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Enikő Bollobás

# FROM TRADITIONAL PROSODY TO GRAMMETRICS

There are a few black holes at the outer limits of literary scholarship which attract critics with some myxterious magnetism yet give a hard time to those who attempt penetration. Perhaps no other literary form has provoked such heated debates both among professionals and laymen as did - and most certainly does - free verse. It has taken many decades and victims of dogmatic intolerance in scholarship to learn new prosodic approaches to free verse, ones which treat free verse as an alternative with equal rights, as an artistic possibility coexisting with metrical verse. We have lived for the last 150 years in an age of stylistic pluralism, where diverse norms of structure have prevailed.

## Towards stylistic pluralism: shift of norms

Prosody, the study of versification, had, for a long time, been one of the most narrowly developed disciplines of English literary scholarship. Prosodic practice followed a rather habitual uniformity: its stability and orderliness offered little excitement for the theorists beside a demand for extreme refinement. For centuries, English poetry was treated, rightly or not, as a rather monolithic body of prosodic materials, whose metrics reflected little of its otherwise colorful developments. Poetry from Chaucer to Tennyson was seen as the coming into power and culmination of one prosodic paradigm, accentual-syllabism; this paradigm was so seldom questioned and so sporadically broken that prosodists simply ignored these attempts. They dismissed even the accentualism of Anglo-Saxon poetry and of the alliterative revival as inviable wildings. Thus, there seemed to be no reason why chapters on, say, 15th century poetry's prosody

should fundamentally differ from the corresponding chapters appendixing 19th century poetry: they both described techniques of the reigning accentual-syllabic meter, with greater or lesser sophistication.

English prosody becomes intriguing when the prevailing paradigm, believed to have originated in Greek and Latin forms and thus to be absolute, is questioned, attacked and broken down by alternative prosodies not based on the accentual-syllabic paradigm. This confrontation of paradigms resulted not in the exclusive dominance of a new paradigm, similar in its 'absoluteness' to the reign of accentual-syllabism, but in a prosodic pluralism and the absence of one dominant period style. In 1797, Coleridge's 'Christabel' posed a serious threat to accentual-syllabism, introducing the then "new principle" of counting accents instead of syllables. The theoretical defense of this new principle was put down by Coleridge himself in the Preface some years after the second part of the poem had been written. Theoretical support followed Coleridge's conscious practice: in 1838, a non-practitioner, Edwin Guest wrote his History of English Rhythms, and attacked accentual-syllabism as the "rhythm of the foreigner", while treated accentualism as the principle of English poetry, the only heir to old English versification. In 1855 Walt Whitman shook the foundations of accent-and-syllable-counting regularity: his "barbaric yawp" counted accents, if anything, and replaced the traditional prosodic unit of the foot with higher prosodic and grammatical units: the line, the phrase and the sentence. At about the same time, on the other side of the Ocean, Gerard Manley Hopkins introduced revolutionary metrical, or, more precisely, nonmetrical, principles similar in their programmatic irregularity to those of Whitman. Hopkins developed his strong-stress paradigm over the twenty years between the 1860s and 1880s, inventing his heavy stress-based 'sprung rhythm'. Robert Bridges also attacked the binary foot-based



verse, but from two directions: influenced by his friend, Hopkins, he experimented with heavy stresses, and also tried out his own metrical innovation: syllabic meter that completely ignored the stressing of individual syllables. The period between 1800 and 1910, but especially between 1855 and 1910, brought about a crisis in traditional English versification as the old norms of the accentual-syllabic paradigm began to be seriously questioned. Imagism, Anglo-American modernism, instantaneously realized Romanticism's prosodic principles too: the explosion of forms announced by modernism challenged the domination of one single prosodic paradigm and proclaimed prosodic pluralism, forcing accentual syllabism to back into the modest status of one alternative. With Imagism, the hierarchy of prosodic paradigms slowly began to fade; beat verse based on optional stress, syllabic poetry, free verse and prose poetry came to be treated less and less as minority prosodies, undercurrent of the accentual-syllabic paradigm, but as alternative paradigms with equal rights in an age of prosodic pluralism.

It is interesting to observe how the study of versification has related to practice. The prosodic innovations of poets were followed only with considerable delay by prosodic theories and apparatuses explaining and describing these practices. In fact, the time-lag between practice and theory has not ceased to exist until very recently, but was perhaps most astonishing in the decades between the 1910s and the 1950s, when practice was multifarious, yet theorists dealt almost exclusively still with the old paradigm. George Saintsbury's History of English Prosody seemed to be, in 1910, the last major contribution to the normative description of accentual-syllabism, but several lesser works continued to appear that exposed the same traditional view of prosody. New Criticism added the works of John Crowe Ransom, W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, I. A. Richardson and Yvor Winters to this line of literary-critical metrics, but

could contribute nothing to the description of a pluralistic prosodic scene. Linguistic metrics dealt mainly with the phonology of metrics and prosody; the contributions of Otto Jespersen, Roman Jakobson, George L. Trager and Henry Lee Smith, Morris Halle and Samuel Jay Keyser are of extreme importance, but, again, to traditional versification primarily. In the 1950s, generative-transformational grammar brought a new interest in syntax and, later, semantics: it offered an apparatus adoptable to the study of alternative paradigms. However, it anticipated poets to develop, from the Romantic premises of the Coleridgean theory, Whitman's 'Preface', Hopkins' innovative principles, an alternative, organic or immanentist, prosodic theory capable accounting for the varied techniques of prosodic pluralism. Thus, for example, William Carlos Williams, Charles Olson, Robert Duncan or Allen Ginsberg put down their 'workshops' directives towards a new prosodic theory. It seems, we have reached a time when theory can finally become synchronous with practice and a prosodic theory can be set up that is capable of dealing with both the older paradigm and the new alternatives in one unified theory: one that dismisses neither the achievments of literary-critical metrics, linguistic metrics nor those of the avant-gardist prosodies.

