

In other words, renku is a kind of ephemeral art, its value resting in the here and now experience of its creation. For English-language practitioners, this is perhaps the most novel aspect of renku, given that ideas of individual accomplishment and writing “for posterity” have long been dominant values in Western poetry. Appreciation for an art of “the here and now” will be a learning process for most English-language poets. Some people will use *Mindful Renku* as the starting point of a lifelong practice. I hope they are not rare exceptions.

Over many years, David Lanoue has offered an impressive array of gifts to the English-language haiku community: his own poems, his haiku novels, his wonderful translations of Issa, and his service to the Haiku Society of America. It seems certain now that *Mindful Renku* will be a key resource, much discussed by renku poets around the world, for many years to come.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Feathered Light: The ABCs of Haiku, by Deborah Burke Henderson (No place [Mass.]: Privately printed, 2026). 185 pages; 6"×8¼". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-244241-87-7. Price: \$28.00 from online booksellers.

A delightful introduction to haiku. In the book, designed for the beginner or person interested in haiku, Henderson weaves haiku history, technique, aesthetics—all with a light, enthusiastic touch. These short prose sections are interspersed with the author’s own illustrated bird haiku (hence the “feathered”). For K: *ground fog / clings to the lowlands / slow-flying kestrels*. M: *deepening sunset / the fading coos / of a mourning dove*. S: *jungle gym / savannah sparrows / up-and-down-and-back-again*. She closes the book with exercises to get the creative juices flowing, as well as resources, and more poems; some by other poets. Although targeted for the beginner, the book also serves as a touchpoint for more experienced poets, or as a source of inspiration. Highly recommended.

Haiku 2026, eds. Lee Gurga & Scott Metz (Champaign, Ill.: Modern Haiku Press, 2026). 125 pages; 5½"×4¼". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-9741894-5-1. Price: \$10.00 from www.modernhaiku.org

The editors of the award-winning annual anthology series continue to mine haiku's corners to find their most "notable ku." Whether all parties will agree is up for debate; but what is certain is that they have collected one hundred powerful poems—poems that cover the full spectrum of haiku creativity, as well as push at its edges. Strongly recommended.

Invisible Crown, by Ban'ya Natsuishi (India: Cyberwit, 2026). 131 pages; 5½"×8½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-93-6354-205-1. Price: \$15.00 from online booksellers.

We have always felt that Natsuishi belonged to the previous-century haiku "obscurists," such as Nakamura Kusatao and Ishida Hakyo, whose desire for personal truth trumped reader understanding. How else do we explain poems such as, *When a cat passes / through the narrow path / it rains* or *One step to the lunar surface / and / one step from it*. In the first, why rain? Why not any other activity? These moments are surely important to Natsuishi, but we are not convinced readers will find them accessible. Still, he is a fascinating poet. *Cultivating fields of dust / praying to a god / with no name; A lost man: / his head is a small box / his body is sheet iron*.

Sea Wind, by Jacob D. Salzer (No place: Privately printed, 2025). 81 pages; 4¼"×6¾". Glossy four-colored card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-257-82196-9. Price: \$15.00 from www.lulu.com

Many of the book's poems are included in *A Missing Thread* (see nearby review). Broken into six thematic sections, the poems here are enjoyable and often ask questions of our place in the world. A few favorites: *minus degree wind ... / the tomb of a man / and his factory; lunar eclipse — / she talks about / her shadow*.

A Missing Thread, by Jacob D. Salzer (No place: Privately printed, 2026). 411 pages; 4½"×6¾". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-105-18388-1. Price: \$25.99 from www.lulu.com

Covering nineteen years of haiku composition, and more importantly, Salzer's continuing exploration of the genre, *A Missing Thread* is a big book. As would be expected, the 305 poems vary in subject matter and styles, covering as they do the years between his teens and his late thirties, so we find normative juxtapositions, wordplay, surrealism, as well as poems on earth-awareness, the digital world, dreamscapes, etc. It is an exciting book with lots to discover. Of interest was his "keyword analysis" at the end, in which he reviews the main topics he has covered. This survey might suggest a simple love of nature—which he has—but his poems are more complex than that, seeking the spaces between nature, himself, and other spaces. Some favorites: *darkness ... / a moth carries / its own light; lost / in my digital footprint / the weight of snow*.

