



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Paul Pfleuger, Jr. (intro)	3 - 12
Peggy Willis Lyles	12 - 13
paul m.	13
Billie Dee	14
_kala	14 - 15
Dave Russo	16
Johnye Strickland	16 - 17
Jane Reichhold	17 - 19
Richard Gilbert	19 - 23
Tyler Pruett	23 - 25
George Swede	25 - 26
Dr. Dimitar Anakiev	26 - 29
Allan Burns	29 - 31
Randy Brooks	31 - 34
William J. Higginson	34 - 35
William M. Ramsey	36 - 47
(endnotes)	48 - 49

Book cover image, "Yaku-sugi tree roots" by Richard Gilbert © 2009.
(taken on Yakushima Island, Japan)

IT IS HARDLY SURPRISING to find that a book which questions conventions and notions familiar to English-language haiku as much as Richard Gilbert's *Poems of Consciousness: Contemporary Japanese & English-language Haiku in Cross-cultural Perspective* [henceforth *PoC*] does has inspired discourse as of late among poets and critics alike. As an extension of that discussion, a section of this summer issue of *Roadrunner* has been devoted entirely to Professor Gilbert's offering consisting of comments from a range of reviewers, mostly poets themselves, that we've collected via e-mail along with reviews which we've been granted permission from authors to include that have appeared in various publications since the title's 2008 release from Red Moon Press. Through his pioneering expeditions, Gilbert bushwhacks several passages through some dense territory standing in and around the way of western haiku, particularly concerning his examinations on the inner workings of language and the differences between kigo and seasonal references, as he firmly places haiku in the context of modernity. As is revealed in the proceeding commentaries, some of those paths are less manageable than others. Nevertheless, he offers points of entry where there were none otherwise. Written engagingly enough to interest haiku poets green behind the ears as well as wily old vets, it would be hard to argue that *PoC* is anything less than an indispensable addition to the literature.

We find that the multi-method typology of disjunction techniques that Gilbert has introduced, which is concerned with psychical gaps, leaps and shifts that take place when reading haiku, has been fairly well-received. Gilbert states in 'The Disjunctive Dragonfly: A Study of Disjunctive Method and Definitions in Contemporary English-language Haiku' chapter that, "Disjunction, as intended, serves to indicate a poetic process happening in the reader's consciousness-disjunction in motile having no fixed point or realization. Disjunctions appear and fall away, al-

ternately reveal and hide themselves depending upon the moment of reading.”¹ Obviously, all readings will not reach some ultimate closure as haiku may convey ambiguity, fracturedness, or the sense that something has been forgotten, excluded or is missing. These are just some of the qualities that drive disjunction. It will be interesting to see if future studies can support or add to this typology as the chapter is limited in the number of examples it provides. Of course, interpretations of haiku may vary from reading to reading and it pleases me to find that the act of misreading finds a home in Gilbert’s typology as meaning from poems will be colored by each reader’s perceptions and what they bring with them into the engagement. A misreading may result in an extraordinary perspective that is unique in itself, whether or not it is aligned with the intentions of the poet who gave it life. While there are those who intentionally set out to deconstruct a haiku, I suppose few of us actually consider misreading a strategy for re-interpretation beforehand. It happens, and it may result in fruitful interpretations. Whether successfully or not, one approach readers often take is to try to place themselves in the context of the haiku and perhaps replace the objects and people within the poem with others they are familiar with. Dewey’s idea of “funded-experience” that Kenneth Yasuda takes up in his staple text *The Japanese Haiku*, thus placing it in the haiku context, comes to mind here. Yasuda draws on the concept to present a musician, a painter and a poet observing “a mountain, a brook murmuring through a flowering dale and birds singing.” He refers to a statement from Dewey, who states that, “Before an artist can develop his reconstruction of the scene before him...he observes the scene with meanings and values brought to his perception by prior experiences...They cannot vanish and yet the artist continues to see an object.”² A reader’s perspective may be likened to this in many ways. One haiku reader might be schooled in post-modern philosophy, the next a practicing zen monk, another a carpenter and so on. Our backgrounds, experiences and prejudices have a tendency to color our interpretations and may even provoke misreading. Professor Randy Brooks is keen on the concept of misreading in Gilbert’s disjunction types and includes comments in his review below that appeared in *Modern Haiku* this year.³ Some critical comments on these disjunction types will highlight shortcomings, possible areas for improvement as well as the potential for such devices to enhance readings.

Above all, in my estimation, this collection serves as a way for familiarizing ourselves with concepts, practices, and viewpoints told by prominent contemporary

Japanese haiku and senryu poets themselves. Having these interviews with subtitles on the DVD that accompanies the book is a plain bonus that more than justifies the \$27.95 Red Moon Press is asking. For some more personal comments on *PoC*, I'd like to look back to when haiku was entirely new to me and recall asking an English professor if she could recommend any haiku titles and how she sent me directly to R.H. Blyth's *Haiku* volumes. Enchanted, I ate them up and couldn't get enough. Needless to say, I was under the impression that haiku and zen went hand-in-hand. Since having formulated contrary positions to a number of aspects of Blyth, I still return to his texts on occasion and find they retain their charm and remain somewhat engaging. While his work may demand more, intellectually speaking, than Blyth, Gilbert presents concepts which often draw from postmodern psychology and philosophy literatures in a manner that hardly over-intellectualizes haiku, as he tackles a number of issues that are central to contemporary existence. *PoC* is less a call to storm the Bastille that is the English haiku establishment, or an attack on existing texts such as Blyth, than it is a sound presentation of his own insights on poetics along with those that have been in practice, post-Shiki, in Japanese haiku. I don't assume that 'zen-like' approaches to haiku that many of us are familiar with are naïve in nature. However, I would say that it *is* the case with approaches where seasonal words are merely plucked from a *saijiki* or from haiku that one seeks to model their own after, and are inserted (especially those that are forced or seeking to appear classical 'Japanesey') into poems, and will result in what *ant ant ant ant ant* Editor, Chris Gordon, has jocularly called, "Martha Stewart haiku."

It seems fitting to find a contrast and comparison being made at least once here in these contributors' comments between Blyth and Gilbert. As Blyth's influence on previous generations is undeniable and well-documented, it will be interesting to see how much of an impact Gilbert's contributions have on this and future generations. Both *Roadrunner* Editor, Scott Metz, and I agree with Paul Miller's statement in his brief commentary that, "Not often enough a book comes along that reminds us that we are not hobbyists, but poets; that haiku is not a "way", but a powerful form of poetic expression; and that we owe it to ourselves to better understand the hows and whys of the tools available to us." If one were to wholeheartedly reject the notion that haiku is grounded in zen principles, and/or is something of a path or way of life, then Blyth might be a less than accommodating point

of entry to this poetry. I can't help but wonder if the so-called "aha moment" that has found its way into so many explanations of what haiku is wouldn't be interpreted as being at the root of the genre without early zen influences which include such concepts as "kensho" or flashes of enlightenment or awakening experiences. In the minds of too many is the notion that haiku is quasi-epiphanic poetry. And what of Blyth's opinion that "a haiku is not a poem; it is not literature"?⁴—and his lack of knowledge (or purposeful avoidance?) of poetic techniques: rhythm, alliteration, allusion, historical/literary/mythological references?—what Haruo Shirane has called "the vertical axis" that was clearly essential to haiku composition since its birth.⁵ How much of this—these warpings—may be attributed to Blyth? While zen thought has undoubtedly played a part in haiku practice, fifty-seven years after the release of Blyth's epic collection I trust we have since shaken the perception that zen and haiku should be thought together. One might assume that Richard Gilbert's knowledge of zen goes deep after having received a degree from Naropa University, well-known for its Buddhist heritage, yet it is admirable how little Richard Gilbert imposes on his readers.

In his commentary on *PoC*, William Ramsey offers fairly interesting vantage points supposing how both Blyth and Gilbert might interpret Lee Gurga's:

trying the old pump a mouse pours out ⁶

I'd say he does a better Blyth than a Gilbert, but you, gentle reader, can judge for yourself. How many of us would like to see how Blyth might respond to a haiku from one of the Japanese gendai selections included in *PoC*, one which relies on fragmentary language and a lighthearted touch of roguishness?—for example, one from Tsubouchi Nenten who often employs such stylistic techniques:

haru o neru yabure kabure no yô ni kaba

in the spring—
lying down desperate, as
a hippo ⁷

Just what would Blyth make of such a haiku? Would he have discredited it on account of its use of a simile? If not, would he have found zen-like qualities? If so, what might they be? How might he have worked them into his comments? It all makes for interesting and healthy speculation as Blyth overlooked haiku of the time displaying such daring qualities, particularly regarding the ‘New Rising Haiku movement’ of the 1930s to the 1940s that Gilbert and the poets interviewed in *Poems of Consciousness* often refer to. Only recently have works such as Gilbert’s introduced the west to this poetry that has failed to be noticed for nearly eight decades. Perhaps as an influence of Gilbert’s research, Itô Yûki is painstakingly making an effort to lend insight into this movement and we have had tastes of his highly-anticipated forthcoming, *New Rising Haiku: The Evolution of Modern Japanese Haiku and the Haiku Persecution Incident* (Red Moon Press) in *Roadrunner* (May 2007 Issue VII:2) and *Simply Haiku* (Winter 2007, Issue 5 no 4). Red Moon Press should be applauded for offering such progressive efforts. Gilbert, Yûki, and Hiroaki Sato have offered translations and commentary on gendai poets in previous issues of *Roadrunner* and we hope to have more in the future, as we see it as a way to contribute and ultimately enhance the literature and poetry itself.

