

Reviewed by David G. Tilley

Haiku, Language, Thought: Creative Freedom through the Space of Mind by Richard Gilbert (Modern Haiku Press, 2025.) 336 pages, 5" x 8". Perfect softbound. ISBN 978-0-9741894-4-4. \$25.00 from modernhaiku.org and elsewhere.

First, what the book is not. *Haiku, Language, Thought* (HLT) is not a collection of haiku (it contains ~350 haiku), it is not a collection of selected haiku written by Gilbert (there may be a couple), and it is not an instruction book on how to write haiku.

Next, what the book is and what it attempts. HLT is a book that explores and maps out, what Gilbert terms thought-space. The relationship between how poems, and in particular haiku, help us find meaning (imaginative creativity and mind expansion), as either readers or writers or both.

HLT comes as an update-from-the-field to Gilbert's 2018 book *Poetry as Consciousness* (PaC). Much of the content of PaC has been reworked and built upon in HLT, making it both more complete and clearer to the reader. In a sense, the book lays out an architecture of thought space and then goes about applying that architecture to small collections of haiku that tend to occupy a location within that architecture. One is reminded of one of those Field Guides for birders that one can get from the National Audubon Society. But this is too simplistic. The architecture proposed by Gilbert is deep and broad covering topics such as privacy, sanctuary, ethics, personal philosophy, conceptual blending, and soul, to name a few. This is no cover-to-cover read-it-and-you-get-it book. HLT is something to keep on the shelf and continue to go back to. It is packed with references to other writers that one can explore. This reviewer followed many of the references (thus showing a propensity towards ADD) and was enriched by each one.

This is a book of philosophy. This is a book of literary criticism. This is a book, most of all, about soul. Gilbert has spent a lot of time wrestling with soul from the perspective of James Hillman, the creator of Archetypal Psychology, and it shows. The first few sections introduce us to Gilbert's "manifesto on poetic imagination as soulful inhabitation." It's a lot to get through before hitting many haiku, but do not be daunted, press on.

If the reader is looking for a broad swath of haiku, they will find that here as well. One can discover the variety of poems in the English-language haiku world. Below is a personal favorite of this reviewer, a "parallel haiku," by Stephen Bailey [Hansha Teki].

what is truth?	
	<i>compass points</i>
embroidered	
patches	
	<i>sewn through</i>
	<i>the fabric</i>
of autumn	
leaves	
	<i>of the news</i>

There is depth here. Yet this book requires effort, and deliberate delving to extract all the value that lies within. This reviewer reads a few pages and then goes for a walk in the woods to ponder the implications. As with any book on philosophy or psychology, if it has depth then the reader will find increasingly more meaning over time as they dip their toes back in.