

PruneJuice

Journal of Senryu, Kyoka & Haiga prunejuice.wordpress.com



Issue Twelve: March 2014

PRUNE JUICE

Journal of Senryu, Kyoka, Haibun & Haiga

Issue 12 : March, 2014

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Prune Juice: Journal of Senryu, Kyoka, Haibun & Haiga is a digital journal occurring triannually, dedicated to publishing and promoting modern English senryu, kyoka, haibun & haiga . It is edited by Terri L. French and Bruce Boynton.

Please send all submissions and correspondence to prunejuicejournal@gmail.com, features and book reviews to bruce.boynton@gmail.com.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

As with many of the haiku and senryu poets I know, I met Lucas Stensland on Facebook. I enjoyed his droll sense of humor and keeping up with the antics of his cat, Dehlia (and now, Sadie). I have also had the privilege of having a renga published with him, Cara Holman and Johnny Baranski.

I was excited to recently find a copy of Lucas' new book, *Fun Again*, in my mailbox, and I decided you all might like to know a little more about this wonderful poet and how he came to senryu.

Lucas, could you tell our readers how you became interested in senryu?

At the time I was working from home, living in Minneapolis. Like a lot of people, I had begun writing haiku in the 5-7-5 format. I was rejected from haiku journals and didn't understand why. An editor advised me to subscribe to a journal and see what English-language haiku actually was. I subscribed to them all and read all the staple haiku books. I was still being rejected, much to my surprise. While reading the journals, one name that kept jumping out at me was Collin Barber. His work was different from most of the others. It was at once funny, direct and humane. That's how I discovered senryu. I sent him a message letting him know how much I enjoyed his work, and he replied with something like, "Cool. Thanks." I kept badgering him and eventually he started sending me longer responses, answering my questions about things like line breaks and *kiru* and whatnot.

*I often wonder
for how many women
I ruined Dylan*

After a while, Collin became something like my Mr. Miyagi, making me do writing exercises, encouraging me to try harder. He would be on his laptop in his backyard in Arkansas, and I'd be on mine in Minneapolis, and we would stay up long into the night writing a back-and-forth sequence while

emailing each other commentary. I think what Collin and his writing instilled in me most was that the best senryu say something about human life in a unique way and how they can make ordinary moments pregnant with new meaning.

*all
the things I'm not
your other left*

Can you tell us a little about why you wrote Fun Again, and how you selected the senryu to go into it?

A lot of the poems in my book *Fun Again* were first published in *Prune Juice*. That and *bottle rockets* were the journals that were most sympathetic to my style and penchant for senryu. When I first discovered *Prune Juice*, I printed them out and read them over dinner and drinks at bars and restaurants, often laughing out loud. (It was actually in *Prune Juice* where I first read Collin Barber.) When I was selecting and sequencing the poems for *Fun Again*, in a way it felt like I was putting together a huge submission for *Prune Juice*. It was through senryu and kyoka that I was able to write about the things that were happening to me and others: Divorcing, drinking, fornicating — the major themes of *Fun Again*, and many people's lives.

*calling in bets
under two different names
the other me wins*

Fun Again, Yet To Be Named Free Press, 2013, <http://www.yettobenamedfreepress.org>, also available on amazon.com.

Additional Information: Feature and book review submissions may now be sent to Features Editor, Bruce Boynton at bruce.boynton@gmail.com.

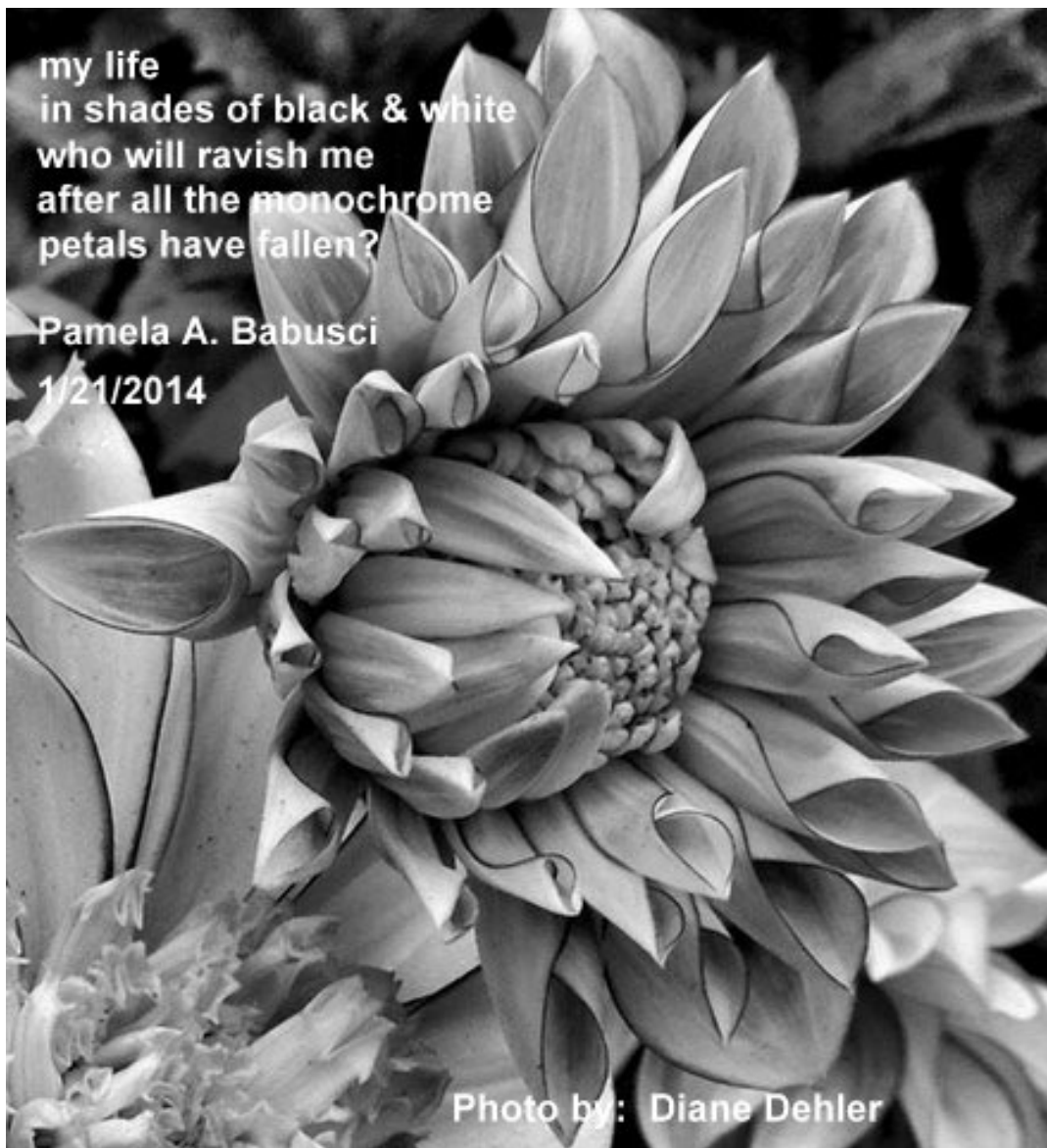
Terri L. French
March, 2014

S.M. Abeles, US

estate sale —
no one left to account
for the ukulele

a blue-haired chick
smoking a joint
shouts "overthrow the government"
one spring morning
when everything just feels right

Pamela Babusci, poet (US)
Diane Dehler, photographer (US)



Johnny Baranski, US

concrete
jungle
shoppers
go
ape

so drunk I let her have her way with me mosquito

Collin Barber, US

the sound of rain
drowning out the ruckus
of my children;
I Facebook like
Lucas Stensland's cat

nude beach
lipstick on a cigarette
butt

Collin Barber, US

The Well

Like a withered leaf waiting for the earth to pluck it from its tree, he sits in his rocking chair — feet on the seat, knees in his chest, thumb in his mouth — and mumbles something that might be found in the Book of Revelation. He thinks I am the Devil masquerading as a friend. Just an hour ago, he laughed and was confident drinking a fifth of tequila would be “enlightening”.

I begin to wonder if he leapt into this well solely to see if he can rise from the darkness.

hangover
a bee climbs out
of the bottle’s neck

Brad Bennett, US

the elevator dings
my like-
ness splits in two

Peggy Bilbro, US

making do
with less
another surgery

he insists —
I look out the window
impasse

Peggy Bilbro, US



Johannes S.H. Bjerg, Denmark

Bleach

His dad died and when it comes to dead daddies I have no experience. I could only be there and watch the 15 or so YouTube videos of Japanese fireworks he wanted to show me on Christmas eve.

He said: "It's odd that thing with dad, isn't it."

"Yes," I said, "but we all must die. We can't live forever," knowing full well he doesn't get generalization like that.

"I wish we could. I've started to watch Bleach again. I'm now on episode 195."

snowless Christmas
I check my skin
for an expiration date

"Bleach" is a Japanese manga, anime series and films about (good) death gods.

Johannes S.H. Bjerg, Denmark

Paper Tissues

this mess someone leaves the perceptible reality

and you (I) grab the head of your godson and notice he has cut his hair
and he's crying and you can't imagine the turmoil inside him knowing how
hard it is for him – and for 'special' boys like him – to process emotions at
least you know a bit about what death is or how your culture and
upbringing handles it but even you haven't yet lost a father just like he has
and you hold him and you cry with him and you notice how *she* in a split
second studies your face as your lips quiver and shake and you realize it's
been a while since you cried in front of her

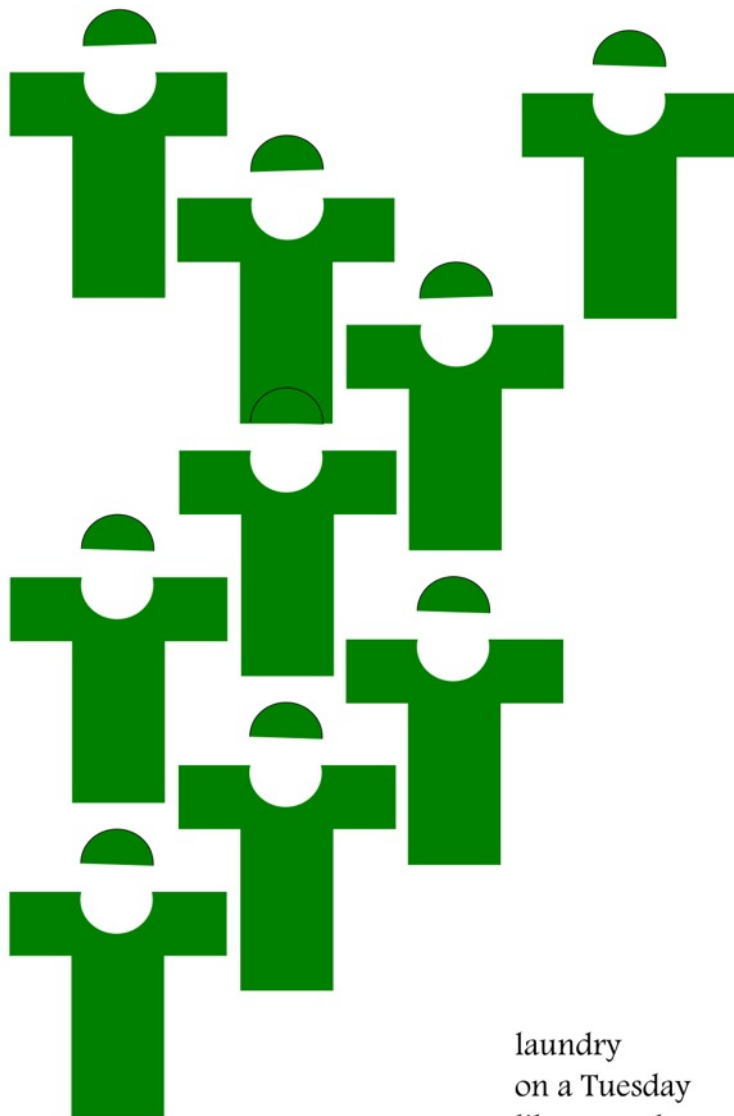
December rain how much is left?

in the same split second you notice he spills a bit of coke on your shirt
'cause he's clinging to a packet of paper tissues and a lukewarm can of
the beverage and you realize he'll probably never get past that awkward
clumsiness in a body he'll never entirely get to fill out and you remember
when he was newborn and you yourself struggled to be reborn into a
sober life and the day you cycled 10 miles to see him for the first time and
the constant nausea of the detox

