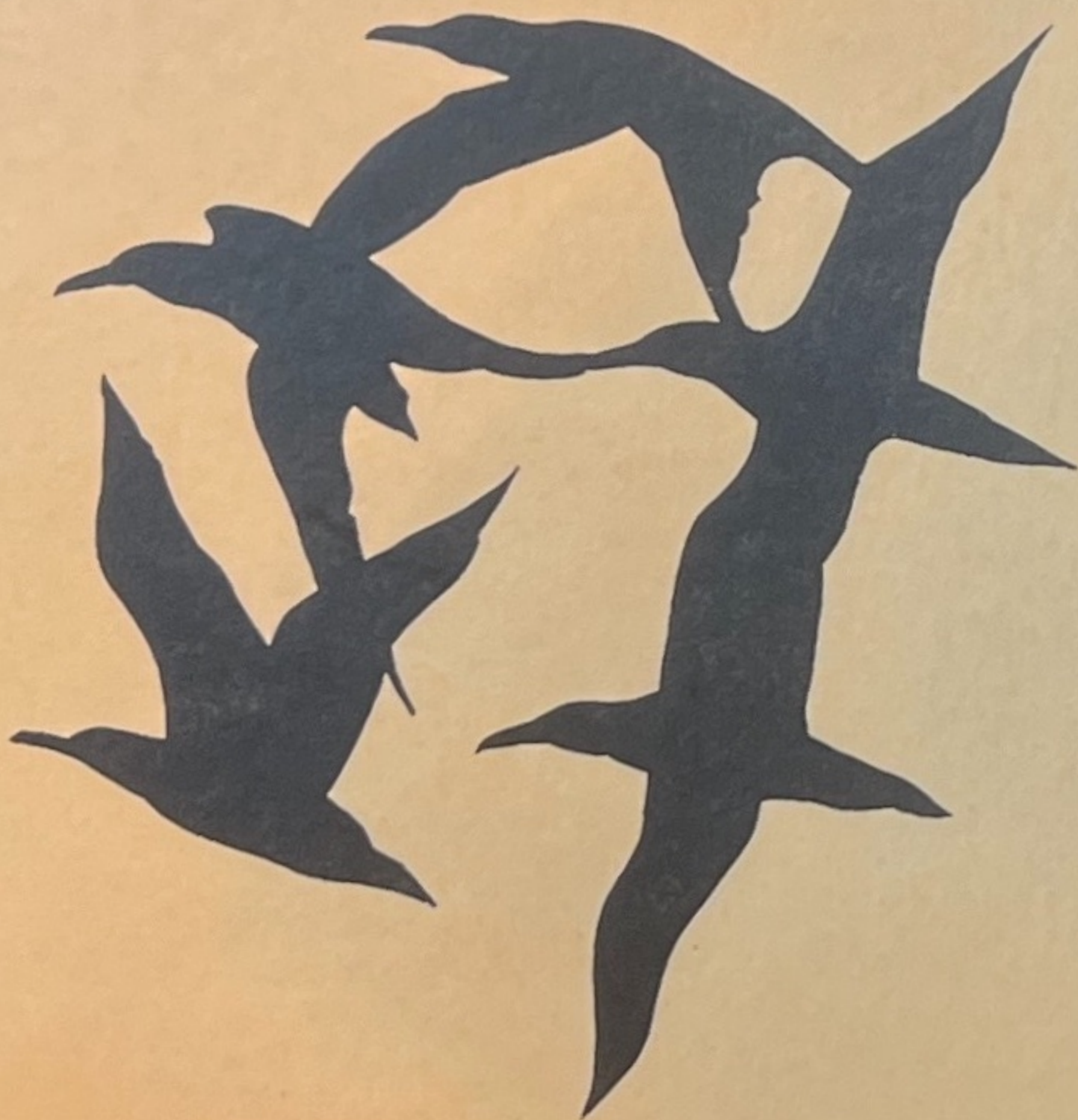


**Journal of  
The British Haiku Society**

Blithe Spirit



**Volume 9 Number 4**

**December 1999**

# Journal of the British Haiku Society

## 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 under consideration elsewhere. Please provide publication details of any item submitted which has already appeared in print. 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 do not necessarily reflect her own. **Blithe Spirit** is published four times a year, March, June, September and December.

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<i>Cover design by David Walker</i>		

## EDITORIAL

My thanks to Colin Blundell for taking over the editor's chair for the last issue which presented the work and views of so many members. It has been a great pleasure to read haiku in *Blithe Spirit* without having had to judge them.

I was interested to see the section on renga (or renku) in the recent *Haiku Spirit* and the reservations expressed by Jim Norton, Sean O'Connor and others about this form. I have long felt uneasy about the adoption of renga by Western writers, for while haiku, tanka and their respective sequences have antecedents in Western literature enabling them successfully to be absorbed into our poetic culture, renga has not. Its concept is alien to our tradition which requires poems to have a single vision that draws together and makes poetic sense of the whole. My impression is that there are many who feel that however clever, diverse and well-juxtaposed renga images may be, texture alone is not enough — that for a poem to satisfy, some resolution of a core theme is necessary. While recognising that participation in the writing of a renga can be a form of bonding and is undoubtedly rewarding and enjoyable for those involved, I question whether it belongs in the realms of literature and whether the final result is particularly interesting for those who later come to read it. *Blithe Spirit* occasionally includes renga in the belief that some do enjoy them, but I sometimes wonder how many of those not involved in the writing read them to the end and would welcome your opinions on this most Japanese of forms.

The Millenium is upon us, but no doubt the vast majority of *Blithe Spirit* readers woke on January 1st to find that nothing had changed, even to the hangover. One thing that I hope will change in 2000 is the name of this journal. With the increasing interest in English-language haiku — now at least 5 haiku magazines as well as the proliferation of haiku information on the Internet — it is only a matter of time before someone starts a magazine called *The Haiku Review* and I would like it to be us. Not a very exciting title you may think, but it has authority and tells you what it's about. If another editor or haiku group did bring out a journal with this name, I feel our *Blithe Spirit*, with its Noel Coward associations — stronger, I believe, than the Shelley link — would sound lightweight beside it. Association in the mind of the reader is important and *Review* indicates an overall knowledge of its subject as well as a net cast widely, but not indiscriminately, for material. *Haiku Link* is another possible, also having the advantage of the word *haiku* in the title. Please don't send in ideas for other alternatives, but let me know if you feel that either of these would be a change for the better and state which one. Any subsequent committee decision will be based on your response.

There is much to look forward to in 2000 with the BHS National Conference in April and Susumu Takiguchi's *Haiku 2000* in August. Also the September issue of *BS* (10/3), which will be a Haibun Special, guest-edited by Ken Jones and David Cobb. Their objective will be to present a selection that demonstrates the range and quality of haibun. This will serve as a benchmark volume on which discussion both of the form and the characteristics that contribute to a successful piece of writing can be based. We are looking principally for original English haibun, but articles on the theory of haibun will be considered. They may be of any reasonable length, either of the 'single episode' type (just a paragraph or two) or of the more extended kind, which includes journals narrating a series of episodes. Preference will be for new work, but previous publication is not an absolute bar. Send 2 copies, please, of your submissions, to: Ken Jones, Plas Plwca, Cwmrheidol, Aberystwyth, Wales SY23 3NB and also, if possible, on disk —*DOS ASCII*. There is no limit to the number of submissions you may send (with sae or IRC) and the deadline for them is May 31st.

I'm afraid about half a dozen copies of the last issue of *Blithe Spirit* had bad printing scars, please let me know if yours was one of them and I will send you a fair copy. The deadline for the next issue will be the end of the first week in February; and the season *winter*.

Caroline Gourlay

## Errata

Wandering the supermarket aisles  
the diagnosis

sinks in

Ken Jones

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

Diana Webb

p45 *The Pathway*: the name of the magazine is *Ginyu* (not *Ginya*) and the penultimate poem should begin *Chibusa*, not *Abusa*.

p53 the editors of *Women's Haiku: a Compendium* (unbeknown to us at the time) are Kiyoko Uda and Momoko Kuroda. Hiroaki Sato subsequently made a selection from the material they had edited and translated.

# HAIKU

## Heather Kirk

sipping last sunshine  
at the wayside cafe  
autumn butterfly

Christmas gift?  
grey sky unwrapping  
a silver ball

## Lee Gurga

in the same room  
but not feeling what you feel —  
summer breeze

## David Brady

watching the hillside —  
white dots slowly rearrange  
their grazing

they sail on by  
then on the jetty  
boat's wake slaps

## Jane Whittle

summer storm —  
wild garlic underfoot  
flavouring the rain

I take shelter  
as the sky comes down —  
falling through the trees

if I were a cat  
I could sit on your crossword  
with my back to you

## eric l. houck jr.

under the  
whittler's knife  
a cat stretches

looking up at the geese  
silently passing  
deaf boy

an old lasso  
the palm of his hand  
worn smooth

icicles in long silver needles  
rabbit tracks  
stitching the snow

on death row  
folding another  
paper crane

### **Andrew Detheridge**

harsh scrape of a shovel —  
the snow drift up to the edge  
of the tree lights

### **Ross Figgins**

dented trumpet —  
one clearly aimed note  
pawn shop window

### **Steve Dolphy**

a midnight snack  
opening the fridge door  
to find a slice of light

in an antique sweet-shop  
tasting childhood again  
such memorable bites

### **Eric Speight**

Old Jezebel  
lights a fag, eye and voice  
roaming the caff



**Steve Mason**

A bombed-out school —  
the child soldier scratches his back  
with a rifle.

A crow lands  
the man with Down's Syndrome  
bursts into laughter.

