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EDITOR'S NOTE

As I write this, the US is entering day 14 of a partial government shut-down. According to the Washington Post, this crisis has already lead to furloughs of 800,000 federal workers (about 350,000 were called back to work after a week due to the nature of their work), cancelled military training missions, and slowed economic growth, which could send both the dollar and global financial markets into a tailspin. No matter where you stand on this fiasco—to the far right, far left, or the vast area in between—one thing is for sure, it's giving us plenty of material for our senryu!

Times of economic crisis and government upheaval are fodder for the wit, irony and cynicism typical in senryu. Recently, I read a paper about *sarariman* or “salaryman” senryu in Japan. The paper explores the changing perception of work, commitment and values as seen in the salaryman poetry over the years 1990-2006. This was a time when Japan went from economic boom to bust. The 1990s were dubbed the “Lost Decade.” The liberal Democratic machine had broken down, which resulted in high unemployment, worker disillusionment and mistrust, as well as stress in the workplace and at home.

As a distinct genre, salaryman senryu date from 1987 when the first competition of the Daiichi Life Insurance Company sponsored an in-house competition. That competition has grown into a public contest receiving thousands of entries every year. Of those, ten winners are awarded. Two winners from 2012 dealt with the same worker dissatisfaction highlighted in the 1990-2006 study. Translated they read:

In this company,
Everyone's so cold to me,
Even the toilet seat

and

“Yes, Sir!”

Just once I want to hear this,
From my wife

Japanese senryu has mocked politics and the government, and dealt with social unrest, economic turbulence, censorship and defiance against authorities, since its inception in the 1700’s in Edo (Tokyo). *Maekuzuke*—as senryu was known into the 19th century— became so popular in early 18th century Edo that the Japanese government stepped in between 1716 and 1735, to shut it down. Still, Japanese poets have remained a spirited lot, able to laugh at themselves while continuing to critically assess the economic and social problems of their times within their senryu.

But, whether it’s in 18th century Edo, 21st century America, or any other time in history or place in the world, there will always be social, economic and governmental issues that effect us globally, nationally and personally. Issues we can poke fun at and seriously confront in senryu.

Terri L. French

Further Reading

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S.M. Abeles, US

beach breeze —
a dreadlocked Jesus
glides through the crowd

for these blue poems
I dip my pen in wells
of fallen sky

Stewart C. Baker, US

underneath
his daughter's prom dress . . .
someone else's legs

skywriting his proposal blown off

trickle down . . .
I give my son
a pay cut

Johnny Baranski, US

head shop
a family run
joint

for a
good time
Cialis

Collin Barber, US

Sunday hangover
I stare into the toilet
and pray to Jesus

basketball practice
an empty water bottle
misses the trash can

online dating
he picks up
a virus

Brad Bennett, US

bad funk —
the trombonist's
elbows

too much perfume —
a family picnic
full of aunts

Johannes S.H. Bjerg, Denmark

All Green

the all greens of late summer I come and go by myself

not sure when I started to feel uncomfortable by morning light that light
that seems too honest too revealing though it doesn't show anything
different from afternoon light too exposed I guess it must go back to my
youth when I preferred arriving at parties some hours later than the others
let them do the tedious warm up

21st century the bells by the crossing are digital

let them deal with those odd hours where no one knows what to say and
so make fools of themselves when they drink heavily to get in the mood to
loosen up and get sick and a few lay the first stones to a later addiction
and I would arrive in the noise unnoticed as I preferred as I prefer

the eyes, she said, are everywhere Dali's elephant-swans

I can't hide in the morning light though I'm not sure I want to I just don't
have the option and it's a total mindfuck it comes from me and is not a
quality of the light itself but it doesn't make it easier things are as we
perceive them and how we perceive is only the top of our inner icebergs

budding pears I say “stones do not have emotions”

and of course that has to change too soon it will be winter and the days
will be unreasonably short and I will get weighed down by the lack of light
the darkness as if had it a weight

beneath Orion's Belt I carry out the ashes

I guess morning light and hindsight are made from the same substance
with sharp edges someone should see to that

This Goat*

this goat is shaved smoking 'neath the blue moon

it's the kind of life when you put your leather jacket on as the second thing
the first is searching through the ashtrays for a dog-end you can light
without burning your nose

an umbrella of jelly-fish the heavens stay in place

and you get a call from an animal welfare organization wanting your money
under the — faulty — pretext that you like animals pets and such and want
your sausages to have had a good life before they become part of the food
industry

your cobweb heart someone didn't tell you

and you finally get up and find some real fags and while the kettle boils
you check the table for dead insects they choose to end their lives in the
night leaving you to pick up the pieces and you wonder why they are so
hard to love and collect money for unlike cats and dogs and hamsters and

unsafe floor a fleeting god escapes the rain

and despite your efforts objects never stay in place not the ones you need
them to and not in the places you put them and pouring water on the
ground coffee a voice on tv talks about the rain you see out the window

autumn a million beetles digging canals under your skin

you can still blow smoke rings even though the missing moles make them
a bit more floppy not as firm as your exhaled smoke used to be a coffee
ring on the book you've given up on

through the tear duct your innermost worm is passed on

and you have this la-la insight that you don't have to kill yourself life will do
it for you boredom suffocating on emptiness nailed to the floor by bad
decisions you name it and a little bird bumps against your window with a
thump and you have cigarettes and coffee and what more my soul

**now the/this goat is shaved: a literal translation of a Danish expression for "now
that's dealt with/done/now this problem/task has been taken care of"*

Meik Blöttenberger, US

100 year rain —
a Barbie doll floats
face down

brussel sprouts —
the co-worker
no one likes

double rainbow
two more states
legalize gay marriage

sweeping up sawdust a rocking chair's marrow

Bouwe Brouwer, The Netherlands

dentist office
in the waiting room a row
of yellowed chairs

Mark E. Brager, US

Ash Wednesday
her Mardi Gras beads
hold the light

dust motes . . .
the librarian's lingering
shhh!

