

**Haiku from the Bayou, Back to Bashō, and Beyond: Searching for the Haiku in Translation**

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## **Abstract**

Although the history of the haiku dates back to 8<sup>th</sup> century Japanese poetic tradition, haiku were not introduced outside of Japan until early 20<sup>th</sup> century through translation. Since this introduction, original haiku creation outside of the Japanese language has taken off, particularly, in North America, through the works of the Beat poets. Raging parallel to this rise in popularity is the debate around what criteria constitute a haiku once it is removed from its original linguistic and cultural ties. This thesis will explore the difficulties in defining and setting boundaries in haiku translation through a multiple translation approach that allows for both an historic and modern lens on this poetic form. The source-language corpus is pulled from Cajun poet Zachary Richard's collection *Feu*. Each selected poem has undergone three translations, to appear through a literal, foreignizing, and mnemonic lens, as a means to explore the nuance and the numerous conceptions of the haiku.

## Résumé

Même si le haïku remonte au 8<sup>e</sup> siècle dans la tradition poétique japonaise, la forme n'a pas fait son apparition à l'extérieur du Japon avant le début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle grâce à la traduction. Depuis, la création originale du haïku dans des langues autres que le japonais n'a cessé de gagner en popularité, particulièrement en Amérique du Nord grâce aux œuvres des poètes issus de la *Beat Generation*. Plus le haïku est monté en popularité, plus il y a eu débat sur les critères qui constituent le haïku une fois coupé de ses racines linguistiques et culturelles. Cette thèse explorera les difficultés rencontrées par la traductrice en essayant de définir le haïku et d'en établir des critères pour sa traduction, en empruntant une approche de traductions multiples qui permet d'analyser le haïku d'une perspective à la fois historique et moderne. Le corpus de langue source est tiré du recueil *Feu* du poète cajun Zachary Richard. Chaque poème sélectionné est traduit trois fois, selon une approche littérale, étrangéïsante et mnémotechnique, afin d'explorer la nuance et les conceptions multiples du haïku.

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## Introduction

Haiku were born out of a long and rich Japanese poetic tradition, dating back over a thousand years. While the term “haiku” itself was not employed until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, certain characteristics, such as brevity and syllabic counts of five and seven, have been noted as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century. First introduced to North America through translation at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, haiku gained in popularity in the 50s and 60s through the works of Gary Snyder, Allan Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and other authors and poets subscribing to the Beat movement. With haiku becoming firmly rooted in Western literature, the form has continued to evolve, and has since found its way into literary practices around the world.

As the form and content of haiku have become more varied and disparate over the past several decades, defining a haiku has become a near impossible task. While the definition of the genre is often reduced to poems of three lines, following a 5-7-5 syllable count, both the traditional Japanese poems and the modern haiku movements are defined by much more. In the former, a haiku must follow strict criteria to earn a place in the literary canon, and in the latter, they must reject said criteria. If the criteria that define a haiku have become more consistently inconsistent, what does this mean for the translation of this genre? Is this a question of fidelity to the author or fidelity to the reader, both in terms of ease of reading and ties to the original literary tradition? Is it in fact best for the translator to establish her own criteria before embarking on the translation process?

These questions have guided the direction of this thesis: to a study of haiku translation through a traditional and a modern lens. The work that follows is based on the poetry of a lesser-known poet of the Beat generation, Zachary Richard, in his collection of poetry *Feu* (2001), and my own translations of a selection of his poems. While Richard is better known for his culturally iconic singing and songwriting on (A)Cadian<sup>1</sup> history and identity within the Western minority francophone sphere, his poetry explores a wider variety of themes, demonstrating a particular penchant for the brevity and natural themes of haiku. Given that his haiku present few unifying characteristics within the classic form, Richard's work is ideal for attempting multiple translations as a means to explore how best to convey the essence of the haiku.

In what follows, I will first provide a brief biography of the author as well as an overview of the collection of poetry *Feu*. I will then examine the history and evolution of the haiku to understand its essential characteristics and how the history of this form has shaped the translation process. Following the contextualization of my thesis, I will provide an overview of classic haiku characteristics and explain how they have guided my multiple translation approaches, through a literal, foreignizing, and mnemonic lens. Finally, I will present my translations of the studied haiku, through each of the described approaches, accompanied by an analysis of the translations and the effect conveyed to the reader.

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<sup>1</sup> Acadians being the name given to the French immigrants who settled in the Maritimes in the 1600s, and Cadians representing an evolution of the name to designate the Acadians who settled in Louisiana as a result of the 1755 Deportation (Magee, n.d.). The term "Cajun" is an English bastardization of "Cadien" (often pronounced "cadjin" in Louisiana French), but also accepted.

# 1 Setting the Scene

## 1.1 Author Biography

Zachary Richard was born September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1950, in Scott, Louisiana. Growing up in the deep South of the United States, Richard's primary language was English, though his lineage was not. In his introduction to *Feu*, Richard describes both his maternal and paternal grandparents as the last monolingual francophone generation of Louisiana, characterized by the "français extravagant ... créé sur la base du parler du centre-ouest de la France du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, et forgé dans le creuset de l'Acadie et de la Louisiane" (p. 10). This French would more or less come to an end with Richard's parents' generation, unable to surmount the social and institutional prejudice that characterized the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. Being split between two cultural worlds and their languages would come to shape Richard's personal and professional trajectory.

Toward the end of the 1960s, Richard left for New Orleans and Tulane University, where he would pursue a degree in history. Academics would not, however, be Richard's only focus: the political engagement that he cultivated over these years, shaped by strong opposition to the War in Vietnam, would be a mainstay over the course of his life (Martin, 2016). He also spent a year abroad in Edinburgh, Scotland, where his childhood classical music training would follow the influences of the time, including Bob Dylan, Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, and Leonard Cohen. Richard would use this experience to launch his musical career: in the early 1970s, he would record a first,

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<sup>2</sup> Mandatory schooling was instituted in 1916 for children in Louisiana, and the language of instruction was English. French was regarded as inferior, and speaking it warranted punishment in the classrooms (Allain, 2017). Facing the growing social stigmatization around French, and having English being presented as the only American language, many francophone parents would consciously raise their children in English.

full-length album that mixed French, English, and Cajun songs, and would also return to Louisiana to form a progressive Cajun ensemble, the Bayou Drifter Band.

In 1975, Richard was invited to be part of a delegation from Lafayette to Quebec, where he was exposed to the strong linguistic and separatist tensions governing the province at the time. This experience prompted Richard to move to Montreal, where he would reside for the next five years. This move would essentially become a turning point for his career: not only did it allow him to understand the necessity in fighting for his language and culture, it also launched him into a new audience base, one that was eager for the kind of militant songs and stories that he began to create and share. As Richard explains, “Le mot ‘Louisiane’ évoque le mot ‘cousin’ pour les Québécois, ça fait partie de la famille, pas de la famille proche, mais de la famille élargie. J’ai donc pu trouver une place unique et sur mesure sur la scène musicale” (Martin, 2016). This kinship between Richard and Quebec is still felt today.

While French-speaking Canada was beginning to adopt Richard as one of their own, he was becoming disillusioned by the political and linguistic realities of his home state. Living in Quebec “revived a militancy in [him] which fell dormant after the Vietnam War” (*La Presse* 2007, qtd. in Brasseaux, 2013), but this too would ultimately lead to disillusionment. For a time, Richard’s militancy saw him refusing to speak English, “until [he] realized [he] was screaming in the dark” (Los Angeles Times, 1979, qtd. in Brasseaux, 2013). Furthermore, his time in *la belle province* was characterized by a tense cultural and political climate that would lead to the failed 1980 referendum for Quebec sovereignty, which by extension was a perceived failure for the North American francophone cause. In 1981, after five years in Canada, Richard left his established

audience to return to America, where he began writing and singing exclusively in English (at least to the public eye).

Richard would remain absent from the francophone scene until 1994, when he was invited to perform at the inaugural Congrès mondial acadien (CMA)<sup>3</sup> in southern New Brunswick. This performance would mark another turning point in Richard's career, and a return to the Cadian roots in his work. As he shared in an interview with Codiac FM (formerly LeFront, the student newspaper at the Université de Moncton), “[j]’ai commencé ma carrière acadienne en ’75 [...] et là, y’a eu 15 ans que je n’étais pas revenu. Pis c’est sûr que j’ai eu une carrière américaine dans ça. [...] Tout ça a été interrompu par le 1er congrès mondial en ’94”. For Richard, there was a clear distinction between his Acadian and his American career, and with the 1995 recording of his first French-language album in nearly a decade (his most successful album to date), the pendulum had swung back to Acadian.

This renewed, staunch engagement in the preservation of the cultural and linguistic landscape in North America would lead to greater movement in Richard's home state. In 1996, he founded Action Cadienne, a non-profit organization designed to promote and preserve French in Louisiana, with the following mandate:

We believe strongly that our identity as well as our heritage, is fundamentally linked to the French language, and our primary mission is to promote the language itself, and to gain recognition of the linguistic rights of the Cadien

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<sup>3</sup> The CMA was born out of the idea of providing a setting for Acadians from all over the world to come together and celebrate their shared history. The first CMA was held in southern New Brunswick in 1994, with over 300 000 participants in roughly 70 different family reunions, academic conferences, shows, and other events, making it the largest assembly of Acadians since the 1755 Deportation itself (CyberAcadie, n.d.).

people The French language has been, and continues to be, an essential element of Louisiana culture in spite of its oppression during the last fifty years.

(Long, n.d.)

Evidently, Richard saw the cultural heritage of the French language as part of an ongoing systematic oppression applied by the state. As he explains, “[w]ithout the language, you have only a vestige of the culture [...]. Other aspects of the culture, such as music or cuisine, may survive, but the language may disappear here [in Louisiana] in a generation. That is unacceptable” (Brasseaux, 2013). While Louisiana’s first French immersion schools required teachers to be brought in from all around the world, many teachers today are native Louisianan (CODOFIL, n.d.), and Richard remains actively engaged with this new generation of French speakers.

Although Richard’s activism has largely been focused on preservation of language and culture, he is also a fierce environmentalist, and has described himself as “fundamentally a tree-hugger” (Martin, 2016) – noting as well the contradictory pairing between this personality trait and his attachment to an historically Republican State with strong Tea Party presence. Whether in his creative work or in interviews he gives, Richard talks often of his experiences cultivating his small piece of land on the bayous of Louisiana. He is also an amateur birder, and the theme of flight often makes an appearance in his works. The natural world eventually shifted into another militant cause for Richard, particularly in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the BP Oil Spill in 2010. Following these cataclysmic events, Richard released a single, *Le Grand Gosier*, from which the proceeds went directly to Gulf Air Acadiana, an organization dedicated to restoring the Gulf of Mexico (Brasseaux, 2013).

Richard is still an active singer, songwriter, and writer, with his latest album released during the writing of this thesis in 2018, and he continues to perform across the continent and globe. In recent years, Richard has garnered attention for his work in documentaries, notably “Kouchibouguac” (2007), which documents a second, much more recent expulsion in the story of the Acadians, this time displaced in favour of a national park in eastern New Brunswick. The film details the resistance to the park by the Acadian residents, and particularly by a single man, Jackie Vautour, who refused to be coerced from his home and who still lives on land within the park today. Richard also released “Toujours batailleur” (2017), which focuses on the resilience of Acadians and Acadians 250 years after the Deportation.

Over the course of his career, Richard has accumulated numerous awards and honours, including but not limited to initiation into l’Ordre des francophones de l’Amérique, becoming an Officier de l’Ordre des Arts et Lettres of the Republic of France, and receiving multiple honorary doctorates. In 2009, Richard became one of only a handful of Americans to receive the Order of Canada, which recognizes “outstanding achievement, dedication to the community and service to the nation” (Information and Media Services, n.d.). These few examples of high international recognition highlight that at its core, Richard’s work is largely about crossing borders, whether between nations and languages, the spiritual and the natural, or the personal and the cultural.

## **1.2 Life as a poet**

Although Richard is best known for his work as a musician and cultural advocate, poetry has always occupied an important role in his life. Indeed, since the awarding of

the Nobel Prize in literature to Bob Dylan in 2017, it is hard to separate writing songs from writing poems, and it could be argued that poetry is the foundation of Richard's career.

In his early years, however, Richard had begun on a very different path, beginning his studies at Tulane University in law. In 1968, in a quiet campus courtyard, Richard came across Allen Ginsberg, sitting alone, playing harmonium, and chanting (Monthly Report, 2014). Richard sat beside him, and Ginsberg taught him a mantra, a simple exchange that Richard would cite as life-changing: "C'était la première fois que je rencontrais un esprit libre ... quelqu'un qui me montrait que la vie c'était autre chose que d'avoir un compte en banque et une voiture; la vie c'est une quête, une aventure" (Desjardins, 2001). This spiritual and creative spark from Ginsberg would set Richard to seek inspiration from other influential authors of the time, notably Gary Snyder and Jack Kerouac (who Richard would later discover was himself a Franco-American). Richard began to try his hand at writing poetry in English, exploring many of the same themes as his Beat influences, particularly drawing from Snyder's strong nature and Zen Buddhist inspirations. He sent his work to many American publishing companies in the early 1970s but would not find market for his poems.

A few years into his new creative path, Richard's time in Quebec would begin to shift his primary working language from English to French. In 1978, the Rencontre des francophones de l'Amérique du Nord, designed to be an "encounter with the Francophone world," organized an event called "Paroles et musique" to showcase francophone literary and musical talent from across North America. When it became known that no delegation from Louisiana had been asked to participate, Richard, along

with noted Cajun folklorist and writer Barry Jean Ancelet (penname Jean Arceneaux), would eventually join the other members of francophone Canada's literary community. In light of the evident perception of "la pauvre Louisiane illettrée" (Arceneaux, 1980, p. 9), Richard and Ancelet set about organizing and editing an anthology of contemporary French poetry in Louisiana. Published in 1980, *Cris sur le bayou* showcased several heretofore little-known Louisiana poets, including Richard himself. In this momentum of a so-called "Cajun Renaissance," Richard published his own first collection of poetry that same year, *Voyage de nuit*, which focused on themes of travel and nature.

Richard continued to write poetry over the next decade. Following his return to Louisiana in the 1980s and his subsequent retreat from the francophone world, he would not publish again until 1997. *Faire récolte*, his second collection, contains poems dated between 1981 and 1994, all written between Richard's departure from Montreal and the CMA. He addresses this book to his neighbours in Louisiana, saying that he will perhaps "give them copies and tell them the title, and since they can't read French, I'll be able to make them believe that it's a farmer's almanac and I'll win prestige in my little corner of the world" (Bierschenk, 2006, p. 1). In this one sentence, Richard gives a glimpse into one of the fundamental problems he has historically faced in his role of poet: the fact that Cajuns were often illiterate in their own language, and thus unable to read his poetry, which was largely written both for and about them.

This problem has infused Richard's poetry both thematically as well as stylistically, for in recognizing that a portion of his intended audience is unable to read his work, he nonetheless acknowledges that they can understand it. In other words, Richard's poetry is written to be read aloud, an attribute supported by the numerous

recordings of his poetry available for listening on his website. This innate orality does not, however, simply extend to explicitly Cajun poetry (i.e. poems addressing Cajun identity or written to mimic oral Cajun speech). Richard offers recordings of all styles of his work, including even the briefest haiku, maintaining that “le son et le rythme des phrases ont autant d’importance que le sens des mots...” (“Paroles et poésie”).

