Nicolae Sfetcu

Poetry Kaleidoscope

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BOOK PREVIEW

1 Poetry

Poetry (ancient Greek: *ποιεω* (poieo) = I create) is traditionally a written art form (although there is also an ancient and modern poetry which relies mainly upon oral or pictorial representations) in which human language is used for its aesthetic qualities in addition to, or instead of, its notional and semantic content. The increased emphasis on the aesthetics of language and the deliberate use of features such as repetition, meter and rhyme, are what are commonly used to distinguish poetry from prose, but debates over such distinctions still persist, while the issue is confounded by such forms as prose poetry and poetic prose. Some modernists (such as the Surrealists) approach this problem of definition by defining poetry not as a literary genre within a set of genres, but as *the* very manifestation of human imagination, the substance which all creative acts derive from.

Poetry often uses condensed form to convey an emotion or idea to the reader or listener, as well as using devices such as assonance, alliteration and repetition to achieve musical or incantatory effects. Furthermore, poems often make heavy use of imagery, word association, and musical qualities. Because of its reliance on "accidental" features of language and connotational meaning, poetry is notoriously difficult to translate. Similarly, poetry's use of nuance and symbolism can make it difficult to interpret a poem or can leave a poem open to multiple interpretations.

It is difficult to define poetry definitively, especially when one considers that poetry encompasses forms as different as epic narratives and haiku. Needless to say, many poets have given their own definitions. Carl Sandburg said that, "poetry is the synthesis of hyacinths and biscuits." Robert Frost once said "Poetry is the first thing lost in translation."

Nature of poetry

Poetry can be differentiated from prose, which is language meant to convey meaning in a less condensed way, using more logical or narrative structures. This does not imply poetry is illogical. Poetry is often created from the desire to escape the logical, as well as expressing feelings and other expressions in a tight, condensed manner. English Romantic poet John Keats termed this escape from logic Negative Capability.

Prose poetry combines the characteristics of poetry with the superficial appearance of prose. Other forms include narrative poetry and dramatic poetry, used to tell stories and so resemble novels and plays.

The Greek verb **ποιέω** [poiéō (= I make or create)], gave rise to three words: **ποιητής** [poiētḗs (= the one who creates)], **ποίησις** [poíēsis (= the act of creation)] and **ποίημα** [poíēma (= the thing created)]. From these we get three English words: **poet** (the creator), **poesy** (the creation) and **poem** (the created). A poet is therefore one who creates and poetry is what the poet creates. The underlying concept of the poet as creator is not uncommon. For example, in Anglo-Saxon a poet is a *scop* (shaper or maker) and in Scots *makar*.

Tools

Sound

Perhaps the most vital element of sound in poetry is rhythm. Often the rhythm of each line is arranged in a particular meter. Different types of meter played key roles in Classical, Early European, Eastern and Modern poetry. In the case of free verse, the rhythm of lines is often organized into looser units of cadence. Robinson Jeffers, Marianne Moore, and William Carlos Williams were three notable poets who rejected the idea that meter was a critical element of poetry, claiming it was an unnatural imposition into poetry.

Poetry in English and other modern European languages often uses rhyme. Rhyme at the end of lines is the basis of a number of common poetic forms, such as ballads, sonnets and rhyming couplets. However, the use of rhyme is not universal. Much modern poetry avoids traditional rhyme schemes. Classical Greek and Latin poetry did not use rhyme. Rhyme did not enter European poetry until the High Middle Ages, when adopted from the Arabic language. Arabs have always used rhymes extensively, most notably in their long, rhyming qasidas. Some classical poetry forms, such as Venpa of the Tamil language, had rigid grammars (to the point that they could be expressed as a context-free grammar), which ensured a rhythm. Alliteration played a key role in structuring early Germanic and English forms of poetry, alliterative verse. The alliterative patterns of early Germanic poetry and the rhyme schemes of Modern European poetry include meter as a key part of their structure, which determines when the listener expects instances of rhyme or alliteration to occur. Alliteration and rhyme, when used in poetic structures, help emphasise and define a rhythmic pattern. By contrast, the chief device of Biblical poetry

in ancient Hebrew was parallelism, a rhetorical structure in which successive lines reflected each other in grammatical structure, sound structure, notional content, or all three; which lent itself to antiphonal or call-and-response performance.

Sound plays a more subtle role in free verse poetry by creating pleasing, varied patterns and emphasizing or illustrating semantic elements of the poem. Alliteration, assonance, consonance, dissonance and internal rhyme are among the ways poets use sound. Euphony refers to the musical, flowing quality of words arranged in an aesthetically pleasing way.

Form

Poetry depends less on linguistic units of sentences and paragraphs. The structural elements are the line, couplet, strophe, stanza, and verse paragraph.

Lines may be self-contained units of sense, as in the well-known lines from William Shakespeare's Hamlet:

> To be, or not to be: that is the question.

Alternatively a line may end in mid-phrase or sentence:

> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

this linguistic unit is completed in the next line,

> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

This technique is called enjambment, and is used to create expectation, adding dynamic tension to the verse.

In many instances, the effectiveness of a poem derives from the tension between the use of linguistic and formal units. With the advent of printing, poets gained greater control over the visual presentation of their work. As a result, the use of these formal elements, and of the white space they help create, became an important part of the poet's toolbox. Modernist poetry tends to take this to an extreme, with the placement of individual lines or groups of lines on the page forming an integral part of the poem's composition. In its most extreme form, this leads to concrete poetry.

Rhetoric

Rhetorical devices such as simile and metaphor are frequently used in poetry. Aristotle wrote in his Poetics that "the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor". Since the rise of Modernism, some poets have opted for reduced use of these devices, attempting the direct presentation of things and experiences. Surrealists have pushed rhetorical devices to their limits, making frequent use of catachresis.

History

Poetry as an art form predates literacy. Poetry was employed as a means of recording oral history, storytelling (epic poetry), genealogy, and law. Poetry is often closely identified with liturgy in pre-literate societies. Many of the scriptures currently held to be sacred by contemporary religious traditions with their roots in antiquity were composed as poetry rather than prose to aid memorization and help guarantee the accuracy of oral transmission in pre-literate societies. As a result many of the poems surviving from the ancient world are a form of recorded cultural information about the people of the past, and their poems are prayers or stories about religious subject matter, histories about their politics and wars, and the important organizing myths of their societies.

The use of verse to transmit cultural information continues today. Many English-speaking Americans know that "in 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue". An alphabet song teaches the names and order of the letters of the alphabet; another jingle states the lengths and names of the months in the Gregorian calendar. Some writers believe poetry has its origins in song. Most of the characteristics that distinguish it from other forms of utterance—rhythm, rhyme, compression, intensity of feeling, the use of refrains—appear to have come about from efforts to fit words to musical forms. In the European tradition the earliest surviving poems, the Homeric and Hesiodic epics, identify themselves as poems to be recited or chanted to a musical accompaniment rather than as pure song. Another interpretation is that rhythm, refrains, and kennings are essentially paratactic devices that enable the reciter to reconstruct the poem from memory.

In preliterate societies, these forms of poetry were composed for, and sometimes during, performance. There was a certain degree of fluidity to the exact wording of poems. The introduction of writing fixed the content of a poem to the version that happened to be written down and survive. Written composition meant poets began to compose for an absent reader. The invention of printing accelerated these trends. Poets were now writing more for the eye than for the ear.

The development of literacy gave rise to more personal, shorter poems intended to be sung. These are called lyrics, which derives from the Greek *lura* or lyre, the instrument that was used to accompany the performance of Greek lyrics from about the seventh century BC onward. The Greek's practice of singing hymns in large choruses gave rise in the sixth century BC to dramatic verse, and to the practice of writing poetic plays for performance in their theatres. In more recent times, the introduction of electronic media and the rise of the poetry reading have led to a resurgence of performance poetry. The late 20th-century rise of the singer-songwriter, Rap culture, and the increase in popularity of Slam poetry have led to a split between the academic and popular views.

1.1 Nature of Poetry

1.1.1 Prose Poetry

Prose poetry is prose that breaks some of the normal rules of prose discourse for heightened imagery or emotional effect.

As a specific poetic form, prose poetry originated in the 19th century in France. French prose was governed by laws so strict that by breaking them, it was possible to create prose that was seen to be intended as poetry. Poets such as Aloysius Bertrand, Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, and Stephane Mallarmé were among the founders of the form. The form continued to be practiced in France and found profound expression in the prose poems of Francis Ponge in the mid twentieth century.

It used to be said that prose poetry was impossible in English, because the English language was not so strictly governed by rules as the French was. In the twentieth century, when English prose has become more and more governed by the iron laws of Strunk and White, this may no longer be the case. Rapturous, rhythmical, and image-laden prose from previous centuries, such as is found in Jeremy Taylor or Thomas de Quincey, strikes 21st century readers as having something of a poetic quality.

1.1.2 Poem and Song

Where verse is set to music, the distinction between **poem and song** may become artificial — to the point of being untenable. This is perhaps recognised in the way popular songs have *lyrics*:. The verse, however, may precede in time the tune (in the way that "Rule Britannia" was set to music, and "And did those feet in ancient time" has become the hymn "Jerusalem"); the tune may be lost over time but the words survive; a number of alternate tunes may fit (this is particularly common with hymns and ballads).

Possible classifications proliferate (under anthem, ballad, blues, carol, folk song, hymn, libretto, lied, lullaby, march, praise song, round, spiritual). Nursery rhymes may be songs, or doggerel: the term doesn't imply a distinction. The ghazal is a sung form that is considered primarily poetic. See rapping, roots of hip hop music also, on the boundaries: verse+music against verse against verse set to music.

Analogously, verse drama might normally be judged (at its best) as poetry, but not consisting of poems (see dramatic verse). Again there are genres as far apart as masque and pantomime.

1.1.2.1 Poesybeat

Poesybeat is an online collaborative artform whereby participants combine music and poetry together into a new musical style. The authors of the music and the poetry often

have never met one another. The premiere site for this style is poesybeat.org, a not-for-profit site that promotes the poesybeat artform.