Alan Bridges, US

natural history museum
crowded with members
of my species

yard sale — feigning disinterest

Sondra J. Byrnes, US

his cracker crumbs —
when did i start
to notice?

eating alone —
can they see
my hunger

Donna Buck, US

shaving her head
after chemo
she wonders . . .
will her straight hair
finally curl?

Helen Buckingham, UK

Scrabble with Mum —
always the right word
in the right place

fear and loathing
on bus 101 —
back to school

Susan Burch, US

love notes
on my windshield
more shit

your glare
like a pin
in a voodoo doll
pierces me
prick

Andy Burkhardt, US

the weatherman says
there'll be popcorn storms . . .
I stream Netflix

morning sun
over coffee we discuss
cremation

Pamela Cooper, Canada

broken bottle—
the barmaid lifts
my spirits

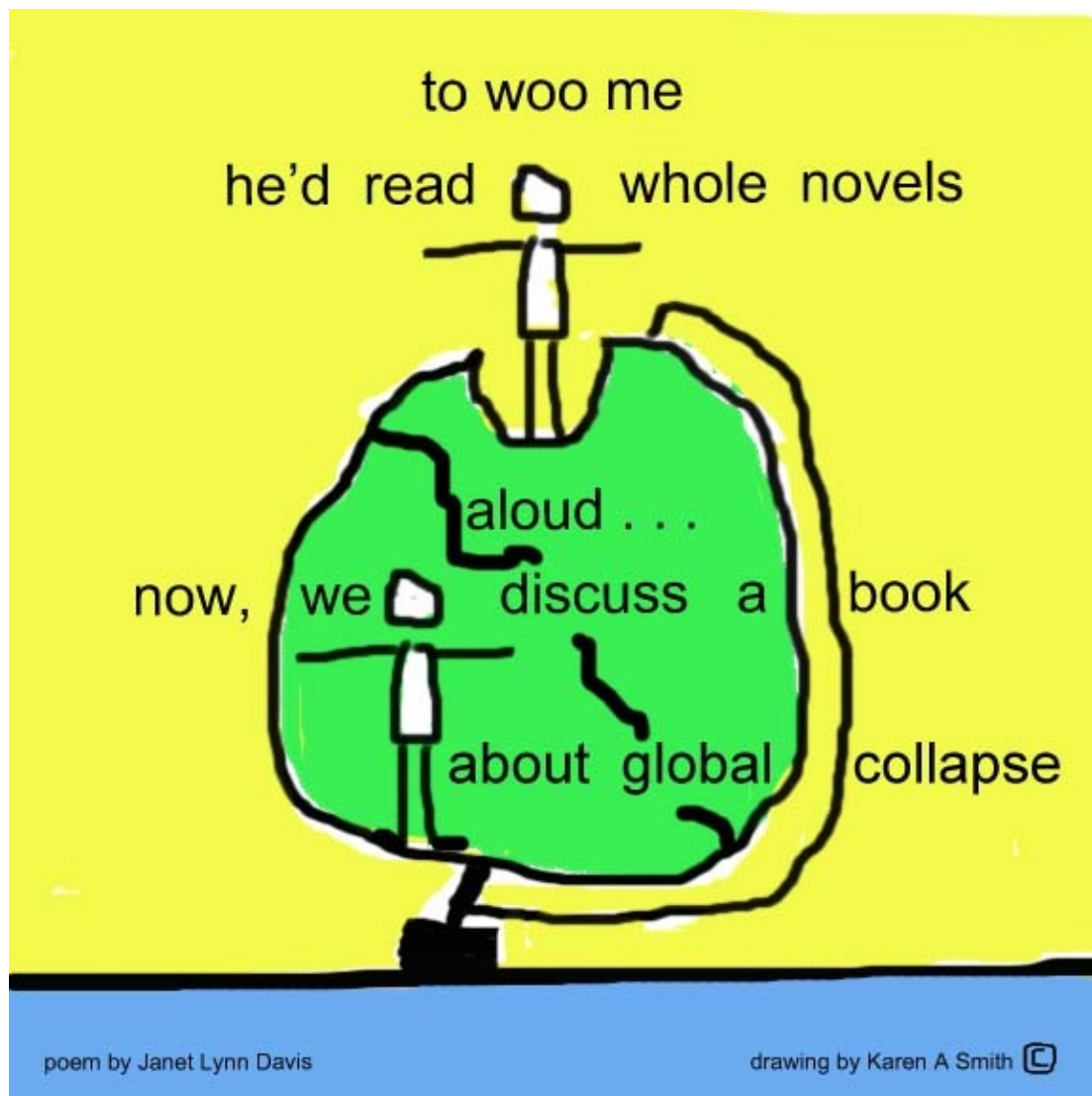
Robert Davey, UK

cosmetics card her beauty points

council meeting
biscuit crumbs on
the deprived area

english winter
snow capped
mole hills

Janet Lynn Davis, poet (US)
Karen A. Smith, artist (US)



kyoka first published in *Fire Pearls 2*, 2013.

Curtis Dunlap, US

talking politics
with my neighbor . . .
eight beers into a six pack

high school reunion —
the chess king arrives
in stilettos

i don't mind
listening
to those voices in my head
sometimes i hear
poems

Garry Eaton, Canada

thirst of West Bank refugees
sufficient
to fill settlers' swimming pools

Garry Eaton, Canada

I Was Kicked In the Ass

by a well dressed, long nosed gendarme, in front of Notre Dame Cathedral in 1964, for shuffling, for farting, for reading Camus in a crosswalk, for wearing a black leather jacket without a motorcycle, for not writing more often to mother, and for other crimes and misdemeanors. I rose from my bed of affliction with a Gallic shrug, repelled by the smell of dirty cobblestones, and took a long, sober puff on my Gauloise Bleue.

left bank bookstall
wind ruffles
through the pages of history

Mortification can also bring enlightenment, and so it was. I became an instantaneous convert to the Universal Church of The True Light! Then there appeared, gigantic in the sky before me, as on an outdoor movie screen torn from Golgotha, an old, rugged cross of Hollywood, and from it hung the suffering Christ, taking me in from on high with compassionating eyes that dripped with gore. In His ruined right hand was the stolen fruit, a wrinkled and worm eaten relic He was returning to His Father's garden. At the sight of it, my lips seemed to shrivel and my teeth became blackened stumps. However, the fingers of His left hand twisted upward to make a painful V, and from that moment I felt great peace. The whole suffering, loving, starving world made orgiastic sense, as with both hands on my

sore behind I experienced an expansive sense of wonder, surrender and surprise. Even the young fire-eater in front of old Cluny, with his cotton balls on skewers and his cans of gasoline, barbecuing his tonsils for centimes, seemed in bliss. The city rejoiced, and the streets ran full with the robed brothers of Isadora Duncan, freed at last from the Temple of the Winds.

