

The Meandering Road: Memory, Inheritance, and the Distinctive Voice of European Haiku

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Abstract

Despite the international expansion of haiku as a global poetry genre, comparative studies distinguishing European from North American haiku remain scarce. This article borrows from Roman Jakobson's theory of the dominant to address this gap, observing foregrounding tendencies in the English-language European haiku published between 2015 and 2025, analyzed in comparison with the North American baseline from the leading journals of the genre. Drawing on Haruo Shirane's distinction between the horizontal and vertical axes of haiku composition, and on Richard Gilbert's taxonomy of disjunctive techniques, the study identifies two main dominants in European haiku: an orientation toward collective history and cultural memory, and an allusive depth rooted in shared literary inheritance, rather than in the phenomenological perception central to the North American framework. Close reading of selected poems is supported by practitioner and institutional discourse from both continents. The findings are offered as a theoretical framework rather than a statistical contribution, designed to provide analytical direction for future empirical studies of international haiku across regional identifications.

Keywords: European haiku; North American haiku; cultural memory; literary inheritance; poetic dominant; disjunctive techniques

Introduction

Since its first reception in the European literary circles between the nineteenth and the twentieth century (Bertrand, 2001; Doi, 2010), Japanese haiku poetry has experienced a rapid international expansion, from its translations and imitations into

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European languages, to the development of haiku as a “global” poetry genre often rendered in English as its lingua franca (Shea & Caldwell, eds., 2023). Although the first imitations in a Western language seem to have been written in France (Bertrand, 2001), it is in Post-World War II North America that the genre saw its most consistent popularization as a form independent from the Japanese matrix. As documented in *Haiku in English: The First One Hundred Years* (Kacian et al., 2013), American haiku production and literature accelerates increasingly from the Beat Generation poets’ “three-liners”, leading to the foundation of *American Haiku*, the first dedicated periodical in English in 1963 (Bull & Eulert, eds., 1963), and to the constantly upgrading definitions and theorizations of the form by the Haiku Society of America (Haiku Society of America, 2004). While the International Symposiums and Conventions on international haiku held in Japan since 1999 (Verhart, 2007) manifest the original genre’s “acceptance of its fate” (Chen, 2024) as evolving into new geographical, linguistic, and stylistic territories, its international form fails to be defined into unanimously accepted constitutive features (Welch, 2002). As the author Michael Dylan Welch observed in his essay on the internationalization of haiku (2002), “haiku cannot help but being [sic] different things in different places, or different languages, with each context giving rise to a different amalgam of perceptions of what a haiku should be”, highlighting the epistemological obstacle that the genre represents in its identification independent from its Japanese origins, yet emphasizing its adaptability to the contexts of reception.

On a comparative analysis of haiku written or translated in English by European authors and North American authors between 2015 and 2025, and by diachronically analyzed practitioner and institutional discourse of both geographical areas, can be noted consistent differences in emphases and tendencies between the two continents.

Although the frequent cross-pollination and direct co-operation of authors from both areas prevented the generation of distinct traditions and renders the identification of exclusive markers untenable, foregrounding elements can be observed as “dominants”, borrowing from the pioneer of structural linguistics Roman Jakobson (Jakobson, 1978, p. 82): tendencies that emphasize formal and thematic choices with major prominence in the poetic production of an area compared to the other. Jakobson applied the concept to verse, to the components of any work of art, to any poetic canon, in order to define what constitutes their inalienable identities as such, and from his own words, dominants can be sought “also in the art of a particular epoch, viewed as a particular whole” (Jakobson, 1981, p. 751). Applied at the level of a regional poetic style, a dominant thus could be identified as an organizing principle in a specific body of production “dominating” the other identifiable components hierarchically, yet without excluding internal variation or contaminations.

