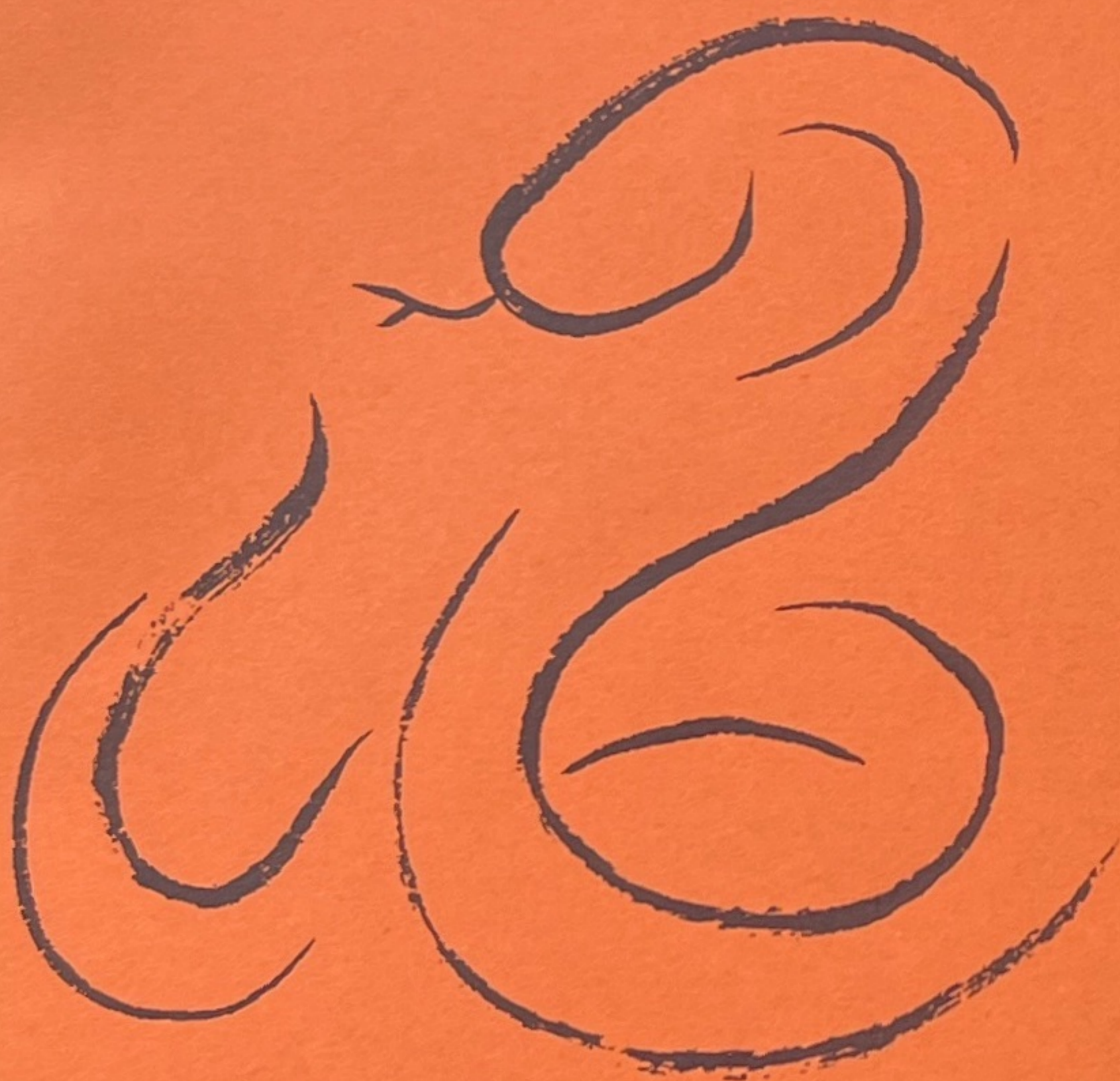


**Journal of  
The British Haiku  
Society**



**Blithe Spirit**

Volume 7 Number 4    November 1997

# Blithe Spirit

## Journal of the British Haiku Society

Editor: Jackie Hardy

Submissions for all but **The Pathway** section to:-

Jackie Hardy,  
[REDACTED]

Submissions for **The Pathway** section only to:-

David Cobb,  
[REDACTED]

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, [REDACTED]

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.

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

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## Editorial

The submissions for this my last issue have arrived in the greatest number ever. They are characterised by many new names for whom I shall watch out in succeeding issues. Better-known names continue to submit but are probably no longer in the majority. This seems to indicate a changing, thriving **British Haiku Society**.

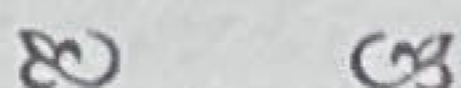
To all those who have written with appreciative remarks recently I send thanks. Doffing the editor's eyeshade will allow me a clearer view of my own creative life but I shall miss some aspects of the role deeply. To the new editor I send best wishes and look forward to making my own submissions to *Blithe Spirit*.

The season for the next issue will be autumn and the theme celebrations. Please have your submissions to the new editor (Caroline Gourlay, [REDACTED]) by Saturday, 24 January.

Greetings for Christmas and 1998.

