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Liminal Spaces in Sadakichi Hartmann's *My Rubaiyat* and *Tanka and Haikai: Japanese Rhythms*

by

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Introduction

My thesis on the modernist poet Sadakichi Hartmann challenged my perceptions of Asian American literature and my own self-perception as a Filipino-American. Active during the 19th and 20th century, Hartmann pushed the boundaries of American literature and participated in several areas of writing including dramas, plays, short stories, articles on Asian art, and poetry. For the purpose of "Liminal Spaces in Sadakichi Hartmann's *My Rubaiyat* and *Tanka and Haikai: Japanese Rhythms*," I will be focusing on Hartmann's relationship with his Asian identity through his poetry.

Going into this project, I did not think that my own personal stake in the subject matter would illicit such a volatile reaction in myself. My first ambitious research project on early Asian American literature occurred in 2019 when I took Dr. Grove's Publishing Practicum. I edited and published an anthology titled *The Lives and Stories of Early Asian Americans: An Anthology of Asian American Literature from 1887 to 1923*. During my research for this project, I selected 14 Asian American authors to form a basic foundation of Asian American literature. It was through *The Lives and Stories of Early Asian Americans* that I also had my first encounter with Hartmann's literature. I learned that Hartmann was a mixed-race individual like me, and I was fascinated by his interest in several cultures—he was influenced by French, German, American, and Japanese literature. Despite being born in Japan, he was raised in Germany before immigrating to the United States. Due to his global perspectives at the turn of the century, he seemed to be a unique product of several cultures. Because I double major in English and Foreign Languages and Culture Studies

with a concentration in French, Hartmann became a fitting choice for me to research further in my thesis.

My struggles in writing this thesis about Hartmann's dual occupations of German and Japanese culture perhaps stem from my own insecurities with my Asian American identity. The importance of race in American history has resulted in nonwhite Americans to build their affiliations with their minority identities. For Hartmann, he did not want to be placed into a single category of race. Because his Japanese mother died shortly after his birth, Hartmann was sent to grow up in Germany with white father's family. His connection with his Japanese identity was limited to the few photos he had of his mother and his research in Japanese art in his adult career. It seemed to me that Hartmann would use his Japanese heritage when it suited his artistic career and kept his German identity as his default. When I think of myself as a Filipino-American, I am similarly removed from my Asian heritage. In the 1970s, my mother assimilated herself into American society by forgoing her Filipino identity to become culturally "white." When I was born in 1999, I remember that I would always bother my mother about why she did not speak Tagalog. I would ask my mom why she would not pass the culture down to me, but our culture had melted away.

This leads me to the circumstances in which Hartmann affiliates his racialized identity with his persona. In the preface of his unpublished autobiography, Hartmann collects various letters and literary reviews about himself and his works. The people who write about Hartmann are foremost interested in racializing and Orientalizing his physical appearance. However, Hartmann's literature does not directly engage in racial politics. At most, he engages obliquely. In the preface to *My Rubaiyat*, Hartmann plays into his racialized self by stating that his poetry may sound foreign due to his Japanese heritage. Similarly, in *Japanese Rhythms*, Hartmann borrows Japanese verse forms,

yet he does not explicitly state his personal relationship with the poetry. His literature has been called apolitical by some critics, and he was even excluded from the first anthology of Asian American literature, *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*, because Hartmann was not considered to be Asian enough. Frank Chin and his editors' classification of Hartmann concluded that he did not contribute to the social condition of Asian Americans, therefore he is not truly an Asian American advocate.

Racial gatekeeping in communities of color and power dynamics between white Americans and the Asian community help revitalize Hartmann's own precarious condition as a poet to be rediscovered. Hartmann avoids being racially labeled, yet he cannot escape the societal force of race. As I researched further into this thesis, the social construct of race became a challenging topic to maintain my focus on. In my personal experience, I have frequently found myself in the liminal space of race. I am perceived to be racially ambiguous. I look too Asian to pass as white, and I look too white to pass as Asian. My childhood in Winnemucca, Nevada made me aware that I was different than my peers because I was one of a handful of Asian Americans at my school. Although I did not grow up to be culturally Filipino, I was still racially marked by my physical appearance. I found myself in the position of belonging to neither my white peers, my Mexican American peers, nor my Asian American peers. Because I did not have a solid foundation of my Filipino culture, I was unable to process my depressive thoughts about why I could not feel completely accepted by my own social circles. I was almost always the only Asian. Because Hartmann was similarly isolated as the only Asian American in his social arrangements, I found myself partially relieved that I could see myself in his experiences.

Hartmann's 1916 *My Rubaiyat* offers some insight into his social condition through the act of sojourning. Throughout his poetic cycle, Hartmann's speaker explores transcendental notions

of traveling and notions of communal homelessness. Of Hartmann's published texts, *My Rubaiyat* also illustrates his literary influence with Walt Whitman. The title of *My Rubaiyat* makes a modernist claim that Hartmann wrote this poem for himself—not for literary critics nor his readership. Edward Fitzgerald's 1859 *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* served as the basis for Hartmann's inspiration to write *My Rubaiyat*, and Hartmann embraces in an Orientalist fashion that he cannot be denied for his literary experimentation. If his contemporaries are going to automatically categorize Hartmann as a racialized Other, then it is a liberation for Hartmann to innovate poetry as he likes because he will not be held to the literary standards of white American authors. Putting further emphasis on the possession of *My Rubaiyat*, Hartmann borrows the convention of Whitman's titling of "Song of Myself." Hartmann refuses to edit his verses for the pleasure of other readers because it is a unique product of his imagination. *My Rubaiyat* would be revised multiple times throughout Hartmann's lifetime making alterations in word choice and punctuation. Signifying another influence that Whitman has left on Hartmann, Hartmann never viewed his works to be complete and in need of revision up until his death.

