How metaphor and iconicity are entwined in poetry

A case in haiku

Masako K. Hiraga

Graduate School of Intercultural Communication, Rikkyo University, Japan

"... there is clearly an iconic element in metaphor."
P. Henle, "Metaphor" (1958: 177)

1. Introduction

The major problem in the treatment of metaphor and iconicity in the past literature in semiotics and linguistics is that metaphor and iconicity have not been studied in a fully related manner within the same frame of reference. Although Peirce (1931–1958, 1962 [1955, 1902]) defined metaphor as a subtype of iconic signs along with image and diagram, metaphor has been treated quite separately from image and diagram in the major literature.

By contrast, this study emphasizes the importance of treating both in the same framework because metaphor and iconicity are essentially entwined as an analogical mapping. On the one hand, metaphor entails iconicity. Imagic and diagrammatic mapping of image-schematic structures resides in the creation and interpretation of meaning in metaphor. On the other hand, iconicity entails metaphor. The metaphors underlying the relationship of form and meaning navigate the diagrammatic interpretation of linguistic forms. Likewise, a metaphorical reading of the text reveals the iconic structure in the text. In brief, two types of the interplay between metaphor and iconicity are analysed and explained in this paper by the model of blending (Turner 1996, Fauconnier and Turner 1998, among others): (1) iconic moments manifested as image-schemas in metaphor; and (2) metaphor giving iconic interpretation to form.
The study presents, as an illustrative and foregrounded manifestation of the interplay of metaphor and iconicity, a detailed analysis of haiku, Japanese poetry of 17-mora text form. With their brevity in form and richness in meaning, haiku are considered to offer an optimal example of how the human mind connects things with minimal linguistic resources but in a particularly subtle way (cf. Blasco and Merski 1999). The analysis focuses on the following haiku text:

```
荒海や      佐渡によたかふ    天河
arawani ya  Sado ni yokotu  ton no gawa
rough sea: Sado in lie  heaven of river
‘Rough sea: lying toward Sado Island the River of Heaven’ (Matsuo 1996 [1694]: 109).
```

The choice of this particular text was based on three factors: (i) it displays a metaphorical juxtaposition, in which two parts of the text are put in comparison and contribute to enriching the multi-layered meaning; (ii) the well-documented revision of the text demonstrates that kanji (i.e., Chinese logographs) play a cognitive role to strengthen the link between form and meaning in the finished text; and (iii) representations of the text in Japanese Sign Language are available for further analysis (cf. Hermofsky this volume).

The analysis shows (1) the poem’s grammatical and rhetorical structure, (2) local blends and recruitment of background knowledge, (3) global blend and emergent meaning, (4) iconicity of kanji as a cognitive medium, and (5) iconicity of the sound patterns. In my analysis, I hope to propose that metaphor and iconicity should be treated as an entwined process, and that the model of blending offers explanations of the dynamic creativity in the interplay of metaphor and iconicity.

2. **Cognitive approach to metaphor and iconicity**

Before analysing the text in detail, this section presents major methodological issues, which give a frame of reference to the present study. The cognitive approach regards metaphor and iconicity as important theoretical issues in the exploration of the operation of the human mind. The vagueness of the Peircean notion of metaphor is compensated for by the definition given by the cognitive theory of metaphor.

2.1 **Working definitions**

In cognitive terms, iconicity (i.e., images and diagrams in Peircean terminology) deals with a mapping between form and meaning (Lakoff and Turner 1989) in various degrees of abstraction, from concrete attributive resemblance to abstract structural analogy. Metaphor, on the other hand, is a mapping between two conceptual spaces of meaning, a projection of a schematised pattern from a less abstract source space onto a more abstract target space (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987, 1993, Turner 1996).

It is often the case that the basis of similarity in the icons is derived from visual, auditory and other formal traits of the object that they stand for, and that the iconic signs are often the visual, auditory or formal representations themselves. Metaphors, on the other hand, do not necessarily have such traits. Rather, they manifest themselves as a heuristic device to mediate dissimilar concepts by means of the similarity they yield (Ricoeur 1975). As Anderson (1984:459) correctly points out, “a metaphor, like an image or an analogy, is what it represents — but not because of an antecedent identity or similarity, not as a reminiscence, but in virtue of a similarity which it creates”. Indeed, in icons, the similarity relationship between the sign and the object is taken to be pre-existent. In contrast, a metaphor connects two entities, which are *a priori* dissimilar. The connecting act via a metaphor establishes the similarity between the two dissimilar entities, and thus creates a new meaning or interpretation.

