Japanese Influences on the Haiku of Gary Snyder, with Six Original Poems

by
Rachel Booher

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Thesis Committee:

Dr. Philip Phillips, Thesis Director

Dr. Fusae Ekida and Dr. Priya Ananth, Second Readers

Dr. John Vile, Thesis Committee Chair

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APPROVED:

_____

Dr. Philip Phillips, Thesis Director
Professor of English and Associate Dean, University Honors College

_____

Dr. John Vile, Thesis Committee Chair
Dean and Professor of Political Science, University Honors College

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Abstract

Haiku is a traditional form of Japanese poetry with origins dating back thousands of years. This creative thesis traces the history of haiku, discusses notable haiku authors, analyzes artistic attributes and principles of haiku, and examines their Japanese influences on the life and writings of Gary Snyder. Snyder's verse is the closest any English-language poetry has come to expressing the true aesthetic of haiku, which includes the seasonal element called *kigo*. Snyder's poems align with the aesthetics of the haiku form, including potential *kigo*, in English. The analytical portion (Section I) of this thesis illustrates the immense impact that Japanese culture has had on American poetry, particularly on the writings of Gary Snyder, and analyzes representative poems by Snyder in the haiku tradition. The creative potion (Section II) of this thesis features original, haiku-like compositions that demonstrate that the English language can employ potential *kigo* within an American landscape and follow the principles of traditional haiku.

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Section I

Introduction

Japan is a country with a rich cultural history and beautiful literary works of art. Haiku includes both elements. Haiku are short poems containing seasonal references, concise wording, and a 5-7-5 syllabic rhythm. These seasonal references, called *kigo*, are typically words or phrases that depict a specific season within the haiku. Ancient forms of Japanese literature contain the foundational principles of haiku and its *kigo*. Japanese poets, including Matsuo Bashō, Yosa Buson, and Masaoka Shiki, have contributed to the development of the structure and aesthetics of haiku. Matsuo Bashō is responsible for originally separating haiku as an independent art form called *haikai no renga*, or just *haikai*, passing down principles and aesthetics to be developed by later authors, Buson and Shiki. Bashō's haiku feature artistic aspects of Zen that are not necessarily dependent on Zen concepts themselves.

Because of Bashō's innovation, haiku gained independence from other literary forms and proceeded to rise in popularity, both within Japan and in other countries. Many years later, Shiki gave *haikai* the name haiku and the poetic form began to accumulate modern topics and formatting, including words that reflect their time periods and respective technology. Interest in this literary form expanded globally, influencing Western and English-language poetry. The Modern poets Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, T. S. Eliot, and R. H. Blyth, who belong to Imagist schools, are a few of the renowned authors who published their own versions of haiku-like poetry. Haiku began to include aesthetics of Western art after the development of the Imagist theories, while most excluded the syllabic 5-7-5 rhythm. Their work has inspired later authors of the

Beat Generation, such as Allen Ginsberg, Kenneth Rexroth, and Gary Snyder (1930-), to appreciate and to experiment with the poetic possibilities of haiku in their own writing.

Of the American poets conversant with the haiku form, Gary Snyder, who studied Japanese literature, language, religion, and culture in both America and Japan, has the most extensive experience. Over the course of his lengthy career, Snyder has published several collections of poetry and essays, all of which embody his Japanese influences and experiences. Snyder is currently best known for his poetry and essays concerning pollutive degradation, his activism promoting environmental awareness, as well as his love for all life and nature and his practices of Zen Buddhism. An avid practitioner of Zen Buddhism, Snyder incorporates many of these principles into his compositions, adding further depth to his poetry. Within his collections are countless short poems resembling haiku and containing potential *kigo*. The existence of English-language haiku is still a matter of controversy, and literary scholars argue whether haiku can be written in languages other than Japanese. Although he is not best known for his haiku compositions, Snyder holds a deep respect for the poetic form, its principles and origins, and Zen. He has infused his haiku with distinctively Japanese and American elements from the natural world. Because of this respect, Snyder not only has captured the haiku aesthetics within his English-language poetry, but he has also incorporated seasonal references within potential English-language *kigo*.

This thesis includes two sections, with Section I containing chapters one through four. Chapter one explores the origins and historical foundations of haiku, answering the question of how it came to be in existence today. This leads to chapter two, which covers the artistic principles, aesthetics, attitudes, and concepts that are unique to haiku. Over

the span of hundreds of years, haiku have developed and grown, accumulating countless various elements along with a few very necessary components. Humanity and haiku are similar, in that we start small, gradually growing and learning more as years progress. One such necessary component is the *kigo*. Chapter two discusses the different types of *kigo*, why they are important, and how they are used within haiku. A knowledge of the haiku having been established, chapter three depicts the life of Gary Snyder, focusing intently upon the Japanese influences. His early life, college studies, poetic associations and friends, travels, and Zen practices are all crucial to understanding his poetry, specifically his haiku-like compositions. Understanding Snyder's life is necessary for the presentation of analyses in chapter four, focusing on the haiku aesthetics and potential *kigo* within Snyder's poetry. Within these five analyses, proof of English-language haiku and potential *kigo* can be found despite the language barrier and the lack of 5-7-5 syllables. Section II includes my original poetic compositions of personal interpretations with their potential *kigo* following an afterword reflecting my experiences throughout the research process. This section embodies the purpose of this thesis and shows that English-language poetry can be written with potential *kigo* while maintaining the haiku artistic attributes. The six original poems utilize all of the research, knowledge, and respect I have for haiku and *kigo*, and further support my theory that English-language haiku are attainable along with the creation of their potential *kigo*.

The significance of this research lies within intercultural exchanges and influences. While the professional audience for my topic would normally be within humanities, literature, or American poetry, this topic also has a place on an international stage. Through this research, the impact of foreign cultures has become evident. Cross-

cultural immersion, study, and experiences help to promote global growth, cultural awareness, and literary advancement. The original Western fascinations with the East led whole generations of writers, like the Imagists Ezra Pound and R. H. Blyth, and the Beat poet, Gary Snyder, to explore and create poetry from their own intercultural experiences. Snyder is one of many who changed the course of American literature because of his observances, inspirations, and studies of Japanese language and haiku poetry. The influences of haiku and *kigo* are another sign of how intertwined our world has become and the literary community can achieve further progress by relying upon the inspirations of cross-cultural experiences.

Chapter 1: The History of Haiku

Haiku is a style of poetry highly revered within Japanese society. It is one of the oldest forms of poetry, whose traces are found within many other classifications of Japanese poetry, such as *katauta*, *sedōka*, *chōka*, *tanka*, *renga*, and *hokku*, which will be discussed in this section. The striking revelation of the development of haiku is that it is both young and old, simultaneously representing new transformations of the most ancient poems. These transformations build upon each other, and, rather than erasing historical poetry, haiku allow past methods to continue to live on through the dynamics of its origins.

The first signs of haiku date back to as early as 712 C.E. and can be found within the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki,* the oldest recorded texts of Japanese classical history and literature. One such verse in the *Nihonshoki*, recorded in 720 C.E., states:

How happy am I! I have met a handsome man.

How happy am I! I have met a lovely maid. (Yasuda 109)

These two phrases are called *katauta* and were the first words exchanged between the god Izanagi and goddess Izanami. They were generally used as questions and responses and were immediate replies that required wit and cleverness, which could be spoken in the lapse of a single breath. This breath was typically between seventeen to eighteen syllables, allowing the speakers to convey depth and spontaneity within a simple phrase (Yasuda 109-10). If one takes a breath and counts the syllables of release, one discovers that both *katauta* and haiku can be spoken in that single breath. The significance of *katauta* in relation to haiku is much deeper than the syllabic count, though this is the most obvious correlation. In the words of Kenneth Yasuda, “It is clear that the length of

katauta arose not through mere chance but because of the type of material it dealt with the simple question; the simple answer" (Yasuda 110). The combination of simplicity and depth within a haiku is reflected in this early form of Japanese poetry. While scholars such as Matsuo Bashō and Masaoka Shiki claim that haiku composed before the Genroku period (1668-1703) "do not amount to much," I agree with the evidence that the most basic components of haiku existed long before the poetic form became independent (Yasuda 111).

Following the *katauta* form was the *sedōka*, which consistently was comprised of a pair of *katauta* in either 5-7-5 or 5-7-7 syllable formats. These poems were not written in a question-reply arrangement, yet they still maintained similar syllabic patterns and simple topics. Further growth of this form gave rise to the *chōka* form, which contains alternating patterns that closely resemble the *katauta,* yet are longer in structure. The *chōka* combines the previously mentioned *katauta* and the incoming development of the *tanka*. One such *chōka* example, in which Yasuda cites the *Kojiki* text, is as follows:

O palace maiden,
the daughter of my subject,
Do you bring a wine-holder?
If you hold it up,
oh, hold it in your hands,
Oh, hold it firmly,
ever firmly in your hands,
O you wine-holding maiden! (Yasuda 113)

Upon closer examination of the syllable commonalities, this *chōka* contains the pattern of 5-7-7-5-7-5-7-7. The significance of this example, when split between the first two lines and the final three, is that this *chōka* contains the patterns of *katauta, tanka,* and haiku.

Tanka, also known as *waka* or classical poetry, is perhaps the most consistent form of Japanese poetry in terms of artistic and poetic aesthetics, syllabic pattern, and rhythm, preserving its original structure as a "well-defined form, namely, five lines in the pattern of 57-57-7" (Yasuda 115). This type of classical Japanese poetry was the most widely written form in the Heian Era (794-1185 C.E.) even as the *katauta* began to dwindle (Bashō 3). During this long stretch of time, the culture of the four seasons permeated the noble courts and its poetry. It is well-known among literary historians that Japanese poetry often incorporates seasonal topics or associations, using spring, summer, autumn, and winter as focal points. These associations often reflect double meanings within a poem, thereby allowing nature and humanity to exist in harmonious verse. The Western philosophy of the "lay concept" is one in which "nature is 'used in reference to ordinarily observable features of the world'" (Shirane xiv). As stated, the culture of the four seasons is a *culture*, not a type of poetry, and it is rooted in how the Japanese view nature as a whole in relation to humanity. According to Haruo Shirane, "The lay view of nature…is not regarded as being opposed to the human, as is the metaphysical concept, as much as being an extension of the human" (Shirane xiv). Indeed, this culture reveals the depth and intricacy that nature, and inevitably, the seasons, have within the Japanese society, historically, religiously, and, in this case, artistically.

The culture of the four seasons has a long and intricate history within Japan, drawing both on external influences as well as the cultural norms of the time period. The

external factors originated in East Asian and Chinese traditional poetry dating as far back as 220-589 C.E. and "was generally expected to do one of three things: express emotions or thoughts (*jō*) directly, describe a 'scene' (*kei*) directly, or express emotion or thought through a scene" (Shirane 25). These concepts influenced Japanese poetry in the Heian period, when expressing thought and emotion indirectly was the preferred aesthetic. Because poets used much of nature to describe underlying emotion and the human condition, they seldom used metaphors. Instead, the description of the natural element became the symbol reflecting the emotive state, reinforcing the usage of puns and *engo* (words culturally or phonetically linked) within *waka* (Shirane 26). Other Chinese anthologies in which the four seasons were of high importance were *Yutai xinyong* by Xu Ling and the *Wen xuan* compiled in the Liang era (Shirane 26). Many of the qualities seen within these sources of literature gradually infiltrated Japanese poetry, resulting in most nature poems becoming seasonal poems. The major difference between the Chinese anthologies was that "Japanese *waka* anthologies…carefully arranged the poems on an elaborate temporal and seasonal grid so that attention was paid to all phases of the seasons" (Shirane 27).

