

## **Performance, Visuality, and Textuality: The Case of Japanese Poetry**

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### **Performance and Text**

The purpose of this paper is to explore the complex relationship among performance, visuality, and textuality, using examples from traditional Japanese poetry, and to reveal how the interaction among these three elements is integral to understanding Japanese poetry as process or action.

I use the word *performance* to mean an action that is carried out, judged, and appreciated according to a set of commonly shared aesthetic, literary, or social codes. Performance is a one-time action, but it is usually repeated so that the audience has an established horizon of expectations. The audience (participants) implicitly will compare one performance to the next. In performance there is direct interaction between the performer and audience, who judge the action according to how well it conforms to, deviates from, or employs a commonly shared set of conventions. As material object, the poem exists in two fundamental forms: the handwritten manuscript and the printed text (which emerged from the early to mid-seventeenth century in Japan, first as movable type and then as woodblock printing). Both kinds of texts can be read and appreciated by audiences who are not witness to the initial utterance of the poem. These texts in turn are appreciated and read according to a set of pre-established aesthetic, literary, or social codes, but those codes may drastically change with time and place.

### **Constative and Performative**

I would like to begin by drawing on a distinction made by the British philosopher John L. Austin in his classic book *How to Do Things With Words* (1965) between constative and performative utterances. Austin

distinguishes between the constative utterance, a statement that can be judged in terms of its semantic content, and the performative utterance, where language functions as action, such as a promise or a guarantee for the future. Austin himself shows that the constative often mixes with the performative. The phrase “how are you?” as a constative utterance asks about your health or condition, but performatively, which is the way the phrase is normally used in a social context, it means something more like “hello, I am glad to see you,” and when the other person replies “fine,” he (or she) is not talking about his health so much as the fact that he wants to acknowledge your attempt to affirm his existence and good health. Similarly, Mikhail Bakhtin in his study of linguistics (1986) argues that each word is not only a sign in a large system, but an utterance, part of an implied dialogue. A necessary feature of every utterance is its “addressivity,” its quality of turning to someone.

These notions of performance and addressivity are key elements in poetry, particularly traditional Japanese poetry. Let me start with a simple example from Japanese poetry: haiku, the seventeen-syllable poetic form developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. The following is by one of its foremost practitioners, the late seventeenth-century poet Matsuo Bashō.

<i>Shiragiku no</i>	Gazing intently
<i>Me ni tatete miru</i>	at the white chrysanthemums—
<i>Chiri mo nashi</i>	not a speck of dust.

As a constative utterance, the poem is very simple. The speaker is viewing white chrysanthemums and seeing that they are absolutely unsoiled. To understand the poem as performance, as an utterance, we need to reconstruct the original setting. Bashō originally composed this poem after arriving as a guest at the house of Madame Sono, one of his disciples, and in this context the poem functions as a greeting and a compliment to the hostess. The poem employs the white chrysanthemums as metaphor for the hostess, implying “this is a beautiful house, with a beautiful hostess, just like an elegant white chrysanthemum, and there’s not a speck of dust here. You and the house are in perfect condition.” This haiku, like much of Japanese poetry, functions simultaneously on two levels, as constative utterance and as performative utterance. As performative utterance it must be understood, to use Bakhtin’s terms, dialogically, in terms of its addressivity.

Modern readers tend to read poetry monologically, either in an expressive, lyrical mode, as an expression of a speaker’s subjective state, or in a descriptive, mimetic mode, as a reflection of the external world as

perceived by the speaker. This tendency overlooks the crucial fact that much of Japanese poetry and prose, particularly in the pre-modern or early modern period, functioned dialogically, fulfilling socioreligious functions such as complimenting a host, expressing gratitude, bidding farewell, making an offering to the land, or consoling the spirit of the dead. This is true of a wide range of literary genres. For example, *The Tales of Heike*, a medieval military epic sung to a lute by a blind minstrel, had the important function of consoling the spirit of the dead, particularly the spirits of the defeated. The same may be said of Noh theater, in which the Noh performance had, as one of its original functions, the purpose of consoling the spirit of the dead. Even a *jōruri* (“puppet”) play, such as Chikamatsu Mon’zaemon’s *Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki shinjū*) about a double suicide of two lovers, can be seen as having this “consoling the spirits” (*chinkon*) function with regard to the spirits of the dead lovers, who had died not long before the performance of the play. In other words, some forms of Japanese literature functioned as a dialogue with the dead. Addressivity thus need not be restricted to a living audience.

