

Dissolving, by Mike Andrelczyk (No place: Alien Buddha Press, 2019). 87 pages; 5" × 8". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-703430-74-5. Price: \$10.44 from online booksellers.

Reviewed by Cherie Hunter Day

Dissolving is Mike Andrelczyk's first full-length haiku collection in print, but he is no stranger to publishing. The backbone of this collection is gleaned from two digital haiku chapbooks: *The Celesta Made of Water* (2015) and *The Stolen Pineapple Earthquake* (2018) posted to the *bones* journal website. In addition, there are plenty of award-winning and previously uncollected poems to fill this collection of 134 individual haiku and five haibun.

Andrelczyk's work has been described as poems from the edge of haiku. He uses a variety of disjunctive strategies best summarized by Richard Gilbert in *The Disjunctive Dragonfly: A New Approach to English-Language Haiku* (Red Moon Press 2008, 2013). The following haiku exhibit a strong disruption aimed at creating space between the poem and reader. This fosters the exploration of the impossibly true.

Zeus in an atom	floating above
the criminal	the avalanche
pays his rent	a string quartet

starfish in the mathematical Bahamas

While there are varying degrees of accessibility, the compelling images and startling juxtapositions create a palpable urgency to delve deeper.

at the bottom
of the sea
a spoon in a drawer

To counterbalance the feeling of separateness in the above haiku we can take some comfort that, although we are suspended between light and dark, we are not alone.

in their dark glass tank
the lobsters
orbiting the sun

There is a fair amount of repetition of images and subject matter: emoji, lions, ghosts, dreams, horses, wolves, mist, and mud. While the themes seem familiar, there is always something more to consider. The reprise gives coherence to this collection by creating a connecting thread within the work, but also forges a link to Andrelczyk's longer lineated poetry such as his chapbook, *The Iguana Green City & other poems*, which was released in 2018 by Ghost City Press. This cross-link of images allows for a deeper dialog between his haiku and mainstream poetry.

I first read *Dissolving* a couple of months ago before the Covid-19 pandemic. My plan then was to write a review highlighting Andrelczyk's craftsmanship as a haiku writer. Technically he utilizes many tools in the haiku toolbox to cast his "poetic spell" for the delight of the reader. But given our current situation, I couldn't continue as if nothing has happened. Our everyday lives have been derailed.

In light of the new reality the following haiku take on additional meaning. They tap into our visceral reaction to the crisis.

cold rain	a mask
a hammer	a loop
wrapped in an oily cloth	of a volcano erupting

skin rejects skin
at the invisible
border line

I doubt if anyone could foresee our present circumstances six months ago when *Dissolving* was released. Today we need anchors in the everyday.

The following two haiku illustrate what Andrelczyk refers to in his haibun “Middleground” as “the slower road out of my Frozenvillemind:”

setting sun	slow afternoon
the old man catching fish	refilling the salt shaker
and letting them go	then the pepper one

I can't think of a more relevant description of this twilight zone we face. One of the questions that comes up daily is “What is essential?” There are the tangible things like food, but there are intangible things to consider too. Now when I read *Dissolving* in light of a shelter-in-place order and social-distancing mandates, my response is, “Poetry is essential.” These haiku by Mike Andrelczyk form an oasis that allows us to dream, to hope, and to imagine. It's a release and a relief—the perfect antidote to counter the barrage of bad news. We can either become numb or we can read, write, and share. I choose the latter. Start here. Start now.

One Leaf Detaches, by Margaret Chula (United Kingdom: Alba Publishing, 2019). 54 pages; 5" × 8". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-912773-24-4. Price: \$15.00 from the author at margaretechula.com

Reviewed by Michael Dylan Welch

sudden gust
the sway of bamboo
one leaf detaches

Western haiku focusing on stereotypical Japanese subjects such as bamboo or kimonos are sometimes overly imitative—or “Japanesey,” which rhymes with cheesy. It's a rare poet who can pull off these subjects in English, to suggest Zen detachment in this case, and it helps if the poet has lived in Japan, which aids them in presenting authentic personal encounters—true heartwood rather than the veneer of imagined or borrowed experiences. Indeed, tourist experiences (my own included)