

Blithe Spirit



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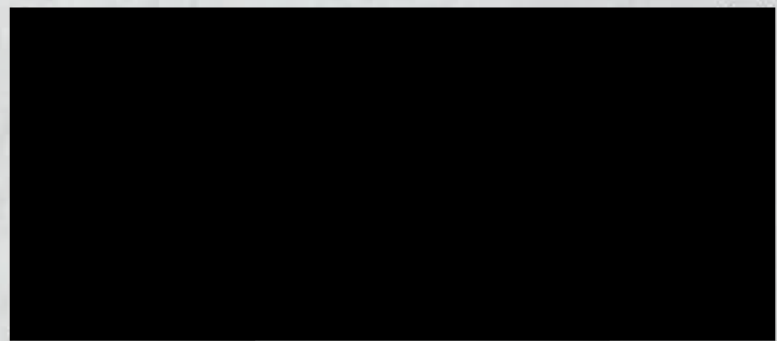
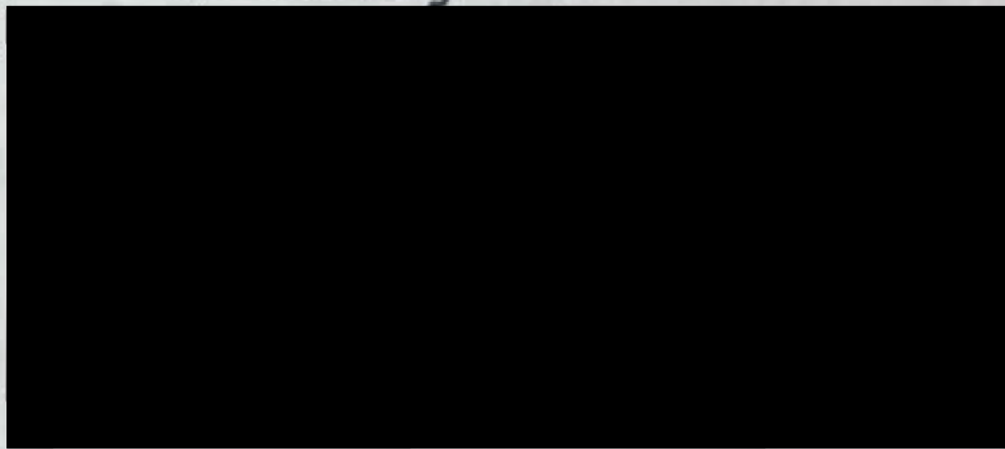
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Volume 4 Number 4 November 1994

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Blithe Spirit welcomes, and exists as a forum for, diverse statements about the writing and appreciation of haiku and kindred forms of verse. The Editor takes entire responsibility for the selection of items for publication.

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Editorial

I read, recently, a review of our journal in which Blithe Spirit was described as the organ of the British Haiku Society. It went on, but this part seemed, to me, to be the most interesting. As poets will, I speculated a little on the word and before I knew it I was involved in full-blown fantasy along body lines. Which organ was it? The heart? The mouth? The eyes or ears? The brain? The reproductive regions where creativity might be expected to reside? The lungs? I was prepared to go along with any of these. Just so long as the author didn't have the appendix in mind.

*

Several readers have proposed a letters page. This may happen next time if I receive any that are both interesting and short.

Keep sending your favourite haiku.

The additional theme next time will be **horses**. The Season Corner will be **autumn**.

May I be the first to wish you Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Jackie Hardy

Season Corner: Summer

skittering along
ahead of me
cicada-husk

tossed away
by the summer gale
a whale's spume

Kohjin Sakamoto

Through the open door
a cool scent — and the ceaseless
sound of summer rain

David Steele

a dab of red
in the leafy garden:
the gnome's hat

Martin Lucas

tiny black flies
return again and again
to the bright blue bag

Annie Bachini

tormentil sprinklings
all along the mountain path
the sound of water

Norman Barraclough

the massive copper beech
is never so still
as in this drizzle

George Marsh

This last hot week
Slashed across the barleyfield
Patches of ripeness

Cicely Hill

In vain
an ant trying to climb
the sand mound

Yasuhiko Shigemoto

evening by the river —
red-varnished toenails
sinking into silt

David Cobb

a swan's wing lifts
spreads — moisture
cools the breathless air

Bamboo Shoot —

in the lay-by summer's first heat
tethered in gypsy's lace in the lid of the sun cream
the traveller's horse scrunch of last year's beach

Jackie Hardy

estuary
the artist's brush
catches the hot sun

Ruth Robinson

Hanging basket twists
fuchsias geraniums
geraniums fuchsias

Patricia V Dawson

At eye-level
a patch of daisies
on the uncut grass

Katherine Gallagher

SOAS/BHS Bashō Symposium

In the absence of a formal report I thought it would be appropriate to publish some haiku inspired by the event in July.

