Two Pilgrimages: Byron's and Basho's

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Matsuo Basho, who has been considered the greatest haiku poet, was born in 1644 and died in 1694 at the age of 51. Byron was to arrive in this world nearly one hundred years after the departure of the Japanese haiku master. Thus they were born in different times and different countries, and so they do not seem to have much in common except the fact that they were both poets and good ones, too. So what is there to link Basho to our poet Byron? Well, firstly they were both great travellers: Byron in Europe and Basho locally, since going abroad was then prohibited by the Shogunate. Next they wrote poetry using the material gathered during their journeys. Their travels produced among other works *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in Byron's case and *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* on Basho's part. Moreover, both poets followed in the footsteps of ancient poets and men of letters whom they admired, and they wrote their poetry fully aware of the traditions handed down to them. In fact their journeys were undertaken to a great extent for the purpose of visiting places made famous by ancient poets and of meeting and talking with their ghosts. In this paper I would like to show how they made use of their respective literary traditions associated with those places and how their treatments in the end differ from each other. By doing this I hope I shall be able to highlight the peculiar traits of both poets.

Some of you know already what the haiku is. It is perhaps the shortest literary form in the world. It has only 17 syllables and comprises three portions 5-7-5 in terms of the number of syllables. In the Japanese language a succession of 5 syllables followed by 7 syllables or vice versa somehow produces rhythmical and poetic effect. The haiku usually contains one word denoting one of the four seasons. So this poetic form is closely linked with the cycle of the seasons. Therefore you can say most haiku are nature poems.

Basho was a great traveller. He made several long journeys. The longest one was a journey to Northern Japan undertaken when he was 45. It lasted five months and covered a distance of some 1500 miles, longer than the distance between John o'Groats and Land's End, I believe. He left Edo (the present Tokyo) in the spring of 1689. The North was a relatively unknown region far away from Edo, the capital where Basho was a respected haiku master surrounded by his disciples and others who admired his poetry. The life of a respected haiku-master an easy and comfortable life, but Basho felt he had to leave all that behind. In fact he sold his own house before he undertook the journey. One may say he became homeless of his own accord, in order to be close to the elements, to experience loneliness, in short, to be a poet.

This journey resulted in the composition of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. This is a travel diary written in a poetic prose with haiku poems strategically placed here and there.[1] The work consists of some fifty sections dealing with the places Basho visited. Its length is close to fifty pages in the Penguin Classics edition. Normally Basho writes about a place in a succinct and evocative prose and rounds off the section with a haiku, though sometimes one or two haiku are placed elsewhere. All told, the journal includes fifty haiku of Basho with ten more contributed by a man named Sora and others. Sora, some years younger than Basho, accompanied his master most of the way. They visited shrines, temples and above all spots celebrated in poetry, Noh drama and so forth.

By the time Basho undertook this journey, he had become a haiku master much sought after. Though the journey was an arduous one, he was from time to time welcomed by local people who admired his poetry. Then poetry sessions were held with Basho as the presiding teacher and master. So there were times when he was not completely alone, though the overall image of Basho one gets from this work is the figure of a solitary poet fast approaching old age in the attire of a priest roaming in a rugged place at the mercy of the elements.

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1 See Basho: *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches*, trans. Nobuoyuki Yuasa (London: Penguin Books, 1966), pp. 97-143.

At the very outset of this work Basho states clearly why he wants to travel:

> The months and days are the travelers of eternity. The years that come and go are also voyagers. Those who float away their lives on boats or who grow old leading horses are forever journeying, and their homes are wherever their travels take them. Many of the men of old died on the road, and I too for years past have been stirred by the sight of a solitary cloud drifting with the wind, to ceaseless thoughts of roaming . . . When spring came and there was mist in the air, I thought of crossing the Barrier of Shirakawa into Oku. Everything about me was bewitched by the travel-gods, and my thoughts were no longer mine to control. The spirits of the road beckoned, and I could do no work at all.[2]

The statement that he is possessed by the travel-gods shows that he has this inner compulsion to travel. For Basho to be a poet is to travel and to roam like a solitary cloud, as in Wordsworth. And then the poets he admired were travelers and died on the road. Saigyo was such a poet. He was a medieval poet who renounced his promising career to be a roaming priest-poet. Basho also had in mind such Chinese poets like Li Po and Tu Fu. When he traveled these poets were constantly on his mind.

