

Blithe Spirit



Journal of
The British Haiku Society

Volume 6 Number 4 December 1996

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Blithe Spirit

Journal of the British Haiku Society

Editor: Jackie Hardy

Submissions for all but **The Pathway** section to:-
Jackie Hardy,

Submissions for **The Pathway** section only to:-
David Cobb,

Annual membership of the British Haiku Society (standard subscription in the UK £12.50, £9 concessionary; £15 overseas surface mail, or £18 airmail) includes four issues of **Blithe Spirit**. Subscriptions to magazine only - £7 a year UK, £9 overseas. Enquiries about subscriptions or membership to: The Membership Secretary,

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 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**. Please enclose a stamped, addressed envelope or IRC with each submission.

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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Officers: James Kirkup (President), Susan Rowley (Chair), David Cobb (General Secretary & Treasurer), Caroline Gourlay (Membership Secretary), Jackie Hardy (Editor, **Blithe Spirit**), Annie Bachini (Editor, **The Brief**), Richard Goring (Librarian & Hackett Award), Martin Lucas (Events), Honour Stedman (Archivist).

Editorial

Please welcome the 24th issue of *Blithe Spirit*. BHS members can be assured that the journal has its feet well and truly under the table. Over the six years of its existence, however, it has worn its name like an ill-fitting overcoat, rendered more or less acceptable by familiarity and the fact that it's the only one hanging in the wardrobe. It would seem that the time is right to shrug off this name, confine it to the back of the historical cupboard or place it in a black bag ready for a jumble sale along with any other items that no longer fit. What I am getting at under this disguise of anthropomorphism and metaphor, is, what's in a name? The committee feel that the name *Blithe Spirit* has served its purpose and there is a better, more appropriate one out there, somewhere. However, the name will only change if we can find an alternative that is appropriate and acceptable to most members. So anyone with a suitable alternative is encouraged to offer it to me or any other member of the committee.

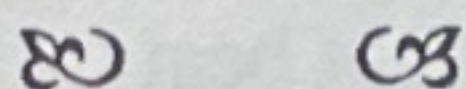
The time has also come to remind subscribers of the guidelines for submitting work. Articles should be, ideally, no longer than 1,000 words. Submissions for the haiku or senryu sections should be no more than six for each section or 24 if they are offered in a block. Please write the name of the author on each sheet of work. If you wish to receive a reply include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The next issue, vol. 7 no. 1, will include a section on the presentation of haiku. I shall forward haiku submissions to various calligraphers, graphic artists, etc. for this purpose. Anyone not wishing their haiku or senryu to be used in this way must say so with their submissions. As this will take extra time, the last date for submission will be 31 December 1996. The theme for the issue will be the moon and/or stars and the season is autumn.

I would like to express my thanks and your appreciation to Richard Goring for his tanka issue. I enjoyed his own tanka particularly and found his headache remedy an interesting idea. I always take paracetamol for mine, but I'm willing to give double malts a try.

Happy Yuletide.

Jackie Hardy



There was an error in the presentation of a haiku by ai li in *Blithe Spirit* vol. 6 no. 2, May 1996. The correct rendition is:

monsoon season
temple lantern
wildly dances

Senryu

a small child
rubbishing my painting
silently

70th birthday
my friend the undertaker
sends me a card

John Shimmin

cardboard city
promises of help -
more rubbish

Janice Fixter

All the way through
The cherry orchard...
The bee follows the woman
In the white coat.

(Ninnaji, Kyoto, 24.4.96)

Tito

Sleeping child
Long crying fit over
A last small snort

Someone overhears
The 'sorry' as I prune
The wrong branch

Cicely Hill

a constant beat
from the flat below -
my throbbing foot

Annie Bachini

She dreams on the bus
her long fingers tapping out
haiku syllables

Claire Bugler Hewitt

wrong number
a deep, soft voice
rings off

Susan Rowley

Postal strike
but as usual
a note from my neighbour

Patricia V Dawson

yodeller's fan club
impressive following
of echoes

Douglas M Henly

Ringling, racing, expectation
"Tracy"
offers double glazing

Ken Jones

Dear Editor

There's a phrase or two from myself in *The Nature of English Haiku* - that's one of the things wrong with it; like Europlonk, it's the product of too many countries. There is much of interest, but it is adulterated and made shabby by having to keep company with so many confusing and inferior viewpoints. It's like a box of junk from the auction room: there are items of value, but they're covered with dust and flies.

How could such an unappetising mess have been cooked up? First, and fatally, it is trying to face inwards and outwards at the same time - and so has to keep looking over its shoulder. It tries to address the old hand - there are attempts at original and quintessential statement; but he is talked down to - given vacuous generalisations and unneeded facts. Much is intended for the beginner, but instead of the examples, anecdotes and advice a starter kit should provide, he is the spectator at a kind of shadow boxing with the ghosts of unstated propositions. It *is* possible to write for several classes of reader at once, but *The Nature of.....* would have been better in a beginner's and an advanced version.

Not everyone will see the second fault as a fault, so the case must be argued. What do the monarchy, a town map, and a repeating rifle have in common? Answer, a history; and many features of their present functioning are puzzling without some reference to that history. Outwardly, haiku has altered very little over the centuries; but there are verses, even in the pages of R H Blyth, completely different in aim and character, both from one time or author, and from separate eras. In spite of this, there lurks behind *The Nature of.....* the idea that there is an archetypal haiku (spirit, juxtaposition, caesura and all) and that every permissible haiku will include as much of the essential as it can. Wrong. Haiku is more like a tangle of interlocking sets: each has something in common with some others, but many are as different as frogs and elbow grease. All these differences, personal and historical, make up the sum of existing models for haiku. And the ancestral voices, whether we notice them or not, can still be heard in modern haiku. They both urge us on to the new (solutions as well as subject matter and styles) and are themselves a field for exploration and discovery.

