

Blithe Spirit



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Editorial

Thank you to all those of you who have supported my editorship along with your submissions.

Another new editor, another new editorial policy? Well, not necessarily. I have the policy document on the selection criteria ready, but I have not yet been able to get towards it. However, I think they set themselves a very difficult goal, and towards an agreement on the nature of

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Editorial

Thank you to all those of you who sent good wishes for my editorship along with your submissions.

Another new editor, another new editorial policy? Well, not intentionally. We still have the policy document on the selection criteria popularly known as the *Consensus*. Having attended my first committee meeting, I am astonished that they were even able to get *Towards a Consensus*..... However, I think they set themselves a very difficult task and towards an agreement on the nature of haiku is as close as it is desirable to get. So, I read the document assiduously before selecting and because of, or in spite of it, I went ahead and chose the haiku I liked. Even with a determination towards objectivity, opinion is subjective. And in the end I can only do it my way. I did make some changes after consulting the opinions of committee members.

I see the task of the editor as a second line position. All *haijin* should be their own editor first. This, I acknowledge, is harder than writing the haiku in the first place. No one wants to murder their darlings. But please, some of you, make an initial selection of your own. Rather than sending thirty, be ruthless. Extract only the best ten. Throw the others in the bin or work on them until they rank highly enough to be included in the top ten. Your haiku will be better for it. And always include a stamped, addressed envelope, please, if you want to hear back from me!

* * * * *

It is necessary to re-attribute this haiku from Vol 3 No 2:

in the gutter
goodbye
on a torn card

Colin Shaddick

Sorry Colin. [*My apologies too, it was my typesetting error - RJG*].

* * * * *

Go ahead. Read and, I hope, enjoy. If you do, or if you do not and you have the time and inclination, write and tell me about it.

Jackie Hardy

Season Corner: Spring

on the verge of spring
an undecided grey sky
the white breasts of gulls

Dermot O'Brien

An eager daffodil
anticipating spring
the pear tree waits

Cy Patterson

first day of school--
on his new satchel
confetti of cherry blossoms

Yoko Ogino

the village green
already full of daisies
and now blossom falls

catkin pollen
dancing on the windstreams
of the passing cars

David Cobb

day-long rain
on the telegraph wire
one drop forms, one drips

Jackie Hardy

spring plowing
in my father's calloused hand
tiny arrowhead

this spring
how they have multiplied
late friend's violas

Jean Jorgensen

Brush painting by
Kazuo Gill

what do you know
bald pinhead dandelion?
she loves me not!

George Marsh

a cake of ice
leaves the shore
at the touch of my finger

all over the moonlit sea
rising and falling
phosphorescent squids

Kohjin Sakamoto

spring sun
across the graveyard
dead flowers

Richard Goring

song of a greenfinch;
a ray of sun on cold steps
and a few snowdrops...

city spring:
the park fence divides
broken bottles
from the daffodils

Martin Lucas

not long out of bud
the poplar's leaves
are already trembling

warm sun now on my back
and my shadow
walking a little straighter

Bamboo Shoot

daisy covered lawn...
a pecked pigeon's egg
filled by rain

David Walker

Look! the first swallow
swooping: every year
such energy

Bruce Leeming

sudden shower -
underneath the trees
bluebells sheltering

Chris Raetschus

Outside the florist
sudden scent of hyacinths
Spring in the air

Round and round
the aubrietia
two busy bees

Joan Daniels

behind the blossom
last season's oranges
rot on the trees

Matt Morden

The first daffodil
flowering behind the fence -
I almost miss it

Ladybird, solo
on the Underground
travels up my arm

Katherine Gallagher

Gusts in May:
Cultivated peony
blooms are swept away

Ken Ellison

walking to work
the sun shines
in my shoes

Frank Dullaghan

the hardest part
thinning out seedlings
- apologising

this morning
in the tank - tadpoles
fatter but fewer

Susan Rowley

the magnolia
unfurls flamingo wings
delicate pink-white

Look, the swifts have come
slicing the street's narrow sky
Miss Jones sheds a woolly

