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Genre: Japanese Haikus of the 18th Century

中々にひとりあればぞ月を友

Yosa Buson

nakanaka ni hitori areba zo tsuki o tomo

Since it turns out

I'm all by myself

I make friends with the harvest moon

身の闇の頭巾も通る月見かな

Yosa Buson

mi no yami no zukin mo tōru tsukimi kana

Someone goes by wearing a hood

in his own darkness

not seeing the harvest moon

None is travelling

Matsuo Basho

Here along this way but I,

This autumn evening.

Clouds come from time to time -

Matsuo Basho

and bring to men a chance to rest

from looking at the moon.

枯枝に烏のとまりたるや秋の暮

Matsuo Basho

On a broken branch

A crow has stopped

Autumn evening

The snow is melting

Kobayashi Issa

and the village is flooded

with children.

うまさうな 雪がふうはり ふうはりと

Kobayashi Issa

It looks appetizing.

The snow softly

And gently

初雪や消ればぞ又草の露

Yosa Buson

hatsuyuki ya kiyureba zo mata kusa no tsuyu

The first snow falls

then it melts

into dew on the grass

This genre is important in our society and in our lives because this helped shaped what Japanese poetry are known for today. Haikus are often connected to the seasonal changes. Although translated haikus lack the exact meaning of the original haikus, they enlighten the mind or soul of the reader. Some of the most well known people to have written haikus in the 18th century are Matsuo Basho, Kobayashi Issa and Yosa Buson. Japanese poetry or literature community can be connected to this genre as the haiku can be more meaningful in the original language than in the translated ones. This genre emerged in the 17th century and did not become known as haiku until the 19th century. The term haiku was derived from the first element haika and the second element hokku. The hokku have to mention the time of day, subjects as the season, and the description of the landscape. Originally, haikus were restricted to only write about nature. After Basho, haikus subject were expanded. This genre are not directed towards a particular audience as many people can read it and get the meaning of the haiku. The rules of the genre is to write a three line- seventeen syllables and usually in a 5-7-5 structure. There are different forms of this genre such as senryu, tanka, and lures. Matsuo Basho was important to have produced in this genre as his writings was considered the new style of poetry and helped shaped Japanese popular form of poetry. He was the first to elevate the haikus to a refined and conscious art. Buson and Issa both followed the tradition of Basho and wrote their own interpretive haikus.

The main message of these samples are nature, or a feeling of loneliness or companionment. They all have the same message which usually refers to the start of a new season. "Since I'm all by myself, I make friends with the harvest moon." (Yosa Buson). This quote indicates that the person will not feel lonely even though he's alone because the moon will

always be in the same place. These examples are not restricted by the 5-7-5 structure of haikus and the seventeen syllables and in three lines. These samples are directed towards the Japanese poets as how these haikus are able to shape the way haikus are written and how the value as art has increased. Most of the samples connects nature to the feelings of people. “The snow is melting and the village is flooded with children.”(Kobayashi Issa). As there are connections with nature and feelings of a person, the reader will be able to relate with the feeling and understanding the importance of nature. The significant differences between these haikus would be the way they are interpreted.

On a broken branch

A crow has stopped

Autumn evening

This sample is written by Matsuo Basho. The message of this sample is the changes in season. When the crow has stopped on a broken branch, it indicates the end of autumn. This was the first haiku of Matsuo Basho and this helped changed the views on haikus and how this created a new style of Japanese poetry. This was one of the haikus that helped shaped on what the haiku should be about. The constraint for this haiku is the seventeen syllable haiku. Even though this was not the standard structure of haiku, this helped on how many syllables should a haiku consist. This text is important to society as it was the first few haikus to be written and was a turning point in the Japanese poetry as it was a new style and signifies the importance of nature. “On a broken branch, Autumn evening.” These terms are most important in this haiku because this indicates the seasonal change. I personally find this sample as most significant

because this was what changed poetry in Japan and how haikus were structured and what concepts were the haikus about.

Clouds drifts from

Town to town

Sea to sea

The first snow falls

Onto the town

A cold breeze past by

The moon gazes down

At a lonely moon

The man gazes back

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