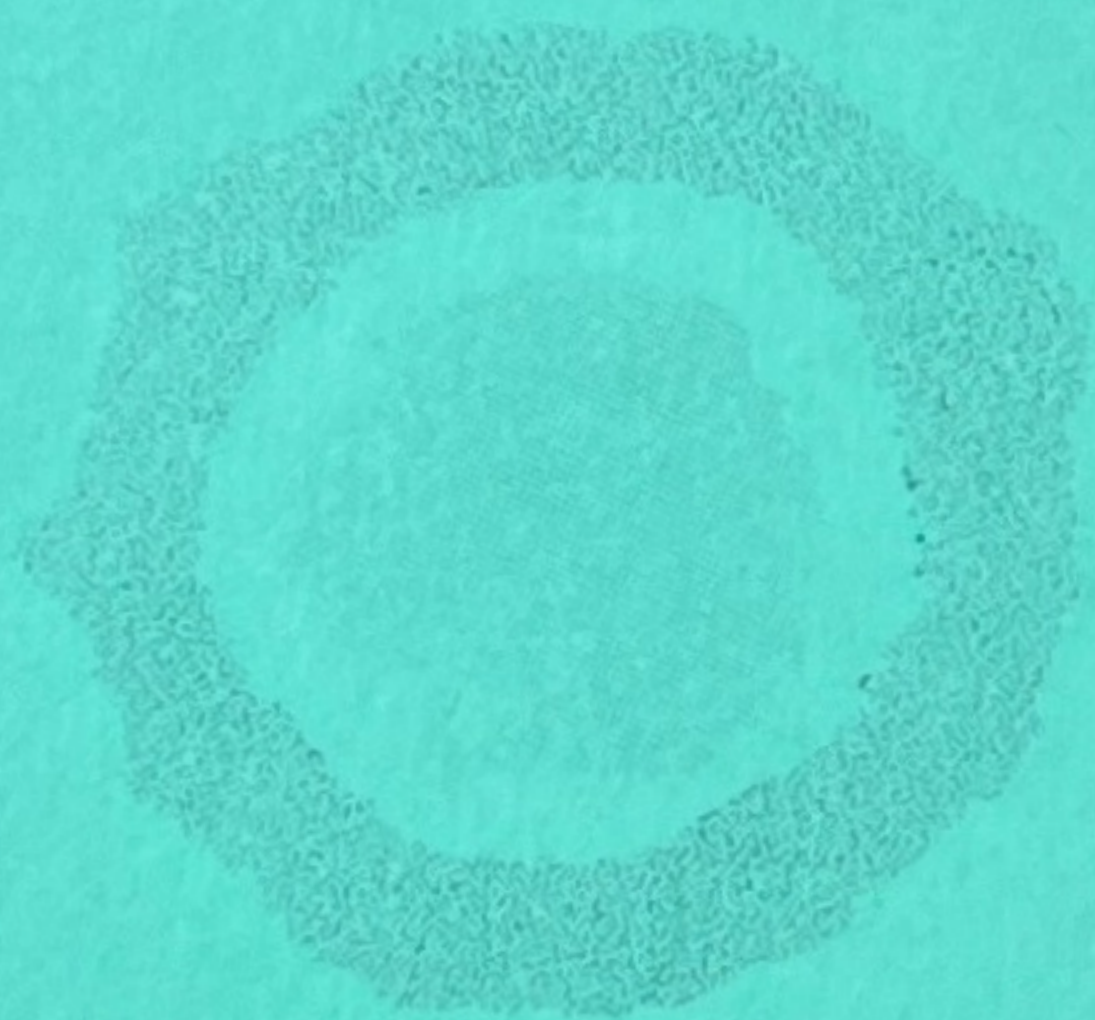


Journal of
The British Haiku Society

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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Editorial

'BHS (British Haiku Society) and HSA (Haiku Society of America) journals have a ... responsibility to uphold tradition.' As editor of BS I thought I could do worse than ponder this statement by the editor of Presence. What exactly is tradition? Well, it relates to the past; it's what we look back to - it's *there*, it's safe. But what was tradition before it was tradition? Take Debussy's music - initially rejected for being formless and technically incomprehensible, it is now regarded as the cornerstone of the post-romantic tradition. The *enfant terrible* subsequently became the elder statesman and when we look at the history of art, music, literature, it becomes apparent that the avant-garde and the traditional are, in fact, one and the same thing seen from different perspectives. Therefore it is misleading to imply (Presence 7#) that 'a continual pushing out of the boundaries' is incompatible with upholding tradition - that some haiku magazines do one and some the other. A good haiku magazine that upholds tradition, will also embrace the new and experimental. Of course not all that is new is good, but to uphold tradition without pushing out boundaries would make for the dullest reading imaginable and no magazine, certainly not BS, would want to be accused of that; Basho was right when he said that haiku would become what future poets make of it. *All art movements tend to the pursuit of novelty, but the true essence of beauty can exist only where the distinction between the old and the new has been eliminated.* Yanagi Sōetsu.

The season for Vol 8/3 is *autumn* and the deadline for submissions Nov. 7th.

Caroline Gourlay

Errata

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

Annie Bachini

clouds scudding

fast birds

blown over trees

David Steele

These haiku mentioned in Dick Pettit's Museum of Haiku Literature Award essay (Vol. 8/2), both contained misprints. Apologies to Dick, Annie and David.

HAIKU

Susan Rowley

travelling alone
my milestone
the stranger's smile

studying again —
a speech on freedom
marks my place

senryu

Eid market —
in the truck children
hug their goat

desert's edge —
out on the midnight sea
lightning's silence

George Marsh

footsteps on deck —
my dreams
creak and sway

being told off
— a swan's neck
in a chill wind

Tito

Like good friends,
Blue sea inland,
Blue land at sea
Over the barley blend.

(Kankbolle, Denmark, 8/74)

Veranda view ...
Green and white and blue —
And the breeze at the corner
Is the day's end.

(Shinyakushiji, Nara, 8/77)

John Barlow

equinox sunshine —
a first bumblebee
and the tail end of redwings

sunshine
off the destroyer's bow
porpoises

walking home —
the full moon unsteady
over the rooftops

Claire Bugler Hewitt

a glass of milk
my pregnant belly
the full moon

sunny kitchen
filling the baby's bath
her blue eyes

can't sleep tonight —
I love the baby
too much

spring buds
I put away the baby's
smallest clothes

Paul Amphlett

a pigeon's shadow
flies silently
up my bedroom blind

tangled winter twigs
runnels of birdsong
move invisibly

alarm screeching
through Saturday crowds
clattering feet

Leo Lavery

miles off
the train stop
here

senryu

Diana Webb

catkins
windlooped
on wire netting

asylum corridor
a sudden window
blossom

Henk Littlewood

nine red dragonflies
rest in tight formation
on the sunny signpost.

black branches
comb the setting sun —
cold threads of orange light

bamboo, beetle, rain
green segments, black segments
glistening.

Michael Rubinstein

meditating
thoughtlessly think
I'm not thinking

Martin Lucas

May rains ...
 against the grey path
 grey snails

a chink of light —
 shadows of the palm
 on the palm

sunburst
bilberry shoots
a brighter green

Gary Hotham

echoing ...
 the sound I make
 somewhere else —
 somewhere else

the birthday party —
the child's breath
bursting bubbles

W.M. Tidmarsh

Ahead of me
my shadow stumbles;
I tread carefully.

Old man by the stream;
from the passing boat
children wave.

The float bobs once;
behind the birches
the moon.

David Cobb

another tide, and
the beached whale's jawbone
deeper in the sand

looking at icons —
the saint's huge beard
paraffined with feasts

pollen in the air —
how it drags out
licking this stamp for you ...

a baby newt
in my hands no longer
quite so minute

Jean Jorgensen

in the distance
a woodpecker tapping ...
her dusty shoes

Remembrance Day
the old soldier's tears
for times most forget

overnight
graveyards vandalised
footprints lead nowhere

Jim Kacian

spring night —
the darkness loosens
about the moon

Cicely Hill

floating in and out
on the afternoon tide
fallen persimmon

sunbeams fall
on their thinning hair —
dolls in the attic

by moonlight
a sea-almond branch points
the way you went

mountain pool
water touches
our chins

Brian Tasker

news of a death ...
not knowing what to say
saying it anyway

afternoon love ...
her hair ruined
before it's even dry

Philip Rowland

earthquake in bed —
sealing
their relationship

ai li

snow
and the black
of mourning shoes

she lifts
her veil
cemetery fog

the warmth
of a penny
in the beggar's bowl

under long ago sun parasol

ENGLISHNESS OF ENGLISH HAIKU
AND
JAPANESENESS OF JAPANESE HAIKU

Nobuyuki Yasa

What is English haiku and what is Japanese haiku are two questions about which, perhaps, no two persons can reach an agreement. What follows, then, is a somewhat wild attempt to define the qualities of English and Japanese haiku, as I see them from my biased point of view. This kind of attempt, however, is worth trying because it enables us to see the essential elements of haiku and variations within the limits of those elements both in English and Japanese haiku. This is, perhaps, what Basho had in mind when he preached about *fueki* and *ryuko*, permanence and change. I think there are some basic elements which writers of both English and Japanese must observe, but they also have the freedom to produce infinite variations so long as they pay due respect to those elements.

