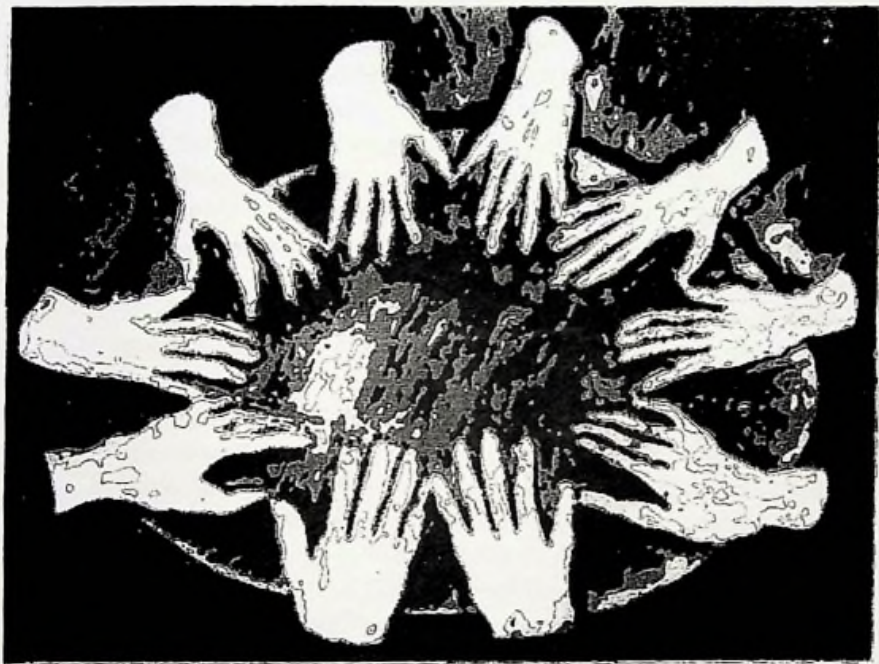


TABLE TURNING



**BRITISH HAIKU SOCIETY
HAIBUN ANTHOLOGY
2005**



Introduction—the Appraisal Process

Ken Jones and David Cobb

Let's at once dispel any possible lurking suspicion that Ken Jones and David Cobb set to work like a surgical team, looking at the victims together, handing each other back and forth the tools with which to cut your haibun up! No, we evaluated them independently at first (and of course without knowing who had written them.) The first thing was to look for pieces that immediately engaged us, that 'flew', without subjecting them too intensely to methodical scrutiny. Only when we had sorted all the pieces into three piles—definite candidates for inclusion in the anthology, possibles, and (alas!) rejects—did we start to rationalise our choices; and after that, to compare notes. This sharing confirmed some of the pieces immediately; in other cases, either Ken or David broke a lance for a piece he fancied, and only after argument did we turn our thumbs up or down. Even with the haibun we finally agreed on, one of us may have been a little less enthusiastic than the other; or our reasons for liking a piece may have differed. It seemed to us you might like something of this variety of opinion to come through in this appraisal, and we should avoid a bland consensual report, and so we have cast it in a form that looks like a dialogue. It is, after all, important to remember that the **BHS Annual Haibun Award** is not conceived as a *contest*, more as an *educational process* from which haibun writing in general may gradually benefit.

This said, we do hold broadly similar views about some of the qualities we should be looking for in good haibun:

- ❖ A display of fresh, lively imagery, in the haiku tradition.
- ❖ Prose that is written to have literary effect, and/or is authentic in context.
- ❖ Creation of feeling and imaginative space. Leaving things open-ended, unsaid.

- ✦ Haiku that are good in themselves and also perform a role within the haibun.
- ✦ Writing that is focussed rather than meandering (N.B. this doesn't necessarily rule out 'stream of consciousness') and that, unless very short, has a well-shaped and sustained theme.
- ✦ Judicious concision.
- ✦ Something of the moods and peculiar sense of humour we associate with 'haiku spirit.'

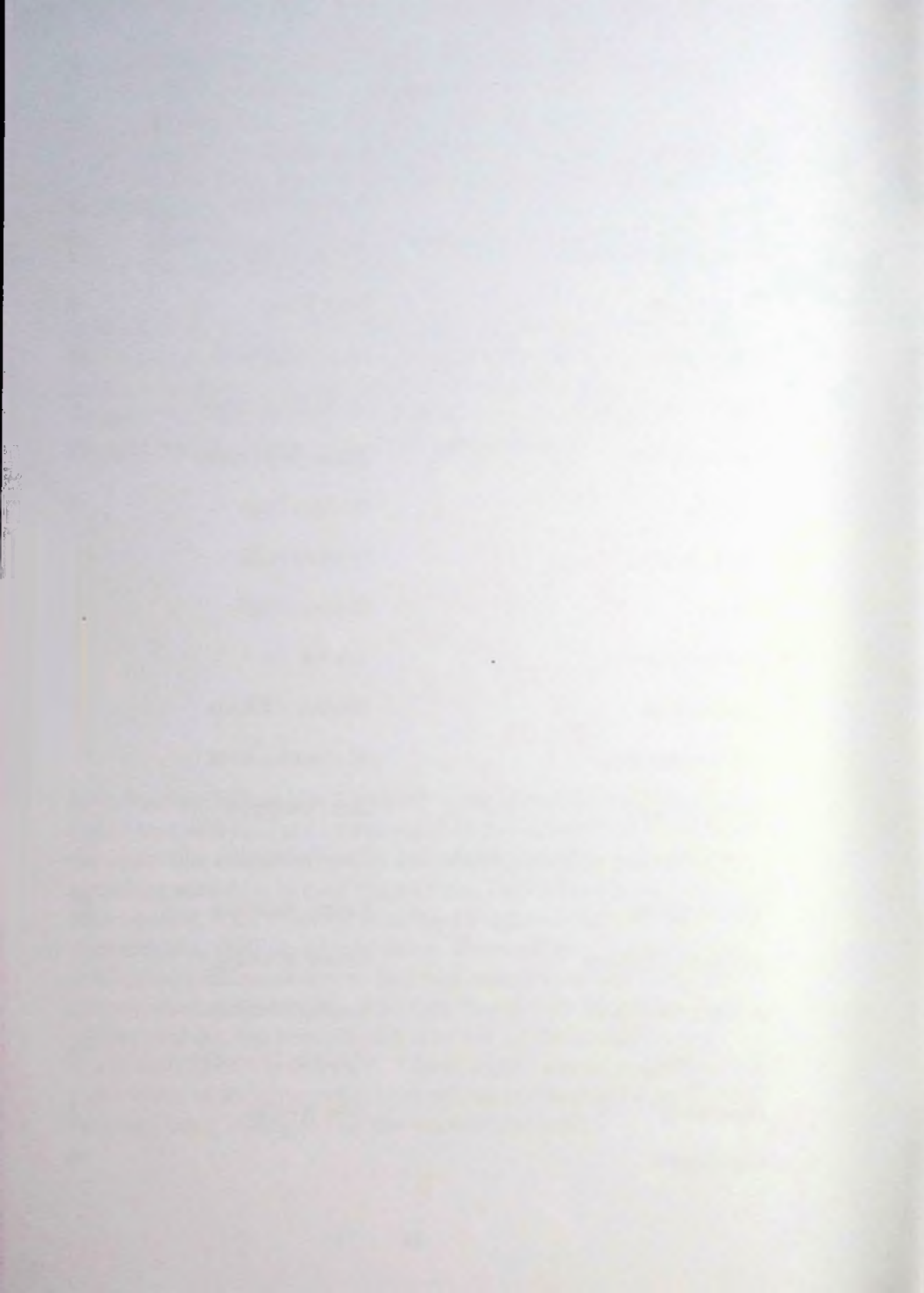
In all, 92 haibun by 36 different writers were submitted. We finally decided to award publication to 18 of these haibun. We didn't attempt for the most part to put them in any rank order; there are no 'overall winners'. For this reason, we print them, with our reasons for choosing them, in the alphabetical order of the authors' names.



