

something we somehow have never seen before and might not ever have seen if Peter Newton hadn't happened by to make a note of it. I don't know how he does it, but I'm grateful that he does.

the moon knows
how I feel
5% full

headlong off the jetty
when I was
a superhero

BRIEFLY REVIEWED

by Randy Brooks

American Haiku: New Readings edited by Toru Kiuchi (2017, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD). 356 pages, 6×9", four-color laminated cover, casebound. ISBN 978-1-4985-2717-0. \$110 from rowman.com.

American Haiku: New Readings explores the history and development of haiku by American writers. In the introduction Toru Kiuchi writes "American haiku has never been more active than it is today in 2015. There are more major American poets writing haiku than at any time in this century. More scholars and researchers begin to pay attention to American haiku. According to 'Haiku Resources: A Scholar's Library of Haiku in English,' published in *Juxtapositions: The Journal of Haiku Research and Scholarship*, an online journal launched by The Haiku Foundation in May 2015, scholarly books and articles dealing with American haiku have appeared numerously placing American haiku into the broader contexts of criticism" (xvi). Edited by professor

Toru Kiuchi, *American Haiku: New Readings* starts with five chapters on the history of American haiku followed by nine chapters of literary criticism on African American haiku and the following individual haiku authors: Richard Wright, Jack Kerouac, Sonia Sanchez, Cid Corman and Burnell Lippy. Chapters include (1) “Yone Noguchi’s Invention of English-language Haiku” by Toru Kiuchi; (2) “Ezra Pound, Imagism, and Haiku” by Yoshinobu Hakutani; (3) “Mutual Influence between the American and the Japanese Haiku: The History of American Haiku” by Toshio Kimura; (4) “Years of Haiku in the United States: An Overview” by Jim Kacian; (5) “Haiku in Higher Education: A Bibliography of Articles & Theses on Haiku Concluding with a Model of Teaching Haiku as Performance Learning” by Randy Brooks; (6) “Richard Wright’s Haiku, Zen, and the African ‘Primal Outlook upon Life’” by Yoshinobu Hakutani; (7) “Zen Buddhism in Richard Wright’s Haiku” by Toru Kiuchi; (8) “African American Haiku and Aesthetic Attitude” by John Zheng; (9) “Jack Kerouac’s Haiku and *The Dharma Bums*” by Yoshinobu Hakutani; (10) “Sonia Sanchez’s *Morning Haiku* and the Blues” by Heejung Kim; (11) “Those ‘Negro slaves, dark purple ripened plums’: Black Atlantic Captives Revisited in *Cane* and Parodied in *Jazz from the Haiku King*” by Virginia Whatley Smith; (12) “Creating African American Haiku Form: Lenard D. Moore’s Poetic Artistry” by Toru Kiuchi; (13) “Cid Corman and Haiku: The Poetics of ‘Livingdying’” by Ce Rosenow; and (14) “Burnell Lippy’s Haiku in Relation to Zen” by Bruce Ross. This collection of recent scholarship on American haiku is an essential holding for all academic libraries and for anyone conducting research in this thriving literary art.

An Amazement of Deer: Our Cascade Mule Deer Neighbors in Haiku, Photos, and Solo Rengay by Carmen Sterba, ed. by Dianne Garcia, and includes 20 guest poets (2017, Cascade Deer Press, University Place, WA). 28 pages, 5½×8½”, hand-sewn Japanese style. No ISBN. \$10 from carmensterba@yahoo.com.

In this collection Carmen Sterba celebrates a herd of mule

deer that live near her home in the Cascade Mountains. The chapbook starts with a solo rengay that ends with *mating season—/ with gratitude we leave / all the fallen apples* (7). Each page features a photograph, short explanation about a particular deer, and a related haiku. For example, *what can I say / the doe is no longer / a stranger* (12). The book ends with a gathering of 20 haiku by various English and Japanese authors. My favorite is by Susan Constable: *day river bed / a fawn licks the color / from a rock* (23).

Birds Have Feathers, Lizards Have the Sun: Haibunies / Ptice Imaju Perje, Gusteri Iimaju Sunce: haibunci by Željko Funda (2017, *Varaždinske Toplice, Zagreb, Croatia*). 120 pages, 4¾×6¾", wraparound cover, casebound. ISBN 978-953-8020-66-7.

