



# Urban Tumbleweed: Notes from a Tanka Diary

*Harryette Mullen*

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**"Harryette Mullen is a magician of words, phrases, and songs . . . No voice in contemporary poetry is quite as original, cosmopolitan, witty, and tragic." ?Susan Stewart, citation for the Academy of American Poets Fellowship**

Urban tumbleweed, some people call it,  
discarded plastic bag we see in every city  
blown down the street with vagrant wind.  
?from *Urban Tumbleweed*

*Urban Tumbleweed* is the poet Harryette Mullen's exploration of spaces where the city and the natural world collide. Written out of a daily practice of walking, Mullen's stanzas adapt the traditional Japanese tanka, a poetic form suited for recording fleeting impressions, describing environmental transitions, and contemplating the human being's place in the natural world. But, as she writes in her preface, "What is natural about being human? What to make of a city dweller taking a 'nature walk' in a public park while listening to a podcast with ear-bud headphones?"



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