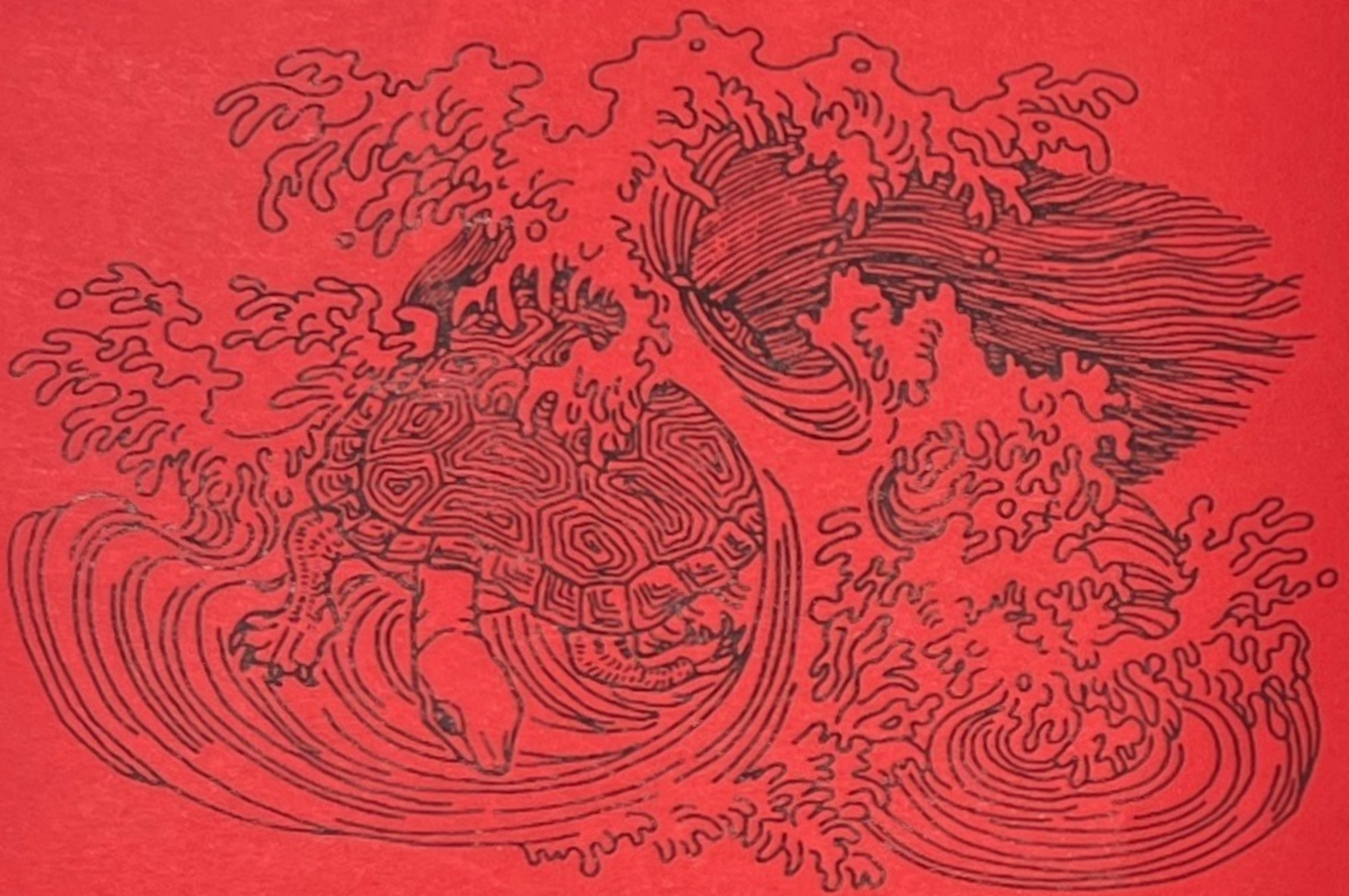


# Blithe Spirit



Journal of  
The British Haiku Society

Volume 2 Number 3 July 1992

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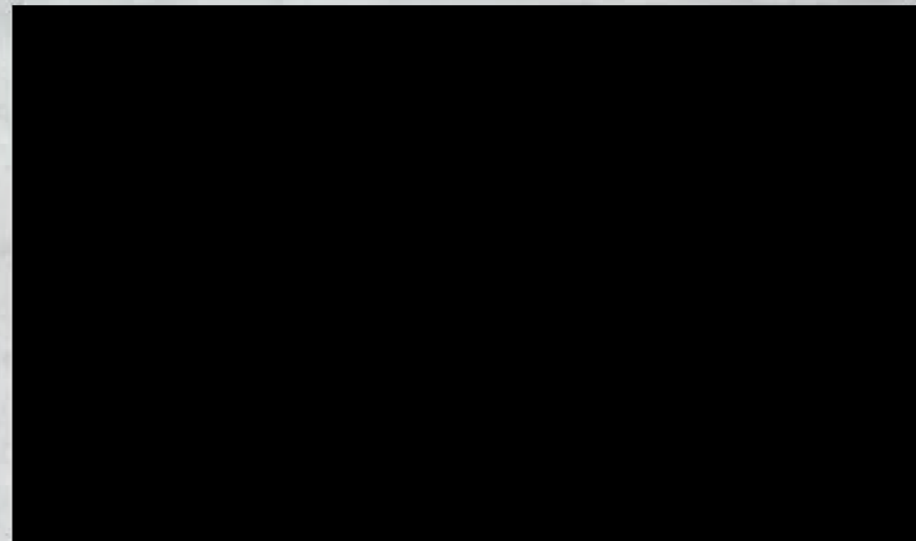
# The British Haiku Society