Eric Speight

Martins

the martins return
to their side-porch nest -
this door is barred !

early business:
in swift flurries
one comes straight at me

quite still
from the back of the nest
a double fantail

beneath
their bijou box
daily debris

batted out against the wind
place juggled for a turn
the martin
a speed-flash, stops, inch off
under the porch's ceiling

the nestling's mouth gapes
wide as its egg
yellow and vermillion

fluttered by birds
or nestlings under the nest
of birds or nestlings

Adepts -
fine flyers skim the house-front
some weaker into the wind

After the flying display
fledglings wobble
to rest before flight

empty doorway
above the wide flat land
no momentary wings

Dick Pettit

A Sense Of The Language

William J Higginson

Perhaps because of the difficulties of translating, especially from Japanese to European languages, certain habits have crept into English-language haiku. Those who try to adhere to a syllable-count form usually pad their work with words that add no meaning ('the cold winter wind', for example). However, the impression that seventeen syllables in English equals seventeen of the 'sounds' (*on*, *onji*, or *bunji*) that Japanese poets count has faded considerably from being an exotic fad among American school teachers who know nothing about either the Japanese language or English poetry (or American) in the 1950s.

But as a shorter haiku in English has gained ground, the opposite extreme brings with it 'telegraphese' that hardly resembles normal speech or writing. Such a phrase as 'sit on warm bench' would grate on the ear much less with a strategically placed 'the'. Absence of necessary articles makes awfully large number of haiku claiming to be "in English" seem to have been written by beginning student of English with no access to native speakers. Note that only three were omitted from that last sentence of thirty-one words, but their minute absence gives it a very strange ring.

Translating brings up another problem that seems endemic in our haiku today. The desire to pack as much as possible into the fewest words tends to result in dangling particles, mainly the '-ing' kind. Sometimes this results from a desire to omit a person - especially the writer - from the poem. In the Japanese language such words as 'I'/'me'/'my' rarely occur, so translators have often resorted to leaving them out of the English translations of haiku and using just the '-ing' form of the verb, creating dangling particles in the process.

Most English words ending in the '-ing' are either nouns or partial verbs, called 'present participles'. Such nouns seem relatively rare in haiku, as they usually suggest an abstract level of thinking. The last word of that sentence is a good example of the '-ing' form as noun; grammarians call it a 'gerund'. When a gerund does show up in a haiku, it had better have an article in front to prevent it from being understood as a verb:

evening fog...
whispering of mothers
quiets the children

Can't you just hear the fog going around whispering about mothers? Simply putting 'the' before 'whispering' would eliminate the problem. (See what telegraphese does to haiku?)

A present participle can get a haiku into trouble. The worst are participles without grammatical subjects (and therefore 'dangling'). Since participles can appear before - and change the meaning of - nouns, one lacking a subject normally refers to what follows. A penchant for omitting subjects often yields ludicrous results, of which the modest author may be

quite unaware:

choking, coughing,
the moon shining over
the quiet lake

Heard the moon cough lately? Much better to give the action to a third person, and put the verbs in the plain present tense:

he chokes and coughs...
the moon shines over
the quiet lake

In many haiku participles show up without the 'helping verb' needed to make a complete sentence. This does not usually result in great confusion, but can create an awkwardness that gets in the way of taking in the meaning on first reading. How much better to simply use the present-tense verb. Then ambiguities, unconscious or intended, become clearer to the writer, and might lead to further improvement. Compare:

the dusty corral
a breeze wafting gently
the hum of bees

the dusty corral
a breeze wafts gently
the hum of bees

Ah, now I see that 'the hum of bees' can - and perhaps should - be the object of 'wafts'. Also, 'breeze' and 'wafts' and 'gently' all contain the idea of 'gentle', a redundancy to be avoided in haiku. How about;

the dusty corral--
on a midday breeze comes
the hum of a bee

Note also that in this instance removing the redundancy allows adding more visual information, and making it one bee eliminates the thumping rime while bringing the experience a little closer to the reader.