The internal influences regarding the seasons were a combination of the Japanese relationship to their country's natural topographic and atmospheric climate and through the imperial courts. Crops were essential to survival, and the Japanese were sensitive to their surroundings and the timing of the seasons. This fact is thought to have had a direct correlation to the seasonal influences within Japanese poetry. On the side of the governing class system, because *waka* anthologies were commissioned by the emperor, many of the seasonal references had a refined and altruistic appeal. Poetry was composed

in honor of the imperial rule, representing the oneness between nature and humanity, as the emperors were regarded as deities. Progression of the *waka* led to the compositions becoming more focused on the seasons within nature rather than as a tribute to the imperial house. Competitions would be held between two writers with a fixed topic for the season. As the two composers competed for intellectual superiority, the judge would scrutinize every word and decide the winner based on how the seasonal word was used with the other components of the poem. This type of practice preceded the expansion of more rural and broader seasonal references as well as the creation of other poetic forms.

The sustained construction of *waka* and its seasonal associations later gave birth to a collaborative art form called *renga*. *Renga* are known as linked poetry because they include multiple lines with alternating syllables of 5-7-5, 7-7, 5-7-5, which expand continuously until the poem reaches one hundred verses. These expansive poems still retained the aforementioned seasonal references and gained popularity from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century (Shirane 73). The first seventeen syllables, known as *hokku*, required a seasonal topic or word to depict the content throughout the rest of the poem. There are several defining factors of a *hokku*, including the necessity to form a complete statement, the ability to represent nature, the juxtaposition of the subject, and the capacity to establish clear imagery. However, the most important element is that every *hokku* contains a seasonal word called a *kigo,* or a seasonal topic called *kidai* (Shirane 176). These distinctions were prominent in *renga* and carried over into future poetic forms. They will be discussed in more detail in the following section. The *renga* were too long in the opinion of the renowned Japanese author Matsuo Bashō, who shortened the *renga* to the *haikai no renga,* or just *haikai*, “because he felt the shorter

length enabled him to create a more polished less formal kind of *renga*" (Record 19). Therefore, the opening verses, the *hokku* within *renga*, became *haikai*.

Bashō became a leading revolutionary in the realm of Japanese poetry, and he began the movement that would eventually become haiku. Born in 1644, Bashō spent most of his life in the pursuit of literary enlightenment (Bashō 2). Travels, hardships, nature, Zen Buddhism, Chinese verse, and education within the Teimon school were key influencers in the journey of his poetic developments (Bashō 11). Over the years, Bashō's poetry underwent many changes according to the circumstances in his life, while maintaining his personal aesthetic to communicate "imagery, diction, and elegant beauty of the court tradition" as well as "spiritual poetics with an earthy humor" (Bashō 11-12). Shortly before his death in 1694, Bashō authored a poem that displays both his literary prowess and a prediction of the expansive impact his works would have upon future writers:

Ill on a journey

My dreams roam round

Over withered fields

tabi ni yande / yume wa kareno o / kakemeguru (Bashō 3)

Within this piece, the proof of Bashō's life's work carries his influence across time and cultures in a way he could have never imagined. Because of Bashō's intensive study and relentless penmanship, the *haikai* paved the way for other poets—like Yosa Buson and Masaoka Shiki—and the development of the haiku.

The master who came after Bashō is a poet named Yosa Buson (1716-1783). While Bashō's poems were filled with elegant traditions and classical aesthetics, Buson

wrote provocative pieces that stimulate the visual senses. Buson was a painter and a writer, composing *haikai* that earned him the nickname the "word painter" (Record 38). Creating stanzas filled with imaginative descriptions, the pictures formed within his poems were unrivaled. One example of Buson's poetry is as follows:

Plants fill with haze

and in the water only quiet

twilight everywhere (Qtd. in Record 39)

This poem seems to contain a portrait within a portrait, reflecting the subtle brilliance of a painted masterpiece. Buson wrote unique poetry with brilliant imagery, claiming that he "enjoy[ed] changing my[his] style from day to day as my[his] fancy dictates . . . [.] I have no desire to follow the elegant path of Bashō" (Record 39). Despite his claims, remnants of Bashō's aesthetics and principles still manifested within Buson's poetry. Noting the distinctive finesse within his poetry, Buson went on to write many elegant *haikai* that mirror the spiritual depth of the original Japanese poetic traditions.

Because *hokku* were part of the linked verse poetry, *renga* and *haikai no renga*, they were not considered independent forms of poetry. The Japanese poet Masaoka Shiki originally isolated and gave the haiku its name. During his life (1857-1902), Shiki liberated the haiku, formally separating it as a distinctive type of poetry (Barnhill 4). While attempting to break away from Bashō's traditions, Shiki respected Buson as a literary inspiration. The similar "word-painting" writing style of Buson can be seen in the following haiku by Shiki:

On the temple bell

has settled and is glittering

a firefly. (Qtd. in Record 42)

His revolutionary stance freed haiku from its monotonous binds, even though most of his achievements were not recognized in Japan until after his death. However, Shiki is praised by Beichman-Yamamoto stating, “By his criticism, the example of his own poetry, and the charisma of his personality, he made haiku an exciting form again” (Masaoka and Beichman-Yamamoto 291). Shiki’s irony, imagery, and freedom of subject became the foundation for the haiku that would transition across international borders. Nearing the end of his life, Shiki yearned for a successor to continue his literary legacy. He had multiple disciples, but two students were known as the “twin stars”: Takahama Kyoshi (1874-1959) and Kawahigashi Hekigotō (1873-1937) (Yamaguchi xx). Neither disciple claimed the specific literary path that Shiki had laid out for his successor; however, both continued to write and teach the art of haiku to future Japanese aspiring authors.

One such author to note is Yamaguchi Seishi (1901-1994), who was a disciple of Takahama Kyoshi. Kyoshi and Seishi have a connection to each other through haiku which represents the importance of generational knowledge of the poetic form being passed down: “Bashō is the progenitor, Shiki the parent who rebuilt the dynasty, and Seishi the legitimate heir to the traditional haiku” (Yamaguchi xxi). Seishi is well-renowned for his modernity and intellect in his compositions of haiku and has combined the principles of Imagism and the Japanese traditions. Because of the global expansion and interest in haiku, other Japanese poets began to branch out even more drastically from traditional principles and writing techniques. Some Japanese authors reformed haiku to be completely free in topic and syllabic resonance while others followed more

closely with historical preferences. The subject expansion in Seishi's haiku has specifically modernized the form of poetry, no longer limiting the topics to trees, animals, or nature as we perceive it. Human nature has found a home within many of his haiku, creating new seasonal references and perspectives in this longstanding form of poetry (Yamaguchi xvi). Subsequent English and American literature have had a countereffect on Japanese literature, primarily during the 1930s and 1940s, thereby broadening perceptions of the identity of haiku. This can be illustrated in the reverse perspective of Western culture's influences in Japanese society. With the opening of its borders in 1854, Japan became exposed to the culture of the West (Davis). The infiltration of technology, customs, language, ways of thinking, and literary works proved transformational for Japan. But with all transformations, there were both negative and positive influences within the country. Haiku benefited from the expansion, pushing past the borders of Japan and into the hands of international poets. The growth of haiku began long before the trade treaty was signed in 1858; however, the impact of the West is still prominent within the modern haiku.

After Shiki's death, the English haiku began to expand and transform. The interest in haiku can be linked to the Western fascination with Japanese culture. Over time, the attraction to Japanese art and literature grew, spreading throughout Europe. Artists and poets alike began to mimic the elegance of the Japanese tradition and the simplicity of the haiku. Thus, the haiku's influence spread rapidly in early 1900s and sank its roots deeply within the Imagist movement. Modern poets such as T. E. Hulme, Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, William Carlos Williams, H. D., and T. S. Eliot are only a few of the renowned writers of the Imagist movement who composed haiku-like poetry. Ezra Pound's poetry

took on qualities from Bashō and Buson and is evident in Pound's citation of Arakida Moritake's haiku. Arakida was a Shinto priest who was often inspired to write poetry using the religious views he practiced. The similarities can be seen between the first poem, Arakida's original composition, and the second, Pound's re-composition:

A fallen petal

Falls back to its branch

Ah! A butterfly!

The fallen blossom flies back to its branch:

A butterfly. (Kawano 117)

Pound's short poem "In a Station of the Metro," is one of the most famous examples of the haiku influence, wherein he even states: "Three years ago [1911] in Paris I got out of a metro train…and suddenly saw a beautiful face and another and another…I tried all day for words for what that had meant for me…" (Kanaseki 223). After a series of writings and attempts at formulating the proper expressions, in 1912, Pound eventually reduced his thirty-lined poem and wrote this *hokku*-like sentence:

The apparition of these faces in a crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough. (Kanaseki 223)

While this poem resembles a haiku, it is not a Japanese haiku. One reason is the language barrier and the nuances of the beauty of the characters can be lost in translation. But this obstacle can be easily overcome by adhering to the haiku's essential principles. However, English haiku do not always follow the exact same principles as Japanese haiku. They have their own unique beauty which will be discussed further in the following section.

After the Imagist era, the phenomenon of haiku became embedded into English and American literature, so much so that haiku is currently being taught to American children as a fundamental type of poetry.

One person who has remained obscure when referencing English haiku influences is Noguchi Yonejirō. Born in 1875, he developed an interest in the English language and, in 1904, became the first Japanese author to be published in the United States (Russell, 2018). Among his works were several haiku, which caught the eyes of American readers. Yonejirō admonished American writers, saying, "I always compare an English poem with a mansion with windows widely open, even the pictures of its drawing-room visible from the outside. I dare say it does not tempt me much to see the within" (Russell, 2018). Yonejirō continued to publish his works in English, which helped open up new and broader audiences throughout the world, including in Europe, inspiring writers like Pound and Blyth. Yonejirō left Americans with a challenge: "Pray, you try Japanese Hokku, my American poets! You say far too much, I should say" (Russell, 2018). Despite the lack of remembrance, Yonejirō's words resonate within the poems of authors such as Gary Snyder who embraced the haiku traditions. Events such as these aided in the progression of the English and American haiku. While many writers settled for mere mimicry of haiku, Snyder delved deeply for the true form of Japanese haiku, thereby instilling many of the haiku's core attributes into his English poetry

Chapter 2: Haiku Aesthetics, *Kigo*, and English Transference

Besides its seasonal element, *kigo*, haiku gradually formulated artistic traits unique to its style. Some of the first principles were suggested by Bashō in the late 1600s. According to Record, Bashō was well-rounded and prepared by the traditions of his ancestors who published poetry. Bashō formulated three principles based on these traditions called *sabi*, *wabi*, and *karumi*. Loosely translated, they stand for "tranquility in the midst of loneliness…simplicity and elegance in daily life…[and] lightness" that contains deeper meaning (Record 34). This general synopsis encompasses the first three exclusive attributes of the early form of haiku. The prominence of the haiku's impending creation lies within the first three lines of the *haikai no renga* called *hokku.* These lines consist of a single verse separated into 5-7-5 syllables and they solidify the focus or topic of the rest of the poem (Record 18-20). According to Bashō, a *hokku* possesses several defining factors, including the necessity to form a complete statement, the ability to represent nature, the juxtaposition of the subject with the object and vice versa, and the capacity to establish clear imagery. Most importantly, every *hokku* contains a seasonal word called a *kigo* or a seasonal topic called *kidai.* These elements were prominent in *renga*, carried over into future poetic formats, and eventually became foundational for haiku.

Many years after Bashō's passing, Masaoka Shiki gave haiku its name and established what he "considered to be the three essential components of haiku: sketching from nature, objective description, and juxtaposition" (Yamaguchi xx). These elements seemingly retained qualities of *sabi*, *wabi*, and *karumi* while also branching off into a more modern landscape of poetry composition. These traits also align closely with the

theories published in the 1914 anthology *Des Imagistes*. This book consisted of works by H. D., Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, Richard Aldington, F. S. Flint, and many other authors who remain unknown. Their main purpose for creating this anthology was to condense and clarify their writing styles and their own personal works (Ramazani 926). This initial volume was edited by Ezra Pound and contained the renowned principles that state, "To use the language of common speech…to create new rhythms…to allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject…to present an image…to produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred or indefinite [and that] concentration is the very essence of poetry" (Qtd. in Ramazani 198). Within the principles of Imagism lay reflections of haiku and its artistic beauty as proof of its international influences.

