ETERNAL STILLNESS
A Linguistic Journey to Bashō’s Haiku about the Cicada*

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しゆくさや岩にしめり 蛍の声 芝焚
stillness: rock into penetrate cicada of voice

Bashō Matsuo (1644–1694) wrote this haiku in his travel diary called Oku no Hosomichi (Narrow road to the deep north). He stated (1966:122–123):

There was a temple called Ryushakuji in the province of Yamagata. Founded by the great Priest Jikaku, this temple was known for the absolute tranquility of its holy compound. Since everybody advised me to see it, I changed my course at Obanazawa and went there, though it meant walking an extra

I would like to express my hearty gratitude to Haj Ross who has encouraged me to write this article and also given a number of invaluable suggestions and comments. I am also grateful to Kanichir Hantzawa, Benjamin Hrushovski, Yasuo Izumi, Patrick Kyle, Koh Miyake, and Kenneth L. Pike for their helpful suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper.

1. Haiku or hokku as it was called during the time of Bashō, is the shortest form of Japanese traditional poetry, consisting of seventeen morae, divided into three sections of 5–7–5. Originating in the first three lines of the 31 morae tanka, haiku began to rival the older form in the Edo period (1603–1867), when the great master Bashō elevated it to the level of a profoundly serious art form. It has since remained the most popular poetic form in Japan. Originally, the subject matter of haiku was restricted to an objective description of nature suggestive of one of the seasons, evoking a definite, though unstated, emotional response. Later, its subject range was broadened but it remained an art of expressing much and suggesting more in the fewest possible words. Bashō’s ideal in poetry was to achieve a level of total identity with nature. Greatly influenced by Zen Buddhism, his haiku indicates “a great zest for life; a desire to use every instant to the utmost; an appreciation of this very in natural objects; a feeling that nothing is alone, nothing unimportant; a wide sympathy; and an acute awareness of relationships of all kinds, including that of one sense to another” (Henderson 1958:21).

seven miles or so. When I reached it, the late afternoon sun was still lingering
over the scene. After arranging to stay with the priests at the foot of the
mountain, I climbed to the temple situated near the summit. The whole
mountain was made of massive rocks\(^4\) thrown together, and covered with age-
old pines and oaks. The stony ground itself bore the colour of eternity, paved
with velvety moss. The doors of the shrines built on the rocks were firmly
barred and there was not a sound to be heard. As I moved on all fours from
rock to rock, bowing reverently at each shrine, I felt the purifying power of
this holy environment pervading my whole being.

In the utter silence
Of a temple,\(^3\)
A cicada’s* voice alone
Penetrates the rocks.

Before Bashō arrived at the final version of this haiku, it is report-
ed that he revised it three times as follows:

1. \(\text{yamadera ya}\) mountain temple:
\begin{align*}
\text{iwa ni \text{shimitsukuj} } & \quad \text{semi no koe} \\
\text{rock} & \quad \text{seep + stick to} \\
\text{locative postposition} & \quad \text{cicada of voice} \\
\end{align*}

2. \(\text{sabishisa no}\) loneliness subject
marker
\begin{align*}
\text{iwa ni \text{shimikomu} } & \quad \text{semi no koe} \\
\text{seep + include} & \quad \text{Ohtani:102}
\end{align*}

3. \(\text{sabishisa ya}\) loneliness:
\begin{align*}
\text{iwa ni \text{shimikomu} } & \quad \text{semi no koe} \\
\text{Ohtani:102} & \quad \text{seep + include}
\end{align*}

4. \(\text{sizukasa ya}\) stillness:
\begin{align*}
\text{iwa ni \text{shimiiru} } & \quad \text{semi no koe} \\
\text{seep + pierce} & \quad \text{Ohtani:102}
\end{align*}

This paper will attempt to analyze (with love and care) the process
of Bashō’s revisions to reveal how his haiku becomes more and more
charged with power through his poetic creation. It is my intention to
share and appreciate the mystical moment of his poem as fully as
possible in the study of his creative process. This will be a journey
toward an eternal stillness where everything is blended into one and
nothingness.

