
REVIEWS

Mind Zaps, by Alan Pizzarelli (Bloomfield, N.J.: House of Haiku, 2019). 142 pages; 5" × 8". Glossy black and white card-covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0962604041. Price: \$15.00 from online booksellers.

Reviewed by Carol Raisfeld

Let me preface this review with an apology. If I sound stunningly inarticulate at times, I can't help it. My mind is completely "zapped."

Mind Zaps kept me laughing out loud ... not just laughing, but snorting and chortling! There should be consequences for causing incontinence! This is a masterpiece, incredibly dense and multilayered. Alan Pizzarelli is such a keen-eyed satirist who knows both heartache and humor. The collection is in a league of its own with its poignant insight into the awkwardness of the human experience and the hilarity of how we live in this world.

There is a cast of invented names conjuring real poets that is excellent, wonderfully nuanced and complicated. Though each poet presents passionate self-expression, there is a blend of these voices that strikes a unified note of universal humor. All poems in *Mind Zaps* are written by Alan Pizzarelli, who takes on a number of noms de plume, which are ticklers by themselves.

The table of contents hints at the inspired craziness within: "Dueling Connoisseurs," "Senryu Magazine," "Trailer Trash," "Breaking News," and "Senryu Samurai." What follows is a sampling of some inventive, absurd and hilarious nuggets to savor from each "chapter."

"Dueling Connoisseurs, A One-Act Play" introduces us to Dame Benedetto, a wealthy Italian wine connoisseur who invites Signor Biagio Ubriacone, a poet and wine connoisseur, to her vineyard to critique her wine. Includes Italian translations. Federico Fellini would be proud.

BIAGIO (after steadily drinking from his flask): Scusi, mi permetta, I was enjoying some grapes from your exquisite vineyard and clumsily stained the crotch of my trousers. It brings to mind a poem I wrote at a vineyard in Tuscany:

drunk again
pulling my pants off
over my head

BENEDETTO: Puh-leese-a Signor, you make-a me pee myself-a!

"Senryu Magazine" includes a stunning table of contents all its own with oodles of magic, irreverence and charm. Pizzarelli gives us a masterclass in satirical parody, presentation and artistic excellence. This chapter is like being invited to the best party ever! I didn't want it to end! From the smorgasbord of brilliance let us touch on a few dazzlers:

"Senryu Toons," a selection of charming smart-aleck cartoons that tickle your funny-bone and hang on. All drawings in this chapter by the incredibly talented artist Alan Pizzarelli.

"drool inwardly!"	"I'm serious!"
she mutters to her husband	he shouts
on the crowded beach	wearing a pinwheel hat

"Senryu," tasty tidbits of humorous irony incorporating invented names conjuring real senryu poets.

washing dishes	I made this with my own hands
washing clothes, wishing...	says the chef
everything wishy-washy	with eight fingers
<i>Tao Chang Lee</i>	<i>Mario Lemani</i>

in the polluted pond a frog croaks
Redmond Rosehip

“Featured poet, Haiku Joey Clifton,” a man described by one critic as “brains without purpose.” Another says, “Clifton is unquestionably the worst poet in America. On the other hand, some of his poems are so bad, they’re good!” With a swaggering confident selfie, Pizzarelli fabricates a parallel-reality. From Clifton’s “New and Rejected Poems”:

the summer wind	fat superman,
blows my mother in laws perfume	he can still fly
from across the sea	but not as high

the homeless man’s dog
poops on the sidewalk
so does he

“Book Reviews,” featuring bang-on simile and throwaway wit, from a revealing parody of “Mr. William Shakespeare’s Senryu”—

From mine bare buttocks	Farewell O youthful mane!
See’st me run —	Cept’ in mine nose and ears
O toothy mongrel!	Ere it doth grow long