A-historical, and facing both ways, *The Nature of.....* produces slippery parameters: "You can do this, but don't do it too much!" Worse, the tone sinks from ineffectual to prissy: the authors worry about how we are going to coerce those wretches who produce appalling verses and insist they are haiku. What can we do? Well, refer them to para (E) sec.3, of course; whereupon they renounce their errors and beg to try again. RJG, in his *BS* 6/3 Editorial, suggests another use: some elderly members have been below-par with their efforts, and a dose of *The Nature of.....* could be a tonic. But, rather, I think we (RJG and myself) should assume the offender (a) is experimenting, (b) is bereft of the Spirit for the nonce, or (c) thinks the editor expects a submission and hopes these aren't as bad as they look - or anything at all, rather than think that this re-assembly of the old *Towards a Consensus.....*, bits of which can be seen sticking out all over, is going to encourage

or control anything. [actually, with the examples before me and the author's names known, my assumption leaned heavily to (b) with a touch of (c) and I hoped the old *Towards a Consensus.....* or *The Nature of.....* would act as reminder/refresher and guide (certainly not as a 'dose' of anything strong!) - RJG].

The new section on 'serious senryu' is very welcome, though the rest of the senryu paragraphs are still inadequate.

What is to be done? The project to write a document which could improbably be both a guide to members and useful literature for the enquirer has been going since 1992, during which time there has been nothing available for the latter. The suggestion has been made that there could be a series of leaflets, *The Nature of English Haiku* being the flagship and *Japanese Haiku* the first of the surrounding flotilla. When these little ships put out to sea, perhaps the 'flagship' can be decommissioned.

a makeshift raft
its mast at times lifts clear
from choppy water

Dick Pettit, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

I've just spent a delightful few days thumbing through back copies of *Blithe Spirit*. Congratulations! I cannot think of any other Arts Magazine that has given me so much enjoyment. Immediately, I wanted to join your list of prospective contributors (tempered by diffidence because I am a new member of BHS). Certainly, I will refrain myself for quite a while before submitting haiku..... following Benjamin Franklin's oft-quoted apology to his niece, "I'm sorry to write you such a long letter. I had not the time to write you a short one."

I have always had a professional, academic interest in the growth, maturity and decay of clubs, groups, societies, businesses and organisations. What are the seeds of success? What are the factors that cause them to disintegrate? The answers are not always obvious to those most closely involved. Occasionally, an outsider's perspective can be useful.

Whatever the organisation, there are always balancing-problems that need fine-tuning,

.....between controversy and complacency,
.....between expansion and stability,
.....when to split up and when to merge with others,
.....setting territorial boundaries,
.....striking a balance between over-discipline and "anything goes",
.....how to resolve conflict between prima-donnas.

Organisations that anticipate these problems are happier than organisations that don't.

Mike Hayes, Sheffield

A North Pembrokeshire Coast Path Journey - Goodwick to Newport

clouds build
an empty IRN-BRU can
clatters across the car park

Martin Lucas

new potatoes
fresh from the allotment
in a tesco bag

Matt Morden

sun through the grove
a gust blows rain
out of leaves

Fred Schofield

cuckoo calls
a rush of breakers
into the bay

Martin Lucas

the last day of May -
a squall, in from the sea, brings
the scent of hawthorn

Martin Lucas

poppy heads
between slate gravestones
one red flower

Matt Morden

after 35 miles
spring
in sheep-mown grass

Martin Lucas

on our backs
a shower blown
from the waterfall

Matt Morden

the spring moon shines
above an estuary -
a song thrush repeats

John Ford

spring's last light
shining
in the motorbike mirrors

Martin Lucas

the hiker drops
what he's reading and snores
glare of dormitory light

Fred Schofield

Note: At the end of May, Matt Morden, Martin Lucas, Fred Schofield and John Ford walked the Northern section of the Pembrokeshire Coast Path, from St Davids to Poppit Sands near Cardigan. The haiku above were written following the third day of the walk, 31 May, and reflect the natural beauty and atmosphere of this coast during early summer.

No one notices it
springtime - on the mirror's back
an apricot scene

Most of us go through life not noticing anything that does not come from within our own sphere of existence, all is taken for granted. Spring comes and goes, and before we are aware of it, the blossoms fall. Bashō had the type of mind that took everything in. Even the old mirror with apricots carved on the back, blends in with the spring scenery. One of Bashō's favourite writers, the Chinese philosopher Chuang-tzu had written, "In uncarved simplicity the people attain their true nature." I feel sure that this philosophy was one of the basis's for Bashō's theory of *karumi*, or lightness.

The birds and fishes
can we ever know their hearts?
our year end party

Of course Bashō did not know everything. He empathised with the birds and fishes, but in the end, he admitted he could never know their true feelings. He nevertheless envied them their freedom. In his younger days, Bashō wrote from the prospect of birds, flowers, etc. What we would term anthropomorphism, that dreaded word we are encouraged not to emulate. Earlier he had written:

Bush clover lies down
so good looking - with her
flowery face

and

Late autumn shower -
looking displeased the pine
waiting for the snow

Are these anthropomorphic? I suspect it only appears that way if we examine the haiku through our blinkered Western concepts. Being a Buddhist, Bashō was at least aware of impermanence, that nothing lasts forever. Issa's and Ryōkan's poetry are imbedded from this point of view. As a result they sympathised and empathised with birds, animals and plants. If they didn't they would have become as Bashō described, no better than beasts. Buddhism well before the modern era had humanised animals and all sentient beings (Dogen included rocks, trees, mountains and rivers), which are all so many potential or actual Buddhas. The inchworm possess an inch-long Buddha nature.

