

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY LAURIE D. MORRISSEY

The Dry Bones haiku by Paul Chambers (The Red Ceilings Press, Darbyshire, UK: 2021). 62 pages, 4" x 6". See theredceilingspress.co.uk.

Paul Chambers's third haiku collection is published in limited edition by The Red Ceilings Press, which specializes in producing pocket-sized chapbooks. *The Dry Bones* is a slim, attractive little book that feels good in the hand and really does fit in a pocket (or purse, glove compartment, or envelope). The cover image by Adam David Taylor is a semi-abstract painting: a wash of pale pinkish gray with a glowing orange shape and a tiny cross near the top. The painting is called "Chapel, Land, and Sea," which are the settings of most of the poems collected here. As in *This Single Thread* (short-listed for the Haiku Foundation's Distinguished Book Award in 2016), the founding editor of *Wales Haiku Journal* presents poems that are inspired by the landscapes of south Wales and by the creatures with which he shares them. In *The Dry Bones*, Chambers focuses mostly on those creatures that are not human. I count 15 kinds of birds, as well as farm animals, deer, and sea animals. There is a slowness in these poems, a savoring of quiet moments. There is attention to shadow and light. Many poems, while rich in concrete detail, also have a mystical quality, as in (1) *quieter now / than before it came / first snow*; (2) *pre-dawn stars... / plumes of breath / from a cattle truck*; and (3) *just enough rain / to darken the scent / of the pine woods*. The book contains 86 haiku in four untitled sections separated by blank pages—an uncluttered format that fits the spare, atmospheric poems. They include his 2019 Golden Triangle First Place Award-winning *night bus... / a handprint fills / with moonlight*. These few words easily become a story. Whose hand is it and where is the passenger going? Is the traveler alone? A full bus or a nearly empty one? Immediately following this haiku is a masterful example using a pivot line: *after rain / the river unreeling / warbler song*. Interestingly, the words "the dry bones" do not appear in any poem—which makes me wonder. Is the title a reference

to the vision God gave Ezekiel? The words “Dry bones . . . I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life” might suggest something about words on a page.

Pixels haiku by Simone Pansolin (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2021). 90 pages, 4.25" x 6.5". Perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-80-7. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

Pixels is the first commercially-published, full-length collection by Simone Pansolin, an Italian musician and haiku poet. The volume contains 70 poems printed one to a page in Italian and English, with the original in bolder type. When I read haiku in translation, I try to resist the temptation to read the English language version first. I like to start with the original, savoring the sounds and rhythm without knowing (or only guessing at) the context. The payoff comes with musical lines like *primo appuntamento*, translated less musically as *first date*. Having the translation in light type helps direct the reader to the original Italian, which some might consider the “truer” version. Pansolin presents his poems in four sections: *il colore del nero* (the color of black), *madreperla* (mother of pearl), *polvere* (dust), and *la storia del futuro* (the history of the future). In the first section, I admire the strong visual qualities of (1) *in the stands / all the legs kicking / without the ball* and (2) *new year's day— / leaves fallen, I can see / the air*. The second section is short (nine haiku), and I particularly like the emotion released by (1) *first date / the sea too moves / along the beach* and (2) *again for the first time an unexpected love*. The third section, “dust,” consists of a dozen haiku about the passage of time. Two favorites here are (1) *the ghost of water / on boiling asphalt— / no longer twenty* and (2) *silver wedding / two silences*. The final section contains a number of poems touching on the theme of war, ending with the title haiku: *discovering / among school desks / the history of the future*. Two-line haiku are relatively rare, yet Pansolin includes eight in this collection. The best of these duo-ku, in my opinion, is *a hundred thousand fallen / and other statistics*. Having finished my first read-through, enjoying many of

Pansolin's poems, I decided upon my favorite: *in a diamond / the mine / a single haiku* (reminiscent of Rumi's entire ocean in a drop). Then, I took my first glance at the back cover of the book and saw that, instead of blurbs by poets and editors, all it contained was this haiku. Whether chosen for this spot by the poet or the publisher, I do not know, but clearly this one resonates beautifully for writers and appreciators of haiku.

