

HAIKU AND DECONSTRUCTION

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Literary theories provide tools for interpreting and situating texts. The modern theory perhaps best equipped to illuminate haiku is deconstruction. Briefly exploring the philosophical underpinnings and rationale of deconstruction, as well as its typical strategies, reveals how well suited this theory is for understanding the unique aesthetic value and for exploiting the full interpretive range of the genre. Furthermore, applying the deconstructive method to a particular haiku can demonstrate in concrete terms just how haiku, in their very structure, invite this mode of interpretation. More importantly, it will provide a specific example of exactly the way in which deconstruction is able to uncover layers of sense and significance in these short poems that otherwise might remain obscure.

As Raman Selden points out, the advent of deconstruction can be traced back to a conference held at Johns Hopkins University in 1966 where the French philosopher Jacques Derrida delivered a paper entitled “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (87). This essay, a critique of the structural anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss, kicked off a movement that dominated the critical scene in America from the early 1970s into the 80s. Though the heyday of deconstruction has now passed, even the most cursory examination of any number of more recent theories—New Historicism and gender theory, to cite but two prominent examples—reveals its lasting influence. Furthermore, as Jan Plug has recently observed, to say that deconstruction no longer prevails as it once did “is not to say ... that deconstruction is ‘dead,’ as some have put it, or that it ever stopped producing varied and important [critical and theoretical] texts” (243). Notes Paul H. Fry, in a book published in 2012, “deconstruction ... is practiced with integrity and skill by a considerable number of scholars...to this day” (141).

The particular version of deconstruction to which Fry is referring is that developed by the deconstructionist generally recognized as the most brilliant and famous in America—David Lehman has labeled him

“America’s archdeacon of deconstruction” (143)—Paul de Man. And as already suggested, the progenitor and perhaps best-known of all the deconstructionists is Jacques Derrida. De Man died in 1983 and Derrida in 2004, but the influence of each remains strong, this in spite of the fact that after his death it was discovered that de Man, as a young man living in Nazi-occupied Belgium, had written a series of anti-Semitic essays in a major newspaper, a revelation that certainly has damaged his personal, if not his professional, reputation (Lehman 269–71). In what follows, I will outline the basic tenets of deconstruction, focusing on the deconstructive theories developed by Derrida and de Man, theories that though surely different in some respects are nonetheless strikingly similar in their general outlines and fundamental assumptions.

II

Haiku are made of words, not things in the objective world. There is a radical difference between a poem’s language and lived experience. That language makes rather than mirrors reality. Deconstruction highlights and can provide theoretical support for these principles. In order to gain a complete and accurate understanding of how haiku work, it is useful, even necessary, to keep these principles, as articulated by deconstructionists such as Derrida and de Man, in mind. As will become evident later in this essay, applying them to haiku is fundamental to opening the full range of interpretive possibilities in these brief poems.

It is especially important to stress the constitutive power of language in haiku given the fact that there are a number of prominent traditional haiku theorists who have argued that a hallmark of the genre is precisely its ability to directly, without mediation, present reality as it is in itself. The assumption on the part of these theorists is that language is transparent, that it is capable of fully and accurately rendering the objective world. Cor van den Heuvel, for instance, in his Foreword to the third edition of *The Haiku Anthology*, asserts that “[h]aiku help us experience the everyday things around us vividly and directly, so that we see them as they really are ...” (xi). He goes on to endorse Allen Watts’ definition of haiku as “the wordless poem,” explaining that “[h]aiku, for the reader, is wordless because those few words [comprising a haiku] are invisible.

We as readers look right through them. There is nothing between us and the moment” (xxix). Likewise, Kenneth Yasuda contends in *The Japanese Haiku* that “haiku has something in common with painting, in the representation of the object alone, without comment, never presented to be other than what it is ...” (7). The haiku poet gives us “the concrete, sensuous material” thing (7), according to Yasuda. He or she “is interested in the object for its own sake” (11).