Kenneth Yasuda also discusses some of the fundamental elements that a haiku contains, which focuses primarily upon attributes including the aesthetic attitude, the aesthetic experience, the haiku moment, and the concepts of object, time, and place. Within his investigation, Yasuda breaks down the core concepts of haiku as taken from the masters and words them in such a way that can be understood by writers across the world. Yasuda states that "[Haiku] in itself, shows that it is able to satisfy certain poetic needs. Its ability to do so is, I feel, because its underlying aesthetic principles are the same as those for any art form in the East or West" (Yasuda 8). This statement was one of the first to connect the two continents in regard to the principles of haiku. The following discussion will focus primarily on the principles as portrayed by Yasuda, with references relating to the original components instituted by Bashō and Shiki.

Similarities in haiku principles begin with the aesthetic attitude or haiku attitude. Aesthetic attitude refers to the writers' perspective and how they understand the world, as

well as their objective assessment of their surroundings. A scientist may look at a flower and see its biological properties. A florist may see how the flower would best add color or balance to a bouquet. However, a writer may see the flower as an entity without separation from self. Yasuda calls this the "haiku attitude" and defines it as "a readiness for an experience for its own sake" (Yasuda 10). Eliot and Williams, while opposite in their poetic styles, held similar modernist beliefs about poetry. Eliot stated that "great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion" while Williams places "true value [on the] peculiarity which gives an object a character by itself" (Eliot 40, Williams 16). The poet's perspective is selfless and does not project personal knowledge or emotions upon the object of the experience. This statement aligns very closely with the words of Shiki regarding objective description of the subject. Emotions expressed in haiku depend entirely on the reader. Haiku use objective descriptions to instigate emotions rather than describe the emotions themselves (Yamaguchi xx). For example, a haiku that includes a single, solitary animal in the middle of the wilderness influences the reader to relate to the loneliness being depicted in this scene. This emotion is not explicitly described, rather its influence is implicitly implied. Furthermore, Eliot holds similar views, stating, "[t]he only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an objective correlative…a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula for that particular emotion" (Qtd. in Ramazani 948). These authors claim that haiku, or art in general, should not be created through emotions, but rather should instigate the emotions of the reader. For poets to compose haiku and prepare themselves for the aesthetic experience, a neutral unbiased perspective is necessary.

The aesthetic experience harmonizes with the aesthetic attitude. However, as Yasuda states, “a haiku attitude does not necessarily cause an experience to be aesthetic” (Yasuda 12). An unattached perspective of the world is not the only prerequisite to creating haiku and obtaining this viewpoint does not immediately translate an experience as beautiful or appealing. The idea of an experience being aesthetic is closely related to Zen concepts, although Zen is not practiced directly as a form of art (Record 48). The ability to unify with one’s surroundings while also separating one’s individual perceptions is intrinsically Zen. Although haiku authors may or may not practice Zen, the similarities are evident. One such statement, as taken from Record, illustrates one such similarity:

> [B]ut for Zen the "reality" of things transcends the intellectual and emotional dichotomies created by the individual ego, that is, Zen describes the state in which the perceiver and the perceived are no longer distinguishable from one another. (Record 48)

Bashō was a practitioner of Zen, as is Gary Snyder, and therefore the relevance of comparison is apparent. For example, the flower owns itself and has an identity separate from what we would place upon it. At the same time, the observer becomes unified with the experience without any self-awareness or forced expectations. The Western habit is often to isolate the object and the subject. Within the haiku experience, however, these two terms are inseparable in relation to the aesthetic experience. According to Yasuda, “The subject cannot exist without the object, nor the object without the subject, since they are one” (Yasuda 13). The poet Seki Osuga states “[We can enter the world of creation] when we are completely sincere and humble before nature, yet free and fearless …

consciousness is completely unified [and] the poet's nature and environment are one" (Qtd in Yasuda 10, 12). One does not exist without the other. The journey to attain the epiphany of an aesthetic experience unified with the haiku attitude is comparative to a journey to enlightenment. This extensive process can be simplified through an analysis of certain Zen concepts that have been incorporated within haiku.

There are additional principles called Zen aesthetics within the haiku poem, many of which share commonalities with Bashō's original theories of *sabi*, *wabi*, and *karumi*. As previously mentioned, Record stated, "Zen describes the state in which the perceiver and the perceived are no longer distinguishable from one another" (Record 48). This harmonization aligns with the conditions that are necessary for the formulation of the haiku attitude and the aesthetic experience. Additionally, the concept of Zen within haiku is not a requirement but is more of a personal decision of the poet. It is an unavoidable fact that Zen qualities and similarities will exist within the art or poetry of the poet who actively practices Zen. Needless to say, the opposite is also true. However, a poet does not need to become a practitioner of Zen to utilize the aesthetic principles that embody Zen concepts. The Zen aesthetics include asymmetry, simplicity, austere sublimity, naturalness, subtle profundity, freedom from attachment, and tranquility (Record 51-52). Many of these characteristics are shared within haiku and are most relatable when referencing Bashō's *sabi*, *wabi*, and *karumi*. Concepts repeated by poets throughout history include sincerity within words, minimizing focus, releasing reality, and retaining a constant respect for the experiences that become haiku. Often those who have connections with Zen, as Bashō did, are able to tap into a wider pool of inspiration from the religious beliefs being practiced. However, while Zen aesthetics exist within haiku,

they are not limited to haiku. Because of this, Zen as a religion and Zen within art can coexist as separate entities. The development of the previously discussed haiku attitude combined with the expected haiku experience could be more easily achieved with the application of Zen concepts.

Once the haiku attitude and the aesthetic experience have become cohesive, their coexistence can produce the haiku moment. The haiku moment is an ephemeral moment of enlightenment within haiku poetry. This haiku moment can be interpreted in many ways, but Yasuda describes it best as "a moment in which the words which created the experience and the experience itself can become one. The nature of the haiku moment is anti-temporal and its quality is eternal" (Yasuda 24). The past and future are inconsequential, and all that remains is the present. It is comparable to catching fireflies in a jar, observing their beauty, and then letting them go. It is here and gone, but the haiku allows the experience to become immortalized through the words used to express it. The immediate illumination of the experience within the haiku moment can also be summarized in the words of Ezra Pound:

> [The image is] that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time…It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits…. (Pound 200)

The commonality among Pound's statement, Zen aesthetics, and the haiku moment all gravitates toward freedom. This freedom can be better illustrated within the three elements of object, time, and place, otherwise known as what, when, and where. These are the elements contained within the haiku that allow it to become a living thing, and "it

is the relationship between these three elements which together are the experience" (Yasuda 41). These elements will be discussed in a later section along with their relationship to *kigo*. The haiku moment is also quite similar to the purpose of meditation and is an element that is intricately connected to *kigo*. The task of discovering and developing the perfect set of words, formulating descriptions of a once-in-a-lifetime encounter, or experiencing a single moment of clarity in the midst of chaos are comparative to the haiku moment.

Despite haiku's growth and progression, the one unchanging element is the inclusion *kigo*. Simplified*, kigo* are single or compound characters or words used to dictate the proper season to the reader (Barnhill 4). As previously discussed, the culture of the Japanese seasons dates back before the 700s, and *kigo* were iconic results of this development. Seasonal references have been refined and systematically organized over several hundreds of years, with spring and autumn being the preferred seasonal topics within the *waka* anthologies. Spring and autumn are also prominent within Chinese poetry, and they have been agriculturally significant in Japanese society. These influences have remained popular throughout poetic compositions worldwide (Shirane 28). However, haiku poetry encompasses all four seasons, as well as times of the year not considered seasons outside of Japan, including spring, summer, autumn, winter, the New Year, and the rainy season. This expansion upon the earlier inclinations for spring and autumn has resulted in the increase in the number of seasonal references.

Historically, within texts such as the *Man'yōshū* (Asuka and Nara Periods, 538-794 C. E.), and later, the *Kokinshū* (Heian Period, 794-1185 C. E.)*,* poems have been separated based on seasonal reference. These poems have continued to aid in the

expansion of the number of seasonal associations. While the *Man'yōshū* has aided in the growth of seasonal poetry, the *Kokinshū* has helped to solidify the presence of the culture of the four seasons for the next thousand years. The *Kokinshū* specifically embodies imperial harmony with humanity and nature and "functions as an elegant and often highly nuanced expression of human thought and emotion" (Shirane 54). Throughout these books, subjects of seasonal types have rapidly increased and have become culturally delegated into separate categories based on association. Animals, plants, atmospheric and natural topography, among many other words, became organized into seasonal classifications and, over time, have been consolidated to reference specific natural elements and phenomena. *Kigo* can also be either a single word or character or a compound set, where two or more words indicate the seasonal reference. This is specifically true for the English translations of Japanese haiku. A single character or word in Japanese can translate into multiple words in the English language. For example, consider Seishi's poem composed in 1948:

A firefly's light

Returning in the same air

Within which it came. (Yamaguchi 109)

The compound *kigo,* "firefly's light," is a summer reference in the category of animals. However, if re-translated back into Japanese, the term originally used is *keika.* This transforms the English version, a compound *kigo,* back into a single Japanese word. Therefore, we can begin to see the complications within translation as well as the difficulties with developing the 5-7-5 syllabic rhythm, even though the seasonal reference remains constant in both languages. However, despite these obstacles, the *kigo* have

transitioned beyond time, language, and countries to remain a constant factor within haiku.

Spring, summer, rainy season, autumn, and winter are all primary topics within Japanese poetry, with later additions of the New Year as a season. Over time, a collection of seasonal words called the *Saijiki* has been created. Alfred Marks, one of the translators of Seishi's poetry, states that "Important haiku that have been written in the past and the subjects they present are selected, classified, and codified by master haiku poets and printed in almanacs called *saijiki*, or 'year-time-record,' where they are indexed by words and phrases …" (Yamaguchi xi). There are essentially thousands of *kigo* compiled within this *kigo*-dictionary. Marks classifies them loosely under the following categories: "celestial phenomena, topography, holiday observances, life, animals (including insects), plants, and the traditional Japanese culture" (Yamaguchi xii). Because of this classification system, it becomes easier to identify the *kigo* used within haiku, many of which can be illustrated through the elements of objects, time, and places.

Objects, times, and places can all be represented within haiku as separate parts of the whole poem or can be revealed within a single *kigo*. A *kigo* can likewise express an individual object, time, or place, or can embody all three simultaneously. Normally, a haiku will illustrate the object, time, and place as the "what, when, and where," as previously mentioned. This can be seen within both individual lines and individual words. That is the beauty of depth through simplicity, and a necessary element for such a short poem. Every season is represented, along with the New Year and the rainy season, and can be expressed through different words that immediately relate to a specific experience. For example, let us consider this haiku written by Seishi:

A carpet of snow

keeping me from going close

to the ocean's edge. (Yamaguchi 57)

The word "snow" allows readers to understand that the occurrences within the poem are taking place in winter. However, "snow" is also an object. Therefore, this singular word identifies both the time of year and the object. This is evidence that objects and times of the year can be represented through the usage of a single *kigo*. Through the same set of words, this *kigo* also embodies every feeling that could be associated with winter: loneliness, silence, beauty, whiteness, coldness, and many others. In this example, we can see how useful *kigo* are to a haiku. *Kigo* are essential to the haiku moment and help capture that experience within its brevity. For a poet like Gary Snyder, whose writings are characterized by simplicity and succinctness, haiku serve as a foundational influence.