**A A Marcoff**

old tree stump  
cobwebbed  
in light

**Diana Webb**

fine rain on the cliffs  
cobwebs highlighted  
with scent of the sea

after the eclipse —  
gurgle of water  
in the drain again

lamplight on the bridge  
heron  
extends its neck

**Leslie Giddens**

walking boots  
outside retreat-house  
pointing inwards

**Gary Hotham**

the long part of the trip —  
sky becomes  
more sky

snow buried snow —  
the mountain lasting longer  
than the wind

the snowstorm arrives —  
the hush among the pedestrians  
on the town's streets

in the airport lounge —  
the spilled coffee  
left to dry by itself

**Leo Lavery**

Hiroshima  
another anniversary  
not a cloud in the sky

P.A. Williams

walk to the bus stop  
passing a street lamp  
overtaken by my shadow

on the bathroom scales  
footprints in dust  
weighing nothing

rushing to the shops  
the wind in my carrier bag  
slows me down

on the stairs  
a loud purr  
the cat's tail counts the railings

Munch's "The Scream"  
hidden  
under a cushion

Colin Maxwell-Charters

my blind uncle —  
one sideburn  
always longer

pecked to death —  
my compassion touches  
the fallen chick

how courteous  
the tramp's greeting — lost on a  
modern road

**AGAINST THE TIDE:  
Antecedents of the Haiku in English Literature**

**Geoffrey Daniel**

If you happened to strike up a conversation with a stranger on the Clapham omnibus, you might well get round to the subject of English poetry. And if you were to ask for a sample of what constituted typical English poetry, you'd likely get something of the following from Shelley: 1

Hail to thee, blithe spirit !  
Bird thou never wert,  
That from heaven, or near it,  
pourest thy full heart  
in profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

[and another 20 such verses].

It is unlikely, however, that you would be offered Soshi Chihara's 2

I catch  
my kid come running  
skylark field

I am, of course, demonstrating the obvious – these poetries are poles apart in many significant features: their length, their construction, their diction and their tone at the very least. Moreover, their spirit is importantly different: Shelley, using the bird as a symbol of inspiration, transforms the creature itself into human terms, ascribing to it "rapture... love... joyance... gladness"; it is "an unbodied joy" .... "like a poet hidden/ in the light of thought"; and a device by which to measure Man's lot. Chihara, on the other hand, simply offers the facts to speak for themselves, and appeal to associations in the reader's mind. He furthermore celebrates a relationship and a moment of humanity, set in a context of birds and field that we can detail for ourselves – man and nature intermingled, but autonomous, of a value each within itself.

What is the point then, you might ask, of the present investigation suggested by the title: the relationship of modern haiku to what has gone before in English poetry? I suggest that if tradition matters, and if a nation has a demonstrable predilection for certain kinds of art, then we may be able to predict the chances for the future of any

particular kind of imported form. However, if traditionally English poetry is found to be completely at odds with the spirit and form of haiku, we may see no point in trying further to evangelise. [And there may be no further point in a British Haiku Society, for example...]

I take the spirit of haiku to be simplicity, a focused and tangential vision couched in deliberately commonplace language, accessible to all readers and listeners, appealing to their experience of man and nature. It deals with the stuff of the senses. It is precise and capable of dealing with all subjects. It is meditative and non-judgemental.

Certainly, the first 1000 years of English poetry show little congruence with these points. In general, early English art was something done by expert practitioners to a passive audience; initially oral and communal, later a solitary book-readership. Poets were separate beings; poetry was not something that ordinary people could do. They were guides, working in a heightened diction and with superior insights, developing their ideas in full, with cunning and musical crafts, working to established patterns and traditions. [Even as succeeding centuries brought in foreign influences, these were assimilated and became part of the tradition: the Italian sonnet became the Shakespearean, for example.] Their work stretched understanding and language to the limits, but it was only accessible to a cultured minority, those who didn't have to labour for their bread and for whom ballads, bread and circuses were the limit.

Traditionally, the subjects of art were also limited to what was appropriate: the great themes of love, death, religion and the heroism of myth and legend. The religion of that first millennium after literacy is an instructive example to consider. As it was for poetry, spirituality was for specialists, the priest behind the altar ministering to the masses in rituals unchanged over centuries. [Innovation was not to be encouraged: that was the path to heresy.] At best, Nature was decorative, an embroidered or symbolic backdrop to the more important concerns of Man; at worst it was to be feared and controlled, red in tooth and claw and part of that unholy trinity "the world, the flesh and the devil". The senses, by definition, were evil, as were all material things that did not lead away from themselves to a contemplation of higher heavenly things. Compare haiku?

It is always possible to find oddities, however, moments and poets who have more in common with the haiku approach [although whether this is by chance or design is a moot point]. Andrew Marvell had the closest and earliest to what might be a haiku

moment in his "Thoughts in a Garden" and his mind "Annihilating all that's made / To a green thought in a green shade". However, this startling image is of course merely one part of an argument, carefully connected, not the central image. In common with the other Metaphysicals, what seems to be a genuine interest in things for their own sake [Bashō "learn of the bamboo from the bamboo" etc] is more likely an intensive use of extended metaphor and symbolism. Donne's "The Flea" for example I would take to be no more than a clever idea; certainly, real fleas did bite people in those days, and blood could be intermingled. But this is squarely in the tradition of a "conceit", merely a witty extension of metaphor that provides the basis for some argument. He actually gives us nothing of the thing itself, no real description: the idea and argument are what really matter.

Continuing my [admittedly sweeping] over-simplification - into the eighteenth century, Pope and Dryden took English poetry to its most mannered and polished versification. Satire and the rhyming couplet carried the tone of the Age: a smart, sneering artifice in which Nature was merely pastoral and Man was his manners [skim Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" for the ultimate in this vein]. It is not until the Romantics in the late Eighteenth century that we find a serious break with the tendencies and traditions I have been describing. The leaders of the revolution [not unrelated to the political events of the time] were Coleridge and Wordsworth, with Shelley, Byron and later Keats, in revolt against what had been unfolding in this age of Classicism.

Wordsworth has been too well examined elsewhere to need much analysis here. Suffice it to say, he made great claims for the primacy of everyday speech over poetic diction; and for the centrality of both humble subjects and natural things. Moreover, "The Prelude" gives us some of what I take to be the first fully realised references to what could be haiku moments, what Wordsworth referred to as "spots of time", formative moments of realisation that shape the spiritual nature of a person<sup>3</sup>, although in his usage they were as much moralistic as anything. Other Romantics could handle moments of intensity, too: Keats' stout Cortez, "motionless on a peak in Darien"<sup>4</sup>; Shelley gave us in Ozymandias a snapshot of man's puny arrogance against the scale of nature's indifference<sup>5</sup>. But in the end, Romanticism went down the traditional way, moralising, intellectualising, drawing it out, wallowing in self-referential emotion. The old battle cry of accessibility through "a selection of language really used by men"<sup>6</sup> became lost.

Through the nineteenth century, poetry ran as traditional as ever: Tennyson ruled the waves, despite what Blake had given us in simplicity. John Clare is much

vaunted as one of the first pure and haiku-like Victorians, with his rustic descriptions. I'm afraid I find him generally inconsequential and the producer of what is frequently unilluminating doggerel. Those who were moving closer in spirit to what haiku find in the world were the prose writer Richard Jefferies, who with his "It is eternity now" <sup>7</sup> managed to define perfectly the haiku moment; and Browning who approached it in "Two in the Campagna" – finding that moment of suspension between two people in love.

Whilst the lonely voice of Gerard Manley Hopkins was opening up new possibilities at the end of the century, Ezra Pound characterised "the common verse in Britain from 1890 [as] a horrible agglomerate compost... a doughy mess of third hand Keats, Wordsworth, heaven knows what, fourth hand Elizabethan sonority blunted, half-melted, lumpy" <sup>8</sup>. In other words – the English tradition at its fullest and worst. However, into this new century also came new influences, particularly the French *symbolistes* who had themselves begun to discover short Japanese poems. Thus it was the haiku first made its appearance in the Edwardian years before the First World War. T S Eliot was beginning to write in a way which would change English poetry for ever. His free verse and symbolism take us closer to the possibilities of haiku literature: away from the constraints of consistent rhyme and meter; from the extensive and traditional patterning; from the poetic diction of *doths* and *haths* to the language of the city, the *demimondes* and the pub. The image, the symbol became central, rather than merely metaphorical colour; this was the "*objective correlative*" he took into the wasteland.

A group of writers formed in the years just before the First War who took this idea of the image to the heart of their writing. Known as "Imagists", they based their ideas upon the theories of T E Hulme and Pound among others. Hulme was writing from the desire "to produce the peculiar quality of feeling which is induced by the flat spaces and wide horizons of the virgin prairie of western Canada" – a response many haiku writers would recognise; his inspiration had come through philosophers such as Bergson and Schopenhauer, who had recommended " [the man who] gives the whole power of his mind to perception... the quiet contemplation of the natural object actually present, whether a landscape, a tree, a mountain, a building, or whatever it may be, inasmuch as he loses himself in this object."

In 1908 Pound defined the image as the "intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" and declared his aim "to paint the thing as I see it". He looked for "absolutely accurate presentation and no verbiage" and "a fine language, departing in no way from speech save by a heightened intensity [i.e. simplicity]". Later he

wrote "Use no superfluous word....go in fear of abstractions" and "language is made out of concrete things. General expressions in non-concrete terms are a laziness." Others like Ford Madox Ford agreed that "poetic ideas are best expressed by the rendering of concrete objects"; F S Flint counselled "direct treatment of the thing" and "to use absolutely no word that did not contribute".

At its best, the movement produced poems like Pound's "In a Station of the Metro"

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
Petals on a wet, black bough

or HD's poem on Hermes that begins "The hard sand breaks / and the grains of it / are clear as wine" However, theory was one thing; the practice was in many cases very different from both what Pound was doing and what they all claimed to be at. John Gould Fletcher could begin a poem on "Dawn" with "Above the east horizon / the great red flower of the dawn / Opens slowly, petal by petal." And Aldington produces "Like a gondola of green-scented fruits / Drifting along the dark canals of Venice, / You, O exquisite one, / have entered my desolate city." In the end it is perhaps not surprising that the movement folded: too many different points of view; too many inferior poets, also.