Note from the Editor: The Anthology compilers point out that their experience with similar contests suggests that entrants are often very particular that every dot, comma and spelling should appear in the anthology exactly as in their manuscripts. They further point out that, in their opinion, it isn't feasible to enforce a common style of punctuation, capitalisation, spelling, or indentation. However, they highlight the publication problem of how to deal with punctuation that is not only unconventional, but unsystematic. One 'house-style' change to punctuation that has been adopted is to use '...' for quotations and words high-lighted, reserving "... " for dialogue; any other changes are at the whim of the editor who is not willing to compromise the English language but is willing to face the wrath of the writers.

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Selected Haibun and Commentary

Prawns and the Moon

Gillian Drake (Wales)

On the pavement of a suburban street in Swansea lies a shelled, pink prawn. It is stranded, high and dry, on a late afternoon in January.

A fleshy crescent
Born
Out of itself.

No doubt it has fallen out of someone's sandwich: a crustacean without a crust. This one probably originated on the other side of the world, where the Indian Ocean beats on the Australian shore and summer is now at its height.

Back home I cast the Net and catch a poem.

Mandurah prawn boats
Dot with light
The moon-dark river.

I gaze out of the window. Here in the northern hemisphere, winter is well advanced. The afternoon deepens into evening, speckling the sky with the cold points of stars.

New moon,
Shadow-shelled:
A peel of light—

And the computer glows in the navy blue room as I examine my trawl of information.

The life of a prawn is dominated by the moon. When young, prawns grow rapidly, moulting their shells to coincide with the full moon (and high tides) each month.

Renewed—
The moon, the shell,
The tide.

If you hold a shell to your ear, you can hear the sound of the sea. And I hear the same ceaseless impersonal energy in the hum of the computer as it throws onto the screen its catch of facts and figures.

A female river prawn can produce around 300,000 eggs a spawning.

Three hundred thousand. And they change colour, darkening as they grow.

Eggs.
Golden, globular.
Many worlds, many moons.

After hatching, young king prawns progress through several larval stages in the ocean and settle in the shallows in coastal bays, or move into the salty lower reaches of estuaries.

Harbour?
Dark tides;
Bright lights—

Then... in late summer, they begin their journey back to the ocean

It is late evening now. My quest over, I switch off the computer, shut out the beat of the world, and close the curtains against the darkness.

Silence.
My room a sealed shell.
But the tides still pull.

David Cobb: *Prawns and the Moon* is a finely-crafted work, rich in word-play and ambiguity, combining factual information from the web with immediate personal involvement. The reliance on quotes might be perceived as a weakness, but as author of *Business in Eden* myself (a piece quoting almost the whole of an army officer's speech to the men in his command) I have to nail my colours to the mast and say I find this use of different voices entirely justified. The format does, however, tend to dictate the need for frequent haiku, and in this case there are several that seem rather forced, and which don't have independent life.

Ken Jones: The strength of *Prawns and the Moon* lies in the originality and imaginativeness of the conception and its pleasant, light-handed treatment. However, much of the prose is quoted from whatever Google netted. Also, there are only two or three haiku of quality. The remainder could as readily be rendered as prose.

I beg my husband to stop at an old apple orchard in the Davis Mountains. The owner sells his ruby reds in bushel boxes stacked on the back of a green pickup. "Too many," my spouse protests, but I insist.

Two days later crossing the desert plains, our truck and trailer sway. A West Texas windstorm. He grips the wheel; I muffle my fear. Between Ozona and Sonora, we find a rundown RV park. I step from the truck and wind-driven sand stings my arms and face. The trailer door whips from my hand, slams against the side. From the doorway, the cloying scent of apples.

I peel, pare, simmer, sprinkle with cinnamon. Gusts rock the aluminum trailer; sand peppers the walls. The wind howls, but we eat our applesauce in silence.

our anniversary
only his voice
on the phone



David Cobb: The tension between husband and spouse, the writer, builds inexorably but very quietly in this artfully understated piece. She begs, he protests; he grips, she muffles her fear; the storm brews, and they eat in silence. We have to imagine a gap of months or more before his perfunctory acknowledgment of their anniversary, recorded in a striking final haiku—one that could actually be read two ways, but I believe it should be the one without emphasis on the word 'his'.

