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THE AESTHETIC USE OF LANGUAGE AND LITERARY EXPERIENCE: AN
INTRODUCTORY PEDAGOGICAL STYLISTICS

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

PH.D. 1984

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THE AESTHETIC USE OF LANGUAGE AND LITERARY EXPERIENCE:
AN INTRODUCTORY PEDAGOGICAL STYLISTICS

BY

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A.B., University of Illinois, 1971

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education
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1984

THE AESTHETIC USE OF LANGUAGE AND LITERARY EXPERIENCE:
AN INTRODUCTORY PEDAGOGICAL STYLISTICS

Ned Scott Laff, Ph.D.
College of Education
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1984

This dissertation outlines a pedagogical stylistics, an approach to teaching poetry based on the aesthetic use of language. Two assumptions are made: poetry is one of the arts and reading poetry is an aesthetic experience. This entails two points. First, one of the distinguishing features of poetry is the manipulation of linguistic structures for literary (aesthetic) effects. Language, for poets, is an artistic medium. Second, the effects created from the patterning of language result from perceived relationships between language and content. They are reader based. Literary (aesthetic) responsiveness depends upon the ability to intuit (read) the analogical relationships between the selection and arrangements of elements of language and what poets try to communicate.

Chapter II explores the sense of sound in poetry. It argues that the "sounds" of words include a tactile element as well as an auditory element. The chapter explores the use of articulatory features of sound to come to terms with the sense of sound in poetry.

Chapter III argues that to appreciate rhythm in poetry we must explore the relationship between the metered line and the line as connected speech. Words, phrases, and clauses maintain their integrity against the meter and carry their own rhythmic weight. The rhythm of a poem results, in large part, from how meter and phrasal rhythms interact.

Chapter IV argues that syntax can be exploited for spatio-temporal features as well as conceptual ones. Syntax can be used to convey abstract "shapes" produced from the compositional nature of grammatical structures.

Because syntactic units occur in time, the pace of these units can be exploited. Finally, because grammatical structures carry an associated meaning-usage, the semantic nature of syntax also can be exploited.

Chapter V looks at the role that pedagogical stylistics can play in literary education by looking at the problem of the text and the reader.

These studies are directed toward introductory college poetry courses. Pedagogically, they should lead students to a better reading experience of poetry and provide educators with pedagogic tools to investigate with students the relationship among literary expression, poetic content and themes, and the reading experience.

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Thanks go to Rich Cureton, my friend and mentor. Under the Hunter's Moon on Windsor Road he buoyed me with his camaraderie and fired my imagination with his passion for the language. Without his urgings and teachings, and most of all his friendship, I could not have completed this work.

To Rachel, Rebecca, and Elanor. You colored my books with your crayons, scattered my papers in your play, and jammed the typewriter. And you taught me again to see the birds sitting on the clouds.

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Author's Note

The texts of the poems presented in the pages of this dissertation have been taken from The Norton Anthology of Poetry; The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry; The Norton Anthology of American Literature, 2 Vols., and The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 2 Vols. In addition, each introduction to poetry cited in these pages contains its own anthology of poetry from which poems were taken to illustrate major points. My intent in using standard anthologies is twofold. First, by restricting myself to poems frequently anthologized, I am taking my examples from poems frequently encountered by students. Second, using these poems demonstrates that the aesthetic effects of language discussed in this dissertation are to be found in the mainstream of American and English poetry and not exclusively in the "special" poems found in the works of individual poets.

I would like specifically to thank Richard Cureton for allowing me to use the following detailed, notated, or scanned illustrations from his work-in-progress on sound, rhythm, and syntax: "Ulysses," "The Lotos-Eaters," "Holy Sonnet 14," "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle," "Domination of Black," "Birches," and "Shadows."

CHAPTER I

LITERARY EDUCATION: TOUCHING HANDS IN THE DARK

The reader's ability to make constructive use of the works of critics will depend not only on his ability to appreciate the relationships they note but also on his ability to appreciate and defend as significant those relationships which, in particular climates of critical opinion, it is customary to underrate or ignore.¹

Winifred Nowotny

Introduction

Despite the modern trends in criticism and the influence they have had on literature curricula, we still find our students unable to read poetry. After all, we have been told that New Criticism, the offspring of Richards's Practical Criticism, has been dead these last twenty years. It has been argued that it died of its very success. It was Richards who wanted to provide a new technique for readers to explore what they thought and felt about poetry. More importantly for literary educators, he wanted "to prepare the way for educational methods more efficient than those we use now in developing discrimination and the power to understand what we hear and read."² From New Criticism we learned the merits of scrupulous attention to text and context, ironies, ambiguities, imagery, and words and their interrelationships. We take for granted that reading literary discourse is quite different from ordinary discourse, and so, for the most part, close textual reading underlies whatever critical position theorists assume.³

Further, the pedagogy behind the New Criticism and its influence on the literature syllabus is the modern tradition of understanding poetry heralded

by Brooks and Warren. In their introduction to Understanding Poetry, they argued that the best way to approach poetry was to keep an eye on the poem as a poem and to treat it concretely and inductively. Their purpose was neither to explore the fundamental problems of poetic criticism nor to provide a neat criterion which could be applied to criticism. Rather, they hoped "to present to the student, in the proper context and after proper preparation, some of the basic critical problems--with the aim, not of making technical critics, but merely of making competent readers of poetry."⁴ Regardless of the critical debates on the nature of literature, the reader, and the literary experience, literary educators have felt secure that in the fifty years since Practical Criticism the skills for reading poetry had been well grounded.

Kenneth Bennett, however, points out that we should not feel as secure as we believe ourselves to be.⁵ Bennett recreated Richards's original "experiment" from Practical Criticism in order to discover what impact literary criticism has had on education. He was trying to find out whether or not there has been any change in students' abilities to read and judge poetry. Bennett discovered that while tastes may have changed, critical abilities have not improved "even though instruction in explication and in literary criticism has become more widespread."⁶ He found that many of the problems Richards documented are still prevalent, the most obvious being the inability to make out the prose sense of a poem. Bennett was quick to point out that readers "tend to read the poem they imagine, not the words printed on the page, and impose their own prose on the poet."⁷ Significantly, Bennett discovered that few of his readers were able to use explicatory techniques without faltering. "Poems, for example, were frequently praised for forming a unified whole, but seldom did their critics state in what specific elements this unity consisted."⁸

In a similar study, Anthony Arthur concluded that "most of the problems described by Richards in Practical Criticism remain our primary concerns in teaching literature; very little has changed since he wrote the book."⁹ Arthur found that his students brought to poetry the underlying assumption that it must teach and entertain. Content orientation dominated concerns for style, language, and prosodic effects. And poems considered difficult to read, for any reason, were resented. Arthur found none of his students looking at diction, imagery, or other prosodic devices. Predominant in his protocols were illustrations of the power of stock response and what Richards called "doctrinal adhesion." Arthur found his students characterized by a naivety of outlook on literature and a poverty of literary experience, and disturbingly he found they lacked any kind of shared vocabulary. Arthur views the results of his study as a tribute to the continual relevance of Practical Criticism as a critical and pedagogical tool.

Not surprisingly, these studies confirm what most of us have long suspected--our students cannot read poetry responsively. But they should also point out that we are not helping our students to master the skills necessary to read and respond to poetry. Our failure here may have to do with how we use literary theory and criticism. This is especially true for those working with introductory curricula. The pedagogic relevance of literary theory is dependent upon student readiness to engage literary works, but what our students' responses suggest is that they lack that essential preparation. The question of the usefulness of literary theory for pedagogy is complicated further by the assumptions of literary thinkers themselves. Wellek and Warren are representative. They assert that our sympathetic understanding and enjoyment are preconditions of our knowledge and our reflection upon literature. "But they are

only preconditions. To say that literary study serves only the art of reading is to misconceive the ideal of organized knowledge, however indispensable this art may be for the student of literature."¹⁰ The art of reading is for pure personal cultivation, and, whether rightly or wrongly, it is separated from literary study.

Students are frequently bewildered by poetry because they have not mastered this necessary art of reading. They are uncertain when dealing with the concentrated and compressed use of language in poetry, mystified by poetic effects stemming from syntactic manipulation, figures of speech, stanzaic forms, line length, and the like; and too often they lack the critical reading abilities to discern prose sense, themes, and the aesthetic enjoyment poetry affords. Many times students simply lack the reading experience to explore the relationships of diction and imagery, sound and sense, and meter and rhythm that distinguish literary response from gross reaction. Seymour Chatman points out that "a large number of our students never respond to literature because they never learned how to read it."¹¹ Quite frankly, our use of literary criticism may not be the panacea we need to deal with this problem.

Our teaching of poetry should have something to do with teaching our students how to respond to it, and regardless of whatever we value from our responses to poetry, those responses result from our efforts at reading. It is at this point that literary educators find themselves at odds with literary critics. Roger Fowler observes of literary critics that "we find that their general comments on the definition of literature are characteristically no more than apologies for their own practical methods."¹² The practice of criticism proves many of the critical discussions on the nature, the function, and the theory of literature to be woefully inadequate to handle literature and our literary experiences. What we sacrifice by focusing upon the critical view of poetry is

our understanding of the literary use of language and our aesthetic experience that ensues from our engagement with the language of poetry. Our reading experience is not part of the structure of criticism, and, like literature itself, we can talk about our literary experience but we cannot recapture it or include it in our critical strategies.¹³

Stanley Fish, though in a different vein, drives this point home. He asserts there is a distinction between our actual reading experience and our reflection on that experience. We "see" what our interpretive principles permit us to see and then attribute that to the intentions of the text. In short, the reader does not report on his immediate response to a poem but on a response to his response that is dictated by his critical stance. The act of critical interpretation is removed (divorced) from the art of reading.¹⁴ This is a serious problem, especially if we are working with students at the introductory level. Their immediate reading response, dependent upon their individual skills in apprehending poetry, may be either underdeveloped, devalued, or ignored because of our desire to provide them with the concepts of criticism and the vocabulary to carry on discourse about literature. Indeed, we may be guilty of assuming that our students command the art of reading upon which their literary experiences depend.

The art of reading is basic to the literary experience, and the honing of our reading response makes us more sensitive to the prosodic elements that render the nonparaphrasable meanings in literature and our literary experience. But it appears that we are developing neither critical reading acumen nor principles which inform that reading--our students are still touching hands in the dark with the poets they read. It is ironic, then, that we pay tribute to Richards's contemporariness instead of asking some hard questions about our

apparent failure as literary educators. Richards, after all, told us that construing poetry is not nearly so easy and natural a reading performance as we assume. It can be taught; it is only that "the best methods of instruction remain to be worked out."¹⁵ Evidently, we still have to find those methods of instruction.

Two Critics in the Classroom

Literary educators have depended upon criticism to define literary questions and skills and to provide the context for the interpretation, judgment, and evaluation of poetic works. This seems natural enough since we have been told that there is no direct learning of literature itself and that because of its intermediary nature all that can be taught is criticism.¹⁶ Wellek and Warren, among others, share this sentiment. They assert that both the teacher and the student "must translate his experience of literature into intellectual terms, assimilate it to a coherent scheme" even if that experience contains strongly irrational elements.¹⁷ We are drawn to literary criticism by the prospect of giving our students a critical/interpretive vocabulary and a framework to pursue literary study.

But the relationship between literary criticism and its use for education is an uneasy one. Our fundamental goal is to help our students to become more intelligent and sensitive readers of poetry and to provide them with principles that inform their reading. Frameworks that lend themselves to literary study, however, may not necessarily be those that best lend themselves pedagogically to enhance and intensify reading experience.¹⁸ Moreover, educators are faced with a plethora of attractive and competing schools. We are left on our own to decide which critical approach will best help our students, and that decision will vary, sometimes radically, depending on the character of our students.

When we teach we teach a critical approach perforce. The problem educators face is how to use literary criticism. If we emphasize literary study before we are sure our students can read and engage literary works, we may end up teaching exercises in methodology at the expense of our students' reading experiences. Our use of criticism may in fact distance our students from their own reading experiences.

Wayne Booth provocatively attacks this problem. Booth "can think of no work of criticism, theoretical or practical, so important that it must be taught to students who have not yet decided that they have a professional interest in literature."¹⁹ We should first teach our students how to read, and for Booth this is criticism as it is most broadly defined. Booth points out that our key use of criticism should not shift our students' attention from the subject of the literary experience. We cripple our students' ability to respond if we first equip them with critical positions and sophisticated critical techniques before they have learned to read poetry. Each critical school has something to "prove" and literature provides the data. Our students become encouraged to test poets against a critical scheme rather than against their reading intuitions and literary responses, and if the poet passes the test, then they merit his work. This tends to keep readers not only two steps removed from any real literary experience, but also from an understanding of their reading effort. Booth asserts we should shift our attention from the systematic structures of critical ideas to practical methods of dealing with questions about specific works and their interrelationships. He sees this approach as resulting in a base for study provided from the students' experience of poetry, or thoughts about it.

Booth sees our job as one of improving our students' ability to answer questions that their own reading generates and not the questions raised by critical thinkers. By working to "improve the student's responsibility in

reading and in making statements about his reading," we can lead our students from bad reading to good reading and help them to think about their own critical statements.²⁰ For Booth our aim is to help our students build a small repertory of questions, principles, and notions about literary facts and methods. To accomplish this, Booth identifies five areas he believes underlie most critical positions: questions about the work itself; questions about its author or about how the work relates to him; questions about the audience and how the work relates to them, questions about either the "world" the work reflects or the beliefs of the reader; and finally questions about other causes of the work.²¹ The moment a student, any reader, makes any kind of statement about a work he has read, he is making critical statements. In introducing our students to critical reading, the point is not to raise one area as superior to another, but to enlarge our students' interest by showing them there are more interesting questions and meaningful canons of discussion for those questions than any reader's spontaneous response suggests. Moreover, we can help our students understand what questions they are talking about and the types of supportive statements demanded.

Booth outlines one further set of distinctions he feels are necessary to help our students locate their questions. Questions in any of the five areas can be about facts in the work, about interpretations, or about evaluation. We help our students "clean up the lines of discussion by clarifying whether they are making claims of fact, which can presumably be verified by every observer, claims of interpretation either of facts in the work itself or of facts derived from one of the related areas, or claims of value."²² Booth notes that the distinction among these three can never be sharply drawn because there are few facts that uninterpreted are worth mentioning, and all evaluations are based on presumed facts and interpretations. But the important point is that from

this outline we can organize our discussions of works we read to generate more and better reading. Questions, the idea of what constitutes literary facts, principles, and methods are what all critics build their works from, and from these we educate our students in the foundation of critical reading. This encourages the sense of responsible reading and, for Booth, brings us closer to whatever experience the literature has to offer.

Wimsatt offers a different approach to the intelligent and sensitive reading of poetry. Wimsatt sees poetry as a precise physical shape of words and human experiences and the relation between poetic form and poetic meaning as the central aesthetic fact. Poetry "is a kind of verbal discourse the power of which--or the satisfaction which we derive from it--is actually increased by an increase in our understanding of the artifice. In poetry the artifice is art."²³ We encounter forms that resonate meaning and are, at the same time, the source of our pleasure. Underlying our attempts to interpret poems and to discuss our responses is a fundamental appreciation. The things we say about a poem and the kinds of responses we experience are the reasons for either our enjoying or disliking it. Our criticism is infused with evaluative intimations and inevitably reflects our engagement with poetry. Wimsatt sees our engagement with poetic forms as an engagement with the meanings that inhere in the form, and so it is necessary for us to come to grips with the kinds of meaning in poetry.

Wimsatt outlines three progressive critical moments necessary for the teacher-critic to lead students into appreciation and interpretation: explanation, description, and explication. Explanation focuses on the simplest kinds of observations we can make on poetic meaning--the kind which deals with the dictionary meaning of a word or phrase. While this level does not carry us far, Wimsatt does not neglect its importance. "This kind of meaning is

definitely, definably, and provably there . . . , let us call this explicit meaning."²⁴ Before we can proceed our students must be aware of this kind of meaning.

Description does not deal with what a poem says but with what a poem is. In simplest terms, description involves two aspects, internal and external. Internal description isolates and accents the many elements of a poem's structure, discusses their features, and shows their interrelationships. For instance, the meter of a poem is of a certain kind with certain variations and relations to the syntax. External descriptions highlight those things which a poem has as its setting. The play upon and variation from the tradition of the heroic couplet in Keats' "Sleep and Poetry" is an example of this type of description. But description, Wimsatt points out, is never simply a report on appearances. "Description of a poetic structure is inevitably also an engagement with meanings which inhere in that structure. It is a necessary first part of the engagement with certain kinds of meaning."²⁵ Through description we return to meaning, but of a different kind than mentioned above.

For Wimsatt, the reasons for our pleasure in a poem, and our admiration for it, rest in the demands of explication. Explication helps us realize the implicit meanings inherent in the poem, and through explication we pattern our responses to the images, feelings, attitudes, and associations the poem evokes. Wimsatt asserts that our experiences and our responses to poetry are grounded in the implicit meaning. He sees little implied at the level of explanation, and he asserts little at the level of description. It is not a merit in a poem that it contains a given vocabulary, or that it has a certain kind of meter, or rhyme, or structure. Rather, Wimsatt tells us that we engage certain features of the poem that assert themselves against the other aspects in the poem and that these are the reasons for our pleasure. Our literary experience is found

in "the realization of the vastly more rich and interesting kinds of meaning."²⁶ We encounter patterns of meanings characterized by coherence which Wimsatt sees as an aspect of truth and significance. Explication alerts us to the cues that enable us to organize the elements of thought and feeling--the images of the text--into patterns of meaning. It is our means to evoke the poem and engage in the literary experience. The idea of form is meaning itself, the balance of denotation, connotation, ambiguity, idea, and suggestion. Explication helps us to see how the meanings words embody open into larger meanings on all levels. For Wimsatt, our discussions about poetry must lead our students to explication; through it we are led to appreciation and the literary experience.

These approaches seem reasonable enough;²⁷ they seem to accommodate our traditional concerns as literary educators. They are congenial with the imaginative experiment. By helping our students explore the "world" reflected in literature they can imaginatively experience different human situations. In doing so they are led to challenge their own presuppositions and system of values. This has always been one of the claimed values of literary education. These approaches also appear to offer us a workable means to provide our students with a fundamental critical acumen to carry on a shared discourse about their experiences with literature. In other words, these approaches seem compatible with our fundamental curricular goal to enhance and intensify our students' literary experiences and to provide them with tools to reflect upon those experiences.

Reading Response and the Literary Experience

It is a nagging question, however, whether these approaches illuminate our reading experience of poetry. Will they help our students to a better reading of poetry? Do these approaches help our students explore, and so become sensitive to, what is unique about a poem that motivates their peculiar reading (aesthetic) response to that piece of language as opposed to others concerned

with similar themes? Regardless of what we believe the efficacies of these approaches to be, we are faced with the fact that too many of our students have mastered neither the ability to read sensitively and intelligently nor the principles which inform that process. In short, literary study can take place without students engaging the text aesthetically. If we look closely we find that our students seem to learn how to parody critical discussion and bandy about critical techniques giving us the appearance that we have succeeded in generating more and better reading of poetry. But we should not equate a study of the thematic concerns in poetry with the complete reading experience. While the thematic strata and the aesthetic go hand-in-hand, we tend to separate them with our critical pedagogical strategies. We too often assume that if we explain the poem and discuss its meanings and implications the reading experience will take care of itself. We confuse our reading experience with how we organize what we know about poetry or a poet, or with what we want to understand about what we have read. Our reading experience is dependent upon our abilities to motivate the experiential content of a poem, the thematic and aesthetic strata stemming from structured language use. Do educational approaches of these types help our students develop aesthetic reading skills? Let us look at Williams's "The Dance."

In Breughel's great picture, The Kermess,
 the dancers go round, they go round and
 around, the squeal and the blare and the
 tweedle of bagpipes, a bugle and fiddles
 tipping their bellies (round as the thick- 5
 sided glasses whose wash they impound)
 their hips and their bellies off balance
 to turn them. Kicking and rolling about
 the Fair Grounds, swinging their butts, those
 shanks must be sound to bear up under such 10
 rollicking measures, prance as they dance
 in Breughel's great picture, The Kermess.²⁸

Most of us would agree that if we are to deal with the reading of the poem we would talk about the work itself, we would describe it, say something

about diction, meter, repetition, and so on. We might mention that Breughel was a sixteenth-century Flemish painter of peasant life and that "The Kermess" depicts a feast-day celebration of a local patron. We might mention Williams's belief that words are found things, like the pieces of a collage, out of which poets make poems. They have a sound and a feel in the mouth; they can spin, roll, flare up, or rumble.²⁹ In this instance we might point to two coexisting ideas--that the poem itself dances and that Williams, perhaps, is trying to catch the movements and tensions of the dancers in the painting with language. Some of us might even bring a photograph of Breughel's picture to help make this point. We might go as far as to say that, with the exceptions of lines 4, 8, and 9, the poem has nine syllables to a line and is predominately a falling metric with initial stresses at lines 4, 5, 10, and 11. But how does any of this show how the poem works on us? What bearing do any of these elements have on us as a source of our aesthetic response, our reading response? What do we say about the poem so as to enable our students to read it better? Let us examine one aspect of reading the poem.

The image of the dance, its music and dance cadence, is impressed on our reading through prosody, phrasing, and perceptual focus. Consider the meter.

In Breughel's great picture, The Kermess,
 the dancers go round, they go round and
 around, the squeal and the blare and the

The problem in this scansion, in any scansion, is to identify the metrical type or the metrical norm established in the poem. We could decide here that the initial foot is an iamb followed by two anapests and a hypercatalectic unstressed syllable. But scanning through the lines in iambic and anapestic feet would force a metrical norm of rising rhythm. The almost waltzing quality of the poem's meter should alert us that a scansion in iambs and anapests would be

difficult to rationalize. Lines 4, 10, and 11 begin stress initial and this might suggest that the rest of the poem might begin with a prothetic unstressed syllable followed by dactyls and trochees. But again, the predominating metric this would establish, in this case falling, would not jibe with our experience of the poem. Both these metrics are hard pressed to accommodate the nine-syllable-to-a-line norm the poem establishes. A better scansion is to read the lines in amphibrachs. From this reading we perceive the down-up-down down-up-down waltzing rhythm of the dance's music. The musical frame created from the amphibrachic meter also provides the textual background against which rhythmic variation and metrical substitution become purposeful. But identifying the meter does not illuminate the interplay between meter, variation, and other elements in the poem. For the prosodic structure to be valuable it must be the rhythmic conveyor of the poem's "idea." Meter makes up only one element in the prosodic structure; scansion is only the first step in understanding how rhythm works on us.³⁰

Rhythmic variation comes in part from the interplay of sentential rhythms against the metrical norm. This creates a counterpoint foregrounding the dance against the musical frame.³¹ Lines 2 and 3 illustrate this:

the dancers go round, they go round and
 around, the squeal and the blare and the

The metrical norm established in the poem is three amphibrach feet per line, but the sentential metric spans the line breaks and is a rising iambic/anapestic. Scanning sententially, we find stresses at, or close to, the end of each sentential unit. In the lines above, round becomes emphasized and is tied to the accelerated movement of the anapests. From this we begin to feel the cadence of the dance, a rhythm we can follow through the poem. The stresses are moments when we seem to rise and pivot and then wheel through the unstressed

syllables to rise and pivot again. The sense of this movement is established in line 2--we feel the line go around as we read the dancers go around. The dance then is carried by the sentential rhythms while the music lingers in the background carried by the lineal amphibrachic meter.

The iambic and anapestic sentential metric, its basic motif of acceleration, also helps to create a sense of festive tipsy dancing. Look at the parenthetical for instance. We begin on a single stress on round followed by four anapests. The sentential acceleration creates a productive descriptive ambiguity. The internal rhyme and the stresses on the rhyme give us a metrical and phonetic parenthetical aside, a descriptive comparison as opposed to the active connotations of the rest of the poem. Yet, the accelerated sentential rhythms provide us with the connoted movement. The ambiguity begins immediately with the stressed round which shimmers between the descriptive adjective and the active adverbial, (a)round. The hyphenated thick-sided enjambes the line final anapest into the line initial anapest. This combines with the stress initial syllable in glasses to "enjamb" again the first and second anapests in line 6. The rhythm wheels us around, as the dance wheels us around. The comparison and the rhythm pressures us to see their bellies tipping as the glasses are being tipped in drinking and the dancing as the wash sloshing in the glasses.

The image of the festive tipsy dancing is further reinforced by the metrical substitutions. Look, for instance, at the present participles. In all but the case of rolling, our scanning reveals the participles are marked by either trochaic or dactylic substitutions. These substitutions spring, or syncopate, the rhythm. We generally feel an effect of sudden or vigorous movement, and these feelings are shaped by the rhetorical pressures of the line. In tipping, the trochaic substitution tips the meter and the line and nicely highlights the lexical and articulatory tipping we read. The substitutions in

Kicking, swinging, and rollicking convey the sense of those movements' sudden vigor against the metrical musical norm. Rolling about is the first of three choriambic substitutions but sets the tone for all of them. The structure of the foot set against the sense of the words rolls us about. Like tipping, the articulatory features of rolling about are highlighted by the choriambic substitution. It is a delightful effect--rhythmically we are rolled about. Especially nice is the final stress on the diphthong, /ou/, which articulates this movement. This rolling choriambic motion is echoed in shanks must be sound by the stress again on the diphthong, and in prance as they dance, by the internal rhyme.

The prosody in the poem is shaped in part by rhetorical pressures stemming from phrasal structures. This interplay correlates prosodic rhythms to the poem's idea and in turn further affects our reading experience. We can see this in the nominal strings in the poem. The polysyndetic structure separates each nominal in the string into a discrete unit. When we read we feel the temporal or processional succession of these units, as well as their lack of equivalence. Look at lines 3 and 4. The music of the dance is broken into discrete units, squeal, blare, and tweedle, and the parallel nominal string following, bagpipes, bugle, and fiddles, likewise breaks up the orchestra. The interplay of the meter and this parallel structure presents us first with the aural perception and then the visual, as if the succession of each unit of aural perception and visual are occurring simultaneously but on "different levels." The aesthetic effect of this phrasing gives us the fleeting perceptions of the dancers as they dance around past the music and the instruments of the dance. Linked with the sentential rhythms discussed above, the effect is quite striking.

Let us look again at tipping in line 5. I mentioned that it was sprung by a trochaic substitution. That substitution draws our attention to a rather

productive syntactic ambiguity. The most obvious reading is to link tipping with the dancers in line 2. In this reading the dancers are tipping their bellies as they dance around the sound of the music and instruments. A second reading would be to link tipping to instruments. This reading implies the tipping of the instruments' bellies as the musicians get caught up in the music they play. The syntax encourages still a third reading. By linking tipping to the sounds and the instruments we perceive the music as agentive. In this reading it is the music itself which tips the dancers' bellies. Our perceptual focus becomes those causes which turn the dancers in the dance--the music tips their bellies; their hips and their bellies turn the dancers. In our reading response we do not have to resolve this ambiguity, or decide which reading is more interpretationally correct. Rather, the three readings effect different perceptual viewpoints which seem to interanimate each other when the rhythmic textures are considered. Our ability to motivate these three readings within the rhythmic frames enhances our reading experience of the poem.

Finally, let us consider the chiasmic effects produced by the first and last line of the poem. Our immediate impression is that the poem comes full circle because of the repetition of the line. But this will not account for the aesthetic effects of the poem's closure. We need to clarify the interplay between what we "see" and what we read. The first line of the poem establishes not only the predominating metric but also the situational frame. The key to the aesthetic closure lies in the interplay of the prosodic structures, the first and last line, and the dancers and they dance in lines 2 and 11. The first three lines, as mentioned above, establish the metrical norm and the music of the dance. The meter is regular and almost formally restrained. As we read through, the sentential rhythms and metrical substitutions accelerate and syncopate the prosody. By line 10 the dance is rollicking from dactylic,

anapestic, and choriambic substitutions that foreground the sense of Kicking and rolling about, rollicking measures, and prance as they dance. The natural pause at the end of line 11 cues us to the chiasmus. It highlights they dance and helps us recall the dancers in line 2. This keys us to the inversion that reads roughly "in the picture the dancers they dance in the picture." The meter at the same time regularizes into amphibrachs giving us an almost parallel metrical chiasmus. The effect is to pull us away from the dance. The syntactic and metrical interplay disengages our aesthetic involvement with the dance while closing and framing the poem.

The intention is not to do a detailed reading of this poem at this point. Nor is what has been discussed more important than many of the other prosodic devices in the poem. Vowel qualities that echo through the poem, especially the diphthong /ou/, have only been hinted at. The interplay between diction, semantic effects, and rhythm lingers in the background of the discussion (notice, for instance, line 7--the interplay between the regular amphibrachs and off balance). Phrasal synecdoche has been neither pointed out nor discussed. Finally, the aesthetic functions and effects of the devices discussed have been only touched upon. This reading is neither definitive nor even entirely unobjectionable.

My brief "reading" of "The Dance" is intended to illuminate some problematic areas in the approaches to teaching poetry outlined above. By organizing our discussions around the areas that underlie most critical positions, we tend to focus our attention on what we do with what we have read instead of what we do when we read. But even if we concern ourselves with the one area that describes the elements of a poem's structure, it is one thing to identify a category for discussion and quite another to provide students with techniques and abilities to perceive and discuss the aesthetic functions and effects of

poetic structures. As my "reading" of "The Dance" has indicated, there is more to our reading of the interplay of meter and rhythm than simply identifying the meter. Our literary experience depends on our ability to understand how the prosodic elements render nonparaphrasable meanings. Poetic structures create unique structures of meaning, and poetic effects are effects of meaning. The suggestive and implied meanings we are so fond of referring to and ruminating about are usually grounded in the hypersemanticization that results from language used at its full stretch. In other words, the directive and selective power of the patterns of implicit meanings are in fact the selective power of the textual poetic elements that direct our reading.³²

Our experience and understanding of poetry depends upon our ability to read the interplay of thematic strata, literary structures, and language. Without this reading acumen students cannot clarify their intuitions of a poem. If our aim is to help our students read more intelligently and sensitively, then we must help them account for the salient qualities in the text, their aesthetic functions, and the effects of those qualities on their reading experience. We need to encourage our students to explore their own reading intuitions and provide them with methods to do so. Our discussions should focus on the continuous links among prosodic structures, themes, experiential content, and our reading response. But traditional approaches, such as those outlined by Booth and Wimsatt, center on concerns a step or two removed from reading responses. They outline literary questions that help us to think about poems without necessarily helping us to a better experience of them; they allude to our experiences. More importantly, they do not insure that our students will become sensitive to and informed about the prosodic elements that effect their literary experiences.³³

Language, Form, and the Aesthetic Experience

The view that the foregoing projects is that reading literature is in

large part an aesthetic experience. The concern of most literary education, however, has been on literature's thematic import. Poetry is made of words that mean, but they also operate. Through structured language use--and this may be as simple as parallelism and rhyme, or as sophisticated as iconic syntax--poetry produces a uniquely informative structure, and this informative structure is the aesthetic structure. "Rhyme and other verse elements save the physical quality of words--intellectualized and made transparent by daily prose usage."³⁴ The weaving of these elements gives us an object which has a special character. It is a mixture of the discursive and the presentational, meaning melded with sound strata, visual presence, rhythm and meter. The experience of poetry, at once aesthetic and meaningful, results from language used at its full stretch, exceeding its normal communicability. This experience emerges from the wedding of the alogical with the logical. Our understanding of poetry and the significance that the understanding has for us hinge on our ability to read how poetic elements fit together. Traditionally, literary educators have relied upon critical works that isolate the major elements of poetry in order to make them more or less visible and which provide students with a guide to investigate and experience the characteristics of poetry.

In their introduction to Understanding Poetry, Brooks and Warren hold that many of the methods of poetry appear in a great deal of ordinary language use. Poetry, then, is not a different use of language; it is a specialization of language giving us a piece of writing which creates certain effects. But poetic qualities never inhere in one or more elements in isolation; they emerge from the interplay of those elements. Our questions about understanding poetry should be directed at how the elements in a poem work together to create the intended overall effect.³⁵ X. J. Kennedy echoes this position. "A poem is to be seen not as a confederation of form, rime, image, metaphor, tone, and theme,

but as a whole."³⁶ While we study one element at a time to comprehend it best, our total attention involves seeing all the elements fused. The conscious analysis of a poem is intended to sharpen our unconscious perceptions which allow us to engage the poem more responsively. It would seem then that this approach offers a background needed to help students toward a better reading of poetry. But does it? Let us look at a few instances.

Brooks and Warren assert that imagery does not merely create mental pictures; it appeals to the senses. Imagery functions as a means of communication by making statements more concrete. Brooks and Warren link imagery to the use of figurative language that conveys ideas through comparison, the most common types being simile and metaphor.³⁷ In discussing the extreme case, they present Pound's "In a Station of the Metro." They assert that in the poem "the reader catches a glimpse of something beautiful and fresh in the most unlikely place, and therefore grasps an interpretation that is potentially applicable to a great deal of experience."³⁸ How does it affect us this way? Curiously, we are never told. Rather we are told that a poetic image interprets object and events to convey certain attitudes. This is true, but much is left out here. Brooks and Warren construct their discussion around the poem and two versions of it:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.
(original)

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Dead leaves caught in the gutter's stream.
(version 1)

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Dry leaves blown down the dry gutter.
(version 2)³⁹

Their point is to show that the latter two versions give different interpretations of the same event because the implications arising from the sets of

comparisons are different. They argue that there is some similarity between a gutter and the subway tunnel, and the comparison of faces to leaves is as valid as comparing faces to petals. But this suggests that to motivate images in a poem we look to what the words refer to and then we reflect upon the implications resulting from the feature matching of those referents. At best, this is partially true. But I would suggest that this approach overlooks our reading experience and gives us an exclusionary account of imagery in poetry. This is evident if we compare the three versions of the poem.

In the original poem three prominent features strike us: the nominal syntax, the lexical contrasts, and the near rhyme. These features create the imagic effect. The comparison in the poem is not quite that of faces and petals.⁴⁰ Rather, we are directed to the visual qualities of the apparition. Let us look at the first noun phrase. Of functions compositionally and not associationally. That is, apparitions is not associated with faces in the crowd, but composed of the faces; we perceive faces as a foregrounded quality of the apparition itself. The second prepositional phrase operates locationally. But importantly, the entire nominal phrase draws our attention synecdochically to only those visual qualities that create the apparition--faces foregrounded against the crowd. The first noun phrase is juxtaposed against the second and the two are neatly tied by the near rhyme crowd and bough. We perceive almost an oriental print. We assume the petals are light in color because the connotational link with apparition and faces suggests it. Wet and black then foreground the contrast between the visual qualities, pale light against the dark. These juxtaposed images are made more effective by the stative quality of the noun phrases. Each phrase, because of its lack of verbs, presents only an "image referent." The "comparison," if we call it such, results from the near parallel syntactic structure and the stereoscopic

focusing of our perception.

Now let us consider the two versions of the poem. Both fail to reproduce the original poetic structure. The second noun phrase of the original is replaced by clausal structures in both versions. This disrupts the stativity and fails to effect the imagistic qualities; we perceive an event and not the pictorial shimmerings of a vision. Of course these poems present different images and different interpretations. But note also that the versions present different poetic structures--our reading experience is also different. The interesting question would have been to reproduce as closely as possible the parallel syntactic structure, the near rhyme, and the lexical contrasts of the original with different lexical items. What could have been explored then would be how poetic elements create imagic effects and how those elements affect our reading experience. This question appears to be overlooked, and we are presented with a rather reductive view of imagery. This is echoed by Kennedy. In discussing the same poem, he asserts that by images in poetry "we generally mean a word or sequence of words that refer to any sensory experience."⁴¹ Thus we suggest to our students that they have only to relate referents of constituent words to yield up the image. The particularizing elements of language and form which a poet uses to sharpen and clarify his images are overlooked, and hence also their effect on our reading.

All language is used from a preselected perspective; there is no neutral transcription of any object or event into words. What distinguishes poetic language use from other forms and what we too often overlook in our discussions is how a "poet uses means available in poetry, but not in prose and nonliterary language generally, to modify or reanimate the import of words he chooses from the whole range of language."⁴² Imagery is a higher level term inclusive of the elements that build up a "sensory experience." Referent, or feature

matching, is only one aspect and may not be the predominant element in the contextual structure of any particular poem. To drive this point further, consider the Williams poem discussed above.

Recall that the image of the dance is impressed upon us by the interplay of prosodic and phrasal structures that directs our perceptual/cognitive focus. The overall presentational image of the poem is in large part created by a rhythmic shape iconic with the "presented ideas." In other words, meter and rhythm participate in the total image and meaning of any poem, and in "The Dance" they are a predominant imaging element. Consider three of the constituents of the overall image.

The most obvious constituent is aural, the audible rhythms of the dance music. Conveyed by the regular amphibrachic meter, this movement articulates what a verbal expression trying to describe the dance music cannot. This establishes the metrical musical norm from which the interplay with phrasal structures and substitutions becomes communicative. A visual/perceptual (synaesthetic) constituent emerges from the meter linked with the polysyndeton. This effect creates a temporal proximity of sounds and objects and the temporal flow of our perception of them. The linear procession is "bent" around, as the dancers go around, by the meter and rhythms. This gives us the image of hearing and seeing the orchestra as the dancers see it. The wheeling and rollicking of the dance results in part from the sentential rhythm of acceleration and the interplay with phrasing and metrical substitutions. This is the kinetic constituent. The trochaic and dactylic substitutions of the present participles spring the lines and create the vigorous movement the participles connote. The choriambic substitutions, especially with the interplay of stress and articulatory qualities, enact the rollicking cadences of the dance. The effect almost

forces us to participate physically and swing with the dance itself. While there are more examples of the imaging function of meter and rhythm in "The Dance," the few discussed should help make the point.