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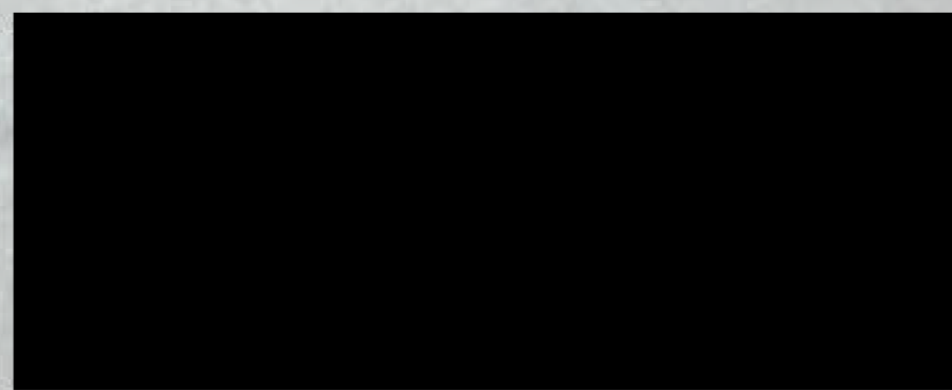
Dee Evetts

Editors:

Blithe Spirit

Colin Blundell

Richard Goring



The Brief

David Cobb

The Pathway

David Cobb

## Editorial

“What’s a ‘haiku’?” asks the lady in the Post Office, tired of rubber-stamping pension books.

“What’s a ‘haiku’?” asks the postman, bottom relieved of the pressure of his bike saddle.

“Why don’t I get such interesting mail?” asks Colin’s partner, who presumably knows what a haiku is because she teaches ‘Writing Haiku’ as a relief from the arid desert inspired by the National Curriculum.

Interest and enthusiasm - that is what is transmitted, by and large, in your letters. And the submissions keep coming on a more or less daily basis. You find the contents of *Blithe Spirit* ‘helpful’, ‘stimulating’, ‘pretty’, ‘informative’. The style of production, its home-grown quality, is approved of as being close to the spirit of Zen.

Some brickbats are thrown which we field with Zen adroitness, polish and arrange with the roses and busts of the ancestors on the mantelpiece. Interesting things, brickbats. And what an alluring word - brickbat!...

“But what exactly is a ‘haiku’?” ask people who might be presumed to know, having been writing them for years. And, “How do you choose what to print in *Blithe Spirit*?” If it is assumed that we know what haiku and senryu are, then presumably we choose what to print according to some set of absolute rules. Well, there’s no absence of rules created by human-beings and stuck-to rigidly or bent, in ways which must be very confusing to the neophyte, to their own uses by other human-beings. We know very well, for instance, that compelling, taut haiku/senryu spin on some concrete image caught spontaneously in the present moment with as little evidence as possible of the consciousness of the observer/observed dichotomy - usually limited to the reader being aware of the crafting of some fleeting comparison that must avoid looking at all like a simile or a metaphor, done with words that avoid rampant ‘poeticism’.

So where's the concrete image in Eric Speight's *It takes time to prove / black is white but it's harder / to see white is white?* And what about the metaphor in William Hart's *moon sliver / slowly nails / the nightblue hill?* And so on... In defence we would say that what we offer in *Blithe Spirit* is intended to kindle this kind of (friendly) discussion.

More of a problem, Colin, who chooses what, after James Kirkup, and then apparently the Japanese, he'd prefer to call 'haisen' - neither haiku, nor senryu or both together - takes the line that all words are metaphors and that the real struggle is to eliminate explicit simile and the awareness of self in 'haisen'. Otherwise he uses the 'haisen' he composed in a dream to guide him:-

not a real haiku?  
chuck it out of the window  
and see if it flies

"But that's not a haiku - you can't have a haiku that mentions 'haiku'..."

"Excuse me, Bashō does..." So the conversation goes on...

\* \* \* \* \*

Several readers have suggested we publish some sort of glossary, explaining what all those Japanese terms really mean. We only wish we knew! We like to think that, issue by issue, such things are being revealed - and sometimes corrected or refined! Much of what *Blithe Spirit* has yet to cover is contained in Bill Higginson's excellent *Haiku Handbook*, which we count as mandatory reading for the serious haiku/senryu/tanka/renga etc. enthusiast. The Committee will produce a glossary in due course.

Lastly, submissions for the October issue should be in our hands by Friday, 5 September, please - and sooner rather than later. The theme for next issue's Season Corner is, of course, Summer.

Colin Blundell and Richard Goring

## Gorse Blossoms

*"when gorse is out of bloom, kissing's out of fashion."  
all seasons, no season - haiku, senryu, experiments...*

newspaper tells us  
man's history lies in earth -  
Docklands Development

*Annie Bachini*

night mist  
unseen  
damp eyelids

firestation  
big wide-door closed  
phone on the hook

firestation FAX  
burning  
with messages

shadows creep up the wall  
and under the table  
child with a flashlight

*Diane Albertina*

in the village  
the madman who knows nobody  
is known by all

snows melt -  
scarecrow's shadow  
moves

cats fighting:  
my green parrot  
up on his hind legs

*John Gonzalez*

Lifting our coffee cups  
simultaneously  
This must be the plateau

*Adrian Keefe*

drawing curtains  
past the old zither;  
frost in the air

tyres on the gravel:  
we prepare  
our cries of great delight

against the stream  
wading  
into the clear

*Geoffrey Daniel*

outside starlings fight  
over toast - framed by steamy panes  
saying I love you

still in the Hogsmill  
a mallard sits preening - then  
picks drifting litter

*Matt Morden*

bin brim-full  
of this year's letters -  
time to move on

& then  
between the snowy peaks -  
a single bolt of sunlight

*Chris Mulhern*

Flames in the dusk sky,  
setting the woodlands alight:  
laser evening sun

*Ken Morgan*

evening, the blackbird  
persuades the sun to stay  
wrapped in song

in the winnowing,  
the chaff carries off dried husk  
of fallen insect

*Michael Facherty*

The pavement shattered  
into hundreds of pieces  
sudden fall of rain

The delight I feel  
goes stamping up the road in  
the little boy's coat

*Colin Oliver*

Having a go at Haiku

It's Haiku evening  
Japanese formal style dress,  
which words shall I wear?

With confidence  
I slip easily into  
seventeen syllables

Exquisite poem  
designed on three simple lines,  
cherry-blossom length

*Denise Bennett*

The rain with its black  
fingers is pattering on  
the winter's window

Does snow hate to fall  
on this earth of dust and dirt  
smeared even with smoke?

