
ESSAYS

ENGAGING WITH AVANT-GARDE HAIKU: A STUDY GROUP APPROACH TO NEW DIRECTIONS IN CRAFT

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“One should never, even for a moment, lick the dregs of the ancients. Like the endless changes of the seasons, all things must change. The same is true of haikai.” — Attributed to Bashō, 17th century Japan

“This is an exciting time to be involved in Western haiku ... Dissatisfaction with a preconceived form is being replaced by a genuine interest in being open. Perhaps this is another age of Bashō, i.e., another age of discovery.”
— Marlene Mountain, 20th century America

Tooling through the virtual universe not long ago, I came across an intriguing poster by one Diego L. Rodriguez. The visual artist had re-visioned a white chrysanthemum haiku by Bashō as a splash of reds, pinks, and grays spilling from what appeared to be a budding flower or a bleeding thundercloud or both.¹ This struck me as an apt metaphor, not only for the adoption of Japanese haiku by English-language poets, but for the everchanging adaptation of that form in English over the last hundred years. I had recently begun preparing workshop activities for a haiku study group based in my hometown. Learning new approaches to the form and new craft techniques, it seemed to me, we might hone our aesthetic appreciation for chrysanthemums old and new. What follows is a workshop précis in the form of an essay detailing our explorations of evolving directions in haiku.

The Evergreen Haiku Study Group, initially convened on the campus of Michigan State University, drew a mixed group of students and community members, of beginners and adepts. In our first years, we spent a great

deal of time exploring mainstream haiku in English, with its emphasis on Japanese aesthetic principles. Of late, however, we had turned our attention to the fresh and unconventional, specifically to those innovations in haiku that adapt traditional aesthetic purposes to new possibilities in English-language poetics.

Aside from the impulse to cast a wide net for study group members of disparate inclinations, there seemed good reason. Given my professional study of creative process, I knew that inspiration often follows exploration. To cite a Liz Lerman Dance Exchange poster long hanging on my wall, one of many ways to “be creative” is to “rattle around in someone else’s universe.”² Add to this, as the choreographer Lerman does, that it helps to “turn discomfort into inquiry”—and a person has a plan. Only by embracing paradox—contradictory ideas, say, or competing modes of composition—and by finding something “to respect at both ends of the spectrum,” says Lerman, can we open ourselves up to expanding modes of expression.

With the haiku spectrum in mind, then, I suggested to the Evergreen group that we read Eric Amman’s *The Wordless Poem*.³ This chapbook from 1969 would serve as a reminder of Zen-inspired prescriptions for artless, selfless, and intuitive haiku that focus on the ordinary suchness of things. I further proposed that we follow Amman with excerpts of Richard Gilbert’s *The Disjunctive Dragonfly, A New Approach to English-Language Haiku*.⁴ As additional escorts into new territory, I also suggested reading two essays by Lee Gurga—“Newku for Old? *Haiku 21* and *Haiku 2014* as Guides to the Experimental and Traditional in Haiku”⁵ and “Normative Haiku and Beyond.”⁶ Grounded in traditional sensibilities, we were ready for some cogent rethinking of where haiku might go and why. We were ready to engage with the haiku avant-garde.

With regard to the arts, avant-garde can be a tricky term. In “Avant-Garde Haiku: A New Outlook,”⁷ Philip Rowland suggests some difficulties. Do we mean aesthetic rebellion of some extreme kind against current artistic norms? Or do we mean radical work that prods and pushes contemporary taste along? Rowland himself ties the term to the former, to utmost rejections of aesthetic tradition. For study group purposes, however, I took avant-garde to refer to forms and techniques that the

mainstream understands as new and different, not wholly acceptable, yet not not-haiku. In that sense, avant-garde becomes interchangeable with experimental or innovative. And as part of the “advanced guard,” the poet is a pioneer, an innovator, an experimentalist pushing the boundaries of what haiku can do.

