

long afternoon—
again at the blinds
the wasp's shadow

sidewalk pigeons
scattering
the day moon

Philadelphia is a city that is known for being as tough as it is soulful, and George reveals both sides. The time you spend reading an accomplished collection of haiku is a great gift to yourself, and this is a book I highly recommend. □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY RANDY BROOKS

Without Syntax haiku by Lee Gurga (Modern Haiku Press, Champaign, IL: 2020). 32 pages, 5.5" x 4.25". Four-color card covers, saddle stitched. ISBN 978-0-9600855-3-8. \$3 from modernhaiku.org.

Without Syntax is a mini chapbook featuring 18 haiku by Lee Gurga. This collection is missing the author's name, but I can assure you that it is by Lee Gurga, and notably, that it received an honorable mention in the Touchstone Distinguished Book Awards. The book is arranged for a pleasant reading experience with one-line haiku on the left pages and vertical haiku (one word per line) on the right pages. The title comes from this vertical poem: *without / syntax / the / bare / skin / of / dawn*. I prefer the vertically-arranged haiku because this format slows the poem down and lets us take in the significance of each added word. In this title poem, we end up with our bare feet planted squarely on dawn. This is an excellent title poem because Gurga is a master of playing with the tension between language and sensation. Sometimes his poems push an abstract word into sensation as in this haiku: *an unspoken assumption tracks through the petals*. But in the best of his work, a technical word becomes a spiritual, life-giving mystery. For example, I have always admired this fresh perspective: *floating in the sonogram summer moon*. Sometimes we get lost in words and find ourselves in the sensations of living. I will end with this one: *looking up from my thesaurus dusk*.

Closed Systems of Joy haiku by Chris Gordon (Eugene, OR: 2020). 24 pages, 5.5" x 8.5". Saddle stitched. No ISBN. Available from the author at 2115 Churchill Street, Eugene, OR 97405.

I don't understand why, but *Closed Systems of Joy* is published with the title page at the back of the book. The first 18 haiku (from the back forward) all start with the phrase "the virus," so perhaps the book is laid out backwards because 2020 has been such an upside-down year? Here are three samples of Gordon's viral haiku: (1) *the virus / I adjust the hole / in my sock*, (2) *the virus / they steal our / common ideals*, and (3) *the virus / superstitions / don't count*. Recurring images from the pandemic pop up in subsequent poems such as *today / at the market / a few masks*. Here is the title poem: *closed systems of joy / under the fog / a thin band of light*. I like the too-house-bound feeling of this one: *in the end / they move by themselves / slippers*. We get one apocalyptic haiku: *good company / at the end of / the world*. I close with the paranoia of socks: *her socks / tell me / she's angry*. What a year!

Light and Counterlight haiku by Mark Miller (Ginninderra Press, Port Adelaide, SW, Australia: 2020). 88 pages, 5" x 7.75". Four-color card covers, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-76109-044-8. \$20 from ginninderrapress.com or online booksellers.

Mark Miller has been writing and receiving awards for haiku for over 30 years, but this is his first published collection. *Light and Counterlight* includes 110 of his haiku arranged in clusters of 6 to 9. The general movement of the collection is through the seasons, starting with this spring haiku: *breaking light / the pale vibrato / of cherry blossoms*. Here are some of his best haiku progressing through the seasons. I like the mystery in this one: *whispering brook / so many secrets / lost to the sea*. Two from summer: (1) *midday heat / the old collie / laps the shade* and (2) *ongoing drought / the stillness / of the rope swing*. I especially like this holiday haiku: *midnight / a lone ferry fills the harbour / with Christmas lights*. Here's a haunting autumn poem: *skeletal leaf*

/ giving back all / that it has taken. I'll end with this observant haiku: midwinter forest / on milkweed the sighing / of a monarch's wings. We should be grateful that Miller has gathered so many of his award-winning haiku into this collection.

Rochester Area Haiku Group 2020 Members' Anthology edited by Michael Ketchek, Catherine Ann Nowaski and Carolyn Dancy (Rochester Area Haiku Group, Rochester, NY: 2020). 38 pages, 5" x 8.5". Four-color card covers, perfect softbound. No ISBN.

