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## REVIEWS

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*Selected Haiku, with Essays and Commentary. Part I: 1937–1960*, by Kaneko Tohta. Translated by the Kon Nichi Translation Group (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2012). 256 pages; 4¼"×6½". Glossy white card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-11-9. Price: \$12.00 from the publisher at [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com).

*Reviewed by Hiroaki Sato*

Kaneko Tōta<sup>1</sup> 金子兜太 (b. 1919) writes the kind of haiku that some of those not in the know—those not familiar with “modern haiku”<sup>2</sup>—may find to be clumsy, incompetent, or nothing more than snippets of prose left unfinished. Take the two pieces that the tanka poet Iwata Tadashi 岩田正 (b. 1925) exalts as “the masterpieces that form the high peaks in the history of modern haiku.”<sup>3</sup>

湾曲<sup>かしょう</sup>し火傷し爆心地のマラソン  
*wankyokushi kashōshi bakushinchi no marathon*

華麗な墓原女陰あらわに村眠り  
*kareina hakahara join arawani mura nemuri*

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1. The book under review gives the name as Kaneko Tohta on the ground that it is the poet’s “established style (and the appellation he chooses to use in English).” *Kaneko Tohta: Selected Haiku, Part I*, 19.

2. I put the two words in quotation marks because Richard Gilbert, the leader of the translation group that produced the book under review, seems to have an odd notion of *gendai* haiku. I expect to deal with the matter in a future article for *Modern Haiku*.

3. Iida Ryūta et al., eds., *Gendai haiku zenshū*, II (Tokyo: Rippū Shobō, 1977), 107.

The first one could easily be a puzzle. Read it simply, without, for example, speculating from the Chinese characters employed what might be meant, and it seems to say, “Curved, burnt, (a or the) marathon at ground zero.” Because *bakushinchi*, “ground zero,” still means only one thing in Japan, the point where either of the two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki exploded, this piece may suggest something portentous, something macabre, as it must be talking about Hiroshima or Nagasaki, but what exactly? What is it that’s “curved”? Are the Chinese characters applied to *wankyoku*, “curved like a bay,” meant to suggest something graphic? A curious Japanese reader might wonder.

Also, if the same Japanese reader happens to come across this piece in a text that gives the reading *kashōshi* for 火傷し, he may wonder: Why give such an anomalous reading?<sup>4</sup> Its standard version is *yakedoshi*. A Japanese writer can facilitate the readings of difficult Chinese characters or suggest or impose a specific reading on a word by the use of the “ruby” font printed on its right side (if the writing is printed vertically; above it if it’s printed horizontally), and Kaneko does the latter here, but for what purpose?

Then, when told that this piece is meant to be a haiku, the reader may wonder further: How could it be? It’s hard to scan it syllabically. At best it comes out as 5–4–6 [or 5–1]–4, which gives little hint of the haiku form. There have of course been hypersyllabic haiku, most people know, as they learn in school that even the haiku saint Bashō 芭蕉 wrote things like the following—which Kaneko himself cites in discussing “the haiku form and rhythm,” in his introduction to haiku:<sup>5</sup>

櫓の声波ヲうつて腸氷ル夜やなみだ  
*ro no koe nami o utte harawata kōru yo ya namida*

Scull’s voice slapping the waves my intestines freeze tonight the tears

4. *Kashōshi* is the reading Kaneko gives in his postwar haiku history, *Waga sengo haiku-shi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1985), 208, and in *Kaneko Tōta / Takayanagi Shigenobu shū* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1984), 52, but not in *Gendai haiku zenshū*, II:70.

5. Kaneko Tōta, *Haiku nyūmon* (Hokuyōsha, 1979), 168–69.

This one comes out as 4–6–7–5. But, in this case, the student reading it is bound to be told that Bashō wrote such pieces only during a short period when he was trying to break out of the constraints of the by then firmly established hokku form, seeking inspirations in Chinese poetry. In Kaneko's case, the teacher may not give that kind of explication, even if he notes that Kaneko wrote this in Nagasaki. Wouldn't the student be confused?

The second piece—which seems to say something even more puzzling, “Resplendent cemetery field: vaginas exposed the village sleeps” — may make it as a haiku, if barely: this one comes out as 8–7–5. In truth, of the five pieces the tanka poet Iwata picks from the “series of great works *Nagasaki*,” which includes the two cited above, only one comes close to the standard 5–7–5, because it falls into 6–7–5:

西の海にブイ浮く頭蓋より濡れて  
*nishi no umi ni buoy uku zugai yori nurete*

But then this one raises a question on its syntax—the question Kaneko addresses at some length by making a distinction between *onsetsu* 音節, “syllabic break,” and *bunsetsu* 文節, “syntactical break,” in his discussion of “the haiku form and rhythm.”<sup>6</sup> Syllabically broken, three parts will read, “in the sea of the west,” “the skull where a buoy floats,” “more wet than.” Syntactically, the first ten syllables make a sentence more or less and say, “In the western sea floats a buoy,” with the next eight forming an adjectival clause, “wetter than a skull.”

Now, Japanese haiku writers are generally divided into traditionalists and non-traditionalists. Traditionalists insist on including seasonal indicators, *yūki* 有季, and sticking to the “set form,” *teikei* 定型. You might say an “outsider,” the non-haiku, non-tanka poet Miyoshi Toyochirō 三好豊一郎 (1920–1992), defined their position clearly when he said: “a haiku with no seasonal indicator and in no set form will be nothing more than a modern short poem.”<sup>7</sup> Non-traditionalists, in contrast, neither insist on seasonal indicators nor the set form,

6. *Haiku nyūmon*, 165–76.

7. Miyoshi Toyochirō, “Yogi to shite no haiku,” *geppō* (monthly pamphlet) attached to *Gendai haiku zenshū*, II:2.

although, mindful of the kind of danger Miyoshi warned against, most of them do not seem to go whole hog.

