

*Favor of Crows: New and Collected Haiku*, by Gerald Vizenor (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2014). 127 pages; 5¼" x 8¼". Hardbound: matte tan paper-covered boards quarterbound in buckram; semigloss four-color covers; black section dividers. ISBN 978-0-819574-32-9 hardcover; 978-0-819574-33-6 e-book. Price: \$24.95 hardcover; \$19.99 e-book, from booksellers.

*Reviewed by Charles Trumbull*

The name Gerald Vizenor is rarely encountered in haiku journals and anthologies, yet his manifold activities in and around the haiku genre belie his anonymity in the community. He learned about haiku as a U.S. soldier stationed in Hokkaido and Sendai, Japan, in the early 1950s and began publishing his original haiku a decade later. To his inaugural work, the 1962 chapbook *Two Wings the Butterfly*, he has since added six more published collections of haiku, most recently *Cranes Arise: Haiku Scenes* (Nodin Press, 1999). Vizenor is a member of the Minnesota Chippewa (Anishinaabe) nation, and lived on the White Earth Reservation near Bemidji, Minn. In the 1960s he worked as a correction officer in a reformatory and was director of the American Indian Employment and Guidance Center in Minneapolis. His main vocations have been scholar and professor in Native American studies at the state universities in Minnesota, Oklahoma, California (Berkeley and Santa Cruz), and New Mexico, as well as journalist, author, and translator. A key area of Vizenor's scholarly and social inquiry has been, to use the term that he resuscitated for use in Native American studies, *survivance*, which he explains in his book *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* is "an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry."

Vizenor's work in literary criticism has examined Native American dream songs and trickster stories in relation to *survivance*. Later he explored the perceived relationship between Japanese and Native American short-form lyrics in "Haiku Culturalism," his keynote address at

Haiku North America 1999 in Evanston, Ill. (published as “Fusions of Survivance: Haiku Scenes and Native Dream Songs” in *MH* 31.1).

*Favor of Crows* collects fifty years of Vizenor’s haiku in a handsomely produced hardback book from a major academic publisher of poetry. A few of Vizenor’s haiku in this collection touch directly on survivance and several more on Native American themes, though he is never heavy-handed in doing so:

grand marais  
old fur traders tease the fire  
survivance stories

lake itasca  
source of the great river  
buried in snow

For the most part though, Vizenor’s work is heavily weighted toward nature haiku in the *shasei* mode. His is very much a haiku of place. His locales are the field and forest—occasionally a rural setting—his subjects the creatures that live there. Perhaps more than would be the case for a non-Indian poet, however, Vizenor’s animals and even inanimate things have souls and human attributes and emotions:

old gray stump  
remembers the past today  
raising the moon vines

blue herons  
tease bashō in the shallows  
spring waders

early morning  
steady beat of a woodpecker  
breakfast poetry

There is a certain thematic poverty in this book, however. Subjects such as that poetic woodpecker, the dancing sunset beams and sandhill cranes, or the storytelling wolves, as in

timber wolves  
raise their voices overnight  
trickster stories

recur too often. Bouncing things—red sumac, gray squirrels, shiny ravens, and cocky crows—occur four times in ten pages (108–117).

Then again, Vizenor frequently misses an opportunity to wring additional meaning from his images. In this haiku, for example,

mosquitoes  
swarm outside the tent  
late night chorus

he has settled for an intellectualized line 3 that simply interprets for the reader the content of lines 1 and 2. Similarly, a number of haiku in *Favor of Crows* present what seems to be three separate images that together may produce a fine mood but exhibit little tension, development, or action; for example:

gentle rain  
cat asleep on the front porch  
doves in the eaves

Haiku after haiku in this collection is constructed in a format with two subjects [images] divided by a phrase beginning with an active verb, e.g.:

rain clouds  
float in a great convoy  
birds in the reeds

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 Oandasas, 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](mailto:claudiaradmore@gmail.com) or the author at [kingsroadpress@hotmail.com](mailto: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