

Happiness

By Andrew Lansdown

A small green bird is hopping
up the grey trunk of a river gum.
The tree leans toward the water.
A duck floats on its reflection.

The climbing bird knocks a fleck
of bark into the water. The duck
inspects it then paddles away.

The Chinese poet Tu Fu wrote,

“After the laws of their being
all creatures pursue happiness.”

Watching the birds, the dragon-
flies, it occurs to me that Fu

is quite wrong. Apart from man,
all creatures simply *are* happy.

No duck ends the day with regret.

We alone aspire to something

Other. And we alone fall short.

Andrew Lansdown (b. 1954) was established as one of WA's finest poets by the early 1980s and achieved exceptional output in both poetry and fiction over ensuing decades. His work was translated into several languages and won the prestigious John Bray National Poetry Award in 1994.

