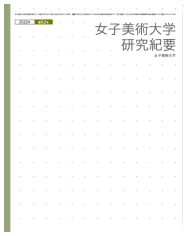

グレート・アメリカン・ソングブックにおける俳句：「ムーンライト・イン・ヴァーモント」の研究

学術論文

Haiku in the Great American Songbook — A Study of *Moonlight in Vermont*

▸Simon COSGROVE

ABSTRACT

Moonlight in Vermont was published in 1944, at a time when most American popular music written for stage and screen — collectively known as the Great American Songbook — was based on a simple 32-bar AABA formal structure and standardized rhyme schemes. Written by composer and lyricist team Karl Suessdorf and John Blackburn, *Moonlight in Vermont* is remarkable for its irregular 28-bar AABAC structure and total absence of rhyme. Furthermore, the syllabic structure and melodic contour of each A section in the song constitutes a haiku, matching the 5-7-5 pattern of Japan's most celebrated and widely-disseminated poetic genre.

The haiku in *Moonlight in Vermont* has been identified by musicians and critics, but observations have been limited to the song's 5-7-5 syllabic pattern and impressionistic lyrics. This study aims to authenticate the haiku in *Moonlight in Vermont* by contextually analyzing the music and lyrics. The history and fundamental characteristics of haiku will be assessed, and its dissemination into western culture — as well as other examples of haiku in musical composition — will be presented.

INTRODUCTION

Composer Karl Suessdorf and lyricist John Blackburn cowrote *Moonlight in Vermont* in Southern California in the early 1940s, and the sheet music was first published in 1944. Worlds away from New York's Tin Pan Alley — the powerhouse of the Great American Songbook [1] — the song nevertheless caught the attention of lyricist and producer Johnny Mercer who had recently founded Capitol Records, and it was catapulted to fame after its 1945 release featuring Margaret Whiting and Billy Butterfield's Orchestra. *Moonlight in Vermont* has been a staple of the jazz repertory since its inception, but — in contrast with George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern and other potentates of the Great American Songbook — its writers are virtually unknown, and academic study of the song is scant.

The formal structure of *Moonlight in Vermont* is fundamentally different to other compositions in the Great American Songbook. By the 1930s, most American popular songs adhered to a tried-and-tested 32-bar AABA template, and the lyrics — almost always based on the theme of love — followed clear and simple rhyme schemes. *Moonlight in Vermont* loosely follows the AABA trajectory, but it has a 28-bar form comprising three six-bar A sections bridged by an eight-bar B section and a two-bar coda (or C section). Other examples of irregular formal structures can be readily found in the Great American Songbook — Jerome Kern in particular showed a penchant for formal asymmetry in his songwriting — but *Moonlight in Vermont* is the only example of a 28-bar AABAC form.

Another defining characteristic of *Moonlight in Vermont* is the absence of rhyme. From the 19th-century songs of Stephen Foster to modern-day hip-hop, rhyme has always been an indispensable component of American popular song, but *Moonlight in Vermont* stands out as the only example in the Great American Songbook to be entirely devoid of rhyme, including internal rhyme.

An even more distinctive feature of *Moonlight in Vermont* — and the focus of this study — is the presence of haiku in the song's A sections. Haiku — a short, typically non-rhyming poetic form originating in Japan in the 17th century — is characterized by a 5-7-5 moraic

template and specific seasonal references. The presence of haiku in *Moonlight in Vermont* has been trivially observed by musicians and critics since the song's inception, but this paper is the first academic study on the subject.

Whether or not Suessdorf and Blackburn wrote *Moonlight in Vermont* intentionally as a series of haiku is unclear. The songwriters never officially documented it, and Blackburn's nephew Bill Rudman, artistic director of The Musical Theater Project in Cleveland, remarks "my suspicion is that it was a coincidence, but...I don't know...I didn't know John well, and I'm afraid we never got to the haiku — merely the lack of rhymes, which in itself is extraordinary."[2] The aim of this study is to authenticate the haiku in *Moonlight in Vermont* as more than a coincidence, by contextually analyzing the song's formal structure, lyrics and music, drawing parallels with haiku techniques such as *kigo* and *kireji*. The dissemination of haiku into western culture will also be examined, and other examples of haiku in 20th-century music will be assessed.

