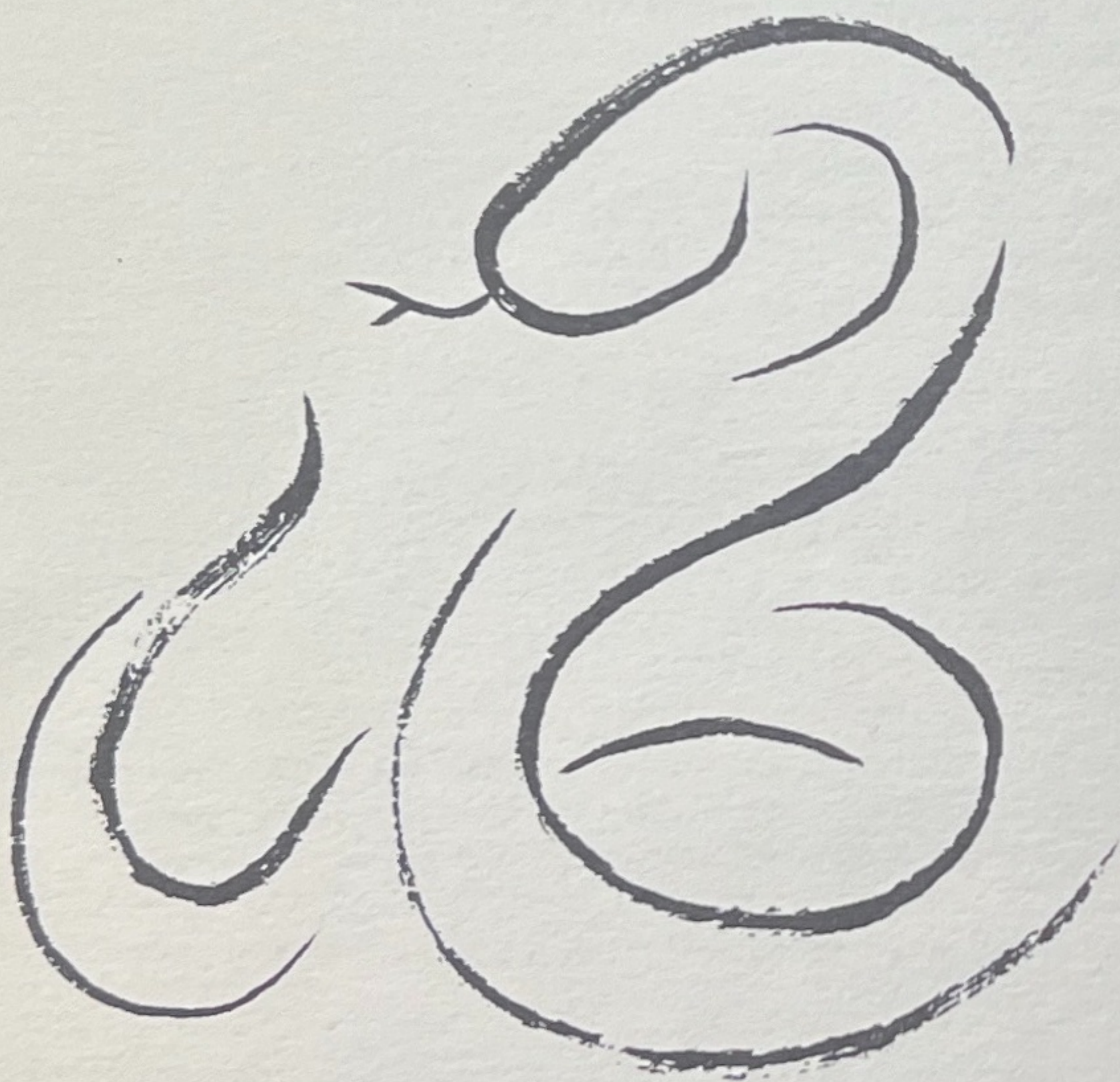


**Journal of
The British Haiku
Society**



Blithe Spirit

Volume 7 Number 2 May 1997

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/US\$24 overseas surface mail or £18/US\$30 airmail) includes four issues of **Blithe Spirit**. Subscriptions to magazine only - £10 a year UK, £12 overseas. Enquiries about subscriptions or membership to: The Membership Secretary,

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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.

Blithe Spirit is published four times a year, cover-dated February, May, August, November.

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Editorial

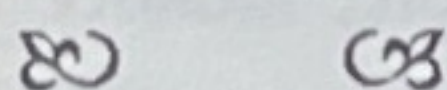
The vagaries of the production of *Blithe Spirit* prevented me from attributing the calligraphy and art work in the last issue. For those of you who appreciate it and would like to know who did what: Allan Hardy page 4, Mel McClellan pages 8, 15, 16 and 27 upper, Penny Price pages 20 and 27 lower, David Walker pages 7 upper, 18 and 28, Maggie West pages 7 lower, 13, 14, 22, 26 and 29. Once more, I pass on the thanks and the appreciation of many readers.

This issue sees the introduction of a new section, the Featured Haiku Writer. This is in response to requests received at last year's national conference. It gives readers an opportunity to read the work of members of BHS who are distinguished haiku writers and whose work is rarely or never published in *Blithe Spirit*. I hope this will prove of interest and be enjoyed.

I could not let the passing of the comet Hale-Bopp go unrecorded in haiku as several of you have chosen to mark it. It has been added as an additional theme.

Issue 3 in each volume has traditionally (if you can call twice 'tradition') focused on a particular form and been the responsibility of a guest editor. There will not be a guest editor this time as I have acquired the services of a GCSE-year student seeking work experience to help me with the production. Issue 3's focus, however, will be the haiku sequence. I welcome submissions on any subject. The season for issue 3 will be Spring, the haiku theme will be trees and the final submission date will be 11 July.

