flick,’ some sort of blend of ‘fly’ and ‘chick’? No: Monroe says she just made it up.”

© 2017 Kory Stamper, *Word by Word. The Secret Life of Dictionaries*, New York: Pantheon Books, p. 85.

Therefore, it rests only to apologize to you, as I did already above.

And to row with the oars that I have, although it is a nuisance that I never know whether I have a paddle in the hand or am dreaming, that is, have the illusion that I am rowing.

Let that be so.

Fortunately I have friends and two devoted daughters to support me in this as in other things, live in a community, get professional help in

practical matters, and am going to consult a geriatrician. Perhaps he/she can give advice, if not for supporting my memory, at least for teaching me how to deal with this and in order to avoid unnecessary stress.

Thank you,

Paul

Paul Mercken is a retired Reader Philosophy, linguist & medievalist, ^oLewen, B, 1934, PhD Leuven (1959); Firenze IT; Cambridge & Oxford GB; USA; Utrecht NL. Member of the Oxford and Cambridge Society of the Netherlands. Committee member of the Haiku Kring Nederland 2004-2016 (HKN – recently merged with haiku.nl). Bunnikse haiku's en ander dichtspul, 2012 in Dutch), 32 p., & Tanka of Place – ATLAS POETICA – Tanka's van plaats, 2013, 20 p. (bilingual). Tanka's &c. (including tanbun/haibun) in AHA Poetry, ATLAS POETICA, Schreef (Taalpodium Zeist/Utrecht NL).

Imachi

Paul Mercken met *Frieda Gheysens*

Paul Mercken, Vertaler Nederlands-Engels

24-29 april 2018

zeeschuim op de baaien
visserbootsilhouetten
wiegen in haar droom

*nog voor mijn eerste koffie
luid geschreeuw van de meeuwen*

als de koningin
van schoppen 6 onmogelijke
dingen gelooft

*in mijn insectenhotel
verblijven enkel hommels*

in het licht van een
volle maan danst in mijn tuin
een groep vuurvliegjes

*ik loop alleen door de straat
maar voel nog steeds zijn ogen*

*de ramen open
in mijn haar en hoofdkussens
blijft zijn geur me zo nabij*

dat droeve verhaal van Pierre
Abélard en Héloïse

*van in mijn ligstoel het vers
gemaaid gras ruiken
de buurvrouw tuiniert*

de beukenootjes
kloppen zachtjes op het dak

*donkere sporen
mensen schuifelen voorbij
in de verse sneeuw*

wolken schuiven voor de zon
de herdershond schiet wakker

*in de wandeltuin
zoekt hij naar etensresten
in de vuilnisbak*

de regen valt met bakken
uit een reet-gore hemel

*het zijn er te veel
ik verstop ze niet langer
mijn grijze haren*

waarom schuiven de maan en
de man gedwee naar de zee

*de koeien schuilen
onder kalende bomen
dicht tegen elkaar*

Titia Bergsma, de eerste
blanke vrouw op Decima

~Nederlands

Docent wijsbegeerte, taalkundige & mediëvist in rust, °Leuven, B, 1934, PhD Leuven (1959); Firenze IT; Cambridge & Oxford GB; USA; Utrecht.NL. Lid van de Oxford and Cambridge Society of the Netherlands. Bestuurslid van de Haiku Kring Nederland 2004-2016 (HKN – recentelijk versmolten met haiku.nl). Bunnikse haiku's en ander dichtspul, 2012), 32 p., & Tanka of Place – ATLAS POETICA – Tanka's van plaats, 2013, 20 p. (tweetalig). Tanka's &c. (tanbun/haibun inclusief) in AHA Poetry, ATLAS POETICA, Schreef (Taalpodium Zeist/Utrecht.NL). Vrijdenker, vrijmetselaar en humanist. Geeft voorkeur aan democratische confrontatie door middel van dialoog

Frieda Gheysen is geboren in Kortrijk België in 1958 en studeerde af als verpleegkundige. Omwille van de werkzaamheden van haar echtgenoot verhuisde ze 15 keer in België en in het buitenland, waaronder Paraguay, de USA, Nederland and Frankrijk. Zij studeerde Boeddhisme en Oosterse religies aan de Universiteit van Kansas. Dit legde de grondslag voor haar belangstelling voor Oosterse poëzie, in het bijzonder haiku. Ze schrijft haiku sedert 2010. Andere hobby's zijn: fotografie, korte verhalen en vertellingen voor kinderen. Haiku van haar hand verschenen in meerdere tijdschriften.