*Mokuo Nagayama*



By the last light of day,  
Reaching the sea:  
At its very edge,  
It begins to rain.

(Chigasaki, Kanagawa 4/91)

Wishing to ascertain  
The name of these mountains:  
Yet, time and time again,  
Finding they have no name.

(near Peermade, Kerala 3/90)

*Tito*

Swallowed slowly by  
the mirage, a ship sailing  
into skyscrapers

It is hard to be  
oneself - when one is a snake  
dancing to a flute

*Tamaki Makoto*

all night long  
full moon -  
will it never set?

(Jan 20, 1992)

After a bad night  
sitting in the early sun  
with a cup of tea

*Kappa*

& every five years  
a strange circus comes to town  
then goes overnight

after the earthquake  
some geezer in stone still stands  
upright in the square

*Colin Blundell*

boy on the beach,  
holds his dog's lead and  
a stuffed toy cat!

*Richard Goring*

The deaf old woman  
passes her cup for more tea,  
no-one notices

By a wind-bent larch  
a girl touches the tresses  
blown across her cheek

*W M Tidmarsh*

It takes time to prove  
black is white but it's harder  
to see white is white

A garbled memory of  
the reported saying of a  
little girl

They've dynamited  
the coral  
to make cement

Jobey Jones  
fried bacon  
on his bright shovel

*Eric Speight*

moon sliver  
slowly nails  
the nightblue hill

windy -  
acorns  
pepper a car

autumn dusk  
in the hilltop home  
the lights are on

*William Hart*

spider and shadow  
frozen on flagstone  
a haiku moment

a sudden breeze  
pages leaf the garden -  
haiku on wind

summer of your eyes -  
apples gathering the dew  
waiting to be picked

*Frank Dullaghan*

drought suddenly ends -  
in the brimful water butt  
a drowned sparrow

*David A Walker*

next to mine  
a dry toothbrush in the bathroom  
my son left home

chat ceased  
all the faces turn in unison  
to the first warbling

in the dark kitchen  
the day comes to a quick end -  
the sound of raindrops

*Yoko Ogino*

Wild waves, gulls screaming:  
on the clifftop a man stands  
motionless

*Bruce Leeming*

above stick nest  
weaving a spiral flight  
the caw of rooks

*Jackie Hardy*

His golden eyes seem  
to be full of pain - the snake  
swallowing his prey

In tree shade, a cat  
is swinging in sea breezes -  
an island custom

(There is an ancient Okinawan superstition that when a cat  
dies its ghost lives on to torment people. So when a cat dies,  
it is strung up from a tree, to make sure it really is dead)

*Tamaki Makoto*

child rubs a bullrush stick  
up and down, up and down  
smokeseed covers us all

small boys  
huddle over a biscuit tin  
filled with pond water

broken path  
horseshoe prints  
on new grass

*Adele David*

In the sunlit bowl  
red apples and an orange:  
I taste their colours

The Clown is quizzing  
his mirrored features: 'Now where  
did I put that face?'

Potatoes set  
the sexton has more work:  
his next hole will be deeper

*Edward Glover*

suspended, silver,  
domes articulate its spine:  
the pier combs mist banks

*David Blaber*

a shadow falls -  
the sun-hungry slow-worm  
freezes

*Ruth Robinson*

gypsy girl

lifting  
her skirt  
from the hedge

photo

a shower  
of white  
plum blossom

*Chris Mulhern*

### Sound and Sense.....: A Reply

**Marianne Kiauta**

Edward Glover suggests (*Blithe Spirit*, April 1992) I did a lot of harm to David Cobb's 'ripples and gills', and I feel sorry for him and his fish. But does Edward know the Dutch language and pronunciation sufficiently well to criticise?

- "zijn weg vinden" is, I would say, even more active than "to pass" and not at all "lifeless".
- "in langzame rimpeling" and "door vissekieuwen" has just (and even more of) those short 'i' sounds that are so favourable for the 'still' effect Edward describes.
- we didn't lose at all David's "soft slow ripples" with my translation "in langzame rimpeling", while the pronunciation in Dutch of "langzame" is inevitably very slow, I mean just as slow as it feels. And "rimpeling" has those small 'rimpels' (has that built-in diminutive), especially meant for water, and speeds things up again.
- "door vissekieuwen": the gutturals 'k' and 'g' are phonetically close, and one is not "better" than the other; the 'n' that is mentioned doesn't get accented in this case in Dutch; the plural ending 'en' (of "kieuwen") forms an unstressed syllable. The consonants that are stressed in this line are the 'ss' and 'k'.

So the conclusion from this example might be that a good poem in translation might not always suffer from the translator, but also from the reader!

Dum recitas, incipit esse tuus. MARTIAL

Comment having been invited on articles appearing in the January issue of *Blithe Spirit*, may I draw on Colin Blundell's 'Right Brain' article, and on the review of Steve Sneyd's *We Are Not Men*, to consider certain relationships/antinomies between the haiku and fiction - or narrative prose - originated perceptions. The review of *We Are Not Men* questions whether the "immediacy and spontaneity" of the essentially Zen-like haiku experience can be present in poems which in part derive from and, helped by titles, take their colouring from the reading of mediating (in this instance science-fiction) texts.

I suggest that it can - as in Steve Sneyd's haiku. Some manifestation of the all-embracing cosmos, so apprehended that it sparks a "flash of insight" (right brain involved), is, as Colin Blundell contends, and as Steve Sneyd (quoted by him) agrees, the point at which the haiku in its essence may appear: the ordering of words in the poem's creation, while being a progression not divorced from that sudden perceptive experience, brings the left brain into action. In this Janus-aspected interplay, however, the mysterious faculty of memory, working often at levels below that of full consciousness, can be either prime actor or catalyst. In such roles memory may retrieve quick insights and empathies felt during reading almost as readily as it will evoke past sensual immediacies; for the reading-consciousness is not a passive phenomenon: the reader is constantly co-former with the author of that which takes shape and persists in his or her mind.

