The Appeal of Haiku in the Countries of the Former Yugoslavia

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Abstract
According to Boris A. Novak (2016), haiku has become one of the most popular poetic forms in the world (45). The article elucidates the initial reception and later development of this micro-poetic form in the former Yugoslav republics, particularly in Slovenia, Serbia and Croatia. Analyzing some representative poems, with particular attention to understatement as one of the vital aesthetic features of haiku, the article demonstrates that it responds to local socio-political and cultural realities and has the potential to make a distinctive contribution to contemporary public life and interpersonal relations.

Keywords: haiku aesthetics, critical reception, public appeal, ethical implications
HAIKU AESTHETICS

From the perspective of traditional haiku with its objective to emphasize mindfulness, appreciation and interconnectivity of all things, Susumu Takiguchi may be right to claim that haiku cannot be used as a tool for achieving political goals (1). However, since 1950s, when the Beat Poets popularized haiku in the United States and beyond, this poetic form has evolved in various ways, depending on the linguistic, cultural and historical contexts of haiku communities. In addition to serving as a form of emotional outlet for the poets, haiku – like literature in general – can also be read as a text with potential social or ethical implications, given that it is part of the “interactive environment,” playing a role in forming our values and moral choices (Richter 248).

Critics tend to concur with Hiroaki Sato, who claims that today it “may be possible to describe haiku but not define it (73). Harold Henderson, an early pioneer of haiku studies in English, has noted that “haiku are not verses that follow rules set down by some authority, but what poets make these verses to be” (46-47). If pressed to give a definition, Haruo Shirane would describe it as “a short poem, usually written in one to three lines, which seeks out new and revealing perspectives on the human and physical condition, focusing on the immediate physical world around us, particularly that of nature, and on the workings of the human imagination, memory, literature and history” (60).

What then is the aesthetic quality indispensable to haiku, given that the syllable count is not essential and minimalism alone insufficient? According to the haiku poet, critic and editor Susan Antolin, this is “understatement,” as she refers to the concepts of silence, restraint, subtlety and suggestiveness (25). In her opinion, “haiku poets excel in the virtue of knowing when to stop; one more word might spoil everything” (Antolin 27). The view that the unexpressed can have a greater affective impact than what is explicit in the work of art, is also valued outside haiku circles. For example, Louise Glück, the 2020 American recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, has noted that “what is wanted in art is to harness the power of the unfinished” (28). Similarly, French literary critic Pierre Macherey (2006) has observed that “what is important in the work of art is what it does not say” (86).

With specific imagery to create a certain mood or feeling and no explanation, which compels readers to make sense of the poem on their own, haiku fits into the line of thought of T. S. Eliot. Eliot claims that the “only way of expressing emotions in the form of art is by finding an objective correlative,” that is, a

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1 I am grateful to Dr. John Han, Professor and Chair of Humanities Division at Missouri Baptist University, for kindly reading a draft of this paper and providing words of support.
situation or a set of events that act as a ‘formula’ for evoking a particular emotion (145). The idea was first outlined in Eliot’s 1909 letter to American Imagist poet William Carlos Williams, namely that “poetic ideas are best expressed by the rendering of a concrete object” and painting it as one sees it, without didacticism and “in sequence of the musical phrase not in sequence of the metronome” (Gray 1998, 52). As in Williams’s work, where “there are no ideas but in things” (Gray 82), in haiku poetry attention is concentrated on the individual object or emotion or event, caught at a particular time and point in space. Haiku poets use images and “functional speech,” which, according to Marianne Moore, “achieves a maximum effect with the minimum possible resources” (vii), leaving it to the reader to intuit the larger context or what is commonly referred to as the ‘meaning’ of the poem. In Eliot’s words, the best masters make their poetry so “transparent that readers do not see the poetry but what was meant to see through it” (Antolin 30). The following poems by Matsuo Bashō serve as illustrative examples:

An old pond …
A frog leaps in.
Water’s sound. (18)

Ungraciously, under
a huge soldier’s empty helmet,
a cricket sings. (107)

As this discussion will demonstrate, haiku produced on the territory of the former Yugoslav republics, particularly in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, is also marked by such distinctive features as plain, unadorned language, juxtaposition of images and understatement, to mention only its most obvious ones. Responding to contemporary local realities, haiku poets draw attention to a wide array of social and political concerns, such as inequality, migration, environmental degradation and war, which testifies to its adaptability to the changing times. The article will also provide evidence that, amid the abundance of poets who uncritically deem their work as superb, there are several true artists, whose work “rewards the reader upon multiple readings” (Antolin 33). It is because of the latter that this poetic form deserves to comfortably find its place in the literary canon.

2 There are numerous different translators of Basho’s poems. For example, “The Old Pond,” which has remained one of the most famous haiku poems ever composed, has around 100 various translations into English. The quoted two poems are taken from the Classic Poetry Series, Matsuo Basho’s poems, published by World’s Poetry Archive in 2004: https://docplayer.net/231635376-Matsuo-basho-poems.html.
THE INITIAL RECEPTION

The concept of brevity, clarity and precision, characteristic of Japanese haiku poetry, which was embraced by the early twentieth century American and English Imagists and the French symbolist poets before them, has found many followers all over the world. Judged by the number of publications and awards won at haiku poetry competitions, this ancient Japanese micro-poetic form with seasonal motifs that Bashō turned into a revered form of poetry about four hundred years ago and emerged as a reaction to elaborate poetic traditions, has also sparked a huge interest in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. René Étiemble, a French comparatist and promoter of Eastern and Asian studies, has noted what he considers a contradictory fact: namely that, in the East European Slavic countries, this poetic form that shares with Zen Buddhism a deep appreciation of the moment and whose main goal is to confirm the idiosyncrasies and wonders of each individual human being or thing was particularly popular during the imposition of totalitarian communist rule (qtd. in Novak 94). Contrary to Étiemble, Slovene academic and literary figure Boris A. Novak argues that the public appeal of haiku within Eastern Europe under the oppressive single-party governments is not surprising. According to him, in a particular socio-political context, even literary works with no political complicity can have political implications (94).

Indeed, in the communist part of divided post-war Europe, where there was no room for individuality, autonomous thinking and creative imagination, the poetic form that encouraged contemplation and individual sensitivity, as haiku poetry does, must have been perceived by readers as a relief and liberation from the tyranny of standardization and repression. On the other hand, by encouraging readers’ creative faculties, haiku poetry did not accord with the ruling regimes’ utilitarian conception of “what constitutes the literary” and their “reductive assimilation of literature to ideology” (Levine 387). Rather, it posed a serious menace to their objectives. These possibly subversive implications of haiku also explain why it was “attacked and continually restrained not only by promoters of the so-called mainstream literature, but by the promoters of politics as well,” as Croatian haiku poet and scholar Đurđa Vukelić Rožić writes in her 2014 study “Haiku in Croatia” (2). Haiku was refused to be accepted “even as information, let alone as culture and artistic fact,” agrees Vladimir Devidé.

Today, the entire region represents a fertile ground for the practice and appreciation of haiku. Haiku poets write about both rural and urban experiences, painting the scents and sounds of nature and offering fleeting glimpses of the essence of vibrant city life. According to Vukelić Rožić, particularly Croatia is a “heaven for haiku poets” (1), rendering them endless opportunities to capture the intricate interplay between stunning coastal areas, lush green valleys and sprawling...
mountain ranges. Drawing inspiration from the country’s folklore, myths and historical events, and conveying the appreciation of each passing moment, the haiku poetry in this area now expands the boundaries of traditional form, reflecting on several contemporary issues, such as migration, inequality, war and climate change. The fusion of traditional haiku with local poetic sensibilities and cultural nuances gives the haiku of this area a distinct voice and contributes to the diversity of the global haiku community.