Paul Mercken is a retired philosophy professor and medievalist from Belgium (° 1934), Bunnik, NL. Research and teaching in GB, USA, Florence, IT, and Utrecht, NL. Committee Haiku Kring Nederland (HKN – Dutch Haiku Society) 2004-2017. Published Bunnikse haiku's en ander dichtspul, 2012 (Bunnik Haiku's and Other Poetic Stuff, in Dutch) & Tanka of Place – ATLAS POETICA – Tanka's van plaats, 2013 (bilingual). Voluntary work in the fields of nature, society, culture and spirituality. Humanist, promoting democratic confrontation by dialogue.

Frieda Gheysens is born in Kortrijk Belgium in 1958 and graduated as a nurse. Through her husband's profession, she moved 15 times in Belgium and abroad, including Paraguay, the United States, the Netherlands and France. At Kansas State University she took courses in Buddhism and Eastern religions. There the foundation was laid for her interest in Eastern poetry, especially haiku. She is writing haiku since 2010. Other interests are: photography, writing short stories and children's stories. Haiku of her hand are published in several magazines.

→

Imachi

Paul Mercken & Frieda Gheysens

Paul Mercken, Dutch-English Translator

April 24-29, 2018

sea foam on the bays
fishing boats' silhouettes
swaying in her dreams

*soon before my first coffee
loud crying of the seagulls*

when the queen of spades
believes more than six
impossible things

*in my insect hotel
only bumble bees reside*

in the full moonlight
a bunch of fireflies dancing
in my garden

*walking alone through the street
I am still feeling his eyes*

*the windows open
in my hair and pillow
his scent remains so close*

that sad story of Peter
Abelard and Heloise

*in my deckchair
I smell the freshly cut grass
a neighbour mows*

the beech tree nuts
softly knocking on my roof

*dark ruts
people shuffle by
in fresh snow*

clouds glide in front of the sun
the shepherd's dog wakes up

*in the walking garden
he's looking for food rests
in the dustbin*

it does not rain but pours
from a heinous sky

*they become too many
I no longer hide them
my grey hairs*

why do the moon and the
man slide meekly towards the sea

*cows take shelter
under shedding trees
close together*

Titia Bergsma, the first
Western woman in Decima

~The Netherlands

Peter Fiore

In The Middle Of A Nor'easter . . .

Jason texts. *I can't believe how much I want to fuck Catherine. I lay awake at night imagining her thin white arms around me, the smell of her dark red hair. Her green eyes.*

I text back, *me too.*

Jason's Wife

Only for a moment you let me see the curve of your thin white neck and your dragon lady hair wrapped around it, as we drove off in a convertible.

Somewhere Else

As Gina's last act of rebellion she empties the joint accounts and enters the Ursuline convent in Paris. She'd rather eat, digest and sleep, scrub the lord's toilets and floors in silence for the rest of her life than clean up after Jason.

Have Another Glass of Wine

She had a houseful of friends. They were drinking Pinot Gris.

—Why don't you just have him over, Jeanne asked.

—We'd love to meet him, Adele put in.

—We're not at that stage yet, she explained.

—Oh Mary, you just don't know how lucky you are, said Anya. At our age any of us'd die for the chance you have.

—And you, Anya, aren't you married?

—So what!

—I have to admit my heart goes a little aflutter when I see his name pop up on my screen.

—What's his voice like?