### Dialogic Poetry

One reason why this dialogic dimension is foregrounded is that Japanese poetry, like many of Japanese traditional arts, usually takes place in a communal context, as a group activity, or as a form of dialogue between two or more people. The thirty-one syllable *waka* (classical Japanese poem), which emerged as early as the seventh century, was composed in two types of settings—first, as private exchanges between friends and lovers; and second, in public settings, as what we would call banquet poetry, which could have a highly political or religious function, such as praising the emperor or the high-ranking host or paying respect to the dead or survivors of the deceased. In both instances, both private and public, there was a specific addressee, and the capacity to compose for the specific occasion (to function as occasional poetry) was generally more important than the capacity to compose for posterity.

The performative nature of Japanese poetry is perhaps best exemplified by linked verse (*renga* or *haikai*), which developed in the fourteenth century and which exemplifies group poetry or poetry of the parlor (*za*). Linked verse opened with the seventeen-syllable (5/7/5) *hokku* verse—which later became the *haiku*—to which was added a fourteen-syllable (7/7) second verse (*wakiku*), which was capped in turn by a

seventeen-syllable (5/7/5) third verse (*daisanku*), and so forth, until a sequence of thirty-six, forty-four, fifty, one hundred, or a thousand verses was completed. Though linked verse could be composed by a single individual as a solo composition (*dokugin*), it was usually a communal activity in which two or more participants took turns adding verses to create a sequence. Each added verse (*tsukeku*) was joined to the previous verse (*maeku*) to form a new poetic world, while pushing off from the poetic world that had been created by the combination of the previous verse and the penultimate verse (*uchikoshi*).

The following sequence (nos. 22, 23, 24) appears in a *kasen* called “Beneath the Cherry Trees” (*Ko no moto ni*) in *Hisago* (*Gourd*, 1690), a Bashō-school *haikai* anthology:

<i>Kumano mitaki to</i>	“I want to see Kumano,”
<i>Nakitamahikeri</i>	she wept
	(Bashō)

<i>Tatsukayumi</i>	bow in hand
<i>Ki no sekimori ga</i>	the barrier guard at Ki
<i>Katakuna ni</i>	unyielding
	(Chinseki)

<i>sake de hagetaru</i>	the bald head
<i>atama naruran</i>	probably too much drinking
	(Kyokusui)

The first verse uses an honorific verb to suggest the high status of the traveler (presumably a woman), who is weeping because she is anxious to visit Kumano, a popular site for religious pilgrimage in the Heian and medieval periods. The next verse by Chinseki joins with the previous verse by Bashō to reveal that the traveler is weeping because a guard with a hand-held bow is refusing to let her pass through the barrier at Ki Province. The third verse, which pushes off from Bashō’s verse and combines with Chinseki’s verse, humorously transforms the barrier guard into a tippler, whose head has grown bald, or so it appears, from excessive drinking. As we can see here, linked verse is a poetry of playful recontextualization; here the aristocratic, seemingly tragic, somber world of the first two verses is unexpectedly transformed into the light-hearted, plebeian world of the last two verses. The interest of linked verse is in the process of decontextualizing and recontextualizing, in the competition to add a good verse to the sequence, and in the constant movement from one world to another. It is a one-time performance whose excitement can never be matched by the final

written record of it. Such poetry is not intended to be a lasting monument. Instead, like the tea ceremony and other such traditional performative arts, it is often intended to be enjoyed in the moment. As Bashō notes, once the linked verse is finished, one must throw it in the trash. In these circumstances, the poetry does not have to be a superior literary text to be excellent performance.

Equally important was the assumption, particularly with linked verse and haiku, that the poem was incomplete, that it was the responsibility of the reader or audience to complete the poem. A good poem had open space so that the reader or audience could participate in its production. Linked verse embodied this process since it left each new link to be completed by the next person's verse. The "cutting word" in haiku, which cut the haiku in two, was intended to open up this critical space.