THE HISTORY OF HAIKU IN SERBIA AND CROATIA

In her study “Haiku in Serbia and Montenegro: Roads and Side-Roads,” Saša Važić draws attention to the common opinion that “haiku is unduly neglected by the literary public but very popular among its lovers” (1). To a great extent, this has also been the case in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, although the influence of haiku can already be noticed in the work of several important early twentieth century poets of the area. For example, the collection *Pjesme* (Poems) by a Croatian poet and translator Antun Gustav Matoš, written in 1909 and published in 1923, contains this three-line poem, which shares with traditional haiku the idea of awareness and appreciation of a specific moment, its beauty and transience.

Jesensko predvečerje  
Iza mokrih polja magla se krije  
kuće i kula: ranjeno sunce (Matoš 12)

Translated into English, the poem reads:

An autumn eve  
Behind wet fields the fog hides  
houses and a tower: the wounded sun

According to Važić, the history of haiku in the former Yugoslavia goes back to the 1928 publication of *Pesmi starog Japana* (The Poems of Ancient Japan), a collection of 57 classical Japanese haiku translated into Serbo-Croatian by Miloš Crnjanski (1). However, with few exceptions, the influence of this genre was not noticeable until much later. The first to write about haiku was probably Ivan Fočt; his study “O klasičnoj japanskoj književnosti (About the Classical Japanese

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3 Serbo-Croatian was an official language of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, when these countries were Yugoslav republics. After the split, each country has its own language (Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian).
Literature)” was published in the 1952 issue of literary journal Republika. Among important studies that contributed to the understanding of Japanese haiku were Dejan Razić’s Razvoj haiku poezije od nastanka do Bašoa (The Development of Haiku Poetry from Its Beginning to Bashō) and Vrhunac haiku poezije (The Peak of Haiku Poetry), both published in 1979.

The main credit for the popularity of haiku in the former Yugoslav republics goes primarily to Vladimir Devidé, a reputable Croatian Japanologist, academic and writer. The author of several books and hundreds of studies and speeches on the literary and cultural history of Japan and haiku, and the recipient of numerous awards at various international haiku competitions including the Order of the Sacred Treasure of Japanese Government (1983), Devidé stirred an upsurge of interest in haiku not only in the former Yugoslav republics but also in other East European countries. Published in 1970, Devidé’s haiku poetry volume Japanska poezija i njen kulturno-povjesni okvir (Japanese Poetry and Its Cultural and Historical Framework) collects Serbo-Croatian rendition of about 500 haiku poems by 100 Japanese poets and still serves as a “haiku textbook.” Dubravko Ivančan, the author of about 2,000 poems collected in eight volumes, beginning with Leptirova krila (Butterfly Wings) in 1964, is regarded as the first and the best Croatian haiku poet, whereas in Serbia, the reputation of being the first to write haiku goes to Aleksandar Neugebauer and his 1975 collection Haiku.

A crucial role in disseminating and promoting national haiku poetry was performed by haiku journals. Two of them were particularly important: the Croatian Haiku (1977–1981), started by Vladimir Devidé, Zvonko Petrović and Željko Funda, and the Serbian Paun (Peacock 1988–). The journal Osvit (Daybreak, 2001 –), published by the Haiku Association of Serbia and Montenegro, formerly known as the Haiku Association of Yugoslavia (1999), has also considerably contributed to the popularity of haiku. Without naming numerous collections and haiku poets who have been granted international awards, commendations and other recognitions, it is safe to claim that, in a relatively short period of time, haiku has gained followers of various ages, educational levels and occupations. Several established poets have also switched to this poetic form, such as Desanka Maksimović, Dobrica Erić, Momčilo Tešić, Miroljub Todorović, Slobodan Pavičević and Mirjana Božin in Serbia, and Tomislav Marijan Bilosnić, Enes Kišević, Drago Štambuk, Jadran Zalokar, Anto Gardaš and Luko Paljetak in Croatia.

