

**Journal of
The British Haiku Society**

Blithe Spirit



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Blithe Spirit

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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 do not necessarily reflect her own. **Blithe Spirit** is published four times a year, March, June, September and December.

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Cover design by David Walker

Errata

Vol 9 No. 2. In Cicely Hill's review of Diana Webb's *Dancing Stones* (p54) 'abstraction-sickness' should have read '... an abstraction — sickness ...'

In Colin Blundell's letter (p56) 'translates' should have read 'transliterates'.

Editorial — On Choice

The last time I had the exciting privilege of being haiku-sifter for *Blithe Spirit* was back in 1991/92 when Richard Goring and I co-edited the journal; it feels like the British Haiku Society has come thousands of miles since then — loads more submissions including articles, haibun, renga and comments to choose from. Since being guest haiku-sifter is a one-off, unlikely ever to happen again, I can luxuriate in the absolute irresponsible freedom to choose just what I happen to like without thinking too much about Guidelines — a guideline is only a guideline is only a guideline! This is a Haiku Health Warning!

I've said this before, but I'll say it again — I believe after William Carlos Williams, that the point of writing or reading poetry (of which haiku is a subset) is to engage in *the renovation of experience*; when a poem or haiku makes me view things in even a slightly different way I enjoy a frisson, little or large, up and down my backbone. For me a haiku-critic's role (now my role as Sifter) is to focus on understanding how a writer achieves the *renovation of experience* rather than to flog to death some absolutist authority-ridden standpoint 'when in truth all that ever exists are our own personal tastes and inclinations ...' (Keith Coleman in a personal letter).

It always amuses me to look at, say, Ueda translations of Bashō haiku and think how few of the poems of the so-called 'masters' would make it into the pages of *Blithe Spirit*; modern haiku gurus have erected grand schemes to guide the writing of haiku — the masters frequently fail the test. On the other hand, I enjoy Bashō's haiku [?]:- *Do not resemble me — / Never be like a musk melon / Cut in two identical halves.*

Truth to the moment, to every moment of life, is all; what I imagined to be for the writer the flash of heightened awareness (but how do I know?), conveyed with verve and without conceit, is what I had in mind as I made my choices. What I also noticed after I had made my selection (unwilling discarding) was an interesting thing about myself: I had chosen many, what others might call, 'obscure' haiku — where there is plenty of room for interpretation, the writer treating us like adults, giving us *our* haiku moment in an AHA of personal interpretation; I also noticed that much of what I'd chosen made me laugh for one reason or another.

Colin Blundell

HAIKU/SENRYU (Other than 5-7-5)

absently
getting up to answer
next door's telephone

last week's bouquet
pruned to fit
a smaller vase

under the spotlight
the irish piper
weaves his fingers

dawn —
the distant sound of the
earth's first light

David Rollins

windows wide at sixty —
the car loaded with light
and the scent of mayflower

BS

after a day
of arguments —
night rain

John Barlow

breeze through the window
the scent of someone else's
Sunday dinner

Martin Lucas

In bed between us
the burning gap
frozen by words and years

Above the daisies
stone angel
with a stone wreath

Wandering the supermarket isles
the diagnosis

sinks in

Three hundredth and sixty-first
cheque book
feeling the stubs

Ken Jones

April
dawn —
a
spider's
web
has
captured
only dew

cancer scare
I've missed
the summer lilies

John Ower

The small boy
tosses all the crumbs
to the smallest duck

Basem Farid

moonless night —
only crickets give shape
to the darkness

... into my dream
the pecking of sparrows
on the window sill

in a calm voice
he disagrees with his hostess
— totally

the old computer teacher
explains the concept
of graceful degradation

David Steele

Autumn leaves
falling in
a
pile

David South

zim! zim! the swifts
into my head through one eye
out the other

the old spin bowler
fingers busy
with a bowl of sloes

David Cobb

Pomp-pomp-pomp
of Her Majesty's Guard
— the sky a light blue

Seeing
then watching
ripples
— this morning's playground puddle

How fortunate the holly leaf
not having to rest its belly
on the pavement

Allan Jarrett

His hands
ceasing from work
press into the bread

Between the buildings
as I sit
dusk's silvering sky

The room is right
my mind tonight
cluttered

reaching
with the solo

Mark Renney

a leafy suburb
the down-and-out
on his way out

into the straggling
clematis a damselfly's
pointed precision

my first visit to
the osteopath creaking
of a chair

Maurice Tasnier

sitting in the library
old men give pass/fail marks
on people in the street

Francis Gallagher

Fizzing peacefully
dreaming of windows
— computers after dark

Arwyn Evans

mother croons
the sleeping baby
curls his toes

Jean Rasey

Near sleep —
from the street
a Tarzan yell

Steven Middleton

Wembley stadium
fifty thousand people
scoring a goal

on the Crouch
a gull touching down
on its shadow

ironing my shirt
the pressed shape of money
in the pocket

below her left breast
the secret of a small brown mole
revealed

bending
to the small child
your hair tumbles

Frank Dullaghan

That high field
caught between a cliff edge
and the edge of a cloud

Old racing calendar,
dead plant, his electric clock
still going

Heavy shower
our dry stone walls
drip

Michael Bangerter

rainbow
uninterrupted
by haiku-writing

grey flight of the heron
changes the world
like rain

in the whole blue death
of the summer sky,
I sense the river moon

Bach
in October:
the morning star

AA Marcoff

the thought of her
spoilt
by the taste of the envelope

turning the corner
boys spreading the pavement
home late again

Andrew Detheridge

Between spring larksong
And spring moonlight,
My ascent
Of the great limestone peak.

(Mt Ibuki, Shiga 29. 4. 99)

Tito

old man jogging past the cemetery

old forgotten well
until the waterplop

twinkle in his eye
three stars on her body

Leslie Giddens

hand full of copper
an old alcoholic
smiles by the winebar

the vagrant
a radio presses
to his head

Alan J. Summers

reflections
splintered by rain
over and over

at the mountain summit

snow

meets the clouds

Joanna Ashwell

deserted wharf:
only the wind
disturbs the cranes

a single
starship
thistledown

Helen Robinson

by their winter lights
across the way
I feel I know them

bringing my day
to the quiet flower
in deep shade

under Orion
starfish darkening
the long beach

Thom Williams

my father muttering
to himself at my mother's
muttering to herself

counting syllables
wondering if I might have
missed a finger

Philip Rowland

dusk ...
green and grey
divide the sky

Frank Williams

passing the flats
another family's clothes
hang on our line

Good Friday:
an ice-cream van pulls up
just before dark

Annie Bachini

in the graveyard
fresh mown grass
a scent of childhood

low tide
figures on the beach horizon
come and go

straightening my tie
in the mirror — don't look
as knackered as I feel

Fred Schofield

woman smiling
from an upstairs window —
March sun melts the snow

children's picture book —
at the centre of the wood
the rain has stopped

Caroline Gourlay

The two articles in *Blithe Spirit* vol. 9/2 by Jackie Hardy and Tōru Sudo on the 'progress' of haiku from Western and Eastern perspectives contained some interesting points that are worth exploring further. Let's begin at home. Jackie Hardy holds the view that the content of haiku is limited compared to the scope of mainstream poetry. She goes on to say that "mainstream poetry encourages writing about computers or indeed anything 'new'" as if that in some way makes haiku deficient. The problem with writing haiku about computers is that it's difficult to interact emotionally with a computer in the subtle way that haiku require, as her examples amply demonstrate. It's the limitation of the subject matter that's revealed, not the limitation of the writer, because a haiku writer needs to work as closely as possible with 'what is', unlike a writer of mainstream poetry. Jackie Hardy then goes on to say that Bashō didn't engage with feminism or equal opportunities. Bashō engaged with the conditions in which he lived. His haiku: *under the same roof / courtesans too, are asleep — / bush clover and the moon* engages with both feminism and equal opportunities in a way that was appropriate to Bashō's time and culture (see Robert Aitken's *A Zen Wave* Ch. 13, p 97 and Ueda's *Bashō and his Interpreters* p 261 for explication).

Modern western haiku addresses both feminism and equal opportunities. The content of haiku written by women may tend towards the traditional and by being so, draws attention to the slow pace of change. But if you read haiku without identifying the gender of the writer, there you have equality, because it's virtually impossible to identify the gender of the writer in most haiku, whatever the content as so often haiku aren't gender specific. But try it and you'll probably guess the gender correctly and there you have haiku as a contribution to the feminist debate. Haiku don't perpetuate stereotypes, they simply reflect them, without judgement and without making any kind of overt political statement.

