



## Oracles in Silence: Comparative Poetics Across Mist, Mountain, and Ice

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### Abstract

This study examines how elemental imagery of mist, mountain, and ice functions as oracular symbols across bilingual poetics. Drawing on English and Japanese versions of three paired poems, the analysis shows how silence and geometry become central devices that mediate between universal metaphors and culturally embedded cosmologies. The English texts emphasize mystical abstraction, vertical ascent, and paradoxical silence, while the Japanese texts foreground ritual divination, circular continuity, and geometric enclosure. Methods of incorporating the discussion within the scope of Comparative Literature, Translation Studies, Cultural Studies, and Environmental Humanities, the article illustrates how more generalized concepts within bilingual poetics might explain cultural and ecological ideas. By incorporating a methodology of reading with an interdisciplinary focus, it relates to an ethics of difference as articulated in Venuti. The findings reveal four thematic currents of silence as oracle, cosmic geometry, cross-linguistic resonance, and ecological continuity. Together these currents show how literature bridges nature and transcendence while reflecting distinct cultural sensibilities. The study concludes that bilingual poetry offers a powerful lens for understanding how universal metaphors are reshaped through translation, ritual, and environmental imagination.

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### Introduction

Fog, mountain, and ice have had figurative meanings as natural imagery for a long time. These elements have more meaning as metaphors because they refer not only to literary description but also have implications for human fate, divine silence, and transcendence. All these elements act as oracular symbols within the matched set of texts analyzed below as they provide meaning through silence and geometry.

This study argues that mist, mountain, and ice serve as elemental metaphors in bilingual poetics, mediating between universal imagery and culturally embedded cosmologies while opening a framework that links silence, geometry, and ecological thought. This paper argues that elemental imagery in bilingual poetics functions as oracular geometry, mediating universal metaphors and cultural cosmologies through silence and form.

Mist, mountain, and ice are selected based on the fact that they represent atmospheric, terrestrial, and crystalline registers that recur across English and Japanese poetics, each functioning as a symbolic site where silence, geometry, cosmology, and ecological thought intersect.

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The research thus investigates and analyzes the ways in which English and Japanese renditions differ in imagery and cultural perspective, and thus it tries to demonstrate within the realms of Comparative Literature, Translation Studies, Cultural Studies, and Environmental In Comparative Literature, Translation Studies, Cultural Studies, and Environmental Humanities, as discussed by Huang and Valdeón <sup>[7]</sup>, Zha <sup>[8]</sup>, Lefevere <sup>[9]</sup>, Li <sup>[10]</sup>, Bassnett <sup>[13]</sup>, and Damrosch <sup>[14, 15]</sup>, the imagery of elements functions as an intervening instrument that mediates between metaphors and traditions. And on the domains of poetics and philosophy of nature <sup>[16, 17, 18]</sup> for illustrating that silence and geometry are core devices within bilingual poetics.

### Oracle of the Mist <sup>[1, 2]</sup>

English version (Oracle of the Mist): Mist is portrayed as a liminal veil, a medium of prophecy where silence speaks <sup>[1]</sup>.

Japanese version <sup>[2]</sup>: The diction invokes Shinto-Buddhist cosmology, situating mist as a sacred threshold <sup>[2]</sup>.

Comparative insight: The English text emphasizes mystical abstraction, while the Japanese version grounds mist in ritual divination. In the English version, pauses and subtle caesura evoke silence as a liminal veil, while the Japanese version echoes ritual cadence, resembling chant-like rhythm that reinforces its sacred threshold.

As interdisciplinary note it can be stated that This contrast links literary imagery to religious cosmology and cultural anthropology <sup>[19, 20]</sup>.

All these images evoke Bashō's notion of liminality in "The ancient pond," wherein silence functions as a threshold, and Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," wherein mist and fog demarcate the region separating human destiny and divine mystery. From an ecological perspective within the humanities, mist represents an atmospheric frailty that reminds us of the subtlety of climate systems veiling and unveiling human destiny.

### Voices of the Himalaya <sup>[3, 4]</sup>

English version (Voices of the Himalaya): The Himalaya is framed as a resonant chamber, echoing human longing and divine presence <sup>[3]</sup>.

Japanese version <sup>[4]</sup>: The imagery shifts toward circularity, presenting the mountains as a "spiritual ring" of continuity <sup>[4]</sup>.