The deconstructionist view could not possibly be more opposed to the ideas about language put forth by Watts, van den Heuvel, and Yasuda. As Peter Barry points out, deconstruction draws upon the structuralist “notion that language doesn’t just reflect or record the world: rather, it shapes it, so that how we see is what we see” (59). Structuralist and post-structuralist theories alike demonstrate that there “is no access to any fixed landmark which is beyond linguistic processing...” (59). Actually, the view that language constitutes rather than reflects reality precedes even structuralism, goes at least as far back as Friedrich Nietzsche. In fact, as Vincent Leitch points out, Paul de Man explicitly follows the 19th century German philosopher in developing his particular version of deconstruction. For de Man, as for Nietzsche, Leitch explains, words are “always at once and originarily, figural or rhetorical rather than referential or representational” (*Deconstructive Criticism* 49). That is, language imposes humanly made concepts upon an inherently chaotic world, substituting those concepts for objectively real things. “There is nothing outside the text,” Jacques Derrida famously writes in *Of Grammatology* (qtd in *Deconstructive Criticism* 176). Though he does not explicitly employ the Nietzschean vocabulary that de Man relies upon, Derrida, like his American counterpart, also contends that language constructs rather than reflects reality.

For both de Man and Derrida, then, Watts’ idea of a “wordless poem” would be nonsensical. Poems are by definition made of words, and only words. Moreover, these words, far from being “invisible,” as Cor van den Heuvel would have it, are always featured, are all that the poem is. The reader can never “look right through them.” To the contrary, to read a poem is to look into its words, Derrida and de Man imply, for all the sense and significance the poem confers is contained in those words.

That is to say, a deconstructionist would deny the possibility that a haiku, or any other written text, could ever give us “the concrete, sensuous material” thing. Some haiku poets may, in fact, be “interested in the object for its own sake,” but Derrida and de Man would argue that whether the poet realizes it or not, his or her language is a structuring and sense-making device, one that transforms “the object for its own sake” into the object as a conceptual construct.

It is certainly true that one does not have to be a deconstructionist in order to recognize that a haiku is made of words and not things in the world. In fact, several recent haiku theorists, in opposition to the traditionalists noted above, have stressed exactly this point. Max Verhart, for instance, argues that “it is not the haiku moment preceding the haiku that matters, but only the haiku moment that is created in the poem” (42). And Gary Hotham, responding to the idea that some “may think haiku writers do not like words, since they use so few,” flatly declares: “I don’t think that is the case. The poet recognizes the strength of words and wants to highlight that power with as few as possible ... One thing the poet is doing with a poem is creating a focus on the power of the word” (47). These and other recent theorists fully acknowledge the primacy and indissolubility of language in haiku.

As noted, however, deconstruction, unlike most contemporary haiku theories, including Verhart’s and Hotham’s, can provide a detailed philosophical and theoretical rationale for the centrality and constitutive character of language in haiku, a rationale that I have only briefly sketched out above. More importantly, the deconstructionist view—particularly that developed by Derrida and de Man—of exactly how such constitutive language signifies is especially amenable to and useful in decoding instances of the genre. In the next section of this essay, I will outline that view of signification and apply it to the interpretation of a particular haiku, one by George Swede:

dawn
remembering her
bad grammar (76)

I have selected this poem, first, because in form and structure it typifies the genre, and, secondly, because it is written by a leading contemporary haiku poet and appears in a recent major anthology—*Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years*—of twentieth and twenty-first century haiku.

III

At the heart of the deconstructionist view of language—that developed by de Man and Derrida, as well as others—is that language is open to multiple, contradictory interpretations. Texts are viewed as inherently unstable; no text ever finally settles into a single, consistent meaning. As John Sutherland puts it, for the deconstructionist, “[t]here is no finality [of meaning]; every literary text is inherently indeterminate” (125). And in Jeremy Hawthorne’s phrasing, “interpretation of a text can never arrive at a final or complete ‘meaning’ for a text” (32). Commenting specifically on Derrida, J. A. Cuddon remarks that each text is viewed as “saying something quite different from what it appears to be saying ... it may be read as carrying a plurality of significance or as saying many different things which are fundamentally at variance with, contradictory and subversive of what may be (or may have been) seen by criticism as a single, stable ‘meaning’” (210). A typical deconstructive move is to identify some apparent, generally recognized meaning in a text and then undermine that meaning, showing that though the text does indeed sponsor the surface interpretation, it also conveys an opposite, contradictory sense. The reality a text’s language manufactures is, then, multifold and ambiguous, not single and unified.

