

I remember when we first published this haiku in *Mayfly* 71, many of our readers loved this girl's tenderness and excitement—eager to share her discovery of the pink sky. *Sunny Uplands* is an outstanding collection of haiku that show us how to keep a child's sense of wonder and discovery in our lives. □■

The Ten Hands of a Fuchka Seller: Haiku and Senryu by Daipayan Nair (Hawakal Publishers, New Delhi, Calcutta, India: 2024) 80 pages, 4.75"x 7". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN: 978-81-974036-2-0. \$33 from amazon.com.

In my haiku class at Millikin University, my students soon discover that they love haiku for two very different reasons. Sometimes they love a haiku because the reader can easily relate to the images and experiences presented in the haiku. But sometimes they love a haiku because it shares images and experiences never before imagined or encountered. Haiku may affirm what we already know in our own hearts, or they may push us to learn about life and hearts we've never known before. Often a mix of the familiar and strange draw us to read and reread certain haiku that become favorites. Various disjunctions between the known and unknown, the felt and never before felt, the everyday and the extraordinary, and the common and odd language compel the reader to look again more deeply for meaning and understanding. Daipayan Nair's collection *The Ten Hands of the Fuchka Seller* carefully balances these dichotomies of excellent haiku. The language seems familiar and conversational. But the cultural context and related vocabulary may be unknown. Haiku can bridge these gaps and share our human connections.

In this collection of haiku and senryu, Nair embraces a poetry of place (what the Japanese call *utamakura*). As Pravat Kumar Padhy writes in the introduction, "The poems are primarily centered around the way of life in Kalkata ... The collection of verses portrays a cultural tapestry of this historical city" (7). Here is the title poem:

Kolkata street corner —
the ten hands
of a fuchka seller

I've never been on this street corner, but I can imagine the street food seller and how busy they are preparing the fuchka with their own secret recipe. I've never eaten fuchka. I looked it up online and watched YouTube videos to discover that it is a popular street food, with a variety of chopped fillings in a shell. A lot of handiwork goes into each one!

Nair's senryu feature a wide variety of people encountered on the streets of Kolkata. Here's the opening senryu:

graffiti art —
an old beggar pees
on revolution

While graffiti and beggars may be universal, it is interesting to imagine the politics alluded to in this poem. Like other contemporary societies, how does the Nair's culture address issues such as homelessness, poverty, and begging? Who embraces or pees on revolution?

Some of the haiku may seem familiar:

her classmates
pulling a new prank . . .
puddle splash

Kids will be kids and ornery. Sometimes one is persecuted by a bullying click of friends. Maybe a splash is not too mean, or it can still result in feelings of alienation and hopelessness by the one abused.

Sometimes we have to learn about customs to understand a haiku's underlying significance:

fading mehndi . . .
every promise
you had made

This senryu features a fading henna tattoo, a sort of mandala on the back of a hand as part of a celebration, possibly the night before a wedding. This is a senryu about the honeymoon being over, the excitement of the wedding, and promises fading away. It is a poem about both kept and unkept promises.

In this next senryu, we encounter the word “bangla” which probably refers to a servant from Bangladesh, but the word does seem to suggest an offensive ethnic slur or connotation:

sea breeze —
her Bangla adds tang
to our gossip

This poem appears to be about privilege and class. People who gather for vacation seek out the pleasant sea breeze. They enjoy gossiping about others — who’s up, who’s down, who’s in, who’s out. The outsider is part of their circle when it comes to the gossip because she has a spicy bit to add.

I will close with one more haiku which, on the surface, appears to be easily understood by readers from all cultures:

red blouse
a safety pin between
her lips

What are the associations or cultural assumptions of wearing a red blouse? Is this referring to a confident woman celebrating good luck and fortune? Perhaps it is referring to the custom that only the bride wears red at some weddings? Is that safety pin for a baby’s diaper? Or is does it simply refer to getting ready

for an event? We can get a clear image from this haiku, but the cultural context and implied significance may be difficult for readers unfamiliar with the Kalkata perspective. I interpret this poem as a representation of a confident mother, possibly a bride, taking care of the essential business of changing a diaper. The joy of this haiku, and this collection, is that we get to imagine and share in the life of fellow humans on the streets of Kalkata. Thanks for this gift of haiku and senryu, Daipayan Nair. □■

REVIEWED BY JACOB D. SALZER

Conversations with Lenard D. Moore, edited by John Zheng (The University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, MS: 2024). 198 pages, 6" x 9". Paperback. ISBN: 978-1-4968-5395-0. \$25 from www.upress.state.ms.us

This is a collection of 16 interviews with Lenard D. Moore, ranging from 1995 to 2023. The introduction text states, "Known internationally for his Japanese-style poetry, Lenard D. Moore (b. 1958) has published eight poetry collections over the course of his career. Moore has distinguished himself especially in such forms as jazz poetry, haiku, tanka, renga, sequence, and haibun, expressing moments of aesthetic delight as well as a voice enriched with African American culture." The back cover also states, "The conversations here lead the reader into Moore's creative mind, demonstrating his fusion of African American music, culture, and history into poetry, especially his jazz poetry, jazzku, and bluesku."

After the introduction by the editor, John Zheng, a chronology provides key events in Lenard D. Moore's life from birth to 2023. In chronological order, the interviewers in this book are: Jane Reichhold (1995), Doris Lucas Laryea (1996), L. Teresa Church (2009), Sheila Smith McKoy (2011), John Zheng (2017), Crystal Simone Smith (2020), David G. Lanoue (2021), Ann Angel (2021), Dee Clere (2021), Toru Kiuchi (2022), Susan Antolin (2022), Sharon Hayes-Brown (2022), Lauri Scheyer (2022), John Zheng