Part 1 is an overview of the history and fundamental characteristics of haiku, and its dissemination into western culture. Part 2 examines John Blackburn's lyrics to *Moonlight in Vermont*, drawing parallels with poetic techniques used in haiku. Part 3 is an analysis of Karl Suessdorf's music, examining the structure, melody, harmony and rhythm of *Moonlight in Vermont*, specifically the use of pentatonic scales and chromatic tension and how these elements can be interpreted in the context of haiku.

PART 1 – AN OVERVIEW OF HAIKU

1.1 History and Characteristics

Haiku (俳句) denotes a short poetic form of Japanese origin, usually comprising seventeen morae in three clauses of five, seven and five. Originally the first stanza or *hokku* (発句) of a linked verse poem or *renga* (連歌), haiku began to emerge as an independent form of poetry in the 17th century and enjoyed a golden age under Bashō Matsuo (松尾 芭蕉 1644–1694) and Onitsura Uejima (上島 鬼貫 1661–1738). Later generations of haiku masters, including Buson (蕪村 1716–1784) and Issa (一茶 1763–1828), developed the genre, and the modern era of Japanese haiku began with Shiki (子規 1867–1902) and Kyoshi (虚子 1874–1959). Haiku continues to thrive in contemporary Japan, with regular features in newspapers, radio and television broadcasts, in addition to haiku clubs and societies nationwide.

Japanese haiku typically contain *kigo* (季語 lit. 'season words'), drawn from the *saijiki* (歳時記 lit. 'year time chronicle'), a comprehensive almanac which lists the *kigo* by season and includes descriptions and example haiku for each entry. *Kigo* include flowers, insects, birds, fish and animals, as well as seasonal foods, abstract feelings, concepts, objects, and natural phenomena. As a rule, each haiku should contain only one kigo.

Another important element of haiku is *kireji* (切れ字 lit. 'cutting words'), characters that can be used at the end of phrases to adjust the structural balance of the verse, separate juxtaposing images and engage the reader. A good example of *kireji* can be observed in Bashō's most celebrated haiku,[3] in which the "ya" (や) of "furuikeya" (古池や) creates a caesura at the end of the first clause that allows the reader to contemplate the imagery of the poem. There is no exact equivalent of *kireji* in English, and the concept is difficult to translate, but it is comparable to the use of punctuation in English, often indicating a pause, an interruption or a sense of closure. As with *kigo*, only one *kireji* should be used in a single haiku, but not all haiku contain *kireji*.

Paucity of verbs and rhyme is another distinctive feature of haiku. In contrast with traditional English poetry, rhyme is not an integral element of haiku, but rhyming words, alliteration and onomatopoeia can be used for effect. The 5-7-5 structure is not always strictly observed — the terms *jiamari* (字余り) and *jitarazu* (字足らず) are used to denote a surplus or a shortage of morae respectively — but haiku are typically short and impressionistic in character.

1.2 Dissemination into Western Culture

There was little knowledge or understanding of haiku in the western world until the late 19th century, although Hendrik Doeff (1777–1835) is known to have written haiku in Japanese while stationed as Dutch commissioner in Nagasaki.[4]

In 1899, British scholar William George Aston published *A History of Japanese Literature*, an influential volume containing English translations of haiku and an overview of the history and practice of haiku. Aston, however, paints haiku in a negative light, writing that "it would be absurd to put forward any serious claim on behalf of Haikai (haiku) to an important position in literature,"[5] echoing the sentiment from his own 1877 volume *A Grammar of the Japanese Written Language* that "nothing which deserves the name of poetry can well be contained in the narrow compass of a verse of seventeen syllables."[6] Despite the condescending tone of Aston's publication, an English haiku contest was launched shortly afterwards by *The Academy* magazine, attracting dozens of entries and advancing the popularity of haiku.

British Japanologist Basil Hall Chamberlain's controversial 1902 essay 'Bashō and the Japanese Poetical Epigram' is more exhaustive than Aston's volume, but the mood is ambivalent at best, labeling haiku as "ultra-Lilliputian...versicles"[7] and dismissing them as "essentially fragmentary"[8] and a "litter of single bricks."[9]

Nevertheless, Aston and Chamberlain brought haiku to the attention of the educated classes, and other volumes about Japanese literature appeared in German and French over the next few years, spreading awareness of haiku throughout Europe. Japan's victory in the 1904–5 Russo-Japanese war, in addition to the fashionable *Japonisme* that permeated the period, contributed to the popularity of haiku in Europe.

