The Influence of Haiku on American and British Poetry

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1. Introduction

The East and the West have been profoundly influencing each other in numerous ways, connected and unified through poetry, prose, theatre, and other forms of artistic expression. Japanese poetry has had a significant impact on a wide range of cultures around the world, particularly through the widely famous short poetic form known as haiku. Haiku, with its five-seven-five syllable structure and emphasis on brevity and the use of seasonal words or *kigo*, has had a significant impact on both American and British poetry. Notably, the Imagist movement, led by poets such as Ezra Pound, and the Beat movement which worked to challenge societal norms, drew inspiration and influence from haiku's focus on concise and precise language. By incorporating haiku's principles of directness and connection to Zen, these movements sought to revolutionize poetry and break free from traditional forms and conventions. Reginald H. Blyth introduced Western countries to Japanese culture through his books, which included translated poetry as well as literary analyses and explanations for those not well-acquainted with oriental cultures. This cultural exchange was also facilitated by numerous translations and scholarly articles that compared Japanese haiku to English poetry. The great four haiku masters provided a solid foundation for newer poets to create short forms influenced by haiku and its techniques. The perspective of these poets, shaped by Western literature and art, suggested that the convergence of Eastern and Western traditions could help unlock the mysteries of haiku. As a result, guiding principles for Western haiku poets emerged, emphasizing the importance of concision, simplicity, and a deeper connection between humans and nature, which gave birth to new contemporary forms that were both rooted in yet free from traditional poetry.

2. History of Haiku

In the first of his four-volume book series, Reginald H. Blyth (1963: 11) notes: 'Haiku are moments of vision, and the history of moments is hardly possible.' During the Heian period in Japan, it was a social requirement to be able to recognize and appreciate well-written Chinese and Japanese poetry. Short poetry forms (*tanka*[1]) were becoming increasingly popular over longer, more complex forms. Over the course of this time, the linked verse (also known as *renga*) appeared and became exceedingly popular within the elite community. In the mid-sixteenth century, poetry in Japan underwent a significant transformation and became more accessible to the high classes, the lower classes, and peasants. This shift led to changes in traditional Japanese poetry and the emergence of a new, more lighthearted form, *haikai,* consisting of a beginning triplet called *hokku*. This very form would sometime later, in the nineteenth century, become known as haiku (Harr 1975: 112-113). The creation of classical haiku can be attributed to Bashō, a notable member of the great four haiku masters, who transformed the *hokku* into a separate poem. He aimed for highly airy, impromptu poetry that was sophisticated and engaging at the same time. Nonetheless, Masaoka Shiki, a fellow poet from the Great Haiku Masters group, is attributed to creating the term *haiku.* Shiki did so in his 1889 essay entitled *Haikai and Haiku* (Ogburn 1998: 58). Makoto Ueda (1963: 3) explains that '[t]he Japanese haiku (sometimes referred to as *hokku*) is quite possibly the shortest of all verse-forms, as it consists of three lines with seventeen syllables together.' In the traditional Japanese style, haiku is typically composed vertically, with the writing beginning from the right-hand side of the page. In certain instances where the poem is accompanied by illustrations, the haiku may be written in a single horizontal line to make space for the artwork (Wakan 2019: 12). Haiku is meant to represent the pure relationship of the poet with nature, spirits, and Zen. It is closely related to Zen as both highlight the value of awareness, simplicity, and a connection to nature. Japanese poetry frequently reflects Zen philosophy and aesthetics, which place an emphasis on discovering beauty and significance in daily life. Zen promotes finding harmony and balance in life, living in the present moment, and being completely aware of one's surroundings. Haiku's strong connection to nature also reflects the way of life in ancient Japan. People coexisted with nature and aimed to maintain a simple

[1] 'Tanka in English is a small lyrical poem that belongs to everyone' (Maur 1999: 13).

life in harmony. The teachings of Shintoism and Buddhism reinforced this belief by emphasizing that humans are inseparable from nature and should respect and preserve it (Hakutani and Kiuchi 2022: 1-2).

> The crucial point about haiku is that they present in brief compass the record of an illuminating moment of perception, a satori, and do so in a way that encourages readers to share deeply as many aspects of that experience as they can open themselves to. (Eaton 2009: 328)

The process of writing haiku does not require *satori*, a sudden spiritual awakening, but it also should not be reduced to a mere intellectual activity of documenting our observation of the world around us (Wakan 2019: 4). For some, at least in part, haiku is more than just poetry. It is a discipline, a way of thinking, and more precisely a way of life. Those who affirm this usually associate haiku with the Tao, Zen practice, or perhaps other forms of oriental meditation (Trumbull 2006: 6). Haiku was often directed towards the writer himself and was meant to be appreciated and shared with others during special events. Haiku poets also utilized the art form during significant moments in their lives (Fushimi n.d.: 35). It typically uses an objective description of nature to allow readers to engage with the poem through their own subjective and fully unique experiences. While it often contains fresh and specific imagery with an intense focus, it is not purely objective, as it aims to resonate with the human experience. To achieve the desired effect, poets such as Bashō and Santōka sometimes altered their verses over time. The purpose of haiku is to use the mundane and exceed it simultaneously, finding inner truth from an outward phenomenon and ultimately using words to go beyond words. The use of a contrasting element, surprise, humor, or mystery in the description of nature can enhance the reader's engagement with the poem. Haiku is a beautiful and powerful form of poetry that invites readers to find meaning in the natural world and within themselves (Addiss 2012: 3).

2.1 The Great Four Haiku Masters

'Bashō's introductory poems were able to bring minds together, Buson brought artistry to the fore and Issa introduced the poetry of everyday life found in the city, while Shiki focused on a new individualism' (McMurrray 2000: 82). Haiku poets are considered experts in attention to detail, distilling intense feelings and vivid imagery into only a few lines. With so few syllables available, they must carefully select each word to evoke a powerful visual image in the spectator. The great four haiku masters are thought to have had the greatest impact on the growth of haiku poetry. The title refers to the most influential haiku poets: Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694), Yosa Buson (1715-1783), Kobayashi Issa (1763-1827), and Masaoka Shiki (1687-1902). Each of these four haiku experts made valuable contributions to the development of the genre by sharing their unique aesthetics and methods and incorporating them into the pre-existing form of haiku. As a result of their efforts, haiku gained popularity both within Japan as well as in other parts of the world.