And perhaps, too, what I have been arguing throughout: the English tradition reasserted itself. Fletcher himself wrote about his contemporaries, "their attempt has not been altogether successful... intense and concise grasp of substance is not enough; the ear instinctively demands that this bare skeleton be clothed fittingly with all the beautiful and subtle orchestral qualities of assonance, alliteration, rhyme and return". Later he noted "It was the fault of Imagism never to let its devotees draw clear conclusions about life... [it led] its disciples too often into a barren aestheticism which was and is empty of content... poetry merely descriptive of nature as such, however vivid, no longer seems to me enough; there has to be added to it the human judgement, the human evaluation." Added to this moralising function, the need for complexity and narrative remained. In particular, the horrors of the First World War demanded space for their complete depiction, and for the voicing of the emotion and judgements that naturally arose from their experience. The inter-war years saw a growth in polemic, too: Auden arrived, political awareness was heightened and the arts became the vehicle of analysis and protest. Writers needed other tools for the job than minimalism, to explain, to persuade, to make sense of a brave new world. The earlier fascination with image had been subsumed into the flow; its greatest legacy was concision and ellipsis.



Which brings me back to my opening hypothesis: Imagism was English poetry's chance to assimilate the haiku and make it work. Ultimately, it didn't. The conclusion may be then that the English are just not suited to this kind of writing, and therefore it has little future. However, since the Second World War a great deal has happened to weight the scales back in favour of poetry like haiku, and I think it actually stands a better chance of acceptability than ever before. The reasons for this are complex, and by no means all to be applauded.

Firstly, tradition of all kinds is now under attack; after a century of free verse, free love and the inalienable freedom of the individual, there is scant respect for anything simply on grounds of its tradition. If it doesn't appeal, it's out, whether it's politics or literature. Furthermore, moralising is out too, as the hold of the once Established Church on national consciousness diminishes, and morality becomes regarded as a merely private affair. In its place is a meditative and often undirected "New Age" spirituality that has naturally made use of haiku-like material for its inspiration. If there is a new religion and morality to replace the old, it is perhaps "eco"-centred: saving the world has a very different connotation now from what Tennyson would have understood. With it comes a new veneration for Nature, especially given the huge eco-industry that revolves around it, not to mention the Green politics. Furthermore, the *here and now* has the ascendancy: what is tangible counts for as much as anything these days. This is related to an increasing stress on the physical and sensual: people are encouraged to focus on their senses, in a self-centred way. Poetry therefore that is based squarely on the things of the living world and on sensual experience has great attractions.

Aiding the spiritual revolution has been the influx of exotic influence, one result of the greater global communications revolution, supported more recently by the Internet. [Notable, too, the rise of web-based haiku sites: the relative simplicity of composing haiku on-line is encouraged by the interactive nature of these sites, almost like chat sites – almost indeed like the first renga events.] The increasing and rapid exposure to other cultures through travel, education and immigration has relegated what was the mainstream English tradition to merely one among a number of possibilities. Related to this is one result of the growing pluralism of British society: the centuries of English literary tradition are considerably harder for non-native speakers to cope with, whereas a poetry that requires simplicity, directness and shortness will find a grateful audience.

There are more seriously regrettable reasons for the popularity of minimalist writing these days. I mean in particular the growing unwillingness [or inability?] of the

educational establishment to require serious study of pre-20th literature, or indeed of any really challenging material for those other than specialist students. This dumbing down of British culture, the ascendancy of the sound bite, has ensured that little early poetry will be offered as a model. The haiku, however, offers an instant fix. It is like the recorder, that instrument of a thousand Primary school music lessons: anyone can get a tune out of it in seconds; whereas a flute takes for ever. So, too, if a child has words and wit enough to make three lines, there will be some teacher to tell her how good a haiku it is. Read any school anthology. Remember your childhood music lessons...

Yes, for better or worse – whatever antecedents haiku might have had, however unpropitious the signs have been - conditions are more right for them now than ever. It has not been easy: the haiku came into this century as an alien form, too short, too unmusical, too amoral; generations of readers and writers before us would have snorted in derision at the claims of the haikuist to be taken seriously; many still do. However, it has been adopted with passion by enough of us to get it a passing mention in the National Curriculum, even while the prescribed lists of Great Writers are being deregulated. We're not there yet, however: Cobb didn't make it to Poet Laureate this time; Gourlay will not be in the Poetry Chair at Oxford, either. And we may well have to accost quite a few more strangers on the Clapham omnibus before we hear any of the BHS membership quoted as a "typical English poet".

## NOTES

- 1 "Ode to a Skylark" P B Shelley
- 2 "Haiku World" Kodansha 1996 ed. Higginson p.71
- 3 "The Two Part Prelude Wordsworth" CUP 1985 [see Part One 1.288 – 374]
- 4 "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" J Keats
- 5 "Ozymandias" P B Shelley
- 6 Preface to "Lyrical Ballads" 1798 W Wordsworth
- 7 "The Story of My Heart" Richard Jefferies, Longman 1883
- 8 for this and all subsequent references to Imagism see "Imagist Poetry" ed. Peter Jones, Penguin 1972
- 9 I am indebted to Colin Blundell for sowing the seeds of this idea.

*This article is based on a talk given at the BHS AGM at Daiwa House [28/11/98]*

**L.M.Hussenbux**

lovers concentrate —  
cool breezes agitate bamboo  
disentangle limbs

**Graham High**

Dry-beached winkle shell:  
little skull with vivid black eye  
— the oyster catcher.

Rain contains the room.  
The well fills; the gourd swells.  
Fingers drum the womb.

Night-lit feast of meat.  
On the turning spit of sky  
huge hills are rolling.

Brief life of breath.  
Cloud on the jagged mirror.  
Red bloom in the hand.

They compare beauties,  
both smiling, the picked flower  
and the bloom not cut.

Sun shining through skin.  
An embryo of the moon  
lights the scanner screen.

**Francis Attard**

ozone friendly —  
worry beads restrung  
for firmness

parade cobblestones  
hardening under  
the new recruit's boots

**Richard Goring**

in the burger bar  
a group of grandchildren  
trading bites

further away  
the guard-dog's barking  
just as close

**Ron Woollard**

Standing so proud  
he makes his mother  
grow taller.

Dead poet's blue plaque  
slowly ivy covering  
the words.

**Fred Schofield**

sea breeze  
the old boat sunk  
in summer grass

**Maurice Tasnier**

through my sleeve  
the slow soaking  
of a child's tears

the neighbour opposite  
locking his garage  
I feel more secure

**Maggie West**

whirling dancers ...  
the birds flying  
through their shadows

**Steve Middleton**

Summer's end —  
bee drops  
to tarmac

Moonlight  
on the kitchen cactus

## Hamish Turnbull

Guilty  
walking past  
his own graffiti.

White waves  
bringing their shadows  
ashore.

Playing the cheque machine —  
the owner gives them  
a mercedes smile.

The ventriloquist  
forgets his lines  
but his dummy remembers.

## Philip Rowland

first coolness ...  
for a moment  
I see it without a name:  
Mt. Fuji

prostrate  
before the Buddha ...  
a banana skin

hazy heat ...  
perfectly flat, the paving  
of Tiananmen Square

## Colin Blundell

empty croquet lawn —  
echo of ball & mallet  
from long-dead players

blind man on a bus  
bids farewell to the driver —  
'see you soon,' he says

## Felicity Brookesmith

flowers with the wine  
you pour, splashing roses  
on the damask

## John Barlow

late for work —  
snail trails glisten  
on the pavement

stepping out  
from behind two molehills —  
red-legged partridge

twilight ...  
suddenly a barn owl  
ghosts the brook

**Frank Williams**

spring sunshine  
the hovering crow skims  
its beak in the lake

**Claire Bugler-Hewitt**

solar eclipse  
and at the darkest point  
you call my name

October bedtime  
the feather on the dream catcher  
turning gently

**B.S**

I feel the last warmth  
ebbing out to God knows where  
— a slant sun on her face

**Katherine Gallagher**

cedar of lebanon —  
shelter for five hundred  
sheep



## 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.

*Klaus-Dieter Wirth (German and English)*

Heiligelinde.  
Das Weihwasser im Becken  
barock gefroren.

Eissegler schiessen  
über den bleigrauen See,  
schneiden die Stille.

Heiligelinde.  
In the stoup holy water  
frozen in baroque.

Ice-sails shish  
across the leaden lake  
the silence is cut.

*Elena Hof (aged 8, German) and David Cobb (English)*

Im Hühnerstall  
braten die Schweine  
keine Eier

Die Brille  
auf der Nase  
hat keine Augen

Der Sekt  
im Glas schmeckt  
nicht nach Zunge

in the chicken shed  
the pigs are not frying  
any eggs

the glasses  
on his nose  
do not have eyes

champagne in the glass  
doesn't taste  
of tongue

## Pick n' Mixing It

Here I am at the Poetry Slam — half pop gig, half cabaret, but with an edge of the gladiatorial, too, as contestants stand up in heats of three against each other. At the end of each poem (no respectful silence here) the audience erupts: hands, feet, poets' friends with their size 10 DMs, hoots and whistles — Slams are judged on audience applause. Next up is a woman who slinks and sways with the physical rhythms of her words, who woos and teases the audience with her eyes and hips. I won't remember a word of it in the morning, but for now I'm with her, swaying, swayed.

And here I am in the car with a cassette player; it takes me back to the folk clubs of my teens and twenties. This poetry is pure story, a Border Ballad in brutally rhymed stanzas, all repetitions and set piece speeches on the brink of sex and death. It's not the sadness, but the unabashed passions of *Tam Lin* or *Matty Groves* that brings tears to my eyes (rather unwisely, now, since I'm driving).

And here I am back in the school library, aged thirteen, picking up T.S.Eliot's *Waste Land* and falling ... for what? I couldn't say, not what it meant nor where this love of dreamlike images and words would lead me.