Keep Walking haiku by Bill Kenney (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2021). 94 pages, 4.25" x 6.5". ISBN 978-1-947271-76-0. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

keep walking is Bill Kenney's third collection published by Red Moon Press. Almost in his ninth decade of life—and his second writing haiku—the former English professor brushes up against some of life's big questions: those about illness, aging, perseverance, acceptance, and mortality. These haiku are his honest conversations with these questions, and I find myself comparing them with my own. In this collection, equally divided into “tense,” “moving my lips,” “the time it takes,” and “tiny sips,” nearly 80 haiku and senryu are presented one per page. They are intensely human, offering up small, subtle moments that hint at the irony we frequently overlook in minor occurrences. The poet's experiences are often somewhat melancholy, but Kenney sees the humor in them. His wry take on life shines in these haiku: (1) *old friends / we talk about the men / we used to be*; (2) *87 / going on 88 / I tell the child*; (3) *strumming the guitar / I never learned to play / autumn rain*; and (4) *winter day / shorter than / I used to be*. Many haiku in the first section of the book deal with illness, specifically cancer. It includes a gem that is polished to a mirror-like finish: *future tense / the doctor / will call*. Other strong and memorable poems in *keep walking* are minimalistic, nature-based haiku. Examples include (1) *raindrops / deciding / not to* and (2) *heron / the time / it takes*. The lovely *evening star / the hills / beyond the hill* just might be my collection favorite. *keep walking* contains two fine examples of

the *honkadori* technique, connecting the reader with Robert Frost (*passing by woods / on a snowy evening / my unkept promises*) and Emily Dickinson. The final section, “tiny sips,” ends with the calm and beautiful *steady rain / might as well / keep walking*. This coda rests nicely with the cover photograph of an uphill path through a damp forest. At the top of the rise is a mist that just might be clearing.

birth haiga by Elizabeth McFarland (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2021). 100 pages, 6" x 9". Glossy covers; perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-75-3. \$25 from redmoonpress.com.

Elizabeth McFarland, an Irish poet living near the Black Forest in Germany, is co-founder of The United Haiku and Tanka Society and a regular contributor to the journal *Haigaonline*. Thirty poem-paintings appear in her first published collection, two of which were published previously in journals. McFarland’s haiga are traditional in that they integrate the three elements of haiku, brush painting, and calligraphy (or in this case, handwriting). In the Japanese tradition, a haiga is created by one individual, and all three elements in McFarland’s haiga are her own work. As in all well-executed haiga, the combination of the three elements creates a pleasing whole with a power all its own. Traditionally, both haiku and painting were produced quickly. In McFarland’s haiga, her ink-brushed paintings and flowing handwriting have a spontaneous feel. The relationship between the painting and the poem may not be obvious. It can take several readings to fully sense the relationship and allow it to shift us into a new space. Happily, the haiga in *birth* expand with each reading. For example, the poem *November twilight— / the moon that was always there / begins to shine* is paired with a wispy dancing figure and a pyramidal shape. This could be a reference to her daughter, whom the poet says (in her introduction) “appears in several guises but wouldn’t necessarily recognize herself.” Each haiku appears in type on the left-hand page with its corresponding haiga on the facing page. McFarland’s paintings, black ink on white pages, vary in tone and density,