Matsuo Bashō emerged as a prominent figure in Japanese literature during the Tokugawa era, which followed a period of decline in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. His earliest existing poem was written in 1662, merely four years prior to when he began serving lord Yoshitada in 1666. Bashō participated in many poetry contests and started practicing Zen meditation after Yoshitada's death (Lucas 2001: 6-7). The *haikai* style he developed is referred to as *shofu haikai,* where 'sho' comes from the second syllable of his name, and 'fu' means style (Giroux 1989: 6). At that time, haiku was already an established form of poetry but had become stagnant due to strict adherence to rules. He wrote over one thousand haiku and several travel sketches and breathed new life into the form with his innovative approach and skillful use of language, creating some of his finest works in the process (Ueda 1963: 424).

> Before Bashō, haiku was largely a dilettantish fashion for the idle. He set about transforming an art for which, from youth, he had a passion, and would from time to time, especially in his remarkable haibun (mix of prose and haiku), comment on its aesthetics. (Stryk 1994: 17)

Bashō approached his work with great dedication and commitment. At some point he considered becoming a priest or an official, but his love for poetry always prevailed. Although he was aware that poetry had no practical value from an objective viewpoint,

he recognized its immense significance in nurturing the artistic soul of humanity (Ueda 1963: 423). Bashō is considered to be the most influential out of the four, he impacted both Japanese haiku poets as well as many Westerners interested in exploring the genre. He created the structure and manner of haiku poetry and pioneered a related form called *haibun*, which blends haiku with prose. In his *haibun*, like the travel diaries *Manuscript in My Knapsack* and *Narrow Road to the Interior*, Bashō drew inspiration from his own life experiences that were shaped by traditional philosophies and religions. His aesthetic principles were fully rooted in Zen philosophy. The objective of such haiku poets is to depict a world where humanity and nature coexist as one. In classical haiku, the distinction between living and non-living things is blurred, leading to the observation that haiku focus not on humans but on objects and nature (Hakutani and Kiuchi 2022: 3-10).

Yosa Buson is highly regarded by the Japanese as a haiku master, second only to Bashō. He lived in the eighteenth century, and he was a central figure among the creative individuals who were part of the bohemian culture in the Kamigata region. However, like many poets and painters of that time, there is limited information available about him for later scholars to use in biographical studies (Marceau 2001: 488). He would often depict Bashō pilgrimages in his paintings. Buson was also known to have a sense of humor, as evident in one of his haikus:

> Sedge warbler
> his song
> has an extra syllable.
> (Buson: 25)

In this haiku he observes that a bird adds an extra syllable to its song, which is significant because haiku poets count syllables when writing haiku. This is not the case in English as it does not have the same system as the Japanese *onji* (basic unit sounds in Japanese, roughly could be compared to what a syllable is in English). In Western haiku, the syllable count may be around a dozen, as opposed to the traditional five-seven-five count found in classical haiku. As a result, free haiku is more common in the West (Rosenstock 2003: 160-162). Buson and Bashō had different attitudes toward composing haiku. While Bashō's life and art were deeply intertwined, with haiku being his religion and himself striving to forget himself and merge with nature to create

creative haiku, Buson approached haiku differently. For Buson, life and art were separate, and he romanticized and objectively portrayed the beauty of the world in his haiku. His haiku often focused on classical, legendary, or lyrical themes, and many of them were visually or audibly appealing, highlighting their sensuous beauty (Henderson 1965: 25).

Kobayashi Issa was born in 1763 on a farm in central Japan. Plagued by a sense of loss throughout his life due to a difficult upbringing and the loss of family members, Kobayashi managed to overcome his struggles, finding solace in poetry, and often humorously calling himself 'Issa the Beggar'. His haiku reflected his compassion for suffering humanity, animals, and nature, as well as his devoutly Buddhist spiritual beliefs. Many American and British haiku poets later adopted his use of irony and humor in their own work (Issa 1997: 9). Issa's influence extends far and wide, inspiring numerous poets and novelists, both within and beyond Japan. He is renowned as a pioneering autobiographical poet who sought to replicate his sincerely revealing approach to writing. ‘It was Issa who, with his bold individualism and all-embracing humanism, helped to modernize the form to a degree matched by no poet’ (Ueda 2004: 9). Issa's writings about insects and other animals continue to be taught to schoolchildren in Japan to this day. His spiritual practice involved writing poetry, and he devoted himself to this craft, composing over twenty thousand haiku, numerous *tanka*, and several works of *haibun*. By the late 1880s, his name became associated with a group of haiku poets who studied under Chikua, following Bashō's tradition and honoring the influence of Zen. Rather than traveling for leisure, he embarked on journeys in search of self-discovery, taking inspiration from Bashō's *Narrow Road to the Interior*. In one of his haiku, he references cherry blossom, a symbol frequently employed in traditional Japanese haiku as well as many Japan-inspired Western haiku and poems:

> Just being alive
> — miraculous to be in
> cherry blossom shadows!
> (Issa: 10)

Issa is a universally well-respected poet as his poems reflect a profound immersion in the wisdom of Zen and the poetic approach championed by Bashō. His works resonate with people from all walks of life, irrespective of social standing (Issa 1997: 10-14).

Merely one year after the Meiji restoration (1867), born into a middle-class samurai family, Masaoka Shiki played a crucial role in the development of modern haiku and *tanka*. During his young years, Shiki received a Confucian education. When his uncle passed away in 1875, he became more interested in Western culture. Upon moving to Tokyo, in the mid-1890s, he developed a taste for a more mature haiku style that was grounded in close observation of reality. Although he adhered to some of Bashō's principles, such as using travelling as inspiration for creating, he believed that traditional haiku was too limiting and should be written in a more contemporary style. Shiki introduced various innovations such as the use of *kigo* and an emphasis on sensory imagery, which later helped to popularize haiku in the West (O'Brien 1982: 210). He was admired for writing seriously in various genres, including haiku and *tanka*, despite believing that these forms would eventually become extinct by the end of the Meiji period. Shiki was aware of the contradiction between his actions and beliefs, but he decided to ignore this and devoted his life to these traditional poetic forms. He sought to justify Japan's traditional poetic forms by exploring various Western ideas, such as those presented by Herbert Spencer, and believed that literature could only be pursued as a vocation if it conformed to rationalism and a scholarly approach. His poetry is characterized by a delicate balance of opposing elements, including realism and fantasy. He often explored the coexistence of opposing forces, such as himself dying and the living natural world around him, in both his prose and verse writings. It is a common belief based on Shiki's writings that he regarded Matsuo Bashō's poetry as inferior and often criticized the majority of his work as trivial, nonsense poetry. Yet, he also acknowledged the excellence of some of Bashō's poems and believed that they were sufficient to justify his reputation as a great haiku master. In some of his other works, Shiki asserted that both Bashō and Buson were equally excellent poets, praising Bashō's realism and acknowledging the influence that his poetry had on him (Beichman 2002: 1-12). Although it is believed that Shiki had been writing classical Chinese poetry since his school days, he did not start writing haiku until he was in his twenties. By many he was admired for his harsh criticism, which he used to destroy the creation of a new kind of poetry that was simply a repetition of well-known poetic