With acknowledging prosodic pluralism, the prosodist's task has been multiplied: prosody has now to account for the alternative paradigms as well, but in such a way that the new measures be treated not as sporadic attempts at anti-paradigms, but as ones constituting a continuity of alternatives necessarily leading to prosodic pluralism.

Literary-critical approaches to prosody

George Saintsbury's three volume History first appeared in 1910, at a time when the deepening crisis of English versification might have become more apparent. From our point of view, the most interesting chapters are those dealing



with the prosodies not falling into the accentual-syllabic paradigm. Saintsbury describes Anglo-Saxon verse as a metrically unsuccessful body of poetry: "Anglo-Saxon poetry is moribund if not actually defunct" (Saintsbury 1910/I: 73). It had, he claims, "sensibly died down" (I: 25) in such a way that its principles had "passed into the composition of rhythmical prose" (I: 25); "the rhythm of Anglo-Saxon poetry is a sort of half-prose recitative" (I: 73). Saintsbury considers alliterative poetry similarly unmetrical (I: 73); he regards alliteration as not constituting measure (I: 100), treats the whole movement of the alliterative revival as retrograde (I: 110).

Saintsbury is similarly sceptic about Coleridge's achievement without even understanding it. He tops his misunderstanding of Coleridge's programmatic accentualism with a prescriptive attitude: "I dislike and disallow the accentual hexameter" (III: 398).

Hopkins gets one paragraph among 'Some More Dead Poets'; two pages are devoted to Whitman, stating that most of Whitman's lines are "prose pure and simple" (III: 491).

Throughout the chapters devoted to non-accentual-syllabic poetry, Saintsbury quarrels with Guest, the proponent of accentualism.

It is rather ironic that a prosodist writing in 1910 should be so explicity and prescriptively on the side of accentual-syllabism and should file a scholarly case against accentualism. It is especially ironic if we consider Ezra Pound's and T. S. Eliot's practice of the time: Pound had already written his Personae and filled it with Anglo-Saxon echoes, lines dismembered according to accentual weight and often on the basis of alliteration; in the 1900s and 1910s Eliot published stress-based pieces in The Harvard Advocate, completed his Prufrock in 1911 and wrote his 'Reflections on Vers Libre' in 1917. Reviewing the Prufrock piece and the Vers Libre article, Pound remarked: 'he [Eliot] wrote as if

all metres were measured by accent" (Pound 1917/1954: 421).

It is indeed unfortunate that Saintsbury was so little aware of the prosodic practices of his own time; it is hard to believe that he was a contemporyry of Pound, Eliot and the Imagists. The second edition of History contained no revisions of his prosodic views, although by 1923 the Imagists had published their anthologies, Eliot had come out with The Waste Land, Pound had put out several of his books containing his Anglo-Saxon and Chinese 'translations', the first of his Cantos, and had also made a 'pact' with Walt Whitman. The most influential prosody handbook for decades to come completely ignored recent and contemporary developments in poetry. Thus, he dismissed those prosodic attempts which ignored the binary unit of the foot as ones being unable to create order: they fail, he claimed, to give the impression of authoritative regularity. Saintsbury limits metrical regularity to accentual-syllabism, assigns exclusive prosodic significance to meter and, in a normative and prescriptive manner, treats meter as an objective principle of authority.

For decades after Saintsbury's classic, prosodic criticism was confined to the study of the prevailing prosodic paradigm, accentual-syllabism. T.S. Omond's English Metrists (1921) drew an equation between meter and accentual-syllabism, dismissing, for example, Hopkins' scandalous inventions as completely unimportant: "I cannot believe that [his] poems deserve or will receive attention from even the most determined seeker after novelties" (263). Paul F. Baum (1922), Lascelles Abercombie (1929), George Stewart (1930), Pallister Barkas (1934) all seemed to bury their heads in the sand when they failed to notice that English versification was going through an unprecedent prosodic crisis: there ceased to be a dominant metrical form in the emerging pluralism of prosodic systems.

These prosody handbooks of the 1910s, '20s and '30s provided a kind of 'evidence' for the more theoretically oriented writings with which New Criticism would contribute to



prosodic criticism. I. A. Richards' Principles of Literary Criticism first appeared as early as 1924, but its tenets concerning prosody (put forth in the chapter 'Rhythm and metre') remained unquestioned by New Criticicsm for several decades. Here Richards defines rhythm as the "texture of expectations, satisfactions, disappointments, surprisals, which the sequence of syllables bring about" (Richards 1924/1979: 71), while meter is a "specialized form of rhythm" (74). The trouble with this distinction - from the point of view of the plurality of prosodies - is that Richards derives rhythmical and metrical effects exclusively from syllabic regularity, but dismisses the possibility that rhythm and meter might interact with other prosodic devices or with grammatical units of higher order than the syllable. Thus he theoretically excludes the possibility of alternative prosodies, yet it is exactly this interaction that the alternative prosodies of the time made use of.

