

Skylark

A Tanka Journal

Edited by Claire Everett

Skylark

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Skylark

A Tanka Journal

Editor: Claire Everett

skylark.tanka@gmail.com

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Submission guidelines: see last page of journal and/or the website. The latter will be updated regularly and will showcase the “Skylark’s Nest” winners and runners up, as well as selected tanka-art/haiga.

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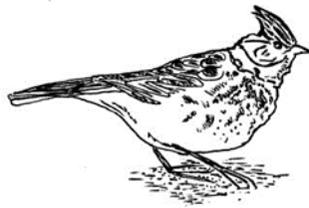
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Nature's Accord.

How is't each bough a several music yields?
The lusty throstle, every nightingale,
Accord in tune, though vary in their tale;
The chirping swallow call'd forth by the sun,
And crested lark doth his divisions run?
The yellow bees the air with murmur fill,
The finches carol, and the turtles bill,
Whose power is this? What God?

from *Poems*
—Ben Jonson 1572-1637



Editor's Message

I write this early on an April morning after what seems to have been a long winter. As a people we are living in the shadow of terror, not just from extremists, but from the all too chilling reality of the irreparable damage we have done to our Earth, this pale blue dot in space. And yet, as I write, the poet-trees, lit with their green fuses, are putting their pens to the paper of a new season and the poet-birds are building their nests, filling their inkwells for the next hatch of songs. I'm mindful that the time we call our own is only ever borrowed, just as the garden I call mine, belongs no more to me than it does to the snake's head fritillaries preparing to rear their chequered heads, or the pair of song thrush who have chosen a conifer bough in the hope that in a few short weeks it will yield to fledgling acts of faith. In this climate of uncertainty, we tentatively unfold our colours, test our wings — be they of feathers or silk — and sing our songs. For our other-than-human fellow beings these activities are ones of necessity, not mere solace, but then I would question how many birds sing for the joy of singing, not simply to say, *Hey, love, I am here!* or *This is my patch!* and how many humans paint and write out of need, out of passion, out of hunger.

Poetry reconnects me to myself (whatever that may be in this life of many lives) and it binds me to others in these loose-leaf, too easily scattered days. Editing the TSA Anthology *Spent Blossoms*, was not only an honour and a pleasure, it continues to bring rewards, as I receive notes of appreciation and read how others have found joy and inspiration in the words of their tanka kindred. *Skylark* continues to go from strength to strength and has plans for its own Anthology before year's end, so stay tuned for announcements and submission calls via the website (skylarktanka.weebly.com)

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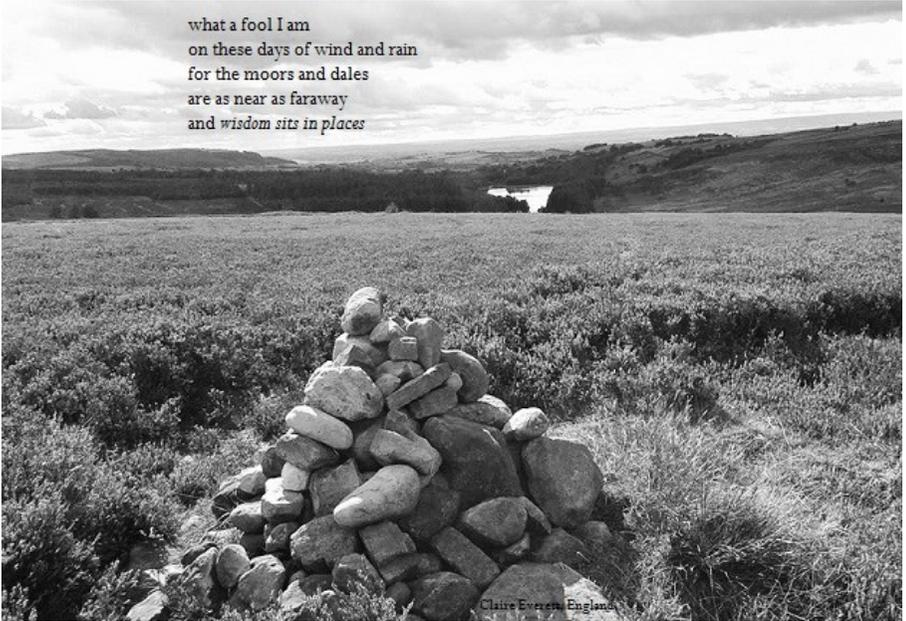
in a few weeks! If you wander over to *Skylark's* sister site, skylarkpublishing.weebly.com, you will see that I have been busy publishing my second tanka collection, *The Small, Wild Places*, and have co-authored *Talking in Tandem* with my lovely, long-suffering husband, Tony. The latest production under the *Skylark* imprint is the fascinating *Seeing Double: Tanka Pairs* by the wonderfully talented Liam Wilkinson; I urge anyone not yet acquainted with Liam's work to welcome this stunning collection into your life. And again, keep in touch, as there other tanka books soon to be released by *Skylark*.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the work of two young poets whose tanka are featured in this edition of *Skylark*. Please welcome William Blackwell Partridge (aged 9) and Seth Gladding (aged 10) to the tanka community. It is uplifting to see a new generation of poets are discovering the appeal of this ancient form; may we encourage them to honour the tradition of this 'short song' as they take it into the next chapter and make it their own. And many thanks to the multi-talented Michele L Harvey who has kindly provided the *Skylark's* Nest prompt for the winter issue, with her elegant *Shadowplay*.

I hope you will find solace and inspiration within these pages. Know, that in submitting to *Skylark*, each one of you has granted me both . . . and more.

~ Claire Everett, North Yorkshire, April 2016

Skylark



what a fool I am
on these days of wind and rain
for the moors and dales
are as near as faraway
and *wisdom sits in places*

Claire Everett, England

*So say the Apache.

Claire Everett, England

Skylark

The Skylark's Nest

The Winners

Selections by *David Terelinck, Australia*

Sometimes the sweetest song comes from the bird that is rarely seen, or glimpsed only fleetingly. Is it that these almost-seen flashes of coloured feathers that make the music so much more enticing?

In Australia we have the bellbird. This diminutive bird, often not seen, fills the forests and valley floors with honeyed crystalline notes. A sound that ensnares the senses and fills one with the awe of the unexpected; that such a clear sparkling note comes from something not fully recognized.

It is the tanka that does not reveal everything at once that is more likely to draw me in as a reader. It is this premise that guided my choice in seeking the sweetest songbirds in this flock. I was seeking the poem that did not replicate the beautiful image given us by Pamela A. Babusci. I wanted the dreaming room of hearing the Skylark's call, but without seeing the bird.

That mysterious dreaming room, and image of the unstated, was calling me. I wanted the tanka to live for me beyond the season and image of the plum and cherry blossom. These delicate flowers do not last long; they are, like bird song, fleeting and ephemeral. We have only a transitory time to enjoy them before they are lost to wind and other elements.

So this drew me to tanka that spoke to me long after the poem was read and the petals had fallen.

The Skylark's Nest winner for me, on every reading, is:

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teach me how
to hold spring
in my palm . . .
the book dog-eared
to a verse by Neruda

Paresh Tiwari, India

This tanka offered so much in the white spaces between each line. It did not speak of blossoms falling, but it leads one to hope that we can find spring when the branches are bare. How to cup and cradle those blossoms any time spring was needed in one's life.

Whether one knows the work of Neruda or not, it is enough to know that his work is loved through feeling these dog-eared pages slip between your fingers. But there is a deeper metaphor for the reader behind this. Just as this book is much thumbed, we know those sakura petals will eventually become dog-eared to wind and rain. But the cherry-viewing season is held in highest regard in Japan. It is a pilgrimage for the Japanese; a journey to hold spring fleetingly in the palm of their hands for the months ahead.

This tanka immediately immerses me in the poem "Your Laughter" by Neruda. It talks about what can be taken away from someone . . . be it life-sustaining bread or air. But it beseeches "do not take me from your laughter". If we teach someone to hold spring in the palm of their hand for all time, as this tanka suggests, then that can never be taken from them either.

This tanka became an extension of Pamela's image and took me on a journey beyond the immediacy of the painting to a deeper need. It opened new windows and moved beyond the blossoms to hope after blossom-fall. For this reason, it was a worthy winner that did not imitate the art work supplied, but amplified the thematic feeling that Pamela so sensitively captured.

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Three other Skylark's Nest tanka are equally worthy of high commendation:

a swirl of starlings
weaving through contrails
of the topaz sky . . .
kindled in me again
this desire to break free

Yesha Shah, India

This poet also appreciates the value of development of the image with delicate link and shift. Pamela's image is one of blossoms reaching for the sky. Do they perhaps envy starlings their ability to leave the earth-bound plane and weave through the lofty skies? Is this poet in empathy with the blossoms . . . only when we have the faith to let go, can we truly break free and soar? In this tanka there is great joy in the unsaid. What is it that has been holding this person back from taking off to live these unfulfilled dreams? Is it fear or responsibility? This is a well-constructed tanka that builds line by line to a very satisfying conclusion.

The next commended tanka is:

plum blossoms
against a gray sky
a tinge of red
daubed on the cheeks
of the aging courtesan

Margaret Chula, USA

This is a winning tanka because of the effective contrast between spring and late autumn. We have blossoms that denote new growth and the greening of hope. But how quickly that youth can pass us by unnoticed. This opposition of the

Skylark

seasons works extremely well in creating a tanka that we can all relate to . . . the inevitable march of time. This courtesan's life is greying out like the sky above her; the splash of rouge upon her cheeks, like the plum blossoms against the wintering sky, are but momentary. This too, like all things, shall pass.

Our final hatchling in this Nest is the following tanka:

as buds to blossoms
this swelling in my throat
in my chest
how close to grief is joy . . .
different rains, same sky

Autumn Noelle Hall, USA

A tanka very worthy of contention because of all it does not say. Again we have a subtle and quite beautiful contrast of spring (joy) and winter (grief). Pamela's image is amplified with the metaphor that although blossoms bring us happiness, we know that there is loss trailing quite closely behind them. Cherry blossoms, and often many people, live and die under the same sky they were born beneath. Tears of joy and tears of defeat and heartbreak.

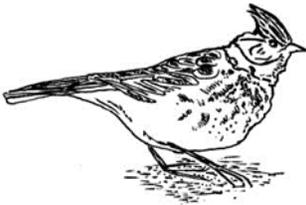
I cannot escape the feeling with this tanka of loss of life at a very young age; perhaps a mother's reaction to the death of a child. And that is one of the great beauties of tanka of this nature — the multiple opportunities it allows readers for their own interpretation.

Congratulations to the winner and the three runners-up. Your tanka are engaging and well-constructed with sound metaphor, imagery and word usage. You have used Pamela A. Babusci's prompt well, and in doing so, drew me in to another world of being and interpretation beyond that of a branch of spring foliage. You have made me stop and think about the

Skylark

poem, and have created that *Aha!* moment that I continually search for in excellent tanka.

Congratulations to Paresh who will receive a free copy of the journal and an invitation to judge the competition for *Skylark* 4:2, Winter 2016.





if i remove
my mask will you
still love me?
ebony sky crowded
with washed out stars

Pamela A. Babusci
2016



Skylark

The Skylark's Nest Prompt
4:2, Winter 2016



Shadowplay 35 x 50 inches, oil on linen,
Michele L. Harvey, USA

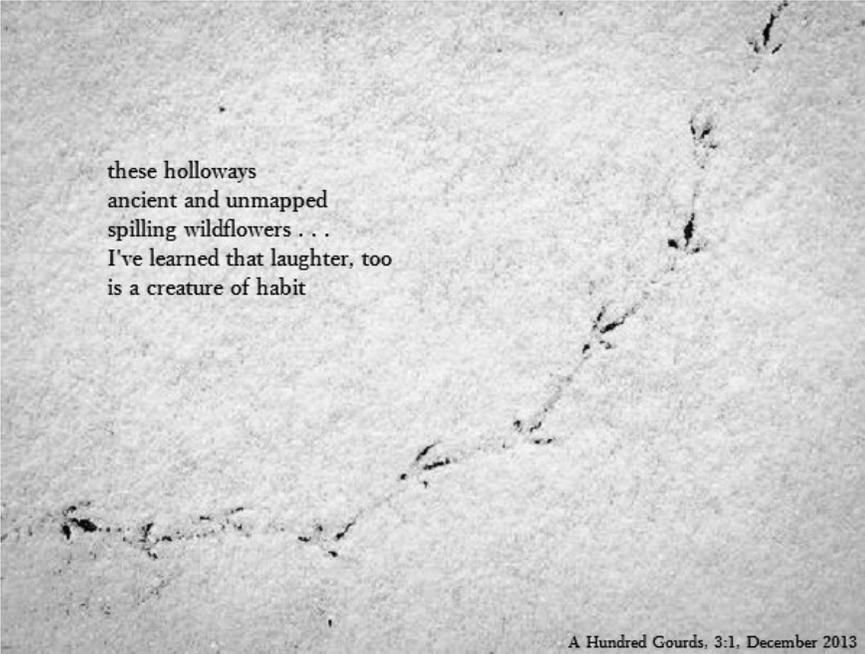
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Michele L. Harvey is a professional landscape painter living in New York. Her year is divided between the very rural central NY and New York City, providing a lively contrast. Her poetry has kindly and widely been accepted by most of the current short form poetry publications and she has won numerous national and international Japanese short form poetry contests, both in haiku and tanka. Although introduced to Japanese poetry in grade school, she didn't attempt to write her own until 2005 when she discovered the contemporary poetry scene online. She's drawn to both landscape painting and the Japanese poetry forms for their shared characteristic of nature expressed through art.

You may view both her paintings and examples of her poetry online at micheleharvey.com.

Poets are invited to respond to the image in any way that moves them. Please label your tanka 'Skylark's Nest entry'.