The brevity of Japanese poetry, only seventeen syllables for haiku and thirty-one syllables for classical poetry (*waka*), allows it to be composed by almost anybody with a minimum of literacy and training in almost all settings. From as early as the seventh century, with the introduction of a writing system, poetry, especially the 31-syllable *waka*, was a form that could be composed both frequently and spontaneously by the aristocracy. And from the seventeenth century onward, the seventeen-syllable haiku form spread to the populace at large.

However, the accessibility of such poetry, which often functions as a form of dialogue, also means that much of it does not match the standard of what in modern Europe has come to be regarded as high literature. After World War II, when Japan was doubting its native poetic forms, there was a great debate about whether haiku was poetry at all. The point here is that haiku did and does not have the same functions as those traditionally found in European poetry or literature. Poetry existed not only as a literary text; it had a highly performative function, the effectiveness of which was judged not by its durability or complexity but by its applicability to a specific situation, which often took precedence over its purely textual function.

### **Performing on a Topic and Communal Imagination**

A major characteristic of Japanese poetry, particularly of *waka* and haiku, is that it exists in an intimate intertextual (text to text) relationship with prior poems or established topics. This kind of intertextual relationship is a characteristic of almost all poetry, but this dimension is especially important in Japan where the poetic form is so short and must depend on

either its immediate context or some intertextual context to achieve complexity. One prominent form of intertextuality is the *honkadori* (allusive variation; literally, “drawing on a base poem”), in which the poet takes a significant part of an earlier, well-known poem (as much as two-thirds of the original) and incorporates it into a new poem, thereby making a direct connection between one text and another across time. Western literature also makes use of the technique of allusion, often referring to stories, characters, and symbols from Greek and Latin literature or the Bible, but we do not find the kind of extensive use of citation found in *honkadori*, where a major part of the text derives directly from another text.

An even more important feature of Japanese poetry, particularly of *waka* and haiku, is the use of poetic *topoi* (*dai*), which provides a base frame for the content of the poem. One of the chief characteristics of Japanese poetry, from at least the tenth century, was the practice of composing on an established poetic topic, usually taken from the seasons, nature, or famous places, each of which was centered on a “poetic essence” (*hon'i*), an established cluster of literary and cultural associations. Rain, for example, took on a different name according to the season and the type. *Harusame* (spring rain) referred to the soft, steady drizzle of spring; *samidare* (literally, rains of the Fifth Month) meant the wet season or the extended rains of summer; and *shigure* signified the brief, intermittent showers of early winter. In the poetic tradition these became seasonal topics with specific poetic associations, which were derived from classical precedent and commonly recognized as the most appropriate subjects of composition.

Spring rain, for example, became associated with soft, dreamy thoughts; the wet season, particularly that of the Fifth Month, implied a sense of unending depression; and the intermittent showers of winter connoted impermanence and uncertainty. These poetic topics and their associations are, in a fundamental sense, imaginary worlds, which join the poet and the reader, and represent a communal, shared imagination. In writing about the scattering of the cherry blossoms, the Japanese poet is not just writing about a specific, direct experience; he or she is writing a supplement to or a variation on a commonly shared body of poetic associations with respect to the seasons, nature, and famous places based on centuries of poetic practice. Here, as in the allusive variation (*honkadori*), originality or individuality is not the touchstone of literary genius, as it often is in the Western tradition. Instead, high value is given to the ability to rework existing subject matter.

