



# Blithe Spirit

Newsletter of The British Haiku Society

number 3

summer

1991

news section

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Midsummer, 1991

Dear member,

In line with our policy of continuous improvement - that is, doing obvious, common-sense things an issue later than we should have done! - you will find Blithe Spirit is now split into two sections - a news section that will fairly soon go out of date, and a magazine section that you will hopefully find worth hanging on to for much longer. Split is perhaps not the right word, for the sections are not completely detached - that would have cost us an extra £30. Still, one day we hope the magazine part will be printed "properly", so that it can take its place with the journals of other societies, such as Haiku Society of America, Haiku Canada, Haiku Kring Nederland, and the Deutsche Haiku Gesellschaft, whose haiku luxuriate between real printed covers. For the moment, Blithe Spirit is on income support, like quite a few of the subscribers. Responding to another request from several of you, you will find the editorial address and next deadline at the end of each section.

Since the last newsletter there has been one more workshop, held alongside the Poets and Small Press Convention (or was it Press and Small Poets?) in Newcastle, on 12 April. The 16 people present, nearly all non-members, came feeling they "knew" very little about haiku, and were pleasantly surprised how much they really knew by intuition; and we even got to the point where everybody composed and shared a three-liner in the last half-hour (mutual joy carried us easily through a session lasting three hours).

A second issue of Kevin Bailey's Haiku Quarterly has appeared, with contributions from a dozen BHS members in it. Wherever this journal is mentioned, the reactions to it are positive, and we urge members to support it by taking out a subscription (£6 per annum for four issues).

Enclosed with this Blithe Spirit are a Membership List update (note that some 30 new members have joined us since Easter); and a leaflet about the Cardiff Literature Festival Haiku Competition - another stupendous event in this annus mirabilis of haiku.

From letters received, I know some of you have started to benefit from "networking" through the post. The Acorns section is proving to be an ice-breaker, permitting shy haiku-philas in one corner of these staid British Isles to enter into correspondence with similarly nervous haiku-philas in other corners. So keep sending your Acorns in - especially with questions about them which you want others to address.



Miraculously, your novice editor finds that each issue of Blithe Spirit develops its own special theme. This time, it is "possession" which has emerged; perhaps an inevitable poetic reaction to a society which has become obsessed with ownership. At the risk of sounding unfashionably mystical and quaint, my feeling is this: None of us possesses the spirit of haiku; if we are lucky, it possesses us; and it's really immaterial whether it speaks through one of us or more than one.

Now, enjoy the summer - if you can get your hands on it. For a good deed, send a piece to Essex.

*David Cobb*

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- \* The fund for the James W. Hackett Haiku Award continues to grow thanks to further sales of his book, and we learn of a \$100 donation from an anonymous American friend. We still have stock of James W. Hackett's "Zen Haiku and other Zen Poems" at £12.00, post paid. The committee has decided on the need to differentiate between members and non-members over entries for this Award, so that the Society does not find itself subsidising non-members out of subscriptions. All haiku from members printed in the current year's Blithe Spirit will automatically qualify as entries, free of charge. In addition, members may submit up to 5 further haiku (marked "entries for Hackett Award") for a fee of £1. Non-members may submit up to 5 entries, similarly marked, for a fee of £2 or US\$4.00. Reminder of closing date: 31 October 1991.
  - \* The editor of New Hope International (Gerald England) corrects our version of the deadlines for entries for his special issue devoted to haiku. Articles of not more than 2000 words are required before 31 October, 1991; haiku should be submitted between October and December 1991.
  - \* Issue 23 of Quartos contains the first half of David Cobb's article "An ABC of English Haiku" and issue 24 (July) will contain the second half. While his stock of personal copies lasts he can supply both issues at half-price (£2 for the two) plus 50p for postage and packing.
  - \* Welsh members in particular please note that The Welsh Academy is holding a haiku workshop on Wednesday 9 October at 12 noon in St David's Hall, Cardiff, as part of the Cardiff Literature Festival. Whilst the Society is not involved in running this workshop in any way, it may be a good opportunity for members to meet. Your editor hopes to be there, but trying to keep a low profile as it's not our show.
  - \* Our President, James Kirkup, has been invited to judge the Japanese language entries for the Cardiff Literature Festival Haiku Competition. James is currently in Japan, and making our activities well known over there.
  - \* In connection with this event, David Cobb was summoned at short notice to the BBC Essex studios in Chelmsford and attached by microphone line to a BBC Wales reporter in Cardiff, answering questions such as "What is a haiku?" and "Is it true that they can be about all sorts of subjects, not just nature,