To illustrate further, there are other *kigo* which are not as inclusive of every element, but still exemplify the object, time, or place. Because *kigo* are versatile, they can be utilized as in the previous haiku to indicate multiple elements or as the shell in which to contain them all. One such haiku by Bashō reads:

On a withered bough

A crow alone is perching;

Autumn evening now. (Yasuda 41)

The *kigo* is obvious but is not introduced until the last line of the haiku. How then do we interpret the object, time, or place unless we read the entire poem? Yasuda gave us an exemplary breakdown of this piece, showing the first line as the *where*, the second line as the *what*, and the third line as the *when* (Yasuda 41). While the *kigo* is "Autumn," or "Autumn evening," it acts as a protective shell, encasing the whole of all three elements of object, time, and place, limiting their reach into other seasons. There are other poems where "withered bough" could specifically be a *kigo* to indicate winter, but in this haiku, it is the location of focus. As the poem leads into the second line, the poet zooms in upon the crow which is the object of focus. Finally, within the last line, the time is sealed as the poem comes full circle. Each word narrows the pathway of focus and then zooms back outward until the entirety of the experience is recorded. This gives the reader a panoramic view of the moment. As Yasuda stated, "the 'where, what, and when' then are the properties which constitute that experience…[.] Without them the experience cannot be fully realized, nor can a haiku moment be created completely" (Yasuda 41). The power of haiku is the effectiveness of the objects, times, and places in embodying the *kigo* and the entirety of the haiku moment.

Other *kigo* retain a cultural significance and specific knowledge of Japanese traditions is necessary. A more difficult piece to decipher is this one by Bashō:

> Glorious the moon…
>
> Therefore our thanks
>
> Dark clouds
>
> Come to rest our necks. (Beilenson 19)

The *kigo* within this piece is the singular word “moon,” which is symbolic of Autumn because it is traditionally the Japanese moon-viewing season. I picture a person, exhausted, relieved, content to rest after a hard day’s work, finding comfort in the night clouds while gazing at the full moon and drifting off to sleep. There is so much more that can be seen once the *kigo* is uncovered.

Buson’s haiku is especially enjoyable to analyze because it paints a picture with words. The *kigo* within his poetry provide a clear image within a painting, a subtle detail that draws the eye, or a frame that enhances the rest of the moment. The following poem is authored by Buson:

In the rains of spring

An umbrella and raincoat

Pass by, conversing. (Yasuda 75)

The “rains of spring” is the compound *kigo*, but the more interesting part is how the rest of the piece is drawn beneath it. This *kigo* is one of those aforementioned frames, which enhances the celestial phenomenon and surrounds the figures conversing. It is difficult not to picture an umbrella and a raincoat floating past in a spring shower, discussing topics of life or love. The first line even acts as the rain falling around the rest of the poem (Yasuda 76).

As previously shown, many *kigo* are relatively easy to detect because they illustrate the time of year by using the name of the season. Another such example is this piece by Shiki which makes an apparent seasonal reference:

Long the Summer day…

Patterns on

The ocean sand…

Our idle footprints. (Qtd. in Beilenson 39)

"Summer day" is the compound *kigo* within this haiku, and immediately, this poem is given context and feelings that would otherwise be missed. Heat, relief from the coolness of the ocean currents, the feeling of feet in wet sand, and a long walk along the shore are all possible inferences within this poem. Beyond the categories of *kigo* are limitless usages for these seasonal words where time, places, objects, seasons, images, emotions, experiences, attitude, and life are only the beginning

Once haiku found its way into the hands of Western writers, controversies arose with authors arguing the legitimacy of haiku as literature. Elizabeth Lamb, Harold Henderson, R. H. Blyth, and Kenneth Yasuda are among the many poets and scholars who have written on both the English-language haiku and composed their own poems. Several have stood by the Japanese aesthetic within traditional haiku and its transference into the English language. Some have raised opinions, such as haiku are psychological or experiential poems, or that haiku required specific motivations or observations (Brooks 57-8). Some researchers, like Tom Lynch and Bruce Ross, describe haiku as poetry of exploration, nature, and "a poetry that attempts to see, feel, smell, taste, touch the world anew, and to transmit those sensations" (Brooks 58). Robert Blyth, R. H. Blyth's son, however, made a paradoxical claim that haiku is not literature. His statement contradicts itself with its poetic affluence:

> A haiku is not a poem, it is not literature: it is a hand beckoning, a door half-opened, a mirror wiped clean. It is a way of returning to nature, to our moon

> nature, our cherry blossom nature, our falling leaf nature, in short, our Buddha nature. 5 (Qtd. in Record 97)

It is ambiguous to state that haiku is not a poem, even though it encompasses characteristics that a poem embodies. Although this statement seems to speak out against haiku, the profundity lies beneath Robert Blyth's poetic refute. His father, R. H. Blyth, lived not only to compose his own haiku, but he was also able to write six books on the poetic form. Both R. H. Blyth and his son, Robert, were clearly knowledgeable about haiku and enjoyed the artistic thrill of its composition. Two facts remain the same: 1) the significance of the historical and literary relevance of Japanese haiku and 2) the development and continued existence of the English haiku. The form of the haiku is transforming and living on within American and English-language literature. Authors and scholars are considering, discussing, researching, and investigating the many components of haiku, and therefore, are giving it a form of eternal life.

From Bashō to Shiki to the Imagists, every component and principle that haiku have gained has been a transformational journey. The English-language or American haiku is no exception as it is a direct descendent of the Japanese haiku. According to van den Huevel, quoted by Kodama, "'Haiku in English got its real start in the fifties'" (Qtd. in Kodama 166). Overlooking the largest difference, which is the language barrier, English haiku can be chaotically unorganized. They lack the majority of the previously discussed principles and aesthetics and incorporate an openness that is unlike the double meanings originally crafted in Japanese haiku. Yasuda believes that three of the largest reasons for misconceptions around haiku in the West are the "enormous difficulties of the Japanese language…the preconceived ideas of what poetry 'should be'…[and] the

Western mind itself, in large part, has come to devalue poetry" (Yasuda 178). Many of the qualities within English-language haiku are unconventional by Japanese standards. Boldness, hostility in nature, wildness, and directness are all American traits that have carried over into poetry. However, American haiku poets do have three things in common according to Kodama: "most write in three [lines]. They present concrete images in utmost concentration [and] They are likely to be suggestive and pithy" (Kodama 169). Knowing the obstacles that hinder haiku composition in the English language is the first step to overcoming them.

Haiku have accumulated personality, individuality, and independence through the transitions over hundreds of years. Japanese haiku and English haiku vary greatly within their composition and content, but their core elements are inherently similar, for one originated from the other. It almost makes them seem "human," as humanity is also a culmination of past, present, and future, developing what is known now and continuously changing. Because of increasingly progressive translating capabilities, as well as further research in the areas of haiku aesthetics in regard to the Western world, haiku are solidifying their presence even more within English-speaking literary circles. Specifically, Gary Snyder has developed the ability to compose poetry that embodies many of the elements and principles that a haiku should contain. Seasonal references, Zen aesthetics, haiku moments, and life experiences are all essential elements within haiku. These can be seen within Snyder's poetry. These influences, as well as his engagement with Japanese language, culture, and religion, are evident in Snyder's life and works.

Chapter 3: Gary Snyder, Zen Buddhism, and the Natural World

Born in Sacramento, California in 1930, Gary Snyder was raised within a family of outdoorsmen, worked on the farm, and frequented the woods of the Sierra Nevada mountains (Welch, "Honorary"). Growing up within nature influenced his writings, as did his early attraction to Zen Buddhism. Snyder's mother raised him atheist, as she had grown weary with the church and religion. Nevertheless, Snyder did attend Lutheran and other Christian services on occasion, encouraged by his parents, who thought it would be a good cultural experience. However, Snyder stated in an interview with Bilbro:

> But I ran into difficulties when we had a heifer that died and I talked about it in Sunday school and said, "Well, will my little cow go to heaven?" And the guy said, "No." I said, "Oh no, I can't handle that." So, I didn't ever go back. A few years later, somewhere, I stumbled onto something in a popular magazine that just said that in Buddhism the idea of, "Thou shalt not take life" extends to all living beings, not just human beings. And I thought, "Oh, that's what I'm looking for." (Bilbro 434)

Interestingly, the simplicity of this one experience helped define a large part of Snyder's life, which is reflected in his writings. There is honesty in simplicity. Snyder, as a child, could not bear the thought of never seeing his heifer again. This realization helped shape the form of Snyder's future poetry.

Snyder enrolled in Reed College in Portland, Oregon, in 1947, where he delved more deeply into the concepts of Buddhism (Bilbro 434). While in college, Snyder studied Chinese history and poetry, as well as Native American religion and anthropology. However, Snyder's interest in Zen Buddhism grew and his desire to study

in Japan intensified. This can be accredited to Snyder's independent study of Zen and his roommate, Philip Whalen, who was also quite interested in Zen Buddhism (Kodama 155). Whalen attended Reed after WWII, studying the humanities and writing poetry reflecting Zen Buddhism and Latin classicism. Whalen would also later become renowned for his participation in the San Francisco Renaissance and as a Beat generation poet. Snyder and Whalen both graduated from Reed in 1951 and would temporarily part ways (Falk 210).

After graduating, Snyder returned to the wilderness to be a firefighter, then as a lookout (Welch, "Honorary"). He typically brought several books with him up the mountains, not simply to pass the time but to enjoy the time with nature. Snyder would cook for himself, practice meditation and Chinese calligraphy, and spend much time examining the mountain landscape (Bilbro 433). Snyder felt at home and received additional confirmation of his life's path on these mountains. His love for hiking extended into the rest of his life, and he regularly wrote about the mountain spaces in North America. One of the many volumes he carried up the mountains were the newly written compositions by R.H. Blyth. Gary Snyder stated, "I discovered the four-volume set of haiku translations by R.H. Blyth that now we all know so well. Reading the four Blyth volumes gave me my first clear sense of the marvelous power of haiku" (Snyder, "The Path"). R. H. Blyth also published studies specifically on the relationship of Buddhism and haiku. Within these studies, Blyth describes his own views on Buddhism as well as his experiences. Blyth held haiku in such high regard that he believed that "Buddhism and haiku, taking haiku as representing the national character of the Japanese

as expressed in 17 syllables" (Blyth 312). This statement gives haiku great power and Snyder recognized this fact.

The poets Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams also influenced Snyder during these earlier years. The Imagist principles, including Williams's concept of "No ideas but in things," were ones that Snyder incorporated into his own poetry and can be seen in his direct style (Kodama 174). Pound's fascination with Eastern art, including haiku, also made a lasting impression on Snyder. These fascinations shaped the aesthetics of renowned poets like T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, H.D., T.E. Hulme, and William Yeats. Poetry that has freedom of subject and clarity of language are also common characteristics in Snyder's works. In one of the stanzas from "Eight Sandbars on the Takano River," Snyder writes:

> Well water
>
> cool in
>
> summer
>
> warm in
>
> winter. (*The Back Country* 44)

The style and clarity are reminiscent of Williams' poem, "The Red Wheelbarrow":

> so much depends
>
> upon
>
> a red wheel
>
> barrow
>
> glazed with rain
>
> water

beside the white

chickens. (Ramazani 294-5)

These two poems by Snyder and Williams, respectively, reflect the Imagist principles as well as Bashō's principles of *sabi*, *wabi*, and *karumi*. Both employ bold imagery, with Williams's piece being slightly more striking because of the stark focus on the bright colors of white and red and their associations with specific items. However, the loneliness and tranquility concealing the profundity in Snyder's poem are more pronounced. Snyder's poem, while lacking the bold imagery, gives a broader scope of the water as a constantly changing entity. The water is the only one of its kind, consistently shifting with the seasons and relying upon no one and nothing to do so. Snyder's poem gives the water its own identity and free will while Williams's poem assigns characteristics to the subjects in focus

Solidifying his connections with English-language haiku and Zen, while researching the ancient Japanese art of haiku, Snyder began creating free-formed versions of similar poetry. His topics and style mirrored the Imagist theories, as seen above, incorporating subjects of nature with clear imagery, juxtaposition, and compact phrasing that granted Snyder's poems a likeness to haiku. By 1952, Snyder had familiarized himself with the Imagist's idea of haiku as a short, compact yet expressive poem, as well as many of their reproductions of haiku-like poetry (Kodama 174). Snyder eventually pursued a higher degree of education in Eastern languages and culture, thereby expanding his knowledge into Zen, Japanese language, and haiku composition.

