

To write poetry is to struggle against the inadequacy of language to express precisely what we intend. Sometimes, if we are lucky, we get close. Metz shows us how one brilliant mind grapples with that endeavor. I have little doubt his work will inspire others to take risks, to expand their range, to play with all the elements of written language, and to do so with a willingness to be vulnerable and open.

*Shifting Light*, by Hannah Mahoney (Durham, N.C.: Backbone Press, 2022). 32 pages; 5" × 7". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-7363467-6-1. Price: \$10.00 from [www.backbonepress.org](http://www.backbonepress.org)

*Reviewed by Billie Wilson*

This attractive slim volume tucks nicely into pocket or purse, and makes a delightful companion for a nature walk or other journey. After reading the first two haiku, I was hesitant to turn the page, wondering if the strength of the opening could be sustained. It could and it was. As I slowly savored each offering, I wished the chapbook were not so slender. Many, rich in sound combinations, beg to be read aloud. In the following example, listen to the “s” and “k” and “r” sounds, together with the subtle, near masterful, “th” sounds.

she takes a spin  
on her birthday bike  
forsythia

Mahoney’s careful word choices throughout are pure poetry and deserve to be read carefully. In addition to the poems with solid sound values, others touch emotions deep within:

night snow  
my father’s handwriting  
on the ornament box

Many echo the rich heritage of some of the early masters of English-language haiku:

old stone wall  
a killdeer's thin whistle  
crosses the fallow field

Some simply offer the gift of a smile:

the turtle's rock  
just its size  
spring light

Others provide an invitation into the mysteries that deepen the impact that is often surprising to some still learning the not-always-so-simple haiku genre.

what it means  
to have a body  
midnight snow

It is tempting to share more of *Shifting Light's* magic. Instead, I commend it to you so that you can fully experience it yourself. As I turned the last page, all I could think was "More, more, more." (So it was no surprise that even her acknowledgements were a pleasure to read.)