Regarding people with disabilities, we may already be reading haiku by people with disabilities for all we know, as their disabilities wouldn't necessarily be apparent, which is the level haiku communicate on. People with disabilities have a compelling argument that they are disabled by society rather than the disability, but they aren't disabled by haiku; it's there for everyone to use and it's a great leveller. Anyway, most of the disabled people that I've met aren't inclined to always be drawing attention to their disabilities — they just want to live their lives like anyone else. In the case of sexuality in haiku, most of the erotic haiku that I've

seen, when written with the attitude of restraint, could be heterosexual, gay or lesbian for all the difference it makes to either poem or experience, when it's the feeling that's being communicated. Even in the case of the more explicit, the last stanza of Hardy's sequence *'Making Sense'* (The Iron Book of British Haiku) could equally have been written by a man. Would that be any less acceptable?

It's a self-evident truth that haiku treat their contents as 'objects' because haiku are written in an objective way. It's only a problem when an attitude or a judgement creeps in and the haiku moves along into the realm of senryu. As Dee Evetts once pointed out, haiku and senryu operate over a continuum, moving into and out of each other, and because of that they are the perfect vehicle for assessing the way we perceive the world and the way we judge what we encounter in our lives. It has nothing to do with what David Hart describes as 'neutral or easy perceptions of beauty' and everything to do with a neutral and easy perception of life, in which we are free and the 'objects' in our poems are free, in an acceptance of things 'as they are'. Each haiku we write without judgement is a step on the road to freedom and each senryu we write shows us where and how we are stuck. Most often it seems to be somewhere in the middle. Haiku don't make the point in a strident political way, but lightheartedly in an unguarded way. Much the same can be said for senryu and the ground in between. Politics without the politics and spirituality without the religion — what a gift! Don't knock it — use it.

Meanwhile back in Japan, things seem to be shaping up quite differently according to Tōru Sudo. I don't feel qualified to comment particularly, other than to question Shiki's assertion that the true value of progress in haiku is 'advancing into areas not explored by the ancients'. If the somewhat surreal examples quoted are anything to go by, we have a problem. As I understand it, haiku work on a kind of archetypal transference — they communicate on a level that is both deep and superficial at the same time. They use the mundane world to connect us to our human feelings that connect us to our peers as well as to the ancients. As I've said elsewhere, haiku unite rather than separate because they communicate between strangers. Haiku are peace poems without the need to write it on a placard or join anything. In haiku you can be a loner and still feel part of the community.

The more we get into the imagination, the further we move away from each other and begin to create hierarchies and personality cults. It's hard to know exactly what Shiki meant by 'advancing into areas not explored by the ancients'. I would like to think he meant us to work with the conditions and contexts of our lives and write haiku from what we find, and that's nothing if not inclusive. Then perhaps we can

move on from the 'flower-bird-wind-moon haiku', or the still-life set pieces in nature that many haiku seem to be. Whilst browsing through a book on Chinese painting recently called *Images of the Mind* by Wen C. Fong, I found a quote which seems apt: 'Since the truth of an old master is discovered only in one's own mind, fidelity to the old means fidelity to one's own inner self. Thus the proper way to seek correspondence is to transform, since the only way to be ancient is to endow the old with compelling new significances.'

All of the above coincided with the publication of Cor van den Heuvel's third edition of *The Haiku Anthology*, the previous two editions being published in 1974 and 1986. I had rather naively hoped that the third edition would have brought forward all the poems from the earlier editions, creating a potted history of English-language haiku, at least from van den Heuvel's perspective. Alas, many of the earlier poems have been dropped to make way for new material and re-reading through *The Haiku Anthology* nowadays does begin to reveal a certain amount of sameness as in Lenard D. Moore's: *Summer noon; / the blueberry field / divided by a muddy road*. Obviously something needs to happen, but what? Actually not much, as in van den Heuvel's: *hot night / turning the pillow / to the cool side* which he chose to drop from the new edition. It's often the view that it's haiku that needs developing, instead of simply 'endowing the old with compelling new significances' by expanding our field of awareness.

In his introduction to the new edition, van den Heuvel states that Vincent Tripi and Carl Patrick write haiku that 'involves a new way of seeing'. Carl Patrick's: *inside / the hailstone / ripples on a pond* and Tripi's: *Owl feather / in my palm / — the feel of moonlight* being examples. Beautiful these poems might be, but haiku? They move us towards the poetic conceits of mainstream poetry with the amount of personality and personal view being disproportionate to that of feeling and experience. I'm reminded of another quote, one by the novelist Arundhati Roy: "A generous writer leaves you with a sense of the world they have evoked; a selfish writer leaves you with a sense of their own brilliance." If that is true of fiction, then it's even more true of haiku and we seem to have reached something of a fork in the road: the choice between generosity and selfishness in the sense of being truly open with those who will read what we write. I believe we need to surrender the idea of brilliance altogether and go with what we are given. Let the haiku moment be the fluke it has always been since Bashō's frog in 1686. Can the future of haiku really be so simple? I hope so.

5-7-5 CHALLENGE

Report by Colin Blundell

Responses to the challenge to 'free-haiku' writers to write 5-7-5 ranged from the supreme sanity of David Cobb's statement that 'my "freedom" includes using 5-7-5 whenever I feel that suits the poem best' to Cicely Hill's interesting statement 'the greatest and huge benefit of 5-7-5, I'm sure, is in the paring down that it demands. Everyone should have done it. Having been somewhat, though not very, 'free' for a long time now, I think I'd probably lose quality of sound and faithfulness to moment if I started counting syllables again. It would need as much time to get back into it as it took getting out of it.' Otherwise there was silence.

David Cobb goes on '... your challenge ... makes life a little uncomfortable for some of us who don't want to be pushed into one camp or the other. I suppose I'm a "freeman" because I produce more haiku that are not 5-7-5 than ones that are ... perhaps 10% of my output [is already] in that form ... by entering the lists do I thereby declare my allegiance to the "free"? ...' Certainly not! There is no camp. For me, the discipline of writing 5-7-5 haiku *and* capturing the moment without, let's call it, 'floridness' is part of the game; I admire many non-5-7-5 haiku though I am deeply suspicious of minimalism as an art form.

Frank Williams also describes how he also is guided by notions of appropriateness; he still feels 'that 5-7-5 is the ideal to aim for ... if this can be achieved without falsifying the effort ... I suppose that the main criticism levelled against the 'free style haiku writer' is the lack of discipline. But ... personally, when writing free style, I always aim for a rhythm in the finished haiku and this is for me the discipline.'

Like John Barlow I find that '... when 5-7-5 haiku come to me it is often without any conscious effort to adhere to the formula, or sometimes without any conscious effort at all, though [now] these are quickly consigned to the great wastepaper basket in the mind. But ... every so often I find it interesting to try to mould words, lines and meanings fluently into the strict form. Occasionally I am happy with the result ... But more often than not I find that after a few readings they contain an extra word or two without which they seem far more natural and unforced, and so after a few rewrites they end up being stripped down to their underwear, or even their birthday suit ... alongside excessive imagery, the most important thing to avoid when writing strict form haiku is poor use of enjambement. An overflowing line can be very unattractive in such a brief poem, unless of course it is combined with

meaning to add to the effect ... the most important tip ... writing in 5-7-5 is to try and use at least a couple of words of 3 or more syllables [which] effectively reduces the perceived length of the haiku and can negate the risk of an overload of imagery. In the absence of appropriate words, another method is to use quickly pronounced words, possibly with internal rhyme to speed up the rhythm ...'

For Elizabeth Moore '... the pain of restriction becomes an additional pleasure upon coming up with a solution ... Jean Rasey: 'The pain: 5-7-5 haiku with odd line endings and obvious added words. The pleasure: for me a natural 5-7-5 has an added frisson — perhaps because that is the way I learned haiku first.

Leo Lavery points out the way in which 'keeping to form ... affects ... the selection of weighed words. Counting syllables (especially in a long word) challenges and curiosities arise. Ingenuity [does not exclude] enlightenment. Or fun. The rhythm, the dying fall is soothing & significant ...'

