

They're sending  
 someone over.  
 I don't know who.  
 Someone blue  
 to sky it all up.

*The Silence Within*, by Juanito L. Escareal (East Bay, Calif.: Haikukuru Publishing, 2018). 120 pages: 5½" × 9". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-7202-7456-8. Price: \$16.00 from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

*Reviewed by Patricia J. Machmiller*

This is a different haiku book from most that you will read. It is mostly haiku, but it also offers nine tanka, a long haibun, and a few free-verse poems at the end. The haiku section, however, is the primary focus of the book and so that will be my focus also.

The haiku section is arranged by season; the poems are presented in groups of five on two facing pages with a single haiku on the left page and four haiku on the right. This presentation tends to encourage reading the five poems as a group. In addition to the poems there is commentary on each page; some of the comments are by the Australian haiku poet Dhugal J. Lindsay, who lives and works in Japan and is a mentor to Escareal, and some are by Escareal himself.

Here are some haiku that I am particularly struck by:

departing spring —  
 if I had a kite  
 I'd tie it down

the car thief  
 also took with him  
 plum petals

procrastinating...  
 the chayote climbs  
 an unfinished trellis

This wry, whimsical sense of the world is one of the endearing aspects of Escareal's writing. And might be easier to discern if the poems were laid out with space that left room in between for meditation. But in this book the commentaries are on every page and, thus, are hard to avoid.

The commentaries by Lindsay are insightful and give the reader a more in-depth, often more expansive view of the haiku he addresses. For example, for the haiku, "blackout — / the peace lily flower / a white flame," Lindsay writes:

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, even a simple blackout must cause anxiety and trepidation. In the dark, the *Spathiphyllum* flower looks to burn like a votive candle.

Escareal's comments, as the author, are necessarily more factual and most often speak to the experience that led to the poem's inspiration or discovery. Once in a while his comment and the haiku very nearly take the form of haibun if the prose and the haiku were reversed (all the comments are at the bottom of the page). For example, one of Escareal's comments is:

At dusk, I sometimes drive to the water's edge of San Pablo Bay ... After parking, I walk ... toward the water and [see] ... the silhouettes of mountains across the bay. For a fleeting moment, it seem[s] ... that I [am] ... the night itself looking down ...

This comment is written for the haiku:

night falling...  
mountains and I  
in shadow

I particularly like it when the commentary is haibun-like. But most of Escareal's comments are of the explanatory kind.

As I noted before, the layout of the haiku in the book tends to encourage reading them in clusters of five (1+4). And each such group has a certain cohesion—the haiku are of the same season and oftentimes the same kigo will be in several of the poems or all of the poems will have a

similar theme, such as a bird theme or a religious theme—all of which surprisingly enhances the reading experience. One is able, for instance, to observe how the same kigo operates in different contexts. This and Dhugal Lindsay's commentary make this book unique.

In organizing this book, the author may have intended that it be used as a teaching tool, for the author's comments lead the reader through the moments before the inspiration comes, the Lindsay comments give insight into some of the haiku, and the groups of haiku are studies in how particular kigo work. I can see it being used as a text for discussion in teaching higher grades or in adult workshops.

I asked some haiku friends from Japan about whether this manner of publishing haiku with commentary is ever used there and learned that it can be one of the forms used to publish one's own haiku collection. The style is called 自句自解 jikujikai (my haiku my interpretation) or 自註 jichu (my own comments).

I leave you with this from Juanito Escareal:

winter thoughts ...  
the skyscraper's glass façade  
fills with clouds

... On a winter workday, a blue sky with floating clouds is a welcome sight amid the doldrums of everyday routine.—jle

*Poetry as Consciousness: Haiku Forests, Space of Mind, and an Ethics of Freedom*, by Richard Gilbert, illustrated by Sabine Miller (Japan: Keibunsha, 2018). 294 pages; 6" × 8½". Cloth cover hardback; sewn spine. ISBN 978-4-86330-189-4. Price: \$38.00 USD; contact poetry.as.consciousnessATgmail.com.

*Reviewed by Mike Spikes*

The multifaceted richness of Richard Gilbert's impressive book makes it a difficult one to review. As the title suggests, its central subject is cognitive poetics, the role that mind plays in both the