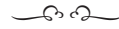


Broadway
at the end of each cross street
a sunset

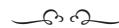


Briefly Reviewed

by Randy Brooks

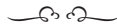
Wind Flowers: The Red Moon Anthology of English-language Haiku 2019 edited by Jim Kacian and the Red Moon Editorial Staff (2020, Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA) 190 pages, 5.5" x 8.25". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-49-4. \$17 from redmoonpress.com.

Wind Flowers is Red Moon Press' 24th annual anthology of English-language haiku. In this collection the editorial board has nominated their favorites from a wide range of journals, then voted on haiku, linked forms and select essays to be included. The result is 151 haiku, 20 linked forms and 4 essays. The haiku are fresh and represent a wide range of approaches to current English-language haiku. For example, here is a minimalist haiku by Christopher Patchel: *snow / be / it* (57). And a self-referential language haiku by Polona Oblak: *where to place the comma first crocuses* (56). One of my favorites is by Julie Warther: *only one side / of the conversation / cemetery walk* (76). Here is one of the best senryu included: *history class / my girlfriend whispers / forget what happened* (65) by Srinivasa Rao Sambingi. LeRoy Gorman contributes an enjambed haiku: *w a r g r a v e s n o n e b r e a k s r a n k* (30). And finally, a playful haiku from Lee Gurga: *when yes / means yes / spring peepers* (31). The essays include a short biography of Tomita Moppos with translations; an essay on haiku in Edo from Tosei to Basho; a Field Guide essay on Mendicants by Charles Trumbull; and a short reconsideration of Shiki's manifesto by Michael Dylan Welch. This is another outstanding anthology from Red Moon Press!



Because of This Light by Evergreen Haiku Study Group (2019, Evergreen Haiku Press, East Lansing, MI) 44 pages, 6" x 6". Four-color card covers, saddle stitched. \$6 plus postage from evergreenhaiku@gmail.com.

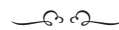
The Evergreen Haiku Study Group has been meeting monthly during the school year on the campus of Michigan State University in East Lansing. As a group they have explored different topics and approaches to writing haiku. They have also provided each other with valuable reading responses. This chapbook is their first collection celebrating participants, featuring "things of this world shed light on our lives" (introduction). Each poet has a short self-introduction so that readers can meet them as persons as well as by their examples of work. Here are some samples starting with *divining / the / wind / miscanthus / plumes* (no page numbers) by Fran Lewis. Student Sophie DeRango offers this brief monoku: *tea bag thoughts of you*. I will close with an evocative haiku by one of the leaders of the group, Michele Root-Bernstein: *tugging on its rope / the rowboat docked / in my dreams*. From this first sampling, I believe we can expect to see many excellent haiku forthcoming from this group of haiku writers.



Half A Rainbow: Haiku Nook, An Anthology edited by Jacob Salzer and the Nook Editorial Staff (2020) 128 pages, 6" x 9". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 9781794883741. \$14 to \$15 plus postage from Lulu, Barnes & Noble or Amazon.

Haiku is a social art and *Half A Rainbow* is an anthology of haiku, tanka, and haibun from an online community, the Haiku Nook Google+ founded by Willie R. Bongcaron. The anthology is dedicated to Rachel Sutcliffe, an active member of this community who died in 2019 from the autoimmune disease, lupus. The book features 21 pages of her selected haiku

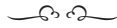
and another 8 pages of haiku “Flowers for Rachel” by other members. Here are two examples of Rachel’s haiku: *bonfire ashes / all that remains / of autumn* (80) and *second hand book store / I browse / through Sunday* (84). Here is one that references her illness: *much weaker now / drawers still full / of a former self* (93). The rest of the anthology features work by Haiku Nook G+ community poets from Canada, the U.K., Germany, Persia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Romania, Indonesia, the Philippines, and the U.S. Proceeds from sales of this book will be donated to Leeds Clinical Immunology Research Fund, Leeds Cares at St. James’s University Hospital. One of my favorites in this anthology is by Nicholas Klacsanxky: *beach fire— / her scar shimmers / in the night* (8). Another favorite: *ghost apple— / people look straight / through me* (17) by Robin Anna Smith. There are several excellent tanka as well, so I will close with this one by Momolu Freeman: *the end / of winter / every seed sown / lives on / in the nook* (29).



