

Winterizing, by Benedict Grant (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2024). 130 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-41-4. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

Reviewed by Dan Schwerin

Pull out Benedict Grant's *Winterizing* when winter refuses to let go. You will find a meditation on all things winter, a reckoning and preparation for the winter that comes to all of us and all we love. You will find in these poems, acknowledgment of the hardships and wonders of dormancy—and even warmth. You will find a variety in the ways he constructs his haiku, and an ordering of the collection that paces well.

Like Thoreau, let's take an axe and pail to the winter pond in search of water by featuring poems that mine endings and next things:

Saturday night
the unignorable knock
of next week

And:

just a highway till that white cross

By the seventh poem in the collection, I was catching a whiff of the aesthetic *makoto*, or truthfulness of expression as a form of unadorned beauty:

small town
the ash of a cigarette
holding its shape

Grant's collection explores the generations and glimpses going forward in time from the visage of turning sixty. Reading further, and then to

the end, it seems to me that this collection turns on the aesthetic *sabishi-sa*, a kind of chill beauty as Donald Richie describes it in *A Tractate on Japanese Aesthetics*: “One etymological explanation of *sabi* translates it as ‘the bloom of time.’ This reading of *sabi*—cold and chill but beautiful—agreed well with a Buddhist-influenced ethos that recognized loneliness as a part of the human lot and therefore sought to become resigned to it and to find a kind of beauty in it.”

For this ‘cold *sabi*’ or ‘chill beauty,’ let’s read into evidence:

until I discovered	late-night call
they eat their young	the distant shore
days	a little closer

After reading the collection, this poem kept returning to me suggesting the peace we make with our autumnal moments:

first fall day
a brand new edition
of my favorite book

There is an objective yet telling way Grant enlarges the significance of small moments with warmth:

sunny spell
a flourish of silks
from the magician’s sleeve

As well as:

coffee and birdsong in that order

While I was reading *Winterizing* I kept thinking of the work of Jack Barry, Chris Patchel, and Lee Gurga. The work of these four poets conveys strong narrative elements told from the eyes of men who pierce us with the truth. Further in, I thought of Buson’s poem relating the piercing cold

of stepping on his dead wife's comb, although she was still very much alive.

Poem after poem called to mind *A Year's Speculations on Haiku* by Robert Spiess, and the speculation for February fourth: "... those haiku that intimate a point of transition, the moment of transformation, yes!"

For example, after reading the collection, this poem and its, 'yes,' kept returning to me:

the first to go not going there

The collection works so well because it is not a one-trick pony. There is warmth in it, the kind that took me to my role as a father and made me stop reading for a moment or two to gratefully remember those bitter-sweet days.

still winter's night
knowing them all
by their weight on the stairs

This is a fine collection, and reading it may have you asking, what do my poems say? What does this season of my life tell? What are the moments that read your life?

No Heroic Measures, by Roland Packer (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2024). 130 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-41-4. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

Reviewed by George Swede

Fellow Canadian Roland Packer engages the reader's imagination right away with the title of his collection, *No Heroic Measures*. It's puzzling until one realizes that Packer is referring to heroic couplets and