Basho mentions the Barrier of Shirakawa in the quoted passage, and in the section which immediately follows he says, ". . . the thought of the moon at Matsushima began to occupy my thoughts".[3] Both the Barrier of Shirakawa and Matsushima were famous places sung traditionally in poetry. These places are called 'utamakura' in Japanese meaning literally 'poetry pillow'. In fact Basho's travel is to visit those places made famous by earlier poets and to immerse himself in the spirit of the place and to talk to literary ghosts as it were. To travel and to visit those places was for him to live as a poet, to live his everyday life. As I mentioned earlier, Basho sold his house before this journey. To live is to be on the road. He was determined to live like those ancient poets he so much admired. Travelling in those days was as precarious one as it was in Britain. One of his travel journals is called *The Record of a Weather-exposed Skeleton*.[4] He felt he was risking his life when he travelled. He envisioned a situation in which he might be dead on the road and his body would be exposed to the elements. Well, he did die in Osaka while travelling, though not literally being weather-exposed. This is the last haiku he composed:

> On a journey, ailing –
> My dreams roam about
> Over a withered moor.[5]

Thus he was ready to die on the road in order to carry on imaginary conversations with the spirits of ancient poets at the places they had visited and sung about. Here is one example to show how Basho treated an 'utamakura,' a place of poetical interest. He arrives at the Barrier of Shirakawa, about which ancient poets left many waka poems. The waka is 31 syllable poem comprised of five portions, 5-7-5-7-7 in terms of the number of syllables. Actually the first 17 syllables became independent to develop eventually into the haiku form.

> After many days of solitary wandering, I came at last to the barrier-gate of Shirakawa . . . I thought about the ancient traveller who had passed this gate with a burning desire to write home. The gate was counted among the three largest checking stations, and many poets had passed through it, each leaving a poem of his own making. I myself walked between trees laden with thick foliage, with the distant sound of autumn wind in my ears and the vision of autumn tints before my eyes. There were hundreds and thousands of pure white blossoms of unohana in full bloom on

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2 Basho: *The Narrow Road to Oku* in *Anthology of Japanese Literature*, trans, Donald Keene (Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1956), p. 363.
3 Ibid.
4 See Yuasa's translation in the Penguin edition.
5 The translation is by Donald Keene quoted in *Makoto Ueda: Matsuo Basho* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1982), p. 35.

either side of the road, in addition to the equally white blossoms of brambles, so that the ground, at a glance, seemed to be covered with early snow.[6]

This section is short, less than a page long, yet it is full of allusions to ancient poems written from the 10th to 12th century, approximately five to seven hundred years before Basho's time. Basho arrives there in June and of course he sees flourishing green leaves. What comes to the poet's mind, however, is another time of the year, the autumn. As the above quotation shows, he hears autumn winds and sees autumn leaves in his mind's eye. The ancient poet he refers to is Taira-no-Kanemori, who left a poem about his wish to have someone convey the news that he has safely arrived at Shirakawa. 'autumn wind' refers to the famous poem written by Nohnin, a priest, which is about the Barrier of Shirakawa being blown by autumn winds, despite the fact that the poet had left the capital in the spring mist.

