NO TIME TO STOP AND STARE

BAMBOO SHOOT

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Ah, Jayzus! And isn't man's whole life one huge bloody constraint in which he struggles to perfect his tiny song. And isn't it the givin' up on it that's the sickness

NO TIME TO STOP AND STARE

HAIKAI

A Collection of Small Perceptions

Bamboo Shoot

Hub Editions

Illustrations

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To all these, for their kind efforts and concessions, much thanks

The shikishi page 97 is by Junko Nakei

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Contents

Introduction

For '***haikai***' read: haiku and the haikuesque, senryū, and other writings using the haiku form. ['***haikuesque***': writings 'showing the qualities and spirit of haiku without slavish imitation of the rules' – J. Kirkup].

If 17 (5/7/5) syllables and appropriate use of *kigo* and *kireji* are essential features of haiku, then few, if any, pieces in this book qualify. So that's all right then, since *chacun à son haiku* seems to have been much the order of the Western day since Ginsberg and Kerouac, at least.

However, beyond mere technical rules for writers lies another consideration. One might speculate that a key part of Japanese haiku tradition is, or has been, a culture specific writer-reader rapport that evolved in Japan over centuries as language, haiku, and haiku-readership developed side by side in some measure of cultural isolation. It may well be today, with modern Japanese writing perhaps becoming increasingly influenced by reflected western conceptions of haiku, that such rapport is becoming less culture specific, more general – increasingly reliant on the plai commonalities of eastern and western human experienc Whatever, some bond of interest and understanding between a writers and their audience would seem essential for the continuec success and development of any written art-form. And most of the haikai in this book have been adjusted to comply with personal un-authoritative observances regarding western haiku writing, the overall aim being to try and produce something of varied style and interest that might not stale too easily on the reader's palate. Three years ago I read Paul Muldoon's *Hopewell Haiku* (*Hay*; Faber &Faber), and was taken not so much by their arguable haiku qualities as by the skilled variety of present tense tone achieved within strict 5/7/5 limits. Likewise, I found James Kirkup's translations in *A Certain State of Mind* (1995, Salzburg University

Press) exemplary in their staying power for readers. Do my attempts satisfy me in the same way? No – but then I'm not a skilled poet.

*

Observations and Observances

SYLLABLES My involvement with haiku began not long after my first attempts at writing western poetry – me, an old git who knew next to nothing about creative writing, even less about linguistics; and who was never going to be able to understand Japanese. Simply, I needed something to pass the time after injury had put a stop to other activities. A magpie interest in arguing out most things for myself, it wasn't long before I was asking 'why 17 syllables?' Later still, having read *Haiku Handbook* with its 'duration theory' of haiku, 'why 12-14?' After all, one need not be a linguist or a computer buff to realise that all language is about information transfer. If language A packs more information into its structure than language B, then B will be at some word-wise disadvantage when it comes to writing haiku. And if the semantic mechanics of Japanese are more efficient than those of English, then shouldn't we be nudging towards the use of more rather than fewer syllables in English haiku? Mr Higginson (*Haiku Handbook*) did briefly mention such things, but at that time I was not aware of any further elaborations – backed up by (what seemed essential) authoritative linguistic analysis. At this point, one thing seemed undeniable: what is wanted to be said/conveyed in any haiku **must** take precedence over its period of utterance. How useful could the temporal statistics from some mechanical translations really be in assessing the semantic equivalence of Japanese haiku and their English transcripts? I thought of the deeper senses of cultural significance that lie behind the use of words in all languages. Eliot on Dante: 'I do not ... pretend that we can appreciate everything, even in one single line, that a cultur-

ed Italian can appreciate. But I do maintain that more is lost on translating Shakespeare into Italian than in translating Dante into English'. And I speculated, in ignorance, on the nature of the Japanese language (especially that of Bashō's day). How does written Japanese (especially in its poetic mode) enter the mind, when that language is closer (?) to its pictorial/ideographic roots than our own and its calligraphy is an art form not infrequently used in conjunction with haiku? Were Bashō's texts more visual then than their English transcripts are today? Did a parallel development of Japanese language, haiku, and haiku-readership result in important cultural understandings not readily translated – even for modern haiku? Later still, in *Japanese Verse* (Bowness and Thwaite; Penguin), I read that in Japanese there were/are aspects of conjugational grammar that are 'more a matter of mood than tense' and very useful as 'tools for the lyric poet'. And I considered the influence that seasonal reference (*kigo, kidai*, and *kikan*) and *kireji* had on haiku readings. All in all, I concluded that the Japanese might have a pretty big advantage over us in writing haiku; that elliptical Japanese brevity might conceal far mo meaningful content than most translators (conditioned by Weste Establishment) would be prepared/able to put into their clipp English transcripts. Finally, I was pleased to find that m amateurish thinking was not too foolish. I discovered that Professor Nobuyuki Yuasa had long ago experimentally translated Bashō into 4 lines and 17+ syllables – because of translation difficulties, and because he felt 'the 4-line form would read better and give more weight and independence to the poem'. And Stephen Gill, an experienced 4-line English writer living in Japan recently wrote (*BS* 10.4, p52): 'reading Japanese involves a cultural attunement to filling in spaces through conventional association that would take, in most foreign languages, quite a number of extra words to convey.' Just so! So what is my approach to the question of syllable count? Quite simply: **whatever it takes, but more must never be excess**. So many English writers who claim never to count syllables, rarely, in fact,

exceed 17 (usually writing well below), suggesting conditioned compliance with transatlantic opinion. But quite apart from problems of semantic content, English words are not infrequently highly syllabled, and overall, I am more concerned with the spontaneity and musicality of the finished product than whether it is hypersyllabic or not, (eg. *with all the clankiness/ ...*in this book). I believe in using whatever it takes to create western haiku etc. of 'literary quality'. As for the 5/7/5 structure, this constraint does not derive from our own language structures – albeit there is a pleasing shape in two short lines and a long one. But all that said, few of the haikai in this book greatly exceed 17 syllables; and most have passed through some 5/7/5 stage.

One further point seems important to mention: in part explanation of his 4-line hypersyllabic translations of Bashō, Professor Yuasa also commented, 'the language of haiku ... is based on colloquialism, and in my opinion, the closest approximation of natural conversational rhythm can be achieved in English by a four-line stanza rather than a constrained three-line stanza.'

LANGUAGE AND DICTION It must sound English. Some years ago I wrote (received slight commendation for), *warm sun now on my back/ and my shadow/ walking a little straighter*. My then comment was, 'written in Birmingham, stamped Made in Japan' (the haiku is revised in this book). Another soap-box bad example favourite of mine is, *in the fire depths/ saw the way/ a peony crumbles* (Shūson, in *Haiku Handbook*). To me, this translation sounds undecided as to whether it wants to be in English or Japanese; and there seems no sound reason why it should be preferred to, *in the fire's depth/ I saw the way/ a paeony crumbles*. So much clipped diction, pidgin-English style seems as if it might derive from ideas on brevity etc. expressed in *Haiku Handbook*. In moderation, and used with discrimination, clipped minimalism **can** work for the English reader; in quantity, as a fashionable or idle stylistic, it palls – well, it does for me. I see no

reason for wanting to sound spuriously Japanese other than, perhaps, to play up to Japanese judges in some competition.

BREVITY In skilled hands, at least, a sense of brevity might better reside in the artistry of the language used than in the mere absence of words. **Language desperately reduced is no less contrived than language over expanded.**

SPONTANEITY should not be edited out. For me, spontaneity covers both sincerity (free from pretence) and *makoto* (truthfulness) – and seems essential to haiku of the 'here and now' variety. This does not deny the need for minor syntactic revisions etc, but I believe in writing only when moved or inspired to do so; and if the spontaneous perception comes in strange, symbolic, or referential language – I use it much as it is.

TONE My impression is that tone in haiku is very important to Japanese writers, but they seem to find it in ways rather different to our own. A personal maxim is, that **it makes no sense in an sort of poetry to give opposite emotions a common tone** eg. *drifting down the river* v. *punching him on the nose.* And nothing, to my mind, guarantees a more monotonous, indiscriminate passive tone than the '-inging participle. At least one Japanese authority has said that its use 'should be avoided as far as possible ... it weakens the expression, and deprives the writer of his aggressive (positive) stance', (Yagi Kametaro; *Messages from Matsuyama*; Katydid Books 1991). All of which is not to deny its appropriate (effective) use.

SOUND QUALITIES are also important to the Japanese. James Kirkup, speaking of Shūson, says: 'it is impossible to do justice to the tonal beauty of the Japanese words in English translation'. We can't hear this, of course – it all goes too fast and alien – but we **can** attend to our own language. It has been said that one reason for the Japanese *chōka* (a longish poem) losing

popularity may have been an aesthetic resentment to the constant repetition of so many same-sounding line endings. If this is true, then ask yourself: how would the Japanese have reacted to the overuse of 'inging participles in their own language? – not that they have them of course.

KIREJI AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTICLES Kireji are grammatic particles that play an important role in Japanese haiku – a sort of spoken punctuation. They have two functions: they can cut between or terminate phrases, and they can act as tonal (emotional) modifiers. There is no real English equivalent; but in their first role, it is commonly suggested that commas, semi-colons, dashes and dots might do as well. Little is suggested regarding their second role, but in fact there **are** good English particles that might, on occasion, occur to the sensitive writer. Take Seamus Heaney's *Dangerous pavements./* ***But*** *I face the ice this year/ With my father's stick.* The first line full stop followed by 'But' gives the whole haiku a positive determined attitude that would not be achieved if the haiku had been written wimpishly as *facing the ice this year/ with my father's stick - / Dangerous pavements.* In the above example, the combination of '.../ **But'** seems to me to take on both kireji roles. Establishment directives to cut out all unnecessary words have, I feel, made many western writers less sensitive to the meaningful potential of particles, eg. the notion of discriminatory choice between 'a' and 'the' seems lost on some.

OPENNESS *Haiku Handbook* says, 'we share by means of words. But words that are too concerned with how **I** respond prevent **you** from responding freely to the object or event that caused my response'. This is true – for similar reason, we avoid gross or ostentatious metaphor etc. But it seems equally important to me that a haiku's imagery should not be so vaguely or ambiguously stated that the reader does not know what he or she is supposed to be looking at. To allow the reader's focus too much openness, too much opportunity to stray from the perception

intended to be shared, can only result in confusion or dilution of the emotions. **The bejewelled finger distracts – the vague finger points at nothing or nowhere in particular.**

THE USE OF REFERENTIAL MATERIAL When I first opened *Haiku Handbook* (p.12), I was excited to find (almost as half-expected) that 'simple Japanese picture haiku' such as *willow leaves fallen/ clear waters dried up stones/ one place and another* (Buson), were far deeper than first appeared – this depth resulting from (for those of Buson's time at least) an understood use of literary reference. Later on, with *the silk tearing/ biwa's current - / autumn's voice* (pp.213-215), it seemed clear that, in classical times, haiku could make good use of scholarly material. I wrote at the time, **what better way to expand the mindscape of the syllabically challenged**. Since when, either because I have little knowledge outside Science, or because I don't read the right haiku carefully enough, or perhaps because referential material seldom finds its way into our haiku anyway, I've been disappointed by the apparent mono-layered depth of so much English haiku. Coming to 'creative writing' late in a largely ur literate life, I often find myself spontaneously incorporatir recently acquired referential material into my own 'haiku' writin and as long as this accords with other observances, I don't edit it out. Any material might be grist to the referential mill, from media jingle to the Fine Arts to historical record. The key word is spontaneity, and it seems important to suggest that referential material – especially, say, obscure literary allusion – should never be contrived into haiku solely to display the author's brilliant mind. But for example, given a certain situation, *One night cheap hotel* might well come into the head of a poetry enthusiast to give just the right world-weary tone to his/her haiku. To another, *blowing in the wind* might achieve the symbolic transformation of 'leaves' into 'thoughts'. In one of my last haiku in this book, .../ *no time to stop and stare/ just peck and go* links a shampoo commercial jingle with a well known scrap of poetry to evoke

(from the commonplace action of geese) a sense of the techno-corporate rat-race we live in. I used it because that is how the fusion of imagery and symbolism came to me **spontaneously**.