Kaneko is among such non-whole-hog non-traditionalists, if you will. For one thing, his idea of including or not including seasonal indicators, *kigo* 季語 or *kidai* 季題, is far from radical. Many of the “traditional” *kigo* have lost their specificities,<sup>8</sup> he says, and argues for adding “new subjects,” *shin-daizai* 新題材, defining their overall character as “physicality,” *nikukan* 肉感, saying they consist of three categories:

- “flesh,” *nikutai* 肉体: human body, animal body, and such
- “time,” *jikan* 時間: things that show the passage of time, such as morning, noon, evening
- “soil” or “earth,” *tsuchi* 土: “spaces” in the natural world, such as wind, sky, earth, mountain, and sea

Kaneko admits that these new subjects are “very close to [traditional] *kigo*.”<sup>9</sup> Indeed, there is little new about his approach for the simple reason that the 600-year history of *kigo* is a history of expanding inclusiveness.<sup>10</sup> Natsuishi Ban’ya 夏石番矢 (b. 1955), the self-appointed flag-bearer of avant-garde haiku, has advocated the creation of “keywords” for haiku with his 1990 book, *Gendai haiku keyword jiten*. Kaneko joined Natsuishi and Kuroda Momoko 黒田杏子 (b. 1938) in 1997 and compiled “a modern seasonal account,” *gendai saijiki*.

For the other, Kaneko’s idea of “set form” is not too radical, either. He argues that “form” or “pattern,” *kata* 型, is absolutely necessary, recognizing that the “set form” for haiku, 5–7–5, is one great charm of this poetic form, even as he argues that it is to make the matter “too narrow” to say that “the formal characteristic of haiku is 17 syllables.” The definition of haiku he offers, then, is “the shortest poetic form in ‘set form’” (最短定型詩形).<sup>11</sup> In the end, he usually does not go

8. Kaneko, *Haiku nyūmon*, 67–91.

9. *Haiku nyūmon*, 92.

10. Hiroaki Sato, *One Hundred Frogs: From Renga to Haiku to English* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1983), 30. Hiroaki Sato, *Japanese Women Poets* (M.E. Sharpe, 2008), xvii.

11. Kaneko, *Haiku nyūmon*, 146–47.

far beyond the 5–7–5 or the total of 17 syllables. For that matter, he doesn't seem to have written hiposyllabic haiku—pieces that fall well short of 17 syllables.

This contrasts with the advocates of *jiyūritsu* (“free-rhythm”) and *kōgo* (“colloquial-language”) haiku, as well as those in the Proletarian Literature Movement. Among them, one may name Ogiwara Seisen-sui 荻原井泉水 (1884–1972), Ozaki Hōsai 尾崎放哉 (1885–1926), and Kuribayashi Issekiro 栗林一石路 (1894–1961).<sup>12</sup>

One thing notable about Kaneko's haiku in this regard is his refusal to deviate from the monolinear format. He does discuss departures from what he calls “the usual practice of writing haiku in a single line without any space in it” by citing examples of those who use intralinear space, punctuation, and lineation.<sup>13</sup> With the best-known practitioner of this last, Takayanagi Shigenobu 高柳重信 (1923–1983), Kaneko even quotes in full his most extravagant example, one broken into three “stanzas” with a total of twelve “lines.”<sup>14</sup>

But Kaneko looks at them as pieces aiming at special “visual” effects and warns that, if you follow suit, you will end up, unless you are careful, not just turning out pieces that are “odious imitations,” but you will also risk “the danger of turning the haiku itself into something wishy-washy.”<sup>15</sup> He made these points when he was 60, but he had never stepped outside the monolinear form and used no intralinear space, no punctuation, before or since.

*Kaneko Tohta: Selected Haiku, Part I: 1937–1960* comes with a seemingly formidable editorial apparatus yet with odd, at times tangential, irrelevant details. It comes with a series introduction by Richard Gilbert, the leader of the Kon Nichi Translation Group that worked out

12. These and 300 other poets and their works are included in the *Shinchō* special, *Tanka haiku senryū 101 nen: 1892–1992* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1992). This valuable compilation presents one tanka, haiku, and senryū poet for each of the 101 years of the period covered.

13. For a discussion of these things in English, see Hiroaki Sato, *Japanese Women Poets* (Armonk, N.Y., and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2008), xxxix–xxxl. For a haiku poet who uses intralinear spacing, see Itami Kimiko, 352–53.

14. Kaneko, *Haiku nyūmon*, 187–93.

15. *Haiku nyūmon*, 193.

this book (as well as the others in the series), a selection of Kaneko's haiku up to 1960 separated into four chronological sections, with the notes on them in four corresponding sections, "translator essays" by Gilbert and Itō Yūki, a chronology of Kaneko's life, haiku indices by page number and "alphabetical," both arranged by English translations but not by the originals, and translator biographies.

Kaneko's haiku come with Japanese originals, roman transliterations, and English translations—each section with an introduction, I might note, despite Gilbert's declaration that "haiku are presented separately from the supporting comments, to provide a reader-experience unadulterated by prose, if wished."

Gilbert also says that his subject is "virtually unknown outside of Japan, due to a lack of translated works," adding, "Of those translated haiku to be found, few give an indication of the philosophic or critical bases informing his thought." Do these translations with notes and commentaries go some way in remedying the situation?

The first thing you notice is that the translations come in a variety of formats, from one to four lines, with various indentations and interlinear spacing, some printed aslant across the page. At least one is presented as a concrete poem. Gilbert justifies this variegated approach by "a history of short-form poetics (Imagism, Objectivism, Language Poetry, etc.)"—an odd point to note when Kaneko apparently has not followed any of them as far as the form is concerned. Let us look at some of the translations.

