

ATLAS
POETICA
A Journal of World Tanka

Number 34

M. Kei, editor
Grunge, editorial assistant

2018
Keibooks, Perryville, Maryland, USA

KEIBOOKS
P O Box 346
Perryville, Maryland, USA 21903
AtlasPoetica.org

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 We do not publish haiku, except as incidental to a tanka collage or other mixed-form work.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.

Published by Keibooks

ISBN-13: 978-1723568435

ISBN-10: 1723568430

Also available for Kindle.

AtlasPoetica.org

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The Consolation of Art

As I was editing *Atlas Poetica 33*, the Trump regime was violating its own laws and treaties by incarcerating asylum seekers coming across the southern border of the United States. It was Nazi Germany, 1938. I do not exaggerate; my degree is history. The Nazis even claimed, as do some supporters of the Trump regime, that the concentration camps for children were essentially summer camps, complete with arts and crafts.

This was just one of many crises that humans around the world have been subjected to. The genocide against the Rohingya, the #MeToo movement (and #MenToo and #ChurchToo), the revelation that the death toll in Puerto Rico after hurricanes last year was actually 20x higher, China having a million Uighurs in camps, the ongoing civil war and civil desperation in Syria, droughts and floods and wars and corruption . . .

Everywhere in the world it seems as if civilization is ending. A collective acknowledgment hangs unspoken in the air: the human species is despicable. This is what defines us as human. Only humans carry out the mass murder and incarceration of their own species.

In the face of such destruction and despair, what can tanka do?

We can—we must—assert our humanity and the humanity of all people everywhere. We do that with art. Art is the antidote to the evil that poisons us. Art is nourishment for the soul. Art is what survives when all else is dead. Today nobody cares about the pharaohs' foreign policies. We care about the pyramids. The words "Renaissance Italy" bring to mind architecture, art, invention, and philosophy. We know Michelangelo and da Vinci, not the endless Italian wars.

Art is what sensitizes our souls to perceive the condition of our fellow human beings and to exult in their beauty and nobility. When faced with human inhumanity, some of us stare it down and refuse to accept that this defines a country, a people, and a species. Art inspires. Which is why tyrants destroy it. ISIS has been blowing up ancient statues and buildings. A nation is not truly lost until every trace of its art has been

destroyed.

Tanka is catharsis, testimony, witness, exaltation, redemption, and most importantly, hope. Humans have never yet been cured of the madness that compels us, like Saturn devouring his son, to devour those who are weaker than ourselves. But carried in our same defective genes is the desire to be better. Whether it is Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*, or Ernesto Cortázar's *Beethoven's Silence*, art is how we express our humanity. It is why cello players take their instruments to bomb craters and war zones, sit in the middle of danger and devastation, and play.

The human heart has been built into tanka from the beginning. In his 'Preface' to the *Kokinwakashū*, Ki no Tsurayuki said,

Hitomaro has passed away—but shall the poetic art stand still? Things change with change of times, joys and sorrows come and go—but shall not the letter of these poems be preserved? [. . .] and for ever, we trust, shall men, taking pleasure in the form of these poems, and profiting by their content, revere the verse of ancient days as the moon in high heaven, and applaud the age which saw the production of this Anthology.

—Ki no Tsurayuki. *Humanistic Texts*.
<<http://humanistictexts.org/tsurayuki.htm#Introduction>>

Lord Ki's time saw war and natural disaster; he knew. We know. With each word on the page, we bear witness to what has happened, and offer hope, *Never Again*.

~K~

M. Kei
Editor, *Atlas Poetica*

Flooding in Minot, North Dakota, USA.

Cover Image courtesy of Earth Observatory, NASA.
<http://eoimages.gsfc.nasa.gov/images/imagerecords/51000/51239/minot_ali_2011176_lrg.jpg>

Letters to the Editor

Dear M. Kei,

Remember this poem from way back in the days *Modern English Tanka*? It's been a few times around the block since then.

peaceable men say
"war solves nothing"
one wonders
whose ashes still silt
the rivers of Europe

I wrote it because I was increasingly alarmed about all the pious talk in governments at that time about how genocide and related mass murdering was "behind us"! Really? We were seeing right and left new evidence of its continued practice (virtually unceasing) since WWII, and still see it everywhere today. Here in Fresno/Clovis, we have a big Armenian population and are reminded each year of the genocide they suffered in Turkey long before the NAZIs engineered their own campaign for "cleansing."

I'll be looking forward to your upcoming issue of ATPO on this subject. I hope poets will address more than surface realities but prod at some of the underlying social and cultural behavior involved, not least of which is deliberate, collective amnesia! You are absolutely right that tanka and related forms can punch this monster in the face.

Yours,
Michael McC

Dear Kei,

I have had to look again at how I feel about the killing fields and such. I think my own suffering right now has made me long for peace of mind and not to think of such things. Wanting to hide. It takes sometimes more courage than I possess to look at the world's losses when my own overwhelm me.

But I must.

I was discussing with Bill and he said something about how the extremes of loss and suffering often bring out the noble in human beings.

I wish you had said something about that in your request for the issue on genocide. I tend to read things too literally sometimes, and I was thinking I would be swamped by all those poems about the world troubles, which is perhaps likely.

I guess one thing that threw me was your focus on American politics. We are far away over here, as are those all over the world and some places where suffering is much worse than anywhere in the west. In small ways, even in Norwich. Every Saturday night at least a dozen cops end up injured in hospital after battles with clubbers on Prince of Wales Road. I'd be inclined to let them get on with it—after all, if you go clubbing and drinking and doing coke then you must accept that you might face violence.

But the cops still go and protect both men and women and get beaten up for it. No weapons in this neck of the woods. Some special cops carry guns in London but not elsewhere. I don't know how I feel about it. There have been more than 100 fatal stabbings of young men in London so far this year and a dozen in Norwich. The gang culture has found England and Wales. But not Scotland. Curious. Maybe that Viking DNA up there makes a difference.

I'm sorry for moaning about the issue. Just my wish for peace. Bear with me. I really appreciated your gentle response.

love
Joy xx

Dear ~K~,

They promise to be a chilling read—settlers were given licenses to kill Aborigines and it wasn't that long ago. It's a pretty bleak history.

Looking forward to the issue.

Best,
C

stabat mater dolorosa

A. A. Marcoff

they came out of the wind like the north:
soldiers: the brutals—with helmet, armour,
blade: never look into the eye of a killer—it is
dark, dead, hollow, black: something had stirred
in the cosmos as though the sun were somehow
changed, the sky darkening now and now: people
covered their ears, for those screams were too
piercing, searing, cutting as a knife into the fabric
of the mind . . .

clouds passed over like whole eras of history,
these moments broken as time itself, and the
man-whipped man came along the road, and
carried a wooden cross that was heavy as the
Earth: and he was wearing a white robe: he was
wearing light itself: a robe that was simple and
plain in the nature of things: and his mother saw
him there, watched as he stumbled, almost
tripping over stones that were hard on his bare
feet, and her hair flowed down her white neck
like water, and she was like a swan, with wings of
white sky:

in the beginning
was the Word—
the flight of a swan
brings wings to the world,
endlessly

and she was full of sorrow now, white with
tears, her eyes wide with pity: he was her child
sublime: and she followed, her head bent now,
the procession heading to a barren place, which
was called Golgotha, the place of the skull, and
she could not watch any more: heard the coarse
shouts, voices raised in mockery, heard the whips
and the lashing, heard the hammering of nails,
his body being broken on a cross of heavy wood,
and the nails were the ripping of the daylight and
the coming of shadows to the desert: and there
was blood: she was no longer aware of the
passage of time, and she waited there, standing,

numbed, blank, as the sun disappeared from the
hill, and she felt the stones underfoot in her
emotion, everything dark for a period: and no
one knew why, for it was still daytime: and she
waited there, standing in the sublime, and she
heard him cry out, and he sounded abandoned
and looked outstretched there wide as a bird, and
she wanted to speak to him, but could not . . .

the quiet radiance
of his eyes—
slow gold shadows
on
silence

and she saw a centurion known as Longeus, a
blind man who did not see with his eyes but saw
with his mind what was transpiring, a man who
had insight and knowledge: he knew a story of a
star, and a tree, and a tomb, and a garden where
that man would appear again as illumination and
physical presence and as radiance: and though he
was full of sorrow, the blind man took a spear,
and pierced the man's heart, to relieve his
suffering at the end of things and in the deeper
course of history, and then the blood of the man
ran down the shaft of the spear, and touched the
blind centurion, and suddenly, in a storm of light,
he saw again, his eyes opened up and he was not
blind any more:

Good Friday:
travelling
through time & light—
swallows
at the Crucifixion

~2~

and the mother watched, as the spirit of her
son rose like white smoke into sky—she could see
that, see it like a shaft that cut into the textures of
the sky, and lit up the darkness, as the sun
returned in visionary power, white and bright
and shining through the veil of darkness, which
was torn now, like dream: and the first day came
and went: and the second day came and went:
and there was creation, out of the complex, from

the night, and so on the third day they all heard a voice from the dawn of time speaking, 'let there be light!':

a light gospel dawn:
sunrise
in the valleys
of
the world

and she saw the coming of a child in the east of the land, child that was the structure of time, a theology of light: and it was as if the tree of the crucified had blossomed into pink, here within the solar system, in the affirmation and intimation of eternity and breath: there was a crucifix of light: and it was immensity in the mother's mind: and her being was filled suddenly, as though with endless space and song, a simple song of the Earth, of worlds: aria of arias, pure voice as clear as the sky, pure voice as clear as running water in a brook, as she saw birds reappear in the silence of trees, a rising sun in their song, as a river of water ran through her mind, a river of life . . .

and there are white swans here, opening their wings, outstretched as the rays of the sun, wide as the world: and the mother glides there upon the waters, and he is there too, swan of swans, wings like gospels that flow into the moment, and he moves by her side, in parallel, in parable, and his wings are galaxies of feather and glide, and the wake of the swan is the rhythm of the breeze, currency of gospel and word and bird and vitality, simple as a song, its shape clear as daylight: there is a great halo on the land around, and on the riverbank apostles walk in their freedom, and they are lateral, structural, and roam amongst lilies in the fields, speaking now the tongue of reality, moving among vineyards and gold and a place of corn growing into harvest: a girl from a pearl holds a single sunflower in her hand: and swan on swan, they merge now like parable with the sun, in the perception of our eyes, immaculate, serene, as everything flows like water and the future and the current of the mind, and two swans move in the

fullness of time, as in a dreaming of the stunning of the sun:

a world
beyond theology
the river flows
into light
like a swan

in the sowing of the dawn—the seeds of reality, its various strands woven with energy: and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well—visions of the houses of stone and the structure of stars: there was the breaking of a chord in the distant past, and a latent atmosphere of rose and ultraviolet—there in the cosmic glow: and suddenly they all heard the sound of the sun . . .

~Leatherhead, in the Mole Valley, England

A A Marcoff—Tony is an Anglo-Russian poet, born in Iran, and has lived in Africa, France, Iran and Japan. He has been a university library assistant, a teacher, and has been in charge of poetry and creative writing in a large psychiatric hospital. A main-stream poet as well as a tanka poet, he has been widely published in journals such as 'Poetry Review'. He now lives near the beautiful River Mole.

Tanka and Cherita on the Theme of Genocide

ai li

auschwitz dawn
the ghost
of birdsong
from
before the war

ethnic cleansing

they leave behind
the photographs

of ancestors
staring
into empty space

mass grave

the forgotten
do not
sing anymore

under
heavy clay

the storyteller
was the last to die

at dawn

the echo of gunshots
in a tale
yet to be told

letters under floorboards
handwritten
stories of love
more names added
to the dead

the men died first
with their caps on
the rivers of blood
a few shoes
left behind

dog-eared photographs
of the dead
they take sabbath
with you
and echo

auschwitz mitzi

now a rose
in the suburbs

but when night falls
she hears again
the cattle trains

remembering mitzi rose

the women and children

watch
the men
being taken away

they wave
to the dead

starting life again
but as an orphan

he sleeps

with old bones
that are
forever missing

where they lie
is forest shade
a sun remembered
only
by the betrayers

she has
no more
tears left
the storytellers
are dead

where villages

are cleansed
of life

a creaking door
the unfinished melody
of grief

the colour

of their religion
killed them

rounded up
like sheep
for the abattoir

they came in the night
with guns
quicklime
is what
the storyteller found

by the old scout camp

no one lingers here
mass chinese graves

from the second world war
chinese whispers
after dark

the skulls
found

all men

with bullet holes
at the back
of their heads

race riots

chinese women
and children
burnt alive in a bus

and pushed into
the *sungai* of no return

sungai is the malay word for river

in the river

are the bones
of the innocent

i throw a wreath
and turn away
when it starts to drown

the ovens

scrubbed clean now
of live screams

flesh inked
with stars
of david

the bones
in
the forest
under my feet
in quicklime

a

gas
shower

all
is
still

~*London and Singapore*

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.

Aju Mukhopadhyay

light dances
around darkish palm trees
fireflies keep their tune
jackals call from afar—
paddy fields abound

dressed in ochre robe
Ganga flows with force in the eve
dancing eddies abound;
a net is spread from the boat
for the last time

days pass by with
sound of tinkling spoon in the cups
and play of sun on the quivering leaves
many domestic tales
wait for something else

calls from golden dust of time
remains in the air
come back again and again
to tell us
of the events passing

a lizard
displaying its colourful fans
waits unfed for its mate
until its arrival
in the evening

~*Pondicherry, India*

Aju Mukhopadhyay, Pondicherry, India, is a bilingual award winning poet, essayist, fiction writer and critic. He has authored 34 books; ten books of poems in English including books of Japanese short verses. Many of his Japanese short verses have been translated in some foreign and Indian languages like some of his other poems and short stories. He is published in India and abroad. His poems have been widely anthologised in about 25 national and international anthologies. More than ten books contain critique on his poetry. He has been published as a world poet in different international journals, ezines, websites and poetry journals.

Somewhere in Between

Alexander Jankiewicz

I awake from an afternoon dream in a daze. With my eyes still closed, I see myself in my childhood kitchen about to get something to drink. I had been playing in the summer heat all morning long. I see my mother crying while cleaning the oven although it's already clean. I ask her what's wrong. She tells me that she just received a phone call from her sister in Germany informing her that Oma had died. When I try to comfort her, she tells me she'll be alright and that I should go back outside to play. I turn around and see a photograph on the table of the two of them baking together in our kitchen. It's from the only time Oma visited us in America.

dog day afternoon
waking up from a nap
years ago
in my grandmother's kitchen
more real than the here and now

I drift in and out of sleep until I'm back in time as a little boy visiting Oma in Bensheim. She's chasing me around her kitchen table with her dentures half out. I become afraid for some reason and plead with her to stop. When she sees me begin to cry, she puts her dentures back in properly and tries to comfort me by offering some of her just-made cake. When I sit down at the table, she begins to tell me about how she and my mother loved to bake together when my mother was a little girl. I eat until my stomach hurts from being so full. I eat just to make sure I can listen to more of her stories until, finally, she tells me it's time to take a nap.

~*Superior, Wisconsin, USA*

Alex is an ESL instructor currently residing in Wisconsin.

Alexis Rotella

On a red-eye flight
to Rome
a Franciscan monk and I
discuss our favorite
Seinfeld skits

Immigrant children
separated from
their moms
the Virgin Mary's
olive oil tears

~*United States*

Untitled

Alexis Rotella

We were going to move to London but at last minute couldn't get a work permit. A good thing because it would have wiped us out financially even before we started.

No central heat
and yes,
it's haunted
the London house
we can't afford

Alexis Rotella's latest books, BETWEEN WAVES and THE COLOR BLUE (Red Moon Press, 2017) are available from the author akrotella@gmail.com.

North Past Pretoria

Alistair M. C. Isaac

Summer, 2014

a locust, racing green
pips vanguard the heavy rains
the farmer, serene

the waste we know is easy
summer's lull is always hard

muezzin calls hover
overlooking Cape Town's mosque
a theft discovered

tourists trust the wrong justice
tapangas make for equals

hot wind cuts the face
stolid eyes squint, cheeks enflame
here even silk chafes

waiting out the storm within
baboons colonize beyond

cloth of cloud cascades
off Table Mount, still below
Lion's Head rears, tame

the southern sphinx turns its back
Townships fester and boil

road straight without end
a slow cow lumbers across
distraction is death

northward lies Pretoria
savage veldt without a boss

graceful spindle bobs
giraffes gallop, mesmerize
preconceptions lost

indlovu, olifant, elp
leviathan they crush cars

panting shrubs shelter
languidly a lion eyes
fat photographers

edge of our domain, thus far
the end of their dominion

~*South Africa*

Alistair M. C. Isaac is a Lecturer in Mind and Cognition at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. In a former life, he studied Japanese literature in Boston, MA.

Adelaide B. Shaw

just a school day
reading, writing, math, then play
'til evil went wild
filling a mind with madness
killing child after child

covered by sheets
they hid their faces
and their hate
but, perhaps, a few
were hiding their shame

~*Millbrook, New York, USA*

Adelaide B. Shaw lives in Millbrook, NY. She has been writing haiku, tanka and other Japanese short form poetry for over 45 years. Her haiku book, An Unknown Road, won third place in the Kanterman 2009 awards, and is available on Amazon Kindle. Her haiku blog is: www.adelaide-whitepetals.blogspot.com.