Jackie Hardy



Errata

Jack Hill's haiku from vol. 7 no. 1 (page 6) should have read:

low tide in winter
dunlin feeding and running
running and feeding

Winter

New Year's Day -
sparrows make a show of it
their idle chatter

Ransetsu (1654-1707) - trans. Bill Wyatt

now the leaves have gone -
two nests

Annie Bachini

winter rain
on cobblestones
every café closed

byron jackson

Vanished - somewhere inside
the forest of Christmas trees,
the child's voice - THIS ONE

Bamboo Shoot

falling from the trees
the last crab apples
this windy winter day

Canary Wharf in winter
steam from its top
is heading east

Frank Williams

Rainy, cold outdoors
no time to plant - hands itch
for the spade's smooth haft

J R Wilson

temperature drop -
footprints in the snow
walking towards me

Caroline Gourlay

In frozen snow
the cat's pawprints
seem delicate carvings

Edward D Glover

leafless trees
to their armpits in mist
the bleat of a lamb

last days of the year -
pedalling at an Easterly
in the lowest gear

George Marsh

bus-window wiped
with the back of a glove
seasonal lights

Matthew Paul

winter twilight,
aeroplane engine cuts out -
all the pheasants screech

Honour Thomasin Stedman

daylight
on the curve of the bowl
chisel's edge

pale moon before dawn;
in the wooden bowl
honesty

Geoffrey Daniel

february
one bright spot on a grey day
winter aconites

Ruth Robinson

Gale force wind -
No wood pigeons in the trees
One pecks on the lawn

Patricia V Dawson

January blues -
missing my closest friend
- my shadow

Charles Brien

a wakeful night -
slow arc
of the cold moon

Jeanne Lupton

December drizzle -
the houseboats resting
on the mud

the arms of a frozen nightdress
relaxing
over the paraffin stove

Claire Bugler Hewitt

Bleak November wind -
playing to an empty street
a hopeful busker

Peter Werner

darkening
deep fallen snow ...
starlings

David Walker

Snowing sound -
the stillness
of midnight

Yasuhiko Shigemoto

The tree in winter;
A black-hooded child walks
A snarling dog

Linda Marshall

Neatly dressed and capped
the scarecrow in the wheat field
through the winter fog

Dermot O'Brien

fire-red robin
lands on the snowy sill
I stop rubbing my hands

cracking walnut shells
the sound only deepens
the white winter silence

Grace Yamamoto

Firework glory
In the long night
The wind blows

Humberto Gatica

Like Bashō, many of Issa's haiku contain *mojiri* (a change in tone). The following is one example of this:

Oh, my! Is this
My final home--
Five feet of snow

Issa left Edo when he was fifty and returned to Kashiwabara, his hometown, in Shinano Town of Nagano Prefecture. Arriving there at year's end when the snow lay deep on the ground, he wrote this haiku. Kashiwabara lies on the plateau that borders Joshinetsu, an area in Japan well known for its heavy snows.

"So much snow! And this is where I will end my days" - which might be a paraphrase of his haiku, reveals his deep emotion. His poem seems to be rather negative about a return to such a place. On the other hand, however, it also sounds like a friendly greeting to it, asking it not to be too hard with him. This is his beloved hometown, and he seems pleased to be able to spend his remaining days there.

His feelings are revealed to us in the serious poetical expression *tsui no sumika* ("my final home"), which comes in the middle of the verse. Before and after it are set the colloquial expressions *kore ga ma* ("Oh, my! Is this") and *yuki go shaku* ("five feet of snow").

He was apparently joking as we often say, "Smiling on the outside, but crying inside", but he was really serious, thinking of his hometown as his final resting place. The expression *tsui no sumika* is an allusion to another poem (*honkadori*), which Issa enclosed with his own turn of phrase. This practice is known as *mojiri*, signifying a change in tone or twist in verse.

Issa often used the spoken language of the latter half of the Edo Period in this way. Every elaborate phrase that he found in a famous poem was a fish that came to his net. He sandwiched classical Japanese and Chinese poetry, historical facts, proverbs, Buddhist tales, and folktales between ordinary people's speech, somehow giving birth to a nostalgic rhythm in this way.

If we compare Bashō and Issa, we can say that Bashō often chose everyday topics, which he adapted to the language of famous Chinese and Japanese classical poetry, while Issa took expressions from spoken language, which he added to his haiku.

(Tōta Kaneko is President of The Modern Haiku Society (of Japan). This article was translated by Kinuko A Jambor)

Haiku

the sound of the sluice gate -
heron moving in the mist

Claire Bugler Hewitt

new fence posts set
birds line up
five feet apart

Ruth Robinson

Ten years on
Still held in the budding tree
A gale-torn branch

A creaking wheel
All the cows turn their heads
And gaze

Cicely Hill

new puppy
cocked head awaiting
the clock's cuckoo

Colin Maxwell-Charters

start of term
a dull cricket repeats
in the doorway

a thundercrack
echoes all over the city
- and still no rain

Dick Pettit

Crisp edge of dawn -
rough waves tossing
nun's chatter in French

Francis Attard

an old racecourse:
a lame hack and two tethered goats
asleep in the sun

Edward D Glover

floating crimson leaves
and right under them,
a dense crowd of carp

barbed wire:
the dragonfly's chosen
to alight on a barb

Tsunehiko Hoshino

After the silent film
we all talk at once

Geoff Richman

rainy dawn
sharing this beach
with the seagulls

byron jackson

Walking all day
through sitka spruce
each one
different

Stone claws
of a mossy griffon
faded family crest

Ken Jones

in the churchyard
after a while
we are silent

Annie Bachini

Welsh sunrise
Clothes line shadows
Slug trail

Humberto Gatica

A One-Day Trip

L A Davidson

A one-day trip at age eight still comes back to haunt. It was winter, snow on the ground, cold but not so constricting as pain from being homesick. My sister and I were spending the weekend with an immigrant family whose daughter, eighth grade, attended the school where we boarded from Sunday to Friday evenings, six miles from home. Mother had accompanied her father's body east to South Dakota for burial.

too stubborn to cry
as the girls talk in bed
the child shivers

Saturday morning with sun making snow sparkle, the mother and Christina suggested we three go for a long walk on surrounding prairie. The fifth grade brother was forbidden to go. He had chores to do and was a pest to his sister and a school bully. Once out of sight of the buildings, Christina said we would go to an abandoned shack behind a hill where there was still a stove and she had brought matches which she showed us almost furtively.

showing the matches
the older girl cautions us
not to tell on her

Bundled against the bitter wind we hurried towards prospective warmth. As I crossed a narrow frozen ditch, the ice broke and I was wet to above the knees. Christina looked around in panic and seeing no-one anywhere in sight and no buildings at all except the shack, she rushed us to it. Fearful that her brother would have followed despite his mother's admonition, the two older girls kept watch while my clothes dried by a fire built of scraps. Except for the stove the place was empty save for debris.

Sure of having been undetected, we made a beeline for home, the sun already edging down.

as we enter
the kid brother smirking
pleased with himself

The mother asks anxiously about our walk. Now it is almost time for chores. The father storms in and in broken English demands what we were up to. Christina seems petrified and looks at us pleadingly when he turns away. She

denies having been at the shack. She says she did not build a fire. Her brother is still smirking, not concerned it seems with the razor strap in his father's hand.