I would argue that Hartmann's 1933 *Tanka and Haikai: Japanese Rhythms* contains Hartmann's most political poetry in his literary career. Hartmann first wrote *Japanese Rhythms* in 1914 and followed the same act of revising and adding poems in this chapbook. Written during the time of anti-Asian legislation in the United States, Hartmann embraces his racialized identity the most in his usage of Japanese poetics. Yet at the same time, the subject matter in *Japanese Rhythms* is not political at all. Hartmann is interested in capturing the movement of natural images, and he states that his decision to write about nature stems from remaining faithful to the original intention of Japanese poetry: illustrating the beauty of nature. Paradoxically, Hartmann does not strictly adhere to the stiff syllabic principles of the tanka, haiku, and dodoitsu. He sees them as a

mere suggestion for his crafting his own Japanese poetry due to linguistic differences in translation. As a modernist poet, Hartmann's commitment to introducing new verse forms into English while not respecting poetic formalities demonstrate his priorities of innovation over 19th century poetic rigidness. By introducing Japanese verse forms at the same time of the 1907-1908 Gentleman's Agreement and 1924 Immigration Act, Hartmann responds to the termination of Asian immigration to the U.S. by proving that Asian Americans are here to stay.

Hartmann will be rediscovered by contemporary modernist researchers in due time. If I may be so bold to make such a claim, this thesis represents the beginning of my ongoing literary research on Sadakichi Hartmann. I intend to treat this thesis as a living document, and I will return to it with revisions as my understanding of Hartmann and the literary circumstances in which he lived in develops. I look forward to the possibility that you may also return to this research and see it expanded upon in the years to come.

The Establishment of Sadakichi Hartmann's Persona In His Unpublished Autobiography

Contemporary studies in American modernist literature are currently revitalizing its canon through the diversification and inclusion of lost voices. Japanese German American Sadakichi Hartmann (1867?-1944) is among these lost voices. Throughout the course of Hartmann's literary career, he navigated several literary circles including canonized authors Walt Whitman, Gertrude Stein, and Ezra Pound (*Collected Poems* 7, 9, 20). In addition to Hartmann's literary career, he was also involved in Alfred Stieglitz's modernist photography circle and wrote articles for *Camera Notes* and *Camera Work* (Wu Clark 61). The goal of this thesis is to demonstrate how Hartmann constructed his literary persona to navigate white spaces in the United States. In the first part of my thesis, I will look at the unpublished typescript of his autobiography written and edited during the years 1898 up until his death in 1944. Hartmann's persona is elusive and refuses to be categorized in a single box, but it conveys the rhetorical devices of his created persona.

Before we delve into Hartmann's autobiography, it is important to address Hartmann's deliberate choice to embrace his Japanese heritage through his name. Born to a German merchant father and a Japanese mother, Hartmann's full name was Karl Sadakichi Hartmann. Although Hartmann never explicitly stated his reasoning to drop his first name in his literary career, his decision to identify himself as Sadakichi Hartmann draws attention to his affiliation as a mixed-race individual. Hartmann's readership during his lifetime would instantly be able to identify his mixed heritage through his Japanese first name and his German last name. Power dynamics of race in America were and still are signifiers of social mobility and class. Anti-immigration laws targeted

toward Chinese and Japanese immigrants were passed throughout the 19th and 20th century, illustrating the U.S. government's anti-Asian sentiments at an individual and collective societal level. A more detailed summary of Asian exclusion legislation will be discussed in the third section of this thesis on *Tanka and Haikai: Japanese Rhythms.*

As it is to be expected when dealing with a lost voice in American literature, Hartmann's literary persona is marked by indefinability. The preface of Hartmann's autobiography contains a section of letters and literary reviews where he critiques the preconceived notions of his identity from his contemporaries. Titled "At Various Angles," Hartmann curates the creation of his persona as perceived by the public. It is notable that Hartmann's original title for the preface was "Anecdotes" (35). His original title suggests that Hartmann found humor in his perceived exoticness and that he believed that his contemporaries' perspectives were merely anecdotal. By changing the name of his preface to "At Various Angles," Hartmann thereby defines his relationships to be a multi-faceted experience in which he plays for and against his contemporaries' perceptions. More information about the perceptions of his persona in "At Various Angles" will be provided in the second section of this thesis on *My Rubaiyat*.

In the opening pages of Hartmann's untitled autobiography, Hartmann develops his distanced and impenetrable persona through his relationship with his mother. The opening chapter, titled "Osadda," offers some background on his birth and relationship with Japan: "As my mother died shortly after my birth from some pulmonary trouble, her existence has remained a mystery ~~to me~~" (289). Immediately, in the first sentence of his manuscript, we understand that Hartmann has insufficient knowledge of his mother's history. She is enshrouded in mystery. Note that Hartmann has crossed out his personal connection to his mother: "~~to me~~." The erasure of his relationship with

his mother emphasizes his detachment from his own personal history. In effect, he suggests that his readers equally know little information about his mother.

