

## BRIEFLY NOTED

*The Colour of Shadow / La Couleur de l'Ombre*, by Daniel Birnbaum (United Kingdom: Alba Publishing, 2019). 61 pages; 6" × 8¼". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1912773-26-8. Price: \$12.00 from [www.albapublishing.com](http://www.albapublishing.com)

Daniel Birnbaum is a French doctor, scientist, and seasoned writer of novels, essays, and micropoetry. The thirty-five or so haiku within this chapbook, the cover of which features a photograph by the poet, are likened to “photographic emotions,” whilst about twenty tanka “introduce more perspective and reflexion.” The text does indeed explore contrasts, not only between forms, but between sensations and perceptions, between natural and emotional images. Each poem is rendered in French and in English, and for those who read both languages the exercise in translation will surely fascinate. Sound values and word choices in either tongue emphasize different aspects of the haiku experience, sometimes with expansive effects. Indeed, the pairing of poems across a linguistic divide often feels like its own kind of poetic genre. *trumpet solo / carving the air / with memories; your shadow / sometimes a color / sometimes a brush / / ton ombre / parfois couleur / parfois pinceau*

*The Art of Reading & Writing Haiku: A Reader Response Approach*, by Randy Brooks (Taylorville, Ill: Brooks Books, 2019). 223 pages; 6" × 9". Glossy black and white card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-929820-17-7. Price: \$30.00 from [www.brooksbookshaiku.com](http://www.brooksbookshaiku.com)

In this thoroughly inspiring text, the haiku poet, scholar, and publisher Randy Brooks offers up an inside look at the semester-long course on “Global Haiku Traditions” that he has taught at Millikin University for the last two decades. In fourteen chapters that range from “The Art of Reading Contemporary Haiku” to the art of “Collaborative Linked Verse,” Brooks lays out his “performance learning” approach, in which students explore the discipline by “doing the discipline.” Students read

haiku, respond to haiku, and write their own haiku, all before hearing a word about technical craft. In fact, Brooks resists explanations of the “rules” for as long as possible, purposefully allowing his students to develop their own sense of what makes a good or even an excellent poem. When his classes do begin to discuss haiku aesthetics, students are ready to realize that “form in haiku is about the silence” before, after, and within the poem that invites the reader into its space. Form is thus “a means of providing the writer and reader with ... a shared consciousness.” Not only does Brooks generously reveal the many classroom assignments and activities that structure his approach, he provides copious amounts of student work in illustration. If this last bit sounds like a slog, rest assured the quantity is more than matched by its quality. As anyone who has mentored novice haikai knows only too well, excellence of thought and expression is hard-won. Yet Brooks manages to elicit the very best novice poets have to offer from an impressive number of students. Poets and teachers interested in effective instruction in the haiku arts, whether in workshop or classroom, will want to take his approach to heart. Recommended. *skipping stones only one completes its journey* (Benjamin Woodcock, Spring 2019); *sister’s dress / how pretty she looked / now it’s mine* (Michelle Holsapple, July 2016); *puzzle pieces / my head / your shoulder* (Hannah Ottenfield, Fall 2018).

*Rough Cut: Thirty Years of Senryu*, by William Scott Galasso (Laguna Woods, Calif.: Galwin Press, 2019). 137 pages; 6" × 9". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-7327527-1-9. Price: \$ 12.95 from online booksellers or contact galwinpress@yahoo.com

This is the second book in the poet’s “legacy series” of work produced in thirty years of writing. It includes over 300 senryu, give or take a few that appear more than once. William Scott Galasso examines the ebb and flow of daily life, family relationships, the man-woman thing, and more in a voice that is as often heartfelt as it is humorous and ironic. *believe me / she tells the friend / who doesn’t; separated by / a common language / his and hers; memoirs — / now that he’s gone I begin / to understand him*

*Degrees of Acquaintance*, by Glen G. Coats (Great Britain: Snapshot Press, 2019). E-chapbook, free access and download from [www.snapshotpress.co.uk/ebooks.htm](http://www.snapshotpress.co.uk/ebooks.htm)

Rivers run through this collection, rivers both real and metaphorical. In a series of twenty subtly ordered haibun, Glen G. Coats probes the nature of relationship, whether with music or the teaching profession, with strangers or acquaintances, the families of our birth or the intimates of our choice. In the flow of memory, diverse themes and images merge into a complex, often luminous understanding of experience. In "Lambs," for example, book facts about the Willis River are interleaved with the story of two young girls, classmates of the narrator, who drown when the car they ride in runs into the rain-swelled waters: *river mist / a melody somewhere / in the chords // words of a song / tighten / their grip*

*Rightsizing the Universe: Haiku Theory*, by Gary Hotham (Scaggsville, Md.: Yigralo Press, 2019). 35 pages; 4" × 6¾". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. No ISBN. Price: \$4.00 plus shipping from [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com) or \$4.00 plus \$1.50 shipping from the author at 10460 Stansfield Road, Scaggsville, MD 20723.