themes. Instead, he advocated poetry that embodied the poet's individual experiences and perceptions (Keene 2014: 2-4). Shiki was always a pioneer, and some Japanese writers even considered him the founder of modern prose. He initiated the modernist haiku movement in the late nineteenth century by challenging the established tradition of haiku from the seventeenth century through his controversial essay *Criticism of Bashō*. He pushed for haiku to surpass mere depictions of nature and instead encompass humanity, where the poet serves as its representative. (Hakutani 2020: 45). The haiku school that he established became the dominant force in Tokyo. The magazine *Hototoguisu*, founded by Shiki's disciple Kyoshi, moved from Matsuyama to Tokyo and became the leading platform for Shiki's ideas. His work was featured in the magazine, which expanded to include tanka, literary and art criticism, as well as prose essays and new-style haiku (Virgil n.d.: 2-9).

3. Ezra Pound and Richard Wright as American Haiku Poets

Ezra Pound is a highly influential yet polarizing figure in the realm of twentieth-century poetry. He made a lasting impact on the genre and introduced aspects of Eastern culture to Western literature. Despite his contributions to the world of poetry, Pound's legacy remains relatively divisive due to his controversial political views and actions. Born in Idaho in 1885 but having spent most of his young adult life living in London (where he arrived in 1908), Pound is often seen as the quintessential avant-garde poet of the early twentieth century among major English and American poets. He closely resembles the conventional model of a revolutionary poet, similar to figures like Apollinaire or Marinetti. Pound's message to his contemporaries to ‘make it new’ and his criticism of those who fail to keep up with the times, particularly Americans, has a strong futurist tone, emphasizing his urgency to innovate and move beyond the traditional forms of poetry (Firchow 1981: 379). It is worth noting that while French translators and critics generally referred to haiku as *haikai*, Pound and the English called it *hokku*. Ezra's fascination with haiku started in 1912 and he confirmed his deep involvement with this form in his 1914 piece on *Vorticism* published in *The Fortnightly Review.*

> Three years ago in Paris, I got out of a "metro" train at La Concorde, and saw suddenly a beautiful face and then another and another... And I tried all that day to find words for what this had meant to me... And that evening... I found, suddenly, the expression... not in speech, but in little splotches of color... But it was a word, the beginning for me, of a language in color... The Japanese ... have understood the beauty of this sort of knowing... The Japanese have evolved the ... form of the hokku. I wrote a thirty-line poem and destroyed it because it was what we all of the second intensity. Six months later I made a poem half that length; a year later [1912] I made the following hokku-like sentence: The apparition of these faces in a crowd; /Petals on a wet, black bough. (Pound 1914: 461)

Upon his arrival in London, Pound became acquainted with poets like Thomas E. Hulme and Frank S. Flint, who founded the *Poet's Club* along with some lesser-known writers. The group, which was interested in French and Japanese literature, searched for new poetic principles and even attempted to imitate haiku and tanka. Flint's article *The History of Imagism*, published in *The Egoist* on May 1, 1915, highlights the poets' serious engagement with Japanese literature. In the article, Flint wrote that he had

been promoting a form of poetry similar to Japanese *verse libre* in a series of articles on recent books of verse. The group suggested replacing conventional verse with pure *verse libre*, *tanka*, and *haikai* at various times (Rohkamm n.d.: 85). According to Japanese author Hisao Kanaseki (1918-1996), it was likely that Western poets began discussing haiku, or *hokku* as it was known at the time, in a sincere manner for the first time when Pound wrote and published his essay on *Vorticism*.

After World War II, haiku became popular worldwide, except in certain communist countries and developing nations. Foreigners started writing haiku in many other languages, such as German, English, and French. Although pre-war books helped many scholars study Japanese culture in the United States, it was only after the occupation of Japan by allied forces that Japanese haiku and the rest of Japanese culture became well-known to Westerners. This sudden acceptance of haiku also deepened many people's relationship with the study of Zen (Nakagawa 1977: 177-178).

Richard Wright (1908-1960) was an American writer and activist celebrated for his impactful prose in works like *Black Boy* and *The Man Who Lived Underground* Wright turned his attention to poetry, specifically the Japanese haiku, only later in life. Prior to discovering haiku, his fascination with the Japanese poetry style originated from his exposure to sixteenth-century Japan. The initial moment Japan entered Wright's awareness may have been in September 1923, when he, at the age of fourteen, read about Japan's earthquakes in newspaper articles. In 1940, three years after his initial encounter with haiku, Richard Wright's best-selling novel *Native Son* featured a character named Bigger Thomas, who was portrayed as a cynic man who served as the mouthpiece for an admirer of Japan. Even in some of his other novels further on he added characters that would either admire or mention Japan and Japanese culture (The Haiku Foundation 2020: 39-40). While recovering from an illness in the spring of 1960, he wrote around four thousand haiku poems and began researching the great Japanese masters, with a focus on traditional Japanese forms rather than Western forms, which were slowly garnering public attention. Wright attempted to publish his haiku, submitting an eighty-two-page manuscript entitled *This Other World: Projections in the Haiku Manner* to the World Publishing Company. It was expected that Richard Wright, being the first prominent American minority writer to delve into the prevalent form of haiku, would receive criticism for his abrupt transition from realistic and naturalistic fiction to haiku. At first, the publisher rejected his haiku collection. However,

some parts of it were published years later and received very little attention or recognition. Haiku finally gained major popularity after World War II, and by that time Wright had access to several critical works about this verse form. He relied on Blyth's writings to gain an understanding of haiku's history and proper usage. Wright aimed to capture the exact form of haiku, including the three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables, as well as a seasonal reference, either implicit or explicit (Iadonisi 2005: 179-180). He was able to fully comprehend and digest his own early poetry only after encountering certain principles of haiku and Zen Buddhism as these very principles provided him with crucial insights that he had previously overlooked in his early writings. Just a few months before his death, Richard Wright began to write some of his first haiku poems. Julia, his daughter, who introduces the collection of his haiku called *Haiku: This Other World*, mentions that her father's haiku served as self-created remedies against illness. The following haiku was read at her father's funeral, and although the date of writing is not one hundred percent known, it is assumed that it was written sometime during the 1950s:

> Burning out its time,
> And timing its own burning
> One lonely candle.
> (Wright: 204)