This anthology features haiku, tanka, and haibun by ten members of the Rochester Area Haiku Group: Pamela A. Babusci, Jerome Cushman, Carolyn Dancy, Frank Judge, Michael Ketchek, Deb Koen, Catherine Ann Nowaski, Tom Painting, Lee Strong, and Deanna Tiefenthal. Each poet is featured on two facing pages, with a brief biography about the author. Most of the sample poems have been recently published in various haiku journals. Here are a few outstanding examples. Pamela Babusci starts with a haiga: *enough / one rice bowl / two chopsticks*. From Jerome Cushman, we get: *barroom tango / the toe of her shoe / licks his leg*. Here is a sunny memory from Michael Ketchek: *stone chimney in the woods / all that's left / of the past*. Catherine Ann Nowaski also time travels in this haiku: *claw-footed tub / I step back / into time*. One of Tom Painting's haiku invites us to take a little voyage: *Indian summer / a tethered rowboat / nudges the dock*. Obviously, this is a talented group of haiku writers! □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY LAURIE D. MORRISSEY

The Years That Went Missing haiku by Susan Antolin (Backbone Press, Durham, NC: 2020). 26 pages, 7" x 5". Glossy covers, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-0-9994659-5-0. \$9 from backbonepress.org.

The first-place winner of the first haiku chapbook contest sponsored by Backbone Press, an independent publisher of poetry chapbooks, *The Years That Went Missing* also received a Touchstone

Distinguished Book Award for 2020. Antolin is an award-winning poet who has served for the past decade as editor of *Acorn: A Journal of Contemporary Haiku*. Her first published poetry collection was *Artichoke Season* (2009). *The Years That Went Missing*, selected by Michael Dylan Welch out of more than 50 Backbone Press chapbook entries, contains 52 haiku and senryu. The poems are arranged two to a page and, with the exception of two monoku, are all fairly traditional three-line haiku. This is an attractive, accessible volume that is a pleasure to read. For the cover, the poet selected an abstract painting by Huynah Kim, an artist who describes the central theme of her work as simply “wonderment.” It is a fitting invitation to a haiku collection that brims with poems that magnify ordinary moments: chattering finches, the call of an owl, an intimate moment between husband and wife. Age and failing health (of self, parents, or a pet) are recurring themes, as in this favorite: *hospital bedside / the crisp fold / of an unread newspaper*. I also love the potent imagery and endless possibilities of *insides spilling / from the dumpling / farewell dinner*. I like to contemplate the flow of haiku in a collection, and this one opens with *end of summer / I pull the rope ladder up / behind me*, which suggests a desire to be separate and alone. It ends on a cosmic note: *night sky / one of those stars might be / the reset button*. To read the haiku that gives this collection its title, you’ll have to obtain a copy. Recommended.

The Nothing That Is *haiku* by David Kāwika Eyre (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2021). 150 pages, 4.25" x 6.5". Four-color card covers, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-67-8. \$20 from redmoonpress.com.

David Kāwika Eyre is a master of brevity and precision. None of the haiku in his second published collection contains more than ten words, and a good many have just two or three. Even then, they may consist of the same word three times (as in *wave / wave / wave*)—or abbreviations instead of words. Among my favorites is his *jan. / etc. / dec*. Spare and often playful, they blend simplicity and complexity. The artwork complements the haiku well, especially

the cover art, which neatly represents the title—a shadow, a nothing that is something. The paintings (five, not including the cover) are the work of the poet’s daughter, Emma Eyre. With the exception of the cover painting, they are two-page spreads, rich and atmospheric, deeply textured in a way that contrasts with the lightness and brevity of the haiku. The haiku are printed one per page in light blue, and the page numbers are pink. Color, here, is a nothing that is something—and for me, it is something distracting. However, I appreciate page numbers; they make it easier to return to favorite haiku. There are a lot of tasty extras in this book: a quote from Wallace Stevens to open the collection, a three-page compendium of quotes “in gratitude to some who have beckoned,” and an acknowledgments section that gives a nod to the editors of the journals in which the haiku first appeared. Other outstanding haiku contained herein: (1) *kneading dough / the rhythm of / a yellow blouse*, (2) *spring light / the scent of delicacy*, (3) *warm wind / the tip of a cat’s tail / dreaming*, and (4) *cream pie / for better / for worse*. I value a haiku collection for not only the quality of the haiku, but also for how it makes me feel and whether it inspires me to write. The haiku in this book are evocative; they lingered and made me wish to return. This collection made me notice things that are nothing, yet something, e.g., empty boxes, scents, spaces within a poem, zero, pauses in music, the hole in my sock.