Turf Cottage, ed. Tony Pupello (New York: Tsuridōrō Press, 2026). 41 pages; 5"×7". Matte four-colored card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-990797-22-2. Price: \$7.20 from online booksellers.

An anthology from the online haiku journal *Tsuridōrō* that has a particular focus on the moody and mythological. Haiku and senryu from forty four poets. A fun mix. *fairy house trail / pretending / I've lost my way* (Lindquist); *witching hour / I find my mother-in-law / with a broom* (Parashar); *autumn evening ... / a dragon changes color / on the temple roof* (Chatterjee).

Watching a Candle by Candlelight, by Tim Cremin (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2026). 88 pages; 4¼"×6½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-76-6. Price: 20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

A collection of haiku, senryu, tanka, haibun, and haiga. Cremin's poetry has a nice range, so the collection never feels stale, and his poems often

surprise in thought-provoking ways. Favorites: *saucer of milk / the stray picks up / a name; the ghost in my phone / predicting the next / river | woods | earth; skipping a stone ... / its one and only chance.*

More of My Journal with Haiku Sprinkled In, by David G. Lanoue (Lexington, Ky.: Haiku Guy, 2026). 460 pages; 5¼"×8". Matte four-colored card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-9949701-0-2. Price: \$14.99 (\$3.99 Kindle version) from online booksellers.

Volumes Two and Three of his journals (2024 – 2025), with as he says, some haiku sprinkled in. Of the haiku, there are actually more than a few; a couple of unscientific sample counts show an average of fifteen poems for each ten pages. That aside, it is hard to discern the audience of the book other than family and friends, as Lanoue frankly discusses retirement, a move from his longtime New Orleans home, the death of a partner, and a search for a way through it all. That said, it is clear that haiku and senryu are a coping mechanism. *intensive care / the nurse makes me / a fresh pot; on the cow-shit pagoda / flies / at prayer.*

Between the Lines, by Ron Scully (No place: Alien Buddha Press, 2026). 31 pages; 5"×8". Matte black and white card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-258616-22-7. Price: \$11.25 from online booksellers.

Poems on sport written from both participant and observer perspectives. Scully calls these poems "micropoems," as opposed to haiku, monoku, or tanka, although most would easily fit into those categories. But many have a staccato clip to them, and a few are more list-like than conventional haiku. *the hurt locker / stink from the last loss / muddied sock; fourth quarter / last chicken wing / no playoffs.*

A Chorus of Frogs, by Joseph Fulkerson (No place: Laughing Ronin Press, 2026). 73 pages; 4"×6". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-9873315-9-0. Price: \$9.99 from online booksellers.

A second collection from Fulkerson. He has a good sense of the haiku form, how its two parts can be best used for effect. This combined with an understanding that all of life can be used for poetry makes this a compelling collection. Some favorites are the humorous poems, many of which hit softly but squarely; he has a good eye for irony. *summer night / protest signs litter / the square*; *sturgeon moon / hundred-year flood / so soon*.

One-line Stories, by Pravat Kumar Padhy (India: Penprints, 2026). 79 pages; 5"×7". Glossy black-and-white card covers; perfect-bound. ISBN 978-81-999560-0-1. Price: \$22.00 from online booksellers.

A collection of one-line poems, presented two per page. Padhy, unlike other one-line poets, does a good job including a cut in his poems. Sometimes these breaks are interestingly uncertain, as in *dreams she conceals winter chrysanthemum*; does the line break after 'dreams' or 'conceals' or 'winter'? For those readers who aren't necessarily looking for a shared moment, this opens up multiple meanings in the poem, which can be enjoyable. Much of his work moves from the tangible to the intangible, creating new realities, or ways of looking at the world. Altogether, a vibrant read. *ant trail somewhere the missing sound; so close to the moon every kiss a nearby star*.