Emmanuel for what it takes please be

Johannes S.H. Bjerg, Denmark

jshb mmxiv



laundry
on a Tuesday
like any other –
I delete Swans from
the lakes in my ears

Johannes S.H. Bjerg, Denmark



Mark E. Brager, US

late night rain —
tracing arabesques
along your scar

spring fever —
one thing leads
to another

(for Rube Goldberg)

Alan S. Bridges, US

g l i c t h

news of his passing a kidney stone

tractor pull
what I want
what she wants

red

the pimento in
the olive
in the
g
l
a
s
s
on the piano

Helen Buckingham, UK

paper cut —
the story
of my life

Pris Campbell, US

chalk art . . .
nude women trampled
in Boston Commons

Ashley Capes, Australia

re-runs —
the police chief
is always balding

Ashley Capes, Australia

a slow passage

the airport announces itself in two voices, both clipped in electronic manicure. harried faces pool at the terminals, they think only in numbers. a glow catches in the fluid of their eyes and coffee's warm blush rises above sweat and aftershave. I imagine one passenger has shed the last twenty-four hours of a James Bond-like life, blood-stained clothes exchanged for a black-forest suit and taxi fare.

in sweeps the wind
leaves tickling
our suitcases

with knives for teeth a child is at work on her parents. newspapers are raised like inky shields. grunts are issued. *toys now toys now chocolate now phone credit too now that thing now this one mum, dad, please, now why not now?* other people nap on red-cushioned chairs. their jackets make for designer blankets and it is a featherweight sleep, they know, at any moment could come a summons to borrowed wings.

the point of your chin
on my shoulder
landing gears creak

Susan Constable, CANADA

whale migration
some of the photos
just flukes

new calendar
my days
are numbered

Chris Dominiczak, UK



June DOWLS, US

remarried
still my pronouns
need work

Terri L. French, US

i ask the waitress
the difference between
sashimi and sushi
and get
an eye roll

science fair solar system all the planets misaligned

roadside motel
roaches ignore
the no vacancy sign

Terri L. French, US

Solomangarephobia

I am dining alone — for the first time. Sitting on the patio of a local bistro consuming copious amounts of wine. Al fresco dining gives me the added benefit of plenty of oxygen should I start to hyperventilate.

my reflection
upside-down
in the soup spoon

Chase Gagnon, US

morphine drip . . .
I sing my mother
a lullaby

no moon
to pray to, tonight . . .
I burn a hole
into my arm
with a cigarette

Chase Gagnon, US

Through the Fire

In the suburban ghetto, I wait for starlight to pierce the tattooed dermis of black smog above us, injecting a crystal glow into the streets that vein up through the shaking arm of Nine Mile, scarred from cutting.

midnight coffee . . .
whole galaxies
between the bars on my window

I spend my nights alone, counting stars and writing shitty poems. I feel so insignificant. I feel like no one gives a fuck what I do and there's no one to tell me I'm a no-one. I'm nonexistent. I was never born, in the all-seeing eyes of the galaxy. It's like committing suicide, erasing myself from existence, until dawn comes and drags my soul back to the real world, like a doctor beating on my chest until my heart pumps again.

crumpling up
another suicide note . . .
morning birdsong

I'm just a lonely stoner, wandering through the back-alleys of a buzzed daydream, searching for something of value inside myself. I find only an old homeless man with an unkempt beard, who claims to be me. He sits on the steps of an old crack house with tears in his hazel eyes as I walk away, back toward life.

cradled in the darkness
of my waning mind
all the answers

I return to find the apocalypse of myself, where a new species spawns from the toxic mutation of unrecognized emotions. Others worship the monuments of twisted steel that once upheld the towers of my sanity, in a skyline that brims with glowing smoke. My fingers are possessed by their fabricated idols, remnants of sensual art that hang in the endless galleries of my own perversion. They fly across the keyboard like the fast rhythmic pulse of a starving pianist, contemplating the madness of his inner Beethoven.

starry horizon
I jump from the edge of earth
to fly

My breath will finally cease when the dome of darkness above us breaks its rhythm, scattering starlight across the dirty floor of Detroit, like a string of pearls yanked from the neck of lady midnight.

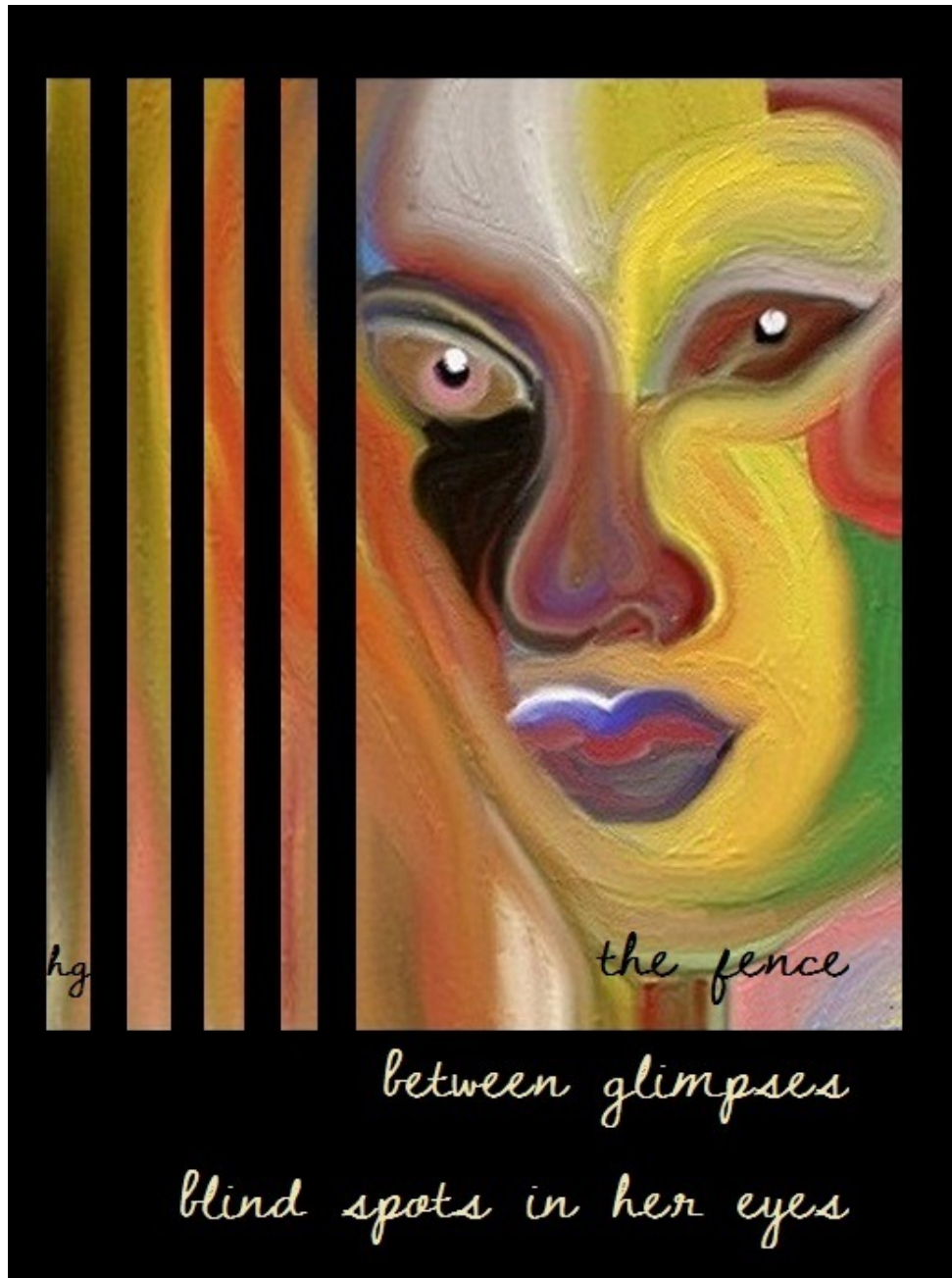
empty street —
followed by the footsteps
of my shadow