Such activity is profoundly true of the poetic process. John Livingston Lowes in *The Road to Xanadu*, his study of "the deep well" and "the hooked atoms" of Coleridge's poetic imagination, wrote: "Things actually seen and things only read undoubtedly coalesced during their strange sleep in his brain....his imagination sprang habitually to creative activity on the spur of words - those 'words that' [in his own repeated phrase] 'flash images'." Lowes illustrated this from Coleridge's reading of works as varied as *Purchas his Pilgrimage*, the *Divina Commedia* and fictions as diverse as the *Odyssey* and 'Monk' Lewis's gothic romances. Sources may be thematic (e.g. the Wandering Jew, the crime of Cain, the pioneering voyage), or verbally specific. To quote Lowes again (and incidentally Browning): "Give Coleridge

one vivid word from an old narrative; let him mix it with two in his thought; and then (translating terms of music into terms of words) he [will] frame, not a fourth sound, but a star." Of the lines,

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:  
At one stride comes the dark -

Lowes comments: "...the large, general impression of a sudden [tropical] shift from day to night diffused through the various accounts he had read, all at once gathers and concentrates into a downward leap of night like that of lightning, while on the instant,

With far-heard whisper o'er the sea,  
Off shot the spectre bark.

Coleridge was writing a long narrative poem in pastiche-ballad form - as far as can be from the haiku along the poem-making spectrum; but time after time there flowers a kindred poetic insight, the awakened percept, the unexpected realisation. One more quotation: Coleridge had read various accounts (Bruce, Bartram) of the intensity of tropical thunderstorms, knowing intimately only more temperate West-country and Lakeland rains. It is Coleridge the poet who on these bases of experience, as Koestler would put it, "bisociates two matrices", the aqueous-mountainous, the tropical-fiery, in imaging the overwhelming potential of elements unleashed:

Like waters shot from some high crag,  
The lightning fell with never a jag,  
A river steep and wide.

It was not so much the 'inspiration' or influence of those travellers' records, as a lived linkage with the experiences of far-ranging mariners, that characterises Coleridge's use of those sources. Such positive interaction with both the fictive and the 'documentary' energises much romantic poetry. Keats, as Robert Gittings demonstrates in his critical biography, *John Keats*, brought to a focus in the 'Chapman's Homer' sonnet, not only his immediate revelatory experiences of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but his readings in Robertson of the history and landscapes of America, and of celestial skyscapes in Bonnycastle's *Astronomy*. Thus, in imaging the new planet and the new ocean in his sonnet: "Keats himself stands on the edge of discovery, like the Spanish explorer and the astronomer Herschel."

For some modern readers it is through the writings of very-far travellers of the imagination, from Wells and Stapledon to Delany and Le Guin, that exotic (even post-modern) realms of gold - or alternatively realms regressed to iron, bronze or wasteland dust - are glimpsed. What lies at the heart of many science-fiction reading experiences is what the Canadian critic Darko Suvin has called "cognitive estrangement": the attainment of perspectives which place the reader ambiguously at the junction of two frames of reference, as it might be present/future, terrestrial/extraterrestrial, human/alien, this leading to shocks of recognition/defamiliarisation not unlike the 'Eureka' or 'aha' states of consciousness. Consider in that light Steve Sneyd's haiku 'Last Frontier Legion':

fluff in the navel  
of time our fleet is flying  
long past our world's end

There he crosses the lightness and ephemerality of fluff, and the transience of flying, with suggestions of technological hardware and of ultimate distances. Counterpointed is a vision of our planet's fate. Distance from the planet and the planet's very survival are thought of in terms of time. Then the use of "navel" (itself an icon of contemplative practice) subjects space-time (while hinting perhaps at its limitation or 'mortality') to biological metaphor, summoning up that Ouspenskian image, the 'long body' of the solar system.

While I would not, could not, propose specific science-fictional sources contributory to such a haiku-formed embodiment of 'cognitive estrangement', minimal yet with perceptions and implications reaching beyond common experience, its roots in genre writing surely exist. Harry Martinson's epic poem 'Aniara' is one example of the many narratives which attempt to realise what a final recession and separation from Earth could mean. The cosmic/biological tropes of James Blish's classic story 'Surface Tension', or those in Wells's 'Under the Knife', occur in imaginative flights paradigmatic of fictions which contribute to the 'deep well' on which this literary-influenced haiku could have drawn. The insights and bisociative 'flash' of 'Last Frontier Legion' are its own, though their gestation lies within a literature which perhaps more than most moves its readers toward a heightened consciousness of their own nature, and enhanced awareness of their many-faceted, envioning universe.



Percy Byshe Shelley was born on 4 August 1792. Our Society, which uses one of his best-known phrases as the title of its Journal, has a special reason for remembering this bi-centenary, even though our main reasons for choosing the title were its appropriacy to a poetic mood we would like to cultivate, as well as a punning reference to our ghostly mentor, R H Blyth.

That Blyth himself remarks with disapproval of Shelley's poetry, that it abounds with "similes in which things of nature are described and expressed by means of comparisons with those of art and artificiality" (*Haiku*, vol 2, p.371), is only one side of his evaluation of the English romantic poet, reinforced as it was by his dislike of Shelley's "moral-drawing". "No-one was ever better or wiser for reading Shelley," he remarks drily.

On the other side, he quotes with approval quite a few extracts from Shelley, and for us it is, perhaps, a special pleasure to find among them a few lines from 'The Skylark'. With a sanction for 'found poetry' which went unreported when that was a hot topic in early *Blithe Spirits*, he says: "The following are haiku taken from various forms of literature. There has been no change in the words or their order; only a three-line division has been made to approximate to a haiku form." (*Haiku*, vol 1, p.266-267). Then he goes on to quote:

Thou dost not float  
Like an unbodied joy  
Whose race is just begun

In the broad daylight  
Thou art unseen  
But yet I hear thy shrill delight

Possibly one of Blyth's favourite excerpts from Shelley, for he quotes it (and that means it was high in his memory) on several occasions, was:

Even the busy woodpecker  
Made stiller by her sound  
The inviolable quietness  
(To Jane: The Recollection)

But as a suitably stirring anthem for us haijin in a bi-centenary year, let me close with these lines which Blyth chose from 'Adonais':

The One Spirit's plastic stress  
Sweeps through the dull dense world; \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_bursting in its beauty and its might  
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