There are two more poems to which Basho alludes in this section. Basho says though thick foliage meets his eyes, he sees autumn leaves in his mind's eye. He owes this experience to another poem written by Minamoto Norimasa, who sings about autumn leaves at Shirakawa thinking about green leaves which he saw when he left the capital. The allusion to 'snow', that is, white blossoms of brambles looking like snow, is based upon yet another poem by Ohe Sadashige, who sings about the snowy Shirakawa though it was autumn in the capital when he set out. Basho concludes this section by referring to the ancient custom recorded by a man of letters, of passing this station in one's best clothes, thus paying respect to this place of poetical interest. Basho ends the section by quoting a haiku by Sora, his companion:

Decorating my hair
With white blossoms of unohana.
I walked through the gate,
My only gala dress.[7]

Thus in this short section four waka poems are referred to. What are these allusions for? It is evident that Basho experiences Shirakawa with these poems in mind. Shirakawa is not an ordinary checking station for Basho. Many poets came all the way from the capital, Kyoto, a distance of some 500 miles, very often braving the elements, and enduring hardships and fatigue. These poets show in their poems how time has gone by during their travels and how the seasons have changed, following the law of mutability, turning green foliage to yellow and scarlet, and bringing snow. Basho feels the spirit of the place enriched by these poems through which he comes into contact with the spirits of the dead poets. To use Southey's line, Basho's "days among the Dead are past".[8] Now Basho has done the same thing as the ancients and become, as it were, one with the place, and with the dead yet living poets. Shirakawa is seen with the eyes of these poets and now he himself is to be added to the list of those poets who have made Shirakawa an utamakura, truly a place of poetical interest.

Now I would like to turn to Byron. As you well know, Byron also travelled long distances. And his travels became materials for his poetry as in Basho's case. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is a notable example. For my discussion of Byron in comparison with Basho I would like to choose Byron's journey to Rome from Venice, undertaken in April 1817, because in that three-week tour he visited several places, most of which can be said as 'utamakura,' places of poetical interest and which offered sources for this section (sts. 30-77) in *Childe Harold* IV.

Now what did Byron expect from his travel in Italy? For one thing, we know that he was expecting to produce a lot of poetry. He tells Thomas Moore not to make his travel plan because he himself has

6 *The Narrow road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches*, pp. 105 - 106.
7 Ibid., p. 106.
8 The edition used to quote Southey's poem is *A Choice of Southey's Verse*, selected with an introduction by Geoffrey Grigson (London: Faber and Faber, 1970).

> . . . a plan of travel into Italy, which we will discuss. And then, think of the poesy wherewithal we should overflow, from Venice to Vesuvius, to say nothing of Greece . . .[9]

Thus he expects to be inspired to write poetry in Italy. Let me first briefly show how Byron sees Venice through the literature inspired by it. He says, Venice is "a poetical place; and classical, to us, from Shakespeare and Otway".[10] He sounds very much like Basho in the usage of the words 'poetical' and 'classical'. 'Utamakura,' poetry pillow, is a poetical and classical place. Venice is unquestionably an 'utamakura' to Byron. In fact he sees Venice through the fictions he is familiar with; *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice* or *Venice Preserved*. For example he calls the husband of Marianna Segati a "'Merchant of Venice', who is a good deal occupied with business".[11] Byron's attitude to Venice is well expressed in his letter to Augusta dated 18 December, 1816:

> The place pleases me – I have found some pleasing society – & the romance of the situation - & it's extraordinary appearance – together with all the associations we are accustomed to connect with Venice – have always a charm for me – even before I arrived here – and I have not been disappointed in what I have seen.[12]

Thus it is through 'all the associations' connected with Venice that Byron views the city. This way of looking at Venice is well reflected in *Childe Harold* IV. The reason why Venice has a special meaning to the narrator is expressed thus:

> Ours is a trophy which will not decay
> With the Rialto; Shylock and the Moor,
> And Pierre, cannot be swept or worn away –
> The keystones of the arch! though all were o'er,
> For us repeopled were the solitary shore. (IV, 4)[13]