Comparative insight: The English text privileges vertical ascent, while the Japanese version emphasizes cyclical enclosure. The English version employs upward syntax and enjambment to mirror vertical ascent, whereas the Japanese

version uses circular repetition and cadence that recall ritual chanting, emphasizing continuity and enclosure.

Note on interdisciplinarity: The combination here links metaphorical representation in literature with geography and philosophy, with verticality implying transcendence and circularity representing cyclical notions of the cosmos <sup>[16, 21]</sup>. The notion of vertical climb links with Wordsworth's thoughts on "Tintern Abbey," wherein mountains symbolize a transcendental spiritual notion, and Japanese concepts of circular shapes echo Buddhist mandalas representing continued cycles of unity within an enclosed cosmos. Mountains, with their added meanings, also stand as notions for ecological continuity.

### Ring of Listening Ice <sup>[5, 6]</sup>

English version (Ring of Listening Ice): Ice becomes paradoxical, frozen silence that nonetheless listens <sup>[5]</sup>.

Japanese version <sup>[6]</sup>: The metaphor intensifies into a ritual circle, transforming ice into a sacred boundary of perception <sup>[6]</sup>.

Comparative insight: The English text foregrounds paradox, while the Japanese version foregrounds ritual geometry. In the English version, paradoxical phrasing and broken rhythm highlight tension within silence, while the Japanese version intensifies ritual geometry through patterned diction and cadence that resemble ceremonial repetition.

Interdisciplinary note: The imagery resonates with environmental humanities and cultural studies <sup>[22, 23]</sup>. The Japanese version's circular framing of ice evokes not only ritual geometry but also ecological enclosure, resonating with contemporary concerns about climate vulnerability <sup>[22, 23]</sup>. This paradox of frozen silence recalls Eliot's "The Waste Land," where ice and sterility embody fragility, and Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," where crystalline imagery suggests both enclosure and visionary geometry.

### Comparative Poetic Focus in English and Japanese Versions

Table 1 illustrates the central contrasts between the English and Japanese versions of the poems. The English texts emphasize mystical abstraction, vertical ascent, and paradoxical silence. The Japanese versions foreground ritual divination, circular continuity, and geometric enclosure. Taken together, these differences show how each linguistic tradition shapes elemental imagery into distinct poetic sensibilities <sup>[15, 18]</sup>.

**Table 1:** Comparative Poetic Focus: English vs. Japanese Versions of Mist, Mountain, and Ice

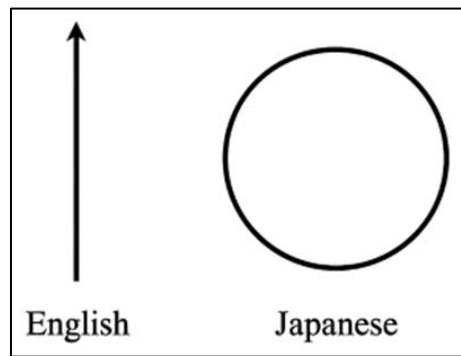
Poem Pair	English Version Focus	Japanese Version Focus
<b>Oracle of the Mist</b> [1][2]	Mystical <b>abstraction</b> — mist as a liminal veil of prophecy	Ritual <b>divination</b> — mist as a sacred threshold in cosmology
<b>Voices of the Himalaya</b> [3][4]	<b>Verticality</b> — mountains as chambers echoing upward voices	<b>Circularity</b> — mountains as a spiritual ring enclosing continuity
<b>Ring of Listening Ice</b> [5][6]	<b>Paradox</b> — frozen silence that nonetheless listens	<b>Geometry</b> — ritual circle of ice as sacred boundary of perception

To deepen the comparative framework, Table 2 expands the analysis across four dimensions: imagery, cosmology, poetic form, and cultural resonance. This structure clarifies how each elemental metaphor mist, mountain, and ice, functions

differently across English and Japanese traditions, revealing the layered interplay between poetic technique and cultural worldview.

