

BRIEFLY REVIEWED

Reviewed by Randy Brooks:

Afriku: Haiku & Senryu from Ghana by Adjei Agyei-Baah (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA) 104 pages, 4¼×6½", perfect-bound. ISBN 978-1-936848-68-3. \$15 from redmoonpress.com

It is such a pleasure to find high-quality haiku in this new collection, *Afriku: Haiku & Senryu from Ghana* by Adjei Agyei-Baah, cofounder of Poetry Foundation Ghana and Africa Haiku Network. Published as a dual-language edition in Twi and English, most of the haiku are based on Adjei's cultural perspectives from Ghana. For example, he writes, *all that remain / of a lost tribe's story— / scratches and scars*. In another he writes, *dawn rivalry— / a muezzin / and a rooster*. This is an exciting collection by one of the new leaders of contemporary haiku in Africa. I look forward to seeing the growth of haiku across Africa and this book is a preview of that anticipated growth.

Catku: Haiku and Senryu by Christina Sng (2016, Allegra Press, Singapore) 16 pages, 2¾×4¼", black and white softcovers, saddlestitch. ISBN 978-981-11-1483-0. \$5 from christinasng.com

Catku is a micro-chapbook of 21 cat haiku. The afterword notes that Christina Sng "has been writing haiku and senryu since 2015 as a form of therapeutic meditation." Evidently her cat, Kit, has been a playful contributor to her contemplation, starring in these haiku. *light drizzle / an afternoon curled up / with my cat*

A Constellation of Songs by Christina Sng (2016, Allegra Press, Singapore) 16 pages, 2¾×4¼", black and white softcovers, saddlestitch. ISBN 978-981-11-1480-9. \$5 from christinasng.com

Originally published as a pdf-file Origami Poems Project micro-chapbook, *A Constellation of Songs* is also available in a small print edition. The 18 haiku in this small collection are organized

into 6 strings. Each page forms a small triptych of 3 haiku on a related topic such as “The Birth of New Things.” Here are the 3 haiku from “The Agony of Loss”: *fading sun / the one-winged moth / tries to fly away* and *gray sea / I search each day / for traces of you* and *learning / the art of dying / chrysanthemums*

A Drop of Pond by Brad Bennett (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA) 80 pages, 4¼×6½”, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-73-7. \$15 from redmoonpress.com

In Brad Bennett’s first full-length collection of haiku, *A Drop of Pond*, we find humor, clear observation, but most of all a sense of wonder. Bennett is an elementary school teacher, and from these haiku I can imagine how well he incites the curiosity of his students. For example, *the boy / belly down on a rock / shadowing minnows* or the title haiku, *a drop of pond / at the end of a beak / setting sun*. An avid supporter of wildlife preservation, Audubon sanctuaries, and national parks, Bennett invites us all to get out of our selves: *Grand Canyon / neither of us mentions / the silence*. In addition to the wonders of nature, he also conveys moments of love, hope, and togetherness. For example, *New Year’s Eve party / my coat on the bottom / of the pile*. This is an excellent collection of award-winning haiku and senryu.

Down the Milky Way / Miliječnom Stazom by Dejan Pavlinović (2016, Pula, Zagreb, Croatia) 150 pages, 5×8”, perfectbound. ISBN 978-953-59233-0-5. 75 Croatian kuna (about \$10.66)

Dejan Pavlinović started writing haiku in both English and Croatian in 2007 and *Down the Milky Way* is his first collection. In the preface, the late Jane Reichhold notes that Pavlinović’s haiku go beyond “noticing the little things that happen in our daily lives” in the way that haiku writers “show the reader the specialness of common life and how it relates to every thing in the world.” I agree that Dejan’s 100 haiku in this book go beyond mere description providing suggestions of another level of significance. The title poem *from star to star / down the Milky Way / a little finger*

instantly connects the distance of the heavens with the immediacy of someone pointing and admiring a creativity beyond us. As a teacher of second languages, including English, Pavlinović is comfortable and very proficient at writing in English. Although employing a conversational tone, he carefully crafts lyrical phrasing and subtle connotations. I conclude with a favorite: *out of the fog / straight into the nostrils / mimosa*

Down to the Wire by Rob Scott (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA) 74 pages, 5×7½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-76-8. \$15 from redmoonpress.com

Down to the Wire is a collection of "footy haiku." The book is organized as a series of Australian Football League match reports, with 7 to 9 haiku per match. Scott writes "football season, like haiku, is marked by the change of seasons" and "since football is played in nature's elements, nature is present in many of the haiku." The opening haiku is *new season — / the sun rises / between the goal posts*. Some of the haiku turn to the psychology of the game: *twilight / the defender caught / in two minds*. A favorite is the title haiku: *the game goes / down to the wire — / my thinning hair*

Elemental by Jay Friedenberg (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA) 80 pages, 4¼×6½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-74-4. \$15 from redmoonpress.com

Jay Friedenberg is a graphic designer and artist, known for his pastel landscapes and cityscapes. With his new book of haiku, *Elemental*, it is easy to see that he knows how to create an interesting exhibit of his haiku as well. This collection is organized into four sections based on the elements: terra, aqua, aeris, and cosmos (instead of fire). The haiku are carefully sequenced as an exploration of each element. For example, "terra" includes the haiku *the stories told / by each generation / sedimentary rock*. At the end of each section, there is a senryu for "comic relief" such as: *water, water, everywhere — / I've had too much / to drink*.

