Plausible deniability: Nature as hypothesis in English-language haiku

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Introduction

A substitute title for this paper might be, 'Beyond the text horizon: Haiku, nature, and the hard problem of consciousness'. I was led to investigate the relationship between haiku, nature and consciousness, and in the course of research ended up in quite a different place than I had imagined. As a result, this paper has three objectives. The first concerns the problem of haiku definition in English, the second has to do with a few elementary possibilities for cognitive-poetic applications as a means of discovering notable linguistic features in haiku, and the third involves an explorative discussion of hypotheticality in haiku as psychological 'move', validating the commonly-held notion that haiku on the whole reveal essentials of nature for the reader. In this paper, 'nature' implies both 'the wild' as discussed in Gary Snyder (1996), and 'consciousness' as defined in Chalmers (1995a and 1995b). I will present an overview of each topic, with the hope of stimulating further discussion.

1. Struggle for definition

In a continual and periodically contentious search for the definition of a young genre, the recently re-written 2004 'Haiku Society of America (HSA) definitions' describe haiku as: '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'. As the terms 'imagistic language', 'essence', and 'intuitively linked' are not further explicated, the attempt at definition remains problematic, as it lacks specificity—an informed linguistic analysis may be of some benefit. An explanatory note to the definition adds, 'Most haiku in English consist of three unrhymed lines of seventeen or fewer syllables'. This formal limitation to syllable-range reflects the prevalent 11-12-syllable mean length of haiku, with exceptions. There has been no strict rule for syllable counting in English for several decades;[1] in any case, the concept that Japanese 5-7-5-*on* ('sounds') should equate to 5-7-5 English syllables, or any exact syllable-count, is a linguistic misnomer. Metrical templates exist however in both Japanese and English haiku, and these template metrics mirror each other, providing a successful model of emulation, inclusive of a range English syllables. The great majority of haiku in English serendipitously follow this metrical template (*cf.* Gilbert and Yoneoka, 2000).

Max Verhart's informative 2007 analytical survey based on written responses from 29 published haijin (the term, meaning 'haiku poet', is a loan word[2]) in 19 countries, sums up some generally held views concerning form. The parenthetical numbers below accord with the number of respondents in agreement on each summarized topic:

> Having looked over all twenty-nine definitions, one can conclude by simply counting that a majority of the haiku poets polled agree that [A] haiku is a short (20) form of poetry (15) [B] concerned with insight (19). To a lesser extent they say that a haiku is [C] based on a moment (7) [D] experienced in nature/[E]seasons (12) or [F] reality in general (9). One feature, [G] the haiku moment, seems to be contradicted by three others, who stress that haiku reflects the changing nature of things.

The survey reveals a degree of generalization which might surprise the linguist, given that the genre presents a number of distinctive linguistic and formal features. To briefly comment on these findings, [A] 'a short form of poetry', fits for the majority of poems published over the past

half-century or more, and it must be hard to find a poet willing to disagree that their work is [B] concerned with insight. Haijin do [G] disagree as to whether haiku is [C] based on a moment. Perhaps this is partly because it is unclear what a moment signifies, whether it be the reader's (subjective/cognitive?) moment, a naturalistic instant, image-schema moment, moment within possible worlds of the poem, etc. As seen in the examples just below, haiku do not necessarily reflect a moment as an instant of time. For instance, Gurga's use of 'forgotten for today' and Kacian's 'looking out…long after' are examples of extended or dislocated (nonlinear, indeterminate or paradoxical) temporality:

forgotten for today by the one true god autumn mosquito

(Gurga, 2003)

swallow flight
looking out the window
long after

(Kacian, 2006)

How long is 'today' for a god; or 'long after' for that birder—10 minutes, 10 days, 10 years?

The examples shown below likewise reveal temporal indeterminacy. Another theme in the Verhart survey [E] addresses 'season'. The great majority of traditional Japanese haiku relate to the seasons, as they contain kigo (a referentially complex word or phrase whose partial function provides seasonal indication (*cf.* Gilbert, 2006)), but many modern haiku in Japan and elsewhere present urban settings, topics such as war, dream-life, mytheme, political realties, surreal stylism, etc., and so lack a seasonal indication. As an aside, in the 17th century, Matsuo Bashô, in his selected-hokku collections maintained a non-kigo category, as did late-Meiji era reformer Masaoka Shiki (coiner of the term 'haiku'), who also penned a number of non-kigo haiku.

Even when a seasonal theme is indicated, as with 'athlete's foot' (summer) in Hoshinaga, seen below, the connotation in contemporary haiku often involves the distortion or semiotic transposition of the traditional kigo intention. Hoshinaga remarks that his kigo use is never purely realistic or naturalistic (Gilbert, 2004a). As this is true for any number of contemporary writers, the genre of contemporary haiku can therefore not be defined as a 'season literature'. This leaves [D] nature as an attribute ('experienced in nature', above)—begging the question of the definition of nature. Finally, in the above-quoted survey, haiku are concerned with [F] 'reality in general', and one wonders what this could not mean. In the following sections I hope to explore some avenues which may lead towards greater genre specificity.