Later in the paragraph, Hartmann describes some physical mementos he once owned from his mother: a group photograph, a large portrait photograph, and a wooden tablet. The first item that Hartmann describes is crossed out from his manuscript: "~~She was unusually tall for a Japanese woman. In a group photograph representing her amidst girl friend[s] she seemed to be half a head taler than the rest~~." The deletion of Hartmann's description of the group photograph may have been due to him determining how he is playing into tropes of Orientalism. He describes her as "unusually tall for a Japanese woman," deliberately aware that he is writing to a white American readership. More precisely, Hartmann is writing to a readership who know his literary works. If we are to presume that the readers of his autobiography are literary critics and authors, Hartmann's rhetoric of the memory of his mother wants his readers to think about how they have previously participated in tropes of Orientalism.

Through the deletion of the description of the group photograph, Hartmann instead offers a cursory description of his mother related to the larger portrait of his mother's face: "I own a photograph which shows her ~~full face~~ sad eyed, with strangely symmetrical though strictly Oriental features, ~~but~~ of that type that is sympathetic if not handsome to our standard of beauty." The western world in the late 19th and early 20th century has just begun to see an increase in Japanese immigrants moving to the United States (371-372 Ling and Austin). Instead of stating the concrete, physical features of his mother in the group photograph, Hartmann deliberately deletes them because he does not want to offer any resolution to his readers' immediate western worldview. Because the autobiography opens after "At Various Angles," Hartmann's rhetorical strategy refuses to adhere to an Orientalist view that his own persona and identity has already received.

Hartmann does not offer any information about his mother being "~~unusually tall for a Japanese woman~~." Rather, he informs us that his mother was "that type that is sympathetic if not handsome to *our* standard of beauty" [my emphasis]. Through Hartmann's use of the plural possessive, he confirms that his autobiography is written with a white readership in mind. He occupies the position of his white readership and refuses to play the role of the inscrutable, yet wise, "Eastern sage." We are only on the first page of Hartmann's autobiography, and the cursory descriptions of his mother lay the framework of how we should view Hartmann himself. He distances his readers from his own origin story by refusing them knowledge about his mother. In effect, Hartmann continues to maintain his enigmatic persona thereby forcing his readers to recognize the failures of their ideology of Orientalism to account for Hartmann and his history.

Because Hartmann imagines who his mother could have been, he sarcastically plays into some of these Oriental tropes to both appease and mock his readers:

> Of her ancestry I know nothing, whether she was a princess as arduous reporters would have it, the daughter of a samurai or ronin as I liked to make myself believe, or merely a <u>mousmee</u>, a Madame Chrysantheme or Butterfly, which lived submissively with my venerable father during his stay in Japan.

Hartmann may not have known his mother, but he did know his father, who he refers to as "my venerable father" throughout his autobiography. By invoking the stories of Madame Chrysanthème and Madame Butterfly, Hartmann establishes the trope of the white European who comes to East Asia and marries an exotic Asian woman. The power dynamic found in these relationships in western literature often leads to the white man "saving" the Asian woman from her oppressive society. She is promiscuous and submissive. She is malleable for the white westerner to colonize and shape into what he sees fit.

The Sojourning Spirit of Hartmann in *My Rubaiyat*

Sadakichi Hartmann opens his series of poems *My Rubaiyat* (1916, third edition) with a preface titled "Instead of a Preface," a letter written in response to criticisms given to Hartmann by William Marion Reddy, a literary critic at St. Louis Mirror. Hartmann's "Instead of a Preface" serves to guide the readers into Hartmann's writing process, as well as his own persona. In regard to the titling of his preface, Hartmann does not give a comprehensive guide to the poem that follows. Rather, he includes a response to a letter criticizing Hartmann's *My Rubaiyat* to respond to white readers who criticize and make assumptions about his literature. He states that *My Rubaiyat* is a work in flux, needing constant revision throughout his life: "As I have stated in my announcement to the public, a poem of the scope and range as *My Rubaiyat* is never complete. No doubt, it will undergo many changes within the next ten years." Taking inspiration from Walt Whitman's own writing process in *Leaves of Grass*, Hartmann followed Whitman's approach to writing and revised the poems throughout the course of his life. *My Rubaiyat* first appeared in 1913 and received its final revision in 1926, 13 years after its initial publication. Hartmann's openness to revision suggests that a work of art is never complete; striving for perfection is unattainable.

Even Hartmann's 1913 preface varies from the 1916 edition. In the 1913 preface, he establishes similar sentiments about *My Rubaiyat* needing to be revised, but he explicitly states his stylistic influences:

> *Of a poem of this scope and character, it can never be said that it is complete and finished. No doubt, it will be revised many times, but the poem has crystallized sufficiently in thought and versification to be offered to the public.*

> *The rhythm may appear strange at times. To fully appreciate it, it would be necessary to hear the author read the poem. The metre is a combination of Whitman's free rhymeless rhythm, the vers libre which changes with every subject and mood, and the vague alliteration of sound in quarter tones, characteristic of Japanese poetry.*

Hartmann invokes Whitman, the French *vers libre*, and characteristics of Japanese poetry to guide his readers' understanding of *My Rubaiyat*. It should be noted that Hartmann subdues his Oriental persona in the original preface. Rather, he states that "The rhythm may appear strange at times." The word "strange" creates an atmosphere where the readers are justified to feel uneasy about his verses. In one sentence, Hartmann gives his readership power over the poet, which allows them to choose whether the poems are of value. Hartmann urges the readers to hear him read the poems to fully immerse themselves in the "strange" realm of these cross-cultural currents, rather than having his readers read the poem with a strict guideline.

