

Avant-Garde Haiku: A New Outlook

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In a letter published in the *Journal of the British Haiku Society*, *Blithe Spirit*, in December 1998, Annie Bachini makes an interestingly provocative statement, amounting to a claim: “For myself,” she says, “I haven’t seen any examples of avant-garde haiku in English.” The immediate target of her letter is Caroline Gourlay’s allegedly too-blithe reference to “the traditional and the avant-garde” in the previous issue’s editorial. If, as Gourlay states, “the avant-garde and the traditional are, in fact, one and the same thing seen from different perspectives,” then in terms of Bachini’s assessment haiku in English would hardly seem to amount to a tradition at all. The basic problem is one of definition: what do we mean by “avant-garde”? And is the idea necessarily problematical?

Gourlay’s statement is consistent with the Concise OED definition, “(of) pioneers or innovators in any art *in a particular period*” (my emphasis), which is all very well in hindsight—for, say, Debussy (Gourlay’s example) who has since become “regarded as the cornerstone of the post-romantic tradition”; but how are we to regard or even properly identify the avant-garde of the *present* period—especially difficult when the art-form itself is still at an early stage of recognition? Gourlay, commenting on Bachini’s letter, says that she finds “no shortage of English-language haiku that break the mould”—a mould, we can assume, of the sort described by the BHS consensus on “The Nature of English Haiku” (1996) (hereafter NEH). On the other hand, the view of haiku as “a kind of poetry, to be treated as an artistic creation, mouldable” (George Swede, quoted in NEH), is accepted widely enough to make it difficult to know where one would draw a line between the acceptable and the “unacceptable.”

This account of the difficulty fails, however, to take into consideration a more radical sense of the avant-garde as—to quote John Ashbery, whose haiku I will turn to shortly: “this force in art which would be the very antithesis of tradition if it were to allow itself even so much of a relationship with tradition as an antithesis implies.”¹ This does of course have paradoxical implications, indicated by the title of Ashbery’s essay, “The Invisible Avant-Garde,” and epitomized by Tristan Tzara’s famous declaration: “The real dadas are against dada.”² Even given the more moderate notion—as expressed by the editors of the global anthology of *Poems for the Millenium*—that a “radical questioning of art and its boundaries defines our sense of an ‘avant-garde,’” it still follows that the questioning must ceaselessly apply (to warrant the term “radical”).³ If we take this radical or (dare I say) “purist” notion of the avant-garde into account, then we can assume that our hypothetical avant-garde haiku might resist “even so much of a relationship with” the incipient tradition (or “mould”) of haiku in English as the “breaking” of a mould implies. Even the view that “all you can say is that a haiku, be it composed in Japanese, English or any other language, is what the person who has written it presents as a haiku” (Hiroaki Sato) need not circumscribe our inquiry.⁴ We may have most to learn from the “merely” haikuesque. Of the examples of “avant-garde haiku” put forward in this paper, most were not presented by their authors as haiku, and all are drawn from sources outside the haiku world.

John Ashbery’s “37 Haiku”⁵

First I shall turn to some one-line poems which *are* presented as haiku, although most of them would, I imagine, have little chance of acceptance into journals such as *Blithe Spirit*. Following through the notion of the avant-garde as in some sense necessarily “unacceptable,” my evaluation take its bearings from the essays on the nature of classic haiku in Roland Barthes’ stimulating study of Japan *Empire of Signs*. For Barthes, the quintessential haiku’s “propositions are always simple, commonplace, in a word *acceptable* (as we say in linguistics)”—as Ashbery’s plainly are not.⁶

