

***insideoutside* by Stanley Pelter. George Mann Publications: Winchester, Hampshire, England, 2008. ISBN 9780955241574. Perfect Bound, 6 x 9 inches, 128 pp., £8 UK.**

*insideoutside* – third of a planned six volume series of haibun by the British writer Stanley Pelter – confirms his often stated predilection for writing that tests the boundaries of the genre and extends the many varied experiments of *past imperfect* (2004) and *& Y Not?* (2006), his two earlier collections. The author generously collects and presents in alphabetical order nearly 70 haibun – everything from haibun that blend free verse, instead of prose, with haiku to texts where a graphic element assumes a place beside prose and verse as an integral unit of composition. There are even haibun written for recitation, whether for solo or group performance.

Because the narrow compass of a review will not allow full discussion of Pelter's numerous innovations, selected examples will have to suffice to represent the variety of his work.

In "Thunderguy – Isle of Arran," the prose half of the normative haibun equation (prose plus verse) is supplanted by free verse passages that alternate with the haiku:

a moon  
even in shadow  
her wet eyes

Grey and more  
Drizzle  
Clouds drift, pull lower over Meall Biorach  
Fall into heather at Doire Fhionn Lochan

some deep  
others near the surface  
so many pitfalls

Town clothes, town shoes, town socks  
Drag of heavy waves  
As sea-served crags fix  
And trees in Coirein Lochain diffract  
Drizzle and more

wet rocks

they reflect  
his going (116)

What is interesting and deserving of comment is that the free-verse sections at the left margin, if read aloud, do not depart radically from the marked rhythms that prose in poetic haibun often adopts.

Pelter's earlier books introduced the graphic component as a third element, along with prose and verse, of haibun composition. His exploration along this line is perhaps more extensive than elsewhere and includes texts accompanied by very simple

(almost primitive) pen and ink sketches, texts presented in comic strip format, texts where a proliferation of type fonts and point sizes underscores meaning and texts where the haibun is handwritten, an act that points to authorial presence and immediacy. One remarkable series of three haibun, “ceci n’est pas une haibune?” (21-24), serves to illustrate Pelter’s program well – the ironic title being a doffing of the hat (a bowler no doubt) to René Magritte, the Belgian surrealist whose simple painting of a pipe bore the inscription, “ceci n’est pas une pipe, i.e., “this is not a pipe.” The first haibun in this series juxtaposes free verse with what looks like a simple linocut of a guillemot in flight. The second offers a relatively standard model of contemporary haibun – haiku, prose and haiku, in this instance – but the adjacent page presents the original text now revised and reconfigured, now part of a black-and-white illustration, now with the text itself presented alternately in handwritten and cut-out letters. The third member of this series advances one further step, dividing the page into two columns, a handwritten haibun text to the left, a collage of what appears to be an old-style IBM digital punch-card with an ink drawing to the right.

Another technique Pelter favors, as in “from bialystok song is to,” is to frame a text with its sound values foremost – the haibun designed for recitation:

from bialystok to from bialystok to from bialystok to this railway track to that railway track to that to that to that to that from this from this to that to here from there to back to front to YES to there to there from here from here from there from there from where to where ... (29)

Work of this nature echoes earlier avant-garde assays in sound poetry such as Tristan Tzara’s “L’amiral Cherche Une Maison à Louer” (1916) or Kurt Schwitters’ “Ursonate” (1921).

Similar effect is achieved in the title haibun where the concatenation of phrases repeated with slight variation appeals to the reader first on the aural level, its lyric tone being rather bittersweet and elegiac as the following excerpt will show:

so i will wait for U in the garden ~ sit in the garden that has just been watered ~ waiting for a buttercup to close ~ a buttercup on the grass that waits to be cut ~ the grass just watered ... in the enclosed garden ~ i sit here for U ~ alone with sounds scents of breeze ~ wait for U to come ~ enclosed by greens ~ the enclosed garden just watered ... i go inside to outside ~ wait for U in the garden just watered ... i say ‘yes’ ~ i say ‘yes’ to inside ~ i say ‘yes’ to outside ~ so i will wait for U in the garden ~ sit in the garden that has just been watered. (42)

*insideoutside*, an attractive trade paperback with a glossy full-color collage cover, is available directly from the author for the price of shipping and handling while copies last. Interested parties may inquire of the author at 5 School Lane, Claypole, Newark NG23 5BQ or via [e-mail](#).

*Reviewed by Jeffrey Woodward*