Thunderheads by Joseph Fulkerson (2020, Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA) 4.25” x 6”. Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 9781947271579. \$15 from redmoonpress.com

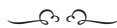
Joseph Fulkerson is an electrician from Owensboro, Kentucky, where he writes poetry and haiku. He starts his collection with a dictionary definition of “pluviophile (n.) a lover of rain; someone who finds joy and peace of mind during rainy days”. Many of the haiku in *Thunderheads* feature rain, drizzle, snow, mackerel sky...various kigo in haiku that celebrate an outdoor life. Here’s one from Spring: *April showers / flood waters breach / the fence row*. Sometimes Fulkerson’s haiku focus more on inner weather as in this one: *steady rainfall writing my father’s eulogy. I enjoy the sounds in meteor shower / the click-clack / of a passing train*. I’ve been to Owensboro, which is nestled on a bend of the Ohio River and is evident in haiku like: *crack of dawn / the well-worn path / to the riverbank*. I will close with the

wonderful title poem (for those of us who are pluviophiles):
thunderheads / the smell of rain / in the air.



Light Packing by Elmedin Kadric (2020, Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA) 4.25" x 6". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 9781947271531. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

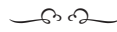
Light Packing is Elmedin Kadric's second collection of haiku. Elmedin is a poet's poet who celebrates art, legends, tales, language and voices. For example, he writes: *the ancient gods / I pour into her ear / with a soft voice*. Poetry and literary art come naturally for him: *from monologue / to dialogue / the river enters the sea*. He enjoys the magic of sharing our stories: *her fairy tale / in first person / spring rain*. He also has a light touch, as if whispering in this one: *rose scent / she lets me in / on a secret*. Some of his haiku explore the voices of others: *first day at work / the waitress serves / her broken English*. Throughout this collection we find an awareness that our words matter, that as haiku poets, we create something out of words that becomes our history. For example, *snail shells we leave behind language*. This is an excellent collection that celebrates the art and power of shared words.



Northern Lights by Marcus Larsson (2020, Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA) 64 pages, 4.25" x 6". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 9781947271517. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

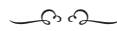
In *Northern Lights*, Marcus Larsson writes haiku that revolve around people and their relationships to each other and the mysteries that are beyond us. The first haiku in the book opens with curiosity: *blooming lilacs / we have a thousand questions / as you arrive* (no page numbers). In another adventure we quietly pay attention: *spring outing / the day care teacher / raises her hand*.

His haiku often portray instantaneous interactions, such as: *summer morning / girls whistle back / at construction workers*. His haiku find the comforts of being familiar: *jukebox music / the waiter knows / what we are having*. However, there are also moments of distance and lost opportunities: *lake walk / I never get around / to telling her*. There is the human desire to be connected: *starry evening / the pilot talks / more than he has to*. One of my favorites is this one near the end of the collection: *winter beach / the child decides / to let the stones be*.



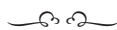
A Turn in the River by Brad Bennett (2019, Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA) 64 pages, 4.25" x 6". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 9781947271449. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

Brad Bennet is an elementary teacher in Arlington, Massachusetts, where he celebrates the discoveries to be found by exploring local conservation areas, Audubon sanctuaries and national parks. This collection begins, appropriately, with *silence.../ a few dots / on the moth's wing* (no page numbers). In this next haiku, he captures a scene of childlike wonder: *early summer / a toddler leans over / the minnow bucket*. What does it take to get out of our heads, our constant talking to ourselves? Here's Bennett's way: *overlook / I stop listening / to myself*. I love the playful contrast in this one: *fall migration / a cross country team / flies past me*. Once in a while, we see the teacher's perspective: *first snow.../ half the class drifts / to the window*. Also fascinating are observations like, *spring / the dead owl / mostly soil*. Near the end of this excellent collection of haiku we find: *old rock wall / tumbled stones show / their lighter sides*.



Aquinnah, Dawn of Martha's Vineyard: Haiku Enhanced Photos by T. M. Shorewick (2019, Aquinnah, MA) 75 pages, 6" x 9". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 9781702371148. \$19.99 from Amazon.com.

