

Eucalypt eNews February 2026

Eucalypt

A Tanka Journal

CELEBRATING
30
YEARS

Submissions to Issue 40 open 1 March, close 31 March 2026

Email up to 6 tanka to editor.eucalypt@gmail.com

Dear Eucalypt Subscribers,

This summer our beach retreat has been shrouded in smoke from two bushfires: one across the bay to the south, one 14 kilometres north in the bushland. Volunteer firefighters have been working tirelessly to gain control of the blazes.

Keeping our windows shut in hot weather with no air-conditioning has been uncomfortable. Relatives in the northern hemisphere are enduring snow and ice. We are all vulnerable to the weather and the natural elements, no matter where we live.

Since 2017, the *Eucalypt* e-newsletter has published poems on eight themed challenges. This year, I invite you to email to editor.eucalypt@gmail.com your original, unpublished tanka on the theme **Four Elements: earth, water, air, and fire**. Closing date: 1 July.

As always, the main print journal *Eucalypt* is open theme. Submissions to issue 40 open on the first of March and close at the end of that month. I'm looking forward to some beautiful poems to celebrate this milestone issue.

Thank you to the subscribers who have already renewed their subscriptions. There is a little increase in price to cover the increasing cost of postage. It is my privilege to edit and publish *Eucalypt: a tanka journal* on a voluntary basis and I delight in hearing the feedback from readers near and far. Thank you for being part of this unique poetry journal.

Warmest wishes for 2026!

Julie



The Scribble Awards

It is my pleasure to announce the SCRIBBLE AWARDS for issue 39.

The Distinctive Scribble Awards recognise
two outstanding poems from each issue of *Eucalypt*,
selected and appraised by winners of the awards in the previous issue.

The winners from issue 39 are . . .

Simon Wilson

we had several
half tins of assorted paint
and a subdued shed
now we have neither
—bright stripes

selected by Jim Chessing

Gwen Bitti

hailstones
hit the tin roof
tat-tat-tat-tat—
trembling veterans
cover their ears

selected by Kathy Kituai

The appraisals can be read on the following pages.
Thanks to Kathy and Jim for their thoughtful choices.
Congratulations to Simon and Gwen who are invited
to be our award judges for issue 40!

Gwen Bitti

An appraisal by Kathy Kituai

hailstones
hit the tin roof
tat-tat-tat-tat—
trembling veterans
cover their ears

Gwen Bitti

Given the opportunity to pick the Distinctive Scribblings Award for *Eucalypt* issue 39—thanks to Michelle Brock for choosing mine, issue 38—I ran through my mind accepted poetics that make a good tanka, like dreaming room, a pivot line, present tense, as well as the use of the senses.

In his book of essays, *44 Poems on Being with Each Other*, internationally renowned poet, Pádraig Ó Tuama states that exceptional poetry (all genres) seldom climax with a resolution, and adds; ‘I write and like poems that don’t necessarily offer soft landings, instead leaving the reader with some tension, the work asking for discussion, reflection and feeling from the one looking at the page’.

Likewise, tanka that leave readers with a question, something that lingers after reading it, often plunging the reader into memories of lived, life-experiences are the most satisfying. With these thoughts in mind, this tanka, by Carmel Summers, caught my attention.

the day
you came to call
a blackbird sang
your questioning eyes
your parting words

What was it that was questioned or were those parting words? Whatever it was or what they were, they’re bound to be soulful. A blackbird’s song is poignant, so much so, I was plunged into my own connection with their song. Having lived in Scotland for three months, only there was I able to enjoy their call without a sense of guilt, because blackbirds are not native to Australia. This tanka also includes a pivot ... ‘a blackbird sang’ ... one that invites the reader to pause and listen more deeply.

I lingered as well with Pippa Kay's compassionate tanka

after the stroke
and months in rehab
he waits . . .
a ladder against
the half-painted wall

and the thought of the consequences of a stroke, the waiting—noted succinctly in the second line—is unsettling. Is the wall being painted *for* the person who had the stroke or *by* the loved one who suffered this demise? Will whoever it was be able to climb the ladder and continue? The depth of anguish after a stroke that interrupts everydayness, captured in this tanka, remains ‘with some tension’ in the reader’s mind.