But alas, since Paris, life has been quite a comedown.

homeless camp
beaten for my share
of the stolen vegetables

Bruce England, US

How do you get
a Norwegian man to talk
about his feelings?
ask how he stacks his firewood:
bark up, bark down?

Four From The Far Side/Gary Larson

A man face down
in desert sand, arm reaching
out to a fishbowl
one fish said, "that one was
just too close for comfort"

A zebra cop
directs the herd past a lion
eating one of them
"move it folks, nothing to see
it's all over, let's go"

In the cross-hairs
of a rifle, a bear smiles
points to his buddy

A kangaroo looks
from dead man to boomerang
"that was meant for me"

Robert Ertman, US

the lucky child, born on
talk like a pirate day —
arrrr!

Seren Fargo, senryu (US)
Lily Sturnus, prose (US)

All Wet

(an email from a friend, with my response)

Just thought I would share my day with you . . .

I was giving a tour of our greenhouse to a group of farmers from Uzbekistan, their translator, and their American guide. Everything was going great; they asked questions and I answered them. I told them about the fume hood, the cooling system, the bla-bla-bla . . .

Then they examine the emergency eyewash. I decide to show them how it works; to emphasize that we prioritize safety. I carefully position the two gentlemen nearest the apparatus well away from it, since it runs water onto the floor and I don't want them to get their shoes wet.

My dignified guests are standing back and watching my capable demonstration as I softly press the lever to release the gentle flow of water. Only it malfunctions. The cover doesn't flip back cleanly, but instead clings to the eyepiece, instantly forming an effective high-pressure nozzle. This produced an angled geyser, which with preternatural accuracy targeted the exact center of the face of the gentleman I had told to stand on that very spot.

Yep.

In the aftermath, my working title has been changed from "Assistant Tours and Docent Facilitator" to simply, "Hoser". If Uzbekistan declares war on the United States any time soon, it may be blamed on an insult suffered in a quiet little agricultural community in California.

conflict in Syria —
if only all our weapons
were water balloons

Raymond A. French, US

a frog, a heron
and a cicada
walk into a bar . . .

Terri L. French, US

cyber bullying
hashtags on
the fat girl's arms

Terri L. French, US

Foothill Transit 187

“Excuse me, does this bus go to Arcadia?”

The bus driver’s taking a smoke break. She swivels her head 180 degrees and glares at me. She blows amoeba shaped smoke rings in my general direction. I take that as a “no.”

sidewalk art
chalk hearts splattered
with pigeon poop

Eventually, a nearly full bus pulls up and the doors swing open noisily. I climb three steps and plunk four quarters into the coin slot. Slinging my purse over my shoulder and clutching my bags in one hand, I reach up with the other hand and grab a sticky metal pole. The doors whoosh shut and we lurch ahead down Colorado Blvd.

sweet *pequeño niño*
wiping a booger
on his seat

The man in the aisle seat next to me taps me on the arm. “You can have my seat,” he says. I thank him and sit. A twenty-something African American girl sitting near the window is talking loudly on her cell phone.

Then she starts to sing. Into her cell phone. Like it’s a microphone.

On and on, stop after stop, her musical dialog gets progressively louder and more dramatic. She sings about everything — her tough day at work, what she is going to eat for dinner, and graphic details of her sex life. I know why that guy gave me his seat.

early autumn
the window mannequin's
jutting nipples

The man standing next to me is chatty. He tells me he's from New York. I tell him I'm just visiting from Alabama. AL-LAH-BAMA he drawls. Why do people do that? I smile. He says he's a mechanic. I could tell because I once dated a mechanic. They can never get their fingernails clean. He has a low, gravelly voice and I have a difficult time hearing him over the songstress next to me. I'm tired so I just nod and smile and hope I'm not agreeing to a post bus-ride romp.

Finally, the girl gathers up her belongings, while continuing to sing into her phone, mumbles a “ ‘scuze me” and squeezes past me to get off at the next stop.

I look up at the mechanic and roll my eyes. He pats my shoulder. “It will all be over soon. Heh heh heh.” Then he too breaks into song.

“Oh, the wheels on the bus go ‘round and ‘round . . .”

Terri L. French, US

terri l. french, 2013



the superfluous words in a little white lie

Jay Friedenberg, US

the bar at closing time —
taking one more look
at the fat blonde

in mom's souvenir box
postcards from childhood trips
I can't remember

amusement park traffic
the first ride we take —
bumper cars

stepping stones . . .
the water
that flows between us

Brent Goodman, US

one long breath
raking the mindful sand
of the litter box

Tim Graves, UK

juggling piranha
in a tsunami —
shampooing the cat

Lincoln Griffin, US

November arrives.
The second son stays put
in utero.

Autumn Noelle Hall, US

high rise
in the night sky
the twinkle
of a hundred TV screens
Dancing with the Stars

Port Salut cheese —
Tiptoeing on the breeze
Pieds de Dieu*

**translation “feet of God,” used to describe the
stinky smell of certain prized French cheeses*

C.P. Harrison, US

passing
the U-turn
for Memory Ln.

