

**E-News No. 32 July, 2011**

**E-news is an occasional, complimentary newsletter to accompany the print magazine**

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**Distinctive Scribblings**

So which tanka from issue 10 did the winners from *Eucalypt* 9 – Elizabeth Howard and Sonam Chhoki choose – and why? My deep appreciation to Elizabeth and Sonam. This peer appraisal process is of immense value to *Eucalypt* and I think these two thoughtful essays are quite outstanding.

Neither appraisal is yet on the *Eucalypt* web-site, but *Eucalypt's* web manager, John Bird, assures me they will be in a day or so.

**Selected Poet: Mariko Kitakubo  
An appraisal by Sonam Chhoki**

I felt like Roald Dahl's Charlie in the Chocolate Factory. As I saw it, *Eucalypt* is a poetical phantasmagoria, where tanka adepts from around the world display imagination, skill and technique to articulate their deepest emotions, thoughts and experiences. With this came, to paraphrase George Steiner (No Passion Spent), 'a nagging weight of omission.'

*Which tanka should I pick from among the impressive array? Would I do it full justice? What if I omit a worthy tanka?*

It did not altogether diminish the delight with which I revisited the poems several times. This tanka by Mariko Kitakubo began to grow on me. It has a compaction of imagery and allusions (personal, mythic, poetical) that played on the mind each time I read it.

*moonlit night  
in the bamboo forest  
a child god  
transforms into a badger  
to summon his mother*

The seemingly straightforward description in the first two lines of the tanka:

*moonlit night  
in the bamboo forest*

takes on a certain charge with the line:

*a child god*

The reader is forced to stop and take note. It evokes for me allusions of myths and beliefs – deities appearing to the initiated, the innate sacredness of nature and the allusion to the archetypal magical attributes of the moon itself. Even as the reader holds their breath there is shift and a metamorphosis of image and perception. The *child god* (divine) transmutes into a *young badger* (mortal). The line:

*to summon his mother*

suggests a vulnerability of the badger cub and there is a note of tenderness in the poet's observation. What struck me is the immersion in the scene and moment that Mariko Kitakubo creates with a deftness and lightness of touch while remaining an unobtrusive observer. An arresting detail of this tanka is the way the shadows of the bamboo in the light of the moon mirror the stippling black and white effect of the badger's head. It evokes a poetical parallel with Blake's *Tyger*, whose golden and black stripes are described as 'burning' in the 'forest of the night.'

The tanka has a pleasing sonority when read aloud. The long 'o's in *moon* and *bamboo* and again the recurring 'o's in *forest, god, transforms, summon* and *mother* slow down the pace and create a sense of wonder as in an echoing Oh! The near-rhymes of *mother* and *badger* as well as in the short 'it' in *lit* and long 'it' in *night* further enhance the sonority of the tanka.

Mariko Kitakubo's tanka is imbued with a sense of a magical moment and as a reader I felt privileged and moved to be allowed to share this.

It would be remiss of me to neglect other tanka in this issue, which deserve a very honourable mention.

Ian Storr's tanka is very Vermeer-like in its portrayal of light, shadow and above all, translucency— the turquoise blue, one imagines, of the *settled sea*, the light on the balcony reflected by the *white plate* and the suggestions of shadow mingled with transparency in these two lines create a veiling effect with a delicious sensuous overtone:

*grapes the green of jade*  
*the seeds within like shadows*

John Quinnett's tanka is also visually powerful. The repetitiveness of the *falling leaves* mirrors the repetitiveness of the woman's sweeping. The *slow-dance* effect transforms a practical task into an aesthetical moment.

The ellipsis in Carla Sari's tanka is laden with such poignancy:

*'We'll meet again,'*  
*I lie . . . to my sister*

Another haunting tanka is by Linda Galloway:

*am I still a mother*  
*now that my child has died*

echo the *descent* of the stone to an unfathomable depth.