The father has not seemed pleased with our weekend visit, but at no time were there signs of his touching us. The thought never crossed my mind. Christina had told us he sometimes beat them. I thought of her kindness to us, trying to ease my homesickness; and I saw the snickering face of her brother who was set to relish her punishment.

panic on her face
as her father shouts at her,
sleet rattles windows

The father turns abruptly to me. The mother intervenes and asks if the brother had told the truth. I swore up and down we had not been in the shack nor built a fire. It was an instant's decision. He was propelled to the adjoining shed and given a loud and painful thrashing. He did not come to supper. No-one said a word at supper. We girls said nothing as we snuggled under the featherbed as soon as dishes were done. It was a long time before I went to sleep. I had been firmly taught and still believe one should not lie. Christina had done nothing really wrong except disobey some unexplained rule, and had in fact protected me. The brother had been strictly forbidden to follow us. To this day I can not decide if I should have told the truth, and I shall always wonder where he was when he spied on us.

as I drift to sleep
still hearing the boy's cries
a cold winter night

Favourite Haiku

The little worm
lowers itself from the roof
By a self shat thread *Jack Kerouac*

Kerouac - along with his fellow Beat poets such as Gary Snyder, Kenneth Rexroth and the late Allen Ginsberg - did much to bring the literature and philosophies of the East to occidental readers, myself included. This haiku still makes me smile, some fifteen years after I first encountered it.

Matthew Paul

A Pembrokeshire Coast Path Journey - St David's to Trevine **Matt Morden**

The drive down to St David's is accompanied by the drizzle. The smallest city is full of mist and tourists. In the pub, bored Germans play cards. The sea here must seem wild.

The youth hostel is austere. Damp seeps in under the tin roof. During the night, rain rattles and the other hostellers cough and snore in creaky beds. Sleep is light and the dawn is early.

The hostel shelters below Carn Llidi, but the tor remains lost in the mist. On leaving, the sounds of the sea blow up from Whitesands, a mile away.

crash of surf
unseen through mist
a blackbird

Fred Schofield

Walking through the bracken, gorse and granite, navigation is difficult. St David's Head remains unconquered. Skirting the stone walls of prehistoric fields, bullocks gaze passively.

misty headland
the only brightness
gorse

Martin Lucas

grazing snails
on the gorse
this year's flowers

Matt Morden

As the mist begins to clear, the coast path joins the clifftop. After a few miles, seals bob in a blue-grey sea, just observing. The weather brightens and the colours of the flowers become more vivid. Bluebells, thrift and spring squill cover the coastline.

sea campion
flowers all turned
by the breeze

Matt Morden

After the first steep climb, refreshments are needed. The view improves, looking back down this wild, impressive coast.

in the mouth
of my waterbottle
the cliff wind sings

Martin Lucas

Walking for three hours without seeing anyone else, the sounds of sea birds mix with the surf and skylark calls.

on a rock
two silent crows
the tide far below

Fred Schofield

At Abereiddy, the road brings humanity. The car park is intrusive after this wild coast. Two more miles to Porthgain where the bleak slate quay fits the coastline well. Stopping for a pint, the bar staff discuss Pulp Fiction trivia.

at the harbour
hung on the goals
- fishing nets

Matt Morden

Continuing to Trevine, the rise and fall of the path makes the walk tiring, although it could be the beer.

after the sharp descent
spreading toes
in my boots

Fred Schofield

The youth hostel here is new and very comfortable. In the dark pub, the day's haiku is shared. A storm blows in during the night, but the hostel is warm. Tomorrow, the wilds of Strumble Head.



Bashō in Bulgaria - Rhodope Mountain area - Pamporovo

We awoke early and decided on a walk before breakfast. Red Backed Shrike fluttering below our balcony, and just up the road, a Hawfinch perched on top of a pine tree. Pallid Swift, House Martin and Swifts occupy the sky. Breakfast and then another local walk. By early afternoon it was clouding over as we joined a walk to one of the nearby peaks.

At one stage during our journey, we met an old priest who must have been over 60 years of age. He carried a huge pack on his back, body bent with strain, puffing and blowing. Walking breathless steps, he seemed to make little progress, with a sullen and humourless look on his face. My companions took pity on him and decided to unload his burden by placing all his possessions on my horse, with me sitting on top. Mountains seemed to pile up far above my head. Below us, an abyss dropped for a thousand feet or more, into a raging river, without it seemed one spot of level ground. Perched high in my saddle, one terrifying moment after another, until at last I had to get off my horse and put the servant on instead.

By the time we reached the chair lifts, rain was bucketing down, so we decided to take a slow walk back, checking on the plants we had seen earlier, in woodlands. Hungarian Snowbells and Red Lungwort dripped, sagging in the rain. Elder Flowered Orchid in both its yellow and purple forms. On the way back we met up with another botanist, Geoff and his wife, from Cornwall. Geoff pointed out some of the plants to us and we shared notes and reminiscences together. We made our way back, wet and bedraggled, but feeling good and refreshed.

As we sat and ate our evening meal, drinking a glass of local wine, I could but not help recollect Bashō's *Journey to Sarashina*, a diary he had kept when he had set his heart on seeing the harvest moon, when the autumn wind stirred his heart with longings.

Birds sing noisily
in the empty woods - rain washes
the mountain path clean

(from *Crystal Flower Memories*, a haibun. Italic script taken from Bashō's Sarashina Kiko of 1688)