Skylark



these holloways
ancient and unmapped
spilling wildflowers . . .
I've learned that laughter, too
is a creature of habit

A Hundred Gourds. 3:1. December 2013

Claire Everett, England

Individual Tanka



Note: poets from the UK will have their country of residence stated as such unless they specifically request it to appear as England/Wales, etc

Skylark

ambling
with a guitar strapped
over my shoulder
a pale dot
on a blue highway

another pull
on the hoodie string
this whole world
is not much bigger
than the hole I'm in

sadness
came along
without warning
a freight train
barrels into the darkness

S.M. Abeles, USA

Skylark

the robin
sings his song over and over
rain music
he was taught, once
upon a spring morning

Mary Frederick Ahearn, USA

Skylark

the sound
of leafless trees in winter . . .
spaces
in the melody
to draw a breath

soft spot —
the newborn sleeping
in my arms
what silken dreams
fly in and out

the mist
of music and mountains —
this homesickness
for the fern-green hill
that lies beneath my feet

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

Skylark

museum display
with my grade-one reader
the sign
DO NOT TOUCH
but it's way too late

Darjeeling
with sliced pear
and chocolate
my best friend's aging mother
doesn't remember she's dead

Maxianne Berger, Canada

Skylark

the tourist thing
in faraway holy places
lighting candles
for the dead
we carry with us

after
the diagnosis
the prognosis
i am now
those other people

Steve Black, UK

at my ramble's end
children's laughter drifts
on fir scent breezes . . .
though I cannot see them playing
through the ancient boughs

Wendy Bourke, Canada

Skylark

yesterday's camellia
droops, dropping petals
from a crystal vase . . .
our brief love affair
perfect while it lasted

surrounded
by buckets and bouquets
of flowers
the florist tells me
about her colourless life

Dawn Bruce, Australia

Skylark

this stillness
of white morning —
waking in your arms
I become
so many colors of snow

seagull
on a sandy berm
drags a broken wing —
I travel with you
fellow *pilgrim of sorrow*

**from the Negro Spiritual A City Called Heaven*

Donna Buck, USA

like spindrift
floating out to sea
farther away
this body
foreign to me

Marjorie Buettner, USA

Skylark

hearing
fireworks
each fourth of July
the vet's unplanned trip
back to Vietnam

Susan Burch, USA

another star
birthed in the north sky
such wonders
clustered above our heads
while we sighed over Elvis

Pris Campbell, USA

over the falls
and into the roiling mist
we were better
at arguing
than forgiving

James Chessing, USA

Skylark

overnight
a spider spins its threads
over my keyboard
to write this poem
I tear the skeins of silk

a Bhutan Glory
rises in the dusk light
I hold my breath
the stillness of prayer flags
on the darkening slope

Sonam Chhoki, Bhutan

swathe
after swathe
of soft, Irish rain . . .
unable to find
a ripe avocado

Marion Clarke, Northern Ireland

Skylark

a house key
tucked in the pocket
of her coat . . .
if only she could tell us
where to find the door

in a small town
an ocean away from Paris
a moment's silence
before the lone trumpeter
plays *La Marseillaise*

the beauty of light
through a simple prism —
in his adopted land
a Syrian refugee
feeds the homeless

Susan Constable, Canada

Skylark

all these death poems —
but what about the vessels
that keep us afloat,
the oars that move us,
the moon lighting the water?

Kyle D. Craig, USA

on the back
of a toilet door
Rumi . . .
she honours the place
her journey began

small town servo
“Mechanic on Duty”—
the things
she notices
since her breakdown

Barbara Curnow, Australia

Skylark

a man's time
is his own
in the dead of night
draining his nightcap
he hears the morepork's call

Anne Curran, New Zealand

on the mirror
the last clear space the mist
hasn't reached . . .
that look of recognition
still in her eyes

Mary Davila, USA

Skylark

retrieved
from a remote alp —
I strain
to hear the small voices
inside my own black box

Flight 9525, March 2015

again the crows
after the winds blow through
 voices
familiar to us
on wings of daylight

Janet Lynn Davis, USA

Skylark

a white lotus
dreams it is a woman
I dream
I am flesh of a flower . . .
tango under a sultry moon

Diane Dehler, USA

branches breaking
from the weight of ripe persimmons . . .
to photographs
spanning six generations
I add the baby's picture

Rebecca Drouilhet, USA

Skylark

The teacher
leads her students
from the classroom
begins a lesson on
the edible schoolyard

Next morning
two strangers of careful grace
circle heartache
neither making promises
about sticking around

Bruce England, USA

Skylark

that kiss
like a butterfly's wing
brushing a black-eyed Susan
on my mind for three days
already

March
the long afternoons
as we turn
and face the sun
one more time

Peter Fiore, USA

Skylark

old carrots
the last of the root cellar
at first light
overwintered, bearded
I leave my cloistered cell

only the splash
of oars in the water
early morning fog
slowly envelops me —
I sadly face my shame

papier mâché
layer after layer
our bruised psyches —
some things can never
be spoken out loud

Marilyn Fleming, USA

Skylark

a bonsai gnarled
by nurturing hands
as if warped by wind
even in summer
the child trembles

old lullabies
in her heart
forgiveness
for her son's
killer

storm clouds
the thick shadows
of my past
our last words
split by sirens

Seánan Forbes, USA/UK

Skylark

distant thunder
from a retreating storm
the tumult
of losing you
easing with time

Jan Foster, Australia

Skylark

winter thaw
pigeons wait
in the park
for their old men
to come

my son
the drug addict
i hold out my arms
for a fix
from an absent God

Terri L. French, USA

in my dreams
you held me close . . .
I wonder,
now the sun has risen
if I slept at all

Urszula Funnell, UK

.

Skylark

a dark side
to the memorial
fading light
renders all
soldiers unknown

leaning gravestone
by the summerhouse
beloved Black Boy
acquisit. April 24 1876
ob. December 3 1896

Tim Gardiner, England

Skylark

the plop
of a little grebe

then the splish
a little distance away

Mark Gilbert, UK



Skylark

for days
I have watched and taken in
the sordid news.
the precious candidate I want,
old yet energetic and behind

spring has come
at least the temperature
in Japan is 17
and now my tanka must change
as I wrap them in warm words

waiting
for the kerosene I ordered
to be delivered,
how cold my study.
how cold the tanka I write

Sanford Goldstein, Japan

Skylark

impossible
to ignore their cries
the babies
my doctor told me
I could never bear

Joyce S. Greene, USA

nubbly pills
on careworn flannels
pillowtop hollows
how we settle into
the shape of ourselves

the senior portrait
my mother chose for me . . .
what to do with this
hand-me-down memory
of the girl I never was

Autumn Noelle Hall, USA

Skylark

in the salon
a dark-eyed girl applies
my polish
face still showing
traces of a shiner

from windows
a flood of colour
at first light
I key in my password
and open the day

a crane
at the end of the pier
rises
through the starry night
and crescendos of sirens

Hazel Hall, Australia

Skylark

the old horse cart
once proud to her touch —
nuts and bolts
of rusted words
now bump across my page

a hint
of old roses
on a breeze . . .
does it count
being happy in a dream

Carole Harrison, Australia

Skylark

imagining myself
in a fragrance of murre
flying off sea stacks
and plunge-diving
into a blustery sea

Devin Harrison, Canada



Skylark

muffled echoes
in the great library hall
the solemn scent
of the authors gathered
here, before me

over the years
I learn quiet has a price
lightning
has left its brand on the tree
solitary, in the field

he sees in me
the girl I once was
unnoticed,
last night's dew shadow lingers
beneath the hem of pines

that summer storm
that lifted
the old tree bodily
I didn't fear as much
as the black cloud of your mood

Michele L. Harvey, USA

Skylark

quarreling
long distance with your sister
you missed
hearing the swans on their way
by the clear light of the moon

gathering again
after day has scattered them
winter sparrows
fill the bamboo
with their thin evening song

putting off
the inevitable
one more day
the sick bird and I
mindlessly happy

Ruth Holzer, USA

Skylark

the Teign river
sparkles and ripples
between
deep brown pools —
so too my life

the yurt comes down
there's no more shelter
Bride in her parka
sits on a boulder
in wind and in rain

this sceptred isle . . .
ferocious hedges
barbed wire fences
everything private
no admission

Gerry Jacobson, Australia

Skylark

reading
Joy McCall's poems
as taxol
drips into my arm I drift
into her world of yew trees

Carole Johnston, USA

decades now
since his death . . .
a tattered moon
slips in and out
of shape-shifting clouds

Carol Judkins, USA

Skylark

moon-whitened
the birch grove lovelier
than in sun
I rest and inhale its magic,
not coming home 'til dawn

a slim birch
blown down in its prime
autumn reds
why did you think life
was not worthwhile?

Kirsty Karkow, USA

Skylark

the frozen forms
of autumn leaves fixed
in pavement concrete . . .
changing the initials
around a tattooed heart

saying goodbye
to the life that
made mine
another death
set in stone

David J Kelly, Ireland

Skylark

small bluebirds rest
on a shiver of branches —
this unending cold
a study of light
and muted color

Mary Kendall, USA

jettisoning
all my modesty
I unwrap
my white body
on a beach of tan

Keitha Keyes, Australia

Skylark

I return
to where eagles hover
the moment
a poem appears by itself . . .
this rising up, wings outstretched

toy mouse
— orange fur and feathers —
you toss
this faded fabric in the air
catch the memory

Kathy Kituai, Australia

Skylark

beneath the eaves
icicles drip at twilight . . .
with eyes that glisten
the old outfielder
oils the mitt again

S.M. Kozubek, USA

just one puff
to set the achenes free . . .
you refuse
to give your name
to my bastard feelings

Shrikaanth Krishnamurthy, UK

Skylark

at her door
the stepfather banging banging . . .
years later
sounds of the night remain
in the marrow of her bones

sunlight
through stained glass windows . . .
the clank
of cash registers
louder and louder

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

Skylark

I remember
her young goth days
and wonder if
she's happy here
among the dead

one poet called him
sweet Morpheus
but I often think
of the dark matter
of my dreams

Greg Longenecker, USA

Skylark

Meiwa the kumquat,
fragrant golden gem of June,
tempts without mercy . . .
we cannot help but oblige,
slowly peeling her alive

through childhood we kiss
our mother's soft cheeks good-night . . .
our lips could not see
her silky skin a fine sleeve:
membrane of steel between us

Clare MacQueen, USA

Skylark

sweeping the doormat,
for a moment I wonder
about the feet of those
who have stood there, knocked,
and were turned away

in morning dark
I was that kid
on a bike
delivering news of a world
chased by a dog

because the stars
are unusually bright
tonight we chat
and in low voices
let our thoughts fade

rock moss
in early spring
I want that
to be the color
of my soul

Michael McClintock, USA

Skylark

no storm
will take me
I grow
like the mangrove
into myself

footprints
remain on the face
of the moon
no second love erases
the loss of the first

Jo McInerney, Australia

Skylark

he is so upset
with the Buddhists and their gift
of *juzu*
prayer beads for his wife
he decided to live

blues
this side of indigo
as if
we could be different
than who we are

Beverly Acuff Momoi, USA

Skylark

twilight sky
with floating clouds
a long journey
before I could travel
the rain-soaked distance

Pravat Kumar Padhy, India

Skylark

I should
get a mandrake
just for
the sake of seeing its roots
oh, this wondrous little plant

William Blackwell Partridge, USA



Skylark

a rosebud
surprised by winter
quietly undone
by the here and gone
of a moment

golden dusk
white birds blossom
a cypress
i turn my shadow
to its quiet side

a cedar sings
of mountain wrens
and snowflakes
if only i believed,
this would be god

Sandi Pray, USA

Skylark

at the funeral
the skirl of bagpipes
leads my friend
out of the chapel
into the sunlight

coming summer
scraps of sunlight
on the river
where men sit on the banks
fishing for whitebait

Patricia Prime, New Zealand

sinking
into the folds
of autumn nightfall
how old can ancient be . . .
the run of the umbilical cord

Kala Ramesh, India

Skylark

interviewed
about a grandfather
I never knew
grief lingers from a war
one hundred years ago

often
in spring I choose
to drive this road
a sun-dappled tunnel
of translucent green

Elaine Riddell, New Zealand

enunciated silence
my spittle
as I read your poem
each syllable a drop
of blossom rain

Grant Savage, USA

Skylark

slats of light
from the full moon
fill the dark room
the dull ache of losing
what I never had

one by one
lights in the high-rise
go off
dozing till the kids sleep
this Saturday night

Yesha Shah, India

warm dusk
replaying this April Sunday
of chores and rest
 a yard clear of winter's leavings
 the first mosquito buzzing

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

Skylark

diagnosed
on a day in late fall . . .
behind the house
he buries himself
in a thousand leaves

slow walk
to the mail box
I renew
an old friendship
with time

on the beach
each piece of glass
a poem
I pick up the small ones
nobody wants

Ken Slaughter, USA

Skylark

does it long
for you too —
beyond the reeds
at dusk
the curlew's plaintive cry

Paul Smith, England

ease me down
into cool waters
plait my hair
with green willow roots
make of me your anchor

this is the song
of our humpback hearts
when we listen
to the ocean breathing
blood returns to water

Debbie Strange, Canada

Skylark

the quiet birdsong
of childhood memories
running barefoot
in the morning
dew

Iliyana Stoyanova, UK

nursing
a tulip in my palm . . .
you claim the kernel
of the universe
as your own

the shadows
of neem leaves dapple
the verandah . . .
the weight of sunset
on Dad's empty chair

Paresh Tiwari, India

Skylark

a summer's day
stuck in the office —
my 9-year-old self
falling from a rope swing
into the river's mystery

Stephen Toft, UK

on the pool
rain bubbles collide
burst and subside
. . . one by one
all my illusions gone

Beatrice Yell, Australia

Skylark

Indian Summer
against skies alight
with ripe persimmons
my neighbor frees the ladder
he can no longer climb

decorative wreaths
on the fence of her pasture
for the old white horse
who relieves loneliness
for the humans who stop by

winter white blooms
in the crevice of a rock
. . . this urge to join my cat
 just so
 in a bar of sunlight

Linda Jeannette Ward, USA

Skylark

the camp counselor
all of fifteen years old
tells us the Facts
I fall off to sleep, thinking:
Dad, maybe, but not Mommy

Neal Whitman, USA

The lacy gloves
I knitted myself with
baby rainbow wool
the toy dolls
of the childless

J. Zimmerman , USA

Tanka Sequences

Solo & Responsive



Skylark

gossamer

the thinning
of the leaf-green veil
at Samhain
the colors of another world
break through

hummocks
of golden grass
let loose
a volley of birds . . .
thoughts tumbling skyward

one white stone
plucked from the gravel —
again and again
I toss it into the blue
to catch its fleeting gleam

the lines
of a poem I've yet to write
tangled
in the silver ribbons
of a lost balloon

splitting
the silver milkweed pod,
Pandora lets loose
upon the autumn earth
a raft of spindrift wishes

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

Skylark

Still

seven years
since I last saw autumn
in the Sento Gosho
golden fans of ginkgo leaves
are still fluttering

a young girl
claps her hands
to call the koi
the stone Buddha's palms
clasped in *gassho*

making her way
with her umbrella cane
an old woman
strolls through the garden
of renewed moss

at Saiho-ji Temple
sitting on Muso's
meditation rock
that same green moss
and raucous crows

Margaret Chula, USA

Skylark

Equinox

if tomorrow
day is longer than night,
will I
accomplish more, or less —
spring weeds grow and grow

if tomorrow
day is longer than night,
will we walk
all the way round the lake —
magpies are still swooping

if tomorrow
day is longer than night,
will we
make time to talk truths —
winds from the Antarctic

if tomorrow
day is longer than night,
how many dreams
might colour my sleep —
more dire news from abroad

if tomorrow
day is longer than night,
should we admit
past pleasures are past —
blossoms yield now to leaves

