

Briefly Reviewed

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David Jacobs. *Just Before Bed*. Spalding, Lincolnshire, U.K.: Hub editions, 2012, handmade perfect softbound, 4.75 x 6.25. ISBN 978-1-903746-98-1. US\$10. Available from the author at davidjacobs2011@gmail.com.

This is a fine first collection by a mainstream poet who, in the last several years, has turned exclusively to haiku. A handful of the 52 poems in the chapbook have won accolades of one sort or another and, by and large, the rest live up to that quality. Characteristics that struck this reader include the deft use of language to connect one image to another, the bittersweet contiguity of reality and imagination, understated wit, and unassuming insight. *coming ashore / at their own pace— / oarsmen's ripples; new dementia wing / Mum insists / on the guided tour; just before bed / the washed up plates / shine in the rack.* ~MRB

Michael Henry Lee. *Against the Grain, Haiku and Senryu*. Saint Augustine, FL: Eleventh Hour Press, 2012, 56 pp., spiral bound, 5.5 x 8.5. No ISBN. US\$8 (\$10 overseas). Available from the author at michaelhenrylee@bellsouth.net.

When one reads widely and forgetfully it can take some time to link a remembered haiku to a poet's name, let alone a face and a life story. This reader is happy to have recognized several favorites in Michael Henry Lee's hand-published chapbook of 49 poems (his second collection). A poet who knows loneliness, illness, and death, yet also satisfaction and optimism, Lee is most persuasive on time and its cycles, a theme that permeates the work. The modest, makeshift quality of the print job does not mar the overall impact of this worthwhile addition to the haiku

bookshelf. *hazy moon / in a starry sky— / our conundrum; autumn deepening / so little time for / the time that's left; bark beetle / a life well lived / against the grain.* ~MRB

Zoran Mimica. *Without Keys, haiku poems with love.* PyTao Press/Red Moon Press, 2012, perfect softbound, 5 x 7. ISBN 978-1-936848-13-3. US\$12 from www.redmoonpress.com.

In this first collection, the Croatian poet Zoran Mimica offers an afterword that sketches a philosophic sensibility germane to the reading of his haiku. Three themes predominate: our time-bound existence, the timelessness of nature, and the stream of our conscious experience of both. Most of the 450 or so haiku, packed densely on each page, read as the improvisations or direct representations of interior mentality Mimica intends them to be; a fistful harness the poetic craft that mediates exterior, that is to say social, permanence. *Someone rushed by / on a bike—I didn't even / bother to see who it was; The yellowness / of my green tea / – it's noon; A butterfly shows me the way / through the bushes / into the sea.* ~MRB

Ken Jones. *Bog Cotton, haiku stories and haiku.* Uxbridge, U.K.: Alba Pub., 2012, 94 pp., perfect softbound, 5.75 x 8.25. ISBN 978-0-9572592-2-5. US\$16.

Anyone interested in haibun will want to read Ken Jones. His haibun—or haiku stories as he calls them—occupy a liminal space between the autobiographical life and fictional reconstructions of same. Utilizing a range of literary tools borrowed from creative nonfiction, most notably personification, he probes the story fragments and back matter of human experience with some brilliant results. In *Bog Cotton*, the life journey is rendered literally, with meditations on travel far and wide, through city and countryside, into the past, into myth, memory, and imagination. The fine balance between aloneness and loneliness, between community and individuality threads throughout: *Sunday morning anglers / their solitude / enjoyed together. One is a James Joyce lookalike—reading, of course. “Any bites?” “Enough to ruin a good read.”* ~MRB

Steven Carter. *Interiors*. Uxbridge, U.K.: Alba Pub., 2012, 120 pp., perfect softbound, 5.75 x 8.25. ISBN 978-0-9572592-5-6. US\$16.

Steven Carter. *Book of Dreams*. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2012, 70 pp., perfect softbound, 4.25 x 6.5. ISBN 978-1-936848-15-7. US\$12 from www.redmoonpress.com.

As one might expect of two books published in the same year, Carter's dual collections of haibun share a number of thematic obsessions, as well as a few anecdotes, bon mots and poetic phrases. The prose is largely excellent—conversational yet larded with literary and philosophical references. His ruminations at their best make one think of essayist Philip Lopate as they tool around a notion and turn it inside out (see, e.g., “Beholder” or “Winter Light” in *Interiors*). Some of the haiku are also noteworthy, though many do not match the prose. Carter's dream visions can challenge connection, as dreams often do, yet not without pointers on entry for the willing reader. In the haibun “Kaneohe Bay,” the narrator panics on an ocean swim:

*I swim harder, but the shore recedes farther with each stroke.
[...W]hat to do? . . . Then, a voice: Stop struggling and thrashing
about; stop kicking against the pricks; stop . . . [...] And sure enough,
even as I relax and tread water, the shore comes closer and closer [...]*

*other horizons
stopping at my toes
the ocean*

~MRB

Alvin Thomas Ethington, ed. *Pieces of Her Mind: Women Find Their Voice in Centuries-Old Forms*. Palm Springs, CA: Omega Publications, 2012, 185 pp., hardcover, 5.75 x 8.75. ISBN 978-0-9850350-7-5. US\$17.95/\$9.95 (paperback), from booksellers.

