

Blithe Spirit



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The Editor welcomes submissions of poetry and articles by members of the **British Haiku Society** (non-members may submit for *The Pathway* section), on the understanding that these are not simultaneously under submission or consideration elsewhere. Please provide publication details of any item submitted which has already appeared in print. Copyright reverts to the author upon publication in *Blithe Spirit*.

Blithe Spirit is published four times a year, cover-dated February, May, August, November. The closing (in-hand) date for submissions for each issue is the first Saturday of the month prior to the cover date.

Editorial

The Blyth launch at Ilford was a great success and I hope those of you who were able to attend enjoyed it as much as I did. It was good to meet old friends and make new ones; put faces to haiku. As well as getting *The Genius of Haiku* underway, BHS revealed its exhibit **Signposts to Haiku**. Preparing this exhibition has occupied some members of the committee and other members of BHS for several months. It is an excellent piece of work and they are to be congratulated. As it is designed to go 'on tour', I hope all members will eventually get an opportunity to form their own impressions. It certainly attracted attention at the launch. Our hosts were the London Borough of Redbridge who were pleased that we had brought RH Blyth, one of their sons, to their notice. The event was admirably catered by Panne Cobb and a family of her neighbours. To all who were involved behind, in front of and alongside the scenes, a big thank you. On with selling the book...

It would seem a good time to restate some Blithe Spirit policy. The editor welcomes submissions of haiku etc., in reasonable quantities, no more than twelve, either separately or on one sheet of paper, accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles should be up to 1000 words, ideally shorter. Longer articles will be accepted, but the editor reserves the right to shorten them. Books for review should be sent directly to the editor; a review may be commissioned, especially if books contain haiku etc which follow the BHS Consensus or, when books are to be widely distributed, either contain 'haiku' which radically depart from the Consensus or pursue an interesting experimental line.

Many of you were inspired by *dogs* this time. A smaller creature, *the spider*, will be the motif for the next issue. The season corner will be *Spring*.

Jackie Hardy

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Season Corner: Winter

This east wind day
My soft shawl
Smelling of Africa

Cicely Hill

winter deepens
tonight's moon
a little thinner

Nika

The rooks are early
into light
cawing the day

E D Glover

my sister calls
across a darkened field
the cold wind
takes her voice

Susan Rowley

stacked up higher
than distant mountains...
firewood for winter

disappearing slowly
under the evening snow
the halted freight train

Kohjin Sakamoto

New Year laughter
resolutions: at dawn
still raining

Bruce Leeming

fat ewes waiting...
at the empty trough
two buzzards perch

David Walker

Winter solstice:
the darkness closes in
against the church bells.

Katherine Gallagher

too cold, we turn back,
facing the moon
and our trail
of fractured puddles

David Blaber

from leafless trees
crow follows crow
into a cold wind

Martin Lucas

Sorbus from China
berries mistaken for leaves
in the year end light

Dermot O'Brien

school Christmas play —
the sheep's eyes goggling
at the angels' news

David Cobb

Out on the snow
Deer and man:
Green sphagnum
And orange peel.
(Hackhurst Downs, Surrey, 2/79)

Tito

Darkness at noon,
more rain floods the field,
confusing the ducks

Patricia V Dawson

only myself
in the train windows
these dark evenings

Frank Dullaghan

winter rush-hour —
rebounding from the pavement
illuminated rain

Annie Bachini

Rusty narrow gauge smoke drifts
curving silently from my neighbour's chimney
through winter woods morning rain

Ken Jones

after the blizzard
a calm freezing morning
small arrow footprints

Doris L Ambrose

Brian Tasker's poems are little chinks in space-time. Behind the commonplace observations we are offered a glimpse of deep order, a resonance faintly heard in some world of the heart.

He has a distinct mode of perceiving. He is alert for the traces of things hidden behind the veil, traces which disappear almost before we see them. He calls it watching *'the edge of unfolding'*. Haiku, for Brian Tasker, is a way for us *'to question our usual way of seeing things'*. It is a form of meditation; a way of attending to what is usually hidden behind the defences of a life lived out of focus. *'Concealed in the most ordinary day is an endless stream of insights just waiting to be noticed - but when we are available'*. But how does one cultivate an enlightened form of seeing? Brian Tasker's answer is through haiku as a spiritual practice. His way of articulating this most elusive of skills is to say one tries *'to make a quantum leap between seeing and seeing, without the mind between'*. He uses the parallel of Zen Buddhism, a discipline leading to a direct pointing to reality, *'or seeing things as they are without ourselves in the way'*, as he puts it.