From the perspective of global haiku, the “irreverent three-liners” revealing “eye opening moments of insight”, as America’s poet laureate Billy Collins defines American haiku in his Introduction of *Haiku in English: The First One Hundred Years* (Collins, 2013), highlighting the idiomatic style and the centrality of the “haiku moment” introduced by the Beat poets (Shirane, 2000), do not necessarily find a greater correspondence with the compositional approaches in European haiku production and definition. “Recording the essence of a moment” still determines the priority of American haiku composition in the definition the Haiku Society of America compiled in 1973 (Haiku Society of America, 2004), then updated to conveying “the essence of an experience” in the 2004 version, widening the focus from keen perception to experience, yet still prioritizing a given moment in the poet’s time. The approach is similarly evidenced in a study by Max Verhart who, in 2007, collected personal

definitions of haiku provided by some of the most prominent writers of international haiku until that year. While Verhart's intention was to document the diversity of haiku definitions existing, and to attempt at identifying the most frequently used terms overall to highlight similarities in the global definitions, the collection showcases distinct differences between the North American and European definitions. The Beat-derived emphasis on the "moment of insight", on the "instant of time", and on reality, that can be found in American authors, as much as in authors from New Zealand, Australia, Canada, India, and in a relatively small number of European authors, finds lesser preeminence or is absent in the majority of definitions from the European authors, where an impressionistic attention to the "changing world", to the "accelerated mutations of several human realities", therefore to more abstract and psychological representations of the experience are observable (Verhart, 2007).

Despite the breadth of institutional discourse on international haiku, though, comparative studies distinguishing European from North American haiku in academic literature remain scarce. As the institutional sources mentioned above highlight, major journals, symposia, and publications tend to universalize the form, rather than identifying it regionally. Welch's own essay for instance (2002), implies that the focal point of international haiku analysis has been to homogenize rather than to distinguish. The present article addresses this gap in the literature by proposing examples from a framework of haiku poems published between 2015 and 2025, backed by relevant practitioner and institutional discourse from the most prominent critical platforms in English-language haiku, and secondary scholarly sources, consulted where academic literature presents significant gaps. Where sources are drawn from practitioner rather than peer-reviewed academic discourse, they are treated as documentary records of normative aesthetic rather than as theoretical standpoints. The European corpus has

been selected from Haikupedia's annual Top 100 lists of most published authors (Haikupedia, n.d.a), chosen for the platform's international scope and its provisional consistency across the decade under analysis.

By grouping together poetic productions from areas of distinct cultural and literary traditions — Latin, Germanic, and Slavic in this particular study — the categorical designation of “European” does not imply claims of cultural homogeneity. The term here is employed provisionally to analyze common orientations that can be observed across areas where collective involvement in historical circumstances and literary circulation have not only been facilitated by geographical proximity. Literary circulation of haiku production continues to be facilitated by the cross-national editorial aggregation that can be indeed observed by the very classification of Haikupedia's European Top 100 Authors lists, where “the most active and creative European haiku poets” are selected according to their frequency of publications across platforms (Haikupedia, n.d.). Therefore, this study borrows the term from the Haikupedia platform, focusing on haiku published by authors that appear in the 2015-2025 lists with a frequency of three or more times, and whose works are selected on the basis of the illustrative relevance to the dominants under analysis, while acknowledging that this selection does not exhaust the range of European haiku production.

The American comparative baseline is drawn from the editorial record of the three leading North American haiku journals and related online platforms — *Modern Haiku*, *Frogpond*, and *The Heron's Nest* — whose combined output constitute the normative mainstream of English-language haiku in North America. A selection of haiku by authors who have appeared consistently in this editorial framework in the last ten years has been conducted on the same qualitative basis of the European works' selection and will provide a solid comparative corpus for this study. It shall be noted

that, even in local production and publication of European haiku, either English still represents a major language of composition, or original language haiku are predominantly translated by the authors themselves and by collaborators, facilitating therefore this comparative analysis. Close reading of the selected poems is conducted to identify dominants that organize the production of one area with greater prominence than in the other, without constituting exclusive regional markers. However, the findings evidenced from this corpus analysis cannot allow statistical confirmation of these dominants and shall be treated as a provisional framework for further comparative studies or empirical research on this specific geographical distinction.