Željko Funda's latest collection of haiku, *Birds Have Feathers, Lizards Have the Sun*, is published as a dual-language edition. If you flip the book over, you read either English or Croatian versions of the haiku from start to finish. Funda refers to this book as a collection of "haibunies" which evidently refers to the running commentaries on his haiku. For example, here is a haiku *city cemetery / in the mouth of a bust / a petal* and the commentary, *Petals are not so trampy as leaves. That's why dustmen aren't so busy about them* (11). The book is organized through the seasons with two special sections on animals and the sea. Here is another haiku *garden / laundry hardly visible / in the fog* and its commentary, *Grannie says fog also does its job. 'And rightly doesn't get paid,' says grandpa* (51). It is difficult to know if the original Croatian haiku have more nuances and subtle connotations than the translations, but most of these haiku do not seem to rise to a level beyond description of ordinary things and scenes. In English the haiku in this collection rarely achieve a creative spark of emotional significance or feeling. The commentaries reduce possible readings and don't encourage us to imagine the scene for ourselves. The title comes from the haiku, *poplar / from its top a hawk watching / a snail in the grass* and its commentary, *Birds have feathers, cats have hair, and lizards have the sun* (79).

The Color Blue: Short Poems & Haiga by Alexis Rotella (2017, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 72 pages, 6×9", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-98-0. \$20 from redmoonpress.com.

The Color Blue is the latest collection of haiku, tanka, haibun, haiga and mostly senryu by Alexis Rotella, an award-winning poet and visual artist. The book ends with the title poem, *No one left / to write to / except the color blue* (69) which suggests an artistic independence and confidence evident in her creative work. The mix of playful language and simple intuitions make this an enjoyable collection. Within a few pages her poems move from the more poignant *Mother's Day / the card / I would have chosen* (10) to *Good Friday / not for / the fish* (14). Her poems also range from minimal senryu to one image one-liners and an occasional typographical twist, as in *Things happen / in / t rees / H* (17) with the H placed below the missing space that would have formed tHrees in the line above. The few haibun are also very high quality although I was disappointed with the black and white versions of the haiga, having seen the vibrant colors of some of them online. This is a quality collection by one of our best haiku writers in English.

Earthshine by Chuck Brickley (2017, Snapshot Press, Ormskirk, UK). 112 pages, 5×7¼", french fold cover, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-903543-43-6. \$25 postpaid from www.snapshotpress.co.uk.

Earthshine is, surprisingly, Chuck Brickley's first published collection of haiku. It collects haiku written from two distinct periods, 1973–1984 and 2007–2017. In the preface he explains two different approaches to writing haiku. In the 1970s in San Francisco, he started by writing haiku from imagination or language experiments. As he explains: "A bit of research and a teen obsession with surrealism led me to apply dream logic, concrete, and E.E. Cummings–style poetics to hundreds of surreal haiku, relying solely on whatever conceptual oddities my imagination could muster" (11). After moving to a small town in British Columbia his haiku poetics changed. "My writing reflected a growing intimacy with nature, an immersion into real life, in real time. The moon, which often went unnoticed in San Francisco,

dominated this little village set in a ring of Coastal Range mountains. So did rain, snow. I was astounded by the myriad flora and fauna—and the townsfolk, each a part of nature as well—right there before me, day and night. I became less concerned with being clever and innovative than with how to express the daily revelations offered by this new life” (11). This book is arranged as a progression through a single year, starting with spring *predawn hush / the forest / still dripping* (15). While many of the haiku are placed within nature, they are well populated by people as in *forsythia / the widow’s blinds / part slightly* (21) and *the abortion. / her long drive home / through spring rain* (22). Because of the emotions evoked, I have often used the following haiku in workshops with young students: *spring evening / I play with the last kitten / to be given away* (24). Brickley does an outstanding job presenting moments as both natural, real and emotionally evocative. He especially enjoys portraying leaps in time and space as in *deserted schoolyard / the fence he climbed over / to Iraq* (54) and *black / berry a / tiny bug / explores / sun by / sun* which is arranged in a berry-shape. Here is another that reaches from the immediate to the grander space of beyond: *a car / at the cliff’s edge / the Milky Way* (62). This is a marvelous collection of haiku full of surprises, discoveries, and significance of being alive. In the afterword, Brickley explains the title of his collection: “Gazing at a crescent moon on a clear night, one may sometimes notice that the section not directly lit by the sun is graced with its own subtle shading of light. This faint glow is actually sunlight reflected from our planet. It is called *earthshine*” (112). When we take time to notice, look twice and consider what often goes unnoticed, like Brickley’s *earthshine* on the moon, haiku becomes a poetry of astonishment and wonder.