There will, of course, be times when one wants the sense of continuing action which only the present participle can provide. Some poems will sound better without adding the auxiliary verb that would make a complete sentence. But generally it is better to avoid using the present participle in haiku, especially without a clear grammatical subject.

Whatever else a haiku in English might do, it will find a more appreciative audience if it indeed sounds like English. 'Poetic licence' need not extend to redundancy, padding, telegraphese or dangling participles.

[Revised at the editor's request from a portion of the 'Judge's Report' for the haiku section of the New Zealand Poetry Society's 1993 International Poetry Competition]

Group 1 Daffodil Ginkō

suisen ya / samuki miyako no / koko kashiko
 here and there in the chilly capital - daffodils! (Buson)

This poetic gathering took place on a perfect spring morning (March 14), blessed with ample sunshine. The composition stroll (*ginkō*) began in the vicinity of the eastern end of The Serpentine in Hyde Park, and continuing through Hyde Park Corner, Green Park and the length of St James' Park, reached its conclusion at a table outside a café just short of Horse Guards Parade. Only one of our party headed off in altogether the wrong direction; and we did make up for this by recruiting a new member on the way! At a couple of places along the walk, the party collected to hear Stephen provide the briefest of historical notes on the early Japanese poets who visited London at the turn of the century - Sōseki Natsume, Yone Noguchi, Gonosuke Komai - all of whom left behind haiku (some of them in English!) composed while walking in the London parks in spring. Our own path was lit by daffodils of every style and colour, and many of the verses we later shared at the cafe were, quite naturally, ablaze with yellow. There follow, in no particular order, just a very few of them. SHG

So near, almost touching
 The trunk of the very old tree -
 Golden daffodils

Ana

A Samuel Palmer group
 Of flowering cherries;
 Geese parading in front

Adele

Thin morning sunlight -
 Shadows of the daffodils
 Stretch across the grass

Tito



Palace in the sun -
 Fountain and willow-branches
 Fall towards water

Martin

Springtime in the park -
 Children feeding London ducks
 In a foreign tongue

Norman

These daffodil trumpets
 Do not disturb
 The sleeping vagrant

Jim

Ink drawings
 by
 Kazuo Gill



Senryu Pie

In a crowd
the smell
of something private

Hamish Turnbull

newborn baby
whose cheek wears
his father's dimple

Yoko Ogino

the cathedral front -
a dropout sits with angels,
kings and queens of stone

out in the playground
kids with their hand-held games
feet in puddles

mother and son
talking together
in his sleep

David Cobb

hidden voices
disappear within
the alley

Annie Bachini

away from street sounds
all those silent fishermen;
a drowned motorbike

Susan Rowley

a tramp sidles by
watching the pavement artist
draw a crowd

laying down his hat
riverbank sketcher lines up
his privacy

Jackie Hardy

Only a dot
On *Mont Blanc*
The bulky mountaineer

Erica and Owen Facey

rain -
I won't phone my mother
I'll make coffee

George Marsh

Compensation claimed
the farmer walking
his unsown fields

In the greenhouse
talking to her seedlings -
that childless woman

Bruce Leeming

Jehovah's Witness
looking so miserable
and witnessing what?

