

ATLAS
POETICA
A Journal of World Tanka

Number 35

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Atlas Poetica
A Journal of World Tanka

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 We do not publish haiku, except as incidental to a tanka collage or other mixed-form work.

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

In addition to verse, *Atlas Poetica* publishes articles, essays, reviews, interviews, letters to the editor, etc., related to tanka literature. Tanka in translation from around the world are welcome in the journal.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<p>Editorial</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"><i>Challenges and Determination</i>, M. Kei.....5</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Educational Use Notice92</p> <p>Poetry</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">A. A. Marcoff.....7</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Adjei Agyei-Baah.....17</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">ai li8, 9, 10</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Alexis Rotella11, 12</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Akane13</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Amelia Fielden.....15</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Autumn Noelle Hall15, 16</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Benjamin Taylor.....17</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Bill Albert18, 19</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Billy Simms.....60</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Brendan Slater.....19</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Carol Raisfeld22, 26</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Charles D. Tarlton27, 31, 35</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Charles Harmon.....39</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Christopher Costabile.....39</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Cynthia Rowe40</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Daniel Birnbaum.....40</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Ed Bremson41</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Elizabeth Howard.....41</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Hilde Devos74, 75</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Ignatius Fay42</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Jackie Chou43</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Joanna Ashwell44</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Joanne Morcom45</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Joe Witt45</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Jonathan Day45</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Joy McCall.....46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Kathryn Bold.....52</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Kazuaki Wakui53</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Lavana Kray55</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Lorne Henry.....54, 55</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Lynda Monahan.....56</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">M. Kei.....56</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Mark Jun Poulos57, 58, 59, 60</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Martin McKellar60</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Marilyn Humbert.....62</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Maryalica Post64</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Matsukaze.....62</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Michael H. Lester.....13, 22, 26, 65, 66, 67, 68</p>	<p>Mike Dillon.....68</p> <p>Nadine Hayes69</p> <p>Patricia Prime70, 72</p> <p>Paul Callus72</p> <p>Paul Mercken.....74, 75</p> <p>Pawel Markiewicz76</p> <p>Ray Spitzenberger77</p> <p>Shernaz Wadia77, 78</p> <p>Tim Lenton79</p> <p>Tish Davis.....80</p> <p>Articles</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Review: <i>Stacking Stones: An Anthology of Short Tanka Sequences</i>, M. Kei, ed., reviewed by Charles D. Tarlton.....81</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Review: <i>Norfolk Ways</i> by Tim Lenton and Joy McCall, reviewed by M. Kei.....88</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Review: <i>The Owl Still Asking, Tanka for Troubled Times</i> by Kath Abela Wilson, reviewed by M. Kei.....89</p> <p>Announcements.....90</p>
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Challenges and Determination

Over the past couple of months, challenges have beset Keibooks and our flagship journal, *Atlas Poetica : A Journal of World Tanka*. These troubles are not of our making, but are due to decisions by Amazon that impact our business.

First, Amazon, owner of both CreateSpace, our printer, and Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP), our ebook publisher, has decided to roll all of CreateSpace into KDP, sharply diminishing international sales and support, and complicating the publication of the journal. It is not just a new piece of software to learn; it's less competent software that does less and requires more skills and workarounds on our end.

Second, although CreateSpace sold at Amazon.in, KDP does not, so our Indian customers will have to purchase our titles through a third party. Likewise, Amazon is currently embroiled in a tax dispute with Australia, so has stopped selling physical books in Australia. Some Australian customers tell me they find Book Depository UK to be a satisfactory alternative.

Third, KDP supports fewer languages than CreateSpace. It doesn't support Sinhalese, Hebrew, or Twi, for example. Some languages, such as Japanese, it supports only in ebook but not in print. I have a workaround for this; if worse comes to worst I can turn unsupported text into jpegs. This means more work for me, but it can be done.

Another major problem is the sharp reduction in support for covers. The 'cover creator' for KDP is a low feature, inadequate system. I have hired a freelancer in France to make covers to my specifications. She will also assist me with some other technical matters. Because of the need to support many languages across many markets, I anticipate some ongoing issues even when the immediate challenges are completed.

Donors volunteered financial and moral support, and it is thanks to them that I am able to overcome the current hurdles. I am grateful to Joy McCall, Chen-ou Liu, John Gonzales, Michael H. Lester, Marianne Paul, Carol Raisfeld, Richard St. Clair, Joanna Ashwell, Kathryn Bold, David Rice, Jon Baldwin, and

Debbie Strange who collectively donated over \$565.00 US. This should be enough to fund the technical work for at least six months, perhaps longer. I am cautiously optimistic that will be sufficient.

Unfortunately, Amazon's reduced support for international markets, especially Australia where there are so many tanka readers, is hurting sales. With Christmas coming up, I hope you will consider purchasing any of Keibooks publications and donating them to libraries, schools, poetry clubs, or other groups.

Updating you all on how we're meeting the challenges doesn't leave much room for discussing the contents of the issue, but I do want to draw attention to multiple long format entries, such as Charles Tarlton's use of a movie script format to write tanka prose. We have multiple poets represented with large selections in the journal. Indeed, ATPO is large format precisely so that we can publish works that are simply too large for other journals.

As an international journal, we have contributions in seven different languages, including our first Maltese tanka by Paul Callus. Also Polish, German, Dutch, English, and Japanese, as well as selections in Twi. This is not our first for this African language. We published Twi all the way back in #7. We're pleased to see more development of tanka in Africa, and you'll find a call for submissions to a tanka journal in Ghana in the announcements.

We're also pleased to publish Nadine Hayes in her first ever publication. We found her writing tanka and other literature on Twitter and encouraged her to submit, and we think you'll be glad she did.

~K~

M. Kei
Editor, Atlas Poetica

Gulf Coast (USA) oil slick.

Cover Image courtesy of Earth Observatory, NASA.
<http://eeoimages.gsfc.nasa.gov/images/imagerecords/44000/44466/gulfcoast_ali_2010177_brg.jpg>

a hymn to the mother

A. A. Marcoff

something had broken in the moment, the gospel thread that binds our lives had been cut like the fabric of nature, and it was a time for sorrow, or pain: my mother was beginning her final journey, I knew it in my heart, and my father and I vowed we would look after her ourselves, at the family home, her home, and the nurses came to support us, and advise us, and they brought a special bed, and father and son, we were resolved to see it all through, whatever happened, to the end: and I had read this all before, years before, when the son in ‘Sons and Lovers’ watches his mother die, and how could I ever forget, that D H Lawrence book of the heart: and my sister came from faraway, over the seas, and she was so welcome to be with us, and my mother was overjoyed to see her, saying she hadn’t known if she would ever see her beloved daughter again, in time, and there were tears . . .

and it fell to me to cook and shop and feed the family, and we took turns to watch with her, and we put a television in her room, and she was always smiling, and with our help she was able to see for the last time her lovely winter cherry tree in full pink blossom, and the time moved gently on, and the days, the weeks, until suddenly things became critical, and a coda came to our lives, and a specialist nurse arrived, a mature woman with great knowledge and wisdom, who kept watch at night while we tried to sleep, and called us from our beds sometimes when the going became dangerous, and we played music on the radio, knowing that hearing is the last sense to fade, and we told her it was all right, she could go in peace when she wanted to, and I told her she had given me the beauty of the world, a beauty that Dostoyevsky thought would save us all, and we said our farewells, as she slid slowly away from us, and moved into the grey, and slowly, slowly, early one afternoon, she left us, and I went downstairs alone to the breath of the garden in early spring, and straight away saw a butterfly

there, the first butterfly I had seen that year, and I wrote:

into
the spring—
a golden butterfly

and we knew our lives had changed forever, and we made the arrangements that were cold and necessary, and went to celebrate her wonderful life, in music, with arias from ‘La Traviata’, her favourite by Verdi, and there were words we had written, and poems, and we made our hymn to our mother, and we sang, and we knew deep in our souls, the beauty and transience of things, and I wrote:

the morning
of her funeral:
walking in the light
of dawn — the grass
pink with fallen blossom

and my father said, yes, that’s it exactly, and afterwards, we came back to her home in a large black limousine, in silence now, and we gathered the heart of the family at large, and we spoke the language of new hope, as we remembered the words of Tagore: ‘death is not the extinguishing of the light, it is the putting out of the lamp because the dawn has come’ . . .

it is the light of the earth that is our hymn and our sun, and I went down to the waters with the birds and their new echo and opera, and there were swans white as the wings of light itself, and the river ran through my dreams, my thoughts, and I made a quiet reading alone, of Christina Rossetti, her

~2~

poem my mother had so much loved, and in the land of early morning, when the sun was rising on the earth and the hills were coming into view, I committed her ashes to the water, light to light, and let the river become her future, her new life, and let the waters take her to her destiny, in this place of perpetual becoming,

when the sun was the whole of the world, which
was so charged with light, and a single robin
sang, wild in its love of morning:

rising
with the sun
how the world rings out
with the light
of a robin's song

and she is here now, in this place of
duckweed and the song of water, in the spectrum
of kingfisher and sun and heron: and the birds
are the river's currency and the heron its steel
grey poise, the gold flow of willow and willow,
reaching, reaching . . .

this
gemstone green river
a course
for kingfishers
a course for dreams

nature is the mother of our moment, river
that is spontaneous now and blue with kingfisher
and sublime with bird: it is a system driven by the
wild, grey and blue and white and green and
flowing through time into whisper and eternity:
and the river is a jewel, carries a universe of sun
and moon and star: it is complete with snowdrops
that cluster together their petal and their light,
and the sound of the river is grey: willows fall to
the water like dream: and it goes on, swan after
swan, moment after moment . . .

swans
galaxies
the deep white wing
of
the river

and in the flower-shadows of the mind, let
the birds sing us to the ground we need, bring us
to the land of the mother, and when a swan flies
into light, it is searching for the sun, as the land is
sprung with a necessary flow and flourishing: and
I hear that song by Mahler, of the earth, echoing
through sky and space and momentum, and I
can hear those thousands praying, by the sacred

river that passes through Varanasi, city of the
light and its pilgrims, where eternity comes like a
river to the moment, and water like the dawn to
new life, caught up in a cycle of light and shadow,
river that is bound for the ocean, bound for a
distant wave . . .

~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.*

back roads

ai li

you can't hold
autumn back
leaves must fall
bare trees your face
older in the mirror

clear space
for a slow dance
moonlight
on
old parquet

a farewell
the mountain
path
making it
remote

i have never struggled
to find
my voice
it was always
within me

a leaf
falling into
my reverie
autumn chill
the fire real low

past midnight
the rain
now a drizzle
in my turban
reading tea leaves

casino-bound
the last
of your savings
in your man bag
and a new sharp blade

cut down
in his youth
his mother's room
still smelling
of undried tears

a cold spell
the steam
from my hot drink
in this dark place
like vanishing smoke

wildflowers
just one
in my hand
to remember
this moment

~Singapore and London, UK

falling into cherita

ai li

one day

your boat
will come

under
cloud and rain
with no oars

a man

and a woman
under a full moon

this autumn night
making
new memories

who stopped playing

our songs?
evening mist

the call for prayer
in
a distant land

love

has become
your destination

but the tickets
have been sold out
for decades

word paradise

won't you
meet me

halfway
clutching your
lexicon?

hot and bothered

i remove
the layer

of vanity
to find
so much old skin

another time
another place

for me
to play you
drowning

in your suburbia

friday

the 13th
falling

on a friday
a razor
the bath red

after your death

i open all
the windows

of your apartment
to set
your soul free

*where do you go to my lovely
when you're alone
in your bed?*

an old song

for the movie queens
of the silver screen

~Singapore and London, UK

star bright
a melange of tanka and cherita

ai li

i'm always
on tiptoe
in the attic
trying
to see the stars

i love you

in
this narrow space

we call *us*
i am naked
i have goose pimples

looks and money
exchanged
you go up the stairs
into red light
heaven

i'm new again

after rain
smelling of

orange blossoms
i found
in my bed

war and peace
on your library card
the bookmark
still in place
smelling of you

a layer of dust

in your room
i trace your name

and wait
hopelessly
for your return

i write
*the temperature
is dropping*
the cold becomes
the fourth line

you tell me

i adorn
your dream

not speaking
my lips
pagoda red

someone watching
me eat
someone
with
blue eyes

no hearts today

in
the butcher's window

only mine
in the rain
still beating

~Singapore and London, UK

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.

Cherita

Alexis Rotella

a black turtleneck

doesn't quite hide
his hickey

he said he was
preparing for
the bar exam

~Maryland, USA

From Light to Dark

Alexis Rotella

Tucked away
in a travel book
a photo
of the Eiffel Tower
mud splattered

In our shared sleeper car, three Italian women cluck away. Just as I doze off, there's a tap at the door. My husband whispers, "We're leaving — don't ask questions — just dress, gather your things and be ready to disembark."

"The compartment door, which I failed to lock, opens," he explains. "I watch with one eye while a long arm reaches in to snatch the wallet from my bunkmate's jacket pocket. So adept are his fingers, I'm sure he's a professional. At the same time, I'm afraid my teeth will start to chatter. He'll find me out and slash my throat.

"After the crook leaves, I awake the elderly gentleman. I also wake up the conductor and agree to walk with him through the train. I spot the grizzly man. His eyes are closed. His face in need of a razor."

In a gendarmerie station in the Alps during the coldest month of the year, a gloved police officer hunts and pecks at a manual Olivetti typewriter. Speaking only rudimentary English, he translates into French the criminal complaint my husband will sign. The policeman assures us the thief will be thrown into a dark dank prison for a long time. Chills run up our spines.

The train seats are cold. We're the only passengers on this pre-dawn run. Our breath clouds turn to crystals.

In my purse
yellow baby booties
unravel . . .
I'll go empty handed
to tonight' shower

~*United States*

No Chance for Us

Alexis Rotella

No one looks at me the way you do. No one ever will. Your laser eyes. They make me giddy. Wherever I move, your eyes follow. I put on my cowgirl boots. I'm about to go out in the pouring rain for a walk alone. You watch. No, you devour. I'm a strawberry parfait with extra cream. A slice of sponge cake with extra raspberry jam in front of a glass pastry case.

You've never been in a house that feels as good as mine. I want to say it's you who makes my house feel like it floats. You say I'll never die; I'll just disappear. I'm an angel dressed in gossamer. Michelangelo chiseled your face. You're from a different planet. Uranus. You know, the one that wobbles as it spins backwards. I want to fall into your strong arms. Arms that prefer young boys, the more Oriental the better.

No one on
the other end
but you
and the trickle
of a waterfall

~*United States*

Alexis Rotella from Arnold, Maryland is a visual storyteller and mobile photographer. Her latest book, Unsealing Our Secrets (MeToo short story poems), is available on Amazon and Kindle.

twilight sky, a kukame

Akane & Michael H. Lester

*crash of waves
a twilight sky
the smell of cooking stew
and a hint
of burning sage*

love beads hang from the head jamb
madrass on her mattress
I put my odds at 80–20

*like cayenne pepper
hot and spicy
a post-autumn love affair reaching fever-pitch*

water buffalo
graze along the river bank
tail-flicking flies
she guides my clumsy hand
with a faraway look

*damp sakura leaves
on the floor
next to the bed
discarded blue briefs—
dense rain and pungent pine-scent*

ebony skin
discovering the mysteries
of an aborigine girl

*red azalea-fine weather—
downtown traffic
thick and noisy*

my lawyer tells me
the charges are bogus
my passport
lies on some bureaucrat's desk
my dreams of Fiji shattered

*hurtling into another Summer
taking pills
for the nerve pain
in my foot—
i need a vacation!*

how badly
I wish she would lie
just once

*edges of your words
turn yellow
this indifference, thick*

the hammering
of a solitary woodpecker
so much work
for such a small meal
she's gone before I wake

*“summertime
and the livin' is easy . . .”
down dim alleyways
a cold breeze
and a few mangy cats*

uncomfortable
the way they look at me
scattered syringes

*dry crackling
of dead leaves burning
all their eyes, daggers*

each leaf
a funeral pyre
see how they run
on eight spindly legs
to escape the immolation

*Wagner's “Immolation Scene . . .”
in front of me
construction plastic
and the yellow
of ‘Caution’ tape*

once again
I cross her red line
into the pink

*in silence
gentle snores
of the other one*

promise me
you will never worship
another God
in return I promise
not to smite your first-born

*you've grown pagan
in your ways—
a balmy afternoon
listening to a broadcast
of MacBeth*

a taste of power—
driven to madness and death
on foul witches' brew

*"thou shalt get kings, though thou be none . . ."
frying chicken breasts
this late noon*

twenty bucks
for a feather pillow
she clucks
a souped-up t-bird
runs a stop light

*from the upstairs window
watching
Troy Donahue
re-painting the boat—
"A Summer Place"*

lyrics aside
Stockard Channing
is no Sandra Dee

*the evening cool—
thinking of Japanese Lanterns
preppin' for bed*

the bugs
come for the light
yet they bring nothing
knowing they are freeloaders
makes them easier to swat

*old love songs
some out-of-the-way
juke-joint—
drinking weak beer
in silence*

As 'Time Goes By'
plays on the jukebox
two men slow dance

*cool evening draft—
electric blue briefs
on the floor*

~Dallas, Texas / Los Angeles, California, USA

Notes

A *kukame* is an exciting medley of free-form Haiku and Tanka. It is a 31 stanza linked poem made up of haiku [from one to three lines] and tanka [from five lines to 3-2 or 2-3 format] which can be used in any order of preference that a writer or writers so wish.