For Brooks and Warren, meter, the systematic ordering of rhythmic language, is the means by which to create a pattern of expectation. They assert that rhythmic language lures us into giving the poem our closer attention and helps us to free our imagination by inducing a suspension of disbelief. The effects of meter are hypnotic and increase our susceptibility to intense states of emotion, with different rhythms stimulating different feelings. Rhythm must conform to the response suggested by ideas and images of the poem. The effects of trochaic substitution, spondee, or anapest are emphatic, helping us to linger on or hasten to the central ideas or words. Rhythm and meter provide the dramatic impression of speech and secure the proper degree of emphasis on the words where meaning is focused. But poetic effects from sound do not inhere in meter; they do not arise from the imitative sound of words; they are neither identified with nor caused by specific vowels or consonants. Rather, they are set by literal meanings. Once close analysis reveals the dramatic development of literal meanings, we account for such special effects as those arising from rhythm, that is, from the expectations those literal meanings give rise to.⁴³

Kennedy's discussion of meter and rhythm does not add anything significant to this. For Kennedy, rhythm powerfully affects us. Kennedy sees rhythm as the recurrence of stresses and pauses. Meter and rhythm function to underline words, and he argues that stresses embody meaning because they emphasize words and direct our attention to what a poet means. While rhythm is conveyed by words, it has no meaning of its own. At best, rhythm enforces certain meanings. Rhythmic language is also an obvious pleasure. Conventional metrics

establish the metrical pattern from which the poet varies. Rhythmical language lulls us into emotional susceptibility, and the metrical interplay of feet substitutions creates variation and provides us with a pleasant startle. For Kennedy "rhythm in itself cannot convey meaning. And yet if a poet's words have meaning their rhythm must be one with it."⁴⁴

These discussions are as correct as they are somewhat empty. No one would argue with the obvious, that meter and rhythm contribute to the "aesthetic surface" of a poem. But again these discussions on rhythmic language are representative of a tendency to generalize and reduce the complexity of the effects poetic elements create.⁴⁵ The adequacy of these discussions to provide our students with a reading acumen that will actively facilitate their apprehension of a poem and engagement in the literary experience is questionable. There is more to meter and rhythm, for instance, than aesthetic surface enjoyed for its own sake. This position results perhaps from Richards's influence when he asserts that rhythm attributed to the configuration of the poetic line is the result of factors external to it--the meaning of words.⁴⁶ The problem lies perhaps in confusing meaning with communicative value and confusing the reflection upon the implications of poetic content with the effects of communicative elements on our reading experience.

Poems enact meaning by endowing "what is said at the statement-level with a fullness of unverbilized particularity."⁴⁷ As Nowotny points out, formal relations do not have meanings as words have meaning; they lend themselves, however, to the formation of meaning. Meter and rhythm, in accord with other elements of language and form, fill in what cannot be filled in conceptually, and one aspect of their communicative weight and value is to create poetic images. They help to shape, color, and particularize poetic content that escapes the discursive specifications of statements. They articulate

relationships among qualities, actions, and events that can never be precisely denoted. A poet does not simply create beautiful rhythms; he creates coherent poems. Without discussing how language and form affect one another, without discussing the communicative polyvalency of poetic elements, language, and form, we erect categories of literary concepts of limited use that tend to restrict instead of help our students' reading intuitions.⁴⁸

We do this as we center our attention on the implications of poetic meanings that can be abstracted from the poem, meanings created from the interplay of poetic elements. We urge our students to become sensitive to the effects of rhythm, meter, sound, and poetic form, and admonish them to remember that a poem is a highly integrated formal structure in which the many working elements must be seen in relationship with each other. Then we provide them with an overgeneralized categorization of poetic elements and language and treat those elements as vehicles whose purpose is to carry poetic ideas and provide special effects. It is difficult to go from the plan these authors offer as an approach to literary works to the reading experience; it is not possible to explore the reading response. Yet if these are the ways we lead our students into poetry, we may be handicapping their reading. Is it any wonder then that our students falter when they try to use explicatory techniques? We fail to provide them with principles that inform their reading, preferring instead to pigeon-hole their reading efforts. We concentrate upon the implications of poetic themes yet cannot claim that we have helped our students to read responsibly and responsively.

The Aim of the Dissertation

It would be all too easy to belabor the issues just raised, but little purpose would be served by that exercise. We frequently note in the literature on literary education that writers affirm that form and content are

intimately connected, but with almost no frequency do we find pedagogical analyses and strategies which offer us and our students methods to examine and experience that connection. We seem to take it for granted that because sensitive readers almost instinctively recognize and are responsive to the salient qualities in poetry that our students will do so likewise. Our obligatory bow to poetic form identifies, classifies, and labels poetic devices traditionally deemed as those that distinguish poetry from prose. But this labelling becomes a means in itself and many times fails to account for the aesthetic and thematic functions of these devices and our apprehensions of them. To be sure, we cannot appreciate how a poem fits together into a unified whole until we illustrate what its various pieces are. But too often we lift features from poems specifically to illustrate poetic devices and fail to show how these isolated elements synthesize into a poem and effect our literary (aesthetic) experience--we neglect their communicative efficacy.

Instead, we tend to focus our "practical criticism" on the context of a poem, discussing literary questions designed to help us think about the work and its various relations to the literary tradition, socio-cultural contexts, thematic implications, and our personal theoretical and philosophic preoccupations. This might be well and good for the sensitive reader who can respond intuitively to the art of poetry, but not so for the majority of our students. Literary educators need to consider poetry as something more than verse prose. There is more to the poetic experience than the feel of "heightened" language attached to literary themes.

We need to find a balance in our curricular rationales that organize literary methods so that we can provide students with the literary reading skills that will account for the poetry and enhance their literary experiences. While we appear to be successful in discussing with students what messages are

found in literary works (prose content), we are guilty of assuming that their literary (aesthetic) experiences will arise naturally from their exposure to literature. We may help our students realize a great deal about the meaning of a poem, but its full import can be realized only in their reading experience of it. Understanding what literature communicates also involves understanding how it communicates. In large part this involves understanding how a poet can pattern and shape language to express what he wants to say. To this end, we need to incorporate into our literary curricula study of the aesthetic functions and effects of the literary use of language.

The studies that follow investigate selected aspects of the aesthetic use of language and outline an introductory pedagogical stylistics. Throughout, these studies argue that poets exploit traditional aesthetic categories--conceptual, emotive, and perceptual--to open up "aesthetic channels" of communication.⁴⁹ Chapter Two explores articulatory features of sound as a means to come to terms with the sense of sound in poetry. Chapter Three argues that in order to appreciate poetic rhythm we must consider the prose rhythms that emerge from the lines of poetry as sentences and the interplay of prose rhythms with meter. Chapter Four discusses syntax defined simply as the ordering of words and word groups, as a spatial, temporal, and semantic structure that poets can exploit to create the aesthetic effects they desire. Chapter Five looks at the role that pedagogical stylistics can play in dealing with the problem of the text and the reader. Finally, these studies are directed at introductory college courses in poetry and are intended as a basic guide to explore the contribution of language to the aesthetics of poetry. Pedagogically, they should lead students toward a better reading of poetry and provide educators with a practical tool to investigate the relationships among literary expression, meaning, and the reading experience.

Notes to Chapter I

¹Winifred Nowotny, The Language Poets Use (London: The Athlone Press, 1968), p. 18.

²I. A. Richards, Practical Criticism (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1929), p. 3.

³For an interesting look at how close textual reading underlies critical theories, see Roland Barthes's S/Z. Barthes stands at the forefront of semiotics and structuralism. S/Z is his book-length analysis of Balzac's short story "Sarrazine." Barthes argues that our reading of "Sarrazine" is structured from five codes (action, hermeneutic, cultural or referential, semes or connotative signified, and the symbolic field), and demonstrates his point with a line-by-line analysis of the entire story.

⁴Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Poetry (New York: Henry Holt and Co., Inc., 1960), p. xiv. Brooks and Warren's assumptions have become the standard underpinnings in the literature guides to poetry: 1) poetry should be read and experienced; 2) it should be treated as an organic system; 3) paraphrase and analysis are never a substitute; 4) form and content are indissoluble; and 5) poetic qualities should never be understood as inhering in one or more factors taken in isolation. Brooks and Warren have generally acknowledged the need to provide students with an awareness of prosodic devices to help them to a more informed reading of poetry. The formats followed by other writers in this area basically have emulated Brooks and Warren (cf. John Ciardi, How Does A Mean? (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1959), X. J. Kennedy, An Introduction to Poetry (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1971), James Kreuzer, Elements of Poetry (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955), Laurence Perrine, Sound and Sense (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1982), Karl Shapiro and Robert Beum, A Prosody Handbook (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), Lawrence Zillman, The Art and Craft of Poetry (New York: Collier Books, 1966)).

⁵Kenneth C. Bennett, "Practical Criticism Revisited," College English 38:6 (February 1977):567-78. See also R. H. Haswell, "Eight Concepts of Poetry for College Freshmen," College English 39:3 (November 1977):294-306. Haswell discusses a diagnostic test he gave to his students to discover their assumptions about poetry. The majority of the responses reflected stock critical categories and critical conventions and were divested of literary and aesthetic implications.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 571.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Anthony Arthur, "Plus ça change ...: Practical Criticism Revisited,"

College English 38:6 (February 1977):584. Arthur is quick to point out that unlike Richards's homogeneous group of literature majors, his readers were a heterogeneous group of students in lower-division literature courses. This is important to literary educators as the majority of students they will encounter will be similar to these nonliterature majors. It is these students they will be helping to become better readers of poetry.

¹⁰Rene Wellék and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), p. 19.

¹¹Seymour Chatman, "Reading Literature as Problem-Solving," English Journal 52:5 (May 1963):346.

¹²Roger Fowler, The Language of Literature (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971), p. 15.

¹³Curiously, this is Frye's position. Frye asserts that while the direct experience of literature is central to criticism, it is excluded from it. "Criticism can account for it only in critical terminology, and that terminology can never recapture or include that original experience." (Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 27.)

¹⁴Stanley Fish, Is There A Text In This Class? (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 5-13.

¹⁵Richards, Practical Criticism, p. 294.

¹⁶Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, pp. 10-11.

¹⁷Wellék and Warren, Theory of Literature, p. 15.

¹⁸For further discussion, see Ned Laff, "Curriculum and the Craft of Teaching Literature Revisited," Journal of Aesthetic Education 16:2 (Summer 1982):87-100.

¹⁹Wayne Booth, "The Use of Criticism in the Teaching of Literature," College English 27:1 (October 1965):4. Booth includes his own work. Booth can see no point to students plowing through works of criticism in advance of their abilities and interests.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 7.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²*Ibid.*, p. 9. For an excellent discussion of the types of critical statements, see M. C. Beardsley, Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1958). My purpose here is not to analyze critical statements, but to ask whether an awareness of these issues enhances our students' reading experience of literature.

²³W. K. Wimsatt, "What to Say About a Poem," College English 24:5 (February 1963):382.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 377.

²⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 378-79.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 381.

²⁷ These articles by Booth and Wimsatt are interesting for what they do not say about critical preoccupations. In this they highlight the gap between the concerns of a Verbal Icon and the concerns of teaching students how to read poetry. They are representative of the many articles and approaches on teaching poetry (cf. Seymour Chatman, "Reading Literature as Problem-Solving"; Norman Friedman, "Three Views of Poetic Form," College English, 26:7; R. H. Haswell, "Eight Concepts of Poetry for College Freshmen," College English, 39:3; George Hillocks, "Approaches to Meaning: A Basis for a Literature Curriculum," English Journal, 53:6; Rushworth Kidder, "An Introduction to the Study of Poetry: Five Assignments," College English, 34:6; Josephine Miles, "Reading Poems," English Journal, 52:3 and 52:4; Louise Rosenblatt, "A Performing Art," English Journal, 55:8; Paul Smith, "Criticism and the Curriculum," College English, 26:1; David Swanger, "Teaching Poetry: Notes Toward an Integrative Rationale," College English, 36:1). Curiously, there seems to be no major work that deals with teaching poetry at the reading level. Critical works such as Fussell's Poetic Meter and Poetic Form, Epstein's Language and Style, and Leech's A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry lend themselves to this, but there seems to be no general work that brings together the varieties of criticism into a coherent pedagogical reading approach.

²⁸ William Carlos Williams, Selected Poems (New York: New Direction Books, 1968), p. 113.

²⁹ For an excellent discussion of this idea see J. Hillis Miller, Poets of Reality (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 290-93.

³⁰ Harvey Gross, Sound and Form in Modern Poetry (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973). See especially Chapters I and II.

³¹ Richard Cureton first proposed the idea that the "prose rhythms" derived from a phrasal scansion counterpoint meter in our personal correspondence (see below, note 10, p. 122). I am grateful to him for illustrating it to me in scanning "The Dance." As important, Cureton outlined that it is these rhythm groups and not metrical feet that have identifiable shape, such as the swoop of choriamb and cretics, the lilt of amphibrachs, the resolution of iambs and anapests, the insistence of trochees and dactyls, and so forth.

³² See Eugene R. Kintgen, "Perceiving Poetic Syntax," College English 40:1 (September 1978):17-27. In trying to find out what readers do when reading poetry, Kintgen had his colleagues read a poem with a complex syntactic structure. He notes that at the points where normal processing of syntax breaks down his readers did not perceive the difficulty in terms of syntax or its effects. Rather, they tried to supply a suitable semantic referent. In other words, the readers tried to glean the sense of the poem without considering the pressure exerted by the poem's syntax--an essential element of poetic form.

³³See note 17.

³⁴W. K. Wimsatt, The Verbal Icon (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), p. 166.

³⁵Brooks and Warren, Understanding Poetry, p. 23.

³⁶X. J. Kennedy, An Introduction to Poetry (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1971), p. 33. These authors have been intentionally stressed. Brooks and Warren represent the beginning of this kind, and Kennedy's work is not only a contemporary representative but is currently in use in introductory poetry courses.

³⁷Brooks and Warren, Understanding Poetry, pp. 633-34.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 155.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁴⁰The idea of comparison is only applicable if we assume that the syntactic deletion is is like. But what would be the effect of the poetic structure if the deletion was which are, creating an embedded relative clause? The poetic structure would convey the "flash" where the two juxtaposed images became one. This certainly would be in accord with Pound's belief of an image as an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.

Richard Cureton has outlined the role of nominal syntax in creating imagistic effects. See below, note 33 on page 185.

⁴¹Kennedy, An Introduction to Poetry, p. 75. Given Kennedy's concept of imagery, one must ask what is it that distinguishes images in poetry from images in the newspaper? Essentially all substantive words refer to something in sensory experience.

⁴²Winifred Nowotny, The Language Poets Use, p. 44.

⁴³Brooks and Warren, Understanding Poetry. See section IV.

⁴⁴Kennedy, An Introduction to Poetry, p. 165.

⁴⁵This trend can be seen in the works listed in note 3.

⁴⁶Richards, Practical Criticism, p. 340. See also J. C. Ransom, "Wanted. An Ontological Critic" in Chatman and Levin, eds., Essays on the Language of Literature (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967), pp. 269-82. His concept of meter is essentially decorative. This may also account for Brooks's and Warren's belief that we project the effects of sound and rhythm from meaning. See E. L. Epstein's Language and Style (London: Methuen & Co., 1978) for an excellent discussion arguing that the effects of meter, rhythm, and sound do inhere in language and the poetic use of language. See also Paul Fussell's Poetic Meter and Poetic Form (New York: Random House, 1979) and Gross's Sound and Form in Modern Poetry.

⁴⁷Nowotny, The Language Poets Use, p. 44.

⁴⁸For example, Kennedy lists four study questions, in An Introduction to Poetry, to aid discussion of Williams's "The Dance": 1) compare the poem to a reproduction of Breughel's painting; 2) scan the poem and identify the meter; 3) what is the purpose of the line breaks; and 4) what is the point of ending the poem by repeating the first line (p. 207). Kennedy presents his readers with only four types of metric feet--iambic, anapestic, trochaic, and dactylic (pp. 169-75). How are students to scan the poem correctly with only this information? What is more, there is no discussion in Kennedy's work of lineal meter, sentential meter, and their rhythmic interplay. Neither is there any discussion of line length, or breaks, or the effects of line breaks. Lastly, there is no discussion of framing and closure in poetry. In other words, students do not get any of the tools from Kennedy's work they need to answer the questions he poses about the Williams poem.

⁴⁹The use of traditional aesthetic categories to look at the "aesthetic channels" of communication was proposed by Richard Cureton. See "Poetic Syntax and Aesthetic Form," Style 14:4 (Fall, 1980):319-20.

CHAPTER II

ARTICULATORY FEATURES AND THE SENSE OF SOUND IN POETRY

I am looking for a word (says the poet)
 a word which shall be:
 feminine,
 with two syllables,
 containing P or F,
 ending on a mute 'e',
 and synonym of shattering, disintegration;
 and not learned, not rare;
 Six conditions--at least!

Paul Valéry

Introduction

Poets have always been aware of the possibility of reinforcing meaning with sound. They seem to know by ear how to renew the contact of words with perceptual experience. Indeed, George Whalley believes that sound, the reverberations and collisions of language, is the essence of poetry.² And while we may argue that there is more to poetry than sound, most of us would agree that the qualities of sound are some of poetry's more striking aesthetic elements. We feel the effectiveness of sound in poetry when we read aloud, and this, in part, underlies our assertions that reading aloud is an important way to teach and help our students understand poetry.

And yet, because of the attention that we pay to the ideas and images found in poetry, we often neglect to discuss how sound qualities add aesthetic significance to a poem. We do reasonably claim that sound qualities are too weak to operate unsupported by meaning,³ but the interaction of sound patterns with meaning patterns is more complex than the embellishment of content, the obvious unifying effect ascribed by the regular recurrence of sound patterns, and the aesthetic pleasure resulting from language heightened by the ordered

display of sound. As Epstein points out, "Poets use the characteristic motions used for pronunciation of sound for artistic purposes."⁴ In any study of poetry, then, we need to maintain a sensitivity to the difference between written realizations and spoken; the language of poetry, although almost entirely written, cannot be appreciated fully if we do not think about the sound of speech.

Literary pedagogy has traditionally approached the effects of sound through three rather broad categories: as a means to emphasize thematic points or images, as a means to create either harmonious or dissonant melodies, and as a means to add onomatopoeia. In the first category sounds are said to couple words together, creating semantic parallelism or foregrounding groups of words for emphasis. We usually associate this with rhyme; alliteration, the succession of similar sounds in initial position; assonance, the repetition of vowel sounds; and consonance, the repetition of consonant sounds.⁵

My love is of a birth as rare
As 'tis for object strange and high:
It was begotten by despair
Upon impossibility.

Marvel ("The Definition of Love")

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew
The furrow followed free

Coleridge ("The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"
ll. 103-4)

The sounds of words working together, either blending harmoniously or clashing discordantly, has been argued to produce responses akin to those of music.⁶ When sounds blend together pleasantly and melodiously the effect is euphonic.

'Mid hushed, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
Blue, silver white, and budded Tyrian,

Keats ("Ode to Psyche")

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

Tennyson ("Come down, O maid")

Its opposite is cacophonous.

Jumping high o'er the Shrubs of rough Ground,
Rattle the clatt'ring Cars, and the Shockt Axles Bound.

Pope (translation of "The Iliad" ll 11.140-1)

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call.

Coleridge ("The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"
ll. 162-3)

Finally, sounds can be mimetic. We usually discuss this in terms of onomatopoeia, the attempt to represent a thing or action by a word that imitates the sound associated with it.

With Blue--uncertain stumbling Buzz

Dickinson ("I heard a Fly buzz")

And plashing of waterdrops
In the marble fountain

Lowell ("Patterns")

A Closer Look at Alliteration

These are the literary concepts that we teach to our students to help them identify and categorize sound patterns. And we should note just that--they are concepts that define conventional patterns of sound in English poetry. As such they are rather commonplace, although important, terms.⁷ However, they neither explain nor provide us with the critical tools to explore how sound values add multi-dimensionality to a linear sequence. And this has important consequences. While our students may be able to point out alliteration, for instance, few are able to discuss what is unique about a piece of alliterated language that motivates their peculiar aesthetic response. For example,

Kreuzer, in discussing alliteration, asserts that it can reinforce continuity of movement, as in these previously cited lines from Coleridge:

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew
The furrow followed free

Or, conversely, it can be used to reinforce abruptness, as in the following lines from Spenser:⁸


Much daunted with that dint, her sence was dazd
Yet kindling rage, her selfe she gathered round,
And all attonce her beastly body raizd
With doubled forces high above the ground.

("The Faerie Queen" Bk. 1 Stanza 18)

We can certainly point out the recurrence of f and b, as well as the internal rhymes ew and ow in the lines from Coleridge, and d, b, and g in the lines from Spenser. But is the intensity imparted to these lines an alliterative effect? Only in part. The alliteration does give unity to the lines, a structural function, and, in some instances, ties words together, a cognitive function. But a careful reading reveals that alliteration may not be the useful term we believe it to be.

The reinforced movement in the lines from Coleridge is imparted by near parallel phonic effects interacting with the syntactic structure of the first line, and with the semantic contrast in the second. The alliteration structurally reinforces this.

In the first line the alliteration semantically ties the blowing breeze and the flying foam. The parallelism of the syntax reinforces our cognitive sense of the image--the movement of wind and sea. These two movements are also presented to us, but they are tied together through sound. While we have near parallel alliteration, b(r), bl, f, and fl, the vowel qualities present a sound contrast. Breeze is characterized by a voiced plosive, voiced liquid, a high, tensed front vowel, and a voiced sibilant. These sound features, plosiveness,

and voicings, suggest the brisk movement of the wind. Foam is characterized by a fricative (obstructed outward moving), a mid-back tensed vowel, and a labial continuant. These qualities are heavier, due mainly to the fricative and the long heavy vowel, and suggest the weighted rush of the sea. The sound contrast, especially between the vowel colors, compares the density and spatial features of the moving air and sea. Following the pitch contours, the internal rhyme melds these two movements together diagrammatically, . It also invites us to read the line appositionally, the rhyme on the open vowel leading us to see the movements of the air and sea as different qualities of the same movement.

The alliteration in the next line first binds semantically contrasting ideas. The idea of furrow following free is something we normally would not attribute. Furrows result from some action--a plow, for instance; in this case the ship's motion through the waves. But the intensity of the image is modified by phonic effects. Furrow and followed are near parallels. Both are characterized by the fricative, across durational liquids, r and l, to the open vowel, ow. The effect through the fricatives to the open vowel conveys the verbal transitivity of furrowing. The twist comes with the tense marker ed, and it accomplishes two things: it leads us to read furrow agentively, and it stops the open vowel with the dental stop, d. Furrow as agent creates the image of the wave troughs moving independently from the motion of the ship. Two different motions, then, are compressed into the same line--that of the ship and of the waves. The dental stop abruptly halts the open vowel creating a tension in the pace of the line. Free, coming after followed, and characterized by a fricative and high, front open vowel, gives us the "feel" of bursting forth. Phonically, these lines anticipate the last two lines of the stanza--"We were the first that ever burst/into that silent sea."--and presents the interrelated

movements of the wind, sea, and ship transformed into qualities of one movement.

The sense of abruptness we feel in the lines from Spenser results not so much from alliteration but from a motif of consonantal stops. Daunted, that dint, doubled, and ground exemplify the stops the reader must negotiate.

Daunted, for instance, has three dental stops, d, t, and d. Doubled begins with a dental stop, is followed by a labial plosive stop, b, and ends on a dental stop. The juncture between words is also affected. The reader must pause after the dental stop in that, begin with a dental stop and then pause again on a dental in dint. Scanning, we find eight dental stops in the first line; four in the second with two velar stops, g; five in the third with two labial stops, b, and three in the fourth with two labial and one velar stop. The majority of these stops are not in initial position. The clustering of these consonantal qualities in so short a space is the source of the felt abruptness--the obstructed transition from one syllable to the next. Alliteration only tells us that certain sounds have been repeated; it does not help us to understand the effects that result from the articulatory qualities of those repeated sounds, in this instance, dental, velar, and labial stops.⁹

Other Aspects of the Effects of Sound

These illustrations question the extent to which our traditional concepts, such as alliteration, help students explore their reading experiences. Sound and articulatory features of consonants and vowels can contribute significantly to the overall effect of a poem. However, by focusing our pedagogy almost exclusively on terms which define general formal patterns we neglect the aesthetic effects resulting from the constituents of those patterns. We inadvertently blur the distinction between those effects resulting from a general recursive pattern and the variety of local effects sound can produce.¹⁰ As a consequence we fail to demonstrate the relationship between the two.

A few pedagogical treatments do allude to the effects of sound combinations but their discussions are not substantive. Some will list and categorize consonants but then fail to discuss the articulatory qualities of those categories. Some will make brief mention of particular phonemic effects, but the mention appears more anecdotal because phonemic effects are never tied into mainstream discussions. Finally, others will mention that producing words involves muscular activity which in turn produces various kinds of feeling, but the reader is on his own to figure out what muscular activity has to do with the aesthetics of poetry.¹¹ In almost all these cases the contribution of sound qualities to the aesthetics of poetry and the formation of those sound qualities is glanced over.

More to the point, these considerations are consistently slighted or presupposed. Our students may come away with the definition of some general conventions of English poetry, but they do not come away with a context to appreciate the effects of sound. We need only look at an example of phonic effects that are not contained under such formal patterns as alliteration, rhyme, and consonance to emphasize this point.

Next, when I cast mine eyes and see
That brave vibration each way free
O, how that glittering taketh me!

Herrick ("Upon Julia's Clothes")

Both the local and global themes of Herrick's poem are classically simple. On the local level the poem captures a moment of exquisite sensuous awareness-- Julia passing, flowing liquidly in her clothes. On the global level the poem expresses the relationship between Art and Nature--Julia's flowing clothes framing and heightening the vibration of her body underneath. The reader "feels" Julia's provocative swaying in her clothes and catches the persona's gasp of delight in large part from the phonetic qualities which operate on two levels--

mimetic or iconic, and emotive.

As Cureton has observed, in the second line, Julia's movements are rendered by the consonantal chiasmus and the interlaced vowels. The first half of the line focuses on labio-dental voiced fricatives enclosed by voiced labial plosives-voiced liquids:

br....v....v....br.

The centered consonants vibrate between the resonating br's, and the phonetic chiasmus suggests the swaying, almost quivering movement of Julia's body as she walks. This cluster is followed by tion, voiceless sibilant (shibilant), nasal continuant. Combined, the consonants suggest the vibrant sensuousness of Julia's body midst the swish of her silk gowns.

The vowels interlace appropriately in the first half of the second line and gain prominence in the second half. The vowels in the first half of the line alternate in height:

a (tensed front mid)....i (tensed diphthong, front high)....
a (tensed front mid)....o (lax central mid).

Interlaced with the consonants these vowels sway within the vibrating consonants. This swaying gains prominence vocalically in the second half of the line:

e (tensed front high)....a (tensed front mid)....
e (tensed front high).

The vowels move up-down-up. Syncopated together within the line, the consonants and vowels complete the rendering of Julia's naked vibration beneath her gowns and her swaying gait.

The vocalic qualities also render the persona's delight, his reaction to Julia's sensuous movement. High, tensed, front vowels, e and i, the back, tensed, rounded vowel o, and the back, rounded diphthong ou are phonetic gestures of the persona's aroused response. Moreover, eth phonically suggests

the persona being taken breathlessly by what he sees. These vocalic qualities provide emotive substance.¹²

The Need to Discuss Articulatory Features

What the above analyses suggest is that the aesthetic effects of sound are deeper and more integral than the conventions we base our pedagogy upon lead us to believe. The varied effects of sound are found in the suggestiveness of articulatory features. In other words, the phonetic concepts used above indicate and detail the auditory and physical sensations of producing sounds. The v, for instance in the lines from "Upon Julia's Clothes," is a labio-dental, voiced fricative. What that means is that our lips vibrate against our teeth as our vocal chords also vibrate. This creates the sense and feel of vibration. Poets utilize this resource of articulatory features, often subtly, to reinforce and to enact meaning, express mood, and add perceptual immediacy.

Phonetic concepts, if indeed concept is the right term, provide us with a body of teachable tools to help our students explore sound features. By understanding those features we become sensitive to them, and how they can be used aesthetically. Mastering phonetic tools allows us to "feel" sound material. The result increases our aesthetic store and so our aesthetic competency, and provides us with a firm ground to discuss the use of sound in poetry.

A Consonant Inventory

Any speech sound involves the projection of air through the mouth and/or nose. Consonants are those classes of sounds which are produced by obstructing the flow of air as it travels through the mouth. Customarily, consonants are classified according to the place of articulation and to the manner of articulation.¹³

Labials. We produce sounds by bringing both lips together. Those consonants articulated are b, p, and m. These sounds are called bilabial.

We also use our lower lip and upper teeth. These sounds are labio-dental and the consonants articulated are f and v.

Alveolars. To articulate d, n, t, s, or z we raise the tip of the tongue to the hard palate at the point of the bony tooth ridge. We feel the raising of the tongue tip in words such as do, new, and zoo.

Velars. By raising the back of the tongue to the soft palate or velum we produce another group of sounds--k, g, and ng. These sounds end the words back, bag, and bang.

Interdentals. By inserting the tip of the tongue between the upper and lower teeth we produce the sounds beginning the words thin and then.

Palatals. Moving the front of the tongue toward the hard palate, just behind the alveolar or bony tooth ridge, we produce sounds such as those in the middle of words like mesher and measure. We also produce those sounds found in church and gin.

Place of articulation is not enough to distinguish the different articulatory qualities of consonants. f and v are both labio-dentals, th, as in thin, and th, as in than, are both interdentals. Despite the fact that they are articulated at the same place in the mouth they differ in quality. We also need to discuss the *manner of articulation*. This involves the presence or absence of voicing and nasality and the degree of obstruction.

Voiced Versus Voiceless Sounds. These sounds differ according to whether the vocal chords vibrate or not. The vibration produces voicing. The difference between f and v then is that in the latter the vocal chords vibrate; v is voiced. When we whisper all speech sounds are voiceless.

Nasal Versus Non-nasal Sounds. m and n are both labial, voiced consonants. What distinguishes them is nasality, the passage of air through the nose. In n the velum (soft palate) is raised against the back of the nasal

cavity preventing air from passing through the nose. When we have a cold and the nasal cavity is blocked, even with the velum open our m's, n's, and ng's sound like b, d, and g.

Stops. Once the airstream enters the oral cavity it may be either stopped, partly obstructed, or it may freely flow out of the mouth. Consonants pronounced with the air completely cut off or stopped at some point in the oral cavity are called stops (p, b, m, t, d, n, k, g, ng). Many call stopped sounds plosives because the airstream after being completely blocked explodes upon release of closure (p, b, t, d, k, g). While nasals are fully stopped in the oral cavity they are not obstructed in the nasal cavity. Nasals and all other non-stopped sounds are called continuants.

Fricatives and Affricates. If the airstream passes through a narrow passage without being totally stopped, friction results. Sounds articulated in this way are called fricatives (f, v, th, th+voice, s, z, sh, sh+voice). Some sounds are produced by a stop closure followed immediately by a slow fricative release. These are affricates. In English the only affricates are ch, as in church, and ǰ, as in judge. The fricatives s, z, sh, sh+voice, ch, and ǰ are sometimes classed together as sibilants (shibilants). In producing these sounds the friction produces a "hissing" noise.

Liquids and Glides. These are sounds with very little obstruction of air. The English liquids are l and r. l is laterally produced, both sides of the tongue are down as the front of the tongue makes contact with the alveolar ridge. This permits air to escape through the side. r is usually formed in English by curling the tip of the tongue back behind the alveolar ridge. The liquids are regularly voiced.

The glides, y and w must always precede or follow a vowel. They are produced by the tongue moving rapidly in a gliding fashion either toward or away

from a neighboring vowel. Glides are produced with so little obstruction that they are sometimes called semi-vowels. They differ from vowels in that they do not carry pitch or stress. The liquids, glides, and nasals are often classified as sonorants because the air, even when obstructed in the mouth, "resonates" through the nose.

The articulatory characteristics of consonants are summarized in Figure 1. While this chart gives only the basic distinctions concerning place and manner of articulation, it provides sufficient context for analyzing consonantal sound patterns in poetry.

The Articulatory Features of Vowels

Consonants, as a class, are those sounds which are produced by obstructing the flow of air as it travels through the mouth. By contrast, vowels are produced with no obstruction. They involve the shaping of the airstream in its passage. As all vowels are voiced, we need only focus our concerns on the place of articulation, rounding, and the degree of muscular tension.

Place of Articulation. The place of articulation for vowels involves gross generalizations referring to the front and back of the mouth. This differs from the particulars that are necessary for the identification of consonants. These generalizations also involve the relative height of the tongue and jaw. Vowels are classified then as either front, central, or back, and high, mid, or low. For example, a in bat is a front, low vowel; oo in boot is back, high.

Rounding. Rounding involves the rounding of the lips. There are only four rounded vowels in English: oo as in boot, u as in put, o as in boat, and ou (au or aw) as in bought. In English these vowels are all produced at the back of the mouth. Front vowels are never rounded.

	Labial	Labio-dental	Inter-dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar
VI. stops	p <u>pit</u>			t <u>tip</u>		k <u>kit</u>
Vd. stops	b <u>bit</u>			d <u>dip</u>		g <u>get</u>
VI. fricatives		f <u>fat</u>	th <u>thigh</u>	s <u>sip</u>	sh <u>ship</u>	
Vd. fricatives		v <u>vat</u>	th <u>thy</u>	z <u>zip</u>	z <u>measure</u>	
VI. affricate					ch <u>church</u>	
Vd. affricate					j <u>judge</u>	
Nasals	m <u>mat</u>			n <u>nip</u>		ng <u>thing</u>
Liquids				l <u>lip</u>	r <u>rip</u>	
Glides	w <u>wet</u>				y <u>yet</u>	

Figure 1. Chart of English Consonants

Tenseness. Vowel tension has to do with the degree of muscle tension or laxness in pronunciation. This is a cover term representing a number of phonetic properties which distinguish, for instance, the tensed beet from the lax bit. Tensed vowels in English are longer in duration, produced by a slightly higher tongue position, and are many times diphthongized.

A word must be said about diphthongs (buy, bow, boy). They are characterized as a vowel plus a glide. Diphthongs involve articulatory movement, generally rising in height, changing in articulatory position, and increasing in tenseness. At the same time, diphthongs fall in articulatory intensity. This results from the articulatory rise--the higher the vowel height, the smaller is the resonance.

Finally, all stressed word-final vowels in English are tense. Figures 2 and 3 summarize the characteristics of vowels and diphthongs.

	Front	Central	Back (Rounded)	
High	e <u>beet</u>	e roses	u <u>boot</u>	(Tense)
	i <u>bit</u>		u <u>put</u>	(Lax)
Mid	a <u>bait</u>	a Rosa's	o <u>boat</u>	(Tense)
	e <u>bet</u>	a <u>but</u>	ou <u>bought</u> (au or aw)	(Lax)
Low	a <u>bat</u>	a <u>father</u> <u>pot</u>		

Figure 2. The Simple Vowels of English

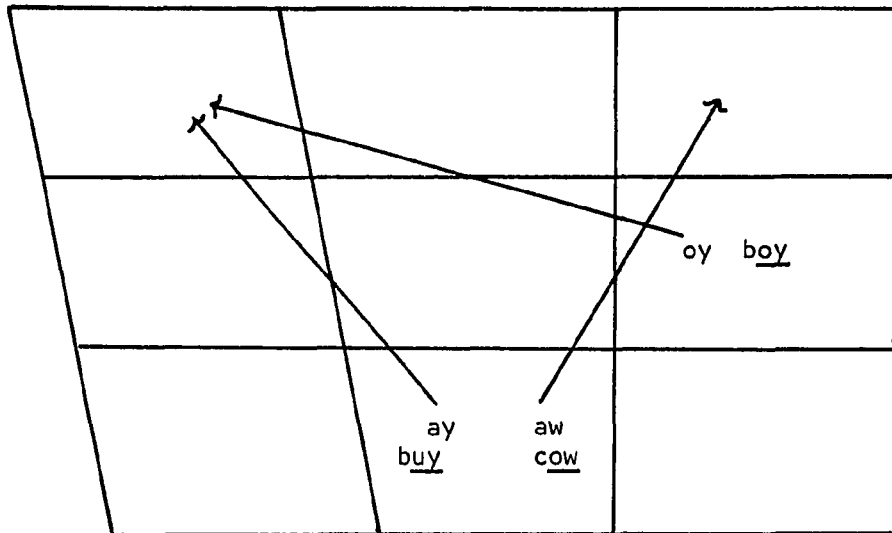


Figure 3. The Diphthongs of English

The Local Quality of Sound Features

While this discussion of sound features is rather fundamental, students need only this elementary knowledge to note and appreciate the aesthetics of sound combinations. It is from these characteristics that we metaphorize about sound in poetry. While traditional pedagogical accounts have limited themselves to the more obvious and easily accessible features of the medium, they tacitly intuit from articulatory features qualities such as vibrance, euphony, sound symbolism, and the like. For instance, Lawrence Zillman, in discussing Hopkins's "The Windhover," notes "The long i of 'striding/High there' seems almost to reach upward onomatopoeically."¹⁴ His intuitions are correct; his analysis is pedagogically empty. Zillman gives us no basis to understand why a long i would seem to rise onomatopoeically. The sense of reaching that Zillman feels results from two diphthongs, i (ay), which move upward as we pronounce

them, and the diphthongized ere. Further, the diphthongs change from lax to tense, also suggesting the feel of reaching upward. Not so curiously, throughout Zillman's introduction to poetry there is no discussion of articulatory features.

It is along these lines that Leech points out a fundamental misunderstanding fostered by terms like alliteration (from the Latin "to the letter").¹⁵ Our pedagogical schemes appear to be based on spelling rather than pronunciation. Yet, when we talk about harshness, sonority, or the brittleness of sound in a given poem, we are talking not only about what we hear the sound describe, but also the feel of the activity of making it. The connection we make between content and associative suggestiveness, as Leech states, is not through the ear alone.¹⁶ There is a tactile element to pronunciation which is as important, and in some cases perhaps more important, than the auditory element. The relationship between the two underlies the theme of sound enacting sense (rather than merely echoing it), and the effects we generally attribute to sound color. Grounding our discussions in articulatory features gives students a concrete frame to feel and experiment with how sound features are used in poetry.

Consonantal Sound Color

Sound color refers to the quality of sounds determined by how sound travels to reach the ear.¹⁷ While it is easy to yield to subjective impressions on the suggestiveness of sound, there appears to be enough agreement on the general categories of sound colors most frequently exploited. For instance, in Dylan Thomas's "This Bread I Break":

This flesh you break, this blood you let
 Make desolation in the vein,
 Were oat and grape
 Born of the sensual root and sap;
 My wine you drink, my bread you snap.

the stops, especially those occurring after the vowels, seem imitative of the

sound a hard object makes when it breaks. This also echoes the theme of breaking which runs through the poem. The actual effect comes from the abruptness of the stops. We would not associate the consonant l with the impressions created by stops or plosiveness. Thus, sound features have a range of potential suggestibility.

