

Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY NICHOLAS KLACSANZKY

A Silence or Two by Jennifer Hambrick (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2024). 150 pages, 4.25" x 6.5". Perfect softbound. ISBN: 978-1-958408-42-1. \$20 from redmoonpress.com.

The newest collection from Jennifer Hambrick, *A Silence or Two*, explores the boundaries of English-language haiku and also includes other genres of short poetry. The poetry is at once poignant and intellectual, with a careful blending of these two targets.

Here are some prime examples of this aesthetic:

rising through the runeshadow cicada song

Many cicada haiku have been written, yet Hambrick has given the *kigo* a new vision with the unique phrase and image “runeshadow.”

moonflower
the secret life
of a passive verb

This haiku showcases Hambrick’s prudent usage of linguistic terms in her poetry, which is not an easy feat to achieve.

filtered moonlight reaching for a euphemism

It is also not simple to craft a haiku that features moonlight without alluding to a historical poem. The poet employs one line to create more layers and uses the word “euphemism” in a natural way—which is commendable.

alone in the cemetery reading birdsong

Crafting a layered and resonant one-line haiku is an art and Hambrick successfully achieved that here.

starless night squeezing into some other skin

The mystery in this haiku garners the reader's attention and also the sound of the monoku works wonders.

glowing
in the luggage x-ray
a galaxy or so

There are several interpretations available but the sense of awe in the haiku is the most striking.

liquid moon
a hypothesis pulses
under my skin

This haiku is abstract, yet at the same time highly relatable on a personal level.

calla lily
the contours
of his absence

A fine comparison of shapes in both an imaginative and palpable way.

time trembling all the horses in me

The left field of "horses" is a fantastic way for the reader's mind to travel and ultimately connect with the haiku.

through blue iris night your distance
stares into me be prairie
for your horses lightning
in your skin against mine igniting
the white wild light
of your animal eye

This short poem has haiku elements, such as seasonal references, sensorial descriptions, and a demonstration of the connection between humanity and the natural world. It avoids punctuation, which gives it a surreal effect. The lines are arranged in such a way that I believe it reflects the mood of the piece.

skyglow
a uterus full of new
ideas

The excellent turn on line three grants readers several layers of meaning.

floating
in a darkened sea
my dead song

This haiku has a classic feel but with a fresh vision. The repetition of “d” sounds, even with the hidden one in “floating,” lends weight.

corpse flower the night at my throat

This is another fine example of a monoku lending more meaning to the words in a haiku.

nautical dusk the dead zone deep inside

Hambrick's usage of double entendres is evident in this poem and many other poems in this collection.

cosmic snow
the light at the end
of this generation

A creative use of diction and imagery that conjures a unique experience for the reader.

night tundra
you write the map
of me

There's an engaging mystery here and imagery that allows readers to sit with the haiku for a while.

As shown in the above examples, *A Silence or Two* is a collection bursting with adventurous haiku and short poems without neglecting emotion and a personal touch. Hambrick has given us much to meditate on and to expand the horizons of our poetic mind. □■

REVIEWED BY RANDY BROOKS

Winterizing by Benedict Grant (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2024)
136 pages, 4.25”x 6.5”. Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-39-1. \$20 from redmoonpress.com.

The title of Benedict Grant’s second collection, *Winterizing*, refers to a quote by Thoreau: “In winter every man is, to some extent, dormant, just as some animals are but partially awake.” As I read Grant’s poems, I identify with the poet’s sense of loss and frustration. Consider this one:

clear blue sky
that moment you sense
a *but* coming

It is a beautiful day and yet instead of enjoying the consonance of being, the speaker instinctively turns to dread that there must be something coming soon to ruin it. This “winterizing” is not a matter of preparing for the coming spring; it is an expectation that winter has infiltrated all aspects of our lives. As an example, he writes about a small town, not with a nostalgic “main street USA” conception, but rather as an ash heap:

small town
the ash of a cigarette
holding its shape

Grant addresses issues of war and politics with the same contrast of dread:

while we struggle
to define democracy
dandelions