First, I should like to discuss the language of haiku. The bold use of vulgar terms is one of the essential elements of haiku. Haiku began as a revolt against the genteel tradition of waka, especially its long-established courtly diction. Waka, literally, means Japanese poetry, and in a sense it is opposed to Chinese poetry. Waka is usually written in kana, Japanese alphabetical letters, avoiding the use of Chinese characters. Waka also avoids the vocabulary of Chinese origin. Haiku, on the other hand, relies heavily on Chinese words. Let me give you a few examples:

nukiashi ni mushi no ne wakete kiku no kana

With soft stealthy steps / I cut through the field, hearing / Crickets on both sides.

What makes this haiku by Ikenishi Gonsui (1650-1722) so remarkable is the first line in which he uses a colloquial idiom, *nukiashi*, which means stealthy steps. An idiom of this kind will not be found in traditional waka. The following poem by Bashō (1664-1692) is remarkable for the bold use of a Chinese word:

Kohri nigaku enso ga nodo wo uruoseri

Biting the bitter ice, / A hermit mouse in a ditch / Relieved its dry throat.

The word for the hermit mouse in a ditch, *enso*, borrowed from a famous Taoist philosopher, Chuang-tzu (c369-286 BC), determines the mood of the poem, and conveys very successfully the state of the poet himself who lives in poverty and isolation.

Now, can we see a similar use of vulgar terms and colloquial idioms in English haiku? Borrowings from Chinese words would be difficult, but can we find a similar use of ink-horn terms which are generally considered to be outside the norm of the poetic language? Perusing through the February and May issues of *Blithe Spirit*, I have found many poems whose writers seem to have made conscious efforts to meet these requirements. For example:

booking in advance / for her trip to Las Vegas, / Granny touches wood.
(*rasubegasu yoyaku yorokobu obaachama*)

This poem impressed me mainly because of the colloquialism of the last line. In the following poem, the use of the word “hyperactive” reminds me of Chinese words in Japanese haiku.

Just watching / the hyperactive child / so wearing
(*cho-kappatsu na ko wo miru dakede kutabireru*)

It is true that Bashō was somewhat critical of the popularity of vulgar terms in the haiku of his day. His famous dictum, *zokugo o tadasu*, correcting vulgar terms, however, does not exclude the use of vulgar terms in haiku. It is a recommendation to use vulgar terms with a noble mind. Taking the poems in the February and May issues of *Blithe Spirit* as a whole, I feel that English haiku is somewhat conservative in the use of vulgar terms, and that there is room for greater adventure in this direction. Even Basho himself said that waka is like the fragrance of the plum tree, while haiku is like the roughness of the pine tree.

The second essential element of haiku is the use of concrete imagery. Here again a comparison with waka is useful. Waka is usually a direct statement of one's emotion while haiku is an expression of one's emotion through a concrete image. There is, however, a certain amount of disagreement about the function of imagery in haiku among Japanese poets. Pre-Bashō poets emphasised the metaphorical quality of imagery. For example, Kitamura Kigin (1624-1705) says:

Spots of snow left on the ground should be likened to the pattern of spots on the fabric called deer-skin, and blocks of soft snow still remaining should be likened to the rice-cakes half-eaten by mice of the sunny-season, or to the melting of the cosmetic powder on the face of the Lady of the Mountain, or to the half-torn cotton-covering of the Hag of the Mountain. If snow starts melting on the roof, you say the gargoyle has shed its disguise, and if a snow image disappears, you say the snow Buddha has passed away before the day of his Nirvana.

Here Kigin is recommending his followers to use metaphorical expression in haiku instead of simply describing natural objects. The result is similar to Elizabethan conceit. Bashō was critical of this kind of witty writing, as his disciple, Hattori Toho (1657-1730), testifies:

Go to the pine if you want to learn about the pine, or to the bamboo if you want to learn about the bamboo, our teacher said. And in doing so, you must leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself. Otherwise you impose yourself on the object and do not learn. Your poetry issues of its own accord when you and the object become one...

Obviously, Bashō was interested in more natural and objective expression, but we must not misunderstand his aim. He is not really denying the use of metaphor in haiku. For him the object does not have value as such, but only so long as it reveals the emotional state of the observer. What we find in the poems of Bashō and his followers is unpretentious metaphor which does not look like metaphor at all. Nevertheless it is metaphor highly charged with emotion. When we come to Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902), we feel that he is aiming for greater objectivity. He emphasized the importance of *shasei*, or *shajitu*, both of which mean sketching:

When you find something interesting in natural scenes, or in human affairs, and wish to arouse similar interests in your readers through your writing, you must describe what you see as it really is without using decorative style or exaggeration at all.

At this point, I should like to refer to the famous definition of an image by Ezra Pound as "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." It has been pointed out by Earl Miner and others that Pound was influenced by Japanese haiku. Pound's definition of the image is similar to

Bashō's with this difference: Bashō seems to emphasize naturalness, whereas Pound seems to emphasize complexity. A short poem by Pound himself can be used to prove the point:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd, / Petals on a wet black bough.

In this poem entitled "In a station of the Metro", two images are presented: the image of the bright-coloured faces among the crowd in the dark underground station, and equally bright coloured leaves hanging on a dark, wet bough, but obviously the latter is used as a metaphor for the former. In other words, Pound is more interested in expressing his thought and feeling about the condition of human beings in modern society than describing a natural scene. Hence the relationship between the petals and the faces is more complex than it seems on the surface. I know that some English haiku read very much like Pound's poem. For example:

Crocus blooms in snow,
Bright colors face the chill air;
Life's warmth against ice.

(yuki no naka inochi no nukumori kurookasu)

This haiku by an American poet is not so complex in its thought as Pound's poem, but it has the same structure, for the poet here uses crocus as a metaphor for life, and snow and ice as a metaphor for death. When I turn to the haiku poems in the February and May issues of *Blithe Spirit*, I find many poems which read more like Shiki's sketching. For example:

rising and falling / with each gust of wind / the severed leaves
(kaze ni mau ko no ha no ugoki sorezore ni)

A water-rat / scurries along the edge / of the pond
(dobunezumi ike no hotori o kosokoso to)

In a way, I welcome this tendency. I think an overt use of metaphor is detrimental to haiku, whether in English or Japanese, as Basho pointed out to his disciples. At the same time, however, we must not forget that metaphor is an essential element of haiku. I believe that Shiki's idea of sketching, if carried too far, can be dangerous. If you just describe the surface of an object I think your poem becomes somewhat thin, like some paintings of the Impressionist

School. Let me quote here three haiku poems by Japanese poets to show the three stages of metaphor I have been trying to explain:

hana yori mo dango ya ari te kaeru gan

More than the flowers
They seem to like the dumplings,
Wild geese going home.

This poem by Matsunaga Teitoku (1572-1653) represents the first stage, where natural objects are used as obvious metaphors for human affairs. In this poem, the poet is not at all interested in depicting the wild geese going home to the north in spring, but he is using them as a metaphor for the practical men who wish to fill their stomachs before they feast their eyes with cherry blossoms. Moreover, wild geese going home constitute a standard subject in traditional waka. The poet is, therefore, enjoying himself by playing the role of an iconoclast. In the following poem by Bashō, however, the image of a goose is used for an entirely different purpose:

byogan no yosamu ni ochi te tabine kana

A sick goose falling / Into the dark, chilly night, / Slumber on the road.

In this poem, the relationship between the sick goose and the slumber on the road is not so apparent. The last line is grammatically ambiguous, for it does not make clear whose slumber it describes. It can be either the slumber of the goose going home, or that of the poet himself who fell ill during his journey. In other words, the poem is so constructed that the goose can be an independent object, or a metaphor for the poet, but a trained reader does not fail to see the subtle relationship between the two. In the following poem by Shiki, we get an immediate sense of place and time, but the poem does not go beyond the sense impression:

yuki nokoru itadaki hitotsu kunizakai

Where a lone peak stands
Still covered with snow, we have
A province border.

It is true that even here we see the landscape through the eyes of the author, who is now writing as a lonely traveller. So the subjective element is not altogether absent, but the author here is little more than an observer. In my opinion, there are too many followers of Shiki among modern Japanese poets,

especially among amateur poets, so that the importance of metaphor in haiku is often forgotten. I am hoping, therefore, that English haiku poets will not follow Shiki, but they will go back at least to Bashō to discover the subtle relationship between the poet and the object he is describing, and furthermore, to explore new possibilities in metaphorical expressions, using the rich tradition of metaphor in English poetry.

The next basic element of haiku I should like to discuss is its form. Some people might say the question of the form does not exist in Japanese haiku, because traditionally, the so-called 5-7-5 form has been generally accepted as the standard. This is true in a way because at the moment most Japanese haiku are written in semi-classical Japanese which is especially adaptable to this traditional form. But if one day Japanese haiku poets should decide to write in modern Japanese, the question of the form would be a serious problem. In fact, some poets have already made this decision. Taneda Santoka (1882-1940) is a good example. He wrote most of his haiku poems in modern colloquial Japanese. As a result, he had to discard the traditional form in many of his poems:

wakeittemo wakeittemo aoi yama
I pushed my way through,
I pushed my way through,
Just deep blue mountains.

In this poem, he has adopted a 5-5-5 scheme, but in the following poem he has adopted a 5-7-2 scheme:

mozu naite mi no sutedokoro nashi
Sharp cry of a shrike — / I can throw myself away / Nowhere.

