

A Spray of Water: Tanka [one narcissus]  
Tada Chimako

one narcissus  
draws close to another  
like the only  
two adolescent boys  
in the universe

## TANKA

consist of five units (often  
treated as separate lines when  
romanized or translated) usually  
with the following pattern

**5-7-5-7-7. syllables.**

The 5-7-5 is called the *kami-no-ku* "upper phrase"<sup>2</sup>, and the 7-7 is called the *shimo-no-ku* "lower phrase".

Upon the shore of Matsu-hō  
For thee I pine and sigh;  
Though calm and cool the evening  
air,

These salt-pans caked and dry  
Are not more parched than I!

GON CHU-NAGON SADA-IYE

Generally Saigyō

This place of mine  
Never is entered by humans  
Come for conversation.  
Only by the mute moon's light  
shafts  
Which slip in between the tree

New Year's Eve --  
on a ladder  
a moon-faced man  
washes the face  
of a clock.

Alexis Rotella

***Izumi Shikibu***

(When a lover was sent a purple  
robe he left behind):

Don't blush!  
People will guess  
That we slept  
Beneath the folds  
Of this purple-root rubbed cloth.

With a happiness continuing all my  
life,  
the day I began junior high school!  
The shoe shop of that time  
is still here.

I come to a sudden standstill

Bummei Tsuchaya

*In many ways, the tanka  
resembles the sonnet, certainly in  
terms of treatment of subject.*

*Like the sonnet, the tanka  
employs a turn, known as a  
**pivotal image**, which marks the  
transition from the examination  
of an image to the examination  
of the personal response. This  
turn is located within the third  
line, connecting the *kami-no-ku*,  
or upper poem, with the *shimo-  
no-ku*, or lower poem*

the border guards  
carelessly let them cross  
the Rio Grande  
these undocumented  
monarch butterflies

Kenneth C. Leibman

A Yorkshire Dales dawn  
By a former hunting lodge:  
Like a lone pee-wit,  
My concertina warbles  
At the Swaledale Squeeze  
PW [version 1]

all day  
rain has come down  
drop by drop  
the pain of your absence  
has penetrated me

KEITH MCMAHEN

The moon that shone the whole  
night through

This autumn morn I see,  
As here I wait thy well-known  
step,

For thou didst promise me—  
'I'll surely come to thee.'

SOSEI HŌSHI

A dawn moorland stroll  
From the dozing Swaledale  
Squeeze:  
Like a lone pee-wit,  
My concertina warbles  
And sings of my solitude

PW [version 2]