A woman drew her long black hair out tight  
 And fiddled whisper music on the strings  
 And bats with baby faces in the violet light  
 Whistled and beat their wings  
 And crawled head downward down a blackened wall ...

Later there was the brusque force of early Ted Hughes, and the desperate wrestling with language of Gerard Manley Hopkins, as passionate in his anguished Jesuit way as any Border Ballad. And there was the ultra-detailed eye, both sensual and scientific, of Peter Redgrove:

Frog-leap plops into the sandy water,  
 The water, the jouncing spring, its bubbles,  
 The fresh and skinny frog that dances  
 Upright in the spring,  
 The little clean legs, the clean satiny mechanisms,

The body of clean cushions and levers, lips and lenses,  
Shimmering mucus and clean silky muslins;  
The green cock-frog decays, still dancing  
In the sandy spring while his generations  
Of flickering black tadpoles surround him like black fire ...

There, every virtue of the haiku disregarded — and on Bashō's own patch, too! but I read that and was thrilled, just as I was thrilled by Berryman's edgy, contorted *Dream Songs*, mimicking the complications of the mind with the same relish, or more recently Sharon Olds' scarily naked dissections of illness, death, love and sex. Or shall I say the huge sweep of Derek Walcott, absorbing Caribbean rhythms and R.P. into an English of Shakespearian vitality? Or... or...?

Never in the history of English poetry have more styles, more ways of speaking, been available, each with their own sort of excellence. How could I say that anyone is *it*, where truth is? I dip in and out of the Slam, fired by its verve, then repelled by creeping assumptions that this is the one true people's poetry, with its smug allusions, twenty something in-jokes, its inbred lack of irony. As in those folk-clubs where the raw tabloid energies of the ballads were reduced to carefully mannered 'authenticity', I shy away from purity. I suspect piety. I approach the world of haiku as I would a new religion — with respect, to pick up the distinctive insight, and with caution: whatever it is, it can't be *all*. In other words, with one foot in the door. This isn't a *responsible* position; I am glad there are other people in there, keeping that house in order. Why should I feel entitled to dip in and out, pick'n 'mixing it from everyone's tables? I just know that's what poetry does for me. It's opportunist and an omnivore. I'm not a haiku poet.

Yes, but look again. Here I am with students, saying Haiku: put aside your preconceptions and do haiku; they'll be good for you. I mean it, too, especially with the more experienced students, the more sure of themselves. I find myself saying: here is a form that expressly stops us doing what got most of us writing in the first place. No way, in so few words, such spare style, can you *make* the reader feel what you intended them to. It is the epitome of standard creative-writing-class advice to Show Don't Tell. You have to trust the readers — to invite them in as co-creators of the thing. (This is, incidentally, what current critical theory is saying, though it would scorn humanistic *trust, invite, and share.*)

Of course, what you find yourself teaching is usually what you need to learn yourself. The arrogant, shy adolescent I was when I first started writing has learned

a little bit about relationship since then. I started writing to tell the world what to think. These days I'd rather live the way I'd like to love; here's me, where are you, we don't have to agree, but can we share? I love the game of renga, the open-endedness, the courteous rather teasing game of making little knight's-moves in the air with each other. Most of all I love the trust of sitting together, waiting as each other writes. It is an education just to see how hard that is to do.

Writing though, like loving comes in different styles and movements. It was a particular love affair that jogged me into a small insight about poetic form. I had bandied opinions in the past about the *sestina*. Who could possibly need such a form, expressly designed to make you say too much, go on too long, repeat it again and again in slightly different permutations? And all of a sudden I realised that there I was in the midst of feelings that went on too long, repeating themselves again and again in etc. etc. I was living a *sestina*, so I wrote it, and it worked. It fitted. Haven't there got to be as many forms and styles and manners as there are experiences, so the sound and the rhythm and the weight and shape and texture fit the life? (The haiku-voice in me pipes up here. *No, it says, you are missing the point. We have a choice — a choice we can make by discipline and attitude. We can be quiet and clear and calm, or we can be chaotic. The point is to discriminate. Now, will you step outside the dojo?*)

And here I am again, coming at the same thoughts in a different location.

Birch tops like brushes  
paint the dark darker, the light lighter;  
paint dark on darkness,  
light on light.

This is Jan Kaplinski, writing from Estonia, but I am hungry for some quality in his writing: within that (very Estonian) reserve, there is an intentness, an awareness of great spaces quietly surrounding our observed reality.

The glow of the night sky —  
so bright and mild that when I dip  
the pail into the water, I see  
my own face clearly there,  
But the water I draw out  
is always the same: liquid,  
cold, colourless, tasteless, odourless.

I love that, and now I look up from my study window, into inner city Bristol, down over St. Pauls where last weekend the streets were full of people dance-jostling and thick drum'n 'bass and ganja smoke, the rhythms of Black British voices. And there's the arresting brass of Janáček's Sinfonietta just behind me on Radio Three. These contradictions. And that's all the reasons why I can't be a haiku poet. I hope I'm a poet who will sometimes write a haiku that won't be a disgrace to the name. And I don't mind that there are people like you, the BHS, who will tell me whether it is or no.

But for now, the isle is full of noises, different registers and styles. They clash, and in my heart of hearts I'm glad they do.

Two one-man bands  
set their pitches on opposite pavements  
Two males of the species  
they glare.  
One, harmonica wired  
to his head like a chrome grin,  
kazoo like a fly's snout,  
shifts his feet  
with the champ of a cymbal  
Both their drums palpitate.  
They advance towards each other  
slowly. Silence  
rings the spot where they are bound to meet.

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Jaan Kaplinski. Quotes from *The Wandering Border* and *Through The Forest* (Harvill).

Peter Redgrove. Quote from *The Weddings at Nether Powers* (RKP).

## TANKA SEQUENCE

Anne Stephens

Shivering in rain  
Pink and grey dancing in time  
A cherry tree bleeds  
Petals on the liquid grass  
Branches bitten by the wind

Water on my face  
Dreams of drowning in shallows  
Air beyond my means  
Failing to reach the surface  
A petal lost to the sky

Rain can be so cruel  
Branches (or arms) reaching high  
Feel the sky scratching  
Hammering nails into wood  
Growing beyond human form

My heart beats with sap  
So my coffin is alive  
Though standing in the shadows  
A magpie perches  
On the axis of my tongue

This morning I wept  
Yet now I have found my roots  
And earth holds me firm  
I feel at depth a wise stone  
Telling me about the sun

Thoughts after reading Annika Reich's thesis '*Haiku: Trägermedium eines Nationalistischen Diskurses in der Japanischen Moderne*' (Haiku as a Vehicle of Nationalistic Ideas in Modern Japan)

David Cobb

Superficially, haiku readers and writers, whether in Japan or in countries of the West, appear to agree about what a *kigo* (season word) can do in a haiku. On closer examination, Western expectations may often be on a different track from those in Japan.

The purpose of a *kigo*, in orthodox Japanese terms, is to release *kisetsu*. This is usually translated as 'seasonal feeling', by which (in company with most other haiku writers in the West) I understand awareness of the season and a sense of being part of nature, participating in its events, as well as surrendering to moods associated with particular moments in the annual cycle. This, William Higginson tells us in *The Haiku Seasons*, 'comes easily to those living in Japan'.

Some in the West might adduce from this that, if only we apply ourselves hard enough, we might begin to share the same kind of seasonal feelings and relationship with nature. However, Annika Reich discovered that many Japanese believe that this kind of sensibility is 'in their blood' and not available at all to non-Japanese, even if raised exclusively in Japanese surroundings and always living a Japanese style of life. In other words, *kisetsu* is, for many (possibly most) Japanese, not just a matter of evoking 'seasonal feeling', but also of evincing 'national solidarity', not just a matter of identifying with Nature, but also of identifying with Japan (or Japan as it is perceived to have been). The meanings of the words 'nation' and 'nature' have been conflated in a land where the vast majority of the population have little contact with green fields, and cannot hear the cicadas for traffic. Reich found it was quite a common belief among Japanese that their country was uniquely blessed with a four-season year!

Whilst the seasonal feelings released by a particular season word will almost invariably, wherever and by whomsoever received, be a mixture of personal experiences with associations that are more or less common to all members of a society and culture, the fact is that it has been a characteristic of Japanese society to set store by the 'normalisation' of behaviour, and so the effect of using a *kigo* has tended to be centripetal, or to put it another way, the desire for homogeneity of

response has traditionally been strong, to an outsider seeming to override the desire for personal expression.

Westerners writing about haiku also mention the power of the season word to release common associations, but my impression is that we are much less concerned about using it as an integrative force, as a way of dealing with socio-cultural aspirations. I believe the Western haiku writer's intention is, with some pregnant image, to put down a reference point, from which base the reader can set out and rediscover things in his or her own personal schema of experience. Western haiku writers seem to be generally happy with the idea that their readers may react to one of their haiku in quite a variety of ways, that the season word they have used may fill this reader with joy and reduce another reader to tears. No real surrender of persona is demanded of either writer or reader, and in contrast to what appears to be expected of a 'conforming' Japanese consciousness, the force of the season word might almost be described as centrifugal. Often enough, the haiku will remain on ground familiar to us all, but we may be particularly fascinated when a haiku leads out of common ground onto a more idiosyncratic terrain.

Some 'modernising' haiku poets in Japan have been helpful in narrowing the apparent gaps between Japanese and Western practice (the gaps, that is between Japanese and Western haiku, and between haiku and senryu) either by abandoning the traditional season words as enshrined in the *saijiki* (almanac) altogether, or by expanding the catalogue to include new categories (people, culture and religion), or by admitting to the canon words 'without prescribed seasonal feeling' as well as words with 'all-the-year-round feeling'.

Going even beyond this, 'avant-garde' and 'surrealist' haiku poets in Japan have sallied forth where we may still be timid about following, giving us juxtapositions of images which don't conjure up any feelings connected with nature or everyday human life, but seem to have much more to do with hallucination, or with taking idiosyncrasy consciously to extremes.