Although Santoka uses many irregular forms, I think it is a mistake to think that he has written free verse. His poems show two rather contradictory motives. He wishes to use colloquial modern Japanese at the expense of the traditional form, but at the same time, he cannot quite ignore the traditional form. Therefore, he wishes to keep it wherever it is possible. The traditional form in Santoka's poems is like the half-erased face on the surface of a rock. In English literature, John Donne does pretty much the same thing, when he writes sonnets. In a way, he wants to destroy the sonnet form, but somehow, he wants to keep it as rigorously as other poets. I think this is what a great writer does to a literary form: he destroys it so that he can recreate it again and make it

adaptable to his own purpose. In short, a literary form exists both to be observed and to be broken.

Turning to English haiku at this point, what can one say about its form? Attempts have been made to keep Japanese syllable scheme in English haiku. I have done so in this paper for an obvious reason, but many poets have found this too limiting. In my translation of Bashō, I used a four-line form, which was criticized by some people as a violation. I do not particularly wish to defend myself here, but I had hundreds of poems to translate, and I found it impossible to keep the original syllable scheme throughout. Moreover, as I have already pointed out, haiku was started as a revolt against the tradition of waka, and includes a revolt against its formalism. In translating waka, I would try to keep the syllable scheme even in English, which I have done in my translation of Ryokan (1757-1831), but in translating haiku, I thought I could take more liberty. However, I can offer no special reason for my choice of the four-line form. I only thought that the four-line form would read better, giving more weight and independence to the poem. Now perusing through the February and May issues of *Blithe Spirit*, I find most of the poets are using the three-line form, hardly paying any attention to the syllable scheme. For example:

telescope sight — / a heron / spreading its wings
(*toomegane tsubasa hirogeta sagi ichiwa*)

Sometimes attempts are made to get the middle line longer than the rest. For example:

almost lost / in the shimmer of water / several ducklings
(*mizu haete hikari ni kasumu kogamo kana*)

Sometimes, but not very often, attempts are made to keep the 5-7-5 syllable scheme. For example:

Sick horse — one hind leg
keeps kicking, kicking the long
autumn night away
(*yamu uma ga ashi de keru keru aki no yoru*)

One poet at least seems to prefer the four-line form:

I will show you something —
One above another,
Two evening stars setting
In a cleft of the hills.

(*iza misen tani ni narande shizum hoshi*)

I am not going to say which form is best for English haiku. Ultimately, the choice of the form must be left to individual poets. One poet may find keeping the syllable scheme too limiting; another many find it an exciting challenge. One poet may find the four-line form more adaptable to his purpose; another may find it too long-winded and loose. Variations within the three-line form are so great and numerous that it is not even possible to say whether there is going to be any standard three-line form in English haiku or not. However, I should like to see a little more awareness of the form among English haiku poets. It was T. S. Eliot who said no free verse is free. I think free verse works best when there is a fixed form to destroy. When we have a complete absence of form, I do not think free verse succeeds so well. In discussing the poems of Santoka I have already said that there are contradictory motives in his mind: a desire to preserve the traditional form, and a desire to destroy and recreate it. Out of the tension of these contradictory desires I think his poems emerged. I believe this applies to English haiku just as well and just as much.

Finally, I should like to discuss the question of *kireji* as an essential element of haiku. *Kireji*, literally, means the cutting word. It is a short word, grammatically a particle, which is placed either in the middle or at the end of a poem. It has the double function of heightening the emotional force of the statement, and, depending on its position, of cutting or concluding the statement. If you emphasize the first function, *kireji* is something like an interjection or an exclamation mark. In translating the famous haiku by Bashō about the frog jumping into the pond, G. S. Fraser tried to make this function of *kireji* explicit:

The old pond, yes! / A frog jumping in, / The water's noise!

But it is the second function of *kireji* that I should like to discuss here, especially its poetic value when it cuts the statement in the middle of the poem, as in the case of Bashō's poem quoted above. When *kireji* performs this function, it is very much like a caesura, or a dash, or comma. In other words, when we have a cutting word in the middle of a poem, the poem consists of two statements, half-separated by the cutting word. There is a great deal of

argument even among the Japanese haiku poets about whether a haiku poem should be a single statement, or it should consist of two half-independent statements. Basho himself left two contradictory opinions about this issue. At one time, he is reported to have said that a haiku poem should be a combination of two things, and that a skilful poet knows how to combine two different things. At another time, however, he is reported to have said that a haiku poem should be simply like gold beaten to its utmost thinness. Among modern Japanese poets, Osuga Otsuji (1881-1920) asserted that a haiku poem should consist of two phrases making one statement, while Usuda Aro (1879-1951) maintained that a haiku poem should be one phrase making one statement. I do not wish to discuss the minute differences among the poets here. I only wish to bring your attention to the function of the cutting word placed in the middle of a poem. When this happens, the cutting word divides the poem into two phrases, each belonging to a slightly different level of meaning. Of course, the poem as a whole needs unity, so that the interaction between the two phrases becomes extremely important, but by bringing together two phrases of different levels of meaning, the cutting word gives complexity and subtlety to the poem. In other words, a clever use of the cutting word heightens the metaphorical character of haiku. Let me give you an example:

kiku no ka ya nara niha furuki hotoketachi

Scent of chrysanthemums — / In Nara, I met ancient / Statues of Buddha.

This poem by Bashō is a typical example of haiku consisting of two phrases making one statement. The cutting word at the end of the first five syllables makes the relationship between the scent of chrysanthemums and the statues of Buddha the poet saw in Nara extremely complex. On the surface level, we can say that the poem is a sketch, and that Bashō smelled the chrysanthemums placed in front of the statues of Buddha as offerings, but to me, this interpretation is unsatisfactory. Bashō visited the ancient capital of Nara on 9 September 1694. This day happens to be the Day of Chrysanthemums, and traditionally a festival was performed at the Imperial Court to celebrate this flower. Moreover, I believed Bashō remembered that chrysanthemums were brought from China as medicinal herbs about the same time as Buddhist statues in Nara. The earliest Festival of Chrysanthemums was celebrated in 685 during the reign of Emperor Tenmu (?-686). This historical association was in the mind of the poet when he combined the scent of chrysanthemums and the statues of Buddha. The result is a poem of rich imaginative quality. We go back to the age of Buddhist statues on the scent of chrysanthemums.

Let me give you another example, this time, from Natume Soeseki (1867-1916):

kagerou no yume ya ikudo kui no saki

A dragonfly lands / To dream, again and again, / At a pile's top end.

This poem has the cutting word at an unusual position, namely, in the middle of the central phrase (in English, after "to dream" in the second line). This clever use of the cutting word makes the poem rather unbalanced, but in this poem, it is very effective because the unbalanced movement of the poem represents symbolically the movement of the dragonfly when it darts off from the pile's end, returning to it a few moments later to dream again before it darts off a second time. Moreover, the use of the cutting word at this position gives unusual weight to what follows immediately, namely, "again and again". Half-separated from the verb by the cutting word, this adverbial phrase indicates the psychology of the observer as well as the movement of the dragonfly. So the reader senses that the observer also dreams again and again without quite achieving his dream like the dragonfly. As these examples show, the cutting word can give a great deal of subtlety and complexity to a haiku poem. In the February and May issues of *Blithe Spirit*, I find many poems using a dash to achieve the effect of the cutting word. For example:

heatwave —/ the winterwear catalogue / brings on a sweat
(*fuyumono no e nimo ase fuku atsusa kana*)

Partly hidden / By a broken cloud — / Easter moon.
(*kumo no ma ni nakaba kakurete haru no tsuki*)

There is one thing, however, that worries me a bit. In many poems, the short line separated from the other two lines by a dash reads almost like a title or a summary, so that the cutting word does not really bring together words belonging to two different levels of meaning. In other words, in spite of the cutting word, the entire poem reads like one phrase making one statement. I am not saying that this is wrong. This is one way of writing haiku, but there is another way, which is, at least to me, more interesting: one statement consisting of two half-independent phrases. There are poems of this kind too, in the February and May issues of *Blithe Spirit*. For example:

daffodil morning — / looking for something / very blue to wear
(*asazuisen nanika no ao o kite mitashi*)

I admire this poem, as its reviewer has done in the May issue of *Blithe Spirit*, but probably for a different reason. I admire it mainly because it brings together two different levels of experience, one external and the other internal, through a successful use of the cutting word. As a result, “daffodil” and “blue” create infinite repercussions in the reader’s mind. Here is another example:

on top of the moor / pissing with the wind — / distant dogbark
(no no kaze ni nyou o hanateba inu hoeru)

Apart from the question of treating a subject like pissing, which Bashō approved with some reservation, I think the poem is far better than the following poem which Bashō defended when one of his disciples criticized it:

decchi ga ou kuso kobishi keru
An apprentice boy / carrying manure, / spills it all over.

Bashō’s disciple was against using the word *manure* and changed it to *water*. I do not think this saves the poem at all; in fact it makes a dull poem even duller. But in the English poem quoted above, I think the combination of *pissing* and *dogbark* creates an interesting meaning. Pissing is a natural act, so you do it with the wind, but when the dog barks, you feel somewhat guilty, but on second thought, you realise that the dog is barking as naturally as the wind is blowing. So the dogbark changes from a warning to a voice of life. I am not saying that the poet was conscious of all this when he wrote the poem, nor that the reader should interpret this poem in the same way as I do, but I am saying that this poem is a good example of a haiku poem consisting of two phrases making one statement.