—Most times I don't even answer.

—Oh Mary, have another glass of wine.

Woodstock

When I talked to her the next day she goes, "You're still dripping down my leg," and I couldn't help wondering how many others had heard that same line.

Be-Bop

Put it this way, sports figures live like counts and dukes.

Consider Sonny Rollins, who rose to the top of the DOWN BEAT AND METRONOME polls only to stop playing publicly in 1959 so he could practice his instrument. Only a few heard his commanding tone booming thru traffic on the Williamsburg Bridge. When asked by the Crowell-Collier publishing company what he envisioned for the next 5 years, then Defense Secretary James V. Forrestal wrote, "Five years of peace with no periods of international tension," a year before the start of the Korean War and three months before his own suicide.

Which brings us to Lennie Tristano. who, though blind, became one of the most inventive musicians of the 20th Century. He was one of the honorary pallbearers at Charlie Parker's funeral. At one juncture, they dropped the casket, but intuitively, Tristano stuck out his arm at that precise moment and caught it. Stick around there's more.

We have been here since before the raising of the mountains. I remember a great fire in the sky, fierce flames and the uproar of slain horses. After the cool winds returned, we lived by the sea, sailed bright ships in the direction of the setting sun and lay the foundations in the hearts of many people. We have survived.

Who else are you going to believe?

that place by the ghost bridge
where the coming together
was the coming together

I think

I saw raspberries

when you take your shower
I take
your panties
up to my face
and breathe deeply

Bridget's dilemma
the one she can fuck
she doesn't want
the one she can't
she wants

our worn underwear
wet and gooey
fucking in the closet
our spooned bodies
sleeping

left
the red hat
you gave me
out
in the rain

I meet my father
in my dreams
he's always yelling
I sit in front of the fire
and drink wine

~New York, USA

Peter Fiore lives and writes in Mahopac, New York, USA. His poems have been published in Atlas Poetica, Bright Stars, American Poetry Review, Rattle, Ribbons, Skylark, A Hundred Gourds and others. In 2009, Peter published text messages, a book of tanka poetry and in 2015, Peter's book of tanka prose, flowers to the torch, was published by Keibooks. In the spring of 2017, Peter's first novella, when angels speak of love, was published by Loose Moose Press.

Lament

Richard Grahn

In my dreams
you're laughing and
petunias are blooming
to the rhythm
of your breath.

My feather
on the wind
you gently float
just beyond
these fingertips.

When I open my eyes
you're gone . . .
footprints
in the grass
fading with the sun.

~In the Beacon, Chicago, Illinois USA

Richard Grahn is an ever-aspiring poet/writer, sculptor, and photographer currently living in Chicago, Illinois USA. His poetic interests include various Japanese styles e.g. haiku, tanka, haibun and haiga. He also enjoys collaborative poetry across a variety of styles. He holds an Associate Degree in Fine Arts from Butte Community College in Oroville, California with additional studies at California State University, Chico.

New England Projections

Richard St. Clair

day dreaming
in a rocking chair
meditating
on its winking eye
the crescent moon

across light-years
such wondrous light
the terrible beauty
of an exploding star
touches me

stillness
the kayak
breaks
the river's
glassy skin

a flowage
of surreal images
slowly
emerging
from anesthesia

frozen surf
jellyfish
crucified
on a gnarled cross
of driftwood

aurora magic
once a magical vision
now fogged
by the sheening face
of city lights

a rhapsody
wisteria spilling over
the lattice fence
glorifying my heart
and my spirit

seagull
on a pylon
high tension wires
snapping with current
and biting wind

through the void
waves of warming
sunlight
unseen x-rays
broadcast cosmic love

from last fall's
tag sale
the bulldog
tendering me
a slobbering welcome

news flash
ploughing through the ruins
hungry ghosts
foraging for sustenance
and survivors

old age
growing pains
my creeping undoing
simple comforts
ever more elusive

distant crows
their shrieking caws
counterpoint
to the meadowlark's
lilting trill