adding depth to the haiku. The paintings range in appearance from bold to delicate and from representational to abstract, and they often incorporate collage. One of the most striking haiga is *winter jasmine...[sic] / he apologises / in his sleep*. In this case, the hand-brushed words are slightly hard to read, so the typeset words are helpful. This is also helpful in those haiga where words are layered over the painting (or vice versa). Another artistic element of each haiga is the position of the words on the page. McFarland uses vertical and horizontal lines, sometimes framing the image or threading through it, and not always corresponding with the line breaks of the typeset haiku. Just as there is a disjunction between the elements of a haiga, there is a disjunction or “leap” between the title word and the content of this book. The word does not appear, although there are birthdays and daughter references. My favorite haiga here is a five-word haiku paired with a mysterious devilish figure: *midsummer’s night / a thing / running*. There is high drama in these few, simple words. The overall effect is both humorous and creepy, open to myriad interpretations. It turns me into a child outside at night, at the mercy of a too-fertile imagination. Midsummer is the season of fertility. A fertile imagination is at work in this haiga. □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY RANDY BROOKS

Carrying Sunrays haiku by Bakhtiyar Amini (Velvet Dusk Publishing, Sacramento, CA: 2020). 68 pages, 6" x 8.25". Four-color card covers, perfect bound. ISBN 9798579804822. \$8.99 from [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

Bakhtiyar Amini lives in Germany and writes primarily in Persian-Tajik and Russian. As the editor/publisher Christine L. Villa writes, “this haiku collection . . . reflects the brighter side of the poet’s everyday experiences and surroundings. From the first to the last page of this book, you will discover that he carries no excess baggage, such as resentment, hate, or anger, despite all of his misfortunes in life. Instead, he takes with him his rose-

colored glasses” (v). Probably the “darkest” haiku in the book is one selected as a Reader’s Choice Award in *The Heron’s Nest: refugee camp / pork and beef cooking / in the same pan*. Most of the haiku are about relationships, dreams, hopes, and the good life. Here are a couple more examples: *divorce / your name is no longer / my password* and *fresh newspaper / the editorial / smells of kerosene*. The book is illustrated by Hemapriya Chellappan.

Contemplating Nature: Pictures, Passages & Haiku by Robert Epstein (Middle Island Press, West Union, WV: 2021). 212 pages, 6" x 9". Four-color card covers, perfect bound. ISBN 9798701616118 \$15 from amazon.com.

Contemplating Nature: Pictures, Passages & Haiku is a book of prompts for writing haiku. Robert Epstein gathers quotes about nature and matches them with photographs. Then, he uses them to imagine, speculate, and write a resulting haiku. In this book, he offers all three prompts—the original quote, the photograph, and his haiku—and invites readers “to embark on his or her own journey of poetic inquiry” (xvii). One example is when Epstein pairs a quote from Marie Curie, “All my life through, the new sights of Nature made me rejoice like a child,” with a photo of a girl in a meadow of cone flowers. Here is the adjacent haiku: *rifle barrel— / the perfect place / for a long stem daisy*. Another example is when a photograph of a waterfall is matched with a quote from Leonardo da Vinci: “Water is the driving force in nature.” And here is Epstein’s haiku: *the answer is yes no yes breaking waves*. □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY TAOFEEK AYEYEMI

Finding the Other Door senryu by Adjei Agyei-Baah. (Mamba Africa Press, Ghana, West Africa: 2021). 23 pages. Available for free download from africahaikunetwork.wordpress.com

How do you take bitter pills smilingly? Let’s assume the maker sugar-coated it. Adjei Agyei-Baah did just that with this collection

by employing humor that sanctifies the soul, as it is with the spirit of senryu. *Finding the Other Door* motivates poets to keep producing in spite of rejection: *morning garden / reading my rejected haiku / to a little sparrow*. While sharing a coping mechanism, the above verse equally creates a connection between humanity and nature in a deeply interactive and harmonizing manner. With it, the author says, when you mock your failure, it fades away. However, the sense of subtlety (*hosomi*) coupled with the feeling of melancholic loneliness (*wabi*) seem to share an aura of abandonment. Editors are therefore implored to soften the blow of rejection with kindness: *spring freshness / almost terminating my ginko walk / a rejected haiku mail*. This simple verse reveals a universally shareable and understandable human experience (*kidoairaku*) which could have unfriendly effects. Most times, rejection has nothing to do with quality, but other factors, such as an editor's inability to resonate with it. Poets are thus advised to keep revising and submitting their work until they find their homes: (1) *rejected submission / finding the other door / to the editor's mind* and (2) *clear blue sky... / my rejected haiku moves on / to win a contest*. Be that as it may, therapeutic and refreshingly so, this new collection by Adjei Agyei-Baah will make a succour for poets at every point of rejection: *filling the cracks / of my rejected haiku / falling cherry blossom*. □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY KRISTEN LINDQUIST