Although Richard’s poetry stands on its own, it is clear that music and musicality are never far behind.

Unlike Richard the singer-songwriter, who has had a successful bilingual career, Richard the poet remains francophone. Although his collections explore many universal themes, it is the identity-driven content in his French poetry that was able to strike the right chord at the right time. His four collections (*Feu* was released in 2001 and *Outre le Mont* in 2015), although released over a span of nearly 40 years, have all been released to an audience hungry for words and lyrics to feed political, cultural, and linguistic tensions and dissatisfactions. Despite many attempts, Richard has never been able to publish an entire collection of English-language poetry. Nevertheless, Richard has made a number of his English creations available on his website, with an accompanying note that “his English language poetry is as rich and challenging as that in French” (“Poetry”). Equally, although his collections are considered as French-language publications, they often contain a number of poems in English.

Richard’s poetry collections might not be as numerous as his music albums, but his work has nevertheless garnered international attention. *Faire récolte* would go on to win the *prix littéraire Champlain* in 1998, which at the time was an award designed to showcase French-language literature across North America, and this collection remains

one of his most celebrated. In 2003, *Feu* was awarded the *prix Roland Gasparic* in Romania.

### 1.3 Feu

Richard's collections of poetry all follow similar threads in style and theme: largely free-verse, and touching on enlightenment according to the Zen tradition, the power of nature, and francophone identity in North America. What distinguishes his collections can most readily be found in the prefaces, either to the entire work or to a section within. As the first section of *Feu* appears to carry the most thematic weight – it bears the same title as the collection and has the most detailed introduction from the author – it will be the principle focus of this project.

As the title would suggest, *Feu* is centered around fire, but more particularly around its duality within the human world: “La relation entre l’homme et le feu a essentiellement deux aspects: un bénin et contrôlable, l’autre destructeur et hors contrôle” (Richard, 2001, p. 9). Within this contrast of benign and destructive, controllable and uncontrollable, Richard further draws on the concept of karma and the notion of unpredictability to make a connection between the cosmic and the physical world. For him, just as fire is unpredictable, so is his writing in French. Richard describes it as a constant fight in a strange language to describe what is most dear to him, because no matter the existing familial and cultural ties to the French language, “c’est l’anglais qui occupe les niveaux profonds de [s]on subconscient” (p. 9). Writing poetry in French, then, is inherently a struggle, a pushing and pulling of two opposing forces (in this case, two languages and cultures). Launching himself into an unpredictable act further ties Richard to his firm belief in the Buddhist notion of karma,

or the concept that for each action, there is a reaction, and because those reactions cannot be foreseen, they remain steeped in unpredictability. For Richard, everything has a ripple effect, and everything is interconnected; how and when something interconnects remains to be seen.

Working from these principles, Richard has divided his collection into four sections, blending and weaving themes and styles in a manner that suggests only loose cohesion from one page to another. Two sections are highly political in nature, often referencing very specific dates, events, people, street names, etc., while the other two sections interweave poems that are much more abstract. Poems can range from three to hundreds of lines; lines can be a single word or a sentence that extends from margin to margin. The themes can be graphic or vague, spiritual or physical, militant, routine, sexual, religious, Zen, or violent.

Richard's work is also characterized by a quasi-absence of consistent stylistic elements – without line breaks, in fact, the line between poetry and prose could become hard to draw. Line breaks provide the only notable consistency, in that they offer a visual structure to the poetry, as noted in Michael Bierschenk's introduction to his translation of *Faire récolte*:

At first blush, it seemed fairly simple [to translate]: no meter, no rhyme – true free verse. This is true on a certain level, as none of the poems in *Take in the Harvest* conform to any traditional poetic form. There are no sonnets here, no blank verse, no alexandrines, not even any metrical haiku... The poems in *Take in the*

*Harvest* are not governed by iambs or trochees, but rather by the inevitability of the carriage return. (2006, p. 4)

The “inevitability of the carriage return” creates a visual pattern for the reader that continues through the whole collection. Most poems follow a three-line, wave-like pattern: line one at the margin, one indent before line two, two indents before line three, and a return to the margin on line four. Other poems follow a two- or four-line pattern, and very rarely, a poem or section of poem will appear as a margin-aligned block of text.

In recognizing that Richard’s poetry is largely free-verse and verbose, following a storyteller’s rhythm and narrative ideal, it is all the more surprising to note that the single identified formal style of poetry in this collection is the haiku. This briefest of poetry styles, however, falls prey to an element of free-verse as well: of forty-four poems in section one, seven are identified explicitly as haiku, none of which follow the same syllable or line count. This deliberate choice on Richard’s part to play with the haiku form is demonstrated by his “Haiku Classique” (p. 37):

Silence sur prairie  
le vent siffle plus à travers  
la craque du châssis.

In the entire collection, this is the only poem to follow the typical Western understanding of a haiku as a three-line, 5-7-5 syllable count, nature-themed poem. In noting that this is a “classic” haiku, Richard is both acknowledging the constraints of the form and

highlighting the flexibility in the boundaries of the form. Bierschenk (2006) adds to this effect that

[a]t first glance, the [haiku] label seems incongruous, since most of the poems are more than three lines long, and none conform to the traditional Japanese syllable constraints (5 syllables, 7 syllables, 5 syllables). The key to understanding the label is, however, not any sort of metrical constraint, but rather a semantic one. Just like his Japanese models, Richard's haiku bracket specific natural action ... [and] in titling his descriptions as haiku, Richard instructs the reader to keep the natural world consciously in mind, making it a key element in the consideration of his work (p. 2).

In this way, the haiku becomes an emphasis of the duality Richard describes in his introduction: a struggle between free and constrained verse, creating a spark of the unpredictable in a controlled environment.

In the initial stages of my research, I undertook a draft translation of the full collection of *Feu*. At the time, I had thought I should search for distinct sociolinguistic characteristics that would provide the basis for my research and translation particularities. Interestingly, what stood out most were not Cajun words and expressions, but the experience and reality of Cajun identity, an important part of which is tied to the land. I thus narrowed my focus to the haiku-style texts only, some twenty-six poems, in order to concentrate on what was important to the author, rather than what I had initially assumed to be the defining feature of his poetry. While there are only seven explicitly-titled haiku in this collection, there are an additional nineteen poems

that, in their theme and brevity, reflect the same characteristics, and it is from these twenty-six poems that I have chosen to build the corpus of my translations in this thesis.

## 2 Haiku History

Although the translation project here undertaken is between French and English, the history of the haiku is such that it is necessary to turn to the study of another language and another culture altogether. The haiku stems from a long history in Japanese culture, and although these short poems can be found in languages and cultures all around the world, and have undergone transformations in style and structure accordingly, their origin provides the basis from which the poems can be understood in literature today.

Exploring the emergence of the haiku in 16<sup>th</sup> century Japan and its adoption in the West in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century will provide important perspective and criteria in tackling translation of modern-day haiku. In this section, I will outline those links to the haiku's history before providing an overview of the modern-day haiku.

### 2.1 From Hokku to Haiku

#### 2.1.1 Early Japanese Poetic Tradition

Japan has an extensive poetic history, with one of the earliest forms, known as *waka*, dating back to 6<sup>th</sup> century Japan, well before the appearance of the haiku (“Waka”). *Waka* was the main form of court poetry until the 14<sup>th</sup> century and is a term that can be used to refer broadly to classical/traditional Japanese poetry. It can also be used as a synonym for *tanka*, or “short poem,” even though it includes such early styles as *choka*, literally meaning “long poem.” The various interpretations of *waka* are not entirely as contradictory as they appear, as even the so-called long poems followed

relatively rigid guidelines with regard to syllables and lines per verse, which typically kept the writing short and concise.

*Tanka* itself is a five-line, thirty-one syllable poem that provided the basis from which classical Japanese poetry evolved (“*Tanka*”). While it began as the work of a single author, it gradually became a collaborative composition between two people, in which one person would write the first three lines, with a 5-7-5 syllable count, and the other person would add the final two lines, each with seven syllables (“*Renga*”). This *tan renga* (short *renga*) was a form of amusement in all levels of Japanese society, with the first poet aiming to offer obscure and contradictory lines to make it more difficult for the second poet to complete the poem in a way that made sense.

It was the collaborative element to the *tan renga* that carried through into the next form of prevailing classic poetry in Japan, which became known as *haikai no renga* (a chain of linked verses) or simply *renga*. The former is typically known to be more playful, while the latter was more courtly and dignified in practice (“*Haiku*”). Short no more, the standard *renga* was approximately 100 verses long, and often it would be a work of many poets. In fact, as Jin’ichi Konishi (1975) states, “[t]he first requirement for the composition of *renga* is *renshū*, an assembly of *renga* enthusiasts who are both the poets and the audience” (p. 33). The assembled enthusiasts were typically a group of people familiar with one another and possessing a similar skillset, so that the resulting *renga* might be more polished and cohesive. Konishi adds that “*renga* has more than one author and that the poem is appreciated during the evolving process of composition” (p. 33). In order to tie the whole poem together, especially with the multitude of voices, it was the task of the most senior poet present to devise an initiating

verse, called a *hokku*, that would appear first in the linked-verse sequence, setting the tone for the ensuing verses (Carter, 2011, p.1).

*Hokku* were written following specific criteria: seventeen syllables over three lines, with a 5-7-5 syllable count, containing a *kigo* (season word) and a *kireji* (cutting word), and able to stand alone as an independent poem. The other ninety-nine verses would alternate between long verses (*chōku*), three lines of 5-7-5 syllable count, and short verses (*tanku*), two lines of 7-7 syllable count (Konishi, 1975, p. 38). Of the one hundred verses, the *hokku* is the only one in which “direct expression of the poet’s thoughts, emotions or observations is permitted” (p. 37), and thus the only verse in which the author has any autonomy. *Hokku* have also been read as reactions to current events and goings-on, i.e. “births, deaths, political success, impending battles, etc.” (Carter, 2011, p.2). Often, of the completed poem, only the *hokku* was recorded, “to be noted for later generations” (p. 3).

### 2.1.2 Mid-Century Shift

Due to the independent nature of the *hokku*, it soon began to be produced outside of the context of *renga* creations. This move is largely credited to Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694), who wrote collections comprised exclusively of *hokku* without accompanying verses (“Bashō”). Bashō studied at the Danrin school, taking in both elements of Taoism and classical Chinese poetry before leaving to wander the countryside and gain followers, which would eventually lead him to found the Shōfu school, of which branches would endure until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bashō’s classical poetry

training, along with his strong Taoist and Zen Buddhist influence, also brought a shift to the themes of the poems, weaving a stronger spiritual element into the poetry (Barnhill, 2005).

Other poets, such as contemporary Ueshima Onitsura (1661-1738), as well as Buson (1716-1783), and Issa (1763-1827), would continue working with the *hokku* independently from the *renga*, but it wasn't until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that the real rift would take place, at a time when *haikai no renga* were losing popularity. Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902), an agnostic nature enthusiast who also happened to be a strong critic of Bashō, departed from the prevailing style of the past two hundred years and “reformed *hokku* as a kind of nature sketch in words” (“Haiku”). He was also the first poet to call his work haiku, thus ushering in a new, standalone style of poetry into the Japanese tradition.

This official departure from *hokku* would have him (perhaps ironically) join Bashō, as well as Buson and Issa, to become the Great Four of the master haiku poets, even though he was the only one to officially write haiku. Stylistically, however, there is no immediate difference between a *hokku* and a haiku – they are both comprised of seventeen syllables over three lines, with a 5-7-5 syllable count, containing a *kigo* (season word) and a *kireji* (cutting word), and are able to stand alone as an independent poem. To call Bashō's and other early poets' work haiku would still constitute a misnomer, for “[e]ven though *hokku* sometimes appeared individually, they were understood to always be in the context of a *haikai*, if only theoretically” (“Haiku”).

## 2.2 Haiku in the West

### 2.2.1 The Imitation Game

By the end of Shiki's life in 1902, the *hokku* was in the very early stages of introduction to North America, but there was not much appreciation for this form of poetry at the time ("Haiku"). In 1904, Japanese-American poet Yone Noguchi wrote "A Proposal to American Poets" in which he described the *hokku* as "a tiny star, mind you, carrying the whole sky at its back... Its value depends on how much it suggests" (1904, p. 1). For Noguchi, where the *hokku* was akin to a "slightly-open door, where you may steal into the realm of poesy," English-language poetry was "a mansion with windows, widely open, even the pictures of the drawing-room being visible from the outside... [which] does not tempt me much to see the within" (p. 1). The beauty of the *hokku* for Noguchi lies in what is deliberately unsaid, the contrast between the obscure and the precise, and the ability of the poem to spark the reader's imagination without giving the whole image away.

It was shortly after this nudge of the *hokku* into American society that the haiku found its first real, although short-lived, foothold outside of Japan. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Imagist movement presented itself as a rejection of "the sentiment and artifice" of the Romantics, which favoured longer verse and flowery prose ("Imagism"). Proponents of this new movement, notably Ezra Pound, T. E. Hulme, Hilda Doolittle (H. D.), Richard Aldington, F. S. Flint, and Amy Lowell, preferred instead to focus on clarity and concision in their language and imagery, and to stray from traditional verse forms in terms of lines, rhymes, and meter. *Hokku* were a natural inspiration for the Imagists, "particularly in the aspiration to perceive a thing directly, to express it without emotion or excess, concisely and in common language" (Rowland,

Kacian & Burns, 2013, p. 311). The exact criteria behind *hokku* were still little known or misunderstood, but one of the most striking examples for similarity is Pound's well-known haiku-like poem, "In a Station of the Metro," that adheres to Imagism's tenets:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd

Petals on a wet, black bough.

While line and syllable count do not govern the poem, Pound's use of brevity and contrast of seemingly unrelated images, as though a "cut" between urban and natural imagery, bear striking resemblance to haiku characteristics.

### 2.2.2 Post WWII Adoption

Imagism left an imprint on English and American poets, but it fell out of style shortly after it emerged (Kawamoto, 1999, p. 710). *Hokku*, likewise, fell off the radar of the Western world for the next few decades, until the years following World War II, which brought with them "an interest centered on art, literature, and Zen Buddhism [...] growing out of increased contacts with Japan through Occupation and a spiritual thirst for religious and artistic fulfilment" (van den Heuvel, 2001 p. xxvii). When *hokku* reappeared, it was as haiku, through the four-volume *Haiku* series by R. H. Blyth, published between 1949-1952 ("Haiku"). While Blyth may have intended to introduce haiku to the West, he did not intend for it to lead to anything but a general appreciation from non-Japanese society. He would later write that "the latest development in the history of haiku is one which nobody foresaw – the writing of haiku outside Japan, not in

the Japanese language” (qtd. in “Haiku”). For Blyth, haiku were intrinsically tied to the Japanese language and culture.