IMMEDIACY If by immediacy we mean ease of reading and understanding, then, with reference to the above, it seems reasonable to suggest that **any use of allusion etc. should not deny a simpler reading for those who do not share the writer's learnedness or quirk of thought**. On the other hand, it seems to me that the onus of raising and maintaining haiku to any sort of literary status must lie partly with the reader. Nothing should ever be too easy perhaps.

SEASON Reading about seasonal formalities in Japanese haiku (with words like *kigo, kidai,* and *kikan* to contend with) can confuse; and we are told that some modern Japanese no longer bother with season words anyway. On the other hand, *Haiku Handbook* says, 'For many Japanese, seasonal feeling still holds the key to haiku art'. Gut reason makes me agree. One need not be a poet to realise that primary feelings can be/are modulated and sub-categorised by circumstance. Season is one such circumstance, and loneliness in Spring is **not** going to be the same as loneliness in Winter, etc. I see seasonal mention in English haiku as the use of a special sort of referential material; and, as with literary allusion say, **if it works (deepens the haiku), use it; if it doesn't, don't. Far more important, however, is not whether but how one uses it.** Seasonal reference may be made directly or via cultural association; but, for me, there are three unsatisfactory ways of using season words – two of them technically unsound:

- Simple initial season statement seems irrelevant to, and does not enhance what follows.

- Seasonal statement is made redundant by subsequent/other imagery.

- Season is indicated, but with no clue as to how season has affected the poet's stance.

I prefer haiku that have some flavour of human origin; and the best seasonal haiku for me, manage to fuse seasonal reference and human emotion into one complex image. This may be easier to achieve for the Japanese with their large repository of culturally well-associated season words, eg. (from Masajo Suzuki's *Love Haiku*; Brooks Books, USA, 2000): *A moth dances into the flame.../ the nape of the man's neck/ draws me in.* Kigo = moth = summer. This haiku evokes sensuality, and is highly charged as a summer storm. Note '*...the nape ...*' – a conscious/sub-conscious visual comparison, perhaps, to a candle flame: bright outer columns of spinal muscle (=luminous outer flame) contrasting with the inner shadows.

PERSONALITY V ANONYMITY Some writers seem, to me, to go over the top in their search for objective anonymity – the avoidance of the terrible **I**. The Japanese make little use of the personal pronoun in their writing; but, if I have understood correctly, this has more to do with the way their language works than with what they feel inside. To curtail long discussion, my aim is to try to find a middle ground between self-indulgent sentiment and Instamatic cardboard cut-out imagery. The question to ask is, does the intervention of the self distort or detract from the main imagery. Shiki, in his short life, suffered from spinal TB and once wrote, *again and again/ from my sickbed I ask/ 'how deep is the snow?'* For many years, I spent long periods in bed with spinal injury, and one haiku in this book seems to echo Shiki (though I wrote it spontaneously without his help). Both of these haiku work for me, but I make no self-satisfied claim for similar success in this collection as a whole. The 'technique' I try to employ is based on something written by Yagi Kametaro: **'To the single image the poet's mind must add a turn of thought; the poet's mind is crucial'**. This is not so very different from Bashō's *mind that goes off and returns.*

*

At the end of the day, I am more interested in wondering how Bashō, Buson et al might have written had they been English than in how we should etc. etc. etc.; but again, not for one moment do I suggest that any 'haiku' here provides an answer. Most of the poems in this book might be categorized as the 'Juvenilia of old age' – the reworked experimental pieces of a 'past it' novice, (how I might write in the future, I don't know – better, I hope, since some poems here seem a bit awkwardly phrased). Nevertheless, there are, I believe, some few serenities amongst the ordinary and the absurd. Indeed, some purist may well ask, 'why mix the good with .....*the other*?' Two reasons:

- All come from the same pen, and are the results of spontaneous perceptions. They are all me – pimples and all; and I do not care to separate one from the other as if to protect from some withering contamination. However well I might write (hope springs eternal), I would never want to reduce the rich stock of humanity to some thin soup of the transcendental (not believing that to be consistent with the English temperament anyway).

- I believe in trying to give a fair read for the money – even if it means mixing quality with simple entertainment. For myself, I am little more entertained by a few choice syllables stuck with fastidious attention to the centre of a sheet of glossy white than I am by monocolour canvases, pickled sheep, or a roomful of neurotic light bulbs. For some of us the journey is only tolerable given occasional sips of lemonade (the old sort). We are what we are.

deepening into
each groove of the plum blossom
the colour of plum

*

What have sonnets and species got in common? I suggest that both can be seen as successful natural patterns of existence that have long shelf-lives – despite relatively superficial variations through time. Both resemble, in Chaos Theory parlance, a 'strange attractor' situation: each exists and breathes within the determined yet indeterminate variety of its form, (one modern theory of speciation actually takes this very seriously). Indeed, resourceful variety within constraints would seem the key to the longevity of any recognisable form; and if this is true for sonnets, then I suggest that it is also true for haiku. But once across the East-West trans-cultural divide, the question 'What constitutes a haiku?' (apparently asked even in Japan) seems to take on a new significance. Well, there were marsupial tigers and there are mammalian tigers; and I suggest that the question, 'What is haiku?' or 'What is a haiku?' in relation to Eastern and Western forms has little virtue. There will never be hard and fast answers only a verbal moving towards, away, and around. Which is not throw writerly integrity out of the window! I use the wo **'haikai'** for this collection having already defined its meaning fo my purposes. The word seems appropriate for such a motley collection; and it also allows me to spontaneously record whatever perception occurs in whatever haikuish way I choose, leaving the assessment of individual poems to others. On the other hand, even if this book contained poems that were all unanimously agreed to be 'good haiku' by Japanese authority, I think that I would still seek another name for what could only be, as far as I am concerned, English equivalents. For me haiku are haiku in the culture where the indisputable tradition is; and even if the West could some day authentically become part of that tradition (unlikely?), that day seems, to me, still some way off. Enjoy my haikai – *Bon appetit.*

*

More than one version of some 'haiku' is given; and there are some explanatory notes at the end of the book.

Numbers against some haiku refer to Notes on page 91

1990

the death mask gape –
the bed a catafalque …

rhythmic rasp of breath

white chrysanthemums –
blood smokes into the still air
… to catch a light breeze

plunged where she left it,
amongst azaleas – her hoe
… no sense of time[1]

long after death,
dressing table drawers
keep their age-old smell

1991

another summer
comes and goes through the stale bedroom–
windows open wide[2]

a well-worn tracksuit
hangs upon the wall ...
I know
each household stain

nothing on T.V.
but bedroom windows ...
I eavesdrop
on life outside the box

I can't find the right words
while outside the bedroom door
a carpenter whistles

1992 SPRING (FMA)

icy winds zip
between the telephone wires , , , ,
swallows will return

woken by birdsong …
and dry cough after dry cough –
just another day

blackbird,
diviner of worms,
your beak
seems just
so – just
so [3]

in a stubbled glass,
steel glints on the half drawn face …
fresh spring aftershave [4]

who has pressed his thumb …
bleeding against the branches
of this crimson quince … [5]

once again bright trumpets
have become faded daffodils …
a mess of streamers

1992 SUMMER (MJJy)

5 am, first light …
two magpies saunter the road –
checking the curfew

this late blizzard
is deflowering the cherries …
such enormous flakes!

such a grey day …
… cars zoom into Spring's flash floods
of cherry blossom

from the second floor,
over cups of black coffee …
I watch the butterflies

Inexplicable!
Black dress, black hat, hot sun – yet
not a bead of sweat

basking in the sun,
she snaps her coloured wings shut
as I approach

wheeling down the road
behind a large pram – somewhere
there is a small girl

a fumble for keys –
arms full, and hot … the dummy
stuck in her own mouth

how confused they seem,
fussing around the foxgloves …
some flowers much too young

in early retirement –
dew set solitaire in each leaf
of the lupins

1992 AUTUMN (ASO)

fresh wind scours inland streets …
sea-sky … miles away the surf
Crashes

deckchairs face away
from the sheen of sun on sand
… and the fast tide turns

echoes or answers?
… down dew-fresh mornings … blackbirds
sing into distance

rain comes through the thatch …
and summer's sun still stings my head –
telling me something

down in the gutter –
all life's sweetness passes by
an exhausted bee

impatient jays
queue up for surgery –
the nearest wood ants

I knew martins once –
their sweep and stall in cornered air
… *Hi sparrers* [6]

even as I stoop,
its green eyes vanish
into the Shasta daisies

neighbour's secateurs?
No – feasting sparrows swing high
stems of Pampas Grass [7]

the dandelion seed
... on its way ...
to someone else's garden

I try to forget ...
but so slowly the set of the daisy petals
has changed today

sheer extravagance!
... this golden leaf fall
to rich purple asters

my neighbour's broom
sweeps away a kaleidoscope
... those were real toys!

supermarket odyssey ...
golden apples of the crab
shine from a distant garden

I missed them earlier …
how they glow this afternoon,
these sunlit yew berries

siennas, umbers,
scarlets – so many colours …
… and bright green stockings …

butterfly husk …
every now and then,
the web shudders

kicking through leaf-mould,
in the fading light
… I'm watched
… branch to branch, the owl

brown nippled mushrooms
nestle into autumn's leaf-fall …
still warm from the sun

how strange,
a Comma has paused … to die,
on honeyed chrysanthemums

tonight, this haiku …
in falling squares of light
from other windows

(Durham Haiku Conference)

in dawn's early light,
heading straight towards the moon …
vapour trails

1992 WINTER (NDJ)

always a bad corner!
... now, through wet fog,
the tail lights
of parked horses

tangled pubic mounds
where long time since my hands cupped
ripened blackberries

wraith-like,
the snow within the window-light
... the sound of breath ...

a garden shrouded
against the dust that falls ...
and falls ...
winter childhood

in my pillowed head,
white noise becomes sparrow cheep ...
(I know it's snowing) [8]

heavy snowfall!
... curled blue shadows canopy
the moon-glazed townscape

Brrr... it's cold!
... the postman's prints are filled
with deep blue shadows

snow stands inches deep
upon the washing line ... sparrows
are not up yet

through frost-stained windows
comes the early morning sun ...
Glory on earth enough!

garden shapes have changed!
... and before I beat the branches
there's a moment's angst

