

Journal of The British Haiku Society

Blithe Spirit



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Blithe Spirit

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The Editor welcomes submissions of poetry and articles by members of the British Haiku Society (non-members may submit for **The Pathway** section) on the understanding that these are not simultaneously under consideration elsewhere. Copyright reverts to the author on publication. Please enclose a stamped, addressed envelope or IRC with each submission if you want a reply.

Blithe Spirit welcomes, and exists as a forum for, diverse statements about the writing and appreciation of haiku and kindred forms of verse. The Editor takes entire responsibility for the selection of items for publication and the layout of the magazine, but wishes it to be known that opinions expressed in articles and letters do not necessarily reflect her own. *Blithe Spirit* is published four times a year, cover-dated March, June, September and December.

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Cover design by David Walker

Editorial

Busyness is the enemy of creativity. I can't remember who said this; maybe no-one did, maybe I just thought it up this moment because it seems to me to be so true. Maybe it's a justification for the fact that I feel much more myself when I'm being what people call lazy i.e. just being around and letting the day take me where it will —having no game plan, drifting ... doing what's required of me (or seems to be) but without any make-or-break sense of urgency. It's probably not the same for everyone; I remember the poet, George Macbeth, once saying that he could only write when he was surrounded by noise — when the offices he worked in were buzzing with activity, doors were banging and the traffic below was pulverising Oxford St. And he was a good poet, so, as we all knew anyway, one can never generalise.

And yet there is something about letting go — stepping aside from an identity imposed by the expectations of other people, about inhabiting, however fleetingly, a self that one recognises, that frees one to be creative; to centre down and wait. Even boredom can be fertile ground. The Chinese curse, *may you be born in interesting times* must have been written by someone who had experienced the danger of constant stimulus. Would either of the Emilies, Brontë or Dickinson, have produced what they did if their days had been fragmented by distractions, however pleasurable? Anyone serious about writing has to practise their craft, but it's only when the mind is allowed to slip out of gear that something more fundamental takes over. When Arthur Miller had his idea for *Death of a Salesman* in the 1940s, he decided to build a cabin; he wanted 'to sit in the middle of it, and shut the door, and let things happen'.

Colin Blundell is to be Guest Editor of the next issue of *Blithe Spirit*. He writes: *I should like to reserve two spaces in Volume 9/3; one for responses to a challenge to 'free-haiku' writers to come up with strict 5-7-5 haiku (and for those interested to comment on the pain and pleasure involved); and one for responses to Gabriel Rosenstock's challenge in Blithe Spirit — page 24, Vol. 8/4, first paragraph — to discover 'hidden haiku' in unlikely texts.*

Summer is the season for the next issue. Please send all submissions to Colin at [REDACTED] by the end of the first week in August.

Caroline Gourlay

HAIKU

Colin Blundell

on the beach at night —
only the sound of the waves
and the level sand

John Barlow

we fall silent ...
the winter-grey river
swollen

letting in
the fresh air ...
mackerel sky

spring gust
blowing me closer
to the bumblebee

Stuart Quine

a gleam of sunlight in the hare's fixed eye

at the crossroads autumn winds

David Childs

tan wheat still warm
hand and small hand
mill grain off the beach

Janice Fixter

spring cleaning —
specks of dust dancing
in the sunlight

through the telescope
the moon so close
evading my grasp

Cicely Hill

she weeps —
the woman with a moustache
and a love bite

still wearing
his *Repent Ye* placard
he chats with friends

David Cobb

pop concert
in the open air —
all eyes on the stars

my office
eastern outlook
towards graves

Michael Bangerter

late Rachmaninov
long wave
for the cricket score

Fred Schofield

kisses on my neck —
a large bee
enters a foxglove

grass still wet from morning
the cow licks
the calf's ear

Patricia V. Dawson

On the line
behind plum blossom
a blue shirt

Wayne Henderson

now an aeroplane
he slips from the winter coat
in his mother's hands

blue-glass vase
— a lack of lilies
and your voice

David Platt

sliding down
the frosted barn's roof
mid-winter sun

red embers
falling into grey ash fading
into grey ash

startled dunlin
their sharp cries squeeze between
wingtips and water

P.V. Subramaniam

the ink of the pen
in my pocket has started
spreading messages

Tom Williams

in summer wind
constellations released
from the pine trees

moth in shadows
still, keeping close
to the holy lamp

dark thoughts
dissolved when biting
into black plum

old men smoking
exhale a storm cloud
into autumn sky

Maurice Tasnier

squall long past
the shelter deckchair still
flat on its back

FEATURED HAIKU WRITER

George Swede

I became intimately involved with haiku in the mid-1970s and since then no other form of writing has consistently provided me with as much pleasure. It suits my way of seeing the world. It matches my minimalist proclivities.

I have also liked the customs that govern interactions in the haiku community. The editors of haiku publications are equally receptive to the work of the known and the unknown and people of all walks of life mingle freely at conferences and meetings, the established elbow-to-elbow with the beginner. Such egalitarianism is rare in the literary world.

Naturally I am delighted to be the featured writer of this issue. For the occasion, I have selected twelve new and previously unpublished haiku.

a ceiling of stars
my boots echo on
the corridor of road

the day gloomy —
a sudden sunbeam
makes it smile

from the March rain
the scent of thawing earth
our eyes on each other

mid-winter thaw
ice clings to the vital parts
of the nude statue

clothesline
creaking
cricket

in the winter stillness
my knuckles crack
a pine cone falls

back home
after a long time
all the dust
where it should be

alone in the woods ...
something tells me
this is not so

spring-cleaning neighbors
their yellow broom
in flower

a man in a blanket
on a steam grating
halo around the moon

the elm still bare
a black squirrel runs across
the spring sky

a sword-waving
stone horseman leaves falling
all around

Errata

In the last *Featured Haiku Writer* (BS 9/1), two of Soen Nakagawa's haiku were misprinted and should have read:

Picked
by an old woman's hand
herbs glow green

A nun has come to visit
now in the moonlight
how bright the icicles!

and he died in 1984, not in 1987 as printed.

HAIKU

Philip Rowland

Running and running
beside the waterless river
in pouring spring rain

inside an envelope
inside an envelope:
funeral money

Ron Woollard

Wasp on a matchstick...
clinging on as the flash-flood
hits the gutter.

Still water
reflecting how the hill
climbs into its depths.

After the train
only the sound
of the ticking clock ...

At the graveside
two old rivals
shaking hands.

Matt Morden

christmas guests
a shower of hail
scatters the crows

wave-cut slate
foam soaks back
into the cracks

Keith Coleman

pondmoon ripples
the hooting
of a tawny owl

how to net the autumn wind?
— here by the washing line
sniff this yellow scarf

sails through
the reed-gap upside down
snow peak of Fuji

Leslie Giddens

after the avalanche
black sleep white sleep black ...

Ross Figgins

heavy family album —
the longest journey
from her lap to his

long, red fingernails
reach for the last king —
solitaire player

cracked bell —
a cricket explores
its new home

john crook

homeless youth
deep in a torn blanket
and her book

sitting alone
watching lemon
bleach my tea

Arywn Evans

Graveyard stillness
shrouded
in the sound of traffic

ai li

the longest winter
every room
you emptied of us

kite
needing string
to get away

Claire Bugler-Hewitt

January sunset
a drift of steam
over the dung-heap

disappearing
in the boiling water
my pinch of salt

Frank Dullaghan

helicopter —
poets glance at the ceiling

sitting so close
your silence
keeps me quiet

Tsunehiko Hoshino

Even when pushed
it does not budge —
toad with narrowed eyes

Streaky Singles

Five Cricketing Haiku

Matthew Paul

the breath between
appeal and decision —
pigeons fly

a Chinese cut
so effective it seems
deliberate

not picking the flipper
torrential cloudburst

Mexican wave
— even the umpires
collaborate

summer sun at last:
a dogged tailender
comes out of his shell

The BHS James W. Hackett International Haiku Award 1998.

