



Bullfrog Blues



Ponderings of a World-Weary Troubadour

***Bullfrog Blues:
Ponderings of a World-Wearry Troubadour***



Alan Dickson



ROWTH

rave on rhyme

Rowth Publishing (2020), Glasgow

Email: admin@rowth.com

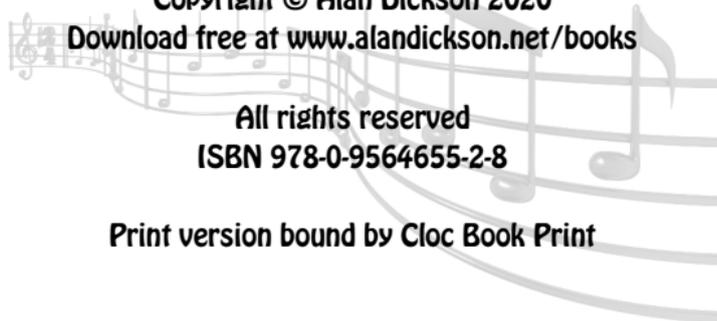
Copyright © Alan Dickson 2020

Download free at www.alandickson.net/books

All rights reserved

ISBN 978-0-9564655-2-8

Print version bound by Cloc Book Print



Welcome to my collection of poems which include a selection of references to my early musical influences using the haiku seventeen syllable structure. In their purest form, haikus are poems of Japanese origin and consist of 5-7-5 syllables that deal with Nature, the best-known one being Matsuo Basho's haiku about a frog jumping into an old pond – how his world of silence is broken by a small creature in his mind. Today, the sound of the amphibian's croaking, particularly the deep, loud bellow of the American bullfrog, found expression in the blues as a way to express painful feelings. As I pondered events in 2020, a year that became ever more toxic, I could hear the bullfrog's bellow grow deeper and louder, inspiring me to give voice to my own thoughts.

Aly D, Dec. 2020, Glasgow



**I'm living in an
Acoustic community
Hard-wired in Glasgow**

**Woke up this morning
With them bullfrogs on my mind
Got the bullfrog blues¹**

**Think I've a bad case
Thought I heard a bullfrog jump
Bellowing out loud**

¹ Rory Gallagher 'Bullfrog Blues'

**Coronavirus
Here, there and everywhere
Masquerading**

**It exposed the cracks
The fragility of life
Down to the last breath**

**There's a crack, a crack
In everything, that's how
The light gets in²**

² Leonard Cohen 'Anthem'

**Lives in the balance
Grappling new normality
Shifting statistics**

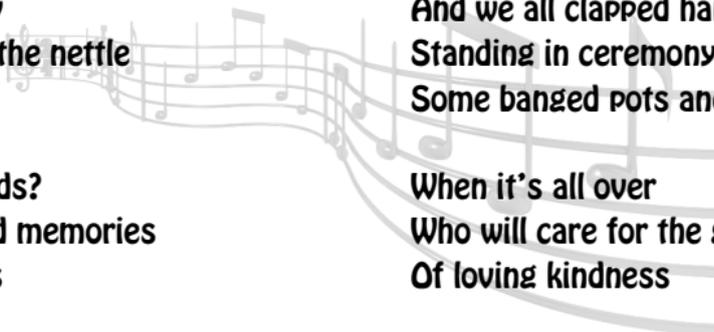
**Slip sliding away
Trying to grasp the nettle
Gesticulating**

**Is this how it ends?
Photographs and memories
Of happier times**

**Archetypal nurse
Preserver of dignity
In adversity**

**And we all clapped hands
Standing in ceremony
Some banged pots and pans**

**When it's all over
Who will care for the givers?
Of loving kindness**



**Lives and livelihoods
Feeling fobbed off in lockdown
Searching for the key**

**Nothing ever lasts
Not even our leisure time
Bundled up with work**

**Gonna be okay
We're coming in from the cold
No woman no cry³**

³ Bob Marley 'No Woman No Cry'

**Life will be better
It's woven indelibly
Into our hearts⁴**

**Feeling sorry for
Yourself doesn't save you from
Your troubled mind⁵**

**As Pete Seeger said
To everything (turn, turn, turn)
We shall overcome**

⁴ Paul Simon 'Train in the Distance'

