

1: A Haiku/Pun for Everyone: Book Three by Paul Treatman. | eBay

More Haikus for Punsters continues in the tradition of the recent Haikus for Punsters, embodying a pun word or pun expression in each haiku, that 3-line Japanese unrhymed verse form that has survived from www.enganchecubano.com haiku/puns focus on a whole gamut of human experiences and sentiments, touching upon love, sex, business, occupations.

In my early years of haiku writing, I easily accepted the prevalent credo being espoused on how to write haiku. This was, sometimes implied and occasionally expressed, as being: One reason for rejoicing in the acceptance of this view, was that it by-passed the old barrier crisis. This was certainly a plus for the whole 70s haiku scene as there seemed a danger of the entire movement bogging down in fights, arguments and broken friendships. Another advantage of this system of defining a haiku was that it bestowed near-religious honor on the author of a passable haiku. Books were even compiled around this semi-religious idea. However, many of us, recognized that "haiku moments" were very much like other flashes of inspiration which, when transported into other media, became paintings, stories, dreams or even new color schemes or recipes. And many others shared the frustration of having a truly life-altering moment of insight and then never being able to write a decent haiku that expressed the wonder and majesty of that moment. They would ask, what was wrong with me? Was I not spiritually prepared enough? Was I too common? Maybe too many of my Christian beliefs kept me from the Zen nirvana of haiku? Among the many great tips for writing haiku and obtaining the questionable Zenniness of Zen I came away with her precept: So there are tools one can use! And I practiced her methods with glee and relative to me success and increased enjoyment. Suddenly I could figure out by myself what was wrong with a haiku that failed to jell as I thought it should. I could ask myself if there was a comparison, a contrast or an association between the images and if this relationship was clear and understandable for the reader. Slowly, over the years, I found by reading the translations of the old Japanese masters and the haiku of my contemporaries whom I admired, that there were more factors than just these three on which one could build a haiku. However, there seemed a disinterest in others wanting to study these aspects which I call techniques. Perhaps this is because in the haiku scene there continues to be such a reverence for the haiku moment and such a dislike for what are called "desk haiku". The definition of a desk haiku is one written from an idea or from simply playing around with words. A ku from your mind was half-dead and unreal. This fear kept people new to the scene afraid to work with techniques or even the idea that techniques were needed when it came time to write down the elusive haiku moment. At the risk of leading anyone into the quasi-sin of writing dreaded desk haiku, I would like to discuss and illustrate some of the haiku writing techniques which I have recognized and used. In order to avoid my seeming to accuse others of using techniques, the ku quoted are all my own. One could also ask to what other images could cherry buds be compared? Or one can turn the idea around and ask what in the spring landscape can be compared to a nap without naming things that close their eyes to sleep. The Technique of Contrast - Now the job feels easier. All one has to do is to contrast images. And yet most of the surprises of life are the contrasts, and therefore this technique is a major one for haiku. The Technique of Association - This can be thought of as "how different things relate or come together". The Zen of this technique is called "oneness" or showing how everything is part of everything else. You do not have to be a Buddhist to see this; simply being aware of what is, is illumination enough. I was watching some ponies grazing early in the morning on a meadow that was still partially covered with the shadow of the mountain. It can also be thought that the pony eating the grass of the mountain becomes the mountain and vice versa. When the boundaries disappear between the things that separates them, it is truly a holy moment of insight and it is no wonder that haiku writers are educated to latch on to these miracles and to preserve them in ku. The Technique of the Riddle - this is probably one of the very oldest poetical techniques. It has been guessed that early spiritual knowledge was secretly preserved and passed along through riddles. Or another one would be: What can one say that the reader cannot figure out the answer? As in anything, you can overextend the joke and lose the reader completely. The answer has to make sense to work and it should be realistic. Here is a case against desk haiku. If one has seen plastic bags caught

