

## ***Skylark***

A Tanka Journal

Editor: Claire Everett

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*Skylark* is a bi-annual publication, appearing in summer and winter.

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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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# ***Skylark***

A Tanka Journal

Winter 2014: volume 2, number 2

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## Editor's Message

As I write, I am reminded of W. B. Yeats' "the trees are in their autumn beauty." Yet again, the year has come full circle, and our friends in the southern hemisphere are embracing the blossoms of spring. More than ever, I feel connected to friends in the tanka community; those we have lost, especially Martin Lucas, whose life and work are commemorated in this issue, and fellow travellers on this tanka path like David Terelinck, who, with his partner, Rob, took the time to visit me and my family in North Yorkshire before embarking on a glorious cruise back to Australia. Together, we made memories to last a lifetime, and beyond . . .

It was a momentous summer for my husband Tony and I, as we went on an adventure of our own: a double C2C cycle challenge on our trusty tandem, Tallulah. We covered 333 miles in five days, from our home in Northallerton to Keswick in the Lake District, across to Whitehaven on the west coast, back via Whinlatter Forest and Loweswater, and on to the North Pennines, 'the roof of England', bound for Sunderland on the east coast . . . then home again. We raised over £500 for the charity, *Mencap*, and are already planning our next trip. Tony is an experienced cyclist and unicyclist, but nine months ago, when we bought Tallulah, I was a complete novice. To say I have fallen in love with cycling is a gross understatement, as many of you will have gleaned from my published writing of late!

I am extremely grateful to Martin Lucas' family, who granted permission for me to publish in this issue some of the remaining tanka from his last submission to *Skylark*. In many ways, I have Martin to thank for my decision to invite Jenny Ward Angyal to take on the role of reviews and features editor; Martin and I were corresponding at a time when I was beginning to feel quite pressured as a result of my editorial responsibilities for two journals, along with various tasks I had agreed to, such as writing book reviews and judging various awards. Martin cautioned me to not take too much on, and also suggested I should not be afraid to ask for help, or, ultimately, to say "no." Then, as I explained in my last editorial, it was during a ride out on the tandem, blowing the proverbial cobwebs away, that I thought of Jenny. I hope you will all agree that Jenny has well and truly embraced the role and has done a superb job and *Skylark* is a better

journal for her substantial contribution. Please join me in congratulating her on this, the culmination of much dedication and hard work: her first issue as reviews editor.

Thanks also to Beth McFarland, previous winner of the Skylark's Nest Award, for judging the Great Auk competition. This was particularly poignant as it was dedicated to Martin Lucas and inspired by his tanka from the summer issue. This was a popular prompt, as you might imagine, and the standard was high. Many poets were inspired to write about other extinct, endangered, or threatened species and this was wonderful to see.

Thank you all for your continued support and inspiration.

Happy reading!

—Claire Everett, October 2014



Claire & Tony Everett, 2014

*my breath taken, first  
by the climb, then the view  
coast to coast  
the west to east  
of loving you*

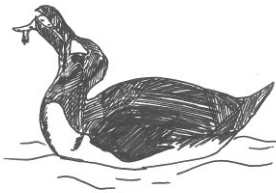
Even on a small island,  
a man tilling the field,  
a lark singing above it

My old village lies  
far beyond what we can see  
but there the lark is singing

When the wild turnip  
burst into full blossom  
a skylark sang

Singing skylark—  
that narrow path  
leads to the sea

—**Kobayashi Issa** (1763-1827)





## The Skylark's Nest

*The Winners*

Selections by *Beth McFarland, Germany*

I suppose, on a typical day, not many of us think about the great auk. When we do recall this bird, we remember pictures showing soft black and white plumage, tiny wings and a streamlined body which we know was wonderfully adapted to its natural environment. We read that the auk was both venerated and valued as a resource to be exploited. The story becomes one of human shortsightedness and greed.

The tanka entries received celebrate the wild seascapes we can still experience, the wonder of a natural world that we thankfully cannot control, but also themes of loss and misunderstanding. It was a great pleasure to read all the tanka entries and to share our collective memory of the great auk.

My first runner up, *Mary Frederick Ahearn, USA*, reminds us of the wonder of the unknown and our attempts to grapple with the invisible. The great auk stands as a symbol for all of that.

signs and portents  
in the lonely sea hours  
when ocean and sky meet  
singular and sacred  
the Great Auk

Another tanka I would like to highlight, by *Yoni Hammer-Kossoy, Israel*, reminds us of the need to look even deeper below the surface:

heavy gray sky  
that's what others say  
who needs wings  
when you can fly  
under water

Who knows what causes us to live the restricted lives we do; and who has not peeked out or been watched from behind a curtain. *Michele L. Harvey, USA*, writes:

wings clipped  
by nature or by nurture  
the spinster  
who peeks out upon the world  
behind frayed curtain lace

An issue mentioned in more than one tanka is greed:

cruising waters  
where the great auk once thrived . . .  
what of me  
is prized enough  
for the greedy to seize?

*Janet Lynn Davis, USA*

Once again, this reminds us of our deep intrinsic worth.

Fear also of others and of the unknown clip our wings. Who cannot feel with the grandparent in the following tanka, by *David Rice, USA*?

not flightless under water . . .  
the men with clubs  
never knew the Great Auk  
my grandson wears dresses  
and soars . . . praise him . . . please

The tanka I have chosen as the winner is by *Joyce S. Greene, USA*:

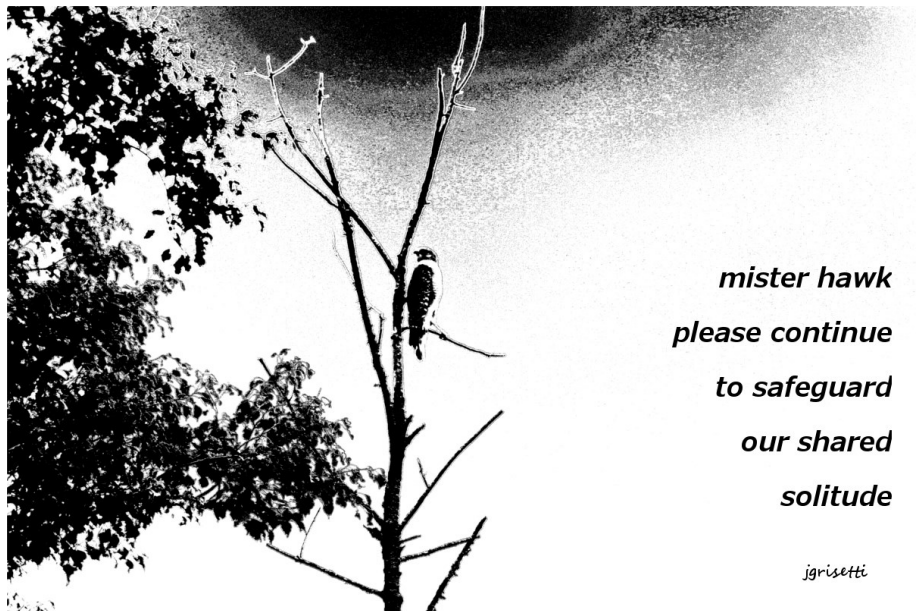
gone now, those Great Auks  
once buried with the dead  
in veneration  
a congregation kneels  
before an ivory cross

Here we have the bones of a simple story laid out before us. It starts in the past. We read of loss— both of 'the dead' and those wonderful great auks. We enjoy the use of the phrase 'in veneration' as a pivot. Then, just before we finish reading, the word 'ivory' sinks in. Suddenly a host of further images arise. We have the elephants and all the

other animals we are exploiting, because they are rare and therefore valuable. The kneeling congregation reminds us of the other groups that are familiar to us, and of which, indeed, we are members ourselves. Then come the questions. Right and wrong don't seem to be simply white and black. What harm are we doing when we actually mean well? Why, and how often, do we destroy whatever is precious? Is it because we need to limit and own what we don't understand? How well do we know our gods?

This tanka, like all the best ones, sets off ripples in all directions. It obeys the 'show not tell' maxim and has no written emotion. Yet our minds will produce emotion enough as we read it carefully. All at once, we are involved in the story, and the story isn't over yet!

Many thanks to everyone who submitted. I enjoyed reading every tanka, even those I haven't singled out for comment. And many congratulations to our winner, *Joyce S. Greene*, for such a thought-provoking piece. She will receive a free copy of the journal and an invitation to judge the 'Skylark's Nest' competition for issue 3:1, Summer 2015.

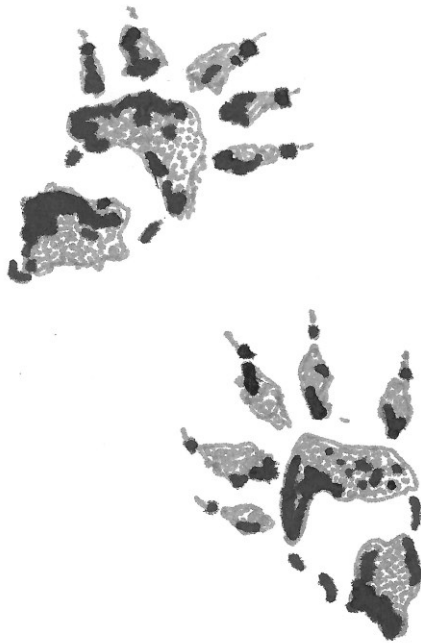


*mister hawk  
please continue  
to safeguard  
our shared  
solitude*

*jgrisetti*

*Joann Grisetti, USA*

**The Skylark's Nest Prompt**  
3:1, Summer 2015



Amy has chosen animal tracks as inspiration for the next prompt. These happen to have been left by a weasel, but poets may write about any tracks, human or otherwise. The prints left by wild animals and birds are fascinating and can tell us a lot about the creature that made them. For instance, roe deer make beautiful heart-shaped impressions when they are moving at a steady, deliberate pace, especially on firm ground, or in snow; in soft earth, the dew claws are sometimes apparent. However, if the prints have a splayed appearance, it is likely the animal was moving at speed.

As many of you are aware, our English badgers have been subject to a barbaric and senseless cull, so you can imagine our excitement when we discovered badger tracks which led to a rather magnificent sett in our local woods. Needless to say, we have kept a close eye on our friends whose kind lived peacefully in this green and pleasant land long before humans set foot here.

You are invited to meditate on this image and use it as a source of inspiration; it could be that you choose to write about specific animal prints, or you may widen the theme to include the many ways we make tracks, or impressions, and ultimately, what we leave behind . . .

Coincidentally, two tanka on page 37 of this issue might have been written with this prompt in mind!

And here's one of mine that would also 'fit the bill':

snow's reminder  
that the fox took the path  
before you . . .  
on the hill above the town  
when my dreams were making tracks

*Presence* #48, 2013

We look forward to reading your tanka!

## Individual Tanka







I'm stuck  
inside myself too  
little flower  
I'll call you beautiful  
if you show me your face

the road ahead  
is a shadow  
I carry  
the moon on my shoulders  
the stars on my back

*S.M. Abeles, USA*

that last day  
looking out the window  
across the great lawn  
toward river and pine  
your eyes leaving mine

*Mary Frederick Ahearn, USA*

scribbling  
faint words to address  
the infinite—  
I pluck one thread  
in the harp of stars

vultures  
tip-tilting in a lazy sky  
I fling  
into the meadow  
the carcass of *ought*

seizing  
six minutes alone  
I soar  
with a red-tailed hawk  
four hundred heartbeats high

*Jenny Ward Angyal, USA*

hothouse hibiscus  
steaming up the windows  
you unpetal me  
& reveal  
my weakness

a lifetime  
of unfertilized eggs—  
invisible scars  
now visible  
from my excised ovaries

*Pamela A. Babusci, USA*

bare silence  
after a seagull's cries  
only backwash  
still holding hands  
still not talking

*Maxianne Berger, Canada*

Lights out  
the fireflies don't listen  
my father  
he told his daughters  
be your own man

*Stephanie Brennan, USA*

a passing shower  
deepens the abbey walls  
to a rich umber  
how lucky I am to have  
your shoulder to cry on

*Dawn Bruce, Australia*

in my dream  
I climb a mountain  
improvise guitar  
and go to talk with you  
darling of my heart

real flowers  
around the tin flower  
my daughter made  
and I planted  
in the garden

*Owen Bullock, Australia*

at the iron gate  
I idle, hesitant to  
press the buzzer  
already hearing her voice  
tell me I'm not gay . . .