1.1 *Alternativity*
Elements of alternativity are frequently found in contemporary haiku. The examples below were chosen to show a variety of features denoting alternativity, and illustrate several specific features: (1) cognitive estrangement; [3] (2) paradox; [4] (3) futurism; [5] (4) time-space subversion, [6] and (5) speculative mythopoesis. [7] Note also that two of the haiku are 'one-liners'. All the examples show cognitive estrangement to varying degrees:

(1)
after the bombing
ruins of a bridge
linked by the fog

(Simin, 2001)

(1+2)
The sweet smell
from an unknown tree
repulses the metropolis

(Falkman, 2004)

(1+2)
Athlete's foot itches –
still can't become
Hitler

(Hoshinaga, 2003)

(1+2)
A spring cliff –
in my cup
tears of a bird

(Yasui, 2003)

(1+4)
spring   wind –
I   too
am   dust

(Donegan, 1998)

(1+4)
pain fading the days back to wilderness

(Kacian, 2007)

(2+4)	(3+4) From the future a wind arrives that blows the waterfall apart	(5) Entering a dream of that Great Fish of the South wanting to cry out
leaves blowing into a sentence		
(Boldman, 1999)	(Natsuishi, 2004)	(Natsuishi, 2004)

Although a considerable amount of energy has been spent on haiku-definitional projects over the last decades, results to date lack adequate resolution. As a result, several critics have echoed Hiroaki Sato's statement, 'Today it may be possible to describe haiku but not to define it' (1999, p. 73). Examining the range of variation exhibited in the examples above, it may be that Sato is strictly correct as to definition but his silver lining is the implicit invitation to cognitive poetics in advancing avenues of linguistic description. Descriptions connoting those specific ways in which haiku utilise language in their creation of reader-effects would likely increase genre valuation and stimulate further interest in this young genre.

2. Out of the water — Towards linguistic depiction

Haiku are poems of consciousness. This has been said in a variety of ways, most notably by R. H. Blyth, the British-expatriate promoter of Zen Buddhist readings of haiku, in his voluminous translations and commentaries (1949-1952, etc.), and by the celebrated Beat writer Jack Kerouac, who was strongly influenced by Blyth, in terms of haiku. Through Kerouac's portrayal of poet and ecocritical writer Gary Snyder in his novel, *The Dharma Bums* (1958), new generations worldwide probably first come into contact with haiku as literature, Kerouac's books remaining perennial bestsellers.[8] Partly as a result of these two contemporary influences, the English-language haiku tradition from the 1950s on has conflated the concept of a zenlike 'moment' (an 'AH' or 'AHA!' moment) with the notion if not raison d'etre of haiku—though this idea is being questioned of late (such a 'moment' is not a central critical concern or main aesthetic within Japanese haiku studies). Leaving aside the relevance of the perspective, it is difficult to discern what 'zenlike' might actually mean. In any case, good haiku seem to possess both magnetism and a near-universal appeal, judging by the many countries and languages in which they now appear. A notable attribute the haiku genre is its ability to overleap borders of language, region and culture.

2.1 *Lily*

One of the most celebrated haiku in English is the following haiku, penned in 1963 by Nicholas Virgilio (1988):

> Lily:
> out of the water . . .
> out of itself

Some features commonly found in English-language haiku can be observed: a three-line tripartite meter, short-long-short line length, seasonal indication (lily), and kireji (a 'cutting word') designated by use of the colon after 'lily' (the semi-colon and especially en- or em-dash are also often used). The 'cutting word' is a subset (i.e. orthographic markup) existing within the wider concept of *kire* ('cutting')—a cutting of the poem in time and space which can occur through multiple linguistic and semantic disjunctions apart from, and in place of, kireji. Note that the examples of Simin, Falkman, Kacian, Boldman and Natsuishi, shown above, do not contain kireji but do exhibit *kire*. In 'lily' is the addition of ellipsis, a relatively unusual feature, as kireji is already found. The poem also successfully applies the technique of rhythmic substitution—the rhythmic repetition in the repeating phrase 'out of' in the last two lines (*cf*. Gilbert, 2004b). Virgilio's haiku is a good example of both the effect and

effectiveness of kireji in English. If this text were to be interpreted prosaically, it might look something like:

1) [A] lily: [it comes/rises] out of the water [and/also (rises/comes) (to be)/(is connected with the idea of arising)] out of itself.

2) [(I/one can) notice that the)/(There is a)] lily [(I am observing/observed)/(which is growing/has grown)] out the water [and] out of itself (too/as well/also).

As can be seen by the 'filled in' sentence-examples 1) & 2) above, haiku in general offer the reader propositions via a series of phrasal and image 'fragments'. 'Formal incompleteness' might well be included in future definitions of verity. In 'lily' there are propositions made concerning being, identity and becoming, which, along with the lily itself, become main loci. In fact, part of the delight in the haiku is the dynamic imbalance between foreground and background. Is the main locus the flower—or identity; birth and growth, or—being and non-being? Figure and ground are at any moment of reading both distinct *and* mutating. Because haiku are extremely brief, the reader not only reads but also re-reads. As re-reading occurs, further thoughts and feelings arise, interpretations build up, while some are discarded; you could say that the poem grows out of itself—thought grows out of itself, feeling grows out of itself, the image grows out of itself, imagination grows out of itself (and/or out of the poem). I term this process 'misreading as meaning', because haiku resist easy solutions as to meaning, resisting reader attempts to ferret out singular meanings or messages, scenes, worlds, or any singular, 'true' interpretation.

Acts of 'misreading as meaning' are abetted by absent syntactic elements, as can be seen in sentence-example 1) which has filled-in elements implied by punctuation and lineation in the haiku. Sentence-example 2) represents an attempt at an even more fulsome prose. This functional compositional-stylism of missing syntactic elements and semantic language-gaps in haiku form has been described as *katakoto*: 'fragmentary or "broken" language' (*lit.* 'baby talk'), coined by Tsubouchi Nenten (2007).

The two sentence-examples reveal that verbal action [growth], and verbs themselves are usually implicit rather than overt in haiku, and that syntactic and semantic compression is a common feature. The deictic 'I' is rarely stated in haiku, nor are pronouns commonly found. These schemes represent two of the ways in which haiku connote objectivity between imaged object(s) and experiencer/reader.

