

and wabi to a feeling of solitude associated with living close to nature. Sabi can also refer to silence, a quiet mind, and wabi to simplicity and tranquil beauty such as in old Japanese temples.

These are Buddhist values, not values of our Western society. I think they are the key. They teach us to approach our subjects humbly, accepting them as they are, learning to see beauty even in things that are old and on their way to the scrap heap. This can give our haiku a Japanese feeling, and if in addition we can make our readers feel nostalgia for a simpler, more tranquil life, that much the better.

Haiku are normally written in the third person. Perhaps this also derives from the need to write humbly, and is very effective. By leaving himself or herself out the poet focuses the reader's attention to the observation that inspired the haiku, ideally getting the reader to feel what the writer felt.

Here are the rules I have made for myself:

1. Haiku are very short, seldom more than 17 syllables. So short that they must leave some things unsaid, to be filled in by the reader's imagination.
2. Haiku are written in the present tense. The reader is presented with an observa-

tion, not with the memory of an observation. The observation can be real or imaginary, as long as it feels real.

3. Haiku are written in the third person.

4. Haiku create images, like little snapshots of what the author was experiencing. One or two images, and they don't have to be visual.

5. Haiku are built around some kind of a contrast, with no explanation, and contemplating that contrast is supposed to lead the readers to think of something they had not thought of before, or had not thought of in that way before.

6. Haiku treat their subjects in a detached manner. The poet's own feelings are left out.

7. Haiku approach their subjects humbly. The poet is just an observer, not a judge, and should only present the facts and let the readers judge from them.

8. Haiku pay respect to the Japanese aesthetics of *sabi* and *wabi*.



This rock from my forest looked a bit like a statue of Buddha, so I gave it to a poet who is into Zen. He decorated it, someone named it Malibu Buddha, and I wrote "From underground." The editor gave me a much shared second prize for it. Later I realized that he had just classified that year's haiku as A, B, or C. In any case he must have liked mine, since he forgot he had published it and published it a second time.

The haiku in the middle were inspired by the shed snakeskins I often find in my wood piles and by the wormholes I sometimes find in the lumber I saw. In the last haiku I was just having fun trying to mislead the readers' expectations.

From underground
the Buddha—
sunglasses

Hey snake
did someone scare you
out of your skin?

Excuse me
longhorned beetle
this log is mine

Shapely limbs
Monroe County
maples

*My feet caress
the bald head
of mother earth*

Inspired by this photo I took of my brother on an island of the lake Päijänne in 1952.



*Black sky
blackbird
black*

When I hunted ducks on Long Point Bay, Lake Erie in the 1970s, sometimes a daily migration of blackbirds between the marshes of the point and the fields of the mainland would fly over me. There were so many that they filled the sky, and it could take an hour for the whole flock to pass by me.

*I lit the stove
a moth
flew out*

Insects and spiders can winter in stacks of firewood, and when the wood is brought into the house will thaw and come back to life. Sometimes too late.

*Ice and snow
and darkness falls
on the road less traveled*

A road less traveled is also a road less maintained.

*I carried
the moon
in a bucket*

A figment of my imagination. I had seen many haiku of one heavenly body or another being reflected in water, and wanted to write the purest, simplest, most minimalist, yet expressive one of them all.

*A neighbor
gave us three potatoes
we ate them with chicken*

I stole this from a Cuban friend's letter. Potatoes are expensive there, so this gift was worth buying some chicken—more expensive than pork—to go with it.