Ken Jones: The title introduces the ambiguous theme of a tired and flawed marriage. The merit of the piece lies in the oblique and understated treatment of the subject. Apart from a couple of explicit pointers, it is left to the stormy imagery to hint at the repressed bitterness of feelings—"The wind howls, but we eat our applesauce in silence."

The haiku shifts forward in time, but with an ambiguity which leaves space for us to imagine what may have become of this shipwrecked couple.

only right arm active, copper twists devour the second hand's backward motion; another part to another radiator, ice-box, boiler; to be bought by another factory worker's by-the-hour accountable time. through single skylight in tin roof, direct rays of late summer march the line and land upon the lucky few, They all notice, radio waves, however, connected by the freedom of a dial (the minutes from another soldering assembly hive), broaden inner ear horizons; the wide space of book reviews, discussions of Japan's grass-root religions; songs of love, loss; big cars, abuse of women, territorial colours, gats and hoods; the blues and news flashes; London bombed—

work bench grooves
cut by day dreams
suddenly in focus



Note: We happened to choose three haibun from Jamie Edgecombe's submission, and we present the chosen haibun in order of our opinion of their quality.

David Cobb: 'Stream of consciousness' is an effective way of representing the thoughts of a worker engaged in a repetitive job that leaves the mind free to roam. My feeling is the haiku, a rather good one, belongs at the beginning, to set the scene, and not at the end. That would impel the reader into the situation right from the start. The maverick use of punctuation is irritating: there are no advantages from beginning some sentences with lower case letters and others with capitals, and the use of colons, semi-colons and dashes flouts any conventional rules.

Ken Jones: A very accomplished evocation of the mind-focussed electronics assembly line, day-dreaming with the radio commentary on the world. A brilliant and unexpected climax is achieved by the last two words of the prose and a haiku which recapitulates the piece with metaphorical concision.

Corpse. Which rotting vegetation, pollen scented air did you breathe?
Through which angle of sun did you feed and grow strong? What
colour hands cut the water from your roots, dissected you flat and thick;
skinned you smooth? How many swings and lashes did it take to claim
you? Which spinal brethren of yours flailed masts to grab at the wind,
while others suffocated in warm to frigid waters, loved and hated by
those, who scurvy-gummed and tribal fearing, bore you away to pencil
ear'd artisans? Still, fingers run along all eight solid feet of you, as the
eggs begin to harden on the cooker

gram,
black mahogany measures
our vague truths



Ken Jones: An original idea skilfully developed through a remorseless run of questions. They hint as much at the exploitative violence of tropical labour as of the shaping of the tree itself, from 'flailed masts' home to 'pencil ear'd artisans'. The more promising the haibun, the more demanding is the task of making a satisfactory landing, brilliantly accomplished here with eggs 'hardening on the cooker', and the recapitulation of an interesting and challenging haiku.

David Cobb: Addressing an old table in the second person is an acceptably novel idea, but the speculations are sometimes wild and can't all be related to the tree from which the table was made. There's at least one 'vague fallacy' among the 'vague truths.' Georgian tables—I actually own one—were indeed made of mahogany (as the closing haiku states), sometimes ornamented with cherry wood. So, stick to mahogany, which is not the timber used to make masts, I think.

June rain on temple eaves. Listening to the quietness of her footfalls,
 compared to the shuffling slide of wooden *geta*¹ upon worn planking. A
 glance sideward: once in a lifetime, a girl smiles like that. Aunts'
 pampering and middle-aged kimono dressers' fussing over: layered
 freedom of black *hakama*² movements; the fan just so. A world away,
 mother and father's staying-awake-late tears run in unison with my
 hidden, dried streaks

falling
 tears and summer rain
 inwardly

From the flutes and soft rumblings of *taiko*³ drumming, the return from
 golden effigies; the offering of branches and saké, from me to you, you
 to me, repeated thrice; the surfaces shine through the membrane of
 liquid, interior light

red lips
 against powdered white
 moistened gold

June sunshine on temple eaves. Drizzling shower over. Stepping from
 the worn, tan eaves: under the ornamental bridge and around the
 Japanese stalk—symbolising our happiness for a thousand years—the
 shuffling silk river, cracks the gravel. After the confines of the
 ceremony and wet weather, little Yukina and Ian chase each other in
 the newly opened spaces; rising humidity

the rain
 within raked gravel
 warmed

¹ *geta* : wooden Japanese sandals

² *hakama* : male form of kimono, often worn at weddings

³ *taiko* : Japanese drums

Ken Jones: Lightly applied imagery evoking a dream world of Old Japan, from which many half-said things appear. Since there is no development, however, for me the lush willow pattern style went on too relentlessly and knowingly. Also I found the last lines of the first and last haiku a little awkward.

David Cobb: It shouldn't be necessary for the reader to go to the footnote to discover that it isn't the girl of sentence 3 who is having problems with the (male) form of kimono. This is a key moment, when we discover that this is a mixed marriage, vital information for our understanding of the (groom's) mother and father staying awake that should be made clear from the start. I do wish also this writer would be kinder to the reader by using more consistent and orthodox punctuation. The denouement is muted. The haiku are purely atmospheric and perhaps we should be looking for more.

"I want to get away from it all." This was the brief I had given to the travel company, "I'll be travelling alone." What they came up with could hardly be more isolated: an almost empty beach hotel on the west coast of North Borneo. I had seen few villages on the drive in, and the nearest town, Kota Kinabalu, is 60 kilometres away. Disorientated by being so suddenly thrown on my own resources I decide to take a run along the beach before my first evening meal.

As I confront the ocean there is no one to be seen along the shoreline to left or right. If there is any human habitation at all, it is hidden by the continuous screen of ragged palms and gnarled banyan trees which creep as near as they dare to the sea before becoming parched and sun-scorched. I start a leisurely jog, heading south.