It is notable that neither 1) nor 2) above are able to prosaically inscribe the kireji in the haiku, represented by the colon in the poem. The colon is then an idiosyncratic genre-specific modifier, designed (in this case) to emulate the character '*ya*' in Japanese, 'a post-position particle used to express emotion, inspiration, feeling' (Hasegawa, 2007). As the kireji 'cuts the ku'—that is, breaks the haiku apart spatially, psychologically and temporally, its semantic connotation might be illustrated as:

[there is a] lily

[something is] out of the water
[something is] out of itself

Something, but not the lily. The lily, as a realistic, deictic object, indicating place and world as *origo* is cut off from the last two lines. So, what is it that is 'out of the water'? Lily-ness, perhaps. The quality of what it is to be a lily. We see that kireji indicates it cannot be 'the lily out of the water'—as realism or literalism. If this were the case, there would be no colon and likely no lineation between first and second lines. Something else is meant. As Heidegger stated, we may liken it to the 'thingness' of things.[9] So, primary disjunction in haiku is often brought by kireji (colon). This linguistic role seems unique to haiku, among poetic genres.

Certainly, *kire* (cutting) is a haiku fundament. It is the semantic act of cutting which paradoxically forges the sense of non-duality, that is, a reader-sense of coherence arising from the fragmentary aspects (*katakoto*) of haiku. If coherence did not occur, we would not have a poem, but merely a grouping of linguistic fragments. Why and how does coherence in haiku occur? While this experience cannot easily be defined, the celebrated 'lily' haiku is acknowledged as an exemplar. There is an

aspect of what I term hypotheticality occurring between the first and second lines, as 'lily' becomes something like (the lily quality of) which it is to be 'out of the water'. But what of the third line? Here, impossibility or paradox arises, revealing a high degree of unusuality and alternativity, spawning metaphoric identity: what it is to be the quality of something of itself coming out of the origin of its selfness.

And, what, or how, might this 'image'? How does the haiku cohere? The final 'outcome' or ending is hypothetical—an imaging (process) incomplete as to meaning—as the poem and its languaged paradox trail off into space—and then return to 'lily' at the beginning again, in an uroboros-like circulation of re-reading.

2.2 *Out of itself . . .*
The haiku apparently centres on 'lily', remaining sensual and somewhat deictic ('lily' is with you right to the end), yet is *also* paradoxical as to action, and *also* metaphorical, due to the irruption of realism (the lily does not literally come out of itself). We can say as a result that the deictic recedes to a contextual resonance rather than figurative ground. At the same time, there exists another figuration: a pond (indicative of Bashô's celebrated 'old pond' haiku), as background—but this image remains halfway-seen, as the body of water remains unstated. The lily could as well be a product of hydroponics. This tableau contains then both realism and surrealism in a near-symbolism, existing in a psychological space between realism, fantasy and dream; a realm which psychologist James Hillman discusses as daimonic (*cf.* 'On Psychological Creativity,' 1998), an aspect of soul which 'deepens events into experiences' (2004, p. 26). I speculate that haiku often begin with 'objective' facts: things, objects, events, and psychological deepening proceeds; that is, following Hillman, objective 'events' become experiences via a process of deepening (are ensouled, in the argot of archetypal psychology).

The haiku ends with a multi-layered experience of realistic image (e.g. lily, lily pond), imagined sensation/perceptions of qualities (lily-ness-coming out-of-water-ness), and impossible tautological truths (how can what it is come out of what it is?). In actuality, there is no 'come' or 'become' in the haiku, only the repetition of the phrasal 'out of'. The semantic idea of coming or going or any evolving of image-schema remains reader-interpretive—perceived movements or actions between planes of reality rely on absences or lacunae between language parts. As a result, there impends a 'languaging' which extends beyond the given text-language and image-schema—this languaging aspect necessarily arises in searching out coherence.

In a sense, haiku evoke islands of cognitive coherence (those language parts and image-constellations which follow familiar lexical and syntactic rules), while by contrast cognitive disjunction (dissonance, alternativity) is evoked via lacunae, *kire*, and 'misreadings as meaning' evolving in reader-consciousness. In discussing the *via negativa* of haiku, Tsubouchi Nenten applies the term *katakoto*; Hasegawa Kai uses *ma* (especially psychological *ma*, connoting a 'psycho-poetic interval of betweenness'[10]); Natsuishi comments that, 'the nothing (*nihil*) can connect with everything, or turn into a more positive philosophy. Through negative stages, it is possible to reach some positive dimension' (2004, p. 68); and American haiku author and critic Jim Kacian writes in his prose poem, 'Presence', 'In this way haiku can be poised between language and silence / In this way it can suggest the centrality of silence' (2006, p. 13). Excellent haiku evoke coherence beyond the text horizon.

2.3 *Like a lily — 'kire' and the hard problem of consciousness*
It is *kire* which most strongly separates haiku from epithet, and this key semantic feature is applied via a variety of linguistic techniques (*cf.* Gilbert, 2004b). We recognise haiku as necessitating extreme concision, minimalism, and attributes of 'image'— but without *kire*, we do not have haiku. *Kire* can be taken as 'cuttings' or 'irruptions', or strong, abrupt 'distortions' of space/time/worlds in reader consciousness.