However, this does not mean that their haiku elicited similarly intensive critical response or received a chorus of praise. It needs to be remembered that, until the fall of totalitarian regimes in the 1990s, literature was assessed through ideological lenses and was primarily meant to enforce the officially promoted precepts of communism, rather than indulge in the transient beauty of nature. Josip Pavičič, the publisher of Devidé’s 1996 Antologija hrvatskoga haiku pjesništva (Anthology
of Croatian Haiku Poetry), which compiles over 1,100 haiku by eighty poets writing in Croatian, was one of the first literary critics who took an affirmative stance towards haiku and “recognized its artistic value” (Vukelić-Rožić 13). The following haiku by contemporary poets Vukelić Rožić and Ljubomir Radovančević, respectively, can serve as examples. Characterized by precision and economy of statement, juxtaposed images allow readers to catch the aura of simple things and liberate their imagination:

večernje vijesti
još jedna masovna grobnica
vremenska prognoza

evening news
another mass grave
weather forecast

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sumrak u dvorištu
jedino svjetlo dopier
od rascvale trešnje

dusk in the yard
the only light there is
a blossoming cherry

Matsuo Bashô, the 17th-century Japanese haiku master, gave this advice to haiku poets: “Go to the pine if you want to learn about the pine, or to the bamboo if you want to learn about the bamboo. And in doing so, you must leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself. Otherwise, you impose yourself on the object and do not learn” (qtd. in Geyer et al. 2). A huge number of poets in the former Yugoslav republics have adopted haiku as the form of their artistic expression, but the quantity does not go hand in hand with quality. This is not only because the poets ignore the above advice or lack the gift of Japanese masters, such as self-discipline and self-criticism, but it is in Važić’s opinion also connected with reviewers who uncritically praise the work of the haiku circle they are part of and editors whose main aim seems to be to “fill their journals” (3). What compounds the problem is bad translation into English – the language generally used by the authors of the so-called small languages to enter the global haiku market (Važić 4).

4 The poems and their translations are taken from the article “Haiku in Croatia” by Đurđa Vukelić Rožić.
HAiku in Slovenia: From Milan Dekleva to Svetlana Makarovič

In Slovenia,⁵ which is today recognized as one of the leading countries of European haiku, the latter has been a popular tradition in poetry writing since the 1970s. The first news about this poetic form appeared in Tine Debeljak’s report on the contemporary literary trends published in the 1927 issue of Dom in svet, at that time one of the most progressive Slovene literary journals. Further information about haiku was provided in Franc Sušnik’s 1936 Pregled svetovne literature (An Overview of the World Literature) and Pavel Karkin’s 1939 report “Iz japonske poezije (From Japanese Poetry),” which includes a few translations of haiku by prominent Japanese poets Bashō, Yosa Buson and Kyoshi Takahama.

Unlike in other Yugoslav republics, in Slovenia haiku was not popularized through translations but directly, through the creative work. As early as 1971, Milan Dekleva⁶ published the first collection of Slovene haiku poems, Mushi, mushi, which drew attention because of both its content and manufacture. Not only the Japanese title of this collection, meaning ‘hot and humid,’ but also the format was rather unconventional, blending the influence of Western experimentalism and Zen Buddhist philosophy. Divided into three thematic sections, Music, Love and The World, each containing seventeen poems, the collection is about momentary feelings or states. With one poem per page, Dekleva establishes a sort of “spatial support” for one of the main themes of his haiku, which is, according to Novak, the “articulation of the relationship between silence and words” (96). Indeed, in line with Jane Hirshfield’s definition of good poetry, the “thoughts in invisible ink” in Dekleva’s poems exert a great power and affect the reader more strongly than those that are expressed, because they allude to a larger context rather than being “narrowed by conscious accounting” (qtd. in Antolin 28). In Tomaž Kralj’s terms, Dekleva’s poems “catch the essence of a moment, reflect it and let it go.” The two poems from the section about love, clearly exemplify the author’s awareness that in haiku, what is left unspoken is more significant than what is said.⁷