Amelia Fielden, Australia

Catalpa tree

the tree's trunk
is rough to the touch
its leaves are like velvet
it is old and gnarled
bent over by the wind

when hit by the winds
her leaves make the sound
of rain, or a river;
after all the years
her smell has changed

instead
of smelling green and fresh
she now smells
dusty and smoky . . .
mysterious

Seth Gladding, USA

Skylark

Grandma's Bureau

under the lid
three unmatched earrings
and a grey shell
irreplaceable treasures
once strung around her heart

on an oval tray
the depression glass bottles . . .
which one
holds grandpa's
favorite perfume?

a brush and comb
with tarnished silver handles
those final years
she almost forgot
to use them

in a golden case
Miami Rose lipstick
first discovered
as a blushing bride
became a married woman

the telephone —
two prongs grasp a receiver
bakelite black
a mute testament
to long-established habits

Joann Grisetti, USA

Skylark

Sacraments

fire climbs
over the convent tree
Virginia Creeper
red as the chalice-blood
of the Bridegroom

illuminating
its manuscript of leaves
the same light
that pierces the hands
of every artist

a V of geese
above the old steeple bell
departure's toll
a thrumming in the chest
an iron taste on the tongue

roadside crosses
weathered gray and wreathed
in black collars
a pair of ringneck doves
ascends on wings of prayer

aspen leaves
scattered now like Judas coins
rain-laden
with pearls of great price
mountain holy water

Skylark

an amber spice
incense lifting with the mist
as though censor-swung
how they rise, these infinite
blessings of death

Autumn Noelle Hall, USA

Skylark

Shaping A Lotus

I bathe my eyes
in jasmine water
before dawn . . .
dance the *ragamalika*
for the lord I worship

red-tipped fingers
shaping a lotus . . .
this moment
if I loved you more
I would perish

jangling bells
around my ankles . . .
I sense
breath from your lips
on the bamboo flute

a breeze
disturbs the curtain . . .
candles dance
I open the window
and all outside is blue

lingering
perfume of marigolds
and incense . . .
I return to the walls
of my lord's temple

Hazel Hall, Australia

**Ragamalika*: a 'garland' of melodies often used in South Indian dance

Skylark

The Global Flyer

across oceans
the record-breaking plane
with sleek lines
that our son designed and flies
beyond his parents' gaze

gathering speed
the long red wings flex
then lift the pilot
from an English dawn
to chase the westbound sun

against the wind
through five time zones
he flies on
yet my feet stick fast
to this dew-drop world

Kirsty Karkow, USA

Skylark

funk & fugue

fen, fern & dusky forest
thinly layered sunlight . . .
gold-questing Norsemen
stomp
across my vision

what if?
in a jungle of jewelweed,
a patch-sized village
of tiny folk
brigadoons at my feet . . .

look!
chalked on the rock face
a stickman & woman —
holding hands they spirit-float
over bracken

cool scary air
from a crevice in the rock,
I could squeeze through
but they'd be waiting —
funk & fugue

oily sunlight
through tendrils of jungly woods —
what if I stumble upon
an ancient temple,
a fearful prophecy?

—for Joy

Larry Kimmel, USA

the door

the little one
is lost, wandering
through woods
up hills, down dales
over the rocks

she had tried
to open the heavy door
to lift the latch
there is some magic
she does not know

she sits
confused and puzzled
on the shore
a blue whale is breaching
far out at sea

there are
slow strange creatures
on the land
great things she knows
from picture books

the night grows cold
stars fill the sky
snow falls
the child shivers
and turns back up the path

Skylark

on tiptoes
she looks in the window
the room is dark
she sits on the porch
crying *mama, mama*

Joy McCall, England

Skylark

night rains

night rain
hammering down
on the roof
and on the garden stones
splashing, dripping, pooling

little rivers
running down the lane
to the marshes
geese asleep, floating
above the drowned grass

further north
the streets, towns
green fields all flooded
the raging rivers
have burst their banks

cars and houses
swamped with muddy water
closed the pubs
the shops the churches
water everywhere

and low
over the sound of wind
and rushing waters
a voice singing
sleep love, all will be well

Joy McCall, England

Skylark

questions

does a tree
sleep at night
and the sap slow
and settle, and rise again
in the morning?

does the mouse
beneath the tree
lifting its head
to look at the moon
know how beautiful it is?

does the spider
sense the symmetry
of its web?
do the birds know
the magic of flight?

does the grass
feel the wind blowing
or the rain falling?
do the planets know
they are circling?

what is knowing?
we think we are wise
but we are fools perhaps
to the wind, the rain
the tree, the moonlit mouse

Joy McCall, England

Skylark

Swimming the Time-Stream

I swim
in pleasant sleep
time's curving, empty way —
it's always there, and always
knows my name.

Your soul,
too, dreamt as mine,
reposed by that river
where mind to mind is drawn
to drink of time.

Michael McClintock, USA

Pine Hill

Somewhere I've read
a million tons of blue steel
built the Golden Gate
but, clearly, it weighs nothing
spanning the west wind.

Hungry, pelicans
arrow down the channel.
Wave your kerchief,
for me, love,
from your porch on Pine Hill.

Michael McClintock, USA

Goddess of Spring

Just how long
will my heart's winter
stay frozen?
Each day, lately, it melts a drop
when you pass down the lane.

Spring is overdue,
I know that much —
I will go to the shed,
clean the gardening tools,
prepare to work in the mud.

Here you are again,
passing in the window,
your long hair
shining in the sunlight
like waters in a brook.

Of course I wonder
what your errands are about —
and what is your name?
The air unravels around you,
time tilts, and days grow warm.

Michael McClintock, USA

Skylark

one blade at a time

she died
I sit alone
feel the wind blow . . .
watching my life
in the eddies

I sit
and watch grass grow
one blade at a time
counting the minutes
since she died

untended garden
gone to seed
and weeds . . .
days pass slowly
years fly by

I walk
as on ice
spring's warmth on my back . . .
our old dog lingers
in the sun

David F. Noble, USA

House of Anne Frank

falling rain
in Amsterdam
this same rain
was falling
during the war

that famous
bookcase door is open . . .
like a ninja
I quietly slide into
Anne's secret space

going around
the empty rooms . . .
I think of
loneliness, depression, and
madness of Anne Frank

I still see
a long line of people
standing
around the House
even in the cold rain

Kozue Uzawa, Canada

Her Blue Room

she lived
in a snow globe
with a small giraffe
my little mother
dressed in blue

I collect driftwood
on another shore
she dropped in the deep
from the yacht of her mind
little blue lifeboat

curled around
the foot of the giraffe
in my mother's room
was it a cougar
the quiet imminence I felt

near the end
my mother swam in circles
working hard
to spin the globe herself
paint it nothing but blue

her heart of gold
in standing stone
wise woman
a blue egg breaks
on the western sky

Skylark

top shelf in our room
tightly sealed
in a silver urn
my mother's secret
her bones are blue

Kath Abela Wilson, USA



Skylark

raw silk

Pamela A. Babusci, USA
& Paresh Tiwari, India

i wish
for you to wear me
like raw silk —
mulberry leaves
spinning in the wind

*this dawn
lost in the taste of
your skin
i wrap my soul
in the night gone by*

you have
nailed me to
the cross of love
resurrection lilies
blossom at my feet

*many moons
have wandered by
our window . . .
the tiny birth-mark
on your right breast*

cobalt-blue stars
orbiting the ebony sky
my stellar body
belongs to you
& only you

Skylark



by Pamela A. Babusci

Nothing is Real

Susan Constable, Canada
& *Kathy Kituai, Australia*

umpteen times
I walk up and down
these hundred stairs . . .
that shiny stone, ragged leaf
and shadow of a butterfly

*wood ducks —
that flash of one
opal feather
again you stand out
from all the rest*

bold lines,
angles and bright colours
draw me
toward Picasso's nudes —
I sit on this bench, alone

*among boxes
under the house
this sweater
she knitted just for him
folded for charity*

crayoned patterns
adorn each piece of paper —
across the sea
children wake to discover
a thousand origami cranes

Skylark

*strung on string
two cardboard swans
in the wind
nothing is real in the way
you turn towards our son*

after the play
her warm voice and smile
can't win my trust . . .
I greet Hansel and Gretel,
avoid the wicked witch

*in the end
were we just a fantasy . . .
four children
a cottage and the vow
'til death do us part*

Mementos

Janet Lynn Davis, USA
& *Jo McInerney, Australia*

what to keep,
what to throw away . . .
tiny rhinestones
missing from the wings
of her butterfly brooch

*we repair
her diamante bow
before pinning it
to her burial shift . . .
the hope of resurrection*

Back and Forth

Amelia Fielden, Australia
& *Kath Abela Wilson, USA*

summer garden
garden of poets listening
to lyrics
caress the opened roses
tune the green-leafed breeze

*cross country and ocean
poets flock to turn
virtual to actual
short songs in the same garden
for a few moments*

precious moments
when time seems to stop
before the clocks
start panting again
to keep up with us

*flying by
memories they say will flash
before our eyes —
in dream-time I keep words
from escaping*

'to sleep, to dream' . . .
I ride a ferris wheel
eyes wide-open
to the clear-cut scenery,
to my dubious future

Skylark

*back and forth
the lilting swing
of a cable car
up and down the mountain
as we compose ourselves*

Skylark

Passing Spirits

Jan Foster, Australia
& *Beatrice Yell, Australia*

cold brush
of fear on my neck —
passing spirits
. . . wind races across the field
leaving footprints in the grass

gold saucer eyes . . .
in a sudden rush of air
the mopoke owl
swoops past us to pounce
upon the woodpile

a heron rises
gracefully from the wetlands
my heart lifts
to hear your message
of a new baby

many hours
spent mastering notes
on a silvery reed —
far away, by the river
the carolling of magpies

camping out
on the western plains
I can hear
in the silence
the music of the stars

Skylark

on a cliff
we call to the mountain caves
opposite —
sounds bounce back to us
an eerie cacophony

The Distance Between Chairs

Michele L. Harvey, USA
& Tom Clausen, USA

this life
of rust and stardust
on my tongue tip
the taste of champagne
as another year begins

*our spiral circling
on this mortal coil
here in the living room
the distance
between chairs*

the way
a discussion diverges . . .
I follow the path
up a steep narrow slope
just wide enough for one

*almost
too far to see
those specks of birds
must be on their way
to a world beyond this one*

The Smell of Snow

Michele L. Harvey, USA
& Tom Clausen, USA

midsummer
tarmac bubbles in the heat
thinking of it
there is no response
to not caring

*the novelty to find
some warmth in cold
and to feel something
in the barren stand
of my chosen lot in life*

where best to use
my life's fallow passion . . .
autumn leaves
lie deep, beneath the maple
and the sky smells of snow

*was it meant to be
that whole years
would come and go
donning the yoke
while my heart yearns*

Skylark

Prism

Michele L. Harvey, USA
& *Kath Abela Wilson, USA*

a rainbow shard
from the bedroom window
some doubt
my life would ever settle
into place, without you

*open window
or skylight crack
one feather
from the wild rainbow bird
on my study floor*

a song
she'd sing while she worked
flown now
with the little bluebird
over the rainbow's arch

*just a step
into the looking glass
of my mother's eyes
how they lit up when she danced
and wore the sky*

~for Kath Abela's mother, Dec 15, 1920 - Dec 5, 2015

Skylark

A Different Shade of Awe

A Sequence with Eight Voices

another day
of howling gales
and bitter cold
this roaring month of March
where are the gentle lambs?

find me
defiant and immune
facing memories
finding ways to heal
and reasons to live

sharp corners
curved and wavy edges
these odd pieces
just won't coalesce
to solve the puzzle of me

at high tide
I try to curl my toes
around sea-foam
as if the joy I feel today
might be gone tomorrow

as the family
drifts off to sleep
I part
my study curtains,
give free reign to the moon

Skylark

it isn't only
that you brew me tea
when I am tired
it's which cup you bring it in
. . . and why

spring dawns
without enough words
for green . . .
each leaf in my garden
a different shade of awe

the wonder
of a midweek dawn
I resolve
to live each day
as if it were my first

Poets, in order, by tanka:

Kirsty Karkow, *USA*, Carol Raisfeld, *USA*, Julie Thorndyke, *Australia*, Carole MacRury, *USA*, Maria Steyn, *South Africa*, Beverley George, *Australia*, Susan Constable, *Canada*, Dorothy McLaughlin, *USA*.

The tanka beginning 'it isn't only . . . appears in "*Those Special Days*" — a limited edition perpetual tanka calendar produced by Beverley George & David Terelinck in late 2015. The calendar may be purchased for \$22 AUD, including post. A PayPal option is available. Enquiries to David Terelinck: tanka_oz@yahoo.com.au

One Memory at a Time

Kathy Kituai, Australia
& *Michelle Brock, Australia*

jonquils
backlit with sunlight
she never noticed
beside the bird bath
before packing —

*concrete path
to the clothes line —
the indentation
where he cracked macadamias
in winter sunshine*

I finger tunes
on an upright piano
she used to play
moonlight mapping bare floor boards . . .
that girl who sat listening

*cupping
grandma's conch shell
against my ear
I hear the constant murmur
of my own ancestral sea*

your head rests
in my open palm
shall I stroke
the softness of fur
or breathe in time with you?

Skylark

*newborn grandchild
I had almost forgotten
the weight of such joy
I'll borrow your lullaby
from a magpie's song*

World War II —
cups of rationed sugar,
tea and flour
mother exchanged,
with neighbours no longer there

*a century
of prudent measuring
her 8-ounce jug
consigned to a bargain bin
outside the thrift shop*

little by little
one memory at a time —
there was that day
picking berries in autumn
he told her not to forget

Skylark

Whisper of Tall Grass

Marcus Liljedahl, Sweden
& Anna Maris, Sweden

summer's end
our voices in the shape
of billowing clouds

*carried away by the breeze
a perfect dandelion clock*

liquid sun
leaning into you
beyond myself

*holding that fragile shell
the rough hands of a nomad*

*train carriage
a symphony playing
on laptops*

still on a roll . . .
the landscapes of Sibelius

table of masks
I sketch serpent tongues
in my notebook

*in the whisper of tall grass
a scent of apple blossoms*

Skylark

tranquil shore
a part of me is washed up
with the seashells

*among the sandcastles
the call of a lost mermaid*

*mirror lake
she mourns the loss
of her singing voice*

at the break of dawn
a nightingale calls down the stars

gridlock
red lights lead the way
to a hard rain

*in my silver locket
a light summer memory*

close to the fire
her every word trembling
in his hands

*memories of a war
in neatly written letters*

Skylark

yet another drink
the vigilant gaze
of cathedral saints

*among winding ivy
the grin of a gargoyle*

first rays of sun
a butterfly unfolds
as the night gown opens

*the flutter of brittle wings
ready to fly*

Skylark

Unexpected

Joy McCall, England
& *David Rice, USA*

her tail
and her courage, gone
she finds shelter
on the same branch
day after day

*not easy
to sit still —
thoughts spinning
feelings untethered —
and just listen*

that aching
to take to the sky
out of the cage
to sing my own song
even out of tune

*yesterday
I heard you
— a gull with missing feathers
gliding just offshore —
speak of seeing fish fly*

a grey quill
drifts down to the deck
the old sailor
dips it in the ink, and writes
“how can I catch the wind?”

