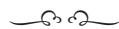


Explanatory notes aid one's comprehension of the texts where appropriate. I was particularly appreciative of the extensive note accompanying Rebecca Mabanglo-Mayor's very fine chained hay(na)ku sequence *The Politics of Beauty* which, unfortunately, is too long to quote here. An informative essay, *Hay(na)ku / Sci(na)ku – Six Word Poetry* by Lauren McBride concludes the English section of the book and helpful biographies of all the poets and translators are given at the end.

Turning to the back of the book cover, it is clear that commenting on the hay(na)ku has become an art form in itself: Aimee Nezhukumattathil says that she loves the hay(na)ku “because of the zip and pop of it...the flame and spark of it. Like snapping a towel at someone you love” and Michael Leong describes it as “an elegantly minimalist form (a bit like the tip of an Oulipian “snowball”)”. It is hard to better these poetic descriptions of delight but it does say a lot about the way in which this versatile form has provided a new means for poetic expression. Fully recommended.



Number Eight Wire edited by Sandra Simpson and Margaret Beverland (2019, Piwakawaka Press, Tauranga, New Zealand) 150 pages 6” by 8¼”, Perfectbound, ISBN 978-0-473-46477-6, Australia: \$25 plus \$10 postage, UK/Europe/US \$25 plus \$18 postage (postal rates only good till July 1, 2019) To use paypal: haithologynz@gmail.com

Reviewed by Michael Ketchek

Number Eight Wire is the fourth New Zealand Haiku Anthology. In the introduction it is mentioned that ten years have passed since the last New Zealand Anthology. Composed of 330 haiku this fine collection highlights the work of 70 poets. The haiku touch on the universal and on things specific to New Zealand. For those haiku that are particular to New Zealand there is a helpful glossary of terms. So that if you are unfamiliar with

the term “pohutukawa” as in this haiku by André Surridge:

in remission—
on the pohutukawa stump
a new shoot

you will find that it is a “large, summer blooming, red-flowered coastal tree.” Knowing this certainly helps you better envision the striking image in this haiku. The haiku are arranged by season. One haiku from each season:

Summer:

mountain stream—
gathering dawn
to itself

John O’Conner

Autumn:

in fading light
the shared breath
of lovers

Catherine Mair

Winter:

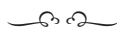
living alone
the wishbone
unbroken

Helen Young

Spring:

wet spring –
in a box by the fire
a small bleat

Sandra Simpson

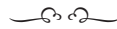


The Art of Motorcycle Haiku by Mark Fargo, including photography by the author (2018, Lone Wolf Prints, Ventura CA) 66 pages, 6" by 9", Perfectbound, ISBN 978-0-578-44704-9.

Reviewed by Michael Ketchek

This book consists of a lengthy introduction followed by almost forty pages of photos and haiku, one per page as well as a sentence or two, mostly some added information concerning the photo. The haiku are in the traditional 5/7/5 syllable format. Mark Fargo clearly states the intent of this book, "Motorcycle Haiku is the daily journey, the distractions, the challenges I face every day. It may not meet traditional standards or expectations...but Motorcycle Haiku is not to be compared to traditional Haiku. Motorcycle Haiku simply uses its format to address the journey and the photographs that happen along the way." Lastly one haiku that describes the photo it accompanies:

Open ranges for miles
Broken fences with barbed wire
Dreaming in the weeds



Head-On by Rich Youmans (2018, Red Bird Chapbooks, St Paul MN) 32 pages, 5 1/2" by 8 1/2", hand sewn, no ISBN, \$12 at <https://www.redbirdchapbooks.com>

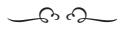
Reviewed by Michael Ketchek

Head On is a collection of thirteen haibun. These haibun are the stories of life's tragedies, car crashes, blindness, the death of a loved one and more. Remarkably these haibun neither wallow in misery nor present feel good endings to tragic events. The stories are written in plain prose which lets the reader feel his or her own emotions without having them dictated by the author. The haiku fit well with the prose giving

one a feeling of life presented just as it is. It is a testament to the craft of Youmans that these haibun are neither tear jerkers or a series of romantic triumphs over tragedy.

Two haiku from a haibun that deals with blindness:

first birdsong in each note, the light of a waiting sky
evening peepers in their song, all the stars



Haiku As Life A Kaneko Tohta Omnibus, translated by Richard Gilbert, Ito Yuki, David Osterman, Masahiro Hori, Koun Franz, Tracy Franz, Kanamitsu Takeyoshi, (2019, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA) 515 pages, 6" by 9" paperback, ISBN 978-1-947271-40-1, \$35.