Metaphor and iconicity often work together. There is an iconic moment in metaphor. Iconic moments in metaphor manifest themselves as a mapping of image-schematic structures in the generation of meaning. The term, ‘image-schema’, itself suggests that both ‘image’ and ‘diagram’ are to be related to this cross-space mapping of metaphor. From a vast amount of information provided by our bodily experiences, interactive perception, feeling, association, contextual and background knowledge, we have an array of images that do not clash with the entire cognitive process of metaphor.

In addition, there is a metaphorical navigation in the understanding of icons. That is, metaphors in the text lead to an iconic interpretation of the form. Such metaphors guide the way one interprets the forms as diagrammatic icons. This interplay between metaphor and iconicity is not a static product of structure, but a dynamic process, emergent, elaborated, and integrated with background knowledge, contextual information, and feeling, at the time of meaning generation both in composition and interpretation.

2.2 **The model of blending**

In order to explicate the interrelationship of metaphor and iconicity and to analyse their actual manifestations in poetic language, this study introduces the model of blending, developed by Turner and Fauconnier (Turner and Fauconnier
1995, Turner 1996, Fauconnier and Turner 1998). The basic claims of this model can be summarised as follows:

1. Metaphor is a cognitive process in which one set of concepts (a target) is understood in terms of another (a source). According to the model of blending, metaphor is a conceptual integration of four mental spaces. Mental spaces are small conceptual arrays constructed for local purposes of understanding. When a conceptual projection occurs, two input mental spaces (source and target in a metaphor) are created. There is a partial mapping of counterparts between the input spaces, as represented by solid lines in Figure 1. These input spaces have relevant information from the respective domains, as well as additional structure from culture, context, point of view and other background information.

2. There are two kinds of middle mental space in addition to the input spaces. These middle spaces are a generic space and a blended space. The generic space maps onto each of the input spaces, as indicated by dotted lines in the figure below. It reflects some abstract structure shared by the inputs. The blended space also receives partial projections from the inputs, as indicated by dotted lines. The blend is a rich space integrating the generic structure, structures from each input space and background information. Often the blended space has an emergent structure of its own, as represented by the square in the figure. This emergence occurs in ways of composition (in which new relations emerge from projections from the inputs), completion (in which the composite structure projected into the blend is completed into the larger system by background knowledge, cognitive and cultural models), and elaboration (in which the blend is further elaborated according to its own logic) (Fauconnier and Turner 1998:271).

3. Each mental space has an image-schematic structure that is consistent and preserved through a conceptual projection of generic and input spaces. The image-schemas are skeletal patterns in our sensory and motor experience, such as a container, a motion along a path, part and whole, centre and periphery, symmetry and so forth.

4. The blended space develops inferences, arguments, ideas and emotions, which can modify the initial input spaces and change our views of the knowledge used to build those input spaces (Turner 1996:83). Therefore, the blend is a dynamic mechanism of creativity.

2.3 Metaphor-icon links

How does metaphor relate to iconicity in the blending model? The model can be elaborated in the way in which the iconic mapping between form and meaning is added in order to account for metaphor and iconicity as an entwined process. Figure 2 is a graphic representation of the relationship of metaphor-icon links, in which iconic mappings are indicated by arrows (cf. Hiraga 2000).

In the ‘meaning’ box, the metaphorical mapping is illustrated according to the model of blending as discussed in the previous section. The ‘form’ box represents the linguistic and other semiotic resources such as sound and visual shapes. When the form directly mirrors the meaning as in the case of onomato-poeia and visible language (e.g. some logographs), the iconic mapping occurs in the direction from form to meaning, as illustrated by an arrow. On the other hand, when metaphors in the text give meaning to form, there occurs a diagrammatic mapping in the direction from meaning to form illustrated by an arrow. There are three types of occurrences of diagrammatic mapping: from the input space, from the generic space and from the blended space onto the form. It is these mappings that give iconic meanings to form at the level of text segments as well as at the level of the macro-structure of the text.

