

Catch 41 by Colin Stewart Jones, Copyright 2013, Yet To Be Named Free Press, Stoke-on-Trent, England

Reviewed by Taofeek Ayeyemi (Aswagaawy)

Colin Stewart's *Catch 41* is a cascade of creative verses that graces its reader's mind with pleasure and rusticity. The title "Catch 41" is like a picture holding a million words as it punctuates the verses' openness to interpretations—due to absence of kireji. This title can imply "catch these haiku 4 the 1 who deserves it," "these verses are 4 the 1 who can unravel their mysteries" or, playfully "4 lines make 1 verse."

In the end, it is refreshing to know that there are 41 haiku in the collection presented in 4 lines each; away from the conventional 3 lines. This is not heresy, but a unique way of adding spark to an old style. Be that as it may, haiku of one, two and four lines are today accepted in Modern English Haiku in as much as they observe the rudiments of haiku viz kigo, kireji, karumi, et al.

In extremity to the Japanese tradition, each verse of 'Catch 41' is crafted in 17 syllables and are presented in 4 lines in laxity thereof. Little wonder the author named the style as 'haiku 4-17.' In principle, this form is a topnotch hack for a poet who wishes to venture into the craftiness of waka/tanka.

Catch 41 explores various themes touching the essence of life and nature with verses characterized by qualities found only in good haiku such as wabi-sabi, kokō and kokoro-ni-kaku. One of such verses is this:

At my Doctor's
I watch the autumn wind
reduce the rose
to a stick.

This verse begins with a sense of fear and hope and later reinforces a feeling of melancholy from a mutilated 'rose' that symbolizes death of, not just the rose but, a patient in the hospital. The harshness of the 'autumn wind' is underscored by the word 'reduce' showing how the wind attacks the rose thereby nourishing a feeling of roughness (*kōko*) and desolation; also evoking a powerful emotional participation (*kokoro ni kaku*) in reader's mind.

This collection however gives a soothing relief with some of its verses that overflow with humour. An example is:

Why did
a mallard follow me
across the bridge
expecting something?

This verse does not only give a feeling of subtle comicality but also conveys how man's environment interacts with him and vice versa.

In addition, the inquisitive mood of this verse is noteworthy. This happens in rare situations where the flow of a verse eschews caesura causing the displacement of *kireji*. In such situation, the *kireji* goes smoothly to the last line; and where such verse asks questions, a question mark replaces the pristine *kireji*—ellipsis and emdash. This situation of shift is called *Ichibutsu jitate*.

Another haiku that narrate animals activities as they interact with man's are these that finds a bird at the window of the observer overlapping its intellectual ability by doing what man ordinarily does—"cleaning" while the other "neatens" its prey before consumption:

A blackbird
on the window sill
wiping dust from
the geraniums.

The sparrow-hawk
starts to pull out
all the crow's feathers
before he eats.

In the spirit of senryu, the author also displays various human events without telling them, as expected of a good ku. Below is a verse that mocks the act of drinking by showing the messy effect thereof:

Still drunk
I wake coughing
and my clothes on your floor
in a piss-wet pile.

There are also verses that make you query possibility, perspective and purpose; and the various interpretations you arrive at will absolutely hold water, and warmth. One of such verses is this:

Carved in stone
the crow unable to fly
in less than
eighteen syllables.

With *Catch 41*, Colin Stewart takes his readers to the sea, the garden, the neighbourhood, the street, the sultry and the cold days, the silent and the melodious nights. And, giving attention to details, he explores various seasons vis-a-vis their resultant events.

What do you expect from an experienced haijin who has published several books, widely anthologized and editor of renowned haiku journals such as *Under the Bashō*, *Puddock* and *Gean Tree Press* (<https://geantreepress.com>). Therefore now, I'll confidently say that that there are more than 41 artefacts to catch in this collection.



23 by Gary Hotham (2019 Longhouse Publications, West Brattleboro, Vermont) 4 page foldout, 4 1/2" by 3" \$15 available from Longhouse PO Box 2454 West Brattleboro, Vermont 05303 or online at

<http://longhousepoetryandpublishers.blogspot.com/search/label/gary%20Hotham>

Reviewed by Michael Ketchek

23, like the TARDIS in Dr. Who, is a lot bigger on the inside than on the outside. Open the shiny green cover and enter a world of wonder; twenty-three artfully presented haiku by Gary Hotham. These expertly crafted haiku are meant to be savored, slowly, in order to get the full flavor of each one. A fine collection, in a delightful package, these haiku will occupy a tiny but important space in your haiku library.

full moon
the side with nothing
to hide

far into the dark
rain on
rain



Jack Kerouac and the Traditions of Classic and Modern Haiku by Yoshinobu Hakutani (2019, Lexington Books, Lanham, Maryland) 193 pages, 9" by 6" Hardcover, ISBN 978-1-4985-5827-3, \$95.00

Reviewed by Michael Ketchek

Jack Kerouac and the Traditions of Classic and Modern Haiku is an informative and thought-provoking book. It gives a historical perspective on the influences that shaped Kerouac's haiku and English language haiku in general. This book traces the history of haiku and the Buddhist influence on haiku poets, especially Basho and Issa. Hakutani shows how various Japanese poets,

especially Yone Noguchi influenced poets such as Yeats and Pound and brought the knowledge of haiku poetic sensibilities to the west. He further explains how the second wave of haiku enthusiasm that occurred in the 1950s can largely be attributed to the popularity of Blyth's four volumes on haiku. It was this work that brought haiku to the attention of such major figures in American literature as Richard Wright, Jack Kerouac, Allan Ginsberg and Gary Snyder. Considerable space is allotted to the relationship of Snyder and Kerouac and how Snyder introduced Kerouac to Buddhism and Blyth. Kerouac's spiritual growth and how he synthesized the Buddhist idea of compassion with the Christian idea of mercy and how it was central to many of his haiku is also discussed at length.

This is a far-ranging book, and while I might not fully agree with everything that Hakutani postulates (in a work of this scope that would be nearly impossible), I highly recommend this book to all who are interested in the history of haiku and the philosophical underpinnings of English language haiku and Kerouac's haiku in particular.



the weight of moon light by Spring Street Haiku Group, 2019, stapled, available for \$6.00 ppd from: Seidboard World Ent. POB 137, New York, NY 10012

Reviewed by Michael Ketchek

Starting with the beautiful cover, which sets the mood for this fine collection of haiku by the Spring Street Haiku Group, this chapbook is a pleasure to read. There are twelve contributors, all of whom are almost as well known as Cor van den Heuvel who is one of the twelve. This is a collection by some of the best and best known writers of haiku. Each poet has up to four haiku included in this collection. The high quality of haiku found in these pages makes it difficult to choose a few examples, so I will just pick the first and last haiku and assure you that all the ones in between are just as worthy.