Tending Gumbo haiku by Bill Cooper (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2020). 100 pages, 4.25" x 6.5". Glossy covers, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-58-6. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

Bill Cooper has published seven previous books of haiku, six with Red Moon Press. In his latest, he presents 122 haiku in four sections: “Dripping Oar,” “Cypress Shade,” “Faint Trumpet,” and “Midnight Bug.” The poems are arranged consistently throughout, with two haiku on the left-hand page and one on the right. Not unlike gumbo, the collection contains a combination of ingredients, in this case haiku and senryu with a variety of themes. As you

might guess from the title, there's a good-sized serving of New Orleans here, offering up not only gumbo, but jambalaya, Sazerac (a drink I admit I had to look up), Mardi Gras, okra, tilapia, and the natural environment of the southern coastal lands. The title haiku is a delicious monoku: *tending gumbo the blend of our voices*. Cooper's nature haiku elegantly link human experience with the natural world. Examples include (1) *shrouded crescent / a heron nudges mud / through her grooming claw*, (2) *snowy owl / dune chill in the taste / of a wild cranberry*, and (3) *dripping oar / the baby tarpon / rolls in a swell*. The book is in memory of the late poet and editor Paul W. MacNeil, who would most likely have enjoyed these. Cooper's senryu about childhood have an emotional resonance that lingers: *counting best friends / her second mittens falls / to the snow*. A couple are more obscure, such as *green marble floor / nor is rye bread / the answer* and the one-word *mir-a-lago*.

Breaking My Journey haiku by Gregory Piko (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2020). 87 pages, 5.25" x 8". Glossy covers, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-61-6. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

Breaking My Journey is a collection of nearly 100 haiku and several poems in related forms. The cover image, designed by Tasmanian visual artist and poet Ron C. Moss, is of a tree against a colorful sky (perhaps a gum tree, native to Australia). The striking image is echoed occasionally between pages of text, giving pleasant breaks to the reader's journey. Many of these haiku evoke Australian settings, but it is not necessary to live Down Under, or even know what a currawong is, to sense the mood in *monochrome morning / currawongs busy themselves / in the drifting fog*. Nine poems are monoku, including *river bend the curve of a raven's cry*, as well as *coldpond*, a highly evocative haiku in a single inventive word. One of my favorite haiku in the collection is the two-line *a quiet kind of love / autumn crocus*. The collection is enhanced by Piko's use of the *honkadori* technique. *Haiku Commentary Online's* Haikai Glossary defines *honkadori* as "...a poem alluding to another poem. They are

commonly written out of respect and are nods to carrying on a tradition of themes.” Piko’s haibun “Near a Station of the Metro” refers to Ezra Pound’s famous one-image poem. In his end notes, Piko explains that one haiku relates to Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and others relate to poems by Matsuo Bashō, William Carlos Williams, and Cor van den Heuvel. The collection includes Piko’s 2010 Touchstone Award winning haiku: *a crow at dusk / ink seeps deeper / into the page*. Other favorites include (1) *breaking / my journey / this pine* and (2) *snowy owl / I’ll leave this world / alone*.

A Sonic Boom of Stars: 2020 Southern California Haiku Study Group Anthology edited by Beki Reese and Susan Rogers (Southern California Haiku Study Group, Temple City, CA: 2020). 120 pages, 8.5" x 5.5". ISBN 978-0-578-64794-4. \$18 from Southern California Haiku Study Group, 10529 Olive Street, Temple City, CA, 91780.

The Southern California Haiku Study Group has published an anthology nearly every year since 2001. This book presents the work of 83 poets (mostly in the Southern California Haiku Study Group, but also some in Haiku San Diego), each of whom had one to four haiku selected by co-editors Beki Reese and Susan Rogers. Moderator Deborah P Kolodji opens the attractively-produced volume with a discussion of the book’s title and cover art. “A Sonic Boom of Stars” comes from a haiku by Kimberly Esser (*broken window / a sonic boom / of stars*) “who uses synesthesia to link the sound of a space shuttle landing to the silent visual experience of seeing a profusion of stars in the night sky.” In her introduction, Kolodji also pays tribute to five members who “joined the stars” in the past year, including Jerry Ball who founded the study group in 1997. Some of the finest haiku in the volume are Esser’s, but haiku by many others stand out. Examples include Kolodji’s *coral necklace / the stories / we hand down*, Naia’s *dandelions / the desire to see / the world*, Genie Nakano’s *cold winter— / our legs candycane / around each other*, and all four of Tad Wojnicki’s haiku, including *beach sunrise /*