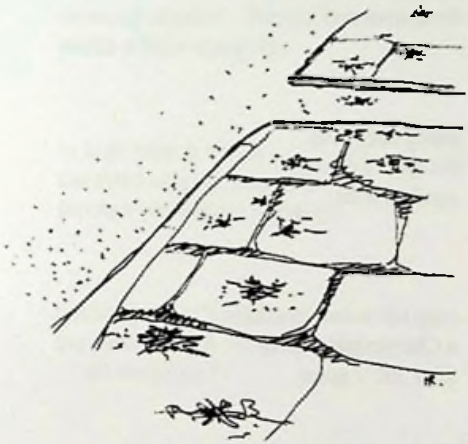
hard pressed
against a sky heavy with snow
... the filigree of trees

1992 NONSEASONAL

desperate pages, dense
fistfuls of passionate flies …
Oh Rachmaninov! [9]

the mirror's glances
never reflect how I feel …
they never will

Spat! Spat! Spat!
… along the pavement – blood
    goes past my turning



New England postcard …
then, after forty years we meet …
to go our ways

still on my tongue,
the polished stone … the wonder
that was always there

God, Psychology's boring …
yet a browsing fly
has become totally absorbed!

a constant check
from the tumble-dry – my underpants!
… as if I'd leave them

is nothing sacred?
… in a major poet's works –
one of my own lines!

like monkeys we
compare our liver spots –
the mirror and myself.

going shopping,
the snail I passed
coming back

crap bar-music catches
a Chopin poignancy
after she's gone

ironing my trousers
to Rachmaninov's 1st,
slow movement
… more water than steam

through all *Four Seasons*!
incessant rain … on something
thrums

1993 SPRING (FMA)

sleet now in the rain ...
the fat old dog looks round
for his older master [10]

night rain buffets
... and through wild glistening branches
come the streetlamps

with warm sun on my back,
even my shadow
walks a little straighter

in high March winds ...
the swirl of a summer dress
through plate-glass windows

not long out of bud,
the leaves of the balsam poplars
... all atremble [11]

I thrust into the wind,
while trees lean
in the opposite direction

...raindrops...
...crater the canal
...the patterns
endless ...
... serene
... mallard

CREATIVE KIREJI

The writers' weekend!
One by one they arrive … Aargh,
I'm the only bloke

the cold bedrooms,
the coffee and cocoa nightcaps … Ohno,
all night the banging doors!

bone-aching dawn –
I gush an early bath … Ahhh,
the steam around my toes

(Ludlow '93)

1993 SUMMER (MJJy)

Which roses will give me scent ?
asks the man
with the powerful aftershave

tilting into sleep,
the music
from a distant fairground

fairground music
tilting into sleep ...
soft rain
on a brown-patched field

just before the rain
turns golden ...
a blackbird lets us know
all about it

the cat's yawn
is all
pink tongue and indolence

scarcely moving
the bamboo
wind chimes
water sounds
cold stone
in the cool
courtyard

(Birmingham Botanical Gardens)

IN A COFFEE SHOP

smart shy lady …
she spoons the cream from her coffee …
then flicks her nose

the girl with a machine-gun laugh –
her hands fly up like startled starlings

over her coffee cup,
the olive-skinned woman
keeps catching my eyes

the pretty student with carmine hair!
Philosophy? A chat show, I say

behind her *Elle,*
… and all her smoke
in my direction

(Drucker's Birmingham)

1993 AUTUMN (ASO)

old man, beneath the sign
At any time
you do not make my day

our last shampoo together –
my car drips all the way home

blackberry wood-smoke …
… drifting over damp leaves …
only my thoughts

OSAKAZUKI MAGIC:
green to scarlet –
the conjuror's scarf trick [12]

trashed cars piled high
in the muddy yard … a blaze
of headlights at sundown

1993 WINTER (NDJ)

fractal-rimed,
the rowan tree
holds only the orange
beak of the blackbird

starlings have noted
an empty tree, and filled it
with whistling discord

FOUR POETS

Sadly long gone,
Miss J. Hunter Dunn. Who misses
The civil servant?

Stevens is exotic –
His blue guitar becomes
Kaleidoscopic.

Bright as a migraine,
Plath ... from Hughes
The hard spiked words.

Oh the horror –
Birth, copulation, and death ...
And all that washing up!

1994 INTERLUDE

stripping its prey,
the sparrow-hawk makes no mistakes
with the orange cat

her bicycle wheels spin
at ten. By afternoon,
wind swirls the brown leaves

no fan of life –
the cord, tight about the neck ...
crimson striped slate-blue

on the floor in jeans,
frayed sweater ... frantically
avoiding his eyes

shutters are closed,
the house damp with memories
Outside, the sun is cold

constantly her 'You'
means 'I'. The first person
is just too painful

1994 WINTER/'95 SPRING (JFMA)

snow crowds the rowan's branches …
and I see my old Yoshino cherry [13]

gaily painted
narrow-boats –
land-locked by ice …
a blue smoke rising
from just one

quite deep, the snow –
all subtle shades and colours …
sparrows unimpressed

Madam,
I know my blue headband looks ridiculous …
Tell that to my ears

after the cold spell,
puddles – cantilevers of ice
slowly crumbling …

surviving meltdown –
a few daffodils
spring free
from their last crust of snow

rain-bright pussy willow ...
all those silky hairs!

bright sun,
a pretty coloured girl ...
her teeth

bonus days ...
my neighbour's dog limps to greet me
with a long sniff at Spring

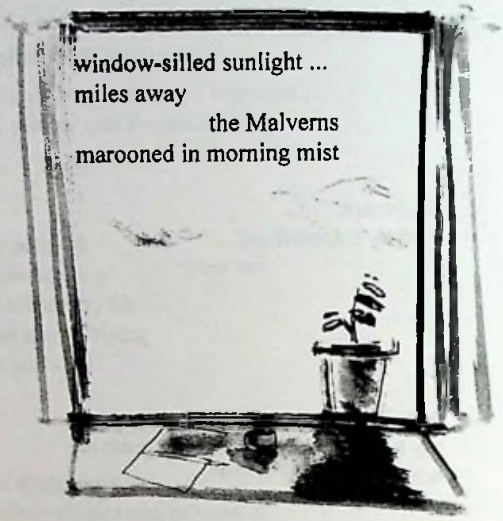
April 1.
Outside the Registry
a photographer blows on his fingers

Spring weddings ...
the wind scatters confetti
over old graves [14]

mingled with the guests
and their recycled confetti ...
a few brown petals

warm Spring sunshine
splashes over City pavements
the scent of hyacinths

1995 SUMMER (MJJy)



window-silled sunlight ...
miles away
the Malverns
marooned in morning mist

the kingfisher
splinters its clear water ...
into blue demoiselles

only thumbnail size,
yet he has mown all this grass ...
all buzz and heat-haze [15]

(Donnington Grove)

out of the scented heat,
such relief ... Aaah!
the cold smell of chlorine

(Donnington Grove – Haiku Conference)

a swan's wing lifts
spreads moisture
cools the breathless air

(Stratford upon Avon)

it's warm,
and a small person's dilemma
is melting!

a white butterfly
flutters towards my legs
... exquisite in mauve

all morning he slaves
in boiling sun – then slings his pick
to put the kettle on

how hot can it get? ...
A carpet salesman shades his car
with Chinese rugs

a blackbird in the bath
is taking ages! Patient sparrows
take a shower instead

Heavy Rock pulsates
over hot tarry pavements ...
light itself wavers

marigolds
still bring the sun
through my sun-glasses

more lime than lemon …
the pseud'acacia
sinks into its own shade

aged mother –
all her energies …
do this, don't do that …

for an instant:
my speed
my brakes
my breath … the sky!
……. a flawless blue

warm morning sun
reveals disaster … the silence
of sparrow feathers

not through a glass darkly,
I bounce off the armoured window
to reflect on life

Summer lightning!
  Each strike rips the sky in half ...
I want to hold my arms out

storm litter
under the chestnut trees – tiny fruits
... and a child's dummy

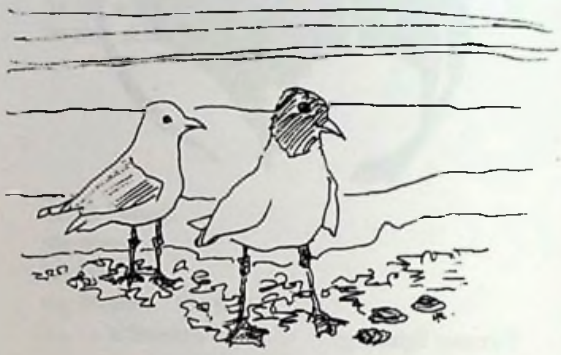
we spoke of haiku,
and ... every so often ...
the scent of freesias

(Japan Centre; Birmingham Un.)

THE SEA, THE SEA (SEP 1995: St. IVES)

to my beach flat
come Turner dawns, thundrous surf …
and small night noises

white sound all night
brings tide-wake round the legs
of early morning gulls



an early morning call
to share the deserted beach
with crabs and seagulls

finding a Beach Café,
I find the day's first chore
is sweeping the sand away

ripple marks
on sifted sand grains …
a just touchable texture

always one leap ahead,
wet sand spurts
precede my feet [16]

each rock pool
strangely empty ...
at first

seaweed and anemones ...
backwards and forwards
the small crab scuttles

scooped from its Universe,
the baby crayfish vanishes ...
until I put it back

I lose it every so often
against the patchy sky –
the blue-grey seagull

half-way round the bay,
I look back ...
to see if my feet turn out

utterly absurd!
Someone
has gone to meet the sea
in high heels.

as if not understanding,
as if it mattered –
the gull backs off
from each advancing wave

once the tide's out,
the rock fissure has another voice – a sound
… like blue-black mussel wetness

to the hotel lounge
come noises from the dining room
and hungry seagulls

sunlit headland …
white walls
one hundred feet above,
'Deep Waters' [17]

almost I'd forgotten it,
the rusty cliff path kissing gate
... no-one around now

sunlit butterflies
prefer the old railway line
to my cliff-top way

'Sandy Bay Halt' ...
the acrid diesel corrodes
my childhood

pinned in a corner,
a seagull jumps the yellow can –
twice for every wave

round and round he runs
to escape the wasp ...
Smell of fish and chips

first dip of the day:
getting a fix on my beach-mat ...
hit by the first wave!

a small child
catches the wave ...
all two foot six of it

over dinner –
still leaking sea-water

Calamari? Squid,
says the waitress. The small boat
turns into the waves

next table's going home.
How calm the sea is …
even the sun's shining

I swap the pretty waitress
to gain a window seat –
Bloody rain!

litter bins,
drunk on the deserted beach …
measuring the rainfall

lasting impressions:
the calligraphy of gulls
on a reach of sand

sea sifting back
the sky returning
with each wave

a sense of Autumn –
all over Hepworth's bronze with strings
there are spider webs

pot boulders –
shaping up to the sea
and to each other …
'Nesting Forms' [18]

a red rose
obstinately itself
a cast hand turned down flat –
that's it … finished [19]

(Barbara Hepworth Gallery)

IN A COFFEE SHOP

before each fresh cup,
she shuffles through her photographs …
expressionless

plump and tarty mum
watches her daughter
downing the cream cakes

just for a moment,
she forgets where the fork is …
in her mouth!

sitting with her head in her hands.
… outside, it starts to rain

(Drucker's, Birmingham)