Senryu

at the cinema
too tall for his money
too short for his choice

David Walker

arthritis
her sweeping brush
worn to one side

Colin Maxwell-Charters

aged 6
and still smaller
than the sunflower

after combing my hair
my bald spot
warmer

Peter Werner

under a homeless head
stock exchange prices

on the stopped train
everyone reaching
for mobile phones

Frank Dullaghan

Family dinner:
The talk is all alive
With hints

Cicely Hill

Letters Home -
on the dedication page
your handwriting

tired-looking doctor
holding my urine sample
talks about Schubert

Caroline Gourlay

muted chanting
through the darkened cloisters
a whiff of tobacco

my model neighbour
in spotless white overalls
decorates his house

John Shimmin

Slipping out
for a breath of fresh air
the smokers

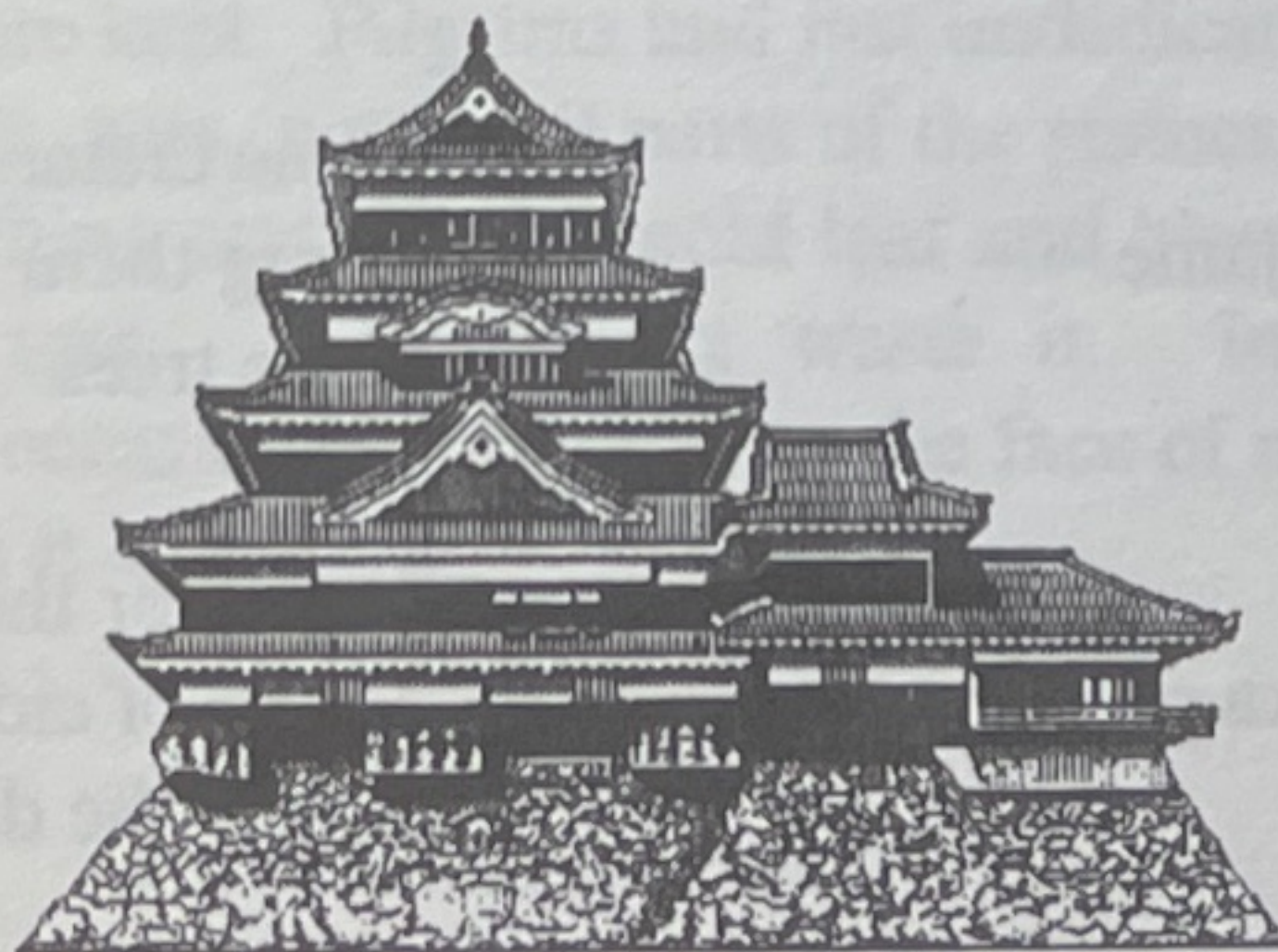
Ken Jones

teaching practice -
the overhead projector
climbs the wall

Annie Bachini

strolling the beach
dawn lovers wrapped in blankets
and each other

Cecily Stanton



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.

Mirko Vidovic (Croat and English)

Images of War

mladići
rasipaju sjeme po
rovovima

virile young men
shooting their semen out
in the trenches

ispekli starčev
mozak u krušnoj peći
za psa lutalicu

baking in the oven
for a stray dog -
an old man's brain

prašćići sišu
crveno mlijeko
ranjene majke

the wounded cow
suckles her calf
with red milk

mina izbila lutki oči
sad gleda s
dva bombona

the doll's eyes
blown out by a mine
replaced with sweets

kalašnjikovi
skraćuju kuckanje
djetlića

kalashnikovs
stop short the tapping
of the woodpecker

sadimo
masline u jame
od mina

mine craters -
using them to plant
olive trees

slušam
topot cvrčka po
bubnju

hush, for the
tramp of cicadas
across the drum ...

Klaus-Dieter Wirth (German and English)

Schreie in der Luft.
Ein Kranichkeil! Die erste
Eins für den Frühling.

Cries in the sky.
A wedge of cranes tick off
the first day of spring.

Paul Finn (Gaelic and English)

am facal gabh ort glacte
criothnachadh ann an soirbheas
thuit iad rithisd cho sneachda air ar chasan lom.

their words seem caught
trembling in the wind
they fell again as snow on our bare feet.

aon uair an obair is dèanta
samhla an sineadh a sneachda tuiteam
stad tu comharraich le do cas-cheum.

once the work is done
like the stretch of falling snow
you hesitate to mark it with your footprints.

Haiku with Headnotes

David Cobb

Only a very few people have written to me expressing interest in 'Haiku with Headnotes' (see *Blithe Spirit* 6/2), but I'd like to offer another example:

A Visit to the Holy Shrine

On holiday in Thailand. Visiting the temple at altitude on Doi Suthep, where relics of the Buddha are kept. Pilgrims and just undedicated tourists applying gold leaf to feet, hands, ears, noses, all parts of the statues. A monsoon storm brewing. Wind snatching stray bits of gold leaf and blowing them about. A small piece by my foot. I would not waste it. Inspiration from my surroundings and the occasion. I stick it over the face of my watch, obscuring time. But all too soon it comes off.