When Brian Tasker has these cleansed moments of perception he is struck most of all by the impermanence of things: the realisation that everything is in the process of change. This is a most unusual angle of vision of a Westerner. It is not the same as the poetic theme of mutability. Christian culture recognises the slow rhythms of rise and fall in the span of a human lifetime and sees death as final and tragic. The seasons have their annual rhythms and become symbols of regular and predictable change, but we grow up in the West to assume that there is continuity in ourselves and in the world around us. It is rare for us to feel that every second a new world is born, that we are continually in transformation and that every loss is regeneration, an occasion for sadness but not for holding on to the past, or despair.

This is Brian Tasker's poetic theme.

after the cloudburst
the stillness
drops on the laurel

Brian Tasker has been attracted to melancholy from childhood, but it is only in recent years that his sense of the transience of all things has become the centre of his writing. He dates it to a particular experience. *'In a moment I saw that everything exists in a state of potential between coming and going. That is what I mean by the tension that haiku should have. The natural limit is the span of one breath. The space of one breath is the coming and going during which everything changes.'*

The perception translates into Brian's account of how one writes a haiku. *'In the first line you set the scene. Then you express the change and express the discontinuity - a shift in consciousness, like a shock - that takes you away for a moment and brings you back. Things have changed irreversibly in that time.'*

His way of defining change draws upon Buddhist terms: *'The present moment is beyond our control: in a constant state of transition between form and emptiness - arising and ceasing.'*

Form and emptiness are the mysterious poles of Buddhism's key sacred text, *The Heart Sutra*, which asserts their interpenetration in a final unity: *'Form is emptiness and the very same emptiness is the form ... whatever is a form is empty, whatever is empty is a form ... All things are in themselves empty.'* Brian Tasker glosses form as *'anything'* and emptiness as *'what it comes from and returns to.'* In his pamphlet *Haiku and Zen* he quotes a Zen Master who wrote:

From death, the situation returns to the state of unconsciousness, or chaos.

and adds himself: *'this human life is an interlude in chaos'*. His view is perhaps like that of another analogy often quoted in Buddhism: waves rise out of the ocean and then return to it; they take a distinct form, though still made of the substance of 'emptiness', and then return to the flux.

To Brian these are not abstruse ideas; they are not ideas at all. They are an experience of change and loss and renewal vividly felt in the minutiae of daily life. The same process unfolds in the heart and in nature and the two are harmoniously connected.

a moment of thunder
here and there
raindrops dampen the dust

Brian Tasker's new book of poems, *Woodsmoke*, from which this is taken (reviewed BS Vol 3 No 4), his third book in three years, has the epigraph - 'This life is fleeting ... haiku are nostalgia for that which we cannot grasp.'

The title poem is like a late Monet showing a world of fleeting intermingled elements, beautifully balanced, all of which will dissolve and be transformed:

a light rain -/into the evening mist/woodsmoke

Brian Tasker, with this publication, has now arrived as the most accomplished of the new wave of haikai. At the heart of his writing he has his distinctive perception of the transient, but he is also a master of language, with a poet's instinct for the weight and flavour of a word and a perfectly judged discretion about what to leave out. He has developed a form of public performance called "Haiku Meditation" which has taught his ear a great deal about the sound-shape of a haiku, dropped into silence. He is skilful with the ambiguously moving middle line, and achieves profound effects with the use of incomplete or faulty syntax to enact the subject:

high tide:
over and over
the shifting shingle

As a boy, Brian was a natural loner and hated school. The effective outcome was in childhood, he says, he *'felt 'outside' of the world'*. I detect two legacies of this period in his mature poetry: the note of sadness seems a yearning for re-attachment; and the absolute objectivity of his observations owes something to the eye developed by an outsider looking with dry detachment on the world.

He left school at 15 and got an apprenticeship in the jewellery trade in Hatton Garden. In the 60s he wandered in India and flirted with Eastern religion. He discovered poetry in 1967. Returned from India, he became a junior manager, married and had two children. After 8 years his marriage failed. He started his own very successful business and married again. Financial pressure and the recession in 1990 *'burned out both marriage and business'*. His world collapsed leaving him adrift. He eventually emerged *'with a strong interest in the process of loss and change'*. Brian volunteered for hospice work which he felt *'grounded me and helped to put my own grief into perspective'*. Out of loss and change in his personal life Brian found his poetic theme.