In *kabuki* and *jōruri* (“puppet”) drama, the thematic base came to be referred to as the *sekai* (“world”), which was drawn from the historical past, usually the medieval period. The playwright was expected to provide an



innovation (*shukô*) on an established world already familiar to the audience through the works of other playwrights. The same kind of phenomenon occurs in Japanese poetry, except that the “world” is not a medieval legend or historical event but rather a seasonal topic or a famous poetic place that thousands of poets had composed upon earlier. In both drama and poetry, we have a base or foundational world, which is already familiar to the audience and on which the poet, playwright, or actor works. So while the performance itself is a one-time action, a fleeting moment, it is anchored in a larger tradition based on communal memory. In the case of Japanese poetry, that tradition is preserved textually in anthologies, private collections, treatises, and handbooks, which explain the poetic associations and which contain exemplary poems classified by topics. This kind of poetry is difficult for an outsider to appreciate in that the reader must know the topic and the major poetic precedents in order to discern the “newness” of the poem. While there are many poems that may be considered “realistic,” the stress here is on the “re-presentation” or “re-production” of earlier texts. The poet is not attempting to be original so much as to create a new variation on an established pattern (*kata*) or theme. Creation is a process of “re-producing,” or better yet a process of “re-performing” or “re-presenting.”

The *waka* and haiku are very short forms in the context of world poetry. The advantage of the short form is that it is very versatile; it can be employed by a wide range of people in a wide variety of social, religious, and political settings in highly performative ways. The disadvantage of the short form is that it does not allow room to indicate the context in which an individual poem was first performed. This potential weakness is offset in part by the reconstruction of contexts in prose and the extensive use of headnotes. The poem can also exist intertextually, as in an allusive variation that connects the new poem to a pre-existing text, or it can exist as part of a long tradition of compositions on an established topic. Later generations cannot reproduce the original context or the performative aspect, but they can read the poem in relationship to earlier poems and topics, which are preserved and transmitted. So while the poem as performance is eventually lost, the poem as text continues to exist in a larger, communal, trans-historical context.

### **Visuality and Poem as Material Object**

Let me now turn to Japanese poetry as a material object for which calligraphy, paper, and packaging were probably as important as the poem itself. As noted earlier, calligraphy was a major art in East Asia. A poor

poem with excellent calligraphy was probably preferable to a good poem with poor calligraphy. The same poem could be written many different ways: in different calligraphic styles (block, running, and so on), in pure syllabary or syllabary mixed with Chinese graphs, and with different spacing (in one line, two lines, three lines, or scattered across the page). The prosody of *waka* and haiku is determined not by line but by syllable count, thus allowing for many different spatial presentations of the same poem.

The type, color, and size of the paper were also important. The poet could also add a sketch, attach a flower or leaf, or add incense or perfume to the poetry sheet. The poem as material object was often a gift for the host, friend, or lover. Matching the poem or paper with the social occasion or season was a key factor in its effectiveness or performativity. So while *waka* was meant to be heard and was often repeated aloud at poetry contests and poetry parties, it was also meant to be *seen* both as text and material object.

To demonstrate the complexity of poetry as material artifact, let me examine a noted *hokku* (seventeen-syllable haiku) by Matsuo Bashō that first appeared in *Azuma nikki* (*Eastern Diary*), a collection of *haikai* poetry (*hokku* and *kasen*, linked-verse sequence) edited by Gonsui in 1681, which was probably composed in the fall of 1680:

<i>Kareeda ni</i>	On a withered branch
<i>Karasu no tomaritaru ya</i>	a crow stopping on a branch!
<i>Aki no kure</i>	Evening in autumn.

The two parts of the haiku—the withered branch and the autumn evening—can be read both as a single scene, as in a “content link” (*kokoro-zuke*), which unites two consecutive verses by content, with crows settling on a withered branch in autumn evening. The same *hokku* can be read as a “distant link” (*nioi-zuke*), or “fragrant link,” in which the two parts are united only by connotation. In *Azuma nikki* this *hokku* is preceded by a headnote, “On Evening in Autumn,” a classical *waka* topic. In that context, the second part poses the question: “what represents the essence of evening in autumn?” The first half answers with “a crow or crows on a withered branch.”

The following hanging scroll (Figure 1), “Withered Branch; Passing Through the World” (*Kareeda ni, yo ni furu wa*), was done in 1681 by an unknown professional painter belonging to the Kanō school, one of the dominant painting schools of the time. The text and calligraphy are by Bashō. A *haibun* (*haikai* prose text with poetry) on “Passing Through the World” (*yo ni furu wa*) is on the left panel and the left edge of the right



panel, and Bashō's *hokku* on the withered branch is in the middle of the right-hand panel.