Jay writes with clarity, humor, and significance beyond the immediate scene. I conclude with his cosmic: *starry night / I exhale / the Andromeda galaxy*

Every Chicken, Cow, Fish and Frog: Animal Rights Haiku ed. by Robert Epstein and Miriam Wald (2016, Middle Island Press, West Union WV) 182 pages, 6×9", perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-9980732-2-4. \$20 from middleislandpress.com

Haiku is not usually considered political or as a vehicle for debating the ethics of issues such as animal rights. However, through the simple act of calling for submissions and gathering a collection of contemporary haiku on the subject, the editors of *Every Chicken, Cow, Fish and Frog: Animal Rights Haiku* demonstrate that haiku can express a common ethos and shared emotions stemming from our human relations with animals. The haiku in this collection convey empathy for animals suffering from abuse, enslavement, and violent treatment. Epstein states in the introduction that haiku poets "draw on the power of intuition and an intimate, unmediated connection to their fellow beings." Here are a couple of sample haiku: *office aquarium / the fish and I / in different boxes* by Yu Chang and: *not as funny / as it sounds / dead duck* by the late Carlos Colón. Here is an example of making an ethical decision: *New Year's resolution / making my wardrobe / animal free* by Kyle Craig. And finally, a haiku of compassion: *how could the cat know / this fledgling too / was someone's child* by William J. Higginson. If you enjoy this anthology, you might be interested in another collection of animal rights haiku also published by Middle Island Press in 2016: *Turkey Heaven* by Robert Epstein.

Haiku 2016 ed. by Lee Gurga and Scott Metz (2016, Modern Haiku Press, Lincoln IL) 116 pages, 4¼×5½", perfectbound. ISBN 0-9741894-8-0. \$8 from ModernHaiku.org

This annual collection is arranged by the author's last name, beginning with Melissa Allen's wonderful haiku, *turn the record*

over and start snowing. I like the way this haiku conjures up memories of playing an old favorite LP album, with its static also serving as an indoor reminder of snow falling. *Haiku 2016* features playful haiku that turn toward language and its meta-physical significance. Consider the significance of a single type character as in editor Lee Gurga's *dotting an i / dotting an i / death verse*. In another example, Paul Miller wrote, *under snow comma embryos* giving full voice and substance to the comma. Or consider Francine Banwarth's haiku, *fallen leaves me with my grudges* which magically turns "leaves" from a noun to a verb in a millisecond, but resonates with a nagging sense of introspective frustration. My favorite is the collection's finale, a vibrant metaphor that casts its poetic spell, written by Peter Yovu: *two ballerinas in one skin a newborn foal*

Hammerscale from the Thrush's Anvil by David J. Kelly (2016, Alba Publishing, Uxbridge, UK) 50 pages, 5¾×8½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-910185-52-0. \$14 from albapublishing.com

"Hammerscale" are flecks of metal left from working iron and a "thrush's anvil" is a flat stone used by a thrush to crack open a snail to eat the tasty bits inside. This first book of haiku and haibun by David J. Kelly is organized into the following sections: thrush song / shade of a tree / snails / stone / release. Kelly excels at bird and nature observation haiku, but too often includes abstract statements. For example: *as we search / for mightier weapons / crossing words*. A personal favorite is: *Winnie the Pooh country / we cross paths with / a woolly bear* which is playful, literary, and observant.

Helices by George Swede (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA) 118 pages, 4¼×6½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-70-6. \$15 from redmoonpress.com

"A helix (pl: helices or helices) is a type of smooth space curve, i.e. a curve in three-dimensional space. It has the property that the tangent line at any point makes a constant angle with a fixed

line called the axis. Examples of helices are coil springs and the handrails of spiral staircases.” The first section of this collection is labeled “Single Helix” and starts with *sandcastle my carefully constructed self*. Swede places the construction of self-identity within his art (haiku), which he characterizes as a sandcastle—an ephemeral construct that lasts only until the tide comes in. This “Single Helix” section has references to creativity: *my poems... / the woodcarver’s / pile of chips* and also includes several autobiographical haiku. The second section is labeled “Double Helix” which refers to a pair of “congruent geometrical helices with the same axis.” From the first haiku, *wedding photo kiss / the merger of our / microbiomes*, it is clear this section is about relationships. The third section, “Triple Helices,” features broader social relationships—nationalism, war, gangs, politics, and social psychology. One of the haiku from this section is: *a monument / to a murderous dictator / mob of pigeons*. The last section, “Beyond the Triple Helix,” explores the origins of life and connections to the present and future. Swede starts this section with: *the day begins... / descendants of dinosaurs / darting, singing*.

