

**SNAPS OF LIFE: HAIKU BY STUDENTS OF ENGLISH STUDIES  
AT NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY IN TORUŃ**

*Old pond...*  
*A frog leaps in*  
*Water's sound.*  
Bashō

*On a branch*  
*floating downriver*  
*a cricket, singing.*  
Issa

Haiku is an unrhymed verse form that emerged in Japan throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Its characteristic feature is the fixed form: the poem has a set number of syllables (seventeen) arranged in three lines of five, seven, and five. Traditionally, its subject matter is related to nature, usually to the seasons or natural objects and beings, and its goal is to express a single idea, image or feeling. In his *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (1992), J. A. Cuddon describes haiku as “a kind of miniature ‘snap’ in words” (399), pointing to the intense emotions behind the condensed and contrastive images and to the sense of sudden enlightenment that lies at the centre of the poem. The most famous Japanese haikus come from the work of Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694) and Kobayashi Issa (1763–1828), whose poems appear at the top of the page. Today, haiku is written in various languages across the world. It has influenced the work of poets coming from different cultural milieus. For example, it was a source of inspiration for the poets associated with the Imagist movement, such as Ezra Pound and Amy Lowell. In Poland, Czesław Miłosz frequently spoke about the influence of this kind of poetry on his work and translated haiku into

Polish (*Haiku* published in 1992). The themes and images in haiku have transformed in response to the changing historical conditions, but the fixed number of syllables remains the rule. Haiku continues to be a verse form popular among both professional and non-professional writers. Moreover, the condensed form of the poetry and its emotional impact make it particularly useful as an educational tool in literature classes. The haiku presented here is a selection of poems by English Studies students (2<sup>nd</sup> year BA) of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, created for the Introduction to Literary Theory course in 2023/2024.

Katarzyna Więckowska

*Sleep, ephemeral*

Warm pillow, respite  
From midnight to morning lights  
Bleeding time away

*Snowflakes*

Daylight fades away  
Memories of sea and rain  
The winter is back

*Night nature*

The sun disappeared  
Whiskers brush against the walls  
The hunting begins

*Two faces*

Two faces look up  
One is made of flesh and blood  
One hidden inside

Days come and go fast  
The wind is blowing through time  
But not for us now

A bloody forest  
Afternoon sun sinks below  
A wolf took its prey

Silly, black, furry  
paws. Playful spark in the eyes  
Besides, brings bad luck

us sitting apart  
sunshine blaze on the surface  
the lake will sleep soon

A raven flies up  
And storms down into the dark  
Losing his feathers

*Ophelia or me?*  
There is a river  
Oh, to sink and drown in it  
Such a muddy death

*The never-ending cold*  
Like the freezing cold  
Of gloomy Siberia,  
My heart burns with ice.

*Winter*  
snowflakes are falling  
and down with each sinking bit  
all creation dies

*Timelessness*

Late night I return  
to my residential block,  
concrete slab of lives.

*Crescent Moon*

The Moon that is up;  
You change yourself time to time:  
I am not alone.

Rapid loss of breath  
Plastic cups, bags. Teal water.  
Beautiful creature.