*Susan Burch, USA*

behind the fog  
tonight's bright moon  
shimmers—  
all those books read  
now forgotten

*Sondra J. Byrnes, USA*

crows fill  
the afternoon sky  
that storm  
in your eyes when I ask  
unbidden questions

thirty years past  
measured by birds' flights  
kissing me  
once for the good days  
at my goodbye door

arrowheads  
from old battles  
buried  
beneath yet another mall  
dead before its time

*Pris Campbell, USA*

searching for  
bodhidharma's shoe  
in the grave  
of my ordinary mind  
nothing left to grasp

long distance  
she touches the screen  
our romance  
pixelates before  
the line is dropped

*Matthew Caretti, USA*



not yet dawn  
running down frosted streets  
past darkened windows  
where lovers slumber—  
we're stars in our own dreams

*James Chessing, U.S.A.*

the monk  
anoints her stillborn  
with saffron water  
gold of dawn spreads over  
a serration of peaks

*Sonam Chhoki, Bhutan*

another lesson  
to enjoy what is mine  
a crack  
in the Royal Crown Derby  
that's never been used

what if  
there's more than a needle  
in the haystack?  
this fear of finding  
what we're looking for

free and easy  
the way he sailed his boat  
in our bathtub  
so unlike this northern lake  
in a late-summer storm

*Susan Constable, Canada*

in my youth  
I traveled the world  
and wrote letters home . . .  
now, middle aged, I've settled  
for holding my parents' hands

*Anne Curran, New Zealand*

A bridge that binds  
two autumn shores . . .  
the river flows  
and cannot be stopped  
on its way to the unknown

Un pod ce leagă  
două țărmuri de toamnă . . .  
râul ce curge  
nu poate fi nicicum oprit  
din drumul spre necunoscut

*Magdalena Dale, Romania*

a child's words  
*gator, monster, blue*  
scribbled  
on notepaper  
in the waiting room

so small . . .  
but only a neutrino  
can pass through  
this universe  
unscathed

strolling the streets  
of *the happiest place*  
*in America* \* . . .  
had I remembered  
I would have worn a grin

\* San Luis Obispo, California, USA

*Janet Lynn Davis, USA*

a shockwave  
in California—  
here, too,  
finding a dollar  
in my shirt pocket

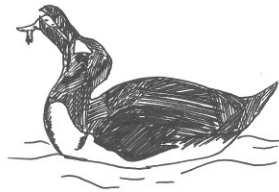
*Jerry Dreesen, USA*

Choctaw dancers  
half seen in autumn mist  
haunt this old town . . .  
when does now  
become eternal

*Rebecca Drouilhet, USA*

Now the sound rising  
deft strokes through roaring rapids  
now the sound dying  
further on there is silence  
further again a faint sound

*Bruce England, USA*



a Facebook photo  
of her first solo cake—  
this longing  
for my granddaughter  
to cook in my kitchen

forget his words  
focus on the iris  
in the temple pond  
purple and white silence  
a zen koan

somewhere  
in the long dewy grass  
a cricket  
is chirruping, constantly  
I wish I still loved you

*Amelia Fielden, Australia*

my latest  
humdrum tanka book  
has my picture:  
I am shown putting on my coat  
at an art museum in Tokyo

the world  
going downhill day after day  
faster and faster—  
my tanka begin to stand  
on their heads and free-fall

if I had a hammer,  
I would put your name  
in precious places,  
how sad and beautiful  
your song to the dead in war

—for Pete Seeger (1919-2014)

*Sanford Goldstein, Japan*

**Author's note:** One day at Camp Wise, a Jewish camp for boys and girls in Painesville, Ohio, we were introduced to Pete Seeger— of course I did not know who he was, but he taught us, I recall, "If I Had a Hammer" and other songs.



the asparagus  
I picked this morning  
beside the bluets  
my children gathered—  
our table adorned with spring

on the hill  
a cluster of sculpted stones  
immutable  
her opinion of me—  
I plant my favorite flowers

*Joyce S. Greene, USA*

brilliant blooms  
for bees to dip in . . .  
I sit  
inside your poem  
sipping nectar from it

shadows  
deepen on the river  
at evening . . .  
you release my fingers  
and slowly drift across

*Hazel Hall, Australia*

a climbing vine  
in the house of mourning  
such pink flowers—  
wishing I could ask her  
its name

*Yoni Hammer-Kossoy, Israel*

on a dim city street  
a coyote trots by me  
teats swinging  
as she races the sunrise  
to her mountain home

my family tree  
loaded so proudly  
with sodbusters—  
how could I not  
love the rain

*William Hart, USA*

an evening breeze  
ruffles leaf shadows  
on the wall  
would ours dance with such grace  
if you were here

stacking firewood,  
the limbs of childhood friends  
after the storm  
the sky softens  
with the shame of a sinner

concentric rings  
so close as not to be seen  
in this tree's life too,  
there must be years  
worth forgetting

*Michele L. Harvey, USA*

on a field of snow  
the February moon  
overshadows the heart  
we made together  
with our bootprints

*Josie Hibbing, USA*

in the snow  
tracks of the red fox  
a straight line  
as I would have liked  
my own to have been

into the trunk  
I stuff my winter clothes  
all jumbled up  
not planning  
to wear them again

*Ruth Holzer, USA*

skeleton racers  
ice-slide fearlessly—  
again my son  
plunges head first  
without a thought

\*Skeleton racing, re-instated as medal sport in 2002 Winter Olympics

he revisits  
the same alley  
at sunset—  
a slave trapped  
in illusion's grip

*Marilyn Humbert, Australia*

the ewe  
turns as if glancing at me  
supplicating . . .  
clothed with dust  
I wonder, who am I?

*Alegria Imperial, Canada*



all day  
we walk the chalk  
South Downs—  
a wide sky follows us  
down to the sea

long grasses  
wave to the waxing moon . . .  
restless  
ancestral spirits  
on Windmill Hill

forty years on  
an English summer  
morning  
draws me back  
to its hazy fragrance

*Gerry Jacobson, Australia*



reading Lucretius  
*De Rerum Naturae*  
the thought  
how can one who hasn't died  
know what happens to the soul?

Nature:  
the careful balance  
of high winds  
atoms, seas, earthworms  
. . . and brazen humans

*Kirsty Karkow, USA*

still there  
after midday  
the ragged edges  
of a faded moon  
keeping vigil

*Keitha Keyes, Australia*

always one  
heckler in the crowd . . .  
beak sharpened  
a Noisy Minor clips  
currawong wings

*Kathy Kituai, Australia*

this starless night . . .  
I dwell in a time zone  
of loneliness  
without a before,  
an after or a when

*Chen-ou Liu, Canada*



too much light  
in the darkness  
and not enough silence  
in the quietness  
of a winter night

a cup of hot soup  
and a bread bun  
in a paper bag  
beginning to absorb  
the winter drizzle

spending time  
in the hills and woods  
of somewhere-  
on-the-way-to-  
somewhere-else

Loch Morar:  
in a place with  
no network coverage  
the misty light,  
the sound of water

even here  
at a wayside  
in remotest Knoydart:  
Japanese knotweed,  
plastic bottles

*Martin Lucas, UK*

your eyes shuttered  
like a camera's  
secret  
follow me  
into our finality

had JPS gps  
would he  
recalculate  
*hell is*  
*other people?*

*Christopher Darrell Luck, UK*

the fire  
down to glowing embers,  
wine on its last legs—  
talk of the missing plane  
fades into silence

between  
her side of the bed  
and mine  
the place we meet  
to remember sometimes

long morning walk  
listening to my heart  
cardinal song  
the calligraphy of tar  
strips on the road

*Bob Lucky, Saudi Arabia*

in her letter  
where tears had dried  
the words were blurred—  
that was how we always  
understood each other

my note  
of apology  
uncrumpled  
and sent out today  
on better paper

I won't know  
when I've eaten  
my last meal—  
much in life slips by us  
with a kind thoughtfulness

*Michael McClintock, USA*

short days  
the mother's temper finds  
her youngest  
running carefree  
through blossoming wildflowers

on her birthday  
he calls to give her  
his very best  
every sentence  
begins with "I"

*Beverly Acuff Momoi, USA*



our last goodbye  
hangs in the heavy  
summer air . . .  
too-blue, the irises  
that bruise the path

on those nights  
when a sheet's weight  
is too much to bear  
he touches me  
with his mind's nimble fingers

*Marie Louise Munro, USA*

step by step  
the nadir sinks  
out of sight  
a steady ascent  
leaves further to fall

*Clive Oseman, UK*

wave after wave  
on an incessant journey  
another sunset  
when I long to change the taste  
of salt, the colour of the wind

*Pravat Kumar Padhy, India*

spinning  
a silk pad, the larva  
hangs itself—  
one needs to die to find out  
if there is anything else

*Marianne Paul, Canada*

barefoot  
in a concrete summer  
i hold you  
come with me, grandchild  
the earth is waiting

bayou sun  
they say she's cancer free  
tonight  
the quiet lets me hear  
the rest of my life

*Sandi Pray, USA*

a common bird  
cleaner of scraps in the garden  
the pigeon  
has seldom been praised  
in song by poets

*Patricia Prime, New Zealand*

as summer  
and Cygnus's journey  
come to an end  
a bevy of swans  
flying southward

*Raamesh Gowri Raghavan, India*

after  
our early morning fight  
the sculptures  
of Khajuraho Temples  
coming together in love

*Kala Ramesh, India*

I stand my ground  
against the wasp  
feigning the courage  
I want  
my kids to learn

*Dave Read, Canada*

my eyes ache  
searching dark tree lines  
for movement  
are you just a trick of the light  
a memory of sun?

*Sandra Renew, Australia*

on the last Thursday  
of her ninety-seven years  
she picked up the phone  
and described with ragged breath  
the new blooms in her garden

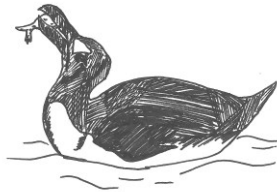
*Deanna Ross, USA*

rose video  
your time lapse heart  
a far away  
silence  
beating open at my words

*Grant D. Savage, Canada*

the bird bath brims  
with a chickadee's notes . . .  
updating  
my playlist, I still can't  
delete our song

*Shloka Shankar, India*



without you  
for so long now  
in my dirty sheets,  
mould green  
on diazepam blue

yesterday you weren't  
but, as you are now  
would you let me  
whisper into you  
a prayer to the devil?

*Brendan Slater, UK*



what I thought  
was a ball of fuzz  
crawls up my shirt . . .  
what is it about life  
that startles me

poems  
that are never written  
deep  
in the woods  
the song of a thrush

the morning  
after thunderstorms  
drops of rain  
on a sunlit leaf . . .  
I let my anger go

*Kenneth Slaughter, USA*

quietude  
then, a circle of loons  
tail-standing  
the sound of wild abandon  
in our throats

the cleft  
between mountains  
a chalice  
spilling alpenglow  
onto our shadows

*Debbie Strange, Canada*

The Mayan temple  
under grass, shrubs, trees  
for millennia—  
one day scuba divers  
will find Manhattan

sixty operations  
to become a  
lovely woman—  
Cassini still  
orbiting Saturn

*George Swede, Canada*

summer rain  
and a porch swing  
that mountain will move  
or it won't  
it's all the same to me

eighteen years  
and I can't remember  
his kiss  
how clouds change the shape  
of the sky

*Jennifer Thompson, USA*

mimicking  
the fiery temperament  
of my orchid cactus  
I put on vermillion slippers  
that I might sparkle

*Nancy Wells, USA*

scent of something burning  
from over the fields  
another summer  
another slow and silent  
devastation

sitting in the garden  
my bare feet warming  
a patch of grass  
I am filled with my voice  
and operatic with silence

play me  
for I am the concertina  
breathing heavily  
between the songs  
of my work and myself

*Liam Wilkinson, UK*

discomforts  
I've grown accustomed to  
the old fridge makes  
a hum I only notice  
when it stops

in a dream  
of broken ground, twisted rails  
and ruined buildings  
I am a plane  
that flies above it all

*Alison Williams, UK*

at the table  
thoughts are screaming  
alone  
behind the smiling door  
you ponder escape

*Paul Williamson, Australia*

a parking lot  
full of blue sky  
windows  
the clouds move slowly  
through all of us

in the mold of my heart  
bone ash mixed with your words  
the slip  
then painted on the inside  
after the firing