In this slim chapbook of thirty-two haiku, Gary Hotham searches for the objective correlatives that expand our sense of the universe. Two epigraphs at the back of the collection suggest that these "verbal equivalents for states of mind and feeling" may, on approach to the invisible, be nothing less than revelations of "the word of God." More prosaically, three opening photographs—also by Hotham—suggest that haiku can provide the nuts and bolts with which we frame the phenomenal world and peer within and through it. Hotham's approach to "new utterance" is disciplined and highly original, as his focused ruminations on clouds, stars, waters, space and time bear witness. Recommended. *squeezing / into our universe / cherry blossoms; outside recorded history / gentle places / for the rain; after Bach / space for snow to fall / deeper*

*Happy Haiku*, by Elizabeth Crocket with a foreword by Mike Rehling and illustrated by Jack Foster (Pilot Knob, Mo.: Crimson Cloak Publishing, 2019). 32 pages; 8" × 8". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-68160-692-7. Price: \$9.99 from amazon.com (also available for \$3.99 as e-book).

Read *Happy Haiku* to the kids in your life for a romp through the year's highlights from their point of view. Elizabeth Crocket is not the first haiku poet to bring contemporary haiku to the picture book world—Edward J. Rielly and, before him, Penny Harter come to mind—though perhaps she is the first to use a childish voice. Unfortunately, this tack is at risk of underestimating original perception and insight in the young. Or maybe it's the illustrations, featuring bug eyes for boys, girls, and other sentient creatures, lending a cartoonish effect to some otherwise winsome haiku. *rainy day / gathering blankets / for our forts; home run / a birthday bat / arrives in time; valentine's day / we give each other / our hearts*

*All the Way Home: Aging in Haiku*, ed. Robert Epstein (West Union, W.V.: Middle Island Press, 2019). 313 pages; 6" × 9". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-7341254-2-9. Price: \$22.00 from online booksellers.

How do we experience aging? Let us count the ways. Robert Epstein presents upwards of 900 haiku in his latest anthology on a theme of existential interest to just about anyone. Hundreds of poetic voices testify in ways that are unique and also universal to the passage of time and the slow ripening and decay of the body. The danger is, when read in one fell swoop, they all begin to sound the same—a testament, surely, to our shared journey. Dip in and out, then, for laughs, for tears, for acceptance, for release. *chin hair — / a dandelion missed / by the mower* (Theresa A. Cancro); *my eighth decade / how the rains / rearrange the creek* (Carolyn Hall); *older this morning / the fence takes up / with a vine* (Dan Schwerin); *starry night / what's left of my life / is enough* (Ron C. Moss).

*Leaf Raking*, by Michael Morell (Windsor, Conn.: Buddha Baby Press, 2019). 57 pages; 5" × 7". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. No ISBN. Price: inquire of author at michaelnmorell@gmail.com

The epigraph to this haiku chapbook, Michael Morell's first, channels the 13th century Japanese priest-poet-philosopher Dogen: "To be in harmony with the wholeness of things is not to have anxiety over imperfections." Accordingly, this collection of fifty-two haiku is suffused with Zen Buddhist spiritual philosophy—and in the best way. Morell may begin with the usual meditations on impermanence, anxiety, and suffering, but he quickly moves on to the fault lines of family relationships, mature love, and the daily acceptance of inner and outer weathers. At least some of the time, acknowledging brokenness brings the poet to wholeness. *bee balm ... / the sting and comfort / of life; November sun — / the way my father / loved me; used walker / i kick the tires / for my father*

*Yone Noguchi: The Stream of Fate, Volume One: The Western Sea*, by Edward Marx (Calif.: Botchan Books, 2019). 414 pages; 6" × 9¼". Matte four-color book jacket; hardcover. ISBN 978-1-939913-05-0. Price: \$48.95 from online booksellers.

