

***Haiku* as Form and Experiment in the Russian-Language Poetry at the End of 20th – Beginning of 21st Centuries**

E. A. Ragozina, S. A. Rodin

Abstract

The popularity of *haiku* and its composition by authors in the Russian language, as well as reflection on the definition of boundaries and formal criteria for belonging to this category of texts, formed the frame for poetry of “*haiku* masters,” or *haijin*, who adhered to the strict canons of the original tradition, and poets who applied it for the purpose of creative experimentation or allowed its free interpretation. At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the first printed platform that provided space for *haiku* written in any of these keys was the almanac *Triton*, the publication of which continued for four issues.

This feature makes it a representative source for the analysis of the perception of *haiku* by Russian-speaking authors. This paper focuses on the poets published on its pages who allowed the possibility of free interpretation of the poetic tradition of *haiku*, its domestication, or use for other purposes of creative transformation. In addition to the original *haiku*, the works included by the almanac’s compilers in the section called “Next to *Haiku*” are also considered, in which Russian-language three-line poems are inscribed in the context of *haibun* and *uta-monogatari*. The paper analyzes the features of these works and their relationship to the original tradition.

Keywords: almanac *Triton*, *haiku* poetry, Russian-language *haiku*, poetical experiment.

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Introduction

In Russia in the late 1990s and early 2000s, interest in Japan manifested itself in various forms, from a fascination with contemporary popular and mass culture and familiarization with it through animation, which continues to enjoy steady audience demand today, to the gradual de-exoticization and domestication of elements of Japanese food culture in the everyday life of large cities. With the increasing number of published translations of Japanese literature, readers' awareness of its diversity grew. A number of cultural initiatives, including the 1998 All-Russian *Haiku* Competition (ARHC), contributed to greater attention to its individual forms and genres, as well as to the stimulation

of Russian-language text production in the style of Japanese tradition. The Embassy of Japan initiated the competition, with the *Argumenty i Fakty* newspaper serving as the main information partner.

This event proved significant in several respects. It demonstrated the breadth of the *haiku* craze, spanning various regions of Russia and involving participants of various ages and occupations, the vast majority of whom were not professional writers. The competition, which required a selection process, also provoked reflection on both Russian-language three-liners and their relationship with the Japanese tradition. The works deemed successful by the professional jury formed the basis of the first issue of the first printed Russian-language periodical dedicated to *haiku*. This was the almanac *Triton*, published from 2000 to 2003 by “ARGO-RISK” Publishing House. Its head, poet, literary scholar, and critic D. V. Kuzmin, was responsible for the preparation of all four issues of the almanac. In the editorial material introducing the main content of the first issue of the almanac, he briefly outlined the existence of *haiku* in the Russian-speaking world, listed a number of sources of inspiration and imitation for authors, noted the growth of “original Russian *haiku*,” pointed to the significant role played in popularizing *haiku* by the specialized online journal *Lyagushatnik* (“Frog Pond”)¹ by the poet and journalist A. V. Andreev, dedicated to three-line poems, and also mentioned the attention paid to them by poetry magazines. The popularity and demand for *haiku*, in turn, converted into the emergence of a specialized printed publication, the purpose of which D. V. Kuzmin defined as follows: “*Triton* is intended to show the phenomenon of *haiku* in all its breadth”².

According to the original concept, the almanac was intended to become a platform for presenting a diversity of approaches to *haiku* composition in the Russian language, drawing to varying degrees on the Japanese tradition. In addition to original poems, *Triton* also announced the publication of translations of *haiku* from Japanese and

¹ Haiku webzine *Lyagushatnik*: <https://haiku.ru/frog/>

² *Triton: Russian Almanac of Haiku Poetry*. (2000) Moscow. P. 4.

Western languages, analytical materials, and works of related forms and genres.