Leech attributes this range of sound color to the dimensions of hardness/softness, and thinness/sonority. He places consonants on a scale of increasing hardness:

- 1) liquids and nasals: l, r, n, ng (as in thing)
- 2) fricatives and aspirates: v, th (as in there), f, s, etc.
- 3) affricates: ch (as in church), j (as in judge)
- 4) plosives: b, d, g, p, t, k.¹⁸

From this scale Leech would argue that the opening lines of Arnold's "Dover Beach" create a sense of contemplative calm.

The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair

With the exception of c (k), t and d, all the consonants belong to the soft end of the scale. Moreover, there is a predominance of voiced consonants, and, as Leech points out, voiced consonants have a more relaxed articulation than their voiceless counterparts.

Sonority is a quality of vowels, and Leech associates it with the two vowel features of openness and backness, especially in combinations:¹⁹

So all day long the noise of the battle
rolled

Tennyson ("Morte d'Arthur" 1.1)

Rolled clearly signifies the distant rumbling of the battle. The back tensed o resounds deeply against the liquids and phonically highlights the rumbling that the verb refers to. This rumbling echoes throughout the line. The deep

sonorous vowels, o and a, either opened or combined with liquids, nasals, and fricatives predominate in the line. The echoing of the vowels is sound symbolic of the battle's thunder.

There is no doubt that poets use various sound colors to achieve textual effects that either reinforce or enact meaning. But while the dimensions that Leech discusses must be considered, they are not sufficiently broad. Sound colors can suggest spaciousness, slow or hesitant movement, tension, irony, or phonetic gesture. The potential range of phonic effects, their associative value, is apprehended in particular contexts activated and focused both by the meaning of words and by poetic content. This fluid relationship makes it difficult to form a taxonomy of sound color and symbolism, especially considered in light of the abundant possibilities of sound color in English. We can, however, elucidate the more frequently used categories of sound color and in so doing provide a context to help students consider the implications of these connections.²⁰

Resonance. This term denotes prolonged fullness of sound. We usually associate this with nasals (ring, lone) and voiced sibilants (rose, treasure). But the liquids and voiced fricatives can also create resonance. Voicing, in fact, appears to be a key common element, and combined with the continuant characteristics of nasals, liquids, and fricatives produces lingering, droning, or vibrant effects.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self.

Keats ("Ode to a Nightingale")

Where were the greenhouses going,
Lunging into the lashing
Wind driving water
So far down the river

Roethke ("Big Wind")

Both passages resonate but with considerably different poetic effects. In Keats, the line peals mournfully adding emotive weight. The resonance in the lines from Roethke pounds against us, mimetic of the deafening and bruising wind.

Harshness. Hard, throaty sounds of velars create the sense of harshness (k; the hard g as in grate, and the hard c as in cackle). Affricates, the sequence of stop plus fricative, can also contribute here (ch as in church, and j as in jagged).

For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,
Or chide my palsy, or my gout.

Donne ("The Canonization")

Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of
piling job on job, here is a bold
slugger set vivid against little soft cities

Sandburg ("Chicago")

Cacophony and dissonance are synonyms we associate with these sound colors:

There was a crimson clash of war
Lands turned black and bare

Crane ("There Was a Crimson Clash of War")

Plosiveness. By plosiveness we mean sound color articulated by the sudden release and/or interruption of breath. While the stops (b, p, t, d, g, k) are generally associated with plosiveness, the voiceless f, and in some cases the voiced v, can also add plosive color. The effect, of course, is weaker with voicing. The stops themselves vary in color, from the explosive b and p to the abrupt g and k. Plosives and fricative color can suggest outward movement.

I came sudden, at the city's edge,
On a blue burst of lake

Sandburg ("The Harbor")

these ascended
 In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
 Flung their smoke into the laquearia,

Eliot ("The Waste Land" ll. 90-92)

The force that through the green fuse drives
 the flower
 Drives my green age, that blasts the roots of
 trees

Thomas ("The Force That Through the Green Fuse
 Drives the Flower")

They can also create a sense of abruptness or periodicity.

It is in captivity--
 ringed, haltered, chained
 to a drag
 the bull is godlike

Williams ("The Bull")

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
 There furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
 How jocund did they drive their teams afield!
 How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Gray ("Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard")

Plosive color can also suggest phonological gestures associated with tension or attitudes.²¹

"Terence, this is stupid stuff:
 You eat your victuals fast enough:

Housman ("Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff . . .")

A pig with a pasty face, so I had said,
 Squeaking for cookies, kinned by poor pretence

Ransom ("Dead Boy")

There are other qualities that plosiveness lends itself toward, for instance, percussive effects. What needs to be kept in mind is the strong sound associations these colors have with either the sense of bursting forth or of pointedness.

Breathiness. Voiceless fricatives f and th, as in thrush, and the voiceless sibilants s and sh, as in shroud create the qualities of breathlessness, hissing, whispering, or hushed softness. The glide w, in suitable contexts, also contributes to this color.

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dew on still waters between walls
Of shadowing granite, in a gleaming pass;

Tennyson ("The Lotos-Eaters" ll. 46-49)

Softly drank through his straight gums, into
his slack body
Silently.

Lawrence ("Snake")

When to sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought
And with old woes new wails my dear time's waste:

Shakespeare ("Sonnet 30")

Liquidity. The liquids (l and r) and the nasals (m and n) can be grouped together as sonorants, and contribute to creating a melodic quality besides that of resonance. Along with the glides, they can be used to create our feeling of euphony, languorousness, and the like. They are frequently used with the resonant ng and the sibilant s.

'Mid hushed, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
Blue, silver white, and budded Tyrian,
They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;

Keats ("Ode to Psyche")

Ah! as the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though world of wanwood leafmeal lie:

Hopkins ("Spring and Fall")

The Problem of Vowel Sound Color

Vowel colors present a difficulty if we expect to find ready-made categories as those that exist for consonants.²² There are some general points we can raise about vowel qualities, but out of context they do not take us very far. For instance, rounded vowel color is generally deeper, perhaps softer, than vowels produce by stretching the lips. The latter we could consider sharper (bode, bead). Laxness would affect vowel color, tending further to "soften" the rounded vowels (hope, hop) and softening those produced with the lips spread (heat, hit). By themselves, tenseness or laxness could be said to have their own color--we certainly get no tensed feeling from lax vowels. Vowel height and position would also add color. A front high vowel (beam) seems tighter, narrower, and more acute than a low central vowel (bomb). We might point out that the front vowels (i and e) are sharp, small, and high, and so metaphorically quick; back vowels (u and o) are dull, large, and so metaphorically slow. Finally, we could say that the long upward slide of diphthongs is associative of large expansive gestures (stride, bow).

There is some sense to these qualities, but they give us only a partial account of vowel textures--and that account itself is problematic. Free, for example, has the feel of release, unboundedness. Its vowel is front and high, what we would associate with a tight, narrow feel. The effect results more from the openness of the vowel. On the other hand, loose, is characterized by a high, tensed, back vowel which we certainly would not associate with being unrestrained or unfettered. There is no fixed relation between vowel color and textual or associative effects. The point to be made is that vowels cannot be considered in isolation from either the semantic context they occur in, the consonantal environment,²³ or the pattern they themselves create. Associative expressiveness, the significance we ascribe to the color and place and manner

of vocalic articulation, results, in the main, from the pattern of vowel recurrence and alternation. In other words, how vowels succeed one another, combine or contrast with semantic, consonantal, and other formal elements of a poem can either reinforce or produce the echoing of content. We can gain a sense of this by looking at the following lines from Crane.

How many dawns, chill from his rippling rest
 The seagull's wing shall dip and pivot him
 Shedding white rings of tumult, building high
 Over the chained bay waters Liberty--

Crane ("Proem: To Brooklyn Bridge")

In line two the vowels regularly alternate in relative height. This alternation is strengthened by the metric stress on the "higher" vowels and the lack of stress on the relatively lower ones.

The seagull's wing shall dip and pivot him

The vowels move down-up-down and iconically reinforce our sense of the movement of the seagull's wings.²⁴

The bird's shedding of its excited cries as it wheels and soars in flight is echoed in the vowel pattern of line three. In "white rings of tumult" the vowels descend in height and position from the high, tensed diphthong i through the mid-central o to the final mid-back u in tumult. As the vowels shed their height they seem to carry the cries of the bird down and away from his wheeling flight. The image strengthens when the pattern reverses itself. The vowels ascend in "building high" to the final stressed diphthong i rising expansively front and high. The ascending vowels catch and contrast the soaring flight of the bird against its falling cries.

The final line is striking. The initial stressed o seems to hover, almost iconic of the bird's flight, over the repeated a in chained bay. The repetition of the vowel a reinforces a stasis, the sense of the shackled water. Finally,

the up-down-up of the vowels in Liberty recalls the movement of the gull's wings. But the final stress on the front, high open vowel also contrasts the gull's free action over the "chained bay waters."

The Aesthetic Uses of Sound

We now have a phonetic context with which to begin to explore sound as a poetic tool for the artist and as a subtle source of aesthetic pleasure for the reader. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that this context simply makes us more sensitive to recurring sound patterns or merely attunes our ear. Certainly, in many poems sound patterns may only be pleasant or not unsuitable, and this "music" of patterned sound is its own justification. On the other hand, in those poems where sound plays a significant role, we can utilize this phonetic context to appreciate and understand the ways sound features can function aesthetically.

Poets use sound informationally to fill out and further particularize thoughts, emotions, and events. As Nowotny points out, the poet "makes a pattern which, when it plays through the reader's mind, enacts the quality of the experience or the movement of consciousness he is writing about."²⁵ In other words, the poet opens up various additional "aesthetic channels" of communication to fill out what he says at the statement level with unverbilized particularity. It is not simply a fortunate coincidence that poets use sibilance (s, sh) to suggest rustling, hissing, hushedness, or whispering but not hammering, booming, groaning, or humming. This patterning of sound values awakens the reader to language being used aesthetically--that is, as a means and as a motivation for our aesthetic responses. And while it is true that the way a poet uses sound features is determined by his artistic problem in getting a particular thing said, the way in which sound features are used suggests general categories found across texts, authors, and literary periods.

The aesthetic uses (and effects) of sound features fall into three broad categories according to what sort of information poets add to a text and how they add that information. The important point is that these categories can be defined aesthetically because of the types of information poets particularize--conceptual, emotive, and perceptual. Not so curiously, these categories underlie our traditional pedagogical approaches to the effects of sound. By taking an aesthetic orientation we can help students to look at the ways poets induce readers to give aesthetically significant interpretations to sound patterns and how these formal elements induce readers to posit those interpretations.

Conceptual Effects

The most frequently discussed and most obvious use for sound is its role as an emphatic binder, providing a frame against which thematic developments take place. Empson has pointed out that the "mode of action is to connect two words by similarity of sound so that you are made to think of their possible connections."²⁶ Leech expands upon this. He considers the "chiming" of sound patterns as a phonological bond creating a foregrounded parallelism. This is especially striking when words which are grammatically paired but contrast in reference and association are bonded through sound.²⁷

This conceptual bonding underlies our discussions of rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and consonance. Rather than simple emphatic pointers, these patterns help to establish the relationships of equivalence between two or more elements. They make the reader apprehend words in meaningful groups foregrounded as a parallel pattern creating semantic relationships. The bond of either similarity or contrast can help to create such conceptual effects as thematic emphasis, thematic movement, or new associations.

The last lines of Tennyson's "Ulysses" provide an impressive example of the use of sound for thematic emphasis.

Tho' much is taken, much abides, and tho'
 We are not now that strength which in old days
 Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
 One equal temper of heroic hearts
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

The persona's plea in the final section of the poem is for heroic perseverance. Tennyson dramatically emphasizes this in the last line. Metrically the line is iambic, and the sentential breaks come at each stress. The line rhythmically rises. But the thematic force of the line comes across because of the pattern of vowels. The major stresses in the final line occur on an alternating pattern of diphthongs and high, tensed front vowels:

ay....e....ay....e

The rising diphthong, sustained by the high, tensed front vowel and then repeated underscores the persona's final exclamation with a thematically appropriate feel of rising affirmation.

In "Anecdote of the Jar" we can see how sound features can be used to help carry thematic movement.

I placed a jar in Tennessee
 And round it was, upon a hill.
 It made the slovenly wilderness
 Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
 And sprawled around no longer wild.
 The jar was round upon the ground
 And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.
 The jar was gray and bare.
 It did not give of bird or bush,
 Like nothing else in Tennessee.

As Keyser has noted, this poem is about influences--how our perception of sprawling Nature is organized by a poetic act (the placing of the jar). In

the first two stanzas, the variation on the syllable round reinforces the thematic sense of order the placing of the jar imposes on the wilderness. One property of the jar, its roundness, is linked through sound to directional senses, surround, around, ground. The jar becomes a focal point and we are made to see the wilderness sprawl around the hill and jar. At the end of the second stanza, the jar's imposing bearing, a second property, is centered in our perception by the introduction of rhyme: "port in air ...everywhere ...bare." The jar is foregrounded emphasizing the imposition of a new perception of the wilderness created by the jar's introduction. Finally, an alliterative bond contrasts the jar's third property, "gray and bare," with the implied teeming life of the wilderness, "bird or bush." The jar does not give of life, like anything else in Tennessee, but gives direction and a certain sense of order.

Each of the jar's three properties imposes a facet of order on our perception of the wilderness, and Steven's use of sound features helps to convey that thematic movement. Each property is bound with one sound device and each device follows the other in serial fashion. The movement from one non-overlapping sound feature to the next parallels the thematic steps which impose form on disorder.²⁸

In Ransom's "Winter Remembered" we find sound features being used to help create new associations.

Better to walk forth in murderous air
And wash my wound in the snow; that would be healing;
Because my heart would throb less painful there,
Being caked with cold, and past the smart of feeling.

Suffering from a lover's painful separation, the persona forsakes his house and hearth, whose warmth reminds him of his absent love, for the "murderous air" of a winter storm. The healing the storm affords is emotional numbness. Ransom creates a marvelous image for the heart numbed by the wind with the alliterated caked with cold.

We normally think of caked either as a shaped or molded object (cake of ice) or as an object covered thickly with some substance (caked with mud). Ransom's image matches both senses of caking with a condition (cold) that is both agent (by means of--with) and state of being. The cold not only covers the heart but remolds it. With uncomfortable chill the cold covers and mixes the persona's heart with lack of sensation. Remolding it, the cold leaves the heart insensible, unaffected by emotion. The emotionally irrelevant weather yields relief by molding the persona into emotional numbness. Ransom's chiming of caked with cold effectively helps to create this imagic significance.

Emotive Effects

Less discussed than either conceptual or perceptual effects is the use of sound patterns to create an emotive ambience. In this aesthetic channel, poets are not trying to achieve a specific enactment or imitativeness. Rather, poets are trying to create a mutual dependence between sense and feeling. Sound patterns are not used to characterize the nature of an object or event, but to capture an emotional attitude or the emotive weight the poet projects into his expression.

To achieve these effects, poets exploit the supple relationships between sound color and words. On the one hand they may focus on a sound pattern we associate with emotive gestures or responses. On the other, they may orchestrate sound colors that are appropriate to the "emotive sense" they wish to convey. The texture of sound, then, may only tie peripherally into the connotative associations of particular words but still render aesthetically the emotive elements that are simultaneous to the sense of the poem. This use of sound underlies discussions of tone, euphony, emotive tension, and the like.

Shakespeare's "Sonnet 30" is a classic example of sound being used to create an emotive ambience.

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
 I summon up remembrance of things past,
 I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought
 And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
 5 Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,
 For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
 And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe,
 And moan th' expense of many a vanished sight:
 Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
 10 And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
 The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
 Which I new pay as if not paid before,
 But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
 All losses are restor'd and sorrows end.

The whole poem is a lesson in the aesthetic use of sound. For the moment we will focus primarily on the mood of the poem. The persona tells us that his memories of the past evoke a nostalgic sadness--a sighing for things sought but never obtained, the waste of his time, the loss of friends and love, and the grieving at old grievances. The first twelve lines build this strong mood in order to make the compliment to friendship that much more meaningful.

Sound features contribute significantly to the mood the poem creates. The predominance of sibilance and fricatives, voiced and voiceless, establish a pattern of hushedness. In the first four lines the clustering is such as to enforce a contemplative atmosphere that surrounds "sweet silent thought." Against this pattern, other sound clusters take on emotive significance. For instance, in line four, the combination of the glide, w, and the long vowels, o and a, are suggestive of the persona's contemplated cry of grief. The combination of mid and low vowels and the nasals in lines seven through eleven (long, since, moan, foregone) carry further the emotive weight, drawing the cry of grief out into sobbing. The continuant quality of these combinations also lends itself to a measured heaviness, appropriate to the unrelieved sadness the persona calls up.

While this but briefly sketches some of the poem's sound color, it should be enough to key the reader to the continuity achieved. The point is the

contribution sound colors make to mood. The calling up of past woes by the persona, accompanied by his expression of grief, is emotively echoed in the poem's sound strata.

Tennyson uses sound color to achieve different emotive effects. The slow movement and the skillful handling of sound sequences in "The Lotos-Eaters" suggest the atmosphere of the lovely and remote but sinisterly enchanted island.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
 In the red West: thro' mountain clefts the dale
 Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
 Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale
 And meadow, set with slender galingale;
 A land where all things always seem'd the same'
 And round about the keel with faces pale
 Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
 The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.
 (ll. 19-22)

Tennyson orchestrates nasals and liquids with mid, low, and rounded vowels. The nasals produce a lingering effect and combined with the liquids create a languid melodiousness. This melody is made all the more heavy by the prevalence of voicing. The vowels that predominate are acoustically low, large, and metaphorically slow. They add a deep sonority to the already heavy lingering consonants. Together, the euphony created emotively expresses the languid atmosphere of the island.

Poets can combine sound colors in complementary ways to affect emotive gestures or express emotive attitudes. One famous example of this is the opening lines to Donne's "The Sun Rising."

Busy old fool, unruly sun.
 Why dost thou thus,
 Through windows and through curtains call on us?
 Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
 Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
 Late school boys and sour prentices,
 Go tell court huntsmen that the King will ride,
 Call country ants to harvest offices;

The poem is a happy one of consummated love, but it is strewn with insults

and scorn. The persona speaks his almost exasperated annoyance at the meddlesome intrusion of the sun that interrupts his lovemaking. Donne draws on plosives, fricatives, and affricates, along with voicing, to create curt and harsh tones. In the first line, for instance, the plosive and voiced sibilant in Busy, the abrupt dental stop in old, and the fricative in fool create a turbulent emotive gesture, a "spitting forth" of an insult. This turbulence is continued in the second line with stops and voiced fricatives. Line five is particularly effective. Pedantic spits forth from the plosive only to be abruptly stopped by the throaty velar stop c. The affricate in wretch and chide contributes to harsh cacophonous exclamation. The entire line is a wonderful emotive gesture of disdain, and Donne's blending of these harsh tones ironically counterpoints his praise for love.

Perceptual Effects

Poets can use the qualities of sound features to "picture" themes, creating a texture of sound that enacts meaning or concretizes it. The use of sound underlies our sense of onomatopoeia. But it is important that we distinguish onomatopoeia from the more pervasive uses of sound color such as sound symbolism and iconicity. Onomatopoeia represents a special class of words which attempt to imitate heard sounds. It rarely adds more than a momentary effect and has little expressive range. More significant is the patterning of sound features to symbolize or be iconic of the physical qualities and processes of activities as a whole. In other words, poets can create a resemblance between the physical form of an expression and its specific content or textual themes using sound qualities.²⁹

To accomplish this poets exploit the "synaesthetic combinations and associations that permeate all languages."³⁰ Sound features can provide support

for a range of ideas and themes. At the same time, articulatory features also constrain the expressive means available to a poet. A sequence of velar stops, for instance, would hardly be appropriate to create a sense of movement. Poets, then, create phonetic correlates (sound symbols or "icons") by sequencing sound segments, articulatory features, and sound colors that can be associated with their poetic context. By exploiting this symbolic potential of sound, poets both refer to contextual meanings and themes and present the sensuous immediacy of what they want to say.

For instance, plosiveness reinforces themes involving abrupt action, breaking out, or explosive action or emotion. A famous example of this is the opening lines of Donne's "Holy Sonnet 14."

Batter my heart, three person'd God; for You
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine and seeke to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'er throw me and bend
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.

The cry for salvation in this sonnet is desperate. The persona calls on God to cease His efforts to mend him and instead demolish him and make him anew. Donne renders, almost ironically, the force of the appeal and the force of being taken by God through a clustering of stops. Batter, person'd, and God combine outward plosiveness and abruptness and contrast with the middle lines of the quatrain which complain against the gentleness of God's courtship. Donne picks up the motif with bend and follows with the alliterated plosives breake, blowe, and burn. Combined with the velar stop k in breake and make (linked also by internal rhyme) and the fricative in force the sound sequences in the last line batter us. Here sound color does more than add thematic emphasis. As the persona would have God pummel him into renewal, so Donne pummels us with a motif of plosiveness.

Perceptual effects often result from different elements in a sound pattern working simultaneously. Stevens, for instance, combines sequence

repetition and voiceless stops to convey the passing of time in "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle."

The measure of the intensity of love
 Is the measure, also, of the verve of earth.
 For me, the firefly's quick, electric stroke
 Ticks tediously the time of one more year.
 (ll. 48-51)

By first repeating the velar stop k in final position in the third line and then alliterating the dental stop t in the fourth, Stevens indicates the over-regularized, mechanical passing of time. But he sharpens each tick to make them tedious. Quick, electric, stroke, and Ticks involve complete stops in sound. This stopping intensifies because the stops are voiceless. Each syllable is cut or clipped, and the effect causes us to stop, start, and stop again. Thus, both the monotony and the tedium of time ticking away are conveyed.

Perceptual effects need not be limited to the use of sound for mimetic or iconic effects. Poets can orchestrate sound features to render the salient features of their images without the sounds actually being mimetic. A nice example of this is H. D.'s "Heat."

O wind, rend open the heat,
 cut apart the heat,
 rend it to tatters.

Fruit cannot drop
 through thick air--
 fruit cannot fall into heat
 that presses up and blunts
 the points of pears
 and rounds the grapes.

Cut the heat--
 plough through it,
 turning it on either side
 of your path.

H. D. makes us "feel" the sense of cutting, the difficulty of moving through the heat, and the sense of the openness that relief from the heat would yield (the wind blowing) by associating sound colors with each imagic motif.

For instance, in the second line cut, apart, and heat are all cut smooth by the same stop. The effect suggests the act of cutting. At the same time, the stops beginning the second stanza halt our movement. Instead of our associating the stops with cutting, their abruptness suggests the difficulty of moving through the heat. Both these effects are stronger because the stops are voiceless, and so sharper than if they were voiced.

The suggestiveness of the continuants and open vowels (rend, open, through, fall, plough) contrast in concert with this pattern of stops. The continuing quality of the nasals, liquids, and vowels suggests the moving of the wind (first and third stanzas). At the same time, the acoustic substance that voicing adds suggests the hemmed movement in the heat. The openness of the vowels hints at the relief an easing of the heat would bring.

The key here is the semantic context. While stops can suggest abruptness and might be argued to be mimetic of the sense of cutting, there are any number of continuants and vowels that can suggest difficult movement or openness. The play of sound colors here adds perceptual immediacy to the context in order to foreground the relationships between cutting, heavy movement, and relief.

Conclusion

The poetic effects of sound are not simple or few, and the brief examples proffered here hardly do justice to the pervasive use of sound in poetry. Simply to discover alliteration or consonance is only a small part of understanding sound. The important part is to discover what the functions of sound features are in terms of the poem as a whole. The above categories are useful, but they are not without their snags. For one thing, these categories of sound usage are not mutually exclusive. Many perceptual effects, for instance, have emotive effects as well, and because sound must always be realized in terms of content, all sound usages contribute to a poem's overall conceptual effect.

The alliterated lines from Coleridge discussed above demonstrate this. The sound pattern first creates a structural bond; the alliteration binds semantically contrasting ideas (a conceptual effect), and the sound features enact the various movements of wind, sea, and ship (a perceptual effect).

For another thing, while the examples are intended to illustrate some of the more significant points, they also illustrate the awkwardness of writing about the effects of sound. The complexities of the aesthetic use of sound have simply received too little attention from both critics and literary educators alike. Because of the traditional emphasis on content analysis, we have not developed the concepts nor the methods to describe and discuss the discernible relationships among sound features. We are not used to talking about features, and when we do we are awkward. For this reason the reader should expect that these discussions will fall short in their precision. Nonetheless, struggling with these features puts into relief the phonic sources of aesthetic effects and increases our sensitivity to them. Pedagogically, this may be the most important point.

Much of the value of poetry lies in the aesthetic use of language; sound features are one element. How these features are structured and then patterned is part of the motivation for our aesthetic responses, and understanding this element of poetic language use forms part of the tacit aesthetic competency of any sophisticated reader of poetry. By incorporating into our introductory pedagogy on poetry discussions on articulatory features, sound colors, and their uses, we introduce our students to one facet of the relationship between artistic means and artistic ends. The value of these categories of sound usage rests on the body of conveniently "teachable" concepts they include. They provide a strategy that readers can use constructively, and pedagogically they can nurture the aesthetic competency of our students. The result would be to help our students become more sensitive readers of poetry.

Notes to Chapter 11

¹ Cited in Anne Cluysenaar, Aspects of Literary Stylistics (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), p. 34.

² George Whalley, Poetic Process (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1967), p. 162.

³ For example, see Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Poetry (New York: Henry Holt and Co., Inc., 1960), p. 151; I. A. Richards, Practical Criticism (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1929), p. 340; X. J. Kennedy, An Introduction to Poetry (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1971), p. 120; John Crowe Ransom, The World's Body (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), pp. 96-97; Karl Shapiro and Robert Beum, A Prosody Handbook (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 9-17. These arguments which downplay the idea of sound symbolism seem to be in reaction to works such as Roger Brown's Words and Things (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1958) which take sound symbolism to the extreme, positing it independent of semantic context. Shapiro and Beum, however, do argue a balanced view on the relationship between sound and meaning.

⁴ E. L. Epstein, Language and Style (London: Methuen & Co., 1978), p. 25.

⁵ For an interesting statement on this cognitive function of sound, see William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity (New York: New Directions Books, 1966), chapter one. Note also that there is a considerable amount of overlap among these categories.

⁶ For example, see Brooks and Warren, Understanding Poetry, section III and pp. 564-565; Kennedy, An Introduction to Poetry, pp. 119-123; James Kreuzer, The Elements of Poetry (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 63; Geoffrey Leech, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1969), p. 93.

⁷ An awareness of these conventions is neither unimportant nor trivial to the students of poetry. However, the discussions of alliteration, rhyme, euphony, and the like tend to blur the distinction between the texture of a poem and the structure. Texture, as Ransom has pointed out in The New Criticism (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1941), is "local," unique to a given poem, while structure involves the larger elements of form which tie a poem with the poetic tradition and the wider world of recurring shapes. The focus throughout this chapter is on poetic textures, the unique effects embodied within formal patterns such as alliteration and rhyme, and a practical strategy for classroom demonstration.

⁸ Kreuzer, The Elements of Poetry, p. 66.

⁹ While we might be tempted to argue that Kreuzer's discussion of the lines by Spenser would be best handled under consonance, we find ourselves with the same problem--is the effect due to consonance or the constituents of the pattern?

¹⁰Alliteration is not the only area where this type of confusion occurs. In discussing "Mid hushed, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant eyed," Brooks and Warren assert that because of the liquid consonants l and r, it is impossible to move from cool to rooted without making a slight pause. They consider this difficulty in transition to be similar to cacophony (Understanding Poetry, p. 149). Two points may be raised. First, they unduly limit euphony to the relationship among vowel sounds and cacophony to the relationship among consonants (pp. 564-565). They become obliged to claim that the languorous effect is cacophonous. Second, they blur the distinction between kinaesthetic effects, pace, and phonetic texture. The effect of liquid consonants is related in a significant manner to the effects of dentals and velars by Brooks's and Warren's assertion. The result is that the reader is left on his own to resolve the disparity between what he reads in the poem and how he is told to understand it.

¹¹See Lynn Altenbernd and Leslie Lewis, A Handbook for the Study of Poetry (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 34; Brooks and Warren, Understanding Poetry, p. 149; Raymon Chapman, Linguistics and Literature (Edinburgh: T. & A. Constable Ltd., 1973), p. 38; John Ciardi, How Does A Poem Mean? (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1959), p. 764; Kennedy, An Introduction to Poetry, p. 124; Kreuzer, The Elements of Poetry, p. 55; Leech, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry, p. 98; Lawrence J. Zillman, The Art and Craft of Poetry (New York: Collier Books, 1967), pp. 194-95.

¹²See Richard Cureton, "Form and Content in Two Seventeenth Century Poems," an unpublished paper.

¹³The following inventory of consonants and vowels, including the charts, is standard material found in any introduction to linguistics. The discussion essentially leans on Elizabeth Traugott and Mary Louise Pratt, Linguistics for Students of Literature (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1980), chapter 2, and Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman, An Introduction to Language (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973), chapter 3. The use of phonetic transcriptions has been omitted with the hope that the examples will clarify sound distinctions. The point is that we need only present an elementary knowledge of phonetic features to our students.

¹⁴Zillman, The Art and Craft of Poetry, p. 230.

¹⁵Leech, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry, p. 92.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹⁷Shapiro and Beum, A Prosody Handbook, p. 9.

¹⁸Leech, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry, p. 98. The illustration from Thomas' "This Bread I Break" is also from Leech.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 99.

²⁰These categories are from Shapiro and Beum, A Prosody Handbook.

²¹Richard Cureton pointed out to me that stops can be associated with the negative attitudes and gestures these illustrations suggest.

²²The only detailed discussion of vowel qualities seems to be in Epstein's Language and Style. Epstein focuses his discussion on what he calls the "buccal dance," the movements of our tongue and lips as we pronounce vowels. These movements, he contends, reinforce or are iconic of content (see pp. 25-37).

²³For instance, it is normally assumed that a long vowel is longer in duration than a short vowel. However, the consonant following a vowel can affect duration. The short a in ball is "longer" in duration than the long a in bait. All vowels in English are lengthened when followed by a voiced consonant. This relationship can affect the tempo of a line.

²⁴Richard Cureton pointed out the movement of these vowels in "The Prosody of Hart Crane's 'Proem: To Brooklyn Bridge'," presented at the Northeast Modern Language Association, April, 1982.

²⁵Winifred Nowotny, The Language Poets Use (London: The Athlone Press, 1968), p. 112.

²⁶Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, p. 12.

²⁷Leech, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry, p. 96.

²⁸For a more detailed analysis of the relationship between sound features and thematic movement in this poem, see Samuel Keyser, "Wallace Stevens: Form and Meaning in Four Poems," College English 37:6 (February, 1976):578-98.

²⁹There is a continual critical debate over the nature of sound symbolism. Critics have argued for the independent expressive value of sound, for the clear association of articulatory features and meaning, and that expressiveness of sound is only an afterthought we project from a poem's meaning. (cf. Brown, Words and Things, pp. 110-13; Epstein, Language and Style; Ransom, The World's Body, pp. 95-97; Richards, Practical Criticism, p. 131 and pp. 340-42; Edward Sapir, "A Study in Phonetic Symbolism," Journal of Experimental Psychology 12 (1938):222-39; Shapiro and Beum, A Prosody Handbook, pp. 14-17; Traugott and Pratt, Linguistics for Students of Literature, pp. 69-73; Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1977), pp. 161-62.) For practical (pedagogic) concerns, as long as we remember that sound symbolic associations are triggered semantically, we can side-step the critical controversy.

³⁰Wellek and Warren, Theory of Literature, p. 162.

CHAPTER III

AN EXERCISE IN RHYTHMIC ANALYSIS

Great is the art,
 Great be the manners of the bard.
 He shall not his brain encumber
 With the coil of rhythm and number;
 But, leaving rule and pale forethought,
 He shall aye climb
 For his rhyme.
 'Pass in, pass in,' the angels say,
 'In to the upper doors,
 Nor count compartments of the floors,
 But mount to paradise
 By the stairway of surprise.'

Emerson ("Merlin")

Introduction

Speculations about the nature and role of meter and rhythm abound in the introductory literature on poetry. The successful use of meter is seen as a sign of the poet's ability to coordinate his themes with feeling and tone. Meter has been looked upon as a "ritual frame" which encloses poetic experience like the border of a painting. It has been considered as a hypnotic device for increasing our attention and susceptibility to emotional states. Meter has been called the basic physical and emotional constituent of poetic content, and departures from metrical norms are said to reinforce emotional highpoints and present them for our aesthetic contemplation. Finally, meter has been considered sound symbolic, conveying the rhythmic sense of feelings, and iconic of movements, stresses, and tensions in nature and our lives.¹

As interesting as these speculations are, if we are to concern ourselves with helping our students become sensitive to the pervasive impressions meter and rhythm create, we must limit our scope from a global perspective on the

nature of meter to practical questions on the significance of meter in any given poem. It is precisely at this point that literary educators run into trouble. Invariably, we tell our students that to become sensitive to rhythm, the pattern of recurring stresses and slacks, they must be able to scan a poem. We tell them that the art of scansion involves marking the stressed syllables in a line² and measuring those syllables into feet, units of stressed and un-stressed syllables. The number of feet per line establishes a poem's metrical norm, and we facilitate students' discovery of norms by providing them with the definitions of the most common metrical feet and norms. We assure our students that few poems are completely regular, and that deviations from the norm are necessary to avoid monotony and can be deeply expressive.³

But how do we determine a poem's metrical norm, determine the stress-profile of poetic lines, as well as the sense of metrical and rhythmic effects? We are told that we need only read and listen to the beat of several lines. Stress and rhythm inhere in language, and meter, after all, emerges when the natural movements of language are heightened, organized, and regulated into a pattern. We condition our reading to a fixed recurrence of stresses, and then, depending on which school of thought we follow, to either a principle of dramatic and rhetorical emphasis,⁴ the crossing of rhythms between words or groups of words that creates modulations,⁵ or by simply reading the lines meaningfully.⁶

The Problem of Iambic Meter and Falling Rhythm

If all we need do is pay attention to stresses and where they fall in order to have the pleasure of knowing what is happening in the rhythms of poetry, then clearly our students would easily master the essentials of meter and rhythm.⁷ However matters are not this clear cut. When we talk about meter we are trying to describe what it is we respond to in the rhythmic pattern of a poem. And while experienced and sensitive readers "know" (feel) what the meter

and rhythm of a poem is, it is a different matter for that reader to explain what it is. As Gross points out, literary educators who hazard the subject must confront the lack of general agreement on metrical conventions, the fact that there is no critical agreement about the scansion of English meters, and that there is no accepted theory about how prosody functions in a poem.⁸ As a result, most introductory approaches are oversimplified and pedagogically weak.

To illustrate this problem we might consider Kennedy's discussion of the opening lines of Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard."

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
 The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
 The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
 And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

According to Kennedy, "the almost unvarying iambic rhythm seems appropriate to convey the tolling of the bell and the weary setting down of one foot after the other."⁹ Kennedy seems to be referring to the basic repeated pattern of unstressed-stressed syllables. But reading the lines reveals a "falling rhythm," a rhythm that results from the interplay of the meter with the prose rhythms of the lines that the sentence phrasing demands, and one at odds with Kennedy's claim.

With the exception of wind, which is stressed, in line two and and, which is unstressed, in line four, the lines scan into a regular iambic pentameter norm. This simple scansion is all that Kennedy gives us, but it hardly provides an account of the rhythmic behavior of the lines. While we find in the lines an almost unvarying iambic meter, we do not find an iambic rhythm. An iambic rhythm, even a monotonous one, would rise by virtue of the stress contours of the lines as natural speech. For instance, in the opening lines of Herrick's "Upon Julia's Clothes"

Whenas in silks my Julia goes,

the meter is iambic tetrameter, and the rhythm is regularly iambic

Whenas|in silks|my Julia|goes,||

("|" represents sub-clausal syntactic breaks, "||" clausal breaks, and "|||" sentential breaks. The diacritical marks indicate stress contours.) Each grammatical unit neatly corresponds with the line's meter. As Julia "goes," the rhythm regularly marches. Similarly, we find a regular iambic rhythm in the last lines of Tennyson's "Ulysses."

To strive,||to seek,||to find,||and not|to yield.||||

Again we find that each grammatical unit corresponds with the line's meter creating a rising rhythm. Here the rhythm emphasizes the assertion of heroic affirmation. In both examples each "syntactic unit" as well as metric foot is iambic, and so both pressure us to feel an iambic (rising) rhythm.

But in the lines from Gray our reading experience does not reveal a rising rhythm. Rather, the weariness we feel at the "parting day" results from a predominantly falling rhythm slowed by stressed monosyllables. For instance, let us consider the second line:

The lowing|herd|wind|slowly|o'er the lea.||

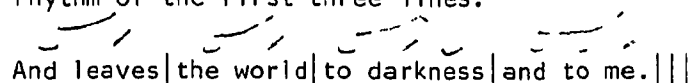
Our reading falls on lowing and slowly, and each stressed monosyllabic word slows the pace of the line. The cadence of the final "syntactic unit" falls and then levels. This, combined with the dental stops in herd and wind, gives us the feel of the herd's weary movement at the end of day. Likewise, consider the third line.

The ploughman|homeward|plods|his weary|way,||

The effect is especially nice in the second and third "syntactic units." Home-ward falls stressed to unstressed, trochaically, and ends on a dental stop.

Followed by the stressed monosyllabic plods with its dental stop, we get the feel of each plodding step. The final "syntactic units" rise and fall, amphibrachically, and then slow our movement because of the stressed monosyllable. The effect is rhythmically iconic of the ploughman's weary homeward walk.

The last line provides an effective counterpoint to the falling, almost lumbering rhythm of the first three lines.