⁵ James Taylor 'That Lonesome Road'

**They say the blues is
Just a bad dream, they say it
Lives upside your head⁶**

**Open the curtains
Today is another day
Take a peek outside**

**Early morning run
Cut short by a dog walker
Dragging on ciggies**

**Cafes are open
Wake up and smell the coffee
An extra shot please!**

**Strike scissors, clip hair
Back to how it used to be
No more pesky grey**

**Consumerism
Is there any mileage left?
As we declutter**

⁶ James Taylor 'The Blues is Just a Bad Dream'

**A dance called progress
One step forward, two steps back
Mind the cowboy hat!**

**The news just repeats
Itself like some forgotten dream
That we've both seen⁷**

**Each day is the same
Continuum of boredom
Amongst the breeze blocks**

**Trapped in a bubble
Rising inequality
Coming up for air**

**I used to think that
I was cool running around
On fossil fuel⁸**

**To oblivion
An uncontrollable urge
To fly the airways**

⁷ John Prine 'Hello in There'. Prine died on April 7, 2020, as a result of COVID-19

⁸ James Taylor 'Traffic Jam'

**Analogue world
Suddenly we all got real
Virus means virus**

**Stop horsing about
An elephant is in the room
Complacency kills**

**Whole lot of people
Suffering tonight from the
Disease of conceit⁹**

**A state of undress
Hidden advisors exposed
No apology**

**It was a strange year
Recalcitrant figureheads
Out of the woodwork**

**Inability
Laid bare by the crisis
Exceptional times!**

⁹ Bob Dylan 'Disease of Conceit'

**Singing the praises
Of the indefensible
Pure chicanery**

**We've been here before
Still we fall down the same hole
And talk the same talk**

**More bottomless pits
Doesn't matter where you climb
Amidst mounting debt**

**As good as it gets
Card-carrying candidates
Climbing with hard hats**

**Somewhere they lost it
Guardians of common good
Down long corridors**

**It's all about land
Just scratch beneath their titles
Cut-throat thuggery**

**They sang la di da
Lording it at The Manor
Where's the do ri me?**

**They're sown early
Row upon row upon row
Seeds of division**

**It's all in the mix
Dud politicians
Hype-hopping about**

**We sing songs of change
More hope than expectation
Amidst troubled times**

**Is this how it ends?
Black smoke plumes, dying embers
Going walk-about**

**Down along the grove
New rhymes sound, apples fall
Bullfrogs bouncing**

**Sittin' by the bank
There I heard a bullfrog busk
He did sing AHA**

**An' he kens he's a
Rale bonny singer as weel
Th' truth he maun tell¹⁰**

**Start your own country
With beauty for direction
Escape there sometimes**

**The door it opened
Man of peace or man of war?
Peacock spreads his fan¹¹**

**All of a sudden
Authoritarianism
Reared its ugly head**

**Bullfrog on the road
No more a stick in the mud
Things are hotting up**

¹⁰ John M. Caie 'The Puddock'

¹¹ From Cohen's 'Story of Isaac'; about one generation sacrificing another.

**Oh, what's going on
We don't need to escalate
Love can conquer hate¹²**

**John Lennon's vision
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace**

**World peace might come
If we could sit all day and night
Lost in translation**

**Time to make a stand
Too much pain and suffering
Let's start the healing**

**Enlightenment is
Everyman¹³ his own artist
Painters painting paint**

**Art forever more
Bearer of possible dreams
Harbinger of peace**

¹² Marvin Gaye 'What's Going On'

¹³ And woman

**Prose-mongers flirted
With angels and poetry
Then got lost in song**

**Singer songwriters
Ever-ready and plugged-in
Charging emotions**

**The mystery train
Singer songwriters on board
Strum chords, whistle blows**

**Bullfrog travelled light
Lived out of his guitar case
Hopping on freight trains**

**What I treasure most¹⁴
Is my old jumbo guitar
Made in Taiwan**

**Singing Bob Dylan
Mouth organ, guitar strapped on
I shall be released**

¹⁴ Well, apart from my family!