and even erotic?" Whether the interview ever took the air is doubtful; though the erotic haiku David quoted did not seem to be a problem. It was Gene Doty's:

entering her  
still balancing  
the checkbook

- \* New member Daniel Rosenstock makes an original claim for haiku as the "natural poetry of the Green movement", in Nuacht Ghlas, April 1991, the newsletter of the Irish Green Party.
- \* David Cobb has met Fuitsu Hazumi in London and this has led to contact with the Gendai (Modern) Haiku Society, Japan.
- \* In Haiku Canada Newsletter, Spring 1991, Jane Reichhold has caused consternation by censuring senryu as "a dirty word". Claims that senryu originated in the "red light" district of Tokyo and were usually demeaning to women. "That we English readers have a mild - and therefore false - impression of senryu," she says, "we can thank R.H. Blyth who was such a gentleman and well-known sexual prude that the senryu he translated were either the cleanest possible ones or those with double meanings in which he avoids revealing the seamier version in his translation." She suggests that the term senryu should be dropped in the West, and that writers boycott any contest or magazine which maintains the distinction.
- \* The New Zealand Poetry Society announced the results of its 1991 haiku competition. There were over 600 entries, judged by Elizabeth Searle Lamb, former Frogpond editor. Three-quarters of some 30 prizes and commendations went to Antipodean entrants.
- \* Rhyming Haiku Contest 1991 - sponsored by Haiku Headlines. We quote: "We beg to differ with the authorities who claim that we should avoid rhyme in English language haiku because the Japanese do not use it. 'The chief reason ... is that all Japanese words either end in a vowel or in n, and rhyming would soon become intolerably monotonous', wrote Harold G. Henderson in his preface to An Introduction to Haiku. ... Enter this contest to prove the point that English language haiku can be admirably expressed in rhyme."

Prizes: \$100, \$50, \$25. Deadline: 1 July, 1991. Open to all. If previously published, state where. Three lines, with first and third rhyming. Strictly 5-7-5 syllables, or briefer. Each on a 3"x5" slip with name and address on back. Winning entries to appear in Haiku headlines No 41 Aug 91 and also in a special chapbook. Entry fee \$1 per haiku. To: Haiku Headlines, 1347 West 71st Street, Los Angeles, CA 90044-2605. Write RHC bottom left of envelope.

- \* The renga which started off in Finchley in February passed safely through nine hands, was posted on, and never reached number ten. In the Dead Letter Office? Being decoded by MI5? We had a photocopy of the first 4 sections, and this has started on its rounds again. Moral: always take a photocopy.



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## SUPPLIERS OF BOOKS

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We would like to recommend the services of No Rhyme or Reason, 16 Wren Close, Frome, Somerset BA11 2UZ, who supply a wide range of translations of Chinese and Japanese literature, and a smaller list of poetry, including haiku, from Britain and America.

Persistent evil rumour has it that Blyth's four-volume "Haiku", pub. Hokuseido 1982, in paperback, is out-of-print, but Richard Goring writes that it's often, though not always in stock at the Japan Centre, London, and he's willing to purchase books there for members, for the price of the books plus postage. Tell him if you'd like him to try and get a book for you, and pay up if he's successful. You may have to wait up to three months.

"I am also happy," Richard continues, "to do the same thing for overseas members who wants books, magazine subscriptions, etc. If they would like to send one single payment to me (International Money Order, real US dollars) with instructions, I will split it and pass it on as required. And it would be good if some of our overseas members, particularly a body in the USA and another in Japan, could offer a reciprocal service. That concept could be developed so that, for instance, everyone in Britain who wanted to subscribe to Ko magazine, could send me their order and cheque and, say, every six months I totalled those orders and sent one payment to our Japanese contact. These services stand to save everyone a worthwhile amount in bank charges, which for relatively small foreign currency drafts are, in Britain at least, quite high. Taking the Ko example, I would have to establish a UK price that covered me for currency exchange fluctuations and for a portion of the bank charges incurred in raising the single six-monthly payment, but there would still likely be a cost saving to members, apart from the hassle."

The following experience should warn you NOT to use the services of International Book Distributors or to order direct from the American publishers, Simon and Schuster: 1 Feb 90 - order for Cor van den Heuvel's Haiku Anthology taken by IBS, cash demanded with order; they passed order to Simon and Schuster. April 90 - wrote to IBS cancelling order, after being given a copy by a friend in the States, and asked for refund; IBS said matter now in hands of S & S. Mid-May, S & S wrote saying the book was out of print, did not offer to refund. 25 May 1991 - wrote to S & S again, demanding refund; as of 26 June, no satisfaction. American authors: please poke your publishers into doing more to promote and supply your books over here!