Figure 1. “Withered Branch; Passing Through the World,” 1681. Hanging scroll.  
Bashō calligraphy and text; unknown Kanō-school painter.

The painting is very much in the style of the Kanō school, with dark lines outlining the trees and mountains, which are then filled with detail and wash. The painter interprets Bashō's poem on the withered branch as having many crows and the tree as having many branches. In response to the question of “what is the essence of evening in autumn?” the painter represented many crows, some flying in the dusk, some resting in the trees, amid red autumn foliage.

Three *tanzaku* (a rectangular 35 x 5 cm. form for displaying poetry and calligraphy) that Bashō did on this same withered-branch *hokku* survive. In the following *tanzaku* (Figure 2) Bashō revised the text, replacing the middle *tomaritaru ya* (“stopping on a branch!”) with *tomarikeri* (“stops on a branch!”), which has an exclamatory ending and is less static than the earlier version. This version is canonized in subsequent *haikai* anthologies such as *Arano* (published in 1689):

<i>Kareeda ni</i>	On a withered branch
<i>Karasu no tomarikeri</i>	a crow stops on a branch!
<i>Aki no kure</i>	Evening in autumn.

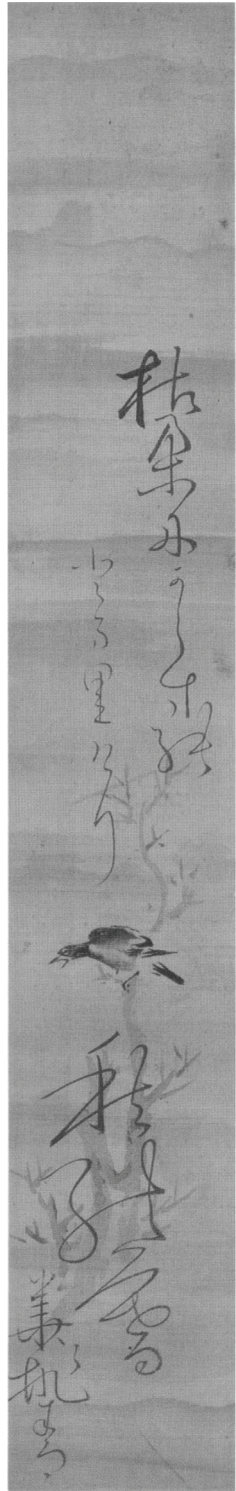


Figure 2. “On a Withered Branch,” c. 1682. *Hokku* and calligraphy by Bashō, signed 華桃青 *Katôsei*, *tanzaku*. Idemitsu Museum, Tokyo.

This may be one of Bashō’s earliest *haiga* (haiku paintings), with the calligraphy, poem, and the sketch by Bashō himself. The calligraphy is

almost identical to that in the earlier hanging scroll. The *haiga* is unusual in that the image of the crow appears in the middle of the calligraphy/poem, immediately after it is described in the poem. Here Bashō clearly indicated that there is only one crow on a withered branch.

The next extant version of Bashō's *hokku* (Figure 3) appears in a *kaishi* (literally “pocket paper”), a square sheet of paper used by poets to record poetry at poetry sessions, as opposed to the *tanzaku* or the *shikishi* that were for display or exhibition.