New Criticists remain consistent in their prosodic views, giving overt preference to traditional accentual-syllabic meters. In a relatively late but important article Wimsatt and Beardsley state that they have "no novel view to proclaim" (Wimsatt-Beardsley 1959/1979: 148), that is, they re-establish the importance of the traditional English syllable-stress meter. In their defense of the accentual-syllabic paradigm, they argue against the 'linguistic' and the 'musical' views of meter, the "two deviacions from ... good sense in metrics" (148).

The abstract nature of meter is emphasized throughout (note the subtitle of the article, 'An Exercise in Abstraction'). According to Wimsatt and Beardsley, meter is constituted by abstract theoretical entities and can wholly be described by abstraction: meter "inheres in aspects of the language that can be abstracted with considerable precision" (157). This stress on the abstractness of meter becomes extremely dangerous in its implications for two reasons: /i/ it diminishes the relevance of oral performance and in-

dividual interpretation, and /ii/ isolates meter from sense.
The distinction between 'anstract' and 'actualized' entails an artificial division between the written and the oral modes of poetry, between poetic and ordinary language. The distinctions wax cold: they will divide the abstract from the concrete, the poetic from the ordinary; they set up a scale of values which will ultimately give priority to a poetry which is 'poetical' because of its abstract prosodic nature: it employs the traditional accentual-syllabic paradigm. With a normative presupposition, Wimsatt and Beardsley state that meter, that is, the accentual-syllabic, will improve any poem. "Perhaps," they go on, "this suggests a reason why the greatest English poetry (Chaucher, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Wordswoth) has after all been written in the more artful syllable-stress meter" (170).

Beside the normative assumption, the main deficiency of traditional literary-critical metrics lies in its resistance to dealing with meter as an organic phenomenon. Traditional metrists disallowed that other prosodic devices beside meter should exist. The primacy they assigned to abstract meter prevented them from treating poetic syntax, sentencing, and contextualization as principles which might interact with meter in creating prosodic 'order'. Linguistic metrics and free verse prosodic practice had to come in order to alter this traditional attitude.

Formal-linguistic prosody

For decades linguistic prosody had remained a complementary discipline to literary-critical metrics: it contributed mostly to the study of traditional English meters. Prosody-oriented linguists such as Jespersen, Jakobson, Trager and Smith, Halle and Keyser set up intricate theories for a system of meters where one paradigm dominated, that which literary metrists from Saintsbury to Wimsatt declared to be the paradigm of English versification, the accentual-syllabic.



The paradigm debate that was going on in contemporary prosodic practice did not receive much attention from linguists either; the linguistics-based apparatus was just as little designed for dealing with prosodic pluralism as was George Saintsbury's, for example.

With its programmatic language experiments, European modernism of the 1910s and '20s drew the attention of early structuralist linguistics toward literature, literary language. Russian Formalism, where the theory of versification was perhaps the most fruitful field, did not treat meter and rhythm as regularities structuring only the phonetic and phonemic strata of poetic language, but rather as structural properties operative on all levels. Unfortunately, the formalist doctrines of Eichenbaum, Shklovsky, Tomashevsky, Jakobson and Tynyanov, designed to handle East-European avant-garde prosodies, were not integrated into the prosodic description of English and American versifiaction. Russian Formalist ideas were isolated from the West, and it was not until Roman Jakobson had emigrated that structuralist linguistics fertilized - in variants which were already somewhat far from Russian Formalism proper - Anglo-American prosody.

Roman Jakobson contributed to the study of poetic language mainly with his later theoretical writings; his earlier pieces dealt with Slavic literature. Already in 1921 he defined poetry as an "utterance oriented toward the mode of expression", that is, he claimed that in poetic speech the communicative function is reduced to a minimum (Jakobson 1921, quoted in Erlich 1965/1981: 183). The immanent laws of poetry derive from its distinct function and poetry becomes an autonomous human endeavor. The Gestalt-Qualität permeating all levels of poetic language makes poetry a complex, integrated structure, distinct in its orderliness from ordinary discourse (Jakobson 1933, quoted by Erlich 1965/1981: 198-199). Later, Jakobson derived this orderliness from the nature of

poetic function, which he defined as one projecting "the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection to the axis of combination" (Jakobson 1960/1975: 358). In Jakobson's theory, then, the principle of similarity or equivalence is superimposed upon contiguity, and thus parallelism and symmetry become the basic manifestations of the poetic function. Literariness is the "transformation of a verbal act into a poetic work", where a "system of devices brings about such a transformation" (Jakobson 1980: 23).

Jakobson's structuralist poetics has been extremely helpful to the study of poetries employing devices; it has become indispensable to the formalization of parallelistic and symmetrical structures. But free verse and the prose poem have called into question the exclusive literariness of the poetic device, by working with traditionally 'non-significant' prosodic elements too (Jakobson 1923); they have relied not only on the metaphorical but also on the contiguous arrangement of prosodic and grammatical units. Poetic practice demands an extension of Jakobson's tenets.

John Lotz was the first to offer a general theory of structuralist metrics (Lotz 1942). He suggested that the study of meter consisted of two sections: study of the linguistic (phonological and syntactic) constituents of meter and the study of the metric "superstructure". Some other phonological and syntactic features are "additive-variative factors" (cf. Jakobson's "non-significant elements"), since they are not necessarily used for metric purposes. On the other hand, the "basic-constitutive factors" have "metric relevancy" (Lotz 1060/1975). Lotz's typology is tight, and holds - as it was intended to hold - for numerically ordered verse. Liberal and organic prosodies cannot accept the notion of metric superstructure, a super-added structure, since it implies a fragmentation and hierarchy of the metrical element.