As Bashō himself mentioned in his diary, the primary concern of this
poem is the holy stillness of the environment fusing with the poet’s
whole being. From versions (1) to (4), Bashō made two important
lexical changes which contribute to representing this fusion more
strongly and clearly.

First, the change of the first word occurred as follows:

1. \(\text{yamadera (mountain temple)}\)

2. \(\text{3) sabishisa (loneliness)}\)

3. \(\text{4) sizukasa (stillness)}\)

This revision implies a transition from the objective surroundings
(version (1)) to a subjective feeling of the poet (versions (2) and (3))
and then to a fusion of the two (version (4)). In other words, “Sizu-
kasa” in the final version designates not only the silence of the holy
mountain temple but also the tranquility in solitude of the poet’s
mind.

The notion of “fusion” or, more exactly, the notion of “original
oneness” is of utmost importance in Bashō’s philosophy of haiku. By
saying “Learn about pines from pines, and about bamboo from bam-
boos” (Hattori:547) Bashō meant that if a haiku does not arise
naturally from the object, the object and its observer will become
two and the observer will not be able to realize the feeling of the
object, since the self will intervene. This teaches that what a poet must
do is be one with nature, or “zoka” (造化) as it is called by Bashō.

This haiku exactly demonstrates his philosophy. He showed
through his revisions that the power of the first word in version (4)
lies in the awareness of the original oneness — that there is no dis-
tinction between humans and nature, subject and object, etc.

The second important lexical change, connected with the notion
of fusion, is the choice of verbs.

1. \(\text{shimitsukuj} \rightarrow (2) (3) \text{shimikomu} \rightarrow (4) \text{shimiiru}\)

These three verbs are compound verbs, consisting of \(V_1\) “shimit,” a
compounding form of “shimi” (to seep), and \(V_2\) — three different
verbs. The semantic differences among the \(V_2s\) can be shown in terms
of two semantic features, [DEPTH] and [SHARPNESS], as indi-
cated in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>(V_1)</th>
<th>(V_2)</th>
<th>[DEPTH]</th>
<th>[SHARPNESS]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>shimi</td>
<td>tsuku</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(seep)</td>
<td>(stick to)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>shimi</td>
<td>komu</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(seep)</td>
<td>(include)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>shimi</td>
<td>iru</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(seep)</td>
<td>(pierce)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is clear that the depth and the sharpness of penetration increases from versions (1) to (4). The powerful connotations with which version (4) is charged through these revisions play a very crucial role in representing "oneness" discussed above, for the verb "simii" is the word which overtly enacts the fusion of the voice of the cicada and the silence of the rocks.  

In addition, these verbs are used metaphorically - both $V_1$ and $V_2$ in all versions. The deviations in meaning in each verb are discussed below:

i) The verb "simu" (to seep) literally requires a subject which has a [+LIQUID] feature. Here, the overt subject of the verb - the voice of the cicada - is [-LIQUID].

ii) The verb "tsuku" (to stick to) literally requires a subject which can be perceived by touch, sight or smell but here the voice of the cicada can only be sensed by the ear.

iii) Verbs "komu" (to include) and "iru" (to pierce) literally require an adverbial phrase which denotes a container but, once again, we find that the rock cannot be taken literally as a container.

Note that in version (1), $V_1$ and $V_2$ are metaphors as a result of deviations in meaning created by the subject-verb relationship, whereas in versions (2), (3), and (4), the metaphorical effects of $V_1$ and $V_2$ arise from two different relationships - $V_1$ from the subject-verb relationship, and $V_2$ from the verb-adverbial relationship. Again, this seems to suggest that the impact of the metaphorical use of compound verbs is greater in versions (2), (3), and (4) than in version (1).

From versions (1) to (4), there is only one syntactic variation that occurs, i.e., between the choice of "ya" or "no."