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## members write

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"I have had an idea about reading haiku. How about making a cassette and passing it around BHS members so that we can get an idea of how to read haiku?" (Sheila Kay Crowson) (Reading haiku aloud certainly calls for skills which don't come naturally to all of us. One must enunciate very clearly. Not a single word must go missing, when there are so few. One would like to avoid repetitions - but they're often demanded. Caesuras are important. And how does one create satisfactory pauses between one haiku and



the next? Perhaps colour slides could be shown simultaneously, to create background and space? Stephen Gill, in his memorable BBC series, used bird song and the "music" of water to give an extra dimension to recitations (by actors) of translations of classical Japanese haiku. It would be good to hear from anyone who has experience of reading haiku aloud, and to collect their suggestions. Then we might be in a better position to act on Sheila Kay's good idea. Ed.)

"Thank you for your refreshing letter commenting on my haiku. I agree with many of your points and am specifically attracted to haiku because of their vulnerability to criticism." (Adam Bass) (A letter typical of many received, which brings out very neatly what members get from belonging to a haiku group, and tend to miss out on in other kinds of poetry circle. Ed.)

"All the articles" (in Blithe Spirit 2) "had aspects of great interest, but I found particularly enlightening the comparisons of different pieces using very closely related images in the review of Klinge, and above all the summary/review of Kervain's "What is a haiku?" re the cultural and religion-rooted origins. The comment re "breaking the yoke of words that holds the gods captive", especially, bridges an apparently immense cultural gulf by suggestively providing, or at least indicating, parallels with the god-releasing role of poetry in early Western and African cultures (cf. Graves' "The White Goddess" and Jan Vansina's "Oral Tradition") and hence offers a legitimising factor for what "Westerners" are doing in "piggy-backing" the form. Of course, whether any Japanese would accept the validity of such implied parallels with fertility/seasonal/"mystery" poetry in cultures elsewhere is a very different question, and one only they could expatiate (or perhaps already have?)" (Steve Sneyd)

"I don't imagine I shall use 'Acorns'. I have an obstinate obsession that if I amend one of my poems at another's suggestion it is no longer my own, but mine and A.N.Other's." (Dan Pugh) (I think that will cue us in nicely to the first article in the magazine section. It also gives me a chance to put right an omission in my own haiku collection, "A Leap in the Light", and record my debt to Mokuo Nagayama for a couple of ideas of his which I incorporated in two haiku on page 44. Ed.)

version is snappier, more vivid, and offers scope for snipping and things like that to be discovered by the reader".

There is no acknowledgment of Bill's effort accompanying the printed

Information about workshops, contests, changes of address, book recommendations and services, letters about the way the Society is run, etc. are all grist for the News Section of Blithe Spirit and should be sent to: The BHS Editor, Sinodun, Shalford, Braintree, Essex CM7 5HN (tel. 0371-851097) at any time. Closing date for consideration for the next issue: 31 August 1991.





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## features section

WHOSE HAIKU IS IT ANYWAY?

Richard Goring

I am bound to agree with Colin Blundell ('The Search for Perfection', Blithe Spirit 2) that I feel free to tinker with what other people have written, though I hope I am always mindful of the original author's feelings (after all, I am myself occasionally just a little 'put out' by some of the rewrites suggested against my own work).

The fact that I receive (even invite) such rewrites, along with experience of gatherings such as at East Finchley in February, indicate that many haikuists share this urge to 'improve' the efforts of others (to say nothing of the frequent 'tweakings' many of us admit to inflicting on our own). I don't propose to comment upon the possible reasons which Colin advances, other than to say I see a grain of truth in every one and, personally, more than a grain in some. Rather, I want to consider an implication of this 'third-party-improving', namely, who should get the credit for the new version.

In his recently-published collection 'A Leap in the Light', our editor has the following haiku:

between the legs  
of the grazing cow -  
blue sky

This haiku was in fact suggested by Bill Higginson as an improvement on David's original:

between a cow's legs  
grazing the hill crest  
snips of blue sky

David himself wrote "I've lost the clever 'pivot line' of which I was inordinately proud (i.e. pairing the middle line with the last, you also get the sky grazing the hill crest): but in the end I feel Higginson's version is snappier, more vivid, and offers scope for snipping and things like that to be discovered by the reader".

There is no acknowledgement of Bill's effort accompanying the printed haiku in David's book. Do any readers think this wrong? In this example, not much of David's original survives in Bill's, so should Bill get all the credit? But, of course, Bill might not have written anything remotely like his effort without the prompting supplied by reading David's original, so should they share the credit?