Colin Blundell

A bearer last week:
this week his six friends
keep the steady pace

Speed; driving too fast
to recognise the creatures
other cars have killed

The old wooden rake
has lost three teeth and needs
to bite everything twice

To foil the forays
of cat fleas we appoint
a scratch-committee

Edward D Glover

Creaky boots halt
In the forest stillness
the sound of pissing

Ken H Jones

Two Travellers, One Path

paired haiku by **Geoffrey Daniel** and **Lesley Lendrum**

(These haiku were written after a walk around the grounds of Glenalmond College, Perth. Both writers made notes on agreed subjects observed on the walk and wrote them up individually later)

Daniel

early bee
about the catkins -
open for business

the big wheel of roots
a nutshell split
gap in the sky

up through
layers of the dead
rosebay willow herb -
baby nettles jagging

ploughland -
shadows of walls
shadows of rainclouds
passing

where the branch was
a black gap
dandelion and dogrose

rooks heading straight
into the wind
the granny swithers on the pot

reciting Basho
at the Biology pond
observing nofrog

wind off the Grampians -
smell of snow and daffodils
bending southwards

jagging - jabbing, thrusting sharply
swithers - dithers, acts indecisively

Lendrum

the grey and yellow
catkins are gently sampled
by an early bee

a broken nutshell
and a twisted root remain
where the hazel grew

no-man's land possessed
by willow herb and nettles
and wild rapberries

across the steep field
april sunshine now displays
shadows from the past

in the thick-rimmed cup
where the ash has lost a branch
a tiny wild rose

little gangs of rooks
tossing about in the breeze:
the chimney cowl nods

a black would-be pond
its water meshed with slime
but never frogspawn

that hill to the north
is patched with snow: the cricket pitch
waits for summer term

granny - chimney pot cowling

In 1992 we had occasion to celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Now, a year later, it is the turn of that most congenial of English poets for the lover of nature and haiku, John Clare, who was born at Helpston, near Peterborough, on 13 July 1793.

An inscription on his gravestone, in the same village, makes the claim that "Poets are born not made", which is at best a half-truth, about as truthful as saying that photographs are manufactured, not taken. In his autobiographical writings Clare makes it clear that he was self-taught, and that above all, "Nature was his teacher" - an idea we find echoed in this period in Wordsworth's 'Expostulation and Reply', as well as in Robert Bloomfield's 'The Farmer's Boy': "The fields his study, Nature was his book".

Although the haiku form had not been 'discovered' in the West in Clare's lifetime, and one would not expect to find in his writings anything that strictly resembles a haiku, it is hard to escape the conviction that he was a latent *haijin*. The following description of him by his early biographer, Frederick Martin, begins to make the point:

"(He) began a sort of hermit's life. He took long strolls in the woods, along the meres, and to other lonely places, and got into the habit of remaining whole hours at some favourite spot, lying flat on his back with his face towards the sky. The flickering shadows of the sun, the rustling of the leaves on the trees, the sailing of the fitful clouds over the horizon, and the golden blaze of the sun morn and eventide were to him spectacles of which his eye never tired, with which his heart never got satiated."

R H Blyth recognised the character of the man. He does not refer to him in *Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics* for the simple reason, as he told James Kirkup in conversation, that Clare's works were not available to him when he was writing this work during his internment in wartime Japan. But in his *History of Haiku* (vol 1 page 25) he wrote:

"John Clare is the greatest English NATURE poet, just as Wordsworth is the greatest English nature POET, but he struggles in vain against the words of the grammar book, of the publisher, of English literature, which smother him completely."

In a later reference, Blyth speaks of Clare more charitably, and without qualification, as "the best and the last of the English nature poets" and goes on to cite the final verse of his poem 'Autumn' as "three haiku".

Now, in fact Clare wrote at least three poems with the title 'Autumn', so you may like to do what I did (I started with only the bare reference). Look up all three poems and decide for yourself which one ends, as Blyth thought, with three haiku! (If you choose right, as I'm sure you will, shrug off the temptation to say "Great minds think alike"!).

Of Clare's possessing the requisite humility to be a *haijin* there can also be no doubt, for he is always concerned to evoke and celebrate moments which are common experience.