Reviewed by Michael Ketchek

In the introduction, by Richard Gilbert the reader is introduced to Kaneko Tohta (1919-2018). Gilbert informs us that Tohta, "instigated several major post war progressive-haiku movements, becoming a leading literary and cultural light as critic, teacher, scholar, and poet." In order to give an understanding of the importance of Tohta this book includes a lecture given by Tohta, a lengthy interview, about 250 haiku and commentary by the translators.

Tohta, in the forefront of 20th century haiku, clearly states in his lecture what subjects, he believes, should be tackled by haiku, "If we are only to compose haiku on the life of 'birds and flowers,' failing to include the whole of life, not excepting humanity, our range of expression will become narrow as a result."

An example of one of Tohta's haiku which eschews both traditional form and content:

before my youthful eye a soldier twitches away

gunfire

In his lecture and interview Tohta addresses many aspects of haiku. Just a few of the topics he touches on: social consciousness, kigo, his war experiences, and haiku's future. An advocate of rawness and direct immediacy Tohta gives this haiku of his as an example:

summer mountain country
mother there calls me,
“good-for-nothing”

This book, beside its extensive translations of haiku by a major 20th century poet, gives the reader an understanding of Tohta's philosophy of haiku. His commentary on so many subjects of importance to writers of haiku is not only informative, but is sure to lead to much discussion and thought. In closing several more of Tohta's haiku:

graveyard too burned
cicadas like pieces of meat
in the trees

the smell of hay
penetrating
the mother, young

we all flow, float away

the sea tide stays

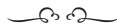
hey, crane!
a baby whacks a rock
with its palm



Briefly Reviewed by Randy Brooks

Healing into Haiku: On Illness and Pain by Robert Epstein (2018, Middle Island Press, West Union, WV) 134 pages, 5" by 8". Four-color card covers, saddle stitched. ISBN 9781732502352. \$15 from Amazon.com.

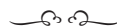
Robert Epstein has been a prolific writer and editor of haiku books on a variety of topics. *Healing into Haiku* collects his own haiku related to chronic illness. He shares his experiences with chronic disabling fatigue over the last 20 years, and how reading and writing haiku “has been my saving grace” (xxii). Here are some examples of his haiku: *more vertigo / no gunnels / to grab onto* (12) and *monarch butterflies / I once moved / like that* (30). An excellent haiku on the fragility of aging friends: *dandelion clocks / one friend after another / blows away* (40). Here is a lighter one: *children’s park— / I’m the overgrown kid / with the inhaler* (64). In the postscript to the book, Epstein notes that “the act of writing haiku has improved the quality of my life” (103-104). He goes on to explain that “Haiku has enabled me to bring my awareness more into the present moment where my anxiety and worry dissipate during the act of being mindful” and “In writing haiku, I feel like I am bringing recognition in some small way to the beauty that still exists, despite all that is depressing in the news” (104). I’ll close with the title poem, *day and night— / the trail continues on / healing into haiku* (96).



The Way of Haiku by Naomi Beth Wakan (2018, Shanti Arts Publishing, Brunswick, ME) 112 pages, 5.5" by 8.5". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947067-67-7. \$15.95 from shantiarts.com.

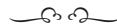
Naomi Beth Wakan excels at synthesizing ideas and clearly communicating the “best practices” or common knowledge related to reading, understanding and writing haiku. As she

states in her opening, “I am writing for absolute beginners, introducing readers to the basics of haiku, as well as a few subtleties” (11). Her approach is to celebrate the lifelong gifts of haiku by succinctly sharing advice and wisdom from well-known haiku writers. This book is loaded with excellent quotes from “haijin” and many examples of haiku illustrating her points. Although Ms. Wakan shares a variety of advice and approaches, she is also transparent about her own approach. Here is her own definition of haiku following a discussion of others’ definitions: “Haiku are small verses, centered in the here and now, thus often including a seasonal reference, that present juxtaposed images in a way that opens the moment described to a deeper depth of understanding, not just of that particular moment, but of all moments in space and time” (20). This is an excellent book to give someone just getting interested in haiku.



Mixed Bag: A Travelogue in Four Forms by William Scott Galasso (2018, Galwin Press, Laguna Woods, CA) 190 pages, 6” by 9”. Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1732752702. \$10.00 from Amazon.com.