after the temple
on the lavatory seat
gold leaf

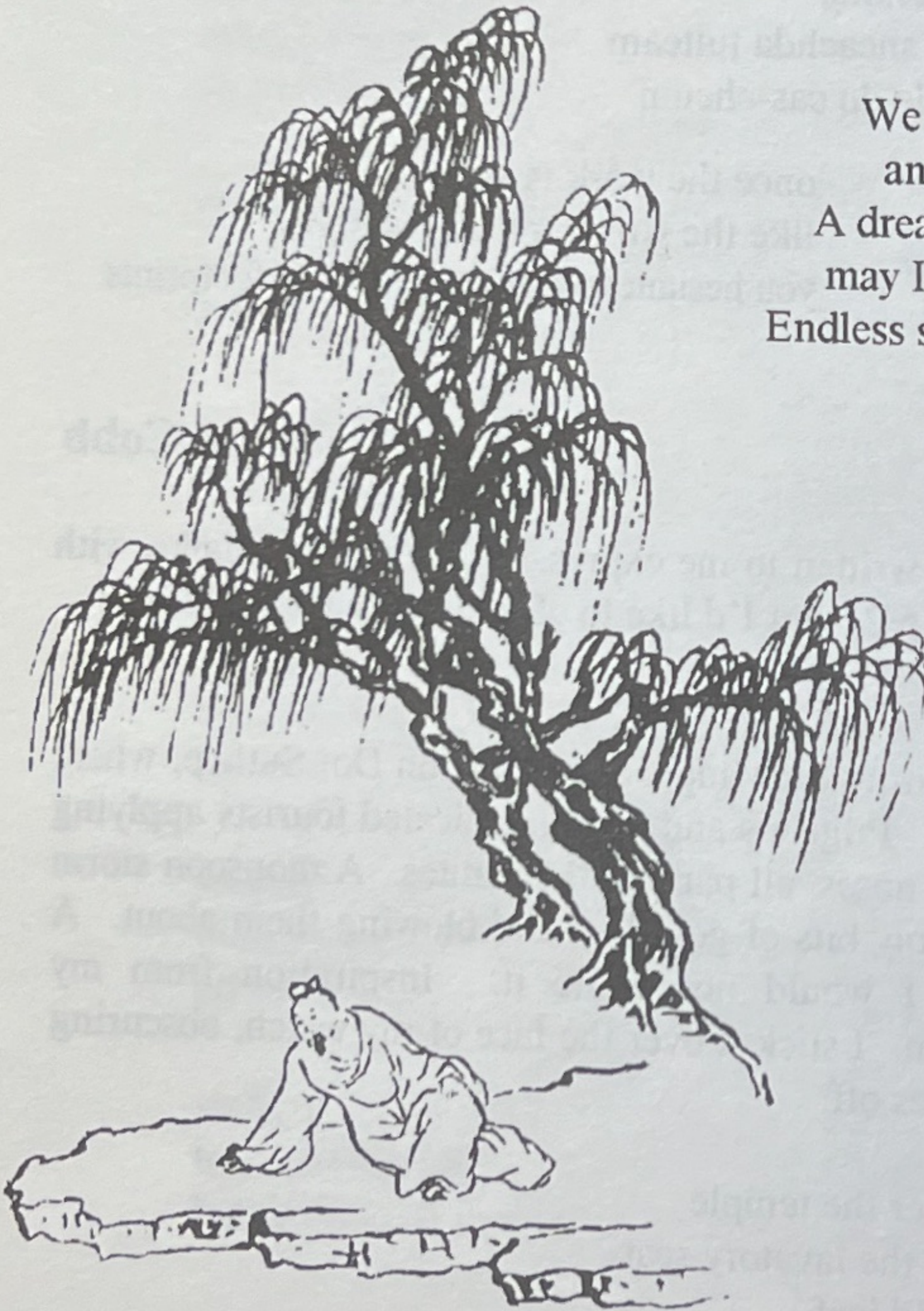
Tanka by Priest Saigyō (1118 - 1190)

Wanting to become free
of these passions
this sadness catches me unawares.
From the marsh a snipe flies up
into autumn twilight

Crickets singing
growing colder with the night
As autumn approaches
their voices grow weaker
fading into silence

We met at night
and made love
A dream from which
may I never awaken
Endless sleep full of desire

Thought I'd stop here
just for a while on this path
by a fresh cool stream
Sitting in willows' shade
how quickly the time goes by!



Bill Wyatt

Comet Viewing

waiting for dark -
the wink of an aircraft
divides the sky

cloud cover -
then Hale-Bopp
shines

so bright

through binoculars

the l e n g t h of its tail

money worries:
tail to the left, now
just before dawn

Jade

after the search -
from the bus window
comet

driving home
on the dark roman road -
comet pointing the way

Jeanne Lupton

Claire Bugler Hewitt

Slipping out of the back door, I walk down the garden path, peering at the stones ahead in the March mid-evening darkness. The light from a thin slice of moon is just enough to illumine a snail and its phosphorescent track working across the path. Carefully stepping over 'him', I reach my viewing point, lifting my head and eyes to peer into the north-western night. Comet Hale-Bopp, the object of my jaunt, is immediately identifiable by its tail - short, slightly golden and fuzzy through my bifocals. During my observation, deliberately brief to avoid over-chill, the comet appears unchanging and stationary. If I venture out again in an hour, it will barely seem to have moved, yet I know it is rushing through space at an unimaginable speed. As I return to the warm house, reflecting on this apparent contradiction, I note that my snail, despite its painfully slow rate of movement, has crossed the path and disappeared.

a snail's progress
.....clearly visible
Hale-Bopp's trail

Richard Goring

Journeys

Fleeting glimpse
a winding lane
going somewhere

Plastic corner table
for two -- me
and my holdall

Ken Jones

over the high pass
curses of the Sherpas
fluttering prayer flags

John Shimmin

bone beneath the hide
the last long ride into Jerusalem

on the second stair down
reading her book again;
breakfast time

Geoffrey Daniel

Beneath the balloon
as roar of hot gas rises
a sinking stomach

Percy Joseph Barsby

Bridge over Bashō's path
Somewhere there must be
the drops of mud

Bamboo Shoot

a white feather
on the lightest of breezes
drifts past the window

evening bus ride ...
bumping along
to the smell of chips

Frank Williams

Peeing in Warsaw:
strange moment
for a profound thought

Douglas Waterman

Grand Canyon
just like the movies
- but somehow less real

Charles Brien

almost home
dusk closes the gap
between the trees

driving in fog
not quite seeing the cat's eyes
this autumn

Caroline Gourlay

winter's journey
above the rainclouds
meadows of light

George Marsh

my walking shoes
fitting like new
camellias bursting

not open yet -
on the pub sign
blistered paint

David Cobb

photography
destinations arrive
with the postman

Ruth Robinson

So watery
all the way from New Zealand
- my apple

Allan Jarrett

Skeleton Coast
lion scavenges
on a whale

autumn migration
streaming across the moor
a swarm of thistledown

Keith Coleman

caught short:
above the sound of my stream
a curlew calls

Jade

They have turned back now,
the gulls that followed us out
The coast a scuffed line

