

some people are not aware of or know very little about. Despite the harsh conditions, I feel this book shows the resilience of the dynamic human spirit. I express gratitude to everyone who made this anthology possible and am grateful to all who continue to stand up to injustices today. I highly recommend this book. ◻■

REVIEWED BY RANDY BROOKS

Designated Driver: A Selection of Haiku, Senryu, and Small Poems by Stanford M. Forrester / sekiro (Wooden Nickle Press, a division of bottle rockets press, Windsor, CT: 2023) 80 pages. 5.5" x 8". Four-color card covers, perfect bound. ISBN: 978-1-7366037-8-9. For ordering information, contact the poet by email at: bottlerockets_99@yahoo.com

Stanford M. Forrester has been writing, editing, and publishing haiku and senryu for over 25 years. This collection features many of his award-winning poems as well as favorites from his more recent mini-chapbooks. He started publishing *bottle rockets* magazine in 1999, and, as his title suggests, he has always enjoyed the playful spirit of haiku and senryu. Here is the title poem of this collection:

poetry party —
the designated driver
just listens

This haiku invites readers to join in this literary joyride. Come to the poetry party or just stay sober and listen. The opening section celebrates the life of poetry and poetry publishing:

tattered chapbook —
rusty staples
color the autumn haiku

Ah, the wabi of an old, hand-stitched haiku chapbook. Best read under the amber light of the autumn moon.

The next stop is a rustic cabin in the woods:

all day rain . . .
they told me the cabin
had a roof

It appears that someone's words made the imagination of the rustic cabin much better than the reality. On the poetry party adventure, we get to enjoy things the best we can:

labor day weekend —
doing as little
as possible . . .

Poets learn to make do with what's available:

stone soup . . .
 i add a few pebbles
 for flavor

I love the folktale about stone soup. It's been a tough year, nobody has much to eat, but as a community they build a fire and put a big pot of water over it. Everyone adds what little they have to the stone soup and soon there is enough for everyone. I read Stanford's senryu as a poetry stone soup . . . he adds a few pebbles to the community's pot of haiku. Indeed, from the credits, we can see that he has contributed several tasty morsels published in *Haiku in English: The First 100 Years*, *Haiku* edited by Peter Washington, and *American Zen: A Gathering of Poets* and he's won several awards as well.

Here is another favorite morsel for the stone soup:

tiny pond —
 what the frog
 left in my hand

I read this haiku as an imagined Issa-like version of Bashō's famous haiku. Instead of being startled by the frog, our narrator has held the frog in his hand and the frog has left behind a little pond of pee in his hand. What a wonderful play with nature and the haiku poetry tradition.

Forrester makes no secret about his love of Issa's haiku. He includes another homage to the "cup of tea" poet with this haiku:

cup of tea —
the moon still
until i sip it

And we hear an echo of Issa in this haiku based on Forrester's haigo, *sekiro*:

the last seat taken . . .
dew
on a stone

As he explains in the back matter, *sekiro* means "dew on a stone."

The collection has a short series of *senryū* with variations on "getaway car" including this one (again referring to the poetry community):

getaway car —
seem to be picking up
a lot of poets

While this reads as a continuation of the literary joyride, it also hints at a theme borrowed from another one of his favorite poets, Jack Kerouac, who also wrote about getting away from the usual paths of commercial American life. Sometimes this requires slowing down to a walk in the woods:

morning walk —
 hoping to find the haiku
 i lost yesterday

The collection ends with a short sequence on writing haiku with an ever-shortening pencil. Here is the final poem:

pencil stub —
 just enough
 to write a haiku

Designated Driver is an outstanding collection of haiku and senryu from a masterful contemporary haiku writer. I highly recommend purchasing a copy for your library, so that you, too, can get away and join his poetry party. ◻■

REVIEWED BY LISA GERLITS

skipping stones: the Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku 2022, editor-in-chief, Jim Kacian (Red Moon Press, Winchester, VA: 2023). 202 pages, 5.5" x 8.25". Glossy, four-color covers, perfect softbound. ISBN: 978-1-958408-16-2. \$20 from <https://redmoonpress.com>

My habit when reading anthologies or journals is to circle in soft pencil those poems that take my breath away or delight me with a fresh perspective. Usually, I circle one every few pages. Often I circle only six or seven in an entire collection. Reading *skipping stones*, I wore my pencil tip dull, circling so many favorites.

The anthology contains nearly 90 pages of haiku/senryu (hereafter referred to simply as haiku), 32 pages of haibun and other linked forms, and a handful of essays. For an entire year, haiku and related works are nominated by current journal editors and the Red Moon Anthology staff of 11 editors. According to the book's back matter, "more than 3000 haiku and related works by over 2000 different authors" were nominated in 2022. For inclusion in the anthology, a nominated work then required a vote from at least 5 staff editors.