Remembering the Rohingya

Anne Benjamin

where are the rains
to douse these tree-tall flames?
ash and smoke
extinguish their villages
not their tears

in slow-motion
the trickle swells
into a river
sluggish and heavy
with abandoned people

even as they run
hard, for their lives,
landmines
in soft earth
at their feet

each day
twenty thousand people—
many children—
search for safe passage
and mercy from strangers

women
and children
crowd canvas camps
in fields sodden
with young men's blood

the monsoon
teems down
pounding
tents awash
with desolation

bruised with shame
she lies, a country
exposing herself
to terror
and further rape

~*Myanmar*

Mirage upon the Waters *

Anne Benjamin

Misbah: at ten, you and your mum run from persecution and violence in Burma. Now, you are thirteen—a quarter of your life spent in detention.

they ask
for refuge we give
razor wire
they ask for bread
we give them sand

Shamim: seventeen, witty and beautiful, you speak four languages. Still you wait, after 1090 days, to hear the language of compassion . . . wasting, withdrawing, sickening.

an aberration
in Pacific seasons
frost blights
blossoming buds
strips saplings bare

Hossein: twenty-something, your ambitions to become a doctor are shackled to an inadequate education . . . How will you heal the memory of seeing your friend's desperate immolation?

lips stitched
ears stitched
eyes stitched—
myocardial infarction
scars the nation's heart

Teachers: wonderful women, welcoming these children to a classroom of respect, engagement, fun; watching them lose purpose, self-harming. You speak out.

in the school
behind the razor wire
lessons in
gentleness
and kindness

~Australia

* Based on ABC Four Corners Program (Aust), *The Forgotten Children*, <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2016/10/17/4556062.htm>.

Anne Benjamin's poetry, fiction and non-fiction appears in international publications. Recent books include *Gemstones*, a collection of tanka sequences written in collaboration with poets from Canada, UK, New Zealand and Australia, and her memoir, *Saffron and Silk, An Australian in India*. Anne lives in Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Autumn Noelle Hall

that clerk who remarked
it's all just damage control . . .
surviving teens
somewhere between soft-shoe's tap
and gumshoe's cloak-and-dagger

~Manitou Springs, Colorado, USA

the love triangle
of a folded flag
my pledge
allegiance to the soldier
for whom it was retired

~Green Mountain Falls, Colorado, USA

Each Day's Absurdity Trumps the Last

Autumn Noelle Hall

Can't decide which is more horrifying—our own clothing labels digitally tattling on us, or Elon Musk's Roadster orbiting in space with untested potential to disperse Mars-knows-what microbes and debris.

First Contact:
the Galaxy Police
storm Earth
to issue tickets
for littering in space

Of course, now that it's been pronounced treasonous not to clap for the President at his State of the Union address, I may not be around to see it. Do they have TV in Guantanamo . . . ? I imagine so—how else would they broadcast our glorious nation's proposed military parade to torture and demoralize dissenters . . .

pardon the sick
my head is spinning . . .
please stop
the ride now
—I want to get off

~Green Mountain Falls, Colorado, USA

When They Shout *Honduras*, I Hear *Endurance*

Autumn Noelle Hall

as the US
declares a dictator
the victor—again
in another rigged election
not unlike our own

the red flags
and black smoke from burnt tires—
the tireless voice
of voters crying *solidaridad*
—all strike deaf ears

and the death toll mounts
in some strange prime sequence
because revolutionaries
are only ever divisible
by one and themselves . . .

as the Deep State
funds literary journals
so algorithms
might make blacklisted radicals
of artists and poets

the freedom
held dear is no longer
that of the People
but of corporations
declared to be people

and conscience is checked
at a receiving door
marked *profit*
painted and repainted
a shareholder shade of green

which translated means:
when our military police
come home to roost—
as they do in all empires
at their imperial dusk

we too must cry out
Honduras in hope
they'll hear *endurance*
and likewise disobey
the order to fire

~*Green Mountain Falls, Colorado, USA*

Notes

Honduran soldiers ordered by the newly imposed government to fire on crowds of unarmed protesters courageously disobeyed those orders in true service of the people.

Cambridge Analytica Patois

Autumn Noelle Hall

“. . . if you want to fundamentally change society, you first have to break it. It's only when you break it, you can remold the pieces into your vision of a new society.”—Christopher Wylie, Data War Whistleblower and former Cambridge Analytica Employee

This Data War necessitates a language lesson. Human beings are now “target profiles” aka “units of culture.” The sort of units one needs to acquire and influence if one desires to fragment a society in order to remodel its cultural politics.

No one makes him create a profile. No gun-to-his-head compels him life-or-death to share those photos or quotes . . . or post his relationship status . . . or this video . . . or that link.

*just think
about all the data
veins to be mined
refined into profits
smelted into votes*

“Micro-targeting” plus new psychological constructs allow “units” to be targeted as personalities. “Data scientists” develop and deploy “cultural weapons.” Some weapons take the form of “apps” designed to harvest information—not just metadata, but status updates, preferences, even private messages. Others require collectives of creatives—designers, writers, videographers, photographers—to create content for fake websites and blogs, “clickbait” intended to lure and persuade.

*Nothing says she must click like, or agree, or consent.
Nothing prevents her from reading the fine print.*

*givin’ it up
for free burritos—
thumbs ups!
the heady dopamine rush
of legalized e-drugs*

In a sham office Cambridge Analytica’s “full-service propaganda machine” sabsers champagne to celebrate the millions garnered by persuading their “target audience of one” via an “ideas-focused” campaign.

Consulting the thesaurus, it seems that—so far—no one was browbeaten, bullied, dragooned, forced, intimidated, made, obliged, pressured, pressed, or pushed. It appears no heavies (even so much as informally), leaned or put the screws on; nor did they demand, exact or extort. 270,000 people—all of their own accord—consensually created a social media page, posted their stats, then downloaded an app and personality tested themselves; in doing so, they allowed the entire operation through their backdoors right into the houses of some eighty million friends. Cambridge Analytica’s own website claimed to have obtained, as a result of this “harvesting,” psychometric profiles for some 220,000,000 American voters. That’s two hundred and twenty million.

*purple koolaid
with a side of soylent green . . .
lines
around-the-e-block
of willing consumers*

During April’s Congressional Hearings, when New Mexico representative Ben Lujan asked Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg about “shadow profiles,” he testified, “. . . in general we collect data from people who have not signed up for Facebook for security purposes . . .” leaving Congress and the rest of us to wonder, *whose* security. On May 1, International Worker’s day, Cambridge Analytica quietly filed for insolvency and closed up shop, leaving a void for the next up-and-coming psychoanalytic pimp.

Even those who have abstained, who have all this time remained “friend”less and entirely without “likes,” may have been “shadowed,” unwilling grist for the algorithmic mill.

harvested
while we were schmoozing
hey, target profiles—
time to stop snoozing—WAKE UP
#DeleteFacebook

~Green Mountain Falls, Colorado, USA

Notes

Based on #5 of Project Censored’s News That Didn’t Make the News for 2017 <<http://projectcensored.org/5-big-data-dark-money-behind-2016-election/>> and information (included specific idiom) obtained in the interview of Christopher Wylie: <<https://www.truthdig.com/videos/cambridge-analytica-whistleblower-how-we-influenced-u-s-voters-video/>>.

Zuckerberg quote from: <<http://canadanewsmedia.ca/2018/04/11/mark-zuckerberg-says-hes-not-familiar-with-so-called-shadow-profiles/>>.

Cherita

Autumn Noelle Hall

anxiety's back—

a Jabberwocky wiffling
burbling through tulgy woods

my kingdom
for a psyche-sword—
psnyckersnack

on our window sill

egg cartons filled
with eager seedlings

tomatoes, peppers, basil
all craning their spindly necks
to take in his new raised beds

wrens wittering

lookee here, a little house
lookee here, a little house

Spring . . .
how wee things flutter in
to green my waiting heart

~Green Mountain Falls, Colorado, USA

Law of the Journey*

on a raft we floated, nameless
inflated with notions of hope

but black skies, black waters
have dyed us all the color
of despair

~Sydney, Australia

Go Away, You White Buggers!

Barbara Curnow & Gerry Jacobson

Tasmania was occupied by Aboriginal communities continuously for at least 35,000 years, right through the ice age when half the island was glaciated. A land bridge to the mainland was drowned by rising sea levels around 10,500 years BP. From then on, the people were isolated until the British invaded and started a colony in 1803. At that time there were about 8000 Tasmanian Aboriginals, in twelve language groups.

“Parrawar, Parrawar, go away you white buggers! What business have you here?”
~Unnamed warrior, 21 February 1830

By 1831 there were two families left (in hiding), a small number of captives exiled to Flinders Island and 25,000 colonists. An exhibition at the Australian National Gallery** shows the work of colonial artists who portrayed them. Contemporary Aboriginal artists, trying to reclaim aspects of their history and culture, are also featured.

pink clouds at sunset
naked warriors dance
surrounded
by darkness
beyond the horizon¹

“Timmy,
a wild native”
hunts roo
with British dogs—
he likes this fast food²

“The system and the fury of these Black Monsters exceeds anything I have yet encountered. The house on fire and these furies dancing outside made me believe I had suddenly been transported to the infernal regions.”

~William Bryan to Magistrate Smith, 10
November 1827

“transported
to the infernal regions” . . .
a farmer
sows a crop of irony
in narrow rows³

stripped
of their nakedness
clothed
in the cloth of their captors . . .
red, white and blue

lovely lithograph
of Flinders Island
two women
with firewood in foreground—
their fire has gone out⁴

“You take it him own country, take it him
black woman, kill it right out, all him little child
—den you put him in your gaol . . . I nebber like
dat way. You better kill it right out.”

~Black Tom to Lieutenant Governor George
Arthur, 1828

sent to die
slowly on Flinders
feet stamp
camp-fires roar and hiss—
recommencing ceremony

last woman
from Southwest Tas—
Tinganoke—
ekeing out her life
in an old convict station⁵

“The adoption of any line of conduct having
for its avowed or for its secret object the
extinction of the native race, could not fail to
leave an indelible stain upon the character of the
British Government.”

~Sir George Murray (Colonial Secretary) to
Lieutenant Governor George Arthur, 1830

a survivor
in 1845
Dickensian
serious, dignified
looking back at what’s lost⁶

~*Tasmania, Australia*

Notes

** *The National Picture—The Art of Tasmania’s Black War*,
curated by Greg Lehman and Tim Bonyhady, National Gallery of
Australia, 2018. The quotations in the text are from the exhibition.

1. John Glover, *A Corroboree of Natives in Mills Plains*, 1832.
Oil on canvas. Art Gallery of South Australia,
Adelaide.

2. Benjamin Duterrau, *Timmy, a wild native taking a kangaroo,*
his dog having caught it he runs to kill it with his
waddy, 1836. Etching, printed in black ink from one
copper plate. National Library of Australia, Canberra.

3. Unknown artist, *Aboriginal Raid on Milton Farm, Great*
Swanport, Tasmania, c1832. Oil on academy board.
On loan from a private collection.

4. John Skinner Prout, *Residence of the Aborigines, Flinders*
Island, 1846. Lithograph. National Gallery of
Australia, Canberra.

5. Charles Stanley, *Natives at Oyster Cove*, 1847. Watercolour.
National Library of Australia, Canberra.

6. John Skinner Prout, *Barnaby Rudge from Cape Grim, Van*
Diemen’s Land, 1845. Drawing, black pencil and
watercolour. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

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* See Ai Weíwei’s sculptural representation of the refugee crisis here:
<https://quartzzy.qz.com/1233898/ai-weíwei-built-a-giant-inflatable-raft-crammed-with-hundreds-of-refugees/>.

*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.*

Barbara Curnow

scrubbing
acne from his face
preparing
for a day of duty
routing-out the Jews

~Australia

Barbara Curnow lives a city/country life in Canberra and in Brogo (Australia). Her writing is inspired more by people and culture in Canberra and more by nature and quietude in Brogo.

Benjamin Taylor

Sunday morning stroll
up the frosty bush trail
in serene silence

It's been almost two years since
we said our final goodbyes

~Australia

Benjamin Taylor is a poet of the Japanese forms from the Central Coast, near Sydney, Australia. He has published haiku, senryu, haibun, and tanka within several international journals.

And I Dreamed

Bette Midler

*found tanka prose curated by M. Kei**

*And I dreamed
I saw the bombers riding shotgun
in the sky,
turning into butterflies
above our nation***

VOTE, and tell your children and grandchildren
to vote.

~New York City, New York, United States

* Source: Twitter, <https://twitter.com/BetteMidler/status/1012886752393089025>.

** Italics are lyrics from Joni Mitchell's 'Woodstock'.

Multi Grammy Award-winning singer/comedienne/author Bette Midler has also proven herself to be a very capable actress in a string of both dramatic and comedic roles. Midler was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, on December 1, 1945. She is the daughter of Ruth (Schindel), a seamstress, and Fred Midler, a painter. Her parents, originally from New Jersey, were both from Jewish immigrant families (from Russia, Poland, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire). Biography excerpted from the Internet Movie Database <<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000541/bio>>.

Billy Simms

growing up
I was taught about
the "Indian Wars"
a quaint name
for a genocide

~Gainesville, Florida, USA

Sequence #2

Billy Simms & Martin McKellar

*visiting my old home
the town changed
yet familiar
old friends' embraces
like cuddling with a cat*

Cicadas live in
The summer's green and believe
The heat never changes.
I walk with old friends, careful
Not to speak of winter's chill.

*birthday surprises
and sudden thundershowers
awkwardly under a tent we chat
of nonsense, careful
not to speak of anything important*

The wild brown rabbit
Calmly nibbles tender grass.
Thunder turns the page.
I wonder why it is I
Never see two wild rabbits?

*I complain
of sand filled pockets
my wife compares it to
middle-age
and jiggle-butt*

Heat and mosquitoes.
Wet sand sticking to my gloves.
I push about my
Lush garden that grows on what
Was, eons ago, a beach.

*cool air conditioning and dust
the environment of offices
looking out the window
I wish for trees
to sprout from the carpet*

Brittle chestnut leaves,
Underfoot, asking to be crushed,
The freed memories —
Swirling brown dust blown
Into unseen space and time.

*mind drifting
to unlimited space and time
a tight hand crushed my heart
my panicked thoughts swirl
at infinity's concept.*

Drifting. Now a cloud.
Now the sun blazing brightly,
With a timid warmth.
The shifting immigrant eyes
At Parisienne street corners.

*wandering through
the Walmart
we watch each other
with othering eyes
America*

Their faces tight with scarves,
Chill pedestrians stride by,
While back and forth,
A large lady with bare arms
And grey hair, mops the sidewalk.

*grey hairs
race by
back and forth
on the bike path
they chase youth*

Six gray-haired tourists
Wander through the small village.
Two slip ripe apples
Into bags. If a youth did
This, wouldn't it be stealing?

*using work
to work
on personal things
if it's stealing
I don't care*

The course and scratchy
Colors of the weeds in fall.
Rigid. Their work done.
I stroke the mottled skin and
Purple veins of my cold hands.

*walking
staving off age
the crunch
of fall's first leaves
or is that my joints*

What logic explains
Here a faint wisp of mist,
There an opaque drift?
Or if I should stave off
The melancholy of fall?

*the season's
hottest day
is summer
as angry about autumn
as we are*

Autumn is the
Only season with substance.
Thick colors that spread
With not too much moisture and
Try their best to leave a stain

*autumn heatwave
the delight of colors
stolen
by the thief
oh global warming*

The thicket's tangled
Branches and fall-colored leaves.
Is there a clear path?
With no map, my emotions
Waiver, each day a false start.

*once a burly thicket
of auburn tangles
my smooth scalp
offers a clear path
for my comb*

The meandering path
Of a few must be made clear
And straight for the many.
But following the path of the many
Is always a mistake.

*fall grasses, heavy
with dew,
nod as I walk the dirt path.
others make it straight and wide
its goal too clear*

The fall flowers with
Their premonition of winter.
A familiar path.
I pause halfway and wonder
"Is it too late to turn back?"

*turning back
I take another look
at artwork
created from
chicken bones*

Fall leaves drift on the
Dark surface of the canal.
I drink in the view,
Then jump into the rush that
Pulses through the city above.

*drifting down
the shadow-freckled street
tired
from the rush of people
I think of nothing*

From four countries, they
Listen to the guide, amidst
Mixing yellow leaves.
They bath in the view, yet they
Remain their separate selves.

*bathing
in an odd autumn heat
I fall asleep
to escape
the troubles of the world*

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

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

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

Britton Gildersleeve

hate cracks like a whip
snaking through the heavy air
snaring the ankles
of children who sang and scampered
now hobbled captive silent

in their wire cages
they dream of empty boxes
seeking warmth safety
cardboard walls that once held gifts
like hands that once held their own

their dreams hollow too
hold what empty boxes do
silence nightmares hope
echoes of unspoken words
the bleeding welts of hate's whip

~United States

Britton Gildersleeve is the author of three poetry chapbooks ~ The Privilege of Breath, Trading with Devils, and A Murmuration of Bees. For 12 years she was the director of Oklahoma State University's OSU Writing Project, where she also taught writing. Her creative non-fiction and poetry have appeared in Nimrod, New Millennium, Atlas Poetica, Soft Cartel, Futures Trading, and other journals. Gildersleeve blogs at <https://teaandbreath.com>, and <https://nimrodjournal.blog>. At one time she was the token Buddhist Unitarian blogger for a national website. She still hears the voices that made her do it.

Mountain Movers

Bruce England

Mountain Movers
hires large, muscular men,
all clad in black,
a team arrives in a truck
and removes all your stuff

She once clearly said
she didn't like the way
I was getting old
I knew what that meant
I called Mountain Movers

~San Jose, California, USA

Revelation 3:20

Bruce England

The Bible reference, Revelation 3:20, is printed on wrappers for burgers sold at In-N-Out Burger restaurants.

Behold
I stand at the door and knock
if anyone hears my voice
and opens the door
I will come in and eat burgers
with him and he with me

~Santa Clara, California, USA

Bruce England

I brought a tanka
to a gun fight
hiding in a break room
waiting for an active shooter
to take himself out

The sky is blue
the sun rises in the morning
these are facts
like the White House
was built by slaves

I hold the things
of my life
in my hands
in the white gloves
of an archivist

1984
had hidden microphones
now on our tables
in our homes, sits Alexa
they say they're not listening

Americans love guns,
the great equalizers,
better than fists and knives,
small men know full well
they can take out big men

You might ask
early on, what the fuck is this?
but as time goes by
it might be better to ask
what the fuck was this?