Now, it is time for me to present my conclusion. The title of my essay, *Englishness of English Haiku and Japaneseness of Japanese Haiku*, may have been somewhat misleading. I must beg your pardon if I gave you the impression that I was going to make sweeping generalisations about the differences between English haiku and Japanese haiku. I hope I have demonstrated that there are more resemblances than differences between them. However, at the risk of arousing dispute and quarrelling, I should like to say a few words about the characteristic features of English haiku and Japanese haiku, as I see them. In language, English haiku uses modern colloquial English, while Japanese haiku is usually written in semi-classical Japanese, although some poets have made bold departures from this. At its best English haiku sounds more natural,

but there is a danger of falling into flatness. At its best Japanese haiku uses vulgar terms within the context of classical Japanese, achieving interesting poetic effects through their contrast, but when this does not happen, Japanese haiku poems read as if they were ghosts of years gone-by. In imagery, English haiku seems to rely more heavily on sketching. At its best, English haiku impresses the reader with its vivid description, but sometimes English haiku fails to go beyond sense impressions.

The characteristic feature of Japanese haiku in imagery is its use of unpretentious metaphors, metaphors that do not look like metaphors at all, but when poets forget this Japanese haiku also fails to go beyond sense impressions. In general however, Japanese haiku seems to achieve more profundity. English poetry, of course, has a long tradition of metaphor, beginning with Anglo-Saxon kenning, and going through Elizabethan and Metaphysical conceits, and Romantic and Symbolistic metaphors, and coming to Surrealism of this century. But in general, English metaphors are radical metaphors, and whether radical metaphors are suitable for haiku or not is a matter for dispute, but I think English haiku will gain more by exploring a new territory of metaphor. In form, English haiku seems to enjoy more freedom, while Japanese haiku is strongly governed by the traditional syllable scheme. What we must not forget is that haiku was started as a revolt against the formalistic tradition of waka. For a haiku poet, therefore, the form is there partly to observe, but also partly to destroy. I think English haiku poets will gain more by having more awareness of the form, while Japanese haiku poets will gain more by making bolder departures from the traditional form. In the use of the cutting word, Japanese haiku poets seem to be more resourceful than English poets, partly because they are more accustomed to the use of the cutting word, but mainly because the English language has no words that play the same role as the cutting word. However, I believe that the poetic effect of the cutting word can be achieved in the English language by the use of a dash, or three dots, or a comma. If English poets remember that the role of the cutting word appearing in the middle of a haiku poem is to put two half-independent phrases together to form one unified statement, I think they can achieve greater complexity and subtlety in their poems.

My final statement is this: I am not quite sure if English haiku has really achieved its Englishness, for I believe English haiku is still in its making. But anything in its formative years is more interesting than anything in its decaying years. I think there is a great danger that Japanese haiku will cease to be

attractive unless Japanese haiku poets make serious efforts to renovate the old tradition. Already in 1946, a famous Japanese critic, Kuwabara Takeo said that haiku was dead in his provocative essay called "A Secondary Art". I do not share this opinion myself, but I can see the danger of Japanese haiku falling into a secondary art. I believe that one way of getting out of this condition is for Japanese haiku poets to study overseas haiku. Perhaps English haiku poets can make contributions in this direction in future.

Nobuyuki Yuasa holds the chair of Eng. Lit. in Hiroshima. He edited and translated *Oku no Hosomichi (Narrow Road to the Deep North)* in 1996, the earliest widely available edition in English. This paper was read at a meeting of the British Haiku Society in Sept. 1996 and presented in Japanese as a public lecture sponsored by Baiko Women's College in Oct. 1996.

Museum of Haiku Literature Award

Fred Schofield has chosen David Leather's:

Willy - nilly
through her ashes
mother's daffodils

This poem has directness, subtlety, depth, music and humour - with no excess words to get in the way. Initially, it seems that nothing happens except in the poet's mind. Yet the slowness and the haphazardness of the event hint at something both particular and general about the way we relate to death. In my experience it's rare to find such strong, unadorned images suggesting such a fundamental and ultimately indescribable dimension of human existence.

Other poems I particularly liked were *a house in mourning*, ai li; *the bedside light*, Frank Dullaghan; *A Nation's Grief*, David Cobb and *jazz pub entrance*, Keith Coleman.

TANKA

Susan Rowley

windfallen
the last plum petals
lie bruised;
home on the train your words
still falling in my head

John Barlow

on a train
to you —
watching
the spring moon
rising

Diana Webb

touch-me-not balsom —
seeds release on touch;
between tentative fingers
spring of a green impulse
startles

butterfly lands on fingers,
stilling the pen
that would catch
the linger of its wings
in words

Philip Rowland

Newly in love —
what to do
with the thought of her —
and then what
to do with the thought of her

Leslie Giddons

the dragonfly darts and leaves
his absent presence behind
we too once stood
on this bridge and vowed
we would be one forever

Sean Burn

Jazz -

don cherry

rain drums all day thru
t the late night arrows of
cherry and co &
trumpetgames muddyin water
before red crack of dawn

clifford brown

so what's new? clifford
bopbouncin or stomp and swing
and trancelike we still
follow yr flight west to that
last turnpike off '56

POINTS OF DIFFERING VIEWS

Kettle Talk

Carol Rumens

This conversation takes place between a young man, 'The Blithe Spirit', a keen, but not yet prominent BHS member and aspiring haijin, and a young woman, 'The Red-Blooded Poet', who has just published her first book of poems with Bloodaxe and of course writes opinionated reviews for the literary magazines.

They are in Blithe's kitchen. Red has called to return the haiku books he lent her in exchange for two newly published volumes of 'ordinary' poetry. These volumes are *Rembrandt Would Have Loved You*, Ruth Padel (Chatto) and *Broken Dishes* by Michael Longley (Abbey Press).

The books Red is returning are *The Iron Book Of British Haiku*, Ed. David Cobb and Martin Lucas, *Jumping From Kiyomizu* by David Cobb (Iron Press) and *darkness and light* by Martin Lucas (Hub Editions).

Blithe: Mind if it's teabags?

Red: Yes, I was hoping for a tea ceremony. No, a teabag's fine.

Blithe: So. What did you think?

Red: I'm in culture shock. Didn't someone say that reading haiku was like being pecked to death by a flock of doves? It was like being strangled by a bonsai tree ... overdosing on cherry-blossom ... drowning in a dewdrop ... suffocating in a ...

Blithe: OK, OK, point taken. No need to use *quite* so many similes, I think.

Red: Sorry, just having a wallow. Pigging out after the starvation diet.

Blithe: Starvation diet? Maybe that's good. You only taste things properly when you're really hungry.

Red: Some of those haiku slipped down so fast I didn't notice the flavour - unlike your tea.

Blithe: Too strong?

Red: No, I like it strong.

Blithe: There's an art to reading haiku, of course. We talk so much about the art of writing them, but ignore the art of reading them.

Red: I was exaggerating. Some of them did make an impression. I liked

Martin Lucas's dog sniffing among the poetry stalls and David Cobb's one about being slapped in the face by the sight of a nun's black stockings on the line. I liked most of Cobb's poems actually. But then I discovered a lot of my favourite haiku were really senryu! In all these books I preferred the renga and the sequences, especially when they built up a bit of narrative. It's not stuff the purists like, though, is it?

Blithe: I'm an impurist myself.

Red: I like to meet another person when I read poetry. Sometimes when I read haiku I get very little sense of an individual ego being present.

Blithe: But you're not supposed to. I must say I enjoyed reading your books and I've made up my mind to read more non-haiku poetry. But I did get fed up with the I, I, I! Sometimes it almost embarrassed me, I couldn't concentrate on the poetry even when it was very good. For instance, I kept on wondering about Ruth Padel's lover and thinking what a bastard he was. Haiku expresses the world, not the self, that's why it's so refreshing.

Red: But it's such a limited world! Admit it, there's something awfully middle-class about English haiku. I always imagine these retired people in dressing-gowns, padding around their perfectly trimmed lawns and making notes on the birdsong. Nothing intrudes on their Eden, except when they kill an insect - by mistake, of course, because they're nature-lovers.

Blithe: Absolute rubbish!

Red: I made a list of all the flowers mentioned in the latest *Blithe Spirit*. Lilies, bluebells, michaelmas daisies, magnolia, chrysanthemums, wisteria, daffodils, asters, charlock, cherry blossom, jacaranda.

Blithe: And what about the trains and coffins and newspapers and loud-speakers, not to speak of the smell of chips? You're being unfairly selective. Not that I'm making any apology for flowers. Even if you're a Bloodaxe young revolutionary living in a Neasden tenement, you've probably seen the odd dandelion or bought a bunch of daffs. Your man Longley's got a 'Daffodil' poem, by the way. He's very keen on flowers. I like his work a lot: it's often very close to the haiku spirit.

Red: He never simply describes his flowers, though. The Daffodils poem is an elegy; a lot of his flower poems are really people poems. Have you noticed how he likes to weave in the person's name? So you get a

wonderful sense of human individuality being valued. You couldn't have a haiku elegy, could you?

Blithe: Haiku poets are deeply aware of death and passing time.

Red: Death in the midst of life, yes I know. The wasp at the picnic, the binliner in the cornfield - all the old cliches.

Blithe: I'd rather call them paradoxes. They're what poetry's all about, surely?

Red: I think what poetry is really about is language.

Blithe: You're sounding suspiciously post-modernist. You'll use the word 'ludic' any moment now.

Red: Why not? Art is play.

Blithe: Not just play.

Red: And haiku is all climax and no foreplay.

Blithe: It plays with rhythm. Think of all the variations you can have on a mere 17 syllables - or fewer. No haiku is rhythmically identical to another.