I inch and only sometimes as far as the twisted pole gone in spare colors

Commonplace? *Acceptable*? The apparent absence of any concrete outside reference draws attention away from the “natural world” and towards—in the poet’s own words—“the experience of experience.”⁷ Does such abstraction necessarily preclude “evocation of haiku spirit” (NEH)? Arguably—again with reference to the terms of the BHS consensus—Ashbery’s work bears witness to “the continuous flow of experience” that is intrinsic to the “haiku moment” precisely by incorporating the mediation or “interference” of language in the experiencing of that flow—or as he himself puts it, “the way a happening or experience filters through to me.”⁸ This practice does of course tend to displace more concrete subject-matter, but also yields flashes of particular insight into the poetic process. “I inch”—well don’t we all, “only sometimes” realizing a negative capability by virtue of which the unsaid (or unpainted, “gone in spare colors”) can be left to speak for itself. A similar yearning is expressed in the following haiku—the beauty of which is that it may also be understood more literally, as perhaps a love poem:

You lay aside your hair like a book that is too important to read now

This chimes with the opening haiku of the series:

Old-fashioned shadows hanging down, that difficulty in love too soon

These last two examples are among the more accessible of the 37, but they share the indeterminacy of most—but not all: the following, for instance, which prosaically deflates the grandiose (if only mock-serious) question:

What is the past, what is it all for? A mental sandwich?

Then as it sinks in one starts to wonder whether this hasn’t hit the nail on the head!

As for formal characteristics, Ashbery’s haiku mostly employ the present tense and range between 10 and 18 syllables. Rhythmically, they remind me of Hiroaki Sato’s translations of Hosai Ozaki’s haiku, which “sometimes sound like fragments of a prose monologue or something insignificant and vague” (Kyoko Selden).⁹ Sato’s dedication of the book to John Ashbery is worthy of note. Apparently, Ashbery’s impetus came from the one-line translations of Basho’s haiku in Sato’s and Burton Watson’s anthology *From the Country of Eight Islands*.¹⁰ Also in keeping with our model of acceptable haiku, they are “self-effacing,” contain no “explicit (and so directive) statements about actual feelings” (Ashbery’s enigmatic use of personal pronouns guards against this); and are “open-ended,” “half-said things” (NEH). So far so “acceptable.”

Needless to say, this is said somewhat tongue-in-cheek. For as we all know—matters of syllable-count and seasonal reference aside—“it is *concrete images*, not abstract words, that carry the meaning and create the tension and atmosphere in haiku” (NEH, my emphasis). The haiku aims at semantic transparency. As Cor van den Heuvel says in his foreword to the third edition of *The Haiku Anthology*: “Haiku, for the reader, is wordless because those few words are invisible. We as readers look right through them.”¹¹ In Barthesian terms, the haiku should take place “within a perfectly readerly discourse,” without “contest[ing] meaning.” So that from a western point of view, paradoxically enough the classic haiku has, in effect, something rather avant-garde about it: “The haiku’s task,” writes Barthes,

is to achieve exemption from meaning within a perfectly readerly discourse (a contradiction denied to Western art, which can contest meaning only by rendering its discourse incomprehensible), so that to our eyes the haiku is neither eccentric nor familiar: it resembles nothing at all: readerly, it seems to us simple, close, known, delectable, delicate, “poetic” ... insignificant nonetheless, it resists us ... and enters into that suspension of meaning which to us is the strangest thing of all, since it makes impossible the most ordinary exercise of our language, which is commentary. (Barthes, 81)

From these reflections on the elusive nature of haiku emerges an informing a-poetics, closely aligned, as Barthes sees it, with “the spirit of Zen” (82-3). Approaching the problem of avant-garde haiku from the standpoint of this traditional alignment (“traditional” in the context of Western haiku, at least), it becomes a question of whether haiku-spirited “suspension of meaning” can be produced within discourse of questionable readerliness.¹²

This is, happily, an open question; but it does suggest a possible criterion by which to distinguish avant-garde and traditional haiku—one in keeping with an overview of avant-garde poetics more generally. *Poems for the Millennium* editors Rothenberg and Joris again:

While the basis for most of these new poetics has been a drive toward social—even spiritual—transformation, the experimental moves on their structural/compositional side have involved a range of procedures that bring out the opaque materiality of language as a medium, as against a “romantic” view of language as purely a transparent window toward an ideal reality beyond itself. (Vol. I, 9)

To bring this to a more specific focus within the context of haiku, I am reminded of the anti-“romantic” drive suggested by Masayo Saito’s “Short History of Takayanagi Shigenobu” (1923-83), “without question one of the few most progressive haiku poets in the history of haiku”:

Unlike orthodox haiku poets, most of whose works are a sort of predetermined translation or summary of what they perceive, Shigenobu sought to encounter a certain language cosmos that transcends reality in order to conjure up “the world that reveals itself only once and for the first time through written language.” His experimental attitude, naturally, got on the nerves of haiku poets in general, who insisted that his works were anything but haiku.¹³

This modernistic approach to haiku is bound to be transgressive simply because it is first and foremost language-oriented. It calls into question the received notion that haiku can point to (even if it cannot represent) “an ideal reality” and thereby transcend language. The poems I shall now turn to extend this line of questioning while employing more concrete imagery than Ashbery’s haiku.

Robert Grenier’s *Sentences*

In 1978 the American Robert Grenier published *Sentences*, a “Chinese-style unfolding box” containing “500 note cards, each with a short poem printed in the center.” I cannot refer directly to this rare publication but the items included in the anthology *In the American Tree*, in Barrett Watten’s essay in *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book*, and in the essay, “Here and Now on Paper: the Avant-Garde Particulars of Robert Grenier,” by Bob Perelman, provide a representative selection.¹⁴ As Perelman points out, the poems in *Sentences* may be brief, but are “not exquisite haiku; what [is] ‘good’ [about them] often seem[s] to lie in a much more recalcitrant direction” (52). For starters, they are not (judging from the 50 or so that I have seen) “sentences”—grammatically speaking. But Perelman’s chosen point of contrast is telling, and in our pursuit of avant-garde haiku, worth extending, given that it leads in “a more recalcitrant direction.” (Besides, one wouldn’t necessarily expect “exquisiteness” of a poetic genre in which—as Gabriel Rosenstock has pointed out—the poet “may—and can and must” write about things as plain as “parsnips”?)¹⁵

Grenier’s *Sentences* are also recalcitrant, however, in that one may not so easily say what particular poems are “about.” To cite an instance that calls into question the very notion of “concrete imagery”:

two trees¹⁶

As Perelman says: “Especially when seen in the center of the otherwise blank card ‘two trees’ reveal themselves as, primarily, two words” (48): words “written,” just as Barthes wonders of haiku, “‘just to write’”—albeit in a somewhat different sense than Barthes intended (Barthes, 82). In *Sentences*, visible language is more the issue than concrete imagery; and the Projectivist idea of open form as an extension of content is an informing aesthetic. On the other hand, their written-just-to-write immediacy does often relate, haiku-like, to a particular “moment ... an island in time”:

except the swing bumped by the dog in passing¹⁷

Here the transition between the said and unsaid is seamless. How much sense of presence would be lost if we were to preface the poem with the words “Nothing moving” (as Perelman suggests) so as to “complete” the sentence. The word “except,” which frames the image of the moving swing, stands out in such a way that the image cannot float free of it (into an “ideal reality”). Grenier is fond of starting his *Sentences*, as it were, in mid-sentence, foregrounding small words that usually go by unnoticed—articles, prepositions or conjunctions, as in the following:

or the starlight on the porch since when¹⁸

Should this be read as an incomplete statement or a question, or both? Here as elsewhere in *Sentences*, syntactic deviation, more than unresolved tension between juxtaposed images, serves to create the poem's "open-endedness." This is not to suggest that ambiguity is alien to our model of "acceptable" haiku: as the BHS pamphlet mentions, "Writing a haiku in one line may add to the ways we can read it"—citing Ruby Spriggs' *my head in the clouds in the lake*. But Grenier's poems suggest new, more literal (that is, less "readerly") ways of understanding the notion of haiku as a "half-said thing." One is also reminded of Louis Zukofsky's speculation: "a case can be made out for the poet giving some of his life to the use of the words *a* and *the*: both of which are weighted with as much epos and historical destiny as one man can perhaps resolve. Those who do not believe this are too sure that the little words mean nothing among so many other words" (quoted by Perelman, 50). In the following example Grenier follows this directive even more meticulously, staking the poem's "destiny" (concomitantly, a sense of his own) on mere vowels:

TWELVE VOWELS

breakfast
the sky flurries¹⁹

As Perelman asks, "Is the field of experience here life or letters?" (Note also that *y* must be counted as a vowel.) "Meanwhile, beneath such calculations: breakfast in a cold world" (Perelman, 49). It would be difficult—indeed, beside the point—to say whether this poem is more self-referring or referential; the opposition between poem-making as abstract, quasi-mathematical artifice and as transcription of particularistic life-experience is imploded.

In light of my previous emphases, it should be noted that "TWELVE VOWELS" enacts its "project" within an otherwise "readerly discourse": little "opaque materiality of language" in this instance, though we are invited to read some into it. In another, structurally similar instance, a relatively abstract and at first sight incongruous word, "corroborative," is included in an otherwise readerly, image-oriented poem, to create an evocative if slight discursive shift in synch with an abrupt adjustment of visual perspective:

corroborative mountainous panorama
POPLARS
facing away²⁰

"Corroborative" is a word most haikuists would steer clear of, but surely few would deny its effectiveness in, well, corroborating that "mountainous panorama," furthered by its contribution to the syllabic disproportion (and assonance) between the first and the second-to-third lines. At the same time, it stands out because usually we think of more abstract statements, or evidence, as "corroborative."

In my final, paired example a more "opaque" sort of corroboration takes place:

SNOW

snow covers the slopes covers the slopes
snow covers the slopes covers the slopes
snow covers the slopes covers the slopes
snow covers the slopes covers the slopes²¹

“Perhaps,” as Perelman suggests, this “can be read as miming the depth of falling snow ... but with the repetitions (between and within the lines) ‘snow’ and ‘slopes’ start to lose their referential bite” (47-8)—just, I would add, as snow loses its “bite” upon falling. “SNOW’s” loss of “referential bite” is figured more concisely in the following, separate poem, by the small word “with,” and in the significant difference between “the snow” and “snow”—as if the very essence of snow lay in such small aural and semantic shifts. It reads simply:

the snow with snow²²

The Haikuesque in Larry Eigner

By way of abrupt introduction to the more haikuesque poems of Larry Eigner, I’d like to juxtapose the following to the above:

the fleering snow
off the eaves
of the garage²³

Here the work of voice and ear achieves a more satisfying precision. The gradation away from the first, stressed “f” in “fleering” to the unstressed “ff” of “off” to the still gentler “of” (anticipated by the pivot-word “eaves”) takes on added precision against the “neutral” backdrop of “the’s”, and is complemented by the typographical indentations. Structurally, a great deal is going on in these 11 syllables; and yet they present only a single movement—just as, according to our model, “the best haiku” should. Indeed, a surprising number of the poems (written between 1959 and 1992) selected for inclusion in Eigner’s 1994 collection *Windows / Walls / Yard / Ways* could well qualify as haiku. Take, for example:

the wind stirs up
shadows on a bush
the fading sunlight fills (42)

or

politics
suspended in snow (72)

or

freedom aging
the air
of this mountain (177)

or

pruning the tree
clearing the skies (184)

A comment made by Eigner’s editor in a “Note on the Text” will come as no surprise to readers and writers of haiku: “It is difficult to suppress the inclination to remark that there is something improvisatorially ‘Eastern’ about these verses” (17). Likewise

his description, elsewhere, of the work as “strangely cleared of personality.”²⁴ Small surprise, also, that the editor in question is Robert Grenier.

