
REVIEWS

Carousel, by Roberta Beary (United Kingdom: Snapshot Press, 2024). 96 pages; 5" × 7¾". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-903543-57-3. Price: £12.99 from www.snapshotpress.co.uk

Reviewed by Peter Newton

daybreak
lilies light
the light

So begins Roberta Beary's newest collection of haiku released earlier this year by the venerable Snapshot Press. Edited by John Barlow, the book's compelling and accomplished narrative arc is evidence that Beary and Barlow have successfully teamed up again to recreate the magic of Beary's 2007 award-winning haiku collection, *The Unworn Necklace*. It is easy to compare the two books given their overlapping themes. Both books share a common thread, which is the interpersonal family journey the poet recounts in poem after poem.

Beary's subject matters often confront adversity. They are subjects many poets address in their poems. And Beary has done so repeatedly in her previous haiku collections as well. In *Carousel*, Beary revisits issues dealing with divorce, care-giving for elders, child abuse, having a gay child and the various physical and emotional scars we all carry into adulthood, admittedly to varying degrees.

Beary has expressed her belief in the healing power of poetry. By facing these difficult subjects head-on, the poet believes that it is easier to move past the trauma to a healthier state of mind. In this regard, Beary is very much an activist poet. A poet with an agenda beyond merely pointing out the pretty. Hers is a story of inclusivity and belonging. As in

Carousel begins and ends with the image of lilies. A choice that reinforces the circularity of the themes it contains. Lilies are among the most symbolic of flowers. They represent the feminine, love, purity as well as the passing of one's soul from this life to the next. Beary does not provide a color for her lily poems that bookend this collection. Suffice it to say, this intentional placement serves as a reminder that we are all passing through this life. Stop. Look. And listen. Each of us only gets one ride on life's carousel. Let's enjoy its beauty and appreciate its brevity.

Certainly, that seems to be the direction toward which the poet is pointed by the end of the collection. In some of the ten one-line poems in the book, Beary employs a style of haiku writing that is prevalent among some more genre-stretching fellow haiku poets in this first part of the 21st century. A seemingly discordant assembly of unexpected words that morph into whatever meaning the reader might bring to it. As in this from toward the end of the book

polyphonic rain the life in front of me

The "polyphonic rain" suggests a harmony that exists in the natural order of things. Not one sound but a layering of sound meant to please the listener. The "light in front of me" could well be the sunrise. A pleasing rainfall to begin the day. Or perhaps it comes at the end of the day for that matter as this poem acts as the penultimate poem in the collection. A hopefulness. And optimism. Followed by the very last poem which suggests a letting go. Perhaps Beary as well as her readers might achieve some modicum of relief from the pains of the past:

water lilies
a murmur of voices
drifts into dusk