The challenge inspired Stanley Pelter, some of whose examples seem like haiku e.e.cummings might have written, to engage in a much larger argument: 'It is about time that a fuller range of experience, whether internal or external, was brought into play. Nor, if we are creative, should we be tied to existing spelling or structures, [leaving it to others to give] a more 'exact' meaning to an idea or image. That is ... how language, rhythms and associations develop over time and from country to country ...'

Allan Jarrett says that he 'would normally avoid working on haiku which have a lot going on in them (several points of focus) as this works against one of the strongest attractions of the form — its brevity. But [in his examples] having worked to 'fill' all the syllables, I believe I have managed to make something of it and it reflects what I felt at the moment — the realisation that the origin of the ants were the nearby cherry trees, the element I might have dropped just to make it slimmer ... Trying to fit the original and vague selection of words into a format I last seriously tried 22 years ago, but with more experience and feel of what makes a haiku, I discover that, by chance more than anything else, it works, but mostly because the original thought or word picture was long enough for me to adjust to the pattern. There are pleasing things like omitting the definite article of the only noun and having to revert to a kind of name-noun — rather like some translations of Japanese haiku — 'Frog' but not quite 'Froggy' or 'Mr. Frog'. What disappointed me a little was to have to drop my original idea for the bird's re-appearance on the surface of the water which was described by the verb 'surface' or 'pop-up' — it had to be one

opportunity to reflect on a spoken aspect of language and bring in some informality — by contracting the 'will' to 'll'.

Overall, [continues Allan] I feel I wouldn't mind if suddenly all haiku writers were ordered to write 5-7-5 on pain of death or excommunication. It would strengthen something George Swede referred to [in BS 9/2] — haiku's egalitarianism.'

5-7-5 HAIKU/SENRYU

By the cherry tree
the dark spots on the pavement
— one-time flying ants

anticipating
where Great Crested Grebe'll show
— always outwitted

Allan Jarrett

after a long night
of insomnia, my door
opens to blue sky

an erratic swipe
of the pen, the toddler stops,
waits for approval

Giovanni Malito

flurry of starlings
spraying the pothole puddle
in all directions

from the guitar case
whirring round the winter pub ...
peacock butterfly

Keith Coleman

winding together
through the overhanging trees
stars and pipistrelles

heat wave lingering ...
his lolly stick hits the tip
next to yesterday's

John Barlow

a neighbourly thought
his redesigned porch scribbled
on my garden wall

x-ray department —
hanging in the waiting room
print of a beached boat

farmyard siesta —
the watchdog's right eye opens
occasionally

Francis Attard

concelebration
high in the chancel a dove
fluffs out its feathers

Jean Rasey

amber searcher's sun ...
of all the stones on the beach
this one comes alive

weeding the neep field ...
then shadows of the rowan
by the rippling burn

David Steele

lazy afternoon
among the waving lilies
only bees busy

clear summer morning
sunlight playing on pebbles
in shallow water

Pamela Hewitt

Instead of eating
I walk past my fatherhood
dreaming in the park

Henk Littlewood

shadows of leaves lie
on the back of my black cat
a lawn-mower's moan

Elizabeth Moore

Bird song — I breathe in
As the siren comes and goes
I breathe out — bird song

Jonathan Buckley

Clouds in the water
before the river weir
rings the insects make

Dermot O'Brien

On this shortest night
shining through the apple tree
a bit of the moon.

On a market stall
Red Indian dream-catchers
selling out quickly.

In the ancient house
supernatural presence
cold in the kitchen.

Joan Daniels

On Mountain Fuji top —
what a great pleasure I taste
seeing the sun rise!

Yasuhiko Shigemoto

Dust specks in the sun
a universe expanding
as I lie in bed

Peter Spencer

pruning the firethorn —
on the gardener's balding head
more blossom than hair

earth-heap in the road —
suddenly a flourishing
of sage-blue tattoos

David Cobb

the brightness of spring
lingering into evening —
white sheets on the line

PRIVATE PROPERTY
for a moment, a blackbird
perched on the notice

Martin Lucas

The aspidistra
30 years in the window
not looking its last

Refrigerator
all night and all day humming
your soft old sweet song

Summer here present
the whole kit & caboodle
piled up on the lawn

Leo Lavery

on the street corner —
two people with mobile phones
standing back to back

John Crook

the stream passes on
over rocks and broken trees
you never mention

Caroline Gourlay

still the same lamp burns
all night long you speak of love
in another bed

carrying your urn
the ferryman shields his face
from the early dark

ai li

indian summer
around the horse chestnut trees
a sheen of conkers

Alan J. Summers

soaring above blue
of a flax field in the sun
heron becomes blaze

Diana Webb

Dusk slowly falling
only a single white rose
delaying the night

Alzheimer patient
reading haiku and smiling
forgets she wrote them

Ron Woollard

fat melons waiting
in fields for a Bashō or
a Buson to pass

the computer man
sits scratching his hard disc
for a forgotten face

touching her body
here and there, the negligé
earns her husband's wrath

P.V.Subramanian

a hot summer's day
in the drinking fountain bowl
broken glass and rust

Frank Williams

as we two lie here
fingers gently entwining
bare thoughts take over

when we are apart
your computer writhes inside me
e-mailing my ache

sitting in the bath
having his long hair cut short
thinking of samson

we, making mingles,
inveigle fondle and slonk
until the funsets

you doh me soh far
so soft so touch so tingles
and so on and so on

Stanley Pelter

Minutes from nightfall —
the whole sky floating on a
thin skin of puddle.

Faultless blue sky. But
still a rainkiss finding my
skin when I want you.

Steven Ford

Ignorant soap-box orator that I am, I've no wish to seem overweening – but almost from first glance I felt there to be aspects of haiku-writing that one could intuit and reason about without any great experience. All that was required, it seemed, was a clear outside view of what might be being missed or avoided by those on the inside. That has to sound misguided, if not arrogant; but a few years and many 'haiku' on, my opinions are little changed – and neither are the sorts of haiku that first provoked them. Indeed, books such as *Messages from Matsuyama* by Yagi Kametaro, and articles such as the recent comparison of English and Japanese haiku by Nobuyuki Yuasa [B.S: 8.3] lead me to believe that my ideas were/are not altogether wrong. Professor Yuasa has eloquently discussed the use of metaphor – one of my early interests; but at Ludlow earlier this year, I dealt rather more crudely with the 'overuse' of a passive voice, the 'cult' of minimalism, and the personalization v. the anonymity of haiku. This article restates my viewpoints on these latter issues.

Dangerous pavements. / But I face the ice this year / with my father's stick.

S.Heaney

Spring won't bring you back. / I watch a flight of geese / both feet on the ground.

C.Gourlay

Along the path to the spring / how restful it is / to walk behind others.

Hakyo

No blackthorn winter, / but as far as my eye can see – / sloe blossoming.

Bamboo Shoot

What can be said about these haiku?

Sure, that's a foine poem you have there, Seamus, but it's a little on the big side – d'you think you could knock a few words out of it now – there's a good fella? You wouldn't dare, would you? Not unless you wanted a well-judged shelalagh rhythmically wrapped round your ears. And good riddance! Heaney is exemplary in observance of form and content whilst writing a clearly English haiku. In fact, being fully syntaxed, all four haiku are pleasant to read and bear re-reading – as opposed to merely thinking hard while extracting content from behind 'the closed

door'. No mere surface-sketches or anonymous juxtapositionings of images, all four deal with things and season, yet are written by people who one might get to know through their writing. Professor Yagi is positive: haiku should always embody one's personality and way of life, while offering real scenes that arouse deep emotion in the reader. I like his (almost) definition of haiku: image plus turn of thought – a harmony between the stable (season, place, image) and the fleeting (fragment of experience). The turn of thought can be implied by a shift of attention or by reflection; but the poet's mind is crucial.

Understand a poem from its words and analyses. Understand the poet from his/her 'life' and use of language. Knowing both poem and poet a little better, how much more complete the enjoyment! Unfortunately, it's not so easy with haiku. But consider Hakyō's poem in the light of his overall development – his other work and humanistic attitude, his lung disease contracted at age 30, and his subsequent pain and discomfort till his death at 56; his writing the haiku at a cool summer resort away from Tokyo, his philosophical acceptance of joy in tranquillity, and his avoidance of sheer objective truth in haiku. Even with this slight synopsis, one understands more, not just about Hakyō, but also the validity of his haiku.