Two of the most influential prosodic theories set up by linguists for the meters of English are, perhaps, the Trager-



Smith and the Halle-Keyser hypotheses, respective applications of descriptive and transformational grammars. The work of George L. Trager and Henry Lee Smith (1951) is not a direct metrical study, but rather a detailed taxonomy of the stress-system of English, emphasizing graduality instead of binary oppositions. They define stress as the indicatior or result of "the presence of phonemic entities" (35). Its relative strength, they claim, depends not merely on degrees of loudness, length and prominence, but can vary according to the placement of (phonemic) juncture and the levels of (phonetic) pitch. This hypothesis distinguishes between weak stress and three kinds of strong stresses (primary, secondary and tertiary), thus it allows for multiple readings, where individual performances may also influence the distribution of stresses.

Just as generative-transformational grammar revolutionized 20th century linguistics, the generative metrics of Morris Halle and Samual J. Keywer introduced a new era to the study of versification. In 'Chaucer and the Study of Prosody' (1966), they expounded a prosodic theory based on generative phonology. They provided a 'grammar' for Chaucer's metrical competence, established the rules which generated the metrical, and only metrical, lines of Chaucer. Instead of the traditional foot-based description, Halle and Keyser describe the iambic pentameter line in terms of ten positions occupied by stressed and unstressed syllables.

In English Stress (1971), Halle and Keyser further elaborate their metrical theory. Here they extend their research to both English stress-based meters, the strong-stress and the syllable-stress paradigms. On the basis of generative phonology, they give the rules of the stress-system of Modern English as it evolved from Old English.

The greatest merit of the Halle-Keyser (Halle-Keyser 1971: 169) hypothesis lies in being valid for meters other than the the iambic pentameter. It gives the most satisfactory ex-

planation of the stress rules of English, and provides the principles of all regular English meters. Neither can free verse prosody do without it, since Halle and Keyser offer rules for the English language. This tight grammar of stress and prosody is pioneering in another respect too: the rules are set up in such a way that they do not rely exclusively on phonological factors, but, for the first time in prosody, syntactic considerations are also involved (note that generative phonology developed after generative syntax). The notion of the stress maximum is of extreme relevance for two reasons: (i) it embodies the interplay of phonological, lexical and syntactic forces (according to the revised and final definition of the stress maximum, it depends on the distance of syntactic junctures too); (ii) as a contextual-linguistic and not a metrical notion, its placement is independent of whether an abstract metrical pattern exists or not.

The most important discovery of the generative phonology of Noam Chomsky and Morris Halle (1968) was that English stress distribution was, to a large extent, predictable. Halle and Keyser applied these predictable regularities as "correspondence rules" between the phonological properties of word sequences and the abstract pattern of meter.

Linguistic prosody promises to correct several errors of literary metrics. Linguistics has provided the possiblity of 'scientific' exactness; its generative-transformational background allows that morphonology, syntax and semantics be integral parts of prosody. The technical apparatus is given; it is up to prosodists to apply it to both metered poetries and open forms.

## The alternative paradigms: organic and immanentist prossodies

The dates of 1797, 1855 and 1910 are significant in the history of English prosody because they mark three waves of 'minority' prosodies undercurrent of the predominant accentual-syllabism: the Romantic, post-Romantic and avant-garde alternatives. Academic prosodies, the literary and the linguistic ones, were either incapable of dealing with these new paradigms or simply ignored them: their formal schemata was designed for traditional poetries written according to laws, rules, norms. However, prosodic pluralism brought about by the presence of alternative prosodies was bound to have a pluralizing effect on the science or theory of versification too: side by side with traditional prosodic frameworks, an organicist prosodic approach also emerged, whose task was to deal with the anti-paradigms rooted in the physiology of speech and language as an organism.



With respect to poetic technique and prosody especially, it was S.T. Coleridge who gave the Romantic foundations of modern poetics. He wrote the first part of 'Christabel' in 1797; this poem enacted the principles of radical metrics, based not on accentual-syllabism but on pure stressing, unknown for centuries in English poetry. Its regularity is perceived by the ear of the reader or oral performer, and not by its relation to an abstract pattern independent of the particular poem.

In Biographia Literaria Coleridge distinguishes between "form as proceeding" and "shape as superinduced". This organicist hypothesis, taken over from Schelling, has its prosodic implications too: Coleridge's organicism violates the accepted standards of the dominant accentual-syllabic form: "shape as superinduced", Coleridge points out, "is either the death or the imprisonment of the thing" (Coleridge 1907/1969, II: 262). For the Romantic poet, the abstract pattern of metered poetry, "shape as superinduced," regulates the poetic text, but trammels and restricts it at the same time: meter becomes a hindrance to creativity. Organic form, "form as proceeding," is, according to Coleridge, "its self-witnessing and self-effected sphere of agency" (262); thus, the poet's task is not to adhere to the norms and devices or rhymed-and-