Clare held to the essential haiku principle of letting Nature be its own advocate:

"... I distinguished Affectation and consiet from nature ... I discoverd (i.e. disassociated) obscurity from common sense and always benefited by making it (i.e. his poetry) as much like the latter as I could, for I thought if they (his readers) could not understand me my taste should be wrong founded and not agreeable to nature." "...when the reader peruses real poesy he often whispers to himself 'bless me I've felt this myself'."

In Clare's prose writings we find repeatedly those quick snapshots of a natural scene which resemble jottings in a haiku poet's notebook, say, "I often puld my hat over my eyes to watch the rising of the lark ... I adored the wild marshy fen with its solitary hernshaw sweeing along in its mellancholly sky."

Clare's autobiographical fragments, in their directness and immediacy and ability to set a whole scene with a single image, are on occasion possibly as close to the haibun style as anything composed in the English language. An example:

"... we got lodgings at a house of scant fame a profesed lodging house kept by a man and his wife of the name of Cole and we was troubl'd at night with threble fares in each bed (this presumably means three-in-a-bed) an inconvinence which I had never been used too they took in men of all descriptions the more the merrier for their profits and when they all assembled round the evening fire the motly countenances of many characters looked like an assemblage of robbers in the rude hut dimly and mysteriously lighted by the domestic savings of a farthing taper ..."

Or again, from his Journey out of Essex. when he was taking flight from the asylum where his mental illness was first, hamfistedly, being treated:

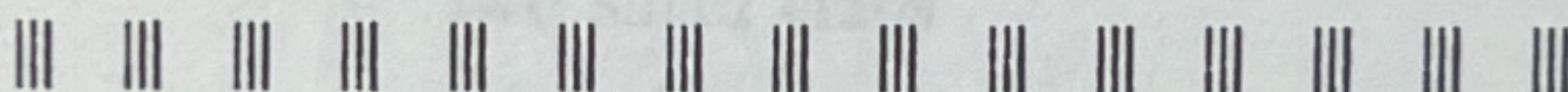
"Some where on the London side the Plough Public house a Man passed me on horseback in a Slop frock and said 'here's another of the broken down haymakers' and threw me a penny to get half a pint of beer which I picked up and thanked him for and when I got to the plough I called for a half pint and drank it and got a rest and escaped a very heavy shower in the bargain by having a shelter till it was over afterwards I would have begged a penny of two drovers who were very saucey so I begged no more of any body meet who I would."

The English *haijin* responds strongly to the poet who had the simple, compassionate sincerity to write:

Continued on page 19



Quaker Meeting House, Dunmow, Essex



Clare (continued from page 18)

For every thing I felt a love
The weeds below the birds above
And weeds that bloomed in summers hours
I thought they should be reckoned flowers
They made a garden free for all
And so I loved them great and small

* * * * *

Now for the problem I set you earlier.

The last verse of the 'Autumn' poem which Blyth quotes is:

The feather from the raven's breast
Falls on the stubble lea,
The acorns near the old crow's nest
Fall pattering down the tree;
The grunting pigs, that wait for all,
Scramble and scurry where they fall.

Gorse Blossoms

The moon illuminates
The tip of a cloud
Blown in tonight from the sea,
And gone tomorrow.

(Uenosakuragi, Tokyo, 7/81)

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

(above Trevelez, Andalusia, 12/88)