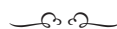
In this book T. M. Shorewick offers 30 photographs from the seascapes of Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts. Each photograph is paired with a 5-7-5 descriptive poem. For example, one photo features a misty point paired with this poem: *This is haze not snow / It makes no difference if / You steer a blind skiff* (20). On the facing page the author provides what the writer calls "American free form haiku". Here are the two from page 21: *Glacial fog suspends all / Until when / Moshup's footsteps fall* and *In ice or mist / Don't persist / Reversion culturally is a twist*. "Moshup" refers to a legendary figure from the Wampanoag people who once inhabited this area.



Haiku Guy Omnibus: a 20th Anniversary Edition of Haiku Guy, Laughing Buddha, Haiku Wars, Frog Poet, and Dewdrop World by David G. Lanoue (2020, HaikuGuy.com, New Orleans, LA) 584 pages, 5.25" x 8". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 9781733301626. \$19.99 from Amazon.com.

While I have read all five of these novels before and reviewed most of them, this edition is quite an amazing offering opportunity for haiku lovers to get all five novels in one massive omnibus for just under twenty dollars! Join Buck-Teeth on this adventure through the haiku world, which includes forays into Old Japan as well as the raucous society of contemporary global haiku. What can I say about such a collection? David Lanoue has invented a new genre, the haiku novel, in which the protagonist and everyone else is immersed in the world of haiku. If the reader knows nothing about haiku, they will soon join Buck-Teeth in his quest to learn how to read and write haiku. If the reader THINKS they know

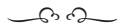
everything about haiku, they will soon find out how narrow and limited their views of haiku actually are. If the reader is looking for a tight novel with twists and turns and resolutions of life-changing conflicts, they will be disappointed because these delightful books wander about, digress, and dawdle over literary haiku aesthetics without ever coming to a definitive conclusion. Are these books fiction or creative non-fiction? Are they examples of magic-realism with a thinking-out-loud ferret and sudden narrator shifts in time and space from New Orleans to old Japan? Are they fictionalized memoir? Are the characters based on actual people in writing groups, or the haiku community, thinly disguised as fictional satire? Is this book really about Issa and how Cup of Tea teaches by example and through his haiku how to perceive, feel, enjoy and mourn the world? Are the other characters in the book based on actual haiku poets from Old Japan? Are Mido, Kuro and Shiro superhero caricatures of certain aesthetics or approaches to haiku from past Japanese haiku masters? Is Lord Kaga just a means of making fun of the mournful aristocratic love poetry from Japan? While these are the puzzles for literary critics to ponder, I can say FOR SURE that these books will reward the reader with fun, surprise, and puzzles related to the haiku world of today and the past. I thank David Lanoue for writing these wonderful books and offering them in this Omnibus edition!



The Strangest Conversation by Joshua Eric Williams (2019, Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA) 64 pages, 4.25" x 6". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 9781947271449. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

Joshua Eric Williams writes straight-forward haiku in a personal voice. For example, this one seems to invite us to rest our feet and enjoy the view: *frozen woods / filled with reflections / shot glass* (no page numbers). Several of his haiku reflect on relationships: *recounting the words / between us / winter rain*. His

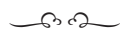
easy-going voice invites readers along, but is also a means of engaging in a direct conversation with nature. For example, consider this moment: *porch light / the neighbors stir / grazing deer*. At ease with himself and accepting the gifts of being immersed outdoors, Williams' haiku represent a lived communion with other living things. Here is another example: *starless night— / the first katydid / i sing back to*. Although he enjoys interacting with the creatures, he is much more language-oriented than Thoreau. In this poem he conjugates a spider web: *spider's web / the subject, verb, and object / line-by-line*. Sometimes the words fade away: *fishing line / every word ripples / into silence*. This is an outstanding collection of conversations with others, nature and one's self. You will be rewarded by engaging in where these conversations take you. I'll close with this one: *sunset colors / the last paragraph / runs on*.