sweet air
in through the window
early spring day's
halcyon bliss
and herald of new life

web of karma
eddies of samsara
clutching at me
tearing asunder
my hopes and dreams

wet dream
woken by the
shriek
of steel wheels
on steel tracks

refugees
lying in tented filth
burning sun
another symptom
of lost enlightenment

wandering mind
upticks
of memories
roiling like a
kaleidoscope

distracted
by life's unforgiving
sorrows
hiding under blankets
refuge in sleep

snow
once welcomed
now
my heart murmurs
in gale force winds

surf
along the beach
frozen fast
beach bum finding
50s bottle caps

légion d'honneur
posthumously
awarded
bittersweet memories
softened by pride

ice sculpture
resplendent
in the light
resilient against
battering winds

subzero
along the tracks
the train
like myself
groaning

listen
to the heartbeat of the
waking cosmos
sky and land caressing
the nurturing ocean

like
a rolling stone
this mind
gathers no moss
no rest

lingering
a cragfast dream
unable
to safely stay
or safely leave

waiting
for spring
for the sonatas
of songbirds
to loosen my veins

fishing
the heron
so still
its shadow condemning
unknowing prey

humming
the neighbors'
dishwasher
vibrating the firewall
like a metronome

sunset
tinging a flock
of distant geese
here I am
westwardly yearning

horses
turning heads
in sync
joining eyes
with passersby

day's end
coddled
by coddled eggs
late spring's
blizzard bliss

blast of sleet
soothing my loneliness
inside
the quantum recompense
of indoors

~Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

Richard St. Clair (b. 1946 in North Dakota) is accomplished in both the musical and the poetical arts. His tanka, haiku, and renku as well as other longer poems have appeared in a number of print and online journals in the US and abroad. In addition to poetry he is a prolific composer: his new chamber music cycle "Through the Seasons with Haiku Master Buson" is a setting of 39 newly discovered haiku by the great 18th century master.

Samantha Sirimanne Hyde was born in Sri Lanka and now lives in Australia. She is grateful to have crossed paths with the exquisite world of haiku, tanka and other Japanese poetry forms.

Samantha Sirimanne Hyde

winter walk
the sun's warmth
and birdsong . . .
my mind on you
bedridden with pain

winter clean-up
digging up daffodils
with their toxic bulbs
I recall the sharp sting
of your words that day

counting
minutes and hours
keeping vigil
the daughter-in-law
you no longer know

finally
taking baby steps
to accept myself
I eye those glazed tarts
at the local patisserie

~Sydney, Australia

from the hills
a powdery mist
drifts off . . .
my perception of you
not what it used to be

~Bandarawela, Sri Lanka

the sign
do not feed animals
on the wall,
a squirrel scampers up
to steal my sugar cube

~Habarana, Sri Lanka

low tide . . .
the placid shoal
luminous
in my darkest hour
your enduring goodwill

~Galle, Sri Lanka

this book
tunnel-burrowed
by silverfish . . .
remembering my father
I hang on to it yet again

~Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

a visit to Fukushima

Sanford Goldstein

too bad
I cannot remember
my name
too bad I cannot
remember any names!

inside the capital
of Fukushima
we search for the library
where the exhibit is
and we found it

how blue
the Pacific ocean
here
I stare
in disbelief

~*Shibata-shi, Japan*

Sanford Goldstein is now 92 years old. He has been writing tanka for more than fifty years. He continues to live in Japan with his friend Kazuaki Wakui.

Shernaz Wadia is a retired primary school teacher, and lives in Pune, India. She was educated in St. Joseph's High School Valsad and Wadia College, Pune. Her articles, short stories and poems have been widely published in web journals and anthologies. She has also published 'Whispers of the Soul', a collection of some of her poems and "Tapestry Poetry"—a genre of poetry composition in partnership, developed by her and Israeli poet Avril Meallem.