As it happens, an answer came in a letter Bill sent me while I was pondering the matter! He suggested an 'improved' version of my "gambolling kitten" haiku, the development of which was detailed in my article in Blithe Spirit 2, then came up with an 'improved' improvement! For the record, these were:

moonlight  
the kitten gambols over  
the frosty deck

moonlit frost  
the kitten gambols over  
the glittering deck



Bill then continued, "I've had the chance to work a few times with a Japanese renku (haikai renga) master, who usually corrects the verses offered by his group members. He gave me the following saying in Japanese renku circles: [When the master corrects it], if even the word 'of' remains, it is your verse". Later, Bill added "if you like my suggestions, you are certainly free to use them, and no credit needed or wanted....It is your poem decidedly, and no matter how excellent (reading Blundell's piece in Blithe Spirit) one may think another 'authority', we are each ultimately responsible for our own final version, whether of a haiku or an encyclopedia."

Much the same view was expressed in a letter I subsequently received from David Cobb (neither he nor Bill knew what the other had written to me) - "I find it perfectly acceptable, at least on a quid pro quo basis, that I should call a haiku that includes a word you suggested MINE, while you call a haiku which includes a word I suggested YOURS. I think this is going on all the time in the haiku community. Can't we say it's the originator's privilege to accept or reject any suggestions for improvements that may be made, and that it's ultimately his responsibility what goes into the 'final' version?"

It seems from the foregoing that the accepted convention is for the originator to put his or her name to any piece, no matter how much it may have been 'improved' by others, at least so long as it preserves and expresses the originator's 'haiku moment'. Personally, I am happy with that, but what say you? And if David had rejected Bill's "cow" haiku suggestion, would it then have been acceptable for Bill to publish it as his own? I think so.

And does that line of thought not go some way to legitimise Colin's 'found haiku' in the literary works of others - a suggestion that seems to have roused some disquiet? Again, I think so. I disagree with Gerda Mayer (Blithe Spirit 2) that found poems should only arise from writings not intended to serve a literary purpose. We seem to accept that there are no sacred cows when it comes to the subject matter of our haiku/senryu, why should there be any in respect of sources? The original article (Blithe Spirit 1) quite correctly identifies books as part of life's experience and touches on the Zen approach of using the 'accidental' discovery or realisation in both appreciating and creating art. Colin also reminds us that Wordsworth, Coleridge and Eliot all used bits of other literary works in their poetry, yet I fancy they took the credit for the whole, on the above basis that they were responsible for what went into the final piece.

This seems an appropriate point to end, and I will do so with one more quote from David Cobb - "In a more perfect world perhaps we could manage without attribution (and concomitant 'possession of the poem') at all." Amen to that.

Entries for Season Corner (by members of BHS only) should contain an image which evokes unmistakably the season previous to the current issue (in Blithe Spirit 3 this is Spring, including Easter and Whitsun). Feel free to "invent" season words e.g. pussy willow, hot cross buns, which are not (could not be) in the Japanese inventory. (You can find the Japanese list in the Reference Section of William J. Higginson's "The Haiku Handbook", pub. Kodansha, 1985.)



# SEASON CORNER

spring's rite of passage:  
lilac, paling in the hearth,  
scent evanescent

David Blaber

old Valentine candy box  
filled  
with pastel embroidery thread

Diane Albertina

clash of erect  
pink chestnut and the drooping  
yellow laburnum

Sheila Kay Crowson

Bare limestone terraces:  
in a dark crevice  
blown seeds feel for the light

Crunching unawares  
snails in a slimy embrace,  
I too know that it's spring

Edward Glover

spring night rain -  
snails crunching  
underfoot

Richard Goring

crunch  
of snailshells in the  
thrush-tracked dew

David Cobb

That grey roof now  
Is half-hidden by fresh green  
Leaves on the pear tree

Peter Tomlinson

slug's yawning length  
on cold moonlit pavement - safe  
from bicycles

Adam Bass

old man stares -  
ladybird on his wrist  
a jewelled cufflink

Elizabeth Bletsoe

it's called Spring Gardens  
this vile slum street - but one tree  
struggles into leaf

Eric Speight

Rainbowed sky -  
butter melts  
on a hot-cross bun

Matthew Paul

a sudden breeze -  
young daffodils retreat  
in shock

Tessa Rose

Dolls' Festival -  
pheasant dish on the table  
at the Cambridge inn

Ikuyo Yoshimura



Hoping that the woman  
In white socks and apron  
Will go on strutting under  
The blooming cherry.