The establishment of haiku as a valid form of English literature is generally attributed to American poet Ezra Pound, with the publication of his fourteen-word verbless poem *In A Station of the Metro* in 1913.

> *The apparition of these faces in the crowd:*
> *Petals on a wet, black bough*.
>
> —Ezra Pound

Pound's verse predates *Moonlight in Vermont* by over 30 years, but *Poor Butterfly* (1916) — a Broadway song (later to become a jazz standard) that was inspired by Puccini's *Japoniste* opera *Madame Butterfly* (1904) and uses such haikuesque lyrics as "'neath the cherry blossom trees" and "The moon and I" to tell the hackneyed story of young love between an American soldier and a Japanese girl — was written just three years after Pound's verse was published. This demonstrates an overlap in the influence of Japanese culture and haiku on both the serious literary output and the lighthearted vaudeville entertainment of America in the early 20th century. Interestingly, the lyrics to *Moonlight in Vermont* — in the same vein as Pound's celebrated 1913 poem — are characterized by a paucity of verbs, showing a direct connection with the haiku aesthetic.

Pound and other imagist poets of the era continued to write haiku-like verses, usually with an abbreviated 5-6-4 syllabic structure arranged in three lines, and the tradition was inherited and adapted by poets of the 1950s Beat generation, including Jack Kerouac and Gary Snyder, who penned freeform verse to match their stream of consciousness ideal. In the same way that jazz musicians used the compact musical structures of the Great American Songbook as a canvas for creative expression, the Beat generation poets unstitched the parameters of haiku and rearranged its elements to fit their syncopated aesthetic, with what Collins calls "a special American twist."[10]

In some circles "haiku" had become synonymous with any kind of freeform short verse, but a number of poets — including African-American novelist Richard Wright (1908–1960) — continued to compose haiku in English modeled on the established 5-7-5 syllabic pattern. Even

then, significant differences between English haiku and their Japanese counterparts can be observed, such as the absence of *kireji*, the presence of multiple *kigo*, and the phonological difference between the English syllable and the fixed-length Japanese mora.

The next part of this study will examine the lyrics of *Moonlight in Vermont* and assess how they relate to the fundamental characteristics and established principles of haiku.

PART 2 – THE LYRICS

2.1 John Blackburn

Lyricist John Blackburn (1913–2006) was born in Ohio and raised in a family that loved music and poetry. From 1937, Blackburn held a two-year teaching fellowship at the drama department at Bennington College in Vermont, and it was during this time that he developed an affinity for the natural beauty of Vermont, walking to and from the college each day from his lodgings about a mile from campus.[11] Blackburn, who would go on to a career in space aviation, was employed at the paymaster's office at Lockheed Aircraft in Southern California when he collaborated with composer Karl Suessdorf to write what would be their first and most successful song.

Over his long career as a lyricist, Blackburn penned the lyrics for hundreds of songs including *Need You* (1949), recorded by Jo Stafford and Gordon McRae, and he collaborated again with Suessdorf on *Susquehanna* (1957), recorded by Oscar Peterson, but nothing came close to the success of *Moonlight in Vermont*.

2.2 The Lyrics

Blackburn's lyrics for the three A sections of *Moonlight in Vermont* use seasonal references in haiku form to create evocative sketches of autumn, winter and summer in Vermont. The structure of the song does not accommodate a fourth season, but as Steyn notes "There's no spring, because, as you know if you live in the North Country, we don't really have any such thing... I guess they didn't fancy writing eight bars [sic] rhapsodizing about mud."[12] By contrast, the B section is structurally non-haiku, and the imagery changes abruptly from natural ("a stream") to urban ("the highway"). Just as Blackburn contrasts natural and urban images in the compact structure of *Moonlight in Vermont*, juxtaposition of natural phenomena and the manmade world can be observed as a recurring theme in 20th-century English haiku.

in the stream
a shopping cart
fills with leaves
—Alan Pizzarelli

Blackburn uses personification in the non-haiku B section ("Telegraph cables, how they sing down the highway / As they travel each bend in the road"), a technique that, together with simile and metaphor, is not usually found in traditional haiku.[13] Additionally, the lyrics of the B section contain verbs, in contrast with the verbless haiku-style A sections, further emphasizing the sectional juxtaposition of rural and urban imagery in *Moonlight in Vermont*.