As facilitator and haiku poet, I was—still am—partial to this person-centered view of the new. Like the teaching poet Marvin Bell, in his “32 Statements About Writing Poetry,”⁸ I take it as a given that “every poet is an experimentalist.” What Bell argues is that everyone learns the craft by writing, reading, writing some more, and “show[ing] in your writing what you have read.” This seems to me a reminder to play around with our poems. Without any goal in mind other than the satisfaction of curiosity and the pleasure of exploration, play is very much a way of learning—probably the best. Not only that, but attention to a range of possibilities in haiku increases the likelihood of forging a unique voice. Originality depends on opening ourselves up to a variety of influences and inspirations, and picking and choosing what works for us. That and, as Bell advises, “try[ing] to write poems at least one person in the room will hate.” Only then do we really know that our playful experimentation is in fact experimental in a community-wide sense. Of course, also try to write poems that at least some folks in the room will love. To do so, to do something new and different yet remain grounded in haiku, is to participate however modestly in growing the future of the form.

In their book *Haiku 21*,⁹ and in follow-up chapbooks, most recently *Haiku 2023*,¹⁰ editors Lee Gurga and Scott Metz locate this leading edge of change in what they call “notable” haiku. “[N]otable haiku,” Gurga writes in his 2015 *Frogpond* essay, “take defining concepts traditionally associated with haiku (brief form, concrete seasonal images, juxtaposition, grammatical incompleteness and the playful use of language) and reinterpret them with a twist.”¹¹

dandelion: dos and don'ts

Consider Aditya Bahl's “notable” haiku from 2013. Brief form, check; concrete seasonal image, check; juxtaposition, check; grammatical

incompleteness, check; the playful use of language, again check—and all with a definite twist. There’s something rare in an image placed side by side with an idiomatic expression; there’s something uncommon in the placement of the juxtaposition, made clear by that colon in the middle of a one-line ku. And because “notable” haiku like Bahl’s put one foot in tradition and the other in continued learning, exploration, and experimentation, they make excellent food for study group thought. Since I was privileged to have written the “Afterword” for *Haiku 2023*, I used many haiku from that chapbook to highlight contemporary experimentation for the study group, and I do so here, unless otherwise noted. (For a wider range of avant-garde sources, see endnote 21.)

No doubt about it, haiku poets these days live in interesting times. As Gurga points out in “Newku for Old,” traditional notions of juxtaposition are just now expanding in fascinating ways. In juxtaposing, poets set at least two images side by side without stating any overt relationship. This lack of relational interpretation creates a space or cut (*kire* in Japanese). Conventionally, this cut is signaled by line breaks and/or punctuation or a visually marked space, as in Peter Newton’s

bus stop
a room inside
the rain

and Bill Kenney’s

my morning walk
my neighbor’s walker —
two springs

and Robert Hirshfield’s

final moments odors gather in single file

In recent years, poets have also been compressing the visual or grammatical space of the cut within one-line haiku—often with multiple break possibilities inferred by the reader. Susan Burch’s

the darkness in me accumulating bats

can be read in at least three different ways, with a meaningful break after “me” or after “accumulating” or, indeed, after the last word, “bats.” Each way of phrasing the poem speaks to the other two, enlarging what is said in a brief six words.

Current haiku experimentation also suggests that we can intuit a cut in fragmentary language—even in the absence of obvious juxtapositions or inferred space.

left to my own device

by Warren Decker is a case in point. To understand how and why an apparently uncut haiku may nonetheless create a break between disparate images, the haiku study group turned to Richard Gilbert.

In *The Disjunctive Dragonfly* and its companion volume, *Poems of Consciousness, Contemporary Japanese & English-language Haiku in Cross-cultural Perspective*,¹² Gilbert argues that cutting is the defining characteristic of haiku. “The haiku form necessitates extreme concision, minimalism, and attributes of ‘image’—but without kire,” he writes, “we do not have haiku.”¹³ The haiku cut involves much more than a marked break in speech, however, or even a decompressed space between or within phrases. “Kire,” Gilbert explains, “can be taken as ‘cuttings’ or ‘irruptions,’ or strong, abrupt ‘distortions’ of space/time/worlds *in reader consciousness*”¹⁴ (*italics mine*). The haiku cut is primarily cognitive.

every fiber of my spider lightning

Paying attention to one’s mental response to haiku can be, pardon the pun, enlightening. When I examine my experience reading the haiku above, by Chuck Brickley, I find critical distortions in my comprehension. Initially, the six-word phrase resists straightforward meaning. Baffled, my mind jumps to the unspoken “every fiber of *my being*” and that phrase, which I can’t shake, becomes part of the haiku. I may intuit a cut after the interpolated “being”—“every fiber of my [being] / spider

lightning”—or after “spider”—“every fiber of my [being] spider / lightning.” The latter thought—“my [being] spider”—brings me to the spider’s web as something that resonates with the network of fibers throughout the living body. So does the very real phenomenon of spider lightning.