Wasp on the Prayer Flag haiku and senryu by Maeve O'Sullivan (Alba Publishing, Uxbridge, UK: 2021). 60 pages, 5.75" x 8.25". Glossy cover, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-912773-39-8. \$15 from albapublishing.com.

Irish poet Maeve O'Sullivan's assured, comfortable style reflects the fact that she has been writing and publishing poetry for over 25 years. This fifth collection with Alba Publishing contains haiku and senryu from the years of 2018–2021. *Wasp on the Prayer Flag* is divided into three sections—Seasons, Sequences, and Senryu. The Senryu section is further divided into themes such as “Wanderlust,”

“Home Sweet Home,” and the moving “A Year and a Day,” a series of responses to the death of her sister in 2017: *barista art the heart slowly disintegrates*. The title poem is found in the last section, “Pandemic”: *my friend tells me more / about his cousin’s passing— / wasp on the prayer flag*. I enjoyed hearing O’Sullivan read from this book on a recent podcast, bringing some of her poems to life and offering a little context for their creation. As an educator, she typically spends her summer breaks traveling and writing, and her work is often inspired by that change of scenery: *walking tour / under this nondescript car park / Hitler’s bunker*. During the pandemic, however, O’Sullivan was forced to remain closer to her Dublin home, so this book is more Ireland-based than her previous collections. Nevertheless, the collection as a whole doesn’t feel pandemic-heavy and is nicely leavened with humor: *bored with lockdown / I wear the sandals in which / I travelled the world*. O’Sullivan’s poems share actual, ruminated moments. A few favorites, from among many, illustrate this sense of “being there”: (1) *I sneak a blackberry / with each lap of the path— / walking meditation*; (2) *this little moorhen / navigating alone / canal walk*; (3) *Horn Hill / a bare-chested farmer waves / to an unseen being*; and (4) *a swan flies west / under Capel Street Bridge— / rainy rush hour*. She herself has described the *ku* featured in this book as “aide-memoires,” touchstones to feelings as much as to physical places. The unassuming, authentic nature of O’Sullivan’s work, with no flashy word play or structural distractions, makes the reader feel as though they are walking alongside her through a garden or along a city street. We all benefit from looking as she points out the birds, flowers, and people that catch her keen poet’s eye along the way.

Window Seats: A Contemporary Anthology of Cat Haiku & Senryu edited by Stanford M. Forrester/sekuro (bottle rockets press, Windsor, CT: 2021). 110 pages, 5.5" x 8". Glossy cover, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-7366037-1-0. \$21 from bottlerocketspress.com.

Although there are several parody “haiku” books about cats out there, this anthology is no joke. Editor Stanford Forrester states

his intention for this book in his introduction:

This anthology is a celebration of life, cats, and poetry; a celebration of the ordinary because that's where we spend most of our lives . . . [W]e aren't high on the mountain meditating or gazing off into the clouds and sky every day. No, we are home feeding our cats and cleaning out their litter boxes. It doesn't get more Zen than that.