In Hakyō's poem, 'spring' (*izumi*) is a summer season-word; and it will no doubt connote more to the Japanese reader than simple translation would suggest. Can we (do we) ever use season-words with the same impact as the Japanese? Quite apart from the absence of the large formal glossaries to refer to, we are simply of a different culture, and surely lack the same collective consciousness? Doubtless, we do have many season-words at our disposal, e.g. in our books on natural history and folklore; and perhaps we could dredge out these references to educate each other through our haiku? But I suggest that we use them with no empty preference over any other sort of allusion: if they deepen the poetry, use them – if not, don't! Why waste syllables? No formality should be an end in itself. My season-word was 'blackthorn winter' [*Flora Britannica*: R.Mabey], and tensions between its meaning, the pun and the overall observation might be felt? Nature coming through regardless v. Nature out of synch? Joy v. anxiety? You might read me now as an environmentalist – or doomsday merchant? But I'm nobody, and one cannot read any poet out of one poem! There has to be a body of work – a developed and recognisable use of language – an attitude.

What are *haiku-moments*? Points in time when 'nature' is keenly perceived as linked to human spirit? Instants of heightened awareness or poetic perception that jolt an emotional need to share? Falling leaf shadow to sunlight bouncing off a

steel girder – the flash of self-identity with some vibrant animal or the tired nerve-twitch of unplaceable recognition in some rush-hour body language? For me, nature's spectrum extends back inside my skull also. Whatever, haiku-moments are brief. Perhaps there is only one true moment when we 'know' we are in love: before, we never knew – afterwards, we are already getting used to the idea. And perhaps haiku-moments are like this – amorous firefly gleams that leave us floundering in the dark trying to recapture their after-images with inadequate words. Nature is tough on humans.

Hence then the brevity of haiku? A temporal onomatopoeia of words? Say too much and you crush the elusive essence ...? No! – wait. Brevity is a feature of the thing itself, not the cage we catch it in. At Ludlow, I compared haiku with the short prose-sketches that James Joyce called *Epiphanies*. These latter also attempt to capture small unspoken silences in cages of words; and as with haiku, it takes an alert reader to sense the presence of anything caught at all. Here is an example of a Joycean epiphany, followed by a rough effort of my own.

She is engaged. She dances with them in the round – a white dress lightly lifted as she dances, a white spray in her hair; eyes a little averted, a faint glow on her cheek. Her hand is in mine for a moment, softest of merchandise.

— You very seldom come here now. —

— Yes, I am becoming something of a recluse. —

— I saw your brother the other day He is very like you. —

— Really? —

She dances with them in the round – evenly, discreetly, giving herself to no one. The white spray is ruffled as she dances, and when she is in shadow the glow is deeper on her cheek.

At the very edge of the change of things – at the edge of the change of change – where the great wave of change sweeps across and retreats, over and over – there are always small pools of the past, each a mirror to its own beginnings and its ends.. And where the city has pushed its soiled fingers deep into the softest flesh of village life, and village life has simply moved aside and within, dreams the old mill pool – itself a small oasis of seasonal change amid the terrible thirsts and sterility of concrete. And on this morning, on this warm summer morning, the old pool smells just as it has smelt on all the other warm summer mornings that have ever preceded it. It smells of life. SPLOOP! Is it a stone? a fish? – but as I reach a view, I see, jutting out of the algal greeniness, the broken brickwork of the old mill;

and onto this tenuous ledge, young frogs are clambering up and out of the water – out of one world and into another towards the sun. The ledge crowds, and one frog diving back into the water, re-emerges to take its place again at the very back of things. And suddenly it is not a pool, and the frogs are clambering off the page onto the desk where I am writing only to return again as words, and the words are clambering down out of my head onto the paper to return again as thought – and I no longer know who made the first sound – the water, the frog, or myself. The rest is silence.

Too contrived? Well, nobody said writing was easy. At least you can see that the same beasties might be caught in different ways? Capture the essence, and size doesn't matter. Mind not form, though I don't suggest that we write epiphanies – nor yet 8-10-8's; Professor Yagi himself was very much a 5-7-5 man. What I am suggesting, is that it is a misconception to believe that silence can only be captured by saying next to nothing. Which brings us to MINIMALISM.

Well juxtapositioned words/images can trigger the reintegration of emotional and cognitive memories such that the flavours simply flood out. But it is no use a poet pointing vaguely at something to be shared, if the reader does not know where to look. Obscure ambiguity by the writer can only cause ambivalence or dilution of the emotions in the reader, e.g. compare the following:

hole/cheese

Nothing in the house / but some dried-up Emmental / and her husband's socks.

I'm not against the minimal in itself. It can, after all, work quite well to evoke the haiku-moment, e.g.

Having sown a breeze (taken from *Messages from Matsuyama*)

One feels with the poet – in England it might be: 'washing outthe rain', which retains the ambiguity, but lacks the structure of the spontaneous colloquial. And some of ai li's pieces seem to work well enough:

alone with leafsmoke(though I prefer my own version in *Fire*, '93); or

widowed shutter/wind.....(though how much the metaphor reflects poet or poetry, *idea* rather than *thing* [Yagi], we can't tell). Thing is, it's easy to hear

Kyoshi saying that they might be effective poems – working in a haiku way — but are, nevertheless, not haiku because they lack traditional formal features. Of course, there's nothing wrong with experiment: dissecting out the working parts of haiku to see what makes them tick – as long as it is just that. (But let's be clear: prise out a haiku's guts, and the poet may well cease to exist; and it's far harder to flesh the bits and pieces out again with words – such that they still work.) It's seeking out the minimal for its own fashionable sake that seems dubious somehow; while if the minimal becomes the deformed finger pointing nowhere in particular – it has to be wrong. Doesn't it?

Tanka, too, have received the minimalist treatment – all part of a seemingly more casual syllabic style; but when poems of 12 – 15 syllables start appearing, it seems almost logical to ask: how do we tell a haiku from a tanka? To judge from Ueda's *Modern Japanese Tanka*, material content now seems wide open; while – from the translations – tanka can usually be distinguished from haiku by asking: direct statement or implied? full syntax or elliptical? But if many of the tanka do translate to syllabically less formal-looking English versions, might this not be misleading to the composition of English tanka? Isn't overall shape and structure as important as syllable count? Professor Yuasa himself says that he would aim for traditional syllabics when translating waka into English. Am I alone in seeing English tanka that seem only clever lineations to exploit an effect of delayed imagery, or expedient lineations of too-short statements? tanka-haiku hybrids? tanka that might be haiku, haiku that are wannabe tanka? Are some poets clear in their minds as to which genre their feelings are best suited for? Can any casual thought or feeling dispensed in a 5-pack be tanka? Is there no risk of tanka becoming like the spurious free-verse of so many creative-writing groups? Any English poet worth his/her salt will tell you that constraints – if observed – can seem almost magical in their conjury of phrases that would not be thought of if one simply used the first words that entered the head. And tanka are poems. There seems a real opportunity provided by tanka for us to be English poets. Contrary to what has been said elsewhere, tanka might well provide the transcultural bridge to understanding haiku (not *vice-versa*); simply because in tanka we say what we feel. I really like

two in the morning
the air like curried lentils
blurs the sight
a welcome garland – tuberose
sickly sweet, heavy as a chain

G.Richman

for its western poetic qualities.

A Final Form? If we want to be more widely read – if we wish to survive, we need to evolve – not vanish into the anal. To my mind, a reader of English haiku collections today risks not so much being pecked to death by doves, as smothered by pidgins – the contributory voices to this state of affairs being the passive, the minimal, and the wholly anonymous:

Surely not all our haiku experiences evoke dreamy passive emotions? So why phrase them as if they do? The persistence of the exhausted indiscriminating voice is, to my ears, an irritant. There are several ways of writing in the present tense that, used with variety, might make one's haiku seem generated by a person rather than by a technically limited piece of software. The present participle is not a tool for getting out of syllabic difficulties, and its use *should be avoided as far as possible: the '-ing' form weakens the expression and deprives the writer of his aggressive stance.* [Yagi].