Devin, Harrison, Canada

grandmother's birthday —
counting the rings
on her aged fingers

Penny Harter, US

Relativity

A man found an old grandfather clock abandoned in the swamp behind his house. Its rootless, weathered body was slowly sinking through a mess of sour ferns into the mud. The man and his wife dragged it up into a corner of their yard where the ground had been filled in and was more solid. Standing it up, they wiped the muck off its base. The man looked at the sky and saw that autumn was coming soon. When the ground froze, the clock would certainly be safe. He tried to wind it with a pair of pliers, but it would not start. So he removed its hands and drilled a birdhouse hole into the center of its face. It could shelter the winter birds. And in the spring, they could nest in the rusting clockworks.

construction site —
empty windows frame
the evening sky

He carried the gold-plated hands into his house and placed them on the corner of his desk. Many an evening through the long winter months, he played with the hands, arranging different times on the dusty wood veneer. And every morning when he walked out into his yard to check on the clock, he was sad that no birds had sheltered in it.

after the estate sale
the family sundial still
on the driveway

One day he gazed out his window and noticed the grandfather clock leaning toward the swamp at a precarious angle. It wants to go home again, the man thought. He looked fondly around his study. He could understand such a leaning. So he went outside, carrying its gold hands. After he dropped them into the bird-hole, he pushed the clock over and helped it slide back down the greening slope.

turning the compost pile —
too many random beetles
thrust into sudden light

Bob Hartwig, US

captured tick . . .
the vegan ponders
his options

Dallas Hembra, US

Farewell

The old porch swing creaks and groans beneath my weight. Rusty springs hold it insecurely to a sagging roof. Not sure of the swing's original color — green and gray blister beneath the last peeling coat of white. Floorboards buckle from the expansion and contraction of stifling summers and bitter winters. Fancy footwork sidesteps a spill. Flies buzz around the screen door, gaining easy entry through a hole in the mesh.

A storm brews in the distance. Thunder rumbles. I feel the house shudder and sense it crumbling down around me.

a raven perched
on the splintered fence
omens

Debbie Johnson, US

cholesterol
in eggs — not all it's
cracked up to be

Prune Juice Feature

by bruce boynton

The Floating World of the Yoshiwara



Aizuru of the Ebiya by Kikugawa Eizani, 1806

Several summers ago, when I was working in Lansing, Michigan, I developed a fever and sore throat, and set off one evening to find some miso soup to ease the pain. I came upon a small Japanese restaurant, staffed entirely by Occidentals in badly fitting imitation kimonos, and boasting both a sports bar and a sushi bar; something for everyone. However, the miso soup and tempura were excellent, and as I sat staring vacantly at the Hispanic sushi rollers, my attention was drawn to a large painting behind the bar. In it a woman lounged against a limb laden with cherry blossoms, her willowy figure echoing the gentle curve of the branch. Her features were delicate and her robes colorful and elaborate. It was a beautiful composition but I had the gnawing feeling that something was wrong. Her dress was elaborately decorated, such as might be worn by a *maiko* (apprentice geisha), but it was quilted and the woman was no adolescent. Her ornate coiffeur, adorned with eight tortoise shell pins, was unlike either the *shimada* style of the mature *geisha* or the *wareshinobu* style of the *maiko*. And horror of horrors, her *obi* was tied in the front! Suddenly the truth dawned upon me.

It's a hooker!

Well, not exactly a hooker; the more accurate term would be a high ranking courtesan of the Yoshiwara.

During the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries the red-light district of Edo, known as the Yoshiwara, became the center of a vibrant urban culture known as the *ukiyo* or the Floating World. This era in Japanese history, known as the Tokugawa period, followed a century of civil war, and saw a resurgence in literature and the arts. New forms of poetry were introduced, such as haiku and senryu, as well as Kabuki theater, puppet theater, sumo wrestling, wood block prints (*ukiyo-e*), and a new genre of fiction (*ukiyo-zoshi*). The term *ukiyo* was expropriated from Buddhist theology where it referred to the impermanence of life and worldly pleasures. Whereas the Buddhist maxim concluded that one must spend one's life in spiritual pursuits to assure one's place in the Western Paradise, new authors such as Asai Ryōi

(1612-1691) turned this teaching on its head. In *Tales of the Floating World*, the protagonist, a Buddhist priest, leads a life of debauchery and pleasure-seeking and still gains enlightenment in the end. The denizens of Floating World embraced the earthy pleasures *because* of life's impermanence. This attitude was captured in the tanka of a much earlier poet.

Because they fall
we love them –
the cherry blossoms.
In this floating world
does anything endure?

Ariwara no Narihira (823-880)

The Tokugawa shogunate established the Yoshiwara in 1617 in an attempt to control prostitution in the new capital of Edo by restricting it to a single quarter. The name *Yoshiwara* means “field of rushes” and referred to the swampy and mosquito infested site designated by the authorities. The Yoshiwara and much of the rest of Edo was destroyed in the great fire of 1657 and a new pleasure quarter was rebuilt in a walled enclosure two hours north of the city along the Sumida River, complete with 200 establishments and 3,000 licensed ladies. The new Yoshiwara was surrounded by a moat and had a single entrance, which was locked and guarded. For the women inside there was no way out.

Only through the Great Gate
the courtesans
peep at the world.¹

These violets!
How the courtesans must want
to see the spring fields!²

Attitudes toward love and marriage in medieval Japan were quite different than those held today. A woman's domain was inside the house (*uchi*), a man's outside (*soto*). The purpose of marriage was to form alliances and continue the family line, not romance. Falling in love with one's wife was considered a bit unseemly. John Gallagher quotes a saying of the time: "Keep love where it belongs.....in the brothel."³ This probably explains the following senryu.

Making much
of his wife –
a painful sight!⁴

The courtesans of the Yoshiwara, though prostitutes, were women of style and sophistication and were often highly educated. They wrote letters, danced, sang and played multiple musical instruments. They had celebrity status, and women throughout Japan copied their dress just as modern women copy movie stars. About 1750 a courtesan named Kiku renounced the sex trade and became the first geisha or arts person, thereby initiating a new cultural tradition. Geisha, at least when acting as geisha, were not prostitutes; they were professional musicians, dancers and entertainers. Courtesans and geisha existed side by side in the Yoshiwara, each with separate and distinct styles of dress and art. Geisha wore kimono and tied their obi in back, indicating they were not sexually available, whereas courtesans wore quilted robes and tied the obi in front. Geisha played the *shamisen* whereas courtesans played the traditional *kokyū*.

The poetry of the Floating World, like its art, was gritty and realistic and dealt with life as it is rather than as we would wish it. Because Edo street life was so familiar to their readers, the poets of the Floating World did not feel the need to explain things and many of their allusions are unknown to modern readers.

