

The Far Reaching Ramifications of the Introduction of Haiku to the Western World

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Capstone Project

September 10, 2019

### **The Far Reaching Ramifications of the Introduction of Haiku to the Western World**

Although the term *haiku* only came to be in late nineteenth century Japan (Trumbull, 2005) the poetic form called *haiku* traces its origins back thousands of years to ancient Chinese poetry (Stryk & Ikemoto, 1973). Japanese haiku are succinct poems of seventeen sound units (similar to syllables) in a 5-7-5 pattern, with a cutting word (*kireji*) that juxtaposes the two parts of the poem (Henderson, 1958). Haiku frequently contain a seasonal word (*kigo*) to indicate the time of year (Dwyer, 2018) and often embody a Zen quality that focuses on simplicity in nature, the present moment, and a deep sense of awe (Blyth, 1949; Summers, 2012). Dwyer (2018) notes that a haiku juxtaposes a condition of nature with human experience to provoke an insightful connection, surprise, sense of awe, or enlightenment. These characteristics are retained in haiku as practiced in the West except that some aspects, such as a seasonal word and 5-7-5 structure, are relaxed since Western languages differ so greatly from the Japanese.

By the 1850s in Japan, haiku was a cultural expectation, a way of life enjoyed by all, taught in the streets, schools, highest offices, and practiced with deep traditions (Harr, 1975). On July 8, 1853, U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry led his four Navy ships into Tokyo Bay harbor to demand that Japan open up to the Western world and establish trade with the United States of America (“Office of the Historian,” n.d.). President Millard Fillmore’s (1853) letter to the Japanese Emperor encouraged friendship, a trade of arts, and commerce. Japan’s acceptance paved the way for a cultural exchange that furthered the influence of Eastern thought and philosophy in the West and introduced the practice of the succinct form of Japanese poetry known as haiku. The introduction of haiku to the Western world was a major cultural event that initiated an expanding movement that over time has quietly permeated Western thinking and behavior as evidenced by its manifold use and expression in Western poetry, literature, science,

philosophy, academia, culture, psychology, business, commerce, and technology, and which has challenged Western ethical foundations. Haiku has directly or indirectly affected everyone.

Bear & Skorton (2019) declare there is a great need for students with interdisciplinary education who can connect ideas across a diverse array of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Blasko & Merski (1998) maintain that the simple profundity of haiku makes it ideal for use in creative interdisciplinary study. They also note that various studies by cognitive scientists have reliably demonstrated that the mind reveals itself by way of an individual's choice of metaphoric language. Since the juxtaposition of observations in haiku is inherently metaphoric, the use of haiku in interdisciplinary education is ideal. Arima (2012) stated that haiku is a global medium that can span cultural differences and lead to mutual understanding and peace. It is clear why the study of haiku and its impact on humanity is important. Incorporating haiku—reading, reflecting, and writing—into life and society can help instill the multicultural, interdisciplinary qualities in tomorrow's global citizen that many consider necessary to take humanity to the next age.

Trumbull (2005 & 2006) details the history of haiku in the West starting with the opening of Japan in 1853 and how haiku gained interest among European and American Imagist poets in the early 1900s; then its remarkable expansion during the post-WWII U.S. Occupation of Japan and its entry into American popular culture with the Beat poets of the 1950s and 1960s; then the founding of the Haiku Society of America in 1968 and haiku's recent explosive multicultural global integration as a world literature via technology and the Internet. Trumbull's history of the Western haiku movement falls into three phases: 1) the Initial phase, 1853-1945; 2) the Great Expansion, 1946-1968; and 3) the explosive Multicultural Global Integration, 1969-2019.

Two key figures introduced haiku in the Initial phase, Basil Hall Chamberlain and William George Aston, both Englishmen (Trumbull, 2005). Their behavioral reaction to haiku

was to study it, translate some haiku into English, explain it, and then express it in publication. Chamberlain published, *The Classical Poetry of the Japanese*, 1880, and Aston published, *A History of Japanese Literature*, 1899. The behavioral reaction to these works by poets, scholars, and the general populace was to read them and learn about haiku.