Arrhythmia by Bruce H. Feingold (2020, Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA) 64 pages, 4.25" x 6". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 9781947271524. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

How does an illness or a sudden life-threatening event affect a person's outlook and perspective of themselves and their world? In *Arrhythmia*, Bruce Feingold shares his shake-up and rebirth of new awareness of both the ephemeral beauties and the heartfelt emotions that last beyond the moment. This collection represents a journey through illness to recovery and health. The first section, "Dead Woman's Pass" is from this haiku: *Dead Woman's Pass / my son doubles back / to check on me* (no page numbers). The second section, "insomnia" features this nightmare haiku: *insomnia / I keep waking up / in 1930's Germany*. The book's title also comes from a political haiku in this section: *arrhythmia the unraveling of the republic*. The next section, "the rise and fall", deals with a heart attack: *sudden death / an angel cradles my heart / with its wings*. In the section "vertebrae" Feingold writes about recovery: *winter sunset /*

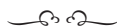
cutting off / the hospital band. The following haunting haiku is also from this section: *winter dusk / the shadows thrown / by whale vertebrae.* The last section “open sky” represents a celebration of restored life, haiku about living the good life, even if it is ephemeral: *cherry blossoms / I listen to my pulse / for arrhythmias* and *World Series / crickets singing / for both sides.* Feingold ends this journey in contrast to the mountaintop start with this haiku: *gentle decline / the trail meandering / to where we began.* This is a masterful collection of haiku that breathes life into all of us no matter how oddly our hearts may beat!



For Now by James Richardson (2020, Copper Canyon Press, Port Townsend, WA) 108 pages, 6” x 9”. Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 9781556595790. \$16 from Amazon.com.

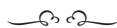
James Richardson is an award-winning poet and professor at Princeton University, known for his playful aphorism, ten-second essays, and lyric meditations. He also knows the haiku tradition and enjoys writing haiku in his playful, contemplative style. Unlike so many other well-known poets who dabble in writing 5-7-5 verses and call them haiku, most of Richardson’s haiku are actually haiku. They employ images and voice and perspective and turn on the haiku cut for immediate attraction and resonating impact. *For Now* is Richardson’s ninth collection of poetry and intermixed with his longer poems and aphorisms are 22 pages featuring haiku. Here are samples selected to represent the range of his work in haiku: *Snow on my page — / no harm / if it’s cold enough.* (16). This next one provides an urban perspective: *Trillions of stars—/ over 7th Ave. / just four.* (37). Five pages feature haiku “in the manner of Issa” such as: *Never mind, robin, / I don’t have a real job /either.* (66) and *Lilacs! / How long / did I sleep?* (64). You have probably noticed that Richardson’s haiku are written as sentences, with a capital letter, standard punctuation, and a period at the end. However, his haiku do not descend into logical witticism.

Instead he achieves a lighthearted, playful voice we so often value in haiku. In another section of haiku “after basho” we find: *The way / their lights are on / no one’s home* (84) and *Winter sunset—I put down the groceries / to unlock the door.* (85). James Richardson is a versatile poet and wordsmith. It is good to see his talents exploring what gifts he can open with haiku.



Small Hadron Divider by David J Kelly (2020, Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA) 96 pages, 6” x 9”. Two-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 9781947271548. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

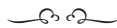
As evident by the title of this collection of haiku, David J Kelly is a scientist and writer. He explains the significance of Small Hadron Divider in the introduction. “Hadrons are composite particles made up of quarks. The two best-known (and most stable) hadrons are protons and neutrons. ... We now know quarks are elementary particles (i.e. indivisible) and so may be considered the building blocks of matter. They come in six ‘flavours’, and it is these flavours that serve as headings for the main sections of this collection. It would appear that matter, as well as experience, is far from monochrome” (7). These six flavors of haiku include: up, down, strange, charm, top, bottom. There is also a section called “gluons”. Kelly explains that “Gluons act, as their name suggests, like glue. They bind quarks together and allow the formation of hadrons” (7). I will share one haiku from each section. Up: *a pale rainbow / stretched across storm clouds / your smile after chemo* (16). Down: *low income high rise / a wrecking ball swings through / its empty heart* (35). Strange: *no right turn / the voice from the sat nav / falls quiet* (47). Charm: *funeral service a murmur of memories* (59). Top: *forest bathing / lost in an ocean / of thought bubbles* (73). Bottom: *footloose / a young foal / learning to balance* (80). And Gluons: *deep in a doodle / chasing a thought / across the page* (93).



Basho's Cocaine: A Haiku Detective Novel by Michael Ketchek (2020, Free Food Press, Rochester, NY) 164 pages, 5.5" x 8.5". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. \$15 plus \$3 shipping from freefoodpress.com.