on cacti, it is simple and safe to come to the conclusion I did. If I had never seen such an incident, it could be it only happened in my imagination and in that scary territory one can lose a reader. So keep it true, keep it simple and keep it accurate and make it weird. Oh, the old masters favorite trick with riddles was the one of: Again, if you wish to experiment the ku may or may not be a keeper you can ask yourself the question: Or seeing a butterfly going by you ask yourself what else besides a butterfly could that be? The Technique of Sense-switching - This is another old-time favorite of the Japanese haiku masters, but one they have used very little and with a great deal of discretion. It is simply to speak of the sensory aspect of a thing and then change to another sensory organ. Usually it involves hearing something one sees or vice versa or to switch between seeing and tasting. Basically what you do is to start with a wide-angle lens on the world in the first line, switch to a normal lens for the second line and zoom in for a close-up in the end. It sounds simple, but when he did it he was very effective. There IS that ironclad rule that one does not use metaphor in haiku. Basho used it in his most famous "crow ku". What he was saying in other words not haiku words was that an autumn evening come down on one the way it feels when a crow lands on a bare branch. I never understood this hokku until one day I was in my tiny studio with the door open. I felt the rush of darkness coming close, as close as an autumn evening and as close as a big black crow. The thud of his big feet hitting the bare branch caused the tiny ripple of anxiety one has when it gets dark so early in the autumn. In that moment I felt I knew what Basho had experienced. But this is a valid technique and one that can bring you many lovely and interesting haiku. The Technique of Simile - Usually in English you know a simile is coming when you spot the words "as" and "like". Occasionally one will find in a haiku the use of a simile with these words still wrapped around it, but the Japanese have proved to us that this is totally unnecessary. So basically the unspoken rule is that you can use simile which the rule-sayers warn against if you are smart enough to simply drop the "as" and "like". The poetic principle is "to depict as is". Shiki was, by nature it seemed, against whatever was the status quo. If poets had over-used any idea or method his personal goal was to point this out and suggest something else. Which was followed until someone else got tired of it and suggested something new. This seems to be the way poetry styles go in and out of fashion. He favored the quiet simplicity of just stating what he saw without anything else having to happen in the ku. He found the greatest beauty in the common sight, simply said. And many people still feel he was right. And there are some moments which are perhaps best said as simply as it is possible. Yet, he himself realized, after writing very many in this style in , that used too much, even his new idea can become boring. So the method is an answer, but never the complete answer of how to write a haiku. Only insiders knew the secret language and got the jokes. In some cases the pun was to cover up a sexual reference by seeming to speaking of something commonplace. There are whole lists of words with double meanings: But we have them in English also, and haiku can use them in the very same way. We have the very same things in English but we haiku writers may not be so well-versed as the Japanese are in using these because there have been periods of Western literary history where this skill has been looked down upon. And even though the hai of haiku means "joke, or fun, or unusual" there are still writers whose faces freeze into a frown when encountering a pun in three lines. Their work is made easier by so many of their place names either having double meaning or many of their words being homonyms sounding the same. In English we have many words which function as both verbs and nouns. By constructing the poem carefully, one can utilize both aspects of such words as leaves, spots, flowers, blossoms, sprouts, greens, fall, spring, circles and hundreds more. You can use this technique to say things that are not allowed in haiku. For instance, one would not be admired for saying that the willow tree strings raindrops, but one can get away with making it sound as if the strings of willow are really the spring rain manifested in raindrops. This is one of those cases where the reader has to decide which permissible stance the ku has taken. In making any connection between the two parts of a haiku, the leap can be a small and even a well-known one. Usually beginners are easily impressed with close linkage and experiment first with this form. They understand it and feel comfortable using the technique. Being human animals we seem destined to seek the next level of difficulty and find that thrilling. So the writer begins to attempt leaps that a reader new to haiku may not follow and therefore find the ku to espouse nonsense. The nice thing about this aspect, is when one begins to read haiku by a certain author, one will find some of the haiku simply leave the reader cold and untouched. Years later, returning to the same book, with

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many haiku experiences, the reader will discover the truth or poetry or beauty in a haiku that seemed dead and closed earlier. Poets of the surrealistic often make leaps which simply seem impossible to follow I am thinking of Paul Celan where the reader simply has to go on faith that the author knew what he was writing about. This is rare in haiku. I know I have quickly read a link in a renga and thought the author was kidding me or had gone off the deep end. Sometimes it is days later when I will go, "Ah-ha!"

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