The old tea master
with a wart on his nose —
grace of a heron

Two pigeons drop in
on the Bashō symposium —
laughter in haiku

Bill Wyatt

lingering
after the Bashō Day —
the teamaster's smile

Annie Bachini

JAH

Bashō, Doggerel and the Personal Content of Haiku

Colin Blundell

The universe is real for us all and dissimilar to each one of us... it is not one universe, but millions, almost as many as the number of human eyes and brains in existence, that awake every morning... Proust

I must create my own system or be enslaved by somebody else's... Blake

In 1893, Masaoka Shiki dismissed 9/10ths of what Bashō wrote as 'doggerel' and drew attention to Bashō's 'limited perspectives':-

...he discarded scenes which arise from imagination and are outside observation, as well as human affairs he had not experienced [which shows] that Bashō's realm was rather small... He simply took himself as his basic poetic material and went no further than expressing the truth of objects related to him. In modern terms, such poverty of observation is really laughable...

Before getting all hot under the collar about this heresy, we ought to examine Shiki's frame of reference: Bashō, he says, opts for **Simple Beauty**:-

On the dead limb
squats a crow —
autumn night

Buson, he says, gives us comparatively **Precise Beauty**:-

the bushwarbler
sings, its
small mouth opening

Bashō's *mental program* goes for the large canvas while Buson has the microscopic. Observe the difference! Taken together, they seem like a complete response to Shiki's advice to *haijin*:-

...You must not stop when you have managed to extract one or two poems from some broad view. Next you must look down at your feet and write about what you see there — the grass, the flowers in bloom. If you write about each, you will have ten or twenty poems without moving from where you are. Take your materials from what is around you — if you see a dandelion, write about that; if it's misty, write about the mist. The materials for poetry are all about you in profusion.

Whilst he does not use the phrase, Shiki also suggests that Bashō's *mental program* gives him **Objective Truth**, so limiting his ability to harness **Imaginative Truth**. Bashō has the objective truth of

Summer rain —
on the hut-wall traces
of poem-cards.

whereas Buson, says Shiki, gives us the imaginative truth of the concealed simile, blowing all the simplistic strictures about 'no similes in haiku':-

harvest moon —
a rabbit crossing
Suwa Lake

Moonlight glinting on waves gives the impression of a white rabbit leaping about.

In her book on Shiki, Jane Beichman points out that his aim is 'to take raw materials from nature, then [refine] them and [make] them part of his imagination', getting closer to his own psychological reality.

Here are three modern examples of 'imaginative truth':-

look, a lugworm	Forests of smiles
angling its golden tunnel	fall through his open fingers
towards France (DC)	never to be caught again (JK)

Wind designs the pond
while beyond a warbler sings
in soft willow greens (JWH)

As a result of life-experience, all human beings, black, white, Zen, Serb, Eskimo, run a personally selected variety of *mental programs*: for example, some people focus on **Specifics**, others focus more vaguely on **Generalities**. Bashō may fail the Shiki test but he certainly demonstrates mental athleticism in other ways, here by focussing on **Specifics**:-

However close I look,
not a speck on
white chrysanthemum.

And here he is, unfocussed, going for **Generalities**:-

Waves scaling
Sado Island —
heaven's stream.

Another program continuum that's easy to illustrate from Bashō (and any self-respecting haiku-writer) is that of **Difference** ↔ **Similarity**. It is, in a practical sense, useful to identify where a person stands in relation to something that is novel to them — especially if you're in the business of trying to convince them that it might be advantageous, to their careers, say, to embrace novelty with enthusiasm. If, in order to cope with what's called 'cognitive dissonance', the racket in the brain resulting from having to think new thoughts, people expend their energy trying to identify whether something novel is **similar to** or **different from** what they've experienced in the past they will be too mentally exhausted to even begin to grasp the New; it is especially a problem if they decide that the new thing, whatever it might be, is similar to what they've known in the past and therefore not worth the effort — they may miss a valuable opportunity for growth.

Bashō regularly takes his readers through **Difference** ↔ **Similarity** by writing haiku that rely on **Difference** for their effect:-

High wind — tea
leaves whip against
the brushwood gate.

Yellow rose petals
thunder —
a waterfall.

and haiku that rely on Similarity to make their point:-

Spring moon —
flower face
in mist.

Early autumn —
rice field, ocean
one green.

The perception of contrast is fundamental to haiku which encapsulates its tension more directly than the self-conscious simile familiar to Western intellectual thought; in haiku, the paradoxical barriers set up by the 'like' of a simile are down, or rather *never erected*.

The serious activity of reading haiku is good for the soul: it can help you increase your repertoire of choices: if you habitually run a 'Think-big' program, you will have to 'chunk down' to minutiae; if you are a 'Minutiae' person, you will be obliged to 'chunk up' to 'Enormity':-

Rainy days —
silkworms droop
on mulberries

and, sometimes, in doing so, you will have to cross the visual-auditory divide to arrive at a curiously deep kinaesthetic sensation so that all your senses are engaged:-

Clear night, sound
of cloth-pounding
hails the Big Dipper.

I am suggesting that the most important mark of excellence in a haiku-writer is not the religious toeing of some desiccated party line but the ability to roam freely through a variety of personal programs with maximum flexibility, incidentally enhancing the experience of the reader — 'poetry is the renovation of experience' (Carlos Williams). At the very least this demonstrates a mind open to the whole world, rejecting nothing, accepting all experiences and, instead of getting bogged down in the infinitely sinful program of **Seriousness**, processing it all with the program of **Humour** and *karumi*.