*sun bleached on the sand
bones of old trees—their roots
clutch the horizon*

After the business of travel, people, baggage and arrival, it seems both distant and intimate to meet oneself uncluttered, naked and alone. No sound except that of my own breathing, and the soft thump of my soles marking the shoreline in time with the sea's exhalations.

*over and over
the waves sucking at the sand—
my mind getting smaller*

My tiredness leaves me. Running becomes easier, breathing deeper, more regular. I lose all track of time in the deep booming heartbeat of the ocean. Transparent ghost crabs scuttle to their holes in front of me as they sense my vibrations in the sand. Barely visible themselves, I see their lengthening shadows. It seems a ghost may cast its shade, leave its tracks. The sun softens as it lowers and strokes my right cheek. I re-cycle the warm air. In - out - breathing - running.

Gradually I become aware of another sound carried on the breeze behind me. As it gets louder, I look nervously over my shoulder and see a motor bike closing fast upon me.

"Hello, hello," the older of the two small boys cries out.

The younger one clings tightly to his friend's waist and, mouth wide open, nods madly at me as they drive on by.

"How far can I run along the beach?" I call after them,

"Far. Very far. You can run forever..."

The voice trails off in the following wind and the sound of the engine fades. Soon they are out of sight altogether. Mechanically I follow the motor cycle track, laid out ahead like the long sloughed skin of a snake. It might be the endless circular print of the Ouroboros which I am following, tracking with my own tracks, panting to the rhythm of the sea.

*wave after wave
the inexhaustible
sunset*

Hunger, and the falling of the sun, tell me I have missed my evening meal. The memory of my hotel has already faded. I carry on running. There seems no reason to stop.

Suddenly the sand is cut through by water. A wide river emerges from the jungle to my left and spills into the sea. I look across to the far shore and still there is no sign of habitation. No human reason to build a bridge. No hidden boats among the bushes. This then, for me, is the end of the beach.

*at a turning point—
persistently aware
of the wind's direction*

Unwillingly I turn back, and face into the breeze. It is dark now, and indistinct. In the wind the palm trees feather out the fringes that distinguish land from sky. One hushed wave merges with another.

*breathing of the sea—
beneath it is the sound
of my own silence*

In the gloom I look in vain for motor cycle tracks. Perhaps the tide has taken them. Perhaps they were never there. But carried in the night breeze I think I hear again the bike boy's youthful voice—

"You can run forever..."



Note: Once again we have three haibun from the same pen.

David Cobb: *Running* is narrowly my favourite among the three of Graham's haibun we have chosen. The haiku are strong, though slightly repetitive of information/images that are either manifest in the prose or imaginable from it; this might lead to some beneficial pruning of the prose? I also noticed the frequent use of one or other of the pronouns 'I, me, my', and counting them up, made it 43 occurrences altogether. It would be interesting to look for ways of avoiding this, and seeing if this was beneficial, though I'm not suggesting that the piece is in any way an ego-trip.

Ken Jones: Depends for its effect wholly upon the sustained imagery of the run. This, together with the variety provided by several fine haiku, carried me along effortlessly on what turned out to be a very long jog. It is testimony to Graham's skill that I was able to share the runner's elation, and even to feel some anxiety about where and how he might end up.

Revisiting the past is a dangerous pastime, even for old school friends, but we learn the rules quickly and catch up on each other's lives with questions— "How many children have you got?" "Oh, you were married twice then?" "Thirty years with the same company? Remarkable!" Soon after, we get to play the game 'Do you remember when. ..?' One thing in particular we can each recall. It's the reason we have agreed to meet.

I haven't spoken to the dead for decades. We've all forgotten how it goes. Our first séance was thirty years ago and the tense anticipation of this evening spans the time between, making us adolescents again. We talk about old excitements while setting out the chairs. Memories, long unvisited, filter back, of a time when kisses and gravestones seemed a perfect mix. A remembered sense of teenage immortality pervades the room, mixed with the distant scent of barely defined romantic longings. We were all such close friends at school. And for a while back then, Sue was more than just a friend—

*talking of the dead
my hand slips into
her unbuttoned blouse*

The wine glasses are cleared away and the circular walnut table, slippery with polish, spirited with lavender, shines like a sunflower. The perimeter petals of alphabet cards are played out around its circumference. I think of my long-dead grandmother playing clock patience in her declining years in a diminishing one-hander against time. All of us now have old parents, dead parents. We wonder who will speak to us through the glass. Five fingers touch the base of the crystal tumbler and the radii of our arms meet at the sparkling hub of cut glass. Under the light, it is the focus of rediscovered flames, of half-buried energies. It moves, and small flashes of fugitive light, like evanescent memories, flicker round the room.

All those years before, none of us had been closely touched by death. Our imaginations were fired with images of earnest Victorian spiritualists, gathering in the intimate and theatrical gloom of candlelight and dark satin drapes. We were so full of our own energies that we felt we could enlighten the darkest of metaphysical corners.

*youthful séance—
a bowl of narcissus glows
white in the darkness*

Now, once again, we are bridging history, with all its garbled dramas, talking through the moving glass, reviving memories, retrieving, letter by letter, the intervening years. Re-living talking to the dead. It all seems risky and illicit, the way it did when we were teenagers, but somehow the intensity, the belief, has gone out of our questions—

“Are you a dead spirit?” *Yes...* “Have you a message for us?” *Yes...*
And so it goes—

*says he's a plague victim—
a scent of lavender polish
in the upturned glass*



Ken Jones: Engages the attention from the start, skilfully conjuring up the experience of reunion, the passing of years and lives, and hence to death and the afterlife of the séance. The séance itself turns out to be prosaic, as signed off in the attractive concluding haiku. The table turning is no more than the occasion for a mosaic of recollection and reverie which is the real subject of this finely crafted piece.

David Cobb: This a very polished piece in a pleasant relaxed style, with three well-adjusted haiku.

"They'll have to do something. I'm going blind." My mother, at ninety three, is to have her second cataract operation. "But at her age," says the Doctor, "it is unlikely to make any real difference."

It's not often the NHS will operate on a patient of ninety three, but I insist. Any action against the prospect of blindness gives her hope, and restored hope, however temporary, may be a palliative more realistic than restored sight. But first the wait. Consultations, check ups and now, at last, the day of surgery.