Thus, the first specialized printed periodical devoted to Russian-language *haiku* theoretically brought together texts from amateur and professional writers under a single cover, showcased examples of poems that both strictly adhered to the formal features of the Japanese versification and freely interpreted them, and allowed Russian *haiku* to be situated within a broader literary and cultural context through the publication of translations and essays. Despite the enormity of its mission and the popularity of *haiku*, only four issues of *Triton* were published. The editorial tone of the first issue was optimistic, but it provided no indication of the expected frequency of new issues. The section of the second issue containing information for potential authors and readers states: “*Triton* will be published twice a year.” A similar section of the third issue states: “*Triton* will be published at least once a year,” while the following issue became the farewell one. The almanac, nevertheless, became a notable phenomenon in the world of the Russian-language *haiku*, on the one hand, summarizing the diverse experience of engaging with Japanese three-line poetry, and on the other, outlining paths for the future development of creative associations and communities, as well as individual authors who published their works there. This paper attempts to examine the materials of the *Triton* almanac to examine the works of Russian-language poets who composed *haiku*, identifying the characteristics of their approach to interpreting the original Japanese tradition and their general attitudes toward it.

***Haiku* as a Space and Place for Experimentation**

The professional writers who published in *Triton* may have adopted the *haiku* format – a short poem with a strict formal and figurative structure – not so much out of interest in the Japanese tradition itself as out of a need for experimentation within the established form. In this regard, the Russian-language *haiku* of several poets in the almanac, from

our point of view, can appropriately be viewed as a form of combinatorial poetry, popular during the years of its publication. For example, in 2002, the first of its kind, *Anthology of Russian Palindromes, Combinatorial, and Manuscript Poetry* ³, was published. Its authors partially overlap with the poets of the first almanac of Russian-language three-line poems. Palindromes were not positioned as works of particular poetic value, but were presented as experiments in working with conventions and limitations.

Attempts to compose *haiku* while adhering to the formal features characteristic of the original tradition could also serve the purpose of enriching the poetic toolkit and introducing variety, without becoming firmly established as a permanent characteristic element of the authors' work. Interest in Japanese three-line *haiku*, in addition to the popularity of the Russian-language *haiku* competition and the emergence of the almanac, was also reflected in online creativity, particularly relevant given the development of the Russian-language segment of the internet. Thus, in 1997, the webzine *Lyagushatnik* ("Frog Pond") was created on the website haiku.ru. This not only contributed to the formation and popularization of the *haijin* community but also served as a platform for publishing works by such subsequently recognized "haiku masters" as Marina Hagen, Vladimir Gertsik, and Mikhail Baru, who were published in *Triton*. One of the almanac's editors and compilers, Alexey Andreev, created a "poetry game" on haiku.ru, called "Renguru," a variation on the theme of an endless chain of *renga* that placed no strict formal requirements on participants other than the number of lines [Andreev 1999]. This approach did not address any poetic overarching goals, but it did allow for diversification of the text-generating process by borrowing some of the external characteristics of Japanese poetry. Beginning in the 2000s, the number of such sites began to grow. Separate websites for

³ *Antologiya russkogo palindroma, kombinatornoi i rukopisnoi poezii*. (2002). [Anthology of Russian Palindromes, Combinatorial, and Manuscript Poetry]. Comp. and comment. by G. Lukomnikov and S. Fedin. Moscow.

poetry groups and associations, formed around the principle of closeness to the original tradition, also gradually began to appear. Meanwhile, *Triton*, compiled by writers with varying understandings of *haiku*, Japanologists and translators (V. P. Mazurik, T. L. Sokolova-Delyusina, A. T. Zamilov), and amateur poets, presented a variety of approaches to its interpretation. The almanac's editor, D. V. Kuzmin, wrote: "Under the cover of *Triton*, there will be room for various concepts of Russian *haiku*, various poetics, all somehow maintaining a focus on the original source – the immortal works of Basho and Issa. On the contrary, I would like to steer clear of epigonism, the mindless copying of classical images, the ubiquitous chrysanthemums, cicadas, and frogs: the poetics of *haiku* are so invigorating because they can adapt to the material of any culture and era, including our own..."⁴.

Thus, the almanac published *haiku* composed according to various principles, which could, within poetic associations, become insurmountable contradictions. To illustrate, let us turn to several examples of Russian-language *haiku* by authors whose texts were perceived by the poetic community as precedent-setting, and therefore indicative of the chosen strategy for engaging with the original Japanese tradition within their own work. When discussing the line of authors who indirectly turn to *haiku*, it is worth mentioning the influence of prominent figures from this same poetic scene, whose texts influenced not only the formation of the concept of Russian-language *haiku* in the late 20th century but also the poetic discourse of Russian poetry [Vorontsova 2016, p. 7–14, 19–20].