Red: You could have fooled me. They're rhythmical clones, a lot of them. I'll admit it's hard to do anything original with stress. If you make it fall on a trivial word it can ruin the poem. I remember this one, listen. (She flicks through a back issue of *Blithe Spirit*).

What kind of tree
is flowering? I do not know —
but the fragrance

Blithe: The great Basho. I love that last line trailing away into the unsayable.....

Red: OK, but what about the second line? - *is* is the kind of word you tuck away inside a line, not expose at the start. I don't like lines that begin or end with *of* either. Some haiku poets do far too much of this.

Blithe: Of course ordinary poets don't?

Red: They do, yes, but they're more likely to get away with it. Haiku exposes this kind of ineptitude - it encourages it! And about that last line. *Fragrance* is far too refined. A lot of haiku vocabulary is.

Blithe: Blame the translator. But you must have liked some of the 'Iron' poets: Jackie Hardy comparing a rose to the bouquet of her lover's sweat, for instance?

Red: Yes, I liked that. And I enjoyed the richness of vocabulary in the Scots dialect poems.

- Blithe:* Did you understand them?
- Red:* Not entirely, but that's partly why I liked them. I like my poems a bit opaque.
- Blithe:* So you'd allow a few flowers as long as they're in Latin?
- Red:* Just one or two. But no bonsai trees.
- Blithe:* You'll be drummed out of Bloodaxe young revolutionaries if you're not careful.
- Red:* You know what I really think? The whole concept of haiku in English is a kind of translation. It belongs to a different aesthetic, a different set of ethics, as well as a different language. That's OK, but poets should work harder at naturalising it, using all their linguistic resources - even rhyme!
- Blithe:* Have you ever tried to write one?
- Red:* Yes, but I had to scrap it because it had a metaphor. Honestly, it was like trying to boil a kettle over a night-light. I gave up.
- Blithe:* Well, I'll tell you what I think about a lot of your sort of poetry. it's like boiling a kettle - just a little domestic kettle - in an industrial furnace. More tea?

Carol Rumens's most recent publication is a collection of light verse, The Miracle Diet, with cartoons by Viv Quillin (Bloodaxe '98). Her next volume of poems, Holding Pattern, is due shortly from Blackstaff. She teaches an undergraduate poetry course at Queen's University, Belfast.

HAIKU SEQUENCE

Michael Dylan Welch

Sleeping Over

my sheets in the laundry
in case you might
stay over tonight

grocery shopping —
first condoms
since the breakup

my fingers
quivering ...
brushing your buttons

flickering candle ...
the curve of my palm fits
the shape of your breast

the candle flickers ...
she smiles and says
my panties are edible

the ice-cube
held between my lips ...
hardens your nipple

your rhythmic breathing ...
my jeans on the floor
bent at the knee

riding you ...
the tip of my tongue
across your lower lip

distant waves —
the stretching of your neck
with my thrusting

in your garbage can
wrapper of a condom brand
I don't recognise

awake in moonlight
beside you
I watch your chest rise and fall

hitting the snooze button,
I disappear
back into my love dream

Favourite Haiku

more ancient by far
than dinosaurs — a pebble
gathered from the beach

B.H.Wells

I've yet to come across a haiku which has given me as much pleasure as this one, which was part of the 1994 Portsmouth-based 'into the small hours' anthology. Its plain-speaking praise of the sheer age of the ordinary that is everywhere around us contrasts with the more glamorous past. It was particularly effective when I first came across it having been written, I'm sure, during that summer of Jurassic hysteria a few years back - a rare occurrence of genuine topicality in a haiku.

Allan Jarrett

SHOULD IT BE *IN* OR *INTO*?

Dick Pettit

furuike ya

kawazu tobikomū

mizu no oto

old pond !

frog jumps in(to)

water of sound

an old pond:

a frog jumps in

the sound of water *Bashō*

Should it be *in* or *into*? *In* is usual, but limits the meanings of the verse. *Inoue's Shorter* gives an unequivocal *into*, but perhaps *in* is still necessary. Does it matter whether the frog *jumps* or *is jumping*? Not much, I feel, though *jumping in* in part avoids having to make a choice between *in/into*. Apart from that, this translation is probably as near as the Anglo-Saxon can get. Nothing is gained by touches of piety, such as silence, stillness, ancientry, etc. and the Japanese have words for *plunges*, *plops* and *splashes* which Bashō could have used had he wanted to.

Splitting hairs? One response to the verse is to read it with care. *Response* is more apposite than usual here, given the kind of respect *the old pond* has been held in by commentators of different viewpoints: (both quotes are from Ueda: *Bashō and his Interpreters*) *The hokku is indescribably mysterious, emancipated, profound and delicate. One can understand it only after years of experience* (Moran 1765) and *The Zen monk Hakuin always talked about the sound of one hand clapping. The sound of water in this hokku is also like that; it is there and it is not there* (Nobutane 1795). Very many have felt that it has the quality of a *koan*. If so, is it in some way a question? And could there be an answer?

First to the syntax. The three lines can be read: 1,1,1; 1,2; and 2,1 - all the possible combinations in fact before you split a line. In the first, 1,1,1, the three items follow each other with a pause in between. After we have seen the old pond the frog jumps and the sound which follows is of water. In the second, 1,2, the frog jumps into, not the pond, but the sound of water. How can this be? The splash is simultaneous with the frog hitting the water, or perhaps some

other watery sound overlays the splash of the frog. 2,1 may be strained but is defensible. In this, the old pond, marked off by the cutting word *ya*, is the main focus. It is the pond that the frog jumps into and the sound of water is something you might hear in that place - maybe a comment on the frog's jump.

Plod on. One interpretation of 1,1,1 is that it is a joke; the frog plunges in and - plop! What else did you expect? A splosh? Thinking about 1,2, the sound of the splash must come before the frog has submerged: before it has finally jumped in. Certainly, the frog's jump may only have been noticed because of the signal from the water. The third, 2,1, an apparent aquatic tranquillity, is even more tricky: the sound of water is absent in the old, still, maybe stagnant pond - possibly there's silence. How is the splash heard? Not at all if the *old* pond has dried up. Rather clever, don't you think? Perhaps, but I suspect that, for example, there was an Ancient Irish Bard or two could do as much while dozing; and, for an encore, prove that all the possible readings are contained in each syntax. It's fortunate there was probably only one frog.

What hope from the ripples of analogy? To Bashō himself, the haiku moment, the in-/unin-itate, creativity, enlightenment, time, causality, host and guest Help! we give up. Modest as ever, the old maestro has us tied up in knots! Was there a *koan*? The question is doubtful; and the frog still doesn't come out However, to the renga player there's a way:

an old pond a frog jumps into the sound of water

a high spring burst trickles down the road

Readers are invited to send a 3rd and 4th verse to the writer (address on member's list) as soon as possible. A selection will be published and the renga continued.

THE PATHWAY

This section welcomes haiku and senryu from anyone - members of BHS or not. Each poem should be in two languages - the original (any language) and the translation. **The Pathway** aims to link those writing in widely and less widely-spoken languages.

Martin Berner (German) and David Cobb (English)

hallo Wespe —
keine Angst
dass quergestreift dick macht

hi, wasp —
no need to worry, stripes
don't make you look fat

hast du's gut
Raupe
nur noch zwei Wochen

you're in luck
maggot
just a fortnight more

so krank
dass ihn
die Tulpe ärgert

sick man
so sick
tulips annoy him

ein Gesicht
in dem man
spazieren gehen könnte

what a face —
the sort one could
go for a walk in!

Nikola Nilić (Serb and English)

rastu zajedno
od pupoljka do ploda
crv i jabuka

from bud to fruit
the worm and the apple
growing together

John Carley (Italian and English)

ferro sul ferro
pauruso tragitto
inscatolati

iron on iron
a most ominous journey
in metal boxes

SUMMER

Dick Pettit

the Presentress
turns to the weather chart
leaving a smile behind

senryu

David Steel

moth beats at the window
eyelids close
small movements draw me in

hottest night
naked on the bed
apart together

David Rollins

a walk in the park
his crutches
between birdsong

Elaine Cleveland

Sailing the garden
Tacking back and forth —
Butterfly.

Francis Attard

derelict beach —
a stray's whine deepening
the last to leave

in midday heat
a mongrel's skin smouldering
with mosquito bites

Arwyn Evans

Picking through a field:
nine poets - pecking
at their writing pads

senryu

Maggie West

blowing away
in hot African winds
— gold dust

shelling peas —
hard rain falling
on the chimney cowling

Keith Coleman

breeze hissing
through reedleaves —
withering heat

Colin Blundell

early summer gale —
the garden is blown sideways
into its shadows

leaving two deckchairs
out in the late summer storms
hoping she'll return

Alan Summers

sunheat —
also parted in death
a ladybird's wings

David Walker

summer again —
poppy seeds pepper
your empty room

parched —
blind snake
licks the stillness

Katherine Gallagher

listening to the news
bushfire alert —
the smell of ash

Ken Jones

Opening the back door
of another day
woodpecker echo

Midges in the air
mist on the hills
wind chimes silent
the papers sold out

W.M.Tidmarsh

He lies beside her
as the punt slides under trees
after one last push

Ron Woollard

Night scent of rapeseed
noonday sunshine
floods my mind

Banging windows
disturbing our siesta
just a summer squall

Allan Jarrett

Before a tea in the park
the delicious magnolia petals

As far as I can remember, it had been the apple tree waiting for me at the gate of my grandfather's place, its shadow covering the roof of the house.

