

scratched LP	open mic
time no longer	a moment's silence
on our side	before the applause
split pill	quarantined
feeling better	all the places
by half	I would go
just a glance	the scar
the road not taken	never discussed
between us	about to be

In the section “Mixed Bag Tanka I,” I enjoyed a group of four ekphrastic tanka inspired by Edward Hopper’s New York cityscapes. In a summery section called “Sea and Sand,” I particularly liked “Canto for Sweets,” a long haibun that warmly captures the ephemeral pleasures of a camp summer. The section called “Vermilion Falling” (sharing a title with Galasso’s 1994 book), another fine drinking haiku appears: *first day of fall / I switch from gin / to whisky*. My favorite in this section is: *paddling swan / pushing daylight / to the shore*. This section (and the book) ends with the bittersweet *Thanksgiving / we share hors d’oeuvres / on Zoom*.

After reading the poetry in this volume, I read the “About the Author” page, preface, two acknowledgments sections, bio, and photo credits, which offer a great deal of explanation. The author’s photo lacks enough tonal contrast to distinguish Galasso’s face, unfortunately. I also considered the book’s title. I like titles to do some work, but it is not obvious to me what this title does since neither the poems nor the cover hint at saffron. That said, Vicki Ann Galasso’s painting makes for an attractive cover.

Shaped by the Sun, by Jeannie Martin (Windsor, Conn.: Buddha Baby Press, 2023). 68 pages; 4½" × 5¾". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. No ISBN. \$12.00 from Bottle Rockets Press, P.O. Box 189, Windsor, CT 06095.

Reviewed by Peggy Bilbro

One of the great pleasures I have discovered in writing reviews is that I am forced to slow down and consider all aspects of the book, more than just reading through and appreciating individual poems. *Shaped by the Sun* by Jeannie Martin is a delightful collection that benefits from that holistic view. From the lovely light-filled image on the cover (designed by Stanford M. Forrester), to Martin's short introduction, and permeating every individual haiku, this book is filled with light—light from our sun, from stars, the moon, a candle, fireflies—all forms of light. In structure and theme *Shaped by the Sun* is one of the most tightly unified collections of haiku I have read. Martin tells us a story of light, from dawn through midnight, from spring through winter, from birth to our return to the source of light.

She opens her collection with a beautiful quotation from Saint Francis of Assisi, "Such love does the sky now pour that whenever I stand in a field I have to wring out the light from my clothes when I get home." With these lines we are led from the first page of the book into a light saturated world. In her brief introduction Martin reminds us that our light comes from many sources, "Stars, far-away galaxies, the Milky Way, the Northern Lights, sun and moon..." and she leads us to consider all of these forms of light as individual and unified sources of connection to each other and to our world.

The first poem of the book awakens the reader with the joy of early light.

dawn
all the daffodils
lean east

while the final monoku brings us to the gentle, lingering light of sunset:

all the way down the street sunset

Between these two moments we experience late afternoon highlights on dusty windows, the twinkle of falling stars, and a swim through moonlit waters.

However, Martin takes us through more than just each day. She also leads us through the seasons from spring:

another galaxy
another sun
springtime

to a summer-centric monoku evoking the solstice, through autumn leaves and October twilight, to the deep cold of wintertime. This passage through the seasons is so deftly handled that we are hardly aware of the passing of time. In the same way, the span of life is a thematic element that unifies the poems from beginning to end. This beautiful haiku references the power of light on young life:

before we
knew words —
sunlight

In one poem an old house cat stretches out in the sun while another poem on an old houseplant provides the title of the collection.

window sill
old houseplant
shaped by the sun

The reader can feel the connection between that houseplant shaped by the sun and our own human lives shaped by the constancy of light in our lives. The next to last haiku in the book holds the promise of new life even when the light of life may seem gone.

all through winter
holding the sunlight
tulip bulb

In the final monoku quoted earlier, we find our own walk down the long street of old age filled with the light of the setting sun.

Martin's haiku are a lesson in mastery of the form. Most of her poems are traditional three lines, but she uses other forms to benefit the poem, as in the horizontal poem of "a long, longer twilight ..." or a vertical poem of falling and rising. Her use of punctuation is limited, but effective when used. Repetition is a continuing structural element as in this playful haiku:

shadow-to-light
shadow-to-light
grasshopper

In the following poem she again combines humor and repetition along with perfectly placed hyphens to capture an image:

step-step-stepping
into sunlight
centipede

In yet another haiku, repetition and punctuation serve to capture her sense of awe at a falling star.

did you see that?
did I see that?
falling star

Martin moves beautifully from the infinite to the finite and back again, always connecting to the light. In one poem the comparison is between a street light and the North Star while the following haiku moves from stars to fireflies, again through the careful use of repetition:

forest evening
one by one – stars
one by one – fireflies

Though Jeannie Martin manages to bring a laser focus to light, at no point does it become too much. Because she has so carefully organized and structured her poems, *Shaped by the Sun* maintains a freshness and crispness throughout. Each poem is a gem internally lit adding to her story of light. Within the context of this collection even the simplest of haiku becomes a vehicle for an infinity of meanings. I highly recommend *Shaped by the Sun* for its beauty, its depth, and Martin's ability to share with the reader her joy in the light that bathes our earth.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Disclosure(s), by John Martone (No place [Charleston, Ill.]: Tufo, 2022). 167 pages; 4"×6". Matte white card covers; perfectbound. No ISBN. Price: Inquire of the author at jpmx@protonmail.com

John Martone, as a poet, redefines what we think we know. He familiarizes himself and the reader with the natural world as in this two-liner: *petals holding / onto a wind*. We are the petals as much as the petals are us holding onto the wind which is as close to capturing the ineffable as any poet might come. He collapses feelings into phrases and further still phrases into a few words. As in this three-worder: *summer is bicycles*. His poems convey a whole way of thinking if not the poet's philosophy: *it's nothing much is all*. There is a confessional tone to many of the poems in *Disclosure(s)* as the title might suggest.. This vulnerability is what makes the work so compelling. *back hoe with no one*. The old saying "We are all in this together" is the overall feeling one might walk away with after reading this book of John Martone's. *sweet pea tendrils / straight from the large / hadron collider*. What could be more opposite than sweet pea tendrils and hadron colliders. The large and the small, the natural and the man-made. Certainly, this prolific poet is a master at wrangling wild words