The rain has let up,  
And we can walk -  
As if on water, as if on air -  
Between magnolias.

Tito

Adam, pink in an  
April wind, shakes the blossoms  
from his blue lapel

these are our boys, beach  
combing, turning up flat stones,  
skimmers for spring tides

C.P. James

winter's seed plan  
becomes summer's catalogue  
of disillusion

Brian Thompson

Violets  
hiding in modesty  
almost overlooked

Joan Daniels

first bee buzzes at  
window: bump and i miss last  
brown oak leaf fall flat

steve sneyd

Whimsical snowflakes  
incongruous April fools  
flirting with blossom

Celia Warren

through heavy snow cloud  
a single ray of pale sun  
spotlights one small field

James Kirkup

Two small boys  
in quilted anoraks  
are eating snowballs

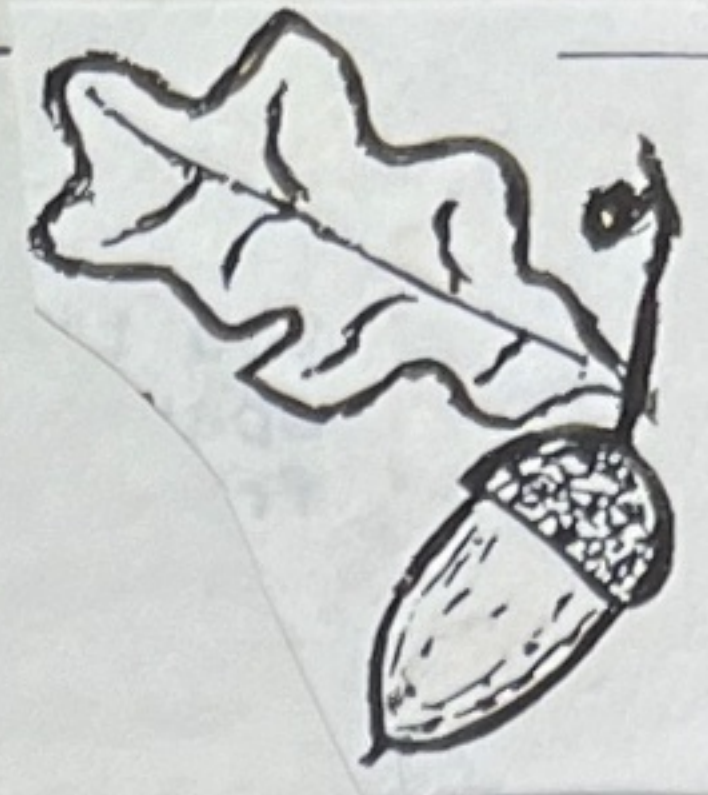
Billy Watt

Bees awake  
to daffodil scent  
and new cut grass

Pearl Gardner

Acorns is a section in which members try out their "nervous work" and solicit reactions from other members, by post, direct. Acorns with questions are preferred to those without, as this helps readers to give the sort of feedback the writer needs.





in the marquee  
yesterday's meadow  
underfoot

(This is current in a series of attempts to convey the odd transformation of grass when it becomes the floor of a tent. Does it work? Was an earlier version 'in the marquee/ the grass underfoot/ so different' any better, or too obvious? Dee Evetts)

a petal lodges  
overnight only in  
the spider's web

a queue of petals  
waiting at the bus stop  
goes with the bus

Sheila Kay Crowson

A pile of red slates  
bedded on moss  
in their place  
are beautiful

Kevin Bailey

The dancer's gesture  
Extends beyond her fingers

(Is a third line needed? Any suggestions? Eric Speight)

head cocked, quizzical -  
my dog watches a woodlouse  
crawling the carpet

(This is 5-7-5, but is it overlong? Is it really a haiku? What emotion, if any, does this image engender? Does anyone actually like it? Richard Goring)

Sea gusts;  
The movement of spray  
on water

(Should I change or add words just to show that this mood of the sea was noticed in spring and not in autumn or winter? Richard Martin)

1 Strange tingles  
as new baby suckles  
at my breast

2 soft tingles  
as new baby  
suckles

(I prefer 2, but is it too short? Does it say enough? By changing 'strange' to 'soft' I intended to make the haiku more 'gentle', but does this weaken it? Are the tingles ambiguous to the uninitiated i.e. men, and women who have not breast-fed? Pearl Gardner)

The kite turns its head.  
Whose field,  
yours or mine?