Eglantine Hedge: Haiku & Senryu / Gardul de măceși by Vasile Spinei (2017, Bons Offices Press, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova). 74 pages, 5½×8½”, perfectbound. ISBN 978-9975-87-296-6. From the author spineivas@gmail.com.

Vasile Spinei’s *Eglantine Hedge* is a dual-language edition of haiku and senryu, with both the original Romanian and English

translation on each page. In the foreword, translator and illustrator Ion Codrescu notes the refinement evident in this collection since his first collection, *The Monk's Smile*, was published in 1996. He notes that Spinei's haiku appeal "in a subtle way to the categories of Japanese aesthetics" (10) of *wabi*, *sabi*, *yūgen*, *mono no aware*, *karumi*, and *yohaku*. This book is organized into four sections: (1) "A Willow Twig" featuring haiku from the poet's village; (2) "To the Fountain from the Plain" has haiku drawn from the surrounding environment; (3) "Straw Hat" shares travel haiku; and a short section (4) "The Ephemeral Moment" features senryu. Here is a haiku from each section starting with *lilac perfume / from my neighbour's garden — / I forget my anger* (41) from the first section. From the second section I loved this one, *on the turret / of the fortified town / a thistle bush in bloom* (107). Here is an example of a travel haiku: *thousands of miles / to see the waterfall... / drought* (154). I will end with a senryu, *chuckling from the bush — / girls washing laundry / in the river* (189). Spinei's best haiku are from the first section, based on experiences in his own garden and home: *after rains / high weeds like the fence — / where and what did I sow?* (59). This is a pleasant collection of haiku.

First Flutter by Kevin Goldstein-Jackson (2017, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 72 pages, 4¼×6½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-07-4. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

At the end of *First Flutter*, Kevin Goldstein-Jackson asserts: "All haiku in this book are based on my own observations of actual events and experiences" (no page numbers). The point of this claim is that his haiku are not imagined fictions. Many of his best haiku are observations of people as in *avoiding the snail / he wrenches his wheelchair*. Some of the less effective haiku seem to be merely poetic statements, such as, *Spring / the flowery language / begins to flow*. He has a couple that are commentaries on the haiku life: *Nature / in the name of love / haiku* and *in my dreams / I wander fields / looking for Basho*. Goldstein-Jackson is best at senryu, *in the park / two walking sticks / lean against their owners*, and his curious *crowded beach / I walk the shoreline / reading tattoos*.

The Haiku Life: What We Learned as Editors of *Frogpond* by Michele Root-Bernstein and Francine Banwarth (2017, Modern Haiku Press, Lincoln, IL). 94 pages, 6×6", perfectbound. ISBN 0-9741894-3-X. \$12 from modernhaiku.com.

In this book, *The Haiku Life*, Michele Root-Bernstein and Francine Banwarth share what they learned about excellent contemporary haiku as editors of *Frogpond* magazine from 2012 through 2015. This book is based on their presentation at Haiku North America 2015 in Schenectady, New York, as they were concluding their term as editors. During four years of reviewing and selecting haiku for *Frogpond*, they refined their own understanding of what they were looking for in haiku worthy of publication. In this book they explain the challenges of codifying high-quality criteria for haiku, a creative, social, literary art. A short example of this complexity is found in their discussion of three levels of context for creativity (personal, public/professional, and historical). They explain the distinction between each level: "If personal creativity involves what is novel and effective to an individual poet or to a small circle of her family and friends, public (professional) creativity depends on what is deemed novel and effective to select communities of enthusiasts. Historical creativity has to do with innovations in the art or craft of haiku that stand the test of time" (12). To simplify their conception of the best haiku, they employed an acronym LIFE to explain their goals for the best haiku. "L is for language that surprises" (22). "I is for imagery that is fresh" (24). "F is for form that functions" (26). "E is for elusiveness that engages imagination" (28). With examples and discussion of haiku representing each LIFE quality, this is an excellent primer for contemporary writers of haiku.

High Desert Cameos by Carl Mayfield (2017, Little Books Press, Cookeville, TN). 56 pages, 5¼×7", card covers, saddle stitched. No ISBN. From Carl Mayfield, POB 44472, Rio Rancho, NM 87174.