This brings us to the point where we recognise there are cross-currents in haiku in Japan. Whereas there is a school of thought that wishes haiku to be a symbol of socio-cultural integration and national self-determination, there is another body of opinion which argues that haiku lacks value unless it arises from individuality. Reich quotes Kaneko Tōta as declaring very stoutly, "Good haiku is everybody's haiku, but the starting point is the Self."



In blatant contradiction of this, apologists for haiku in the West are fond of asserting that one of haiku's essential prerequisites is 'selflessness' (no.1 in R H Blyth's famous list of '13 characteristics of the state of mind which the creation and appreciation of haiku demand'). It is perhaps all too easy to think that the surrender of Self (individuality) and the surrender of Ego (self-centredness) are the same.

Reich points out that this (mis)understanding of haiku arises from a too close identification of haiku with Zen (as a redemptive way of life) which is completely foreign to the thinking of the vast majority of Japanese who read and write haiku.

I hope that Annika Reich's stimulating paper will eventually become more available,

## **Museum of Literature Award**

Patricia V. Dawson has chosen David Rollins'

absently  
getting up to answer  
next door's phone

David Rollins' haiku has all the qualities that I look for — a sense of the solitary poet responding to his environment. It draws me into his experience and resonates, leaving an image in my head.

*Months and days are eternal travellers; the passing years are travellers, too. Bashō*

Unmistakenly Saxon, that little window in the tower. Circa AD1000, when they were bewailing the end of the world. A less enduring millennial souvenir was the flayed skin of the Dane, originally nailed to the south door. A thousand years later it has been replaced by a notice in ink, transfixed with drawing-pins. "For your charity please latch SHUT THE CHURCH DOOR lest any bird fly in and die of thirst and hunger."

The great key turns effortlessly; the door swings open without a sound.

Among the hammer beams  
a sudden rustling  
of dusty angel wings

There they hover forever, though pockmarked with the buckshot of 'a thorough Godly Reformation'.

Before me stands our departing millenium, a grand cage of stone and glass, faintly scented with beeswax and linseed oil.

Gothic light  
creeps across memorial slabs  
dissolving another day

Leather on limestone, my boots echo down the nave. In this Church of England are stone ladies and gentlemen in abundance, but no saints to be seen.

Alabaster crusader  
etched on his breast plate  
Victorian graffiti

Earlier in the millenium the village forefathers sharpened their scythes on this whetstone of the Norman Yoke. Above, among the brightly painted hatchments of noble lords, the Royal Arms are displayed. For three hundred years this gaudy Lion and Unicorn have been fighting for the Crown. Not all is pomp and circumstance,

however. Here is a simple plaque to the squire's eldest son: *Killed at Festubert at the head of his platoon, 18th May 1915. Aged 23 years.*

The pulpit is a fine three-decker. I mount the creaking joinery to the top deck, beneath its Jacobean sounding board.

High in the pulpit  
hush of expectation  
rows of silent pews

Overawed, I content myself with a single expansive gesture. Close to my head, above last Sunday's hymn numbers, a stone imp sticks out his tongue at me. Below is the squire's box pew. It has a little cast iron stove with an embossed tortoise: *Slow but Sure.*

On the second deck — the Reader's — a well worn book of Common Prayer lies open at its foxed title page. The black gothic is impressed deeply in the paper. Turning the pages I shed a tear for the ancient certainties, grave and constant in their King James English.

Back at the south door, a narrow stair winds upwards in the thickness of the wall, past the Saxon window. Another stiff new guide rope, awkward to grasp, has been passed through iron rings. In the chapel above the porch the mood of nave and chancel is here compressed into the smaller compass.

Whitewashed walls  
iron-hard oak  
this hassock full of husks

High church incense hangs in the damp air. Apart from the bench at the back there are no seats, only three long prie-dieu, for resting scripture and elbows, with hassocks for the knees. Through the small window are the churchyard yews, and the rookery beside the Hall. Light falls on a cross, cut from a hazel wand and tied with bailer twine. It is flanked by a pewter candlestick and faded cottage flowers in a bottleglass vase. On the wall

Rude painted Christ  
arms stiff splayed  
his hanging weight

Kneeling on woven flowers and birds I recall the peculiar down-to-earth sweetness of English mysticism — Walter Hilton of Nottinghamshire, Richard Rolle the Yorkshireman, Mother Julian of Norwich, and *The Cloud of Unknowing*, all those saints of the apple orchard.

The light begins to fade and a winter chill creeps in. Through the walls the ponderous tick of the church clock frames a deepening silence, and then,

Creaking and whirring  
gathering its metallic strength  
its chime shakes the world

## The Lilies

Durda Vukelić-Rozić

Late that evening, my friend brought me lilies. She had to leave almost immediately, but after she had gone her smile stayed with me, present among the lilies.

The dark freckles  
on ivory petals —  
a friendly face

One lime-green bud opened into a six-folded star.

Brown new moons  
on white spindly trunks  
trembling

A stubborn bee battered the window pane.

The bee  
kissing the lilies in the vase —  
nevertheless

an old pond  
a frog jumps into  
the sound of water

a high spring burst  
trickles down the road

*floating along  
into the gutter  
cherry petals*

*on the canal  
a queue of barges*

a dog barks  
lights behind curtains  
under the moon

sharp footsteps  
along the damp pavement

*pale dawn  
scurrying breeze  
leaves drift about*

*nocturnal cats  
wait patiently on sills*

an opened window  
tips the black bundle  
into the drain

first time out  
for Jojo the amateur cracksman

*safe as houses  
but he lost  
his footing*

*a crowd gathers  
to watch the falling stars*

the brilliant night  
loses its edge  
in dewy moonrise

slipping away from the party  
into barnyard shadows

*silently the boat  
quits its mooring  
for the open sea*

*the coastguard watches  
hand on the doorknob*

a few onions  
left unpicked  
in the sloping patch

outstanding — level 2  
press START to try again

*New Year postbag  
brown envelopes  
bills to be sent*

*leaves and mud  
brought in on wet boots*

*small musketeers  
with feathered hats and sashes  
ask for cake*

*a dangerous smile  
steals my heart away*

*at the zoo  
the benign curve  
of the crocodile's jaws*

*'Snap', she says.  
'I've won the game.'*

*straightening  
as the burst of applause  
abruptly ends*

*the voice climbs to C  
and skips out on the heights*

*above the pines  
in clear air  
choughs clatter*

*she sulks in her kitchen  
rattling her pots and pans*

*the weekend guest  
excuses himself, goes  
to look for the moon*

frost forms below  
early lights in the village

*5 am.*  
*a plane to catch*  
*he stops the alarm*

*a life apart*  
*inside his car*

a policeman knocks  
and bends again, disquiet  
loosening him

*a busy road*  
*traffic and birdsong; one louder*  
*than the other*

*along the tarmac*  
*husks and flowers*



Ezra Pound, who needs no introduction here, had roots in the American Midwest, both personal and poetic. His father was born in Wisconsin, and the younger Pound spent part of his childhood there. One of his first jobs was teaching at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana. Unfortunately, this didn't last long as Pound was thrown out for consorting with an itinerant actress. That this event has had an important impact on 20th century literature is indicated by its consequences, as stated in *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry*. "In 1908, when a projected academic career was cut short, he set sail for Europe ..." Imagine how different 20th century poetry would have been if Pound had spent forty sleepy years teaching at Wabash College!

On the poetic side, significant works of Pound's poetry and prose first appeared in Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* magazine in Chicago. In fact, a letter from Pound published in an early issue of *Poetry* stated that the magazine would be his exclusive periodical outlet in the United States. Pound's *A Few Don'ts By An Imagiste* was published in the March 1913 issue, and contains advice that is still useful to today's haiku poet. For example:

*It is better to produce one image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works.* (201)

*Use no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something.* (201)

*Go in fear of abstractions.* (201)

*Consider the way of the scientists rather than the way of an advertising agent for a new soap.* (201)

Perhaps because of the similarity of Pound's DON'TS to the techniques of haiku, his famous poem *In a Station of the Metro* in the April 1913 issue of *Poetry* has been considered by many to be the first haiku or at least haiku-like poem to be published in English. Here is the poem as it appeared in *Poetry*:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd :  
Petals on a wet, black bough :

However, Pound's essay and F. S. Flint's essay *Imagisme* in the March issue clearly state that the impulses behind the imagist programme are Greek and French, rather than Japanese. Flint writes of the *imagistes*, "They were not a revolutionary school; their only endeavor was to write in accordance with the best tradition, as they found

it in the best writers of the time — in Sappho, Catullus, Villon.” That the imagists had been using Greek models is illustrated by some adaptations from *The Greek Anthology* by Hilda Doolittle that had been published two months earlier in the January, 1913 issue of *Poetry*. Here is a stanza of Doolittle’s that sounds as haiku-like as anything being done at the time:

Wind rushes  
Over the dunes,  
And the coarse, salt-crusted grass  
Answers

Haiku-like, yet not consciously haiku-derived. Similarly, in his DON'TS essay Pound mentions the Greek poets and dramatists, Dante and Shakespeare. Speaking of rhythm and rhyme, he invokes Sappho, Catullus, Villon and “the leisurely Chaucer.” Nowhere in his essay does he mention a non-western model or influence. As Brett Bodemer speculates in his article in *Modern Haiku* XXX #3 (*The Unexpected Import*) Pound’s association of the metro poem with Japanese hokku seems to be after the fact.

