

sible, and, in fact, includes many everyday phrases used often in conversations, like “we have to talk” and “as far as I can see.” Some tropes are more specific, such as “like father like son” or “sticks and stones.” The poems, because they are expressed using this friendly voice, feel like a conversation between Frampton and a close friend. We, her readers, feel connected to her life and enriched by her wisdom. At the end of the book, Frampton has found comfort through relationships, and also, likely, from her chosen craft.

Jack Kerouac and the Traditions of Classic and Modern Haiku, by Yoshinobu Hakutani (New York: Lexington Books, 2019). 193 pages; 6" × 9". Glossy four-color hardcover. ISBN 978-1-4985-5827-3. Price: \$68.85+ from online booksellers.

Going to the Pine: Four Essays on Bashō, by Geoffrey Wilkinson (United Kingdom: Privately printed, 2019). 52 pages; 6" × 9". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-9160622-0-7. Price: \$9.99 from the author at Franksbridge, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 5SA, United Kingdom.

Reviewed by Randy Brooks

This has been a great year for new scholarship on haiku, and in this review, I compare two compilations of essays on haiku by Dr. Yoshinobu Hakutani and Geoffrey Wilkinson. Dr. Yoshinobu Hakutani is Professor of English at Kent State University, where he teaches courses in American literature and linguistics. He has a distinguished record of cross-cultural scholarship examining exchanges between Japanese and Western cultures evident in Modernist, Contemporary, and African American poetry. Geoffrey Wilkinson is an independent researcher with a degree from Cambridge University, where he studied philosophy, history, and literature. His book gathers four essays on Bashō as a poet who developed an egoless art that embraces the uncertainties and “transitori-

ness of this world.” One of the most interesting similarities between these two books is that both consider “being on the road” important to the full development of a haiku poetics of open acceptance to experiences beyond the self.

In *Jack Kerouac and the Traditions of Classic and Modern Haiku*, Hakutani has collected five of his most significant essays on the development of Japanese and American haiku. While the entire book is a treasure-trove of his haiku scholarship, the most exciting news is that we now have a scholarly account of the motives, the poetic goals, and the achievements evident in Kerouac’s haiku. The last four chapters are new scholarship on Kerouac’s haiku poetics based on a reading of his *Book of Haikus* published in 2003. According to Hakutani, “Not only did Kerouac learn the specific techniques of haiku composition from classic haiku, he also learned the most important philosophical state of mind that underlies haiku, called *mu*. A Zen-inspired poet suppresses human subjectivity as much as possible, or minimizes it, in depicting an object or a phenomenon in nature. This poetic perspective rids the poet of egotism and self-centeredness.” He argues that Kerouac relies on a conflation of Christianity and Mahayana Buddhism as primary sources for his poetics of living and expressing a beatific life. He notes that “Buddhism taught Kerouac that the phenomenal world was like a dream and an illusion and that happiness consisted in achieving that strange vision in the mind—enlightenment.”

Hakutani discusses both of Kerouac’s novels, *On the Road* and *Dharma Bums*, where he finds the same themes and literary goals as in Kerouac’s haiku. He writes: “For Kerouac, the central mission of *On the Road* is not to describe the life of the beaten but to celebrate the life of the beatific.” The haiku that Kerouac wrote when this novel was published “reverberate with *On the Road*. As Kerouac was phrasing the images and ideas for the haiku, he must have been reflecting on his observations of the similar images and ideas that appear in *On the Road*. Kerouac believed that the central theme of the novel is the spiritual quest of these characters.” Hakutani provides several short readings of Kerouac’s haiku as evidence of his beatific quest while being “a roaming bard like Basho.” For example, he writes that “In my medicine cabinet / the winter fly / Has died of old

age” demonstrates a Buddhist compassion for nonhuman beings. Another haiku, “Spring day— / in my mind / Nothing”, embraces the concept of *mu*. Hakutani observes that “[t]o enter the state of nothingness, one must annihilate oneself. The undisciplined self is often misguided by egotism.” He concludes that the haiku Kerouac wrote “reflect his study and practice of Buddhism as a religion as well as a philosophy. What is remarkable about his haiku is that not only was he influenced by the books he studied, but he was also inspired by his own experiences in wandering and meditating in the fields and on the mountains in America.”

In Going to the Pine: Four Essays on Bashō, Geoffrey Wilkinson considers the haiku master’s approach to haiku, especially his advice for haiku writers to “[g]o to the pine to learn about the pine. Go to the bamboo to learn about the bamboo. Set aside all personal thoughts and motives, for you will learn nothing if you insist on interpreting objects as you see them.” Although Wilkinson discusses only five of Bashō’s haiku in these four essays, each is thoroughly considered as an example of egoless, unconditional openness to all experiences. The second essay reviews a wide range of interpretations of the famous “old pond” haiku, noting the difficulty Western readers have had accepting the “the truth of things as they are unencumbered by our own thoughts and preoccupations.” The third essay is an extended monologue of Wilkinson’s thoughts as he tries to arrive at the most acceptable translation of Bashō’s haiku, “A cicada’s shrilling / pierces the rock— / unbroken silence”. In this essay on translating the cicada haiku, the difficulty begins with the phrase “the heart knows nothing but peace” in the prose that proceeds Bashō’s haiku. Wilkinson decides that the subsequent translation needs to capture this mountain temple scene where, “[i]n its inner state, the heart exactly mirrors the ‘pure tranquility’ of the external surroundings.” Rather than examine the range of Bashō’s poetry or its cultural history, Wilkinson closely examines key aesthetic goals and spiritual (Buddhist) perspectives that inform his work.

In the most fascinating (and longest) essay of this collection, Wilkinson compares the poetic sensibilities of Bashō and John Keats as kindred spirits—traveling bards on a quest for authentic experiences and spontaneous response. Drawing on their own journals, letters, and com-

mentaries, Wilkinson notices “that Bashō and Keats both stand for an unconditional openness to all experience, so unconditional that it demands a complete transparency—or, Keat’s word, *annihilation*—of the self.” Wilkinson explains further that for Bashō “the self probably had a religious-metaphysical meaning rooted in Buddhism; that is, the self represents our attachments, our preoccupations, our striving, everything that traps us in a divided ‘me/not-me’ relation to the world, and therefore it is an obstacle not just to ‘true’ poetry but to our own ‘true’ being as part of a greater reality beyond individual identity.” Wilkinson goes on to consider how “going on the road” tested both poets’ openness to all experiences of humanity—prostitutes, impoverished people suffering fleas, and horses pissing nearby. Keats expresses his disgust along his travels, but Bashō accepts these situations and experiences with grace and understanding of shared suffering. Wilkinson cites this haiku as an example: “Fleas and lice, / horses pissing nearby— / such was my sleeping place”. He concludes: “Bashō was steeped in a centuries-old, Buddhist-influenced literary tradition that returned again and again to the transitoriness of this world and the vanity of all our individual cares and ambitions. Unfair as the comparison is, perhaps we have to say that Bashō was the better traveler because, so to speak, he was better equipped to annihilate self.”

Noon: An Anthology of Short Poems, edited by Philip Rowland (Japan and United Kingdom, Isobar Press, 2019). 158 pages; 5½" × 8½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-4-907359-26-3. Price: \$20.00 plus shipping in the US. Details from isobarpress.com

Reviewed by John Stevenson

Every so often, someone asks how we can create bridges between English-language haiku and “main-stream” poetry. Perhaps without the mixed metaphor. It seems obvious that one strategy would involve supporting journals that showcase both sorts of poetry on a more or less equal foot-