

break with haiku tradition, but stretches its boundaries of inclusion in ways I found delightful. An impressive debut. □■

REVIEWED BY PIPPA PHILLIPS

ea's e by Scott Metz (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2022). 226 pages, 6" x 9". Matte four-color card covers, perfect softbound. ISBN: 978-1947271951. \$20 from <https://redmoonpress.com>.

In many of his poems, Scott Metz employs punctuation and spacing that confound an easy parsing of his poems—it is something of an ethos of his work. Metz offers a preliminary quote by Robert Grenier that proves illuminating: “Is it a long poem if you look at it long enough?” Metz extends the method to the title of his latest chapbook: *ease*, interrupted by errant punctuation—*ea's e*. The title is a haiku in and of itself, a paradox, whose meaning is subverted by an apostrophe and a space.

Metz's poems are laced with unexpected spacing and punctuation, creating breaths and pauses within the length of each poem, but also uniting the poems so they are in discourse with one another. Certain subjects recur throughout the volume. The leitmotif of leaves underscores the way Metz employs negative space to structure his poems—the poems themselves appear to be leaves scattered by the wind.

The volume is bookended by two poems that allude to the following haiku by paul m.:

outdated magazines
In the green room
Of a rose

In Jack Galmitz's *Views*, paul m. says the following about his verse: “The poem plays with the idea of a ‘green room’ which is traditionally a room stage performers wait in before they go on stage. I had in mind the green room of the Tonight Show or Letterman with their true and pseudo celebrities. The final line

makes the imaginative leap (a haiku-leap, if you will) to the room being the calyx of a rose, only now the rose has faded—much like all celebrity will” (21). While Paul M. compares the fleetingness of a season to the fleeting nature of fame, Metz centers his collection on the fleetingness of humanity in the grand scope of the universe:

awkward. Laughter in
the green. Room
of the Anthropocene

Anthropocene. Who is
that. Standing by
the stage. Door

For all the poems and experiences that come between these two haiku, we remain in the interior of the green room. By the end of the volume, we have only come to the threshold of the door, looking out into what comes next. Our time on earth, individually and collectively, is as short as a celebrity’s stay in the green room.

This perspective establishes a *de facto* empiricism that governs the collection. Thoughts about nature, gods, and grammar are yoked to the subjective lens of experience. Metz’s work reads like a history of humankind, where he both observes and creates the story of human entanglement with nature. Objectivity is impossible; the act of observation is an act of creation, and destruction—or deconstruction—is essential to it. For instance, the words below have been torn into pieces by spacing and punctuation, but the reader is meant to put them back together—an act akin to the construction of a nest.

.At
her. B
est.
th.Is a
nd. Th
.At

.For the
ir. Nes
t.S

At first glance, the poem looks like nonsense. It takes effort to piece the words together, but once you manage, you can read lineation into the poem as well—“at her best / this and that / for their nests.” The wordplay is a commentary on how the reader experiences the poem, piecing this and that together into an understanding of the poem. The vein of metatextuality that courses through the text demonstrates a preoccupation with the construction of meaning, of art, of technology, and of worldbuilding. Overt references to grammar emerge, often yoked to seasonal elements. Metz’s poems are often as much about the construction of a poem as they are about its subject, as much about the process of observation as the thing observed. Some haiku veer into the uncanny, employing an extremity in juxtaposition, whether it be the linguistic and the natural, earthly and the cosmic, or the real and the fictional.

fire
fly

there
's
a n

other

time

machine

On a first reading, Metz subverts the reader’s expectations—we expect that the poet has spotted another firefly, and are confronted instead with an impossibility. At first, the reader is stunned by the extremity of the juxtaposition. As the poem begins to settle, you realize that for Metz, the firefly is like Proust’s madeleine—a sensory experience that transports you back in time.

Metz’s *ea’s e* is the product of many years work, and is consequently rich with meaning, capable of multiple readings. It is a book one can depend on paying multiple return visits to.