

Paulson's late wife, Maki, this short collection covers a full spectrum of human and wild experiences, with the undercurrent of love running through.

In a brief span of pages, Paulson manages to convey the highs and lows of career, community, and love, always underpinned by a sense of awe and/or humor. He doesn't shy away from wordplay, such as, "second inning / the sound of one man / napping," which I appreciate. The only quibble I have is that the sudden presence of tanka at the very end was a little jarring. While tanka are certainly an excellent form for the topics Paulson chooses, the fact that the book ends with only four of them creates a sense of imbalance. I might have liked to see them more dispersed through the collection, between the haiku. That being said, the closing tanka, clearly written for the departed Maki, is both moving and the perfect bookend to the opening haiku.

the smell of leaves is an excellent collection for those currently wrestling with the challenges and joys of aging, working through the loss of a beloved family member, or seeking lighthearted and nondidactic wisdom. However, I think everyone can appreciate the skilled approach to composition that appears in every single poem.

a handful of huckleberries by Rick Tarquinio. 96, pp., perfect softbound. Bridgeton, NJ: Odd Duck Press, 2025. \$20 via PayPal to [soundingplace@gmail.com](mailto:soundingplace@gmail.com) or email Rick to pay by check. The poems in Rick Tarquinio's a handful of huckleberries were all written between March 2024 and March 2025 at Parvin State Park in New Jersey, and all appear for the first time in this volume. Taking us on a yearlong journey from one spring to another, this collection shows a masterful ability with kigo.

What I appreciate most about Tarquinio's haiku is his

commitment to precision. For example, “hauling her eggs / up the embankment / a red-eared slider” and “sunlit shoal / a cruising pickerel / parts the minnows” are poems that benefit from the exact turtle (red-eared slider) and fish (pickerel) being named. If you’re not familiar with some of the species specific to the eastern United States, the haiku generally have sufficient context for you to understand anyway. However, I recommend taking the time to look up unfamiliar animals when you find them in this book; this collection is filled with learning opportunities. Despite only having driven through New Jersey, I feel a sense of connection to the park in which these poems were written because I took the opportunity to learn more about the animals that live there.

a handful of huckleberries contains a number of standard kigo (snowflakes, falling leaves), but the presence of such specific plants and animals also shows that Tarquinio understands how to build seasonal references out of his own surroundings. This collection will appeal to a wide range of readers, but I especially recommend it for anyone consciously studying kigo, especially if they are interested in learning how to develop seasonal references specific to their area.

Something Left: Towpath Anthology 2025, ed. Jack Blocker, Matt Snyder, and Linda Weir. 73 pp., perfect softbound. Washington, D.C.: Blocker Book Press, 2025. Order at [brooksbookshaiku.com](http://brooksbookshaiku.com) Something Left contains the work of 21 Towpath Haiku Society poets. Rather than being divided into sections for each poet, poems are arranged by their relationship to each other. I detect a subtle but powerful sense of link-and-shift, as though this wasn’t only an anthology, but also a sequence unto itself. For example, consider the connection and contrast between Ryland Shengzhi Li’s “the silence / in between our houses / river of fireflies” and Lee Gieseke’s “train in the foothills / something left / of its

sound” on the opposite page.

At the very end of the book, the editors have included an In Memoriam section, in which Towpath poets composed haiku in honor of group members who have passed. Each set of poems is prefaced by a brief biography of the poet being honored. I thought that this was a moving section, but I also would have liked to see a few sentences about the broader context that led to it. For example, did the poets who contributed have personal relationships with the poets they wrote for? Did any (or all) of these pieces borrow lines from the poets being referenced? While this is a small book without much room for long prose passages, I still found myself wishing I had a little more detail.

I recommend *Something Left* for anthology enthusiasts, particularly those who study the ways in which they are arranged, and especially for those leaders of local haiku groups who are interested in creating anthologies of their own. This book is an excellent example of how to create a volume that is entirely local yet nonetheless meaningful to people who live outside your region.

*Water Between Mountain Stones*, ed. Shirley and Randy Brooks. 24 pp., staple-bound. San Ramon, CA: Two Autumns Press, 2025. \$11.00 (\$20.00 for overseas orders) via PayPal to [hpncadmin@gmail.com](mailto:hpncadmin@gmail.com).

*Water Between Stones* is the latest edition in the Two Autumns Reading Series, which began in 1990. This year’s chapbook contains the work of Mimi Ahern, Randy Brooks, Gary Hotham, and Yvette Nicole Kolodji, featuring a selection of their readings from the series.

Each poet has 12 haiku, all of which were previously published. You can tell that each reader selected their best work; every

poem in this brief anthology points to the specific style of the poet who wrote it. There are also a number of callbacks, which may be intentional but may also be happy accidents, between each poet. For example, Yvette Nicole Kolodji's "rare steak / his interrogation / of my boyfriend," about an early relationship, is a fun counterpoint to Randy Brooks' "New York strip / our wedding anniversary / pink in the middle," about a more mature love. In addition, readers may find themselves rediscovering an old favorite that had been published a long time ago.

Water Between Mountaim Stones is a best-of chapbook. It's so brief that it leaves you wanting more, but in that brevity, it allows you to truly appreciate the excellent work of the featured poets.

Briefly Reviewed by Daniel Shank Cruz

tea: all the time it takes: A Haiku Anthology edited by Denise Fontaine-Pincince (Self-published: 2025). 141 pp. Perfect softbound. ISBN 978-0-9982409-2-3. \$20.00 from amazon.com or contact dcfontaine@yahoo.com.

tea: all the time it takes is an anthology about one of the world's most imbibed beverages that includes writing by 112 contemporary poets from thirteen countries listed alphabetically by last name, plus a poem each by Bashō, Chiyo-ni, Buson, Issa, and Shiki. Some of the best poems are those that treat the subject from an unexpected angle:

tasseography—  
seeing the wings  
rise to the rim

Joanna Ashwell

Spring sun—  
a little cash saved  
in the flowered teapot

Janelle Barrera

A handful of poems examine tea's historical role in geopolitics, as in Ruth Holzer's

tea cup  
on the map of Vietnam  
leaving a stain

Although most of the poems are three lines, there are some excellent monoku, such as Cam M. Sato's

the blush in her cheeks this morning tea

As with any themed anthology, the poems can feel repetitive at times if read in gulps rather than sips, but overall this is an enjoyable book worth adding to any HSA member's library.