

I tell him I hear  
that voice, too,  
spring breeze

just how  
to hold you  
paper kite

The collection recently won the Haiku Foundation's 2015 Touchstone Award. It is well deserved. Schwerin is a poet we have been enjoying for a while and  $\oplus RS$  is easy to recommend.

## BRIEFLY NOTED

*African American Haiku: Cultural Visions*, ed. by John Zheng (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 2016). 197 pages; 6¼" X 9¼". Hardcover. ISBN 978-1-4968-0303-0. Price: \$65.00 from online booksellers

Ten essays on the individual haiku practices of Richard Wright, James A. Emanuel, Etheridge Knight, Sonia Sanchez, and Lenard D. Moore. Half of the essays reveal good study on their subjects, but on the whole an uneven collection. As might be expected, considering an excessive focus on Wright's haiku, the essays on Wright don't reveal any new ground. Other essays work best when they examine a poet's individual use of haiku, especially in relation to Emanuel, Knight, and in some ways Sanchez, rather than unconvincingly trying to link their work to traditional Japanese aesthetics. The volume concludes with three essays on Lenard D. Moore that nicely detail his history with the genre (although one is a hagiography). An essay by Ce Rosenow interestingly bridges Moore's individual haiku experiences with a larger communal African-American narrative.

*Juxtaone*, ed. by Peter McDonald (Winchester, Va.: The Haiku Foundation, 2015). 268 pages; 6" x 9". Matte red, grey, and black card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-9826951-2-8. Price: \$50.00 from online booksellers. *Juxtatwo*, ed. by Peter McDonald (Winchester, Va.: The Haiku Foundation, 2016). 292 pages; 6" x 9". Matte red, grey, and black card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-9826951-3-5. Price: \$55.00 from online booksellers.

Softcover printings of the Haiku Foundation online journal *Juxtapositions*. Editor McDonald declares that "...to date, no publication has dedicated itself solely to the exploration of haiku as a form worthy of formal scholarly investigation." We take exception to that bold comment. *Modern Haiku*, *Frogpond*, *Blithe Spirit*, and many other journals over the years have published scholarly work. This is especially problematic when one considers that the first issue of *Juxtapositions* contains work (sometimes expanded) that had appeared previously in such places as *Modern Haiku*, *Frogpond*, and *Haiku heute*. But perhaps editor McDonald meant by 'solely' that the journal only contains scholarship, not haiku or haiku-related arts; but even if that is the case (ignoring the haiga the journal uses to separate the essays) he neglects decades of strong writing on haiku. Ego aside, *Juxtapositions* fits nicely into the realm of existing haiku scholarship. Each volume contains several essays by a cast of scholars and well-known haikuists.

*Guess Who, Haiku*, by Deanna Caswell and Bob Shea (New York: Abrams Appleseed, 2016). 24 pages; 9¼" x 9¼". Hardcover. ISBN 978-1-4197-1889-2. Price: \$14.95 from online booksellers

This colorful children's book uses ten haiku (5-7-5 versions) as riddles for young readers. A haiku such as *a chunk of Swiss cheese / chewing sounds heard from a hole / in the kitchen wall* is answered on the following page with 'A Mouse!' The mouse then offers its own haiku which introduces the next animal. A nice introduction to the genre.

*Cicada Chant*, by Giselle Maya (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2016). 78 pages; 5" X 7½". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-60-7. Price: \$17.00 from [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com)

Thirty-six haibun and tanka prose on the poet's village life in Provence, France. It is a community very much of the earth and seasons, and through Maya we get a good sense of its breath and breadth. The haiku and tanka deepen our understanding of the life she describes, as seasonings, although sometimes they could be additional text rather than haiku, i.e. *his eyes / blue green as the creek's / swimming holes*. She is an enjoyable tour guide and the collection stays close to home.

*Small Things Make Me Laugh*, by Yu Chang (Rochester, N.Y.: Free Food Press, 2016). 40 pages; 5½" X 8½". Glossy black and white card covers; perfectbound. No ISBN. Price: \$13.00 from [www.freefoodpress.com](http://www.freefoodpress.com)

A member of the Route 9 Group, and long a background fixture of the haiku community, Chang is a poet well-known for his consistently strong haiku. Chang himself is very much of the moments he illuminates and often they are presented in a humble, self-effacing manner. Many are quiet poems, but done with such an even hand that all things are revealed as significant. The simple layout of Michael Ketchek's Free Food Press is the perfect way to present Chang's work. A welcome addition. *mating season / I am / all ears*

*At It Again: New & Selected Haiku*, by John Brandi (El Rito, N.M.: Tooth of Time Books, 2015). 104 pages; 6" X 7". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-940510-20-3. Price: \$15.00 from online booksellers

Brandi is wary of labeling his small poems 'haiku,' calling them 'twists' or 'snippets.' While many are aphorism-like, many are clearly haiku—and fine ones. For thirty years he has shared his vision through poems that

engage a life honestly lived. His work has always had a folksy charm. His newer poems seem quieter. We are glad for another gathering. *Woodpile low / first hyacinth / from a bank of snow*

*Off the Beaten Track: A Year in Haiku*, ed. by Hamish Ironside (United Kingdom: Boatwhistle Books, 2016). 218 pages; 4¾" X 7¼". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-911052-01-2. Price: £12.00 from [www.boatwhistle.com](http://www.boatwhistle.com)

In the afterward, the editor admits that the book is something of a “writing experiment,” one where half the poets are established haikuists and the other half novices; additionally, that asking each to write a month’s worth of new haiku might produce questionable results. The resulting book is, as expected, a bit of a mixed bag. It is divided into months—one for each poet. The haikuists (Herold, Lucky, Paul, Swede, Welch) perform well, although there are some weaker poems; the novices tend to take their own tack with the genre—which can be interesting, but also frustrating for those readers who have their own definition of haiku. Elsewhere we have expressed an interest in the dividing line between haiku and non-haiku. The current volume would have benefited from each poet, the novices especially, justifying their choices.