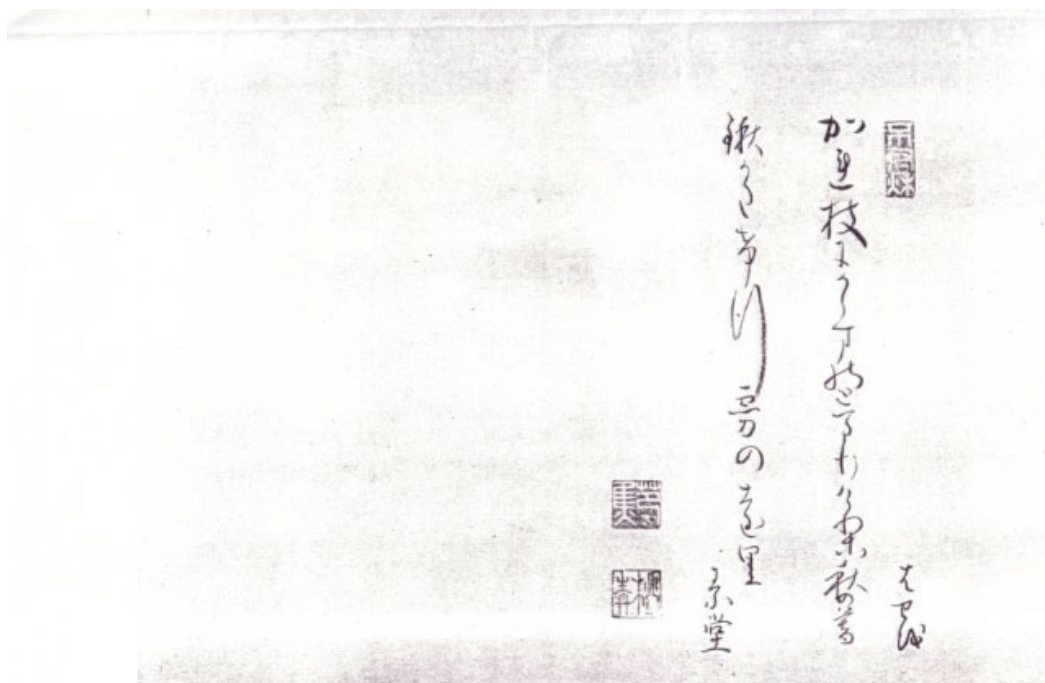


Figure 3. “On a Withered Branch,” late 1680s. *Hokku* by Bashō (Baseo); *wakiku* by Yamaguchi Sodō, *kaishi*.

In this *kaishi*, which was probably done in the late 1680s, seven or eight years after the original version, Yamaguchi Sodō (1642-1716), one of Bashō's disciples and an outstanding *kanshi* poet, has added a *wakiku* (second verse) to Bashō's original *hokku*, creating a short linked-verse sequence. The *wakiku* is “going with a hoe on the shoulder, a distant village in the mist” (“kuwa katage yuku / kiri no tōzato”). This verse combines with the preceding *hokku* to create an autumn scene in which the fading of a farmer into the autumn mist echoes the fading of life implicit in the image of the crow(s) settling on a withered branch. (*Aki no kure* in Bashō's *hokku* can be understood as either “autumn evening” or “the end of autumn”.)

In 1692-93, more than ten years after the first version, Bashō produced this *gasan* (painting with poem; Figure 4), a painting by Morikawa Kyoriku (1656-1715) with the calligraphy and *hokku* by Bashō.