Howard A. Doughty writes that John Blackburn "knew and thought enough about haiku poetry to render his most famous popular song more or less in that form."[14] Many of the seasonal references in *Moonlight in Vermont* correspond exactly with the official *kigo* contained in the *saijiki*, including "Moonlight" (*getsumei* 月明, September), "Falling leaves" (*kareha* 枯葉, November), Blackburn's own coinage "Snowlight" (*yukibare* 雪晴, January), "summer breeze" (*nanpū* 南風, June), and "meadowlark" (*hibari* 雲雀, March). But did the lyricist really know about the *saijiki* and consciously base his stanzas on traditional Japanese haiku, or was his lyric simply inspired by the scenery of Vermont and the tradition of seasonal references that permeates the Great American Songbook from Gershwin's *Summertime* to Mercer's *Skylark*? Indeed, Mercer — who sponsored the first recording of *Moonlight*

in Vermont and catapulted the song to international fame — wrote the lyrics to no less than nine songs with "moon" or "moonlight" in the title.

The answer is unclear, but the evidence points to Blackburn having possessed at least a rudimentary knowledge of haiku, and there are irrefutable parallels between the lyrics of *Moonlight in Vermont* and traditional haiku. Haiku had already entered contemporary American literary culture when Blackburn took up his drama teaching fellowship, and it is reasonable to assume that he was aware of the genre. Blackburn's lyric for *Moonlight in Vermont* fits the mold of traditional haiku with its 5-7-5 syllabic pattern and natural imagery, and even though it flouts the rules of Japanese haiku with the appearance of more than one seasonal reference per stanza, the absence of rhyme and paucity of verbs and punctuation are characteristic of both Japanese and English haiku. The only instance of punctuation in the A sections is the comma separating "Falling leaves" and "a sycamore" in the first stanza. This comma, as well as the ellipsis at the end of the B section ("by the lovely..."), plays the role of *kireji* and acts as a caesura to balance the flow of the verse.

The opening line "Pennies in a stream" is vaguely reminiscent of the old pond in Bashō's most celebrated haiku, the image of coins being tossed into a stream paralleling the image of Bashō's jumping frog.

> 古池や蛙飛び込む水の音
> (*furuike ya kawazu tobikomu mizu no oto*)
>
> The old pond
> A frog jumps in
> The sound of water
>
> — Bashō Matsuo

While *Moonlight in Vermont* contains no rhyme, Blackburn makes subtle use of alliteration ("ski/side/snow") and assonance ("stream/leaves"), a technique often found in traditional Japanese haiku.

Rikio Murao (b. 1942), author of the exhaustive 20-volume series *The Complete Collection of Jazz Lyrics* (ジャズ詞大全), makes no mention of the connection between *Moonlight in Vermont* and haiku in his entry on the song, instead dismissing Blackburn's attempt as amateurish (素人臭い、*shiroutokusai*) and unsophisticated (初ういしさ、*uiuishisa*)[15] because of its irregular formal structure and absence of rhyme. Murao writes that it does not match the standards of the Tin Pan Alley songs that featured in movies and Broadway shows, and expresses surprise at the popularity of *Moonlight in Vermont*. His Japanese translation of Blackburn's lyric does not capture the subtleties of the original, and his commentary fails to observe any link with haiku. Murao's analysis is echoed in the liner notes of Margaret Whiting's 1954 recording of *Moonlight in Vermont*, her second studio recording of the song, in which the critic brands the melody and the lyrics as "fragmentary." A significant parallel can be drawn here with Chamberlain's 1902 commentary about haiku as "essential fragmentary" and the early scholars' misinformed dismissal of haiku as an inadequate literary form.

In Sheila Davis's account of the songwriting process, Blackburn is said to have remarked "After completing the first 12 bars of the lyric, I realized there was no rhyme and then said to Karl, "Let's follow the pattern of no rhyme throughout the song. It seemed right."" [16] This account suggests that even Blackburn himself did not notice the absence of rhyme until he had already written half of the lyrics. But can Davis's recollection be verified? She also writes that Blackburn was "working from the title and writing to Karl Suessdorf's melody" [17] contradicting the account by Blackburn's nephew, theatre director Bill Rudman, that the songwriting process was "simultaneous." [18]