Perhaps the best way to understand how deconstructionists capitalize on the polysemous character of language in their interpretations of literary works is to briefly examine a particular deconstruction of a particular text carried out by a particular deconstructionist. Paul de Man, in his seminal essay “Semiology and Rhetoric,” argues that the final line of William Butler Yeats’ poem “Among School Children” can be read in contradictory ways. More specifically, he identifies the sense in which the line is usually interpreted and then reverses that meaning, painstakingly demonstrating that as well as sponsoring this usual sense it also sponsors another, opposite interpretation.

It should be noted that de Man's concentration here on a small segment of text is typical of deconstruction. Since language is viewed as so densely meaningful, so open to multiple interpretations, the critic's focus is often narrow, though as will be evident in de Man's reading of Yeats, this narrow focus almost always carries larger implications for the text as a whole. As Peter Barry notes, deconstructionists frequently "concentrate on a single passage and analyze it so intensely that it becomes impossible to sustain a 'univocal' reading and the language explodes into 'multiplicities of meaning'" (70). And as Vincent Leitch points out, de Man himself, in an interview, once observed that "he worked not from larger ideas but 'one inch over the text'" ("Paul de Man" 1362).

De Man's deconstruction of "Among School Children" proceeds, in detail, as follows. The last line of Yeats' poem reads: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" De Man notes that this line "is usually interpreted" as a rhetorical question, as asserting the unity of dancer and dance, as a disguised proclamation that it is not possible to know one apart from the other (11). "It is equally possible, however," de Man writes, "to read the last line literally rather than figuratively" (11), that is, "since the dancer and the dance are not the same, it might be useful, perhaps even desperately necessary—for the question can be given a ring of urgency, 'Please tell me, how can I know the dancer from the dance'—to tell them apart" (12). De Man contends that even though the two interpretations differ to the point of contradiction, even though "one reading is precisely the error denounced by the other," both are legitimate and each determines a completely different interpretation for the poem as a whole (12). The meaning of the poem is radically unstable, circulating between opposed senses. "For it turns out that the entire scheme set up by the first reading [final line interpreted as a rhetorical question] can be undermined, or deconstructed, in terms of the second [final line read literally]" (11–12). And, of course, the order can be reversed: the second reading of the Yeats line can just as easily be deconstructed by the first as the first can be deconstructed by the second.

Actually, of course, the situation is more complex than this. De Man does not mean to suggest by his deconstruction of Yeats' poem that texts are limited to only two distinct interpretations. To the contrary, texts are

open to a multiplicity of meanings; to repeat John Sutherland's observation concerning deconstruction in general, a remark that certainly applies to Paul de Man in particular, "[t]here is no finality [of meaning]; every literary text is inherently indeterminate." Deconstructions can themselves be deconstructed, as other of de Man's own essays demonstrate. "Rhetoric radically suspends logic and opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration" (10), de Man writes in "Semiology and Rhetoric." As noted in the previous section of this essay, de Man believes that all language, including Yeats', is finally rhetorical. The possibilities for the interpretation of Yeats' line are, then, not merely dual but "vertiginous"; there is a dizzying potential for "referential aberration" inherent in this poem, as there is in every other instance of language.

One obvious quality of haiku that makes them amenable to deconstructive reading is their extreme brevity. As noted, deconstructionists tend to concentrate on the close interpretation of small segments of text, work "one inch over the text." A haiku, in its entirety, is a "one inch" text, is of the length that attracts deconstructive attention. With a haiku, a deconstructionist need not focus on a limited portion of the poem, as de Man focuses on the single line in Yeats, and then connect that focused reading to the text as a whole. Instead, he or she may have the satisfaction of considering the poem in its entirety. In sum, haiku, in their brevity, are uniquely hospitable to the sort of dense, detailed reading that deconstruction heralds.

More significantly, the fact that a typical haiku juxtaposes distinct images between which no, or very little, connection is spelled out suggests a deconstructive view of language and invites deconstructive reading. Certainly, not all haiku are so constructed, but as William J. Higginson, among others, has noted, a great many are, and in those poems that are so made it is up to the reader to constitute the connection between images (116). Sometimes the connection is strongly implied by the words of the poem. More often, in the most provocative and original haiku, it is not, or at least not completely or clearly. The reader is encouraged to consider multiple possibilities, all of which to some degree differ and some of which may outrightly contradict each other. The meaning of the poem as a whole, in turn, largely depends on the connection, or

connections, the reader makes. As Michele Root-Bernstein argues, a haiku is “an emblem of creative discovery” (18–19). She writes: “haiku insight begins with the sudden recognition of an unexpected or hidden likeness” (19). Haiku, that is, highlight the deconstructive insight, exemplified in de Man’s reading of Yeats’ poem, that the full meaning of a text does not come ready made on its surface, but rather must be excavated—creatively pieced together—by the reader.