This anthology testifies to the groundswell of personal creativity and avocation that sustains the arts in general and the poetic enterprise in particular. It also confirms what many people have observed: that the humorous, ironic stance is more elusive than earnest insight. Yet the effort is worth the challenge, for as

Wittgenstein would have it, “A serious and good philosophical work could be written consisting entirely of jokes.” *life... / I think I might die / before it’s over* (Vicki Taylor Bonnell); *it’s not what you said / it is what you didn’t say / that I heard you say* (Marie Toole); *good ending— / too bad it didn’t start / sooner in the play* (Joan E. Stern). For more, see the essay in this issue by Susan Campion, a new voice in the endeavor. ~MRB

Rebecca Lilly. *Yesterday’s Footprints*. Allan Burns, ed. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2012, 66 pp., perfect softbound, 4.25 x 6.5. ISBN 978-1-936848-17-1. US\$12 from www.redmoonpress.com.

Some of us write haiku. Some of us write haiku poetry. The skill revolves around the author’s ability to gather words, shape them into poetic images, and through those images enter a moment and reach beyond it, to find the doorway to the self and probe deeper into some essence of the beauty and poignancy of this existence, which slips away from us even as we live it. In this, her third book of poetry, two of them dedicated to haiku, Lilly’s attention to detail enriches her writing and calls us to witness, to taste, touch, see, smell, and listen to her moments observed: *The valley’s scent / of rain-wet earth; / lowing cattle*. Through finely tuned juxtapositions, she links the past with the present: *All together again / old friends talking at once— / the flowering plums*; calls us to attention: *Wind rattles the shutters— / someone holding / the wild card*; and, at times, brings us to our knees: *Dropping windfalls . . . / were there such simple answers / to our problems*. ~FB

Magpie Haiku and Tanka Poets. *Weathered Wings: An Anthology of Poetry*. Alberta: published privately, 2012, 72 pp., perfect softbound, 5.75 x 6.5. ISBN 978-0-969356-42-4. No price given, from Joanne Morcom at morcomj@telus.net.

Seven women poets deliver a collection of poems that range from the lighthearted to more serious subject matter. *reunion dance / wanting him to stay / for the full Bolero . . .* (Patricia Benedict); *string quartet / the cello gives sadness / a voice* (Sylvia Santiago). ~FB

Kaneko Tohta. *Selected Haiku With Notes and Commentary, Part 2, 1961–2012*. Translated by The Kon Nichi Translation Group. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2012, 250 pp., perfect softbound, 4.25 x 6.5. ISBN 978-1-936848-21-8. US\$12 from www.redmoonpress.com.

This is the final volume in a 4-volume series on the life, work, and writing of Kaneko Tohta, one of Japan's leading literary and cultural figures. (*The Future of Haiku*, volume 2, was reviewed in *Frogpond* 35:2 and *Selected Haiku: Part I, 1937–1960*, volume 3, was reviewed in *Frogpond* 35:3.) Kaneko is at the forefront of the modern haiku movement, and his haiku may appear inaccessible to the unenlightened. But the collections, including this one, come with extensive notes on the haiku and translation process, which serve as a learning tool for those who would profit from an inside look at a poet whose vision is “eye-opening, accessible, and refreshingly direct.” *one dog two cats / we three finally / not A-bombed; pacific ocean / as if brooding eggs / girls on the shore* ~FB

Michael Dylan Welch, ed. *With Cherries on Top*. Sammamish, WA: Press Here, 2012, 140 pp., ebook. ISBN 978-878798-34-3. Free download from www.sites.google.com/site/nahaiwrimo/with-cherries-on-top.

NaHaiWriMo (National Haiku Writing Month) is a Facebook page that promotes daily writing through haiku prompts. In August 2012, a different prompter each day suggested themes such as star myths, birth, grass, and forgotten things. Thousands of writers responded, and from the selection, 190 haiku and senryu were chosen and gathered in this “first of its kind” ebook anthology. Stunning photographs introduce each prompt and give the collection an electric charge. One of my favorite prompts was “Beatles song,” which inspired haiku and senryu such as: *here comes the sun . . . / a list of seeds / to plant* (Dawn Apanius); *spider / in the kitchen / let it be* (Terri L. French); and *too tight the last dance his hey jude off key* (Sheila Windsor). Don't miss this free collection, along with inspiration to jump-start your writing practice. ~FB