Skylark

*just stretch your wings . . .
wasn't that you soaring?
checked the field guide
yes . . . accidental . . . rarely seen here . . .
I'll send you a picture*

Skylark

Come Sit Down

Don Miller, USA
& *Joy McCall, England*

the gentle rain
of a soft guitar tune
from another land
the whispers
of sunflowers

*tomorrow
the Autumn Equinox
today the west wind
blowing the black seeds
over the wet ground*

I sit on her brick ledge
listening to the flutes
of wood chimes in the wind
won't you *come sit down*
on the garden wall and listen too

*Inspired after listening to "Come Sit Down" a song by Holly Lerski:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JxzhMJvqV8Q>

Skylark

sparrow

Don Wentworth, USA
& *Joy McCall, England*

the spirit
bruised, battered
hung up high
for close inspection
what say we, friend?

*we look through
to the other side
and see
bright flashes of light
darting, spinning, flying*

connections
all over this place
sparrow threading
ribbon and stalk
nest and world

slow rain

Liam Wilkinson, England
& Joy McCall, England

foreshore fog
whitewashing
my morning eyes
I shed salt tears
beneath an onion sun

*I am there
in the slow rain
on your face
seeing the morning
through your eyes*

come with me
to the pine shade
where sea wind
dries the cheeks
of weeping statues

wild thyme

Liam Wilkinson, England
& *Joy McCall, England*

swaddled in wisps
of cigar smoke
and old English ballads
my young mind
blooming

humming
the Skye boat song
dreaming of mist
on highland hills
the scent of wild thyme

quietly undoing
the fiddle case clip
aching to know
my way around
The Fields of Athenry

Rengay



Coming and Going

Yvonne Hales, Australia
& *Matthew Paul (UK)*

at low water
liveried shelduck
collect on the mud

*road signs all rebranded
by the county council*

fellwalkers pore over
a tea-coloured
survey map

*I trace the contours
of my weary face
in the bathroom mirror*

haunting shakuhachi
soothes a furrowed brow

*over Fenland fields
the evening light
comes and goes*

Skylark

Threshold

Mariko Kitakubo, Japan
& *Kath Abela Wilson, USA*

Finn Air
we cross
the dateline

*a leaf through the door
lost again*

boomerang
the autumn sky
between my fingers

*we pull from both sides
but don't break
the wish bone*

when the swing
switches directions

*birdsong
we meet
at the clock tower*

*celebrating our time together at HNA and Tanka Sunday, 2015 in Schenectady and Albany, NY

Skylark

Wild Asters

Giselle Maya, France
& Sonam Chokhi, Bhutan

please come and join
my guest, the wind in the pines,
in my small tea hut

—*Basho*

shizuka
at the tea ceremony
harvest moon rising

*where snow leopards roam
untrodden snow*

on the *tsukubai*
a lid of ice and snow
winter retreat

*dusk window
she sits alone
sipping memories*

wild asters on the hill
the way of tea for life

*mountain shrine
offerings of tea and incense
rise to the sky*

Authors' notes:

shizuka: serenity

tsukubai: the stone water basin in the garden near the teahouse
holding fresh water to purify hands and mouth with a bamboo dipper
before entering the tearoom,
as one of the four principles of Chado (Tea) is purity

Skylark

Autumn Anemones

Giselle Maya, France
& Tora, France

tokonoma
a white anemone blends
with its shadow

straw sandals
set upright by the entrance

pine song
or an enormous kettle
simmering

haiken
we bend from the waist
to view a teabowl

without a bow
cat and east wind enter

incense fills
this intimate space
heavenly peace

Authors' Notes:

tokonoma: present in most Japanese style rooms with tatami mats

roji: a path of stones leading to the tearoom

haiken: the formal viewing of teabowls by the guests after drinking the green powdered tea (macha) whisked with hot water.

Skylark

the familiar tune

Geethanjali Rajan, India
& *Sonam Chhoki, Bhutan*

typhoon warning
the sonorous tone
of a double reed

*a litter of shadows
in the toppled temple*

cosmos blossoms
an urchin shares his home
with a stray

*the only light
under the old stone bridge
a cotoneaster bed*

cicadas start to sing
the familiar tune

*all along the road
buddleia to buddleia
a swallowtail searches*

Skylark

On the Cusp

David Terelinck, Australia
& Carol Judkins, USA

earth hour . . .
the equinox needs
no prompting

*in the green-dark woods
fireflies at twilight*

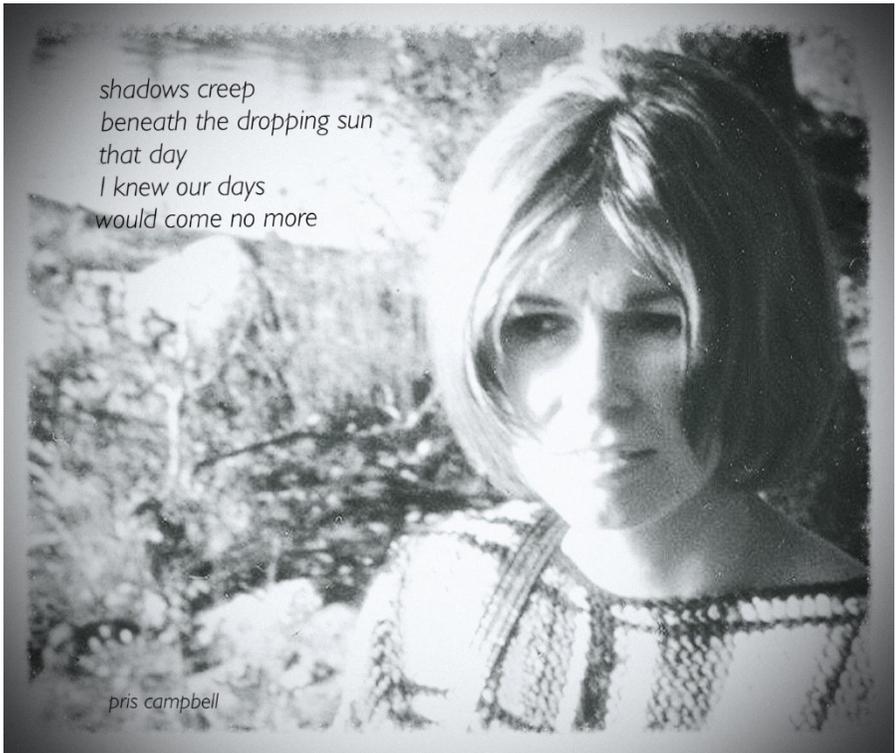
somewhere
between sea and sky
a new moon rises

*thick fog
cloaks the estuary —
hidden within, the sun*

times we say yes
when we really mean no

*on the cusp —
our resolute steps
in darkness and light*

Skylark



Pris Campbell, USA

Skylark



returning to the lake
after he died
golden oldies from his radio station
drift between bangs
from the squeaky screen door

Wendy Bourke, Canada

Tanka Prose



Skylark

Threads

Mary Frederick Ahearn, USA

*She watched and taught the girls that sang at their embroidery frames
while the great silk flowers grew from their needles.*

—Louise Jordan Miln, *The Feast of Lanterns*

Some are self-taught, others learn from their mothers, aunts, or good friends. We share our skills. But mostly we sew alone, in solitude. The hands are busy, the mind quiets, becoming contemplative, still. There's the beauty of the cloth, linen, cotton, natural or dyed. The simplicity of the slender silver needle. And the thread, the twist, the floss — each skein of color brings an association, that connection to a memory, perhaps a season. Tomato red, sunset coral, willow green-yellow, stone gray, and light blue tints of rain. Moss, shell, stone, and snow — all in your hand. Image turns to memory, to words, some for poems, some for prayer, all toward the peace that passes all understanding.

pulling
floss through beeswax
to strengthen the thread
the scent of honey
in a winter room

saving snips
of leftover twist
for the robins
dreams, hopes, prayers
woven in spring nests

On the Cusp of Winter

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

An unfamiliar car crunches slowly up my quarter-mile gravel driveway. I hope it's not the Jehovah's Witnesses again. An elderly lady climbs out of the driver's seat. *I don't want to intrude*, she says, *but I was born in this house, in 1938. I just lost my husband, and I had a yen to see my homeplace again.* Her eyes swim with tears. She points to the well-house. *I remember my Daddy climbing down into that well*, she says. *My, it was a long way down!*

water
rising from a deep place . . .
the last petals
of the autumn-blooming cherry
drift earthward

Skylark

Grease and Grace

Anne Benjamin, Australia

As a young man, my husband rode a Royal Enfield 350cc motorbike known as a Bullet: a single cylinder, four stroke, 17 HP, four-speed, air-cooled Indian icon of the roads. With a top speed of 110 kilometres per hour, the Bullet was part of our courtship and became our family vehicle. Bullets have a distinctive pulsing exhaust thump, so I usually heard my husband return home 300 metres before he rode into view.

he takes me
to meet his family —
I hang on
wind in my eyes
and six metres of sari

Thirty years later, on one of our regular trips back to Chennai, we visit an old college friend of my husband's: a fine leather craftsman and an exceptional photographer who, having turned sixty, has just invested everything into restoring and selling Enfield Bullets. His wife greets us on a gloomy wet evening at a narrow entrance. She guides us under a dripping roof along planks placed above pooled water.

The workroom-cum-showroom is filled with motorbikes — all Bullets — in various stages of repair and re-construction. We pull up chairs, chat and take tea and cake from a table cluttered with tools and paraphernalia.

wrenches, wheels
disassembled chrome bits
from a chassis —
rear-view mirrors reflect
a jigsaw dream

Skylark

My husband's friend and his wife have difficulty finding mechanics with sufficient specialisation for their business; they both spend long days at the workshop. The man eats his cake with hands engrained with grease; enthuses about being able to indulge his passion for the Bullet; is cheerful about his lack of business acumen. His wife shrugs at the "showroom" her husband has turned into a work-pit; at the fact they live in a partially constructed home. She is dressed in loose top and long pants, her hair caught up in a soft twist. Her skin is flawless, without make-up. She is charming, elegant and radiant.

incessant rain
drips through cracks
into a dark pool
rainbowed with oil
a single lotus

Skylark

Cliffs

Kyle D. Craig, USA

waves no longer waves
by the time they touch shore . . .
a swallow soars
over sea oats, swaying
in the summer wind

It was the year we traveled to the cliffs of Moher in County Clare and looked out towards O'Brien's tower, the Aran Islands. A combination of height and rock made me want to stay inside the gift shop, but you forged past the sign that read of immense gusts of wind and the number of people who fell each year to their ends. You stood upon the edge, suspended over the blue blanket of the ocean, with outstretched arms and the wind pushing at your back.

a frigate bird
disappears into the water —
I find myself
doubting commitments
made to others

Skylark

hovered hallows
Susan Diridoni, USA

staining stems
and woody fragrances
clumps of bee-hovered-over herbs
some delicacy of sylvan chemistry
brushes across me every time
the leaving lets me know it
will hang in the air
and immediately will I long for it
to bring my face low again, blossom-low,
catalyst-claimed

once wild and
abandoned the lot next door
pathway
to possum, skunk, raccoon
a sprite in the old pear tree

Skylark

Fault Lines

Autumn Noelle Hall, USA

At the breakfast table, I say, “Fukushima radiation.” He says, “Organic produce.” I say, “High crime — and cost of living.” He says, “Ocean — and redwoods.” I say, “Sixteen lanes of bumper-to-bumper traffic.” He says, “BART*.” With each point scored, we gain a little distance, lose a little ground, like each other a little less. *Everything that is, is because other things are.* We would not be fighting were we not leaving the mountains to move to San Francisco. We would not be moving had he not come to hate his job here in Colorado; he would not hate his job had he never moved here in the first place; and, of course, he would never have moved here had it not been for me.

blame . . .
round and round and round
she goes
and where she stops
nobody knows

*Bay Area Rapid Transit

But I can stop. Stop seeing him as my enemy. Stop making myself his. For just this moment, at the risk of flying off completely, I can choose to loosen my grip on samsara’s merry-go-round.

infusing the kitchen
a lavender-lemon scent
Buddha’s Hand
opening its citron self
inviting me to breathe

Note: Less than a month after this piece was written, my husband’s San Francisco job mysteriously fell through. I was reminded of the old Buddhist wisdom story about the boy who finds a wild horse, breaks his leg riding it, and narrowly escapes an army recruitment as a result. Bad luck, my husband’s cancelled assignment...? Good luck, my own welcoming of one more mountain spring . . .? Perhaps. —*ANH*

The Gambler

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

In the middle of the 1000-acre paddock he listens to straw stalks rustling in summer heat, watches spiralling dust funnel upwards, and spots an occasional crow circling overhead. Yesterday's busyness of harvesters, augers and trucks is forgotten as he surveys withered, splintered stubble waiting to be fired in autumn.

He turns and sighs, knowing in a few weeks, the cycle of ploughing, sowing, reaping will begin once more.

the farmer
throws a dice
every day
sky watching —
the vagaries of weather

Skylark

Marionettes

Shrikaanth Krishnamurthy, UK

promises
of virgins in paradise —
12 year olds
playing hopscotch
from light to shade

As the girls laugh outside on the dusty street, a man discusses the failing monsoon and poor yields with the farmer and his wife. Agreeing that it is so hard to make ends meet, he offers to take their daughter to Mumbai where she can work as a housemaid and send them money.

"We can't marry her for maybe another four years. At least she can do something useful until then"

marching on
for the One Master
or another —
her wide eyes filled
with unformed dreams

At the Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus, they meet an uncle. He runs his eyes over her as the two men discuss something. After a lot of gesticulation and waving arms, some money exchanges hands. The village man tells her to do what the uncle says and that she will make a lot of money. He says he will tell her mum and dad that everything is fine.

In the cab, uncle's hands go wherever his eyes had been before. She tries to push them away, but he grips her tighter. And then slaps her.

In Kamathipura, lots of girls and women are lounging on doorsteps. An older woman, takes her in and gives her some food.