Swede’s haiku—“dawn / remembering her / bad grammar”—perfectly illustrates just how open to deconstruction haiku are and, more particularly, how deconstructive reading can surface and highlight a rich range of meanings in a typical haiku. In characteristic haiku fashion, the poem consists of two distinct images that are juxtaposed but between which no connection is spelled out. The reader is forced to interpret. What is the link between daybreak and the narrator’s memory of some unspecified woman’s “bad grammar”? Is there any other connection between the two images than the literal fact that the juxtaposition strongly suggests: the narrator’s memory of this woman occurs as the sun is rising? And what does the poem as a whole mean when specific links between the two images are provided? In sum, what, precisely, is Swede trying to say here? The haiku demands that the reader treat its language as functioning in the way the deconstructive critic claims all language functions: as not itself transparently delimiting meaning, but rather requiring that the reader creatively construe whatever meanings it might contain. And as will become evident in what follows, Swede’s language, in deconstructive fashion, sponsors not one but multiple and contradictory senses.

Of course, before one can specify a connection between the two images, one must decide what each image in isolation implies. Once more, the deconstructive view of language is suggested: what each image separately implies is not a given but is rather a matter of interpretation. One obvious way to read the opening line—“dawn”—of Swede’s haiku is as an entirely positive image. Besides literally designating a time of day, “dawn” metaphorically implies enlightenment, insight. Daybreak is that moment when things obscured by the darkness of night first become visible. It represents the movement from blindness to revelation, from ignorance to truth. The second image in the poem—the narrator’s memory of a

woman's "bad grammar"—suggests, in contrast, something markedly negative and unpleasant. The woman recalled is uneducated, coarse, and uncouth. Recalling her makes the narrator, likely highly educated and cultured himself, cringe.

A readily apparent link, which the reader must provide, between the two images is, then, that "dawn" symbolizes the speaker's realization that a particular woman he met the previous evening was, in fact, uneducated, coarse and uncouth. Like most all haiku, this one, in its brevity, invites the reader imaginatively to fill in the details; Root-Bernstein's notion of haiku as "an emblem of creative discovery" can be extended to the supplying of implied narrative elements. One possible creative construction of the poem is that the narrator was introduced, the night before, to a woman he found physically attractive and seductive. Perhaps he met her in a dimly lit bar. Alcohol, music, and a sexually charged atmosphere caused him to focus entirely on the woman's outer beauty and sultry appeal. He talked to her, listened to what she said, but in his inebriated and sensually aroused condition he completely overlooked the fine points of her language. The next morning when he awakes, however, he soberly reflects upon the woman, now recalling her "bad grammar." That is to say, he becomes acutely and painfully aware that beneath her sexually seductive surface the woman was crude and uncultured. The speaker, far more intellectually sophisticated than she, now finds her unattractive; in the light of day she is no longer appealing to him. The "dawn" is both the literal time when he comes to his senses and a metaphor for his awareness (it "dawns" on him) of who and what she really is.

But, it is crucial to note, the poem can be read in an opposite way. It can be deconstructed. Attention to deconstructive reading strategies, that is, can alert the reader to the possibility that Swede's haiku conveys not only the meaning outlined above but a diametrically opposed one as well. More specifically, just as Paul de Man's deconstruction of "Among School Children" reveals that the last line of Yeats' poem can be interpreted as stating that there is no difference between dancer and dance and that there is a difference that needs to be explained, so can Swede's haiku be read as both a realization of the truth and a blindness to the truth, both as a story about revelation and one about obtuseness.