Having a sense of disjunction, and the separation of realistic object and deixis from its ending fruition, in 'lily' the last line applies the reflexive pronoun 'itself' to create a paradoxical image, neither realist nor surrealist. What is the thing that is a 'self' of 'it'? Of course, it is a lily, only the lily, but it is also what it is to be like a lily in its thingly character. A further exegesis of this haiku approaches the centre of a fundamental debate in cognitive science and the philosophy of consciousness: what it is like to be something that experiences the feeling of experience. A well-known paper by Nagel (1974) asked the question, 'What is it like to be a bat?'; and David

Chandler developed this problem for cognitive science, coining the now-legendary phrase 'the hard problem of consciousness':

> The really hard problem of consciousness is the problem of *experience*. When we think and perceive, there is a whir of information-processing, but there is also a subjective aspect. As Nagel (1974) has put it, there is *something it is like* to be a conscious organism. This subjective aspect is experience. When we see, for example, we experience visual sensations: the felt quality of redness, the experience of dark and light, the quality of depth in a visual field. Other experiences go along with perception in different modalities: the sound of a clarinet, the smell of mothballs. Then there are bodily sensations, from pains to orgasms; mental images that are conjured up internally; the felt quality of emotion, and the experience of a stream of conscious thought. What unites all of these states is that there is something it is like to be in them. All of them are states of experience. It is undeniable that some organisms are subjects of experience. But the question of how it is that these systems are subjects of experience is perplexing. Why is it that when our cognitive systems engage in visual and auditory information-processing, we have visual or auditory experience: the quality of deep blue, the sensation of middle C? How can we explain why there is something it is like to entertain a mental image, or to experience an emotion? (1995a)

The problem is 'hard' because *experience* cannot yet be explained or defined by cognitive science. Generally speaking, haiku formally address the hypothetical question posed by the hard problem of consciousness: of how it is to know the feeling of how consciousness is,[11] apart from the 'easy problems' (see the Addendum for these), via the creation of paradox, ambiguity and hypotheticality, so that image foregrounding, linguistic seriality, image-schemas, become weak, non-existent, or ambivalent. In consequence, a *via negativa* arises. That is, a haiku act as a finger or peninsula of language, jutting out into languageless potentialities in which something inexplicable to cognitive science (indefinite, non-definable) is occurring. One may say that the haiku text points beyond itself. Not every haiku achieves this locus in a strong manner, yet those that do so may represent a limit for cognitive poetics, an idea I would like to pursue in the remainder of this paper.

3. Putting the period deeply: Hypotheticality and the hard problem

To the extent there is reader/poem-coherence experienced in haiku which present with disjunctive, fragmentary language and *kire*, haiku propositions evoke Chandler's hard problem—how it is to know the feeling of how consciousness is—and are intriguingly separated from the more 'easy' problems of consciousness. I would like specifically to show how a dualistic cognitive fundament, the 'discrimination of figure and ground' (and those modes of attention which create this orientation), can be subverted within the haiku landscape,[12] by discussing an example presenting an abundance of hypotheticality. Easy aspects of consciousness are not negated in the evocation of hypotheticality in haiku, but rather relegated to the background, much like the landscape in the rear view of a car mirror. We know what got us to where we are, but coherence in the poem does not seem to lie in returning to those previous cognitive stages.

While it is impossible to address the hard problem directly, an example demonstrating how haiku bring the reader toward the phenomenology of the hard problem via adumbrations of the paradoxical and hypothetical can be found in this haiku by Natsuishi Ban'ya:

> *Shin-tairiku no chûshin no sabaku ni fukaku kuten o ute* (24-*on*) (2004, p. 24)[13]

> Put a period deeply
> into the desert
> at the center of the new world

'Put a period' begins with what seems a trivial action: put a period somewhere. Usually we put them on paper; yet the second line represents a left turn with 'into the desert', reversing semantic expectation. Putting a period 'into the desert' evokes a different line of image, action and form from what might conceivably be done with a literal, textual 'period'. And so, realism is subverted. The sense of paradox is heightened by the imperative grammatical tone. The poem is so short that while thinking this part out I have scanned the whole several times. Though having read this poem some

years ago, I continue to formulate possible worlds: the aspect of explaining, in fact, the 'explainer' of intellect rides behind the propulsive process of reading/misreading.

3.1 *Figure and ground as Möbius*

Some of my hypothetical speculations concerning this haiku are that the period implies 'end of an era,' death, finality, a flag (of some sort), a statement; the desert is real and inhabits the new world, or a speculative new world; is an actual place (e.g. Death Valley, the high desert of Nasca); the haiku is political, 'center of the desert' represents America's current government and its war in Iraq; the period is a wounding; the haiku is historical, relating to Columbus' 'discovery' and eurocentrism; so, the haiku is revisionist and ironic, accessing 'new world' in a post-colonial manner; the haiku landscape is that of another planet awaiting discovery; an alternative universe where putting a period exactly thus makes good sense; the haiku is a surreal remembrance, a novel myth. Alternativity spawns alternativities; the period is wherever my attention is.

There are a number of linguistic features which act as semantic attractors here—as much as the poem resists rational sense, it also resists non-sense. Some of these cognitive attributes are that,

1) Something is being done (i.e. use of 'put', 'into', 'of' in prepositional phrases).
2) There is a desert (geography).
3) There is a period (a common noun).
4) 'New world' is a familiar term (compound noun) for a place and/or idea of region.

Due to the use and arrangement of the above four elements (representing actions, things, biome, and region), the haiku stubbornly resists being taken as nonsense, as it applies familiar notions and deixis. Nonetheless, the haiku grazes the nonsensical—one thing this poem is not doing is putting a period anywhere — but then again . . . This flashing back and forth, between sense and the *nons-* of sense; between meaning and its irruption; between Newtonian time, space and form, and its quotidian counterpoints is emblematic of *gendai* (modern) haiku in Japan and a growing number of '21st-century modern' haiku in English.[14]

The text has an uroborous-like quality, turning round on itself like a Möbius strip. An uroborous is a pattern of infinite progression and return—a Möbius has the additional property of collapsing dimension (two surfaces become apparently one). In that attention itself becomes the primary focal point of the haiku lens, the familiar scenario of figure/ground polarity collapses into the 'zero dimension' of attention itself.[15] The uroborous and Möbius are paradoxical, yet strong paradoxicality can impend in a form of 14 words within a pattern of 7-5-8 syllables.