**Jackie Hardy**

[The Cat's Yawn Press humbly apologises for the delay in producing this issue – typesetting schedules were ruined by a combination of workload, including BHS James W Hackett Haiku Award administration, and personal and family illness - the delay is catered for in the extended submission closing date, above. Richard Goring]



## Errata

There was a typographical error in the fifth verse of Patricia V Dawson's sequence, 'The Farmer at St Benoit', in *BS* 7/3, p.5. Our sincere apologies to Patricia. The correct rendering is:

when his cream car  
arrives, his charolais appear  
on the horizon

## **Ships and Boats**

on the Woodside ferry  
surrounded by greying skies  
and blue rinses

*John Barlow*

fishing boats  
on sunlit water  
smell of hotel breakfasts

*byron jackson*

my father's boat  
just a dot now on the horizon  
his handkerchief in my hand

*Grace Yamamoto*

Washing bare tree roots  
a slip wave follows the barge –  
Dead frog floating by

Water lapping – fish  
flap in the keel

*Arwyn Evans*

the seagulls wheel  
over the squeal  
of the swingboats

*Claire Bugler Hewitt*

in the pedalo  
we sail without a captain  
across the still lake

*Katherine Gallagher*

rain –  
the boat in my neighbour's yard  
gets wet at last

*David Cobb*

swans preening  
under the willow  
flotilla of white feathers

*Diana Webb*

Motorboat race --  
the waves colliding  
violently

*Yasuhiko Shigemoto*

In the child's bath  
foam laces the red sail-boat  
capsized on a sponge

*Sue Schraer*

dolphins weaving  
before the prow: always  
faster than the ship

*Paul Amphlett*

passing marshfields –  
through a dirty train window  
a jetty of yachts

*Alan Summers*

rough sea in the harbour –  
old fishing boat rocking  
against a millionaire's yacht

*Gilles Fabre*

Lying vacant  
in the harbour – a quota  
of fishing boats

*Paul Quayle*

Tide's out  
gulls and boats  
sitting motionless

*John McDonald*

on the bargee's deck  
only the potplants  
are unpainted

*Stephen Derwent Partington*

ebbtide – the dinghies  
turn on their leashes, tugging  
for the horizon

*Geoffrey Daniel*

## **A Trip to Spain**

**Frank Williams**

Holidays can by definition be both a source of joy, and at the same time a source of stress. A trip to Spain, not my first, but each trip a new adventure of sun, sea and Shangri-La! The stress; packing, travelling to the airport, the seemingly endless wait at the airport, and the take-off. The joy begins; sunny blue skies, a beautiful day full of expectation. A visit to the cockpit; all around a sea of white clouds, and in the distance the coast of Spain beckons. Back in my seat, and I'm looking out of the window daydreaming.

on a white cloud  
our plane's silhouette  
in a circle of light

A haiku is not 5-7-5 syllables. It is 5-7-5 *ji-*, except in those cases where it is longer (*jiamari*) or shorter (*jitarazu*) than typical, but they are a separate issue. These units of Japanese in which haiku is counted are not sound-units like our syllables but writing units, more like the letters of our alphabet. As it happens, 90% of the time one of these units does form a complete what-we-would-call syllable, so, generally speaking, 'syllable' is not a bad translation. But it is an approximation only and provides no basis for construing haiku as a 5-7-5 syllabic metre in English.

There are two main points here. Firstly, Japanese poetry is always counted according to its written form, ignoring any contractions which are made when the words are spoken aloud. For example, the 'tsu' sound in *matsu* (pine-tree) or *tsuki* (moon) is usually unvoiced so that these are pronounced *mats'* and *ts'ki*: the English ear hears only one syllable. This is analogous to 'memory' becoming 'mem'ry' in English. But whereas in English we can choose whether to scan 'memory' as two or three syllables, in Japanese poetry each word must count its full written value, regardless of how it is spoken: *matsu* and *tsuki* always count two.

Secondly, doubled vowels and the single consonant 'n' are counted separately. This means that there are numerous words which count longer in Japanese than they do in English. How many syllables in .....

Haiku ?	Hai-ku = 2 ?	Ha-i-ku = 3 !
Bashō ?	Ba-sho = 2 ?	Ba-sho-o = 3 !
Tokyo ?	To-kyo (2 ?) or To-ky-o (3 ?)	To-o-kyo-o = 4 !
Martin Lucas ?	Mar-tin Lu-cas = 4 ?	Ma-a-ti-n
[Maatin Ruukasu]		Ru-u-ka-su = 8 !

Or, to reduce the argument to absurdity, as we well know,

writing a haiku  
in seventeen syllables  
is very diffic

but it's even more diffic when you discover you've just written

ra-i-ti-n-gu a ha-i-ku	9 !
i-n se-be-n-ti-i-n shi-ra-bu-ru-zu	13 !
i-zu be-ri-i di-fi-ku	8 !

which is 30 'syllables', if you're Japanese.

Thus, it is purely arbitrary to say that a haiku in English *should* be 5-7-5 English syllables. Certainly that's one thing it has been and can be ... any other pronouncement on form risks being equally arbitrary ... but to claim special validity for this particular interpretation is like brewing imitation miso soup from Bovril while pouring scorn on a rival imitation brewed from Marmite.

Let's explore more. The world is shifting, drifting, never fixed. Why attempt to fix it?

## Museum of Haiku Literature Award

Susumu Takiguchi writes: How much experienced or otherwise in haiku this poet is, I know not. If he is a novice, he has hit a jackpot in his innocence. If he is an old hand, he has admirably cultivated his own distinct style - deceptively easy language, good flow with every word familiar in separation but all words combined and arranged, a magic.

even in my pocket  
it is everywhere  
this morning's spring wind                      *Gilles Fabre*

In this haiku (yes, it is a haiku!), the middle line and the third are an experience of us all. It is the first line and the fact that it is there that makes it at once original and universal. No, 'pocket' is not gimmicky. Otherwise, no-one would put coins or car keys in it. He did not say, for example, 'in my inside pocket', which would have been gimmicky, rendered the failed poem (now, **not** a haiku) to a dustbin and denied him the award in favour of the following two runners-up.

*Annie Bachini's* 'Sainsbury's in spring - / a young couple push the trolley / holding hands', missing the award by a whisker, is a haiku of 'our time' (Betjeman, or Larkin might have written the first line in amusement) and yet timeless, zooming on the affectionately held hands, a concrete, physical symbol of love between the young couple like an eternal spring.

*David Leather's* 'Curlew's call / returns to echo the moor / snow by the wall' is a rare example (at least to me) of attaining the 'best of both worlds' of English and Japanese poetic traditions. First of all it is a proper poem no matter what it's called. Secondly, it has a good flow, rhythm, alliteration, resonance, musicality, 'pictorial' language and nice rhyme. On the other hand, it has a season word, a distinct form (no, it doesn't have to be 5-7-5), a feeling of loneliness and desolation. If only past poets hadn't mentioned the curlew so often!