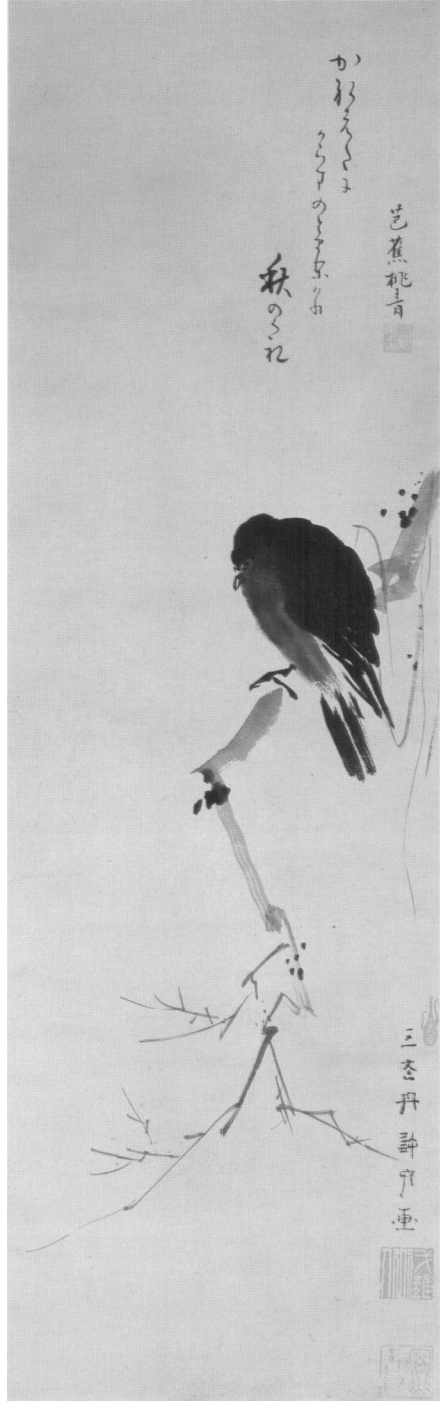


Figure 4. “On a Withered Branch” (*Kareeda ni karasu no tomarikeri aki no kure*), 1692-93. Signed “Bashō Tōsei.” Painting by Morikawa Kyoriku. Idemitsu Museum, Tokyo.



Kyoriku was a painter who had studied with Kanô Yasunobu (1613-85); Bashô had met him in Edo in 1691 and took painting lessons from him. In this *haiga*, or haiku painting, Bashô uses the kana syllabary instead of the Chinese graphs he used in the earlier version.<sup>1</sup> More importantly, the painting is executed in a pure ink (*suiboku*) style, closely adhering to medieval and Chinese models. In response to the question of “what is the essence of evening in autumn,” Kyoriku answered with the Chinese painting topic, “a cold or frozen crow on a withered branch,” an answer that Bashô probably had in mind even when he wrote the initial version ten years earlier.

As we can see here, the poem as material object is extremely important. Furthermore, the same poem may be re-contextualized or re-materialized many times over a lifetime in different media and in different genres (hanging scroll, *tanzaku*, *kaishi*, *hokku*, *haikai* linked verse, *haikai* anthology), in different calligraphic styles, and with different partners. This re-contextualization can seriously alter the meaning of the poem (moving in this instance from multiple crows flying amidst bright autumn foliage to a lonely crow resting on a single bare branch). Furthermore, these are often joint productions in which “linking” from the *hokku* to the painting or from the *hokku* to the *wakiku* is a kind of performance.

The composition of the poem is thus only the first stage of performance. The *hokku* is usually said aloud and recorded on a *kaishi*, or pocket paper. Then, if the poem is noteworthy, it is presented on the calligraphically centered *tanzaku* or the more elaborate *shikishi* (colored and designed paper). The *hokku* could also be expanded into a *haibun*, a short vignette that combined *hokku* and poetic prose. The *hokku* could be presented calligraphically as part of a *haiga* (haiku painting) in a text/image combination. Each of these material versions represents different performances of the same text.

The material form of the *tanzaku*, *haibun*, or *haiga* had two very important social or ritualistic functions; the first was to thank the host of the *haikai* session or the host of a lodging. The poet as a guest usually wrote something and gave it to the host as a present and token of appreciation. In fact, Bashô depended on the generosity of his hosts for a living, and he literally paid his patrons in the form of *kaishi*, *tanzaku*, *shikishi*, *haibun*, and

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<sup>1</sup> The text reads as it did in Bashô’s earlier *tanzaku*: “kareeda ni / karasu no tomarikeri / aki no kure” (“on a withered branch, / a crow comes to a rest, / autumn evening”). Bashô’s signature (Bashô Tōsei) is at the upper right, and Kyoriku’s signature (Gorōi Kyoriku ga) is at the bottom right.

*haiga*. In one case, Bashō even sent an elaborate picture scroll (*emaki*) of a journey to the main host of his trip to the Kansai-Nagoya region. The second important function of the *tanzaku*, *haibun*, and *haiga* was as commemoration of a particular poetic gathering, commemoration of a performance. The poem in material form functioned like the photograph does in modern society—as a record of a one-time event.

