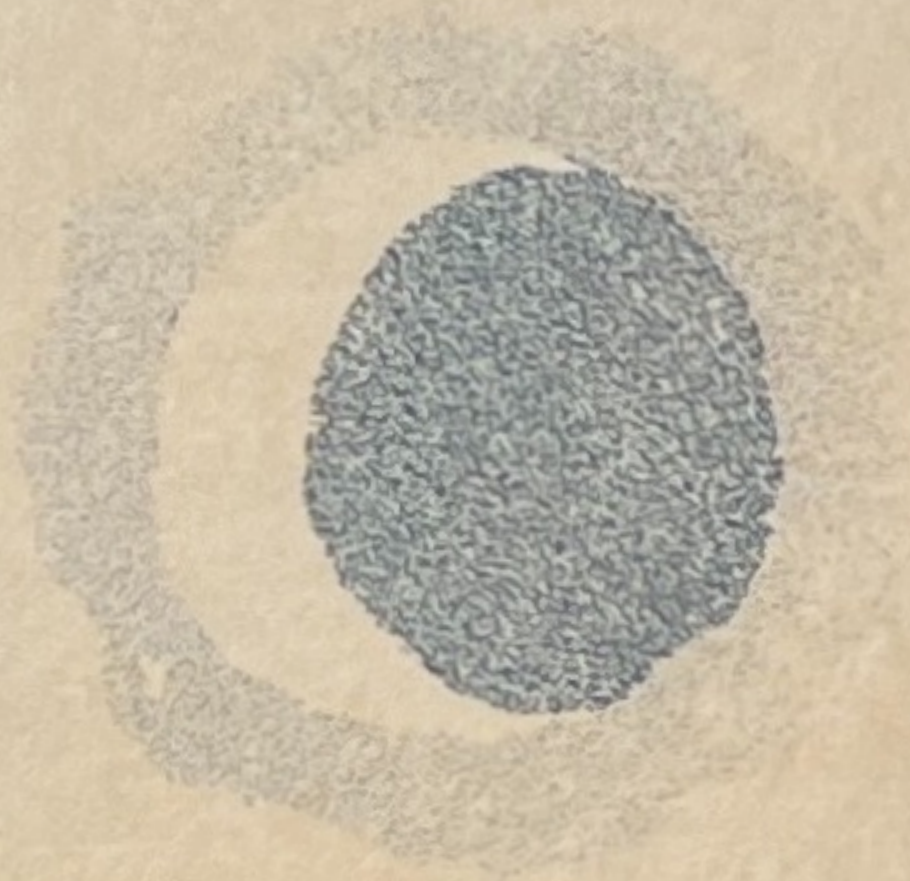


**Journal of
The British Haiku Society**

Blithe Spirit



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Journal Of The British Haiku Society

Blithe Spirit

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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 and the layout of the magazine. **Blithe Spirit** is published four times a year, cover-dated March, June, September and December.

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Contents

Editorial		3
Norman Barraclough		5
Haiku		6
Bashō Manuscript Revisited	Susumi Takiguchi	16
Museum of Haiku Literature Award		21
Sequences		22
The Elevator Door Statement		25
<i>Haiku and Nature - a response to James Hackett</i>		
<i>favourite haiku</i>		27
Points of Differing Views	David Hart	28
<i>Why I Don't Write Haiku</i>		
The Pathway		31
Tanka		32
Featured Haiku Writer	Gabriel Rosenstock	35
<i>favourite haiku</i>		37
Spring		38
Reason About Rhyme	Geoffrey Daniel	43
Haibun	Ken Jones	47
Reviews		50
Letters to the Editor		55

Cover design by David Walker

Editorial

It is sad that the 1998 National Conference will be remembered principally for the sudden death of Norman Barraclough. It was a shock to all present and cast a long shadow over the weekend. Norman was a loved and respected member of the BHS who will be greatly missed; it was unfortunate, too, that under the circumstances, it was hard to give Saturday's Conference Papers the attention they deserved.

In spite of this, the two days at Ludlow were stimulating and immensely enjoyable with all contributions of a high standard. In a way peculiarly his own, Norman contributed even in his absence, by bringing us closer in a shared sense of loss and an increased awareness of him as a person. In the evening we paid tribute to his memory with readings of some of his haiku and some of our own - ones either written for the occasion or ones that seemed relevant to it.

A vital ingredient in the weekend was the American presence of Lee Gurga, last year's President of the Haiku Society of America and now Assistant Editor of *Modern Haiku*, and Gary Hotham, a familiar name in the world of haiku. We are grateful to Lee for coming all the way from Illinois to deliver his paper, *American Haiku*, which gave a penetrating and comprehensive insight into the way contemporary Americans view and make haiku.

This month the first of a series of occasional essays, *Points Of Differing Views*, makes its appearance - this one by the poet, David Hart. Recently several factors have made it seem desirable to try to bring poets and haiku poets to within closer range of each other. The suspicion that sometimes seems to exist between the practitioners of these two *genres* doesn't contribute to the common good of poetry; in an attempt to bridge this gap I have invited poets who have written haiku but who are, on the whole, better known for their longer poems, to compare the two forms from a personal as well as a literary point of view. I hope that in this way poets who see haiku merely as an exercise - a means to the end of writing what they regard as 'proper' poetry - may be encouraged to reappraise their attitude to it; and that writers of haiku, who dismiss more 'muscular' poetry as cluttered and wordy, will understand the complexities involved in writing such poems.

The season for the next issue is *Summer* and the deadline for submissions the end of the first week in August; please could you write your names on your manuscripts and send a s.a.e. if you want a reply.

Caroline Gourlay

Errata

Apologies to the contributors to *The Pathway* in the last issue for the omission of accented letters in their haiku; this was the fault of the editor and not the translator.

Also to Keith Coleman for leaving out the semi-colon in his tanka (page 29) which should have read -

May warmth:
pink breast of the chaffinch;
drawn by scent
along the back lane
to this wall, where a magnolia peeps

and to William Grant whose haiku (page 6) should have read -

Sailing on the lake,
Carried on the evening breeze,
Smoke from Bar-B-Q's.

Leza Lowitz's translation of Machi Tawara's tanka referred to in the review of her book - *a long rainy season* (page 50) should have read -

You
bright as a tulip in bloom -
take me
away
in February

Norman Barraclough

(28th April 1927 - 18th April 1998)

the magpie
breasting the wind —
its rise and fall

only
the whiteness of wild plum
and the passing cloud

on the moor
wind-chased ripples run
into still water

Norman had chosen the latter of these three haiku as his 'death poem'

HAIKU

Gary Hotham

one foot
louder than the other —
the wind comes with her

rain
falling down
on the light

pushed off the busy road —
the driver sits
in the stalled car

none of
the room's cold air
comes out of our breath

Matt Morden

tyre marks
across the apology
from a lover

senryu

Philip Rowland

In Japan

stepping into slippers
for the single
step to the toilet

Pádraig ó Horgáin

the crescent moon
whitens a hawthorn hedge —
cock crows

a winter shower
lashes the church walls —
coffin bearers walk erect

Martin Lucas

Bach's Toccata and Fugue —
fly on the armrest

cat sat on the insurance policy

David Platt

hanging in the air
pipesmoke in the spotlight
unanswered question

heavy buddhist text
so good at squashing spiders
but not yet read

senryu

the rising moon
bags munros with no effort
the winding road

Gilles Fabre

back home —
at the front door again
avoiding the snail

taking the mouse
off the trap —
how am I to die?

with those white clouds
rushing to the snowy mountains
my anger's gone

Yasuhiko Shigemoto

Feeling
as if my mind were washed
wandering about in the naked trees

ai li

rose
its thorns
scratching wind

the sons
of dead men
in nursing homes

the cigarette vendor in thick fog

senryu

a house in mourning
finding silence
in the garden

Ron Woollard

Perched on the tree-top
the last leaf quivers in the breeze
and flies away.