Housebound in Nirvana is a sequence of love poems which chronicles the period up to the crisis and recovery. It is a first book and the reader can feel a poet learning fast and groping towards his voice. *'It was during this period that I met Kevin Bailey, who encouraged my writing and suggested my work lacked tension. This was key advice and transformed my work'*. So, suddenly, two-thirds of the way through *Housebound*, one comes upon the authentic sound of Brian Tasker, zinging with tension.

a pause in an argument
birdsong

By the end of the book Brian had found that haiku, not tanka, was his form.

Within a year he had written a second book, *Notes from a Humdrum*. The voice is so sure now that at least a dozen of the poems are works of art. There is a new note of self-deprecating humour.

angry at the cat...
washing itself

The meditative enlightenment expressed through haiku has none of the finality of our familiar genres - the epigrammatic ending of a sonnet, the self-dramatising insight of the lyric, the heroic ending of a tragedy, the solution to a detective story - it is always unfinished and it is always 'nothing special' (a favourite phrase the Zen masters use about their vision.). It represents an insight into how the beautiful stillness, called 'the empty' in the Sutra, lives in and under and beyond every thing and its presence can sometimes be felt. But to those who perceive it, it is not a melodramatic revelation, even less a 'solution', just a grateful sense of being 'inside' the world of the ordinary, at last, instead of 'outside'.

Brian Tasker has a vivid perception of the haiku spirit and a conviction of the centrality of the theme of change. In the Japanese tradition, change is one of the great themes, but certainly not the only one; nevertheless it is the one which Brian has found generates his poetry. He sees it as his mission now to guard the haiku spirit, which he does by editing *Bare Bones*, by throwing 'righteous anger' into his book reviews (*'I am not prepared to stand idly by and see haiku diluted down to personal taste'*), by teaching his vision of the haiku of transience with the conviction of an evangelical preacher (though perception is not something you can really teach), and by publishing his poems. Let us give a big welcome to *Woodsmoke* and hope that the years to come are very productive - and not too full of changes.

Sources of quotations from Brian Tasker are from talks he has given, conversations, letters, *Bare Bones*, *The Bare Bones Haiku Guidelines* and *Haiku and Zen*. *Housebound in Nirvana*, 1992, *Notes from a Humdrum*, 1992, *Haiku and Zen*, 1992, *Woodsmoke*, 1993 and *Bare Bones* magazine are all available from the *Bare Bones* Press, 16 Wren Close, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2UZ

Dogs

Sleet now in the rain —
the fat old dog looks round
for its older master

Petrouchka

Sunday morning —
fingers read teethmarks
in the headlines

through stained glass
sunlight rainbows
the mongrel's coat

Jackie Hardy

sunny spring park
every dog running
before its master

Kohjin Sakamoto

fat whelp sleeps
in the gaunt lad's lap...
a begging bowl

David Walker

To pass a dog gently
Over a fence
Is one of the pleasures
Of the wandering journey.
(After Basho, Fulham, London 2/72)

Tito

the old man's dog
walks through the snow

alone

Ruby Spriggs

walking the dog,
Nelson bounds from tree to tree —
aroma therapy

my canine haiku
perfect in last night's dream —
doggerel!

Charles Brien

turning round
every few barks
— the stray and the stranger

Chris Mulhern

Only a black dog
goes plunging into the sea
this November day.

Walking my friend's dog
I am shown where his mistress lives
and which is his pub.

Eric Speight

a dog with a leaf in its mouth
looks back
at its owner

Fred Schofield

There are several aspects to Colin Blundell's article, (BS Vol 3 No 4), which I found interesting and which reinforced some of my perspectives on haiku: in particular, its relation to the unconscious.

I have an eclectic perception of the unconscious and see it incorporating all life experiences and the perceptions of the child, the adolescent, the adult and the parent in different phases; these perceptions coming from the senses, feeling, thinking and intuition. In addition I believe it operates on at least two dimensions (what people call the higher and lower unconscious) and probably more.

My understanding of what happens in a haiku moment is that something in the external world triggers an aspect of the unconscious which relates to the past, the present or, possibly, even the future. It may relate to the unresolved or resolved of the past and present and to different possibilities for the future. Where the writer is literally positioned, in relation to the subject, can, as I understand it, not only affect their perception of the material world, but also, which aspect/s of the unconscious is/are triggered.