1) yamadera (noun [location]) ya (poetic punctuation)
2) sabi"isa (overt subject) no (subject marker)

5. Moreover, this verb is a locus of semantic fusions of such opposites as largeness and smallness, hardness and softness, immateriality and animateness, mortality and mortality, eternity and instantaneousness, etc., represented by the contrast of rocks and the cicada. The point in this haiku, however, is not to stress the tension of these opposites but to make us aware of the "original oneness" of them. For further discussion on the notion of "fusion" and "tension" in an interpretation of this haiku, see Masako K. Hiraga, "Metaphor and Poetry: Problems in a Hermeneutic Theory of Metaphor" in Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of Linguists (Tokyo, 1989), pp. 1082-1085.

6. In version (2), there is one more overt subject "sabishisa," which is not liquid. Also, I think that "sabishisa" in version (3), and "Sizukasa" in version (4), could be covert subjects of the verbs "Sizikomu" and "Simii," since we can interpret from the context that "sabishisa" and "Sizukasa" penetrate into the rocks. Again, these covert subjects are non-liquid.

II

1) yamadera (noun [location]) ya (poetic punctuation)
2) sabi"isa (overt subject) no (subject marker)

(3) sabi"isa (covert subject) ya (poetic punctuation)
(4) Sizukasa (covert subject) ya (poetic punctuation)

"Ya" is called "kireji" (splitting letter). These kireji function as kinds of poetic punctuation, by which poets express, hint at or emphasize their mood and "soul-state." "Ya" usually means a sigh of admiration, though there are delicate nuances which differ according to context. Rhetorically, "ya" divides a haiku into two parts and is usually followed by a description or comparison, sometimes by an illustration of the feeling evoked. It also suggests a kind of equation between the two parts divided by "ya."

In this poem, "yamadera ya" in version (1) can be interpreted as an adverbial phrase or a locative from the context, since "yamadera" is a concrete noun referring to a place. On the other hand, "sabishisa ya" in version (3) and "Sizukasa ya" in version (4) are made up of an abstract noun (referring to the mental state of the poet and/or the condition of the environment) and "ya." This combination bears more ambiguity than "yamadera ya," for it allows us more freedom of interpretation; e.g., we can interpret these nouns as covert subjects of the verb, "Sizikomu" or "Simii" respectively.

So what does a change from "ya" to "no" signify? In version (2), the haiku can be read grammatically in two ways, since it has double subjects by the use of "no" (a subject marker in poetic diction) on one hand, and by the inversion of the subject "semi no koe" and the verb "Sizikomu" on the other. The two readings of version (2) are:

i) "sabishisa" (loneliness) penetrates into the rocks.
ii) "semi no koe" (the voice of the cicada) penetrates into the rocks.

I think that stating "sabishisa" as an overt subject is too direct for the aesthetic of haiku. We can infer from the context that "sabishisa" in version (3) or "Sizukasa" in version (4) penetrates into the rocks, as does the voice of the cicada. The ambiguity or indirectness of the poem stir our imagination. Therefore, not stating overtly but hinting at the penetration of "sabishisa" or "Sizukasa" by the use of "ya" not only enriches the implication of the haiku but also strengthens the impact of the penetration of the cicada's voice into the rocks, for this is the only overtly stated penetration.

Also, the use of kireji "ya" in versions (1), (3), and (4) suggests a kind of equation between the two parts it divides. The quality of the equation differs among the versions as shown in the following table.

