

Evensong on The Great Egg by Erin Castaldi (2019, Moonstone Press,) 29 pages, 5.25” by 8”, Saddle stitched, ISBN: 978-1-946150-34-9, \$10:00 plus p&p from Moonstonearstcenter.org

Reviewed by Roger Watson

Erin Castaldi lives in New Jersey and in this volume reflects on what she sees and hears on her walks by the Great Egg Harbor River. The book contains 51 poems, the majority of which have been already been published in a range of international journals and websites. Most of the poems are three-line haiku with some other variations. These include two longer sequences, one of which describes the tidal nature of the river and contains the following observation about high tide:

life stirs to higher ground
shades of life
cling to dry boughs

I especially liked the attempts to describe nightfall as in:

crinoline wings
take hostage my lamplight
lazy August night

and

petals at dusk
letting in the lullaby
last hymn of the day

This latter one reminded me of the evening hymn by John Ellerton ‘The Day Thou Gavest Lord, is Ended’.

The poems both capture and conjure up images such as in the one that I imagined was about a peering through the window of an empty Quaker place of worship:

meeting house
sunlight splinters
silent benches

There are some superb observations on nature and the behaviour of the animals on the river. A description of the way some birds stretch their legs on waking was very apt:

kicking midnight
out from under
feathered bellies

And I could just envisage the bird described in the next haiku being diverted towards an aerial meal when a:

tornado of gnats
redirect
the sparrow's flight

Another avian poem suggested the movement of the birds dipping into and fluttering back and forth around some water collected after a downpour:

thunder showers
in a trash can lid
splashing cardinals

Many of the poems in this collection have a synesthetic effect, where the images are also associated with sounds and, especially, smells such as damp earth, fresh rainfall and brackish water. This is Erin Castaldi's first collection of haiku; I hope it will not be her last