While Blyth’s *Haiku* volumes present some poets associated with the New Rising movement, he either fails to notice or rejects a number of important contributions of daring haijin of the time, focusing instead on the classical and neo-classical periods. If only to satisfy my curiosity, I went through Blyth’s *Haiku* volumes and tallied the number of poets he chose to represent each century and the results are as follow:

Representation of haiku poets by century in Blyth’s four *Haiku* volumes

Century	Number of poets included
15 th	3
16 th	2
17 th	86
18 th	54
19 th	20
20 th	12

In all fairness to Blyth, the first printing of his haiku texts were at the mid-point of the 20th Century, a trying time in Japan. However, we can only wonder whether he questioned the importance and integrity of modern haiku. Gendai poets, specifically the New Rising poets (shinkô haiku undô), who were, as Gilbert tells in the preface, “progenitors of gendai haiku, [who] expressed not only aesthetic sentiment; these poets also fought for their values through heroic struggle, suffering, and blood, and are deserving of further consideration and remembrance”⁸ are underrepresented. The number of modern poets in Blyth’s work might be understandably less than others as a result of a number of factors, yet we see that he clearly takes 17th and 18th Century haiku as his central focus. Ironically enough, it is not Blyth but Gilbert that tells us more about early 20th Century Japanese haiku. We often return with critical eyes to texts of such magnitude as Blyth’s *Haiku* and Shirane’s *Traces of Dreams*, which is a testament to their achievements. It appears that there are those who fear that Blyth’s contributions are being slighted and that they will become obsolete over time as works like Gilbert’s critically scrutinize his efforts; but I see them as different places, different eras, which at times offer similar psychological landscapes, where Blyth stands as something of a quaint cottage and Gilbert a dymaxion home. And my intentions here are not to attack Blyth, rather I see them as both relative to this discussion and a response to some comments in this review that I feel are somewhat disparaging toward the book. These readers may have been set off early on in the preface where Gilbert states that, “Blyth idealized the classical while devaluing the modern as at root selfish, small-minded and confused.” Gilbert offers a thorough enough explanation of Blyth’s motives and the shortcomings of his approach and I believe, as the author states, that “Blyth is a fascinating figure.” Enough said here about Blyth and his relation to Gilbert. More follows.

Perhaps the chapter that most clearly illustrates the potential of *PoC* to both reshape perceptions of haiku and draw in new poets and readership is ‘The Miraculous Power of Language: A Conversation with the Poet Hoshinaga Fumio,’ which also appeared in *Modern Haiku*.⁹ Hoshinaga’s haiku at times achieve an alarming disquietude. Strange devices drive these poems. To say that they come from mainstream poetry alone would do no justice to his technique; yet, there are some themes that should ring familiar to modern poetry readers. The fatigue of arbitrari-

ness of language might surface. One may find a fragmentary poetic reminiscent of *Waste Land*-period T.S. Eliot, or ironies comparable to those of Samuel Beckett. Other times readers may be led down roads to aporia when, somehow, the poems find themselves stabilized and grounded by concrete imagery or in the sounding of the rhythms. All at once unsettled and sound, how does he pull this off? The poet candidly discusses his technique and much more in the chapter. He also reveals how a sense of kigo may be instilled into a poem. The aesthetics at the very heart of gendai haiku are revealed in haiku such as the following, the latter of which Dr. Dimitar Anakiev will comment on in some depth:

ni-ju oku kônen no gishyô omae no B-gata
 twenty billion light-years of perjury: your blood type is “B” ¹⁰

ika hakka akadeka hôka kinsenka

squid peppermint
 Red-detective arson
 marigold ¹¹

While telling of the disharmony of language that emerges in his work, Hoshinaga quotes from the postscript to a book he published in 1968:

I do not believe the truth that the sea is blue. That I believe it is blue: an encompassing state of affairs that limits as blue, via the comprehension of my eyes: I believe *only* that. Though it is inconvenient, I wish to compose haiku with a free posture towards truth, that is, with reference to the encompassing situation. With this thought I’ve been writing haiku freely, selfishly, for half a year. This is the result of my selfish six months...As a matter of fact, there is a vast wilderness of lyricism beyond these haiku: the wilderness I failed to capture with a dull, sleepy-faced rebelliousness. This book reminds me afresh-I must start again with a clean slate and to this end, I cast out this book with good grace.¹²

Perhaps this suggests that Hoshinaga cannot blindly rely on that linguistic category called “blue” to express himself; at any rate, his taking a nearly apologetic tone regarding his “selfishness” reveals his humility after having taken such a defiant and unrestricting stance in this pursuit of his own truth. The deconstructive qualities about ‘squid peppermint’ located and explored by Dimitar Anakiev suggest that Hoshinaga has injected a postmodern sensibility into this haiku. I concur with Anakiev finding similar characteristics and see a place for Derrida’s approach in the discussion of this poem.

Of course, not all of Hoshinaga’s poems are of the variety I’ve discussed. These for example:

eki mae de mabushii jidai to ippai yatta ga

near the station
drinking with the dazzle
of the era ¹³

nawatobi no wa ni higurashi ga haittekuru

into the jump rope's spinning ring a cicada jumps in

nigemizu e sengo no chichi wo oitsumeru

toward the mirage of water
the postwar fathers
chasing after... ¹⁴

suggest the range of possibilities for amalgamating both classical and contemporary aesthetics in haiku. And there are several works from a number of poets—both western and Japanese—displaying such qualities throughout *PoC*.

It has been said that Gilbert fails to define what gendai haiku is, leaving the term still somewhat nebulous, and I cannot disagree with this. However, I personal-

ly—and perhaps I speak for others—am not seeking a definition for what gendai haiku is. I am rather skeptical of definitions for poetry as they may be restricting. With the generous offering of haiku and commentary from poets in this text comes the sense of what the term connotes, and I am satisfied with this. The only minor criticism that I could raise against *PoC* is the fact that most of the essays and interviews that make up this collection have been previously published, but it is certainly convenient to have them all bound into one book. I must admit though that it has enabled me to see it through fresh eyes. It is clear that Gilbert is forward-looking in his commitment to ‘modernizing’ haiku and it should be said that this is not done by way of merely shunning tradition. One of the most valuable attributes of this book is the fact that it is peppered with suggestions for further reading and future research. Concerning the latter, it is of interest to me to place haiku within the context of eco-poetics (and/or vice versa) and I see Gilbert’s offering eco-critical perspectives and analysis to the literature pointing a way in. Another research possibility regards haiku poets’ interpretations of nature. In the ‘Kigo and Seasonal Reference’ chapter Gilbert states:

As a young genre, the English haiku has a unique opportunity to forge a refreshed sense of culture with regard to nature, and there may be more relevant philosophical issues at hand than the question of how to connote season words. A question yet to be addressed in English haiku is, “what do we mean by nature?”¹⁵

He also mentions how Gary Snyder has spent a lifetime exploring the topic. Being that the term ‘nature’ makes its way into several definitions of haiku, including the current Haiku Society of America’s, it may be fruitful to ask poets and scholars what the term means to them in this still-young 21st century. *Roadrunner* Editor, Scott Metz, and I are now in the early stages of framing a study combining both quantitative and qualitative elements that will collect interpretations from as many participants as are willing to contribute, to hopefully give us a clearer understanding of the term. We hope that the sample size will be representative enough to draw some generalizations. With issues such as global warming, climate change and sustainable development for the planet of great concern today, it would be interesting to see what nature means in the context of contemporary haiku. And these are just a few ideas we’ve taken from this book. We hope many will find this book of

value, both for its bold propositions and its practical insights into the workings and possibilities of contemporary English-language and Japanese haiku.

It is our hope here at *Roadrunner* that this collection reaches a broad audience and that it will stimulate further discourse. We thank all of the contributors for the time and care taken to express their thoughts and opinions on Richard Gilbert's *PoC* and hope this serves as a way of letting the author know that for all the heart and sweat that went into this work, English-language haiku is better for it.

Paul Pfleuger, Jr.

Tainan, Taiwan

August, 2009

The essays and interviews in *PoC* have already enlivened conversation within the English-language haiku community, and I trust they will encourage translations of a broad spectrum of contemporary Japanese haiku as well as fresher and deeper readings of haiku in English. While it would be wrong to tout the book as a new bible for haiku composition, it is a vigorous reminder that for most non-Japanese poets there isn't an old one.

As one who believes haiku had a stronger influence on 20th century American literature than has yet been recognized and that English-language haiku has not yet begun to receive the critical attention it deserves, I welcome connections drawn between the genre and ecocriticism, literary theory, language theory, literary linguistics, depth psychology, psychoanalytic criticism, Jungian criticism, mythopoeia, deconstruction, cognitive studies, and other disciplines. Viewing haiku through varied lenses reaffirms their diverse and enduring power and clarifies their relevance to major issues affecting human life. As Richard Gilbert writes, "Haiku which utilize *kire* effectively have the potential to evoke reader-experiences of coherence, arising as ecos and anamnesis. Haiku are radical in the way they use language to recast relations between consciousness and nature. There seems no more sufficient rationale to explain the survival of this extremely brief genre as a high art for over four centuries and its recent internationalization." ¹⁶

I look forward to productive dialogue as the material in *PoC* is corrected, refined, developed, and expanded. As Richard writes in his Author's Preface, "The work presented here is but a beginning." The potential for spirited links and shifts is almost limitless.

Peggy Willis Lyles ¹⁷

I found *PoC* both interesting and frustrating. Interesting, because Gilbert digs into the "hows?" of a poem, and asks Western writers the "whys?" around our conception of it. His interviews with some gendai poets was equally interesting for the window it opened on both practice in Japan as well as a look at individual styles.

However, the book was frustrating in that Gilbert too often let the gendai Masters off the hook. The reader would have been better served with more in-depth and less passive interviews. For example, Hoshinaga Fumio, in a conversation about kigo at one point, refutes *saijiki*s for being "fake" (since he is not a Tokyo or Kyoto resident) yet on the next page acknowledges a *saijiki*'s authority on the question of a chrysanthemum's seasonality. There is also some confusion on Gilbert's part around how Fumio uses kigo, but that should have been clarified before the interview went further. Additionally, elsewhere in the book, there is an obvious xenophobic quality to Uda Kiyoko's poetry that bears further examination.

That aside, it is rare to have a haiku book challenge our understandings and potential of the genre the way this one does. Not often enough a book comes along that reminds us that we are not hobbyists, but poets; that haiku is not a "way", but a powerful form of poetic expression; and that we owe it to ourselves to better understand the hows and whys of the tools available to us. In 1998, it was Haruo Shirane's *Traces of Dreams*. In 2009, it is Richard Gilbert's *PoC*.

paul m. ¹⁸

Gilbert's argument that *kire/katakoto* unites the movement within haiku beyond mere juxtaposition is exciting. It reintroduces Thinking, Supposition, Projection back into a genre that has gone moribund in the West. 20th century imagistic realism has run its course in my opinion, and has intrinsic limitations besides. And that raging *shasei* bull needs a ring in its nose. IMO. IMO.

Surely, we can get beyond misty-dawn-Edo-kigo-faux-zen-haiku without going over to disembodied-L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E-gaga. Maybe there should be a 12-step program for BlythShiki-ism? I think Gilbert is trying to pave that path to recovery.