3.2 *MUMS: Modes of provocational forgetting*

How does the reader organize cognitive landscapes, in reading this haiku? Are you sussing out how the poem is organized? How many times have you scanned the poem so far? Has the sense of figure, ground, and meaning been shifting and shuffling with re-reading? Have a variety of propositions and possible worlds been formulated, with certain image-schemas discarded—some of which are revisited? I think of this process as 'misreading as meaning'. To the extent such a cognitive process becomes potent as a foreground, an interesting dance develops between multiple hypothetical strands of feeling, image-schemae and logics—a dance of MUMS: 'Modes of provocational forgetting under the influence of creative misreading(s)'.

3.2.1 *Defamiliarization*

At least three cognitive aspects seem involved in provocational forgetting. The first involves iterative experiences of *defamiliarization*, as the journey of 'misreading as meaning' continues. This is the provocational aspect of a MUM. Defamiliarization occurs in terms of semantics, syntax, schema, and deixis. As possible worlds rise, are discarded, mutate, and are re-run, the reader swims on through various novel landscapes, and so, normative grammatical and semiotic structures are usurped ('forgotten' or left behind, so to say) as novel cognitive structures and orientations arise and evolve. Development, in this sense, involves 'dishabituation' (a variety of forgetting; loss of prevailing pattern).

3.2.2 *Forgetting to learn*

A second aspect of 'forgetting' was advanced some decades ago by the noted neurologist Julian Jaynes (1976), who outlined stages of cognitive learning in his speculative work on the evolution of subjective consciousness. In Chapter 1, 'The Consciousness of Consciousness' (pp. 21-47) Jaynes explains that as elementary steps of a learned process become unconscious (lost to or 'forgotten' by consciousness), this developing unconsciousness allows for an increase in expertise (i.e., without increasing unconsciousness expertise could not develop). In his example, if an accomplished pianist were to suddenly have to consciously experience the beginner-level of playing—where to place each finger on each key—there would be a return to a novice level of performance. Mastery relies on a great deal of information, at one time conscious, having become unconscious. This idea seems a commonsense truth for craft in general. Corollary to this is the concept of reader-expertise in haiku reading—there is a developmental curve involving iterations of provocational forgetting in the evolution of reader engagement.

3.2.3 *Foraging anamnesis*

Another aspect of forgetting, indicative of psychic potency, can be illustrated via the perspective of depth psychology. In a primary mythos of the underworld journey, taken from classical Greece, there exist two great underworld rivers/goddesses: Lethe and Mnemosyne. It was said that departed souls must first drink the waters of Lethe (forgetting, amnesia), before travelling through her lands to finally drink the waters of Mnemosyne (anamnesis) (*cf.* Hesiod, *Theogony*).[16] To briefly summarize the concept, via the 'forgetting' of certain cognitive patterns and structures (cognitive amnesia)—a variety of psychological death (underworld rivers convey *thanatos*)—*divergent orders of recollection* (re-memberings consequent to one's descent) are inspired; the goddess Mnemosyne is mother to the Muses.

Altogether, taking this view of the forgetting/re-membering process, finding or resolving coherence first seems to involve an iterative process of defamiliarization and forgetting(s), antecedent to re-memberings, anamnesis. Unfortunately, a continuation of this topic is beyond the scope of this paper.[17]

3.2.4 *(Re)birthing coherence*

Perhaps haiku resist strict definition in that the main locus of *poesis*—experiences of coherence—cannot be adequately described in language. Cognitive-poetic aspects such as MUMS can however offer a process-description of possible reader-phenomenology. There seem useful hints to the phenomenology of consciousness within haiku coherence, as experiences birthing novel modalities (anamnesis) of experience/remembrance. This may be an unsurprising statement for art in general; however, it is really about how the MUMS get you there. That is, it is the unique, sensate taste of poetic *experience* within the haiku cosmos that matters, pragmatically.

3.3 *Cognitive reflexivity — Metaxic ambiguity*

Peter Stockwell in his 'Surreal Figures' (2003, p. 15) outlines five psychological aspects involved in *selective attention* (an 'easy' problem of consciousness) based on classical Gestalt psychology. Here, each of these is summed up, with examples given from 'Put a period':

1) Elements positioned close to each other will be treated as having a unified relationship.
  Ex. (put/period), (deeply/desert), (centre/world)

2) Elements that appear similar will be assumed to be related.
  Ex. The nouns: (period/desert/new world)

3) Figures with a perceived closed boundary will be seen as unified.
  Ex. (Into the desert/at the centre)

4) Elements with few interruptions between them will be seen as connected.
  As the haiku form is extremely brief, *all* elements have few interruptions between them.

5) Elements which seem to share a function are treated together.
　Ex. (Put/deeply/into/at), (a period/a desert/a centre/the new)

Even with these gestalt-semantic cues, 'Put a period deeply' has no solution, and does not resolve as to figure and ground, as it contains several layers and types of abrupt paradox (and any given paradox may be paradoxical to the others)—and yet—cohesion. The phrasal fragments contain commonplace semantic, syntactic, and logical elements, as well as simple, realistic images (period, desert, new world). There is also a high degree of *cognitive reflexivity*, which I ascribe as the evolving awareness in reader experience of 'imagining as imagining, reading as reading, knowing as knowing' (the 'out of the water / out of itself' effect).

There is another layer to this reader experience, the psychological space that opens up within the disjunctive paradoxicality of real semantic notions exhibiting incompleteness—a space wherein the known, and the knower of *what* is known, have become unblended or unbonded. Hillman refers to this as *metaxic*. 'Metaxy denotes the intermediate realm between two opposites' (1966, pp. 379-80). To enter this psychological realm of 'between' is more or less equivalent to Hasegawa Kai's depiction of 'psychological *ma*' in haiku, mentioned earlier. As metaxic ambiguity occupies consciousness, a variety of psychological space opens, which Karl Kerenyi denotes as '*das Moment des Unerklarlichen*: the moment of the inexplicable.[18] This interval of the space of 'betweenness', *psychological inexplicability as poesis*, represents a journey between haiku and reader.