~*Santa Clara, California, USA*

Sedoka Sequence

Bruce England

Darkmotherscreaming
body-fear before languages
a bowel-emptying fear
a blade-readiness
for the second primal-fear:
your group-self will disappear

The Tutsi-Hutu
genocide in Rwanda
clubs, machetes, and guns
ancient-modern modes
for gut-dark, tribal strife
all darkmotherscreaming

Bio-life withers
oceans rise, deserts spread
heat-driven extreme weather
now the pale-tribes fear
mass trans-border migrations
it's all darkmotherscreaming

First line taken from poem by Andrei Voznesensky.

Envoy

Would it be so bad?
once there was such a world
it could happen again
an earth full of life
a blue-white, eating ball
devoid of human presence

~*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. As he once wrote: You worked hard / all your life / on your résumé / now what would someone / say for your eulogy? (Bright Stars: An Organic Tanka Anthology, Volume 5. 2014.)

A Breath Away

Carol Raisfeld

Allen is 14 when the Germans occupy the town of Ivie in the summer of 1941, and forces his family into a ghetto. When they ask his father what he does for a living, he lies and tells them he is a brush-maker—he figures there will be more use for a tradesman. The Germans spare Allen from an initial massacre of the men and, along with 200 other young people, deport him to a labor camp. The tragic separation from his family actually saves his life.

a sudden storm
of lightning and thunder
flying in fear
not seeing its parents again
a sparrow falls from the nest

The labor camp is located in a railroad yard—the boys sleep in boxcars. Food rations are meager and their futures uncertain. Having heard about partisan groups living in the nearby forests, twenty-five of the youngsters decide to risk escape and join them.

Systematically stealing rifles from the Germans ensures the group gets fed along the way. Finally reaching the forest, they encounter the Bielski Brigade, led by four brothers, which has about 200 partisans. Arriving with rifles, the brothers quickly accept the newcomers. With bullets flying past and German planes dropping bombs, the group makes their escape through a swamp. Allen hears the bullets—‘tsch, tsch’ falling in the water right beside him and he is not afraid.

in a canopy
of shadows and light
overlapping
stand still, watch the trees
you’ll inhale life and death

After the war’s end, Allen manages to leave Poland with his older brother and Sophia—a partisan from another detachment who would one day be his wife. They eventually make it to a displaced persons’ camp where Allen meets a boyhood friend, Solomon, from Ivie. It would be 67 years before they see one another again.

across the room
voices trembling with joy
called out
“hello again my friend
remember when . . .”

~*Ivie, a small town 73 miles west of Minsk, Poland

My grandmother Bianca came from Minsk, and married Solomon. So many stories passed on at their dinner table in the Bronx, New York.

Early Spring

Carol Raisfeld

Her mother was quite ill after the last hospital stay, her father a memory. When the eviction notice came Rory was sent to live with her aunt.

on the subway
crowded with commuters
sitting close
a man exposed himself
saying, “just watch”

Skipping days from high school, she says she spends a lot of time exploring the city—maybe getting a job after graduation.

late afternoon
not far from the carousel
cherries in bloom
a young girl in the park
sells herself

~across the bridge in Brooklyn, New York, USA

Sunday

Carol Raisfeld

I grew up in an Irish-Catholic neighborhood,
where signs on apartment buildings read—

“No Jews No Dogs”

My friend went to parochial school and in
the afternoons we would meet at my public
school playground. It was exciting the first time I
went to church with her. The stained glass was
beautiful, the organ music soft. I will never forget
Father White asking me to join the congregation
and would I like to go to confession, he would
show me what to do.

Saying goodbye, he shook my hand and held
it far too long. I saw his eyes and they scared me.
I began to recognize then, the eyes of a predator.
I was 13.

each night
inside the darkness
nightmares—
meeting his demons
in hell

~*Jackson Heights, Queens, New York, USA*

Carol Raisfeld

a drink, then rape
took more than innocence
altering her life
ghosts enter without knocking
forever present in this soul

a male hand reaching
into the woman's blouse
stick figures
in the psychiatrist's office
help with the nightmares

assaulted
by her husband, no memory
of the night . . .
her cheek purple, her eyes glazed
a sky stares back, bleak and old

the earth scented
with everyone's past
is never done
those that leave find new souls
beyond this muddied, sullen, abyss

finally telling
she lived with fear, horror
and violence—
her eye swollen, afraid to leave
holding on we cried together

first job
she could not shower
him away
almost home on the bus
her dress smells of him

“mama, mama”
she cried without words
closing her eyes
still seeing the man
that touched her

she shows
the nurse new bruises
wondering
how to explain to the kids
he won't ever go to jail

~*Atlantic Beach, New York, USA*

Carol Raisfeld lives in Atlantic Beach, a barrier island close to New York City. Her hobbies include sailing, chess, sculpting, painting and boxing. She holds US and foreign design patents in interactive soft toy design. Her poetry, art and photography appear worldwide in print, online journals and anthologies.

*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.*

Chen-ou Liu

on this sultry night
our first class reunion:
my foamless beer
and his theory
of a happy marriage

all the bitterness
locked inside her heart . . .
the clicking
of grandma's needles
late into the night

~Taipei, Taiwan

acting white
like Miami heat
on the skin . . .
his blonde girlfriend
and he in shades of shadow

~Miami, Florida, USA

she replies
in a flat tone
don't worry, I'm fine . . .
her arms dotted with scabs
fresh, half-healed and old

a dung beetle
lies on its back
with its feet
toward the starless sky
this hopeless life, and yet . . .

my muse
a blood python
coils around me
a love poem ready
to spill itself out

~Ajax, Ontario, Canada

Charles Harmon

dreamcatcher
don't think too much
about ancestors
who got caught
in the nightmare

~ongoing in many places

Hutu and Tutsi
same race, same place
refugee friend Jean
protected his brother
slashed by machetes

~Rwanda, 1994

Red Cross volunteer
worked relief in Darfur
genocide haunts me
tried to save the living dead
sights I can't unsee, '03

still can't understand
why Jewish friends
drive German cars
made by hands
that built crematoria

~here, there, and everywhere

raped by pirates
May didn't talk all year
until the last day
"thanks for teaching me"
survivor of boat people

~Viet Nam, 1979

Mao murdered millions
"there's a lot of Chinese"
his excuse
party is everything
individual is nothing

~China, PRC, 1949–1976

Saddam Hussein
gassed his own people
after denying
that they were his people
Kurdish genocide

~Iraq, 1986–89

Chinese restaurant
two Cambodian women
survived hell on earth
now smiling and happy
religious converts

~Cambodia, Khmer Rouge Killing Fields, 1975–79

wish I could have fought
with Lord Byron against the
Ottoman Empire
when they murdered the cradle
of our civilization

~Greece, 1821–32, 1914–23

rape is genocide
winnowing the offspring
from the original
enslaving the mother
to raise the rapist's child

~Croatia, 1941–1945

Ronaldo
always my fastest runner
trying to outrun
his Guatemalan past
Mayan genocide

~Guatemala, 1965–

parlayed with *soldats*
Légion étrangère française
strangers on a train
described how they dealt with
“*les petits nègres en Afrique . . .*”

~Marseille to Avignon, 1979, various

first
they burned the books
then
they burned the people
who wrote the books

~Qin Empire, China, 213 BCE, *en suivant*

decapitation
of intelligentsia
Katyn massacre
“gotta keep them damn Polacks
in their place, Tovarish”

~Poland, 1940, by NKVD

AmerIndian
All-American athlete
Purple Heart war vet
Dad fought racism here and there
cried reading *Trail of Tears*

~Texas, California, Pacific Theater, WW2

Chinese babies
tossed in the air for
bayonet practice
ten million murdered
Rape of Nanjing

~China, 1937–43, by Japan

they came for the Jews
Catholics, Gypsies, reds, gays
the handicapped
remaining silent I did nothing
then they came for me

haunted by gang rape
racist jocks called her “Injun!”
drove her tortured life
little sister chose to end it
finally left us last year

imagine Einstein
had he stayed in Berlin
with his Nobel Prize
beaten to a pulp at Uni
shipped off to Auschwitz

gang initiation
my student shot seven times
survived the drive-by
five-year-old little brother
died in emergency

eating their own
the Revolution consumed
Robespierre, Marat
millions felt *la guillotine*
égalité avant la mort

ruling the Russians
one Mongol left in charge
of village or town
when armies returned in Spring
reckoning of life or death

~United States

Ukraine

Charles Harmon

Holodomor
my Ukrainian students
Tanya and Lena
told of their grandparents
when Stalin starved millions

good people died first
refused to steal or whore
gave food to others
refused to cannibalize
or murder, good died first

black soil breadbasket
of the Soviet Union
extermination
for resisting
collectivization

~Ukraine

Charles Harmon, science teacher, lives and works in Los Angeles, California, USA, and enjoys cooking for his wife and three children. Charles has spent more than five years overseas in over sixty countries traveling, traveling . . .

Dave Read

recycling a line
from an old poem —
a seagull
pecks
at trash

evergreen
until they hit the ground
these brown
pine needles
on which the homeless sleep

reading
Sanford Goldstein
on my phone
an old text message
five lines down

finally
becoming one
with nature . . .
my Aunt's ashes
drift with the wind

as the sun
starts to set
grandma
crushes
her last cigarette

walking beside
a fence I used
to climb
thirty years
and sixty pounds ago

yesterday's rabbit
buried in snow —
the sound
of traffic and
merciless crows

grass still
matted from the weight
of snow—
I'm slow in starting
these springtime chores

resting
on the hillside
grass
a silence
wide as sky

as the children
slowly fall asleep
I read
by the dimmest
setting on my phone

pulling on
a long sleeved shirt
he covers
the tattoos
of someone he once knew

sadness
fills the pastor's eyes—
the promise
of the afterlife
trembling on his lips

~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, Presence, Modern Haiku and Acorn), and anthologies (including old song: The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku, 2017).

Dean A. Brink

Dean A. Brink, Japanese-English Translator

偶々にふりあいの時の疑ひて姿の蔭を海に
置かまし

I doubt myself when
I seem to see you again
from time to time
in waves rolling onto a crowded beach
if only shadows lost on the seafloor

~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). His poetry has appeared in journals including Atlas Poetica, Exquisite Corpse, Going Down Swinging, Cordite Poetry Review, New Writing, Nimrod, and Portland Review (online). Recent publications include, Japanese Poetry and Its Publics: From Colonial Taiwan to Fukushima (2018).

cold cases

Debbie Strange

we avoid
the place in which
they found you
but our thoughts
often take us there

we do not
want to think of you
in this way
but we remember
because we must

~Manitoba, Canada

In memory of cousins D and J, murdered five decades apart.

Debbie Strange (Winnipeg, Manitoba) is a Canadian short form poet, photographer and haiga artist. She is the author of Warp and Weft: Tanka Threads (Keibooks 2015) and its sequel, Three-Part Harmony: Tanka Verses (Keibooks 2018). Please visit her at <http://www.debbiemstrange.blogspot.ca>.

Southern Barns

Elizabeth Howard

friends have built a new house,
boast of a mantel
made of barnwood—
I run fingers over
the weathered wood

think of the farmer
who loved this barn,
nursed livestock in the stalls,
stored hay in the loft
where kittens nest

he knelt nearby,
praying the weather—
storms, droughts, blizzards—
wept over his champion boar,
stricken with cholera

on the homeplace,
the gray barn squats desolate,
rusty tin roof flapping,
gaping holes in stalls,
the double doors drooping

no calves and pigs,
only pigeons nesting in the loft,
a groundhog in the corn crib,
a dingy dog
dozing under a junked car

the red barn across the hollow
is frosted with snow—
doves fly through the hay window,
a calico cat prowls the stalls,
an old donkey dozes on the south side

southern barns are laced with vine
my favorite has trumpet vine
reaching into the hayloft,
its red blossoms inviting
ruby-throated hummingbirds

again, I rub the barnwood,
lovely old gray wood,
but it lacks the dove nest
grandfather showed me
and dirt daubers in the rafters

~*Tennessee, USA*

Elizabeth Moura

father said
a survivor
crumbled
to dust
in his arms

silence follows
after the battle
the mother
can't wake
her perfect child

~*World War II*

underneath
brilliant green
a million souls
composing
their verses

how can
the trees
not wither
considering
what they've seen

~*World War I*

Elizabeth Moura lives in a converted factory in a small city and works with elders in a small town. She has had poetry, flash fiction or photographs published in The Heron's Nest, Chrysanthemum, Atlas Poetica, Presence, Shamrock, Flash, Paragraph Planet, Flash Fiction Magazine, O:JA&L, and Occulum.

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.

Erin Kubota

The languid bubble
Ceases, so suddenly, breaks
Absentmindedly
The empty heart in myself
Gazed into eternity

~Tokyo, Japan

シャボン玉
散っては消える
ぼんやりと
永遠を眺める
虚しき心

Wailing infant child
Stolen from its mother's grasp
Kept in a wire cage
Only to be neglected
Humanity forgotten

~Los Angeles, California, USA

A multi-racial American who grew up in Tokyo, Erin Kubota endeavours to create bridges between the two cultures through her writing. Kubota's appreciation for subtlety led her to study Shodo, the ancient art of Japanese calligraphy. She currently lives in Los Angeles, CA, USA.

Frances Black lives in Sydney and was inspired to write on this theme as she finds herself ensconced in a family navigating senseless dysfunction.

Frances Black

Human history is the same story told a thousand ways. Violence wrapped in different persons delivered with individual embellishment.

the twists and turns
of the human saga
ensures survival
through cruelty
of infinite variation

Dictators and tyrants exhibit two faces—
ruthless actions where cruelty on a whim is the
order of the day accompanied by terror as to
how it might all end.

absolute power
a prelude to nightmare
always wondering
which smiling face
encases treachery

Our family and societal structures are sieves
allowing the seepage of human emotion.

the fire of feeling
consumes reason
allowing free-rein
to man's seemingly
insatiable nastiness

Today's Western culture arises from the ashes
of prior human civilisation. Never before have so
many people lived in relative safety confidently
expecting to die of natural causes.

Human fear does not tolerate exile. The
nanny state is born ensuring the population their
need for fear and doubt.

modernity spawns
the age of anxiety
so incongruous
to the reality
of life's security

~Sydney, Australia

Heads from the North*

Gerry Jacobson

A brown duck floats around the severed heads, perches on a water lily to preen. The bronze heads are partly hidden by reeds. The pond is peaceful, serene, a backwater of the sculpture garden. So are the mass killings partly hidden. Blotted out of memory as people recover and life goes on. Many of the heads have Chinese-like features. Are they taken from death masks?

I read the inscription. The installation remembers the 1966 genocide in Indonesia. Sixty-six heads, sculpted in bronze, set in the pond. Hundreds of thousands of lives destroyed. One was the life of the sculptor's father. He disappeared.

That was the '66 genocide. But isn't there one more or less every year, somewhere in the world? And it's been going on since we *Homo sapiens*, wiped out *Homo neanderthalis*. What's on for this coming year? Syria perhaps? Sudan? Korea? Known hot spots. Or something unexpected?

the Little Ones march
towards their train*
holding hands—
above their heads
the trooper's machine gun

~Canberra, Australia

* 1. Dadang Christanto, 2004, *Heads from the North*, bronze.
Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

2. Leo Hass, 1945, 'Children on the way to Auschwitz', drypoint and aquatint. Ben Uri Collection, London.

Efficiency

Gerry Jacobson

In the Jewish Museum this sunny Stockholm afternoon, I notice an unobtrusive exhibit: a small notebook with handwritten numbers. It is Raoul Wallenberg's telephone book, from Budapest, 1944.

165-569?
this is Wallenberg
Swedish legation . . .
please could I speak
to Colonel Eichmann

I enter the darkness of the special exhibition: 'The Auschwitz album.' Black and white photos taken by an unknown German officer, which were discovered after the war. Lively scenes. Hundreds of people in overcoats are lined up. They've just come off a train. Among them are prisoners in striped pyjamas, and well-dressed German soldiers.

in sharp focus
queuing for selection
those innocents . . .
some go right, some left
slave labour or gas chamber?

They don't know that they're going to die soon. We do. This is *Anus mundi*. It is believed that the photos were taken to show how efficient the Germans were at running an industrial death machine.

~Stockholm, Sweden

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.

Cherita

Jackie Chou

to them

I'm what they call me
not what I am

not poet, not scholar
just the little girl
in "China girl"

asking others

to do for me
what I do for them

only the city birds
reciprocate
with their gleeful songs

group photos

my clothes an ensemble
of different shades of grey

who knew the matching soul
underneath
would be captured as well

loving those

who others find
unlovable

I discover
a starlight in me
I never knew was there

listening on the bus

to child prodigies
singing My Heart Will Go on

I miss my stop
their voices
carrying me to Eden

I remember my mother

checking the door
for the umpteenth time

as I write these words
cross them out
then repeat

a charred stump

bare branches
shaped like a bird in flight

the pelican's story
waits to be told
in another still life

~California, USA

Jackie Chou is a poet residing in sunny Southern California. She sometimes gets her inspirations from common city birds and flowers. Her works have been published in Atlas Poetica, Skylark, Ribbons, the cherita journal, moonbathing, ephemerae, and others.

Jacob Kobina Ayiah Mensah

petals are blood
river surface
sighing
replaces
behind

in liberia
a footstep
divided
after
lying
awake

in a strange letter your hair is too bright for bullets and my mornings

it hums with the weird

it is enough to look

too much for both hands

too much to smell

too much to lick

a light in a naughty war

well-meaning jokes along a trap
she giggles and guffaws with old
soldiers in the bar for insignia

i keep thinking of you in dark corners / so diluted much with sunlight / my most precious possessions

your thoughts rushing by fifty at least to a word carved from genocide

Take me to coffee

and let us talk

and fall in love

for strange activities.