Whalen's friendship with Snyder was solid despite the time apart and they both moved to Berkley in 1953 to further their studies (Welch, "Honorary"). Snyder and

Whalen lived together, and Snyder chose to become a graduate student at the University of California, Berkley, furthering his studies in East Asian Languages and literatures instead of anthropology. Snyder analyzed Chinese poetry with Dr. Chen Shih-hsiang, translated Chinese Zen poetry written by Han-shan/Kanzen, and studied Japanese under Dr. Donald Shively (Snyder "The Path"). Snyder claimed that "Through Dr. Shively I got to know the formidable American Buddhist scholar Ruth F. Sasaki …[.] She offered to help me get to Kyoto, saying that it would deepen my knowledge of Japanese" (Snyder, "The Path"). Snyder was offered a scholarship to study Zen Buddhism in Japan and Ruth Sasaki financially backed his studies.

Shortly before he moved to Kyoto in 1956, Snyder and Whalen became associated with other authors within the Beat generation. Kenneth Rexroth, Robert Duncan, Jack Spicer, Allen Ginsberg, and Jack Kerouac, along with Whalen and Snyder, all formed a close comradery. In his poems, Snyder often referenced his fellow Beat poets:

> A certain poet, needling
>
> Allen Ginsberg by the campfire
>
> "How come they all love *you?*" (*Danger on Peaks* 35)

This poem reflects a small portion of Snyder's relationships with the Beat Generation writers. Snyder was present in 1956 for the epic reading of Ginsberg's *Howl* and was very close friends with Kerouac and Ginsberg (Kerouac 16). They were all hiking buddies, which can be confirmed in one of Kerouac's publications. Because Snyder was an integral part of the Beat Movement, many of his interactions garnered inspiration for other works of art. Kerouac published a novel, *The Dharma Bums,* in which he used

Snyder as his main character inspiration (Ramazani 535). Within the book, Snyder is known as "Japhy Ryder," and is described as the Zen poet. In his introduction, Kerouac makes statements like "I need Gary's way now" and "I need some of your [Snyder's] gaity and natural bikkhu openness" (Kerouac 23). Throughout the book, Kerouac personifies Snyder as an instructor, "the embodiment of the truest, least self-serving form of American optimism" (Kerouac 22). Kerouac recounts the many occasions when Snyder instructed him in the art and composition of haiku poetry. Therefore, Snyder was not only influenced by authors like Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Whalen, but Snyder influenced their lives as well. Snyder's intentions were grounded in his own engagement with East Asian religion and culture. This allowed him to produce a type of poetry that connected mankind and nature, human nature and the wild. The results are bold imagery, concise thoughts, and a bonding appreciation for haiku aesthetics. The foundation of Snyder's inspirations includes his exposure to nature and haiku, his studies in East Asian languages, Zen Buddhism, and his experiences with his poetic companions.

In 1956, Gary Snyder embarked on a journey to Kyoto, Japan, to study Zen Buddhism and Japanese poetry. At the recommendation of Ruth Sasaki, he traveled to a temple in Kyoto called Rinkō-in and found tutelage under Isshu Miura. While there, he cleaned, cooked, hiked, and perused the old documents of Zen masters (Kodama 178). Snyder also picked up some new hobbies, such as wood carving, wherein he discovered further enlightenment and "the kind of peace of mind he could not find in the Western world" (Kodama 180). He would also travel to India and Nepal, but Snyder always made it back to Japan. These experiences elevated the level of poetic finesse found within many of the publications he produced during his time in Japan.

Snyder also spent much time researching Japanese literature, learning the language, and absorbing historical works of poetry from the *Man'yōshū,* the *Kokinshū,* and the *Nihonshoki*. This included the writings of Bashō, Buson, Ōtomo no Yakamochi, Tanikawa Shuntarō, Ōoka Makoto, and Sakaki Nanao, as well as Masaoka Shiki and the Shiki translations by Dr. Burton Watson (Kodama 183). Snyder became enthralled specifically with Shiki's works, stating:

> Though I had read translations of Shiki before, it was Dr. Watson's versions of Shiki published by Columbia University Press in 1997 that enabled me to fully appreciate him. Janine Beichman wrote *Masaoka Shiki: His Life and Works*, first published in 1982, but I didn't read Beichman's book until after my exciting exposure to Shiki through Dr. Watson. We English/American language speakers are fortunate to have these two excellent books to give us access to a man who was a giant in the world of haiku poetry. (Snyder, "The Path")

Snyder's fascination with Shiki's poetry further fueled his writing aspirations. But Shiki was not the only poet whom Snyder respected. Bashō's spiritual and classical compositions and Buson's literary imagery also played key roles in Snyder's poetic progression. Snyder himself claimed that both Bashō and Buson were earlier influences before he published his book *Mountains and Rivers without End* in 1966 (Wenzel). Among the many things learned while in Japan, "haiku was 'a convenient poetic form for the young and developing poet Snyder.' It blended his interest in Zen and the Orient" (Qtd. in Kodama 175). While it was convenient, haiku poetry fit well into Snyder's repertoire and continued to do so throughout his literary career.

Between 1955 and 1969, Snyder traveled back and forth between the United States and Japan multiple times. However, the effects of his stay in Japan were prominent, specifically the influences of Zen and haiku. In his poetry, Snyder frequently revisited Japan and the Eastern cultures. On one such trip to Kyoto, Snyder married his first wife, Joanne Kyger, in 1960 (Kodama 193). In 1964, he began teaching literature at the University of California, Berkley, but, shortly thereafter, he returned to Japan to study Buddhism of the Mahayana-Vajrayana school (Ramazani 535). In 1966, after his recent separation from his first wife, he met and fell in love with a Japanese woman, Uehara Masa, who was a student at Kobe University. In August 1967, they were married on the tip of an active volcano and, soon after, Masa became pregnant. They had a son named Kai and moved back to America in 1968 (Kodama 193-95).

By this time, Gary Snyder was famous within American society and had published four books of poetry. In the coming years, he would write several more books and, in 1975, won a Pulitzer Prize for his book *Turtle Island* (Kodama 196). Kodama writes, “In those works after he left Japan can be traced not only the Japanese influence but Snyder’s mature fusion of the Buddhist ideas and the Western literary tradition” (Kodama 196). Once Snyder had a family and a home base, he studied haiku within the Western environment. In 1986, Snyder joined the faculty at the University of California, Davis, where he taught until his recent retirement (Ramazani 535). Snyder sought to write poetry reflecting haiku aesthetics, containing different topics of nature, wilderness, and the wild. In a speech given in 2004 after receiving the Masaoka Shiki International Haiku Grand Prize, Snyder stated:

> Honoring the haiku sensibility, I look for what would be the seasonal signals, *kigo*, in our Mediterranean middle-elevation Sierra Mountain landscape. What xeric aromatic herbs and flowers, what birds, what weather signals, will we find? They are different from Japan. (Snyder, "The Path")

His worldview broadened with time and his Buddhist beliefs expanded into what Kodama calls "the Mahayana love of every existence on 'this planet'" (Kodama 198). Much of Snyder's poetry published after 1969 became more focused on pollution, destruction of nature, and his lamentations that "the USA … never gave the mountains and rivers, /trees and animals, / a vote" (Qtd in Kodama 197). Snyder decided to become the voice for parts of the earth that had not been given a choice. Snyder's love for all life is strongly echoed within both his older poetry as well as the ones more recently published. This can be traced back to his childhood decision that Zen Buddhism contained what he sought, a love and respect for all life.

Snyder's concentration on environmental issues did not begin, though, until after his son was born. Snyder's environmental awareness had always been present, and he has always held affection and respect for all life. In 1956, when sailing for Japan, Snyder stated: "I began to perceive that maybe it was all of Western culture that was off the track and not just capitalism—that there were certain self-destructive tendencies in our cultural tradition" (Kodama 178). Perhaps having children and a family made him even more conscious of the world as it will become rather than only the world or "as nature is itself" (Ramazani 535). This is a direct result of his practices and studies in Zen and his exposure to Eastern culture and haiku. In an interview exchange, Gary Snyder made an extremely bold claim:

> Bilbro: In *Back on the Fire*, someone asked you if you thought poetry could change the world, and you said, “Ha!”
>
> Snyder: And that’s a real Zen “Ha!” It means, “Yes,” and, “Are you kidding?” (Bilbro 439)

This single comment holds big aspirations on a global scale. However, Zen itself is a practice of harmony, unity, peace, pursuit of the egoless self, and respect for all life both human and sentient beings. Therefore, this statement no longer seems unattainable. Rather, it is profound and could be predicting another poetry revolution rivaling that of the Imagists or the Beat Generation.

Gary Snyder, as a poet, a human being, a Zen Buddhist, and a father, is an inspirational and humble individual. Even after years of poetic fame, Snyder remains modest regarding his work. He does not use the term “success” in his responses, although he has been awarded and recognized by many as such. He radiates contentment and fulfillment in his life through activist work, poetic composition, and existing within nature as part of nature. Aspects of his life permeate his poetry, primarily his haiku-like compositions and shorter poems. According to Yamazato, “Snyder’s quest continues into the present: it by no means ended as he completed a cross-cultural circle” (Yamazato 163). It is no wonder that the Zen concepts are so heavily prevalent within his works. Snyder once called himself the “Buddhist poet,” stating that the connection between religion and poetry can be described by the Zen Master Dōgen: "We Study the Self to forget the Self. When you forget the Self, you become one with the entire phenomenal world" (Wenzel). Bashō was also a practitioner of Zen, as previously discussed, and his poetry was heavily pronounced and identified through the spiritual elements within. This

is not to say that the single commonality between Snyder and Bashō is their beliefs in Zen or Zen aesthetics within haiku. The historical phenomena of poetic principles that have been passed down from the centuries have trickled into the hands of Snyder. Bashō's original *sabi*, *wabi*, and *karumi* and the Zen aesthetics, Buson's emphasis on imagery, Shiki's three requirements of a haiku, the Imagist theories, and Yasuda's breakdown of haiku attitude, experience, and moment have much in common. Gary Snyder has received inspiration from his many predecessors, and his poetry has rightly earned him a place among the most renowned modern American writers.

Snyder places his existence within the poetry that he writes, which is symbolic of the haiku experience and attitude. That readiness to experience the world as it is rather than subjecting the experience to expectations seems to be a specialty of Snyder's. However, in an interview with Wenzel in 2007, Snyder claimed, "I have never called my brief poems 'haiku' except in certain rare cases where a brief poem met what I felt were the key aesthetic requirements of a top-quality haiku — which means among other things, freedom from ego" (Wenzel). This reflects his deep respect for haiku as a Japanese art form, as well as his respect for the masters who developed the form. This respect is also manifested in the words of Bashō as quoted by Yasuda: "He who creates three to five haiku poems during his lifetime is a haiku poet. He who attains to ten is a master" (Yasuda 25). These words resonate throughout history to all who seek to attain the accomplishment of writing a haiku because it sets a standard. Snyder, in particular, seems to view haiku with a Zen perspective. Journeying to enlightenment does not seem to be as important as being present and experiencing the moments that occur during the journey. This contradiction in combination with the artistic aesthetics of haiku, its rich history, its

cultural heritage, and its nature-focus seems to comprise what a haiku should be from Snyder's perspective.

Haiku are not haiku simply because of *kigo* or the syllabic rhythm. Haiku encompass history, a moment of clarity, the unity of human nature and the natural world, and the amount of an experience that can be exhaled in a single breath. Snyder was drawn to the depth and simplicity of haiku and so, when composing poetry in its likeness, he sought to do so with the utmost proficiency. Therefore, it can be assumed that through detailed analysis and examination, the aesthetics of haiku and their *kigo* can also be found within the poetry of Gary Snyder.