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⁵ Slovenia was the first Yugoslav republic to gain independence from Yugoslavia (in June 1991).
⁶ Milan Dekleva, a poet, novelist, short story writer and playwright, is the recipient of several prestigious Slovene literary awards, including the Prešeren Foundation Award in 1989 for his poetry collection Zapriceženi prah and the Grand Prešeren Award in 2006 for his lifetime poetry. Mushi, mushi is the author’s first poetry collection.
⁷ For the poems, see https://sl.wikisource.org/wiki/Mushi_mushi. See also the interview the poet held with Peter Semolič on September 6, 2015. https://www.poiesis.si/pogovor-z-milanom-deklevo/.
Stojiš za menoj.
Spet si oblak in bojim
se, sonca vajen.

Translated into English, the poem may read as: 8

You stand behind me.
Again, you’re a cloud.
Accustomed to sun, I fear.

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Prideš po temi.
Zrak je britev in tvoje
prsi so rana.

English rendition:

You come by darkness.
The air is a razor, your
breasts a wound.

Around the same time, Rudi Stopar also adopted this condensed and intense form to express his emotional experience. His meticulous speech with carefully selected words allows the readers to conjure up the scene in their minds’ eyes. As Goran Dekleva explains haiku in his study “Podobe Japonske: Pesem, ki zna vse povedati v 17-tih zlogih (Images of Japan: A poem that can say it all in 17 syllables),” 9 Stopar uses this poetic form as a space for exalting the beauty of nature to counter the blindness of western capitalism and consumerism. One of Stopar’s haiku poems reads:

privezano z vrvmi
ujeto med jambore
ugaša sonce

tied up with ropes
caught between the masts
the setting sun

8 Unless stated differently, this and all subsequent English translations are provided by the author of this article.

9 See https://prvi.rtvslo.si/podkast/podobe-japonske-/173251320/174794757.
In 1975, the first anthology of Japanese haiku *Mala antologija Japonske lirike* (A Tiny Anthology of Japanese Lirics) was published, edited and translated into Slovene by Mart Ogen. The Slovene cultural space witnessed a veritable outburst of haiku verse in 1996, when the first important Slovene haiku journal *Prijatelj* (A Friend) opened up the location for both the translation of Japanese haiku and the dissemination of Slovene haiku by Iztok Geister, Mart Ogen, Ivo Antič, Slavko Kvas, Milan Dekleva and Franc Pečnik, among others. The publication of several other Slovene literary journals, for example *Letni časi* (Seasons) and *Apokalipsa* (Apocalypse), both focused exclusively on haiku poetry, gives a strong indication of the popularity of this poetic form in Slovenia. In 2000, the Slovene Haiku Society organized the inauguration World Haiku Association Meeting in Tolmin. A year later, the Japanese haiku poet Banja Nacuiši was one of the main guests at the renowned Vilenica International Literary Festival. The fact that schools in Slovenia regularly organize haiku competitions at national and international levels, gives further evidence of the appeal of this succinct and precise verse. So does a long list of Slovene anthologies of haiku, beginning with *Ribnik tišine* (The Pond of Silence, 2005), edited by Dimitar Anakiev; the book collects haiku poems by fifty poets and their translations into twelve European languages.

Similarly extensive is the list of poets who have chosen this ascetic poetic form as their mode of expression. However, as Novak has observed in his accompanying study to Josip Osti’s haiku collection *Objemam te in poljubljam v vseh barvah Marca Chagalla* (I embrace you and kiss you in all colors of Marc Chagall, 2010), only some Slovene haiku poets can be regarded as “excellent and sensitive authors of haiku,” whereas many others have roughly learned the technique without obtaining a sufficient understanding of philosophy that is fundamental to haiku (108).