**A new religion
All things bright and beautiful
All things green and small**

**An ounce of music
Sprinkled on the cathedral
Nature rejoicing**

**Bursting with delight
Them spirals within spirals
Caught the bullfrog's gaze**

**What if scripture is
Nothing more than hidden music
Hallelujah!**

**God's in fine fettle
Says you can get redemption
Mind do some U-turns!**

**Times are a changin'
It'll soon shake your windows
And rattle your walls¹⁵**

¹⁵ Bob Dylan "Times They Are A Changin'"

**Art and politics
Weave together in my soul
Working-class habit**

**Poets are pilgrims
Constantly moving stars
Universal verbs**

**Only thing I knew
Was to keep on keepin' on
Like a bird that flew¹⁶**

**Gotta keep moving
Can't let the virus take hold
Or them bullfrog blues**

**Caledonia
Waiting in the rain today
Nothing unusual**

**Got up this morning
Went in search of Scotland
Am I getting hot?**

¹⁶ Bob Dylan 'Tangled up in Blue'

Still feeling the cold
Wrapped up in identity
And long narratives

Now when you're feeling
Kind of cold and small, look up
Your rainy day man¹⁷

When the rainbow comes
It will start to get better
Hither and thither

Trees are company
Windswept and interesting
Baring the cold breeze

Beneath the Campsies
The cold snap brought governance
A fiefdom too far

Scotland's history
The good, the bad and ugly
Makes us what we are

¹⁷ James Taylor 'Rainy Day Man'

**I can't imagine
Today without yesterday
Or tomorrow**

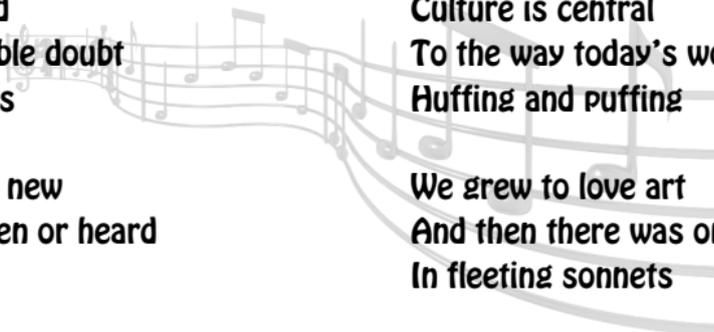
**Flipping Scotland
Beyond reasonable doubt
See how she flies**

**They said it was new
Never before seen or heard
Contemporary!**

**So said the poets
Exclamations are our trade
And warm assumptions**

**Culture is central
To the way today's world is
Huffing and puffing**

**We grew to love art
And then there was only song
In fleeting sonnets**



**Storm clouds gathering
Still we hang our washing out
Without a clothes pole**

**Cat's out of the bag
Bulldogs are salivating
And bursting their chains**

**Ain't no use joking
Broken treaties broken vows
Bullfrog croaking¹⁸**

**Growing restlessness
Will things be so different?
Irrevocable**

**Change the mood music
Wee wishy washy windbags
Can't cut the mustard**

**What is your craving?
Child-free labour chocolate
Master Chocolatier**

¹⁸ Bob Dylan 'Everything is Broken'

**Onwards they all came
Wave after wave after wave
In rubber dinghies**

**From whence we have come
No-one can say or show proof
Except our longings**

**Up until last night
We learned to make ends meet
Dreaming of basting**

**Under a grey sky
Poets sharpen their pencils
Charcoaling notebooks**

**Nothing ever happens
At least not here on this patch
The ground's hardening**

**Tip of the iceberg
The world is peelie-wally
Wi' a' the wee sooks**

**Hobnobbin' are we?
Highfalutin ideas
Wi' yon high hied yins**

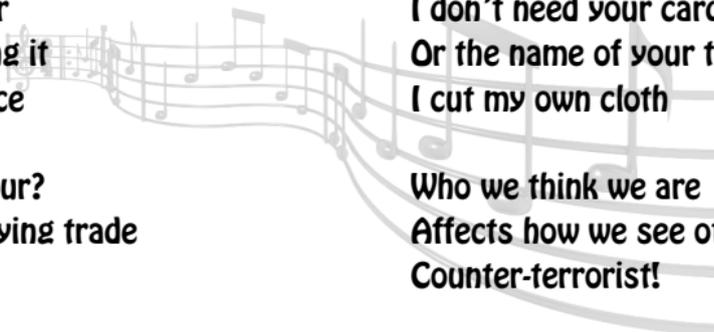
**Follow the leader
Everyone is doing it
Playing lip service**