Returning to “left to my own device” by Warren Decker, I am aware of a similar cognitive warp in my reading experience. In this case, distortion lies in the word “device” (as in iPhone or laptop) and the idiom “left to my own devices.” Using the singular form of device in the haiku as opposed to the plural in the idiom, the poet creates two sets of meaning. These interpretive possibilities vibrate against one another—and in that dissonance a catering to personal desires collides with social isolation collides with commentary on the cultural moment.

For Gilbert, distortion of consciousness—what he calls disjunction—is what powers haiku. Disjunction, with its emphasis on the cognition of impeded reading, incorporates an array of possibilities for *kire* beyond conventional notions of juxtaposition. In fact, Gilbert argues in *Poems of Consciousness*, “the concept of disjunction in haiku [is] more primary in function than juxtaposition.”¹⁵ Which is to say, juxtaposition is a form of disjunction but not the only one, as “left to my own device” or “every fiber of my spider lightning” must make clear.

What other forms of disjunction might there be? If for no other reason than the playful stimulus of a new toy or tool, the practicing poets of Evergreen Haiku were eager to find out. Gilbert himself suggests that poets examine “modes of disjunction as a means of determining creative method.”¹⁶ Get a handle on how experimental haiku do what they do, and we might just derive craft techniques of use to our personal poetic growth. In hopes of doing just that, the study group turned to Gilbert’s *Disjunctive Dragonfly* and its “new approach” to English-language haiku.

The Disjunctive Dragonfly is not exactly a primer but, in that book, Gilbert sketches out three genre features that are characteristic of all good haiku: in his terminology, “perceptual disjunction,” “misreading as meaning,” and “overturning semantic expectations.” He also sketches out fourteen disjunctive techniques characteristic of many experimental haiku. This “expanded palette” focuses on disruptive elements in language that drive cognitive breaks in reader consciousness. Since it was my task to

present a selection of these techniques to the study group, what follows is my paraphrase of Gilbert's thinking, as expressed in *The Disjunctive Dragonfly* and *Poems of Consciousness*, and as aided by Gurga's explication of Gilbert's key points.

Perceptual disjunction. Genre feature 1, the act of juxtaposing images and words, or otherwise placing them in close contact, creates cognitive tension, especially when the implied relationship is unusual. Cuts, compressions, and fragmentary language operate in this way to make familiar things and ideas unfamiliar. Put another way, any deforming of typical sentence structure or meaning-making violates our sense of reality; there follows a perceptual break in conscious coherence.

my head in the clouds in the lake

In *The Disjunctive Dragonfly* Gilbert cites this 1998 haiku by Ruby Spriggs as an example of how the compression and fragmentation of thought may create a strange take on reality. The haiku is composed of two phrases, the first an idiom, the second a common observation. Yet when "my head in the clouds" and "the clouds in the lake" are compressed together, the whole becomes a confounding thing to say. There is a real reflection in the lake; there is also the dizzy disorientation of that illusion.

The same perceptual disjunction also occurs in more conventionally arranged haiku.

cold damp morning
charred wood
in the raven's call

Dave Russo's "notable haiku" features a typical break after line one, thereby juxtaposing the damp time of day with something interesting about the call of a raven. Yet within lines two and three the reader may feel yet another break, another conundrum asserting itself: the presence of charred wood in that sound.

Misreading as meaning & Overturning semantic expectation. Genre features 2 and 3 further clarify the cognitive dissonance between what we perceive in and through a haiku and what we know about the

world. Indeed, that dissonance has us misreading and rereading as we attempt to resolve the cognitive break and assign meaning to part or all of the poem. In Russo's haiku, a first and hampered reading of lines two and three may sort itself out if we shift to synesthetic thought. The smell of charred wood is like, or is triggered by, the sound of the raven.