## Haiku

behind tall pines  
a fluff of willow floats  
in and out of sight

*David Cobb*

stuck at a signal;  
in the incomplete silence  
whispering Walkman

*Martin Lucas*

finely tuned we wait  
the baton's faintest movement  
transforms the silence

*Ruth Robinson*

puddle after puddle --  
the bright colour  
of her long raincoat

*Gary Hotham*

in the hawthorn hedge  
a single robin --  
all those red berries

stepping from the shower  
rain lashes the window

*Frank Dullaghan*

nagging toothache --  
the blare from a radio  
downstairs

*Richard Goring*

War plane roars,  
crossing the training field  
the lone hare

*Humberto Gatica*

sweeping the garden  
I forget about my landlord's  
latest threats

(after Bashō)

*Annie Bachini*

the letter box  
disgorging letters  
for someone else

*Peter Werner*

Palm fronds  
gently holding  
the sound of spring rain

*Cecily Stanton*

hunter --  
the wounded bear waits  
for a closer shot

champagne glasses --  
throwing plastic  
into the fireplace

reading your lifelines  
veins of frost  
on my window

*eric l houck jr*

steaming open  
my haiku envelope --  
more last thoughts

*John Shimmin*

Moving towards us  
carrying ducks to the bank:  
surface of the lake

In the final light  
dragging along before bedtime  
two clumps of raincloud

*Sue Schraer*

Wind rattles the window,  
a seven-legged spider  
waits for flies

*Wayne Henderson*

common housefly –  
i let it in  
out of the rain

eating almonds  
her japanese eyes  
blink blink blink

frost on the glass –  
since her departure  
nothing, on nothing

*Stephen Derwent Partington*

## **Favourite Haiku**

I turned round to see  
if my shadow was still there:  
it, too, had turned round

*James Kirkup*

I appreciate a childish mentality in this haiku. Perhaps this author was walking alone in the countryside under the bright moon at night. His shadow was always pursuing him, so he might possibly be scared at it. All of a sudden he felt loneliness and turned round to see if his own shadow was still following him. I can't read this haiku without smiling a bit.

**Yasuhiko Shigemoto**

## Letters

Dear Editor,

### **Gone-fully-initiate (or, Should we teach syllables to count?)**

As Douglas Henly (*BS* 7/3) sees from the revealing tally he made of 7/2's verses, it is now too late to recall BHS poets to the one box of 5-7-5. For better or worse, we and the North Americans have headed west out of the traditional matrix of *The Hidden Pond* (reviewed in this issue, p.29) and are still travelling - Past / where the cuckoo vanished / a single island. Yet we're by no means out of sight: in the main, people use only three patterns of haiku, and there are arguments for and against each of 5-7-5 syllables, 2-3-2 stresses, and free form/minimalist.

"Stick to 5-7-5 until it becomes impossibly wordy" is perhaps still current advice to the beginner. But maybe this entanglement is just a stitch, and taking second wind the aspirant will berth in port and stay there. Fine 17-ers frequently appear (John Shimmin, Dermot O'Brien (7/3) and Patricia V Dawson (6/1)):

clutching daffodils / watching the old gravedigger / curious children  
The sun in the west / the evening bell sounds gently / the closing of the park  
A kind man, he wounds / as he agrees with remarks / that he has not heard

In the first, the three three-syllable words make the verse taut, in the second, all the little words slow movement and feeling, and in the third the unimportance of stress gives the tone of a casual, quiet remark. In all three, the words are suited to the meaning, and there's no sense of padding out to make up the number, or trying to get too much in, which are the faults of the 17-er. Does anyone want to discourage the regular full-counters?

Even so, many writers, including myself, were persuaded to the 2-3-2 stress pattern, as argued in William Higginson's *Haiku Handbook*. I think WH recommends with it 10-14 syllables: otherwise 7-21+ would be possible:

black cats / sprawled out, lift / eight eyes  
at the top of the coaster / as the youngest of all leans over / a sickening lurch

As a regular user of this form, I know where the shoe pinches: it feels heavy. Once can lighten it, and gain dramatic effects, by missing out a stress from one or two of the three lines:

at the top / of the topmost hill / no touch of wind

But I often feel that my pictures, which come in all shapes and sizes, are cut to size and stuck into exactly the same frame. If only I could learn to fly, and be as the free-formers! Yet I'm pretty sure the next one, with little help from me, will plod into the usual pattern.

The free form/minimalists produce pieces which make me gasp with envy. It's as if they were sculpting in air (Fred Schofield and Kohjin Sakamoto):

old men / and sparrows / huddle  
white sail.... / whiter still, / under my shading hand

However, FF/Ms sometimes give short measure. So do 'tundra', 'raindrop', 'luminescence', and 'antidisestablishmentarianism'. However useful for meditation, these are not haiku. People who think so would leave a pile of bricks or a dead cow in the Tate. Yet Colin Blundell showed in *BS* 7/3 that two-liners can also be haiku; and Susan Rowley confirmed it. So has Joan Smith (a renga verse):

winter wedding / bronze chrysanthemums

Tentative conclusion: there have to be at least two points of interest to make a haiku. On the other hand, an excessively long four-liner need not be a short story (Tito):

Further down the cobble beach / the face of another / sunwatcher /  
loses its copper glow

What can we say? DMH's despairing pleas for 17 justified itself by an undeniable concern: the need for a norm. Well, yes, but every haiku writer does come to his/her sense of a norm: through experience of the Japanese masters; reading and considering, among other things, *BS*; thinking about life; and above all, going out to see and write haiku. However many tricks and variations he may play on that norm, and however weary with himself he may get, 'admiring this man's art and that man's scope', he develops sufficiently doughty standards of body, mind and - to keep a word up the sleeve for a moment, let's put in *corps, coeur et esprit* - to be able to say: "I don't care what anyone else may think about it, but I've just done something really fine." And as of his own work, so for that of others. A piece which has keen sight, feeling and intelligence gives a wonderful lift, for though the effort of one, it is in a sense a collective achievement; it is what we have all been working for: "The whole haiku nation has laboured and groaned in spirit until now."