The effectiveness of the elaborated model of blending shown in Figure 2 shows up here. For it is with this model that one can specify which part(s) of the metaphorical process — whether the input, generic, or blended spaces — relate(s) to the diagrammatic mapping of form and meaning. In theory there are four possibilities: a mapping (1) from generic space onto form; (2) from input source space to form; (3) from input target space to form; and (4) from blended space.
3. How a poem manifests metaphor-icon links

Through a detailed analysis of a prototypical example of *haiku* by Basho Matsuo (1644–1694), this section demonstrates that the poetic text chosen indeed foregrounds metaphor-icon links and thus serves as optimal data to support the theoretical claims made in this study.

*Haiku* or *hokku*, as it was called during the time of Basho, is the shortest form of Japanese traditional poetry, consisting of seventeen morae, divided into three sections of 5–7–5. Originating in the first three lines of the 31-mora *tanka*, *haiku* began to rival the older form in the Edo period (1603–1867). It was elevated to the level of a profoundly serious art form by the great master Basho. It has since remained the most popular poetic form in Japan. Originally, the subject matter of *haiku* was restricted to an objective description of nature suggestive of one of the seasons, evoking a definite, though unstated, emotional response. Later, its subject range was broadened but it remained an art of expression suggesting as much as possible in the fewest possible words. Both *tanka* and *haiku* are composed by people of every class, men and women, young and old. As the Japanese language has only five vowel sounds, [a], [e], [i], [o], and [u], with which to form its morae, either by themselves or in combination with a consonant as in consonant-vowel sequences, it is not possible to achieve rhyming in the sense of European poetry. Brevity, suggestiveness and ellipsis are the ‘life and soul’ of *haiku* and *tanka*. The reader is invited to read the unwritten lines with the help of his/her imagination (for further explanations given in English about Japanese *haiku*, see Blyth 1952, Yasuda 1957, Henderson 1958, and Shirane 1998).

The *haiku* to be looked at here is taken from Basho’s *Oka no Hosomichi*, one of the acknowledged masterpieces of Japanese literature:

Example 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>荒海や　佐渡によ結合　　天河</td>
<td>rough sea: Sado in lie heaven of river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>arumì ya Sado ni yokotau</em> <em>ama no gawa</em></td>
<td>‘Rough sea: lying toward Sado Island the River of Heaven’ (Matsuo 1996 [1694]: 109).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1 Metaphorical juxtaposition

(a) Grammatical and rhetorical structure

The poem at first glance describes a natural scene. On the one hand, the sea is rough; and on the other hand, over one’s head, there is the Milky Way arching
toward the island of Sado. Even if one does not have much pragmatic knowledge about Sado Island or the Milky Way in Japanese history and culture, one may sense the grandness of scale depicted by this *haiku*. It is a starry night. The Milky Way is magnificent. The grandeur of the Milky Way is put in contrast to the dark rough sea. The waves are terrifying; the water churns and moans, as if it would not allow the boats to cross. It is dangerous and fearful in the night.

This dark sea does indeed separate the people living on the island of Sado from the mainland. The island is visible across the troubled waves, perhaps with its scattered house-lights. Human beings (including the poet) are very small in the face of this spectacular pageant of powerful nature. And yet there are thousands of human lives and stories embedded in the scene.

The first five-mora segment, *araumi ya*, consists of a noun, *araumi* (‘rough sea’), and a *kireji* (‘cutting letter’). *Ya*. *Kireji*, a rhetorical device, used in *tanka* and *haiku*, consist of about a dozen particles and mark a division point in the text. Although the functions of the division vary according to the particles, a general effect of *kireji* is to leave room for reflection on the feelings or images evoked by the preceding segment. *Ya* in Example 1 is a *kireji* particularly favoured by Basho and said to have ‘something of the effect of a preceding ‘Lo!’ It divides a *haiku* into two parts and is usually followed by a description or comparison, sometimes an illustration of the feeling evoked. There is always at least the suggestion of a kind of equation, so that the effect of *ya* is often best indicated by a colon” (Henderson 1958: 189). That is, *araumi* (‘rough sea’) and the rest of the text, *Sado ni yokotau ama no gawa* (‘the Milky Way, which lies toward Sado’), are juxtaposed to constitute a kind of metaphor in which the feelings or images evoked by a rough sea are illustrated by the feelings or images evoked by the Milky Way arching over the Island of Sado (see Figure 3).