若きわが眼前銃撃にひきつる兵  
*wakaki waga ganzen jūgeki ni hikitsuru hei*

before my youthful eyes a soldier twitches away  
 gunfire

Kaneko was employed by the Bank of Japan, the country's central bank, upon graduation from the Economics Faculty of the Imperial University of Tokyo, in 1943. But he soon quit to volunteer for the Navy. Japan was in the midst of a war, and Kaneko was a patriot in his

own way. In March 1944 he was commissioned a second lieutenant (accounting) and sent to an island in the Truk (Chuuk) Lagoon. It was right after the Japanese naval facilities there, along with four cruisers and four destroyers, were smashed by the U.S. forces, with more than 7,000 dead. For the rest of the war, he, along with the others, faced starvation. Upon Japan's surrender he became a POW.

This haiku, in 5-9-6, seems simply to say, "Right in front of my young eyes a soldier has spasms at [the enemy] gun assaults." But the note says something mysterious: "At a point of composition, in this haiku, the author seems to be the killer." Where does the author-killer idea come from? Kaneko?

Another haiku describing Kaneko's experience in the Truk Lagoon, also translated in two lines, seems to obscure unnecessarily what it's about:

スパイの名の土民海際で打たる  
*spy no na no domin umigiwa de utaru*

as a spy a native

struck down at the shore

Is the haiku saying that the Chuuk person or people who had just arrived by boat were suspected to be U.S. spies and shot dead at the edge of the sea? Or that they were taken to the shore to be executed for the same reason? The word *umigiwa*, "sea edge," is highly suggestive, but *utaru*, "be struck," "to be beaten," is suspiciously euphemistic. Did Kaneko clarify the matter in one of his writings explicating his haiku or did he orally explain it to the translation group? Did he explain exactly what he meant by *utaru*? Why did he not use a plainer word when the piece, in 9-8, is already "metrically"<sup>16</sup> irregular and adding a few syllables to make clearer sense would not have noticeably disfigured it?

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16. The translators call syllabic count "meter." I was startled to see this because my teacher of poetry, the Shakespearean scholar Lindley Williams Hubbell, used to tell us: "English is a metrical language; Japanese a syllabic language." However, both *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* and *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* say there are two kinds of meter (metre): quantitative and accentual. So Gilbert et al. are correct.



Yet the note the translators provide for this piece is so irrelevant as to make a mockery of such questions. It says: “‘*domin* (土民),’ native, is these days politically incorrect (viz [sic], ‘savage’).” In truth, the word in question, meaning “indigenous person,” may not have been derogatory, but even if it was, today’s “political” linguistic pretensions could not have been a matter of concern on an island of annihilative slaughter and touchy vengeance.

Killings on coral islands are more directly mentioned in the following haiku, but only to confuse.

殺りくされず泉に映す土民の情事  
*satsurikusarezu izumi ni utsusu domin no jōji*

away from slaughter  
 the image reflects in a spring:  
 native love affair

The first seven syllables say, “without getting slaughtered,” rather than “away from slaughter,” so here the translation seems to stumble. But there’s trouble with the original as well, even as it appears to blend murderousness with idyll à la Melville’s *Typee*.

*Utsusu* is a transitive verb, but who or what is casting the idyllic image of a lovemaking indigenous couple — assuming it is just one couple — in a spring? Also, who escaped slaughter? Is it the lovemaking couple or, though unlikely, the one who is casting the image of the coupling in the spring? In 7-7-7, this piece is so off the regular haiku “meter” that the reader may at least expect a clear description, but he does not get it. In writing about hokku in *History of Japanese Literature* more than a hundred years ago, W.G. Aston was compelled to quote Horace, *brevis esse laborat, obscurus fit*.<sup>17</sup> Even so.

The translators tell us these three are from among Kaneko’s pieces recalling his life in the Truk Lagoon years later. In contrast, the three I’ve cited at the outset of this review are supposed to describe directly,

17. W.G. Aston, *A History of Japanese Literature* (Rutland, Vt., and Tokyo, 1972), 294. The book was originally published in 1899.



more or less on the spot, what Kaneko saw or what he imagined from what he saw. The translators have worked on two of them.

*wankyokushi kashōshi bakushinchi no marathon*

among the twisted and charred

marathon at

Ground Zero

The short haiku form often, inevitably, prompts the writer uncertain of his creations to explain himself. Otherwise, the reader or the translator would have to resort to his own creativity for a reasonable comprehension of the piece at hand. Kaneko noted he wrote this piece while he was assigned to Nagasaki as a Bank of Japan bureaucrat, from January 1958 to June 1960. The translators of this book accordingly decided that this piece described the warped, burnt debris of the buildings devastated by the atomic bomb blast.

As it happens, Kaneko explained what this piece was about. When he arrived in Nagasaki nearly thirteen years after the atomic bombing of the city, many sections were still in ruins, but they were also vigorously recovering. One day he took a walk in the area near ground zero, as he often did, when he saw a group of marathoners “running with youthful rhythm.” But while he watched them, he saw, in his imagination, their bodies suddenly “become disfigured, get burns, and collapse—that image burnt into my head, reappearing repeatedly a number of times.”<sup>18</sup> So, unless you reject “intentional fallacy,” that’s what this piece describes, not what Kaneko saw “among the twisted and charred.”

Incidentally, the translators’ note on this poem would have benefited from a touch of editing.

“*kashō*” (火傷) is usually pronounced “*yakedō*” [sic] (burned, burnt), but here it is read as “fire scar” [sic] (viz. “scarred by fire/radiation”); “twisted and charred” may also be interpreted as “crooked and fire scarred/seared.”

18. Kaneko Tōta, *Waga sengo haiku shi* (Iwanami Shoten, 1985), 209.

The translators' understanding of the second piece is not far off the mark but it has problems.

*kareina hakahara join arawani mura nemuri*

splendid field of gravestones

labia uncovered

the village sleeps<sup>19</sup>

First off, *join* (女陰) is certainly not “labia,” which would be *inshin* (陰唇). *Join*, to be technical, is “female genitalia” or “pudenda,” or, perhaps in general parlance, “vagina,” though about this last many women may disagree, among them Naomi Wolf, whose *Vagina: A New Biography* has recently elicited ferocious ire from weighty female critics. Anyway, here the translators seem to have allowed free rein to their pornographic or else clinical imaginations. That may be why they followed it with “uncovered” for *arawani*.