High Desert Cameos is a beautiful chapbook of haiku by Carl Mayfield capturing a quiet life of contemplation and contentment on the high desert of New Mexico. The haiku are illustrated by Wayne Hogan with stark silhouette-like shadow drawings, each

with an embedded recycle symbol. The haiku are written with an unpretentious voice of someone who knows his outdoor neighbors well: *unchurched, still I turn / when the meadowlark / begins to sing*. Not in a hurry to be somewhere else, Mayfield notices and writes *lizard's tongue / touching the water / once*. In my favorite, he shares the simple joy of falling rain: *in the wheelchair / tilting her head back / to feel the rain*. Throughout this collection he conveys a sense of being at home with an American western *sabi*: *solitary hiker— / in conversation / between shoes and sand*. I find only one haiku of complaint: *wearing out / everyone's smile— / the west wind*. The book ends with a poem in which our narrator faces a ravine and says goodnight to the badger.

In Search of the Hidden Pond: Little Poems by David H. Rosen (2017, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR). 48 pages, 7½×5½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-5326-3676-9. \$7 from wipfandstock.com.

Dr. David H. Rosen is a physician, psychiatrist, and Jungian analyst who enjoys a variety of creative endeavors. This small book is a collection of his "little poems" celebrating moments of insight and feeling. Some of these poems are haiku-like and others are simply light-hearted prescriptions for living: *Dream talking— / pouring sake* (no page numbers). Playfully illustrated with a few strokes of a marker by Diane Katz, this is a fun chapbook in the spirit of maxim-poetry books by Paul Repp. I'll conclude with the title poem: *Sauntering through a forest / Finally, a hidden pond*.

The Kraken Latitudes or, Parallel Universes by Steven Carter (2017, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 86 pages, 5×7½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-04-3. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

The Kraken Latitudes by Steven Carter reads like a disjointed dream journal or diary through time, memory, and an ever-shifting confusing present. The blurb authors, Amelia Eunice and Valentina Schiattarella, suggest that this book is "part satire, part bricolage" or it "is an assembly, a do-it-yourself puzzle with limited directions which allow us to put together, not object or objects, but a view on the world" (back cover). The opening

section, “Early onset Alzheimer’s,” provides the narrative frame for continuous fragmentation and leaps through time and place. The narrator talks about the tricks of memory and partial-amnesia: “I’m 74 now and frankly embarrassed in my poet’s Purgatory (the same inner weather-maker whose winds tousled the hair of women like imaginary women springing like Aphrodite from the half-shell of a haibun)” (8). This is a complicated narrator with self-references to memories and experiences of the author, referred to in the third person as Steve. Once in a while as a poetic interlude, a haiku ends one of the memory recall sessions *Lucky day / On the sidewalk / A ten spot* (27). I’m afraid this is too much of a puzzle for me to puzzle out.

Latitudes by Paul Chambers (2017, Alba Publishing, Uxbridge, UK). 92 pages, 5¾×8¼”, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-910185-74-2. \$15 from AlbaPublishing.com.

Latitudes is Paul Chambers’ second collection of haiku. This book includes several haiku providing careful observation of scenes in nature, like *deep river bend... / the fisherman casts / into a cloud* (55) and a more competitive *church cross / a crow / displaces a crow* (16). There also are many excellent bird haiku, but my favorites are those catching both the inner and outer weather, as in *spring heat— / the imprint of grass / in her thighs* (20) and *midsummer dusk / a boy rides the farm gate / shut* (36). This collection of well-written haiku invites us to pay attention and notice what is happening out there and within us: *deserted beach... / a ball drifts back / to shore* (52).

Les Saisons du Parc / The Seasons in the Park / Las Estaciones del Parque by David Ball with translations into Spanish by Judith Alvarado (2017, L’Atelier du Grand Tétras, Mont-de-Laval, France). 56 pages, 5½×8½”, perfectbound with French folds. ISBN 978-2-37531-0140-4. 12 euros from online booksellers.

David Ball has written haiku for several years in the park of a château in eastern France. This trilingual edition, *The Seasons in the Park*, shares haiku progressing through the seasons. Most of the haiku are descriptive with lines of commentary, for example

majestic / the old oak / in midsummer (12). A few provide more interaction from the poet: *two walnut trees / overhanging the path / both pockets bulging!* (18). Perhaps the best haiku is *the wooden bench / deeper by a year under / the moss and ivy* (44).