(This article draws on the insights of Neuro-linguistic Programming; there are many other kinds of program which are of equal interest when approaching the reading of haiku. The Bashō examples are taken from the Penguin 'On Love and Barley' translations by Lucien Stryk).

Gorse Blossoms

'when gorse is out of bloom, kissing's out of fashion'
other seasons, all seasons, no seasons, haiku et al...

criss-crossing
the postman's path
snail-trails

Matthew Paul

supporting
sagging chrysanthemums
just spider threads

David Cobb

On the envelope
the postman brings a drop
of autumn rain

New Forest road —
a young donkey asleep
on the grass verge

Dimitar Anakiev

Joan Daniels

Nudged by the rain
Yew berries shift and roll
Along the tombstone

Cicely Hill

on the carcass
cutting it fine
the crow in the road

on the watertank
sipping on a leaf
a butterfly

Jackie Hardy

Alan J Summers

Leaded-glass diamonds
dripping in condensation
Daylight trickles through

Celia Warren

The first thing this morning —
The green of the grass
Just before
The sun comes up.

(by Primrose Hill, London, 3/89)

Tito

below the stone track
the estuary starts to fill
with the evening tide

Colin Blundell

He wore it last year —
farmer burning off his field —
the same old red shirt

Tamaki Makoto (trans James Kirkup)

pruning saw
on the old pine —
smell of resin

Richard Goring

almost autumn — all over
Barbara Hepworth's bronze with strings
there are spider's webs

Petrouchka

Lichen in the fog
Glowing yellow and pale green
Girl at the window

Jack Hill

The Pathway

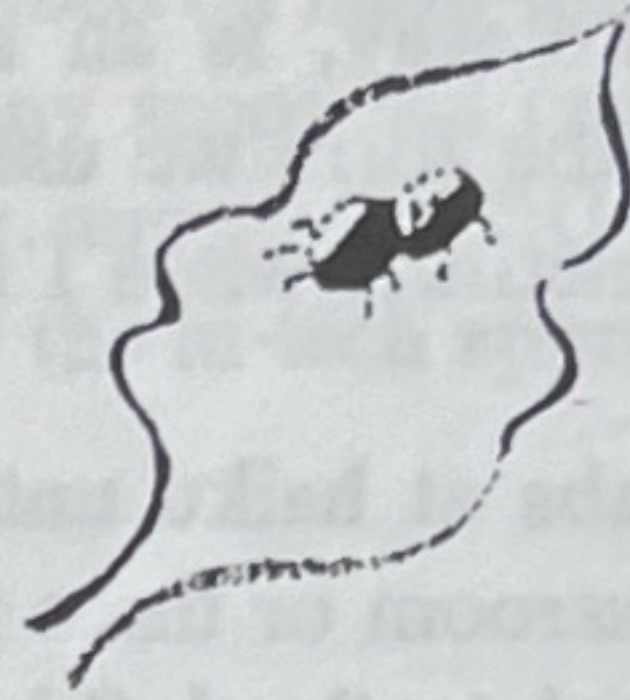
The following haiku by James W Hackett have appeared, with Irish translations by Gabriel Rosenstock, in '30 Zen Haiku of James W Hackett', pub. An Cumann um Haiku, and obtainable from ÁIS, 31 Fenian St, Dublin 2, price £5.

A leath na bpincíní
sa tanalacht ghriantasta
ní luann dóibh dáiríre



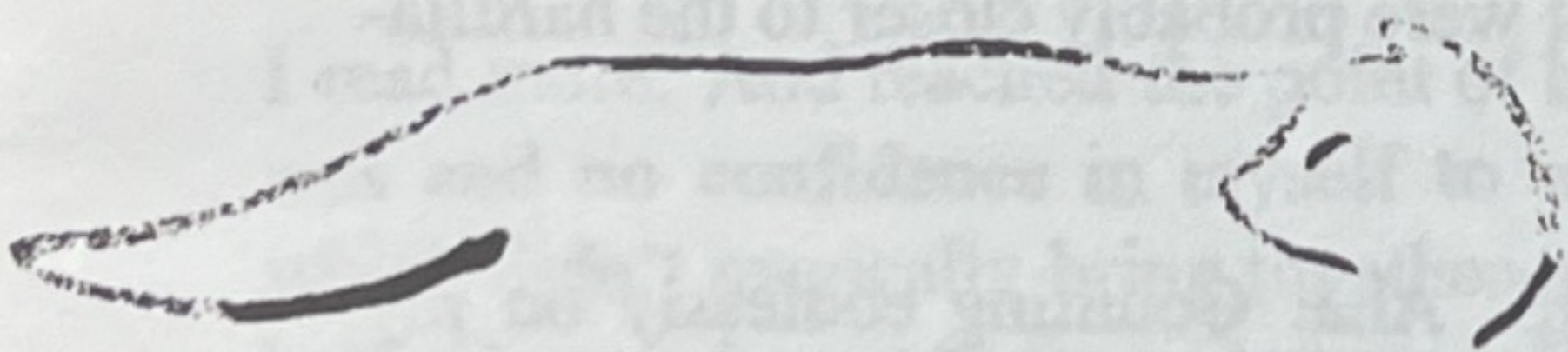
Half of the minnows
within this sunlit shallow
are not really there.