1.2 End-stopping

End-stopping is a feature in poetry where the syntactic unit (phrase, clause, or sentence) corresponds in length to the line. Its opposite is enjambement (also spelled enjambment), where the sense runs on into the next line. According to A. C. Bradley, "a line may be called 'end-stopped' when the sense, as well as the metre, would naturally make one pause at its close; 'run-on' when the mere sense would lead one to pass to the next line without any pause."

An example of end-stopping can be found in the following extract from *The Burning Babe* by Robert Southwell; the end of each line corresponds to to the end of a clause.

> *As I in hoary winter's night stood shivering in the snow,*
> *Surprised I was with sudden heat, which made my heart to glow;*
> *And lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,*
> *A pretty babe all burning bright did in the air appear.*

The following extract from *The Winter's Tale* by Shakespeare is heavily enjambed.

> *I am not prone to weeping, as our sex*
> *Commonly are; the want of which vain dew*
> *Perchance shall dry your pities; but I have*
> *That honourable grief lodged here which burns*
> *Worse than tears drown.*

In this extract from *The Gap* by Sheldon Vanauken, the first and third lines are enjambed, while the second and fourth are end-stopped:

> *All else is off the point: the Flood, the Day*
> *Of Eden, or the Virgin Birth—Have done!*
> *The Question is, did God send us the Son*
> *Incarnate crying Love! Love is the Way!*

Scholars such as A. C. Bradley and Goswin König have estimated approximate dates of undated works of Shakespeare by studying the proportion of end-stopping to enjambment, the former being more typical of Shakespeare's early plays, and the latter a feature of his later works.

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2 National Poetry

2.1 American Poetry

The **poetry of the United States** began as a literary art during the colonial era. Unsurprisingly, most of the early poetry written in the colonies and fledgling republic used contemporary British models of poetic form, diction, and theme. However, in the 19th century a distinctive American idiom began to emerge. By the later part of that century, when Walt Whitman was winning an enthusiastic audience abroad, American poets had begun to take their place at the forefront of the English-language avant-garde. This position was sustained into the 20th century to the extent that Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot were perhaps the most influential English-language poets in the period around World War I. By the 1960s, the young poets of the British Poetry Revival looked to their American contemporaries and predecessors as models for the kind of poetry they wanted to write.

Toward the end of the millennium, consideration of American poetry had diversified, as scholars placed an increased emphasis on poetry by women, African Americans, hispanics and other subcultural groupings. Poetry, and creative writing in general, also tended to become more professionalized with the growth of Creative Writing programs on campuses across the country.

Poetry in the colonies

One of the first recorded poets of the British colonies was Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672), who remains one of the earliest known women poets in English. Her poems are untypically tender evocations of home and family life and of her love for her husband. In marked contrast, Edward Taylor (1645–1729) wrote poems expounding Puritan virtues in a highly wrought metaphysical style that can be seen as typical of the early colonial period. This narrow focus on the Puritan ethic was, understandably, the dominant note of most of the poetry written in the colonies during the 17th and early 18th centuries.

Another distinctly American lyric voice of the colonial period was Phillis Wheatley, a slave whose book Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral, was published in 1773. One of the most well-known poets of her day, at least in the colonies, her poems were typical of New England culture at the time, meditating on religious and classical ideas.

The 18th century saw an increasing emphasis on America as fit subject matter for its poets. This trend is most evident in the works of Philip Freneau (1752–1832), who is also notable for the unusually sympathetic attitude to Native Americans shown in his writings. However, as might be expected from what was essentially provincial writing, this late colonial poetry is generally technically somewhat old-fashioned, deploying the means and methods of Pope and Gray in the era of Blake and Burns.

On the whole, the development of poetry in the American colonies mirrors the development of the colonies themselves. The early poetry is dominated by the need to preserve the integrity of the Puritan ideals that created the settlement in the first place. As the colonists grew in confidence, the poetry they wrote increasingly reflected their drive towards independence. This shift in subject matter was not reflected in the mode of writing which tended to be conservative, to say the least. This can be seen as a product of the physical remove at which American poets operated from the center of English-language poetic developments in London.

Postcolonial poetry

The first significant poet of the independent United States was William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878), whose great contribution was to write rhapsodic poems on the grandeur of prairies and forests. Other notable poets to emerge in the early and middle 19th century include Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882), John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892), Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849), Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809–1894), Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), James Russell Lowell (1819–1891), and Sidney Lanier (1842–1881). As might be expected, the works of these writers are united by a common search for a distinctive American voice to distinguish them from their British counterparts. To this end, they explored the landscape and traditions of their native country as materials for their poetry.

The most significant example of this tendency may be The Song of Hiawatha by Longfellow. This poem uses Native American tales collected by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, who was superintendent of Indian affairs for Michigan from 1836 to 1841. Longfellow also imitated the meter of the Finnish epic poem Kalevala, possibly to avoid British models. The resulting poem, while a popular success, did not provide a model for future U.S. poets.

Another factor that distinguished these poets from their British contemporaries was the influence of the transcendentalism of the poet/philosophers Emerson and Thoreau. Transcendentalism was the distinctly American strain of the English Romanticism that began with William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Emerson, as much as anyone the founder of transcendentalism, had visited England as a young man to meet these two English poets, as well as Thomas Carlyle. While Romanticism mellowed into Victorianism in post-reform England, it grew more energetic in America from the 1830s through to the Civil War.

Edgar Allan Poe was probably the most recognized American poet outside of America during this period. Diverse authors in France, Sweden and Russia were heavily influenced by his works, and his poem "The Raven" swept across Europe, translated into many languages. In the twentieth century the American poet William Carlos Williams said of Poe that he is the only solid ground on which American poetry is anchored.

An American idiom

The final emergence of a truly indigenous English-language poetry in the United States was the work of two poets, Walt Whitman (1819–1892) and Emily Dickinson (1830–1886). On the surface, these two poets could not have been less alike. Whitman's long lines, derived from the metric of the King James Version of the Bible, and his democratic inclusiveness stand in stark contrast with Dickinson's concentrated phrases and short lines and stanzas, derived from Protestant hymnals. What links them is their common connection to Emerson (a blurb from whom Whitman printed on the first edition of Leaves of Grass), and a daring quality in regard to the originality of their visions. These two poets can be said to represent the birth of two major American poetic idioms—the free metric and direct emotional expression of Whitman, and the gnomic obscurity and irony of Dickinson—both of which would profoundly stamp the American poetry of the 20th century.

The development of these idioms can be traced through the works of poets such as Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869–1935), Stephen Crane (1871–1900), Robert Frost (1874–1963) and Carl Sandburg (1878–1967). As a result, by the beginning of the 20th century the outlines of a distinctly new poetic tradition were clear to see.

Modernism and after

This new idiom, combined with a study of 19th-century French poetry, formed the basis of the United States input into 20th-century English-language poetic modernism. Ezra Pound (1885–1972) and T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) were the leading figures at the time, but numerous other poets made important contributions. These included Gertrude Stein (1874–1946), Wallace Stevens (1879–1955), William Carlos Williams (1883–1963), Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) (1886–1961), Marianne Moore (1887–1972), E. E. Cummings (1894–1962), and Hart Crane (1899–1932). Williams was to become exemplary for many later poets because he, more than any of his peers, contrived to marry spoken American English with free verse rhythms.

While these poets were unambiguously aligned with High modernism, other poets active in the United States in the first third of the 20th century were not. Among the most important of the latter were those who were associated with what came to be known as the New Criticism. These included John Crowe Ransom (1888–1974), Allen Tate (1899–1979), and Robert Penn Warren (1905–1989). Other poets of the era, such as Archibald MacLeish (1892–1982), experimented with modernist techniques but were also drawn towards more traditional modes of writing.

The modernist torch was carried in the 1930s mainly by the group of poets known as the Objectivists. These included Louis Zukofsky (1904–1978), Charles Reznikoff (1894–1976), George Oppen (1908–1984), Carl Rakosi (1903–2004) and, later, Lorine Niedecker (1903–1970). Kenneth Rexroth, who was published in the Objectivist Anthology, was, along with Madeline Gleason (1909–1973), a forerunner of the San Francisco Renaissance.

Many of the Objectivists came from urban communities of new immigrants, and this new vein of experience and language enriched the growing American idiom. Another source of enrichment was the emergence into the American poetic mainstream of African American poets such as Langston Hughes (1902–1967) and Countee Cullen (1903–1946).

World War II and after

Archibald Macleish called John Gillespie Magee, Jr. "the first poet of the war".

The Second World War saw the emergence of a new generation of poets, many of whom were influenced by Wallace Stevens. Richard Eberhart (born 1904), Karl Shapiro (1913–2000) and Randall Jarrell (1914–1965) all wrote poetry that sprang from experience of active service. Together with Elizabeth Bishop (1911–1979), Theodore Roethke (1908–1963) and Delmore Schwartz (1913–1966), they formed a generation of poets that in contrast to the preceding generation often wrote in traditional verse forms.

After the war, a number of new poets and poetic movements emerged. John Berryman (1914–1972) and Robert Lowell (1917–1977) were the leading lights in what was to become known as the confessional movement, which was to have a strong influence on later poets like Sylvia Plath (1932–1963) and Anne Sexton (1928–1974). Both Berryman and Lowell were closely acquainted with modernism, but were mainly interested in exploring their own experiences as subject matter and a style that Lowell referred to as "cooked", that is consciously and carefully crafted.

In contrast, the Beat poets, who included such figures as Allen Ginsberg (1926–1997), Gregory Corso (1930–2001), Joanne Kyger (born 1934), Gary Snyder (born 1930), Diane Di Prima (born 1934), Denise Levertov (1923–1997), Amiri Baraka (born 1934) and Lawrence Ferlinghetti (born 1919), were distinctly raw. Reflecting, sometimes in an extreme form, the more open, relaxed and searching society of the 1950s and 1960s, the Beats pushed the boundaries of the American idiom in the direction of demotic speech perhaps further than any other group.

Around the same time, the Black Mountain poets, under the leadership of Charles Olson (1910–1970), were working at Black Mountain College. Somewhere between raw and cooked, these poets were exploring the possibilities of open form but in a much more programmatic way than the Beats. The main poets involved were Robert Creeley (born 1926), Robert Duncan (1919–1988), Ed Dorn (1929–1999), Paul Blackburn (1926–1971), Hilda Morley (1919–1998), John Wieners (1934–2002), and Larry Eigner (1927–1996). They based their approach to poetry on Olson's 1950 essay Projective Verse, in which he called for a form based on the line, a line based on human breath and a mode of writing based on perceptions juxtaposed so that one perception leads directly to another. Cid Corman (born 1924) and Theodore Enslin (born 1924) are often associated with this group but are perhaps more correctly viewed as direct descendants of the Objectivists.