Barbara Fisher's tanka imbues a mundane daily chore, *ironing* with a poetical elegance. The quiet of the room is enhanced by the lengthening shadows and the contrast with the hiss of the iron steam sets up a contemplative tone. One gets a sense of an instance all the more precious for the unexpectedness of it – a kind of finding the sacred in the profane.

I also like the child-like delight that Mary Franklin captures in her tanka. The assonance in *again, train* and *rain* brings out the sense of a gush of inspiration.

Athena Zaknic's tanka conjures a sinister setting – dusk, her slow walk from the bus stop, his waiting underlined by the line:

*now on his fourth stubby*

There is a back-story to this and an uneasy sense of something about to happen, which raise questions:

Is he a stalker? Is he a violent parent or partner?

That the poet offers no answers makes the tanka all the more compelling.

Finally, Max Ryan's tanka has a brooding sense of mortality:

*... sixtieth birthday ...*  
*the darkness out there*  
*... the tug of an unseen tide.*

**Selected Poet: Sonam Chhoki**  
**An appraisal by Elizabeth Howard**

back home  
from the oncology ward  
I peel my first orange  
the burst of juice and smell  
colour of the sun I missed  
Sonam Chhoki

I am impressed at the quality of the work in the tenth edition of the tanka journal, *Eucalypt*. The task of choosing one tanka over all of others is rather overwhelming. Two tanka about writing, Shona Bridge's *a distant light* and Mary Franklin's *suddenly*, appeal to me as a writer who knows about the two pages, one blank, the other overflowing with words that pour from some source beyond us. I am intrigued by Kath Abela Wilson's *when what might happen/happens*, sympathize with the ones who have experienced recent earthquakes: Barbara Strang, Helen Yong, and Nola Borrell. None of us are immune to natural disasters—floods, tornados, hurricanes, fires, etc., that shatter lives. Other tanka appeal to me: Michele L. Harvey's *painting*, Allegria Imperial's *into fog*, Lynette Arden's *thanks to my mother*, Max Ryan's *woken on the eve*. One that I like especially well—that I also wanted to choose—is Edith Bartholomeusz's tanka about children. Far too many children in all parts of this earth are *on the far side/of the river—/no bridge/from there to here*.

After reading through the tanka several times, I eventually chose *back home*. This tanka followed me around while I was making up the bed and doing laundry. Chhoki has captured the universal experience of cancer and chemotherapy in a wonderfully positive way. We all know the horrors, either through personal experience (I have had breast cancer) or the helpless agony of watching a loved one or a close friend suffer and deteriorate (I have lost a daughter and a sister). Chhoki has hinted at the months of treatment, but chosen to emphasize the joy of recovery.

She leaves the misery, the darkness, *colour of the sun I missed*, to the end of the poem, after we know the story has a happy ending. When the doctor pronounces the sentence, perhaps avoiding eye contact, the lights go out, the sun hides its face. The world is gray, foggy, dreary. Favorite foods lose their flavor, become repulsive; the morning coffee tastes like metal. The smell of food, bubbling on the stove, baking in the oven, roasting on the grill, is nauseating. Hair falls out, skin becomes ashen. The face in the mirror is ghostly, skeletal. Exhaustion begins the day and ends it. Walking, even a few steps, causes faintness. The mind is clouded. A simple chore, such as balancing a checkbook, the household accounts, is a long arduous task.

The first line, *back home*, is wonderful. Home is that comfort place we hurry to after a long arduous journey or a hard day's work. There we can kick off our shoes, put on our old faded jeans, breathe deeply, and relax. There we refresh mind, body, and spirit for a new beginning. In the second line, we learn the long arduous journey has been to the oncology ward, sitting for hours while poisons drip into the vein, poisons that cause such awful nausea, fatigue, depression. All of that is past now, we are home.

Color bursts back into our lives, into our faces, senses reawaken. Once favorite foods again become favorites. We rejoice in the smell of bread baking in the oven. Morning coffee has the aroma, the taste, that we love, that sets us stirring, ready for sunrise, birdsong, a walk among the flowers. Walk, such a wonderful word. What joy, that first hike, actually climbing a hill after many months of incapacity. The mind is whole again. Thoughts, dreams, ideas burst forth as juice bursts from the orange. All of the lights that were extinguished back there in the oncology ward are back on again. We soak up the sun, a giant orange ball rising in the east, in a radiant halo of color, colors we know and colors so rare we do not even know their names.