As the poet says, in the next stanza, "The beings of the mind are not of clay; / Essentially immortal", Shakespeare's creations such as Shylock and Othello, and Pierre of Otway's *Venice Preserved* will always be there when material things like the Rialto, the symbol of the prosperity of Venice, pass away. One should remember that it is at the Rialto that Antonio mocks Shylock The implication is that the material Rialto may disappear, but the one in fiction will not. Thus in the words of Kenneth Churchill Byron added "the awareness of the literary ghosts of the city" on top of "the full Romantic image of Venice"[14] supplied by Madame de Stael's *Corinne.* Besides politics, to a great extent it is literature that connects Venice with Byron.

Having said that, I should like to turn to Byron's journey to Rome and his treatment of it in *Childe Harold* which will be of special use in view of the discussion of Basho's practice of echoing actual poems in his poetry with Byron's similar practice. Byron leaves for Rome on 17 April, 1817, goes to Ferrara to see Tasso's cell, Ariosto's tomb and the old castle. Then he goes to Arqua from Padua to see Petrarch's house and tomb, spends only one day in Florence, though he was "drunk with beauty," and arrives in Rome on 29 April. As for what he did in Rome and its environs the following letter to Murray is quite helpful;

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9 Letter to Thomas Moore, 10 February, 1815 in *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie Marchand (London, John Murray, 1973 - 1982), 12 vols., IV, p. 269.
10 Letter to Moore, 17 November, 1816, Ibid., V, p. 131.
11 Ibid., p. 129.
12 Letter to Augusta Leigh, 18 December, 1816, Ibid., p. 140.
13 The edition used to quote *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1980 - 1991), II.
14 Kenneth Churchill: *Italy and English Literature*, 1764-1930 (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 28-9.

> I excursed and skirred all the country round to Alba – Tivoli – Frascati – Licenza - &c. &c. besides I visited twice the fall of Terni – which beats every thing. – On my way back . . . I got some famous trout out of the river Clitumnus – the prettiest little stream in all poesy – near the first post from Foligno – & Spoletto.[15]

As the quotation shows, Byron is raving about the fall of Terni and the river Clitumnus. Surely he is very much aware of the literary traditions associated with these places. I am going to limit the following discussion to Byron's treatment of the River Clitumnus and the fall of Terni. I am afraid I have no time to talk about Byron's love-hate relationship with Horace, with whom Mount Soracte is associated.

According to Hobhouse, "No book of travels has omitted to expatiate on the temple of the Clitumnus".[16] This river is a poetic place of interest *par excellence.* Addison says as follows:

> In my way hence to Terni I saw the river Clitumnus, celebrated by so many of the Poets for a particular quality in its waters of making cattle white that drink of it.[17]

Then he quotes such authors as Virgil, Lucretius, Juvenal, more recently Congreve and others who wrote on the river Clitumnus. For instance, Virgil says in Dryden's translation:

> White flocks, Clitumnus, and huge victim bulls,
> Oft sprinkled with thy hallowed stream, have led
> A Roman triumph to the temple doors.[18]

Pliny also gives a description of the river and the temple to the river-god Clitumnus in his letter.[19] In other words from a literary point of view this is a classical spot in Italy one just cannot miss. As has been quoted, Byron was elated with the famous trout of this river.

This is how he introduces the river:

> But thou, Clitumnus! in thy sweetest wave
> Of the most living crystal that was e'er
> The haunt of river nymph, to gaze and lave
> Her limbs where nothing hid them, thou dost rear
> Thy glassy banks whereon the milk-white steer
> Grazes; the purest god of gentle waters!
> And most serene of aspect, and most clear;
> Surely that stream was unprofaned by slaughters -
> A mirror and a bath for Beauty's youngest daughters! (IV, 66)

Here Byron refers to 'river nymph,' 'the milk-white steer,' the river god, his temple and so forth, and shows clearly he is writing the stanzas on this river fully aware of the literary tradition. Here is a poem of allusion *per se* to the classical tradition. Byron adds to the list of poets who wrote about the river.