During his studies of Blyth's analyses and readings of classic haiku, Wright discovered that the masters of haiku were capable of conveying the paradoxical concept of being one with nature while still retaining their individual identity. Being raised and educated in Western culture came as a creative obstacle for him and he faced difficulties in achieving this required quality in his haiku. Classical haiku emphasizes the use of simple language, imagery, and thought, reflecting the unencumbered bliss of connecting with nature. Wright also noticed that classical haiku attempted to eliminate as many words as possible because the idea should be reliant on itself and not be born as a substitute for intuition (Hakutani 2007: 515). Similarly to many poets interested in Japan, Wright obtained the four volumes of Haiku by R. H. Blyth from Beiles, a renowned Japanologist and haiku scholar. Upon reading Blyth's work, Wright discovered that Zen embodied a spiritual aesthetic and identified thirteen key traits of the Zen state of mind, including selflessness, solitude, acceptance, humor, freedom,

silence, non-intellectuality, contradictoriness, amorality, simplicity, materiality, love, and courage, with selflessness being one of the most significant characteristics of the philosophy (Iadonisi 2005: 181). Haiku is primarily found in self-contained groups of writers and publishers, mostly in the United States. However, recent developments have connected it more closely to the broader field of modern poetry, making it more acceptable in general literary studies. Haiku is now understood as modern poetry literature, rather than an imitative verse style, or an exotic hobby. The twenty-first-century haiku poet now embraces a wider range of poetic tools. Despite the risk of blurring the lines between haiku and other forms of short poetry, it is important to note that the haiku style in English has always been a hybrid, influenced both by Japanese and Western poetics. To continue expanding and avoid instability, haiku must constantly push its boundaries while remaining rooted in the past to maintain its distinct identity (Salloom 2020: 1995).

3.1 Imagism and Haiku

Similar to transcendentalist writers Ralph W. Emerson and Walt Whitman, Japanese haiku poets drew inspiration from nature and seasonal changes. Emerson and Whitman's poetry had similarities with Japanese haiku in how they approached the subject of nature. In the early twentieth century, haiku gained popularity in North American English poetry and played a significant role in shaping the work of Imagist poets like Amy Lowell (1874-1924) and William C. Williams (1883-1963). Researchers such as Miner (1957), Lipke and Rozran (1966), and Wilson (1997) have frequently analyzed Pound's 'In a Station of the Metro' poem in relation to the concept of Imagism. In January 1913, Pound introduced the idea of Imagism and mentioned the imagists as a group in Poetry. In the March issue of the same magazine, he outlined the principles of imagism. This is not surprising given that the poem is often associated with Imagism. Imagist poets relied on the use of images, rather than explanation or storytelling, to evoke emotions in their poetry. These images were often centered around objects (Liebregts 2015: 11). In haiku, a seasonal reference serves as an objective correlative, connecting the poet's feelings to a natural phenomenon. The poet aims to capture the image of nature as it exists without any additional meaning or reference, and although the Imagists did not place great emphasis on the use of a season marker in haiku, it did align with their goals of formal experimentation. Their understanding and interpretation of haiku were shaped by their knowledge of Western literary traditions and modernist values. The communal and visual aspects of haiku, such as *renga* group composition and *haiga* visual poem paintings, were mostly overlooked if understood at all. Haiku was translated to fit into the modern poetics of twentieth-century America, resulting in a shift away from the communal and visual aspects of the practice towards a print-based practice. Haiku were seen as individual poems, each one arising from a moment of observation without the use of allusion or intertextuality. For Amy Lowell, the intensity of the mind in haiku dovetailed with her poetic vision (Halebsky 2014: 240-241). Ezra Pound noted that haiku is imagistic rather than symbolic, while W.B. Yeats's symbolism was influenced by cross-cultural visions of *nō* theatre and Irish folklore. Pound's Imagism, on the other hand, had its roots in classical haiku (Hakutani 2009: 1-35). In his 1913 manifesto of Imagism, Pound proposed that poetry should address its subject directly and avoid sentimentality and overused expressions. His poem *In a Station of the Metro* is an example of a fabricated

metaphor and is consistent with the principles of Imagism. However, it cannot be considered a true haiku since haiku requires the use of objective, realistic images. Even though Pound, along with John Gould Fletcher and Amy Lowell, attempted to write haiku poetry, their works only have some similarities to haiku but for many are not true representations of the form (Ross 2011: 8-9).

> Haiku are imagistic in nature, use common language and are best if devoid of judgment, analysis, metaphor, simile, and — in the Zen tradition — other rhetorical, intellectual, or ego-assertive devices. (Welch 1995: 96)

Haiku and imagist poetry share many similarities, as the former played an influential role in the development of the latter. Both forms emphasize brevity and sharpness and utilize Pound's technique of ‘super-position’ (metaphorical layering of one idea on top of another). They are also ‘open’ to a wide range of interpretations, like many avant-garde works of art. Both haiku and imagist poetry are innovative, pushing against tradition. Despite its relatively brief existence and inability to establish itself as a distinct genre, imagist poetry exerted a notable influence on modern American and English poetry. In contrast, haiku has endured as a popular and established genre with its own set form and conventions (Kawamoto 1999: 709-710). The irony of Imagist poetry lies in the poet's manipulation of the reader's assumptions. Unlike Surrealist poetry, which purposefully distorts language and poetic form to remind us of the fantastic nature of their world, Imagist poetry uses concrete language to present a seemingly real world, even if it is fantastic. By doing so, the poet tricks the reader into accepting the presented world as real. Ultimately, it is not a matter of whether the ‘thing’ presented in the poem actually exists, but whether we perceive it to exist through the poet's concrete and vivid language. Gery (2008: 4-6) further claims that during the twenty-first century, the legacy of Imagism is not primarily about its break from traditional English poetic form and language, but rather its intensely emotional and disciplined approach to poetry. The poets involved in Imagism, including F.S. Flint, Pound, H.D., Richard Aldington, Wyndham Lewis, and D.H. Lawrence, all sought to break free from the oppressive constraints of traditional English poetry. However, what has endured is the intensity of feeling and discipline that these poets brought to their work. By discipline, the author does not mean a strict formal order or random chaos, but rather a rigorous and intentional approach to crafting each individual word and image in a

poem to convey a powerful emotional impact. Upon the ‘opening’ of Japan to the world, the Imagists were influenced by short haiku poetry.