As if in answer to one of my earlier questions [B.S: 6.2] Keiko Imaoka [B.S: 8.1] tells us that English does indeed carry more information per syllable than Japanese. I assume that semi-classical Japanese is being referred to (while noting Professor Yuasa's apprehension concerning any future use of the modern language); and also that the statement is a statistic – clearly, not all English syllables carry equal semantic weight. But I'm not sure that Keiko Imaoka's article answers entirely what I meant at all. My general contention is this: that a proper comparison of the information content of two languages – especially two languages as structurally different as Japanese and English – must consider both the translatable and the untranslatable. Unfortunately, if putting appropriate questions seems to require only common sense, the relevant answers seem only available to those who are genuinely culturally bilingual. Simply to translate a language is not the same as to read that language as a native. Language defines culture forms people – in some sense, it might even be said that people are their language. Language defines our entire mental universe: everything from material things and their relations to how we feel about them. It programs our cultural structures, and ultimately it defines itself. 'Language centres' in the brain predate human language: evolutionary opportunism has simply turned their use from a 'more primitive' to a 'more advanced' system of cultural communication. Likewise, the gut-strings of emotion predate the human expression of feeling. *My dog's got no nose – How does he smell? – Terrible – How do you feel? – Like any one else I guess.* Perhaps, when every last synaptic function has been explained, we will still be asking, *Yes – but*

why do I feel? – forgetting that wh do I feel? — forgetting that ‘feel’ is simply a word – something that we have invented to enable our cultural software to run more smoothly. *Yes, but why do we feel?*

Within any culture – from individual to collective use – words hold more than just the superficial meanings that are easily translated into other languages. Meanings, as they pass between people, are controlled by complex frameworks of reference that may not be recognized between different cultures. As for words themselves, it is common enough experience to see/hear within them the multiple echoes of their derivation and evolution – to notice how constituent syllables will sometimes shine out with independent meaning. Consider the following: (demon), *demonstrate*, *remonstrate*, *monstrance*, *monstrous*, (MONS, mons) – of the four surely related words, only the noun holds a clear meaning. Or stare at ‘Oxford’ until it regains its original sense. And while it would be a neurotic over-reading (though clearly context related) to receive

How beautiful / the sUShi bar at MatsUShima / jUSSt US

and worry over whether it has been sent by the pretty waitress, the YakUZa, or the girl’s father, subtle untranslatable ‘meanings’ can be conveyed at this level of language structure – it is, after all, part of how poetry works. So if Japanese does hold any haiku-writing advantage over English, we might as well begin looking for it at this level.

In *The Haiku Handbook* (pp.22-23), there is an example of allusion – by Shiki towards Bashō – that involves both context related and derivative meaning. Shiki writes the word ‘ato’ in phonetics, deliberately creating aural ambiguity that allows allusion to ‘ato’ written in characters by Bashō. ‘Ato’ has two characters, each with completely different meanings (‘track’ and ‘after’), but only one phonetic spelling with context related/directed meaning, (clearly, two words such as ‘would’ and ‘wood’ would scarcely echo a similar allusory impact in English). In the same haiku, Shiki also writes ‘ikusa’ (‘battle’) in phonetics to allude to Bashō’s character for ‘natsugusa’ (‘summer grass’: derivative of ‘kusa’ = ‘grass’). And what makes these examples of interest here, is the Japanese option of using either ideogrammatic characters or phonetics. There’s no shortage of semantic slip in English when we want to be ambiguous, but in writing words like ‘dough’ and ‘dough’, we are stuck with using groups of purely geometric signs (letters) that retain no cultural memory of ever having been pictographic.

Now it's possible – with a bit of homework – to discover other aspects of Japanese that conceivably might afford meaningful advantage over English when it comes to writing haiku; e.g. in Penguin's *Japanese Verse* (pp.xliii-xlv), we find that there were/are aspects of conjugational grammar that are *more a matter of mood than tense* and very suitable as a *tool for the lyric poet*. But to me, such examples seem far less important than what can be thought of with no research at all. For we need only to think back into the early days of haiku, and beyond, and ask questions like these: how does a language – especially in its poetic mode – enter the mind to affect consciousness, when that language is so close to its pictorial roots and its calligraphy is an art form? We know how we read – we run a mental mime of word sounds as we proceed; but how did Bashō read? Did his 'visual' texts provide him with a view of reality slightly different from our own? A more open view perhaps? Whatever the position of modern Japanese in all of this, haiku began at a time when characters might well have been more like ideas than words; and even in Japan today, there may be a writer-reader bond of meaning that is very different from our own – simply, a cultural heritage of a different way of reading. Professor Yagi says, *because of its brevity, a haiku can never express anything completely ... must suggest as much as possible ... what is unsaid is as important as what is said ... it is implication that counts*. True – but is this innocently misleading? Might not 'pictorial' Japanese brevity perhaps convey more than severely clipped English? Rather than concern ourselves with onji/syllable equivalence, might we not better ask how Bashō, Shiki, Kyoshi et.al. would have used the English language?

Certainly there are basic elements of haiku-writing to be observed and respected. Under a general heading of *tradition*, I see them grouping into *structure* and *approach/spirit*. But it is surely wrong to observe either at the expense of the other. A dead butterfly may retain all its form, proportions, and seasonal associations – but is, nonetheless, dead! Consider the following:

Perched upon the muzzle of a cannon
A yellow butterfly is slowly opening and shutting its wings

Amy Lowell

On the cannon's muzzle / a butterfly slowly fans / its yellow wings

Both seem simple, unostentatious statements of a single vision – but look what happens. 'Fans' is a colloquialism that Professor Yuasa might allow? – but is the butterfly now showing boredom at human stupidity? Or has it acquired the overtones of a gunslinger? Both implications are misleading, while the *'slowly opening and*

shutting' of the original gives a greatly augmented focus of attention and quiet insight. And if the 'haiku' is not that bad? – to unattuned ears it might seem that the butterfly has been crudely pinned out for inspection, having lost all of Amy Lowell's natural innocence.

Maybe I've not learned the 'correct' reading skills yet, but when I find an English haiku that successfully captures the ephemeral spark of its haiku-moment, it is usually fully (not sparsely) syntaxed. In *Haiku Anthology*, I find Mabson Southard's work a wonderful relief from the monotony of so many similar clipped dictions. Keiko Imaoka says that we must not become so concerned with form that we lose sight of the essence; for me, the formal structure – too closely observed – seems a straightjacket to clarity, style, individuality and variety. It is good to find Professor Yuasa not disapproving of a four-line English form (quoting incidentally an English four-liner that somehow translates into far fewer Japanese *onji*). I find it refreshing to have haiku-moments presented in my own language – by real people; my only rider here being that four-line forms should not become 'tankaesque' perhaps?

Walking down into afternoon sun –
The feeling of wanting
To commemorate every
Turning of the track .

Stephen Gill

— and the capitalization of lines, here, seems inappropriate?

How then 'should' we write? With industry and integrity, but also innovation and individuality. There's nothing prescriptive here – only provocations to thought. No advocations of total abstinence or wild invention – only suggestions to avoid indiscriminate excess and staleness. Haiku were surely always meant to be open texts, never vague or obscure; how else might they be shared? And likewise, the pathway of photographic anonymity leads nowhere – we are people, so let us, within tolerable limits, write as such. As for life itself, survival would seem dependent on maintaining a dynamic balance. I recommend – to those who don't know them – the browsing through Paul Muldoon's 90 *Hopewell Haiku*, published recently in his new collection: *Hay*. Strictly 5-7-5, and with consistent rhyme (subtly subdued by metric for the most part) – I pass no judgement as to their general haiku qualities (not all are exemplary). What Muldoon offers that's worthy of our thought, is a skilled variety of present-tense tone and content. All 90 can be read at one sitting with no ensuing dullness of the mental edge or 'inging' in the

ears. Likewise, James Kirkup's excellent book of 5-7-5 translations: *A Certain State of Mind*.

Within whatever format or adopted style, allowances are surely needed to accommodate modern vocabularies with their long words; while all those a's and the's etc. that do structurally pad out our language (more must never be excess), should not be shorn indiscriminately where they may clarify place, thing, or tone. As for rhythms, erudite analyses seem pointless for something as small as a haiku; one need only listen, with attention, to overall effect – the sound might paraphrase the sense perhaps? And the minimal is better found than sought – certainly not fashionably contrived. There are, after all, times when we want to say very little:

the rain /almost a friend / this funeral

Alan. J Summers

...and you 'know' if it works – you should!

The vogue of minimalism in haiku seems to have started in America, but do we not have ideas and voices of our own? There is something to be said for the elegant, well-cadenced 'breath of thought', but might this not as well be accommodated in a longer vehicle? The cultivation of a minimal style for itself alone does not seem in the 'spirit of haiku' somehow – quite apart from the Damoclean *Yes, but can he write?* Further, this 'brevity of utterance' thing is a Japanese (not a Western) aesthetic – why should we try to be what we are not?