Then comes a somewhat Neo-classical stanza:

> And on thy happy shore a temple still,
> Of small and delicate proportion, keeps,
> Upon a mild declivity of hill,

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15 Letter to John Murray, 4 June, 1817 in *Letters and Journals*, V, p. 233.

16 See Hobhouse's note to *Childe Harold*, IV, st. 57.

17 Joseph Addison: *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy in The Years 1701, 1702, 1703* (1705), in *The Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Addison* (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd, 1914), ed. A.C.Guthkelch, 2 vols. II, p. 80.

18 John Dryden: *The Second Book of the Georgics*, II. 201-3, quoted from *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958), 4 vols, II, p. 942.

19 Quoted in *The Works of Lord Byron: Poetry*, E.H.Coleridge, 7 vols. (London: John Murray, 1898-1904), II, p. 380.

Its memory of thee; beneath it sweeps
Thy current's calmness; oft from it leaps
The finny darter with the glittering scales,
Who dwells and revels in thy glassy deeps;
While, chance, some scatter'd water-lily sails
Down where the shallower wave still tells its bubbling tales. (IV, 67)

Byron is looking at the temple which, Pliny says, is "an ancient and venerable temple, in which is a statue of the river-god Clitumnus"[20] though it is likely that Byron saw the one that replaced the original one. He is hearing the same river, as the preceding men of letters heard, telling 'its bubbling tales', the river with its temple and its 'finny darter' and water-lilies which were all familiar to his predecessors. He is sharing the same experience with them through this river and makes his bit of contribution to the literary tradition. The river becomes a bit richer in its literary significance because of his contribution. Like Basho he feels the existence of "the Genius of the place".

The next four stanzas (sts. 69-72) are on the fall of Terni, and Byron presents another nature poem, this time of a somewhat more elevated, imaginative kind. This spot is also a classical place of interest celebrated by poets from Virgil onward. Hobhouse's note shows that he and Byron read Addison's comment on this fall in his *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy*:

> The fall looks so much like 'the hell of waters' that Addison thought the descent alluded to by the gulf in which Alecto plunged into the infernal regions.[21]

Byron uses the expression, 'the hell of waters' in stanza 69. Hobhouse's note above refers to Addison's belief that

> . . . this is the gulf through which Virgil's Alecto shoots her self into Hell: For the very place, the great reputation of it, the fall of waters, the woods that encompass it, with the smoke and noise that arise from it are all pointed at in the description.[22]

Addison quotes a passage from Virgil with Dryden's translation attached to it. As Addison says, "When Virgil has marked any particular quality in a river, the other Poets seldom fail of copying after him".[23] Anyhow the way to look at the fall as something that reminds its viewer of hell starts with Virgil, and Byron adds to the number of 'the other Poets'. So again this piece of poetry is based on a literary and classical tradition. Harold's, after all, is a literary pilgrimage as well.

How highly Byron thought of this fall, this poetic place of interest, can be seen in the following note of his attached to st. 71:

> I saw the 'Cascata del marmore' of Terni twice, at different periods - once from the summit of the precipice, and again from the valley below. The lower view is far to be preferred, if the traveller has time for one only, but in any point of view, either from above or below, it is worth all the cascades and torrents of Switzerland put together: the Staubach, Reichenbach, Pisse Vache, fall of Arpenaz, etc. are rills in comparative appearance.[24]

Here he sounds like an ordinary tourist, comparing all the cataracts he has seen before and giving the fall of Terni the pride of place. Basho would not be impressed by spectacular landscapes, unless they have been visited and sung by earlier poets.

Let us see how the fall is depicted by Byron:

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20 Ibid.
21 Hobhouse's note to IV, st. 72.
22 Addison: *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy*, II, p. 83.
23 Ibid., 45.
24 Byron's note to IV, st. 66.