*echoing halls—
the ophthalmic ward clock
clouds over*

The operating theatre is just a small room off the corridor. The nurse guides her in and lifts her gingerly onto the bed-trolley where she envelops her in a blue shroud. Only the smudgy grey cumulus of my mother's face is visible. The nurse turns to me. "Would you like to wait next door? It should only be half an hour."

*sun squares skirt the floor—
bleary eyed, I spoon the skin
off my coffee*

She emerges uncertainly, the nurse guiding her elbow. A cloud of cotton wool grows from her eye socket as if a bright fungus had flourished in her skull and blossomed there. "How are you feeling?" "A bit groggy." The sun streams through the window and she staggers. "The light's too bright, I can't see anything." Her untreated eye weeps in sympathy. We wait until the sun clouds over so that she can see to walk. "When the dressings come off there may be some improvement, but Mum, don't expect too much." "Oh well, whatever happens, I expect I'll cope."

*at rest in the dark—
she makes light of her
approaching blindness*

Ken Jones: *Clouds* is a skilfully understated piece of writing, inviting empathy with both mother and son. There is some memorable imagery and the whole is finely crafted. The three haiku metaphors contribute well to the effect, even though the last is rather heavy.

David Cobb: A moving piece motivated by filial love which never embarrasses the reader by becoming mawkish. The repeated metaphors for cataract are, however, perhaps a mite too heavy: the clock clouding over; the skin being spooned off the coffee. The restlessness of the aged mother's opening remark contrasts with the resignation of her final one in a very poignant way.

Boole drives the hairpins leaning into the curves without turning the wheel

mountain switchback headlights out in the stars

Möbius sings with the radio sticking in the loop 'lululululu' of the refrain

well there goes the border from Austria to Hungary

Klein swigs rakija from his bottomless bottle staining the front of his scoop-necked shirt

humid night the brown paper bag tears through

and I'm in the back seat rattling with the empties at every bump

for my birthday one more trip round the sun



David Cobb: What it is to be one of 'Four men in a car' could hardly have been represented to us more memorably and with more economy than this. The haiku just about assert their ability to stand on their own; our anthology won't be able to print them in colour as the author did, but using italics is enough to distinguish the one-liners for what they are. The author's possibly deflated spirits over the missed occasion of his birthday are suggested by the penultimate haiku (the collapse of a damp paper bag) but the disappointment is ultimately dismissed—what is a birthday, anyway, but just another day?

Ken Jones: A vivid evocation of a drunken night time car journey, with three reckless companions. They take the names of mathematicians, leaning into the tight curves and playing with the calculus of survival—though a note to this effect would have been helpful. There is plenty of mad abandonment in the prose, steadied by haiku which strike a different note—though I would have preferred them to be slowed down a little into three-liners (and the second is no more than prose).

She frees herself from her mother and waddles towards us strangers.
Has weighed us up from a distance, people with cash to spare, and even
when still some way off calls out, "Cig'ret, gimme, cig'ret, gimme!"

The mother, big-bellied with another expected child, heaves herself to
her feet. Leaves some unidentifiable garments lying there. Seems it
hardly matters whether she slaps and rinses them or not, the Trisuli runs
so full of filth. With a smile, truly motherly, she points first to her
belly, then her little daughter, eyeing us with hope and not a little
confidence.

The toddler offers us a peanut.

*in a distant land
hands searching the skies
for the missing word*



Ken Jones: Within its modest limits this showcases several of our haibun criteria, unfolding towards the subtly suggestive haiku. The offer of the peanut is the kind of ambiguous throwaway which I much prize in a haibun.

David Cobb: This fulfils my 'expectations' of haibun—above all, its complete lucidity, avoidance of complexity and distracting ornament, indirect evocation of sentiment, and finally, a haiku at the end that completes the piece, but at the same time one that is self-sufficient. It works as a parable drawing attention to the limits of our ability to communicate despite our overweening pride in our technological inventions and our sense of 'development'.

High on the Downs, just below an Iron Age hillfort*, the greensward is cut away to reveal, in the chalk beneath, the cartoon-like outlines of a beast.

*the ageless White Horse—
like a child she races
to tread on its tail*

A shiver passes through me as I take form again, urged to it by some extraterrestrial force. Stiff at first after so many centuries as a one-dimensional figure, I prick up my ears and catch a sound carried to me from afar by the wind: the call of another horse.

A deepfelt wish to meet up with the others breaks me free from my surroundings. My answering neigh is loud and strong, I shake out my mane, I scrape the ground with my hoof and set off at a canter, towards the place to which I seem to be drawn by some impulse from within. A warm nuzzle.

The sun rises in a red glow although the moon has not yet set.

A flock of goldfinches, on their daily rounds, search the now vacant patch on the hillside. Astonished to find the figure gone, they notice a threadlike outline is still there and think to return it to the White Horse. One finch lands on the tail, another on the muzzle, others fasten on where they can and together, with the shreds gripped firmly in their beaks, on a count of three, they all take to the air.

The sun has now risen above the earth and in the distance on the green slopes the goldfinches see the horses grazing.

What is this—my own self flying towards me, like the spectre of a witch! The finches, having reached us, loosen their grip on the outline and deposit it on the ground, entire, but in a new shape. At first I am doubtful that this outline belongs to me, but my nose assures me it is so.

* Wiltshire UK

With my mouth I carefully pick it up, give it a thorough shaking, and drop it again—and yet another shape stares me in the face. This is fun, I have to go on doing it, each new shape is a magical surprise.

*so long out of use,
the key no longer turns
in the old lock*



David Cobb: This might be an intriguing excursion into the paranormal, nothing short of an attempt at creating a ‘new myth’ or fairy tale, but it doesn’t quite cohere. If the first paragraph of prose were to end with something like this—‘A woman running like a child who believes in magic’—and the phrase ‘like a child’ were removed from the haiku that follows, things would be connected up in such a way that we might (if we have a mind to ‘explain’ things) read the transformation of the Horse as the child’s fantasy. It is also difficult to relate the final haiku to what has gone before. Marks, however, for the attempt to bring magic into haibun.