Sakura Fubuki, ed. Pakistan Japan Cultural Association (Pakistan: Pakistan Japan Cultural Association, 2026). 344 pages; ebook. Free download from <https://pjca-isb.org/pjca-1st-international-haiku-anthology-2026/>

The PJCA presents an international anthology of cherry blossom haiku from forty-four countries, featuring the work of close to three hundred poets. All the poems are presented in English, Urdu, and Japanese. As would be expected from an anthology, especially one on a single topic, themes repeat, and the poets are of varying strength. But there is much to be enjoyed. *young cherry blossoms— / in the town once engulfed / by tsunami* (Hiroyuki); *peace talk ... / cherry blossoms drift / from my neighbor's tree* (Vazic); *cherry blossoms/ the rescue horse's frame / filling out* (Robinson).

Wild Rabbit Moon, by Deborah Karl-Brandt (Germany: Privately printed, 2026). 126 pages; 5¾"×8¼". Matte black and white card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-3-8192-9417-4. Price: \$16.01 from online booksellers.

A collection of haiku, senryu, and tanka on the many paths and kinds of love—as well as their absence and loss. At times it feels like a narrative sequence, but then a surprising poem from another viewpoint or character will drop in, and the whole assumption needs to be re-evaluated. How like love! A fun, and at times heartbreaking, collection. *redwood / swaying in a gentle breeze / you and me; rusty chain / another day / being his wife; winter solitude / when he wanted to have / a child with me; autumn wind / in her address book / names.*

County Fair, by Eric Sundquist (Taylorville, Ill.: Brooks Books, 2026). 56 pages; 4"×5¾". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-929820-42-9. Price: \$15.00 from www.brooksbookshaiku.com

One of the 2026 HIGH/COO Chapbook Awards winners. Sundquist's poems of county fairs are a fat slice of Americana, one that invites us to look at long held traditions and perhaps ourself in the funhouse mirror. The poems are structured as if a single fair, and despite some of the pointed irony, Sundquist never feels judgmental. This is a long sequence on joy. Very enjoyable. *baton twirling / the girl breaks ranks / for pig wrestling; the wheat queen / waves to the crowd / second trimester; tunnel of love / the widower buys / two tickets.*

Japanese Forms in American Poetry: Beyond Haiku, ed. Ce Rosenow (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2026). 112 pages; 6¼"×9¼". Yellow and white covers; hardcover. ISBN 978-1-6669-6422-6. Price: \$90.00 from online booksellers.

In the Introduction, editor Rosenow gives a good overview of how the Japanese forms under discussion (haibun, linked verse, senryu, and tanka) developed alongside the larger development of haiku. Through four

essays that follow, each form is looked at more closely. John Han focuses on linked verse, giving a capable overview of the kinds written; however, an examination of the mechanics of linking, and how the various forms of linked verse differentiate from each other would be welcome. Rosenow's own essay on American senryu describes a high-level history of the form in this country, and offers interesting offramps that deserve more space for themselves. Aubrie Cox Warner's piece on haibun is the most narrowly focused, eschewing an overview or history of the form, instead examining ways in which haibun can, as editor Rosenow puts it, "challenge the white, heteronormativity of narrative." Of interest, her exploration of how "... the journey, written through haibun, can reveal identity" or otherness.

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Prairie Stars, by Eric Sundquist (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2026). 134 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-87-2. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

A delightful collection from Sundquist. He has a terrific knack for discovering significance in the most interesting of details, yet the poems never feel inauthentic, staged, but instead fresh. It was hard choosing a couple favorites. Recommended. *closing time / lipstick prints / on the octopus tank; the stillness / of a singing bowl / morning star; watching a goldfinch / long gone / her hands go on knitting.*

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Griots: Keepers of the Story, eds. Lenard D. Moore and Crystal Simone Smith (Greensboro, N.C.: Unicorn Press, 2026). 85 pages; 5" × 8". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-87775-230-1. Price: \$18.00 from www.unicorn-press.org

A griot is a West African storyteller, the memory of a cultural group, so it is an apt descriptor of the collected haibun from the Carolina African American Writers' Collective (L. Teresa Church, Lenard D. Moore, Crystal Simone Smith, Sheila Smith McKoy, and Gideon Young). The fifty-six haibun continue the work of their previous anthology, *One*

Window's Light (2017), sharing the lives and stories of the poets through literature. The haibun are varied, urban, rural, modern, ancestral—in all, the fullness of the African American experience. An enjoyable read.

