

## The Last 20 Tanka Poems by KONDÔ Yoshimi

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One of the greatest modern tanka poets and my mentor, KONDÔ Yoshimi (近藤芳美) passed away some four years ago at the age of 93. He has 24 collections of his tanka poems published in his lifetime, in which his 11,911 tankas are included in all.

The following are the last 20 tankas of KONDÔ Yoshimi's from his last 24th collection (posthumous) of his tankas, *After A Forked Road* 『岐路以後』 (2007). Translations are all mine.

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ベッドより立ち上りざま足を拉ぐにわかなる衰えを知ることとして

Getting up from bed

I had my foot broken,

I realized a sudden

decline in my health.

ギプス巻かるるままに治療のすべて終うなべて老い人の無口なるなか

I was treated with my foot

put in plaster, during which

all the graybeards around

remained completely silent.

遠き号泣止む間病床の暁けのねむり大地の果ての眠り待つごと

A far-off wailing fades out,  
my sleep at dawn sick in bed,  
it seems to me to wait for a sleep  
at the farthest corner of the Earth.

号泣止む間地の果ての常のねむり人はそれぞれの生を分けつつ

A wailing dies away,  
a usual sleep at the end  
of the Earth ; every one has  
his own portion of life.

めぐる祈り知らざる宗教陶醉に昼さえ乾く風落つるしばし

Even in the daytime with prayers  
and religious raptures around  
completely foreign to me,  
a dry wind is weaker awhile.

ひと夜のねむり百年のふかき眠りねむりは人を忘れしめつつ

One night sleep or  
one hundred year deep sleep ;  
every sleep makes one forget  
one person after another.

初めより生死のなしと知ることに思い至る日行き継るべく

One day I finally realized  
there was, from the beginning,  
no life, nor death ;  
I must go to cling to the day.

生と死ともとよりなしと知ることの老いの極みの救済が生る

There is originally no life, nor death ;  
it becomes clear to me now :  
Here comes a relief  
for the ultimate old age.

すでにして「神」としあらむ救済の老いの果てなる静けさが待つ

A relief would have already  
belonged to God :  
a calm, the end of the old age,  
is now waiting for me.

静けさと安堵と「神」の救済に或いは「神」なる絶対の「無」に

A calm and a relief,  
be in the help of God,  
or in the absolute  
“Nothing” of God.

絶対の「無」を救済に思うとし一切の人間の限界に立つ

Considering the absolute “Nothing”  
as a salvation, I now stand  
on the bounds  
of all human beings.

逃れ得ぬこととして負う重たさの生死の問いの宿命として

Carrying the weight on my back  
as inevitable ; it is  
the fate of the pursuit  
of life and death.

地を這い生くるいのちの宿命につねに怖れに生と死を負う

Living a life crawling on the earth ;  
it is my destiny, which has made  
me fear into bearing a burden  
of life and death.

人ひとりうちに問うとし返り来る答などなき生と死が待つ

Inquiring into one person  
in myself, I have come upon  
life and death waiting for me  
without any answers returned.

生と死と問うとして負う苦しみの無明の問いのさまよいとして

An investigation of life and death  
has ever distressed me  
and made me roaming about  
in spiritual darkness.

その無門を無門として受くる絶望を自ら早く知るものとする

Lacking the gate is not having the gate ;  
accepting the fact throws us into despair ;  
which I have already found  
myself knowing very early.

くり返す放心を無心の思いとし君におさなきときはめぐりつ

Repeated abstraction of yours is  
an innocent thinking, so I feel :  
the infancy is now coming  
back to you again and again.

ながきながき思い心に重ねつつ老年というさびしき時間

A long, long time has  
accumulated my thought  
after thought; advanced age,  
that is a desolate time!

君にしばし留まる心を無心とし空にかすみて残る夕映

My thought lingering on you  
awhile ; a state of nonattachment :  
the sunset glow remained  
hazy in the sky.

マタイ受難曲そのゆたけさに豊穰に深夜はありぬ純粹のとき

“The St. Matthew Passion” ;  
the richness and huge harvest  
have pervaded at our midnight :  
a purified time, it is, indeed.

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These 20 pieces added, my English translations of KONDO's tankas  
have now reached 182 in number.

An *in memoriam* tanka that I dedicated to my late mentor ;

追悼の歌などぼくは先生に作りませんよ佇めるのみ 孟

A dirge ! I will never make  
such for you, my mentor ;  
I will never : I only  
remain standing, dazed.