An apple tree
painting year's seasons
by the cottage.

The New Year covered the house with snow; the tree, the meadow, the winding road - everything but the birds and a cord of smoke.

In every courtyard
greeter's paths in the snow
coming, leaving ...

Marrying the Sun and the Earth, the spring adorned the apple tree, a touch of blush on each petal.

Warm in sparrow's beak
on a blossomy bough
of the apple tree.

The smell of summer ripened on clusters of green apples, swelling under the dark green, shiny leaves.

Rustling waves
of lush grass foaming
with the butterflies.

The autumn below the apple tree spread out the leaves; the spring, the summer and the autumn in each leaf shoved over by the wind, covering stubborn daisies.

On a shine
of red apples
the swaying sun.

Ancestral Voices On Kos

Bill Wyatt

Arrived at apartments in the early hours of the morning. A meteor flew across the balcony & gone in the blink of an eye. Sky glittering with stars, Orion my neighbour. Distant hoot of an owl.

Waiting for the moon —
clouds drift by like orphans
who banish my sorrows

Up early for breakfast, a short walk across the main street of Tigaki, once a small fishing-village. Flamingoes winter here in small numbers. Sometimes white storks & pelicans drop in, on their way to Northern Turkey & Eastern Europe. October, the month when the festival of Thesmophorica is celebrated. Held in honour of Demeter & only attended by women, to assure the fertility of the fields.

Back at Tigaki for the evening meal.

Impromptu dance
to Zorba the Greek — waiters
spring into autumn

October's full moon —
from the taverna, 'doo-wop'
mingles with cicadas

Mosquitoes a problem. After an evening of wining & dining, I'm in no fit state to combat them. Defenceless, when I retire to bed, straight into the arms of sleep & Demeter. In the morning wake up to many lovebites.

As an offering
to this floating world — my blood
accepts the mosquito

Just outside the hotel found several plants new to me. On looking them up, turned out to be Bladder Hibiscus. Pale, large, solitary flowers, yellow with dark purple centres, opening only in the mornings. A native of Asia.

Just like an autumn leaf
that has lived its day — soft breeze
whirls me away

(after Theocritus)

Theocritus, the Sicilian & bucolic poet lived on Kos for a while. He wrote one of his most ambitious poems here, the idyll which we know of as *The Harvest Home*. He describes the Koan countryside, with its singing linnets, & larks, & bees that loitered above fresh flowing streams. Where 'elms & black poplars make a shady place there, / its green freshness roofed in by unkept leaves.'

cicadas welcome
in the evening twilight
ancestral voices

October '95

Favourite Haiku

water trough ...
a horse
drinking the sky

ai li

The stone trough, the sky and the horse drinking the broken reflection - so well conjured up making the impossible come true and with a frisson.

Patricia V. Dawson

REVIEWS

The Iron Book of British Haiku. Edited and with an Introduction by David Cobb and Martin Lucas. Iron Press, [redacted] 112pp. ISBN 0 906228 67 0 £6.50.

With the haiku genre now firmly entrenched in other countries and written in many languages, a more representative anthology of British haiku is welcome. For many years the writers of North America have been the ones who have influenced the writing of, and the development of, haiku in English. It is good to see the British writers taking up their position.

As stated in the Introduction, the earlier collection, *The Haiku Hundred*, was not limited to British writers, but rather a showcase for haiku at the time. This little volume I believe, was a guide for the newer British writers. *The Iron Book of British Haiku* is, therefore, the first major anthology of British haiku, senryu, renku, haibun, rensaku and haiku-influenced poems.

The Anthology represents the work of seventy-one poets from the famous to the little known. It is 21 1/2cms x 11 1/2csms: attractively designed and printed on a thick 'onion skin' paper which is very nice to the touch. One of Dee Evetts' haiku has been chosen for display on the back cover:

morning sneeze
the guitar in the corner
resonates

I found it refreshing to read in the Introduction that rather than maintain that haiku connects human nature to nature, it seems 'more accurate to say that haiku are written from a mind-set which takes it as axiomatic that both nature and human nature rest on one reality and that either can be used to express insights into the other.'

As expected, I found some old friends within the Anthology's pages, and also some writers who would be considered the 'heavyweights' and recognised by most haiku readers: Dee Evetts, Brian Tasker, Colin Blundell, David Cobb, Jackie Hardy, Martin Lucas, Fred Schofield, Bill Wyatt to mention a few. Please don't take me to task if you feel left out! It may be unfair to choose

names, but I'd like to mention some poets whose work I would recommend you read: Annie Bachini, Roberta Davis, Frank Dullaghan, Katherine Gallagher, Caroline Gourlay, Byron Jackson, Ken Jones, Alan Maley, Chris Mulhern and Stuart Quine (who has written my favourite haiku from the Anthology):

lighting the lamp
the shadow deepens
between her breasts

Not simply because it is a lovely, soft, warm scene, but because it holds much more if we think about it. From the beginning of time the woman has kept the hearth fire burning and lit the lamps when night falls. So we recognise our cultural origins within the poem. In an age when most parts of the world have electric light, she deliberately chooses a less harsh light. Is there a mystery here? And I don't mean feminine mystique. Is there some deep, dark secret which only she holds in her heart? At night, perhaps, it becomes less bearable.

There is a good mix of senryu and as stated in the Introduction, (as) 'haiku and senryu frequently merge in English, a strict demarcation is impossible to maintain.' I enjoyed George Marsh's:

missed it
the moment to join in the laugh

Also included in the Anthology is an example of haibun and renga (renku). Neither of these pieces is remarkable. I suspect they were chosen as possible good examples rather than pieces to be enjoyed. But as with 'showcase' collections, I guess that is the way it should be.

There is one small criticism I have for those who compiled the Anthology. They have included some haiku written in Scots. I have no argument with this. It does seem logical that if some British writers write in Scots as a first language then they should be considered; after all, the United Kingdom is just that: a union of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. But why not place the English versions of the poems next to the originals instead of in a separate appendix at the back of the book? If I had not been reading the Anthology with more care than usual I should probably have merely skipped the Scots versions. I imagine anyone picking up the Anthology for a quick glance will do the same. This

would be unfortunate. In Bruce Leeming's book, *Scots Haiku*, the English versions are on the facing page, making them more comfortable to read.

It is unfortunate that criticism takes up as much space as anything else that might be said. I must, therefore, reinforce for readers that *The Iron Book of British Haiku* is an important volume and should be considered as a valuable work for any reader or writer of haiku. With the rapid rise of haiku popularity and development in many countries, it pays us to keep an eye on what our peer groups are doing. You will also enjoy the poems!

Janice Bostok

Season Words. Haiku by John Mayhew Manson, wood engravings by Gill Tyson, with a forward by Peter Lamarque, pub. Galliard, 45, Pentland Terrace, Edinburgh, 1991. ISBN 1 872859 09 7. 70 pp. Hardback. Price undisclosed.

It took an excursion north of the border, to hold a workshop in Edinburgh, to discover a book that would have been exemplary had we known about it eight or nine years ago, when it first came out. The pity is one cannot help appraising these haiku against the background of what is being achieved in 1998 and, in this context, many of the poems seem either rather tame or sheltering close to Japanese models. Nevertheless, some stand up well:

This broken branch
I so nearly lopped,
 first blossom

Without a label
the marrow seedling
knows exactly

Convalescing,
I begin to see
 weeds again

Spring gusts:
a leaf from a golden tree
writing on the wind

Chapel ruins;
whins pushing through
a rusty bucket

Up on the heather moor,
coiled like a snake,
 a snake!

One could carp here and there over the occasional simile, the odd anthropomorphism, a thought overpowering an experience, but if rightly taken as the work of a pioneer, there is both achievement and promise. One wants eagerly to

know if Manson developed his style further and, if so, where one can get one's hands on his later work. (We have our sleuths out trying to track him down.)

This book is also remarkable for the succinct, but sharply insightful *Forward* by Peter Lamarque, who we understand to be now the Professor of Philosophy at the University of Hull. Here are the bare bones of it:

Over four hundred years ago the Japanese perfected the aesthetics of suggestion. In a number of unique art forms they exhibited the extraordinary expressive potential of things utterly simple and austere Zen Buddhism, so influential in this aesthetic vision, enjoined its disciples to discard all explanation of things in favour of grasping their essence in slight and random moments of revelation. Suggestion counted more than statement, the hidden more than the overt.....

Many Western artists and poets have been attracted to this doctrine of austere simplicity, in spite of its running counter to the self-consciously intellectual and theory-driven tradition of mainstream Western art. Haiku, the perfect exemplification of the Zen ideal, has found wide appeal even among those who know little of its Japanese origin. In this sense it has become a truly universal art form. With its spontaneity, its sensory quality, its lack of 'deep' meaning, it neither needs nor seeks intellectual justification. It has kept faith with the original Zen precept that justifications are unnecessary. Haiku seeks not to explain but to reveal the object and the mental image become one and inseparable, fused by the poet into a moment of revelation.

As an art form haiku manifests layers of Zen-like paradox: deceptively simple, yet calling on deep imaginative resources; ephemeral yet hauntingly resonant; spontaneous yet governed by strict formal conventions; fleeting in revelation yet timeless and universal; verbal yet essentially visual; deeply rooted in Japanese culture yet reproducible with such effect in other languages ...