Billie Dee ¹⁹

'Kigo and Seasonal Reference: Cross-cultural Issues in Anglo-American Haiku' was a highly thought-provoking essay, was most convincing, and highlights some very valid issues relating to Indian kigo in my mind. For one, where does India stand in all this talk? India is new to haiku, we have just a handful of renowned haijin, but do we know how to relate to nature? If you ask a city-bred teenager, the answer is maybe no—and that would be the case in any country, wouldn't it, in these modern times?

Right from our Vedic days, from the most famous Sanskrit poet, Kalidasa, who wrote *Ritusamharam* (*The Gathering of Seasons*), India is intimately tied to nature and it's cultural roots are entwined in this. Our Classical music, to this date, follows the season and time, when a raga (melody) can be sung or played. Thus we have spring raga called *Basant*, which are most often heard in spring, and so we have hundreds of ragas to be sung in our six seasons: summer, monsoon, autumn, frost, winter and spring (with hundreds of compositions relating to this season alone). Each season lasts for approximately two English months. India still follows the lunar calendar and every auspicious function is according to the full moon (*Purnima*) and no moon (*Amavasya*).

“The conceptual base of kigo is its culture, not its season, I would argue . . .”

— Richard Gilbert

To me, this one line tells everything about haiku and understanding the art that lies embedded in it. A friend of mine—a very good Indian haikin—said that he is constantly changing the scene (meaning the kigo word) because the editors don't understand him otherwise.

parijaat blossoms
mother tells a story
of temple Gods

— _kala

From experience, I can safely say that *parijaat* is an autumn flowering tree. We see it covered with blossoms in autumn, after our three months of rain. Shaking the tree is the speciality of this tree, my mother used to say, that even for our Gods we don't offer flowers plucked rudely from the tree. We shake the *parijaat* gently, expecting it to offer flowers, sure enough it does! We pick those flowers from the ground and offer it to God. An Indian would understand this story . . . and how much more it adds to the enjoyment when a kigo word is not just a season word?

To a traditionally rich country like India, wakening to haiku, how beautiful it would be if we expose our haiku lovers to our very own roots through haiku, and from there to branch off into gendai haiku. . . . The route seems clear now. On a lazy monsoon day, housebound by unrelenting rains, how beautiful it would be to curl up with Gilbert's thoughts—expanding our mind-space.

_kala²⁰

PoC gives a good, hard shove to reductive notions of haiku, such as the tendency to overlook the last 100 years of haiku—in Japan and elsewhere; an over-dependence on historical analysis; and a simplistic interpretation of "nature" as the subject of haiku. The verve and humor of Gilbert's typology of disjunction in haiku, and his explication of *kire*, a superset of *kireji* or "cutting words" in haiku, are especially valuable.

Richard Gilbert has an unique perspective on haiku, having studied with Gary Snyder, Patricia Donegan, and Allen Ginsberg in the U.S, and more recently with the gendai (contemporary) haiku poets in Japan. Gilbert brings contemporary linguistic analysis to bear on haiku in Japan and North America. Yet he doesn't "murder to dissect" these little poems. He helps us appreciate them in a new way.

Dave Russo ²¹

Have you ever wondered where the rebels were among 20th Century Japanese haiku poets? In an era when rebellion against the previous poetic traditions (or schools, as we used to call them) came fast and sometimes furious in the West, it seemed unlikely that haiku poets in a country so far advanced in culture as Japan would be oblivious to the literary developments in the world around them. Richard Gilbert has found them—the gendai (contemporary) haiku poets. As Jim Kacian points out in the Introduction, one of Gilbert's "specific contributions . . . [is] a new nomenclature and classification system, which has enabled us to rekindle the conversation about what haiku poets in the west are up to, without being limited to the language, sensibility and techniques employed by another culture for other purposes four centuries ago."

[T]he part that I found most exciting was the discussion of the famous 'old pond' poem of Bashô, included in an interview with the gendai poet Hasegawa Kai, entitled "Haiku Cosmos I: Bashô's 'Old Pond,' Realism & 'Junk Haiku,'" and

"Haiku Cosmos II: Cutting Through Time and Space – Kire & Ma." I felt that I could fully appreciate Bashô's *furuike* ('old pond') for the first time . . . after reading Hasegawa Kai's explanation of the "psychological *ma*" concept, which he says has been misunderstood in this poem for 300 years.²² [My Japanese-English dictionary defines *ma* as "interval, pause, time; space; room."]

Richard Gilbert's discussion of "disjunction" has been expanded, and clarified by careful revision, in the essay entitled "The Disjunctive Dragonfly." Not only is it more readable by the novice, but also it stimulates thought about the relation of disjunction to "the *kireji*-concept [cutting] as semantic *kireji*, helping to catalyze the reader's aesthetic perception of haiku as an artform, and disjunction also evokes a sense of depth."²³ The concepts included here are exemplified with techniques, ways of looking at haiku that open up the possibilities of composition for the English-language poet.

Tsubouchi Nenten [one of the *gendai* poets interviewed in *PoC*] suggests that Shiki's poems read in the context of his use of *haigô* (pen names to create different psycho-personae), "sheds new light on the significance of Shiki's creativity."²⁴ Another interesting idea: that we can learn from the *gendai* poets new ways of perceiving both Bashô and Shiki with respect to their intent and poetic techniques.

Johnye Strickland ²⁵

It seems we have now reached the summer season of professors and pseudo-academics, who unable to write poetry, attempting to fill books with complete nonsense about the statue of their scholastic positions. There is a new big one just in time for falling asleep in a hammock.

Among the odd bits of theory and "key concepts of poetics" the idea that "disjunction" is something new and vital to haiku is being put forth by Richard Gilbert in this book. Through many pages, with all the correct footnotes and references, the reader is supposed to be impressed with this idea that what makes haiku great is this aspect of disjunction.

It is true that the phenomenon of disjunction in poetry has been around since the Greeks first fiddled with it, and the Chinese understood and used the concept long before any one else was that interested in poetry. All these poets understood what Gilbert does not. That one of the aspects of poetry is about finding oneness in the world and showing it to others.

We all know intimately about disjunctiveness as we go through days of collecting the most astounding events, people, ideas and impressions crowding together in our minds—often with a clamorous effect. That is not poetry. Disjunctiveness is not a poetical device and especially not one used in haiku and other Japanese genres.

What we learn from poets, from any land, is what the Japanese have learned to do so well – linking. There is the poetry. The way words and images are used to carry ideas and images from one mind to another is the skill of writing. The art of poetry comes from the heart and minds of poets and their readers as they form the linkages between a disparity of ideas or objects. How one goes from puppies to stars is much more interesting to the poet than the idea that yes! these seem to be two separate and distinct things. Hello?

The challenge is to find that small pivot, that pinpoint where two images cross, while stretching the mind as far as one can and then to create the words that call up additional images that take the reader by the hand while crossing from one to the other. That is haiku. That is how it works.

Professor Gilbert fails to understand this. That is why his listing of the haiku techniques, which I first discovered and he has now renamed and claimed as his own, falls so flat in his book. He is interested in the separateness of things, and these techniques were created to help the haiku writer, or any one else, build the bridges needed between any two or more parts of the poem. He can glibly give the techniques new and meaningless names because he does understand how and why to use them. He is like the cat that looks at the finger pointing to the mouse instead of being the poet who makes the leap to catch the bit of life across the room.

There are a lot of good men in the haiku scene and many of them write excellent haiku. What the world does not need is a bunch of them ganging up, ignoring women, who do more of the writing than they do, and then discussing with pursed lips and pages of gestures how mysterious it is and yet how they know it all – with footnotes. Most of the references to books Gilbert studied are by men and it

is the men who will now endlessly discuss the fact that the book is not very good, and probably its only value is in the added on interviews with German and Japanese (mostly) men. So ladies, if you wish to spend \$28.00 plus postage to find yourself ignored and blarney-stoned about theories that do not hold water; go get the book on your way to the nunnery.

Jane Reichhold ²⁶

Jane Reichhold, in her essay, “How *Poems Of Consciousness* Fail [sic] To Demonstrate The Disjunctive Dragonfly” (*LYNX* XXIV:2, June, 2009) makes claims which are spurious and defamatory. Among them is her bizarre statement that I've stolen her ideas (which she at the same time disagrees with in her essay). She writes: “his listing of the haiku techniques, which I first discovered and he has now renamed and claimed as his own . . .” is a patent fabrication. A charge of plagiarism must be taken seriously, and this short essay provides a response.

My long paper “The Disjunctive Dragonfly: A Study of Disjunctive Method and Definitions in Contemporary English-language Haiku” was mainly inspired by email conversations with two colleagues, Jim Kacian and Philip Rowland. In 2003 we were working towards a new anthology of haiku in English (this work continues). I was contemplating possible conceptual approaches to groupings of types of haiku which would provide new ways of conceiving of the genre as a whole. After being involved in haiku composition for some decades, I was feeling more urgently that aspects of haiku, elements and techniques I most appreciated and was passionate about, remained undiscussed and unappreciated. In a burst of activity over several days which stretched to weeks, some of the categories of techniques appeared in my emails to my colleagues. The inspiration came from a single haiku, by Jim Kacian, which I referred to in the title of my paper as “the disjunctive dragonfly.” Here is that work:

my fingerprints on the dragonfly in amber

which won a third-place prize in the 2003 Kusamakura Haiku Competition, held in Kumamoto, Japan. As one of the judges, I had been in part responsible for its selection. The haiku (as excellent haiku will do) stuck in my mind, and I was moved to defend and promote this innovative mode of haiku composition. My main goal in the “Disjunctive Dragonfly” paper and elsewhere has been in part to inspire readers and poets by expanding the conception of haiku in English via the presentation of a new vocabulary of haiku techniques, thereby extending the range of critical inquiry. In this effort my research focus had been influenced by the field of literary linguistics—I had been introduced to PALA (The Poetics and Linguistics Association) by my friend and colleague in Kumamoto, Professor Masahiro Hori, during the editing of his book, *Investigating Dickens' Style: A Collocational Analysis* (Palgrave, 2004); we worked together for several years prior to its publication. Perhaps this recounting will serve to verify the originality of my work, and its intention. Seventeen disjunctive categories for haiku were developed, the work involving months of searching through 1000s of haiku to provide examples. Here are the disjunctive categories:

1) Perceptual disjunction, 2) Overturning semantic expectation, 3) Misreading as meaning, 4) Linguistic oxymoron, 5) Imagistic fusion, 6) Metaphoric fusion, 7) Symmetrical rhythmic substitution, 8) Concrete disjunction, 9) Rhythmic disjunction, 10) The impossibly true, 11) Displaced mythic resonance, 11) Misplaced anthropomorphism, 13) The unsatisfactory object, 14) Pointing to the missing subject, 15) Semantic register shift, 16) Elemental animism, 17) Irruptive collocation.

