

Marriage Tanka

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NICOLE COOLEY

Marriage Tanka

- i.
When Shakespeare's Coriolanus greeted his wife, he called her "my gracious silence." Or was it not "my greatest silence?"
- ii.
Build a Shrine to the Unlucky. To the Misfortunate. The Tubercular Wife who died too early, lungs wool-clotted.
- iii.
The wild roses climb the fence like bad girls, into the neighbor's yard, ravenous, then as we sleep at night—gasoline drowned.
- iv.
Outside, the street furred with dark. In our bedroom, my legs hooked over your shoulders. Cold lamplight rinses the night sky clean.
- v.
In Spenser's *Amoretti* the beloved never speaks back. I swallow the poems like bad candy, choke on the wife.
- vi.
Marriage: over and over a retelling. A dress to wear for days on end. A dress to shuck off, stuff under the bed.
- vii.
Husbandless: a bowl of dry ice. Husbandless: thimble to protect a finger, little silver stump. Husbanded.
- viii.
The *cassone*, or marriage chest, given to the bride by her parents at the wedding. Gold, to hold her clothes. Most resembles a casket.
- vix.
Green lush silence is its own shrine to marriage. As is the wife who did not die. The wife who wore the tight black wedding dress.