In the British Haiku Society's eighth annual Haiku Award, James W. Hackett has chosen the following three £70.00 prizewinners. All are of equal merit:

Early spring thaw:
footprints of our dog erased
last walk in winter

Frances Mary Bishop, Canada

city park
in the butterfly garden
discarded syringes

Carol Dagenhardt, USA

calling each other
the free owl and the captive
unable to sleep

Sheila M. Windsor, England

Six haiku were chosen as Highly Commended (again of equal merit):

on a park bench
two friends
sharing a silence

Giovanni Malito, Ireland

each day new flowers
on the thrown away stem
chicory stems

Helen Robinson, England

under a wall's lip
along a busy road —
a row of parked snails

Robert Alcock, England

smoldering wax
in the empty chapel
a kneeling pad creaks

Linda Jeannette Ward, USA

freezing winter night
homeless man wrapping his scarf
gently round his dog

Grace Mathew, USA

drinking from a pothole
the pigeon steps aside
for a taxi

Doris Heitmeyer, USA

Congratulations to the authors of all the nominated poems.

James W. Hackett comments: 'Again I was impressed by the general quality of the haiku — and delighted by those verses singled out (above). What has become an international response to the Award is very gratifying. I have always believed in the transcendent spirit of haiku ... and that this spirit can contribute to the creation of a higher consciousness, one sorely needed to counter the tragically short-sighted tribal mentality of so many. The miracle of life on Earth deserves nothing less.'

The numbers of entries in 1998 was 760, from 167 entrants — a large rise on the previous year. We received entries from a wide range of countries: Japan, China, New Zealand, Romania (10), Yugoslavia (30), Bosnia, Croatia (19), Macedonia, Greece, Germany, Holland (14), France, Malta, Canada (35), the USA (144), Ireland (28), and the Isle of Man. The breakdown of entries from the UK showed wide local variations, with 328 from England, a very encouraging 72 from Northern Ireland, 22 from Wales and only 10 from Scotland.

The first sift team shortlisted 95 poems by 49 authors, representing 10 nations. James W. Hackett then made his selection from the list of 95. Poems remained anonymous throughout the selection process.

The BHS James W. Hackett Award will run again in 1999. Rules and conditions of entry will remain unchanged. Intending entrants should note the new submission address: Sinodun, Shalford, Braintree, Essex CM7 5HN, England, UK. Martin Lucas will again be the administrator for the Award. The closing date will be: 30 November, 1999.

A Haiku/Senryu of our Own

I haven't written many haiku in the last eighteen months. There are a number of reasons for this but the fact that this period of time is the same length as my no longer being editor of *Blithe Spirit*, is more than coincidence. During the almost five years of my editorship, which sometimes involved the preliminary selection for the Hackett award too, I must have read thousands of haiku and senryu. Not all of them were brilliant: indeed some were dire. But many of them were of a very good quality, according to our guidelines. And I remember being a stickler for the guidelines. Now I am no longer obliged or privileged enough to read masses of haiku, I feel both bereft and relieved. When I try to conjure up my feelings at the time the one that comes most easily and readily to mind is boredom.

Not that the individual haiku were boring. Indeed many of them were exciting and inspiring. But I did notice a frisson of ennui creeping over me every time the season changed. I prayed for a late spring and a rapid autumn. Burgeoning buds held no joy for me, they became only the harbingers of haiku about burgeoning buds. Russet tones in falling leaves lost their thrill. They scattered themselves across my desk every time I sighed. (You see, I still remember the language!) Somehow the content and the language were much of a muchness. Some haiku writers tried very hard to stimulate my fatigued judgement; some I appreciated, some, I am sad to say, I did not.

One thing which was a matter of experimentation was form. Writers sent one word, two words, three words, four words, one line, two lines, three lines, four line haiku: capital letters, small case, justified, indented, vertical, punctuated, spaced, joined haiku. In the matter of form, invention ruled.

What, then, of content? For all the apparent scope that haiku/senryu has to offer, is this limited compared to the scope available to mainstream poets? Or is, as David Hart puts it, "to make pretty haiku about our neutral or easy perceptions of beauty" intrinsically unsatisfying? I believe the answer to both these questions is yes. I believe we need to do something about it, something that might reverse the trend of the relatively short length of membership of BHS that many people's membership seems to follow.

There has been some debate in *Blithe Spirit* recently about whether haiku should be written about computers. For some haiku/senryu writers it is sufficient to say that Bashō did not write about computers, therefore the answer to this issue is obvious. Neither did Bashō engage with post-modernism, feminism or semiotics, also for obvious reasons. But I'm convinced he would have done! About computers he would have given us something like this:

freshly picked present
from a grateful disciple
apple mac

after zazen
a shoal of green fish
screen saver

a chill wind
through banana leaves
dreams of warm boots

Mainstream poetry encourages poems about computers or indeed anything 'new', which is why, possibly, I now write more poetry than haiku.

Bashō did not engage with equal opportunities, either, but this does not mean that as a society of the late 1990s we should not. It is interesting that for the last six and a half years the journal has been edited by women but it has not fostered a school of feminism nor has the proportion of women submitting haiku and senryu to *Blithe Spirit* gone up. If anything it seems to have declined slightly since 1995. (From about 40% to just under 30%). To take one number of *Blithe Spirit* as an example (Vol 8 no 4) women are 'in the kitchen', 'sweeping leaves', have finished the 'spring clean'. The content is nothing if not traditional. I don't think this is what Alice Walker means when she says 'that naming our own experience after our own fashion (as well as rejecting whatever does not suit) is the least we can do.' (1) It may be that women editors spend much time 'rejecting what does not suit'. I know I did. Particularly haiku/senryu that treated women as objects. I tried to get my own back once and I wrote a sequence called 'making sense', in one haiku of which I looked at the male as sex object. Men loved it. It has become the most anthologised, the most commented on piece of my work. Who had the last laugh? Not me. But what about this?

harley:
leathers
on leather

Some women, particularly Annie Bachini and Claire Bugler Hewitt, have taken pains to tell 'our own experience after our own fashion' and have been rewarded with publication. But if we are to consider the moral imperative of working towards a more just society it is not just women who are being marginalised. Where are the haiku/senryu from the disabled, lesbian, gay, deaf, blind etc sections of our society telling their own experience? It has enormous potential to enrich our haiku. What are we doing to offer them a chance to speak? Mainstream poetry does.

Perhaps as I write, some enterprising haiku writer is completing a long sequence or haibun in which Alan Shearer accompanies Bashō, along a good post modern route, *The Narrow Road to the North-East*. Here is the hokku,

stripped
to our away kit
we head for the goal

Mainstream poetry publishers admire that sort of thing.

In volume 8 number 4 of *Blithe Spirit*, Caroline Gourlay quotes from the Japanese avant garde haiku poet Ban'ya Natsuishi's article *The International Nature of Contemporary Haiku*, in which he suggests that 'The haiku was considered a dusty old thing coming from the Japanese feudal period, but we can also consider it from a universal point of view, as we live in a century which offers us unexpected possibilities'. It seems to me that the English-speaking haiku world and particularly The British Haiku Society have left it too late to explore the 'unexpected possibilities' of this century. However, how willing will they be, as we approach the 2000s with all its ridiculous hype, to embrace any kind of change?

Jackie Hardy's first haiku collection *The Dust is Golden* is published by Iron Press next month. Her collection, *Canuting the Waves*, published by Bloodaxe in 1998 contains some haiku. She was editor of *Blithe Spirit* from 1993-1997.