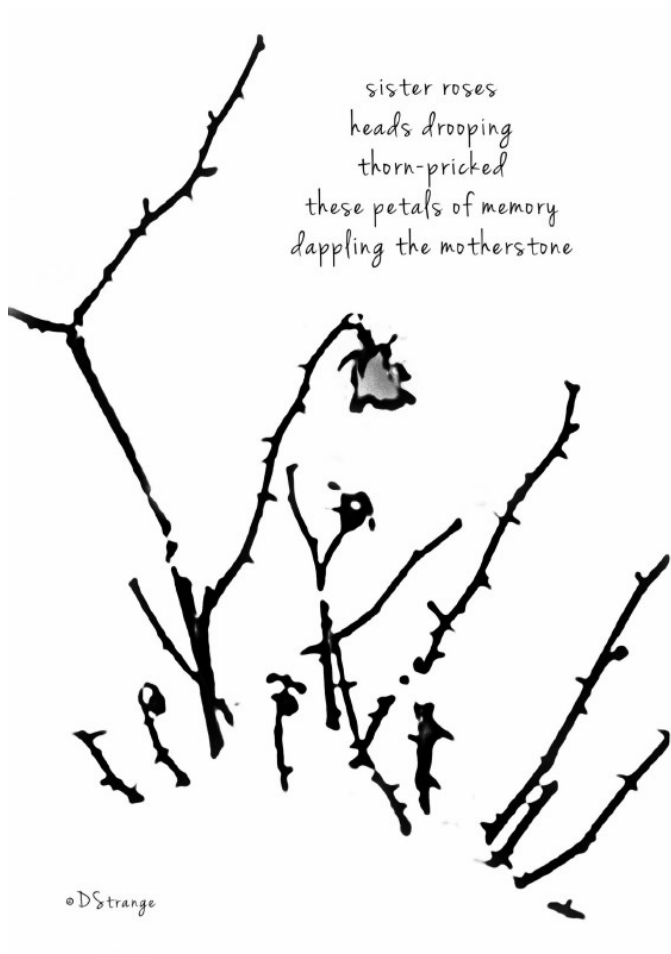
*Kath Abela Wilson, USA*

I hear you  
digging the garden  
I can't see him  
but know you're relishing  
the robin for his company

*Geoffrey Winch, UK*







sister roses  
heads drooping  
thorn-pricked  
these petals of memory  
dappling the motherstone

©DStrange

*Debbie Strange, Canada*



**Tanka Sequences,  
Solo & Responsive,  
& Rengay**



## Sonatina

light fading  
at the tunnel's end  
I slip away  
down the fluted passage  
inside a singing reed

longing  
to open the clear wings  
of music  
I breathe into my flute  
a flight of butterflies

the murmur  
of wind-turned leaves  
before a storm—  
the soft cry of a mourning dove  
echoes in my flute

*Jenny Ward Angyal, USA*

## Jade Reveries

immersed  
in the fleeting artistry  
of springtime  
peony petals scattered  
across the garden

i gather them  
for my hot morning  
bath  
soaking in the essence  
of their gracefulness

putting  
on my cotton kimono  
i make strong coffee  
& read the love poems  
of Ono no Komachi

living  
vicariously through  
her passionate words  
i clench the book  
& commune with God

dwindling light  
with a waterfall  
of pale blossoms  
opening my heart chakra  
to jade reveries

*Pamela A. Babusci, USA*

## Illusion

riding bareback  
through an end of winter woods  
a few snowflakes  
sticking  
to this wreath of roses

these roses  
sipping flakes of snow  
and a flock of robins  
roosting  
all along a maple's leaf scars

robins  
puffed-up  
all along the scars  
reshaping  
this naked maple

a snow globe  
shaken once;  
my brother  
hands on the reigns  
ready to race!

gifted  
to that naked tree  
this wreath of roses,  
the horse's apple  
sliced and carefully arranged

*Tish Davis, USA*

## **With Light**

illnesses congeal  
in the waiting room  
a muddy lotus  
calls forth the Heart Sutra  
as if a Buddhist within awakes

time  
granted  
in bodhisattva hands  
syncopates  
with light

bodhisattva stand-ins  
radiated and IV-ed, racked  
through nights  
hidden lotus tissues  
await their moment

*Susan Diridoni, USA*

## **melons in the park**

my big brother  
taking me to the park  
was I fifteen then?  
he used a big knife  
to cut the watermelons

people parked  
and asked how much  
and I said fifteen cents,  
I do not remember how many  
slices we sold

my brother  
handsome  
and strong,  
me— a wimp  
even then

it was the Depression  
and my sister and I  
sold cups of lemonade,  
the days were hot,  
the customers few

a child  
of the Depression  
was I,  
not bombarded  
with terrible news each day

even now  
at 88, I wait,  
wait for my friend to return,  
then I feel safe,  
then I can sleep

*Sanford Goldstein, USA*



## Secrets of Women

the long sleep  
when a spindle pricked  
a princess . . .  
an old sewing basket . . .  
try on the thimble

at the base  
a faded name . . .  
I finger  
lace and gingham,  
remnants of living

that little hat  
carefully crocheted . . .  
daydreams  
neatly threaded  
on nickel-plated needles

painted cane  
dust-filled and brittle  
skipping  
back decades to girlhood  
needlework classes

French knitting  
from recycled Coats'  
cotton bobbins . . .  
borrowed by brothers  
to roll in the kitchen

trousseaux . . .  
the slipping of scissors  
through ribbons . . .  
unpicking the seams  
of a history of thrift

busy birds  
weave leaves and twigs  
together  
a sewing circle . . .  
the secrets of women

*Hazel Hall, Australia*

## **Moon Dreaming**

~ for Joy McCall

she is moon  
floating on a pond  
willow boughs  
wound into her hair  
where will I find her?

fairies dance  
around her on the knoll  
drink the wine  
of roots and secrets  
she is moon, dreaming

she knows where  
the sunset bursts best  
where wildflowers  
twine west into crimson stars  
wind wuthers about her words

if you know her  
she will invite you in  
spin you poems  
make you ginger tea  
if only you can find her

*Carole Johnston, USA*

## **juniper**

suddenly  
wild juniper  
on the wind  
and I am sitting with him  
on canyon sandstone

such a long way  
down to the river  
far below  
and still the scrubby trees  
cling to the stone

he sings  
watching the eagles  
high above  
another lost love  
and juniper on the wind

*Joy McCall, UK*

## **Curtain in Sunlight, with a Breeze**

Dreamland . . .  
the breeze there  
came with me  
and blows now  
in the curtain.

The border  
between one thing  
and the other:  
life the dream,  
death the awakening.

A simple idea,  
but how do I know?  
With a finger  
I touch the curtain,  
making a dimple.

I have seen whales  
passing down the coast  
do the same thing,  
a dimple on the water  
marking where they dived.

When I reached 60  
I knew the short march  
had begun—  
the one to the mountain pass  
that will be my exit.

I am thankful  
there appears no steepness  
to the slope—  
so far, the short march  
has been easy.

The trees are thinning,  
however, and I note,  
while the light is brighter  
and my vision clearer,  
the air depletes me.

So that is it—  
there is this curtain  
made of sunlight  
and a breeze.  
Life is the dream.

*Michael McClintock, USA*

## Remember

remember when  
a dissonant chord  
was bold and new  
how the earth  
has suffered since

once in a while  
I am reminded  
of great exploits  
being a millionaire  
is such old news

I can barely  
remember my youth  
being a boy  
with glasses  
was such a hindrance

It's so easy  
to forget the bad  
or is it  
when you need  
to connect the dots

another fall day  
the trees are bare  
just days  
after the storm  
with your name

I stretch my arms  
hoping to regain  
what I lost  
my fingers almost  
touching the future

*Mike Montreuil, Canada*

## Stone Circles: Labrador

*~ in memory of Leonard Budgell who was born in Labrador and who wanted to show it to me. After he died I did get to see many of the places he loved.*

this is where you lived  
among Hebron's hills  
here the garden  
the graveyard  
its picket fence

the Torngat mountains rear  
like mythical monsters  
skies of lemon  
and salmon  
take away their bite

storm clouds lift  
on the beach at Iron Strand  
roseroot sedum glistens  
the shorewater  
settles

caribou scapula  
by an iron-red pool  
in this valley  
stone circles that anchored  
thule hide tents

fine-bundled hay  
the scat of a bear  
that has lunched on grass  
an ursine artifact  
song of the day



at Saglek Harbour  
no one left now  
to listen for  
the almost noiseless feet  
of caribou on muskeg

glacier-worn mountains  
one behind the other  
you spent evenings  
absorbing the order  
in this solitude

*languish languid limpid livid*  
you loved words  
they came tripping out  
like spring brook water  
lively

in this small cave  
you ate with a friend  
it was dark  
all you could see were  
his strong Inuit teeth

you must have noticed  
and forgotten to say  
how water-drops on horsetail  
form perfect globes,  
capture the lowering sun

whoever is in this stone grave  
how i envy him  
he will never have to leave  
the Labrador  
or these sunsets

*Claudia Coutu Radmore, Canada*

## How

the kid now  
nineteen can cast  
so much light  
so much shade  
my seed

my pursuit  
my indiscretion  
my blood, bones,  
swollen mood  
when it rains I wonder

did she do more  
than push, scream,  
screw me  
up in a paper ball  
his new middle names

I pretend to forget  
the school he left  
with birch scars  
the church he visits  
with rubber walls

*Brendan Slater, UK*

## Into Dusk

Anne Benjamin, Australia  
& Yvonne Hales, Australia

I follow my shadow  
along the afternoon  
towards dusk

*we meet on the steps  
at the Opera*

by the Harbour  
night hums phosphorescent  
with voices

*mooring lines creak  
at the vaporetto stop,  
waiting*

in half-light  
only the breath of Bora\*

*sighs . . .  
reliving moments  
when you took the lead*

\*Gusty wind of the Adriatic region

~ ~ ~

## Imprint

~ for Martin Lucas

Beverley George, Australia  
& David Terelinck, Australia

seashell game  
lifting one, then another  
fading imprint

*the memory  
of migrating geese*

far side of the river  
flicker of a cyclist  
between trees

*woodsmoke—  
the ripple of leaves  
on unfelt wind*

clouds close behind  
a soaring gull

*just beyond  
where the horizon curves,  
that patch of blue . . .*

~ ~ ~

## Brief Encounter

Carol Judkins, USA  
& *David Terelinck, Australia*

crimson morning—  
the sounds of autumn  
in leaf-fall

*asking the question  
the hospice nurse can't answer*

all hallows moon  
children dressed as ghosts  
passing by

*Ouija board . . .  
never enough time  
to say "I love you"*

*a Brief Encounter*  
with tissues and hot tea

*bluebird song  
the sepia tones of winter  
fading away*

~ ~ ~

## Pulling Weeds

David Terelinck, Australia  
& Beverley George, Australia

pink ribbon day—  
icing every cupcake  
with hope

*a swirl of skylarks  
on the dress he buys for her*


on the swings  
all the children they  
will never have

*second opinion . . .  
back and forth through magazines  
not reading a word*

holidays ads  
and the wash of Muzak

*suddenly precious . . .  
pots & pans and pulling weeds  
the humdrum of each day*

~ ~ ~



autumn prayers  
i release them  
silently  
the last ginkgo leaf  
surrenders to the wind

Pamela A. Babusci 2014

pressed & ink printed ginkgo leaf

## Child's Play Back Then

Michelle Brock, Australia  
& Kathy Kituai, Australia

crazed and chipped  
beside the vintage teapot  
gran's pie vent—  
secrets traded in the kitchen  
over rolling pins and pastry

*granddaughter  
flour smudged on her cheek  
kneads scone-dough  
seldom rolled, egg washed  
or baked in a woodstove*

new year's eve—  
laughing with family  
around the table  
son's girlfriend teaches us  
to fold Chinese dumplings

*Friday night chips  
warm in newspaper  
Dar reads out  
last week's 'footie' scores  
before that rush of steam*

rising mist  
tracking father's footsteps  
across the paddock—  
child's play back then  
telling toadstools from mushrooms



*brown onions  
pickled in malt vinegar  
I taste mum's  
time and time again  
in my imagination*

steak and onions  
sizzling in the pan—  
dad waltzes mum  
around the kitchen  
to 'ta-ra-ra boom-de-ay'

*cup of tea  
sipped in silence . . .  
on the hearth  
where he cooked for her  
the kettle singing*

~ ~ ~

## Undercurrents

Jan Foster, Australia  
& Anne Benjamin, Australia

gold flashes  
as fish dart beneath  
water-lilies  
I catch a rare glimpse  
of your hidden depths

*westerly winds  
split the sunlight  
on the water  
my sense of purpose  
... shifts*

joy and pain—  
in his new daughter's face  
a reflection  
of her mother  
lost in childbirth

*through the shiver  
of old glass windows  
lives shift—  
gone, the men who dared build here  
gone, their clear views to the sea*

diamonds wink  
from the surface of the bay  
treasure  
beckoning those  
with seawater in their veins

~ ~ ~

## **decay**

Sanford Goldstein, USA  
*Joy McCall, UK*

I am  
an old-timer  
laid out  
to rot  
in the sun

*without  
erosion  
and decay  
nothing new  
can grow*

my body  
decays  
and my mind,  
so what else  
is new?