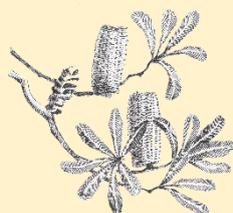
However, rare is the tanka that utilises not only all that is mentioned above that makes tanka significant. Gwen Bitti’s tanka also contains onomatopoeia (tat-tat-tat-tat), alliteration (tin, trembling, tat-tat-tat-tat, and hailstones, hit) which are harsh sounding letters in themselves, along with the use of sound and assonance (hit tin), and features a powerful pivot line (tat-tat-tat-tat).

hailstones
hit the tin roof
tat-tat-tat-tat—
trembling veterans
cover their ears

How timely this poem is, given the state of war in the world today. We hear the guns, feel the force of them and dwell on the effect this has on veterans, who, trembling and covering their ears, relive unspeakable horror of war as they suffer Post Traumatic Stress, year after year.

There is no soft landing in this tanka. It could be argued that poetics utilised were never considered by the Japanese. But we are writing modern English tanka today. Gwen Bitti’s tanka is one of the best I’ve read for some time, and for that reason I have chosen it as the Distinctive Scribblings Award for *Eucalypt*, issue 39.

Kathy Kituai



Simon Wilson

An appraisal by Jim Chessing

we had several
half tins of assorted paint
and a subdued shed
now we have neither
—bright stripes

Simon Wilson

Many thanks to Tony Steven Williams for selecting my tanka from the last issue for the Distinctive Scribblings Award, and for his thoughtful commentary. It is gratifying to be understood. I hope my appraisal does the same for Mr. Wilson.

For me the pleasure at discovering a remarkable tanka is two-fold. First, there is the surprise—intuitive, visceral, and immediate. The flash to attention informs me that I am in the presence of something unique and compelling. That initial phase is followed by the second more deliberative process during which I discover why I like it. Multiple readings peel back the layers of craft and inform my reflections on the content.

Upon first reading Wilson's tanka, I knew I had found my Scribbling Award. There is no other poem in the journal like it. It's the tone of voice. The contrast between the conversational tone of lines one through four and the explosion of "stripes" in the last line is sublime. I imagine a scene where the speaker stands with brush in hand sheepishly explaining to his bemused neighbour the rationale for his creation. Perhaps the speaker himself is not quite sure what possessed him. It's in that moment between the painter and the neighbour where the dreaming room begins.

The mood is measured yet light, to be sure, but also full of mystery. Measured in tone as if the poem is nothing more than the presentation of a simple problem to be solved for what to do with several half tins of paint and a subdued shed. The solution, at least in the speaker's mind, proves to be obvious. Lightness in the whimsical content. Like the punchline of a well-delivered joke, the last line, with its leading em-dash and concluding spondee, clarifies everything. Mystery in the relationship and imagined conversation between the two people, as well as in the workings of the speaker's mind. What possessed him? Impulse or prank? Or just a solution to a problem of what to do with old paint?

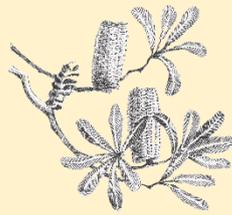
I like the use of the word "subdued," for it carries more than its weight. It's an interesting adjective to describe an old shed; I can think of other words like run-down, weathered, or dilapidated that are perhaps more accurate. But subdued also describes the tone of the poem, as

I've observed, as well as the speaker's character. And in yet another way, it also lends the shed itself an almost animate quality, as if it were something that needed to be calmed or even tamed, contributing further to the sense of mystery.

I find line four particularly precious. It feels like there should be an end stop after line three to give the reader pause for breath, but the poem marches on in the same deadpan tone announcing the solution to the problem: "now we have neither" leftover paint nor dull shed. Problem solved.

This is both a simple and remarkable little poem told with exquisite craft that blends humour and mystery, as if the event just suddenly presented itself and all that Mr. Wilson had to do was write it down. Well done!