From the fragrant earth
one branch of apricot blossoms
on which a wren sings

Bashō must have delved deeply into Chuang-tzu's writing, as many of his haiku reflect that philosophy, even more so than Buddhism or Zen. The "uncarved simplicity", from the Chinese word 'pu', sometimes translated as "original simplicity", "natural integrity", "uncarved block", is a recurring theme in the *Tao Te Ching*, where Lao Tzu writes, "Display natural simplicity and cling to artlessness". During Bashō's last years his goal in haiku was 'lightness' (*karumi*), whereby a poet living in this topsy-turvy world could still gain a sense of equilibrium, like the Zen monk sweeping snow:

Sweeping the garden
forgetting all about the snow -
my besom broom

Bashō did not write a great deal about the actual art of composing haiku. What we do have are those sayings recorded by his disciples, especially those of Doho, who recorded his master's "The haiku must be composed by the force of inspiration. If you get a flash of insight into an object, record it before it fades in your mind". Haiku should be done "like felling a massive tree, like leaping at a formidable enemy, like cutting a watermelon, or like biting at a pear".

Chrysanthemum flowers
in bloom - between stones where
the stone mason lives

Tanka

selected prunings
how lovely they look
bunched in vases
a short stay on the way
to the compost heap

Ruth Robinson

Precious glass bobbin
Abacus of lacy dreams
Beaded in good faith
Waiting all these years unused
To be broken by my haste

Anne Stephens

Summer

Latest bulletin -
the old man's dahlias
falter in the wind

Caroline Gourlay

over and over
over and over, the swifts -
snatching summer bugs

Honour Thomasin Stedman

Summer heat -
the tails of the cattle
flicker above the deep stream

A white petal falls
in the heavy air -
summer lightning

Claire Bugler Hewitt

waking in sunshine
bottles from the barbecue
shadowed on the wall

John Shimmin

summer lightning:
a fox zig-zags
across the dark lawn

Linda Marshall

Summer solstice
- spend a few moments
evicting a ladybird

Allan Jarret

Summer contemplation
in the meadow my shadow
darkens the grass

byron jackson

in my worn shoe
a buttercup

Ken Jones

afternoon breeze -
snared in the spider's web
a flickering feather

Frank Williams

thorn in my hand
I remember it still
fragrance of the rose

Jean Jorgensen

hot summer day --
long after the dustcart
the stench

Richard Goring

high amongst
the Old Man's Beard
a single last rose

Susan Rowley

birch tree shadow
across the flanks of a colt
twitching leaves

Keith Coleman

under a boat
bobbing at anchor
crabs in the rippling shade

Edward D Glover

Herb Robert
growing by the tracks
rust on the rails

Maggie West

a tipsy snooze
on a summer afternoon
dishwasher churning

summer night
a duck glides
between moons

George Marsh

Summer workshop
a swarm of wasps
following the queen

Elizabeth Warren

second-hand clothes -
a ladybird lands on
the camouflage jacket

Annie Bachini

My first 'live' encounter with haiku took place in the autumn of 1986 at the beginning of a Creative Writing course at the City Lit., Holborn, London, tutored by Mark Williams. Haiku-like minimalism was an excellent model, said Mark, for any writer wishing to weed out waffle and cut through to the point. We were offered three groups of examples for comparison: famous short poems by Ezra Pound ("In a station of the Metro") and William Carlos Williams ("The Red Wheelbarrow", "This is just to say"), a dozen or so translations of classical haiku, and ... extracts from the journals of the Hampshire cleric, Gilbert White. Bill Wyatt, in *Summer Heat*, has given an account of his own search into the poetry and nature notes of John Clare, and shown that Clare, through the twin powers of his love of nature and gift for language, was hot on the trail of haiku though he didn't know it. Much the same point can be made about Gilbert White, who died in 1793, the year Clare was born. His eye is keen, his feelings are acute, and he records with precision and rhythm, knowing how much to tell and how much to leave out. All he observes is grounded in his sense of seasonal change. With thanks to Mark Williams for the insight, here are twelve extracts from White's jottings in 1784:

- Jan 4 Rain, rain. Wagtail.
- Feb 28 Dark, & harsh. Crocus's blow.
- Mar 28 Frost, ice, blustering. Snow on hills & roofs.
- Apr 8 Grey. Sun. Men open the hills, & cut their hops. Red even.
- May 13 Hot sun. Cut the first bundle of asparagus. Wind cold on the down.
- Jun 22 Heavy showers, strong gales. House-martins hatch.
- Jul 22 Cold & blowing. Showers. The wind broke off a great bough from Molly White's Horse-chestnut tree.
- Aug 7 Sun & clouds. Shower. Many hop-poles are blown down. No swifts seen for some days. Cool, autumnal feel. Days much shortened.
- Sep 12 Dew. Heat, cloudless. Peaches & nectarines advance towards ripeness. Several hornets, but no wasps. Ground dry, & heated.
- Oct 19 Sun & clouds. Sweet afternoon. Many spider's webs.
- Nov 1 Rain. Grey & mild. Mr John Mulso was shot in the legs.
- Dec 24 Vast rime. Deep fog, still. No wagtails since the snow fell.

Reference: Gilbert White, *A Selbourne Year*, ed. E Dadswell, Webb & Bower, Exeter, 1986.