Skylark

the final call
for passengers to board —
everyone
tells her she's good
for nothing

She washes away the sweat and grime, eats something,
catches some sleep. Now she wears make up over her bruises.
She sits on her bed, waiting, for the next man. At least some
money is reaching home.

Kalashnikovs
leave behind ripples
of silence —
the rustle of banknotes
in uncle's pocket

Skylark

Christmas Eve
Gary LeBel, USA

'Lorsque les loupes vivent de vent . . .'

—François Villon

'Whipping Post' bursts out of the watering hole and echoes down the empty side street, fading as you round the corner; the dry, brittle hinges of withered palm-leaves creak as they lift and fall with the mild winds blowing in from the ocean. Squatting on telephone wires, stiff-necked crows blurt out stifled cries that sound more like the lamentations of men whose dreams are broken.

Beyond the bar, beyond the vacant parking lot where the night sea breaks and crawls
 over floodlit sands,
 silhouettes laugh and stumble along the tide-line as if
 they were the last two left on earth.

Arm-in-arm
with a cougar in red pumps,
the twenty-something in sneakers
leaves a snow of bells
as he closes the door behind them

Lorsque les loupes vivent de vent . . . 'When wolves are fed on wind . . .'

The song 'Whipping Post' was written and recorded in 1969 by the Allman Brothers Band.

Skylark

The Sprig
Gary LeBel, USA

It had snowed during the night. At dawn I went out walking. On the way back to your place, I plucked a small branch-let of white pine dusted with snow to give you.

When I returned you were awake but still in bed. "Here," I said smiling, and you took the sprig awkwardly as if it were someone else's gift you'd been given by mistake or even worse, some strange prickly insect. I blushed with embarrassment.

I said, "Heian princes and consorts once attached poems to sprigs of pine or orange blossoms and sent them to their lovers the morning after."

Still the blank stare. "What is a 'hain' " you said, "and where is my poem?"

It lay folded in my back pocket, and tonight it fell
like a pressed leaf
out of the book I was reading.

January first,
a night of exile and silence,
the full maelstrom left
with the dirty dishes
at the restaurant

The Deepest Cracks
David Terelinck, Australia

It's the eyes that bother her the most.

She feels she must get them right. Especially being windows to the soul, as they say. But every time they are far too pointed at the inner canthus. She looks at her notes from the life drawing class.

the truth
found behind iris
and pupil . . .
this constant illusion
that it's you I can trust

She punches the clay down again, wets her hands, and starts to shape from scratch. As her thumbs gouge out eye sockets, she wonders how God managed to get it right. Did he have any self-doubt when he was shaping his first face? What was the blueprint he followed in his mind?

the heat
from wood-fired kilns
is there ever
a time in our life
when we're fully centred?

She thumps the clay again. Imagines it is her ex-husband. Then she thinks of the time her cheek gave way under his fist. She lost count of how many weeks she had to take food through a straw. But that's all in the past now . . .

Skylark

how often
can we reshape a life?
the deepest cracks
are where kintsugi masters
find the greatest challenge

Skylark

Roots

Neal Whitman, USA

Today, even on firm ground, we stumble into another season of colored maple leaves. I tumble head-first and the leaves watch me fall. Face down, I feel the hum of the earth. Whoosh! Falling from the dead pine, its last needles rain. One blast and the birches are bare. In the last light on the last day of fall, the last apple falls. Under the cypress tree, the violet hour spreads a blanket over me. I remain face down. Still I feel the hum of the earth. Vibrations, notes knee deep. Bullfrog meditations. My fingers poke into the damp ground. Reaching up to touch my fingers, roots. Tree roots send nutrients into my body electric. A not undistinguished poet had sent me a letter, handwritten and barely legible. His apology: "My manual typewriter refuses to type." He advises me to open my first poetry recital "not babbling about yourself, but with a poem." I open my first recital:

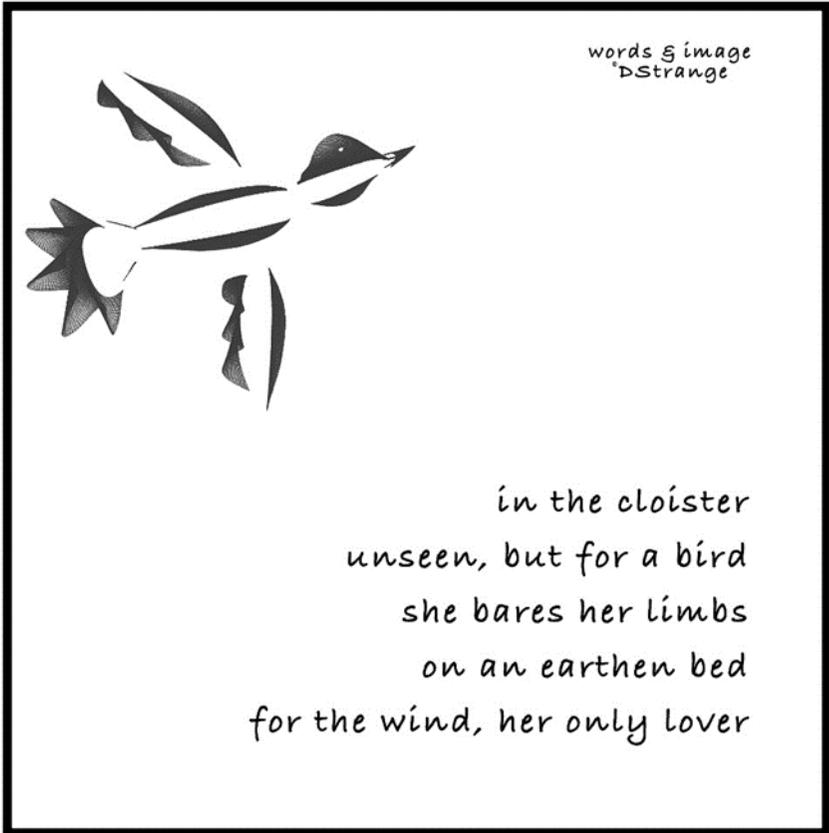
There was a time
when words were treasured,
an ancient time called
The Holy Nomen Empire.
Now we value bits and bytes.

In 1951, Wynn Bullock took two iconic photographs: "Child in the Forest" and "Old Typewriter." In the former, Wynn's five-year old daughter lies face down on a forest floor he viewed as "virginal." He hoped that the cyclic character of natural forces would be evident. In the latter, he found on the same day a typewriter in the muck along the edge of an old road. This common artifact that had once inked letters had now fallen back into nature and become part of the organic whole.

Skylark

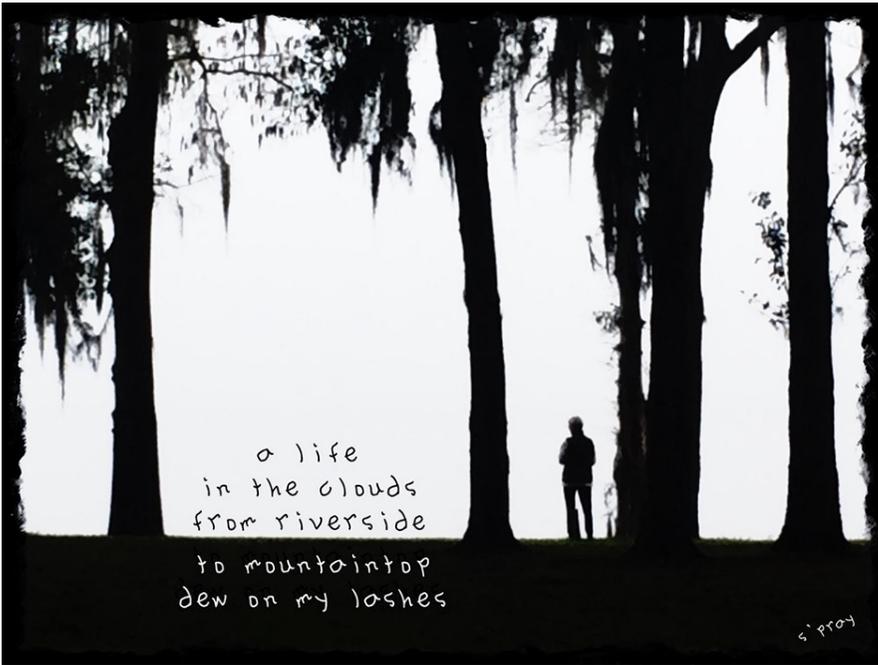
God took a selfie
under the Tree of Life
He shook it once
and out fell an apple
Steve Jobs took the first bite

Skylark



Debbie Strange, USA

Skylark



Sandi Pray, USA

Special Feature

Tanka Prose: Experiments & Reflections



Experimental Responsive Tanka Prose or Tanka Tales Renga

Marilyn Humbert, Australia
& Samantha Sirimanne Hyde, Australia

The exercise is loosely based on a haibun-renga schema that I was involved with in 2012 set for Bottlebrush Tanka Group by Beverley George: http://www.haikuo.org/2012/03/about_haibunrenga_a_brief_posi.html and I have gained further experience writing haibun renga in a team with Jan Foster, Anne Benjamin and Keitha Keyes: <http://www.ahapoetry.com/ahalynx/282article.html> and another with Amelia Fielden, Carmel Summers and Jane Reichhold added to the team: <http://www.ahapoetry.com/ahalynx/282collabs.html>.

Aim: A collaboration, telling a story using link and shift similar to that in renga.

Although when writing tanka prose the prose component can be any length and the number of tanka is not limited, for the purpose of this exercise we decided to keep the prose brief and one tanka each turn as we write alternately as per the schema.

To achieve an overall story written by two people writing alternatively

The tanka to link and shift except for the last tanka which links, shifts and loops back to the beginning.

The tanka stand alone, and when read without the prose, link, shift and tell a story

The prose, when read without the tanka, links, shifts and tells a story.

Guidelines:

Prose component is

Written in any tense

Skylark

Prose is brief, giving a background for poetry lines which follow.

No direct reference back to anything beyond the immediately preceding piece, e.g. if the moon has already been mentioned, refer to it obliquely by some other term.

Each new piece must brush lightly against the one before and move off in a new direction as with responsive sequences.

Prose for this exercise precedes poetry component

Poetry

Must link/shift

Must stand alone

Must always move off in a new direction

Mention the required component as per the schema.

Elements Schema for two people

Marilyn(M) & Samantha(S), Nov 2015

1

M tanka Free Choice

2

M prose + Free Choice

3

S prose + fire

4

M prose + earth

5

S prose + Free Choice

6

M prose + Free Choice

7

S prose + air

8

M prose + water

9

S prose + Free Choice

10

M tanka Free Choice

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Echoes Across the Ages
Tanka Tales Renga

Marilyn Humbert & Samantha Sirimanne Hyde

*winter dusk
oozes across the horizon
rainbow colours
welcome night's cape —
your hand brushes mine*

The south wind is sharp; a chill penetrates my heavy clothing. The summit of the hill is covered in fog, and it's difficult to find the trail back to camp in failing light. My feet slip as night dew settles on the rock strewn track.

*an owl's hoot
ripples the starlight
I hear whisperings
of ancient wanderers
among tree shadows*

Far away we see silhouettes of smoke fingering a hillock. We check the rural fire service website again. It says in an hour the bush fires will be at our doorstep. We have to leave now. I hurry across the tinder dry grass to open the gate.

daylight glares
through charred foliage
on the road home
my mind stuck on death —
soaring black kites*

* birds of prey

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*Near the steep cliffs of our cottage, giant honey-comb cracks
have opened, scarring the seared earth. A carcass, buried
without ceremony on All-Hallows eve is exposed at the foot of
the ancient granite towers.*

*interred
in cold grey soil
bones
gnawed and splintered
our dog's treasure*

My sister and I skip around our gardener who has dug a giant hole to replant the banana tree. Suddenly he jumps into the cavity to claw around the soil with his bare hands. Finally, he emerges brushing the dirt off a large opaque rock.

*chance find
this palm-sized nugget,
misty deep blue
if only I'd valued you
before you'd gone*

*The hoary first-mate says the Merpeople's city teeters on the
edge of an abyss where ancient currents converge in a giant
whirlpool. Telling of glimpses, mermen riding horses, guard-
ing merfolk harvesting fish and kelp beneath the glow of iri-
descent lights. Close by, a bullion fleet is moored to submerged
docks: ghost ships manned by pirate spectres that rise, sailing
on storm-riven nights hunting the living, crossing churning
seas.*

*what lies
beneath foaming waves
in the chasm
pieces of eight
or a mermaid's necklace*

Skylark

Five days after the tsunami, the bodies still float in the lagoon amongst the debris, the huge gush of water having deepened its channels. Coastal sand dunes lie eroded and seaside vegetation languishes. The sheer force of the waves has even uprooted sturdy coconut palms. The odour of festering, bloated, water-logged flesh clings to the air. Though we cover our noses with handkerchiefs, we have no other option but to breathe in this overpowering atmosphere of death.

an emerald earring
the only lasting marker
to identify my cousin
in recurring nightmares
we splash on that beach

Leaving the drudgery of my father's compound. Frost-bound grass snaps beneath my footfalls. Dawn is already warming the earth: mist melting, rime becoming droplets, sliding off stems and leaves, nourishing the undergrowth. As I reach the escarpment, the sun is peeping over the ridge, peering into the valley, bouncing off hundreds of canvas tents. Home to refugees from the quake and aftermath of flooding. It is here I will find food, water, sanctuary and anonymity amongst the displaced. Here I wait to begin a new life of independence and freedom of choice.

*needing more
than food and water
this caged bird
sings for freedom
to fly from these shores*

The day I collect my passport from the embassy in Colombo, I'm feverish with anticipation. Even on the return journey home in a jam-packed bus, I can't refrain from opening my satchel just a smidgen to take a peek and to touch the

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visa sticker attached to a page inside. The wavy red lines across the label look like vivid rays of sunshine dancing on a river's swells. After three years, the wait is over. Now comes the uncertainty of flying to a country I'm yet to see and starting all over again — making something out of it, stumbling and learning, creating new connections. Let the chips fall where they may.

free falling
soaring across emerald dells
over azure oceans
I toss and turn that night
dreaming of space travel

a song
echoes across the ages
moon man
sings of his journey
'til Mithras bridles his horses

**Reflections on the Bisociation (1) of Verse and Prose
in Tanka Prose**

Charles D. Tarlton, USA

Prose is when all the lines except the last go on to the margin. Poetry is when some of them fall short of it.

—Jeremy Bentham (2)

1

Amongst the several categories of poetry — like sonnets, ballads, odes, elegies, and villanelles — perhaps none has a single defining trait as salient to its nature as the juxtaposition of verse and prose in the tanka prose. At the core of what makes a tanka prose (beyond the requirement of at least one passage of prose alongside a tanka) is the expectation of how they will conjoin. (3) It is probably useful at this point to distinguish among prose, verse (the tanka) and poem (the tanka prose).