The New World by Keith Polette (2017, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 74 pages, 4¼×6½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-04-3. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

Keith Polette is a professor of English at the University of Texas at El Paso. A scholar on literacy and English education, *The New World* is his first collection of haiku. The title comes from: *old map / the new world / drawn by hand* (no page numbers), which is illustrated by a photograph of an old hand-drawn map of the Americas. This haiku is an example of his theme of mapping out the journey of everyday life...trying to read the significance of signs, words, and marks left behind by those who have ventured ahead of us. Sometimes forces of nature change our avenues: *rolling stones / the river re-routes / the space between mountains*. Other times we follow a trail of writing: *in an empty parking lot / a yellow pencil / points the way*, or a literary work like *Moby Dick* appears to remind us of obsessive quests: *late night movie / the white whale / pulls ahab down again*. In another haiku he gives up on words, *we buried / the argument / zinnias burst into colors* but soon returns to words, *one lamp glowing / i read words of the dead / thunderstorm*. Then he revisits a favorite poem by Robert Frost in *fork in the trail... / how rusty / i have become*. Near the end of the collection he has a winter haiku where there is no map from our forebears: *buried under snow / the only path / through these woods*. But Professor Polette will continue to seek that invisible path he knows is temporarily hidden. It is the path of haiku. His collection ends with *crows caw in fog— / i awaken / to everything gray*.

Persimmon: A Harvest of Haiku edited by Stephen Henry Gill (2017, Hailstone Haiku Circle, Kyoto, Japan). 152 pages, 5½×6", perfectbound. ISBN 978-4-9822-8-4. \$18 from Hisashi Miyazaki, 54-16 Hamuro-cho, Takatsuki-shi, Osaka, 569-1147, Japan.

This collection of haiku provides samples of work from an active, international, English-language haiku community in Japan, Hailstone Haiku Circle. In the introduction, Stephen Henry Gill explains the significance of persimmons in his neighborhood of Saga in Kyoto, noting “Kyorai’s storm-damaged persimmon harvest and how it had led him to name his thatched retreat ‘Rakushisha’ (the House of Fallen Persimmons). This beautiful property, today run by a preservation society, is where Bashō had stayed to write his *Saga Diary*” (4-5). This site has become a common meeting location for Hailstone haiku group meetings. Citing two famous haiku, *Holding to her cheek / a red persimmon... / (my daughter sleeps)* (6) by Issa and *Eating a persimmon— / the bell of ancient Hōryūji / booms out* (6), Gill explains his poetic goals for selecting haiku from this community of writers. “Homely, as haiku should be, yet *transporting*—this is the essence of the persimmon, and it is these two features that I decided to look for in making my selections of haiku to go in this book. The pool from which I have chosen is simply any haiku submitted at Hailstone events or seminars since publication of our last anthology, *Meltdown*, in 2013” (6). The anthology is organized into four “haiku villages” in alphabetical order of authors. The collection also includes special sequences and haiku from events. The book ends with an ABC collection of haiku, highlighting the use of verbs such as admit, bend, cling, draw, etc. Here are a few of my favorites from the anthology that provide examples of the range of haiku written by this lively community: *Rose pink / after the first bath of the year— / a little girl* by Yae Kitajima (40); *The smiling stewardess, / between her breasts / a crucifix* by David McCullough (65); and *We watch the falls— / it watches us, / a lone monkey* by Hisashi Miyazaki (68).

Quaking Marsh by Stuart Bartow (2017, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 60 pages, 4¼×6½”, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-05-0. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

Stuart Bartow teaches writing and literature at SUNY Adirondack and is chair of the Battenkill Conservancy. An accomplished

nature poet, this is his first collection of love/nature haiku. The collection starts with the title poem, *quaking marsh / how she stirs / in her sleep* (no page numbers). I enjoy how this haiku instantly transforms the marsh into a living muse, a lover stirring with dreams and possibilities. Bartow is at home on the marsh or in the woods with *new neighbors next door—starlings* and often talks to small critters as in *stowaway in my kayak / where's home / wolf spider*. He also writes of human desire: *spring sermon / mind keeps wandering / to those legs*. One more favorite: *spring traffic jam / all of us stuck / in a dandelion storm*. Bartow's collection of haiku celebrates the human heart at home in nature.