Tito

old route
well-worn double track
from church to pub

Ruth Robinson

Feasting on breadcrumbs
Shaken from my tablecloth
Six squabbling sparrows

Dan Pugh

Last night
a fog
this morning
a mountain

Hamish Turnbull

dying vibrations
on the TV aerial -
pigeon on the wing

Norman Barraclough

Nodding its head
the sheep limps jerkily
on three good legs

Will Morris

just on the tide-line
in missionary embrace
two small crabs

wormdigger's mittens
extending fingernails
to mugs of tea

David Cobb

winter afternoon
between the swish of wet tyres
pop music, needling

Jackie Hardy

concert in the park
during intermission
sounds of the freeway

Jean Jorgensen

prickling in the scalp
sudden smell off my jacket -
invisible rain

George Marsh

talking in whispers
in the fog...
two shadows

up through winter waves
the shell-covered hulk --
old humpback whale

Kohjin Sakamoto

In autumnal woods
my chain saw's reek
hangs in the still air

Ken H Jones

the non-stop train
stopping
between stations

after rain
the bus shelter roof
still dripping

Richard Goring

the jangle of chains
and the gate opening wide -
thick fog on both sides

Colin Blundell

Not a leaf to be seen -
a blaze of berries
on the cotoneaster

Cy Patterson

first light:
from out of the elm
the loud voice of the wren

Martin Lucas

Atlantic wind -
cloud shadows
climb the mountains

Frank Dullaghan

Beyond the palings
secure, sits the portly cat
the terrier raging

Eric Speight

Tide going out -
in the rock pool
seaweed waves

Chris Raetschus

Hedgerow - campion
honeysuckle and wild rose
marginal beauty

Denise Bennet

The Pathway

This section welcomes haiku, senryu and occasionally tanka from both members and non-members of the Society. Each poem appears in the original language and at least one translation, which should be either English, French or German. (English, French and German are, of course, acceptable in the original versions, too.) Above all, *The Pathway* aims to internationalise "the haiku experience", and enable those to share in it who write and read some of the world's less-widely-spoken languages.

Bruce Leeming (Scots and English)

I' the snawie wynd
a chitterin gangrel:
lums reikin

In the snowy lane
a shivering vagrant:
chimneys smoking

Doon amang the birks
linties blythely jink:
cluds ahin the ben

Down in the birches
linnets happily flit:
clouds behind the hill

Cranreuch at daw
hoolets screichin - wraiths?
Aye, wi' toom wames

Hoar frost at dawn
owls screeching - ghosts? yes,
with empty bellies

Marijan Čekolj (Croat and English)

usred noći
bat koraka prolazi
kroz maglu

middle of the night
footsteps growing fainter
deep in the fog

u rano jutro
jureći autobusi
rastjeruju noć

daybreak --
furiously the buses
disperse the night

Dimitar Anakiev (Serbian and English)

Sivilo neba
ogleda se u bari
- Gugutka pije.

All grey the sky
reflecting in the puddle
a dove comes to drink.

Reč prijatelju
dode mi sa proletrnjom
kišom u sunrak.

A word for my friend
came with a spring shower
after dusk.

Marianne Kiauta (Dutch and English)

dat speciale licht
van die lange schaduw
over mijn voetsporen --
voor mij, onbetreden sneeuw
deze oudejaarsdag

that special light
cast by long shadows
over my footprints --
before me, untrodden snow
last day of the year

David Cobb (English) and Horst Koepsel (German)

by the letter-flap
a spider in its web
half-starved

am briefkastenschlitz
die spinne in ihrem netz
ist halb verhungert

Gabriel Rosenstock (Irish and English)

Foiche
moillíon ar éigean
-- rós dreoite

Wasp
barely lingering
-- withered rose

Aimiréal dearg
Ag geimhriú ar thairseach fuinneoige
Seolann scamail an earraigh

On the window sill
a red admiral hibernates --
billow-clouds of spring

Time For Tanka

darker than despair
- the moment just after
the moment you leave;
unripe fruit of the cherry
tossed to the ground by cold winds

relaxing
letting go of all the stress,
the final tape spools on;
finally discovering
I have let you go too

Susan Rowley



Ink drawing by
Doris Husband

like a little girl
almost afraid, you would turn
your face up
to be kissed
by the light of the moon

this is all there is
you said,
moments of joy -
scattered stars in the heavens
this moon in the sky

Frank Dullaghan

As I turn away
from an imploring stranger
I see my own face
there are my beseeching eyes
reflected in a window

On my fingers
the smell of Herb Robert
bring back memories
of furtive evening picnics
stolen from a cool larder

Patricia V Dawson



Brush painting by
Kazuo Gill

Awakening softly
With the deep red of sunrise,
Unfolding petals for you -
This rose of baccarat.