And that is the main question: how the force of the prose will require from the poet a fitting or proportionate verse response and how that verse in the new larger context of prose and verse together will re-read the prose and lift the whole “tanka prose” to the level of poetry.

The idea is crucial to tanka prose; let me provide a couple of examples:

The old wind chimes, that had emerged from the melting snow in spring and ever since held a place nearer to the house by the trellis, I found them enlaced by woodbine.

chimes entwined
by honeysuckle,
how I miss
your mellow tone, now that
the wind blows west (4)

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This is, in form at least, an example typical of much modern tanka prose. The prose passage is descriptive of a direct and simple observation, albeit an inherently literary one. The tanka that follows represents what I would call free-verse-tanka, that is, tanka that follow few or no rules regarding the length of lines. Thus, in this poem, the syllable count is 3-5-3-6-4, which, while seeming pretty random over against the old 5-7-5-7-7 syllable form, probably meets widely adopted S-L-S-L-L rule. (5)

But, more important, the poem undermines itself as poetry, for me, because the crucial separation between prose and tanka (which should arouse and fulfill some new expectation, something that could only be fulfilled poetically and only by the addition of verse to the prose) has been collapsed. The resulting poem represents a single simple thought; there is no dialectic and no tensions resolved.

What if we re-write it this way?

The old wind chimes, that had emerged from the melting snow in spring and ever since held a place nearer to the house by the trellis; I found them enlaced by woodbine. Chimes entwined by honeysuckle, how I miss your mellow tone, now that the wind blows west.

It is clear, (isn't it?) that the tanka here, as a continuation of the prose passage, adds only further similar observations of the poet. The tanka is merely that last sentence chopped up into lines of 3-5-3-6-4 syllables. Does it make us go back and re-read the prose differently? Does it fulfill or resolve any expectation or tension left by the prose? And most importantly, does it transform the prose into an element of a poem? My answer to these questions is: No.

By way of contrast, here is a tanka prose by Jeffrey Woodward that I include to illustrate my argument:

Graceful Willow

Sixteen perhaps, auburn hair pulled back tightly in a bun, a trace of cranberry lipstick that her mother very likely did not approve. Forsythia aflame and, before the bench by the river where she leans to write, tulips opening. Her elegant and practiced cursive is like that of the current — flowing on. She is too young, certainly, to guard so many secrets. And her diary — would it possess the patience to receive them?

the willow is green
young and eager to become
for wind and water
the pliable plaything of
each breath and eddy of spring (6)

Now, this is a beautiful example of a contemporary American tanka prose; the prose is a sensitive and perceptive reflection, the verse formed perfectly around the pivotal “for wind and water,” and composed in a traditional 5-7-5-7-7 format. Reading through it and on to the tanka, we notice several parallels of idea and word use.

In the prose passage, a young girl, sixteen, her hair done up, wearing lipstick her mother probably wouldn’t approve, surrounded by flowers that are “aflame” and “opening,” leans to write in her cursive script (that is like the river’s current). Is she ready for the secrets she probably has glimpsed? Will she get them expressed in her diary? I would hazard a guess and sum this prose passage up as follows: a young girl on the cusp of passionate womanhood sublimates her erotic feelings in the act of secret writing in the midst of spring.

Turning to the tanka: there are no girls but, instead, a willow (green, young, and eager) to be “bent” over and made the

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“pliable plaything” of wind and water. Because this “seduction” is taking place in the morally neutral zone of trees and rivers (raising none of the frankly humanly sexual implications that the prose does), the hesitation that constrains the judgment in the prose passage is overcome. When we re-read the prose in light of the tanka, the girl’s sublimated desires there are revealed, and we now see her as eager to become the “pliable plaything” of “each breath and eddy of spring.”

Across that gap between prose and verse, the lines,

the willow is green
young and eager to become

make a metaphor of willow sapling and young girl to answer in the positive those questions at the end of the prose, albeit in an illusive language that tells us nevertheless that it is sexual desire that is the secret she is recording in her diary.

The central idea here is that the relation between the prose and the verse in tanka prose will be, to borrow a term from optics and popular entertainment — stereoptical. What I mean by this is that the upshot or end-goal of the tanka prose resides in an idea or a feeling at the intersection of the prose and the verse (and not fully in either on its own).

2

As the poet arrives at the end of the prose and looks across the gap to the possibility of the verse to come, the possibilities, while not endless, are large. But so is the responsibility; the full meaning of the prose passage hangs in the balance. Say one thing in the verse and, in the combination, the prose takes on one particular hue, say something else in the verse, and the prose means something else entirely. The import that is achieved in the synthesis of prose and verse makes the choices here very important. And, it is crucial, from this point of view anyway, that the prose and the verse NOT say or mean the

same thing, that for there to be a synthesis and a truly distinct level of poetic meaning, the prose and the verse must come from different perspectives.

The difficult question before us is this: can a tanka prose be any prose passage followed or preceded by any five-line verse? In some technical sense, this is an unexceptional question, and seems to describe much of the published tanka prose today. On the one hand, of course, there seems to be little to complain about; there are no accepted rules for the writing of tanka nor any agreement how exactly the prose and the verse need to be related.

There are, of course, no limits whatsoever on the content, style, or voice of the prose passage (much of the delight of experimental tanka prose writing of late has come from wide range of prose styles). Whatever rules once governed the composition of tanka, there seem to be few operative today. From subject matter, to length of lines, to internal structure (the pivot, for instance), tanka today run the full gamut.

The 5-7-5-7-7 syllable structure is not widely practiced any more, nor does even the compromise S-L-S-L-L find very wide acceptance. Tanka today (it may fairly be said) need only be five lines long (the lines can be any length, in any arrangement). The tendency toward free verse in modern poetry has had an effect among writers of tanka prose. Rules requiring specific structure and form in poetry seem crotchety and arbitrary today, and all that really remains of prescriptive form in tanka is the requirement of five lines.

So, in the face of a collapse of rules and, therefore, of expectations in tanka prose, how do we know what we are doing when we write it or when we read it? How do editors make fair and constructive decisions about what to publish?

How, in the face of all this slippage, can we recognize a viable tanka prose? While specifying an acceptable style or content in the prose or reigning in the increasing informality of the tanka are neither possible or desirable, there is an area

of critical judgment by which we can discern the difference between haphazard and disciplined tanka prose.

3

Weak tanka prose can be separated from strong ones by the energy contained at the point of intersection between the prose and the verse. Whether light or serious, rhythmical or uninflected, archly poetic or prosaic, tanka prose redeems itself in the symbiosis that takes place where prose and poetry intersect. Initial reactions to the content of the prose are overcome and altered in the reading of the verse; and, vice versa, as the whole poem now seems different in light of the altered relation of prose and verse.

Tanka prose is a dynamic genre, containing at its core a poetic engine that can transform a prose passage (however staid or dramatic) and a separate but proximate five-line verse into an amalgam that, on whatever scale, can become transcendent.

The side-by-side structure of tanka prose is a given; as Jeffrey Woodward has written, the basic underlying form of tanka prose is — one prose passage and one verse or tanka. The elements of prose depiction, free from the demands of formal rhythm or formal structure, allow the phrase and sentence of verbal expression to employ whatever length and complexity are necessary to say what it means to say. Verse, on the other hand forms its message within the constraints of regular formal structure (even the freest poetry, as Charles Olson reminded us, is tied to the human breath). In verse and prose, the demands or liberties of form put constraints on the way things can be said. Put simply, there are things we can say and do in verse that lie beyond (above, beneath, beside) what can be said in prose.

4

It might be useful here to reflect on some of the many possible relations between prose and verse in combination. Because the power of tanka prose resides in the intersection of

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the prose and the verse, in the space created by their collocation, we ought to explore at least some of the possible relations between prose and verse and their outcomes.

To this end, I would like to suggest several important categories of relation between the prose and the verse in tanka prose. As part of the account of each category, I will try to provide a simple example of a tanka prose displaying those aspects. In the interests of clarity, I will employ the same prose passage in each case.

1) Verse as the extension of or conclusion to the prose passage.

What I have in mind here is a reaching in the verse beyond what is being overtly said in the prose, but at the same time drawing an essential thread out of the prose, something whose connection to the prose is not merely to extend it, but to over-determine it. The verse is not just the prose extended, but something that by extending alters the overall meaning:

Part of the charm of winter in New England is how the world is made to seem simpler. The leafless trees are simpler the way a skeleton or an outline is. The snow that covers everything is uniformly white, obliterating the differences between lawns and asphalt, river and road. The ice and snow muffle the sounds of civilization all around, and there are far fewer bird songs.

in a dream of spring
a fairy palette of green
and pink makes roses
you see only with your eyes
closed, smell only in the dark

2) Verse as commentary or reflection on the prose.

Skylark

This is a straightforward strategy in which the verse sets out to reveal subtle or hidden meanings or implications in the prose:

Part of the charm of winter in New England is how the world is made to seem simpler. The leafless trees are simpler the way a skeleton or an outline is. The snow that covers everything is uniformly white, obliterating the differences between lawns and asphalt, river and road. The ice and snow muffle the sounds of civilization all around, and there are far fewer bird songs.

is this the season
for reflection, when the eye
rests in monochrome
is it easier to know
our world when it's flattened out?

3) Verse as negation of the prose, as discord and contradiction.

This strategy invites us clearly to seek a dialectical overview. From the contradiction of what the prose might plainly state, the verse creates a composite that forces the imagination to seek a way to reconcile thesis and antithesis:

Part of the charm of winter in New England is how the world is made to seem simpler. The leafless trees are simpler the way a skeleton or an outline is. The snow that covers everything is uniformly white, obliterating the differences between lawns and asphalt, river and road. The ice and snow muffle the sounds of civilization all around, and there are far fewer bird songs.

winter makes me dream
only of warmth, warm colors
warmth in old cold bones

Skylark

the red squirrel might die for lack
of acorns cached beneath the snow

4) Verse as free-association with the prose, as something recognizable as intuitively provoked by the prose.

This, I would say, is my own preferred method of writing tanka prose. It requires, of course, a sort of unconscious trust that by thinking of altogether disconnected ideas in the verse a vital relation will, in the end, be found to exist there:

Part of the charm of winter in New England is how the world is made to seem simpler. The leafless trees are simpler the way a skeleton or an outline is. The snow that covers everything is uniformly white, obliterating the differences between lawns and asphalt, river and road. The ice and snow muffle the sounds of civilization all around, and there are far fewer bird songs.

simpler, the way death is
(a less enthusiastic
oracle might say)
dampening down the pulsing
green, slowing the heated blood

5) Verse as re-working, re-reading, re-constructing the prose.

In these cases, even a perfectly straightforward prose passage can turn itself in different directions alongside the verse. In the verse, doubt can be thrown on the prose's basic assertions and/or otherwise undermined in its staid simplicity:

Part of the charm of winter in New England is how the world is made to seem simpler. The leafless trees are simpler the way a skeleton or an outline is. The snow that covers everything is uniformly white, obliterating the differences between lawns and asphalt, river and road. The ice and snow

Skylark

muffle the sounds of civilization all around, and there are far fewer bird songs.

looking at snowflakes
with a magnifying glass
a kaleidoscope's
revealed, an architecture
beyond all comprehension

6) Verse as improvisation stimulated by the prose.

Weaving in and around the major elements of the prose, the verse builds imaginatively on discernible features or meanings in the prose. The verse repeats patterns or meanings found in the prose, but repeats them in original ways, in ways that create something entirely new:

Part of the charm of winter in New England is how the world is made to seem simpler. The leafless trees are simpler the way a skeleton or an outline is. The snow that covers everything is uniformly white, obliterating the differences between lawns and asphalt, river and road. The ice and snow muffle the sounds of civilization all around, and there are far fewer bird songs.

the ice is stillness
holding the world motionless
like a slow drumbeat
prevents the eager dancer's
flight, fastening feet to floor

7) Verse that merely follows upon the prose, the next thing to arise in the poet's mind.

This is perhaps the Ur form of tanka prose; it is the simplicity that all the other modes carry in their DNA. Whether guided or unguided, the prose and the verse follow upon one

Skylark

another according to the thought or feeling of the poet. The interaction between the prose and the verse, perhaps not as deliberate here as in the other patterns, nevertheless generates the poetry:

Part of the charm of winter in New England is how the world is made to seem simpler. The leafless trees are simpler the way a skeleton or an outline is. The snow that covers everything is uniformly white, obliterating the differences between lawns and asphalt, river and road. The ice and snow muffle the sounds of civilization all around, and there are far fewer bird songs.

can you dream of white's
absence of all color, white's
obliteration
of the spectrum for a time
differences by which we see

1: See Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation*. "Bisociation" is a blending of elements drawn from two previously unrelated matrices of thought into a new matrix of meaning by way of a process involving comparison, abstraction and categorisation, analogies and metaphors.

2. Works, X, 442,444.

3. Jeffrey Woodward uses the term "segue." See his "The Segue in Tanka Prose," *Ribbons* 11:2 (Spring/Summer 2015)

4. Ingrid Kunschke (*Haibun Today*, 2008) tanka prose contained in an "Untitled Diary."

5. See the discussion in *Simply Haiku*: <http://simplyhaiku.com/SHv7n2/features/Ideal.html>

6. Jeffrey Woodward, *Another Garden*, 13.

Articles, Essays, Reviews

Jenny Ward Angyal
Editor



All reviews by Jenny Ward Angyal unless otherwise stated.

Between Sea and Sky

A Review of *From the Middle Country*, tanka by Noriko Tanaka

Ginninderra Press, Port Adelaide, Australia, 2015, 62 pages, perfect bound paperback, 5 x 7.8, translated by Amelia Fielden & Saeko Ogi, foreword by Michael McClintock. ISBN 978-1-74027-908-6. US\$15 (including overseas airmail postage) from anafielden@gmail.com

that patch of blue sky
between floating clouds —
I do not know
what lies
beyond there

In her “Afterword” to the present volume, Noriko Tanaka writes “I have a sense there is some kind of world we must not see.” That sense of worlds unseen or barely glimpsed pervades the poems in *From the Middle Country*, Tanaka’s fourth collection of tanka and the third translated by Amelia Fielden and Saeko Ogi. In these pages the poet herself often seems to be suspended, adrift between worlds and unable to find her place.

as a shadow
floating
between life and death
I circled the night
in the aquarium

Whether the poem’s narrator is a ghostly shade or a circling shark, the startling last line tells us that she is captive in a small space, in a kind of *bardo* between life and death, searching for home.