Chapter 4: Haiku Analyses and Snyder's Poetic Aesthetics

The influence of haiku on English-language poetry runs deep. This section examines the unique qualities that set haiku apart from other artforms through analyses of Gary Snyder's poetry. Many artists have sought to compose haiku, further developing different facets, aesthetics, and attributes exclusive to the form. Snyder has carved out a distinctive place among better-known names. His poetry reflects the depth of his Zen studies and Japanese influences, but even more so it reflects the respect Snyder holds for the earth and haiku itself. His poetry possesses just as much profundity and elegance as many of the Imagists and Beat generation poets. All poets have characteristics that set them apart from each other. Oftentimes, these differences allow their similarities to become more noticeable through analysis. Snyder is no exception. If taken through the steps of analysis, Snyder's poetry not only reveals the aesthetics of a haiku but also potential *kigo* not previously found within English-language haiku.

Snyder has published many books of poetry throughout his career, but I will be focusing on poetry from two specific collections. The first collection, titled *The Back Country,* was published in 1971. Many of the poems within this book were written over the course of several years, mainly between the 1950s and 60s, before, during, and after Snyder traveled to and throughout Japan. The contents are dedicated to Kenneth Rexroth and organized in a timeline, framing Snyder's travels (*The Back Country* 2). Snyder also includes a poem by Bashō on the same page as his dedication to Rexroth, symbolizing his reverence for the works of Bashō among other Japanese authors. The second collection, titled *Danger on Peaks,* was published in 2004. Snyder begins this collection with pieces that describe his first ascent of Mount St. Helens on August 13, 1945 (*Danger on Peaks*

9). This was the same day Snyder discovered that atomic bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. His heart mourned greatly for the destroyed cities and the more than 150,000 dead. Snyder made a promise that day, with anger and rage toward the powers of governments and politicians: "By the purity and beauty and permanence of Mt. St. Helens, I will fight against this cruel destructive power and those who would seek to use it, for all my life" (*Danger on Peaks* 9). This collection proves to be powerful and intimate, containing pieces that draw out the reader's emotive responses. My analyses examine the progression of Snyder's poetry over this extended span of time.

Snyder's poetry evinces aesthetic qualities of beauty, simplicity, and depth. After careful consideration, I have selected several pieces from each collection that mirror haiku aesthetics and contain potential English *kigo*. This first piece will begin the sequence of seasonal references, revealing not only qualities of the haiku, but also Zen concepts and echoing principles from the Japanese masters. The following poem by Snyder comes from the 2004 publication, *Danger on Peaks*, and is titled "Dent in a Bucket":

Hammering a dent out of a bucket

a woodpecker

answers from the woods. (26)

The first pieces of information to identify are the object, time, and place, or the *when*, *what*, and *where*. Looking closely, the simplest way to determine this is to pose them as a series of three questions, "When? What? Where?" The answers become apparent because only certain parts of this poem fit into those missing pieces of the puzzle. *When* the individual was "Hammering a dent out of a bucket…a [*what*] woodpecker…[*where*]

answers from the woods" (26). Therefore, the object, time, and place have been revealed and even separated by the lines within the poem. The existence of object, time, and place is one of the poem's first attributes that pays homage to the haiku.

Additional aesthetics of haiku lie within the way this poem is framed in imagery and how it builds in intricacy. The juxtaposition of the bucket and the woodpecker raises a startling contrast yet calls upon the similarities they might share. Both are products of nature, one animate and the other inanimate. Despite its formation by human hands into an article meant as a tool, it seems that the bucket still "remembers" its time as part of the earth. It calls to the earth, and the forest answers. This concept is also comparable to Bashō's Japanese principles of *sabi, wabi*, and *karumi*, though I would argue that *wabi* is the most personified despite the poem containing signs of all three. The *sabi* and *wabi* qualities of "simplicity and elegance in daily life" and the "tranquility in the midst of loneliness" permeate the poem (Record 34). The bucket is lonely and calls to the forest, and the woodpecker, searching for companionship, echoes the loneliness of the bucket. The object, time, and place exemplify a personality with feelings of longing within solitude. Then, in the last two lines, we are granted a glimpse of contentment as the forest responds to this hollow echo, creating a "lightness" with complexity (Record 34). This lightness takes form in the initiated feelings of relief in the midst of loneliness, bringing the reader a small amount of comfort. These emotions of first solitude and longing, transforming into contentment and companionship is a bittersweet happy ending. The poem presents the object, time, and place as it is, in that singular moment, leaving the reader with a sense of epiphany, the realization that, while the bucket and woodpecker

feel temporarily connected, the tranquility will exist only within the moment of this poem.

This realization of false companionship is also tied to the potential seasonal element within the poem. After careful research and investigation into the North American environment, I read “woodpecker” as the potential *kigo* of the poem. Woodpeckers that are native to the Sierra Nevada mountains are usually active during spring, summer, and fall, searching for food, nesting, and mating. However, closer inspection of this poem leads me to believe that it references spring. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,

> Woodpeckers peck into trees in search of food or to create a nesting site. They also "drum," or peck in a rapid rhythmic succession to establish their territory and attract mates. Drumming usually occurs in the spring on metal or wood resonant surfaces. (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

The woodpecker in this poem seems to be responding to the echo of the hammer as a mating call. This one assumption combined with the diligence of fixing something that is damaged, the call of the bucket longing for its origins, and the woodpecker searching for its mate give a beautiful picture of the unity of man, animals, and nature. There are also hidden Japanese influences within the concept of brokenness and repair. Repairing damaged items is also a Japanese art form called *kintsugi*, or *kintsukuroi*, which translates into “golden joinery/golden repair.” It is symbolic, and Carnazzi writes that “[a broken item] becomes even more refined thanks to its ‘scars’. The Japanese art of *kintsugi* teaches that broken objects are not something to hide but to display with pride”

("Kintsugi"). Combining this Japanese philosophy with the previous analysis, one can see that Japanese culture has rooted deeply within Snyder's poetry.

Snyder's respect for nature is clearly expressed within his poems, which are also oxymorons. Snyder's poems contain treasures of insight combined with an objective perspective. This next piece by Snyder is a poem taken from *The Back Country* and is included in a poetic sequence of short poems called "Hitch Haiku." It appears to be more aligned with the current times, maneuvering into the realm of modern society, while also containing the profundity of a Zen practitioner. The poem has no title, and is as follows:

Steering into the sun

glittering jewel-road

shattered obsidian. (26)

In this poem, the haiku elements and seasonal references are slightly less evident. The easiest principles to identify are the object, time, and place. This does not necessarily make the *kigo* more apparent or determine the seasonal setting, but it does allow the reader to see the haiku similarities. The *when*, *where*, and *what* are once again separated by line and will fill the questions asked for the earlier analysis. *When* "Steering into the sun," the "[*where*] glittering jewel-road" gave the appearance of "[*what*] shattered obsidian" (26). Snyder juxtaposes the road and a beautiful stone, creating a bright and stark transition that is similar to the relationship between the bucket and the woodpecker of the previous poem. This contrasting parallel, again, combines the elements of the natural world and the human nature of modernity and machines. This trait seems to be unique to Snyder's poetry and is more pronounced in some of his later pieces. The reasoning may lie within Snyder's elevated perception of environmental destruction and

the integration of mankind with the natural world. Or it may also be the Japanese influences of Zen and the heightened awareness of having familial responsibilities shared with the reality of aging. It seems likely that all of these explanations play a role in Snyder's poetry.

The subjects and objects within the poem are closely intertwined. This road contains an identity that is unified with the stones of the earth and vice versa. This relates back to the earlier statement that the subject and object cannot exist without one another (Yasuda 13). They are one, object and subject, and the road seemingly is created with an understanding of its ancestry. The road still shines in the rays of the sun, like its forefathers that came from the earth. This objective description is more pronounced because of Snyder's Zen beliefs. It allows him to view the world as it is, in this moment, without placing human expectations upon what the road should be, what it should do, or how it should act. This poem presents the road as its own entity without the participation of human interaction. Rather, we are offered a glimpse of an observer who can confirm the personification of "the road" as a separate entity with individual identity. These qualities embody both Shiki's concepts of haiku in objective description and Yasuda's explanation of the haiku attitude and experience, birthing the "haiku moment."

Drawing from this information and taking on a Western perspective, one can more easily determine the seasonal references. The appearance of the road, the glittering jewels, and the reflection of the sun on the obsidian asphalt suggests the season of summer. The heat waves and sparkle of the pavement give off a mirage of sorts, creating a stunning, timeless path of solid black gemstones. The potential *kigo* in this piece is the word "obsidian," not because of its uniqueness but because of what it embodies.

According to the *Geoscience News and Information* site, "Obsidian is an igneous rock that forms when molten rock material cools…[.] The result is a volcanic glass with a smooth uniform texture" (*Geoscience*). This discovery of the relationship between the obsidian, the road, and the heat that was once contained within the stone recalls the heat of summer. The road reflects a molten path of glass that was once lava within a volcano. Obsidian is a special type of rock, as it is classified as glass, and is considered to be unstable and dissolves much faster than other stones. Its life is shorter than the rest of the earth, so it appears as the mirage of shattered glass in the heat of summer and is gone with the changing of the seasons. Within the United States, obsidian is rarely found east of the Mississippi River because there are no recent active volcanos there. Its home lies within the western states, including Arizona, Nevada, California, and New Mexico (*Geoscience*). Because Snyder has spent so much time in the Sierra Mountains, as well as many of the other western states, obsidian likely would be a common occurrence in his travels.

In summary, this early poem exemplifies principles exclusive to haiku. The simplicity of Zen aesthetics, the objective description and juxtaposition from Shiki, the inclusions of object, time, and place, and the reference of seasonal elements all lead to the same conclusion. Despite the lack of the syllabic rhythm of 5-7-5, which is necessary in Japanese-language haiku, this poem can be called a haiku written in the English language.

Gary Snyder has also written poems that contain alternate meanings with misleading circumstances. Snyder's pieces retain a freedom of subject matter, sometimes bordering the vulgar or offensive. This poem is no exception, with its morbid inferences

and realistic imagery. The seasons are also cleverly integrated into his poems and are not always obvious. The following piece is slightly more complex, and its seasonal reference is not as easily revealed. It is titled “Cool Clay” and comes from Snyder’s collection, *Danger on Peaks*:

> In a swarm of yellowjackets
>
> a squirrel drinks water
>
> feet in the cool clay, head way down. (28)

At first glance, this poem does not appear to have much in common with a haiku. First, the Imagist principles are more evident, especially regarding the new rhythms, the clear language, and the presentation of the images (Ramazani 198). The language is unambiguous and accessible to the average reader. The squirrel drinking water, swarming yellowjackets, and the cool clay are presented as crisp images that are well-known to most American readers. The rhythm exists in a free verse pattern rather than the traditional haiku 5-7-5 rhythm. Despite its prominent Imagist qualities containing simple language and creating an image, this poem still retains haiku form because of its similarities with Shiki’s juxtaposition and objective description, and Bashō’s *sabi*, *wabi*, and *karumi*. The contrast of the yellowjackets and the lone squirrel, represents a fight for survival, and the emotions of sadness, fear, frustration, and even anger that result are all haiku characteristics resulting from Japanese influences.

Unlike the other poems previously discussed, the object, time, and place are not as apparent. The object, time, and place are not separated by stanza, but are conjoined throughout the entire piece. The *where* is “In a swarm of yellowjackets,” the *what* is the squirrel with its feet in cool clay and the *when* is the action of drinking the water (28).

The conjoining of these elements further demonstrates that the subject and object are unified within haiku and cannot be separate from each other (Yasuda 13). Nature can be considered a linked circle of life, whereas the relationship between the object and subject is also interconnected. This is inherently one of the many Zen aesthetics evident within this poem.

