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A Comparison of Robert Frost's Poems *In White* and *Design*

I first transcribed the lines of the two poems side by side and colored the differences in order to visualize them better. I also numbered the lines (considering the title line as number 1, and that line 10 does not exist in *Design*). The result allowed me to understand better what “works” in each revision.

1	Title: <i>White</i> vs. <i>Design</i> There is a lot of white in the poem, including the Heal-all which usually is a blue flower. Several words rhyme with the word white: sight, blight, kite, delight, height, plight, night, aright. “Design” appears only at the end, seemingly questioning whether there is design in nature.
2	The new first line introduces the speaker as actively observing the scene, which was done in line 5 of the original version in the form of a question. The original “snowdrop” has been moved to line 8 in the new version, becoming metaphorical instead of a simile. The spider is now “dimpled” instead of “dented,” and “fat.”
4	“Lifeless” has been replaced by “rigid” which may be more accurate, given the nature of satin.
5, 6	The original questions want to indicate strangeness in the tableau, but the new version says more by eliminating them. The new version continues the description

	of the scene. It seems more appropriate to structure the poem as a description of the scene followed by the questions in lines 11 to 16.
8	New location of “snowdrop” which is used to qualify the spider instead of a simile. Articles are now indefinite, which I think works better in a description.
9	“The moth” has become “dead wings” which I think works better because it emphasizes the immobility of the moth.
12	In the original version, “Brunella” was only another name for “heal all” and was hardly necessary. “Every child’s delight” did not seem too relevant. It looked like a branch of the poem that had not been developed.
14	In the new version, the line continues the question of line 13 elegantly, lending a more complete picture of the spider carrying the moth rather than the spider alone.
15,	Replacing “and of night” by “to appall” the speaker makes it an active question.
16	The original was questioning the propriety of the word “design” itself, while the new version may be closer to wondering about the design, or the absence of it, in nature.

General Impressions

The new version flows better. I think the restructuring of the questions into more descriptive sentences works much better. The last two lines of the earlier version seemed to question the meaning of the word “design,” which I don’t think was the intent. The new version of the lines seems to work better in wondering about the size of creation (questioning how nature could bring about such beauty without design by a superior entity).