Highway of Sleeping Towns by Deborah P Kolodji (2016, Shabda Press, Pasadena CA) 108 pages, 6×9”, perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-9915772-3-1. \$16 from shabdapress.com

Deborah Kolodji’s *Highway of Sleeping Towns* is a book of selected haiku from over 15 years of writing. The collection is refreshing to read because Kolodji does not repeat common haiku themes, but instead conveys a wide range of emotional responses to contemporary life. Her haiku do what the best haiku do—they offer surprising gifts of insight and emotion from our own lives. The title haiku is: *highway / of sleeping towns / the milky way*. A couple more favorites are: *thistles in bloom / grandmother’s needle / threaded in purple* and *tax day / my mother’s IV / beeps at me*. While employing ordinary, conversational language, she surprises us by the turn of imagery from one context to another. This is an outstanding collection all haiku lovers should add to their libraries.

In the Lantern Light by John Gonzalez (2016, Alba Publishing, Uxbridge, UK) 50 pages, 5¾×8½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-910185-54-4. \$15 from albapublishing.com

In the Lantern Light is John Gonzalez's fourth collection of contemporary haiku. Gonzalez brings readers along with him to a variety of settings, with a clear sense of perspective. For example, *three gravediggers / watching a funeral / from a distance* or *boat ropes / dangling and straightening— / tide in, then out*. Many of the haiku throughout this collection bring us back to images of death, funerals, or graves like a recurring chorus: *on a gravestone / a spider / plays dead*. This haiku is followed by *merry-go-round— / daughter all set / to catch me up*. The mix of life and death haiku makes for an engaging reading experience and reminds us of the ephemeral nature of our lives.

Invisible Tea by Kyle D. Craig (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA) 72 pages, 6×9", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-71-3. \$15 from redmoonpress.com

In his first collection, Kyle Craig seeks to "risk delight." He opens with a quote by Jack Gilbert: "We must have the stubbornness to accept our gladness in the ruthless furnace of this world." Throughout the collection his haiku, tanka, and haibun playfully tiptoe on the curb between delight and the anxiety of injustice and suffering. The title poem is the delightful *high noon / a toddler pours / invisible tea*, but later in the book we find *nature channel / a toddler watches / mothers eat their young*. One of my favorite haibun is, "We Regret to Inform You" which is a litany of things that go wrong all at once, ending with the haiku *snow storm / grocery store shelves / out of milk*. Often he captures the perfect mix: *walking past the nightclub / a woman wears / her newborn*. This is an excellent collection by a promising new voice.

Life Death etc by Anna Maris (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA) 78 pages, 4¼×6½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-72-0. \$15 from redmoonpress.com

Life Death etc is a dual-language collection of haiku in Swedish and English by Anna Maris. Her haiku quietly explore experiences of hope, fear, loss, and a constant expression of caring. For example, in one haiku she writes, *paper boat / another worry / sails away*. This haiku starts with a playful scene that darkens into an attempt to let go of worries. The haiku in this book are populated by people who are often looking for sanctuary: *home town / in the familiar houses / strangers*. The haiku in the section titled “death” feature survivors, as in: *insomnia / the cold on the other side / of the pillow*. This is a collection of well-written haiku that are heartfelt in the universal language of being human.

Matcha by Stanford M. Forrester / *sekiro* (2016, Wooden Nickel Press, Windsor CT) 12 pages, 3×3”; Letterpress mini-chapbook, sewn. No ISBN. \$5 including postage from Stanford M. Forrester, PO Box 189, Windsor CT 06095

Matcha is the latest in a series of beautiful letterpress mini-chapbooks published by Stanford M. Forrester. The title includes kanji for *matcha* printed on the cover in bold silver ink and on the title page kanji in green ink. This small collection of 7 haiku and senryu are playful and refreshing: *poetry party— / the designated driver / just listens*. I like mini-chapbooks because they invite the reader in for a short visit with the author’s work. Come enjoy a little *matcha* with Stanford: *tea ceremony— / it begins and ends / with an empty cup*

Naad Anunaad: An Anthology of Contemporary World Haiku ed. by Kala Ramesh, Sanjuktaa Asopa, and Shloka Shankar (2016, Vishwakarma Publications, Pune, India) 234 pages, 5½×8”; perfectbound. ISBN 978-93-85665-33-2. From vpindia.co.in