*Galaxy of Dust: The Red Moon Anthology of English Language Haiku 2015* (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2016). 184 pages; 5½" X 8¼". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-55-3. Price: \$17.00 from [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com)

An annual anthology that seeks to bring together the best haiku, senryu, haibun, linked verse, and essays on haiku published in 2015. It includes haiku published in journals and chapbooks, as well as contest winners—all work filtered through the eleven RMA editors. The current volume is particularly enjoyable with some very strong work. If you only buy one book of haiku a year it should be this.

*Kreischen der Kreide* / the screech of chalk, by Ralf Bröker (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2016). 100 pages; 4¼" X 6½". Glossy black and white card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-53-9. Price: \$12.00 from [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com)

A first collection in German and English; haiku with a few tanka. A post-modern writer, his haiku take on the isolation of modern, urban life. There are some interesting juxtapositions and Bröker makes good use of them. Some of the English translations need work, leaving at times stilted phrases such as 'open school day' when the writer probably means 'opening' or 'first.' And more than a few poems fall flat. A good editor could have trimmed it to a leaner, stronger effort. That said, it is an enjoyable and thought-provoking first outing. *snowflake in my hand / if i was dead / it would stay*

*Answers Instead: A Life in Haiku*, by Edward J. Rielly (Farmington, Maine: Encircle Publications, 2015). 39 pages; 6" X 9". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-893035-29-4. Price: \$13.95 from online booksellers

Because of haiku's focus on the here and now, and the intimate, important details of human life, they can be especially autobiographical—especially when one has been writing haiku for nearly forty years as the author has. Through his latest collection, *Answers Instead*, Rielly looks back at his childhood on a dairy farm, becoming a parent himself, and of additional generations. He is a strong craftsman and the haiku delight. As he confides in the introduction—and as would be expected of a short form—these are glimpses rather than a fully formed biography. But each contain a truth and glimpse into a life. *at the loan desk / a farmer talking quietly— / autumn drizzle*

*Pod Krilom Rode* / Under the Wing of a White Stork, by Durda Vukelić Rožić (Croatia: JU Zeleni prsten, 2016). 86 pages; 4¼" X 6¾". Black and

white card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-953-56250-5-6. Price: inquire of the author.

Eastern European haiku tend to eschew disjunction and juxtaposition, concentrating instead on complementary images or ideas. This makes the poems quieter and often more akin to astute observations. The haiku in *Pod Krilom Rode* highlight the difficulties storks face living in such close proximity to humans. The poet mixes myth and legend with everyday observations to create a world in which the storks are just as important as their human counterparts. Yet, despite their imperilment, the poet's image of the stork is stoic, and at times magical. *Epiphany— / blessing of the house / and the nest*

*What Light There Is*, by Sylvia Forges-Ryan (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press). 104 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Glossy black, red, and white card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-58-4. Price: \$17.00 from [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com)

Forges-Ryan has won a number of haiku contests, as well as served as *Frogpond* editor from 1991 to 1993, so the reader can be assured they are in good hands. The current volume contains haiku, senryu, and tanka, and there is unsurprisingly a tendency for her haiku to take on some of the sentimentality of tanka. Yet she is an effective writer and the poems have a confident ease to them. She tackles all living things with a compassion that feels natural. The book's six sections progress nicely and are separated by Ion Codrescu's ink drawings. *Firing squad photo / something in my heart / also slumps*

*Chrysanthemum Dusk*, Susan B. Auld (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press). 58 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-54-6. Price: \$12.00 from [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com)

Auld's debut haiku collection begins in autumn with poems of loss, leavings, and decay, then moves into winter. More than half of the book is

taken up by haiku of these two seasons, and there is a nice mix of the natural and human worlds. When spring poems arrive it is almost surprising! Gone are the references to other people, and the poet is seemingly left alone to wonder at and embrace a new life. Auld writes with a welcome, light touch. A strong debut. *rooster crow / waking the vase / with fresh water*

*Black & White*, by Ernest Wit (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2016). 80 pages; 4¼" X 6½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-56-0. Price: \$12.00 from [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com)

The haiku in *Black & White* were written between 2011 and 2015, most published, and some winning awards. Wit is Polish, yet his haiku feel more American in style than much of what is written on the continent. These are up-close poems, many of personal relationships, which reveal a watchful eye; and there is a consistent voice to the work. As in any collection there are a few merely observational poems, but Wit is a strong poet and the current collection is a good addition to his oeuvre. *my plans, my dreams / starlings darken / the summer sky*

*Finding a Way*, by Robert Witmer (India: Cyberwit, 2016). 70 pages; 5½" X 8½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-93-85945-13-7. Price: \$15.00 from [www.cyberwit.net](http://www.cyberwit.net)

We have long enjoyed Witmer's haiku and look forward to his submissions from his residence in Tokyo. Yet despite this residence in haiku's homeland, his work always feels universal. He doesn't write about cherry trees and temples, but rather everyday things that resonate with readers regardless of their location. There is a lyrical-ness to his work and his subjects are occasionally anthropomorphic, yet they don't feel out of place in his larger worldview. The book is divided into fifteen "suites" that thematically move with the seasons. An enjoyable and successful collection. *rookie card / nobody wants / hitting every spoke*