Then, they compound the matter by probing into the etymology of *join* in their note: “join [*sic*] (女陰): woman (女) + hidden (陰). ‘*hoto*’ (陰) (vagina) is used in the ancient *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* texts.”

True, in a way, but the word 女陰 is likely to derive from the Chinese conception of “female yin.” Also, if you invoke the ancient Japanese word for the female genitalia, the Chinese characters applied to the indigenous word *hoto* in *Kojiki* 古事記 are 蕃登. The note as regards genitalia, in any case, is totally irrelevant.

The remainder of the note quotes from an earlier volume in this Kaneko series, *Ikimonofūei*, and it seems to depend on the accounts Kaneko has given. One day he came upon a peninsular dune, which turned out to be a cemetery. For some reason many of the gravestones were marvelous, well polished and aglitter. In contrast, the surrounding fishing village was dilapidated, dirty, and decadent, with women sloppily obscenely attired, and so forth.<sup>19</sup>

19. Iida Ryūta et al., eds., *Gendai haiku zenshū*, II:99–100. Kaneko Tōta, *Waga sengo haiku shi*, 211–12.

Does *Kaneko Tohta: Selected Haiku, Part I*, help illuminate Kaneko Tōta as one of “the most important literary and cultural innovators of postwar Japan” and “a philosopher-poet of international stature, whose works and thought place him in rarified company,” as Richard Gilbert says he is? I wonder.

*The Art of Haiku: Its History through Poems and Paintings by Japanese Masters*, by Stephen Addiss (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2012). 370 pages; 6¼"×9¼". Quarterbound, white and black paper; four-color wrappers; flyleaves; Smythe-sewn. ISBN 978-1-590308-86-8. Price: \$24.95 from booksellers. 997 poems with illustrations, many in full color.

*Reviewed by David G. Lanoue*

I haven't felt this excited about opening a new book about Japanese haiku since 1995, when I purchased Robert Hass's *The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson, and Issa*. But perhaps because he came to haiku not as a scholar but as a poet—in fact, as the U.S. poet laureate—Hass's tome was a disappointment for readers like me who had already devoured the studies of Yasuda, Blyth, Yuasa, Ueda, and Higginson and wanted fresh insights or at least new information on classical Japanese haiku tradition. *The Essential Haiku* was a good effort at popularization but broke no new ground. However, cracking open my review copy of Addiss's book, my experience was decidedly different. Addiss is an expert in Japanese art, folklore, literature, and Buddhism who understands Japanese, translating all of his examples himself (Hass's "versions" were admittedly rearrangements of R.H. Blyth's translations and, sadly, a few mistranslations—a practice that I lamented in the pages of this publication [summer 2000]). As author or coauthor of more than thirty books about East Asian art and culture and as the Tucker-Boatwright Professor of the Humanities and professor of art at the University of Richmond, Stephen Addiss knows his stuff. To my

delight, he has written a book that taught me much and will serve as required reading, next time I teach the haiku seminar at my university.

I only have two caveats to report: one large, one small. Many of my students take Japanese for their foreign language requirement; these young readers will share the disappointment that I felt, seeing only Romanized transcriptions and not the original forms of the tanka and haiku examples. In bygone days one might have attributed such an omission to a publisher's lack of Japanese fonts, but such an excuse is no longer possible. Addiss embeds some Japanese words, in Japanese, in his commentary, so his publisher certainly could have duplicated the original texts that one would expect in a critical book.

A second, smaller caveat that I will remember to pass on to my students (and now, I pass to you) is Addiss's regrettable inclusion of a lovely but apocryphal haiku that he attributes to Issa: "thankful — / snow on the quilt also comes / from the Pure Land." The Japanese editors of Issa's complete works do not ascribe this so-called "death poem" to Issa. Including it as such in his book suggests that Addiss might have depended a bit too heavily on English-language sources, many of which repeat the legend that the poem was "found under Issa's pillow."

Despite the lack of Japanese texts and the apocryphal verse, I highly recommend this book. Addiss's introduction to haiku is the best in print. He explains that one-breath poetry is not the inscribing of a life moment on the tabula rasa of consciousness—the poet's or the reader's. Imagination, he points out, "has roots in memory." He goes on to situate haiku by means of myriad examples from figures both major and minor, male and female, and from Japanese literary and spiritual traditions. His treatment of haiku's antecedents from tanka to Zen is superb, and superbly balanced. He doesn't overstate, for example, the importance of Zen Buddhism to haiku (as Blyth did) but rather admits, perceptively, that haiku arose in "a Zen-influenced context" that must not be ignored.

A particular joy of this book is Addiss's informed and nuanced discussion of haiga and the subtle interplay of image and text—reproducing thirty-eight plates for readers to ponder and enjoy.

*The Art of Haiku* is two books in one: the first is a well-written introduction to Japanese haiku in the context of Japanese culture, supported by copious examples. The second book is an anthology. I've eagerly begun reading this second book, skipping Addiss's prose commentary and, this time, concentrating exclusively on his wonderfully translated examples. I'll cite a few gems.

moonflowers—  
I stick my drunken face  
out the window

*Bashō*

when the wound  
on his face was healed  
he was beheaded

*anonymous senryū*

the sound of rats  
walking on dishes—  
the coldness

*Buson*

after killing the spider  
it gets lonely—  
cold evening

*Shiki*

I recommend that my students—and you—take the time to read and enjoy both books.

*The Temple Bell Stops: Contemporary Poems of Grief, Loss and Change*, edited by Robert Epstein (Baltimore: Modern English Tanka Press, 2012). 251 pages; 6" x 9". Glossy full-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-9353983-0-1. Price: \$19.95 from [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com).