Consider these examples which, without insight, are totally obscure to modern readers:

The second night
she sits
several inches nearer.⁵

Strange as it seems, a high class courtesan, or *tayu*, had to be wooed. An interested visitor first visited a teahouse inside the Yoshiwara and asked for the courtesan he fancied. The proprietor sent a letter of request to the courtesan, who usually lived a few blocks away. While awaiting her reply the suitor was expected to buy sake for his friends and hire musicians to entertain the company. The *tayu*, would arrive in great style, accompanied by the female supervisor of her house, one or two *kamuro* (child prostitutes who served as pages), a *shinzo* (adolescent courtesan in training), a male employee who carried the courtesan's bedding, and occasionally a geisha. When the courtesan entered the teahouse she was seated in the place of honor and she and the client went through a simplified version of the wedding ceremony. Everything was very formal. And this was only the beginning. No self-respecting courtesan would make love to a client until the third visit, if then.

Having deceived his mother
he goes off
to be deceived himself.⁶

He deceived his mother about where he was going and is about to be flattered and deceived by the courtesans he will visit.

The priest earns
all the money and the doctor
fritters it away.⁷

Visitors to the Yoshiwara often disguised themselves; in fact shops near the entrance to the quarter did a thriving business in providing such disguises. In this poem the priest has disguised himself as a doctor.

With wriggling worms
for bait, the courtesan
fishes for men.⁸

Earthworms were a frequent metaphor for the cursive form of Japanese handwriting. Higher class courtesans sometimes wrote letters to their favorites to encourage more frequent rendezvous. This is reminiscent of the practice among the nobility of the ancient Heian court who exchanged tanka in the pursuit of lovers.

Twenty-seven comes
driving away
thirty-three.⁹

The man has divorced his wife to marry a courtesan who was released from her period of indenture at age 27. Because of their beauty and refinement, ex-courtesans were eagerly sought as marriage partners.

A clever wife:
she makes him take their child
on his blossom viewing.¹⁰

Cherry trees were planted in the middle of the main street that led from the Great Gate (*O-mon*) into the Yoshiwara. The trees bloom in the first week of April, and when lit by lanterns and seen against the night sky, the matted blossoms form a cumulous mass of great beauty. In this poem the wife uses a stratagem to ensure her husband's blossom viewing does not lead to other activities.

The wife comes back,
having fallen in love
with the *kamuro*.¹¹

"How wonderful is human nature!" comments R.H. Blyth. A wife visited the Yoshiwara to see what all the fuss is about, and ends up charmed by the beauty and grace of the *kamuro*. Despite their indentured status

promising *kamuro* were treated kindly and taught deportment, *koto* (harp), *ikebana* (flower arrangement), incense burning and tea ceremony.

Sold by filial duty
Redeemed
by undutifulness.¹²

Young girls were often sold into prostitution by their poverty stricken families. Tokugawa mores (and Confucian precepts) applauded such sacrifices on the part of young girls. In this poem the girl sacrifices herself because of filial duty but her debts are paid and she is redeemed by a young man who is spending his inheritance in an undutiful manner.

The night she was redeemed,
she feels as if
she had been sold.¹³

A young prostitute's debts are paid and she is free, but strangely, she feels as if she has been sold into slavery again.

Smiling at the nun
with no little finger,
She just smiles.¹⁴

The nun was formerly a courtesan and cut off her little finger in a pledge of undying devotion to her lover. At the end of her indenture she was released and became a Buddhist nun. The man knows this and the nun knows he knows. Hence, no words are needed.

She goes to see the face
her husband is
mad about.¹⁵

"This," says Blyth, "is perhaps the shortest short story ever written." A woman peeps into a male paradise and finds her own private hell.

The magnet points to the Yoshiwara
from any place whatsoever.¹⁶

“This,” says Blyth, “is Freud’s doctrine in a nutshell.”

In its opulence and entertainments the quarter emulated Heian court life of 794-1185 CE. Sex per se was easily attainable, but what aficionados longed for was glitter, romance, and an escape from the strictures of Tokugawan life. The Yoshiwara offered all these and more. The Yoshiwara was already in decline by the beginning of the Meiji Period in 1868, and in 1958, when the government made prostitution illegal, the Yoshiwara closed its doors forever. Despite all it stood for, the Yoshiwara made an indelible imprint on the art and literature of the nation as well as on the thousands who spent their time and money and left their hearts there.

Cold winter rain
In the sky,
the red Yoshiwara.¹⁷

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²Blyth, R.H. *Haiku* vol. 4, p. 29, (1971) Hokuseido Press: Tokyo.

³ Gallagher, John. *Geisha*, p. 105, (2003) PRC Publishing Ltd: London.

⁴Blyth, R.H. *Japanese Life and Character in Senryu*, p. 71, (1961) Hokuseido Press: Tokyo.

⁵ Blyth, R.H. *Edo Satirical Verse Anthologies*, p. 244, (1961) Hokuseido Press: Tokyo.

⁶ Blyth, R.H. *Japanese Life and Character in Senryu*, p. 520, (1961) Hokuseido Press: Tokyo.

⁷ Ueda, Makoto. *Light Verse from the Floating World*, p. 184 (1999) Columbia University Press, New York.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁹ Blyth, R.H. *Japanese Life and Character in Senryu*, p. 165, (1961) Hokuseido Press: Tokyo.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.556.

¹¹ Blyth, R.H. *Edo Satirical Verse Anthologies*, p. 217, (1961) Hokuseido Press: Tokyo.

¹² Blyth, R.H. *Japanese Life and Character in Senryu*, p. 522, (1961) Hokuseido Press: Tokyo.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁴ Blyth, R.H. *Senryu: Japanese Satirical Verses*, p. 123, (1949) Hokuseido Press: Tokyo.

¹⁵ Blyth, R.H. *Edo Satirical Verse Anthologies*, (1961) Hokuseido Press: Tokyo.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁷ Blyth, R.H. *Senryu: Japanese Satirical Verses*, p. 192, (1949) Hokuseido Press: Tokyo.

