

These are indubitably wonderful haiku (there are no bad haiku in *The Heron's Nest* or *The Wonder Code*) but do we need multiple examples? It's almost as though Mason is assuring us that *The Heron's Nest* follows his haiku wonder code in its selection procedures, or he wants to drive home the veracity of his analysis by lavishing us with myriad examples.

Inclusion of the "Solo Exhibition" section in *The Wonder Code* is the biggest mystery, however. Comprising 103 haiku, all but 6 of which originally appeared in places other than *The Heron's Nest*, it could have been a chapbook or small book of Mason's work, and a welcome first collection at that. These are very fine haiku indeed—most of them winners of top prizes or featured in the best journals—and it is wonderful to have them gathered in one place. They are arranged into subsections that again parallel the five chapters of the book, suggesting that perhaps they were included in early drafts of the five galleries but were so numerous that they threatened to crowd out the haiku of others. A clue to Mason's rationale for including this section comes in the last paragraph of the book, where he acknowledges the contributions of his partner Carla Gambescia: "the aforementioned solo exhibition of my own haiku appears in this volume at her insistence." In any event, as it is, the section seems tacked on at the end of a book that began with a different purpose altogether.

I am puzzled by these things, yet I enthusiastically affirm that I am the very proud owner of *The Wonder Code*, a book that I think will be influential in the years to come. It is certain to be enjoyed by experienced haiku poets as well as those just coping with the essential aspects of the genre. I myself gained a great deal from the informative and accessible essays as well as from the author's presentation based on the book at Haiku North America.

The Soundless Dance: Haiku, by Gérard Krebs (Spalding, Lincs: Hub Editions, 2017). 66 pages; 20.5 cm; 5½" x 8". Glossy oversize tan card wrappers with four-color image; pasted flaps; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-957646-08-7. Price: UK£6.50 from the publisher.

Reviewed by Charles Trumbull

Gérard Krebs, born in Switzerland and living now in Finland, discovered haiku in 1979 while traveling in Japan. He has been writing and publishing his own haiku only for the past seven years but already has three books to his credit. The first (2015), in German titled *Natur und Haiku—Haiku und Natur*, contains thirty-five haiku and a substantial essay on the interrelationship of haiku and nature. A second collection, *Der Duft von Heu / Profumo di fieno* (“The Scent of Hay”), contains twenty-five of Krebs’ haiku in German with Italian translations (assisted by Erika Rombototto) appeared in 2017 almost simultaneously with his English-only *The Soundless Dance*. In the Foreword to *The Soundless Dance*, Krebs writes, “None of the haiku have been translated from another language, all have begun their life in English.” Nonetheless, I noticed that a few haiku were published simultaneously in German and English (e.g., “das Eis Lapplands/Lapland’s ice,” quoted below, is included in the 2010 German Haiku Society members’ anthology and *Modern Haiku* (41.2) in that same year).

The Soundless Dance is a solid collection, especially for a first publication in a poet’s second or third language. For the most part Krebs treads the well-worn paths of classical haiku, choosing—as one might expect—primarily topics from nature. Perhaps owing to the relatively short time Krebs has been writing, I note a certain sameness of subject matter: of the fifty-three haiku in this collection four are about twigs and three about cherry blossoms. Krebs’ haiku (in all three languages) are presented in three lines, but “standard” syllable count (which is much less flexible in German than in English haiku practice) is disregarded, and the haiku read in a natural, unforced way.

Working within the parameters of classical haiku, Krebs often finds emotional depth:

pilgrimage
in my satchel
my life

old trenches
boys playing wars
of their fathers

as well as novelty, surprise, and even disjunction:

waking up
with a tree on my bed
winter moon

beer garden
the man drinking a toast
to his shadow

first sun rays
a cherry tree enlightens
the temple compound

snow melt
the topmost twigs
all gnawed off

Some of Krebs's haiku reveal how he identifies with nature:

you too
turned all white
dandelion

not the man
I used to be —
plum blossoms

He can show an Issa-like innocence when he speaks directly to small creatures:

go on chirping
sparrows — I won't
tell anybody

little red crab
what are you looking for
on the pilgrim's path?

Krebs is an enthusiastic traveler, and his awareness of locality adds freshness of perspective to his haiku:

mountain dusk
just the sound of
grazing cows

midsummer
a steamer cuts the lake
in half

In the former haiku I sense the faint tinkle of cowbells in an Alpine meadow. In the second I'm taken to a view of the long, narrow Königsee in the Bavarian Alps and the wake of a steamer cutting the lake in half at its narrowest point.

Similarly, Krebs' residence in a Nordic land yields these gems:

Lapland's ice
melted at last —
first mosquito bite

departing swans
last arctic sunlight
in their wings

G rard Krebs is a haikuist well worth getting to know better, and *The Soundless Dance* provides a fine opportunity to do so.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Sisyphus: Haiku Work of Anna Vakar, ed. by Vicki McCullough (Canada: Catkin Press, 2017). 88 pages; 5½" x 8¼". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-928163-17-6. Price: \$15.00 from sisyphus@telus.net

Vakar was an early writer as well as essayist of haiku. A mentee of Eric Amann, she helped him edit the journal *Cicada* until she broke with Amann over what she perceived as his definitional narrowness. Despite her extensive teachings and writings on the genre, she herself wasn't widely published. Editor McCullough rectifies that with the current volume. Vakar's work is characterized by its breadth; it seems more important as a means of expression than as an end in itself. She looks closely at things, searching for revelations; sometimes they are purely objective, other times a bit too explanatory. A good reminder about following rules too closely. *wind-driven sleet— / trying yet another position / the colt*

The Theater of the Desert, by Ban'ya Natsuishi (India: Cyberwit, 2017). 84 pages; 5½" x 8½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-9-385945-99-1. Price: \$16.00 from www.cyberwit.net

Thirty haiku by Natsuishi written during a trip to Morocco. The poems are translated into nine languages (French, Portuguese, Italian, Bulgarian, English, Mongolian, Chinese, Arabic, and Japanese) and each