

*8 tankas from hush rush*

opening the dark  
small closet of muffled thoughts  
my hidden self crouched  
in a cluster of demons  
dusty and outdated lies

that lantern riddle  
is a flickering question  
tell me, I insist  
yet the wind moves its own mind  
to escape my foolish grasp

are you like that wind?  
beneath your pleasant greeting  
a mysterious sound  
heard through wet hair and dazed eyes  
I raised my head and wondered

early morning sun  
pigeons' keen throat-sing on eaves  
innocence recurs  
the Drive's asleep, a reprieve  
quick, a chance to contemplate

golden spinning globe  
all eyes and longing pinned firm  
on chancing a glance  
of fate, the swarm of bodies  
rushing through mortal battles

what's the party for?  
we hunger to claim the streets  
to conquer and shine  
jewelled fields of ecstasy  
to reach immortality

turn! I say, turn now!  
letting the water slip through  
my slightly open  
fingers—do you wish for change  
an irreversible plunge?

songs of drunken love  
lost on the moonlit pavement  
while this wordless ache  
knows no home, no refuge yet  
lying alone, listening

[Poet's Note:

I first experimented with the *tanka* form (5-7-5-7-7) after I read *River of Stars*, an English translation of *tankas* by Akiko Yosano. Akiko Yosano lived in 19th Century Japan and was of course writing in Japanese. She shocked the male-dominated world of poets with her frank explorations of women's experiences. She was lauded for her daring innovations. As a woman and a poet, she established a bold, feminist presence by inventing her own poetics, letting her experiences inform and inflect her language.

After writing a few *tankas*, I put the project aside for three years, and only resumed the project this summer. Thanks to the phenomenon called the World Cup, I've since been developing more *tankas* as meditations on noise and silence, on the need for companionship and camaraderie in the world as contrasted with the need to retreat.

It's been fun as well to see how I create my own poetics as I work within the parameters and limits set by the form. I like the paradox inherent in imposing such conditions: although the exercise is restrictive in one sense, it also challenges me to move and relate differently through the language. A certain kind of urgency emerges from such a challenge. Here are 8 *tankas* from my manuscript-in-progress *hush rush*.]