The *kukame* can be written solo or with up to six writers. It was created by ai li on the 21 November 2001. The first piece 'blue burqas *ancient paths*' was written by ai li and Alexis K. Rotella.

Michael H. Lester, a lawyer and CPA, practices business management in Los Angeles for the entertainment industry. He writes poetry for the sheer agony and disappointment it injects into an otherwise idyllic existence. Some call Michael a workaholic. If he were not so busy working all the time, he would take issue with that.

Akane enjoys both the immediacy and lasting resonance of English Language short verse. Akane lives in Texas, USA.

Amelia Fielden is an Australian translator of Japanese literature, with deep attachment to Japan.

Two Spring Days

Amelia Fielden

During my longish life I have only twice had the delight of visiting a dedicated peony garden. Both gardens are in Japan.

The first time was in 1969. Living then in Tokyo, I learned from the local newspaper of peonies in full bloom at a temple north of the city. On a work-free day Derek and I caught a train there, with our small daughter in a push-chair. We were overwhelmed by the rainbow spectrum, and the lushness, of the spring flowers. The many slide photographs we took were later lost in our divorce, but I have the mental pictures to this day.

*April love
so young, so hopeful
golden yellow
deep crimson, fragile pink
colour prints in my heart*

Almost half a century later, with a dear friend from student days, I discover a second peony paradise.

This one lies secluded, within the grounds of the Hachimangu Shrine, which is a popular tourist destination in the historic town of Kamakura, south of Tokyo.

Strolling up the long crowded avenue towards the scarlet shrine, we notice off to the side of a large lotus pond, bamboo fencing and a gate with a discreet sign, 'Peony Garden'. There are few people inside, and we wander joyfully among the beds of brilliant blooms planted under cherry blossom trees lining the banks of the pond.

*a chance visit
maybe the last chance
together
we take photos to show
our grandchildren*

~Japan

Hell's Half-Acre

Autumn Noelle Hall

It is off-season, so I am not at all prepared for by-the-busload bourgeoisie beneficiaries of our world's fastest-growing economies — well-heeled legal aliens in possession of visitor visas and Benjamins-a-plenty. I have long thought we Ugly Americans the leaders of the global pack when it comes to arrogance, ignorance, and rudeness. But as I learned first-hand, Interpretive Ranger-style, there are new Alpha Wolves howling at Yellowstone these days.

a buffalo herd
obstructing the parking lot
tourists
pushing and shoving
kicking up a fuss

primping teens
cells held like compact mirrors
between selfies
in front of the mud pots
spitting on sacred ground

fumaroles
venting heat from the bowels
smoke pouring out
of ears which can hear
entitlement in any tongue

I resist multi-lingual sarcasm and battle the bigotry bubbling up from my gut. I tell myself that this place is a wonder all peoples deserve to see. That I am proud to be a tax-paying contributor to our World's First National Park, and pleased to catch the better parts of a colorful Artist Paintpots' worth of languages — French, Korean, Chinese, Russian, Elk, Trumpeter Swan, and Coyote . . .

Camera in hand, I am happy to make room at the overlook for a backpack-strapped college kid visiting on intrepid foot, "Just taking it all in . . ." Happy, that is, until a woman-of-a-certain-age-and-from-a-certain-place (where manners are apparently optional) uses the

universal language of bone to elbow him out of her way. All so her marriageable charge—in a long peach scarf, and longer peach skirt, and panorama-wide peach hats—can perch on the overlook wall directly above the No Sitting or Standing on Wall sign smirking a peachy cover-girl smirk. Having just shot over 400 tourist-free landscapes in four days, I am incensed at the way they and their hired photographer reduce the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone—and its stunning 308-foot plunge fall—to mere backdrop.

A lesser part of me wants to exhibit a universal gesture of my own.

But the greater part of me recalls Chief Joseph and the way my own manifest-destined white government violated legal treaties to rob him of his homeland; and then charged its white calvary to pursue what was left of his people through the very place I am now standing; all before rounding them up, frozen and exhausted, and shipping them off to Ft. Leavenworth.

Right on cue, hot shame surges up like a geyser. My heavy heart reminds me that we are all “foreign devils” here on Hell’s Half Acre.

mile upon mile
of native lodgepole pine
the same kind
that invading beetles
decimated Nation-wide

all eroding
the way wind and water carve
rock
stark beauty revealed
by that which is removed

a caldera
just three miles underfoot
ready to blow
us all to kingdom come
without prejudice

~*Yellowstone National Park, USA*

Cool Hand Fluke

Autumn Noelle Hall

“What we’ve got here is failure to communicate . . .”
—*Paul Newman, in the final scene of Cool Hand Luke*

as we turn left
across 24 West
the gloves come off—
no really, both gloves fly
right over the windshield

It takes some seconds before we realize what they are—some sleek legal weed adverts? A flapping pair of frantic blackbirds? No . . . my brand new mitts. Now smack dab in the middle of a divided highway zooming with mountain-bound traffic. Damn handy, those gloves—just my size—just right for hiking in this not-quite-spring weather. But hardly worth dying for.

“Did you put them on the hood?” the now-irritated driver that is my husband inquires.

“No—and I’ve no idea how they could’ve gotten there . . .”

I retrace my steps
from the house to his car
gloves in hand
hands in lap, along with purse
along for the ride

we park at the store
(dog back seat barking)
“SIT!” I bark back
as I exit the car
unseating my gloves, no doubt

“Maybe another customer picked them up and left them on the hood,” I offer, ungratefully wishing the helpful soul had left well enough alone. I might have noticed my gloves on the ground outside the car door . . . I had before.

habits
these unbreakable chains
bane of my existence—
how many licks does it take
to get to one's own center?

the answer
to times I questioned
abandoned shoes
along life's highway . . . ?
walk a mile in 'em

~Woodland Park, Colorado, USA

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

~Sydney, Australia

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's 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.

Ben 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.

Adjei Agyei-Baah is a language lecturer, translator, editor and presently a PhD candidate at University of Waikato, New Zealand. He is the co-founder of Africa Haiku Network, Poetry Foundation and Mamba Journal, Africa's first international haiku voice. Adjei is a worldwide anthologized poet and winner of several international awards.

Agyei Agyei-Baah ye brɔfo kyerekyerɛni, kasa nkyerease, samifoɔ, sane ye adesuanɔ a w'afano wɔfoforɔ wɔ Waikato suapɔn mu a ɛwɔ New Zealand abrokyiman mu. Ɔye Africa Haiku Network, Poetry Foundation ne Mamba (abibiman haeku nwoma a edikan) kɔfabae mu baako. Agyei anwensem ahyeta wiase afanan nyinaa, sane agyegyɛ abasobɔdee pii.

Adjei Agyei-Baah

Adjei Agyei-Baah, Asante Twi
Translator

factory oil spillage . . .
the rainbow
finally stretched
in a gutter
dream beyond dream

when I know
nothing will happen
she brings up issues
which will turn me off
in bed

stock-still
the egret waits
for the cow to unsettle
grasshoppers
in the grass

famgo ase
a afiri adwumayɛdan mu
nyankontɔn mu tene
sɛ abaa, ma me hunu sɛ
daɛɛ akɔyi daɛɛ wɔ ho

me nim sɛ
biribiara nsi anadwo a
ɔpegɔya nkɔmmɔ a
ɛboto me bɛɛma
wɔ mpa mu

nantwinoma
gyina wɔ ne nantɛɛ mu
hwɛ sɛ nantwie
behwete mmebe
wɔ nsensan mu

~Kumasi, Ghana

Howling

Bill Albert

In Howl, his most famous poem, Alan Ginsberg saw

. . . the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,
dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,
angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo
in the machinery of night

His beatifically nightmarish vision of America in the 1950s resulted in his publisher being put on trial for obscenity. The judge ruled that the poem was not obscene, but rather had redeeming social value.

Tuning into
sound juxtapositions
I hear beat
colour flow shining
clear as Ginsberg's eye

My dear friend, the Zimbabwean disability rights advocate, Jabulani Ncube, was a powerful spirit. This spirit was married to a daunting intellect, a booming laugh and a finger-fusing handshake. Jabu was one of the founders of the disability movement in southern Africa. He died suddenly in 2012 in Namibia. He was 59.

African sun
woven into cloth
bright tendrils
wrap the memory
of Jabu Ncube

~Norwich, England

Bill Albert is a novelist and poet. He lives in Norwich, UK, near to his friend and mentor Joy McCall. As a disabled Jew he would have been a real gift for the Nazis.

Bill Albert

In 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed by 48 countries. It came about directly in response to the Nazi genocide.

fields sown with skulls
rooms of broken shoes
year zero
out of blackened land
a single red rose

~Norwich, England

useless eaters

Bill Albert

It is possible to a large extent to prevent unhealthy and severely handicapped beings from coming into the world. I have studied with interest the laws of several American states concerning prevention of reproduction by people whose progeny would, in all probability, be of no value or be injurious to the racial stock. — Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf

It is not surprising that disabled children became the first victims of the Holocaust. They were quickly followed by disabled adults.

Both offered the template for the more ambitious killings that were to follow. This included their wholesale murder in rolling gas chambers kitted out as shower trucks.

crushed faces scream
silent against glass
harbingers
of blood-red nightmares
the useless eaters

~Germany

Brendan Slater

I once read
don't know where or when
that the fern
is older than the crocodile—
I am older than both

~Barlaston Downs, Stoke-On-Trent, England

pure
at its source
the river
gives itself up
to the sea

~Humber Estuary, West of Grimsby, England

they've all
got someone
the bastards
hundreds of footsteps
don't stop at my door

~Psych Unit, Zwolle, The Netherlands

it seems time
to write a will
and leave my son
a box full of promises
with assembly instructions

~The Daily Med Collection, Tow Path, Etruria Vale, England

maybe it wasn't
all of my father
who wanted to leave us
just a part of him
unknown

~Therapy, Newcastle-under-Lyme, England

wishing
it all away
but still
the hollow smell of vomit
becoming ocean

*~Some A' road driving back from some North Wales resort
to some Private Housing Estate for the Aspirational
Working Class of the 1970s, The North Midlands of
England*

wishing we
had never started
wishing we
could begin again
. . . that damned dripping tap

~Kitchen, Flat, Etruria Vale, England

at the moment
when the moon is
precisely half
I look into the light
I look into the dark

~Leaving Tesco, Clough Street, Hanley, England

I need this route
to hold just once more
and then
I'll wring out the disease
however much there is

*~Coach to Glasgow, near Manchester heading North,
England*

what price a life—
on hearing of his death
my first thought
that damned four quid
I'll never see again

~Smack Towers, Hanley, England

every morning
I take the towpath
follow its whim
all the way to myself
and all the way back

~Trent & Mersey Canal, Etruria Vale, England

my time
my space
my consciousness
in a raindrop
that never forms

*~Bare Hotel Room, Singel 69, Amsterdam, The
Netherlands*

alone in the cold
of the early hours
we think of each other
alone in the cold
of the early hours

~In my single bed

too much
yet not enough
the moonlight beckons
I walk into the clearing
I carry my death with me

~The Woods, Wedgwood, Staffordshire, England

vulnerable too
I feel the pain
the pain you feel
because the pain you feel
is both sides of now

~Someone else's flat, Hanley, England

cycling the towpath
with custom cowhorn handlebars
to the lockman's house —
I deliver his paper
I'm not missed for hours

~*Stourbridge, England* †

†*This poem was written with the Carl Bridgewater case in mind. So I've taken poetic license and created a situation I have been in many times as a kid.*

often
in the drunkenness
of Winter
I see you, I hear you
but I can never touch you

~*Trent & Mersey Canal, Etruria Vale, England*

coal fire . . .
she pours tea
offers maybe
sympathy, or sex
I never did get the difference

~*Flat, Blurton, Stoke-On-Trent, England*

one trip
I got all the way there:
violence
just violence
some of it me

~*A Familiar Yet Unknown Dimension*

to feel love
I must feel loveless
knowing most likely
I'll die alone
alone

~*On top of my World, Tent City, Hanley, England*

autumn
in the air
the fungi
the ghosts
the cigarette burns

~*Shelton Cemetery, Stoke-On-Trent, England*

too late
far too late
to fix the mistakes
I made as a young man
calling on rolls of the dice

~*Diver's Alley, Hanley, England*

the taste
of petrol
and the farmyard
it took me to
for just those few moments

~*In the garage, cold, cobwebs, petrol can, Sunday morning, around 10 a.m.*

Brendan Slater is a father and a dreamer. He has been writing what the Imagists may have referred to, informally at least, as hokku for about 10 years and been published in a variety of magazines, e-zines, journals and anthologies.

Never Again

Carol Raisfeld

Nathan's childhood was peaceful before the war and shielded from the growing horror of Hitler's death machine. Then the terror began, being taken, put on a train and separated from all that he knew. His mother frantically trying to find a way to leave a message for his father telling him what happened.

Somehow Nathan survived the Holocaust. He emigrated to Israel and then the United States, settling down and raising a big, happy family. Five children, 12 grandchildren: Each named after one of his 32 relatives murdered by the Nazis in the Holocaust, which killed 6 million Jews.

blue skies
milking the cows
at dawn
the children on a train
to Auschwitz

~Bronx, New York, USA, 2018

International Holocaust Remembrance Day
January 27, 2019

Windblown Wildflowers

tanka pairs ~ a fantasy love story

Carol Raisfeld & Michael H. Lester

*locating each other
with a visual flick of desire
across the room
the shock of being wanted
so wanting to be needed*

she can have
anyone she wants
but who does she want?
I put my best
foot forward

so many things
I would like to say
but can't
instead I talk
about the weather

*smiling
we talk of climate change
and the heat
all about global warming
as the temperature rises*

*the curve of your back
how it tingles when kissed
tonight
the curve of your neck
and the curve of your lips*

lingering
over your softness
the heady scent
of windblown wildflowers
I become the honeybee

if you trust me
I will take you
to places
of ecstasy
never dreamed

*the suspense
as you undress me
slowly
so close, I call your name
as the candles dim*

*midnight rain
intense like a burst
of spilled beads;
your breath quick and short
trembling, each pulse on fire*

even as a boy
I never believed in magic
now, your scent
of lilac and jasmine
makes doubt disappear

I lower the straps
of your nightgown
watch it slide
down your hips as I
bring you to my lips

*eyes closed
I feel your touch
taking me
softness of whispers
the scent of our heat*

*and then
that night of shooting stars
you touched me
in a cradle of sand
I became a woman*

with trembling hand
gently I take your purity
in return
as the ocean laps the shore
I give my heart

*in moonlight
the lapping of waves
as gulls cry out
eyes closed I succumb
to your rhythm*

I do everything
in my power
to make
the moment last
forever

*with quickening
pace, your breath at my
throat, dissolving me . . .
in waves, I sink into heaven
with you deep inside*

at last
my flesh upon your flesh
my lips
discovering your secrets
learning how to please

*after love,
two umbrellas go chatting
in the rain . . .
a swirl of willow seeds
in the rushing stream*

I think of you
as autumn leaves
twirl
to the river
and drift downstream

*how you
touch me with your eyes
until
I catch my breath
and yield to your want*

if love were blind
I could not find your
velvet lips
where I long to linger
in your scarlet warmth

*your fingers
caress my neck
in a slow fan . . .
working their way down
lingering on my softness*

when your softness
glistens with dew
I enter
with a gentle thrust
and whisper in your ear

*in silence,
side by side
after love . . .
if only you knew
all of me*

I trace
a heart across
your belly
where soon I hope
will be our love child

*the window
glazed in rain
my belly
warmed by your wetness
we gleam in the dark*

as we lie sated
in the warmth of our
lovemaking
I whisper the words
you long to hear

*I suck
the brandy from
your finger
before love; whispering
promises of much more*

I slather
your belly
with brandy
and slowly lick away
the warm sweetness

dripping wet
just out of the shower
and wrapped in a towel
I still think
only of you

*palm prints
on the glass door
sharing
an early morning shower
bubbles breast to chest*

*ceiling shadows
and midnight rain, silence
between sighs . . .
in different fantasies
we read before sleep*

I read
of exotic women
in faraway lands
my fantasies fulfilled
by this woman at my side

no pugilist's blow
to solar plexus or head
can hurt so much
or cut so deep
as words of love unsaid

*collecting tips
with her tapered fingers
and slender wrist
wanting words of love
aching to be kissed*

*as morning sun
comes softly onto my bed
I wonder
would you come to me
if I needed you*

as the sea
disappears behind the clouds
I wonder
if you think of me
the way I think of you

I have
emptied my heart
and still it aches
with the thought
of you

*it happened
as the outside world
fell away
just us, slowly unlocking
each other's dreams*

playing out
a romantic fantasy
wondering
if dreams
really come true

*and still
this romantic fantasy
in winter dreams—
my summer friend
do you miss me?*

daydreaming
of the luxurious waves
in your hair
I hope to take these dreams
to bed with me

*and still
having never met
I write
to you about the poems
you lovingly wrote to me*

*kids in bed
the haiku poet indulges
in private pleasure . . .
fondling her perfect breasts
she writes erotica*

two poets
worlds apart
write of pleasures
they give themselves
wishing it were the other

*~Los Angeles to New York, USA
. . . and back again*

The Last Train to Poland a tanka pair

Carol Raisfeld & Michael H. Lester

*family taken
and all that we knew
gone
the men still together
wear stripes and tattoos*

to pass the time
on the train to Auschwitz
Jewish children
count the trees along the way
they stop at six million

*~on board a Holocaust Train en route from a Warsaw
ghetto to Auschwitz Extermination Camp*

*Michael H. Lester, currently resides in Los Angeles, California, where
he writes a little poetry every chance he gets, and hangs on to the slim
hope that someone, somewhere, someday will read it. Twitter:
@mhlester.*

*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. Twitter:@carol_red.*

Thanksgiving Day

Charles D. Tarlton

FADE IN:

INT. SUPERMARKET — DAY

A scattering of shoppers push carts up and down the aisles.