(Paris, 12/73)

Tito

Group 3 Rhododendron Ginkō

shakunage no / shiro ni masaru wa / nakari keru
no white compares to the white of the rhododendron! (Kozan)

Our haiku stroll took place in the teeth of a West Country gale on May 30th at Stourhead Gardens, situated very near the point at which the borders of Wiltshire, Dorset and Somerset intersect. The landscaped gardens, laid out in the eighteenth century, feature a good-sized lake, whose clear, spring-fed waters are the source of the River Stour and around whose shores are planted great glades of rhododendrons and azaleas. Our party numbered eight, a commendable turn out given the nature of the weather - a morning of high winds and horizontal rain! We strolled anti-clockwise round the lake in composition mode: then offered up our scribblings over a refectory lunch. The afternoon saw us visit the parish church, which was decked out in Pentecostal flowers, and then stroll clockwise round the wind-tossed lake while composing more haiku. Over our heads, the tender new leaves of magnificent trees danced wildly; beside the path, framing views of the lake, walls of incandescent orange, carmine, yellow, purple, white... The gale ameliorating, sunshine eventually appeared as if by revelation. As we left the gardens at the end of the day, the lake shone a brilliant silver. Thanks to local convenor, Brian Tasker, for arranging this productive meet.

SHG

In the painting of the water
Martins skim...

Out beyond the island
Of the painting of the water...

Tito

Moss on the stone wall
Silencing, befriending
The fall of raindrops...

[Isahikabe no, koke amaoto o, tomo to shite] *Satomi*

Sheltering from rain
in the country church -
a half-remembered tune

Brian

The wind drops...
rain comes straight down
through laburnum flowers

Martin

continued on page 29

Museum of Haiku Literature Award

The £50 prize, sponsored by the Museum of Haiku Literature, for the best haiku or senryu published in each issue of *Blithe Spirit*, has been won by Jackie Hardy with this haiku from the previous issue (April 1993):

startled in tall grass
the pheasant's wings beat
faster than my heart

Dee Evetts writes: "I had hoped to avoid the selection of a poem by one of the Society's officers. However, it would be standing impartiality on its head to pass over what I consider the strongest work in this issue. Jackie Hardy's haiku is a triumph of compression, the first line skilfully applicable to both poet and bird, the whole poem conveying a sense of mutual shock and at the same time of unity. This experience could so easily have been sentimentalised or intellectualised.

A close runner-up was Ruth Robinson's

above the tree-line
silence - only the whisper
of the chair-lift wheel

As it stands, this is very good. Take away the redundant 'silence' (try laying a pencil-tip over the word) and it would be resonant, masterly."

The selection from this issue will be made by Jim Norton.

Group 3 Rhododendron Ginkō

(continued from page 28)

To the little boy
In the shallows
The fish are all
Wagging their tails!

Tito

Rhododendron flowers -
Although now scattered on the ground,
Still their colour burns
[Shakunage ya, chirishikite nao, moe nokoru] *Satomi*

Book Review

Cold Moon; the erotic haiku of Gabriel Rosenstock (Brandon Books, Dingle, Co. Kerry, Republic of Ireland 1993, 96 pp. £7.95)

Giacomo Casanova was a man of many parts, though folklore has tended to celebrate only one of them. He, and perhaps Ovid, would have appreciated Gabriel Rosenstock's erotic verses, sniffy as they are with what Casanova would have termed 'the amorous juices'. That pair of ancients might just have missed a laconic sense of humour, though, which was such an important ingredient of their own erotic writings. Rosenstock is sensitive, sensuous, but always more or less serious.