The Pathway

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

Yasuhiko Shigemoto (Japanese and English)

nukazukeba	a frog pops out
bashō no haka yori	from behind Bashō's grave
kawazu kana	when I kneel down

Gerald England (English) and Sakuza Takada (Japanese)

how smooth the icecracks -	kōri ware
slow movement of glacier	tani ni hyōga wa
down the spring valley	ugoki-dashi

Japanese translations by Noriko Kajihara from various authors read at a Museum of Haiku Literature / BHS kukai in spring 1996

holding her child	ko o dakite
to watch the water	mizu o misen to
- the mother's smile	haha no emi

Susan Rowley

Cloudburst over	niwaka ame
a child's sandcastle,	nagareru skoppu
the spade floating	suna no shiro

Katherine Gallagher

Sun so hot	manatsubi ni
the sound of snails	otsuru katatsumuri
falling from walls	tsuta no kage
behind ivy	

Adele David

sound of laughter	kabegoshi no
from behind the wall -	hajikeru warai
the geraniums in bloom	zeraniumu

Annie Bachini

Klaus-Dieter Wirth (German) and James Kirkup (English)

Ein Fliegenjahr.
Man riecht die Misthaufen,
bevor man sie sieht.

A year full of flies,
and you can smell the dunghills
before you see them.

Graffitischwüre
auf jungfräulich weisser Wand
und schlecht leserlich.

Vows to be faithful.
Graffiti on virgin white,
hard to decipher.

Unaufhörlich bellt
ein Hund in die Dämmerung,
wird immer lauter.

Endlessly barking
a dog as evening falls.
Louder and louder.

Ioan Gabudean (Romanian and English)

Furnici mărunte
ne iau măsura tălpilor
fierbinți

Small ants
are taking the measure
of our hot insteps

E dimineață
Se înserează-n
licurici ..

It's morning.
Night is falling
in the glow-worm

*Various modern Japanese poets translated into English by Chiyoko Mukai
and George Marsh*

hae hitotsu
ryōya no suzuri
neburi ori

On a moonlit night
a fly is licking
the whole surface of the inkstone

Kawabata Bōsha (1897-1941)

enten ya
konchuu to shite
tada ayumu

I keep on walking
in the heat of the sun
and so does the beetle

Kinoshita Yuji (1914-1965)

ko no kaya ni
tuma ite tuma mo
usumidori

Moving in
the net round our child's bed
my green wife

Fukunaga Konji (d. 1985)

Haiku

Immigration Office -
net curtains billow
with the southerly breeze

at the Gents
snapped head of a daffodil
clutters the drain

Martin Lucas

a doodle for words -
the trickle of tap water
begins to irk

Annie Bachini

Light fades
The woods become
One great tree

Cicely Hill

new stone wall
the reddish colour
of nearby hills

Ruth Robinson

no intermission
this sabbath: from dawn the noise
day-long of harvesters

Edward D Glover

there is no such thing
as an empty road: beware
the dung-beetle's ball

Geoffrey Daniel

clock ticking:
somewhere between midnight
and the train to Leeds

Linda Marshall

still
within my closed eyes...
falling cherry blossom petals

Kohjin Sakamoto

Approaching an island of dreams,
A curtain of rain
Shadows the sea
To indigo.

(boat, Tanegashima to Yakushima 22.7.96)

A night where
The back of a carp
Catches moonlight
In the mere.

(Osawanoike, Kyoto 8.10.95)

Tito

scattered hereabouts
here beneath these leafless trees
fallen syringes

Steve McComas

patches of mist
lingering along the road
a child late for school

Jade

music lesson...
the neighbour closes
her window

moths at his window
old caretaker
staying up late

ai li

Reviews

Bashō and His Interpreters: Selected Hokku with Commentary, Makoto Ueda, Stanford U P, 1992 (rep. 1995), 460 pp, pbk, £16.95

This exhaustive study increases understanding of many familiar Bashō haiku; it introduces many out-of-the-way ones; and is a useful aid for haijin who seek to establish both a theoretical and a practical starting point for their own writing.

Makoto Ueda takes 255 of the haiku, gives a translation, the romaji, a word-by-word transliteration, a note on difficulties or points of interest; and then commentary extracts, from contemporaries of Bashō to the present day. The translations have been revised from those given in his earlier *Matsuo Bashō* (Kodansha), but although 100 poems appear in both books - 25 are not recycled - most of the selection is new. Still, he has not scraped the barrel clean: many readers will think of haiku they would have included in preference to some of those that have been.

Yet however serious these omissions could be, they would not detract from what the book sets out to do. The romaji with transliteration, plus the translation, enables the reader to see how the language works (and learn a little Japanese); "the order of images" as Ueda puts it, is plain; ambiguities of the kinds not explained in the Notes can be seen, and so on. There are a few pieces where in spite of all the help the meaning is still puzzling. However, it obviously doesn't puzzle the commentators.

A very positive aspect of the commentaries is that, between them, they reveal a number of significancies in the haiku/hokku - these are not pure unrelated artistic creation, but may have social, and occasional reference as well as containing different, even incompatible meanings. The commentaries frequently bring out things one had missed, even though, as their translator is very aware, they range from the banal to the way-out, and often contradict each other. A modern critic sometimes sees something in the heart of a haiku which seems completely to have been missed in three centuries of comment. Perhaps towards the end of the book one is skimming the commentaries, but points of interest are always surfacing.

Many of the haiku were intended as hokku, even if never used in renga, and in some cases were clearly not composed at the scene they describe - though there are a large number of those composed on journeys. In a high proportion of poems the poet and his emotions are part of the poem - a few of them relating matters which would have been uninteresting in a less exalted personage. Many of the haiku are of fewer, or more, than 17 syllables, and a number break away from 5-7-5 syntax.