Frank Sinatra, who had been singing *Moonlight in Vermont* since 1957, was surprised to discover in the early 1990s during an after-hours conversation with pianist Steve Lawrence that the song did not contain a single rhyme, exclaiming "Well, I be damned. There's no

rhymes. I never realized that."[19] This statement, from one of the most celebrated veterans of 20th-century American popular song, makes it clear that the absence of rhyme in *Moonlight in Vermont* is barely noticeable, because the flow of Blackburn's lyric is seamless and uncontrived, in the same way that a good haiku is spontaneous and inspired, a phenomenon Yasuda refers to as the "haiku moment."[20]

America was actively involved in the Second World War when *Moonlight in Vermont* was written, and the familiar imagery in Blackburn's lyrics provides a moment of solace from the horrors of war. Haiku may not seem the obvious poetic template for a song that celebrates American natural beauty, especially considering the anti-Japanese sentiment at the time, but the healing effect of Japanese linked verse in times of conflict can be traced back to medieval times. Shirane writes "One of the reasons that linked verse became so popular in the late medieval period... was because it was a form of escape from the terrible wars that ravaged the country at the time. For samurai in the era of constant war, linked verse was like the tea ceremony; it allowed one to escape, if only for a brief time, from the world at large, from all the bloodshed." [21] From this perspective, Blackburn adopts not only the syllabic structure but also the aesthetic quality of haiku in *Moonlight in Vermont*, offering an impressionistic vignette of halcyon America as an antidote to the ravages of war, while at the same time echoing the patriotic romanticism of other popular American songs of the era.

The next section will assess Suessdorf's music, analyzing elements of formal structure, melody, harmony and rhythm and examining their connection with the haiku in *Moonlight in Vermont*.

PART 3 – THE MUSIC

3.1 Karl Suessdorf

Karl Suessdorf (1911–1982), was born in Valdez, Alaska. After attending military school, he went to Washington University, where he studied music privately. In 1938 he married Anna E. van Kleeff, and settled in Los Angeles, a mecca for composers at the time. Suessdorf was making ends meet working at a dairy near the Lockheed plant in the early 1940s[22] when he met and started collaborating with John Blackburn. Suessdorf suggested writing a state song, and Blackburn — recalling fond memories of his fellowship at Bennington College — proposed Vermont.[23] Shirane, writing about the importance of famous places in Japanese poetry, remarks that "there are relatively few English haiku on noted places."[24] In *Moonlight in Vermont*, however, we find a haiku disguised as a popular song that pays tribute to the natural beauty of a celebrated American landmark.

In addition to *Moonlight in Vermont*, Suessdorf also wrote the music for *I Wish I Knew* (1945) and *Key Largo* (1948).

3.2 The Music

This section will analyze the formal structure, melody, harmony and rhythm of *Moonlight in Vermont*, and identify specific relationships between Suessdorf's music and haiku.

Moonlight in Vermont has a 28-bar AABAC formal structure with no verse, comprising three six-bar A sections bridged by an eight-bar B section and a two-bar coda (C section). By the mid-1920s, the 32-bar AABA structure had become the norm in the Great American Songbook,[25] and the four-bar phrase was — and continues to be — the staple unit of American popular song. Even songs that stray from the 32-bar structure, such as Jerome Kern's 60-bar *I won't dance* (1934) and Cole Porter's mammoth 108-bar *Begin the Beguine* (1935) are underpinned by four-bar phrases and 16-bar sections. The formal structure

of *Moonlight in Vermont* is unique in the context of the Great American Songbook, but — just as the absence of rhyme in Blackburn's lyric slipped under Sinatra's radar — the unconventional six-bar sections flow so naturally as to go unnoticed. Steyn remarks that "Every eight-bar section [sic] is about a season — it's kinda like Vivaldi's Four Seasons but they wrap it up in 32 bars [sic]"[26] and Wilder comments that "the six-measure sections are so natural that the added two in the last section seem at first to be a tag to an eight-measure section."[27] Writing about the reader's cognitive perceptive of haiku, Collins mentions the "clever optical illusions" and "Alice in Wonderland dislocation of our size-logic."[28] The same concepts can be applied to the listener's experience of *Moonlight in Vermont*, in that the song creates a mirage of a standardized formal structure despite its irregular composition.