The next seven-mora segment, *Sado ni yokotau* (‘which lies toward Sado’), is an adjectival clause which modifies the last five-mora segment, *ama no gawa* (‘the river of heaven’). *Sado* is a place name, an island located about fifty miles from the coast of mid-Honshu. *Ni* (‘toward’) is a postpositional particle of location. *Yokotau* (‘to lie’) is a verb which normally has an animate agent and describes the action of spreading one’s body on something flat (when used as a transitive verb) or the state of a body spread out on something flat (when used as an intransitive verb). As the grammatical subject of *yokotau* in this poem is *ama no gawa* (‘the river of heaven’), an inanimate noun, the verb is used metaphorically.

The last five-mora segment, *ama no gawa*, is a proper noun signifying the Milky Way. The literal meaning of *ama no gawa* is the river of heaven. It involves a metaphor in which the path-shaped set of stars (the Milky Way) is seen as a river. The second and the third segments of the poem thus constitute a local metaphor, in which the river of stars in the heaven spreads its body toward the Island of Sado. There are conventional conceptual metaphors behind this local metaphor, namely, *nature is animate* (in this case *river is animate*), and *a path-shaped object is a river*.

(b) Background knowledge

In addition to this local knowledge about the grammatical and rhetorical structure, it is indispensable to consider the background knowledge recruited at the time of reading. The Island of Sado and the Milky Way have rich cultural implications. Sado Island has a long history. The island is geographically separated from the mainland by the Sea of Japan. Because the rough waves prevented people from crossing the sea by boat, the island functioned as a place of exile for felons and traitors from the tenth century up to the end of the nineteenth century. At the same time, gold mines were discovered there in the early seventeenth century, and attracted all kinds of people. At the time of Basho, the Tokugawa Shogunate had control of the gold mines, and the people imprisoned in the island were forced to serve as free labour there.

Thus, the metonymy of a rough sea with Sado Island activates the cultural and historical meanings of the island. Also, the roughness of the waves is consonant with the roughness of life on the island, which involves violence, cruelty, and despair. Another important point is that the name of this island is written in two Chinese logographs, 佐 and 渡, which mean ‘to help’ and ‘to cross’ respectively. The cognitive meanings of the logographs, particularly that of ‘crossing’, seem to be mapped onto the image of a rough sea. One can probably detect, in the alignment of these two image-schemas (‘rough sea’ and ‘island’), workings of such salient conventional metaphors as “life is a boat journey and the waves are an obstacle to such a journey.” The difficulty of crossing is highlighted here, and further reinforces the sad feelings relating to the difficulty of reunion by separated people, one group living on the island, the other living on the mainland across the rough sea.

Moreover, there is a sad legend about the Milky Way, which originated in China and was brought to Japan. The date on which this poem was composed, the night before the seventh night of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, suggests that the poet had this legend in his mind. For the seventh night of the seventh month (i.e., the 7th of July) is known and celebrated as the ‘star festival’ after the Chinese story. The two bright stars on either side of the Milky Way, the star Vega and the star Altair, are believed to be Princess Weaver and Oxherd. These two stars face each other across the Milky Way; but, because the Milky Way is so wide and vast they cannot meet easily. One day the god of heaven
pitted Princess Weaver's lonely life and arranged for her to marry Osherd. After
they married, the Princess became too lazy to weave. The angry god punished
her and allowed her to visit her husband only once a year, the night of the 7th of
July, but only if the night was fair.

The separation of this legendary couple is mapped onto the separation of the
people imprisoned in Sado Island. Both the Milky Way and the Island of Sado
with their cultural connotations share event frames for confinement — spatial
confinement, limited freedom, limited means of travel, and the mental state of
being separated.

In sum, this haiku text can be seen as a global metaphor in which several
images are compared and preserved to produce multi-layered meanings in the
blend. Most prototypically, such images include a rough sea and the river of
heaven (Milky Way) as an obstacle, a separating flow of water, and the legen-
dary couple and the prisoners as people prevented from reuniting with their loved
ones. They constitute the input spaces to be mapped onto one another, and
integrated into the blended space, as illustrated in Figure 3. Furthermore, there
are other implicit meanings in the text. The text may evoke, for example, a
feeling of elegy or a realisation of the helplessness or nothingness of human
beings in the face of powerful nature, in this case, represented by terrifying
rough waves and vast starry skies. It may also imply varying kinds of contrast:
A contrast of motion between the violent waves and the peaceful skies; a contrast
of colour and light between the black and dark sea and the silvery and bright skies;
and a contrast of the real and the legendary between life stories of people and
the love story of stars. These implied images and meanings can all emerge at the
time of reading of the text, as represented in the blended space in Figure 3.