WM Tidmarsh

Slow on crutches
The old man goes as far
As the postbox

Linda Marshall

crossing Black Mountain
wet with morning dew
black slugs

David Walker

Standing at the gate
by freshly blooming roses
I watched you leaving

Dan Pugh

avoiding the cracks
in the pavement as I walk
job interview

leaving home
the ferry rocking me to sleep
mother's face

Grace Yamamoto

Museum of Haiku Literature Award

Richard Goring writes: I am quite sure that I was not influenced, either for or against, by the manner of presentation of some of the haiku. My choice is Yasuhiko Shigemoto's:

The Bon moon
shining over the tower
of London

The Bon festival, a definitely Japanese event which takes place annually in August, is a celebration to welcome the spirits of the dead. The Tower of London is, of course, a definitely British structure which, with its often violent history (the young princes imprisoned, Traitor's Gate, etc.) may be the home of many long-dead spirits. This haiku embraces two widely separated cultures and places through the same moon that shines upon them, cycle upon cycle. It helps draw together poets from both countries in a gesture of goodwill, which surely is one of the great Blessings of haiku. I also particularly like the unstated caesura which neatly breaks up the phrase 'Tower of London'. It is especially effective when the poem is read aloud.

Amongst other contending haiku, I especially liked Maggie West's spent match, Annie Bachini's sliding leaves, John Shimmin's bobbing float and wagtails (but felt 'watching' was superfluous), Jeanne Lupton's and Bill Wyatt's autumn chill/wind, and all three of Sharon Lee Shafii's. David Platt's 'frgment' was good too - I thought at first that I was supposed to find the missing 'a' somewhere in those dark hills!

Caroline Gourlay is to select from this issue.

Featured Haiku Writer - Doris Heitmeyer

winter trees:
root and branch looking
more and more alike

kissing under a bridge
two people
in winter coats

the old pigeon
drinks earnestly and deeply
from a black puddle

first butterfly--
my legs feel so heavy
in spring mud

library stairs:
two men hosing winter soot
from the stone lions

the last strand
of the old nest lets go
in March wind

wisteria tangle
standing alone this spring
the tree rotted away

the lily in the vase--
it opened during my nap
without a sound

on the promenade
the zinnias planted last month
all wither at once

slimy pond:
a dog jumps in--
the smell of the water

A Note to Members of The British Haiku Society

I would like to thank Jackie Hardy, editor of *Blithe Spirit*, for inviting me to publish a few of my haiku. For ten years, 1986-1995, I was Secretary of the Haiku Society of America. I saw the beginnings of The British Haiku Society during that time and have been fascinated to watch its growth.

I have been writing haiku since the early 1980s, though I discovered the translations of R H Blyth, Harold G Henderson, Kenneth Yasuda and Nobuyuki Yuasa much earlier. J W Hackett's Zen haiku demonstrated that genuine haiku could be written in English. Until 1994, when I retired from my paying job, I worked as a medical secretary while trying to paint or write in my leisure time.

Last year, shortly after my retirement, an unexpected illness (a brain abscess) forced me to resign as Secretary of the Haiku Society, though I remain an active member and haiku writer. This selection of haiku has a special significance for me. A year ago I was not sure whether I would be able to walk very well or to write again. I now enjoy nature walks in Central Park, a pleasure I only dreamed of during the two months I spent in the hospital. These haiku were all written during my recovery.

Doris Heitmeyer

April 14, 1997

Favourite Haiku

tissue paper kisses

melting

in the rain

Maggie West

This strikes me of the impermanence of life, and of the human version of love. This could also be a promise of new love, or again, simply a woman on the way to a rendezvous; a boyfriend, or friends going on to a nightclub. Is she simply removing excess lipstick, or is it a gift, of an imprint of her kiss, for someone special? The guesses are endless, yet it still makes me come back to Kabir and of his poem where we are like paperboats melting as we sail along a river of life. Seven words that hit me stronger than many a long poem could. The art of the haiku is portrayed to perfection here, I believe.

Alan J Summers

Reviews

The Haiku Seasons: Poetry of the Natural World, William J Higginson, Kodansha International, 1996, pbk., 171 pages, ISBN 4-7700-1629-8. US\$16.00

“All traditional Japanese poetry has historically been deeply involved with nature. Natural cycles, such as the seasons and the course of love relationships, have long been major subject matter for composition, the primary source of figurative language, and a large part of the basis for organizing poetry collections.”

So says the author at the beginning of chapter 5, having spent previous chapters proving the first part of this statement. After commencing with 'The Essence of Haiku', there follows 'The Seasons in Older Japanese Poetry', with many *waka* (tanka) drawn principally from the *Manyōshū*, *Kokinshū* and *Shinkokinshū*, then 'Linked Verse and the Seasons', with example excerpts from both *renga* and *renku* sequences, and 'Hokku, Haiku and Senryu', once more with many illustrative poems (all these examples are in both Romaji and new English translations). Bill Higginson reminds us along the way that one of the rules of *renga* composition requires the opening verse, the *hokku* (out of which developed the stand-alone haiku), to clearly identify the season. Bill also points out that many *senryu* also contain a clear seasonal reference.

All this well-researched and enjoyably-readable material is the foundation for Higginson's endeavour to enlighten us to and convince us of the value of the *saijiki*. A *saijiki* is a reference book, its contents normally arranged by season and for each season a set of categories with their seasonal topics (*kidai*). For each topic there are recognised season words (*kigo*) listed. Each entry has appropriate natural, historical and cultural explanation, together with example poems. A *Saijiki* is therefore *both* an anthology to be read for pleasure and a source of definition, inspiration and instruction. But while *saijiki* have existed for many years and are routinely used by Japanese haiku poets, Higginson suggests they have excited little interest or enthusiasm amongst non-Japanese. This may be due in part to a belief that Japanese season words have little relevance outside of Japan, especially given that “.....certain words and phrases embody ideas that go beyond their literal meanings.” However, Bill Higginson believes that as interest in haiku and related forms (he uses the word *haikai*, to embrace haiku, *senryu*, *hokku* and *renku*) has grown throughout the world, the time “is ripe for a multicultural, international look

at what [*haikai*] have become during the final decades of the twentieth century” and that the best way of doing that is through “a survey of the best international haiku and related work, organized in the traditional manner in a way that allows the inclusion of both seasonal and nonseasonal poems.” In short, by the publication of a modern, international *haikai saijiki*.

