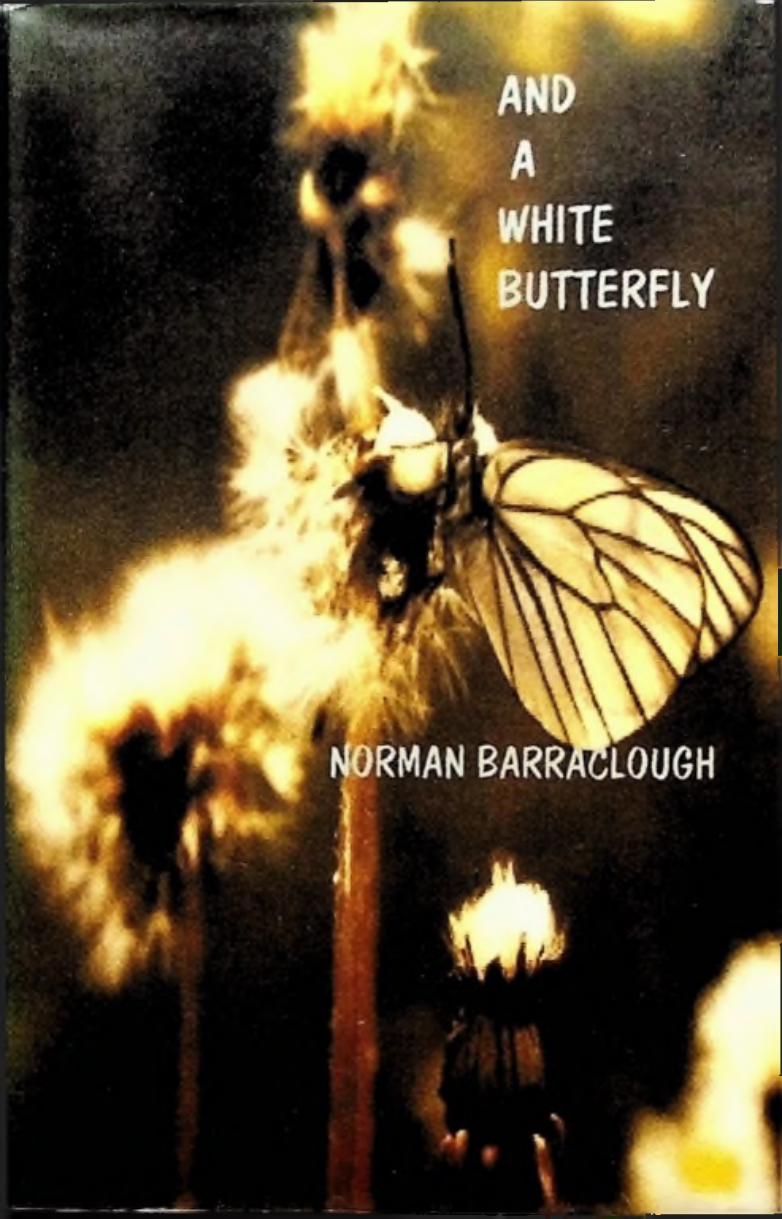
AND
A
WHITE
BUTTERFLY
NORMAN BARRACLOUGH

AND A WHITE BUTTERFLY

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Norman Barraclough

(Edited by Colin Blundell
and Fred Schofield)

Hub Editions

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NORMAN BARRACLOUGH
1927-1998

I first met Norman in Chepstow in 1994 at the beginning of the British Haiku Society 5-day walk along the Offa's Dyke Path, an event in commemoration of the tercentenary of Bashō's death. Though a beginner haiku poet at the time, his knowledge of plants and trees was a reference point for the rest of the walkers. In the following few years he possibly attended more BHS events than anyone else. I always looked out for him. He would be quiet, humble and enthusiastic.

He died during the BHS conference at Ludlow, on a walk, on Saturday 18th April 1998. It was a beautiful morning with flowers in the hedgerow and skylarks singing. He collapsed suddenly and all attempts to resuscitate him failed. We learned later that he'd had a massive heart attack.

In the pub the night before, he talked with several of us—about life in general and the

feelings we all experience—at greater length than on previous occasions. When expressing opinions, I never felt with him that I had to battle to make my own point or listen in frustrated silence while he forced his: it was a respectful honest exchange. That night one of the things we touched on was religion. On the subject of guilt he said he couldn't think of anything he ought to feel guilty about; he'd always tried his best...

