

Out of Translation, by Aubrie Cox (Somerville, Mass.: Kattywompus Press, 2015). 19 pages; 5¼" x 8½". Tan card covers; saddle-stapled. ISBN 978-1-936715-93-0. Price: \$12.00 from the publisher at 22 Line St., Unit E, Somerville, MA 02143 or www.kattywompuspress.com.

Reviewed by Francine Banwarth

When I put on the editor's hat for *Frogpond*, the journal of the Haiku Society of America, in 2012, I expected to learn about haiku and related forms from an editor's point of view. As editors, these are a few of the questions we ask: How does this poem work and how well? Will I find surprise and freshness of perspective in the juxtaposition of images? How does word choice affect mood and tone? Will I discover layers of meaning or suggested emotion beneath the surface of the lines? What does the author offer that sets this poem above and beyond the thousands of others read during a single submission period?

These are questions Penny Harter, poet and author, may have entertained when she judged the 2014 Turtle Light Press Haiku Chapbook Competition. She chose *Out of Translation* as third-place winner and provided commentary on her selection process: "I enjoyed seeing the variety of haiku—especially the locality reflected in the flow of the collections and the different angles of vision of the human connection to the natural world.... I also hoped to find meaningful connections in the pairing of poems on the page.... I selected the manuscripts that contained the most haiku that spoke to me emotionally, haiku whose images were clear, strong, and at times both startling and haunting.... I particularly enjoyed the journey of those haiku collections that took me completely into the circumstances and landscapes they inhabited."

Out of Translation is a modest collection, thirty-eight poems set two to a page, but it is one of depth and breadth. The title itself can be interpreted in a number of ways, which seems essential to the author's vision and voice:

library dust
 spirits rise out
 of translation

Translation applies not only to language and meaning. It can also, for example, indicate a change in form, shape, or appearance, or be applied to the study of genetic information that determines heredity and variation in organisms. Through sure-footed imagery and the pairings of the poems on each page, the author seems to “come out” from within herself in an attempt to realize and understand her place in the world. The first two poems tap into the immediacy and the mysteries of existence:

moon walking
 wet clover
 between my toes

black water bayou
 whispering names
 of old gods

Altogether, fourteen haiku in this collection reference or imply some form or body of water, including her own:

baptism song
 a turtle slips
 into the river

february flurries
 the fear my body
 won't last ...

In each of these poems the author conveys a more-than-momentary infusion with her surroundings: bare feet moon walking in wet clover; the ancient stories a black water bayou might tell; the daily ritual of baptism and renewal along a riverbank; and, finally, with “february flurries,” the transience of this existence, the recognition that she is but briefly passing through our world. Each of these haiku “moments” is rendered in rich and concrete imagery that resonates beyond the words on the page.

There are poems in which the author revisits her childhood, a time of passage through innocence and innocence lost. A baby’s crib, a mother’s trust, a child’s toys—symbols of youth that were once whole and a source of nurturing and comfort are broken or scattered:

oak moon
 all that's left of the crib
 is splinters

weeds gone to seed
 I lie again
 to my mother

toys ...
 my father couldn't fix
 summer rain

Layered in these lines is a sense of nostalgia, a measure of regret, coupled with an emotional honesty that lingers beyond childhood and adolescence. But as the adolescent matures, it is through her connection with the natural world that she begins to define herself, to translate her life and wrestle with the elements of existence and human relationships through language, memories, losses and gains, hopes and dreams, and perhaps a sought-for sense of purpose in the universal whole:

blue ghost fireflies
 the things
 that define me

Haiku has been a way of life for Cox since her undergraduate studies at Millikin University: "I went to college to write a novel and came out writing haiku." She studied under Randy Brooks and earned her B.A. in English literature and writing in 2011. Her first haiku chapbook, *tea's aftertaste*, was published by Bronze Man Books in 2011 and in 2013 she graduated from Ball State University with an M.A. in creative writing. She has served as haiga editor for *One Hundred Gourds* and in November 2015 she was elected by the Haiku Society of America to serve as *Frogpond* editor for 2016 and beyond. Wearing this "new" haiku hat, Cox will continue to share her artistic voice and vision:

roadside violet
 all the places
 I've yet to go

This haiku gem could be a companion piece to one I've always admired and remembered by Peggy Willis Lyles, first published in *bottle rockets* No. 24 in 2011:

first violets
its all about
staying small

which applies, certainly, to the size of font used for the poems in *Out of Translation*. The dimensions of the collection nicely accommodate the intriguing cover art, "Six Queens," by Sarah Raad (first published in *The Broken Plate*, 2013). On the inside the font is smaller than one would expect, given each pair of haiku, which leaves the bottom half of every page blank... an emptiness that perhaps resonates with the reader, a space to realize the reverberations felt for the delicate complexities and intricate nuances the author delivers in the lines of the poems.

Ikuya's Haiku with Codrescu's Haiga, edited and translated by Itō Isao, haiga by Ion Codrescu (Japan: Ronsō-sha, 2015), 162 pages. Hardcover. ISBN 978-4-8460-1424-7. Price: ¥2,700 from online booksellers.

Reviewed by David Burleigh

The *Collected Haiku by Katō Ikuya* (1929-2012) published in the year 2000, is a substantial volume, gathering the work of ten earlier collections. It weighs more than a kilo, is bound in dark blue silk, and has a presence suggestive of the poet, who was wearing a kimono of similar material when Kimiyo Tanaka and I went to visit him some years ago. He was the recipient of one of the 21st Century Ehime Haiku Prizes, and we had been asked to render a selection of his work into English for a memorial booklet to be printed in Matsuyama, where the awards were made in 2002. He responded graciously to questions about his haiku, while we