The title for this anthology comes from the Sanskrit concept of “the primordial sound in the cosmos, referred to metaphorically as AUM” which is “known as naad, and its resonance as anunaad.” The editors explain that the haiku in this collection

“resonate, each in a unique way—just for you!” This is an ambitious collection of haiku in English from contemporary authors around the world, representing diverse approaches and voices. You will find familiar haiku “friends” published in several previous anthologies, such as: *through the small holes / in the mailbox / sunlight on a blue stamp* by Cor van den Heuvel, as well as haiku by young writers such as Aubrie Cox: *roadside violets / all the places / I’ve yet to go*. The haiku range in topic from family: *goldfish bowl / my daughter asks / if I’m going to die* by John McManus to haunting nightmares as in *ghost town — / the sound of army boots / from alley to alley* by Kashinath Karmakar. The 746 haiku by 231 authors from 26 countries provide a showcase of evidence that English haiku is alive and well, resonating with significance throughout the world.

Old Enough by Bruce H. Feingold (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA) 76 pages, 4¼×6½”, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-78-2. \$15 from redmoonpress.com

Old Enough is Bruce Feingold’s third collection of haiku. The short biography at the back of the book states, “He believes that haiku, like his work as a psychotherapist and as a way of life, is an art of the heart which taps our intelligence, creativity, openness, courage and honesty.” As I read the haiku from this collection I find haiku that give presence to heart, as in *finch’s red head / I want to / love again*. In another we join the adventure, *step by step / my daughter and I climb / the mountain mist*. The title poem is: *old enough / to just listen / trout rising*. This collection meets his stated goal of haiku as a means of sharing the significance of our lives.

Out of Nowhere by Rob Scott (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA) 70 pages, 5×7½”, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-77-5. \$15 from redmoonpress.com

Rob Scott grew up in Australia but first learned about haiku while teaching in Japan. He is the author of a master’s thesis,

“The History of Australian Haiku and the Emergence of a Local Accent.” He is currently a teacher in Sweden. *Out of Nowhere* is Scott’s first book-length collection. Scott notes in his introduction that he does not write about Australia. Instead, the 82 haiku and senryu in this collection represent his attempt to “write haiku with a pulse.” I enjoyed reading this collection and would say this is a book of haiku that express the inner weather of contemporary life. The title haiku is: *wind gust— / out of nowhere / we start an argument* and on the opposite page we find *icemelt— / the moon drifts / through my whiskey*. Many of the haiku explore the challenges and joys of relationships: *spicing up the stew / she hands me coriander / in that dress*. Rob Scott has successfully written an outstanding collection of haiku with a pulse!

Seven Suns / Seven Moons by Michael Dylan Welch and Tanya McDonald (2016, NeoPoiesis Press, Seattle WA) 64 pages, 4×7”, perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-9903565-9-2. \$14.95 from NeoPoiesis-Press.com

Seven Suns / Seven Moons is a collaborative experiment in repetition and variation. Michael Dylan Welch opens with 63 sun verses, followed by 63 moon verses by Tanya McDonald. Then they collaborate by writing “seven suns”, then “seven moons” rengay, concluding the book with a kasen renga shifting back and forth between “seven suns” and “seven moons” links. For example, *seven suns / gang members laughing / at a comic strip*. As I’ve said in previous reviews, I am not a fan of collections of haiku that employ continuous repetition of an image or phrase, but in this case I like the playfulness of the poets and the responsive collaboration evident in the rengay. Also, each section starts with a prelude with variations such as “one sun”, “two suns” working up to “seven suns.” In the postludes that reverse the count back to one sun and one moon, I especially enjoy the sixth verses in both sections because they break free from the repetitive pattern: *two puns / the laughter / you never gave me* and: *two loons / snow-bound / on our anniversary*

Scent of the Past...Imperfect ed. by Renée Owen (2016, Two Autumns Press, Santa Clara CA) 32 pages, 5½×8½", saddle-stapled. No ISBN. \$8 from jwrobello@hotmail.com

The Haiku Poets of Northern California have been hosting the Two Autumns annual readings for 27 years. This collection includes haiku from the August 28, 2016 reading in San Francisco. The four featured readers are: (1) Michele Root-Bernstein, who provides the title poem: *lilacs / the scent of the past / imperfect*; (2) Robert Gilliland, (3) June Hopper Hymas, and (4) Michael Sheffield. This reading series and the related chapbook provide an archive of many of the best of contemporary haiku poets over these three decades. Hymas' haiku, *abandoned homestead / a thin row of cottonwoods / in afternoon rain* speaks to my own memories of Kansas and what a difference a little rain makes.