There is the "swarm of yellowjackets," "the squirrel drinking water," "the cool clay," and the "head way down" (28). Everything happening within the poem takes place within the swarm. The entire poem is encased within a constantly shifting legion of minds that work in unity to provide for the colony. This quality of consistent change seemingly reflects an asymmetric superficial appearance, randomizing the physical attributes of the swarm. Peering within the horde, the squirrel is a single, solitary opposing force. Not part of the swarm, yet within the swarm, the squirrel simultaneously exists and becomes one with its surroundings. The surreal action of drinking water in the midst of outward chaos creates an austere sublimity and a tranquility within loneliness that embodies the Zen concepts as seen within haiku. The "feet in cool clay" and "head way down" represent a grounding to the earth, connecting the sublimity and chaos full circle. Yellowjackets most often create their hives underground or near wooded areas. Therefore, the full circle seemingly echoes the Ensō of Buddhism. The Ensō "symbolism refers to the beginning and end of all things, the circle of life and the connectedness of existence. It can symbolize emptiness or fullness, presence or absence" (Ensō Circle). While the Ensō is not inherently Japanese, because of its relation to Buddhism and its heavy use in Japanese calligraphy, it can be considered part of the Japanese influences in this poem. At first glance, it is an incomplete circle. In relation to haiku, the Ensō is

similar to the haiku moment. According to Egen, the Ensō is a "manifestation of the moment, an expression of absolute enlightenment" (Ensō Circle). Within this poem, the moment exemplifies strength in loneliness and numbers simultaneously while allowing readers to revel in this singular moment of vulnerability.

So, where does the season fit into the aesthetics? Originally, I assumed the potential *kigo* in this poem was the compound phrase "swarm of yellowjackets" and represented the season of autumn. According to Animal Corner, yellowjackets are active during spring, summer, and autumn, building their colony, feeding the hive, supporting the queen, and fertilizing the eggs (Animal Corner). It is also relatively known that if a nest is disturbed, the yellowjackets communicate via smells to warn of danger, instigating a defense mechanism. Yellowjackets are carnivorous but are also known to have a sweet tooth. They frequently attack beehives for the honey and nectar that bees collect during the spring and summer months. However, during the months of September and October, they become particularly mean and desperate as winter approaches and the search for food becomes more difficult (Animal Corner).

Within this poem, the yellowjackets are specifically swarming the squirrel. This unfortunate squirrel seems to have stumbled upon the nest in its pursuit of a drink of water. The cool clay implies that temperatures may be dropping, but it is more likely that the squirrel is cooling himself within the clay. Squirrels do something known as splaying when the heat gets too bad, which brings their bodies in close contact with the coolest surface nearest to them. Furthermore, heat rises, and many animals who do not have sweat glands or efficient ways to cool themselves in the heat of summer will seek out other sources of relief. This is why hippos and pigs can be observed taking mud baths and

horses enjoy a good dust roll. The moisture from the mud evaporates at a much slower rate and carries away body heat along with it, sometimes decreasing body temperatures by as much as 3.6˚F (Greiling). Because of these findings, I have revised my original assumption of the potential *kigo* to be "cool clay" embodying the late summer months when the heat is at its peak.

This poem is sly in its morbidity, yet profound in its sublimity. The squirrel seeks out water and relief in the cool earth, disturbing the nest of yellowjackets. The yellowjackets proceed to swarm the poor squirrel in self-defense, but the squirrel still lowers its head to drink. This scenario evokes feelings of remorse, sorrow, and pity for the squirrel while simultaneously prompting feelings of anger or annoyance toward the yellowjackets. Even the emotions incited give off a muddled wave of summer heat, rage, and irritation. With its head way down, the squirrel becomes connected to the nest and the yellowjackets connect with the squirrel, wherein we see the manifestation of the Ensō circle. Nature's dark side comes full circle, personifying realism, life, and death within Zen concepts and the haiku moment. The combination of life within its natural environment, the circle of life and death, the symbolism of the Ensō, and the haiku characteristics through Zen aesthetics provoke reflection in the reader. The deliberate simplicity of Snyder's language disguises the depth and meaning within this poem, adding to its complexity. The retention of simplicity and complexity within the same poem is a classic characteristic of traditional haiku, and the cleverly hidden morbidity draws upon the modern concept of new, unexplored topics.

Thus far, we have delved into haiku that incite emotions of loneliness, anger, frustration, contentment, and awe. This next piece alternatively reflects feelings of joy,

playfulness, and trace amounts of sarcastic humor. The seasonal reference is also hidden among the stanzas, while within the lines are Japanese characteristics of double meanings, witty wordplay, and an entire haiku experience. The following is a poem from Snyder's collection "Hitch Haiku," contained in *The Back Country*:

Drinking hot saké

toasting fish on coals

the motorcycle

out parked in the rain. (26)

On first reading, this poem comes across as a detached statement from an observer. On second reading, I could feel the release of stress at finally enjoying a hot cup of saké at the end of a long journey. The smell of roasted fish and charcoal, and the gentle splashing of the rain outside would feel like a deep inhale and exhale of relaxation. The gentle, cool breeze that comes with smell of storms would hug my frame. The scene concludes with a slight bit of sarcastic humor at leaving the motorcycle out in the rain but enjoying the peace to the extent that there was no concern for the bike. These few words capture the haiku moment, reflected in a single drop of rain, segregated from the rest of the world. It is only I, saké in one hand, the other on my knee, breathing the scents of a hot meal and the rain, loving the sound of bells as the water gently patters against the motorcycle. This moment captures an objective perspective while creating a scene that brings the reader comfort, peace, and relatable humor.

One of the most noticeable traits is the layout of the lines, an inherently Western habit. The words are scattered haphazardly, yet purposeful. Each line contains another image, a part of the entire moment. As the poem is read, our eyes are drawn to the

variances automatically. The spacing attracts the focus of readers, enveloping them, allowing them to transition into the moment. The single word “out” that is off by itself triggers the sense of ironic amusement at the situation (26). This imagery, however, is reminiscent of Buson’s ability to paint pictures with words. The poem as a whole gives off an appearance of playfulness and joy, contentment in solitude, and acceptance. There is nothing to be done now that the motorcycle is out in the rain except enjoy the meal, the drink, and the respite. The images are provoked by clear language, forming them into a relatable experience, which is why the reader is swept away into the world, the haiku moment, that this poem builds.

Because of this poem’s similarities with Buson’s style, it also contains characteristics of the Imagist principle of “present[ing] an image” (Ramazani 927). The portrait captures the moment, incites various emotions of humor and sarcasm, and displays a scene of simple elegance. This suggests that the poem holds traces of Bashō’s tradition of *wabi*, where the reader accompanies the observer on a journey discovering the value of the immaterial (Record 34). The journey ends with a new beginning, an acceptance that life passes faster than a drop of rain on a motorcycle. This is a Japanese concept reflective of the previously discussed Zen aesthetic, where the “perceiver and the perceived are no longer distinguishable from one another” (Record 48). It seems that this poem contains a small portion of every haiku aesthetic, both Japanese and English influenced. This English-language haiku embodies a human identity with its culmination of past, present, and future forms.

Determining the season and the potential *kigo* of this poem is challenging. After much deliberation and research, I have concluded “coals” to be the potential *kigo* of this

poem, indicating the season of autumn. I have approached this assumption using Japanese language translation because of the innate characteristics of double meanings within traditional haiku. Because of Snyder's studies in Japanese language, it can be assumed that he understands the different meanings held within *kanji*. When translated back into the Japanese language, coal translates to *sekitan*. Comprised of two kanji, this word encases hidden meanings within its characters and radicals. The first kanji represents stone, but the second kanji contains different radicals, or parts, that mean various things such as mountain, ashes, fire, and puckery juice. Puckery juice is exactly what it sounds like: a juice that has bitter or sour qualities. The continuation of the irony is laughable because saké was typically heated under two conditions. The first is during the colder seasons, and the second is because it removes the bitter taste of poor-quality alcohol. It is unlikely that the rider in this poem would bring high-quality sake on a motorcycle journey. This also suggests the surrounding temperatures were dropping, as coal was a common tool for cooking and heating various things, as well as creating wordplay. Haiku written in the original Japanese language often incorporated double or cryptic meanings within the kanji used. This would create a concealed message meant for the reader to uncover. While this haiku is written in English, it is my theory that Snyder may be utilizing double meanings expressed in Japanese.

As a geological element, according to the USGS, coal is defined as "a sedimentary deposit composed predominantly of carbon that is readily combustible" (USGS). It has been and is a necessity for cooking, transportation, factory operations, keeping warm in colder months, and trade. Coal combines traditional and modernistic elements. It is a word that represents both its uses for basic human needs and its uses in

more recent technology and trade. It unifies the past, when the Japanese would historically utilize this substance for heating and cooking, and the present, where both Japanese and Westerners utilize it for modern purposes. Merging the identity of the coal with its deeper elements also reveals the season. Coal is not simply comprised of carbon. The USGS website states that "[Coal] is formed from plant remains that have been compacted, hardened, chemically altered, and metamorphosed by heat and pressure over geologic time" (USGS). In this poem, the heat of summer has passed, the lives of the trees and plants are sinking into hibernation, and the leaves are dying. Nature has been compressed and worn, starting its phase of transformation. The world is entering its autumn slumber, preparing to outlast winter, and greet a new beginning in the spring. The progression of the poem acts out the timeline of the seasons, ending with the hope for death to feed new life.

This final piece observes the opposite side to hope and humor, evoking emotions that are slightly more bleak but no less beautiful. It is seemingly tied to the previous analysis, where there is hope for new life in death. But this poem encompasses feelings that are more contradictory in nature. It incorporates elements that coincide with traditional and non-traditional themes and compositions, specifically regarding the seasonal reference. This poem was also taken from the collection, *The Back Country*, and is also contained within the series of poems, "Hitch Haiku:"

Stray white mare

neck rope dangling

forty miles from farms. (25)

Within the collection, Snyder states that this poem was written on "A freezing morning in October in the high Sierra" (25). However, despite the obvious seasonal clue, there are several other elements that dictate this poem's haiku characteristics. The object, time, and place are written in subterfuge, creating misleading assumptions. As before, introducing the questions *what*, *where*, and *when* reveal the correct answers. *When* the "[s]tray white mare" had its (*what)* "neck rope dangling" (*where)* "forty miles from farms" (25). The main question is how can what appears to be an object be, instead, the time? From Western literary perspectives, one reason is because the mare is not the object, but the subject. In Western literature, the subject is separate from the object. This poem draws the reader's focus to the mare as the topic, not only because it is within the first line, but because everything in the poem relates to the mare. However, according to the earlier Japanese principles, the object and subject exist together, and in this poem, the object is literally attached to the subject in the form of a neck rope. The second reason is because the time element is indirectly attached to the mare through the adjective "Stray." This animal, a fully-grown mare, has lived other experiences, but this adjective portrays a specific time in this mare's life. Therefore, the time in this poem is indicated through the descriptions of the type of horse being depicted.

After determining the object, time, and place, the hidden nuances begin to make themselves evident. The mare is juxtaposed with the neck rope, a symbol of beauty contrasted with a symbol of bondage or death. The distance between the horse and the farms emphasizes the solitude of this lonely animal who escaped from its home. The objectivity of the perspective allows readers the ability to assume the situation. Upon first reading, this poem illustrates a lost animal far away from home. But is this truly the scene

being observed? Did the mare accidentally break loose of its bindings and run away from the farms? Describing the horse as a stray gives negative connotations, the neck rope seems ominous and symbolizes captivity, and the distance from farms seems to create a picture of loss. Re-reading the poem reveals a greater complexity.