It's karate that I love
More than poetry, now.
Just try to come close!

This three-line poem by Elena Schwartz, one of the most prominent representatives of the Leningrad underground of the 1970s and

⁴ *Triton: Russian Almanac of Haiku Poetry*. (2000). Moscow. P. 4.

1980s⁵, adheres to the formal principle of haiku metrics – the number of syllables in the stanza is distributed according to the 5–7–5 pattern. The following three-line verse by Vladimir Gertsik, a recognized “master of *haiku*,” who, in turn, influenced another line of authors who adhered to the stable formal and figurative structure of three-line verses, not only follows these constraints but also contains other elements of the original tradition⁶:

A monastery in the mountains.
On the ruins a white
Wild rose. A bee.

Gertsik provides a locational reference in the first line, which is essential to *haiku*, and also adds a *kireji* (切れ字),⁷ expressed by a period. Schwartz’s approach is fundamentally different, postmodern, and avoids deep delving into tradition. In 2002, a collection of her works, *East Wind*, was published, featuring nine “hokku” written between 1980 and 1996. Almost all of them are grouped into short cycles: “Two Hokku on the Theme of Lent,” “Three Hokku on the Theme of Harakiri,” and “Three Hokku on the Theme of Karate.” It is telling that these works, on the one hand, reference popular notions of Japanese culture, while on the other, the *haiku* form is used in connection with religious motifs and the theme of Lent⁸:

⁵ Schwartz, E. A. (1997). *Zapadno-vostochnyi veter. Stikhotvoreniya* [West-East Wind. Poems]. Saint Petersburg. P. 61.

⁶ *Triton: Russian Almanac of Haiku Poetry*. (2000). Moscow. P. 25.

⁷ In original Japanese *haiku*, a delimiting word or particle serves as a marker for the “cut” of the *haiku* in the ratio 5:12 or, conversely, 12:5, thereby determining which semantic part the second line will belong to. In European writing, due to the lack of such words, it is most often expressed with punctuation marks – periods or dashes.

⁸ Schwartz, E. A. *Zapadno-vostochnyi veter. Stikhotvoreniya*. P. 61.

I showed you a fig,
Soup, bite it!
What? Ate it? We have Lent.

To draw closer to God,
As the skin of the righteous
To the bone, day after day.

While the first text is rather humorous and reminiscent of *senryu* (川柳)⁹ in spirit, the second is very close to Schwartz's poetics, to her typical imagery. Perhaps due to the significance of the images used, the syllabic principle is also violated – here, in Russian, all lines have seven syllables. The final “hokku” from Schwartz's collection stands out from the previous ones: firstly, it is not part of a cycle; secondly, it has no subtheme, but is titled “The Last Hokku”¹⁰.

On a dark street
An angry, lonely lantern
Will go out any minute.

Of all Schwartz's “hokku,” as they are called, this text is the closest to the traditional *haiku* form: it specifies a place, and the overall mood is akin to the poetics of *sabi* (寂, “tranquility,” “loneliness”), but it violates the formal principle of syllable alternation – the first line contains six syllables in the original text. This may be due to the combination within a single text of both a *haiku*-oriented approach and a reliance on the European literary tradition, particularly tercets, which often served as components of longer classical poetic works. In two of the cases under consideration, Schwartz creates “chain stanzas” reminiscent of tercets. In “Three Hokku on Harakiri,” the line “harakiri – you” is repeated

⁹ A satirical and humorous genre that developed during the Edo period and takes the form of *haiku*.

¹⁰ Schwartz, E. A. (1997). Zapadno-vostochnyi veter. Stikhotvoreniya. P. 62.

three times, each time imbuing the word “harakiri” with new semantic connotations¹¹.

Harakiri – you,
Like a bird in the belly, you cry:
Let me out!

Harakiri – you
Growing up like a child in the darkness.
Soon. Oh-oh-oh!

The samurai has died.
You dance joyfully over him,
Harakiri – you.