Whatever meaning the reader's multiple readings make, the compression of synesthetic thought works to overturn what we expect the words to say. By asserting an alternate relationship between felt things and sense modalities, the poem poses an alternate reality alongside the "real" one, as does "my head in the clouds in lake." What's more, these imagined worlds of alternative understanding launch us into experimental haiku—and the use of new disjunctive techniques.

For the purposes of the study group, I presented only some of Gilbert's fourteen experimental techniques—which I lumped into two categories: as I termed them, "chimeric fusions" and "(im)possible realities." To my way of thinking, a chimeric image combines two or more unexpected elements, for example the faun of western mythology or the Japanese *kirin*, an imaginary creature part deer, part ox. I include Gilbert's "imagistic fusion" and "metaphoric fusion" techniques under this heading. (Im)possible realities comprise naïve perceptions of experience, childlike or ancient, as well as figments of play, imagination, and speculation. Whether simply untutored or multiculturally diverse, all these are understood as lying outside or beyond predominantly shared notions of reality. I include under this rubric the following four of Gilbert's techniques: "the impossibly true," "displaced mythic resonance," "misplaced anthropomorphism," and "elemental animism." (In addition, I crib from one or two other, more cryptically described techniques, such as "forensic parthenogenesis," for conceptual insights and model haiku.)

Chimeric fusions. In *The Disjunctive Dragonfly*, Gilbert describes imagistic fusions thusly: "The disjunctive aspect fuses disparate images into one complex, while at the same time, paradoxically, creating separations due to reading/misreading."¹⁷ As I paraphrase it, the compression of imagery does away with formal juxtapositions and *at the same time* creates cognitive breaks due to the fragmenting of normal speech. To see how this works, we consider three haiku—the first, by Eve Luckring, is among the poems Gilbert chooses to illustrate disjunctive fusion:

sore to the touch his name in my mouth

In this haiku compressed phrases do in fact fragment in more than one way. We may read “sore to the touch / his name in my mouth” or “sore to the touch / touch his name in my mouth.” This haiku also compresses sense impressions, verging on synesthesia, as tactile sensation fuses with sound fuses with pain—or as Gilbert points out, painful bliss.

A thorough perusal of *Haiku 2023* (as indeed many other repositories of experimental ku) suggests that fused images merge together at key words: either those that hinge one phrase to another or those that suggest homonyms that become part of the cognitive mix. In Matthew Cariello’s haiku that hinge word is “lost”:

all my words lost umbrellas in the wind

In Helen Buckingham’s haiku, one word tellingly sounds like another:

god’s feat of clay left to burn

Once cognitively processed, the homonym “feat/feet” insists upon itself with “feet of clay.”

In both these haiku, the compression of sense impressions and imagery creates an attendant compression of literal and figurative readings. In Cariello’s haiku, words become umbrellas. In Buckingham’s haiku, the literal reading—or as close as we can get to one—contrasts the firing of clay with the more abstract notion of character flaw. The dissonance between the two creates a deep probing of religious belief.

Let’s take a closer look at the fusion of literal and figurative, because much experimental haiku tends in this direction. Indeed, in the following three haiku from *Haiku 2023*, metaphorical readings are as important, if not more so, than factual ones. The felt meaning of the haiku privileges the figurative. No surprise, then, these poems do not shy from abstraction or overt metaphor.

the moment kindling catches grief

Evan Vandermeer

sea glass gathering
along the edge
of the zeitgeist

Michelle Tennison

masquerade —
Death
blows me a kiss

M. Shayne Bell

In the last word of his haiku, Vandermeer shifts from the expected and palpable image, “fire,” to something arguably more conceptual, “grief.” The result is a cognitive double take that has us comparing two disparate things as one conflagration. Tennison’s “sea glass gathering” also fuses physical action with mental construct. Whether sea glass gathering refers to human beachcombing or a wrack line left by the waves, the real-world phenomena of lines one and two shift unexpectedly to the abstract in line three. Where the reader might expect “beach,” she gets “zeitgeist” instead, a word that connects “time” and “spirit (or ghost)” to convey the idea of communal thought. As a result, the haiku asserts an unusual metaphor fusing literal and figurative, capped by a compound chimeric word that does just that.