Edward Marx, a literary scholar teaching in Japan, takes as his subject the life of Yone Noguchi, cross-cultural pioneer, plagiarist, and fraud. Seeking to rehabilitate the man's reputation, Marx notes that Noguchi was the first Japanese to publish books of poetry, including haiku, in English. This accomplishment, along with more substantial literary endeavors, would argue for the writer's "powerful influence on the Anglo-American modernist encounter with Japan." Noguchi's standing in English-language haiku, however, remains minor, for his efforts were mediocre at best. His first haiku publications (1904) include "Fallen leaves! Nay, spirits? / Shall I go downward with thee / 'Long a stream of Fate?" and "Lo, light and shadow / Journey to the home of night: / Thou and I—to Love!" Marx quotes Lee Gurga (in a 1999 essay for *Blithe Spirit*) to the effect that these haiku may not be "as auspicious a beginning for our

haiku as Pond's metro poem [published in 1913], but we are all here today nonetheless. Perhaps at this point in our history we might consider being gracious enough to acknowledge Noguchi's role in the communication of the aesthetics of Japanese haiku to the West." Perhaps. In his overview of English-language haiku at the back of *Haiku in English, The First Hundred Years*, Jim Kacian argues that the first haiku in English actually appeared in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, and were either translations of Japanese originals by English-speaking scholars or amateur efforts by same. According to Kacian, Noguchi's first attempt at the form in 1902 (unpublished until 1914) was simply "the first haiku we can be certain was composed originally in English": "Tell me the street to Heaven. / This? Or that? Oh, which? / What webs of streets!" With due deliberation, Marx wends his way through these considerations and much more—this book (regrettably without an index) is but volume one of Noguchi's eventful life, covering the years from his birth in 1875 to his "A Proposal to American Poets" in 1904. In that essay the "trickster-artist" promoted the seventeen-syllable poem as "a tiny star, mind you, carrying the whole sky at its back." That, surely, we may all agree on.

*A Portable Universe*, by Mark Gilfillan (United Kingdom: Alba Publishing, 2019). 96 pages; 6" × 8¼". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-912773-25-1. Price: \$15.00 from [www.alba-publishing.com](http://www.alba-publishing.com)

In her memoir *Our World*, poet Mary Oliver argues that "attention without feeling ... is only a report." This remark came to mind while reading Mark Gilfillan's second book of 180 or so haiku and senryu. Exploring territories of home and childhood, as well as those locales that call to the inner self, the poet trains an observant eye on natural and human worlds. Despite a sometimes somewhat choppy style, the very best of his poems give expression to an empathic connection forged by encounter: *back home / the reassuring rumble / of the kettle; millstone on the moor / through the turning of seasons / how little you've changed; beach driftwood all the rough edges rounded*

*The Heart of Margravine*, ed. David Jacobs (United Kingdom: Privately printed, 2019). 16 pages; 5½" × 8". Glossy four-color card covers; saddle-stapled. No ISBN. Price: £2.00. Inquire of the editor at davidjacobs2011@gmail.com

A slim booklet of haiku (and one haibun) written by six poets, at least two of whom have served as ‘haiku poet in residence’ for the Margravine Cemetery, a green oasis tucked within the city of London. A unique example of haiku in the service of community, all proceeds from this small anthology will revert to the cemetery’s “Friends” and their support of its natural and manmade beauties. Would that the notice boards of all local parks were studded with haiku—and of this caliber: *in lo in m mo y / the headstone all but consumed / with ivy*

*The Day Awaits*, by Risë E. Daniels (Windsor, Conn.: Baby Buddha Press, 2019). 42 pages; 4" × 4¾". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-7327746-4-3. Price: \$7.00 from the author at loneheron-art@gmail.com

In this debut chapbook of twenty or so haiku, Risë Daniels explores some of the possibilities in three poetic stations of the day: daybreak, dawn to dusk, and twilight. Daniels may well have squeezed more from such devotions, yet some of what she offers surely chime the hours: *train platform — / my breath fades into / the winter twilight*

*Touch of Light*, by Jeannie Martin, with vincent tripi (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2019). 83 pages; 4" × 6¼". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-46-3. Price: \$15.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

*Touch of Light* opens with an invitation to engage in the natural world through haiku. As a poet and teacher, Jeannie Martin is primarily interested in bringing haiku to underserved and marginalized populations—

those found in senior centers, nursing homes, prisons, and homeless shelters—nevertheless, her prompts and model poems seem just about right for any group of practicing poets. In twenty short sections, each followed by three or four haiku of vincent tripi's and hers, she invokes the "simplicity of the everyday world" just outside our windows and doors. Suggested for its inspirational tone, though be advised, no craft do's or don'ts included. *springtime / my houseplants lean / toward the window* (Martin); *can't stand it anymore / can't stand it anymore / the mockingbird's silence* (tripi).

