

and thus, we only have ‘the middle’ instead of the linear and logical narrative that we might otherwise prefer from a poem, or even a novel. We might now need to place ourselves into a situation where we are compelled participants of “telling a story backward”, though it’s a gift to be included both as a ‘companion’ storyteller and as an interpreter of fragments of a story. Another single-line haiku from Day illustrates this observation:

petal rain we imagine a different ending

Perhaps this is cherry blossom rain, or any time that petals might rain down on us, or something else? That “different ending”—is that while watching a film at home or somewhere else, or are we the film, and something has ended differently, for better or for worse? Perhaps we can consider the reverse narrative which has its place within the incompleteness of haiku verses, as well.

Haiku are often thought of occurring as ‘now,’ though they quickly become an ‘active past’ that hangs around the periphery of our present timeline existence. We are unpeeling “the effect before the known cause” and arriving at this “end at the beginning.” And are we not time-travelers in our own lives, navigating the dash between birth and cessation?

last time I heard you became dusk      ◻■

## REVIEWED BY KRISTEN LINDQUIST

*all the stars i can swallow* by Laurie D. Morrissey (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2022). 98 pages, 4.25" x 6.5". Perfect softbound, matte cover. ISBN: 978-1-958408-01-8. \$20.00 from [redmoonpress.com](http://redmoonpress.com).

This second book of haiku from Laurie D. Morrissey is divided into three sections, each marked with a scenic photograph: “all the stars I can swallow,” featuring quiet revelations in nature; “Connecticut hills,” comprising poems of childhood and family memories; and “winter tracks,” showcasing winter/snow haiku. A signature poem early on in the collection might serve as her *modus operandi*,

demonstrating both her playfulness and thoughtfulness as a poet:

belly down  
staring into the stream  
of consciousness

Morrissey clearly pays close attention to the natural world. Many of these poems share a focused observation that also conveys an implicit sense of wonder, demonstrating well her internal sensitivity to the external world:

morning light— a thousand baby spiders leave the lily	winter light the permanence of longing
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fireflies — my mind a mystery to me

The clarity of Morrissey's presentation belies the complexity of her craft. What might seem straightforward at first glance often contains rich layers of emotional depth when we allow ourselves to fully inhabit the moment she shares:

flirting with the stars . . . campfire sparks	thoughts of a journey— distant islands of clouds	lilacs — exactly
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While Morrissey's title poem—*all the stars / I can swallow— / night swimming*—lyrically conjures up the magic of summer, this New England poet seems most inspired by the region's longest season, winter:

one silence after another winter stars

dying bonfire  
a winter field  
filled with moon

even with my eyes closed — snowflakes

And I especially enjoy her homage to fellow New Hampshire poet Robert Frost: *hemlock snow / the wingshake / of a crow*. Whatever the season, this lovely book is worth a careful read. ◻■

#### REVIEWED BY TERRI L. FRENCH

*Blessed: Modern Haibun on Almost Every Despair* by Andrew Riutta (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2022). 164 pages, 6" x 9". Four color covers, perfect soft bound. ISBN: 978-1-958408-07-0. \$20 from [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com)

The title and cover of a book are what first draw a reader in, and both do so in the case of Andrew Riutta's latest collection, *Blessed: Modern Haibun on Almost Every Despair*. Straight away, we are drawn to the words "blessed" and "despair." One would not expect an individual experiencing despair, especially "almost every despair," to feel particularly blessed, and yet, in reading the haibun, a sense of gratefulness and hope prevails. How does this come about? The cover image hints at the answer. The abstract image, created by writer/artist, Mark Meyer, appears to be, at first glance, a photo looking into an empty glass but could just as easily be seen as an expanding galaxy. This to me suggests both introspection and extrospection on the writer's part—a flawed man's humble search for self through contemplation, life experience, relationships, nature, religion and spirituality. Through Riutta's writing, we feel his struggle to find balance between despair and hope, loss and love, and shame, forgiveness and grace.

Religion and spirituality are peppered throughout the prose and haiku in unusual ways. From the grandfather whose expression "ain't that something," which Riutta calls "the purest form of gospel," to Dollar Store Jesus candles, medicine men, sweat lodges, and toothless Buddha's—Riutta has a way of bringing divinity and doctrine down to earth.

Riutta has an unobstructed writing style and a knack for combining commonplace objects and mundane, everyday occurrences with the beauty of nature: