

Torii Haiku by David H. Rosen: Profane to a Sacred Life. Eugene, OR(2018, Resource Publications) 88 pages; paperback, 6" x 9", ISBN-10: 1532657099, ISBN-13: 978-1532657092, <https://www.amazon.com/Torii-Haiku-Profane-Sacred-Life/dp/1532657099>

Reviewed by Robert Epstein

David H. Rosen's latest collection of haiku, which spans forty years, is a gentle book. But please note: gentle does not mean placid, plaintive or bland. *Torii Haiku*, whose title refers to the Japanese gate delineating the mundane and the sacred, is gentle because it was written by a gentle soul, with a heart both passionate and innocent. A psychiatrist by training and a Jungian analyst by trade, Rosen shaped the global haiku included in the book as a poetic memoir, which means his innocence guided the self-disclosure and vulnerability apparent in these pages. Early on we encounter a young man "burned by love" who wanders alone...yet not quite:

Alone—
me
and the sea

Spiritually speaking, Rosen discovered how Nature was big enough to hold his isolation and heartbreak. He learned on his own what other spiritual guides like the Zen Buddhist master, Thich Nhat Hanh, and the secular teacher, J. Krishnamurti, have long-observed: our individual lives are inextricably connected with Nature, which includes human and non-human beings alike. In this light, Rosen echoes the incomparable Japanese haiku poet, Issa, in seeking both inspiration and wisdom from a slug—a "lowly" mollusk often considered a nuisance:

Slug...
mentor for moving
through the world

Again, Issa may be heard in another haiku by Rosen overflowing with gratitude:

Gnat...
thanks for reminding me of
our short lives

Whether he is writing about the passing of his beloved rescue dog, Willow, or other changes over the course of a full life, Rosen is acutely conscious of impermanence, the Buddha's core teaching: everything arises and passes away. While this holy truth may plunge the faint of heart into despair, sensitive and innocent souls like Rosen discover new heights of awareness that enrich the wholeness which is our original nature. With hints of Thoreau, author of *Walden*, throughout, the mundane becomes sacred as benevolence, compassion and joy quietly suffuse one's consciousness. It is for this reason that Rosen is able to emphatically assert in the *Prelude* to the book that "all haiku are healing moments."

Insofar as we are able to face our hardships and adversities with courage and fortitude, we will be rewarded and renewed. Not even death can deprive us of what matters most, as Rosen poignantly suggests in the following poem about an activist who lives on in the hearts of those similarly dedicated to preserving humanity:

Heather Heyer
holding a deep red blossom...
died for peace

Rosen includes a series of haiku that center around the planet we inhabit. The repetition of the first line adds weight and a sense of urgency to the need for altering our relationship to the natural world in light of climate change and continued exploitation of resources.

On mother earth—
every step
gentle and measured

We come from the Earth and we return to the Earth. Knowing this, we are called to treat our planet with thoughtfulness and reverence. This is the vital message of an attuned poet like Rosen, who has treated countless patients over a long career and has taught many students to listen with great care and kindness. The universal reflects the personal and vice versa. This reciprocal mirroring may be heard in the beautiful haiku Rosen penned on the death of his dear mother:

Mother dying...
full moon over
Kansas City, the world

Co-author of *The Healing Spirit of Haiku* as well as *The Tao of Elvis*, Rosen's view is wide, very wide. Indeed, his vision is nearly as wide as the world because he has allowed his own heart to grow that big. He experiences healing as well as new and lasting love, prompting him to beckon the reader to join him in that most precious of journeys, too. His haiku are not only haiku; they are a sacred offering, a homeopathic remedy for one and all.

Beads
of dewy friendship,
flowing forever

Briefly Reviewed by Randy Brooks

Haiku Poems and Short-short Stories by Yasuomi Koganei (2015, Tokyo, Japan) 108 pages, 5³/₄" by 6¹/₄". Black and white card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-4903944180. From Yix04102@nifty.com

Yasuomi Koganei is a member of the Meguro International Haiku Circle workshop where he has shared and revised this collection of 47 short-short stories and English haiku. In the introduction he states that he has been writing haiku in English for more than 20 years, and in this collection, he includes "stories" in a bilingual format. Yasuomi does not discuss his conception of a short-short story nor does he refer to these as haibun. The short prose sections vary from interesting facts, points of history and personal memories to a few that appear to take a fictional narrative perspective. The haiku nicely pop out of the larger context for moments of crystalized perception. One story is about the haiku circle's workshop on "Four Dimensional Haiku (4-D Haiku)" which the author explains are "haiku poems that tell a long story or large space as Masaoka Shiki said they were like novels" (16). He cites an example by Buson: *couple sentenced / to capital punishment / changing into spring clothes* (16). The author shared some of his attempts to write 4-D haiku including, *shadow of a plum tree / on the newborn's robe / — daughter in the old album* (16). In some ways, the short prose sections of this collection function as a means to add more dimensions to each haiku through time, space, literature or politics. Here is an example of one with three haiku: 44. Noh Actress. "There was a Noh actress among my friends. She was one of the top two Noh actresses in Japan. In other words, she was a pioneer of the Noh actresses (92)." That's it for the story, and here are the three haiku: (1) *the greeting card — /*