7. By comparing versions (2) and (3), we can understand the importance of the kireji, for it is the only revision. In version (2), the subject marker "no" functions to connect the first word and the middle section of the haiku. On the other hand, in version (3), the use of the kireji "ya" makes it possible to pause after the first word. This pause is phonetic but it has psychological connotations as well, suggesting more delicate and profound implications than are possible in version (2).
the vowel [i] is very important in this haiku because of its symbolic sound effects. The vowel [i], which is articulated with the least energy among Japanese vowels, symbolically suggests the following meanings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbolism</th>
<th>Represented by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i) shortness</td>
<td>life of the cicada (possibly human life, too)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) smallness</td>
<td>size of the cicada size of the human being in contrast to the gigantic rocks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sequential order of vowels reveals an interesting fact, too.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>5 morae</th>
<th>Meter 7 morae</th>
<th>5 morae</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>a a e a a</td>
<td>i a i i u u</td>
<td>e i o e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>a i i a o</td>
<td>i a i i i o u</td>
<td>e i o e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>a i i a a</td>
<td>i a i i i o u</td>
<td>e i o e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>i u a a a</td>
<td>i a i i i u</td>
<td>e i o e</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line 1</th>
<th>Line 2</th>
<th>Line 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dominance of LOW vowel [a]</td>
<td>Dominance of HIGH vowel [i]</td>
<td>Dominance of MID vowels [e] [o]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The metric scheme forms a sound pattern of LOW-HIGH-MID vowels, which is preserved from the first version to the final one. The dominance of [i] is located in the middle line, where the words “iwa ni” (into the rocks) and “simi + V₂” (to penetrate) appear. Again, the word “simiri” (seep + pierce) contributes to [i]’s dominance. Thus, the theme of this haiku—penetration into silence—is represented very clearly in its middle line by this mingling dance of meaning and sound.

This becomes even clearer when we trace the sequential order of high vowels, as indicated below:

Since each haiku has 17 morae, hence 17 vowels, with very few exceptions, the average number of occurrence of the vowel [i] in each of Bashō’s haiku in *Oku no Hosomichi* will be 4. It seems clear that the high proportion of [i] in this haiku about the cicada (7 out of 17 vowels) is so unusual that it needs some explanation.
"Sizumaru" (to become quiet), "Sizumeru" (to calm down), "Sasayaku" (to whisper), "Seijaku" (stillness), "Seishoku" (silence), "Shinkan" (silent), etc. Also many onomatopoetic or mimetic expressions of silence contain these sibilant sounds: e.g., "SuzuSuzu," (silently), "So(to)" (quietly), "Shimiri" (quietly), "Shi(to)" (quiet), "Suyasuya" (to sleep quietly), "SoyoSoYo" (to blow quietly), etc. In connection with this sound symbolism of silence, we find in every version that most of the obstruents are voiceless.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Number of voiceless obstruents</th>
<th>Total number of obstruents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that every version has only one voiced obstruent out of several obstruent consonants. This is definitely consonant with the theme of silence, too.

How about [-CONTINUENT] consonants?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Line 1</th>
<th>Stops in Line 2</th>
<th>Line 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>[ts] [k]</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>ko-te</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are only a few stops: they are all voiceless and [k] is the most common one. The place of the [k]s in version (4) seems to play a role, since one [k], three morae from the beginning of the poem, and the other, two from the end, contribute to bracketing or framing the entire poem.9 The former three versions do not have this kind of bracketing structure.

It is clear from what we have discussed so far that the theme of this haiku is the fusion of the paradox: silence with voice. We can say:

9. Also two vowels occurring before [k] and after [k] in the final version bracket the poem.

I owe this observation to Haj Ross.
Bashō’s revisions are a journey toward this fusion. His intuitive insight worked on all levels and aspects of the revisions which we have demonstrated analytically. Here, we would like to call attention to the more holistic interaction of the sound and the meaning in the final version.

It seems to me that the semantic progression of the lines in the final version and the progression of their sounds go in opposite directions.

**PHONOLOGICAL PROGRESSION**

Line 3 ← Line 1

**SILENCE**

Line 1 → Line 3

**VOICE**

**SEMANTIC PROGRESSION**

If we look at the semantic progression of the lines, we find that it goes from “silence” to “voice.”

Line 1  しようかや  “silence”
Line 2  いわにしめいる (“silence”)
Line 3  セミノコエ  “voice”

On the other hand, if we look at the phonological progression of the lines, we find the reversed order — “voice” to “silence” — as exemplified below:

i) From line 1 to line 2, we notice the repetition of the similar [-CONSONANTAL] sequence.