### Larks.... and other matters

coming down  
through lark-song, my daughter  
on a parachute

Squatting on a wire  
a starling has caught the trill  
of the clouded lark

rippled barley -  
liquid on the breeze  
the trill of larks

*David Cobb*

Shelley's baptism  
recorded in Warnham church -  
of necessity

(inspired by Shelley's pamphlet:  
*The Necessity of Atheism*)

*Ernest Sheppard*

Hobnobbing with heaven  
the lark drops sheer as if shot  
and runs to her nest

*Edward Glover*

"The Lark Ascending"  
ordered for my funeral -  
high hills sun-squinting

*Colin Blundell*

Skylark soars upward  
spirit of summer sustained  
in column of song

*Denise Bennett*

A shimmer of stars  
descending in broad daylight -  
song of the skylark

*James Kirkup*

### Tanka on a theme by Shelley

"At length, upon the lone Chorasmian shore  
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste  
Of putrid marshes..." (Alastor)

Were these the seas that drowned you  
These the azure waves  
Your spirit rode on?  
You at least died undefiled  
By a lesser age's wastes

*James Kirkup*

## Season Corner: Spring

beside the dying  
and dead daffodils a lone  
snowdrop still flowers

*Annie Bachini*

April snow and cuckoo  
come together promising  
dead flowers dead birds

Fish rise in the lake:  
circle after circle breaks  
on eternal shores

*Edward Glover*

Daffodil trumpets  
silent fanfare of springtime -  
robin sings the tune

*Mohd Ali Noor-Cashmore*

haiku glee  
under the spell  
of spring

sodden earth  
triggering  
seeds

*Diane Albertina*

New leaves on the trees  
are changing the view - houses  
start to disappear

*Pamela Johnson*

about to flower  
buds on the discarded branch  
hung with rain

*Brian Tasker*

Wind across the pond  
frogspawn  
riding the wrinkles

*Colin Oliver*

March wind-  
the cat teeters  
on the trellis

the bare branches  
are being covered by  
a green haze

*Richard Goring*

thrush entered office  
a chorus of bowed heads raised -  
Spring was in the air

there is a shadow  
in the fresh green of your eyes -  
raindrops lost in leaves

*Frank Dullaghan*

Sudden Spring -  
from the forsythia  
a burst of bloom

*Joan Daniels*

I would choose:  
A pink rock path  
Descending steeply to a lake...  
Through a spring larch-wood.

(Burtness Wood, Cumbria 4/89)

*Tito*

a crunch of gravel:  
jays dart from the bluebell patch,  
snatching the colour

*David Blaber*

a splashed frog  
leaps ahead  
of my watering can

released from the door  
a half-squashed frog  
tries to climb the wall

*Ruth Robinson*

rising with Spring mists  
hop tendrils track the sun...  
silent pilgrimage

easter sunlit shafts  
old woodland cemetery...  
born again Brimstone

*David A Walker*



Sheep - *Alison Cobb (age 3)*

1. The hot bright sun  
Gets brighter and hotter. August  
By the blue-green pool.
2. Under the shady trees  
An acrid tang of grass.
3. A farmer relaxes  
In the late evening. Pork  
And dumplings. And beer.
4. Sheet lightning. Then a wind.  
And the trees dance in the downpour.
5. Diving for shelter  
From the heat in the sunlit  
Depths of the pool.
6. My favourite water-colour  
As a child. For sea and sky.
7. From the silence of oceans  
I rise to dazzle and noise,  
As cool as a splash.
8. The painter freezes movement  
As the poet refreshes sound.
9. The children queue  
For ice-cream and coca-cola.  
One climbs a high tree.
10. A witch might try to drink  
This pool. Or a duck might drown her.
11. True friends forever.  
And if they haven't died  
They're living still.
12. The chestnut's roots grope deep  
In darkness. Soon there'll be conkers.

13. In snow-bound forests  
A herd of jumpy deer  
Stand munching by moonlight.
14. Silver-haired, he guards  
The picnic. She swims alone.
15. Familiar faces.  
Bellies fatter, breasts slacker  
Than a year ago.
16. How can the young and foolish  
Be other than young? And foolish?
17. In my daughter's satchel  
A half-smoked packet of Marlboro.  
At least it's not condoms.
18. On her birthday I gave her books.  
On my birthday she gave me sunflowers.
19. An afternoon doze  
On the sun-drenched grass. As children  
We wish we were older.
20. Dust we are. And to dust -  
And daisies - shall return.
21. A proud young body  
Almost makes the town  
Seem monumental.
22. Stone flows. And metal flows  
Like water. But paper is patient.
23. Twinkle of frost  
At midnight. Black cracks  
Across the glacier.
24. Ski-ing downhill. Almost  
As fast and free as flying.
25. A bee moves on  
Under my lazy gaze  
From clover to clover.

26. On his tightrope a tiny spider  
Crosses a line of ants.
27. Some swimmers swim  
As runners run. And others  
As unborn babies.
28. An exploding percolator  
Started her labour pains.
29. A well-pleased baby  
Drinking his fill. The cord  
Still quopping softly.
30. A snip. The doctor smiles.  
Two of everything.
31. Waving and kicking  
He takes a first bath,  
Not bawling but smiling.
32. A sprinkle of drops on my skin  
Like a shower. A swimmer passes.
33. Wrapped in her towel  
She combs her glistening hair,  
Lifting large breasts.
34. A swell of perfect buttocks,  
Divinely shining, G-stringed.
35. The August sun  
Stays hot till evening. Midges  
Dance ecstatically.
36. Twilight. Left to their brooding  
The silent trees breathe on.

Munich 1991

## An Apology by a Westerner Writing Haiku

Colin Blundell

“Haiku...? What the hell's a haiku...? Japanese poem...? You're not Japanese - what are you doing writing haiku...?”

Occasionally you get challenged by people who don't even write 'poetry' to explain why you write haiku: to talk about the influence of Japanese culture seems to me to be absurd if you've never been to Japan; the nearest I can get to thinking about making sense is to explain the attraction of Zen as a way of thinking, but people are equally baffled when all you can do to explain yourself is to throw your fan out of the window or tip a glass of water on the floor.