Something about cats—and our relationships with them—has inspired centuries of poets and writers to extol this little animal that deigns to share our space. Cats have been depicted in haiku from the beginning; Bashō, Buson, and Issa all wrote about cats, often using the early spring kigo “cats in love.” This anthology showcases the latest examples following that long tradition. Featuring the work of 102 different poets, many of them noted and well-published, this collection offers a wide selection of good haiku that all happen to be about cats. (Full disclaimer: I am a contributor.) Like some haiku, the inscrutable cat can perfectly embody the Japanese aesthetic of *yūgen*, or mystery: (1) *midnight waking . . . / the cat's face / studying mine* (Bonnie Stepenoff) and (2) *my cat / looks so many places / beyond me* (Tom Clausen). And, yet, the everyday quirks of cats will also resonate in these poems—the cat's love of sleep: *midmorning — / the sleepy cat / calls it a day* (sekiro). That proverbial curiosity: *trapped beneath a paw / curiosity / frees the fly* (Julie Schwerin). The playfulness that so easily flips to killer instinct: *robin's-egg sky — / the cat bats around / the last feather* (Carolyn Hall). Cat and dog adoptions skyrocketed during the coronavirus pandemic. When we need a companion, we turn to pets: *the calico cat / we talk about isolation / or at least I do* (Alan Summers). And we grieve when we lose that beloved family member: *the children bury / a taped shoebox / newly hallowed ground* (Barrie Levine). This anthology celebrates well these ordinary creatures that have such power to transform our lives and inform our poetry.

Crumb Tray haiku by Jay Howard (Privately printed: 2021). 84 pages, 5" x 8". Glossy cover, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-00-693846-7. \$10 from author at jayhoward@gmail.com.

Jay Howard's first collection *Crumb Tray* is jam-packed, typically six poems per page. That's a lot of crumbs on this toaster's crumb tray. This is perhaps, in part, reflective of the poet's enthusiasm for the form; he shares in his introduction that, in 2019, he had written more than one thousand haiku by May! But, for the reader, it's a bit too much to take in, even over several sittings. Howard's better, often humorous, observations get lost amid the crowd: (1) *a long drive / I come to the end / of my patience*; (2) *through green a wisp of cloud am I happy*; and (3) *discussing which mom's / chicken and noodles is best / first snow*. Howard states in his introduction that he "tried to stay out of the way" in arranging this collection. But the book would have benefited from more thought as to arrangement, along with heavier-handed pruning and curating to create more white space on each page and introduce some much-needed pauses. Also, while a reader new to haiku might appreciate the guidance of the random explanatory notes throughout, they felt unnecessary and distracting to me. At the end of his book, Howard includes an apologia that offers a basic explanation of some principles of haiku construction using his own poems as examples, providing useful information for a reader unfamiliar with the form. □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY TOM SACRAMONA

Across the Full Moon haiku and senryu by Taofeek Ayeyemi. (Mamba Africa Press, Ghana, West Africa: 2021). 59 pages. Available for free download from africahaikunetwork.wordpress.com

"To everyone who has held the torch as I take this haiku journey," Taofeek Ayeyemi begins in the dedication of his eChapbook *Across the Full Moon*. These are poems of the nighttime, Bryan Rickert observes in the foreword, priming the reader to look for the

“wonder,” “romance,” and “possibilities” that exist in this world. Ayeyemi’s collection includes haiku in English with a Yoruba translation below, done by Oni Tomiwa. The English haiku *the cat’s shadow / spills into the plate . . . / full moon* has its cut after the second line; this is one of the few instances where the Yoruba translation is rendered differently, and instead the cut between phrase and fragment comes after the first line: *òṣùpá kooro . . . / òjiji ológbò / nínú àwo*. We can learn from the author’s sensitivity how to always be open and receptive to the haiku moment, and we can delight in being wholly invited into his world: *chilly wind . . . / even the blanket / is cold; wedding night . . . / the gifts covered / in dew-laden dust*. As we make our journey guided by Ayeyemi, we increasingly learn more about our fellow travelers: *making a bed— / the man in a hat spreads / a fishing net*. While able to write personal poems and do romance justice, as a lawyer by profession, Ayeyemi mostly thinks about others. In this one in particular, he references Bashō’s famous ‘autumn deepens’ haiku: *rainy night . . . / a neighbor fills her buckets / with dirty clothes*. We appreciate that the haiku section runs twice as long as the senryu section, although Taofeek Ayeyemi is skilled at both types of verses by virtue of his powers of observation and kind heart: *first dinner / watching her dimple / through glass cups*.