Presently, there is increasing interest in this form of poetry, which is reflected in the existence of at least four magazines in North America that publish haiku in English. Translations of Japanese haiku are also very popular. Renowned translators of haiku include Harold G. Henderson, R.H. Blyth, and Miyamori Asataro (Giroux 1989: 10). The standard for English haiku is not fully defined yet and there is no strict guideline that poets must follow. There is, however, a general consensus that the length of a haiku should be less than twenty syllables and it should capture a ‘haiku moment’ – a moment of insight or observation. A haiku typically contains a pause, an idea or feeling, and a season word (*kigo*) or a substitute that provides readers with a context to understand the poem (Nakagawa n.d.: 181). The Imagists laid the groundwork for a later generation of poets to reinterpret haiku. Poets in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly the Beat poets, studied the philosophical and aesthetic concepts of Buddhism, and wove together English language translations of Japanese literature with a body-based practice of Buddhist meditation as means of accessing haiku (Halebsky 2014: 241).

In summary, classical Japanese poetry, with its emphasis on understatement and reduction, stood in stark contrast to the bloated, nostalgia-laden Romantic poetry of the West. Although the modern writers of haiku were considered too unconventional in the context of Japanese classical poetry, haiku favored a direct treatment of ‘thing’ and focused on presenting a simple picture or artifact without explicit reference, hence this kind of approach to poetry was in line with the principles of Imagism (Salloom 2020: 1953).

4. Haiku in Britain: Sir George Bailey Sansom and Reginald H. Blyth

The opening of Japan to the West in 1868 sparked an interest in haiku among English envoys. This interest later influenced British-born poets to explore and write Japan-inspired poetry. Haiku became popular in North America before it did in Britain, serving as a historical link between the haiku tradition in Japan and the development of haiku in Britain. The North American experience with haiku had an influence on the practice of haiku in Britain, although the range of British haiku is not identical to that of North America. Despite this, there is some overlap between the two, with many of the same trends occurring in both regions. In the 1990s British haiku developed its own theoretical foundation, drawing largely from the work of poet and editor Brian Tasker and the British Haiku Society committee, led by Secretary and later President David Cobb (Lucas 2001: 35-40).

Perhaps the most notable person who picked up this interest was Reginald Horace Blyth. Blyth was born in 1898 in London to working-class parents. He had a somewhat unconventional personality from an early age and by the time World War I broke out Blyth was already known for his vegetarianism, his admiration for George B. Shaw, and his decision to become a conscientious objector. This led to him being imprisoned for three years of hard labor. After his release, and disillusioned with the class system in Britain, Blyth decided to leave the country and pursue a life of wandering. However, his journey of travels came to an end after he spent a year in Asia and became captivated by culture, cuisine, and people. He settled in Korea in the mid-1920s and began teaching English at Seoul University. Soon he returned briefly to England to obtain a B.A. in English literature, which he believed would help his teaching career in Korea. It was during his time in Seoul that Blyth met a monk from Kyoto's Myoshin-ji temple, which is a traditional center of the Rinzai Zen sect in Japan. This encounter had a profound impact on Blyth, motivating him to learn Japanese and take up Zen practice. He soon became a disciple of the Zen master Kayama Taigi and moved into the temple. In 1940 he settled in Japan where he spent the rest of his life, even though he was interned as an enemy alien during World War II. Blyth married a Japanese woman and supported his family of four by working as a teacher and even tutoring the Crown Prince of Japan.

It was during this time that he began writing and translating prolifically. Blyth had a broad interpretation of Zen and saw it in almost everything, including Western literature.

He expounded his ideas in several books, including *Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics* (1942), *Japanese Humor* (1957), and his four-volume *Haiku* (1949-52). Through these works he inspired generations of Westerners to become interested in Zen and Japanese culture (Aitken 1998: 1-2). His cultural alienation in his four-volume Haiku series (1949-1952) resonated with the American Beat writers, who found a connection with their own ideals, and he consequently influenced them (Ramsey n.d.: 4-5).

Blyth's focus in his haiku works is not on seasonal themes, but rather on the meanings of the poems. Many of the poems that Blyth wrote talk about things that are not known in the West. Blyth's works concentrate on explaining what he sees as the meaning of haiku, rather than describing and explaining the seasonal topics. Despite the fact that Blyth openly denies that haiku is literature, his four volumes were the first real introduction to haiku for many who later became deeply involved. However, the haiku tradition is far richer and more varied than Blyth's Zen-dominated explanations suggest (Higgins 2009: 120-121).

Sir George Bailey Sansom, a prominent British historian, and Japanologist, did not write haiku poetry himself, but his significant influence on how British poets adopted and assimilated Japanese culture into their creative expression is worth acknowledging. Born in 1883 in London, Sansom completed his education at Palmer's School in England before going abroad to attend a government high school in Normandy. Afterward, he continued his studies in Germany. In 1904 Sansom began working for the British Foreign Office and was sent to Japan in 1906. While carrying out his consulate duties, he had plenty of opportunities to travel domestically around Japan and visit different towns and rural areas. In 1911 he translated *Tsurezuregusa* (Essays in Idleness) into English. Later, during his time in Tokyo from 1925 to 1940, he published *A Historical Grammar of Japanese* (Rekishiteki Nihon Bunpō) in 1928 and *Japan: A Short Cultural History* (Nihon Bunka Shōshi) in 1931. For a long time, Westerners imagined a contrast between an active Europe that actively influenced Eastern cultures and passive Eastern cultures that passively accepted this influence. This idea became a stereotype that was deeply ingrained in Western thought. In his books, Sansom gives specific examples of how this stereotype originated with the first European explorers' visit to Asia. However, Sansom's goal was not just to show the impact of the West on Japan. He was also interested in how Japanese society and

politics responded to Western influences and how this, in turn, affected the West (Saeki and Haga 1987: 166-167).

5. Influence of haiku on other American and British poets and the Beat Movement

Earl Miner's book *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature* (1958) highlights three significant historical events related to Japan that had a profound impact on Western literature. The first was the discovery of Hokusai's Japanese block-print art by Felix Bracquemond in 1856, the second was the visit of the Japanese mission to the United States in 1860, and the final one was the International Exhibition in 1862 in England. Furthermore, the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 is widely believed to have heightened European interest in Japan. Oddly enough, the attraction of foreigners to Japan and Japanese culture similarly came in three waves. From a 'Japanology' perspective, there was a significantly increased fascination with Japan and its culture after the Edo period ended in the nineteenth century. The first wave occurred shortly after Japan 'opened to the world,' with travelers flocking to the country to record their impressions of this previously enigmatic land and equally mysterious people. The second wave occurred in the early twentieth century after Japan's defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, which cemented Japan's reputation as an Asian miracle country, capable of defeating even the most powerful Western nations. The third wave emerged in the late 1960s and lasted throughout the seventies, as Japan experienced a period of remarkable economic growth and recovery from the devastation of World War II, once again drawing significant interest from the rest of the world (Miner 1958: 33).