Another reaction was that philosophers and influencers began to explore and practice haiku's behavioral accoutrements, including Zen meditation, mindfulness (living in the moment), transcendentalism (rising above a self-centric universe to one of a collective whole), and reverence of nature—see video “Eastern Philosophy,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90-2Dg2CJdw>. The ethics of Western individualism and conquering nature were challenged by new Eastern ethical ideas of collectivist morality and harmony with nature, as expressed in the works of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson; and the poetry of Ezra Pound and William Butler Yeats (Pagan, 2018). The behavioral reactions of Yone Noguchi, born, raised, and educated in Japan, led him to become one of the greatest influencers of this phase. He moved to America, taught haiku to the Imagist poets, and published *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry* in 1914, which explained haiku (Trumbull, 2005). An article published in *Poetry* magazine in 1919 regards Noguchi to be the forerunner of haiku in America and declares him to be the most important link between the poetry of America and the poetry of Japan (E.T., 1919). Trumbull (2005) credits Noguchi with writing the first original English language haiku in 1903.

In the 1910s and 1920s, British and American Imagist poets in London and Chicago took great interest in haiku and incorporated it into their poetry, such influencers as D.H. Lawrence, Amy Lowell, James Joyce, Marianne Moore, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Carl Sandburg, Wallace Stevens, and Charles Reznikoff (Swede, 1997; Trumbull, 2005). A haiku that Ezra Pound wrote in 1913 is credited as being the first English haiku written by a native English

speaking poet (Smith, 1965; Trumbull, 2005). Native Americans and African Americans also wrote haiku and the work of one prominent African American, Lewis G. Alexander, who was also active in the Harlem Renaissance, laid the foundation for other African American haiku poets to follow (Trumbull, 2016).

The Great Expansion of haiku began with the Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952, at the close of WWII. A remarkable behavioral reaction of this phase was that thousands of Americans moved to and lived in Japan during this time and became deeply involved in Japanese culture, bringing their knowledge of it back home to America and publishing hundreds of books (Higginson, 2001). According to Trumbull (2005), there arose a great interest in Japanese art, literature, and Zen philosophy among the American populace. Two scholars who worked for the American Occupation, Reginald H. Blyth and Harold G. Henderson, wrote and published a number of seminal works that ignited the haiku movement in America (Higginson, 2001). Blyth and Henderson are regarded as pillars of the Western haiku movement (Trumbull, 2005).

Blyth published his monumental four-volume set, *Haiku*, from 1949-1952 (one book each year) which inspired the popular counter-culture generation of Beat poets (Ferri, 1990; Swede, 1997; Trumbull, 2005). Henderson published, *An Introduction to Haiku*, 1958, and *Haiku in English*, 1965, the first *how-to* books on writing haiku. While Blyth's and Henderson's works ignited the haiku movement, it was the Beat poets, according to Swede (1997) who fueled it and propelled it into popular cultural awareness, led by the work of Jack Kerouac, Gary Snyder, and Allen Ginsberg ("Haiku," 2017).

Jack Kerouac had a significant role in popularizing haiku in America with the publication of his most widely read novel, *The Dharma Bums*, 1958, which became the sacred text of a generation of youth who followed the Beat poets and began to write haiku and practice Zen like

the novel's main character (Higginson & Harter, 1985). The behavior of the *Beat Generation*, named by Kerouac (1958), was to throw off the traditions of American individualistic, materialistic, and competitive culture and to adopt practices that were more cool, communal, and cooperative as well as appreciative of nature and of each person's place in the world (Trigilio, 2014). They expressed themselves by writing and practicing haiku, wearing simple egalitarian clothing, and engaging in hip, jazzy music and artistic endeavors (Johnston, 2013). The journal, *American Haiku*, was launched in 1963 and Higginson & Harter (1985) relate how it further established haiku in mainstream America by disseminating it to a broad readership.