Francis Attard

a get-together:
analyst on the couch
resting

senryu

in a hurry —
stutterer shakes
hands

senryu

circus clown
adjusting face — and the giggle
in the audience

J. R. Wilson

Too high to look down
I cut my way to new sky,
topping cypresses

Rod Treseder

Showery summer's day —
mare's tail
over the riding school

In the midnight silence
still
the snow falls ...

Grey hair on newspaper —
its shadow
darker than itself

Annie Bachini

illness —
waking in the early evening
..... darkness

Ernest J. Berry

cable car
slowly uphill
its loaded shadow

autumn rinse
her blue hair
turning silver

thunder
the dog's howl
drowns it

Sue Schraer

Beyond the shadows
in the stench of the old barn
yet more shadows

Frank Dullaghan

my ironed shirt hanging
in a white shaft of moonlight

the bedside light
halving the room

David Walker

briar snags
purple and barbed —
her tongue

John Capp

a cold autumn night
moonlight in the silent yard
finds the black cat's eyes

a sudden downpour —
in the darkened sitting-room
the glitter of brass

Richard Goring

on the door
of the animal charity shop
'NO DOGS ALLOWED'

winter clothes post
shorter
than its shadow

David Cobb

A Nation's Grief
leaking through the headlines
fish and chips

the full moon
looks sideways down a street
of ill repute

Paul Amphlett

Watching
from the safety of time
death

Ruth Robinson

I look down
to see 'Grandmother's' shoes
on 'Mother's' feet

feet wide apart
the thrush strains to draw a worm
from the dry lawn

reading
the pain in my elbow comes
as the poem ends

Sheila Windsor

first day at school
lunchtime
I hug your bear

window frames
life
passing by

Geoffrey Daniel

last cut before winter —
silence in the grass
after the mower

A.A. Marcoff

mood.
sun.
death.

my own obituary
is written in the snow.
winter dream.

Zen
pilgrimage.
Zen dust.

Pearl Elizabeth Dell

An e-mail from you
all your news but missing
your hand-written love.

Bill Wyatt

Holding on to
emptiness, I let it go —
heartache gone

Brian Thompson

storm-cock singing
my wife glares at clouds
newly-permed hair

time passing
the gnomon shadow creeps
winter aconites

senryu

Keith Coleman

thorn-tree at the ridge ...
in the autumn storm,
stag antlers tossing

jazz pub entrance ...
throughout the solo, rainwater
drips from his earring

Fred Schofield

children in the band
their silent faces
before the first note

between the piano's phrases night wind

new woodbine leaves
the cat's gaze
catches bluetits

Dee Evetts

island airport ...
our baggage handler puts on
his pilot's cap

her smile
almost a woman's —
extended by chocolate

BASHŌ MANUSCRIPT REVISITED: Yaba-hon Oku-no-Hosomichi

Susumu Takiguchi

Prologue.

In the autumn of 1743 a haiku poet of Osaka called Baijuu took part in a Memorial Service held in the city to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694). On this solemn occasion he put on show a slender book which he treasured as part of the *tokokazari*, or tribute display. This was the original manuscript of one of the world's most famous literary classics, namely Bashō's *Oku-no-Hosomichi* (Narrow Road To The Interior). It was believed that the manuscript had been handwritten by Bashō himself and the book has since come to be known as *Yaba-hon*, or Yaba copy of *Oku-no-Hosomichi*.

Baijuu was a senior disciple of Yaba (1662-1740) who in turn was a trusted student of Bashō, especially during the Master's last years. Yaba is known to have visited Bashō often at the Banana Hut. He helped Bashō to develop the famous poetic concept of *karumi* (lightness).

Fifty years before this Memorial Service, Bashō, now a frail figure, embarked on his last and fateful journey to the Western Provinces. On May 11th (or possibly May 8th) 1694, he left Edo to which he would never return. In his travel-satchel was a fair copy of *Oku-no-Hosomichi*, which his disciple Soryu had made for him in the previous month. This copy became 'the definitive version' of the famous travel diary as opposed to the Yaba-hon version and came to be known as *Nishimura-hon*, or simply *Soryu-hon*.

One theory now asserts that Yaba and his two other colleagues at Echigoya, Rigyu and Ko-oku, (both disciples of Bashō) helped Bashō with his work on *Oku-no-Hosomichi*. Most notably, Bashō's hand-written manuscript is said to have been lent to them at Echigoya for Rigyu to make a fair copy of it. Professor Ueno believes this to be Yaba-hon; whether his theory is correct or not, the manuscript vanished after the aforesaid Memorial and since then has been presumed lost.

The Discovery.

Little wonder then that a shock wave broke over Japan and spread beyond when it was announced that the missing Bashō manuscript was discovered and pronounced

genuine. This was on 25th November 1996 and it was the top story of the NHK (Broadcasting House) evening news. It is easily the greatest literary discovery in Japan of this century and significant in the history of world literature should its authenticity be upheld; however, one cannot help but be reminded of incidents such as the finding of Hitler's supposed diary, or the recent 'discovery' at Oxford of the manuscript of Shakespeare's poems in his own hand.

Fourteen months on, most people seem to have accepted the authenticity of the manuscript, but some lingering doubts still remain; a definitive academic research paper is yet to be published and more scientific investigation needs to be done before we can feel totally happy about it.

Circumstances Leading to the New Discovery.

In 1981 an Osaka antiquarian book dealer, Nakao Kenichiro, swapped one of his scroll paintings for a manuscript which his fellow dealer brought in, claiming it was by Bashō's hand. This manuscript suffered a dramatic fate before coming to the world's attention. Mr. Nakao's two-story house was wrecked by the Great Hanshin Earthquake that struck Kobe in January 1995. He had a narrow escape and when he went back to his half-ruined house to fetch some belongings, he also searched for the manuscript in question and found it miraculously undamaged in the rubble.

Authentication: The First Positive Sign.

Prior to the Earthquake, Mr. Nakao had tried to have the manuscript authenticated. This was in August 1990 and the specialist he consulted was Sakurai Takejiro, Professor of Japanese Literature at Kobe Shinwa Women's University. He told Mr. Nakao that the book could be the so-called "Yaba-hon" but that he needed further research and tests before saying anything definite.

However, subsequent research was making Prof. Sakurai more and more convinced about the authenticity of the manuscript. Before long his research was leaked and various rumours started to circulate about Bashō's manuscript having been "found in Hong Kong", or in America, or even having been already proved to be a fake.

After the Earthquake Mr. Nakao was determined to have the manuscript judged one way or the other. Prof. Sakurai and some other scholars involved also thought this, so they made concerted efforts to establish overwhelming evidence that the item

was genuine. To test the paper used for the manuscript, Prof. Sakurai asked the help of Dr. Machida Seishi, Professor Emeritus at Kyoto Craft and Textile College, an established authority in the field. Dr. Machida's verdict on the authenticity of the paper was positive.

The Case for Authenticity.

The case for authenticity can be summarised as follows: -

1. Bashō's own hand-writing is known to have some letters whose form is either idiosyncratic and peculiar to him with some actually wrongly executed (yes, even Bashō could make mistakes!); moreover there is a high degree of consistency in them which makes them readily identifiable. Twenty such letters were found, all examples of which proved consistent with each other and with examples taken from other authenticated Bashō's hand-writings; 455 items in all, including *Nozarashikiko* and Bashō's letters. Clearest examples of these include kanji for death (*shi*), water-side (*gai, migiwa*), barrier (*shoh, sawari*), shore (*kishi*), mound (*tsuka*), and to demand (*motomu*).