However, between Blyth’s other extensive writing on Japanese and Asian culture, Kenneth Yasuda’s *The Japanese Haiku* (1957), and Harold G. Henderson’s *An Introduction to Haiku* (1958), the haiku spark was lit in North America. By 1963, *American Haiku*, a magazine devoted to what Blyth found so unimaginable, was founded by James Bull in Wisconsin (van den Heuvel, 2001, p. xxviii). Henderson writes in a letter to the editor that “if there is to be a real ‘American Haiku’ we must – by trial and error – work out our own standards” (p. xxviii). Indeed, where Blyth looked to emphasize the traditional Japanese poetry genre, with particular leanings to the Zen connection, *American Haiku* represented the beginnings of an independent genre with room to grow into modern Western society, and the style of growth being determined by the poets themselves (“Haiku”).

The evolution of the haiku as a genre came about through translation that offered little or no background context: Blyth emphasized the structured, standalone quality of the *hokku*; Yasuda favoured seventeen syllable, 5-7-5, A-C rhymed verses; Henderson highlighted the events and images and did not count syllables, although also included rhymes which were not present in the originals (“Haiku”). It’s no wonder, then, that though many attempted to write their own haiku, there was still very little understanding regarding defining characteristics of a haiku. As W. H. Auden is quoted in Henderson (2004),

“[a]ll one can do ... is to give students as wide a variety of translated Japanese haiku as possible till they acquire an understanding of how the

mind of a Japanese haiku-poet works. Then, of course, a gifted student may find... that the form can be adapted to one's own kind of sensibility. In the history of literature it is extraordinary how profitable misunderstanding of poems in foreign languages has been" (p. 186)

Students of haiku from outside the Japanese language and culture were left to their own devices and, more importantly, to their own interpretation of what constituted haiku, which would ultimately set the genre on a path of rapid evolution.

These first few non-traditional haiku were "perhaps different from the ones found in the manifold of classical translations, but they were just as compelling, just as deep, just as human" (Rowland, Kacian & Burns, 2013, p. 334). Although this style of poetry was gaining traction, there were a few key voices that would truly launch this second, much more robust wave of haiku in North America in the 1950s, namely Gary Snyder, Allan Ginsberg, and Jack Kerouac. These contemporaries belonged to the Beat Generation, subscribing to a world-weary outlook, but also continually searching for enlightenment ("Beat Movement"). In terms of poetry, this movement sought liberation from structures and traditions, and haiku appeared as a means to adopt a recognizable poetic form all while rejecting the traditional constraints.

Weinreich, in the introduction to Kerouac's "Book of Haikus" (2003), pinpoints the arrival of the haiku in the Beat circle to Snyder, who spent a significant amount of time in post-War Japan studying Zen Buddhism. However, Snyder spent more time as a translator than a creator (Rowland, Kacian & Burns, 2013, p. 322). Both Kerouac and Ginsberg would become prominent American haikuists, both exploring at the same time

what it meant to be at the infancy of this new branch in the poetic tradition. For Kerouac's part, he maintains that

[t]he American Haiku is not exactly the Japanese Haiku. The Japanese Haiku is strictly disciplined to seventeen syllables but since the language structure is different I don't think American Haikus (short three-line poems intended to be completely packed with Void of Whole) should worry about syllables because American speech is something again... bursting to pop. Above all a Haiku must be very simple and free of poetic trickery and make a little picture and yet be as airy and graceful as a Vivaldi Pastorella (qtd. In Rowland, Kacian & Burns, 2013, p. xxix).

Kerouac would, in fact, attempt to entirely rename the American haiku, calling his versions "American pops." Ginsberg, on the other hand, would attempt to move haiku towards becoming the "American Sentence," and gave little consideration to the essence of the haiku so much as to the importance of establishing a form that could stand alone from the traditional Japanese poems. For Ginsberg, haiku "should be a simple declarative sentence – a beginning, middle, and end, subject, verb, object" (qtd. in Foley, 2003), doing away with abstract or incomplete thoughts. Unlike Kerouac, Ginsberg believed that the tie to syllables was important, and retained the seventeen-syllable count (Rowland, Kacian & Burns, 2003, p. 323).

### 2.2.3 The Modern Haiku

Although there was no consensus among these English-language haiku pioneers, the concept of the haiku, in all its potential facets, had been imprinted into the fabric of the American literary landscape. The Beat movement would taper off in the early 1960s, but by then, the foundation was laid for a new generation of haikuists, and with it, new understandings of the genre. Haiku-themed journals appeared increasingly over the following decades, each with a particular vision and perspective. *Haiku*, for instance, founded by Eric Amann, kept a Zen focus in its publications, while *Haiku West*, founded by Leroy Kanterman, tried to keep traditional structures even though they allowed for a broader range in themes than simply nature (Rowland, Kacian & Burns, 2013, p. 328).

From the emergence of these journals came the creation of organizations and societies that brought new voices of the haiku movement together. Local groups gave ground to national societies, leading to the founding of The Haiku Society of America in 1968; Haiku Canada would follow 10 years later. This growing acceptance of English-language haiku was further reinforced by the publication of *The Haiku Anthology* in 1974, in which the editor, Cor Van den Heuvel, sought to demonstrate the full range of haiku as explored over the past two decades. This not only allowed English-language haiku to gain greater legitimacy, but also showed that “haiku [were] not simply a 5-7-5 nature sketch, but a wide-ranging, emotive, capacious genre capable, in the right hands, of expressing anything a poet might wish to convey” (Rowland, Kacian & Burns, 2003, p. 333). Haiku, then, had truly been adopted into North American society as a valid, recognized form of poetic expression.

The popularity of haiku in North America would pave the way for the genre to become one of the most widely adopted forms of poetry in the world. In spite of this, the absence of an agreed-upon definition leaves the haiku conspicuously varied in form and content when compared to other poetry genres. A general search for haiku criteria will yield the standard that has been repeated thus far: seventeen syllables, three lines, 5-7-5 syllable count, nature theme. Some definitions, like the one proposed by the Haiku Society of America, deliberately eschews the specifics, choosing to provide a broad view instead, stating that a haiku is “[a] short poem that uses imagistic language to convey the essence of an experience of nature or the season intuitively linked to the human condition” (2004). While both definitions take a different approach, they are both ultimately the same: valid, but flawed.

In the end, Henderson’s observations on haiku creation in 1969 remain as true today as they were then:

There are as yet no generally accepted criteria for what haiku in English are, or should be. What kind of poems they will eventually turn out to be will depend primarily on the poets who write them. It seems obvious that they cannot be exactly the same as Japanese haiku – if only because of the difference in language. At the same time, they cannot differ too much and still be haiku (p. 28).

Haiku today, just as in Henderson’s time, depend on the balance between tradition and modernity, between established and innovative form. Modern haikuists, then, are left in much the same position as the very first creators of haiku outside of Japanese language and culture – needing to study the traditional form, but free to develop their own understanding of a haiku.

### 3 Haiku in Translation

Every translation project requires consideration of how best to convey the essence of a text in another language. However, when the boundaries of the form of the source text are unclear, the translator's task becomes nebulous; as Henderson (1969) suggests, "no translation of a poem is ever absolutely faithful to the original, and many so-called translations of haiku have been very unfaithful indeed" (p. 13). Thus, the inherent difficulty in defining haiku creates a grey zone around the translation process: should the translator favour loyalty to the author, knowing that his criteria for what constitutes a haiku frequently deviate from common Western understanding? Or should the translator bring the text closer to Western expectations of haiku? Furthermore, in understanding the history of the haiku form, and its precise, arguably inseparable connection to Japanese language and culture, is there merit to recalling the source of the form itself into the translations?

As Henderson (1969) observes, "[m]any of the [haiku purists] believe that one *must* be Japanese to experience the full impact and emotion to be gleaned from the abbreviated form of poetry" (p. 9). Thus, as a haiku translator who is neither from Japan nor Japanese-speaking, and in working with haiku written outside of a Japanese context, I am left with both a sense of the freedom generally allowed in modern-day haiku and a sense of obligation to traditional haiku, not unlike Richard himself. My translations, then, are a result of these dueling motivations: aiming to give proper respect to the constraints of the haiku form, while also recognizing that a haiku can be much more than these constraints. In order to explore the parameters of this duality, I will first undertake an overview of the characteristics that scholars underscore in the

traditional haiku form, and how they have been approximated (or not) in English.

Following this overview, I will outline the theoretical approaches that have guided my choice in attempting multiple translations of my corpus.

### **3.1 Haiku characteristics**

A common definition of a traditional haiku can be understood as defined in the New World Encyclopedia: “a three-line poem with seventeen syllables, written in a 5/7/5 syllable count... [o]ften focusing on images from nature, [and] emphasiz[ing] simplicity, intensity, and directness of expression” (“Haiku”). Critics may add more precise characteristics to this definition, however, in order to avoid becoming mired in technicalities, I will use this understanding as the basis for dividing my overview of traditional haiku into three sections: structure, image, and expression.

#### **3.1.1 Structure**

As critics have noted, to a Western sensibility, the haiku is most recognizable through its structure: “Along with the outbreak of haiku in America in the 1950s came the Great Seventeen-Syllable Debate, which continues to simmer in the haiku community to this day” (Rowland, Kacian & Burns, 2013, p. xxviii). At first glance, this “Great Debate” can seem unwarranted – Japanese haiku were indeed traditionally written to correspond to the count of seventeen. However, even though “[t]he syllable is a constant feature in every spoken language [...] and most people have an intuitive sense of what a syllable is... [e]ach language has its own rules about what kinds of

syllables are allowed, and what kinds aren't" ("Syllables and Syllable Structure").

Counting "syllables," then, is an entirely different exercise depending on the language.

In linguistic terms, the syllable in English is comprised of three elements: the onset, the body, and the coda (Gilbert & Yoneoka, 2000). The body, either a vowel or diphthong, is the crux of the syllable, and can appear on its own, as in "a" or "eye." The body is often accompanied by either the onset, one to three preceding consonants (as in "fly"), or the coda, one to four terminal consonants (as in "art"), or it can form the centre of both (as in "speech"). Shirane (2000), however, maintains that "the term syllable is an inaccurate way of describing the actual metrical units of Japanese poetry" (p. vii), as Japanese "syllables" are more properly akin to mora(e), or "[the] unit of time equivalent to the ordinary or normal short sound or syllable" ("Morae"). Shirane's criticism, mirrored by countless others, is that counting sounds is not equivalent to measuring duration.

Units of morae, known as *on*, can be either strong or weak. As Gilbert and Yoneoka (2000) note, a strong *on* is akin to the onset and body of an English syllable, presenting as a set of one consonant and one vowel (for instance, "ka"). Weak *on*, on the other hand, distinguish between long and short vowels, include the nasal "n," and distinguish between double consonants – they can be understood as an approximate of the coda. Thus, what would comprise a single syllable in English could be understood as two "syllables" in Japanese. What's more, while counting syllables in English can vary largely depending on accent and stress, all *on*, whether strong or weak, are represented by a single *kana*, or a character in traditional Japanese writing, making the "syllable" count straightforward (Henderson, 2004, p. 189).

Additionally, the composition of a word can be quite different between Japanese and English. As Welch (2015) notes, Japanese words are typically short and contain lots of syllables, similar to “radio” and “area.” English words, however, will often have clusters of consonants that, while adding extra sounds, do not add syllables. For example, “Jo,” “joy,” “joys,” “Joyce,” “joist,” and “joists” will all count as just one syllable, even though the duration of sound in “Jo” versus “joists” is not the same. In fact, the English language has numerous examples of words comprised of up to nine letters, such as “screeched,” “schlepped,” and “strengths,” which all correspond to just one syllable. As Donegan (2003) observes, “[i]n Japanese, seventeen syllables makes about six words, but seventeen syllables in English usually makes about twelve words or more.” Thus, in measuring syllables by English standards, classic Japanese haiku will typically fall short of seventeen. Conversely, by classic Japanese standards, a seventeen-syllable English-language haiku is downright lengthy, able to convey more information than its Japanese counterpart.

The seventeen syllables of a classic haiku are distributed in a 5-7-5 syllable distribution pattern, appearing in a single, vertical column, as traditional Japanese writing appears in lines from the top of the page to the bottom (Welch, 2006). While this syllabic pattern may seem unnatural in the English language, heightening the foreign quality of the form in the West, Imaoka (1996) notes that “[t]he 5-7-5 syllable rhythm in Japanese haiku is not the matter of arbitrary choice that it may appear to be to a non-Japanese haiku writer [...] To most Japanese, words phrased in these configurations have a remarkably mnemonic... quality” (p. 30). Mnemonic devices aid in memorization, with common examples in poetry including rhyme, alliteration, and

rhythm/musicality. In the case of Japanese haiku, the rhythm inherent to the language pattern serves a mnemonic purpose, explaining in part the longevity and popularity of haiku in Japan even when written copies were not always readily available.

English language on its own, however, does not inherently become an easy-to-remember rhythm, particularly when arranged in a 5-7-5 syllable distribution pattern. Imaoka (1996) notes that “there is no discernable rhythmic structure to such an arrangement, due to the disparate length of English syllables.” This pattern of syllables in Japanese can most readily be likened to iambic in English – an unstressed syllable followed by one that is stressed – as it is a natural cadence into which the Japanese language falls (Shultz, 2017). Henderson (2006) suggests that the best equivalent in English to the 5-7-5 pattern is, indeed, accented syllables, but does not impose the iamb – rather, he proposes successive lines of 2-3-2 stressed syllables among roughly twelve syllables in total, which is what he feels to be the equivalent in duration and rhythm to seventeen Japanese *on* (p. 101).

It is important to note at this point that I have only been addressing the structural elements of the classic haiku as it pertains to English, as, for the most part, that is the language into which I am translating Richard’s poems. Stress patterns may prove an effective means of portraying the haiku in English, but the same patterns do not exist in French, where the syllable remains a dominant focus in poetry, in the alexandrine tradition of lines of twelve syllables. Despite the tantamount evidence that classic haiku “syllable” count and distribution are impossible to replicate, and not even necessary to mimic, they nevertheless remain an important consideration, if only because Richard

acknowledges the seventeen-syllable count in his “Haiku classique” as part of his understanding of the classic haiku form.

Another element in Richard’s understanding of the classic form is the distribution of the syllables over three lines, which also widely remains a point of contention. Although classic haiku appeared in a single line, the first translators of this form typically chose to present the poem in three lines to represent the syllabic pattern, if not the syllables themselves (Henderson, 2004). If the translator felt that other divisions existed in the poem, haiku could also appear in two or four lines, although this was less common. Critics such as prominent haiku translator Hiroaki Sato have challenged this practice, maintaining that haiku ought to be translated in a single line in the spirit of the classic form (Welch, 2008).

Although some Western poets will play with one-line haiku, the three-line structure has undeniably become embedded in Western use of the form, particularly as it provides a visual means of identifying what is otherwise difficult to define. My own initial understanding of haiku could accept that there might be more or less than seventeen syllables, but three lines were a must, just as a sonnet must have fourteen. However, as with most other features of the classic or early Western haiku, modern poets, including Richard, readily deviate from this norm. While *Feu* includes several brief poems expressing images of nature, I did not initially consider them for my corpus, until I noticed that three of Richard’s explicitly-titled haiku – “Sieste haiku,” “Stray Cat Haiku,” “Haiku des hérons” – exceed three lines. Additionally, in my reading of Richard’s collection, the three-line “carriage return” format suggested the haiku structure throughout the body of work, even in poems that are pages long. Thus, I needed to

reconsider my definition of the haiku, and conclude that, structurally speaking, brevity is the most precise feature I can retain.