The Beats and some of the Black Mountain poets are often considered to have been responsible for the San Francisco Renaissance. However, as previously noted, San Francisco had become a hub of experimental activity from the 1930s thanks to Rexroth and Gleason. Other poets involved in this scene included Charles Bukowski (1920–1994) and Jack Spicer (1925–1965). These poets sought to combine a contemporary spoken idiom with inventive formal experiment.

Jerome Rothenberg (born 1931) is well-known for his work in ethnopoetics, but he was also the coiner of the term "deep image". Deep image poetry is inspired by the symbolist theory of correspondences. Other poets who worked with deep image include Robert Kelly (born 1935), Diane Wakoski (born 1937) and Clayton Eshleman (born 1935).

Just as the West Coast had the San Francisco Renaissance, the East Coast produced the New York School. This group aimed to write poetry that spoke directly of everyday experience in everyday language and produced a poetry of urbane wit and elegance that contrasts strongly with the work of their Beat contemporaries. Leading members of the group include John Ashbery (born 1927), Frank O'Hara (1926–1966), Kenneth Koch (1925–2002), James Schuyler (1923–1991), Richard Howard (born 1929), Ted Berrigan (1934–1983), Anne Waldman (born 1945) and Bernadette Mayer (born 1945).

John Cage (1912–1992), one-time Black Mountain College resident and composer, and Jackson Mac Low (born 1922) both wrote poetry based on chance or aleatory techniques. Inspired by Zen, Dada and scientific theories of indeterminacy, they were to prove to be important influences on the 1970's U.S *avant-garde*.

James Merrill (1926–1995), off to the side of all these groups and very much sui generis, was a poet of great formal virtuosity and the author of the epic poem The Changing Light at Sandover (1982). The influence of Wallace Stevens is evident throughout Merrill's verse, as well as the musical precedents of German and French poetry (languages taught to Merrill by his childhood governess).

American poetry now

The last thirty years in United States poetry has seen the emergence of a number of groups and trends. It is probably too soon to judge the long-term importance of these, and what follows is merely a brief outline sketch.

The 1970s saw a revival of interest in surrealism, with the most prominent poets working in this field being Andrei Codrescu (born 1946), Russell Edson (born 1935) and Maxine Chernoff (born 1952). Performance poetry also emerged from the Beat and hippie happenings, and the talk-poems of David Antin (born 1932) and ritual events performed by Rothenberg, to become a serious poetic stance which embraces multiculturalism and a range of poets from a multiplicity of cultures. This mirrored a general growth of interest in poetry by African Americans including Gwendolyn Brooks (born 1917), Maya Angelou (born 1928), Ishmael Reed (born 1938) and Nikki Giovanni (born 1943).

The most coherent *avant-garde* grouping during this period has been the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets. L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry is extremely writerly, discounting speech as the basis for verse, and dedicated to questioning the referentiality of language and the dominance of the sentence as the basic unit of syntax.

This group includes a very high proportion of women, which mirrors another general trend; the rediscovery and promotion of poetry written both by earlier and contemporary women poets. In addition to L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, a number of the most prominent African American poets to emerge are women, and other prominent women writers include Adrienne Rich (born 1929) and Amy Gerstler (born 1956).

The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E group also contained an unusually high proportion of academics. Poetry has tended to move more and more into the campus, with a growth in creative writing and poetics programs providing an equal growth in the number of teaching posts available to practicing poets. This increased professionalization is one of the clearest developments and one which seems likely to have unpredictable consequences for the future of poetry in the United States.

The 1980s saw the emergence of a group of poets who became known as the New Formalists. These poets, who included Molly Peacock, Brad Leithauser, Dana Gioia and Marilyn Hacker, write in traditional forms and have declared that this return to rhyme and more fixed meters is the new *avant-garde*. However, critics of the group have compared their traditionalism with the conservative politics of the Reagan era. It is intended as an insult.

Concurrently, a Chicago construction worker named Marc Smith was growing bored with academic poetry readings. In 1984, at the Get Me High Lounge, Smith devised the format that has come to be known as slam poetry. A competitive poetry performance, poetry slam opened the door for a new generation of writers, spoken word performers, and audiences by emphasizing a style of writing that is edgy and topical.

Poetry slam has produced noted poets like Alix Olson, Taylor Mali, and Saul Williams, as well as inspired hundreds of open mics.

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3 Periods

3.1 Ancient Poetry

3.1.1 Augustan Poetry

Augustan poetry is the poetry that flourished during the reign of Caesar Augustus as Emperor of Rome, most notably including the works of Virgil, Horace, and Ovid. This poetry was more explicitly political than the poetry that had preceded it, and it was

distinguished by a greater degree of satire. In English literature, **Augustan poetry** is a branch of **Augustan literature**, and refers to the poetry of the eighteenth-century, specifically the first half of the century. The term comes most originally from a term that George I had used for himself. He saw himself as an Augustus. Therefore, the British poets picked up that term as a way of referring to their own endeavors, for it fit in another respect: 18th century English poetry was political, satirical, and marked by the central philosophical problem of whether the individual or society took precedence as the subject of verse.

Overview

In the Augustan era, poets were even more conversant with each other than were novelists (see Augustan prose). Their works were written as direct counterpoint and direct expansion of one another, with each poet writing satire when in opposition. There was a great struggle over the nature and role of the pastoral in the early part of the century, primarily between Ambrose Philips and Alexander Pope and then between their followers, but such a controversy was only possible because of two simultaneous movements. The more general movement, carried forward only with struggle between poets, was the same as was present in the novel: the invention of the subjective self as a worthy topic, the emergence of a priority on *individual* psychology, against the insistence on all acts of art being *performance* and public gesture designed for the benefit of society at large. Underneath this large banner raged multiple individual battles. The other development, one seemingly agreed upon by both sides, was a gradual expropriation and reinvention of all the Classical forms of poetry. Every genre of poetry was recast, reconsidered, and used to serve new functions. Ode, ballad, elegy, satire, parody, song, and lyric poetry would all be adapted from their older uses. Odes would cease to be encomium, ballads cease to be narratives, elegies cease to be sincere memorials, satires no longer be specific entertainments, parodies no longer be *bravura* stylistic performances, songs no longer be personal lyrics, and the lyric would become a celebration of the individual rather than a lover's complaint.

These two developments (the emphasis on the individual and the willingness to reinvent genre) can be seen as extensions of Protestantism, as Max Weber argued, for they represent a gradual increase in the implications of Martin Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and the Calvinist emphasis on individual revelation of the divine (and therefore the competence and worth of the individual). It can be seen as a growth of the power and assertiveness of the bourgeoisie and an echo of the displacement of the worker from the home in growing industrialization, as Marxists such as E.P. Thompson have argued, for people were no longer allowed to remain in their families and communities when they had to travel to a factory or mill, and therefore they grew accustomed to thinking of themselves as isolates. It can be argued that the development of the subjective individual against the social individual was a natural reaction to trade over other methods of economic production, or as a reflection of a breakdown in social cohesion unconsciously set in motion by enclosure and the migration of the poor to the cities. There are many other plausible and coherent explanations of the causes of the rise of the *subjective self*, but whatever the prime cause, poets showed the strains of the

development as a largely conservative set of voices argued for a social person and largely emergent voices argued for the individual person.

Alexander Pope, the Scribblerans, and poetry as social act

The entire Augustan age's poetry was dominated by Alexander Pope. Since Pope began publishing when very young and continued to the end of his life, his poetry is a reference point in any discussion of the 1710's, 1720's, 1730's, or even 1740's. Furthermore, Pope's abilities were recognized early in his career, so contemporaries acknowledged his superiority, for the most part. Indeed, seldom has a poet been as publically acknowledged as a leader for as long as was Pope, and, unlike the case with figures such as John Dryden or William Wordsworth, a second generation did not emerge to eclipse his position. From a technical point of view, few poets have ever approached Alexander Pope's perfection at the iambic pentameter closed couplet ("heroic verse"), and his lines were repeated often enough to lend quite a few cliches and proverbs to modern English usage. However, if Pope had few rivals, he had many enemies. His technical perfection did not shelter him from political, philosophical, or religious opponents, and Pope himself was quarrelsome in print. His very technical superiority led Pope to injudicious improvements in his editing and translation of other authors. However, Pope and his enemies (often called "the Dunces" because of Pope's successful satirizing of them in The Dunciad of 1727 and 1738) fought over central matters of the proper subject matter for poetry and the proper pose of the poetic voice, and the excesses and missteps, as much as the achievements, of both sides demonstrated the stakes of the battle.

The Pope/Philips debate occurred in 1709 when Alexander Pope published his Pastorals. Pope's Pastorals were of the four seasons. When they appeared, Thomas Tickell, a member of the "Little Senate" of Addison's (see above) at Button's Coffee-shop, wrote an evaluation in Guardian that praised Ambrose Philips's pastorals above Pope's. Pope replied by writing in Guardian with a mock praise of Philips's Patorals that heaped scorn on them. Pope quoted Philips's worst lines, mocked his execution, and delighted in pointing out his empty lines. Philips responded by putting a staff in the floor of Button's with which to beat Pope, should he appear. In 1717, Pope explained his theory of the pastoral in the Discourse on Pastoral Poetry. He argued that any depictions of shepherds and their mistresses in the pastoral must not be updated shepherds, that they must be icons of the Golden Age: “we are not to describe our shepherds as shepherds at this day really are, but as they may be conceived then to have been, when the best of men followed the employment" (Gordon). Philips's *Pastorals* were not particularly awful poems, but they did reflect his desire to "update" the pastoral.