Personal Myths: Numbers 2, 3, and 4 haiku by Thomas H. Chockley (Lulu, Raleigh, NC: 2021). 96 pages, 4.25" x 7". Four-color card cover, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1716321993. \$15 from online booksellers or \$2.58 eBook from *lulu.com*.

In the opening pages of *Personal Myths: Numbers 2, 3, and 4*, Thomas H. Chockley recounts that the idea for this book stemmed from a walk he took with his granddaughter and wife at Hadrian’s Wall in England back in 2016. Making good on his artistic vision, Chockley brought out *Personal Myths I: Born in Mystery* from Red Moon Press in 2018. Chockley’s second collection has 156 haiku and is the companion piece to his first on the mystical function of myth.

This book continues to cover the remaining functions of myth, as posited by Joseph Campbell: the cosmological, sociological, and pedagogical *vis-à-vis* the book's haiku are grouped into these as section headings. Cosmological: *before during and after me / Niagara Falls*. Sociological: *politicians speaking in bumper stickers*. Chockley's thoughts show he has an active mind attentive to a lot of different things from geocaching to quantum foam and mound builders. Many are cerebral poems. Chockley tells us walking at Hadrian's Wall: "Any hiker is constantly aware of the present and the historical in the landscape." The nexus of present day and the historical line up well in this one: *a Dublin pigeon / on Oscar Wilde's head / tour stop # 5*. What stays in my mind is Chockley's introduction to the pedagogical function and Campbell's definition of it as "how to live a human lifetime under any circumstances." Two of Chockley's from that section: (1) *foggy moon / the first time he calls me / step-dad* and (2) *egg timer / at our age / over is easy*.

Dream Tree haiku by David Watts (Cyberwit.net, India: 2021). 50 pages, 5.5" x 8.5". Four-color card cover, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-81-8253-714-9. \$15 from online booksellers.

David Watts's debut collection is here fast. He wrote his first haiku mid-August 2020, and in less than a year, has had 81 accepted in numerous publications and released this collection, offering 76 poems through the India publisher Cyberwit. Thematically, *Dream Tree* touches on many subjects from the more general field of owls, dragonflies, and bonsai to the specific, such as gluhwein, the alphorn, and the San Gabriel River. They hold together as remembrances of the poet's life, re-seen and re-imagined by the close attention the form demands: (1) *potato sprouts / my son asks / about reincarnation* and (2) *barn dream / picking sparkles of hay / from her hair*. Memories and loss alternate as dominant subjects and sometimes combine: *places / my father took me / river mountain sky*. My favorite: *her face / ignites goes out ignites / passing firefly*.

The Wild Beyond Echoing: James Hackett's Haiku Way by Paul Russell Miller (2021, Grandad Publishing, Painswick, Gloucestershire) 146 pages, 5.75" x 8.875". Four-color card covers, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-9995931-4-8. \$15 plus postage ordered directly from the publisher by email to: pr.miller@live.co.uk

Paul Russell Miller's book studies the essential elements of haiku composition as the form was understood by the late James W. Hackett through his many published works over a half century of writing. The book was released on what would have been Hackett's ninety-second birthday (August 6, 2021). Well known to many, Hackett is a first-generation haiku poet whose beginning work appeared as early as 1963 in the journal *American Haiku*. Miller puts together a wonderful study of Hackett's 'Haiku Way' that will please any haiku aficionado for its passion regarding the form. This will also interest readers for the comparisons between Hackett's Way and the way English-language haiku has evolved. "By his own admission," Miller says in the preface, Hackett was a "fiercely independent spirit . . . and one who held firmly to certain principles which the rapidly-developing genre quickly marginalised, his withdrawal from the American haiku scene began long before his retirement to Maui and the appropriately-named township of Haiku in 1999." The scholarly research that went into this book was supported by Hackett's literary estate, which provided the author with Hackett's private journals. Miller shares some interesting earlier drafts of how Hackett classics arrived in their end form. Hackett made extreme use of punctuation, and Miller expertly gives close textual readings on how punctuation furthers Hackett's poems. Chapters are grouped around the "Suggestions" section (e.g., writing tips) with which Hackett traditionally concluded his books, so this study intends to also serve as an instructional volume for those seeking to write haiku the Hackett Way, which is inseparable from his Zen approach. Hackett's own poetry serves as the best example to his method: (1) *A bitter morning: / sparrows sitting together / without any necks*; (2) *The child's dish of mud, / by her own calculation, / took a year to cook*; and (3) *Blocked, the line of ants / just broadens until it can / go around*.

