New Year's day
the party hat not made
to stay on

That string-thin elastic band is all that holds the life of the party together. Which is to say—life itself. It's a temporary arrangement. Perhaps the poet is saying it's time to set childish things aside. The party's over. But I suspect Gary Hotham might argue otherwise. In *Stone's Throw* he sustains a consistent atmosphere of celebration. A party that does not end. A tribute to the one-breath poem which is made up of words but not merely words—better words.

Imago, by Peter Yovu (Princeton, N.J.: Ornithopter Press, 2016). 32 pages, 4⅝"x7⅛". Gray card cover with block-printed wrappings; saddle-stitched. ISBN 978-1-942723-02-8. Price $11.00 from www.ornithopterpress.com/books.

Reviewed by Cherie Hunter Day

The author describes the scope of *Imago* as: "about sixty individual pieces arranged in nine sequences. One-line poems take the place of titles, acting as 'resonators' from which a number of other poems sound out, and back in. [...] I have brought my love of the image, of sound, of haiku, aphorism, riddle, fragments and brief texts to bear in these poems many of which are personal in nature but reflect [...] universal themes."

The term imago has several meanings that are explored in this book. Imago is Latin for 'image,' something that is one step removed from an actual object. For Yovu the image in poetry supplies the necessary turn-around space for the imagination. The following one-liners are examples of the 'resonators' he refers to, which act as section heads.

A Blade as Belief as Long as Tomorrow

For Beauty I Wept Butterfly Pins

Yovu shades into a second meaning of imago in the epigraph: "To begin with the word / for a winged insect / fallen onto the water // of the page / and what // comes up." Here imago relates to an entomology term to signify the final phase of insect metamorphosis with functional wings. Yovu includes several haiku about birds and insects with obvious wings but poses the deeper question of what is necessary for a person's final stage.

a lark

the sky takes up

its song

The term imago was also used in psychoanalysis, first by Carl Jung, as an unconscious prototype of personality. It is the return of an idealized image of a person, usually a parent, formed in childhood and persisting in the unconscious into adulthood. Yovu addresses the existence of this not-quite-integrated shadow in the following haiku in the section, "I Can't Hear My Footsteps Fill with Sky."

my father dying
all night his mirror
prepares for me

The words seem straightforward and the reader might be tempted to ask, "How can a mirror, an inanimate object, prepare for anything?" The impulse to directly sort out meaning is thwarted with this riddle. Death confronts the body and confounds the mind in the same puzzling manner. Yovu invites the reader into sail into this vulnerable area to consider a new synthesis—a personal one.

the crying
was always my mother
and then it was

the sea

wind

at my final breath
pronounce me

Yovu is known for stretching haiku into the surreal.

the hush

as he enters the room
ears turn

into quotation marks

the second story
falls into the first

rubble

at the back of my throat

The effect is disarming. Poems break open, offering loci to explore beyond predictability. It comes with an urgency to overcome the limits inherent in language and to close the gap of separateness. There is ever more to consider.

a blue coffin
one nail escapes

the solar system

But even as the reader is asked to defy gravity in this haiku, Yovu returns again and again to the intimacy of the body as seen in the following haiku.

grackles gather
the enamel sounds their beaks make

in my mouth

Yovu's poems are stunning, and the book design matches this craftsmanship. The cover features a hand-printed duotone block print of a frog skeleton by Mark Harris: another iteration to look beneath the surface to the bare bones underneath. Most pages have several poems on them, and this allows the layout to have an impact as well. The spaces between words, between lines, and ample white space on the page provide breathing room. Whole worlds can enter and exit these micro-moments. And while every aspect of the book is carefully considered, it feels effortless. Everything is as it should be, and it remains fresh after many readings.

A fitting epilogue.

Words lifted free of the page

a cloud of starlings

shifting legibility.

Imago is the third volume in Ornithopter Press's catalog of beautifully designed, handcrafted, limited editions. I look forward to more beautiful offerings from the press and from Peter Yovu in the near future.