Shernaz Wadia

venturing into
the vastness
his eyes reflect
the shimmer
of the mica-flecked sea

hungry goats
on either side
the grassy
no-man's land
out of bounds even to them

this morning
my only companions
thrushes
skimming along
the hilly track

in strong denial
he converses
angrily with
his wife's
vacant chair

passing by
the paddy field
he is grateful
he has cultivated
good contacts

~*Pune, India*

Dream of Lesbos

Thomas Martin

Sequence inspired by a girlfriend's dream

she awakens
dreaming of *Lesbos* again
in a sweat
her passions stirred by Sappho
she wants to give herself

to her dream lover
a beautiful woman
who bends over her
takes her beyond the red dawn
to orgasm after orgasm

so spent
she wonders if she can give
herself to a man
again but not love and sex
but for the fire of his seed

her lover's touch
stirs her beyond the reach of words
unfolds her legs
spreads her labia open
and leads her into the sweet storm

she loves
sapphically now
she can't help it
their love so strong and unattached
she gives herself again and again

~Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

Thomas Martin

the moon and stars
with us as we drive to our site
along the river
in the warm night we need no tent
crickets and frogs sing us to sleep

~campground, Bend, Oregon, USA

parked cars
in the front yard a fence
for the child
who drives his battery car
round and round his dad

ever the loner
when I am old and sick
like an old cat
I want to wander off
and die in some secret place

~Portland, Oregon, USA

Sedoka

Thomas Martin

a nightcrawler
through some cosmic strange
twirls round and round my fingers
so quietly
I cannot pin it on a hook
and so release his silence

~Liberty, North Carolina, USA

Thomas Martin was born and raised on a farm in Southeastern USA. He graduated from the University of NC at Chapel Hill. He now lives in Portland, OR, with his beautiful and talented wife, Joyce. He has published haiku, tanka and haibun in many journals both in print and online.

Vijay Joshi

even
among the cherry trees
I miss the koi pond
competing for attention
food vendors

among
the babble of syllables
hear
the voice
of new poem

hospital room
eastern glass window lights up
tiny spot on the bed
gradually becomes
big bright red blob

still damp
on the clothes line
yesterday's wash
monsoon rain
lingers

walking alone
in the dark alley
the flashlight fails
even her shadow
abandons her

Aleppo
a crying toddler tries
to wake up her dead mother
random bombings
disrupts school classes . . . again

~*New Jersey, USA*

Vijay Joshi is a published author. His poems are published in Atlas Poetica, Contemporary Haibun, Haibun today, Chrysanthemum, US 1 worksheets, Eucalyptus.

Review: *Only in Silence* by Beverley George

Reviewed by Patricia Prime

Only in Silence

Beverley George

Pearl Beach, Australia (2017)

Pb 35 pp

ISBN: 978-0-9943670-0-6

\$15 or \$20 AUD incl. postage in Australia

\$25 AUD incl. postage in Japan and New Zealand

\$28 AUD incl. postage in USA, UK and worldwide

Beverley George has been a major presence in the tanka world for a long time. As founding editor of *Eucalypt: a tanka journal*, she influenced and fuelled the growth of tanka among many poets. *Only in Silence* is a selection of tanka by Beverley George, translated by Aya Yuhki. These tanka were first published in *The Tanka Journal* (Japan) by the Nihon Kajin Club (The Japan Tanka Poets' Society). The collection includes seventeen tanka sequences by Beverley George (two written with collaborators).