Season's End haibun by B. A. France (Kelsay Books, American Fork, UT: 2021). 34 pages, 6" x 9". Four-color card cover, perfect softbound. ISBN: 978-1-954353-11-4. \$16 from online booksellers.

Although *Season's End* is a slim book, it is full of haibun and tanka that pay such close attention to the details that the collection feels much larger on the whole. The opening tanka has lines B. A. France attributes to Takuan Shoto, a Rinzai Zen Buddhist: "forget the mind / so you can do all things." France's technique works by slowing down and narrating events that seemingly would have occurred in a split second's time—he does this in the haibun "Foxtrot," where he watches a fox until she drops out of view, as well as in "Tunnel Vision," where he observes the changing play of leaf shadows as twilight closes in around him. The tanka and prose are often flowery; the connection between a haibun's prose and its capping verse is sometimes obscure. For a collection containing almost exclusively natural imagery, France manages social commentary in two haibun "Hybridization" and "White Wings." In the first, we learn a tree in his yard has undergone a hybridization with another, and the two types of trees have become one. The significance of this for France is that it also applies to people—to quote from the piece: "Not cataclysm. Not havoc. Not revolution. Change, one being at a time. One soul at a time." "White Wings" ruminates on the flight of a cabbage moth. France laments the staggering path of modern society where capitalism is inseparable from the previous centuries' colonialism:

Busy white wings, dollar-sized, in constant motion. Not as big as silver dollars, instead those new ones, with Jean Baptiste hoisted on Sacagawea's back and her knowing, world-wise gaze over her shoulder, looking back at you as if thinking: I see what you're going to do to this place.

The piece concludes with the verse: *under the maple / summer ivy claims space / crawling over stones.*

Grandmother's Pearls: Dream Anthology by Alexis Rotella & Friends (Jade Mountain Press, Greensboro, NC: 2021). 117 pages, 6" x 9". ISBN 979-8529608227. Available from [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and \$9.99 from Kindle.

Every word and page of Alexis Rotella's newest collection, *Grandmother's Pearls: Dream Anthology*, is put to its best use, including its fine art illustrations. I was already engaged from examining the back cover with this comedic line from Connie Kaplan, author of *Dreams Are Letters from the Soul*: "Introductions are usually boring and I often skip them, but the intro to *Grandmother's Pearls* is amazing, inspiring, and informative." This kind of writing truly does bare one's soul. There are plenty of wonderful haibun, along with select haiku, tanka, and cherita in this dream anthology. In the introduction, Rotella recalls a talk she gave at Haiku North America Winston-Salem about how the moon affects our dreams: "Even if we don't correlate the moon with dreams, the moon plays an unconscious part in our everyday life. She represents the unconscious, and our everyday and night life is colored by what sign of the zodiac she is traveling through. Dreams are filtered through twelve different lenses (signs), the moon being the magnifier." Readers are privileged a peek into Rotella's and her friends' dream realities, including Roberta Beary, Margaret Chula, Terri L. French, Penny Harter, Kala Ramesh, Alan Summers, and Billie Wilson, among others. My favorite pieces are (by Rotella unless otherwise noted): "No Escape," "Glass Ceiling," "Tequila Moon," "Preordained," "Eerie Night," "Being Green," "Pompeii" by Roberta Beary, "It's 1952 Again" by Barbara Kaufman, and "Back to First Grade." Only five pieces have prior publication credits, meaning there is much in print to enjoy for the first time. I will end with Rotella's shortest haibun, "Easter Lily Time," regretting that I cannot quote from more pieces at length, as all are intriguing: "I receive a handwritten letter from my father on the anniversary of his death and although I understand it, I have no idea what it says. *taste of darkness on my tongue.*"