1. Historical Background

While considering a historical overview on how Japanese haiku reached the West in translation between the nineteenth and the twentieth century, it is necessary to remember that literary influence did not only travel westwards. It was indeed the time when Masaoka Shiki, considered to be the “pioneer of modern haiku” (Shirane, 2000), introduced “Shasei-realism”, a style where direct experience and depiction of the poetic subject was central to the composition. According to the literature on haiku (Kacian et al., 2013), this tendency was inspired by the contemporary realism in Western literature, and it is from his influence that the first disseminators of haiku in the English language started shaping the concept of the “haiku moment”, later enforced in North America by the introduction of haiku in connection with Zen Buddhism. Before the emphasis of it as a poetic meditational practice (Kerouac, 2003), American writers had approached the form or derived experimentations predominantly with an imagistic style, where juxtaposition techniques and typographic silence integrated different levels of sensorial and emotional compression, as particularly evident from the pieces by Amy Lowell (Kacian et al., 2013, p. 4) or Langston Hughes (Kacian et al., 2013, p. 7), yet evolving

towards a direct presentation of the subjects, as showcased in pieces by Reznikoff (Kacian et al., 2013, p. 5) or in the early works by W. C. Williams (Williams, 1991). This is indeed the lineage that led to the above-mentioned Haiku Society of America's 1973 definition of haiku "recording the essence of a moment", and to Billy Collins' "eye-opening moments of insight" (Collins, 2013). On the other hand, from the first emergence of haiku-inspired poetry in Europe can be observed less concern on the integrity of the poet's perception, instead of a greater resonance with the historical context, response or continuity with a specific literary heritage and, on a later stage, with shared cultural memory.

The very structural approach to the interpretation of the Japanese haiku form as such, the canonical seventeen morae of classical haiku, the arrangement of the piece into one to three lines, the cutting and seasonal elements (Gilbert & Yuneoka, 2000), vary according to the ways American or European writers respond to their respective literary traditions. Tauchner (2007) calls American "playful mind", the tendency to freedom from formal convention, that can be recorded with greater consistency at least from the Beat poets (Kerouac, 2003), in confrontation with the formal conservatism that he ascribed to the German-language area up to his date. Nevertheless, as Tauchner's interlocutor notes in his article, poems published in *Frogpond* and *Modern Haiku* — two of the major North American publishing platforms of haiku literature — "follow the same pattern of making", illustrating a relatively stable aesthetic consensus, while European publications kept moving toward thematic and aesthetic experimentalism, as the present article aims at demonstrating. Yet, this comparative study sets aside formal and prosodic elements that constitute haiku inherited structural matrix, in favor to the attitudinal, semantic, and historical dimensions of composition in each area. The reason of this limitation is that formal elements have been transmitted globally through

common channels of influence and cross-cultural reception, therefore not representing discriminating variables across different regions, and would blur if not hinder the identification of dominant aesthetic elements of composition. Interpreting the form of one-line haiku, for instance, what would be the choice behind the early twentieth century Romanian haiku-inspired monostich introduced by Ion Pillat (Haikupedia, n.d.d), where typographical silence was employed to contain a verse still reminiscent of European symbolism, does not necessarily correspond to the American *monoku* (Kacian et al., 2013), magnifying phenomenological perception in minimalism. Cor Van Den Heuvel's one word "tundra" (1963) represents perhaps the epitome of American minimalism, where the perception is absorbed all into the one seasonal word.

The French Paul-Louis Couchoud had been the first author recorded to compose poetry imitating the Japanese form into a Western language in 1903 (Bertrand, 2001). Interest in this new and exotic form of poetry grew on a time when English Imagism, Italian Futurism and Hermeticism were all budding in opposition to the elaboration and rhetoric of contemporary poetry (Doi, 2010). The earliest minimalist poetry by Giuseppe Ungaretti himself, the renowned initiator of Italian Hermeticism (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1999), had been reviewed by a critic of his time in comparison with the Japanese poetry of Suikei Maeta and celebrated for the "supreme essentiality" of his brief verse (Argira, 1917). Brevity and "haikaism", associating Italian minimalism with Japanese haikai, had been a way of appreciating the emergent Italian poetry by some critics of the first decades of the twentieth century (Doi, 2010).