David Cobb

Grass Sandals: The Travels of Bashō, by Dawnine Spivak, illustrated by Demi; Atheneum, New York, 1997; 36 pp. hardbound, \$ 16 US.

shadow-patches, haibun by Janice M. Bostok, Bernard Gadd and Catherine Mair, illustrated by Janice Bostok, Hallard Press, 43, Landscape Rd.,

Papatoetoe, Auckland 1701, New Zealand, 1998, 64 pp. perfectbound. £5.00 + econ. postage.

An exotic and elegant children's book aimed at the age 6-9 audience, *Grass Sandals* connects a series of incidents from several of Bashō's travels in a single narrative. The book integrates four elements on each 2-page spread: a short prose passage relating a part of the Bashō story, a haiku translated into English, a kanji for one of the natural phenomenon related in the text on that page and a brightly-colored painted illustration. The book also contains a map of Japan that shows the locations of some of the incidents related in the book.

It contains a total of 10 haiku translated (or adapted) into a 5/7/5 form. Nine of the haiku are by Bashō, one by Issa. The illustrations are absolutely breathtaking, but oddly more in a Chinese than a Japanese style. Both the texts and the poems are somewhat loose adaptations of the originals. Here is the text and the haiku from the spread that has the kanji for *uma* (horse):

*Once a trusting farmer lent him a horse to ride across a wide, grassy field.
The wind blew on Bashō's suntanned face as the horse trotted through the
clover.*

*hibiscus flowers
munched up in the horses mouth
eaten one by one*

Grass Sandals is sure to stimulate an interest in both Japanese culture and haiku among the children who read it. While Spivak is clearly knowledgeable about Japanese poetry it is unfortunate that she felt obligated to force her translations into a 17 syllable pattern. I find myself wishing that she had focused more on the spirit than on the form of haiku. Her version of Bashō's *old pond* -

*old and quiet pond
suddenly a frog plops in —
a deep water sound*

is padded out to 17 syllables with adjectives and an adverb not present in the original. This shortcoming aside, *Grass Sandals* is a fine children's book, interestingly conceived and beautifully produced.

shadow-patches contains 9 haibun by each of the three authors, ranging in length from 1/2 to 3 pages. It is illustrated with 12 charming *sumi-e* drawings by Bostok and contains a one page *Afterword ... Talking About Haibun* by Mair. In the *Afterword* she says, 'Just as haiku is finding its distinctive "Western voice", so will haibun.' No doubt this is true, but if it is to find a voice that is of distinction as well as distinctive, it will be necessary that we all develop a high degree of self-criticism in determining what is to be kept as an exercise and what is to be published. Several aspects of each haibun need to be considered with regard to this question:

1. Is the subject matter of sufficient general interest to be published? Let's face it, not all our travels are of as great an interest to others as Bashō's travels.
2. Is the prose clear, concise and readable? After all, the reader should experience some aesthetic pleasure in *reading itself*, apart from the subject matter of the piece.
3. Is there anything in the prose to distinguish it from ordinary Western narrative prose? In other words, what exactly is the *haibunness* of haibun? There can be no doubt that haibun is increasing in popularity, but it is of some concern that part of the reason for this popularity may be that haibun is more similar to Western narrative prose than is haiku itself and therefore more comfortable to write. While this may lead to some interesting short stories containing haiku-like poems, it is important that those attempting to write haibun to give some thought to the aesthetic that distinguishes haibun from other prose.
4. Are the haiku of sufficient quality to merit publication? It is important that those attempting to write haibun devote sufficient time and study to perfecting their haiku craft before submitting their haibun for publication and review.
5. Are the prose and haiku intergrated into an aesthetic whole?
6. Has the the writer taken the subject matter and taken it to a new level by investing it with what Bashō called *yojo* or 'surplus meaning?'

This collection does contain much to enjoy (Bostok's work is of a consistently high standard and some of Mair's work is strong), but the overall quality seems to this reviewer to be rather uneven. Many of the haiku (or more correctly, haikai) poems are weak and I personally found Gadd's telegraphic prose style distracting to read. But since I am an American reviewing an Australian/New Zealand book for a British journal, perhaps it would be best if I let the work speak for itself. In selecting the excerpts below, I have made an attempt to choose from the strongest work of each of the three authors.

From Bostok's *Getting Off The Round-About*:

Autumn. A hint of summer lingers in the shortening days, a reminder that nothing is ever really gone, even when we think it has. At our age a relationship should be more mellowed and comfortable. No need for wild passion and the intense disagreements we still experience.

colourless sunset
the evening closes colder
on the mountain

From Gadd's *Old Oswestry*:

Beside narrow country road on travel's first morning-discovery. Rush from car. Steep side grassy fosse and dyke ... first iron-age hill fort! Old Oswestry. Run in through complications of ancient earth wall gates. Noticeboard. Slight wrinkle across field slope like green vellum page - Wat's Dyke. Maybe off-shoot of Offa's Dyke, immense earth, turf wall to hold out Saxon ancestors, or Celts. Or to mark bounds of Celtic kingdom become fashionably Saxon, re-employing antique *pa*. Hasten up dusty path.

black face sheep
stop gaze scurry
for safety of spill steep fosse

From Mair's *Rafting*:

Flight N.Z .4
a bald patch nods beneath
a cabin light

I've taken this plunge through space. There will come a time when we will step from this machine in Frankfurt

beyond the glass
cockpit, all those screens
look! the Northern lights

Lee Gurga

Senryu - Haiku Reflections of the Times. Selected by Bitoh Sanryu, trans. and ed. by Matthew Spellman, Mangajin Inc. 1997. 118 pp. US\$ 8.95. Yen 1,300.

All too often we tend to hear people in the West argue about whether certain works are haiku or senryu, or have elements of both. I have never heard the same argument in Japan. As far as modern haiku and senryu are concerned, these two different forms would just not normally get confused there. Instinctively the Japanese know the difference. Why is this so?

First, the Japanese senryu seems more distinctively senryu-like than its Western counterpart. Comic elements are more pronounced; irony and mockery are more explicit and the topic and choice of words are normally totally different from those of haiku and more exaggerated than we see in work produced in the West.

Such examples are amply given in the book under review. In fact the 100 senryu selected here perhaps have the characteristics I have pointed out much more than many others composed in modern Japan. The main reason for this is that it is an anthology of so-called 'current events senryu', mocking and attacking what's going on in the world of corrupt politics, decadent society, degenerate culture and the disjointed international community. Senryu exposes the 'weaknesses of human beings and the contradictions of life,' according to Bitoh Sanryu who selected works for this book.

These examples were collected from among countless senryu works published in the popular *Current Events Senryu* column (started in 1950) of the *Yomiuri Daily* between 1989 and 1997. They were composed by numerous senryu aficionados up and down the country who flooded the newspaper every day with the average daily submissions of more than 1,000 works. Only 5 will find the honourable places in the column. Some examples from the book:

England and China / each gets one half of a year / on this calender (England hands over Hong Kong to China, July 1, 1997).

The wall's destruction: / dust of the post-war era / rises and dances (The coming down of the Berlin wall unleashed all vices, injustices and corruption which had been concealed and contained in it, creating pandemonium).

After purchasing / a bit of America, / tempers flare (Sony purchases Columbia, Mitsubishi, Rockefeller, Plaza etc.; Americans demanded it, but don't like it when it has materialised).

I hesitate to call these works 'poems'. The book uncritically does so. The name *senryu* was derived from an Edo poet of the same name, Karai Senryu (1718-1790), who was a renowned anthologist of *maeku-zuke* and *manku-awase*, the origins of *senryu*. At that time *senryu* was still a part of *renga* or *renku* and therefore merited the name of poem. The famous 'Haifu-Yanagidaru' is a 167-volume anthology with poems based on Senryu's selection. However, these *ko-senryu*, or old *senryu*, had witticism or irony that was only subtle and mild compared with modern *senryu* composed after the Meiji Restoration.

Should there be any in the West who consider even one example in the book to be not *senryu* but *haiku*, his or her definition of *haiku* would need redefining.

Susumu Takiguchi

Presents Of Mind. Haiku by Jim Kacian. Katsura Press, P.O. Box Lake Oswego, OR 97034, USA Also available (signed by the author) from Red Moon Productions, Route 2 Box 3977, Berryville, VA 22611. 1996 5 x 8 1/4. \$14.95. ISBN 0. 9638551 8 2.

tangled branches / but birdsong wings / right through

This *haiku* could be a metaphor for Jim Kacian's writing which is deft and assured. Using the sparest of language (rarely more than 12 syllables to a *haiku* and some contain as few as 7 or 8) his poems grab the reader's attention immediately; with never an extraneous word, they do indeed 'wing right through.'

There are 87 *haiku* in the book that take us through the seasons, beginning and ending in January. Throughout there is an undercurrent of melancholy which is heightened by the terseness of expression - *sharp wind / the metal door bangs shut / bangs shut* and *late at night / the cold white edges / of the bed*. Kacian has a gift for finding the exact word that gives a particular *haiku* its special flavour - *coiled snake / only its tongue / has thawed* would have lost much of the element of surprise and pathos if he had used the word 'dead' instead of 'coiled.' Likewise in *cracked chrysalis / the inside full / of shadow*, the word 'full' placed next to 'inside' rather than at the beginning of the third line is crucial to the sense of emptiness.