The relatively traditional, haikuesque line arrangement in the first instance above is rare among Eigner’s shorter verses; typically, the spatial potential of the typewriter is intrinsic to “‘thinking with things as they exist’ (Zukofsky) ... while remembering that ‘only the Imagination is real’ (WCW)—hereabouts using his eyes & ears,” as Grenier puts it.²⁵ For Grenier, this approach is epitomized by this quasi-didactic poem of Eigner’s:

no past

no future

music

wake up in the head (15 & 53)

The poetics suggested by this poem corresponds quite closely to the following formulation as to “true haiku” by Robert Spiess: “The whole of life is in each moment, not in the past, not in the future—and thus a true haiku is vitally important because it is a moment of total and genuine awareness of the reality of the Now.”²⁶ In Eigner’s poem it is “music” (the most obviously abstract of the arts) which would perhaps “waken” awareness—implying a poetics of attentive *listening*. What differentiates Eigner’s characteristic approach from most haiku poets’ is his attempt to have each poem—as one of Eigner’s most attentive critics, Barrett Watten, puts it—“account for its own existence ... as Eigner says, ‘to find the weight of things.’”²⁷ This entails a more careful weighing of words, a closer engagement with the poem’s process, than is customary among haiku poets. The distribution of words on the page is crucial, measuring unpredictable correspondences between language and self and the external world. The words too are “things,” are not merely “seen through.” Take, for example:

(l i k e B u s o n
s a i d

light
Spring
dark
 old
 candle
 smell (54)

—echoing Buson’s *Lighting one candle / With another candle; / An evening of spring* (in R.H. Blyth’s translation).²⁸ Eigner has realigned the simplest elements of Buson’s poem almost entirely as nouns, at the same time bringing the poem to the sharper sensory focus of “smell.” The vertical one line arrangement, the words wisping hesitantly to the right, delays and heightens the perception. The singling out and unpretentious choice of words (note the simple contrast between “light” and “dark,” “Spring” and “old,” providing a structural base for and a link with “candle // smell”), the typographically half-empty, “lazily” aligned reference note; together these qualities seem to acknowledge that these are, after all, only words (partly derived

from another's words): words "telling the truth as if it were false," to appropriate Yatsuka Ishihara's belief as to "the essence of haiku."²⁹ They take on present "reality" in terms of what our "Imagination" makes of them. Otherwise (and also) they amount to nothing more than

pages and pages
brief things (73)

As if to underscore Ishihara's definition, there are instances in Eigner where the poem incorporates an "echo" of itself, as according to the traditional manner of reciting a haiku—with a difference:

Change of life? ah
the dark rain
against the dull trees

Living changes ah
the dark rain
against the dull trees (104)

The modified, "secondary" version indicates the provisional nature of "both" utterances: the truth must be told "as if it were false" because truth-telling is never final, never absolute.

"Like Buson said" demonstrates simply Barrett Watten's identification in Eigner of "the autonomy of the noun phrase in the argument of the poem"—which marks another striking point of correspondence with haiku:

But this is not a phenomenon of Eigner's work alone; the constructive potential of the noun phrase, often involving a blurred distinction between reference and predication, is common throughout the poetry of the postmodern period. For example, the lyrical quality of the haiku, popularized during that time, is basically that of the independent noun phrase. ... Moreover, this could be seen as a reaction to and rejection of the metaphysics of referentiality, canonized by the New Critics, that identified poetic means with such distancing devices as metaphor and irony while grounding meaning in a simplistic priority of the world over the poem. (Watten, 179)

Eigner's "syntactic jarring of the perceptual space" constructed by the poem (Watten, 176)—more extreme than that practised by most haiku poets—points up innovative possibilities for haiku in English. Take the following:

w i d e - r a n g i n g
cloud over
sunlit
somewhere enough for a storm (163)