2. Comparison of the manuscript with other known manuscripts by Bashō's hand indicates that it is genuine.

3. The manuscript has 74 patches of paper pasted on the original pages and on these patches are corrections and additions in Bashō's own hand-writing. These were totally unexpected but can be construed as further evidence that the manuscript is indeed by Bashō's hand.

4. The paper used is high-quality, Genroku period's *Torinoko-gami*, presumably the mixture of *kohzo* and *ganbi*. The paper looks new partly because it is of good quality and has hardly deteriorated at all, and partly because the manuscript has been kept well and the condition preserved; *Torinoko-gami*, which has been used since the Nara period, is proof against paper worms. The *ganbi* material makes the paper smoother (less absorbent) and brush strokes tend to be thinner and finer than in the case of more absorbent paper. Comparison with other *Torinoko-gami* of Genroku period indicated strongly that the paper in question was made during Genroku period.

5. Bashō's hand-writing is finer than average and is consistent with the narrowness of the letters of the manuscript which depends partly on the brush itself as well as on the style of the calligrapher.

6. Bashō was given good-quality paper supplies by his disciples and admirers, which explains the superiority of the manuscript paper; it is also a fact that in the Genroku period such paper was not expensive to buy.

7. The wrapping paper in which the manuscript is folded testifies that the book is genuinely in Bashō's hand and mentions that the name of the owner is Arikuni. He has been identified as Urai Arikuni (1780 - 1858), a Kyoto haijin of the Bashō school and a renowned collector of antique documents and books. This and other items kept together with the manuscript indicate the reliability of Arikuni's records.

Some of the Findings.

Some hitherto-unknown haiku poems came to light. These included *Mizu sekite wase tabanuru yanagikage* (In the shade of willow trees works go on making a dam to stop water from flowing in and making early rice crops into sheaves), which Bashō eventually abandoned in favour of '*Ta ichimai uete tachisaru yanagi kana*'.

A *Kyōka* (or vulgar *tanka*) was discovered in the new manuscript. None of the versions of *Oku-no-Hosomichi* contain *kyōka*. The newly discovered *kyōka* reads, *Furu-ato no ikani furikemu samidare no na nimo arukana minowa kasashima*.

On 24 out of 32 leaves of text there are 74 patches of paper pasted, with corrections and additions. Of the 74 patches, 7 are double-patched. All indicate Bashō's enormous effort to revise the work.

Comparison of the manuscript with *Sora-hon* revealed that the latter contained 8 copying mistakes, which had not been known before. Similarly, discrepancies have been found between the manuscript and *Nishimura-hon*. Quite a few corrections may have to be made to the existing literature on *Oku-no-Hosomichi*.

The Sceptics.

After the excitement of the news of the discovery, some doubts about the manuscript's authenticity started to creep in. Two voices carried more authority than others: - those of Yamamoto Yuiitsu, Professor Emeritus at Ohtani University and Masuda Takashi, a renowned expert of graphoanalysis of old manuscripts.

Summary of Prof. Yamamoto's Doubts

1. From the viewpoint of *hisseki kantei* (graphoanalysis) the manuscript does not 'look right' (*hisseki kantei* can be impressionistic and subjective, lacking in scientific objectivity, but still influential and essential in authentication processes).

2. The sample letters given as evidence of the uniqueness, or peculiarity of Bashō's hand-writing style are in fact also found in manuscripts by other hands of the same period as Bashō's and can be said to have been quite common then. (If this is true, or deemed to be a serious counter-argument, it would weaken perhaps the most important card of the advocates claiming authenticity of the manuscript.)
3. The manuscript contains mistakes too rudimentary and crude to have possibly been made by Bashō; 59 mistakes are listed.
4. These mistakes include those which are much more likely to have been made by someone simply making a copy in a parrot fashion from whatever original used. Though this is a conjecture, the copyist may have been Bashō's nephew called Toin who was staying with Bashō around the time when Bashō was believed to be writing *Oku-no-Hosomichi*.
5. The manuscript cannot be said to be in Bashō's hand.

Summary of Mr. Masuda's Doubts

1. General impression is that the manuscript lacks consistency and naturalness, which is characteristic of a genuine hand. It gives the impression that someone was copying from another text.
2. One of the crucial arguments in favour of the manuscript is letters which are peculiar to Bashō. However, these are the first thing fakers try to imitate.
3. The hiragana letter "ha" has a clumsy *kuzushi* (cursive style), indicating that it was written by someone who was not used to this letter.

His conclusion is that the manuscript in question is not genuine, nor is it a normal bona fide copy done with good intentions, but rather a fake, maliciously created to look like a draft manuscript.

This paper was given at the 1998 National Conference of The British Haiku Society

This quarter's judge always marks off the best of each quarter's pieces - about 20. However this time the quarter's winner was not among them. Nor is it usually: once in 2-3 is probably the score. As for predicting the winner, there have been 2 or 3 near misses since issue # 2/4. But there are different ideas about good haiku and maybe it doesn't hurt to let the oddballs have their turn. More seriously, the haiku we take to ourselves often taps a forgotten or unconscious memory; it gives back to us our own experience, with shadowings or overtones we hadn't realised existed. So, different jokes for different blokes.

Originally 25 of 8/1 were picked and the reduced to 7. Many of the discards were turned down with the greatest reluctance

after my friend leaves
 crumbs on the carpet
 and the firs's sound

Annie Bachini

almost mid-morning
 the water drips from
 its frozen patterns

Gary Hotham

End of summer
 In the bonfire's smouldering
 Some bitter stalks

Cicely Hill

In Alexandria a haep o clouts
 raxt oot its hand to me.
 It had nae sex.

David Purves

La lune sur la mer
 Plus belle
 Que la lune au-dessus

Alain Kervern

Putting his fingers
 in his ears, the boy screams
 at the fireworks

Patricia V. Dawson

clouds scudding
 fast birds

blown over trees

David Steele

Already regretful at eliminating so many fine pieces, choice now became painful. Tapping out the above for the final round, I tried to hold back from judgement, but metaphorically laid odds. The winner was one of the outsiders: David Steele's *fast birds*.

SEQUENCES

Mike Hayes

gaining the summit
abandoning the handrails
for a short freedom

from his last lover
poison arrows an entry
to the next in line

a willing shoulder
turned by the practised victim
into the morass

sharing their secrets
erasing all messages
to avoid offence

she liked him to shave
whilst itching for the contact
of another beard

after lovemaking
'your body-hair is nicer'
genuine feelings

escaping abroad
exchanging intimacies
at the terminal

Matt Morden

Teifi Pools

vapour trails
across the dark blue
hoot of an owl

stiff with the frost
yesterday's washing

in puddles —
car headlights
and the dawn

tips of sitka
bent and twisted

cooler breeze
across the lake
a heron

highest rock
a pellet of bones

derelict chapel
ochre lichens frame
a padlocked door

stone circle
unmarked on maps

robin's red breast
lengthening shadows
on abbey walls

a stone in the yew
Dafydd ap Gwilym 1164 - 1209

home at dusk
slam of the door
unsettling crows

Janice Fixter

crematorium roof —
crows sit together
in silence

stained glass light
splashes of red tears
on my hand

no flowers —
only the widow's perfume
blending with wood polish

outside the chapel
snowdrops grow
undisturbed

drifting away
mourners and damp mist —
the air clears

funeral over
we stop for sandwiches
and a post-mortem

afternoon bath
washes away grief
leaving a tide mark

I think a few comments need to be made concerning some of the ideas about haiku that James Hackett puts forward in his essay, *Bashō and Nature*. In the recent issue of *Blithe Spirit*.¹ He writes about 'the aesthetic anarchy of modern haiku' with the result of 'modern writers divorcing haiku from nature.' He goes on to say that haiku have been 'pre-eminently a form of nature poetry: one where, if humans are present at all, are suffused with nature.' I certainly don't hold this view of haiku as being just a form of nature poetry or even that it should be; we would lose too much of the haiku's power if that were the case. Even Harold Henderson, certainly a recognised authority on Japanese haiku, didn't think the haiku was pure nature poetry. In chapter 1 of his book, *An Introduction to Haiku*, he says:

'It may be noted in passing that the use of *ki* is probably at the base of a charge that has been advanced that haiku are more concerned with nature than with human affairs. Such a statement is ridiculous. Haiku are more concerned with human emotions than with human acts, the natural phenomena are used to reflect human emotions, but that is all.'²

I think the genius, the power of the haiku comes in its attempt to frame a moment of time or state of being with a very careful use of words. The form and the words come together in 'the essence of a moment keenly perceived.'³ Our very use of words makes us the pre-eminent presence in anything we write or speak about, including haiku. There is no escape from the human point of view when we use our language. The nature in haiku is suffused with the human and is present in the poem because of the human.⁴

With that in mind I don't think we have to fear with Hackett that 'today, 'haiku' is written about everything from elevators to computers - a dire fate for such a rare poetry.' Even though T.S.Eliot was not a haiku poet, he did say something about the art of writing poetry that I think is very important for a writer of haiku to remember: that a poem forms a new whole from the various pieces of the world around the poet and is the verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling. He said:

'When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two

experiences have nothing to do with each other or with the noise of the typewriter or with the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.'

'The possible interests of a poet are unlimited ... The poets in question have, like other poets, various faults. But they were, at best, engaged in the task of trying to find the verbal equivalents for states of mind and feeling.'

Bottom line: there is nothing so sacred about nature that only it makes a good haiku. I don't think our criteria for an excellent haiku should be whether it has an elevator in it or a morning glory. But our criteria should be whether it profoundly captures the state of being, the moment in time of the emotion that is part of the human experience. Perhaps the essence of the situation can be more 'keenly perceived' with something from nature like a morning glory.⁶ Even, perhaps more easily done. But it also can be done with an elevator as Jack Cain so skillfully did years ago. Now to do it with a computer.

Footnotes.

1. Vol. 8 # 1. March 1998 p. 34-35.
2. p.5 of my paperback version published by Doubleday Anchor in 1958.
3. Phrase from the Haiku Society of America definition of a haiku - see either of the Haiku Anthologies edited by Cor Van den Heuvel, p. 249 in the 1974 edition, published by Doubleday Anchor and p. 355 in the 1986 edition, published by Simon Schuster.
4. Even 'natural science' is not just all nature: Werner Heisenberg says in his book, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science*: 'Natural science does not simply describe and explain nature: it is part of the interplay between nature and ourselves: it describes nature as exposed to our method of questioning.' (p. 81, published by Harper and Brothers, New York. 1958).
5. Both quotes from Eliots's essay: 'The Metaphysical Poets' first published in the Times Literary Supplement, 20th October 1921. Page 247-248 of *Selected Essays 1917-1932*, published by Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932.

6. See the morning glory haiku Henderson quotes just after the statement he made above. See Elizabeth Lamb's morning glory haiku in the 1986 *Haiku Anthology*. I have made a lot more attempts at haiku with morning glories in them than elevator doors; the morning glory is an easy object for a haiku. It's a thing of beauty and wonder in itself - the deep blue, the prolific blooms, the long, tangled vines, the quick fade of the blossoms each day. The computer doesn't have the same aura. It's rarely a thing of beauty in itself. The tangle of wires coming out of the back of the computer and the peripherals is not quite the same as the tangle of morning glory vines. If we understand how a computer works then we may be greatly impressed with the brilliance of its engineering. Then again, the computer hasn't been around for as long as the morning glory. So it's not as natural. Then there are the problems a computer can give us. The computer is more likely to give us a moment of painful humor. But still let's not write it off as a legitimate object for a haiku.

Favourite Haiku

a moment between
lighthouse flashes
cold smell of fish

David Cobb

When I go to Aldeburgh it is usually in November. It gets dark early and is, more often than not, cold - breath lingering in the air. I stand on the beach, surrounded by the black hulk of resting ships, watching the men fishing at the water's edge.

It is then that I am always reminded of David Cobb's haiku - it is so right.

Ruth Robinson

POINTS OF DIFFERING VIEWS

Why I Don't Write Haiku

David Hart

Haiku seems to me either the easiest or the hardest kind of poetry to make. I like to think I can knock off a haiku at will and imagine, if I get it right, that I shall have said all there is to say in a nutshell. Which must make it difficult beyond measure.

But here is a Journal containing a great many haiku, and in the next issue there will be a great many more. So are they, far from the great summation, merely petals that fall and are blown away in the wind?

If I myself am a character type amenable to being summed up, I rather think it's manic-depressive I am. I gave up alcohol some ten or more years ago and I am glad I did; I might have drunk myself to death by now. Not that I thought of myself as alcoholic - but it may have been a close thing - rather, that when I'd drunk a bit, I would make notes or write little poems and feel I'd caught the essence. I hadn't of course, but my attraction to haiku seemed to be of a similar kind: the manic belief that I had summed up the whole of an experience in a few choice words.

Manic sounds crazy, but there is a quiet version of it that still wants to believe that an experience, or the sum of what we are, can be given brief and accurate verbal form. Maybe this is true, or maybe it's a delusion that we are better off without. The answer might be, yes, the haiku can do that summarising job and doesn't have to be labelled manic or anything else as a put-down; that on the contrary it's the sanest, wisest unblemished way to put experience into words.

My experience of haiku has been that once I start to make poems in this form, I am stuck with the habit. It's the same with puns - once I get into that groove I can't think of anything else. This comes to seem sterile and then no longer interests me. The habit becomes an end in itself - it isn't leading anywhere, even if it carries the illusion that it is.

On the other hand I recall with pleasure and something like smiling veneration a small book of poems by Bashō I had some thirty years ago. Recently I was staying with friends and read some photocopied haiku of Issa in the room in

which I was sleeping. I found myself awake in the middle of the night with those images provoking me to write a poem of my own. I recall with gratitude Dom Sylvester Houedard's enigmatic and playful presence, in person and in his poems and other writings. The haiku that in his version goes

frog

pond

plop

has been a kind of touchstone. So perhaps there's more to haiku for me than I am willing to admit. Perhaps on my death bed I will be playful enough to leave a haiku as my final poem, but in my present everyday life I don't yet know how to measure the great unknown of experience, to be quiet enough, to be patient and detached enough; I don't yet trust the brief summing up that a haiku seems to be. The poems I feel I need to write will have to get busier yet, with their sleeves rolled up in experience, keeping a record, letting the rag bag of my imagination throw up what it will. Distillation through haiku might one day be the blessing I have arrived at.

But still I hear myself saying that haiku is a delusion, a simplistic escape from the harder perceptions. I wonder if what I feel in the High Street most days can be given the haiku treatment:

Crossing between the cars
the child in the buggy
breathes in the bad news

I have heard myself say that one of the paradoxes of poetry is that pain can be transformed into something beautiful, but even to say it now as a principle shames me. Whose pain? Does a haiku about the poisoning of a child's lungs in any way make recompense? What use is beauty here? So should we keep off the hard subjects, the painful perceptions, the bad news and make pretty haiku about our neutral or easy perceptions of beauty?