 And leaves | the world | to darkness | and to me. |||

The first two "syntactic units" coincide with the iambic meter and rhythmically rise. They also pick up the tempo. This helps to clarify the ambiguous And leaves by creating a sense of expectancy--we seek to know to whom the ploughman leaves the world. The third "syntactic unit" rises and falls amphibrachically, almost mimetic of the falling darkness. The fourth unit scans as a rising anapest. It sharply quickens the tempo and focuses our attention on the persona. The rhythmic effect of the line underscores the solitude and the darkness that have been gathered up by the persona to provide a background for his pensiveness.

We find in the lines from Gray an effective interplay of cadences. Against a fixed iambic pentameter (rising meter) we feel falling prose rhythms in the first three lines counterpointed by the quickened pace of the last line. What this suggests is that our experience of poetic rhythms is fundamentally a recognition of the interplay of two simultaneous systems: meter (with its variation by foot substitution) and the prose rhythms that the language insists on. The experience of the two are related since meter is rooted in the natural stress values of the language. But they are not identical--meter may or may not coincide with prose rhythms. Our ability to sense rhythmic effects depends in large part on appreciating the difference between the two and in considering their interaction. As Kennedy's claim illustrates, however, we tend to confuse

this relationship in our introductory pedagogical approaches; we confuse meter with rhythm. The consequences of this are important.

In the introductions to poetry, discussion of rhythm centers on defining metrical notation and feet. They focus on the regularization (equalization) of stressed and unstressed syllables into recurring patterns, and discussions of rhythm center on metrical substitutions and remarks about meaningful reading and appropriateness. But poetic rhythms result in large part from the interplay of meter with prose rhythms, and the appreciation of prose rhythms must also be learned. With this in mind we need to add to our introductory approaches to poetic rhythm discussions of prose rhythms as structures in their own right in counterpoint to metrical beat.¹⁰ Without this background we leave our students without the basic tools to appreciate the relationship between meter and prose rhythms and hard pressed to perceive and understand poetic rhythms. Yet the above reading does suggest a clear pedagogic strategy to provide our students with the fundamental tools to appreciate meter and rhythm. To do this we need to consider the role of meter, the problem of metrical substitution and variation, prose rhythms, and the use of meter and rhythm.

Meter as Paradigm

C. S. Lewis has pointed out that "when we ask for the metre of a poem we are asking for the paradigm."¹¹ In other words, individuals differ in their reading of poetry, and even the same individual can hardly pronounce a single line the same way twice. Just as important, no two lines are phonetically identical; syllable, pitch, duration, and tone will differ. When we talk about the meter of a poem we are not talking about how an individual reads a poem aloud or about how he ought to read aloud. By "paradigm" Lewis means the classical concern with the laws of traditional foot prosody--not matters of taste or interpretation--on which general agreement can be reached. "When it comes

to defining the paradigm, say, of decasyllabic verse, I do not see how we can avoid saying that each line contains five units of some sort . . . we mean . . . that wherever the paradigm is completely obeyed, analysis cannot help finding that certain phonetic configurations occur five times in the line."¹² This metrical paradigm is the background against which the rhythm and tempo of our reading gain their poetic efficacy.

Along these lines Wimsatt and Beardsley have argued that meter is the mere skeleton of the poem. Pitch, loudness, length of time in uttering a syllable, and timbre are characteristic of a reader's performance, but they are not necessarily true of the meter of a poem. "Meter inheres . . . in aspects of language that can be abstracted with considerable precision."¹³ As such, meter is descriptive, not performative,¹⁴ and for Wimsatt and Beardsley this is the important principle about English syllable-stress verse. When we discuss meter we talk about syllables, number of syllables, and relative stress, primary, secondary, and weak. More importantly, Wimsatt and Beardsley see the principle of counted syllables and relative stress as a means to explain the necessary things about syllable-stress verse. "For one thing, quite starkly, you can tell an iambic line from one that is not iambic,"¹⁵ and variations in stress position, addition, or omission (metrical substitution) become readily identifiable. Words and phrases are either continuously reinforcing or departing from the metrical pattern of unstressed-stressed syllables, and the interplay of phrasal (prose) rhythms with this pattern gives rise to rhythmic effects.

Meter, then, singles out and organizes into a pattern of regular recurrences a normative feature of the English language. Lewis and Wimsatt and Beardsley quite rightly argue that this feature is the principle of recurring stresses. They also affirm that meter is not rhythm. Rather, rhythm is the

interplay of meter with various other linguistic features which creates rhythmic patterns. Meter is thus a primary convention of artifice in poetry. In large part its role is to provide a fixed scheme (with its occasional variation by foot substitution) against which the poet can establish an expectation in the reader and create rhythmic variation and surprise. At the same time meter provides the abstract pattern from which the reader measures the natural rhythms he feels. Prosodic analysis begins by recognizing the metrical paradigm or norm.

Basic Scansion

Metrical scansion is a relatively simple matter: it is reading verse in a more or less forced way to bring out the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables which give the line metrical structure. This may not bring out the tensions in the line. With the exception of metrical substitutions, scansion will iron them out. Scanning depends on two closely related points. First is lexical stress. As Quirk et al. note, "the placing of stress within English words is--save for relatively minor exceptions--so rigorously invariant that it is difficult for us to understand a word where the accentuation is deviant."¹⁶ Regardless of how a word is used in prose or poetry, it keeps its stress pattern. While there is no single position where we can expect to find main lexical stress, these stress features are basic to our understanding of words. We learn them as we learn language natively. For instance.

first syllable: an swer
 second syllable: a bove
 third syllable: au to ma tic
 fourth syllable: in com pre hen sible

In fact, lexical stress works to maintain a constant alternation of syllables with different degrees of stress: one main stress per word; no

consecutively stressed syllables within a word, and some words that are always unstressed.

This latter point is important. If a line of verse is predominantly composed of monosyllabic words, stress falls upon those words that are given conventional vocal force.

And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea.

Byron ("The Destruction of Sennacherib")

As a general rule, proper nouns and lexical words (most nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) bear stress in connected speech. Words showing grammatical relations, such as noun markers (a, an, the), prepositions, auxiliaries (is, was, will be), most pronouns, and simple conjunctions normally get weak stress.¹⁷ The marking of stress in lines of poetry is largely conditioned by the lexicon and grammar of English.

The patterns of heavier and weaker stress, however, depend on the make-up of word groups. This is the second point. "To meter language is nothing more than to take a group of words and put them together in such a way that a distinct sequence of relatively stressed and relatively unstressed syllables results."¹⁸ We can gain a sense of this by looking at the following lines:

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Caesar bled;

Fitzgerald ("Rubaiyat" stanza xx)

With the exception to the secondary stress on some, the alternation of unstressed-stressed syllables is regular. Both our ear and eye recognize that the pattern $\sim /$ appears more often than any other combination. But by rewriting the lines into a normal prose pattern and without changing either the syllable count per line or the basic meaning, we lose the meter and the rhythm of the lines.

I sometimes think that the Rose never blows
 so red as where some buried Caesar bled;

The minor change to a few sequences of words destroys the meditative chanting created by the meter and rhythm.

Likewise, let us look again at one of the lines from Gray's "Elegy":

The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,

The meter is insistent and can be heard throughout the interplay with the prose rhythms. But its role in the poem is more than simply to be heard. By rewriting the line into more normal sentence patterns, we can begin to understand the interplay between an abstract metrical pattern and the actual rhythms of the language.

i The ploughman plods homeward his weary way,

ii The ploughman plods his weary way homeward,

In both these lines moving homeward into a more normal sentence position introduces a trochaic substitution. But this minor variation disrupts the interplay of meter and prose rhythm. In both instances homeward constitutes the metric foot and the "syntactic unit." Rather than an interplay between meter and prose rhythm resulting in a falling rhythm, the trochaic substitution works against the weary falling rhythm. We stumble forward on homeward, almost being jarred forward, and this is an effect that ruins the texture of the line.

The Metrical Norm

Meter, then, is simply the ordered pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables, and "metrical feet" are simply the defined conventional units of recurring stressed-unstressed syllables that poets have traditionally used to pattern language.¹⁹ When we characterize a line as iambic pentameter, we are saying no more than that it contains ten syllables with each even syllable stressed.

u / / u / / u / / u / /

Similarly, anapestic tetrameter is no more than twelve syllables with every third syllable stressed.

u u / u u / u u / u u /

As units, metric feet and the number of feet per line are not dependent on either word or phrase boundaries, but on the conventions we define them by.

An ag/ed man/is but/a pal/try thing,
A tat/tered coat/u pon/a stick,/un less

Yeats ("Sailing to Byzantium")

The Ass yr/ian came down/like the wolf/on the fold,
And his co/horts were gleam/ing in pur/ple and gold;

Byron ("The Destruction of Sennacherib")

We should also note that poets can avail themselves of the older and simplest of English metrical conventions. This is the pattern of Old English strong stress meter. In its rigid form, strong stress verse is a line of four stresses, two on either side of a medial pause and a variable number of weak stresses. The distinctive formal feature is that three (sometimes two) of the stresses fall on words which begin with the same consonant (occasionally vowels). We can find this pattern used frequently in modern poetry, though many times without alliteration and with variations of three to five stresses to a line.²⁰

Here is a place||of disaffection
Time before||and time after
In a dim light:||neither day light
Investing form||with lucid stillness
Turning shadow||into transient beauty
With slow rotation||suggesting permanence.

Eliot ("Burnt Norton" III ll. 1-6)

While the metrical conventions within the English literary tradition²¹ facilitate the "metrical contract"²² between poet and reader, poets are by no means bound to them. They can establish their own metrical conventions within a poem. For example, here are the opening lines of Stevens's "Domination of Black."

At night, by the fire,
 The colors of the bushes
 And of the fallen leaves,
 Repeating themselves,
 Turned in the room,
 Like the leaves themselves
 Turning in the wind.

Each line contains two strong stresses with a varying number of unstressed syllables. While it appears that Stevens is exploiting strong stress meter, we do not find the stresses balanced on either side of a medial pause. Rather, the short lines serve to emphasize each image, each phase of thought. The stress placement controls the tempo and helps to focus either an image (for instance, lines 1-3), or the movement of images, as one image is likened to and then eclipsed by the next (lines 4-7). At best then, we can describe Stevens's norm as two stresses per line.

What should be clear is that the traditional metrical conventions a poet uses are a shorthand for models of patterned stressed-unstressed syllables. They determine what all the lines in a poem will have in common, for instance the iambic pentameter of the sonnet, and provide a point of reference to regard the nature and extent of variation from that model. Yet poets are free to create their own meters, and we recognize those created norms in the same manner as we do metrical conventions. Scanning reveals the number and position of stresses. We simply determine what the lines of a poem have in common, if

any pattern is repeated, and what features are particularly striking. Defined metrical feet may help to produce the most economic description, but, as in the Stevens example, we may only discover a consistent but irregularly positioned number of stresses per line.²³

The Question of Norms

We need to remember, however, that any system of metrical scansion is largely arbitrary both in principle and in terminology. As Josef Malof has argued, a goal of scansion is to appreciate a certain kind of form, to develop an "ear" for the rhythms and rhythmic effects moving through the poem. The form of any specific scansion is not as important as how it helps us to understand the rhythms within the sequence of words.²⁴ For example,

'Mine and yours;
 Mine, not yours.
 Earth endures;
 Stars abide--
 Shine down in the old sea;
 Old are the shores;
 But where are old men?
 I who have seen much,
 Such have I never seen.'

Emerson ("Hamatreya")

The first four lines could be cretics, two beats, or a single stress and an iamb. The fifth line could be a four beat, spondee and ionic a minore, or spondee--pyrrhic--spondee. The sixth line could be a trochee and iamb, or a choriamb. And so on. In this example we cannot determine a metrical norm from conventional metrical strategies. But a relationship does exist between the "metrical architecture" and the syntactic (logical) structure of the poem. Here Emerson creates a "metre-making argument."²⁵ Each line announces a

"truth" in the simplest and most direct way. The stress pattern punctuates each point of riddling fact and rhythmically underlines the syntactic relationships (opposition in the first two lines; agent action in lines three and four; complement-subject in lines six and seven; the chiasmic contrast of relative clause, direct object, and verb phrase in lines eight and nine). The metric and rhythmic value develop out of the subject and stance of the poem and not from an imposed or adapted convention. This suggests that metrical and rhythmic value does not inhere in metrical norms but in how a poet puts those norms to use. Poets do not simply use meter to create patterns and then force their meanings into those patterns. They shape conventional norms, or the ones they create, to be connotative of the meanings and feelings they wish to convey.

Substitution and Rhythmic Effect

With this in mind we need to rethink how we approach metrical substitution and variation with our students. We define substitution as a "routine license" of poetic convention. "Once a metrical pattern has been implied, we can say that variations . . . occur through the introduction of substitute feet which here and there replace certain base feet."²⁶ We are fond of saying that these substitutions are necessary in order to avoid the monotony of sing-song verse and, as important, either to syncopate or add tension to poetic lines. But in saying this we also need to discuss how these substitutions, these moments of syncopation or tension, act as emphatic points of expression. To this end, Paul Fussell has classified three principles of expression through variation.

1. A succession of stressed syllables without the intervening of unstressed syllables can reinforce effects of slowness, weight, or difficulty.
2. A succession of unstressed syllables can reinforce the effects of rapidity, lightness, or ease.
3. A reversal in rhythm (i.e. a trochaic substitution, ' ~, in an iambic line, ~ ') implies a sudden movement,

often discovery or illumination; or a new direction of thought, a new tone of voice, or change of poetic address.²⁷

For instance, Fussell would argue that poets can "stretch" time by using spondees.

Had we but world enough, and time,
 This coyness, lady, were no crime.
 We would sit down and think which way
 To walk, and pass our long love's day.

Marvell ("To His Coy Mistress")

With the secondary stress on would, the introductory spondaic substitutions in the third line halt the pace established by the first couplet and "sits us down." The final spondee at the close of the couplet linked with the stressed long reinforces the sense of day being stretched beyond its bounds by love.

Trochaic substitution, on the other hand, can be used to contrast elements or change our perspective.

each separate leaf
 is bright and cold,
 and through the bronze
 of shining bark and wood,
 run the fine threads of gold.

H.D. ("Along the Yellow Sand")

Metrically the lines are dominantly iambic. The spondee in the final line focuses our attention on the fine threads. The trochaic first foot helps to foreground these elements. The metric reversal changes our perspective from the leaves themselves to the sun shining through them.

Fussell's principles are useful and need to be considered, but they are limited in a number of respects. First, Fussell's concern is with foot substitution foregrounded against a precise metrical norm, the iambic. We may be

skeptical, therefore, of the possibility of using his principles to explore the expressive potentiality of "prosodic systems" that differ from the iambic, that fall between the conventions of syllable stress, strong stress, and free verse--Emerson's "Hamatreya" cited above is an example. This is important because we frequently encounter poems that do not adhere to a carry-all metric, especially in modern poetry.

Second, while Fussell is certainly correct that a succession of stresses can impede the pace of a line and a succession of slacks can quicken the pace, poets can buck the meter in two other important ways. A line of verse can be impeded or accelerated by consonant or vowel patterns. Pope provides a classic example.

When Ajax strives some Rock's vast weight to throw,
 When Ajax strives some Rock's vast weight to throw,

("Essay on Criticism")

The pace is slowed because of the articulatory difficulty in the transition between the word junctures. For instance, to pronounce Ajax strives, strives some, or Rock's vast without elision requires a pause between the words. This slows the pace of the line, but this prosodic strategy is not metrical per se.²⁸

Poets can also play against the regular pull of the meter by using the pull of individual words, lexical stress, and the prose rhythms of the lines as sentences. A good illustration of this is found in Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes."

And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
 And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
 She seemed a splendid angel, newly drest.

(stanza 25, ll. 221-23)

With the exception of soft in the first line, the lines scan into regular iambic feet. The prose rhythms counterpoint the meter. For instance, consider the second line:

∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
 And on her hair a glory, like a saint:

The syntax pressures our reading into three units: the iamb-like regularity of the locative prepositional phrase, the "amphibrach" of the inverted subject, and the "cretic" of the simile.²⁹ The effect is twofold. A glory leaps out from the iambic base and we are focused on the gleam of her hair. The brisk "cretic" then further punctuates the simile that is offset by caesural pause, lending a sense of devout rapture, a sense of reverential but passionate adoration. Fussell's principles do not account for this interplay of meter and prose rhythms, and yet this interplay is fundamental to the rhythmic effects in poetry.

Finally, the appropriateness of meter and rhythm in a poem may have a variety of effects that may be related only tangentially to the relative speed or the manner of movement of the lines. Our discussions of poetic rhythms tacitly assume this. Again, let us consider the lines from H.D.'s "Along the Yellow Sand" cited above. In the final line we find a spondee, or at least consecutive stresses.

/ ∪ / / ∪ /
 run the fine threads of gold.

From Fussell's principles we would argue that the spondee slows the pace of the line. In part we would be correct, but to what purpose? In this instance the spondee creates a compositional foregrounding. It throws into bold relief the running thread of gold against the "shining bark and wood," helping to concentrate the visual detail. Here perceptual focus is the metrical significance rather than movement or tempo.

If we are to help our students understand and appreciate the presentational significance of meter and rhythm, we need to expand upon principles such as Fussell's. While we might agree that in English there are only a few possible meters,³⁰ every new combination of words brings new rhythms to those few meters. From these prose rhythms poets can gain a greater flexibility in the line than is possible from metrical substitution, and prose rhythms are one of the strategies poets can take advantage of in free verse. But virtually nowhere in the introductory literature do we find these discussed. Moreover, while we do find good discussions of metrical notation, rarely do we find detailed discussions of what poets are hoping to achieve from the meters and rhythms they use, or the relation between metrical value and content. If we hope to give our students sound fundamentals on meter and rhythm, we also need to discuss prose rhythms and the aesthetic uses of meter and rhythm.

Scanning Prose Rhythms

The metrical feet we have been discussing are conventions, units consisting of two syllable values, either stressed or unstressed (three, if we include secondary stress). They have nothing else to do with language. As Chatman notes, metrical feet "are non-grammatical and non-lexical, and so do not bear any relation to word integrity, phonological juncture, or any other real linguistic features."³¹ Foot boundaries may split words, or we may find that two words separated by even the strongest juncture (for instance, by a period) to be in the same foot.

The Ri/ver, spread/ing, flows/--and spends/your dream.
 What are/you, lost/within/this tide/less spell?
 You are/your fa/thers fa/ther, and/the stream--
 A li/quid theme/that float/ing nig/gers swell.

Crane ("The River" ll. 121-24)

Words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, however, preserve their integrity against the pattern of the meter. Our reading is pressured by the grammatical intonational units of the lines as sentences. As Quirk et al. point out, these tone units "Tend to divide up the stream of speech into grammatically and lexically relevant sections."³² Grammatical tone units make up prose rhythms and, broadly speaking, they also involve patterns of stressed-unstressed syllable. It follows that we can use metrical foot conventions to discuss these rhythms, as far as they will take us. The difference is in the grouping--the basic metrical grouping is syllable stress count, whereas the prose rhythm groupings are sentential, a matter of grammatical and logical cohesion. In other words, the prosodic breaks that make up prose rhythms are realized by the end of a tone unit, or rhythmic division according to syntax.³³

We can re-group the lines from Crane as follows:

The River, | spreading, | flows | --and spends your dream. |||
 What are you, || lost | within this tideless spell? |||
 You are | your father's father, | and the stream--
 A liquid theme | that floating niggers | swell. |||

Each "syntactic unit" is "measured" by the grammar of the lines. For instance, the last line is measured into three "units"--noun phrase, relative pronoun and the noun phrase of the relative clause, and verb phrase. The important point is that these groupings come forward from the grammatical logic of the lines and carry their own rhythmic weight.

This "syntactic scansion" reveals the expressive tension between the metered line and the line as connected speech. The rhythms we feel and hear result fundamentally from this interplay. The lines from Crane provide a good illustration. Except for the pyrrhic in the third line, these lines are a regular iambic pentameter. The regularity of the meter seems almost to suggest

the irresistible flow of the River. But Crane wants his readers to feel the fixity and the flux of the River, both as the Mississippi and as a symbol of time bearing all humanity in its "one will--flow!" We are gripped by the measured dynamic movements created by the prose rhythms that surge against the meter.

For instance, the first line breaks into four rhythm units and suggests the coursing of the River. The rhythm waves through the amphibrachic first unit. Against this, the following trochee falls and pulls us away. It underlines the sense of spreading we feel that results from the verb being "spread" from the noun--the syntax spreads. The single stressed flow then surges as we pick up the syntactic flow. The final double iambic unit picks up the tempo of the line suggestive of the River's coursing current. We can contrast this with the final two lines. In the third line, the iambic first unit brings us to a quick rise. Together with the waved rhythm of the second unit, the first two units suggest the River's unruffled flow. Then the last unit, anapestic, again picks up the tempo, and carries us to the final lines. The constant waving rhythm of the last line carries us to the final stressed swell. The total effect presents the River's relentless flow with the final stress punctuating its dynamism.

Caesura and Enjambment

Syntactic scansion also gives us the tool to better our discussions of two other types of influences on rhythm--caesura and enjambment. We would not be mistaken to say that these rhythmic counters are rooted in prose rhythms. We normally define caesura as an extra-metrical pause within the line. While we tend to think of pauses as stops, moments of silence in the line, it would be more correct to state that caesura is a "catch" in the line, an interruption

of the tempo. These "catches" or pauses are determined by the grammatical (syntactic) structure and sense of the line. As Leech notes, "pauses are often felt necessary at the end of larger syntactic units--sentences, clauses, and some phrases--in fact, at the boundaries of intonation units."³⁴ Caesurae are often marked by punctuation, but punctuation in itself does not indicate the strength of the pauses in reading. We can see this in the following lines from Tennyson's "Ulysses":

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,

The semicolons break the pace of the lines, but they do not definitely interrupt it. Rather, they bring the separate elements of the fading day into relationship with each other, creating a measured linear flow. We can compare this to the following lines from Eliot's "Journey of the Magi":

All this was a long time ago,||I remember,||
And I would do it again,||but set down
This set down
This:||were we led all that way for
Birth or Death?

Here we feel a definite interruption. The first two breaks are parenthetical asides--the first lending a colloquial air and the second a sense of self-reassurance that what was done was worth doing. The final break is clearly an emphatic pause.

Punctuation marks, we must remember, are only in part visual symbols that help to convey the distinction of intonational units in the stream of speech. They may not be necessary to mark pauses. For instance,

Ask for the great Deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless in Gaza||at the Mill||with slaves

Milton ("Samson Agonistes" ll. 40-41)

The pauses we feel in the second line fall among three phrases descriptive of Samson. The first is adjectival and describes Samson's physical being. The second is a locative prepositional phrase and the third a prepositional phrase of accompaniment, both focusing on his servile fate. The pauses are *intonational* and juxtapose these two qualities of Samson's ordeal against each other.

Caesura results then from the relationship between syntactic units and rhythmic measures, but there is more to be said about this relationship. For instance, we normally draw a distinction between end-stopped lines and run-on lines. This overflow of one line to the next we define as enjambment, and we primarily discuss it in connection with rigid verse forms like the heroic couplet. But in general enjambment can occur within any regular metrical pattern the poet establishes. We can look at enjambment as similar to metrical variation because it creates a tension between the expected pattern of end-stopped lines demanded by the meter and the run-over. But enjambment results from the dictates of prose rhythms created by the grammatical patterns.

Again Leech provides a useful guide. "We describe enjambment as the placing of a line boundary where a deliberate pause, according to grammatical and phonological considerations, would be abnormal; that is at a point where a break between intonation patterns is not ordinarily permitted."³⁵ The most extreme form occurs when enjambment results from a line break within the same word.

Like clear springs renewed by flowing,
Ever perfect, ever in them-
Selves eternal.

Campion ("Rose-cheeked Laura, come")

tipping their bellies (round as the thick-
sided glasses whose wash they impound)

Williams ("The Dance")

A more moderate form of enjambment occurs when the line ending and beginning are part of the same phrase.

Haply I think on thee--and then my state,
Like to the lark at the break of day|arising
from the sullen earth,|sings hymns at heaven's gate;

Shakespeare ("Sonnet 29")

The second and third line are enjambed by the participial phrase. This run-on is especially effective. By carrying us past the bounds of the line ending this run-on, like the lark lifting from the bounds of the earth, signifies the persona's spirit being lifted from his "outcast state." We are carried up by the rhythm of the phrase.

The most common form of enjambment is when the end of one line and the beginning of the following line belong to the same clause. Frost provides a good illustration.

You come to fetch me from work tonight
When supper's on the table|and we'll see
if I can leave off burying|the white
Soft petals|fallen from the apple tree
.
The sturdy seedling with arched body|comes
Shouldering its way|and shedding the earth crumbs.

("Putting in the Seed")

The line divisions between the second and third lines separate verb and object. (The run-on between the third and fourth line is phrasal.) In the second set of lines, the division is between verb and adverbial. Again, the effects of the enjambment transmit a feeling of breaking constraints.

In the first instance, the close of day, characterized by the putting up of work, is reinforced by the end-stopped first line. This is underscored by the caesura in the second line. The clausal run-on between the second and third lines, and the phrasal run-on between the third and fourth lines break the constraint of work's end at suppertime. They rhythmically drive the "springtime passion" to continue putting in the seed until the planting is done. The effect in the final line, though, is quite different. The run-on bursts the line ending as if to render iconically the seedling's strenuous breaking through the soil. The variation which the enjambment contributes is a sense of continuance against the closure of end-stopped lines, a sense of breaking constraints.

The Aesthetic Uses of Meter and Rhythm

The two scansion, metrical and sentential, provide us with the fundamental tools to explore metrical and rhythmic effects. These effects always have been considered a secondary means of expressing the emotional and/or physical attitudes of either the persona or the poetic content. By contributing to the texture of "thingness" the poem is trying to achieve, meter and rhythm also have been considered a means to add sensuous vividness. It is easy to agree with these ideas, but in themselves they have no explanatory power. Explaining how the pattern of stresses and variations from that pattern add emphasis and emotional quality and make things tangible has always proved to be troublesome, especially for literary educators. Traditionally, we have approached this problem in terms of the concept of fit, the appropriateness of metrical expectancy with meaning expectancy. But what does it mean to say that the meter of a poem is "appropriate" to the sense? Literary educators have tried to approach this in two ways neither of which is satisfactory by itself.

First, we have tried to evaluate the elements of meter. We interpret metrical feet metaphorically in terms of fluidity of speed. The iamb is rising; the spondee is slow and solemn; the trochee jigs; the pyrrhic is light; the anapest is swift, and the amphibrach bounds and canters.³⁶ But as Chatman is quick to note, these statements characterize poems written in these meters rather than the value of the metrical feet themselves.³⁷ Moreover, the relationships here are neither hard nor fast. As noted above in the lines from H. D.'s "Along the Yellow Sand," the spondee in "run the fine threads of gold" is neither slow nor solemn but functions compositionally. And as we will see below, a poet can make his rhythms bound and canter against an iambic norm. Most importantly, this characterization of meter neglects the interplay of prose rhythms. We need only recall the above discussion of Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" to realize that the significant urgencies in poetic rhythms may develop from the interplay of prose rhythms against a rather simple metrical norm.

Second, because meter and rhythm are temporal phenomena, we also have tried to discuss how the manner of rhythmic movement can be appropriate to poetic content. The regularity of meter frames poetic content, separating it from our practical concerns. It also helps to make common and familiar language strange and unusual; meter heightens our awareness of what is going on in a poem. We usually discuss metrical heightening in three ways. Meter, we say, underlies the connection between ideas and emphasizes words where meaning is focused. This is accomplished by means of emphatic stress. Because meter adds rhythmic intensity, it heightens emotional quality and so becomes a means to express feeling and stimulate deep emotion. Here we usually point out the recurring beats and tie them to musical tempos. Finally, we say that meter resembles the attributes of things in a poem, an onomatopoeic effect.³⁸

But again there is no fixed correspondence between certain meters and manners of emphasis, certain emotions, or onomatopoetic effects. For instance,

$\overset{\cup}{\text{A}}\text{ll } \overset{\cup}{\text{C}}\text{hance, } \overset{\cup}{\text{D}}\text{irection, } \overset{\cup}{\text{w}}\text{hich } \overset{\cup}{\text{t}}\text{hou } \overset{\cup}{\text{c}}\text{anst } \overset{\cup}{\text{n}}\text{ot } \overset{\cup}{\text{s}}\text{ee;}$

Pope ("An Essay on Man," Epistle 1,
l. 290)

$\overset{\cup}{\text{S}}\text{hall } \overset{\cup}{\text{I}} \text{ compare } \overset{\cup}{\text{t}}\text{hee } \overset{\cup}{\text{t}}\text{o } \overset{\cup}{\text{a}} \text{ summer's } \overset{\cup}{\text{d}}\text{ay?}$

Shakespeare ("Sonnet 18")

Both lines are iambic pentameter, but their rhythmic effects are quite different. While we might like to say that some meters are swifter, or lilting, or more dignified, we are really talking about the fundamental relations between meter and prose rhythms and the poet's play upon those relations to particularize his poetic content. This does not contradict our intuitions about appropriateness of meter and rhythm to a poem, but it does demand that we approach the problem of appropriateness in terms of the aesthetic means available to a poet.

In other words, while it is true that meter and rhythm are too weak semantically to express anything not indicated by a poem's message, they are expressive forms at a poet's command. As Gross argues, poets structure meter and rhythm to articulate patterns of expectation, fulfillment and frustration and the movements of feeling, and to communicate those non-paraphrasable experiences rhythm alone can express.³⁹ The way a poet uses rhythmic forms depends upon his artistic problem in getting a particular thing said. Like the uses of sound discussed in Chapter II, we can define the uses of meter and rhythm in terms of aesthetic categories--conceptual, emotive, and perceptual.

Conceptual Effects

Metrical patterns and their variations can become elements to highlight thematic (conceptual) consequences. We have normally discussed this in terms

of rhetorical emphasis. Threading meaningful statements through metrical patterns imparts a formality to an utterance and focuses our attention in a special way. What we like to claim is that this movement of verse adds dramatic significance. In other words, poets use meter to give the dramatic impression of speech, and metrical variations help to secure emphatic stress on words where meaning is focused.

In part this is correct--metrical variations may be used to emphasize ideas or images at the point where they occur--but the conceptual effects of rhythmic forms are more pervasive. As well as the use of metrical variation to highlight important thematic points poets can contrast meter and rhythm with content creating either conceptual ambiguity or thematic tension.⁴⁰ They can also use rhythmic forms to present their themes, to be thematically iconic. These uses of rhythm help the poet achieve rhythmic exactness of statement and to induce the reader to a conceptual experience, to how rhythm can convey ideas. From the interplay between rhythmic forms and content, poets can create such conceptual effects as thematic emphasis, thematic tension, or thematic mimesis.

Wordsworth's sonnet "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge" provides excellent illustrations of the use of meter and rhythm for thematic emphasis.

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
 Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
 A sight so touching in its majesty;
 This City now doth, like a garment, wear
 5 The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
 Ships, towers, domes, theaters, and temples lie
 Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
 All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
 Never did sun more beautifully steep
 10 In his first splendor, valley, rock, or hill;
 Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!

The river glideth at his own sweet will:
 Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
 And all that mighty heart is lying still!

The description of the city and the persona's response are rather straightforward. There are no bold comparisons or striking realistic details. And yet the poem is successful because of the singularity of the vision and the excitement it conveys. In part this results from how the meter is used emphatically. For instance, the first foot of the poem is a trochaic substitution, as is the first foot of the second line. The two substitutions, on Earth and Dull, against the iambic pentameter norm emphasize first that nowhere else on earth is there a sight more impressive and that one would have to be extraordinarily dull not to be aware of it. Likewise, the metrical substitutions throughout the poem tend to emphasize either the splendor or the singularity of the sight. The initial trochee in line seven, for example, foregrounds Open as if to say that in this moment the city normally at odds with nature has become akin to it. The initial trochee in line nine and the initial trochee followed by the spondee in line eleven foreground never and emphatically assert the singularity of the vision and the experience.

The prose rhythms also contribute emphasis. The cadences are light, underscoring the delicacy of the moment. At the same time the lightness of the rhythm quickens our focus on the qualities of the description. In line three there are only four stresses. The prose rhythmic units underline sight, touching, and majesty by giving them stress prominence against the light movement. In line six, syntax and meter combine to focus each part of the panorama. The prose rhythms fall gently and enjamb the line undercutting the final stress and so the sense of the line closure.

Ships, | towers, | domes, | theaters, | and temples | lie \
 Open | unto the fields, | | and to the sky;

But the final stress at the end of the sixth line followed by the initial stress in line seven slows the pace of the enjambment. Except for the initial trochee the meter of line seven is regularly iambic broken medially by caesura. The prose rhythms coalesce and the rhythm of the line rises. The contrast in the rhythm of the two lines, six and seven, emphasizes the "City," now still, lying open to surrounding nature.

While this touches on only a few of the metrical irregularities in the poem that create thematic emphasis, these examples should be sufficient to illustrate the point. These irregularities seem thematically emphatic because they forcibly catch our attention and throw emphasis on thematic points. We need only to look at lines twelve and thirteen to realize this. Line twelve ends with a metric spondee, and this links with the stress in the preceding iamb. The prose rhythms of the end of the line break into three units, an anapestic and two single stresses. The pace at the end of the line quickens and then slows, but here the effect is perceptual, rendering the slow gliding movement of the river. The initial spondee in line thirteen, Dear God! clearly renders the persona's emotive response. It is the lack of either perceptual or emotive saliency that cues us to the thematic role of meter and rhythm.

We can turn again to Wordsworth to find an excellent example of meter and rhythm used for thematic tension.

A slumber did my spirit seal;
 I had no human fears;
 She seemed a thing that could not feel
 The touch of earthly years.
 No motion has she now, no force,
 She neither hears nor sees;
 Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
 With rocks, and stones, and trees.

("A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal")

Readers of this poem are struck by its thematic ambiguity. On one hand it is possible to feel that the dead girl (Lucy) has been caught up in the sublime life of nature. On the other hand we could read that her death has left her inanimate, void of all sense, and horribly inert. The rhythmic form of the poem contributes significantly to creating this thematic tension. We only need to consider the second stanza to illustrate this.

The poem's metrical norm is essentially that of a ballad, alternating lines of iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter. The first line of the second stanza begins and ends with a spondaic substitution, and the line is also rhythmically cut by a caesura before no force. The effect creates thematic ambiguity. The initial spondee is forceful against the iambic norm. This is especially noticeable because the prose rhythms of the first stanza subdue the iambic meter. In the last line of the first stanza, for example,

$\overset{\sim}{\text{The}} \overset{/}{\text{touch}} | \overset{\sim}{\text{of}} \overset{/}{\text{earthly}} | \overset{\sim}{\text{years}}.$

the amphibrachic second unit gives a gentle wave. The spondee's force throws No motion into relief against the rhythmic base. The caesura stops our motion through the line, and then the final spondee throws no force into relief. The effect is mixed. Semantically the sense of motion or force is expressed, but rhythmically the spondees are forceful.

The third line again begins with an initial spondee, and its effect is also forceful against the iambic meter and prose rhythms. This forcefulness is a bit at odds with the connotations of Rolled round and diurnal. Together they suggest the orderly periodic motion of the earth's daily rotation. But the initial spondee jars us forward and suggests another sense of Rolled, that of being pushed or impelled forward. The semantic sense of smooth motion is counterpoised by the rhythm. This links with the mixed effect of the stanza's first line.

This tension between semantic sense and rhythm is reinforced in the last line. The meter is iambic trimeter, and each grammatical break occurs on the metric foot.

With rocks, || and stones, || and trees. |||

The regularity of the meter and rhythm becomes mechanical. Is the girl more alive because she is now part of the life of nature, or is she an inanimate thing held inertly in earth's diurnal motion? The tension between these two readings is fostered by the interplay of rhythmic form and content.

Meter and rhythm also can be thematically mimetic. Rather than mirroring in a straightforward physical sense the physical objects or events a poem describes, meter and rhythm can mirror some abstract or thematic concern of the poem. Herrick's "Delight in Disorder" provides a good example.

A sweet disorder in the dress
 Kindles in clothes a wantonness.
 A lawn about the shoulders thrown
 Into a fine distraction;
 5 An erring lace, where here and there
 Enthralls the crimson stomacher;
 A cuff neglectful, and thereby
 Ribbons to flow confusedly,
 A winning wave, deserving note,
 10 In the tempestuous petticoat;
 A careless shoestring, in whose tie
 I see a wild civility;
 Do more bewitch me than when art
 Is too precise in every part.

The metrical base of the poem is iambic tetrameter but the verse constantly deviates. In lines two, four, and eight there are initial trochaic substitutions. In line four the final stressed syllable is dropped, yet the feminine ending is end-stopped by the semicolon. In line seven the third foot

is a pyrrhic followed by a trochee. The feminine ending here hastens the phrasal enjambment. In line ten, the initial foot is a pyrrhic and the third is anapestic. (Rhetorical pressure, however, does suggest that ln could be stressed and so change the substitution to a trochee.) The line is also lengthened by a syllable. Line eleven is enjambed into line twelve, and the tempo of line twelve quickens because the last two metric feet are found within one word, civility.

Against this metrical play the prose rhythms add their own syncopated spring. This is especially noticeable at the ends of lines. In lines two, six, and ten, for example, the lexical pull of wantonness, stomacher, and petticoat add a brisk rhythmic cretic. In line four distraction pulls amphibrachially, and in lines eight and twelve confusedly and civility add the swing of a double iamb. This syncopated spring is echoed also phrasally. In line five the adverbial here and there is a rhythmic cretic. In line nine the adjectival deserving note parallels the double iambic rhythm that ends line eight. Line seven is especially interesting. The connective phrase and thereby can be scanned two ways, either "and[˘] there[˘]by," or, under rhetorical pressure, "and[˘] there[˘]by." One scansion adds a rhythmic amphibrach; the other a cretic. Finally, in line ten, whether we read the first syllable as unstressed or stressed, the entire line itself is deviant. The quick waver of tempestuous (second paeon) against the brisk cretic of petticoat foregrounds the line forcefully against the iambic norm. The line itself is tempestuous, but perceptual immediacy is only one of its effects.