Line 1  しよう  う  か
Line 2  し  い  わ  わ  か

Strictly speaking, [u] and [w] are different sounds; however, both have quite similar qualities, as they are articulated in the high, back position of the mouth. In this repetition, line 2 totally lacks consonants as shown above.

ii) In lines 1 and 2, the consonants sandwiched by vowels lose their obstruency from the beginning of the line to its end.

Line 1  こ  さ  さ  あ  あ  い  い
Line 2  な  い  し  い  い  お  い  い

iii) From lines 1 to 3, vowel sandwiches lose the contrast between the sandwiching vowels (V₁) and the sandwiched consonants (C).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line 1</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>Line 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[+ BACK]</td>
<td>[- BACK]</td>
<td>[+ BACK]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[- BACK]</td>
<td>[+ BACK]</td>
<td>[- BACK]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[- BACK]</td>
<td>[- BACK]</td>
<td>[- BACK]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In lines 1 and 2ₐ, vowels and consonants in the sandwich are articulated in contrastive positions in the mouth, vowels at the back and consonants at the front in line 1, and vowels at the front and a consonant at the back in line 2ₐ; whereas in lines 2ₐ and 3, the places of articulation are non-contrastive between vowels and consonants.

All these facts imply that the sound shape of this haiku goes from “voice” to “silence.”

What does this reversal mean in the end? I think that the reversal itself represents the fusion; there is no distinction between silence and voice nor between sound and meaning.

Haj Ross points out another fact which demonstrates the openness of silence and voice and of sound and meaning. He assumes that the three most important word/morphemes are しゅく-seimi-semi because either the first or the last can be the subject of the middle one, and that しゅく is like a phonetic compromise between しゅく- and semi, as しゅく and しゅく share the first mora and しゅく and semi share the last mora.

\[ \text{shared first mora} \quad \text{(zuk-)} \quad \text{shared last mora} \]

It seems that the phonetic similarity motivates the semantic fusion of “silence” and “voice.”

There is one more thing to add in terms of sound symbolism. In Japanese onomatopoeia, the voice of cicadas is represented in four ways, and interestingly enough, the Japanese name the cicadas according to these four onomatopoeic expressions as shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Onomatopoeic form</th>
<th>Name of the cicada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i) ににい or みんみん</td>
<td>ににい (or みんみん) zemi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) どづ:どづ:</td>
<td>どづ:どづ: zemi or abura zemi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) かすか</td>
<td>かすか or ひぐらし</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv) つくつつく ほ:し</td>
<td>つくつつく ho:shi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notice that there are a lot of [i], [a], [u], [m], [n] and [k] sounds in these onomatopoetic expressions. We cannot ascertain which kind of the cicada’s voice Bashō heard when he composed this haiku, but it is extremely interesting for us to find that Bashō uses the very sounds of the onomatopoeia of the cicada’s voices to write this particular haiku on the cicada.

VI

Since a haiku is not only intended to be read aloud but also to be appreciated as a written form, we have to examine the orthographic revisions as well.

| 1 | 山寺や | 石にしみつく | 蝉の | 聞 |  | 
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 涼しき夜 | 岩にしみ込 | 蝉の | 聞 |  | 
| 3 | さびしさ夜 | 岩にしみ込 | 蝉 | の | 声 | 聞 |  | 
| 4 | 閑 | 岩にしみ入 | 蝉 | の | 声 | 聞 |  | 

There are two revisions in terms of Chinese and Japanese characters. First, Bashō changed from 石 (stone) in version (1) to 岩 (rock) in versions (2), (3) and (4). Both are pronounced as [iwa] but the size of the stone associated with respective characters is different. 石 usually signifies small stones, whereas 岩 is used for larger ones. The choice of 岩 instead of 石 highlights the visual contrast between the large size of the rocks and the small size of the cicada (and human beings). It might also hint graphically that the rocks are in the mountain, since the character 岩 consists of two radicals 木 and 石, meaning “mountain” and “stone” respectively.