The compilation provides lots of material relevant to the perennial debates on what haiku is and how (and with how many words) to write them. Many are lovely, and draw one into them in a way which excludes admiration or judgement. Here are two which may be unfamiliar (only part of the commentaries is given):

Visiting Atsuta Shrine after its repair.

polished anew
the holy mirror is clear, too
blossoms of snow

togi / naosu / kagami / mo / kiyoshi / yuki / no / hana
polishing / repair / mirror / also / clean / snow / 's / blossom

NOTE: The government had completed repairing the shrine the previous summer, after 80 years of neglect. Bashō had seen its dilapidated buildings during his journey of three years earlier. The shrine had a mirror for its holy icon.

COMMENTARY: The opening phrase symbolically alludes to the repaired shrine, but it is also conceivable that the poet actually saw a clear mirror deep in the shrine's interior. It so happened that the snow was falling - snow like beautiful white blossoms. The poet felt as though he had been cleansed both physically and mentally. - Ebara

Hoso Pass (on the way from Tafu Peak to Ryumon)

resting higher
than a lark in the sky
a mountain pass

hibari / yori / sora / ni / yasurau / toge / kana
skylark / than / sky / in / rest / pass / kana

COMMENTARY: There is something here of surprise and childlike joy. Of course the poet composed the hokku on the spur of the moment. - Ebara

This poem is commonplace, though it presents an appealing scene. - Abe J

This is a witty poem. - Mizubo

But the wit is not of a very high order. - Keion

.....The image of the lark suggests not only the altitude of the mountain pass, but also the weather that day. - Shida

When we have reached a high place, we experience a kind of elation, feeling as if we have risen higher in social status. The poem depicts such childlike elation as well as a touch of surprise. - Iwata

A lark's song is cheering and lively, well befitting spring. Hearing it, Bashō returned to an innocent, childlike frame of mind and called out to the lark, saying lightheartedly, "I'm higher than you." - Yamamoto

Not all the commentaries may hit the nail on the head, but collectively they show where you might profitably aim a hammer; they are an always-interesting and sometimes necessary complement to the essential translation/transliteration and notes.

The amount of work the book entailed is daunting. Makoto Ueda refrained from giving his own commentaries: the compilation and translation was itself a labour of love.

RJP

Bashō's Narrow Road: Spring & Autumn Passages, Hiroaki Sato (ed. & trans.), Stone Bridge Press 1996. ISBN 1-880656-20-5 US\$15.00

Stone Bridge Press is based in Berkeley, California, and publishes books about Japan and its culture, including works of fiction and poetry. While there are not many titles concerning haiku, this one is surely the most important. Professor Sato should already be known to many BHS members, his previous books including *From the Country of Eight Islands: an Anthology of Japanese Poetry* and *One Hundred Frogs: From Renga to Haiku to English*. He is also a past president of the Haiku Society of America and a long-standing New York resident.

This book contains both Sato's translation of the classic haibun *Narrow Road to the Interior (Oku no Hosomichi)* and the renga sequence *A Farewell Gift to Sora*, the latter being a Bashō disciple who accompanied the poet on his famous trek in 1689. As a non-Japanese speaker/reader, I cannot pass any personal judgement on the 'accuracy' of Sato's translation of both prose and poetry, but the success of his previous books and his long exposure to North America and its language give some confidence. This translation reads well enough to me, without seeming markedly better than any other. Professor Sato discusses aspects of translation in his lengthy Introduction, where he reproduces the opening sentences of the translations by Nobuyuki Yuasa, Cid Corman and Kamaike Susumu, Earl Miner, Dorothy Britton, Helen Craig McCullough, and Sam Hamill. If you have any of these earlier books to hand, you may now like to compare it/them with Hiroaki Sato's opening lines:

The months and days are wayfarers of a hundred generations, and the years that come and go are also travelers. Those who float all their lives on a boat or reach their old age leading a horse by the bit make travel out of each day and inhabit travel.

Other matters in the Introduction include apparent reasons why Bashō made this and other treks during the latter years of his life (Professor Sato speculates it was partly to visit many of the sites routinely mentioned in poetry so as to see their 'poetic truth' at first hand, partly to confirm and strengthen his reputation as a renga poet and hokku master) and whether he was a Ninja. There then follows the major part of the book, the translation of *Narrow Road*..... and it is the manner in which this is done that is likely to establish this version as the 'standard reference text' for years to come. On each pair of facing pages, the translation appears on the right-hand side, with in-text haiku rendered as a single line each in both romaji and English. At appropriate places there is a 'footnote' number, and the actual notes are printed in a small font down the left-hand page. In all, there are 341 such notes, detailing places mentioned, explaining poetic allusions, recording notes made by Sora, quoting other poems, and a whole host of other matters. In addition, there are several pages of Endnotes, most of which expand on earlier 'footnotes'.

For good measure, Professor Sato has also included illustrations to the original text drawn by Buson in 1779, the opening portions of all the renga for which Bashō wrote hokku during the journey, and the 36 verse renga in which he participated and which is known as *A Farewell Gift to Sora*. This latter is accompanied by several pages of Commentary, covering every verse.

Stone Bridge Press has a UK agent and its books should be obtainable through any bookshop of any worth. The UK price seems to vary somewhat according to when and where purchased. If you don't yet have a translation of *Narrow Road*..... (and even if you do), make this version a 'must' to buy - if you feel the translation does not seem significantly more appealing than any other, it has still got to be a good investment for all those notes. I recommend you read the text straight through once, then read it along with the notes, then read it again straight through.