Ungaretti's brevity and compression had been connected with the experience of war, of life's precariousness and of human pain (Cambon, 1967), and it is indeed in the form of French haiku that the poet Julien Vocance chose to materialize his vision of World War I in his *Cent Vision de Guerre* (1916). Vocance's use of the form represented

a change, as he shifted the exotic, imitational attitude of his French contemporaries to the terse, yet poignant, interpretation of his subjects that had been reviewed as a “spiritual lesson of tact and poetry” by the critics (Bertrand, 2001). Constituting a precedent, haiku form and its quality of suggestiveness would later be employed in Europe as a response to shared historical circumstances, for instance as a reaction to political suppression in post-World War II Romania (Haikupedia, n.d.d), or as an introspective war and post-war commentary, such as in the areas of ex-Yugoslavia (Haikupedia, n.d.c).

Haiku reached most of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe not directly from Japanese sources but through a sequence of linguistic intermediaries: Romanian poets first encountered the form via French publications (Haikupedia, 2005); Bulgarian readers made contact with Japanese poetry through French and German translations (Haikupedia, n.d.b); and the first translation of classical Japanese haiku into Serbo-Croatian, published by Miloš Crnjanski in Novi Sad in 1927, was rendered not from Japanese but from English, French and German intermediary versions (Haikupedia, n.d.c). This transmission is crucial, as it produced a multidimensional reception already inflected by the aesthetic priorities of the literary traditions involved. Each of these traditions carried into subsequent haiku composition the cultural resonance of its regional landscape, for instance the Carpathian pastoral world of Romania; the Adriatic coastline of Croatia; and the Mediterranean landscape that was flourishing with new symbolic and philosophical weight in the poetry of Montale and Quasimodo, among others.

In reference to the early century Italian Hermeticism again, directly referring to European Symbolism and approaching Surrealism and Existentialism, the movement established a tradition in which brevity carried not perceptual immediacy but

metaphysical density, with fragmented utterances and disrupted syntax allowing poets such as Montale to express existential pessimism covertly under political censorship (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1999). This legacy is structurally distinct from the American imagist tradition emphasizing on the clarity of the perceived moment and constitutes part of the literary background for the allusive register observable in the contemporary Italian and Central European haiku studied in the present article. A parallel, yet independently developed tendency in postwar Japan helps providing a further theoretical framework for the dominants identified here. The Japanese *gendai* haiku movement—the modern haiku movement which emerged under the leadership of poets such as Kaneko Tōhta in direct response to the military suppression of avant-garde haiku, expanded the form’s subject matter into politics, subjectivity, and collective trauma. As Gilbert (Wilson, 2009) has explained, *gendai* haiku represent an uprooting accomplished via experimental avant-garde language and techniques, yet one in which the old is likewise held in the new — a formulation that could equally describe the practice of the European poets examined here. The convergence is not the result of direct influence but of structural parallel: the experience of collective violence and suppression led poets in both traditions independently toward a more expansive conception of what the form can express. Gilbert’s taxonomy of disjunctive techniques in English-language haiku (Gilbert, 2004) is therefore employed in the analysis that follows, as it provides the theoretical vocabulary for describing these shared tendencies between the European haiku composition and the Japanese *gendai* haiku. Disjunctive techniques, to be intended as compositional devices where conceptual and syntactic “non-sequentiality” in haiku provide meaning to the reader (Gilbert, 2004), have been identified in the corpus under analysis as the formal mechanism through which the dominants are manifested, therefore allowing comparative distinction.

The compositional approach dominant in North American haiku, on the other hand, can be understood through the framework Haruo Shirane (2000) elaborates in confrontation with the origins of classical Japanese haiku: a characteristic orientation toward what he calls the horizontal axis—the immediate, direct personal experience, and the concrete observation of nature—at the relative expense of the vertical axis of historical allusion and of cultural memory. Indeed, Brian Tasker (2001), defending the general Western haiku moment approach in response to Shirane’s criticism, clearly articulates haiku as “a poetry of things as they are”, where the focus to the genuine and direct experience would ensure authenticity and a democratic reach. This overview exposes some of the attitudinal reasons why symbolism, metaphysical and avant-garde approaches have been less prominent in North American composition, and what historical and literary conditions had directed on Shirane’s vertical axis the dominants of European haiku that are identified in the present study.