But was it entirely after the fact? An important early missionary of Japanese poetry to the West was Yone Noguchi, described in the November 1919 issue of *Poetry* as “the most important link between the poetry of America and the poetry of Japan”. Noguchi was born near Nagoya in 1875. As a child he learned English, and during the two years at Keio University he read works of Herbert Spenser, Thomas Carlyle, Washington Irving, Oliver Goldsmith and Thomas Grey. Noguchi moved to San Francisco in 1893, where his first poems in English were published in 1896. His first book of poetry in English, *Monologues of a Homeless Snail*, was published there in 1897. Over the next forty years he published over twenty books in English, books of his own poetry as well as books on Japanese poetry, art and culture. His 1914 book, *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry*, was very influential at the time and is still quite readable today. It contains his essay, *The Japanese Hokku Poetry*, which translates haiku or hokku of Bashō, Buson, Moritake and Chiyo-ni. Of particular interest is his remark about Chiyo-ni’s ‘dragonfly hunter’ poem in his translation:

The hunter of dragonflies,  
To-day, how far away  
May he have gone!

This poem, Noguchi says, "is a little thing really worthy of a place in any Greek Anthology". This may well be intended to ally haiku with the principal source of inspiration of the Imagist program. Noguchi is believed to be the first Japanese to compose original verses in English. Four of his English-language 'hokku' as he called them were published in the November 1919 issue of *Poetry*. They are clearly an attempt to bridge the gap between haiku and the 19th century English poetry he had read as a student. Here is one of Noguchi's hokku:

Full of faults, you say.  
What beauty in repentance!  
Tears, songs — thus life flows.

A poem of generalization not up to the standards of the finest haiku, Japanese or Western. (Curiously, it is surprisingly similar to much of the bad haiku that is being written today.) Eight tanka were also published in the same issue. They were written by Jan Fujita, who had recently come to Chicago to work for the *Chicago Evening Post*. Though called tanka and published in four lines, they are much more haiku-like than Noguchi's hokku. Here is one:

The storm has passed,  
The sky washed clear.  
Raindrops on twigs  
Reflect the moon.

A book of Fujita's tanka, *Tanka: Poems of Exile* was published by Will Ransom's press in Chicago in 1923. It may be one of the first books of original tanka written in English.

One question that arises is whether Pound's understanding of haiku was influenced by Noguchi and other sources in English like Basil Hall Chamberlain, or whether it came primarily from French sources as has been claimed. Several factors argue in favor of an English influence. Noguchi and Chamberlain used the term *hokku* to describe his poems and their Japanese forbearers, as did Pound in his famous 1914 'Vorticism' essay, while the French used the word *haikai*. While it is true that the hokku of Noguchi in *Poetry* were published six years after Pound's metro poem, these were not the first of Noguchi's hokku to have been published. His two-volume, *The Pilgrimage*, published in Kamakura and Yokohama in 1909 contains six of Noguchi's English-language hokku, forming a sort of love-sequence. Since their publication pre-dates Pound's metro poem by four years, the hokku in it deserve at

least to be mentioned in discussions of the first English-language haiku. No doubt Pound's name has been consistently invoked over the years in an attempt to 'legitimize' haiku in English by giving it the same venerable founder as Modernist poetry, but it is to be hoped that English-language haiku has passed beyond the stage where it needs to be propped up in this manner. Of particular interest is the fact that Pound is known to have received a copy of *The Pilgrimage* from Noguchi in 1911, two years before his metro poem was published, and the year in which Pound himself tells us he had the experience on which the poem was based.

The academy has for the most part ignored any possible influence that Noguchi may have had on Pound's understanding of haiku. Earl Miner's essay, *Pound, Haiku and the Image*, does not even mention Noguchi's name. But evidence, uncovered by the research of Yoshinobu Hakutani, seems to be mounting that Pound had at least read poems and essays by Noguchi. As I mentioned earlier, Pound is known to have received a copy of *The Pilgrimage* from Noguchi in 1911 and commented on the book in a letter to Noguchi. *The Pilgrimage* contains six of Noguchi's haiku or hokku in English. Noguchi's essay, *What is a Hokku Poem?* appeared in the London literary magazine *Rhythm* two months before Pound's metro poem appeared in *Poetry*, and nearly two years before his 'Vorticism' essay. Pound is believed to have attended Noguchi's lectures on Japanese poetry at Oxford in January of 1914. It has been assumed that Pound depended on the French for an understanding of haiku, but Pound used the term 'hokku' while the French used the term 'haikai' to describe this Japanese poem. All this seems to be sufficient to suggest that Pound may have depended on Noguchi for at least some of his understanding of this Japanese form. But additional evidence of direct influence has been present in the literature apparently unnoticed for the past eighty years. In an essay in the January 1913 issue of *Rhythm*, Noguchi mistakenly describes hokku as 'this sixteen syllable form of Japanese poetry'. Perhaps as a native Japanese he had just inadvertently confused his numbers in English. In an article by Pound titled *How I Began* in the June 1913 number of *T.P.'s Weekly*, Pound also states that the Japanese poem has sixteen syllables. When one combines the fact that Noguchi made the same mistake in print a few months before Pound, the possibility of cross-fertilisation seems more than just wishful thinking. While this is not absolute proof, it seems unlikely that the two poets would have committed this uncommon error independently.

Paul-Louis Couchoud has often been credited with writing the first haiku in a Western language. His *Au fil de l'eau* predates Noguchi's *The Pilgrimage* by four years. But were Couchoud's the first haiku to be written? In Noguchi's *Rhythm* essay, he discusses the genesis of two hokku he wrote in London in 1902. While he

presents the two poems in English, he states explicitly that one of them was first written in Japanese and only later translated into English. Of the other poem he makes no definitive claim, so we can never be certain whether it was originally composed in Japanese or English. However, the situation is clearer for a poem whose genesis he describes in his 1914 book, *Through the Torii*. This poem was also written in London, but a year later, in 1903. Here is what Noguchi writes of the poem:

*I myself was a hokku student since I was fifteen or sixteen years old; during many years of my Western life I often tried to translate the hokkus of our old masters, but I gave up my hope when I had written the following in English:*

*My love's lengthened hair  
Swings o'er me from Heaven's gate:  
Lo, Evening's shadow!*

Noguchi continues: *It was in London, to say more particularly Hyde Park, that I wrote the above hokku in English, where I walked slowly, my mind being filled with the thought of the long hair of Rossetti's women as I had perhaps had visited Tate's Gallery that afternoon .... I exclaimed then: "What use to try the impossibility in translation, when I have a moment to feel a hokku feeling and write about it in English?"*

While this poem confuses the moment with unnecessary poetic language, it is the first haiku written in English of which we have a record, and one of the first haiku written in any Western language. Couchoud still retains his distinction of having published the first haiku in a Western language, Noguchi not having published his poem until 1909, but Noguchi's seems to have been written before Couchoud's. Noguchi's poem may not be as auspicious a beginning for our haiku as Pound's metro poem, but we are all here today nonetheless. Perhaps at this point in our history we might consider being gracious enough to acknowledge Noguchi's role in the communication of the aesthetics of Japanese haiku to the West.

It is true that Noguchi's haiku are generally unexceptional; many are downright bad. Some might fear that to acknowledge Noguchi's role would detract from the achievement of Pound's metro poem. Quite the contrary. If Noguchi's work was characteristic of what was known in the West of the poetry of Japan, Pound's achievement is all the more remarkable. The importance that Noguchi himself ascribed to haiku is indicated that he chose to conclude the two-volume collection in

which they appear with the six hokku. In an introductory note to the hokku, Noguchi says, "Hokku in the Japanese mind might be compared with a tiny star, .... carrying the whole sky on its back". Has the diamond-sharpness of haiku ever been expressed more poetically?

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*Lee Gurga is past President of the Haiku Society of America and Assistant Editor of Modern Haiku.*

AUTUMN

Yasuhiko Shigemoto

To Kyorai's grave  
I offer a chrysanthemum taller  
than its stone

ama bolton

yellow moon rising  
behind the sycamore  
shadows on the bed

full moon  
splintered  
by the dipping oar

Arwyn Evans

Shaking old leaves  
the crow perches  
in a low moon

Light foot-fall  
acorns  
dropping on dry loam

Evening —  
a thin wind through me  
the valley's shade

**Maurice Tasnier**

penny for the guy  
reaching into my pocket  
the cold wind

**David Rollins**

night frost —  
in the shadow a fox,  
crouched in his stillness

early autumn  
dawn floating in  
on a mist

sky darkening  
a blackbird pecks  
at a streetlamp

**Matthew Paul**

autumn puddles —  
accompanied to work  
by a rainbow

**john crook**

falling leaves —  
day by day seeing more  
of our neighbours



**Joanna Ashwell**

the pathway  
within the hall mirror  
strewn with leaves today

even my shadow  
is covered  
with autumn shades

among the stones  
winter gathers  
whistling all the names

**David Childs**

children walk home  
the sun is gone  
climbing in their tree

**Keith Coleman**

coloured leaves  
three plumes of pampas grass  
bend toward the pine

stones  
across the autumn mud  
tightrope-walker's arms

**Allan Jarrett**

Seeing the first crane this season

— the one  
I stepped on

Young enough  
and free enough  
— picking up the wet leaf  
to show mother

Here  
exiled from nature,  
we thought,

... it crawls darkly across the carpet

**Chris Allinson**

daffodils gone over  
by just the one syllable  
make way for bluebells

my scots grandmother  
on her eightieth birthday  
paints her toenails

lonely and twitching  
see the ornithologist  
looking for a shag

**Ken Jones**

End of season  
*Gifts & Souvenirs*  
sharing his silence

## TANKA

Frank Dullaghan

my name in your head  
is a new season —  
a small brown leaf  
or an animal lost  
beyond its journey

ai li

heirlooms  
on antique necks,  
ears and hands  
in the  
growing dark

love  
did not stay  
the kelim facing east  
knows  
no footfall

B.S.