*the soul  
emerges  
and flies  
up, away from  
the broken shell*

life  
defeats  
the soul,  
and I remain  
rudderless

~ ~ ~

## Currents

Patricia J. Machmiller, USA  
& Beverly Acuff Momoi, USA

sunflowers  
at the edge of the field  
looking directionless  
the wind moves among them  
with a ragged sigh

*he despaired—  
how would she live?  
she needed  
no justification for joy  
just these days of sun and light*

in Brazil  
there is that place where  
two rivers merge  
and they go along as one  
half brown, half blue

*night light  
thousands of fish flashing  
beneath the blue  
so much undiscovered  
so much still to see*

in receding surf  
sand dollars, uncovered  
broken and worn . . .  
partial excavations  
of a lost city

*out of sync  
different worlds inhabiting  
the same space  
stars in the river of heaven  
a halo over the mountain*

~ ~ ~

## Shizuka\*

tranquillity, serenity, stillness, contemplative silence

Patricia Prime, New Zealand  
& *Giselle Maya, France*

autumn afternoon  
in the art gallery  
whispering voices  
in front of the canvasses  
of water lilies by Monet

*cicada pines  
silent now in late winter  
silver sky  
painted by snowflakes  
waking with poems in my heart*

he brings me a gift  
of mandarins and persimmons  
I arrange them  
on the windowsill  
to ripen in the sun

*heralding spring  
the cuckoo's voice from the forest  
I visit a garden  
learn how best to plant  
a strawberry patch*

because of the bare trees  
with their creaky branches  
I notice  
a young woman on a park bench  
singing softly to herself

*bamboo shoots  
surface among asparagus  
by leaps and bounds  
they create a fence to shield  
this tranquil sanctuary*

so vibrant  
the rainbow arc  
in the west  
an unforgotten dream  
remains in my heart

*Katsura palace  
with auspicious sites  
for moonviewing  
window wide open I wait  
for the mountain crest's glow*

the time of youth  
is past and gone  
leaving me  
clinging to memories  
drifts of cherry blossom

*everything is still  
but for the candle's flicker  
antlered reindeer  
traced in manganese and ochre  
vanish into the clouds*

\*This is the Emperor of Japan's chosen poetic word for the year and  
many people will write tanka on this topic in Japan.

~ ~ ~

## salvo

Brian Zimmer, USA  
& Joy McCall, UK

I strike  
the arrogance of fear  
weapons  
honed and poised  
at every border

*hiding, huddled  
behind the walls  
I listen—  
his voice, rising  
against the wind*

a secret spell  
forgotten until needed  
the chest opens  
a luminous moon  
rises from the seabed

*pale light  
shatters on the stone  
shards in my hair  
my mind pierced, sweet  
with seasalt and sorrow*

those shards  
are your arsenal  
by lunar glow  
your hair flies sharp  
to wound the surging tides

~ ~ ~

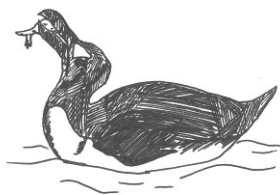


*in the spring wind  
your tattered prayer flags  
flutter  
the mantras have faded  
but I still mourn*

*photo and tanka:  
Sonam Chhoki*



## Tanka Prose



**A Retraction**  
*Matthew Caretti, USA*

How it must feel to be the last of your kind. No shared migrations, no annual setting off. Only coming ashore. Into the truest sense of *alone*.

He was then living already for some greater death. Centuries had been predicted, hoped for, though he fell far short. Could he sense the thinness of his being and resist no longer? How does the word *extinct* translate to a feeling?

Lonesome George will die three deaths. The physical end came with the cessation of a heartbeat. Then the burial by a few keepers. But the final death—the last time his name is spoken—could take generations.

with the tide  
memory returns  
an empty shell  
tosses about in the silt  
of fading evening light

**Note:** Lonesome George was the last of the Pinta Island tortoises. His first death came on June 24, 2012.

~ ~ ~

## **Evolution of a painting**

*Janet Lynn Davis, USA*

wispy roots  
between my fingers—  
souvenirs  
of aloe and kalanchoe  
from her garden to mine

How to include the right touch of light? And choose the most-fitting hues? Once I settle on palette and mood, then create my scene with brush and oils, the story appears to change.

My choices now: Leave things as they are. Or instead, modify my canvas, dabbing muddy shades on top of clearer colors, accepting that I may not be able to go back.

souvenirs  
from her garden to mine—  
ragged roots  
of aloe and kalanchoe,  
my mother's mind in tatters

~ ~ ~

Y  
*Seren Fargo, USA*

The ridicule and bullying happened in school as well as at home. I later told my mother that it was a good thing I was born a female, and therefore more likely to take my anger out on myself instead of others, for if I was a male, I would certainly have wound up in jail.

another  
school shooting  
the other students  
say only  
that he was shy

~ ~ ~

**Atonality**  
*Ignatius Fay, Canada*

The argument is about his kids versus her kids. Her anger changes focus when she sees him preparing to install his homemade speakers on top of the kitchen cupboards. He has labored long, usually late in the evening, to build these two small cabinets. They look good and sound okay, despite being thin plywood covered by an adhesive veneer.

jealous  
of his other love  
she resents  
any time or attention  
he spends on music

She accuses and belittles until he loses his temper. Rather than strike her, he throws the speakers down the stairs. One bounces and lands on the basement floor unharmed. The other breaks into several pieces. A little later, he puts them both in his workshop garbage can.

midnight  
the house has gone  
quiet  
getting out of bed  
I retrieve the wreckage

At 6 a.m., I put both speakers on the kitchen table and go back to bed. The repair work is barely noticeable. The sounds of Glenn Miller play softly from above the cupboards during breakfast.

whistling softly  
Dad nods without comment  
half smiling  
music with our meals  
for twenty-five years

~ ~ ~

**Tea Rose**  
*Gerry Jacobson, Australia*

The petals droop into my teacup. The rose rests on its side but rose . .  
. Rose . . . Rosa reverberates in my body. My heart. My brain. The  
love of my life. This three year old monkey who cries and sings and  
throws ferocious tantrums and dances and plays and hits her baby  
brother.

my sixty-eighth year . . .  
will granddaughter  
just born  
fill the rest of my days  
with delight and wonder

I pick up the rose. It's almost scentless. Put it down. It falls in the tea.  
It's a tea rose. It's pink. So are the two babies in Tosolinis this  
morning, both colour-stereotyped.

our café  
full of prams  
and toddlers—  
the Little Ones  
slurp their babycinos

Rosa is often pink, but we try and vary it. C calls her 'my eccentric  
daughter.' I saw her get dressed the other day. She was going out  
with me. I helped her out of her pyjama bear suit. She wandered  
around naked deliberating which undies to wear. Eventually, couldn't  
decide, so she put on two, the yellow and the pink, followed by two  
pairs of tights. Several dresses were hanging there. She chose three  
and put them on, one on top of another. I commented on her bare  
arms— it was a cold morning— so she put on a long-sleeved skivvy  
over the three dresses. A padded jacket followed by a rain-cape  
completed her outfit. Off we waddled to splash in puddles in the park.

lifting her up  
lean lithe body— to watch  
the cement mixer—  
pouring out my love  
setting it in concrete

The rose seems to be unfurling, it's warm in here. How  
will Rosa unfurl? I'm conscious that I may not live much longer. I  
doubt that I'll see her grow up. I'm making the most of Now.

**Author's Note:** The tanka 'lifting her up' was first published in *Ribbons*, 6, 2, 2010

~ ~ ~

**After Reading Joy Harjo**  
*M. Kei, USA*

the day rides  
a splintered horse  
and leaves  
a trail of barbed wire  
in my heart

And then I wished I could write poetry like the Native Americans I  
admire.

~ ~ ~



**East & West**  
*Gary LeBel, USA*

**1. An Idyll and a Painting Lesson**

At first light  
a scent of ash rises  
from sleep-mussed hair—  
through what worlds  
can she be voyaging?

A child might express the beauty of this place with three loaded brushstrokes of blue, yellow and green. We are the only campers round a tarn that lies under Mount Lassen's volatile protection, no fires last night or the night before, a starry, intimidating dark.

Today she's up to her thighs in water with her camera, squatting as if that would somehow make her invisible. As the wild deer wade in a few yards away, she creeps stealthily in after them but they keep their distance; I watch from the campsite.

Deep in flowers  
we make love in a woodland meadow  
the only blossom  
we can give to Kypris  
that never dies . . .

Yesterday, near twilight, we had come upon a clearing where a herd of deer had gathered. The tension they forged was exquisite, for they were the architects of a moment so taut and fragile that any stray noise would have shattered it instantly: how idyllic their days must be when predators' scents blow elsewhere.

The herd had allowed their young to venture freely outside their immediate domain, though I'm certain they knew we were there.

All night long  
the owl's somber voice  
reminds us  
that the forest is speaking  
and we are to listen

While the trusty bloodhound of her Nikon leads her along in the lake,  
there's a brisk movement behind me, a flicker of russet: I hold my  
breath, become a statue. Its timid neck stretches out towards me,  
something I sense viscerally but cannot see. Drawing closer, its  
hooves step shyly on the ashen ground . . . it sniffs an ear . . . its nose  
hairs brush my earlobe . . . its grassy breath a warm and sour mash . .  
. and then it's gone. Now I'll have to decide whether or not to tell her.

Take a housepainter's brush  
dipped in eggshell blue  
and make a long and easy stroke  
then pour the light of California  
straight from the jar.

**Note:** 'Kypris' is another name for Aphrodite.

\* \* \*

## 2. Village

'Maine knows you,  
Has for years and years'  
—Amy Lowell, *Lilacs*

You can drive straight through, or you can get out of your car and listen from the bridge as the Dyer and Sheepscot Rivers flow seamlessly into one. Ever headed elsewhere, I had always wanted to stop here one day, and today, almost a half century later, I do. For the impatient summer traveler, there's little more than a cluster of fine old homes, a whiff of brackishness and a bridge to cross . . . but O what light!

Venerable oak,  
how long have you stood sentry here  
to these mingling waters  
marking each decade's passage  
with a knot?

Since the heart of Maine beats in every inch you love, I lay down my ruler in Sheepscot. Aside from the old bridge's new face, little else looks changed after all this time. Walking through a place instead of driving is like swimming instead of rowing: when you take the time to go about on foot, the bay you hardly glanced at parts its dazzling lips and like a rhapsode sings of its long Abenaki past to anyone who'll listen,

or this slower, keener mode of seeing might yield a spray of delicate yellow flowers shaped like buttons beside a window's trim weathered by years of rains and snows to a burnished silver, the play of light inside its Spartan room, a harvest never lean.

Marble temples,  
Druidic circles, moldy castles & cobbled lanes  
of rain-washed blood  
yet I'm still hunting for local gods  
in tide-flats, hills and rivers

Next to the village grange hall stands a map with dates and place names: all its facts are food for the imagination. It's rare to find a place that offers up itself so unconditionally.

By the grange hall door,  
daubed in yellow, blue and purple,  
lie soup cans strung together—  
do these crows recall a day  
when the sky rained hard with rice?

An old rowboat lies abandoned in the reeds beneath the grange hall's  
barnacled pylons; the riverbanks at low tide are as brown and smooth  
as chocolate. Churning with a pungent broth of existence in continual  
death and birth, there's no richer smell than a river's.

Blue sky,  
white clapboards and rivulets of rose:  
the strings of a living lyre  
that can never quite  
be plucked

In fields that slope gently down to the rivers' edge, the high late-  
summer grasses wind-weave new threads in golden brown, wheat-  
straw and yellow ochre: they give off a scent you can't quite place, a  
kind of ubiquitous herb as strong as mint or basil, though it would be  
somehow wrong to name it. I walk from one end of the village to the  
other, unhurried as if the noon had paused and were waiting for  
further instructions . . . and it's then that I sense them come and go,

courting and bearing children, treading stairs by snow-light down to  
morning kitchens, planting corn and beans and melon, working the  
tides and summer gardens, planning lives in starlit meadows, asleep  
in the August hush by open windows and perhaps from where I stand,  
looking out across their village as I do.

