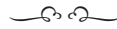


Reviewed by Michael Ketchek

end of summer by Joseph M. Kusmiss (2015, Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA), 4 1/2 “ by 6 1/2 “ perfectbound, ISBN 978-1-936848-44-7 \$20.00

Joseph M. Kusmiss has written a fine book of haiku. The cover is a black and white photo of a wooden dock in perfectly still water, which is an appropriate image for the haiku that follow. After just a few pages I felt as calm as the water on the cover. Kusmiss writes, *walking walking-/ I leave/ myself behind*. So, I recommend, read, read and leave yourself behind and become immersed in the captivating images in this book. *on a tall stalk/ a red-winged blackbird/ also alone*, and *in the woods/ a christmas wreath/ turns brown*.



Pandemic Haiku: living through COVID-19 by Robert Epstein (2020, Middle Island Press, West Union, WV) 104 pages, 5” by 8” perfectbound, ISBN 978-1-7341254-7-4

This latest book by Robert Epstein is all about the current crisis. It has haiku interspersed with black and white photos that illustrate some of the poems. My favorite combo is a picture of a ladybug on the tip of a finger that goes along with this haiku:

self-isolating
I let a ladybug
get close

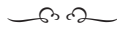
The poems in this book echo the fears and experiences that are shared by the entire world. In this haiku Epstein captures a mix of feeling everyone can relate to:

coronavirus fears-
what a bowl of pea soup
does for the soul

The longing for a return to normal is well stated in this poem:

sheltering in place-
still swiping
her dating app

If years from now a person too young to remember the pandemic asks what was it like back then, just give them a copy of this book and they will understand what living through these days was like.



Sticky Notes Haiku: This Life by Robert Epstein (2020, Middle Island Press, West Union, WV) 132 pages, 5" by 8" ISBN 978-1-7341254-8-1

This book starts with quotes by the famous that praise small things and a preface by the author that addresses the importance of the small and humble. The haiku are presented as if written on sticky notes, a small simple tool for recording a poem, which Epstein in his prefaces acknowledges that he uses himself. The haiku are presented one to a page with an appropriate black and white photo on the page facing the poem. The book is divided into three chapters. The first is *Notes and Such*, which is about writing and the places that writing is found.

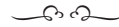
fresh blueberries-
the small stain
on his writing pad

A haiku from the second chapter, *Stop Telling Time*:

outdoor café-
sunlight refilling
her empty glass

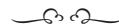
And from the last chapter, *Unfinished*:

curbside—
in the original box
her unfinished puzzle



Sci-Ku: Explorations into the Poetry of Science by Jay Friedenber
(2020, Available at Lulu.com) 96 pages, 4 ½” by 6 ⅝”
perfectbound, ISBN: 5-800136-560813

Jay Friedenber’s *Sci-Ku* is where poetry and science collide in a wonderful way. The book is divided into nine chapters that range from Astronomic to Geologic. Many of the haiku mix science and human interaction as in this humorous poem: *plate tectonics/ we rub each other/ the wrong way*. This haiku about climate change presents this crisis in a personal and playful way: *rising sea levels/ the kids build another/ sandcastle wall*. In the following haiku, Friedenber gives a picturesque explanation of a current model of the universe: *expanding multiverse/ a clown blows balloons/ inside balloons*. And if “balloons inside balloons” needs further explanation as how it relates to the multiverse theory, there is a handy glossary that explains scientific terms. This delightful book not only unites human activity with science, but allows you to brag to your friends that haiku has helped you to understand gravitational lensing and the Fibonacci spiral (see glossary). Fun, educational and poetic, and all packed into one book. You can’t beat that.

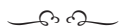


The Signature Haiku Anthology edited by Robert Epstein (2020, Middle Island Press, West Union, WV) 273 pages, 6” by 9”
perfectbound, ISBN 9781734125450.

