in which the fish has been drawn by Sanki on the sand (215), that adds some further resonance.

When I was teaching, poetry or haiku, I sometimes asked students to consider whether William Blake's poem "The Fly" represented the same thought as Issa's well-known verse "Do not swat the fly" (*yare utsu-na*), or a different one? Likewise, I noted how one of Sanki's wartime haiku, "A machine gun — / in the middle of the forehead / a red flower blooms," might be read alongside a poem by Rimbaud, "Le Dormeur du Val," even though the latter is a sonnet, to see if they in any way resemble or speak to one another. Again, it might be interesting to compare Sanki's wartime haiku with those of Julien Vocance (1878–1954), while noting that he was a combatant, while Sanki was not. There are many ways to approach this rich collection of Sanki's work, perhaps the largest number of haiku by any modern Japanese haiku poet yet translated. It is a fine achievement, and clearly it has been Masaya Saito's avocation to undertake it.

After the book-launch at a Shinjuku bookstore, I had a chat with Masaya, and then went for a drink with him and a couple of his friends, first in a rickety building near the station. After that he led us to another place, across the red-light district and up an alley so narrow that you nearly had to turn sideways, for another snack. I recall the deep sigh of satisfaction and relief that he gave, the book-launch over, taking his first sip of a Tsingtao beer. Now the reader can share that satisfaction too, enjoying the result.

The Empty Field, by Matthew M. Cariello (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 126 pages; 4¼″×6½″. Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-08-7. Price: $20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

Reviewed by Rebecca Lilly

Cariello's *The Empty Field* is a compilation of haiku he wrote over forty years (between 1982 and 2022), and it was unclear to me to what extent these poems were culled from a larger body of haiku he

composed during that time period—in other words, whether these haiku represent, in his judgment, his very best, extracted from a much larger body of work (in which case this book is more like a "selected haiku"); or, alternatively, whether the book should be considered closer to a "collected haiku," presenting most of what he wrote and deemed worthy during that forty-year timespan. It would have been interesting, and helpful, to know in a preface or introduction to this collection, what guided the author to choose the poems he did, in view of the long timespan over which they were written. Indeed, the book has a cyclical feel to it, which suggests that very long timespan.

There are several respects in which the book offers us this sense of expansive time through natural cycles. One is through images that reference the seasons, the moon's phases, and the passage of elements, one to another (air, water, fire, and earth), as well as the cycle of desire itself (want and fulfillment, which stirs yet another want). Cariello deftly presents recurring images that both echo the past incarnations of that image and hint at its future appearances. The crickets, the moon, and the Buddha are three of the images that repeat in different iterations throughout the collection, emphasizing natural cycles and time's passage. The moon, of course, has its own cycles; and the image of the Buddha naturally suggests the transience and fragility of all things in time; but, in addition, the fact that these images get repeated throughout the collection creates an additional emphasis on cyclicality, and lends a cohesiveness to the collection as a whole. The natural cycle of elements presents itself in the section titles: air, water, fire, and earth. Those elements, in their transformational relationships with one another, form a circle: air condenses into clouds falling as water (the rain), and water puts out fire, while the remains of fire (as earth) create rising vapors which again form the clouds.

Of particular interest to me is how Buddhist philosophy (in particular, the necessity of letting go of a transient and changing world) gets reflected in the images in this book. One I found striking in this regard:

a thousand windows
above the trees
mockingbird song

To me, this suggested how the sky (a symbol of heaven) represents a reflection of our multiple views about it: we see multiple "mind interpretations" rather than the (reflectionless) thing itself. The poem also suggests that what we see, literally, are windows of skyscrapers rather than the sky: we see the artificial things we've created (windows of buildings) rather than the natural and already present reality. And then, in the final line, the mockingbird song is a metaphor for the mind-created imitation of the real, a mock-up of the real rather than the real itself.

Wind is a recurring image in this collection, a dual symbol suggesting the passage of time in the natural world, as well as the spiritual "breath" which presumably continues from life to life in the Buddhist philosophy of reincarnation. Wind is both the new beginning and the spiritual essence in this captivating poem:

new moon
among old pines
wind

Here the wind effectively links two of the oldest and most venerable images in haiku: moon and pines. The moon (in being absent, an emptiness) stands for the new, and the pines for the old, and wind is the bridge, the essential link to both.

Other poems suggest the cycles of living things by contrasting death and life in striking ways. I found the line breaks with "dead" to be very effective in these poems:

autumn wind
even the dead
tree sways

climbing the dead
lilac bush
morning glories

The term "dead" brings to mind death or all that's dead in a general sense, which immediately gets particularized in the next line, as "tree" or "lilac bush." This quick movement from the general to the particular grounds the observation. It's surprising also, because, on another reading, one

might be thinking of dead people or spirits, but then the object is shown to be quite natural and ordinary (a tree or bush). The movement from what appears to be ghostly or superstitious to what's there in plain sight and not frightening at all (the tree or bush) is affecting. And while this may be a very idiosyncratic reading, the lilac bush, for me, has a biblical resonance with the "burning bush," from which dead spirits rise into heaven (as suggested by "morning glories").

One feature of this collection that I thought made it a stand-out was the strong element of surprise in several of its poems, as mentioned by one of the commentators, in praise of the author, on the back cover. Here is a perfect example:

autumn wind
how many crickets
does it take?

I love the open-endedness of interpretation here: how many crickets does the wind blow away. perhaps to death; but "crickets" can mean "silence" (in cinematic slang); how many crickets does it take to silence the wind, or how many silences (or "deaths") does the wind take with it, as crickets or other easily crushed insects?

Or consider this poem:

blossom shower my loss doubled

The blossom shower is a colorful delight of spring, the "shower" of spring rain and lush flowery abundance—and yet the author is stung by a renewed sense of loss. The poem does an about-face, as the emphasis reverses from the freshness of spring beginnings, to the fallen dying blossom. It's unexpected and affecting.

something less
than the speed of light
camellia blossoms

Here is a striking juxtaposition between movement and stillness. After "light," one expects movement in the next image (a bird or a winded branch, perhaps) and instead, surprisingly, finds stillness in the camellia blossom: its whiteness "solidifies" light in petals that tend to be opaque rather than diaphanous, with a surround of heavy, waxy leaves.

And finally, this poem's deft encapsulation of the Buddhist notion of self:

chasing cloud shadows I fail

The book's title, *The Empty Field,* and the references to Buddha in several poems in the collection, suggest that the author, if not a Buddhist himself, is very familiar with its Four Noble Truths. In the poem above, the psychological mind-based self (the "I") fails in resisting what is. It can't make itself endure since it is the same as what it chases, a shadow or cloud. It makes the foundational error of looking for itself outside, rather than looking inwardly to discover its own empty essence.

The poems in Cariello's book, *The Empty Field*, were written and culled over a long time period, and it shows. It is an excellent collection and I highly recommend it.

Dear Elsa, by Marco Fraticelli (Canada, Red Deer Press, 2023). 240 pages; 5¼″×7¼″. Four-color card civers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-889956-86-5. Price: $14.95 from online booksellers.

Reviewed by Randy Brooks

Marco Fraticelli's first foray into haiku fiction was his book, *A Thousand Years: The Haiku and Love Letters of Chiyo-ni*, 2018. In that book, he imagined and wrote love letters prompted from Chiyo-ni's haiku. The book reads like a novella, progressing through the imagined love relationship. In 2023, Marco wrote a second haiku fiction book, *Dear Elsa*, a book for children ages 8-11. As an experienced fifth-grade teacher,