*Checkout Time is Noon: Death Awareness Haiku*, by Robert Epstein (Shelbyville, Ky.: Wasteland Press, 2012). 78 pages; 6" x 9". Glossy full-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-600477-50-8. Price: \$10.00 ppd from the author at [taylor/epstein@earthlink.net](mailto:taylor/epstein@earthlink.net) or from online booksellers.

*A Walk Around Spring Lake*, by Robert Epstein (Shelbyville, Ky.: Wasteland Press, 2012). 65 pages; 6" x 9". Glossy full-color card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-600477-29-4. Price: \$10.00 ppd. from the author at [epstein@earthlink.net](mailto:epstein@earthlink.net) or from online booksellers.

*Reviewed by Paul Miller*

After completing his recent anthology *Dreams Wander On: Contemporary Poems of Death Awareness* (2011) Epstein was left with a number of poems that for whatever reason were not included. He discovered as he further sifted through them that many were not so much related to death awareness, but to the many forms of loss instead. Those poems became the material for his latest anthology, *The Temple Bell Stops*.

In his insightful introduction, Epstein quotes Rainer Maria Rilke: “Our instinct should not be to desire consolation over a loss but rather to develop a deep and painful curiosity to explore this loss completely...” Exploration as a form of engagement is exactly how Epstein sees both the death awareness of his previous anthology and these poems on loss.

There are far too many kinds of loss (“the death of a parent, spouse, sibling, friend ... divorce or relationship breakup ... a falling out ... foreclosure ... a layoff or job termination ... a miscarriage ... changes associated with aging ... ” etc.) to go into here, but the reader will find them all in this collection. Since these are explorations rather than laments they don’t feel morbid; in fact, their tone is often one of discovery and liveliness, as if by investigating the loss the poet has rekindled a spark. Epstein has a Zen tint to him, and I don’t think he would dispute the notion that loss and recovery are in many ways the same coin. This isn’t to say that the various poets come off as aloof or emotionless. For example, a poem by Raquel D. Bailey is heartbreakingly full of emotion, yet at the same time all the kisses of the past seem ever-present. There is a glow about this poem.

open casket:  
the kiss  
that used to wake you

I was interested to discover that many of my favorite poems from any number of writers related to loss. This shouldn’t have been surprising since haiku so perfectly capture immediacy and sense impression. Epstein nicely adds: “Thus, even in the midst of death, loss or change,

our intuition is miraculously able to apprehend the inextricable connection we have with ourselves, with others, with the world around us; only later does the everyday mind or ego catch up in terms of comprehending this.” Two more haiku, each of a different kind of loss.

cycling with my son —  
this is the autumn  
I fall behind

*Curtis Dunlap*

Veteran’s Day  
we only want  
to make love

*Lenard D. Moore*

At over 300 poems, there is a lot more to discover in this anthology, and I am grateful to Epstein for compiling it. He has a good sense for strong poems.

*Checkout Time is Noon* collects sixty-eight of Epstein’s own haiku on death awareness. Like the poems in his anthologies, he is not wallowing in despair, but rather “lean[s] into the well of impermanence.” A wonderful phrase, and one which aptly applies to his own explorations, solidly grounded as they are in the American haiku main.

when it’s time

open the window I’ll follow  
the songbird home

This is a wonderful poem. The space between lines one and two makes us linger on the phrase, and I find “it’s time” leaps out. The second line is a nice misdirection as if he is speaking to the reader, following the reader into what awaits us all; yet that slightest of extra spaces indicates a human hesitation. The song in the last line redeems him.

tonight  
I become a button hole  
the wind passes through

it won’t last  
I won’t last  
blue moon

This is a strong collection. Epstein, if he ever needed it, has synthesized the lessons of his anthologies well. In fact, the long introduction of either anthology could have headed this collection. Yet there is a nice voice that is Epstein’s own that comes through.



*A* *Walk Around Spring Lake* collects 167 poems about Epstein's favorite body of water, a lake in Santa Rosa, Calif., that he frequents. Not surprisingly, some of the poems deal in the same kinds of impermanence as the above books. However most seem to reflect a child-like joy in the lake.

|                        |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Spring Lake            | on the lake     |
| I would never think of | there are no    |
| skipping stones        | emergency exits |

At times, perhaps because of the pull the lake has on him, you can feel Epstein trying to understand the lake—rather than just be of it: *over there/among the reeds/my answer*. Such poems suffer a bit of intellectualization. And a few seem a bit trite: *hey! that biker/just made off with/my blues*. Although perhaps this gives a wider range to the collection as a whole, to illustrate the variety of feelings the lake provides him. On the whole it is an enjoyable collection.

*Lakes & Now Wolves*, by Scott Metz (Lincoln, Ill.: Modern Haiku Press, 2012). 61 pages; 5½"×8". Four-color semigloss card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-974189-49-9. Price: \$15.00 from the publisher at [www.modernhaiku.org](http://www.modernhaiku.org).

*Reviewed by Eve Luckring*

**T**o simply categorize Scott Metz into a camp of writers highly influenced by *gendai* haiku is to miss the larger mission of his exhilarating and sensitive work, which *lakes & now wolves*, Metz's first collection, makes clear. Perhaps more than any other young contemporary poet writing haiku, Metz emulates Bashō's restless efforts to study the past and re-imagine what haikai can be for his own era, to connect it to the culture of his day, and to free it from pedantic and formulaic strictures. Metz is one of Bashō's best students with regard to the principle of *fueki*

*ryūkō* (不易流行), “the unchanging and the ever-changing.” In his own career Bashō exemplified *fueki ryūkō* through his study of Chinese philosophy and literature, as well as his knowledge of earlier Japanese poets (particularly Saigyō and Sōgi), while constantly exploring how to reinvent haikai, evidenced in his ever-shifting stylistic modes.

another god  
built of words  
moon tugging

Since Bashō never recorded his ideas about *fueki ryūkō* directly, after his death his students debated exactly what he meant by this concept in regard to the role of tradition and “the ancients” (*kojin*: 古人), the notable poets of the past. His students debated what kinds of changes truly advanced haikai and furthered the pursuit of what Bashō called the “truth of poetic art,” *fuga no makoto* (風雅の誠). These debates continue today, with Metz, like Bashō, seeking to gain haikai entry into the larger poetic and cultural traditions of his era.

roots coming back to roost

Metz is a relentless experimenter, never settling into predictable formulas, always willing to forego the supposed transparency of words and plain speech for play with syntactical shape, punctuation, visualization of a poem on the page, and poetic devices typically antithetical to the traditions of English-language haiku. Though he breaks with many of the aesthetic preferences and the narrower definitions of the haiku “moment” dominating 20th century English-language haiku, his work is indebted to the intrepid explorers of the period who traversed similar territories.