Jim Chessing



From the Archive

night flight to Japan . . .
I go to sleep in autumn
wake up in spring
trade leaf fall for blossom drift,
picnic under dark-limbed trees

Beverley George

Eucalypt a tanka journal
Issue 23 Nov 2017

Ties in Tanka

**Anthology of Australian and Japanese tanka poets
Call for Submissions**

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Australia and Japan, we would like to publish a bilingual commemorative anthology of tanka strings this year by Australian and Japanese tanka poets.

The title of the anthology will be *Ties in Tanka* 短歌の絆.

Please submit tanka strings with 5 tanka, with a title;
3 pieces at maximum, by the 1st of June 2026.
Your works should not have been published in any form before.
A maximum 2 pieces will be published.

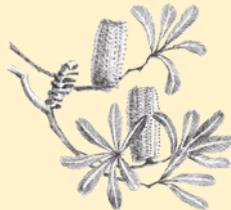
The publisher will be [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).
You can buy copies direct from [amazon.com.au](https://www.amazon.com.au) or [amazon.com.jp](https://www.amazon.com.jp), if you live in Japan.

A book launch is to be held on 29th November 2026
in the Community Hall in Kangara Waters Retirement Village,
Belconnen in Canberra.

CONTACT:

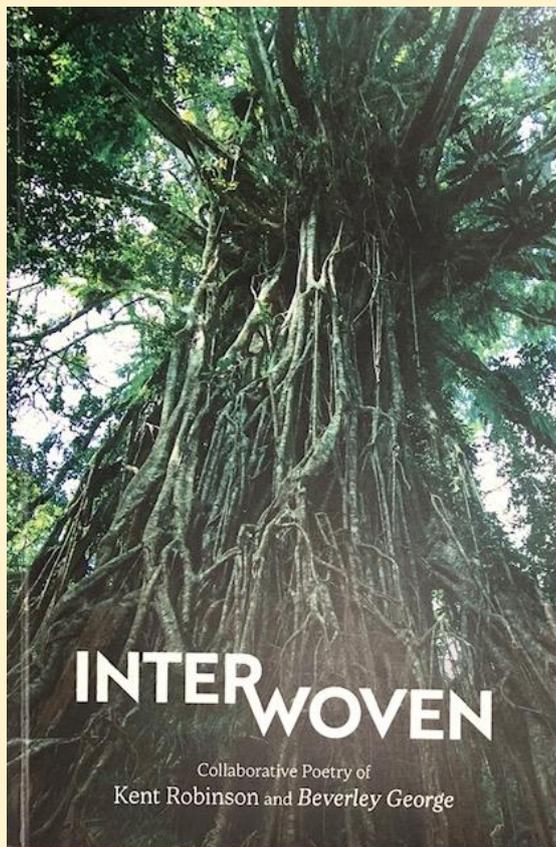
Amelia Fielden anafielden@gmail.com

Saeko Ogi sogi5690@gmail.com



Book Notes

Publications we have heard about . . .



Interwoven

Collaborative Poetry of
Kent Robinson and Beverley George.

Kenilworth Road, 2025.
ISBN 9780646898261

Please contact Beverley or Kent
for more information.

