



## Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years

*Philip Rowland (Editor) , Jim Kacian (Editor) , Allan Burns (Editor) , Billy Collins (Introduction)*

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*Haiku in English* is an anthology of more than 800 brilliantly chosen poems that were originally written in English by over 200 poets from around the world. Although haiku originated as a Japanese art form, it has found a welcome home in the English-speaking world. This collection tells the story for the first time of Anglophone haiku, charting its evolution over the last one hundred years and placing it within its historical and literary context. It features an engaging introduction by former U.S. poet laureate Billy Collins and an insightful historical overview by leading haiku poet, editor, and publisher Jim Kacian.

The selections range from the first fully realized haiku in English, Ezra Pound's "In a Station of the Metro," to plentiful examples by haiku virtuosos such as John Wills, Marlene Mountain, Nick Virgilio, and Raymond Roseliep, and to investigations into the genre by eminent poets like John Ashbery, Allen Ginsberg, and Seamus Heaney. The editors explore the genre's changing forms and themes, highlighting its vitality and its breadth of poetic styles and content. Among the many poems on offer are organic form experiments by E. E. Cummings and Michael McClure, evocations of black culture by Richard Wright and Sonia Sanchez, and the seminal efforts of Jack Kerouac.

## Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years Details

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## **From Reader Review Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years for online ebook**

### **Donald says**

Excellent read. Recommend it to anyone interested in the history of Haiku in English, and who wants to know a little about the key players past and current. The Mini Bios in the back of the book were worth the price. Nothing didactic or biased about the presentation of the information, either

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### **Charlie Close says**

An excellent overview of the history of haiku in english, presented by Jim Kacian, one of the foremost haiku editors and historians. A fine complement to The Haiku Anthology. I highly recommend this book to anyone looking for an introduction to haiku, or anyone familiar with haiku who wants a deeper historical grounding.

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### **Danielle DuPuis says**

If you are an English teacher, a person who appreciates poetry, or someone that is in the process of learning more about poetry, this is for you. Several of the poems stood out to me, though they didn't really seem like, "Haiku." Personally, I think I still prefer to read traditional Western poetry, but that's just me. Still, a decent read. I would have liked to have spent more time pondering and reflecting on the poems. But I think I would need to be guided by someone a little more educated in poetry.

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### **Nadina says**

I loved the Haiku's but I feel I would have taken more from the Overview if it had been mixed through the entire book, covering the impact of the author's that are mentioned before or after the poet's haiku. I did like the first part of the Overview where they talk about the format of haiku.

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### **Christian says**

Essential reading for any lover of haiku. Includes many journals and websites to explore.

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### **Scott Wiggerman says**

LOVED it! Page after page of extraordinary haiku! The "afterward" by Jim Kacian, an overview of 100 years of ELH (English-language haiku), should have been the foreword, but with an intro by Billy Collins (and the

opportunity to have a name people will recognize on the front cover), it was stuck after all the poems. I'd recommend starting with it and then reading the haiku. Nonetheless, I thoroughly enjoyed this volume, with such fine haiku as my friend Penny Harter's:

broken bowl  
the pieces  
still rocking

This is a book I could start all over and read again--and will.

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### **Lindsey says**

Absolutely love this anthology and have discovered so many new poets. The introductions/info was just as interesting as many of the poems.

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### **Bill Kerwin says**

Have you ever, browsing idly on the internet, encountered an obscure hobby or art—creative taxidermy, say, or “tiny house” design—and soon discovered you had fallen down a rabbit hole, that a subject you had once thought could be covered in a footnote was a universe in itself, possessing a history of pioneers and innovators, complete with schools of traditionalists and modernists and a smattering of iconolasts and rebels?

Reading *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years* can be lot like that. You will learn of the pioneers like Ezra Pound and Amy Lowell, the puristss who insist on sticking to seventeen syllables, the many who prefer prefer three lines and the few who prefer one, the ones whose subject matter is traditional (the seasons) and the ones who write of modern life (sexuality, warfare, politics). There are famous poets whose Haiku are surprisingly bad (Ginsberg) and famous prose writers whose haiku are surprising good (Richard Wright, Jack Kerouac), and then there are the 95% of poets whose names you have never heard of and whose writings are almost exclusively haiku. Like zen koans, they often miss the mark entirely, but when they strike you in the right way, they are small illuminations and may leave their mark on you for hours.