1995 AUTUMN (ASO)

pub yard shade –
cold draughts
to the roar of indoor fans

twice now this lilac dusk,
a black cat has crossed the lines …
to slip through white railings

hurrying through autumn leaves …
beetle existence too
must seem a labyrinth [20]

my new umbrella
records each passing tree …
grey background drizzle

clutching his paper sheets,
hoping for a late summer …
we've something in common

dark October rain …
yet roadside rose-hips brighten
into brightness

1995 WINTER (NDJ)

a gold leaf …
tarnished by the first light frost –
I feel my age

winter trees
superimposed
en colonnade
to a vanishing point
of light

leafless branches
trawling the black and white
coloured balloons

wintry evening –
briefly, the horses' breath …
whiter than the moon [21]

whiter than the moon,
the horses' breath – this envy
for other peoples' lives

whiter than moonshine,
the horses' breath – the bleak air
freezes my ears off.

out of my dreams
comes the sound of sparrows
hopping in the snow

black on white on black …
each branch and twig has become
its own ground and relief

wind and snow
  have their own ideas
                about the shape
                  of my new car

a boulevard of trees
stretches out its filigree
… the sky filled with snow

horizontal weather.
  Beneath the grocer's awning …
  the snow-capped oranges

1995 ***That time of year thou mayst in me behold***
My wallet empty and my fingers cold

empty carrier bags
billowed by Siberian winds
haul me market shopping

sky blueprint blue …
even on the balance blocks of yellow cranes
there are Christmas trees

(Brindley Place, Birmingham)

into the starry starry night
a hot-dog stand
exhales its onion breath

last minute presents –
Merry Christmas says the scaffolding …
wet City dusk

Christmas lights all fuzzed …
the hot-dog stand sinks drizzle-snug
into its own cloud

Parfumerie and Cosmetics
through double doors
the darkening streets

(Rackhams)

late Christmas Eve –
all the ground floor glitz complexions
fading a bit

the lift doors open …
full …
and close –
too damn quick [22]

outside the fitting rooms,
he touches the silken lingerie
in smaller sizes

closing time –
empty lifts and faces
… Christmas kisses

fast emptying streets –
each high-rise office window
lit, carded, and tinselled

tireless
electric
blue
the lift
of the Hyatt Hotel

a busker
repeats his phrase –
corrects a wrong note …
Freezing!

shedding my laurel leaves
at the fancy-dress …
all the bright young things

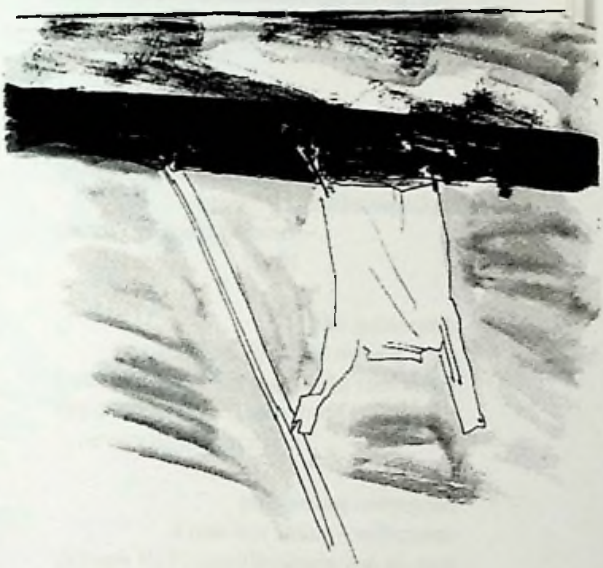
slowly
turning
turkey
carcass
suspended
over silent snow
the sun
sets [23]

(after Ravel's Le Gibet)

1996 SPRING (FMA)

red-scarfed
and stepping out
in green wellies …
only my shadow stays blue

effortless, the sun
cuts shadows out of morning frost …
the beginning of art? [24]



Oh my poor shirt –
board-stiff in the biting wind …
can't even flap freely

melting snow reveals
my summer footprints –
a face peers back

some samurai!
aching ankles
forgot my *thank-you* ...
the taste of tea

(Japan Centre, Birmingham University)

Spring comes cold and bright,
with green light and smell of tar ...
boys from the black stuff

yellow ivy
has taken over the dead oak
... and a blackbird sings

deepening into
each groove of the plum blossom
the colour of plum

dangerous pavements
caterpillar – mind you don't
step on any cracks [25]

1996 LONDON INTERLUDE (APRIL)

midge shoals take time out
to sun on darkest stones ...
Concorde overhead

(Public Records Office, Kew)

my morning train ...
picks up speed at last ...
..... Mortlake Cemetery

lunching at Simpson's,
I face the sushi samurai
sandwich-handed [26]

beside the sumo photo
and his hand-print,
stands the sushi barman –
bored

from two street lamps,
two shadows turn the corner
... every muscle tense

through Hi Fi crackle
comes the disembodied voice ...
Ahhh ... haiku [27]

(Daiwa House, London)

a bridge over Bashō's path?
Surely somewhere there must be
the drops of mud ... [28]

(Daiwa House)

umbrellas on a bridge
in wind and rain … the willow
seems even lovelier

(from Daiwa House)

a black umbrella'd mood:
my old friend – how did she die?
Regent's Park in Spring

what an eyesore,
the BT tower … but shears in hand,
here come the gardeners

their mouths as if glued
together in Regent's Park –
pigeons … spring flowers

we have lift off … Splat!
Oh no we don't … Oh yes we do –
mallard-sheen in Spring

hissed at by a brown goose,
I hiss straight back.
That shook him

dining Italian,
I push the flowers
into the empty space

watching the waitress' face
as the old *papa*
kisses the female guests

I might charm the birds from the trees
he thinks …
I wish I knew the language

('La Traviata', Kew)

the hotel empty;
by the door, my coat and scarf
wait with my car-keys

one last search of my room …
all I wanted from life –
where did I leave it? [29]

as I drive away,
a single leaf becomes attached
to the windscreen

(Kew)

1996 SUMMER (MJJy)

I shouldn't put your head out
snail,
it's bucketing down out here

I bend a branch down
to smell the 'almond' blossom,
and come home petalled

already letting go
one cherry petal at a time
to the mown grass

as sunrise burns into day,
comes the sweetness of a bluebell wood

all windows wide –
I'm still followed by a perfume …
… azaleas opening

Hollyhocks
seem quite at home in Belgravia …
    … the heat of the pavements!

a warm breeze
disturbs the wind-chimes on a Dockland's balcony …
and I smell the sea

looking back
through my carriage window – the child
on a swing
suspended

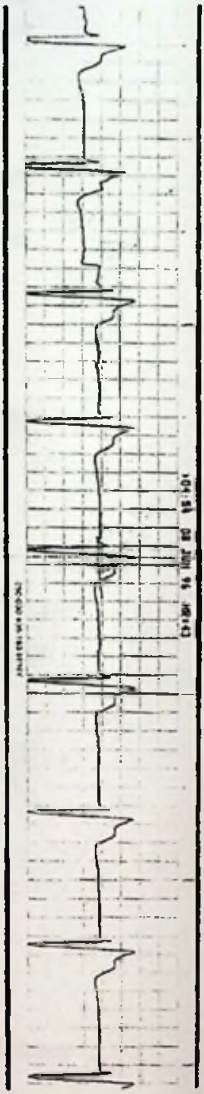
from my empty train –
the anonymity of anglers
in heavy rain

… no longer there –
just the recorded heart-beats
slowly printing out

belongings …
I open her Sorrento box –
not yet quite run down [30]

feeling for the notes
of Joplin's 'Solace' …
windows wide
to the humid night

into the paper-bank
with all the tattered music …
all her fingering



blown –
all the red tulips.
At last,
the yellow one

hot work, navvying –
how the sweat runs
... on his nose
the drill's vibration [31]

Brrrrr .....
on the navvy's nose,
the drill's vibration

the stone-cutter too
has a runny nose ...
fat rain-spats
splash his dusty arms

lop-sided
in hot sun,
the fat bee
tumbles
from flower
to scented flower

the cut rose,
a touch of class to the bird-bath –
sparrow squabble

Daisies ... she stoops to pick,
then throws them to die
in the hot sun

the incredible gravity
of the short skirt –
neither up nor down …
a kestrel [32]

lime blossom
has clothed the streets with gold …
CAR WASH CLOSED

after the landslide,
the rescue
– a few humble-bees
come stumbling out

it has tightened its loose coils
as in life,
the half-charred snake

strutting between delphiniums,
turning his head every which way –
a peacock

proprietorial,
the boxer-bouncer door stop –
just a good licking

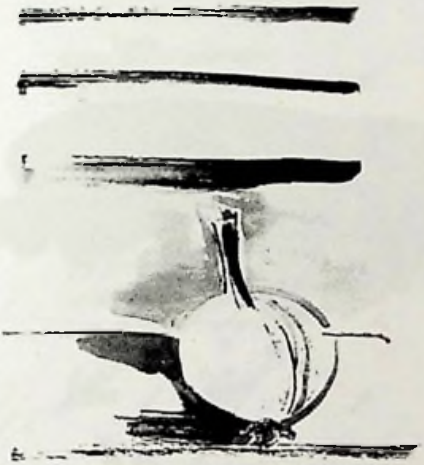
in peat-dark burns,
tongueless fish
practise their endless gutterals [33]

scuff marks –
my mother's shoes …
and dress
in the OXFAM shop

1996 AUTUMN (ASO)

against the wall ...
against the white wall,
the butterfly

getting on with life
on the bottom shelf –
an onion



long lion days –
the old cat, couchant
on the gate-post

becoming unbuttoned
too late –
the skirt flares in the wind ...
flashing glances

sightless in bright sun,
who should I bump into but
my talkative friend

hungry to devour words,
I savage a tomato …
and pips fly everywhere

spiralling
down
into
its
spinning
sha
do
w …
aleaf

with each raindrop,
a piece of sky falls
from the clothes-line …
starlings

bees buzz in lavender,
lifting with life …
maggots in the dead mouse

among the pink-tinged
mounds of cod – a moving thing,
the mackerel's eye [34]

stung out of solitude –
the wind-whipped muddied leaf
almost springs tears

it's blow your nose twelve times
an hour weather – but somehow,
I'm carefree for once

such a lot of noise
from an empty leafless tree …
That you,
tiny blue bird?