### 3.1.2 Theme

If the structural misconceptions surrounding haiku outside of the Japanese language are problematic, equally so is the question of theme(s) associated with classic haiku in Japan. While Western haikuists and readers retain haiku as the ultimate nature poem, or at least as a go-to form for portraying a snapshot of nature, this description is generally applied to the overarching theme of the poem. In traditional Japanese haiku, however, the connection to nature is much more formal, requiring the use of a *kigo* (season word). The *kigo* serves to place the poem in the immediate moment, setting the season of the poetic observation, while also referencing something much larger in scope:

In Japan, the seasonal word triggers a series of cultural associations which have been developed, refined, and carefully transmitted for over a thousand years...

[they] anchor[...] the poem in not only some aspect of nature but in the vertical axis, in a larger body of poetic and cultural associations (Shirane, 2000).

*Kigo* thus allow for a richness in the underlying meaning and image of the haiku, without compromising the brevity of the poem.

There are five categories of *kigo* as compiled in *saijiki*, or dictionaries of *kigo*: spring, summer, autumn, winter, and New Year (Yamamoto, 2005). Traditionally, the Japanese calendar followed the Chinese lunar year, with New Year falling at the overlap

between winter and spring, typically in early February. New Year is not a season unto itself, but it does mark the beginning of the next cycle of seasons, and familiar things experienced for the first time in the new year are attributed a particular specialness. Each season in turn has associated elements and references that can be roughly divided into seven categories: the season, the heavens (celestial), the earth (land or seascape), humanity (aspects of daily human life), observances, animals, and plants.

Words that have been classified into *saijiki* categories, however, are not always evident to an untrained eye; while certain *kigo* are associated to a direct image, others are connected by convention alone. One example can be observed in this haiku by Bashō, translated by Blyth:

All the family visiting the graves,

White-haired,

And leaning on their sticks.

While there does not appear to be a direct connection to nature in this haiku, the traditional Japanese season for visiting graves is the fall, and thus “graves” serves to link the poem to that time of year (D., 2016).

Certain words reoccur more frequently in classic haiku, which Shirane (2000) describes as a pyramid:

at the top were the big five... the cuckoo for summer, the cherry blossoms for spring, the snow for winter, the bright autumn leaves and the moon for autumn.

Spreading out from this narrow peak were the other topics from classical poetry –

spring rain, orange blossoms, bush warbler, willow tree, etc. Occupying the base and the widest area were the vernacular seasonal words... in contrast to the elegant images at the top of the pyramid, the seasonal words at the bottom were taken from everyday, contemporary, commoner life.

Overall, to understand the implication of certain season words in traditional haiku, the reader must have an extensive knowledge of Japanese culture and cultural practices, not to mention Japanese landscape and seasons.

Thus, although *kigo* inarguably have played an important role in providing continuity to the haiku genre in Japan, “the elaborate seasonal understanding developed in Japan exports badly to the West” (Trumbull, 2000). Indeed, even modern haiku in Japan will frequently omit a traditional season word. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the broad range of themes covered by haiku can best be understood by this statement from Hirschfield (2017): “[i]n a testament to both the limitlessness of any subject and suppleness of haiku mind, over 19,000 haiku about Spam – Spamku – have to this date been posted online.” If such a vast amount of poetry can be written about – of all things – spiced ham in a can, it’s safe to say that haiku have moved beyond simply portraying an image of nature.

Authors choosing to keep at least a reference to the traditional thematic content of haiku, or the *kigo* itself, will often incorporate seasonal references specific to their geographic region. Richard’s haiku often contain a direct or implicit seasonal reference – for instance, wind, rain, and fog in the winter, or crickets and cicadas in the summer. These references are reinforced by Richard’s addition of a date and place in parentheses at the end of his poems.

### 3.1.3 Expression

Having examined the structural and thematic elements of the classic haiku, and how they can occur (or not) outside of the classic form, a final element to consider is how the two intersect in haiku image(s). While haiku in the twenty-first century address any and all thematic content, traditional Japanese haiku were typically written to capture a snapshot of nature and time, “present[ing] the world just as is” (Rowland, Kacian & Burns, 2013, p. xxxi). That is to say, haiku are meant to present the world directly and immediately in the here and now – there is no simile involved, because what *is* simply *is*. Juxtaposition is fundamental to presenting this snapshot, “guarantee[ing] that haiku are always about relationship, a stated or implied comparison of elements” (Rowland, Kacian & Burns, 2013, p. 306). This comparison is often between natural and man-made elements and activities, as well as between a perceived scale from the miniature to the gigantic. As I mention above in this overview, the seventeen *on* in traditional Japanese haiku are written in a single line, rather than three, which remains the norm in English-language haiku. The practice of writing haiku in three lines, beyond representing the pattern inherent to the rhythm of Japanese, is also a means to visually signify the asymmetry and juxtaposition that characterize the form. Representing this division over the course of a single line in classic haiku is accomplished by means of a *kireji*, or cutting word.

*Kireji*, like *on*, are notoriously difficult to translate, and it is a feature specific to the Japanese language. Welch (1997) explains that *kireji* serve to express tone, whether a question or exclamation, something most easily approximated by a punctuation mark in English, even though classical Japanese has no punctuation other than the full stop.

*Kireji*, as the English translation suggests, are in fact complete words, represented by their own *kana*, and counting towards the poem's "syllables" (Henderson, 1969, p. 33). Welch (1997) remarks further that "[b]ecause of haiku's brevity, each punctuation mark can indeed be as important as each word... [and] by understanding the varieties of punctuation marks and observing their application, perhaps we can better communicate our haiku moments". A haikuist can also choose to omit punctuation altogether, depending on what they deem more efficient in communicating the image(s) of the poem

In a typical sentence, punctuation can be used to signal pauses, relationships, contemplation, tone, and form. Within haiku, however, its principle function is to symbolize a "cut" between two juxtaposed parts of the poem. The haiku is traditionally divided into two asymmetrical segments, the shorter of the two known as the "fragment" and the longer as the "phrase", each conveying its own image ("Haiku: Poetic Form"). Welch (1997) notes that the most common punctuation used to cut a haiku in English is the em dash, which "suggests an instantaneous jump from one part to the other, as if the two parts are both happening at the same time," as well as the ellipsis, which "suggests a slight pause, as if one thing happens and then another." The cut, then, marks the change in focus from one image to another.

If the poet decides to use no punctuation, they are effectively leaving room for the reader to judge where the cut takes place. Others still will opt for no punctuation, but instead use indentation to give the effect of a break. Given the grammatical flexibility in Japanese, the divisions can be open to interpretation, and the construction of the poem over a single line reinforces the role of the reader in determining where the divisions

are. By choosing to translate Japanese haiku into three lines, or less commonly by two or four lines, translators can effectively choose where to place the divisions, shaping them for the reader.

Beyond the question of divisions, the reader is an important player in creating the image(s) of the haiku – Seisensui, one of the Japanese haiku masters, maintained that the haiku is an “unfinished poem” in itself, and it is the reader who finishes the poem (Welch, 2018). Haiku written with this understanding will often contain images expressed in deliberately ambiguous or open-ended manners. However, many Western haikuists, Richard among them, will often apply Western writing conventions by beginning the poem with a capital letter and ending with a period, which effectively opens and distinctly closes the poem to further contemplation. Welch (2014) states that a “haiku often captures a moment in time, implying what happened both before and after that moment... [M]any haiku poets start with a lowercase letter and avoid ending with a period, suggest[ing] that the start and end of the poem are both ‘open’ rather than ‘closed’, which helps broaden the poem’s effect.” Capitalization and punctuation ultimately remain a choice personal to the poet and the translator, but they are instrumental in determining whether the reader has an active role to play.

There is one more feature – or rather, lack thereof – of classic haiku that also determines the “openness” of the poem: titles. The practice of adding a title, much like the practice of writing haiku in three lines, can be traced to the first translations of haiku (Toury, 2012, p. 207). Titling haiku, quite simply, is a result of incorporating Western literary conventions in a form that is visibly foreign. It is not a practice without consequences on the final form: as Abdulla and Record (2016) note, titles “violate the

haiku code because a title usually forms a kind of summary or even a commentary [which] inevitably delimits the haiku's meaning and reduces the reader's freedom to participate in generating the poem" (p. 181). The addition of a title, much like adding punctuation or capitalization, is a means of directing the reader, indicating a beginning and end. Conversely, the absence of titles in classic Japanese haiku serves to open the poem even more to the reader.

Richard consistently titles his poetry, each fulfilling one of the three following functions: emphasizing the principle image of the poem ("Haiku brouillard," "Stray Cat Haiku," "Ma Cha Haiku," "Haiku de la vaisselle sale," "Sieste haiku,"), repeating a central phrase of the poem ("Les criquets qui chantant," "Plus fort que d'habitude," "Cigales planant," "Au soleil levant," "Un à la traîne"), or adding information ("Haiku classique," "Début janvier haiku," "Ciel sans lune"). The date and place in parentheses at the end of his poems function parallel to the title, setting the scene in time and space. Additionally, in even greater deviation from classic haiku tendencies, Richard occasionally adds a sentence or two in afterthought to his poems that serve to provide more information and context for the inspiration to the poem ("Les criquets qui chantant," "Ma Cha Haiku," "Cigales planant").

A final note on the expression of haiku is on wordplay. Although some readers may believe haiku to be more serious, there is often a good deal of humour and allusion in the expression of the image. As Welch (2018) notes, "[a]llusion and wordplay can help to condense and deepen haiku poetry [...] These techniques help to compress more meaning and poetic effect into such a short poem." Onomatopoeia is a frequently supported device to this effect, particularly as it heightens the immediate sound and

image (Blyth, 1964). Furthermore, as modern Western haiku already run the risk of striking an imbalance between poetry and prose, experimentation with poetic devices such as assonance, alliteration, and internal rhyme – features that all occur in Richard’s haiku – are often encouraged (Henderson, 1967, p. 66). On the other hand, simile, metaphor, and end rhyme are typically discouraged (Rowland, Kacian & Burns, 2013, p. 337), which although infrequent, do also appear in Richard’s haiku; notably, an end rhyme appears in his “Haiku classique,” which would indicate that his understanding of haiku include poetic devices indiscriminately. Thus, when incorporating poetic devices into haiku, the author and/or translator needs to strike a balance between lightness of language and seriousness of the image.

### **3.2 Translation Approaches**

The research above highlights the difficulties and complications in defining the haiku, particularly haiku as practiced outside of Japan and the Japanese language. This in turn has led to difficulty in narrowing and determining an approach to the translation of my corpus. A translator could very well choose to adopt a *laissez-faire* attitude in her work – if the author is clearly pushing back against established norms, what boundaries, if any, exist for the translator? As Nida observes,

[s]ome professional translators take considerable pride in denying that they have any translation theory – they just translate. In reality, however, all persons engaged in complex task of translating possess some type of underlying or

covert theory, even though it may be still very embryonic and described only as just being 'faithful to what the author was trying to say' (Nida, 1991, p. 19).

Although Nida is more concerned with interlingual communication than the type of discourse involved, his statement is nevertheless pertinent in the context of haiku translation: if the haiku can be difficult to recognize in its source text, to translate without determining a process and criteria could render the haiku unrecognizable in the target language.

Having explored the history of the haiku, from its initially strict constraints to its modern free-form, I have established that there are no unanimous solutions to ensuring a recognizable, "authentic" haiku, whether in creation or translation. Thus, to avoid a disservice to the author, the reader, the haiku tradition, and the translator herself, I have chosen Humboldt's views on translating the Latin and Greek classics as a productive strategy: "... readers of a national language... will get to know [the classics] better through multiple translations rather than just one translation" (Schulte & Biguenet, 1992, p. 4). Richard's haiku may not fall under the 'classics', but multiple translations will nevertheless "offer readers the opportunity to enter deeper into the essence of a given poem" (p. 4), as well as offer the translator deeper insight into her work.

In order to better convey the essence of my corpus, then, I have chosen to produce three separate translations of each selected poem, following what I have chosen to label as a literal, foreignizing, and mnemonic methodology. Although each approach is distinct, together they form a theoretical framework that allows the translator to move progressively away from the source text without pushing it completely aside. For the literal translation, in which the aim is to follow the source text syntax as

closely as possible, I refer to Nabokov's scathing critique of translations that deign to "beautify" the target language at any expense to the source text (1941, 1955/1992). Following this, I turn to Schleiermacher and Venuti as proponents of foreignization, in which the translation deviates from the ideal of fluency to produce a target text that alienates the reader. In my adaptation of this methodology, however, I have chosen not so much to place the source *language* at the forefront as the source *form*. Finally, in the mnemonic approach, I borrow from the ideals of musicality as upheld by Folkart (2007) and Valéry (1985/1992) to focus on the spirit of the source text and source form, without getting trapped in their structures.

### **3.2.1 Literal**

When I first began working with Richard's poetry, I translated with the mindset that the entire collection was written in free-verse. As I grew to appreciate that the image mattered more than the structure (or lack thereof), Richard's haiku, clearly titled or otherwise, began to emerge more clearly to my eye. This led to the understanding that however the haikuist chooses to portray their image, they must do so briefly. As such, every word in a haiku must be chosen carefully to enhance the precision of the image(s).

While word-for-word translation has found few real champions over time, haiku could arguably represent the ideal form for such an approach: an exact mirroring of the author's words may reflect the precision with which he has chosen them. In 1941, author Vladimir Nabokov published his caustic essay "The Art of Translation,"

unleashing vitriol on translators who dare to omit any syntactical element of the source text. The translator's transgressions, he maintains, can be committed on three levels, each with an increasing level of severity: excusable ignorance, intentional omissions, and worst of all, "when a masterpiece is planished and patted into such a shape, vilely beautified in such a fashion as to conform to the notions and prejudices of a given public." In other words, for Nabokov, there should be no 'pandering' to the reader. He reiterates this stance (although perhaps less viscerally) in his essay "Problems of Translation: *Onegin* in English," in which he writes that "[t]he clumsiest literal translation is a thousand times more useful than the prettiest paraphrase" (1955/1992, p. 127). Indeed, though such a translation inevitably leads to poor idiomaticity, it can serve to showcase the nuance and constraints of the source text and language.

Translating in Nabokov's footsteps would entail adding "copious footnotes" to the translation (Ali, 2017, p. 7), which, notably, can become cumbersome and interrupt the flow for the reader. My "footnotes" as such appear in the commentary that follows my translations, as opposed to within/directly below the poem, so as to avoid redundancy and repetition. If I were to insert footnotes in the poems, though, they could easily serve a didactic function, including highlighting the structural and thematic choices of the author, exploring which elements of the poem adhere (or not) to the traditional haiku form, and elucidating the legitimacy of the modern-day haiku and its place within the genre.

Although I wouldn't typically advocate for a word-for word translation, particularly with lengthier prose, the brevity of the haiku is such that the reader can view and review the poem easily, and as a whole. For Nabokov, translating literally is the only real way

to convey the sense of the text – anything else, especially attempts to translate the “spirit” of the text, are unfaithful to the author and their work (1955/1992, p. 127). Unlike Nabokov, I believe that the spirit of the text is important, but I also recognize that breaking the work down by the word allows the translator to highlight particular effects conveyed by the author in word choice and placement.