In any case, I'm not completely convinced that my interest in the 'spirit of haiku' did really begin when I read *The Way of Zen* in the early sixties; I don't think I would have been so captivated by Alan Watts's writing if my mind had not already been made a fertile seed-bed in some other way.

Tracing the mind-trails that lead to present moments and ways of thinking is always fascinating; while the trail is being blazed you're too busy doing what they call 'learning' to keep track of the evolving pattern - once the pattern is established it's difficult to unravel: what, for instance, brings one person to see a haiku as a focus for the entire universe while another says dismissively, "So what?"? Is there a moment in childhood when some people make a choice to be forever locked into immediacy, concreteness, the Suchness of things, while others fix on, say, money to locate (and therefore lose) themselves in a web of possessions and organised diversions?

More specifically, I wondered if I had read some Western thinker whose ideas might have played on my mind to make it easy to become 'haiku-hooked' when Watts came my way.

I have always enjoyed the encapsulation of 'little moments' in poetry because they leave you puzzled, amazed, contemplative; they reverberate in the mind long time to come: D H Lawrence's 'At the Bank in Spain' can serve as a random example:

Even the old priest, in his long black robe and silvery hair  
came to the counter with his hat off, humble at the shrine,



and was immensely flattered when one of the fat little clerks  
of the bank  
shook hands with him.

It is often pointed out that Zen-think, such as this, occurs in literature other than Japanese: it manifests itself in a regard for the moment, for the specificity of objects (sono-mama), allows them to stand without comment to do their work in the mind. The opposite occurs "when we concentrate on a material object... [then] the very act of attention may lead to our involuntarily sinking into the history of that object...". Explanations, footnotes, unwrapping ideas (as now) paradoxically work towards the defeat of ideas; a good bit of advice for haiku-writers might be that "novices must learn to skim over matter if they want matter to stay at the exact level of the moment..." (Nabokov). Matter in itself, left to itself, is powerful to fix and subsequently summon up past moments - my personal list might start thus: knot-holes in fences, curious rock-forms, running water, a back garden man-hole cover, fir trees on a distant horizon...

I recently re-read James Kirkup's *The Only Child*. The reading helped to strengthen a tentative hypothesis that some people make an existential choice early on in life to be concerned for the minutiae offered by experience; such a choice can work towards a particular mind-set that, given an awareness of the form, can lead to habitual haiku-writing. While "other people [were] partially deafened by the busy hum of their own bodies", James found himself unable to make a noise in the company of others; the inward-turning sensitivity, "lonely but not conscious of loneliness", results in a rich haul of potential haiku-moments: the shining door-knob of the house where he was born, the H-shaped boot-scraper, gas-lamp in the street, slightly stirring shadows of flowery lace curtains, far-off moaning of ships, jam jars of dead wall flowers and marguerites amongst gravestones, boots of newspaper readers in the library, chipped blue enamel teapot, vivid blue flashes on tram-wires, granny Kirkup's porch smelling of Autumn and sea, telegraph poles in the lane, magical labyrinth of white sheets on washing day, the dog Rosie, the milkman's horse, sparrows hopping in the gutter, seagulls flying over chimneys, the bandstand in South Marine Park, the travelling spark at the end of the lamplighter's stick, a seagull perching on a rocking buoy, a model ship in a glass case... Exa-

mining carefully this "rag-bag... that we cannot bring ourselves to part with", possessing it "like a fresh and extraordinary strength, we discover at the end of long and tangled skeins a bright pin of truth". Haiku is a "bright pin of truth"! Ordinary experience is always fresh and productive when you can relate your soul to it like this; there is no chance of being 'bored' - "people who get bored are ones who always reckon that something amusing ought to come at them from outside" (Robert Walser: *Jakob von Gunten*) - at key moments of perception the observer becomes the door-knob, the H-shaped boot-scraper, a knot-hole in a fence, and so on; the soul goes out to meet experience, constructing itself from events rather than waiting for ready-made amusements as small as a TV programme, as large as Disneyland.

So, perhaps, the nature of one's childhood choices and sensitivity makes it relatively easy, or not, to accept the haiku process when it comes your way.

Had I, in addition, read something in Western philosophy that would serve to justify an obsession for the idea behind haiku-writing? Tracing this mind-trail ought not to be too long a business for in what I like to call my 'intellectual life' there were at the very most ten formative books. Of these, Aldous Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy* which I read in the late-1950s gave me, from medieval mysticism, the concept of *Istigkeit* - *Suchness* - which translated keenly to the Japanese concept 'sono-mama' after I had read Watts. But, going backwards on the mind-trail, I come to A N Whitehead's *Adventures of Ideas*. I reach to my bookshelves for a book about Whitehead, recently acquired, and re-discover ideas that I had completely forgotten but which have long since ceased being, in Whitehead's own term, "inert" to become 'my own'.

Whitehead is against carving experience up into lumps; he denies the conventional division of Nature into apparent and real. Nature is what is given in experience. The fundamental unit of existence is an "event" or "occasion" where subject and object are united, where there is no dichotomy of perceiver and perceived. Promising! Precisely Zen!

For Whitehead, the event/occasion exists momentarily at the intersection of "presentational immediacy" and "causal efficacy": there is a dripping tap in presentational immediacy; for a split

second there is a mental construction 'dripping tap <=> plumber' (plumbers mend taps, this tap needs a plumber). 'Split second' is a poor language attempt to depict the "timeless moment" when the dripping tap is and is not connected with plumber (= causal efficacy).

Whitehead believes that we come to unique awareness of who and what we are by constructing ourselves out of our contacts with such occasions of experience. Far from our manipulating events, occasions grasp us to become concrete through what Whitehead calls "prehension": the conscious 'I' is a "route for occasions" to make themselves felt.

I often have the feeling that haiku write me; looking back over a notebook containing a month of haiku I certainly feel that their occasions have made me a route; the momentary awareness we capture in haiku becomes the way we read the world - so it is a constant feedback loop: the frog plopping into the pond constructs the awareness of the poet; without the presence of the poet, no frog, no plop, no pond because no eye to see or ear to hear. Whitehead would say that there is nothing to choose between the frog and the man whose mind has for a split second become the frog.