2. European Dominants

The Vertical Axis: Collective History, Landscape, and Cultural Memory

Julien Vocance’s “visions” represent a fundamental historical antecedent of European haiku on contemporary history, although there seem to be no direct evidence so far, that either Vocance, nor any other twentieth century’s author of war poetry influenced the haiku analyzed in the present study. Yet, war trauma as directly experienced, inherited, or the proximity of it, particularly expressed as symbolically ingrained into domestic, natural or agricultural elements, appears to be part of the dominants distinguishable in the corpus as manifestation of Shirane’s vertical axis of historical and cultural allusion. The following poems by Goran Gatalica provide a clear example (Gatalica, 2022, pp. 139, 163, 29):

meandering road—

my grandpa tries to forget

Auschwitz

*
**

approaching war—

wild thorns covered up

with twilight

*
**

the plum petals

stuck in a rain gutter—

refugee camp

Drawing on Gilbert varieties of disjunction in contemporary English haiku (Gilbert, 2004), possible interpretations of temporal disjunctions in the first two compositions allow Gatalica to render his grandfather's internment trauma, and the hypothetical reference to the Balkans wars of his personal experience, or the indefinite incumbency of war, closer to the reader. The first and third compositions simply name, displaced with semantic weight after the typographical silence, the theme of the poems as they would easily be recognized by another European reader. These specific examples reveal elements of shared experience that bring together a consistent portion of European haiku production, in its frequent treatment of traumatic memory. Memory is expressed through the collective perception of history, or through the agricultural landscape, like in the metaphoric fusion (Gilbert, 2004) of the meandering road with the grandfather's attempt to forget, of the wild thorns in the approaching dark with the anxiety of war. "Seizing the secret cause of memory in an instant, I try to express it", as can be read in the preface of *Thawed Ground* by the Russian haiku poet Viktor Ivanov (as cited in Tatyana, 1997; translations mine). This seeking and seizing of memory in

surrounding objects carries the cultural connotations that opposes the “engagement with silence, locality, and empirical reality”, in Liu’s (2025) analysis of Gatalica’s poetry, to the immediacy of human-nature harmonization in a domestic example by Ron C. Moss, Australian first place winner of the Peggy Willis Lyles Haiku Awards 2021 from *The Heron’s Nest* (Moss, 2021):

tangerine sunset
a small boy gallops
his stick-pony home

Integrated within the normative aesthetic of *The Heron’s Nest*, Moss’ example of a reference to the agricultural/domestic world as an anchor to the present, describing a moment of sensory immersion, can be ascribed to Shirane’s horizontal axis of temporal immediacy. On the other hand, the underlining relationship between the traumatic inheritance of war experience, of trauma in general, and agricultural continuity can be observed in the following compositions by the Romanian Lavana Kray (Kray, 2016, 2023):

ghost town
in the underground shelter
sprouting potatoes
*
**
grass perfume—
a butterfly alights
on the scythe blade

War is felt in its contemporality or historical proximity, and trauma is integrated in the symbolic connotations of the peasant element. This sort of imagistic displacement contrasts structurally with the treatment of War by the American soldier Randy Brown

(Brown, 2015), also the result of direct experience, but expressed as the point of view of a human witness, strengthened by the use of vernacular language of military life:

“Dead-weight,” “straphanger”

I carry only stories

No guns, no camo.

Follows an American example by Bill Pauly, Touchstone Award recipient 2011 (Pauly, 2011), where the experience of war is not only displaced, but also individualized, in a disjunction that is consequentially symbolical of the subject’s personal trauma:

back from the war

all his doors

swollen shut

Instead, the paradoxical disjunction in the following haiku by Cezar-Florin Ciobîcă, where the physicality of a rubble and of a gust of wind are juxtaposed to Tolstoy’s masterpiece, suggests the synthesis of literary identification and the historical crystallization in a concrete detail (Ciobîcă, 2022):

rubble...

the wind browsing

through War and Peace

Thus, enforcing a perspective of European identification of haiku on Shirane’s vertical axis, the present Italian haiku by Antonio Sacco (Sacco, 2024, p. 125; translation mine) has been translated for this study as an example of superposition between the agricultural and the literary inheritance themes:

I compose verses—

A farmer in the fields

Ploughs furrows

The metaphoric fusion of the verses and the ploughing, perhaps reminiscent of the medieval Veronese Riddle, unanimously considered one of the very first literary endeavors of Italian literature (Migliorini & Griffith, 1984), loads the superimposition with cultural weight, precisely representing what Shirane intends with “the larger frame, the larger body of associations that carries from one generation to the next and that goes beyond the here and the now” (Shirane, 2000). In a comparative American monoku by Annette Makino, Francine Porad Haiku Award 2020 (Makino, 2020), the extensive depth of time is invoked naturalistically, through phenomenological observation rather than cultural, placing the poem on the horizontal axis of natural instantaneous identification:

long before language the S of the river

Eons are condensed in the instantaneous observation of the river, in a moment of revelation. On the other spectrum of perceived temporality, in the following poem by Bryan Rickert, published in *The Heron's Nest*, Vol. XXVI, No. 3, September 2024 (Rickert, 2024a), the object of natural perception is suddenly revealed through complex sensorial inclusivity:

spring rain

the all at once

of mushrooms

The moment could be intended as one of the main subjects of the poem, and it is semantically rendered by a sensorial perception. In an example by the Italian Eufemia Griffo, published in the German journal *Chrysanthemum* #30, April 2023 (Griffo, 2023), the extensive perception of time is also derived by the age of the natural object, but it is conveyed through an expression charged with cultural and historical connotations:

ancestral memories

the deep roots

of an ancient oak

Returning to the symbolic inclusion of peasant and domestic elements, Griffio supports their connotations by framing them in a liturgical-calendar observance that carries centuries of collective ritual (Griffio, 2022):

All Souls' Day

the scent of walnut leaves

in the fireplace

Disjunction, Allusion, and the Gendai Parallel.

As it is inferred from the examples examined in the previous section, the thematic tendency that orientates European haiku composition towards Shirane's vertical axis is activated through compositional allusivity and a certain element of abstraction. It is indeed on this point that further distinction between the haiku from North American and European authors is allowed by placing both corpuses against the innovative background of Gilbert's taxonomy. While claiming the actual presence of allusive depth in North American poetry in response to the extant mainstream definitions of English-language haiku up to 2004, based on realism, Gilbert refers to the innovations of Japanese gendai approaches as an exemplary foundation to borrow from, to challenge "standard guidelines" and provide alternative ideas in composition and in the analysis of the qualities he named "disjunctive" (Gilbert, 2004). Several examples present in his studies showcase extensive use of styles that go beyond the "shasei-realism" as theorized by Masaoka Shiki (Shirane, 2000), and the commentary to *The Heron's Nest Awards* in 2023 demonstrates that openness to abstraction, to "refreshing fusions of the figurative and the literal" (The Heron's Nest, 2023), and to

the kind of conceptual disjunction Gilbert identifies in his research as having gained mainstream relevance in the recent years.

The European haiku analyzed between 2015 and 2025 showcase a tendency to disjunctive techniques, to literary allusion, to the metaphorical and the symbolic, yet their allusive depth tends to be represented primarily by metaphysical or existential registers, depth derived from questions of being, finitude, or temporality, possibly the result of a historical reservoir of literary inheritance and shared cultural memory. Instead, haiku in the North American style seem to borrow their depth tendentially from within the phenomenological experience, typically individualized and framed within the moment of perception. Normative examples can still be found in the definitions of haiku collected by Verhart (2007) where, even in the compositional approaches grounded in the observation of nature or the seasons by European writers, we find concepts of abstraction, symbolism, and literary existentialism as essential. Vasile Spinei from Moldova and active in Romania describes his formula as “those of four seasons, melted together in the flashing light of intuition and consciousness, emotion, and premonition. Zorman from Slovenia uses a haiku as a definition of haiku, naming it “a short rendezvous / scented with the perfume / ‘Eternity’, while the French Georges Friedenkraft directly connects the form to a spectrum ”from existential emotions to wild surrealist dreams!” (Verhart, 2007). This area of experimental approaches though, is where more openings and cross-pollination exist, perhaps also due to the “increasing international communication” mentioned by Gilbert himself (Gilbert, 2004), and to the acceptance of European works into the North American publications, as the following haiku by the Italian Angiola Inglese published in *The Heron's Nest* Vol. XXII, No. 3, September 2020 (Inglese, 2020) shows:

isolation—

sixty-four spaces

on the chessboard

The abstraction of a purely conceptual image, without any reference from nature nor of any subject, the reduction of spatiality onto the geometry of a chessboard, are enforced by a cutting that is no more orthographic than semantic. The ambiguity derived from disjunction, opens the multiple possible readings from the missing subject to the circumstances. A similar, yet more moderate “missing subject” (Gilbert, 2004) technique can be found in the following work by the Slovenian Polona Oblak (Oblak, 2018, p. 24), where the “alone” in the poem is a vague allusion that opens multiple interpretations:

night lightning

alone in the room

with a hornet

The poem, published in the North American *Frogpond* 41:2 (Oblak, 2018), let interpretations on absence and spatiality be recreated by the reader. On the same page of the publication, the following poems, respectively by the American authors Jeannie Martin and Aron Rothstein, feature their clearly defined subjects anchored to the temporality of the observation, although ambiguity here is also present as an extension of readings from the possible substitution of the subjects:

to them

we all look alike

fireflies

yellow-jacket nest—

the lawnmower continues

without me

These works represent identifiable variants on an experimental spectrum where editorial agency plays an associating role. From the Anglo-Saxon world, the British poet Alan Summers provides an example where the creative disjunction borrows from phenomenological perception, but the missing human element isolates it into pure movement, representing a connecting bridge between the markedly European abstractedness and the American haiku moment. From the 2018 Haiku Society of America Haiku Award (Summers, 2018):

the rill's trick

a greenfinch moves

its green around

The naturalistic description is enhanced by sound devices, and interpretation is amplified by the chromatic ambiguities of green, and by the multiple semantic separations between the first two lines. In its vorticist essence, the work synthesizes the natural vision in its dynamicity rather than from its relation to an observer.

In *Haiku: The Art of Implication over Explication* (2016), Summers claims his ideas of haiku suggestiveness as an “invisible bridge” between the given parts of a poem, and of “implication” as a fundamental element of the form. “This non-verbal bridge that cannot be spoken, a no-text land of white space/negative space where omissions and low key suggestion are equally important makes a haiku reverberate” (Summers, 2016). And a reverberation also from the vertical axis of Anglophone literature, though direct influence has not been confirmed, invite comparison between the celebrated opening poem of Wallace Stevens’ *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* (Stevens, 1917) and one of Summers’ monoku, winning poem of The British Haiku Society

Awards 2018/19 (Summers, 2019), featuring a blackbird and its syntactically, spatially and temporally displaced eye:

eye of the song a blackbird touching the void

It's the dissolution, perhaps the identification with the void that makes the objects of the poem metaphysical subjects. A bodily perception abstracted from a specific moment in time, rather manifested by the rarity of its occurrence in the emotional world of the author, is represented by Nazarena Rampini in her haiku published in *The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku 2024* (Rampini, 2025):

Halley's comet

the rare hug

of my father

Cosmic prospect and depth here are representative of the author's psychology, and abstraction does not affect subject and objects, but time itself. A paradoxical disjunction produces the inversion of time as perceived by the subjects in an example by the Polish Krzysztof Kokot (Kokot, 2025), where the inverted order between the announcement of a departure and its implied happening becomes coherent as suspended into uncertainty:

departures—

he still doesn't know

how to tell her

On the other hand, emotional weight in an example by Rickert, in *The Heron's Nest* Readers' Choice Award 2024 (Rickert, 2024b), is entirely mediated through the physical presence of a wren alighting on the reeds:

autumn reeds

a little wren's weight

changes nothing

However, the boundary between European and North American compositional tendencies is thus permeable rather than fixed, and that inclusive editorial frameworks actively participate in the circulation and recognition of forms and techniques across geographic contexts. Structural and compositional techniques seem to migrate more readily across geographic boundaries than the historically and culturally embedded themes identified on the vertical axis; yet even in a shared international arena, the specific dominants remain legible, as can be observed in the following two poems. The honorable mention awarded by the Irish Haiku Society's International Competition 2025 to the German Stefanie Bucifal's monoku (Bucifal, 2025) centers on a perceived natural detail with the directness characteristic of the competition's winning tradition — haiku by Australian, American and Canadian authors — while remaining compositionally legible as a European tendency in its compression of seasonal perception in an imagistic spark without narrative observation or subjective identification:

springtime the spark of a lilac tree

Conversely, the honorable mention awarded by the Haiku Society of America to Edward Cody Huddleston in the Henderson Award 2025 (Huddlestone, 2025) extends the phenomenological moment characteristic of the North American dominant into astronomic immersion, abstracting subject and experience to the threshold of universality while remaining grounded in direct bodily perception:

skinny dipping

a single ripple

reaches Polaris

Ultimately, despite cross-pollination and editorial inclusiveness, permeability does not dissolve the dominants into international homogenization. While highlighting how dominants are relational rather than absolute, Bucifal's and Huddleston's cases operate at the edges of their respective areas, illustrating the characteristic reservoirs each draws from.

Conclusion

The European dominants identified in this study — the orientation toward Shirane's vertical axis of collective history and cultural memory, and the allusive connection to a reservoir of literary inheritance and shared historical experience, rather than in the phenomenological perception central to the North American mainstream — are intended as foregrounding dominants, as theorized by Roman Jakobson: compositional directions that organize the European haiku examined with greater structural prominence than in the American production, without constituting exclusive regional markers. The permeability of these dominants, inferred throughout the analysis in the cross-pollination between the two styles, confirms that what distinguishes European haiku is not the presence of particular techniques — which tend to migrate across geographic boundaries — but the cultural background from which their allusive depth is drawn.

The present study does not offer statistical confirmation of these tendencies. The works presented, selected from a larger corpus under analysis, is sufficient to illustrate the dominants identified, but not to quantify their frequency or distribution across the full range of production in either continent. The findings are offered as a theoretical framework and the basis for analytical direction, designed to provide conceptual foundation for future empirical studies, such as statistical data collected across larger corpora. Such studies could benefit, for instance, from computational

methods applied to haiku archives, enabling frequency analysis of thematic clusters, or disjunction techniques across the two continents or even between specific national and cultural traditions — a methodological direction that lies beyond the scope of the present article but that the dominants identified could provide.

One further aspect of European haiku composition, deliberately set aside from the focus of this analysis, may provide a direction for future study: the role of multilingualism in European haiku publishing and composition, from the points of view of normative aesthetics and of editorial ecology. The practice of haiku composition across two or more languages has a significant precedent in the work of the Italian poet Andrea Zanzotto, whose *Haiku for a Season / Haiku per una stagione* constitutes an experiment on multiple levels: first, to present poetry bilingually; and second, to write the original poems directly in English, later rendered by Zanzotto into semi-independent Italian parallel texts (Zanzotto, 2012). This bilingual compositional method, in which the gap between languages becomes a creative space rather than a translation problem, anticipates a practice with no mainstream parallel in North American haiku. At the editorial level, several prominent European platforms operate as explicitly bilingual or multilingual environments with no American equivalent: *Chrysanthemum* presents itself as a fully bilingual German-English publication in which all submitted material is accepted in the poet's native language and translated by the editorial team (The Haiku Foundation Digital Library, n.d.); the *Wales Haiku Journal* has published Welsh-language haiku alongside English translations, with the transcreation process explored as a reflection on the form's links to Welsh poetic tradition (Wales Haiku Journal, n.d.); and *Enchanted Garden Haiku Journal* operates as a Romanian-English bilingual platform (Haiku Newz, n.d.). The examples from Goran Gatalica analyzed in this study are extracted from a collection, *Night Jasmine*

(Gatalica, 2022), that had been intended as an inclusive, multilingual presentation of the author's poetry, with each haiku being rendered in seven languages. This editorial infrastructure produces a different canon from the monolingual English-language selection governing the American mainstream — one in which the cultural sedimentation carried through translation constitutes an additional layer on the vertical axis identified here as dominant in the European production. A systematic comparative study of multilingual editorial practices in European haiku publication, and of their compositional implications in their English renderings would constitute a valuable and unexplored contribution to the field.

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