### **3.2.2 Foreignizing**

While the goal of literal translation is to bring the reader closer to the author, an easy criticism to make is that it creates a laborious reading experience by including such extensive footnotes and commentary. Arguably, instead of bringing the reader closer to the author, this approach can bring the reader closer to the translator and the translator’s process. The fact that this approach draws awareness to the foreignness of the text, however, is not without its merits.

Foreignization was introduced as a translation method by philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher in his 1813 speech *On the Different Methods of Translating*, in which he upheld that a translated text ought to read as just that – a translated text (1938/1992). As German theorist Hugo Friederich (1965/1992) observes on Schleiermacher, adopting a foreignizing approaching is to posit that the power of a text ultimately lies in the original, and thus “[t]his power becomes the creative impulse of the translation... The creative stylistic power of the original has to become visible in the translation; it even has to regenerate itself as the creative force of style in the target language” (p. 16). Sensing the original in the translation, then, is essential to ensuring

the creative transfer of the poem, and, as Schlegel maintains, to rid the translation of foreign elements “would be to destroy it” (Schulte & Biguenet, 1992, p. 4).

One of the next big proponents of foreignization would be translation scholar and theorist Lawrence Venuti, who builds on Schleiermacher’s view in his seminal work “The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation” (1995). Pulling from examples throughout history, Venuti argues that the prevailing practice of producing domesticating translations, which he defines as “ethnocentric reduction[s] of the foreign text to target-language cultural values” (p. 20), has served to remove any notion that the text is, in fact, a translation. To this he opposes the practice of foreignization, which instead places “an ethnodeviant pressure on those [target-language cultural] values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad” (p.20). While Venuti does not encourage foreignizing a text to the point of clumsiness in the reading experience, he does advocate for making it clear to the reader that the text is a translation, and that behind the text is another language and culture.

Adopting a foreignizing translation, then, is to “signif[y] the difference of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language [...] deviating from native norms to stage an alien reading experience” (p. 20). Although Venuti is referring to the cultural codes of the source-text *language*, I have adapted my definition of a foreignizing translation to instead focus on the codes of the source-text *form*. That is to say, given that the haiku is still largely touted as a foreign poetic form in the West, I have chosen to highlight the origins of the haiku form, linking to traditional characteristics that may either be eschewed or misunderstood in modern haiku. In doing so, I am moving away from the concept of foreignization according to Venuti, and am

instead attempting to bring the reader a little closer to understanding the haiku as it emerged in Japanese language and culture.

As mentioned throughout this thesis, Richard's haiku fall into the modern category, both because they do not follow a strictly unifying structure as well as, more incriminatingly perhaps, they are not written in Japanese. However, we must consider his "Haiku classique":

Silence sur prairie

le vent siffle plus à travers

la craque du châssis.

Here, Richard applies several rules that can be traced to the traditional form: seventeen syllables, three lines, natural imagery, repetition of sound/wordplay, distinct fragment and phrase (which connects to the *kigo*/cutting word). In knowing that Richard acknowledges these characteristics, and that he has chosen to deviate from them in his other haiku, adopting a foreignizing approach that connects to the traditional form allows for a greater understanding of the constraints from which the author is deliberately freeing himself.

I have therefore undertaken my foreignizing translation to emphasize these characteristics, while also removing titles, afterthoughts/additional information, punctuation, and capitalization, as well as ensuring a deliberate seasonal reference and 'cut' are present. I have also, as much as possible, attempted to remove repetition of concepts to be more precise in my words and the overall image; for instance, because it is understood that a "moon" is in a "sky," there is no need to use both "sky" and "moon" in such a short poem. At the same time, I have also attempted to emphasize the

ambiguity inherent in classic haiku by limiting article use, creating an image that is at once precise but vague.

### **3.2.3 Mnemonic**

As Richard is typically more concerned with theme than with form, adopting a translation approach that looks to the “spirit” of the poem, so scorned by Nabokov, becomes essential. Beyond the imagery in traditional haiku, the innate mnemonic quality is vital to the poems – after all, poems of pleasing sounds to the ear favour being remembered. The significance of orality and musicality in Richard’s work urges the translator to adopt a translation approach that marries inspiration from both the traditional and the modern-day form of haiku. Indeed, poet and philosopher Paul Valéry underscores this in his essay “Variations on the Eclogues” (1985/1992), in which he details his tribulations in translating Virgil, lamenting

how many poetic works, reduced to prose, that is, to their simple meaning, become literally nonexistent!... this is because the finest verses in the world are trivial or senseless once their harmonic flow has been broken and their sonorous substance altered as it develops within the time peculiar to their measured movement, and once they have been replaced by an expression of no intrinsic musical necessity and no resonance” (p. 115).

Conveying the musicality of a poem would, unlike the other approaches I undertake, require a deliberate distancing from the source text. It is the essence of the text that becomes important, to be transformed into an auditory experience, as opposed to one

for the eye, in the target language. For Valéry, the aim is not, however, to forget the original text completely – translating the Eclogues for him required a return to Virgil, to discover and channel the original inspiration (p. 113).

Similarly, a distancing from my source corpus can allow for a greater freedom in conveying Richard's inspiration, and honouring the musicality with which he has always approached his work. Poet and translation theorist Barbara Folkart recognizes the need for this 'freedom' in her "Second Findings: A Poetics of Translation" (2007), in which she explores what it means to produce a poetically-viable translation. Translating in this light, to produce a poem that still holds its poetry when translated, becomes "a matter of doing, of writing out your own understanding of the text. The thinking translator does as (not what) the S[ource]L[anguage] author did" (p. 8). In the present context, then, the translator must be able to distance herself from the traditions of the haiku form to acknowledge the intrinsic relationship between music and poetry in order to do as the author himself did.

For Folkart, "[p]oetry is an attempt to get as close as possible to the real-in-the-instant – and imagery is one of the more obvious ways in which poetry engages the real" (p. 62). While she is providing an overarching look at poetry, her definition runs parallel to the classical motivations behind haiku, conceived to be in the immediate – the here and now – and engage with the 'real' through sharp imagery. Folkart continues to note that it is "ultimately musicality and imagery [that] interact to construct and convey the poem's vision" (p. 62), rather than the focus on the words themselves. The emphasis on musicality is further maintained by Valéry, for whom a poem's vision is conveyed by "constraining language to interest the ear directly... at least as much as it

does the mind” (1985/1992, p. 113). Thus, the image is not dependent on the words alone, but on the audible effect of the words.

Beyond the importance of musicality in creating the image of a poem, there is a greater mnemonic quality at play, from which this third approach to translation has been derived. As Valéry states, “the succession of syllables ought to form for the ear a kind of audible shape, which... should impress itself simultaneously on both voice and memory” (1985/1992, p. 113). “Voice and memory”, then, become the foundation to this approach, in which harmony is favoured above all else, to create a poem that lends itself both to being spoken and being remembered.

As Janecka (2001) notes, “musicality in poetry is usually achieved by means of phonetic effects of some phonemes, and they evoke associations that are similar to certain natural sounds.” Thus, incorporating features such as onomatopoeia, repetition, alliteration, and assonance represents a means of increasing the musicality of the poem. Likewise, as Woodsworth (2002) maintains, these “suprasegmental features” can render the poem more cohesive,

hold[ing] its different elements together in a readily recognizable way... [the features] not only produce an effect pleasing to the ear (audibly or silently) but reinforce the reader/listener’s capacity to relate new input from the poem to what has gone before, through arranging various lines of the poem into a readily perceivable *pattern* (p. 3).

Translating mnemonically, then, includes increasing wordplay and poetic devices to create patterns in rhythm and sound for the reader, and heightening the juxtaposition of

images. In acknowledging patterns to which the reader might be accustomed, I have also chosen to add titles, which typically serve to either repeat a phrase from the haiku or add context, with the aim of making the poem easier to remember. Additionally, in playing with rhythm and meter, I have decided to add punctuation where appropriate, to signal pauses, as though for a speaker taking a breath. The mnemonic translation follows Richard's lead in beginning with capitalization and providing end punctuation, as well as the three-line indent, which gives a clear start and stop to the poem, all while lending the rhythmic weight of the source structure.

Ultimately, to borrow Folkart's words, "nothing less than a poem will do as a translation [; it must be] nothing less than a beauty of equal intensity made with resources of the target language and the *vécu* of the TL writer" (2007, p. 116). It is my hope that the mnemonic translation will benefit not only from my personal '*vécu*' (taken here, broadly, as my predilection for playing with language), but also from the resources drawn from both the source language and the source form.

#### 4 Translations and Commentary

From the full haiku corpus of twenty-six poems, I have selected thirteen of those to showcase in a literal, foreignizing, and mnemonic translation approach. In the presentation of my corpus, the source poem will appear first, followed, in order, by the literal, foreignizing, and mnemonic translation. I will then provide a commentary for each series of translations, discussing the successes and difficulties in each version, as well as the overall effect on the image.

There are a couple of notes to add before proceeding to the translations.

Firstly, while I could have randomly selected the poems that make up my corpus, I have chosen only those haiku that are set in the author's home, Chênes du Marais. Richard's collection includes haiku set in France, Panama, and Canada, but in sharpening my focus to poems set in Louisiana, I am attempting to honour the traditional importance of *kigo*, which place the reader in their source country and culture. Thirteen haiku may not be enough to compile a *saijiki* of Louisiana season words, but they do allow the reader to dress a small portrait of the author's seasons and surroundings.

Secondly, while there is no essential order to the poems in order for them to be understood, there is nevertheless a reasoning to the order I have chosen. The "Haiku classique" appears first, to better unpack Richard's understanding of a classic haiku, which in turn informs the rest of the translations. Following that, all poems will be presented in order of their appearance in the calendar year, from January to December, to provide, if only lightly, a snapshot of seasonality in Louisiana – not unlike the snapshot function of the haiku itself. Finally, the poem that appears last in my corpus,

“Un à la traîne”, is also the last poem in the entire collection of *Feu*. This is important only in that I find it a pleasing reflection of the author’s intentions mirrored in the translator’s approach.

Thirdly, among the thirteen poems selected, there are two that present a slight deviation – that is, while eleven of the poems in my corpus have been translated from French to English, I have also chosen to work with two of Richard’s English-language haiku. Although the research presented thus far has focused on haiku in English, I felt it was important to include “Ma Cha Haiku” and “Stray Cat Haiku”, if only because they are among the few explicitly-titled haiku in the collection, and because they are also set in Chênes du Marais. Undertaking the same exercise in translation towards French was also an important reflection of parallel realities between the author and the translator.

Richard writes in the preface to *Feu*:

Je continue à me battre avec la syntaxe de la langue de Molière, en me trouvant dans la situation intenable des francophones sur la lointaine frontière de la francophonie... Dans ce même temps, nous, les déracinés de la francophonie essayons d’adapter la richesse de notre expérience à une compréhension internationale, souvent au détriment des choses qui nous ressemblent plus.

Jouer avec le feu (Richard, 2001, p. 9)

I too continue to fight with French syntax from the precarious perch of a minority francophone, perhaps reflected in my decision to write this thesis in English. In translating Richard’s poetry into English, I am also, in some way, inherently betraying his struggle for French expression by turning his words into those of the “oppressor”, or the dominating language of our North American existence. It feels only fair to flip the

script, if only in a very small way, and to also have my part in the practice of “jouer avec le feu”, playing with fire.

## 4.1 Haiku classique

Silence sur prairie  
le vent siffle plus à travers  
la craque du châssis.

*(aux Chênes du Marais, le 8 février 1996)*

### 4.1.1 Translations

#### a) Literal

Classic Haiku

Silence on prairie  
the wind whistles no more through  
the crack of the window.

*(at Chênes du Marais, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1996)*

#### b) Foreignizing

silence on prairie  
winter wind whistles no more  
crack in the window

#### c) Mnemonic

Window Haiku

Silence reigns  
as the whistling plains wind down –  
no wind through cracked panes.

#### 4.1.2 Commentary

Richard's "Haiku classique," as mentioned throughout my research, is a crucial element to situating and contextualizing my thesis. In highlighting that this haiku is "classic", Richard is communicating to the reader that he understands that formal constraints exist, but that he is deliberately deviating from them. This signals to the reader (and the translator) that they should pay greater attention to the formal characteristics of the poem.

Most notably, this is one of the few haiku of Richard's that follows a seventeen syllable, 5-7-5 pattern. There is a clear asymmetry, with the first line standing alone from lines two and three, which are also made similar by the repetition of an article (*le/la*) as the first word of the line. The cut between the fragment and phrase strengthens the juxtaposition that happens on two levels: visually, between the expanse of the prairie to the crack in the window, and audibly, between the silence and the whistling of the wind. The auditory level is further heightened by the repetition of the "s", present in each of the three lines ("silence sur", "siffle", "châssis"). The mnemonic quality of the source text is further highlighted by the end rhyme that Richard inserts, between "prairie" in line one and "châssis" in line three, asserting the cohesiveness of the haiku.

The literal translation was straightforward in this case, with large concordance of syllables and sounds. Of the three words in line one, only the preposition changes, with "silence" and "prairie" remaining exactly the same in English. There is the loss of the alliteration in "silence sur", but another alliteration returns naturally and harmoniously through "wind", "whistles", and "window". While "châssis" designates "window frame" in

standard French, it designates the window itself in (A)Cadian French<sup>4</sup> (“Châssis”). The structure in lines two and three stand alone, as in the source text, both beginning with “the” and thus keeping the emphasis on both the visual and audible images of the wind and the crack. Although “à travers” is a prepositional phrase that translates into just one word in English (“through”), “plus” necessarily needs to become two or more words in order to convey negation. This is problematic on a second level, which is that “plus” should be accompanied by the “ne” that belongs in phrases of negation, but, as is common in oral French, the “ne” has been dropped. In the end, as with line one, line two still contains the same number of words and syllables as the original; line three is the only one that does not. By placing “la craque” in front of “châssis”, the author is further highlighting an important element of the contrasting image, and thus, in preserving this structure, it required translating “du” by “of the” as opposed to inverting the image as “the window crack”.

From this initial translation, I was able to focus more on the images, all while keeping the source close. The principle difference is that, in removing the articles at the start of lines two and three, there is greater ambiguity in the divisions of the poem, which is in turn heightened by the openness of the poem conveyed through the absence of punctuation and capitalization. Each line can thus either stand on its own or be coupled to one that precedes or follows. However, the cut is arguably greater between lines two and three, in the hard “crack” that stands out from the otherwise softer syllables. I was able to heighten this play on sounds by making the seasonal reference

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<sup>4</sup> For this and most other regionalisms, I am referring to the Glossaire acadien, compiled by Pascal Poirier, as it provides insight into regionalisms that correspond to both Acadians and Cadians. “Chassis”. Glossaire acadien. [http://139.103.17.56/cea/livres/glossaire\\_index/glossaire.cfm](http://139.103.17.56/cea/livres/glossaire_index/glossaire.cfm)

explicit, incorporating the information in the author's afternote to make clear that it is a winter wind. I was also able to strengthen the audible image of the haiku, having maintained the alliterative effect of the "whistling winter wind", and further complementing it by the hissing "s" in "silence" and "ceases".