1996 WINTER (NDJ)

however quiet the snow,
it disturbs the radiators
... almost too still, the moon

searching for the shelf
of the
recommended wine ...
I am not alone

Vanished ... somewhere inside
the forest of Christmas trees,
the child's voice – THIS ONE [35]

poor man – almost
as immersed as his daughter
in the cut-out book

this year I clear the snow
conscious of my mother's eyes
from an empty bedroom

almost an afterthought –
the few more flakes of snow
from an empty sky

as daylight breaks,
I watch the Christmas illuminations
lose their bezazz

eyeing up the balloons
and paper chains … the old cat
just can't be bothered

January morning:
the Sale doors open wide,
to disturb the pigeons

1997 SPRING (FMA)

can't sleep, can't sleep …
from pane to pane,
the yellow moon

metal screams,
then nothing …
but the moon,
sharp-edged as bone[36]

Spring again so soon …
which Christmas cards are these – still
stuffed in the bookcase?

across wet pavements,
they seem to pass like shadows …
black coffee blues

strategically,
I park my Polo to outshine
the filthy Lotus

how cool this morning …
spread out canal-side in the sun,
the café chairs

ankle-deep in scrolls,
a young carpenter
planes something flat

surrounded by scrolls,
the old cabinet maker –
mostly hand and eye[37]

his own master –
enjoying Life and Spring smells …
sharp tug on the lead

how can I save you
ladybird, if you refuse
to take my hand?

no blackthorn winter,
but as far as my eye can see …
sloe blossoming [38]

1997 SUMMER (MJJy)

with thick cherry blossom
blanketing the lawn, a wood-pigeon
comes in like a jumbo

a small bird's cheeping
penetrates the still night ...
and stops

the pinkness of white
panties under the cherry tree ...
such noisy sparrows

pretty girls
no longer a rare commodity –
it's summer

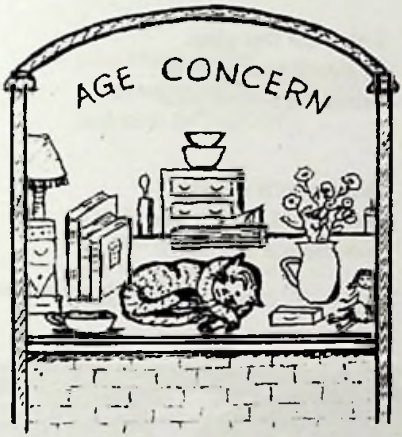
herbaceous clematis
reaches for the prickly branches
of Charity

the alkie bag-lady,
skirt up round her thighs,
doesn't give a damn

ssSWISHCRACK – perfect:
straight between the bonsai oaks …
……smaller and smaller

Oh snail, you've made it
halfway across the pavement …
but where's your shadow?

dead-heading the poppies …
in a summer downpour … with bees
still on their pollen round.



in the window
of Age Concern, old 'tiger'
snoozes in the sun

the Test Match washed out,
her husband bored … idly she
tears apart sweet peas

Supermarket blues:
double-teamed by the pram twins –
basket-dunkin' shut-out [39]

geriatric ginger
looks up wearily
                as his tail
falls into shadow

the blonde barmaid
cleans out a one-armed bandit,
and lights flash everywhere

I nose the fine glass
of elderflower spritzer …
summer's almost gone [40]

thunder rolls around
and around the lavender fields …
how the scent darkens

(Astley Abbots, Shropshire)

1997 AUTUMN (ASO)

beneath the raised slab,
things
have been trying hard to grow

must be ninety now ...
through her parlour window
we exchange high fives

slim office dollies ...
always sharing their sandwiches ...
and such fat pigeons!

an acorn falls, and
the ladybird catapults
head over abdomen [41]

all he seeks now's sleep,
the war-torn tom next door ... those fleas
have no respect

Sunday morning bells
shouting all over the park
while she shells the peas

burnt offerings
at the barbecue …
her husband elsewhere

musts of age
in the second-hand bookshop …
some remembered texts

up out of deep sleep
and memory – the sad tang
of a Sunday bell

a grief of gulls
    far out
tiny bobbing boats

what is it – that
rusted thing
out on the lake
– the sun behind it ... [42]

(Regent's Park)

with all the leaves turning,
the cry of a land gull
crosses the water

(Regent's Park)

... running like clockwork ...
the Northern Line mouse –
..... black as the colour code [43]

Chokushi-Mon:
Please keep off the gravel ...
'footprints' all over [44]

(Kew Gardens)

pine needles have fallen
to the gravel garden's grooves ...
quiet *tsukubai* [45]

The Gardens closing,
my shadow trespasses
across the raked gravel

(Kew Gardens)

outside
the mahogany doors,
his car
has broken down

(Harley Street)

1998 ALL SEASONS

a new year dawns,
and in the cold half light of somewhere
... there's a car alarm

icy ...
past each lock-gate
... only the sound
of the next

how pink her tongue is
as she licks the stamps ...
my nose
blue with cold

cold and unpromising,
but on my birthday card
there's a cherry orchard [46]

'*AWNDEEN*'. Same voice,
same year – 'So, we meet again,
Mr Rubinstein' [47]

after the bin-men,
a scrap of poetry
passes me in the wind

with all the clankiness
of a steamroller, the empty can
rolls unconcerned downhill

poor kite ...
caught fast ... and with all the trees
bursting into leaf

(Kensington Gardens)

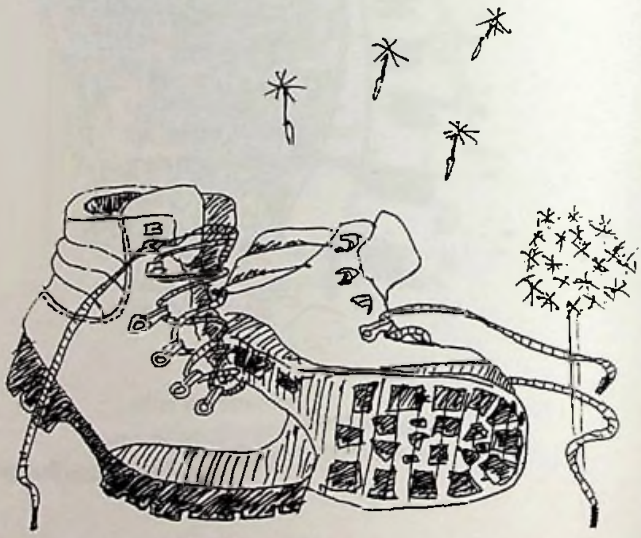
how far back they go,
the dandelions – uncountable
along the railway line

dirty old town –
the wind-ripped cries of land gulls
haunt scarred hillsides

rain all day, all week ...
and puddles across the road
are occupied by ducks

on a sunlit path,
white hair ruffled by the light breeze …
dandelion clocks [48]

(Ludlow, 18th April ;
for Norman Barraclough)



sweet-scented wallflowers!
... where else but on a wall,
over nettle beds

through the tea-room windows,
morning glories
blacken against the sun

(Dunnington Farm – near Redditch)

barefoot from the cool
of rain-soaked grass, I find the warmth
of old tree roots

(Treasures of Tenbury)

tip-toed, he holds on
tight to a big balloon ...
and his mother's knees

a child's big green balloon
seems to prefer my company ...
... nervous glances back

golden cherry leaves
gather on the sun-splashed lawn ...
heron grey overhead

stars wink in
and out of urban haze ... the plash of water
in a perfumed garden [49]

a frolic of heifers ...
in and out the skyline trees
and rose-red limestone

(Yorkshire memory)

the towpath icy –
between the crack of lock-gates,
our footsteps' company ...

out of the lock chamber
comes a twist of blue smoke – voices,
and red geraniums

(Lapworth)

1999 ALL SEASONS

with sudden descent,
a cloud of starlings stage
a pitch invasion

morning sun
finds the frost-field crammed
with geese ...

windows wide at sixty –
the car loaded with light
    and the scent of May-flower

the black poplar thrusts
its severed stumps skywards –
a handful of green leaves

all the way down the line,
yellow ragwort merges
into green and grey

Between two winters

reaching the flight of lock-gates,
magpies startled into sunlight
at winter gunshot

I feel the last warmth
going out to God knows where
... the slant sun on her face

summer's given up ...
and with it, the last flowers
of her hanging baskets

no tree this Christmas,
and my entire focus
is on its absence

was it really here
I lost myself … listening to leaves fall
… smelled rain so pungent [50]

(Sutton Park – W. Midlands)

brilliant, brilliant!
the acer's leaves
sharp etched on blue …
and not a cloud in sight

a balloon-seller –
his head, a cloud of coloured gas …
… and I forget the time

(Birmingham City Centre)

cursing myself
still cursing her hairpins
rattling up the Hoover

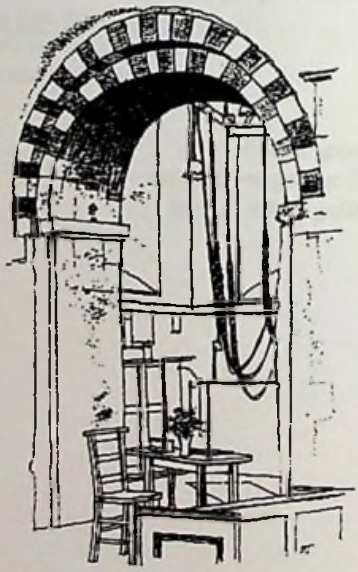
Two Haiku for a Bell

... down lovely seasons all
twixt clang and clang we ring
small silences ... [51]

... down lovely seasons
all twixt clang and clang
we ring small silences ...

*

voiced for all seasons,
our tongues upturned in silence
in the midst of noise



For a few 'haiku' more: Birmingham 2000

ghosts inside the head ...
the patterns in my coffee cup
do not repeat

I plant her tree
with the Queen Mum's spade ...
she'd have loved this soil

and in a favourite garden,
I scatter all her ashes
around my footprints
(Botanical Gardens – Birmingham)

poor butterfly –
there's only one way out ...
and that's not it

he looks distinctly odd –
that man washing down the fountain
with a hosepipe

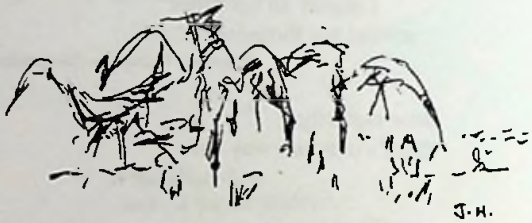
yanked away
from an interesting tree
..... pees anyway

how the nights drag on,
as one rose petal after another
drops its perfume

a vapour trail
heads towards summer's indigo –
its winking lights
get lost in the fireworks

the slowness of time –
spiders have settled in
on the SOLD notice

I have gone away –
there's nothing that I can do
about my shadow



Canada geese at grass -
no time to stop and stare,
just peck and go [52]

(Kew Gardens)

how like my own mind –
so difficult to access.
Useless manuals!

I stare at the screen,
windows wide … children coming home …
Where has my life gone?

the blank screen stares back –
just a sheet of white paper …

between the thing itself
and its unique perception,
where is the rose?

Man with Skull by Hals –
the morbid self-reflection
haunts my vanity

a saké in parting –
in the company of friends
there is solitude [53]

EXERCISE:

Back in November '95, a Brit.Haiku Soc. workshop at Daiwa House set the following task: turn the poem below into a haiku.

> ***The way* a crow**
> **Shook down on me**
> **The dust of snow**
> **From a *hemlock tree***
>
> **Has given my heart**
> **A change of mood**
> **And saved some part**
> **Of a day I had rued.**
>
> Robert Frost, 1874-1963

All too often, the muse sends us mortals dashing for a pencil – only to leave us chewing on it for the next few hours, days, weeks .... Quickly, before the mind became too cluttered with thought, I scribbled something down.

> **perching crow**
> **out of myself too**
> **the falling snow**

Simultaneously, it seemed, I sensed the potential metaphor of *coming out of oneself* – the sudden shifts and contrasts of position: of black on white v. white on black, of the down-ness v the up-ness of things. And no doubt, Bashō's raven played its sub-conscious part. Whatever, there, in about 20 seconds was the engine of the piece – staring me in the face, yet definitely short of parts. For the next few minutes and following weeks, I sucked timber – only knowing that the italicised words were important in Frost's poem, and therefore integral to the desired haiku. One day, out of the blue, I wrote,

> **spraddling a hemlock branch,**
> **black crow – out of myself too**
> **the falling snow**

Close, but there were still problems: the rhyme clanged, the second line diction and sense were wrong, '**black**' was redundant. And what's this word, '**spraddling**', what does it mean?

