

/ *very large novel*. Taylor's sense of humor appears in a few poems, however, his love for his family, the Burrard Inlet, and specifically his love for being a father takes precedence. In addition, a lot of care and attention went into the physical design and formatting of this book. In short, this collection offers authentic glimpses into Rob Taylor's life and observations. It is clear that he has found his voice in his poetry, which embodies a compassionate and sensitive tone. Readers will be inspired to see haiku as both a solitary activity and as an integral part of family and everyday life. As I turn the last page, I can see the blur of the poet's father looking back at his son with a great deal of love, respect, and admiration. A thoughtful and heartfelt collection. □■

REVIEWED BY CHERIE HUNTER DAY

Shine Shadow by Peter Yovu (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2024) 108 pages, 6" x 9" paperback, perfect softbound with full-color cover. ISBN: 978-1-958408-51-3. \$20 from redmoonpress.com.

Shine Shadow is the latest full-length collection of poetry by Peter Yovu. It's a satisfying literary treat that offers haiku or haiku-like minimalist poems along with longer poems in the lyric, narrative, and mediative modes, short prose, and haibun. Over sixty percent of the poems are haiku or haiku-like, either single-line or three-line poems, some with expansive alignment. Presenting haiku alongside lineated poetry feels novel because there are so few instances where this has been done. *Shine Shadow* is exemplary in that the poems work so well together. As Philip Rowland notes in the preface: "when the integration of haiku with other kinds of poetry is done with nuanced care, as here, the effect is enriching, opening new avenues and perspectives for the reader."

Peter Yovu has published work in the leading haiku journals for over thirty-five years, and his style in this collection shows his range, from traditional/contemporary:

winter solstice
the light we take in
with the wine

a long winter
the edible bones
of canned sardines

to the imaginative and the surreal:

poster of a missing cat
two silver thumbtacks
lit by the moon

taken up by a hawk

every letter of
a snake's alphabet

two ballerinas in one skin a newborn foal

Haiku readers will also recognize the homage to Hosai Ozaki in four sequences of four single-line haiku interspersed in the collection. Most of these are excerpted from a longer series titled "To Hosai Ozaki" originally published in the *Heliosparrow Poetry Journal*. Small edits such as regrouping poems, and the interspacing in a line aren't major revisions, but these subtle reconfigurations speak to the plasticity and subtlety in Yovu's work.

The title of the collection comes from a short sequence of three haiku:

where all my eyes
touch darkness
fireflies

shine on the knife
the pieces with eyes
go in the ground

approaching winter
my shadow
climbs a wall

This sequence highlights one of the ongoing themes of Yovu's work—mortality. In his chapbook, *Imago* (published by Ornithopter Press in 2016), he focused on the death of others, mainly his parents. In *Shine Shadow*, it is the nearness of his own death that occupies him. What does it mean to exist, and what endures afterwards? Despite the references to endings, the collection isn't the least bit morose. Yovu's curiosity and attention to both interior and exterior landscapes invite the reader to look with him in the same direction.

The shine/shadow of the collection expands into other dichotomous pairs: childhood/old age, remembering/forgetting, dreaming/wakefulness, familiarity/strangeness, speech/silence, playfulness/seriousness, self/other. Probing the space generated by one-in-consideration-of-the-other is Yovu's forte. We tend to see something new or unknown in terms of the known. While it helps to process the experience quickly, it also limits that experience. I think Yovu would agree with the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, Charles Simić, who said, "the purpose of poetry is to return that which is familiar to its original strangeness." Can we recapture our initial sense of wonder and experience things again as if for the first time?

To cultivate a beginner's mind is familiar to haiku writers, but how does that happen? How does one get around one's preconceptions? How does a poet tune oneself to capture the essence of what is and what is not? The author offers no concrete answers other than to remain open and listen with every part of his being.

when did a sound
become my name?

rain falling all night

While this review focuses mostly on the haiku and haiku-like poems contained in *Shine Shadow*, the longer poems are integral to the collection. Yovu has been reluctant to say that he writes haiku; he writes poetry. Getting caught up in labels tends to become a sorting exercise and predetermines how the reader processes the poems. Yovu maintains there is no bright line. Poetry is poetry. Listen to the music of language in the following poem:

A deer steps through

a crust of snow.
Its shins
bleed and shine.

Horizon is a bone
between earth and sky,
its marrow gone,

hollowed into
a flute
for one who

taking a long breath in,
breathes through,
calling, calling

the distances home.

The book cover features an abstract painting titled “Amber in Man” by Peter Yovu. The artwork is different from the author’s

fanciful black and white drawings in *Sunrise* (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2010, 2019). This cover has bold red and orange forms that to me resemble vertebrae. I recall a poem from *Imago*: “the darkening/desert sky//vertebrae breaking through.” The image is organic, visceral, and holds a lot of emotional friction, which pairs well with the collection’s content.

This is a forward-thinking, expertly crafted, and remarkable collection. I highly recommend it. ◻■

REVIEWED BY JUDSON EVANS

A Man on Horseback: Haibun by Joe McKeon (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2024). 100 pages, 6” x 9”. Perfect softbound. ISBN: 978-1-958408-52-0. \$20 from redmoonpress.com

The combination of the title in lowercase—“a man on horseback” and cover art of a solo merry-go-round horse isolated from its cohorts—strikes the right tone for a collection that breaks chunks of nostalgia loose from the carnival of Americana to examine each fragment in the round. McKeon’s haibun offer a fine-tuned appreciation of textures of a specific place and time, the southside of Chicago in the 50’s-70’s:

“Chicago has always been a city of two world views
northside verses southside. cubs versus sox. magnificent
mile versus skid row.

rustbelt
the mortgage broker draws
a red line”

(“Dissociative Identity Disorder”)

The haibun also range across the American scene historically as politics and technology shift from the Space Age to the