Relatively recent scholarship published in English about pre-modern haiku, and the increasing number of translations of postwar and contemporary Japanese haiku, have clearly demonstrated that the prevalent aesthetics of American haiku during the last fifty-some years is not necessarily the essence of haiku, but a manifestation of it.

Moreover, the legacy of Imagism and its use of common speech, along with the Beat Generation’s experimentation with haiku (inspired by the translations most in circulation at that time) influenced how haiku laid

roots in America. In context of its historical period, the poetics of early American haiku had a rawness, immediacy, and concreteness. However, as the 20th century progressed, the dynamic between word and image changed. With image becoming the predominant language of a media-saturated society, significant new developments arose in poetry. Consider that the transparency of language has been skillfully probed and the currency of the image re-imagined by American poets as early as Gertrude Stein, and as diverse as Oppen, Spicer, Ashbery, Grenier, Hejinian, Bernstein, and Armantrout, all of whom have much to offer writers of haiku. Most importantly, many more translations of modern Japanese haiku have greatly expanded and destabilized earlier notions of what haiku has been and can be. (To name a few: Fay Aoyagi's blog, *Blue Willow Haiku World*, the bilingual collection *Haiku Universe for the 21st Century* published by Gendai Haiku Kyōkai, and Richard Gilbert's work with various collaborators.) It is this broader history that contextualizes Metz's work, while any careful reader will find that he is well versed in classical Japanese haiku.

Perhaps for Metz, language, as Oppen maintained, is more solid than transparent.

bridge (one last time its eyes close on us).

What might be called Metz's more "opaque" poems seem to me to be about returning language, for both reader and writer, to what Stein called its "excitingness of pure being" in reference to her famous line, "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose":

Now you all have seen hundreds of poems about roses and you know in your bones that the rose is not there.... I know that in daily life we don't go around saying "... is a, is a, is a..." Yes, I'm no fool; but I think that in that line the rose is red for the first time in English poetry for a hundred years.

As Philip Rowland aptly points out in his insightful introduction to *lakes & now wolves*, what some readers may find most challenging about Metz's use of language and syntax is actually his attempt to more fully capture a non-dualistic experience between observer and observed,

between the particular and the universal — principles much heralded in both pre-modern Japanese and 20th century English-language haiku. If the poetic devices Metz employs seem heretical to traditional haiku, I would encourage readers to reconsider his approach as an invitation to more fully participate in the poem, even if it is to do so in an unfamiliar or uncomfortable way. I am reminded of what R.H. Blyth wrote about haiku, that it is “an open door which looks shut.” Metz’s work stretches in new ways exactly that quality of haiku — how actively the reader’s imagination is engaged to co-create the poem — so often used to describe haiku.

i exit a birdsong a feather

Though Metz disagrees with the idea that haiku needs *kigo* (and advocates instead for *muki-kigo* and an expansive definition of nature, rather than seasonality) this collection demonstrates that his relationship to the “natural” world is as deep as his love for literature and his concern for the state of society in the 21st century.

the blood rushing through my blowhole winter stars

It also makes clear one of his greatest strengths, his commitment to deepening the connection between contemporary haiku and its cultural context, not only through skillful allusion to Japanese haiku and Western literature, but in his address of the contemporary political landscape.

like  
sho  
ot  
ing  
fish  
Gaza

At his best, Metz exhibits a deep empathy for the world around him.

However, for him the world is not confined to what we can name, define, or reduce to the five senses; his poems often traverse chimera, the enigmatic, and the ambiguous, making it fully palpable, returning us to the mystical power of words.

a whale  
and then a word  
part of the burning

Metz's poetry, as well as his tireless work as a critic and editor, has been instrumental in stirring healthy and robust discussions among poets, bringing a rosy flush to the genre. It is a deep love and careful study of haiku that drives Metz to rekindle its flames with his provocative and playful touch. *lakes & now wolves* should be on the bookshelf of every committed writer of haiku. There is much to learn from these poems. Much to learn.

without permission part of me begins to bloom

*Sketches of Mexico*, by Marian Olson (Northfield, Mass.: Lily Pool Press, 2012). 110 pages; 5½"×8½". Semigloss white cover with four-color photo; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-934714-40-2. Price: \$20.00 from the author at 2400 Botolph Rd, Santa Fe NM 87505.

*Reviewed by George Swede*

New Mexico poet Marian Olson began publishing haiku in 1979 and since then has built a reputation for excellence in all of haiku's related forms. Six prior haiku collections include *Desert Hours*, which won the Haiku Society of America Merit Book Award for 2008.

Olson's introduction to *Sketches of Mexico* describes a life-long fascination with the people and culture south of the border and the eventual purchase of a time-share condo in Mazatlán, a city on the Pacific. The collection's 150+ haiku are what she calls "time capsules" of her experiences in that country. Although Olson has visited the populous cities of the interior (Guadalajara, Mexico City), none of her haiku evoke them or their exhilarating mountain settings. Instead, Olson is content to focus on experiences in seaside towns more familiar to tourists who visit Mexico for a week or two.

gusts blow up  
the privacy curtain  
beach *baño*

poolside margaritas  
here too  
birds squabble

blessing us  
the cliff diver  
takes our tip

incoming tide  
mariachis move closer  
to the seawall

hawkers  
ready for cruise ships  
Acapulco

*mole* spooned on  
grilled snapper  
rendezvous at eight

The term “Sketches” in the title aptly describes the preceding pieces. They seem to be late drafts more than fully-realized haiku. Nevertheless, they manage to be evocative, just like the sketches of master artists.

