

Lapland's ice
melted at last —
first mosquito bite

departing swans
last arctic sunlight
in their wings

G rard Krebs is a haikuist well worth getting to know better, and *The Soundless Dance* provides a fine opportunity to do so.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Sisyphus: Haiku Work of Anna Vakar, ed. by Vicki McCullough (Canada: Catkin Press, 2017). 88 pages; 5½" x 8¼". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-928163-17-6. Price: \$15.00 from sisyphus@telus.net

Vakar was an early writer as well as essayist of haiku. A mentee of Eric Amann, she helped him edit the journal *Cicada* until she broke with Amann over what she perceived as his definitional narrowness. Despite her extensive teachings and writings on the genre, she herself wasn't widely published. Editor McCullough rectifies that with the current volume. Vakar's work is characterized by its breadth; it seems more important as a means of expression than as an end in itself. She looks closely at things, searching for revelations; sometimes they are purely objective, other times a bit too explanatory. A good reminder about following rules too closely. *wind-driven sleet— / trying yet another position / the colt*

The Theater of the Desert, by Ban'ya Natsuishi (India: Cyberwit, 2017). 84 pages; 5½" x 8½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-9-385945-99-1. Price: \$16.00 from www.cyberwit.net

Thirty haiku by Natsuishi written during a trip to Morocco. The poems are translated into nine languages (French, Portuguese, Italian, Bulgarian, English, Mongolian, Chinese, Arabic, and Japanese) and each

accompanied by a haiga by Kuniharu Shimizu. They are typical Natsui-shi, a mixing of images with ideas, with some interesting bridges between the two. *Medina of one thousand years / trailing silk / and a sleeping cat*

A Gust from the Alley, ed. the Spring Street Haiku Group (New York: Privately printed, 2017). 81 pages; 4¼" x 6¾". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-329850-59-0. Price: \$7.17 from lulu.com

Following closely on the heels of 2017's *Low Growling from the Petunias*, the Spring Street Haiku Group present another anthology of their work. Addressed in the Introduction is the question of whether there is a group style, since it is a workshop group, and the Introduction details a few examples of how poems have been edited by the larger group; yet it is clear that each writer has their own voice. Humorous senryu as well as thought-provoking haiku.

50 Haiku Calligraphy Works by Regular Contributors to Ginyu, ed. by Ban'ya Natsuishi (Japan: Privately printed, 2017). 73 pages; 6" x 8¾". Matte red, black, and white card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-4-879442-84-0. Price: ¥1500. Inquire of the editor.

The haiku of twenty-one poets through their calligraphy. All regular contributors to Natsuishi's journal *Ginyu*. A twentieth anniversary edition.

An Amazement of Deer, by Carmen Sterba (University Place, Wash.; Cascade Deer Press, 2017). 28 pages; 5½" x 8½". Matte four-color card covers; hand-sewn. No ISBN. Price: Inquire of the author

When Sterba married she became part caretaker of a mule deer herd. *An Amazement of Deer* is a collection of haiku, photographs of the herd, and her observations. She also includes twenty deer haiku by other poets. Through the poems, we feel the love and amazement she has for the herd. *mating season / the buck shakes / a coat of rain*

Souls Cleaner Than Ours, by Michael Flanagan (Johnstown, Penn.: Prolific Press, 2017). 36 pages; 5½" x 8½". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-632750-92-1. Price: \$8.95 from www.prolificpress.com

Flanagan has a good eye for detail and an imagination to match, as well as a good sense of humor concerning the natural world. Unfortunately the poems close too easily, and give little chance to a reader looking to interpret the scenes themselves. Squirrels meditate, sparrows pray, and the moon a proud parent—all anthropomorphisms normally left out of haiku. *Gray predawn— / lifeless tree limbs / still pray to heaven*

Ghana 21, by Adjei Agyei-Baah (Ghana: The Mamba Press, 2017). 27 pages; 5" x 8". Saddle-stapled. ISBN 978-1-549677-45-8. Price: \$4.00 (softcover); \$0.99 (Kindle) from online booksellers

Inspired by David Rodrigues' *Gaza 21*, Agyei-Baah set out to write a similar chapbook on his country of Ghana. Like *Gaza 21*, there are twenty-one haiku, in Agyei-Baah's case the last line of each being "in Ghana." Agyei-Baah points out the complexities and ironies of life in Ghana, from its corrupt police to its instabilities. *only soccer / keeps a nation under one banner / in Ghana*