Despite all this emphasis upon seasons, Bill Higginson early on acknowledges many fine haiku and other poems have been written in which there is no specific season identified. This has become more a commonplace in Japan this century, quite apart from the international arena where many poets take little or no account of the ‘rule’. (And of course, a considerable portion of the verses in renga/renku sequences are seasonless). Bill notes that, nonetheless, most modern *saijiki* have no ‘seasonless’ category and exclude seasonless poems from their examples, a situation he obviously finds unsatisfactory.

Thus chapter 5 deals in depth with the haiku seasons (and the calendar) and also introduces non-seasonal aspects. Finally, the book rounds off with a chapter (followed by a very useful bibliography) entitled ‘Toward an International Haikai Almanac’. This is by way of a sample, with sections arranged in the traditional *saijiki* categories (The Season, The Heavens, The Earth, Humanity, etc.). Under each category are a number of topics, each with an explanation of meaning and usage and perhaps with notes on variations, then several example haiku. There are also notes by Higginson on the example topics and poems. The illustrating haiku are contemporary and gathered from around the world (some in original language and English), and more than a few author names will be familiar to readers of *Blithe Spirit*.

Chapter 6 is doubtless intended to whet the appetite for a companion book, *Haiku World: an International Poetry Almanac*, also edited by Bill Higginson, which will be reviewed separately. It is a *saijiki* containing around 1,000 “outstanding contemporary hokku, haiku and senryu” under some 650 topics and includes a ‘seasonless’ section. Judged on the strength of the book reviewed here, it will be worth getting. For, as Higginson concludes, “Using a *saijiki* may be educational; it is always enjoyable.” and “..... a *saijiki* helps us know both ourselves and our place in the world.” I agree. Recommended.

(Both books should be easy to obtain in Britain. The review copy was ordered through my local Waterstones and cost £12.99).

RJG

The Earth Drawn Inwards, Cicely Hill, Waning Moon Press, 10
Gains Road, [redacted], ISBN 0-9529775-0-8
£2.50

A reviewer in *Poetry Review* recently, described a reviewed poetry book as "rather like eating a sandwich where the bread is superior to the filling." Cicely's book is decidedly the other way round, which is, of course, the better way to be, but often we do not see or know the filling and have only the bread to go by. In this case, I recognised the filling. I have long been an admirer of Cicely's work and some of these 95 haiku have already appeared in *Blithe Spirit*. The layout is excellent; they are interestingly and variously composed on the page. The whole is divided into seasonal sections separated by a garnish of senryu. The final part of this collection is titled haiku without season.

Cicely has a close affinity to the natural world and captures the haiku moment with style:

Mist
Swaddling the hill
Wet bilberries

On the doorstep
An inch or two of snow
The huge night sky

She is also adept with human nature:

Before the friend comes
Changing the radio dial
To the Third Programme

Once again
In this foreign city
The same quarrel

I savoured the flavour of all these haiku and senryu. It's rather a shame, then, that those who are unacquainted with Cicely's rich filling may respond only to the bread. The cover, with its ammonite image which is tasteful and attractive, has problems with the text. In the six words there are three changes of font, two sizes and a curious mixture of upper and lower case. Also the title itself differs from that on the title page. The back cover blurb would have benefited from closer proof reading, too. This is important. The hungry may seek sustenance elsewhere. However, this is the first venture by Waning Moon Press, so easy to forgive, but their next visit to the baker's will be watched with interest.

JAH

The Narrow Road to Oku, Matsuo Bashō, trans. Donald Keene, illus. Miyata Masayuki, Kodansha International, ISBN 4-7700-2028-7 £18.99

This is a splendid book with 39 full-page *kiri-e* illustrations by Japan's foremost collage artist. On the cover flaps, Masayuki tells the reader that he chose *The Narrow Road to Oku* as the theme of the exhibition which marked the 30th anniversary of his career as an artist. The collages are bold, beautiful and in colour; quite different from the tiny, black and white illustrations which we are used to seeing accompanying Bashō texts.

Professor Keene's translations seem to be of secondary importance. In the five and a half page preface he points out the difficulties of translating not only the title, but both the prose and the haiku. He says the first haiku of *Oku no Hosomichi* is particularly difficult to translate, offering the reader what he calls a fairly literal translation - "An age in which the occupant of the grass hut changes -- a house of dolls". He then offers a paragraph of explanation as "No-one would be likely to guess the meaning from such an English translation." Quite; and it's very helpful, too. I was, therefore, astonished to read what he had made of the haiku:

Even a thatched hut
May change with a new owner
Into a doll's house

Now 'a doll's house' has a different meaning from 'a house of dolls'. From this haiku I am left with the impression that Bashō passed the *Bashō-an* on to a sort of seventeenth century Paul Daniels.

I looked up some of my favourites and admired the following Keene translations:

Rainhat Island -	Plagued by fleas and lice
Where did you say it was?	I hear the horses staling
Muddy roads in May	Right by my pillow

How lonely it is!
Even lonelier than Suma,
Autumn at this beach

Worth owning, I think. It offers plenty to talk about.

JAH

Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers,
Leonard Koren, Stone Bridge Press 1994, pbk., 95 pages, ISBN
1-880656-12-4 US\$14.95

Two separate words which have come together to represent a whole Japanese aesthetic which at its least is a particular type of 'beauty' most closely represented in English by the word 'rustic', *wabi-sabi* in its fullest expression can be a way of life and has many Zen-like characteristics. In a brief history, Leonard Koren notes a long association between *wabi-sabi* and the tea ceremony. He also provides a provisional definition of the term and compares it with Modernism, finding some general points of similarity but many more where the two are poles apart. Finally, he plunges into a depth consideration of the *wabi-sabi* universe, looking at the metaphysical basis (things are either devolving toward, or evolving from, nothingness), spiritual values (truth comes from observation of nature, 'Greatness' exists in the inconspicuous and overlooked details, beauty can be coaxed out of ugliness), state of mind (acceptance of the inevitable, appreciation of the cosmic order), moral precepts (get rid of all that is unnecessary, focus on the intrinsic and ignore material hierarchy) and material qualities (suggestion of natural process, irregular, intimate, unpretentious, earthy, murky, simple).