At the moment of the occasion I am nothing but the occasion itself. The occasion is a growth of feeling and an ultimate unity and I am that growth and that unity. My actuality, my concreteness, is to be defined by what is present in the occasion, whether derived from the past or conceptually turned towards the future, whether concerned with some present physical feeling or with an idea plucked from empty air.

In Whitehead's terms, a haiku would be a non-judgemental "proposition" about the world based on pure data without the intervention of mentalisms.

"Haiku...? What the hell's a haiku...? Japanese poem...? You're not Japanese..."

"You're right, I'm not. But there's this chap called Whitehead - he says... And I made choices in childhood that made me content with little events and occasions... And then I discovered haiku and everything clicked into place. Hoorah for the Japanese without whom the vehicle for expressing all this would not exist!"

roar of the beaters from the wood  
in the garden leaves fly  
from our rakes

in the mud of the hunters' tracks  
like crazed compass needles  
pheasant clawprints

after the shoot  
the winter field  
is silent and empty

hiding in withered cornstalks  
the wounded rook  
is hunched and impassive

tending the bird  
transforms you into a boy -  
fatherly sounds of comfort

indifferent to food  
he submits to stroking  
claws gripping a finger strongly

left to himself with perch and dish  
in his own time he flies  
beyond motion and hurt

my gaze is drawn  
into the pool of his clear eye -  
shock of my tiny reflection

bury me in the sky  
tucked in the fork of a high tree  
my beak to the black north

winter light burning me into the blue

Editors' note: *This poem, which David Cobb considers "excellent in its compassion", was runner-up in a recent BBC Wildlife magazine competition for poems about caring for nature.*

## Time for Tanka

I no longer recognise  
myself in mirrors,  
but greet some passing  
stranger whose persistent gaze  
suggests forgotten friendships

### THINK TANKA

in this life  
events which have never  
taken place can increasingly  
result in a disastrous  
absence of consequences

*James Kirkup*

Across the dance floor  
flows the beat of modern drums,  
while the dancers' feet  
echo primitive rhythms  
from unknown and distant lands

*Joan Daniels*

The boy had been dead  
an hour from an overdose  
his young ruined face  
surprised by faint vestiges  
of an ancient lineage

Soft Malay music  
filters in from next-door flat,  
voice answering voice  
in courteous back and forth  
of lovers' playful teasing

*Eric Speight*

Empty pigeon holes;  
bureau bereft of letters,  
our loose-leaved-loving.  
Love-torn words are now scattered,  
and fly, delicate as doves.

*Denise Bennett*

As I stare at tanks  
in the window, a girl passing  
glances at the goldfish  
that glide and shimmer. Her dark hair  
floats - her eyes are drowned

With one flowing gesture  
the chatelaine pulls  
and offers me an apple  
from her prize tree: one side red  
the other birdshit-white

*Edward Glover*

A spider scurries  
across the Berber carpet  
- the hoover takes him.

His killer hums a soft tune  
and starts on the dusting.

*Michael Facherty*

My room is small and  
Warm, and I can hear the rain  
Beating on the door  
While the downpipe discharges  
Water on to the pavement

Today the flotsam  
Revealed a red plastic cup -  
Salt stained and rock rubbed -  
Wreathed in a tangle of weed,  
Spent condoms and crude sewage

*Kenneth W Brooks*

So, a plan's evolved  
in the boy's mind, his white knight  
on my black square, poised.

but his back's to the window,  
the field's red rhomb is frosted.

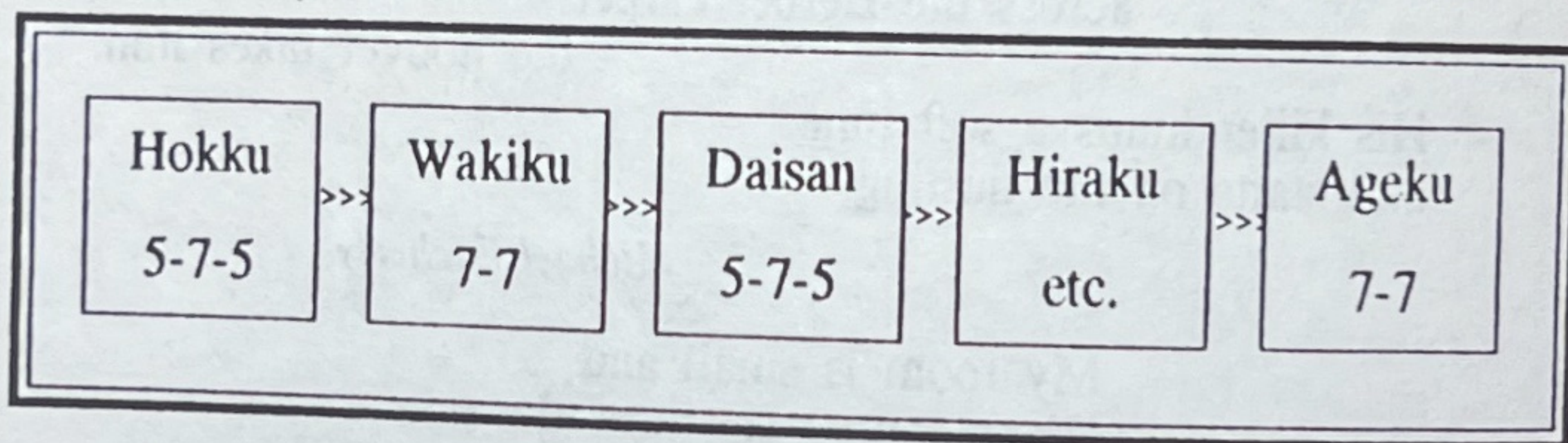
*Peter James*

## Traditional Japanese Renga

Geoffrey Daniel

Haikai no renga - linked verse light in spirit - is traditionally composed by a group of poets at a social gathering, each contributing a verse to complement the efforts of the previous speaker. Composition is done on the spot (apart from allowance of preparation in advance of the opening and closing verses).

Renga may be defined as a sequential form of poetry that consists of many (traditionally never less than 36) alternating verses of 5-7-5 onji (sound units, often but inaccurately translated as 'syllables') and 7-7 onji, with the linking made in such a way that any two consecutive verses must make an intelligible whole, but three may not. The opening and closing verses - and those in between - have specific names and the overall structure may be represented thus:-



Hokku - 1st Part (5-7-5)

Sets the tone - uplifting and strong - contains realistic elements - has season words. The origin of the haiku.