This latest book, edited by Robert Epstein, is a collection of haiku, senryu and tanka that have been selected by the poets

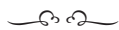
themselves as their signature poems. It is left up to the poet to decide why they chose a specific poem as their signature. Each contributor was invited to include commentary on their poem if they wished to do so and many did. A reader will recognize many familiar names, and it is interesting to see which poem they have picked as their signature work. From the commentaries several reasons were frequently cited as why a poem was chosen. For some poets it was a poem of theirs that had been most often reprinted. Others picked a poem that they felt especially displayed their craft. Many picked a poem that evoked a special moment or memory or revealed something about themselves.

Whatever the reason, and a fair number of poets chose to let their poem stand without commentary, this collection is just full of wonderful poems. Because so many fine haiku, senryu and tanka are in these pages I find it impossible to pick out only a few favorites and will leave that almost impossible task to the readers of this truly enjoyable book of the very best haiku, senryu and tanka.



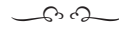
...*this fly* by Jeannie Martin (2020, buddha baby press, Windsor, CT) 16 pages, 4" by 2 ¾", stapled. Copies available from the author at jeanniejeanne@gmail.com

This delightful little book by Jeannie Martin is, as the title suggests, all about flies. Twelve haiku that consider the close, sometimes too close, relationship we have with flies. These poems brought a big smile to my face and in these troubled times that is a blessing. Two that I especially liked: *crowded café/ this fly/ seems to know me* and *everywhere/ but all at once/ fly*.



WOOF! by Jeannie Martin (2020, Wind Tree Press) 32 pages, 4” by 5 ½”, stapled. Copies available from the author at jeanniejeanne@gmail.com

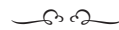
This book starts with a dedication, “to the three dogs of my adult life: Terry, Mr. P and now, Harpo. All rescue dogs that rescued me.” All readers, especially dog lovers, will appreciate these heartfelt haiku about dogs. Twenty haiku, one to a page that speak to that special relationship between human and dog. Two from this fine collection: *full moon/ her nose print/ on the window* and *200 mile road trip/ her paw/ on my knee*.



Before I Forget Them by Jamie Wimberly, Edited by John Stevenson, (2020, Redheaded Publishing, Alpharetta, GA) 54 Pages, 5 ½” by 8 ½” perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-578-66619-8. \$10.00

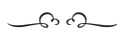
A fine collection of haiku, mostly three to a page with every other page blank except where a page faces a page containing artwork by the author and here one finds a single haiku. Though nature may be included most of the haiku are about people or their objects. An example of nature interacting with human possessions is this haunting haiku: *first fallen leaves/ a red backpack/ floating down the street*.

The four pieces of full cover artwork add emotion and stir the imagination. The haiku in this book are not lighthearted. They are meant to make you think and feel: *dimming light she laughs with the dead*. And one more that I especially liked: *their romance/ the length of a/ Marlboro red*.



Stimmen der Steine (Voices of Stones) 145 Haiku by Klaus-Dieter Wirth (2020, Allitera Verlag, Munich, Germany) 176 pages, 5 ¾ “ by 8 ¼” perfectbound, ISBN 978-3-96233-228-0

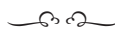
These haiku are presented in German, English, French and Spanish, with all translation done by the author. Most of the poems were originally written in German, but some were originally written in French or English. The original poem is always presented in italics to differentiate them from the translations. In his preface Wirth laments that most publications do not mark the difference between haiku and senryu and in this book all senryu are labeled with an “S.” My German is good enough to note that Wirth makes poetic decisions in his translations so that the haiku are not always exactly the same. In this haiku originally in English: *black ice/ pheasants in the road-side ditch/ little white puffs of breath*, becomes in the German: *Glätteis/ Fasanen im Straßengraben/ weiße Atemwolchen*. In the German version the word “little” is omitted and the “puffs” have become clouds, “Wolchen.” In no way do I consider this a fault as Wirth’s command of language makes it clear these are poetic choices and for those readers who are fluent in more than one of the four languages it can be interesting to note these choices. These haiku are well crafted and that they work so well in translation is a real tribute to Wirth. Two originally in German, but here only in the English translation: *jet fighters/ have passed by/ the roar of silence* and *bead curtain/ the rustling/ of filtered light*.