A readable, thought-provoking book, also containing 23 full-page 'gritty' black-and-white photographs of *wabi-sabi* objects and scenes and one poem, a *waka* by Fujiwara no Teika. A useful addition to any haiku-poet's library, but some may balk at the £10.99 UK price.

RJG

Dust Devils Dancing: a Haiku Anthology, Ver Poets, edited by
Margaret Toms, Brentham Press, St Albans, ISBN 0-905772-53-9 £3.00

This well-produced little book contains the work of 11 poets from the St Albans group who call themselves Ver Poets. It begins with eight explanatory lines about 'The Haiku', in which it is described as "a strange little three-legged beast". Indeed. The Ver Poets' haiku-like verse is typical of the half-initiated. Most are hooked on 5-7-5; there is much philosophy; plenty of questions, simile, metaphor, anthropomorphism and so-whatness. For all that some attractive images emerge. I will send them a copy of this *Blithe Spirit* and perhaps they will be inspired to join BHS.

JAH

Silver Path of Moon, a haibun, Janice M Bostok, Post Pressed, [redacted] Australia.

Write to the publisher for details, price, etc.

Silver Path of Moon's 22 pages of text and poetry express the writer's feelings of desire, passion and loss. The unique and interesting drawings, although not technically brilliant, add another dimension to this attractively presented book.

Janice Bostok has called this account of her erotic life a haibun, but it breaks the conventions of haibun in at least two respects. Firstly, it does not chronicle an actual journey of any kind, instead the writer's experiences are presented as a series of sensual vignettes. Secondly, as well as haiku, tanka and senryu, longer western verse forms are included in the last three sections.

The authenticity of Janice Bostok's encounters is never in doubt, but I wonder if the fact that she seems too close to it all hampers her ability to lift her writing and perceptions onto a level where insights into the actuality can take place:

"I smile in the yellow glow of candle light and remember the touch of your hands on my eager body; their gentleness as they caress my breasts and squeeze my nipples; and the ease with which they slip inside me."

The poetry at times does demonstrate Janice Bostok's skills as a haiku poet:

his sudden touch
accentuates the shrillness
of a bird's call

Each scene uses nature to reinforce the tone of the relationships that seem to haunt the writer:

"My hand on your naked body searches to see if you are awake. A gentle rain begins to fall."

rain on the roof
growing heavier

my restlessness
awakens in you

This conscious use of nature as a device to reinforce or add another dimension to the focus of the writing reverses the usual convention of haibun where nature, people and points of interest, both historical and in the present, are the focus.

Another difference is that Janice Bostok rarely addresses the reader: her feelings are directed towards her lovers and the reader is often positioned as a voyeur, which probably adds to 'the titillation effect':

"Sweat trickles down my body and mingles with the wetness of your own. I taste the salt of your lips."

One of the achievements of *Silver Path of Moon* is that Janice Bostok recounts her experiences without objectifying her lovers: something women seem better able to achieve than men. Having said this, I do think that, with erotic writing generally, there is an ethical question in terms of whether the other person has given permission for their body to be displayed in public, regardless of whether they are named or not:

in naked heat
he leaves the bedroom
penis hanging loose

I enjoyed reading *Silver Path of Moon* and applaud Janice Bostok for her bravery in revealing such intimate details about her sexuality. Women's sexuality is still largely defined by men and it is important that individual women express it in their own terms, which will inevitably involve difference.

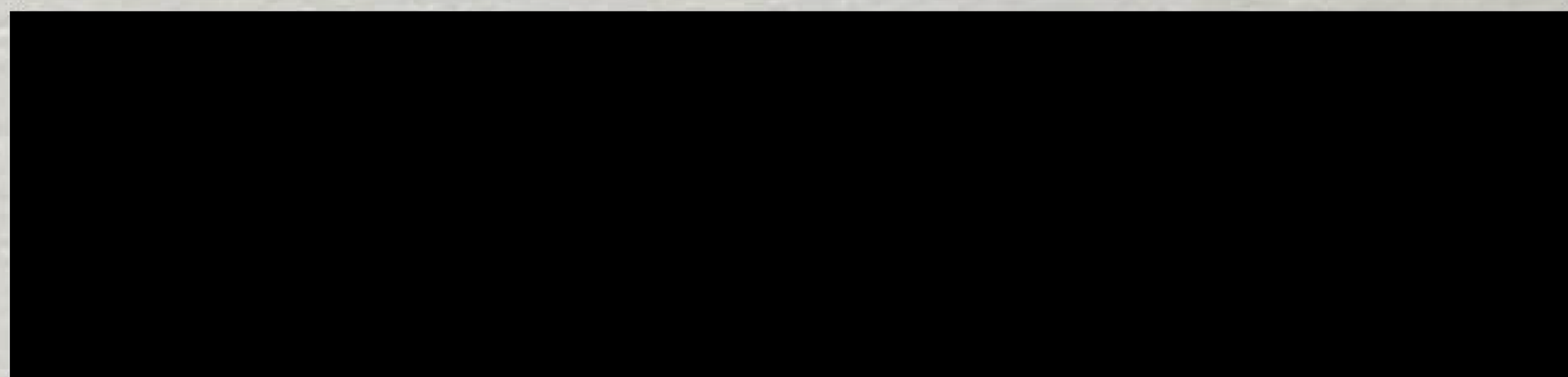
AB

Also received:

Janice M Bostok's *Still Waters* - haiku with images by Cornelis Vleeskens.

To Hear the Faint Bells, Milton Acorn, illus. Gilda Mekler. Hamilton Haiku Press, Ontario LM8 2Z6, Canada. ISBN 0-9691638-7-8 Can\$7.00

Suiko (The Water Jar), Eiko Miyaji (trans. Judy Kendall and Iris Elgrichi). 2-14-8 Teramachi, Kanazawa 921, Japan



Blithe Spirit **Volume 7 Number 2**
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Contents

Editorial		1
Winter		2
Issa's Use of Mojiri	Tōta Kaneko	6
Haiku		7
A One-Day Trip	L A Davidson	9
Favourite Haiku		10
A Pembrokeshire Coast Path Journey		
	Matt Morden	11
Crystal Flower memories	Bill Wyatt	13
Senryu		14
The Pathway		16
Haiku with Headnotes	David Cobb	17
Tanka by Priest Saigyō	Bill Wyatt	18
Comet Viewing		19
Journeys		20
Museum of Haiku Literature Award		23
Featured Haiku Writer	Doris Heitmeyer	24
Favourite Haiku		25
Reviews		26