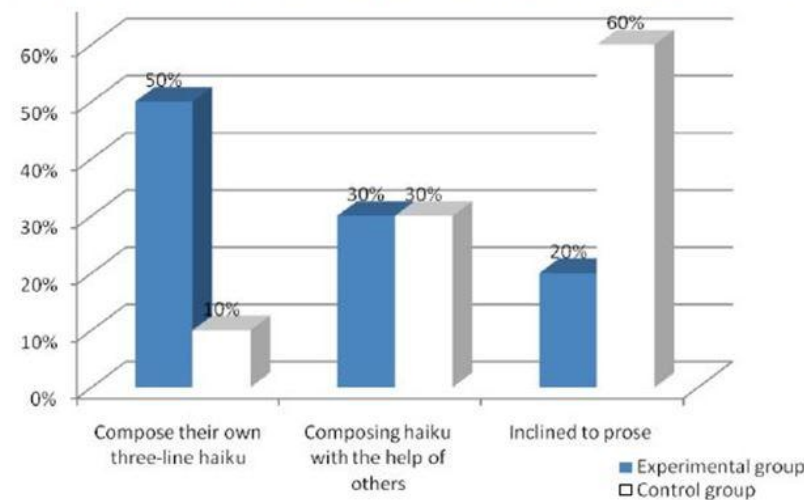
The popularity of the haiku subculture instigated new changes in behavior as enthusiasts began to meet, discuss haiku aesthetics, critique each other's works, and organize, which culminated in the founding of the Haiku Society of America ("Haiku," 2017). They expressed themselves in haiku and in scholarly articles about the art, philosophies, and ethics inherent in haiku, including Zen mindfulness and simplicity, which emphasized liberation from self and moved people away from materialism (Hakutani, 2017; Lomas, Etcoff, Van Gordon, & Shonin, 2017). Not everyone agreed with these philosophies spurring ethical debate about materialism and collectivism, and which leads to higher morality and value (Hwang, 2001; Koehn, 2013).

With the founding of the Haiku Society of America, haiku began its explosive rise to multicultural global integration. It gained momentum in popular culture from the 1970s through the 1990s with an increase in aficionados, societies, and publications (Peck, 1990; Swede, 1997). In the 1990s through the 2010s, haiku permeated many facets of society as evidenced by the psychological studies performed to discover how it affects the brain (Belfi, Vessel, & Starr, 2018; Pollock & Korol, 2013; Roberts, 2005; Stephenson, 2014; Wassiliwizky et al., 2017), its use in interdisciplinary educational development (Blasko & Merski, 1998; Brooks, 2016a,

2016b; Dalke & McCormack, 2007; Gough, 2014; Lynn, 2003; Nguyen & Slavik, 2017), its use in learning science (Burrow, 2016; Kuhn & Boyers 2015; Rillero, 1999), its use as a means of self-discovery and mental health (Gil, 2018; Greenwood, 2015; Lomas et al., 2017; Massey, 1998; Toroian, 2002), its impact on innovation and discovery (Björneborn, 2017; Cheney, 2002; Rillero, Cleland, & Conzelman, 1999), its use in business and commerce (Holmes, 1995; Kuefler, 2014; Ziliak, 2011), its incredible popularity online (Caplan, 2008; Higgins, 2001; Higginson, 2001; Krauze, 2016; McMurry, 2000), and finally, its impact on ethical and political debate (Dwyer, 2018; Fonzo, 2004; Lomas et al., 2017). Haiku is practiced everywhere.

In 2017, Garifullina & Bashinova published their studies on haiku as a means of multicultural education of preschool children. Figure 1 shows the success of teaching haiku to the preschoolers as a basis for the confidence that it distinguished data results from the control

**Figure 1.** The results of the experiment on versification haiku among preschool children



Reprinted from *The art of haiku as a means of multicultural training of children in pre-school education*, by Garifullina, & Bashinova, Copyright 2017, Revista Espacios.

group. The study used scientific experimentation and modeling to evaluate what the students had learned and how it affected them; the data demonstrated that writing haiku encouraged the development of speech, imagination, mental and physical activity, and multicultural moral values

over that of the control group (Garifullina & Bashinova, 2017). The study was limited to a small time frame and opportunity for more extensive study of the further impact of haiku on these same preschoolers as they mature could prove beneficial.

Wassiliwizky et al. (2017) conducted extensive studies on the neural impact of poetry, including haiku, on the brain, mapping neural reward response and peak emotional experiences, important for mental health and well-being. In their study, data was compiled on the second-by-second brain activity in correspondence to the poetic language stimuli, which statistically, according to data averages, elicited a reproducible pre-chill 6 to 8 seconds before the primary reward response consistent with the end of the poem. Data showed that poetry elicited different powerful reward responses than music or theater. They concluded that their studies should draw attention to the potential power of poetry in education.