The key to the disjunctive concept is that in haiku disjunction impels coherence, which, I try to demonstrate, though paradoxical is evident and indeed part of the uniqueness defining the haiku genre. Original creative work is hard won—substantiating work academically provides clear, evidential arguments, and verifiable rationales for novel concepts. An aspect of this work concerns a demonstration of familiarity with the history of haiku in English; a topic I first addressed in a co-authored paper, “From 5-7-5 to 8-8-8: Haiku Metrics and Issues of Emulation—New Paradigms for Japanese and English Haiku Form” (March 2000). I believe the title alone conveys a longstanding research interest and approach. (Published papers are available at: research.gendaihaiku.com).

I will comment briefly on Ms. Reichhold's own thesis in her essay, in which she presents her definition of haiku:

. . . that small pivot, that pinpoint where two images cross, while stretching the mind as far as one can and then to create the words that call up additional images that take the reader by the hand while crossing from one to the other. That is haiku. That is how it works.

This is the definition, "that small pivot, that pinpoint" "stretching the mind" that will "create the words" "call up additional images" and "take the reader by the hand" "while crossing": "That is haiku. That is how it works." Such obscure prose suggests Ms. Reichhold seems in need of education concerning the critical essay. As a BA paper, it would receive a fair amount of red ink, as the terms used ("pivot" "pinpoint" "stretching the mind" "by the hand") remain undefined.

I would like as well to address Ms. Reichhold's personal attack, concerning sexism. She writes:

What the world does not need is a bunch of them [men] ganging up, ignoring women, who do more of the writing than they do, and then discussing with pursed lips and pages of gestures how mysterious it is and yet how they know it all—with footnotes. Most of the references to books Gilbert studied are by men . . .

Through my research (found in part at: gendaihaiku.com) and in my book *PoC*, the poetry, life and thought of Uda Kiyoko, Onishi Yasuyo, and Yagi Mikajo have become known for the first time outside of Japan, via live interview and translated materials (if it matters, women poets represent 50% of my work, as the other three poets I researched and interviewed in the book were male). I received a grant from the Japan Ministry of Education to perform this research, which took several years. Perhaps Ms. Reichhold missed not only this freely online-available research, but also the whole book chapters? When references and endnotes are involved (I use no footnotes), one is seeking to provide evidence, proof. Veracity, I submit, is not and should not be dictated by gender, or gender-weighted by tonnage.

In "The Disjunctive Dragonfly" article, and in the book *PoC*, there is an extensive discussion of coherence; how haiku coheres via the vehicle of, and in con-

trast to, disjunction. I discuss how this seemingly paradoxical quality may be a defining hallmark of the haiku genre. Ms. Reichhold writes that I do not understand, "That one of the aspects of poetry is about finding oneness in the world and showing it to others." Perhaps Ms. Reichhold missed the discussion of "coherence" and implications of this term, which is equal in importance to ideas of disjunction.

I do not feel Ms. Reichhold's term "oneness" above is academically sufficient, unless the term is delimited and defined with care. An experience of "oneness" is not one whose quality is easily agreed upon—in fact, some would deny the experience altogether, others might call it mystical or religious or sacred, and such an experience might vary in its significance and symbolism by culture—all such permutations need consideration and treatment at an academic level. In fact it's this kind of writing, regarding haiku, that has earned the genre and its adherents a poor critical reception on the part of scholars and literary critics. The grounding of my work is in a secular-humanist western academic framework, as a result. Words like "oneness" obfuscate unless they are carefully defined—something Jane does not attempt anywhere in her writing.

The further evolution of "coherence" can be seen in my paper "Plausible Deniability: Nature as Hypothesis in English-language Haiku," particularly in 'Section 3: Out of the Water—Towards Linguistic Depiction,' where Nick Virgilio's "Lily" haiku is discussed. "Plausible Deniability" was recently published in *Stylistic Studies of Literature* (Peter Lang 2009). The three book editors are internationally known linguistics scholars.²⁷

One of my central aspirations has been to raise the estimation of haiku in English to a level of serious valuation and interest on the part of academics, so this publication means something to me personally. A small action, whose intent is to create further interest in and arouse the curiosity of teachers and scholars. It is difficult to see how the haiku genre will continue and remain strong without the participation of educators and the researches and passion of students. Ms. Reichhold also labels me as one of what seems a veritable male horde: "pseudo-academics, who unable to write poetry, attempting to fill books with complete nonsense" Hopefully the reader can judge Ms. Reichhold's ability to discriminate between "pseudo" and "academic," as her essay mirrors her acumen on this topic. The charge of "unable to write poetry" must be left to reader discretion. My haiku (which I began publishing over 30 years ago) have been most recently included in

the last several issues of *Noon: Journal of the Short Poem*. In the Afterword to *PoC*, a selection of my published work appears, obviously not to Ms. Reichhold's taste.

I do not think my ideas represent the "right" or "true" critical approach to haiku. The references contained in those works Ms. Reichhold eschews build a verifiable logical case, but more importantly, to my way of thinking, provide further avenues of contemplation and study—and potentially innovative avenues of composition. It's hopefully part of the excitement of reading academic articles on haiku, to learn further about excellent haiku in English, to get turned on. I look forward to more fruitful discussions, as there is much remaining to be discussed.

A 2nd, expanded edition of *PoC* is planned for 2011.

Richard Gilbert ²⁸

The Hasagawa Kai interviews, the longest videos in this online collection, offer commentary on Basho's "old pond" haiku. He asserts that the old pond haiku has been misunderstood for 300 years. I am most interested in his comments about the old pond haiku as a guide for how to write effective haiku. I have often used the old pond haiku as an example, or the model of a poem, especially when I am stuck, or have writer's block, or if I want to compare a poem I have in my head with another source. The old pond poem is easy to memorize, and easy to keep with you. In high school, I needed to memorize *Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening* by Frost, and I still remember it, but Basho's poem seems fresher. This is an example of the differences between gendai haiku culture, and western English-language poetry culture. Hasagawa Kai also made some interesting comments about haiku as realism. The interviews are worth watching for these perspectives.

Tsubouchi Nenten mentions several points about Japanese haiku that I find interesting, including the translation of "hai" in haiku which means "not human" in English. Another of the gendai haiku poets translates "ku" as "to come" in English. Tsubouchi Nenten also remarks that Masaoka Shiki used more than 100 pen names

(*haigô*), something I did not know, and he says that the opinion of Shiki's work in Japan is that he wrote superficially. This is much different than the material in English that I have read about Shiki, all of which regard him as one of the four greats of the haiku art form. Tsubouchi Nenten also speaks about "katakoto," which is fragmentary or "broken" language, and that Shiki was into automatic writing, a method that sounds similar to Jack Kerouac's spontaneous writing.

Uda Kiyoko sounds Buddhist in her interviews, speaking about rice paddies, frogs, and human beings as being all part of the same thing. I interpret most of what she says as non-duality, and also impermanence. This interview is interesting to me because I always hear about Buddhism from experts in Buddhism, like Buddhist monks, or the Dalai Lama, or Thich Nhat Hanh, and Uda Kiyoko offers me a "citizen's" view of Buddhist thought. She also explains that a person who lives 100 years only has the opportunity to see spring blossoms 100 times, or a farmer only growing crops 100 time, thus working rural and agricultural themes into her talks.

Hoshinaga Fumio has interesting things to say about the Japanese sensibilities of spirituality, and "kama." In the course of the interview, Fumio describes the differences between Japanese kama and Christian ideology. I enjoyed this interview for the same reasons I enjoyed Uda Kiyoko's comments about Japanese spirituality. He speaks about Japanese religious shrines, "kami-sama," and the spiritual qualities of not only human beings, but also other creatures of nature, like a dragonfly, a frog, or even the grass and the trees, and that everything has a divine soul. He speaks of "insects in heaven" as a kind of credo. He also describes his view of bad words, or cursing, and considers these type of words and language to be bad luck. For example, if you write something very negative, this could cause something negative to happen. It is easy to see what Fumio would think about black magic or witchcraft, obviously very bad things to become involved with. Fumio also mentions an interesting historical event relevant to Japanese culture, the Mongolian invasions of Japan in the middle ages, known in Japan as "gengko" because it was Genghis Khan's grandson who spearheaded the attacks. Apparently, the invasions occurred during typhoon season, and strong winds thwarted the Mongolian ships and Japan prevailed. He compares these winds to the Japanese word kamikaze, and suggests

that the source of this term was born with the national defense the typhoon winds provided to Japan.

Tyler Pruett ²⁹

Richard Gilbert's *PoC* is a mix of previously published papers as well as interviews which result in a patchwork book despite strivings for unity via a preface, introductory remarks for most chapters, notes, endnotes and an appendix.

so many types of disjunction meadow of wildflowers

Nevertheless, readers who skip the repetitive sections and search for new insights will be amply rewarded for Gilbert provides a groundbreaking synthesis of ideas from Japanese haiku criticism, as well as linguistics, psychology, sociology and anthropology.

bellflower bumblebee bobbling for zappai

Not only does he manage to justify the haiku as a distinct kind of poem, but also to explain its ongoing evolution in Japan as well as in the English-speaking world.

gendai haiku evening beams on these gnarled hands

What ties things together is his core concept of disjunction (in 17 variations) which provides readers with the vocabulary to appreciate the wide range of haiku that are being published today.

my image nation too small for irruptive collocation

Gilbert's work is a major addition to modern and scholarly haiku theory and criticism dealing with English-language haiku, a process which arguably began with

Thomas Lynch's 1989 Ph.D. dissertation for the University of Oregon, *An Original Relation To The Universe: Emersonian Poetics Of Immanence And Contemporary American Haiku*.

my laugh hol kire low

George Swede ³⁰

Richard Gilbert's *PoC* represents the first voice in Anglo-American haiku criticism to bring to an international readership democracy instead of authority. This anti-dogmatic book tears down the prejudices which have been built up and culminated over decades of English-language haiku theory. In this work the genre is rescued from overly complex ideologies and refreshed by concepts inspired by simple and common poetic truths.