Tré dhuilleog ghriantasta
scáthanna dhá fheithid
i gcumann dorcha



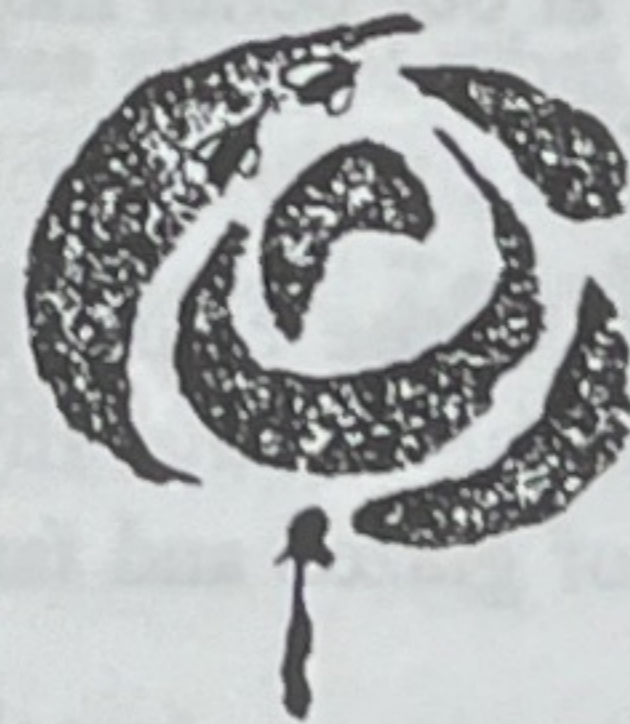
Through a sunlit leaf,
the dark shadows of two bugs
merge and become one.

D'fhonn teas an lae
a thomhas i gceart, féach sad
an chait ina shuan



For a real measure
of the day's heat, see the length
of the sleeping cat.

Dhá chuileog bheaga
i ndáil a chéile - nach iontach -
ar an rós seo mar aon



Two flies, so small
it's a wonder they ever met,
are mating on this rose.

A Personal and Partial Account of Life with Haiku

Susan Rowley

A cursory glance back through the pages of possible haiku, proto-haiku, hardlia-haiku, halfa-haiku, neverahopeofa-haiku and all the other members of the family of scribblings assembled in what I hopefully dub Haiku '92, Haiku '93 etc just goes to show that

haiku
is evolutionary:
time tells

(That, by the way, is an apology for what I call a Meta-haiku. Meta-language is the form we use to talk about language itself so... I find they creep in sometimes when I'm playing with improving on a previous idea.)

My own stabs at haiku until two years ago were trying to teach it in a primary classroom or three from a particularly uninformative paragraph in a 1952 English textbook (I knew, of course, that it had to have the hallowed 5-7-5 form but, apart from that, it seemed, anything went:

stuck, my poem stops;
I hold up my begging bowl
A word falls in — plop

The children, bless them, wrote some lovely poems in spite of me.)

Once with a friend I remember standing on a tube station platform producing, at our better moments, what were probably closer to the hardlia-senryu form.

Then came **Blithe Spirit** and the **BHS**. Aha! Counting endlessly on my fingers, beating out that rhythm anywhere and everywhere I launched into a new era of glazed and faraway 'moments'.

Andirons takes three.
Poke the fire and watch the sparks
hoping for a star.

This was followed by hours of compiling all my efforts from scrappy bits

of paper, backs of envelopes (where, as we all know, all truly great poetry is scrawled — other than on beer mats and menus, that is) and my hopefully named 'haiku notebooks'. These were a series of spiral-bound shorthand books, inevitably also home to the odd recipe, sketch for a new craft idea, half-written letters and shopping lists. I could get side-tracked for hours reworking haiku when I was really looking for the kitchen window measurements.

pen poised
waiting for inspiration;
the kettle boils

I confess I do something which part of me frowns upon: I type all my efforts on to computer disc. So unnatural, but so easy to rewrite, reorder, try out. I'd really love to have each one hand-inscribed on hand-made paper but I simply don't have the time. I'd rather use any seconds I can grab to myself at the chalkface, hacking away at another nugget. (YOU may not find nuggets in chalk — I keep hoping!) Of course the hi-tech approach can have its drawbacks:

forgotten haiku
gone to computer heaven;
libation to the gods

I avidly read the articles in **BS** and tried to follow all available advice. **The Haiku Handbook** was sheer bliss. I stopped writing so many telegrams. "Anything on haiku?" I asked at the local library. Back came three weeks' silence, followed by a copy of the *Manyōshū* with a note: "Will this do?" They did later come up with two tomes of Blyth's translations — after which I appear to have moved on to writing in a form of pidgin English.