Cognitive reflexivity is a heightening of cognitive self-awareness, yet there is incompleteness and paradox which likewise evolves, due to disjunctive paradoxicality. At this point we have come to a psychological 'moment' (*das Moment des Unerklarlichen*), 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. A 'moment of the inexplicable' is a bit deceptive—the plural form, 'moments of', and alternatively, 'field of', or 'landscape of', could be substituted. My approach here, utilizing cognitive poetics and western depth-psychological notions, hopefully retains a sense of the complexity of haiku-poetic experience. In Japanese, the term *kire*, 'cutting', described (in brief) as a cutting through time and space, is an elegantly concise description for a complex, indeterminate, cognitive process. For Bashô, *kire* was at the heart of his haiku aesthetic.[19] That this term and its implications remain undiscussed in English is indicative of a knowledge gap that exists in Anglo-American haiku studies concerning haiku fundaments.

A central feature of haiku exhibiting strong hypotheticality is that they ride the horizon-line of inexplicability while also diving in. Yet if inexplicability alone were itself the outcome, confusion would result rather than coherence. This issue of confusion versus coherence leads to my final topic, the relationship between haiku and nature. It may be that the haiku journey here encounters something wild, unbounded, and unconfined by normative structures.

4. The grain of things: Nature and haiku

Plausible deniability in haiku has to do with how haiku articulate multiple possible worlds, each one hypothetical, plausible, and at the same time also deniable as to its existence or viability, in relation to the text. What does all this have to do with nature? Gary Snyder writes,

> So I will argue that consciousness, mind, imagination, and language are fundamentally wild. "Wild" as in wild ecosystems—richly interconnected, interdependent, and incredibly complex. Diverse, ancient, and full of information. At root the real question is how we understand the concepts of order, freedom, and chaos. Is art an imposition of order on chaotic nature, or is art (also read "language") a matter of discovering the grain of things, of uncovering the measured chaos that structures the natural world? Observation, reflection, and practice show artistic process to be the latter (1996, p. 168).

That we are fundamentally wild: language and consciousness are fundamentally wild. Snyder's depiction of the wild differs from the idea of chaos as an inchoate order of being. Echoing classical Greek ideas of beauty as 'pattern', Snyder writes of 'a measured chaos that structures the natural world'; that there arises in consequence, 'the grain of things . . . uncovering the measured chaos that structures' the pattern, forms, and (cybernetic) structures evident in what is wild in universe.

Heidegger likewise indicates an aspect of wildness in that things in their fundamental nature (things in their thingness; lily in its lilyness; to 'put a period deeply'), resist and evade thought, being 'seldom expressible':

> This exertion of thought seems to meet with its greatest resistance in defining the thingness of the thing. . . . The unpretentious thing evades thought most stubbornly. Or can it be that this self-refusal of the mere thing, this self-contained independence, belongs precisely to the nature of the thing. . . That the thingness of the thing is particularly difficult to express and only seldom expressible is infallibly documented. . . . The world is not the mere collection of the countable or uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are just there. But neither is it a merely imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of given things. *The world worlds*, and is more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject . . . (2001, pp. 31, 43).

The '*world worlds*', as a verb: 'world is never an object that stands before us' because it is 'ever-nonobjective' and we ourselves are subject to this nonobjectivity; 'world' ('being', as Chalmer's *experience*) can, then, be neither imagined schema nor the representations of given things—Heidegger's idea seems similar to Snyder's 'measured chaos' presenting 'the grain of things'. Both seek a non-dual, integral continuum for nature and consciousness—a continuum which evades, resists or otherwise challenges its easy problems. Snyder's 'nature' and Heidegger's 'world' indicate epistemological spaces in which the wild is fundamentally extra-human, extra-rational/objective, and primary rather than primitive.

The issues raised are relevant to a description of haiku and nature, in that they approach the difficulty of inscribing nature and consciousness within a single phenomenological field. Perhaps it is only via forms of psychological inexplicability as *poesis* that the reader is able to be led through a labyrinth of creative, hypothetical image-schema, away from the easy problems of consciousness toward the intimate wilderness of 'what it is like to be something', apart from the functional utility of 'modes of attention' ('the object that stands before us . . . tangible and perceptible'). Looking at Snyder's definition of 'wild ecosystems' there are strong parallels with the cognitive-poetic haiku landscape: richly interconnected, multifarious, interdependent.

Snyder also discusses an historic Anglo-European bias which has opposed civilization to nature; civilization as a garden which keeps nature at bay, and out. From Snyder's same essay:

> Many figures in the literary field, the critical establishment, and the academy are not enthralled with the natural world, and indeed some positively doubt its worth when compared to human achievement. Take this quote from Howard Nemerov, a good poet and a decent man:
>
> *Civilization, mirrored in language, is the garden where relations grow; outside the garden is the wild abyss.*
>
> The unexamined assumptions here are fascinating. They are, at worst, crystallizations of the erroneous views that enable the developed world to displace Third and Fourth World peoples and overexploit nature globally. Nemerov here proposes that language is somehow implicitly civilized or civilizing, that civilization is orderly, that intrahuman relations are the pinnacle of experience (as though all of us, and all life on the planet, were not interrelated), and that "wild" means "abyssal," disorderly, and chaotic (p. 166).

In contemporary haiku a shape-shifting landscape develops, partly form and image, partly uncertainty, partly remembrance, partly those ideas and feelings which recede, as palimpsest—impelling the inexplicable, through cutting (*kire*). When haiku are described as poems evoking nature, this sensibility may at root be related not as much to evocations of season or naturalism, as an evolving process of indeterminacy in reader-experience, evoking a sense of interdependent systems, 'ecological' landscapes, and non-duality inhabited via metaxy. As such, the move toward alienation exhibited by textual language (described in Abram, 2005; Manes, 1992) becomes a primary poetic subject and subversive mode of exploration in modern haiku, which uses language with the intention

to recast the ground of the natural in both literature and the reader. This intention locates haiku in English uniquely within the purview of ecopoetics and the academic field of literature and the environment.