In what way has this been possible? Gilbert's point of departure for this book is not that of cultural differences—which for many decades have made of international haiku a Procrustean bed—but rather the work is rooted in a common poetic ground which liberates and demystifies Japanese haiku. The author, a poet himself living in Kumamoto for over a decade, in seeking the truth of Japanese haiku has avoided the tutorship of known ideological concepts, through discussions with and translations of contemporary poets. A number of crucial elements concerning poetry, genre, poetic names, artistic secrets, terminology and the life of haiku poets in Japan are revealed.

The answers discovered, among them the most important principles in Japanese haiku, are shown to be surprisingly well-known and common to poets and poetry from all parts of the world: the power of poetic language (*kotodama*), the importance of rhythm and mythology, the associated meanings of words (the “true” intention of words), ellipsis in expression (*katokoto*), *licentia poetica* in the interpretation of genre, and nearly all topics pertaining to haiku poetics in Japan are some of the most important key-points in these exciting conversations.

Gilbert is capable of putting the reader into the very heart of haiku and offers a spiritual understanding of its core, which enables the reader to feel immediately familiar—it becomes possible to comprehend the heart of haiku from ancient times to the present. The multi-focal documentary method is convincing and intimate to the reader. Along with the revolutionary approach of letting Japanese poets speak for themselves about their poetry, in what is in my opinion the most important aspect of the book, Gilbert successfully adds his own unique critical contributions and corpus of translated haiku poems. *PoC* has found its inspiration in authentic documentary material (a DVD with subtitled video interviews, included with the book, makes it possible for each reader to hear the living voices of Japanese poets!), scientific work, quotations from major critical works, and informal conversations—these are important subjects for haiku. The book is pioneering in many ways, including its multi-dimensional concept and postmodern atmosphere.

The first goal of the book has been overcoming the provincialism in understanding Japanese haiku, and haiku in general. It has been in this direction that the author has put most of his efforts. Due to this overarching goal, perhaps certain significant aspects of the work are not readily apparent at first glance, for instance the excellent translation work—a result of a cross-cultural, collaborative team effort. As an example, I would like to focus on a poem of Hoshinaga Fumio which has impressed me, both for its poetic qualities and its expert translation:

squid peppermint
Red-detective arson
marigold

Surprisingly simple, this poem opens a complex field for the the interpretation and analysis of rhythm, mythology, style and philosophical context. The most interesting detail is a technical phrase used by the poet: “red-detective.” It seems to be a “deconstructed” term (in the manner of Jacques Derrida) of “rebel” created by the poet just as a visually covered “gap” in the logic of the narration. The deconstructed terms in poetry of Hoshinaga Fumio open new levels for interpretation and, along with strong dispersion of the poem created by numerous caesuras (“uncovered gaps”), create a very specific poetic language. All these subtle things are to be found in the translations of Gilbert & team presented in the book.

Among the many interesting haiku topics discussed by Japanese poets—bringing new light to many of the persistent dogmas of Western haiku—this book offers a new conceptual and terminological footing to the Western reader with a spiritual insight given by Gilbert and his collaborators. The work also brings a new understanding to the broadly discussed haiku technique of kire (caesura) miraculously opening its exotic curtain, and thereby allowing this profound concept to be seen anew as a universal tool inherent in any language.

As a part of a broader re-coding of culturally specific terminology into common meanings, this is perhaps the most important scientific contribution to a cross-cultural knowledge in poetry from the birth of such studies. As a poet, Gilbert, in *PoC* is able to separate poetic and cultural elements and treat haiku from a universal point of view.

Another of the most significant issues in haiku, the kigo (seasonal reference) is addressed, moving it from the realm of the poetic field into the arena of culture. Gilbert has here performed a final step in understanding haiku as a poetry existing beyond cultural differences. Via paradox, the role of haiku is broadened, keeping alive twinned possibilities: practicing haiku as a pure form of poetry and practicing Japanese culture through the poetry.

Along with the author's authentic scientific interest and his poetic needs there is no doubt that *PoC* is also the result of a collective frustration, broadly speaking, in the practice of international haiku, which in the last decade has faced numerous obstacles, as it has been rooted mainly in an established cultural politics which treats haiku as a kind of conceptual hostage. I am positive that haiku, liberated from such tutorship, as with any poetry, can only provide an aid to cultural exchange and cultural richness. Perceiving haiku as a cornucopia of poetic and cultural democracy, Gilbert's voice, established in *PoC*, speaks in the name of these efforts—this work is a founding stone of the genre of International Haiku, a genre located beyond conceptual and cultural differences. This is why the great achievements of the book are not the last word in understanding haiku but rather a new and exciting beginning of a coming haiku era.

Let me also stress here: International Haiku is not a name for a new concept in haiku but the result of democratic practice, which began its official life as a form of organization in the Tolmin Haiku Conference 2000, and has now found its theoretical footing in Gilbert's work, and its real home in the democratic haiku practice

of the Kumamoto poetic circle. It is my great hope that the democratic practice of International Haiku be influential, at both the national and international level.

As with most great works, *PoC*, a book which operates with a large scale of meaning, is at the same time familiar and intimate to the reader, speaking as modestly as haiku poetry itself: from the hearts of authors and poets. This achievement makes the mission of the book a mission of poetry: a gift of freedom. Needless to say more.

Dr. Dimitar Anakiev ³¹

What seems most valuable to me about this project [*PoC*] is the way it fosters awareness and potentially provides poets with new options. The ideal outcome would be the realization of the “expanded toolbox” Gilbert mentions in his “Introductory Remarks.”

For those who have based their conception of haiku on classics such as “on a bare branch a crow has landed—autumn nightfall” it is indeed startling to encounter contemporary gendai haiku such as Hoshinaga Fumio’s “twenty billion light-years of perjury: your blood type is ‘B’.” It’s analogous to studying galleries of realistic oil paintings and then stepping into a room full of abstract expressionist works. This salutary shock puts us in touch with the (or at least a) reality of what’s going on now where the genre began. It should arouse our deepest curiosity. How this encounter will translate into specific techniques useful for the practice of writing English-language haiku remains, of course, to be seen.

The fact that what I call our “tradition” isn’t necessarily valued highly (or acknowledged at all) in other quarters is no secret. Gilbert himself has a somewhat unfortunate and reductive tendency to equate English-language practice with *shasei* or what Hasegawai Kai curtly dismisses as “junk-haiku.” Whenever the word “realism” appears in *PoC*, it seems destined to be preceded with the adjective “naïve.”

The dangers inherent in haiku being assimilated to academic culture are well illustrated by some of Gilbert’s own critical analyses, in which hermeneutical vir-

tuosity sometimes trumps commonsense. The most telling example is the explication (actually, two of them: pgs. 38–45 and pgs. 115–17) of Virgilio’s celebrated “lily” haiku, perhaps our tradition’s closet equivalent to Bashô’s “old pond.” Gilbert’s language in discussing this poem becomes particularly baroque: “The final ‘outcome’ or ending is hypothetical—an imaging (process) incomplete as to meaning—as the poem and its languaged paradoxes trail off into space—and then return to ‘lily’ at the beginning again, in an uroboros-like circulation of re-reading.”

But there’s an even larger point here: It has to do with the seduction of obfuscation, a disease the humanities are particularly susceptible to acquiring. I’m all for stimulating, sophisticated interpretations of our haiku; but I would prefer we did not indulge in mental gymnastics at the expense of seeing more obvious and probable interpretive possibilities. Thankfully, though, Gilbert’s book succumbs to “academese” only intermittently.

Another larger issue the book raises for me is implicit in the way it characterizes haiku as “poetry of consciousness.” I see richness in this possibility but also dangers. For many of us one of the principal charms of haiku has been its relative avoidance of the inward-turning, self-involved, symbolic/metaphorical tradition of western poetry, which typically privileges imagination over “the thing itself.” The situation we find ourselves in seems ironic, in that contemporary Japanese haiku poets have embraced such western tendencies whereas English-language haiku poets have been attracted to the genre precisely as a means to escape them! If so, higher syntheses within both traditions should certainly be possible.

Are we in danger at this point, I wonder, of not comprehending the origins and deeper philosophical implications of our own techniques? I think we err badly if we equate “realism” in haiku only with *shasei* and not with an underlying Buddhist philosophical perspective (which in our own day dovetails neatly with aspects of scientific empiricism and environmentalism).

It’s also worth recalling that from an environmental perspective, self-involved human consciousness is often a problem—the problem, in fact. Anthropocentric ideologies (“people first”; “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it”) predicated upon an inward turn have helped contribute to the destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of species. In our time haiku has the capacity to at least gesture toward an urgent reconnection between humanity and the rest of the world. This reconnection is the subtext, I would argue, of just about all self-

effacing, nature-oriented haiku of the more sophisticated variety. Such haiku help further, in their extremely modest way, the conservation program Aldo Leopold envisioned of “building receptivity into the still unlovely human mind.” So I would hope we will not simply “turn inward” in our poetry too hastily, because the Buddhist imperative to transcend the self and the scientific imperative to study nature intersect in both environmentalism and haiku (at least as this one poet conceives of it).

I feel very stimulated and invigorated having read Gilbert’s book. A window has been opened onto a world I had scarcely discerned previously. I am impressed by Gilbert’s enthusiasm and dedication and his desire to help us expand our toolbox of techniques. This encounter he has arranged for us with gendai haiku should prove to be a very productive starting point, so long as we know what we’re really about and do not accept outside evaluations uncritically.

One last point: I wish *PoC* had an index.

Allan Burns ³²

Richard Gilbert’s *PoC* is a book that is both disturbing and endearing. It is a book I initially was disappointed with but subsequently was pleased to like. . . .

My disappointments are not based on what the book is but rather with what the book is not If you are expecting an academic book you will be disappointed. Although it has footnotes and references at the ends of chapters, in several ways it does not observe the standards expected in an academic work. It lacks a unifying perspective or thesis running through the essays and interviews. The book is divided into “theoretical concerns” and “multicultural issues,” but the author does not provide an overview of his approach to theory nor multicultural perspectives. He does not place his inquiry within ongoing threads of literary scholarship. Key theoretical concepts such as “poetic consciousness” or “ecocriticism” or “cross-cultural perspectives” or “disjunctive poetry” are discussed but not located within existing academic dialogues. In the same way, in the second half of the book we are given interviews with contemporary Japanese haiku poets, but they are not

placed in any context or keyed to a continuum of Japanese haiku poets or movements.