All the years of arrows  
that could split the finest hair  
and the blunted, broken ones  
that spiraled limply down:  
a quiver's contents

~ ~ ~

**Guttersnipes**  
**Gary LeBel, USA**

*'Go ahead, indulge a little in the joy that luck has given you,  
but measure sorrow, also, with the same short stick.'*

—Archilochos of Paros, 7th Century BCE

Standing head-bent with the concentration of Alexandrian scholars inside the shack, the adults are busy molesting and hardness-testing thirty-three kinds of apples culled from local orchards, the smells of pies and fritters leaking out through a hole in Paradise. I leave her browsing jams and jellies and fancy preserves— I leave her often

when she shops.

Suddenly there's a soft hammering of melodiousness on the tin roof. I go outside to the covered porch

where all the children have gathered. With conspiratorial grins and eyes wide with delight, they squat around a downspout gushing with rain,

cupping and sipping and giggling, numbing and pinkening hands that come in all ages and flavors of childhood . . . and so leaning against a roof-post I scribble this note

lest I forget  
the best part of a day

that as soon as it's able  
will fall fast asleep

in the big brass featherbed  
of the past . . .

With a taste of honey  
straight from the comb  
the legend you live  
instead of just  
talk about

**Note:** The fragment of Archilochos of Paros was translated by Richmond Lattimore from *The Norton Book of Classical Literature*, ed. Bernard Knox, NY 1993

~ ~ ~

## **Diamond in the Rough**

North Gare, Teesside, England

*Amy Claire Rose Smith, UK*

Behind the litter-scattered beach and the calm sea, a belt of factories sucks in the horizon. I watch steam billow from the chimneys, *chug chug chug*. There goes some more CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. There is no such thing as 'sea air' here. The stench from the factories overrides the fresh salty tang of the sea which you might experience at Whitby, Scarborough, Saltburn . . . But if you look and listen closely, this isn't a dead land. Whimbrels call from unseen perches. Hundreds of linnets— small brown birds with peachy breasts— flock to the boulders which are gathered at the tideline like old ladies on market day. We climb over the rocks, grazing our hands and turning over on our ankles. All to see what's over the ridge: pied oystercatchers with their carrot bills, turnstones sporting their tortoiseshell backs. As the tide comes in it begins to create a pool whose fleeting presence is a perfect stop-by for the wading birds who call this strange place home.

between  
Lucozade bottles  
two dunlins  
make this morning  
their own

~ ~ ~

**Crépescule**  
*Charles D. Tarlton, USA*

*Recueille-toi, mon âme, en ce grave moment,  
Et ferme ton oreille à ce rugissement.*  
—Baudelaire

were the gods cognizant  
of pulling the sun slowly down

“Was it the Arnold?” The woman in large green overalls and a sheepskin hat is shouting out in the middle of 17<sup>th</sup> street, wrangling the traffic around her. “Or just the Edward, was it?” she yells. “Or the Steven? Steven the Arnold . . . was that it?”

how in operas  
an old soprano’s aria can ring bells  
they stand yelling, “Brava! Brava!”

it’s the story; it’s the  
music. But in Italian

The Heineken guy is crossing the street with a hand-truck of stacked beer cases; he is glad for her help slowing the traffic. Two late afternoon drunks are locked in a loud argument about boxing or racism; it’s hard to tell.

two dukes and a barmaid  
eyeing the top of the keep  
men of destiny give their all

the street’s a painted paper scene  
the strolling players amble  
turn, nudge and smile  
we’re in a Mario  
Lanza movie, the girl blushes



A police cruiser arrives in response to a fender-bender in the middle of the intersection of 17<sup>th</sup> and Capriccioso, where a City pickup truck had rear-ended a taxi. The cabby insists they leave the cars exactly where they had come to rest until the accident report is filled out.

are these *les danseurs*  
*fantômes* found around Giselle?

the loyal peasant revelers  
is this her whirling unto death?

Then, it starts to rain, soft and easy to begin with, but afterward torrentially. Everyone hurries out of the street; the woman in green overalls huddles under the maroon and white grocery awning and the beer guy puts away the hand-truck, drops the canvas panels over the cases and kegs of beer in their rows, and drives off.

the Count's officer withdraws

shifting to the fields  
where scythes encompass the corn  
workers stop to sing  
in the Springtime, the noon day  
rising vaults of heaven ring

soprano's bosoms

The storm-darkened street and neon signs reappear in puddles. Convoys of cars creep by, wipers going, leaving a thin weave of tire tracks in the wet. The stoplights at the nearest corner click through their red-green-yellow, and red again phases, completely out of synchronicity with the lights at the farther corner. The weird rhythms of colored lights—click-clackety-click-clack—add musical syncopation to the scene.

heaving in crescendos  
bellowing sad, sad, songs

the roof once made of music, lifts  
open to the dome of heaven

The street level door between Raymond's Shoe Shoppe and White's Bakery opens and a man in an artist's smock and black beret steps out. He carries a large palette, the surface of which is rich in globules of brilliant oil paint, and a handful of brushes all maybe three feet long.

regard the tenor  
rotund, sure, but very handsome

a man easy with a sword

O, the heavens opening  
hear broken voices raised in glory

He walks straight into the street, pushes the bristles of a brush into a dollop of red and then into the yellow and with a wild, sweeping stroke upwards, he wipes a section of the sky into color, blocking out the rain. Then he dips the brush into paint again, sweeps the sky again, and more of the sky turns red-yellow, darkening.

a thunderous chorus  
raised, maps of dragons fused

along entablatures, like settling  
clouds of starlings to the stars  
loud and bright, melodramatic

comes then *denouement*

He puts the end of a second brush into aqua-marine paint and then a little more yellow and some black on a second brush. He sweeps the sky again and again, both arms pushing the dazzling rainbow of colors higher up into the sky. He sweeps and dips and sweeps and dips until the cupola of the world is ablaze in color and the last bit of sun slides below the horizon.

waving his baton in furious  
rondels, goading up  
the strident music, cymbals  
smash and echo— the kettle drums

~ ~ ~

## Meaningful Adjacencies

David Terelinck, Australia

Clouds of steel and glass float by, gleaming in the hot July sun. Their mosaic shapes fracture and distort on cornering, then drift on in a sky the colour of hope.

My eyes follow the line of the building back to earth, and to those I am standing amongst. Some people have their heads bowed. I see many others with lips moving slowly in silent prayer. Several have tears in their eyes. All are reverent in thought. No one looks defeated.

I trace their names. My fingers run over the deeply carved letters and the highly polished bronze. Each person recorded here is a stranger. But equally I am bonded with them all. They bore everyday names that we should never forget. There is Ronald, the name my father was christened with. I once had a best friend, Marjorie. When younger I went to school with a clutch of Debbie's. And my own given name appears over and over.

The names cycle on in ceaseless lines of palpable loss. And those in the crowd become my brothers in grief.

A fine spray of mist rises from the waterfall where the north tower once stood. This much-needed balm cools my reddened cheeks. In this fleeting moment I sense the gentle touch of those who perished.

in this place  
where time stops, and time is  
never-ending  
sails that fill away  
on unexpected winds

**Note:** *Meaningful Adjacencies* is the term applied to the placement of the names on the 9/11 Memorial in New York City. It is designed to "reflect where the victims were on 9/11 and the relationships they shared with others who were killed that day, honoring requests from victims' families for specific names to be next to one another."

~ ~ ~

**Hands**  
*Anita Virgil, USA*

despite my hands  
turned old  
another spring  
my love grows  
lush as grass

I learned from kitchens. Creaming cold butter and sugar endlessly to lemon color on summer mornings. Grateful for the little breeze that meanders through the back screened door. Sweating, I grate pieces of fresh cocoanut. Small-talk the while and the nearby smell of dark Annie's hands: cooking grease lingering. And patience. *Always that*— and kindness with a child.

Other days, down we go to the cool basement. Wet clothes soak in the laundry tub. The DUBL HANDI washboard stands in the gray water, wooden legs softening . . . USE EITHER SIDE ACCORDING TO FABRIC it says. She hums, balances the cake of harsh yellow soap on the small window ledge. Then the warmth from her iron, back and forth. Stacks of rough-dried clothes off the line wait for her touch. Once in a while, advice on what part to press first, or how to skirt corners.

Upstairs, at evening, a raise to four dollars a week from three, an issue. Resigned, peeling off her worn apron as usual, the dishes done and put away, floor mopped, she takes home a few leftovers from our supper— and the 'gift' of discarded clothes. It is all. For now.

how many times  
these rituals  
putting away the clean  
remembering the dirty  
*my whole life*

~ ~ ~

first kisses and raindrops the taste of petrol  
of street lighting and coldness

circular tanka, *Brendan Slater, UK*



## **Special Feature**

In Memory of Martin Lucas  
1962-2014



**Birding with a Haiku-ist in Lochinver**  
*Kathy Kituai, Australia*

I like real reviewers— especially those who have the courage to cover both the best and worst aspects of tanka and haiku collections. Sure I might stick a few pins in a doll sewn in their image at the stroke of midnight as a result of what is said about mine, but how do you know if your poetry is working, or how to improve, unless it is reviewed honestly?

Martin Lucas' review of *In Two Minds*\* published in *Presence*, was not an avalanche of accolades, nor was it a tsumani of criticism, but it seemed to suggest that he was a real reviewer. He hadn't liked the *one* poem I loved in the collection. In fact he said he didn't understand it, even though he couldn't fault it. Still, I welcomed his comments.

I also welcomed the opportunity to tell Martin this at the Fourth Haiku Pacific Rim Conference, Terrigal, Australia, 2009. I was boarding a bus at the time and Martin, being Martin, beckoned me to get on the bus before him. Did I imagine he stepped back even further when I introduced myself and thanked him for the review? Published only a short time before this visit to Australia, it was still fresh in my mind.

I was still serving a five-year, self-imposed apprenticeship for tanka at the time . . . oops! . . . Let me rephrase this statement . . . even today, after nine years of writing tanka, I still am an apprentice. And yet when I asked him if he would visit this upstart Australian poet in Lochinver, Scotland in the following year where I would be in retreat (*if* my application for funding to collaborate with a Scottish potter was successful), he jumped at my cheeky invitation. It was my turn to take a step back from him. Why would he drive all the way up from Preston to spend four days with me? There were things I now understand about Martin that I didn't understand then. However, knowing that he was a birder, perhaps I might have mentioned that there were birds in the area I'd never heard of. And maybe he *did* reply along the lines: "Oh I've never travelled to the Highlands", and more likely than not I said: "I've never been bird-watching" and added even more cheekily, "I'd like to interview you". . .

Even so, would Martin be as real as he seemed to be in print? Still pondering this anomaly, I recorded this entry in my dairy:



17 July 2010:

*Martin Lucas arrives tomorrow night, he rang yesterday to find where I was exactly and I'm challenged with the fact that I'm so focussed on the project (Deep in the Valley of Tea Bowls), I haven't spent enough time concentrating on questions for his interview . . .*

Worried about the MP3 I'd borrowed to record UK poets and their poetry, I added: *I must find time to get online and learn . . . time enough Monday.* How was that going to happen? Monday and Tuesday the potter and I were busy stacking a ton of wood (yes a ton is needed for a wood kiln firing).

Martin was also a recipient of a PhD in Literature at Cardiff University. I've never seen the term *Dr* in front of Martin's name. In *Presence*, a journal he edited since 1996, he listed himself as Martin Lucas. Equipped with well-deserved academic accomplishments, he chose to dedicate his literary efforts to a little understood genre like haiku. Taught in Australian schools by teachers, not writers, haiku is mistakenly presumed to be the perfect genre with which to introduce poetry. Why? Because it is written as simply as possible in three lines, and therefore cannot possibly be complex, can it? If this is actually the case why did Japanese poets devote themselves to a lifetime of mastering this genre?

According to birdwatchers I am a backyard birdie, or feeder birdie . . . one who studies birds according to what visits their back shed. Magpies, rosellas and king parrots visit mine or bathe in a pool beside the daylilies. How could I not want to watch them? Although Martin was a 'twitcher' (yes he had a list of birds ready to tick when we set out to walk the grounds of Glencanisp), he didn't strike me as a 'power birder', one who chases birds to add to life-lists, location to location, not stopping to take in the birds' well-being, behaviour or realising the damage this does to the environment.

The first lesson Martin taught me was how to walk in the woods while twitching, one foot quietly after another, taking care not to disturb anything on the path or draw attention to myself. The second was to see with my ears.

All the clues for birding are in the essay he delivered at The Fourth Haiku Pacific Rim conference:

*Haiku as Poetic Spell.* In these words Martin invites us to not just concentrate on the content but to write with our ears, hear haiku, “. . . an expression that is more akin to magical utterance than the mere reporting of an incidence, however consequential or inconsequential.”