Most importantly, '**spraddling**' speaks its own meaning. Something between sprawling, spreading, struggling, straddling; the word shouts comic ungainliness. But does it exist? A Lewis Carroll fan, I might easily have coined it myself – and wanting to be sure, I checked through all the likely poetry that I'd read (not a lot). Twenty poems into **T. Hughes book 'Crow'**, I found **'Crow spraddled head-down in the beach-garbage guzzling a dropped ice-cream.'** Clearly, my finding the word for use in the 'haiku' was down to appropriate sub-conscious suggestion. Whatever, the N. American Hemlock would have been well known and loved by Robert Frost. Its branches, drooping tippily when snow-laden, would have caused any crow perching problems. And so, the simple spontaneous use of allusion in this case helps us to see, perhaps, the situation in the 'haiku' more fully and think, 'No wonder Robert Frost was amused'.

Finally, I tried one further 'out of form' adjustment:

a crow,
spraddling the hemlock's branches
... out of myself too, the falling snow

18 syllables...

'**the**' specifies the tree – the one that Frost is standing beneath; not just any old tree over there.

'**a**' signifies one of many; but its use also softens the hard monosyllable of '**crow**' into a muted iamb. Coupled with the revised metric distancing of '**crow**' from '**snow**', this softening effect lessens the rhyme-clang.

The '-ing' in '**spraddling**' and and the '-s' at the end of '**branches**' both serve to emphasise the ongoing desperate struggle for corvine dignity.

The running metric of the last line carries three main stresses – all towards the end of the line ('**too**', '**falling**', '**snow**'.). This construction suggests an initial sense of good humour followed by the impression of further snowfall.

Overall, there is a tension between cause and effect – between the *vision* and the *turn of thought* – that does not deny further exploration by the reader. On the other hand, one can share the poet's experience of looking upwards to see where the snow is coming from. As previously suggested, 'openness' should **not** be so vague as to cause ambivalence, or to obstruct any coherent emotions at all.

*

Because of haiku's smallness, analysis cannot but take away some of that prized haiku quality termed 'openness'. But such analysis performed authorially is only what readers should be doing for themselves anyway in trying to decode the writing and the effects that it has on him or her. The development of critical/analytical faculties seems, to me, no less important to writers of haiku than it is to writers of western poetry. How can one set about improving one's own writing, if one does not recognise, or understand the nature of, the qualities to seek? Without some appreciation of what makes a line work or not, and without some consequent technical tinkering, how else does one turn the spontaneous poetic vision of the moment to its best effect on the page? I can't help thinking sometimes, that if one concentrates too much on haiku form and the 'simple' juxtaposition of verbally cropped images – ideas that derive (perhaps a little spuriously?) from writings of a different language-culture (the only language-culture that can truly claim a haiku *tradition*), one misses (becomes blind to) the opportunity to attempt fusion of western poetics with the true spirit of haiku. The above analysis may be more concerned with western 'prosodics' than considerations of Japanese form; but perhaps this is what's needed to find true western haiku equivalents of 'literary quality'? My 'final' version of Frost's poem-cum-haiku seems neither 'good' nor 'bad' – is not presented as anything but food for thought and argument.

*

The idea of capturing a silent moment of sudden insight in a cage o words is not uniquely Japanese. James Joyce's hero, Stephen Daedalus, for instance, has the concept of 'Epiphanies' – in which 'the soul of the commonest object' can suddenly reveal its 'radiance' or 'quidditas'. Joyce's Epiphanies were written in short prose. My 'Epiphany' overleaf imagines Joyce rewriting Bashō's famous haiku: *An old pond; / a frog jumps in – / the sound of water.* The blank space is a caesura (or silent break) in which one might hear a quiet *sploop*. The epigraph is partly apocryphal: Bashō is *said* to have composed his haiku in response to a question from his Zen master, and 'the old pond' *may* symbolise Bashō's mind; partly, it parodies a conversation between Stephen and his friend concerning the non-epiphanising of a town clock.

But read Joyce's /Stephen's Epiphany 26 for better haiku-likeness; *James Joyce: Macmillan Casebook Series.*

EPIPHANY

Then Master Buccho asked
'How about before the rain, before the green moss gets wet?'

Stephen glanced at the pond, and smiled
'It has not epiphanised yet,' he said, 'but I'll think of something.'

At the very edge of the change of things, at the edge of the change of change – where the great wave of change sweeps across and retreats over and over ... there are always small pools of the past, each a mirror to its own beginnings and its ends. And where the city has pushed its soiled fingers deep into the softest flesh of village life and village life has simply moved aside and within, dreams the old mill pool – itself a small oasis of seasonal change amid the terrible thirsts and sterilities of concrete. And on this morning, on this warm summer morning, the old pool smells just as it has smelt on all the other warm summer mornings that have ever preceded it. It smells of life. SPLOOP! Is it a stone? a fish? ... but as I reach a view, I see, jutting out of the algal greeniness, the broken brickwork of the old mill; and onto this tenuous ledge young frogs are clambering up and out of the water – out of one world and into another towards the sun. The ledge crowds; until one frog diving back into the water re-emerges to take its place again at the very back of things. And suddenly, it is not a pool; and the frogs are clambering off the page onto the desk where I am writing only to return again as words, and the words are clambering down out of my head onto the paper to return again as thought; and I no longer know who made the first sound – the water, the frog, or myself. The rest is silence.

INTERTEXTUALITY IN HAIKU

Literary allusion as 'a *method of expanding meaning is used frequently in Japanese haiku, but often eludes Western readers, or even modern Japanese, who may not have the literary background necessary to appreciate many allusions*'. Haiku Handbook gives classical and modern examples: On pp.12-14, Buson's *willow leaves fallen/ clear waters dried up stones/ one place and another* seems, at first glance, a little thin on meaningful substance; but its multi-layered allusion to a particular willow tree spans back some five and a half centuries from a waka by Saigyō (1118-1190), through a nō play by Nobumitsu (1435-1516) and Bashō's Narrow Roads of the Interior (1689), to the 18th. century, where Buson (1716-1784) adds a final touch of metaphor to comment on the 'modern' decline of Bashō's haiku method. On pp. 123-124, an example of 'allusive variation' is given: *an empty elevator/ opens/ closes* (J. Cain, 1969) becomes *the elevator/ opens .../ vacant masks/ ...closes* (F. K. Robinson, 1976). 'Elevators presumably may be empty in more ways than one'. My own variant is ***the lift doors open/ full .../ and close – / too damn quick*** (a busy department store at Christmas).

In general, allusion within literary texts is used to illustrate or enhance the subject, or to undercut it ironically; but other writing need not be the only source of referential material – well known persons, places, or events might serve as well. The modern term 'intertextuality' (which includes allusion) refers to the multiple ways in which any writing uses, echoes, or is linked to other texts; and the word 'text' might have wide definition. I find some 6% of my haikai writings to be intertextual; (I prefer the term 'haikai' for my own writings). ***Dangerous pavements/ caterpillar – mind you don't/ step on any cracks*** echoes Seamus Heaney's *Dangerous pavements./ But I face the ice this year/ With my father's stick.* The colloquialism ***'mind you don't'*** can be read two ways; caterpillars are not superstitious. ***Effortless, the sun/ cuts shadows out of morning frost.../ the beginning of art?*** echoes Bashō's *The beginning of art – / the depths of the country/ and a rice planting song.* R. Aitken (*A Zen Wave*) translates Bashō's first line as *The beginning of culture – /.* My own variant means '**art**'. But ***Neighbours secateurs?/ No – feasting sparrows swing high/ stems of Pampas Grass*** (compare *Clods of earth/ seeming to move?/ No – quail; by Naitō Meisetsu*); ***One last search of my room .../ all I wanted from life – / where did I leave***

it? (compare *There is nothing/ in my desk drawer./ I open it and look in; by Ozaki Hosai)*; and ***I nose the fine glass/ of elderflower spritzer .../ summer's almost gone*** (compare *Wrapping my hands round/ this teacup's old yellow glaze – / September going; by Katō Kōko)* ... these last three haikai are all examples of totally independent writing that lack any intentionality of reference at all. That they compare to other writings (discovered much later) only points to the commonality of certain human experience: they allude to the text of life itself.

Might Haiku Handbook have commented a little more on the use – or non-use – made of allusive methods by Western writers? Judging from The Haiku Anthology (Cor van den Heuvel), up till 1986, at least, North American haiku writing seemed fairly committed to developing styles dependent on the plain juxtaposition of simple images for their effects; and newcomers to the scene at that time might well have thought that the use in haiku of allusion (of the literary variety at least) was valid only for the Japanese. Haiku Handbook's directive – that haiku language '*must be utterly clear, stripped of all impediments to sharing*', might have been read by some as prohibitive to the use of **all** allusion: have been seen as being just as bad as metaphor in closing off the writing to a reader's interpretative freedom, (even though Haiku Anthology and Haiku Handbook do comment on the not infrequent use made of allusive variation by both East and West). What evidence is there that the creative climate has changed since? Not a lot, it seems to me. But then my opinion is based on little more than what I read in UK haiku publications: few Japanese haiku (whose translations may mislead, and whose allusions, if any, may be culturally obscure anyway); and little up to date transatlantic writing. But flicking back recently through 10 years of Blithe Spirit, I found little evidence of allusion that deepens the text. Maybe I missed much. Where, for instance, was *How pleasant – just once/ not to see Canary Wharf/ through morning mist* by Martin Lucas, that I came across some 6 years ago? (an ironic allusive variation to one of Bashō's haiku – for '*Canary Wharf*', substitute '*Fuji*'). As if in pre-emptive rebuke, while I was writing this, December's Blithe Spirit came through the door with Ken Jones' *Long grasses/ through cracks in tarmac/ planners' dreams* (the irony here gaining much from its soft voiced allusion and pivotal ambiguity); and Stanley Pelter's *fallen leaf/ how could I mistake it/ for a butterfly* (after Arakida Moritake) – which I nearly missed!

It isn't necessarily easy to pick up other writers' allusions. Allusions don't have to wave frantic flags at the reader; and they might be anything from semi-private to full up-frontal, from simple sensory to complex mental. Also, as with extended metaphors in Western poetry, some allusions in haiku may well work best when one is least aware of them. Take for instance ***always one leap ahead,/ wet sand spurts/ precede my feet***, conditioned by Ruth Robinson's *a splashed frog/ leaps ahead/ of my watering can.* Any beach-stroller will surely have noticed this phenomenon; a few may even have sensed that it reminded them of something (without being able to pin down what); but who hasn't chased a frog with a watering can? Observation and word entering my mind together, '***leap***' was retained for its spontaneity. More privately, consider

slowly
turning
turkey
carcass
suspended
over silent snow
the sun sets

Only a few classical piano enthusiasts are going to get the slightest twinge of allusional recognition here (a vision of *Le Gibet*, from Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit*, which pictures a criminal left to hang outside the city gates. In the reddening sun, his body slowly rotates). But the writing stands well enough on its own; and notes only serve to expand any sensual appeal it may already have. More complexly, consider ***Spring weddings .../ the wind scatters confetti/ over old graves.*** '***Spring***', the immediate word, deflects attention from the allusion to Philip Larkin's *The Whitsun Weddings*,

..... the wedding days
Were coming to an end. All down the line
Fresh couples climbed aboard: the rest stood round;
The last confetti and advice were thrown,
And, as we moved, each face seemed to define
Just what it saw departing: children frowned
At something dull; fathers had never known

Success so huge and wholly farcical;
The women shared
The secret like a happy funeral; .....(extract)

... but the distinction between Spring and Whitsun hardly matters; the dance of Life is, at all times, only the flip side of the dance of Death. Larkin might well have thought of the ephemerality of Mayflies while writing his poem.