Silver Salmon Runes (Haiku / Senryu 2010–2016) by William Scott Galasso (2016, Galwin Press, Laguna Woods CA) 106 pages, 6×9", perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-9706471-7-7. \$10 from createspace.com

This is a large collection of haiku and senryu by William Scott Galasso, organized by the seasons. Reading through the collection, with 2 or 3 haiku per page, I get a sense of authenticity and integrity as if I was reading someone's journal. The haiku are well written and accumulate into a sort of autobiography of the seasons. Here is a sampling from two seasons: *winter wind— / we lean into / each other* and *spring training... / behind the dugout / a new girlfriend*. Galasso also includes a haibun, sequences, and senryu, such as *sidewalk café / her love life lousy... / now we all know*

Slicing the Morning Mist by Carolyne Rohrig (2016, Free Food Press, Rochester NY) 28 pages, 4×5½", deckled paper covers, sewn. ISBN none. \$6.50 from freefoodpress.com

This is a hand-sewn chapbook of haiku by Carolyne Rohrig. The title poem is *tai chi / slicing the morning mist / in quarters*.

The chapbook features 2 haiku per page with an underlying spirit of a peacemaker—someone seeking peace with themselves and others. This is a gathering of quiet, whispering haiku, such as: *village women in black shawls / gathering for the funeral / whispering*. Within these pages we encounter moths, cloudy skies, small talk, last words, confession, and my favorite: *pregnant— / sucking at her feet / the outgoing tide*. This is an excellent serving of the best free spiritual food I know of, haiku.

A Small Boat by John Martone (2016, Samuddo / Ocean, Charleston IL) 60 pages, 4¼×7", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-365-54753-9. From johnmartone@gmail.com

With one haiku per page, *A Small Boat* lets us join John Martone in daily contemplations. Overall, Martone's haiku express quietude—letting things be without imposing our needs on them. One haiku says *every form / of solitude / autumn lakes*, and another, *your eyes get used / to the dark— / listen to that wind*. Some turn inward and ask for forgiveness, *digging up / a handful of moss / another sin* but most ask us to just notice the unnoticed as in the title poem, *gothic arch / a small boat / in the fresco*. Near the end of the collection we watch *a small boat's / wake widens / to the hills*

Strange Silence / O Liniște Stranie by Constantin Novacescu and Jim Kacian (2016, Waldpress, Timișoara, Romania) 96 pages, 5¾×8", perfectbound. ISBN 978-606-614-153-6.

Strange Silence / O Liniște Stranie includes 48 pages of haiku by Jim Kacian and 48 pages of free-verse poetry by Constantin Novacescu. All of the poems are published in both English and Romanian. Novacescu's poems employ surrealistic imagery with dream-like leaps of imagination. Kacian's poems are good examples of contemporary haiku, such as this favorite: *late summer / after the scab / the scar*

With a Deepening Presence by Don Wentworth (2016, Six Gallery Press, Pittsburgh PA) 100 pages, 4¾×6¼", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-926616-86-5. \$8 from Don Wentworth, 282 Main, Pittsburgh PA 15201

Don Wentworth is a seeker of enlightenment, the way... but like so many other writers he is unable to give up his attachment to poetry. In a section titled "Haiku Epitaph" he writes, *Let's talk / about attachment now / blue morning glory*. The collection has many references, quotes, and allusions to Buddhist and related literary concepts. However, Wentworth is always playful and spontaneous, as in, *no GPS / the dashboard Buddha / smiling*. One of my favorites: *spilling tea / on a book of mindfulness / again*

Reviewed by Michael Dylan Welch:

African American Haiku: Cultural Visions ed. by John Zheng (2016, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson MS). 198 pages, 6¼×9¼", hardback, 978-1-4968-0303-0. \$65 from upress.state.ms.us/books/1855 or on clearance for about \$15 on Amazon

It is rare for an academic book, let alone one published by a university press, to examine English-language haiku, and this book may well be a first—other than the occasional dissertation and a book or two that have concentrated purely on the haiku of Richard Wright (I also note Jeffrey Johnson's *Haiku Poetics in Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde Poetry*, which is also in the ballpark, but it does not cover any leading haiku poets of the last fifty years). The poets under discussion here include Richard Wright, James Emanuel, Etheridge Knight, Sonia Sanchez, and Lenard D. Moore, covered by two essays for each poet, except for Moore, who has three. As for the commentators, those in the haiku community may well recognize such names as Yoshinobu Hakutani, Toru Kiuchi, Ce Rosenow, and the book's editor, John Zheng, but not Sachi Nakachi, Virginia Whatley Smith, Claude Wilkinson, Meta L. Schettler, Richard A. Iadonisi, and Sheila Smith McKoy.