The presentation of the image without preliminaries in the first two lines is common practice in the tradition of haiku, but a more abrupt "syntactic jarring" occurs between the third and fourth lines, where we are left wondering—left to imagine—what is "sunlit." A form of predication (incomplete and unemphatic without a verb) completes the tentative proposition of the poem: "cloud ... somewhere enough for a

storm.” The omission of a referent after “sunlit” underscores this tentativeness and heightens the sense of perceptual immediacy. Effectively, the “syntactic jarring” of the poem’s “perceptual space” serves to prevent a jarring of the “nounal state” into which the final thought dissolves—thereby achieving a haikuesque, Barthesian “suspension of meaning.”

In many other instances, Eigner introduces relatively abstract phrases, often of the sort that float around in one’s head, echoing with questionable meaning until set in juxtaposition with more concrete imagery—as in the following:

w o r l d w i t h o u t e n d

and the back yard
 phonopole
 branches
 sky
 transformer (90)

Notice how the arc of swiftly observed objects (both natural and man-made) *in* the “world” creeps back toward the *beginning*, left-hand margin, so heightening the contrast with the idea of a “world without end.” As mentioned earlier, the inclusion of such abstract, generalized ideas is not generally deemed “acceptable” in haiku, though I wonder whether, say, the opening line of Gary Hothams’ *this day in history-- / the air / the leaves fall through* is really any less abstract (despite the pointed “this”) than “world without end.”³⁰ Clearly there is a place in haiku for such abstractions, set in juxtaposition with more concrete images, resulting not only in a greater breadth but also a slightly more “opaque” or tangential vision, perhaps truer-to-life:

s t i l l
 s l i g h t
 the cat up
 the roof slope
 in under the pane
 reflecting the sun (181)

The image of the cat tucked away “under the pane” is clear enough, but the “moment” also entails the bringing of the perceptual “fact” to a focus, through the words “s t i l l” and “s l i g h t.” These words help to enact the uncertain process, as well as the final “product” of perception.

As perhaps the most haikuesque of the poets profiled in this paper, Eigner’s more senryu-like qualities also deserve mention. I’ll use the term loosely, to include moments of off-beat hilarity:

happy chicken
 in life
 must be
 tasting so good (130)

—though this could be read as satirizing both the callousness of meat-eaters and the humourlessness of the opposition! In a similar, but more poignant vein:

bowels
brewing
j'ai 50 ans (72)

—where the abrupt code-switch translates the otherwise rather unsavoury implications of “bowels // brewing.” Here’s an incredulous, yet utterly realistic observation on a related theme:

gale under the hedge
is that dog merely messing ?? (146)

More politicized and aphoristic :

O Jerusalem
fighting for a waterhole is one thing
a dispute over a graveyard is
something foolish (98)

Eigner’s insistence, like the haikuist’s, is on the priority of particulars over “absolutes” –which, as he begins another poem, “are nothing / like the sky / an / illusion” (101). Finally, in a lighter “philosophical” vein:

Drive you
up
the wall
is right
but it all seems to be
windows and doors
on top
too (49)

A lengthy conclusion to such a speculative essay (with “windows and doors / on top / too,” I hope) would be inappropriate. My broadest aim has been to challenge or at least complicate the received view that it is necessarily “concrete images, not abstract words, that carry the meaning and create the tension and atmosphere in haiku.” The fact that no clear line can be drawn between word and world can, as we’ve seen, enable new inflections of the haiku spirit. To explore these more language-oriented possibilities may well be to challenge the haiku community’s bias against the “intellective.” But more important is the bid for a broader *and* more discriminating approach to the open, continually evolving question of the avant-garde vs. the traditional, made in the belief that such questioning may itself be a vital sign of a genuine “tradition” of English-language haiku.