A WOMAN in her late twenties guides a grocery cart with one hand while the other steadies a baby on her hip. She moves along deliberately, thoughtfully, not buying much.

EXT. SUPERMARKET — PARKING LOT — DAY

An old Pontiac pulls into the parking lot and swings into an empty spot.

A MAN in his late twenties gets out of the car, walks toward the supermarket, and goes in.

SONG OF HIMEROS 1

a coincidence
perhaps, but nicely cunning
to align these two
it seems about to happen
when neither one was looking

we saw it coming
gradually but certain
as if the cosmos
took an interest, pulling strings
luring these unknowing ones

INT. SUPERMARKET — DAY

The Man grabs a grocery cart from the rows of nested carts and heads into the produce section.

He carefully searches among tomatoes in a bin, choosing three or four and puts them in a plastic bag in his cart.

He picks up bananas, oranges, and lettuce and then turns out of the produce section and into the next row, searching among the various kinds of coffee.

He picks a can of ground coffee and hurries along to the end of the aisle.

INT. SUPERMARKET — CEREAL AISLE — DAY

As he U-turns to the left and into the cereal aisle, the Woman is coming in his direction.

They spot each other immediately. The Woman shifts the baby on her hip.

They come closer along the cereal aisle and stop their carts side by side.

SONG OF HIMEROS 2

echoes of their past
ring like clichés in their heads
he can't think of her
without regret, she forgot
him mostly, got on with life

nevertheless, here
they are as if the planets
had aligned with them
two separate life threads twisted
but only for a second

MAN

Hey, hello. How are you doing?
(pointing to the baby)
Yours?

Their conversation is stiff although they make an effort to sound casual.

WOMAN

Yes.

The Woman looks down tenderly at the baby. The Man tries to catch her eye.

SONG OF HIMEROS 3

such a little thing
to build a wall with, like stones
for years piling up
between them who had once been
so close, inseparable

but now look at them
strangers in the most banal
setting—the grocery
store. He thinks his heart's in shreds
she's barely ruffled by it

MAN

(absently)
Long time, huh?

She doesn't answer right away, and when she does she means to deflect his question.

WOMAN

Yea . . . long time.

The Man senses her nervousness and desires to get something said. It's now or never.

MAN

You happy?

WOMAN

(buoyant)
Yes. And you?

MAN

(shrugs)
Sort of

SONG OF HIMEROS 4

a real irony
drips off his remembering
how he'd broken off
from her, how he'd coolly turned
away from his commitment

now, oh, now for sure
all his miscalculations
thunder in his ears
the irredeemable fact —
she's on her own trajectory

The Woman is nervous now and eager to leave. The Man seems to be made of lead.

WOMAN

Well

MAN

Yea

WOMAN

I'd better get going.

MAN

What's the baby's name?

WOMAN

(impatiently)
We call him Billy.

MAN

Billy After your Dad?

WOMAN

Look . . . I've got to get going . . .
it was nice to see you.

MAN

Yea . . . it was nice to see
you, too.

The Man makes a funny face at the baby as Woman walks away.

SONG OF HIMEROS 5

loss accumulates
makes his memories collide
with each current dream
as recollections derail
his recurring fantasies

does he want to go
forward? With what kind of hopes?
maybe Time will start
all over for him, erase
his regret-filled memories

~United States

Folie à Deux

Charles D. Tarlton

FADE IN:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO'S EMBARCADERO — DAY

JULIETA, a schizophrenic Hispanic woman in her early twenties, jounces along the sidewalk, heading south toward the Ferry Building.

SUPERIMPOSE: FOLIE À DEUX

She looks quickly into each and every trashcan, singing and gesticulating to an imaginary companion.

She finds a discarded McDonald's wrapper and licks the mustard and catsup off it.

She passes by, continuing her ritual singing and pleading and her figure diminishes in the distance and finally out of the shot.

LA MADONNA

fractions make a whole
rough-splintered at the edges
like a crazy quilt
loose bits blown by the vortex
must be brain pan dust devils

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO'S EMBARCADERO — DAY

PEDRO, a paranoid-psychotic young Hispanic man about 18, is walking along the sidewalk, coming in the opposite direction, heading straight for Julieta.

He also searches for scraps in trashcans, talks inaudibly in Spanish to himself, and repeatedly looks over his shoulder, as if someone were after him.

Pedro and Julieta arrive at the same time at the same trashcan. Both hesitate, neither prepared to make the first move.

Pedro steps back and gestures politely to Julieta that the trashcan is all hers. Julieta leans into the trashcan and talks back over her shoulder.

EXT. EMBARCADERO — DAY

Julieta and Pedro push a huge grocery cart filled with their possessions along the sidewalk near Fisherman's Wharf.

Up ahead FENG ZI is playing the Urhu (Chinese fiddle) in front of a small crowd of tourists. He does not play very well and the instrument screeches and moans as he saws with the bow.

They approach the back of the small crowd and stand listening.
The instrument squawks and squeals.

LA MADONNA

a kaleidoscope
that when reversed shatters his
regularity
arranging, rearranging
ordinary stuff—madness

EXT. ALCOVE IN THE PIER RAILING—DAY

Julieta and Pedro crouch against the railing with the water at their backs. They both face into the corner of the alcove.

Julieta opens her eyes wide and rolls her irises up under the lid.

Julieta and Pedro leave the alcove and hurry down the sidewalk, turn up Market street and disappear.

EXT. CIVIC CENTER HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT—DAY

Julieta and Pedro sit on the side of a fountain. They are talking to BRONCO, a black man dressed all in fur in a wheelchair.

Bronco is examining a paper bag full of orange plastic medicine bottles.

EXT. BAYVIEW SAN FRANCISCO—NIGHT

Julieta and Pedro talk to a shadowy, sinister figure through the passenger window of a parked car along an unlit street.

The only light is from the car's interior dome light. Pedro hands the figure money in a roll. He counts it, and hands Pedro an old .38 pistol.

Pedro takes the pistol, steps back, and the car drives away.

LA MADONNA

here is the goddess
comes in the night, comes in dreams
oh, does she demand
rowdy things, acts of madness
devotion to her illness

EXT. EMBARCADERO NEAR FISHERMAN'S WHARF — DAY

Julieta and Pedro walk toward the small crowd gathered around Feng Zi playing his Urhu.

Julieta takes the pistol out from under her shirt and hands it to Pedro, who takes hold of it tentatively

Pedro takes the gun and pushes his way into and through the crowd toward Feng Zi. He reaches the front and faces Feng Zi, who stops playing immediately and stares at the pistol.

Pedro raises the pistol and fires over and over until the hammer clicks repeatedly on the spent rounds.

Feng Zi is blown backwards and into the street. The crowd scatters, screaming and stumbling.

Julieta and Pedro run away up the sidewalk toward their alcove.

EXT. THE ALCOVE IN THE PIER RAILING — DAY

Julieta and Pedro crouch in the alcove. Julieta has taken charge.

Julieta opens her eyes wide and rolls her irises up under the lid.

LA MADONNA

when the way is clear
now cold calibers measure
his insane intent
it's not even his finger
on the trigger. She pulls it!

EXT. EMBARCADERO SIDEWALK — DAY

Julieta and Pedro push their grocery cart through a crowd of children in front of the Exploratorium.

Two police cars race up and screech to a stop by the curb at right angles.

Police jump out and surround Julieta and Pedro, cuff them and toss them in the back seat of a squad car.

INT. CLINIC — DAY

Julieta and Pedro are led handcuffed into the clinic.

As they pass through the revolving doors, nurses rush up and separate them. Julieta and her nurses off to the left. Pedro and his nurses off to the right.

Pedro looks painfully after Julieta as they are led away. She looks straight ahead.

LA MADONNA

devils everywhere
how do they know about my
refuge in madness?
lets me strike out frantically
thrashing the air in the night

INT. CLINIC OBSERVATION ROOM — DAY

Julieta, in street clothes, with two Doctors, watching Pedro through one-way glass.

INT. PEDRO'S ROOM — DAY

Pedro is struggling with nurse who is trying to give him an injection.

He sits up in bed and strains against the handcuffs that fasten his wrists to the bed.

INT. CLINIC OBSERVATION ROOM — DAY

Julieta turns to leave the observation room.

As she does she looks into the camera and her eyes roll up into her head, showing us only the whites.

LA MADONNA

all my enemies
are invisible. That makes
keeping eyes on them
maddening. I will kill my
way out of this, kill them all!

FADE OUT.

~United States

Crépuscule

Charles D. Tarlton

FADE TO:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO — EMBARCADERO — LATE AFTERNOON

Shadows stripe the asphalt in the road, angle across the trolley tracks, fold around the concrete curbing and low walls, and lift with the breeze into the palms and awnings where the City meets the Bay.

TORERA, a madwoman in her fifties in green overalls and a sheepskin hat stands in the middle of the intersection, making veronicas in the traffic around her with an old shower curtain.

TORERA

O-lay, this is magic.

She makes a slow pass as the car slips by. Another car, another perfect pass.

TORERA

Everyone's waiting.

And then another.

TORERA

O-lay!

She turns back from the last passing car and walks indifferently through the traffic to the curb.

THE SINGER

the things people say
in the odd spaces between
miracles. Toro!
and the black beast comes charging
in, stirring the bloody sand

father with a knife
a cold kitchen verdugo
killing phantom bulls
when the rain came up and pocked
the dream arena's red sand

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO — MARKET STREET — A LITTLE LATER

A truck pulls up and the driver gets out, takes down the hand truck, opens the fabric side of the truck, and unloads cases of beer. He stacks them on the hand truck and crosses the street, easier now because Torera is directing traffic.

THE SINGER

this ordinary
street, with its ordinary
stories, all of them
told with words and syllables
missing in syncopation

something of its calm
patiently waiting
out the whole morning
its eye where the sky's bleeding
where the sun tears it open

A *City of San Francisco* pick-up truck makes an illegal left turn and an oncoming cab crashes into it.

The TRUCK DRIVER gets out, examining the damage. The CABBY gets out and walks over, just as

. . . a police cruiser arrives and the COP gets out. He pulls a notebook from his pocket and approaches the Truck Driver first.

COP

So, what happened?

TRUCK DRIVER

Out of nowhere . . . I tell you.

CABBY

Popped up, a jack-in-the-box.

TRUCK DRIVER

Came on like gangbusters.

CABBY

Like lightning!

THE SINGER

the street's a ballet
the sun's sliding makes music

closer to the end
of the bright day, nearer dark
a dance of changing colors

sunrise or sunset
makes us aware of the world's
essential darkness
where does the bright sunshine go?
falls from the *Erdapfel's* edge

BEGIN MONTAGE

- A darkening sky blends the lengthening shadows into one.
- It starts to rain, soft and easy at first, but gradually increases to a torrent in the gutters.
- People hurry out of the street.
- Torera huddles under a maroon and white grocery awning.
- The beer guy puts away the hand truck, drops the canvas panels, and drives off.
- In the storm-darkened street neon signs are reflected in puddles.
- Convoys of cars creep by, wipers going, and leave a thin weave of tire tracks in the wet.
- Stoplights at the nearest corner click through their red- green-yellow-and-red-again phases.

END OF MONTAGE

THE SINGER

here's where the poem says
the light's beginning to fail
in expectation
everyone is queuing up
something's about to happen

butterfly stomachs
in the bleachers, shifting seats
for a better view
anticipation, shuffling
trying to gain perspective

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO — FERRY BUILDING — CRÉPUSCULE

People gather at the entrance and then stand dramatically aside as the glass doors open and the NEW PICASSO steps out.

The New Picasso wears an artist's smock and black beret.

CABBY

Look! He's coming out now!

The New Picasso carries a large palette, covered with dollops of brilliant oil paint, and a handful of brushes.

WOMAN

Oh, God! I love this!

The New Picasso walks straight out into the street.

COP

Everybody stand back!

The New Picasso pushes the bristles of a big brush into red and then into the yellow.

Standing back, as if to assess his canvas of sky, he makes a wild, sweeping stroke upwards in the air.

The clouds turn wildly red and orange in the setting sun.

The New Picasso dips the brush into paint again, sweeps the sky again, and more of sky turns darkening red and orange.

The New Picasso puts the end of a second brush into a purplish blue and then some black.

He sweeps the sky again and again, dragging the dazzling dusk of colors lower and lower down the spectrum and the sky.

The New Picasso sweeps and dips and sweeps and dips until the horizon of the world is ablaze in color just under the line where darkening cloudy sky and ocean meet.

The last bit of sun slides below the horizon.

THE SINGER

the end of the day
comes like the end of the song
necessarily
each streak of sun-reddened sky
pushes away the other

making layered stripes
the spectrum breaks in splintered
colors, more colors
sinking in the sea, the cold
sea, all the lights going out

FADE OUT.

~United States

Kyoka

Charles Harmon

seen through beer goggles
she looked good at 3 AM
kid looks good, like me
paternity lawsuit
not looking so good

welcome committee
makes you feel at home
friendly, at ease
but what's with the pitchforks?
and why's it so damn hot?

~Los Angeles, California, USA

Charles Harmon

lightning first
then thunder
flashing fists
then words that cut her
like knives

dirty old fox
guarding the henhouse
molesting the chicks
supporter of #MeToo
yeah, #HimToo

~Los Angeles, California, USA

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 . . .

Christopher Costabile

mother kneels
next to my daughter
plucking pink shells from sand
the only hint of darkness:
seaweed scraping the tide

this rich neighborhood
sounds like a construction zone
every week
an outdoor facelift
keeping the homes in vogue

at the thrift store
a row of gold clocks
no longer ticking
she asks if we should celebrate
our anniversary

first time in years
the family
all in one place:
a hospital room
where grandpa is dying

in the master's class
i keep thinking
of jokes, but alas
a room too serious
for asides

~Valrico, Florida, USA

Christopher Costabile is a musician and writer from Valrico, Florida. Currently pursuing a master's degree in film at the University of South Florida, he co-founded the now-defunct literary journal, Übernothing, and coordinates various art, music and poetry events throughout the Tampa Bay Area.

Cynthia Rowe

when I ask
for more light in this room
the builder
says he was baptised Moses,
sans the miracle gene

~Pahran, Victoria, Australia

ushered
off the plane
the barfly
takes the next
available flight

~Sydney, NSW, Australia

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

Daniel Birnbaum

the old pond
has seen so many birds
so many storms
none has broken its surface
as the first boat

this morning
I would like to fly away
with the clouds
yet where would I go
under the same sky?

my messages
all over your heart
free to read
like writings on a wall
desperately a wall

every day
during a few seconds
looking for a space
between flowers
and butterflies

in the cemetery
despite life being tortuous
everything is linear
even perhaps
the rise to Heaven

summer heat
watching the waves
come and go
on your skin
at our beat

from nowhere
the merciful wind
filling the void
your breath
perhaps a part of it now

don't ask for God
with its scarf of moving clouds
the sky
cannot be strangled
to tell the truth

grass
unless strewn with poppies
unnoticed
like people
until they bleed

~France

Daniel Birnbaum lives in France. Aside from French literary journals his poems have appeared in Acorn, Bamboo Hut Journal, Blue Heron Review, Chrysanthemum, Dragon Poet Review, Eucalypt, Failed Haiku, Modern Haiku, One-Sentence Poems, Presence, Red Wolf Journal, Shot Glass Journal, Stardust Haiku, Skylark and World Haiku Review. He has twelve books published.