Senryu

David Cobb

grilled beauty
on an Ibiza beach —
Venus Schnitzel

last post of the year
I catch it
early

Janice Fixter

before the interview
my calmness
unnerving me

in the supermarket
wavering over the steak —
an old flame

Steve Dolphy

houses undone
a lone bulldozer
heads for home

old ceiling fan
rustling brochures
for air-conditioning

Hanoi heat
a thirsty florist
spraying her flowers

Mark Renney

Innocence framed
for safekeeping

Stephen Bone

time on
my hands
I wind the clocks

deep in
silent conversation
two deaf friends

Francis Attard

lined up against the wall
queuing for
Goya's exhibition

Matt Morden

induction day
the counsellor's sandals
her introduction

community meeting
the priest adds up
his mileage claim

The world of the Internet can be compared to your local pub. It can be pleasant to drop by for a drink once in a while, but you wouldn't want to spend your life there. That said, haiku is fast becoming the poetry of the Internet and there is much to interest the occasional visitor to cyberspace. Since a quick glance down the BHS address list reveals a scarcity of e-mail addresses, this article seeks to highlight the opportunities offered by access to a computer for those interested in haiku.

Firstly, it is necessary to debunk a few popular myths about computing in general and the Internet in particular. Access to the Internet need not be expensive — many local libraries and all colleges and universities are hooked up to the World Wide Web. Enrolling on a one hour a week course in any subject at your local college will give you free use of this resource. Additionally, these institutions will often allow you a free e-mail address for correspondence. Many people now have Internet access at work and if all else fails you could buy a computer.

You don't need to know how a car works to drive one — and the same applies to computers. If you can click a button with your finger you are away.

The Internet is not just for young people. I estimate the average age of people submitting to haiku sites at between 50 and 60, but it might be older still. Those later in life often have more time to make valuable contributions to the Internet haiku communities. They usually know more about haiku too.

Haiku is the most popular form of poetry on the World Wide Web for a number of reasons. At present, the majority of web pages and mailing lists are based in America, where the profile of this type of poetry is higher than the UK. The brevity of the form means that posting haiku onto a mailing list can be done in a few minutes. Typically, haiku poets use simple language which can make haiku more accessible than 'mainstream' poetry, and there are a number of web-based haiku competitions. All of these factors help to raise the profile of the form.

For haiku enthusiasts, access to a computer can open up a whole new world. A poet in a geographically remote location has access to hundreds of fellow poets at the click of a button. There are a number of forums where haiku can be

submitted just to be read or for discussion. There are dozens of editors requesting e-mail submissions for their on-line haiku pages. The possibilities for *renga* and *renku* with poets around the globe are great.

Typing 'haiku' into an Internet search engine reveals thousands of sites related to this form of poetry. These range from the excellent (a few) to the appalling (many). This is because on the Internet 'haiku' has become a generic term for all short free-form prose on subjects from Spring, through Spam to the Spice Girls. Writing computer error messages as 'haiku' has become very popular and prompted a recent article in *The Times* on the form.

There are two main areas on the Internet that are likely to be of interest to haiku poets. The World Wide Web is a massive collection of web pages which often combine articles on haiku with poetry, graphics and music. Anyone with even a basic understanding of computers is able to produce one of these pages. This makes the process very democratic, but does not always mean that the information presented (or haiku) are of a high standard.

Perhaps the easiest way to access the more informed haiku web pages is through a gateway site, such as the pages put together by Mark Alan Osterhaus which have the following URL (site address) <<http://www.execpc.com/~ohaus/haiku.html>>.

As information on the World Wide Web can be easily linked together, the 'links' page on a site such as Osterhaus's means you can move easily from one site to another (the so-called 'surfing' of the web). All of the following pages are linked to the Osterhaus site.

Acorn editor AC Missias has written perhaps the best description of contemporary haiku on the web. It can be found at <<http://www.webdelsol.com/Perihelion/acmarticle.htm>>.

Ryu Suzuki's *Logos and Haiku* pages feature many of the 'speculations' on haiku written by Robert Speiss, editor of *Modern Haiku*, the longest running English-language haiku magazine. The URL is <<http://www.bekkoame.or.jp/~ryosuzu/WHATHAIKU.html>>.

The first port of call for many haiku poets is the *Shiki Internet Haiku Salon*, based at Matsuyama University in Japan. The Shiki team run an informative

website — <http://mihan.cc.matsuyama-u.ac.jp/~shiki> as well as three very popular mailing lists.

Other recommended sites include Jane Reichold's *Aha Poetry* <http://www.ahapoetry.com> and Dhugal Lindsay's homepages <http://www2.ori.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~dhughal/haikuhome.html>.

Gerald England, editor of *New Hope International* and Aabye's baby runs a UK based haiku mailing list, *Haiku Talk*, <http://www.nhi.claranet.hktalk.htm>. Other UK-based haiku websites include John Barlow's *Snapshots* magazine site which features another good definition of contemporary haiku, <http://www.mccoy.co.uk/snapshots/start.html> and ai li chia's *still* magazine pages <http://www.into.demon.co.uk/index1.htm>.

The Irish magazine *Haiku Spirit's* site <http://www.dublinwriters.org/haiku/index.html> features the haikualive mailing list and some interesting articles by David Cobb and Gilles Fabre.

These sites are a small number of my favourites. By the time you read this the information will probably be out of date and there will be another dozen haiku sites on the web. If you go looking, you will probably find them before I do, and that's one of the beauties of the Internet.

Please e-mail any comments on this article or suggestions for interesting sites to Matt Morden (xst19@dial.pipex.com). An article on haiku mailing lists is to follow in a future Blithe Spirit.

Acknowledgements are made to AC Missias, author of the CyberPond column in Frogpond, for some of the information here.

Spring

Steven Ford

The promise of spring —
Kosovo's orphan playing
with shoes of the dead

Alison Williams

waiting room
the slow drip
of rain

spring air —
the sharpness of
a gull's cry

ebb tide —
swan on the mud
silent white

Yasuhiko Shigemoto

A butterfly
making a cat stand
and dance

Wind passing —
the peony hidden
between the leaves

Maurice Tasnier

first warmth
the colours of
distant rooftops

Diana Webb

March Sunday — daybreak
catching the sun
in an angler's smile

Ron Woollard

Spring sunshine
making the fire's flames
go cold

Allan Jarrett

a flash of spring
on my breakfast knife

Terry Cuthbert

bubbles of water
take my heart
into a new landscape

arrived home
saw the note
ate the plums

Leo Lavery

spring
a spider swings
in the linen cupboard

Stanley Pelter

landscape retreats
as you move
into it

passion gone —
wearing the early morning
with a new warmth

wrinklies day trip north
passing car-drawn caravans
pulling the rain

Neil Bettinson

The building rooks
sound further off
in the spring rain

Jennifer Holland

in spring
'love' she says
'my skin and yours'

W.M. Tidmarsh

Cloudburst
sunburst,
pavement steaming.

Sea-mist,
in the tide-pools
silent gulls.

Katherine Gallagher

a child on tip-toe
reaches for almond petals
tossed by the wind

a street of cherry blossoms —
their white clusters
blotched by rain

David Rollins

a spring chill —
only the wind
in the bandstand

that last haiku
totally lost in the smell
of wild garlic

Ama Bolton

white petals
dark water flowing fast
rain on the wind

Dermot O' Brien

Bending to the weight
of a bumble-bee a flower
swaying in the breeze

Myra Wilkins

under the blossom
weeding between primroses
wind chimes

Giovanni Malito

first bloom of spring —
each of the roses is
the most beautiful

the rustle
of leaves
transcribing the wind

twilight...
a lone water strider
crossing the moon

David Brady

Back from the world tour
they do not hear
the blackbird sing

Ken Jones

Each heel and heave
a spill of new potatoes
in the tumbled earth

Shiki Masaoka (1867-1902) who played an important role in starting modern haiku, said there were two types of progress in haiku: the beginner becoming an adept and the adept ‘advancing into areas’ not explored by the ‘ancients’. He went on to say, ‘I don’t have to point out that true value lies in the latter,’ and noted that Hekigotō KAWAHIGASHI (1873-1937) was representative of that kind of progress. Elsewhere he wrote: ‘As the population increases and education spreads, people’s tastes will inevitable become variegated in thousands upon thousands of ways; so, in response, will literary and artistic expressions. The short poetic form of haiku exists for the same reason and, for the same reason, haiku changes as the age changes.’