Theoretically, Slovene haiku poets, like Croatian and Serbian ones, draw on the classical Japanese masters and their tradition, while also acknowledging the influence of modern Western haiku, which is manifested in looser structures and in a broader range of subject matter. They seek to transcend the nihilistic concerns of modern Western humanity by revealing the meaning in barely perceptible moments that generated their artistic tension. As Iztok Geister writes in the introduction to his 1973 collection *Haiku*, haiku poetry differs significantly from the Western poetry. Its purpose is not literariness as understood by the West, but to “inspire the reader to experience what the poet felt” (qtd. in Sajovic 246). The following poems by Darja Kocjančič and Josip Osti, respectively, illustrate this claim.

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10 Boris A. Novak’s accompanying study has an indicative title, “Sedemnajst zlogov za vso globino srca in zvezde neba (Seventeen syllables for all the depth of heart and the stars of the sky).”
They are included in the 2014 anthology *Breskvini popki* (Peach Buds), edited by Primož Repar and translated into English by Jure Novak.

koraki pred vrati –
kar ima, begunec pokloni: 
brezzobi nasmeh

footsteps in front of the door –
all he has, the fugitive gives:
a toothless smile. (70)

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So časi, ko so
regratovi cvetovi –
judovske zvezde.

There are times when
dandelion flowers are –
stars of David. (78)

Perhaps the best indicator of the popularity of haiku in Slovenia is the fact that some of the most prominent Slovene poets, such as Boris Novak and Svetlana Makarovič, both recipients of the Grand Prešeren Award, the highest award for artistic achievements in Slovenia, have also adopted this poetic genre. Makarovič, who is by common consensus regarded as ‘the first lady’ of modern Slovene poetry, has recently published two haiku volumes. First is *Zima vezilja* (Winter of Embroidery, 2016), a collection of 45 haiku on half empty and unnumbered pages, aptly illustrated by the academic painter Andrej Brumen Čop. The book gives evidence that, in the hands of a true artist, the Japanese poetic form can easily absorb an entirely different conception of creation in addition to the traditional one (Dekleva 16). Some poems perfectly fit within the framework of classical haiku as a form of marvelling at the fragile moments of beauty and the mere fact that something exists, whereas several others reveal the poet’s ongoing critique of human authoritarian consciousness. Unlike in her previous work, in which she is declaratively direct and uncompromising in depicting horror, violence and the meaningless that seem to be the only true reality of the world, this time the same ideas are expressed through ellipsis, hints and silence (Dekleva 16). Only seldom does what is terrifying happen before readers’ eyes (see the first haiku below); in most cases, her poems allude to the traumatic event that already happened (see the second haiku that follows):
Skozi vejevje
Mrzle človeške oči
Vroči brizg krvi.

Translated into English, the poem reads:

Through the branches
Cold human eyes.
Hot splashes of blood.

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Mrzlo ognjišče.
Tu je bil nekdo doma.
Otroška risba.

English translation:

Cold hearth.
Someone was at home here.
A child’s drawing.

Conducting readers through a bare and cold winter landscape, symbolizing emotional sterility and moral decay of modern society, Makarovič skilfully weaves together the elements of beauty and ugliness, gentleness and cruelty, playfulness and bitterness, and combines them with a razor sharpness. Although her portrayal of the world’s state is unapologetic, she avoids moralizing. It is clear that human selfishness, insensitivity and negligence arouse her anger and that she unreservedly takes the side of those in need. Yet, as Martina Potisk observes in her 2017 review, Makarovič “rejects the insincere human solidarity that results from the increased importance of ‗good name‘ in recent times, and astutely addresses the most distorted ‘truths’ in the context of contemporary societal concerns (313). The following two poems, in particular, bear witness to the inhumanity of today’s society:

Tujkino dete.
Ta zima ga bo vzela.
Potlej bo lažje.