He was more interested in falling *under the spell of birds* than recording what he had seen. The sighting completed, the bird flown away, only then did he tick off sightings on his list. The standards set in his essay are the ones he lived while birding.

The joy as we came across birds in the Highlands he either didn't expect to find (inconsequential or otherwise), or was hoping to see, went beyond a simple listing. A rustle of foliage, a shadow in the tree top and he thrust his binoculars in my direction, a finger pointing to where the bird could best be seen. The joy of anyone beside him was his. A successful haiku is one that infers meaning with as few words as possible. I was birding with a poet who was a haiku himself.

Had Martin not joined me in Lochinver, I wouldn't have taken as much notice of seagulls swooping and circling over my head at St Andrews after leaving the Highlands. They were within arm's reach. Australian seagulls squawk. Scottish seagulls lament. Why was this so? On the way to the local Lochinver store for milk to make a cup of tea, Martin took my question seriously, and pointed out colour and song differences between the species on the way there. I listened more intently to their Celtic repertoire.

Reading *Zen Birding*\* (a gift from a dear and sensitive friend) as I write this, I learn that birds, aware that they are being observed, observe us. As the four days passed leisurely in fashion, I realised he had been observing me before we met through tanka I'd published in *In Two Minds* and now his attention was trained on me while birding. I had been too busy listening where he listened, following the finger silently pointed towards a rustle in the undergrowth, a sunlit flash of colour behind the leaves, to notice.

Binoculars set up to watch loons on the second day (the very bird he had come to observe in the Highlands) we decided to share our picnic lunch. With the speed of wings whirring suddenly out of the foliage,

he asked me what my astrological sun sign was. What did that have to do with being a birder? Or tanka and haiku for that matter? Seeing the surprise on my face . . . sheer astonishment at that guess-the-sun-sign-party-game (and not from a realist like Martin surely?) he asked if I would like to know what he had decided I was. Why not? I was safe. No one has ever guessed. And if it wasn't enough for him to *get it right* he went on to ask: "Is that a dragon embossed on your pants?"

I hadn't only bought this tracksuit because it was midge-proof, yes—I'm a dragon according to Chinese Astrology. Without another word he unbuttoned his coat and revealed a large dragon on his t-shirt. We sat in complete silence after that and shared our lunch, taking it in turns to look through binoculars at loons, no need for further conversation.

I vowed from that moment to say only what was necessary in haiku, tanka and especially free-verse. And when I find my 'monkey mind' writing yet again the same tanka in different words, I leave them in my notebook. When there is nothing to say, or someone else has already said it, why publish? Wasn't that what Martin had also inferred in *Haiku as Poetry Spell*?

There's lushness in the Scottish woods not seen in Australian scrub. Walking around the loch at Glencanisp, observing reeds in the softest of greens that had fascinated me ever since I arrived in Lochinver, I did not need to say "look how soft those reeds are" as he also observed them. When, perched on rocks where the burn was at its most dramatic rush and tumble of foam and water, a dragonfly with transparent orange and jade wings alighted on me, Martin's "Don't move, there is something on your shoulder" didn't demand further explanation either. The berries he located where I saw none in the undergrowth, and foliage he identified on our way back to his car before he left, assured me that it wasn't just birds he was present with. He was under the spell of the environment.

In my own teaching of creative writing courses since 1990 I have invested most of that time imploring participants— not always with success— to understand *how* a poem reads through its language, metaphor and other poetics, and to know that this is as important as what it says.

When I read this comment in his essay: “(poets) *writing original haiku in English have focussed on what is said and paid relatively little attention on how it is said*”, I knew this was the real reason why I wanted to spend time with this haiku-ist in Lochinver. Martin expressed something I wasn’t hearing elsewhere.

Less experienced than he, I hadn’t reasoned, as he had, that translation of haiku and tanka tends to convey content, often at the expense of poetics. This can mislead us into thinking only about the content. It would be impossible to translate, from the content of what we said during his four day visit, exactly what made me run back to where I had left him at the swinging gates near the entrance of the burn before he drove back to Preston, and take the risk of telling him that I had no reason to say this, but intuitively I knew we would not meet again. How did I know we would never talk as deeply as we had while bird watching? Was this because I’m of a certain age and getting funding is as rare as birds on endangered lists today? No it was deeper than that.

His last words were that it didn’t matter if we met or corresponded again. And we never did. Again no explanation was needed between us. There is little point in chasing haiku and tanka just to add to a growing list of publication. If you have said all that you have wanted to say that is more than enough. Martin hadn’t just come to Lochinver to see the loons, or joined me as an excuse to add another sighting to his life list of birds. I’m not the most special person Martin had chosen to spend time with. He was generous and kind. A man true to his word, and he kept a promise made in Australia to come to Lochinver.

The secret of what makes a sighting successful is to let it come of itself, to be present with the unexpected, observe what there is to see where you are, become spellbound when a poem, bird, dragonfly or a friend appears and you are swept away by their magic— and be aware of how what you say is said.

*What is more real than that?*

\* *In two Minds*, by Amelia Fielden and Kathy Kituai, MET, 2008

\* *Zen Birding*, by David M White and Susan M Guyette, O-books 2010

## **Articles, Essays, Reviews**

*Jenny Ward Angyal*

*Editor*



**Brief Echoes of Birdsong**  
*Short Reviews*

**100 Tanka by 100 Poets of Australia and New Zealand, edited by Amelia Fielden, Beverley George and Patricia Prime.**

Ginninderra Press, Port Adelaide, Australia, 2013, 68 pages, paperback, 5.5 x 7.8, introduction by Kiyoko Ogawa, illustrations by Ron C. Moss.  
ISBN 978-1-74027-831-7. \$15 plus postage from [stephen@ginninderrapress.com.au](mailto:stephen@ginninderrapress.com.au)

Continuity and change, tradition and innovation mark the history of *waka* and its modern form, *tanka*. Anthologies of 100 poems by 100 poets— *Hyakunin Isshu*— go back nearly 800 years, according to Kiyoko Ogawa's introduction to the present volume. The more modern tradition of English-language *tanka* has spread throughout the world and is particularly vibrant in Australia and New Zealand, to judge from the offerings in this handsome little book, enhanced by Ron C. Moss's delicate, whimsical paintings of local flora and fauna. The editors have done an excellent job of selecting 100 strong poems in a wide range of styles. These 100 modern poets, including both prominent names and those less well-known, explore the full range of traditional *waka/tanka* themes, from love:

from Europe  
your daytime calling  
my deep night,  
our voices making love  
along the seabed

~Amelia Fielden

. . . and grief:

the old woman  
with a walking stick  
bent over  
her daughter's grave  
like a question mark

~Andre Surridge

. . . to joy in the continuing richness of life, even in the face of impending death:

aged laughter  
from three stooped women  
fills the cloisters  
in the Hospice garden  
trees bow down with ripened fruit

*~Anne Benjamin*

Many poems celebrate the natural world, and all seek to capture in their brief lines the beauty and fragility revealed by mindfulness of every passing moment:

how lightly  
the layer of garlic skin  
floats to the floor  
like a dragonfly  
with punctured wings

*~Jan Dean*

\* \* \*

***Mint Tea from a Copper Pot and Other Tanka Tales***  
by Amelia Fielden.

Ginninderra Press (limited edition), Port Adelaide, Australia, 2013, 107 pages, paperback, 5.6 x 8.1. ISBN 978-1-74027-804-1. \$20 (including postage) from [anafielden@gmail.com](mailto:anafielden@gmail.com) .

Mint and copper, savor and luster— in her collection of “tanka tales,” well-known Australian poet and translator Amelia Fielden shares richly flavored glimpses of her own life. Widely traveled and versed in several languages, Ms. Fielden, who has specialized in translating the work of contemporary Japanese women writers, has lived in Japan, England, Morocco and Malta, as well as her native Australia. In 40 tanka-prose pieces and six sequences, which together include over 200 tanka, she treats the reader to fascinating stories and poems about her experiences.

She reflects on her childhood and youth in Australia, on Pearl Harbour and polio:

Christmas eve  
a boy child lying  
in the next bed  
cried himself to death—  
Santa came next morning

. . . and gives us revealing, amusing personal glimpses of her character as a young woman:

from under  
my brief white tennis frock  
I flashed  
legs clad in scarlet tights . . .  
just to see what might happen

Many of the tanka tales are, of course, set in Japan, and offer the reader wonderful cultural riches as well as personal anecdote. One of the best concerns her considerable surprise, as a young student newly arrived in Japan, on learning that she was to have a *miai* or “seeing meeting,” the first stage in an arranged marriage. Ms. Fielden also offers an extensive tanka diary of a return journey to Japan



decades later, and reflects on her lifelong experiences:

first persimmon  
of this Japanese autumn,  
discarded skin  
luminous as lacquer—  
no, I regret nothing

She also includes stories and poems about friends and family, love and loss, and her beloved labradoodles. Any reader of this charming book will come away feeling that she has come to know personally the woman behind the translator, and Ms. Fielden is well worth knowing.

what a life:  
lots of people to love  
poems to write—  
'please, Sir, I  
want some more'

~ ~ ~

## The Essence of Each Rock

### A Review of *Just This*, Tanka by Margaret Chula.

Mountains & Rivers Press, Eugene, Oregon, 2013, 92 pages, paperback, 5.5 x 8.5, introduction by Amelia Fielden. ISBN 978-0-9793204-9-1. US \$16 (includes postage in USA), from [www.margareatchula.com](http://www.margareatchula.com).

According to legend, the ninth-century Chinese sage Lingyun attained enlightenment when he saw a peach tree in bloom. He wrote a poem about his experience:

...  
One glimpse of peach blossoms,  
Now no more doubts— just this\*

In the title poem of her second tanka collection, Margaret Chula writes:

from the garden  
a handful of lilacs  
and mint for my tea  
lilt of a Mozart concerto  
just this, just this

Her last line may simply express quiet contentment— the beauty that surrounds the narrator is sufficient for happiness. But perhaps it is also meant to reflect upon the “suchness” of things— a Buddhist concept that refers to the true nature of reality, which lies in the uniqueness of each fleeting moment. *Just This* is a collection of 100 tanka that reach out to capture the unique suchness of moments in the poet’s life.

One hundred is the traditional number of tanka in classical Japanese collections. Ms. Chula, who spent twelve years in Kyoto and is steeped in the waka/tanka tradition of Japan, has structured her collection in five sections, each introduced by a waka (in English translation) by a woman poet of Heian Japan. Each group of twenty tanka clusters around a theme and the poems in each section, printed spaciouly one or two to a page, are thoughtfully arranged to flow into and enhance one another.

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\* Quoted in *The Zen of Creativity* by John Daido Loori (New York: Ballantine Books, 2005)

Like the title poem cited above, two of the section headings—“Lingering Fragrance” and “Hush of Crickets”—hint at the sensory richness of this collection. Ms. Chula’s tanka are notable for the range of concrete sensory images they employ—not just vision but also touch, smell, sound, and taste. In thirteenth-century Japan, Zen Master Dogen, citing experiences such as Lingyun’s peach-blossom enlightenment, taught that “the Way” is attained through the body. And, of course, the gates of the body are the five senses. In *Just This*, Ms. Chula treats the reader to 100 embodied, multisensory glimpses into the essential nature of things.

The first section, “Lingering Fragrance,” is, as one would expect, replete with images of fragrance. There are no weak tanka in this entire collection, so it is difficult to choose, but here are some of my favorite fragrant poems:

newspaper headlines  
of uprisings, earthquakes  
and radiation  
waft of daffodils  
beneath a sickle moon

The bleak and slightly abstract upper verse, dominated by the narrator’s gloomy thoughts, is set against the lower verse with its simple, immediate sensory images, drawing narrator and reader alike back into the present moment. Yet the sharpness of the sickle moon cuts through the sweetness of the daffodils, reminding us of the harsh realities laid out in the upper verse.

moon bathing  
the lone deer and I  
the ferment  
of apples and grief  
washing us clean

This poem turns beautifully on “the ferment” in line 3. The smell of fermenting apples, yes, but also the metaphorical “ferment” of grief. Yet in line 5 the narrator tells us, unexpectedly, that the sharp scent “washes us clean” in a healing catharsis of grief.

my turquoise mala  
unravels on the altar  
lingering fragrance  
of the incense stick  
after it burns out

(*mala*: Buddhist prayer beads)

In this final tanka of the first section, Ms. Chula demonstrates her skill at sequencing her poems: the last three lines, hinting at love, loss, and longing, lead seamlessly into the next section, “Who Can Say What Loneliness Is.” This section includes poems about romantic love, such as this one

sunlit pond  
the koi surfaces  
all mouth and whiskers  
suddenly  
I long for your kiss

in which the narrator effectively— and humorously— juxtaposes the opening visual image with an unexpected but very apt tactile memory, capturing a sudden moment of recognition.