Wind Man: Haiku at Work, by Brian Chaffee (Cincinnati, Il.: 23rd Century Modern, 2017). 104 pages; 6" x 9". Black and white card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-522091-43-1. Price \$11.79 (paperback), \$7.49 (Kindle) from online booksellers

An eighty-eight haiku sequence on a fictional salesman. The Dilbert-like character endures endless travails, from poor hotel buffets to airports. While some of the poems are funny, they aren't really haiku; they explain too much and are too overtly metaphorical. *revolving front door / breeze flips junk mail to the floor / fish flop on wet tiles*

Jumble Box: Haiku and Senryu from National Haiku Writing Month, ed. by Michael Dylan Welch (Sammamish, Wash.: Press Here, 2017). 240 pages; 6" x 9". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-878798-39-8. Price: \$18.00 from online booksellers

In 2010 Welch started the NaHaiWriMo Facebook group, whose members' goal each day is to write a haiku. Prompters provide daily prompts—words or themes—that the members incorporate into their daily poems. The current volume is assembled from haiku and senryu written during the month of February, 2017. The book is divided into twenty-eight sections, one for each day's theme. As would be expected from a group, some poets are stronger than others, but in the main Welch has done an admirable job winnowing down the content into one hundred poets and their 324 poems. The volume includes twenty-eight haiga and a cover by Ron C. Moss. It is interesting to read the different directions poets can take a prompt, such as these two from February fourth's prompt "hand."

origami
the boat in the ocean
in her hand

Sheila Windsor

a guilty verdict
handed down...
freezing rain

Johnny Baranski

Body of Evidence: A Collection of Killer 'Ku, eds. kjmunro and Jessica Simon (Canada: Catkin Press, 2017). 76 pages; 5" x 7". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-928163-11-4. Price: \$10.00 from kjm.1560@gmail.com

Published as a fund-raiser for the fortieth anniversary of Haiku Canada, *Body of Evidence* is an anthology by thirty-one poets on the varied subject of crime. The collection is broken into thematic sections ("Weapon of Choice," "Violence Against Women and Children," "B&E," "Behind Bars," etc...). Despite the heavy subject matter and because the poets aren't criminals (as far as we know), the poems have a light touch, and

often take their subject matter from the news or movies. Surely one of the most original collections; and enjoyable. Sadly, co-editor Simon recently passed away.

Waiting, by kjmunro (Canada: Leaf Press, 2017). 7 pages; 4¼" x 14". Blue card covers; card fold out. No ISBN. Price: CAD \$6.00 from www.leafpress.ca

Chapbook #5 in the press' *Leaflet Series*. Five haiku on the subject of a visit to the doctor, and the waiting it entails. Nice poems, but the size and topic leaves one wanting to know more; much like an actual visit to the doctor. *the nurse calls my name / I stand hands / open*

Star by Star, by Rick Tarquinio (No place [Bridgeton, N.J.]: Odd Duck Press, 2017). 36 pages; 5½" x 8½". Black card covers; saddle-stapled. No ISBN. Price: \$10.00 from www.ricktarquinio.bandcamp.com/merch

In the main a collection of haiku on the farms and fields of Southern New Jersey, where the poet grew up and lives. Tarquinio finds the right details, and shows the reader how they are important, in his surroundings. The poems are just as much about the present as they are about the past. He wonderfully remarks in the collection's one paragraph introduction: "whoever said you can't go home again didn't live here." Very enjoyable. *childhood fields / a bobwhite calling / across the years*

Gardul de Măceși / Eglantine Hedge, by Vasile Spinei (Republic of Moldova: Bon Offices Press, 2017). 198 pages; 5½" x 8½". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-9-975872-96-6. Price: inquire of author at spineivas@gmail.com

A large collection of haiku in English and Romanian from an established haikuist, with illustrations by Ion Codrescu. The book is divided into four

sections, each moving slowly out from Spinei's home village. Despite this outward progression, the poems are in the main about the Moldavian countryside. The poems are gentle, observational, and give a good sense of the poet's love of his surroundings. Spinei knows haiku and he writes with an almost American stylistic sensibility; we are glad for this volume. The title poem: *all through / the Eglantine hedge— / flowers for thieves*

The Kraken Latitudes, by Steven Carter (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2017). 86 pages; 5" x 7½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-04-3. Price: \$15.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

Another volume of haibun in which Carter revisits his past—whether real or imagined—and the pasts of others. His stories span distances and time, and are told with a casualness that belies his intention. As we have noted before, his haiku tell a bit too much for our taste, and some arguably aren't haiku. Still, Carter has tales to tell.