metered poetry, but to develop a form that is "malleable"
to the meaning of each poem. Organic form denounces the nor-
mative devices of poetry and proclaims sincerity of technique.
The date of 1855 is perhaps the best known for its proso-
dic significance: the first edition of Leaves of Grass ap-
peared. Its 'Preface' announced a new kind of poetry, the
American. Whitman indeed launched an American tradition in-
dependent of the main line of British poetry, but with
roots in European Romanticism. He took over Schelling's and
Coleridge's organic theory through the mediation of the Amer-
ican Transcendentalists, and set up his own prosody on this
basis. The essence of Whitman's prosodic innovation lies in
establishing a non-syllabic periodicity depending on gram-
matical units higher than the phonological ones. His much-
treated parallelisms, linking prosody to the thought
rhythms of the Bible, consist in the coincidence of prosodic
and syntactic units: his rhythmic periods, lines, correspond
to logical and grammatical units, sentences, clauses and
phrases. His catalogues establish refined equivalences be-
cause they move on the two axes of selection and comination
at the same time: runs on the axis of selection produce a
semantic periodicity of an associational nature, hence his
thesaurus-like lists, while the movements on the axis of
combination provide regularities and variational possibili-
ties within syntactic periodicity. In his intricate play
with syntactic and semantic constants and variables, he em-
ploys both basic modes of verbal behavior, combination and
selection, which could not have had an equal share in metri-
cal poetry. Beside grammatical periodicity, Whitman's proso-
dy relies on an irregular heavy stressing; it is the natural
feeling of stress periodicity of the native speaker that
Whitman makes use of. Yet for Whitman, stress was not a pho-
nemic phenomenon (he had no ear for minor linguistic units
such as the syllable), but a lexical and phrasal one: his
hovering accent, as Sculley Bradley calls it (Bradley 1939:
444), does not fall sharply on one syllable but is equally



distributed along the whole lexical or syntactic unit, the
word or the syntactically related phrasal unit. In his po-
etry, double accents within syntactic boundaries are neut-
tralized and merge into one.
The metrical theory implicit in the 1855 'Preface'
states rhythm's dependence on higher grammatical-lexical,
syntactic or semantic-organizations. "Poetic quality is not
marshalled into rhyme or uniformity ... The rhyme and uni-
formity of perfect poems show the free growth of metical
laws ... The fluency and ornament of the finest poems ...
are not independent but dependent," he claims (Whitman
1855/1959: 415). The oppositions inherent in these state-
ments, 'marshal' vs. 'grow,' 'independent' vs. 'dependent,'
seem to pattern the Coleridgean distinction between "shape
as superinduced" and "form as proceeding." What is more im-
portant, neither Coleridge nor Whitman speaks of a distinc-
tion between shape and non-shape or law and lawlessness, but
rather they re-define the concepts of 'shape' and 'law'.
They both give a new dimension to the notion of order, and
show that form can remain form even when it is not pre-ex-
isting and abstractable.
Whitman was not, from the point of view of his prosody,
as much of a "solitary singer" as he thought himself to be.
He had his 'camerados' in Europe: Hopkins, Bridges and Mal-
larmé. Whitman and Hopkins led the Anglo-Americal paradigm
debate of the period between 1855 and 1910, which resulted
in the explosion of forms in the modernist era. This debate
went on between the Tennysonian model of rhyming accentual-
-syllabism and the alternative, programmatically irregular,
prosodic paradigms of Whitman, Hopkins and Bridges. The neat
distribution of the dominant elements of rhyme, accent- and
syllable-count of the traditional model was suddenly upset;
some elements were abandoned while others gained individual
prominence. Thus, for example, rhyme was conspicuously ab-
sent from Whitman's prosodic system, but was excessively
used by Hopkins in several forms. Stressing became a major

prosodic principle in Whitman's and Hopkins' poetry, while 'pure' syllable count regulated Robert Bridges' verse. The shift of dominants that characterized this paradigm testing can be described by the emergence of secondary metrical elements to primary importance. Thus, for example, rhyme and syntactic parallelism belong not to the constitutive factors of meter, but - according to John Lotz' classification - to its additive-variative factors (Lotz 1960/1975). The extreme prominence of rhyme-like effects (where "figure of grammar" also blongs) in Hopkins and that of grammatical parallelisms in both Whitman and Hopkins testify how secondary elements of the Tennysonian paradigm become primary regulating principles in the non-Tennysonian model.

Modernist and postmodernist poetries disseminated and in a way institutionalized the prosodic alternative paradigm that had appeared only sporadically on the 19th century American literary scene. Modernist writing - Imagism in Anglo-American poetry, Formalism in Russia or Surrealism in Frace--demanded, in a neo-Romantic manner, that art be an act of renewal, rediscovery, producing surprise by de-automatizing our way of seeing and also our reading process.

The prosodic innovation of Imagism consisted in cadenced free verse, where the term of Amy Lowell has its musical associations (cf. composition according to the "musical phrase"). Cadence is the coincidence of grammatical and prosodic units; cadenced free verse is thus built of a phrasal rhythm, of prosodically isochronous phrasal units. Its greatest advantage is musical flexibility, Lowell claims: "these delicate veriations of movement, or rhythm, if one prefers that term, have always been possible to music, but poetry had not power of expressing them until the introduction of cadenced free verse" (Lowell 1920: 139).

William Carlos Williams' "variable foot" creates a peroidicity similar in certain ways to Whitman's phrasal rhythm, Hopkins' sprung rhythm and Imagist free verse: they are all heavily stressed and cadenced, that is, dependent on



the syntactic and semantic organizations of the poetic text; they are all prosodies organic to grammar. There is no strict-accentual and/or syllabic-numericity in Williams' 'foot'; it is a flexible, relative, unit following the mobility of speech, hence its variability.

Charles Olson's postmodernist "projective verse" exhibits a fidelity to the pulsations of physiological and psychological events. Poetry is, in line with the Romantics, treated in its strong connection with bodily processes, breath in particular. Olson programmatically connects writing with the physiology of speech, connects speech with action, mental processes with biological-natural processes (Olson 1950/1966).