Ken Jones: The strength lies in an ingenious and attractive conception well sustained at a flying pace, through the goldfinches to the return to the ‘outline’. The prose is easeful and generally well crafted, with nothing superfluous to the theme, and with some charming remarks like the stiffness engendered by being one-dimensional for centuries. However, the first haiku were better simply folded back into the prose. The second provides a satisfactory metaphor for closure—except that in fact the ‘old key’ seems to have turned very smoothly...

New beauty meets us at every step
in all our wanderings (John Muir)

... he must have stepped too near the lake sunk through soft snow down into ice in snowshoes he was an experienced hiker in his sixties from the town of Joshua Tree came right over the pass he must have stepped too near the lake... I must have pitched my tent and camped overnight thinking of those miles to the stars I must have watched this backpack un-snap from the melting ice and float in the lake I must have wondered if someone was attached to it because of the way it tilted in the lake... I must have woken to sunlight pouring through me this blade of grass peeping through snow and to a helicopter hovering above the pack with the pilot pointing to my body... I must have gone and stepped too near the lake...

an osprey rises
from the water
fish slapping sunlight



Ken Jones: Focussed on the enigmatic switch of identity, between the living and the dead, which is cleverly contrived and closely written. The haiku is attractive but perhaps a little too distant from the theme. The John Muir quote is redundant, and the title could have been better related to what follows.

David Cobb: I read this as a near-death experience, related so that it only gradually becomes apparent that this is what it is. The run-on style, involving almost no use of conventional punctuation, is quite engaging. A quotation ahead of a haibun might be justified because it leads us into the piece, declares its topic, or in some way comments on the whole, but here the one from John Muir is inappropriate and therefore an irritating embellishment. The final haiku works well, but would be even better if its final line had a different grammar, e.g. fish-slapped sunlight.

... the soft watch is flesh; it is 'cheese'

Dru Phillippou (USA)

I'm thinking, Thales, the first Greek philosopher, believed everything is 'water'. Anaximenes believed in 'air'. Xenophanes in 'earth'.

Herakleitos in 'fire', and said, 'This world, which is the same for all, no one of gods or men has made; but it was ever, is now, and ever shall be an ever-living 'Fire''. Democritus praised 'atoms' and imagined a cornucopia of sizes and shapes. Empedocles argued for all the elements. But Archimedes went in another direction: he yearned to move the Earth and invented levers and pulleys.



And wrote very large numbers like the vigintillion:

1,000,000,
000,000,000,
000,000,

000,000,
000,000,000,000,
000,000,

000,
000,000,000,
000,000

Winding through Mitilini's streets on Lesbos Island, I'm thinking, 'lunch'. At the cafeneon, I order 'saganaki', shallow fried cheese. Cheese, an integral way of life for the Greeks. Hence the Byzantine proverb, 'The poor did not have any bread, but they could afford some cheese!'

Feta
Sefla
Kasseri
Anevato
Galotyri
Manouri
Kalathaki Limnou
Pichtogalo Hanion
Ladotiri Mitilinis
Xynomyzithra Kritis
Formaela Aracovas Parnassou.

Just for the sheer sound of:

Cheese
Fromage
Formaggio
Queijo
Käse

A fly lands on my watch. I'm thinking, Salvador Dali. Paintings of soft watches, m-e-l-t-i-n-g like cheese. Again, I'm thinking, Thales. Water *is* in everything. Even in 'cheese'. Stretching and deforming objects.

'Water,. the bitter servant of the Sun, begins to work over all the earth. It dissolves, it warms, it softens, it penetrates.' Paul Claudel

'Even stones and bricks reduced to powder and then exposed to the action of Fire... always give a little water; and they even owe their origin, in part, to Water, which, like glue binds their parts together.'
Herman Boerhaave

'The true eye of the earth is water. In our eyes it is water that dreams.'
Gaston Bachelard

I'm thinking, 'klepsydra'. A bowl-shaped vessel, slowly filling up with water, measuring time. Or how retsina spills into the tablecloth, taking up time.

I'm thinking, *ta panta rei*, 'everything is in motion'. Herakleitos

thyme-scented honey
over a bowl of figs
bumblebees b-fuzzing

Evening at a cafeneon:

Pleiades rising
a sprinkle of feta
over black olives

dawn
the sound of a gong
going out of existence...

Soon, I'm thinking, 'Sappho', born on Lesbos. Her poems and songs written for the lyre. Invented the Sapphic meter:

-U / - - / -UU / -U / -U /
-U / - - / -UU / -U / -U /
-U / - - / -UU / -U / -U /
-UU / -U /

A Sapphic attempt:

Heard the smooth like melodies rising softly,
Heard the young girl dance by the moonlit waters
Filled with wild joy, praising Sappho's altar and
Plucking a lyre on...

Then onwards to the fish market:

Sardines
Anchovies
Mackerel

sunrise
an old man lifting
a fish gill

A fisherman prepares sardeles pastes (pronounced, 'sar-dell-es pass-tess'). Leaning over his catch of sardines, he places a layer of sardines, then salt, then another layer of sardines into a small bucket.

I sit on an ivy-covered stump and eat sardeles pastes for breakfast. I stare out into the harbour. Soon I'm thinking, 'emptiness' or the emptiness of water reflecting everything. But mostly I'm thinking, 'water' is in everything, transforming nature.

a gust of wind,
the Kingfisher's cry
warps over the river



Ken Jones: A flowing reverie of observation and reflection, the writer skilfully deploys erudition—for some perhaps too much, and too pretentiously. There are, however, some attractive haiku along the way.

David Cobb: This one is reminiscent of the style of haibun pioneered by Bill Wyatt: an engaging patchwork quilt of classical and modern quotations and did-you-know information, in which the author is unobtrusive, but pops up from time to time as the 'link man' or commentator. The haiku in this piece are intriguing, one is a masterpiece: *sunrise / an old man lifting / a fish gill*. Altogether an outstanding piece.