Back in 1991, (*An ABC of English Haiku:* progenitor to our present *Composite View*), David Cobb (luminary of The British Haiku Society) wrote *Japanese haiku are riddled with allusions to famous literary works and historical events. The margins of allowable allusion in English still have to be charted. The furthest I've dared go is: 'on the stroke of noon/ the snow-gown of the cypress/ is turning to rags'.* Well, I rather like this haiku, despite it seeming a cocktail of reference, metaphor and marginal anthropomorphism. But 'allowable' and 'dared' are hardly positive words, and between '94 – '96 (*Towards a Consensus; Haiku for All; Haiku – Then and now*), allusion gets scarce further mention. Then, in *The Nature of English Haiku*, we find *Other matters ...subject to fashion as well as personal taste ...* include *...allusion* (and) *Allusions were much favoured by Bashō, but are riskier these days, when even well-read people do not all read the same works.* In sardonic mood, one might ask, 'are we then to dumb down haiku to the level of our worst-read readers?' More moderately, we might ask 'Was it **only** Bashō?' or 'Were allusions understood by everybody in **classical** times then?' Anyway, all such writerly caution needs is the observance of a few technical guidelines. Finally in *English Haiku: A Composite View*, we find *The desire for 'presence' does not rule out allusion. One of haiku's achievements is to relate present and past (as represented by literature, legend, history), hinting at the transience of the former and the enduring quality of the latter, so that our living experience fuses in a common paradox.* Well, that seems a bit weighty; surely allusion might have lighter purpose too. Most importantly, is anyone listening to such advice? Having occasionally spoken to English 'doers of haiku' * who seem of the opinion that literary allusion, at least, has little or no place in English haiku; and having also had the quaint experience of having some of my own haiku liked well enough until their allusive depths were revealed,

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*Apparently, in Japan, one asks, *Haiku o nasei masu ka?* (literally, *Do you do haiku?*; and 'To write haiku', means to put in calligraphic form, (Yagi Kametaro; Messages from Matsuyama). Colin Blundell further informs me that the word *poet* has its roots in the Greek language, where poet = ποιητης (a maker or doer of things).

(*Oh, but that's too difficult – haiku should be more immediately readable.*), I'm inclined to be somewhat dispirited. I find it depressing that 'we' are willing to give so much time to discussing terms such as *immediacy, particularity, incompleteness, unguardedness, directness, deep playfulness* etc. (terms having all the subjective indefinability of wine bibbers' jargon), yet choose to ignore the objective and glaringly obvious: that the use of allusion always was, and, according to Haiku Handbook (1985), seemingly still is, a part of haiku tradition in Japan. Allusion works! By turning simple images into potentially more complex ones, it produces yet one more (or is it two?) of those allegedly sought after haiku qualities: *depth* and *layers of meaning.*

So what guidelines might be suggested for the use of allusion or any other form of intertextuality in haiku? Well, I suggest that referential material might be 'anything that works' – for light or serious purpose; but unles one is writing imaginary haiku perhaps, it should not be contrived c sought. Nor should one go around with likely references in one's menta pocket, just itching for the opportunities to use them. Referential material should be evoked naturally by circumstance, drawn to the surface of awareness from one's subconscious by the lure of the right moment. That way one maintains makoto, sincerity or whatever, by making the freshness and spontaneity of the language and the freshness and spontaneity of the moment one and the same thing. For instance, it shouldn't really stretch belief to accept that, on having my path crossed by a green squidgy thing with multiple legs, I just might – quite innocently and almost without thinking, have come out with ***Dangerous pavements/ caterpillar.*** 'Deep playfulness'? Search me; but certainly, in such circumstances only the deliberate act of erasure or editing out could be considered as contrivance. Mr J. W. Hackett (*The Zen Haiku*) advises *Never use obscure allusions ...real haiku are intuitive, not ... intellectual*; and I'd mostly go along with that. Certainly, one shouldn't use allusions simply to display the brilliant mind. Besides which, allusions are far more likely to be immediately effective if they work first on the senses rather than the intellect. But it might be reasonably argued that if a haiku is already independent of any allusion that it contains, then it cannot matter much if that allusion carries unobtrusive erudite baggage? Who'd notice, except the few readers who might enjoy a discovered bonus? **Most importantly**, all haiku should stand independent of any allusions etc. that they contain. Explanatory notes might be supplied when appropriate, but in the absence of such aids, allusive haiku should never deny a simpler reading for those who do not share the writer's 'erudition'.

A Comparison of two haiku:

the silk-tearing / biwa's current / autumn's voice (Buson; *Haiku Handbook*)

Written from on the spot experience, this haiku concludes a haibun ('*Uji Visit*'). Haibun title and haiku's opening line reference a poem by the T'ang Dynasty poet Po Chü-I.

> *a silver jug suddenly dashed crystal fluid spatters*
> *armored cavalry rushes out swords and spears resound*
> *song gathering to the end stroke with care struck*
> *four strings one sound* **like tearing silk** (extract)

Biwa and Uji are both rivers; Buson and Po Chü-I both lovers of the social pleasures of life in the capital where there is access to art and music etc. But Po Chü-I's poem relates to a time when he has been sent to live in some provincial outpost, and describes the ambience – particularly the sounds – of an evening on the river. '*like tearing silk*' forms a small part of a complex sensual image that captures the sounds of both river and distant lute music; and the whole poem evokes feelings of intense nostalgia for the life missed elsewhere. Buson, too, experiences the rural life away from the capital; and faced by the mountain torrent of the Uji, he remembers Po's lines. By use of his allusion, he manages to fuse all of the intensity of Po's feelings with his own – plus whatever extra is carried by the seasonal '*autumn's voice*'.

Buson would have had a select contemporary readership familiar with the Chinese poets – one that would probably have needed no help to understanding; although the haibun does cite the alluded to poem and relevant extract. But can an un-annotated translation of this haiku be understood by modern westerners? Does it take too much imagination to grasp that '*the silk-tearing*' is metaphor for the sound of a river? Even missing out on all that the alluded to poem has to offer, unknowledgeable about haiku and season words, might one not still intuit **something** out of '*autumn's voice*'. Overall, might one not get **some** sense of nostalgia for things lost? Whatever, what's underlined here, is **how** Buson's allusion was inspired; also, that in classical times at least, it was not frowned on to write 'erudite' haiku.

Over the gravel sea,/ a river in the trees – the sound/ of children's voices

No haibun, no footnotes: access to meaning is through the poem itself. This apart, the 'haiku' has not a little in common with Buson's. Written spontaneously from the immediate experience of visiting a formal Japanese garden, it images the wind in a stand of pines mingled with the distant sound of children playing; and it references two lines by Seamus Heaney: *The riverbed, dried up, half full of leaves./ Us listening to a river in the trees.* Now, poetry scraps can be released from the subconscious by events similar to those that caused them to be written in the first place; and at such times, one really shares with the poet. But when these scraps reach the surface of awareness, they may well have dragged with them more cognitive, yet no less spontaneous associations that overwrite with symbolic meaning – for the writer at least.

How accessible is this haiku? Does one need to have read Heaney, or an analysis of his lines to reach a reasonable interpretation? '***a river in the trees***' intends to evoke a sense of rushing water or the sea; and to reinforce this interpretation, the second line ends with – '***the sound***'. But when second line runs into third, '***of children's voices***', an ambiguity is created as to what has been heard, (Buson wrote in his haibun, *The sound reverberating in mountain and valley confuses human speech*). Only '***over the gravel sea***' risks causing problems for readers. Some may not know that a common feature of formal Japanese gardens is a carefully raked area of gravel that symbolises the sea, while tumbling rock-fall symbolise mountain torrents etc. But then, maybe we can learn from other peoples' haiku? Would Buson have expected everybody to understand his allusions? In fact, this haiku has not deviated far from current standard practice – two juxtaposed images to evoke a shared sense. Doesn't the sound of wind in trees, sea surge, or children's voices evoke, in older persons at least, a sense of nostalgia for something lost or undefined? Admittedly, we need Heaney's first line for any autumnal sense; and it requires knowledge of both Heaney's lines to release the hidden 'erudite' baggage (such as it is). Heaney may well have been metaphoring a need to find a new poetic voice from an old source. When I wrote the above, I happened to be thinking about the English haiku. But if nobody knows that, does it matter much?

To conclude: should we actively strive to use allusions in haiku? Definitely not! Nor need we become literary scholars in order to write haiku. I have tried here to provide a spectrum of intertextuality in haiku/haikai writing, and to suggest that all of us, irrespective of background, must have assimilated plenty of referential material that

might enrich our writing – if we let it. I'm suggesting that, as creative writers, we should try to keep our minds more open, ridding them of what might well be misconceptions; and that we be not so quick to edit out the dreaded 'literary excess' when it appears in response to instant perception. Perhaps also, as intelligent readers, we should accept that haiku might be written to a range of literary strengths, just as we accept that Western poetry has its Wendy Copes and its T.S. Eliots. Might not Buson have known similar times? Surely, we owe it to Haiku to protect **all** the important elements that have contributed to its tradition. How sad, if West (and East in imitation of the West) lost one of the foundation stones of Haiku's literary status, either through misconception, or because raising the creative stakes became too much like hard work. Who knows what Western poetic interest might not be stirred by an infusion of Buson-style writing?

Canada geese at grass –
no time to stop and stare,
just peck and go.

A flock of geese moving like a shoal of fish – no time for anything except feeding. Two allusions suggest Man's position in an increasingly techno-corporate world: *What is this life if, full of care/ we have no time to stand and stare (W. H. Davies). Just wash and go (Shampoo commercial jingle).* Despite all its post-analysis, this writing wrote itself, spontaneously, in exactly the above form. Quite fortuitously, it might even, from a distance, nod towards Bashō: Learn from the geese what it is to be a goose. Spontaneity works – if you let it.

*

Presentation of this article at the 2003 British Haiku Society Annual Conference drew two comments; only their gist is given here; neither question is *verbatim*, and I apologise for any error:

H.R: Surely, one needs to be steeped in literature to be able to generate worthwhile allusions?

B.S: I used the term 'intertextuality' to forestall this question. The suggestion is that the mindscape of the syllabically challenged haiku might be expanded by the use of spontaneous (not contrived) referential material without bending 'the rules'. Such material might be a single word, a colloquial phrase, a line of poetry, a historical reference – any

material that works, as long as the end result is compatible with some aesthetic standard. For instance, the scent of '*May-flower*' through car windows might suggest a sense of adventure; '*blowing in the wind*' might mentally transform a shower of leaves into thoughts; '*one night cheap hotel*' (T.S.Eliot) might set just the right world-weary tone for a particular haiku; looking for four-leaved clovers on '*Culloden moor*' might prolong a reader's thought. Of course, the more marinaded the haiku poet is in 'real literature', the more likely it is that 'real literary allusion' will appear in his or her creations. At least, that's the theory; the thing is, it rarely seems to. I'd hate to think that our 'really well-read' members were stifling all spontaneous allusions at birth so as to pursue some ideal based on simple imagery'. Both methods seem to have had equal validity in haiku history.

M.L: So far, I've not been really impressed by any western attempt at allusive haiku writing.

