#### TANKA POETS ON SITE

ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY

of prompts performed for Tanka Sunday August 18, 2013 on the Queen Mary, Long Beach CA

> A CELEBRATION sampling by Tanka Poets on Site



Tanka Inspired by Kathabela's Prompts:

"No ordinary flower"

"What cannot be contained"

"What fruit do you identify with or talk to"

And Gary Blankenship's "Children playing (in the road)"



# July 28, 2013: prompt: no ordinary flower

(I always think of my life now as a bloom on a long branch. "No ordinary flower". All of us can trace the arched stem of our lives as in process, and retrospect helps to see the very individual and interesting shape. I never imagined the unusual bloom my life would create. With sudden and intense transition... my life took a different turn, it was a traveling flower. When Rick and I joined our lives, he had a companion for his amazing invitations to international conference, and I who had never traveled became an adventurer with him, to China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Iran, Slovakia, Croatia, many European countries and more... One of our early trips together was to Shanghai, China. There in mid-May, the campus at Shanghai Jiao Tong University was abloom with magnoliaa. It was in Shanghai, with delight, that I saw the largest magnolia flowers I have ever seen. Standing there, having arrived in China, I held one close to me, but did not pick it, it was bigger than my head... I think it picked me! It had a very long stem, a curving branch that leaned toward me, and I posed with it, as if with a lover, or a long lost friend. I've always loved magnolia, and after that, even more so. In Pasadena there are streets named and lined with Magnolia. I remember (have to find) a tanka I wrote about an old woman I saw, standing at the very trembling top of a ladder on Magnolia Street, with a pair of garden shears, to cut a magnolia bloom... I did not have to climb so high or risk so much. So when I wrote this tanka for the prompt "at the same time" it came from that magnolia in Shanghai, more than ten years ago, it seems like now... what now magnolia your stem still attached your bloom my breast a blush your time a thousand miles away We all share the arching stem of life... it's bloom.., what are the rare flowers of your life, what do they look like, their details, and what is their emotional content...in your tanka?)

#### JENNIFER THOMPSON

he becomes her just as the sunset adorns a pale blue sky color by color they bloom

#### JEAN HOLLAND

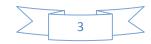
Wildflower's seeds, tousled by northeastern winds now nestle, seeking nourishment my legs, no longer wayfaring, plant both feet before you

#### SUSAN DIRIDONI

hillsides of Kyoto are splashed with carpets of bright color the wild azalea far from garden and bonsai pot

#### **CAROL JUDKINS**

the easy bruise of gardenias... soft sounds from loving hearts perfume our world





#### JOSIE HIBBING

at the tip of his paintbrush-a rose unfolds its redness in the twilight

# TRACY BEH

ascended cloud mountain unknowing descended freed left you there as grace-offering a peace rose blooms in the labyrinth

#### ALEE IMPERIAL ALBANO

...and the sun at zenith peels a soft soul redness not of a flame but a blossoming heart

# MICHELE HARVEY

no rose queen nor peony am I my place is in the weed-strewn, dappled light the violet at your feet

# RALF BRÖKER

dad's birthday the reddish yellow rose still laying by the fieldstone next to his stele

#### ORRIN T. PREJEAN

after the gala moving around the gothic mansion: she, clad in chartreuse, enters; delectable Hemlock in her hair

### LIE BONGKY

moonless sky the scent of jasmine colors my night tossing whispers of love straight to your heart

# SHEILA WINDSOR

a shade too bright and made of plastic we followed it thru the streets of Venice sunflower in the guide's hand





# GERRY JACOBSON

shyly blooming at the autumn equinox ... our first dahlia of the summer

### JOSIE HIBBING

a pressed dandelion in your baby book... for twenty years you have been blooming in my heart

# SHEILA WINDSOR

poppy, cornflower, daisy and love in a mist my paintbox as vibrant as the wild flower meadow this sizzling day

# KATHY UYEN NGUYEN

the way he unwinds the texture of his heart . . . pressed into my hands fresh-cut daises along with a ribbon of kisses **KASH POET** (kashinath karmakar) kash flower changing the horizon not for the first time this autumn festival without my Dad

# TRACY BEH

how you curve toward light arching grace stems, buds, flowers spring naturally from your spirit partial shadows your true abode

# SONDRA J. BYRNES

now well past prime the garden and i here no flower is ordinary even the late rose of sharon has power over me

# CB CRANE

out in the backyard our optimism battles with nature's grumpy adherence to cycles and decay as tulips burst home





