

addressing the linguistic erasures of the natural world from the collective vocabulary of childhood. In "After the Removal of 30 Types of Plants and Animals from the *Junior Dictionary*," McLarney deftly links lost words alliteratively with what we humans will come to lack by losing them, the coupling and uncoupling inherent in her subject unfolding in the poem's two-line stanzas: "Leave a few things intact, // allow the possibility of turning books' pages back / to lobster, leopard, lark, then forward to last – to lasting – to live."

As a noun, forage is fodder or winter feed for horses and cattle, a laying up and laying by, a preserving, of plums, of persimmons. Conversely, as a transitive verb, forage can mean to "plunder, pillage, ravage," the path along which Western cultures have travelled to bring us to our current pass. And as an active verb, forage is the opposite of agriculture, of planting and tending. Rather, it's the action of a "roving search for provisions of any kind." Indeed, these remarkable poems might be said to forage for hope in a time of environmental and social crisis, a crisis this poet refuses to sit out. ■

A READING FULL OF LIGHT

a review by John Zheng

Gideon Young. *my hands full of light*. Backbone Press, 2021.

JOHN ZHENG is author of *A Way of Looking* (Silverfish Review Press, 2021), which won the Gerald Cable Book Award, and *Enforced Rustication in the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Texas Review Press, 2019), editor of five books including *Conversations with Dana Gioia* (University Press of Mississippi, 2020) and *African American Haiku: Cultural Visions* (University Press of Mississippi, 2016), and Professor of English at Mississippi Valley State University.

GIDEON YOUNG was born in Connecticut and received his BA in Literature from the University of Connecticut and MA in Elementary Education from NC State University. He is a member of the Carolina African American Writers' Collective, the Haiku Society of America, and the Carrboro Poets Council. His work can be found in publications such as *Obsidian: Literature in the African Diaspora*, *The Long River Review*, *Black Gold: An Anthology of Black Poetry*, and *Modern Haiku*. In 2020, he received second place in the James Applewhite Poetry Prize competition for his poem "kwansaba crown," which was published in *NCLR* 2021.

OPPOSITE Gideon Young during his reading of his 2nd place poem for *NCLR*'s Zoom celebration of 2020 James Applewhite Poetry Prize awardees, 14 Apr. 2021

Gideon Young's *my hands full of light* is a small collection of thirty-four haiku vibrating with a new voice that represents a prism of the haiku world. One frequent image in this collection is the hand.

The first haiku of the collection uses hands to present a father who works hard to support and protect the family: "fatherhood – / weathered brown hands / shield a candle." A poet uses imagery not only for a new creative expression but also to help the reader understand metaphoric language through visual correspondence. Though the first line of this haiku is an abstract word (which suggests a question – what is fatherhood?), the visual correspondence in the second part is metaphoric and helps the reader superimpose the concrete image upon the abstract idea. While "brown" suggests race, "weathered hands" indicates hardworking, and hope or family is like the candlelight being shielded. This haiku echoes Robert Hayden's "Those Winter Sundays," which presents a father whose – "cracked hands that ached / from labor in the weekday weather made / banked fires blaze."* Both Young's and Hayden's descriptions recognize the effort of a father figure as the backbone of family.

The second haiku with the hand image is a complete sentence, which seems to function against the traditional technique of using a kireji to cut the haiku into two parts –

"nose tickles / from the sprig of mint / in my daughter's hand" – but, this statement presents a delightful moment of family life enjoyed by both the father and the daughter. This haiku has a nice synesthetic presentation of relationship and family life. The transference of the senses from sight (the mint sprig in the daughter's hand) to touch and smell (tickle in the nose) vivifies the scene.

The next haiku using a hand image is the title poem – "father of two / my hands full / of light" – which seems to echo the first one discussed. Both haiku have a father figure and use the hand as the focal point. However, light in the third one conveys happiness because in a father's eyes, his two children held in his hands are surely the light of joy.

Jazz has a place in Young's collection as well. Personally, I feel it is always a challenge to write about jazz in haiku because haiku is too brief to encompass jazz, but Young smartly chooses only a brief



moment to establish a linkage between the sound of a bird and the tune of Duke Ellington: "shaded chickadee / her first notes / an Ellington tune." This is also associative thinking, as the song moves from the song in nature to the tune in human nature. The next jazz haiku – "blue of winter / Moonlight / jazz bassline" – involves the sense switching between seeing and hearing. The winter moonlight (a visual image) interacts with the jazz baseline (an audi-

tory image) as if to add a color of blue to tranquilize the mood in a cold night.

Young's haiku is about the interdependence of nature and human nature. Reading it is an experience of the senses and an aesthetic appreciation of the figurative language used to create a new voice that offers an *ah ha* moment. In short, it is a joy to read Young's debut haiku collection as my hands are full of light when I hold it to read. ■

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* Robert Hayden. *Collected Poems*, ed. Frederick Glaysher (Liveright, 1985) 38.