Speaking for myself in my own poems I can shape my pain and confusion, my uncertainties and fragmentary discoveries, I can let the mystery of poetry speak for me if it will. I can shape my pleasure, too, and if whatever I write meets

anyone else where they are, thank the gods for that. Perhaps one day I shall arrive at haiku as a kind of spiritual fulfilment; it won't be a pretence for me then, but a true expression.

For there is a sense in which I aspire to that. Or I would like it - the haiku essence - to allow itself to me. It will be the playfulness, perhaps, that I shall understand properly then. Our Western spirituality has been heavy in comparison: I know myself as the inheritor of Shakespeare, Nietzsche, Kafka, Dostoevsky, Samuel Beckett and much as I find Wordsworth and even Keats and Shelley rather wordy, I cannot escape their type of engagement with experience. And then, of course, there is the inheritance of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, both heavy with being here, however much they speak of self-sacrifice and the hereafter. I am happy in principle to sit more lightly to attachment to experience, to take the Zen path; non-being has long been where I know I am. Or where I am not. And surely - I argue back to myself - a haiku at best can do more than suggest that, it can open a window on to it and fly through.

But perhaps it is the flocking of the birds of haiku that has made me not want to join that club:

So many elegant birds
free wheeling in blue
no blue is to be seen

Such poems are a pleasure to me for a while, then seem to have been too easy; they carry no weight beyond the illusory moment. There's a simple pleasure in doing it, but no real sense of purpose. The poems I write that do matter to me seem to have come out of a greater struggle. Rarely do they have such an obviously satisfying form and when published in newspapers have met with the response from some people that they have no form at all. But they wouldn't satisfy me unless they had form of some kind and if I have any sense at all of what poetry is, it is radically different from everyday talk or from the kind of prose I am writing now. Perhaps in relation to haiku I am still earthbound, not yet ready to fly. Or, as I am inclined to say, the haiku is only a pretence at flight and I'm still after the real thing.

David Hart won the National Poetry Competition in 1994 and was a runner-up in 1996. He won the Irish National Poetry Competition in 1995. His poems have been widely published in poetry magazines and his first collection Setting the poem to words has recently been published by the Five Seasons Press. He is 1997-98 Birmingham Poet Laureate.

THE PATHWAY

This Section welcomes haiku and senryu from anyone, member of BHS or otherwise. Each poem should be in two different languages - 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.

Vladimir Devidé is perhaps the doyen of Croatian haiku poets alive today. In 1997 he celebrated the completion of his sixth cycle under the sign of the Ox by republishing his 'Haibun' (beautifully illustrated by Nada Žiljak) and by publishing a book of haiku sequences, 'Trenutak/The Moment'. Here is a small taster from the latter, in Croat and English - the English versions with the assistance of Višjna and Graham McMaster.

Nova godina.
Snjegović u novom
snježnom kaputu.

New Year's Day.
The snowman in a new
snowy coat.

Klobukom gljive
srebrna, sasušena
gusta sluz puža.

On a mushroom
the silvery, dried up, thick
slime of a snail.

Planina izlazi
iz magle, borovo stablo
iz planine.

A mountain coming
out of the fog, a pine tree
out of the mountain.

Ljudi izdišu
maglu. Magla udiše
ljude.

People exhale
the mist. The mist inhales
the people.

Na listovima
stare knjige lirike
- smeđe mrljice.

On the pages of
an old book of poetry
- small brown spots.

Knjiga u krilu
djevojke: mlada knjiga;
lijepa knjiga.

A book in the lap
of a girl: a young book,
a beautiful book.

TANKA

Geoff Richman

Chennai Airport, Madras

two in the morning
the air like curried lentils
blurs the sight
a welcome garland — tuberose
sickly sweet, heavy as a chain

Janice Bostok

my eyes beg
for the touch of your hand
which remains idly
stroking the lightly tanned skin
of your own beautiful body

for safety
she keeps men's shoes
by the door
larger than father's
ever were

Sanford Goldstein

cover
the reddish bruise
with a cloth
of cranes:
tonight's lapse

lovely
it is
to see
these May flowers,
to give scent to my humdrum

Patricia V. Dawson

A year and a half
ago your mother died and
yet, while joking
with you on the telephone
I heard her laugh.

Leslie Giddens

you said rest in me
and I will deepen
my rest in you:
but I never expected
such a vast world of stillness

after looking long
at the ongoing sky
the silence reaches my roots
and deeper still the voices
of underground rivers

A.A. Marcoff

see!
how the river
moves the sunrise
deeper and deeper
into mind

John Barlow

two cabbage whites
spiral skywards together
and I wish
our hearts
still did that

you talk on the phone
of wanting to watch it snow —
outside our window
the wind and rain
beat ceaselessly

Dee Evetts

falling out
this summer night:
on the silent ride home
you restrain your hair
from brushing my face

Éamh na bhfaoileán
 faobhar na scine á thástáil
 ag díoltoir éisc

*Cry of seagulls
 fish-vendor testing
 the knife's edge*

Scol an loin sa chróntráth
 ag cuimilt
 a sine clé

*Blackbird cry at dusk
 stroking
 her left nipple*

I ngloiní dú' an daill
 dul fé
 na gréine

*In the blind man's glasses
 the setting
 sun*

Ag dúiseacht i lár na hoíche
 is gan de smideadh uirthi
 ach an ghealach

*Waking in the middle of the night
 her only make-up
 the moon*

Smólach ar an bhfaiche

Cigire

Nóiníní

Thrush on the lawn

Daisy

Inspector

At last count I'm the author/translator of seventy books. The haiku has a special place in the scheme of things, if there is a scheme.

Someone once said *nobody writes poetry about parsnips*. Haikuists do and therein lies the freedom they enjoy.

I write mostly in Irish (Gaelic). Ancient Irish poetry has something of the flavour of Japanese haiku, sharing as it does a) brevity, b) nature-centredness, c) the influence of monasticism and meditation. You can get something of the flavour of that feeling from the following 7th century verse by Marbhán Naofa (The Blessed Dead One):

Tá bothán agam sa choill
Nach fios ach ag mo Thiarna;
Fuinseog abhus, coll taobh thall,
Crann mór ard á dhíonadh.

*I have a hut in the wood
Known only to my Lord;
Here an ash, yonder a hazel,
And a big tree sheltering it.*

It's strange, but true, how sustaining this type of literature can be for a poet writing in the 1990s. How beautiful is this poem by Íde Naofa, a recluse; she died in 572:

Íosagán,
An leanbh a oilim im bhothán:
Cad is fiú iomad séad?
Is bréag uile ach Íosagaú.

*Jesukin,
The child I nurse in my hut:
Where's the worth in many jewels?
All's illusion but Jesukin.*

I have an international haiku column in the Belfast newspaper, *LÁ*. All who wish to be included may send me a selection for translation to -
37, Garrán Arnold, Gleann na gCaorach, Co. Átha Cliath, Éire/Ireland.

Gabriel Rosenstock

Favourite Haiku

Oh you, with your
Mabel Lucy Attwell kisses
and penguin hugs.

Maggie West

This little poem raises such an immediate, powerful picture in the mind - a summer day, out in the open, sunshine, pretty clothes blowing in the wind - lump-in-the-throat stuff, thinking of playing with the unselfconscious toddlers. Not a word wasted. The 'Oh you' exactly defines the loving relationship. 'Penguin hugs' - I've never come across this phrase before, but it is so aptly descriptive and cleverly avoids a simile.