Consequently, one strength of this book is how it engages critical commentary from voices that the haiku community may not have heard of — or heard from — before. This helps us get out of our haiku ghetto. Brief biographical sketches at the end of the book tell us more about the book's pedigreed commentators, although it seems that some of them could benefit from having more experience with leading English-language haiku journals and criticism. Other strengths include the assessment of haiku as effective poetry, regardless of whether it is "haiku" or not, the exploration of jazz, blues, and improvisation, the innovations of some of these poets as they make haiku their own, and the adaptation of haiku to an African American vernacular. This book is not light reading, to be sure, but it provides essential discussions for anyone with an academic interest in contemporary haiku in English, especially for its focus on ethnic studies.

Beginning: British Haiku Society Members' Anthology 2016
ed. by Shrikaanth Krishnamurthy (2016, British Haiku Society, Ramsgate, UK). 128 pages, 5¾×4", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-9063305-8. £4 from blithespirit.editor@gmail.com

With *Beginning*, edited by the incoming editor of *Blithe Spirit*, the British Haiku Society celebrates twenty-five years of publishing its annual members' anthologies. Unlike most members' anthologies from the HSA and Haiku Canada, each BHS anthology has a theme inspired by a single word, and that word gives each anthology its title. The 2016 collection is the largest yet, with 150 poems. Two poems appear on each horizontal page in a pleasing hand-size book (although it would have been more helpful for the index to list names by last name rather than first name). After twenty-five years, it's refreshing to see all these poems that return to "beginning." A favourite, by Claire Knight:
a bough / heavy with snow— / her baby's first kick

Chrysanthemum Dusk by Susan B. Auld (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 64 pages, 4¼×6½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-54-6. \$12 from redmoonpress.com

A collection of 48 poems, 14 of which are one-liners, and one of which is a visually spaced four-liner. Each poem appears by itself on the page, sometimes with a repeated chrysanthemum illustration, making for a relaxed read. We can depend on Auld to write varied and vivid haiku, as in *still fly / traces a slow circle / first frost and snow falling / on tangled trees / alone with my thoughts*

Discovering Fire by David Grayson (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 160 pages, 5¼×7¾", perfectbound. 978-1-936848-59-1. \$15 from redmoonpress.com

David Grayson's short essays have been appearing steadily in various publications. They are conversational, light, and easy to read, which may be just what many readers prefer, but it means that they often just skim the wave tops rather than diving deep. For example, the essay on J. D. Salinger does a thorough job of citing examples of the writer's mentions of haiku in his fiction, but provides limited analysis of (or speculation on) their influence on English-language haiku, nor does it connect the dots to Blyth's translations that appeared around the same time, or to the rising influence of the Beat poets. And the thinking behind some essays could be more rigorous, such as in one essay about season words that implies "eucalyptus" to be a season word. But a quick review of guidance on season words from William Higginson, Gabi Greve, and other sources will tell you that it isn't, completely undermining the point of the essay. The poem quoted as an example had been entered into the season word category for the Shiki online kukai, but the organizers later realized that they had mistakenly offered "eucalyptus" as a season word prompt and shouldn't have. This suggests that at least some knowledge covered in these essays is simply "received" and not analyzed sufficiently. Still, it's good to have all these essays compiled in a single book, but the reader may well want to consider them carefully—with at least a pinch of skepticism. The essays are grouped effectively, and the structure seems to be modeled after Paul O. Williams' *The Nick of Time: Essays on Haiku Aesthetics*,

alternating sections of essays with four sets of the author's haiku, ten at a time. The essays are grouped into such themes as "Haiku Practice," "Haiku Poets," "Haiku and Art," "Haiku and Religion," and "The Short Poem" (the best section). A sample poem: *lay-offs— / the indents from the chair / still in the carpet*

The Fingertips of a Glassblower by Bill Cooper (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 64 pages, 4¼×6½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-62-1. \$15 from redmoonpress.com

As with his recommended 2015 book, *Young Osprey*, this book again features poems with rich subjects and diction (bergamot, Binh Dinh, spoonbill, farrier, dragonflying, mangrove, jambalaya, spalted, scherzo, opal, Respighi, krewe, matador, yarrow). The book's 88 poems (25 of which are one-liners) appear at one or two per page, which helps the reading experience unfold in a relaxed way. As in the previous volume, a handful of poems feel private, such as *near my first bedroom / a boy puncturing / the fire house*, but many others rise up with creative expression and fresh or intense seeing, such as *egret on a high branch / the lily eyebrow / of a gator* or *slowing the bike / in full bloom a field / of lavender* or *clanging halyard / a clam basket full / of snow*. In addition, several poems move beyond personal observation to take a refreshing stance of empathy, as in *high in the pine / an eaglet's first taste / of trout* or *cranberry sunrise oh to be a bog turtle*. One more favourite, because of its childlike delight and sharp observation: *muffled giggles / her smile reflected / in a crab bubble*