Thus Shiki was flexible and accommodating as to the actuality of haiku. Yet if you ask whether the strategy for change he proposed has had any effect in the past one hundred years, my answer has to be: ‘No real effect.’ When you look at haiku as they have been written in the last hundred years, you at once notice three main developments:

1. The predominance of flower-bird-wind-moon haiku with the emphasis on the idea of *shasei*, ‘sketch’, that Shiki advocated.
2. The adherence to the traditional approach that accepts the 5-7-5 syllable form, seasonal words (*kigo*), and *kana*, *ya*, and other cutting words (*kireji*) as essential.
3. The ambiguous treatment of the questions of dimensionality and layering of language.

All this has worked to flatten haiku, distance it from, shall we say, ‘poetic inspiration’, and dilute Shiki’s goal of turning haiku into a literary genre that represents a comprehensive art form. In fact, you might say that all haiku has done in the past hundred years is to construct a genre of brief, ‘impressionistic poems’.

In order to spawn strong and insightful haiku in the coming century, we must re-examine what has happened in the past century and propose some guidelines for new haiku. We must carefully examine the haiku writer’s imagination, identity and style, and deep psychology, along with this century’s dominant ideal of

shasei. We must liberate haiku from its restrictions and consider incorporating cosmic, universal, humanistic and religious sensibilities. For haiku to be rich and fertile, we must abandon superficial, ocellar perspectives.

Seisensui OGIWARA (1884-1976) said haiku had two elements: 'fluidity' and 'condensation', suggesting that he could write haiku only by allowing these two opposing forces to contend with each other. Of the two, 'fluidity' is hard to define, but I take it to mean the willingness to illuminate perceptions hitherto not captured. If my understanding is correct, it should encompass views that are cosmic, universal etc., which I've just mentioned. It should also mean the embodiment of the author's imagination, identity and style and so forth.

Seisensui's 'condensation' is what comes with the fixed haiku form 5-7-5 syllables — that is, the haiku's basic strength of drawing things together into a set confinement. At the same time, Seisensui advocated the the creation of *shintanshi*, 'new short poems', in addition to the so-called *jiyuritsu*, haiku that do not stay within the confines of set syllabic patterns or syllabic count. In his view if something can't be confined in a set form, it shouldn't be.

Some of the haiku written in the past hundred years that I consider significant in the creation of future haiku embody Seisensui's notions of fluidity and condensation.

Lying in the grass I hear the sound of clouds flowing in the sky

Hōsha SERITA (1885-1954)

This haiku, composed of 6-8-5 syllables, illuminates correspondence between self and sky that combines visual, auditory, and tactile senses. Almost Whitmanesque, it shows the readiness to accept an object or objects into a poet's inner world. Hōsha was a lifelong insurance man who was inspired to write haiku by Seisensui's arguments.

The flesh grows thin these are large bones

Hōsai OZAKI (1885-1926)

Composed in 8-8 syllables, this describes human physicality in the ultimate state with intrepid insight. Hōsai, a graduate of the Imperial University of Tokyo, drank himself into poverty and died a mendicant monk. His pieces were published in Seisensui's magazine and Seisensui posthumously collected his pieces in a book he named *Taikū* (*The Big Sky*). (A substantial selection of

Hōsai's haiku in Hiroaki Sato's translation can be read in *Under the Big Sky I Don't Wear a Hat*, published by Stone Bridge Press in 1993).

Litvinov isn't the name of a wine, my friends

Eibō NICHII (1910-1993)

Litvinov here is the Soviet politician, Maxim Maximovich Litvinov (1876-1951) who served as foreign minister from 1930-1939 and as ambassador to the United States from 1941-1943. He was particularly known for his efforts for peace and international co-operation. Eibō, who worked for the government as a monitor of Soviet radio broadcasts, was arrested for his anti-war haiku in 1941. This piece of his sounds like a pronouncement in ordinary conversation, though the total syllabic count comes to seventeen.

Sleeping lotus: cleanse the flesh with something that isn't death

Kusatao NAKAMURA (1901-1983)

Kusatao, a self-proclaimed prophet, did his best to bring religious dimensions into his haiku. He was the leader of the Humanity Explorers school of haiku. This piece was written in 5-8-6 syllables.

Under a rainbow we humans I am alone

Sōsōshi OGAWA (born 1921)

This piece, written in 5-7-6 syllables, seems to consider the future of earth as well as an unchanging aspect of humanity. A note appended to it says, 'At Assissi', and the collection that includes it says, 'The world kept swaying, moving in various ways, and my haiku appeared to exist slightly out of key with the tremors.'

The other land breeze stirs moves eternal cedars dust

Ban'ya Natsuishi (born 1955)

This piece incorporates phrases from the *Amida Sutra* and evokes the Pure Land, a Paradise for all sentient beings. It is said that when a wind rises and stirs the bo-tree (Bodhendrum), under which the Shakyamuni attained enlightenment, ineffable music begins and reaches the farthest corner of the universe. The fact that the haiku is written entirely in Chinese characters and the reading given in katakana syllabary adds to the sense of religious recitation.

These haiku remind us that *hai* of the word *haiku* originally implied the dynamic ability to extract the essence from reality, recognise it for what it is, and if necessary criticize or differentiate it. For haiku for the coming century, we must work to recover that ability.

This article first appeared in the Japanese *Ultra Haiku Magazine*, March, 1999.

Traditional Japanese poetry aims to embody certain moods which contain the poetic recognition of the Buddhist understanding of life. *Sabi*, the spirit of loneliness, is the yearning for connection; religiously it is a recognition that the isolation felt by the ego is illusory; poetically it is the expression of the depth of feeling hidden by this truth:

loneliness —
hanging from a nail
a caged cricket

sabishisa ya
kugi ni kaketaru
kirigirisu

Wabi is a recognition of the profundity of the humble and everyday; the spirit of poverty:

along this road
no one travels;
autumn evening

kono michi ya
iku hito nashi ni
aki no kure

Aware is the poetic expression of impermanence; the evocation of the transient:

misty rain;
today it is good for once
not to see Fuji

kirishigure
fuji wo minu hi zo
omoshiroki

Yugen is connected with the religious awareness of the numinous; a sense of 'mysterious depth' (cf. Stryk, pp. xl-xliii) as when we are moved without being able to explain why:

a wild sea
stretching across to Sado Island
the Milky Way

ara umi ya
sado ni yokotau
ama no gawa

To this list of traditional moods Bashō added his own poetic principle, *karumi*, or 'lightness'. This is the attempt to convey the religious attitude of a tranquility which 'accepts all things as they come'. (Ueda, p.66). Two weeks before his death Bashō wrote:

a white chrysanthemum —
however closely I look
not a speck of dust

*shiragiku no
me ni tatete miru
chiri mo nashi*

Ueda comments: 'It seems to be the sort of poem that could not be written in the absence of serenity.' (p. 67).

Edward Conze writes that under the Ashikaga Shoguns (1335-1573) Zen 'had the support of the government' (p.115) and its 'cultural influence' spread throughout society. Zen emphasizes 'concrete action rather than speculative thought' and the moods of *wabi* and *sabi*, the combination of simple elegance and depth, were reflected in all forms of artistic expression, including the tea ceremony and painting, as well as in poetry.

The (mythical) origin of Zen is in an action rather than a concept:

According to tradition, Zen first arose when Sakyamuni Buddha held up a flower and winked. Only Mahakasyapa understood, and smiled. He thus became the first Patriarch of the Zen tradition. (Williams, p.113).