Twelve dark red plums  
I brought her — just to make a change  
from the strawberries,  
the grapes ... and the iced melon ...  
Now, I'm down to the last one

## Sanford Goldstein

all this theory  
about form, about the long and short,  
finger held out like a jab,  
I let my tanka roll  
even to the flat edge of a crack

down down  
these poems  
of a life lived  
in shreds  
in pieces

the invited one  
did not come  
and I blew the one flame  
and ate the two slices  
on a white plate

those few moments  
of embrace and eye-contact  
as if all worries  
were put into a sack with stones  
and tossed down and down

## Fred Schofield

walking alone  
this cool summer morning  
by now you or I  
would have spoken

**John Barlow**

snow  
about to fall ...  
both of us know  
we have both  
been waiting

**Leslie Giddens**

I love our blue & Wight  
sky sail awaydays  
but the black sun  
in my heart  
refuses to set

**Alison Williams**

the hills  
in a mist of rain  
softly  
the truth spoken  
in quiet glances

a line of trees —  
beyond the fifth the world becomes  
uncertain  
starting a journey  
on a winter day

Adorning the approach to the entrance, a comment from an eighteenth-century lady entices the visitors: 'You thank nature ... but ... all is here reformed by art ... art concealing art.'

A twentieth century lady in the ticket kiosk tells me I am too old for the teddy-bear trail, but I can have a guide if I want one. Without guide or bear I set out on the path through a landscape transformed from barren heathland into a place described two centuries ago as Eden or Elysium. A water wheel raises water from the river Mole to the level of the lake. Mothers and toddlers peer at the churning water.

sun over wheel  
in turn rusty spokes lift light  
shimmer of green wings

Further up the path orange rowanberries shine, small beacons against a wooded slope. Through a gap, cows in a field across the river. Site of a hermitage. The leaflet says the hermit couldn't cope with more than a fortnight.

At the top of the slope I find the Gothic Tower. A forest of thistles attracts butterflies. Seeds lift in little clouds towards the summit. Camera poised I forage among the thistles for shots of wings.

A man suddenly appears with a group of children and unlocks the tower. I follow them inside and up the winding stair. View over four counties and the top of the thistle forest. I spiral back to earth, continue on the route.

site of Bacchus temple  
toddlers sip juice  
through straws

Another viewpoint. A newly constructed marquee in the style of the Turkish Tent with white garden chairs and tables arranged inside.

viewpoint tent  
almost traps  
a dragonfly

Down the slope, across the lake and up another slope, I share the view from the interior of a Gothic temple with two ladies. 'Lovely for sliding down on a sledge in winter.' Before leaving I stroll round places I missed earlier, 'all the result of the vision and genius of one man ...a solitary man through paradise.'

grotto rock  
orange berry  
caught in a web

## Cracks

David Cobb

I have just one wisdom tooth left.

The local anaesthetic has taken hold and I'm waiting in the dentist's chair to have it removed. The dentist is casually sorting through his tools for the best one to do the job. Late November. As the instruments chink he talks to his assistant about the rush he anticipates over the Christmas period. "Always some emergencies," he says. "Better leave gaps for them in the appointments book."

"For the 'nut cases'," I quip with a numb jaw, guessing that many a weak crown has fallen foul of a walnut. The dentist laughs and sets about wrenching my tooth out, breaking it into four pieces. There's a pun to be extracted from that mishap too, but I've never made a dentist laugh before. Better not overdo it.

If, in pain like this, I can still manage to pun as if by reflex, it won't be a surprise if my last creative act should be, not a death haiku, but a death pun. Oh well, pun on, and to Hell with the punishment!

Later, with a jaw still so stiff I could imagine the wisdom tooth still there, I sit looking out at my back garden.

Buddha in the frost  
cushioning himself  
on autumn moss

Ban'ya NATSUIISHI (real name Masayuki INUI) was born in Hyōgo in 1955. Studied French at the University of Tokyo where he took a Ph.D. in comparative literature and culture in 1984. In 1991, appointed Professor at Meiji University where he continues to teach. From 1996-1998 he was a guest research fellow at the Seventh College of Paris. NATSUIISHI saw his first haiku in print in a monthly when he was fifteen and met the avant-garde haiku poets Tōta KANEKO and Shigenobu TAKAYANAGI when he was twenty. Published his first book of haiku in 1983 and since has published seven more collections of haiku and several books of essays; he has also edited a number of books, among them the international anthology *Guide to Twenty-first Century Haiku*.

One may well find among contemporary haiku poems those excellent works that make the most of season words. However, these works rely so much on indigenous cultural idiosyncrasies that they cannot possibly achieve universal values. Instead, haiku without season words is capable of exploring new possibilities of poetic expression in time and space. Already many haiku poets are using alternative 'key words' successfully, such as *mother, baby, death, future, hand, head, journey, island etc.* These 'keywords' possess rich power of association enabling the poet to transcend the aforesaid narrow framework imposed upon us by seasonal references and to look into more fundamental human issues. A school of contemporary haiku is gradually becoming a new genre which is of a global dimension. This genre will have the insight and critical mass which make it possible for haiku to reach the universal aspects of human psychology and even the expanse of the universe itself.

*From Earth Pilgrimage*

(Rippū-shobō, Tokyo, 1998)

*English trans. by Hiroaki Sato & Bany'ya Natsuishi*

*Kanshaku-mochi no kyōju ni sekidō-tsūkashō*

For the irascible professor  
a certificate  
for crossing the line

*Yōjō no ginga o okasu inabikari*  
A lightning violates  
the Galaxy  
above the ocean



*Chunijian burū wa sagi o karuku suru*  
Tunisian  
blue lightens  
the swindling

*Hai de shiru suna no chijō to ruri no sora*  
With lungs I discern  
the sandy ground  
and azure sky

*Rōma no arayuru tokoro yūbenjutsu to mangetsu*  
In Rome every-  
where you go oratory  
and the full moon

*Suisei miete pari ni sannin yatto sorou*  
The comet visible —  
in Paris finally together  
the three of us

*Warera wa rojōha monmarutoru no natsu no yoru*  
We the school of the streets  
in Montmartre's  
summer night

*Hiru no kiseki e yotayota mori no harinezumi*  
Waddling into  
this noontday miracle  
hedgehog of the woods

*Yonsen-nen o busō no menhiru tori o kiku*  
Armed with  
four thousand years the menhir  
listens to birds

*Tadori tsuki taru itsutsu no izumi ni kashi-ochiba*  
I finally reach  
the five fountains  
dead oak leaves

## REVIEWS

**Pale Moonlight** by Gerard John Conforti, Deep North Press, Evanston, Illinois.  
ISBN 1-92911-00-4, \$8.00 + pp, 126 Cassidy Place, #M2, Staten Island, NY 10301.

A book of two halves as they say: many excellent, atmospheric haiku sandwiching four very personal sequences. The individual haiku exhibit craftsmanship rather than experimentalism and range from insightful meditations of nature to depictions of the transient sparkles of the urban landscape.

Autumn woods  
years of fallen pine needles  
yield to my steps

Above the harbor  
the morning sun ignites  
the windows of skyscrapers

Gerard John Conforti has clearly invested a good deal of thought into the structure of the collection so that the haiku are presented attractively, three to a page. They lead pleasantly into one another without becoming too obviously sequential: *A horseshoe crab/crawling out of the sea/kids wait with stones* precedes *Washing away/memories of yesterday/the receding tide*, and largely merit the high praise afforded by Jane Reichold in her informative introduction.

The real clout of the book, and what sets it apart from other collections, however, lies in the sequences concerning the author's experiences, respectively, of his upbringing in an orphanage, a spell in a psychiatric hospital, his brother's death from AIDS and a visit to a close friend in a psychiatric hospital. We in the British Isles are rarely used to such matters being dealt with through the medium of haiku — though we may be familiar with 'mainstream' poetry tackling them in the work of Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton and other writers of the so-called 'confessional' school — and this is, to me, both revelatory and challenging. In terms of emotion the sequences are powerful indeed, but what of their aesthetic appeal and their attempt to 'capture' those elusive haiku moments? Conforti has drawn upon memories and incidents of more than thirty years in his orphanage-sequence and, despite their obviously sincere attempt, one has to query the effect of haiku that have been moulded by history:

Early morning rise:  
in front of our beds  
we stand at attention

In the infirmary  
we say the nightly rosary  
in our beds

These seem to lack the vitality so evident in the individual haiku; it is as if Conforti is struggling to paint the background before he can focus on the details. By contrast, the mental illness and AIDS sequences offer priceless haiku moments of conviction and clarity:

Walking the path  
the shadow of a nurse  
follows her

Waiting  
for the thorazine pill  
full moon

*From the Mental Ward* is an outstanding sequence, which ought to be read by anyone interested in how a haiku-writer can translate awkward subject matter into genuine art. So, too, is the superb six-haiku sequence concerning the death of Conforti's brother:

Asleep —  
the veins of your forehead  
strain for life

In its quiet eloquence, this sequence creates an emotional and poetic resonance that far exceeds its size and which bears comparison with Thom Gunn's *The Man with Night Sweats*. For haiku-writing in English to advance, it must contend with difficult, painful issues. In this book, Gerard John Conforti has bravely led the way for others to follow, whilst amply demonstrating the ability to write haiku of subtlety and beauty.

Matthew Paul

**Chiyo-ni Woman Haiku Master** by Patricia Donegan and Yoshie Ishibashi, Tuttle 1998, large pb. pp 280. ISBN 0-8084-2053-8, 9.95.

Chiyo-ni, Chiyo the nun (1703-1775), often stands out in classical anthologies and this collection and commentary is very welcome. It includes a hundred haiku in romaji, translation and calligraphy, with related haiku in the small print and many black and white illustrations. There are also some haibun, three renga, chapters on life and art, notes, glossary and bibliography. However, this is not so much a rigorous, academic treatment as a personal expression of affection and esteem by the authors, whose effort is to allow Chiyo to speak for herself.

Chiyo's father was a scroll maker. She was in the company of artists and writers from childhood, and sent as an apprentice to recognised haijin. Quickly recognised,

she still kept to a simple life, out of the professional haiku circuit. Between her thirtieth and fiftieth years she had to manage the family business, but at 52 was free of this duty, became a nun, and was so able to live an independent life devoted to the way of haiku. She published two large collections and wrote over 1700 haiku.