Haiku form will remain problematic for one and all, but in one way it should be treated as haiku punctuation: nobody writes letters to *BS* to complain about the dearth of full stops and capital letters in Comrade X. Here we do as we like, but

are at the same time in *mellifluous concord* - or maybe it's polyphony, disordered only by raw or out-of-tune voices, and the occasional quodlibet.

So, all's done and we're tidied-up. Except someone's left out on the bench a piece of Buson, from Blyth's *Haiku*. Hmn.... bright, neat - how delightful!... and.... ah, now I see it: definitely polyphonic:

The apprentice at liberty / Steps over the string of the kite, / And hastens on

*Dick Pettit, Jeddah*

Dear Editor,

I hope Douglas Henly and Margaret Tims (your correspondents in *BS* 7/3) won't mind my saying that they don't seem to have cottoned-on to what most contributors to *Blithe Spirit* are trying to do.

They aren't trying to write *verse*. Their aim is poetry or rhetorical effect or releasing the latent force of images to enlarge experience or set experience at large. For this they find 'flexible style' or 'organic form' ("where form is reinvented for each new poem/experience", as stated in *The Nature of English Haiku*) more appropriate than rigid adherence to a single form, 5-7-5 syllables. But 'flexible style/organic form' *is* inclusive of 5-7-5. I would myself use 5-7-5 when I thought it said things best.

There is now, and never has been, anything deviant about this. Bashō (I rely on Makoto Ueda's translation) wrote:

"Even if you have three or four extra syllables - or as many as five or seven - you need not worry as long as the verse SOUNDS RIGHT [*my capitals*]. If even one syllable stagnates in your mouth, give it careful scrutiny." In other words, the ear, not the eye, is to judge the appropriate form. Bashō was flexible himself, using on occasion as few as 14 or as many as 21 syllables.

In more recent times, R H Blyth advised writers of haiku in English to think in terms of stresses - possibly 2-3-2 accents would work well. George Marsh, in a paper read at our last national conference, enlarged on the relationship between traditional English metres and stress-timed measures in haiku.

Blyth also commented frequently on particular haiku that they weren't haiku because they simply weren't interesting. Insistence on the 5-7-5 form is one of the surest ways of cultivating boredom.

*David Cobb, Braintree*

Dear Editor,

Like many others, my enjoyment of haiku began with R H Blyth's four-volume *Haiku*, which continue to provide guidance and inspiration. Blyth's haiku are not so much literal translations as gifted interpretations of the Japanese classics, and he chose to present in English most, but by no means all, of them in what has become the familiar three-line arrangement.

Volume 4 (Autumn-Winter) contains over 600 haiku in English, out of which only half-a-dozen comply with the 5-7-5 format, or put another way, only one in a hundred comply with what Douglas M Henly seems to regard as the norm (Letters, *BS* 7/3). What's more, there are numerous ten (or more) syllable lines, couplets, one-liners. If Mr Henly thinks that "a novice would get scant guidance" from the May issue of *Blithe Spirit* containing one in eighteen 5-7-5 haiku, what hope is there for Reginald Blyth?

I doubt if my opinion would interest Mr Henly. When trying to write haiku/senryu I sometimes use a 5-7-5 format, sometimes not. It depends on what seems appropriate, what one feels comfortable with, at the time. I have noticed four poems published in *Blithe Spirit* from Mr Henly in recent years, none of them in 5-7-5 format.

*John Shimmin, Porthmadog*

## **Favourite Haiku**

barn door swinging shut  
the darkness left inside  
until next summer *Caroline Gourlay*

With the shutting of the barn door we experience the finality of the end of summer and the chill with such a building as it waits with the darkness for the door to be thrown open to the brightness and warmth to come in the following year.

It is such a good haiku that we can smell it as well as feel it, see it, and hear it creak.

**Patricia V Dawson**

## Featured Haiku Writer - janice m bostok

### summer evening at home

evening a last burst of birdsong from the thicket  
ginger tom flicks one ear in his sleep  
eating early the dishes done before the news broadcast  
comfort in summer insects the heat lessening  
the drumming sound of cane toads' mating calls close  
cat stretches goes out to investigate  
alone listening as life pulsates in the darkened heat  
tv(m) coarse language adult themes  
after a while the cat comes back settles on my knee

### notes from the acute care unit

chest pain the chill of autumn deepens  
the ride to the hospital long  
trees touching overhead narrow my vision of home  
midnight the intensive care unit dimly lit  
light reflection adds to mist in the painting on the wall  
unstable angina I don't really want it stabilised  
sight & sound of monitors filter through early morning hours  
sudden high pitched sound of a monitor gone dead  
reflected in the monitor's screen jacaranda's leafy green  
mobile ward monitor keeps me in touch with my heart  
but the heart monitor knows nothing of what i feel



Janice Bostok was born in Mullumbimby, New South Wales in 1942. Her interest in haiku was triggered in 1971 when an American pen friend sent her a Peter Pauper book of Japanese haiku in English translation. Her writing until this point had been personal experience articles, stories and free verse but the haiku form had a great effect on her. Soon her work was being published in American haiku magazines.

Since then Janice's haiku has been published in many books and magazines all round the world and she is a sought-after contest judge and article writer. She edits *Paper Wasp* and *Hobo* haiku magazines. She and her husband are retired and live on a banana plantation in Murwillumbah, New South Wales.

Janice writes: I began writing sequences of one-line haiku because Marlene Mountain has always influenced me greatly.

### **Favourite Haiku**

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

This haiku has a very beautiful soft atmosphere to it; quite calming, almost meditative. If you read the haiku you can see why, because the person is being lulled into a gentle, restful sleep or half-sleep. The person may be leaving home for the first time, into an apartment, as the first move into adulthood. It could be the person's first job, or it may well be that the person is most definitely a woman, and she is in perhaps her first pregnancy. The mother's face and her own face, now as a mother-to-be. Perhaps it is the ferry, a mechanical being, rocking the prospective mother to sleep, as she will do for her baby once it is born.