Conclusion

In this paper, some possibilities have been offered which may lead to more specific definitions of the haiku genre (e.g. formal incompleteness, *kire* stylism*, katakoto,* modes of plausibly-deniable hypotheticality, MUMS, metaxic ambiguity). Also, several unique features of contemporary haiku such as time dilation, futurism, mythopoetic realities, spontaneously generating alternate universes, and the positing of unique physical laws and behaviours have been examined, as they occur in the course of generating plausibly deniable disjunct paradoxicality.

Haiku which utilise *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. Although who we are and what we become within points of poetic coherence arising out of disjunctive hypotheticality cannot yet be described by cognitive poetics, modes and stages of reader phenomena in haiku may be outlined and the genre more specifically defined. I would like to end with a remark by C. G. Jung (1969, p. 420) in relation to the hard problem of consciousness, which seems relevant to evocations of the wild in haiku: 'The psyche and its contents are the only reality which is given to us *without a medium*'.

Acknowledgements

Addendum

David Chalmers briefly defines the hard problem of consciousness, and the difference between the easy problems of consciousness and the 'hard problem' (1995a, excerpted from pp. 200-202):

> There is not just one problem of consciousness. "Consciousness" is an ambiguous term, referring to many different phenomena. Each of these phenomena needs to be explained, but some are easier to explain than others. At the start, it is useful to divide the associated problems of consciousness into 'hard' and 'easy' problems. The easy problems of consciousness are those that seem directly susceptible to the standard methods of cognitive science, whereby a phenomenon is explained in terms of computational or neural mechanisms. The hard problems are those that seem to resist those methods.
> The easy problems of consciousness include those of explaining the following phenomena:
>
> - the ability to discriminate, categorise, and react to environmental stimuli;
> - the integration of information by a cognitive system;
> - the reportability of mental states;
> - the ability of a system to access its own internal states;
> - the focus of attention;
> - the deliberate control of behaviour;
> - the difference between wakefulness and sleep.
>
> All of these phenomena are associated with the notion of consciousness. For example, one sometimes says that a mental state is conscious when it is verbally reportable, or when it is internally accessible. Sometimes a system is said to be conscious of some information when it has the ability to react on the basis of that information, or, more strongly, when it attends to that information, or when it can integrate that information and exploit it in the sophisticated control of behaviour. We sometimes

say that an action is conscious precisely when it is deliberate. Often, we say that an organism is conscious as another way of saying that it is awake.

There is no real issue about whether *these* phenomena can be explained scientifically. All of them are straightforwardly vulnerable to explanation in terms of computational or neural mechanisms. . . . In each case, an appropriate cognitive or neurophysiological model can clearly do the explanatory work. . . .

The really hard problem of consciousness is the problem of *experience*. When we think and perceive, there is a whir of information-processing, but there is also a subjective aspect. As Nagel (1974) has put it, there is *something it is like* to be a conscious organism. This subjective aspect is experience.

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ENDNOTES

[1] In America, the growing pains of the new genre are hinted at by Anita Virgil, one of the early leaders of the HSA, in a recent interview discussing her experiences, circa 1971 (Wilson, 2005):

> Hard as it was for many to take, and hard as it was to convince many practitioners of this simplistic adaptative [*sic*] 'solution' to writing haiku in another language (and, unfortunately, to this day in the American educational system it persists!), it meant moving away from the dictum of 17 English-language—and later foreign-language—'syllables'! Throughout the book *The Japanese Haiku* by Kenneth Yasuda, the top of every page all the way across reads: 57557557557557557557. And at the back of the book where he had his own haiku in English, he wrote them in 17 English syllables. How is a beginner to ever shake this off? Talk about subliminal messages! Yes, to the Japanese it had relevance, but to some of us outlanders, it was not the whole story. It was rarely applicable when writing in English.
> In critiquing the poems of that era, it was not too difficult to see where the writers in English added words SIMPLY FOR THE SAKE OF MAKING THAT 17-SYLLABLE COUNT. It was referred to as "padding." In most every instance, these 'extra' words were no more than redundancies. They did not add to the poem. To the contrary, they weakened the impact by dragging it out, repeating the same idea. Since the greatest beauty of the haiku for me is their power of concision with which one can open up worlds of implication, suggestion—if one selects only the essence of the moving experience that gave rise to the poem, this verbosity was a real handicap. In the main line poetry circles of those days (and still today somewhat) American haiku was totally disdained. Ignored. Not published. Dismissed.

[2] The term 'haijin' is not italicized as it has become a loan word within haiku studies. Other terms, such as *kire* ('cutting') have not yet taken hold, so they remain in italics.

[3] 'Cognitive estrangement' is a term coined by Darko Suvin (b. 1930, Professor Emeritus, McGill University), primarily in relation to science fiction and fantasy genre-studies, which implies an awareness on the part of the reader that the text does not present a world as familiarly known, but rather a cosmos whose alternative phenomena, through the displacement of empirical and materialist views, impels a reconsideration of habitual, scientifically-based perspectives.

[4] 'Paradox' here indicates causal or ontological impossibility; e.g. a tree smell cannot repulse a metropolis (in Boldman), nor can one (still can't) 'become Hitler' (in Hoshinaga), or 'fading the days' in Kacian, etc.

[5] 'Futurism' in this context indicates a time set in the future which is imbued with poetic, if not visionary (or at minimum speculative) possibility.