It is my God Felicity.

btwn our wives

a well hit

on the relationship

a final incident

bfr winter

in my celestial body

half my memory

a deadly poison

revolving in the vortex

of the seawater

~Ghana

Guernica (1936)

Jacob Kobina Ayiah Mensah

full of mothers and kids

full of shouting

full of smoke

somewhere down the block

until it is hoarse

~Ghana

Jacob Kobina Ayiah Mensah is a self-made Ojibwe, Basque, Catalan, Spanish, Gypsy, Black African and Greek descent and author of many works of poetry including [menhirs] material science, it is it, Jatton Theory, e=5, BOOM 7, 2BQ, California Tune & St Petersburg Yellow Breeze, and works of abstract mathematics including Arthur Algebras, Haiku Algebra, c-Algebra, G-Functions, Norton Group, Epic Ring, etc. Ayiah Mensah is a vegetarian and he has practiced mathematics, poetry and art his entire life. His poetry is published on the blogs, including Ekusen Journals, Goal Stream Review and Kukubenkuka, A Bar of Tanka Food, and has also been accepted and appeared in literary journals and anthologies, including Cordite Poetry Review, Haiku Scotland, Atlas Poetica, Modern English Tanka, Paper Wasp, Ginyu, Asahi Shimbun, Presence, Eucalypt, Ambrosia, Shamrock, Moonset, Frogpond, World Haiku Review, South by Southeast, Autumn Leaves, Simply Haiku, Haiku Reality, MASKS, red lights, Heron's Nest, NOON, Modern Haiku, is/let, Acorn, Otata, Skylark, Ribbons, Hedgerow, Botsoto, New Contrast, Voices Israel, Reader Digest, World Haiku Anthologies, Sun & Snow Anthology, Haiku 21, Catzilla, Albatross Haiku, Take Five: Best Contemporary Tanka, Sketchbook: A Journal for Eastern & Western Short Forms, Bliss, Strata Magazine, The Whole Desolate Day, First People, etc. He usually composes his poetry in Fanti, Tivi (Akuapem), Tivi (Asante), Ewe, Basque, Catalan, Dutch, German, Greek, English, and Spanish, and sometimes in French, Italian, and Portuguese. He is currently editing Pkankmaton, senryu Vendor Journal, The Rough Sheet Tanka Journal, etc, and also still working as algebraist, artist, writer, mathematics tutor, and freelance journalist. His other writings are essays, criticism, fiction, plays, histories, journalism, and children and young adult books. His books of nonsense verses for children & young adults are The Lore of the Little World, Punk Drink, Aaron's Flowering Rod, Night-in-Boots, On My Hobby Horse, Ms Piddelity, and Sleepless Messenger. Ayiah Mensah lives in the southern part of Ghana.

Refuge

Jenny Ward Angyal

the flag
torn stripe from stripe
and star from star
 children ripped
from their parents' arms

flooding across
the permeable borders
of the heart
 the sound
of stones weeping

the cry
of a home-going vixen
seeking
asylum in the earth —
my heart gone to ground

awakened
by the liquid queries
of birds
I add my own —
how long will shadows lie

~United States

Jenny Ward Angyal

war of words—
purple smoke rising
at a touch
the puffball becomes
a mushroom cloud

~Planet Earth

swastikas
in the subways
of New York—
where does this train
 stop

~New York City, New York, USA

Bible Belt—
a win at the ballot box
on the strength
 of a slogan
God is a racist

~North Carolina, USA

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.

the mystery of your name

Jim Doss

what is freedom
but the will to embrace the shadow
the fortitude to stir
life's ashes into a whirlwind
and stand calmly in the eye

out of shadows I was born
to shadows I will return
if you gaze hard enough within
you can see me blooming
like a moonflower on your darkest nights

new moon
reflecting its darkness
over the earth
face of a mother
that smiles down upon me

what is love
but a dark monk
moving through our lives
blessing us with his incense
whispering that most sacred of names

even now
in the shadow
there's a room
where a hand beckons
do you dare step inside?

~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.

Joanna Ashwell

inch by inch
moonlight stretches
across your spine
the curve of you
encased in indium

fireflies find and
skim the darkness
of an empty porch
where a stagnant swing
waits for one last flight

a reply from you
consists of an instant frown
so when did kisses
turn to silence
and a growing distance

choosing to travel
with a substitute
on my left finger
covered by a decoy
to fool predators away

the viaduct curves
ascends to the treetops
across the river
in steam and cloud
the vapour of wings

a glow beyond
these distant walls
where moonlight shines
a strand from you
to me enfolds us

~United Kingdom

Joanna Ashwell lives in the North East of England with access to the Pennine hills and plenty of woodland. Published in Atlas Poetica, Skylark, Ribbons and others. Enjoys a good glass of wine and chocolate.

A Brief History of Torture

Jon Baldwin

The healthy man does not torture others—generally it is the tortured who turn into torturers. — Carl Jung

Waterboarding produces fear
but also produces water
it spills and darkens
your already dark suit
you might need to rethink.

Fingernails
the roots of teeth
tender liver and balls
are good targets
they work.

But you can't make out
confession amid cries
murmured tales and sniffed out lies
strange screams for mercy
are non-admissible in court.

So now your servants exhort
new methods to exhaust
and bring about anxiety
hoping sufferers speak in their sleep
under surveillance.

This is the future of torture
no marks nice and clean
convictions keenly betrayed
for half a glass of water
and glimpse out of a tiny window.

~*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.

Cycling *a ryuka sequence*

Jonathan Day

cycling the straight stretch of road
before the hill climb, I came
to a place where a stand of oaks
cast a patch of shade

the early sun shone through the trees
in that way it does in springtime
and lit up a bush with new leaves
bright against the shadows

it was a moment in the day
like a snapshot, catching things
transient, ephemeral
yet somehow infinite

and I thought, next year in this place
I might see just the same thing
the same moment of light and shade
circling, repeating
and my heart would be glad again

~*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>

Freeze the arrow in the air

Joy McCall

There were those on the Scottish isles who told the true stories of the longships and the Viking invaders; the longbows, the battle axes, the broadswords; the raping, the pillaging; the slaughter. And later Orkney Islanders, the descendants of Vikings, wrote poems and tales of that history.

it was not all
blood and thunder
broken arrows
broken bodies
the smell of death

There were times when the ships came with music and singing and gifts and the handshake of friendship. Then the poet-heralds in the bows of the ships told no tales of slaughter and death—

they sang the songs
of the great journeys
the sails, the oars
the sight of the shores
of the beautiful land

old island men
part Viking, part Scots
sit around the pub fires
drinking rough ale
retelling the tales

There was one man, a little mad, often drunk, who wrote the stories in ways that would chill the blood. His name was George Mackay Brown and when he died, his name lived on and on in those islands, and over the hills and far away.

And a young man, in Scandinavia, read the tales and sang the song of one ship that came in peace. He is a Dane, with long red hair and a great red beard, tall and strong, with a voice that would melt the northern ice.

And a thousand years and as many miles from those longships and battle axes and poet-heralds, he sings—

*freeze the arrow in the air
make your mark and leave it
hanging there
be the first to turn around
take the leap . . . to higher ground
(by the band Rasmussen)*

I heard him singing, and I wept and I thought of Sven, and the islands, and battles, and struggles, and old poems . . . and choices.

And I wished men now would learn those same lessons and bring gifts and songs instead of war.

~Oban, Scotland

wormwood and gall

Joy McCall

Facing some difficult medical choices, I turned to the Tarot and drew the card of the Tower—bodies falling from a building on fire.

That didn't help so I tried the Zen cards and the I Ching and got The Fool.

Then I did what I often do and took my father's worn old King James Bible and closed my eyes and opened it—Lamentations 3.

I debated He with a capital H but it seemed wrong to blame God for everything.

I'm sure it's not his fault my skin is old and my bones are broken. And it was an olive pit that broke my tooth, not gravel stones.

*he hath led me
and brought me
into darkness
but not into light
against me is he turned*

*my flesh
and my skin
hath he made old
he hath broken
my bones*

*he compassed me
with travail
and hath set me
in dark places
as they that be dead of old*

*he hath
hedged me about
that I cannot get out
he hath made
my chain heavy*

*he hath
enclosed my ways
with hewn stone
he hath made
my paths crooked*

*he was unto me
as a bear
lying in wait
and as a lion
in secret places*

*he hath filled me
with bitterness
he hath made me
drunken
with wormwood*

*he hath also
broken my teeth
with gravel stones
he hath covered me
with ashes*

*I said, my strength
and my hope is perished
remembering mine affliction
and my misery—
the wormwood and the gall*

there are no answers
to my questions
the taste of absinthe is bitter
my joints are stuck
with seed pearl and gall

~Norwich, England

Crashlanding

Joy McCall

in a blue-light flash
I crash
and I'm thrown
through the dark barriers
to the unknown

where loss is
a bottomless pit;
and a far
hope is a distant
flickering star

where fear
drifts round me
like phantom breath
and I run to ground
and hide, beneath . . .

the dark rainclouds
that circle the sun
and sleep; and wake
at the rainbow's end
with no limits to joy.

~Norwich, England

Even newly awakened from coma, Joy McCall wrote poetry before facing reality.

On Barton Fell

Joy McCall

The motorbikes were parked way down the hill, in the little Cumbrian village.

We climbed the long rough track, where Romans once drove their carts, up towards the mountains.

It was a desolate place in the winter, and we saw no other travellers there.

We planned to go further but stopped as the snowfall grew heavy, and took night shelter in a Neolithic cave.

steady all day and night
the snow had been falling
the supper-fire went out
it was dark and cold
in the shallow cave

The hill ponies, small and black, were restless. They stirred, standing under the sparse hawthorns, waiting for the sunrise.

Once a pony had fallen down into an ancient fire-pit and died there, and some long-ago people had laid it out, all straight.

When we came there, the body was bones, disturbed a little by something digging, perhaps a fox.

we thought to cover the body
and say some prayers
but then, the wind
and the winter snows
were sacrament enough

The nearby Cockpit stone circle sits half-buried in earth, the capstone aligned with a distant hill where beacons once flared to show the way.

The Roman cart track leads past the ruins of the Neolithic settlement, away into the hills, and disappears in fallen rocks.

It is a strange, unearthly kind of place. I sensed the spirits of those ancient people, still dwelling there among the rocks and stones.

we slept awhile,
and did I dream
the ancient guttural voices:
“what people are these,
so thin, their skin so pale?”

~Moor Divock, Barton Fell, Cumbria, UK

string

Joy McCall

I've been musing on why I don't like the word 'sequence'. There's no particular reason except that it seems like a cold word, and it makes me think of Monty Python and their dislike of 'tinny words' and their love of 'woody words'. I can understand why Sanford Goldstein tried to bring in the word 'string' to mean a kind of set of tanka. I think the word works fine for all kinds of sets of tanka.

Maybe I just like the word string! It says so much about holding things together, about creating and about strength. The word comes from the old German/old English for 'strong'.

rough jute
parcel string
garden twine
linen thread
yarn and cord

There are so many things you can do with string, besides the linking of poems —

tying broken things
knitting, weaving
wrapping
patching old clothes
mending fishing nets

nature knows
how to string
morning glory
twining around
the trunks of trees

english ivy
runner beans
asparagus
celery stalks
pea pods

It even comes into love—"I'll string along with you," and the strings and ropes of sailboats and tennis racquets; and more than anything, the music—

the bow, the strings
cellos and violins
banjos and guitars
mandolins, bass and harp
the fiddle, the lute

the piano strings
in the great concert hall
and on the cliffs
the harp of Aeolus
the god of the sea winds

When I'm weary, I string beads, making necklaces and malas. Counting always comes into it.

Which brings me back to . . . tanka, syllables and lines and phrases and words.

That small song, stringing words and visions.

~Norwich, England

Graves

Joy McCall

In the faded old photograph, taken the year I was born, my father in his long white Royal Air Force Chaplain's robes stands praying in a field in Burma.

There's a crowd of villagers in rough clothes gathered at the edge of the field.

Around my father, Indian soldiers stand to attention in simple khaki uniforms with pale belts.

The soldiers have spent much of the hot day digging shallow graves for their fallen comrades, one grave after another, until the field is full of graves.

My English father begins to pray the formal prayer to his God for the peace of the souls of the dead—

*Oh God
whose mercies
cannot be numbered
accept these prayers
for these thy servants . . .*

Many of the soldiers do not understand his words or his strange faith.

They bow their heads and pray their own prayers to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, and others of their gods—

*his body is gone
may his soul find its way
to his true nature
moving ever closer
to the One God . . .*

When the war ends, my father comes home, bringing the photograph, his heart heavy with death.

I am a small girl
lying in my bed
listening
as my father weeps
below the stairs

how can I sleep
when I hear too
the guns, the cries?
in my dreams
I see dead bodies

Even when he was old and dying, my father
kept the photograph with him.

He spoke often of the war and the sounds of
death and his own inner battle to hold onto his
faith.

It was never easy, he said, but he did it. It was
his calling.

He said that not everyone is lucky enough to
have a life filled with meaning and purpose, as he
did.

if I was in a field
full of the war dead
my faith would fly
with all that breath . . .
gone with the wind

~Norwich, England

Zelda

Joy McCall

A big white pigeon is haunting my garden.
It is a cruel bird and drives the other birds away.
Even the normally fierce magpies fear it.

the pigeon
struts, head high
silent
its feathers pure white
its heart all black

other birds flee
when it lands
the garden
goes quiet
nothing stirs

even the trees
seem to be afraid
the leaves are still
the grass does not move
there's not a breath of wind

I think of the legends, of the wood pigeon in the
Cold Mountains . . .

it sank
into the deep snow
its grey feathers
turning to white
and rose with the dawn

the white bird
is the messenger
of the gods
from shrines and funeral pyres
over the hills and far away

a piano
begins to play
in my head
slow, soft, I sing
the song of the wind

the bird looks up
and takes flight
over the trees . . .
the small brown birds
pick at the moss seeds

Of course I have named it Zelda.

~Norwich, England

On Armistice Day 2018

Joy McCall

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row . . .*

—Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae, 1915

beside my river
rows of paper poppies
red as blood . . .
when the night rains come
they too will fade, and fall

~Norwich, England

*Joy McCall was born in Norwich towards the end of World War
Two. All she remembers of it is the sound of the air raid sirens, and the
sad serious face of her father when he came home.*

dark, light, shade

Joy McCall

The hot summer air is heavy with the smell
of slurry. The harvests are done and now the
farmers spread pig shit to feed the ground for
next year's crops.

my heart aches
the pig fields are empty
the abattoir
fills with the sounds
of slaughter

School is out and the families head for the
coast. Children build sandcastles and swim and
eat ice cream. A whale lies dead on a local beach.
It has swallowed dozens of bits of plastic.

plastic washes up
on every shore
the tides bring
man's waste
back to haunt us

Wildfires are blazing all over Europe,
Scandinavia, Canada, all over the world. Even
some small Norfolk cornfields are on fire.

the English streams
and ponds are dry
dead fish
litter the riverbeds
the land is parched

I weep all night. It does no good.

on the telephone wire
above the factory
a greenfinch is singing
its wheezy
one-note summer song

~Norfolk, England

Ace

Kath Abela Wilson

It was on a simple community golf course, we had begun to know one another better. A small group of women whose husbands were good golfers. We'd formed our own group, knowing the rules, enjoying the company of other beginners. One day two of us struck out alone, talking our way through whiffs and low balls off the tee. We began to tell our stories. She was patient and persistent, and I liked playing our nine holes together. She was reminiscing. She told me how hard her childhood was, that one day she had to hide in the woods with her sister and brother and that day extended to day after day. Dangerous times. Something very scary was happening. She did not know where her parents were. And after a few days, from her hiding place she saw it happen. The small church in her village was in flames. No one escaped, she said. Tears came to her eyes. It was her turn at the tee on a par three.

with a relaxed swing
she called out
viva la Yugoslavia
her first
hole in one

~*Santa Barbara, California, USA*

Traveling North

Kath Abela Wilson

Summerland
it's misting all day
the old sign we love
says Zoo next left
and we're ready for it

perfect day for driving he says
unless you're one of those
nature people
who likes sunny trees—
mystified . . .

roadside
lone palm tree
lightly rooted
its past trimmed down
so vulnerable

weeping willows
on either side
some years some trees
don't forget their past at all
drought-strewn hills

the grey sea
and yellow ice plants
not yet open
2 pm and I have to make
all the colors myself

~*Pasadena to Santa Barbara, California, USA, May, 2018*

Her Work

Kath Abela Wilson

*always wake up
dancing she said
mother's snake arms
the gracefulness I learned
from her eyelash flutters*

~Staten Island, New York, USA, 1951

she woke in the night
and rearranged things
to her liking
the soft sounds of mother
putting the world in order

~Santa Barbara, California, USA, 2011

Come True

Kath Abela Wilson

Why did she leave her boots on, when the snow melted her dream, the trudging over. She left the rose orchid in her hair all night. If anyone had found her, they would have questioned her motives.

her fantasy
had a thin veil
and she was alone
in her sleep
where he found her

~Pasadena, California, USA

Inspired by a painting by Robert Stewart.

cherita

Kath Abela Wilson

at her favorite cat hotel

my older feline like a youngster
taps the window

her wild young lover
shows up again
paw to glass

~Tokyo, Japan

feeding raw eggs to raccoons

the youngest sits firmly
will it break or hatch

the oldest
climbs calmly into our planter
cracks it over the herbs

~Santa Barbara, California, USA

*Kath Abela Wilson wrote and published *The Owl Still Asking, Tanka for Troubled Times*, Moria Press, *Locofo Chaps*, 2017. It was her way of dealing with the onset of a threatening time in history. A tanka a day in protest, felt like it could help. Her feeling for community is strong, as she leads poetry groups with shared inspiration, in Pasadena, California. She recently traveled to Portugal, where on the far shore of the Atlantic she performed with her husband Rick, playing Persian and Arabic neys, a program she created called "A Quest for Peace" in the Animusic Congress, 2018.*

Getting Dark

Keitha Keyes

the doctor
gives me a book to read
“Early Breast Cancer”
and asks
if I have any questions

more tests
counting down
to surgery
how I hate
this body I’m in

what face
should I put on
for others
now I have
this diagnosis

the pity
I see in the eyes
of friends
when I tell them
makes me more afraid

my life
in the hands
of strangers . . .
someone
flips a coin

~*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.