In 1724, Philips would update poetry again by writing a series of odes dedicated to "all ages and characters, from Walpole, the steerer of the realm, to Miss Pulteney in the nursery." To do so, he shortened his line length to 3.5', or almost half a normal iambic pentameter line. Henry Carey was one of the best at satirizing these poems, and his Namby Pamby became a hugely successful obliteration of Philips and Philips's endeavor. What is notable about Philips against Pope, however, is not so much the particular poems and their answers as the fact that *both* poets were adapting the pastoral and the ode, both

altering it. Pope's insistence upon a Golden Age pastoral no less than Philips's desire to update it meant making a political statement. While it is easy to see in Ambrose Philips an effort at modernist triumph, it is no less the case that Pope's artificially restricted pastoral was a statement of what the ideal (based on an older Feudal arrangement) should be.

The Scribbleran Club wrote poetry as well as prose, and the club included among its number John Gay, who was not only a friend and collaborator of Pope's, but also one of the major voices of the era. John Gay, like Pope, adapted the pastoral. Gay, working at Pope's suggestion, wrote a parody of the updated pastoral in The Shepherd's Week. He also imitated Juvenal with his Trivia. In 1728, his The Beggar's Opera was an enormous success, running for an unheard-of eighty performances. All of these works have in common a gesture of compassion. In *Trivia*, Gay writes as if commisserating with those who live in London and are menaced by falling masonry and bedpan slops, and *The Shepherd's Week* features great detail of the follies of everyday life and eccentric character. Even *The Beggar's Opera,* which is a clear satire of Robert Walpole, portrays its characters with compassion. The villains have pathetic songs in their own right and are acting out of exigency rather than boundless evil. Gay's tone is almost the opposite of Jonathan Swift's. Swift famously said that he hated mankind but loved individual humans, and Gay's poetry shows a love of mankind and a gentle mocking of overly serious or pretentious individuals.

Old style poetic parody involved imitation of the style of an author for the purposes of providing amusement, but not for the purpose of ridicule. The person imitated was not satirized. Ambrose Philips's idea was of adapting and updating the pastoral to represent a contemporary lyric (i.e. to make it a form for housing the personal love complaints of modern shepherds), where individual personalities would be expressed, and this desire to move from the universal, typical, and idealized shepherd to the real, actual, and individual shepherd was the heart of the debate. Prior to Ambrose Philips, John Philips, whose The Splendid Shilling of 1701 was an imitation of John Milton's blank verse for a discussion of the miseries of poverty, was championed by Addison's Kit-Kats. The Splendid Shilling, like Pope's poetry and the other poetry by the "Tory Wits," is a statement of the social man. The shilling, the poverty, and the complaint are all posited in terms of the man in London, the man in society and conviviality, and not the man as a particular individual or with idiosyncracies. It was a poem wholly consonant with the poetry of the Scribblerians. After Ambrose Philips, though, poets would begin to speak of peculiarities and actualities, rather than ideals. It is a debate and a poetic tension that would remain all the way to Samuel Johnson's discussion of the "streaks of the tulip" in the last part of the century (*Rasselas*).

Translation and adaptation as statement

Gay adapted Juvenal, as Pope had already adapted Virgil's Eclogues, and throughout the Augustan era the "updating" of Classical poets was a commonplace. These were not translations, but rather they were imitations of Classical models, and the imitation allowed poets to veil their responsibility for the comments they made. Alexander Pope

would manage to refer to the King himself in unflattering tones by "imitating" Horace in his Epistle to Augustus. Similarly, Samuel Johnson wrote a poem that falls into the Augustan period in his "imitation of Juvenal" entitled London. The imitation was inherently conservative, since it argued that all that was good was to be found in the old classical education, but these imitations were used for progressive purposes, as the poets who used them were often doing so to complain of the political situation.

Readers of adaptations were assumed to know the originals. Indeed, original translation was one of the standard tests in grammar school. Pope's translation of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey was not an attempt to make the works available to an Augustan audience, but rather to make a new work occupying a middle ground between Homer and Pope. The translation had to be textually accurate, but it was intended to be a Pope translation, with felicity of phrase and neatness of rhyme from Pope. Additionally, Pope would "versify" John Donne, although his work was widely available. The changes Pope makes are the content, the commentary. Pope's edition of Shakespeare claimed to be textually perfect (although it was infamously corrupt), but his desire to adapt lead him to injudicious attempts at "smoothing" and "cleaning" Shakespeare's lines.

In satire, Pope achieved two of the greatest poetic satires of all time in the Augustan period, and both arose from the imitative and adaptive demands of parody. The Rape of the Lock (1712 and 1714) was a gentle mock-heroic, but it was built upon Virgil's Aeneid. Pope applied Virgil's heroic and epic structure to the story of a young woman (Arabella Fermor) having a lock of hair snipped by an amorous baron (Lord Petre). The structure of the comparison forced Pope to invent mythological forces to overlook the struggle, and so he borrowed sylphs from ludicrous (to him) alchemist Paracelsus and makes them the ghosts of vain women. He created an epic battle over a game of Ombre, leading to a fiendish appropriation of the lock of hair. Finally, a deux ex machina appears and the lock of hair experiences an apotheosis. To some degree, Pope was adapting Jonathan Swift's habit, in A Tale of a Tub, of pretending that metaphors were literal truths, and he was inventing a mythos to go with the everyday. The parody was in no way a comment on Virgil. Instead, it was an imitation made to serve a new purpose. The epic was transformed from a paean to national foundations to a satire on the outlandish self-importance of the country nobility. The poem was an enormous success, at least with the general public.

After that success, Pope wrote some works that were more philosophical and more political and therefore more controversial, such as the Essay on Criticism and Essay on Man, as well as a failed play. As a result, a decade after the gentle, laughing satire of The Rape of the Lock, Pope wrote his masterpiece of invective and specific opprobrium in The Dunciad. Pope had translated Homer and produced an errant edition of William Shakespeare, and the 1727 Dunciad was an updating and redirection of John Dryden's poison-pen battle of MacFlecknoe. The story is that of the goddess Dulness choosing a new avatar. She settles upon one of Pope's personal enemies, Lewis Theobald, and the poem describes the coronation and heroic games undertaken by all of the dunces of Great Britain in celebration of Theobald's ascension. When Pope's enemies responded to The Dunciad with attacks, Pope produced the Dunciad Variorum, which culled from each

dunce's attack any comments unflattering to another dunce, assembled the whole into a commentary upon the original Dunciad and added a critical comment by Pope professing his innocence and dignity. In 1743, Pope issued a new version of The Dunciad ("The Dunciad B") with a fourth book added. He also changed the hero from Lewis Theobald to Colley Cibber. In the fourth book of the new *Dunciad*, Pope expressed the view that, in the battle between light and dark (enlightenment and the dark ages), Night and Dulness were fated to win, that all things of value were soon going to be subsumed under the curtain of unknowing.

John Gay and Alexander Pope belong on one side of a line separating the celebrants of the individual and the celebrants of the social. Pope wrote *The Rape of the Lock*, he said, to settle a disagreement between two great families, to laugh them into peace. He wrote the *Essay on Criticism* and the *Essay on Man* to emphasize, time and again, the public nature of human life and the social role of letters. Even *The Dunciad*, which seems to be a serial killing of everyone on Pope's enemies list, sets up these figures as expressions of dangerous and *antisocial* forces in letters. Theobald and Cibber are marked by vanity and pride, by having no care for morality, so long as they are famous. The hireling pens Pope attacks mercilessly in the heroic games section of the *Dunciad* are all embodiments of avarice and lies. Similarly, Gay, although he always has strong touches of personal humor and the details of personal life, writes of political society, of social dangers, and of follies that must be addressed to protect the greater whole. On the other side of this line, however, were people who agreed with the *politics* of Gay and Pope (and Swift), but not in approach.

Sentiment and the poetry of the individual

The other side of this division include, early in the Augustan Age, James Thomson and Edward Yonge. Thomson's The Seasons (1730) are nature poetry, but they are unlike Pope's notion of the Golden Age pastoral. Thomson's poet speaks in the first person from direct observation, and his own mood and sentiment color the descriptions of landscape. Winter, in particular, is melancholy and meditative. Edward Yonge's Night Thoughts (1742 - 1744) was immediately popular. It was, even more than *Winter*, a poem of deep solitude, melancholy, and despair. In these two poets, there is the stirrings of the lyric as the Romantics would see it: the celebration of the private individual's idiosyncratic (but paradigmatic) responses to the visions of the world. Both of these works appeared in Pope's lifetime, and both were popular, but the older, more conservative poetry maintained its hold for a while to come. On the other hand, Thomas Gray's Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard set off a new craze for poetry of melancholy reflection.

Gray's *Elegy* appeared in 1750, and it immediately set new ground. First, it was written in the "country," and not in or as opposed to London. In fact, the poem makes no reference at all to the life of the city and society, and it follows no classical model. Further, it is not an elegiac in the strictest sense. Also, the poem sets up the solitary observer in a privileged position. It is only by being solitary that the poet can speak of a truth that is wholly individually realized, and the poem is a series of revelations that have been granted only to the contemplative (and superior) mind. After Gray, a group often referred

to as the Churchyard Poets began imitating his pose, if not his style. These imitations followed no convenient or conventional political or religious division. Oliver Goldsmith (The Deserted Village), Thomas Warton, and even Thomas Percy (The Hermit of Warkworth), each conservative by and large and Classicist (Gray himself was a professor of Greek), took up the new poetry of solitude and loss. Additionally, Thomas Chatterton, among the younger poets, also followed. The only things these poets had in common was that they were not centered in London (except Chatterton, for a time), and each of them reflected, in one way or another, on the devastation of the countryside.

Therefore, when the Romantics emerged at the end of the 18th century, they were not assuming a radically new invention of the subjective self themselves, but merely formalizing what had gone before. Similarly, the later 18th century saw a ballad revival, with Thomas Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry. The relics were not always very ancient, as many of the ballads dated from only the 17th century (e.g. the Bagford Ballads or The Dragon of Wantley in the Percy Folio), and so what began as an antiquarian movement soon became a folk movement. When this folk-inspired impulse combined with the solitary and individualistic impulse of the Churchyard Poets, Romanticism was nearly inevitable.

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4 Styles

4.1 Acrostic

An **acrostic** (from the late Greek *akróstichon*, from *ákros*, "extreme", and *stíchos*, "verse") is a poem or other text written in an alphabetic script, in which the first letter, syllable or word of each verse, paragraph or other recurring feature in the text spells out another message.