As with the majority of popular songs from the period, *Moonlight in Vermont* is written in common 4/4 time. The only tempo indication in the original score is "Freely", but the original 1945 recording is performed as an in-tempo ballad. Had Suessdorf decided to mimic the structure of haiku more transparently, he might have opted for alternating time signatures of 5 and 7 — in the same way that pianist Dave Brubeck experimented with irregular meters in "Blue Rondo à la Turk" (1959) and "Jazz Impressions of Japan" (1964) to create a sense of exoticism — but this would have rendered the song stylistically inappropriate and musically contrived.

Japanese jazz pianist Yosuke Yamashita's composition *Haiku*, released on the album *Sakura* in 1990, starts with a repeated 5-7-5 rhythmic pattern with notes of equal length (Fig. 1), imitating the fixed-length morae of Japanese haiku.

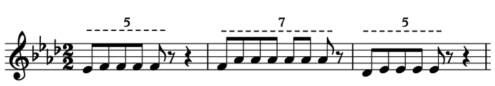

Fig. 1 Yosuke Yamashita *Haiku* (author's transcription)

While Yamashita writes in the liner notes that "I have wanted to emphasize my Japanese character as a musician", Minor interprets the narrative of *Haiku* as "What's with all this dainty frog/jump/splash shit, man? We're out to getcha!"[29]

Whatever the objective, the connection between Yamashita's *Haiku* and haiku per se extends no further than its 5-7-5 rhythmic pattern. By contrast, Suessdorf's melody for *Moonlight in Vermont* weaves three phrases of five, seven and five notes respectively into a simple meter with no complex syncopation or subdivision (Fig. 2), invoking what Vizenor calls the "subtle tension" of haiku.[30]

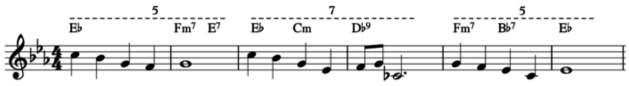

Fig. 2 *Moonlight in Vermont* A section (bars 1-6)

The phonological difference between fixed-length Japanese morae and multi-length English syllables is reflected in the contrast between the uniform eighth notes that constitute Yamashita's 5-7-5 motif in *Haiku* and the varied rhythmic units that make up Suessdorf's 5-7-5 phrases in *Moonlight in Vermont*. Otherwise, any connection between Yamashita's expressionistic free jazz composition and traditional haiku is negligible, or — as Atkins writes — "too tenuous to be credible."[31] In the liner notes to "Jazz Impressions of Japan", Brubeck speaks of his compositions as "minute but lasting impressions, somewhat in the manner of classical haiku"[32] but any tangible connection between Brubeck's music and haiku is similarly ambiguous.

The melody of *Moonlight in Vermont* is based on the Eb major pentatonic scale, which corresponds exactly to the *ryo* (呂) mode used widely in traditional Japanese music, including ancient *gagaku* court music (Fig. 3). The first three bars of Suessdorf's melody (see Fig. 2) use all of the notes of the ryo mode.

Fig. 3 Japanese *ryo* mode
(ascending and descending, transposed to E♭)

It is highly unlikely that Suessdorf, a composer of American popular song, was familiar with traditional Japanese modes, but a connection between the pentatonic scale and oriental music had already been established in western art music since the late 19th century, after Debussy — inspired by his exposure to Indonesian gamelan at the 1889 Paris Exposition — used the scale in his impressionistic compositions. Other examples of the pentatonic scale — which derives from the first five tones of the harmonic series and can be found in almost every musical culture — abound in the Great American Songbook, so it is by no means exclusive to *Moonlight in Vermont*, but it is conceivable that Suessdorf chose this scale to highlight a connection with the Asian musical aesthetic and, by association, with haiku.

The C♭ in the fourth bar (see Fig. 2) lies outside of the pentatonic scale, and it functions as a musical *kireji*, a melodic caesura in the middle of the 5-7-5 phrase. In this bar, the D♭7 harmony is dissonant in the context of the E♭ key center and thus creates tension within the composition, just as the use of *kireji in* haiku momentarily interrupts the stream of the verse.

The interval between the F and the sustained C♭ in the fourth bar (Fig. 4) is a tritone, the infamous *diabolus in musica* dissonance of the Middle Ages that would later become an integral component of contemporary classical music and jazz harmony in the 20th century.

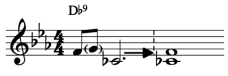

Fig. 4 Tritone in *Moonlight in Vermont*

Sloboda describes the effect of hearing a tritone as "not...too different from the one experienced at the bottom of a staircase that failed to mention it's missing its last step"[33] further supporting the idea that Suessdorf's melody parallels the punctuating role of *kireji* in haiku.