Though the haiku's opening image can be construed in entirely positive terms, it can also be interpreted in a very different way, as connoting lack and limitation. "[D]awn" suggests not only enlightenment and insight, but also cold, constricting, pure and calculating reason. In turn, the night, which precedes daybreak, might be associated with and viewed as symbolizing mystery, romance, and intuitive feeling, as opposed to the blindness and ignorance with which it is implicitly connected in the first reading above. Being literally that time of day when darkness first turns into light, "dawn," in sum, might be seen as symbolic of the move from mystery, romance, and intuitive feeling into the harsh glare of day and reason, a reason devoid of any sense of passion, sensuality, and heartfelt emotion.

That is to say, the poem as a whole may be interpreted as follows. When, at "dawn," the narrator in the poem recalls the "bad grammar" used by the woman the night before, he is not opening his eyes to the Truth about her but is rather allowing his strict rationality, symbolized by the "dawn," to discern only a surface fact about the woman and totally discount the deeper knowledge he had discovered about her the previous evening, namely, that beneath and in spite of her technical flaw—her "bad grammar"—there lurked a powerful and primal lure, an emotionally profound and logically confounding mystery and magic. In other words, on this reading of the poem the woman's beauty was not merely outer but emanated from her spirit and character; her sensual and seductive allure sprang from a source as dark and untamed as the night in which he met her in that bar. The alcohol and sexually charged atmosphere of that night enabled the speaker to suspend his reason and sophisticated polish sufficiently to see into the woman's depths, a suspension that is itself suspended at daybreak. Put another way, the "dawn" might be associated with the man's petty and pretentious inability, precipitated by his cold reason, to look past the woman's superficial, ultimately inconsequential, imperfections in order to continue in his understanding and appreciation, initiated the previous evening, of her magnetic substance and power.

As noted, de Man argues that rhetoric "opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration." Swede's poem exemplifies such a view

of language as rhetorical in the “referential aberration” the two above readings of its words demarcate. His haiku suggests not one but two senses, each of which, in de Man’s language, is “the error denounced by the other.” Furthermore, to say that Swede’s text sponsors the two opposed meanings outlined above is not to argue that these are the only two possible interpretation of the poem available. Just as Yeats’ poem might be read in more than the two ways de Man explicitly identifies in “Semiology and Rhetoric,” so might Swede’s poem be read in yet other, contrary senses. For example, in both the interpretations sketched in the preceding pages, the “her” in the poem is assumed to be an adult woman the narrator meets on an evening out. But “her” might be read in a radically different way, as a child—perhaps the narrator’s grandchild, perhaps a niece or daughter of a friend—whom the narrator encounters. In that case, the girl’s “bad grammar,” which the speaker recalls the morning after the encounter, is neither a serious character flaw nor ultimately a trivial fact about her but rather something cute and endearing. The narrator perhaps chuckles when he thinks back on the youngster’s innocent and entirely forgivable misuse of the language. That is to say, the deconstruction of Swede’s poem detailed above surely does not exhaust its potential meanings. It does, however, highlight and illustrate in detail the fact that, as deconstruction prescribes, the poem can be interpreted in more than one way, in at least two senses that contradict each other.

IV

As well as providing a theoretical basis for recognizing that haiku are made of words rather than things, and highlighting the fact that these poems contain multiple, contradictory senses, deconstruction can also give us a new way of understanding and valuing the genre’s brevity. A traditional haiku is only seventeen syllables long; many contemporary, non-traditional haiku have fewer syllables than that. These poems, on the surface, appear so very slight. If, however, the genre is subjected to deconstructive analysis, haiku turn out not to be slight at all but, to the contrary, remarkably substantial. Ironically and paradoxically enough, they can be viewed as, in a significant sense, long and involved.

As Raman Selden points out, one of Derrida's characteristic deconstructive moves is to reverse the polarity of binary pairs and show that the privileged, primary term is actually secondary and derivative (89). For example, nature has traditionally been viewed as primary and civilization secondary; nature comes first and civilization second, the latter being a supplement to the former. But Derrida would argue that if we look more closely "we find that nature is always already contaminated with civilization; there is no 'original' nature" (Selden 89). Civilized man's notion of nature, which is the only notion of nature we have, is formulated within the confines of an already present civilization, an addition to it. Nature is dependent upon civilization in that nature is defined against it, as that which civilization is not. In this sense, then, it is civilization that is privileged and primary rather than nature, and it is nature, not civilization, that is secondary and derivative.