I read more. And reached the point of having no idea at all of what a haiku was and no confidence in myself to write one. I was rejecting anything which didn't magically bring together two disparate images. Too clever by half. Great when it happens but even Bashō et al didn't expect that all the time:

the indecision
(which what yes no perhaps — damn)
of a final draft

Back to nature and the 'suchness', the 'treeness of a tree', the 'oneness' and

all the other -nesses which we, the lay people of haiku (who don't happen to subscribe to one or the other set of jargon, but have a happy eclecticism and do, as a matter of fact, experience exactly what the rest are talking about) bumble along without. I've always loved the religion and hated the dogma, as it were, in many things. Although learning different labels for something is interesting and sometimes downright useful if it gives expression to the hitherto unexpressed, you can tell more from the haiku people write. 'By their deeds shall you know them' (and know their deeds/moments) or something like.

clean page and no thoughts
but emptiness and whiteness
— this is the poem

As in all creative activities, we don't run on high all the time. Like many people I expect, I go from a dozen or more attempts in one session to one in three weeks if I'm lucky. I find that change and bereavement have left big gaps in my writing, apart from a few almost therapeutic outpourings and then, even months later, something has sparked off another spate of work. I've been surprised, too, by haiku moments coming back from what I'd thought of as lost time.

wakeful night
turning and turning
a single word

Well, I now allow myself to forgo the strict 5-7-5 and have been known to knock out a two- or four-liner — one still seems very outré, but you never know: watch this space, as they say.

Recently, I've gulped down large and very satisfying helpings of the Blyth Genius (known locally as 'Essex man goes East'), James Hackett and, probably more significantly freeing than the others, James Kirkup. Now I feel more able to just write and experiment. A more natural approach. All that reading and struggling has helped. Maybe even slightly more important than writing haiku is just that we can write. To me, writing something that is haiku in the moonlight on the lake — 'frosting on cakes' doesn't happen to be my idea of a treat.

Towards a Consensus has been good to have on hand and I love the bit

about not cutting up a sentence 'like some poor worm'. (I've found a few, luckily one or two still wriggling and saveable, in looking back over my work.) Much has and could be written about the way we revise our haiku. It's a fascinating process.

On re-reading my *Blithe Spirits* I now find advice on many of the things I've struggled for there all along. I think there's probably a Reading-Readiness effect somewhere here! There could be a place for a 'selected essays from...' for people new to haiku and I definitely recommend a regular dip into past copies.

Although some of my haiku arrive complete and fairly set, things do evolve and seem to need a settling time. The mind goes on subconsciously musing over the more recalcitrant efforts, I find. It's often easier to put them righter or throw them out when there's a space between the first impulse and the drafting(s). Trouble is, I think I'll still be changing some of them in ten years' time. Well, they're mine, I'm allowed!

sleepless — kept up again
by the two o'clock haiku

Of course the main reason we write haiku is that it's a form in which we want to communicate or express something. It has a discipline all its own, whether we want to stick to counting or not. It has a 'feel' to it and that's what we're aiming for. The Rules, Guidelines, Towardses are signposts which do help, but basically they're in a foreign language. So much of the process is intuitive. It's a tuning in. It's holistic. Go on, grab the Gestalt!

When we get it right someone says, "Oh, yes!". When we get it spot on, many people do. When it's just pretty good, it makes a memory for ourselves and that's worth keeping it for; a haiku collection can be like a diary... It can probably also be like a fish — but I've said enough. Happy Haikuing!

looking up from the keyboard
— the sky is dark!

Senryu Pie

the midges
more eloquent
than the speaker

Ken Jones

the smacked boy
stops crying for a moment
to look for the marks

army cadet —
white skin edging
his summer haircut

Frank Dullaghan

pub notice:
Now Open
Bear Garden

Martin Lucas

delivery vans
churn through rosebay willow herb
and distant vistas

Colin Blundell

Anniversary
canned music tracks the silence
one hand beating time

Caroline Gourlay

at grasp-bird's-tail
the tai chi master
breaks wind

Nika

everybody smiles at me today —
my silly new shirt

in the rose garden
a man I don't much like
enjoying the sun

George Marsh

Through frosted glass my visitor crying

Barry Atkinson

The old fisherman
tells tales of poachers, how many
he has caught

Patricia V Dawson

day of his funeral
still inviting messages
'after the tone'

David Cobb

Who Owns Haiku?

Brian Tasker

The article by our founders 'At The Edge of Unfolding Rich Diversity: A Profile of BHS' (Vol 4 No 3) opens an interesting debate on the role of the BHS and the future of haiku in Britain.

A recent letter from a haiku friend in America posed the question: who owns haiku? No-one owns it, but that does not mean that no-one should be prepared to take responsibility for it. In fact, it seems to me that everyone who uses the term should take responsibility for it, otherwise haiku will simply vanish. It will cease to be recognisable in any meaningful way, it will have been assimilated and absorbed, it will have lost its taste.

So when I said that I am not prepared to stand idly by and see haiku diluted down to personal taste, I meant that I am prepared to make the effort to keep haiku special, not sacred, but special. I have attempted in my book, *Haiku and Zen: The Bodhisattva of Forgetfulness* to explain my views on how and why, at least within my present understanding of the subject.