These poems have grown from living and traveling in New York, Kyoto, Panama, and eastern Long Island. Surfer, gardener, perpetual student of the Japanese language, Leonard Green is approaching 70 and learning to live with the challenging beauty of aging.

Belgium 1915

Keitha Keyes

on the signal
soldiers go over the top
of the trenches
forced to kill or be killed
each step could be their last

shell holes
filled with water —
men sink
into the mire
of pointless combat

~*Belgium*

Leonard Green

Having shoveled the path
I sleep deeply.
I dream of deer
crossing a winter field,
tracks filling with snow.

When I am
lifted by air,
ash rising on wind,
will I miss
this spring light?

~*Eastern Long Island, New York, USA*

Uptown for another test—
the Park’s azaleas
have fallen,
summer clouds rising
over Manhattan.

Light through the hospital window,
enough: kindness flowers
along a stony path.
cheerfully you come to me
with my morning meds.

~Manhattan hospital bed, New York, USA

How old we've grown.
Let me hold you here, asleep
still in the first near light
of this brief and rainy dawn
in autumn.

We will go, you and I,
into the rain
and soil where leaves
have fallen
and do there the dark, silent work of love.

~Kyoto, Japan

Washing your bowl
I grow fond
of this summer dusk,
the two of us, old,
in the near dark.

Infirm, fatigued
I listen to my neighbor's sax
climbing night's passages.
exhausted passenger,
I climb along.

~New York City, New York, USA

We surfed this rocky beach
still young. Here, now,
I find a stone
and press it to my chest; then,
I've no idea what to do.

~Montauk, New York, USA

Rain After Drought

Lorne Henry

searching in vain
for water in my garden
a black cockatoo
called away by its parents
rain please we need you

strung
across the roadway
moorhens
after months dry
it showered last night

frog calls
from the paddocks
after a long dry spell
on first hearing
I thought they were birds

heavy rain
with buffeting winds
a carolling
of butcher birds
from the sheltered west

violent wind
the sound of low flying
small aircraft
above the roof
hope he makes it

in heavy rain
I see three great egrets
flying through gusts
I move to watch them
and drop the phone

~New South Wales, Australia

Lorne Henry lives in countryside of New South Wales, Australia, but she has many memories of other parts of the world that sometimes surface. She has been writing haiku since 1992 and was introduced to tanka in 2005. She also writes Haibun and Tanka Prose.

Johnny, I Hardly Knew Ye

M. Kei

It was easier to believe in the glory of war when soldiers wore uniforms like peacocks, their brass and braid shining brightly in the sun. How their plumes waved! Their horses' heads nodded as they clip-clopped along in parade, as if they, too, agreed with the nobility of it all.

how she cried
when he came home
from the recruiter,
strutting like a king
bestride his world

The true price of war is not in the bodies fallen in their gore, but in those left behind. The weeping women and lonely children. The friends separated forever. No more jests, no more future.

the stone
wears his name,
but it isn't him
even though
the dates match

The groundskeeper comes round once a week. Think of that, young men, when you go off to war. Your most frequent companion will be the immigrant who never knew you, but tends your grave for minimum wage.

~Chesapeake Bay, USA

All These Deaths Are Choices

M. Kei

children in Russia
called home before
they burned to death,
trapped, choking, dying,
"Tell Mom I love her"

and that boy,
eleven years old,
leaped
from a fourth-floor window
broken on the ground, but alive

the security cameras
impassively watched
men trapped
in a locked stairwell
frantically trying to escape

every animal
in the petting zoo
perished,
but their lives are not counted
among those lost

not the first fire
to claim so many lives
in Russia,
just one of many,
so many dying in the smoke

in America,
we prefer our children
to be shot to death;
in Russia, they would rather
they be trapped in fires

all these deaths
are choices
all these deaths
are made by adults
who decide to do nothing

~Chesapeake Bay, USA

M. Kei

that winter
we were surprised
when we died,
as mortal men
generally are

the bulldozer
overran my family's graves
so that white people
could build a
shopping center

French baritones
singing an elegy
in a language
I can barely follow
but the loss is clear enough

hand drawing North America
on a whiteboard
because my classroom
has no map or globe,
but Trump wants to give me a gun

America
the land where we
sacrifice our children
on the altar of
the Second Amendment

his face as red
as his MAGA hat,
the man who
doesn't believe in
global warming

when people we know
become ghosts
and our dreams
have drifted out to sea
in pale white January

at the bottom
of the canal,
toy soldiers
tossed by children
weary of war

my heart,
striking midnight,
began to toll,
each peal of pain
an echo of darkness

~Chesapeake Bay, USA

M. Kei is a poet of the Chesapeake Bay, a tall ship sailor, Quaker, gay, father, grandfather, and teacher. Or he used to be. Now his principle occupation is resisting American Fascism any way he can. He is the editor of Atlas Poetica: A Journal of World Tanka, and the author of January, A Tanka Diary. He recently edited Stacking Stones, An Anthology of Short Tanka Sequences (Keibooks, 2018).

Marianne Paul

children taken
from their mothers
at the border—
the claim that internment
is a summer camp

confused
by the scornful tone
to their words—
a little girl in braids
they call me *squaw*

~Canada

*Marianne Paul:
here i am! <www.mariannepaul.com>
The Literary Kayak <www.literarykayak.com>
"To live poetry is better than to write it."—Basho*

Trouwerner: 1803–2018

Marietta McGregor

6,000 granted
equal protection . . .
fine numbers!
but milord, reconsider:
our sheep need land

a proclamation
from the Protector
ripples spreading
under lake ice
elusive shadows

I remember visiting the Hobart Museum as a child, a fourth-generation post-colonial Tasmanian. As far as I knew, there were no Tasmanian Aboriginal people left anywhere. Little was taught about them at school, and what history we were told was a whitewash. Our family tended to shy away from too much talk of history — after all, we’d descended from convicts ourselves, lowlifes from British prison hulks, a fact never mentioned by some of my relatives. Nor did people speak of another violent and tragic history, or wonder what became of the Tasmanian Nuenonne woman, Truganini (Trugernanner), who died in the infamous Female Factory at Cascades 70 years before I was born. Certainly no one said the word ‘extermination.’ The collective memory drew a blank.

dockside scum
in leg-irons from Blighty
transported for life
in the Queen’s fair name
a murder of crows

these dark days
an island hot
with musket fire
a dozen down for a dram
or three of rotgut grog

Cushioned as I was by my ignorance of past deeds, to me the Tasmanian Museum seemed full of wonders. One gallery I particularly loved held a life-sized diorama installed in 1931 of a near-naked Aboriginal family, man, woman and child, cooking over a fire against a stylised and imaginary Arcadian backdrop of Mount Wellington, in the ‘wild nature’ spirit of the Carl Akeley taxidermy dioramas in the American Museum of Natural History. The father’s heavily-daubed ochre dreadlocks were exotic, a glimpse of somewhere different, not my familiar suburban place of birth and growing up. What I didn’t understand as a kid was that this artfully-posed nuclear family group was the whitefeller’s view of what was regarded as a primitive, impoverished culture rightly consigned to history. The tableau was a response to a perceived lack—the ‘nonexistence’ or ‘non-survival’ of ‘full-blood’ Tasmanians.

possum-skin cloak
as a wrap for her infant
in night blackness
driven by a southerly gale
the stink of soldiers’ oaths

mallee-root fire
the last black embers
at its heart
the shape of a mother
rocking her lifeless child

Two years after Truganini died in 1876, her fears that her burial would be desecrated were sadly proved correct. Learned men from the Royal Society of Tasmania robbed her grave at Cascades, and dug up her body like a medical curio to be added to the infamous Crowther Collection of Aboriginal skeletons. Against her explicit death-bed wish, Truganini became a museum piece. Her skull went on display at the Tasmanian Museum in 1903 as “The Last Tasmanian”, along with her maireener shell necklaces and a death mask. Not all of her was even in her birth island. Some hair and skin lay in London, in the drawers and cupboards of the Royal College of Surgeons, along with other

human remains pilfered and desecrated in the name of knowledge.

white egret plumes
for the captain's lady
two British pounds
for one black infant
kidnapped alive

Queen's Orphan Asylum
this night-time keening
only a wind change
stirring a crow that mourns
in the winter windbreak

By the time I was old enough to visit, Truganini's skull was packed away in the museum's stores—that happened in 1947 after many petitions. Her sorrowing ghost still wandered the dim corridors. In one gallery, there stood a head-and-shoulders bronze bust of her, eyes cast down, beside another of her husband Woureddy, sculpted in 1836 by English artist Benjamin Law. To me Truganini looked serious and sad, but I was too young to be told about the horrors inflicted on the original Tasmanians. I had not yet heard of genocide. We were taught in school about Governor Arthur, who was lauded as a founding father of Tasmania.

Arthur's war
a new colony protects
its faithful servants
Woorady's people
dying at its margins

a chestful of medals
for his new campaign
ridding the island
at the Governor's pleasure
bones picked clean

In 1976, Tasmania's first people reclaimed Truganini's remains from Hobart and London, had her cremated at Hobart's Cornelian Bay cemetery and scattered her ashes in d'Entrecasteaux Channel. This commitment to

the waters near her birth island took place seven days before the centenary of her death.

nunenonne woman
her maireener necklet
locked behind glass
a bronze without hands
enfolding ghost children

exiled in body
on Wybalenna
no longer useful
her fraying kelp basket
carries its last water

After years of putting up 'talking points' or 'dilemma labels' next to its exhibits of original Tasmanians about the problematic whats and whys of representation, the Tasmanian Museum finally dismantled its older indigenous exhibits, including the diorama, in the late 20th century. The Aboriginal people of Tasmania still seek to prove they are original and genocide was committed against them, over a century after Truganini's death. While some attempt at correcting history has been made, the portrait bust of Truganini continues to ignite anger, because it symbolises the myth-making that she was the last of her kind.

tendrils of smoke
left-behind campfires
kicked apart
on a family's flight
a boobook spooks

sorry place . . .
in the bluff's shadow
the cup of a cranium
its bullet-hole
leaking tears

There were protests when two of the few remaining original 1836 busts of Truganini and Woureddy in private hands went up for auction by Sotheby's in 2009. The busts were expected to fetch a record price for sculpture in Australia of \$A500,000 to \$A700,000. The works were

withdrawn just hours before the auction. Senior members of the Aboriginal community said Truganini's legacy had been defiled by the insistence she was the last Tasmanian. There is an aphorism attributed to Lenin, "a lie told often enough becomes the truth."

mutton-fish shells
the cracked dreaming
where old ones sang
in this cave mouth
the south wind weeps

colonial wars
a history book's
blank pages
white as wood ash
scoured by frost

~*Tasmania, Australia*

Notes:

Trouwerner = the Aboriginal name for Van Diemen's Land, now Tasmania, the southernmost State of Australia. The island had been inhabited for at least 2,000 generations.

Van Diemen's Land = the name first used by Europeans for Trouwerner, which was considered to be 'terra nullius' and seized by Britain as a British Crown Colony and penal settlement.

Nuenonne = the Tasmanian Aboriginal name for Bruny Island.

Truganini (Trugernanner) = Nuenonne woman born on Bruny Island, exiled to Wybalenna, died in Hobart in 1876. The last surviving member of the exiled group, incorrectly believed to be the last original Tasmanian.

Woorady = or Woureddy (d.1842), a Nuenonne man from Bruny Island and Truganini's husband, served as liaison between George Augustus Robinson, a preacher who conducted the 'Friendly Missions' to the Aboriginal people.

boobook = the smallest of Australian owls, also called the Tasmanian Spotted Owl.

mallee-root = woody lignotuber of a type of wattle.

Wybalenna = established on Flinders Island, Bass Strait, in 1834, after the forced removal of the Tasmanian people. When it opened it housed 134 exiled Aborigines. By 1847, only 47 were still alive. They were taken to Oyster Cove, where most died.

maireener shell = small highly-valued kelp snails which were polished back to expose the mother of pearl.

mutton-fish = abalone, a single-shelled mollusc gathered off rocky reefs in shallow seas.

Oyster Cove = a small settlement in south-east Tasmania, where 47 people from Wybalenna were taken in 1847.

Reference notes:

The kyoka prose draws on material from Tasmanian Museum and Gallery Reports, 'Sydney Morning Herald' and 'The Mercury' newspaper reports, 'The Griffith Review Edition 39: Tasmania—The Tipping Point!,' The University of Tasmania's 'Companion to Tasmanian History,' and a scholarly work copyright by Ray Norman, 'Interrogating Placedness: Tasmanian Disconnections,' 2013.

Tasmanian by birth, Marietta McGregor lives with her husband and family in Canberra. Since childhood an enthusiast of the outdoors, she has pursued various careers from researcher in palynology to garden designer, parliamentary guide, desktop publisher/editor, science journalist, writing tutor, visitor manager at an astronomical observatory to science and technology marketer. Her awards include second place in the United Haiku and Tanka Society's 2015 Samurai Haibun Contest, commended in the 2015 Martin Lucas Haiku Award, merit awards in ITO EN Oi Ocha Haiku Contest (2016 and 2018), Sakura award in the 2017 Vancouver Cherry Blossom Contest, and editor's prize for a haibun in Rattle's Ekphrastic Poetry Challenge, March 2018. She belongs to the Australian and British Haiku Societies and the Haiku Society of America.

Mark Jun Poulos

glowing white as the moon
a blimp hovers in the night sky
above downtown—
small red light on its belly
pulsing on and off

~*Starbuck's scene, USA*

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

too proud
to admit to herself
her life did not turn out as she wished
she seems like someone
constantly nursing a wounded ego

Whitman
whose poems I so adore —
how I wish to embrace him
and plant a tender kiss
on his white-bearded cheek

trying to be kind
I was in fact being cruel —
asking for the number of a woman
whom I never intended to call
whom I no longer found beautiful

stuck on a freeway off-ramp
I gaze up
at a huge American flag —
stars and stripes
hypnotically undulant in the sea wind

gazing into this lovely
Japanese woman's big gray eyes
I feel like I'm gazing down
into the depths of
a dark, still well

~Albany, New York, USA

In the Library

Mark Jun Poulos

alone in a library stall
reading a book
I hear the faint mutterings
of a schizoid homeless man
conversing with himself

suddenly
I hear a woman's voice
nasally, high-pitched, unpleasant —
scolding the man for talking
while she tries to work

you don't know me
you ugly bitch he responds —
breathless with rage
how dare you, you you monkey!
she shouts

a pause ensues
eerily silent —
I listen with shocked suspense
awaiting what I knew was
bound to come next

nigger, nigger, nigger!
her voice louder, harsher
as she repeats the word —
while he mutters it back to her
maybe in defiance

the librarian
intervenes —
stop you guys he says
while she storms out into the hallway
that echoes loud with shouts of the n-word

~Albany, New York, USA

Ancestry

Mark Poulos

maybe noting my thick, black eyebrows
he frowningly asked: *are you half-Arab?*
this WASP
whose Japanese wife
was pregnant with their first child

though I've been
complimented on my looks
I've always felt ashamed of my face—
that it didn't look like my mother's,
that it didn't look Asian

you don't look Japanese at all!
people would say
when I told them I was part Japanese—
making me feel as if
there was something wrong with my appearance

knowing I was half-Japanese
a co-worker of mine
a naive, young Chinese girl
asked me smiling: *was your mom disappointed*
when she first saw you?

I wondered if Japanese people
felt the same way—
if they thought me someone
who looked too European
too much like a foreigner to be one of them

burdened with this neurosis
of feeling myself a mongrel
unacceptable to the Japanese
I often feel uncomfortable
being seen with my mother in Japan

Mark, you and your sister
a family friend once told me
have anime-like eyes—
I think the Japanese would take
an immediate liking to you

many Japanese people
especially women
have lovely eyes—
large, limpid, soft
beautifully reflecting light in all its forms

this WASP's wife
who worked at a bank
under a black woman
asked her husband:
why do these blacks have white names?

oh, that's from slave days
mom told me he replied—
explaining to his wife
she was a difficult boss
because she was an “angry black”

shaking my hands
he frowned again
voice shaking as he said goodbye—
perhaps afraid
his own baby would end up looking like me

I've not seen your brother and sister yet
he said nervously—
as he raced to the window
of my aunt's beauty salon
hoping to get a good look at them

seeing a picture of his newborn
who was a beautiful
chubby-faced Eurasian baby
I thought he must feel relieved
she didn't look like any of us

I can vividly imagine
a Japanese man saying
he doesn't even look Japanese!
hotly rebuking my mother
for marrying outside her race

some Japanese men
I deeply dread
harsh, rigid, domineering—
who don't mince words
about how much they loathe foreigners

this WASP's
father-in-law
refused to set foot out of his door
to greet his new son-in-law
when he visited Japan

he could not forgive his daughter
I was told
for marrying a foreigner
who he probably thought
would pollute his bloodline

kids, we have to move
we can't afford
to live in this house anymore
mom said
a forced cheery tone in her voice

our new home
was near the heart
of '90's gang-infested South L.A.—
an old stuccoed duplex
that had seen better times

a bachelor in his thirties
our neighbor was
a sharp, irascible, playful man
half-Japanese, half-black
who had lived all his life in the area

eight years old
I told him he looked like Cheech
from Cheech and Chong
giggling as I did so
hoping he would find it funny

instantly
his face darkened with rage—
he who was so inclined to make
silly jokes that made me laugh
didn't utter a sound

what are you?
what race are you? he asked
sounding angry—
I'm half-white, half-Japanese I said
still smiling

what makes you think
you're white he said
his voice rising—
Greeks aren't white!
he roared

I felt
like a dagger
had been plunged into my heart—
immediately erased
was the smile on my face

years later
I learned at the UPS warehouse
where he worked
there once existed
a racial hierarchy, a pecking order

Italian-Americans
at the top
Mexican-Americans
in the middle
African-Americans at the bottom

I wonder if his fury
that had been directed at these Italians —
pseudo-whites who longed to be accepted as
WASPs
was also aimed at
other Mediterranean peoples

days later
my little sister and I
laughed and played around him
as he sat watching us
from the stoop of his duplex

in a surge of childish glee
I said to him:
Orenzo, you and me are friends! —
no we're not he swiftly replied
expressionless

my joy instantly wilted
I felt as if
another dagger
had been plunged into my heart —
I was on the verge of tears

an avid gun owner
he loved guns
as much as any WASP bumpkin —
something that perplexed me until I recalled
how much he loved cowboy flicks

mind steeped
in fifties cinema, TV,
did he adopt WASP values
including its bigotry —
did he secretly long to be one himself?

shouting
get a job nigger!
at an old panhandler in a drive-thru
he pulled his head back into his car
lips trembling with rage

an African-American G.I.
serving in Nagasaki
during the U.S. occupation
he wedded a Japanese woman
who bore him a son

with his wife and son
he settled in California —
hey boy, speak some of that Japanese
black men would often ask his son
at barbecues and parties

by the time I met her
my neighbor's mother was an ugly old woman
nearing seventy —
waspish, bitter,
spiteful, sharp-tongued

hating her husband
for leaving her
with a little boy to care for by herself
did she ever use the n-word in his hearing
to refer to African Americans?