# CHRIS WILKINSON

This hyacinth corsage Blessed by Persephone Guards me through my sleep Forest drums extoll your smiles We wake to the smell of lavender

### GARY BLANKENSHIP

plastic a bouquet on his gravestone faded replaced every memorial day until she no longer remembers

#### KRIS KONDO

little girl imagines living in a dandelion world golden then silver magic swirls with wishes' breeze bourn promises

#### ALEE IMPERIAL ALBANO

I, water hyacinth, on my stillness skies dwell unseeing under raging waters my flailing roots



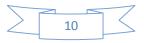
in sacred rites I, lotus flower, ensconced incense curling but weightless to brush my murky depths

fathom deep there you find me I, anemone, nymph and blossom of impossible beauty

in us, coral flowers, schools of liquid fish eyes find slumber in truth without softness for we are rocks

always I, water lily, catch the dawn's hesitance to leave after a night of bliss

JENNI L. BACKS apple blossoms through an open window... the fragrance of her thighs around him



#### KATHABELA WILSON

so long neglected Queen urn full with pleasure she lives on air and weeps ensconced in pink spills from her tight sheath unfurled

#### LECH HAIKU

tell me does he have a right to touch the redness of petals of the blossoming rose? my shadow

# KATHABELA WILSON

out of her thin shell she breaks in tears a quiver full of green

#### HEATHER BROHMAN

snow white's petals determine prince charming intentions he loves me he loves me not



# TRACY BEH

coolly spinning webs of perfume as rain pelts my midnight's garden... bed of spider lilies

### GARY BLANKENSHIP

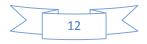
two dollars the oldest rose bright red ignored until it blooms and we marvel at the beauty of a discount rose

# PAT GEYER

certain beauty no other time of year... royal it has risen from behind a garden rock purple pasque flower

#### DEVIN WALTER HARRISON

in Colombia – sequestered a night-blooming cereus apparitional immaculate white flowers slip away before dawn



# KATHABELA WILSON

still dark surrounds this heavy branch white sky a tinge of pink first word magnolia speaks aloud

### KATHABELA WILSON

you look in my window too magnolia my sister with a poet's heart no ordinary bloom

# KATHABELA WILSON

born before the bee beetles for a charm ancient magnolia transform with heady scent you waft the world

#### SUSAN DIRIDONI

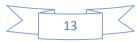
hillsides of Kyoto are splashed with carpets of bright color the wild azalea far from garden and bonsai pot



how many clouded faces frown above my need to enter white swamp mallow

#### SUSAN BURCH

inside those blackened petals lies her heart holding on tightly to Love's ashes





# July 15 prompt: what cannot be contained (Kath)

(I love these (Webster's) definitions of uncontainable: 1. Being irrepressible. 2. Being strong. 3. Being overwhelming. 4. Being overriding.] 5. Being overpowering. 6. Being compelling. 7. Being unmanageable or ungovernable. For me, this is the nature of life itself, in each one of us, in our true poetic wonder, and beyond it all the extraordinary universe. It refuses to be defined or contained. The photo I posted for today's prompt... just a small illustration. Roots don't stay underground. Petals, and leaves defy gathering, fences, plots and plans... Devin Walter Harrison wrote this off-prompt today, he inspired me. our engineering of Tanka site under construction how reductive the mind that thinks to proscribe how it can be contained What is uncontainable in your life. How unmanageable, ungovernable are you? How has this quality been active in your life and in your poetry? In my experience, and in my tanka, I feel that this sense of the uncontainable displayed in all its potency within a small space (as in our poems here) is closest to evoking the mystery wonder and vitality we aspire to express because it is what we feel as poets and aspire to admittedly impossibly contain. Can you begin to express this in small situations that illustrate, in the feelings those details evoke, in your tanka. And... life, I think is not without irrepressible humor about it all!)

# MARY WHITE

from the chimney pot bursts of birdsong such music little creature

15

#### ORRIN T. PREJEAN

after you left yesterday i piled my hands full of your left-over thoughts ran to my room spread them out and got high

#### LOUIS OSOFSKY

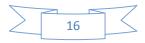
this morn' I'm going out to count the clouds -if you wait for me still I might bring back a few

# KATHABELA WILSON

how did it happen her smile a prompt he leans close even without a pen to leave a mark

#### SCOTT ABELES

I'll join you in hell if that's what it takes – hot night you spread like fire



#### WILLIE BONGKY

loneliness once the full moon brightens the naked sky... your joys and longings buried in musty letters

# RALF BRÖKER

how it feels to hold the tears while you wear your bridal dress amongst the pictures our children laugh about

#### JEAN HOLLAND

exhaling hazy visions, the trash barrel burns glowing embers floating, then fading recollections of youth

#### CRISTIAN MOCANU

after the summer storm as I'm watching my step ambitions dwindle: can my soul be the puddle reflecting the rainbow?

