
REVIEWS

Where the Tide Meets the Stream, by Glenn G. Coats (Carolina Shores, N.C.: Pineola Publishing, 2020). 68 pages, 6" × 9". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 9798670630597. Price: \$8.00 from online booksellers.

Reviewed by Bill Cooper

A lifelong fisherman, Glenn Coats plies waters from stream to ocean in search of food, beauty, and insight in this sequel to *Furrows of Snow*, winner of the Turtle Lights competition in 2019. While Coats' mother occupies center stage in *Furrows of Snow*, here the poems often focus on his father:

barred owl
father answers
with silence

fishing at night
father's hat
shines like the moon

light in the leaves
eyelets my father
no longer threads

grains of sand
what father would trade
for more time

The haiku emerge quite naturally from first-hand experience, often on east coast creeks and rivers from New Jersey to the southeast region of North Carolina, where the author now lives. The waterways in this region, from the Toms River to the Calabash River and including the Chesapeake, are among the most intricate and fish-laden on our planet, and the author learns and savors much from his time there. Coats fishes for trout where streams still run clear, where estuaries are self-cleansing, even as scientific reports remind us that these waters, like many worldwide, are increasingly at risk and in continual need of conservation, beset by man-

made threats ranging from fertilizer and industrial animal farm waste on land to a rising, warming, acidifying sea. For Coats, the water remains his cherished friend. He encourages the reader to linger in these poems, with an unhurried, easygoing style befitting the patience of someone who meditates deeply during his outings. The relationship between fisherman and water is often featured:

cold spring rain
the river wraps around
our differences

allowing the river
to swallow my legs
drum of woodpeckers

they drip
even in my dreams
water from oars

midnight confession
the bones of a creek
at low tide

In some haiku the poet deftly uses the third line to surprise and delight:

dusky brook
father wraps the trout
in bacon

the wash of tides
one shell
with a perfect hole

Coats also considers the young:

campfire songs
children nestle
in the canoe

an old flame
the boat nudges
spent cattails

in the bent arms
of the fisherman
a fourth generation

And the will to live is exemplified by the fish themselves:

miles from the sea
a fish in the cooler
still bites

Coats is adept at blending sight and sound to convey universal aspects of his experience:

river dawn songs drift from a passing barge river lights
a song in the back
of my throat

frozen bay stories are running again spring river
the warmth of tunes
on the Victrola

river dusk
the whistle of someone
rowing home

While most of the haiku feature creeks and rivers, the ocean appears occasionally, as in:

a prayer to keep them down ocean swells

father's faith
in what lies below
ocean swells

Using water as a lens, the poet throughout inspires gratitude for what fathers, fishing, and streams convey. What Bashō referred to as *Zoka*, nature's creative force, is ever present in these poems, with their emphasis on movement and activity. *Zoka*, as writings by Robert D. Wilson and Don Baird highlight, is the driving force that gives haiku its vitality while conveying a sense of impermanence. Accepting the offer to imbibe *Zoka*, the reader feels welcome in the Coats boat, sensing the play of light on water, the understated rhythm of casting and reeling, the mingling of fresh and saltwater, in an environment deserving of our attention and care.