For example, my own experience informs me that if something 'hits' me when I turn my head to look behind me, it triggers something of the past which is resolved, at least in one of the elements, ie senses, feeling, thinking or intuition. Equally, when I am parallel to a subject, it is almost certainly about the present and I usually find this a more powerful experience. It does not happen often. However, I do not rate any of my experiences as being better than another; just different.

We all enjoy and relate to different types of haiku. For me the haiku which contain a feeling sensitivity to the subject (and dialectically to the writer) are the ones which affect me the most (not that a description of the feelings is necessarily expressed within the haiku — that doesn't leave space for the reader). Another person may relate to haiku with more of a thinking component. And it may be that haiku which capture all four elements are the ones which are universally appreciated.

I do not have a set formula for all this — I wish I did! But I do have moments, very similar to haiku moments, which say to me, either almost immediately after the haiku moment, or when I am reading an old haiku, something like: "That is finished now", "That is about 'whatever'", "That is a child speaking". Obviously, I do not have these insights about every haiku, but it has occurred enough times to convince me that the process is happening.

Incidentally, at the time of the initial haiku moment, although aware of being affected by something 'out there', I am not always aware of what it is that has affected me. On these occasions I have to wait until unconscious informs conscious before I can even write the haiku.

I realise that other people will use a different framework to understand the haiku experience and I hope that as many perspectives as possible will be seen on the pages of **Blithe Spirit**.

Erratum

Vol 4 No 1, p 16, 4 lines from the bottom: should read 'the poet's presence is not apparent'.

Gorse Blossoms

"when gorse is out of bloom, kissing's out of fashion."

other seasons, all seasons, no seasons, haiku *et al.*

old churchyard —
more trees standing
than headstones

Richard Goring

Mist on the ridge:
in my hands, under my feet
the mountain crumbles

Cool summer —
cicadas singing
even in the rain

Mokuo Nagayama

His springtime voice
Keeping me company again this year —
The death-watch beetle

Cicely Hill

dawn —
the smell of wild horses
permeates the fog

Nika

under the tree
the displaying wren's shadow
lurks and imitates

Ruth Robinson

fitful west wind
emerging moth clings
to its tattered cocoon

Jean Jorgensen

Wednesday market —
the smell of onions
in the mackerels' eyes

David Cobb

a shell on my desk —
the sea roars
in the city

Frank Dullaghan

Night in the tropics —
the half moon — its other half
dropped in the lagoon.

Metallic rustlings —
the fronds of the seaside palm groves —
a wind from the north

James Kirkup

Momentarily
on a layer of the wind —
faint breath of mugwort

Makoto Tamaki
(Translated by James Kirkup)

in the dark
sitting with my rubber plant
listening to the rain

the taste of tea —
shadows gather in the room
before dusk comes

George Marsh

my terror of the bat in the rafters
terror

Ruby Spriggs

crossing the bombarded bridge
one by one in starlight
refugees

Kohjin Sakamoto

Moving the slabs —
the young frogs stare up at me,
fingers spread

Jim Norton

A Bit of Both

A Temple Monkey

Can a verse be both haiku and senryu at the same time? If a haiku is a singularity, attracting and retaining both material and the gazer; and senryu a nova, throwing out light and indeed the reader too, along the skyways of wit; then surely every piece must be either one or the other, and the 'haisen' postulated by some theorists is not possible. If it were, the two opposite states, self-oblivion and critical wit, would have to be either held together by some powerful force, or else alternate in rapid pulsation. Let's look:

old folks' outing —		people holding
wheelchairs and walking sticks		doors open
in each other's way	DC	in each other's way FS

These two pieces (from BS 3/1) might have been written as test cases. Does the first laugh at the ineptitude of the old and their attendants? No. Rather, we cheerfully join in the vigorous confusion. The change of feeling turns this piece back into haiku. The second, in spite of the ambiguous helpfulness, seems at first similar, but there is an ambiguity in *in each other's way*. They are imitating each other: the courtesy is comical, and the verse senryu. So, in another piece by FS (BS 3/2)

cut back tree / holds its stubs / to the sky

at first we see only two images of distress overlaying each other; but it is finally clear that these exist to express the outrage of the third image - the public employee whose cheque-books have been emptied by Thatcherite cuts.