The New World, by Keith Polette (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2017). 76 pages; 4¼" x 6½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-04-3. Price: \$15.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

Polette's first haiku collection is seasonally divided, but its similarity to most haiku collections ends there. The haiku in *The New World* run the gamut from interesting observations to poems that stretch our imagination in wonderful ways. He often breaks well-intentioned rules, getting away with it more often than not, but sometimes he stretches his connections too far; but it is obvious he is thinking about how he can use this form to illustrate his world view. A good first collection. We expect he will go far. Two haiku: the first which is delightful; the second where he goes a bit astray.

two rivers meet
in the mouth
of the frog

insomnia...
night rummages through me
looking for lost keys and loose change

High Desert Cameos, by Carl Mayfield (Cookeville, Tenn.: Little Books Press, 2017). 26 pages; 5¼" x 7". Matte four-color card covers; side-stapled. No ISBN. Price: inquire of the author at P.O. Box 44472, Rio Rancho, N.M. 87174

A small, unassuming collection on a desert life. Mayfield is very much at home among the animals and landscape, and his observations feel right. Often the least significant thing is shown to have great significance. A strong sense of interconnectedness—the poet included. Many of the poems are paired with sometimes abstract pen and ink illustrations. An enjoyable outing. *unchurched, still I turn / when the meadowlark / begins to sing*

Quaking Marsh, by Stuart Bartow (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2017). 58 pages; 4¼" x 6½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-05-0. Price: \$15.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

A first collection from Bartow. The haiku well describe place; there is a comforting cohesiveness to the collection. The poems are nature haiku in the main, and what an active nature it is: nature as it is, nature becoming, leaning on itself, and pointing beyond. As might be expected, a few poems misfire, usually personification taken a step too far; but an enjoyable collection. One that strikes the balance just right: *a thousand crickets auditioning for the moon*

The Color Blue, by Alexis Rotella (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2017). 72 pages; 6" x 9". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-98-0. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

A substantial collection of haiku, senryu, tanka, haibun, and haiga from a poet who knows how to do all five. Her poems often find the ironies in life, usually from her own—or a persona of herself—and she takes these imperfections humorously in stride. Yet, the poems also delve into

what it means to be human and our attempts to be part of something larger. There is an honesty to her work. Some of the senryu are toss-off observations and we wish the haiga were in color and a bit more complex (see MH 47.2), but these are nits. A rewarding collection. *First date / he hands me a rose / from my garden*

They Gave Us Life: Celebrating Mothers, Fathers & Others in Haiku, ed. by Robert Epstein (West Union, W.V.: Middle Island Press, 2017). 218 pages; 6" x 9". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0998073-29-3. Price: \$20.00 from online booksellers

Epstein has edited a number of thematic anthologies, the latest on the relationships we have toward parents or parental figures. However, rather than explore all sides of these relationships—and perhaps that is asking too much for a single volume—the haiku, senryu, and tanka mainly celebrate them. A large number of poets and poems. Like his other anthologies, Epstein gets a good variety of voices.

Earthshine, by Chuck Brickley (United Kingdom: Snapshot Press, 2017). 112 pages; 5" x 7¾". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-903543-43-6. Price: £11.99 from www.snapshotpress.co.uk

Winner of the 2015 Snapshot Press Book Award, Brickley's first collection gathers haiku from over twenty years of haiku practice. The poems are seasonally arranged and broken into fourteen sections, and like all Snapshot Press books, it is beautifully produced. Quiet unassuming poems that capture nature in its mysterious making and unmaking, yet they are much more than pastoral snapshots; rather they notice important connections that a quick glance would miss—and we'd be all the poorer for it. More importantly, Brickley has the skill to make these moments tangible through poetry. If one is looking for a haiku model, one needn't look further than *Earthshine*. Easily recommended; a book we will return to. *moonrise / still out there weeding / in her sunhat*

Persimmon, ed. by Stephen Henry Gill (Japan: Hailstone Haiku Circle, 2017). 150 pages; 5½" x 6". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-4-990082-28-4. Price: \$18.00 from www.hailhaiku.wordpress.com/publications/

The current anthology includes poems written since the group's previous anthology *Meltdown* (2013). The haiku are segregated into sections, each section set apart by either a haibun or haiku sequence. There is an additional section, "Calendar Says," in which verbs are used as haiku subjects, upon which editor Gill discourses; our favorite section. The book ends with a few poems on deceased friends or members. The Hailstone group is an active one, and the reader feels the communal nature of the group, particularly in what seems a "house style": leading capitals, occasional four-line haiku (after Tito), and the inclusion of *utamakura* or poetic places. As always, an enjoyable outing.