An example of this lack of academic context and definition of key terms is evident in Gilbert's essay "The Disjunctive Dragonfly," in which he argues for emphasis on disjunction — rather than juxtaposition or superposition — as the source of creative tension in haiku. I am glad that Gilbert is taking up the questions of haiku creation as an act of readers' and writers' consciousness, but I am disappointed that he does not connect his essay and its approach to his theoretical predecessors, both within and outside the haiku community. He simply starts with disjunction as a given without explaining where the concept comes from, stating only that "The idea of disjunction can be equally applied to poetry in general" (103). It is good that he is using the concept for the discussion, but it is frustrating that he misses the opportunity to let the haiku community connect to the broader discussion of disjunction in contemporary poetry . . . [see William Sylvester's "The Existence of a Disjunctive Principle in Poetry: A Preliminary Essay"; Peter Quartermain's "Disjunctive Poetics: From Gertrude Stein and Louis Zukofsky to Susan Howe"; Earl Miner's *Japanese Linked Poetry: An Account with Translations of Renga and Haikai Sequences*; Makoto Ueda's *Modern Japanese Haiku: An Anthology*; Haruo Shirane's *Traces of Dreams*]. . . .

We should acknowledge the scholars and translators and predecessors who have explored the functions and processes of consciousness available in the haiku genre. The good news here is that we are getting past debates over definitions and lists of "do's and don'ts" and into discussions about poetics, especially questions of how haiku work as literary artistic experiences both for writers and readers. Let's get on with the exploration of the function of haiku as a literary art.

Now for the love story — why have I come to love Gilbert's book? This book is what it is: a gathering up of various essays and interviews, mostly about contemporary Japanese haiku writers. Gilbert is not a scholar who has spent his life studying Japanese literature, but he is fascinated with modern and contemporary Japanese haiku. He does not have access to a large library of Western haiku but is familiar with some English-language work and a few journals. He has attempted to write haiku and has published a few, but he does not write this book from the perspective of a haiku writer. So he writes his essays and this book as an exploration. He is an explorer of the consciousness that lies beneath the haiku or in spaces be-

tween and within it. He is interested in the writer's motives and interior shifts of consciousness and the possibilities of conveying those psychological processes in the disjunctive literary art of haiku. He reads haiku as roadmaps to cognitive processes of writing and reading haiku. He is interested in what is going on in the haiku poet's head and then in the haiku reader's head. He invites us to join him on a journey into the current landscapes of haiku, especially with those with whom he has contact in Kusamakura, Japan. This is the strength of the book. Gilbert is someone who likes to ask questions — and we all benefit from his asking. So after I got over my fuss with academic expectations, I found this book to be a rewarding, fun journey, sometimes into the consciousness of Richard Gilbert, but more often into the minds and practices of his interviewees.

Gilbert's focus on consciousness provides an interesting perspective for looking at haiku — a perspective that leads to his list of types of disjunction that includes: (1) perceptual disjunction, (2) misreading as meaning, (3) overturning semantic expectations, and (4) linguistic oxymoron. He goes on to describe thirteen additional cognitive shifts found in haiku including: (5) imagistic fusion, (6) metaphoric fusion, (7) symmetrical rhythmic substitution, (8) concrete disjunction, (9) rhythmic disjunction, (10) the impossibly true, (11) displaced mythic resonance, (12) misplaced anthropomorphism, (13) unsatisfactory object, (14) pointing to the missing subject, (15) semantic register shift, (16) elemental animism, and (17) irruptive collocation. These types are ripe for exploration, and I hope that Gilbert and others seek examples and discussions of haiku employing his categories in the future.

Perhaps the most valuable contribution of this book is that Gilbert has started to map out a typology that will ultimately help us understand the art of reading haiku. He helps us explore and celebrate the possibilities and traditions of linking and shifting of consciousness within a haiku and from one haiku to the next. To understand the art of reading haiku, one needs to recognize the range of possible devices so that bursts of consciousness usually found in the best haiku are anticipated yet one can be surprised by new, unexpected turns. This process of anticipation and surprise is what keeps the art of haiku alive, vibrant, ever-changing, and new. If a haiku is too predictable, it is just a repeat performance of our anticipation. If it is totally unpredictable, we don't know how to read it or recognize it as

a haiku. This is one of the tensions that as writers and readers of haiku we all live with.

It is interesting that misreading as meaning is one of the types of disjunctive acts mentioned by Gilbert, because misreading is both fun and yet ripe for abuse or broader misunderstandings about haiku as a genre. If one deliberately attempts to misread a haiku, any haiku, it can result in absurdity, satire, or dismissal of the haiku as a quality literary work. One of the challenges of translation is that the cultural associations and unspoken suggestions are not evident. When the poet deliberately tries to have the reader misread the text as well, it may not be evident that Japanese techniques such kigo can be used in American haiku. Or if one assumes that English language haiku are mostly realistic descriptions of experienced scenes, they can be deliberately misread as never having resonating significance other than the actual things mentioned. One might claim that most American haiku are merely *shasei* haiku. Nicholas Virgilio's "lily out of the water" haiku is just an observation about the way water lilies grow and bloom. Where else other than out of the water could a water lily grow and where else other than itself could it bloom? The significance is not in the *shasei*, but in the wordless part of the haiku — the pauses, the silences, the unspoken associations. In other words, using Shirane's conception, one can misread haiku by assuming that the horizontal surface of perceptions evident in the images is all that is there in the haiku, ignoring the deeper significance found in the language, expression, syntax, cultural associations, implied social contexts, spaces, gaps, and the silences before, within, and after the words. So misreading can be abused in order merely to ridicule or seek a lack of significance, just as the art of reading calls for readers to expect more than a mere snapshot.

Randy Brooks ³³

In *PoC*, Richard Gilbert investigates Japanese haiku in the flesh. He not only reports on what he has gleaned from books about haiku, but includes interviews with and writings by living Japanese haiku masters. Here you will meet some of today's most widely respected poets. Kiyoko Uda has been at the forefront of haiku's

growing popularity among younger poets for the past several decades. She recently became president of the Modern Haiku Association—the most avant-garde of Japan's major haiku organizations. Hasegawa Kai leads the contemporary reexamination of all our assumptions about the haiku of the past and points the way ahead for this new century. These and others provide striking poems—in Gilbert's insightful translations—that will, along with his own provocative essays, make anyone familiar with the haiku genre rethink their understanding of this brand new poetry.

William J. Higginson ³⁴



From R. H. Blyth to Richard Gilbert: The Postmodern Turn from Essence

by William M. Ramsey

The Essence of a Moment Keenly Perceived

ESSENCE: The fixed, basic, and invariable nature of a thing; its defining, permanent, and universal reality; its core substance; its true, distilled nature.

HAIKU: An unrhymed Japanese poem recording *the essence of* a moment keenly perceived, in which Nature is linked to human nature.

(Haiku Society of America; italics added)

It was natural for me, coming to haiku about twenty years ago, to embrace the definition of haiku given above in the original formulation (1973/1976) of the Haiku Society of America. Today I reflect on what is lost when three words, *the essence of*, are deleted from the definition. The answer seems to be—nothing. If worded as follows the definition would mean exactly the same: “An unrhymed Japanese poem recording a moment keenly perceived, in which Nature is linked to human nature.” The three omitted words are a redundancy, and this essay is about why that particular redundancy carries such power, persisting even today in many contexts and variations.

The HSA has anticipated me with its current definition as formulated in 2004. It reads: “A haiku is a short poem that uses imagistic language to convey *the essence of* an experience of nature or the season intuitively linked to the human condition” (italics added). Here the earlier “essence of a moment” in nature shifts subtly to the “essence of an experience” of that moment in nature! What is gained by this change from moment to experience? The answer seems to be—nothing. No indispensable element, no exact technique, would be slurred over by omitting the three redundant words: “A haiku is a short poem that uses imagistic language to

convey an experience of nature or the season intuitively linked to the human condition.”

I raise this question because of the appearance of Richard Gilbert’s remarkable book, *PoC*. Gilbert mounts a vigorous demonstration that haiku need not be defined by Zen essence—or any essence—but by certain operations of language, particularly a richly developed arsenal of tactics that haiku poets long have deployed to cause dramatic “disjunction” in the consciousness of the reader. What, then, is the haiku experience? It’s a language performance.

My response to all this has been dramatic, for reading this book initially was a dexterous stab in the heart. That is because my earliest encounters with haiku were framed by a hugely remarkable, personally formative argument—R. H. Blyth’s extraordinary commentaries on the Zen basis of haiku.³⁵ Under Blyth’s expansive wing I once fancied myself entering a “haiku path”—in rarified search for a refined, seventeen-syllable “haiku moment”—in order to attain my spiritually conditioned, satori-like “aha! experience.” Gilbert helps me see that if the Zen example led me into haiku writing, it was neither a necessary nor sufficient cause for competence in the form. There are other, less mystifying ways to skin the haiku cat. Call them the “haiku way” if you like, but they boil down to intelligent use of an effective form for the creative perceptions you want to deliver. In short, while stabbing me Gilbert convinced me, and I suspect that if Bashô remains my sacred text, disjunction will be my shtick.

Essence in Our Postmodern Moment

In the fifty years from Blyth’s achievement to Gilbert’s, the modern era morphed into our postmodern moment, and if the latter means anything it is the all-out assault on essence. No truth claim, our cultural theorists argue, can assume sure and unquestioned ontological standing. All statements, no matter how objectively true they seem (and indeed may be), arise from a social context, they are historically “situated,” and they are dependent on how one’s language system and cultural codes construct utterance. In “Ode on a Grecian Urn” the Romantic John Keats could utter sublimely: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.” Today such abstractions share the fate of all eternal, transhistorical assertions clothed as universal truths. They are taken first as so-

cial constructions, and their reception as eternal verities becomes deferred in endless chains of culture's significations. As for Keats's urn, one might first ask what right had Englishmen to loot Greece of its art treasures in the expansion of empire, while posturing as arbiters of Beauty and civilization.

Today haiku cannot be said to have an essence or mystique independent of cultural confluences working through it. And where does that leave Bashô and me? For the moment, stranded. In the meantime, I regard Blyth and Gilbert as book-ends, each a distinct historical benchmark in haiku theorizing. Blyth, coming of age as World War I was disintegrating Victorian culture, experienced the modernist rage for order and found an answer far away from Britain in the coherent, unifying "way" of Zen Buddhism. In contrast, contemporary readers sense that post-modernity slides all truth claims toward social contextualizing. Inevitably, we now tend to approach haiku practice without the metaphysical trappings of former times.