American postmodernist poetics realized the ideas of modernism in that it developed an open prosody relying on linguistic features, relations and operations immanent in the English language. Immanence, Charles Altieri's term (Altieri 1973), became the postmodernist synonym for organicism. In the writings of Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, Robert Creeley or Denise Levertov, immanent form is defined in its opposition to the traditional control of imposed form consisting of a "set of rules that will bring the troubling plenitude of experience 'within our power'" (Duncan 1973: 209). In postmodernist 'composition by field,' on the other hand, the language material, just as the poetic experience, is not to be ordered, re-structured, by the interpretive mind of the poet. Form is taken from language, and the poetic experience, itself; it is realized through attention, humility, and openness to the movements and values of language, when "movement and association ... arise as an inner need" (Duncan 1973: 210). The poet should allow language itself to speak.

Technique as sincerity, this grand Romantic obsession, is re-animated in this poetics by claiming the discovery of form through attention to the objectism of words and to the interacting forces inherent in language. The prosodic implications of this immanentist position touch the mode of poetic syntax, sentencing in particular. Grammar functioned

as prosody for Whitman but in his poetry the sentence was still a normative element displaying completeness. In postmodernist writing, the sentence strives not towards completeness but the wholeness of the context or the poetic situation. The new sentence becomes a mobile unit: it is the active that generates thought. Syntactical boundaries may be disrupted or blurred; syntactic units may hold several functions at the same time, thus creating an usually complex web of semantic relations. With the abolition of fixed, routine, grammatical connections, individual words become more palpable, more object-like, and with their unfixed valencies they act as nuclei of potentialities. While traditional prosodies relied on accepted deviations from an imposed norm, on the interaction between the regularity and irregularity of the metric superstructure, the prosody of postmodernist poetics is made complex through the interplay of continuity and discontinuity, coherence and incoherence, expectedness and unexpectedness--all textual strategies inherent in the larger verbal material.

. Grammetrics: an ideal of prosody

Prosodic practice and the prosodic thinking of such seem to have outpaced scholarly description. Prosodic pluralism, avant-garde prosodies have no adequate explanation. Traditional literary metrics has remained obsessed with the still widely employed accentual-syllabism, but ignored the other, more upsetting manifestations of stylistic pluralism. Linguistic prosodists, especially those trained on generative grammar, have come closer to the possibilities of studying grammar, have come closer to the possibilities of studying the morpo-phonological, syntactic and semantic forces interacting in verse, but concentrated mainly on metrical poetry, and have not coupled description with exegesis. The immanentist prosody of the postmoderns was designed as an apology of their own avant-garde practice and did not aspire to a wider validity. These three territories of prosodic thinking have not been brought to a synthesis for the pur-



pose of describing and explaining both metrical and nonmetrical poetry. Yet what is needed is a prosodic theory that is capable of dealing with traditional and modern paradigms, one which uses a formal schemata of general applicability. The first step toward such a generally applicable prosodic theory is, I presume, the full acknowledgement of the prosodic pluralism characterizing poetry in the English language.

The two-hundred year old tendency toward the liberation of poetic forms cannot be ignored any more: literary prosody has to undertake the exegesis of free verse and open poetry too, and here it shall be fruitful to draw the lessons of linguistic and organicist-immanentist prosodies. Proponents of organicism and immanence deal with poetic material unsupported by abstract and independent systems; what has to be explained here (and can be, with the help of linguistics) belongs to the territory mostly ignored by traditional prosodies: poetic morphology and syntax, sentencing, text-grammatical operations. Not that these grammatical strategies had been missing completely from metered poetries, but, rather, they were treated as of secondary importance, coming only after the primary order of the metrical principle, while little attention was given to how meter itself is modified by grammar. Yet the density that distinguishes poetry from prose arises, on the level of form, not from the presence of abstractable patterns, but from a complex interplay of prosodic and grammatical operations (for an interplay you have to have two). The reason why I suggest that the description of free verse is the first step towards a unified theory of prosody is partly because it has not been done, partly, and more importantly, because free verse exhibits certain prosodic operations in an elementary, crude, form. Once the non-metrical measures of open poetry are mapped out, explained and interpreted, this methodology can be incorporated into the study of metered poetry--for its certain benefit.

The ideal prosodic approach seems to be what P. J. Wexler has called the grammetrical one (Wexler 1964). The basic postulate of grammetrics is that prosody is meaning and is thus related to the movements of language in a more intimate way than it was thought to be. Grammetrics examines the relationship between prosodic and grammatical units; it investigates how the rank scales of the poem-stanza-line-foot, on the one hand, and the sentence-clause-phrase-morpheme-syllable, on the other, are correlated in poetry. In particular, it focuses on the coincidence or non-coincidence of the two most volatile units, the line and the sentence.

Donald Wesling is one of the most serious exponents of grammetrics. In his earliest article dealing with grammetrics (Wesling 1971) he investigates, on free-verse material, the several possiblities of the interaction of grammar and meter. He begins his analysis with Whitman's "explosion of syllable-stress metrics" (167), but concentrates on the moderns and postmoderns in greater detail. He examines Pound's dismembered lines veering "towards extremes, testing the limits of variability in meter as in grammar" (166). Wesling treats William Carlos Williams, Louis Zukofsky, Robert Duncan, Edward Dorn and Robert Creeley, poets who employ different grammetrical strategies varying the coinciding units from several sentences to a single syllable per line.