Ed Bremson

I wish
I had been awake
to watch the mouse
dragging the cheesy knife
across the kitchen counter

I play God today
with an insect
on the sidewalk
and decide . . .
should it live or die?

once
full of light
the Earth now
turning
to the dark side

turn the fan on low
and lie under the covers
with eyes closed
while the cool air gently blows
all cares away

oh well,
people have lived lives
of quiet desperation
before
. . . deepening autumn

~Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Ed Bremson is an award-winning haiku poet. He has been writing and publishing poetry for fifty years. His poems have appeared recently in the journals Prune Juice, Haigaonline, Bruce Ross' Autumn Moon Haiku, and Contemporary Haibun Online, as well as in the Japanese newspapers Asahi Shimbun and Mainichi Daily. In 2017-2018 he was selected three times as Haiku Master of the Week by NHK World, Japanese TV. Ed lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, USA.

Umber Robe

Elizabeth Howard

I stand on the gallows
in a rough umber robe
an umber bonnet shades
my tear-stained face
I pretend the robe is pink

if I could marry Ramon
I would walk beside him
in pink, in my arms a spray
of delphinium, the colors
of love and joy and fruition

yet Ramon is in prison,
charged with treason,
I am charged for hiding him . . .
nevermore will I wear pink
I will go down in umber

they call him traitor
who would supplant Gallio
“the rightful heir”
Queen Delia sits on the throne
until Gallio is of age

Delia hates Ramon
because of his red hair
his grandfather's hair
the birth crown—true mark
of the rightful heir

I am only a pretty woman
sentenced to die for loving a man
they want me to beg and cry
but I will not
I will go down in silence

~Arlington, Tennessee, USA

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

Age of Responsibility

Ignatius Fay

Her first job, at 14, is working for me at one of my three pizzerias. The job is 5:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m., but with clean up, we are seldom out before 3 a.m. She lives next door with her parents, who are friends of mine. I have to do some fancy talking to get them to allow her to take a night job at such a young age. I promise to take full responsibility for her well-being and to drive her home myself after work.

Eight months later, after a particularly hard, and profitable, shift, I take the staff to an all-night bowling alley where we can get something to eat and shoot some pool. On me, of course. We have a great time, and time screams by.

The lights are on when I drop her off at 6:30 a.m. Her parents are frantic; they go up one side of me and down the other. I am speechless. Dumbfounded, in fact. That they might be worried has never even occurred to me. The fact that I am 25 years old should be irrelevant. I have given and been true to my word. She is safe, she is with me, and I drove her home. How can they be upset? This is me! The epitome of trustworthiness. Ask anyone.

Needless to say, tonight is her last shift.

first night
taught to dress pizza
with both hands
feeling like she has
ten thumbs

~Ontario, Canada

Limits

Ignatius Fay

for me
'too cold' occurs at
temperatures
others still consider
quite warm

I cannot go for a walk if the temperature is below 12°C. Any colder and the air is too chilly for my diseased lungs. Despite 24-hour oxygen therapy, my body cuts circulation to extremities to preserve oxygen levels in vital organs.

I learn my limits one beautiful September afternoon. Almost cloudless, the temperature hovers around 10°C. A bit of a breeze, but I should be fine. At the halfway point, 20 minutes from home, my fingers are becoming white and numb. My toes are losing feeling.

At my door, I have a problem — no feeling from the elbows down. I cannot get my hands in my front pants pocket to retrieve my keys. Luckily, the young lady next door is washing her car. I ask her to come and unlock the door for me. Her puzzled look turns to concern when she sees my hands.

awkward
although I admit
too many years
since a woman groped
around in my pants

~Ontario, Canada

Ignatius Fay, a disabled invertebrate paleontologist, writes haiku, tanka, haibun and tanka prose. His poems have appeared in many respected online/print journals. Breccia (2012) is a collection of these forms, a collaboration with Irene Golas. He is the current editor of the Haiku Society of America Bulletin, and resides in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada.

Jackie Chou

uncracked
fortune cookie —
will its promise
still come true
in my pocket?

group home
my laundry disappeared
then reappeared
on someone else
three days later

submitting poems
there's no turning back
once I click "send"
they're now on the wings
of cyberspace birds

diary entries
from adolescence
instead of brilliance
I discover
perfect penmanship

like a tortoise
I not only win races
but know
I have a better heart
than the lovely hare

~California, USA

Cherita

Jackie Chou

his Chicano accent

inspired me
to speak in class

we became inseparable
two brown birds
in a white milieu

my father's mother

had a secret
for longevity —

apologizing every night
for truths she spurted
during the day

~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.

Joanna Ashwell

a kiss in snow
ice pearls melt
on your lips
the way we meet
lost in all the edges

darkest side
of the moon
where you shelter
I'll begin there
quelling stars

the secret
of my secret
is wrapped inside
a pearly shell
buried at the world's end

when did no
become go
the twist in her thighs
when the waters rush
signalling a storm

with open arms
I found you
broken
from a scarecrow husk
I fixed your heart

the wind
it sings of blood
it moans of loss
repeating, repeating
for someone to listen

filtered beans
a smooth roast
coffee preferences
you want it all
loaded with chocolate sprinkles

starlight
burns bright
the darkness
solders us
in pewter

flakes
in a storm
carry us
to silence
snow's cathedral

~*United Kingdom*

Joanna Ashwell, a writer from the North East of England. Writes haiku, tanka, Cherita and other related forms. Likes the continuing discovery of the self through reading and writing.

Joanne Morcom is a writer and social worker in Calgary, Alberta.

Joe Witt resides in Altadena, California, with his wife, Roz, and their two cats, ShadieLadie and Mouse. They have one son, two grandsons and two step-grandchildren, who keep them busy. Retired from JPL in 2002, he is currently learning to kiteboard. He is in Mira Mataric's creative writing class at the Pasadena Sr. Center and has had a tanka, a haiku and three free verse poems published.

The Holodomor

Joanne Morcom

In the early 1930s, Joseph Stalin's collectivisation policy forced Ukrainian peasants to give up their land and livestock to the government. Resisters were killed or exiled. Those left behind had nothing to eat but birds, mice, rats, insects and each other. Millions starved to death from 1932 to 1933. In 2006, the Ukrainian Parliament declared the Holodomor (death by hunger) a deliberate act of genocide by the Soviet Union against Ukrainians. Russia does not recognize the famine as mass murder.

a bowl of hot soup
on a cold winter night
tastes delicious—
does it really matter
what's in it?

~*Alberta, Canada*

Joe Witt

on moonless nights
at wounded knee
listen
whispering on the wind
the ghost dancers

on moonless nights
at wounded knee
whispering on the wind
the ghost dancers
the wind fades as do they

~*Altadena, California, USA*

Present

Jonathan Day

I sat
under the shade
of a trio of Douglas firs
watching butterflies
in the summer sun
ducklings on the pond

The sun high in the sky lit up the water. The air above the pond surface was busy with insects, butterflies, dragonflies — the whole dense community there and on the tall grasses around the edges.

I mused

at the picnic table
thinking about those
who want to talk
always about God
and the scriptures

and thinking of all that I have read in my life —

philosophy
poetry, sci-fi
history
religion, fiction
all kinds of science

I have read and heard so many people asserting *such and such* to be so . . . now what I like is to go cycling and see for myself what the guidebooks say is there this time of year — the butterflies, the wood ducks, the swallows, the yellow throats.

I don't want to have to weigh and judge some assertion someone has made about things;
I want to go and see for myself—

I want
to look at the world
with my own eyes
unfiltered
by others' words

all the things
I have read
are just turning
into noise
in my head

I would rather
head out into the woods
and just look around
it's all right there
for me to see —

the great vast
mysterious
unarguable
present
that I love so much

~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>

Joy McCall

the little train
rumbling across the marsh
scares up
a murmuration of starlings
sets the gypsy cob to running

goldenrod
meadowsweet
reed rushes
derelict windmills
ditches where swans nest

fresh water for the cob
Irish whiskey for the gypsy
and the witch
falls asleep to the sound
of quaffing and lapping

by the river
chatting with the hooker
when the priest came
and gave us the sign —
forgiveness and blessing

are they wasted
these years I have lost
in longing
for streams and seas,
sheepfolds and furrowed fields?

undressing crippled
on the bed
hit by longing
to row down a river
or slow-climb a hill

yearning I picked up a pebble
and slipped it under my foot
that was as close as I could get
to the solid, lovely ground

~Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England

beauty and truth

Joy McCall

I was musing on poems I have loved and went way back to the age of sixteen when I learned and recited for a school exam the poem by John Keats — ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’.

So many poems come and go, while others, once learned, stay with us.

The Keats poem is one that stayed and I can still recite the whole of it almost sixty years later.

I wondered why. It’s a long poem that doesn’t much sing to me the way the small tanka of Ryokan sing.

I looked at the poem on the page and realised it was the last two lines that made it stay with me —

*“Beauty is Truth, and Truth, Beauty:
that is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know.”*

or even —

*beauty is truth
and truth, beauty
that is all
ye know on earth
and all ye need to know*

Although I had written poems, often tanka, long before I learned the Keats one, I had not, until then, formed an idea of how I wanted to write my own poems.

From then on, I wanted to write only poems that held on to something of beauty and truth.

there are
so many kinds
of beauty
they are nothing
without honesty

there are
many truths
what good are they
if they are warped
and misshapen?

It is not easy to write keeping truth and beauty dancing together.

in truth
there can be
much ugliness
in beauty there can be
many lies

Still, it is my way of writing. I often fail, My mistakes are how I learn.

And always in my head is another poem I learned at sixteen, and another two lines that sing the same kind of song to me —

*“Spend all you have for loveliness,
buy it and never count the cost . . .”*

Sara Teasdale (American poet who died by suicide in 1933)

~Norwich, England

my own self

Joy McCall

All my life, I have felt myself to be of known and also hidden parts. I have written poems down the decades about the male and female sides of my self.

I think we are all like this. That splitting at the dawn of time makes us long for wholeness, to search for our 'other half'.

All things have a dark side and a light side and we are no different. We too hold night and day within us.

animus

he has dark skin
dark eyes
dark hair
even his nature
is dark

the poems he writes
are of passages
and pain
winding, curling
constricting

at the fire
he burns
his fingers
to the bone
wordless, silent

when we dance
there is space
between us
I will not let
him take my hand

I want
to be dark too
but I am light
from my skin
to my bones

the flames
which burn him black
flicker
and go out
when my pale tears fall

anima

light on her feet
the anima dances
through my days
through my nights
through my dreams

she is a watcher
of bees and falling leaves
of people passing,
an observer
a pale-eyed bystander

she is
the candle-lighter
the web-spinner
the weaver of hope
the bringer of water

her white hand
on my shoulder
pushes me
into the hidden places
where honesty grows

she sings
the songs of the hills
of the great grey stones,
of the four wild winds
and the clear streams

she will not
listen to lies
and falsehoods
she holds the truth
in the palm of her hand

Envoy

As Polonius said to his son Laertes in
Shakespeare's Hamlet—

*This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.*

~Norwich, England

passages

Joy McCall

I want to stop
on the old bridge
and still and quiet stand
and feel the solid stone
beneath my feet

I want to pause
and lean on the rough walls
and watch
the river pass below
clear and deep

in the gentle space
between the river
and the sky
new resolve may fill
my hesitating heart

then from the merciful stream
I will unwavering
lift my eyes
upward to the sky
and the far brown hills

~Norwich, England

Barton Fell

Joy McCall

high on the hill
once again we meet
picking our way
past the piles of stones
about our feet

bleak
and desolate
is the place —
silent
you stand alone

you stoop
and with one finger
trace
words
upon a stone

the wind
blows the words
away
before I can ask you
what they say

you raise
your head to the stormy sky
and the mountains grey
'let's stay here forever' you say
and I, tearful, turn away

I cannot speak
or meet your eyes
I just stand
like the stones
beneath threatening skies

~Norwich, England

Once More on Barton Fell

Joy McCall

We have spent the morning roaming the fells,
picking the wild leaves, not saying much.

Each of us is looking for something we know
well, unfamiliar to the other.

I hear the Gypsy a little way off, singing 'the
wild mountain thyme'.

I'm humming 'love grows where my
rosemary goes'.

The hours pass and we meet again in the old
circle with our small bags of leaves and roots.

It is quiet on the hill. Just the bleating of
lambs and the occasional call of a hawk.

he fills the bowl
with wild carrot
bearberry leaf
shepherd's purse
sticky goosegrass

it is now he speaks
his prayer to the land
giving thanks
for the green things
the shoots, the roots

I pass the box of matches. Somehow, a
modern lighter is not right for this kind of thing.

Is there a holiness in the striking of a match?
It seems so to us, a thing that goes back and back,
to flint and fire.

The hawk screams and dives.

he says
what he always says
at such times —
something must die
for something else to live

The sun is low in the sky. The stones are
casting long shadows. They give shelter from the
chilly wind.

He strikes the match and lights the leaves.
They sputter a little then settle to burn, slowly.

The smell is — what can I say — heady, bitter,
beautiful, somehow fitting in this desolate place.

He is always the first to smoke. It is our habit.

the man goes ahead
making sure it is safe
for the woman —
some ancient
tribal thing

He passes the pipe and I smoke. It is like
breathing in the land, the green giving of life.

We sit watching the sun going down, each
lost in our own musing.

Now and then we speak, of dreams and
longings and questions.

The smoking is done. What goodness there
was, is within us now.

I set light to the little pile of leftover leaves
and roots in a hollow in a stone.

It is a hollow made by many centuries of rain
and running water.

Ovid (43 BC) wrote,

*Dripping water hollows out stone, not through force
but through persistence.*

The smoke curls upwards and is caught by
the wind and gone.

I feel sad. Rituals do that sometimes.

my moments
like the thin smoke
there — and gone
leaving only a trace
a sea-change

all those times
I wanted to keep —
how slowly I learn
the gentle art
of letting go

~on Barton Fell, Cumbria, England

trees

Joy McCall

copper beech
silver birch
oak and pine
all around
my heart entwine

and the sun
through dappled boughs
hope
within my heart
allows

~Norwich, England

Norfolk Beach

Joy McCall

a Norfolk beach
is missing—I know
because I found
sea-smoothed pebbles
littering the ground

how they came there
so out of place
is a mystery to me
but I fancy I hear them
calling, calling to the sea

~Norwich, England

Crazy Eva

Joy McCall

I used to ride the motorbike on my day off into the countryside and would meet all kinds of strange Norfolk people, peasants really.

I often went by a ruined house and thought no one lived there until I saw her one day—and went back several times to see her again, in case she needed a friend.

She got used to the sound of the bike and would come scowling to the door. I never went close as it was clear callers were not welcome.

I did leave a box of chocolates and some tangerines on the path once. I don't know if she ate them.

The landlord at the pub where I had lunch told me about her.

He said that her parents owned the great house but they grew old and died and she was broke and so the house fell to ruin but she lived on alone there in one room.

He thought she had no relatives. No one came to see her. The people of the village called her Crazy Eva.

she looked like a witch
wild long grey hair
filthy ragged clothes
tall and bony
bent and aged

I wished
she was happy
living like that
and not lonely
but who knows?

They found her long dead a few years after my crash and the house has been demolished, although the old ivied walls around the plot still stand.

I don't know where she is buried but it would be a pauper's grave. If I knew where, I would take flowers.

I wrote this for her, long ago, while sitting on
my old bike in the lane that passed her house.

Crazy Eva
she lives on cornflakes
boxes and boxes
piled in the corners
of her dirty room

Crazy Eva
lives in a derelict house
dutch gables
and potted orchids
at the front door

Crazy Eva
her garden is a forest
hidden behind a wall
covered in ivy
and creepers

Crazy Eva
she only comes out at night
all day she wanders
muttering, around
the crumbling rooms

Crazy Eva
the village boys
call her a witch
and throw stones
in her well

Crazy Eva
who could love her?
I think I do . . .

~Norwich, England

*As Joy McCall grows older, she values more the strange beauty of
the old and mad people she has met on her myriad journeys.*

Kathryn Bold

in an old box
I find a thousand cranes
origami birds
you gave me for luck
before my life unfolded

after you left

I went to the market
and bought a loaf of bread

when the clerk gave me my change
I acted normal
like the world wasn't ending

forever

you promised
you, me and the stars

I just checked
and they're still here
Orion and all the rest

power walk

I hurry past an old man
stopped on the trail

savoring wild berries
the way I did as a child—
when did I get so old?

the canoe
you built for us
I wonder if young lovers
own it now
I wonder if it floats

too swiftly the sparrow flew

into my window
too swiftly its soul flew

from that winged form
by the time I got there
it was gone

I watched a honeybee

climb into a summer rose
seeking sweet warm juice

deep in the petals'
soft pink folds—
it was almost obscene

my friend is missing

a middle-aged woman
with no memories

I see flyers for her
everywhere—
and her eyes and hair

new neighborhood
workers plant ficus trees
in perfect rows
where old oaks once stood
twisted and beautiful

beach cleanup
I find a baby doll's head
with sand in its eyes
it still blinks
but doesn't cry

winter's evening
frail old dog
climbs into his bed
and turns around
just two times

dating again
how my pulse
quickness
each time the phone
pings

~California, USA

Kathryn Bold is a writer from Southern California whose poems and essays have appeared in bottle rockets, Failed Haiku, Frogpond, High Desert Journal, Hippocampus, the Los Angeles Times, Modern Haiku, Passager, Zocalo Public Square and other publications.