daylight crawls / crab by crab. Stevie Strang's *super moon / the day after / still the super moon* is outstanding for its originality and gentle wit. Her cosmic artwork, which enhances the title haiku, graces the anthology's cover. In addition to haiku in English, the collection includes several foreign-language haiku, and haibun by 17 poets. The anthology, in Kolodji's words, "brings focus to quintessential images of life in Southern California." However, as an anthology containing more than 200 haiku organized alphabetically by the poets' last names, this collection covers a wide range of subject matter and emotions. It features both longtime and newer participants of the study group with the result that some of the poems are not as original and inspiring as others. The editors' affection for the study group and their enthusiasm for the project are evident. Reese and Rogers put their personal stamp on this collection through their thoughtful selections and layout, and their decision to include a section of window-themed haiku in an otherwise un-themed volume. They clearly enjoyed their collaboration, and readers will enjoy the result. □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY KRISTEN LINDQUIST

I Wish edited by Stephen Henry Gill (*Hailstone Haiku Circle, Japan: 2020*). 104 pages, 4.125" x 5.75". Perfect softbound. ISBN 978-4-9911809-0-3. \$17. Contact Hitomi Suzuki at indigoapple28@gmail.com for details of ordering the book.

This twentieth-anniversary collection of the Hailstone Haiku Circle, founded by editor Stephen Gill (Tito), offers many diverse voices in a small package. It features 218 English-language haiku by 57 poets living in the Kansai region of Japan where Bashō and Buson came from. Each member has their own page containing 1-4 three-line or four-line haiku. The dense little book, which might have been better served by a larger format, also chronicles what the group has been up to since its last book, *Persimmon*, came out in 2018. "Roller Coaster," a long haiku sequence with many sections, becomes the

best kind of group therapy through its poignant haiku commentary on various large-scale calamities—culminating, of course, with the coronavirus pandemic. The book concludes with an “In Memoriam” section, helpful “Notes” to explain some of the Japanese references in the preceding poems, an “Afterword” by member Duro Jaiye on the influence of Bashō, and an events timeline for this very active group. To absorb so many diverse haiku by so many poets requires multiple readings. The haiku that stuck in my head after each re-reading included *Spring in the air / a small fee to enter / the Church of Light* by Jaiye, *Summer earthquake / ground spangled with glass, / sky full of stars* by Mizuho Shibuya, and this timely pandemic offering, *On the pine branch / a snake’s sloughed skin— / lockdown eased* by Yaeno Azuchi. To celebrate the publication of *I Wish*, the group held a *kukai* in spring 2021 during which members shared their three favorite haiku from the anthology. The top two haiku serve as good examples of the overall quality of the collection: (1) the winner, *Like a Kabuki actor / an old persimmon tree / posing alone* (Hitomi Suzuki), and (2) the runner-up, *This colour / squeezed from sky and earth, / a tinted leaf falls* (Miki Kotera).

Seabeck Reunion: Tenth Anniversary Anthology edited by Michael Dylan Welch (*Haiku Northwest Press, Bellevue, WA: 2020*). Foreword by John Stevenson. 132 pages, 7" x 10". Perfect bound. ISBN 978-1-953092-00-7. \$18 from online booksellers.

Many haiku practitioners, myself included, were able to join the ranks of Seabeck Haiku Getaway attendees when, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the annual conference was held virtually in the fall of 2020. Participants were given a slide-show tour of the grounds led by co-founder Michael Dylan Welch who also shared various haiku written at or about the campus in Seabeck, Washington, where the in-person getaway had taken place annually for the previous 12 years. This anthology serves as a similar, yet even more comprehensive tour of Seabeck’s first ten years, from 2008

through 2017. Also led by Welch, the extended literary tour is as much an interesting glimpse into the flavor and traditions of this significant haiku gathering as it is a showcase of its participants' creativity. You don't have to have been there to appreciate the quality and diversity of the 172 haiku and senryu included. The selections open with two poems each by the ten featured guests from the first decade, including this one by Penny Harter: *migrating butterflies / cover the names— / war memorial*. Four main sections then offer poems written by the 2017 attendees. The first, "It Happened At Seabeck," focuses on the gathering's activities, offering a sense of the event's physical setting as well as its often playful tone: *after sumi-e / the glide of a mud shark / in the lagoon* (Jacquie Pearce). "Mountain Clouds" presents miscellaneous poems that didn't fit into the other sections. The season when Seabeck happens each year inspires the haiku in "Autumn Again": *early autumn even in sadness morning star* (Terran Campbell). "In Good Taste" celebrates the sense of taste, the theme of the 2017 gathering. These four main sections are followed, delightfully, by "Tango," an erotic renga. The final section presents the winners of the 2017 Seabeck kukai. Here's the first-place poem by Dianne Garcia: *deviled eggs / seasoned with paprika / and mom's opinions*. Even more poems are included in Welch's afterword, in which he provides detailed narratives on each of the first ten years of Seabeck. In addition to stirring the memories of past attendees, these informative highlights may also serve as great inspiration for activity and presentation ideas for one's own haiku group or gathering. And they certainly made me hope to be able to attend Seabeck in person someday. As Welch says, "[W]e gather at Seabeck to share and discuss haiku each year because we need each other." We read such anthologies for the same reason.