Jack Galmitz, US

on the subway
propped up by people
the smell of sardines

my shadow
reassures me
I'm solid

Heiki Gewi, Republic of Yemen



Autumn Noelle Hall, US

a good egg
and scarce as hen's teeth
this editor
publishing poetry
so unlike her own

licked index finger a page turner on her Kindle

so shallow, yet
how she drowns in the depths of
her self-importance
a stone's throw from shattering
the pond's moon illusion

Michelle R. K. Hed, US



Dallas Hembra, US

Patchwork

pieces of her quilt
scattered like ashes waiting
to be deciphered

Where to begin? The job of rifling through someone's personal possessions, an honor, or a curse? Sacred if nothing else.

Unfinished journals of innocent beginnings and troubled middles tucked away everywhere: In drawers, boxes beneath the computer desk, hiding in cubby holes throughout the house. Some dated, many not. Events, not always in sequence. Smudges of tear-stained gray leading down the dark hallways of pain and suffering interspersed with pages of hope and joy: The dissolution of a marriage destined to fail, the agonizing account of nursing a father through the final stages of cancer: A page turner that shares space with fleeting images of happiness, penned in a lighter more fluid hand. The birth of another grandchild, a son's recovery from addiction, exonerating her from the burden of guilt that she had carried around for years. The ghostly laughter of family gatherings remembered in each and every ledger.

Under the bed, wrapped in a faded silk shawl, the only journal precisely dated from beginning to end. The downhill spiraling of her mother's descent into dementia. The last entry, a prayer of gratitude bringing it all to an end.

tied up in a bow
beginnings, middles and ends
life's paradox

Alegria Imperial, Canada

a llama chewing on prophetic words winter drizzle

**Alex Jankiewicz,
The United Arab Emirates**

lovers' quarrel —
the storm
before the quiet

Debbie Johnson, US

search for self
some days reveal only
dust bunnies

Barbara Kaufmann, US

weeping cherry
blooming in the old bastard's yard
regardless

an old hiker
setting her sights a bit lower
climbs out of bed

the dentist
keeps drilling until he hits
my anxiety

Jessica Malone Latham, US

pierced tongue
the day she stopped
talking back

Phyllis Lee, US

undertaker
always a bouquet
for the wife

recital
two students play chopsticks
appassionato

Maria Leopoldo and Myron Lysenko, Australia

GRAND SLAM

approach shot
he flirts with someone
in the crowd

*chasing the ball
playing hard to get*

she compliments him
for watching the tennis
backhand slice

*on the couch
with a fan
it's electric*

hot serve —
he holds to love

*match point!
players embrace
over the net*

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

a white dove
on the windowsill
cooing
again in a tweet
she breaks up with me

my muse blinking
in Morse Code . . .
one more glass of wine

Gregory Longenecker, US

at the end
she looked at me and said
we'll always be friends
and I thought
one more yeti sighting

ego
the sound of one mind
grasping

Joe McKeon, US

biology exam
even the frog is on
pins and needles

Jonathan McKeown, Australia

A Gold Filling

We arrived before the bell had gone and stood waiting at the side gate of my daughter's school – my Dad and me, and my two-year-old nephew, Charlie. Charlie stood with his fingers hooked onto the fence-wire, looking in for his cousin, talking to himself all the while in his own musical way. A little curious, I was straining to hear what he was saying, and at the same time making an effort not to seem too uninterested in my father's ramblings.

“Have a look at this,” he said suddenly, pulling up his top lip with a big baggy finger and pointing to the tartar-stained, partially decayed-looking remains of a tooth in the side of his mouth. I looked and realised his gold filling was missing.

“What have you done with my inheritance?”

Pointing his thumb down his throat: “I swallowed it.”

“I suppose you've been going through your poo,” I said, half joking, without really thinking.

He looked at me and smiled in a way that I found all too familiar. He was retired now but I had sat through so many of his plumbing stories around the dinner table that I knew what it meant ...

“Well, now that you mention it, ... (he adjusted his stance so I could see better what he was explaining with his hands) I've been getting bits of toilet paper and folding them over like a sandwich so that I can feel through it without ...” There was no stopping him now. On he went, looking from time to time over the rims of his glasses as he demonstrated; his large communicative hands manipulating the unseemly sandwich exclusively for my edification, ensuring I was seeing – as if my apprenticeship was still incomplete – exactly how it was done. Just then

Charlie intoned something ... but my father's eyes would not release me. He was getting down to the nitty-gritties of what no doubt was a very methodical and particular procedure for finding a lost filling, and all the while his hawk-like eyes threatening over the tops of his glasses to catch me not paying proper attention. But then I heard my name and – mercifully released from the obligation to attend wholly to his unnecessary elaborations – I looked down.