The key to the metrical and rhythmic play is found in three oxymorons--sweet disorder, fine distraction, wild civility--and the last lines of the poem. Together these convey the persona's preference for neither order nor disorder, wildness nor civility, but for the fine balance between the two. In

the last lines we realize that the clothes stand for art, which includes the poem. The persona would have all art imitate that balance as the poem does metrically, being neither too regular nor too wild. (We also should note how Herrick underlines this with the perfect metrical regularity of the last two lines and how he springs the meter phrasally with the final prepositional phrase.) The substitutions and changes of pace provide a lively counterpoint to the order of the meter. As the persona is bewitched by the "fine distraction in the clothes," so Herrick uses these deviations to bewitch us metrically. The "sweet disorder" of his metrical art is mimetic of his theme.⁴¹

Emotive Effects

We always have discussed meter and rhythm as a natural accompaniment to (strong) emotions. For these effects, poets use prosody to create the illusion of duration and rhythmically convey what we affectively experience in those fictive moments. Here poets are neither trying to emphasize content thematically nor trying to imitate objects or events. Rather, they use prosody to help create the moods and tones of feelings that accompany thought and experience.

To accomplish this, poets play upon the connotative relationships between rhythm and words. They pattern stress, phrasing, metrical expectancy and frustration, pauses, and enjambment to effect rhythmic tension or ease. They tie these prosodic variations to the urgencies readers expect from the "idea" of a poem. These textures create a sense of pace or momentum, climax or crescendo, or dying away, and provide an aesthetic form enabling readers to have an emphatic response. This use of prosody underlies our discussions of our feelings of poetic attitudes, the emotive tones and tensions of poetic situations, the responses of personae, and the like.

Frost, for instance, uses pace and caesura in "Out, Out--" to reinforce the tense emotive pathos of an unpredictable rural accident.

And then--||the watcher at his pulse took fright.
 No one believed.|||They listened at his heart.|||
 Little--|less--|nothing!--|||and that ended it.|||
 No more to build on there.|||And they,||since they
 Were not the one dead,||turned to their affairs.|||

These lines are blank verse, but with considerable metrical substitutions. In the first line the third foot is a pyrrhic and the last a spondee. The initial foot of the second line is a trochee and the fourth foot a pyrrhic. The only regular iambic foot in the third line is the last foot, and the initial spondee in line four is the only substitution in the fourth line. In the final line the third foot is a spondee and the fourth a pyrrhic. As considerable as these substitutions are, it is the interaction of the prose rhythms and caesurae that creates the rhythmic tension. The prose rhythms and caesurae do not simply slow the pace of the lines, they break it. These rhythmic breaks reinforce the shock of the boy's accidental death. At the same time Frost plays with the cadences to convey the cold fact that the routines of life go on regardless.

In the first line the initial iamb is stuttered by the grammatical break. The tension is quickly built by the syntactic transposition and the prose rhythms. The noun phrase, the watcher, is separated from the verb, took. The intervening prepositional phrase creates a fearful anticipation in large part because of the rhythmic weight it carries. The prepositional phrase is anapestic and picks up the tempo rapidly, alarmingly so, against the initial iambic foot and the mild wave of the noun phrase. We are brought up short by the line final spondee of the verb phrase. Linked with the stress on pulse the effect takes us aback. We are struck "dumb" as "the watcher" (the doctor) is by what the boy's pulse tells him. The line shudders in recognition of the tragedy.

In the last four lines the medial caesuras help to evoke the disbelief and yet the matter-of-fact resignation to the boy's death. The caesura in the

second line breaks the swift prose rhythm units with a stop. The swoop of the initial prosodic choriamb is brought up short by the dental stop and the caesura at the sentence end. The second half of the line wavers through the subject and verb and then the pace quickens through the anapestic prepositional phrase. This is also brought up short both by the dental stop and the line end-stop. The quickened pace and strong rhythmic breaks evoke the feeling of stunned disbelief.

The grammatical pauses in the first half of the third line and the stressed less between the trochaic Little and nothing make us feel the agonizingly long moments of the fading pulse. These pauses are a powerful evocation. But the dead stop of the caesura in the third line is followed by a moderate rhythm, an almost mundane rhythm as if the end of the boys' life is like any other daily rural occurrence.

The final two lines shift tone dramatically. In the first half of the fourth line meter, rhythm, and sense are almost curt matter-of-fact, punctuated by the caesura. The second half of the line and the fifth line rhythmically convey the callous fact that life goes on. The fourth line ends on two iambic (metric and prose rhythmic) feet, but the grammatical pause between them cues a parenthetical aside. Almost off-handedly the iambic meter and the clausal enjambment turn us back from the incident to the daily concerns of the living. But the tension is pitched at the caesura in the last line. It breaks the spondaic substitution in the last line. We forcefully stop at dead and forcefully begin on turned. We rhythmically throw off the incident. The final prepositional phrase is a fourth paeon (the pyrrhic combined with the iamb) and takes us quickly back to the daily chores. The emotive tension is balanced in these five lines between the agony and stunned disbelief in the first two and one-half lines and the seemingly terrible indifference that our affairs go on

despite the sudden, irrational human tragedy in the last two and one-half lines.

Poets also use meter and rhythm to help create emotive moods. For example Stevens uses triple meters, swing rhythms, and enjambment (claimed as appropriate for light and joyous themes) to create an ambience of fear in "Domination of Black."

I heard them cry--the peacocks.
 Was it a cry against the twilight
 Or against the leaves themselves
 Turning in the wind,
 Turning as the flames
 Turned in the fire,
 Turning as the tails of the peacocks
 Turned in the loud fire,
 Loud as the hemlocks
 Full of the cry of the peacocks?
 Or was it a cry against the hemlocks?
 Out of the window,
 I saw how the planets gathered
 Like the leaves themselves
 Turning in the wind.
 I saw how the night came,
 Came striding like the color of the heavy hemlocks,
 I felt afraid.
 And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

These lines resemble a loose accentual verse, varying two to four stresses per line. As mentioned above, it is difficult to find a predominating metric to this poem. The short lines give great emphasis to each image and create a poem of sight and sound. The cries of the peacocks, the leaves, the fire, and the shadowy color of the hemlocks are all made explicit. But the prose rhythms are pervasive, moving each line until one image is likened to and turned into another.

In the third through the eighth lines, for example, Stevens plays upon the rhythmic difference between the participle and the past tense in Turning and Turned. The falling trochee against the anapestic phrasing in the third and fifth lines, and the almost double anapest in the seventh line create swooping rhythmic contours. We sense the turning of the leaves, flames, and tails. The fifth and the seventh lines enjamb into the single stressed Turned. This is the imagistic connective. The fifth and the sixth lines and the seventh and eighth lines are adverbial phrases. Their rhythmic effect creates a prosodic simile. Each image is underlined by the same rhythmic contours; these contours work to liken the images to each other. The turning of the leaves rhythmically becomes the turning of the flames, which becomes the turning of the tails of the peacocks.

The phrasal and rhythmic repetition combine to build a dizzying intensity of swirling images. Then Stevens cues a change in the images in the eighth line with a double stress (spondee?) on loud fire. We now "hear" the sounds of the images "turning" into one another. The ninth line rhythmically echoes the sixth and eighth lines. The sound of the fire rhythmically echoes the cries of the peacocks.

The rhythmic intensity reaches a pitch in the final lines of the stanza. Are the shrieks of the peacocks against the twilight, the leaves turning in the winds, the cries of the peacocks themselves, or the hemlocks? The sense of resolution, even in questioning, is undercut by the swirling rhythms. In the tenth line we swoop from the initial stress to cry, and swoop again to the stressed pea, but fall off on the second syllable. In the last line the rhythm of the question itself makes the question uncertain. The line breaks into four prose rhythmic units.

Or was it|ã cry|against|the hemlocks?|||

The line begins and ends on a rhythmic amphibrach. In between are two iambs. On the initial amphibrach we waver and the following two iambs seem strong against this, seem to convey a sense of resolve. But we waver again on the final rhythmic amphibrach. The rhythms challenge whether or not the questions are being asked. From the rhythms we become dizzy, lose certainty, and cannot discriminate between the images. We are swirled into confusion.

The rhythmic momentum carries into the final stanza. The first five lines rhythmically echo the swirling contours of the stanza above. The poet links the dazzling images of the leaves, the peacocks, and the fire with the gathering planets. These images swirl together in swooping contours. The fifth line then rhythmically ties the coming of night, the movement of darkness to these images. The darkness comes insistently. The fifth line ends on two stress (spondaically?) and is followed by the two stresses that begin the sixth line. The swooping contours then pick us up. The striding shadows of the hemlocks are the striding of the night coming. The seventh line is a complete break in the rhythm. The short, clear iambic dimeter (?) gives us a sense of resolution, a moment of certainty. This moment is tied rhythmically by the last line to the images by the fire. The cries of the peacock against the striding hemlock-darkness become the persona's fear against the striding night-blackness.

As with many Stevens poems, this is about the struggle between the rich, synthetic imagination and the bleak "night" of reality (or death). These rhythms convey anything but emotion recollected in tranquility. We are moved from a vision of leaves to a vision of peacocks' tails, from the sound of peacocks' cries to the sound of fear, and so to a feeling of fear.

As well as creating an emotive ambience, poets use rhythm to convey emotive responses and personal expressions or exclamations. Dickinson does just this in "Wild Nights--Wild Night!" (249).

Wild Nights--Wild Nights!
 Were I with thee
 Wild Nights should be
 Our luxury!

Futile--the Winds--
 To a Heart in port--
 Done with the Compass--
 Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden--
 Ah, the Sea!
 Might I but moor--Tonight
 In Thee!

Dickinson orchestrates metrical feet and prose stresses to create an anguished exclamation for fulfillment. The prose rhythms coincide neatly with the meter of the poem. We begin forcefully with two spondees, but the tempo is anything but ponderous. The effect is insistent and exclamatory; we are immediately pitched high. The iambic dimeter of the second line picks up the tempo. The third line begins spondaically and is followed with an iamb. The effect of the second and third lines is striking. In the context of the spondaic first line the iambic dimeter of the second line conveys an agitated excitedness. The third line again pitches us high with an initial spondee and then rocks us forward with the iamb. The fourth line maintains this emotive intensity by the play of lexical stress against the iambic dimeter. The quick pull of the meter is counterpointed by the brisk cretic swoop of luxury. The effect seems like an impassioned gasp.

The second stanza is a modulation of rhythms that evince the persona's frustration. The first line is literally in metrical and rhythmical opposition, trochee then iamb. The declamation mark breaks what normally would be a choriambic rhythm--the rhythm is frustrated. In the second line the anapest of the

first prepositional phrase picks up the tempo. Then the following iamb of the second prepositional phrase pulls that tempo up. Again, the tempo is unfulfilled. The last two lines are best dealt with phrasally. Done is stressed in both lines and is phrasally distinct from the adverbial prepositional phrase. Coming line initial the stressed Done exclaims the reduced clause "I am done with . . ."; we feel the intensity of the futility. In the third line, the phrasal rhythm is a third paeon, ^{˘˘˘}. The line runs quickly and rises maintaining the intensity, but the trailing unstressed syllable makes the line rhythmically tail off. (Intonationally, this rhythm is associated with making lists.) The rhythm of the line pulls us to the initial stress of the fourth line, another peak. The fourth line ends anapestically, giving a quick steep rise and carrying the futility to a point.

The third stanza is a rhythmic resolution. Phrasally, the first line runs trochee and amphibrach. The falling trochee is softened by the waver of the amphibrach, unlike the first line of the second stanza. Here we roll in the rhythm like a boat being rowed. The initial stress of the second line is an exclamation appropriate for Ah. We pause after and then pick up the iamb. We rise in an almost quickened gasp of relief. The final lines create a strong resolution. We again pitch high metrically on the spondee and follow with three iambs. But here we neither pick up the tempo nor feel any rise. While each metric iamb is also a phrasal iamb each is separate--the first two separated by a declamation mark and the last by the line final mark and isolated on its own line. While we end on an exclamation, these rhythms create a sense of composure, as if the frenzy has given way to an enraptured contentment. The rhythms resolve the anguish to be with someone and the longing thwarted by some restraint or block. The final emotive plea is as if longing has become a kind of fulfillment in itself.

Perceptual Effects

Poets also use meter and rhythm to add sensuous vividness by creating rhythmic resemblances or icons. With prosody poets can enact the relationships between objects, qualities, and actions which concretize poetic content. We are tempted to analogize this use with onomatopoeic effects, and this analogy underlies our claim that the iamb is rising, the spondee is slow and laborious, and that the trochee falls. There is some sense to this claim. For instance the choriamb, ^{/'}[~][~]^{/'}, does seem to create a feel or sense of swooping or swinging, and it would hardly be appropriate to convey solemnity or laboriousness. But this analogy with onomatopoeic effects will not carry us far. Onomatopoeic words are discrete conventional units imitative of heard sounds, and they retain their poetic efficacy regardless of context. This is not the case with meter. For example,

^{/'} [~] [~] ^{/'} [~] [~] ^{/'} [~] [~] ^{/'} [~] [~] ^{/'}
 Bind us in time, O Seasons clear, and awe

Crane ("Voyages")

Here the line initial trochee combines with the following iamb to create a choriambic foot. But this foot reinforces the sense of binding by binding the two unstressed syllables between stressed syllables. We feel no sense of swooping.

Nevertheless, this point does not deny that poets can create rhythmic textures that enact or concretize content. Poets can play upon fluidity or speed, stress impetus, or create feelings of rising or falling. By orchestrating these metrical and prose rhythmic features, poets can exploit the synaesthetic association of pace and manner of movement. They shape these qualities to signify perceptually poetic content. The force of these resemblances is based both on how well a poet joins his synaesthetic associations to the sense of his poem, and how well the reader aesthetically recognizes the similarity

between rhythmic form and content.

Perceptually, the most common use of rhythm is to convey the sense of movement. Here poets orchestrate meter and phrasing to render the salient features of speed, manner, impetus, and the like. We find a good illustration of this in Frost's "Birches."

He learned all there was
 To learn about not launching out too soon
 And so not carrying the tree away
 Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
 To the top branches, climbing carefully,
 With the same pains you use to fill a cup
 Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
 Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
 Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.

Against black verse (an iambic pentameter norm) Frost captures the sense of climbing, poise, and then flinging out from the tree.

The fourth line, for example, is broken medially. The initial trochee creates a choriambic unit with the following iamb. Here the unit swoops, mimetic of the launching out to the ground. The second half of the line consists of regular iambic feet and, along with regular prose rhythms, creates a motif of poise. Together they convey a rhythmic sense of balance and stability against the variations in these lines. This rhythmic poise is jogged in the fifth line. Metrically it begins with an anapest that carries us up quickly to the stressed top. This is followed by the trochee, branches, and a medial pause. The reversal and the pause halt the quick rise we feel. Rhythmically, we have reached the "top." Meter and lexical stress coincide in the last half of the line. The trochee, climbing, and the dactyl, carefully, create falling contours, something we normally would not associate with climbing. But this rhythmic reversal underscores the deliberate movements up the tree. This is

especially true in context with the sixth line. Its initial "foot" is an ionic a minore (˘˘"). (One could argue that the initial foot is a pyrrhic followed by a spondee, but the rhythmic effect is that of an ionic a minore.) The two slacks bring us up quickly against the weighted stresses. The effect is one of effort and, when considered with the contours at the end of the fifth line, conveys the effort of careful climbing. The end of the sixth line is metrically and rhythmically iambic. The rhythm regularizes and again picks up the motif of poise.

The seventh line is a wonderful transition. The initial trochee and iamb again form a choriambic unit and, followed by the pause, seem to swing us to the top, and we pause. Metrically the second half of the line is iamb-anapest-iamb. The prose rhythms are an amphibrach, and even, followed by two iambs. The interplay between the two creates a sense of overflow. We feel the branches swaying with the weight of the climber readying himself to leap.

The final two lines iconically render the swinging from the tree. The initial anapest of the eighth line is a quick onset and focuses on flung with its phonetic intensive "fl" suggestive of outwardness. The following trochee pulls us outward as it metrically reverses. The spondee is especially effective. Metrically, the spondee is forceful against the anapest and trochee. Prosaically, feet first interrupts the rhythm of the syntax of the line. The effect is a mimetic thrust like the feet thrust forward. The final anapest picks us up rapidly as the swinger leaps from the branches.

The final line renders the flight. Metrically, the first and the third feet of the line are trochaic substitutions. Prosodically they combine with the second and fourth iambic feet respectively to create two choriambic units. We swoop through these choriambic units. The final anapest is rapid but almost smooth against the vigor of the two choriambic units, and we alight on the ground.

Poets do not have to make their rhythms directly referential to achieve perceptual effects. They can use prosody to create perceptual rhythmic metaphors. An excellent example of this is found in Hopkins's "Inversnaid."

This darksome burn, horseback brown,
 His rollrock highroad roaring down,
 In coop and in comb the fleece of his foam
 Flutes and low to the lake falls home.

Cureton has pointed out, Hopkins compares the rush of the burn, a brook, to the motion of a horse. His word choices support this interpretation. The burn is horseback brown; its creek-bed is a highroad. Its white water is a fleece, and finally, the burn falls home, not simply into a lake. These choices apply to a horse and riding but only metaphorically to a creek. Cureton argues Hopkins infuses this conceptual imagery with surging rhythms. The irregular flow of the stream as it gathers force, breaks into white water, leaps over irregularities in terrain, and roars down is projected as the rhythm of a horse as it begins to trot, gallops, jumps, and continues galloping home.

The first line is composed of regular iambs but syncopated in the middle by the omission of a weak syllable and the phrasal caesura. This syncopates the tetrameter by breaking the line into two prose rhythm groups. The first group is a double iamb and gives us a quick down-up down-up tempo. But notice how darksome pulls against the meter trochaically. This pull creates the feel of "trotting." The second group is a brisk cretic and runs up-down-up. Together the two rhythm groups make the line post up like a horse and rider. The second line has no syncopation; it is a regular iambic tetrameter. But the prose rhythms counterpoint the line. Four prose units play against the four metric feet.

His rollrock|highroad|roaring|down,||

We bound through the initial amphibrach. The following trochees and single stress give a strong spring to the rhythm. Here we begin to canter.

In the third line both meter and prose rhythms coincide: the line runs iamb-anapest iamb-anapest. The line accelerates as the rhythm runs two beats to three beats. We step and surge as the river breaks into a "gallop." The initial stress of the fourth line is striking against this surging rhythm. It momentarily suspends the rhythm and has an effective synaesthetic effect--we not only pause but actually, in some imaginary space, leave the "ground," like a horse leaping an obstacle. The rest of the line almost parallels the third. We pick up the "gallop" of the iamb-anapest-iamb (even with the secondary stress on falls) as the burn "falls home." The rhythms bound and canter and we experience the joyous abandon and exultation in the turbulent coursing of the creek.⁴²

Poets can achieve subtler perceptual effects of rhythm. Frost again provides a useful example in "Two Tramps at Mud Time."

(i) / / / / / /
 Good blocks of oak it was I split,
 As large around as the chopping block;
 And every piece I squarely hit
 Fell splinterless as a cloven rock.

Against a predominantly iambic tetrameter Frost creates some marvelous effects. In the first line each metric foot corresponds with each syntactic foot. The tenor of the line is set by the foot final stops. Rather than marching through these feet, especially the three iambs, three of the feet are cut by stops, ks, k, and t. We pause at the third foot because the inverted syntax demands it. The rhythmic effect gives us the line as "chopped blocks." The first two feet of the second line carry the same rhythmic value.

The last half of the second line is rhythmically interesting. Metrical-ly we scan the line as anapest and iamb. Phrasally the line breaks into a

third paeon and a stress. The play of these two create rhythmic acceleration and at the same time the feel of a brisk cretic. This is made all the more brisk by the stressed affricate, ch, and the plosive and velar stop, b and ck. Here the rhythm becomes chopping, like the quick, hard stroke of the ax against the block.

In the third line the meter is regular iambic tetrameter, but phrasally counterpointed. The inverted object creates a slight pause. This pause breaks the line symmetrically, and the meter in each half is pulled trochaically by every and squarely. The rhythmic symmetry squares the line. But the counterpointed rhythm has no tension. The rhythm is a steady and even pull, like the rhythm of each stroke of the ax as it rises and falls, and rises and falls again.

The fourth line is almost iconic. It begins stress initial and follows with a dactyl. Here the foot falls as the split pieces of wood fall. This line is also rhythmically broken in half, and the second half of the line parallels the final part of line two. Again the rhythm is becoming of the ax stroke as it cleaves the block of wood. The rhythmic parallelism also gives us a sense of closure. (The near phonetic parallelism and rhyme strengthen this.) In these four lines we have the complete act. The rhythms help to set the scene of self-controlled ax strokes and the splitting of wood.

Conclusion

This chapter began by arguing that it is easier for good readers to know or feel the rhythms of a poem than it is to talk about them, and the difficulties encountered in discussing it here bear that out. We have looked at only two features that affect rhythm. We have not discussed the articulatory features of syllables that tend to quicken or slow the pace of a line. We have only touched upon the effects that word junctures have on tempo. We have not

discussed the role of sentential intonation, and the effects of lineation have only been alluded to. Finally, we have not discussed how meter, and especially prose rhythms, can contribute to free verse. The intent here is pragmatically simpler. Before students can explore how subtler features of language affect rhythm, they need a basic ground to realize how poets can shape prosodic form to suit their artistic purposes.

Like most elements of poetic structure, meter and rhythm are diverse and affect our reading experience on various levels. The examples offered here illustrate that we need to do more with our students than simply identify metrical feet, norms, and foot substitutions. If we limit our discussions to meter, to the matter of mechanics, at best we give our students only an idea of the pre-conditions against which rhythm emerges. We give the impression, though unintentionally, that rhythm is some mysterious unanalyzable organic whole at which we can only hint. By adding a fundamental discussion of prose rhythms, we can introduce our students to how the pull of words and phrases, the rhythms of the language itself, creates rhythmic tension, changes in pace and direction, and adds dimensionality to the regular pull of the meter.

These examples also show the need to discuss meter and rhythm within an aesthetic frame. We have generally discussed meter and substitution in terms of "expressive emphasis." Trochaic inversions that change rhythmic direction create emphasis. Anapestic or spondaic substitutions that change pace create emphasis. Meter emphasizes words, moods or tones, and images. But does emphasis account for all these different things? We have to question our pedagogical approaches that reduce rhythmic values to one value--emphasis. The term not only is used to the point where it becomes meaningless, but by reducing the diverse effects of rhythm to one effect, we also reduce our students' responsiveness. The aesthetic categories, as broad as they are, can help us to

explore with our students what meter and rhythm are for, why poets choose certain meters and work with certain prose rhythms, and what they hope to gain.

As a final note, it should be remembered that this chapter is an exercise in exploring the use of prose rhythms to come to grips with the relationship between meter and rhythm. It would be best to underline exercise. It is not intended to present metrical theory or to prepare students to do detail metrical criticism, even though some of the discussions might suggest such. Rather, it is intended to show that by including discussions on the fundamental interplay between meter and prose rhythms and their aesthetic uses, we can help students (and teachers) learn to experience and value prosody. We can help students sharpen and clarify their reading responses to rhythm and so strengthen their reading experiences of poetry.

Notes to Chapter III

¹ See Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Poetry (New York: Henry Holt & Co., Inc., 1960), p. 124; John Ciardi, How Does A Poem Mean? (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p. 994; Paul Fussell, Poetic Meter and Poetic Form (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 12; Harvey Gross, Sound and Form in Modern Poetry (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973), pp. 14-20; I. A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1924), pp. 143-44; René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), p. 241.

² Theorists have argued that there are anywhere from two to eight levels of stress in English stressed syllables. This level of sophistication is beyond the needs of our students, especially at the introductory level. More importantly, it would add unnecessary theoretical problems without making any significant pedagogical contribution. For an excellent study that considers levels of stress, decibel range, and oscilloscoped pitch contours, see Seymour Chatman, Theory of Meter (London: Mouton & Co., 1965). For the purposes of this chapter scansion is limited to stressed, ' , and unstressed, ~ , syllables. There are points where syllables do not fit either as stressed or unstressed, but somewhere in between. These will be marked with secondary stress, ^ . Finally, those disputed points of scansion, points where a syllable could be marked either as stressed or unstressed, will be marked with both the acute accent and the breve and with parentheses around one of them. This is not intended to indicate that one scansion is preferred over another. The use of the parentheses is a convenient method to indicate those places of metrical ambiguity.

³ See, for example, Brooks and Warren, Understanding Poetry, pp. 122-30; John Ciardi, How Does A Poem Mean?, pp. 920-33; X. J. Kennedy, An Introduction to Poetry (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1978), pp. 145-51; James Kreuzer, The Elements of Poetry (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955), pp. 24-50; Ruth Miller and Robert Greenberg, Poetry An Introduction (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), pp. 116-24.

⁴ Brooks and Warren, Understanding Poetry, p. 137.

⁵ Enid Hamer, The Meters of English Poetry (London: Methuen & Co., 1954), p. 8.

⁶ John Ciardi, How Does A Poem Mean?, p. 930.

⁷ Kennedy, in his Introduction to Poetry, ascribes to this position, as do Miller and Greenberg in their Poetry An Introduction. The importance of this is that both works are currently being used in introductory college poetry courses.

⁸ Harvey Gross, Sound and Form in Modern Poetry, p. 3.

⁹ Kennedy, An Introduction to Poetry, p. 149.

¹⁰Brooks and Warren, in Understanding Poetry, and Karl Shapiro and Richard Beum, in A Prosody Handbook (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), briefly mention the play of meter and prose rhythms. Brooks and Warren in their "Note on Versification" in the glossary of their work mention that one factor which influences the tempo of rhythm "is the location of pauses defined by sense units . . . it is obvious that the sense unit does not always coincide with the line unit. In practice, sense divisions--phrase, clause, sentence--often terminate with the line; and conversely, the end of a line unit may divide a sense unit" (p. 564). Shapiro and Beum note only that phrasal rhythm can play against metrical rhythm (p. 61). Neither work goes beyond these statements to lay out the tools to analyze metrical patterns, prose rhythms, and their interplay.

The best discussion of meter and prose rhythm in an introductory text is perhaps to be found in Edward Proffitt, Poetry An Introduction & Anthology (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1981), chapter five and pp. 132-37. But Proffitt only mentions phrasal rhythm units in the midst of analysis. He shies away from talking about the details of phrasal rhythms or how to determine them.

The concept of scanning both meter and prose rhythms and interpreting prose rhythms in counterpoint to meter has been fully developed by Richard Cureton in personal correspondence. His scheme underlies my scanning of prose rhythms, but my presentation outlines only the basics. Cureton has revised this idea into a significant theory of rhythm. See his "Rhythmic Scansion," presented at the University of Illinois, February, 1984.

¹¹C. S. Lewis, "Metre," A Review of English Literature 1:1 (January, 1960):46.

¹²ibid., pp. 48-49.

¹³W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Concept of Meter: An Exercise in Abstraction," PMLA 74:5 (December, 1959):590.

¹⁴This position has been argued by others. For instance, see Wellek and Warren, Theory of Literature, pp. 158-59 and Gross, Sound and Form in Modern Poetry, p. 31. They argue that those who base scansions on either musical notations or transcriptions of acoustic recordings are interpreting the pattern an individual reader imposes on the metrical pattern.

¹⁵Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Concept of Meter," p. 593.

¹⁶Randolph Quirk, Sydney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, Jan Svartvik, A Grammar of Contemporary English (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1979), p. 1036. Quirk et al. also point out that while linguists have distinguished with more or less difficulty four to five degrees of stress, the most relevant distinction is a simple binary opposition (though it is often important to distinguish an intermediary or secondary stress). The point, however, is that stress is a significant feature in English and stress position can change the meaning and function of words, i.e., pro ject, pro ject; per fect, per fect; a ttribute, at tribute--here the difference is between noun and verb or adjective.

¹⁷The poet, of course, can force an exception to this general rule with his metrical pattern. For instance, the insistent iambic tetrameter of Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" forces us to stress grammatical words.

Whose woods these are I think I know.
 His house is in the village though;
 He will not see me stopping here
 To watch his woods fill up with snow.

¹⁸Shapiro and Beum, A Prosody Handbook, p. 20.

¹⁹Metrical terms, such as iamb, spondee, and choriamb, line lengths, such as dimeter, trimeter, and pentameter, and traditional metrical conventions have been defined so often that reader familiarity is assumed. While many introductions give adequate definitions, an excellent discussion of these terms can be found in Paul Fussell, Poetic Meter and Poetic Form. Also, Lewis Turco's The Book of Forms (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1968) is an excellent reference that diagrams 175 traditional Anglo-American metrical forms. What is important to remember is that the terminology of poetic feet has been borrowed from classical quantitative prosody--the concept of the foot is an abstraction and, as many have been quick to point out, we will never encounter pure examples of standard metrical feet.

²⁰Josef Malof, A Manual of English Meters (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), among others, has pointed out that there is a considerable amount of overlap between "stress verse" and "foot verse." A poem in iambic pentameter also can be described as a strong stressed verse with each line containing five verses. The overlap and interplay of the two becomes important in free verse.

²¹There is a third system of metrics literary theorists refer to--syllabic verse. Here the important metrical consideration is the number of syllables to the line. Examples of syllabic verse are Haiku and the French forms. The problem English writers face in working with syllabic verse is the significant role stress plays in the language. Our scansion invariably leads us to either stress verse or foot verse. For example here are the opening lines of Thom Gunn's "My Sad Captains."

One by one they appear in
 the darkness: a few friends, and
 a few historical
 names. How late they start to shine!
 but before they fade they stand
 perfectly embodied, all

Here Gunn maintains seven syllables per line, but the count of syllables does not create the rhythmic interest. The variable number of stresses (two to four), the forceful syntax, and the enjambed line endings overlap the syllable pattern. For introductory concerns, syllabic forms will not be a consideration.

²²Metrical contract refers simply to the idea that the poet and reader hold certain metrical conventions in common and certain ways of responding to certain metrical traditions. For instance, the English heroic couplet is two lines of rhymed iambic pentameter. Traditionally, it is used in narrative poems of some length that deal with matters of great import and/or grand proportion. When this metrical convention is used for satire or humor, as in Pope's "The Dunciad" or "The Rape of the Lock," the connotative associations of the

metrical form itself add to the irony and humor. In large part this idea of metrical conventions explains the brevity of this section. The aim in this chapter is not to catalogue metrical types, but to explore the aesthetic uses of meter.

²³See Chatman, Theory of Meter, pp. 114-19. He argues that the composition of the normal foot is assumed to be the "smallest submultiple of the normal line."

²⁴Malof, A Manual of English Meters, p. 165.

²⁵"Metre-making argument" refers to Emerson's idea that a "thought so passionate and alive . . . has an architecture of its own." Meter is not simply added to idea; idea and form are "equal in the order of time." See his essay "The Poet" in Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Complete Works (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), Vol. III, pp. 8-11.

²⁶Fussell, Poetic Meter and Poetic Form, p. 33.

²⁷*ibid.*, p. 35. Fussell's principles are not unique; they are found in many discussions on substitution. However, Fussell provides the best expression of them.

²⁸See E. L. Epstein, Language and Style (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1978), pp. 41-44 and Chatman, Theory of Meter, pp. 198-99. The effects of sound features on pace also have been touched upon in Chapter II and will not be dealt with here.

²⁹While prose rhythms are not scanned in the same manner as metrical feet, this discussion shows the usefulness of metrical notation in discussing prose rhythmic units.

³⁰See Geoffrey Leech, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1969), p. 112; Hammer, The Meters of English Poetry, p. 9; and Malof, A Manual of English Meters, p. 29.

³¹Chatman, Theory of Meter, p. 117.

³²Quirk et al., A Grammar of Contemporary English, p. 1049.

³³For an excellent discussion of prose rhythms, see Norton R. Tempest, The Rhythms of English Prose (London: Cambridge University Press, 1930) and Herbert L. Creek, "Rising and Falling Rhythm in English Verse," PMLA 28:1 (January, 1920):76-90.

³⁴Leech, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry, pp. 107-08.

³⁵*ibid.*, p. 125. See also Roger Fowler, "Prose Rhythm" and "Meter" in Roger Fowler, ed., Essays on Style and Language (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 88, where he argues that enjambment is really a matter of the degree of grammatical cohesion between lines roughly measured from hierarchial units of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences.

³⁶See, for instance, Shapiro and Beum, A Prosody Handbook, pp. 33-44; Kennedy, An Introduction to Poetry, p. 147. Poets also have looked at metrical feet in this way. See Humphrey House and Graham Storey, eds., Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Journals and Papers (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 274-75. Coleridge composed a little poem that classified metrical foot values.

Trochee trips from long to short.
 From long to long in solemn sort
 Slow Spondee stalks; strong foot! yet ill able
 Ever to come up with Dactyl trisyllable.
 Iambics march from short to long;--
 With a Leap and a Bound the swift Anapests throng.

("Metrical Feet")

³⁷Chatman, Theory of Meter, p. 191.

³⁸See Brooks and Warren, Understanding Poetry, p. 126 and p. 144; Ciardi, How Does A Poem Mean?, p. 994; Kreuzer, The Elements of Poetry, p. 35; and Laurence Perrine, Sound and Sense (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), p. 175.

³⁹Gross, Sound and Form in Modern Poetry, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁰See note 22 above.

⁴¹Proffitt discusses this poem along similar lines. See Poetry An Introduction & Anthology, pp. 110-11.

⁴²Cureton's analysis is in "Phonetic Structures and Unconventional Meaning in Poetry," an unpublished paper.

CHAPTER IV

POETIC SYNTAX: WORDS IN THEIR BEST ORDER

Of all the elements necessary to make an utterance meaningful, the most powerful is syntax, controlling as it does the order in which impressions are received and conveying the mental relations 'behind sequences of words'. . . . Consequently, syntax, however little it is noted by the reader, is the groundwork of the poet's art. Often it supports a poetic edifice elaborated by many other poetic means and the reader is content to believe that these other means are the cause of his pleasure. But when a passage relies chiefly on its especially compelling and artful syntax to make its effect, the reader and critic who never expect syntax to be more than 'a harmless, necessary drudge,' holding open the door while the pageantry of words sweeps through, will be at a loss to understand why the passage affects them as it does and at a loss to do critical justice to its art.¹

Winifred Nowotny

Introduction

Few critics or literary educators would argue with Nowotny's claim that the way poets put words together is an important although sometimes subtle source of our aesthetic pleasure as readers. In the previous chapter, for instance, we looked at how poets can counterpoint meter with syntactic phrasing, and how they can create various kinds of textual rhythms from the interplay between the two. But as Nowotny suggests, syntax plays a more pervasive role, a role that is often overlooked because of the attention we give to the more "artful" poetic devices, such as meter, sound features, imagery, and the like. Perhaps, as Nowotny suggests, this is because at the level of syntax we respond "with less conscious awareness of the immediate causes of our responses."² Syntax, the relationships of how words are put together into sentences, is so ordinary, so fundamental that it is often difficult to see it working. Indeed, no utterance

makes sense without the relationships syntax imposes--without syntax language would be "word salad," as "Cat late the out we night put last." Because we naturally tend to take in syntax without effort (except when the syntax becomes extremely complex), Nowotny points out that "its operation as a cause of potential pleasure is often the last cause we recognize, if indeed we recognize it at all."³

As a poetic device syntax seems to attract our attention either when it is inverted within the bounds of convention yet in a manner we normally do not encounter:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:

Coleridge ("Kubla Khan")

or when it significantly deviates from the conventions of language:

anyone lived in a pretty how town
(with up so floating many bells down)

Cummings ("anyone lived in a pretty how town")

or when syntax is so complex that we consciously need either to rearrange it or to sort out its elements to make sense of a passage:

The bloom, whose petals nipped before they blew
Died on the promise of the first fruit, is waste;

Shelley ("Adonais" ll. 52-53)

In these instances we tend to look at the syntax as artifice: inversions give a poem an archaic or poetic air and keep the lines within the constraints of rhyme and meter; deviations make poems poetically "fanciful," and complexity arrests our attention making us focus on a poet's thought.

Our introductions to poetry do not look at syntax in any greater detail than this sense of artifice, if, indeed, they look at it at all.⁴ But to view syntax in this way trivializes the role that it plays and has little bearing on syntax as a source of a reader's aesthetic response to a text. To get a better

understanding of this we can consider the following three illustrations.

The River, spreading, flows--and spends your dream.

Crane ("The River")

It is what he does not know,
 Crossing the road under the elm trees,
 About the mechanism of my car,
 About the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,
 About Mozart, India, Arcturus,

That wins my praise.

Eberhard ("On a Squirrel Crossing the
 Road in Autumn, In New England")

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
 dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon,
 in his riding
 Of the rolling level underneath him steady air,

Hopkins ("The Windhover")

In each of these illustrations the syntax is compelling and adds aesthetic (literary) significance to what each poet is trying to communicate. In the line from Crane the subject is "spread" from the verb by the reduced relative clause spreading ("which is spreading"). This reduced clause is nonrestrictive and so is offset by commas which create a parenthetical phrase. A parenthetical phrase carries a separate intonational pattern from the rest of the sentence in which it occurs. The effect in the line from Crane is to separate the subject, both spatially and temporally, from the verb creating a sense of syntactic interruption or delay. This spreading of the syntax is iconic of the spreading of the River. Here the syntax adds perceptual immediacy.

The syntax plays a different role in the lines from Eberhart. Here Eberhart combines a "cleft sentence," negation, syntactic interruption, and repetition to create an emphatic and yet ironic statement. A "cleft sentence" is a construction which gives focal prominence to a particular element in a sentence (subject, object, or adverb). Clefts divide a normal sentence into two separate

sections, each with its own verb. According to Quirk et al., "most cleft sentences begin with the empty pronoun it followed by the verb be, which in turn is followed by the element in which the focus falls."⁵

John stole the bicycle.
 It was John who stole the bicycle. (subject focus)
 It was a bicycle that John stole. (object focus)

The basic sentence in the lines from Eberhart is "What he does not know wins my praise." The cleft sentence focuses emphasis on the clausal subject--"What he does not know." But this clausal subject is different from the cleft sentence example above and creates a sense of expectancy (anticipation) on two levels. First, what is cataphoric, pointing us forward to a discourse reference later in the sentence, along the lines of "What he does not know is about" Here, however, what points us forward to the complements of the verb of the clausal subject, know. One sense of expectancy is about what the what refers to. At the same time, we have a structural sense of expectancy to get to the rest of the cleft sentence--that wins my praise. Our sense at this level is to find out what the focal prominence is about.