The welcoming of constraints is (perhaps) at bottom the deepest secret of creativity [D.Hofstadter]. Yet constraints are never the end in themselves – only the means to that end. (They might be wisely used here, for example, to maintain haiku-tanka discrimination). Let's not forget our four-line poets and translators, nor the Hekigodos and Seisensuis of this world. Eliot was right: Il n'y a pas vraiment de vers libre – there are no free lunches; it has to be a case of Vorsprung durch Technik. Haiku ga yasashii to omottara oh – machigai desu.

Ah, Jayzus! And isn't Man's whole life one huge bloody constraint in which he struggles to perfect his tiny song. And isn't it the givin' up on it that's the sickness?

SUMMER

another scorcher
her sunflower reaches
the top of the wall

night heat —
our sun-striped bodies
left tangled

John Barlow

Nostradamus next month
— a field full of grasses.

Allan Jarrett

heat ...
the sloping wood
lies silent

high summer ... dungscent, & the twittering skylark

stalking ...
bubbles gather
round a heron's shin

Keith Coleman

a Bach fugue
hands separately
trying to make sense of
the rainy season

summer-night —
neon
non-attachment

Philip Rowland

The waymark
becomes a foxglove
nowhere

End of a summer's day
in the languid waves
sandcastles crumble

Ken Jones

Child on a bicycle
rides past the roses
again and again

Katherin Gallagher

wild bees —
the lion's stone mouth gaping
its little shade

Francis Attard

a walk on the shore
down towards the sea —
tiny open shells

Anita Packwood

O!
a haiku was born
just as I pulled out this weed

Yasuhiko Shigemoto

summer wind
and my garden's
raining roses

Jennifer Holland

Rain at Cwm Yoy the empty church
I listen to the swivel of old stones

Summer afternoon
one clap of thunder
surrounding silence

Opening my shed door —
out slides the smell of a cat

Arwyn Evans

Summer heat
The dry balding garden thirsts
Sweat on your soft down

Tim Acton

The lavender
smelling of
linen-cupboards

Grasshoppers
sawing away at
the scenery

Summer —
on the shore
the sea

Leo Lavery

Humid twilight
Venus all alone
over the rail-track

Steven Middleton

sunless summer —
sour taste of the blackberry
left on the hedge

Caroline Gourlay

seed pods crack
in the heat and overhead
a bird of prey

sun shower ...
the wedding proceeds
under large umbrellas

Giovanni Malito

the noontide heat —
standing at the bottom
of a hole I dug

Tsunehiko Hoshino

in the churchyard —
the daisies leaning
towards the sun

summer clouds —
two swans passing
beat for beat

a mosquito
caught in his hand —
gone!

summer solstice —
the sun reaches a new place
on the fridge

John Crook

yellow daisies
their heads through
the school railings

a line of surf
too far away
to hear it

warmth of the sun
a softer
silence

Alison Williams

highlighted
through the sunshine:
all my dusty rooms

a fishing
line
breaking the chain
of mountains

between the sun
and an approaching storm
standing so close

Joanna Ashwell

'HIDDEN' OR 'FOUND' HAIKU

Report by Colin Blundell

Five members took up the challenge to find haiku in others' writing:-

soldiers marching —
afterwards the road bare and white
except for leaves

(From the first paragraph of Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms. For me the 'ah-ness' is in the road appearing perfectly normal as though nothing of moment had happened. It even has a seasonal reference in the fallen leaves).

Jean Rasey

The house in the trees with the shady lawn

(Hardy: The House of Silence)

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls

(Hardy: The Convergence of the Twain)

Francis Attard

square mirror swings
throwing lozenges of sunlight
on smooth grey trunks

(Sunday Times Magazine 24th July 1999)

Felicity Brookesmith

old folk
keep each other company —
around the bandstand

with the children
and a hyperactive dog —
heading for the coast

insufferable heat —
midsummer
in the city

(Independent Wednesday Review 12/7/1999)

John Crook

Hidden Haiku from Adrian Henri — John Barlow

I first got into poetry through reading Adrian Henri and the Liverpool Poets when I was about 15, and soon after realised the only thing I wanted to be in life was a poet. Henri's own 'haiku' contain abundant similes, metaphors and use of the past tense, which is perhaps unsurprising as many were written in the early 1970's. Yet much of his prose is considerably haiku-like in spirit and occasionally his shorter lyric poems and verses read incredibly like many contemporary English tanka ...

Henri remains my favourite poet to this day. Beyond the immediacy, irreverence and wit of many of his earlier *Mersey Sound* pieces, his *Collected Poems* has a pervading sense of many of the qualities of Japanese poetry, especially *sabi*, (loneliness) and often the all-too-rare element of *makoto* (truthfulness).

Although there are numerous 'hidden' haiku and tanka to be found throughout Henri's work, to really appreciate the extent of these qualities the poems have to be read as they were written. For any haikuist serious about bridging the gap between mainstream poetry and haiku, I ... recommend reading ... the *Collected Poems* ... Despite the fact 'that most of the poems are autobiographical', his references to his environment often express his own reality without intrusion of the ego, and he is fully aware of the essence of haiku. In 'As if in a Dream' (*Penny Arcade* Jonathan Cape 1983) Henri refers to the smell of a gift of freesias as being 'a haiku left on my doorstep'. And as Carol Ann Duffy noted when reviewing his collection *Nor Fade Away* (Bloodaxe 1994) his poems 'speak with a direct simplicity'. The spirit of haiku?

city morning
dandelion seeds
blowing from wasteground

(Opening line of *The Entry of Christ into Liverpool*, *Penguin Modern Poets* 10)

fairground
closed for the winter
flat red sun

(from *Part Two, 1951-7*, 14 in *Autobiography*, *Jonathan Cape* 1971)

two lots of footprints / through the snow / to my room / both of them / mine
(*Poems for Wales* in *Collected Poems*, *Allison and Busby* 1986)

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 (any language) and the translation (English, French or German) The Pathway aims to link those writing in widely-spoken and less widely-spoken languages.

*Sayumi Kamakura — Editor of the Japanese haiku magazine Ginya (Ultra),
Japanese and Hiroaki Sato, English.*

Tainai no midori ni somaru made hirune

Daytime nap till the inside of my womb's dyed green

Saineria matsu to iukoto kirakirasu

Cineraria the act of waiting makes me glisten

Eda ni uwagi kakete nigatsu no kumo o yobu

jacket hung on a branch I call February clouds

Kagirinaku kami no nabikeru koto mo haru

My hair endlessly streaming out this is also spring

Fukazume no itami nimo nite mizu kōru

Resembling the pain of a nail cut too deep water freezes

Abusa daku shōjo no natsu no horonigashi

A girl hugging her breasts her summer faintly bitter

Dangai kara watashi no yume o nozokikomu

From a precipice I peer into my own dreams

Singing the Dance of the Atoms

Although I had been a reader of haiku for many years and sometimes expounder of the form in writing workshops, it was not until two challenges lurched at me about a decade ago that I began to be a haiku writer. Since then hardly a day passes without me jotting down in the bum-pocket notebook some note towards the expression of a 'haiku moment' — 'a choir sways downwind from the pub, tied and suited, in a cloud of aftershave', from yesterday evening — which I might hope, later, to knock into shape as a functioning haiku or senryu.

The first of these challenges was to judge with David Kerrigan, the Cardiff International Haiku Competition. Faced with a haiku mountain of over a thousand entries, we whittled the pile down to about a hundred which were worth serious consideration. En route we consigned to the reject pile efforts that read like alliterative newspaper headlines, sloganistic messages about drugs, dogs, religion and the fall of communism, whimsical generalised 'wisdoms', poetical Japanesey things full of 'myriad flowers' and 'russet foliage', and scores of five-seven-fivers whose authors seemed to be as bereft of notions about the function and feel of a true haiku as the competitor who hit us with the offering that was all of 38 lines long. Bludgeoned by so many non-haiku, it was hard but necessary for us to keep alert to those delicate and subtle constructions whose quieter voices were in danger of being lost in the general hubbub. Not particularly fussed about syllable counts, we were looking for resonance and transformation, rather than simple imagistic description. Of the many excellent haiku that made it difficult to decide on the winners, we found a mixture of the traditional, owing much to classical Japanese practices, and those which refracted the haiku form through the sensibilities of their author's own occidental literary cultures. Although I had been reading Bashō and the Japanese masters (in translation) for years, I had read contemporary haiku only in a scattered manner: it was a pleasure, judging this competition, to encounter the work of David Cobb, Jackie Hardy and Dee Evetts, whose collections I later sought out and derived, perhaps, certain permissions from.