In the first and second “hokku,” *harakiri* is imbued with the qualities of a lyrical subject, possessing a childlike semantic aura. This creates an antithesis between the Japanese perception of the belly as the receptacle of the soul and the European tradition’s understanding of the belly as the birthplace of new life, which, within the scope of Schwartz’s work, fits into the overall antinomy of life and death. In the third “hokku” of the mini-cycle, *harakiri* is transformed into a collective image of death, alluding to the traditions of European street culture and the “Danse Macabre,” imbuing the *haiku* with a foreign cultural content atypical of the original tradition. The work of Schwartz, a professional poet and a highly influential figure in poetic circles of the time, possessing a vividly distinctive writing style, exemplifies the combination of elements from different traditions on several levels within a single *haiku*. The work of *haijin*, or “*haiku* masters,” in contrast to this approach, leans toward text generation within the framework defined by a focus on the authenticity of the figurative and symbolic system of Japanese *haiku*. Schwartz’s approach resonated with many actively producing poets of the time,

¹¹ Schwartz, E. A. (1997). Zapadno-vostochnyi veter. Stikhotvoreniya. P. 61.

significant for the history of Russian-language *haiku* and the *Triton* almanac, as well as those involved in discussions regarding the causes and consequences of the turn to Japanese *haiku* in the Russian-language poetry community.

In this context, the figure of Viktor Krivulin, who maintained contact with Schwartz and organized poetry gatherings, including *haiku* readings, is of interest. In the summer of 2000, poets from the LITO (a literary association close to the Leningrad underground poets) gathered at his home. Among them was *haijin* Mikhail Baru, who was among the *Triton* authors. The main topic of their conversation was Japanese three-liners. A surviving video recording¹² includes reading of some original *haiku*. Krivulin's interest in them was likely sparked by both the influence of Dmitry Prigov, who visited Japan in 1999, and the general fashion for *haiku* and experimental poetry, which peaked in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In 2000, Krivulin wrote several texts dedicated to Japan and China ("Japanese Translator," "War in the Old Capital," etc.)¹³ and also turned to writing Russian-language three-liners. His *haiku*, read at a meeting of the LITO in the summer of 2000, went like this:

Now everything is seen through different eyes
Either they were blind before
Or have they gone blind now.¹⁴

In addition to reciting his own *haiku*, Krivulin also spoke about his acquaintance with three-line verses: "The first *haiku* I heard... It was

¹² Poets of the Literary Society visiting V. Krivulin in Komarovo, 2000. <https://rutube.ru/video/8a892c5eda4dfbd4a0ff319b12cf565a/?r=plemwd>

¹³ Krivulin, V. B. *Stikhi posle stikhov* [Poems After Poems]. 2001. Saint Petersburg. Pp. 14–15, 26.

¹⁴ The text is presented without punctuation marks in accordance with the principles of Japanese notation; the author's punctuation cannot be restored.

written by Venichka Erofeev's friend and drinking buddy Avdyushev, now a drunkard, and it went like this:

The wind sweeps away the autumn leaves
Today I
Saw Lenin in a coffin..."¹⁵

This attests to a certain degree of prevalence and demand for this form in late Soviet intellectual circles, as well as its ability to convey a political or parodic-humorous subtext, which aligns them with the *senryu* tradition. Both texts voiced by Krivulin are characterized by their recourse to phraseological corpora, which would later become typical of Russian-language *haiku*. Krivulin introduces the phraseological expression "to look with different eyes," while Avdyushev's line "Saw Lenin in a coffin" introduces the technique of deidiomatization. Similar examples can be observed, for example, in Vitaly Chipizhenko's haiku [Meshcheryakov 2010]:

A lonely fly
In a piece of amber
Stuck into trouble.

On the one hand, such usage is close to the use of homonymy in the original Japanese tradition. However, Russian-language *haiku* is also characterized by deidiomatization, with an emphasis on colloquial expressions. Despite the fragmentary presence of *haiku* in the works of Schwartz and Krivulin, their influence on the poetic community is widely recognized. Their texts were largely precedent-setting, and the groups of authors that formed around them were active participants in the literary process during the period under review. Before the split within the community, evidenced, in particular, by the closure of the *Triton* almanac, these groups included both authors considered "masters

¹⁵ The text is also presented without the author's punctuation marks.

of *haiku*” and poets who turned to the Japanese tradition for creative experimentation, offering their vision of the Japanese form in a Russian-language context.