Full of Moonlight: Haiku Society of America 2016 Members' Anthology ed. by David Grayson (2016, Haiku Society of America New York). 150 pages, 5½×8¼", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-930172-15-9. \$10 from 2016.hsa.anthology@gmail.com

The 2016 edition of the HSA members' anthology presents 378 haiku at three per page, interspersed with three moon photos by Garry Gay, who also provided the moody cover image. This year's anthology had no theme, but a standout feature is the editor's

introduction that points out the variety and types of haiku produced by the society's members as a snapshot of where haiku is today, making note of *shasei*, nature poems, empathy, senryu, one-liners, two-liners, and even whiskey poems. All poems are arranged alphabetically by last name, which results in many serendipitous pairings of poems, as the intro notes, but it also makes the index at the end (which lacks page references) unnecessary. Here's the editor's poem: *mixing red and yellow paint / my son discovers / fire*. And here's the title poem, by Christopher Herold: *no more wishes / all the dandelion globes / full of moonlight*

Getting On by Ernest J. Berry (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 72 pages, 4¼×6½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-61-9. \$15 from redmoonpress.com

This book presents 86 poems at one or two per page that have won or placed in various haiku contests from 1995 to 2005, and the introduction promises a second volume covering prize-winners from 2006 to 2016. The first section, "Getting Up," has 38 poems, and the second section, "Getting Out" has 48, and each section includes a poem fitting the book's title: *getting on / i play a couple of holes / on the laptop* and *getting on / off to bed / with frogpond*. A couple of poems seem excessively similar to preexisting poems by other poets, but most of the poems here are fresh and appealing.

Haiku, Green Tea & Sushi by Ernest J. Berry (2016, Prisma Print, Blenheim, New Zealand). 194 pages, 6¼×6¼", perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-9941401-5-9. \$30 NZD from prismaprint.co.nz

This lavishly designed book is a pleasure to peruse, with fine moments scattered through its many pages. We should all be so fortunate to write haiku like most of these. According to a brief author's note, all of the poems in this book (like its predecessor, *Getting On*) have "won or been placed in some international competition." As with the previous book, no credit is given to any of the contests in which these poems placed, but such an

extensive list would undoubtedly overburden the book. When we see that the book contains 277 poems, arranged at one or two per page in fifteen themed sections, placing so many poems in contests is a truly remarkable accomplishment. Surely no one submits to more contests than Ernie. As Nola Borrell wrote in her longer poem, “Classic Haiku: A New Zealand Perspective,” “As for go to the pine, / look at Ernie who can write / forty haiku without leaving his desk / and wins all the competitions.” And presumably these poems are just from 2006 to 2016, since the previous book covered 1995 to 2005—although at least some of the earlier poems reappear in this book. A couple of poems are omitted here where I understand that the prizes were rescinded for apparent plagiarism, and two poems included here now have notes appended to them, such as “with a nod 2 basho” and “a nod to Allan Burns” (neither poem was intended as an allusion when it originally placed in a contest). The book also includes this poem, *autumn leaves / the names of the dead / sink deeper*, which for my tastes is overly similar to Eric Amann’s classic and widely published prize-winning haiku from 1978, *The names of the dead / sinking deeper and deeper / into the red leaves*. Yet this poem does not include “a nod to Eric Amann,” nor does it pass as allusion. It’s a shame that such a marvelous collection would be compromised in this way, but there is still much to enjoy here.

Horizon by Anatoly Kudryavitsky (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 72 pages, 5×7½”, perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-66-9. \$15 from redmoonpress.com

Like many haiku collections, this one effectively slices the poems into common seasonal groupings at a relaxed pace of one or mostly two poems per page (15 in spring, 19 in summer, 21 in autumn, 13 in winter). The book also adds a section of “nonseasonal” haiku and senryu (19 poems), then a sequence (five haiku), and ends with eight haibun (each with a single haiku). This makes for 92 haiku and senryu plus the haibun. A few poems lift off the page for me, such as *spring tide— / the reflection of a bridge / flows under the bridge* and *morning wind / the library / of fallen leaves*

Impressions of Morning: Haiku by World Children *ed. by the JAL Foundation* (2016, JAL Foundation / Bronze Publishing, Tokyo, Japan). 120 pages, 8×8", perfectbound. ISBN 978-4-89309-624-1. ¥1,600 (about \$14) from webmaster@clubjapan.jp

This is the 14th volume of the JAL Foundation's sumptuous full-color anthologies commemorating its biennial world children's haiku contests. The most recent contest attracted more than 26,000 entries from 36 countries and regions around the world. All poems, focusing on the theme of morning, appear in their native language as well as Japanese and English translations (full disclosure: I helped with many of the English translations). The children's illustrations are especially vibrant and energizing. The book is highly encouraging to every selected poet, and shows widely varying skill levels with haiku, as these few almost random selections demonstrate: *Morning sound / The world's dream / Happy people* (Hugo Trindade, age 15, Portugal); *A bird is singing / On the tree branch / A cloudless morning* (Pecea Ion, age 13, Romania); *I wonder... / In the morning sky / Still the moon* (Hiyori Tokiwa, age 7, Japan).