In “masquerade,” Bell baldly names the figure in the mask—“Death” with a capital D. The abstraction wraps itself in a personification that blurs the line between what might be real and what might be metaphor. Do we understand the blown kiss literally or figuratively? What plane of existence are we on here? Chimeric fusions of concrete and abstract imagery suggest alternate relationships between things and ideas that jar us from the world as is ... to a world as may be imagined.

(Im)possible realities: the impossibly true. The question is, to what effect? Gilbert argues that fusions of fragmentary thought make “impossibly true” haiku believable, due to the logic inherent in the grammatical construction itself. He cites the first of the haiku below in *The Disjunctive Dragonfly*; I draw the following two from *Haiku 2023*.

cold rain —
my application
to become a crab

Fay Aoyagi

adrift in your sea
my three octopus
hearts

Ben Gaa

long icicles
sinking into the dark flesh
of the empty apartment

Patrick Sweeney

In creating a sense of the “impossibly true,” certain aspects of a poem’s imagery may seem plausible, as in Aoyagi’s “cold rain” or Gaa’s “adrift in your sea.” Yet each haiku proves otherworldly. In “cold rain” fantasy finally asserts itself in the last word of line three. Whether we interpret “crab” as crustacean or crusty individual, the idea that a person applies to become one or the other is imaginative and playful and, strictly speaking, untrue. In Gaa’s haiku plausible reality comes into question as line two feeds into line three. The poet’s identification with the cephalopod is false in one way, yet true in another. As with “cold rain,” the reader of “adrift in your sea” goes back and forth, gestalt-wise, between a literal interpretation that is impossible and a figurative reading that is metaphorically believable.

Readings and mis-readings also teeter-totter between the possible and impossible in more obscure haiku such as “long icicles.” Are the “long icicles” of line one “sinking into the dark flesh” of line two or is the poetic narrator, perhaps, “sinking into the dark flesh of the empty apartment”? On the face of it, neither reading seems plausible. We are left with two dissonant strands of imagery—and a sense of the surreal, whether dream or nightmare. Yet it is in this context that the haiku “makes sense.” As in dreams, there is a logic that intuitively connects the images. Line one may suggest a cold winter and a house poorly insulated; line two, a body mired in some dark interior, wallowing in self-pity or reproach. Picking up the house imagery of line one, line three reveals that the apartment (symbolic of the self) stands empty. If the sequencing of real things acting one upon the other seems unreal and irrational, the imagery nonetheless speaks of a bleak loneliness that freezes body and soul.

(Im)possible realities: displaced mythic resonance. The overt sur-reality in Sweeney’s haiku finds echo in other (im)possible realities, particularly those Gilbert sees as tapping into or creating a mythic landscape. Such haiku speak to ancient ways of being and doing that, subconsciously

at least, compel poetic belief. In *The Disjunctive Dragonfly*, Gilbert cites the first of the haiku that follow for its naturalistic approach to “new forms of mythos,”¹⁸ an apparent displacement of the real within the imagined or vice versa:

inside a bat's ear
a rose
opens to a star
Eve Luckring

In a similar vein, from *Haiku 2023*:

thistle me
in the early afternoon
tiger swallowtail
Randy Brooks

yellow ribbons of pollen on the beach Gretel's last pebbles
Jo Balistreri

Luckring's haiku is a divination, a seer's reading of portents in a time and place out of mind; that by Brooks, an invocation. The imperative, “thistle me,” opens a prayer for shape-shifting and closer communion with what flutters at the edge of an ordinary afternoon. For her part, Balistreri calls on fairytale, arguably part of the European mythic canon, to situate a dystopic future. As I read the poem, “yellow ribbons of pollen” refer to the washes of pine pollen seen along US coasts in recent years—a strange sight due to the rising temperatures and longer growing seasons of climate change. As a phrase in itself, “on the beach” evokes the end of civilization—I immediately think of the novel by Nevil Shute. Acting as a pivot phrase, “on the beach” ties the pollen tides to “Gretel's last pebbles”—will we or will we not find our way out of these dire straits? Ancient stories tell us that in a trail marked with stones or other threads, there is at least some hope.

