

Briefly Reviewed

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Carol Pearce-Worthington. *We Are Not to Sing in the Car, Haibun 2005–2013.* New York, NY: 2014, perfect soft-bound, 107 pp., 5.5 by 8.5 inches. ISBN 978-1-492873-83-9. US\$11.99 and variable from www.amazon.com.

Poignant, haunting, immeasurably sad, incredibly brave—these are some of the words that come to mind after reading this collection of 78 or so haibun from a remarkable practitioner. Divided into 7 parts, the book wends its chronological way through a life of common happenstance and uncommon misfortune: a theme amply developed in pieces such as “Lifelines,” “Ballet Class,” “Self Surrender,” “I Heard She Took His Ashes,” and “This Papillon.” Pearce-Worthington reveals a deft hand at crafting allusive prose, pregnant haiku, and space in between the two. As well, she creates such a magnetic pull from one autobiographical vignette to the next that the reader is drawn to conjure what remains unspoken—and to care. Though verging at times on the bleak, the work inspires trust.

. . . I was young and hopeful and wanted to be an actress a singer and a dancer wanted to be all things never questioned whether I had the talent or the chance just knew that otherwise life was unbearable performed and toured and fell for a law student on his way to Vietnam . . .

*all the nickels
and the dimes
of your days*

(From “What Are You Doing for the Rest of Your Life”) ~MRB

Graham High. *The Window That Closes.* Arlington, VA: Turtle Light Press, 2013, perfect softbound, 26 pp., 5.25 x 8 inches. ISBN 978-0-974814-7-42. US\$11.95 from www.turtlelightpress.com.

Graham High, president of the British Haiku Society, has authored a dozen or more books of poetry. Anyone wondering whether 5–7–5 haiku have seen better days should read his latest, *The Window That Closes*. This collection of 40 poems, winner of the 2012 Turtle Light Press Chapbook Contest, utilizes the formalism to probe the last days of the author’s mother with descriptive delicacy as well as insightful punch. There is close attention here to what remains for a life well lived when health and energy slip away, when one crosses the final “rift of waiting.” For High, the debilitations of the journey do not outweigh the affirmations of love and life. *out to see the spring, / she notes the coldness of wind / through thinning hair; the cat on her lap— / an ear flicks forward every / time she turns a page; just below the moon / the small circle of her breath / in the window frost* ~MRB

David Cobb. *Anchorage, Selected Haiku 1991–2013.* Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2014, perfect softbound, 100 pp., 5.25 x 7.75 inches. ISBN 978-1-936848-26-3. US\$17 from www.redmoonpress.com.

In this collection of his best work over the past 25 years, the “patriarch of British haiku” presents some 200 poems rich in the secular values of a life examined through the double lens of society and of nature. As the excellent introduction by Michael McClintock states, Cobb’s imagery is earthy, rather than mystical; his phrasing colloquial as well as sensual. A number of poems are presented twice, in different formats, offering opportunity to consider how one line rather than three may subtly expand meaning. The book holds treasures that promise to reward multiple re-readings. *eclipse of the sun a snail slides out from under a stone; spring sunshine / my dead wife’s handprints / on the window pane; running downhill / to see the sun rise / a second time* ~MRB

Mitsu Suzuki. *A White Tea Bowl, 100 Haiku from 100 Years of Life.* Translated from the Japanese by Kate McCandless. Berkeley, CA: Rodmell Press, 2014, perfect softbound, 165 pp., 5.5 x 8.25 inches. ISBN 978-1-930485-35-8. US\$14.95 from www.rodmeilpress.com.

A birthday gift from the Zen community to the widow of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, Zen priest, founder of San Francisco Zen Center, and author of *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. After his death in 1971, Mitsu Suzuki remained at the center, taught tea ceremony, and began to write haiku, publishing her first collection in 1992. The 100 poems compiled here are drawn from the 4000 or so she wrote after her return to Japan in 1993. Though the collection is rife with the particular concerns of Zen philosophy and practice, a great many—most—of the haiku speak with age-old wisdom to a wider audience. *Mashing yams for soup / with this pestle / three generations old; Autumn chill— / tea bowl's roundness / wrapped in my hands; Learning from haiku / sustained by haiku— / this path of dew.* In addition to an introduction by Zen priest Norman Fischer, the book ends with nearly a dozen salutes to a well-loved spirit. ~MRB

Dietmar Tauchner. *Noise of Our Origin / Rauschen Unseres Ursprungs.* Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2013, perfect softbound, unpaginated, 4.25 x 6.5 inches. ISBN 978-1-936848-27-0. US\$12 from www.redmoonpress.com.