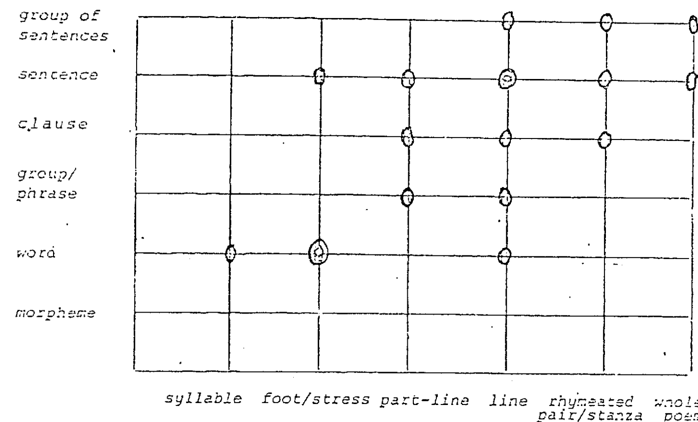
Wesling's forthcoming The Scissors of Meter (MS) offers the first full-scale grammetrical theory. The apt title summarizes the main argument of the book as the genitive phrase carries the tension of an active-passive ambiguity in that it "holds metering and sentencing in the same thought" (Preface). If the concept of meaning includes rhythmic cognition too, then prosody is meaning while at the same time meaning shapes prosody. It is the ultimate task of grammetrics to describe this intricate coalescence of sound and meaning, of meter and grammar, of aesthetic and cognitive impulses.

Meter, Wesling suggest, is an abstraction, a formula, a descriptive scheme, only outside the text, but within any



poem it ceases to be notational. Here meter has its positions filled by the graphs of thinking, that is, by the relational elements of language. Grammetrics studies how these relations relate to meter. Grammetrics is an interpretive approach: it deals with how technique 'means,' "expresses the relationships between two systems, grammar and metrics, each consisting of a set of rules that define the interactions among these variables" /Part II, Ch. 'Elements of Grammetrical Theory'/.

Concrete grammetrical analysis begins with the description of the intersection points of the two axes of grammar and meter. Wesling gives six ranks on the grammatical and metrical axes each: morpheme-word-phrase-clause-sentence-group of sentences and syllables-foot-part-line-rhymeated of stanza--whole poem.



Naturally, not all intersection points are equally important or even possible: there are sixteen scissoring points at most, and they seem to be distributed along the two central grammetrical coordinates of the word-foot and the sentence-line coincidences. Indeed, the most prominent scissoring points are where word meets foot and sentence meets line, while the remaining fourteen are still productive and possible convergences.

The style of sentencing can be described with reference to the typical, productive or possible scissoring points. Grammetrical inspection becomes interpretive when it is related to the semantics of verse structure. The scissoring points of a poem are described in terms of the three principles of linear arrangement, continuity vs. discontinuity; equivalence vs. hierarchy; regularity vs. irregularity. After determining the placement, frequency and the kind of these scissorings (whether they make the text continuous or discontinuous, hierarchical or levelled, tending toward regularity or irregularity), one has to translate grammetrical data into hypotheses about the degree of coherence, expectedness and intensity. Stylistic generalizations, inferences about the semantic nature of the poetic text are made on the basis of grammatical and prosodic-metrical analyses. Allow me to give two examples.

With the rhythmic and semantic effects of lineation and dismemberment, modernist poets refined the notion of the enjambment. "Don't make each line stop dead at the end, and then begin every next line with a heave. Let the beginning of the next line catch the rise of the rhythm wave, unless you want a definite longish pause," Pound demanded in the Imagist 'Credo' (Pound 1918/1954: 6). He was aware that at the beginning of the line the "rhythm wave" rises, and made extensive uses of it. In 'Canto 116,' for example, individual words are separated by indentation and thus gain emphasis.



again is all "paradiso"
          a nice quiet paradise
                    over the shambles
and some climbing
               before the take-off,
to "see again,"
the verb is "see," not "walk on"
i.e. it coheres all right
                         even if my notes do not
                                        cohere.

Lineation throws attention to the particulars of language; this is the function of visuality in modernist prosody: to move the line, and together with it, the reader's attention, on the scales of continuity-discontinuity, expectancy and surprise. The notion of the enjambment has become more complex since now the ranks of grammatical units divided by line breaks are rhythmically and semantically informative of the poet's intention. Depending on where line scissors grammar, the poet can vary the rhythmic and semantic weight of a given unit. Lines ending with sentences create the impression of natural speech; if lines cut clauses and phrases from each other, the result is still close to the rhythm of speech, although more hesitant and meditative speech. When line breaks occur within phrases, cutting off function words from full words, speech becomes discontinuous: interphrasal typography de-automatizes our reading process. Here words are isolated from their immediate grammatical surroundings and gain a tactile quality similar to those of real objects. Williams' 'Queen Anne's Lace' employs all gradations of the enjambment, thus refines not only the poem's rhythm, but also its meaning.

| Poem line | Lineation |
|---|---|
| Her body is not so white as | interphrasal: Prep/NP |
| anemone petals nor so smooth--nor | interphrasal: Conj/NP |
| so remote a thing. It is a field | interphrasal: with $NP_{Gen}$ |
| of the wild carrot taking | phrasal: VP/NP |
| the field by force; the grass | phrasal: NP/VP |
| does not raise above it. | sentential |
| Here is no question of whiteness, | clausal: constituent S/Cl |
| white as can be, with a purple mole | phrasal: NP/PP |
| at the center of each flower. | sentential |
| Each flower is a hand's span | interphrasal:within $NP_{Gen}$ |
| of her whiteness. Wherever | phrasal: AdvP/NP |
| his hand has lain there is | interphrasal: VP/NP |
| a tiny purple blemish. Each part | phrasal: NP/VP |
| is a blossom under his touch | clausal: NP/CL |
| to which the fibres of her being | phrasal: NP/VP |
| stem one by one, each to its end, | sentential: const. S(const.S) |
| until the whole field is a | interphrasal: Art/N |
| white desire, empty, a single stem, | phrasal: NP/NP |
| a cluster, flower by flower, | phrasal: NP/NP |
| a pious wish to whiteness gone over- | phrasal: NP/NP |
| or nothing. | |