Obviously there is more than one correct way to write haiku and I could not even begin to say what they all are; nor do I believe in the negation of individuality. The quality and range of poems in Cor van den Heuvel's *Haiku Anthology* readily shows that an extremely wide stylistic variation is possible in haiku without sacrificing the spirit. There is hardly a single poem with the glare of personality - the poet is simply there - one with the moment!

Being one with the moment is what Blyth described as a 'temporary enlightenment' - a momentary transcendence of self and self-interest. By itself, the concept of such an experience is not very reassuring, but in the context of nature or even the world at large, one simply enters into the stream of things and goes with the flow. Buddhism is an acceptance of the universal truths of impermanence and fundamental emptiness (insubstantiality) of self and also a means of transcendence. Such truths were implicit in the Japanese culture of Basho's time and it was against a background of that insecurity about the 'self' that haiku developed.

These truths are no less profound in the 'global village' of the late 20th century than they were then. One obviously does not have to be a Buddhist to be aware that life is mutable and that our sense of self can be a fragile

one; neither is an understanding of these truths the sole preserve of Buddhists.

Enlightenment is that which frees us to live in spontaneity, even if only for a moment. At the far end of the haiku spectrum, this kind of experience is the source of haiku. At the other, nearer end, the source might be simple awareness or even emotion, as the BHS Consensus would have it. But it is generally agreed that haiku do reflect actual experience and are not made up.

My view is that we need to be very clear in our minds, that a haiku is written from experience and not from a thought. A moment of haiku may be intuitive and instinctual, but the process of writing is not and one way of making a distinction between thought and experience is by combining elements of Taoist philosophy and Buddhist psychology. A harmony with change allows us to let the original experience go and the non-rationalisation of feelings allows us to honour the experience.

A good haiku retains all the immediacy, objectivity and spontaneity of the experience, and nothing is lost except a few seconds self-centredness. The challenge of writing haiku is maintaining that open-mindedness. The history of haiku is also the history of Eastern culture and it is certainly worth more exploration than a token nod. It is not so much a freedom of mind that yields haiku, but a freedom from mind; momentarily for the experience and then cultivated to produce a poem. Retaining the freshness of immediate experience requires a constant reappraisal of the way in which we look at the world; so if we are talking about methods, my view is that the particular directness and taste of Zen seems more suited to haiku than Western Romanticism with its roots in the imagination.

For some, haiku deepens an interest in the East, for others it simply enhances the way they already live. There is nothing tendentious about it - some haiku poets are Buddhists, most as far as I know, are not. I have no problem with 'isms', especially in the case of Buddhism, as it claims no monopoly on the truth and crusades and forced conversions are unknown in its history. So I am unsure of what Blyth's train of thought would have been with that one.

It must be said that haiku is hardly the domain of a self-conscious and pious Buddhism. On the contrary, I see haiku as the literature of the secular or

relative world that reveals something of the absolute, without saying so: revealing through the seen and the known, the unseen and unknown and all of that by surprise! It is the casual acceptance of such profound truths in everyday experience that can make haiku so special, in a way that is unique. Haiku are a good medium for doing that; I feel that comparisons with other poetic forms are beside the point.

As the matter has been raised, it is arguable whether or not the BHS panders to people whose material does not respond to the basic criteria of haiku. That it has done, is visible in some earlier issues of *Blithe Spirit*: Daffodil trumpets / silent fanfare of springtime - / robin sings the tune (vol 2 no 4) is one. A similar piece appears in vol 4 no 3: the fanfare is over / coffee coloured daffodils / leave their green streamers. Anthropomorphism is obviously rampant.

The last anthology *Fire* is solid evidence that anything still goes. It is a cop-out to say that the purpose of such anthologies is to let members show where they stand. The only purpose that I can see, is to allow haiku to become self-defined. Examples like - Dawn raiding heron / catches a watery sun / flies off enlightened, or A spread of yellow / Forsythia... buttering / A sun-toasted wall, or Sitting on the brink, / the sun, unswallowed, fuses / with the horizon prove the point. To me, those are all distinctly thoughts and not experiences, but statements of the poet's ideas.

The point here is not so much a question of my personal taste; but it is apparent that the struggle that writing haiku entails is not being addressed. Publication is an endorsement and what is published soon becomes the basic criteria, but that is just my view and I do not set the agenda. However, it is now an issue for open debate. So what views do members have?

As Blyth ought to have known there is nothing humourless about Zen, it is just the way you take it, but it begins by being taken seriously and that is a universal truth. Otherwise as with haiku, it soon becomes a mockery.

Humour is a solely human interpretation of events and it is at its best when it is loose and natural and not too self-concerned. Once at a Dana (meal offering) for some Theravadan Buddhist monks, someone had wittily bought

along a rather sloppy cheesecake. This had us all in a quandary, as, traditionally, alms-food is only to be placed in the monk's bowl. One of us duly went and discretely enquired of the head monk, 'We're not sure about serving the cheesecake in the alms-bowls?' The monk replied, 'Out of compassion for the cheesecake, serve it on a plate!' In other words, the cheesecake should be treated with respect and not just with the reaction of tradition, but as a response to the present moment. So it is with haiku, too.

There is room in haiku for everyone, but not room for all of everyone: something has to give and it is that which gives that gives us haiku.