Staring at the Midnight Sky haiga by Mark Teaford (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2020). 128 pages, 10" x 7". Perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-65-4. \$30 from redmoonpress.com.

This striking collection of photo-haiga features haiku, senryu, and tanka paired with black-and-white or sepia photographs. The format is large enough to properly appreciate the photographic images, all of which were shot and edited by Teaford. The photos were taken in various places around the world, yet none of them feature exotic travel scenes which might overpower the accompanying poems. The haiku *quiet dignity / above all else / giraffe browsing*, for example, is not paired with anything resembling an African landscape, but rather an image of a narrow city alleyway. With haiga, there's a fine line between the poem being either too overtly connected to the image or so far from it as to render the pairing surreal. Most of the haiga in this book are on that line, provoking a broader range of meaningful associations for the reader/viewer with only a few pairings feeling obvious or too far out there to be fully appreciated. On an image of what could be either moss on stone or a view of a palm forest from the air, for example: *what I should / have known /...obituary*. Even with the less successful pieces, the two parts each have something to offer on their own; many of the photographs easily stand alone as art, and a number of the poems have been previously published. In his "Introduction," Teaford says, "I'm a firm believer that there's untold beauty in the world around us if we only take the time to notice. Of course, there are also images that are thought-provoking in other ways, and again we need to notice them so we can learn from them." Spoken like a true photographer. And a true *haikai* poet. Teaford's cropping and emphasis on texture, contrast, and detail successfully mirror the techniques used in his poems. The works cover a range of evocative topics within four sections—"Relationships," "Life Today", "Health & Medicine," and "Nature"—and feature both organic and architectural images. He doesn't shy away from politics or the tougher aspects of humanity: (1) *social distance / someone's name / no longer hyphenated* and (2) *shot in the head thrown on a fire / government said / it was suicide*. There is much to spend time with in this fine collection. □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY BRUCE ROSS

Journey haibun by Zane Parks (*Privately-printed: 2020*). 56 pages, 6" x 9". Glossy cream cover, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-6781-7992-2. \$7 from lulu.com.

Zane Parks's *Journey* focuses on the life of city folks. This collection expresses itself in the sensibility of urban reality, often in a humorous way. These haibun have appeared in many haiku journals, including *Frogpond*, *Contemporary Haibun Online*, and *Modern Haiku*. A good example is the concluding haiku of "Celebration," which like many of his haibun, ends with a humorous haiku, like the end of a joke. Here on his birthday, his roommate gives the author and his girlfriend some privacy: *peace march / we exchange the sign / and the baby*. Another example is "Easter Chicks, in which the author and his brother get Easter chicks that are painted purple for Easter and quickly grow up and peck at his mother's feet while she hangs the wash. It concludes with the following haiku: *mom happy / with the new craze / pet rocks*. In his "Submission," Parks imagines, after sending a submission, what the rejection letter would be, which should be amusing to many of us. Basically, *Journey* is an entertaining read you will come back to from time to time.

Pilgrimage haibun by Keith Polette (*Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2020*). 94 pages, 4.5" x 6.5". Four-color card covers, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-947271-69-2. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

Keith Polette's *Pilgrimage* frames his haibun on impressionistic fables created from ordinary life, phrasing them with poetic metaphors and literary and other references, including William Blake, Ernest Hemingway, Van Gogh, Mark Twain, Robert Frost, and Franz Kafka. For example, in "Wheatfield With Crows," after examining the symbolism of the mass of crows, the dilemma of their destroying the wheat field is turned into the concluding

haiku: *foreclosure / feeding the scarecrow / to the fire*. Another example, both humorous and philosophical, is “Poet Laureate” about a homeless man accompanied by his dog. The haiku is a cardboard sign he had written on: *invisible man / needing spare change / to change*. Some of these haibun have appeared in a variety of well-known and lesser-known journals. All in all, a fine collection of poeticized fables that you will enjoy.

Bar Resbel *haibun* by Bouwe Brouwer (*The Old Sailor, Sneek, The Netherlands: 2021*). 29 pages, 14 x 21 cm. Four-color card covers, saddle stitched, limited edition of 25, numbered and signed by the author. 15 Euro from bouwebrouwer.com.

Each of its 14 sections, the first one beginning with the author’s arrival, is accompanied by a color photograph facing the text. The majority of the sections are centered on the bar of this work’s title and descriptions of the activities of those who happened to be in the bar at that time. *Bar Resbel*’s tone and approach is in fact based upon the author’s favorite writer, J.D. Salinger. In the chapter “Marbles,” the narrator quotes a line from Salinger’s *Seymour: An Introduction*. Though the prose of each chapter and how they are focused and expressed is very reminiscent of Salinger, each one, as in many haibun, is concluded with a haiku, some of which are expressed like traditional haiku—for example, *residential apartment— / in every window / a sunset*. Many of the chapters are also funny stories: Two brothers run the bar. The author overhears the older brother talking to a regular customer that their father passed away and left them a bottle of wine that hadn’t been opened. The brother opened the bottle and found it had become undrinkable. In a particularly humorous section titled “Game,” the bartender, Nesto, is remembering a childhood memory when he stayed home and played fencing by himself with two knitting needles and stabs at one hand with the other while also trying to defend himself with the first hand. In another amusing chapter, an older American writer says, “Sometimes I

would like to do something differently. I get up in the morning and tell myself: today I will write a poem. Maybe a travel story, sometimes autobiographical. I'll just start and I will see where it will take me. But every time it turns into a detective story." In a Salinger-like humor, the cabdriver, Fidel, tells the author he is upset because "he's taking care of a friend's cat but his own cat hasn't been seen for days: it has hidden himself somewhere in the attic." When his cousin comes to visit, he thought he had "the home advantage," but as usual, in this haibun, he was wrong, and he said to himself: "The week seemed long. I should have hidden myself in the attic." The last section ends with a humorous senryu, characteristic of the ongoing tone through the haibun: *mountain village / an old woman / in a 4x4*. You will be amused by the colorful characters in this book. □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY SHELLEY BAKER-GARD

Echoes: A Collection of Linked-Verse Poetry by Michelle Hyatt and Jacob Salzer (Privately-printed: 2020). 100 pages, 6" x 9". Perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-716-41079-6. \$15 from Lulu.com.

Echoes is a fine poet collaboration on various forms of renku-inspired verse focusing on friendship. Michelle Hyatt and Jacob Salzer are both experienced poets, and their poetry for this book was composed during the world's social isolation due to Covid-19. The collection is diverse and divided into the following sections: "Tan Renga," "Yotsumono," "Rengay," "Experimental Renku," "Junicho," "Kasen," and "Solo Linked-Verse." Besides friendship, the other prevailing subject is a consideration for ancestors, including mother earth or Gaia. This theme appears in many of their renku-inspired forms. Take the following tan-renga from a sequence of them called "Past Lives" as an example: *past lives / the ancestors smile / in my grandma's face // dry riverbed / the thirst for knowledge*. The next section is a group of yotsumono renku, and Hyatt and Salzer used the book *Renku Reckoner* (2015) by John Edmund Carley as a guide

when choosing which form variation of renku to use. Carley came up with the anti-thematic yotsumono form for poets interested in creating shorter-linked verse based on the renku link, shift, and turn composition. However, *kigo* or seasonal references, and fixed topics are optional. It is a four-verse sequence for which Carley uses the renku terms of *hokku*, *waiku*, *daisan*, and *ageku* to name each verse. Hyatt and Salzer have four yotsumono poems in the collection, and all of them are beautiful examples of this form. Their junicho (12 stanzas) and kasen (36 stanzas) renku follow the traditional subject recommendations that Carley describes and charts out in his book. The reader will find many moon and season verses in addition to verses about grandparents that are wonderfully rendered in just the right order. Interestingly, Salzer and Hyatt decided not to include the indication of the verse author on the poem's page itself, as is typical in published linked verse forms. This was intended to eliminate distraction for the reader, but if you are someone who wants to understand the personality of the individual poets through their poetry and linking, you will end up referencing the back of the book before you read a poem to see who is writing the verses. Most readers will not have any serious issues with the organization of these renku-inspired poems and will simply enjoy the experiences and emotions they evoke. □■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED BY TOM SACRAMONA

Flowers, How They Carry Us haiku by Jill Lange (*café Nietzsche press/bottle rockets press, Windsor, CT: 2020*). 87 pages, 5" x 6.5". Glossy color cover, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-7327746-8-1. \$16 USD (postage free within the USA) add \$7 outside the USA. Mail to: Jill Lange, 2045 Staunton Rd., Cleveland Heights, OH 44118. To purchase via internet: www.macsbaks.com/flowers-how-they-carry-us. To pay by check (USD), contact the author at bluetwoods@gmail.com.