English rendition reads:

A foreigner’s child.
This winter will take it.
Then it will be easier.
Daleč so vojne.
Sekaj, sekaj smrečico.
Božični puran.

It can be rendered into English as:

Wars are far away.
Cut, cut the little spruce tree.
Christmas turkey.

With no excessive emotional charge, no superfluous word, no explanation or interpretation, the poems haunt because of what has remained unsaid. An additional word would spoil the magic. The poems are perfectly in line with Bashō's observation that his disciples “paint in black ink,” whereas the works of other schools of poets resemble coloured paintings (Antolin 26). The question raised by the poetic subject in the volume’s concluding haiku is utterly appropriate in today’s world, which is corrupted by egotism and insensitivity. It is also essentially rhetoric: Can humans change and become more compassionate, responsible and sensitive?

Ptički, vprašam vas.
Al’ bo že skoraj pomlad.
Ko nas več ne bo.

Birdies, I ask you.
Is it spring yet?
When we are no longer here.

The poems in Makarovič’s second haiku collection Naj bo poleti (Let it be in Summer), published in 2018, are equally marked by the elements of silence, restraint and suggestiveness, which makes them strikingly powerful and sharp, yet at the same time fragile and beautiful. Defying the values venerated by today’s rational and depersonalized society, they invite us to create self-reflection and become better, more sensitive and respectful towards each other and nature.

Like literature in general, which – in Hirshfield’s terms – “speaks about what needs to be solved rather than solves,” or in Nussbaum’s words, functions as a

“bridge to both a vision of justice and to the social enactment of that vision” (364), haiku poems by Makarovič and other true masters of this craft provide spaces for posing ethical reflections and exploring the possibilities of change. Considering that the world is still full of antagonism, this is a compelling rationale for haiku’s wide distribution and circulation.

CONCLUSION

This article has provided an overview of haiku’s long tradition in the former Yugoslav republics. Although the philosophy behind this brief, intense and above all intuitive poetic form did not match the perception of literature during the period of communist political regimes in this region, it elicited a huge public response. Today, Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia are among the leading countries of European haiku, but with exceptions in Slovenia, critical circles have remained rather indifferent towards this genre (Važić 4).

Slovene haiku poet and essayist Marko Hudnik has observed that, when in his old age, he discovered haiku, he found an occupation that could give the meaning to his life – “even in retrospect” (62). The discovery of haiku has brought a sense of purpose and meaning to the lives of many who have recognized its transformative power, that is, the ability to “open one’s eyes and ignite the souls for the unknown moods and purified experiences of overlooked or insignificant things” (Sajovic 246). Revealing the beauty in the seemingly ordinary things and enriching our lives with experiences that transcend rational comprehension, these poets bring new awareness and fresh insights to the world. As Josip Osti concludes his 2010 haiku collection: “Brez pesnikov bi / bilo enkrat videno / vedno enako” (90), rendered into English: “Without poets / once seen would remain / forever the same.”

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Priljubljenost haikuja v državah nekdanje Jugoslavije

Haiku se danes uvršča med najbolj popularne pesniške oblike. Članek osvetljuje prve odzive in kasnejši razvoj te jedrnate pesniške oblike v nekdanjih jugoslovanskih republikah, še posebej v Sloveniji, Srbiji in na Hrvaškem. Z obravnavo nekaj reprezentativnih pesmi, pri čemer je v ospredju koncept neizrečenega kot eden od determinirajočih estetskih značilnosti haikuja, dokažem, da se haiku ažurno odziva na lokalno družbenopolitično in kulturno realnost ter prispeva k ustvarjanju pogojev za boljšo kvaliteto javnega življenja in medsebojnih odnosov.

Ključne besede: estetske značilnosti haikuja, kritiški odziv, priljubljenost med bralci, etične implikacije