# CLIVE OSEMAN

no space to spare yet everyone so distant in this place casting burdens to the breeze to drift away unheard

#### GARY BLANKENSHIP

a crack in the concrete sprouts find the sun yellow flowers

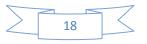
# TRACY BEH

a crimson dawn... deluge of birdsong awakens the uncaged a flight of pure feathers beyond their sanctuary

#### DEVIN WALTER HARRISON

his laughter so unrestrained tears rolling down his cheeks





#### HEATHER BROHMAN

Your heart Rages like a bull I wept For I could not contain your soul

# TAD WOJNICKI ISRAEL

a tugboat's wake overflows the deck as if to say watch out for what you can't see

# KATHABELA WILSON

bursting new seams such feelings as a body can't contain so autumn makes a sparkly fringe

#### SONDRA J. BYRNES

the heavy sky lets go deep rain puts out a scorching rage



# PAT GEYER

the occident not by accident reimages societies whether good bad or ugly

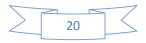
# PAT GEYER

nothing to say very loud... soapbox filled with the blares of political bubbles

# KATHABELA WILSON

on an ordinary street roots of great oaks make sidewalks swerve we too are the stuff of what the earth cannot contain

CHRIS WILKINSON'S we are the stuff earth cannot contain swerving past haiku pentangle poetry our staff of oak



# DEVIN WALTER HARRISON

tinder ignited the time worn flares enters the sky where the gods are revised pantheon - a clean sweep

# NE TAYLOR

frizzle frazzle whirly twirly flopsy mopsy no witch's spell tames my demon locks

# CLIVE OSEMAN

no space to spare yet everyone so distant in this place casting burdens to the breeze to drift away unheard

# SHEILA WINDSOR

into this fragrant cottage garden of a day wind blown faces each mouthing the name: .... Nagasaki

# SHEILA WINDSOR

into this fragrant cottage garden of a day wind blown faces each mouthing the name: ....Nagasaki

JOSIE HIBBING from a river of silence I drink the beauty of your words-the rhythm in my heart flowing... flowing...

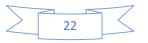
# CHRIS WILKINSON

supernova insight light that dims the sun and moon and stars flooding out all triumph and despair you smiled at me you cared

# GARY BLAKENSHIP

the first time he grabbed my finger and smile I knew I would love him and never tell him no





# GARY BLAKENSHIP

emotions explode from the page showering poet and reader alike with thoughts they grasp tight

#### JENNIFER THOMPSON

unravelling so easily in your hands silk ribbon that pretty bow under thumb undone...my hair let down

#### DEBORAH SG

Voice of crushed seashells Underfoot while she mourns Railroad to nowhere Railroad to everywhere Where wrens sing

#### KATHABELA WILSON

high tide at our front door I leave it open wave washed floors to start again with your new heart

#### TOMISLAV MARETIC

after all my prayers and devotions, after so many efforts...these uncontainable passions

#### ALEGRIA IMPERIAL

how her fingers tuck in stray words... tip to tip of sunset shores crow's yardstick for skies

#### SUSAN DIRIDONI

illustrator to Lilliput Review inventiveness cannot describe his humor so irrepressible his good cheer

#### BETH ZIMMER CUNNINGHAM

folded secrets, attic scents memories unearthed deliberately placed for me she whispers from the grave adults forbidden playground





# July 5 prompt : identifying with or talking to fruit (Kath)

(Johannes S. H. Bjerg's wonderful post today (off-prompt) turns into our prompt! I especially enjoy it because I love peaches, and "always wanted to be one" as I told him. He said "maybe you are"! Well as a young teenager I went to a writer's conference with my journalist dad, and one of the older writer's there gave me the nickname "peaches and cream". So I aspired from a young age! What fruit do you really identify with, what are you, fruit-wise? And/or what fruit do you like to eat and talk to, as he does? Draw the parallels clearly in detail in your tanka!