Sanguinella by Helen Buckingham (2017, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 80 pages, 6×9", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-11-1. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

Sanguinella is a type of blood orange dogwood tree, but in this collection it becomes a symbol of a life tinted by a difficult environment. As Helen Buckingham notes, "Fifty-eight years since the seed was planted, *sanguinella* provides a scrump back through the often bloody orchard that constitutes my life until now, from the rural pickings gathered over recent years in the bonsai city of Wells, to the tangled branches of a childhood spent battling various forms of blight in a mulberry-stained corner of South London" (80). Buckingham writes as a survivor of this childhood and life, but she is having a lot of fun writing all kinds of haiku, and I'm having all kinds of fun reading them too. Sometimes she characterizes this struggle in epic terms: *vacation over an industrial-scale cobweb* (8). Then again, she takes small victories, resisting the aging lost as in, *hiring deckchairs— / still young enough / to feel too young* (9). In this compressed minimal haiku, *maypolor* (13) we get both the fun of celebration and the fear of depression the next day. In some haiku, the struggle is with nature: *black ice / blue light / spinning* (16). Other times it is because of our fairy tale expectations: *midnight call / his car / a pumpkin* (21). Sometimes industrialization and new construction seems to be the enemy: *returning home / a builder's crane / gives me the finger* (25). Then we enjoy a brief moment with colleagues:

office workers / share the one / umbrella (35). Of course, Buckingham doesn't shirk the more difficult scares and challenges of contemporary life. For example, in this haiku *breast lump / I scrabble around / for my whitest bra* (36), we find her scrabbling not just for clothes but also for words. In another tender haiku of loss, she writes, *the week of her funeral / a moth brushes my cheek / goodnight* (44). The book ends with a minimal, playful, two-word haiku that is naturally literary: *ribbit / ibid* (76).

Somewhere Inside Yesterday by Gregory Longenecker (2017, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 70 pages, 4¼×6½", perfect-bound. ISBN 978-1-947271-10-4. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

This collection is an interesting mix of traditional haiku and linguistically challenging monoku. The title poem, *music box somewhere inside yesterday* (no page numbers), is an example of Longenecker's broken linguistics. We try to connect the "inside" with the music box which is presumably open, playing its old tinny song. However, it is the music box that is out of place, out of its yesterday. Some of his monoku are less complicated, as in this humorous haiku: *stepfamily some assembly required*. Others often seem to be only half a haiku, lacking a turn or surprise or added depth of felt significance. His more direct haiku are very poignant as we imagine: *moving day / we take apart the bed / our parents' dreamed on* and *garden café / sparrows tend / the empty tables*. I enjoy Longenecker's surprising extended metaphors like *still fragile / out of the chrysalis / out of rehab*. We start this haiku thinking of a butterfly emerging from its chrysalis but soon shift into imagining a person coming out of rehab. Both the butterfly and former addict are fragile with reborn potential for beauty in the life after cocooning. One of the best in this collection is a traditional haiku: *summer twilight... / girls braid and unbraided / each other's hair*.

Star by Star by Rick Tarquinio (2017, Odd Duck Press, NJ). 36 pages, 5½×8½", holograph card covers, hand-sewn saddle stitched. No ISBN. \$10 from Rick Tarquinio at ricktarquinio.bandcamp.com/merch/star-by-star-haiku.

Star by Star is Rick Tarquinio's second collection of haiku, dedicated "to the farm fields and woods where I live in southern New Jersey. I grew up here, so every day I walk these dirt roads, trails and train tracks into both my future and past" (no page numbers). The first haiku, *country road / a field of wildflowers / for sale by owner*, is both a commentary on contemporary concepts of ownership and the beauty of nature. He writes haiku that call for a double-take, as in *sudden rain / an invisible man / left on third*, which places us in limbo between the recent past and near future of a postponed game. Sometimes, he brings us along as observers: *honeysuckle / through spider threads / the pull of youth*. A few share tender indoor moments: *spring breeze / the shy one singing / inside her room* and *glowing embers / I tell her a story / she already knows*. Tarquinio is a musician as well as poet and several haiku have allusions to music, as seen in *strawberry fields / forever ago / hung about* and *blossom rain / learning Beethoven / from an app*. This is an enjoyable collection of high-quality haiku evoking a wide range of emotions, including the subtle humor of irony found in *dentist office / the poinsettias / off-white*.