(Im)possible realities: “misplaced anthropomorphism” and “elemental animism.” Conjuring impossible realities, the poetic narrator

speaks in and through non-human things and processes. No surprise then, that some impossibly true haiku may also endow the non-human with something close to human speech or intention.

meadow speaking the language she dreams in

Scott Metz

no one listens like a dandelion

Victor Ortiz

forgiving each other

with just a nod

white jonquils

Lori Kiefer

These haiku channel an anthropomorphism that seems more than mere conceit—but rather, an empathy that transcends human self-centeredness. As Gilbert explains with regard to “meadow speaking,” they exude a “naïve sense of childlike projection ... a kind of fancy and sincere seeming that allows the anthropomorphic metaphor to rise above pathetic fallacy.”¹⁹ Whether one intuits a cut after “meadow,” after “meadow speaking,” or takes the phrase whole, the haiku evokes an empathetic grasp of felt experience well beyond the expressions of human speech. Similarly, from *Haiku 2023*, the dandelion in Ortiz’s haiku understands the unspoken wishes of the narrator, whose own appropriation of the wind’s role speaks volumes. As for Kiefer’s haiku, a reading in which “white jonquils” communicate with mute movements of the body places us in a world of fantasy just a rabbit hole away.

Gilbert notes in *The Disjunctive Dragonfly* that any haiku featuring transcendent empathy between humans and other living things will also “inherently exhibit the quality of animism.”²⁰ Indeed, there seems little to distinguish this related technique from “misplaced anthropomorphism” except the non-living state of the actor in the poem. Things and processes that western culture conventionally understands as inanimate become animated with behaviors amenable to human understanding.

clouds
blowing off the stars

Penny Harter

the ghost in my phone
predicting the next
river | woods | earth | word

Tim Cremin

Gilbert cites Harter's haiku for the interpretive duality of "blowing off." The clouds have agency *and* intention, both of which affect what is real or unreal in the conjured scene. Cremin's 2023 "notable" haiku immediately draws the reader into current concerns about machine intelligence. The vertical bars or pipes in line three denote the logic of computing, wherein a chain of commands filters and transforms data—and anticipates in real time not just our location but our next word and, in some speculative future, our next thought.

Over the course of six months or so, the poets of Evergreen Haiku parsed the chimeric fusions and (im)possible realities of many new and notable haiku. At the same time, we looked for inspirational suggestions and practical pointers to apply to our own craft. With fresh ideas about disjunction, imagistic fusion, and blended worlds both real and imaginary, we were ready to experiment on our own. As facilitator, I came up with some general craft advice:

- Upgrade from juxtaposition to disjunction. Use fractured sentence structure or other cognitive breaks in the language to expand haiku meaning in the silent spaces between things and thoughts.
- Embrace imagination. Use fusions to explore impossibly true notions of the world and experience. Pose the figurative alongside the literal, the naïve or surreal alongside the real. Allow the cognitive experience of a thing or event to offer a new way into poetic description.
- Give yourself permission to play around. See how far you can fly your understanding of haiku without losing sight of the shared genre.

I also culled a handful of compositional tips from the model haiku themselves:

- *Shift at the slip of the tongue.* Take advantage of semantic expectation to segue, in the same way that Vandermeer does with the very last word of “the moment kindling ...”
- *Hinge your haiku:* Redirect imagery at the drop of a pivot word or homonym, as Cariello and Buckingham do in “all my words ...” and “god’s feat of clay ...”
- *Create chimeric fusions:* Hook what’s real on what can only be imagined; like Peter Newton, find the “room inside / the rain.”
- *Play with (im)possible worlds.* Tap into the multiverses of shared imagination. In “yellow ribbons of pollen ...” Jo Balistreri connects the ecological present to age-old fairytales of challenge and resolution. Other allusions to the cultural canon may similarly expand the haiku moment.
- *More play with (im)possible worlds.* Let the imagery speak to naïve, animistic, or surreal effect, like Patrick Sweeney does in “long icicles.”

