

TEACHING HAIKU IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION, PART II

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The following is based upon the author's keynote at Haiku North America 2015 at Union College. For Part I, see issue 39:1.

Another area included in the bibliography is pedagogical research on teaching haiku. The big news here is that you have to go beyond the quick assignment, the instant experience, and into more long-term approaches for quality engagement with reading and writing haiku. As soon as teachers go beyond the one-hour or two-day assignment, the articles begin to discuss how writing haiku engages students in ongoing creativity, and how sharing haiku builds community. Often these newer pedagogical studies focus on how haiku helped students in community colleges, in English as second language programs, in schools with students who are disadvantaged, or with students who are basically failing school.

How are other academic areas using haiku as part of teaching? There are a lot of disciplines using haiku, and while some members of the haiku community might argue that these faculty are “abusing haiku,” I argue that faculty from these disciplines are using haiku because they value certain aspects of it as related to their own academic area. Faculty in the fine arts do a beautiful job of integrating the arts, including the integration of the visual and the verbal evident in their use of haiku. Sometimes these creative arts faculty are adapting the aesthetics of haiku, but more often they are genuinely interested in multiple arts and creatively bringing them

together. There are wonderful dissertations and MFA projects and theses that are musical compositions, exhibitions of visual arts including haiku, and that employ haiku in aspects of theatre.

Faculty in the natural sciences and mathematics have also been drawn to haiku. Teachers in the natural sciences are especially drawn to haiku because of the haiku traditions of close observation and discovery. Scientists like the fact that when they use haiku, they are encouraging students to look closely, be careful with observations, and then succinctly express what they are seeing. Are scientists concerned that these are beautiful, great haiku? No, but they obviously value the close observation and awareness, and being succinct and careful with words. They want that part of haiku. For example, graduate students in neuroscience are basically looking at the reactions of certain treatments and drugs on the blood and cell levels of the body. After observing the reactions, the students turn their observations into haiku. Okay, these are pretty bad as literary haiku, but what is interesting is that the faculty member is valuing something in haiku that is recognized as important.

Faculty in the social sciences embrace things like empathy in haiku and its usefulness in areas such as gerontology and hospice therapy. Business, law and economics professors are doing this too. There is a professor at Roosevelt University in Chicago, Stephen Ziliak, who uses haiku in his economics courses. He does haiku in one course then renga in the second class, so students get two doses of it.²³ He writes about haiku as being a wonderful type of economic speech in its limited resources where you have to use those resources carefully, and yet haiku writers also have endless freedom in the process of writing. Ziliak's essays are informed about contemporary haiku.

Finally, let's get into the real topic—teaching haiku as writing. When we look at the literature on this, everyone knows that we will find several older articles on the common haiku writing assignment. The typical haiku writing assignment is a quick, easy, instant gratification assignment: Provide a dictionary definition of

haiku as a short poem, with 5-7-5 syllables, about nature. Ask the students to write a haiku, add a drawing, and you're done. Students can do this in an hour, or they can do it in 15 minutes. So it's an instant activity. And, sadly, so many of our students across the United States have been there, done that. Next?

Unfortunately, in a large number of MFA programs and undergraduate creative writing programs, the common haiku assignment is still the only thing students are going to get. Students might get a slightly longer version of the assignment, but faculty rarely "do haiku" for more than one or two class periods. Usually the faculty treat it as an exercise in concise writing with the constraints of a closed form. They usually don't require that the students write "about nature" but they do expect them to follow the 5-7-5 syllable pattern, since they view haiku as a closed form of poetry. So you've got to do a whole lot of poetic tricks and clever stuff in this short 5-7-5 box. That's the way the common assignment for writing haiku exists in most undergraduate and graduate programs in creative writing. So sad. It could be so much more!

The good news is that several teachers have started reading and exploring contemporary haiku in English and are developing new approaches to teaching haiku. Instead of the common assignment, what we need to do is get to learning goals that go beyond that instant gratification 5-7-5 language game approach. Students need to be writing haiku as a creative engagement and self-expression. There are several articles about this new approach, showing up for all different levels of education—grade school, high school, college, graduate school—that stress the importance of long-term engagement, about establishing a community of writers trying to grow as writers by sharing their work. It's about the expressive pedagogy of sharing important memories, experiences, feelings, understandings, and questions in our lives with others.

This new conception of teaching haiku emphasizes long-term engagement, with writing being about developing habits of observation, contemplation, reflection, and public sharing. In the

last two decades we have seen the emergence of new research about contemplation and the importance of helping students develop habits of quietude and deep thinking. The goal is to teach students to not be so quick. This approach teaches students to slow down and to think carefully, and then revise their work in that same kind of deep contemplative thinking. Examples are recent studies such as Jessica Curran's dissertation "From Mourning to Meditation: Theorizing Eco-poetics, Thinking Ecology."²⁴ Another example is from Harvard University: Becky DeVito's dissertation, "Writing as Inquiry: How Might the Practice of Writing Poetry Function as an Epistemic Tool for Poets?" which examines the creative activities of several contemporary American tanka poets. These research studies and pedagogical essays call for a rich view of teaching writing as essential instruction in life-long skills of inquiry, observation, contemplation, awareness and reflection.

When I started teaching haiku courses at Millikin in the 1990s, I spent a great deal of time thinking about what I really want my students to get and take away from the experience. I have continued to refine and further develop the course over the years, trying to intensify the experience. And here's my quick list of what I want them to get.

First of all, I want them to know that haiku is fun. I want them to love reading and writing haiku and that haiku poets are in it because it's fun; and if it's not fun, then there is something wrong.