Acrostics may simply spell out the letters of the alphabet in order; these acrostics occur in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and in certain of the Psalms of the Hebrew Bible. Two notable acrostic Psalms are the long Psalm 119, which typically is printed in subsections named after the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, each of which is featured in that section; and Psalm 145 (commonly referred to as "Ashrei"), which is recited three times a day in the Jewish services. Or, the acrostic may spell out a name or some other message, such as the acrostic contained in the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, where the letters of the acrostic are embellished with ornate capital letters. Or, the acrostic may be used as a form of steganography, seeking to conceal the message rather than to proclaim it.

Here is an example in English, an Edgar Allan Poe poem titled simply *An Acrostic*:

> ***E****lizabeth it is in vain you say*
> *"**L**ove not" — thou sayest it in so sweet a way:*
> ***I****n vain those words from thee or L.E.L.*

***Z**antippe's talents had enforced so well:*
***A**h! if that language from thy heart arise,*
***B**reath it less gently forth — and veil thine eyes.*
***E**ndymion, recollect, when Luna tried*
***T**o cure his love — was cured of all beside —*
***H**is folly — pride — and passion — for he died.*

4.2 Concrete Poetry

Concrete poetry is poetry in which the typographical arrangement of words is as important in conveying the intended effect as the conventional elements of the poem, such as meaning of words, rhythm, rhyme and so on. It is the self-consciously radical form of the technique of **visual poetry** (a term sometimes applied to concrete poetry).

The term was coined in the 1950s, and in 1956 an international exhibition of concrete poetry was shown in São Paulo, inspired by the work of Carlos Drummond de Andrade. Two years later, a Brazilian concrete poetry manifesto was published. One of the earliest Brazilian pioneers, Augusto de Campos, has assembled a Web site of old and new work (see external links below), including the manifesto. Its principal tenet is that using words as part of a specifically visual work allows for the words themselves to become part of the poetry, rather than just unseen vehicles for ideas. The original manifesto says:

> concrete poetry begins by assuming a total responsibility before language: accepting the premise of the historical idiom as the indispensable nucleus of communication, it refuses to absorb words as mere indifferent vehicles, without life, without personality without history - taboo-tombs in which convention insists on burying the idea.

Although the term is quite modern, the idea of using typography to enhance the meaning of a poem is an old one. Early examples include the following poem by George Herbert (1593-1633) (here in a scan of the 1633 edition of Herbert's *The Temple*), in which the poem is merely a comment on the title, which presents the poem's principal meaning typographically:

Another early precursor from Herbert is "Easter Wings", in which the overall typography of the poem is in the shape of its subject. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll contains a similar effect in the form of the mouse's "Tale," which is in the shape of a tail. More recent poets sometimes cited as influences by concrete poets include Guillaume Apollinaire, E. E. Cummings, for his various typographical innovations, and Ezra Pound, for his use of Chinese ideograms, as well as various dadaists.

Concrete poetry, however, is a more self-conscious form than these predecessors, using typography in part to comment on the fundamental instability of language. Among the better known concrete poets in the English language are Ian Hamilton Finlay and Edwin Morgan. Several important concrete poets have also been significant sound poets, among them Henri Chopin, and Bob Cobbing.

4.3 Christian Poetry

Christian poetry is any poetry that contains Christian teachings, themes, or references. The influence of Christianity on poetry has been great in any area that Christianity has taken hold. Christian poems often directly reference the Bible, while others provide allegory.

Overview of Christian poetry

Poetic forms have been used by Christians since the recorded history of the faith begins. The earliest Christian poetry, in fact, appears in the New Testament. Canticles such as the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis, which appear in the Gospel of Luke, take the Biblical poetry of the psalms of the Hebrew Bible as their models. Many Biblical scholars also believe that St Paul of Tarsus quotes bits of early Christian hymns in his epistles. Passages such as Philippians 2:5-11:

> *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*
> *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*
> *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*
> *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*
> *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:*
> *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;*
> *And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* (KJV)

are thought by many Biblical scholars to represent early Christian hymns that were being quoted by the Apostle.

Within the world of classical antiquity, Christian poets often struggled with their relationship to the existing traditions of Greek and Latin poetry, which were of course heavily influenced by paganism. Paul quotes the pagan poets Aratus and Epimenides in Acts 17:28: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being: as certain also of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.'" Some early Christian poets such as Ausonius continued to include allusions to pagan deities and standard classical figures and allusions continued to appear in his verse. Other Christian poems of the late Roman Empire, such as the Psychomachia of Prudentius, cut back on allusions to Greek mythology, but continue the use of inherited classical forms.

Other early Christian poets were more innovative. The hymnodist Venantius Fortunatus wrote a number of important poems that are still used in the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church, such as the Vexilla Regis ("The Royal Standard") and *Pange, lingua, gloriosi proelium certaminis* ("Sing, O my tongue, of the glorious struggle"). From a

literary and linguistic viewpoint, these hymns represent important innovations; they turn away from Greek prosody and instead seem to have been based on the rhythmic marching songs of Roman armies.

A related issue concerned the literary quality of Christian scripture. Most of the New Testament was written in a sub-literary variety of koinê Greek, as was the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Old Latin Bible added further solecisms to those found in its source texts. None of the Christian scriptures were written to suit the tastes of those who were educated in classical Greek or Latin rhetoric. Educated pagans, seeing the sub-literary quality of the Christian scriptures, posed a problem for Christian apologists: why did the Holy Ghost write so badly? Some Christian writers such as Tertullian flatly rejected classical standards of rhetoric; "what has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" he asked.

The cultural prestige of classical literary standards was not so easy for other Christians to overcome. St Jerome, trained in the classical Latin rhetoric of Cicero, observed that dismay over the quality of existing Latin Bible translations was a major motivating factor that induced him to produce the Vulgate, which went on to become the standard Latin Bible, and remains the official Bible translation of the Roman Catholic Church. A fuller appreciation of the formal literary virtues of Biblical poetry remained unavailable for European Christians until 1754, when Robert Lowth (later made a bishop in the Church of England), kinder to the Hebrew language than his own, published Praelectiones Academicae de Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum, which identified parallelism as the chief rhetorical device within Hebrew poetry.

In many European vernacular literatures, Christian poetry appears among the earliest monuments of those literatures, and Biblical paraphrases in verse often precede Bible translations. In Old English poetry, the Dream of the Rood, a meditation on Christ's crucifixion which adapts Germanic heroic imagery and applies it to Jesus, is one of the earliest extant monuments of Old English literature. Dante Alighieri's The Divine Comedy represents one of the earliest monuments of Italian vernacular literature. Much Old Irish poetry was the work of Irish monks and is on religious themes. This story is repeated in most European languages.

Examples of Christian Poems

St. Patrick's Breastplate - Old Irish. 8th century prayer for protection
Piers Plowman (1360 - 1399) - Middle English, an allegory of correct Christian life, written in unrhymed alliterative verse
The Divine Comedy (1265 - 1321) - Italian. The author, Dante, is guided through Hell and Purgatory by Virgil and through Heaven by Beatrice. Uses complex rhyming (Terza rima).
Dies Iræ (13th century) - Thomas of Celano's celebrated sequence on the Last Judgment.
Paradise Lost (1667) and Paradise Regained (1671) - John Milton's English epics on the fall and salvation of the human race.

4.3.1 Biblical Poetry

The question whether the literature of the ancient Hebrews includes portions that may be called poetry is answered by the ancient Hebrews themselves. That the ancient Hebrews perceived there were poetical portions in their literature is shown by their entitling songs or chants such passages as Exodus 15:1-19 and Numbers 21:17-20; and a song or chant ("shir") is, according to the primary meaning of the term, poetry.

Characteristics of Ancient Hebrew Poetry

Rhyme

Ancient Hebrew poetry contains no rhyme. Although the first song mentioned above (Exodus 15:1-19) contains assonance at the ends of the lines, as in "anwehu" and "aromemenhu" (15:2), such consonance of "hu" (= "him") can not well be avoided in Hebrew, because many pronouns are affixed to words. This does not disqualify the works from being poetry: Shakespeare is very sparing in his use of rhyme.

There is no poem in the Old Testament with a final rhyme in every line; although Bellermann ("Versuch über die Metrik der Hebräer", 1813, p210) alludes to an exception, meaning probably Psalm 136, the rhyme throughout which poem consists only in the frequent repetition of the word "ḥasdo." H. Grimme has stated in his article "Durchgereimte Gedichte im A. T." (in Bardenhewer's "Biblische Studien", 1901, vi. 1, 2) that such poems are represented by Psalms 45, 54, and Sirach 44:1-14; but he regards the consonance of final consonants as rhyme, as with "oznek" and "abik" (Psalm 45:11), while rhyme proper demands at least the assonance of the preceding vowel.

All of this is not so surprising when considering the fact that rhyme was only popularized by the Arabs at a much later time, the Qur'an being the first large work of literature that unmistakably employed rhyme.

Unusual forms

The employment of unusual forms of language cannot be considered as a sign of ancient Hebrew poetry. In the sentences of Noah (such as Genesis 9:25-27) the form "lamo" occurs. But this form, which represents partly "lahem" and partly "lo", has many counterparts in Hebrew grammar, as, for example, "kemo" instead of "ke" (Exodus 15:5, 15:8); or "emo" = "them" (15:9, 15:15); or "emo" = "their" (Psalm 2:3); or "clemo" = "to them" (2:5)—forms found in passages for which no claim to poetical expressions is made. Then there are found "ḥayeto" = "beast" (Genesis 1:24), "osri" = "tying" (49:11), and "yeshu'atah" = "salvation" (Psalm 3:3)—three forms that probably retain remnants of the old endings of the nominative, genitive, and accusative: "u(n)," "i(n)," "a(n)."

Again, in Lamech's words, "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, harken unto my speech" (Genesis 4:23), the two words "he'ezin" and "imrah" attract attention, because they occur for the first time in this passage, although there had been an earlier

opportunity of using them: in Genesis 3:8 and 3:10, "He'ezin" = "to harken" could have been used just as well as its synonym "shama'" = "to hear".