Of course, many of Olson’s haiku go beyond preliminary drawings. They are the final product, brimming with insight and mystery.

Tijuana club  
a flash of gold  
whenever he laughs

the motorcycle  
swings into traffic  
dadmomtwokids

agave its sharp edges tequila

city outskirts  
a man and his cart  
the color of dust

assignation  
the cabby outside  
with his smoke rings

Ironically, much of the best work in *Sketches of Mexico* does not illustrate life specific to that country.

ocean thunder  
fry flash silver  
in the cresting wave

palapa shade  
I open my book and study  
the sea

skeleton kites  
 sway in the wind  
 girls in bikinis

I try a raw oyster  
 to please you  
 then ask for another

full moon  
 shadows of lovers  
 round sea caves

family-held blanket  
 a girl steps out  
 in a bikini

These fine haiku show that seaside life is indistinguishable from one balmy clime to another. If there were differences, Olson's acute observational and poetic skills would have revealed them.

*The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics*, by Roland Greene, editor in chief, and Stephen Cushman, general editor (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012). 4th ed. 1,637 pages; 7" x 10". Semigloss white card covers; Smythe-sewn. ISBN 978-0-691154-91-6. Price: \$49.50 from booksellers.

*Reviewed by Charles Trumbull*

*The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics* has been a basic reference work for literary scholars and poets since it first appeared in 1965. The 3rd edition was published in 1993. The current volume is the 4th. I confess that I have not acquainted myself with all 1,637 pages and more than 1,000 entries; rather I concentrated on the articles in our orbit, i.e., Japanese short-form poetry and its Western variants, and compared the new edition with the 3rd edition, which, dog-eared, has been in my library for almost two decades.

The good news is that the new edition contains more articles in our field, possibly signaling a growing interest in haiku etc., both in terms of depth and breadth. I found the following: "Poetry of Japan" by H. Mack Horton, "Modern Poetry of Japan" by Leith Morton, "Japanese



Poetics” by Esperanza Ramirez-Christiansen, “Japanese Poetic Diaries” by Edith Sarra, “Haibun” by William Wenthe, “Haikai” by Cheryl A. Crowley, “Western Haiku” by Jeffrey Johnson, and “Asian American Poetry” by Timothy Yu.

The 3rd edition featured these anchor pieces: “Japanese Poetry,” with sections on “Classical” and “Modern,” by Earl Miner (one of the associate editors of the volume) and Makoto Ueda, respectively; “Japanese Poetics” also by Ueda; “Haiku” by Hiroaki Sato, and “Renga” also by Earl Miner. It would be hard in the mid-1990s to have found a more stellar lineup than these scholars — like the current roster, all university professors — and their contributions are uniformly excellent.

Horton’s “Poetry of Japan” includes a paragraph about haikai/hokku/haiku, just enough to put the short verse form into the larger context. Crowley’s page-and-a-half-long essay, “Haikai” is divided into “Introduction,” “Formal Characteristics,” and “History.” It is an excellent summary of the evolution of haiku from renga up to the changeover from haikai to haiku about 1900. The author mentions “seasonal words” but does not discuss *kigo* or *kidai*. She also mentions “kireji (literally, cutting characters)” and gives an example from Buson of a haiku that uses both. We could have wanted a fuller discussion of these topics which lie at the core of haiku poetics.

Morton’s “Modern Poetry of Japan” is a very fine review of developments since the late 19th century in three sections: “Tanka,” “Haiku,” and “Free Verse.” The haiku section details the time of Shiki to the present, although, given all the fuss in the West recently over *gendai* haiku, the lack of any mention here poses a few questions.

Ramirez-Christiansen’s “Japanese Poetics” is more accessible than Ueda’s earlier coverage of the topic. Both focus on the evolution of poetics in *waka* and devote very little space to haikai and none to haiku aesthetics. Wenthe’s short article on “Haibun” is an adequate introduction to the origins of the form, but his brief treatment of contemporary Western practice does not peer beyond big-name poets James Merrill, Robert Hass, and Rachel Blau DuPlessis. That Sarra’s piece, “Japanese Poetic Diaries,” a genre little practiced today, is four times longer than that on haibun seems disproportionate, but his essay is

solid. Yu's "Asian American Poetry" concentrates on Chinese American poetry with only passing mention of work by Japanese Americans, except for Lawson Fusao Inada, who is dubbed the most important Japanese American poet.

For us, the key essay is Johnson's "Western Haiku." It is clearly derived from the author's recent academic work (*Haiku Poetics in Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde Poetry* [2011], reviewed by Edward Zuk in *MH* 43.3). The piece is divided into three sections, "Before 1910," "Through the Two World Wars," and "Resurgence in the 1950s." Each, unfortunately, is full of misapprehensions and half-baked conclusions. The first section begins with the outrageous statement, "The Western adaptation of haiku poetry began in 1905 when Paul-Louis Couchoud (1879–1959), who was also among the first translators of haiku, composed poems in [French] in the fashion of haiku."—this, despite the early likely efforts of Dutch traders, Portuguese missionaries, and Romanian polymaths; the translations (and likely haiku compositions) by Englishman W.G. Aston; and investigations by Basil Hall Chamberlain and Lafacadio Hearn before the turn of the 20th century; and the experiments in haiku by the Mexican poet José Juan Tablada as early as 1901–2 (which, curiously, Johnson discusses a few lines later).