Sound of a Leaf: 2018 Seabeck Haiku Getaway Anthology edited by Carole MacRury and Vicki McCullough (Haiku Northwest Press, Bellevue, WA: 2020). 74 pages, 6" x 9". ISBN 978-1-953092-01-4. \$15 from online booksellers.

Sound of a Leaf mourns Johnny Baranski who died in January 2018. There is much to appreciate in the anthology, and the introduction mentions that a memorial reading for Johnny was led by his daughters, Margo Williams and Amy Baranski, as well as Amy's partner, Bob Redmond, all of whom are poets. It opens with a haiku by John Stevenson, an attendee from the East Coast: *night train / we all think we know / where we're going*. While I enjoyed the somber poems most, such as this fine haiku: *shorter days / a mudshark thrashing / in the shallows* (Michele Root-Bernstein), there are plenty of upbeat poems which touch on solace: *still air / still trees / still me* (Amy Baranski), as well as those that playfully touch on the art of haiku itself: *at the haiku meeting / the wood floor planks / short long short* (Seren Fargo). One rengay, and a brief account by Garry Gay remembering how he created the form, is also included. A book you can get lost in: *labyrinth / facing myself / with each turn* (Chandra Bales).

Joining the Conversation: 2019 Seabeck Haiku Getaway Anthology edited by C. R. Manley (Haiku Northwest Press, Bellevue, WA: 2020). 97 pages, 5.5" x 8.5". ISBN 978-1-953092-02-1. \$15 from online booksellers.

C. R. Manley edited this 2019 Seabeck Haiku Getaway anthology and provides an introduction in enough detail that readers feel included in the magic of these West Coast haiku gatherings. It is clear from the cover that this was a special year, featuring artwork by Ion Codrescu. A rengay composed by poets traveling from afar opens the collection. The rest of the anthology is paced two to three haiku per page, interspersed with Codrescu's beautiful haiga of seven choice poems. This layout divides the anthology into its smaller parts and allows readers ample space to stop and mull over favorite haiku: *morning after / reconsidering / the taste of sake* (Jacquie

Pearce), *whitecaps— / one breaks / into an eagle* (Tanya McDonald); *twenty steps / into the forest— / the things I can't name* (C. R. Manley); and *some deer ignore / for a few moments / the traveler* (Ion Codrescu).

Ever Forward haiku by Claire Thom (Privately printed: 2021). 67 pages, 8.5" x 11". Four-color card covers, perfect softbound. ISBN 979-8505146293. Available from online booksellers.

Claire Thom is a poet and teacher originally from Scotland who has been living in the south of Spain for the past 15 years. Her interest in haiku stems from visiting Japan in 2019. Profits for this collection are being donated to a Guide Dogs charity in the U.K. (<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/>). Colin Thom is an artist and retired architect, and he's responsible for the watercolor illustrations between each of the intentionally-titled haiku. Without observing formal elements of haiku composition except adherence to 5-7-5, the resultant poems are awkward—*coffee bean brown eyes / soft cappuccino feathers / sprinkled with cocoa*—and others read as whole sentences: *cautious pin cushion / carrying hitchhiking fleas / weaves its way through leaves*. □■



Errata

In the previous issue 44:2—

- *Heart Springs* by Michele Root-Bernstein should have read “the rules are not to look away from each other and not to stop ever until.” (It incorrectly read “<not to ever stop until>”).