

Briefly Reviewed

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Clare McCotter. *Black Horse Running*. Uxbridge, UK: Alba Publishing, 2012, 78 pp., perfect softbound, 5.75 x 8.25. ISBN 978-0-9551254-6-1, US\$16. Order through info@alba-publishing.com.

This first collection of haiku, tanka, and haibun by the Irish poet Clare McCotter offers a recondite yet rewarding journey through human and animal worlds. There is a glossary of foreign terms at the back of the book; readers may also need an English dictionary by their side. McCotter's haibun are especially imbued with a dazzling, language-driven lyricism that both challenges and captures the suchness of things. At its best, her style delivers a palimpsest of pure sound and image that resolves into clear-eyed insight. In "earth raven," the grave of that "svelte sweven"

... bleeds a geography of shy migrations
beak blood bone and bone's
soul rising through sap to bole a tree's
breath delirious transpiration

here other
than wind's lamentation
nothing is

McCotter's haiku, in one and three lines, in two or three images, range from the intellectual to the emotional, the enigmatic to the edgy. Intensely personal or deftly universal, they nearly always illuminate. *evening in the library / waiting with Freud / for the pigeons' return; if only she had been buried wild crimson cyclamen; the mare's eye / still water / stillborn prayer.* ~MRB

Stella Pierides. *In the Garden of Absence.* With an introduction by the author and an afterword by Michael Dylan Welch. Neusaess, Germany: Fruit Dove Press, 2012, 76 pp., perfect softbound, 5 x 7.75. ISBN 978-3-944155-00-5, US\$10. Order at <http://fruitdovepress.com>.

In this first collection Stella Pierides offers micropoetry, haiku, and senryu inspired by her participation in NaHaiWriMo, a daily prompt Facebook community created and coordinated by Michael Dylan Welch. Forty-seven or so poems give form to childhood loneliness, adult aloneness, and the presence (and creative presents) of absence. In Pierides's meditations, imagination takes center stage, as do imaginary gardens, real toads, and their negative space:

plum blossoms
the stone toad dressed
in pink

The result is a welcome *début* in which the reader will find much to admire. *even if / they are made of mud . . . / dolls; on the clothesline / three skirts four blouses / missing you; granny's cushion— / pulling the darkness out / pin by pin.*
~MRB

Irene Golas and Ignatius Fay. *Breccia: Haiku and Related Forms.* Sudbury, ON: Author-published, by Lulu.com, 2012, 208 pp., perfect softbound, 6 x 9. ISBN 978-0-9809572-2-8, US\$17 from the publisher at <http://www.lulu.com>.

The poems featured in this collection are deeply influenced by a sense of time and place, of geographical location as well as family dynamics and day-to-day living in a mining community. Haiku, senryu, tanka, and haibun were selected by the authors from their collective years of writing and carefully arranged and integrated into an organic flow they refer to as “a poetic breccia.” Roughly 1.85 billion years ago the area

of Sudbury, Ontario, was impacted by a large meteorite, and breccia, an angular composite rock, was formed: *learning to map / the Sudbury Breccia / black flies* (Fay). European immigrants in search of a better life gradually relocated on the land and worked the mines: *nickel town . . . / the tang of sulfur / on the breeze* (Golas). Moments of family life and loss are documented with poignancy: *broken promises / a thistle takes root / in mother's heart* (Golas); *dad's fedora / as if he were still here / autumn again* (Fay). A lighter touch is interspersed throughout, including a section called "Tattoo Poems": *choosing a design / for our family tattoo / February thaw* (Fay); and poems of the seasons hit their stride: *cold rain / all at once / the leaves let go* (Golas). All in all, an interesting and satisfying body of collected works. ~FB

Stephen Addiss. *The Art of Haiku: Its History Through Poems and Paintings by Japanese Masters.* Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, 2012, 370 pp., hardcover, 6.25 x 9.25. ISBN 978-1-590308-86-8. US\$24.95 from booksellers.

In a comprehensive and in-depth look at the history of haiku, Stephen Addiss discusses the craft (the art) of this poetic form, as well as the art (paintings and calligraphy) that often accompanied traditional Japanese poetry. Addiss explores the lives, works, and influence of masters Bashō, Buson, Issa, and Shiki, along with a host of other Japanese poets into the twentieth century. The nearly 1,000 haiku and tanka included in this publication are translated by Addiss, a scholar-artist who has authored or coauthored a number of books about East Asian arts. In addition to an insightful introduction that discusses the question "What Are Haiku?" the haiku enthusiast will find discourse on the tradition of renga, hokku, haiki, and haiga and a chapter on senryu and Zen. It is difficult to describe the scope of this text in a few paragraphs or pages, but holding the book—the weight of it—one realizes it is not just another haiku history book. *The Art of Haiku* is a journey, and one worth taking. History comes to life on these pages in the prose, poems, paintings, and calligraphy.

Through his explication and the work of the masters, Addiss informs us that “The purpose of haiku was to use the mundane while exceeding the mundane, to discover a moment of oneness in the diverse or to discern multiplicity in the singular. Haiku can find an inner truth from an outward phenomenon, and ultimately use words to go beyond words.” These are words to keep in mind as we strive to create our own haiku in this modern world. ~FB

foolishly in the dark
grabbing a thorn—
fireflies

Bashō

white chrysanthemums—
the scissors
hesitate

Buson

autumn evening—
a hole in the paper door
plays the flute

Issa

after killing the spider
it gets lonely—
cold evening

Shiki



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