RJG

darkness & light (93 haiku, 10 tanka, 3 sequences, 1 cinquain), Martin Lucas, Hub Editions, 1996. £4.00 (? plus postage) from 1 East View, Galgate, Lancaster LA2 0JT

It's refreshing to read a haiku collection in which most of the poems not only fulfil the criteria for the form but are good examples of it. There are also some other features which make this a pleasing book. One is the cover which is at once both rich and stark; over time, it adds to the depth of the poems. Another is the Introduction - the first half of it, at least (except the presumptuous instruction to the reader to find the 5-7-5 haiku). It is informative and concise for the reader new to haiku and yet provides another interesting angle for those more familiar with it. The rest of the Introduction, describing the qualities of some of the poems, I find pretentious and unnecessary.

The haiku present us with a wide range of scenes, though the mood is often reflective:

sharing black coffee ...
a trace of lipstick
on her cigarette

There is some valid and interesting experimentation.

puddles
bubble

must be one of the shortest successful haiku by anyone, despite its initial preposterousness. I'm not so sure about

island

It effectively conjures a scene (with space for several alternatives) but perhaps the list on the title page (quoted at the top of this review) should be extended to include "and a word".

There are several excellent haiku:

tuning the radio ...
somewhere outside
starlings whistle

which appeals to me with its delicious aural perception. Here, as in the majority of the haiku, we are given just enough information and assonant use of language to prompt (even tickle) our imaginations - which is of primary importance in haiku.

a public callbox -
while an old man phones, his dog
looks out at the rain

illustrates Martin's gift for drawing attention to special qualities in a mundane situation and effortlessly creating an atmosphere.

A few don't work because they seem to try too hard.

clouds across the sun
the siamese cat's
blue eyes blink

has too many words, most of them qualifying others, and too much sound. Whereas

nobody
knocking at the letter box -
spring wind

seems to suffer from contrived artlessness. The tanka don't work because they're either too vague or overtly poetic or come across as over-long haiku. But to end with an example of Martin at his best:

snow thaws from the fields
a blanketed horse
stands motionless

Here he skilfully says nothing while giving us so much to imagine. I experience a slight conflict between the eye and ear on 'fields': the singular would sound more satisfying but the plural allows a broader visual aspect. The rolling rhythm of the second line with the prolonged ending in the third (achieved by two consecutive stresses followed by two longer, vaguer unstressed syllables) invigorate the poem and give it a meditative quality.

FS

Daisychain, Susan Rowley, Hub Editions 1996. ISBN 1-870653-56-4
£2.50 ppd from [REDACTED]

Susan Rowley's little book (6 x 4 ins) has a delightful cover with a handwritten title. She gives us 43 haiku, one to a page, and an introduction cum dedication. Here Susan reveals a love of "quietness, stillness and the small". These qualities are displayed admirably in this collection:

dipping for water
the fly leaves
gleaming

in each drop
on the drenched bush
moonlight

Susan is also concerned with movement, particularly dancing, and five of her haiku are about different styles of dance. My favourite in this collection:

morris dancers
tread old patterns
into summer turf

Several of the haiku moments seem to occur in church. Some are of a spiritual nature but others reveal her wry amusement about life:

short sermon -
from the choir a rustle
of sweetpapers

kneeling
she looks sideways to see
who isn't

A gentle, heartwarming book, this. Get yours warmed before the winter sets in.

JAH

Heart's Flower: The Life and Poetry of Shinkei (1406-75), Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen, Stanford University Press, 475 pp, hbk, US\$45.00

Shinkei was the Priest in Charge (Bishop) of a national shrine at Jujushin'in near Kyoto, then the capital of Japan. He was forced by war to leave, the shrine was destroyed, and for the last eight years of his life he lived first at Shingawa, near Edo (Tokyo) and finally in the interior near Mount Oyama. He probably suffered no great physical deprivation, but the exile and ravages of war were felt keenly. In the first part of her book, E R-Ch traces the history of the man and his times through the poetry. The second half is a systematic presentation of the verse. She comments on over 250 waka (tanka), over 100 hokku (actually used for renga) and over 100 maeku and tsukeku (two-verse renga links). There are also two hyakuin (100 verse sequences) and many quotations of honka (earlier poems used as points of reference in waka or renga).

This is indeed a feast. There is no space even to list all the qualities of the verse, and quotation must be very selective. Here are two waka:

All the noises of
things have ceased, and the moon
dark within the inlet,
a solitary voice -
dim rustle of reeds in the wind

I would soar off into
the vast Void of the sky, so
great is my desire -
but old age makes in the end
a wingless bird of a man

At one point E R-Ch speculates whether Shinkei could have been an unacknowledged influence on Bashō. Certainly some of the hokku have similar qualities:

In that single cry,
the depths of unseen mountains
- cuckoo!

Cleaving
streams of autumn light
shrine cedars

Cupped in my hands
a fragrance spilling over -
chrysanthemum water.

When all the world turns
hazy with springtime, mind is
empty of flowers.

About renga links, E R-Ch makes the point that although there are "plot and scene links, and linking by word pairs, scent, or honkadori (allusion) the tsukeku often alters the way we understand the maeku, sometimes subtly, sometimes as a complete alteration". Renga, she says very firmly, is what happens between the links. In this first link, the 'catch of great prize' is a reference to a story of a king returning from hunting who found the sage he needed fishing. The tsukeku ignores this, referring to the moon.

In the second, a lonely, restless sleep changes to the slightly comic wait for an assignation:

There's a catch of great prize
on the way back from the hunt!

Lying in wait for
the moon, upon the dimming fields
the snow clears up

Sleeping on a transient bed
even dreams cannot settle.

Along the corner-room
lodgings so hopefully chosen,
the waiting night dwindles

These two links could have come from waiting haikai; but as E R-Ch's abundant selections show, though Shinkei, as recognised in his time, was a poet of great feeling and originality, his idiom was that of the courtly poets. He was only more surprising, more subtle and more real, in that so much of his verse comes from his own experience and observation.