So why the enduring appeal of *essence*? Like our vestigial organ the appendix it still clings to discussions of what haiku is whether in talk of a haiku "moment" or an "experience" of a moment—or in a haiku anything. Likely, the historical tradition of Bashô, Buson, and Issa remains so compelling that we cannot excise it from our haiku viscera. But this will hardly do. No matter how compelling the example of Shakespeare is, no drama course in the country prescribes Elizabethan theater as a singular "path" for the next Ionesco, Brecht, Albee, or Pinter. No critic ponders any distilled Shakespearean "essence." Would it be the essence of a tragic *moment* keenly perceived, or would it be the essence of the *experience* of that tragic moment? Indeed, exactly how should Johnny Depp soliloquize when in despair?

Bashô: Go to the Pine

Bashô, the first great practitioner of hokku, is partly responsible for our fixation on a haiku essence. As remembered by his follower Doho, here is Bashô's famous advice on how to write haiku: "Go to the pine to learn of the pine, and go to the bamboo to learn of the bamboo." The idea, taken from Zen, is self-effacement. By detaching from the ego one may better focus on the poetic object for what it is. In effect, subjective restraint dampens emotional effusions, yielding stronger objec-

tivity and clarity. What Ezra Pound and the Imagists learned in the twentieth century, Bashô had figured out centuries earlier. Moreover, it works, leading to concisely etched images of remarkable power.

Yet, what Bashô saw as emanating from a spiritual discipline can be explained in other ways, such as intelligent invention. That he came to great art was because in part his Zen practice happened to convert well to excellent writer's vision. Let's consider the apparent "purity" of his verse. His suppression of self-display seems to allow him to "enter into" the object observed and discover in a special *aha!* moment the deep-down, pure essence or eternal significance of something. Always, however, these moments were cast into *writing* acts. To create a verbal artifact requires artifice, i.e., the art of making or inventing. Even Bashô's most sublime haiku were language events, and as Richard Gilbert demonstrates the components of these events can be demystified and rendered secularly. In sum, one need not enter a spiritual path to learn how to trigger readers into responsive cognitive performances.

This point can be supported by a glance at our various haiku handbooks, all of them meritoriously laying out the specifics of craft. Typically they start with an overview of haiku's historical Japanese roots while offering an invitation to "the haiku path." Yet, the greatest bulk of these books pertains not to achieving one's inborn Buddha-hood potential—how to intuit the essence deep behind the material veil—but how to use practical tips. The result is a peculiarly disjunctive effect of its own. First, we are coached in quasi-Zen manner to capture the so-called "essence," or "suchness," or "thusness," or the "singular" quality, or the "deeper reality" of things. Subtly, this vocabulary weaves a specialized language of "depth," all presuming the mind has a special intuitive, transcending faculty that goes "deeper" than ordinary cerebration, indeed independent of language and cultural codes into which all thought finds expression. Then, the handbooks go on to offering abundant advice on exploiting seasonality, seeking juxtapositions, avoiding complete sentences, using definite articles sparingly, show don't tell, using good cutting words, rewriting intensively—and lots more down-to-earth, non-Zen suchness.

Bound up in this discourse is the important advice of avoiding explicit commentary, statement, or intellection. True, Bashô's classic nature image or Shiki's objectivistic *shasei* sketch would be marred by the "impurity" of such mental interference. Yet, we have all seen modern haiku that are effective *because* they

are explicit commentaries—the very statements being objectifications of a dramatically felt moment. To “go to the pine” for a non-intellective nature moment is not a pure, non-mental leap into intuited “deep” essence—it is inescapably an act of cognition.

Reading R. H. Blyth

Also responsible for our fascination with haiku essence was R. H. Blyth (1898-1964). Especially with his four volume *Haiku* series (1949-1952), he influenced American Beat writers who saw in his cultural disaffection an affinity with their own agenda. A British pacifist, vegetarian, and idealist, Blyth was imprisoned in 1916 as a conscientious objector. His subsequent pattern of exile aligns him with other disillusioned, post-War writers such as Hemingway and those who felt they were a “lost generation.” It was the exile T. S. Eliot who stated that their civilization had become a “wasteland.” Blyth exiled himself to India, then lived and studied Zen in Korea. Marrying a Japanese woman he then lived in Japan, constructing through his life and writings a sustaining coherence not to be found in Europe’s wasteland. If, as W. B. Yeats feared of civilization, “the center does not hold,” then Blyth was determined that it would hold—in the Zen timelessness of the Far East.

Reading his brilliant haiku commentaries is a repeated journey from cultural fragmentation into the unified essence of the universe. In the “Preface” to Volume 4 of *Haiku*, he extols haiku for its Zen entrance into the essentialist core: “Its peculiar quality is its self-effacing, self-annihilative nature, by which it enables us...to grasp the thing-in-itself.... we are to be in a state of *muga*, self-lessness, when we compose haiku.”³⁶ Bashô, being adeptly enlightened, touches “the very nerve of life” and thus pulls unity out of fragmentation with an “unerring knowledge of those moments in time which, put together, make up our real, our eternal life.”³⁷ Shiki, he suggests, touched the great core while eating persimmons and hearing a Buddhist temple bell toll: “Eating and listening, the two elements of human life, material and spiritual, prose and poetry, practical life and religion,—these are so far apart when we think about them, but sitting in the tea-house eating persimmons and listening to the voice of religion, there is felt to be no disparity.” An intuited unity dissolves our illusion of fragments: “The past and the present, the heard and the tasted are one.”³⁸

Randomly flipping the pages of Blyth's volumes, I can often land on such a commentary. These are moments I relish, noting however that all are grounded in the binary antithesis between material and spiritual, odious and marvelous, brute fact and beautiful, or the mundanely ordinary and the sublime. In Volume 3, I flip to his explication of Buson's remarkably etched picture of sparrows in rain:

A sudden summer shower:
The village sparrows
Hang on to the grasses. ³⁹

Blyth observes that "this verse expresses the violence and abruptness of the shower." Yet there is more, for the ordinary points to a larger reality: "But there is not felt to be any division of the subject, the shower—the sparrows. It is a unity, and the sparrows are felt to have their place (albeit a wet and uncomfortable one) in the larger movements of nature."⁴⁰ Surely I'm not the first to be amazed at this rising of mist from an ordinary view so that I see—I see a numinous mountain peak I had not known was there. Blyth has lifted me from a mere moment to the unitary "haiku moment."

I happen to love these over-readings, but they must be historically situated in Blyth's need to wrest cosmic coherence from modern chaos. So when he says of another haiku that "the falling of a leaf or a twig contains in it all existence,"⁴¹ I wonder if the haiku writer simply has pointed to the delicate transience of things—like Buson's sparrows—and not the essence of a moment keenly perceived of the great division-less unity. The fact is, in Blyth's version of the old masters, no observed detail can be insignificant. And here's the problem: if all details become *equally* cosmically significant, then little can be distinguished from a grand—and very subjective—impression of unity.

Commenting on flowers in a haiku by Chora, Blyth says: "It is the thusness of things, their just-so-ness, which gives the poet that indefinable but unmistakable feeling of significance, (something quite beyond intellectually perceivable appropriateness or logically expressible congruity,) which is the poetic flow of life becoming conscious of itself."⁴² *There it is*—the moment of haiku depth, of pure ego-less entrance into the essence of pine or bamboo, without the interference of explicit statement. Yet, it is not as objective as it appears, for the binary antithesis

lurking beneath (fragmented matter vs. unitary essence) suggests the social construction. To receive a haiku this way one must be developing a personal Buddhism. That reflects a grand narrative, an assumed story of things that makes them all intelligible. At bottom this is not the “craft” of haiku; it is the spiritual path of haiku. Moreover, the qualities needed for taking this journey are more moral than technical: selflessness, humility, restraint, silence, alertness to the sublime—let us say, the life of an ascetic spiritual aspirant in recoil from Western decline.

Reading Richard Gilbert

Richard Gilbert’s *PoC* is the crest of a postmodern wave that has been rising. Recently, a major advance in understanding early haikai tradition was Haruo Shirane’s impeccably scholarly *Traces of Dreams* (1998). Through a postmodern lens, Shirane historically situates Basho in the context of cultural systems converging through him—his status in the commoner social class, his turn toward vernacular language, and haikai’s reversal of readers’ expectations, all playing off classical traditions. Rejecting any monologic reading of Basho, Shirane does not rely on a singular “haiku essence” to explain Basho’s poetics.

Gilbert breaks even further from essentialist mystique. His university teaching in Japan, close knowledge of gendai haiku writers and theorists there, and formal study in poetics, depth psychology, and linguistics all contribute to a provocative methodology. “Cognitive poetics” is difficult for the casual reader, especially its classification and nomenclature of “cutting” techniques, as well as densely detailed linguistic analyses of haiku. A clearer picture emerges if one looks behind the technical matter to how Gilbert is historically situated in American cultural politics of the Beat tradition. At Naropa University in the 1980s he was in contact with Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Peter Orlovsky, and Gary Snyder, all icons in the countercultural emphasis on new wave consciousness. The core impulse of the Beats was liberation—from American materialism, moral and political repressiveness, and bourgeois stultification. From Snyder, Gilbert also absorbed eco-political seeds manifest in *PoC*. So “consciousness” for Gilbert is not only a term of formal psychology but also a culturally contextualized value, aligned with “consciousness raising.” It suggests the Beats’ grand narrative of change through liberation, beginning at the personal level with “mind expansion.” A haiku in this context is neither

a cultivation of seasonality nor a mythic awareness; it is a dynamically liberating “poem of consciousness.”

Gilbert pulls off something most difficult to do, which is to explain semantic creativity—how language yields striking poetic effects—as Basho’s great gift to the haiku form. It was not nature or seasonality, originally a convention of the renga’s opening verse, which Basho took deeper than before. It was the play of mind—transferred through brilliant cutting techniques—to irrupt the reader’s perception and induce a co-creative cognitive response. The key principle is “disjunction” (meant to replace the simpler idea of juxtaposition). More frequently than other literary forms, haiku assaults or subverts a reader’s customary *grammatical* expectations when, through semantic distortion, the text shifts into a peculiar direction. In that split-second disjunctive “gap,” where one loses comprehension of what has just been read, a new reading must be performed arising with altered consciousness (or “alternativity”). Thus, despite Shiki’s objectivist-realist dictum to sketch accurately from nature, no nature perception is innately literal and “objective.” Why? Because, Gilbert argues, “haiku ‘realism’ is not ultimate truth” but a subtly dramatic rhetorical effect.⁴³ The ingenious haiku mind projects onto reality (rather than rendering it) by an adroit construction of shifting coherence. In sum, a good haiku makes the reader lose a starting sense of meaning—creating a new coherence out of the disjunctive shift’s gap.

