

BRIEFLY NOTED

Crazy Bitches, by Roberta Beary (Winston-Salem, N.C.: MacQ, 2025). 128 pages; 6" × 9". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-3305-6606-8. Price: \$25.00 from online booksellers.

Beary is one of our best haibun writers, and through the eighty haibun presented in their latest collection, *Crazy Bitches*, the reader will discover why. The book collects work from 2004 through 2024. Their prose is sharp, inventive, and because the formats of the pieces vary the collection stays fresh. Many have short-story-like twists, as they share stories of their life, both biographical and invented, and try on a few characters. But their themes in most are consistent: to give voice to the voiceless, to call out bad behavior—especially among family members—, and to point out the often cruel ironies of life. Yet despite these obstacles, there is a strength to their writing, a resilience. Readers of their book, *Haibun: A Writer's Guide*, which Beary coauthored with Lew Watts and Rich Youmans, will be familiar with their idea that title, prose, and haiku are treated as equals—and importantly, things are left unsaid, often just hinted at, which allows the reader room to maneuver. All of this is at work in *Crazy Bitches*. A welcome addition to any library.

Infinity Strings, by Hifsa Ashraf and R.C. Thomas (United Kingdom: Infinity Books, 2025). 79 pages; 5" × 8". Black and white card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-3999-9308-1. Price: \$13.11 from online booksellers.

A collection of tan-renga that invites the reader into a private technological world. For example, Thomas' *c0ld w1nd / the f0ne v1brates / w1v every msg* is followed by Ashraf's *dec1pher1ng / the b1nary c0des*. We like Thomas' use of ones and zeros in a poem about messaging, and the addition of the wind adds nice layers to how we think about such communications. Other poems are very abstract, such as: *existential thought / at the heart of it / Cygnus X-1* (Thomas) // *unraveling / the gravitational*

waves (Ashraf). Perhaps our desire for shared ground in haiku—and in this poem both verses could mean anything—is keeping us from enjoying these more. We applaud the risks they are taking, and some of the images / ideas are compelling, but we were left wanting more to hang on to. One more: *brain fog / gliding through the mist / a robotic goose* (Ashraf) // *a bird in the hand / out of memory* (Thomas).

Moonflowers, by Bipasha Majumder De (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2025). 96 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-57-5. Price: \$20.00 from www.red-moonpress.com

Her second collection. Indian haiku are freer with poetic devices than Western haiku. A look at two poems is instructive: *childhood home / walls slough off / their memories* and *wet night / cicadas and I / dancing cha-cha-cha*. The first is tangible enough, in possibly a horror-ku kind of way, yet we can viscerally experience the moment, ponder its meaning, and most importantly, take something away; while the second poem is purely of the intellect, and leaves us with a chuckle and sense of cleverness, but not much else. De works heavily in this abstract, sometimes surreal vein. As might be expected, some of the poems are very personal: *hyacinth blossoms / I take a bath in the fragrance / of starfish*. But many are enjoyable and look at life from unexpected angles. A few favorites: *air raid / a mum-to-be writhing / in labour pain*; *bleached branches / I live under the shadow / of war*.

A Retrospective, by Tyrone McDonald (Windsor, Conn.: Bottle Rockets Press, 2025). 12 pages; 4" × 2¾". Black and white card covers; saddle-stapled. No ISBN. Price: \$5.00 from www.bottlerocketspress.com/bookstore

Ten poems which McDonald published In Bottle Rockets. We love these small books which can serve as haiku business cards, ready to hand out to

people as brief introductions of our work. McDonald is a fine poet and it is an enjoyable introduction. *train ride through the countryside / the graffiti i like / and don't like; supply chain issues / is it safe yet / to receive hugs.*

Otvoreno Pismo / Open Letter, by Dejan Bogojević (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2025). 66 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-304805-35-3. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

New collection from the president of the Haiku Society of Serbia, and editor of their two magazines *Lotos* and *Plum Blossom*. Haiku in eastern Europe have always been more wrapped up in myth and poetical thinking than that of the West. This openness is both a blessing and a drawback, as shown in these two poems: *a prayer written in / familiar handwriting: / my mother's smile* and *volcanoes are collecting / the sorrows of this world — / angels and gods*. A good sampling of Serbian haiku.

My Journey with Haiku, by Kōko Katō (Japan: WEP, 2024). 135 pages; 5¼" × 7½". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound with wraps. ISBN 978-4-86608-172-4. Price: Inquire of the author.

Three short books in one, including *My Journey with Haiku*, containing thirty-seven haiku with commentary by Kōko Katō. Her name will be familiar to many as the longtime editor of the journal *Ko*. Her own work has always been deeply traditional and filled with lightness. The commentaries include much biographical information and help to situate the individual poems within her life, often providing the impetus for a poem's creation. Some favorites: *A seated figure / of Bashō on the bookshelf — / passing year and coming year*; *Bamboo brooms by the wall / at the mountain hermitage / on a clear autumn day*. Also included is *Song of the Wind*, thirty-seven haiku by an international cast of poets, translated into Japanese, presumably chosen by Katō; and *Freshness of Bashō's Haiku*, a haiku textbook for fifth graders in Ukraine.

Kaleidoscope Dream, by Terri L. French (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2025). 135 pages; 6" × 9". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. 978-1-958408-56-8. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

A collection of haibun and tanka prose, separated by individual haiku. French has a strong command of the form, her voice breezy as she relates tales of (we assume) her state-side travels. Her stories are full of characters who have been changed by this world, and she caps the prose with poems that shift just enough to open the view more, but not so much they negate what has been read. The individual haiku do a good job refreshing the palate, moving the larger narrative along. A few favorites: *dwindling daylight / an evening alone / depilling sweaters; bare branches / where do birds / go to die*. A fine collection.

Little Waves, by Andrew Terrell (India: Cyberwit, 2024). 71 pages; 5½" × 8½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-93-6354-025-5. Price: \$15.00 from online booksellers.

Fifty-eight haiku and senryu, arranged one to a page, in three geographical sections: Washington State, Hawaii, and Australia. The poems are quiet reflections, written in taut grammar, on his daily observations. *small moon / covered by a patch of clouds / packing bags again; morning commuters / a sweet mango pit / clatters to the floor*.

No Matter How It Ends a Bluebird's Song, by Kat Lehmann (Calif.: Rattle Foundation, 2025). 44 pages; 6" × 9". Matte four-color card covers; saddle-stapled. ISBN 978-1-931307-60-4. Price: \$9.00 from www.rattle.com

One of the winners of the 2024 Rattle Chapbook Prize. The poems are nicely spaced, and there is a good overall narrative flow relating to the treatment of an unspecified illness. As would be expected of one of the

founding editors of the online journal *Whiptail*, the poems often work at the edges of haiku poetry, often in abstract and disjunctive ways, but this is very appropriate—and perhaps necessary—considering the poet’s changed relationship to their body. While we have at times questioned the boundary between haiku and more abstract, less grounded poems, there is no denying the powerful emotions at work in *No Matter How...* Some favorites: *ICD / codes / the / taxonomy / of / raptors; sun warmed tomatoes and my bones ripe.*

Traffic, by Guy Nesom (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2025). 100 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-55-1. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

Latest collection from Nesom. A back blurb describes his work as casual, with an almost off-the-cuff tone; we’ll add the poems are often about off-the-cuff moments as well. No one would ever accuse Nesom of aiming for the fence, he’d rather be looking down at his feet to see what he tripped over, which makes the poets an enjoyable companion. Some favorites: *last week’s rain / returning as colors — / the robin at dawn; late again / broken seashells / also beautiful.*