**Table 2:** Expanded Comparative Framework: Mist, Mountain, and Ice.

Element	Imagery (English)	Imagery (Japanese)	Cosmology (Japanese)	Cosmology (Japanese - 2nd Column)	Poetic Form (English)	Cultural Resonance
Mist	Liminal veil, abstraction or silence	Sacred threshold, ritual boundary	Mystical abstraction, prophecy through silence	Shinto-buddhistic divination threshold of the sacred	Free verse cadence, emphasis on pause and ambiguity	English mystical tradition (Wordsworth, Colridge) (Japanese ritual cosmology)
Mountain	Vertical abstraction of echoes	Circular enclosure spiritual ring	Transcendence through height, longing for divine presence	Cyclical cosmology continuity through enclosure	Ritual diction, cadence echoing chant and invocation	Japanese ritual cosmology (Bashō, Shinto practices)
Ice	Paradoxical silence, frozen yet listening	Paradoxical silence, frozen yet listening	Silence as paradox, fragile matter	Geometry of ritual enclosure sacred listening boundary	Geometric diction, ritualized repetition	Western paradox tradition (Coleridge's ice, Eliot's silence)



**Fig 1:** Conceptual geometry of English (vertical ascent) vs. Japanese (circular enclosure)

To clarify the conceptual contrast between English and Japanese poetic traditions, Figure 1 presents the underlying geometries that shape their elemental metaphors. The English versions emphasize vertical ascent, which reflects a trajectory of transcendence. In contrast, the Japanese versions highlight circular continuity, which evokes ritual enclosure. This visual representation supports the patterns outlined in Table 2 and illustrates how cosmic geometry functions as a central metaphor across linguistic and cultural frameworks.

Table 1 illustrates the conceptual geometry underlying the contrasts: the English versions privilege vertical ascent (axis of transcendence), while the Japanese versions foreground circular continuity (ritual enclosure). This diagram represents how cosmic geometry operates as a central metaphor across different traditions.

This table 2 illustrates how elemental imagery diverges across English and Japanese poetic traditions, highlighting differences in metaphor, poetic structure, cosmological framing and cultural resonance.

Thus, these differences are summarized in tables below and visualized in Figure 1, set the stage for thematic synthesis.

### Thematic Synthesis

Three thematic currents emerge across these paired works:

- **Silence as Oracle:** Mist and ice embody silence yet function as mediums of prophecy.
- **Cosmic Geometry:** Mountains and ice are framed as rings, circles, or enclosures, emphasizing continuity.
- **Cross-Linguistic Resonance:** English versions lean toward abstraction, where Japanese versions embed toward imagery in cultural cosmology.

These currents resonate across literary traditions: Bashō's evocation of liminality in the haiku 'The ancient pond' lines parallel with Coleridge's mystical fog in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Another example is Wordsworth's mountains which embody vertical transcendence, while Buddhist mandalas emphasize circular continuity. Eliot's sterility in *The Waste Land* contrasts with Japanese ritual geometry, where ice becomes a sacred enclosure. Together, these echoes sharpen the bridge between English Romanticism and Japanese ritual poetics, situating elemental imagery within a global comparative framework.

These flows demonstrate how literary analysis intersects with religious studies, cultural anthropology, and philosophy of nature [11, 12, 17].

**Ecological Resonance:** Mist and mountains embody atmospheric fragility and ecological continuity, situating

poetics within environmental thought.

Within this structure, mists embody a metaphor for the transient nature of climate with veiling and unveiling that represents human fate. On the other hand, mountains stand as a metaphor for stability and continuity but also carry an ecological perspective of destruction and recreation and an ideational journey. All these components emphasize an interplay that exists within nature between fragility and stability.

From an environmental humanities perspective, mist and mountains offer more than literary tropes because they are ecological signifiers which emphasize human involvement with ecological processes. As a signifier of ecological precariousness, mist suggests the challenges associated with atmospheric equilibrium and parallels modern preoccupations with ecological change and climate. As a transcendent and dramatically recurrent signifier, mountains confer a sense of ecological and cultural resilience.

Ice, as frozen silence, embodies ecological vulnerability. It symbolizes enclosure and fragility, resonating with contemporary concerns about climate change and the melting of boundaries between stability and collapse. In Japanese ritual framing, ice becomes a sacred enclosure, while in English abstraction it embodies paradox, reminding us of the precariousness of ecological continuity.

A cross-cultural poetics here would suggest that the English traditions emphasize mystical abstraction and transcendence via these images, while Japanese traditions entwine these images with ritual cosmologies emphasizing cyclical and ecological enclosure. It thus places elemental imagery on literature, ecology, and cosmology and illustrates that bilingual poetics can be meaningful and insightful with regards to aesthetic and ethical considerations on environmental thinking.

Finally, ecological resonance in mist and mountains highlights that poetry relates not only to cultural sensitivities but also plays an active role in developing ecological imaginaries. Further bridge human perception with the fragility and continuity of the natural world.