Jo Parsons



The Deutsche Haiku Gesellschaft, formed in 1988, holds a biennial Whitsuntide national conference combining society business, private poetic pleasure, and public performance. This year's meeting took place in Lindenberg, Bavaria, from 17-21 May. By kind invitation of DHG's founder, and fantastically active president, Margret Buerschaper, I was lucky to be present for most of the proceedings.

The DHG's rate of development has been no less breathtaking than our own. It now has about 210 members, of whom some 40 from all parts of Germany (as well as a few from neighbouring countries) came to the conference. On the first (Friday) evening the members took dinner together, but tummies had hardly got down to the serious work of digestion before Carl-Heinz Kurz (proprietor of the publishers Zum Halben Bogen, ardent supporters of the German haiku movement) had us all on our feet, one at a time, for an off-the-cuff sharing. (I shall know another time to arrive armed with a sheaf of haiku in English and German, rather than find myself translating with right hand and brain hemisphere, while the left of each is still engaged with dessert!)

The Saturday programme began at 8.30 in the morning and went on, with breaks, until nearly 10 at night. Business came first: this included raising subscriptions to DM 60 (N.B. about £20; less by special application only. And incidentally, Kring Haiku Nederland also charges more than us, around £15-16.) At this level of subscription the DHG can print its quarterly journal to professional standards. The biennial Zum Eulenwinkel Award (cash and booklet publication), this time for a collection of tanka, was made to Joachim Grünhagen, with an eulogy from the previous winner, Rüdiger Jung. A reading from the prize-winning volume followed this. We were welcomed by the mayor of Lindenberg, and over coffee had the first chance to browse the book stall displaying for sale some 20-30 members' work, virtually all published or self-published to high professional standards. Then, at 11, Yukio Kotani, professor of comparative literature at a university in Tokyo, lectured, drawing attention to resemblances between Basho's Oku-no-hosomichi (Narrow Road to the Far North) (which he interpreted as a journey also to an "underworld" inhabited by the great historical and mythical figures of Japan) and Goethe's Italienische Reise (Italian Journey).

Business continued after lunch, with some uneasy discussion over DHG's offer to absorb the Berliner Haiku-Gruppe, founded by Hilmar Bierl, with its 40 members. The majority of these are East Germans, in the former meaning of the term, for whom "society" is a word with unpleasant connotations (as an "interest group" they had formerly been regarded as "dissident") so they prefer for the time being to continue as an unstructured group.

An open forum completed the afternoon. However much Margret Buerschaper, from the chair, was ready to contemplate haiku in slightly freer form, there was a consensus in favour of

"orthodoxy", members actually asking for "strict rules" to be laid down on numbers of lines, syllables, positions of caesura, the necessity of season words, and the like. Further insecurity emerged over use of the terms haiku, senryu, and haisen for poems which might be either haiku or senryu. The proposal to use Dreizeiler (three-liner), as an all-inclusive term, fortunately did not catch on, as it would have hardened the prejudice against haiku in any other number of lines. ("Pragmatismus, nicht Dogmatismus", your average Anglo-Saxon thought to himself, but kept quiet, blenching at the thought of the pronunciation tangle he might get into if he said anything aloud.)



In the evening local townspeople were invited to come and hear descriptions of haiku, senryu, tanka and renga, with most of us reading aloud examples of each, not only in German, but also in English, Russian, Dutch, Japanese, Italian, even Latin, followed by German translations. There was also a demonstration of ikebana flower-arrangement with haiku accompaniment. The regional newspaper, which had run a competition for haiku written by its readers, was represented among an audience of perhaps 12-20.

On the Sunday morning we were bidden to assemble in the town square and lie in wait for people coming out of church. With a proper sense of Whitsun, haiku were again read aloud in an array of languages, to the accompaniment of church bells, and with umbrellas at the ready; the weatherman, sensitive to the variety of season words on offer, gave us alternating doses of wind, sunshine, rain and hail. Some local schoolchildren had won prizes in a recent haiku competition in Japan, and joined us in reading.

The afternoon saw the entire conference walking 4-miles through forest, pencil and paper in hand. Each of us had drawn out of a box someone else's hokku (5-7-5) which had some bearing on forest sights and sounds, and was expected to add two further lines (7-7) and a single-word (noun) title. The result was called a renga (though each 5-7-5-7-7 was self-contained and did not chain). After dinner in the evening, those who had written the final two lines called out the person who'd written the hokku, and, after much shunting of chairs and climbing over each other's laps, each read their part aloud to the assembly.

Whitsun in Lindenberg had brought news of haiku to journalists, bank staff, choirboys, waitresses in cafes, and the mayor. Also to birds, bees and cows with bells round their necks. One person who stopped outside the church to listen to our open-air performance was heard to exclaim that it sounded a whole lot more spiritual than what had been going on inside. She may have been right.