“Need to do wee-wee, Jono,” he sang again. Dad ploughed on, but sensing the urgency I ventured an intermission.

“I think Charlie needs to do a wee.”

“What? How d’ya know?”

I looked down and was just about to repeat what Charlie had said when two little trickles spilled over the backs of his tiny shoes and began forming shiny pools at his heels.

“Need to do wee-wee, Grampa,” he said again in his carefree, sing-songy voice, still hooked on the wire mesh of the fence and staring dreamily off into the playground.

“Well whadidya do it in ya pants for?” he answered in a tone of mock reproach (but looking at me with mischievous amusement). “Ya mother’ll blame me fer that.”

The following week, Charlie and Dad, dropped in to say hi. He yakked for a while over a cuppa while Charlie played with the keys on my key rack. Then something reminded me and ... well, I had to ask:

“Hey, did you ever find that gold filling?”

“No,” he said, with evident vexation, “... and after all the crap I went through.”

scab duty:
an old ibis inspects
the deserted schoolyard

John McManus, UK

bar room brawl
the retired boxer
just watches

traffic jam
my mind begins
to wander

dad's desk
the rehab brochures
right where I left them

Anna Mazurkiewicz, Poland

in vitro
i play old maid
with God

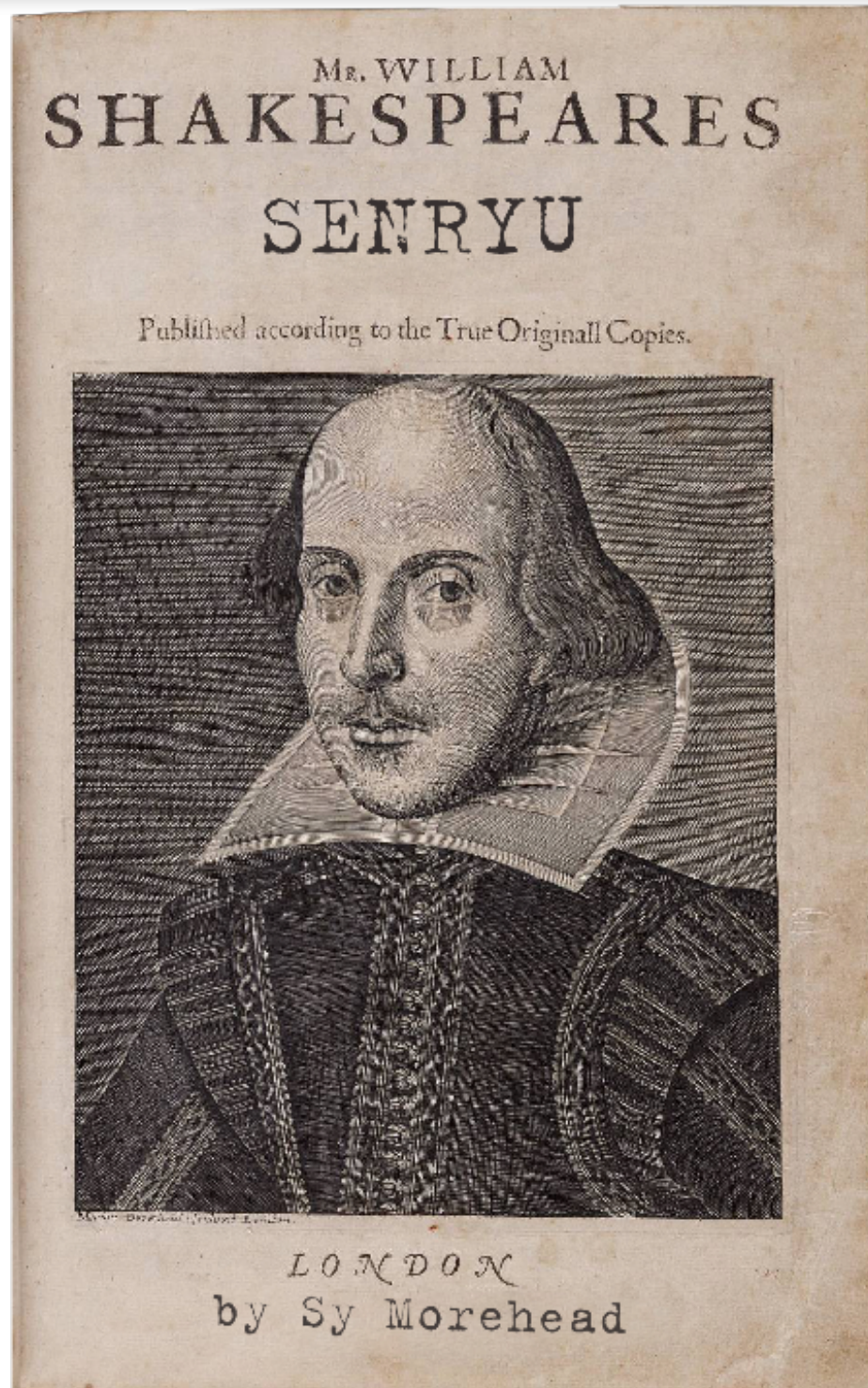
petition for divorce
the period
in every sentence

Mike Montreuil, Canada

Monday morning quarterback
retelling the play
that should have been

evening walk
the dog
with a leg up

Prune Juice Feature



Mr. William Shakespeare's Senryu

by Sy Morehead, Scribbler's & Sons, London, 2014, 231 pp.
Hardcover, \$23.95

A Satirical Review by Alan Pizzarelli

The notion that not much is known about the life of William Shakespeare is no more than an uneducated myth. In fact, contemporary scholars are revealing more and more about the life and times of Shakespeare, aside from the fact that he spent much of his time fleeing the various plagues of his era in England, often without his pantaloons.

The recent discovery in London of an obscure folio, written in 1607, is the subject of *Mr. William Shakespeare's Senryu*, by Sy Morehead, who makes a very convincing case that an ancient Japanese poetic form, known as *senryu* was written by Shakespeare more than a century before its *origins* in 18th century Japan. The folio contains 92 poems, most written in three short lines which Mr. Morehead proclaims were penned by "The Immortal Bard of Stratford on Avon" to "amuse poetry enthusiasts at London's Inns of Court & Chancery." He also claims the immortal bard recited some of these short poems at his audition for Ben Jonson's comedy, "Every Man in his Humor" in which authentic playbills list William Shakespeare as one of the "principal comedians."