JuxtaOne *ed. by Peter McDonald* (2015, The Haiku Foundation, Winchester VA). 268 pages, ISBN 978-0-9826951-2-8.

JuxtaTwo *ed. by Peter McDonald* (2016, The Haiku Foundation, Winchester VA). 292 pages, ISBN 978-0-9826951-3-5. Both, 6×9", perfectbound. \$50 each on CreateSpace or Amazon.

I'm a contributor to both of these volumes—annual assemblages of essays and criticism on haiku poetics in an academic vein—but I hope I can still comment objectively. The full content of these two journals is available on The Haiku Foundation website (thehaikufoundation.org/juxta/), and more recently these two journals have been made available in print form. The price point will strike some as shockingly high (although perhaps not for academic books), but this is because both journals are printed in color throughout. This places the haiga that intersperse the

essays in their best light, but I'm not sure if the haiga should be included. If haiga are included, why not have sections of haiku, too, and sequences and haibun? The haiga provide visual and aesthetic relief to the walls of text, but dropping them would give the journal a more academic focus, or at least printing them in black and white would substantially reduce the cost of these publications, and make them more likely to be purchased and read. Still, these journals are beautifully produced and a pleasure to hold in the hand. The essays provide an array of critical perspectives on haiku that can prod and change the sometimes narrow views haiku poets themselves may have of this poetry, especially where they include commentary from writers whose work does not appear in the usual haiku journals. This shows the haiku community to be branching out, which is a superb development. This note is insufficient to discuss the content of these journals in depth (they deserve a fuller review), but they are highly recommended, whether in print or online, for those wishing to deepen their study of haiku and its aesthetics.

Winnows by Maxianne Berger (2016, *Nietzsche's Brolly*, Toronto, ON). 60 pages, 5¼×8½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-920489-48-2. \$22 by PayPal from Marshall Hryciuk at imagorediron@gmail.com or from Imago Press, 30 Laws Street, Toronto ON, Canada M6P 2Y7

A note on the front cover says that *Winnows* collects "haiku and senryu 'plundered' from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*." This ambitious book is a kind of "erasure" poetry, an elaborate experiment in which the author has removed words from the pages of Melville's classic novel (all while keeping the words in the same order) to come up with the poems that remain. Three poems appear on nearly every page, for a total of 136 poems, many of which have been published individually in various journals and anthologies. Worth a look to see her many fine catches winnowed from a weighty novel—all of them energetic minnows rescued from a mighty whale. *a worn hearth / all the fireside tales / in this blade of grass*

Small Things Make Me Laugh by Yu Chang (2016, Free Food Press, [Rochester NY]). 46 pages, 5½×8½", perfectbound. No ISBN. \$13 from freefoodpress.com

A pleasing collection of 114 haiku and senryu (one to three per page) by one of haiku's most reliably rewarding voices. As for the book itself, perhaps more attention to bookmaking necessities would help make the publication more professional, such as including a copyright page, and all the things that go with it, such as an ISBN. Nevertheless, there's something refreshingly unpretentious about the lack of such formalities. Here's the title poem: *cherry blossoms / small things / make me laugh*. And a few other favorites: *sports bar / she lets go / of my hand*; *Möbius strip / I am too old / to touch my toes*; *class reunion / the photographer / moves us closer*; *cemetery gate / she lets me / go first*; and *winter evening / a cafeteria tray / at the end of the slope*. Recommended.

What Light There Is by Sylvia Forges-Ryan (2016, Red Moon Press, Winchester VA). 104 pages, 4¼×6½", perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-936848-58-4. \$17 from redmoonpress.com

This book distinguishes itself by its delightful collaboration with Ion Codrescu, who provides energetic calligraphy and haiga illustrations for six of the author's poems, plus cover calligraphy. The book's six sections provide striking tonal variety, such as with the poems about war and politics or the sections on desire and longing and on sickness and loss. A great deal of thought has gone into the grouping and sequencing of the poems in ways that many other haiku books should emulate. The book collects 148 poems, 33 of which are tanka (mostly in the love section). Here is one of three poems that give the book its title: *Diagnosis / what light there is / dimming*. Here's another favourite: *Softly falling snow / little by little / I learn to forget you*