Returning to Hartmann's expanded 1916 "Instead of a Preface," his persona is of greater importance to the text in this iteration of the poem. He states in his letter to Reddy, "I will drop the mask and tell you the secret of my verses. You say that they impress you as being uneven and unfinished. I heartily agree with you." Hartmann claims to be frank in his letter, unmasking himself, yet he paradoxically maintains his persona. In Hartmann's autobiography, he acknowledges the various personae deployed by others that try to categorize him as an exotic Other. Consequently, the persona we see in the preface of *My Rubaiyat* is consistent with exoticism. Hartmann chooses to hide behind his persona, but we are aware that he does this for consistency with his public image.

The preface of Hartmann's manuscript "At Various Angles" compiles personal letters and articles written about Hartmann's elusiveness. One letter, written by William Marion Reedy, is the correspondence to which Hartmann responds in his preface. Reedy writes his personal

observations of *My Rubaiyat* while interlocking Hartmann's own heritage into the poem's text as an explanation of the work's exoticism: "The verses have stretches of rare sensuousness, and then again they have the sharpness of the epigram. Their Orientalism is rather eclipsed by their Neitzcheanism [sic], but the Oriental flavor is never wholly absent" (*Autobiography* 12). Reedy uses a typical generalization of race to understand Hartmann as an individual and an author. To Reedy, Hartmann's conscious choices in writing *My Rubaiyat* are guided by his German and Japanese heritage. Because Hartmann had a German father, of course he was influenced by the ideologies of Nietzsche. Because Hartmann had a Japanese mother, of course there would be an "Oriental flavor" in his poetry.

Later in Hartmann's "Instead of a Preface," he further elaborates on his perceived foreignness. He comments on Reedy's criticism by emphasizing his unique position of being a Eurasian in the United States:

> To make rhymeless lines read like a poem is the most laborious take a songmith [sic] can set himself. It is the vanity of the alien to show his mastery over a language that was neither his father's nor his mother's tongue. But I object to your sentiment that I disdain rhyme. (92-93)

The conversation that occurs between Reedy's and Hartmann's letters reveals to us that Hartmann's success and respect due to him as an artist require him to exoticize himself to his white readership. It is true that English was not his mother tongue. Hartmann's early childhood was spent in Hamburg, Germany. Hartmann places himself as an "alien;" his persona allows him to navigate white spaces with the opportunity to mold and shape new forms of Modernist poetry. Despite Reedy's criticisms, he acknowledges Hartmann's lyrical prowess. At the end of Reedy's letter, he writes: "Some people have an idea that Sadakichi has let loose upon us a little stream of Futurist

poetry. They may not be so far wrong. . . . His book is a curiosity worth the study of those who would explore strange souls." By calling *My Rubaiyat* a "curiosity," Reedy suggests that Hartmann's literature is merely an experiment that may stand the test of time. *My Rubaiyat* is "Futurist," yet it is a "little stream." Reedy's language at the end of the review is hesitant to acknowledge Hartmann's literary innovation.

Since Hartmann is aware of the dominant white social forces who will determine whether his poetry will be of worth, he addresses these concerns back to Reedy. "You see, I possess the arrogance of conviction. I believe it [*My Rubaiyat*] will survive, simply because it strikes a popular chord, and attempts, no matter how vaguely, to reproduce the broken melody that hums in every mind." For Hartmann, he is firstly writing his poetry for himself. In a modernist gesture, he is confident that "the broken melody that hums in every mind" will transpire over time. Look no further than his literary circle including Walt Whitman, Ezra Pound, and Gertrude Stein who have thus written works that are anthologized and have entered the Western canon. Imagist poets Pound and H.D. explored this notion of broken melodies, and Hartmann's dedication to the innovation of poetry is a precursor of the Imagist movement. Even if his works are excluded in the common discourse of Modernism today, Hartmann is waiting to be rediscovered. He utilizes Whitman's oracular voice, the *vers libre* of the Symbolists, and Japanese verse forms in his poetry.

Hartmann's concluding remarks in "Instead of a Preface" address the ignorance of western critics when it comes to evaluating eastern art:

> But excuses that a critic knows nothing about a certain subject, and yet at the same time deliberately pricks at this very thorn in the flesh of his ignorance, are sad to contemplate. Rhyme is surely not out of date. And the supposed lack of rhythm is merely imaginary. Would you enjoy Japanese or Chinese music? Very likely not and yet they contain as fine

> a rhythm and as musical a quality as any modern composition. Only they are vaguer, subtle, different.

The turn of the twentieth century represents a time in which the seeds of a globally connected world have been planted. In the literary world, the twentieth century has allowed authors to innovate new literary forms and rethink how a text can be written. Hartmann's six-line rubaiyat does not adhere to the four-line quatrain. He is interested in inventing a new literary form instead. As for his criticism against Reedy and other critics, it is not Hartmann's obligation to inform them about their perceived Orientalism. Reedy and others need to accustom themselves to new forms and ideologies to converse knowledgably. Modernist gestures of fractured rhythms and broken melodies are innovations that are inevitably "vaguer, subtle, [and] different."