The other challenge arrived one morning in the form of an official chit from Swansea City Council ordering 'six short poems on the cosmos' (no less) for the walls of the new Tower of the Ecliptic astronomical observatory. My knowledge of cosmology being shamefully inadequate, I embarked on a crash course of self-

education, hoping that some formal ideas might develop as my understanding grew. Voyaging outward to learn about the mighty forces of the cosmos — the stars and galaxies, black holes and quasars — will propel you sooner or later on a voyage within, to investigate inner space and the realm of the atom. Among my readings was Fritjof Capra's intriguing *The Tao of Physics* which dovetails the findings of Einsteinian physics with similar insights, reached much earlier and along very different paths, from oriental koans and poetry. Faced with the abolition of the concept of absolute space and time, and the unification of all matter in the cosmic dance of energy, the Cartesian dualities of my atheist's world view gave way, gratefully, to an appreciation of profound interconnections, and an understanding of the universe not as a series of objects, but as a complicated web of relations. All that once seemed solid — this table, that rock — melted into processes and dynamic patterns, the ceaseless transformation of all things and all situations. For twenty odd years I had felt the truth of, and tried to live my life by, William Blake's famous lines:

He who binds to himself a joy
Does the wingèd life destroy.
He who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sunrise.

Now that guiding intuition was reinforced by both western scientific enquiry and a philosophy discoverable in the art and wisdom of the east.

If to cling to fixed forms is to suffer and to kill, what are the consequences of this insight for the poet's, or the scientist's, observational practice? If the observer is as much part of nature as the thing he or she is observing, there can be no such thing as an objective, immutable reality capable of encapsulation and definition by a detached outsider. Fritjof Capra quotes John Wheeler on this: *Nothing is more important about the quantum principle than this, that it destroys the concept of the world as 'sitting out there', with the observer safely separated from it by a 20-centimetre slab of plate glass. Even to observe so miniscule an object as an electron, he must shatter the glass. He must reach in. He must install his chosen measuring equipment. It is up to him to decide whether he shall measure position or momentum. To install the equipment to measure the one prevents and excludes his installing the equipment to measure the other. Moreover, the measurement changes the state of the electron. The universe never afterwards will be the same. To describe what has happened, one has to cross out the old word 'observer' and put in its place the new word 'participator'.*

In this participatory universe the familiar, absolute distinction between subject and object must yield to a co-mingling of identities and interchange of energies, as Bashō acknowledged when he advised his disciple Hattori Toho to go to the pine if he wanted to learn about the pine and abandon his subjective preoccupation with himself: 'Your poetry issues of its own accord when you and the object become one ...' The haiku's famous avoidance of literary embellishment, its disinclination to foreground the writer and his or her writerly skills, ensures that there is no distraction from the 'spiderness' of the spider and the 'treeness' of the tree. The haiku maker wants us not to look *at* a thing, but to look *as* it.

The haiku, I thought for a while, could be the vehicle of my six short poems about the cosmos, but it didn't quite answer my requirements, and I chose eventually to adapt an older, Welsh three-line form known as the *englyn penfyr*. Although the haiku and the Welsh nature gnome have in common such features as concision, observational accuracy and a strict syllable count, they differ in important respects. The haiku is concerned with particular times and places and will have nothing to do with proverbial utterances, whereas the gnome is a sententious statement about universals. I wanted to mix some general observations about cosmological matters with comment on the human condition. The early Welsh nature gnome, representing perhaps the beginnings of science, combines the classification of natural phenomena, usually in the first two lines, with an aphoristic wisdom in the third; the form seemed ideal for my purposes.

My flirtation with the haiku was suspended for a while, but the form had become freshly congenial and important to me. I continued to read and be inspired by haiku, to research the haiku's nature and history, and to never let a haiku moment pass without taking rough note. Soon after completing the cosmic gnomes this reader of haiku started to become a writer of them.

For all its apparent simplicity, the haiku, it seems to me, is a much more subtle, if not more complex form than is often allowed, and it is widely misunderstood. In spite of its brevity, it is at revolutionary odds with our superficial sound-bite culture, insisting on patient attention to the mystery, minutiae and essence of life, finding in the little things that we ruthlessly edit from our hurried existences, the very savour of our being. The pared down suggestiveness of its language makes it a wonderfully collaborative form in which the current between the haikuist's words and the reader is completed only by the reader's imagination — or, as Bill Wyatt said in an article I read many years ago, the haiku provides the fire with its wood, the reader brings the match.

I think a good haiku can be enjoyed by any reader, even without benefit of background knowledge, but there's no doubt, as with any art, that some understanding of the haiku's purpose and ways of working will greatly enrich one's experience of the form. Too often, when visiting schools, I am shown whole walls full of what the head teacher has been pleased to call haiku, and when I doubt that any of these obedient five-seven-fivers are haiku, in anything other than the straightjacket they are wearing, I am met with puzzlement and raised eyebrows. This simple yet demanding form is not the easy introduction to poetry writing that many syllable-counting teachers seem to think it is, and few leave school knowing the first thing about it. When we took David Cobb to the BBC studios in Cardiff after he'd won the Cardiff International Haiku Competition, there was a moment's awkward silence after he'd read his winning entry, broken only when the interviewer asked 'Is that all?' We seem to need lashings of salt and monosodium glutamate with everything, and are ill-prepared for the subtle flavours of this delicate dish from the east. Give it time, give it space. I'm inclined to advise on such occasions, feel the atoms dancing and the universe altering around you.

Since the early 1970s Nigel Jenkins has been a strong and individual voice among Anglo-Welsh poets. His Selected Poems (Gomer Press) was published in 1990 and his most recent book, Ambush (Gomer) appeared in 1998.

Museum of Haiku Literature Award

Matthew Paul has chosen Frank Dullaghan's

helicopter —
poets glance at the ceiling

Only six words, but what a marvelous haiku/senryu! Simplicity and deprecatory humour combine in a child-like, collective reaction to an unseen machine: a curious contingency, deftly and beautifully expressed.

HAIBUN

Check Out

Fred Schofield

Alongside the allotments between the busy Old Lane and Beeston Co-op. A large area with three or four older men walking around their plots, carrying tools and plants, digging, weeding. A bright day, but still a chilly breeze. Quietness here is bordered on one side by local traffic and on the other by the constant drone of the M621 a mile or so away.

From the broad-leaved bush the song of house-sparrows. In the path two old acquaintances chat — a man and a woman. They're talking about people they know or knew. She has a small brown and white dog on a lead, sniffing grass. 'Yes,' she says to the man. 'Stop eating grass', she says to the dog. 'Do him good', says the man. 'Vitamins.'

At the Co-op bottle bank a Fiat Brava drives up aggressively. A young man gets out leaving the engine running; he jettisons bottles into the variously-coloured bins while a girl waits in the car.

In the store itself a 60s compilation is playing — original tracks, not the insipid sing-along-to-the-constant-clap you often get. Fresh-looking apples, pears, kiwis and melons — unusual for a Sunday in this shop where the idea of sabbath trading still almost feels anachronistic.

The girl at the only open checkout is young and wearing bland makeup. She doesn't seem relaxed enough to chat, which is strange in the Co-op. I'm slightly consoled by the Kinks' Waterloo Sunset. I consider buying a lottery ticket and illogically dismiss it on the grounds that I'll be abroad when the results are announced.

supermarket door —
leaving behind
the unresolved phrase
of an old song

REVIEWS

Tadpoles — Haiku by British School Children — Edited by David Cobb. Pub. British Haiku Society, 1999. ISBN 0 9522397 3 6. £4.00

Usually when I encourage adults to write haiku, I feel I am inviting them to experience their surroundings with the surprise and wonder of children. Once, when trying to explain haiku as a way of life to a young person on the threshold of adulthood, he said, 'you mean it's like picking your nose'. It's all here in this book, with the young contributors reminding us that haiku writing is rooted firmly in the every day, celebrating a range of experiences from 'the sublime to the ridiculous'. Alex Killick, ages 9, gives us wonder:

On a winter's night
little snowflakes keep falling
on my backyard fence

Sean Furse, 10, gives us fascination with the hygienically dubious:

National nit day
someone's hair is full of nits
I'm glad it's not mine.