The B section moves to the chromatic mediant key of G major, modulating up a half step four bars later to A♭ major. The monotonal melody matches the abrupt change in the lyrics from country to city with its Morse code-like repetition, before the sudden octave leap in the third bar signals a "bend in the road" (Fig. 5).

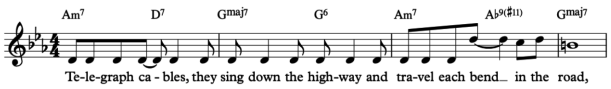

Fig. 5 *Moonlight in Vermont* B section (bars 1-4)

At the end of the B section, the melody traverses back from A♭ major to the tonic of E♭ major via a B♭7(♭9) dominant chord with the ♭9 scale degree of C♭ in the melody (Fig. 6).

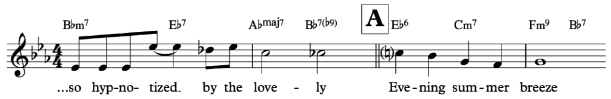

Fig. 6 *Moonlight in Vermont* end of B section, reprise of A section

Significantly, this C♭ is the same dissonance that constituted the musical *kireji* of the A section, but here it acts as a chromatic pivot leading to the reprise of the final A section. Blackburn recalls, perhaps anecdotally, that Suessdorf had trouble harmonizing the C♭ in the melody — "It took him a week, but he finally found the chord."[34] In addition to this complex chromatic chord, the sophisticated harmony that runs throughout *Moonlight in Vermont*, in tandem with the otherwise simple pentatonic melody, shows that Suessdorf was familiar with both contemporary jazz harmony and the established compositional techniques of the Great American Songbook.

There is no punctuation in the lyric at the end of the bridge, and the last phrase of the B section crosses the

double bar line before resolving in the second bar of the final A section (see Fig. 6). This point of structural asymmetry is highlighted by Sinatra on his 1958 recording of *Moonlight in Vermont*, as he extends the phrase over the double bar line without taking a breath.

The two-bar C section, a built-in coda made up of a single phrase, contains the most dissonance and chromatic activity of the song (Fig. 7).

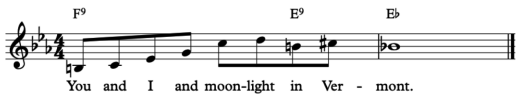

Fig. 7 *Moonlight in Vermont* C section (coda)

The same motif appears in the piano introduction to Suessdorf's original score, and it starts with B♮, a chromatic passing note which is enharmonically equivalent to the C♭ that plays an important role as musical *kireji* in *Moonlight in Vermont*.

This phrase can be interpreted as a microcosm of the whole song, in that the melody combines elements of the pentatonic scale with chromatic passing notes and descending chromatic harmony, and the lyrics create the illusion of a standalone haiku complete with *kigo* ("You and I and *moonlight* in Vermont"). Just like a well-constructed haiku, the phrase is short but impactful, and the dissonant interval between the first and last notes of the phrase (B♮/B♭) echoes the juxtaposition and disjunction that Gilbert labels "*a priori*" in haiku composition.[35]

CONCLUSION

Bashō once wrote "One who produces even a single good poem has not spent his life in vain,"[36] a posthumous stamp of approval for *Moonlight in Vermont* which was the only song written by Blackburn and Suessdorf to achieve wide acclaim. The aim of this study was to authenticate the haiku in *Moonlight in Vermont* by analyzing the lyrics and music in the context of traditional haiku and its dissemination into western culture, especially in the first half of the 20th century. The abundance of seasonal references in Blackburn's lyrics, together with the 5-7-5 syllabic pattern, the paucity of rhyme, verbs and punctuation, and the juxtaposition of natural and urban imagery, all point to the theory that *Moonlight in Vermont* is haiku by design and not by coincidence. Suessdorf's melody is based on the pentatonic major scale which — in addition to its association with east Asian music in the western musical discourse — corresponds exactly to the traditional Japanese ryo mode, and he uses chromatic inflections as musical *kireji* to punctuate the melody. The unique formal structure of the song and its asymmetric phrase lengths suggest the influence of haiku, and the structural and harmonic juxtaposition between the A and B sections further support a connection with the haiku aesthetic.