One telling example of such attempts to rethink Japanese *haiku* was the “Hokku Plus” genre, proposed by Oleg Popov and Vladimir Belobrov in early 2000. It proposed adding a fourth line to classic Japanese *haiku*, based on V. N. Markova’s translations. The poets prefaced their “Hokku Plus” with a manifesto titled “Understatement Is When There’s Nothing to Say,” which demonstrates a far from admiring view of *haiku*. Due to its illustrative nature, we will cite the text in full:

“We have always found it strange that the whole world admires various unfinished things so much, mistaking incompleteness for some kind of refinement. We don’t know who started it, but everyone, like monkeys and parrots, repeats such silly admiration. They admire half-finished paintings (abstractionists and the like), half-baked theatrical productions without sets and costumes (we can’t remember their names), music without melody (the Beatles), books without plots (Joyce and other such nonsense), films without action and sex (Tarkovsky, Antonioni, Godard). We have the fortitude to understand that we will not go down the wrong path! We have enough strength to walk straight! We have enough intelligence not to admire nonsense and unfinished mass culture. Not only do we conscientiously complete everything we do ourselves, but we also consider it our moral duty to correct what others have left unfinished before us. For a long time, it was customary to admire half-finished Japanese three-line poems, the so-called hokku or haiku. Finally, we have found the time to work on this matter and finish what the Japanese were too lazy to finish. The Japanese are great at making equipment, of course, but their poetry is clearly substandard. What would you say if the Japanese, for example, hadn’t finished the tuning knob or the lid of the double-cassette deck for your stereo, or hadn’t finished the power plug or the pickup head? Huh?..”¹⁶

¹⁶ Belobrov V., Popov O. Vladimir Belobrov, Oleg Popov i Drevneyaponskie poety. Palka s rezinovoi nakhlobuchkoi [Vladimir Belobrov, Oleg Popov,

The text is filled with ironic intonations, both at the lexical level and through the analogy between the poetic form and a stereo system, taking the picture to the point of absurdity. However, despite the appeal to the four-line form familiar to Russian culture, the authors do not mention the importance of rhyme, and in some of the texts they present, it is ignored. Examples of this include the following “haiku plus”:

Spring showers.
How full suddenly became
The moat around the castle –
Up to the neck in some places!

With a candle in hand
A man walks through the garden –
Seeing off spring.
On his back, a rifle, on his belt, a grenade.

Other works do contain rhymes, but they are either imprecise, such as “chasche – yashchik” (“more often” – “a box”), “zvuchit – kharchi” (“sounds” – “food”), or verbal, such as “vzmyvayut – nyryayut” (“soaring up” – “diving”), “rezvyatsya – zanimat’sya” (“frolicking” – “studying”). The fourth lines of such works also often deliberately deviate from the overall tone of the original work and contain anachronisms, which defines the overall tone of the final text as frivolous:

Water birds
Swaying on the waves
Near the moon
An American astronaut flying.

Besides anachronisms, this effect is also achieved by addressing themes uncharacteristic of *haiku* and inserting prominent Russian

and Ancient Japanese Poets. A Stick with a Rubber Cap]. 2000. <http://www.belobrovpopov.ru>.

expressions into the text (“Oh how I want some snacks and beer”; “eh, mommy, oh my!”). Furthermore, Popov and Belobrov make no attempt to match the final line to the metrics of the original text – their verses often range from 9 to 12 syllables. Following these, the idea of “*haiku plus*” was developed in the work of the poet German Lukomnikov. Some of these works were published in the *Triton* almanac under the general title “Basho + Lukomnikov = Hokku Plus.” The combinatorial approach to composition is emphasized by giving the title the format of a mathematical formula. A more complete version of his “hokku plus” was published on the website “Vavilon,”¹⁷ as well as in his collection *Butterfly’s Flight, or Hokku Plus*, published in 2001 by the “Krasny Matros” publishing house with illustrations by A. Flitman¹⁸.