Second, I want my students to realize that it's not just a haiku tradition. My course is called "Global Haiku Traditions." There's always the plural "s" on tradition, because there has always been a variety of approaches and there will always be competing varieties of approaches. I don't teach a dominant approach to a living art, and I see little value in preaching a dominant approach to writing haiku.

Third, I let Webster's define haiku. The more important thing is to "be" in haiku. To develop the art of haiku you have to engage and encounter and enjoy the practice of doing the art. You can look up

definitions all day long and it won't change the practice and you still won't understand what it is to be a literary artist in the world of haiku.

Fourth, it's more about what haiku can do for readers and writers as they write and experience haiku. I want them to play with language and learn the power and exactness and precision of haiku. All of that is part of learning the art.

Fifth, I want them to explore, and know some of the history and the origins of haiku and related aesthetics. I want them to begin that journey, but I don't want them to finish it. I don't want them to get lost in it. I want them to find their own way, and share along the way, and to put their whole self in when we do the haiku engagement with each other. It's not enough to just put a toe in the haiku pond. I want my students to put their whole self in and shake it all about.

At Millikin we emphasize "performance learning" as our main philosophy of teaching. That means we ask students to "do the discipline" and to learn by reflecting on their work in the discipline. So in Global Haiku Traditions my main strategy is to immerse students into a haiku community. There are two main goals I want each student to take away from the course: to learn the art of reading haiku and to learn the art of writing haiku. My students are invited to bring their whole selves in—all their memories, their associations, their reading abilities, their anxieties, their fears, their joys, their language abilities, and their sense of fun engaging in this social art.

Another key expectation of performance learning is that students aren't just performing for themselves or for the teacher, but they are taking their work out to others beyond the classroom. The students are going public with what they are doing. So the Global Haiku Traditions class becomes a space for performance.

How do my students find opportunities for public performance of haiku?

(1) We read haiku out loud all semester long. Everything we talk about we have heard out loud two or three times. We read Japanese haiku out loud in Japanese. The students are always a little hesitant at first, but with romaji they can make a good attempt.

(2) We also do a lot of sharing and discussing responses to favorite haiku. That's a very important thing. We read an author and they find three or four favorites and then we talk about why they spoke to us.

(3) We do *kukai*, where submissions are read anonymously and then students pick out favorites and talk about why they love those haiku, and then we find out who the author is and we applaud them and say their haiku is born through its recognition at that moment. I want to stress how important feedback is for writers. When a student hears the responses of other readers and what the haiku are doing for them, the writer knows that he or she wrote this and it's being heard, which is valuable feedback. It's not just that I like this haiku better than that one. It's also not a poetry workshop focused on editing out all of the blemishes of a poem. It's that I love this haiku because this is how it spoke to me.

(4) I also ask the students to take their work to others—friends, family, coworkers. Over break I always ask my students to prepare a sheet of their haiku to share at home. I ask them to come back with feedback about favorites. I want them to explain why they love haiku and engage family and friends in the art of reading haiku. Students are sharing haiku that they are reading, they are sharing haiku that they write, and I have them write linked verse with family and friends.

(5) Finally, students publish by submitting to literary journals and by reading their haiku in public. At the end of our class, our final exam consists of two parts: an envelope of submission-ready haiku by each student, and a public reading where they invite family and friends to join us. Some semesters we have 30 and other semesters we may have 90 people come to the end of the semester haiku

reading. The campus engagement in haiku becomes a community beyond the class.

It's really been a joy teaching haiku. And while there is so much I could teach my students, like all of this outstanding academic research, what I focus on is a semester-long opportunity to live the life of being a haiku poet in a vibrant haiku community.

Notes

23 Ziliak, Stephen T. "Haiku Economics: Little Teaching Aids for Big Economic Pluralists." *International Journal of Pluralism and Economics Education* 1.1/2 (2009): 108-129.

24 Curran, Jessica Lee. "From Mourning to Meditation: Theorizing Eco-poetics, Thinking Ecology." Stony Brook University, 2012. Dissertation. 210 pages.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH DONNA M. BAUERLY

Aubrie Cox

This interview was conducted shortly after Bauerly's talk at the fifth Cradle of American Haiku Festival (2016) in Mineral Point, Wisconsin. It has been edited for length and clarity.

AC: In the preface of the biography, you mention that the idea to write Raymond Roseliep's biography came in 1977, but you did not begin researching or writing until 2003. What happened over that timespan and what prompted you to finally begin the project?

DB: In 1976, Dr. Frank Lehner (editor of the *Delta Epsilon Sigma Bulletin* [later *Journal*]) asked me to write a review of Raymond Roseliep's first all-haiku text *Flute Over Walden*. The beginning of my truly professional relationship with Raymond Roseliep.

Raymond Roseliep always sent me copies of his texts, so you could say I was researching all along with each review I wrote. Two of my Loras College (Dubuque, Iowa) awards had hefty monetary help plus an entire semester free from teaching, twice. Time and money. Very essential.

Then I retired in 2007 with the express purpose of full-time work on the biography. And Loras graciously assigned an office to me in the Academic Resource Center which I still have for my use as of now. All Raymond Roseliep files there plus computer and printer. Voilà. Access is the third essential! All told, the bio took 13 years!

AC: At your talk at the Cradle of American Haiku at Mineral Point, Wisconsin, you said Raymond Roseliep expressed he did not want a biography, but that others learn about him through his poetry. In writing *Raymond Roseliep: Man of Art Who Loves the Rose*, how did you balance his desire with your own (and others') desire to see a biography come to fruition?