—to the “The Monkey’s Underwear,” a review of a poetic tome from Fruit of the Loom Books. The author displays his faculties of wit and acute imagination by implementing the poetic device of anthropomorphism, ascribing human attributes to a nonhuman thing or being:

grazing sheep
gossip
about the new farmhand

“Trailer Trash, The Letters of Etmo Duey,” the next chapter of *Mind Zaps*, also offers guffaws galore! A clever drawing of Etmo Duey and his cat introduce this chapter, as well as a senryu that parodies a famous haiku by James W. Hackett:

bitter morning
 neighbors sittin' together
 without any teeth

Also included, letters to “maw” that will leave you chuckling:

dear maw,

i aint callin' cousin mary beth jo bob ugly, but when she cries, its mighty
 strange how the tears roll down her backside.

yr lovin' son,

etmo

after sex
 she paints her eyebrows
 back on her face

"Breaking News," a chapter without boundaries, includes sobering gems touching on religion, sexuality, politics, and poverty ... where the world is out of balance:

in the confessional	school's out —
the pedophile priest	students run with hands
is again given absolution	clasped over their heads

global warming
 a coffin slowly floats down the street

"Senryu Samurai:" The book as a whole concludes with a spoof and deep bow to the graphic-novel-style art of the early Ukiyo-e artists and avant-garde kabuki theatre. The woodblock prints and paintings are fascinating works to study and enjoy from public domain Ukiyo-e illustrations. Ukiyo-e translates as “picture(s) of the floating world” and is a genre of

Japanese woodblock prints and paintings that flourished from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries.

This is a brilliant assemblage that records the journey of a samurai warrior traveling across Japan seeking a new life as a poet wanderer. Each poem is translated into Japanese adding a distinctive touch to the visual. The chapter is an engrossing masterpiece unto itself. Space does not allow for all the "wonderfuls" to be shared here, but they will linger with you and your secret smile. Below are slices of the journey:

That night Shino said, " the poet Namazu who was born here and took his name from this village was haunted all his life by nightmares of yodeling fish heads. Here are two of the poems I recall:

The great fish head
becomes a bloated belly
and then a deadly gas.

Dreamt
I was a cormorant fishing
woke up choking

...

Near Taga Castle—after hearing the faint sounds of children playing—I was unexpectedly arrested—as a “spy” by a commander of the feudal lord named Yoshimori.

borrowing a cup of sugar
from the enemy camp
what was i thinking?

Finally, some other eye-openers of note:

eating red peppers
the peonies behind me
burst into flame

side by side
sumo wrestlers sleeping
snoring and farting

peeling potatoes, recalling her buttocks

From beginning to end I kept falling into inspired pieces of satirical lunacy, including ridiculous hyperbole, wonderful wordplay, pop-culture references, political allusions and similes. I became involved in all its absurdity no matter where I opened a page. This book is a state of mind.

Thank you, Alan Pizzarelli for a place of joy ... inside *Mind Zaps*. In these turbulent times, we need a place to let the good times roll.

Walk with Gandhi, by Gabriel Rosenstock, illustrations by Massood Hussain (Ireland: Gandhi 150, 2019), 109 pages; 8½" × 11". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-9162254-0-4. Price: \$19.00 from online booksellers.

Reviewed by Jennifer Burd

I found it refreshing to revisit the life of Mahatma Gandhi through poetry and painting in *Walk with Gandhi*, a book of haiku by Gabriel Rosenstock with beautiful watercolor illustrations by Massood Hussain. At times I felt I was indeed walking with Gandhi, experiencing his life and outlook in a way I wouldn't from reading a more academic presentation. Rosenstock, an accomplished Irish haiku writer and promoter of Irish culture, presents the book's haiku in both English and Gaelic. While the book aims to reach young adults, it is suitable for adults as well.

In *Walk with Gandhi*, the haiku use imagery based on Gandhi's life to create moments of insight that also resonate with contemporary life. While the book doesn't teach about haiku structure, some of Rosenstock's haiku do showcase the power of the form by presenting particular moments—actual or imagined—from Gandhi's life, such as seeing a bird, touching a cold railing, or having a thorn extracted from a foot. Some of the illustrations depict realistic scenes, while others include visual symbolism or metaphors. Each spread of the book also includes prose commentary that provides educational notes and quotes, and at times highlights parallels with Irish culture and language. Keeping in mind the