A very beautiful haiku, with a hint of mystery. We all so often like things to be cut and dried; this poem isn't. Ten words, fourteen syllables, the grace of the haiku once again triumphs.

**Alan J Summers**

## Tanka

February,  
a friend returns –  
under churning clouds,  
standhawk  
hangs on the wind

how light, the sound  
of a bell through the evening snowfall;  
one dry crack –  
laden bough  
of the winter-flowering cherry

*Keith J Coleman*

called from a dreamless sleep  
by the sea, the sand softcold  
on this midnight beach  
I stand alone and will not  
wake you even for a kiss

in shoal after shoal  
between our legs and fingers  
the lake says fish –  
holding close to you  
I just gape and gasp

small night-time ripples  
lap at the stony shore;  
somewhere a bird calls  
and is answered by your laugh  
– low and delighted

*Susan Rowley*

## 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.

Constantin Abăluță is regarded as one of Romania's most distinguished living poets. The following haiku and tanka are from his most recent collection, *A Lens on the Table*, pub. Leda, Constanta, 1996.

În linistea odăitei mele  
ziua care se sfârșeste  
se-adaugă mileniului

The peace of my room –  
this waning day is added  
to the millenium

Gardul de cărămidă  
o frunză tot încearcă  
să-l sară

The brick wall:  
a leaf tries all the time  
to fly over it

Noapte rece.  
Luna a rupt  
pânza păianjenului

Cold night.  
The moonlight has torn  
a spider's web

Toamnă –  
o frunză udă  
a acoperit numărul casei

Autumn –  
over the house number  
a damp leaf

Spre casă, în amurg.  
Pe fiecare stradă  
sunt alt trecător.

Homewards, at dusk.  
On every street  
I'm another passer-by

Pod în ceață –  
suieratul trenului  
cât e de pur

Bridge in the mist –  
how clear  
the whistle of a train

Ninge.  
Un copil își face vânt  
cu un evantai rosu.  
O sută de zile de tăcere  
celui ce vede acestea

It snows.  
A child is fanning herself  
with a red fan.  
A hundred days of silence  
to whoever sees all that!

## Summer

in front of the gravestone  
a solitary magpie  
summer evening

*Frank Williams*

cumulonimbus  
tumbling swallows

*Matthew Paul*

driving early summer waves  
to the island in the offing  
the River Mogami

*Tsunehiko Hoshino*

Summer stroll:  
even the scarecrow wears  
a straw hat

*Francis Attard*

The lazy buzz of insects  
distant wind turbines  
motionless

*Ken Jones*

Night stalls --  
a strange child clasps me  
by the hand

*Yasuhiko Shigemoto*

thundery air  
infused with insects  
tea on the lawn

clock striking nine –  
dusk closes the entrance  
to the walled garden

*Caroline Gourlay*

It's midsummer day  
Plus one – already I sense  
The nights drawing in

*Michael Rubinstein*

avoiding a bee  
until the two flies  
separate

*Annie Bachini*

early morning cool;  
canalside café chairs  
spread out in the sun

*Bamboo Shoot*

out of a deep sleep  
starlight on a silent field  
a wind from the sea

*Mike Hayes*

thunder  
crumples  
the teak hills

*David Cobb*

Midnight heat  
fireflies travel  
in the river's echo

*Humberto Gatica*

incoming tide  
slowly the seaweed  
edges up the sand

*Richard Goring*

the summer solstice –  
wedding-party in the rain  
toasting each other

*Katherine Gallagher*

storm expected ...  
silence  
in the summer grass

summer night  
in the bath water  
a weed-burr

*Claire Bugler Hewitt*

summer morning  
cherry tree shadows  
blow across the curtain

*Fred Schofield*

The end of summer,  
but love-in-the-mist  
starts to flower again

*Patricia V Dawson*

midsummer night concert --  
the wind is rising with  
the sound of strings

*Chiyoko Mukai*

Highland summer  
gigantic cumuli  
sail

*Bruce Leeming*

english rain  
caribbean rhythms  
Notting Hill carnival

*Grace Yamamoto*

the curve  
of the cricket's leap: scent  
of wild marjoram

*Norman Barraclough*

The banks of the stream  
rhododendrons in flower  
mark its winding course

*Dermot O'Brien*

late summer sunshine  
two magpies sparring  
in the new furrows

*Ruth Robinson*

Blue hydrangea  
glowing in the chapel's haze;  
unspoken prayer

*W M Tidmarsh*

across the quarry  
from the spiky ridge of firs  
summer's first cuckoo

*Martin Lucas*

early June –  
the chack of a ring ouzel  
and tormentil everywhere

*John Barlow*

out of summer sun  
in the cool church  
flickering candles

*byron jackson*

our bare feet  
next to each other  
next to the ocean

*Gary Hotham*

sinking down  
with the sun  
a thistle seed

*Diana Webb*

the back steps near dawn –  
coolness on my forehead  
of this rain

*Geoffrey Daniel*

Summer rain  
a starling splashing  
from a roof-top gutter

*Wayne Henderson*

## **Favourite Haiku**

Becalmed bay  
Small boats at anchor  
Drift and turn

*Fred Schofield*

It's got all the stuff: brevity, moment and even motion, but two puzzles continue to entertain me: the endless length of pause when I read 'drift' and then 'turn'; and which would be the best medium with which to picture this moment. This haiku is wonderful provocation for a painting competition.

**Edward Lade**



Sunday morning breakfast in bed, watching rain squalls clearing away east up our cwm. Today, Y Figyn! Salmon sandwiches and a coffee flask and we're off. Turning off the main road we pass a farm where they rate the Language of Heaven above mere passing trade:

“WYAU AR WERTH”;  
obscured by weeds:-  
“Eggs for Sale”

We park the car and pass an empty cottage called “Y Gesail” ...

In the kitchen window  
Sainsbury's washing-up liquid  
another holiday home

Around it graze Welsh Blacks, with their long horns, and Pure Bred Mountain Sheep. *Gesail* means, literally, an arm-pit, and hence in this case a hollow in the wall of cliffs guarding Y Figyn. However, the first part of the climb is a boring slog up steep grass and a time for old movies in the skull cinema. Up on the ridge we contour round the back of the mountain on a path hemmed in for miles by sitka spruce.