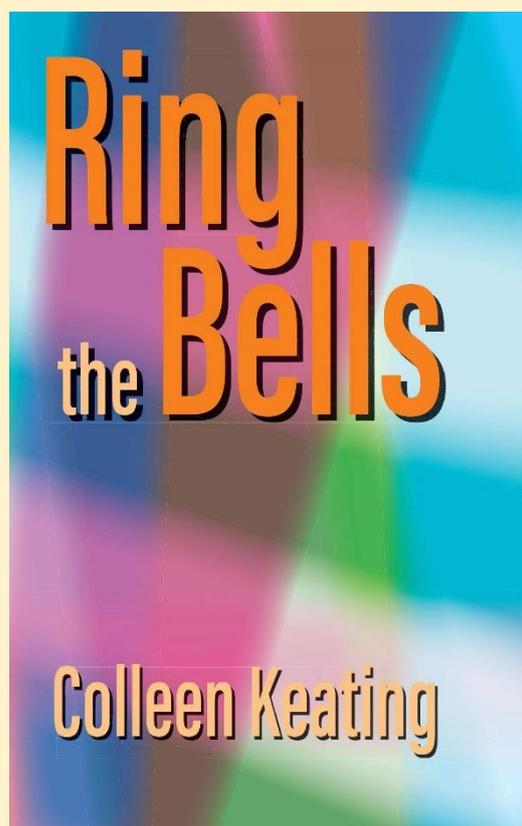
kentrobinson211@yahoo.com.au

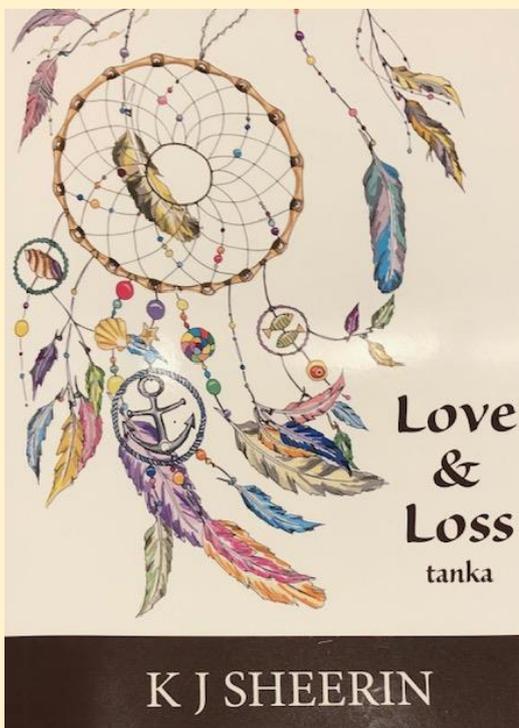
Ring the Bells

By Colleen Keating

[Ginninderra Press](#), 2025.

ISBN:9781761097157 \$24.99





Love and Loss
tanka by K J Sheerin

[Bookpod](#), 2025.
ISBN 9780645320589 \$18

Turning the Calendar

twelve tanka strings
by
Julie Thorndyke



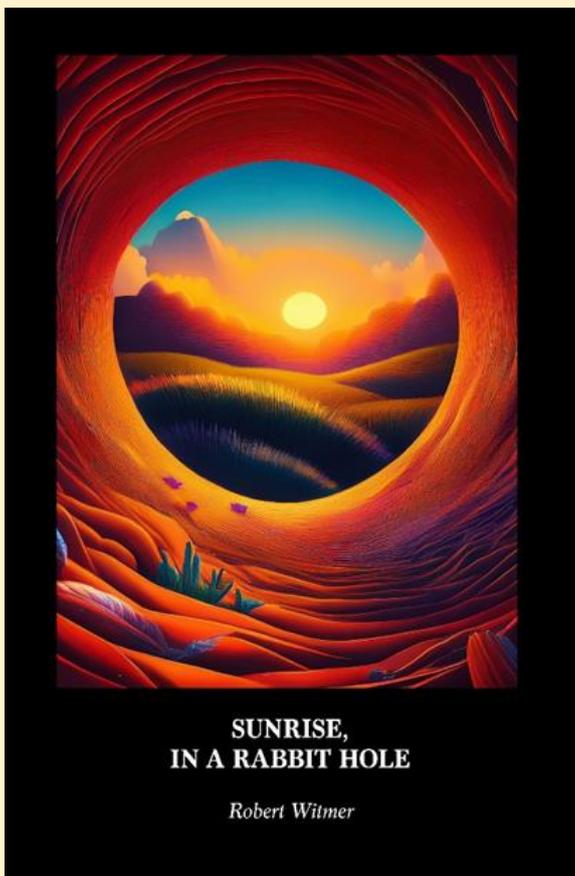
Turning the Calendar
twelve tanka strings
by Julie Thorndyke

