

REVIEWED BY JAY FRIEDENBERG & TOM SACRAMONA

rounded by the sea haiku by Bill Cooper (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2022). Unpaginated, 4.25" x 6.5". Glossy covers, perfect softbound. ISBN: 978-1-947271-88-3. \$20 from <https://redmoonpress.com/>.

Bill Cooper puts out a strong and balanced collection in his most recent book. The title of his eighth collection, *rounded by the sea*, goes right to age—specifically, the way it wears down, with the capital letters amusingly eroded away. The book contains a mix of one- and three-line poems as well as a nice distribution of both haiku and senryu. Four of the poems in this work are contest winners and/or anthologized. The book is divided into four chapters corresponding to the topics of “child,” “water,” “land,” and “air.” Individual themes run through many of the chapters with subjects like masks, birds, and jazz coming up repeatedly. A number of the poems have a distinct haptic and cross-modal quality to them. Take, for instance:

warm breeze
grandpa lifting me
to the tractor seat

These words give us an image but also place us directly into the body of the child. One can feel grandpa’s hands hoisting us into the seat and the breeze simultaneously. The warmth places the poem seasonally as either spring or summer. This and other poems provide us with a virtual snapshot of a childhood, capturing essential developmental moments. As the “childhood” section foregrounds the collection, we see Cooper exploring and comparing his upbringing amidst the fear of nuclear war in the 1950s (a threat of mutually assured destruction) with what he witnesses as his children’s fears as parents now and the difficulty of raising children during a global pandemic:

unwrapping	preschool
yellow tape at both ends	each superhero
the seesaw	masked

The oscillation between periods of time is interesting, though may be difficult to see initially. We like the technique Cooper employs, where he can launch from an observation of a young father to a memory of his own dad:

baseball glove	dad dyeing
dad's furrowed brow	the tip of a woman's shoe
softens	sputnik beeps

Cooper utilizes this effect again when observing a young mother and then remembering his own mom:

just this moment	first stitch
her perfect balance	she says she's at peace
daughter on shoulders	with the world

In all of the baseball haiku, Cooper seems to be showing us that baseball, when he was growing up during the Cold War, served not only as America's pastime but also as a wanted distraction that softened the harsh reality and danger of that age of a nuclear build-up:

spring training
 Gil McDougald's foul tip
 rolls under a Ford

Does the child chapter match thematically with the others, which are focused on the land, sea, and air? This chapter seems to be the tip of the iceberg in Cooper's book, which often deals directly with the other crisis facing his children and grandchildren: climate change.

hilltop cemetery
 a beam of sun sweeps
 the steel mill

I was particularly struck by the vividness of the imagery in many of these haiku. This poem has a strong cinematic quality and evocative emotional undertone. Are we looking at the death of an industry?

Are the people buried in these graves the workers from the factory?

The book's last poem can be read in any number of ways as the apropos response to these societal, political, and environmental pressures of both history and present day. Or is it a statement on the way humankind has betrayed our planet?

et tu, universe?

Bill Cooper's poetry hits us on all levels. It is perceptually vivid, emotionally powerful, and makes us think, with some humor to boot. These haiku are perhaps best described as well integrated in that they combine different sensory inputs, as well as thoughts and feelings. The author is equally adept at portraying both natural and psychological concepts. Well worth reading in its entirety. ◻■

REVIEWED BY TAOFEEK AYEYEMI

Degrees of Acquaintance haibun by Glenn G. Coats (Snapshot Press, Ormskirk, UK: 2019). 28 pages. Free access and download from <http://www.snapshotpress.co.uk/ebooks.htm>

A Synonym for Gone haibun by Glenn G. Coats (Snapshot Press, Ormskirk, UK: 2021). 37 pages. Free access and download from <http://www.snapshotpress.co.uk/ebooks.htm>

Glenn Coats's *Degrees of Acquaintance* and *A Synonym for Gone* are winners of the Snapshot Press annual Chapbook Prize in 2019 and 2021 respectively. These wins underscore his deftness and dexterity in the art. Both collections investigate relationships, mostly cordial, with people around the haibun personae, such as neighbors, friends, and students.

But in contrast to *Degrees of Acquaintance*, the 24 haibun in *A Synonym for Gone* delve into more personal depth and give attention to blood and family culture, such as fishing and reunion, making it more revealing in substance and coherent in form. The book is divided into three sections: "Crossings," "Breathing Twilight," and "Daylight," containing eight haibun each. These