The Buddha was not speaking in code, attempting to communicate a set of secret teachings by esoteric methods. What Mahakasyapa understood could not be paraphrased in words. The Buddha was simply performing an action with full attention; Mahakasyapa was giving the action *his* full attention. The smile was the inevitable spontaneous response. There is a parallel here with haiku which I don't have to force. A haiku similarly cannot be reduced to concepts, or analysed discursively. It simply holds up before our eyes a flower (or frog or bird or insect or whatever) and invites our unpremeditated reaction. It is a quiet affirmation, as Conrad Hyers says of Mahakasyapa's smile, 'a moment of seeing with the freshness and immediacy of the little child, full of amazement and wonder.' (p. 25). I am not saying that we have to be enlightened before we can appreciate haiku, but there is a strong similarity between the method of haiku and the method of Zen:

'To meditate, a man has to fix his thought on something: for instance, on the oneness of God, or his infinite love, or on the impermanence of things. But this is the very thing Zen desires to avoid. If there is anything Zen strongly emphasises it is the attainment of freedom; that is, freedom from all unnatural encumbrances. Meditation is something artificially put on; it does not belong to

the native activity of the mind. Upon what do the fowl of the air meditate? Upon what do the fish in the water meditate? They fly; they swim. Is not that enough?' (Suzuki, p. 41).

Haiku are not meditations on the birds flying or the fish swimming; they are direct presentations of things which are not consciously edifying, but simply being themselves. There is nothing to understand as such, simply a world to advert to, attend to and absorb:

to the sun's path
hollyhock flowers turn
in summer rain

*hi no michi ya
aoi katamuku
satsuki-ame*

Every flower there is being held up by the Buddha and every flower-haiku is Mahakasyapa's smile. I admit there is a limit to how far I can push the Flower Sermon analogy because, inevitably, there is very little that can be said about it. Yet the thread of transmission running from Mahakasyapa through the Zen masters to Bashō is not hard to discern. Hyers identifies it:

'The distinctiveness in this ... outlook lies in its peculiar combination of accepting the concrete 'suchness' ... of the mundane particular, while at the same time realising the inexhaustible significance and mystery in the most commonplace object and situation.' (p. 83).

The spirit of haiku is one of utter simplicity and, in the sense that no meaning as such can be abstracted from them, they are meaningless. Meaninglessness is a quality haiku share with the Zen anecdotes.

A monk asked Yeno ... the Sixth Patriarch, 'Who has inherited the spirit of the Fifth Patriarch ...?'

Answered Yeno, 'One who understands Buddhism.'

'Have you then inherited it?'

'No,' replied Yeno, 'I have not.'

'Why have you not?' ...

'Because I do not understand Buddhism.' (Suzuki, p.76).

Haiku frequently have the quality of discovering something ordinary and noticing it as if for the first time:

looking closely I see
shepherd's purse flowering
beneath the hedge

*yoku mireba
nazuna hana saku
kakine kana*

The essence of haiku is what is clumsily labelled 'suchness'. It is perhaps what a Buddhist becomes aware of through the meditative practice of mindfulness. Blyth describes it:

'The coldness of a cold day, the heat of a hot day, the smoothness of a stone, the whiteness of a seagull, the distance of the far-off mountains, the smallness of a small flower, the dampness of the rainy season, the quivering of the hairs of a caterpillar in the breeze — these things, without any thought, or emotion, or beauty, or desire, are haiku.' (Blyth, p.68).

With Bashō, close observation is habitual, remarking the unremarkable:

first snow ...
daffodil leaves bend
beneath the weight

*hatsuyuki ya
suisen no ha no
tawamu made*

The appeal is not to our thinking but to our senses. The snow and the leaves have colour. The snow is cold to the touch. It is not necessarily a heavy snowfall; it is the delicacy of the balance of the leaves that registers the weight. To attempt to dignify this with talk of *samsara* equalling *nirvana* only goes to show how off the point the philosophical formulae frequently are. Yet if this formula means anything then it must apply here. Bashō's world is not some dream world to which the ordinary mortal is denied access. It is the world of familiar experience, in which we all move and have our being. The difference with Bashō, if there is a difference, is that he makes no attempt to avoid, escape or switch off; he accepts and celebrates. His external conditions are the same as ours; his inner disposition is more highly attuned and aware, but with each haiku this is offered to us for sharing. Blyth writes:

'The essential simplicity of haiku and Zen must never be forgotten. The sun shines, snow falls, mountains rise and valleys sink, night deepens and pales into day, but it is only very seldom that we attend to such things.' (Blyth, p. 63).

Seeing through the eyes of Bashō and feeling with his feelings, we can perhaps return each to our own world and begin to respond in a similar way. This is a

portable Buddhism with a practical purpose. Bashō wore the black robes of a Buddhist priest when travelling, but this was probably his preferred mode of dress. It is known that he practised Zen meditation, but it is not known how far he progressed: 'Bashō does not seem to have urged his disciples to do *zazen*, and seldom speaks about Zen and its relation to haiku.' (Blyth, p.36).

There are Buddhist references in a minority of his poems, but no more than would be consistent with the world-view of a religiously-aware layman. He admires Saigyō, but as a poet, not as a spokesman for Buddhism. He made frequent visits to temples, but not, apparently, as a particularly devout pilgrim; rather because he appreciated their hospitality and atmosphere of unworldly quiet. The awareness of Buddhist history and culture that he displays in his journals is that of an educated person, not a religious partisan. He makes no reference to the concepts of Buddhist philosophy, except insofar as there is a bearing on his art, as, for instance, in connecting transience with beauty.

It would not be inappropriate to claim that Buddhism was no more than a background that provided the context in which he operated. There is plenty of mileage in viewing haiku from a purely literary viewpoint, making no attempt to place it in a religious frame of reference. Yet it is worth remembering the argument of LaFleur that in Japan religion and literature have not always been compartmentalised the way they are in the 20th century western intellectual world. When Ryōkan had his hermitage burgled he expressed his compassion, as a Buddhist, for the thief who got away with so little, wishing he could offer him the moon; this expression took the form of a haiku:

the burglar
left it behind —
moon at the window

Santoka, the Zen beggar, follows the tradition of the monk who was struck by the miraculousness of drawing water and carrying fuel, (*cf. Hyers, p.87*) and gives a day-by-day diary of the mundane details of his wandering life, walking barefoot, sitting in the fields, sleeping beneath the sky; the account takes haiku form:

wearing rags
in the coolness
I walk alone

boro kite
suzushii
hitori ga aruku

The heart of Buddhism is Emptiness; there are therefore limited possibilities for direct verbal expression. The Zen masters prefer to speak through activity, offering tea, tweaking noses, slapping backs or kicking over buckets. When they do speak they use paradoxical and non-sensical phrases, and delight in apparent contradictions. Since mountains and rivers are the body of the Buddha, and since all beings are the Buddha-nature, it is difficult to stray off the point. The truth expresses itself in activity and is designed to be put to use; it is not merely for tossing back and forth as an academic exercise. It is not a dead abstraction, but a living reality. There are plenty of poems by Zen masters which take a didactic approach; for instance, one by Bankei (1622-'93) ends:

No mere talk uncovers truth:
the fragrance of those garden plums! (*Stryk, p. 90*)

Bashō takes the first of these lines as read. It might be prefaced to any one of his poems; in fact it is superfluous. Haiku are about the aesthetic composition of sensory experience typified by the second of Bankei's lines.

'A tired traveller who saw some purple wisteria dangling from a trellis in the evening dust found a harmony between the flowers and the weariness of his own mind and body.' (*Ueda, p.57*).

The road might be the Way of Life; the traveller the Self who is No-Self; the flowers the Word of Buddha and the harmony the harmony of the universe. It isn't necessary to say so.

tired of travelling
I seek lodging for the night;
wisteria flowers

kutabirete
yado karu koro ya
fuji no hana

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This paper was given at the 1996 National Conference of the British Haiku Society.

Museum Of Haiku Literary Award

Stuart Quine has chosen this haiku by Arwyn Evans

Hoar frost —
barbed wire
blossoms

Successful haiku are, I believe, the product of the active engagement of writer and reader with publication being in effect an invitation to participate in this process. Having defined the context of the haiku, two sharply contrasting elements are presented in the plainest of terms, thereby allowing the broadest possible range of interpretations which a fuller description would tend to exclude.

TANKA

B.S

pegging the washing out
doesn't do much for poetry ...
... not that all passion's spent,
just cross-stitched, tight-gusseted,
and marked: at low temperature.