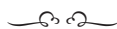
Basho's Cocaine is the second haiku detective novel by Michael Ketchek. As in his first novel, *Haiku Detective*, this story is narrated by Francis Swift, a detective who loves bourbon, women, and haiku. Francis is a big-hearted guy who just likes to help people, especially clients who happen to share his love of haiku. I don't want to spoil the fun of joining Francis on his latest challenge, but let me summarize by saying that at least three of the characters have been published in *Modern Frog* magazine, and a fourth one aspires to get her haiku published in the journal. Detective Swift's primary client, Rodney Farnsworth, is on a quest for "Basho's cocaine" which has been infused with Basho's spirit at a Zen monastery where the monks "around the clock the entire year, recite all of Basho's haiku over and over again while concentrating on the cocaine, imbuing the powder with the essence of Basho's wisdom". This Basho-imbued cocaine is somewhere near Buffalo, New York. I would call this a mad-cap adventure, but that wouldn't give Detective Swift's rather large sidekick cab driver, Mad-Dog, the respect he is due. Unlike the characters in the book, readers not only get to follow the narrator's thoughts but also his haiku, as they pop out during his detective work. Our narrator not only lets us in on the inner-workings of a detective, he also lets us in on the inner-workings of writing haiku. After being jilted in a distant relationship, he shares his editing and revision process by giving readers three versions of a love-lost haiku: *best I can do / a goodbye kiss / by text*. As he says, "It's strange sometimes how haiku interferes with my thinking about a case and sometimes a case interferes with my thinking about haiku." He tries to read an issue of "*Burnt Firefly*, a haiku journal that specializes in avant-garde haiku," but has trouble paying attention. He explains, "Thankfully my sandwich and glass of iced tea arrived and I could concentrate on something more sensible than weird haiku." For the most part, Francis is

a down-to-earth guy who finds inspiration in bars: *dimly lit bar / in the shadows / old lovers* and in diners: *moonlit clouds / cream pie meringue / in diner neon*. I won't tell you how or whether he solves his clients' problems or not, but I can promise you that our haiku detective is always on the lookout for smooth bourbon, a warm woman, and the joy of sharing a good haiku.



Side by Side Poems Prints by Sylvia Forges-Ryan and Sandra Olenik (2019, Cyberwit, Allahabad, India) 69 pages, 5.5" x 8.5". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 9789389074604. \$15 from www.cyberwit.com and amazon.com.

Two creative artists, haiku poet Sylvia Forges-Ryan and print maker Sandra Olenik, have collaborated to create a wonderful collection, *Side by Side Poems Prints*. The book cover features the title poem—*Side by side / going where there is no path / we make our own*—with examples from four of the prints in their original dynamic colors. The rest of the prints are in black and white, each paired with a haiku on the facing page. The abstract prints provide an excellent visual counterpoint or companion to the haiku. They are not illustrations and the haiku are not short captions for the prints. They exist side by side for us to enjoy together. One of my favorite pairings is: *Summer evening / eating a peach / the color of the moon* paired with a print that suggests a marbled horizon with a torn shape above it. Another favorite is: *More wintry weather / but nobody told / the daffodils*. This haiku and print both have a muted playfulness. I will end with a print that suggests wings paired with: *Spring fever / dancing just for themselves / young girls in white dresses*.



Ripples of Air: Poems of Healing by Charlotte Digregorio (2020, Artful Communicators Press, Winnetka, IL) 236 pages, 5.5" x

8.5". Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 9780991213917. \$19.95 & \$4 postage from Artful Communicators Press.

Ripples of Air is a large collection of poetry by Charlotte Digregorio. In the introduction the author explains that "Poems do matter. They make us aware of life's joys and delights, and they heal life's hurts" (1). The book is divided into 12 chapters including: *Nostalgia, Peace, Creatures, People, Work, The Heart, Seasons' Potpourri, Solitude, Art, Wonder and Whimsy, The Spiritual, and Aging, Illness, Death*. Each section features several long poems and a few pages of haiku, senryu and tanka. There are several sequences and some mixes of poetry with haiku-like stanzas. Here is a haiku from the Nostalgia chapter: *returning to my hometown.../ the church / i left behind* (26). From the People chapter: *at the greasy spoon.../ he rehashes / his divorce* (57). Here is one from the chapter on The Heart: *moonlight.../ he croons to me / out of tune* (95). And one more, a senryu from the Wonder and Whimsy chapter: *leaving the bank / with six figures / on the odometer* (154).