Loneliness arises not only from the loss of friends and lovers but from the loss of one’s parents, as those deep original bonds are finally broken.

cleaning out  
Mother’s lingerie drawer  
the tears in her stockings  
sewn up so tightly—  
all my unanswered questions

The carefully mended stockings contrast poignantly with the ragged edges and loose ends of the narrator’s questions, which may remain forever unanswered. Themes of loss continue into the third section, “Hush of Crickets,” which offers moments of both sound and silence.

in his final days  
Daddy breathes oxygen  
through a plastic tube

how fragile  
the long necks of daffodils

at Obon  
a priest chants  
the Lotus Sutra  
one by one, the wind blows out  
candles lit for the dead

The first of these two tanka captures a moment of insight into the fragility of life, glimpsed through the unexpected pairing of images: the plastic tubing, the slender necks of daffodils. In the second poem, the Lotus Sutra speaks of the unity of all beings, beyond existence and nonexistence— even as wind snuffs out the candles of the dead. A profound paradox to which one can only bow in acquiescence— *yes, that is how it is.*

“Trying to Remember” follows “The Hush of Crickets,” just as recollection follows loss.

red-winged blackbirds  
and the patter of rain  
on the veranda  
our ghosts sit at the table  
reading poems, drinking wine

Sound, sight and taste combine to evoke the ghosts of memory— or are they the ghosts of the narrator and a companion, glimpsed in a moment of insight into the elusive nature of time and the self?

Dreams, too, may arise from the wish to remember, the desire to understand:

in last night's dream  
I discovered a drawer  
of broken toy parts  
why do I open my heart  
to all these wounded people

The narrator's subconscious, dreaming mind brilliantly connects the open drawer with the open heart, broken toys with wounded people,

to create a poem whose simple images evoke complex feelings while leaving the final question as wide open as the heart.

The fifth and final section of Ms. Chula's book is called "Yesterday's Desires," and its title poem

yesterday's desires  
what were they?  
a vase  
without flowers  
holds only itself

presents a moment of crystalline insight which defies paraphrase yet resonates with intuitive truth. The blossoms of all we desire wither and fade and we are left holding only the clear emptiness of the present moment.

In *The Zen of Creativity*, John Daido Looi writes "The best we can do is be always open and receptive. Whether we're receiving Zen teachings, a work of art, or life itself, we can let it in, taste it, experience it, let it penetrate our cells, our pores, our being, and then leave it be." Margaret Chula's wise and lovely tanka exemplify this creative spirit, capturing, exploring— and then gently releasing— the uniqueness of each moment, the suchness of things.

the essence  
of each of these rocks  
now painted on canvas  
one by one we return them  
to the river

## All Things Change into Musical Instruments

**A Review of *Music of the Heart: Tanka Melodies*,  
an anthology edited and translated by Amelia Fielden and Saeko Ogi with the  
assistance of Noriko Tanaka.**

Ginninderra Press (limited edition), Port Adelaide, Australia, 2014, 158 pages, paperback, 5.6 x 8.0, foreword by Zenchiku Takashi. ISBN 978-1-74027-854-6. \$20 (including postage) from [anafielden@gmail.com](mailto:anafielden@gmail.com).

In the brief foreword to *Music of the Heart*, Zenchiku Takashi writes “I feel that tanka is something universal which can transcend nation and time.” The same has often been said of music, so a cross-cultural anthology of tanka on musical themes seems a perfect marriage.

*Music of the Heart* was created to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the bond between sister cities Canberra, Australia, and Nara, Japan. The editors and translators have assembled a bilingual anthology of 199 tanka written by 55 Australian poets and 77 Japanese poets. All of the tanka are presented in both English and Japanese, two or three to a page, with translations on the facing page. Within each section—Australian and Japanese— poems are arranged alphabetically by authors’ names.

Curiously, both sections of the book carry the same subtitle, “The Melody Lingers On.” The Australian section, with 105 poems in English only, was published separately under that title in 2012. The inclusion of 94 tanka by Japanese poets widens the range of musical themes and allows comparison of the two groups of poems; and the inclusion of the translations makes this a truly cross-cultural volume. Any anthology of this scope is inevitably uneven, but the book includes many outstanding tanka.

Music, like tanka, is a powerful means of both expressing and transmuting human emotion, and many of the poems explore this power.

he plays  
the piano after the funeral  
till the small hours . . .  
the dark fades away  
in moonlight and sonatas

~Dawn Bruce

This poem's clear, simple language is at once literal and metaphoric — “the dark” is both the darkness of night and the darkness of grief, and both are dissolved by moonlight and music. The last line references Beethoven's “Moonlight Sonata,” further enriching the poem with this specific auditory image. Reading this tanka, one can hear the deep, mysterious consolation of music.

The ways in which music can move the human heart are infinite, and the tanka in this volume capture some of that variety:

people stare  
at the man singing  
a lullaby  
in the supermarket  
. . . so crazy, so comforting

*~Keitha Keyes*

This tanka captures an unusual but quite believable musical moment, and in just four words sums up the contradictory yet compatible reactions of the bystanders. The idea that something crazy can also be comforting has a paradoxical rightness about it, yet leaves dreaming room for the reader's own responses to this charming vignette.

Clearly, music need not be brilliantly performed on a concert stage in order to move us:

a halting tune  
from my child's tin whistle. . .  
I hold each note  
against the day when all  
will be lost in the dance

*~Jo McInerney*

Here the sound of her child's music-making evokes the narrator's awareness of the inevitable loss of childhood and, eventually, of mother and child as well. This poignant tanka is layered with meaning: “I hold each note” can refer both to music and to the effort



to hold on by means of memory; and the last line can be read as a metaphor for the ongoing dance of life and death. The music of that dance also echoes in the following somber tanka:

swallowing  
the sleeping tablets  
I listen to a requiem  
taking one step closer  
to the cliff of death

~*Kikuta Hiroko*

This poem is the middle of a story, but what story? Is the narrator attempting suicide, or seeking the oblivion of sleep after the funeral of a loved one? Either interpretation works, and this openness allows different readers to connect to the poem in individual ways.

But music can transport us to heights as well as depths:

shutting my eyes  
surrendering my all  
to the music  
I become a rider  
of the Milky Way

~*Kondo Kasumi*

. . . a tanka whose last lines give us a beautiful image of musical ecstasy. Just as music may carry us into the cosmos, so too many poets discover music in the natural world:

a lyrical voice  
and friendly disposition  
my neighbor  
likes to sing in the rain—  
who named him butcher bird?

~*Pat Harkin*

This poem elicits a smile at the surprise in its last line— we expected a human neighbor! But birds are not the only music-makers in the

natural world.

leaves fallen  
from the nettle tree  
dancing staccato  
to the rhythm of winds  
in the old country

~*Komeda Yasuko*

in a patch of sunlight  
the *odori* grass  
moves rhythmically  
to and fro like a metronome,  
with its spring dreaming

~*Takita Kayo*

The reader need not be familiar with nettle trees or *odori* grass to resonate with the natural music captured in these poems, and with the emotion subtly implied in the last line of each.

The power of both music and nature to connect us to one another is poignantly expressed in this tanka:

nose to glass  
her unreachable boy  
wonders aloud  
mummy do you see rain  
or can you hear the music

~*Tessa Wooldridge*

We are not told why the boy is unreachable— perhaps he has autism or an emotional disturbance— but it does not matter. He has a magical capacity to hear the music in the rain, and he reaches out to share that magic with his mother.

Many poems in this volume express that wonderful capacity to discover the music in all things.

'even rainy days  
are not bad,'  
I noticed—  
all things change  
into musical instruments

~*Sugita Naho*

Those who are alive to the world of sound can find music not just in rain but also in more unexpected places:

*Miserere*—  
breath held as I wash  
this wine glass  
so fragile and clear  
like notes floating high

~*Michael Thorley*

as soon as I place  
a piece of white porcelain  
in the alcove  
dazzling music  
rises from it

~*Yamashita Fumiko*

In these two poems we experience a kind of synesthesia as auditory and visual images intertwine, awakening our senses to the musical potential in the everyday objects we often overlook. Indeed, for those who are really alert, music and poetry can be found in still more unusual places:

the rhythm  
of bacteria cultivation jell  
breaking up  
with a poignant sound,  
reaches a crescendo

~*Morigaki Takeshi*

What creative use the poet makes, in this intriguing tanka, of rather unpromising material. Is the gel breaking up because some virulent strain of bacteria has outgrown its culture medium? Or because the gel has dried out and the bacteria have died? Is the imagined sound “poignant” because of the implications for some beloved person’s health? We do not know, but we are given much to ponder.

I do not know Japanese, and I have the utmost respect for the difficult art of translation. I do not know whether the translators’ goal was to follow as literally as possible the Japanese original or to create freer translations that explore the poetic potential of the English language. However, for the English-speaking reader, some of the poems translated from the Japanese are slightly marred by constructions or line breaks that seem awkward in English, such as prepositions dangling at the ends of lines. In several poems, including the one above, a comma is placed between subject and predicate in a sentence. Perhaps this is an attempt to capture an untranslatable feature of the original Japanese, but in English it is ungrammatical and therefore distracts the reader from enjoyment of the poems’ meaning and beauty.

In comparing the Australian and Japanese sections of *Music of the Heart*, it is interesting to note the differences in tanka structure. Nearly 60% of the Japanese tanka are constructed (at least in the English translation) as a single sentence, while this is true for fewer than 20% of the Australian tanka, which more often fall into two distinct parts with a break between them. It would have been interesting to read some commentary by the translators, versed in both languages, on both their philosophy of translation and on the differences they observe between contemporary Japanese and English-language tanka.

These are, however, very minor points. This anthology explores the deep resonance between tanka and the music in all things, and will engage any reader who loves both. In *The Listening Book*, W. A. Mathieu writes “We can no more hear all the vibrations in a sonata than we can see all the radiation from the stars. There is an effulgence, a surfeit in the world. We will never hear it all, even if we invent a hundred new ways to listen and bring all the dark into the light.” The poets of *Music of the Heart*, exploring both dark and light, have invented 199 new ways to listen.

as I contemplate  
the IV drip attached to me  
I compose tanka,  
my mind playing around  
in a world of freedom

*~Yamashita Fumiko*

## The Scent of Rain

**A Review of *Petrichor, Anthology of Short Verse*  
by Pamela A. Babusci, Collin Barber, Claire Everett, Colin Stewart Jones,  
Kenneth Slaughter, and Jeffrey Winke.**

Yet to Be Named Free Press, Stoke-on-Trent, England, 2013, 158 pages, perfect bound paperback, 5 x 8, produced and with a foreword and cover art by Brendan Slater, illustrations by Johannes S. J. Berg. ISBN 978-1492823063. US \$8.10 from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

*Petrichor* is the scent of rain after a dry spell; the word was coined from Greek roots meaning *stone* and *the fluid in the veins of the gods*. It is an apt title for this anthology— many of the poems are hard-edged and gritty as stone, yet the alert reader will also catch among its pages the whiff of renewal.

the way you learned  
to put on your coat  
the hood, then the sleeves . . .  
after the overdose  
each day is a triumph

~Claire Everett

The volume is structured like six separate chapbooks with 16 to 25 poems in each. About 80% of the poems in this “anthology of short verse” are tanka. Claire Everett includes two tanka-prose pieces and Kenneth Slaughter includes a six-tanka sequence and one haiku; Jeffrey Winke’s section is comprised entirely of haiku. Johannes Berg’s dream-like images enhance each section of the book, whose poems are presented spaciouly, one to a page.

With six sections by six distinctively different poets, *Petrichor* derives its unity from the shared exploration of life’s underbelly. In his “Foreword” to the book, Brendan Slater speculates about the purpose of poetry. Can it feed the soul, make us more empathic, and therefore make the world a better place? Despite all evidence to the contrary, Slater says, “we still write. And we write because we believe our words will make a difference. I’m unashamed to say that *Petrichor* was conceived to make a difference . . . If *Petrichor* contains just one

poem, one line, that inspires a reader to re-evaluate an aspect of their world, then we have succeeded.” Based on that criterion, *Petrichor* has succeeded very well indeed, for its pages are filled with poems that lead the reader so see with new eyes facets of life from which we too often shy away.