Under blanket conifer  
not one tiny bird  
the mountain streams race through

Breaking out onto the high moor we are surrounded by the friends of a lifetime, each in its proper place, some trailing cloud, some bright in sunshine: Cader Idris, Rhobell Fawr, Ddualt, the Rhinogs, the Arenigs, the Arans. Southwards are the heaving uplands of mid Wales. A line of wind turbines dances along a ridge and, as always, the conifers:

Thin serrated skyline  
separates  
heaven from earth

To the north grey crags rise to the summit of our mountain. As usual, we each pick our own way through the big broken landscape:

In the corner of my eye  
my wife  
threading the crags  
disappears appears

The mountainside is flecked with brilliant white quartz, sometimes whole gleaming boulders, sometimes speckled grey and white, sometimes squeezed in veins. Yet it is all only in the eye of the beholder.

Wow! What dazzlers!  
themselves  
just mountain rocks

To have called the mountain Y Figyn – The Bog – is unfair. The summit is crowned with a fine pyramidal cairn above a wind blown tarn.

Tufts of coarse grass  
large and small  
each its own islet

The route off is straight down a cleft alive with those spouty waterfalls for which the sonorous Welsh name is *pistyll*. We see our red toy motor far below. Back late: kindling the woodstove; luxuriating in the bath; cooking the curry; slumped with the Colour Supplement.

## Favourite Haiku

Between tenements  
red ball of winter sun:  
she hobbles on home      *Jim Norton*

I appreciate the image like the last scene of the film in which a woman's life was depicted. A lonely woman is impressively portrayed in the contrast with the universe view 'red ball of winter sun'. Perhaps she is an old woman who has endured many hardships in her life.

**Yasuhiko Shigemoto**

## Senryu

The wine gone  
I can see the glass  
clearly

*Wayne Henderson*

old postman –  
new mongrel drags in  
sizeable parcel

*Francis Attard*

again  
wanting to tell my old friend ...  
who died a month ago

*John Shimmin*

the crowded bus  
jolting us  
into familiarities

*Peter Werner*

heatwave --  
most of the old folks  
sitting in the shade

*Richard Goring*

in her wedding dress  
the office mad-cap  
suddenly beautiful

*Frank Dullaghan*

for a moment  
in my reflection  
my mother's face

*Janice Fixter*

Sister Cecilia  
sun-freckled in her wimple  
writes 'anomaly'

*Pamela D Hewitt*

third encore –  
old lad in the aisle  
finds a creaky foothold

*Fred Schofield*

two boys soaked by the rain  
their macho walk  
fading to a drizzle

*Annie Bachini*

## Haiku Sequence

### Drought

Dusty sparrow  
picking at dried up sticks  
waiting for rain

The stamping horse  
its nostrils flaring wide  
snorts at the west wind

Afternoon heat  
adder wallowing  
in so much dust

A parched sparrow  
perches on wind-chimes  
calling for rain

*Ron Woollard*

## Renga

### June

unchanging landscape –  
slow passage of a day  
across the ceiling

a shadow  
leans into the room

eyes closing –  
louder and louder  
the afternoon sun

on all the white walls  
my mothers' paintings

insistent voices  
ruffling the curtains  
summer wind

bee in the medicine glass  
drone of the forage harvester

a peewit's cry  
rising in the mirror  
moment of aloneness

*Caroline Gourlay*

## Reviews

**Gathering Light: an international haiku anthology**, LeRoy Gorman (ed.), Hamilton Haiku Press, ISBN 0-9691638-8-6. £3.00

This 28-page book publishes the winning poems in the Herb Barrett Award 1996. As well as haiku it has some interesting illustrations by Gilda Mekler and biographies of the winners. The paper is a heavy and mottled one making the book a pleasure to handle.

The well-deserved winning poem is by Jeffrey Witkin from Maryland:

gathering light ...  
one swell of the sea  
becomes another

**JAH**

**In the Waterfall**, Spring Street Haiku Group, 1997. From Dee Evetts, 102 Forsyth Street, #18 New York, NY 10002, USA. US\$3.00

The fifth in the series, this little book from the Spring Street Haiku Group represents a selection of the haiku presented and discussed during 1996. These ones appealed:

moving day  
pigeons line  
a leafless branch

*Anthony J Pupello*

October again  
my walk to the post office  
on the sunny side

*Dee Evetts*

one cricket sunset

*Carl Patrick*

new address book  
the ex's number  
in pencil

*Karen Sohne*

**JAH**

**A Hidden Pond: Anthology of Modern Haiku**, Kōko Katō (ed.), trans. with commentary by Kōko Katō and David Burleigh, Kadokawa Shoten, 1997, hbk, 252 pp.

A Hidden Pond. The name itself is a wonderful evocation of Bashō's famous haiku while suggesting the stillness and intimacy of thought that experiencing a haiku moment can be.

There is a wide range of writing within this haiku sphere. The notes on each haiku and word-by-word translation help to deepen and broaden the reader's experience and ability to take part in the 'moment', while the transliteration enables us to 'hear' the original too. There is much here to learn about Japanese culture and about the language itself. Short biographical notes are also included.

Arima Akito, in a Preface, speaks of recognising amateurism as a characteristic of haiku. I understand it as an innocence, a basic response made almost before the overlay of cultural differences come into play.

Some references and choice of words leads me to think that the use of poetic words is usual in Japanese haiku. We tend to try and avoid them in English haiku as they detract from the simplicity of the image. Could this perhaps be because of the nature of what we call 'poetic' often being Latinate and flowery, rather than the whimsical and lovely old country words for things? Where do the Japanese 'poetic' words come from?

'Fireflies in love...' (p.100), 'it is best to remember...' (p.49) and 'It is courage alone...' (p.13) seem very different from what is seen as haiku in BHS. We would tend to have the fireflies mating, to avoid interpreting their 'feelings' as love; we try not to tell the reader what to think and so would avoid the decisive 'it is courage alone...' which would probably come under the heading of aphorism; 'best to remember...' works for me when seen as an observation to oneself, but still seems very overt in making some kind of recommendation. Not criticisms, these, but thoughts and queries about differences. (*Vive les differences!*) Oh yes, and it's great to see so many haiku by women!