Second, the term “koe” (voice) is written differently in versions (1), (2) and (4) on the one hand and (3) on the other. In versions (1), (2) and (4), the Chinese character 聞 is used, while in version (3), two Japanese syllabic characters (“hiragana”) 聞 are used. This change functions as a means of equating the beginning and the end characters of the poem. In versions (1), (2) and (4), the first line begins with a Chinese character and so ends with another Chinese one, while in version (3), it begins with Japanese characters and also ends with them.

10. There has been a controversy about the kinds of the cicada between “ninii zemi” (Toyotaka Koyama) and “dze:zi: zemi” (Mochiki Saitō). The “ninii zemi” theory is considered more plausible in relation to the season (early summer) when the poem was composed. (Cf. Isoi Asō, Oku no Horomichi Kōdoku [Lectures on Oku no Horomichi] (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1961), p. 308.

One consideration which should be added to an orthographic treatment of this haiku is the use of the Chinese character 閑 to denote “stillness.” In Japanese, the most common Chinese character for “stillness” is 静, which etymologically means “to end the fight” and thereby no sound and no motion. In this sense, it implies physical silence rather than mental calmness. 閑, on the other hand, suggests mental aspect of silence—“leisure time,” “calmness,” “easiness,” etc. What is interesting is its etymological meaning: “to bar the gate,” derived from the radical constituents of this Chinese character, i.e., 門 (meaning “a gate”) and 材 (meaning “a bar made of wood”). Notice how Bashō described the mountain temple in his travel diary.

“The doors of the shrines built on the rocks were firmly barred...” (my italics) (1966:122).

We cannot ascertain if Bashō deliberately chose this particular character to enrich the association of the poem; nevertheless, the text itself of this haiku never ceases to bespeak the enormous associative power of poetry.

VII

To summarize, this haiku essentially describes the profound stillness prevailing in nature, including the poet himself. Bashō pictures his theme with a touch of vivid action, the voice of the cicada, but only in order to intensify stillness. The voice may first be felt as disturbing; then, all the more a deepened mood of stillness prevails in the poet’s mind. Thus, the voice pierces the rocks. Stillness is resonant with the tranquility of the rocks and the eternal loneliness of the poet. The iconicity of the metaphorical word “simitru” represents this whole process of becoming still. The whole poem, with its sounds and meanings, crystallizes the moment of becoming or melting into the eternal stillness. Such a sense of fusion in haiku is a way of “satori,” i.e., “awakening” in Zen Buddhism. It is an enlightenment as returning to the original oneness.

Our discussion, by looking at the poet’s revisions, shows how he succeeded in charging his words with poetic power and demonstrates that the grasp of such original oneness is best represented in the final version phonologically, semantically, syntactically and orthographically.

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POSTMODERNIST LYRIC AND THE ONTOLOGY OF POETRY

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The Cognitive Questions
(asked by most artists of the 20th century, Platonic or Aristotelian, till around 1958):

"How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it?"

The Postcognitive Questions
(asked by most artists since then):

"Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?"

"Over every poem which looks like a poem is a sign which reads: This road does not go through to action: fictitious." The wit here is John Crowe Ransom's (1938:131), but the concept is a commonplace of poetics, traceable in the Anglo-American tradition at least as far back as Sir Philip Sidney—and Sidney, we know, only relayed what was already a commonplace of Continental poetics. The world of the poem is separate from the real world of experience, constituting a heterocosm: this principle, along with the principle of mimesis, has been the mainstay of theories of poetic ontology since the Renaissance. Indeed, the two principles are mutually dependent and mutually implicating. For the real world to be reflected in the mirror of literary mimesis, the imitation must be distinguishable from the imitated: the mirror of Art must stand apart from and opposite to the Nature to be mirrored.

The heterocosm theory draws a sharp boundary around the fictional projected world, but by the same gesture it denies the possibility of ontological difference within the fiction. A mirror must have a frame, but it will reflect better without any ripples or scorings across its surface. Thomas Pavel reiterates this orthodoxy when he writes that fictional constructions, once granted the willing suspension of disbelief