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ON METAPHOR AND SIMILE IN HAIKU/SENRYU by Colin Blundell

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All language is metaphor since words, by their very nature, stand over against 'reality': haiku and senryu cannot, therefore, avoid metaphor (or its less robust colleague, simile) either overt or covert. This also presents a problem for Zen, giving birth to its enigmatic utterances - we are, after all, in un-Zen moments, observers of a world which does not seem separate from our thoughts; inventing words to express thought only serves to emphasise the separateness. How can we point to things without the use of the invention of words?

One could say that there are both taut and limp haiku: haiku more often than not make comparisons (near and far, large and small, quick and slow, one event with another) but limp haiku make comparisons in more obvious ways - by simply including 'like' or 'as'. So

a father at last  
like a lizard  
stopping starting stopping

(Nakamura Kusadao,  
Penguin Japanese Verse, p. 17)

with its overt simile is 'limp'. The idea is interesting, however: to observe that the excited father is behaving like a lizard darting about is something that could be done in a spontaneous, unthought-out, moment and result in the 'squeezing of the eyes' to produce a haiku. It has to be accepted that the



translator may be at fault but, failing a knowledge of Japanese, it's worth speculating whether it would make it a 'taut' haiku if the tenor of the piece were retained while the words were modified:

- 1 a father at last -  
acts the lizard stopping &  
starting & stopping

or better still perhaps:

- 2 a father at last  
watching - how the lizard moves!  
stops and starts and stops

Since all words are metaphors, it is impossible to avoid the hidden metaphor or simile in any writing; as Blyth says, "poetry is seeing one thing as it were telescoped in another". (The Gulf War was like a computer game to generals and TV observers - but not to civilians or combatants.) Maybe judgement about the effectiveness of haiku is a matter of what they ask the reader to do. In modification 2 above the reader is left, as a result of ambiguity, to make the connection: maybe the father is watching the lizard, or maybe watching something else (his firstborn? the birth itself?) like a lizard.

A second example may serve to ram this point home:

gentle as my dead friend's hand  
resting on my shoulder  
this autumn sunshine (ibid.)

Relieved of sentimentality and the overt, laboured, simile this might become:

my dead friend's hand is  
now resting on my shoulder -  
this autumn sunshine

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#### HAIKU: SOME TECHNICAL POINTS AND PARALLELS by James Kirkup

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In a traditional Japanese haiku there is often one of four words called kireji ("cutting word") from kiru, "to cut". These are used in various set ways.

ya is employed at the end of the first line only. That is, if the first line presents only four syllables, ya can be used as a "makeweight" syllable. It is also used when the season word in the first line has only four syllables. In a language like Japanese where there are practically no indications of pronouns or definite and indefinite articles, such a usage is obviously of great advantage to the poet. Moreover, the sound of the syllable ya seems to counter a tendency to prose feeling at the beginning of the haiku. It is never used in the final line. It has no exact meaning.

nari can be used anywhere in the haiku except at the very end. Like ya, it has no special meaning, but is more like a grammatical component.



kana and keri are used mostly at the end of the third line, though keri can sometimes be found at the end of the second line. In their position at the end of the last line, they naturally have the effect of "prolonging" the feeling that vibrates at the end of the haiku, indicating a close, but giving the listener or reader an opportunity to pause and meditate on the verse.

The kireji are sometimes retained in English translations, but the effect is meaningless and the use superfluous. There are many examples of their use in Peonies Kana, haiku "by the Upasaka Shiki", better known as Masaoka Shiki, translated by Harold J. Isaacson (Allen and Unwin, London, 1973). Isaacson fails to mention nari, and the use of kireji makes his translations clumsy.

It is interesting to compare the kireji with the Hebrew word selah found in the Old Testament, where it usually occurs at the end of a verse or of a psalm. But it can also be used internally, somewhat like nari's internal positioning. This internal use can be found in Habbakuk iii, verse 3, and in verse 9. In verse 13, it appears at the end of the verse. Besides these three appearances in Habbakuk, selah appears 71 times in the Psalms. Examples of selah at the end of a psalm can be found in Psalms 9, 24 and 46. In Psalm 4, selah appears internally, though at the end of verse 4.

Selah seems to have been used as a kind of musical indication in recitation or chanting of prayers, and may also have some of the meaning of "amen" or "so be it". So its use approximates that of kana or keri. A similar use may be found in the ancient Greek and Latin iambic short poems in which the scazon is employed to vary iambic metres known as choliamb or "limping metre". The scazon creates a tonic reversal in the iambic ending of a line or verse.