As the author explains in his foreword, this is a “Mixed Bag” of poems (haiku, tanka, poems, haibun) written about his travels over the last 50 years. “The work has been culled from 14 previous books and includes added new material written over the last three years” (no page numbers). Most are presented with titles indicating sequences, such as this one, “California / South Dakota”. It has three verses: (1) *renewal of faith / ...the swallows return / to Capistrano* (2) *Pacific wren / the forest / finds its voice* (3) *Mid-day heat— / hawks above the Rosebud River / circling the dead*. Most of the sequences include several more links than this example.



Under Raintrees (Cherita by ai li in Translation) edited and translated by arvinder kaur (2018, Lokgeet Parkashan, Chandigarh, India) 136 pages, 5" by 7.5". Black and white card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-93-83392-17-9.

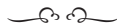
This is a tri-lingual edition featuring translations of ai li's cherita from English into Hindi and Punjabi. In the introduction Patricia Prime explains, "The cherita tells a story in linked poetry of one, two and three lines (or in variations of this order). It can be written solo or by up to three partners. It was created by ai li" (xii). ai li describes the cherita as "a six-line, three stanza storytelling short form genre" (xviii). Here is one presented with spaces as published:

dark night

no stars
no moon

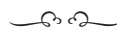
i learn
that your fingers
read braille (page 4)

The cherita reads as a progression of images and phrases that gather into a story. There is the first line, "they say you are missing"; then a second stanza of two lines, "i fold your clothes / into the night"; and a third stanza, "talk / to your pillow / with my tears" (14). Longer than haiku and more lyrical as well, the cherita often take an inward, psychological turn like tanka. They move from the context to the inner imagination and voice of the narrator. In one cherita, ai li plays with the "expansion" of tanka into a cherita: *tanka blues // before / ink dries // i add / a sixth line / and tell another story* (24). This is a good selection of solo cherita by ai li from a variety of her previous books.



The Silence Within by Juanito L. Escareal (2018, Haikukuru Publishing, East Bay, CA) 120 pages, 6" by 9". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-1720274568. \$16.00 from Amazon.com.

The Silence Within is an interesting first collection by Juanito L. Escareal, who started reading and writing haiku by joining the Shiki Internet Haiku Salon in 1989. Ten years later he joined a Japanese haiku group, Fuyoh, and received encouragement and guidance from the co-editor of the Fuyoh journal, Dhugal Lindsay. In this collection Escareal shares haiku, tanka, and haibun along with commentaries by himself or his teacher, indicated in the book as "DL" for Dhugal Lindsay. While the author's own commentaries too often explain the "back story" of a haiku, the commentaries by his teacher are quite interesting. They demonstrate the importance of feedback and reader responses to the growth of a new writer. Lindsay's responses were often published in the Fuyoh journal as well, so they were written with a broader audience in mind. I found myself reading the haiku, forming my own opinion, then re-reading the haiku after reading the published response. Here is a favorite haiku and response: *folding up / the ping pong table / a short day* (65). Lindsay writes, "The ping pong table had been set up outside or in a space dependent on natural light. All afternoon this space resounded with the click-clack of a ping pong ball rallied back and forth. The inevitable rise and fall, rise and fall of the sun has brought an end to today's game and the ping pong table is folded up. As the days vary in length around their centre at noon, so too is the ping pong table folded at its centre. And once again it will be unfolded as the new day unfolds on the morrow" (65). This is an excellent first collection with many engaging haiku and insightful reader responses.



Walking, Just a Little Water by Rebecca Lilly (2019, Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA) 100 pages, 4¼" by 6½". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-33-3. \$20.00 from redmoonpress.com.

Walking, Just a Little Water is Rebecca Lilly's second recent book featuring both present-centered haiku intermixed with her new experimentation with expanded haiku that express a "more subterranean and subconscious commentary, less grounded in immediate sensory observation" (page 7). In the introduction she explains that "much of my poetry seems to arise from my struggles to come to terms with absences of various kinds, particularly the loss of someone or something loved, whether that perceived loss be a past experience or an imagined inevitability" (5). The result is an excellent collection of evocative explorations of the inner and outer realms of consciousness. For example, here is the title poem: *walking just a little water some life in me stirs* (11). In this haiku I feel a sense of loss and return to coming alive, in the walking and inevitable movement of water. The absence is not fully identified but referred to as "some life" but the stirring is felt. There is a similar winsome feeling in this haiku: *Cliffs, tinted clouds / the river reflects ... / if I weren't a self* (15). These haiku seem to be seeking that release of ego, a letting go of self to fully embody a felt presence beyond the "who I am". Then Lilly shifts to the inner voice which goes the other direction, totally into her thoughts shown here on page 12:

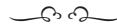
talking to myself wind
strikes leaf edges time's
runoff in the whispers

The book progresses through observations and inner commentary or speculations like this through the seasons. Sometimes the haiku and expanded haiku create a kind of call and response feeling as lingering perceptions morph into the subsequent speculations. For example, following *Moss softens*

rocks / in the forest hollow— / a horned owl's call (23), we get this expanded haiku on page 24:

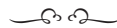
some wise voice a new form
of foliage its wings first
a word then the person

I'll end with two more haiku of loss: *Mourning him again— / I tweeze out / the bowl's burnt incense* (48) and a favorite on page 59: *Early spring moon— / she never birthed / those fantasy children.*



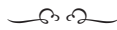
Nothing is Empty: A Whole Haiku World by Robert Epstein (2019, Middle Island Press, West Union, WV) 112 pages, 5" by 8". Four-color card covers, saddle stitched. ISBN 9781732502376. \$15 from Amazon.com.

In this collection of haiku, Robert Epstein collects haiku that address the question “whether nothing or emptiness might nudge us to wake up from the trance of striving or becoming, if we would give nothing but our full attention” (pages xv-xvi). The haiku move through a variety of encounters with emptiness or nothing: the toddler's first peek under the bed (5). Sometimes “nothing” is the unspoken second half of a haiku as in: *where the monarch was a moment ago* (7). In a more domestic setting: *moving in / she opens the refrigerator / for the first time* (18). Sometimes he portrays efforts to replace something missing: *empty nest / the new puppy / has no clue* (33). And of course, the biggest crisis comes in the middle of the night: *midnight foraging / the last piece of pie / missing* (49). All seriousness aside, I hope you enjoy the playfulness of this collection of haiku which is, of course, much to do about nothing.



Wild Rhubarb: One-line Haiku by Stuart Quine (2019, Alba Publishing, Uxbridge, UK) 92 pages, 8¼" by 5¾". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-912773-19-0

Alba Publishing knows how to publish a collection of long, one-line haiku. Each haiku appears on its own wide, horizontal page with plenty of space to pause, read and re-read each poem. This collection, *Wild Rhubarb*, is arranged by seasons following the order of composition by Stuart Quine. The overall effect is that we are reading a haiku journal, starting with: *spring rain the muddy dugs of a pregnant sow* (pages unnumbered). Several of the haiku seem to be quite personal as in this one: *turning the corner my future life waits two streets away*. I enjoy this refreshing one: *unraveling on a coastal path her braid of rain-bright hair*. Another one from the summer section: *tonight after twenty years she is in my dreams wild-eyed and accusing*. One from fall: *that's me in the photo a seven-year-old with a snake curling around his arm*. And I'll close with a selection from winter: *how little I've learned just the correct use of language and a few simple tools*.



Goodwill Galaxy Hunting by LeRoy Gorman (2019, Urban Farmhouse Press, Windsor, Canada and Detroit, MI) 70 pages, 5.75" by 8.25". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-988214-25-2 \$10.94 from Amazon.com.

LeRoy Gorman has been a favorite haiku author in my collection since his early work in the late 1970's, largely because he has always explored the horizons beyond the evident limits of most haiku. It is a pleasure to discover this latest collection, *Goodwill Galaxy Hunting*, in which Gorman explores the outer limits of science fiction and fantasy with his haiku and tanka writing dexterity. This collection briefly goes back to earlier days of space exploration, opening with a moon landing tanka: *a footprint / on the Sea / of Tranquility / for a moment / we walked / on water* (page 3), and a tribute haiku: *Neil Armstrong dead / still /*

the bounce in his step (4). Of course, others travel by means other than space ships: *methadone clinic / not everyone leaves the planet / the same* (4). After additional haiku sequences and poems about our explorations of Mars and our solar system planets with telescopes and probes, Gorman shifts to explorations “beyond far out” with science fiction haiku such as: *her tentacles crossed / is that a yes / or no* (24) and: *Alpha Centauri toyshop / an Earth war game / collects dust* (26). Then Gorman takes up the issue of time, which according to Einstein “is an illusion”, with a series of time travel senryu: *long bald / the time traveler goes back / for a haircut* (41) and *time portal wedding / an exchange / of nows* (45). The last section is titled “Home on the Strange” and features a miscellany of science fiction and fantasy perspectives, such as: *the singles bar / Narcissus clones / fall for each other* (56), and the closing poem: *two hours / to a far galaxy & back / same old movie* (64).