John Barlow

trying
not to think
of you ...
pleiades piercing
the speeding clouds

that look in your eyes ...
how brilliant are the stars
seen
from the cold side
of the moon

in the dark
a tawny owl calls
unanswered
I pour out my last drop
of whisky

Sanford Goldstein

thinking
it might be
our last dance,
I hold my bald aunt
tight

a few persimmons
on a distant tree,
fruit all withered
as if the lesson's
still to be taught

at the hot spring bath
that twenty-two-year spirit
brings his lithe body
to the tub's edge
for the world to see

I sit
like a foreign curiosity,
legs unable
to fold, bend
my chopsticks held like a hint

Leslie Giddens

the moon fell out of the sky
and left a hole
of silence in my heart:
raising her from the sea
I woke and found you gone

The Pathway

This section welcomes haiku and senryu from anyone, members of BHS or not. Each poem should be in two different languages — the *original* and the *translation* (English, German, or French). The Pathway aims to link those writing in widely-spoken and less widely-spoken languages.

Georges Friedenkraft (French), from 'Monostiches on an Asian Dream World', pub. Peccadilles, 1999 and Brian Fergusson (English).

Aux portes de la nuit, lumineuses tes jambes

The gates of night are nigh, your legs are all aglow

Ta hanche se dénude aux gifles des moussons

Your thigh is lying bared by the monsoon's wild gusts

La plage autour de l'île et, plus loin, l'océan

The beach girdles the isle, the ocean lies beyond

Pieds nus sur le sentier, là où le volcan fume

Barefoot we climb the path where the volcano smokes

Ioan Gabudean (Romanian and English).

Apune soarele:
pictorul rămâne cu pensula
după ureche

The sun sets:
a painter sits with a brush
behind one ear

HAIBUN

Banged Up, Deeply

David Cobb

Close to the gates of the prison, the last 'free' establishment, a 'good pull-up for carmen' called *Hard Times Café*. With my lady escort, past the too-high-for-a-pole-vault double gates and the perimeter fences topped with razor wire, a parody of Rotella invading my mind:

she leads me in
her key-bunch
jangling

The Education Block, when I am vouched for, with its fetid smell that squats in sinuses. Carbolic? Dope? My valuables are removed and put in a safe, also my Blutak is taken away, too useful for moulding keys. The lady teacher unlocks the loo for me, locks me in, and when I knock loudly, lets me out again.

In the library I arrange the tables in a crescent. Twenty or so men have opted to learn 'better' English while in prison. They're paid for it, too, but less than for turning things out from metal, wood, plastic, clay.

We study some modern Japanese haiku and some English ones. I mention the possibility of symbolism in one of the poems. 'You're deep, man, crazy, but cool!' says the Rastafarian from Hackney. We take the word 'deep' into our critical vocabulary.

I explain that Japanese poets like to write a poem on the eve of their death. As an example, Akutagawa's poem which he asked his sister to give next day to his doctor, another haiku poet, in anticipation of dying during the night:

My runny nose:
everywhere, except on it's dewdrop,
evening dusk falls.

The Algerian fundamentalist protests, very quietly but firmly, 'No man knows the day of his own death. It is in God's hands. What you are saying is blasphemy!' Two more charges of blasphemy follow. There's an acute silence

during the coffee-break when I wonder if a huddle of three beards may be pronouncing a *fatwa*.

Finally, with emphasis laid on writing from direct experience, they set about their own haiku. I make the rounds, trying to help them, one by one. The Algerian fundamentalist doesn't want any help. When we start to share our poems, he volunteers to be first and offers us three verses of the Koran. Others come out with experiences which I am happy to tell them are *deep* and *cool*.

'Five years!' —
says the flush-faced judge
not raising his eyes

snow on the sill —
he pokes a finger out
through the cell bars

banged up —
waiting for a white dove
to fetch my crumbs

Ten minutes a week:
Where are you living now?
What are you doing?

Following in the footsteps of Thomas Willisell, the old soldier who played a large part in the development of field botany and of whom John Ray said 'a soldier who having taken great affection to the botanical studies hath arrived to a great knowledge in plants'. My task, 300 years on — to trace and find those rare Breckland plants, spring ephemerals that last only for a short period of time.

With my companion we set off for Suffolk. In what seemed like no time at all, we arrived at Barton Mills roundabout ...

Out of the mud
discarded furniture
and spring vetch!

Barton Mills, taking its name from a large corn-mill and wharf on the river Lark. Church of flint and tile, biscuit and grey; here we also found a small plant belonging to the chickweed family — the Little Mouse-ear, a widespread but local flower in bare, sandy ground.

We stopped off in Brandon to check out our B&B. Everywhere old streets shaded by trees. There is something timeless about Brandon, 'a thoroughfare town' on the crossing of Little Ouse, ancient industries of flint and fur now replaced by forestry. When men were knapping flints, Homer was reciting the deeds of Odysseus. Houses made from flint, walls, pavements, the church, too. After settling things with the landlord, we drove off to Bodney church a few miles away, across the Norfolk border in search of Drooping Star of Bethlehem. This tiny flint church stands on a mound overlooking a farmhouse. During the French Revolution nuns fled their country and took refuge in the hall; one was the daughter of the Prince of Conde. Their remains remain lie in the churchyard, surrounded by firs and elms; a stream runs just below the church and birds sing in the trees ...

So far from home —
sleeping nuns protected by
Star of Bethlehem

Our next stop was Weeting, said to be the earliest inhabited part of Norfolk. It was here that Hereward the Wake hid out in what now remains of a moated late-12th century hall. Nearby stands the prehistoric site known as Grime's Graves. Hundreds of circular pits lie scattered about, once flint quarries worked by men who used stone hammers before the pyramids were built. In the heart of Breckland 4000 years drift by ...

Among the bracken
and silver birches — antler picks
picking out flintstones

Then drove on to Lakenheath, with its terrible place in the pages of history. During the Peasant Rising of 1381, after the Black Death, the serfs decided that it was time for their freedom. John of Lakenheath, warden of the barony, to escape the enforcers of the Statute of Labourers, fled to Bury St. Edmunds Abbey. Chief Justice Cavendish was on circuit in Suffolk, and being recognised by one of the rebels, took immediate flight. He tried to board a boat on the river, but a woman saw him and pushed the boat into mid-stream. He was caught and later decapitated, his head taken to Bury St. Edmunds and set up alongside those of John of Lakenheath and John of Cambridge, the prior of the Abbey. Lakenheath was originally a *hythe* or landing-place in the fens. Once the largest US air base in Britain, now thankfully gone ...

On the way home, as though inebriated by sun, moon, stars, flowers and birds, suddenly remembering that life is no more than a temporary home, sheltering us from a winter shower, with all its certainties and impermanence.

Dozing in the car I reflected on old Tom Willisell who had tramped these parts so long ago. Once a foot-soldier under Cromwell, then a maker of pegs for shoes. John Ray wrote to Edward Llwyd on 22 March 1692 — 'T. Willisell, who was indefatigable and could endure any hardship, and live as well upon oatcakes as whig as another man upon flesh and wine, and ramble over hills, mountains, woods and plains. Poor Tom Willisell's loss, I cannot remember without some trouble.'

Out of the skull
endlessly grinning —
spring ephemerals

REVIEWS

The Meridian, edited by Stephen Gill and Kohjin Sakamoto. One copy only in Britain: available to BHS members from the BHS Library, care of Richard Goring, 27, Park St., Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SSO 7PA.

A very respectably bound and well laid-out book based on the classes in haiku in English which are run in Japan by the editors (though Kohjin Sakamoto has since retired). Each poem is given a page which includes the final text in both English and Japanese, plus the student's original version and a few tutorial comments. The presentation allows the reader more time to consider each poem than does the standard practice of putting two or more finished poems on a page in a monolingual collection or anthology. It leads me to wonder how we might present our published haiku to better effect.