Faye Knights, 12, reinvokes many a vivid moment from most of our childhoods:

Mrs. Rankin
walking around the room
looking at our work.

Was this haiku-writing work, I wonder. Any of us adults have haphazardly discovered haiku, regaining childlike perception in the process. Most of the children represented here have been systematically taught haiku, learning to become self-conscious about their spontaneity.

Haiku are so cool
we have to do them at school,
it is a school rule.

Jaimin Thakrar, 11

According to the Foreward, some of the 800 haiku submitted came in A-, B+ etc., but the writers of the 100 shared here have avoided the trap of trying to please the teacher and offered perceptions sometimes unpretentiously matter-of-fact and vivid and uninhibited by a ban on metaphor:

My orange cat
brought me a present.
A broken bird.

Claire Andrade, 6

Each blade of grass
standing to attention
with a uniform of sparkling frost

Emma Jones, 11

As a teacher comments on the back cover, 'The great thing about haiku is that it can be used across a wide ability range'. I guess this is because, as David Cobb says in his Foreword, 'It depends on awareness, on seeing things as they are and a vivid retention of experience'.

Diana Webb

The Haiku Anthology by Cor van den Heuvel (expanded third edition). Norton, New York. 1999. 363 pp. hardback, US\$27.50. ISBN 0-393-04743-1.

'This magnificent anthology ... destined to become a milestone in contemporary books ... belongs in the library of every haiku enthusiast.' So said the reviewer of the First Edition way back in 1974, and the passage of time has done nothing to dim its reputation. The number of haiku has increased with each new edition: about five hundred in 1974, over seven hundred in 1986, about eight hundred and fifty in 1999.

'I have a previous edition, is it worth getting the new one?' Yes, because about half the poems are new to this edition. Twenty-three poets in the Second Edition have gone, forty-three of the eighty-nine writers in the Third Edition are included for the first time (these include such outstanding writers as Tom Clausen, Dee Evetts, Lee Gurga, Doris Heitmeyer, Christopher Herold, Jim Kacian, Jane Reichold, Vincent Tripi, Michael Dylan Welch). N.B., with only one exception I can find, all the writers are from North America, but the writer mentions the existence of *The Book of British Haiku* in his bibliography.

To the excellent Forewords of the earlier editions is added a third which usefully appraises some of the leading contributors. After all these years, van den Heuvel is able to provide fresh insights. One I must quote:

When I first read Alan Watt's characterization of haiku as 'the wordless poem,' I thought it was because haiku had so few words, but now I believe it goes deeper than that ... Haiku, for the reader, is wordless because those few words are invisible. We as readers look right through them. There is nothing between us and the moment.

Women's Haiku: a Compendium Ed. by Hiroaki Sato. Pub. Rippu-shobo, Tokyo. 1999.

There are certain books that are sufficiently as well as best reviewed simply by quoting their contents, Readers may then judge for themselves whether these books are for them. Hiroaki Sato has an outstanding reputation as poet, academic and translator, so I must assume that the following are as near to the originals in sound, feeling and meaning as anyone can achieve, as well as being representative of the writing of the more experimental women haiku poets in Japan. (In the book they appear also in the Kanji).

Short night shall I toss away my child crying for milk *Shizunojo TAKESHITA (1887-1951)*

A woman stands alone ready to cross the galaxy *Takajo MITSUHASHI (1899-1972)*

In my mouth a limb of a thrush makes an echo *Keiko SHIMIZU (1911-)*

No direction no time no distance the desert day breaks *Kiyoko TSUDA (1920-)*

Winter full moon in the midst of my own smell I sleep *Kyoko TERADA (1922-1976)*

The flesh called tongue twists around the white peach flesh *Aiko KUMAGI (1923-)*

The birth cry between my thighs stretches into budding-tree darkness *Mikajo YAGI (1924-)*

Trying to escape its own fire a firefly flies *Mizue YAMADA (1926-)*

A white magnolia has emerged without a stitch *Sayumi KAMAKURA (1953-)*

David Cobb

The Sound of Rain by Brian Tasker. The Annexe, Blythe House, 65, Nunney Rd.,
Frome BA11 4LE £4.00 ppd.

For those of us who read a great many haiku there has to be something special in a chapbook to keep us turning the pages, even one as short as this. Brian Tasker's haiku do indeed hold the attention with their combination of irony (which gives a delicious twist to what would otherwise be quite a commonplace observation) and tenderness —

the retired gardener
his balcony filled
with plastic flowers

There are 24 haiku in this attractive handmade book. Each is interesting for the glimpse it gives, almost diary-like, of one person's daily life; between these covers is the ordinariness that makes up most of our lives, peppered with (often self-deprecatory) a wry humour that brings out the pleasantly idiosyncratic flavour of this particular one.

post coital bliss
at last
I can free my arm

in the midst
of my depression —
the smell of a baked potato

One or two of the haiku I read metaphorically— *sleepless night ... / flickering lightning / but no thunder*. How many times has any one of us lain awake at night, counting to measure how far away the storm is — waiting after the lightning in expectation of thunder that never happens? a reflection, perhaps, of disturbance at a deeper level, when sometimes we are kept awake in the small hours by the kind of nebulous anxiety that often assaults us at the darkest point of night.

With very few exceptions Brian Tasker is as spare with words as possible without dumbing-down to minimalism. I am not convinced by the single-line haiku unless there is a good reason for it and have the impression that *seeking attention the therapist's cat* has been written in one line only because it could not really be written any other way. This is not because its sense demands the one-line treatment, but because it is a statement rather than a haiku, albeit an amusing one. On the other hand *drifting into our lovemaking the sound of rain* and the intriguing and disquieting *pale without her tan autumn deepens* both work well as one-liners.

There! I've given you a quarter of the haiku in the book; but don't let that be a reason for not buying it; it's good.

after an argument
on the future of haiku —
the wind in the pines

Caroline Gourlay

gripping the perch by Geoffrey Daniel. Snapshot Press. 56pp, perfect-bound. ISBN 0 9526773 1 8 £4.00 (+50p p&p).

This handsomely-produced and impressive collection, which won the 1998 Snapshot Collection Competition, may not be ideal for the reader who wants to be cosseted in a cosily reassuring world of dreamy landscapes and uplifting thoughts. However, for the rest of us, we can be assured of being stimulated, challenged, sometimes dazzled — and certainly never at risk of being bored.

The writing has the stamp of authority which marks the work of a poet clearly in control of his material. There are no frayed edges, as it were, no slack. It is all tightly knit, every line and every word taking its rightful place in achieving the desired result —

in between showers
beginning again
the patient settling of mud

The ultra-pernickety might be tempted to quibble over the use of 'patient' for introducing an anthropomorphic element into a seemingly unremarkable natural event. However, this would simply show a failure to recognise that it is precisely here, in the use of that adverb, that the 'magic' of the poem lies; it adds another dimension which enables the haiku to reach out and touch us in a human way that would otherwise hardly be possible.

This book well repays returning to again and again. Pieces which might appear little more than quite pleasing at the initial reading can later start revealing unexpected depths. One or two are somewhat enigmatic, while others intrigue because of a vaguely mysterious, slightly disturbing quality. We wonder exactly what has been left unstated as our imagination moves in to start wandering through the empty spaces —

at the airport he leaves her
that one word hanging
unpronounceably

evening surf —
my children out there riding it
me laughing, and laughing

It's that comma in the last line that unsettles us; it makes us stop, ask questions and, perhaps, even want answers.

Although manipulating words and honing phrases with great skill, Geoffrey Daniel is more than just a first-rate craftsman. Only a poet could have composed —

fog by night
 voices of the greylag
 clearly heading
somewhere

On a lighter note, he can use a quirky wit to enliven an unlikely scene or evoke a moment of sunny insouciance —

forty-two lines
from one telegraph pole;
not enough birds to go round

letting the dog out —
what shall we do
this first of spring?

His imagery can be powerfully vivid and arresting —

where sleeve
meets glove —
bangle on the bone

under my touch
however gentle
your nipples bunch into fists

And he can wonderfully capture atmosphere—

bedroom door shifting —
from elsewhere in the house
complications of air

a bitter rain —
two silences
 beneath
the one umbrella

With 72 haiku and six tanka, this attractive little book can be thoroughly recommended as a 'good buy'.

Maurice Tasnier



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