Paul Amphlett

SPRING

Frank Williams

the bush ...
amidst silence and sunshine
the purl of the stream

David Cobb

vernal equinox —
days getting longer
but the nights still long

sciatica —
I listen to the lark
flat out

Bruce Leeming

My old friend
smiling at the warm sun —
Parkinson's

My young friend
sitting in the sun — annoyed
by a fly

A woman passes
silently weeping:
scent of hawthorn

W.M. Tidmarsh

Old men on park seats;
scent of girls passing
stills their gossip.

So early this year
aconites, snowdrops;
eager to see you.

Michael Rubinstein

April snows
melting wet
on white petals

Maurice Tasnier

fresh daffodils placed
in kitchen window she
changes her apron

on the longest day
the walk home
so short

Eric Speight

Between the hills
the mountain
frets the clouds

Joanna Ashwell

Low cloud
sweeps our view
away

Arwyn Evans

Cold stone, small cloud —
The churchyard blackbird

Green stars in April —
My bonsai larches budding

Sun shaft
Dust rising
Darkness

Alan Summers

the morning star
through the caravan skylight
a peacock's scream

stargazer lilies
'they'll open at midnight ...'
last meal together

Jane Whittle

Nothing to wake me
after the birds, not a sound
since you oiled the gate.

Under the smooth flow
of continuous waves
shapes are repeated.

My skin is so new
it has asked for silk clothing
to wear without you.

Matthew Paul

in his motorized wheelchair
taking the dog for a run

senryu

sean burn

all this snow
& the fridge
still hums

grasshopper

leaps

toward

inaudibility

snow melts outside
inside
the temperature drops

Joan Sheridan Smith

Cold wind in my hair
on the moor, yellow gorse:
branches swaying.

After the conference,
a consultation
of garden chairs.

John Shimmin

after 3000 miles
elvers in the heron's beak
still struggling

watching waders
working the spring tide —
a sudden bite

unwelcome ramblers
holding the gate open —
for the farmer's car

senryu

Yasuhiko Shigemoto

The cancer patient
looking up at the last cherry blossoms
from the wheelchair

Peony garden —
your slow step
my slow step

David Leather

Willy-nilly
through her ashes
mother's daffodils

Two boys
race down their ball
clapping feet

Hurling
wall of water
mist-sprays primroses

Katherine Gallagher

in the village distance
the white blossom
of a pear tree

I began this article for two reasons: firstly, I was writing the guidelines for a haiku competition (run by the *Association of Christian Writers*) and considering whether rhyme should be discouraged; secondly, I had been re-reading Kenneth Yasuda's book, *"The Japanese Haiku"*,¹ 40 years after first publication, in which many of his translations of classic Japanese haiku are fully rhymed. The question of rhyme in haiku - like the habit that all roads have of leading us to Rome - brings us back to the old debate about how Japanese we feel we ought to be in defining English haiku. I should like to avoid that particularly well trodden highway. Instead, by looking at the range of rhyme types available, and the practical effect that they have, I shall suggest what use the English poet might make of the technique in writing haiku.

A health warning, first. In a very short poem whose length is seldom more than the average breath, rhyme has often been felt to be intrusive. Where no word is wasted, two or more words that share their sound draw attention to themselves. Furthermore, if the rhyming occurs at the ends of lines, it has added effect, since the line-break draws yet more attention to it. Generally speaking, only comic verses (such as Ogden Nash's) deliberately point up their rhyme; otherwise, the usual aim of rhyme is to aid flow, link key words, add melifluousness, give a memorable quality, but to do it with discretion.

One English tradition has further shaped our perception of rhyme in the short form - the epigram and the rhyming couplet. Derived from Latin models, it was used extensively in the C18th to produce that smug, know-it-all-and-have-the-last-word-on-everything effect, often with a satirical or moralising bent. The result is one of finality - producing a neat package of thought, with the end rhyme conclusively sealing the unit. It is usually balanced in some way, with a falling cadence, and the end stopped second line brings the rhythm to an absolute halt. Alexander Pope was the master of it -

*Know then this truth, enough for man to know —
"Virtue alone is happiness below."²*

*Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast,
when husbands, or when lap-dogs, breathe their last.³*

However, this effect of finality may very well be what we do not want to produce in our haiku, given the origin of haiku as *hokku*, the opening verse of a sequence, whose function it was to set the tone, and establish a physical, temporal, emotional setting. Whilst we don't need to be slaves to that historical fact (nor head off again down the road to Rome...) I think that most writers would include the consequences of that origin in their definition of haiku. The spirit of haiku is to *suggest* rather than *state* our understanding of the world; to offer the thing itself, but leave a sense of incompleteness about it - inviting the reader to supply for himself context and associations, to make the connections between the elements that are offered. We might be wary, then, of poetry that seems to offer conclusive statements; that does not share and invite, but dictates what we shall understand. Equally we might suspect techniques that promote this.

I am uneasy, therefore, reading Kenneth Yasuda's translations of Bashō in which he insists on end rhyme, and indeed goes yet further in applying classical meter as well. He seeks to give us a truly "English" haiku - one that he believes to be in tune with our own traditions. He renders Bashō's frog poem therefore as,

*Ancient pond unstirred
Into which a frog has plunged,
A splash was heard.* ⁴

(NB complete with capitalisation and punctuation in the English "traditional" mould; note use of titles in the final selection of his translations as well). Even allowing for the archaism of the diction, it seems to me that the rhyme takes away any of the delicacy of the mystery.

In the section on rhyme in haiku, he commends the sense of completeness the technique offers: "*Through its use there can occur a sense of finality, of completion to an experience as it begins, unfolds, and comes to rest in meaningful sound*". ⁵ He further defends his use of rhyme in translating Japanese haiku: "*As poems in English, they utilize all the poetic resources of the language, of which rhyme is one of the greatest*". ⁶

He offers the following as an example of how well rhyme works (with no apologies to Professor Higgins..?)

*Hurriedly runs rain
Toward the sunlit grain field,
Half across the plain.* ⁶

He presumably then would not agree with John Milton, who deliberately avoided rhyme for his most significant work, *Paradise Lost*, referring instead to "*the troublesome and modern bondage of Rhyming*", noting further that it was "*no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse*".⁷ Milton's chosen medium, blank verse, has offered a major line of continuity in English poetry (see Shakespeare and Marlowe before; Wordsworth and Browning after). And if we are looking back at traditions, we find that the earliest English poets also managed to avoid rhyme: the Anglo-Saxons in *Beowulf* used alliteration and a system of stresses to link ideas and give form to the sound patterns. It was only the invasion of French forms in the early Middle Ages that altered our native tradition.

So much for health warnings: we don't have to use rhyme to be English poets. If we do, however, subtlety is the principle I should recommend. For me that would, generally speaking, cut out full rhyme: (*cat - sat - mat*) particularly when used as end rhyme - what many regard as the defining feature of English poetry, and what Yasuda prefers. Masculine rhyme on the single syllable (*cat - sat*) is obvious enough; feminine rhyme that repeats two or more vowels (*station - nation*) increases that effect further. (Read Yasuda on "Hermaphrodite" rhyme... p.95ff too...)

Other rhyme types that are possible but should still be treated with caution are internal or medial rhyme in the middle of lines, to disguise the effect somewhat, while sight rhymes (*love - rove*) look like full rhymes, judging by the spelling, but sound partially dissimilar. These have always had something of the feeling of a trick and are seldom used these days. Alliteration (*big - bold - bad*) can be regarded as a sort of rhyme - the deliberate repetition of initial sounds for effect. Like full end rhyme, it is to be treated with caution, although it is very useful in linking key words. It is relatively common in Japanese models (and Yasuda has a discussion of six alliteration types in his book). Interestingly, he notes that "*alliteration speaks gently where rhyme commands*", recognising at least the potential of rhyme to dominate.