# CHRIS WILKINSON

Holding the fruit To silently consume the joy Encompassing the harvest In the echo of your words Secretly, we are cherries.

# TRACY BEH

Grandma's damson wine hid atop a tall cupboard... en pointe on a chair I reach for forbidden pleasure even now I taste you.

# TRACY BEH

So now we know how you are you. Formed by cookies, Kathabela.

#### VERONIKA ZORA NOVAK

sweet flesh of the white cherry lingers voracious were the appetites of our innocence

### GENIE NAKANO

Oh summer heat free me of my skin underneath I'm soft and moist a newborn peach

# NE TAYLOR

trains in the backyard tomatoes jiggle apples fall victoria station gathers odd fruit





# WILLIE BONGKY

an open laptop busy with the chatters... diced dragon fruit sitting next, all red and crunchy for the taking

# DEVIN WALTER HARRISON

longan 'dragon eye' squeezed out of its skin translucent flesh always beguiling when under its spell

# DEVIN WALTER HARRISON

paired sweet cherries tossed into my mouth bloodstain my lips on the way down 'shiju' love suicide

# RALF BRÖKER

if you don't mind, lime I would add some mint to your fruity acid some chilled prosecco will make us dance



# GERRY JACOBSON

melting into your softness God is there listening in the mulberry tree

#### GARY BLANKENSHIP

in brambles the most succulent berry black raspberries your arm scratched on its thorns pie forgot I clean your wounds

#### GARY BLANKENSHIP

sun ripened red juicy delectable tomatoes picked fresh of the vine eaten dripping over the sink

# NE TAYLOR dripping over the sink ripe blackberries my lips purple your lips waiting i share



# NE TAYLOR

raspberries trifling with ladyfingers soaked in single malt my whipped cream moustache

# PAT GEYER

| young lovers    |
|-----------------|
| touch           |
| the sweet pink  |
| of cherry juice |
| their blush     |

# GARY BLANKENSHIP

elderberry wine the jar passed back and forth if grandma knew we'd stole two or three one left we move ever closer

# KATHABELA WILSON

a big spoonful of me peaches and cream my blush barely knowing what it meant to be ripe

# green banana dawn. . . I don't see him watching me

reading the paper and eating breakfast until I look up and swallow

#### JANETTE HOPPE

MISO WONG

I too – feel like the strawberry at the bottom of this champagne flute intoxicated

# NE TAYLOR

raspberries trifling with ladyfingers soaked in single malt my whipped cream moustache

#### KATHABELA WILSON

raisins and caraway from Andalusia seed cake passed mouth to mouth the essence of yes





#### BRUCE D. REED

three small peaches from my tiny baby tree first year's crop I moved to the country John Prine said to plant peaches

#### PD LIETZ

blackberries I follow the valley ice cream pail in hand over his shoulder the bear looks at me

#### TERRI HALE FRENCH

a hand full of raisins I remember when I couldn't wait for my cycle to end

#### JENNIFER THOMPSON

don't you see they are merely plates of cherry picked platitudes and all you do is eat

#### AMANDA DCOSTA

biting succulent strawberries in the evening laughter echoed through the rafters

#### **GENIE NAKANO**

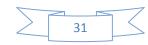
peach my skin is just a cover for sweetness reclining.. just below

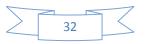
#### JEAN HOLLAND

wild blackberries lining dusty back roads leaves that favor....poison oak, I ponder scratching my ankle

# PAT GEYER

"You're wearing a nightgown" I said to a fig "Isn't it too hot?"... as the nutella melted I figured I should lick





# GILLENA COX

you are perfect as an eyeball peeled to see desire of a poets souls drunk on the passion of words

# SONDRA J. BYRNES

wild blackberries in the woods a handful of sweet nothings still nothing

dark plums in a white bowl—

your look bruises a quiet afternoon

tart granny apple what they say about her when she's gone

# DEVIN WALTER HARRISON

itinerant mango steamy happy fruit makes me giddy when it feeds me joy slips down my throat





# July 23 prompt: children playing (in the road)

The street where my wife, Chris, lived before we were married was a playground. At almost any hour or type of weather there was a group of kids playing in the street someone hollering car if a vehicle came by. the kids ranged from high schoolers to a toddler with a saggy diaper. (And sometimes adults.) The only thing that slowed the games was lunch and many ate it on the fly, sandwich in one hand, drink in the other - the former laid on the street when their turn came. Games involved anything with a ball, ball and stick, or stick; variations of tag; and lots of wheels - bikes, skates, skateboards. (The was 30 years ago, so rollerblades were not common.) There might be hopscotch or jacks without regard to gender - but mostly a batted, kicked or thrown ball.

