

At the Ponderosa with Susan

Cowboys gather on the porch. They say that the rancher's killer could only be an outsider. Their voices rise to the upstairs window and enter the pink bedroom. There, the young widow smiles. She lifts her sewing scissors and drains the basin. Her delicate hands carefully close the window. Now that the smell of bleach is all but gone.

pine casket
the benedictions of
black-eyed susans

Beary writes in a note at the end of the book that they “write haibun for the people who view themselves as unseen and unheard.” Therefore, *Crazy Bitches* includes poems about frequently marginalized topics such as abortion, dementia, divorce, drug use, homophobia, neurodivergence, queer joy, and sexual abuse. These haibun illustrate how to write politically conscious poetry of high aesthetic quality, just one reason why Beary's work is essential.

REVIEWED BY ALLYSON WHIPPLE

One Hundred Poems from Old Japan: A New Translation of the Hyakunin Isshu edited by Fujiwara no Teika and translated by Michael Freiling (Tuttle Publishing, Rutland, VT: 2025). 223 pages, hardcover. ISBN: 978-4-8053-1923-9. \$19.99 from [tuttlepublishing.com](https://www.tuttlepublishing.com) and other online booksellers.

One Hundred Poems from Old Japan is a contemporary translation of the *Hyakunin Isshu*, a 13th-century waka (tanka) anthology whose title means, “one hundred poets; one poem each.” A canonical anthology in Japanese literature, this English-language translation aims to bring the enduring legacy of these poems to an English-language audience not just through the translations, but also through the original color illustrations and the supplemental audio recordings available online. Translator Michael Freiling has

created poetic translations that both embody the classical spirit and resonate with a contemporary audience; these long-ago poems resonate across the centuries. In addition, the poems are rendered in English, Romanized Japanese, and actual Japanese; those who are interested can practice matching sounds to letters to deepen their experience of the Japanese language. Freiling's opening essay also provides a meaningful cultural context for the waka form within Japan. The full-color illustrations and the ability to actually hear the rhythm of these poems in Japanese provides an educational and aesthetic experience. While reading, I was cognizant of how human emotions remain consistent across time and space, especially when it comes to love, aging, and death:

people's ways and human hearts
 I'll never understand—
 only the plum trees
 in my father's garden
 remain faithful in their fragrance
(Ki no Tsurayuki)

the color of these petals
 wilting in the shower,
 useless—
 as the time that rains too heavy
 on my aging frame
(Ono no Komachi)

a new spring day it seems
 as sunlight plays upon the grass,
 my heart both calm and restful—
 until I spy the cherry blossoms
 rushing to destruction.
(Ki no Tomonori)

This book is an excellent resource for beginners to the tanka form, to classical tanka, but also gives the reader cultural context and

the chance to hear what these poems sound like in their original language. Those who already have some experience with tanka also certainly stand to develop new insight; Freiling has provided a strong overview of literary Old Japan in 20 solid pages. And those already adept at tanka will appreciate this book as a keepsake; it's a well-constructed volume, a worthy container for these poems that stand the test of time.

The Poetry of Chiyo-ni: The Life and Art of Japan's Most Celebrated Woman Haiku Master edited by Patricia Donegan and Yoshie Ishibashi (Tuttle Publishing, Rutland, VT: 2025). 253 pages, hardcover. ISBN: 978-4-8053-1866-9. \$19.99 from tuttlepublishing.com and online booksellers.

The new edition of *The Poetry of Chiyo-ni* (first published in 1998 and long out of print) aims to present the multifaceted creative life of Chiyo-ni within the broader context of classical haiku. In addition to collecting her haiku, haiga, haibun, and linked verse, Patricia Donegan provided essays that are both biographical and accessibly academic. This volume is not just a comprehensive overview of Chiyo-ni's work, but also an opportunity to deepen one's knowledge about the social function of both standalone haiku and linked verse in Chiyo-ni's time. In doing so, Donegan and Ishibashi have provided new insight into the ways in which English-language haiku practitioners can honor the haiku tradition.

The introductory matter contains two essays: "Chiyo-ni's Life" and "Chiyo-ni's Haiku." The latter section opens with a discussion of the haiku form that goes beyond the basics, situating the form within the cultural context of 18th-century Japan. I felt the 7 ½ pages devoted to this topic were well worth the cost alone, as they provided historical and cultural insight that might not be familiar to beginner or intermediate practitioners. From there, one hundred of Chiyo-ni's haiku are arranged by season, with notes identifying the kigo and occasionally providing additional