Jill Lange's debut collection is fittingly named for its flower theme

with poppies featured across its front cover and daisies on the back. Much like a bouquet, these poems are better for the way they are grouped together and how their sequencing colors them, adding vitality and interest. A purple flower example: *early May morning / before starting my car / the scent of lilacs*. Red: *poinsettias / how they warm / a winter night*. White: *fields of daisies so many nots*. Lange's use of motif draws earlier poems into conversation with later ones, like in the following two where cornflowers stand in for the speaker's husband or memories of him: (1) *cornflowers and daises / the promises / we couldn't keep* and (2) *country road / I've been here before— / cornflower blues*. Her effort to write about flowers at all times of the year pays off with a book of haiku in which nearly all resonate and many have depth. One of several sub-themes that sustain the book's development to its end are social justice issues, such as in a haiku sequence called "Making Sense of It," which references poppies, soldiers, millennials, and war, as well as this tanka: *San Francisco / the 1984 convention / Geraldine Ferraro day— / everyone with flowers / mine violets*. "From the beginning of the twentieth century in France, a small bouquet of violets was a code for love from one woman to another," according to Jean-Michel Othoniel's *The Secret Language of Flowers*, which in the context of Lange's tanka, would be the love and admiration the speaker has for Geraldine Ferraro, the first woman to be named a vice-presidential candidate for a major party. In a section that focuses on memories, this tanka connects well with events of present day where Kamala Harris recently made history as the first female, first Black, and first Asian-American vice president of the United States. This is a good poem to end with and perhaps one that precipitated the author's desire to write this enjoyable floral collection: *rescued— / how a flower / also rescues us*.

The Rothrock Haiku Contest by Kurt Westley (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2020). 56 pages, 4.25" by 6.5". Glossy four-color covers, perfect softbound. ISBN 978-1-9427271-68-5. \$15 from redmoonpress.com.

Kurt Westley credits Harold G. Henderson's *An Introduction to Haiku* as "the first book flashpoint for my love for the form." I can say the same of *The Rothrock Haiku Contest* and the form Westley creates with it, which is a genre of its own making. He uses English epic poetry conventions to interestingly frame his short haiku-writing competition. Akin to how William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* opens with an argument by Rintrah, *The Rothrock Haiku Contest* opens with a prelude narrated by a being, Rothrock, also the name of a state forest and the setting for the contest. In the prelude, Rothrock articulates the central theme of the work: "two soaring above windswept waters / now only one exhales its trackless wake / trail narrows primordial boulders too steep / to climb." Re-reading the collection, you can understand the basic plot: A challenge or contest between two haiku poets, Waku and Woro, where only one wins and exits the forest; the other remains stuck, "gasping for words that will not come." The back of the book features a pencil drawing of a shanty, presumably where the losing poet must live out his days, until perhaps they have another fated haiku contest? The haiku competition occurs in several rounds that take place in autumn (9), followed by winter (7) and spring (2), and (2) non-season rounds called "the hut's isolation" and "conclusion." They repeat the subject of "mountains" for both autumn and winter, and I think there could have been more variation of subjects in a collection this short: *downdraft raven / autumn mountain / bulges in his missing eye* (Waku) and *winter mountain / ascending into the very clouds! / or is it coming closer?* (Woru). These writers yearn to transcend their earthly bodies or escape the forest, and to such a degree, the judge once comments, as is typical each round, "Are both haiku hermits wary of their own corporeal bones tonight?" Other times, the judge's commentary lauds the winning haiku for their "immediacy of image," "unique pictorial twist," or "mystery." This is a book with an intriguing frame narrative that I enjoyed learning about and exploring how Westley put it to good use.