During his second creative period 1600-1608 when he composed his great tragedies, Shakespeare also composed his *comadies*. During those years, it is said that he was so enlightened by poetic brevity, that he reduced his popular play *Hamlet* to the solitary line "To be or not to be, that is the question." At which point the actor exited the stage for the final curtain. Afterwards, when the proprietor of London's Inns confronted William and asked why *Hamlet* was cut so short, he elegantly sniffed a pinch of snuff, sneezed & responded "vast sails suit not my craft!" and exited stage left. Will's performance at the Court & Chancery was short lived after being pursued by a torch bearing mob led by bloodhounds:

From mine bare buttocks,
See'st me run —
O toothy mongrel!

Morehead further claims that Shakespeare lost the infamous folio while fleeing to Warwickshire, following rumors of yet another plague, this one reportedly resulting in permanent hair loss. As portraits and the following poem of the young bard attest, he didn't make it:

Farewell O youthful mane!
Cept' in mine nose and ears
Ere it doth grow long.

Some Elizabethan scholars, however, proclaim that at least some of the short poems dated 1612, were actually written by Marlowe, who was known to own quills, paper and ink. Still, other critics vehemently insist that the author is actually actor/comedian George Burns, who auditioned with Shakespeare for the part of Johannes Shagbab. Burns claimed he didn't pass the audition because at the time he was "too old to play the part" and that it inspired Shakespeare to write the following two-line poem contained in the folio:

Betrayed by moonlight
O who can thou trust?

Morehead debunks any claims that the folio poems could have been written by Marlowe, Bacon or Burns for that matter. However, his statement "How can a slab of bacon possibly write a poem?!" is far from convincing.

In reading *Mr. William Shakespeare's Senryu*, the question remains: Did the Immortal Bard of Stratford on Avon really write these verses?

Morehead points out that in the original folio, some of the verses are initialed J.S., which he claims is a pseudonym (Johannes Shagbab) Shakespeare used for some of his more controversial senryu, such as:

The merchants of Venice
Are Jews
Who else?!

Under the pseudonym of Shagbab, Shakespeare also ridiculed the current fashion trend:

How oddly suited!
One too many plumes
In thy pointed hat!

Perhaps, the most convincing of Morehead's claim is one senryu dedicated to Ann Hathaway:

To Ann Hathaway:

Ere long the sagging clouds
Hast given likeness to thy bosoms
O droppeth it!