In another study published in 2012, Iida showed the value of haiku writing in teaching English-as-a-second-language (L2) students how to write academic English at the college level. In the studies, L2 students were taught how to write haiku in English. Comparative data in this empirical study showed an increase of words used in essays from 117 different words to 156 in pre- to post-test results, and a decrease in use of negation (weaker writing) from 90% to 30% (Iida, 2012). The data showed conclusively that haiku writing contributed to a student's ability to more eloquently and fluently express their thoughts in English.

Belfi, Vessel, & Starr (2018) conducted a study seeking to find a correlation in a poem's subject matter and its aesthetic appeal. They tested the vividness, valence, and arousal of sonnets and haiku and concluded that vividness of subject was the greatest predictor of aesthetic appeal. But the study's data also showed that haiku's vividness, valence, and aesthetic appeal were



above the 70% range while sonnets came in above the 55% range, which uncannily revealed that haiku were rated as having far more aesthetic appeal.

Nguyen & Slavik (2017) showed in their paper on reimagining curriculum by incorporating haiku, how John Dewey's educational philosophy of *stop and think* is precisely consistent with the practice of haiku. Data from Rillero's (1999) studies on the use of haiku in science courses revealed that 75% of the haiku science students tested showed an increase in observational ability, appreciation of nature, and the precision of their scientific reporting. Lynn (2003) reported that the state of Utah wants educators to use haiku to evaluate if students internalized course materials across a wide array of subjects. The rationale is that by using haiku, students cannot just regurgitate paragraphs from textbooks or fake understanding of concepts.

In health and medicine, Stephenson & Rosen (2015) reported that in their studies on haiku and healing, the data demonstrated that writing haiku led to a significant decrease in patient anxiety and physiological symptoms. In business and commerce, The VIM Way is a modern entrepreneurial and business leadership training company that uses haiku exercises in the context of Jungian based soft-skills training, executive coaching, and 360-degree feedback to train professionals for business success ("Haiku – gaining a clear," 2019). Further, Toroian (2002) noted that Anheuser-Busch used haiku in a series of beer ads, and that in life's modern high-stress culture, people are finding relief by expressing themselves in haiku.

One way to check haiku's popularity on the Internet is by a metrics study of the exchange of haiku information on a social media platform such as Twitter. Up to the minute analytics for haiku on Twitter are easily acquired at a number of analytics sites. Pasting this link: <https://socialbearing.com/search/general/%23haiku> — into an Internet browser will produce such an analytics report. On July 24, 2019 the report for haiku showed 100 tweets from 8:50 p.m. to

9:50 p.m. that reached 155,445 users with 254 retweets and 597 likes (both positive indicators); and on August 18, 2019, there were 100 tweets from 5:40 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. that reached 258,392 users with 586 retweets and 1,030 likes. Yet tweets about limericks took 9 hours to reach similar numbers and tweets about sonnets took 9 days to reach these numbers.

All of these empirical studies, papers, data, and analytics demonstrate the popularity of haiku and show that the practice of haiku has already benefitted individuals and society in such areas as multicultural values, imagination, integration, mental health, well-being, professional development, stress reduction, personal expression, linguistic eloquence, technology, business and commerce, scientific innovation, aesthetic appreciation, and more. But this only hints at the possibilities of further exploration and study. Blasko & Merski (1998) identified that the wide popularity of haiku across multiple countries gives scholars an opportunity to study a live, real-time creative activity in an interdisciplinary way. This is just the beginning. There is so much more work to be done in specifically exploring how haiku can be used to benefit all humanity.

Study and collaboration between psychologists and educators could lead to discoveries about the role of haiku on a developing mind and subsequently improved curriculum that fosters greater cross-discipline understanding, innovation, and scientific advancement. Studying how haiku is used to express individual experiences can lead to insights on how cumulative experiences make a person who they are. Such discoveries could be used in both personal and professional development to help produce whole-person qualities of well-balanced, creative, collaborative individuals who integrate in teams that produce more than their individual parts.

Björneborn, (2017) conducted detailed studies on serendipity but only touched on how haiku were used to record these serendipitous experiences, which were defined as what happens when individuals encounter unplanned things, information, or people in relation to other things

they already know or discover. In a sense, these are unplanned connections that emerge from the empty space of the juxtaposition between these items. This is exactly what haiku does. Studying how the empty space in haiku juxtapositions of dissimilarities can lead to serendipity would be another tremendous study that would help scientists, innovators, inventors, and designers to learn how the mind finds unique creative solutions not thought of before.