In his preface to Dietmar Taucher's first bilingual collection, Richard Gilbert remarks on the poet's "unique sensibility," one that makes the language of galactic time, space, and cosmos its own. If readers find it necessary to brush up on their astronomy and their physics, the effort will certainly reward. Despite his grasp of recondite matters—or perhaps because of it—Tauchner's poetic vision is simple, precise, and allusive. Likewise, his choice of phrase and form is as experimental as it is elemental. The result is a kind of discovery that the science and the mystery of human understanding are ultimately one. *between dream and reality a black hole; sleepless/ the moon's /tick; apple wormhole to the core* ~MRB

paul m. *Wanderlost*. Illustrations by Merrill Ann Gonzales. No place, 2014, unpag. (36 pp.), handsewn card covers, 4.25 x 5.5 inches. No ISBN. US\$8 from Paul Miller at Modern Haiku, PO Box 930, Portsmouth, RI 02871.

Such an apt title for the process of writing, thoughts just on the tip of consciousness, yet out of reach, nearfelt, demanding a focus, much like studying the night sky for the flair of comets. Though the 2013 New England skies were uncooperative, the author writes in the afterword, the presence of comets “tinged other relational orbits, returns, and near misses.” These themes are skillfully woven into 34 solid, well-crafted haiku in which we feel the poet’s subtle yearning for some order in the universe all the while he is grounded in the natural world, of which he is keenly aware. *returning comet— / movement within / a vernal pool; tidal berm / wasps search the inside / of a glass bottle; low winter sun / my fingers probe / the empty birdhouse* ~FB

Cherie Hunter Day. *Apology Moon*. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2013, unpag. (76 pp.), perfect softbound, 4.25 x 6.5 inches. ISBN 978-1-936848-28-7. US\$12 from www.redmoonpress.com.

In a collection that brings to mind the words of poet Mark Strand, *I move / to keep things whole*,* we find 60 poems of self-discovery and self-doubt, of human frailty as well as strength, of gain and loss and transformation in the process. Day’s work is not static. She engages a variety of themes and approaches with haiku that range from the traditional to those with more disjunctive qualities. A biologist by training, she explores personal insight through images and juxtapositions that are fresh and surprising and sometimes jarring, as in the title poem: *apology moon / tonight the word / is ‘meniscus’*. By definition, is the reference to the crescent shape of the moon or the cartilage in a knee joint, or both, which infer bending and flexibility on the part of both apology giver and receiver? Haiku of deeper contemplation can be a window to the soul. *sharing my plan / to travel the world / dandelion; donating / my son’s cello— / red leaves in the wind; middle age I believe the azaleas pink lies* ~FB

* (“Keeping Things Whole,” *Sleeping With One Eye Open*, 1964)

Charlotte Digregorio. *Haiku and Senryu: A Simple Guide for All.* Winnetka, IL: Artful Communicators Press, 2014, 232 pp., perfect softbound, 5.5 x 8.5 inches. ISBN 978-0-9912139-0-0. US\$19.95 from the publisher at artfulcommunicators@icloud.com or PO Box 25, Winnetka, IL 60093.

Digregorio is a prolific writer and educator who has a passion for “the rewarding art of haiku and senryu” and for sharing that passion with others. Midwest coordinator for the HSA since 2010, she has given countless workshops for adults, students, and teachers. *Haiku and Senryu* is a practical guide delivered in a relaxed, conversational tone so that the lessons and examples are informative and easily accessible. Targeted for beginning and intermediate haiku and senryu poets, chapters feature haiku and senryu background and basics, voices of the form, the significance of nature and seasons, teaching and lesson plans, tips for polishing work and getting published, and extensive appendices and bibliography. The author includes insightful perspectives of a variety of haikuists along with a generous sampling of published haiku and senryu. An energetic and comprehensive guide. ~FB

Steven Carter. *The Distances of Sleep* (2013); *City of Shaded Light*; *Heart Murmurs*; *Letters to My Parents* (2014), all published by Alba Publishing, Uxbridge, U.K., perfect softbound, 5.75 x 8.25 inches. US\$15/\$16 from the publisher. *After Vincent and Theo.* Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2014, 177 pp., perfect softbound, 5 x 7.5 inches. US\$12 from www.redmoonpress.com. (See publishers for ISBN numbers.)