*Icons of Windsong*, by Dietmar Tauchner. Trilingual edition: English and German by the author; Hindi translations by Arvinder Kaur, with a foreword by Jim Kacian (India: Cyberwit.net, 2019). 81 pages; 5½" × 8½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN: 9789389074840. Price: \$15 from [www.cyberwit.net](http://www.cyberwit.net)

In his foreword to this collection of seventy or so haiku, Jim Kacian lauds Dietmar Tauchner as "one of the most innovative and accomplished poets writing today," not only for his "skillful handling of language and technique," but for his "capacious approach to the human situation." Tauchner indeed excels by these measures. Better than most, he folds the conceptual within the perceptual as he ranges from the "livingroom filled with worlds / of words" to "peace becom[ing] war somewhere" to "snow in the creator's synapses." Thought itself, or rather, the red shift/blue shift effect of the physical world on energies of thought, appears to be a major theme running through the chapbook. Recommended. *starry night / i become an icon / of windsong; heat shimmer / on the streets / the city's / illusions; DreamingTheLanguageOfQuanta*

*Look Closely: A Collection of Haiku*, by David H. Rosen (Eugene, Ore.: Resource Publications, 2019). 85 pages; 5" × 8". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-5326-8792-1. Price: \$9.00 from online booksellers.

This is retired psychiatrist David H. Rosen's eighth book of haiku, yet some readers may find themselves pondering where snippets of thought, however wry, leave off and disjunctive verse begins. In lieu of a heart to heart with the poet, it is the text that must be interrogated: *Existentially, it doesn't matter; Tomorrow, I'll be a / marigold; Once you're in the ground / it's over*

*Tick-Tock*, by Lew Watts (Great Britain: Snapshot Press, 2019). E-chap-book, free access and download from [www.snapshotpress.co.uk/ebooks.htm](http://www.snapshotpress.co.uk/ebooks.htm)

The retired geologist and oil company executive ponders time geological and otherwise in a set of sixteen haibun. Under the pressure of memory, the personal is the professional and the past is still present. In "Lost in Time," the poet inspects the deposits of an ancient glacial lake, looking for a "dropstone," a "pebble or boulder released by melting ice" in the late Devonian period: "But the layers are perfect, undisturbed, and I follow them north until the ledge narrows and disappears. *so many years ... / I still search for you / in traffic*"

*Another Trip Around the Sun: 365 Days of Haiku for Children Young and Old*, ed. Jessica Malone Latham (Taylorville, Ill.: Brooks Books, 2019). 184 pages; 5½" × 8½". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1929820-20-7. Price: \$24.00 from [www.brooksbookshaiku.com](http://www.brooksbookshaiku.com)

A possible problem with anthologies is a tendency to gobble haiku up in handfuls, which after a time can diminish each individual poem's effect. Anthologies like Martin Lucas' *Stepping Stones* or the current volume create a contextual form for the poems that seeks to halt this behavior. It is still possible, of course, to consume them greedily, but more enjoyable is reading them one at a time—in the case of *ATAtS*, one per calendar day. Since the poems follow the calendar, the reader engages with them in

the season they describe, which allows for a deeper, more relevant reading. Per the title, editor Latham desires for readers to tap into their inner child—that sense of wonder children have when encountering the world. This “beginner’s mind” is especially apt for haiku poets, yet Latham understands that it is often lost (or misplaced) as we get older, so the current volume is perhaps a way back to that mindset. The anthology contains 377 haiku (one for each day plus an additional introductory haiku for each month) by a cast of seventy-seven international poets, and the poems are strong examples of current English-language haiku practice. Anthologies can serve as good entry points for both persons interested in haiku and poets looking to better their skills, and *ATAtS* fulfils both these needs.

*Hog Wild*, ed. Corine Timmer (Portugal: Bicaideideias Publishing, 2019). 41 pages; 5¼" × 8". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-989-99760-3-0. Price: €10.00 from [www.bicaideideias.com](http://www.bicaideideias.com)

Coming off the heels of her previous anthology, *Barking Mad* (2018), whose proceeds benefited Portuguese street dogs, Timmer's new anthology aims to do the same for our porcine friends. Proceeds from its publication will benefit Farms Not Factories, a UK charity aimed at educating the public on the dangers of factory farms. The haiku themselves are of good quality and the reader never feels preached at. Several pages contain Timmer's artwork in which pigs and humans are represented with stones; these delightful works are worth the cost of the book alone. Another enjoyable and thought-provoking outing from Timmer. *livestock truck — / one round pink nose / stuck between bars* (Marina Bellini); *Tuscan boar stew / a taste of the meadow / in every bite* (Corine Timmer)