Out of the more than half a thousand haiku included in this volume, I give you twenty that gave me a touch of that zen koan experience. I could have chosen many others as well. And each one is written by a poet I have never heard of before.

*hot day  
the mime leans into a wind  
that isn't there. --Cor van den Heuvel*

*keep out signs  
but the violets keep on  
going. --John Wills*

*white lilacs*

*before sunrise  
their own light.* --Virginia Brady Young

*passport check  
my shadow waits  
across the border.* --George Swede

*summer night:  
we turn off all the lights  
to hear the rain.* --Peggy Willis Lyles

*Late August--  
I bring him the garden  
in my skirt.* --Alexis Rotella

*Through the slats  
of the outhouse door  
Everest!* --Margaret Chula

*last night lightning  
this morning  
the white iris* --Patricia Donegan

*saying too much  
the deaf girl  
hides her hands* --Matthew Louvriere

*deep in the mountains  
the shaving mirror  
shows me the mountains* --Dee Evetts

*back from the war  
all his doors  
swollen shut* --Bill Pauly

*spring sunshine  
my dead wife's handprints  
on the windowpane* --David Cobb

*in the silent movie  
a bird I think extinct  
is singing* --Leroy Gorman

*whittling  
till there's nothing left  
of the light* --Jim Kacian

*jackknifed rig  
a trooper waves us*

*into wildflowers --Robert Gilliland*

*all day  
I feel its weight  
the unworn necklace --Roberta Beary*

*behind the camera  
I face  
my family --Eve Luckring*

*Snow at dawn . . .  
dead singers in their prime  
on the radio --Rebecca Lilly*

*losing its name  
a river  
enters the sea -John Sandbach*

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## **Judith Schrauder says**

Fantastic Forward and poetry. The Overview at the end by Jim Kacian, however, was the biggest piece of written snobbery I've ever read. Clearly, he only had one small audience in mind when he wrote it.

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## **S.B. Wright says**

I previously reviewed The Haiku Anthology by Cor van den Heuvel, Haiku in English is perhaps best seen as a companion collection to it.

Some of the content is duplicated in each volume but they both have different objectives.

The former is a third edition of mainly North American Haijin (the third edition IIRC dropped some important early contributors like Janice Bostok from Australia) and it tends to provide a number of poems from prominent Haijin, enabling the reader to get a real sense of each poets oeuvre. I believe Cor attempted to choose the best examples of the form he could.

Haiku in English broadens the field of poets to include European, UK and Australian Haijin (current and historical) and attempts to reflect the history of the form, showcasing proto-English Haiku at the beginning and highlighting experiments in short poetry that stem from this Japanese form.

Indeed the jacket copy calls it “the first anthology to map the full range of Haiku in the English tradition”. So, as the editors forewarn in their foreword, it’s not a collection of the best of the best in the form. Which is not to say that those haiku selected are deficient in any way.

Where a Haijin may have made an impact or pursued a variation to great enjoyment and success, only selected poems have been chosen to illustrate the achievement. Some poets only have one Haiku listed and it may not be that which is considered best from their body of work, more that it might illustrate an important step in the tradition.

To that end Haiku in English is more about the form and its English history than individual poets or groups of poets.

We begin with Pound's:

In a Station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
Petals on a wet, black bough.

Examine parts of Wallace's Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird:

Amoung twenty snowy mountains,  
The only moving thing  
Was the eye of the blackbird

and then it's more or less off into more familiar Haiku territory.

There's some 800 poems here including those from many top poets still active in the form. The collection is capped off with a comprehensive historical essay by Jim Kacian, which in conjunction with the various introductions collected in The Haiku Anthology, serve to preserve the history of the form and the important achievements of its Haijin.

There is a very real danger that due to a lack of interest from the core of Western poetry tradition (despite works being included from Heaney and Collins) that much could be lost. This collection serves to head off this possibility.