NOTES

1. John Ashbery, *Reported Sightings*, ed. David Bergman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 389.
2. As Ashbery points out, to the extent that the avant-garde can be discussed at all, it must constitute “a tradition of sorts.” The Tzara quotation may be found in full, and is further explicated in Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris, eds., *Poems for the Millenium* Vol. I (Berkeley, LA & London: University of California Press, 1995), 289.
3. *Poems for the Millenium*, 8.
4. Hiroaki Sato, “The HSA Definitions Reconsidered,” *Frogpond* XXII:3, 73.
5. John Ashbery, *A Wave* (Manchester: Carcanet Press), 1984, 37-8.
6. Roland Barthes, *Empire of Signs*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 70. Further references to this work are cited in the main text by author and page number.
7. Quoted by John Shoptaw in *On the Outside Looking Out* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1994), 3.
8. Ibid.
9. from the Introduction to Hosai Ozaki, *Right Under the Big Sky, I Don't Wear a Hat*, trans. Hiroaki Sato (Berkeley, California: Stone Bridge Press), 1993, 11.
10. See Shoptaw 260-1
11. *The Haiku Anthology*, ed. Cor van den Heuvel (New York and London: Norton, 1999), xxix.
12. Barthes makes the distinction between “readerly” and “writerly” texts in *S/Z*. Readerly texts, according to Barthes, “are products (and not productions),” whereas the writerly text aims “to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text.” See *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (London: Jonathon Cape, 1974), 4.
13. *Modern Haiku* XXIX, Summer 1998.
14. *In the American Tree*, ed. Ron Silliman (Orono, Maine: The National Poetry Foundation, 1986), 20-25. Ed. Bruce Andrews and Charles Bernstein, *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 235-7. Bob Perelman, *The Marginalization of Poetry* (Princeton, New Jersey: University of Princeton Press, 1996), 46-52. Further references to Perelman’s own words will be cited in the main text by author and page number. *Sentences* itself was published by The Whale Cloth Press, Cambridge, Mass. in 1978.
15. Gabriel Rosenstock, “The Stairway of Surprise,” *Blithe Spirit* 8:4, Dec. 1998, 21.
16. Quoted by Perelman, 48.
17. Quoted by Perelman, 47. A “moment ... an island in time” refers to David J. Platt’s preface to the British Haiku Society Member’s Anthology 1998, *Island*.
18. *In the American Tree*, 24.
19. *In the American Tree*, 22 and Perelman, 48.
20. *In the American Tree*, 20-21.
21. *In the American Tree*, 22; Perelman, 47; *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book*, 236.
22. *In the American Tree*, 20.
23. Larry Eigner, *Windows / Walls / Yard / Ways*, ed. Robert Grenier (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1994), 72. All further Eigner quotations are from this book, and are cited in the main text by page number only, in most cases.
24. Rothenberg and Joris, eds. *Poems for the Millenium* Vol. II (Berkeley, LA and London: University of California Press, 1998), 301.
25. From Grenier’s prefatory essay to Eigner, 15. Another useful “way in” to Eigner is Charles Bernstein’s piece, “Again Eigner,” in *My Way: Speeches and Poems* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), which is suggestive of further kinship with haiku. For instance: “This is a poetics of “noticing things”, where, as Eigner writes, “nothing is too dull with material (things, words) more and more dense around you.” But equally,

Eigner's is a poetics of coincidence, where "serendipity" (contingency) takes its rightful place as animating spirit, displacing the anthropocentric sentimentality of much of the verse of our time" (86).

26. Quoted by Bruce Ross (ed.) in his Introduction to *Haiku Moment* (Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1993), xiv.

27. Barrett Watten, *Total Syntax* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 190. Further references to this book are cited in the main text by author and page number.

28. R.H. Blyth, *Haiku*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1992), 394.

29. Quoted in *Blithe Spirit* 8/1, editorial.

30. Hotham's haiku can be found on page 94 of *Haiku Moment* (see note 23 above).

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