The reader may find two difficulties with the book. The language of the commentary is a highly articulate fusion of many critical idioms. However, without it very many subtle points of interest would go unnoticed. They could indeed not be registered at all in more homely language. It's worth the trouble. Secondly, the translations may at times be thought flowery and over-explanatory. E R-Ch tries to bring out the feeling of the verses; and there is much to explain. She says, "I have tried to follow the dictum 'less is more' in translation, but have frequently broken it in order to transmit more than the nothing that would result from the pieces that were beyond my powers". The romaji is given for every poem.

This review transmits very little of the book, which is a marvel of sympathy and thoroughness, of great interest to all writers in Japanese verse forms. It's also very expensive: let's hope Stanford put it into their paperback list.

RJP

blue spilling over: Haiku Canada Members' Anthology 1995-6,
LeRoy Gorman (ed.), Haiku Canada, [redacted]
Canada. Can\$3.00 ppd

In a foreword, Leroy Gorman suggests "this small volume offers a glimpse at the variety of work being done by members of Haiku Canada". Indeed. Sixty-one haiku poets and sixty-one haiku designed to represent every one of the membership who contributed. This is a bold venture, which I think comes off very well, incorporating haiku by writers at all levels of experience. BHS has been chary of this sort of exposure.

There are some excellent haiku from members of BHS:

Spring flood
two wooden shoes float by
taking turns being first

George Swede

business page photos
each person wearing
the same smile

Ruby Spriggs

And from those who are not:

sudden shift
sends the suicide's ashes
into our faces

Suezan Aitkins

up and down
through hill country
the train's whistle

Jim Kacian

Most of the haiku are arranged in three lines, with a pleasing variety of spacing and caesuras; there is one four-liner and a concrete poem by LeRoy Gorman. The gamut of haiku style is run, at least nominally, by Arizona Zipper:

yo stumpo ghighi
agh! bobka diful daful
rhangy poo bouda

Howay the lads, hinny!

JAH

A Certain State of Mind - An Anthology of Classic, Modern and Contemporary Japanese Haiku in Translation with Essays and Reviews, James Kirkup, Salzburg University, 1995. ISBN 3-7052-0941-8. Price not given

I follow no path - the path follows me

JK

Except to those of an authoritarian turn of mind, there is something particularly passionless about the BHS *Consensus* - those who have a passion for rules will choose to ignore the softening effect of the laudable *Towards a....*. James' book offers a 'think for yourself' antidote to writing poetry by the rule-book; it provides an enormous range of ideas and examples, usually translated by James, useful to anybody whose response to the *Consensus* is "Who says?" Particularly useful are the explorations, often using examples from European minimalist poets, of what might be said to fill the interesting category 'haikuesque' which gets short shrift from the purists:

Everything's a path
through memories that yearn for
the highest pasture

Agustí Bartra

There is the universe of things 'out-there' that we create inside us and there are ways of talking about them; the infinite variety of ways is *always* more fascinating than a specific approach.

Poetry invented the world. The world has forgotten it. *Octavio Paz*

Woven together
vowels and consonants build
the house of the world

Octavio Paz

The house referred to here is a place where Bashō spent some time but it can also signify our total experience of life.

The splendid collection of Japanese (therefore authentic?) haiku and senryu is interspersed with essays by James on Japanese haikai, on Bresson - the famous French film-maker's haikuesque sensibility ("allow things to appear which without your help would never be seen...") and so on. An incredible gold-mine of a book with many provocative ideas - on the art of translation and the nature of the English approach to haiku and so on... Members of BHS may wish to take issue with James over his description of Britain as a place "where an ingrained provincial and insular mentality rejects foreign influences, or merely regards with amused condescension the poetic developments of 'abroad'. Our backward colonial prejudices and blinkered outlook on international trade perpetuate themselves even in literature...". One needs to think hard about this!

Old widow's home
living with bedbugs only
and the love of Christ

Fujimori Shin

CB

BELLS ARE CALLING: Haiku & Senryu by Jack de Vidas, Paper Wasp, [REDACTED] 24 pp, 115 poems. Write for price including postage.

This is a mixture of poems which work well and some which have problems. There are six line drawings, most of which are too geometrically simplistic and relate to the poems in a crude manner which adds nothing - though the one on the cover does its job well

Many of the successful poems I found needed time to seep in, which I think is a good quality in itself, revealing a sincerity in the perception and composition with a deep potential for resonance, eg:

She waits.
After midnight
it grows too cold.

Most of the unsuccessful ones unfortunately made a much more forceful impression on first reading and tended to dominate my initial reflections on the book as a whole:

I have pondered life
beyond man's fear of death.
Time for coffee.

Such general statements cannot be made more acute by the banality of a coffee break. The book also contains some unnecessary metaphors and self-conscious allusions to the author. However, a wide range of subject matter is covered and this sometimes occasions poems of surprising breadth:

They exchange vows
in the green pavillion.
Soldiers are coming.

and poingancy:

My hand springs away
in the moment of cut.
Pain comes after.

But there are examples of triteness I could well do without:

A duet.
The lover and nightingale
sing to the moon.

On balance, though, the book contains sufficient compassion and subtlety to outweigh its shortcomings.

FS

After Lights Out, Spring Street Haiku Group, 1996. US\$3.00 ppd, from Dee Evetts, 102 Forsyth St., #18 New York, NY 10002, USA.