Hartmann's rubaiyat contain six-line stanzas and with eight syllables to a line. There are 75 verses, and they are written in free verse and do not contain a steady rhythm, as previously mentioned by the poet in "Instead of a Preface:" "My meter is rough and wilful and subject to impurities, . . . My rhythm changes constantly but it is palpable, underneath as it were, at all times" (93). Instead of writing in iambic meter, Hartmann deliberates on using meter strategically to complement his poetic image. The idea of "impurities" suggests imperfection, but they are an influence on Hartmann from Whitman's free verse. Hartmann's rhythms are "palpable," suggesting that his poetic rhythm urges his readers to recite his poetry aloud in order to experience his craft.

In Hartmann's first rubaiyat, he demonstrates his free verse through the constant shifts of meter:

— / — / — / — /

What should we dream, what should we say,

— — / / — — / /

On this drear day, in this sad clime!

— — / — — / — /

In the garden the asters fade,

/ — / / / — /

Smoke of weed-fires blurs the plain,

— / / — — / — /

The hours pass with a sullen grace—

— / — / — / — /

Can we be gay when skies are gray! (95)

The first line of the rubaiyat contain a standard iambic meter, and the second line drifts away from the established meter. From here on in the verse, Hartmann expresses his modernist gestures by shifting in meter to create an emphasis on specific words and images. The second line of the verse draws attention to the words “drear day” and “sad clime.” These words are unique to the line in that they all contain stressed syllables. By calling attention to the stress in the English language, Hartmann can draw attention to these words’ significance. In the final line of this rubaiyat, it is notable that Hartmann returns to a standard iambic meter to conclude. If we interpret the opening verse as a critique on literary tradition, then Hartmann’s return to the literary tradition may suggest that he is capable of writing in iambic pentameter. The first and last lines of this rubaiyat establish that he is knowledgeable and capable of engaging in literary tradition, but he deliberately does not want to participate in tradition.

Aside from the rhythm of Hartmann's rubaiyat, his introductory rubaiyat also contains Whitmanesque gestures through his usage of an oracular voice: "What should **we** dream, what should **we** say, / On this drear day, in this sad clime!" Compare this to Whitman's voice in the opening lines of "Song of Myself:" "I celebrate myself, and sing myself, / And what I shall assume you shall assume, / For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you" (13). In Hartmann's *My Rubaiyat*, he does not invite his readers to join his poetic thoughts. He immediately includes them with the usage of the first-person plural pronoun. Whitman, on the other hand, signifies his own individuality through his celebration of himself by immediate employment of the first-person singular pronoun. In Hartmann's poem, it is not until the seventh rubaiyat that his own individual voice appears: ". . . And you and I? / We hear the same recurrent rhymes, / Like changing seasons, night and day, / We simply come, sojourn, and go." Similar to the rupture of the first-person voice in Hartmann's unpublished autobiography, he uses "you and I" to place himself in a marginalized position. He subverts the cliché of "coming and going" to a place. Rather, "We simply come, *sojourn*, and go" [my emphasis]. The act of sojourning suggests that Hartmann feels that he exists in a liminal space of simultaneous belonging and alienation. By replacing his own individual voice with a plural voice, Hartmann personifies himself as an equal to his readers.

The sparsity of Hartmann's first-person singular voice in "My Rubaiyat" continues until the end of the poem; we only hear his voice seven more times in verses 15, 19, 20, 23, 58, 59, and 60. We should note that whenever Hartmann employs the first-person pronoun, he evokes themes of wandering and sojourning. The act of sojourning reveals a teleological way of traversing. Hartmann locates his speaker traveling from one place to the next, and he does not rest in one place. For his readers, Hartmann may be asking us the contingency of our own condition and placement to the world.

In a transcendentalist essay such as "Walking" by Henry David Thoreau, the idea of sauntering into the woods allows the individual to restore himself in the healing powers of nature: "I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits, unless I spend four hours a day at least—and it is commonly more than that—sauntering through the woods and over the hills, absolutely free from all worldly engagements" (1803). For Hartmann, he sojourns throughout *My Rubaiyat* without a purpose, similar to Thoreau walking without a specific guiding principle. Hartmann embraces his solitude in the 23rd verse where he is alone with his readers by the seashore:

> Let me pass on to the seashore.
>
> Watch the traverse of white sails,
>
> The seagulls in their spiral flight,
>
> The breakers that brighten the waves,
>
> And as in rambles of boyhood
>
> Fling pebbles out into the sea. (100)

Hartmann engages with the natural world through his descriptions of the seagulls flying through the sky, the foam of crashing waves, and pebbles being thrown into the sea. The only mark of society in this verse is found in the "traverse of white sails," yet this image is presented to us from a faraway distance. Traversal suggests movement of the boats moving toward and away the sea. Civilization cannot rest in one place. Unlike Thoreau, who keeps his individual "I" to himself, Hartmann brings us directly into the poem by using the imperative mood. We, as Hartmann's readers, are guided by his changes from place to place. He tells us to "*Watch* the traverse of white sails," and "*Fling* pebbles out into the sea" [My emphasis]. The effect of Hartmann's commands creates an egalitarian frame of mind because we are invoked to participate in the actions of his

poems, albeit they are simple and commonplace actions. Hartmann's overriding tone in the verse is therefore asking us to deepen our own personal insights of simplicity in life.