Kazuaki Wakui

Kazuaki Wakui, Japanese-English
Translator

under the rainy sky,
summer solstice
the darkest ever,
swallows are flying merrily
along with midday bats

雨空は (amazora wa)

昼蝙蝠の (hiru kawahori no)

飛びまがふ (tobi magou)

燕暗き (tsubakura kuraki)

夏至のなからに (geshi no nakara ni)

gleaming was my ordinary Autumn
the old classroom would overlook,
through the frosty glass pan
facing the north to east
the Aegean could be seen

かがやきは (kagayaki wa)
遠き常の秋 (tohoki tsune no aki)
教室の (kyohoshitsu no)
曇玻璃北東に (don-hari hokutoho ni)
多島海見ゆ (tatohokai miyu)

having a doze
in the afternoon warmth
when an accordion sobbing
on and off
being heard from distance

をりふしに (worifushi ni)
手風琴聞ゆ (teuhukin kikoyu)
かすかなり (kasuka nari)
をちかたうらぶるる (wochikata urabururu)
ひるつかた夢 (hirutsukata yume)

as mildly,
just in a few more turns
of the pencil sharpener,
one Autumn day of mine
coming to an end

うらうらと (ura ura to)
えんぴつげづる (enpitsu kezuru)
三たび四たび (mitabi yotabi)
秋一日は (aki ichijitsu wa)
暮れゆきにけり (kure yuki ni keru)

~Shibata-shi, Japan

*Kazuaki Wakui is an artist who lives with his friend Sanford Goldstein
in a house he built in Shibata-shi, Japan.*

Night Ward

Lorne Henry

night nurse
shines a torch in my eyes
to see if I'm asleep
perhaps she could listen
to my breathing instead

sleepless
as the hours tick by
one o'clock
a kookaburra laughs
what is he doing awake

seventy years
since I've been in hospital
except for my son's birth
how different how efficient
equipment and expertise

years ago
the ward sister
woke me
to give me a sleeping pill
I hid it under the pillow

two snorers
one left her TV on
I lie awake
composing tanka
will I remember them

overheard
at nurses' change over
about me
she'll have a long life
better than any pill

up and down
to toilet through the night
never before
hope it won't be
ongoing

emergency
a helicopter flies in
where from
how far away
Australia's a big land

at first light
from the eucalypts
a magpie carols
followed by ravens
and squawking cockatoos

~Australia

Lorne Henry

at last I found
a comfortable chair
I manoeuvre it
from my car up the stairs
then need to sit in it

wind
coming off snow
I snuggle
my dog on my lap
my hot water bottle

an orchid dangling
from his white beard
he sniffs gardenias
while waiting to cross the street
my dog checks the latest scents

difficult to play
my Chinese flute
of ancient origin
dark grey against the white wall
my friend thought it an emu egg

my dog
so pleased to see me
return from hospital
he damages a ligament
now both are invalids

late April
autumn weather at last
but what's this
a purple waterlily
that should have bloomed in summer

~Australia

Lorne Henry lives in the 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.

Lavana Kray is from Iași, Romania. She has won several awards, including the status of Master Haiga Artist, from the World Haiku Association. Her work has been published in many print and online journals. She was chosen for Haiku Euro Top 100, 2017. Currently she is the editor for Cattails collected Haiga works of the United Haiku and Tanka Society. This is her blog: <http://photohaikuforyou.blogspot.ro>.

Lavana Kray

no trace of you
to the end of the road —
there will be
no more obstacles, one day,
when we both become shadows

oh, snowdrifts . . .
a pair of puddles
under the sun —
we could repeat our story,
if we were two icicles

I hear steps
although no one passes by
overnight —
my longing for you rolls
around like a cogwheel

~Iași, Romania

Autumn on Linga

Lynda Monahan

a salt breeze
coming in over the cliffs
of Linga
and the light slants low
across the slow roll of the sea

It is the time of year when the short summer
is near ending and soon Edan will be gathering
peat for the evening fires.

The Minke whales are to be seen as they
follow the herring and mackerel in the waters off
our island. The puffins are already leaving the
breeding grounds.

soon we will sit
by the peat fire
at the darknin'
listening to the old tales
Edan tells of the trows

We will curl beneath the quilts in our box
beds and sleep the long night away lulled by the
ruddy cheer of the fire and the late summer song
of the sea.

~*Shetland Islands, Scotland*

Lynda Monahan is a Canadian poet living in north central Saskatchewan. She is the author of three previous poetry collections, A Slow Dance in the Flames, What My Body Knows and Verge. She is co author of a fourth poetry collection titled Ululation which is to be released in autumn of 2019.

M. Kei

bad news
at the mechanic's—
I put a quarter in
and receive
a sour green jawbreaker

pity the boy child
born on Mother's Day—
his birthdays spent
watching preparations
for someone else's party

beware the ship
with the skittish,
hostile cat—
she's the victim of
a crew with bad tempers

they're just words,
words as
brittle and transient
as dead leaves
blown by the wind

for a few weeks
he loved me enough
to grant wishes:
his handwriting on the flyleaf
of a cherished book

breakfast
a small leak
dripping
alongside my
trencher of eggs

fluffy clouds
the color of
innocence
the anniversary
of Hurricane Katrina

I, who know
so little about Africa,
find myself
engrossed in the intricacies
of the Capecoast font

no snow,
but the glittering pearls
of fog
collecting
on the leaves of grass

~Chesapeake Bay, USA

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

Mark Jun Poulos

chased by a bird of prey
a pigeon crashes against the window—
the sound of flapping wings
smacking loud against plate glass
chilling my blood

she seemed so happy
laughing quietly to herself
with a childlike glee—
that her life ended so abruptly
is a blow to me

now I realize
a happy heart
jovial, free of bitterness
even good health itself
cannot protect us from sudden death

does it not wish
to fly and hunt again
to live out its life in health
to be a bird again
wings outspread in the sun?

that bird
despite its suffering
doesn't pity itself—
yet that fact alone
makes me want to hasten its death

reaching a shrine well
I peer down
water lustrous, black as oil—
and wonder what ancient serpent
must be coiled in its depths

around midnight
I wake up
hearing the cat I'm taking care of
give out a long shrill cry
as if deprived of one who's loved

pausing on a rain-wet street
I enviously watch a cat
perched on a brick wall
gazing out across a swift river
almost bursting from its banks

lovely young woman —
hair a light red
skin creamy, immaculate
with that black puppy in her arms
she looks even lovelier

~*United States*

in rural Albany

Mark Jun Poulos

whose old remains
lie in that grass mound
over there
topped with a crooked headstone
wet in the driving rain?

what spirit haunts that mound
and seems to weep
its own demise
in the autumn rain
slashing down from the sky?

not far away is a farm
a red barn, a wagon —
was he who now sleeps
the sleep of eternity
the patriarch of a once flourishing family?

~*Albany, New York, USA*

At Ise Shrine in Japan, Sacred to Shinto

Mark Jun Poulos

standing alone
apart from the milling crowd
a haggard woman
gazes sorrowfully at the shrine
on the verge of tears

woman
haggard with sorrow
what ails your heart so much
that you should stand there alone
your gaunt face worn with pain?

are you mourning for one gone
are you dying of cancer
hoping that the Sun Goddess
might shine her warmth on you
heal you in a way nothing earthly can?

seeing you
standing there
behind the braided rope fencing off the sacred
shrine
looking hopeless
I feel sad myself

I want to approach you
a foreigner
who cannot speak your language
and tell you in my own way
I notice your suffering

a suffering
that the crowds do not notice
not even the shrine attendant
who stands there ceremoniously
in his elegant attire of white silk

I often feel more compassion
toward the Japanese
than toward my fellow Americans —
the former suffer in silence
ashamed of their own personal pain

stories of men and women
many quite young
I've heard
that do away with themselves in a forest
hating their own lives

cast-offs from society
they take their own lives
in the open air
secluded from others
leaving their bodies to be picked apart by animals

souls shattered
by society's callousness
by unhealed mental illness
they see suicide
as the ultimate rebuke toward their fellow men
and women

it must be eerie
to walk through that place
to hear in the leaves trampled underfoot
in the wind blowing through trees
the spirits of those who died in torment

I imagine being near there
at nightfall
when their spirits appear—
shadowy forms flitting through pines
bathed in cold moonlight

like one in a Noh play
I would watch
vengeful ghosts
replaying the scenes in their lives
that have brought them so much torment

~Japan

Blue-Eyed Longing

Mark Jun Poulos

that blue-eyed girl in high school
I thought was just a friend—
now forty
I realize how deeply she longed
to be with me

but my heart
agonized by longing
for another girl
did not notice the depth
of her desire for me

she gave me a cassette
full of music
that I didn't bother to listen to—
maybe love songs that expressed longing
she could not convey in her own words

did she long for me
with agony too—
while I wasted away
with longing for a girl
who didn't show me the slightest interest?

playfully hopping about
in some leafy weeds
sprouting from the foot of tree
how happy that finch looks
in its little arbor of green!

~Los Angeles, California, USA

Mark Jun Poulos

sprays of bougainvillea
cascading from a schoolyard fence —
how lovely, intensely
purple they look!
now that the sun has pierced through the overcast

a little boy gazes at a man
snorting lines of cocaine
off a park table
while his nanny
looks away distracted

faint stirrings of pity
I feel the first time for my father
dead a year —
he has finally found I think
that peace that long eluded him while alive

my father
barely twenty
when he married my mom —
he had a heart of kindness mother said
during their first years of marriage

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."

Sequence #3

Martin McKellar & *Billy Simms*

Try eating sardines!
The Christmas tree spine and bones
Pointing in all directions.
Paralyzed with a surfeit
Of ideas, where do I start?

*painting a mural
over the long days
the image takes form
giant birds announcing
Summer*

Soot on graffiti,
Your fading hope in your tattoo.
Birds inking the sky.
I can always start afresh
When the summer rains arrive.

*summer deluge
water fills
the street, my yard, my basement
curious, my cats stare at
the encroaching water*

A silver bowl holds
Dark red summer cherries — sweet
And mesmerizing
As the mistruths of the trade
You spout and I want to believe.

*cherries molding in a bowl
my wife said
'make sure you eat them'
I try to think
what else have I forgotten?*

I had forgotten
The feel of northern summers,
Clear light with no warmth.
Heavy peony blooms with
Winter in the back of their mind.

*summer blooms
shrill cry of cicadas
shed exoskeletons
cling to my house
a reminder of a short season*

The drifts of spent blooms
Are remnants of spring's frenzy,
Now a brownish litter.
I too once danced in life's
Restless surge of energy.

*piles of dust and litter
the cumulative debris
of ten years
the garage blossoms
with (late) spring cleaning*

My ideal pine forest
Is richly complex, but from
The train window, I see
Only the litter of pine
Needles, endless, unmoving.

*endless relentless
motion
my ideal day
to simply sit
and do nothing*

Enchanted, we paid
Lots of money to sit in
The bar's golden light,
While outside, unheard, endless
Summer rain transformed our world.

*summer
golden twilight light
the neighbor's
tv flashes
a strobe-like pulse*

Summer weeds find space
Along edges of cobblestone
Sidewalks, untrampled.
Away from the pulsing crowds,
My new dreams rise cautiously.

*cracks
in my driveway
sprout weeds
they should be pulled
though I ignore them*

Unaware of me,
Summer weeds tick off each day
Until they mature.
I wonder how much of my life
I owe to being ignored.

*unaware
ants explore
near my kitchen door
I marvel
at their natural abilities*

Summer air currents
Wash the willow tree. Her lean
Golden branches rustle.
Where is the expected thicket
Of children under her skirt?

*my wife's skirt
hip and trendy
she worries about its length
I ogle and admire
her legs*

~Hamilton, Ohio, USA / *Europe*

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

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

For Hannah & Ryan
15th September 2018

Marilyn Humbert

with grace
she weaves the pandanus trail
to the tallest tree —
they pledge as one,
hand in loving hand

beneath a cascade
of pastel rose petals
together
in the Eudlo sun
making memories

they dance
through the small hours
stars glimmering
in their eyes, happiness
to cherish through long years

~Logwoods Homestead, Eudlo, QLD, Australia

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.

Sweet Blues

Matsukaze

enjoyed warmed up soup
in the back office
amid chatter enjoying a wine cooler

a quiet Sabbath with few arrivals —
in the back office
watching “Peter Gunn” episodes on my phone

to my left
a rather dull colored apple —
this summer heat will not abate

re-reading Tawara Machi’s “Salad Anniversary”
collection
i think of her, Fumiko, Takuboku, Mokichi
and Goldstein

my colleague dressed in all black
on his phone building roller coasters
this afternoon moves slowly

this summer full of people and heat
again i have no lover
i’m like a priest at a shrine

reading Ozaki and Santoka’s haiku
wondering what i’d look like
as a mendicant monk

when you leave i try on your shirt
swallowing your smell
i even try on your underwear

memories upon memories . . .
cooking mixed vegetables
i think of where i’ll be a year from now

a day of work-weariness at an end
outside the local transit bus
completes another round

i've now had three Snickers—
remonstrating myself silently
i finish my wine cooler

sharing the sun with you . . .
in an afternoon Lyft
headed to work again

summer's first tomato
skin firm yet delicate
i realize many things about me

tonight
sweet-sour blueberries while seated on my
balcony
everything warm, still, and . . . and . . .

listening to the blues
variations on 'My Favorite Things'
while re-arranging my bedroom

on the phone our conversation
lapses into a silence
between us short questions and answers

as always
once home you bury your face
into a can of beer— i don't know anymore

eating grapes to pass the time
in the distance the sound
of a train's whistle a dog's bark

this night curling up on the couch
i aimlessly thumb through
the 'Gossamer Years' by Michitsuna's mother

another reading of Ralph Ellison
we discuss over rather flat coffee
the black condition

and what is racism?
why can't white people understand racism . . .
the taste of a po' boy freshly warmed

everyone i meet needing more money . . .
she brings me a slice
of icebox key lime pie

hoping to have my Saturday's to myself
still in bed
quite naked in between dreams

beneath your indifferent attitude
i see a boy—
the afternoon sky turns a slate gray color

while showering noticing a discoloration
on my ceiling—
once dried and clothed
i put in a maintenance request

while watching 'Peter Gun' i think
of being a lounge singer . . .
'the leaves are brown/ came tumblin down
in September/ in the rain'

over casual conversation remarking
how i'd like to visit
an old-fashioned hamburger joint

thinking that once i get paid
i'll order a bouquet of hydrangea
or perhaps black-eyed susans

in my journal writing how much
i look forward to a vacation
somewhere with someone

today: July 7th
i wonder if i've exhausted my words, myself,
and the belly of tanka

thinking to myself that i really need to
find a job i can do
at home!

quickly down the southern staircase
on television watching the police
chase a bomber

once my shift's over
dressing in street clothes
i grab my bike to head home

Sunday—
i'll be off . . .
hope i don't miss my "Law & Order" marathon

resolving within myself
not to stuff the second Snicker
down my throat

two more hours
and i'll turn back into to frog—
on and on you go about business acquisitions

something sensual about the sound of ice
in a glass
thinking i'll go downtown tonight

Sabbath afternoon
i sit naked
in my room absorbing the moment

waking up to a break in this summer heat—
the mailman delivers my mail
and gives me a sweet blues

~*Texas, USA*

*Matsukaze enjoys both the immediacy and lasting resonance of English
Language short verse. Matsukaze lives in Texas, USA.*

Maryalicia Post

hospital
flowers on the window sill
sympathy
fading a little
each passing day

woke today
calling your name
forgetting
you'd gone years ago
while I was dreaming

sunlight
turning green leaves gold
then red
soon they will drift down
briefly glorious

each day
birds circle the sky
restless—
restless till twilight
when they fly home

~*Dublin, Ireland*

*Maryalicia Post is a journalist and travel writer based in Dublin,
Ireland. Her website is maryaliciatravel.com.*

Michael H. Lester

as I close
my eyes for the last time
I recall the boy
who stood wide-eyed
at grandma's deathbed

~a hospital in Rochester, New York, USA

the old cow path
overgrown with giant hogweed
since pa died
the warblers he used to feed
still come looking for him

~Uncle Bill's farm in Ohio, USA

another day
passes between us
in silence—
like the elm
we grow older, not wiser

~a lonely house in Costa Mesa, California, USA

I learn patience
as I observe a white-lined
sphinx moth
immobile for days
waiting to die

*~the walkway of my home in Los Angeles, California,
USA*

writing poems
about suffocation
in a room
where the windows
don't open

*~my office in Los Angeles, California, looking out over a
Methodist Church, USA*

on shore leave
the sailor has a yen
and a hankering
a kindly geisha
relieves him of both

*~my first trip to Tokyo, Japan, from Yokota Air Force
Base, circa 1968*

sad raven
wings tucked tight
at your side
how beautiful you are
silhouetted against the moon

*~channeling Edgar Allen Poe's Pollyanna side from my
office in Los Angeles, California, USA*

heavenward
thick with mountain mist
flies the sparrow
untouched birdseed
in my outstretched palm

*~in the backyard of my home in Los Angeles, California,
USA*

I stand motionless
at the crossroads of time
a stuck pendulum
wondering whether to go
forward or backward

*~road closed, no U-turns, in Los Angeles, California,
USA*

Has Anyone Seen My Son?