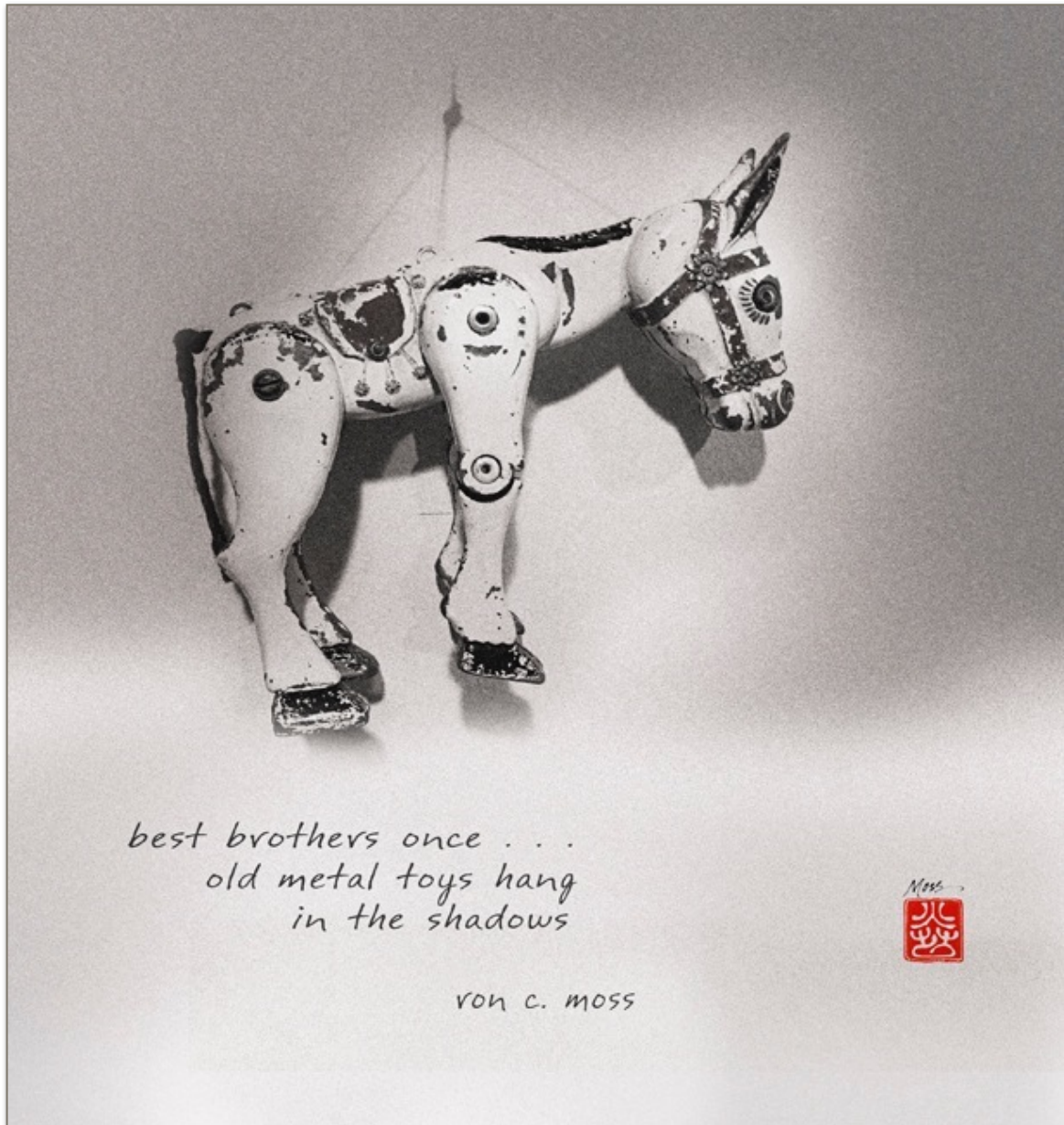
FINIS



Ron Moss, Australia



Ron Moss, Australia



Marie Louise Munro, US

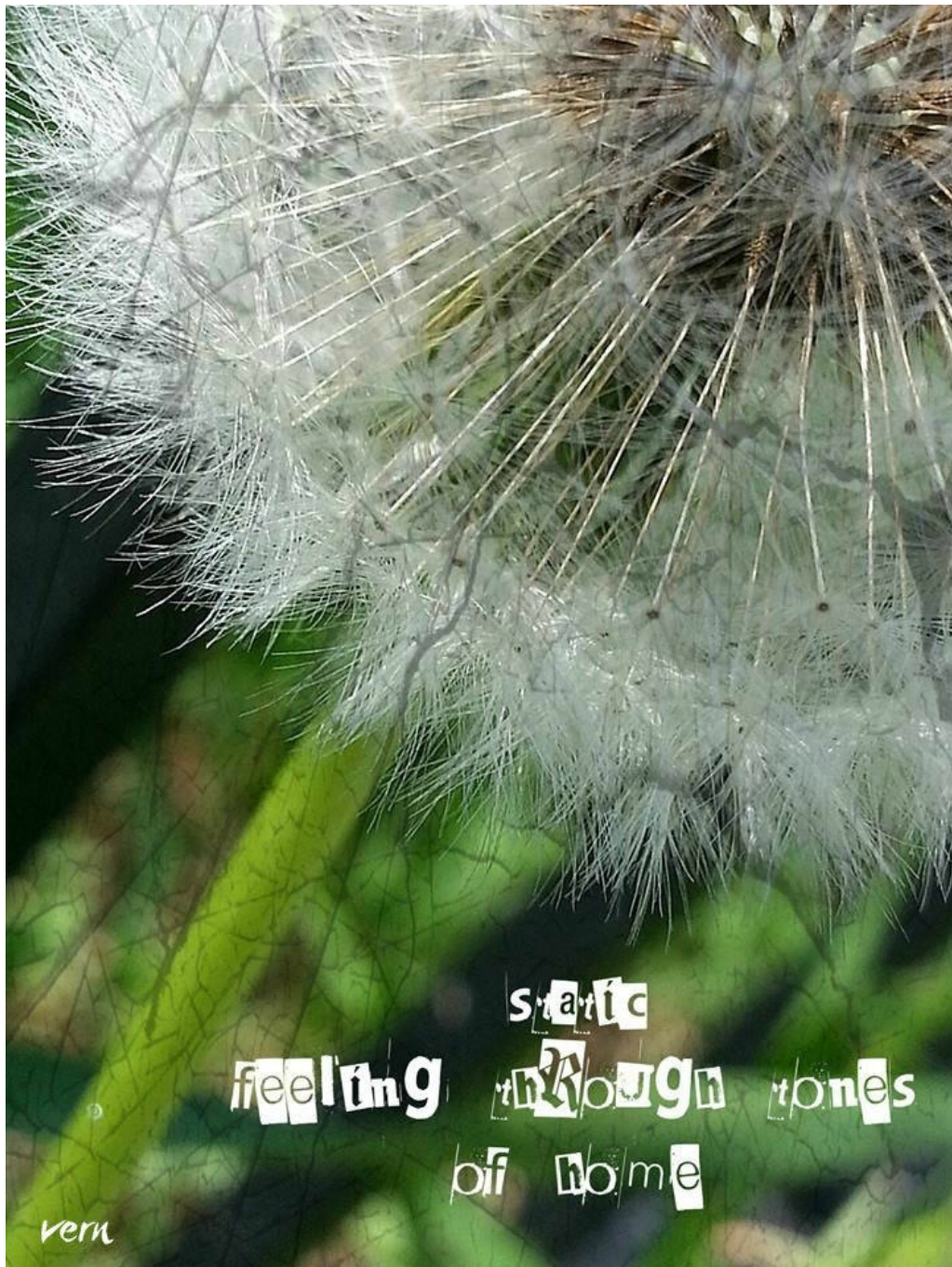
quake weather
everywhere you kiss me
fault lines

H. Gene Murtha, US

tattooed her right to bare arms

sex aside
the bumblebee's
goldenrod

Veronika Zora Novak, Canada



Polana Oblak, Slovenia

self-portrait
she smooths her face
in photoshop

sudden downpour
the lame beggar
forgets his limp

triple root canal
my dentist introduces
a pyramid scheme

Wincenty Ozga, Poland

a heart poured
into coffee foam
I'm not alone

Sandi Pray, US



Sandi Pray, US



Vinay Leo R., India

four-leaf clover —
still believing that
she loves me

blank pages . . .
all the emptiness
I can't write

Geethanjali Rajan, India

book keeping —
I try to balance
the year's karma

valentine's day —
no one picks the misshapen
chocolate

Kala Ramesh, India

introduction —
I hear only
my name

Michael Rehling, US

Super Bowl
my beer
has no commercial

Michael Rehling, US

Switzerland in Milwaukee

In the 70s I lived for awhile on Warren Avenue in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a half a block off the fabled Brady Street where all of us hippies and radicals lived and worked at revolution and peace, in that order. Bernadine Dohrn stayed in a house nearby when she was on the lam, and we did not like that very much, or her for that matter. Just the 'rumor' that she was there brought out the cops, and that meant there was heat for all of us. On the other hand, we made enough 'noise' of our own so that when I think about it now she just zeroed out in the scheme of things. After all, the Black Panthers were just a half a block down Warren, and two radical bookstores that were run by Trotskyites, so all of that combined with open drug use, and our flamboyant dress and old cars made us into 'targets' for the police anyway.

On one end of Brady Street were the aforementioned hippies and crazies, with candle and incense shops, and the psychedelic record store and 'head shop' named 'The 1812 Overture'; and on the other side was the Italian neighborhood, complete with the 'Trio Brothers Pizza', which was owned by three brothers who were said to be in the Mafia. Sandwiched right between them on Brady Street was 'Frankie Tomasello's Bar'. It was like the Switzerland of Brady Street. Frankie was not a mob guy, just an Italian who inherited a bar. The bar itself was long and made of wood, and looked like it came out of a western movie. The booths, on the other hand, looked like they came out of a hamburger joint and were sandwiched in too close to the bar. The

carpet was garish, and dirty, so Frankie kept the lights low, and served generous drinks, so no one ever mentioned it. He was usually alone, but on Friday and Saturday he had a cook and a waitress, both of whom I always thought were Frankie's relatives, but I can't prove it, and it never came up.