Haiku 2020, Lee Gurga and Scott Metz Editors (2020, Modern Haiku Press, Champaign Illinois) 5 ½” by 4 ¼”, perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-9600855-1-4 \$10.00.

One hundred haiku published in the past year make up this anthology, that is not your typical “best of” collection. The haiku in this book are in the words of Richard Gilbert who wrote the preface, “a compendium representing the creative depth and diversity of contemporary haiku.” The editors clearly want to showcase what is on the cutting edge of haiku in the 21st century. A quote from Sōdu Tōru on the back-

cover states, “We must liberate haiku from its restrictions and consider incorporating cosmic, universal, humanistic, and religious sensibilities. For haiku to be rich and fertile, we must abandon superficial and ocellar perspectives.” The haiku in this collection are inventive and rich in imagery. A few examples of what is found in this thought-provoking collection: *through a crack in the blue butterfly* by Ann K. Schwader, *distended howl of a wolf spins stars* by Veronika Zora Novak, *this too, is summer/the breasts of a mannequin* by Réka Nyitrai, *alley frost/ except/ where he slept* by Chuck Brickley.

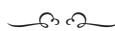


All The Songs We Sing, Lenard D. Moore, Editor (2020 Blair, Durham, North Carolina) 207 pages, 7” by 10” Perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-949467-33-8. \$17.95

This book celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Carolina African American Writer’s Collective and while the poems in it are not primarily haiku it does include some haiku by Moore and several other poets readers may be familiar with that appeared in a fine anthology of haiku, *One Window’s Light* also edited by Moore. It was interesting to read poems by haiku poets that are not haiku. The fine imagery found in L. Theresa Church’s haiku can also be found in her longer poems. One of her haiku: *rose-laying/ at Alex Haley’s tomb/ a rooster crows* and a stanza from her poem *The Moment at Hand*:

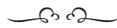
Michelle Obama’s green-gloved hands
cradle Lincoln’s
red-cased Bible
this winter day.

A few more haiku from this anthology: *spring break—/ my boys screaming/ at blue jays* by Crystal Simone-Smith, *pale ferns/ across the lake/ a powerboat surges* by Gideon Young.



The Walk Home by Susan Lee Kerr (2020 Alba Publishing, Uxbridge, United Kingdom) 60 pages, 6" by 8 ½" perfectbound, ISBN 978-1-912773-34-3 \$15.00

The Walk Home is a collection of haiku, senryu and tanka spanning thirty years of creative writing by the author. The first chapter is titled *Where do haiku come from?* In this chapter Kerr explains the mind state needed to write haiku. Summing it up best when she says, "a free-floating defocused attention, a mode of not seeking but allowing. This type of attention has allowed Kerr to capture such outstanding moments as in the following haiku: *winter sunset/ even the gasworks scaffold/ gilded rosy pink* and *in the cemetery/ green air of cut grass/ I breath deep* and *in the train's dark glass/ I reflect on the woman/ who seems to be me.*



reviewed by Tom Clausen

in the curves, by Alan S. Bridges (2020, Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA), 4 1/4" x 6 1/2", Four-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-56-2. from redmoonpress.com \$15.00

On a very fortuitous cross country train trip in 2008 Alan H. Bridges had a chance meeting with John Stevenson who was on his way to a west coast haiku event. The conversation that ensued on that train was sufficient to spark an interest and curiosity in haiku for Alan that led him to become one of the most well known poets in the haiku community. Twice Alan received recognition from his peers as being the Poet of the Year by readers of *The Heron's Nest* in both 2016 and 2017. Alan's haiku have been published widely in journals and anthologies and now his first print collection has been published by Red Moon Press.

in the curves is a masterful first book from Alan S. Bridges containing sixty-five memorable haiku, one per page. This