In the following stanza, Hartmann shows us the results of our action throwing the pebbles into the sea:

> They skip o'er the gleaming surface,
> They sink and vanish from sight
> As all that abides on this earth.
> Yet on the surface like stray thought,
> Each ripple owns an inner sway
> And wave-like stirs the azure brine. (100)

In the first half of this stanza, Hartmann lets us envision the pebbles metaphorically as wanderers. There is only so much beauty of the world that an individual may see, but the individual must examine his or her fleeting moments closely lest he or she should die. The "gleaming surface" of the ocean therefore shows us the beauty of the natural world we exist in, and the sinking of the pebbles show the inevitability of our deaths: "They sink and vanish from sight / As all that abides on this earth." Hartmann also turns nature into an uncontrollable force in these two lines; our fates are all interconnected by death. However, he acknowledges our own individual agency by the end of the stanza. All of our individual impacts on the world are marked by different ripples. Drawing from poetic Imagism, Hartmann's intense focus on the surface of the water forces his readers to individually interpret the meaning of the pebbles and water. For me, the fourth line in the stanza tells me that we are to interpret the pebbles as individuals: "Yet on the surface like stray thought." The ripples on the water serve to represent our perceptions of the world, and we create meaning in life when we distort and stir the seawater.

Stanzas 58, 59, and 60 contain the only consecutive sequence where Hartmann uses first-person pronouns. The 60th stanza is also the final instance we hear Hartmann address himself with the "I" that is otherwise prominent in texts by Whitman and Transcendentalist writers. In all three of these stanzas, Hartmann continues to address the same themes of wandering and sojourning. In stanza 58, Hartmann writes: "How can I give right directions / When I am a wanderer myself! / Onward I stroll and ever on." In this instance, Hartmann could suggest that his sojourning spirit is caused by a lack of a sense of national belonging. Hartmann envisions himself as a wanderer because he lacks the connection between a solidified understanding of his racialized self. In *The Asian American Avant-Garde*, critic Anne Cheng describes this feeling to be categorized by "racial melancholia." Hartmann cannot properly mourn for his racialized identity because of his proximity to whiteness. The cultural dissonance between his German and Japanese identity cannot be resolved because he was never properly exposed to his Asian identity (77-78). In Hartmann's autobiography, he details the different locations he has lived throughout his life. After the death of his mother in Japan, he and his brother were sent to Germany through the wish of his mother to receive a western education (28). In 1882, as a young adult, he moved to Philadelphia (*Autobiography* 107). Despite all of the places Hartmann has lived, he relishes the uniqueness of his wanderings.

In the 59th stanza, Hartmann describes his own imaginary place of happiness. The descriptions of nature propose a life far away from society:

For my happiness cannot be yours;

In humble ecstasy I could live

In a hill-town, among roses,

With robins feasting at my table,

While woods and fields, valleys and streams

Around would be my promised land. (109)

Hartmann acknowledges that our personal visions of happiness will inevitably be different from his own. He would rather live in a simple transcendentalist setting surrounded by nature. Although society is still present to a degree in his cursory description of a "hill-town," Hartmann is interested in the natural world that would surround him. He takes ownership of "my table" and "my promised land." Hartmann has yet to find a place to call his own, which continues the theme of wandering, but this is the reason that this his "promised land" is his "humble ecstasy" (109). Following the Judeo-Christian tradition, he must traverse toward his promised land even if his goal is unrealizable within his lifetime.

In the 60th stanza, Hartmann continues to reflect on his own idea of happiness. He calls out to the readers that "You might not like such simple fare" (109). Hartmann is consistent in the leveled nature of his speech. He admits to himself that the vision of emplacement is boring and untrue to his wandering sense. If we think Hartmann's ideal place is too simplistic, it will not bother him at all. Rather, Hartmann writes in response: "I cannot tread your well-paved roads / Though verdant they may seem to you." Although channeling the core themes of Transcendentalism, Hartmann is nonjudgmental about our own personal ideas of happiness. We may think our well-paved roads are green with grass, but they are still too civilized for Hartmann. He concludes the stanza by stating: "Each path leads to some point of view, / What you like best, is best for you." Like the ripples of the pebbles in the 24th stanza, we are all entitled to our own perceptions of the world and what our own personal needs are. As for Hartmann's sojourning identity, he already understands what is best for him and must continue his journey.

Movement in the Poetic Image of Sadakichi Hartmann's

Tanka and Haikai: Japanese Rhythms

First published in 1914, Sadakichi Hartmann's *Tanka and Haikai: Japanese Rhythms* contains some of the earliest poetry of Japanese verse forms in the English language. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact date in which Japanese verse forms became an interest for American poets such as Ezra Pound, but Hartmann's interest in Japanese poetry can be found in 1904 with the publication of his essay "The Japanese Conception of Poetry" (Wu Clark 62). Hartmann's essay "The Japanese Conception of Poetry" will provide me the framework of Hartmann's poetic strategy and imagery of movement in *Japanese Rhythms*. Similar to his process of re-editing in *My Rubaiyat*, Hartmann altered his poems and added additional tankas, haikus, and dodoitsus in *Japanese Rhythms* from 1914 to 1933 (*Autobiography* 22). For this analysis, I will be looking at the 1933 edition of *Japanese Rhythms*, as it represents Hartmann during his late writing career and provides a fuller vision of his collection of poetry. Hartmann's usage of Japanese verse forms serves as a subtle act of defiance against Asian exclusion acts in 20th century America, and he therefore expresses pride in his Japanese heritage through his poetry.