Michael H. Lester

a shadowy figure
in his long black trench coat
slinking down alleys
selling drugs to pimps and whores
one step ahead of the law

the concrete
littered with needles
and addicts
slumped against brick walls
rubber tubes on their arms

some of them
will be dead or in jail
by morning
others will make it home
take a shower and get to work

the underground economy
where cash can buy anything
but caveat emptor
these goods are not grade A
and there are no refunds

a frantic woman
shows a picture of her son
to the alley people
one woman nods her head
and points to a doorway

she pushes her way
past the jumble of bodies
to her son
where he lies unconscious
foaming at the mouth

as she scrambles
to find the cell phone
in her purse
a shadowy figure stabs her
and disappears into the night

*~The alleys of skid row in downtown Los Angeles,
California, USA, present day*

Secrets in the Attic

Michael H. Lester

after pa's death
we sift through grandpa's
old journals
wiping the dust off pages
of unfulfilled dreams

dust light
fights its way through the window
nearly covered
with years of unwashed grime
and still, lifeless cobwebs

a sudden jolt
when we reach an entry
from 1945
with a picture of grandpa
in an SS uniform

~Los Angeles, California, USA

Cherita

Michael H. Lester

an actual skeleton

dressed in her wedding gown
clutching a bouquet of calla lily

how long will she wait
steadfast at the altar
for her long-dead betrothed?

~some alternate Universe

A Cherita Terbalik

Michael H. Lester

even today

there are those who think
the best use
for a baseball bat

is to bash in the heads
of gays and lesbians

~The mean streets of Los Angeles, California, USA

Cattle Call

Michael H. Lester

I never gave much thought to why the elderly
couple named the corner grocery store the Lucky
Star Market.

blue tattoos
stamped on their forearms
a reminder
that some people
are not human beings

*~Lucky Star Market, Detroit, Michigan, USA, circa
1952*

Under the River Green Tree

Michael H. Lester

The birds speak to each other. *Where should we
go today?* they say. *Let's go to Joy's place. The food is
good. The kestrels are few, and her hair is a comfortable
place to nest.*

lounging too long
under the river green tree
a menagerie
of creatures large and small
nest in her silver hair

~Under the River Green Tree, Norwich, England

One Night Stand

Michael H. Lester

I can never let go
of the wonder he was
in his youth
so beautiful, so passionate—
aging is a cruel joke

unable
to hit both the high notes
and the low notes
I settle for another
bottle of cheap vodka

last call
at the local watering hole—
slim pickings—
I must choose between
the hooker or the tranny

please don't
she whispers in my ear
as she unzips—
I really shouldn't, you know
as she pushes me to the wall

consumed by guilt
I decide not to go home—
I know a place
where no one cares
who you are or what you do

~California, USA

Mike Dillon

the first coolness
rides the breeze
that rattles the maple:
the spawning stream
still runs quiet

in the city
you were invisible
except for the old man's stare:
back home your face moves
towards the mirror

the campfire burns down
as clouds cover the stars:
above the ocean's curl
and boom you hear
the shorebirds' piping

the old blind man
taps the damp cobbles
with his blackthorn stick:
the foghorn warns the ships
and gentles him home

back and forth you go
on the giant swing:
the silver river far below
firm ground rushing back
the silver river far below

~Washington, USA

Mike Dillon lives in Indianola, Washington, a small town on Puget Sound northwest of Seattle. He is the author of four books of poetry and three books of haiku. Several of his haiku were included in "Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years," from W.W. Norton (2013). "Departures," a book of poetry and prose about the forced removal of Bainbridge Island's Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor will be published by Unsolicited Press in April 2019.

Nadine Hayes

i wonder
if in the night
you search for me
like misplaced car keys
frantic to find me once more

in her sleep
she kicks her paws
jogs my memory
and I remember to remember
I am never alone

echoes of the past
my heart no longer hears
nothing left to fear
no reason to look back
I pack my bags and go

waking up to
your kiss on my brow
sun on the daisy
isn't it the sweetest thing
to know you're someone's world

the sun has set
the heat of the day
smothered in embrace
of the moon's cool breath
weeping willow of dream

to exist
in two places at once
here and there
your thoughts
your heart

studio apartment
sometimes I loathe being alone
wish I had someone
to talk to other than these walls
of solitude and silence

after the rain
the air is far more sweeter
I feel less forsaken
and hope is far-reaching
welling in the depths of my soul

am I destined to
only find you in the dark
at the edge of stars
the burning flames and shadows
conjuring mere reflection?

I asked the wind
if it would be your surrogate
carry your burdens
the things that depress your soul
too heavy to bear alone

never forget
even when the sun sets
your flower breathes
an eternal aura of golden
immeasurable light

the sky reaches
though its hands I cannot see
I lean upward
body tilted like a runaway tree
embrace the sun

~North Carolina, USA

Nadine is originally from Bridgeport, CT, but lives in Winston-Salem, NC. She currently works as a teacher's assistant at a school for special needs children. She is a poet who enjoys spending time with her dog Faith and plans to further her education, get her Ph.D in Clinical Psychology. Her poems can be described as her disconnection and connection to the world; her desire to understand and be understood.

Cherita

Patricia Prime

Queen's Birthday

fourteen guests
arrive for a barbecue

when the rain comes
they crowd into the lounge
to party until midnight

Saturday morning

a currant bun
in the toaster

burned
at the edges
it still tastes good

I walk
in the winter garden

where recently I grew flowers

from the dark soil
sprouts a bright yellow
daffodil

a clatter of wings
from the cabbage tree

as black shapes take flight

stooping
to snap a deadhead
I surprise a bee

the window glass
is threaded with fallen rain

on the street a river of traffic

casting shadows
as light pirouettes
around the walls

"She'll live on in her art,"
someone said of an old friend

I covet one of her paintings

a small child
with thumb in his mouth
her six-year-old son

a first bird
breaks into the blue

answered closely by a mate

feeding table
a handful of fruit and nuts
quickly devoured

a slim woman
in a halter top
handles fruit

riffing the vegetables
as she contemplates dinner

pram-bound toddler handed a grape

we walk to the edge
of the lake
to scatter his ashes

close to the bank
where we plant water lilies

I see dragonflies flash through light

my grandson
the entomologist

takes wetas
out to an island
in the gulf

protected from predators

the family make plans
to walk the Routeburn Track

far away in the South Island

explorer's hut
a clutter of backpacks
at the door

having trouble

with your relationship
you may not be to blame

don't delay
consult your friends
for their useless advice

you were good at music

could play any tune
by heart on your guitar

busking
came naturally
provided uni funds

this soft winter

an Auckland morning
sees a neighbour

cutting branches
from a tree overhanging
my fence

twenty-five years ago

my friend and I
were in China

the weeks went fast
heading to the Terracotta Army
then on the road to Nepal

she looked asleep

when I tiptoed
into her hospital room

I pulled up a chair
whispered her name
stroked her hand

~New Zealand

Colours of Lhasa

Patricia Prime

I want you to feel the colours, scents and sounds as I did walking through the marketplace in Lhasa, my feet pounding the dull matte yellow dirt. Here, the high altitude congests my lungs, the shriveled apple tastes of nothing, black clothes of mountain people are caked with mud and the saffron robes of monks cast shadows on the road.

outside the bazaar
a rotating prayer wheel spun
by mountain people
life with its harum-scarum
on a busy day in the market

Colour has power over the eyes, the spirit. Contrast lets you see the picture I'm painting for you — white stupas, rainbow-coloured prayer flags, black sheep and hairy brown yaks. It's a different world from the one I'm used to with its green fields and evergreen trees, colourful birds and people of various nationalities.

waiting to be milked
a yak with matted brown hair
stands in a bare field
where women wash clothes
in a fast-flowing stream

I hope you can sense the intense blue of sky and river, the white of snow-capped mountains, the red of the monasteries, brown of fields — all the lines and curves of this exceptional country made clear. What, I wonder are we, living one day after another, wondering, wandering, living a reservoir of colour, senses, passions, inhaling the air, compared with these simple people going about their daily lives.

the scent of incense
a monk places a white scarf
around my shoulders
I take his hand, explain who I am,
the beautiful country I'm from

~Tibet

Patricia Prime is the editor of Kokako and reviews/interviews editor of Haibun Today. She writes reviews for Atlas Poetica, Takaha and various Indian journals. Patricia is one of the selectors of tanka for Gusts and selects haiku for Geppo.

Paul Callus

Paul Callus, Maltese-English
Translator / Traduttur Malti-Ingliz

pink petals
falling gently
on lush green grass . . .
her soft words
caress my heart

petali roża
neżlin bil-hlewwa
fuq ħaxix folt ħadrani . . .
kliemha ħlejj
imelles 'il qalbi

conserved
for future
generations
the mellow fruit of
granddad's wisdom

ippreservat
għal generazzjonijiet
futuri
il-frott misjur
ta' għerf in-nannu

trees dripping
long after
the rain has stopped—
her words
linger in my mind

ilma jgattar mis-siġar
għad li x-xita
ilha li waqfet—
kliemha
jitnikker f'moħħi

in the garden
the shrill song
of a cicada
across the fence my
neighbour's nagging voice

fil-ġnien jinstama'
iż-żarżir ilħiħ
tal-għażżiela
in-naħa l-oħra taċ-ċint
it-tgemgim tal-ġara

inhaling the aroma
of grandma's cooking
wafting through the air . . .
an unfamiliar house
brings me down to earth

fl-arja tinxtamm
ir-riħa tfuħ
tal-ikel tan-nanna . . .
dar xejn familjari
iġġibni f'sensija

I sit next to
a man and his
newspaper . . .
tacitly
we share news

bilqiegħda
biswit raġel
b'gazzetta f'idejha . . .
bla nitkellmu
naġġornaw ruħna

~Malta

Paul Callus was born in Safi, Malta. He is a retired teacher, and has been active in the literary field for around 50 years. He writes poetry, short stories, and lyrics for songs, mostly in English and Maltese. His work has been published in various anthologies and online sites. In recent years he wrote and published in both historical and children's books. He is also a translator.

Paul Callus twieled Hal Safi, Malta. Hadem ta' għalliem u llum huwa irtirat. Ilu attiv fil-qasam letterarju għal madwar 50 sena. Jikteb poeżiji, stejjer qosra, u lirika għal kanzunetti, il-biċċa l-kbira minnhom bil-Malti u l-Ingliż. Xogħlu deher f'diversi antoloġiji u siti online. Dawn l-aħħar snin ippubblika kotba storiċi u għat-tfal. Huwa wkoll traduttur.

Koningsdag

Paul Mercken & *Hilde Devos*

Paul Mercken, Dutch-English Translator /
Vertaler Nederlands-Engels

Koningsdag. Ik haal
oranje tompoezen bij
de Vlaamse bakker.

*Naar Haspengouw rep ik me:
bloesems kijken, de laatste!*

En wel naar Limburg
met zijn zangerige tong
en zijn troubadours.

*Groene glooiingen, stilte,
soms een grommende motor.*

Vanop zijn tractor
ziet de boer het vogelnest
niet en maait het weg.

*Kieviten krijsen, krijsen:
“Geen zomer zonder kleintjes!”*

In de stilte klinkt
plots het kraken van het ijs—
haar paard schrikt ervan.

*Boven haar ademt het paard,
hoog in het nachtblauwe, de maan.*

De kleur van de lucht
weerspiegeld in de Noordzee,
grauwe Narcissus.

*In elk etalageraam
kijkt ze hoe haar kapsel valt.*

*Dwalen door een bos
wil hij, zonder te denken
aan terugkeren.*

Spinnen, afrollen, knippen:
geboorte, leven, en dood.

*Mieren en mieren
vermalen alle voegen.
Terras in nesten.*

Met de film ‘de wilde stad’
safari door Amsterdam.

*Uiterst traag sluipt ze
op het verweerde beton
de kat van schaduw.*

Rust verstoord door golven
van gedreven toeristen.

Paraplubakken
gevuld met bezemstelen
en een levensgrote zeis.

*In het lommer van zijn eik
tijd en ruimte eindeloos.*

~Bunnik, Provincie Utrecht, Nederland / *Kortrijk,
Provincie West-Vlaanderen, België*

*Docent wijsbegeerte, taalkundige & mediëvist in rust, °Leuven, B,
1934, PhD Leuven (1959); Firenze IT; Cambridge & Oxford GB;
USA; Utrecht NL. Lid van de Oxford and Cambridge Society of the
Netherlands. Bestuurslid van de Haiku Kring Nederland 2004-2017
(HKN – recentelijk versmolten met haiku.nl). Bunnikse haiku’s en
ander dichtspul, 2012, 32 p., & Tanka of Place – ATLAS
POETICA – Tanka’s van plaats, 2013, 20 p. (tweetalig). Schrijft
haiku’s, tanka’s &c. (tanbun/haibun inclusief) in AHA Poetry, ATLAS
POETICA, Schreef (Taalpodium Zeist/Utrecht NL).
Woonachtig te Bunnik, Provincie Utrecht, Nederland.*

*Meerdere keren per week wandelt Hilde Devos alsof het de eerste keer is
door het Broek om de hoek. In de geur van gras en kruid vangt zij er
haar meest verrassende ervaring van de dag in woorden. Terwijl zij naar
wuuwende halmen staart en luistervinkt naar vogels en wind, dobbert zij
op haar verbeelding. Soms krijgt zij gezelschap van een fietser of
wandelaar en hoort de wonderlijkste verhalen, waarvan flarden wel eens
in een vers of verhaal verdwalen. Op zomerse avonden klikt haar
fotoapparaat zolang de zon rollebolt over verre hoogspanningskabels en
uiteindelijk vuurrood in het bos verdwijnt.*

King's Day

Paul Mercken & *Hilde Devos*

Paul Mercken, Dutch-English Translator /
Vertaler Nederlands-Engels

King's Day. I'm buying
some orange pastries at the
Flemish baker's shop.

*I hurry to the Hesbaye;
to watch blossoms, the last ones.*

That is in Limburg
with its singsong tongue and its
famous troubadours.

*Green hillsides, silence, at times
the sharp snarl of a motor.*

From the top of his
tractor the farmer doesn't see
the nest and mows it.

*Lapwings crying and crying:
"No summer without chicken!"*

In the silence sounds
suddenly the cracking of ice —
her horse makes a jolt.

*Breathing above her the horse;
up in nightly blue the moon*

The sky's colour is
now mirrored in the North Sea:
a grey Narcissus.

*In every shop window
she checks how her hair falls.*

*He wants to ramble
all through the forest without
a thought to return.*

To spin, to unroll, to cut:
to be born, to live, to die.

*Ants, evermore ants
are grinding all of the grouts.
Terrace in trouble.*

With the film 'De wilde stad'
safari through Amsterdam.

*Extremely cautious
she creeps on the worn concrete
the shadowy cat*

Silence disturbed by waves
of dedicated tourist crowds.

Some umbrella stands
holding a range of broomsticks
and a life-size scythe.