I must mention the very evocative and pleasing cover and endpapers of this hardback book; it's beautifully produced and good to handle. I recommend it.

SR

**My Green Wife: Koji, Stefanov and Other Poets**, Chiyoko Mukai, Mitko Vassilev and George Marsh (trans. & eds.), Waning Moon Press, [redacted] ISBN 0-9529775-4-0.

**Salting the Air**, George Marsh, Waning Moon Press, ISBN 0-9529775-2-4.

**Words on the Wind: haiku & scroll-poems**, James Norton, Waning Moon Press, 0-9529775-3-2.

**Echoes in the Heart**, Michael Gunton, Waning Moon Press, ISBN 0-9529775-1-6.

These four books (and Cicely Hill's) from Waning Moon Press are the result of George Marsh's successful bid to the National Lottery. They are hand-produced with attractive narrowly-corrugated cardboard covers tied with different-coloured ribbons. The title of each book, together with a small drawing, is revealed in a rectangular slot cut out from the front cover.

*My Green Wife* is remarkable for its variety. In a Preface George Marsh explains its *raison d'être*. For the English reader/writer it does sterling work in making available the haiku of little-known modern Japanese writers. It offers new translations of Bashō, too. Good though these are, the book's success rests on the selections of the work of the Japanese haiku poet Koji and the Bulgarian Stefanov.

Here are two of Stefanov's:

A warm whiff  
from the evening stones –  
crickets

My old boots  
with a delicious crunch  
on the ice crust

But Koji's are the finer:

Winter starlings –  
a hundred bird silence  
over my head

New-planted sapling  
gives  
in the gusts

Excellent. A must-have.

George Marsh's *Salting the Air* gives us some 64 haiku, two sequences, a haibun and a couple of sonnets. As a long-time admirer of George's haiku (several of these haiku have appeared in *Blithe Spirit*), I have no hesitation in



praising and recommending. I liked the sequences, too. The haibun (about the death of his father, a very difficult subject to tackle without sentimentality) would benefit from some sensitive editing. An editor might have also persuaded George to cut the sonnets.

Here are two sample haiku to whet the appetite:

after a day  
deep in the hills  
the sound of traffic

a Pompey musher\*  
strutting the gale  
laughs at a tree's wild swirl

\* Buy the book and find out !

*Words on the Wind* consists of a Foreword, 54 haiku and 19 scroll-poems. Scroll-poems are sometimes haiku sequences, sometimes not. But the scroll-poems are all based on a haiku model; imbued with the haiku spirit. Susumu Takiguchi's Foreword is enlightening particularly on James Norton's enlightenment and skill. For me the quality of Jim's work is exemplified in his haiku that asks a question. He is one of the very few Western haiku poets who do it and not only get away with it, but who make it seem so right. See for yourself:

Who's more wide-eyed  
them or us?  
nest of wild kittens

Dare I tell him?  
From my neighbour's dung-yard  
a double rainbow

This book is a treasured possession.

If your bag is *sabi* then Michael Gunton's collection *Echoes in the Heart* is the one for you. Of the 46 haiku presented here more than half of them have that important sad quality, whether human predicament:

winter wind –  
alone this evening  
I water my plants

or the poignancy of the natural world:

under a bare tree  
a few mauve crocuses  
quiver in the wind

Michael also gives us a tanka section with a dozen examples. Who could read this and not find echoes in the heart?

can't do this  
afraid to do that  
panic  
the ceaseless circling  
blind deaf loneliness

If you are looking for a Christmas present to yourself this year, you can't go wrong with this set of books from Waning Moon Press. And at £5.00 each a bargain.

### JAH

[copies of all the Waning Moon Press titles are being added to the BHS Library - details in the next BHS Library Supplement]

**The Spring Journey to the Saxon Shore**, David Cobb, Equinox Press, Sinodun, Shalford, Braintree, Essex CM7 5HN, ISBN 0-9517103-3-8, pbk, 63pp., £5.00

This is a superb work of haiku literature, provided you pass by or surmount the obstacle of its Introduction.

The haibun itself is a breath of fresh country air. David Cobb rattles along the narrow lanes to Norfolk, discovering and commemorating East Anglia's very own *utamakura*, pillow-places haunted by 'great ghosts', the local heroes and penniless poets of the past. The prose is 'bicycle speed', lacking a walker's steady emphasis, having momentum but exposed to elements and happy accidents along the way. Pedal power allows him to halt, pay homage, move on, entertain reveries and reminiscences and make spontaneous detours at will:

Wake up in a mist called Suffolk. Time and time over  
losing the way to Stowlangtoft and then coming upon it  
entirely by chance.

In a couple of places he loses balance and falls off. A young waitress's breasts are "the size of brussels sprouts" It seems an unlikely comparison in terms of volume, and the evocations of shape, colour, texture and flavour are bizarre.

Also odd is the passage comparing his ancestors' reproductive successes with those of "Lord Dandelion". His own footnote admits that "the comparison cannot be made", so let's add "and should not have been". (Besides, since dandelions, as he discloses, reproduce asexually, it should have been "Lady Dandelion".)

But these are blips. The rest is a riot, packed with useless information (the best kind) and ghostbusting and gravedigging so thoroughly you imagine he wasn't so much pushing a gear as pulling a plough. Among the purplest passages are the potted history of 1812 - "so many evidences of the civilising works of man" - and the Music Hall funeral:

"No laments for Lily, now. Best we send her on her way with some of her own favourite tunes." ... congregation find themselves singing *Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road*. Later, the organist plays us out to the waiting grave with *Don't dilly-dally on the way*. Pallbearers in apprehension of *The Lambeth Walk*.

This crossing between counties is also magnificent: "Where Suffolk and Norfolk meet the border is marked on both sides by sheep."