It seems that the 'haisen' is extremely unstable and can rarely exist for more than about 2 seconds. It resolves into either a haiku giving off a faint hiss of psycho/socio comment; or a senryu surrounded by a slight gravity. Let's try 2 more pieces:

with fly-crammed beak
the martin swooping down
towards my gape

DC

the leaf in your hair
brightens the do of it
this autumn morning

CB

The first (BS 3/2) appears to record a moment of arrested time: surely haiku! Yet we must remember it is not DC, nor the martin, that experiences this, but we observers. Obviously a lot depends on whether DC manages to close his mouth in time. A similar point must be made about CB's piece (BS 4/1): leaf, do and autumn suggest senryuesque reflections on Nature, Art and Transience; while we are left gazing on a leaf in the hair of the inamorata. Isn't this haiku? Well, no: what we the observers are in fact seeing is a man paying an affectionate, genial compliment, perhaps with that very slight touch of irony which often creeps into long-term relationships; clearly this is another senryu.

Let's continue the search outside our own little habitat:

An empty can
rolling in the empty car
of the day's last train

Mokuo Nagayama

a pot of mash
heating on the old stove
for the third time

Rujana Makuta

The first (BS 3/1) suggests various emotions: we have ridden that last train; nay, have *been* that empty can. Yet, whatever our feelings, we end just watching the can, about to take another roll. The 'pot of mash' (BS 4/1) appears at first sight similar. Yet for RM the inspiration came from the facts that it was only mash, twice re-heated, on the stove for which, had it been modern, no electricity would have been available. The *pot au feu* is not necessarily a sign

of war and deprivation, yet so seen, it becomes, in combination with its more homely associations, an object of intense contemplation. This seems to be a haiken of the first hypothetical type, where the inward and outward impulses are in stasis.

Do readers agree? If so, they should write, in the first instance, to *Nature*. Now for the monkey puzzles:

empty carriage
every seat bearing
a 'reserved' slip

Richard Goring

pouring
into tea
Easter sun

Kohjin Sakamoto

1. Was Richard Goring's piece (BS 3/1) wrongly classified as senryu? Well, it all depends on whether you have a seat yourself. If so, then this is one of those wry comments on the human comedy which brings home to us that we're basically all right. But no seat! And all those reserved solidly from King's Cross to Doncaster! The homeliness of those empty orange seats is a mockery. For me this was a Gorse Pulsar.

2. A reward of £5 will be paid for the best analysis, comment, companion piece, 2-line continuation, Zen riposte, or piece of monkey work on this haiku (?) by KS from 'Fire' the 1993 members' anthology.

The Pathway

This section welcomes haiku, senryu and tanka from any one — member of BHS or not. Each poem should be in two different language versions — the ORIGINAL (any language) and the TRANSLATION(S) (English, French or German). The Pathway aims to link those writing in widely-spoken and less widely-spoken languages.

Alain Kervern (French) and Gabriel Rosenstock (Irish)

Il pleut noir
Les ombres s'accroupissent
Au fond de l'aube

Báisteach dhubh
scáthanna ar a ngogaide
i gclais an mhaidneachain

Flotilla d'étoiles
Une comète se détache
Du silence

Loingeas réaltaí
Scinneann cóiméad
As an tost

Ertore José Palmero (Spanish and English)

El viejo parque
y el otoño. La tarde
y nuestro adiós.

The ancient park
and the autumn. The
afternoon
and our farewells.

Un bote ondula
el agua, y las formas
del puente danzan.

A rowboat ripples
the water, and the bridges
dance on their arches.

Kevin Maynard (English and French)

On the other side
Of the *Pont de l'Abattoir*:
Rallaye freezers hum.

De l'autre côté
Du Pont de l'Abattoir:
Des frogos ronronnent.

David Cobb (English) and Horst Koepsel (German)

stained glass windows —
the laid-up flags fade
in coloured light

soldatenkirche —
im farbigen sonnenstrahl
bleichen die fahnen

Pierre-Berenger Biscaye (French) and James Kirkup (English)

Une feuille d'automne annonce
sous la porte entr'ouverte
l'arrivée du facteur!

Autumn leaf under
an open door announces
the postman's coming

Un oiseau sur le balcon attendait
le prochain vol de feuilles
vers l'automne..