In the evening after his death we read some of his poems together. The conference continued as we were sure he would have wished. Of course, there was an added solemnity but also a strong sense of his being still amongst us.

His love of the natural world helped him to write intimate nature poems. He would often spontaneously include a reference to himself in such poems but the results are rarely obtrusive or self-conscious. In his best work there is that sense of something beyond words which haiku sometimes point to.

FS

THANKS

to Norman's family for the help that has made this book possible

to Hub Editions for generously providing the first twenty *numbered* copies of the book as a personal tribute to Norman.

scattered tormentil
all along the mountain path
the sound of water

still flowering tips
of mountain heather—
the church spire below

overgrown garden pond
the old stone philosopher
staring back

the footpath sign says
fourteen miles—freshly in mind
an old photograph

rustle of blown leaves
scattering—
crinkle of map
being unfolded

above all
a clock-face is framed
by scaffolding

Big Ben strikes high noon—
the old paddle steamer
silent at its mooring

the hot paving stones
a cluster of scorched weeds, and
a white butterfly

funeral over
hibiscus blue floating past
our closed car windows

office blocks
line the canal
ducks circle

conifers taper
darkly into the dawn sky
how light the first song

a clouded dawn
seeing sunrise in raindrops
on sapling branches

plane trees
already half the height
of the ancient obelisk

nature trail gossip—
a mullein caterpillar
on Water Figwort

poetry making
a Writing Course member
laughs to herself

the bee works its way
down the flower spike slowly
to faded petals

dragonfly shadows
flit across the pond, searching
eyeless

at both ends
of the deserted footbridge—
fallen leaves

empty willow-herb
seed pods curl around
clear blue sky

at the cliff face
the tide turning over
winter sun

morning papers—
the oak tree's shadow
white with frost

sound of a car—
the young pheasant mid-road
lost for wings

churchyard
in the chalkhills, snowdrops
whitening graves

under bare branches
acorns bursting—
a touch of red

bird seed table—
first the squirrel then I
scuttle away

only
the whiteness of wild plum
and the passing cloud

the silence
of the beechwood
bluebells

between the beetle
and the upside-down sky
a scrap of dead leaf

new platform timber
high on the castle ruins—
rain closing in

lace-wing moth
alights on the window
spots of rain

brighter still
the rain-washed berries
after snow

through falling snow
hillside house lights
the hoot of an owl

the magpie
breasting the wind—
its rise and fall

the unfinished wall
he lines up another flint
leaning backwards

Jehovah's Witness
pauses on the garden path—
frosted magnolia

clusters
of oakleaf gall close by
the cries of children

high on the fell
my numbed fingers lose touch
with the violets

the tunnel ahead—
rain clouds almost low enough
to touch

the curve
of the cricket's leap: scent
of wild marjoram

a crowd
of windflowers quivering
as one

inside
out of the fog
of steamed-up spectacles
blue water-lilies

this shortest night
the actor's speech drones on—
a noisy aircraft

some dream! I awake
thinking Heaven and Hell
are equal

the beechwood hedge
taking shape
with each clip
a puff of small flies

green leaf reflections
in the ford's dark shallows—
the firm stones underfoot

young lad on the bus
spoiling for a fight—
fast asleep

mid week
nature trail—someone is sure
of the bird's name

buried cables—
the red poppies
fading

a stranger's blur
fills the eye of my camera
at the shutter's click

the nibbled mushroom—
aroma at cook-up whets
pickers' appetites

streaming tufts of fleece
caught up on the barbed wire fence
the wind in our hair

dying vibrations
of the TV aerial—
pigeon on the wing

springtime in the park
children feeding London ducks
in a foreign tongue

meeting a blackbird
eye to eye at arm's length
he turns his back

at dusk
outshining a crescent moon—
the white rose

breaking new ground
clink of fork striking flint
the shortest prong

on the moor
wind-chased ripples run
into still water

in the snow
between paw prints
a furrowed track

white-lined crests riding
rank by rank into the bay
vanish on its curve

all round
the sprawled blackthorn
the last few sloes

poised for an instant—
the blue of a damselfly,
yellow irises

the ancient pollard,
its dead bole mingled
with leaf shadow

the leaning tombstone
on the yew-tree lawn
daubed with green moss

still part-furled,
a wing of the butterfly
on his open palm

winter sunlight
on the shelf of old books
'The Way of All Flesh'