The type of haiku represented in the book seems based on post-Shiki and 'Modern' Movement notions rather than conscious attempts to follow the Japanese Tradition, though there are some self-conscious attempts to evoke the past:

Deep autumn,
Light shining on a narrow road:
Bashō lives

Kei Goto

However, in the following, even though the subject matter may seem unadventurous, there is a subtle beauty:

Peace returns
To the old temple courtyard
With autumn rain.

Satoshi Honuchi

Several of the poems have a more straightforward appeal to the Western reader:

alone with my thoughts
the kitchen still resonates
with his anger last night

Reiko Hayahara

Stephen Gill's comments and advice are positive and authoritative, and provide an insight into his way of teaching. Kohjin Sakamoto's comments are in Japanese (though I've heard that he only ever writes haiku himself in English). The command of English among the students is obviously quite varied: some of the original attempts read like word-for-word translations from Japanese, whereas others have undergone very little alteration (the latter, of course, is also due to the quality of the poem — not that those who are best at English are necessarily best at haiku! ...). I find a fascination with the tutorial and editorial processes and imagine many readers will feel provoked into coming up with their own English versions to compare.

This book — and the work it represents — is interesting and valuable at a time when haiku seems to be attempting both to define itself in the West and trace its roots in the East. I recommend all BHS members to borrow it.

Fred Schofield

Absence of Cows Spring Street Haiku Group. 39 poems by 11 haikjin. £2.50 (ppd. to UK). Sterling cheque to Dee Evetts, 102, Forsyth St. #18, New York, NY 10002, USA.

When reading a collection of haiku a certain flavour comes across. The same is often true of periodicals; the editor's selections set the tone, which then probably influences authors in the selections of poems for their submissions. Thus, when reading *Modern Haiku*, for example, I have to be sure to read only a page or two at a time, otherwise the similarity of form (caesura at the end of line one) can dull my appreciation. However, I always look forward to the small annual collection from the Spring Street Group in New York. Their haiku and senryu are fresh and often surprising. There might not be many great haiku here (and some will feel the definition somewhat strained at times) but I derive a great deal of entertainment from their work — I have laughed aloud at some of these. The authors come across as real people writing about their real experiences; there is a disarming frankness. The collection reminds me of my first impressions of the American flavour of haiku in *The Haiku Anthology* (ed. Cor van den Heuvel).

Since I prefer a cool beer to a fine wine — and I can't afford the fare to New York — I will continue to send a cheque off once a year and be confident it is well spent.

feeling for my napkin
under the table
—cheek in the butter dish

Bruce Detrick

fifteenth birthday
my son's eyes no longer
exactly blue

Karen Sohne

David Steel

Zen Haiku — in the Space of One Breath by William Anthony Grant.
Brandywells, Kings Nympton, UMBERLEIGH, Devon EX37 9SP. £5.00

'By catching the moment at the very instant of its collision with the eternal, Bashō could produce a high-speed snapshot of the trigger mechanism of Zen enlightenment. In modern metaphor the haiku became a Zen hologram, in which all the information necessary to re-create a large, three-dimensional phenomenon was coded into a miniscule key ... A perfect haiku is not about the moment of Zen enlightenment; it is that moment frozen in time and ready to be released in the listener's mind.' (p.54).

For me this is the most memorable passage in this 95 page miscellany (though I would prefer 'insight', not 'Zen enlightenment'). Its twenty short chapters range from haiga to pilgrimage, and from haijin to 'poems by William Anthony Grant'. It would have been wiser to omit the poems, however, and to stick to the pleasant, even prose. Similarly the author's own twenty-five haiku detract from the ten pages of generally thoughtful and sure-footed *Rules for Zen Haiku*, and could mislead the beginner. One of the better examples:

Once she slept with me,
Now that she's gone forever,
I hold her pillow.

Moreover, the author seems to assume that all the haiku are necessarily 'Zen inspired' which does a disservice to both haiku and Zen.

The pages on pilgrimage and journal-keeping caught my eye, especially the *Rules of (Poetic) Pilgrimage*, both the author's and the list from the 1760 *Goshichiki* (which have been ascribed, perhaps wrongly, to Bashō). Male haijin are warned 'not to become intimate with women haiku poets... Dissipation prevents the richness and unity of the mind. The way of haiku rises from concentration and lack of distraction. Look well within yourself.'

The Zen is that of the wandering, rather earnest romantic, and not uncommon before the practice became more strongly grounded in the West. Earthy vigour, paradox and irony are little evident. This book is something of a personal testimony, now eight years old. In the fifteen-item bibliography there is, with one exception, nothing later than 1986 and, strangely, nothing by R. H. Blyth, with only one passing reference to him in the text. The personal streak both undoes the book and at the same time makes it an endearing and interesting read.

Ken Jones

A Splash of Sunlight by Janice M. Bostok. ISBN 0-9597523-2-3, 1998. Available from 260, Cambell's Rd., Dungay 2484, NSW, Australia. \$5.00 (US).

Nearly 30 years of a poet's life woven into haiku. Their inspiration and readership span the continents and they cover a wide range of styles, emotions and experiences. There are altogether 224 haiku — 7 to a page on 32 pages, each page topped and tailed by one-liners.

The layout I found pleasing. There is no contrived compartmentalisation, yet in some mysterious way each poem is enriched by the text that surrounds it. Some might take issue with Janice Bostok's line-breaks — well, a purist might regard as cavalier:

dawn greeted
loudly from the islamic
neighbour's house

which appears somewhat clumsy; but placed among others that are arranged more conventionally, the reader might appreciate the extra dimension lent by different approaches.

I experienced a wide range of emotional responses to these poems. Very low on the list was the schoolmasterly 'No, that will not do' which did occur occasionally for adverb-abuse brought in, I thought, inappropriately. Yet all is forgiven when she strikes gold, which she does again and again — from the minimalist

spit
on a hot rock
spluttering

to the (if you like) maximalist

in my suburban loneliness
the incessant spinning
of rotary clothes hoists

How to summarise this poet's considerable skills? In picking out four, I allow the poems to speak for themselves —

cold morning Chopin assaults the ears
envelope my thumb slits open the seal of his tongue

stepping stone alone
moves when evening comes
my pulse strangely content
to be

Bare Feet by Gary Hotham. Longhouse Publishers, USA. Available in this country from the author, [REDACTED]

These haiku are 'for Karen in the year of our 25th', so it is appropriate for each poem to be given the respect due to a precious stone on display; each has a page to itself. There are only 26 haiku altogether and my impression is that behind their preparation lies a jewel-cutter's care and precision. My two favourites —

the sky changes home late
she changes the darkness the stars
her shoes are in

Hey! that's easy. I could write that. So it often seems when one comes across the simple inevitability of a successful poem; but how much sweat and heartache lies behind this apparently effortless sublimity? I would argue that it requires a rare and disciplined talent. Where masses of intimate detail is thrown at me by a creative artist, I resist — I find I don't care to know; but when Gary Hotham gives us glimpses of his personal life, I find I want to know more.

The book is published in Vermont. If he is American his antecedents are Emerson and Whitman. And like them he has the power to stop you in your tracks with a few words.

Mike Hayes

Sarumino, or *The Monkey's Straw Raincoat*, is the bible of the Bashō school. It is a canonical work, published in 1691, of selected poems and prose, including linked-verse sequences called *haikai-no-renga* or *renku* by Bashō and more than one hundred of his followers. The anthology title was chosen from the first hokku by Bashō: *Hatsu-shigure saru mo komino wo hoshige nari* (The first winter drizzle / the monkey too seems to desire / a little straw raincoat, translated by Miner and Odagiri). Included in what is known as *Haikai Shichibu-shu* (a collection of the school's seven anthologies), *The Monkey's Straw Raincoat* has arguably done more for the development of the style of the school than even *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*.