Haiku and Zen The Bodhisattva of Forgetfulness is available from Brian Tasker price £6.50

Corrigenda

Vol 4-2 (May 94) p27 Satomi haiku should read 'Rolling around' — *not*
'round'

Ibid p28 Tito haiku should read 'In the first rays of sun' — *not* 'the sun'

Vol 4-3 (August 94) p28 'Tsunehiko' — *not* 'Tsunehiki'

Favourite Haiku

From Katherine Gallagher: One of my favourite haiku is:

The temple bell stops —
but the sound keeps coming
out of the flowers

Bashō

I love this for its juxtapositions and for its linking of the senses - hearing and sight, with a suggestion of a third, smell, which is what usually 'keeps coming / out of the flowers'. I also like the assonance, the cadenced flow of the piece - delightfully musical.

From David Peel: Cicely Hill's

Still unopened
The greenish hydrangea flowers:
The taste of tea

caught my attention. I think the colon suggests deductive intellect, forcing an Eliot objective correlative effect. Punctuation free (is Tea Ceremony intended?), there is a ritual / clinical presence in which one feels the unattended eye roam the room before other senses take over. Synaesthetics and colour associations do the rest. It works.

From Ken Jones:

why did he return
to that empty island?
bog cotton in the wind

Kenneth White

Ken comments: Beautifully empty, also of intellection! Asking questions can be a self-consoling way of evading the truth. And the truth, just how it is, can be as moving and mysterious and simple as 'bog cotton in the wind'. 'Empty' is here the essential word: poetry experienced with an empty mind, not an artful mind.

From Yasuhiko Shigemoto:

I wrote a haiku
on a bus ticket, and then
dropped it in the trash.

James Kirkup

A haiku flashed across the writer in a bus. He wrote it on a ticket, not having a pocketbook. And he couldn't recall the haiku written on the ticket he lost carelessly. I have had a similar experience, too, so I heartily sympathise with him and appreciate a bit of humour in his life.

From Colin Blundell:

Snow on Good Friday —
in an opening window
whole landscapes swivel

James Kirkup

Colin writes: Immaculately 5-7-5, inducing a brief shiver, a sense of movement and the reader's invention of swivelled landscapes — mine have high hills at the top of which, as Donne tells us, Truth resides: Death and Resurrection too. So much in three lines!

Tsunehiko Hoshino Masterclass

George Marsh reports on a workshop held in Portsmouth, on 24 September 1994.

"Like in a Japanese painting, there is an area of space in the poem; there is a void in the middle." Tsunehiko Hoshino was talking about the caesura-effect in a poem by Martin Lucas :

a slice of melon
thrown away
the end of summer

He went on: "It is charming because there is no logical or rational connection between the two halves, but an interesting gap. Cause and effect must be avoided in a haiku. The second part of the poem must not follow directly on from the first."

The workshop was organised in the way that the haiku poets of Japan operate: all the poems (thirty-four of them in this case) were typed up anonymously on the sheet of A3 and numbered. Participants voted for their choice of the three best haiku, and voting slips were collected by the chairman. As each voting slip was read aloud the authors of the chosen haiku identified themselves, and the voter articulated his or her admiration of the poem. This resulted in a workshop which was all appreciation and praise, manifestly fair and balanced, and made its point about weaker poems by simply ignoring them and praising the successful features of the stronger ones.

Amongst the other points Tsunehiko Hoshino made in discussion;

- Movement is a good element in a haiku. If possible, we avoid being static.
- Personification must be avoided, but you may attribute feelings to people and animals.
- In Japan we ask of a plant in a poem, could it be substituted by any other plant? Only if it is the right plant, and other plants would not be suitable to replace it, is the poem a success.
- Too much alliteration and repetition is not usually successful.
- Try to compose with something in the poem beyond actuality — something mystical, deep or puzzling — not just the reporting of facts and observations (which leads to the well-known So-what haiku).
- The best haiku are redrafted, brushed up later, even if the idea comes in one go, whole.

- It is very rare in Japan (only 2 or 3% of the poems published by the Association of Haiku Poets) for the poem to be successful outside of the normal constraints of using 17 onji and a season word.
- Tanka poets in Japan do not tend to be the same people as haiku poets, do not publish in the same places, and use quite different subjects and quite different methods of composition.
- Professor Hoshino set great store by precision in botanical and zoological observations. He discussed the qualities of an almond tree at length and praised a poem that did not show its blossom as merely decorative, but had the insight to represent it as an integral expression of the whole tree, 'blue shadowed, spilling / from black bark'. The poem was by Vicki Feaver.
- He placed a strong emphasis upon the season word, and clearly had very precise associations with a vast number of nouns: 'a lady's white shoes', for example, indicate summer in Japan. You could not be British and be vague about what season was meant by 'fog' or 'rose' or 'rain'. He asked me if 'sea-bass' was a season word in English, and 'mackerel'. He is a keen fisherman. On reflection, I decided that they were both summer words. 'Oyster' and 'mussel' are a different matter, but are they autumn or winter?