sawn-down hawthorn—
orchids flowering
through its shadow

still closed
this Mid-summer's Day
flowers of St John

between the barks
of a distant muntjac
words with a stranger

park garden pattern
a tame squirrel displays
its full height

telescopic sight--
a heron
spreading its wings

watery reflections—
kingcups in full flower
the shape of a rock

proud of fallen leaves
black botanical labels
spelling out species

in the twilight
under a half-moon a lamb
rolls onto his back

tumble of trash
into the empty bin—
trill of a redbreast

retirement homes
lone woman in grey
perambulating

heart beat handed down
seeing generations

on the coach
for the tunnel crossing—
its black TV screen

four octaves
in the tunnel—the notes
of a violin

tunnel journey
reading the white carriage walls
in place of haiku

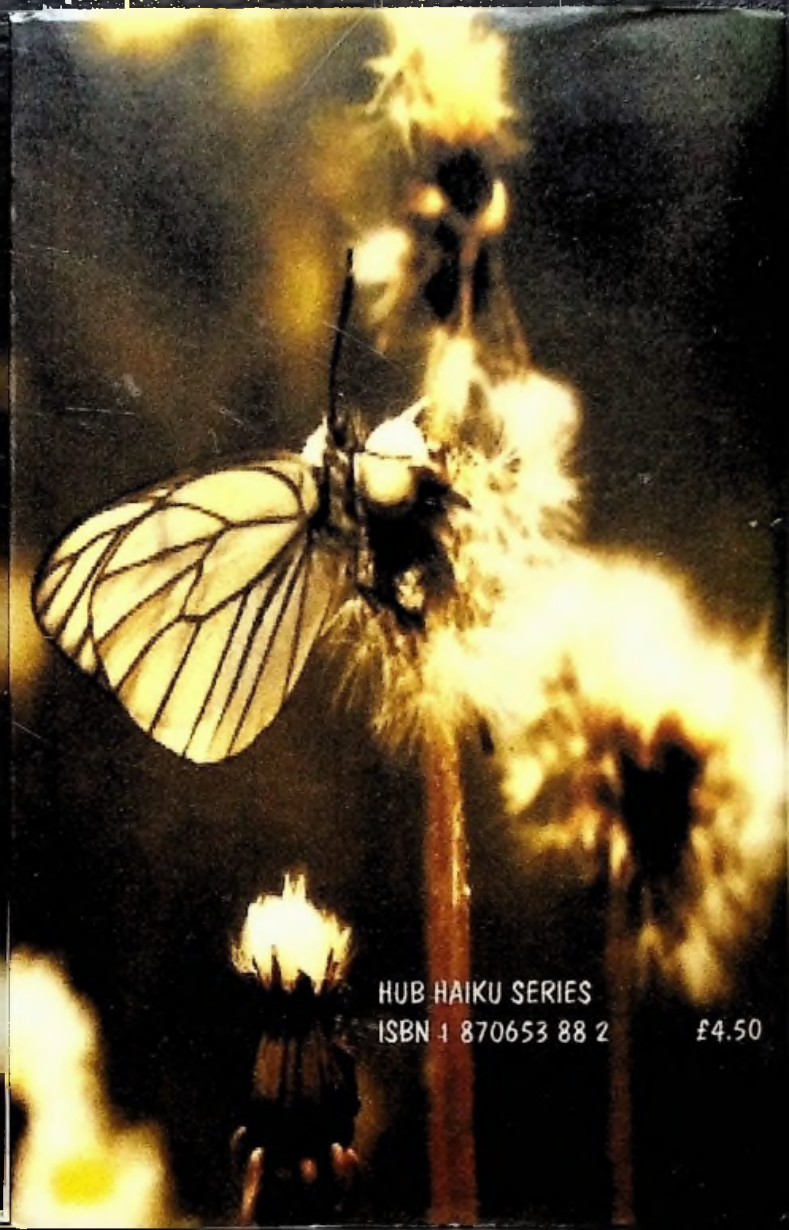
beneath
the cherry blossom, stars—
common chickweed

development
paddling in all directions
ducks on the canal

boots off
at the walk's end—soaring wings
of a red kite

Frequencies
Moving away is only to the boundaries

Hand-made
in a Workshop
in Wingland close b
Belloc's
Walk round the Wa



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