Autumn brings the 1996 Collection from the Spring Street Haiku Group. This time there are thirteen contributors. The three new names add their distinctive voices to this very distinguished group of haiku writers. There is much to admire. I was taken, particularly, by the irony:

reading a travel guide
while she rides
the exercycle

the statue of St Francis
covered with wire
to keep away the birds

Cor van den Heuvel

Evan Mahl

looking at himself
in the funhouse mirror
the dwarf

Mykel Board

a cabbage white
hovers around the street vendor's
fresh broccoli

Doris Heitmeyer

But then, it's been that sort of year.

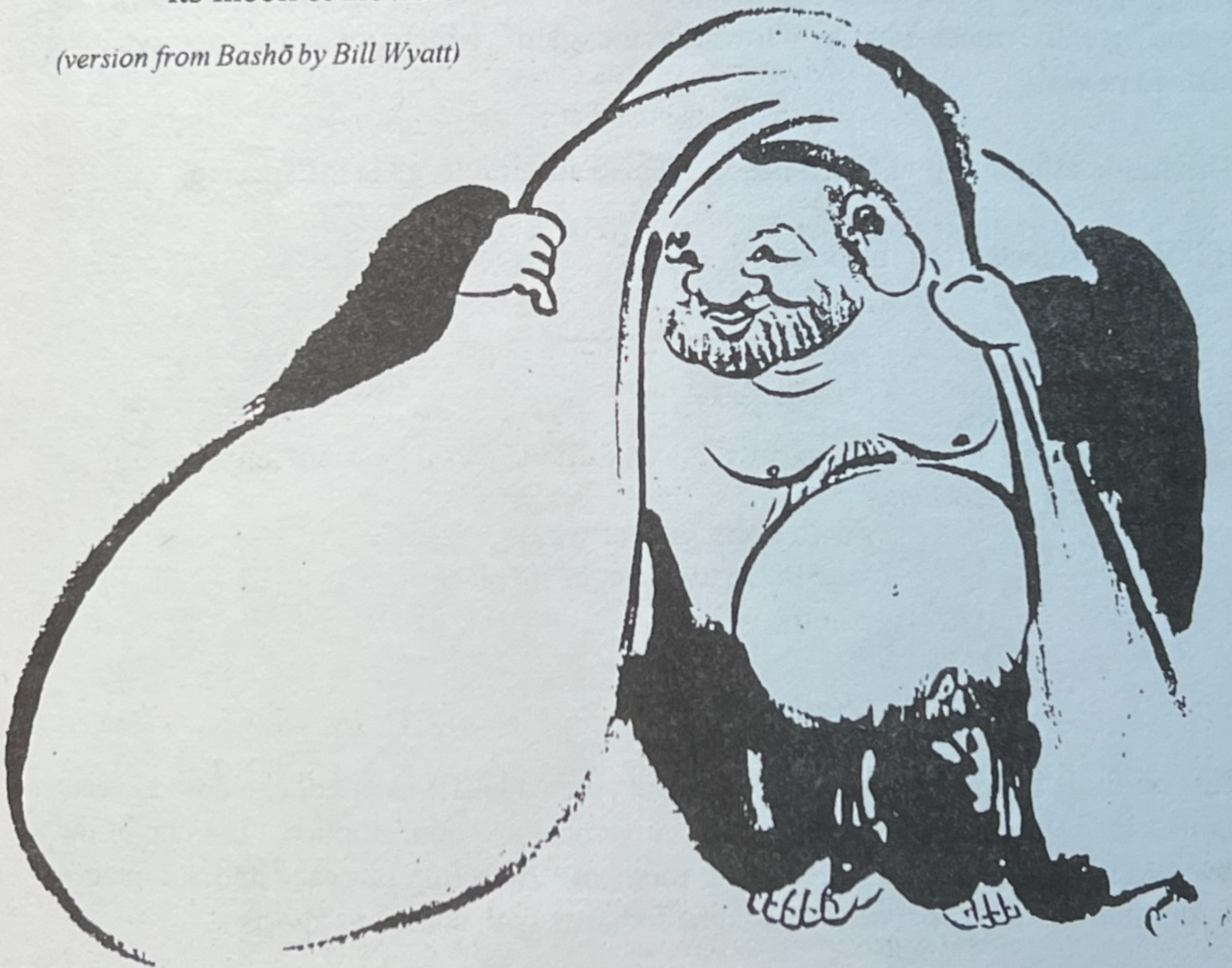
JAH

Haiga

How I would love to
look inside your mysterious bag -
its moon & flowers

(version from Bashō by Bill Wyatt)

Painting by Suiō Genro (1717-89)



Note: Hotei (Chinese name Pu-tai) was always seen carrying a huge sack over his shoulder. Wandering around, he begged for food and money, and whatever he received would be dumped into his sack. If anyone asked what was in it, he would reply "Follow the time".

Museum of Haiku Literature Award

George Swede writes: Here's my selection for the MHL Award:

evening -
the herd heads gatewards
the traffic thins

Jackie Hardy's haiku evokes two rural evening occurrences recognizable the world over: cows returning to the barn and roads emptying. These two events are linked in a way that effortlessly elicits in the reader the poet's experience of awe and wonder. Furthermore, it does so with an admirable economy of words involving just eleven syllables.

Hardy's haiku is also identifiably British because it includes the word "gatewards" which is partly responsible for the brevity of the piece. In North America, we would use the more clumsy "towards the gate" which involves four syllables instead of two.

The subtle alliteration of "herd heads" is also admirable, as is the spacing.

Bill Wyatt selects from this issue.

Favourite Haiku

with every gust of wind
the butterfly changes its place
on the willow

Bashō

This reminds me of a particular spot near a lake when I was at college 20-odd years ago. I love the way that stillness and movement are both implied. It's one of the few successful haiku with a recurring moment. A feeling of peace and acceptance predominates. Maybe it helps me come to terms with some old ghosts ...

Fred Schofield



Price £1.50

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