Actually, however, as Paul H. Fry clarifies Derrida's thought, "what looks like an inversion of priority in a binary pair...[is] not so much that as a reminder that they [the two items comprising the pair] cannot exist apart from each other" (139). It's a matter of not being able to tell "whether the chicken or the egg came first," for in the final analysis, in Derrida's scheme "you can't have one [item in a binary pair] without the other [item in the pair]" (139). Derrida's intent, then, is not to deconstruct a traditional, false hierarchy in order to establish a new, truer one. Rather, his aim is to show that all hierarchies are inherently unstable, and can be reversed. Yes, nature can be shown to be secondary to and derivative of civilization, but this reversal of the traditional binary can itself be reversed; civilization is always already infected by nature in that there is no civilization without a natural state to define it against. As Terry Eagleton succinctly puts it, Derrida's deconstructions of binaries "demonstrate how one term of an antithesis secretly inheres within the other" (115). A thing is never what it is but also contains within itself what it is not, its own opposite.

The insight, key to Derrida's deconstruction of established hierarchies, that things contain within themselves their own opposites, that there is finally no such thing as a seamless identity, can be used to reevaluate the seeming slightness and apparent brevity of haiku. The brevity of haiku,

when looked at with Derridian eyes, contains within itself its own opposite: length, abundant content. It does so, one might argue, in the sense that a haiku achieves its brevity by repressing, explicitly excluding, so much that it implicitly encompasses, so much that is part of what it fundamentally is. Instances of these exclusions are readily apparent in my analysis of Swede's haiku in the preceding section of this essay. To cite the central examples, Swede's poem does not spell out but rather only suggests links between its two juxtaposed images, and his text invites the reader to fill in omitted narrative details. Put in terms of deconstruction's paradoxical logic, the haiku does not contain what, in a very real sense, it actually contains. These poems that are in one sense short and condensed are in another sense long and involved. Slightness in haiku turns out to be disguised substantiality in that a haiku is its few words and the words, implied by the text, the reader must supply to complete it.

To cast the argument in terms of a hierarchically ordered pair, a haiku, looked at one way, might be viewed as an aesthetic lightweight in comparison to longer genres such as novels, short stories, or even lyric poems. After all, how could a seventeen-, or fewer, syllable text possibly be as substantial a work of art as a short story or a novel that is hundreds or thousands of words long? How could it even measure up, in terms of artistic content, to a twenty-, twenty-five-, or thirty-line lyric? Indeed, there are a number of literary magazines and journals that won't even consider publishing haiku, often presumably because these poems are viewed as too slight to constitute "real" literature. In other words, one might argue that there exists an evaluative scheme in which the longer genres are aesthetically privileged, deemed primary and authentic, while haiku are marginalized, viewed as secondary, as something less than full-fledged artistic productions.

Derrida, however, shows us how such a hierarchy might be reversed so that haiku are seen as privileged and primary while longer genres are viewed as secondary and less aesthetically robust. One might argue, for example, that haiku more succinctly, more effectively and efficiently, convey particular themes and ideas than do longer works. That is, haiku distill themes and ideas to their purest, sharpest essence whereas longer works express those same themes and ideas in more redundant and sprawling,

less focused terms. In fact, I myself have suggested just such an argument in a previous essay: “Haiku and Ockham’s Razor: The Example of Jack Kerouac,” published in *Modern Haiku* in the summer issue of 2013. In this paper I contend at length that a well-known Kerouac haiku is able to express more powerfully particular themes than does Kerouac’s most famous work, the full-length novel *On the Road*, with which it shares those themes (58–65).

Of course, as Derrida prescribes, no hierarchy is finally stable; every binary one establishes can be reversed. The haiku / longer genres hierarchy is no more ultimately secure than is the longer genres / haiku hierarchy that it deconstructs. There are surely respects in which longer genres are aesthetically more robust than haiku, and achieve artistic ends that these very short poems cannot. And obviously there is a sense in which novels, short stories, and lyrics are, indeed, longer and more involved than haiku. My point here is only that Derridian deconstruction provides ways of valuing and understanding the brevity of haiku that might not otherwise be evident. My aim throughout this essay, in fact, has not been to promote deconstruction as the only critical tool available for unlocking the inner workings and general character of the genre. Instead, it has simply been to show that this literary theory—in the Derridian and de Manian modes especially—is particularly useful, and fitted, for interpreting haiku and evaluating the form as a whole.

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