On the balcony
a bird waiting for the next
leaf-flight to autumn

Marianne Kiauta (Dutch) and David Cobb (English)

het zompig moeras
hoe innig het afscheid neemt
van mijn lieslaarzen

the glutinous swamp —
how reluctant its farewells
to my galoshes

(Readers of Dutch will like Marianne's recent collection of haiku, senryu and tanka, 'Tule Voor De Berberis', pub. Ursus, Bilthoven, Netherlands, 1993 (ISBN 90-73527-02-3).)

Senryu Pie

Moving house
I pretend this stretch of river
Is the one I dreamed of

Cicely Hill

Proud and preening
in the seven-pocket jeans
— "Tickets please..."

Susan Rowley

inside the cuffs
of her late husband's pants
sand and soil

Ruby Spriggs

rain-trapped in the house
they can't escape each other
only the clock speaks

Eric Speight

guilt-laden shoppers
shrinking past the bag lady —
heading for their homes

Charles Brien

evening class —
the recent divorcee
sculptures a kiss

in his menopause
purchasing Valentines
in packs of five

David Cobb

after they have gone
still hearing voices
in the room above

Annie Bachini

missed it the moment to join in the laugh

George Marsh

shivery and ill;
the chill of the toilet seat
pierces like ice

David Steele

Cold tea
in a cold cup
paperwork

Ken Jones

two double bass players
— hands prepared for an entry —
sway to the opera

a 2CV starting
repeats and crescendos —
I smile in my bed

Fred Schofield

At the climax
of Othello
a teenager sleeps

Bruce Leeming

Museum of Haiku Literature Award

The £50 prize sponsored by the Museum of Haiku Literature for the best haiku or senryu published in the February 1994 issue has been won by Martin Lucas.

evening hush...

a tabby cat

slips through the railings

cars race noisily

into

the gentleness of drizzle

Stephen Gill writes: The question is: which of these two haiku is *better*? The answer that comes is neither; both are technically unimproveable and effervesce that rare 'quality' of awe and mystery - *yūgen* - one finds in the works of Bashō, Buson and Kyoshi. And why bother to choose, anyway... for both poems are the work of a single poet! Congratulations Martin Lucas... and thanks! You have allowed us to be party to two more of your numinous Secrets of Silence.

Cicely Hill selects from this issue.

Mushy Snow

Matsutake ya shiranu ko-no-ha o hebaritsuku
Stuck to
The armillaria mushroom
The leaf
Of an unknown tree. *Bashō*

Six poets — three British and three Japanese — set out from Abinger in Surrey on September 26th, bearing wicker baskets and haiku notebooks.

Murasame ni nobana to shimeji kago no naka
In the basket,
Beneath an autumn shower —
Wildflowers and champignons. *Ayzen*

Murasakidake kuraki miyama no tsuyu himeshi
In the tiny purplish mushroom,
All of the dampness,
All of the twilight,
Of some distant forest floor. *Tito*

At the journey's end we enjoyed a feast, seated on a rug beneath a beech tree around the pan-crowned stove:

Shita-saki de aki o korogasu take no en
With the tip of my tongue,
Rolling round
The 'autumn' —
The mushroom party *Satomi*

Nearly two months later, on November 21st:

On a falling snow morning ...
As people awake,
The lights in each house,
So golden.

Tito

On Hampstead Heath, in North London, the snow lay undisturbed by wind - four clean inches on the ground, and nearly as much on the branches of the trees:

Wakuraba mo asahi ni keburu yuki-yanagi
Ayzen

In the first rays of the sun,
Discovering
The still-green willows
Dusted with snow.

Tito

A pine-clad tumulus, an ancient oak, a flock of long-tailed tits, a final shower of snow — these were amongst the sights we recorded as we wound our way slowly back towards the warm, welcoming house of one of our number, where, as the late autumn sun outside began to undo the frozen whiteness (the snow had all but disappeared by mid afternoon), we drafted and shared our verses sitting on the floor around a low table.

After being kissed,
The ancient oak
Adds to the poet's hat
Leaf and snow.