On almost every page are examples of the different ways in which Kacian achieves his effects - his ability to choose images that reinforce each other to produce a cumulative effect, sometimes of great intensity - *heat lightning / a silent snake strikes / the meadow mouse* (again the haiku revolves round a single word) and his use of colour to sharpen the haiku experience -

sun sets / through blackened leaves / last red pepper

dark waters / the snowy egret / having flown

Indeed he is so skilful that sometimes I get the feeling one or two of this collection are the result of a well-honed technique rather than direct experience; they have a second-hand feeling about them. *Sweet persimmons / the sky ripens / in the west* seems contrived - a haiku about a haiku rather than the real thing. That said, some of these poems are among the best I have ever read - *New Year's dawn / light first gathers / in the icicles* and *falling leaves / the house comes / out of the woods* - in both of these the reader immediately recognises and delights in the originality and authenticity of the haiku moment.

The book is pleasantly uncluttered - one haiku to a page and the blue brushwork designs, also by Kacian, are as spare as the poems and the perfect accompaniment to them. I'm not so sure about the Introduction, though - a quasi-philosophical piece on the nature of silence/creation/language. For some, these observations might point in a helpful direction, but to me their chief purpose seems to be to draw attention to the link between *Presence* and *Presents*, a clever play on words which seems at odds with haiku that need neither explanation nor justification.

Caroline Gourlay

The Way Of The Hawk by Doris Heitmayer. 1998. 315 East 88th St. Apt 1F
New York 10128-4922 5\$.

This 'haibun' is an often moving account of the excitement engendered by the rare event of a pair of red-tailed hawks who take up residence at the top storey window of a Fifth Avenue building in central New York. Throughout the 20 pages there is a close observation of nature, often red in tooth and claw, and the reader is treated to constantly shifting perspectives - hawk-watchers looking up with cameras and binoculars, hawks looking down with eagle eye; the scene

shifts dizzyingly from country to town, buildings to trees and between different parts of town as the seasons pass.

the hawk's shadow
arrives at the hawks' nest
before the hawk

a frieze of pigeons
lines the steep cathedral arch
in a cold rain

There's a real sense of the town trying to go about its normal business in spite of the descent of the hawks. In part the sense of excitement is achieved by the unremitting staccato rhythm of prose-haiku-prose-haiku. But this style can also be a disadvantage in that after a brief prose statement one is merely waiting for the next haiku; I found myself getting set in the the mental pattern of wondering how the former would be transformed into the latter. Some haiku statements indeed I thought could have been better as part of the preceding prose - for example, to avoid the simile in '*like awkward girls/ in white pantalettes / the hawks prance and bounce*'. Quite often, on the other hand, prose comments are superflous as with 'The young hawks land with difficulty on the roof, sometimes crashing into the glass walls' - enough to leave this to our imagination:-

in the glass forest
of museum skylights
the young hawks quarrel.

I did not get on with the frequent anthropomorphic musings ('she seems to know what a handsome bird she is' which results in a haiku with the idea of a young hawk that 'gives us her profile' for a photograph). It's much better when Doris juxtaposes humanity and hawk:-

On the hottest day of the year I have caught a summer cold. With a temperature and a raging headache, I dream all night of a hawk swallowing a red gob of entrails bigger than its head,

*a bowl of chicken broth
beaded with golden fat —
that's good for a cold.*

The booklet itself warranted the small amount of attention that would have had it trimmed neatly round the edges.

Colin Blundell

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

Why I don't scratch my head with a nail gun.

I agree totally with David Hart's decision not to write haiku. If the poems in his essay are any indication, they are really not worth doing and I applaud his decision to write something else. Hopefully in the future that something else will not include essays about haiku.

Much has been said about the democratic nature of haiku. Higginson has pointed out that haiku is a poetry that is written for a popular audience by people from all walks of life. What is often overlooked about this democratic nature is that it allows even the most accomplished of poets to write bad haiku and to write badly about it.

Part of my philosophy is never to act on investment advice from someone who has not made a fortune themselves. I never ask for advice on cars from the Amish. And I never pay any attention to what poets who can't write haiku have to say about it. 'If you want to know the road up the mountain, ask the man who goes back and forth on it.' Not much point in asking someone who got lost, is there?

Lee Gurga

I very much enjoyed 8/2, especially David Hart's article.

Matthew Paul

I enjoyed the inclusion of the article by David Hart. It's good to read other people's ideas about the limitations of the haiku form and how it sometimes fails them. It focuses one's own feelings and inevitably strengthens them.

Allan Jarrett

Dear Editor,

'Free Form' haiku, 5/7/5 haiku - who cares? Only self-appointed haiku gurus. As an unregenerate 5/7/5 haiku writer, too old in the tooth to think about bothering to change now, what I find alarming about GH's grudgingly approving review of my 'Back in the Country' is the generalised authoritative advice on how to *really* write haiku. I totally agree with GH that 'correct' (sic) syllable counts are not the essence of haiku'; I also agree that throwing random words at paper is *not necessarily* an effective recipe for writing a haiku. Sure, the essence of haiku is something other than mere words - in fact, words are a pain in the brain to the haiku-writer, because they get in the way of the immediate apprehension of experience and force a gap between unrefined impressions of the world and one's drive to write things down.

It is also impossible to disagree with GH that both poets and haiku-writers (and others) should think carefully about the words they use, but there's a big difference between what happens when you write a poem and what happens when you *achieve* a haiku. The discipline of writing a 'proper poem' is totally different from what's required to achieve a haiku; discursiveness and going back over the thing you first thought of, spending a good deal of effort (which I would, incidentally, call 'play' rather than 'work') on rhetorical cadences, images and so on that conveys what you *think* you're after - such things are relevant to 'poetry' but not to haiku.

I'm surprised that GH should place such an exhausting premium on 'work' in relation to haiku. Look at his words: he clearly values the precision work of 'honing' down to a 'transparent' wafer of words, believes we should devote ourselves to 'working hard ... working without relief', engaging in the work of 'going after' and 'capturing' haiku (in the spirit of the hunt - haiku as netted bear); so it's not surprising that he should project his own enthusiasm for sweat and blood into what he presupposes to be my own haiku-writing process - how can anybody possibly know how much 'time and energy' another puts into writing? The great thing about haiku for me is that, 5/7/5 straitjacket and all, they take no time and energy to conceive and hardly any to concoct. I happen to believe that a haiku, as opposed to a 'proper poem', should just materialise, not out of GH's haiku-moment that 'overwhelms with as much intensity and clarity as possible' (just imagine! - a remarkably Romantic indulgence), but out of a sensation that '*x* *just is*'. If a suddenly felt relationship between me and any

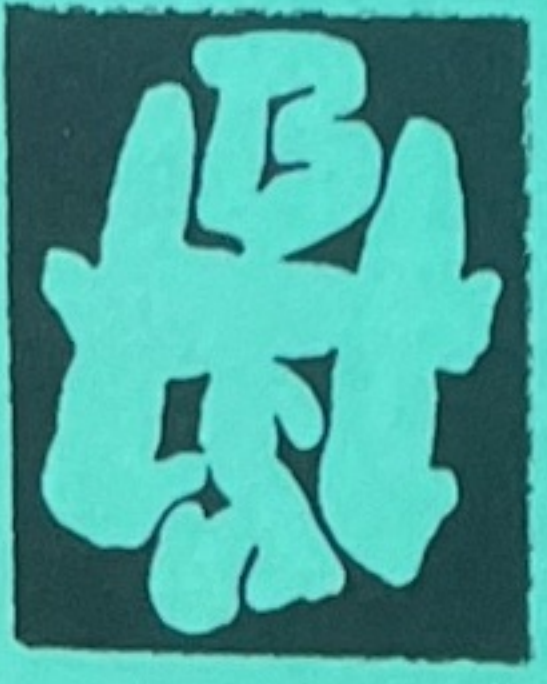
other part of the universe does not almost immediately fall into 5/7/5 then I discard, or make it into something else.

What can GH mean specifically by the idea of 'a process of concision that packs more time and space into each word we keep (after honing) so that, as we read them (the words), more is said than we see printed or hear spoken?' Anybody who's been captivated by Ezra Pound will be happy that writers should engage wholeheartedly in 'concision', or even excision, but just how *precisely*, from the writer's point of view does this have the effect of packing 'more time and space into each word we keep'? All a writer can do to influence the way a reader interprets the poem on the page is to tinker with line arrangement and be canny with rhymes and rhythms; on the other hand words are just *w3:dz*; nothing more can possibly be *said* than is actually written down; when less is *said* ('puddles bubble') the writer may succeed in indicating that readers are at liberty to pack in whatever personal imagery they wish; what readers actually do with *any* word in a poem (or prose, come to that), to what extent they'll raid time and space for meaning, depends on their own construction of reality. Because of its spareness, a haiku is quite a good example of what is known as an 'open text' - one in which the reader is an active element in bringing the text to provisional meaning.

The comparison between rocket science and writing poetry is interesting; in the sense that rocket science has to stick to certain natural rules of physics and chemistry to ensure that the rocket takes off successfully, all poetry *is* like rocket science; only by sticking to the rules of sonnet-form will a sonnet take off, only by general adherence to iambic pentameter is Shakespeare able to break step to make profound points, only by rigorous attention to cadences can an imagist poet make an impact, 'free verse' writers are effective in so far as they capture the natural rules inherent in the way words relate together to create novel possibilities of meaning, and haiku poets, obeying the rules to celebrate difference, have the extreme luxury of being able to choose the discipline of 5/7/5 syllables, or count stresses, or go with the rules of imagism of free verse. It's all rules whichever way you look at it - it's the way the universe wags.

Colin Blundell

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