



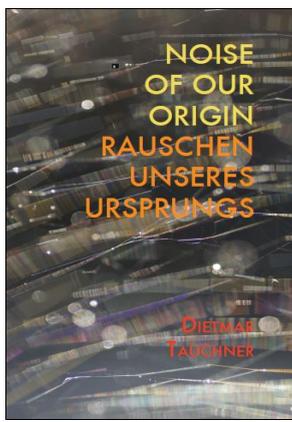
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***noise of our origin* – Dietmar Tauchner**

reviewed by Lorin Ford



***noise of our origin*, haiku by Dietmar Tauchner**

Red Moon Press

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On a first, quick flip through the pages, readers may be struck by words which could lead to the impression that *noise of our origin* might be something like 'The Big Boys' Haiku Book of The Universe'. In one sense, such an impression would not be wrong. Many of the 65 haiku that comprise *noise of our origin* range in celestial subject matter from our own familiar moon and sun right back to the Big Bang, with much that technological advances have enabled scientists to study in between: Leonids, Venus, Sedna, Sirius, the Big Dipper, the Milky Way, Andromeda, supernovae, White Dwarfs, quasars and black holes, the Hubble Deep Field constellations and more, including hypothetical entities such as the planet Nemesis and wormholes in space. We also find tachyons, quanta, dark matter, dark energy, the antiparticle, the neutrino, atoms, chromosomes and biobricks.

Tauchner's haiku, however, are far from being away with the space fairies or in danger of being lost in the realms of theory and abstraction. They engage this reader because they are local, grounded in human experience, perception and awareness. With a light but precise touch, the distant and the near, the large and the small, the mundane and the wondrous, in time present, past and future are brought into relationships which seem inevitable. This is a sure sign that Dietmar Tauchner has mastered his craft.

big dipper
the factory releases
its shift workers

sleepless
the moon's
tick

in love
the stars
chirping

boarding
a neutrino arrives
in my future

If we look at the Big Dipper now, we can see a square shape with one of the sides opened out like a factory door, and the nearby scatters of stars as workers being released. Humanity has ever made stories about the patterns of stars based on what was familiar on earth. Tauchner's factory releasing shift workers is a new story, but behind it lies the modern knowledge that stars are indeed factories, the creators of all the elements that form the basis of life and the conditions for life to exist.

A moon that ticks recalls an earlier time in history when mechanical metaphors were applied to our galaxy and solar system as well as to the relatively recent past when all clocks were mechanical, and ticked. Is it from memory that the sleepless one blends the ticking of a clock with the moon? Is it the buoyant, springtime feeling of being in love, in the second haiku of the group above, that blends the chirping of young birds with the stars? These images are of what's immediately perceived, not an attempt to labour after facts, and our perceptions are informed by our past experiences.

The fourth haiku, 'boarding', differs (in my reading) in that lines 2 and 3 seem to contain an amusingly understated calculation. Given that an estimated "65 billion (6.5×10^{10}) solar neutrinos per second pass through every square centimeter perpendicular to the direction of the Sun in the region of the Earth"¹, it's a safe bet that, if one has any future at all, many neutrinos will surely arrive. The juxtaposition relies on intuitive linking between L1 & the rest in the manner of Basho's 'scent linkage'. Rather than resort to crossed fingers or a lucky rabbit's foot, as some do when boarding a plane, Tauchner calms his anxiety by thinking positively about a neutrino arriving in his future. Tauchner's tone is rarely dramatic, and often gently self-mocking.

This quiet, understated but unmistakably earthy and playful sense of humour is a binding thread throughout. Electrons may be perceived as waves or as particles and in *noise of our origin* Tauchner's haiku show a comparable kind of duality. Such is the admirable compression and balance achieved that as well as being delightfully funny on one level these haiku evoke further and deeper contemplation.

our talk
about things to come
Sirius

where no man
has gone before
scrap metal

beer tasting 4000 years of history

morning after the uncertainty of quanta

I take 'Sirius' to echo its near-homophone, 'serious', thus making a pun. If we consider Sirius's connections with flaming heat, the 'dog days' of Summer and its ancient reputation as "an evil portent, bringing heat/And fevers to suffering humanity"² then the topic being Siriusly/seriously discussed might well be the future effects of global warming, which is much on our minds these days.