Adele

SHG (A shortened version - Ed)

Tanka

on the walk home
streets empty of people
stars hidden
and the half-moon soft-edged
through haze

awake past midnight
I feel the odd vertigo
of being alone
the balcony light flickers
high above: a few faint stars

Martin Lucas

a distant train
in the early morning;
returning to bed
I feel the fading warmth
of your place beside me

Susan Rowley

Rejecting help
intent on feeding herself
the old woman
flutters towards her mouth
another spoonful

E D Glover

The cherry flowers,
I can remember each spring
and every prayer
I whispered as summer passed
without a fruiting

Patricia V Dawson

And just as I close my gate,
Away down the valley
The festival drums cease ...
And the night fog
Feels moist on my face.
(Kujira, Nikko, 4/83)

Tito

REVIEWS

BLUE BAMBOO, James Kirkup, Hub Editions, 11 The Ridgway, Flitwick, Beds, MK45 1DH, 73pp, £5.75

James Kirkup's new book is divided into three sections — part one haiku, part two haiku sequences and part three tanka. In the first section the haiku are five to a page and are mostly 5-7-5. Many of these haiku moments have been inspired by people, writers and painters, and exotic places, Spain, Japan, Mongolia. The haiku sequence is an interesting form and gives time and space to explore a subject. I liked, particularly, the *Mount Fuji* and the *tatami* sequences. In a note at the beginning James suggests that 'Drinking sake and getting drunk is not really suitable for *tanka*, but the four poems on that subject just happened to come out that way.' Of course they did, James. Cheers!

JAH

SUMMER HEAT, Bill Wyatt, A4, photocopied, unbound, 22p

Having given a measure of praise to Bill's 'botanical-haikuical travelogue', 'Spring Ephemerals', in Vol 4 No 1, I now wish I'd known he had something better up his sleeve: 'Summer Heat'. (This too is now in the Loan Collection.)

Briefly, then, Bill traces some of the steps of John Clare around his native Northamptonshire. He looks for the same wild plants as did this 'finest of Britain's minor naturalists and the finest naturalist of all Britain's poets', and stirs them into a winsome brew of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic onomastics, Greek and Latin botany, Culpepper herbalism, English folklore, Clare's poems and journals, the translated haiku of (chiefly) Buson and Issa, and his own haiku. A unique and definitely English source of inspiration to anyone who might want to write a haibun. DJC

BREATHING WITH THE MIND: VERSES IN SENRYU AND HAIKU STYLE, Kenneth Verity, Element, Shaftesbury, 1993, 120pp £6.99

A collection of three-liners by the author, tending towards senryu, of poor expression, often requiring explanation and of ultimate 'so-what-ness'. These three-line musings are buttressed with chapters on 'The History and Origins of Haiku and Senryu', 'Composing S&H', and a 'Glossary of Terms'. The last is, honestly, not that bad, excepting the confusing and unnecessary differentiations he makes between *renku* and *renga*, *tanka* and *waka*. There's a bit too much 'sadness' for my liking in his definitions of *sabi*, *yūgen* and so forth, too. Rather more importantly *haiku* itself is described as: "a 17-syllable poem arranged in lines of 5-7-5", but, since *onji* are not syllables and there is no lineation in Japanese, this definition needs revision. It also fails to take into account that the majority of Western haijin are writing in free-form. He also talks of a haiku as *a formal statement* — misleading, to say the least.

As a means of producing a haiku, he tells us to: "Sit quietly with pad and pencil in hand, close the eyes and let such moments come." This is a recipe for fantasy.

I feel this book is a positive DANGER to the public's perception of haiku. Please boycott this book FOR HAIKU'S SAKE! SHG

FROGS SINGING, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 17pp, \$3ppd.

This little book (4 x 5.5.in.) is well produced and contains some 26 haiku/senryu. Some I found quite easy to identify with: summer rain on & on & on others less so, they are much more Canadian in flavour. Most are good, some are excellent. My favourite: driftwood knot staring back JAH

NEW ZEALAND HAIKU ANTHOLOGY, ed. Cyril Childs, *The New Zealand Poetry Society Inc., Wellington, 1993, 83pp.*

It's hard not to be envious of NZ haijin — their Poetry Society not only recognises them, it publishes them, too. This first anthology contains some 154 haiku which represents the work of 19 haijin, their biographies, an introduction by the editor; some notes on the Japanese masters and the contemporary North American scene, a sample criticism and guidelines for writing haiku. All the haijin are accomplished poets and the subjects of their work is wide-ranging. Some contributions, like Alan Wells' two word haiku, are too close to the boundaries for this editor, but most would fit into the pages of BS without receiving special notice. Altogether, an excellent production. A quote from the guidelines:

"Revise and revise. It is a rare haiku that cannot be improved in one way or another." JAH



Price £1.50



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