The roar of waters! – from the headlong height
Velino cleaves the wave-worn precipice;
The fall of waters! rapid as the light
The flashing mass foams shaking the abyss;
The hell of waters! where they howl and hiss,
And boil in endless torture, while the sweat
Of their great agony, wrung out from this
Their Phlegethon, curls round the rocks of jet
That gird the gulf around, in pitiless horror set, (IV, 69)

One should take note of some of the words and phrases used here: 'the abyss,' 'howl and hiss,' 'boil in endless torture,' 'great agony,' 'Phlegethon,' 'pitiless horror,' and so forth. The whole stanza is devoted to depicting the fall as a hell, and this imagery is used to convey the suffering of those in hell. Emphasis is on the powerful nature of the fall with the frequent use of alliteration: 'headlong height,' 'wave-worn,' 'howl and hiss,' and 'gird the gulf around' (st. 69), followed by 'crushing the cliffs' and 'fierce footsteps' in st. 70.

Byron seems to be indebted to Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*[25] for his treatment of the fall. One can point in Byron's stanza some of the words used by Coleridge: 'chasm,' 'gushing,' 'dread,' 'fountain,' 'unceasing,' and so forth. The word 'winding' is reminiscent of 'meandering'. The use of such rhymes as 'round' and 'ground', and 'profound' and 'bound', though somewhat traditional, nonetheless reminds the reader of Coleridge's poem.

The similarity is not limited to the poetic technique but the fall scene is charged with that powerful energy which characterizes Coleridge's poem. Byron's treatment is characteristically Byronic in that the fall is seen in terms of his private life. In the concluding stanza of this portion Byron talks about a rainbow in allegorical terms as follows:

An Iris sits, amidst the infernal surge,
Like Hope upon a death-bed, and, unworn
Its steady dyes, while all around is torn
By the distracted waters, bears serene
Its brilliant hues with all their beams unshorn:
Resembling, 'mid the torture of the scene,
Love watching Madness with unalterable mien. (IV, 72)

While this is a nature poem it is at the same time something else. The things of nature, rainbow and the fall are made use of to express certain situations in life. Firstly the rainbow is likened to "Hope upon a death-bed," that is, to somebody looking after a very sick person with confidence that he or she will recover. Secondly, this scene is in turn likened to another situation in which "Love [is] watching Madness with unalterable mien." One cannot be quite certain as to what Byron really means here. One assumes that there is a mad person who is watched over calmly by another with love and care, while the others treat him as a mad person.

One is intrigued by the mystery of the situation. Perhaps one should be reminded of a scene in *Don Juan* where

Inez call'd some druggists and physicians,
And tried to prove her loving lord was *mad*,
But as he had some lucid intermissions,
She next decided he was only *bad*;[26]

25 The edition used to quote from Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* is *The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London: Oxford University Press, 1912).
26 The edition used to quote from *Don Juan* is *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1980 - 1991), V.

If Donna Inez is partly modelled on Lady Byron who, when the legal separation was being processed, did try to make her husband appear mad, the situation described in the above quotation very likely refers to what Byron went through himself in the first few months of 1816.

So in all likelihood 'Madness' refers to the poet himself. What about 'Love'? Perhaps it refers to Augusta Leigh who did not change her attitude to Byron? Thus the natural surroundings are utilized to express and elucidate human situations and this is Byron's way. Byron chooses one facet of his life which most concerns him at the time of his writing. Byron not only follows the traditional view of the fall in his description, thus adding to the list of those who wrote about it, but also writes about his own personal problem. If the earlier treatment of the river Clitumnus is more low-keyed and objective, here the treatment is more intense and subjective. A poetical and classical spot of interest received a very subjective treatment at the hands of Byron to be made into a truly egotistic portion of the poem.