Critics attacked the absence of rhyme and the irregular structure of *Moonlight in Vermont*, as well as the "fragmentary" nature of the song, just as early 20th-century scholars such as Aston and Chamberlain used the same language to dismiss haiku as an inferior literary form. Written at a time when interest in haiku was at an all-time low in North America, *Moonlight in Vermont* in fact connects the dots between the early 20th-century verses of Ezra Pound and the poems of the Beat generation. Kerouac wrote that a haiku should be "as airy and graceful as a Vivaldi Pastorella"[37] and this is indeed true of Moonlight in Vermont, a haiku in the guise of an American popular song, contrasting starkly with the contrived musical interpretations of haiku by jazz musicians including Brubeck and Yamashita.

Both haiku and the Great American Songbook are typified by expression through a limited formal structure, and *Moonlight in Vermont* — the only haiku in the American Songbook — should be celebrated as a unique and innovative example of an aesthetic synthesis between two cultures.

NOTES

1 The Great American Songbook is not a physical book per se, rather it is a collective term for the body of popular music associated with Tin Pan Alley, Broadway and Hollywood in the first half of the 20th century.
2 Direct email correspondence, April 2021.
3 Often referred to in English as *The Old Pond*.
4 Wakan, 2019, p. 23.
5 Aston, 1898, p. 294.
6 Aston, 1877, p. 203.
7 Chamberlain, 1902, p. 347.
8 Chamberlain, 1902, p. 261.
9 Chamberlain, 1902, p. 307.
10 Kacian et al., 2013, Introduction by Billy Collins, p. xxvi.
11 Peate, 1996, p. 21.
12 https://www.steynonline.com/7197/moonlight-in-vermont
13 Some examples of personification can be found in modern (post-Kyoshi) haiku.
14 http://collegequarterly.ca/2007-vol10-num02-spring/reviews/doughty4.html
15 Murao, 1999, p. 115.
16 Davis, 1985, p. 210.
17 Davis, 1985, p. 210.
18 https://evergreenpodcasts.com/ive-heard-that-song-before/moonlight-in-vermont
19 https://www.steynonline.com/7197/moonlight-in-vermont
20 Yasuda, 1957, p. 24.
21 Shirane, 2000, p. 9.
22 Peate, 1996, p. 23.
23 Peate, 1996, p. 23.
24 Shirane, 2000, p. 8.
25 Wilder, 1972, p. 56.
26 https://www.steynonline.com/7197/moonlight-in-vermont
27 Wilder, 1972, p. 513.
28 Kacian et al., 2013, Introduction by Billy Collins, p. xxxiii.
29 Minor, 2004, p. 172.
30 Vizenor, 1984, p. 4.
31 Atkins, 2001, p. 255.
32 Brubeck, 1964, Liner notes.
33 https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/music-theory/what-is-a-tritone/
34 Peate, 1996, p. 24.
35 Gilbert, 2008, p. 24.
36 Kacian et al., 2013, Introduction by Billy Collins, p. xx.
37 Lawlor, 2005, p. 176.

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グレート・アメリカン・ソングブックにおける俳句 —「ムーンライト・イン・ヴァーモント」の研究

サイモン・コスグローブ

「ムーンライト・イン・ヴァーモント」は作曲家カール・スースドーフと作詞家ジョン・ブラックバーンによる 1944 年の曲である。当時のグレート・アメリカン・ソングブック（20 世紀前半のブロードウェイのミュージカルや映画音楽）は 32 小節構成の曲が数多く、単純な押韻形式の曲が大半だが、「ムーンライト・イン・ヴァーモント」は非対称的な 28 小節の AABAC 構成で書かれており、歌詞はまったく韻を踏んでいない。さらに珍しいことに、曲の各「A」の旋律と歌詞が俳句の構成（5-7-5）と一致している。

「ムーンライト・イン・ヴァーモント」における俳句の存在は既に指摘されているが、5-7-5 の指摘と、歌詞の一部の表面的な考察にとどまっている状況である。当研究では俳句の歴史と基本要素を探り、西洋文化への俳句の普及や 20 世紀の西洋音楽における他の俳句の影響の事例を考察したうえで、「ムーンライト・イン・ヴァーモント」の音楽と歌詞を分析する。曲の形式や旋律、および歌詞の季語性と音楽的な「切字」の存在を明るみに出し、「ムーンライト・イン・ヴァーモント」における俳句の影響が深く本質的なものであることを立証する。