The mnemonic version builds off of this, ultimately becoming more playful and musical. I have kept "haiku" in the title, in keeping with the author's intention of advising the reader to keep the haiku in mind; however, in naming it "Window Haiku", I am giving more information to the reader as to the image they should keep in mind. There is an immediate contrast between the title and the opening line, establishing the duality of images, as it passes from the visual ("window") immediately to the audible ("silence"). Line one, in being visibly shorter than the other two, stands alone, but it is powerful in setting the overarching scope of the poem through just three syllables. Although Richard only includes an end rhyme, I chose to also play with middle rhyme, to encourage a sense of continuity in the flow of the lines, without reducing it to "easy" verse. Thus, "reigns", "plains", and "panes" act as steppingstones from one line to another, further emphasized by the imitation of the author's indent structure, which make the lines appear as stairs. This connection pulls through the haiku even though I have added an em dash to indicate a cut between lines two and three, assuring overall cohesion. Finally, I chose to play with the word "wind" in its homographic forms, which, when read, causes momentary confusion to the reader, but thus also serves to stress the oral quality of the poem, because even if read silently, the reader is forced to "hear" the pronunciation in their thoughts.

## 4.2 Début janvier haiku

Mouillait tout l'après-midi  
à minuit, ça continue  
à tomber.

*(aux Chênes du Marais, 1998)*

### 4.2.1 Translations

#### a) Literal

Beginning of January Haiku

Rained all the after-noon  
at midnight, it continues  
to fall

*(at Chênes du Marais, 1998)*

#### b) Foreignizing

rain falls steadily  
midnight light hides all but sound  
a winter chorus

#### c) Mnemonic

Just January

The rain today –  
how steadily it fell, and well  
into the night.

#### 4.2.2 Commentary

Although the source text follows a seventeen-syllable count, the syllables are distributed in a 7-7-3 pattern as opposed to a 5-7-5. There are four divisions in this poem, occurring at the end of each line as well as being indicated by the comma in the middle of line two. There is no clear season word in the body of the poem, but the season is explicitly indicated in the title; that an image of rain should follow, even though the season is winter, serves to highlight the particularities of the author's natural environment. "Début janvier haiku" has a strong oral quality, evident from the absence of an article or pronoun at the opening of the first line – the poem begins immediately with the verb "mouillait", as opposed to "il mouillait", which is a drop that occurs naturally in spoken (A)Cadian French<sup>5</sup>. The mnemonic qualities of the poem are further heightened by incorporating assonance ("mouillait," "après") as well as rhyme ("midi," "minuit"), which, along with the repetition of "m"s, emphasizes the contrast in time, stretching the timeframe of the poem from afternoon to midnight.

The opening word, "mouillait," was the first translation challenge, as it is a standard regional (A)Cadian term used instead of "pleuvoir" ("Mouiller"). I acknowledge that translating it by "rain" does not convey Richard's regional choice, but to replace it by a single word would necessarily be providing a more descriptive term, for example with "poured" or "drizzled", as opposed to staying neutral. Otherwise, translating literally allowed me to capture more of the grammatical and linguistic nuances of the source text. The hyphen in "after-noon", for instance, directly mimics "après-midi", and does not displace the reader excessively even though it is a deviation from standard English

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<sup>5</sup> Although the pronoun "il" could be replaced with a softer "y", as in "y mouillait", this sound is often simply absorbed into the verb.

spelling – rather, it draws the reader to the original. Inserting “the” in line one, as opposed to a more typical “all afternoon”, is also a deviation from typical English, but not grammatically incorrect. In line two, I have kept the same pronoun-referent as the source text, in that “ça” should refer to a noun, but the rain is presented as a verb; likewise with “it”. As well, while there is a repetition of “à” in French, the particle represents different parts of speech, and thus is translated by two different words in English: “à minuit,” preposition, by “at,” and “à tomber,” verbal phrase, by “to.”

In the foreignizing approach, the here-and-now of the image is sharpened, with the addition of “steadily” in line one showing immediate and continuous action in the rain fall. Although the source text appears to contrast times of day (passing from “après-midi” to “minuit”), I have instead created a new juxtaposition between the visual (“light”) and audible (“sound,” “chorus”) image. “Midnight light” in line two plays with rhyme to heighten the strange image created for the reader, because light at midnight is, of course, darkness. That this (non)light should further “hide all but sound”, contrasting (non) visual and audible, further emphasizes the strangeness of the reading experience to the reader. Line three continues the audible image while also incorporating the seasonal reference conveyed in the title of the source text.

Finally, the mnemonic version impresses itself on the reader’s memory directly from the title, by means of the alliterative “Just January.” “Just” here has the sense of “only just beginning,” which still serves to place the season of the poem, all while being easier to remember. I have incorporated a visual cut with the em dash in line one, which also serves as an oral marker to pause, emphasizing the principle image of the poem, the rain, as well as the concept of time. While the haiku is principally iambic, “steadily” in

line two creates a noticeable quickening in the rhythm, all while remaining connected to the assonance and internal rhyme of the rest of the line: “how steadily it fell, and well.” The brief disruption in meter serves to heighten the image for the reader, offering short and quick syllables that patter, not unlike rain drops.

### 4.3 Haiku brouillard

Orion s'échappe de ce brouillard  
de fin janvier,  
des éclairs au sud-ouest.

*(aux Chênes du marais, le 24 janvier 1996)*

#### 4.3.1 Translations

##### a) Literal

Haiku fog

Orion frees himself from this fog  
of end of January  
some lightning bolts to the south-west.

*(at Chênes du marais, January 24, 1996)*

##### b) Foreignizing

fog of late winter  
obscures all but Orion  
lightning strikes southwest

##### c) Mnemonic

Out of the Fog

Out of the fog Orion appears  
as lightning sears  
the southwest sky.

### 4.3.2 Commentary

“Haiku brouillard” is a 19 syllable (9-4-6) poem that contrasts the sharpness of images related to the sky: through the fog, which blurs and covers, and lightning bolts, which slice through the cover. There is a specificity to the poem, highlighted through the demonstrative pronoun “ce” in front of “brouillard”, the distinction of place within the month with “fin janvier” (which also acts as an explicit seasonal reference), and the precise direction of “sud-ouest”. There is also an occurrence of assonance that stretches from line two, “janvier,” to line three, “des éclairs,” which serves to provide continuity through the cut created by the comma, and the shift in image from the fog to the lightning.

The first problem encountered in the literal version was in the reflexive “s’échapper,” which places the action of the poem on Orion. My first instinct was to translate by “escapes” or “breaks out,” but the reflexive “se” in French requires a greater agency to the subject; thus, by employing “frees himself”, it is clear that the subject performs the action. A further problem I encountered was with “éclairs”. As a singular noun, “éclair” could be rendered simply by “lightning,” but in the plural, “lightnings” would have been a bit of a stretch. Thus, in English, I had to specify “lightning bolts”, which, although is only one syllable more than the French “éclairs”, it visibly takes up much more room in the line.

In the foreignizing translation, although I removed the title, I kept fog as the opening word, to highlight it as the central theme, as indicated by the author in the source text. However, mindful of syllables, I switched the more precise reference to “fin janvier” to the more ambiguous “late winter.” Lines one and two form the phrase of the

haiku, able to stand on their own. This construction has transferred the action of the image to the fog, which “obscures all but Orion,” and also includes an alliterative effect. The third line provides a cut in image and rhythm, the trochaic meter of line three placing stress on the switch to lightning. There is also an alliteration and precision kept in “strikes southwest.”

The mnemonic translation contains elements of both previous translations, but noticeably deviates in the rhythm. As in the source text, I have directed the reader to the principle image of the poem but have also taken it a step further by making the title a phrase from the opening line, aiding in recall. This is further reinforced by the repetition of the opening “o” of “out” to the middle of the line in “Orion.” The body of the poem does follow a seventeen-syllable count but is distributed in a 9-4-4 pattern. There is continuity from one line to the next, particularly with the rhyme of “appears” at the end of line one with “sears” at the end of line two, and the alliteration of “s” that carries over from line two to line three in “sears the southwest sky.” However, the long-short-short syllable distribution pattern serves to highlight the cut between line one and lines two and three, as well as the switch to iambic meter in lines two and three.

#### 4.4 Stray Cat haiku

Full moon rising  
    in the late winter sky,  
        stray cat does not come  
Today.

(aux Chênes du Marais, le 11 février 1998)

##### 4.4.1 Translations

###### a) Literal

Haiku chat errant

Pleine lune montant  
    dans le ciel fin hiver,  
        chat errant ne vient pas  
Aujourd'hui.

*(aux Chênes du Marais, le 11 février 1998)*

###### b) Foreignizing

pleine lune rayonnante  
fin hiver illuminée  
chat errant absent

###### c) Mnemonic

Haiku chat errant

Projection de la pleine lune  
    silhouette du chat errant  
        aujourd'hui absent.

#### 4.4.2 Commentary

“Stray Cat Haiku” is another seventeen-syllable haiku, but with a distribution pattern over four lines of 4-6-5-2. The poem is comprised of two distinct images, juxtaposing what is and what isn’t. The first two lines set the scene of the moment of the poem, “rising” in present continuous, noting an action in progress, and the second, following an obvious cut by the comma at the end of line two, expresses an observation that extends beyond the moment, an observation accumulated throughout the day. This extension in observation that is further emphasized by “today” being the single word of the fourth line.

The first line of the literal translation is able to follow closely in syllables and words, although recognizing that expressing an action happening “now” would perhaps more accurately be represented by the phrase with “en train de” in French. However, in using “montant,” I am able to still express that the action is one in movement, even if the immediacy is not conveyed the same. The second line presented only momentary pause in considering the translating of “late,” as “fin” arguably has more finality than the source text conveys. However, “tard” would not be appropriate in a French version, and any type of more explicit solution would come across as matter belonging more to a footnote than anything else. The cut is still easily preserved between the two images, and lines three and four also conform well to the source, “does not come” fitting into the French negation form of “ne vient pas”, with a necessary inversion of the particles to make grammatical sense. There is also the necessary syllabic increase between “aujourd’hui” and “today”, but the construction of the sentence remains otherwise the same.

In the foreignizing version, my main challenge was in condensing the time into a more immediate picture overall. I had initially started with “pleine lune est montée,” but I felt that that too conveyed more in time, as it implied the process it would have taken for the moon to be risen. Thus, I turned the image into one of light, which carried through the poem as a way to throw a spotlight both on the late winter and the absence of the stray cat. The three lines are more distinct than in the original, forming three separate segments, but with more cohesion between lines one and two, and a more distinct cut between lines two and three. The concept of time is further made ambiguous by omitting mention of “today.”

Finally, in the mnemonic version, I have amplified the image of light by playing with either its presence or absence in each line. The alliterative first line, “projection de la pleine lune,” conjures a literal spotlight, creating a tangible opening image for the reader. In line two, the reader follows the spotlight to what it highlights, the “silhouette du chat errant”, thus creating a heightened and cohesive visual experience. This image is juxtaposed with the twist in line three, in which the cat, being absent, disappears forthwith from the reader’s image. The end rhyme in line two and three, between “errant” and “absent” nevertheless lends a cohesion to the reader’s experience. The title is the same as in the literal translation, as it remains the central subject of the poem, which is also emphasized by placing the mention of the stray cat in line two, sandwiching it between the two images, the “projection” and the “absent.”

## 4.5 Haiku de la vaisselle sale

Vaisselle sale sur la table,  
poète négligeant sa pratique  
de Zazen.

*(aux Chênes du marais, le 13 février 1998)*

### 4.5.1 Translations

#### a) Literal

Dirty Dishes Haiku

Dirty dishes on the table,  
poet neglecting his practice  
of Zazen.

*(at Chênes du Marais, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1998)*

#### b) Foreignizing

poet neglecting  
his winter Zazen practice  
dishes lingering

#### c) Mnemonic

Dirty Dishes

Dirty dishes on the table  
poet unable to descend  
into his Zazen.

#### 4.5.2 Commentary

“Haiku de la vaisselle sale” is another seventeen-syllable haiku with a differing distribution pattern, 6-8-3. It is unique in the collection of haiku in that it is the only one that does not contain an image of nature; rather, reflective haiku on the nature of the poet himself, and his home environment in the literal sense. The two images contrasted, cut between lines one and two by a comma, are that of a table of dirty dishes, which is an effect of the second image, that of the poet practicing Zazen, a form of seated meditation stemming from Zen Buddhism (“Zazen”).

The literal version was straightforward in this instance, one noticeable difference between languages showing itself in the necessary translation of “vaisselle,” a singular noun, into “dishes” as a plural in English. This further creates an alliteration that was not present in the original. In line one, there is an unintended trochee that creates a more intentional rhythm than the source text. Lines two and three remain the same, complete image referring to the poet, following same syllable and word count.

The foreignizing version required more thought as to both how to place the image in a season and keep it in the moment. As there was no reference to nature indicated in the source text, I inserted mention of the season in which the haiku was stamped (winter). I also inverted the images of the source poem as a means of keeping the full idea of the poet practicing Zazen together. I created more ambiguity in line three, in choosing to not translate dirty dishes outright, but keeping the implication of the dishes being dirty by having them be “lingering.” There is also a continuity from line one to line three through the repetition of a present continuous.

The mnemonic translation brings back the “dirty dishes” to keep the alliteration. I

have chosen to keep it as the title, without stating that it is a haiku, and repeat it directly in the first line, so that the title acts as a repetition and aids in recall for the reader. The first line has a trochaic meter that further places emphasis on the opening alliteration. The last word of line one, "table," leads to a middle rhyme with "unable" in line two, which creates continuity, even though "table" represents a cut between the two images of the haiku. There is another near-rhyme between the last word of line two, "descend," and the last word of line three, "Zazen," which ties the poem together. There is a shift in meter in the middle of line two, passing from trochee to iamb, which heightens the reader's sense of inability to follow the rhythm, as the poet's inability to do his practice. There is also a play on the image, as "Zazen" is a seated meditation; "descend into his Zazen" thus has a double meaning, in the literal and figurative sense, and creates more movement in the reader's image.

## 4.6 Sieste haiku

Sieste de deux heures  
    pendant que la pluie  
        tombe contre  
Mon châssis.  
*(aux Chênes du Marais, le 15 février 1998)*

### 4.6.1 Translations

#### a) Literal

Nap Haiku

Nap of two hours  
    while the rain  
        falls against  
My window.

*(at Chênes du Marais, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1998)*

#### b) Foreignizing

precipitation  
pattering on the window  
poet naps indoors

#### c) Mnemonic

Nap haiku

Pattering precipitation  
    keeps the beat  
        as the poet sleeps.

#### 4.6.2 Commentary

The “Sieste Haiku” is a fifteen-syllable poem spread over four lines in a 5-5-2-3 pattern. Lines one to four form a complete thought, if not a complete sentence, with a soft cut from line one to line two; soft cut here referencing that there is a switch in image, but there is a continuity expressed by the “pendant que” of line two, directly connecting the two images. The first line is stating an action, napping, that is stretched over a precise amount of time, two hours, which is then contrasted in the rest of the poem by the image of the rain falling against the window. There is a personal element to the haiku, with the poet inserting himself in the observation of the moment, noted by the possessive “mon” in line four, as well as the implication of the poet being the one undertaking the “sieste.” The poem finishes in a choppy rhythm, due to the short syllables in lines three and four, but the image that extends on the rain is held together by the rhyme of “pluie” and “chassis.” The rain can be understood here as the seasonal reference.