Having served their initial performative function, the *hokku*, *haikai* sequence, or *haibun* could then be reproduced as printed text in *hokku/haikai* collections or in various kinds of diaries or narratives. Bashō's travel diaries were often later created (after the journey) by weaving together a number of individual *tanzaku* and *haibun* that he had done while traveling. These exist in both manuscript and in printed form. With the rise of printing in the mid-seventeenth century, the *hokku* collections, *haikai* anthologies, and travel diaries were often printed and published for wider consumption. In preparing the texts for printing and publication, Bashō often rewrote the *hokku*, the headnotes, and the *haikai* linked-verse sequences themselves, sometimes even changing the names of the participants, either to improve the texts or to make them more comprehensible to someone who was not direct witness to the event. The textual, printed versions thus are not an accurate record of the initial performance so much as a textual variation of the original performance.

The manuscript and printed texts in turn had ritualistic and social functions. One important objective was the commemoration and advertising of the latest achievements of a particular poetic school or circle of poets. For example, *Nozarashi kikō* (*Skeleton in the Fields*), one of Bashō's early travel diaries, celebrates Bashō's encounter with the Owari (Aichi/Nagoya) group and the establishment of the Bashō style, especially the transition from the turgid Chinese-style of the early 1680s to the gentle, pseudo-*renga* (linked-verse) style of the mid-to-late 1680s. In a similar fashion, *Oku no hosomichi* (*Narrow Road to the Deep North*), Bashō's most noted literary travel diary, commemorates the emergence of a new configuration of disciples centered in Yamagata, Kaga, Ōmi, and Edo. Bashō discovered and cultivated most of these disciples during his journey to the Deep North. *Haikai* were also composed, collected, and printed as a *tsuizenshū*, or a memorial service collection, to honor a deceased poet, to serve as an offering to the spirit of a deceased on the anniversary of his or her death. An equally important genre in the Edo period was the *saitanchō* or "New Year's Day Poems," a collection of poems (that could be *kanshi* [poetry in Chinese], *hokku*, or *waka*) composed, collected, and presented by a poetry group to celebrate the arrival of the New Year (*ganjitsu*). These were printed, sold, or given away at the beginning of the new year as good-luck presents.



### Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the Japanese poet generally existed with other poets in a dialogic situation, in which two people exchange poems, as a form of elevated dialogue, or in a more expanded group situation in which two or more people compose poetry together, as in classical linked verse (*renga*) or popular linked verse (*haikai*). In either case, much of Japanese poetry has two potential functions: (1) as a one-time, social, political, or religious act or performance, which stressed addressivity and the significance of which was inevitably diminished or lost after the act was finished and (2) as a text, in manuscript or printed form that continued to exist outside the initial context. In the first function, the poem is often recited orally or sent to the addressee, while in the second function, the poem is written down or printed and then transmitted and circulated.

As a one-time social, religious, or political performance, poetry is disposable. As a circulated manuscript or printed text, by contrast, the poem needs to be understood by those who are not witness to the initial context. This need to recreate or preserve the original performative context of the poem gave rise to a number of literary genres. One of these was the *uta-monogatari*, or poem-tale, which tells the story or stories (often legends) of how the poem came to be composed, what happened, and what effect the poem had. (The most notable of these is *The Tales of Ise*, focused on the legendary “life” of Ariwara no Narihira, the noted ninth-century *waka* poet.) Another related form is the poetic diary, which records or recreates the original context for later readers in a biographical or chronological format. (The travel diary can be seen as a subgenre of the poetic diary.) The poetic diary, which included both the poems written by the author and those sent by others, became an autobiographical form. In many cases, Japanese poems are preceded by what is called a headnote (*kotobagaki*), which provides either the topic or the context for the poem. In other words, the performative, occasional nature of poetry gave rise to a number of interrelated prose genres that reproduced the original social context of the poetry.

Since the poems were often variations on established topics or alluded to earlier poems, existing in a larger intertextual context, even without their original social, religious, or political contexts, they could survive and be selected and re-presented in later collections and narratives as variations on established themes (seasons, love, travel, separation, and so on), as happened in the imperial *waka* anthologies beginning with the *Kokinshū* (early tenth century) and in *haikai* anthologies such as *Sarumino* (*Monkey's Raincoat*,

1691). That is to say, poems were often repackaged, taking on a new life independent of their social origins. In short, the relationships among the performance, the material presentation, and the text are not only complex but critical to understanding the dynamics of the production and reception of Japanese poetry.

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