The collection displays Beverley George working at the height of her powers in a series of tanka sequences. There are poems about a train journey, a grandson, friendship, generations who have gone before, and many more. Throughout there is a sense of taking stock; of reviewing the past and contemplating the present, together with anxiety about the passage of time, and the mind full of things that need to be accomplished, as expressed in the first sequence: "First Light on Tree Bark":

a phone call jerks me
from dreams of blue mountains
hazed by eucalypts —
the new day crowding in,
my mind writing its long list (12)

The book contains many powerful poems such as "Scars", with its images of being "scarred

by a rope,” “his long white scar /made by the teeth of a shark” and the lovely final image of a sideboard made by the poet’s grandfather:

rim stains
of port wine glasses
and hot cocoa mugs
this oak sideboard grandpa made
the last thing I will part with (17)

In “empty garden” George poignantly recalls the loss of a loved one:

how can I explain
what life is like
without you?
my heart does not believe
that you are gone (18)

We also discover pungent and wry poems about pain, death and a funeral, as in “RDF”:

the way in which
our children spoke
at your funeral service . . .
I prune the bougainvillea
back to its buds (20)

The collaborative tanka sequence, “Paddocks of Wild Grass,” with Meredith Ferris, is also a poem about love and loss. The poem ends with this verse by George:

*June solstice
and the pelicans have fled . . .
wave after wave
of yellow wattle flares
under rain-washed skies (23)*

In some of the sequences we experience that nagging feeling of slight dislocation that many of us feel and which George captures in “Loss and Longing.” This is the first verse:

crescent moon
defines the pale edge
of driftwood . . .
gleaming coldly
my discarded wedding dress (24)

There is also an interesting poem, “From Here to There,” about Japan and the “guide who died.” The sequence begins with the lovely verse about grandchildren:

beach café
first one, then two, then three
grandkids write haiku
small white fingers flying
eyes darting here . . . now there

But a flying bird reminds the poet of the distance between where she is now and the time she spent in Japan:

in an alcove
of the Ishidatami inn
a framed photograph
of my guide who died, and me
. . . weeping cherry tree (26)

Another poem with a Japanese background, “Riding the Wind” contains this lovely verse:

I acknowledge
but do not yet believe
my own transience —
betrayed by breath and pulse . . .
thistledown on the wind (27)

“In the Footsteps of Bashō” is a four-page collaborative sequence between Beverley George, M. L. Grace, Michael Thorley, David Terelinck, Catherine Smith, Robert Miller, Carmel Summers and Lynette Arden, in which the headnote states: “*In the autumn of 2010, twelve Australian travellers from Edo to Yamagata following the footsteps of Basho on his ‘Oku no Hosomichi’ (Narrow Road to the Far North)*”. The poem begins with this verse by George:

oku no hosomichi
we pause among cedars . . .
the faint scuff
of Basho’s straw sandals
on the leaf-strewn path

and ends with this verse by David Terelinck:

purple grapes
plump and heavy on the vines
the sweetness of
this harvest, this season,
this time of life (35)

This collection provides a compendium of interesting sequences by a wonderful tanka poet and her friends. It's an ideal collection for someone coming to tanka for the first time or for a devoted follower of tanka and tanka sequences.

A Temple Bell Sounds, tanka selected by Beverley George

Reviewed by Patricia Prime

A Temple Bell Sounds
Beverley George, editor
The Digital Centre
Artarmon, Pearl Beach, Australia (2017)
Pb 38 pp
ISBN: 978094357020
RRP: \$20 AUD incl. postage in Australia
\$25 AUD incl. postage to Japan and New Zealand
\$28 AUD incl. postage to USA, UK and worldwide

A Temple Bell Sounds contains 108 tanka from the first twenty-one issues of *Eucalypt*: a tanka journal, selected by the journal's founding editor, Beverley George.

The wide array of subjects and scope of tanka from poets around the world is amazing. The poems take the reader travelling across geographies and histories—including “summer evening / on the wide verandah”, the “Sea of Japan”, ancestors, children and relatives and more seemingly personal reflections such as “the simple certainties / of a loved child’s world”, “war time / at the factory” and a “father’s

signature.” George seems to have deliberately chosen to avoid clear sections, presenting more a stream of consciousness in the arrangement of the tanka. The poems are ordered in a way that gives some tracks or threads of thought, so that ideas from various places and poets blur and knit in surprising ways.