To say that these verses are not haiku but closer to senryu is to cavil. (Quite a few of them, for example, are written as reminiscences in past tense.) To say that they also diverge from the generality of senryu is to add nothing. They should be taken generously as three-liners with a wide range of moods, from the salacious, physical bawdiness of

huge crimson sun
liquid on the horizon
your lips surround my member

or

brassiere
ridiculous object
until you put it on

to more reflective poems, such as

in exhausted brown leaves
i see her eyes
our love has laid us low

or

the littlest, most ordinary thing -
shaving your legs -
i stare at a blank page

The book is made very decorative by black-and-white pictures by Peter Sluis. He seeks to illustrate rather than complement from his own imagination. Representational forms dominate, but there are frequent more abstract motifs of the yoni type which we all wear

unselfconsciously on our Paisley-pattern skirts and ties. The illustrations, in rectangular boxes contrast with the tentacling verses on the opposite page; first in an English version, then in Irish.

Saxons amongst us will note wryly that this book is published with the support of the Irish Arts Council. Can you imagine their counterparts in the UK doing this?
DC

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David Elliott: *Wind in the Trees* (AHA Books, P O Box 767, Gualala, CA 95445, U S A. \$4.50)

David Elliott is currently Professor of English at a Pennsylvania college and widely-published in North American haiku magazines, where some of the poems included in this collection have already appeared. The poems are in fact grouped into ten sequences of varying length, with titles including 'For Gregory' (about the birth of - presumably - the author's son), 'Six Year's Geese', 'From Room to Room' (alone in a motel), 'From One Who Stayed Home' (which includes some tanka) and the title sequence.

Although in many cases the place of a poem in its sequence is clear enough, and the verse is thereby enhanced to a degree, others seem more obscure and a few feel as though they belong in another sequence. Regardless, the great majority (and there are 145) are capable of standing on their own. Compare Elliott's daffodil and rhododendron offerings with our home-grown verses in this issue:

Farm house long gone
daffodils blooming
where the door was

Through the runners
of a forgotten sled
daffodils

Rhododendron leaves
tightly curled a sparrow
puffs its feathers

In common with so many other haiku-poets, David Elliott is often concerned with the contrasts of life and death and the transitory nature of existence:

Some year
they won't find me here...
returning geese

Burial prayers
grandson playing hide and seek
behind the stones

Moment-of-birth face
wrinkled old man
come back again

The booklet runs to 36 pages and has a tall and thin 26 x 10.5 cm format, printed on an off-white paper. The quality of printing and binding is the usual high standard associated with AHA Books. It can be purchased direct or, probably, from the Bare Bones Press (see below).
RJG

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Brian Tasker: *Housebound in Nirvana* (Bare Bones Press, 16 Wren Close, Frome, Somerset BA11 2UZ. £ 4.50 postpaid - cheques payable to B Tasker)

Subtitled 'Fragments of an autobiography in tanka, haiku and other poems, Halloween 1988 - Spring 1991', this little collection appears actually to chart the birth, flourishing and passing of a love affair. The opening pages of poems (the birth and flourishing) are mainly tanka, a form traditionally associated with love poetry. Many are delightfully erotic:

fireside warmth and wine
urges endearments
from our lips
our breath fanning
the flames of desire

resting in the quiet
beating silence of our love
your hand seeks me
entreating an undying moment
to die again

But the affair, as so often, runs its brief course, ending in argument, hurt, parting and missing. As the tale unfolds, so haiku and other ultra-short forms come to predominate and there is more unsaid than said:

a pause in an argument
birdsong

arriving home knowing
that you've gone
yet, a rainbow

remembering her
still soft
beating rain

Interspersed with these verses, yet adding to the whole, are tanka and haiku covering more 'conventional' topics. There are just under 50 poems in 40 pages, the booklet measuring 14.5 x 10.5 cm in portrait format and handmade from the recycled materials, tactile covers and string binding that are now Bare Bones' hallmark. Another enjoyable, pocketable little item, worth adding to your personal library.
RJG



Journal - hand made in a garden shed in Bunyan Land