

## Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY NICHOLAS KLACSANZKY

*Where Rain Would Stay: The Haiku Poetry of Peggy Willis Lyles*, edited by John Barlow and Ferris Gilli (Snapshot Press, Ormskirk, Lancashire: 2022). 240 pages. 8½" x 5½". Hardback. ISBN: 978-1-903543-45-0. £30.00 on <https://www.snapshotpress.co.uk>

This is an exceptional collection of haiku for several reasons. Not only are there copious amounts of excellent, uncollected haiku featured from the legendary Peggy Willis Lyles, but there is a profound introduction by John Barlow, four detailed appendices by the editors, a chronology of Lyles' haiku in the collection, and an easy-to-use index of the poems present.

Readers will get a sense of the dedication and hard work the editors put into *Where Rain Would Stay* from the introduction and presentation of the haiku. However, by reading the appendices (*The Selections*, *The Variants*, *Seasonality*, *The Ordering*), readers gain a true understanding of the detail and sincerity the editors employed. Just as we can feel the heart in Lyles' poetry, we can also feel how the editors imbued each section with serious intentionality with respect to Lyles' legacy.

In the introduction, we get a brief biography of Peggy Willis Lyles after learning that the haiku in this collection are 236 previously published poems that were uncollected. The next section of the introduction details the uncollected haiku in question and the history of Lyles' publishing. We learn that *Where the Rain Would Stay* is a comprehensive accompanying volume to *To Hear the Rain*, published in 2002 by Brooks Books—the last collection Lyles published before her passing. Subsequently, the introduction delves into Lyles' growth as a haiku poet from her first haiku epiphany, early haiku, regular contribution to publications, and finally to being a highly respected member of the haiku

community as a poet, editor, contest adjudicator, and invited reader at festivals and universities. The last two sections of the introduction go over the editorial approach applied to the book and a final note on Lyles' outstanding legacy. The introduction includes fine examples of Lyles' haiku that illustrate her range and the editors' choices.

The main part of *Where Rain Would Stay* is separated into four sections according to the seasons. The seasons are indicated by unique names: *Blue Butterflies*, *Sun-Splotched Stone*, *Morning Moon*, and *Winter Stars*. These names correspond to haiku present in the respective sections. Below, I will feature the poems and provide commentary:

blue butterfly  
I keep coming back  
to the same place

The color blue plays into a sense of returning—blue being ancient like the sky or oceans. Yet, blue can have a melancholy reference to it too, which makes this haiku layered.

sun-splotched stone—  
the lizard's dewlap  
bobbles

It's easy to enjoy the unique vocabulary and imagery in this haiku. The comparison of a lizard's dewlap with sun splotches works strikingly well to make an unlikely bond.

a cold cup  
from a cold cupboard  
morning moon

The shapes, temperature, and interaction between humanity and nature create a palpable mood. The sound of the haiku elaborates expertly on this mood.

he comes to bed  
 clean-shaven . . .  
 winter stars

The mystery in this haiku lends to varied readings. These myriad implications and their comparisons with winter stars are poignant and fresh.

Following the 236 previously published haiku that were uncollected before this volume appeared, four appendices are provided.

*Appendix 1: The Selections* goes into greater depth than the introduction about the exact nature of the collected haiku and the methods with which the poet recorded, edited, and thought of her work. In *Appendix 2: The Variants*, the editors discuss how Lyles at times had several variations of the same haiku and the choices the editors of this book had to make in light of these findings. With *Appendix 3: Seasonality*, there is an expounding on the seasonal progression of *Where Rain Would Stay* and how Lyles was keen on using the power of local kigo paired with a fine understanding of Japanese seasons. Finally, in *Appendix 4: The Ordering*, the editors illuminate readers about the nuances of how they sequenced the haiku in the volume.

*Where Rain Would Stay* ends with two sections: *A Chronology of Haiku* details where each haiku in the book stands in terms of time: from 1976 to 2010; lastly, the *Index of Haiku* gives readers an alphabetical look at where each haiku is in the collection.

*Where Rain Would Stay* is a monumental tribute to the late Peggy Willis Lyles. Each page has intentionality, which justifiably honors a legend in the haiku community through the editors' great labor, detail, care, and best interests. In special circumstances, a book can bring a passed poet seemingly back to life and make it appear, if not for a moment, that a posthumously written collection was published by none other than the original poet. This is such a tome. ◻■