Though many of the Western poets' interest in haiku could be attributed to their personal curiosity towards Japan and Japanese culture, Makoto Ueda (1931-2020) should be mentioned as a particularly important part of this unexpected import of haiku into the West. In his 1976 anthology *Modern Japanese Haiku* he analyzed and explained how modern haiku came to be. Regarding Europe, the resurgence of haiku after World War II is said to have originated from Imma von Bodmershof, a German novelist who influenced others in Germany to write haiku. Japanese poetry appeared in Britain after many years of multicultural exchanges. In his book *Kwaidan - Stories and Studies of Strange Things* (1904), Lafcadio Hearn, a British-born writer who also had Japanese citizenship, included a few examples of *hokku*. His translations, single prose sentences with a melancholic tone, however, were notably different than the

original as they often included additional information and syntax that are not present in the original haiku from Japan (Higginson 1938: 80).

By the early twentieth century, it was not only English-speaking poets that were writing haiku. In France, poets like Julien Vocance and Paul-Louis Couchoud began composing haiku in French, and in 1910, Michael Revon finished translating a Japanese literature anthology. Five years later, Cocance Vocance wrote a series of haiku titled *Cent Visons de Guerre*, and by 1920 around twelve poets were creating haiku for *Nouvelle Revue Française* (Kim 2018: 23-24).

Jack Kerouac (1922-1969) was a prominent figure of the Beat Generation literary movement. He followed the haiku principles and techniques introduced by Blyth but acknowledged that English haiku could not maintain the same seventeen-syllable structure as in Japanese due to the fluidity of Japanese syllables. Instead, he proposed his own concept, a 'Western Haiku' that would convey meaning in three lines using simple language, without resorting to poetic tricks, while creating a visual image with an airy and graceful style, similar to a Vivaldi pastorella. To support his view, he cited examples of haiku written by Bashō, Buson, and Issa, which he considered more elegant and straightforward than any haiku he could ever write in any language (Hakutani 2009: 89-92). During the 1950s, Beat writers and poets turned to Japanese philosophy of Zen Buddhism and haiku in search of a remedy for the perceived societal and literary shortcomings of American culture. Notable members of this group include Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, Philip Whalen, Cid Corman, and particularly Jack Kerouac, who devoted much of his later years to writing haiku. He used the form to express his discontent with consumerism, prevailing literary norms, and even his own sense of masculinity (Iadonisi 2014: 290).

5.1 Modern Western Haiku and Difficulties in Translating Haiku to English

Twentieth-century haiku poets had more writing possibilities than their predecessors. The early 1900s in Japan were a turbulent period of change for Japan. Younger generations grew up in a Westernized setting and experienced a burst of pop culture and serious art that incorporated innovative ideas from the Meiji government's rapid modernization. There was a high demand for quick and cheap entertainment, which was fulfilled by mass-produced books, radio programs, newspapers, and magazines. Japanese artists also studied Western painting styles as seen in *yōga*, and Natsume Sōseki authored the first modern Japanese novels (Beach n.d.: 52-58). After World War II, the occupation troops and their families had an increased interest in Eastern culture and Zen Buddhism, which led to a growing awareness and understanding of haiku. This is reflected in the numerous haiku contests, magazine articles, and poetry volumes dedicated to haiku in English. However, the cultural context and technical challenges inherent in translating haiku from Japanese to English make it difficult to determine with certainty whether English-speaking poets truly grasped the essence of haiku (Giroux 1989: 2). In order to fully comprehend haiku texts, which are imbued with traditional implications, a profound comprehension of traditional Japanese culture is necessary as it molds the cultural cognitive model (Hiraga 1999: 463). Paul Miller proposes that the difficulties that English natives face with not being able to write Japanese-inspired poetry can be attributed to the introduction of haiku to America primarily through Blyth's works, which emphasized Zen and disregarded haiku after Shiki. Another factor could be that American poets did not have any prior approaches to haiku that they could reject or adapt. Therefore, simply adapting the form to English was considered an experiment in itself (Hakutani and Kiuchi 2022: 252).

Founded in 1968, The Haiku Society of America spent over two years in letter exchanges among authorities before reaching and agreeing on a valid definition for haiku. The definition which stands even today is that haiku are the world's shortest poems, consisting of seventeen syllables, which follow the five-seven-five sequence. But because of the difference in the number of sounds (Japanese has fifty and English has twenty), Arthur Waley (1865-1966), one of the earliest translators of Japanese literature, stated that ‘[i]t is not possible that the rest of the world will ever realize the importance of Japanese poetry, because of all poetries it is the most completely

untranslatable' (Bowers 1996: 8). Linked-verse poetry (*renga*) appeared in America sometime before haiku. *Renga* gained popularity in the United States during the mid-1970s. *The End* magazine published a few English-language *rengas* in 1975, and the very next year the Haiku Society of America hosted sessions on the form and shared the traditional format in their newsletter. *Haiku Magazine* later published a special issue with articles on the form and multiple renga sequences. Since then several *rengas* have been published in Canada and the US. English rengas are usually composed through correspondence and take a long time to complete, while the Japanese renga strives to fully complete a sequence in only one sitting. While some American haiku poets still comply with counting syllables and arranging them in three finely organized lines, others take a more creative approach, experimenting with different typographical forms. This is demonstrated in the following haiku, which highlights the unique approach of a 'modern' American haiku poet, Clyde C. Glandon:

> Sunset on the pond –
> the edge of the ice sharpens
> into dark water.
> (Sato 1995: 179)

Japanese and Western minds differ culturally and historically, which is reflected in their respective poetry and prose. While haiku written in English may show some viable adaptations, some are so far removed from the original that they no longer qualify as haiku. It is important to note that when reading translated haiku, a lack of emotional response could be due to a mistranslation, rather than one's own inability to appreciate the poem. An example of this is the translation of the following poem:

> *Sore mo wo kore mo wo kesa no haru.*
>
> A clear spring morning sky,
> And here and there, far overhead,
> Singing the wild geese fly.
> (Henderson: 2004)

In this case, the translator mistook ‘wo’ for ‘gan’ and did not understand the reference to the New Year's Day in ‘kesa no haru.’ This translation, for many readers, made not much sense and evoked little to no emotional response.

The Japanese language in its uniqueness offers a wide set of problems for translators. Haiku is a form of poetry that focuses on capturing one moment and the emotion it evokes, therefore each word in a haiku is carefully chosen, and the reader must consider all implications, including internal comparisons as pioneered by Bashō, as well as surface values. A good haiku will include a *kigo*, which is an essential part of the form. By including a *kigo*, the poet is able to convey the time of year, the natural setting and other contextual details that help to enhance the reader's experience of the poem. In essence, haiku is about distilling a moment into its essence and conveying that essence to the reader through carefully chosen words and imagery. Due to the complexity of Japanese grammar, plenty of mistranslations come from the fact that the same form of a Japanese word may stand both for plural and singular. Since no haiku generalizes the situation, a trained reader would understand that the poet is most likely referring to one singular flower, a bird, or a pond, however for new or inexperienced readers, this could cause a bit of a problem in understanding or interpretation (Henderson 1990: 186-189).