Bill Wyatt's *Renga from the Monkey's Raincoat* has emerged to redress the relative neglect in the West of this anthology and, more generally, renga, despite the slim volume dealing with only one of the six parts of it. This seems partly because he has created his 'versions' (rather than translations) of the four 36-verse sequences of Part V in a way which is personal rather than academic. The four sequences are: *The Kite's Feathers*, *Summer Moon*, *Tub of Ashes*, *Flowering Plums & Fresh Herbs*. The poet in Wyatt comes out clearly when one compares his versions with those written by Earl Miner and Hiroko Odagiri, the two academics who produced the famous translation, *The Monkey's Straw Raincoat and Other Poetry of the Basho School*, Princeton University Press, 1981.

Take the first stanza. Miner and Odagiri's translation goes: *Even the kite's feathers / have been tidied by the passing shower / of early winter rain*. This verbose translation sounds as if it comes from a science textbook when compared with Wyatt's: *Even the kite's feathers / are neatly preened / winter's first shower*. It has to be said, however, that preened is a tricky word. It sits well in Wyatt's version, but it misses the point of the original verse in that it was the rain that tidied the feathers and not the bird. The original Japanese *kaitsukuroinu* is rather an unusual word and perhaps not so easy even for a Japanese to interpret correctly. So we all share the difficulty of translating Japanese haiku. We can go on talking about these problems, but I am far more thrilled by the way the original verses inspired him to almost 'recreate' these *kasen* in a totally different language. Wyatt's versions exude a feeling which is more akin to the original poems; only a genuine poet can do that.

One small point relates to the illustrations of the book. They are charming line-drawings by Ruth Spinks and there is nothing wrong with them in themselves. However, they perpetuate the Western stereotyping of Japan and repeat wrong clichés such as choosing Chinese images to illustrate a Japanese book. The excuse may be the predilection among Japanese literati to revere Chinese art, but that does not seem to apply here. In spite of these infinitesimal flaws Wyatt has managed to bring into the English-speaking world a charming little anthology which will delight many a haiku-lover.

Susumu Takiguchi

Dancing Stones by Diana Webb. £4.00 Hub Haiku Series. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] ISBN 1 870653 82 3

In this collection of 100 haiku, Diana Webb looks on the natural world with a perceptive eye and not a little botanical acumen

pub garden, dusk
old blackbird listening
ripe elder berries

Season, hour and mood are evoked in nine words. Summer past its height, elderberries are ripe and the blackbird, old now, listens. Some light and sound come from the pub, seen and heard through the dusk. The key note is muted. Central images are in harmony — the dark gloss of berries, the dark gloss of the bird, a triumph of sensuous impact and economy.

On the whole, Diana Webb's 'nature' haiku are more sure-footed than those dealing with human affairs and man-made things. The haiku significance of random objects, of human flotsam, lies often in their very randomness, their chance assemblage under the sun or the rain. Only in this way may poems like *Summer bric-a-brac / pink rabbit / crucifix* and *Holy Week / in the gutter palm cross / cigarette butt* be read if they are to avoid sentimentality: *In the sand / a doll's dismembered arm / palm upwards to the sun*. In the much more interesting, faintly surreal

tombstone overturned
under the angels' armpit
floating leaves

it is as if, in stripping the subject of invested significance, the poet had freed her imagination.

Very fortunately, Diana Webb's poetic insight saves her from her own theories. The introduction to *Dancing Stones* is entitled 'Healing Haiku'. Elsewhere the poet has expressed her belief in the power of haiku to heal the individual and the planet. However that may be, Bashō wrote *on some boil / it seems to touch — the supple / branch of a willow*. Boils, chilblains, toothaches aren't symptoms of an abstraction-sickness, suitable cases for haiku healing; they are the stuff of haiku which records the uniqueness of all things. Poetry, not therapy.

A wordless, receptive state of mind is traditionally thought to be a prerequisite for haiku. The introduction to this book describes a personal ritual for the metamorphosis of haiku into 'dancing stones'. The account begins promisingly with the direct sense experience of a bird singing in a tree, but moves to focusing ... on the *awareness* (my italics) that the bird is singing; and that it is 'a miracle and rippling out from this particular perception that everything is a miracle'. As abstractions proliferate the haiku spirit recedes. A stone is used as a launching pad from which to poise in 'my dance of choosing to embrace everything as a miracle despite the threats, frustrations and banalities, that impinge from the society around me.' To approach the mysterious exchange which takes place between sentient and non-sentient in this anthropocentric, not to say egocentric, way is surly to deny both beings and things their deepest elemental identity.

And yet

wind strokes
pelt of barley field
shimmer of mill-pond

In the event, fancies and intellection can't come between Diana Webb's true haiku experience and its expressions in poems well worth reading. Forget the introduction.

Cicely Hill

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

Dear Editor — Guides enable us to wander from the well-charted paths without losing ourselves altogether. Blueprints are maps, and we know that 'the map is not the territory'. A guide to writing haiku leaves sufficient space for personal exploration. Blueprints register an inflexible status quo. Guides allow us to drop stones into a pool and watch the circles spread outwards. Blueprints merely delineate the pool's depth or stone's weight.

I think I've laboured the difference implied in your Editorial sufficiently to show my own preference for an open-minded tutor rather than a closed-circuit textbook.

Wayne Henderson

Dear Editor— The value of reviews needs to include taking poets to task as pointed out by Lee Gurga in his talk at Ludlow, and is not just for beginner poets, but as a continuation of the debate. An excellent example of this was Allan Jarrett's critical but balanced review of the two books by Martin Lucas. The reviewer was centred enough to be critical of Martin's work without seeming to attack him, perhaps my mistake in my review of *Tanka Splendor 1997*; I was so caught out by George's swagger that I developed one of my own. So I'm sorry if I caused George offence. My review just expressed a different view and having a different view doesn't necessarily constitute slinging rocks.

In 1995 Martin Lucas and I attended Haiku North America in Toronto with George Swede and many others. At one point we visited a Chinese restaurant for a meal. Everyone got a fortune cookie with the usual cliches of health, wealth etc. except me: mine read *Strong and bitter words indicate a weak cause* and that shut me up for almost four years. I clearly still find myself looking for a balance between the haiku that I love and trusting the Muldoons of this world not to trash it entirely and because of that sometimes panicking in my response.

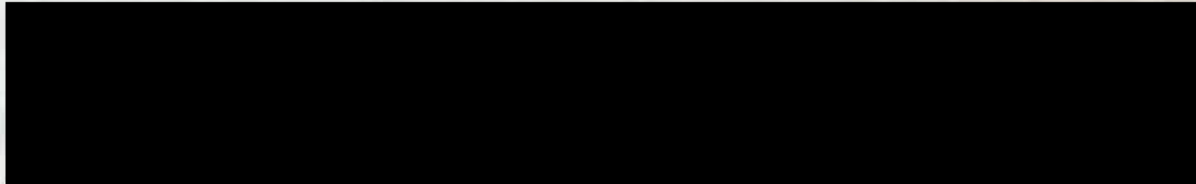
This ties in with the Editorial which offers Buddhism as an example of something that has endured through divergence. More to the point is that Buddhism endures because it works on universal patterns and it is transpersonal. This is also true of haiku in its purest sense: haiku communicate between

complete strangers and because of that unite rather than separate. The biggest challenge that any haiku community faces is to bring that sense of unity and communication into the debate itself, so that haiku in the West may continue to move forward. The question that all of this raises is how far can individual poets be expected to sacrifice their work to further the debate on haiku? — a debate that I've always deemed to be urgent lest haiku be lost forever. A debate that can take place best of all within reviews, and Allan Jarrett's review offers a valuable model.

Brian Tasker

Dear Editor — À propos David Cobb's *What Should We Call Ourselves*, allow me to parade my classical education for a moment: the word 'poet' is derived from the old Greek word which translates as *poiein* meaning 'to do' or 'to make'; a poem is literally a 'thing made'. If someone refers to me as a 'poet' I deny the accusatory label: *I write poems*; this, sir, does not make *me* into anything; I do something about *making sense of the world*; that sometimes the results happens to be a senhaik will not emerge, if at all, until sometime later in the conversation. Usually I keep quiet about the whole wretched business; I discovered haiku for myself — why haven't they?

Colin Blundell

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