*In the shelter of his oak tree
time and space without end.*

~Bunnik, Province of Utrecht, the Netherlands /
Kasterlee-Tielen, Province of Antwerp, Belgium

*Retired College teacher of Philosophy, linguist & mediaevalist,
°Lewen, B, 1934, PhD Lewen (1959); Firenze IT; Cambridge &
Oxford GB; USA; Utrecht NL. Member of the Oxford and Cambridge
Society of the Netherlands. Committee member of the Dutch Haiku
Association Haiku Kring Nederland 2004-2017 (HKN – recently
merged with haiku.nl). Bunnikse haiku's en ander dichtspul, 2012
(Bunnik haiku and other poetic stuff), 32 p. (Dutch), & Tanka of
Place – ATLAS POETICA – Tanka's van plaats, 2013, 20 p.
(bilingual). Writes haiku, tanka &c. (including tanbun/haibun) in
AHA Poetry, ATLAS POETICA, Schreef (Journal of the local
Taalpodium [Language Podium] Zeist/Utrecht NL).*

*Hilde Devos walks as if for the first time through the swamp around the
corner several times a week. In the smell of grass and herbs she catches
her most surprising experiences of the day in words. Watching the
blades wave and eavesdropping on birds and wind, she bobs up and
down upon her imagination. At times she meets a cyclist or a Rambler
and hears the most wonderful tales, shreds of which may as well stray
into a verse or a story. On summer evenings her camera clicks until the
sun frolics above distant high voltage wires and eventually disappears
scarlet into the forest.*

The Hunting Tanka

Paweł Markiewicz

Paweł Markiewicz, English-German-Polish
Translator

hunter and huntress
gave their hartshorn to druid
in fulfillment-time
druid and antlers in May
eternal things of feelings

das Jagdtanka

Paweł Markiewicz, Deutsch-Englischer
Übersetzer

Jäger und Jägerin
gaben ihr Hirschhorn dem Driuden
in Erfüllungszeit
Druide und Geweihe im Mai
ewige Dinge der Gefühle

Myśliwska tanka

Paweł Markiewicz, tłumacz polsko-angielski

myśliwy i myśliwa
dali swój róg jeleni druidowi
w czasie spełnienia
druid i poroże w maju
wieczne rzeczy uczuć

~*Poland*

Cherita

Paweł Markiewicz

*Sometimes cherita as well as tanka can be based on
archaic or literary words.*

the ambrosia in ewer

I am drinking it when muses
wake up at dawn

slumber of Zeus
my winged forefather
animates birds from my dreams

old cemetery

forgotten vexations
of romantic ghosts and muses

a brio of the old crow
on the oak
it wakes me to life

the vinaigrette

is empty like
the ewer after a feast

only a drop of ambrosia
shimmers inside with
colors of heroic happiness

I am the Erl-king
and my sire in eternal
slumber—the king of wind

whose tears
are the silvering world
born from Muses' dreams

~Poland

*Paweł Markiewicz was born in 1983 in Poland. He studied both
Laws and German studies in Warsaw. He was twice the scholarship-
holder of Forum Alpbach in Austria—the village of the thinkers. His
more than 30 long poems have been published in German magazines
and anthologies. Paweł has written recently haiku in English which
were printed in Japan, Australia, as well as in Germany.*

*Raymond (Ray) Spitzenberger is a freelance writer who has published
in numerous poetry magazines, including ATLAS POETICA, FOOD
FOR THOUGHT, BETTER THAN STARBUCKS,
BITTERZOET, RED RIVER REVIEW, POETRY
QUARTERLY, TANKA JOURNAL, THE PAWN REVIEW, 50
HAIKUS, HAIKU JOURNAL, and others. He is a retired college
English teacher who lives near Houston, Texas, U.S.A., with his
beautiful wife Peggy and temperamental cat Gatsby. He is 84 years old*

Three Tanka About Growing Old : A String

Ray Spitzenberger

the fear of knowing
if I fall I can't get up
such feeling of hope
when those strong arms raise me up
and my life's doings don't end

sorry I need help
sorry to be a millstone
he is not my son
if he were, would it matter?
all of us need a Father

do I, an old man,
seem foolish like a cane toad?
show me otherwise
derail my paranoia
and ripe sensitivity

~Texas, USA

Transience

Sharnaz Wadia

I sent him a New Year ecard . . . our
cyberspace exchanges have trickled down to
almost nil from personal to forwards to only
festive greetings

Today I open the mail telling me who all
haven't viewed my card and I see his name there
which is very unusual . . . perhaps he is sick . . . or
on a long holiday.

On a whim I go to his FB page and I read a
post from a friend of his "may you rest in peace I
will always remember all the great times we had
you were an awesome friend and will always have
a place in our hearts we will miss you . . ."

unaware
I hold on to the string
one more kite drifts off
never to be seen again
when did it snap?

~India

When the Bell Tolls

Shernaz Wadia

The music is vintage, the staple they grew up on. The atmosphere charged as these women with dyed hair and balding, paunchy men talk animatedly. There's unending laughter. They relive the naughtiness of school days, revive old friendships, discuss teachers (at times irreverently) and revisit their youth in aging photographs . . . extricated from past rivalries, adolescent inhibitions or competition they taste exhilarating freedom. Each of them is a story being retold even as new narratives continue to be scripted.

Stolen, yet not so subtle glances hoping to resurrect old flames evoke gossip and leg-pulling. Their amorous fantasies are soon hijacked by nostalgia. One of the 'girls' is persuaded to sing her once favourite 'Counting Colours in the Rainbow' and then their own Mohmad Rafi delights with the old Hindi number 'Dil Ek Mandir Hai'. (The Heart Is a Temple)

But all is not hunky-dory. A note of sadness and finality creeps into the revelry at the memory of those who passed away in their prime, emphasising the transient nature of life. It hits and hard at that, leaving everyone a little empty as someone intones "ask not for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee."

A few new bonds are forged but will eventually get relegated to the 'someday I will call her up' list. The exhausting routine of daily grind sees promises linger in the labyrinth of unfulfilled ones; numbers are confined to the phone diary; email IDs are just more clutter, while hopeful relationships decay.

she spoke of
her fight with cancer
why did I not
seek out
her loneliness?

~India

Cherita

Shernaz Wadia

each time I awaken

to trains passing
in the night

I am happy
one took
you away for good

cattle egrets script the sky

their journey opposite
to the sun's

in the morning
they go westward
to the east at dusk

climbing

these rising
paths I learn

no matter how high you go
the journey back
is always downward

single

in their double bed
she wishes

he had left sooner
because she could have found
someone new by now

~India

touching the past

Tim Lenton

In these long, long days
so busy, so empty
the past crawls
across the lawn
like a snapping turtle

I dig my heels in
walk the circle
try to distinguish
between memories
and count the years

eastern kingbirds
and cardinals
fly past:
the coyote
has disappeared

I am becoming
the man who died:
we let him go
among the dust
and statues

and now
I sit and wait
for those heavy
drops of rain
in my hair

that guilty love
that search
for ecstasy
that fear
of finding it

raking
through forgotten fields
looking for apples
in the sun
and unmade beds

if this were
a labyrinth
I would be
nearing
the centre

there is a gate,
but many shadows:
I reach out for the future
and touch the past
again

~Norwich, UK

Tim Lenton has been a journalist most of his life but now writes predominantly poetry, including tanka and haiku, the former sometimes in collaboration with Joy McCall. He lives in Norwich, UK, is married with an adult son and two grandchildren and is a winner of the Fish International Poetry Prize. He has a website at www.back2sq1.co.uk.

Shernaz Wadia is a retired primary school teacher and lives in Pune, India. She was educated in St. Joseph's High School Valsad, and Wadia College, Pune. Her articles, short stories and poems have been widely published in web journals and anthologies. She has also published 'Whispers of the Soul', a collection of some of her poems and "Tapestry Poetry"—a genre of poetry composition in partnership, developed by her and Israeli poet Avril Mealem.

Waiting for Daylight in Shanghai

Tish Davis

dropped off
at the wrong terminal
on the other side of the world
only morning
knows the way

multi-directional
the wheels
on my new luggage
find a stranger
who speaks English

After checking in, I follow the small map on the back of my boarding pass. The elevator to the JAL VIP Lounge only goes down. Unlike the airline's luxurious lounge in Narita, the facility here occupies a small footprint at one end of a long drafty corridor.

in the dimly-lit lounge
copies of the *Shanghai Daily*
folded neatly
along bold fonts
and waiting on a wooden rack

that red-smocked server
with her sandals flip-flopping
unnoticed
by the traveler
in the armchair

morning rests
on a fishing village
tinted by a blue-green sea
these moonlit waves—
I cannot sit down

still standing
and without the artist's name
but morning
will reach my husband first
share it, share it, I whisper

following
invisible pathways
with travelers
whose names I do not know
destinations only imagined

*~Japan Airlines (JAL) VIP Lounge at the Shanghai
Pudong International Airport*

Note

JAL relocated the lounge and opened an upgraded and larger one in 2016.

Tish Davis lives in Concord, Ohio, USA. Her work has appeared in numerous journals including Modern Haibun and Tanka Prose, Atlas Poetica, Haibun Today, red lights, Modern Haiku, Frogpond, Presence, bottle rockets, Contemporary Haibun Online, and Simply Haiku.

Review: M. Kei, ed., *Stacking Stones: An Anthology of Short Tanka Sequences* (Keibooks, Perryville, Maryland: 2018)

I

A Digression (To Start)

I sat scribbling
poems to my beloved,
the canary behind me
scattering seed
all over its cage (1)

I think this tanka by Roger Jones is representative of the individual tanka in *Stacking Stones*. It is simple, direct, bends in the middle, and makes a light metaphor out of “poems” and scattered “seed.” It tends, in these ways, to carry on some aspects of the traditional Japanese tanka. But it does so within a virtually free-verse line structure of 4/6/7/4/5.

Compare this to one of the more traditional tanka by Christopher Shawn Rathburn.

One day waking up,
Knowing it down to the bone
That help is needed.
Giving your self permission
To find a way to survive. (2)

Here the tanka pivots perfectly on that third line, leading out of “waking” and “knowing” and into “giving” and finding “a way to survive.” The poem is formal, like a traditional sonnet, down to capitalizing the first word in each line. In his “Introduction” M. Kei notes that Rathburn “writes in a strict 5-7-5-7-7 pattern of syllables which has generally been abandoned in English because it usually creates verses that are too dense and heavy. Tanka are supposed to be ballet dancers, not linebackers.” (3)

That anyone is concerned about the pros and cons of a particular line length or other formality of traditional tanka is because tanka are thought of, not simply as “poems,” but as a kind of poetic genre, like “sonnet,” “ae freislighe,” or “villanelle.” Dogmatism often burdens forms like the sonnet. Take, for example, T.W.H. Crosland:

It has been commonly held that poetry is a law unto itself, and that there are no standards whereby it can be judged. Of the sonnet, however, this is certainly not true. The law has written itself explicitly and finally, and the standards have been set up and are irremovable. Of the law we may dispose very briefly. A sonnet consists of fourteen decasyllabic lines, rhymed according to prescription. Any poem of more than fourteen decasyllabic lines, or less than fourteen, is not a sonnet.

He goes on to equally high-handed lengths regarding rhyme patterns, the need for couplets, and so forth. What I find ironic (or is it just amusing?) is that this stance in regard to sonnets seems to be the opposite of what gets said in relation to tanka. The swing in tanka writing seems to be toward increased relaxation of formal rules. None of this would matter much if, instead of thinking that a tanka is somehow a definite generic literary form about which we must make some rules, we simply acknowledged it to be a short song or poem, as the word *tan-ka* indicates. Whether we want a ballerina or a linebacker would depend, then, on the job to be done.

Notice, on the other hand, how more generously modern American poetics, having ceased to worry so much about the genre of a poem, tolerates wide variations, judging form only by how well it handles the subject at hand. Consider the following two not untypical Modern American poems; the first is an excerpt by Robert Creeley . . .

As soon as
I speak, I
speaks. It

wants to
be free but
impassive lies

in the direction
of its
words (4)

. . . and the second is by C. K. Williams.

If that someone who's me yet not me yet
who judges me is always with me,
as he is, shouldn't he have been there when I
said so long ago that thing I said? (5)

A huge portion of modern American poetry would fall between these two extremes of form, and it seems unlikely that, given all of the options, Williams and Creeley chose these forms for any other reason than how they contributed to what the poet was trying to do. Can you imagine a serious argument now among literary critics about whether one or the other of these was legitimately a poem? You might or might not appreciate either poem, delighting in the formal idiosyncrasies or regretting the lack of rhyme or scansion, but you would never withhold the designation "poem" from either.

A quick perusal of the author biographies at back of this book reveals what I would have thought is an unexpectedly large number of poets who identify themselves quite broadly as English short poem writers. I think this is likely a window on the future (at least I hope it is) when tanka and tanka-forms will simply elide into another way to write poetry in English. I believe that by clinging to the exotic roots of the form in (ancient) Japanese poetry, tanka writers risk being permanently sidelined. Japanese practice, anyway, is not limited to anything like the five lines (when they are translating tanka into English); sometimes one, or two, or three, or four lines are not uncommon. As tanka becomes a more common form within English poetry, it might finally turn away from the limited utility of Japanese traditions for writing poetry in English.

If the sonnet with its roots in Petrarch can expand to include the sonnets of e. e. cummings, then there is hope.

I have never been a fan of the single, isolate tanka. One reason is that it is over before it has hardly begun, and that puts a tremendous burden on the poet. The pressure is felt in two directions: first, the poem often ends up grasping for significance in irony or, as it is so compact, seeking exaggerated perceptions; second, the single tanka (in my experience) calls out for some matrix from which it can draw significance and to which it can lend compass. Here is an example, the tanka split in two by a prose passage to allow implications to flow in:

a weeping willow
you would know of all the trees

The wind had started to blow on the Reservation and rawboned mongrels scuttled along with their backsides to it. Sand billowed up and clouds of dust tumbled along between the Burger King and the Western Union. Stooped over men with nothing to do leaned against walls or light poles. The "vacant" sign at the Best Western burned yellow through the blur.

sends its feelers out
the slightest trace of water
sets them on a mad panic (6)

This means that the shape and meaning of any tanka is a collaborative question; it all depends on the poetic context. The single, isolate tanka bears the heaviest burden, but the greatest force of tanka poetry derives from the complex in which it is / can be placed. I prefer the benefits to be got from tanka prose, but it is also the case that the tanka sequence provides an effective setting in which each tanka can flourish from the proximity of the others. The tanka sequence, like the tanka prose, extends the force of the tanka as a poem and frees it from the expectation of a burlesque ending that so often attaches to short poems.

II

Placing tanka in a sequence removes some of the pressure to keep rousing the reader with dramatic images and overly musical turns of phrase. The tanka in a sequence are often more like stanzas in a longer poem than anything else. As such, they are parts of a larger whole to which they each contribute and from which each one gains a larger interpretive setting. It's a lot like a dance; the single ballerina can pirouette, soubresaut, strike an arabesque, but with a muscular partner, she can fly.

In the space remaining, I would like to look at five exemplary tanka sequences in *Stacking Stones* to show several ways the problem of connected tanka verses can be resolved. I don't mean to suggest that these five sequences are necessarily better than others in the volume, but that they illustrate for me some underlying strengths of tanka and the tanka sequence.

1. *Crossings* (7)

biting into a vermilion apple
with night coming
light traffic
and silence

*the lights go out
at the drive-thru window
a crow
pecks an apple
before becoming night*

just waking up
a moment gathering myself
stretching and
wringing shadows out of my bones

*the triumph of youth!
this afternoon sun—
that time
in my life
I conquered my shadow*

on this summer day
an old woman stops in the middle
of the pedestrian crossings
searching for a memory

*the warm breath
of a summer breeze—
we listen
as Grandma tells
stories of her youth*

As we can see, the structure of this tanka sequence features contrapuntal utterances; the first in each pair being written in four lines, the counterpoint in five.

This is a poem filled with an energy that comes right out of its dialectical structure. The first voice is like the opening scene of a movie, with the character biting into an apple at exactly the end of the day and the scene clearly established with the night, traffic, and silence. The second voice focus sharply and away as the apple has become a black crow's dinner, the lights go out, and the crow's image disappears into night's blackness.

The second pair of tanka, I think, are less successful, the second too vague in relation to the recognizable actions of the first. That "wringing shadows out of my bones," is brilliant and reaches back into the first sequence's darkness.

The best was saved for last, however. The old woman suspended in the middle of an intersection having momentarily lost control of her memory is almost too poignant to bear. It's as if she was rummaging through her purse. And in the second tanka there is the perfect opposite; not an old woman without her memory, but one in a peaceful domestic scene recounting "stories of her youth."

The line structures in both tanka voices are truly free verse; there is no discernible pattern of syllables, but there is wonderful poetic rhythm. Listen to those two opening lines again:

biting into a vermillion apple
[pause, poised as if on a precipice, and then]
with night coming

Something equally “poetic,” in a sense far broader than any “rules” of tanka, happens at the end as well:

we listen
[the poet says]
as Grandma tells
[we perk up our ears]
stories of her youth.

You could almost dance to it. “Crossings” over into night, into consciousness, and the crossing of streets and the crossing over from one generation to the next. So, what is the advantage here of the sequence rather than individual tanka? Well, we know more now of what really happens when the light disappears, as well as how later on we have to struggle our way back into the light, and we know that both shadow and light have more meanings than one.

2. *blue danube* (8)

another way
of dying
filling up
your room
with soul memories

an old
gilt hairbrush
coty loose powder
dusting
a lost generation

the chandelier
now dark
waltzes from
the danube
echo

your jewel box
pins and coronets
tiaras and cameos
basking on
fading red velvet

This tanka sequence is very like Creely’s stanzas. The line pattern across the poem is irregular, befitting a listing of discrete visual memories. This is a very economical method of storytelling; *ai li* lets the objects do all the telling. The action of the poem is set in the first tanka, linking the souvenirs in a room with a kind of dying, but luckily that is just the beginning.

The overall structure of this sequence is simple, but powerful. We are set up to expect memories in a room, and we get them, fired like accusations — “Do you remember this?” And then the physical objects on which the memories fasten themselves. We see the objects, the hairbrush, the chandelier, the jewel box and jewels, and they drip with significance for us even though they are not our own memories.