Skylark

in the snow
which drifts along
melting
between sea and sky
is my homeland, I wonder

The “homeland” for which the poet yearns lies somewhere between sea and sky, and is not to be found here on the surface of the earth, in this “middle country” we inhabit for the brief span of our lives.

The middle section of Tanaka’s book is entitled “From the Middle Country: Onogoro Island.”

I’m thinking about
Onogoro Island
in the ‘age of the gods’,
meanwhile stirring
some stew in a pot

In Japanese mythology, Onogoro was a mythical island created by a divine couple who stood on the floating bridge of heaven, stirring the sea with a jeweled spear — a richly ironic contrast with stirring stew in a pot. Such contrasts between the mythic Middle Country and the mundane one we inhabit pervade this section of the book:

that old professor
who believed utterly
in dream divination,
is today concerned
by the red of a tomato

The poems in the “Middle Country” section are set not in the depths and reaches of the sea, nor in a mythic country,

Skylark

but on land, in actual, living cities and forests. Yet even here the boundaries between worlds are thin:

every time
I think of you, I
become a leafy forest,
with trees in that forest
swaying in the slightest breeze

Is this a love poem? Is it addressed to a person, to the earth, to the “Middle Country” itself? If the “Middle Country” is an island, like Onogoro, that suggests a certain isolation from other, distant worlds. As the poet gazes into the sea surrounding the island that is her life, she muses on existence itself:

looking
at the water’s surface
I am doubtful,
somehow, of whether
I actually exist

Around each island lies the sea. The first and shortest of the book’s three main sections is called “From the Ocean Country: Blue Times.” Sea images abound:

born through the eye
of a needle,
the translucent jellyfish
swims, wobbling
around its world

“*Born through the eye of a needle:*” is this an allusion to the difficulty of attaining heaven? Is the narrator herself the “jellyfish,” wobbling uncertainly around her own world?

Skylark

swimming behind
the school of fish,
a single fish
is tangled in foam and
the white shadow of death

This could be read as a literal observation of sea life — or as a metaphor for the human condition. “Blue times,” indeed — the blue not only of sea and sky but of mood as well.

a king penguin
gazing up at the northern sky,
said
‘is this what
life is like?’

A question surely every thoughtful reader has asked herself: that vast blue emptiness . . . is it all there is, or does something more lie beyond it? Can we know? Can we connect with it? In the third and longest section of her book, entitled “From the Country of the Dead: The Sleeping River,” Tanaka writes

oh, river,
sleeping as you ice over,
there is a blue sky
eternally
disconnected

And yet Tanaka discovers many connections among the varied realms of sea and sky, between the Middle Country and the Country of the Dead:

beyond the dripping
of the rain
are low clouds —

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my deceased father's fingers
flick the abacus

I laugh, alone,
and suddenly
from the floor
in a corner of the room
a shadow arises

In the first poem above, the dead seem to live again in the place where sky and water meet. In the second, one can only wonder if the shadow that arises at the sound of laughter is the shadow of sorrow, the shadow of loved ones lost and remembered, or the shadow of the poet's own mortality?

"The Country of the Dead" contains over half of the book's 170 tanka and delves ever deeper into the realm of the mysterious:

on the table
where an advance notice
of murder was delivered
this morning, I placed
a red apple, then left

Now *that* is the middle of a story — an entire novel, perhaps. Myths and legends of the Middle Country figure in the Country of the Dead, as well:

the myth speaks of
a thousand-year-old pheasant
being transformed
by the sea — into that sea
I try setting my right foot

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Again the yearning for transformation, and the image of the sea — a symbol of those mysterious, unplumbed depths wherein perhaps our hope of transformation lies.

a day when loneliness
wells up like water
in a salt jar —
the island is my father,
the ocean is my mother

The ocean, where life arose, is in that sense our mother; and perhaps at death we return to a metaphorical ocean. Between birth and death, we dwell in the Middle Country, an island in the vast sea, where we often feel alien and isolated:

when I come up
onto the roof to see
the solar eclipse,
the wind there whispers
'I don't need you'

And yet we are afforded glimpses of that other world from which we are shut out:

he travelled
to the Other World
wearing ordinary clothes,
whispers Taro
as he gazes at the moon

“Wearing ordinary clothes” — even in our most ordinary, mundane condition, the mysterious Other may become available to us.

The sense of mystery that pervades Tanaka's individual tanka is present also in her arrangement of the poems. Each of the three major sections of her book includes several titled

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subsections — 12 in the longest, “Country of the Dead” section. The selection and sequencing of poems in the subsections sometimes makes intuitive sense and is sometimes baffling. “Songs at the Bottom of the Sea,” for instance, leaps from images of salamanders, crabs, minnows, moon-jellies and sea otters—to an aviary hedge, poisonous toads, and bespectacled eyes. Perhaps “the depths of spectacles” recalls the depths of the sea; and when the voice from the aviary hedge says “I shall meet you again in the next world,” it echoes the otherworldly themes that run throughout the book.

“I have still not seen Heaven,” Tanaka writes in her Afterword. Readers are invited to abandon strict logic, trust their intuitions, and join the poet’s wandering quest through the Ocean Country, the Middle Country, and the Country of the Dead — a journey full of challenge, mystery, sorrow and delight.

in secret
I have been walking
along the edge of life —
without any trace
trees bear their blossoms

Skylark

Ghost Bridges

A Review of *flowers to the torch*, American Tanka Prose by Peter Fiore

Keibooks, Perryville, MD, 2015, 86 pages, perfect bound paperback, 6 x 9, introduction by Stuart Dybek, afterword by Charles Tarlton. ISBN 978-1507577356. US\$12 from Keibooks.

to the music of the spheres
though our days vanish in smoke
 we're still dancing
at the place
 where the sidewalk ends

~from "A Confluencia of Rhythm"

Dancing freely where the sidewalk ends, outside the constraints of traditional form, Peter Fiore celebrates and mourns all the days of our lives that vanish in smoke. In prose and poems and prose-poems, he weaves together the evanescent fragments of his own life, from before his conception to after his death.

The book opens with the title piece, "Flowers to the Torch:"

. . . I am only beginning to rise in my father's blood, my mother's eyes. I watch myself through them . . .

. . . as if the poet, his parents — everyone — are but brief blossoms consumed by the torch of time. The last tanka prose piece in the book, entitled "the end of the line . . ." imagines the poet's own death:

a shudder
 and then you're gone
off into eternal peace

Skylark

so we think
or does the light just shut off

Between the bookends of conception and death, the poet explores every facet his life:

memories of childhood and adolescence; relationships with (many) women; families and fatherhood; coming of age and caring for an aged parent; urban life, travel, music, tennis. He writes sometimes in the first person and sometimes in the third, telling the stories of his alter-ego, Rocco.

Flowers to the torch includes 26 tanka prose pieces with 29 tanka; 7 or 8 prose pieces without tanka; and 9 or 10 free-standing tanka. (It's not that I can't count: one piece *might* be a tanka with very long lines . . . or it might be a prose piece with five very short paragraphs.) Experimentation with form is Fiore's hallmark. In his "Preface," he wonders "if it's possible to have tanka prose without a tanka poem." Fiore's prose does often share several characteristics of tanka: brevity, immediacy, the use of images to suggest emotion, and a sense of fleeting moments captured before they're lost.

Some prose pieces read like flash fiction:

Rocco hikes his duffle bag up over his shoulder and walks out into the snow falling in thick fast flakes he can hardly see to the corner. Before he gets there, Magnotta the shoemaker, sees him . . .

~ from "*The Return*"

. . .and others like prose-poems:

you can still see horses in the morning in mountain fields grazing across the street from where I live and frost on the tips of golden rod and rock walls and sun breaking through burnished trees . . .

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when
 can I
 unwind
 your kimono
 again

— a poem that is almost concrete, its indented lines unwinding like a strand of silk.

At their best, the tanka (and the prose, too) are layered with metaphor:

ghost bridge
in misty frost and morning sun
 once again
 I don't know
 where I am

~from "Escape from Manzinella Beach"

Flowers to the torch is a book of ghost bridges: bridges between the generations; between the sexes; between gritty urban realism and flights of fantasy; between poetry and prose; between life and death. Readers of every stripe will find in Fiore's work bridges to their own lives, loves, struggles and bewilderments:

I keep writing
 the same poem
 . . . full of broken hearts
 whirling snow
and flight

~from "Escape from Manzinella Beach"

Grammar of Shadows, Poetry of Light

**A Review of *Warp and Weft: Tanka Threads*
by Debbie Strange**

Keibooks, Perryville, MD, 2015, 94 pages, perfect bound paperback, 6 x 9, introduction by Michael Dylan Welch. ISBN 9 781512 361124. US\$12 from Keibooks.

we are
homeless clouds
w a n d e r i n g
a cardboard sky
begging bowls filled with stars

So many contrasts packed into one little poem: the freedom of wandering, the pain of homelessness; the eternity of sky, the flimsiness of cardboard; the poverty of a begging bowl, the infinitude of stars. This is the closing tanka of a book densely woven with contrasts. In the “Author’s Note” to her first volume of short-form poetry, award-winning Canadian poet Debbie Strange writes “the work is arranged so that readers shuttle back and forth between the light and dark tanka fibres.” Often those fibres are intertwined within single poems as well as between them. Drawing together tanka published at different times in different journals, Strange has woven a fabric of 72 tanka triptychs, titled sets of three poems sharing a common thread. Strange’s thoughtful and effective rearrangement of poems that originally appeared in other contexts highlights the fascinating way in which tanka can change and enhance each another as their variegated threads are laid down side by side to form new patterns.

Like the tanka cited above, many of the poems in this collection explore questions of who we are.

Skylark

I am driftwood
curves undulating
worn smooth
my windswept bones
the flute of tides

~ from 'the flute of tides'

This poem could be read as an imaginative identification with a piece of driftwood — or as a metaphor for the human condition. Are we not all worn smooth, windswept, resonating to the music of forces larger than ourselves?

scattered
beneath the roses
these questions:
are you not more than ash
am I not more than rain

~from 'more than rain'

Raindrops, the ashes of the dead, and questions — questions about who and what we finally *are* — all lie scattered beneath the evanescent beauty of the rose. Strange offers no answers, but many explorations of the questions, couched in powerful, striking images and metaphors.

ragged

you shed
your antlers
in the glade
I wear the bleeding velvet
a cloak of ragged prayer

I am
the bonedust

Skylark

of winter
on the bent
jackpine

he gasps
at the ragged scars
upon my back
remnants of that night
they tore off my broken wings

Language this magical invites the reader to venture, naked as bonedust, into a world where we must weave our own cloaks of meaning and wonder, grief and beauty

Many of the ragged scars explored in Strange's book originate in the complex relationships of family.

sitting
on Santa's lap
year after year
she asks for one thing:
a father who stays

~from 'the child'

after the divorce
we sisters in the back
of a pickup truck
vagabond wind stealing tears
from homeward-looking eyes

~ from 'ancestral bones'

this baggage
carried from one life
to the next

Skylark

we unpack everything
but our belongingness

~from 'baggage'

Each of these poignant poems illustrates Strange's deft use of language: the childlike simplicity of the wish for 'a father who stays;' the 'vagabond wind' echoing through the sisters' vision of themselves; and 'belongingness,' that perfect final word so unexpected and so resonant with the ache of displacement. The bond among sisters is woven throughout the book in threads both light and dark:

skinny-dipping
with my sisters
washing moondust
from our hair
then braiding it with stars

~from 'winter sisters'

today
my bleeding fingers
caress
the broken strings
of my late sister's guitar

~from 'broken strings'

Strange is a guitarist, singer, and song-writer as well as a poet, so music echoes in many of the poems.

we compose
the music of our lives
with grace notes

Skylark

scattered between
lullaby and requiem

~from 'the singing bowl'

What an exquisite expression of the way in which we strive, from the time we're born until we die, to discover or create grace in our lives — 'grace' in any meaning of the word you choose. Love is a prominent grace note in most lives, and many of Strange's tanka — so like grace notes themselves — celebrate both love and its discontents.

our initials
tattooed on sand
b e t w e e n
heart-shaped tracks
of white-tailed deer

~from 'heart-shaped'

leaves of glass
splinter beneath our feet
after the ice storm
we tread carefully around
one another's edges

~from 'edges'

The impermanence of sand, the brittleness of ice — both these poems illustrate Strange's masterful use of metaphors drawn from the natural world to express human feelings and conditions. Having lived in each of the four western provinces of Canada, she writes poems deeply rooted among the mountains, prairies and forests of her native place.

Skylark

a ragged curl
of birch bark fluttering
in the sun
even our smallest wounds
become limned with light

~from 'limned'

Such a vivid image drawn from a phenomenon so small that most of us might overlook it — a bit of bark torn loose and edged with sunlight. But under the spell of Strange's pen, the observation becomes so much more, as — characteristically — she draws our attention to the intimate and inevitable linkage of light and dark, of woundedness and beauty. Indeed, seeking to 'limn our wounds with light' is an exquisite definition of the poet's calling, and it is an art at which Strange excels.

moonbeam quills
through our windows
transcribing
the grammar of shadows
into the poetry of light

~from 'a wafer of moon'

Skylark

Unpainted Flowers

**A Review of *Spring's First Caress*,
Tanka by Brian Zimmer
edited by Kay L. Tracy and Jill Rauh**

Kay L. Tracy, Portland, OR, 2015, 136 pages, perfect bound paperback, 6 x 9, foreword by Beth Zimmer Cunningham. ISBN 978-0996467919. US\$12, available from Amazon.com

*There, your dark cry you named prayer — what then my words?
—Brian Zimmer*

the old friar
knew no place so dark
a straw
could not be lifted
for love of something

The friar's cell is a dark place, and yet the sound of some small vital thing rustling in the straw brings a smile to his lips — and to ours. Dark places illuminated by beauty and the love of life — this is the texture of Brian Zimmer's posthumous tanka collection.

Zimmer hoped to self-publish a book of poems one day, but felt overwhelmed by the task of making thematic choices. "Maybe I just write poems and not books?" he wrote. In light of that hesitation, and of his tragic and untimely death, readers will be grateful to Zimmer's friends Kay L. Tracy and Jill Rauh for their labor of love in compiling and editing the present volume. *Spring's First Caress* offers about 350 of Zimmer's poems from the years 2008 — 2010, arranged in roughly chronological order. Zimmer, who believed that poets must "keep moving ahead," wrote many forms of poetry, and the present volume includes a number of gogyohka as well as one-line tanka.