Grateful Haiku: Capturing the Grateful Dead Experience in One-Breath Poems by Mark Dailey (*Free Food Press, Rochester NY: 2021*). 32 pages, 5.5" x 8.5". *Spray-painted card covers, no two alike, string bound. No ISBN. \$8 USA, \$25 all other countries from freefoodpress.org.*

This chapbook features over 75 haiku and senryu that joyfully span the career of a celebrated band by a talented poet. Yes, this collection by Mark Dailey really is spray-painted and no two copies are alike, just like no two live recordings of a Dead song sound the same: *drifting incense / a different Dead song / from every car*. This is certainly a delightful read for fellow Dead fans. You can also approach Dailey's book like a live poetry reading, hearing him read some haiku that receive the greatest reactions from the audience, such as *expanding cosmos / somehow we find / our seats*. In this collection that isn't trying to be serious, poems so often succeed for that very reason—they aren't trying to be anything other than they are—fun—which was Jerry Garcia's credo anyway. I care about so many of these based on my love for the band: *spreading like wildfire / the news that Jerry / wore red and how softly / how beautifully / Jerry forgets the words*. If, in the last example, you thought of Jerry's long-term drug-addiction, weight problems, and diabetes all contributing to his physical decline and early death, and the poem's soft moment of Jerry's spirit coming through in the way he says the words, not mattering if they are indeed the right words, then you should get this book ASAP because it was written for you. A number of Dailey's poems can be enjoyed regardless of if you are a Deadhead, as in this poem which previously appeared in *Frogpond* and still stands as a gem even without this collection providing its association with a Dead song: *morning dew / finding the champagne cork / in the grass*. I delighted in seeing that poem's inclusion in the context of this chapbook. I'll end with this poem about entering a concert venue since you'll be getting a front-row seat when you begin this collection: *gate security / squeezes us together / the first moo*.

Torn Asunder: Putting Back the Pieces memoir by David H. Rosen (Resource Publications, Eugene, OR, 2021). 87 pages, 5" x 6.5". Glossy color cover, perfect bound. ISBN 978-1-7327746-8-1. Available from online booksellers.

This is part two of David Rosen's memoir. It covers both Rosen's work life and personal life, unpacking his identities as a psychiatrist, researcher, husband, father, Jungian analyst, and poet. In the preface, Rosen explains that writing this book was a way to heal and "put back the pieces" since his 2009 diagnosis with multiple sclerosis. His first memoir from 2014, *Lost in the Long White Cloud: Finding My Home*, covered his birth to age 30. As fate would have it, I received *Torn Asunder* in the mail a few days after finishing Gary Lachman's *Jung the Mystic: The Esoteric Dimensions of Carl Jung's Life and Teachings* (2010). Jung and Rosen would surely see this as an example of synchronicity—those eerie occurrences in life that have no causal relationship yet seem to be related. In this memoir, Rosen records many of these instances, so if you have any interest in Jung, you would certainly enjoy learning more about how Rosen perceives the world. Rosen's memoir is replete with photos of his family and places he's been to over the years, along with details of his chronic depression and impressive publishing ventures. On the whole, the blurb on the back of the book by Mark Unno, professor of religious studies at the University of Oregon and a Shin Buddhist priest, sums up this book best: "David Rosen in this memoir is in turns vulnerable, courageous, sad, joyful, too human, funny, and extraordinarily generous and wise." Of about 50 short poems that are interspersed throughout, this is my personal favorite: *Village of thatched roofs / On a lush mountain / The monk's meal of greens*.

Wild Violets haiku by Paul Cordeiro. (Privately-printed: 2021). 20 pages, 5.5" x 8.5". Saddle stitched.

Paul Cordeiro's chapbook *Wild Violets* was laid out by season by the

poet's close friend, Bob Barboza, who is also a haiku writer. *Wild Violets* and Cordeiro's collection from 2013, *Bare Earth*, are available for free from The Haiku Foundation's Digital Library. Comparing them, pets remain a muse: *labor day dusk / the beagle buries / a stewed bone*. In the newer work, there's a single monoku: *rolling out recycling bins thunderclouds*. Cordeiro also ventures into bolder territory in the new work, including erotic tanka: *rubbing legs / beneath the blue moon / these crickets / not the only ones / in harmony*.

Travel by Haiku compiled by Marshall Deerfield (*A Freedom Book, Philadelphia, PA: 2021*). 149 pages, 5" x 6". ISBN 978-0998425832. Available from afreedombooks.com.

Six collaborators co-authored their own Jack Kerouac-style "haikus" on a road trip. Each writer contributes a single line and together each line forms the haiku-like poem: *Beside / the white line / the tie-dye / scavenger / poet / harvests dream / catchers*. □■



Errata

In the previous issue 44:1—

- Reference to Allyson Whipple's haiku on page 23 was accidentally omitted from the author index.
- On page 112, Hokusai's *jisei* "*matsu no hara*" should be "*natsu nohara*."