I think something of this sort is what the editor, M. Kei, has in mind when he says:

These shifting meanings due to contiguity are what we call ‘multivalency’ in tanka, or controlled ambiguity. This flexibility of meaning is one of tanka’s great strengths. (9)

But, in the case of *danube*, I would argue for a different reading of the role of form. This poem is made up of an introductory tanka followed by three instantiating tanka (I am really tempted in this sequence to call them “stanzas”). They don’t so much interact with one another as accumulate, building up the initial idea of “soul memories” with precise and dramatic instances. I imagine the poet sorting through the items on a woman’s (a mother, a lover) vanity; the poem stops the list on the idea of red velvet, but it could conceivably have gone on until the inventory was complete. (10)

3. *rain, rain* (11)

it is no use
going to the village
the road is closed
the water is lapping
at all the doors

the pub is shut
water a foot deep
on the old flagstones
the ale casks bobbing
floating in the cellar

the cows have moved
to higher ground
the Hollow Lane
is busy with rabbits
their meadow flooded

long-ago man built
his churches here
on high places
the water runs downhill
the graves stay dry

I sit in the porch
above waterlogged fields
thinking of Noah
and praying for enough sun
for just one rainbow

rain, rain is a tanka sequence in some ways like *blue danube* in that its overall strategy is to accumulate images and ideas, but in this case it serves a narrative structure concerned with torrential rain and subsequent flooding in an English village or town. The road is closed and water is lapping at all the doors, the pub is flooded, the meadows are flooded, and only the church is safe from flooding. Church? Flooding? Then, of course, Noah. And, again, because of the narrative setting and the turning from one aspect of the flood to another, the individual tanka (and, again, they seem so like five-line free verse to me) (12) do not so much feed on each other as wait to contribute their aspect of the overall story.

It is a beautiful poem, written in elegant but simple words and leading compellingly to its last idea, namely Noah, the flood, and the rainbow. There is a simple action at the heart of each tanka, the road is closed, the pub is shut, the cows have moved, the water runs downhill, and the poet sits on the porch, “thinking of Noah / and praying for enough sun / for just one rainbow.”

Without that “and” at the beginning of the line, “thinking of Noah” would have been the perfect pivot.

As in the story of Noah, the poem reaches an optimistic conclusion after having come through disaster after disaster. It is all the more poignant on both counts because the writing is so concrete and specific. The images are alive and simple, painting a precise picture in which we all but listen to the rain or hear the wet squish in the soles of our boots. The worst thing was the image of ale kegs afloat in the basement of the pub!

4. *What We Shoulder* (13)

the heft
of fifty-pound seed sacks
portioned out
by the scoopful
along weathered deck rails

the infinite
black oil seeds that slide
down scrub jay crops
the way incalculable drops
of rain slake a gauge

ironic luck
sunflowers popping up
cache after cache
beak-secreted in the mulch
of manicured landscaping

migrating flocks
we hope we helped launch
the acres
of sun-gilt faces
orbiting on clockwise watch

the blue
of a flight feather lost
borne aloft
amidst petals falling soft
as sunlight on stones

What We Shoulder tells a story of feeding scrub jays sunflower seeds from hefty grain sacks in the garden and marveling at the sunflowers that rise

up later. Again, the progress through the poem tells a story, one step at a time. They feed the seed, the birds devour it, and plant it in “caches,” out of which heliotropic sunflowers flourish, turn their faces to the sun, and in the end, the birds leave only a single feather hovered in the air.

These tanka follow a more conventional line structure (S/L/S/L/L) with a subtle pivot in the third line. This creates a gentle discipline within which the rhetoric and syntax of the poem must be achieved. But, it is not so heavy a burden that it could force ideas into awkward straight-jackets. Look at some of the easy phrasings:

portioned out
by the scoopful

the infinite
black oil seeds that slide

or

sunflowers popping up
cache after cache

These represent to me just about the perfect balance between inspiration and the measured foot in some particular number across this or that many lines. You can still feel the homage to tanka form in each little poem, but, at the same time, the conventions are open as to subject vocabulary, or morphology.

These tanka come the closest so far to M. Kei’s notion of something like a dialectic among the individual tanka, any two of them amounting to more than merely their sum, and so on. The idea of the measured seed, whether carried in heavy sacks, consumed by scrub jays, popping up from where they were accidentally planted, joy at contributing to one of nature’s big doings, and coming to an end with the sentimental flight feather soaring on its own. We see that in reading from first to second tanka, that the second would not mean much without the first, nor the third without the first two, and so forth. In the end, the touching conclusion reverberates back through the whole sequence, the spirit, almost, of that

missing bird that lost the feather hovering over all. Why don’t those people shouldering the bags look up?

There are in this collection, of course, tanka more heavily rule-governed than these by Autumn Noelle Hall, but her sequence represents powerfully what can still be done with tanka sequences even when hesitating to leap into the fearful formlessness of free verse. What? Abandon the hear-say (no two experts agree) rules of tanka? Do you think I am kidding about free verse being fearful and formless? Test yourself with these lines by Paul Blackburn:

Drops on the train window wobble . stream
My trouble
is
it is her fate to never learn to make
anything grow
be born or stay
Harbor beginnings and that other gleam .
The train
is full of long / way / home and holding
lovers whose
flesh I would exchange for mine
The rain, R. F. . . . etc. (14)

5. *spectral* (15)

in the space
between wakefulness
and dreaming
my sister sings songs
I have yet to write

my dreamscapes
haunted by green spirals
of aurora
these memories of you
conjured out of light

last night
I dreamt of things
fantastical
this morning, my life
so dull and drear

night after night
this recurring dream
the universe
is telling me something
I do not understand

This four-tanka sequences works differently those discussed above. Here the poet leaps from one tanka to the next, bringing forward always the idea of dreaming. The title, *spectral*, connotes both a dream or ghostly realm and the spectrum of colors, as in a rainbow or artist's palette. The first tanka finds the poet midway between awake and dreaming, the second takes us into a nostalgic dream with colors, the third contrasts the wonder of the "dreamscape" with the banality of real life, and then we learn it happens every night, leaving the poet to wonder if

the universe
is telling me something
I do not understand

The poem works by gradually revealing more and more of the reality in (behind?) the dream world. In the end the dreams are mildly debunked, ordinary reality and the waking mind seemingly back in charge, but in the last tanka a whole new set of questions appears. Maybe the dreamscape is really about something bigger than the dreamer?

The syllabic form working in these four tanka seems to be a modified version of the S/L/S/L/L pattern, but applied pretty loosely. In the first tanka, the count is 3/5/3/5/5; the second is 3/6/4/6/6; the third (the most deviant) is 2/4/4/5/4; and the fourth is 4/5/4/6/6. Now, all of these indicate a tendency or preference toward some definite tanka structure, some irreverent set of rules that, whatever they are, can be honored in the breach. Perhaps, however, it is no accident that the third stanza is the most pivotal, straddling the dream world and reality. The others are all more loosely conventional, but this one more rudely makes long and short identical, if you will, and keeps everything short.

The sequence *spectral* is ghostly, with memories caught in the blurred line between present and future, weaving dream-memories where light and image coalesce, and bluntly invoking the harsher waking morning. The poet ends up standing at the edge of that abyss Nietzsche was probably talking about when he wrote:

He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster. And if you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss also gazes into you (16)

*

Stacking Stones is a very good read, but I caution readers to come at it patiently, slowly, chewing on the words and searching with lips and tongue for all the tastes that are in there. Some of the poems, if read lightly or too quickly, will seem better than they really are, while others, if skimmed over, will simply be missed. And it is these, the ones deserving of close and reflective reading that will give you the kick, make it all seem worthwhile.

Before concluding this already probably overlong essay, I want to turn briefly to one of the most interesting pieces in the book, *wild swans: a dream-poem*, by A. A. Markoff, an English tanka poet from Leatherhead, south of London. In *Stacking Stones*, this poem takes up three and a half pages of mainly dense prose, made up of seemingly endless, run-on sentences, punctuated just twice by very free verse tanka. The prose is constantly accelerating, heading who knows where, and if I had to characterize it, I would say it is like reading a cross between some Zen song of enlightenment and Borges. It is hard to follow because it jumps from one thing to another and never waits for anything to really develop before going on to the next, but it is an exciting trip nonetheless and ends up with the swans, us looking at the swans, the poet singing with the swans as they lift off the water and out of the poem, leaving only this gem:

the sun at last:
winter fades
into
the flight
of swans

their wings wilder and wilder . . .

Charles D. Tarlton
Northampton, Massachusetts, USA

Footnotes

- 1) Roger Jones, *May-December* (Texas)
- 2) Christopher Rathburn, *Crucible* (Minnesota)
- 3) *Stacking Stones*, 15
- 4) Robert Creeley, *The Pattern*
- 5) C. K. Williams, *The Gaffe*
- 6) A poem of my own.
- 7) Akane (Texas) and Dave Read (Alberta)
- 8) ai li (London and Singapore)
- 9) *Stacking Stones*, 11
- 10) On a personal note, the mention of Coty face powder took me straight back to a little house in Bellflower, California, and my mother's vanity table when I was ten.
- 11) Joy McCall (Norfolk, England)
- 12) When I scan the tanka for syllables there is very little variation among the five; lines of 4, 5, and 6 syllables make up all but one line, where there are 7.
- 13) Autumn Noelle Hall (Colorado)
- 14) Paul Blackburn, "Brooklyn Narcissus," *The Selected Poems of Paul Blackburn*.
- 15) Debbie Strange (Canada)
- 16) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (146).

Review: *Norfolk Ways* by Tim Lenton and Joy McCall

Reviewed by M. Kei

Norfolk Ways, Tanka poetry
Tim Lenton and Joy McCall
Norwich, England (2017)
Pb 51 pp
ISBN: 978-1-874739-83-8
£8.00 UK

Joy McCall and Tim Lenton are back together again, writing about their native Norwich, England. The book is a collection of responsive tanka in three parts: a photograph taken by Tim, followed by his tanka, and then Joy's tanka in response. By sticking to the theme of 'pathways' they impose discipline on a form that can easily meander. Having something concrete to unite their tanka mean that each poet brings something new to the conversation.

Another point of discipline for Tim is to choose a strict syllable count of 4-6-4-7-6, trimming a little off the excessive length of a traditional sanjuichi tanka in English, while keeping the discipline of a formal form. Joy writes freely, using however many syllables per line suits her. The varied approaches help keep the pairs interesting: each poet's voice is clear, but they blend together in a larger whole.

tall pink houses
line an old city street
by the river:
a girl in red takes pictures
of what has disappeared

rain falling
on grey cobbled lanes
and beneath my feet
piles of twisted bones
in dark plague pits

A rather cheery photograph of a pair of rose and pink townhouses side by side with a narrow entrance to a mews between them features a young woman in a red and white houndstooth-

checked coat taking pictures. It's the usual tourist scene in a very old city, but the tanka have something deeper to say. These are poets who know their city.

Fans of Joy and Tim's history and countryside will find the photographs add a new dimension to the magical, sometimes macabre, but always beautiful, world created by the poets.

Review: *The Owl Still Asking, Tanka for Troubled Times* by Kath Abela Wilson

Review by M. Kei

The Owl Still Asking, Tanka for Troubled Times
Kath Abela Wilson
Locof Chaps, Chicago, Illinois, USA (2017)
Pb 34 pp saddle-stitched

A brief note on tanka introduces the chapbook, followed by a note honoring the poet's mother who passed away in her 95th year, then the poet's biography. The quality is good, with a clear large font on cream paper, suitable for readers who prefer large print.

One or two tanka appear on a page, suggesting that tanka appearing on facing pages should be read together as a sequence. The numbering of each poem suggests that the entire work should be read as one long sequence of thirty-four tanka. It is tempting to think this may be a diary covering a month with each page representing a day, but the pagination does not correspond to the calendar. Nonetheless, the use of numbers within the poems suggests a daily progression.

falling asleep
first night
2017
how the poem
dissolves into words

day two of a strange year
a rooster
in my first dream
I roost with birds of paradise
and wild green parrots

on the third night
I dreamed
I was awake
and it had not happened
this shipwreck on our shore

The first seven poems are numbered with the first seven days of the year, and a later mention of January suggests these all take place in a short span of time. But the sequence is undone; she tells us nothing further about the shipwreck she dreamed didn't happen, and the record moves on to other things: her mother, the Resistance (US political resistance to the Trump regime), and nature, with images of the moon and torches.

wearing green
a thousand welcoming
lady liberties with torches
at the airport
carrying poems

The numbering resumes, and we learn that we are indeed in the midst of a diary, a diary of thirty-four days, and the days linked to the disturbances in the United States, all focused on the man who is never named, but his identity is obvious: Trump.

33: atomic # arsenic
I am not alone
wake feeling a personal affront
edicts ripping friends apart
next he'll outlaw flowers

The final tanka brings the sequence to a close, but not a satisfaction. It is a magic spell, a potion, that is a hoped-for cure. It speaks with an uncertain certainty.

magic square
34th day of the year
a potion
counting the days to a cure
in all directions

Political tanka are exceptionally difficult to do well. It is very tempting for poets to speak directly and critically, but that's a polemic, not a poem. There must be artistry to it. The poet must be able to step outside of the moment to capture the moment.

sixteenmo
so we fold ourselves
into books
in the history of time
we fill in the cracks with gold

I have been seeing a lot of tanka of protest and politics of late. Get this book and learn how to do it right.

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.

Rough Sheet Tanka Journal (Ghana) Call for Submissions

The *Rough Sheet Tanka Journal* is seeking submissions of tanka and all tankaesque poetry for its 3rd edition. TRSTJ is the first literary journal in Africa dedicated to tanka and all tankaesque poetry. The journal seeks to feature new and emerging and as well as old tanka poets, writers and artists from anywhere in the world. It encourages tanka innovations in experimental,

analytic, journalistic, or prosaic forms while maintaining the lyric flavours. It considers anything of tanka as long as it is not libelous, obscene, or unprintable.

Please, anything of tanka or tankaesque poems can be waka, kyoka, gogyohka, gogyoshi, ryuka, sedoka, rokugyohshi, mondo, cherita, konu-na, sumdzi, doyuta, tristin, oriwan, soyukwa(n), nokwa, fibashi, bayika, rutamkan, brakayohka, ransaka, ruyoka, or making katuata, lanterne, quinzaine, cinquain, etc, work as tanka.

Submissions can be poetry, painting, drawing, collage, essays, and critical reviews, or hybrid in any language with English or French or Spanish translations. Submission is throughout the year and can be sent to theroughsheettankajournal@gmail.com. TRSTJ is currently using <https://http://therstj.blogspot.com/>

Tanka readers can also visit kukubenkuka.blogspot.com. *Kukubenkuka: A Bar of Tanka Food* is a place where tanka poets and tanka lovers can stop by and enjoy everything of tanka. It is a project. Readers can submit a tanka or related poem with a recipe to be published on the blog. The email is: kukubenkuka@gmail.com

Songs of a Waking Cosmos: Cherita Set to Music Published by Richard St. Clair

New Englander Richard St. Clair, a longstanding modern-classical composer, has taken cherita into a new domain of vocal music. His latest musical work sets ten of his own cherita for soprano voice with the piano as accompaniment. He has given this 12-minute song cycle the title "Songs of a Waking Cosmos". The songs meld modern style with traditional musical language, each song capturing the emotional essence of its corresponding cherita. St. Clair has also recently written songs to cherita by ai li.

An extended selection of this work can be heard on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ySjQj9s958> along with the full lyrics in the “More” window.

The seventh song is a heartfelt threnody to the countless victims of the terrible civil war in Yemen:

deepening

sadness befalls
Yemen

starving children
too weak
to cry

The tenth song bears the title of the cycle:

listen

to the heartbeat
of the waking cosmos

the sky
the land
the nurturing ocean

The sheet music for this cycle can be purchased from SMP Press through SheetMusicPlus, where dozens of St. Clair’s compositions are for sale and download. Here is the URL: <https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/>.

pieces of sky
edition 2:3 of the cherita

This edition of pieces of sky showcases 90 fine cherita from writers and poets who hail from UK, USA, Singapore, New Zealand, Ukraine, India, the Kingdom of Bhutan, Canada, Lithuania, Australia, Ireland, Romania, and West Africa.

<http://www.thecherita.com/piecesofsky/>

I have thoroughly enjoyed selecting and collating all your cherita for this Summer edition. *Cherita terbalik* continues to capture the imagination of poets and there are again fine examples in this edition.

I have edited this edition as I have all the other editions of *the cherita*, to be experienced in two ways. It can be read as one storybook but also as an anthology of individual poems. Two reading experiences within one book, filled with stories of Life, Love and Loss.

The cherita terbalik [*pronounced chair-rita tur-bar-lake*] can be written with stanzas of [3-2-1], [2-1-3], [1-3-2], [2-3-1] and [3-1-2] and with up to 3 partners. I hope you will all try this either solo or with your writing friends and submit your best efforts to me.

Here’s my August card for you :-

<http://www.ojolie.com/cards/pickup/91b82b2277d79ad>

Your loyalty and storytelling with cherita continue to inspire me and help me with the ongoing production of *the cherita*. Your cherita ensure that the quality of the poems is met, which in turn ensure that each edition of *the cherita* remains top notch to showcase your work.

I cannot thank you enough for your ongoing support, the sharing of your stories, all of which gives flash fiction a new heightened dimension for us to revel in.

ai li
editor
www.thecherita.com

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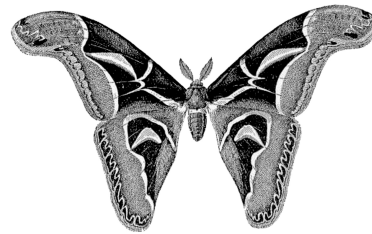
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Editorial Biography

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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tanka and short forms*

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tanka and short forms*

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