

I recommend a good year for a possible apocalypse for those studying the art of monoku, as well as anyone looking for an example of how to make timely poems feel timeless. I also think it's an exceptional collection of urban haiku. There is much to recommend about this book, and if you haven't read it yet, consider doing so.

moonflowers by Bipasha Majumder De. 96 pp., perfect softbound. ISBN: 978-1-958408-57-5. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2025. \$20.00 at [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com).

In his introduction to Bipasha Majumder De's moonflowers, Alan Summer writes, "The power of haiku, and its poem power, is to get to the essence of a human being, whether that's the author themselves, or capturing a part . . . of their childhood, and their own humanness, or perhaps unleashing something about us, the reader" (13). De's haiku engage with a wide range of external landscapes to connect to that human essence.

I appreciated the opportunity to discover new-to-me geographical terms in these poems, such as in, "oleshky sands / strewn with oyster shells / necropolis." De also incorporates other cultural works into her poems, in poems like, "drought / I can still hear / the notes of Megh Mollar." Some of the culturally-specific poems include contextual notes, which readers will appreciate.

Most of the poems show a strong balance of external images and emotional resonance. For example, in:

air raid alarm  
signature spiders spin  
their webs

the peaceful work of spiders contrasts with the noise of the

sirens, and the stress response they are sure to provoke. However, there are a few poems that I felt could have used more precision, even when I understood the general reference. In the poem:

smell of gunpowder  
I am craving for jasmines  
for fiancees

the bitter smell of gunpowder contrasts with the sweet smell of jasmine, and the fear of ongoing war conflicts with the optimism that accompanies a wedding. However, the repeated use of the word “for” and the plural “fiancee” confused me. Jasmine is a traditional flower in South and Southeast Asian wedding celebrations, but ultimately the poem lacks the imagistic precision and emotional clarity found elsewhere in De’s work.

While there are a few misfires in this collection, moonflowers on the whole succeeds as a cohesive book. The poems delve into landscapes and present life in all its complexity. These haiku neither shy away from sadness, such as the death of a parent, nor neglect the joys, such as the beauty of an opening moonflower. Alan Summers’ in-depth introduction is a delightful bonus. This is a welcome second collection, and I look forward to De’s future work.

Briefly Reviewed by Allyson Whipple

The Smell of Leaves by James A. Paulson. 44 pp., perfect softbound. Windsor, CT: buddha baby press, 2025. \$5.00 by contacting the author at paulsonja1955@gmail.com.

James A. Paulson’s the smell of leaves is a collection that demonstrates a life well-lived. Dedicated to the memory of