Wakiku - 2nd Part (7-7)

Throwing a different light on the same subject as the hokku - completes what is essentially a tanka.

Daisan - 3rd Part (5-7-5)

Turns away - changes the subject while maintaining some kind of link with one element of the wakiku (but not the hokku)

Hiraku - Subsequent Parts (7-7 and 5-7-5 alternating)

Each of these, whether 7-7 or 5-7-5 and regardless of how many, is known as hiraku. They continue the pattern, each linked to some element of the preceding verse but not to the verse before that.

## Ageku - Final Part (7-7)

This "does not necessarily have to connect with the previous part" (Hiroaki Sato). My preference is to return to an element of the opening hokku, whilst also linking with the previous hiraku, thus making a neat 'circular' structure - but this is not traditional.

The object of renga is to delight and surprise by flying off at tangents whilst maintaining links. Part of the enjoyment is obviously in the quality of the poetry itself; part of it is also in the discovery of the links and in the appreciation of the internal logic by which the sequence may cover vastly dissimilar areas.

### Linking (Fushimono) - after Hiroaki Sato, *One Hundred Frogs*

There are traditionally many techniques of linking renga parts, each named and defined. These are the main ones:

#### 1. Straight (hira-zuke)

Linking based on word pairs - *bird/trees boy/girl*

#### 2. Two for two (yotsude)

A combination of two items provoking another two -  
*east/west moon/sun*

#### 3. Landscape (keiki)

One description followed by another, but of a different place. There is a stress upon naturalness.

#### 4. Association (kokoro-zuke)

Between two not obviously related ideas -  
"I have a horse, but I am going on foot"  
"Having seen at day break the snow that piled up in the night"  
(At the simplest level, linking here by consequence).

#### 5. Verbal (kotoba-zuke)

Word-association or punning - *splash/waves*  
"pine" is both "a tree" and "yearns for"  
(Punning is not necessarily humorous in Japanese).



6. Allusion (uzumi-ku)

Buried reference to an earlier episode or story, one part in each of the sections to be linked.

7. Suggestive descriptions (yosei)

One suggests the other -

*"I hear the sound of a distant mallet"* (for fulling cloth)

*"the moonlight night grows late, the air quiet"* (this being suggestive of work being done late at night, by some lonely person).

8. Contrast (sotai)

*Spring/Autumn mountain/valley*

9. Contrariness (hikichigae)

Going against the expected, clichéd reaction; a shock effect - cherry blossoms scatter easily, so poets are expected to hope the wind will not blow; to be contrary is to hope that it will.

10. Place Names (nadokoro)

Usually hidden by punning (to be used sparingly) -

*"shitakusa no oi so no mori"* (the forest where low grass grows) conceals the name of a village - *"Oiso"*.

There are others, which seem to me to be nit-picking variations on what is here. Association by word or idea - either of similarity or contrast - seems to be the most usual means.



Ink drawing by *Doris Husband*

## Review

David Cobb: *Mounting Shadows* (Equinox Press, Essex. £ 3.95 from the author - address on page 2)

It may seem a shade incestuous - one member of BHS Committee reviewing another's book: "Sure to say good things - they're all mates together..." To counteract the voices in my head I've even felt inclined to look for as many negatives as I can, just to prove that it's not just an old soldiers' network.

But, objectivity being a consistently dead duck, never to be had at any price, it may be enough just to hedge my comments with the above paragraph.

Riffling through the pages of David's handsomely produced volume, divided into nine intriguing sections, niftily illustrated by Charlotte Smith, ex knife-thrower's stooge in an Irish circus, the only negative I can dig out derives from the totally personal problem I have coming to terms with non-three liners and with haiku/senryu as an artful scattering of words. So this is where I have to work hard: in doing so I'm finding that the 'concrete haiku' is beginning to penetrate my soul:-

the watering can  
swinging  
from side to side  
censing geraniums

and, especially,

across the fields of stubble  
flame stalks flame

There are a number of these 'irregular', often concrete haiku; there is also much enjoyable ambiguity deriving from David's obvious delight in making words perform dual functions, in the latter case, 'stalks' working as both noun and verb.

DELIGHT transmits itself on every page of this book, even when the subject-matter suggests what I suppose could be called 'moral' concerns:-

pinchpenny - he's even ploughing in his own barbed wire	the ex-serviceman holding a tray of matches may have heard one struck
---	---

Wallace Stevens said that "poetry is the renovation of experience"; images that startle, alternative ways of seeing the world - these are what I require of poetry; haiku/senryu is a particularly useful form for encapsulating the delight of thus being startled. And David delights:-

everyone reads it,  
she says, scratching her acne -  
the Kharwasutra

making a peg-leg  
for a friend, the leper  
grips with a scar

Teaching haiku/senryu to teenagers back in the sixties, I adopted what would now be called a 'minimalist' approach, simply teaching them the word JUXTAPOSITION and asking them to make some juxtapositions; then we studied the resulting conceptual tensions (tightening/relaxing, large/small, near/far, long/short, fragile/solid, random/precise). David's book would have been an admirable source of initial examples, preferable, in many ways, for this purpose, to the *Penguin Book of Japanese Verse*:-

a bumble bee  
weaves through the ribbons  
of the maypole dance

this longest night  
the dog cocks half an ear  
towards the stars

I like the studied economy of what is called in the trade 'synecdoche', whether in the conveying of a child-like innocence (whose?)

the chocolate grin  
adores the dandelion  
in the tulip bed

or in the more robust

any second now  
the hole in the road will sprout  
a blue tattoo

Variety and consistency, the reader constantly required to adjust sights - all set in seasonal flux from the 'bare poplars' at the start through

the seagull squints  
both sides of the wall  
into brown bosoms

to the dying fall, extreme compression and just-so-ness of

end of summer:  
the patio table  
folded in two

Just a few of 141 haiku/senryu - and Charlotte's brush drawings.

CB



Hand Made  
In  
A Garden Shed  
In  
Bunyan Land