Joy to all who have traveled through the darkness and come *back home* to the light.

## ***Eucalypt no 11***

Submissions close on September 30. Preferred submission dates August-September. Please head every submission with your name and the statement that your work is 'original, unpublished, and not under consideration elsewhere.'

If you are new to *Eucalypt*, or not yet a subscriber, please include your postal address in the heading. *If your work is accepted it would be appreciated if you subscribe, or at least order a copy of the issue in which it appears.* This is how print poetry journals survive. Thank you.

## **Subscriptions**

Your subscription may need renewing after issue 10. You can find out where your subscription is up to by looking on the address label, and/or on side 2 of the wraparound sheet sent with *Eucalypt* issue 10. Thank you to the many people who have subscribed ahead. A subscription form is available from <http://users.mullum.com.au/jbird/Eucalypt/E-subscribe.html> Cheques and money orders must be in Australian dollars payable to B M George. Thank you for your support.

## **Stamps that lead a second life -can you help?**

Several years ago, when I was editing and producing *Yellow Moon*, I told contributing poets that postage stamps on the copious mail I received from them was passed on to Mr and Mrs. K Healey, who for many years have been preparing used stamps for sale to collectors, with all proceeds going to research into Parkinson's Disease. After that announcement, many poets included used stamps with the submissions they sent.

Although I continue personally to give stamps that come my way to the Healey's, I haven't told *Eucalypt* contributors about this generous-spirited couple's endeavours. What is heartening is that often when I go to a writing function, a poet who once participated in *Yellow Moon* will come up to me with a small pack of used stamps they have been saving for me to pass to the Healeys, to assist this much-needed research.

So now now you know. If you'd like to join in, please do.

## ***Grevillea and Wonga Vine: Australian Tanka of Place***

**Editors: Beverley George and David Terelinck**

Copies of this have now been mailed to participating poets, many of whom have since requested extra copies, and to various Australian libraries. Overseas poets will find information about this publication on the wraparound sheet that came with *Eucalypt* 10. Please note this is a limited edition print publication, and place your order promptly if you would like a copy.

A review by Patricia Prime is available on <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/node/590>

## **Tanka In Australia**

### **\*\* News and Workshops**

**From Geelong, Victoria, Jan Foster writes:**

Lots of news from down south. Breathstream Tanka Poets group is now on the Twitter network of the 15 libraries in the Shire. Six people at the June meeting, ten at the July meeting and several more enquiries for the August meeting. A second group is being considered to keep numbers in each group to an acceptable level for growth in understanding tanka. Meetings are held at the Belmont Library and an Open Meeting is planned for Seniors Month in October.

## **\*\* Reviews**

### ***Grevillea & Wonga Vine***

An extensive and thoughtful review by Patricia Prime is available on the New Zealand Poetry Society's Haiku web-site <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/node/590>

### ***Tanka Huddle***

edited by Julie Thorndyke

Sydney, Swan Bay Books, 2011.

ISBN 978-0-9808407-0-4 15 p pb

\$7 (Australia) or \$10 (overseas) to: J. Thorndyke, 3 Forest Knoll, Castle Hill, 2154 NSW Australia [price includes postage and handling].

#### **Reviewed by Sue Vale.**

I'm very new to Tanka. In fact, reading *Tanka Huddle* is my first real experience of this unique form of poetry. And what an introduction! I've been variously shocked, amused, intrigued and moved, but ultimately converted, by just five lines.

The members of the Tanka Huddle have created a rich collection of stories woven with humour and beauty. And sometimes pain. Snapshots of life and nature, painted so clearly, so vividly, I could see and taste and touch it all.

Each poem sent me on a journey far beyond its five lines, setting a scene and telling a story that captured my imagination and had me wondering what would come next, or perhaps what had gone before.