B.S: Sure, but then 'so what sickness' afflicts simple imagery haiku too. What I'm suggesting is that we won't know what may be achieved by acceptance of allusive methods, especially in the hands of those best equipped to use them, until we make the effort – both as writers and readers. And I'm certainly not expecting the sudden emergence of small miracles of haiku literature. Technical and cultural factors (differences between classical Chinese and modern western poetry for example) will probably stop us ever writing haiku like, or as effective as, Buson's *willow leaves fallen* or *the silk-tearing*. But from my position of limited reading, I feel that western haiku is due some 'new' technology (technology which in this case seems scarcely to have been tried out) in order to produce something of more varied interest – that more people will accept. The way via *Intertextual City* seems a better literary bet than the road to *Surreality*.

I found Ken Jones' allusive comparison of developers with warriors stimulated thought as well as humour. Despite the different translations of Bashō's *Fuji* haiku (Aitken v. Blyth), many might now think of this as, *one can have too much, even of a good thing; what then the bad?* Your variant thus has enjoyable valid humour, even if 'not great haiku'. And for myself, I was pleased simply to be able to spontaneously respond to both previous *elevator* variants and Haiku Handbook's comment on them. Regarding Buson's use of allusion, Haiku Handbook says, Buson's allusions *never appear without the clarity and power of a strong sensory*

image. But his two haiku quoted in this article still seem to fall into two categories. *willow leaves fallen* encourages us to think (through metaphor) as well as see; *the silk-tearing* seems the stronger haiku because it links strong sensory haibun imagery to equally strong sensory imagery of allusion, requiring us only to see and hear (could the haiku have been written without the haibun?). Whatever, my own *over the gravel sea* seems category one – one for 'thought'; so does *turkey carcass* (except that the allusion is not obvious, and needs notes).

In a recent haibun – *Thoughts, Words, Writing* – I wrote *Tai Haku, the Great White Cherry, much valued in Japan, is said to have vanished from Japanese culture somewhere between the 18th and 20th centuries, only to be restored from a 'new' clone found in an English garden.* That was a fortuitous metaphor; although, of course, haiku has never vanished from Japan. However, what I was suggesting was that this new clone must, while retaining its parental ('genetic') constraints, develop within the space afforded by its new cultural surrounds. It should reflect **our** approach to life, **our** seriousness, **our** sense of humour (not just *deep playfulness*) etc. And western humour there should be, as well as western colloquialisms etc. For myself, I am very unsure as to the nature of what I am writing, but I have felt for some time now that true haiku can only exist in the country where the tradition lies; that all else can only be 'haiku equivalent' – different, though of no less literary value. As previously mentioned in the introduction (p vi), to ask 'what constitutes haiku?' in relation to Eastern and Western forms seems hardly worthwhile. I refer to my efforts as **haikai**, because I feel that too close an allegiance to the principles of so-called 'true' haiku precludes experimentation into finding a true English form; while the use of **haiku** to describe some of the experiments tried out by others seems misleading. On the other hand, the experimental use of intertextual methods seems a step in the right d*irecti*on in as much as it seeks to restore a seemingly ignored, yet important, traditional technique.

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Notes to the Haiku

1. A gene in the family? Compulsive behaviour can be opportunistic. My elder sister, in loneliness not entirely her own fault, became driven by drudgeries; and her internal clock was several hours out from the rest of us. How close-related this seemed to the willingness to devote 'limitless' time to others, or music (much to the anxiety of some of her pupils, to whom A Levels were more important than 'master classes in violin technique').

2. Our brief lives: so *like the swift flight of a lone sparrow through the banqueting hall where you sit in the winter months* (the Venerable Bede – taken from J. Kirkup's, *A Certain State of Mind* p. 78).

3. Compare: *Swallow O swallow/ you mud lover O lover/ swallow O swallow* (Ayako Hosomi)

4. The last line can be read to sound a slightly different meaning.

5. The absence of a question mark is deliberate.

6. Regrettable wordplay in the last line.

7. Compare: *Clods of earth/ seeming to move?/ No – quail* (Naito Meisetsu)

8. Different minds – compare: Auden's *Happy the hare at morning / for she cannot read the Hunter's waking thoughts.*

9. Both on the page, and in action. The last line can be read as frustration or expletive.

10. While almost all of these haikai document real and first-hand events, some of them seem to find a subconscious symbolism. This particular one I like because it seems to reflect a human commonality: two old friends nearing the end in worsening conditions.

11. Fresh leaves of balsam poplars give out a beautiful pervasive scent in April/May.

12 .Osakazuki is one of the most highly coloured Japanese maples in Autumn.

13. Apparently, the Yoshino cherry (x yedoensis) is one of Tokyo's favourite cherry trees. Its flowering branches can seem smothered with light pink snow, and the flowers are beautifully almond scented. I had planted one in a previous garden, but had to leave before it reached maturity. Now I only had pictures to look at – and the rowan tree.

14. Thinking of Larkin's *Whitsun Weddings* (?), where key lines (for me) seem to be, *The women shared/ The secret like a happy funeral.*

15. Strangely, the only person who (unsolicited) thought this 'good' was Japanese. Some English persons don't seem to understand it at all – something that I can't understand because it seems simple enough. The mower is distant, and the sounds of his activity mingle with those of bees and flies. There is a laid-back perspectival view of quintessential English summer.

16. This poem seems conditioned by Ruth Robinson's, *a splashed frog/ leaps ahead/ of my watering can.*

17. On a cliff-top, 'one hundred feet' above the sea, are the white walls of a house called 'Deep Waters'.

18. During her life in Cornwall, Barbara Hepworth's work was much motivated and influenced by the natural shapes of the surrounding landscape. I believed, at the time of writing this 'haiku' down, that there was a sculpture called 'Nesting Forms'. Now in doubt, after some years, I feel that I may have wrongly noted down a term for a generic description. Certainly there is a sculpture called 'Oval with two forms' that has a nesting stones effect. Whatever, on the shoreline I found an example of natural lapidary. [In the preceding 'haiku', *bronze with strings* is a generic term, and refers to a sculpture called 'Spring'].

19. In writing down this 'haiku', I had in mind a fragment of a statement made by Barbara Hepworth: '... but it's never finished.' Where I got it from, and what it referred to, I have forgotten, and have not traced since. She may have been talking about working on any piece

of sculpture; more likely, perhaps, she was talking about art in general. From the late 40's onwards, Barbara Hepworth lived a solitary life at her new studio in St. Ives. The immediate post-war years were upsetting ones for her: the Holocaust disclosures, her second divorce in 1951. Her response to what she saw as ugly and bad in the world was to 'make as many good sculptures as one can before one dies.' She died in a fire at her studio in 1975, after 10 years working on through cancer. She was always insistent that after her death, no sculpture of hers should be completed or cast in bronze. Her reconstructed studio now houses a permanent exhibition of her work; on the first floor, next to freshly placed flowers, rests a bronze of one of her hands (cast in 1967). It seemed to make an eloquent statement.

20. After Kafka.

21. This poem, which has been published in *The Iron Book of British Haiku*, is redundant in its seasonal imagery; and the motivating experience was vicarious (TV). Since, in the past, I have watched racehorses training in similar situation; and since I now lead a very uneventful life, I prefer the two alternative versions given; the second of which encodes criticism of 'cardboard – Instamatic' imagery in haiku. Compare: *on a barren branch/ a raven has perched – / autumn dusk* (Bashō; Haiku Handbook, p. 9)

22. After Frank K. Robinson's haiku: *the elevator / opens ... / vacant masks / ...closes* (which itself alludes back to J. Cain's, *an empty elevator / opens / closes* Haiku Handbook p. 123).

23. Ravel's *Le Gibet* (a piece of piano music from *Gaspard de la Nuit*) pictures a criminal left to hang outside the city gates. In the setting sun, his body slowly rotates.

24. Thinking of Bashō's: *The beginning of art - / the depths of the country / and a rice-planting song*; (R. Aitken translates this haiku: *The beginning of culture /...*). My poem specifies *Art*.

25. After S. Heaney's *Dangerous pavements./ But I face the ice this year/ With my father's stick.* Caterpillars don't mind do they? – too many legs, and not superstitious.

26. In the restaurant, by the sushi bar, was a 'samurai figure' in full armour.

27. Listening to scratchy recordings of Japanese renditions of haiku.

28. After a lecture in which we were told that much of Bashō's 'Narrow Road' route was now modernised.

29. Compare: *There is nothing/ in my desk drawer./ I open it and look in* (Ozaki Hosai). Something on the poet Ozaki Hosai can be found in James Kirkup's *A Certain State of Mind*; University of Salzburg Press.

30. My mother's musical box that played *Come back to Sorrento.*

31. The original version.

32. Stranger than fiction – the raised embarrassed gaze.

33. Composed out of memory – all practising 'loch' presumably.

34. After W. Stevens *13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.*

35. After writing this, I couldn't help thinking that there was some symbolism of trapped ego in it. A rather more far-fetched idea quickly followed: that the mass of Christmas trees was a bit brain-like in structure – with all its interpenetrating branches; the voice definitely disembodied. Difficult to know which comes first sometimes.

36. A real enough event, but I confess to a bit of borrowed imagery.

37. The original version – the other is senryū imagination.

38. 'blackthorn winter' is a folk-lore term: a short cold spell in early Spring that is said to precede or accompany/synchronise the sudden flowering of Sloe/Blackthorn in English hedgerows. On this occasion, there didn't seem to have been one. There is a pun on 'sloe'; and the 'haiku' may be saying that despite global warming, the sloe will still flower – if uncertainly. Apparently, this phenomenon is known in Japan too.

39. Basketball terminology.

40. Compare: *Wrapping my hands round/ this teacup's old yellow glaze – / September going* (Kōko Katō).

41. Vicarious experience: typical cine-photography of The Oxford Research Group.

42. I have been told by a Japanese person that 'sabi' means, or can mean, 'rusty'. The absence of a question-mark denotes indifference. This poem 'tries' to penetrate the 'feelings' of the object.

43. The trains weren't; the mouse was. I had hoped that an Issa-like compassion would be read into this 'haiku'. Do these poor subterranean creatures ever see the sun ... do they ever come to a shocking end?

44. The disobedience of wildlife! A gravel garden is a traditional featur of formal Japanese gardens; the gravel is kept carefully raked into concentric patterns and often symbolises the sea.

45. A 'tsukubai' is a dripping water basin – a traditional feature of Japanese gardens.

46. Coloured by a recent theatre visit (Chekov), and wanting to be elsewhere.

47. Listening to a CD of Artur Rubinstein playing a programme, part of which I had experienced live many years before.

48. After *Cymbeline*: *golden lads and girls all must* ...Shakespeare's own reference is to dandelions (allegedly?).

49. Semi-detached bathwater. Alhambra it 'aint.

50. An old childhood place – secluded woodland it seemed then; now, too close to a main road smelling of petrol fumes.

51. A haiku that rings changes.

52. A flock of geese (moving like a shoal of fish – no time for anything except feeding) made me think of Man's techno-corporate world. '*What is this life if, full of care, / we have no time to stand and stare.*' (W. H. Davies); '*Just wash and go.*' (Shampoo commercial). Learn from the geese what it is to be a goose.

53. This haiku was written in '94, at the end of the Bashō tercentenary walk – Offa's Dyke: Chepstow to Knighton. It makes a distinction between loneliness (in which unwanted thoughts can cloud the mind) and solitude (in which the mind is relatively free and untroubled).

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