On the North American haiku scene, bilingual poets and translators agree that about eleven English syllables approximate the seventeen Japanese syllables in terms of conveying information, brevity, and the fragmentary quality found in Japanese haiku. Certain American poets recommend using either 3-5-3 syllables or 2-3-2 accented beats for haiku writing. However, in shorter haiku, rigid structuring can be more restrictive for English haiku than for Japanese haiku. This constraint can hinder the potential of English haiku. While 5-7-5 haiku can still be structured with ease in English due to the extra syllables, for many it is not necessarily the preferred form in modern Western haiku (Imaoka 1996: 28-33).

Despite the availability of surveys in the English language dating back almost half a century, many Anglophone readers and even literary scholars are still perplexed by *gendai* haiku, which translates as 'contemporary haiku'. However, its reputation remains highly respected in Japanese literary circles. Beginning with the translations of authors such as Makoto Ueda and William Higginson in the 1970s, an increasing number of Western haiku poets have turned to this tradition as a source of creative inspiration. *Gendai* haiku is firmly rooted in pre-modern *haikai*, from Bashō and Buson

to Issa, but is primarily derived from Shiki's original concepts of haiku (Beach n.d.: 52-53).

According to Araki (1976: 38-40), when translating traditional Japanese poetry forms such as *tanka* and haiku translators often make changes to the original imagery in order to better convey the overall impression of the poem. This casual approach to imagery can result in unnecessary modifications to the original work which ultimately completely changes the experience for the reader.

Following the increase in public interest for haiku, the first English-language haiku magazine, *American Haiku*, was published in 1963 in Platteville, Wisconsin, signalling a growing interest in the form that was no longer a mere passing fad by the end of the 1960s. This was evident in the emergence of haiku magazines and collections being published across both coasts of the United States, as well as the Canadian and American Midwest. Over the following decades, the popularity of the English-language haiku continued to grow, with more than a dozen periodicals dedicated to publishing the form and its close relative, the *senryu*. Notably, three of these publications, *Brussels Sprout*, *Frogpond*, and *Inkstone* (Canadian), have lasted over 12 years, while one, *Modern Haiku*, has been in circulation for over 27 years. This newly accepted North American haiku, once having taken root, began to spread its seeds across the English-speaking world and beyond. Following its success, *The British Haiku Society* was established in 1990, becoming a formidable entity that organized monthly meetings, annual conferences, and published its own journal, *Blithe Spirit*. Independent haiku periodicals also emerged in the wake of this literary success (Swede 1997: 5-8).

5.2 A Comparison of Japanese Haiku Writing Techniques with American and British Haiku

To the untrained eye of a first-time reader, Japanese haiku writing may seem effortless and plain, but it is indeed a rigorous and precise art form. The Japanese writing system is comprised of three distinct forms of writing, with the Chinese characters *kanji* forming the foundation. Each *kanji* character can have multiple readings and connotations, and many characters are composed of smaller units called radicals, that also carry their own meanings. In comparison, the English alphabet can seem relatively simple and lacking in depth. Simply counting syllables in English haiku is not enough to address this significant difference (Kendall 2018: 1). One of the many purposes of haiku is to convey a perspective on nature or natural occurrences, without attempting to offer any lessons to the spectator or to philosophize on the motifs. Haiku avoids direct emotional expression, instead aiming to evoke emotions through imagery. Rather than telling, it shows. Since most haiku focus on nature, they should include a *ki* (season) or *kigo* (season word), that signifies the time of year. For example, mist indicates autumn, snow denotes winter, songbirds represent summer, and cherry blossoms signify early spring (Harr 1975: 113). Brevity is also a very notable aspect of haiku. In Japanese, syllables are shorter and less expressive compared to English syllables. This means that a seventeen-syllable haiku is even more concise than a ten-syllable English line. Despite the discussions in Japan about *shasei,* the accurate depiction of nature, a concept introduced by Masaoka Shiki, this did not make haiku writing any easier for poets (Kawamoto 1989: 245-246). In good Japanese haiku, strong and explicit emotions are not present. Instead, the poems convey a sense of *sabi,* a vague feeling that transcends individual emotions. This lack of personal emotions is exemplified in Bashō's haiku, which do not seem to express any emotion or mood, but instead focus on capturing the essence of nature (Ueda 1963: 426).

Haiku differs from other poetry in that it uses an ‘absolute metaphor’ of the natural world to connect the particular with the universal. Unlike other forms of poetry that rely on metaphor to create emotional impact, haiku relies on *kireji,* a Japanese particle that acts like punctuation in English, to emphasize the relationship between the two parts of the poem and create a spark. For instance, the first line might refer to the weather, while the second and third lines describe a particular object or creature in nature.

Through the absolute metaphor and *kireji*, haiku brings together the universal and particular (Ross 2007: 2).

While it may be difficult for non-Japanese haiku poets to create traditional Japanese haiku that strictly adhere to the form, because it is characterized by its sentiment, ideology, symbolism, and intertextual references, successful attempts at traditional haiku have been written in English. For over a century, American poets have been composing haiku in English and discussing the different principles that should define contemporary haiku in English. As the 20th century progressed, certain guidelines were established, such as the emphasis on imagery and the use of juxtaposition to shape the relationship between the images in haiku. Although Makoto Ueda introduced American poets to *gendai* (modern) haiku in his 1976 anthology *Modern Japanese Haiku*, a more extensive experimental approach did not emerge until the start of the new millennium. According to Ueda, the *Gendai* movement is relatively recent, and there is a vast range of poetic styles within it, including traditionalist, symbolist, and surrealist haiku. While Blyth's works introduced Americans to haiku, primarily focusing on Zen and disregarding haiku after Shiki, it was only in the early 2000s that the American haiku tradition had evolved enough to support the beginnings of an American experimental haiku approach (Rosenow 2022: 247-252). Over the last thirty years, there has been a surge of Western poets and unique collections of haiku. This increase in haiku production has been encouraged by its inclusion in school curriculums, particularly creative writing courses, and the incorporation of haiku in poetry competitions throughout America and Europe. As a result, haiku has been widely accepted as a form of poetry in the English language. The trend is expected to continue, as predicted by Blyth in his book *History of Haiku*. Some poets and translators predict that English haiku will soon resemble one of the traditional prototypes of English verse, such as the heroic couplet (Nakagawa 1977: 179).