Johnson's second section mentions Amy Lowell, Ezra Pound, and John Gould Fletcher briefly before turning back to French and Spanish poets in the interwar period. One might have expected at least a mention of poets in America in the same period such as E.E. Cummings, W.C. Williams, and Wallace Stevens who, like the Imagists, were influenced by haiku. For his third section, however, Johnson jumps to what he perceives as a "resurgence," i.e., the Beats. Gary Snyder's engagement with East Asian poetry, Johnson says, is "perhaps the greatest among all Western poets." Johnson then turns to two Brazilian concrete poets and Jorge Luis Borges and Octavio Paz. He devotes about a paragraph to Paz's 1987 haiku sequence "Bashō An."

Sato's "Haiku" article in the 3rd edition devoted two-thirds of its allotted space to haiku outside Japan, averring that French were the first to take up the form and mentioning Latin American poets in passing, before zeroing in on English-language haiku, especially developments in America.

Two meaty paragraphs deal with publications and organizational matters and trends in haiku poetics in North America. Not a word about these things in Johnson's article. From the latter piece, one would get the idea that, apart from brief flirtations by Imagists and Beats, French- and Spanish-language haiku represent the apotheosis of haiku outside Japan, and that Western haiku apparently has long since atrophied.

There are no entries (or even cross-references) in the new *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics* for "senryū," "haiga," or aspects of Japanese aesthetics such as *sabi*, *wabi*, *mono no aware*, or *karumi*, which are essential to haiku (though Ramirez-Christiansen mentions in passing *yūgen*, *omokage*, *yojō*, and a few attributes of renga linkages). No mention of "renku" is to be found at all, even in Crowley's discussion of renga. Neither volume contains individual articles about haikai/haiku poets. And while we're niggling, we might also mention a couple of editorial lapses: one finds both plurals, "morae" and "moras," while Wenthe is allowed to use the plural "haikus." Not all circumflexes over vowels in *rōmaji* words have been converted to macrons.

Without gainsaying that this volume overall is a monumental achievement, from the narrow standpoint of the Western haiku poet or someone who has a professional or avocational interest in haiku worldwide, the new edition of *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics* is a case of two steps forward and one giant step back.

*The Fragrance of Dust: Haiku Stories Poems*, by James Norton (Uxbridge, U.K.: Alba Publishing, 2012). 102 pages; 5 3/4" x 8 1/4". Semi-gloss white card covers, perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-955125-48-5. Price: US\$16.00 from the publisher at [info@albapublishing.com](mailto:info@albapublishing.com).

*Bamboo Dreams: An Anthology of Haiku Poetry from Ireland*, edited by Anatoly Kudryavitsky (Tralee, Ireland: Doghouse Books, 2012). 93 pages; 5" x 7 1/2". Glossy white and four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-957207-32-5. Price: €12.00 from the publisher at [www.doghousebooks.ie](http://www.doghousebooks.ie).

*Reviewed by Charles Trumbull*

The arrival on our desk of two books of Irish haiku underlines a fact that has been apparent for some years: haiku is alive and thriving on the Emerald Isle.

James Norton is a haiku pioneer in his homeland. In his introduction to the *The Fragrance of Dust* we learn that after seeing his first haiku in the 1960s, he rediscovered the short verse in 1991, and that event caused him to take up writing again after a twenty-year hiatus. He founded the journal *Haiku Spirit* in 1995 and served as its editor or coeditor until 2000. Not a great many of Norton's haiku have appeared previously in print, however, though this is his second collection of haiku.

A practicing Buddhist, Norton uses poetry to find depth and resonance in the landscapes he traverses. He reports in his Introduction that over the years he had developed his own approach to haiku in that he has chosen “[to eschew] conformity to notions of a rigid 5–7–5 syllable 3-line formula confined to ‘objective sketching’ in the manner of a photographic image or mere nature-note.” That is to say, Norton's creative path has led him pretty much to the place where the rest of the better English-language haiku poets find themselves today. He also says he has been inspired by home-grown poetry: early Irish nature lyrics.

The subtitle of *The Fragrance of Dust* is somewhat misleading. The book actually comprises mostly haibun of the long, travel-note kind embraced by Welshman Ken Jones and Englishman David Cobb, and longer poems and sequences that are only sometimes haiku. The haiku tend toward the poetic, lyrical, and metaphoric, for example these, selected at random from various places in the book:

Leaf drip—  
an invisible roofer tap-taps  
nails into fog

coughing  
and the stranger upstairs  
coughs too

Rare fish-flake  
all the way from Japan  
for a stray cat

Dinner *alfresco*  
serenaded from the rooftop  
by a cricket

Anatoly Kudyavitsky, the protean ex-pat Russian founder of the Irish Haiku Society in 2006 and its online journal *Shamrock* in January 2007, has compiled the first specifically Irish haiku anthology, showcasing up to a dozen haiku by each of seventy-seven poets born or living on the island of Ireland. Most write in English, but a few haiku in this collection are in Irish. This book is introduced by a short essay on the history of haiku in Ireland and ends with short biosketches of the contributors. All but a score of the poets are so far relatively unknown internationally, and judging from their listed publication credits they mostly revolve in Kudryavitsky's orbit—i.e., *Shamrock* and the IHS—but no matter, there is much of interest to be found here. Here is a sampling of the contents:

honeycomb—  
honey and darkness stored  
for the long winter

*Noel Duffy*

blackbird  
holding the winter sun  
in its beak

*Ciarán Parkes*

a pause  
in the discussion  
soft summer rain

*Maeve O'Sullivan*

there must be light  
where they come from—  
chestnut blossoms

*Gabriel Rosenstock*

*Bamboo Dreams* is a worthy addition to your bookshelf alongside other anthologies from the British Isles such as *The Iron Book of British Haiku* (ed. David Cobb and Martin Lucas, 1998) and *Another Country: Haiku Poetry from Wales* (ed. Nigel Jenkins, Ken Jones, and Lynn Rees, 2011).