3.2 Iconic interpretation navigated by metaphor

With the metaphorical reading analysed above, the visual and the auditory
configuration of the text shows up its iconic effects.

(a) Visual iconicity

Firstly, let us look at the visual elements. The Japanese language has a unique
writing system in which three different types of signs are used to describe the
same phonological text: kanji (Chinese logographs), hiragana (syllabary for
words of Japanese origin), and katakana (syllabary for words of foreign origin
other than Chinese). In the context of the present discussion, logographs are of
particular importance because they function as a cognitive medium for poetry.
Basho revised this poem orthographically from Example 2 (a) to 2 (b) (Matsuo
1957 [1694]).

Figure 3. Blending of Araumiya

Example 2
(a) 荒海や佐渡にござたふ天河
(b) 荒海や佐渡にござたふ天河

araumi ya  Sado ni yokotou  ama no gawa
The poet’s three noun phrases, arami, Sado, and ama no gawa, were all spelled in kanji in both the first [Example 2 (a)] and the revised [Example 2 (b)] versions. The boxed part, the verb of lying, was revised from kanji, a Chinese logograph, to hiragana, two moraic letters. The main effect of changing the character type in the verb yokotou (‘to lie’) from 楽 to よ hiragana is to make that part of the text a ground for the conspicuous profile of 荒海 (‘rough sea’) and 天河 (‘milky way’). In general, because kanji, being logographic characters, have a distinct angular form and semantic integrity, they differentiate themselves visually and cognitively as the figure while the remaining hiragana function as the ground.

This differentiation of kanji is particularly prominent in the words 荒海 (‘rough sea’), 佐渡 (‘Island of Sado’), and 天河 (‘milky way’). These three nouns are all written in two kanji. All of them include kanji (underlined in Example 2 (a) and (b)) such as 海 (‘sea’), 渡 (‘to cross water’), and 河 (‘river’) which are made up with the same radical 豕 signifying water. Both 荒海 (‘rough sea’) and 天河 (‘milky way’) relate to water, as described above. The semantic similarity between 荒海 (‘rough sea’) and 天河 (‘milky way’) in terms of ‘waterness’ and the obstacle (in the real life and in the legend explained above) and their dissimilarity (violence in the ‘rough sea’ and peacefulness in ‘the river of heaven’) are also foregrounded. This is a case of diagrammatic iconic effect, intensifying the meaning of the foregrounded elements by the repetitive use of similar visual elements — two-character nouns and the same radical.

Besides, 渡 (‘to cross water’) in Sado 佐渡 the name of the Island, seems important, because this logograph means ‘to cross.’ As the background history and the legend show, both ‘rough sea’ and ‘the Milky Way’ are obstacles for the loved ones crossing for their meeting. This character is placed in the middle of the poem as if it signalled the crossing.

(b) Auditory iconicity

The sound structure also exhibits interesting iconic effects navigated by the metaphorical interpretations. The following analysis illustrates three possible iconic effects produced by the distribution of vowels, consonants, and the repetition of adjacent vowels. Example 3 is a phonological notation of the poem’s moraic structure.

Example 3
Line 1 a-ra-u-mi ya ([-] = the division between mora)
Line 2 sa-do ni yo-ko-to-u
Line 3 a-ma no ya-wa

The distribution of the vowels shows that the poem predominantly uses back vowels such as [a] and [o]. As indicated in Table 1, there are 8 [a]’s (47%) and 5 [o]’s (29%) out of a total of 17 vowels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a</th>
<th>o</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>u</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Line 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When one compares this distribution to an overall distribution of the five vowels in the fifty haiku poems by Basho in Oku no Hosomichi in Table 2, it is clear that this haiku is characterized by the high occurrence of [a] and [o] and the low occurrence of [i].

Table 2. Occurrence of vowels in the 50 Haiku in Oku no Hosomichi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a</th>
<th>o</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>u</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[a] and [o] are pronounced with a wide passage between the tongue and the roof of the mouth, and with the back of the tongue higher than the front. These two vowels have characteristics, which are contrastive to the vowel [i], a front vowel, pronounced with a narrow opening of the mouth with minimum energy. The backness and the openness often create ‘sonorous’ effects, which may draw associations of something deep and large (cf. Jespersen 1964 [1921]). In this poem, perhaps, these effects have something to do with the largeness of waves in the rough sea and the depth and width of the river of heaven.