If you are looking for the muse, she is most likely with Steven Carter. Time and inspiration for writing are often elusive, but this author is seizing the moment. All are collections of his latest haibun, with the exception of *The Distances of Sleep*, which features haiku, tanka, “stalactites,” and “new Zen aphorisms.” Carter is a skilled narrator, he does not shy away from experimentation with form, and he approaches his craft through the lens of a lively and introspective mind. At times the haiku could be better nuanced, but all in all, each collection promises an engaging read. ~FB

Other Collections Received

Jim Kacian & the Red Moon Staff, eds. *Fear of Dancing: The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku 2013.* Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2014, 194 pp., perfect softbound, 5.5 x 8.25 inches. ISBN 978-1-946848-24-9. US\$17 from www.redmoonpress.com. Eagerly anticipated by poets and editors alike, the 2014 volume marks the 18th in an annual series that features some of the best work in the genre.

James Fuson. *Twenty Years: Reflections of an Empty Sky.* Detroit, MI: [sic] Press, 2014, 78 pp., perfect softbound, 5.5 x 8.25 inches. No ISBN. US\$15 from www.sicpress.org. The impact of incarceration on a single life examined through 20 years of changing seasons and concrete imagery inside the walls of prison. *the fall rains / bring a stark chill / through an open window; a wet floor / a warning sign / too late*

Stanley Pelter. *Haibun Notebook.* Hampshire, U.K.: George Mann Publications, 2013, 158 pp., perfect softbound, 6 x 9 inches. ISBN 978-1-907640-00-1. No price given, from the publishers. True to its title, a collection of expanded notes that guide the reader through the author's long relationship with the craft of haibun.

Franco Debono. *Almond Blossoms.* Malta: Privately Printed., 2012, 75 pp., perfect softbound, 4.25 x 6.75 inches. ISBN 978-99957-0-307-3. No price given from www.play.com. Sketches of nature and the human environment in 109 haiku, followed by 3 brief essays on metaphysical truth and the mathematics of poetry. *light years / spiralling leaf scars / on the almond twigs*

David Oates. *Drunken Robins.* Columbus, GA: Brick Road Poetry Press, 2011, 109 pp., perfect softbound, 5.25 x 8 inches. ISBN 978-0-9841005-1-4. US\$12.95 from www.brickroadpoetrypress.com. A collection from the author's 20-year body of work with an eye focused on nature and human experience. *after communion / he finds a bit of meat / between his teeth*

James Fowler. *Falling Ashes.* Brookline, NH: Hobblebush Books, 2013, 54 pp., perfect softbound, 6 x 9 inches. ISBN 978-1-939449-02-3. US\$16 from www.hobblebush.com. Haibun, haiku, and 9 slightly longer poems recounting the author's 25 years in the navy, interwoven with nature and other matters on the homefront. Riveting prose and haiku that are image driven. *desert war / the grains of sand / keep moving*

Rob Flipse and Eric Hellal. *Haikool: 108 Haijins.* France: Éditions L'iroli, 2013, 141 pp., perfect softbound, 7 x 6.75 inches. ISBN 978-2-916616-19-3. Price: 15 € from editions_liroli@yahoo.fr. One haiku by each poet translated into six languages. The haijin are sketched by artist isabel Asúnsolo in what she calls "carinatures," which pair delightfully with the *hai* or humorous and comic nature of most of these haiku.

Gabriel Rosenstock. *The Naked Octopus.* Ireland: Evertime, 2013, 77 pp., perfect softbound, 5.5 x 8.5 inches. ISBN 978-1-78201-048-7. US\$10.95 from www.evertime.com. Trans. into Japanese by Mariko Sumikura, and in the tradition of Japanese erotica, haiku charting the adventures of an amorous octopus in love with a human woman. Poems culled from the imagination with a healthy dose of wit and humor. *octopus yogi / I stand for you / on one tentacle*

Philomene Kocher. *Singing in the Silo.* Ontario: Catkin Press, 2014, 74 pp., perfect softbound, 5 x 8 inches. ISBN 978-0-9880784-9-9. \$15 Cdn + S/H from the author at pkocher24@gmail.com. Haiku, tanka, and haibun by a poet whose imagery quietly conveys the "oneness" of a moment and the beauty found therein. *morning light / a single thread / anchors the spider web; the crow lands / a petal falls / into the pond*

Jon Petruschke. *Dream Haiku: Poems from Nights and Naps.* No place: CreateSpace, 2013, 200 pp., perfect softbound, 5 x 6 inches. ISBN 978-0-615916-51-4. US\$9.50 from online booksellers. "Whimsies, ideals, desires" from the author's active dream world find their way into haiku form. A broad range of the surreal leaves room for interpretation. *All his pets / sit inside his / body's chalk outline.*