The generally lighthearted tone of the *haiku*, characteristic of Lukomnikov’s poetics, is further reinforced by the stylistically understated introduction to the poems posted on the “Babylon” website: “The idea of Vladimir Belobrov and Oleg Popov (see their “Stick With a Rubber Cap”)”. About a third of Lukomnikov’s “hokku plus” texts contain obscene language, heightening the laughter effect, or are supplied with paradoxical closing lines that introduce foreign or even extraterrestrial objects into the text. An example of this is the following work, based on Basho’s *haiku*¹⁹:

For a moment,
the peasant stopped threshing rice.
He looks at the moon...
(HE IS AN ALIEN.)

Most often, Lukomnikov resorts not so much to adding the fourth line, which, according to Popov and Belobrov, should logically

¹⁷ Proekt “Vavilon”. <https://www.vavilon.ru>.

¹⁸ Lukomnikov, G. G. (2001). *Babochki polet, ili hokku plyus* [Butterfly’s Flight, or Hokku Plus]. Moscow, Saint Petersburg.

¹⁹ *Triton: Russian Almanac of Haiku Poetry*. (2001). Issue 2. Moscow. P. 108.

conclude the text, as to commenting on it, turning the co-author of the original *haiku* into an outside observer. Another technique used in his “hokku plus” is to combine Japanese *haiku* with the realities of Russian culture:

A heron strides sternly
Across the fresh stubble.
Autumn in the village.
I’LL COMB THE HORSE’S MANE.

Together with the master of the house,
I silently listen to the evening bells.
Willow leaves are falling.
DING, YOU KNOW, DONG...

A heavy bell.
And at its very edge
A butterfly slumbers.
HUSH-A-BYE...²⁰

The ringing of a bell, like the image of a horse in general, is a familiar figurative structure in the Russian tradition, in which the reader will be able to discover references to a vast number of familiar images and works, beginning with Prince Oleg, continuing with the troikas of Gogol and Nekrasov, and ending with the song “I’ll Go Out to the Field With a Horse at Night,” while the last poem even ends with a line from a Russian lullaby. Developing this borrowed idea and bringing it even closer to Russian tradition, Lukomnikov also regularly uses rhyme in his “hokku plus.” Given the specific structure of V. N. Markova’s translations of Japanese poems, which served as the starting point for his “hokku plus,” creating a strict syllabo-tonic quatrain was not

²⁰ Yaponskie poety + German Lukomnikov [Japanese Poets + German Lukomnikov]. Vavilon. <https://www.vavilon.ru/bgl/hok.html>

possible. However, this did not prevent the use of cross rhyme between the second and fourth lines:

The moon through the haze...
The frogs muddied the pond.
Where's the water? Where's the sky?
NO, I DON'T LIKE REPTILES.*

*<Intentional inaccuracy, for the sake of rhyme. – G.L.>

This remark appears only once, but despite its frivolity, it points to the importance of rhyme for Lukomnikov when completing the fourth line: rhyme becomes more important than factual accuracy. The convergence of the Japanese source text with the Russian-language poetic tradition in his work leads to the emergence of texts that transform *haiku* into an analogue of modern *chastushkas* (Russian ditties), as evidenced by the following points. Firstly, rhyme is obligatory in them. All *chastushkas* are written in trochaic tetrameter, where feminine and masculine rhymes alternate (FMFM), and the rhyme is, in the overwhelming majority of cases, cross-rhyming (lines 2 and 4 necessarily rhyme, 1 and 3 less often), paired rhyme is rare (but if it does occur, lines 3 and 4 necessarily rhyme, but not 1 and 2) [Zyryanov 1974].

Thus, the rhymed 4th line with masculine rhyme is especially important for a *chastushka*. In Lukomnikov's work, the fourth line always rhymes, in most cases, with the second. It is impossible to draw any conclusions about masculine or feminine endings; they appear in roughly equal proportions in his works. Secondly, the "hokku plus" genre shares similarities with Russian folk literature in its themes and the underlying spirit of its lyrics. More than a third of Lukomnikov's poems contain obscene language, and colloquialisms are also common, which is consistent with folk and lower-class culture, of which *chastushkas* are a part. However, the general perception of his poems was significantly influenced by their publication format. While online versions of "hokku plus," as well as their publication on the pages of *Triton* leave no room for interpretation other than frivolous and humorous, in the collection

Butterfly's Flight..., where they are accompanied by images that are far from caricatured, their presentation takes on a different aspect. Moreover, on its pages, the original Japanese *haiku* and Lukomnikov's added fourth lines are separated by an illustration placed in the center of the page, and the authors' names are also included. This allows the original text and the final line, which turns it into a "hokku plus," to be perceived as two independent texts. Thus, even deliberately humorous works, when presented in a different light, can offer a different approach to their perception.