Links to Illustrations

Cherry trees at entrance to the Yoshiwara: <http://www.hiroshigeii.net/images/TotoMeisho/YoshiwaraL.jpg>.

Cherry trees seen at night: <http://japanfansan.blog124.fc2.com/blog-entry-75.html>

Kamuro and tayu: <http://www.fujiarts.com/cgi-bin/item.pl?item=329965>
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/andrewosbourn/2522922757/in/pool-tayuu|andrewosbourn>

Maiko (apprentice geisha): <http://www.flickr.com/photos/michaelchandler/3229021908/>

Mineko Iwasaki, a famous geisha: http://farm5.static.flickr.com/4033/4478228149_0c101ba7ef.jpg

Tayu procession: <http://virtualneko.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/oiran-dochu.jpg>

Shamisen, the instrument of the Geisha: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5rs7pfZuPs>

Kokyu, the instrument of courtesans: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JV2b-a8Pto>

Further Reading

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Ringdal, NJ. *Love for Sale: a world history of prostitution*, (1997) Grove Press: NY.

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Kashinath Karmakar (kash poet), India

Mona Lisa —
studying her browless smile
with a frown

M. Kei, US

marriage —
it's like slavery,
except the collar
is small enough
to fit around one finger

“1st Baptist Church
one mile” —
but why walk
any further when
God is already here?

Bill Kenney, US

another spring
the widow removes
her wedding band

honor roll
her mother is proud
of herself

Jessica Malone Latham, US

waxing hair
off my face I think about
my bald brother

G.R. LeBlanc, Canada

motherly advice
the grate of a plow
against pavement

piña colada umbrella
not one ounce of shade
left on the beach

bait fishing
the last hook catches
grandpa's ear

Lydia Lecheva, Bulgaria

off to the mountains
she puts green nail polish
in her rucksack

fall equinox
half of his head
is aching

Erik Linzbach, US

twist top wine
afternoon recess
in the teachers' lounge

playdate
finally meeting the parents
of other special children

Gregory Longenecker, US

a rose
by any other name
Alzheimer's

samsara
wandering from one bar
to the next

empty church
the priest searches
for cell reception

Bob Lucky, Ethiopia

topless beach
all the women
my age

broken heart
everywhere the finger points
another shard

Bob Lucky, Ethiopia

Wednesday

I go to see my friend the rabbi. During my visit his parrot keeps squawking shabat shalom shabat shalom.

“Stupid bird,” the rabbi says.

“Stupid bird,” the parrot says.

“I’ll be going,” I say.

“Shabat shalom!” the parrot says.

“Shabat shalom,” I reply.

talking to myself
the crowd on the sidewalk
parts like the Red Sea

Bob Lucky, Ethiopia

Incident at Bole Airport, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

I'm drinking Dr. Pepper and Crown Royal before we leave for the airport. I never drink Dr. Pepper and Crown Royal before anything, but I'm being polite to the friend who's driving us. After check-in and immigration I have to piss. There's a line at the single urinal, and I'm at the end of it. The woman who stands at the door with a roll of toilet paper in case you forget your own comes and stands behind me while I pee. I notice all my efforts are literally going down the drain and into a red plastic bucket. I'm telling you, at that moment, everything depends on a red plastic bucket not being full to over-flowing.

boarding call
sheets of toilet paper
on the wet, black tiles

Washing my hands, I ask the woman why people don't just piss in the bucket. She has no idea what I'm saying and I have no idea why I'm saying it, so we're even until she hands me a sheet of toilet paper and without thinking, I take it.

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

poetry workshop:
I try out the critic's
reading glasses

guided museum tour:
her hips sway
from side to side

Joseph E. McKeon, US

lovers enjoy
a "romantic dinner"
by Kindle light

the environmentalist
picking up dog poop
with a plastic bag

students raise hands
on the first day of school —
metal detector

Jonathan McKeown, Australia

suburban developments
the mansions higher
than the steeple

Annette Makino, US

summer bonfire
the Christmas tree lights up
one last time

from the hot tub
wearing only his belt
Orion rises

Annette Makino, US



father and son
in matching caps
doubleheader

Jayashree Maniyil, Australia



Jayashree Maniyil, Australia



Lauren Mayhew, US

outdoor shower
sunlight peeks
through the slats

bar seats
strangers discuss everything
but loneliness

the art
of sugar coating . . .
palmetto bug
sounds much nicer
than cockroach

H. Gene Murtha, US

poolside
again she orders
sex on the beach

licking his balls
for luck he says
the relief pitcher

how useless
these hospital gifts
for a stillborn . . .
a withered leaf,
a fallen feather

H. Gene Murtha, US

GLOVE SIZE

first exam
i ask the proctologist
his glove size

second exam
i get a prescription
for hemorrhoids

third exam
my favorite position
no longer my favorite

fourth exam
an empty bottle
of ExtenZe

Peter Newton, US

new neighbor
I meet her smoker's cough
first

nosebleed seats
the beer vendor
calls me boss

Maeve O'Sullivan, Ireland

zoo visit
grandma lingers
to watch the little egret

Eric Otto, US

genetics lab
feathers rain from the air vent
the missing rabbit

Minh-Triết Pham, France

graveside —
a cell phone ringing
“To infinity, and beyond!”

Thomas Powell, UK

crowded graveyard
another plastic wreath
destined for landfill

Joan Prefontaine, US



Kala Ramesh, India

a bronze swan
the paper weight holds
my thoughts

after the verdict
weighing
the silence

Boris Ratnikov, US

multiple orgasms
saved by
the sperm bank

a vacancy in the desert
tequila sunrise
included

Michael Rehling, US

Fuzzy Math

my brain manufactures excuses for me like some automatic pilot gone entirely haywire. i lost my watch and say out loud that it was a good thing to lose that expensive nuisance. i did not want it anyway. where was my mind when i paid 900 bucks for it? right now i am typing and leaving out all capitals and most punctuation. i tell myself i am a poet and i can do that . . .

computing
my net worth right this minute . . .
the scent of jasmine

The Wisdom of Insects

i am in a simple frame today. anyone who wants three hours of explanation for one sentence by the sixth patriarch of zen, or some other such nonsense, needs to tune out now.

a butterfly sits
on a windblown flower

not moving

Michael Rehling, US



Elaine Riddell, New Zealand

elder day care
he returns with glitter
in his beard

Edward Robson, US

stepping out, the chill
of friendly breeze reminds me —
go back for my pants

Alexis Rotella, US

His heart beating
as he opens her diary —
every page shorthand.

chilled mango
in a silver bowl—
the ceiling fan whirls
as my friend and I
discuss the plight of elephants.