**Is there no honour?
Seems to be a dying trade
Withering away**

**The angry bullfrog
Was beholden to no-one
Incalcitrant**

**I don't need your card
Or the name of your tailor
I cut my own cloth**

**Who we think we are
Affects how we see others
Counter-terrorist!**



**Identity speaks
I'm getting into the swing
Must be worth something!**

**Hatching and thatching
Political manoeuvres
Dishonesty gapes**

**Bullfrog soldiered on
Blew his worries to the sky
Toing and froing**

**Whatever you do
Nurture artistic freedom
Poetry and strum**

**The wind is blowing
Freedom soon will come; then we'll
Come from the shadows¹⁹**

**Bullfrog's agog at
The giant salamanders
Wuhan's wet market**

¹⁹ Leonard Cohen 'The Partisan'

**Wet talk everywhere
Travel with an umbrella
Don't dilly-dally**

**Finally they spoke
The silent majority
Innumerable**

**Uncontrollable
They text on every corner
Fighting with mobiles**

**No white flags in sight
Fighting a rearguard action
Waving umbrellas**

**Across the big pond
Big toad thinks he's a big shot
Wants all of the pie**

**He's taught in his school
From the start by the rule, that
The laws are with him²⁰**

²⁰ Bob Dylan 'Only a Pawn in Their Game'

**We're at the crossroads
All talkin' about George Floyd
Down on bended knee**

**There is a feeling
Like the clenching of a fist
There is a hunger²¹**

**So as sure as the
Sun will shine I'm gonna get
My share now, what's mine²²**

**Democracy is
Coming to the USA
So said our Leonard**

**Keep them on the hook
With insupportable debt
They call it democracy²³**

**And Bob Marley said
Emancipate yourself from
Mental slavery**

²¹ James Taylor 'Shed a Little Light'

²² Jimmy Cliff 'The Harder They Come'

²³ Bruce Cockburn 'They Call it Democracy'

**Who in mortal chains
Who in power, and who shall
I say is calling?²⁴**

**The ships are all gone
But what is left in their wake?
Bemoaning fathers**

**Started hollerin',
Yellin', dancin' up and down
Like a bullfrog²⁵**

**We need life poets
To save the world and ourselves
From scant attention**

**First to the counter
Taking all that is going
The gravy train rolls**

**Call in the poets
Call in the priests and prophets
Greed infestation**

²⁴ Leonard Cohen 'Who By Fire'

²⁵ Woody Guthrie 'Talking Sailor'

**Fish out of water
We dart like wannabe pikes
Eating fish suppers**

**Why go external?
You can keep it in-house
And watch the plants grow**

**We all want the best
Public imaginations
So why go private?**

**Worlds are collapsing
Where have all the poets gone?
Weighing their few words**

**A creeping sickness
The weight of expectation
Shackling success**

**On the dry-stone dyke
The future all but crumbled
As we ate biscuits**

**Traditions die-hard
But today we live in hope
With the pandemic**

**We really did think
That music could change the world
Wielding red Fenders**

**Jimi frets his stuff
With his star spangled banner
And electric Joe**

**Big toad's become unstuck
Foraging around for scraps
Eating humble pie**

**A new dawn rises
On the back of yesteryear
Trailing heaps of smoke**

**We can do our bit
Hope and history will rhyme²⁶
Stepping out again**

²⁶ Seamus Heaney's 'The Cure at Troy'

In the spirit of haiku, this collection of poems pack life's whole gamut into 144 three-line verses with reference to music, art, politics, nature, identity, people, places, religion and work. They were written as a kind of 'retuning' exercise towards the reaffirmation of life - our greatest and most valuable possession in this age of coronavirus.

