

*Ethiopian Time*, by Bob Lucky (St. Paul, Minn.: Red Bird Chapbooks, 2014). 48 pages; 5½"×7". Matte four-color card covers; saddle-stapled. No ISBN. Price: \$12.00 from [www.redbirdchapbooks.com](http://www.redbirdchapbooks.com)

*Reviewed by Adelaide Shaw*

Bob Lucky lived in Ethiopia for four years. This collection of haibun, tanka prose and prose poems recounts some of his observations and experiences in that country. In his writing he gives us a view into a part of the world unfamiliar to most of us except for what we see on television or read in newspapers.

Haibun and tanka prose, as with haiku, are evolving. Writers of these forms, and editors, have their own understanding and preferences as to what makes a haibun or tanka prose. Without going into the guidelines and suggestions, or what should or should not be included in these forms, it is enough to say that Bob Lucky, as a writer of these forms, knows them well.

In these pieces we feel the heat of the day and the coolness of the night. We smell the smoke from burning crosses at a festival. We hear and feel the wind and see the poverty. We witness the author's daily life as a teacher in the haibun, "Poetry," as a resident learning the customs in "At the Nebil Café," as a concerned and worried husband in "Waiting," as a tourist visiting other areas in the country in "An Evening in Harar."

In addition to giving the reader a sense of being in an exotic place, Bob Lucky shares his personal feelings. In "Keeping Track" he muses about his birthday with the ending haiku expressing a universal feeling after we reach a certain age.

rainy season  
the warmth of ironed  
underwear

There are twenty-one haibun, four tanka prose and four prose poems in this collection. The prose poems read like haibun. Perhaps it is because these prose poems are included in a collection of haibun and tanka prose

that they seem incomplete without the addition of at least one haiku. When I came to the end of the prose I was expecting a capping poem.

Some of the narratives which end with a paragraph of prose would be better if that paragraph had been worked into the earlier prose before the last poem. This is a personal preference, but ending with prose seems like an afterthought, like something someone would say in conversation upon leaving, “Oh, by the way, there is just one more thing..”

In these narratives, the poems, whether haiku or tanka, are well matched additions to the prose. I especially liked the two haiku in “From the Porch.” In this haibun Bob Lucky describes a scene of flowers, plants and birds, a scene complete in its tranquility. The two haiku, one at the beginning and one at the end, add to this tranquil mood a sense of completeness.

waiting for nothing	27th anniversary
my toes in the sunlight	the puppy brings
knees in the shade	my missing sock

“Waiting” is another haibun in which the haiku are perfect additions to the prose.

a lump	in the dark
feeling every pothole	stars so far from my mind
in the road	

One more point I would like to mention is concerning titles. Titles are as important to haibun and tanka prose as are the narratives and the poems. The best titles are neither completely explanatory as to give away the suspense or so far removed from the prose as to be meaningless. The titles in this collection provide just the right amount of information. I particularly liked “An Update on the Class War” and “If Bruegel had lived in Addis.” At first I was intrigued by these titles; after reading the prose, I was amused by them.

*Ethiopian Time* is an enjoyable collection and an excellent example of haibun and tanka prose.