The various poets are adroit in their craft of language and form. For example, in Belinda Broughton’s tanka there is a wonderful vignette of a hardworking farmer, who yet has time to admire beauty:

smelling
of sweat and cattle dust
my father
akubra in one hand
wild orchids in the other (9)

The tanka are concise, yet powerful. One of my favourites being Shona Bridge’s

each small stitch
of her needle
in the moonlight . . .
the movement of red thread
for what words won’t say (11)

The tanka show a range of style as well as subject. Some draw on humour, as in Jan Dean’s tanka:

choirboys
angelic, soothing, sweet
sang at my wedding
unaware between hymns
I saw their chewing gum (14)

While others are ironic and show how one can overcome insults and derision, as we see in the following tanka by Sonam Chhoki:

years of his taunts—
she aches with uselessness
and unlearns
how to sing, how to hope
how to dream in colours (15)

The poets' dexterity and skill in the tanka form are captivating and exciting. Take this tanka by Julie Thorndyke:

the warm arc of you
in our midnight haven
no words
just a single movement
my instep against your calf (18)

I like the expression "warm arc" and the sensitivity of "just a single movement" is haunting.

The tanka in *A Temple Bell Sounds* are anecdotal and lyrical. They are imagistic and depend on their conciseness and suggestion for their effect. The fabric of the poems is evident. Within the book the joy of love is evident, there is delight and confusion, pleasure and pain and all conveyed by the language, the setting-out, the gaps, punctuation or lack of it and we receive both the pleasure and pain evoked by the reading of these poems. Some of the tanka are dream-like or suggestive; there is a gut-reaction. Everything relates to our humanness, of being in relationships, of being one with nature or of being challenged by adversity, and Terra Martin's fine tanka about receiving a loved one's prognosis:

gazing
into the lapis lazuli sky
your prognosis
disappears in a haze
of tears and disbelief (24)

The well-known names of tanka poets from various countries are spread out to meet us but in amongst the serious, the philosophical, the intellectual, the personal, there is still room for humour, as in Sanford Goldstein's

during
the hearing test
for names,
I come out with Desdemona,
with Iphigenia (35)

These poets have a gift of turning the ordinary into enchantment in their writing. The poems make me look again at simple things: a cabin, a yellow leaf, shadows, the scent of mint and "the hour I am / most alone." The writing making everyday living suddenly an incredible and exciting gift.

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.

Three-Part Harmony, Tanka Verses, by Debbie Strange Published by Keibooks

In *Three-Part Harmony, Tanka Verses*, Debbie Strange has taken her previously published tanka and strung them together like notes on a staff to create a new set of trios that together form a seamless symphony. Each tanka poem stands on its own as a fully developed verse full of meaning and music, but joins together with the other members of its trio to create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Each verse is like a musical instrument with its own unique voice, but blends in harmony with the sounds of its mates to form a richly sonorous tapestry of sound and image. Readers who loved her previous book of tanka, *Warp and Weft, Tanka Threads*, will be delighted by her newest collection. For those who are new to the poetry of Debbie Strange, *Three-Part Harmony* is an excellent introduction.

I am
the black
and holy roundness
of stone
and water

f i n a l l y
the river trail freezes
our ski tracks
the only graffiti
in this whitewashed city

fence posts
wearing prairie crows
and dust shrouds
we strum the rutted road
with barbed wire fingers

stonescapes
along the arroyo
rain-spattered
my every bone thirsty
for one last taste of you

“Debbie’s tanka are all richly layered, with every word carefully chosen. In her triptychs, she explores the interplay of natural and human worlds in a very deep way, more so than would be possible in individual tanka. The quality of individual tanka is consistently high, and the interweaving of themes between the sets of tanka is also impressive. I highly recommend this book!” — Ken Slaughter, Past Vice-President, Tanka Society of America

“Debbie brings her own brand of magic to her tanka. One can’t help but be mesmerised by her adept use of language to help take us through her inner and outer world of beauty.” — ai li, editor and publisher of *the cherita, still, moving into breath* and *dew-on-line*