[6] 'Time-space subversion' indicates the upsetting, overthrow or even destruction of a space-time continuum via the images presented in a given haiku. For instance, in Donegan, 'spring wind' exists in a time-space framework in which a cogent author writes a haiku—thus, 'I…am dust' subverts the time-space of both spring as season, and the author's lifetime as a cogent being (there is in addition the paradox of wind as dust); in Kacian, 'pain' is experienced by a cogent author, thus it embodies a specific deixis, which is subverted by a possible world in which pain, or its causal result is 'fading the days' back to wilderness—which, whatever this outcome may be, is no longer framed by the time or space of the antecedent deixis.

[7] 'Speculative mythopoesis' involves novel, hypothetical mythic creation.

[8] Two different editions of Kerouac's *On The Road* are currently ranked within the top 1500 best-selling books, and *The Dharma Bums* is ranked just over 6000, at amazon.com [Accessed 12 November 2007].

[9] In 'The Origin of the Work of Art', Heidegger (2001) describes the 'thingly character' of things (an evolution of the Kantian 'thing-as-such') as a phenomenological arising apart from any particular set of sense-data given by that thing, thus implying that 'the sense of what it is like to be something' (which

David Chandler discusses as the hard problem of consciousness), is intimately fused with the most basic apperception of image. See Section 4 of this paper for a further quotation of Heidegger.

[10] This is my interpretive translation; Hasegawa's appellation of *ma* presents a conundrum for the translator.

[11] The leading explicator of the hard problem of consciousness, David Chalmers (Professor of Philosophy; Director, Centre for Consciousness Studies, Australia National University), defines the hard problem of consciousness as, 'explaining why we have qualitative phenomenal experiences. This is contrasted with the "easy problems" of explaining the ability to discriminate, integrate information, report mental states, focus attention, etc'. Easy problems are easy because all that is required for their solution is to specify a physical mechanism that can perform the function. Hard problems are distinct from this set, 'because they persist even when the performance of all the relevant functions is explained' (*Cf.* David Chalmers, 1995a and 1995b. For additional information visit: http://consc.net/Chalmers, and Wikipedia: http://tinyurl.com/2ws2zq [Accessed 12 November 2007].)

[12] Please see the Addendum for a further explanation of differences between the hard and easy problems of consciousness, as well as Chalmers, 1995a, 1995b, 2008 (forthcoming in March).

[13] This haiku is published in English translation from the Japanese. Ban'ya was a co-translator, and had final approval of the translation. The romaji was included in the published English-language text.

[14] I have borrowed Marjorie Perloff's coinage, from her overview of contemporary poetry, *21st Century Modernism* (2002). In the Introduction, Perloff addresses the 'unambitious attitude' found in much contemporary poetry:

> [O]ne need no longer pay lip service to the tired dichotomy that has governed our discussion of twentieth-century poetics for much too long—that between modernism and postmodernism. . . . Far from being irrelevant and obsolete, the aesthetic of early modernism has provided the seeds of the materialist poetic which is increasingly our own. . . . what interests me is the unfulfilled promise of the modernist (as of the classical) poetic impulse in so much of what passes for poetry today—a poetry singularly unambitious in its attitude to the materiality of the text, to what Khlebnikov described as the recognition that "the roots of words are only phantoms behind which stand the strings of the alphabet." It is this particular legacy of early modernism that the new poetics has sought to recover. '"To imagine a language," said Wittgenstein, "is to imagine a form of life"' (pp. 1-5).

[15] Paradoxes abound in science and have some resonance with the contemporary haiku cosmos: Klein bottles, paradromic rings, black hole singularities, the nature of 'universe' prior to the big bang, dark matter, dark energy, the double-slit experiment, etc.

[16] 'Here [at the Chthonian Oracle of Trophonios in Boiotia] he [the supplicant] must drink water called the water of Lethe (Forgetfulness), that he may forget all that he has been thinking of hitherto, and afterwards he drinks of another water, the water of Mnemosyne (Memory), which causes him to remember what he sees after his descent (Pausanias, circa 200 CE, *Guide to Greece*, Book 9, sec. 39.3); a mimetic ritual of the underworld experience. Available from: http://tinyurl.com/3alt6y [Accessed 12 November 2007].

[17] The connection between haiku and remembrance is conceptually fertile—the following stanzas of Heidegger (2001, p. 10) seem relevant, if as calling cards:

> The oldest of the old follows behind
>   us in our thinking, and yet it
>   comes to meet us.
>
> That is why thinking holds to the
>   coming of what has been, and
>   is remembrance.

[18] The translation is found in a Ph.D. thesis by Johnston, 2006 (Chapter III, 'The soul's sphere of infinite images', para. 40). Available from: http://tinyurl.com/3bo6me [Accessed 12 November 2007].

[19] The following is a draft translation from the *Kyoraisho*. Kyorai was one of Bashô's main disciples, and this text is considered among the most important of those illustrating Bashô's teachings:

> Placing kireji in hokku [haiku] is for those beginners who do not understand the nature of cutting and uncutting very well. . . . [However,] there are hokku which are well-cut without kireji. Because of their subtle qualities, [for beginners] more common theories have been founded, and taught. . . . Once, the master, Bashô, said, as an answer to the question of Jôsô [one of Bashô's ten principal disciples. b. 1662－1704]: 'In waka, after 31-*on*, there is *kire*. In hokku, after 17-*on*, there is *kire*." Jôsô was immediately enlightened. Then, another disciple asked [on the same topic], and the master, Bashô, answered, 'When you use words as kireji, every word becomes kireji. When you do not use words as kireji, there are no words which are kireji.' And the master said, 'From this point, grasp the very depth of the nature of kireji on your own.' All that I have described here is what the master revealed, until the very threshold of its true secret [oral tradition], the thickness of one leaf of shoji-paper (Kyorai, 2001, pp. 497-99).

Additional research

1) The Gendai Haiku Website. http://gendaihaiku.com (video interviews with notable Japanese modern-haiku poets, subtitled in English and German).

2) Previously published haiku research papers: http://research.gendaihaiku.com.