[Swan Bay Books](#), 2025.
ISBN 978 0 9808407 8 0 \$20



On Wonder
By Vanessa Proctor

[Walleah Press](#), 2024
ISBN 978 1 763653 078 \$22.00

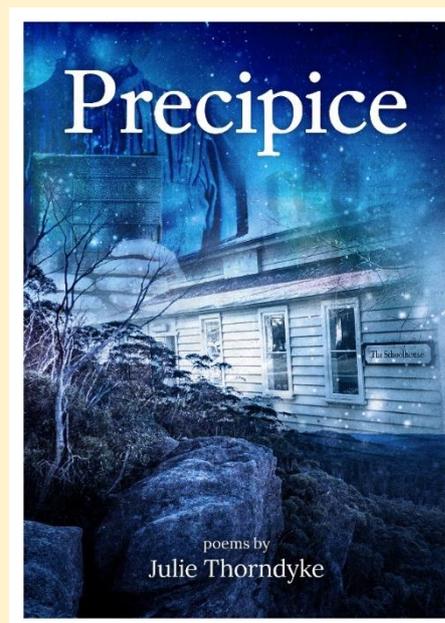


Sunrise, in a Rabbit Hole

by Robert Witmer

Robert Witmer's third book of poetry is composed of 98 prose poems, some of which include haiku. This sunrise in the poet's rabbit hole is a call to awaken and leap out into the light of day, where words wend their way toward meanings that are by turns serious, comedic, weird, and wonderful. Imbued with the secret of suggestion, these poems invite the reader into the process of creation, and thereby to engage with the poet in exploration and discovery. \$15

<https://www.cyberwit.net/publications/2463>



Precipice

by Julie Thorndyke

Swan Bay Books, 2024. ISBN 978 0980 840 773
\$14.99

<https://juliethorndyke.com/precipice/>

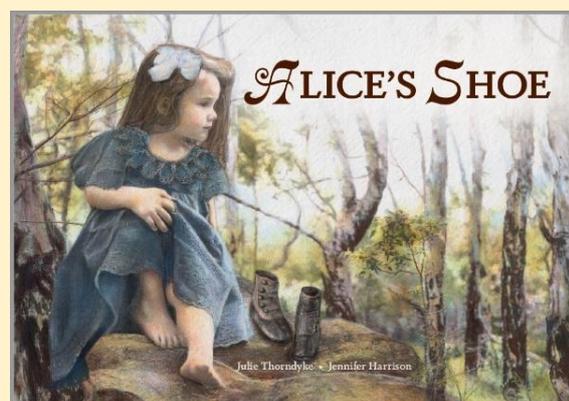
Alice's Shoe

Written by Julie Thorndyke and illustrated by Jennifer Harrison, this picture book tells the story of deafblind Alice Betteridge and her breakthrough into literacy through the sense of touch.

Available from bookshops

MidnightSun Publishing, 2023.
RRP \$29.99 ISBN 978-1-922858-13-9

<https://www.dymocks.com.au/book/alices-shoe-by-julie-thorndyke-and-jennifer-harrison-9781922858139>



Subscriptions for 2026

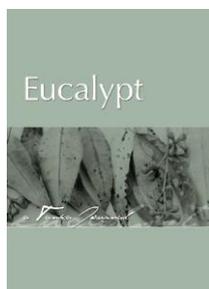
Updated online payment buttons have been added to my website for your convenience.
<https://juliethorndyke.com/eucalypt-a-tanka-journal/>

Thank you for your support!

Missed a Eucalypt newsletter?

Back issues are archived [HERE](#)

<https://jthorndyke.wordpress.com/eucalypt-a-tanka-journal/>



SUBMISSION DATES:

MARCH 1 TO 31
SEPTEMBER 1 TO 30

Please send six poems in the body of your email, with your name and full address to
editor.eucalypt@gmail.com

With the subject line:
Submission – [your surname here]

**Australian subscriptions
\$50 AUD per year.**

**\$70 AUD for
international subscribers.**

PayPal is available.

ABOUT EUCALYPT

Eucalypt is the first Australian journal devoted to this ancient Japanese poetry genre.

Japanese waka (now called tanka) are five-segmented poems. In English, they are usually written in five lines. Often, they address profound human emotions, such as love or mourning, but can also be used to record everyday experience.

The genre is 1300 years old, but is surprisingly relevant to the way we think and feel today.

Eucalypt is a print magazine which showcases contemporary tanka poetry written in the English language and publishes only those poems its editors consider to be of the highest standard.

Its objectives are to offer wider publication opportunities to tanka poets and to make more people aware of the delights of reading and writing tanka.

There are two issues per year, in May and in November.

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