What of haiku’s special “aha! moment”? Gilbert says of the reader’s landing point: “At this point we have come to a psychological ‘moment’...but it is not an AHA! (which implies that you “get” something). Or, if so, the getting is all about the losing; that is, getting lost.”⁴⁴ By deploying incompleteness, absence, and ambiguity,⁴⁵ the disjunctive tactic dislodges one from habitual perception, which is what gets “lost.” Indeed poetry more frequently than other genres taps into these primitive operations of consciousness: “Poetry easily enters the mythic dimension, as its roots are preternaturally archaic.”⁴⁶ Behind this outlook, which stresses the mind’s being stripped to the cognitively primordial, one detects perhaps an echo of Ginsberg’s primal scream in “Howl.” In the end, Gilbert’s interest in “depth” matches Blyth’s, but the depth he explicates is the wondrous ferment of depth psychology.

Gilbert’s ideas fascinate, once one has labored with methodological terminology—and there’s the rub. Describing creativity in its semantic aspects is a

daunting task, and Gilbert's theoretical discourse is hard-going, indeed academically arcane for the non-linguist. It reminds me of attempts to describe Mark Twain's humor, during which his humor is unavoidably killed. Earlier I noted that in Blyth there is a conflation of all details into an overarching unified essence, so that all readings are variations on the one topic of grand unity. Gilbert runs a similar risk. All semantic tactics of a haiku tend to point to the same story—operations of cognition. Focus veers *away* from what is “out there” in the landscape and being existentially savored by a real person (not a mental-semantic operation) with a distinct life story and shaped sensitivity. That is to say, the subject is always consciousness itself. In cognitive poetics what, then, happens to a haiku narration's implied truth claims? Every haiku becomes a spectacle of altering consciousness. Truth is a dynamically deferred not a rendered signification. Instead of “depth” we are always leaping over a succession of disjunctive “gaps.”

I can't predict if knowledge of cognitive disjunction will prove helpful for writers trying to generate text. For me, there is something existentially necessary about the lived haiku moment. As we write a haiku we simultaneously are being shaped by social circumstance, life experience, personal issues, and some driving values—for which we frame some resolution. Working self-consciously with Gilbert's disjunctive types, a writer might easily fall into artifice and away from a dramatic life moment. Haiku written that way might narrow in scope, becoming an adept exercise in disjunction. Surely Naropa-trained Richard Gilbert would not want that, a bourgeois *fashion*.

Reading Lee Gurga

trying the old pump a mouse pours out

How Blyth Might Comment

In this verse the landscape suddenly penetrates the writer's awareness in a much unexpected way. An old pump and a field mouse—the mechanical and life principles—these are not so far apart as we normally think. Here, on the broad rural landscape of the American Midwest, the minute and the expansive join as one.

With only ordinary thoughts in his head, or perhaps with none, Gurga walks about a farm property, his ego blank and thus unknowingly receptive to the event following. Idly yet impulsively, he reaches to a pump handle to see if the mechanism works. What it produces is not water, a requirement of life, but a mouse, the flesh-and-blood substance of life itself. Life pours,—it does not hop or skitter—from the mechanical pump, no doubt startling the human whose hand still grasps the handle. One usually steps back when surprised by a rodent, as the mind tries to discriminate a nonhuman threat, but this haiku withholds that information. It captures instead the instant *before* one recoils in protection of self, as this strange manifestation of life breaks in where it has not been expected.

It is hard for a haiku writer to put all this in eight simple words, all but one of them monosyllabic, and readers who think this is trivial writing do not yet know haiku! The mouse has been rudely ejected from its makeshift home. The poet too is displaced from a comfortable, customary sense of home, for here is an invasion by another order of being. Each of the two experiences a brief, disorienting instant of expulsion or exile, yet this is superseded by its opposite, the poet's discovered sense of deep affinity. This is simultaneously landscape and inscape. The two "homes" are here intertwined, as are all creatures on earth. The suchness of the mouse,—its living significance prior to any zoological categorizing—evinces the all-encompassing unity of things. Both creatures in the haiku exist near each other on earth; both follow the biological urge to occupy a place temporarily felt to be "home." Then, just as the mouse "pours" from the pump, life's inexplicable mystery "flows" like water into one's deepening awareness.

How Gilbert Might Comment

One cannot read this haiku with the simple logic of "man pulls pump handle (leading to) mouse jumps out of pump." Such customary perception is interrupted by three cutting shifts into illogic (after *pump*, *mouse*, and *pours*), each gap in comprehension leading to momentary misreading before the reader's re-assembling of coherence. A poem of consciousness, this is not an objectivistic nature sketch but an aesthetic liberation from literalist perception.

As many as nine modes of semantic disjunction may be at work in these eight brief words. (1) Perceptual Disjunction. Is the opening phrase ("trying the old

pump”) a gerund as sentence subject or a verbal action preceding a subject? Any normative English sentence construction is thwarted at the first cut, after *pump*, because what follows irrupts either of the assumed sentence propositions. A mouse appears, canceling the gerund possibility, while also being an action we can’t perceive a mouse doing. (2) Misreading as Meaning. This shift, then, has led the reader into mistakes in reading. As *mouse* appears one goes recursively back to see where one got it wrong, and is lost in a gap of illogical comprehension—as Gurga meant to happen. (3) Overtuning Semantic Expectation. Just as a mouse can not operate a pump handle, neither can it pour something, nor can it pour *out* as if water—there are three impossibilities here induced by disjunctive shifts in meaning. The illogic of the final shift exceeds even a kid’s cartoon, where Mickey Mouse might pour a glass of water but certainly not *be* water. Thus, all predictable relational and verbal matters have been overturned by deftly misleading semantic tactics. (4) Linguistic Oxymoron. There is no *kireji* here (or an equivalent like a line break or a dash) to mark a standard juxtaposition of two different materials. The *lack* of punctuation pulls all together into one pouring action, at least momentarily, leading to a linguistic self-contradiction. Can a mouse try a pump? For a split instant it does, before we discover there are multiple materials in this poem, *before* which we sensed a self-contradiction. (5) Imagistic Fusion. The first image, a pump, predicts running water. In the second image, the stuff being poured seems to be a mouse. Gurga has devilishly compressed two incompatible bodies of material. (6) Concrete Disjunction. This haiku isn’t “concrete poetry,” so I am stretching things. Yet, the complete lack of punctuation and capital letters, and the fusing of actions, do evoke a continuous pouring—words as liquid. As a visual distortion of grammatical logic (having its own visual grammar), the line-as-object liberates the reader from constrictions of normative semantics. (7) The Impossibly True. To repeat, these are impossible images: a mouse operating a pump, pouring water, and pouring out—your psyche is deliberately being scrambled. (8) Misplaced Anthropomorphism. To repeat, the above images are ludicrously anthropomorphic. Why is the anthropomorphism misplaced? So your mind will bend even more before it can rest. (9) Irruptive Collocation. Idiosyncratic phrasing such as “a mouse pours out,” in which mouse and streaming water are conjoined, is an unusual distortion of language—one more way that haiku can push the mind into logic-defying creativity in little space.

Conclusion

In a span of fifty years, our haiku thinking has shifted from mytho-poetics to cognitive poetics. The first model has been likened to a path. The second model I liken to a magic carpet ride. Somewhere in the disjunctive gap between these modes, you may have to take your stand. You may: (a) click on “ego detachment,” or (b) press “irrupt the complacent mind—reject the literal.” Either way, I think that haiku will survive.



NOTES

¹ Gilbert, Richard. *Poems of Consciousness* (Red Moon Press, 2008), 117.

² Yasuda, Kenneth. *The Japanese Haiku* (Tuttle Publishing, 1957), 17.

³ *Modern Haiku*, 40.1 (Winter 2009), 114-124.

⁴ Blyth, R.H. *Haiku* (4 Volumes), 243.

⁵ Shirane, Haruo. "Beyond the Haiku Moment: Basho, Buson & Modern Haiku Myths". *Modern Haiku*, 31:1 (winter-spring 2000) AND http://www.haikupoet.com/definitions/beyond_the_haiku_moment.html

⁶ Gurga, Lee. *Fresh Scent* (Brooks Books, 1998), 104.

⁷ *Poems of Consciousness*, 157.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹ *Modern Haiku*, 35:3 (Autumn 2004), 27-45.

¹⁰ *Poems of Consciousness*, 177.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹² *Ibid.*, 176.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 210.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 56

¹⁷ Personal Correspondence, hereafter "PC".

¹⁸ PC

¹⁹ PC

²⁰ PC

²¹ Russo, Dave. Amazon.com:
<http://www.amazon.com/Poems-Consciousness-Richard-Gilbert/dp/1893959724>

²² *Poems of Consciousness*, 81.

²³ *Poems of Consciousness*, 128.

²⁴ *Poems of Consciousness*, 149-50.

²⁵ Strickland, Johnye. *Simply Haiku* Summer 2008, vol 6 no 2.
<http://www.simplyhaiku.com/SHv6n2/reviews/Gilbert.html>

²⁶ Reichhold, Jane. "How 'Poems of Consciousness' Fail [sic] to Demonstrate the Disjunctive Dragonfly". *LYNX* XXIV:2 (June 2009). www.ahapoetry.com/ahalynx/242articles.html

²⁷ See <peterlang.com/Index.cfm?vID=11816 vLang=D>

²⁸ Gilbert, Richard. "Unfit At Any Speed: The Author's Response to Jane Reichhold's 'How *Poems Of Consciousness* Fail [sic] To Demonstrate The Disjunctive Dragonfly.'" *Simply Haiku* vol 7 no 3 (August 2009) or www.simplyhaiku.com/SHv7n3/reviews/Gilbert.html

²⁹ PC.

³⁰ PC.

³¹ Anakiev, Dimitar. "A Gift of Freedom: An Insight into *Poems of Consciousness* by Richard Gilbert". *Frogpond* 32:1.

³² PC and *Presence* 39.

³³ *Modern Haiku* 40.1.

³⁴ Higginson, William. Red Moon Press website:
<http://www.redmoonpress.com/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=32&products_id=60>

³⁵ Blyth, R. H. *Haiku* (4 volumes). Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1949-1952.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 980.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 981.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1110-1111.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 696.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 697.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 843-844.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 855.

⁴³ *Poems of Consciousness*, 116.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.