A contemporary, Shoin, said incontrovertably that Chiyo's haiku are 'pure, like white jade, without ornament or carving ... a female style that is subtle, fresh and beautiful'. The delicate and plainness come out in many verses that seem ordinary, but somehow aren't. For example a New Year and Spring haiku:

flying of cranes  
as high as the clouds —  
first sunrise

everything I pick up  
is alive —  
ebb tide

Not all are simple 'sketching'. Many of her verses are allusive (Spring and Winter):

a butterfly  
in front and back  
of the woman's path

first snow —  
if I write  
it disappears, it disappears

Her verses about women could have been written by a man, but if they were, would have a different meaning (Autumn):

even moonviewing  
women desire  
shadows

how terrifying  
her rouged fingers  
against the white chrysanthemums

Some verses, usually related to Buddhist teachings, pronounce truths (Summer & Autumn):

clear water  
no front  
no back

autumn field ....  
some grasses flower  
some don't

Readers of all the haiku will come across subtlety of meanings and variety of address to the reader as well as the pure vision and clear writing. Chiya sometimes has the colloquial manner of Issa, which otherwise would seem to have come out of nowhere.

The tan-renga, haibun and greeting haiku are all interesting, but best is the kazen-renga by Chiyo and Shisenjo. The episodes and links are much in the style of the Bashō 'Summer Night', with changes of scene and seriousness in every verse.

The presentation of Chiyo's verse is the first in English of a classical haiku poet outside the obvious four, and the first — about time too, say the authors — of a woman poet. It's both fine, and enlightening in the sense that it increases the number of haiku models; Chiyo-ni is very much someone to go back to, and '... however much I gaze, not a speck of dust.'

*Dick Pettit*

**The Shapes of Emptiness** by Robert Bebek.

Ceres, Zagreb 1997 ISBN 953-6108-61-5.

Look at any edition of *Blithe Spirit* since it began in 1991 and you will find plenty of poems that rely for their impact/effect on what could be called 'conjunction': this image against that, the monumental and the minute, one mood against another, the present against the past and so on; haiku does not so much eschew metaphor and simile as compress the linguistic expression of an inevitable human experience (comparison between day and night, hot compared with cold and so on), into the economy of mere verbal conjunction. Indeed, it is a state of the art assumption that the making of comparisons that result in the literary form of metaphor and simile are actually programmed into epigenetic behaviour — we cannot avoid conjunction.

A quick flick through *Shapes of Emptiness* (hard-back, one poem to a page with parallel translation) promises entertainment; reflecting intellectually, it's possible to get bogged down in noting anthropomorphisms, the counting of syllables, groaning at the very few examples of awkward translation, which I shall now ignore; in the introduction James Hackett notes that Robert Bebek avoids 'the emaciating influence of minimalism'.

I chose to open the book at random several times to see what conceptual patterns emerged. This was what I read first:

having overtaken me  
the stray dog once again  
slackens his pace

*Entertainment value* — warm little smile, nice flow. *Intellectual reflection* — 17 syllables in original and translation, single sentence reprehensible to some, anthropomorphic projection of decision-making on to dog. Woofwoof! *Reflective-space-making* — re-create the event in your imagination, stop internal dialogue and naming of bits of the experience; do it in your mind for yourself and watch the little smile materialise: the poem works; it dances in your mind. Turning back a couple of pages:-

in this tree's crown  
just a few apples  
and the full moon

*Entertainment value* — I see with a high degree of pleasure a Samuel Palmer painting. *Intellectual reflection* — implied comparison: 'moon like an apple' literary thought or inevitable conjunction ...*Reflective-space-making* — shut up the internal dialogue and just be aware of the immense space and stillness; when the words start flowing again you could think about the conjunction of transitoriness and [relative] permanence in this perfect moment; time is transcended.

Bebek's *conjunctions* often pass into the silence of emptiness — 'alone on the shore / my breathing / repeats / the rhythm of the sea', 'through new fallen snow / a slow tolling bell / merging with its echo'; the idea of perfection through *conjunction* is a theme, often done with a touch of ironic humour — 'a garden perfected / by a pair of old boots / drying between the flower beds'; human presence in the poems gives us perfect events, subtly suspended in stillness — 'by a blooming bush / a blind man hesitating / just for a while', 'autumn evening / placing an extra cup / next to my own'. How is this suspension of movement managed? Somehow the two things in each haiku balance one another, or maybe even cancel one another out without disposing of either, and make for the stillness and emptiness of in between — blind man and the [smell ?] of the blooming bush, autumn evening and the extra cup.

that withered leaf  
the way it stuck to my sole  
for a few steps

120 haiku to choose from, some stick to your soul for only a few steps, some for much longer, maybe forever — and this is just as it should be.

Colin Blundell

**Twenty Views from Mole Hill: the Last Haibun-ga of the Twentieth Century** by Lidia Rozmus Deep North Press ISBN 1-929116-02-0 \$18.00. From 1, Echo Ct., #11, Vernon Hills, IL 60061 USA

**Edges** by Joseph Kirschner Deep North Press ISBN 1-929116-01-2 \$14.00. From 2157, Ridge Ave., 2D, Evanston, IL 60201 USA

What struck me at first about these two books is the quality of production. *Twenty Views from Mole Hill* features 28 6"x 6" cards printed in two colours in an elaborate origami-like slipcase. A haibun-ga is a word invented by the author to describe her haibun illustrated with sumi-e paintings. The paintings are what makes it work, even if they are generally a little vague as to what they are, although several are very expressive. The text is basically descriptive in a happy kind of way, following life on Mole Hill through the seasons. The haiku seem to be mostly contrived as in: *new year / hard to remember — / higher number and ice cubes in a glass / why is the titanic / on my mind?* By the time I'd got to December: *starry night / Milky Way, all the stars, moon — / who knows what else!* I just felt irritated.

In his preface to the pocket size perfectbound book *Edges*, Joseph Kirschner says that the feeling of edges, in all their various connotations, *typifies what a poet tries to express in a haiku*. That may be so, but it doesn't really come across in what he expresses as a haiku moment. There is a flatness that pervades throughout this book. Examples like *winter storm; / but falling rains / melt the snow* or *sudden February wind / and gray clouds, too* or *scattered blossoms / apartment gardeners / quickly rake them up* just seem pointless to me. The sumi-e paintings by Lidia Rozmus are a pleasant enough distraction, but do little to compensate for the overall lack.

The odd thing is that production values aside, the feeling that I was left from both these books was an underlying genuineness; but without discernment in the actual poems, haiku lose both edge and energy and genuineness on its own, essential as it is, just isn't enough.

Brian Tasker

**Pink Bulldozer** by the Spring Street Haiku Group NYC 1999. 24pp, 12 poets, 49 haiku. \$3.00 ppd from Dee Evetts, 102 Forsyth St., #18 New York 10002, USA

An offering from a group (a summer school?) that has been running annually since 1993. As it is under the aegis of Dee Evetts, it should have a bit of a pedigree. So why didn't it register with me? I don't know. I've been reading it and re-reading it for the past fortnight and can't put pen to paper. Unusual. Mental block. My own errors mirrored in the work of others? Probably. Many are maudlin; sometimes

embroidered; occasionally crass. According to the preface, this group has inspired the 'international romance of the century'. If so, it all seems a bit out of kilter with Mykel Board's:

the VD clinic —  
waiting for blood test results  
I write Valentines

Perhaps two people blissfully happy send the rest into bouts of cynicism. Perhaps their cynicism is infectious. And then suddenly I am charmed by Bruce Detrick:

somebody ate  
the zucchini relish  
somebody gave me

Why is this still reverberating? I haven't a clue.

*Mike Hayes*

## LETTERS AND COMMENTS

Dear Editor — What's all this from Jackie Hardy, Tōru Sudo (and to some extent Brian Tasker) in BS 9/2 about haiku needing to 'move forward', 'break new ground' etc.? We should rather pay attention to James Joyce's comment (via Hugh McDiarmid): 'the principal question about a work of art is from how deep a life it springs ...'

Without this consideration haiku's going nowhere; with it, it's coming from wherever those who write it happen to 'deeply be' at the time. What's the panic? We can only do what we can. And anyway, there have already been several excellent haiku written in English, some of them by Jackie Hardy and some by Brian Tasker.

*Fred Schofield*



Dear Editor — In a private note, Ernest Berry asks if I have e-mail; if only he knew that a colleague in a different human field addresses his Rowland Hill letters to me '@snailmail.co.UK'! I am prompted to reflect that outside of BHS Committee, where I insist on my right as membership secretary to refuse to waste my time typing e-mail numbers and websites in the Membership List, I don't often advertise my enthusiasm for 'snail-mail'. Given half a chance I would also, like Ray Bradbury's 'Murderer' (195), hobnail-boot all mobile phones that interrupt my train journeys with their gormless conversations; if I had the know-how, I would introduce the Grandmother of all viruses into the Internet, so that the insidious lie of the 'Knowledge Revolution' be laid forever. I wish the Millenium Bug every success. I already know the heady bliss of having shot the television in its face.

The medium is the message; all electronic gadgetry designed to speed things up and keep people 'in touch' is contrary to the spirit of haiku. Haiku is creating space for yourself to slow down and notice the small precious things of everyday life that are often lost in the constant cacophonous pressure to speed everything up. Slow down! Create the space to think for yourself. Send e-mail and you run the risk of instant response; snail-mail creates time for reflection.

Mobile phone people deprive themselves of the present moment; how can they be present to themselves when they are yakking away into a machine? Internet gossip sites provide you with instant access to mountains of unregulated facts: indiscriminate sound-bite 'haiku' and haiku worthy of the name jostle there with pornography and bomb-making advice. Being connected brings glut; it will *never* deliver wisdom. Solitude comes with maturity. 'Silence is the general conversation of the universe' (Hermann Melville).

How much information can human attention deal with? Be honest! No more now than it could in the Stone-Age. The great attraction of haiku is that its discipline brings simplification; electronic gadgetry only complicates.

the computer man  
cruises the dying planets  
on his screen-saver

*Colin Blundell*



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