But above all, Tsunehiko Hoshino showed us by example how to take a wry and unusual angle on observations and bring our human world into a mysteriously tense relationship with the natural world:

a blue damselfly
swished away by the hand
holding a cigarette

A Different Pathway

It would appear timely to give some examples of tanka, particularly to demonstrate their 'differentness' from haiku. (Some would even go so far as to say that, in order to avoid a clash of styles, tanka should not appear within the same covers alongside haiku!) The following are recent translations by James Kirkup and Makoto Tamaki of poems written in the Japanese 31-syllable form (5-7-5-7-7) and appearing in 'One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets'. Reminiscent of 'Carmina Burana'?

They say I'm in love!
The rumour is already
spreading .. I kept it
hidden from them — I've only
just started to fall in love.

Koisutefu waganawamadaki tachinikeri
hitoshirezukoso omoisomeshika

Mibu no Tadami

If I had never
met you, I should not complain
of your heartlessness —
and never feel this regret
for what has never happened.

Afukotono taeteshinakuwa nakanakani
hitoomomiomo uramizaramashi

Chunagon Asatada

I was so troubled
by the rumours of our love —
now it's all the same
what they say — I must see you —
even at the risk of my life.

Wabinureba imawataonaji naniwanaru
miotsukushitemo awamutozoomou

Motoyoshi Shinno

I believed your love
would last long — but this morning
after you left me
I'm lost in thoughts as tangled
as my long hair after sleep.

Nagakaramu kokoromoshirazu kurokamino
midaretekesawa monookosoomoe

Taikenmonin no Horikawa

Short as reed stubble
in Naniwa Bay, one brief
night with you — was it
for this I have devoted
my endless longing to you?

Naniwaeno ashinokarineno hitoyoyue
miotsukushiteya koiwatarubeki

Kokamonin no Betto

The way things are now,
I have to renounce our love.
I only wish that
there were some other way to tell you
myself — and not through others.

Imawatada omotiaenamu tobakario
hitozutenarade ifuyoshimogana
Sakyo no Daibu Michimasa

Out of loneliness
I went from my hermitage
and looked around me —
but everywhere seemed to be
the same autumn evening.

Sabishisani yadootachiidete nagamureba
izukumoonaji akinoyugure
Ryozen Hoshi

Museum of Haiku Literature Award

Susan Rowley has chosen David Steele's

Outside the classroom
the bicycles stand all day
in spring rain

Susan writes: 'This has a subtlety I enjoy very much, the steadily falling rain matched by the persistence of the bicycles and the reason for their being there; the point of balance between the call of the season (and the bicycles) and the fact that it's raining (although Spring rain has a call all its own, so maybe that should be on the first side of the balance!) and that the owners are in the classroom — a place with its own qualities of time and restriction. This creates a strong sense of stasis within which other strands of tension can move.'

I like the atmosphere it creates and the way it does so, the words simple and measured, the line breaks natural and effective, the fact that however much I talk about it I still can't explain the space it creates in my mind — I just have to read it again.'

Tsunehiko Hoshino chooses from this issue.

Reviews

Tangled Hair Love Poems of Yosano Akiko, translated by Dennis Maloney and Hide Oshiro, illustrated by Hide Oshiro, Pine Press, NY, 1987. ISBN 0-934834-05-9

The book begins with a brief introduction by Dennis Maloney, informing the reader of Yosano Akiko's many achievements. We are told that she is widely recognised as the greatest woman poet in modern Japan. Born in 1878, during her life she published 75 books and 20 of these were original poetry. She is seen as one of Japan's foremost writers of tanka. And before her death in 1942 she had become highly regarded as a critic and educator, supporting feminism, pacifism and social reform.

In the original *Tangled Hair* there are 399 poems. This volume has chosen 54 — two to each page, with full colour illustrations. The subtle drawings do not impose, but would better enhance the poems if the poses were more assertive:-



From the silk gauze
of a young girl's sleeve
a firefly drifts out,
floating in the blue evening breeze.

The sequence of poems chronicles the relationship of Akiko and Tekkan,
her lover.

Relaxing this morning, while
writing a poem about my lover from Saga,
in the mirror I saw myself,
provocative in a summer dress!

Her passion gives her power and she has no qualms about expressing it.

Hair unbound from this hot house
of lovemaking scented with lilies
I dread the night
fading to pale rose.

And finally:

Now and then I look back
on my passion in the past;
it was like the blind one
who fears no darkness.

I felt empowered and enriched by **Tangled Hair** and wanted more of it.

AB

I Woodshavings: write for price to *Dee Evetts, 102 Forsyth Street, 18, New York, NY, 10002.*

7 Woodshavings is a publication from the Spring Street Haiku Group who
/ meet every month at Poets House, Spring Street, New York. It consists of
poems written and discussed during 1993 and represents the work of ten
haiku poets. Each poet has offered 2 - 4 examples of her/his work. The
quality is consistent with poems workshopped amongst a dedicated and
talented group.

A sample or four:-

thunder
my woodshavings roll
along the veranda

Dee Evetts

in an English garden
a paisley shirt hangs drying
for the third day

Mykel Board

November rain
a faded seed packet
in the garden

Cor van den Heuvel

long distance
with each ring
farther away

Karen Sohne

Highly recommended!

JAH



Price £1.50



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