

of souls and wings by Janick Belleau : Comments from English speaking poets – May 2010

« I received your book recently and am enjoying reading it -- it is also a beautiful book.

I didn't know the history of especially the French women translators/writers of tanka -- that was important to know. And your own tanka is lovely –

I hope the book gets spread out to others, as it deserves to be. Take care, »

PATRICIA DONEGAN, HAIKU POET & TRANSLATOR, US

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« After a first reading of your book, I have to say that I am very impressed by your poems' subtlety and classicism. Much of contemporary tanka in English can be read through very swiftly and superficially. Your poems have a depth to them that requires a very thoughtful reading. Yet there is a lot of emotional honesty as well. »

Angela Leuck, POET

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« I love the fact that (the book) is in both French and English about a Japanese tradition.

(At the beginning,) the concise, clear explanation of what a tanka is is very good.

The whole book is '*composed with gentleness and sensibility... no matter how fearful a thing may be of itself, ...it is made to sound graceful and elegant*' (Fujiwara no Teika).

(Your collection) is very loving and/or soulful (...). Some (poems) of course do reach me with no interruptions (...)

Thanks for an excellent piece of work. I shall enjoy reading the book again.

ANNA VAKAR (AKA, AVA KAR), POET & ESSAYIST, British Columbia

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I've read the poems a few times it was a multiple pleasure... to revisit some poems I'd previously seen in either *Gusts* or *la Revue du tanka francophone*... and to meet poems new to me... and of course there is the cumulative effect of the thematic groupings...

I am particularly impressed with the section *Burning Fire*... the poems have, well, heat!

*Baie de diamants / longeant la route verte / au milieu de l'été /
le coeur fou je vais vers toi / du rouge sur mes lèvres (p. 87)*

along the green road / on a midsummer day / a bay of diamonds /
wild with joy I go to you / wearing red lipstick (p. 86)

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*Forêt d'épinettes / autour du lac si calme / ce nouvel oiseau
jamais entendu avant / ton rire au quotidien (p. 91)*

spruce forest / around the cabin lake / this new bird /
never heard before / your laugh on a daily basis (p. 90)

Each poem in its own way of exemplifying one of the most important aspects of a tanka, the final line must be the strongest one... and they do... and they are...

I also really like the contrast in

*Les bourgeons / grossissant de jour en jour / mes projets /
dans une pièce à moi / avec vue sur murs vides (p. 95)*

buds / bigger by the day / my projects /
in a room of my own / with a view of white walls (p. 94)

And of course, the first two lines are both literal outdoor garden as well as metaphorically referring to the projects...

Another poem I'd single out is this next one which is so utterly peaceful and 'summerly'.

*Pédalo / sur le lac aux nénuphars / un ballet d'insectes /
je me laisse transporter / dans leur monde silencieux (p. 121)*

pedal boat / on the water lily lake / a ballet of insects /
I let myself be carried / into their silent world (p. 120)

And finally this poem, another with the central theme of isolation... which so recalls the poems of ancient times...

*Grillons silencieux / soleil sous les nuages / tout est secret
une impression de vide / plus personne ne m'écrit (p. 125)*

silent crickets / sun behind the clouds / all is secret /
a feeling of emptiness / no one writes to me any more (p. 124)

It conveys isolation, aloneness, but just a hint of being lonely.

I must also comment on the photos which are so apt for the sections they illustrate... the heron (p. 93) is a particular delight...

Maxianne Berger, tanka poet and translator