Both these senses of expectancy are heightened by syntactic interruption. In line two, the participial phrase separates the verb of the clausal subject, know, from its complements. This postpones the completion of the subject and heightens our sense of expectancy. This syntactic interruption is also appropriate on another level. Formally, the line is a parenthetical aside. The interruption creates a feeling of suspension, and this is mimetic of the persona and the situation. Just as the persona's thought is "suspended" by his attention caught by the squirrel crossing the road, so we are suspended by the syntax. The second interruption is the repetition of the prepositional complements. This pattern continues to build the clausal subject and postpones our getting to the main verb, wins, and the rest of the cleft sentence. This delay

heightens our structural expectancy.

Against this heightened sense of expectancy, the phrasal repetition in lines 3-5 and the negation in the first line add an emphatic ironic twist. The repetition of the prepositional complements creates a sense of abundance, but here of a specific kind. About the carries the meaning "on the subject of." The phrasal repetition builds the "cultural store" the persona himself carries-- the abundance of knowledge (wisdom?). This "building of knowledge" is made emphatic by the pace of the last complement, "About Mozart, India, Arcturus." The line is asyndetic; it has no "ands." The syntactic pace quickens as each cultural "thing" is heaped on the other, and the quickening of the pace builds an emphatic intensity. (It is interesting to note also that these cultural "things" are aligned into a progression of increasing size and distance.) But this intensity is ironic because of the negation in the first line. The squirrel is being praised for what he does not know and, played against our expectations, this abundance of knowledge is bloated out of proportion and importance. Normally, we would give praise to such learning, but here Eberhart emphatically turns it inside out with the pattern of the cleft sentence. What makes the squirrel beautiful, what wins praise is what he does not have, a sense of culture which would intrude upon his sense of his own nature. Here then, the cleft sentence, syntactic interruptions (suspensions), repetition, and negation create an emphatic yet ironic statement and add emotive (and intellectual) intensity to the lines.

Hopkins's use of syntax creates a different overall effect. In "The Windhover," Hopkins's image of the falcon's flight mirrors Christ's mastery over the world, and the give-and-take between freedom and discipline. The metaphoric ground plan is that of a horseman, and Hopkins creates this metaphor immediately in the poem's opening lines with his grammatical ingenuity and

brilliant handling of lexical items. Hopkins builds his metaphor from his handling of the prepositions in the last lines, "riding of the rolling level underneath him steady air." He does this by using of, and preposing and embedding the second preposition, underneath, within the object of the preposition of. Riding is a noun denoting action. The use of of after a noun denoting action indicates the object of the action. Notice the difference between riding in, riding on, riding through, and riding of. The use of of creates a sense of agentivity--the falcon's control over something. That something is the object of the preposition, air. Our base sentence, then, is "the Falcon in his riding of the air," and it corresponds to "the Horseman in his riding of the horse."

But the air we perceive in these lines has a corporeality that we normally would not attribute to air. This effect is due to the play of prenominal modifiers. By linking rolling, level, and steady Hopkins violates selectional restriction rules on what words can be combined with others.⁶ The result is a beautiful oxymoronic image of movement with stability. The controlled movement brought to our attention emerges from how we are made to construe its features through the syntax. A participle indicative of turning over repeatedly is tied to a noun indicative of horizontal surface⁷ and an adjective of stable, fixed position. This collocation is followed by the embedded preposed prepositional phrase, underneath him. By grammatically making the prepositional phrase function as an adjective, Hopkins forces us to attribute a spatial permanence to the air that we normally would not attribute.⁸ This "new" air is distinguishable from the air above the bird in a manner that is different from the normal prepositional relationship (i.e., the air underneath him, of the steady air underneath him) where the air would be distinguished by relative spatial position. Rather than describing transitory spatial relations between the air and the bird, the air is attributed qualities of rolling, level, steady, and spatial

permanence--it is underneath him air; air that is always under the power and control of the Falcon. Combined with riding of, these qualities attributed to the air are the same qualities we could attribute to the back of a mount. Thus, the metaphoric image of the horseman (Falcon) and his mount (air) is created syntactically. By attributing these qualities to the air by syntactic means, Hopkins forces us to rethink how we see the world through language. The contribution of the syntax here is conceptual.

It should be clear from these illustrations that syntax can be an important tool for the poet. But it should also be clear that syntax need not be "wildly" deviant or unduly complex in order to be distinctive. Rather, poets make expressive choices from the many alternative patterns language presents for constructing sentences. They can exploit the sense of syntax as a form in itself by playing with the way sentence parts are arranged spatially or the way they follow each other temporally. Poets also play upon our "unconscious" expectations about sentence units (i.e., phrases, clauses, sentences), their syntactic functions, and the meanings which reside in their usage. And, they can play upon the expectations which any word raises about the word classes and syntactic functions of the words that follow it. This is what Nowotny means when she suggests that syntax controls the order in which impressions are received and conveys the mental relations behind the sequences of words. And yet, because there is no discussion of the role of syntax in the introductory literature on poetry, we leave our students at a loss to appreciate and to understand the aesthetic (literary) significance syntax can have. We need not be versed in the subtleties of syntactic theory to appreciate poetic syntax; we need only to keep an eye to form and to sharpen our "grammatical wits."

Syntax and Expressive Choice

For our purposes syntax can be defined simply as the ordering of words

and groups of words into what we normally call grammatical and meaningful sentence patterns. In general, the principal elements that make up the basic English sentence pattern are subject plus verb, followed optionally by object, indirect and direct, complement, and/or adverbial, in that order (S→SV(Oi)(Od)-(C)(A)).⁹ But the sentences we use tend to be more complex than this pattern suggests. We can amend this pattern in any number of ways. We can change the order of elements in the pattern, and we can add words and groups of words to each of the elements as long as they relate grammatically. The most obvious ways we do this are with the placement of modifiers, of restrictive or non-restrictive phrases, prepositional phrases, and so on. We can coordinate words, phrases, and sentences, and we can subordinate them. We can delete items that are either obvious in the sentence pattern or repetitious. We can use either active or passive voice, and we can invert the pattern by either moving elements in the pattern or by special constructions, such as cleft structures. There are any number of ways we can add to, subtract from, and rearrange the items of the basic sentence pattern. This flexibility gives us an "expressive choice" about how we can say things.

Poets take advantage of this flexibility. But in making their expressive choices poets also play upon the character and location of sentence elements; they play upon the inherent effects that arise because of the different ways sentence elements can be combined. One way, then, to think about how poets use syntax is to consider the choices poets make against a more normal alternative for "saying" the same thing. For instance, consider these lines from Donne:

On a huge hill,
Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and he that will
Reach her, about must, and about must go:

("Satire III" ll. 79-81)

Donne wants to convey the difficulties we encounter and must overcome if we are to reach Truth. His syntactic choices enact this. To see this we need only compare these lines to a more normal prose version.

Truth stands on a huge, cragged, and steep hill,
and he that will reach her must go about and about.

This version of the lines does not have the syntactic impediments we feel from Donne's lines. Donne creates the feel of impediment with syntactic inversion, displacement, and near parallel repetition.

Donne fronts the adverbial prepositional phrase and at the same time postposes two of the modifiers of the prepositional object hill. The fronting gives focal prominence to the *hill* and so marks it for special emphasis. This emphasis creates a syntactic delay in getting to the subject of the first clause, Truth. Donne then plays with the syntactic functions of the postposed adjectives, Cragged and steep. As Quirk et al. note, we usually regard postposed adjectives as reduced relative clauses--"[which is] cragged and steep."¹⁰ Here, the reduced clause is nonrestrictive and so set off by commas in a parenthetic relation. But as Quirk et al. also point out, we tend to postpose modifiers when we do not want them to be taken for granted and when we want their role as a specific identifier to receive emphasis.¹¹ The result is that the parenthetic relation is given a separate tone unit from the rest of the sentence, and in the lines from Donne, this gives the adjectives prosodic emphasis. The syntactic pace of the line becomes rough and irregular, like the rough irregular terrain of the hill on which "Truth stands."

In the last line, Donne displaces one of the prepositional adverbials, about, adds a modal auxiliary connotative of compulsion, and inverts the normal order of these elements (modal--adverbial-->adverbial--modal; modal--verb--adverbial-->adverbial--modal--verb). The syntax is twisted around, entwined. The near parallel repetition emphasizes this by syntactically twisting twice.

This twisting impedes our movement through the line. It suggests both structurally and temporally the twisted way up the huge hill. Donne, then, syntactically renders the difficult way in which Truth is approached.

Because of their character, Donne's syntactic choices, while effective, are clearly obvious. Poets can be much more subtle. For instance, consider the following poem by Williams.

As the cat
climbed over
the top of

the jamcloset
first the right
forefoot

carefully
then the hind
stepped down

into the pit of
the empty
flowerpot

('Poem')

At first glance the syntax seems regular enough. Williams, though, skillfully plays the temporal adverbial clause against the syntactic agents of the sentence and the postponement of the verb to create syntactic focus and generate syntactic suspension.

The initial phrase of the poem, "As the cat/climbed over/the top of/the jamcloset," is a temporal adverbial clause, here as an adjunct. Temporal adverbial clauses express time relationships between events. This particular clausal pattern, "As the ...," expresses a relationship of simultaneity or the co-occurrence of two or more events. Here the two simultaneous events are the cat's climbing and the movement of the cat's feet. In other words, the cat's climbing over the jamcloset occurs at the same time but is looked on as somehow separate from the movement of the cat's feet. But as Quirk et al. note, the

temporal clause indicates an event that is given or assumed within the context of the sentence,¹² and the given in these lines is the cat's climbing. The effect of this syntactic play focuses us telescopically on the cat's feet.

Williams reinforces this focus in a rather interesting way. He syntactically separates the movement of the cat's feet from our sense of the cat as the agent who causes his feet to move. He does this by promoting the cat's forefoot and hind into agents themselves by substituting the definite article, the, for the expected possessive pronoun, his, her(s), or its. Instead of the cat placing (stepping) first "his" (her, its) right forefoot and then "his" hind foot down, Williams turns the feet into independent agents, capable of their own action, their own movement by using the definite article ("the right forefoot . . . then the hind stepped down"). Williams, then, creates two simultaneous events out of one, and pressures us to look at one of them--the movement of the feet.

It is in the movement of the feet that Williams sees the "Poem," and he generates this poem for us with ellipsis and subsequent postponement of the verb. We normally would expect the verb, stepped down, to come after the first agent:¹³

First the right forefoot carefully (stepped down)
then the hind(foot) stepped down.

Normal ellipsis would delete the verb in the second clause to eliminate the redundancy of repeating the verb.

First the right forefoot carefully stepped down
then the hind.

Deleting the verb suspends the syntax, "hangs it up in the air," if you will, because of the "gap" created by the unusual word order.

First the right forefoot carefully then
the hind stepped down.

This in turn suspends us. Our expectations are for the verb which completes the sense of what the right forefoot carefully does, and our expectations get

"hung up." This is quite effective. We are suspended "in the air" by the form of the syntax and our frustrated expectations. We feel almost precariously balanced by the syntax and our expectations held up from getting to the verb. This feel of syntactic suspension is iconic of the precarious yet balanced movement of the cat's feet as first one, then the other steps down into the flowerpot.

There are any number of ways that poets can take advantage of syntax. What the analyses here are intended to illustrate is that despite the great variety of ways in which poets can utilize syntax, our understanding and subsequent appreciation rest on considering a poet's syntactic choices against the background of unwritten alternatives. Thinking about a poet's syntactic choices is inherently comparative. Naturally, the comparisons in these analyses are partial because the poems have been considered only against the syntax of what we call normal, unpretentious prose. Yet, to introduce students to what poets add to their works with their syntactic choices we need do no more than this. By placing a poet's use of syntax against our sense of everyday syntactic use we do more than re-order the syntax into a more normal, more understandable form. We can bring to students' attention that just as there are different ways of expressing the same idea with syntax, there are different effects that inhere in those ways. Thus, for example, to appreciate how Donne's choice to twist his syntax takes on aesthetic value depends on our understanding of the normal order of those particular features, and the normal effect of that order. Likewise, to appreciate Williams's choice to use the definite article instead of the personal pronoun depends on our understanding of how both of those elements are normally used. With this fundamental comparative approach we can begin to reveal to students how poets exploit syntactic features and how those features take on aesthetic saliency within the context of their poems.

The Problem of Form and Syntactic Features

What we reveal with this comparative approach is that there are any number of ways that poets can play upon the flexibility of syntactic structures to further the aesthetic aims of a text. But this same flexibility is also the greatest dilemma literary educators face in introducing students to the aesthetic use of syntax. We can sense this problem from the illustrations already presented. Poets can play off of the appropriate use of a syntactic structure for its unique function or meaning that resides in its usage (e.g., Eberhart, Williams). They can play with the order of elements to change their normal syntactic prominence (e.g., Eberhart, Donne). They can generate patterns from syntactic repetition (e.g., Eberhart) or alter normal grammatical patterns with deletion (e.g., Williams). They can deviate from syntactic rules and order, straining selectional and collational restrictions (e.g., Hopkins) and distorting the order of elements (e.g., Donne). In a word, poets can take advantage of every way the grammar allows to generate sentences and any way they need to to deviate from the grammar.

Yet this only points to the grammatical ordering of sentence elements. Poets can exploit other levels to be found in syntax. For instance, syntax has "shape." As Richard Cureton has noted, syntax can be seen as both an object and an event.¹⁴ Sentences have size, boundaries, and centers. Sentence parts can be arranged symmetrically or asymmetrically, balanced or imbalanced; they can be juxtaposed or separated (e.g., Crane, Donne, Williams). As events, sentences have beginnings, middles, and ends. Sentence parts have duration. Some are long, some short. They can move at different paces, some moving slowly, some quickly. They can accelerate and decelerate or impede pace (e.g., Donne). They can form temporal patterns parallel to spatial patterns--elements can be temporally parallel, juxtaposed, or separated (e.g., Crane, Eberhart, Williams).

And, as we will see later, together these features can be either static or dynamic.

The kinds of things that poets can do with syntax and the aesthetic effects they can produce are extremely diverse, perhaps more so than any other aspect of the poetic use of language. But unlike those other aspects (especially those discussed in the pages of this dissertation), we cannot find a fixed correlation among syntactic features, forms or patterns, and syntactic aesthetic effects. For instance, in Chapter II we found a fairly stable relationship between the articulatory features of sound and the different types of sound color. The qualities of sound features are concrete and fairly constraining to the poet. Thus to introduce students to what poets can do with sound features, we can proceed easily from the structure of sound features to the color of sound features and then to their aesthetic uses. But this is not the case with syntax. Consider repetition. In the lines from Eberhart the syntactic repetition contributed to the aesthetic significance of the poem on at least two levels. First, because of where it occurs syntactically, the repetition prolongs the focal subject of the cleft sentence and postpones our getting to the main verb. This helps to create a sense of expectancy. Second, the repetition creates a sense of abundance, in part because of the usage meaning carried by the particular prepositional complement, About the. But repetition need not create either a feeling of postponement or a sense of abundance. Consider these lines from Wordsworth.

And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
 A motion and a spirit, that impels

All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

("Tintern Abbey" ll. 93-102)

These lines consist of one sentence: subject (I), verb (have felt), an object (A presence) modified by three parallel restrictive noun clauses (that disturbs me . . .; Whose dwelling is . . .; that impels . . .), and an apposition of presence (A motion and a spirit) also modified by a restrictive noun clause. As H. G. Widdowson notes, each of these clauses is structurally equivalent to the other, and, with the apposition, each "represents an attempt to capture an elusive sensation which is both a presence and a sense, both a motion and a spirit, an experience which is compounded of all these and at the same time manifested through each of them."¹⁵ Within the repetition of each structure is the embedded repetition of elements which suggests the character of the image the poet is trying to manifest. Compounded, these "multiple" repetitions render different aspects of the feeling of the presence and the features of each aspect.

It is the second and third clauses which are central to our concern here. Within both we find repetition of equivalent and near equivalent structures. The second noun clause is a restrictive genitive clause, and the aspect of the feeling of the presence it manifests is place. (The first noun clause is adjectival, describing the qualities of feeling the presence.) Within the clause five noun phrases are repeated--all are equivalent complements to the subject of the clause, dwelling. The equivalence of each phrase suggests the equivalence in the value of each. Thus, we find the feeling of the presence to be dwelling equally in the setting sun, the ocean, the air, the sky, and man. But the nature of the restrictive genitive clause adds a curious character to this sense of place. First, whose is a possessive relative pronoun and its usage suggests the identifying of an antecedent, here the feeling of the presence, by limiting that antecedent's identity through possession. Second, this sense

of identification is heightened by the nature of restrictive clauses, used to modify antecedent in order to provide unique identification. The nature of the clause and the repetition within it create an interesting tension. Wordsworth, on one hand, uses a restrictive genitive clause to get somehow at an aspect of feeling essential to the character of the presence--here a unique "feel" from the sense of its place. But his use of repetition suggests that this aspect cannot be either described or delineated; its nature is omnipresent and cannot be pinned down to one place.

Wordsworth follows this same pattern in the apposition in the eighth line and the adjective clause that follows. A motion and a spirit is appositional to A presence, re-characterizing it. The ninth line again repeats equivalent noun phrases, here objects within a restrictive noun clause. In the third noun clause the aspect Wordsworth is trying to characterize is the force of the presence, its agentive qualities. But again the tension arises because this force impels everything. Repetition works against the nature of the restrictive clause. This is conceded in the last line. The presence can be felt, but it cannot be characterized. It dwells in all things; it impels all thinking (feeling) things and objects of thought, and rolls through all things.

Repetition in these lines has a different effect entirely from what we found in the lines from Eberhart. Wordsworth plays the nature of restrictive clauses against repetition. As Widdowson points out, these lines present "a simple proposition: 'I have felt X' and the nine lines which follow explore the ways in which this X might be expressed."¹⁶ What the tension between the restrictive clauses and the embedded repetition reflects is the struggle Wordsworth finds in expressing this X. In trying to suggest the character of the presence he faces trying to express that something he feels as the ineffable in all experience and thought. The play of the restrictive clauses against the

repetition, then, reflects that the very language itself does not provide the poet a way to express that image of the presence. Here, syntactic repetition adds to the emotive intensity of the poem by helping to render the poet's struggle to express what he cannot, in spite of his knowledge of it.

In looking at how repetition contributes to the lines from Eberhart and Wordsworth we find at least six factors, none of which is easily reducible, which we need to consider if we are to explain these poets' use of repetition to our students. Briefly, we need to consider what sentence features, or sentences, are repeated; how are these repeated features related to each other and to other parts of the sentence or sentences; what are the usage meanings (semantic associations) which reside in the repeated features; how do those repeated usage meanings relate to the sentential environment; what do the lexical elements contribute within the repeated features, and how does the poetic context within which these repeated features occur affect our sense of what a poet might be saying with his use of repetition? These are a few of the variables we need to consider, and they may not be the only ones. For instance, we also need to consider the spatial and temporal qualities of repetition, qualities Eberhart appears to make use of to help create structural expectancy but are of no concern in the lines from Wordsworth. The effects that poets can achieve with repetition, then, depend upon what sentence features and qualities poets choose to exploit from the alternatives syntax presents and what they are trying to express with it.

What we find with repetition is that as a pattern it foregrounds certain sentence features, but as a literary concept it does not provide a basis to explain what those features are or what they contribute to a poem. In the illustrations presented here we have seen that repetition can help to create a sense of expectancy, a sense of abundance, and tension. This is by no means a

complete list, but, as we have seen also, these effects can be achieved by syntactic means other than repetition. Moreover, the factors we need to consider to appreciate the effects of repetition are those we need to appreciate the effects of any expressive use of syntax. Together they outline the basis of the comparative approach discussed above. We seem to find ourselves back at the point where we began.

Another View of Syntactic Form

In his study Syntax in English Poetry 1870-1930, William Baker offers one of the few attempts to come to grips with the problem of syntactic form in poetry.¹⁷ While his work is primarily a comparative study of thirty poets in order to reveal both the continuity and change in poetic style between 1870 and 1930, the outline of his method is instructive for our concerns here.

Baker asserts that while poets can arrange their syntax in any number of different ways, only a few patterns occur with enough frequency to warrant attention. For Baker, only four patterns matter. First is what Baker labels as the "norm," or regular sentences. He defines this as a regular sentence, with "a string of words of appropriate character in their customary locations."¹⁸ By this we should take him to mean the general pattern where subject precedes verb, verb precedes object, and so on. Variations from this norm occur when poets either rearrange, add, or delete words. Baker categorizes three primary ways poets vary from the norm: dislocation, elaboration, and fragmentation. He defines dislocation as a shift in the standard order of a sentence's basic elements. This includes modifying elements that are displaced from their normal position beside or after the element(s) they modify and/or the interruption of standard word order by parenthetical statements.¹⁹ Elaboration is the change in the character of a sentence when an unusual number of word groups with the same sentential character are joined into a single sentence.²⁰ This has less to do

with the length of a sentence than it does with the compounding (repetition) of elements, such as the addition of verbs, the coordination or subordination of clauses, or the addition of an extended series of nouns, noun phrases, modifiers, or objects. Fragmentation is simply the deletion of words from a sentence that creates an unusual word grouping. Usually, this involves the deletion of verbs creating what normally we would call a fragmented sentence.²¹ But fragmentation can occur by abbreviating clauses, omitting subjects, and deleting other sentence elements.

We have seen already some of the syntactic variations that appear to make up these categories in the analyses above. What we need to ask, though, is whether Baker's categories can help us to deal with the problem of syntactic form and aesthetic effects. Baker means his categories to be descriptive of general syntactic schemes. And this is important. There are any number of expressive choices poets can make among syntactic alternatives. The only real constraint we seem to find is that a poet's choice does not interfere with the communicative function of the syntax. To step over this boundary, a poet would create his own private syntax and vocabulary.²² Pedagogically, then, any scheme that would help us to sort out these choices, to categorize them would appear to be useful. But like other literary categories we have encountered, these categories do little, or nothing, either to explain the effects of syntactic variations classified under each category or to delineate the aesthetic uses of these variations. For example:

He stirred his Velvet Head
Like one in danger, Cautious,
I offered him a Crumb

Dickinson ("A Bird Came Down the Walk--")

These lines are syntactically regular except for the parenthetic, Cautious. We could list this as an example of dislocation. But this gives

us no insight into what the aesthetic (literary) relevance, if any, of the parenthetical might be. In these lines the parenthetical adjective creates an interesting syntactic ambiguity. It can be linked with the sentence before it: we see the movement of the bird's head as an act of caution, a movement that tries to anticipate the danger in the surroundings. It can also be linked with the sentence after: we see the offer of the crumb as a cautious act, not to frighten but to befriend the bird somehow. The effect of the parenthetical is to "fuse" the sentences syntactically. This fusion captures the quality of the moment. We oscillate between the two contexts and the syntactic fusion binds them into a larger, more ambivalent one. The effect suggests the fragility of the momentary encounter between the bird and the persona, characterized by caution that binds the two but will not allow them to meet.

Here is another example from Frost.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
 And sorry I could not travel both
 And be one traveler, long I stood
 And looked down one as far as I could

("The Road Not Taken")

These lines are also "dislocated." In the second line the adjective, sorry, is fronted and the copula (be) is deleted. Because in this instance sorry refers to an emotional state (feeling) its normal position is predicative-- here, "I was sorry." In the third line the adjective, long, is fronted from its normal adverbial position after the verb--"I stood long." The effects here are trivial. These two dislocations do little more than preserve the meter and perhaps add rhetorical emphasis.

The value of Baker's categories is limited because they offer us no explanatory means to explore the various aesthetic effects that can be achieved with syntactic form, or a means to determine whether a particular syntactic strategy is aesthetically relevant or not. But the value of Baker's categories

suffers on another account. Their descriptive strength may not be as strong as these two illustrations suggest. We can see this by looking at the following lines from Auden.

There head falls forward, fatigued at evening,
 And dreams of home,
 Waving from window, spread of welcome,
 Kissing of wife under a single sheet;
 But waking sees
 Bird-flocks nameless to him, through doorway voices
 Of new men making another love.

("The Wanderer")

How are we to categorize these lines according to Baker's scheme? The first four lines seem to be fragments because they appear to lack a coherent subject. We sense this because of the lack of both possessive pronouns and articles. Head, for instance, strikes us as an odd subject. Without either possessive pronouns or articles it stands awkwardly alone, seeming to lack coherent subject reference. Lines three and four consist of three phrases that seem to stand in apposition to home in line two. But each phrase lacks pronouns and articles. Each phrase feels wooden, fragmented, and without coherent reference (dreamlike) because of the missing elements. The phrases also seem disconnected, yoked together only by sentential placement. It would seem, then, that these lines are fragments.

But we can also look at these lines as dislocated. We sense this in lines three and four, if only because they "feel" out of sorts. Something seems to be missing from each of the phrases which creates the sense that the word order is not quite right. This might be from the missing articles, the change from the participle to noun in spread creating a rather awkward phrase, and the lack of any pronouns. This sense of dislocation is reinforced in the last two lines. The deletion, perhaps, of "hears" in the sixth line disrupts the parallel clausal structure creating an intriguing ambiguous image by

joining the two clauses into a clause and prepositional adverbial phrase.

These lines could be dislocated fragments, or fragmented dislocations. Regardless of their character, however, they also involve repetition of parallel and near parallel phrases patterned into one sentence. And so, these lines are also elaborated.

It is not simply that these lines prove difficult to categorize. Even if we were to accept the rather awkward description of them as elaborated, dislocated fragments, or whatever, we have to ask ourselves what we gain from such a description; what do these categories add up to, and what do they explain to us. This is a critical problem with Baker's scheme. It is not whether we can place lines into certain descriptive categories that should be our concern, but whether the descriptive categories explain the nature of the features which allow us to put lines into one of these categories and the stylistic import of those features. Let us look again at the lines from Auden.

The important features in these lines have been hinted at already--the lack of possessive (and personal) pronouns and articles, and the apparent missing verb in the sixth line. The syntax becomes disjointed, but this is only part of the effect. For instance, in the first line the lack of a possessive pronoun creates an interesting synecdoche. Rather than "his head," head is promoted into its own subject. The effect is twofold. First, it gives us a sense that head is independent of the person. We sense this because without either a possessive pronoun, or article, head lacks any specific or unique reference. This raises the second effect. Head becomes grammatically generalized. In other words, at this place and moment (There) any head falls forward. What we begin to feel is a loss of a sense of self-identity. This is reinforced through the lines. Window, spread of welcome, wife all are grammatically generalized, without specific reference to either place or person.

Their role as identifying a particular home is undercut. The effect is heightened because the three phrases from which these words come stand as appositional aspects of what makes up dreams of home.

This lost sense of self-identity, of who the wanderer is or where he belongs, is twisted in the last two lines. Without the verb "hears" we have an ambiguous synaesthetic image--we see voices as a doorway through which we look. The image is strangely apt. The syntactic frame is built on a prepositional adverbial of orientation. It pressures us to see voices as a point of reference from which the speaker is standing and trying to orient himself to the world about him. But the voices do not provide that orientation. They are voices of a different language which make the world strange and nameless. (It is interesting to note that the birds themselves may not be strange to the wanderer, but become strange when seen through the "glasses" of a different language.) Here the lost sense of identity is intensified by a syntactic expectation for orientation and the frustration of that expectation by a context suggesting that orientation itself is lost. At this point the wanderer is totally alone.

Auden's syntactic choices help to foster this sense of being alone, of being so "far out" that images of the familiar cannot be made concrete. The disjointed syntax helps to contribute texture. But the fascinating emotive tension results from the distinctive features that make the syntax disjointed. His syntactic scheme frustrates our sense of identity that the collage of images would normally evoke. By omitting possessive pronouns, articles, and the verb Auden captures the moment when the wanderer loses the sense of himself and a coordinated view of life.

The problem that the Auden poem poses for a strategy like Baker's is not unusual. More often than not we find that more than one of his categories can

apply to the syntax of a poem. And even if we do guess which category to apply, we still face the problem of describing the import of the syntactic features. But if this approach proves problematic with poems whose syntactic play stands out its weakness becomes fully evident with poems such as the following from Frost.

Then the boy saw all--
 Since he was old enough to know, big boy
 Doing a man's work, though a child at heart--
 He saw all spoiled. "Don't let him cut my hand off--
 The doctor, when he comes. Don't let him, sister!"
 So. But the hand was gone already.

("Out, Out--")

Baker's categories simply do not apply to these lines. And again, this is not unusual. The syntax of many poems appears to be unremarkable, not patterned or manipulated in any striking manner. Nonetheless, the syntax of these poems can be quite effective, especially when we consider that poets can choose other ways to phrase their syntax. But a scheme such as Baker's leaves us at a loss to describe the syntactic character of these lines, let alone the import of the syntactic features. The lines from Frost provide an excellent illustration of this.

What draws our attention in these lines is So. It seems to be a pivot in the poem upon which the pathos of the scene turns. The phrase works on two levels. As an adjective So reinforces the factual sense of the events, as if to say that these were the boy's words--"It was so." It also carries the subtle hint of indifference that seems to run through the poem, the matter-of-factness of the rural accident--"These things happened so." This is reinforced by the punctuation which separates So from both the line before it and the sentence following it.

But the sense of the adjective is counterpoised by So as an adverbial conjunct, a counterpoise also heightened by the punctuation. So is a result

conjunct," used to introduce the consequences or results of what was said before in a discourse and to integrate those consequences into the structure of the sentence or phrasing. The period stops this and is followed by another conjunct, But. The implication of But is that something is contrary to our expectations or that what follows the conjunct is somehow contrastive with what came before it. It is with the clash of these conjuncts that Frost builds the pathos of the moment. Our expectations start in one direction because of the "result conjunct," but are cut short by the full stop. We begin again, just as abruptly, by the sentence initial conjunct which leads us in a contrary direction. Our expectations are startled; the expected is suddenly unexpected. This clash helps to build a sense of futility, not simply because of the uncertainty but of the helplessness in the face of unpredictable events. It is not anything "deviant" in the syntax which startles our expectations; it is how Frost plays the appropriate use of two syntactic choices against each other.

What we learn from Baker is that if we try to organize our pedagogical discussions of syntax in terms of structural categories we cannot convey to students a full picture of the contribution of syntax to the aesthetics of poetic texts. The problem is twofold. First, poets need not pattern syntax in any particular manner for it to be compelling. How they choose to make their syntax "deviate" from the "norm" may be no more than a standard usage variation. Because of the diversity of ways that poets can work syntax, any structural approach, by necessity, is oversimplified. Second, the choice among syntactic alternatives may rest on any number of different aesthetic aims. On one hand, within any structural category we face inevitable aesthetic diversity. On the other hand, syntactic forms from different categories, while structurally diverse, may affect basically the same aesthetic functions and effects. These problems break down any aesthetic unity we would hope to find

among categories within a structural approach, and question its pedagogical usefulness.

A Syntactic Checklist

Nevertheless, the analyses offered here do suggest that despite the great variety of ways in which poets can use syntax and the different aesthetic effects syntax can generate, we can provide students with a reasonable guide with which to look at the relationships among the forms of syntax, aesthetic effects, and our aesthetic responses. These guidelines are implicit in the analyses, and they are built around three parameters.

The first parameter is the expressive potential of syntax. As was pointed out above, poets make use of different features inherent in syntax. We can generalize these features into three levels or dimensions. Richard Cureton has done just this in his study on the poet E. E. Cummings, and his levels of syntax as an expressive form are useful to us here.²³

On one level syntax is a "semantic form." What this means is that the meaning of a sentence involves more than the summing up of the meanings of the words in the sentence. Words are sentence components; they are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and the like. Within these classes the items themselves have different qualities. Nouns can be proper or common, count or mass, verbal or deverbal; verbs can be transitive or intransitive, finite or infinite, static or dynamic; and verbs also carry tense and aspect. Adjectives can be predicative or attributive; gradable or nongradable; inherent or noninherent. Some words are grammatical only, used to convey or establish the relationships between items, such as determiners, demonstratives, subordinators, and so on. These are the components we use to build noun and verb phrases, adjectival and adverbials, relative clauses, and the other elements of sentence structures. Together, all these elements carry usage meanings. How they are arranged in

sentences defines important semantic relationships among the meanings of words. There is a qualitative semantic difference, for instance, between the active voice, with its agent-action-goal structure, and the passive, in which active subject becomes passive agent. Phrases and clauses can be fronted or embedded within other clauses affecting how pieces of contributory information accumulate in the sentence. They can be coordinated or subordinated placing syntactic constituents on the same level or creating a hierarchy of relationships. The choices of syntactic arrangements involve qualitatively different semantic entailments, and poets exploit these entailments for their aesthetic purposes.

On another level, syntax is a "formal structure." As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson point out, "Writing a sentence down allows us to conceptualize it more readily as a spatial object with words in a linear order."²⁴ Sentences are not simply a collection of words; they are composed of hierarchically ordered linguistic units. We know when looking at a sentence which words, phrases, or clauses occupy initial position; whether sentence constituents, such as subject and verb (phrase) are close to each other or far apart, or whether the sentence tracks outward from the main verb. Poets can create direct links between the form of a sentence and its content by playing with this linear order to fashion syntactic shapes. They can spread elements out or crowd them together; suspend elements through deletion or build them up through repetition; serialize features or twist and invert them; balance features or enclose them. By exploiting formal, compositional features, poets can use syntax to create "spatial metaphors" to produce the effects they desire.

Finally, syntax is a "temporal form." A sentence is not static; it is an event where words, phrases, and clauses succeed one another in time. We do not take in sentences all at once; we progress through them. From the beginning of a sentence we make, as Stanley Fish would have it, "anticipatory

adjustments."²⁵ Because of what we know as readers about well-formed sentences, how sentence constituents are ordered generates expectations about what follows after them. This involves not only our anticipation of getting to major sentence constituents, such as the subject, the verb, and possible objects or complements, but also our anticipation about what follows those constituents. Poets can play with the expectations we have about finished syntactic forms. They can delay our getting to major sentence constituents or interrupt our progress through a sentence. They can bring us quickly to the completion of sentential units or sentences themselves, or they can prolong them. They can lead us in one direction creating an anticipation for one sentential outcome and then surprise or frustrate us by finishing in another direction. Poets use this temporal level to suit their aesthetic needs by how they make us unravel the events of their sentences.

The second parameter is based in the organizing principles used to discuss syntactic structures in the analyses above. To think about a poet's syntactic choices is inherently comparative--we look at what is written against unwritten alternatives. In this way we bring to attention the different effects that inhere in different syntactic alternatives. It is from this comparative strategy that we can make some useful generalizations about the syntactic patterns to be found in poetry.

One of the things we discovered was that poets need not make their syntax wildly distorted in order to make it compelling. Poets may only exploit the differences to be found in standard usage variations from the basic norm (S V(O)(C)). On one level, then, we can talk about syntactic patterns as "nondeviant." On this level a poet's expressive choice among syntactic alternatives is based on the appropriate use of a pattern for its unique features. He may exploit it for its semantic implications, such as the fronting of

temporal adverbials, or for its linearization, playing upon the pattern's spatial ordering and/or temporal flow, such as parenthetics, branching structures, extrapositions, and the like.

On a second level we found that poets can repeat syntactic features to achieve their aesthetic ends. We can talk about this level in terms of "statistical deviation." Here poets cluster or group together syntactic features into patterns we usually would not find in the norm of workaday prose. Our immediate sense of this is nouns and noun phrases and/or verbs (phrases) strung together into elaborate series or catalogs--what we usually refer to as verbal repetition. But verbal repetition can take many forms. Poets may simply reiterate a word, playing upon its different roles and functions until it becomes a pervasive motif. They may only repeat a relevant grammatical unit, such as a phrase or a clause, or repeat a sequence of grammatical units, such as a noun followed by a prepositional phrase. Or, they may create a pattern of parallel sentences. As Leech notes, "The exact nature of the unit is irrelevant; what is important . . . is that the repetition should be felt to occur at the beginning of equivalent pieces of language, with which there is an invariant part (verbal repetition itself) and a variant part (the rest of the unit)."²⁶ Poets play upon these patterns to bind or contrast meanings, to create liturgical rhythms which can add emotive intensity, or, as we have seen, to create a sense of abundance, spatially as well as conceptually.

Finally, we can look at syntactic structure as "categorically deviant." On this level poets fracture syntactic structures. They strain syntactic order, deviate from grammatical restrictions, and violate selectional restrictions. Their deviations may be as simple as playing with the order of prenominal modifiers or the preposing of postmodifying phrases. They may fragment or dislocate sentence elements. At the extreme, poets can disrupt the

syntactic structure entirely, making it appear as something of a "word salad." Their aim may be to create purposeful conceptual confusion or to make us look at things differently by changing how the syntactic structure organizes our sense of the world. They may disjoint syntactic patterns themselves to convey disjointed experience, or to set up expectations and abruptly frustrate them or lead us up garden paths. The crucial point is that poets play their expressive deviations against what makes up normal utterances in order to challenge our customary responses to syntax.

From these two parameters we can begin to raise the kinds of questions that will help students look at the effects poets achieve by the way they order words.²⁷ We can focus on the sentence level, for instance, with the following:

- Are thematically related words juxtaposed or separated? (temporal/spatial, juxtaposition/separation)
- Are phrases and clauses unusually balanced or regularly inverted? (symmetry/asymmetry, inversion)
- Does the spatial or temporal order of events conveyed by the words mime the order of events in the world, the perceptions of the speaker, or some movement the sentence refers to? (chronological iconicity, psychological iconicity, physical iconicity, movement)
- Are the sentences unusually long or short? Do they contain embedded phrases and modifiers, or are words and phrases abnormally repeated? (continuation/cessation, complexity/simplicity, regular reiteration, substance, emphasis)
- Are the sentence structures interrupted in any way, or are syntactically expected words omitted or replaced by unexpected words? (interruption, suspension, surprise)

We can look at the relationships between sentences.

- Are sentence boundaries broken or blurred so that two sentences share constituents? (fusion)
- Are the ends of sentences omitted in deference to the beginnings of following sentences? (intrusion)
- Are sentences repeated with only minor changes? (addition, subtraction)

Finally, we can look at the general texture that poets create.