The literal translation is able to follow the word structure and count almost exactly. However, I did have difficulty with the translation of “pendant que” in line two. Although I initially translated it as “during which”, mimicking the word count and length of the source text, it was not entirely accurate, as it references the nap more specifically, which, if translated back to French, would become “durant lequel.” It thus became “while”, indicating simultaneity without directly referencing the nap. The same problem as throughout the other poems remains in the handling of “châssis,” which poses problems in replicating the regionalism, and becomes simply “window” in my translations. The end rhyme in lines two and four is also lost in this translation.

The foreignizing version has a few major differences from the literal translation. Firstly, in acknowledging rain as the seasonal element, I have kept it as the opening image. I have also removed the concept of a lengthy duration of time, indicated by the precision of “deux heures” in the source text. By being able to fill the first five syllables by a single word, “precipitation,” and in having this word also be the seasonal reference, the image becomes sharper, with the focus clearly in place. Following the lead in line one, there is an alliterative flow throughout the haiku, repeating the “p” at the beginning of each line. There is a harder cut between lines two and three, marking a shift in image without the linking conjunction as in the source text. The self-referential element of the “mon” has remained, but with added ambiguity: instead of the first person, I have inserted the “poet” himself. This is also consistent with the mention of the poet in “Haiku de la vaisselle sale.” There is a further contrast created in specifying the poet is napping indoors, juxtaposing the rain that is implicitly on the outside of the window.

In spite of the unassuming title, which serves to provide the theme of the poem very simply, the mnemonic translation plays heavily on rhythm to heighten the reader’s experience. The first line draws the reader in immediately with the tripping syllables of the alliterative “pattering precipitation.” These eight syllables elongate the first line and emphasize the choppiness of lines two and three, which are noticeably shorter and also switch between a trochee in line two and an iamb in line three. They are nevertheless drawn together by their rhymes (“keeps,” “beat,” “sleeps”). Beyond the syllabic play, the visual and audible are brought together by the words suggesting rhythm (“pattering,” “beat”), especially in conjunction with the visual image of the poet sleeping, which conjures the audible image of a lullaby.

## 4.7 Les criquets qui chantent

Premier coup d'été.  
vent doux sifflant du sud-est,  
les criquets qui chantent.

*(aux Chênes du Marais, le 5 mars 1998)*

*Les criquets se réveillent aujourd'hui. L'humidité comme une serviette mouillée que la planète se met sur la tête. Beware the Ides of March.*

### 4.7.1 Translations

#### a) Literal

The Crickets are singing

First hit of summer.  
soft wind whistling from the south-east,  
the crickets who sing.

*(at Chênes du Marais, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1998)*

*The crickets woke up today. The humidity like a wet towel that the planet wraps around its head. Beware the Ides of March.*

#### b) Foreignizing

first wave of summer  
soft southeast breeze ushers in  
a choir of crickets

#### c) Mnemonic

Cricket Chorus

First feel of summer –  
chorus of crickets carried  
in the soft southern breeze.

#### 4.7.2 Commentary

“Les criquets qui chantent” marks a transition in the seasons, as although the poem is set in March, the first line of the poem is referencing a feel of summer (presumably consistent with Louisiana’s southern climate). It is also one of the poems for which the author includes an afternote, providing further context on the weather and seasonal shifts. He cautions himself and the reader to “Beware the Ides of March,” which can be understood as a caution that the seasons are shifting, that the “premier coup d’été” is not necessarily a sure indicator of the season’s beginning. The source poem is comprised of three distinct lines, one of the few set in a seventeen-syllable, 5-7-5 pattern. Each line represents its own image, and it is the punctuation that tells the readers where the cut takes place. Line one ends with a period, thus separating it from the following two lines, which are both sensorial images, line two in the feeling and line three in the auditory, that are meant to support the opening line. There is a further juxtaposition between the “coup” of line one and the “doux” of line two, contrasting hard and soft, as well as the contrast in auditory and tangible images (“whistling,” “hit”). There is also assonance occurring between “sud-est” at the end of line two and “criquets” at the beginning of line three, which provides continuity.

Perhaps the most noticeably jarring aspect of the literal translation occurs in the title, which itself is a repetition of the third line of the haiku. “Les criquets qui chantent” is using a relative pronoun followed by a verb, suggesting the phrase would typically follow an “il y a.” Although the translation is mimicking the structure, and it is grammatically correct, it is also noticeably heavy to the reader, as it would

typically be condensed into “the singing crickets” or “the crickets are singing.” Line one stays the same, “coup” being translated as “hit” which although would not be typically said in English, it is not far off from more common “feel,” “hint,” “wave,” etc. There is a grammatically necessary inversion of noun and adjective in line two, but placing “soft” first creates an alliterative link to the “south-east” at the end of the line. The title is then repeated in the third line. The afternote is included, kept to remain close to the source text and provide the same context as in the source poem, but will not be analyzed for its translation.

The foreignizing version keeps the same structure in the cut, keeping line one on its own as the fragment and lines two and three as the phrase. Line one remains largely the same, except for substituting “wave” for “hit,” which is more idiomatic. There is a loss in rhyme and juxtaposition from the source text, but the image is heightened from beginning to end, with “wave” being understood through the “breeze”, and the “breeze” carrying the “choir of crickets,” so that the image is extended from beginning to end of the poem. There is an additional two alliterations in the haiku, in line two “soft southeast” and line three “choir of crickets,” which is a means of bringing back the contrast in hard and soft through the syllable sounds, from the “hiss” of the “s” to the hard “c”s. There is also a play on double meaning, with “usher” used in the sense of announcing or bringing in, but also referencing an usher in a theatre, which when placed with the image of a choir takes on a new image.

The mnemonic version is playing largely on the alliterative possibilities to tantalize the reader’s ear, each line with its own sounds, passing from soft (“f”) to

hard (hard “c”) to soft again (“s”). The images stay largely the same as the first two translations, keeping the “first wave of summer,” however it is also one of the few instances in the mnemonic approach where I have inserted other punctuation. In recognizing that the source poem is describing two images as happening at once, I have chosen to add an em dash, which would signify a pause for effect to the reader, as though preparing to describe just what is that “first feel of summer” indicated in the following two lines.

## 4.8 Ciel sans lune

Asteur y a des maringouins  
mais ils sont pas farouches  
de trop.

*(aux Chênes du Marais, le 4 juin 1999)*

### 4.8.1 Translations

#### a) Literal

Sky Without Moon

At this hour there are some mosquitoes  
but they are not savage  
of too much.

*(Chênes du Marais, June 4th, 1999)*

#### b) Foreignizing

curtain of twilight  
brings buzzing of mosquitoes  
timid savagery

#### c) Mnemonic

Moonless Sky

Now the mosquitoes,  
they fill twilight – not to be seen  
but to be felt.

#### 4.8.2 Commentary

The source haiku is a sixteen syllable, 8-6-2 poem that showcases the orality instilled by the author into his poetry, with regionalisms and structural showcases used to describe a summer scene.

“Asteur”, also written “astheure”, is a word developing from the phrase “à cette heure”, a typical marker of Canadian and Cajun French. Thus, in a literal translation, it is possible to keep some of this regional flavor by showing how one word in French used to initially be three, and can be kept in three in English, becoming “at this hour”. Equally regional, but harder to render, is the absence of “il” in the phrase “il y a”, which would be translated by “there are” in English. “There” is both “il” and “y”, so the absence of one doesn’t change the outcome, even though it fails to show this effect in the translation. Likewise, line 2 shows an incomplete negation that is also common in oral Cajun French, omitting the “ne” in what would be “ils ne sont pas” in a complete, grammatical negation. However, in English, the negation only ever requires one word, in this case “not”. Line 2 further provides what is arguably a repetition of information, with the pronoun “ils” referencing the mosquitoes a second time. The haiku forms a complete sentence, while also providing clear divisions at the end of each line, providing more information on one image, around the mosquitoes being out – mosquitoes, here, ostensibly the season word, indicating summertime. Line one sets the scene, stating the presence of the mosquitoes, line two provides qualification on the character of the image, letting the reader imagine their own experience with mosquitoes. The third line, all while being distinct, still provides a type of cut from the other two lines, “de trop” being a qualifier that can feel like an oral marker, tacked on to the end of a thought,

showing a playful, tongue-in-cheek quality. This marker of idiomatic Cajun French can, much like “asteur”, be showcased to some respect in the literal translation, by using a construction not otherwise used in English, literally “of too much”.

The foreignizing translation allowed for some freedom in amplifying the image by cutting out some of the more flowing prose qualities of the source text. The source title has been incorporated into the haiku as it serves the source text, the title serves to add extra information. Articles and pronouns have been cut from this version, to encourage ambiguity, however, I have also incorporated some specifying imagery, such as “twilight”, which serves to bring greater precision to the time in which the poem is set. The alliteration of “b”s serves to highlight the onomatopoeia “buzz”, highlighting classic haiku’s enjoyment of the device, while also introducing an auditory quality to the poem to heighten the reader’s experience of the moment. Opposing “timid” and “savagery” in line three serves two purposes: it creates a heightened contrast from the source poem, in what seems direct opposites, but is in fact a play on the word “farouche”, which can have both of those meanings. It also conveys the “de trop”, in the playfulness of the author who is saying “but they aren’t bad – not much, anyway”.

The mnemonic version plays on both previous translations while also creating a more fluid rhythmical experience for the reader. It is made audible not through onomatopoeia, as in the foreign version, but through the oral qualities of the poem. This is highlighted by the very first word – opening with “now” not only places emphasis on the immediacy of the poem but the single syllable also lends itself well to dramatic weight should it be read aloud. The oral qualities of the poem are further underscored by the immediate repetition of the subject, “mosquitoes,” in line two, through the

pronoun “they”, which is a repetition that might occur in natural speech for emphasis. The reading experience is equally heightened by bringing in another sensorial quality, which also serves to highlight the role of the reader here – it is up to their imagination to recall the feel of a mosquito, and all the “savagery” of their character to imagine. Furthermore, the structure of “not this but that” is a common formula in English, which also contributes to the oral quality of the poem.

## 4.9 Plus fort que d'habitude

Cette nuit les criquets chantent  
plus fort que d'habitude.  
peut-être c'est à cause  
De la lune.

*(aux Chênes du Marais, le 17 juillet 1997)*

### 4.9.1 Translations

#### a) Literal

More Loud than the usual

This night the crickets sing  
more loud than the usual.  
may-be it's because  
Of the moon.

*(at Chênes du Marais, July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1997)*

#### b) Foreignizing

summer crickets sing  
deafening the stifling air  
full moon shining

#### c) Mnemonic

Louder than usual

Tonight the crickets sing  
to belie their size –  
moon on the rise.

#### 4.9.2 Commentary

"Plus fort que d'habitude" is set firmly in the summertime, with the crickets becoming once again the seasonal reference. The poem is set in four lines, with twenty syllables spread in a 6-6-5-3 distribution pattern. There are two complete sentences, with a rare instance of two periods, one at the end of line two and the second at the end of the poem, as is customary with Richard's poems. The first period can be construed as the cut between images, but it is only soft, as there is an explicit cause-and-effect relationship between the auditory image of the crickets singing and the visual image of the moon. There is a repetition of sounds, with "plus" and "peut" at the beginning of lines two and three respectively, as well as a near-rhyme between "habitude" at the end of line two and "lune" as the last word of the poem.

Perhaps what is most glaring once again is the title, and the obvious grammatical error, which is also repeated in line two. While I have typically kept the literal translations within the realm of proper English, this haiku presented an easy opportunity to replicate the structure of the French with an English equivalent that, while incorrect, isn't jarringly incomprehensible, for instance like inverting subject and adjective (i.e., "la maison bleue" into "the house blue"). Lines one and three also contain irregularities in an attempt to stick closely to the source text and language, specifying "this night" as opposed to "tonight," and inserting a hyphen in "maybe" to mimic the two-word structure of "peut-être" in French. The alliteration at the beginning of lines two and three is kept with "more" and "may", but the rhyme is lost.

The foreignizing version keeps the auditory and visual images of the source text but makes the cut sharper. I have changed all the verbs to present continuous, placing

the observation in the moment, and removing the nebulous aspect of time in the source text, that extends both through the night and, because of the comparative “louder than usual,” across multiple nights. To replace the comparative and tighten the observation in time, I heightened the image of the crickets singing – not only are they “singing out,” but they are “deafening.” “Humid” is an addition to heighten tangible image of summer. Lines one and two remain the phrase, line three the fragment, with a switch to the image of the moon. The juxtaposition is emphasized by beginning the haiku immediately with “crickets” and beginning the final line with “full moon,” contrasting size from the littles to the biggest. There is also a symmetry in the ending of both lines one and three with a preposition, “out” and “down” respectively.

The mnemonic version is once again a combination of both previous translations. The title pulls from the source poem, but it becomes the more idiomatic rendition of the literal (“louder” instead of “more loud”). The flow through the poem is kept in spite of rhythm switches from line to line, with the opening line setting the time and the main image. The audible is built through the visual in the first two lines, of crickets singing to “believe their size” (that is to say, loudly), although the first two lines create a phrase together, lines two and three have a beat in rhymes that also belong together. The em dash once again signifies an oral quality in the poem to the reader, as a means to take a pause, and switch images. Beyond the rhyme between “size” and “rise” that serves to create coherency to the end of the poem, the juxtaposition also keeps the reader involved in the images, both in the visual images of “cricket” and “moon”, as well as the similar images of cricket voices raised and the moon itself rising.

#### 4.10 Ma Cha Haiku

Sun slipping behind the cloud bank  
reflected on eastern rim  
of tea bowl.

*(aux Chênes du Marais, le 27 septembre 1998)*

*Hurricane Georges attacks Plaquemine Parish, Biloxi and Mobile Bay. On the Cadien Prairie black wall rolls though in mid-afternoon, leaving behind a blue calm broken by gorgeous clouds. Make Ma Cha, alone, lonely tea ceremony on the back porch watching the sun go down. No birds flying today.*

##### 4.10.1 Translations

###### a) Literal

Ma Cha Haiku

Soleil glissant derrière le banc de nuages  
reflété sur bord de l'est  
du bol à thé.

*(aux Chênes du Marais, le 27 septembre 1998)*

*L'ouragan Georges s'attaque à la paroisse de Plaquemine, baie Biloxi et Mobile. Sur les prairies Cadiennes, un mur noir avance en mi-après-midi, laissant derrière lui un bleu calme, entremêlé avec des nuages magnifiques. Fais du Ma Cha, seul, une cérémonie solitaire sur le perron d'en arrière, observant le coucher de soleil. Pas d'oiseaux qui volent aujourd'hui.*

###### b) Foreignizing

soleil sur prairies  
reflets d'après-ouragan  
ma cha dans mon bol.

###### c) Mnemonic

Moment Ma Cha

Ouragan passé  
solitude ensoleillée...  
moment macha.

