



***Another Garden: Tanka Writings* by Jeffrey Woodward**

Tournesol Books October 2013, (available at Amazon.com), 180 pages, perfect bound.

Reviewed by Ruth Holzer, USA

Following his recent volume of haiku and haibun, *Evening in the Plaza*, Jeffrey Woodward's new book gives us a generous collection of tanka and tanka prose as well as two thoughtful essays on the genre and an interview with Claire Everett. Many of the poems in *Another Garden* have been previously published, and it is a pleasure to have them assembled here, where they can resonate with each other and allow the reader a full experience of Woodward's artistry.

One of the hallmarks of Woodward's style is its reticence, expressing just enough to involve us in further thought, without overdoing explanation or emotion. He finds the right word, places it where it belongs, and makes it seem effortless. Another is his eye for line and color, his ability to create strong visual imagery, especially in the case of haibun inspired by paintings. And a third is its drawing upon a wide range of artistic, literary and historical references; there is no such thing as a "typical" haibun in his repertoire. In every tanka prose piece, the prose and the poetry work seamlessly together.

The poems in *Another Garden* include those of a personal nature, which explore memory and imagination. "Photograph at 19," expertly blends the social and political concerns of an earlier generation. The moving "The Girl from Shanghai" views disparate yet similar worlds of despair and hope, while "Halo" considers a life's choices and concludes with a calm detachment reminiscent of Yeats:

I sit beside
a lamp
and in the warmth
of that company
turn a page

Poems such as "Drifter" and "The Trial of Dorothy Talbye, 1638" display a convincing empathy for the characters. Poems of landscape such as "Needles by Night" and "Soberanes Point" carry us directly to the place, as does this homage to Robinson Jeffers:

not far from the house
I find the wind-worn
Monterrey Cypress
did you plant this twisted one,
this gaunt one, this evergreen

("Tor House")

Some of the most intriguing poems are based on works by Matisse and Cezanne.

these lips of the conch
pink enough to startle
the beholder's eyes
and handless in the background
a black clock's blank face

("The Black Clock")

Woodward's versatility is everywhere in evidence. The sequences, especially "Little Fig," and "Behind Your Name" resemble mysterious fugues that invite re-readings, and end with a sense of space, of continuing; for example, the concluding tanka in the long, dream-like sequence "Resident Angel":

ice pulls back away
from the wind-protected,
sunny island shore
and, into that unexpected
pond, the cold, the quiet swan

As "*Lagniappe*," Woodward adds two essays, "The Road Ahead for Tanka in English" and "The Elements of Tanka Prose," and an in-depth interview with *Skylark* editor Claire Everett. These pieces effectively round out the volume and provide a wealth of scholarly and personal material to inform and guide contemporary tanka practitioners. *Another Garden* is a must-read for everyone interested in Japanese forms, and in poetics generally.

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