- Is there a distinctive syntactic texture in the poem?
(prominence)
- Is the texture appropriate or inappropriate? (relevance)
- Is the texture local or pervasive? (scope)
- Does the texture remain constant through the poem or
does it change? (development)

The list of questions here is by no means complete nor should we expect that they all can be applied to an individual poem. They are suggestive, however, of how we should organize our discussions of poetic syntax. The problem which we encounter in trying to approach poetic syntax through form, a structural perspective, is that the diversity of syntactic alternatives does not lend itself to workable categories. Added to this is the problem that the aesthetic diversity within any structural category, and across categories, undercuts their usefulness. But the questions which we can generate from these two parameters help us to overcome these problems by providing us with a different perspective--an aesthetic perspective. These questions focus on the types of things which poets can do with syntax. They look at how poets generate different effects with syntax and provide us with a sense of "syntactic color." They orient us not simply toward structure but toward the important relationship between aesthetic effects and syntactic structure (form).

The Aesthetic Uses of Syntax

With these questions and the sense of "syntactic color" we derive from them, we find the third parameter: the aesthetic use of syntax. Syntax becomes compelling as poets shape its semantic, formal, and temporal features in their efforts to convey thoughts, emotions, and perceptions as precisely as possible. We have seen in the analyses already offered here that poets manipulate syntax to make us re-think how we look at things through syntax, to

generate different kinds of tension through expectation, anticipation, and surprise, and to render iconically themes and events. What this suggests is that we can discuss the uses of syntax in terms of the same aesthetic categories which have guided our discussions of sound features and meter and rhythm--conceptual, emotive, and perceptual.

Conceptual Effects

We are perhaps most familiar with how poets use syntax for conceptual effects. Parallelism, for instance, is one fairly common means. Here syntax is used like a frame to compare or contrast words and phrases by placing them in equivalent structural positions in syntactically parallel clauses or sentences. Syntactic ambiguity is another familiar means at a poet's command. As Empson has demonstrated, poets exploit a variety of syntactic means to present different appropriate semantic contexts within the same syntactic units. Poets can use words, phrases, or clauses to modify different clauses in a sentence in different ways; they can use verbs which can be read simultaneously as transitive and intransitive; they can place clauses so that they can be read as either the subject or the object of a sentence; they can use words which are contextually appropriate in one way as a line ends and appropriate in another as a new line begins, and so forth.²⁸ And as Brooke-Rose has shown in great detail, while most discussions of metaphor have been concerned with idea-content, the "how" of metaphor is based on the ways in which words are made to relate lexically and grammatically. She shows how poets use conventional syntactic phrasing with collocations we would normally consider unconventional or anomalous to redo lexical and grammatical meanings.²⁹ Finally, we are also familiar with audacious deviations, such as selectional restriction violations (i.e., Dylan Thomas's famous phrase "a grief ago"). This eccentric use of syntax lets poets coin new semantic complexes.

With each of these poets either reinforce or build thematic patterns in a poem. But it is important to note that parallelism, ambiguity, metaphor, and selectional restriction violations are not the only means available to a poet to create conceptual effects. They represent some of the more obvious ways that poets array lexical and grammatical meanings to build their themes. Poets are often more subtle, using their syntax to create a thematic stance or to affect thematic development. For instance,

Life contracts and death is expected
As in a season of autumn.
The soldier falls.

He does not become a three-days personage,
Imposing his separation,
Calling for pomp.

Death is absolute and without memorial,
As in a season of autumn,
When the wind stops,

When the wind stops and, over the heavens,
The clouds go, nevertheless,
In their direction.

Stevens ("The Death of a Soldier")

Samuel Keyser has pointed out that Stevens constructs a world in which the death of the soldier is as natural as the leaves that fall in autumn. But Keyser argues that just as we would not look for the initiator or agent in the death of a leaf, so Stevens urges us to see the death of the soldier. As Keyser has it, Stevens gives us "a timeless world without agency, a world in which events are inevitable and human agency is absent."³⁰ Keyser's point is that Stevens builds this world with his choice of nonagentive intransitive verbs, syntax in which the agents have been deleted, and the use of the timeless present tense.

Keyser notes that all the verbs in the poem, save two, are finite and that they fall into two categories. The verbs either can never take an agent (is, become, falls) or they can take an agent but do not in the poem (contracts, is

expected, stops, go). To appreciate this let us consider "The soldier falls." As Keyser explains, "the verb fall in line with the soldier falls describes an action that has happened to the subject but not an action the subject can bring about by his own instigation . . . its subject cannot be its agent."³¹ Instead, the subject has the affected role, typical of the role of the affected direct object--a participant which does not cause the action of the verb but is directly affected by it in some way. This pattern repeats in the verbs that can take agents. Contracts, stops, and go are syntactically ordered so that they describe actions that happen to the subjects. For instance, consider the difference between "the wind stops" and "Aeolus stops the wind." The difference between these two should be clear. Contracts, stops, and go can be either intransitive or transitive. Stevens exploits their intransitive qualities which requires syntactic patterns in which the subject is "affective" not "agentive." The result is that these verbs do not express "causative meanings."

The strategy is a bit different with is expected in line one, but the effect is the same. is expected is a passive verb phrase. Normally, transforming a sentence from active voice to passive involves the rearrangement of two clause elements and the addition of one. The active subject becomes passive agent coming after the verb phrase, the active object is moved into the grammatical subject position, and the passive agent is introduced by the preposition by. Passivization can only occur with transitive verbs. Thus we find

- i. John hit the ball.
- ii. The ball is hit by John.

But not

- i. John kneels.
- ii. *John kneels his body.
- iii. *His body is kneeled by John.

But in "death is expected" the passive agent is deleted. With the semantic subject of the line deleted no agent is conceived of; the line becomes a nonagentive

passive. Is expected takes on the same verbal syntactic quality as "is," the intransitive copula, plus subject complement. We are left with a semantic object, Death, as both syntactic and semantic subject, and any sense of semantic subject, and with it the sense of agency, is dissolved.

The two exceptions to this pattern are the nonfinite verbs Imposing and Calling, but they are found in a syntactic construction that affects their syntactic function. Syntactically, they are linked not to the subject of the sentence, He, but to the subject complement, personage. These verbs form participial clauses that post-modify personage (corresponding to restrictive relative clauses). There is no sense of syntactic agency from them. Rather, they are descriptive phrases.

The world presented through Stevens's syntactic choices has no (human) agency: it is a world where things occur but without an initiator, as if all events follow because of the nature of things. Against this sense of the absence of agency the tense of the verbs takes on importance. All the verbs are in the simple present tense. Keyser raises two points about this. First, "In English the means of expressing action developing through time is not the present tense but rather the present progressive tense."³² Thus, "Life contracts," "The soldier falls," "the wind stops," and "clouds go" do not describe ongoing action. Second, "the use of the simple present tense expresses general truths which, because they are always so, are timeless."³³ "Death is expected," and "Death is absolute and without memorial" express "truths" which are outside of time.

The soldier's death is timeless, without cause, within a world which is timeless and without agency. The pathos is paradoxical. In the world of the poem the soldier's death is a natural event not to be associated with an agent, but in its nature to be looked upon as natural as the turning of the seasons and the dying of the leaves. Stevens, through his play upon verbs, syntax, and

The burden on the reader is to keep sense of the contributory elements before he knows what they are contributing to. This would become especially problematic with a definition.³⁴ The inversion from normal order, then, creates a strong but constrained statement, and it creates the sense of "lust in action" as but a constrained moment.

The second definition returns to normal order--(thing to be defined, verb (to be), definition)--and this order permits considerable elaboration. Readers build up information cumulatively within the sentence directed by the main sentence stem. The second definition elaborates how we are led up to "lust in action," and how we are led from it. It is this which is the focus of the poem. Within this definition action is leaped over, and the present is subordinated to before and behind. The expansion of the second definition consumes the poem and parallels the way lust is said to consume life. The structure of the definitions, then, is a mimetic frame for the play of the poem's theme.

If the structure of the definitions provides a thematically mimetic frame for the poem's theme that lust consumes our life, the pattern of the clausal constituents which make up the second definition create the thematic play of the fitful, contrary nature of lust. These patterns should be fairly obvious. Within the second definition contradictory clause-groupings are joined creating antithetical parallelism. The result is a definition built from "contrasts-in-logic." This patterning forces the reader to perceive in lust the longing for the ecstatic and the self-contempt of the shameful as inseparably twisted together. This is accomplished in large part because the "present moment" as we would think of it is syntactically elided, and we are propelled into the oppositions of before and behind: Enjoyed-despised (l.5); Past reason hunted-Past reason hated (ll. 6-7); A bliss-a very woe (l.11). To get a better sense of this we can look at lines six and seven. The persona first begins at a time before action. But the

moment of action, while it is present, is presented as past with the past tense, had. Line seven is the affective response to the action had. Syntactically, then, action is presented as over, gone without us realizing it happening. But the before and the behind last far longer, divide us, and prevent us from the ordinary experience of the present. The sentential patterns create the conceptual intensification of the antithetical qualities of lust. But by eliding action they also blur the relation of thought to action, and this helps to intensify our sense of how lust distorts our lives--action, and so experience itself, is an unfulfilling instant caught amidst the irrational passion of anticipation and the remorse of contrition.

Much of the detail of the syntactic play only has been hinted at because the syntactic patterns are obvious. But enough has been discussed to make the point. Within the poem the pattern of the syntax plays an important thematic role. On one level, the pattern of the definitions mimetically structures the development of the themes. On another level, the antithetical parallelism arrays the lexical meaning of the words into a rather dynamic pattern. This pattern structures the development of thematic intensity by propelling us against the contradictory qualities of lust as part of the syntactic process of the sentence. Here then, syntax is exploited to affect thematic development (movement).

Emotive Effects

Sentences unfold as we read them. How they unfold as we read depends upon the order of their elements and the pace at which we move from one element to another. Poets can play upon these features to create emotive effects. For instance, the patterns of sentence elements create expectations about what elements will follow. Poets can play with the order of elements to set up expectations, frustrate them, or delay our satisfaction of them. We already have seen illustrated above, for instance, how poets can make use of cleft structures and

parenthetical either to postpone our getting to major sentence constituents or to separate them. The effect helps to build tension by playing upon our sense of "syntactic" anticipation. But poets can also surprise us by creating syntactic "twists," frustrating our expectations with unexpected turns in a sentence which demand that we re-read (and re-think) the beginnings of the sentence. Poets can also govern the pace at which sentences unfold. With inversions, post-modifying phrases, and repeated syntactic patterns poets can affect how we "move" through a sentence. They can lengthen phrases, interrupt them, or collapse phrases to slow down movement, create hesitancy, or speed up the pace. While poets use a variety of syntactic strategies to achieve these kinds of effects, the important point is that they achieve the effects of syntactic (emotive) tension by playing upon our syntactic/semantic expectations.

E. E. Cummings, for instance, uses syntax to startle and shock us into the dramatic pathos of a mouse's death in "Me Up At Does."

Me up at does
 out of the floor
 quietly Stare
 a poisoned mouse
 still who alive
 is asking What
 have I done that
 You wouldn't have

A prose translation can help us to appreciate what Cummings is trying to do.

Out of the floor a poisoned mouse who is still alive
 does quietly stare up at me asking "What have I done
 that you wouldn't have?"

The poem's odd syntax and lineation break the statement, isolating features for emphasis. The effect helps to evoke the feeling of guilt that the persona feels by the persona himself projecting the almost human indignation through the "eyes"

of the mouse. We sense this immediately because of the use of the objective personal pronoun Me. We use this pronoun when we are the recipient of an action or event we describe.

- i. Bill hit me.
- ii. He knows me.
- iii. It happened to me.

Me, the persona, is the recipient of both the stare and the question. But the dislocation of the syntax does more than the prose translation suggests--the syntax becomes an odd "objective correlative," it creates a sequence of events that evokes the perplexed pathos of the mouse's last question and the persona's self-condemnation in the face of it.

The broken syntax stutters with inversion, interruption, and jumbled word order, suggesting the persona's lost sense of composure in the face of the dying mouse. The poem begins with a startling collocation: objective pronoun--prepositional adverb--preposition. This collocation is self-conscious and disruptive. The pronoun strikes us as an odd sentence initial element, but it allows the persona to throw abnormal focus on himself. There is no verb (phrase) for the prepositional adverb to complete the meaning of, and the preposition is frustrated because its object, which would complete the "intended recipient" relation, has been made sentence initial. But more, there is no subject to establish a relation between a subject and the intended recipient of the subject's action. The collocation does give a sense of direction and relation pointed at a recipient objective pronoun, but it forces us into uncertainty about what that direction and relation are. The syntax shocks us because of its order and omission of subject and verb. This shock discomposes and disorients us; it forces us to feel the discomposing shock of the Me.

Against this sense of shocked discomposure, the verbal auxiliary, does, creates an emphatic anticipation. On one level, the auxiliary begins to place

the collocation within the context of a sentence by making us anticipate a main verb. This also raises our anticipation about the subject of the sentence. But the use of does also adds emphasis. For instance,

- i. He stares.
- ii. He does stare.

The auxiliary intensifies or emphasizes the verb. But in the poem we are left intensified with no verb as well as no subject. The line rattles us but at the same time the emotive anticipation throws us forward to sort things out.

But we can sort things out and regain our composure only as the syntax (and so the Me, the persona) begins to sort itself out after the initial shock. The word order of the second line is normal, but still frustrates us. We expect a verb but find an adverbial. But with it we begin to find focus--we can make sense of up. In the third and fourth lines we reach the verb, made emphatic because of the auxiliary, and the subject. The word order in these lines is also normal. Each of these lines isolates a major sentence constituent, and how they are made to follow one another creates an interesting "spatial bond," a bond which ties Me and the poisoned mouse, and helps to build the dramatic tension between the two. Syntactically, Me stands "above" the mouse and we follow the persona's gaze down toward the mouse as we work through the syntax. Semantically, this is reversed--the mouse's stare travels up (as does the question), and takes us upward with it. This binding, built on syntax which disconcerts us, sets the scene of the moment.³⁵

It is in the final four lines, however, that the poem's impact is felt. In the fifth line the inverted word order of the relative clause adds emphatic tension. The adjective, still, is fronted. This gives the adjective rhetorical emphasis and also reinforces our sense of being startled by melding the word's role as adjective and adverb. On one hand, the word carries the sense of motionlessness, the mouse lying still, in the grips of its own death. On the other

hand, the word carries the sense of "yet." The poisoned mouse, while motionless, is yet alive. This is followed by the fronting of the predicative adjective, alive, in front of the verb. The word order startles us as the mouse still being alive so startles the persona. This word movement fuses the verb into two contexts: the first is the simple present and emphasizes, because of its strange syntactic position, that the mouse is still alive. The second is the present progressive, and this throws us forward to the question.

The lines that make up the question are syntactically normal, and this has much to do with their evocative force. Because they are normal they become prominently foregrounded against the poem, and this heightens their pattern. The normal word and syntactic order also breaks the "spatial bond." Syntactically and semantically we are taken only from i to you. And finally, the structure of the question itself adds force because it is rhetorical. More precisely, it is a positive rhetorical question, one in which no negation occurs in the main clause: "What have I done." This structure is used to convey strong negative assertions: "I have done nothing." The shock of seeing the mouse still alive is wrenched by the mouse's question that strikes to the quick because of its forceful coherence against the discomposed syntax of the persona. The emotive drama of the poem, the shock, and the pathos that it evokes, are carried by these sequences of syntactic events.

Cummings uses syntax to take us unawares, to shock (surprise) us with the coherent pathos of his question against the discomposure of the syntax. Poets need not be as extravagant in their use of syntax to achieve their emotive aims. The point should not be lost because of the deviant nature of Cummings's syntax. Poets can use syntax itself to create unexpected twists, surprising us syntactically and semantically by playing upon what we normally expect from our interpretive experience of finished syntactic forms. But poets can use syntax for a

different emotive effect, one that neither creates syntactic tension through anticipation nor surprise with unexpected twists. Poets can focus on syntactic pace. For instance,

And if tonight my soul may find her peace
 in sleep, and sink in good oblivion,
 and in the morning wake like a new-opened flower
 then I have been dipped again in God, and new created.

5 And if, as weeks go round, in the dark of the moon
 my spirit darkens and goes out, and soft, strange gloom
 pervades my movements and my thoughts and words
 then I shall know that I am walking still
 with God, we are close together now the moon's in shadow.

10 And if, as autumn deepens and darkens
 I feel the pain of falling leaves, and stems that break in storm
 and trouble and dissolution and distress
 and then the softness of deep shadows folding, folding
 around my soul and spirit, around my lips
 15 so sweet, like a swoon, or more like the drowse of a low, sad song
 singing darker than the nightingale, on, on to the solstice
 and the silence of short days, the silence of the year, the shadow,
 then I shall know that my life is moving still
 with the dark earth, and drenched
 20 with the deep oblivion of earth's lapse and renewal.

And if, in the changing phases of man's life
 I fall in sickness and in misery
 my wrists seem broken and my heart seems dead
 and strength is gone, and my life
 25 is only the leavings of a life:

and still, among it all, snatches of lively oblivion, and snatches
 of renewal
 odd wintry flowers upon the withered stem, yet new, strange flowers
 Such as my life has not brought forth before, new blossoms of me--

then I must know that still
 30 I am in the hands of the unknown God,
 he is breaking me down to his own oblivion,
 to send me forth on a new morning, a new man.

D. H. Lawrence ("Shadows")

The basic pattern of the poem is fairly obvious. It consists of four verse paragraphs, each consisting of one "if-then" sentence. Each sentence has a time adverbial after the if which focuses each sentence on a different moment--the present, the near future, a season of the year, and the changing seasons of a

man's life. The initial and at the beginning of each sentence ties the sentences together into a "curious catalog." Each sentence elaborates the conditions in which the persona believes the experience of renewal will come from the experience of "oblivion." Together, the sentences build a "catalog" of affirming belief in the grips of the shadows of death. Finally, we cannot miss the expansion in the poem. Each time adverbial details a larger, more significant moment of time. Each conditional clause lays out scenarios more elaborate and profound than the previous one. And each concluding adverbial clause claims a stronger belief in the renewal which comes from the experience of oblivion.

It is not the semantic relationships these patterns establish, however, which give the poem its intensity; it is the movement of the syntax itself within these patterns. Consider, for instance, how the poem opens, And if. We are immediately swept up by syntactic pace. To sense this we need only compare the poem's opening with the rewritten alternative:

If tonight my soul may find her peace

We feel a difference in the sense of syntactic movement. This movement involves a bit more than the rising contour of the unstressed and against the stressed if. Line initial "ands" link sentences to preceding sentences, thoughts to preceding thoughts. And so, the opening phrase carries an implied link to something preceding it. The poem, then, does not begin, at least in terms of our reading experience of it. We are picked up and carried by the syntax and thought already moving forward. This same sense of movement begins each of the sentences.

But while the beginning of each sentence sweeps us up, the poem's intensity results from syntactic patterns that build momentum and create syntactic crescendos in the conditional clauses. A good illustration of this is in lines thirteen through seventeen. Within these lines the poet plays upon various types of verbal repetition. Repetition itself is often used for emphasis, but

in these lines it also exercises a "rhythmic control" over the cadences of the syntax and the "narrative pace" (the movement of the narrative itself) within the phrasing. For instance, in line thirteen folding is the last part of one phrase and the beginning of a new phrase. To sense what the poet is trying to do with the repetition we can rewrite the lines:

the softness of folding deep shadows, folding

The insistence in the cadence is broken, but we also lose something else--the emphatic syntactic play. The first folding is adjectival; it is a reduced relative clause ("which are . . .") and ends the noun phrase (object of the preposition) which is marked by the comma. The second folding is grammatically ambiguous; it is on the borderline between being an adverbial and an adjectival. It could be modifying the first folding both to intensify it and to focus on the process. It could also be modifying shadows adding predicative restriction by focusing on the "what" of the verbal force the participle carries. It is important to note the difference also between the first folding which can be moved into a prenominal attributive position and the second folding which cannot because it is the head of a phrase.

*the softness of folding around my soul deep shadows

The second folding expresses that the shadows are in the process of folding rather than folding as an identifying characteristic of shadows, as in the first folding. By placing these two next to each other the poet creates an emphatic syntactic blend of all these "syntactic moments" and catches the point where one syntactic/semantic phrase ends and another begins. Combined with the insistent cadence, the emphatic syntactic play gives us the sense of one phrase breaking out of and building from the other. It is this that creates the feel of syntactic crescendo.

We find a similar pattern in line fourteen and between lines fifteen and sixteen. In line fourteen the anaphoric repetition of around my continues the insistent cadence, especially coming immediately after folding, folding. But the repeated adverbials vary from the previous pattern. Here the narrative line controls the phrases building out of each other. We first focus on the spirit; then on the physical. The phrases, though, neither substitute for each other nor are they appositional. Rather, they build off their role as adverbials. The anaphoric repetition provides the constant element that grafts the different contexts, elaborating the narrative line. This same repetition also creates adverbial intensification, and it is this intensification which continues to give us the sense of the crescendo of one phrase building from the other.

Between lines fifteen and sixteen, we find the repetition of a word with varying grammatical inflection, song and singing. Here the building is lexical, but parallels in manner the phrasal blending of folding. Song ends one phrase, and it is important to note that it denotes an object. Its repeated variant, singing, begins the next phrase, and it denotes an event. Here we swing from noun to verb, from stative to dynamic, and again the repetition carries us insistently through one phrase building into another.

The repetition of on, in line sixteen, is purely emphatic, but it carries us to the final crescendo of the clause. Its pace is marked by acceleration through a triadic sequence which increases in semantic weight, decreases in structural weight, and carries the underlying insistent cadences of repetition. Each element in the sequence, days, years, and shadow, takes us forward to a more profound sense of silence. We move through this sequence at a quickening pace because each element is in a phrase of successively decreasing structural weight. Yet, the full weight of the insistent cadences of repetition is implied throughout the sequence, even as each repetitive element is progressively deleted.

- 1) solstice and silence of short days
- 2) silence of the year
- 3) the shadow

Here is a climatic pattern: the increasing semantic weight, decreasing syntactical structural weight, and the implied elements of repetition create an insistent quickening syntactic pace which drives us toward the pitch of the clause.

In each instance the repetition at once connects phrases but also intensifies the moments when the phrases build out from each other. It is this building which creates the momentum of syntactic crescendos in the poem. Indeed, it is as if the points of repetition are the moments when the narrative and syntactic momentum carried by one phrase crests and then builds with more intensity into the next. We get caught up in the pattern of phrases which crescendo through repetition until they pitch and break, almost like a wave, over the final adverbial clause. Against the pace of the conditional clause, the final adverbial of the sentence comes as a decrescendo, a denouement that releases (unravels) the intensity.

These brief illustrations only touch upon the poem's dense syntactic texture, but they should be sufficient to help readers explore that texture on their own. We could have looked at the other instances of repetition in the poem, for instance, the polysyndeton in lines six and seven, or the enumerative catalogues in lines two and three or twenty-two through twenty-five. In each we would find that the syntactic strategy is directed toward the same end. In each conditional clause, phrase is built upon phrase either through verbal repetition or the repetition of parallel syntactic structures. The pace of the conditional clauses is orchestrated to build syntactic crescendos that crest and then break over the final adverbial clauses. The momentum of this pace creates the emotive intensity of the poem.

One final note should be made for our students. While this poem only

illustrates one strategy from playing upon syntactic pace, it also illustrates that the rhythmic effects of pace are nonimitative. That is, they are neither thematically mimetic nor perceptually iconic. Rather, as with most rhythmic phenomena, their effects largely add emotive weight by conveying the intensity of feeling through the movement of the syntax.

Perceptual Effects

While poets can play with the order of sentence elements and pace to affect how sentences unfold, they also can play upon these same elements to shape sentences. Here poets use the formal (spatio-temporal) structure of sentences as directly as possible to help create the "images" of the experiences, situations, and ideas they are trying to convey. Words can be juxtaposed, sentence phrases can be inverted or twisted, major sentence components can be interrupted, or spatially and temporally separated, and so forth. In this way poets can create "iconic resemblances" between the form and the sense of their sentences. Richard Cureton has noted that poets can "use syntax exclusively in its nominal (as opposed to speech act) function for imagistic effects."³⁶ Here poets use nominal sentence structures (noun phrases and nominal groups) which lack finite verbs. This eliminates the narrative or assertive efficacy of the sentences in a poem. This lets poets lead us directly to the referents of their sentences by bypassing the mediation of a persona (speaker). In this way poets can create the perceptual immediacy of their images. Poets can also manipulate their syntax to give prominence to words, phrases, or other sentence elements that are thematically important. By inverting word order, using syntactic breaks, and parentheses, poets can give perceptual saliency to conceptually important words, foregrounding them, and thus adding (rhetorical) emphasis to a poem's important themes. The key point is that poets use the form of their syntax to convey the direct experience of the content of their sentences.

Robert Graves, for instance, uses syntax iconically to render the flight of a butterfly and his own thoughts about poetic insight in "Flying Crooked."

The butterfly, the cabbage-white,
 (His honest idiocy of flight)
 Will never now, it is too late,
 Master the art of flying straight,
 Yet has--who knows so well as I?--
 A just sense of how not to fly:
 He lurches here and here by guess
 And God and hope and hopelessness.
 Even the aerobatic swift
 Has not his flying-crooked gift.

5

Against the poem's regular eight syllable couplets the syntax is erratic and jolting. As Cluysenaar argues, the effect is achieved by the insertion of "syntactic asides" which interrupt, spatially and temporally, the resolution of the sentence. In the first four lines, for example, the basic clause is quite simple: The butterfly . . . Will never . . . Master the art of flying straight. The syntactic diversions begin immediately in the first line. Its structure is appositional but marked, because what would normally be a compound adjective is inverted into an apposition ("The cabbage-white butterfly"). The apposition is strengthened by the. This pulls at us because what we normally would expect as an attribution is wrenched into a coordinated constituent of the same level as the subject, butterfly. The second line is a complete parenthetical aside. It bears no relation to either the line above it or those that follow. Rather, inserted between the subject(s) and the verb, it presents a syntactic as well as a narrative digression. It is the persona's comment on the flight of the butterfly and pulls us in different direction from where the poem is trying to go. Here we digress, reflectively, to a comment on the flight (the poem) itself before we even get a sense of it. This pull is heightened because the line separates the subject from the verb, and so we are pulled from any sense of what the subject may be doing that warrants the parenthetical comment. The verb phrase

begins in line three, Will never, and is interrupted by the time adjunct, now, and the clause, it is too late. The rest of the verb phrase is in line four and runs forward smoothly. The syntax of these lines is "crooked," taking us erratically in different directions rather than smoothly forward. This syntactic movement is iconic of the erratic nature of the butterfly in flight.

Graves takes this movement further in lines five through eight, the second clause of the sentence. We are off again in line five with the verb has (and so also the implied subject) separated from the complement in line six by another aside. Here, the aside clearly makes the connection between the butterfly and the persona (Graves). Its "crooked" flight is the metaphor in which the persona sees the honest idiocy of his own creative efforts. But Graves jolts us in lines seven and eight. In line seven, the second here is unexpected; it jars us from our anticipation of "there"--the idiom is disrupted. This is built on in line eight by the absence of the expected preposition "by" (and (by) God and hope and hopelessness). Each element in the string is made discrete by the polysyndeton, as if each is a separate, distinct contributing factor, but somehow equal in value. With here and there we "lurch" from element to element. These jolts in the syntax punctuate the unpredictable flight. The butterfly seems to move without apparent reason, lurching from spot to spot, and we lurch with the butterfly through the syntax.

Finally, in the last two lines, the juxtaposition of words lends awkwardness to the syntax, keeping the "crooked" effect within the lines that would otherwise run easily. In the ninth line aerobic swift reverses what we normally expect as adjective-noun order. The collocation is interesting on another level. Normally, we find aerobic as a plural noun, "aerobics" (He did aerobics; His swift aerobics excited us) and only singular as a predicative adjective (He is aerobic). But in the poem its roles are confused. Either the

predicative adjective is promoted to a noun with swift as its adjective, creating an oddly ordered collocation, or the predicate adjective is prenominalized, creating an equally oddly ordered collocation. The effect is to focus on a quality of speed as a synecdoche, but there is more to the effect. The collocation carries the connotation of swift but practiced stunts, lacking the spontaneity that the butterfly (and persona) are graced with. Yet this collocation is ironic because it is carried by oddly ordered syntax which can be characterized as unpracticed and spontaneous.

Has not, in the final line, carries a touch of literariness which strikes the ear as odd within the poem's context of colloquial syntax. It lends awkwardness to the line. The poem ends syntactically "crooked." The final phrase, flying-crooked gift is twisted from its normal order, "the gift of flying-crooked." The effect keeps us off balance. The normal order conveys what makes up the gift (the gift of . . .). Putting an adjective before "gift" usually tells us about the type of gift (a birthday gift, a bridal-shower gift, a mother's day gift). These two are collapsed in the final phrase, creating a curious sense of attribution that surprises us and reinforces the pattern of "crooked syntax."

In the poem erratic syntax plays against the regularity of the octosyllabic couplets to create a syntactic icon of the crooked flight of the butterfly. But this play of the syntax is also a statement of the poet. We see this in lines five and six. For the poet, "flying-crooked" is preferable to the "art of flying straight." The flight of the butterfly is a metaphor for the creative efforts of the poet. Beneath the "aerobatics" of form, the regular octosyllabic couplets, the syntax is iconic of the "honest idiocy" of creative effort and poetic inspiration.³⁷

Poets need not manipulate syntax to make it iconic in order to use it to add perceptual immediacy. They can focus on the referential nature of syntax

and play upon it for imagistic effects. Here, poets do not use syntax to assert, deny, or state things; they use it in a manner that simply demands that a sense or reference be assigned to the form. Poets do this by playing primarily upon noun phrase fragments (nominal syntactic structures) and avoiding the use of verbs. This strategy separates the referential reading we assign to noun phrases from the major sentence constituents which would place these phrases into statements, speech acts, propositions, and so forth. The result is that poets can use these nominal structures as images. The classic illustration is Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" discussed in Chapter 1, in which he uses two stative noun phrases to create a stereoscopic image. But poets can create different kinds of imagistic effects. A delightful illustration is Roethke's "Child on Top of a Greenhouse."

The wind billowing out the seat of my britches
 My feet crackling splinters of glass and dried putty,
 The half-grown chrysanthemums starring up like accusers,
 Up through the streaked glass, flashing with sunlight,
 A few white clouds all rushing eastward,
 A line of elms plunging and tossing like horses,
 And everyone, everyone pointing up and shouting.

Widdowson has noted of this poem that "it expresses a sense of dynamic movement in suspense from any particular time reference."³⁸ This effect is achieved because the poem is built around a series of noun phrases which give us the "image" of verbal aspect without the constraint of verbal tense. The key here is to notice how the progressive verbs are undercut in each line. This is done by the omission of the auxiliary verb "be." The result is that the dynamic verbs are changed into post-modifiers and specifically into reduced relative clauses. But without a main sentence verb to give the context a sense of tense, a sense of when action occurs (i.e., past, present, future), we cannot know whether we are to take the modification as "the wind (which was, is, or will be) billowing out of the seat of my britches," and so on. Likewise, we have no cue

to tell us whether the omitted verb is past (was), present (is), or future (will be). The effect is to take the action out from the sense of occurring in time. Instead of actions taking place, denoting events with durations, actions become timeless (almost attributive) qualities of the head nouns.

The qualities that are expressed by each noun phrase are sensations of ongoing movement, but movement caught and frozen in a timeless moment. This effect of dynamic, ongoing but frozen movement emerges from a focus upon verbal aspect. Aspect refers to the manner in which the action of a verb is regarded or experienced. The choice of aspect either comments on or gives us a particular view of action. English has two aspectual contrasts: perfective/non-perfective and progressive/non-progressive. For instance:

- i. The wind billows out the seat of my britches
- ii. The wind is billowing out the seat of my britches

Both sentences are in present tense but they differ in aspect. The first is simple present and focuses on the state or occurrence of the action, here the occurrence of an event within a present moment. The second is present progressive and focuses on the performance of actions, the "doing" of them. Normally, tense and aspect cannot occur without one another. It is the relationship between these two features that makes up our general categories of verb tense, such as present progressive, past perfect, or future perfect. But in the poem these two features are separated. There are no auxiliary verbs to carry tense and combine with the progressive participles to create progressive verb phrases. Nor are there any main verbs which would carry tense and press us to see the participles as adjectives complementing an implied relative pronoun:

- i. (I see) my feet (which are) crackling . . .
- ii. (I saw) a line of elms (which were) plunging . . .

In effect, within each noun phrase the progressive aspect is isolated from tense, focused upon, and used as a peculiar modifier. Each noun phrase conveys a

different feature of continuous movement, but at the same time it is movement that does not seem "to move" in time. And since there is no specified time, the features in each noun phrase are felt to be occurring simultaneously. There is no sense of one event coming before or after another, or sense of one event leading to another. Each phrase seems to be an imagistic impression which makes up part of a composite event.

The poem, then, depicts a series of continuous and simultaneous actions without the sense of movement toward completion or finality that a verb tense would convey. These actions do not advance in any narrative sequence. Rather, they create a highly visual tableau. Together they freeze the commotions of the event. The form of the syntax fixes the images of the persona on top of the greenhouse, the chrysanthemums, the clouds, the trees, and the people into a continuous present in the same way that we would fix the images into a painting or photograph.

Finally, poets can use syntax simply to lend perceptual saliency to words or phrases which are in one way or another important to the context of their poems. For the most part, this involves choosing among syntactic alternatives or manipulating syntactic patterns so that features which are either normally emphasized or unemphasized altogether receive strong syntactic emphasis. Here poets use inversions, syntactic breaks, parenthetics, and the like to focus upon certain syntactic items, or syntactically to isolate pivotal words and phrases. This gives these items marked syntactic prominence, foregrounds them for special attention, and rhetorically emphasizes their content. A good illustration of this is H. D.'s "Oread."

whirl up, sea--
whirl your pointed pines,
splash your great pines
on our rocks,
hurl your green over us,
cover us with your pools of fir.

The persona exhorts the sea to rise by using the vocative with imperative finite verbs of commands. Vocatives are nominal elements added to sentences or clauses denoting the person or persons addressed and signalling that the sentences are addressed to them. Here, the vocative is sea and linked with the imperative verbs creates rhetorical commands. Commands, as speech acts, are directed at someone or something the speaker has authority over. The "felicity conditions" of commands are not met here.³⁹ The speaker has no control over the sea, unless, of course, the speaker is a god or, perhaps, a sorcerer. (It is interesting to note that an "Oread" is a mountain nymph and fits in with the images of waves as "pointed pines" as fir trees. In any event, a nymph would have no command over the elements, such as the sea.) Hence, the commands are rhetorical and might be seen as some kind of affirming or self-accepting exhortation by the speaker to an already rising sea, a sea the speaker is helpless against.

The rhetorical intensity of this exhortation is heightened by the vocative being placed in line final position of the first line. This increase in intensity becomes obvious when we look at the alternative to the poem's opening line.

- i. sea, whirl up--
- ii. whirl up, sea--

The rhetorical force of the verb seems weakened in the alternative. This is because the vocative has a separate tone unit from the rest of the sentence it appears in, especially when it comes line initial. Coming line initial, the vocative takes prominence away from the verb. This prominence of the verbs is important to the continuity of the poem. By placing the vocative in line final position it becomes "hidden" within the imperative phrases. As a result, all the verbs are foregrounded as line initial. They take on a syntactic prominence they ordinarily would not have in their normal medial positions. Just as important, they receive stronger phrasal stress than they normally would. This creates a forceful syntactic "focus" upon stressed, syntactically prominent, line-initial

dynamic verbs. This not only heightens the intensity of the exhortation but it also increases the saliency of the verbs' dynamism.

We feel the rising sea through the dynamism of the syntax. The rhetorical force of the vocative and the force of the imperatives create a powerful pattern of rhetorical expression. This pattern combines with the syntactic focus on the line-initial verbs, foregrounding their dynamic qualities. In large part, the play of these features together gives the poem its perceptual vividness.

Conclusion

As the analyses here illustrate, our discussions of poetic syntax are seldom elegant, and often they are simply clumsy. At present there seems to be no way around this. There is no easy way to talk about the poetic use of syntax. We have seen that because of the diversity of syntactic alternatives, the diversity of syntactic effects, and the variety of roles syntax plays, we cannot introduce students to the poetic use of syntax with ready-made categories. And for the same reasons any introduction to the use of syntax in poetry cannot be anything more than suggestive. Syntactic patterns are a communicative part of the messages we convey. How we use the alternative patterns which syntax affords affects how readers make sense of what it is we are trying to convey. Poets play upon these alternatives and take them beyond the limits of normal language use. They exploit what we "know" about syntax, but they also exploit our experience of features inherent in syntactic patterns. This means that to appreciate, for example, how the use of inversions, pronouns or articles, the choice of voice, or the placement of modifiers take on aesthetic (literary) value depends on appreciating how they operate normally, on thinking about how language is used to communicate generally. And in large part this accounts for the clumsiness in the discussions. But we should remember that our aim is not to have our students do detailed syntactic analyses as it is to provide them with an opportunity to

develop their responsiveness to how syntax affects their reading experience of poetry.

Perhaps the major task we confront in introducing students to the use of syntax in poetry is to help them realize that syntax itself is *communicative*. This is as true of good writing in general as it is of poetry. Our concern should be to provide students with an interpretive (reading) approach which they can apply to the range of ways syntax can be used. And it is this which recommends the comparative procedures offered in these pages. With it we can help students realize for themselves that different syntactic choices for saying the same thing do different things and have different effects on the reader. Tied to the parameter of aesthetic uses, we can help them demonstrate for themselves how syntactic choices and their effects take on aesthetic value. But, most importantly, we give them a reading tool that will continue to help them develop their sensitivity and responsiveness to the aesthetic (and communicative effects in general) of syntax even as they grow as sophisticated readers of poetry.

Notes to Chapter IV

¹Winifred Nowotny, The Language Poets Use (London: The Athlone Press, 1968), p. 91.

²*Ibid.*, p. 26.

³*Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴Curiously, even in those introductions to poetry where we would expect to find some substantive discussions about the role of syntax there is none. See, for instance, Geoffrey Leech, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1969); Elizabeth Traugott and Mary Louise Pratt, Linguistics for Students of Literature (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1980), and H. G. Widdowson, Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1975).

⁵Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, Jan Svartvik, A Grammar of Contemporary English (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1979), p. 951.