#### 4.10.2 Commentary

“Ma Cha Haiku” is an eighteen syllable, three-line, 8-7-3 English-language haiku. While the author has written “ma cha” as two separate words, typically this type of tea is spelled either as a single word, or as “matcha.” Although the lines flow into one another, there is a noticeable cut between lines two and three, both in the abruptly short syllable count and in the switch in images from the sun and cloud bank to that of a tea bowl, calling the reader’s eye to juxtapose the vast and then focus on the specific. The haiku is followed by an afternote from the author providing more context on the natural and personal environment – that the sun and clouds are a result of hurricane season, that this provoked a moment of solitude for the poet, who makes tea and observes the natural elements in action.

The literal translation was straightforward, with the title remaining the same as in English, and the principle difference in word count occurring because of French structure. Principally, the adjective structure requires not only an inversion of noun and adjective, but also the addition of a preposition, “de” or “à.” Thus, “cloud bank” becomes “banc de nuages,” “eastern rim” becomes “bord de l’est” and “tea bowl” becomes “bol à thé.” This translation highlights an area of ambiguity in the source text, which is that it is not clear whether the “reflected” in line two refers specifically to the sun or to the cloud bank, or to the image as a whole. Happily, both “soleil” and “banc” are masculine, and I was able to keep the ambiguity in “reflété” without having to be more precise in the image. Once again, I have translated the author’s afternote, but it is for contextual purposes and not for analysis.

The foreignizing version incorporates some of this context to round out the image in seventeen syllables. Notably, I have incorporated mention of the hurricane, as hurricane season in Louisiana runs from summer into fall, and it can act as a season word here. I have also incorporated a structure used by the author in “Haiku classique,” with the first line reading “silence sur prairie,” but have shifted it to “soleil sur prairie” – for an attentive reader, this will create some cohesion in the corpus, but also throws out to the silence and solitude the poet has expressed feeling in his afterthought. The three lines can be read separately, but in keeping the image of “reflets,” the image of the sun carries through to line two, though quickly contrasting it with the image of a hurricane, even if it is one that has passed. The cut is sharp between lines two and three, passing from wide open space and strong natural elements to the specific, “ma cha,” in a specific, small place, the “bol.” By adding the possessive “mon,” I am admittedly inserting the poet more than he did in the source text, but in trying to pull more information from the afterthought, it made sense to emphasize the poet’s place in the poem.

Finally, the mnemonic version attempts to build the moment for the reader very simply, by highlighting the poet’s own observations on the moment. Although the poem is sixteen syllables, it appears very short, each line just two words, but this creates a bouncing effect, with each two-word<sup>6</sup> pairing building or contrasting images. I have once again referenced the hurricane passing, as well as the sunshine that comes after the hurricane, but have inserted the poet in a more indirect way than the foreignizing version, through “solitude” and “moment macha.” There is a rhyme between “passé”

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<sup>6</sup> For this effect, I have chosen to reduce “ma cha” to a single word, which appears to be a common practice.

and “ensoleillée,” encouraging the bouncing effect, but I have also followed this by an ellipsis, to emphasize the action of pausing. This helps the reader immerse themselves in the poem both by having an oral marker to pause, but also in being able to read the pause as the very thing the author was capturing through the haiku in the first place. The alliteration in the third line brings in the playful nature of the rest of the poem, ensuring cohesion, even though the lines could stand on their own.

## 4.11 Cigales planant

Escadron de cigales  
planant au-dessus du jardin,  
sécheresse en cette fin d'été.

(aux Chênes du Marais, le 29 septembre 1997)

*Des cigales arrivent par centaines au-dessus de la maison, partant dans tous les sens.  
C'est un miracle qu'elles ne se rentrent pas dedans.*

### 4.11.1 Translations

#### a) Literal

Cicadas Soaring

Squadron of cicadas  
soaring over-top the garden  
drought in this end of summer.

(at Chênes du Marais, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1997)

*Cicadas arrive by the hundreds overtop the house, from everywhere and flying in every direction. It's a miracle they never bump into each other.*

#### b) Foreignizing

Cicada squadron  
soaring chaos of shadows  
end of summer drought

#### c) Mnemonic

Soaring Cicadas

Growing chaos  
as cicadas soar  
o'er the garden.

#### 4.11.2 Commentary

“Cigales planant” is a three-line, 6-8-8 haiku that places the poem squarely in the season, with references to cicadas, drought, and end of summer. The title is a repeated section of lines from the poem, which reveals that “planant” is referring to “escadron,” the singular, all-encompassing noun. There is a cut between lines two and three, marked by the comma at the end of line two, passing from movement to stagnancy, from specific to vague. There is a repetition of “s” sounds in the first and last lines, with “escadron de cigales” and “sécheresse en cette.” The afternote from the author offers more precise imagery as to the chaotic nature of the moment.

The literal translation is able to follow the source text fairly closely, even replicating the alliteration in line one with “squadron of cicadas,” carrying through line two with “soaring.” Although I could have translated “au-dessus” simply as “over,” I took the opportunity to replicate the French structure to a degree by adding “over-top,” joined with a hyphen to mimic the source. Line three also has a reflection of the French source, by sticking to the translation of “en” as “in,” even though typically in English this would be translated as “at.” Once again, the author’s note has been translated, but is not here a subject of analysis.

The foreignizing version has incorporated elements of the author’s note into shaping the image of cicadas. “Cicada squadron” pulls directly from the literal translation, though it has been inverted to remove the extra syllable “of,” as well as the act of “soaring.” Bringing in the concept of “chaos” is referencing the sheer volume of cicadas described by the author, and their flying in every which direction. The hard “c” of “chaos” also replicates the structure of “cicada” and “squadron.” At first I had translated this line as

“soaring chaos overhead,” but the act of soaring necessarily has a notion of height attached to it, and so to avoid redundancy, I added “shadows,” which in fact heightens the image: The reader can imagine being in the moment, looking up at the masses of cicadas, which means looking up at the sun, which turns the cicadas into dark shadows as opposed to distinct shapes. Line three, a sharp cut as in the source text, is again a repetition of the literal translation, merely inverted to reduce syllables.

The mnemonic translation is playing largely with assonance to carry the harmony of the poem for the reader. The title recalls the literal translation, inverted once more, and repeats information that follows in the body of the poem. The lines are short, 4-5-4 respectively, and keep the rhythm moving quickly from one line to the next, replicating the feeling of movement captured in the images. The “o” of “growing” is repeated in “soar,” end of line two, as well as “o’er,” beginning of line three, creating a zigzag of assonance in the poem, complemented by the “a” brought through “chaos” and “cicadas.”

## 4.12 Au soleil levant

Au soleil levant  
    pique-bois piquant dans  
        le pic de la maison,  
Me faisant sentir  
    moins seul.

*(aux Chênes du Marais, le 6 décembre 1999)*

### 4.12.1 Translations

#### a) Literal

At sun rising

At sun rising  
    woodpecker pecking in  
        the peak of the house,  
Making me feel  
    less alone.

*(at Chênes du Marais, December 6th, 1999)*

#### b) Foreignizing

echoing sunrise  
the woodpecker perseveres  
loneliness at bay

#### c) Mnemonic

Rising Sun

Rising sun  
    reveals the woodpecker's resonance –  
        solitude overshadowed.

#### 4.12.2 Commentary

“Au soleil levant” is a five-line, twenty-two-syllable poem spread in a 5-6-6-5-2 distribution pattern. It is the longest of the poems I have chosen to analyze, though not the longest poem I have chosen to include in my corpus of haiku. There are two distinct images: the visual of the sun rising and the auditory of the woodpecker pecking. There are a couple cuts that could be interpreted in the poem, both after line one and the switch in images, or after the comma in line three, and the switch to the poet’s self-reflection. There is wordplay and alliteration surrounding the image of the “pique-bois,” the thrice repeated “p” imitating the sound of the woodpecker as well as placing the image in the “pic” of the house.

The literal translation is able to follow word count and structure very closely. “Au soleil levant” is already an atypical construction in French, but it also indicates an active element – the observation is not at “sunrise,” then, but at “sun rising.” The wordplay and alliteration remain the same, with the “woodpecker pecking in the peak.” There is an inversion in the reflexive “me faisant” to “making me,” but simply for linguistic structural reasons.

With any of the longer poems, it requires careful consideration of the images to reduce both lines and syllables, especially as there were three images that could carry over: sunrise, the woodpecker, and the poet’s loneliness. Thus, I’ve given one line to each image, all while smoothing over the connections between lines so that they are not totally separate. The auditory image of the sound of the woodpecker, indicated by “echoing,” is affixed to the visual of the rising sun, condensed into the more typical “sunrise.” This is further emphasized by “perseveres,” which ensures the alliteration of

the source text, and although less explicit than “pecking,” provides an implicit image, particularly combined with “echoing.” Line three offers a double meaning through the use of “bay,” which both throws back to the image of the house (in the sense of both bay windows or the bays as divisions of a large space) as well as the expression “to keep something at bay,” which in this instance is in controlling an emotion, keeping it at a distance, if only temporarily.

The mnemonic translation plays on both previous translations to heighten and play with the auditory and visual images. The title goes back to the literal translation of “at sun rising,” but inverted to be more idiomatic; the title is also the first line of the poem, aiding recall. Lines one and two form a complete sentence, playing with alliteration through “rising,” “reveals,” and “resonance.” There is also a play on combining the images – typically the sun would reveal something visual, but it is here revealing the sound of the woodpecker. This play with images is continued in line three, separated by an em dash to indicate a pause for the reader and distinction from the other lines. The visual image is brought into the poet’s sentiments, “overshadowed” playing on the “shadows” created by the light of the sun and “overshadowed” as in making something less significant.

### 4.13 Un à la traîne

Une volée de tchoques,  
    volait autour du marais.  
    Il y en a un à la traîne  
Qui ferait mieux de se dépêcher.

*(aux Chênes du Marais, le 12 décembre 1999)*

#### 4.13.1 Translations

##### a) Literal

One at the train

A flock of blackbirds  
    flew around the marsh.  
    There is one at the train  
Who would do better to hurry itself.

*(at Chênes du Marais, Decembrer 12<sup>th</sup>, 1999)*

##### b) Foreignizing

bevy of blackbirds  
one trailing o'er the marshes  
time to hurry now

##### c) Mnemonic

Trailing Behind

Bevy of blackbirds circle the swamp  
    beckoning, beckoning,  
    for one to keep up.

#### 4.13.2 Commentary

Although only four lines, "Un à la traîne" is one of the lengthiest haiku at twenty-nine syllables, in a 5-7-8-9 pattern. The title is a segment directly from the poem, indicating that although the poem describes an opening image of a flock of birds, the importance is in one bird in particular. The juxtaposition is natural, passing from many to few, as well as contrasting motion and slowness. The poem is comprised of two complete sentences, each containing one of the juxtaposed images, separated in line two by a period. Lines one and two present the "many" image, offering an alliteration and near-rhyme in "volée," line one, and "volait," line two, the latter of which also creates assonance with "marais" at the end of the line. The second image, of the single blackbird, is one of trailing behind, but offered as a thought from the author – in saying "qui ferait mieux," there is the expression of an opinion from the observer.

The literal translation shows its clunkiness in this poem, but greatly highlights regionalisms and French expression. "One at the train" is nonsensical in English in the context of the source text, but it highlights the construction of the original expression, which signifies to be last or to be late. Line one presents another translation difficulty, in that "tchoques," is a Louisiana-specific regionalism for "blackbird," but has no equivalent in English other than its formal noun. The alliteration has been preserved through "flock" in line one and "flew" in line two, but the assonance is lost. "One at the train" is then brought back in line three, and carries well into line four, with the noticeable oddity of "hurry itself" in imitation of the reflexive "se dépêcher."

The foreignizing translation highlights the contrast of "many" and "few," with line one heightening the visual of the flock with "bevy," and the ensuing alliteration with

“blackbirds,” opening the poem on strong tones. The article has also been removed, keeping ambiguity, and heightening the significance of “one” at the opening of line two. The more idiomatic translation of “un à la traîne” would be “trailing behind,” which I have been able to insert partially, with simply “trailing.” There is more ambiguity in the end reflection from the poet, with the “time to hurry now” being implied for the bird who is trailing, but could also be more general. Line three is a distinct cut from the rest of the poem, standing alone as its own phrase.

Finally, the mnemonic translation leans towards idiomaticity for the reader the title becoming “Trailing Behind,” referring to the initial image of the source poem. Line one opens the same as the foreignizing version, repeating the alliteration in “bevy of blackbirds,” and continues on to bring in the action identified in the source text, of the birds flying around. “Circle” encapsulates the action of “volait autour,” and although I have translated “marais” as marsh in both the literal and the foreignizing version, I have chosen “swamp” here for alliterative purposes. “Marais” can be either, particularly with no further context offered, and in knowing that the Louisiana landscape could easily lend itself to either. In line two I deviate from both previous translations by placing a further action or intention on the “bevy” of birds – they are the ones encouraging the lone, trailing bird to join them. The repetition of “beckoning”, beyond continuing the alliteration of “b”s, offers a dactylic meter that imitates a waltz-like 1-2-3 beat, and lends itself well to imbuing the poem with a more dramatic quality. Referring to “one” in line three still allows for the quantitative contrast of many to few that is written into the source poem. Finally, in inserting a near-rhyme between “swamp” at the end of line one

and “up” at the end of line three, there is a sense of continuity and cohesion from beginning to end of the poem.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is not to provide definitive answers or suggestions as to the form of the haiku, both in creation and in translation. If anything, approaching the translation process through multiple lenses, allowing for multiple understandings of the form, brings the reader closer to the reality of the haiku in the twenty-first century. That is, for all the characteristics we can attribute it, the haiku remains an ambiguous, imprecise form of poetry.

Overall, it is the opinion of this translator that each approach has its merits, but that no one translation is definitively superior. In fact, moving methodically from one translation to another, starting close to the source text and gradually moving further from it, was crucial to building on the author's intentions. This process ensured that the thread of the source text was present throughout each translation. Even if the unifying thread to the haiku form overall can be debated, the unifying thread in the corpus of poems and translations is evident.

Translating literally did produce the clumsiest poems, but it best highlighted the word and structure choices of the author. Following this closer examination of the source text, the foreignizing approach was an exercise of taking those elements extrapolated from the source and to work them within constraints associated to the haiku form. This tended to produce a more stilted rhythm, but allowed for sharper, contrasting images, and a deliberateness in elements such as seasonal references. Finally, the mnemonic approach produced the overall most pleasing, arguably strongest and most recognizable poems, but it relied on the work done in both the literal and foreignizing translations to be able push the images and themes further.

In the end, the question remains: do any of my translations, in fact, qualify as haiku? Adopting multiple translations was the ideal way to explore the nuance and the numerous conceptions of the form, but I have grown increasingly conscious throughout the writing of this thesis that my translations may not find a legitimacy in the world of haiku. But then, this is very much in the spirit underlying Richard's own haiku, which is that you have to play with boundaries to see where they actually are.

Thus, it seems only fitting to conclude this thesis is in the same way as Richard signs-off the preface to his collection:

J'envoie ces vers dans l'univers. Ils sont venus de loin, mais je ne sais pas d'où exactement. Je n'ai pas d'idée de l'endroit où ils vont aboutir. Ce sont des braises que je garroche dans le ciel. J'espère simplement qu'elles ne s'éteindront pas trop vite. Comme ça, elles auront la chance un jour de foutre le feu ailleurs (2001, p. 11).

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