More success in haiku is likely to be found with half rhyme (or pararhyme): (*cat - black - can*) where only one of the two vowel/consonant elements is repeated.

This also has the effect of assonance, which is the term for any linking by repetition of sounds, but normally used of sounds which are not at the ends of words; some writers use the term also to refer to linking by vowel sounds, reserving the word consonance for linking by consonant. This is the most widely used technique of sound linking used by haiku writers, being more discreet, yet providing enough cohesiveness to provide aural links between key words. Composite rhymes (*flat - knock - snap or deep - vale - deal or rain - tip - take*) are a form of assonance in which elements from two dissimilar sounding key words are combined in a third; it is not a generally recognised technique, but one with which I have been experimenting; for example –

is that my daughter
alone and singing?
the early morning flight

where “*daughter - alone - morning*” have the links (*au + n → orn*).

From what I have said, it should be clear that I am not opposed to manipulation of sound effects; indeed, I have always been in favour of experimenting with any technique that will enable the poet to recreate his understanding in the reader's mind. Haiku, above all, aims to present the thing itself, and our senses are the most involved here, if we want the experience to resonate.

However, there is a need for balance and discretion: 12 to 17 syllables, 2 - 3 - 2 stresses, my personal preference for haiku form, does not usually sit well with anything strident, which for me includes full end rhyme. I shan't ban it in my competition, because good poets can always break the rules - but don't expect to see it in the winning poem!

References

- 1 *The Japanese Haiku* - Kenneth Yasuda, Tuttle, 1957
- 2 *An Essay On Man* Ep iv l.309, Alexander Pope
- 3 *The Rape of the Lock* l.157, Alexander Pope
- 4 *One Hundred Frogs*, p.154, Hiroaki Sato, Weatherhill, 1983
- 5 *The Japanese Haiku*, p.90
- 6 *The Japanese Haiku*, p.97
- 7 Preface to *Paradise Lost* 1668 Ed.

HAIBUN

From The Athelstan Filling Station

Ken Jones

'Ancient Saxon hill-top town (2334 inhab.)' Leaving the motorway and splashing through Wiltshire darkness I am greeted by the bright lights of closing shops. A Spanish dressmaker and her Polish husband, Malmesburians of 27 years standing, offer bed and breakfast. I learn that well out of sight Malmesburians make parts for telephones and vacuum cleaners.

The winding streets of stone cottages are explored with all the delight of fresh arrival.

Outside drawn curtains
a lighted candle
for the street

In the sumptuous lounge of The Old Bell, here I am, a shentleman of eight poor Cardiganshire acres, savouring the elegance of Landed England.

Starched linen napkins
unfolded
for the cream of parsnip soup

Meanwhile, a French waitress tries to explain to a German diner what a parsnip is.

Through tombstones I thread my way to bed.

Stopped
in the abbey graveyard
by a floodlit autumn beech

However, back in the High St. it is Saturday night.

Thigh-high skirts
and scattered Coke-cans
gargoyles of the Butter Cross

Sunday dawns dank, dark and overcast.

Sipping wake-up tea
the abbey clock
the swish of tyres

Malmesbury Abbey is, and is not, a ruin. A lofty pile of flying buttresses, only the middle of it still stands, as a parish Church: impressive, uneasy, a grand stone speech broken short. The Twelve Apostles, clad in twelfth century linenfold, greet me in the porch.

St. Peter's toes
broken
by Reformers

Inside, I pay my respects to a fake effigy of Athelstan, allegedly first king of Britain. Before the Norman yoke the abbots had good old Saxon names like Fosberc, Xambriht, Aethelmodus and Brihtwold ('died of drink'). Outside, one of the walls bears a reminder of the Civil War assault of 25th May, 1644, led by 'a Serjeant and forty resolute musquetiers': -

In creamy stone
the pitted patterns
of Parliamentary shot

A farewell stroll follows the small, clear streams of trailing cress that almost encircle the little town.

Down in Aldhem's Mead
the squeaks
of children's swings

REVIEWS

Back In The Country Colin Blundell. Hub Editions 4, Victoria Cottages, Church Rd., Terrington St. John, PE14 7SS. 4.50 ISBN 1 870653 68 8.

To my way of thinking about haiku, Colin Blundell spends too much time and energy making his haiku fit the 5/7/5 syllable count pattern. Rather, he should be honing each one of his haiku to capture as precisely as possible the brief state of being that is ordinary but also extraordinary, the narrow moment of numinous time the haiku at its best is meant to express. One reason why one likes poetry and why one likes haiku is because the poet has worked hard to put as much power and energy as possible into each word. It's hard work that should be transparent to the reader. I think Lorine Niedecker caught something of that process in her well-known poem, *Poet's Work*, which pictures the poet working without relief in a condensery. But the condensing is not just getting rid of words to make the story shorter as in a Reader's Digest Condensed Book but a process of concision that packs more time and space into each word we keep so that, as we read them, more is said than we see printed or hear spoken. The haiku resonates deeper and deeper levels of human significance.

Writing poetry is not rocket science where the formulas of physics and chemistry must be followed exactly in order to get a successful launch and orbit around the earth or moon. Oh, I suppose there could be some fudging of the formulas by the scientists and still a successful lift-off and orbit, but I suspect there is too much risk of life and limb for there to be too much intentional fudging. Correct syllable counts are not the essence of haiku. So getting the syllable count right does not make a haiku. And of course not just any grouping of words will make a haiku. The goal of the haiku writer is to put words together with a precision (now that process might be analogous to the care that the rocket scientist takes in his calculations) that lead the reader into the moment that overwhelms with as much intensity and clarity as possible. I know you are all thinking how often does that happen!

O.K. Colin Blundell got a bit more of my thoughts about what a haiku writer should be doing than my thoughts on his haiku. I do think CB's goal is to write a haiku that captures those moments, those states of being that are full of keenly

observed significant energy. He recognises them and goes after them in his haiku. Some examples of these I particularly liked:

the frozen river —
lone figure of a woman
waiting for her dog

the breaking of waves
on the distant coral reef
a lonely fisherman

two children running
as if the whole of their life
depended on it

the Earth's crust thrust up
in seven different shades
worn by many feet

And even though Blundell's adherence to the 5/7/5 is somewhat unnatural to me I would say for the most part there is a straightforward clarity of expression in the haiku that lets the moment breathe its power back on the reader.

Gary Hotham

My Shadow Doing Something George Swede 24pp. No price quoted. Tiny Poems Press, Enfield, Connecticut, USA.

45 haiku/senryu and 12 tanka - approximately - the forms are intermingled and not always distinguishable. If writing haiku is easy, George Swede makes it look even easier, lapsing, occasionally, into something too obvious:

last night's bitterness ...
he adds twice the sugar
to his coffee

But in general, even potentially sentimental moments are saved by an ever-alert wit:

first spring without
our golden retriever —
so many shoes
with their tongues out
by the back door

Form is treated with intelligence and originality, as an opportunity rather than a problem. Compare and contrast these two - a taut three words and a languid five lines - each achieving pathos and humour:

creek
cricket
creaking

spring floods —
two wooden shoes
float by
taking turns
being first

The title, together with the dedication "to our shadows" adds a hint of mystery and suggests a psychoanalytical approach to the creative process. But in keeping with the pervading tone, it may be simply another way of lightening up.