The sonorous effects are also created by the frequent use of nasals ([m], [n], and [ŋ]), and vowel-like consonants ([y] and [w]). Table 3 shows the distribution of consonants.

The dominance of sonorants such as [m], [n], [ŋ], [r], [y], and [w] is characteristic of the text. The sonorants often provide prolongation and fullness
of the sounds, and hence usually produce lingering effects (cf. Shapiro and Beum 1965: 10–12). It could be argued that the back vowels and sonorant consonants jointly reinforce a sound-iconic effect of the ‘depth’ or the ‘largeness’ of the image of ‘water’ elements, i.e., a rough sea and the river of heaven expressed by the poem. Also note that the only line that has obstruents (i.e., non-sonorants such as [s], [d], [k], and [t]), is Line 2, in which the island is mentioned. If one can interpret ‘sonorants’ as iconically associated with ‘water’ elements, then one can also infer that ‘obstruents’ are associated with ‘non-water’, namely, the island in this text.

The last point is that the text seems to conceal very cleverly and wittingly a key word, which is congruous with the metaphorical interpretation of the poem. The prototypical sound sequence in Japanese is an alternation of a single consonant and a single vowel such as CV-CV-CV. This general feature applies to the haiku text, too.

Example 4

Line 1 a-ra-u-mi ya
Line 2 sa-do ni yo-ko-to-u
Line 3 a-ma no ga-wa

A closer look, however, enables one to recognize that there are a few occurrences of two vowels (or semi-vowel) adjacent to each other such as [+Back] and [-Back], manifested as [a-u], [o-u], and [a-w] as underlined in Example 4. In Line 3, there is a similar sound sequence, g a w a, a as the Japanese semi-vowel [w] phonetically close to [u]. It could be said that each line of the poem has a vowel sequence, [+Back] and [-Back], which is poetically equivalent to [a-u], hidden in the sound sequence of a word or two adjacent words. Very interestingly, this vowel sequence, [a-u], is a verb in Japanese, which means ‘to meet’. The hidden repetition of [a-u] in each line could be read as an echo of a hidden longing between separated people. Again, the iconic effect of this hidden element supports the reading of the text as a global metaphorical juxtaposition, i.e., separation of the two stars on either side of the Milky Way mapped onto the people in the Island of Sado separated from their loved ones on the mainland.

3.3 Metaphor-icon links in haiku

It has been claimed that the cognitive projection of metaphorical juxtaposition as a result of the kireji (‘cutting letters’) is to be explained as a global blend which integrates the input mental spaces of ‘Milky Way’ and ‘rough sea’, which are at the same time locally blended spaces. This blend or conceptual integration occurs as a dynamic process of ‘making sense’ over the entire array of many mental spaces under the recruitment from cultural and historical knowledge and other background contexts, and thus creates emergent structures. The process of integration is graphically represented in the ‘meaning’ box in Figure 4.

The arrows connecting form and meaning in Figure 4 illustrate how iconic mappings occur. Firstly, the water radical repeatedly used in the three kanji logographs is a mimetic image icon of three drops of water, and thus, is mapped onto the input spaces of ama no gawa (‘the river of heaven’ or ‘Milky Way’) and araumi (‘rough sea’). This is represented by the two arrows of ‘imaginic mapping’ in Figure 4. Secondly, there is a diagrammatic mapping between the generic space (path of water as obstacles) and the water radical in kanji. The mapping is diagrammatic because the strength of water elements in the generic space is mapped onto the repetitive structure in the form when one interprets an iconic meaning of the repetition. Thirdly, when the blend forges emergent meanings for the overall metaphorical interpretation of the text, the metaphorical reading navigates diagrammatically some iconic interpretations of sound configurations. The sound architecture of the text is now read as an analogical icon of the semantic structure of the poem. This is illustrated by the arrows of ‘diagrammatic mapping’ from the blended space onto the form in Figure 4.