From: Andrej L Stoelting

To:

Date:

Subject: Rite of Spring

Dad, Mom:

Now I understand the true meaning of that phrase, 'Rite of Spring'. It's as if the Midwest awakens May 1st after five months of dreary slumber. Even the most stubborn trees are beginning to bud and most are in full bloom. Blossoms of white, lavender, and pink are everywhere with amazing tulips seemingly springing forth from nowhere. Yes, January through April does suck in this state, but now I understand why people live here: so they can have one good month before the steamy heat turns this place into a pressure cooker. As nature begins to come alive I can feel the city's apathy turn to exuberance. It's almost like a bee hive and now it's time to make honey. Though I miss the cool breeze off the ocean and the smell of damp earth beneath the redwoods, spring will get me by in this land of your past.

From:

To: Andrej L Stoetling

Date:

Subject: Re: Rite of Spring

from the window
of your old room
I watch
the pear tree bent
in a new direction

Note: three awards for Laurie Stoelting, but this time we don't think we'd be able to agree which is the best.

Ken Jones: *Rite of Spring* contains attractive and evocative description, and in 'land of your past' and the concluding 'poem' (with its rather forced symbolism) there is reference to another dimension. Evidently the writer's son is making a new start in life where his parents once lived. The writer's reply is in the form of a haiku which too much resembles chopped up prose.

David Cobb: Marks to this one for trying a novel format—as email messages or memoranda. Here it would seem natural to adopt the clipped prose style that is often favoured in haibun writing, sometimes with less reason, but almost perversely the original message is in complete sentences. Missing details of sender/receiver and date might also have been added to complete the illusion, but that's a small point. The final poem (reply) is interesting, but defeats description as either a haiku or tanka, as it reads as a single continuous statement.

Traveling in another hemisphere I come to the center of a lava island.
Rock pockets and ragged hollows, errant seeds begin to grow.
Barrenness requires such faith. And what of patience? My husband,
who assists me, has wandered off. I could shout but no one will hear
me.

I need help. Otherwise, I would not be wishing for something, which I
think is my son, or a fairytale—silly and hopeless. I'm considering my
feet and the fissured rock—this place where Darwin found his
proof—when the hand of God reaches down to me. I look up as if this
is the Sistine Chapel. It's the guide.

I do not know him but when someone offers his soul, you take it. Last
night when we were reveling he did not join in. I have that picture in
my mind as he begins to speak. His grip is a magic carpet . We are
gliding.

Machismo is not good for marriage. His bride has returned to mother
and he has remorse but no hesitation and he doesn't know if he
deserves to be her husband, or if she'll let him. But I do know that he
needs to be forgiven. It's a catholic country.

"All marriages have rocks," I say. "Even after 39 years you have to
work things out. You listen. You don't expect perfection. You try to be
sensitive. Only a very sensitive person would have seen I needed help.
Today it's not the husband—it's you who is helping me."

how long can it last—
two albatross
ride an updraft



David Cobb: *Southern Crossing* is an excellent piece, written in a subdued literary style, about a serious aspect of the human condition. I could wish for the occasional whiff of religiosity to be removed, though; specifically, 'when the hand (of God) reaches down to me. (I look up as if this is the Sistine Chapel.) It's the guide' would be all the better if the words I have bracketed were removed. An apposite title - I almost said, 'for once', because quite often writers of haibun have difficulty finding a good title to fit; perhaps it would be better in many cases to leave them untitled, but I suppose magazine editors don't like that. Spoils the index? And a very good off-at-a-tangent closing haiku.

Ken Jones: An attractive and engaging confessional of half said things in an ambiguous encounter within two marriages. The treatment is light as a feather, a playful flirtatious daydream that never gets out of hand, and with an underlying wisdom to it. I enjoyed the little ironies, and especially the Michaelangelo touch, and there's a nicely ambiguous haiku to round it off. Compare with *Silent Storm*, above—there's a lot of haibun mileage in matrimony

You throw the last of the soup in with the spaghetti. Or maybe it's an epiphany from a dream that leads you to experiment with the still here chutney. You decide to wear a clean but secondhand magenta bathing suit to an after six wedding—under silk pajamas—and it's a wild hit. Now this is recycling.

And you work with words.

In the same way you wire an enameled bracelet to become a gorgeous necklace you shape a fresh poem, unearth an old one. You find orphans, infants, spinsters. Rejects and winners. You get an idea, mix and match. It's a present to yourself. Haiku at mid-life.

above a nowhere sea
the fog opens
a place for words



David Cobb: It threw me at first that the present tense is used here, against the conventions of haiku and haibun, to relate habits rather than narrate single events. In a piece that aims to justify the creative process, both culinary and the making of poetry, the curious (and not all that intelligible) phrase 'a nowhere sea' seems imaginatively justified.

Ken Jones: An attractive, complex haibun which seduces with its shifting, suggestive and fast-paced imagery. This is a lively picture of a feisty and creative woman whose 'work with words' is of a piece with her lifestyle. However, the 'nowhere sea' in the haiku strikes me as clumsy and contrived.

Dad's car pulls up in the drive. We all look at each other. What is he doing here? He never comes here on a Saturday. He's smiling; he's nervous. Asks how we all are individually, including Mum. In fact, he is being extra nice to Mum. Then it comes.

"Guess what?"

"What?"

"Christina's pregnant! You're all going to have a new little brother or sister!"

Found my old doll
—in the attic—
Huge painted grin

He is trying so hard to keep this nice. Too hard; cracks show immediately.

"Look, I know it's a shock, I was pretty shocked myself. It was an accident."

I look to the floor while Mum explodes.

"How dare you. It wasn't more than six months ago you were telling Beth that accidents don't happen. You're a doctor for fuck's sake."

Despite the sting, I want her to stop shouting at him. He looks like a little boy.

She's running now, fast, outside and away. She doesn't know where; ends up in the back garden where we used to camp over the summer. The bonfire we started earlier is crackling hard. We watch them, out the window. Watch their mouths shouting at each other. He holds out his arms and she runs into them.