In the book’s opening section, entitled “lying in a field,” Pamela A. Babusci, a tanka poet probably best known for her lyrical evocations of romantic love, loneliness and loss, brings her poetic sensibility to bear on darker topics:

visiting  
a dying friend  
the slow drip  
of black  
rain

outside the church  
falling petals  
from the weeping cherry  
another  
teen suicide

One might argue whether these poems, with their unusual breaks and very short lines, can properly be called tanka; however, one of the strengths of this volume lies in its refusal to label the poems within it except as “short verse.” Freed from conventional strictures, the poets are free to experiment— often to excellent effect, as in Babusci’s two poems, above. The structure of the first poem mimics the dripping of the rain; the second gives great weight to the word *another* by placing it on a line by itself. Some of Babusci’s poems also offer the most brilliant splashes of light in this otherwise dark little book:

skinny dipping  
in a summer river  
a million stars  
clothe us  
in liquid light

Collin Barber’s section takes us “Further Down the Starlit Road,” a journey full of uncertainty:

staring into  
the refrigerator's  
cool breath  
I look for something  
that isn't there

Here an experience familiar to every reader is transformed by a subtle sleight of the language into a provocative metaphor: what are we really searching for? Is it really not there, or can we just not see it?

Barber's road is often dark:

I no longer  
hate you for leaving  
the needle  
in your arm  
when they found your body

But even this stark poem carries the hint of forgiveness in its opening lines, and glimmers of starlight illuminate Barber's shadowed road:

the Milky Way . . .  
sometimes I feel  
like a moth  
clinging to a door  
that will soon be opened

Will the door open inward or outward? Will the moth be entrapped, crushed, or freed? The poem's ambiguity leaves the reader much to ponder.

Entitled "Sticks and Stones," Claire Everett's section offers strong tanka that are at once honest and lyrical in their exploration of bruising experiences. From her tanka-prose piece, "Gastropod," about a battered woman leaving her abuser:

savouring  
every mile between us . . .  
moonlit slime  
the slug's soft underbelly  
drawing a line



The striking image in the lower verse shows the reader through its powerful final line that this woman will *not* be crawling back on her belly; although still vulnerable, she is nevertheless “drawing a line.”

Other poems in Everett’s section explore challenging themes of illness and loss:

skin and bone  
beneath a thin grey blanket  
my life waits  
huddled on a gurney  
outside your hospital room

that night  
I was without sisters  
and no-one’s daughter  
not even a name tag  
for my stillborn child

The first tanka above is a very relatable poem whose stark images are transformed into metaphor by the unexpected turn in line 3. The second poem beautifully expresses the bleak aloneness that accompanies the experience of stillbirth— a loss whose magnitude and impact other people may not fully appreciate. It is a theme also explored by Colin Stewart Jones:

still  
trying to catch  
snow on my tongue . . .  
the bittersweet names  
of my aborted child

Snow on the tongue melts away in a moment, yet the taste of loss is palpable. The poem’s brief first line creates a feeling of ongoing struggle to come to terms with that loss. Jones calls his section “Love, Slugs & Other Drinks,” themes poignantly captured in poems such as these:

kirkyard  
grass left to grow  
among daffodils

an old ex-submariner  
offers a slug from his can

my lover  
gathers her clothes  
in silence  
I trace the moon  
on a windowpane

In the first poem, both the kirkyard and the old man show signs of neglect but also remnants of beauty—daffodils gone wild; the impulse to share what little one has. The second poem captures a deeply ambiguous moment—so much is said and unsaid in the silence of the third line. Is this the silence of communion or of disconnection?

Many of the “Secrets” in Kenneth Slaughter’s section also remain unspoken:

in the yard with Mom  
I mention my brother . . .  
a train whistle  
cuts short  
the song of a robin

So much is left unstated in this brief and beautifully crafted poem, yet the lonely sound of the train whistle and the phrase “cuts short” combine to suggest a life cut short like the robin’s song. Many of Slaughter’s mild and understated poems similarly imply whole stories, often poignant:

on a shelf  
in her dining room . . .  
the red truck  
her father bought  
hoping for a boy

How does “she” feel, we wonder, about this memento—carefully preserved—of her father’s wish for her to be someone else? Slaughter also leavens his “Secrets” with doses of wry, self-deprecating humor:

a backpack  
with my life story inside  
the truth  
I twist and bend  
just to get it in

. . . leaving the reader to ponder the rigid or flexible nature of truth, story and memory— a theme also explored in one of Jeffrey Winke's haiku in the final section of the book:

rusted memory  
can't pry it  
open . . .

Winke's section, entitled "The Stillness," captures many quiet, poignant moments reverberant with what is left unsaid:

after hours  
a cop, a thief, a whore  
at the taco truck

solace  
the feel of her palm  
against mine

*Solace*— the scent of rain for the parched heart. In their very different ways, but always with courage and honesty, the six poets of *Petrichor* explore a range of difficult and challenging themes, giving the reader models for how to dive into the dark places and come up whole. The act of writing is itself a healing antidote to despair, and the act of reading this book brings us in rich measure the solace that is poetry:

and here  
is the moment's exit wound—  
a poem  
exactly where it fell  
and still warm

~*Claire Everett*

## All the Time There Is

### A Review of *Slow Growing Ivy*, Tanka by David Terelinck

Cedar Press, Sydney, Australia, 2014, 112 pages, perfect bound paperback, 5.8 x 8.2, introduction by Beverley George, cover art and illustrations by Sylvia Amoedo. ISBN 978-0-646-91428-2. AUD \$22 in Australia, or AUD \$25 worldwide, from [www.davidterelinck.com](http://www.davidterelinck.com).

The tanka in this second collection by award-winning Australian poet David Terelinck flow through the pages organically, like leaves of ivy growing on a wall. *Slow Growing Ivy* includes 113 individual tanka, eight sequences (one written responsively with Carol Judkins), and six tanka-prose “journeys.” Printed on glossy paper, the poems are enhanced by Sylvia Amoedo’s black-and-white drawings.

The individual tanka, attractively presented one or two to a page, are not divided into sections and do not appear to form a single, linear sequence; instead, the range and complexity of Terelinck’s themes link the poems to one another like leaves on a branching vine, the whole forming a complex and pleasing pattern.

Here the reader finds tanka on such classic themes as love and loss, often expressed through exquisite images:

the pearls  
of Cassiopeia spilled  
across the sky . . .  
a nightjar calls from the tree  
where we carved our initials

This poem has a delicious openness about it— we do not know what has become of the lovers, nor whether they carved their initials tonight or long ago. But the choice of the words “spilled” and “nightjar” carry just a hint of loss and of metaphorical darkness, an impression that is reinforced by the second poem on the same page:

only the moon  
understands my grief . . .  
waxing, waning,  
sometimes so complete  
it cannot be ignored

—a stunningly apt metaphor that will be understood by anyone who has experienced the cyclical stages of grief. Terelinck also observes the smaller, less conspicuous events of the natural world around him and employs them skillfully to express the anguish of the human condition:

sudden crack  
as a bunya pine cone  
splits open—  
no way to prepare  
for that kind of news

the empty husk  
of a milkweed pod—  
how I wish  
you'd never asked  
how much I love you

Like many of his best tanka, these two poems juxtapose a quiet, understated comment with a concrete image that is at once unexpected and precisely right. In this way Terelinck creates sensitive, stunning little gems about the most serious issues:

blue plums  
over-ripe and tasting  
of dusk—  
we never discussed  
organ donation

prawn boats  
tethered to creaking wharves  
by winter mist—  
you said you never wanted  
to be on life support

However, there are many glints of light among the layered leaves of *Slow Growing Ivy*— including some wry and poignant humor about human relationships:

who gets to keep  
our old kama sutra—  
how on earth

did we ever end up  
in this position

the slender tip  
of a cardamom bud . . .  
on prom night,  
single fathers everywhere  
having mother-daughter talks

Terelinck offers the reader several beautiful meditations on the nature of memory, that mother lode of poems:

a drone of bees  
in summer lavender  
trailing our fingers  
through slow-running waters  
and childhood memories

shelling peas  
on a summer afternoon—  
shaking loose  
each memory caught  
in mother's colander

Each tanka uses a completely different metaphor for memory—languid, slow-running waters; peas caught in a colander— yet both surprise and delight the reader with their rightness, demonstrating Terelinck's ability to explore a theme from multiple angles. Witness, for instance, these two tanka about dreams:

following  
the fecund curve of  
your dreams . . .  
what waits within us,  
what waits without

the clatter  
of loose coins inside  
a beggar's bowl  
the dreams I can't remember  
the dreams I can't erase

The two poems are similar in structure and each presents two contrasting aspects of dreams, yet each leads the reader to muse in a different direction. Both demonstrate Terelinck's evident preference for traditional s/l/s/l/l tanka structure, and in each he has allowed a preposition to dangle at the end of a line. It may be that he has done this not merely for the sake of line length but deliberately to create a tiny pause before revealing the object of the preposition. However, this works better in the second poem, where the line "of loose coins inside" more closely approaches a single poetic phrase than does "the fecund curve of." The second tanka is also stronger because of the concrete and evocative image in its upper verse, typical of Terelinck's best poems.

It is difficult to pick only a small bouquet from the many shining leaves in *Slow Growing Ivy*. Among my personal favorites are the many tanka that explore philosophical and spiritual themes. The book opens with these two meditations on the nature of god and self:

the mellow notes  
from a stilling vesper bell—  
and when god is done  
how shall I fill  
these wingless hours . . .

chanting sutras  
from the mountaintop . . .  
dissolved of flesh  
I am no more, or less  
than a silvered gust of air

There is enough on this first page alone to provide the reader with abundant food for thought, but deeper among the leaves lie many more tanka of similar richness.

Terelinck also offers us eight tanka sequences on a wide range of themes. The tanka within each sequence are clearly linked like leaves on a single stem, yet each poem could well stand alone. (Interestingly, 22 of the individual tanka in the first section of the book were drawn from eight responsive sequences that Terelinck wrote with several other poets.) Among my favorite tanka from the sequences is this, from the sequence "Every Drop of Silver":

cracked and faded  
a discarded alms bowl  
still holding  
every drop of silver  
the moon can offer

With its beautifully contrasting images this poem completes a short sequence that explores the themes of loss and recovery from loss. I do not say it *concludes* the sequence because both this tanka and the whole sequence remain wide open to the ambiguities of love and grief.

One of the most unusual sequences is “Whispered by Eucalypts,” which is about the discovery of the skeletal remains of the poet’s grandfather, who had been missing for fifty years. Terelinck handles this strange event and its emotional repercussions with typical sensitivity:

long bones  
bleached by decades  
of sun and moon—  
is it possible to miss  
someone you never knew?

The final section of *Slow Growing Ivy* includes six “prose journeys,” all very different from each other. One of the most moving is “Squandered Gifts,” which is written in the second person, creating a feeling of intimacy between narrator and reader. It ends with this emotionally powerful tanka:

*flesh of my flesh . . .*  
if only you could  
barter away  
your unsullied womb  
for her squandered gifts

—demonstrating Terelinck’s ability to enter into a persona not his own and write effectively from a woman’s point of view.

Given his philosophical turn of mind, it is not surprising that Terelinck offers several fine tanka on the theme of time, including his title tanka, from a sequence of the same name:



a shaded corner  
in the hospice garden  
—slow growing ivy  
as if there is all  
the time in the world

The tanka derives its emotional power from the contrast between the word *hospice*, with its implication that a cherished person is nearing the end of his or her days, and the unhurried growth of the ivy. The ivy seems to have “all the time in the world,” while the narrator feels acutely the shortness of time. But the Greeks had two different words for time, *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* is the time we measure with our ticking clocks, while *kairos* means “right moment” or “opportunity.” *Kairos* is the passing instant when an opening appears— the invisible tunnel through which the archer’s arrow flies straight to its mark, or the momentary gap through which the weaver sends the shuttle. \*

The poems in *Slow Growing Ivy* demonstrate the power of tanka to widen and deepen our brief allotment of *chronos* through awareness of *kairos*. Each tanka represents a passing moment in which the poet has seized an opportunity to create meaning and thereby deepen time:

morning,  
cobbled together  
with birdsong—  
the answer to prayers  
comes in many forms

\* White, Eric Charles. *Kaironomia: On the Will-to-Invent*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987.



## Submission Guidelines

Submissions for the 3:1, summer issue of *Skylark* will be read through December and January and will close on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2015.

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**

**NB:** *Following notification of acceptance, please refrain from sharing your work online prior to the issue going to print. If you do so, your tanka will be withdrawn from the print issue.*



**Friends of *Skylark*:**

David Terelinck & Robert Miller, Australia