It occurs also in Exodus 15:26; Numbers 23:18 (a sentence of Balaam); Deuteronomy 1:45, 32:1; Judges 5:3; Isaiah 1:2, 1:10, 8:9, 28:23, 32:9, 42:23, 51:4, 44:3; Book of Jeremiah 13:15; Hosea 5:1; Joel 1:2; Nehemiah 9:30 (in a prayer); and in 2 Chronicles 24:19 (probably an imitation of Isaiah 44:3).

Furthermore, "imrah" = "speech" might have been used instead of the essentially identical "dabar" in Genesis 9:1 and following, but its earliest use is, as stated above, in Genesis 4:23. It is found also in Deuteronomy 32:2, 33:9; 2 Samuel 22:31; Isaiah 5:24, 28:23, 39:4, 32:9; Psalm 12:7, etc.; Proverbs 30:5; and Lamentations 2:17. In place of "adam" = "man" (Genesis 1:26 and following) "enosh" is employed in Deuteronomy 32:26; Isaiah 8:1, 13:7, 13:12; 24:6, 33:8; 51:7, 51:12; 56:2; Jeremiah 20:10; Psalm 8:5, 9:20, 10:18, 55:14, 56:2, 66:12, 73:5, 90:3, 103:15, 104:15, 154:3; Job 4:17, 5:17, 7:1, 7:17, 9:2, 10:4; 13:9, 14:19, 15:14, 25:4, 25:6, 28:4, 28:13, 32:8; 33:12, 33:26, 36:25; 2 Chronicles 14:10 (compare the Aramaic "enash" in Daniel 2:10; Ezra 4:11, 6:11).

For a systematic review of similar unusual forms of Hebrew grammar and Hebrew words occurring in certain portions of the Old Testament see E. König, "Stilistik", etc., p277-283. Such forms have been called "dialectus poetica" since the publication of Robert Lowth's "Prælectiones de Sacra Poesi Hebræorum", iii. (1753); but this designation is ambiguous and can be accepted only in agreement with the rule *a parte potiori fit denominatio* for some of these unusual forms and words are found elsewhere than in the "songs" of the Old Testament.

These unusual forms and expressions do not occur in all songs, and there are several Psalms that have none of these peculiarities.

Parallelism

Not even the *parallelismus membrorum* is an absolutely certain indication of ancient Hebrew poetry. This "parallelism" is a phenomenon noticed in the portions of the Old Testament that are at the same time marked frequently by the so-called *dialectus poetica*; it consists in a remarkable correspondence in the ideas expressed in two successive verses; for example, the above-cited words of Lamech, "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, harken unto my speech" (Genesis 4:23), in which are found "he'ezin" and "imrah," show a remarkable repetition of the same thought.

But this ideal corythmy is not always present in the songs of the Old Testament or in the Psalter, as the following passages will show:

- "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation" (Exodus 15:2).
- "Saul and Jonathan, the beloved and the lovely, in life and in death they were not divided" (H. P. Smith, in "International Commentary," on 2 Samuel 1:23).

- "Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, and fine linen" (2 Samuel 1:24).
- "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season" (Psalm 1:3; compare 2:12);
- "I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about" (Psalm 3:6-7 [A. V. 5-6]; see also 4:7 and following, 9:4 and following).

Julius Ley ("Leitfaden der Hebräischen Metrik," 1887, p. 10) says therefore correctly that "the poets did not consider themselves bound by parallelism to such an extent as not to set it aside when the thought required it." This restriction must be made to James Robertson's view ("The Poetry of the Psalms", 1898, p160): "The distinguishing feature of the Hebrew poetry ... is the rhythmical balancing of parts, or parallelism of thought."

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5 Technical means

5.1 Accent

Accent in poetry refers to the *stressed* portion of a word. For example:

> "Let Us make man in Our image,
> according to Our likeness;
> let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,
> over the birds of the air, and over the cattle,
> over all the earth and over every creeping thing
> that creeps on the earth"
> Genesis 26-27

Now depending on where you place the *stress* in this poem you will get a different meaning. For example, place the stress or accent on 'Our' and suddenly we have more than one God. Place it on 'them' then, there would appear to be a lot of men already there ready to receive planetary rights. Place it strategically on 'fish', 'birds', 'cattle' then you've got a really nice wrap up with accenting the last 'earth' for emphasis. Of course, where to accent in poetry can be of hot debate.

5.2 Anacrusis

In poetry, **anacrusis** is the lead-in syllables that precede the first full measure, while, similarly, in music, it is the note or notes (even a phrase) which precede the first downbeat in a group. The latter sense is synonymous with **upbeat** and is often called the **pickup** or the **pickup note**.

In the *Star Spangled Banner*, the word *Oh* in the first line is in anacrusis in both the music and the anapestic meter of the poem:

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x    /    x   x   /    x   x   /     x  x  /
Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light. . .
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5.3 Assonance

Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds within a short passage of verse or prose.

Assonance is more a feature of verse than prose. It is used in (mainly modern) English-language poetry, and is particularly important in Old French, Spanish and Celtic languages.

Willy Russell's eponymous student Rita described it as "getting the rhyme wrong".

Examples

- Tr**y** to l**i**ght the f**i**re.
- He gave a n**o**d to the **o**fficer with the p**o**cket.
- fl**ee**t f**ee**t sw**ee**p by sl**ee**ping Gr**ee**ks.
- H**ay**den pl**ay**s **a** lot.
- "[E]very t**i**me **I** wr**i**te a r**hy**me, th**E**se p**E**ople th*i*nk *i*t's a cr**i**me" - Eminem, *Criminal*
- I'm **run**ning up **on** some**one**'s **lawn**s with **gun**s **drawn**. — Eminem *Rock Bottom*

5.4 Cæsura

A **cæsura**, in prosody, is an audible pause that breaks up a long line of verse. Also used in musical notation as a complete cessation of musical time.

Cæsuræ figure prominently in Greek and Latin versification, especially in the heroic verse form, dactylic hexameter.

Examples

Latin

Virgil's opening line of the *Æneid*:

> *Arma virumque cano,* || *Troiæ qui primus ab oris*
> ("I sing of arms and the man, who first from the shores of Troy. . .")

displays an obvious cæsura in the middle of the line [this is of course not the middle of the verse, as the writer says, the caesura is the so called penthemimeres (or B1 or

masculine caesura). the middle would be after the third (leaving apart, that a hexameter is katalectic), but not in the third foot], its usual position. The cæsura can move around freely in the lines of dactylic hexameter. Technically, in dactylic hexameter, a cæsura occurs anytime when the ending of a word coincides with the ending of a metrical foot; it is usually only called one when the ending also coincides with an audible pause in speaking the line. The ancient elegiac couplet form of the Greeks and Romans contained a line of dactylic hexameter followed by a line of pentameter; the pentameter often displayed an even more obvious cæsura:

> *Cynthia prima fuit; || Cynthia finis erit.*
> ("Cynthia was the first; Cynthia will be the last" — Horace)

Old English

But the cæsura was even more important to Old English verse than it was to Latin or Greek poetry. In Latin or Greek poetry, the cæsura could be suppressed for effect in any line at will. In the alliterative verse that is shared by most of the oldest Germanic languages, the cæsura is an ever-present and necessary part of the verse form itself. Consider the opening line of *Beowulf*:

> *Hwæt! we Gar-Dena || on geardagum*
> ("Lo! we Spear-Danes, in days of yore. . .")

Middle English

But compare that with some lines from William Langland's *Piers Plowman*:

> *I loked on my left half || as þe lady me taughte*
> *And was war of a womman || worþeli ycloþed.*
> ("I looked on my left side, as the lady told me to, and perceived an expensively dressed woman.")

Modern English

Now, compare that to lines from Hilary Duff's *Wake Up*:

> *Wake up, wake up || on a Saturday night*

Classification

A *masculine cæsura* is one that occurs after a stressed syllable; a *feminine cæsura* follows an unstressed syllable.

Cæsuraæ can occur in later forms of verse; in these, though, they are usually optional. The so-called ballad metre, or the common metre of the hymnodists, is usually thought of as a line of iambic tetrameter followed by a line of trimeter, but it can also be considered

a line of heptameter with a fixed cæsura at the fourth foot. Considering the break as a cæsura in these verse forms, rather than a beginning of a new line, explains how sometimes multiple cæsuræ can be found in this verse form (from the limerick Tom o' Bedlam):

> *From the hag and hungry goblin || that into rags would rend ye,*
> *And the spirits that stand || by the naked man || in the Book of Moons, defend ye!*

In later and freer verse forms, the cæsura is optional. It can, however, be used for rhetorical effect, as in Alexander Pope's line:

> *To err is human; || to forgive, divine.*

5.5 Dissonance

In poetry, **dissonance** is the deliberate avoidance of patterns of repeated vowel sounds (see assonance). In general, words that are difficult to pronounce or contain harsh, rasping consonants are considered dissonant. Dissonance in poetry is similar to cacophony and the opposite of euphony.

5.6 Kennings

In literature, a **kenning** is a compound poetic phrase substituted for the usual name of a person or thing. For example the sea in Old English could be called *seġl-rād* 'sail-road', *swan-rād* 'swan-road', *bæþ-weġ* 'bath-way' or *hwæl-weġ* 'whale-way'. In line 10 of the epic Beowulf the sea is called the *hronrāde* or 'whale-road'.

The word is derived from the Old Norse phrase kenna eitt við, "to express a thing in terms of another", and is prevalent throughout Norse, Anglo-Saxon literature and Celtic literature. Kennings are especially associated with the practice of alliterative verse, where they tend to become traditional fixed formulas.

A good knowledge of mythology was necessary in order to understand the kennings, which is one of the reasons why Snorri Sturluson composed the Younger Edda as a work of reference for aspiring poets. Here is an example of how important this knowledge was. It was composed by the Norwegian skald Eyvind Finnson (d. ca 990), and he compares the greed of king Harald Gråfell to the generosity of his predecessor Haakon the Good:

> *Bárum Ullr, of alla*
> *ímunlauks, á hauka*
> *fjöllum Fyrisvalla*
> *fræ Hákonar ævi*;
> *nú hefr fólkstríðir Fróða*
> *fáglýjaðra þýja*
> *meldr í móður holdi*

mellu dolgs of folginn

Translation in prose: Ullr, the onion of war! We carried the seeds of the Fyrisvellir on the mountains of the hawks during all of Hakon's life; now the enemy of the people has hidden the flour of Fródi's *hapless slaves* in *the flesh of the mother of the enemy of the giantesses*.