Back at the far end of Frankie's, near the restroom, was an old Seeburg jukebox. It lit up like a Christmas tree, and had NOTHING but jazz selections. Most of it Bop, but lots of the oldies, too. It was like, if you want country or rock or anything else just go elsewhere. If Frankie had to tend bar for a living he was going to do it with Miles, Dizzy, and the best of the jazz world to accompany him, and he fed that juke from his tip box as much as any of us. My friends and I all loved jazz, and so when we could afford a 'night out', it was off the few blocks to Frankie's we went. Both the Italians and the hippies knew how to have a good time, and somehow it all worked. I never heard of a fight, or a disagreement either, just peace, love, beer, greasy burgers and JAZZ!

brubeck on the juke
the waitress brings my beer
in 5/4 time

Claudette Russell, US

breakup
a romance novel
with no sequel

birthday card
choosing how
I want you to feel

museum docent
the art
of listening

Stanley Sicheloff, US

arts and crafts
third graders glued
to their work

Traci Siler, US

Half unbuttoned
in the night sky
burlesque moon

Rain
the shrapnel
of stars

Carla Shepard Sims, US



John Soules, Canada

virtual cloud
watching my privacy
drift away

Laurence Stacey, US

adjunct office
even the printer
struggles

Elizabeth Steinglass, US

spring break
stepping on a heart
made of shells

Lucas Stensland, US

“how cats take their coffee”

asking
if she likes cats
at this age
politics mean
so little

she says
things got worse
after Portland —
Sadie kicks litter
in the new apartment

long workday —
wishing I could
text my cat

my entourage
follows me to the bedroom
brushing against my legs

riding me in bed
she says never stop
I scratch her ears
as she purrs
because love is easy

Delia vomits
on my feet
and demands food —
only an alcoholic
. . . or a feline

4 a.m.
a paw wakes me
for no reason

awaiting
her return
even the cats
skip their
morning coffee

Debbie Strange, Canada

so tired
of sleeping with
(myoclonic) jerks

transplanted . . .
a bleeding heart
in the surgeon's garden

Andre Surridge, New Zealand

night shift
the cop on break
plays angry birds

Jari Thymian, US

my hair
the same shade
as the headstone

cooling gravestone
Mom and Dad
head-to-head again

the undertaker
drops his cell phone
under the lowering casket
a mourner whispers:
she never returned my calls

Paresh Tiwari, India

Stem Cells

Homeward bound, after a day packed with meetings, I board my late evening flight. All I want to do is put on my headphones and drift into a soundless, dreamless sleep, but I will have to wait for the cacophony to die down. People going on vacations, coming back from them, kids boarding a flight for the first time, families who want to sit together to continue their banter and newfound friends. I look at them warily 'what is the world so abuzz about'? Dropping down on my aisle seat, I press my feet — now protesting the confines of my dress shoes.

Then I see them, a tourist couple in typical loose fitting muslin kurtas* ... he sporting a wild Mohawk that tapers down into a ponytail and she a wizened face with blonde curls falling gently over her wrinkles and crows' feet. A small leather pendant that hangs around his neck with a beaded string catches my eye. Is it an eagle's head carved in leather — a totem of some kind? The couple settles into a comfortable silence beside me.

The flight by now has started getting quieter, the initial buzz of excitement giving way to the click-clack of seat belts. As the flight attendants start droning the safety procedures, I can't help but introduce myself and blatantly ask what the eagle-head pendant stands for. The man chuckles 'it's not a pendant dear' he says gently, 'it's a medicine pouch, I carry the umbilical cords of my four grandchildren in this — makes me feel that they are with me wherever I go'. He lifts it up gingerly and holds it out for me to examine. Between my fingers, I can feel the grain of raw leather and the weight of something intangible. The decorative draw-strings falling obliquely on the rounded face giving it its slight resemblance to a raptor.

As the plane starts to noisily lift up into the night, he excuses himself, leans back into his seat and closes his eyes, all the while holding the frail, almost pale hand of his wife as if bound by an unseen umbilical cord.

paper moon —

I cut and paste, a collage
of memories

**Kurta — A generic term used in South Asia for several forms of upper garments (generally a loose, open cuffed shirt falling either just above or somewhere below the knees of the wearer) for men and women, with regional variations of form.*

Angi Waggoner, US

Before Solitaire

Every time I hear cards being shuffled, I see the end table next to my dad's worn-out recliner. There is a series of interconnected rings within easy reach of his left hand. These marks are art created by countless sweating Pabst Blue Ribbon cans. His patinaed Zippo sits on a half crushed soft pack of Camel Filters. A Zippo-click can always take me back to the first hacking rush off a stolen butt. Next to the green glass ashtray, rests an ever revolving deck of cards. If you were a regular in our house, you would have grown used to the sound of shuffling cards. He once told me it was a way to keep the silence at bay. He would shuffle cards for hours.

the ticking clock lulls
until
a cricket chimes in

Julie Warther, US

Christmas card list —
cousins
once and twice removed

burnt out strand
waiting 'til after the holidays
to tell the kids

Michael Dylan Welch, US

first date —
no luck
in a field of clover

первое свидание —
целое поле клевера и . . .
полный облом

*Russian versions appeared in
Ershik (Toilet Brush) #2, July 2013*

Kathabela Wilson, US

altars
all the broken things
I keep

splitting the fruit
the first man
so agreeable

Sara Winteridge, UK

this same starlight fell
face-down in a flooded trench —
bayonet rain

granddad
dead and buried
long since
I wonder still
about his glass eye

her expiry date
tins of rice pudding
on the formica shelf

Tad Wojnicki, US/Taiwan

Way of the Grasshopper

I blew from college to college — Warsaw to Cincinnati, El Paso to San Francisco — digesting philosophies, picking degrees, getting hired, getting fired, unable to strike a root — until Carmel greened before my eyes. It was where Highway 1 humps over the dunes flashing the Monterey Bay. We pulled over, ogling the bright bay, woodsy Carmel Hill, and Pebble Beach golf links beyond.

"Feels like home," I told Sweets, looking from the sandhill.

Have I stepped into the valley, though? Sown the seed? No, I haven't. It's been years. With one job in Carmel, another in Salinas, and yet another in King City, I'm still a highway-hopper, jumping from sandhill to sandhill, eyeing the greens.

Stone-broke —
boasting a healthy income
of sand dollars