

The repetition of this style becomes deadening after several pages. These recurring weaknesses suggest that greater selectivity and closer editing would have been a good idea.

Quibbles notwithstanding, *Favor of Crows* is a fine monument to one of America's pioneer haikuists, an autodidact poet who has been laboring, mostly outside the haiku "mainstream," for more than fifty years. Gerald Vizenor has surely inspired survivance haiku from the pens of such Native American luminaries as William Oandasan, Mary TallMountain, N. Scott Momaday, and Sherman Alexie.

Drifting, by Marco Fraticelli. (Canada: Catkin Press, 2013). 88 pages; 5"x7". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound, ISBN 978-0-9880784-4-4, Price: US\$10.00 plus postage. Inquire of the publisher at claudiaradmore@gmail.com or the author at kingsroadpress@hotmail.com

Reviewed by Roberta Beary

Treasure found is perhaps what haiku poet Marco Fraticelli thought when he first discovered the eight diaries of Celesta Taylor in an abandoned cabin near Quebec. Combining his haiku with the excerpts from the diaries, written between 1905 and 1916, Fraticelli has crafted a poetic hybrid of a woman's midlife musings and his responses to them.

Drifting is a true page-turner, bringing together a May–December romance (which may be one-sided) and the darker element of incest. In the author's Introduction one learns, "Celesta was hired as a housekeeper by her first cousin, Henry Miles. Henry was himself a widower with two teenage sons ... (and) was the father of a newborn baby, Evelyn, who was born out of wedlock with his fifteen year old niece, Clara Miles, whom Henry had engaged as a housekeeper." But wait, there's more: "At the time of the first journal, 1905, Celesta was 45 and Henry 32." Henry also is a man of God, a Seventh-day Adventist now on the wrong side of his church elders. Although Celesta does write in her diary about Henry's

treatment by the church, she is silent on Henry's relationship with Clara and their child Evelyn.

Fratlicelli resists the temptation of viewing the diaries from a 21st century perspective. But some things have not changed much since 1905, as is apparent from the first three diary entries, each marked with a large X and each dated almost exactly one month apart. These Xs are Celesta's code for her menstrual cycle. The third entry, dated December 7, 1905, reads, "X Mill caught fire." The haiku for that date echoes the fire image foreshadowing what's in store in a few years for Celesta, then age 45:

I sprinkle ashes
from the woodstove
onto the compost pile

The following month there is another X and another fire. The January 9, 1906, entry reads "X Commenced a big tub of butter. Davis house burned."

Fratlicelli directly references the X only once in his haiku. Ironically it is to mark the absence of Celesta's menstruation—a harbinger of the beginning of menopause. On July 30, 1906, Celesta writes "Henry went to the sanatorium. Got there just in time to save his life." The haiku for that date is

no rain again
the X
in this month's calendar

There is no X again until September 23, 1909. On September 24, 1909, Celesta writes, "Sad. My head very bad" and two days later, "I have been so sad all day. Sewed some but felt so bad I could not do much." On October 5, 1909, she notes, "I sewed all day. General work. More cheerful for no reason." While Celesta does not seem aware of the cause of the changes in her physical and mental state, the haiku in response to this entry expresses the poet's greater understanding

a butterfly
settles
on one of my weeds

The diary entries describe a life filled with hard housekeeping tasks and illness. Henry grows more and more upset with his treatment by the church elders, yet his daughter/grandniece Evelyn continues to live under his care and protection. He never appears to make the connection between his life choices and his ouster from the church. Meanwhile Celesta's midlife symptoms continue. Under the date July 11, 1911, she writes, "X' the first for nearly two years. I have breathed too much turpentine is the reason why."

I do not know if the term perimenopause existed in the early 20th century, but today if you enter perimenopause symptoms on Google, you will get more than 1 million results. *Drifting* gives the reader an accurate first-person perspective on the condition.

But *Drifting* encompasses more than the journey from perimenopause to menopause or another tale of unrequited love. Fraticelli's haiku get to the heart of the tangled family relationship between Celesta and Henry, thirteen years younger. Just three days after the July 11, 2011 entry, we read this haiku

breathing
watching him
breathing

As Celesta reaches her 50s, Henry meets a much younger woman. In October 20, 1915, Celesta writes, "I look like death and have failed ever since I got his first letter about that girl." The response haiku

the leaves are gone
and half the moon too
but I am still here

conveys just the right feeling of human frailty.

Ironically Celesta does not realize the relationship she seeks with her cousin Henry mirrors his with niece Clara. Nor is this indicated in any of the response haiku.

Overall Marco Fraticelli's pairing of his high-quality haiku and Celesta Taylor's diary entries is both sensitive and successful. Highly recommended.

(d)ark, by John Stevenson (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2014). 74 pages; 5¼" x 7¾". Glossy color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-27-0. Price: \$12.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

Reviewed by Paul Miller

Stevenson is well known to the haiku community: an award-winning poet, past president of the Haiku Society of America, past editor of its journal *Frogpond*, current managing editor of *The Heron's Nest*, and member of the Route 9 haiku group, among other things. His fifth collection *(d)ark* contains a nice mix of haiku, senryu, and tanka.

I have always thought of Stevenson as a poet who is interested in what it means to be a person (or persona) in your own skin. One of my favorite poems of his is the title poem to his 1999 collection *Some of the Silence*: "a deep gorge... / some of the silence / is me." This sense of personhood is a theme he has mined successfully through later collections. His newest collection continues that journey. Three examples:

my house
without me
autumn wind

maybe an ant
next time
maybe this time

a man in a crowd in a man