Of course, craft advice is one thing; acting upon it another, as I realized in my own attempts to emulate the avant-garde:

drift
wood
i
even
know
how

The challenge is to write, read, write again, and show in your writing what you have read.²¹ The challenge is to question the ku: Is language as well as imagery under pressure? Does that pressure crack open a space to be discovered? Does a considered reading of your haiku call upon the *how* as well as the *what* of experience, the cognitive act as well as salient qualities

inherent in the moment? The poet who answers yes to any or all these questions participates no matter how humbly in the slow sea change of haiku function and form. Bashō noted long ago that the seasons of poetry alter with the seasons of human culture. Three hundred years on, the haiku pioneer Marlene Mountain echoed his observation. Evolving haiku in a new language for a new age makes experimentalists of us all.

NOTES

This essay was first presented as a lecture/workshop at the Haiku North America Conference held in Cincinnati, Ohio in the summer of 2023. Thanks to the editors of *Haiku 2023* for allowing me to plunder their anthology, to the inaugural issue of *Half Day Moon Journal* for including my experimental haiku, and to the poets of Evergreen Haiku for inspiring me with their enthusiasm for the new.

¹ See <https://www.behance.net/gallery/103104829/40-HAIKU-POSTERS>.

² Lerman, Liz. *Seven Ways to Be Creative {According to Liz Lerman}*. Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, 2007.

³ Amman, Eric W. *The Wordless Poem, A Study of Zen in Haiku*. Haiku Publications: A special issue of *Haiku Magazine*, vol. III issue V, 1969.

⁴ Gilbert, Richard. *The Disjunctive Dragonfly, A New Approach to English-Language Haiku*. Winchester, VA: Red Moon Press, 2008/2013.

⁵ Gurga, Lee. "Newku for Old? *Haiku 21* and *Haiku 2014* as Guides to the Experimental and Traditional in Haiku." *Frogpond* 38.1 (2015), 67-85.

⁶ Gurga, Lee. "Normative Haiku and Beyond." *Modern Haiku* 52.2 (2021), 31-44.

⁷ Rowland, Philip. "Avant-Garde Haiku: A New Outlook." First publication, *Frogpond* 25.1 (2002). Revised version for *Roadrunner* (2011) retrieved July 31, 2024 from <https://roadrunnerhaikublog.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/rowland-avant-garde-haiku-essay-with-notes.pdf>

⁸ Bell, Marvin. "32 Statements About Writing Poetry." *AWP Chronicle*. Retrieved July 30, 2024 from <https://teachersandwritersmagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/32-statements.pdf>.

⁹ Gurga, Lee and Scott Metz, eds. *Haiku 21, An Anthology of Contemporary English-Language Haiku*. Lincoln IL: Modern Haiku Press, 2011.

¹⁰ Gurga, Lee and Scott Metz, eds. *Haiku 2023, 100 Notable Ku from 2022*. Champaign, IL: Modern Haiku Press, 2023.

¹¹ Gurga, “Newku for Old? *Haiku 21* and *Haiku 2014* as Guides to the Experimental and Traditional in Haiku,” 69.

¹² Gilbert, Richard. *Poems of Consciousness, Contemporary Japanese & English-Language Haiku in Cross-cultural Perspective*. Winchester VA: Red Moon Press, 2008/2013.

¹³ Gilbert, *Poems of Consciousness*, 43.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid, 29.

¹⁶ Ibid, 103.

¹⁷ Gilbert, *The Disjunctive Dragonfly*, 47.

¹⁸ Ibid, 99.

¹⁹ Ibid, 68.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Statement 2 of Bell’s “32 Statements about Writing Poetry” extolls the role of reading. In this essay, I limited my choice of exemplary haiku to those cited by Gilbert in *The Disjunctive Butterfly* and *Poems of Consciousness* and by Gurga and Metz in *Haiku 2023*. Yet the interested poet may peruse experimental haiku in any number of collections, including the Gurga and Metz “notable haiku” chapbooks for most of the years 2014 through 2024. A handful of currently publishing journals also feature the avant-garde in whole or in part—for a representative selection see *Half Day Moon*, *Dadaku*, *Heliosparrow*, *Kingfisher*, *Noon*, *Password*, and *Whiptail*, either online or in print. Archived issues of *antantantantant*, *is/let*, *Roadrunner*, and *Bones* are also available, the last two housed online at The Haiku Foundation.