~Los Angeles, California, USA

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."

Cherita

Maryalicia Post

“hello, love”

the workman said
as workmen here
still sometimes do

how could he know
I needed that today?

~*Dublin, Ireland*

red coffee bowls

we'd just bought at Monoprix
come with us in the ambulance
after the chest pains

I'm glad I didn't buy more
two's our lucky number

~*Paris, France*

she made a cape

of brown paper
for the dazed bird

it flew away
the cape drifted down
like a silent goodbye

~*Nairobi, Kenya*

seagulls squalling

in a summer sky
shadow

of a bird's wing
reports
of an incident

~*Dublin, Ireland*

Maryalicia Post is a travel writer who lives in Dublin, Ireland. She is the author of After You, a poem about the journey through bereavement published as a book by Souvenir Press, UK. Her website is maryaliciatravel.com.

The Dark of a Continent

Matthew Caretti

I read of the earliest Cape Colony. The diaspora and displacement. Close the book. Dream of a shipwreck. The flotsam of apartheid. The jetsam of its dismantling. Wake suddenly to some great mystery.

in the dark
sudden cry
of winter voices
the last blood moon
of our lifetime

~*South Africa*

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.

Matsukaze

always waiting
for
the rising
of
a new world

'coffy is the color' —
this black skin
will
become beautiful
in the mouths of people

i pause
in silent prayer
and the world
sits
suspended

in a dash
to be right
to be out loud
i jot down
many words

will someone sing
a hymn
to America's
uncertain future
in a bronze voice?

i want booze
i want sex
lots of sex —
bending willow
in the churchyard

one day
i too
will be settled
like
two dry towels

the colleague and i
sit
talking
about the purchase
of permits and guns

cool
autumn afternoon
i am still
amid
this highway traffic

doing quick shopping
for
random things —
a cute man and his crew
passes by me

lately
a few dreams
of marriage
of a wife
and a baby

sunspill
across the floors —
this afternoon
proves to move
at a slow pace

ringing phone . . .
i
do not
even give it
a second glance

taking
all my daily
situations
and stuffing them
into minimal tanka

have i found my voice yet?
something
i ponder
while a customer
goes on and on

saltine crackers
and a sprite
to settle my stomach . . .
wait!
am i pregnant!?

wanted
to be rich
by now . . .
now i just
want to be safe

purchasing
coffee from Starbucks
a haiku
taking form in mind
when he walks by

deciding
to return to singing—
a certain thrill
i get when thumbing
through German Lieder

listening to Mahler
then to Orff
thinking to myself
i'd like to watch
Hitchcock's 'Topaz'

halloween approaches . . .
but
we the people
have already been living
in a nightmare

“isn't it awkward . . .”
not
finishing my statement
before your lips
are on mine

stopping by
another
Cajun food joint
just before
heading to work

drinking
several wine coolers
on the job
and i really
don't care

to pass the time
i jot down tanka
about anything
that comes
to mind

~Dallas, Texas, USA

*Matsukaze has been writing
short verse since 2006.
He is a thespian and vocalist.
He lives in Dallas, TX USA*

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

— Othello, William Shakespeare

Michael D. Mann

hibiscus flowers
in the center
once silent
buzzing with
the gift of life

cerulean water
with golden sand
surreal colors painted by
sunrises and sunsets
so many unspoken words

a grief
tied to my past
grows old
one last look
I finally let go

an old door flat
on the ground
what lies beneath
to knock or
not to knock?

leviathan oaks
turning in his black eyes
a male painted bunting
perches in the open to sing his
jumbled, sweet mating song

sandpiper calls and
cries of raucous gulls
chase the scuttle of trash
my tension
flies with them

wanderlust
the bend in the marsh
walking with the tide
marsh songs unfurl
serenity around me

warrior's
code
death of
the enemy
or die fighting

at death
when footsteps
disappear
hopeless is not
void of hope

my heart and soul are
bound by your love
though we are apart
I am your slave mastered
by priceless memories

aging . . .
an unexpected march
toward decrepitude
little time left to
amend mistakes

traffic
waltzing down
congested roads
and me
hiding

I left what was me in
Mekong Delta mud . . . now
marshland muck susurrates
the rebirth of my soul
me and not-me as one

gardens and children,
come to be with pain
grow best with love
life without love is a
sunless flower garden

~United States

Michael D. Mann was born in the USA on the wrong side of the tracks; dirt poor where the police often were the enemy. The draft spit him out in Vietnam and he embraced killing to survive. Wounded twice and sent home, a mercenary group contacted him. On his way to Europe to join them he met a woman, fell in love, married, sired a son, and did not die as an assassin.

Running on Empty

Michael H. Lester

A pack of Lucky Strikes rolled up in his white t-shirt sleeve, a cigarette dangling from his lips, his eyes squinting from the smoke; he calls my bet and raises \$5. I peel up my cards from the sticky, beer-stained table and peek at my hand again — two jacks, Ace high.

It's two o'clock in the morning and I've broken curfew. My father will be furious.

I fold, suffer my losses, and call it quits for the night.

gambling away
my meager allowance
I drive home
with the gas gauge on empty
the needle points to my future

~Detroit, Michigan, USA

The Last Leaf of Autumn

Michael H. Lester

Yes, life is a mystery. Some believe everything happens for a reason and is meant to be. I believe that life is a series of random events, like the goings on of the Universe — things flying in every direction without purpose.

children
launch multicolored marbles
in a circle
where will the last leaf
of autumn fall?

Yet, there are forces in the Universe, such as gravity, that influence the direction of things and determine their ultimate fate.

Is there such a thing for humankind? I suppose there is, and it is death.

But on the way to our final destiny, anything can happen.

fortune, good or ill
awaits at every turn —
though humankind
may take the paths less traveled
all lead to the same place

~A tiny speck in a swirling galaxy somewhere in the Universe, July, 2018

Where to Now?

Michael H. Lester

My grandparents came to America from Poland, Germany, and Russia.

I don't feel deep roots to my ancestral home, but as a boy working on my stamp collection I felt an inexplicable attraction to a stamp with a picture of the German coat of arms and hoped to visit there someday.

A few years later, when I learned about the Holocaust and experienced firsthand the cold war with Russia, I lost the desire to return to my homeland.

bloody stains
on the postage stamps
from Germany
I cannot wipe them off
with these fretful tears

These days, I fear for my adopted country, the United States, much more than I do for my ancestral home.

the damage
one man with a hammer
and a pack of lies
can do to the welfare
of all humankind

*~The dining room table in my childhood home,
Detroit, Michigan, USA, circa 1957*

The Sparrow Sings for All Men

Michael H. Lester

come with me
what have you left
to lose?
the sparrow sings
for all men

I will teach you
the way of the old ones
in time
you will understand
for now, just follow

listen
do you hear the
tadpoles
darting about the pond—
the wings of the dragonfly?

hush
the moon speaks to us
through the crickets
their steady chirp
a mating call

let us lie
on the soft green grass
together
naked under the moon
two as one

*~A self-built cabin in a wooded forest in Northern
Michigan, USA, circa 1960*

An Act of Mercy

Michael H. Lester

the moon
seems sluggish tonight
lingering
over a forest of pines
and painting the lake yellow

I sit
with my arms folded
at the window, waiting
hoping you will come home
wondering who you are with

on the table
still in its envelope
the note you left
I cannot bear
to open it

twenty years
of togetherness gone
in a heartbeat
I think of ending it all
ending the suffering

my hand
reaches for the envelope
I open it
Dear Peter, I am dying
All my love, Roger

*~A self-built cabin in a wooded forest in Northern
Michigan, USA, circa 1980*

Cherita

Michael H. Lester

before 250 congregants

the proud Bar Mitzvah boy
recites his 64 line Haftorah
without a single mistake

the crowd erupts in applause
just as the bomb explodes

*~Beth Aaron Synagogue, 18000 Wyoming, Detroit,
Michigan, USA, 1958 (now Gospel Temple Baptist
Church)*

Ravages of Age

Michael H. Lester & *Genie Nakano*

the old skin
a patchwork of spots
and strange bumps
dry as the desert
wind-worn sands of time

*bags baggage
and budding wrinkles
yet I feel
thirty-five inside
mirrors tell cruel lies*

remember
when we were thirteen
the blood flowed
to our tender parts
that now sag and droop

*my doctor orders
"use it or lose it"
I asked
my lover for help
gone those quickie days*

I recall
the verve of my youth
as I trudge
up the seven steps
to the old folks home

*at the airport
my hip replacement
triggers off alarms
so much attention
for all the wrong reason*

those days
when I got second looks
now long gone
even the mirror
seems indifferent

*far away
I pass for mam'selle
keep me
under soft candlelight
or turn off the lights*

my grandson
challenges me to a race
around the block
my counter proposal
a game of bocce ball

*long ago
I ran barefoot
over river rocks
today I ponder
taking off my shoes*

on my arm
a new liver spot
I shed tears
peeling onions
the layers of my life

*back then
wanted to be ballet thin
in ten years
will I want to be
what I am now*

as I age
the uncertainty
of my youth
yields to the sureness
of maturity

*I accept
to sit in mystery
not always
have the answers
nothing is permanent*

in old age
I start to drop things
the plus side
better reflexes
catch me if you can

*my wit is quick
lived long enough to know
let it flow
laughter is the key
the way to set me free*

~California, USA

*Michael H. Lester lives in Los Angeles where he writes of
exotic, faraway places he has never been and of startling
events he has never witnessed. Occasionally, he waxes
philosophical about things of which he has absolutely no
knowledge or insight. Sometimes this stuff gets published.
Go figure.*

*Genie Nakano lives in Gardena, CA, where she teaches yoga
and dance at the Japanese Cultural Center of Gardena. She
has a regular column for the Rafu Shimpō where she shares
her tanka and short stories. She has written three books of
tanka available on Amazon.Com and can be reached at
GenieYogini@Yahoo.Com.*

scars

Murasame & Akane

*waking in the dark
filled with sorrow
for the young, dead
all I know to do
is pray . . .*

this slightly cool afternoon
in this quiet hotel
thinking . . .
even the taste of Sprite
has dulled

*all things
on earth carry scars
seen or unseen—
is the heart of God
scarred, too?*

after bathing
reciting prayers—
this G-d fearer
this son of Noah
lies down in thought

*it rains and rains
until I wonder how soon
the rising tides
will steal the land
and drown the souls of men*

~Norwich, England / Dallas, Texas, USA

*Akane enjoys both the immediacy and lasting resonance of English
Language short verse.*

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

*Mike Montreuil lives the retired life in Ottawa, Ontario. He is the
editor of the Haiku Canada Review and co-editor of the French Tanka
journal Cirrus: Tankas de nos jours.*

Mike Montreuil

am I doing
something wrong?
my retired friend
driving
his new BMW

yes, yes
we know all too well
it's summer recess
before the vote
that will not come

the homeless man
packs a new
shopping cart
his destination
still unknown

~Canada

Patricia Pella

I don't know your name
I don't know your story
I know we both bleed red
and weep in the same language
I know you. I am you

stolen children
gateways
to their souls
closing
one by one

~Rhode Island, USA

*Patricia Pella
loves to play with words
chase syntax
search for harmony
tell the story.*

Close to Home

Patricia Prime & Giselle Maya

I have stared out
through this window many times
who knows the sum
of such idleness
or is it inspiration?

I stood there this morning
a fresh cup of coffee
sending its aroma
from the table beside me
into the autumn air

alone in the house
cradling a cooling cup
pen and paper
lie in wait for me
like some hungry beast

Here, after all was time. A time recalled from the depths of memory. London had been bombed beyond recognition, but the people lifted themselves up and began to rebuild their homes and their lives all over again. The world carried on peacefully after the grip of war and my father's return from Germany. I hardly recognised him in his uniform as he lay his kit-bag in the front room of our terraced house. He took items from it like a magician: china dolls for me and my sisters, metal cars and a jeep for my brothers, a handbag for my mother. Soon, life settled down and the struggle began for people to build a new order out of the rubble of the destroyed past.

At night, in summer while my parents read the newspaper, a hot wind might come from the south and if I went out with friends to the cinema or to a dance, we would look at the stars across a million miles. We might even hear a faint sound from space. Sometimes we'd see a shooting star or the moon sailing in the sky, casting its light on the dark streets. The city lay silent in the moonlight. Above us the moon and stars went on

their magical courses and then the sun rose into the silence.

recovering
from a snowstorm
chill puddles
snow-patched fields—
an earth-sheltered life

how do trees survive
days and nights of snow
and ice
blossoms wait to breathe the sky
a tentative dream . . .

The story of post-war hardships seems effaced in the volcanic fires of the earth's centre—they are so painful that they no longer seem real. Father did not go to war, instead made a splendid garden, so our family could eat. He turned the radio on and said out loud: "Who would listen to this nonsense . . ." and changing the station to Mozart or Chopin, started to hum along.

We were evacuated to the country where my aunt lived with her family on a farm in a small village. It was there I fell in love with the countryside, forests, meadows, streams where mother and I picked watercress and where I lost my favourite book "Thumbelina" in the long grass—we could not find it again. My brother had to stop going to school when there were air attacks as the train he had to take came to a halt, passengers hid under the train and school was suspended. It was then he taught me the Greek alphabet and asked me to recite it for visitors.

Vaguely I recall air raids where we had to dash to subterranean shelters for the night. Once we picked ears of wheat at harvest time when a plane swooped down on us—we hid in deep ditches. These nearly effaced nightmares—did they really happen? They did. And even now in other lands they do. So many years later now, I have created a peaceful life, to garden as my father did, read as mother loved to do, to write and paint, with much work to be done every day.

releasing its hold
this long harsh winter
I am ready
to be embraced
by scented breezes

deep in the garden soil
where the toad hibernates
soon to emerge
among blue periwinkles
and shady rhubarb leaves

~New Zealand / France

Patricia Prime grew up in England and now lives in New Zealand. Here she obtained a degree in English and Social Sciences and gained a Teaching Diploma. She taught kindergarten for 40 years. Patricia is the editor of Kokako, writes reviews for Takaha, Atlas Poetica, Muse India and other journals. She is reviews/interviews editor of Haibun Today. Her poetry, haiku, tanka, haibun, tanka prose and cherita have been published in a variety of journals and anthologies. Patricia published Shizuka with Giselle Maya.

Giselle Maya is a painter and poet who lives in Provence, France. She has lived and studied in Japan. Presently she enjoys gardening, writing and, when time allows, painting. Some of her most recent publications are The Tao of Water, Poem Tales, Garden Mandala, Anemones, Treewhispsers, Shizuka and Cicada Chant. Many well-known journals have published her work: Ribbons, Skylark, Kokako, CHO, Haibun Today, Cattails, Editions des Petits Nuages and several others. To order books please contact the author: giselle.maya@orange.fr.

Pat Geyer

nothing but loss
except for body counts . . .
battles raged and lost
“Ricky died in Nam”
he was seventeen

~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.