Some would take a complete U-turn, so I thought I knew where we were headed, only to be blind-sided in the last line. I'm thinking of the lunchbox crumbs and my shocked tears as I took the impact of its final word.

But speed dating took me from an initial smile to a full-blown belly laugh. I sat giggling at my desk for a long time afterwards and still giggle now, more than a week later, whenever I think of it.

I wait eagerly now for the next offering from Tanka Huddle.

## **\*\*Dates for the Diary**

### **Sunday July 24<sup>th</sup> Pearl Beach, Central Coast, NSW**

**Book Launch party:** in the Pearl Beach Village Hall, with as many of the contributing poets to *Grevillea and Wonga Vine: Australian Tanka of Place* as are able to attend, reading their own work. (there will be between 21 and 25 poets attending with their friends! There will be a catered afternoon tea and no doubt a few surprises! Thanks to everyone who has already responded. Enquiries and RSVP [editor@eucalypt.info](mailto:editor@eucalypt.info)

### **August 5<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Visit to Australia by Tokyo poet, Mariko Kitakubo**

Last November following the successful *Footsteps of Basho Tour* arranged by Mitsui Travel, Dy Andreasen and I spent a few days in Kamakura with Mariko, [as Linda Galloway and I had the previous October]. Dy and I are looking forward to hosting Mariko in Sydney August 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> before driving with her to Canberra on the 8<sup>th</sup> to attend events described below for the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, and also for a little relaxation and sightseeing and catching up with friends..

### **August 11th Canberra**

#### **Tanka Performance, convened by Amelia Fielden**

On Thursday August 11th, from 6pm, at the Asia Bookroom, Macquarie, there will be tanka performances, with live music, on the theme of:

'A Celebration of the Life and Work of Kawano Yuko'.

Kawano Yuko was the very well-known Japanese poet who died on 12 August 2010. Poet Mariko Kitakubo, visiting from Tokyo, will participate in readings of Kawano's tanka. Details on this event from **Amelia Fielden** at [anafielden@hotmail.com](mailto:anafielden@hotmail.com)

### **August 13<sup>th</sup> Canberra**

**Kathy Kituai**, founder and facilitator of the Limestone Tanka Group, invites you to participate in the following event.

#### **In conversation with poets:**

**Mariko Kitakubo** and **Beverley George** at the Gods@Hedley Bull cafe.

A rare opportunity to hear tanka poetry read in its original language by a Tokyo poet, as well as in English, and to listen in as Mariko and Beverley discuss tanka, a Japanese genre that is gaining popularity in Australia even though it originated in Japan 1300 year ago.

Details of this event from Kathy Kituai at [kkituai@gmail.com](mailto:kkituai@gmail.com)

Limestone Poet members please note this event replaces the meeting scheduled for August 28<sup>th</sup>.

### **August 20 Sydney, NSW**

#### **Book Launch**

Saturday, August 20 at 2:30pm at Castle Hill Public Library, Castle Hill, New South Wales, Australia, Julie Thorndyke's second tanka collection, *Carving Granite*, published by Ginninderra Press, will be launched by Emeritus Prof. Elizabeth Webby.

### **September 18th Sydney**

#### **Book Launch**

David Terelinck's first collection of tanka, *Castling Shadows*, is approaching the last stages of production. It will be launched by Beverley George, editor of *Eucalypt: a tanka journal*, on Sunday 18th September 2011 at the NSW Writers' Centre. For more information on the launch or ordering a copy of the collection, contact David direct on [tanka\\_oz@yahoo.com.au](mailto:tanka_oz@yahoo.com.au)

Wishing each of you continuing joy on your tanka pathway,

*Beverley*

[editor@eucalypt.info](mailto:editor@eucalypt.info)

[www.eucalypt.info](http://www.eucalypt.info)

**Stop Press:** Australian Ron Moss has won the prestigious UK- based Seashells Competition Convened by Martin Lucas, editor of *Presence*, for his haiku

starry night ...  
what's left of my life  
is enough

Ron Moss  
[Australia] Montage #8