As a stray, the mare has no attachments, imitating the Zen concept of freedom from attachments (Record 51). The word "stray" represents part of the time element, or the *when*, but it is more representative of a journey of transitioning rather than only a state of being. Despite the possibility of being born into captivity, this horse is descended from wild horses who lived among the plains and mountains of the Western States. Like most animals, there exists dormant innate instincts that crave freedom. The neck rope, while being a symbol of bondage, is dangling, broken, and unattached. This suggests a greater implication that the horse broke free of the attachments holding it back and has now began a journey to its true home, away from the farms. These double meanings continue to embody Japanese principles and the Zen concepts, including simplicity, austere sublimity, profundity, and the freedom from attachment rather than loneliness or despair. This poem can be read and evoke feelings of either hopelessness and fear or empowerment and liberation. These images contained within few words are the embodiment of objective descriptions "and through them the stimulation of the emotions of the reader" (Yamaguchi xx). Inciting so many different emotions while also utilizing the concepts of Zen concurrent with the object, time, and place, this poem demonstrates its relationship with the haiku aesthetics of *sabi*, *wabi*, and *karumi*.

The seasonal reference was not necessarily predetermined by Snyder's earlier statement. Many poems contain seasonal elements that do not identify with the current

season during which they are being written. However, this poem contains multiple indicators of the season of winter. During the formation of the seasonal components, winter "may have been the most severe season for people in the ancient period due to the combination of cold, frost, and snow" according to Japanese historical records (Shirane 45). It is a season that caused dread and fear of the elements, as well was generally "regarded as cold and lonely" (Shirane 46). These perspectives have not changed, even today, but the season has evolved and been given additional identities in Western culture.

Winter is also a time of hibernation, transformation, and renewal. The mythological phoenix eventually rises from the ashes, but the ashes have to exist first, and death must precede the ashes. In this sense, this poem embodies both aspects of winter. Therefore, the potential *kigo* needs also to embody both identities of winter. This can be found in the words "white mare." Death, captivity, and bondage precede purity, freedom, and liberation, ending in deliverance from the severe season. The neck rope can embody both freedom and death concurrently, as it is the broken chain of bondage as well as a tool used for executions. The mare, while being the subject of the poem, is also the messenger of its own death. A white horse is a symbol repeated in various Biblical texts and mythologies throughout Europe, representing purity, heroism, as well as a courier of the dead.

From a Buddhist perspective, the neck is also the connection between the head and the heart and is also the location of the fifth chakra in the throat. Chakras, or "cakras," are "energy centers associated with particular parts of the body" (Chakras and Buddhism). The throat chakra in particular is known as the spiritual connection between the rest of the channels, representing purity, expression, and communication. This

produces some wordplay within the fact that the mare is white, which is most commonly associated with purity, but can simultaneously represent the paleness that comes with death. It is also common in many Western countries and within Native American tribes to make rope from the fibers of the horse's hair. I would like to think this rope was also made of horsehair, producing a scenario in which the mare has surpassed its own limits and broken free of earthly attachments. Combining this description with the broken rope, an image of transcendence is conceived. The white mare is dying to its old life, "forty miles from farms," and is entering the journey to freedom and rebirth. In this sense, this poem is an interconnected English-language haiku, demonstrating more modern aesthetics and winter emotions, while also producing depth and a seasonal reference traditionally found in Japanese haiku.

Based on the analyses of these poems, English-language haiku and potential *kigo* already exist. Gary Snyder has been able to draw the out the latent possibilities of developing haiku that abide by the Japanese aesthetic. While I acknowledge the presence of other Western poetic characteristics, such as romanticism, imagism, and classicalism, the purpose of these analyses is to focus upon the haiku attributes. After publishing and composing poetry for over a decade, Snyder is still very much active, both in the literary and local community. These poems demonstrate that literature and art can transcend language and cultural barriers. This is true of many other art forms, and the development of English-language haiku and potential *kigo* is one more element that demonstrates that our world is closely integrated through more than words.

Conclusion

Each of Snyder's poems includes various characteristics of traditional Japanese haiku. While differing in context and topic, each poem shares the principles of Bashō, the Zen concepts, the imagery of Buson and the Imagist theories, Shiki's essential components, the haiku moment, and the seasonal element contained in their potential *kigo*. Based on the progression of the history of haiku, one can see that the English language does not limit the form's expansion or growth. Global attention and aspirations have established new ideas, new topics, new rhythms, and new potential *kigo* that can also become part of a haiku. Because the haiku is a compilation of growth and development over hundreds of years, it has proven its ability to adapt and change despite the passage of time or the obstacles of language barriers.

Gary Snyder is a forerunner by having produced such poetry that not only resembles haiku in the English language but *is* true haiku. While he will humbly deny his ability to compose such masterpieces, the literary community can begin to see the value and authenticity in his poems as well as the necessity of intercultural influences. Haiku is a short, simple poem, containing boundless insight and splendor. Haiku and *kigo* have already crossed the boundaries of countries and languages, and the transition from Japanese to English has not hindered its allure or complexity. It will be exciting to see how Snyder will continue to influence the progression and integration of English-language haiku and their potential *kigo* within the scholarly community, eventually transforming and rebirthing the haiku into another literary phoenix.

The following section includes original poems that reflect my current knowledge of haiku and its principles. These poems resemble haiku since composing true haiku is

still beyond my current skill level and capabilities. These compositions are written in English, and they contain potential *kigo* signifying a specific season. My goal is to depict haiku artistic principles and aesthetics in these original works. Through this research, my perspective of haiku has drastically changed, and I now harbor a deep respect for the form, its history, and its essential components. Japanese haiku and Gary Snyder's poetry have influenced my perceptions, as evidenced by the compositions that follow.

Section II

Original Poetic Compositions

The following six compositions depict the seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, and these contain potential English-language *kigo*. I spent many hours meditating on the context and content of these poems, looking to both nature and personal experiences for inspiration. Each poem contains language that is clear, concise, and specific. English speakers will be able to recognize the seasonal significance and enjoy the brightness and color that is portrayed. I have included footnotes with the potential *kigo* of each piece, along with its seasonal orientation and category. These potential *kigo* are locally referenced, taken from the environment and events common in North American culture. Some of them incorporate elements strictly from nature while others intertwine with modern topics and technology. I am indebted to Bashō for his ideas concerning Zen and the creation of haiku, to Buson for his concept of painting with words, and to Snyder for his inspirations and modernity. Snyder has motivated me to continue researching and composing haiku, supporting the cause for literary environmental awareness and intercultural poetry integration.

These compositions incorporate the knowledge I have gained throughout this research process, and they are the best I can produce with my current abilities. The seasonal order is as follows: one for spring, two for summer, two for autumn, and one for winter. By utilizing the haiku aesthetics that have been passed down through generations, across continents, and past language barriers, I hope to overcome the obstacles hindering the creation of true English-language haiku and new *kigo*.

Wilted bluegrass,[1]
heavy with dew
and cattle hooves.

[1] Potential *kigo*: bluegrass, spring, plants

Humming cicadas
Goldenrod conductors[2]
High noon soprano.

[2] Potential *kigo*: goldenrod, late summer, plants

Cotton Candy melts[3]

Crowds of scattered petals

Firework flowers.

[3] Potential *kigo*: cotton candy, summer, life

Golden
gourds grow[4]
Yellow school bus passes
Silent rivalry.

[4] Potential *kigo*: gourds, autumn, plants

Maple leaves sway[5]
the wind whispers
Echoes of crimson waterfalls.

[5] Potential *kigo*: maple leaves, autumn, plants

The crescent reflected
distorted by ripples
a Red wolf howls.[6]

[6] Potential *kigo*: red wolf, winter, animals

Personal Reflection

The importance of global intercommunication and intercultural experiences is unprecedented. This research has broadened my perspectives of haiku while also revealing the differences that one form of poetry can make within diverse literary communities. This thesis details the development of Japanese haiku and its integration into the English language and American poetry. The analyses of Snyder's poetry further support the relationship and similarities between traditional haiku and their English-language counterparts.

While I think that this thesis has accomplished its initial purpose, I also know that this is only the tip of the iceberg. My knowledge on this subject is minimal compared with the extensive amount of information available. In the future, I plan to continue researching haiku, utilizing my knowledge of Japanese language to read poetry in its original language. This will enable me to analyze and compare English-language poetry and Japanese poetry with more depth and accuracy, as well as to learn more about *kigo*. Pursuing a greater understanding of haiku and the seasonal elements may allow me to create an English-language version of the *saijiki* containing *kigo* native to Western culture. Because the American standards of haiku remain so vague, this area of study is largely untapped and waiting to be explored.

The process of writing this thesis has been both rewarding and harrowing. I will begin by saying that I had many theories and misconceptions about the information that I discovered. I initially believed that haiku were simple poems, while also knowing that they originated from Japan. From my perspective, haiku were short and rigid types of literature, adhering to the 5-7-5 syllabic rhythm. These misunderstandings have since

been cleared. However, because of my preconceptions about haiku, I ran into obstacles throughout the research process.

Examining haiku's history and artistic attributes allowed me to realize how wrong I was about this form of poetry. Haiku are ancient, profound, nature-oriented poems, overflowing with color, life, and power. I was astounded when I discovered Bashō's statement: "He who creates three to five haiku poems during his lifetime is a haiku poet. He who attains to ten is a master" (Yasuda 25). Furthermore, Gary Snyder, a writer who has been composing poetry for decades, claims that he has never written a true haiku. While this thesis aims to prove Snyder's claim to be incorrect, I was humbled. Beginning this journey, I had arrogantly assumed that I could easily write six or seven haiku. After all, I had believed they were simple poems. I no longer hold those beliefs, and I have attained a newfound respect for haiku.

Learning about the historical roots of haiku revealed to me how words and traditions can travel through time. Haiku are one of many art forms that connect us to the past, and this form of poetry has endured for hundreds of years. Within every word lies depth and concise intentions, inciting specific emotions within every reader. Every *kigo* is unique and complex, promoting the concept of secondary meanings within singular and compound words and phrases. All it took was one word and I was able to envision an entire world within a few short lines. Bashō's traditional compositions, Buson's colorful language, Shiki's objective perspectives, and Yamaguchi's modernity inspired me. I followed the journey of haiku across continents and became able to identify its influences in the writings of Western authors. Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, R. H. Blyth, Kenneth Rexroth, Jack Kerouac, and T.S. Eliot were among the many renowned poets

who continue to motivate me. This further demonstrates the international connection to me, as multitudes of people across the globe have studied, analyzed, and have been inspired by haiku.

Delving into the life of Gary Snyder brought me a sense of realism. He is not simply a literary scholar or a great poet. He is a human being who was born, had a childhood, a college life, friends, hobbies, beliefs, morals, and countless travels. He is just like me, yet not. Snyder reminds me of the haiku: a conundrum, an oxymoron, and a harmonious contradiction of both humanity and nature. Haiku are compilations of their past selves, shedding skin, and being reborn throughout each new generation. Humanity is similar, shedding experiences and learning life lessons as we discover and grow. I have found a camaraderie with Snyder and haiku, a relatable aspect of innate human nature and imperfection. I hope that this thesis aids in the progression of the English haiku and further integrates haiku into American poetry.

Because my perspectives of haiku have drastically changed, the weight of responsibility that comes with the knowledge has resulted in a deep respect for the tradition. As a result of this research, I finally understand the words of T. S. Eliot:

> Yet if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, 'tradition' should be positively discouraged…[.]Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labor…[.] [T]he past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and [even greater] responsibilities. (Eliot 37-38)

This quotation encompasses my, and every writer's, responsibility not only to rely upon the previous generations, but also to build upon them. Eliot is saying not to follow blindly the rules and principles created by past authors but rather to respect and learn from them. We have a duty to learn from past generations and to take in the knowledge left behind, and, with that knowledge, to create new principles and new rules. The "new" arises from inspirations of the past. The past depends upon the present to relay the messages of lessons learned and lives lived. Discovering the truth about haiku has been a journey of self-discovery. As a human, I am a paradoxical creature, for I am the only kind of being who can be anything and nothing and fit into a single harmonious existence.

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