Claudette Russell, US

Sunday mass
everyone driven here
by guilt

family reunion
my mother's stories
told differently

Stanley Sicheloff, US

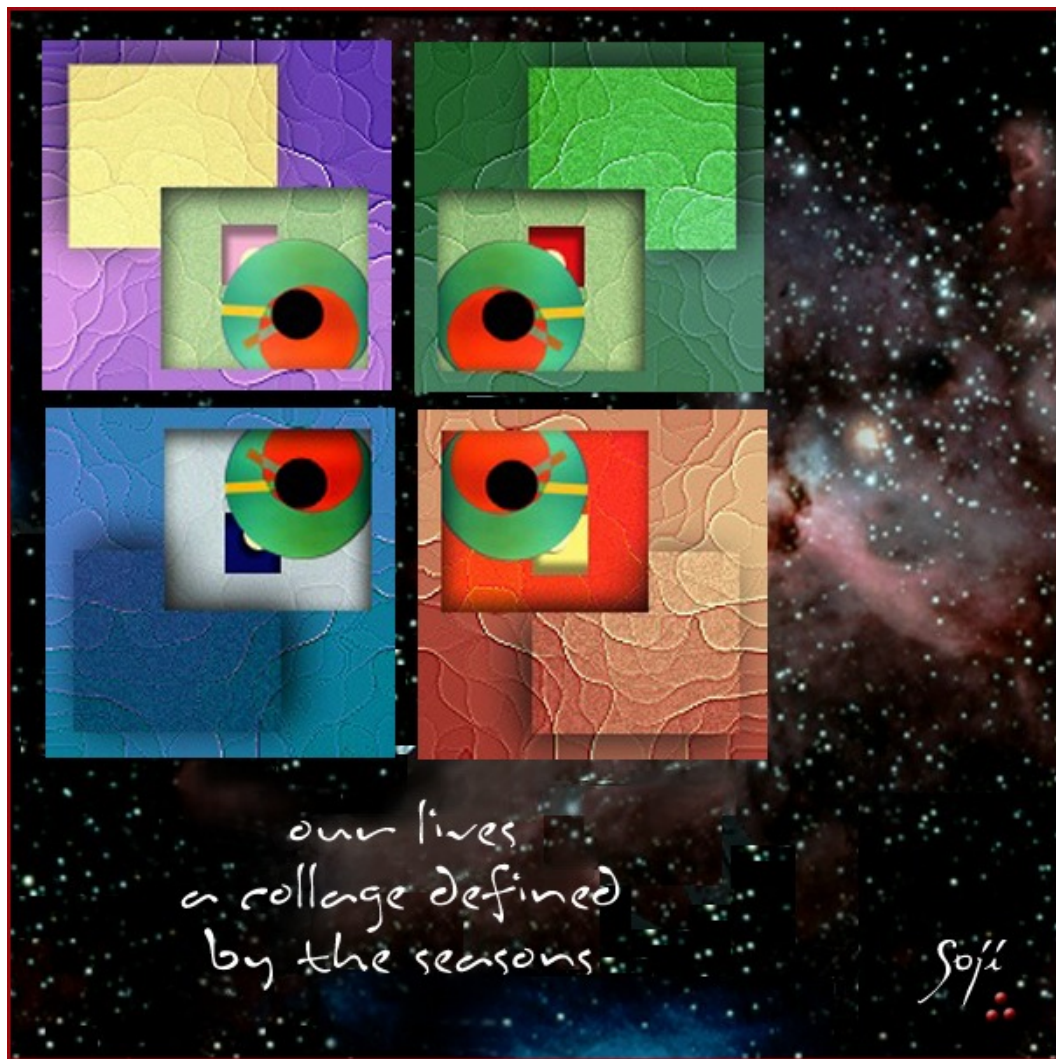
after brunch
the Eggs Benedict
betraying me

chakra trouble
my third eye
has psoriasis

Carla Sims, US

book store search
I find grandma
Lost in Time

soji, US



soji, US



Richard St. Clair, US

lovemaking
through the paper-thin walls
I drown it out
with Stravinsky's
Rite of Spring

Elizabeth Steinglass, US

first light
the dim glow
of your phone

André Surridge, New Zealand

waxing moon she decides on the Brazillian

Rachel Sutcliffe, UK

knitting socks
a hole
in the pattern

lawyer's office
sharing a pen
to sign for divorce

unable to agree
we sigh
in unison

Paresh Tiwari, India

Distance

One of the three roads that led to my house may have been the longest but I was sixteen — I liked to pedal my bicycle slowly down this road. As the May heat shimmered from road-tar beneath the scarlet *Gulmohar* blooms, I would smell the *besan ladoos*, long before crossing in front of the sweet shop . . . whistle to the sleepy mongrel by the side of a shuttered comic book store . . . stop awhile to cheer the local cricket team.

This road wound past a park, hopped over a culvert, snaked past a kite maker's workshop, stuttered near a century old banyan tree . . .and then careened to a stop beneath her balcony.

aching to read

the braille of her mounds —

sleepless night

Gulmohar (Flame Tree) — A tree noted for its fern-like leaves and flamboyant display of flowers.

Besa laddoo — A traditional Indian sweet-meat, made by sautéing gram flour, generous amounts of clarified butter and sugar for hours.

Marie Toole, US

in-laws' wedding gift
the coveted spot
in the family plot

Maureen Virchau, US

grateful
for elastic waist bands —
Thanksgiving

Anita Virgil, US

The Prince & The Frog

Something's gone terribly cock-eyed in my life. And it must have been due to one hell of a kiss: I did get my gray prince, but he is often far away. Trouble is, a damn gray tree frog has moved in with me!