In 1853 when Japan was opened to the West and haiku introduced, no one could have predicted the incredible impact it would have on Western culture and indeed on multicultural globalism in less than two centuries. The major cultural event of the introduction of haiku to the Western world initiated its steady expansion as it quietly permeated Western behavior until its explosion in the last three decades as a multicultural global medium of communicating experience and sharing humanity. Its multifarious use and expression in education, psychology, philosophy, ethics, science, culture, business, commerce, and technology, let alone its manifold enjoyment as a poetic art and literature, has directly or indirectly affected everyone. The importance of the interdisciplinary nature of haiku as a global medium across cultures and fields of knowledge should not be understated or ignored moving forward. With more study and understanding of haiku and its powerful ways of improving an individual's mental capacities in so many areas—peace, well-being, observational skills, logic, poise, presence, creativity, eloquence, empathy, and cross-cultural understanding—humanity can capitalize on this wonderful succinct poetic form that has already had significant positive impact on the world. The continued proliferation of the practice of haiku—reading, reflecting, and writing—in life and society will instill the multicultural, interdisciplinary qualities in tomorrow's global citizen that are needed to take humanity peacefully to the next age.

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### Appendix: Author's Reflection

It seems like some past age in a far different world when, as a displaced homeless nineteen-year old living on his aunt's dining room floor, I ventured into a rickety old second-hand bookstore and found, *Zen Poems of China and Japan: The Crane's Bill*, by Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto, 1973. I began to read this little treasure with wide-eyed fascination. In the Introduction, Ikemoto challenges Western thinkers to pay attention to Zen poetry and to experience it for themselves, not just read about it. He suggests that to truly experience this poetry one must remove the Zen of it from the Zen of it to realize it is simply poetry of being—dynamism that is life-activity beyond all that is relative. I read this in a poem on page 7:

*...about enlightenment / no matter what road I travel / I'm going home ~~ Shinsho.*

At that moment I experienced a deep and sudden realization beyond words that I can only describe as the peaceful recognition of being at home in the universe and at home in myself. I recognized that the unfolding of my life before me would be a journey that was to be enjoyed and experienced by making the most of each moment now. It gave me a peace and optimism that has been, at times, challenged and tested in this life, but which has never subsided since.

Researching and writing this paper about a topic I love has been an incredibly enriching experience. At the start of this class, I decided I wanted to write about a positive event that impacted humanity and I wanted it to be in the arts and humanities. Having practiced haiku for almost forty years, it was an easy choice. My research for this paper considerably expanded my knowledge of the Western haiku movement and inspired me to consider writing a book about it. In doing this project I learned that with careful planning and disciplined writing I can cover a huge amount of information in a succinct way and still keep it readable and interesting. Being able to use sixty-four sources in ten pages and mostly in a seamless way surprised me.

The process I used to gather my sources, critically read, review, and synthesize them, and then logically pattern and write the paper, worked perfectly well for me. I would not change a thing about the process; however, doing it again, I would certainly have more experience in it and therefore execute it with greater ease and skill. What I did exceptionally well with this process is synthesize the material. I paced the work, took necessary breaks, and kept it fresh all the way through.

Over the years, reading, pondering, and writing haiku has helped me to sharpen my observational skills, increase awareness of the interconnectedness of everything, recognize the wake I leave as I pass, and embrace life in the here and now. It affects the way I express myself in speech, poetry, and writing, and the way I think about life ethically, adding the dimension of collectivism to my worldview of what is right and best in life, without abandoning individualism, the foundation of Western thought. It is a merging of East and West, if you will.

Adding the knowledge and experience gained in the research and writing of this paper to my mind and life, and planting some seeds in the fertile ground of unexplored dimensions, has been a pleasure and a privilege beyond measure—one that will come into even more fruition in the days and years ahead. The meaningful immersion into this topic of haiku has been deeply moving and inspiring and I am eager to see the future forest that grows from it.

For my final thoughts, I leave you with haiku.

among green saplings  
a brown squirrel buries nuts:  
forest of children

~~ DE Navarro