The second haiku in this group immediately called to my mind Uda Kiyoko's

teppen ya kanarazu otoko ga tachidomaru

piled iron:
without doubt
men stop³

Uda's haiku has long been a favourite of mine. I see Tauchner's 'where no man' in conversation with this haiku, quite likely an intended allusion. Men have so long been fascinated with the uses metal can be put to, including scrap metal, that it seems part of their nature, as Uda observes. Now, after many decades of space exploration, there is indeed scrap metal out there where no man has been. Will men one day have a chance to recycle space junk?

In the third haiku, above, the experiences of 'beer tasting' and 'tasting 4000 years of history' blend through the hinge-word, 'tasting': a marvellously extended 'haiku moment', and in the fourth haiku the uncertainty principle of quantum mechanics is playfully associated with the effects of a hangover.

Dietmar Tauchner's *noise of our origin* takes its title from the final haiku in the book:

new radio
noise
of our origin

Tauchner humorously compares the noises we might hear when browsing the frequencies of a new radio with the 'noise' of cosmic radiation from the Big Bang mapped by radio telescopes. Or it could be that he actually listened to a sound simulation.⁴ This noise is the very old news of the beginning of the universe, reaching us now across space-time. This haiku reminds us of whence we have come, through many marvellous transformations, in keeping with Carl Sagan's famous message:

"We are the local embodiment of a Cosmos grown to self-awareness. We have begun to contemplate our origins: starstuff pondering the stars; organized assemblages of ten billion billion billion atoms considering the evolution of atoms; tracing the long journey by which, here at least, consciousness arose."⁵

We are here, on a tiny dot in the vastness of space-time, and when reading *noise of our origin*, we are aware of it. With Tauchner, we are both expanded and humbled as we explore the grand view of the universe that modern science and technology provide and we adjust our world view accordingly.

about a 100 billion galaxies I'm about nothing

a quasar plays god where my thoughts start a war

deep space ∞
the vast waste
of time

Do readers of haiku really need to know something about modern science, keep our ears tuned for new developments? In my view, yes, we all do. As Sagan observed in 1990:

"We live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology, in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology. This is a clear prescription for disaster."⁶

Dietmar Tauchner is to be commended for expanding the haiku universe. As well as being a collection of enjoyable and rewarding haiku, *noise of our origin* will please those who are familiar with the advances in modern science and will inspire those who may need to do some extra reading and viewing to refresh their knowledge. It's worth it.

I should mention that though I've quoted only the English versions of the haiku, *noise of our origin* is a bilingual edition, in German and English. My only quibble with the book, apart from a copy editor's oversight that had me confused for a moment ('scarp metal' for 'scrap metal') is that I wondered about the English version of this one haiku:

Olympus Mons das Auf's & Ab der Menschen

Mount Olympus men's up & down

In context of the whole book, surely Tauchner does primarily mean Olympus Mons, the name given to a mountain on the moon *in reference* to the Greek mountain, home of the gods in Greek myth, so Olympus Mons shouldn't be translated into English any more than it should be translated into German. Also, although I don't have German, what I intuitively translated as 'the ups and downs of men' (or 'the ups and downs of man/mankind/humanity') in the German version makes more sense to me, given the association of the rocket-fueled moon landings of the 20th century with the Greek myth of the beginnings of technology, Prometheus's ascent of Mount Olympus to steal fire for the benefit of mankind. '*das Auf's & Ab der Menschen*/ the ups & downs of men', in my view, has a more suitable rhythm (giving, as it does, the sense of a longer time span and more physical weight to those 'ups & downs') than does the comparatively abbreviated 'men's up & down'. An historical graph of achievements and pitfalls is suggested, as is a sense of the seeming inevitability of both.

It's a minor quibble, about one haiku out of sixty-five, and it might serve to demonstrate that each haiku in *noise of our origin* invites our full attention and engagement.

¹Neutrino par. 4, [Wikipedia](#)

²Homer (1997). *Iliad*. Trans. Stanley Lombardo. Indianapolis: Hackett

³Uda Kiyoko. Richard Gilbert and Itô Yûki (trans.) October 29, 2007, [Gendai Haiku](#)

⁴'[The Sound of the Big Bang](#)' (c) John G. Cramer - 2013

⁵Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*, Random House, New York, 1980

⁶Carl Sagan, "Why We Need To Understand Science" in *The Skeptical Inquirer* Vol. 14, Issue 3, Spring 1990

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