"Next to Haiku"

The materials published in *Triton* were not limited to *haiku*, but also included authors' experiments in related genres and forms, as well as Lukomnikov's "hokku plus," which were placed in the "Next to Haiku" section. Among the publications that interpreted Japanese literary sources in an original manner, it is worth noting the works of Mikhail Baru and Zlata Feldman,²¹ designated as "*haibun*"²², as well as "Regional Monogatari" by poet Ivanhoe²³, written with a focus on the *uta-monogatari* genre. The most likely source of inspiration for the Russian-language *haibun* was Matsuo Basho's classic travel diary *The Narrow Road to the Interior*, available to Russian-speaking readers in translations by V. N. Markova (poetry) and N. I. Feldman (prose).

The *haibun* by Baru and Feldman also combine travel notes and capture emotions and images in *haiku*, combining everyday and landscape sketches with indications of seasonality and weather

²¹ Presumably a pseudonym of Marina Hagen. On the "Polutona" portal (polutona.ru), some of the above texts are published under her name.

²² *Triton: Russian Almanac of Haiku Poetry*. (2002). Issue 3. Moscow. Pp. 124–133.

²³ *Triton: Russian Almanac of Haiku Poetry*. (2002). Issue 3. Moscow. Pp. 124–130.

conditions. However, while drawing on the original Japanese tradition, they reinterpret it in their own way. In *Triton*, Baru's *haibun*, consisting of seven episodes, including a prose section and a poetic conclusion in the form of a *haiku*, is published without separating them into separate numbered chapters, allowing it to be read as a single, coherent text. The influence of the Japanese tradition is evident not only in its form but also in its system of images, built on natural objects and phenomena. Furthermore, its regular use of parcellation deprives it of any hint of a plot-based narrative, which boils down to capturing individual states and impressions ("It's cleared up. It's warmed up. Just a little. The sun has set briefly. Observes custom"). Attention to detail, states, and impressions leads to the emergence of specific and vividly marked objects and situations in *haibun*: the lyrical hero goes fishing, sitting on a stump, devours with gusto "Riga sprats, Krakow sausage, and a couple of local pickles," washing it down with "Sibirskaya Korona" beer, after which he returns to admiring nature, discovering the similarity of the surrounding landscape with "the picture on the large boxes of chocolates from the Red October factory." These features allow us to characterize Baru's *haibun* as a synthetic text, oriented at various levels toward the Japanese *haibun* tradition, yet reinterpreting it with an eye toward foreign cultural realities and the Russian-language literary tradition, as evidenced, in particular, by its final fragment²⁴:

"Not to row, not to steer, but to lie, to drift carefree. Let everything pass by, without mooring, without landing, without casting off. Not to disclose coordinates, nor home port, nor phone number, nor marital status. To honk inarticulately into a trumpet and blow smoke rings. Not to remember departure and arrival dates. To remember nothing... It's impossible.

spring sea of desires
on warm and gentle waves
I swim to you to spawn..."

²⁴ *Triton: Russian Almanac of Haiku Poetry*. (2003). Issue 4. P. 129.

Zlata Feldman's *haibun* interprets the original tradition differently. The text lacks capital letters, likely a reference to the impossibility of dividing Eastern script into registers. It contains references to the seasons and describes the landscape and weather conditions, but its distinctive feature is a shift in perspective: in certain fragments, the narration is told from the child's perspective ("some adults think puddles are for dirtying shoes, although shoes are actually washed in them. but actually, puddles are for looking at the sun on a bright day without squinting, and for breaking the crispy crust, and for making boats..."). The *haiku* concluding the prose fragments are typically abstract and, unlike the poems in Baru's *haibun*, lack appeals to Russian identity²⁵:

with yesterday's rain
didn't meet
the cut flowers

heat
sparrows bathe
in dust

The prose fragments, however, not only contain references to the realities of Russian life but also draw a contrast between them and nature. For example, the lyrical heroine of Feldman's *haibun* "had to explain to the traffic cops what was going on. well, i honestly said that i was letting a dragonfly pass, which not only ran a red light, but was speeding and had no license plates..."²⁶. The flight of fancy, however, is immediately interrupted by the remark: "and you know what he [the traffic cop] replied: 'where in the city,' he says, 'did you see a dragonfly?' and indeed..."²⁷ – which postulates the impossibility of existing in the imaginary reality of Japanese literature.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 131–132.