Before analyzing *Japanese Rhythms*, it is important to provide some contextual information about 20th century Asian exclusion acts pertaining to people of Japanese descent. The Gentleman's Agreement was passed by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907-1908 to bar immigration of subsequent Japanese people. Roosevelt's intention for this agreement was to "assuage the growing anti-Asian sentiment in California" (Ling and Austin 12). Despite his intent to create peace with white Americans, they were still enraged due to the increased competition of

jobs and the influx of Japanese immigrants working in low-paying jobs (Ling and Austin 11). In 1913, the Alien Land Law was passed in California to discourage Japanese immigrants from owning land and displace Japanese immigrants from their homes (Ling and Austin 11-12). Because the U.S. government did not pass any alien land laws due to U.S. and Japanese foreign relations, each state would create their own alien land laws to discourage further immigration of Japanese immigrants (Ling and Austin 13). We do not know how the Alien Land Law affected Hartmann's life because he did not comment on the rise of anti-Asian sentiment in his autobiography. However, we do know that in 1917 that Hartmann gave 44 scholarly lectures in San Francisco (*Autobiography* 3). His autobiography does not specify what his lectures were about; Hartmann only provides this information in his self-curated timeline. Once the Immigration Act of 1924 banned all people of Asian descent from immigrating to the United States, Hartmann remarked that in the same year he was "Living at the edge of the desert. Hold-up on Telegraph Hill during a visit to S.F." (Ling and Austin 121, *Autobiography* 3). Once again, Hartmann only provides this information in his timeline. He does not give us further information about the circumstances of his detainment in San Francisco.

Japanese Rhythms consists of three sections of poetry: tankas, haikus, and dodoitsus. I will only focus on the first section of *Japanese Rhythms* contains twenty tankas. A tanka consists of 31 syllables written in five lines, and the format is 5-7-5-7-7. Akin to the subject matter of *My Rubaiyat*, Hartmann uses images of the world's natural beauty, and he uses movement in the natural image to create a feeling of fleeting time. In Hartmann's 1904 essay "The Japanese Conception of Poetry," he explains his reason for remaining dedicated to Japanese poetic forms: "The leading characteristic of the Japanese poet seems to be his fertile fancy for pictorial

minuteness. Nature is always the leading *motif*. All his metaphors are drawn from the external beauties of nature" (*Collected Poems* 131). On one side, Hartmann argues that his desire to write closely to the original characteristics of a haiku is due to his need to recreate Japanese verse forms authentically. On the other side, Hartmann's subject matter in *Japanese Rhythms* often contain movement in nature. We previously saw physical movement in the act of sojourning in Hartmann's *My Rubaiyat*, and the idea of natural movement in *Japanese Rhythms* may evoke the struggle of Asian immigrants to immigrate in American society in the 20th century.

In the first tanka in *Japanese Rhythms*, Hartmann writes about the seasons, the facet of nature often used by poets to render in figurative language human interactions with time. Movement is found in the transition of nature from winter to spring:

> Winter? Spring? Who knows!
> White buds from the plumtrees wing
> And mingle with the snows.
> No blue skies these flowers bring
> Yet their fragrance augurs spring. (117)

In the first line, the speaker is found in a liminal space where he is uncertain whether the season be winter or spring. Due to the constraints of the tanka poetry form, every word is subject to the poet's scrutiny. The question marks in "Winter?" and "Spring?" show the reader the speaker's uncertainty, removing the necessity of asking a complete question and throwing into relief the juxtapositions that will structure the rest of the poem (*Collected Poems* 117). The punctation of the first line consequently creates a sense of immediacy where we are focused on the impact of each word.

The following two lines, however, immediately resolve the question that Hartmann's speaker had just asked. The branches of the plumtrees are beginning to bloom, a sign of spring, and they are moving with the breeze that carries the late snow. The verbs "wing" and "mingle" create the sense of movement (*Collected Poems* 117). The image of the blooming white buds winging makes us envision the arrival of spring as a flight from winter. Still, winter's snowfall occupies the image of the tanka, and their mingling also makes us realize the similarities between the two objects. The snow and buds are both white, and their cohabitation in the liminal space of winter and spring make us question if they are but the same. The end of winter represents the beginning of life, and the beginning of spring shows us nature's product of life.

It should be noted that Hartmann broke the formal syllabic structure of the tanka in the third line. The line has six syllables: "And mingles with the snows." Although Hartmann is adhering to the essential conventions of traditional Japanese poetry, he deliberately adds an extra syllable. Referring once again to "The Japanese Conventions of Poetry," Hartmann states: "Any attempt, however, to convey the euphony and the rhythmic beauty of Japanese poem into a foreign tongue, is futile" (*Collected Poems* 128). Futility suggests the idea that we should feel encouraged to take creative liberties in translating foreign cultures into our own. In the case of Hartmann, he bridges the 19th century and 20th century by experimenting in Japanese verse forms. Hartmann envisions futility as an ongoing challenge for the poet to find new ways to innovate future movements of literature, and innovation is a process that never reaches an ending point. When we consider the 20th century to be the fracturing of tradition and modernity, it is only appropriate that Hartmann chooses to forgo adhering precisely to the syllabic structure of the tanka. When we read the third line of the tanka, our ears are not bothered by the inclusion of an extra syllable. If we removed the definitive article for "the snows," then the irregularity of the line would become

apparent despite being syllabically correct. Because the Japanese language lacks definitive and infinitive articles, poets writing in Japanese are able to fit in more information without using an extra syllable to specify nouns or objects. I believe this is additional reason why Hartmann declares that the act of translation is futile, yet it instills literary innovation.

