The moon and witnesses appear in both poems; however, the final poem demands accountability—a satisfying shift from the earlier poem, in which the speaker has no support and is all alone.

The last poem also circles back to the initial long poem, yet drops us off in a different place. After reading the poems in this volume, we cannot help but reflect on these challenges that occur so frequently in women's experience. This last poem is an invitation, a call, a challenge: now that we are all witnesses, what are we going to do?

Sōseki Natsume's Collected Haiku: 1,000 verses from Japan's Most Popular Writer, trans. and introduced by Erik R. Lofgren (Tokyo & Vermont: Tuttle, 2024). 312 pages; 8¼″ × 5½″. Matte four-color book jacket; hardcover. ISBN 978-4-8053-1845-4. Price: $19-99 from online booksellers.

Sōseki Natsume: A Collection of Haiku in Irish, English, and Greek, by Gabriel Rosenstock (Ireland: Ababúna, 2026). 66 pages; 8¼″ × 5¾″. Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-918058-16-1. Available from online booksellers.

Reviewed by David Burleigh

One of the notable things about Makoto Ueda's pioneering anthology *Modern Japanese Haiku* (1976), beyond its meticulous scholarship and presentation, is the inclusion of two novelists among the twenty poets represented: Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916) and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927), the latter to some extent a disciple of the former. Neither has appeared in any of the much more compendious anthologies issued since, such as those from the Modern Haiku Society in Japan (2001; 2008), though Sōseki does appear in a smaller one by Lucien Stryk, *Cage of Fireflies* (1995). Clearly this is something that Erik R. Lofgren seeks to remedy with this book, at least for the older author.

Besides being Japan's most popular novelist, familiarly referred to by his given name, and one of its greatest writers, Sōseki was also closely

associated with Masaoka Shiki, the haiku reformer. Born the same year, Shiki was some months younger than his friend, with whom he shared a house for a time at Matsuyama in Shikoku, where there is now a museum devoted to this. The phrase made famous in Shiki's verse on their parting—'two autumns' (*aki futatsu*)—has even made its way into English haiku, and there are glimpses of all this in books on Shiki, so it is good to have the other side filled in. Although a detailed account of the time the poets spent together is not given, in part at least this must be Professor Lofgren and the book's intention.

It is an attractive volume, with a floral design on one part of the cover that suggests the highly decorative designs of Sōseki's books when they first appeared, and sometimes seen in exhibitions. A couple of things may strike the reader as perplexing, as they start the book. One is that it opens with "Acknowledgments," beginning on the right-hand page, like a chapter of the book. The other is that the "Introduction" gives the word 'haiku' in italics, perhaps again to suggest the time that Sōseki was writing. William N. Porter's anthology, *A Year of Japanese Epigrams* (1911)—contemporary with Sōseki, and in which Shiki appears—speaks of "*haikai, haiku, or hokku*," but uses the middle term only once.

The thousand haiku that the book contains have been whittled down from more than twice that number, and the introductory material explains the translator's general approach, which is not to be constrained by a fixed pattern, but rather to allow for variation. Most of the verses are rendered in two lines, while the 'cut' or division in the meaning, often shown by *ya* in Japanese, may be represented by a semi-colon, or even a dash, in the English version. The arrangement is seasonal, with a small selection of non-seasonal verses at the end, and the Japanese text is given throughout, along with roman letters for pronunciation and ease of reading. We start with New Year, which is fairly brief:

元日に生れぬ先の親戀し
ganjitsu ni umarenu saki no oya koishi

New Year's day
    longing for my parents before they were born

A helpful note reminds us of a reference to the practice of Zen, while we also know that, as a child, the author was given for adoption twice, with unhappy consequences.

鳥や来て障子に動く花の影
tori ya kite shōji ni ugoku hana no kage

has a bird come?
flower shadows shift on the paper screen

This is readily appreciable, and the trope of sensing something off to the side or not quite clearly visible, is one that occurs again.

The next is one of Sōseki's best-known haiku, from Spring which, together with Autumn, makes up most of the book:

菫程な小さき人に生「まれたし」[script missing]
sumire hodo na chiisaki hito ni umaretashi

how I wish to be reborn as inconspicuous as a violet

He studied English literature in England, and says in one verse that he has grown tired of reading Tennyson, as one might. It occurred to me that the verse above might owe something to Wordsworth's famous lines about "A violet hidden by a mossy stone, / Half-hidden from the eye!" Sōseki also wrote poems in English, some of them quoted in the Introduction.

The manner of translating haiku has come a long way, and Lofgren explains his approach in the introductory material. He seeks to avoid the restriction of a fixed form, generally favouring two lines over three, but adapting this in accordance with the specific content of each verse. Some verses extend to three lines, while others are confined to one, as the text seems best to lend itself in another language. A recording of all of the haiku, in English and Japanese, is available on the publisher's website, read by the translator, and a Japanese speaker. This wonderful resource allows the reader to know how the translator 'hears' the English version, alongside the rhythm of the original, and is a great boon to students of either language.

In the Introduction, the translator suggests that some of Sōseki's haiku "almost seem to auger [sic] the advent of free verse." This is one of the verses that he composed in London, on hearing of the death of Shiki:

霧黄なる市に動くや影法師
kiri ki naru ichi ni ugoku ya kagebōshi

moving through a city sallowed in fog;
human shades

Autumn is perhaps the richest season, and this might well be a line in a Modernist poem. This is a certainly a valuable collection, although I had two other smaller ones already on my shelves: one, of *Zen Haiku* by Sōiku Shigematsu (1994), draws out its theme through poetry and letters, while the other, in French, *Sôseki Haikus* by Elisabeth Suetsugu (2009), is illustrated throughout with Sōseki's calligraphy and paintings.

Also with colour illustrations, though not by Sōseki, comes a new small book by the distinguished Irish language poet Gabriel Rosenstock, with the haiku, one to a page, in Irish, English, and Greek (the last by Sarah Thilykou). I note this one, in Autumn:

in the lavatory
I sense there's a deer outside
snorting

Lofgren includes this too, and a couple of others that mention the privy, reminding me that Sōseki himself says somewhere that the great thing about haiku is that you can compose them "on a bus or in the toilet." It is difficult to do that with a sonnet.