Haiku in English should form part of a core reading cannon in anyone seriously attempting the form. There's also sufficient variety in the Haiku selected, that as a reader of The Haiku Anthology I don't feel as though I have paid for the same material.

Haiku in English is currently available in hardback, though a paperback version is slated for release in January.

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### **Amy (Other Amy) says**

The other books of haiku I wanted from my library were checked out, so I read this one instead. I was pleasantly surprised. This is a nice little anthology which attempts to present the history of haiku in English, organized by publication date, beginning with Ezra Pound and moving forward. I found quite a few poets whose work I will be seeking out in their own collections. There are some examples of short poems which are not haiku included to show the interplay between the haiku form and other poetic forms, which I did not really appreciate, but as this is as much a history as an anthology, I thought their inclusion was justified. The

most striking poem of the lot? Not a surprise:

#### *Suicide's Note*

*The calm,  
Cool face of the river  
Asked me for a kiss*

#### *Langston Hughes*

However, many of the later examples were also very good. The overview of haiku in English at the end provides a nice prose history of the form. I only skimmed the introduction by Billy Collins, though.

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### **Elizabeth says**

There are enough poems in this anthology that I could like many of them and still feel ambivalent about the collection as a whole. I appreciate the historical scope and being able to watch English-language haiku develop, but at the level of liking or loving (or not) individual poems, it was hit or miss. Which is true of many anthologies.

After the poems, there is a historical overview of haiku in English. I thought this was the best reason to read the book—and it wasn't the reason I chose it, so this was a pleasant surprise. I wish it had been placed at the beginning because then I would've had a historical context for the haiku as I read them. Come for the haiku, stay for the excellent explanation.

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### **Harley says**

The value of this collection of haiku is that it tells the story of haiku written in English over the last one hundred years. If you are a haiku poet and have read and studied haiku then I recommend that you first read the essay by Jim Kacian at the end of the book. It is superb! This anthology of English-language haiku is edited by Jim Kacian, Philip Rowland and Allan Burns. To put the book together, they obviously have read thousands of haiku published in the haiku magazines in the the last 60 years. They document the growth and changes in haiku through the work they have selected.

The anthology begins with some of the shorter poems of Ezra Pound and includes some well-known poets and writers like Wallace Stevens, Amy Lowell, Langston Hughes, e. e. cummings, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, and Jack Kerouac. Most of these poets dabbled in haiku but their real work was elsewhere. Then the anthology shifts to early haiku poets like Cor van den Heuvel who is best known for his anthology called **The Haiku Anthology**. The book is still the best collection of haiku written in English. It is the book that I would recommend to anyone interested in reading haiku.

For a period of 7 years between 1975 to 1982, I wrote and published more than 100 haiku in more than 20 haiku magazines. I also read the haiku of many of the poets in these pages. One of my favorites is James W. Hackett. I own several of his small books. Others who I read include: Nick Virgilio and Robert Spiess. Spiess was the editor of **Modern Haiku**, one of the best haiku magazines and one of the oldest that is still

published. I was fortunate to have dinner with the man one evening in Madison, WI where he lived. I also remember reading the haiku of John Wills, Rod Willmot, Virginia Brady Young, Michael McClintock, Geraldine Clinton Little, Janice Bostok, Alan Pizzarelli, Elizabeth Searle Lamb, Marlene Mountain, George Swede, Ruth Yarrow, Gunther Klinge, Peggy Willis Lyles, Alexis Rotella, James Kirkup, and Lee Gurga. I own two hardback collections of Raymond Roseliop, the Iowa priest who wrote haiku: **Rabbit in the Moon** and **Listen to Light**. Lorraine Ellis Harr, who has three haiku in this anthology, published my first haiku in her magazine, **Dragonfly**. I also met Randy Brooks who published several of my haiku in his magazine, **High/Coo**. So reading this book for me was like taking a trip down memory lane. A special thanks to Jim Kacian, Philip Rowland and Allan Burns.

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### **Juli Anna says**

A solid overview of the history of English-language haiku. There's a great mix of well known and little-known poets here, and a huge range of styles. I thought the quality of the haiku was a little hit-or-miss for me, though.

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### **Amanda at Nerdification Reviews says**

How fun!

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