“Strange is an acute observer and gives insightful, lyrical and honest accounts of the world around us from the tide-pool at our feet to luminous bodies in distant stellar realms. She tackles the traditional topics of tanka with fresh

and lyrical metaphors. Her songs flow from thrush, robin and bittern, from wind and storm, and the cries of human emotion.” — David Terelinck, author of *Casting Shadows* and *Slow Growing Ivy*

Three-Part Harmony, Tanka Verses

by Debbie Strange

Introduction by M. Kei

Afterword by ai li

Keibooks (2018)

ISBN 978-1986077934 (Print) 136 pp

\$13.00 USD (print) or \$5.00 USD (Kindle)

Available in print and ebook at Amazon.com and other online retailers.

Contemporary Haibun Online 14:2 Published

The team of Bob Lucky and Ray Rasmussen is pleased to announce the release of *Contemporary Haibun Online 14:2, July 2018*, for your reading pleasure. Please check out the current issue to enjoy a stimulating assortment of haibun, tanka prose, articles, commentary, and haibun news.

Writers are invited to submit haibun and tanka prose. Please consult our submission guidelines.

Note that you can use the links at the bottom of this page to easily forward this announcement to friends and/or Facebook should you wish to do so (and we would appreciate it if you did – we need to spread the haibun genre around to new readers and writers). If you have a different preferred address, you can send it to us and if you don’t want to receive these notices, you can also unsubscribe to future mailings.

If you experience any problems with this mailing or the CHO issue, we’d appreciate your feedback.

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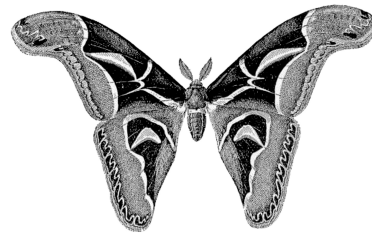
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Editorial Biography

M. Kei is the editor of *Atlas Poetica* and was the editor-in-chief of *Take Five : Best Contemporary Tanka*. His most recent project is *Stacking Stones, An Anthology of Short Tanka Sequences*. 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 poetry collection is *January, A Tanka Diary*.



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*.

Publications by Keibooks

Anthologies

Stacking Stones, An Anthology of Short Tanka Sequences
(forthcoming September 2018)

Neon Graffiti : Tanka of Urban Life

Bright Stars, An Organic Tanka Anthology (Vols. 1–7)

Take Five : Best Contemporary Tanka (Vol. 4)

Fire Pearls (Vols. 1–2) : Short Masterpieces of the Heart

Tanka Collections

Three-Part Harmony, by Debbie Strange NEW!

Warp and Weft, Tanka Threads, by Debbie Strange

Black Genji and Other Contemporary Tanka,
by Matsukaze

October Blues and Other Contemporary Tanka,
by Matsukaze

flowers to the torch : American Tanka Prose, by peter
fiore

on the cusp encore, a year of tanka, by Joy McCall
fieldgates, tanka sequences, by Joy McCall
on the cusp, a year of tanka, by Joy McCall
rising mist, fieldstones, by Joy McCall
hedgerows, tanka pentaptychs, by Joy McCall
circling smoke, scattered bones, by Joy McCall

Tanka Left Behind 1968 : Tanka from the Notebooks of
Sanford Goldstein, by Sanford Goldstein
Tanka Left Behind : Tanka from the Notebooks of Sanford
Goldstein, by Sanford Goldstein
This Short Life, Minimalist Tanka, by Sanford
Goldstein

Journals

Atlas Poetica : A Journal of World Tanka

M. Kei's Poetry Collections

January, A Tanka Diary

Slow Motion : The Log of a Chesapeake Bay Skipjack
tanka and short forms

Heron Sea : Short Poems of the Chesapeake Bay
tanka and short forms

M. Kei's Novels

Pirates of the Narrow Seas 1 : The Sallee Rovers
Pirates of the Narrow Seas 2 : Men of Honor
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