Onion of war is a kenning for "sword" and names for gods were often used as base word in kennings for men and women. *Ullr, the onion of war* means "warrior" and refers to king Harald. *The seeds of the Fyrisvellir means "gold" and refers to Hrólf Kraki's saga and it was the stolen gold that Hrólf's men spread on the wolds (vellir) south of Gamla Uppsala fleeing the Swedish king Adils in order to make the king's men dismount and collect the gold. The mountains of the hawks is based to the knowledge that royalty often had tame falcons and hawks that they carried on their arms, and means "arms". In the second part the flour of Fródi's hapless slaves means "gold" and in order to understand the kenning, we need to know Grottisöng and the legend of the Danish king Fródi. In Sweden, he bought the giantesses Fenja and Menja whom he had grind a mill that produced gold as if it were flour. The two giantesses were hapless because Fródi never let them rest and in revenge they finally produced bad luck and war until the mill broke down and Fródi's hall burnt. The flesh of the mother of the enemy of the giantesses refers to the Earth (Jörd), as she was the mother of Thor, the enemy of the Jotuns.*

A notable peculiarity of kennings is the possibility of constructing complicated kenning strings by means of consecutive substitution. For example, those who are keen in kenning readily know that *slaughter dew worm dance* is battle, since *slaughter dew* is blood, *blood worm* is sword, and *sword dance* is battle.

Another kind of wordplay is based on the inversion of kennings. For example, if *sword dance* is battle and *spear-din* is another kenning for battle, then sword may easily become "spear-din dancer".

The root "ken" is still used in Scandinavian (känna) and in German (kennen) whereas its English use is restricted to Scots and the North of England. In northern Britain it is used in describing what a person knows about something or what they see, especially when seafaring. For instance, if somebody queries the happenings of the North Sea, of a lighthouse resident, the watcher would say they are kenning this or that - "D'ye ken what a kenning is?". The root was applied to the "k" rune, pronounced similarly.

Modern kennings

Despite the archaic connotations of the term, many kennings exist in the modern lexis:

- "The devil's dandruff" - cocaine.
- "Falling over juice" - alcohol.
- "The Game of Kings" - various sports, primarily tennis.
- "The Beautiful Game" - football.

- "wood-pusher" - skateboarder

5.7 Meter

Meter (non-American spelling: **metre**) describes the linguistic sound patterns of verse. Scansion is the analysis of poetry's metrical and rhythmic patterns. Prosody is sometimes used to describe poetic meter, and indicates the analysis of similar aspects of language in linguistics. Meter is part of many formal verse forms.

Fundamentals

The precise units of poetic meter, like rhyme, vary from language to language and between poetic traditions. Often it involves precise arrangements of syllables into repeated patterns called *feet* within a line. In English verse the pattern of syllable stress differentiates feet, so English meter is founded on the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. In Latin verse, on the other hand, while the metrical units are similar, not syllable stresses but vowel lengths are the component parts of meter. Old English poetry used alliterative verse, a metrical pattern involving varied numbers of syllables but a fixed number of strong stresses in each line. Meters in English verse, and in the classical Western poetic tradition on which it is founded, are named by the characteristic foot and the number of feet per line. Thus, for example, blank verse is unrhymed "iambic pentameter," a meter composed of five feet per line in which the kind of feet called *iamb*s predominate. The origin of this tradition of metrics is ancient Greek poetry from Homer, Pindar, Hesiod, Sappho, and the great tragedians of Athens.

Technical Terms

- caesura: (literally, a *cut* or *cutting*) refers to a particular kind of break within a poetic line. In Latin and Greek meter, caesura refers to a break within a foot caused by the end of a word. In English poetry, a caesura refers to a sense of a break within a line. Caesurae play a particularly important role in Old English poetry.
- Inversion: when a foot of poetry is reversed with respect to the general meter of a poem.
- Headless: a meter where the first foot is missing its first syllable.
- Quantitative: see Quantitative#Use in prosody and poetry

Common Feet

The most common characteristic feet of English verse are the iamb in two syllables and the anapest in three. (See Foot (prosody) for a complete list of the metrical feet and their names.)

Greek and Latin

The **metrical "feet"** in the classical languages were based on the length of time taken to pronounce each syllable, which were categorized as either "long" syllables or "short" syllables. The foot is often compared to a musical measure and the long and short syllables to whole notes and half notes. In English poetry, feet are determined by emphasis rather than length, with stressed and unstressed syllables serving the same function as long and short syllables in classical meter.

The basic unit in Greek and Latin prosody is a mora, which is defined as a single short syllable. A long syllable is equivalent to two moras. A long syllable contains either a long vowel, a diphthong, or a short vowel followed by two or more consonants. Various rules of elision sometimes prevent a grammatical syllable from making a full syllable.

The most important Classical meter is the dactylic hexameter, the meter of Homer and Virgil. This form uses verses of six feet. The first four feet are dactyls, but can be spondees. The fifth foot is always a dactyl. The sixth foot is either a spondee or a trochee. The initial syllable of either foot is called the *ictus*, the basic "beat" of the verse. There is usually a caesura after the ictus of the third foot. The opening line of the *Æneid* is a typical line of dactylic hexameter:

……..

6 Verse

Most **verse** writing uses meter as its primary organizational mode, as opposed to prose, which uses grammatical and discoursal units like sentences and paragraphs. Verse may also use rhyme and other technical devices that are often associated with poetry.

Not all verse is poetry. Generally speaking, what separates the two is that in poetry language achieves the highest possible level of condensation.

In popular music a verse roughly corresponds with a poetic stanza. It is often sharply contrasted with the chorus or refrain melodically, rhythmically, and harmonically, and assumes a higher level of dynamics and activity, often with added instrumentation. See: strophic form, verse-chorus form and Thirty-two-bar form.

Holy books such as the Bible or Qur'an are divided into small verses.

6.1 Accentual Verse

Accentual verse has a fixed number of stresses per line or stanza regardless of the number of syllables that are present. It is common in languages that are stress timed such as English as opposed to syllabic verse, which is common in syllable timed languages such as classical Latin.

Accentual verse derives its musical qualities by the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables in more or less regular patterns, as in this example: *to **be** or **not** to **be*** (bold represents stressed syllables). This is an example of the iamb, the metrical foot that is most commonly used in English-language poetry.

Another common effect is to alternate lines of different syllable count, or length. For example, in this verse from the ballad *Barbara Allen*, the first and third lines have four stresses each while the second and fourth have three.

In Scarlet towne, where I was borne,
There was a faire maid dwellin,
Made every youth crye wel-awaye !
Her name was Barbara Allen.

6.2 Alliterative verse

In prosody, **alliterative verse** is a form of verse that uses alliteration as the principal stylistic device to unify lines of poetry, as opposed to other devices such as rhyme.

The most intensively studied traditions of alliterative verse are those found in the oldest literature of many Germanic languages. Alliterative verse, in various forms, is found widely in the literary traditions of the early Germanic languages. The Old English epic *Beowulf*, as well as most other Old English poetry, the Bavarian *Muspillo*, the Old Saxon *Heliand*, and the Old Norse *Poetic Edda* all use alliterative verse.

Alliterative verse can be found in many other languages as well, although rarely with the systematic rigor of Germanic forms. The Finnish Kalevala and the Estonian Kalevipoeg both use alliterative forms derived from folk tradition. Traditional Turkic verse, for example that of the Uyghur, is also alliterative.

Common Germanic origins and features

The poetic forms found in the various Germanic languages are not identical, but there is sufficient similarity to make it clear that they are closely related traditions, stemming from a common Germanic source. Our knowledge about that common tradition, however, is based almost entirely on inference from surviving poetry.

One statement we have about the nature of alliterative verse from a practicing alliterative poet is that of Snorri Sturluson in the Prose Edda. He describes metrical patterns and poetic devices used by skaldic poets around the year 1200. Snorri's description has served as the starting point for scholars to reconstruct alliterative meters beyond those of Old Norse. There have been many different metrical theories proposed, all of them attended with controversy. Looked at broadly, however, certain basic features are common from the earliest to the latest poetry.

Alliterative verse has been found in some of the earliest monuments of Germanic literature. The Golden horns of Gallehus, discovered in Denmark and likely dating to the fourth century, bears this Runic inscription in Proto-Norse:

```
x    / x x  x   /  x x      /  x  / x x
ek hlewagastiR holtijaR || horna tawidô
(I, Hlewagastir son of Holti, made the horn.)
```

This inscription contains four strongly stressed syllables, the first three of which alliterate on /h/, essentially the same pattern found in much latter verse.

Most alliterative poetry was composed and transmitted orally, and much has been lost through time since it went unrecorded. The degree to which writing may have altered this oral artform remains much in dispute. Nevertheless, there is a broad consensus among scholars that the written verse retains many (and some would argue almost all) of the features of the spoken language.

Alliteration fits naturally with the prosodic patterns of Germanic languages. Alliteration essentially involves matching the left edges of stressed syllables. Early Germanic languages share a left-prominent prosodic patterns. In other words, stress generally falls on the initial syllables of words, apart from some prefixes.

The core metrical features of traditional Germanic alliterative verse are as follows:

- A long-line is divided into two half-lines. Half-lines are also known as verses; the first is called the a-verse (or on-verse), the second the b-verse (or off-verse).
- A heavy pause, or cæsura, separates the verses.
- Each verse usually has two strongly stressed syllables, or "lifts".
- The first lift in the a- and b-verse must alliterate with each other.
- The second lift in the a-verse often alliterates, but is not required to do so.
- The second lift in the b-verse does not alliterate with the first lifts.

The patterns of unstressed syllables vary significantly in the alliterative traditions of different Germanic languages. The rules for these patterns remain controversial and imperfectly understood.

The need to find an appropriate alliterating word gave certain other distinctive features to alliterative verse as well. Alliterative poets drew on a specialized vocabulary of poetic synonyms rarely used in prose texts and used standard images and metaphors called *kennings*.