Now I would like to show how Basho and Byron compare in their usage of poetical and classical places. As the above discussion has shown, both Basho and Byron were well-aware of their respective literary traditions. In fact they were incited to travel because of the literary associations. When they travelled, their creative power was released and they wrote poetry. They were inspired by the spirits of the ancients and they themselves added their share to the already existing literary spirit haunting these places.

There are differences. One difference is the choice of the genres. *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* is called haibun, which is written in poetic prose interspersed with haiku. The language is brief and succinct and Basho devotes only so many lines to each of some fifty places he visits. He briefly gives his impressions of a place and moves on to another. It is not a narrative medium. It is a genre in which the poet tells the reader the basic information and leaves the rest to the reader. The writer is not talkative. The refined sensibility of Basho is conveyed to the reader in a language both brief and sufficient. In contrast, like the other Romantics, Byron is talkative. And *Childe Harold* is a narrative poem, too. When you talk, generally speaking, you explain things. You tend to expand and elaborate. That is what Byron does. Basho shrinks and contracts sentences. Byron enlarges and elongates them.

He presents a case, makes a search, elaborates on it and seeks to answer his questionings. Ideas are presented and followed to their logical conclusions, or so Byron at least tries. Poetry is half feeling and half logic in Byron's case. His poetry has a metaphysical side. Basho dispenses with logic and presents a poetic atmosphere for the reader to feel rather than to think out. When Basho visits places of interest, he remembers ancients associated with them and echoes their poems and contributes his poetry almost as an offering for the poetical spirit of the place. His poems will be only slightly different from their predecessors. He will not seek a complete originality. He will see to it that his originality be minimal. Modestly he will echo earlier poems. By writing a haiku, he makes his contribution for preserving and modifying an imaginative poetic space handed down to him over the centuries.

Then each has his own purpose to travel. For Basho journeying itself is an act of being a poet. He wishes to visit places visited by earlier poets and compose haiku, and that's all he wants to do. That is his way of life too. Those places do not have to be scenic. As a matter of fact, the check point of Shirakawa was a nondescript place when Basho visited. If he has some emotional problems, he does not talk about them. Byron's case is quite different. The early Harold "felt the fulness of satiety: / Then loath'd he in his native land to dwell." (I, 4) and the later Harold or Byron sets out to forget, to "wean me from the weary dream / Of selfish grief or gladness" (III, 4). Anyway he travels to forget and visits places. But he does not forget his problems. The fall of Terni not only evokes the poetry associated with the place but makes him bring in his own problems and makes it the matter of his poetry.

The fact that he cannot forget results in his creative work. That is, the efforts to forget become the matter for Byron's poetry. Even the treatment of the river Clitumnus includes the sentence "'tis to him [the genius of the place] ye must / Pay orisons for this suspension of disgust". (IV, st. 68) Why disgust? one wonders. Byron refers very clearly to "the dry dust / Of weary life (ibid.) Undoubtedly he is thinking of his own 'weary life'. A poetical and classical place is not only a sacred place worthy of his deference, but something which is

experienced with his whole personality, his past life, the state of mind he happens to be in at the time. On the other hand Basho is reticent about his place in society or interaction with the world in general or particular.

Basho is more like a Zen priest, being serenely himself. He seems to be comfortable being at the mercy of the elements. He gets the sense of living when he travels, goes to places visited by ancients and recalls their poetry and writes his own. Byron is just as interested in those places, but he is not content with just associating himself with earlier poets and recalling their literary compositions. He must needs talk about himself and his emotional problems at a mundane and realistic level. Byron is wading and struggling in the mud. Basho the man must have struggled in the mud, but his problems are distanced in his work. He does not even think about how he will be seen by the world. He merely figures in this work as a solitary poet playing with winds and clouds, happily communicating with the spirits of ancient poets and being one as it were with the spirit of a poetical and classical place.

Is this the difference between a meal of boiled rice with vegetables and a dinner of steak cooked rare with full-bodied French wine? But I am afraid I already sound too mystified.