Garden fork stands
—Silent—
Prongs dug deep

We all react in our different ways. Matt starts mumbling, so sure it'll work out. Uses Dad's words in an attempt to convince our blank faces.

"Just think girls, there be another one in the family, it'll be alright."

I'm angry and so is she.

Matt puts the kettle on. All is not well.

Mum returns without him and drapes herself over the chair sobbing. She blames herself. How could I imagine the feeling? I haven't had a child.

At Dad's new house it's unbearable to watch. Started off as round the clock smugness then turned into a bump, and the bump gets bigger. I pretend I haven't noticed, sitting at their dining table, getting at the salad with those huge, wooden tongs. Their house is transforming as well, bigger every time I come.

It's become a habit of mine to have to run to the toilet now and again during dinner. I make my excuses and leave. When I get in there I close the door and my whole body surges, pushing out great waves of grief. Then I come back in and sit down. My eyes never seem to give me away; it doesn't last long enough to stain them red or make them puffy. It's a bit like being bulimic, no one seems to notice.

tiny hand wraps
bony knuckles
flesh warm

I knew she was due in August. She came slap bang between my brother and me. We're all August babies, but she's only half us.



Ken Jones: *New Arrival* has a quite ambitious and complex theme, unfolded in graphic and engaging prose through dialogue as well as imagery. Dialogue has a directness which is very welcome in haibun, and the imagery is enhanced here by the 'offset' haiku. However, in the second part (beyond the asterisk line) there is a loss of momentum. This does not really mark a second episode, and there is a reversion to just telling it how it is, rather than continuing to shape the story. The feeble haiku adds to the let-down. This is yet another warning that it is easier to make a good start with a haibun than to know what to do with it by the end—or when just to end it early on a strong note.

David Cobb: The personal-confessional type of haibun is common, and it may need to make connections to general experience to be successful. Here, however, the writer carries us convincingly into a situation the majority of us will not have experienced. A particular strength of the piece are the first two haiku containing images that are superb 'objective correlatives' of the prose scene; the garden fork stuck in the ground brilliantly encapsulates the confrontation between the husband and his estranged wife.

A question is raised by the row of asterisks, representing 'some time later'. Would it have been better to finish the piece here, keeping it more unified? I really think so, and there isn't really enough in the passage after the asterisks to make a separate haibun.

Imagine a place where a small creek has tumbled from the hills into an abandoned slate quarry and suddenly become part of a wide estuary. At low tide the salt flats are a haven for waders and sea birds. As the water rises it creeps up sinuous channels—silvery light, lapping at purple whalebacks of mud, gradually swallows everything, until the river is part of the sea.

Today the weather is wild. Tinted clouds race across the sky, from blue to black, from sunshine to downpour. Now and then, beyond the river, small hill pastures flash emerald green among rolling cloud shadows.

in streams of light
we wander a strange shore
between cloud and rainbow

We shelter in a dark tunnel under the railway, until the rain stops, then step out into a surreal world. This place was once a boat yard but, now, lorries are parked on the shore. One looks old enough to have pulled a gun carriage on the Somme. Half built or rotting boats lean against the cliff face; dinghies painted with eyes and teeth lie about like stranded fish among tattered tarpaulins, rusty scaffolding and plastic lobster pots. A child's canvas chair has been tied to the remains of a giant paper kite.

broken wings
thin skin fluttering
from bamboo bones

Mildewed caravans, limply curtained windows—do people live here sometimes? A wineglass, half full of water, a pink geranium wilting in a pot. 'Take care! The tide will come in at 2.45 pm.. You must clear the foreshore by 4.0 pm.' What will happen then?

COME TO THE CIRCUS! Of course. TENTS & EVENTS. Not today—only their ghosts today. Ghost of young, agile and creative fine-

weather creatures. One old boat is named 'Kirsty Mcall'; a second—'Compromise'.

We make lopsided silhouettes against the shining water—an elderly group. I lean on my walking stick and gaze at the bright fields across the estuary, beyond the rainbow. Suddenly I sense a movement just behind me.

mending her face
in a clapped-out car
the ghost of Kirsty Mcall.

I move away tactfully and find myself in a graveyard. Sawn-off bones rear up against the sky, a dinosaur skeleton perhaps, leaning from twisted girders.

monster bones
the ribs of giant ships
dreaming of Vikings

So many broken things lie at our feet, so many big ideas, young hopes, creations and entertainments—all abandoned.

tangled young dreams
'£1 per metre per week'
sinking in quick sand

Will they come back, like the tide, in the spring, with children and dogs and plans for a new season? Meanwhile winter is coming. We pick our way back through the debris of their absence, looking forward to tea in a warm house. The stir of other people's imagined adventures has left us feeling tired. The estuary is full of water now, leaden under a darkening sky.

we run out of words
taking cover from deluge
under an old ark



David Cobb: When this writer is describing actual things (roughly the first half of the haibun, up to the word 'Compromise'), this piece works well (though the second haiku is no more than an addition to the descriptions and does not justify its separate existence.) From that mid-point on the haibun veers towards the writer's thoughts and minor delusions, very little happens that is palpable and real, and the piece ends rather tamely with the prospect of a nice cup of tea. The haiku are plentiful but none of them really capable of giving us a fresh slant on the prose.

Ken Jones: The setting is attractively established, with imagery which for the most part stops this side of exaggeration. The descriptive second phase holds the attention well, moving into a third, more intensive and evocative section featuring four haiku at least some of which were better folded back into the prose. If, as here, the prose imagery is strong and attractive, then the haiku need to play a different role than just attempting more of the same. This is an interesting and challenging question which even the most accomplished haibun masters have sometimes had difficulty resolving.

CONCLUSION

David Cobb and Ken Jones

It remains for us to congratulate all 32 entrants—not just the 10 who have been awarded a place in this anthology. It was evident to us that everyone had a belief in haibun and was committed to making a serious effort to develop this fledgling genre and gain for it increasing respect.

We believe the **British Haiku Society Annual Haibun Award** has a future of some kind, and trust that even those who may have been disappointed this time will take part again—possibly with fresh insights into the possibilities of the form as a result of reading this anthology.

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