Skylark

“I’m convinced,” Zimmer wrote, “that being a poet has nothing to do with being read.” Not surprisingly, nearly 90% of the poems in the present volume are previously unpublished. “Write for yourself first,” Zimmer wrote. “That’s my motivation: to make something beautiful; to name what I see and experience; to sing.” And true to that edict, his poems have the spontaneity and authenticity of the best diary-style tanka. Although he claimed he couldn’t “find much of a narrative thread” in his own work, themes do emerge, inevitably and organically, from what the poet saw and experienced, from the straws he chose to lift and the trembling lives he found beneath them.

hummingbird —
a change of light
and breeze
reveals secrets
to an old man

of course
the trees laugh
rocks weep
and badgers sigh —
my sly ventriloquists

Everything in the natural world reveals secrets when the inner light changes; and for those with ears to hear, all things laugh and weep. Zimmer heard, and he sang what he heard, sang with the voice of the badger, with the voice of summer itself:

listen —
Indian Summer
faintly
chanting plainsong
down the country lane

Skylark

The image is so perfect that one can almost see the golden light and catch the scent of drifting leaves. The word “plain-song” carries an echo (resounding also in the friar’s cell) of a formal religious faith the poet may have left behind, somewhere along a country lane — not without twinges of regret for those ways of knowing that are closed to the modern mind:

the mystic
knew the virginity
of trees
the sheer grace of
blossoming cherry

Even under the spell of the cherry tree’s “sheer grace,” Zimmer casts the mystic’s knowledge in the past tense; he does not claim it for himself. And elsewhere he takes a harsher view of faith:

my closest:
do you understand
no sacrifice
was entailed in
shedding faith’s skin?

the mysteries
we’ve invented
are illusions —
why paint
the flowers?

cosmos
by the river
not a theory
or opinion
among them

Skylark

Faith is shrugged off with an almost-brutal gesture by one who wishes to regard the flowers simply in-and-of themselves, not gussied up with illusions. And while “cosmos” is, of course, the name of a common flower, it could also refer to the comforting idea of a well-ordered universe — a theory of which the flowers have no need, and which the poet tosses onto the scrap-heap of opinion and illusion.

saved
from holy falsehoods
verse sets free
fate will have its say
poetry the last word

the courage
to write it down —
a superstitious
fear of careless
invocation

Poetry may have the last word over against what fate may have in store for us — but only if it is “saved from holy falsehoods.” Believing that “verse sets free,” and overcoming a “superstitious fear” of invoking unknown forces in which he no longer believed, Zimmer nevertheless possessed in abundance “the courage to write it down.” Indeed, he seems to have *needed* to “write it down” as a way of wrestling with private demons.

“stop writing,
you’re scaring me”
but he couldn’t —
spooked horses
break from the corral

Skylark

. . . as words break from the poet, fearsome, wild and uncontained, galloping across the untamed reaches of the mind.

from madness
he flails and swings
at empty air
horror defends itself
from what stalks

padlocked
beneath the floor
a dragon —
six hours till the
magic wears-off

Although poetry may ultimately have the last word, in the interim the narrator must defend himself “from what stalks.” The “six hours of magic” is perhaps no more than a temporary chemical stay against the padlocked dragon.

madness
taught me
that self
is a chemical
cocktail

No reader who has been harrowed by mental illness in self or other will have escaped the bitter speculation expressed in this poem. Mood and mind *can* be drastically altered by medication — are we, then, no more than our biochemistry? Perhaps. And yet . . . whence the uniqueness of Brian Zimmer’s own voice? Perhaps the greatest marvel is that matter itself — “mere” chemistry — is far stranger and more wonderful than we suppose; far from being just insensate, uninteresting “stuff,” it must be shot through with all the potentialities of

Skylark

the human spirit. And that potential includes love, that great mystery and power:

how long since
I spoke a word of love —
your constancy
a rain of petals through
this reign of terror

Here it is not chemistry but the constancy of love that provides the narrator with sustenance throughout the “reign of terror.” In a poem enhanced by gentle wordplay, we can almost see the drifting petals that bless a tormented life with beauty.

Nowhere does love speak more clearly in Zimmer’s work than in his tanka sequence, “April is the Cruellest Month,” about the final days of someone — presumably the narrator’s mother — who long ago taught him to pray.

a wounded deer
leaps highest . . .
this day
the golden hour:
lucid one last time

Having “crossed the border”— surely a metaphor — to be present at the death of his loved one, the poet rejoices in her last, golden hour of lucidity, drawn forth by the wound of approaching mortality. A wounded deer himself, Zimmer at times underestimated his own capacity for love:

the betrayal
of this flavourless
orange —
my peeled heart
would also disappoint

Skylark

But readers of *Spring's First Caress* will not be disappointed by this poet's "peeled heart," overflowing as it is with all the honest flavours of pain and beauty, borne of the poet's capacity to see and hear the world in all its grace:

from a bench
above the lilac dell
hill and breeze,
song and flight —
everything undulates

These are surely not the words of a man whose heart is a "flavourless orange." But, as he says, everything undulates — including moods, those humors of the heart that so profoundly color how we see the world and how we see ourselves. From the reader's perspective, Zimmer may have written a more accurate self-assessment in another poem, alive with another metaphor:

white lotus
emerging
from my mouth
my tongue its stalk
all I ever wanted

A white lotus, symbol of rebirth or awakening, springs from the mud of pain and confusion, emerging from the poet's mouth like song . . . or poetry . . . or prayer.

What then his words? Are they the dark cries of existential anguish, the fervent prayers of an unbeliever, or simply unpainted flowers spilling from the poet's tongue and blossoming into a species of truth at once unvarnished and exquisitely beautiful? However we choose to name them, Brian Zimmer's words will continue to entwine our hearts — like roses, like thorns.

Skylark

rose vine
winding
through a lantern
extinguished
long ago

Skylark

Whorls Upon the Heart

A Review of *All You Need is Love*,
Tanka on the Love of Life

by 62 Australian Poets, edited by Amelia Fielden

Ginninderra Press, Port Adelaide, Australia, 2015, 62 pages, perfect bound paperback, 5.1 x 7.9, preface by Amelia Fielden. ISBN 978-1-74027-918-5. US\$15 (including overseas airmail postage) from anafielden@gmail.com

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways . . .

—Shakespeare, Sonnet 43

When Amelia Fielden, well-known tanka poet and translator, called on her fellow Australian poets to submit tanka about love, she asked that they define the word as broadly as possible. The result is a collection of 120 tanka that count not just the *ways* that people love, but also the glorious variety of things and living things and other phenomena that capture our hearts. The poems are arranged not thematically but alphabetically by the poets' last names, yet many recurrent themes are evident. Naturally, romantic love figures prominently:

letting go
of the past I wish I'd had
your hand in mine —
two glider possums
cross the winter moon

~Michelle Brock

In this richly layered tanka, the first three lines — absent a comma after “past” — can be read in two different ways, an ambiguity that adds openness and interest to the poem. Ei-

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ther way, the last three lines give us a tender image of togetherness in the face of both beauty and adversity — “the winter moon.”

Romantic love may ripen over time into something less passionate, perhaps, but equally deep.

we sit quietly
how was your day?
full, and yours?
the same —
the mirror catches the light

~*Sue MacKenzie*

It is *almost* possible to miss the understated tenderness beneath the surface of this quiet poem. There is little need for words, but the mirror catches the warm, subtle light reflected to and fro between the partners.

Love of family and children is another common theme.

I bathe you
in a silvery basin
filled to the brim —
tiny fingers grasp my thumb
trace whorls upon my heart

~*Anne Benjamin*

The silvery basin filled to the brim evokes an image of serving an honored guest — and also becomes a metaphor for the narrator’s overflowing heart.

Whorls traced upon the heart may last a lifetime, yet few human relationships survive unbruised.

what if
mother had shared my love

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for Beethoven
cadence after imperfect cadence,
would I play the blues less?

~*Kathy Kituai*

The love of music resounds in many of the poems, as in this one where playing the blues gives voice to the narrator's sadness over the imperfect cadences of a relationship now ended by death. Love and loss are intertwined throughout the book:

blue felt hat
high in the cupboard
a fragment
of you still remains
after all these years

~*Kate King*

As in all the best tanka, the simple image of a simple object becomes imbued with great depth of feeling.

The love of nature, expressed in nearly as many poems as those about people, provides both consolation and joy:

new tendrils
on climbing vines
reach out —
my heart lifts
in the early light

~*Maria Encarnacao*

There is so much to love in this world of imperfect cadences — people and pets, poetry and special places; chocolate, coffee

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and dessert; music, books and the ever-blooming world of nature. Impossible to encompass it all, yet the tiny, highly polished gems that are tanka can give it a good try:

they say
the universe
is egg-shaped —
it lies in my garden
under a broken nest

~Lynette Arden

A Review of *Eucalypt: A Tanka Journal*: Issue 19

The first literary journal in Australia dedicated to tanka: Beverley George, Editor, Design & Layout: Matthew George Design Pty Ltd: 2015; Illustrations: Pim Sarti, 44 pages, saddle stapled. issn: 1833-8186. Available from: www.eucalypt.info.

by Linda Jeannette Ward, USA

Considering her own virtuosity in writing tanka, such as her collection *empty garden* and her award-winning poems in international competitions, it comes as no surprise that Beverley George, the Editor of *Eucalypt: A Tanka Journal*, unfailingly presents us with the highest, most sublime examples of the form today. As poetry in print began to fade, and more and more print journals and literary magazines were shifted online, Ms. George persevered by publishing the Australian journal of short form poetry *Yellow Moon*, and then, in 2006 launching *Eucalypt*. A decade later, this peerless work of art-in-print demonstrates that, like the re-launching of *The Paris Review* five years ago, the highest quality work can be found in selective editing by a gifted editor-poet.

In these poems, the childhood memories and fantasies of two poets are juxtaposed in a delightful way that prompts readers to reflect back on their own imaginary play with objects not meant for amusement.

our schoolyard fence
a xylophone
I played
my pencil all the way home
glissando of growing up

daydreaming
during geometry class
a straight line lifted
and twirled into a spiral
like something from the sea

Kath Abela Wilson

Simon Hanson

Comfort is offered by these poets, and leaves room for our own thoughts about how meaningful the familiar objects and

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sounds around us can provide solace.

where
in these notebooks
is that poem . . .
the one about your blue shirt
the comfort of your step

a tiny nest
filled with bits of fluff
grass and string
my own comfort of clutter
in books, photos and shells

Maria Steyn

Carol Raisfeld

And from the familiar to the unfamiliar — at least for readers like myself who have not been fortunate enough to visit Australia — these poets' nature-watching brings us tantalizing references to *eros* and *thanatos*. A refreshing change from most poetry editors, who often seem skittish about selecting tanka with regional vocabulary or esoteric flora and fauna.

strewn on paspalum
a torn torso and the head
of a wallaby . . .
my rural days, so full
of life and death

wild medley . . .
silver dead trees
black stumps
tangled regrowth
and the lyrebird's song

Barbara A Taylor

Gerry Jacobson

In the best tanka tradition, supernatural themes or references are included in this issue. The reader is shifted pleasantly to alternate realities.

unable
to find relief now
in the ordinary,
I whirl into the uncommon
place where witches dwell

this snowy eve
I sense the siren call
of spirits fey
yet these leaden feet
are chained to reality

Sanford Goldstein

Kent Robinson

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Here we find insights through color: ways to die and ways to stop the endless struggle.

pure indigo
settles into my heart,
when I cross borders . . .
I would like to die
a wanderer of this earth

Mariko Kitakubo

how you struggle
at making something
from nothing . . .
a red flower emerges
in outback sand

Hazel Hall

These poets demonstrate that the stirrings of grief, and the haunting that the loss of a loved one brings, can happen with unexpected departures other than death.

the whistle
of the northbound express
punctures the night
. . . it's not in your leaving
but the way you chose to go

David Terelinck

if I knew where,
I would send your medications
and the coat
you threw in the dumpster . . .
if only I could send you peace

Elizabeth Howard

To close this issue, two poems appropriately bring the day to an end with shadows and the drip of water bringing a sense of oneness with the earth.

stock-still
the heron
gathering light
we pass in shadow
rainfall on wild garlic

Joanna Ashwell

I bid the day
a quiet good-bye
watering roses
in the evening shadows
until they drip

Michael McClintock

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As these poems illustrate, Ms. George masterfully juxtaposes tanka in ways that rise above a planned sequence, yet pull forth memories, observations, dreams and emotions shared by various writers from nine countries around the world. What an inspiring change from the listing of poems by the alphabetical arrangement of the first or last names of poets.

Please don't let my introduction to this review on the strong features of *Eucalypt* in print form give the impression that a complete withdrawal from the Internet has occurred. As a bonus, subscribers to this journal receive from time to time a free electronic newsletter that Ms. George provides for news, discussion and invitations to vote for one's favorite poem: www.eucalypt.info.

Submission Guidelines

Submissions for the 4:2, winter issue of *Skylark* will be read through June and July and will close on August 1st 2016.

Kindly submit up to ten original, previously unpublished tanka &/or one sequence*, tanka prose, tan renga, articles etc. with the subject heading “Skylark tanka submission” to skylark.tanka@gmail.com.

At the end of your submission, please include your full name and country of residence.

All rights revert to authors upon publication. Your tanka must not be under consideration elsewhere, or submitted to any contest.

In addition to your regular submission, you are also invited to submit one tanka for the “Skylark’s Nest” prompt (see page 13). Unfortunately, we are not able to reproduce colour images in *Skylark*, but poets wishing to submit tanka-art may do so; coinciding with the publication of each issue, a selection of the best will be added to a haiga gallery on the website. Alternatively, black and white tanka-art may be considered for the print journal.

The website skylarktanka.weebly.com will be updated regularly. Back issues will be available as PDF files as each new issue is published. The “Skylark’s Nest” winners and runners up will also be archived.

Jenny Ward Angyal is the *Skylark* Reviews and Features Editor. If you would like your book to be considered for review please contact

skylarkreviews@gmail.com

Similarly, submit all articles for consideration to the address above.

Any queries should be addressed to the Editor:

skylark.tanka@gmail.com

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* If you would like to submit more than one sequence (for instance, if you have collaborated with different poets) this is acceptable, although I request that you send no more than 5 individual/collaborative sequences.

Errata:

In *Skylark* 3:2, Winter 2015, in my review entitled **Marks that Keep on Burning, (*Deep in the Valley of Tea Bowls* by Kathy Kituai & Fergus Stewart)**, there were two places where *chanoya* should have read *chanoyu*. I am grateful to Giselle Maya for pointing out this error.

Giselle also referred to the quote from *The Book of Tea* (1906) and said that the author's name should read:

“OKAKURA KAKUZO (in Japan the last name used to be and still is at times put first) but recently in Western fashion it would be KAKUZO OKAKURA, either way is fine, (instead of Akakura)”.

I pointed out to Giselle that I had quoted the author's name as it appears in Kathy's book.

I welcome all feedback regarding errors. Readers will appreciate *Skylark* is a labour of love and its editor and proofreader work hard to minimise mistakes, but “to err is human” . . .

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