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"A poem should not be long. Every word was once a poem."

(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

"A single word even may be a spark of inextinguishable thought."

(Percy Bysshe Shelley)

The Editor of Blithe Spirit welcomes submissions of haiku, senryu, articles on various aspects of haiku, letters, and reviews. Please send to: [REDACTED]. Submissions for Blithe Spirit 4 should reach the Editor not later than 31 August 1991. Reminder: the next Season Corner will contain haiku about the summer months, June to August.



# reviews

Günther Klinge trans. Ann Attwood: "Drifting with the Moon" and "Day into Night", pub. Tuttle, Rutland, Vermont, 1978 and 1980, respectively

Klinge, president of a German pharmaceutical company, believing in the need to "pause now and then to consider how many things in this world radiate peace", followed a strict regimen in which he wrote three haiku - one before work in the morning, one after lunch, and one in the evening. These became essential pauses in his busy day. Believing in the healing and regenerative powers of haiku, it is understandable that he should emphasise "haiku moments that can be approached only through inner stillness" and "the over-and-again newness of things". Klinge's work also bears the haiku hallmark of compassion.

Readers who seek the companionship of a mind at rest will find something in both these volumes (which, incidentally, are both luxuriously produced in hardback). For example,

The fragrant forest.  
A ladybug flits across  
the waterfall's roar.

The sleeping Isar.  
Still sleeping as the new bridge  
lengthens across it.

But for this reviewer, restfulness and homogenised "newness" are not a good recipe for a long collection (each of the books contains best part of 300 haiku). Haiku have many moods, and offer a canvas on which we should be brave enough to try and capture more than still life. Klinge gives us far too few surprises; typically, they are as straightforward as his

Noiselessly the rain  
trickles in thin rivulets  
down the stone lantern

and the number of haiku I marked as ones I should like to read again (perhaps 20 out of 500) is something to give us all pause (myself not least) when we contemplate bringing out our collection or selection.

In these extended selections, there are almost inevitably - and in the haiku scene, justifiably - near-duplicates of "haiku moments" seen by other poets, and it is interesting to compare them, for they seem to throw the relative merit of Klinge's work into perspective (Klinge's poems on the left):

The light happy ring  
of the carpenter's hammer  
on the winds of spring

summer's end:  
the quickening of hammers  
towards dusk

(Dee Evetts)

Gentle Sunday rain  
on the bodies of two cats  
pushed to the roadside

dead cat ...  
open-mouthed  
to the pouring rain

(Michael McClintock)

DJC



## books and chapbooks received

Colin Blundell: "Cormorant's Eye", pub. Hub Editions, 1991 (available from [redacted], price £2.00 plus postage 22p.) 64pp, limp cover, perfect bound, dustjacket.

Joan Daniels: "Across the Bridge", pub. National Poetry Foundation, 1991 (available from [redacted]) 40pp, perfect bound. Price £4.00. (Joan explains that this is an experiment, using a sequence of three-line, seventeen-syllable verses for narrative, and that haiku sequences in the stricter sense form only a small part of the book.)

David Cobb: "A Leap in the Light", pub. Equinox Press, 1991 (available from [redacted], price £2.95 plus postage 30p.) 64pp, perfect bound, with brush drawings by Charlotte Smith. Orders in North America to: PO Box 313, La Honda, CA 94020, at US\$ 5.50 or Canadian\$ 6.50.

Harold Morland: "A Scatter of Seed" pub. Cudworth Press, 1990 (available from R.Procter, [redacted], £4.00 post free.) With woodcuts. 30pp. A4, spirobound.

Ivor Garb: "Haiku, some with an African flavour", pub. Milner-type, [redacted] No price available.

With the specifications for the James W. Hackett Award in mind, it is timely to remind members about:

James Kirkup: "Zen Contemplations", containing haiku and other poems, pub. Union Services, Osaka, 1978, available from the author (see Address List) at £10.00. 70pp, perfect bound.

end quote

"What Paz, as so many others, found in the haiku was verbal concision, a precision based on close observation of the world, particularly the natural world, and the sense that a poem remains permanently at the verge of completion, never arriving, as Western art once attempted, at a finished totality. The reader always supplies the rest of a haiku, and it changes with each reading. The haiku is a tiny graph of relations within the natural world - a world that includes its human observers - but these relations, according to Buddhism, are as illusory as the interacting beings. For both poet and reader it is a sudden act of the discovery and affirmation of a comradeship in illusion."

(Eliot Weinberger "Paz in Asia", in: Sulfur 27, Fall 1990.)

**The British Haiku Society**