### Methodological Positioning

The project belongs to the field of Comparative Literature and makes a tangible contribution there, within Translation Studies and Poetics. It also relates to Cultural Studies, locating images within Shinto-Buddhist cosmology and Himalayan spirituality. The article shows, through an examination of bilingual instances of these poems, that translation is more than a linguistic act and that poetics goes between universal imagery and specific cosmologies.

The contrasts listed in Table 1 above form the basis for the interdisciplinary scope illustrative of how these cultural frameworks differentiate elemental imagery into poetic sensibilities. A close reading and comparative analysis allow these bilinguals to be viewed within a literary and cultural framework. By so doing, there is reinforcement of the interdisciplinary scope discussed above, as these contrasts are viewed with textual accuracy and a sensitivity and philosophy that correspond with these cultures.

It will be an added contribution to discussions associated with the field of Comparative Literature Studies, as it analyzes how bilingual poetics can be an instrument for viewing cultural cosmology and ecological thought.

This strategy fits with what Venuti calls an “ethics of difference” and implies a translation practice that, instead of seeking similarities, undergoes a cultural process emphasizing difference as a meaning site.

Together with Venuti, Bachelard, Ricoeur, and Lefevre provide more complexity to the methodological framework. Bachelard’s meditation on *The Poetics of Space* calls to mind that imagery like mist, mountain, and ice is more metaphorical as well as spatial. Ricoeur’s meditation on metaphor articulates very effectively the dialectics of universality and particularity with regard to meaning and metaphor. Lefevre’s understanding about politics of translation underscores that all acts of translation are very political because they readjust imagery anew on the politics of culture. All these theoretical mediations once again remind us that as a methodological practice, bilingual poetry performs at that intersection and juncture. This is valid both literary and philosophically.

Through the fusion of close reading and framing an interdisciplinary textual practice, it will be shown within this analysis that poetics involving bilingualism have the capacity to shed light on cultural cosmologies and notions of ecology.

### Conclusion

The comparative reading of *Oracle of the Mist*, *Voices of the Himalaya*, and *Ring of Listening Ice* reveals how elemental imagery such as mist, mountain, and ice is trans linguistic while remaining culturally specific. In the English versions these elements emerge as metaphors of mystical abstraction, vertical ascent, and paradoxical silence. In the Japanese versions they are reframed through ritual divination, circular continuity, and geometric enclosure.

Taken together, these contrasts reveal how bilingual poetics mediates between universal metaphors and culturally embedded cosmologies. By situating these texts within Comparative Literature, Translation Studies, Poetics, Cultural Studies, and Environmental Humanities, as explored by Huang and Valdeón<sup>[7]</sup>, Zha<sup>[8]</sup>, Lefevre<sup>[9]</sup>, Li<sup>[10]</sup>, Xu<sup>[11]</sup>, Pham<sup>[12]</sup>, Glotfelty and Fromm<sup>[22]</sup>, Heise<sup>[23]</sup>, and Garrard, the analysis highlights the interdisciplinary value of cross-linguistic poetics.

It crystallizes three thematic currents: silence as oracle, cosmic geometry, and cross-linguistic resonance. Such currents do throw a light on how literature comes to function as a passageway between nature and transcendence, and at the same time, it points out how cultural frameworks insert the elemental imagery into different poetic sensibilities.

This study demonstrates that bilingual poetics not only mediates between universal metaphors and cultural cosmologies but also provides a framework for ecological

and philosophical reflection. By integrating Venuti’s ethics of difference with insights from Bachelard, Ricoeur, and Lefevre, the paper advances Comparative Literature as a discipline attentive to both cultural specificity and planetary imagination.

Based on the ethical stance on difference as outlined by Venuti, it becomes evident that the bilingual perspective typified below illustrates how translation itself becomes a ritual of cultural change, maintaining different cosmologies and yet developing paths of resonance.

By combining poetics, cosmology, and environmental humanities, it becomes clear that bilingual poetry research can illuminate the cultural shift of universal metaphors, making it a paradigm for comparative literature.

Future research could extend these considerations to other bilingual traditions of poetry and analyze more systematically the relationship between imagery related to elements and cultural identity. These extensions would help extend the range of comparative poetics and enable a better understanding of universal metaphors and how they are transformed in different ways within various traditions as influenced by translation and cultural perceptions W<sup>[14, 23]</sup>.

### Ending Envoy

*Mist veils the oracle,  
Mountains ring the silence,  
Ice listens in geometry—  
Three voices, one destiny.*

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