Normally, he parks on a house-timber outside and from there he croaks harshly each spring for a mate. On a hot day, I find him perched on the hose and ever so gently lift him back on to a one- inch timber ledge. He is unperturbed by this.

his body
soft as a baby's
testicle

But nevermind that. Problem is, he has moved indoors with me: As I was dozing off one night, a nerve-jangling

BRRRRUUUUUUUUUUUUtt

rings out from the front hall — or the kitchen? The kitchen. Near the fridge. Unmistakably the yell of the gray tree frog. Out of bed I climb and next thing, I'm down on hands and knees, flashlight in hand searching the narrow space next to the wall where horrid dust bunnies collect. No body there. Back to bed. Begin to doze when louder, angrier, gray frog screeches from high up in the living room. I don't know when he pulled off

this trespassing act. But I am sleepy; I open a window in hopes the cool night air will attract him outside again.

A few days pass. Pouring rains silence the cicada racket. The house blissfully silent. Until today.

BRRRRUUUUUUUUUUUt again.

Even as I write he is calling to me and I, like a jerk, am answering him! So this is my problem: if I could just get my gray prince into the house and the damned gray frog out, my life would be perfect! My world righted once more. Surely I did something wrong when I conjured up that old frog act?

trilling back at the tree frog
he answers me!
wonder what it was I said *

* *Prune Juice: Journal of Senryu & Kyoka, January 2012*

Frank Watson, US

she and I
are not the same
but yet . . . a cup of tea

Lolly Williams, US

white flag
anger in the letter
I never mailed

listening
to what you're not saying . . .
tumbleweed

enlightenment
the way she colors outside
her laugh lines

Marilyn Appl Walker, US

his and hers
from the dryer
the sparks and the cling

baby shower
the mother-to-be
sips a virgin mary

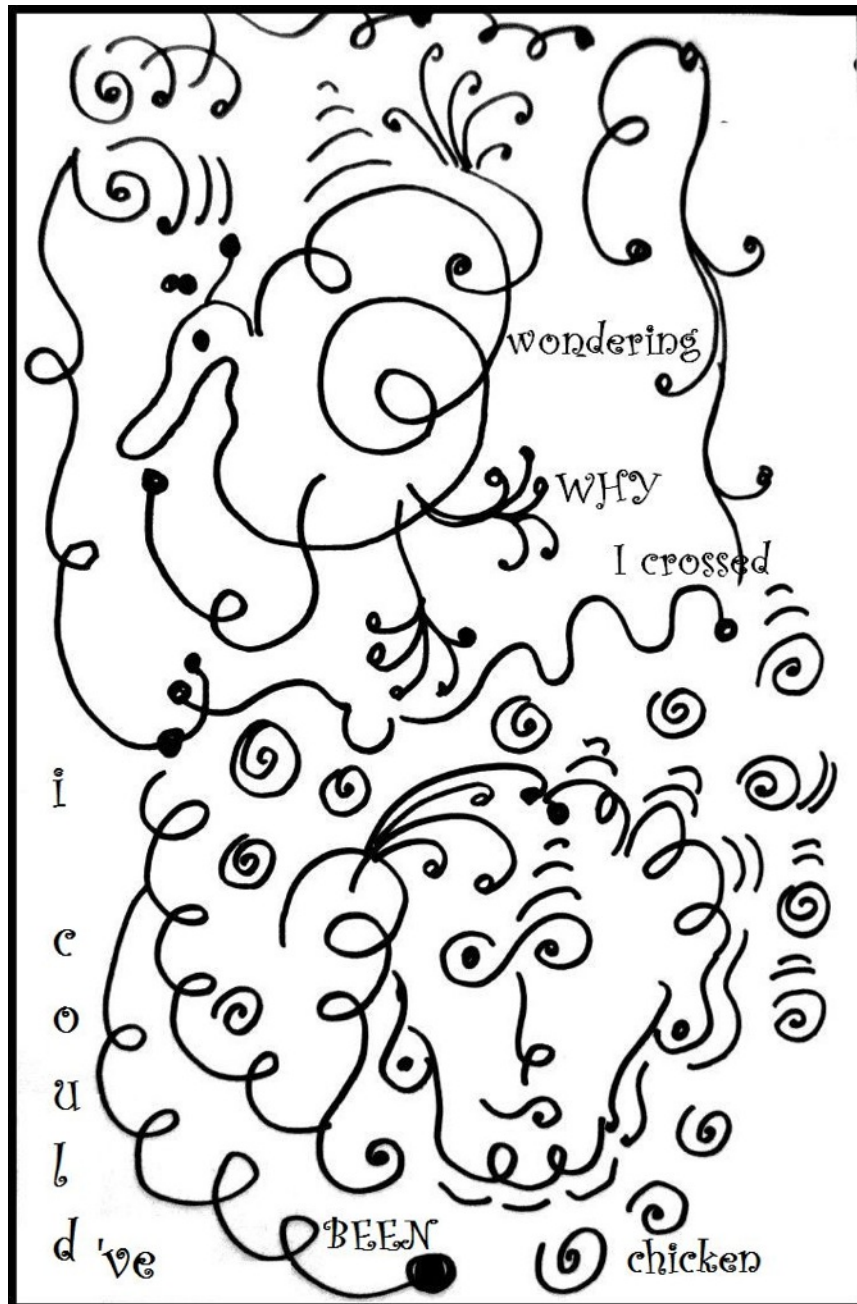
Julie Warther, US

windows down
too much gas
in the car

their dog's polished nails
all evening
keeping my hands in fists

second marriage . . .
combining
bucket lists

Kath Abela Wilson, US



Rafał Zabratyński, Poland

HOURLASS

I slow down a few steps before the peak of the mountain.
Some part of me wants this dream to last longer.
There's not a single person at the top.
She shows up after a moment.
The brisk sunrise lights up
the red of her lips.
this pinch of
time
to remember
the red of her lips.
The brisk sunrise lit up
She showed up after a moment.
There wasn't a single person at the top.
Some part of me wanted that dream to last longer.
I slowed down a few steps before the peak of the mountain.

HOURLASS