Old English poetic forms

Old English poetry appears to be based upon one system of verse construction, a system which remained remarkably consistent for centuries, although some patterns of classical Old English verse begin to break down at the end of the Old English period.

The most widely used system of classification is based on that developed by Eduard Sievers. It should be emphasized that Sievers' system is fundamentally a method of categorization rather than an full theory of meter. It does not, in other words, purport to describe the system the scops actually used to compose their verse, nor does it explain why certain patterns are favored or avoided. Sievers divided verses into five basic types, labeled A-E. The system is founded upon accent, alliteration, the quantity of vowels, and patterns of syllabic accentuation.

Accent

A line of poetry in Old English consists of two half-lines or verses, *distichs*, with a pause or *caesura* in the middle of the line. Each half-line has two accented syllables. The following example from *The Battle of Maldon*, spoken by the warrior Byrthnoth, shows this:

> *Hige sceal þe heardra, || heorte þe cenre,*
> *mod sceal þe mare, || þe ure mægen lytlað*
> ("Courage must be the greater, heart the bolder, spirit the greater, the more our strength is diminished.")

Alliteration

Alliteration is the principal binding agent of Old English poetry. Two syllables alliterate when they begin with the same sound; all vowels alliterate together, but the consonant clusters *st-*, *sp-* and *sc-* are treated as separate sounds (so *st-* does not alliterate with *s-* or *sp-*). On the other hand, in Old English unpalatized *c* (pronounced /k/) alliterated with palatized *c* (pronounced /ch/), and unpalatized *g* (pronounced /g/) likewise alliterated with palatized *g* (pronounced /y/). (This is because the poetic form was inherited from a time when these letters always sounded the same.)

The first stressed syllable of the off-verse, or second half-line, usually alliterates with one or both of the stressed syllables of the on-verse, or first half-line. The second stressed syllable of the off-verse does not usually alliterate with the others.

Survivals

Just as rhyme was seen in some Anglo-Saxon poems (e.g. *The Rhyming Poem*, and, to some degree, *The Proverbs of Alfred*), the use of alliterative verse continued into Middle English. Layamon's *Brut*, written in about 1215, uses a loose alliterative scheme. The Pearl Poet uses one of the most sophisticated alliterative schemes extant in *Pearl, Cleanness,* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Even later, William Langland's *Piers Plowman* is a major work in English that is written in alliterative verse; it was written between 1360 and 1399. Though a thousand years have passed between this work and the Golden Horn of Gallehus, the poetic form remains much the same:

> *A feir feld full of folk || fond I þer bitwene,*

Of alle maner of men, || þe mene and þe riche,
Worchinge and wandringe || as þe world askeþ.
(Among them I found a fair field full of people, all manner of men, the poor and the rich, working and wandering as the world requires.)

Alliteration was often used together with rhyme in Middle English work, as in *Pearl*. In general, Middle English poets were somewhat loose about the number of stresses; in *Sir Gawain*, for instance, there are many lines with additional alliterating stresses (e.g. l.2, "the borgh brittened and brent to brondez and askez"), and the medial pause is not always strictly maintained.

After Chaucer, alliterative verse became fairly uncommon, although some alliterative poems, such as Pierce the Ploughman's Crede (ca. 1400) and William Dunbar's superb Tretis of the Tua Marriit Women and the Wedo (ca. 1500) were written in the form in the 15th century. However, by 1600, the four-beat alliterative line had completely vanished, at least from the written tradition.

Alliterative verse is occasionally written by modern authors. J. R. R. Tolkien composed several poems about Middle-earth in Old English alliterative verse; these poems were found among his papers and published posthumously. W. H. Auden also wrote a number of his poems, including The Age of Anxiety , in alliterative verse, modified only slightly to fit the phonetic patterns of modern English. The noun-laden style of the headlines makes the style of alliterative verse particularly apt for Auden's poem:

Now the news. Night raids on
Five cities. Fires started.
Pressure applied by pincer movement
In threatening thrust. Third Division
Enlarges beachhead. Lucky charm
Saves sniper. Sabotage hinted
In steel-mill stoppage. . . .

Other poets who have experimented with modern alliterative English verse include Ezra Pound, and Richard Wilbur, whose *Junk* opens with the lines:

An axe angles
from my neighbor's ashcan;
It is hell's handiwork,
the wood not hickory.
The flow of the grain
not faithfully followed.
The shivered shaft
rises from a shellheap
Of plastic playthings,
paper plates.

Old Norse poetic forms

The inherited form of alliterative verse was modified somewhat in Old Norse poetry. In Old Norse, as a result of phonetic changes from the original common Germanic language, many unstressed syllables were lost. This lent Old Norse verse a characteristic terseness; the lifts tended to be crowded together at the expense of the weak syllables. In some lines, the weak syllables have been entirely suppressed. From the *Hávamál*:

> *Deyr fé || deyja frændr*
> ("Cattle die; friends die. . .")

The various names of the Old Norse verse forms are given in the Prose Edda by Snorri Sturluson. The Háttatal, or "list of verse forms", contains the names and characteristics of each of the fixed forms of Norse poetry.

Fornyrðislag

A verse form close to that of *Beowulf* existed in runestones and in the Old Norse Eddas; in Norse, it was called *fornyrðislag*, which means "past-words-made" or "way of ancient words". The Norse poets tended to break up their verses into stanzas of from two to eight lines (or more), rather than writing continuous verse after the Old English model. The loss of unstressed syllables made these verses seem denser and more emphatic. The Norse poets, unlike the Old English poets, tended to make each line a complete syntactic unit, avoiding enjambement where a thought begun on one line continues through the following lines; only seldom do they begin a new sentence in the second half-line. This example is from the *Waking of Angantyr*:

> *Vaki, Angantýr! || vekr þik Hervǫr,*
> *eingadóttir || ykkr Tófu!*
> *Selðu ór haugi || hvassan mæki*
> *þann's Svafrlama || slógu dvergar.*
> (Awaken, Angantyr! It is Hervor who awakens you, your only daughter by Tófa! Yield up from your grave the mighty sword that the dwarves forged for Svafrlami.")

Fornyrðislag has two lifts per half line, with two or three (sometimes one) unstressed syllables. At least two lifts, usually three, alliterate, always including the main stave (the first lift of the second half-line).

Fornyrðislag had a variant form called *málaháttr* ("speech meter"), which adds an unstressed syllable to each half-line, making sixto eight unstressed syllables per line.

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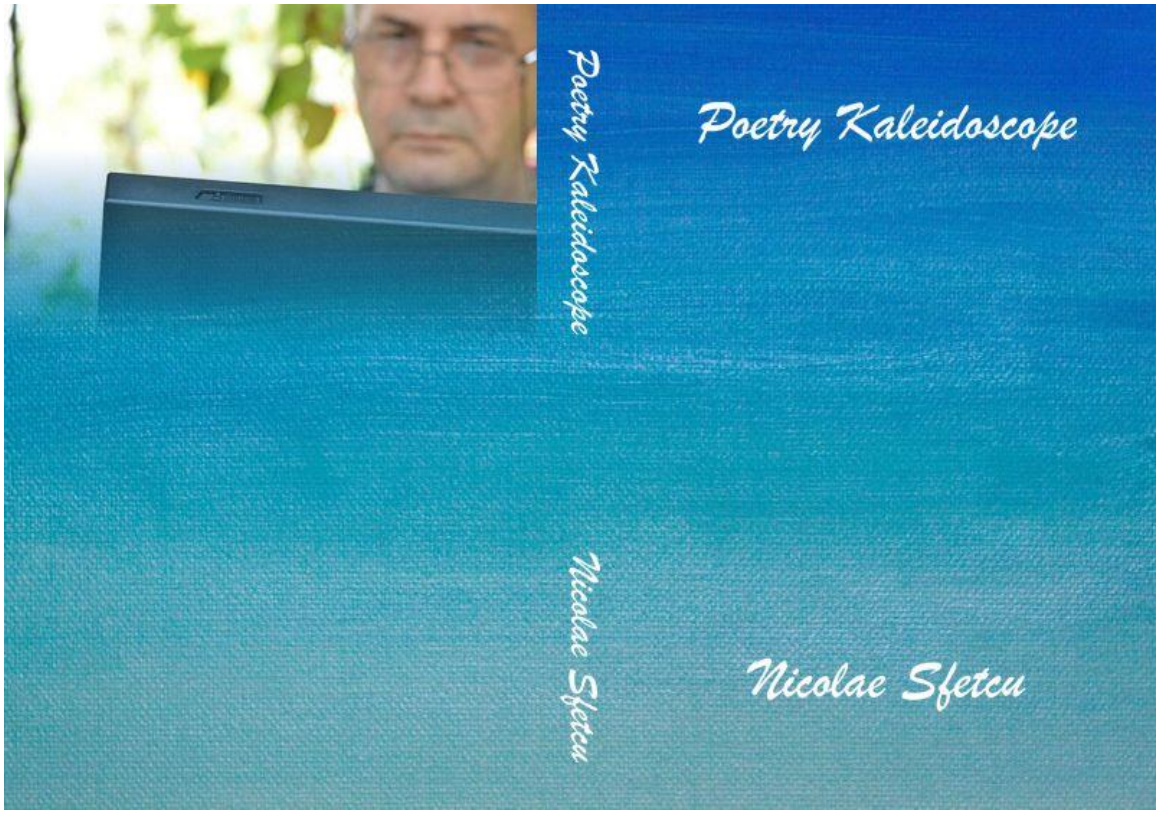

Introduction in poetry: nature of poetry, tools, history, terms (periods, styles and movements, technical means, tropes, measures of verse, verse forms, national poetry...

Poetry is traditionally a written art form (although there is also an ancient and modern poetry which relies mainly upon oral or pictorial representations) in which human language is used for its aesthetic qualities in addition to, or instead of, its notional and semantic content.

The increased emphasis on the aesthetics of language and the deliberate use of features such as repetition, meter and rhyme, are what are commonly used to distinguish poetry from prose, but debates over such distinctions still persist, while the issue is confounded by such forms as prose poetry and poetic prose.

Some modernists (such as the Surrealists) approach this problem of definition by defining poetry not as a literary genre within a set of genres, but as the very manifestation of human imagination, the substance which all creative acts derive from.

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