The fourth and fifth lines of this tanka conclude with a provocative reversal that blue skies do not create life: "No blue skies these flowers bring / Yet their fragrance augurs spring" (*Collected Poems* 128). Hartmann etches the portrait of the white hues of the buds and snow as the mingling of new life. Blue skies and sunlight are traditional and clichéd portrayals of spring, and Hartmann decides to write against this idea because the social construct of time and seasons contain transitionary periods that are not accounted for. Rather, Hartmann uses the smell of the flowers to signify the change of the seasons. Their "fragrance" evokes the idea that smell is a fugitive sense (*Collected Poems* 128). We are not able to control what we smell, yet we are able to control our sense of sight. The speaker's confusion of the season at the beginning of the tanka is caused by his dependency on sight. By the end of the tanka, we realize that we cannot trust the visual image of winter and spring because we are trained to see the social constructs of seasons. Consequently, Hartmann argues that we should have more trust in our fugitive senses because they can detect the liminality of seasons. A blue sky does not mean that spring has arrived, nor does a white sky suggest that winter is still upon us. Our sense of smell can help us re-evaluate the subtle movement from winter to spring.

The sixth tanka in *Japanese Rhythms* exhibits Hartmann's exploration of movement through the abstraction of imagination. Disillusionment and isolation are illustrated to be the product of modernity:

Tell, what name beseems

These vain and wandering days!

Like the bark of dreams

That from souls at daybreak strays

They are lost on trackless ways. (118)

The aural nature of Hartmann's poetry allows his readers to feel as if his speakers are directly addressing us. The speaker in this tanka urges us to respond to his question about modernity with the word "[t]ell," and we are presented the feeling of having a close connection with the speaker through Hartmann's informal tone (*Collected Poems* 118). The speaker is at a loss for words, and his desperation to understand his feelings is emphasized by the exclamation mark at the end of the second line. Through this deliberate punctuation, Hartmann encourages us to construct our own interpretations. For this particular analysis, I am interested in analyzing the tanka through the lens of modernity. Modern civilization is "vain" because it disregards the feeling of the individual through its coldness. As a result, the speaker feels as if he is a wanderer in his day-to-day life (*Collected Poems* 118). Hartmann fits the themes of modernist writing by capturing the isolated feeling of the speaker. The speaker is trying to locate the fracture in civilization, but he is unable to understand why it leaves him with an isolated emotion.

In lines three through five, Hartmann's speaker delves into the abstract by introducing images of "bark of dreams," "souls at daybreak strays," and "trackless ways" (118). The disillusion of modern society can leave a wanderer with a distorted sense of imagination. Modernity influences the imagination of the individual, and Hartmann's speaker can be observed to intensely experience it. Hartmann makes the abstract idea of dreaming concrete by describing it as bark from a tree. He suggests that modernity's influence on imagination impacts one's individual growth and experience at an external level, whereas the inner bark of a tree contains the unadulterated spirit

of the individual. The bark can therefore be interpreted as the loss of one's perceived control over the self. When "daybreak strays," our imagination is hindered by the repetition of modernity's isolation, and we cannot cope with our dormant imagination. Our "trackless ways" show us that if we give in to the disillusionment of society, we may turn ourselves into involuntary exiles who cannot see that imagination has no history. For Hartmann, his persistence to guard his imagination closely suggests that he has learned to endure society and its treatment to him.

Conclusion

There is still a substantial amount of research to be done on Sadakichi Hartmann in terms of his liminal identity, experimentation with literary form, and construction of his political identity. My thesis serves to only scratch the surface of Hartmann's complex persona and history. It is impossible to categorize Hartmann in a single box, and his resistance to be perceived as a knowable individual proves to be futile in his autobiography. Hartmann does not want to be completely understood, and he illustrates this desire through the various paradoxes he gives us. He wants us to question our preconceived notions of race and view it for the construct that it is. I will admit that my struggle in engaging with this thought process is the reason why this thesis was so difficult to produce. Hartmann does not want to be categorized by his racial makeup, yet he cannot avoid society's relentlessness to categorize his identity for him.

In regard to contemporary studies in Asian American studies, Hartmann makes us question who we should consider to be an Asian American. The editors of *Aiiieeeee!* did not accept him as an Asian American because Hartmann had challenged their own notions of race thirty years after his own death. The editors viewed Asian American identity as a political choice established through action. Yet in the case of Hartmann, he was political with his usage of Japanese verse forms in *Tanka and Haikai: Japanese Rhythms* and the reclamation of the rubaiyat in *My Rubaiyat*. Hartmann's elusive and indirect approach to politics proved to be too passive in the eyes of editors Frank Chin, Jeffree Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong.

Through the act of Asian Americans gate-keeping other Asian Americans from their identity, it also makes us need to re-evaluate how we should next approach the conversation of

race in the United States. Hartmann wanted to be seen as an artist first, but all of his literary endeavors were compared in relation to identity politics. Because Hartmann could not change the perception of his white contemporaries to see him outside of race, it became a necessity that he identity with his racialized self. The Asian American experience goes beyond cultural identification and heritage. Identifying oneself as a white individual while being racially marked will always end in scrutiny by the white majority. For the Asian American community, Hartmann represents a voice for those who have lost the connection to their heritage culture. Despite the reality of many Asian Americans having close proximities to whiteness, it is impossible to change their racial makeup. Cultural exclusion of Asian Americans by Asian Americans calls for the need to find communal solidarity. Further research in Sadakichi Hartmann will help modernist scholars to understand the racialized positioning of Asian Americans and bridge the shifts in literary tendencies from the 19th century to the 20th century.

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