Workings of the interplay of metaphor and iconicity demonstrated above by the detailed textual analysis and the graphic representation are prevalent in various texts of poetic and non-poetic nature if not as prominent as in the one discussed above (cf. Hiraga 2000). The point is that far from being subordinated to meaning, the visual and sound shape of the text plays a crucial role in creating and reinforcing meaning.
HOw metaphor and iconicity are entwined in poetry

4. Conclusion

Interpretations of the literary text are constrained in certain ways — by the use of conventional conceptual mapping, by commonplace knowledge and by iconicity between structure and the meaning. The analysis has demonstrated that the reading of haiku is also dependent on these factors. Basho used conceptual metaphors, and exploited almost every possible resource in the lexicon, syntax, and orthography to multiply the implications of the short poetic text, e.g., kireji (‘cutting letters’), kanaji (‘Chinese logographs’), allusions, and sound patterns. It is indispensable to rely also on cultural and historical background knowledge to understand the enriched meanings of his texts. Finally, iconicity is of particular importance in a short poetic text such as haiku because brevity seems to require the form itself to participate in giving images, concepts, and feelings. This has been demonstrated by Basho’s clever use of kanaji and sound structure in visual, auditory and cognitive terms.

The major methodological contribution of this study is that I have added to the model of blending proposed by Turner and Fauconnier a few specifications for explicating the workings of metaphor and iconicity as an entwined phenomenon.

The Turner-Fauconnier approach is flexible and comprehensive as it assumes that meaning creation is an ongoing mental operation with an emergent structure in the blend of input mental spaces. The model can therefore incorporate structures not only from the expressed entities (i.e., input spaces) but also from the unexpressed (e.g., pragmatic contexts, background prior knowledge, cognitive models, inferences, and emotions). This makes it a very realistic and effective instrument for literary analysis.

With regard to the relationship between form and meaning in the creation and interpretation of the text, this study has tried to define, more explicitly than the Turner-Fauconnier model, metaphorical and iconic mappings, which occur at the time of blending. It has been shown through the sample analysis of haiku that this elaborated model can specify which parts of the metaphorical process, whether the input, generic, or blended spaces, relate to the imagic and diagrammatic mapping of form and meaning.

Composing and understanding a text is a process of making sense out of the stream of images, concepts, knowledge, and feelings, emerging together. The interplay of metaphor and iconicity essentially concerns this dynamic relationship of form and meaning in action.

Acknowledgments


Notes

1. Word-for-word translation is given by the author and not in Matsuo (1996 [1694]). My word-for-word translation is based on Matsuo (1996 [1694]) and Matsuo (1996 [1694]). The in-text reference with different years of publication indicates that the year in brackets is a source or an original work and the year in parentheses is an access volume according to which the citation is made.
2. Turner and Fauconnier use the term ‘mental space’ in contrast to the term ‘conceptual domain’, employed by Lakoff, Johnston, and other cognitivists. Mental spaces are small conceptual arrays put together for local purposes of action and understanding, while conceptual domain is a vast structural array that could not be made active in thinking (Turner 1996).

3. A mora is a unit of timing. Each mora takes about the same amount of time to pronounce.

4. Some rivers have human male names such as Rando-Tara ('place-male name') for Tone River. Furthermore, rivers are prototypically metaphorized as snakes in Japanese idioms, e.g., kawa ga dōkoro-sara ('A river snakes'), kawa ga hebi no yoo-ni sagaru ('A river curves like a snake'), etc.

References


Matsuo, B. 1957 [1694]. Oku no Hosomichi (Sara Zaikoo Nikki tsuki) [The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Sara’s Travel Diary]. Annot. Shiochiro Sagira, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.


From Sign to Signing

Iconicity in language and literature 3

Edited by
Wolfgang G. Müller

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena

Olga Fischer

University of Amsterdam
**Table of contents**

Preface and acknowledgments ix
List of contributors xi
Introduction: From Signing back to Signs 1
  Olga Fischer and Wolfgang G. Müller

**PART I**

**Auditory and visual signs and signing**

The influence of sign language iconicity on semantic conceptualization 23
  Klaudia Grote and Erika Linz

What You See Is What You Get: Iconicity and metaphor in the visual language of written and signed poetry: A cognitive poetic approach 41
  William J. Herlofsky

Spatial iconicity in two English verb classes 63
  Axel Hübler

What imitates birdcalls?: Two experiments on birdcalls and their linguistic representations 77
  Keiko Musada

**PART II**

**Visual iconicity and iconic mapping**

Perspective in experimental shaped poetry: A semiotic approach 105
  John J. White

Where reading peters out: Iconic images in the entropic text 129
  Julian Moyle