Shifts Katherine Gallagher. 80pp Hub Editions 4.50 ISBN 1 870653 69 6

I find some of Katherine Gallagher's haiku too slight - journal entries which doubtless told the author something at the time, but perhaps don't justify publication:

hot-house daffodils
flown in
from Holland

But she isn't the first haiku poet to discover that if you seek subtlety you can slide perilously close to non-entity; I'm questioning her editing not her writing. Many of these poems work well and show a lightness of touch that could not have been achieved without faith in the merits of the objective note-taking method:

spider drops its thread
from my clothes-line —
hangs beside the socks

There's nothing more than what's there, but it's wonderful. Katherine Gallagher, being an accomplished writer of other kinds of poetry, may be conscious of the discipline required for haiku, yet when the poet in her emerges the effect is almost always beneficial:

the boats lift
— sun's late rays
on decaying paint

As you read this, the image is so vivid you may not be conscious of the assonance, working away, adding music to the art. This is pure haiku, and pure poetry too. In my view, this unity is where we should all be aiming. If we miss sublimity we might still hit simplicity and as haiku poets we must admit that this too is, inexplicably, enough:

a water-rat scurries
along the edge of the pond
then back again

Martin Lucas

Kyoshi: A Haiku Master. Susumu Takiguchi, Ami-Net International Press, 1997. [REDACTED] A5 pbk. 122pp 6.00 ISBN 1-902135-00-8.

When Shiki died in 1902, his disciples Kawahigashi Hekigotō and Takahama Kyoshi (1874-1905) took opposite paths. Hekigotō became an innovator and Kyoshi a traditionalist. Each had his own followers and literary outlets, Kyoshi's being the famous *Hototogisu* magazine. The story was told in William Higginson's *Haiku Handbook*. Susumu Takiguchi tells it three times in this book, from slightly different points of view and with more detail. None of the accounts says what has happened to the experimentalists, though some are still writing.

For there seems no doubt that the dominant tendency in present-day Japanese haiku is along the lines of what Kyoshi practised and preached. Haiku are seasonal nature poems, mainly in 17 syllables, with cutting words where appropriate, (so Katō and Burleigh's *Hidden Pond*, though James Kirkup's *A Certain State Of Mind* has more adventurous pieces). Susumu Takiguchi describes Kyoshi's life and opinions in short chapters, explaining what he meant by 3-stage sketching, birds-and-flowers nature, and landscape; and translates 100 haiku from throughout his life.

These are the new and engaging parts of the book (though there are also 25 pages of commentary and translation of 'experimentalists'). Most are in a quiet voice, to be realised slowly. This, on the launch of *Hototogisu* in 1897, is unique in tone and content:

Shigure kogarashi no areare te areideshi mono
Winter rain,/And winter wind,/Raged and raged;/It was born/Out of this turmoil.

In a later poem the violence is transferred:

Kogarashi ni Asama no kemuri fuki chiru ya
The smoke/From the volcanic Asam/Is it going to blow apart/By the winter wind

A poem on Japan's surrender at the end of World War II is full of feeling and tact:

Teki to iu mono ima wa nashi aki no tsuki
There is no longer/Any such thing/As our enemy;/Autumn moon.

Play of sound and, one suspects, of meaning is quite frequent:

Ochitsubaki tsuchi ni kisen to shitsutsu art
Fallen camelia flowers/Are turning/Back to earth.

There is also some humour:

Hatsusuzora ya Dalakunin Kyoshi no zukou ni
The large sky on New Year's Day/Spreads over/The arch-villian Kyoshi.

An inner title in the book is *Kyoshi: Father of Modern Japanese Haiku*. Susumu Takiguchi argues that Kyoshi should be recognised as no. 5 of the great Japanese haiku masters. I feel the book doesn't do enough to make even a secondhand judgement possible. It is an introduction to Kyoshi. There is also some good advice on how to write haiku.

Dick Pettit

LETTERS

Dear Editor.

On February 10th I attended a successful and very enjoyable book launch for the *Iron Book of British Haiku*, at Golden Square Bookshop in London. A few days later I got around to reading the Introduction by the book's Editors, Martin Lucas and David Cobb. I found it interesting, lucid and accurate - with the exception of a startling error of fact in the final section. Among the brief description of forms related to haiku, we find the following definition: 'A renga is a connected chain of haiku written in co-operation by a group.'

I was dismayed to find such a misleading statement published in a context where it will inevitably be regarded as authoritative. I wrote at once to the Editors voicing my concern, and expressing the hope that they would find some way to publish a retraction or correction, ideally in the pages of this magazine where it would have the widest effect. They have chosen not to do this. However, in a recent e-mail message, Martin Lucas (who acknowledges having written the passage in question) has graciously said that a letter or article by me, clarifying the picture, would be valuable.

I hope to submit such an article to *Blithe Spirit* later this year. With the limited space available in a letter such as this, I must limit myself to the following very abbreviated explanation. Haiku has evolved as an independent form during the past few centuries, from its original function as the, or 'starting verse' of a renga. None of the other verses have ever been regarded by the Japanese as haiku. The form of renga alone - with its alternating two-line and three-line verses - should alert us to this. The internal verses are linked to and dependent upon one another, and the whole point and skill of renga composition resides in this linking and dependence. This unique quality of renga - that which makes it fun, fascinating, and infinitely challenging - is undermined when we begin to regard it merely a 'chain of haiku.'

Granted, it is extremely difficult to come up with a short and convenient definition of renga. and I am sure this partially explains the blunder in the *Iron Book* Introduction. At the same time I cannot agree that this excuses it. Brevity is one thing; misinformation is quite another.

Dee Evetts, New York

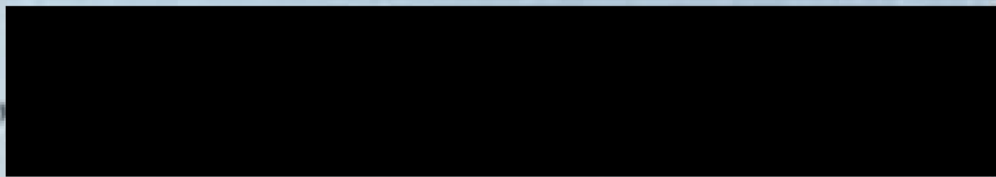
David Cobb replies:

I fear that Dee's statement, 'They have chosen not to do this', may lead some readers to think Martin and I are being complacent and intransigent, and I would like the chance to say that this is quite untrue.

The facts are these: late in March Dee wrote to us, separately, proposing that we publish a retraction of the statement about renga, otherwise he would feel obliged to write a letter such as has now appeared. I have never seen Martin's reply, though from conversation I believe it was in line with mine. To stick to my own answer, I accepted that we (Martin and I) were guilty of a slipshod definition of renga. I questioned, however, whether it was appropriate to try to put matters right by using *Blithe Spirit* as a sort of erratum slip. Like any other members of BHS, we have access to these pages only at the discretion of the Editor. Like any other authors working for an independent press, we have a duty to consult with our publisher (here *Iron Press*) and not take unilateral action, however much we believe it to be necessary.

The normal way to draw attention to a point of concern like this would be in a review. Not knowing whom Caroline had in mind for this, I did in fact suggest to her that she might like to prime the suggested reviewer to mention it.

I have to disagree with Dee that *Blithe Spirit* is the 'ideal' place for a retraction where it will have the 'widest effect'. *Blithe Spirit* is read by upwards of 200 people, most of whom have a pretty good idea of what renga is and are able to judge for themselves that our definition is faulty. The *Iron Book*, on the other hand, is likely to get into the hands of thousands of people, the majority of whom may know very little about renga. So it is the general public, not so much subscribers to *Blithe Spirit*, that need to be informed. The normal way to do this is to insert an erratum slip in existing copies of the book and correct the next edition. The first option wasn't open to us, as most of the first printing was in the bookshops before the unsatisfactory wording was spotted. But Martin and I did take immediate steps to improve the definition of renga at the second printing and *Iron Press* have agreed to do this. I told Dee in March that this would be happening.'

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