Still the Dead Trees by Robert Piotrowski (2017, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 60 pages, 4¼×6½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-08-1. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

Still the Dead Trees is a collection of haiku and tanka by Robert Piotrowski, a teacher who lives in southern Ontario. Although the haiku occur in specific seasonal context, the focus is on the desires, hopes and inner lives of people. For example, here are two haiku related to aging parents: *snowy pine / my mother notices / the gray in my beard* (9) and *I work to fix / every mistake / my father's tools* (9). A bit of intrigue is evident in *seedless watermelon / last summer's / secrets* (11) and an intriguing, suggestive one *sundress / the shadow of her / new tattoo* (12). Piotrowski excels in romance, *holding the door open / for the wrong reasons / her soft hips* (33), and remembrance, *dashboard hula girl / the way you once / moved me* (32). A favorite from the perspective of an aging rocker, *electric guitar / I plug into a*

younger version / of myself (42). His tanka explore similar feelings, but in one he notes *the difference / between haiku and tanka / we linger / in the doorway / talking about rain* (48).

Through the Silence by David Elliott (2017, Nightshade Press, La Plume, PA). 136 pages, 5½×8½”, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-640420-7. \$16.95 from booksellers.

David Elliott’s third book of poetry, *Through the Silence*, is a combination of short narrative poems and haiku. It is interesting to speculate on how haiku has influenced his short poems, with an emphasis on perception and themes such as impermanence and consciousness. Likewise, many of Elliott’s haiku are miniature stories, as in *Making snow angels / with my son falling back / so many years* (19). In addition to teaching creative writing and literature at Keystone College, he taught the history of jazz, which is evident in several haiku such as *Billie’s tremolo / the long reflections of harbor lights / shimmering* (42). The haiku are presented in clusters that almost appear to be sequences. For example, in a cluster called “All Night” we encounter *Cloudless night / crickets / brightening the moon* (55) and *4 a.m. / only two peepers / still at it* (56). The cluster of haiku “Through the Silence” shares haiku of grief and consolation as in *After Dad’s death / so many Christmas cards / wishing him well* (70). David Elliott is an authentic poet whose poems tell short-short stories with precision and care. I’ll end with a personal favorite: *How much I’ve forgotten... / my dog pulling me / into the mist* (110).

The Weight of Snowflakes by Mel Goldberg (2017, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 74 pages, 4¼×6½”, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-07-4. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

Mel Goldberg is a retired English professor who, after extended travel, has settled in Jalisco, Mexico. He is the author of several books of fiction and poetry, and this is his third collection of haiku. The title poem is *blue morning / the weight / of snowflakes* (no page numbers), which I imagine as winter melancholy. Several haiku in this collection are written from a perspective of old age, looking back with a mix of nostalgia and a sincere

sense of loss. For example, *in my old age / every trail leads back / to where I have been*. Another sad one: *tears for one / who has died / or myself*. One of my favorite haiku by Goldberg is this tender one: *funeral home / she straightens his tie / for the last time*. Often, he enjoys mysteries, such as *mushroom circles / so much / we do not know* and *the saguaro / raises an arm / maybe it has the answer*. While his blue morning voice is consistent throughout the collection, there is always an underlying sense of hope that things are not done. He recognizes this questing in a friend, *hospice / he speaks of poems / he plans to write*, and in the final poem: *eightieth year / behind my eyes / a young man*.

Wind Man: Haiku at Work by Brian Chaffee (2017, 23rd Century Modern, Cincinnati, OH). 96 pages, 6×9", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-522091-43-1. \$11.79 from Amazon.com.

In *Wind Man: Haiku at Work*, Brian Chaffee offers a collection of short poems depicting a “day in the life” of a fictitious office warrior. His view of haiku is that it is “a kind of verbal Instagram—capturing a moment within a defined frame of convention.” All but one of his poems follow the 5–7–5 syllable pattern. The book starts with poems about the start of the day: *fumbled quarters, sleet / and hash browns hit the blacktop. / thanks. have it your way* (10). Later there is a coffee break: *dresses, ponytails, / heels chatter on break room floors / march of the admins* (15). Chaffee enjoys some poetic flourish as in: *like a fleece blanket / or a stuntman’s air mattress / inch-tall beery foam* (53). As a pop-culture book, this is a playful book of zappai—somewhat in the spirit of the television comedy, *The Office*.