Vanished Roads, by Thomas L. Vaultonburg (No place: Wolf Twin Books, 2026). 104 pages; 4¼" × 6¾". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-9879911-3-8. Price: \$15.00 from www.wolftwin.com

There is a loose thematic movement in the collection, from loss to acceptance to renewal. Many poems are existentially interesting. *evening rain — / the path I came by / no longer exists; tidal pool — / anemones closing / around my reflection*. But others feel like overly clever statements without a lot of room for reader engagement: *Memory is a / room where the furniture has / teeth. Sit carefully; I skip the stone — / not to see where it lands / but to let it go*. A bit of a mixed bag.

Shaping Darkness, by Ria Collins (United Kingdom: Alba Publishing, 2026). 76 pages; 5¾" × 8¼". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-912773-78-7. Price: €16.00 from www.albapublishing.com

Debut collection from Collins, containing poems on her life in western Ireland. She is an able observer, and her poems are often quiet moments of interdependence. As she says in her brief introduction, she is looking to feel these moments with her heart. This viewpoint may come from her zen background. An enjoyable outing. *patter-splash of rain / a butterfly folds its wings / on the window-pane; crying swans / land on the shore / silent snow; summer supper / flash of a kingfisher / cutting the lake*.

Noon: An Anthology of Short Poems: Volume 2, ed. Philip Rowland (Japan: Isobar Press, 2025). 103 pages; 5½" × 8½". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-4-907359-52-2. Price: \$24.48 from online booksellers.

The anthology collects poems selected from issues 14 – 27 (2019 – 2025)

of the now-online journal *Noon*. While the issues are freely available online, we like the idea of collecting them in physical form, to be carried about into the world, to places an extension cord cannot reach. We have always enjoyed the way Rowland includes haiku with other short poems, many with the same aesthetic ideals, and here—as in the journal—he cleverly sequences them for additional readings and reverberations. Recommended.

Much Needed Rain, by Mike Stinson (Wayne, Neb.: WSC Press, 2026). 92 pages; 5½"×8½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-9892196-7-4. Price: \$16.00 from online booksellers.

A collection of haiku, haibun, tanka, and prose poems. Stinson writes well of life in the Great Plains, noticing that what's important, what often binds communities, are the small details. The book is divided into seasonal sections, with a few thematic subsections, including one on baseball haiku tucked after summer. We enjoy the mixture of forms. A strong outing. *t-ball / the shortstop / brings his dinosaurs; first day of summer / a lusty growl / from my stomach; poker nights / how we call and raise / our stories.*

Ghost Woman, by Crystal Simone Smith (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2026). 75 pages; 6"×9". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-4780-6264-6. Price: \$23.95 from online booksellers.

Collected haiku and haibun, organized by the Japanese principle *godai's* five elements, and their thematic meanings. The poems are more emotional, scar-full than some of her previous work, which is saying something; childhood memories are brought to the surface, and Smith has to reconcile their place in her current journey. It is these intimate moments and their hauntings that give the collection its power. While we have enjoyed her previous work in which she looked at and imagined the lives of others, we prefer this turning toward her own journey. The haibun are especially powerful. Recommended. *late night / lit by its own luster*

/ snowfall; waiting room / two clocks / different times; we gather in black / outside the church — / autumn mountains.