⁶Selectional restriction rules specify what words can and cannot go together. For instance, "The girl gather" violates selectional restrictions because "girl" is singular, not plural. "The boy drank the cake" is odd because "cake" is solid, not liquid. Likewise, "The mouse neighed" is unacceptable because neighing is an action associated with horses. For an excellent discussion of this see Geoffrey Leech, Semantics (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 141-46. Many metaphorical uses of language involve violating selectional restriction rules. For two good studies of the effects that the contact of words have on each other, see Owen Barfield, Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964) and Christine Brooke-Rose, A Grammar of Metaphor (London: Martin, Secker & Warburg, 1958).

⁷Hopkins reinforces this image visually and phonetically. The image is visually reinforced as the "ll" in rolling move apart in the palindromic level, which is visually level. Phonetically, the movement from the liquid r through the mid-back vowel o to the liquid ll and ending with the continuant nasal velar ing rolls as it is articulated. This is followed by level characterized by the same liquid consonant, l, at the beginning and end. This consonant binds two mid-vowels of roughly the same vowel height, producing a level sound.

⁸Richard Cureton pointed out the role that this "collocation" of pre-modifiers plays in personal correspondence.

⁹There is general agreement among linguists about this basic order of the English sentence. See Leonard Bloomfield, Language (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1933); Dwight Bolinger and Donald Sears, Aspect of Language (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1981); Noam Chomsky, Syntactic Structures (Hague: Mouton and Co., 1957), and Quirk et al., A Grammar of Contemporary English.

¹⁰Quirk et al., A Grammar of Contemporary English, p. 248.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 859.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 745.

¹³ Richard Cureton pointed out the role of ellipsis in this poem to me in personal correspondence.

¹⁴ Richard Cureton, "Literary Iconicity," presented at the Midwest Modern Language Association, November, 1982.

¹⁵ H. G. Widdowson, Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature, p. 43.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁷ William E. Baker, Syntax in English Poetry 1870-1930 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). Another study on the problem of syntactic form in poetry is Donald Davie, Articulate Energy (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1976). While Davie's insights are interesting, his approach is a bit too subjective and figurative for our concerns. We can sense this from the titles of his chapters and sub-chapters: "Syntax Like Music," "Syntax As Action," "Dramatic Syntax," "Syntax Like Mathematics." In looking at Davie's work we find that he does not deal with syntax as much as he deals with the thought behind the syntax.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² A few poets do, at times, step over this boundary. See, for instance, the works of Gerard Manley Hopkins and E. E. Cummings.

²³ See Richard Cureton, "Poetic Syntax and Aesthetic Form," Style 14:4 (Fall 1980):318-40. See also his unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Aesthetic Use of Syntax: Studies on the Syntax of the Poetry of E. E. Cummings, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1980.

²⁴ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 126.

²⁵ Stanley Fish, Is There A Text In This Class? (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 23.

²⁶ Geoffrey Leech, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry, p. 79.

²⁷ Pedagogical questions similar to these were suggested to me by Richard Cureton.

²⁸ William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity (New York: New Directions, 1966).

²⁹Christine Brooke-Rose, A Grammar of Metaphor. See also George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By.

³⁰Samuel Jay Keyser, "Wallace Stevens: Form and Meaning in Four Poems," College English 37:6 (February 1976):584.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 581.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 583.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴For a good account of "branching" in sentences, see Walter Nash, Designs in Prose (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1980), pp. 111-19.

³⁵Cureton notes these spatial and semantic relationships. See, "E. E. Cummings: A Case Study of Iconic Syntax," Language and Style 14:3 (Summer, 1981):194.

³⁶Richard Cureton, The Aesthetic Use of Syntax: Studies on the Syntax of the Poetry of E. E. Cummings, pp. 36-37.

³⁷Anne Cluysenaar, Aspects of Literary Stylistics (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), pp. 57-9.

³⁸H. G. Widdowson, Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature, p. 108. Widdowson notes the separation of tense and aspect but his purpose is to illustrate that literary language deviates from normal language, especially from the constraints outlined in transformational grammar. He does not explore in any detail the aesthetic implications.

³⁹"Felicity conditions" refer to the conditions which make up appropriate speech acts. This term was coined by J. L. Austin. For a discussion of these conditions see his How To Do Things With Words (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 14-24.

CHAPTER V
THE TEXT AND THE READER

The possibilities of "form enacting meaning" are virtually unlimited--as unlimited, let us say, as the author's imaginative power over the expressiveness of language, and as the reader's capacity to see connections.¹

Geoffrey Leech

Introduction

The studies presented in this dissertation outline an approach to literary education which might be called a pedagogical stylistics. While this presentation is somewhat incomplete, it nonetheless demonstrates that taking an aesthetic orientation to introducing students to poetry holds some promise for coming to grips with the problem of helping students to read and enjoy poetry. One of our fundamental curricular goals always has been to help our students become more intelligent and sensitive readers of poetry, to enhance and intensify their literary responsiveness and experience. The claim made in this dissertation is that exploring the aesthetic use of language with our students can contribute in an important way to achieving this goal.

It bears repeating that poetry is one of the arts and that the experience of reading literature is an aesthetic experience. This is an underlying assumption of this dissertation and it entails two points. First, one of the distinguishing features of poetry (of literature in general) is the adaptation of linguistic expression to literary function. For poets, language is an aesthetic medium; they fashion it into patterns beyond those required by ordinary usage. As H. G. Widdowson notes, "whether the components of these patterns are deviant or non-deviant or both is of secondary importance . . . the effect of the

patterning is to create acts of communication."² How poets manipulate language captures their perceptions and feelings of things and, at the same time, creates an expression of those perceptions and feelings. These patternings do not "say" (refer to) things; they sound, feel, and look like the things. Their correspondence to what is said is not direct and conventional but analogical and built on selective feature matching between elements in the language and content. The art of literature is tied to the aesthetic use of language.

At the same time, the aesthetic success of any poet's use of language depends upon the reader's sensitivity to the aesthetic saliency of literary language use. This is the second point. To put it another way, the effects created by the patterning of language result from the perceived relationships between features in the language and content. They are thus reader based. As Richard Cureton notes, the aesthetic effects of language "are metaphors in which the structure of language itself is the metaphorical vehicle."³ Our literary responses to these "vehicles of language" depend crucially on our ability to intuit (read) the analogical relationships between the particular selection and arrangement of the elements of language and what a poet is trying to communicate in a poem. As we develop an awareness of the ways poets can use language to convey their messages (the formal choices that a poet faces in any context within the system of constrained alternatives which language presents), our sensitivity and aesthetic competency as readers of literature increases.

Our literary responses, then, depend on what C. S. Lewis has called "the all-important conjunction (Reader meets Text)."⁴ But what this dissertation suggests is that we cannot assume that our students' literary responses will develop naturally by exposing them to poetry. The aesthetic use of language is not based on "natural" links between language and content (such as onomatopoeia) but on how the conventions of language can be "motivated" to dramatize content.

The nature of these motivations must be learned. Just as students need guidance to explicate literary allusions and to derive contexts in order to consider archetypal themes or socio-cultural concerns, so also they need guidance to perceive stylistic effects, to perceive the way language can be used to express a poet's unique message. In its simplest sense, the role of a pedagogical stylistics is to mediate the meeting between students as readers and poetry. Pedagogically, it provides a guide to study the relation between linguistic form and literary function, and reader response.

This dissertation, and other studies which have been written in a similar vein,⁵ develop a body of knowledge which is conveniently teachable. If incorporated into the mainstream of literary pedagogy, it could help to restore a balance to literary education which has leaned heavily toward content analysis. By discussing the complexities of the aesthetic use of language, we can make explicit part of the tacit aesthetic competence of all sophisticated readers of poetry and provide a means to cultivate our students' intuitive understanding. Yet pedagogical stylistic approaches do not have wide currency in literary education. Even those who would most benefit from a pedagogical stylistics, those who argue for pedagogical approaches to literature as art or through the reader's response to literature, do not incorporate a fundamental aesthetic stylistics. We can appreciate the significance of this by looking at two contemporary views.

On Teaching the Art of Literature

Bruce Miller's recent work, Teaching the Art of Literature, is fairly representative of those who argue for a pedagogical approach to literature as art. Miller asserts that literature hangs ambiguously between the arts and the humanities and that most teaching of literature focuses on literature as one of the humanities. By this he means our teaching of literature reflects on what literature has to say and then directs that reflection out upon the world.⁶

For Miller, a focus on literature as one of the humanities overlooks what we should value most--the experience of literature as art, the aesthetic experience. This is not to deny that literature deals with "meanings" but that the significance of meaning in literature "inheres in things other than the explicit and literal messages that the humanities employ."⁷ The experience of literature that Miller alludes to is the experience of art as a meaningful event.

Miller contends that reading literature depends on our understanding of three aspects: literature as event, object, and message. By "event" Miller means no more than that our reading is an engaging aesthetic experience. "The person who reads literature successfully will have a highly conscious and thoroughly pleasant experience, independent of any personal need, in which the particular work that is being read arrests the reader's attention, fixes it, controls it, and concludes it."⁸ Literature as "object" refers to the idea that literature is more than words on a page. The reader sees, hears, and feels the sights, sounds, persons, and feelings depicted on the page. By "object" Miller means the "function of transmuting words into things,"⁹ a function he calls constituting or constitution. Finally, literature as "message" refers to the various levels of meaning-messages embedded in literature as event-object.

Miller further argues that our reading itself can be seen as a composite of three features which correspond to the three aspects of literature as art: intensity, order, and abundance. The features of intensity correspond to literature as event. "Intensity is the almost fevered fascination that we allude to when we say that a work is compelling or gripping."¹⁰ Ordered reading refers to our responsiveness to the structure of literature as object. "Order in our reception of a work is the exact accommodation of the mind to all the specifications of the work which cause it to be the particular object that it is."¹¹ Finally, abundant reading is our responsiveness to the various dimensions of

meaning in the work. As Miller points out, each feature is necessary in a good reading of the art of literature. "By itself intensity is just another name for frenzy, and order alone is mere attention; together, combined with abundance, they give us the passionate serenity of aesthetic delight."¹²

It might appear from Miller's claim that we have a statement of basic aims for the teaching of literature that will help us to cultivate an awareness of literature as art and our response to it. But there are problems here. In the first place, it is difficult to imagine how we might outline a pedagogy to teach students to be "compelled" or "gripped" by any particular work they read. This, more than any element in Miller's approach, is based on individual idiosyncracies and tastes. The idea of literature as event and its correlate reading feature of intensity fits more appropriately into a general philosophy of literary aesthetics and aesthetic experience. This first aspect of Miller's scheme is not a realistic pedagogic aim and will not provide a guide from which introductory poetry courses might be designed. Pedagogic aims have to be more limited in order to be brought within the scope of reasonable attainment.

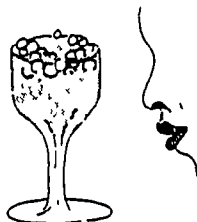
With respect to literature as message and its correlate of abundant reading, the problems should be obvious. This aspect delineates the different types of interests sophisticated readers take in literature--the thematic development of a writer, literary influences, the intellectual milieu, and the like. While Miller is correct in saying that an understanding of these interests can help students appreciate more of the "hidden facets" of literature, what has to be faced is how to incorporate these concerns into teaching, an issue Miller neglects to consider. To appreciate how to make use of biographical, socio-historical, archetypal, or psycho-analytic criticism requires studies in those critical approaches apart from learning to read and appreciate the art of literature.¹³ These critical approaches are the bases of professional studies

in literature, and only a few of our students go on to such studies. What we so often do as a remedy is to tell students what messages are to be found in literary works they are reading. Instead of guiding our students to techniques of individual interpretations, we provide them with a point of view of some critic. Our students come away with ready-made judgments rather than strategies for a better reading of literature. This problem has been discussed in Chapter 1.

More important for our concern is Miller's concept of literature as object and his claim about how we perceive this object. This aspect of Miller's scheme would seem central to helping students to a better reading experience and so deserves closer attention. Miller defines "literature as object" as the function of transmuting words into things, what he calls constituting. He illustrates what he means with an example from Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" and it bears quoting at length.

O for a beaker full of the warm South,
 Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
 And purple-stained mouth;

The last two lines give the instance of constituting here. . . . One reading that the lines will impart consists of two objects, the glass which has wine bubbles glittering about the rim and, near to it, a human mouth stained by wine. That image, in crude representation, would look like this:



But the lines equally well support a different picture. As we look at the full goblet of wine, first the glistening bubbles at the top become two eyes, one winking at us, and then we add a mouth to the glass so as to

transform it into a bright-eyed Silenus inviting us to drink and be merry. That picture would look like this:



Again . . . no evidence exists to tell us which of the two readings to take. The context supports either of the constitutings as well as the other, and no remarks by Keats on these lines are recorded. Here, too, we do our constituting independently of the text . . . the basis for selecting a particular constituting of Keats's lines seems to be satisfaction; we probably select that reading that most pleases us.¹⁴

For Miller, constituting is a subjective process and varies in accordance with each reader's sensibilities. "We choose the reading which gives us the character that we can most readily imagine. We are basing our judgments on bits of 'evidence,' which are more private and personal to ourselves than they are demonstrable aspects of the text."¹⁵

We can agree that different readers will bring their own perceptions and values to bear when reading, and they will associate a poem with their own experiences. But while we must grant that our reading shades off into a personal sense of intuitive significance, there is also the point where the experience of a poem is (or should be) grounded in the form of its art. As open-ended as the language of a poem might appear to be, it is not an open invitation simply to match our private responses in a compatible way to what we "intuit" as a poem's content. The text has a great deal to do with the images we perceive. Let us consider again the lines from Keats. In fact neither the pattern of the lines nor the context of the poem supports either of the images that Miller conjures up. Miller, it should be noted, favors the second of the two images.

The only perceptual saliency found in these lines is the orchestrated

sound features and the rhythmic play found in the third line

√ / √ / √ / √ / √ /
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,

The plosive, b, plays against two sound features to render the effervescence of the sparkling wine. The plosive itself seems to pop like the bubbles of the wine, and indeed the onomatopoeic bubbles cues this suggestiveness. This motif plays against a predominance of front, high lax vowels (short acute vowels). These vowels are kinaesthetically small. The one exception, excluding bubbles, is the front, high tensed e in beaded. Yet this vowel is clipped short by the dental stop. The clipping of the "long" vowel between the plosive and dental and the "short" vowel between the two dentals shortens the duration between the plosive, dental, and dental. This also creates a kinaesthetic sense of "bubbling," and with the clipped duration these "short" vowels suggest beadiness. In the second half of the line the velar and nasal continuants in winking and the liquid and labial continuants in brim combine with the vowels and the final plosive to finish the image of the wine. The continuant quality, especially keyed from the voiced sibilant (also a continuant) s in bubbles, completes the sense of the fizzing sparkling wine.

The rhythmic play reinforces this image. Except for the pyrrhic substitution in the fourth foot, the line scans into an iambic pentameter. The lexical and phrasal pull counterpoint the meter. Beaded, bubbles, and winking are lexically trochaic. The lexical pull "pops" against the meter reinforcing the image of the popping bubbles. The line ends with a phrasal anapest that pulls us up quickly to the brim of the beaker. The rhythmic focus adds an appropriate finish to the image of the beaker filled to the brim with sparkling wine.

These effects are not subtle and so should not present a problem to the reader. But this moment of perceptual saliency is only part of the image. The rest of the image develops through syntactic elaboration and lexical

significance. Elaboration means no more than that a number of word groups with the same or similar grammatical character work together in one sentence and, in many instances, in the same part of the sentence. The lines from Keats are a classic example, having four post modifying elements of near parallel grammatical structure and function. It is this pattern which controls the "ordering" of the image.

In the first line, the adjective of the head noun, full, is postposed, coming after the noun instead of its normal preposed position (full beaker). Postposed adjectives are usually regarded as reduced relative clauses, and in this instance it would be restrictive. This is reinforced by the role of the prepositional phrase which is the restrictive complement to the adjective. Here of signals what composes the material which fills the beaker (normal word order would be: Beaker which is full of . . .). This movement of the adjective and its linking with the post-modifying prepositional phrase moves our focus from the beaker to its contents, and sets up a pattern of restriction. The second line stands in apposition to the first but is clearly additive. Here is a new quality. The persona is not calling simply for a vintage of dance, song, and mirth but for Hippocrene, waters from the fount of poetic inspiration. As well as further restriction, the line also adds an emotive intensity. Repetition is not necessary for apposition, but here the syntactic repetition adds an emotive force. The persona's exclamation does not merely express a desire for wine; it beseeches for a beaker of poetic inspiration.

The preposition With in the third line establishes the notion of "having" and focuses us on the concrete character of the wine. As mentioned above, the sound features and the rhythmic play of the line add the perceptual saliency to the image. The line is linked syntactically to the persona's exclamation and this link fosters a sense of imagined anticipation. The desire from the two

previous lines is bonded to the third; it is so strong that the persona and we can "see" in our mind's eye the sparkling wine.

The fourth line is simple syntactic addition. Governed by the syntactic signal, And, the descriptive noun phrase adds an end-focus to the lines. Mouth clearly refers to the brim of the beaker and the adjective, purple-stained, attributes a wine stain to the brim. This attribution can be read in two ways: either the wine stains the brim or the brim itself is stained, suggesting a well-used beaker. While the implications of these two readings are different, the phrase itself refers to the beaker in the first line and pulls our focus back from the quality of the wine to the beaker of wine. This creates a sense of closure--we start with the beaker, focus on the wine, and come back to the beaker, but this time with a new sense of its significance because of the pattern of restriction. The static nature of the noun phrase adds weight to this sense and thus completes the image of the beaker and wine.

If this is how the image unfolds, does it add up to Silenus (foster-father of Bacchus) inviting us to drink and be merry? While the last two lines do depict a tantalizing image, that image is governed by the persona's appositive plea in the second line and the elaborate pattern of syntactic restriction. The restrictive nature of the postposed adjective and its prepositional complement direct our sense of the image. It is not Silenus that the poet seeks; the intoxication the persona craves is not of wine but of poetic inspiration. It is the syntax and the lexical significance of Hippocrene in the prepositional complement that pressure our reading of this image. The poem itself bears this out a few lines later.

Away! Away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,

While there is scope for variation in our response to the significance of

this image, and perhaps there is no way to decide impartially from the poem itself how the image is to be taken, the point of this analysis is that the "bits of evidence" from which we "constitute" the image are based on demonstrable aspects of the text. Our ability to constitute the poem as art depends on our ability to understand poetry's artistic medium, and in large part this is an understanding of the aesthetic use of language. Yet this element is missing from Miller's account.¹⁶ A pedagogical stylistics offers the means to add this element into an approach to literature as art. From the perspective of this approach a pedagogical stylistics would provide students with an opportunity to explore how language can take on the value of an artistic medium.

On Aesthetic Reading

Literary educators also have begun to show a growing concern with the role of the reader, and Louise Rosenblatt's provocative study The Reader, The Text, The Poem perhaps represents best those concerned with a "reader response" approach to literary education. For Rosenblatt, the concept of a poem "presupposes a reader actively involved with a text and refers to what he makes of his responses to the particular set of verbal symbols."¹⁷ The poem is the experience of a text shaped by the reader under the guidance of the text. This is the gist of Rosenblatt's transactional view of the literary work and literary experience. Of special interest to literary educators are Rosenblatt's ideas on how readers actively build poems from their responses to a text.

Rosenblatt points out that the reader is active and not simply a passive receiver of messages embodied in a text. The text is a set of physical marks on a page; it is "a set or series of signs interpretable as linguistic symbols."¹⁸ It does not become a work of history, science, or a poem until the reader re-creates it from his interpreting of those marks as verbal symbols. The work emerges as the reader links those symbols with external references and

his own past experiences, thoughts, and feelings. As Rosenblatt notes, "the selection and organization of responses to some degree hinge on the assumptions, the expectations, or sense of possible structures that he [the reader] brings out of the stream of his life."¹⁹ But how we focus our reading activities is also governed by the text, and this is an important point for Rosenblatt. Different texts require readers to do different things, to focus their reading activities and attention in different ways. Rosenblatt distinguishes two types of reading activities texts give rise to: non-aesthetic or efferent and aesthetic.

By "efferent reading" Rosenblatt refers to that reading activity "in which the primary concern of the reader is with what he will carry away from the reading."²⁰ Rosenblatt suggests that we engage in this type of reading in reading history, newspapers, science, cookbooks, and the like. The symbols on the page are transparent, pointing only to concepts, ideas to be tested, or actions to be done after the reading is performed. Our attention is focused on lifting out the paraphraseable message from the text. Aesthetic reading, in contrast, focuses on what happens during the reading event. As Rosenblatt has it, the reader attends to words in their particular order, to the chiming of sound, sense, and idea, to their referents in the "real" world and in literary contexts, and to the associations, feelings, and attitudes the words arouse. "In aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text."²¹

The distinction that Rosenblatt makes between efferent and aesthetic reading, a distinction that her entire study revolves around, is no more than the traditional distinction between discursive or conceptual apprehension and aesthetic apprehension. Moreover, the "poem" that Rosenblatt refers to as emerging from our reading transaction with a literary text is no more than our

aesthetic experience of the text. Aesthetic reading is simply our aesthetic engagement with literature. This is not to belittle Rosenblatt's argument. She makes two points which should be of critical concern for literary educators. First, the salient features of a text on which our aesthetic experiences depend, and our responses to those features, have received too little attention from literary educators. As Rosenblatt would have it, literary educators have focused primarily on efferent reading (content analysis) and our aesthetic experience has been left somewhat to chance. Second, and most important, if readers' aesthetic experiences result from their active engagement with a text, then one question literary educators need to confront is what readers need to engage actively a literary text.

Rosenblatt's answer to this question is a bit vague. Her basic proposition is that once we adopt an aesthetic stance²² we develop a guiding principle to organize our responses to a work, and the arousal of expectations within a text influences the selection and synthesis of further responses. The fulfillment or frustration of expectations either reinforces the guiding principle or demands revision of it until, if all goes well, the text is decoded. Our responses to textual cues from which we build our sense of the poem depend on our competence with the semantic "code," literary codes and conventions, and all other codes that grow out of and around the concepts of social life.²³ In short, we bring everything in our experience to bear in order to respond to a text, but only those things in our experience which we have learned to respond with.

This is a crucial point. We need to learn how to bring our "encyclopedic" knowledge to bear on a text. For the most part this has been the business of literary criticism. Whatever other purposes literary criticism serves, it organizes our experiences of literature and helps to develop techniques to

heighten our responsiveness to a text. Rosenblatt is arguing that we should realize that literary criticism is part and parcel of the reader's activity, and that the literary critic is a reader like any other reader reflecting on his own aesthetic transaction with a text. This is not to deny the techniques of "efferent analysis" literary critics depend upon, such as cultural history, biography, social theory, and the like, but when these interests become ends in themselves the literary critic or student becomes historian, biographer, or social theorist. Rosenblatt sees the role of criticism, especially in education, as a movement "from an intensely realized aesthetic transaction with a text to reflection on semantic or technical or other details in order to return to, and correlate them with, that personally apprehended aesthetic reading."²⁴ For literary educators this means our use of criticism should strengthen the aesthetic transaction between reader and text.

It would seem then that a pedagogical stylistics would fit neatly into Rosenblatt's scheme. By seeing how this fit is made we can get a feel for her concern about efferent techniques becoming ends in themselves and how they become a means to illuminate, reinforce, and place into context the aesthetic event. She provides an excellent example from Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky."

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogroves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

Rosenblatt agrees that verbal cues, the way words are patterned in a text, the arrangement of sound, syntax, meter, and stanza, are the most pervasive cues in guiding our reading. But the analyst, she argues, who approaches the text with these "topics" in mind is not reading the text in order to create a work of art, "he is reading it efferently in order to make a systematic classification of elements . . . for the purpose of determining objectively which

is relevant to his particular preordained system of selection."²⁵ It is at this point where things become fuzzy for literary educators. Consider what Rosenblatt says about "Jabberwocky." An efferent reading of the lines illustrates how language provides "markers" or "slots" that identify various kinds of units in the structure of the sentence. Efferent reading focuses on devices such as word order, word endings, and articles by which different parts of speech are indicated. Aesthetic reading, on the other hand, is a different activity "in which the grammatical structure would be intuited, as the reader paid attention to sounds, the associations, the ideas and feeling-tone activated by these verses. He would be absorbed in the actual sensing, interpreting, and organizing of what is aroused in him by the text."²⁶

As suggested in this study, however, literary appreciation is in large part comparative--to understand, for example, how sound features take on value in literary writing depends on understanding how they take on value normally. Intuiting associations, ideas, and feeling-tone from grammatical structures depends on our understanding of how we intuit ideas from those structures normally. For literary educators this means they have to take their students through the efferent to the aesthetic, they have to establish covert intuitive practice as overt pedagogic strategy. Let us consider the lines from "Jabberwocky" with this in mind.

We sense that this "string of sounds" has meaning despite the fact that almost half of the words are nonsense words. Like Alice, the poem fills our heads with ideas, but it does so because these lines do not deviate from what we normally expect from English. On the simplest level, while the nonsense words appear unfamiliar, they sound like possible English words. They obey the phonological rules about how English phonemes combine in sequence. In any language, the sounds that make up a word and meaning are associated, for the

most part, conventionally and arbitrarily. Thus to say that toves, wabe, mimsy, and raths are possible English words is to say no more than that they are phonologically and morphologically acceptable and that the language system has not established a relation between sound and reference (which is a more technical way of saying that they make no sense). However, since these words are phonologically possible, they could be assigned meanings and become part of the lexicon.

Moreover, many of the words play off familiar phonologic strings and suggest either word blending (portmanteau words) or clipping. Blends are compound words that are less than compounds (i.e., smoke + fog = smog; motor + hotel = motel). Clipped words resemble abbreviations; they are "short forms" which are used for whole words (i.e., telly, the British word for television; burger, the short form of hamburger). From this we might associate brillig with brilliant + something; slithy as either a blend of slimy + something or a possible clip of slithery; gyre as a clip and verbalization of gyroscope, and mimsy as something + flimsy. This by no means accounts for these nonsense words, but it does help to set up the play of the poem. In the definitions that Carroll created for these words, he makes light of these semantic associations we try to derive from the words' sound suggestiveness. For example:

- Brillig (derived from the verb to bryl or broil): 'the time of broiling dinner, i.e. the close of the afternoon.'
- Slithy (compound of slimy and lithe): 'Smooth and active.'
- Gyre verb (derived from gyaour or giaour, 'a dog'): To scratch like a dog. (Carroll does give us another definition from an explanation by Humpty Dumpty: "To 'gyre' is to go round and round like a gyroscope.")
- Mimsy (whence mimserable and miserable): 'Unhappy.' (Or, as Humpty Dumpty has it: "'mimsy' is flimsy and miserable'.")²⁷

Carroll intends that we have fun playing with the arbitrary relation between sound association and meaning.

The most important source of pressure on the reader in these lines is syntax. These lines are not strings of random words put together; they are combined according to the regular rules of syntax. This is important. A random string of nonsense words, even with familiar English words within that string, would have no "associative sense." Consider if we rewrite the first line as follows:

Brillig the 'Twas and toves slithy.

This random string has no associative value and so none of the play upon and with language. Because these lines do follow regular syntactic order, the grammatical pressure forces semantic properties upon these nonsense words. In other words, while these words may have no reference they remind us of many words which do because of the way they show up in the sentence construction.²⁸ We can see this by taking the nonsense words out.²⁹

'Twas -----, and the ----- ----
Did ---- and ----- in the ----;
All ----- were the -----,
And the ---- -----.

The familiar words are grammatical words and establish how the nonsense words relate to each other, the sentence as a whole, and project associative value. How these words relate associatively lets the reader interpret the lines as a description of an outdoor scene with various creatures moving about.

Let us consider, for example, how the lines open, 'Twas ----- . The word that follows 'Twas (It was) must be either a noun or an adjective. If it is a noun it would either have to be preceded by an article or be a proper noun. Clearly the word following 'Twas is an adjective. But as important is the form of the clause. Here "it" is an empty "prop" subject, being neither pronomial (which would require an antecedent) nor an anticipatory subject

(where the "prop" subject is the replacement for a postponed clausal subject: It was nice seeing you--Seeing you was nice). In cases where "it" is an empty prop, no subject participant is necessary for completion of the adjective's meaning (i.e., 'Twas cold/sundown/spring/Wednesday . . .). These cases are adverbials of time and place, focusing on either physical or temporal qualities of a place of action or state of affairs. In a word, they set forth a scene. While we might not know then what brillig means, we sense it sets forth a quality of the poem's setting.

In the second part of the line the cues us to a noun phrase. We read toves as the head noun in large part because of the beginning of the second line. Did is a generalized agent auxiliary verb, and it carries the tense of a verb phrase. It signals an active voice and a simple sentence structure (in this instance Subj.-Verb-Adv.place). Except in those instances where an adverb comes between the subject and verb (I quickly shut the door) we expect the subject immediately to precede the verb or verb phrase. We also know toves to be a noun because it does not carry a "marker" that would suggest it to be an adverb. Rather, if it carries a "marker" at all it carries "s" which suggests toves to be a plural noun. We read slithy as an adjective because of the "y" following the pattern of "y" as an adjective suffix added to nouns, as in silk y, slink y, and so on. But as important, the agentive auxiliary verb Did requires a subject capable of performing an action, hence alive. Thus we read slithy toves as some kind of creature(s). Finally, Did makes us read gyre and gimble as verbs necessary to complete the verb phrase. The second line ends with a locative prepositional phrase (adverbial of place). We sense wabe as a place where the toves do whatever it is that they do.

These two lines establish our expectations for the rest of the nonsense words in the poem because the grammatical categories function throughout the

passage. Mimsy suggests an adjective similar to slithy, and raths and borogroves suggest plural nouns following the pattern of toves. We read the final line as following the established pattern of simple sentences, with raths as the noun, mome as an adjective, and outgrabe as the verb following subject-verb concord (It should be noted that subject-verb concord is a further suggestion that toves, borogroves, and raths are plural nouns.). By looking again at the definitions for some of the words cited above that Carroll created, we find that these grammatical associations are not far off. What these associations lack in specific content they make up in the semantic features drawn from our grammatical sense.

Much of the meaningfulness of these lines results in large part because real grammatical words are used in the right places. They trigger certain elements that set our associations working. The fun we have with the poem is the play of sense and nonsense, the play of a "linguistic joke." On one level we play against the logical demands of the language with the suggestion that our everyday language is largely unaccountable and perhaps as much "nonsense" as these lines. But more, the fun is also directed at poetry itself, that poetic achievement rather than making sense from nonsense is meant to fill our heads with cloudy (in both senses of the term) ideas.

The analysis here is rather basic, but it should point out that the grammatical structure is not simply to be intuited, as Rosenblatt suggests, while we are absorbed in sensing what the poem arouses in us. Our response to Carroll's sense of fun depends on our understanding his language play, and the syntax plays a major part. It is a real source of the associations and ideas activated by these lines and needs to be "read" also. This same point has been made in relation to other features of language discussed in the previous chapters. If readers are to respond aesthetically (aesthetically read, as

Rosenblatt might have it) to the language writers use, they must make discoveries similar to those that writers make about how we respond to language. This is the role of pedagogical stylistics. From fundamental linguistic insights it helps us to explore how our aesthetic responses to the language of literature arise from our responses to normal language use. Far from being "efferent" analysis, a pedagogical stylistics, by helping us explore with students how language can take on aesthetic saliency, can help to deepen our students' capacity for the aesthetic experience of literature.

Conclusion

It might be argued that the analyses and procedures offered in this dissertation do nothing more than confirm our intuitions about the poems presented. After all, poets do no more than exploit the language they share with their readers. But the idea that the only knowledge we need of language to understand how to read poetry is that which we acquire naturally may be misleading. While we must begin with the realization that a sensitive reader--any reader!--possesses certain native abilities, the above studies should witness that reading literature is not a native skill. What seems crucial to the character of poetry is that poets fashion language into patterns over and above those required by normal language use. Literary artists "stretch" the medium and open up various communicative channels inherent in the language. They convey their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions in words, sounds, and structures shaped and patterned to realize their communicative intent and to express what normal language use cannot. They create sound symbols, verbal rhythms, and syntactic icons making the language move, building metaphors, and forcing us to consider and reconsider how we see the world through language. This is the work of a creative writer, and it demands creative readers.

What this dissertation has tried to illustrate is that a pedagogical stylistics can help students become such readers. With it we can explore with students the fairly stable correlations between linguistic means and artistic ends that appear across texts, authors, and literary periods. By understanding how language can take on aesthetic value, we can explore the motivations for our aesthetic responses. A pedagogical stylistics provides a rationale for literary educators to pursue that exploration. More work needs to be done on lexical and grammatical features, the effects of discourse, dialect and idiolect, the relationships between rhetorical and narrative structure, speech acts, the sequencing of stylistic elements, and the like. We need to understand how poets can make use of these features of language, how they function aesthetically, and how they give rise to our intuitions about what we read. Without such effort we cannot hope to teach our students how to explore the relationships between themes and the language used to express them, and how literary experience emerges from our encounter with the aesthetic use of language.

Notes to Chapter V

¹Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short, Style in Fiction (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1981), p. 242.

²H. G. Widdowson, Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1975), p. 47.

³Richard D. Cureton, "Literary Iconicity," presented at the Midwest Modern Language Association, November 6, 1982.

⁴C. S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism (London: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 128-29.

⁵Among those that stand out are Raymond Chapman, Linguistics and Literature (Edinburgh: Edward Arnold, 1973); Seymour Chatman and Samuel Levin, eds., Essays on the Language of Literature (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967); Anne Cluysenaar, Aspects of Literary Stylistics (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975); Richard D. Cureton, The Aesthetic Use of Syntax: Studies on the Syntax of the Poetry of E. E. Cummings, unpublished doctoral dissertation (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1980); Roger Fowler, ed., Style and the Structure of Literature: Essays in the New Stylistics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975); Geoffrey Leech, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1969); Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short, Style in Fiction; Winifred Nowotny, The Language Poets Use (London: The Athlone Press, 1968).

⁶Bruce Miller, Teaching the Art of Literature (Urbana: NCTE, 1980), p. ix.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. xi. Miller exemplifies the difference as follows: "One who wants to become familiar with the notion that God is totally in act had better read philosophy . . . but one who wants to know the consequences of the intuition that God loves humans will do better to turn from philosophy to art" (p. xi).

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹³Miller categorizes these critical interests into three approaches: ostensive, intrinsic, and extrinsic. In the ostensive approach we read literature as a textbook about a subject or as a reflection of an important idea in the history of ideas. In a word, we read literature as historical, psychological, or a biographical document. In the intrinsic approach we read in an

effort to respond to the literary work itself. The most distinguished form of this approach is New Criticism. Finally, in the extrinsic approach we take facts or ideas that are not literary and apply them to literary works in order to illuminate our reading. For example, the history of word usage or an understanding of the prevailing cultural norms and ideas of an era can help to open up a work to our perception (see pp. 26-33). While Miller is correct about this, and while his categories may be of some use, he fails to consider that the critical interests classified under each of these approaches must be studied and mastered in their own right by teacher and student alike before they can be of use in either teaching or reading. This raises issues about teacher preparation and overall curricular strategy that are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

¹⁴Miller, Teaching the Art of Literature, pp. 17-18.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁶What is curious to note is that Miller appeals to the grammatical features of the language in his opening discussions on teaching the short story (see p. 85). The brief insights he makes are useful, but there is neither a coherent scheme for incorporating this appeal to grammar into a pedagogical strategy nor any discussion of the importance that the effects of grammatical features can have on our reading. Rather, his appeal to the language is ad hoc.

¹⁷Louise Rosenblatt, The Reader, The Text, The Poem (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), p. 12.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 11.

²⁰Ibid., p. 24.

²¹Ibid., p. 25. Rosenblatt is careful to note that there is no clear break between the efferent and aesthetic stance. We can take an aesthetic stance toward a scientific text, for instance, to appreciate the elegance of scientific proofs. Likewise, poems can be read efferently for the bits of wisdom we can carry away. Rosenblatt's concern focuses on the primary relationships we have with texts--we do not read science primarily for the aesthetic experience nor poetry for facts.

²²Rosenblatt is a bit vague on how a reader knows that a text is to be read efferently or aesthetically. She seems to suggest that we learn from social contexts that certain stances are taken to certain objects. These "social clues" range from how poems look on the page to where poetry books are shelved in libraries and bookstores. While this is an issue that should be noted and raises thorny problems concerning the definition of art, the role of the institution of the artworld, and the problem of "found art," it is peripheral to our concerns here.

²³Rosenblatt, The Reader, The Text, The Poem, pp. 54-56. Alan Purves has made a similar point. He sees the active reader engaged in a process of probing and juxtaposing the various elements of a work until a focus is crystallized.

That focus emerges from the reader's past experiences, past encounters with literature, literary theory, and analyses, and other factors. See Alan C. Purves and Sharon Silkey, "What Happens When We Read a Poem," Journal of Aesthetic Education 7:3 (July 1973):63-72.

²⁴ ibid., p. 162.

²⁵ ibid., p. 89.

²⁶ ibid., p. 80.

²⁷ Carroll provides two glossaries to the poem, one when it was originally published under the title "Stanza of Anglo-Saxon Poetry," and the other as Humpty Dumpty's explanation of the poem to Alice in Through the Looking Glass. See Lewis Carroll, The Annotated Alice (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1967), p. 191 and p. 272.

²⁸ It is interesting to compare "Jabberwocky" to a poem that violates relational and grammatical roles that govern the kinds of elements that can be combined and the order of combination. Poets often violate these rules to create interesting images. A classic example is Dylan Thomas's a grief ago. Ago usually follows words reflecting periods of time (an hour ago, a week ago, three months ago) but not other combinations (a chair ago, a dream ago, a sister ago). In a grief ago Thomas adds an emotional state of being to the phrase for poetic effect. We make sense of the phrasing by recognizing its deviant nature but at the same time construing the phrase from what we know of the demands of the selectional and grammatical rules. Here time is measured through the duration of emotional states. It is the breaking of the rules that creates the imagery.

²⁹ For similar discussions, see Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman, An Introduction to Language (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974), pp. 126-27; Elizabeth Traugott and Mary Louise Pratt, Linguistics for Students of Literature (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), pp. 87-89; and W. Nelson Francis, "Revolution in Grammar," Quarterly Journal of Speech 40:3 (October 1954):299-312.

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