Solo Renga

Paul Mercken

Paul Mercken, Vertaler Nederlands-Engels

*Pinksteren met
vurige tongen en de Heilige Geest—
veel volk onder weg*

het is mooi weer en
de natuur staat in bloei

*bokjes blaten
hun stem herkend door de ooi—
tijd voor een picknick*

het kozakkenkoor
trekt weerom volle zalen

*in een azuren hemel
glorieert een volle maan—
naar Vincent Van Gogh*

die arrogante Theo
dat had hij toch niet verdiend

*‘wij zijn allemaal Hebdo!’
maar heeft het veel geholpen?—
we zijn meer bewust*

overall zwermen vlinders
alleen een kind die het ziet

*het leven gaat door
ook in het Syrisch geweld
lekt er ergens een kraan*

en duiven koeren vredig
op de moskee van Tabriz

*een papierloze
vluchteling gaf ik wat geld—
ik kon het missen*

vanuit Duitsland heeft zijn broer
het met dank geretourneerd

~Bunnik, Provincie Utrecht, Nederland

Solo Renga

Paul Mercken

Paul Mercken, Dutch-English Translator

*Whitsunday with its
fiery tongues and Holy Ghost—
crowds on the roads*

the weather is nice
and nature is blooming

*wee billy goats bleat
their voice known by the ewe—
picnic time*

the Cossack choir
again has a full house

*in the azure sky
a glorious full moon—
after Vincent Van Gogh*

that arrogant Theo
but that he did not deserve

*'we are all Hebdo!'
how much did that help?—
we are more aware*

everywhere butterflies swarm
only a child sees it

*life goes on— even
in the Syrian violence
somewhere a tap leaks*

and pigeons peacefully coo
on the mosque of Tabriz

*to a paperless
refugee I gave some cash—
I could miss it*

from Germany his brother
returned it with thanks

~Bunnik, Provincie Utrecht, Netherlands

vrijheid

Paul Mercken

Paul Mercken, Vertaler Nederlands-Engels

uit Volendam: "ur
is niks gekker as un mins"—
Werkendam beaamt
dat leert hun de godsdienst, want
je onderwerp je aan God

en de overheid
weg met de eigen mening:
verbied het praten
over homofilie en
roken— ze zijn ongezonder

ja, de mens is zwak
dus zondigt hij af en toe
maar je gaat toch niet
ondeugden verdedigen—
dan ben je gek als een deur

sorry, dat helpt niet
ik steun ieders recht om dwars
te liggen, want ben
zelf vrij ze te weerleggen,
ben dus voor meningsvrijheid

ja, daarvoor vechten
wij oorlogen, om vrij fout
te mogen zijn, maar
inmiddels tier ik: beperk
het roken tot Outer Space

~Voor Bevrijdingsdag, 5 mei 2018

*Belgische filosofiedocent in ruste en mediëvist (° 1934) wonende te
Bunnik, NL. Wetenschappelijk onderzoek en onderwijs in GB, USA,
Florence, IT, en Utrecht, NL. Bestuurslid Haiku Kring Nederland
(Dutch Haiku Society) 2004-2017. Publiceerde Bunnikse haiku's en
ander dichtspul, 2012 & Tanka of Place – ATLAS POETICA –
Tanka's van plaats, 2013 (tweetalig). Lid van de Oxford and
Cambridge Society of the Netherlands. Bestuurslid van de Haiku Kring
Nederland 2004-2016 (HKN – recentelijk versmolten met haiku.nl).
Vrijwilliger op de gebieden van ecologie, cultuur en zingeving.
Humanist.*

liberty

Paul Mercken

Paul Mercken, Dutch-English Translator

Volendam: “*there is
nothing madder than people*”—
Werkendam agrees
that is what faith teaches them, for
you submit to the Deity

and the government
down with your own opinion
forbid talking of
being gay and of smoking—
they are unhealthy habits

yes, people are weak
so, they do sin now and then
but still you are not
going to defend vices—
for you’d be mad as a door

sorry, that does not
help—I support anyone’s
right to be wayward,
I’m free to contradict them
hence I’m for freedom of speech

yes, that’s why we fought
wars, to be able to be
in all freedom wrong,
but meanwhile I shout:
ban smoking to Outer Space

~*For Liberation Day, May 5, 2018*

*Paul Mercken is a retired Reader Philosophy, linguist & medievalist,
°Leuven, 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).
Voluntary worker on the terrains of ecology, culture and society.
Humanist.*

From Sea To Shining Sea

Peter Fiore

Crazy Horse knew the world men lived in was a shadow. When he dreamed himself into the real world, everything seemed to float or dance. His horse danced as if he were wild or crazy so he called himself Crazy Horse. He’d learned if he dreamed himself into the real world before going into battle, he could endure anything.

It all conspires against you. Your people are forcefully removed by the Great Father in Washington from the land where you were born, where your ancestors are buried and where you’ve raised your families, to a bleak plain filled with rock and dust, sagebrush and snakes. And still the bluecoats chased you up and down the country. Some of you escape thru the snows to the Black Hills, but starvation eventually brings you back to your assassination.

This happens over and over again until all the Indians are either dead or imprisoned, like a record that keeps skipping over and over the same story of love and loss.

Minutes later the Anola Gay drops the bomb on Hiroshima and in a flash over 100 thousand people are vaporized. A flash and a great cry goes up. There are fires everywhere.

Don’t fuck with us. We’ve been driven crazy by the thirst for more and more of the white metal and no longer care for the fields and forests, the plains and the purple mountains, the shining rivers that raised us.

~*United States*

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.

Hidden Harbors

Pris Campbell

the room
swirls around her
pretending
she's a POW
to get through the day

how she sways
when she walks
back then
for a man's hungry gaze
now, with hope not to stumble

the neurologist sneers
when he glances at her
she flinches
to *there is no such thing
as chronic fatigue syndrome*

she writes
an obit for that person
she once was
the house so quiet she can hear
the throttled purr of her cat

old friends
become fleeing mice
the boats
she sailed to hidden harbors
rise in dreams to haunt her

~Florida, United States

The tanka, haiga and haiku of Pris Campbell have appeared in numerous journals, including Frogpond, moonbathing, cattails, Acorn, Haigaonline, One Hundred Gourds, and Failed Haiku. The Small Press has published six collections of her free verse poetry, as well as a tanka book. Clemson University Press published an eighth book, a collaboration. A former Clinical Psychologist, sailor and bicyclist until sidelined by ME/CFS in 1990, she makes her home in the Greater West Palm Beach, Florida, U.S.A.

Prophet's Rock

Randy Brooks

I climb Prophet's Rock
to look out
over the meadow
all the foxtails
a gathering of tribes

to the East
of Prophet's Rock
warriors on horses
stir up the dust
restless for war

these very trees
dropping acorns
witnessed
the gathering storm
of ghost shirts

names of the dead
on the battlefield
monument
not one of them
a Native American

~Battleground, Indiana, USA

Pravat Kumar Padhy

I scream
for the breeze of help
in deep oblivion
loudly I breathe my last
carrying the scar in my womb

~India

Pravat Kumar Padhy hails from Odisha, India. He holds Masters in Science and Technology and a Ph.D from Indian Institute of Technology (ISM), Dhanbad. His tanka are published in Atlas Poetica, Skylark, Ribbons, Simply Haiku, Presence, cattails, red lights, Fire Pearls 2, One Man's Maple Moon Bright Stars 1, Neon Graffiti, Triveni, Every Chicken, Cow, Fish and Frog, Earth, They Gave Us Life, Its own place, Stacking Stones and others. <<http://PKPadhy.blogspot.com>>

Randy Brooks

crawling through
the overgrown brush
we play war
it's so easy knowing
who the bad guys are

lost world
missing in action
wisps of prayers
rise
from the battlefield

family photo
on the grand piano
her Uncle remains
forever young
in uniform

the soldiers move on
to the village
for young ones
and when they are gone
not even the earth remains

~United States

Dr. Randy M. Brooks is the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences and Professor of English at Millikin University. He teaches courses on the global haiku traditions and tanka at Millikin. He and his wife, Shirley Brooks, are co-editors and publishers of Brooks Books, and edit Mayfly haiku magazine. He serves as web editor of Modern Haiku magazine and serves on the Executive Committee of the Haiku Society of America as the Electronic Media Officer, editing the Frogpond web sampler and maintaining the society web site.

Center of the Universe

Richard Grahn

in the fields
where I used to play
the world has changed . . .
everything seems smaller
even blades of grass

What you saw on that empty hillside a century or more ago, I'll never really know because you took that vision with you to your grave. What you made of it though, remains a pleasant memory even if time has not wasted any time in etching it slowly away. The shelves in the gun-room have other people's stuff on them now. The cobwebs in the attic are new. The rock garden has been ripped out but ants in the yard are still building castles in the sand.

I can remember the creaky sequence of five doors opening and closing through the garage and into the kitchen. A wooden thunk, a spring, a click, a gentle yawn, a clunk. Did you purposely build that into my memories of you? I mean, there you were on the foundation of your dreams raising a home where I could come alive. What I took away from that is nothing less than the stuff of a mythical adventure.

Still, it wasn't a structure that stood at the center of my universe. It was you. Wood and stone and plaster were no match for your wit, patience and capacity to love and forgive. What you built beside that little hill can't be measured with watch or stick. Every year the leaves come falling down. I'm sorry I can't rake them all but that never really mattered to you, now did it?

dreams conceived beneath the stars
have returned to the meadow
where life remains
a poem on the lips
of a child

~Deerfield, Wisconsin, USA

Meditation

Richard Grahn

ommmmmmmmmmmmm . . .

chanting to the echoes
of dewdrops in a teacup
lips invoke
the ancient songs
of life

where petals fall
into the pond—
a blossom
opens up and shares
its secrets

between what is
and the great beyond
an ocean
in a seashell
pounds the shore

one moment and no more
to spend inside eternity
to leave behind
what's never been
and seek what's meant to be

. . . shanti

~Baha'i House of Worship, Wilmette, Illinois, USA

Richard Grahn

the tide is out across the bay
only a small stream
winds its way through the mudflats—
a heron stands
in the emptiness

~Maquoit Bay, Brunswick, Maine, USA

on another journey of faith
through echoes in the rain
she tends her simple garden
with the touch
of a believer

~In the flower beds, Evanston, Illinois, USA

at the Ocean City boardwalk
a Ferris Wheel is spinning . . .
the clicking of her heels
disappears into the evening
and the lapping of the waves

~Ocean City, Maryland, USA

together we descended
into the eerie glow
of Lehman Caves
grandmother braved the shadows
in oh so many ways

~Lehman Caves, Nevada, USA

across the field
a tempest brews—
lightning bearing down upon
a carload full
of drunken fools

~In the cornfield, Marshall, Wisconsin, USA

if I fell from a cliff
and found you at the bottom
I'd walk back to the top
and do it all over
again

*~Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Gunnison, Colorado,
USA*

bongos in the night —
we find strong men
in the moonlit meadow
hurling dreams
into the stars

~Upper Bidwell Park, Chico, California, USA

the cheeks of God flushed
when He learned
how she touched
the dewdrops
on the leaves

~In the backyard, Deerfield, Wisconsin, USA

it's laundry day
the boy picks up his ball
and tries to wipe
the grass stains
off his knees

~Brunswick, Maine, USA

*Richard Grahm 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.*

Coastal Flooding: Massachusetts North Shore, March 2018

Richard St. Clair

black clouds
lingering cold
pierces my heart
frozen
in ice and spume

nor'easter
energetic and worsening
the sleet
reflecting my grief
deep into night

shoreline homes
battered to splinters
my heart's
heraldic memories
bludgeoned to shreds

gale winds
making whistling tunes
terrifying
as the home shudders
in tidal force

sandpipers
blown askelter
ferociously
fighting the
inevitable surrender

gulls
huddling in refuge
under
a skating rink's
rotting eaves

morning
after a fierce night
survivors
evaluating the sea's
consequent rage

thanking
the gods of wind and rain
a reprieve
walking on ground
among dead branches

~Massachusetts, USA

The Horror of Karma Unleashed : A Collage

Richard St. Clair

shaking hands
Putin and Assad bonded
as one
united as purveyors of death
to the huddled yearning masses

marching
with a stately pavane
a memorial
for the pilots of a war
waged on high with napalm

there he is
wearing a three-piece suit
dignified
on trial for genocide
sporting a wry smile

murdered
was my aged grandmother,
one life;
murdered are the millions
of lives by military might

tears
soaking the blood-stained ground
unmarked
mass graves no one left to mourn
no one there to consecrate

again
heartbroken to think
of those
killed and tossed like trash
in piles to rot in the sun

calm
after the running blood
in silence
the nameless lying stiffly
in ragged rows of death

racing
through a rice paddy
in fear
a village of civilians running
into blistering murderous fire

he sits
comfortably in his uniform
commander
overseeing the Rohingya slaughter
a satisfied grimace on his face

hot day
in the Rwandan jungle
bells
tinkling in the empty villages
where only the wind is stirring

in horror
a black-and-white film
Nazi soldiers
shooting and burying the Jews
no time for their last Kaddish

unforgiven
unforgivable and
unforgettable
a mountain of bodies
shrunk to skin and bones

I weep:
my grandmother's murder
amplified
into a million shards
of bodies piled high

Rumsfeld's Saddam —
“he's our kind of guy”
inured
to his rule of tyranny
and his war of poison gas

I cannot pray
I cannot offer thoughts
of consolation
I am powerless to change
what seems must come to pass

my faith
is being tested every day
as the killings
go on unnoticed and uncounted. . .
where is the Buddha now?

~Massachusetts, USA

Richard St. Clair (b. 1946) is a recognized composer as well as a tanka and haiku poet. His music has been heard on three continents. He has set tanka and haiku to music, including a recent cycle “Music of Joy” setting 15 tanka by renowned poet Joy McCall. His Shin Buddhist faith helps him to deal with and live in a world filled with violence. A victim of violence himself, as well as a survivor of murder, his feelings on genocide are immediate and strong. He lives in Massachusetts with his wife of 27 years.

Ruth Holzer

roadside shrine
bouquets, balloons and teddy bears —
yellow strips
of ripped police tape
flutter from the guardrail

~Sterling, Virginia, USA

even though
our days in Venice
were numbered —
we crossed a crooked bridge
sailed to the farthest island

~Italy

now the sacred lake
has its own website
that lists
dates of boating accidents
and the names of the drowned

~Lough Derg, Ireland

when the time came
to leave for the airport
there was
no one to say goodbye to
so I simply left

~Amsterdam, Netherlands

finding the key
I enter for the last time
the room where we lived
through days of hunger
chilly restless nights

~London, England

first passport—
may those armed guards
in full uniform
who grudgingly stamped it
have crossed over the border

~Panama

making my way
through dangerous streets
no one
living at the old address
after all

~Newark, New Jersey, USA

Killaloe
Tuamgraney, Scariff—
those lovely towns
with their churches and pubs
that know me no longer

~Ireland

were there not
graves enough here
that you had to go
and lie down in distant
New Jersey, unvisited

~Clifton, New Jersey, USA

*Ruth Holzer's poetry has appeared previously in Atlas Poetica, as well
as in journals including Acorn, bottle rockets, Frogpond, The Heron's
Nest, Modern Haiku, Presence and red lights.*

Journeys

Samantha Sirimanne Hyde, Marilyn
Humbert, Crys Smith & Jan Foster

I try
not to react
to life's surprises—
how smooth the stones
in this deep rock pool ssh

Tilling the Field

Dad is ploughing. I watch as moist loam is
sliced and turned in a wave along the length of
the top paddock. At the fence-line he lifts the
disc-plough, turns, drops the implement beside
the furrow and churns back. Over and over until
the whole field is prepared for harrowing.

today I dig
into the crust
of my past
mining pyrites
of pain, jades of joy mh

Building

In the backyard under tall rustic gumtrees my
brother is constructing an amazing apparatus. He
has gathered pieces of cardboard, posts, sticks
and large cartons from the local store. I dare not
ask as I think the object is still in wonder mode
and the final result is yet to be decided.

daydreaming
in ethereal realms
creativity
transforming ordinary
into incredible cs

Inspiration

I have been staring at a blank screen for so long, my brain feels as if pieces of it keep trying to escape and fly away. My writing has reached an impasse and needs something to reignite it. The sun has just touched the horizon and the air has the sharp tang of early spring as I set out for a walk to clear my head.

a blaze
of impossible colours
the artist
without equal—
this morning's sunrise jf

Solitude

In this unfamiliar town, I can't seem to fall asleep. I decide to open the door to the tiny balcony that juts out of my room and step out. I'm greeted with a blast of steamy humidity and the buzz of mosquitoes. I quickly retreat. To while away the time, I sit on the floor and play games of solitaire.

before
the heavy monsoon
this drabness,
across the lagoon
a gale force wind ssh

The Coup

Silence in the small hours wakes me. There is no nocturnal scratching or rustling, no comforting sounds heard. Then, the distant rumble of heavy machinery on the move. The gloom is alive with flashing lights and thudding booms. Out of the shadows, rebels advancing into a storm.

alone
this longest night
surrounded
by stomping boots
of an enemy mh

Devastation

In the cold comfort of the balcony we stare in disbelief, watching destruction across the road; remains of bricks and mortar slowly being crushed to the ground—once homes to our neighbours—people we knew and loved and shared our lives with.

time bites
at the heel of memories
offering no solace,
hearing no pleas
progress stealing our history cs

The Raid

We plan a visit to a clothing factory to investigate claims of illegal activity. We locate four workers who have no permission to work. The woman I interview says she has been held against her will. She trembles and grips my hand. Despite the perception of impropriety, I let her hold it.

outside
our feet stall
in soft silt . . .
you talk of your regrets
of family back home ssh

Courage

On the flat top of a light pole at a busy intersection, a magpie has built its nest. In the stiff breeze, the pole sways but the bird is not deterred. Now the nest is complete, it is occupied day and night, a partner bringing food.

amidst
the world's turbulence
strength
to rise above strife, trusting
your own abilities jf

Rejuvenation

Our daily meditation begins in a tree-lined park, far enough away from the main buzz of peak hour. Dew drops are still fresh on the earth. I choose the familiar seat by a marble fountain. My grandmother and I used to sit here when we visited the city.

deep breaths
slowly—in and out
a calmness settles
soothing morning doubts . . .
time to face the office cs

The Band

My friend and I have been in the queue for hours waiting for the doors to open. It's 1971, my favourite band, Pink Floyd, is performing at Melbourne's Festival Hall. We elbow our way through tangles of jeans, t-shirts, bare midribs, tattoos and afros to find our seats or rather stand on them. We clap and stamp and cheer. The lights begin the strobe sequence. And we scream when the music starts. The music is loud. All too soon it's over. My ears still ringing as I fall asleep thinking I will never forget my first rock concert.

sticks pound
in four-time beat
vocals blend
guitars strum riffs
shaking the foundations mh

Endurance

The fire has passed at last and the road home is open again. I join the line of other locals anxious to see if our homes are untouched or smoking ruins. Bushfires along the Great Ocean Road are not common and this one was sudden and savage in its onslaught. My house where I live alone was directly in its path. Sentinels known as the Twelve Apostles stand offshore, impassive columns of layered limestone,

constantly being worn away by the relentless assault of the water.