Turtle Dreams: The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku, eds. Jim Kacian & the Red Moon Editorial Staff (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2026). 194 pages; 5½"×8¼". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-82-7. Price: \$20.00 from www.red-moonpress.com

The latest annual from Red Moon Press, containing 165 poems, twenty-three linked forms, and six essays. Work this year comes from forty-two haiku periodicals (print and online), nine contests, and a handful of other anthologies; a good sweep! The essays include Brad Bennett's "Short-Longer-Longest" (from *MH* 56.2), Randy M. Brooks' "Haiku as Imaginative Forest Bathing," Robert Epstein's "The Place of Wisdom in English-Language Haiku Poetics," two of Kacian's "Clerikus" pieces, and David McMurray's "Perceptions on the Control of Nature." The RMA is perhaps best thought of as an annual exam, the taking of ELH's temperature. It should be on every serious haiku poet's bookshelf.

Holding Back the Night, by Michael Ketchek (Rochester, NY: Free Food Press, 2026). 48 pages; 5½"×8½". Matte black and white card covers; perfectbound. No ISBN. Price: \$15.00 from the author at mketchek@frontier.com

A mixture of haiku and senryu. Ketchek has always been the everyman of haiku, known for his "Haiku for Hippies" books, and his poems are often irony-noticing senryu pointed clearly at 'the man'; but here the poems—chosen by Tom Clausen—cover a wider ground. Many *are* quick ironic stabs at the modern world, but others linger longer, more thoughtfully. An enjoyable outing. *a campfire / a guitar, a song / holding back the night; on a day when one / cigarette is not enough / first violet of spring; waiting room / the artificial fern / is dying.*

A Trick of the Light, monoku by Jim Kacian and photographs by Toni Piccini (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2026). 110 pages; 9"×9". Four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-81-0. Price: \$35.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

This volume pairs Kacian's monoku, from his books *Where I Leave Off* (2020) and *after / image* (2017), with Piccini's photographs. The introduction by Piccini suggests that he was the driver of the project, the one doing the pairing, in this way it is not so much a collaboration, but Piccini's responses that we are experiencing. The photographic subjects are varied and enjoyable. In most instances the text a single line on the plate. Piccini finds themes or a single word / idea and leaps from there. It is fun to tag along on his journey.

City of Dark Woods, by Robert Hirschfield (India: Red River, 2026). 90 pages; 5½"×8". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-81-999369-3-5. Price: \$9.99 from online booksellers.

As an ex-journalist, Hirschfield is well traveled, and many of the poems nostalgically revisit this wandering life. Many are poems of growing up in his native, mid-century Bronx; there are ten haibun tucked into the middle of the collection and most are about that time. This American realism is offset in other more mystical poems, which gives the collection a nice roundness. As might be expected of an older poet, especially one who has taken up haiku more recently, many of the poems have identity at their core; Hirschfield looks at himself in relation to others, as a father, as a son. His love of cinema (the theme of several of the haibun and a suite of one-liners) reinforces this idea of 'role.' An enjoyable collection. Some favorites: *before language / gets there / dry ice*; *the old street / its wind / in my pocket*; *listening / at my friend's gave / for his stutter*.

Suddenly the Moon, by Anirudh Acharya (India: Writers Workshop, 2026). 146 pages; 4¼"×6". Matte four-color card covers; cloth bound. ISBN 978-81-995932-2-0. Price: 350 Indian Rupees from www.writersworkshopindia.com

A first collection of what Acharya calls “haiku-like” poems on life in Chennai, India. Despite the moniker, the 127 poems are presented in three lines, centered on the page, usually with a cut, and arranged in seasonal order. There is much to like in his observations, and haiku-like, he often lets the reader find meaning in the poems. That said, the collection could have used a better editor to remove weaker and repetitive poems, and some of the poems are simple observations that left us wanting more, but we enjoy Acharya’s sincere engagement with his cultural and natural landscape. *Copying her actions / the flower seller’s kitten / paws at the garland; Still out in the rain — / on trash bags uncollected — / night’s fallen flowers; The shop that sold us / on its lifetime guarantee / closed permanently.*



THE ROBERT SPIESS MEMORIAL HAIKU AWARDS COMPETITION FOR 2027

Modern Haiku is pleased to announce the Robert Spiess Memorial Haiku Awards Competition for 2027. The purpose of this competition is to honor the life and work of Bob Spiess, editor of *Modern Haiku* from 1978 to his death on March 13, 2002.

Opening Date: January 1, 2027

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