We saw the same phenomenon at Kahneeta - kids of every age playing in the park streets and lawn (really the drain field) until stone cold dark. (Our group had a no-electronic vacation - well, the kids not the adults.) It was usually the pool until lunch and street play until 1030 or so. (I will admit I can do without skateboarders.) One of younger kids didn't have a bike so he ran behind the others pretending. Are your streets a playground for kids - or adults? What do they play? How long? What kind of play goes on in your tanka?

### ORRIN T. PREJEAN

feeling somewhat old long after darkness falls my 31 yr old self steps outside to leap into the middle of left-over kid-laughter

# SHEILA WINDSOR

a year from the call the thud of a ball on the wall I'm just this side of lost

# TINA HOFFMAN

All the poets, dead. They scream their cold epitaphs in the soil. They play as if tomorrow were more reasons to live life again

# HEATHER BROHMAN

'*Bobby Orr*' Car five porch dwellers cry out Reluctantly shift Instantly resume Bobby takes one for the team *Score* 

# SHEILA WINDSOR





summer long up early and gone to the common of daring and danger no adult may follow

#### JOSIE HIBBING

in the moonlight the village children play shadow tag on the street-recalling those carefree days of my childhood

# OTTERI SELVAKUMAR

on the road children playing too play run with running no care full broken a house window

# PAT GEYER

in the road sometimes on the playground little rascals playing war... little do they know

# CHRIS DOMINICZAK

a pier's height her shadow teetering carved stone or sea submerge and remerge this umbilical cord

### JOSIE HIBBING

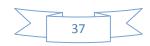
street children flooded the puddle after the rain this child in me yearns to jump in the mud

# TOMISLAV MARETIC

a car is passing... the brief time-out in the football match for the children playing on the road

# **CAROLE HARRISON**

swinging so high I glimpsed another world over the treetops . . . what was big now grown smaller





# RALF BRÖKER

big grin on the boy's face first time he beats his father playing checkers

# TRACY BEH

high-jumping I soar colliding into a passerby profanities fly... chastened, reformed a lady now, I play indoors

# KATHABELA WILSON

listening in the child cave wise and wary perched on staircase ledge sounds of grown ups play where none should dare

# DEVIN WALTER HARRISON

street hockey - we dazzled each other with stick work on slippery winter roads until earth's orbit shifted and left behind frozen warriors

# CHRIS WILKINSON

When you hear the whistle of the bombs You know they won't fall on you My best friend said He tossed me a football On the field of childhood

#### SONDRA J. BYRNES

no one playing in the road a greater force sucks children into grand theft auto

# KATHABELA WILSON

cement yard swings over and over the wall we named popcorn clouds one by one the taste of sky

# GARY BLANKENSHIP

the city cousin visiting from across the country seemed a sissy so we picked on him without mercy that summer





he took it better than we wished he would until we gave we weren't bad just immature taking too long to learn that summer

schooled by grandma in her quiet way we grew into fairly decent adults hoping karma ignores that summer

# GARY BLANKENSHIP

down a hill too steep for my old bike miss a truck on the first cross street a dog found me on the next

# **VIOLETTA ANTONIA SORCINI**

Sweet smells of laughter supple limbs once climb full breasts filled with energy to spare no cares of tomorrow only dreams of play

#### KATHABELA WILSON

they played shouts above sunset stayed underbridge where dark grew long and green and our words were blue-eyed grass

#### BRIAN ZIMMER

many secrets under this bridge her toll a paradoxical poem received in her own hand

#### BRIAN ZIMMER

her this time – my sister and I shriek with laughter falling against parked cars both of us middle-aged

#### SUSAN BURCH

slowing down to avoid the kids on the street a deflated red balloon becomes a used condom





Since August 1, 2012 members of Tanka Poets on Site, an online collaborative group on Facebook has written tanka on on 382 prompts. We archive all the poems written to the site, and estimate that we have collected close to 8,000 tanka from international poets.

The prompts are given by Kath Abela Wilson (Kathabela), assisted once a week now by Gary Blankenship.

Gary is the head archivist, assisted by Kathabela, and recently joined as assistant archivist by Susan Burch.



Kath Abela Wilson Editor and Director of Tanka Poets on Site 2013

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