standing firm
against constant battering
cut off
from all support
. . . how long can I remain whole jf

The Secret

I hike through a forest of blackened stumps. The lack of undergrowth makes locating the entrance easier than previous times. I crawl through the gap between two boulders and darkness swallows me. My torch casts a weak yellow glow as the shaft widens. My treads echo with each step. Further on is a large domed cavern. The air is still, cold, empty of life. I know that no one else has passed this way since I last visited the diggings. My secret is safe.

in stale air
deep underground
the midden
a puzzle of many pieces
records their lives mh

Indignity

The tour operator stops his van abruptly. "Photo?" he asks, pointing towards a large area overflowing with garbage. There we see two elephants foraging through the rubbish. One is throwing tattered sheets of plastic on to its head as if trying to keep cool from the tropical heat. At a safe distance, two peacocks observe them while also pecking at the debris.

their habitats
chopped down
. . . rezoned
the gloomy shroud
of a concrete jungle ssh

Renewal

Visiting my son and his wife at their beachside home, I gaze out at the rippled silver of the bay. The house reflects the peace in the seascape before me and I am grateful. This is a second marriage for both and the lively household of teenage daughters they bring together have become friends as well as sisters. A new baby boy completes their happiness.

sea glass
in a wide-mouthed bowl
displayed—
weathered, polished,
beauty from brokenness jf

Fire

The ferry is chugging smoothly across the harbour at day's end. Commuters are heavily into technology and do not notice the changing view outside. The distant shoreline is flecked in crimson flames. Suddenly the air is shattered by screaming sirens and the shrieking cries of concern.

dried scrub-land
grasses and bracken
crackle
under the scorching heat
of an unrelenting summer cs

Resilience

Our excursion makes a detour along the Danube River to a small Benedictine monastery in Regensburg. Our guide tells us that the abbey was burnt down during World War II. Yet we marvel at the impressive building that has risen from its ashes. We're asked to be silent as we enter the dark hallowed space. Through the glow of a stained glass window, we make out silhouettes of hooded monks singing the most haunting of Gregorian chants.

sacred song
whatever our faiths
this tug of awe
despite life's chaos
this refrain of hope ssh

Peace

After the service, we find a sheltered bench by the beachside to sit quietly and take in the serenity of nature. The waves froth and bubble and keep rolling in. A crisp breeze bites the air. Families settle on the sand, children are frolicking by water's edge. Today is Anzac Day . . . a soft feeling of goodwill prevails.

thousands
line the streets . . .
in reverence
we are reminded
of what went before cs

Aftermath

Enjoying our trek through the ranges, we fail to notice the clouds boiling up above the tree line. It is only the absence of birdsong which alerts us, forcing a rush to find cover. Tucking ourselves beneath the meager protection of a rock shelf, we wait for the tumult to pass. After an interminable time, we emerge to find the landscape blanketed in white.

the path before us
obscured—
circumstance
leads to changed thinking,
a new way forward jf

overwhelmed,
hands reaching
to steady
. . . we cross
to the distant shore mh

~Australia and beyond

Marilyn Humbert lives in the Northern suburbs of Sydney, NSW, Australia. Her tanka and haiku appear in international and Australian journals, anthologies and online. Some of her free verse poems have been awarded prizes in competitions and some have been published.

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.

Jan Foster, a former English teacher, lives with her husband in Geelong, Australia. Her tanka, tanka prose, haiku, haibun and responsive sequences have been published in journals in Japan, USA, New Zealand, Britain, Canada and Australia, as well as online. She is the founder of the Bottlebrush Tanka Group (Sydney) and the Breathstream Tanka Group (Geelong). Her favourite things, apart from writing with her responsive sequence partners, are her grandchildren, a good book to read, a cryptic crossword to conquer and a samurai Sudoku to solve.

Crys Smith lives in the Northern Beaches of Sydney against a backdrop of lush bushland. She has been writing free verse poetry from an early age, some being published or given awards. Since coming across the Tanka genre in recent years it has become her passion . . . and has been published in various journals.

Sanford Goldstein

loneliness
is my way
not stopping
I sit alone and ponder
my nothing world

waiting
for miracles
to happen
of course they avoid
my lonely house

in my tanka cafe
this cold evening,
I have on
my new boots
that keep me from falling

my friend
has gone away
to a friend's house,
and I will be alone
for three days

I found my
poems in a published
book —
not the luck
of the Irish

no longer
at my former
tanka cafe,
I found a new place
to write my poems

I wandered
but not lonely
as a cloud,
I go along in my new
boots

will I live
another year
or two, still one year
would be enough
for lonely me

~*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.

Sandra Renew

in the mountains
Spring brings the fighting
she opens her door to the sun
soldiers on the ridge
stand against the sky

she cleans her rifle
checks sights to adjust the range
dusts off her khakis
waits hidden on the hill
once she was a checkout clerk

until the guns stop
hawks stay high in still air
circle and watch
when only the bodies are left
silence stinks of heat and blood

lists of those missing
who is known dead
children alone
she spells out the names
learning to read the lost

she does what she knows
Safety Post for Children
crayons and paper
biscuits water no new shoes
tent flap pegged against the wind

~Afghanistan

pickup trucks in convoy
young men with guns
crowded in the back
government troops or rebels
what difference when children die

~Sudan

in the shopping centre
skipping child on each hand
in khaki and combat boots
his hands still smell of gun oil
eyes still scan for threat

travel paper stamped
approved for border crossing
checklist marked OK
country of origin brown skin
no guarantee of entry

some streets
become our country
I find you
in the same place police
know where to find us

rainbow T-shirt
and combat pants
a fashion statement
until uniform exchange
makes her a soldier

~Australia

Sandra Renew worked in post-conflict or war zones in Indonesia, Afghanistan, Sudan, and Sri Lanka, over a period of twelve years from 2000-2011 delivering programs for children who were growing up knowing only war as normal in their country. She now lives in Canberra, Australia. Her tanka is published internationally including in Haibun Today, Skylark and Atlas Poetica.

broken

Scott Pickett

I promised
I would write
and I kinda lied
I'm sorry . . .
I'm in Oswiecim

I spent
6 hours
at Auschwitz I
and Auschwitz II
Birkenau

I am broken
I am crying as I write this
I will be back
in a few days
all the gods willing

a bottle
of Zubrovka
costs 20 zlotys
let's see how fast I can make
this thing disappear

There are a whole bunch of things I'd like to say.
I don't know which things might be relevant.
Or appropriate.
Or off the mark.
Or speak too much of rage rather than
compassion and usefulness.
So for now . . . I'll say nothing.

~Oswiecim, Poland

Oświęcim is a town in the Lesser Poland province of southern Poland, situated 50 kilometres (31 mi) west of Cracow, near the confluence of the Vistula (Wista) and Sola rivers. The town is commonly known for being the site of the Auschwitz concentration camp (the camp is also known as KL or KZ Auschwitz Birkenau) during World War II when Poland was under the control of Nazi Germany.

Scott Pickett lives in Calgary, Canada with a beloved cat and is a musician and a tuner of pianos and a runner of films in dark cinemas. He is a raging introvert but also loves deeply some few people. He just turned fifty and decided it was time to follow his dream and travel across the world to Russia on a motorbike. So he has, stopping at many places along the way. He is kin to Joy McCall but that is accidental and not her fault.

Shernaz Wadia

all he asked for
were his human rights
not the earth and sky
the 'savarnas'
gave him 0 . . . (nought)

savarnas—The four major social classes defined in Hindu texts.

barbs of bigotry
burst through its hole
to dehumanise him
casteism re-triumphed
in his suicide

neither
ready answers
nor right questions
brought meaning
to this late dalit's life

~India

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 Avriil Meallem.

Tanja Trček

sitting
on a cushion of air
I'm eating
wild strawberries
dipped in sunshine

chirp chirp —
shh
a cricket
has good news
to share

the crystal river was cold
the ferns dense
I breathed sunlight
and peace
was easy

on the rocks
of peeling silver
turquoise moss
sways softly
in the midnight river

cypresses
and lavender fields
under a sepia sun —
grandma's box
of photos

in the wind
the grasses join
their tiny green hands
and dance
and dance

under that old shrub
i found a stray sadness,
shivering, its coat matted,
it kept licking
its past

with its sleepy orange eyes
the morning peeked
through the window
reached for grandma's teacup
and ate it

just when i was
about to fall asleep
the night snuggled up to me
the stars on its blue pajamas
twinkling happily

to have
two small fairy tales
and a garden
with an old pear tree
between them

she flows through the night
her blue wet eyes
searching for a sea
in which she could
rest

~*Golnik, Slovenia*

Once an all-around athlete, Tanja Trček is now mostly bedbound. She often finds the enormity of her illness overwhelming and seeks refuge in small things, her very favorite among them being tanka. Seemingly small poems, but with the power to give meaning to one's life, maybe to even save lives.

At the Table

Tish Davis

Half-orphans with nowhere to go; our
grandparents take us in for a little while.

his carving knife
across the grain
the white ruffles
on grandmother's apron
barely move

while he leads the prayer
thanking God for this meal
my sister
wiggles
on the Yellow Pages

after learning
about Protestants, the colored
and that Hitler's best deed
was killing Jews
we fold our napkins

~Ohio, USA, 1960

Tish Davis lives in northern Ohio. Her work has appeared in various journals including Atlas Poetica, Skylark, Haibun Today, Modern Haibun and Tanka Prose, Ribbons, Contemporary Haibun Online and others. When she isn't busy with work and grandchildren, she enjoys exploring the local parks with her husband and three dogs.

Tracy Davidson

a shocked world swore
it would not happen again
but here we are
a pit of broken bodies
stretches into forever

my grandmother
muses on how Hitler
would have tweeted . . .
much the same she thinks
but with better spelling

ashes on the breeze
a village vanishes
overnight
the few who tried to flee
only delay their slaughter

a child cowers
in the corner of a cage
the better life
her parents sought for her
a fading dream

we witness
the inhumanity
of man
yet still we close our borders
and build our walls

~Warwickshire, England

Tracy Davidson lives in Warwickshire, England, and enjoys writing poetry and flash fiction. Her work has appeared in various publications and anthologies, including: Poet's Market, Mslexia, Atlas Poetica, Writing Magazine, Modern Haiku, The Binnacle, A Hundred Gourds, Shooter, Journey to Crone, The Great Gatsby Anthology, WAR and In Protest: 150 Poems for Human Rights.

Tan Renga

Vijay Joshi & Dianne Feula

the world fails to see
another one-eyed orphan
Aleppo

NRA hides behind
the second amendment

female bones
whisper Mayan secrets
a tropical forest

a gold medal
years of sexual abuse

East Berlin
shadow of the Wall
darkens the tourist bus

a parolee struggles
under the yoke of the law

~*New Jersey, USA*

*Vijay Joshi is a published poet, having published *Reflective Musings*, a collection of contemporary poems and *Kaleidoscope of poems*, a collection of haibun, and tanka poems. His poems are published in *Atlas Poetica*, *Haibun Today*, *Chrysanthemum*, *Contemporary Haibun*, and *US 1 worksheets*.*

*Dianne Feula has worked on an archaeological dig in Belize, leads writing workshops for seniors. She is published in *NJ Journal of Poets*, *Voices from Here*, *Stillwater Review*, *Exit 13*, *Submerged: Tales from the Basin*, *Adama*, and *US 1 Worksheets*.*

Is it the wind that howls? ryuka triptychs, by Joy McCall & Liam Wilkinson

Reviewed by Patricia Prime

Is it the wind that howls? ryuka triptychs
Joy McCall & Liam Wilkinson
Skylark Publishing (2018)
RRP: \$10
Pb 59 pp

The volume of Joy McCall and Liam Wilkinson *is it the wind that howls?* contains ryuka triptychs. These poems constitute the authors' working as a team, not a consequence of the scale of the enterprise, but of a shared enthusiasm: the project is a labour of love.

The perspectives are appropriate, perhaps inescapable. The poems appear in three verses: one poem per page, with verses by Liam Wilkinson in bold and those of Joy McCall in italics. The three ryuka that make up the poems contain four lines each with a syllable pattern of 8-8-8-6.

The world of the poems is less a world than a sure tract of country, home and nature. They seem to have two principal atmospheres: one of wildness and one of solitude. Partly one is reminded of the nostalgic recreation of the atmosphere of the seasons and of our place in nature. The poems have a quality of the magical and evoke unmistakably the world around us. In the ryuka "home", for example, we witness home, the mountain pass and spring in England:

miles away from the nearest wave
deaf to gull and cries of fresh fish
I think of Weaponness, my home
where winds have learned my name

*hidden in a high mountain pass
where the air is rare — a circle . . .
curled against a great stone, I sleep
and dream of the old ones*

a spring is wound around England
tendrils green each waking woodland
from surging sea to standing stone
our vagrant wishes rove

There is a genuine complexity of mood and method in the ryuka. Here, reminiscence passes into daydream, waking to a conscious exercise of the power of poetic imagination. There is an attractive insouciance in the proceeding, a freshness and vitality in the results, and a breath of yearning about the poems, which are characteristic of both these poets, and make up a large part of the enchantment of the poems. We see, for example, in “a sanshin,” the magic of a musical instrument and the friendship which exists between the poets:

yet more magic from the hedgewitch . . .
at my door, a long slender box
fragile—musical instrument
my heart strings start to play

*what are pieces of wood and string
compared to the heart's ryuka
singing its ancient native song
over the land and sea?*

a sanshin from Okinawa
with thin wood in place of snake skin
three strings to hang my poems on . . .
each song, my friend, is yours

These are poems that are quiet and reflective. They are evocations of stillness and experiences mulled over in quiet. The poets write verses that are always vital and intellectually stimulating. It is hard to choose from any one poem to illustrate the vitality, the natural and the social senses, and the linguistic bravura that belong to this collection. “Risen again,” a fine ryuka about walking in spring across flood plains, illustrates some of these themes:

from hedge to hedge goldfinches fly
as the dawn makes its promises
and I stomp across the flood plains
glad of another day

*a plain little greenfinch is perched
chirping on the weathering cross
where the bones of the old cat lie
under pebbles and grass*

now the sun is risen again
spring colours sing from the hawthorn
where a last brambling forages
before his eastward flight

“The devil’s brew” is a fine poem about the poets delight in nature, the moon and dimming stars. These two verses illustrate some of this:

*the sign says ‘don’t drink from this well’
heedless I lie down on the bank
let my face fall into the stream
and sip the devil’s brew*

rustling in the oaks, a pale moon
claims its seat in the dimming sky
I wipe my lips, I close my eyes
and spread my limestone wings

McCall and Wilkinson look at things carefully at nature and human nature with a passion and verve that tells you what they think and mean. This is a great collection of vibrant and intelligent verse from two fine poets.

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.

Stacking Stones, An Anthology of Short Tanka Sequences Published by Keibooks

Stacking Stones, An Anthology of Short Tanka Sequences
M. Kei, Editor
List Price: \$16.00 paperback / \$5.00 Kindle
7" x 10" (17.78 x 25.4 cm)
Black & White on White paper
202 pages
ISBN-13: 978-1722375454
BISAC: Poetry / Anthologies

Tanka have been compiled into sequences ever since they were first invented more than a thousand years ago. It is only natural to continue this tradition today. In the pages of this anthology you will find the first comprehensive treatment of short tanka sequences composed in English. Over 100 contributors, working as solo poets or collaborating in teams, have produced short sequences (2-13 tanka) and tanka prose covering a wide range of human experience and emotion. Some of the finest tanka poets have joined together to create an anthology that is a 'sequence of sequences,' serving as an exemplar of the synergy of using tanka as building blocks in larger, more complex works.

Sample Poems

from 'Spun'

*the artist
brushes her cheek
passionflower
what color is it
in the dark*

on my day off
at a downtown exhibit
staring intently
at the reds
in a Gaugin painting

*Kath Abela Wilson, California, USA
Matsukaze, Texas, USA*

from 'Turn, Turn'

In a world torn by war and corruption, I fret
about the things I throw away, the things I lose,
the things that go and never return.

first day of summer,
spitting watermelon seeds
into the compost heap,
a few months later,
I have more watermelons

M. Kei, Chesapeake Bay, USA

from 'Wartime Love'

weeks would go by without news
then three or four come at once

now he returns home
in a wheelchair, thin and pale
I see past the scars
to the man I used to know
the man he still is inside

Tracy Davidson, Warwickshire, England

from 'Snow'

the Inuktitut
articulate what
I cannot —
the subtle details
of winter and life

qanittaq:
the layering of snow
and ice
the heaviness of all
these years

Marianne Paul, Canada

from 'Wild Swans'

and I sing in some ancient chorale, or spell,
as if I were singing the land into existence,
chanting the green songs, making wishes in that
magical time, the white swans lifting now from
the waters, powering their white wings like winds,
and taking me deep into distant skies, with their
ballet and moving and sublime and their wild,
their declaration of spring:

the sun at last:
winter fades
into
the flight
of swans

their wings wilder and wilder . . .

*A. A. Marcoff, Leatherhead, in the Mole Valley,
England*

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excerpts from the foreword by

Caroline Skanne

ai li has launched
december loneliness
her new book of cherita and
tanka

december loneliness is the title of ai li’s first cherita and tanka book which features 90 virgin poems with a one poem to a page format, and now available in print and on Kindle on Amazon. It is also her twenty-third book, and belongs to her Poems for Inner Rooms series.

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If any of the above four books strike a chord with you, please feel free to review, comment on Amazon or give a feedback directly to me. Many thanks.

ai li
editor
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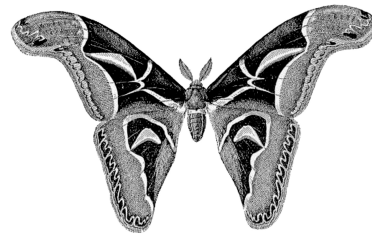
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Editorial Biography

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*.

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