²⁶ *Triton: Russian Almanac of Haiku Poetry*. (2003). Issue 4. P. 132.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 132.

Another example of using Japanese literature as a starting point for one's own rethinking is Ivanhoe's "Regional Monogatari"²⁸. Its main reference point was the *uta-monogatari* genre, familiar to Russian-speaking readers from the works *Ise Monogatari* (translated by N. I. Konrad)²⁹ and *Yamato Monogatari* (translated by L. M. Ermakova)³⁰, which had already attracted the attention of literary figures and even become objects of parody. Ivanhoe's interpretation violates some principles of the original Japanese texts, but overall, his "Regional Monogatari" appears surprisingly compositionally consistent for a poet known for his departure from convention and poetic performances. *Triton* presents nine short stories,³¹ each containing a *haiku*, which distinguishes the "Regional Monogatari" from Japanese *uta-monogatari*, for which, due to the specifics of the historical development of literature, only *tanka* was possible. The experiment with incorporating *haiku* into its structure was intended to focus the reader's attention on a specific moment presented in the stories. Their prose sections are written in free verse, and certain techniques employed, particularly inversion and explanatory remarks in parentheses, stylize them as translations of Japanese classical literature. The absence of punctuation and capital letters, in turn, visually aligns Ivanhoe's texts with Eastern writing. In "Regional Monogatari," the free interpretation of the *uta-monogatari* formula is complemented by original content. Ivanhoe draws on intertexts on various levels. His work contains

²⁸ *Triton: Russian Almanac of Haiku Poetry*. (2002). Issue 3. Pp.124–130.

²⁹ *Ise Monogatari*. (1979). Translated by N. I. Konrad. Moscow: Nauka.

³⁰ *Yamato Monogatari*. (1982). Translated by L. M. Ermakova. Moscow: Nauka.

³¹ The anthology *Russian Poems of the 1950s–2000s*, however, contains ten of them under the title "Regional Monogatari. The First Scroll" (pp. 790–793]. See: *Russkie stikhi 1950–2000 godov. Antologiya (pervoe priblizhenie)*. (2010). [Russian Poems of the 1950s–2000s. An Anthology (First Approximation)]. In Two Volumes. Volume 2. Compiled by I. Akhmeteyev, G. Lukomnikov, V. Orlov, A. Uritsky. Moscow.

allusions to N. A. Nekrasov (“My father chops / and I take them away”) and the film *Shadows Disappear at Noon* (“Noon / shadows creep somewhere / and disappear”), while its eighth fragment is built on references to the works of A. P. Chekhov, particularly “The Seagull” and “The Cherry Orchard.” The domestication of the original Japanese literary genre also occurs through the use of folk tales. For example, the seventh fragment cites a superstition associated with hiccups, and the tenth plays on the tale of the bear on a linden leg.

Conclusion

The popularity of *haiku* and the rise of Russian-language three-line verses, as well as reflection on the boundaries and formal criteria for defining texts within this category, developed into two main streams: “*haiku* masters,” who adhered to the strict canons of the original tradition, and poets who turned to it for creative experimentation or freely interpreted it. At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the first publication to offer space for works written in either vein was the *Triton* almanac, which ran for four issues. This characteristic makes it a representative source for analyzing the reception of *haiku* by Russian-speaking authors. This article examined attempts at original interpretations of *haiku* and other genres of Japanese literature that came to the attention of experimental poets. Among the diverse approaches, common techniques included playing with the formulaic nature of Japanese poetry, using colloquial vocabulary and elements of humorous culture, and merging Japanese style with Russian realities. The termination of the almanac’s publication demonstrated the incompatibility of this perception of *haiku* with the adherence to the original tradition held by the *haijin*, and these approaches subsequently continued to develop in various venues, both online and in print.

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