The haiku have a thicker texture than the prose, as if they mark points where he had to pause to unclog tyres. There is no attempt to impose an airbrushed lyricism, East Anglia must speak in its native accents or not at all:

ferret in pocket –  
the drunk kisses it  
before each swig

froth on his whiskers  
a man in the pub explains  
how high the tide was

You can't lift these from their context, but you wouldn't want to, they're comfortable where they are. Like its pub customers the haibun is defiant in its individuality, an excellent evocation of the special spirit of this particular portion of England. The key to this is the author's unique tragic-comic-historic-ironic perception. May we admit that comparisons are odious, and that a General Theory of Haibun is an irrelevance, and relish *The Spring Journey to the Saxon Shore* for what it is?

ML

**A Haiku Garden: The Four Seasons in Poems and Prints**, Stephen Addiss (ed.) with Fumiko and Akira Yamamoto, Weatherill 1996 (New Holland in UK), ISBN 0-834803-57-7, hbk, 112pp. £11.99

This is a small coffee-table book. About 120 haiku are interspersed with nearly 50 illustrations, about half of them full-page or wider. The pictures, of flowers and plants, birds and other creatures, are taken from woodblock prints of the 17-19 Centuries, and are in a variety of quiet styles. They don't illustrate the haiku on their pages, but make a separate, overlapping array. The haiku, given in characters and translation, are divided into seasons. Some might not be seen in a garden, but they are all about undramatic natural scenes. Bashō, Buson, Issa and Shiki are well represented, but mainly by lesser-known pieces. Both poets and artists are well-documented at the end of the book.

The translations seem as near to the original as possible, vary from 6-18 syllables, and quite free of the desire to be impressive. Where comparison with other versions and the original has been possible, they come out very well, as for example in two familiar verses by Bashō:

Under the trees  
into the salad, into the soup –  
cherry blossoms

The moon speeds on  
the treetops  
still holding rain

Apart from the seasons, this is an unsystematic anthology, and there are pleasant surprises over every page, both of subjects and of authors. Of these, the earliest is Sogi (1421-1502) and the latest Tei-jo (1900-88):

Both grasses and trees  
waiting for the moon –  
dewy evening

For an evening guest  
I fumbled and pulled out  
green onions

The arrangement of poems and pictures make this a book to dip into: just a few and then lay it down again. It's ideal for putting into the hands of a non-haiku friend as an attractive introduction.

RDP

[This book and the earlier (1991) and similar format **A Haiku Menagerie**, ISBN 0-834802-48-1 (£9.99) are being added to the BHS Library]

Hairs & Hawk Circles, Gary Hotham, Tel-let, available from author free:  
send sae [REDACTED]

Do take advantage of Gary Hotham's offer and you will receive 26 haiku in an A4 booklet. I liked these:

the land ends --  
foam  
on the water's edge

a day  
lost to the rain --  
mountains close by

*endgrain - haiku and senryu 1988-1997*, Dee Evetts, Red Moon Press, P O Box 2461, Winchester, VA 22604, USA, ISBN 0-9657818-1-X. US\$10.00

This very fine collection of 80 haiku/senryu and one sequence results from Dee Evett's best work from a nine year period. This alone says much about the poet. Here is a man who knows a lot about himself:

new underwear  
even my shoulders  
hang straighter

He is a keen observer as well as a precise and controlled writer:

rainy night  
half the cat  
still indoors

who displays a very attractive honesty:

however close  
we push the beds together  
the gap between us

*endgrain* has a Foreword by Anthony J Pupello who also helped to edit and select the poems and an Introduction in which Dee Evetts reveals his haiku history. In it Dee suggests that haiku must "ultimately be assessed by the same standards as all other literature ... by its aptness, wit, accuracy, felicity of language, and by its lack of sentimentality and moralizing." Yes, yes and yes again. This collection demonstrates all these things and much more. Don't miss this book.

JAH

**The Classic Tradition of Haiku - an Anthology**, Faubion Bowers (ed.), Dover Thrift Editions, 1996, ISBN 0-48629-274-6 , large pbk, 80pp. £1.25

This handy and attractive anthology collects 230+ haiku/renga verses from Sogi to Shiki. The romaji is given with one or more translations, mostly from academic sources, which vary in quality; but there are many adequate and some fine versions. "The old pond" has five translations. Bashō, Buson, Issa and Shiki each have 20-30 pieces, few unfamiliar; and the pre-Bashō section adds little to the usual snippets. On the other hand, there are about 30 writers from the time of Bashō through to Buson. Particularly striking, and for me at least, new, are the selections from Onitsura (13) and Chiyo (18); and there are a number of other delightful surprises. The liberal footnotes are necessary and helpful; and in relating the interaction between writers, give a sense of "the fun they had". The slim volume would make an inexpensive gift for a newcomer to haiku, and some who buy it to pass on might end up keeping it.

**RDP**

**The Psalms in Haiku Form**, Richard Gwyn, Gracewing (Fowler Wright Books), 1997, ISBN 0-8-52444-353-6, pbk, 176pp. £7.99

Richard Gwyn is not the first Catholic priest to be charmed by the 'simplicity' of haiku, nor the first to present a new translation of the Psalms. But he is probably the first to combine both interests. His object, he says in a commendably brief Foreword, is to provide something "of interest and help to those who find the Psalms, as they are normally presented, beyond their intellectual and meditative scope ..... might well have greater appeal than would a daunting text with any learned footnotes." And so it is - all 150 Psalms admirably paraphrased as sequences of 5-7-5 verses, mostly in easy-going modern English (though old names for God, such as Yahweh, pop-up along the way). But note the title: these are verses in haiku 'form' - few are actually 'real' haiku, many emerge as aphorisms, others are epigrammatic. But then, this book isn't aimed at haiku poets (there isn't a word of explanation about haiku within the covers). Those interested in the Psalms from a spiritual perspective may find the book a refreshing addition to their library. Here, as a sample, are the opening verses of the 23rd Psalm:

The Lord my Shepherd, / there is nothing I shall want, / grazing in His fields.  
To quiet waters / He leads me, and as I rest / He revives my soul.

The review copy is being added to the BHS Library.

**RJG**



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November 1997

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Price £ 2.50



ISSN 1353-3320