Haiku uses a distinct diction that is different from other Western poetry, and its aim is to convey an experience as clearly as possible so that the reader can gain insight. It is often described as poetry without ‘poetic language’. However, there is a tradition of Western poetry that also values a similar use of diction, beginning with the Imagists and continuing with poets such as William C. Williams, Robert Frost, Ted Kooner, and Alice Notley (Kacian 2006: 62). In the world of haiku, the adoption of the three-line format has had a lasting impact on the practice of the art. Despite some reservations, like Hiraoki Sato's belief that single-line translations of haiku and tanka provide a closer

experience to the Japanese originals, most poets writing haiku in English have stuck to the traditional three-line form. Kerouac, however, broke with this convention in the fifties by experimenting with a single-line structure. Despite Kerouac's example, the three-line format remained the norm for the first half of the twentieth century among English-speaking poets in the haiku community (Kacian 2012: 39-40).

Prior to World War II, the majority of English haiku poets had a limited understanding of the true essence of haiku. They only knew that haiku was a few-syllable poem. Consequently, it was not until after the war that they were able to learn about haiku thanks to the diligent efforts of translators and scholars (Nakagawa 1977: 193). The typical structure for an English haiku involves three lines, with the middle line often longer than the other two. While haiku in formats of two or four lines are not unheard of, they are not the norm and may be written in various arrangements such as vertically, diagonally, or horizontally in a single line (Wakan 2019: 12).

Recognizing the significant influence of cultural, linguistic, and historical disparities that present distinct challenges for non-Japanese poets, it is crucial to emphasize that haiku as a form offers numerous avenues for both established and emerging poets to express their own unique moments and experiences. Japanese haiku poets might write about cicadas, *Setsubun* festivals, or spiritual observations inspired by Zen, British poets will write about ducks, rainy afternoons or steaming cups of tea and American poets might reflect some emotion modern life evokes in late night hours. Does this make their haiku any less ‘real’ if there is any concept of ‘realness’ in literature at all? I would disagree that it does. Literature stands as a painting brush for poets such as Buson, and poetry forms, especially contemporary forms, should not be ‘protected’ under the veil of not being one-hundred-percent identical to traditional forms. Literature, both Japanese and Western, is in fluid motion, impacting each other in more ways than any scholar can observe for their book or article, as long as the language is alive so is literature, and as long as there is a creative mind willing, or forced to write by its inner turmoil, there are ways in which it can bring something new to the pre-existing forms and perhaps even ‘improve’ them.

6. Conclusion

Haiku poetry has been extensively researched and studied, with the literate in sixteenth century Japan required to have a thorough understanding of Chinese and Japanese poetry. Haiku has evolved from its early traditional form, where it often accompanied a beautiful painting, to a contemporary form that emerged in the Beatnik era of the 1950s. Despite its various adaptations, it can be argued that haiku remains rooted in Japanese tradition. The great four haiku masters and prominent figures such as Pound, Wright, Kerouac in North America and Sansom, and Blyth in Britain have significantly influenced the form and impacted other short literary forms. By reading Japanese traditional haiku, foreigners can immerse themselves in Japanese culture and observe the impact of traditional haiku on modern short poetry. Literary movements such as Imagism and The Beat Movement, both carried some aspects of haiku (such as brevity and often focus on Zen), enabling future forms to break free from traditional, longer forms. Agreeably, there are significant differences in both culture and language between Japanese and English, translations of haiku have been available since Blyth's first volume on Japan. While it can be argued that non-native readers will never fully grasp the cultural depth behind haiku, this view is contentious because many translations have the potential to add to the understanding of the genre, and errors in translation are dependent on the translator and not necessarily indicative of an inherent issue with the genre. Reading haiku poetry is crucial not only for understanding Japanese culture but also for appreciating the poetic evolution from the sixteenth century to the present day.

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Abstract

The exchange between Eastern and Western cultures has been significant in literature and art, particularly through poetic forms such as the haiku, which emphasizes brevity and uses seasonal words to express the beauty of the moment. This form has inspired Western poetry movements, such as Imagism and the Beat movement, as well as individual Western scholars and haiku writers like Ezra Pound, Richard Wright, and Jack Kerouac in America, as well as R. H. Blyth in Britain. The great four haiku masters in Japan established a solid foundation for future poets in the haiku form through their distinctive writing styles. Translation of Japanese poetry, along with analysis and explanation, though sometimes met with some problems due to linguistical differences between Japanese and English, facilitated cultural exchange and allowed the emergence of guiding principles for Western haiku poets. Despite these differences, translations of haiku have contributed to the understanding and appreciation of the genre's poetic evolution. This thesis inspects how reading and understanding haiku poetry is essential for understanding how haiku supported and molded the evolution of poetry from sixteenth-century Japan to American and British poems.

Keywords: haiku poetry, Imagism, Beat movement, Ezra Pound, Richard Wright, The Great Four Haiku Masters, R. H. Blyth, translation.

Sažetak

Razmjena između kultura Istoka i Zapada imala je značajan utjecaj na književnost i umjetnost, posebice kroz poetske forme poput haiku pjesme, koja ističe sažetost i u kojoj pjesnici rabe motive koji simboliziraju godišnja doba kako bi izrazili ljepotu trenutka. Ova je pjesnička forma služila kao inspiracija za umjetničke pokrete poezije Zapada poput Imagizma i Beat pokreta, kao i za pojedine znanstvenike i haiku pjesnike kao što su Ezra Pound, Richarda Wright i Jack Kerouac u Americi, te R. H. Blyth u Velikoj Britaniji. Četvorica velikih japanskih majstora haikua, kroz svoje prepoznatljive stilove pisanja, postavila su snažnu osnovicu za buduće pjesnike u haiku formi. Prevođenje japanske poezije, zajedno s analizom i pojašnjenjem, usprkos povremenim poteškoćama zbog razlika između japanskoga i engleskog, olakšalo je kulturnu razmjenu i omogućilo nastanak smjernica pjesnike haikua na Zapadu. Unatoč jezičnim razlikama, i eventualnim poteškoćama, prijevodi haikua su pridonijeli razumijevanju i poštivanju poetske evolucije žanra. Ova teza istražuje kako je čitanje i razumijevanje haiku poezije ključno za razumijevanje na koji je način haiku potpomogao i oblikovao evoluciju poezije – od poezije 16. stoljeća u Japanu do poezije u Americi i Velikoj Britaniji.

Ključne riječi: haiku poezija, Imagizam, Beat pokret, Ezra Pound, Richard Wright, četiri velika majstora haikua, R. H. Blyth, prevođenje.