

Reviewed by Allyson Whipple

Wondrous Instruction and Advice from Global Poets by Charlotte Digregorio. 334 pp., perfect softbound. ISBN: 978-0-9912139-2-4. Winnetka, IL: Artful Communications Press, 2025.

Charlotte Digregorio is a longtime champion of English-language haiku and senryu. Her book *Haiku and Senryu: A Simple Guide for All* has introduced many poets to the form, and in the age of more visually-oriented, short-form social media, the staying power of her blog – where she features numerous haiku and senryu poets – is an accomplishment in its own right. The author of five other nonfiction books (as well as two poetry collections), Digregorio now brings us a volume that seeks to synthesize her haiku life with her careers in teaching, editing, and public relations, as well as her knowledge of free-verse poetry.

Wondrous Instruction and Advice from Global Poets is divided into three sections: “The Nuts and Bolts of Writing Poetry,” “Wisdom and Heart: The Short Forms of Haiku, Senryu, and Tanka,” and “Thrive as an Author.” I appreciate the ways she moves from poetry generally to Japanese short forms specifically between the first two sections. Each chapter is written in Digregorio’s accessible, conversational style that will make beginners feel that they can rise to the challenge of writing good poetry. With such a long writing career, Digregorio is able to provide a number of concrete suggestions and practices that a poet can put to use immediately; I especially liked the suggestion to keep a poetry log to help a writer get a sense of their own voice. However, there were occasional sections that felt like missed opportunities. For example, Chapter 5 contains a section called, “Dissolving Racial Barriers Through Poetry, Music, and Art.” This is an important topic, but Digregorio only allotted it a page of space; that is simply not enough. In such a brief section,

she seems to have a particularly rosy view of the power of art and poetry, without acknowledging that systemic prejudice still exists in creative industries. In addition, while there are many sections throughout the book in which Digregorio solicited and published commentary from poets around the world, she did not have any direct commentary from people in this section; I think some personal narratives would have strengthened the prose.

“Wisdom and Heart” is an overview of Japanese short forms that, while largely appealing to beginners, has value for established practitioners as well. This section of the book relies heavily on commentary from practitioners around the globe, which Charlotte solicited through her blog. I appreciated the insights my fellow haijin shared about why they wrote haiku and what the form meant to them; I felt I got to know some of my fellow poets in a new way. However, I was a little confused as to the purpose of the final two chapters in that section: “Interpreting the Theme of Borders” and “Love – The Good, Bad, or Ugly.” While these chapters contained a number of excellent poems, I didn’t quite see how they fit into a section that had otherwise provided introductions to the forms and then focused on the ways in which these forms could help us lead a purposeful life. While not without merit, they felt out of place.

The final section, “Thrive as an Author,” has excellent advice for both beginning poets and for more seasoned practitioners looking to publish more work and improve their self-promotion skills. I appreciate Digregorio’s insider knowledge from her work in publishing and public relations, such as how far in advance to contact an editor at a monthly magazine. Her sample press releases are also helpful. What I most value in this section is the way Digregorio provides evergreen advice that can be applied in a range of contexts, so no matter how print or electronic media changes, her advice will still work. In an ever-evolving media

landscape, we all have something to learn from this section. Still, there were occasional moments when I wondered about the structure and organization. For example, the chapter “Short is Deep for Your Book’s Title” is only about two pages long; it felt like this could have been a section rather than a chapter unto itself.

Ultimately, while I have some criticisms of the book, on the whole it still has a great deal to offer the haiku community, and the poetry community at large. Beginners will find a great deal of approachable, accessible advice. Those of us with more experience will learn some new tips and tricks. No matter where you are in your writing life, the commentaries provided by other poets are also insightful and enjoyable. These commentaries get to the heart of *Wondrous Instruction and Advice from Global Poets*: the importance of connection locally and globally.

you are here by Maxianne Berger. 98 pp., perfect softbound. ISBN: 978-1990657-14-6. Coaticook, Quebec: Yarrow Press, 2025. \$12.00 CAD from www.shorelinepress.ca.

Maxianne Berger’s *you are here* is a collection largely structured by the seasons, with intermezzos in between that more fully address human life. Her work draws on a range of cultural and artistic references, from the West African griot to European classical music. Full of allusion yet completely accessible, this book shows not only Berger’s poetic skill, but also illustrates the dynamic range of haiku.

The first section, “spring dream,” is seasonal. However, Berger doesn’t simply give us spring poems. Every piece connects some way to the sense of “dream,” whether directly or obliquely. For example, “morning haze / waiting for the stop sign / to turn green,” is a relatable, humorous poem that insomniacs, as well as