In the context of such a poem, where out of 21 lines 15 end with sentences, clauses or phrases, the typography of the remaining 6 seems to be surprising. Sentential, clausal and phrasal lineation reveal a greater or lesser coincidence of grammar and prosody, or, we could even say, a greater or lesser subordination of grammar to prosody. Interprasal lineation, where prosody violates grammar, points to the key-words of the poem and as such has the same function as rhyme does in that they both direct and control attention. Thus, words emphasized by interphrasal enjambment are: anemone petals, so remote a thing, of the white carrot, of her whiteness, a tiny purple blemish, white desire. The last line also gets extra emphasis not only because it is



the closure, but also because the phrasal division is punctuated by the dash at the line ending. These seven key-phrases /anemone petals, so remote a thing, of the wild carrot, of her whiteness, a tiny purple blemish, white desire, or nothing/ indeed pin down or outline the message of the whole poem, again in a metonymical order. Of course, only a variation of the degrees of enjambment can create prosodic excitement and can punctuate the poem semantically; had Williams ended all his lines on unkinetic particles, typography would have lost its attention and rhythm controlling function.

"When rhythm renounces the support of abstract and independent systems--meter or isochrony--," Charles O. Hartman points out, "the basic principle of the line emerges and takes absolute control" (Hartman 1980: 92). Indeed, the centrality of the line in modernist nonmetrical prosody is clear; it derives from being allowed to serve as the meeting ground of grammatical and prosodic processes. The shifting relations between syntax and lineation create a tension between continuity and discontinuity, thus providing each line with unexpected prosodic and semantic information. Williams' poem 'By the Road to the Contagious Hospital' is a fine example for the dynamism of grammatical and prosodic forces generating a semantic effect.

> By the road to the contagious hospital
> under the surge of the blue
> mottled clouds driven from the
> northeast--a cold wind. Beyond, the
> waste of broad, muddy fields
> brown with dried weeds, standing and fallen
>
> patches of standing water
> the scattering of tall trees

All along the road the reddish
purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy
stuff of bushes and small trees
with dead, brown leaves under them
leafless vines--

Lifeless in appearance, sluggish
dazed spring approaches--

They enter the new world naked,
cold, uncertain of all
save that they enter. All about them
the cold, familiar wind--

Now the grass, tomorrow
the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf

One by one objects are defined--
It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf

But now the stark dignity of
entrance--Still, the profound change

has come upon them: rooted they
grip down and begin to awaken

With an abundant use of preposition in the four opening stanzas /by, to, under, from, beyond, along, under/, Williams provides the poem with an initial energy and at the same time expresses the vigour and dynamism of nature in spring. The miltiplicity of prepositions implies that spring is not considered as an abstraction or a symbol, but as a concrete entity, as as such demands function words with the implicit feature of concreteness and locality. In the prespositions Williams found such an equivalent series of linguistic gestures for spring which expresses dynamism and concreteness at the same time.



After some prose passages, 'The Contagious Hospital' is the first poem in the volume Spring and All; it is a strong upbeat providing the poetic impulse and setting for a whole series of texts. As such an exposition, its lead is all the more important. The drive and swing (or 'spring') of the first stanzas is attained by means other than prepositional abundance too: the grammetrics of phrasal and interphrasal enjambments creates the impression of syntactic continuity. Seven lines begin by tying up the syntactically loose ends of previous lines (blue / mottled; the / northeast; the / waste; fallen / patches; reddish / purplish; twiggy / stuff; sluggish / dazed). Also, the first verb only occurs at the end of the 15th line, the first point of rest both grammatically and prosodically. From this point, the poem seems to calm down somewhat. The train of images is maintained to follow a sequential order, but the shifts are both less frequent and less abrupt. The multiplicity of spring is not detailed as was in the first stanzas, but is mentioned by the collective pronoun, "they"; the items are not presented individually, rather their general movement, growing, awakening, is depicted. The poem moves to a more universal scale-- "it" might refer to pregnancy, new life, spring and totality--, without yet becoming abstract: images remain at the particularity of the grass and the carrot leaf. Typography is still used to create semantic effects by locating key-words and key-images in initial and final line positions. As often in Williams' poetry, the poem is about the process of how things are born: continuous syntax follows the movement of discovery, while discontinuous typography marks the ultimate stages of this process, articulating the particulars as the perceptible results of spring's awakening. "No idea but in things!"

Although free verse, open poetry and the prose poem demand a different approach from metered poetry, grammetrics is not restricted to the study of metrical verse only. Here grammetrics does not describe and interpret the interfer-

ences of grammar and meter, but those of grammar and the measures of nonmetrical prosodies. Grammetrics is the first prosodic theory that applies the same apparatus and methodology for the description and exegesis of both metered and non-metrical/measured verse, that is capable of handling poetries of any formal tightness. As such, grammetrics seems to exhaust the possibilities of prosody. It is just about the most the prosodiest can do, although it is no more than he has to.

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