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FORM AND FUNCTION OF POETIC LANGUAGE

An attempt is made here to consider poetry as one of the aspects of language. It is not the first attempt and certainly not the last.

REDUNDANCY IN POETRY

At first glance we are startled by the multiplicity of *additional formal laws* restricting the poet's free choice of expressions: intricate rhyming schemes, equal number of syllables in a line, regular distribution of short and long, stressed and unstressed syllables, alliteration, prevailing in both ancient Germanic and modern American poetry:

Paler be *th*ey *th*an *d*aunting *d*eath
the *s*leek *s*lim deer
the *t*all *t*ense deer.

(E. E. Cummings, *All in green*)

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Repetition of vowels ("inner rhymes"):

> ... ich liebe all*ei*ne,
> Die kl*ei*ne, die f*ei*ne, die r*ei*ne, die *Ei*ne.
> (Heine, *Die Rose, die Lilie...*)

Inverted sound sequences, called echo patterns (Elizabeth Shewel):

> Agonise selon peut-être *le décor*
> *Des licornes...*
> *Aboli bibelot* d'inanité sonore
> (Mallarmé, *Ses purs ongles*)

Point and counter-point of high-pitched and low-pitched vowels:

> Des c*ieu*x sp*i*r*i*t*u*els l'*i*naccess*i*ble az*u*r, ...
> S'*ou*vre et s'*en*f*on*ce avec l'attir*an*ce du g*ou*ffre,
> (Baudelaire, *L'aube spirituelle*)

Robert Frost mentioned in his lectures the poet's commitments. The first measure determines the rhythm of the poem and with each word the choice of the following words will be more and more restricted, until the poet is finally caught in the net of commitments. According to Roman Jakobson, "the structure of verse can be most thoroughly described and interpreted in terms of enchained probabilities" (1960). Poetry seems to be necessarily more redundant than any other kind of verbal communication (Abernathy).

Even free verse is governed by stricter rules. Comparing the distribution of stressed syllables in Hungarian *free verse*, and prosaic works, it turns out that the distribution is significantly more regular in free verse than in a comedy written in prose, and more regular than in an epic poem written in hexameters. The entropy (as a measure of irregularity) of pairs of phrases amounts to 5.29 bits in prose, but only 4.07 in free verse, and to 4.79 bits in the hexameter (Fónagy, 1965), justifying Eliot's statement that "no verse is free for the man who wants to do a good job" (p. 31).

It is rather amazing that poets seem to enjoy their bed of Procustes, and are more stimulated than hampered by all these restraints.

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The repetition compulsion is not restricted to the phonetic level in poetry. Words, phrases, sentences, whole stanzas may be repeated with or without variation. Even the *content* of lyrical or epic poetry is highly structured, *orchestrated.* (cf. Jakobson, 1961, Austerlitz). "The use of recurrent themes is as natural to poetry as to music. There are possibilities for verse which bear some analogy to the development of a theme by different instruments; ... there are possibilities of contrapuntal arrangements of subject-matter" (Eliot, p. 32). The motives broached in the first stanza of Shelley's *Song of the Men of England* are developed in the fifth:

> The *seed* ye *sow*, another *reaps*;
> The *wealth* ye *find*, another *keeps*;
> The *robes* ye *weave*, another *wears*;
> The *arms* ye *forge*, another *bears.*

The four lines have exactly the same structure: the NOUN ye VERB, another VERBS.

We have four invariants and three variables on the lexical level. The variables themselves are closely interrelated, both horizontally and vertically. The "leit-motifs" of the poem are set along the vertical axis, and each is developed along the horizontal one:

seed ...... sow ...... reap
wealth .... find . .... keep
robes ..... weave .... wear
arms ..... forge ...... bear

The sixth strophe is a kind of inversion, a kind of antistrophe to the preceding one. The word order is reversed, the verb draws ahead of the noun. The indicative mood is replaced by the imperative.

> *Sow seed*— but let no tyrant *reap*;
> *Find wealth*—let no impostor *keep*;
> *Weave robes*—let not the idle *wear*;
> *Forge arms*—in your defence to *bear.*

Even plays and novels differ in their verbal orchestration of events from unorganized reality. "The novel has always been a

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symphony for me, composed of points and counter-points, a network of themes, where ideas play the same role as motives do in music," declared Thomas Mann in his Princeton lecture, speaking of the *Zauberberg*.

THE IMITATION-THEORY: SOUND AND MEANING

Classical rhetoric based on Aristotle's *Poetics* considered redundancies introduced to poems as well as other figures of speech as a kind of ornament. According to another ancient tradition which is already clearly formulated in the work of Dionysius of Halikarnassus (first century B. C.), sounds had to suggest and reflect, not only to denote the objects, express and not only report emotions. In everyday speech, emotions are reflected in the rate of speech, in intonation, in unusual pauses, in the shift of stress, the emphatic lengthening of vowels or consonants or the expressive modification of articulation and the corresponding shift in the sound spectrum; e. g. a raised, forward tongue position and brighter vowel color may reflect gaiety, particularly strained consonants may express anger. This expressive phonetic level is entirely lacking in poetry (Jakobson, 1933).

The poet, however, as an expert in verbal magic, can easily fill this gap, by a skillful grouping of the words according to Dionysius of Halikarnassus. The upward-shift of the second and third formants endowing a vowel phoneme with a lighter color, could be simulated in poetry by a similar *shift* in the spectrum of the whole verse or strophe, i.e. in a corresponding shift of the expected (usual) *frequency distribution* of the vowels:

> Auf gr*ü*n*e*r L*i*nd*e* s*i*tzt und s*i*ngt
> D*ie* s*ü*sse Ph*i*lom*e*l*e*;
> W*ie* m*i*r das L*ie*d zur S*ee*le dr*i*ngt,
> So d*e*hnt s*i*ch w*ie*der d*ie* S*ee*le.
> (H. Heine, *Die schönen Augen der Frühlingsnacht*)

Poets, aesthetes, grammarians, philosophers of all ages, with quite different cultural and ideological background—Dante, Vida, Scaliger, Opitz, Lomonosoff, Diderot, the abbot Batteux, Con-

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dillac, Lessing, Friedrich Schlegel, Jean Paul, Mallarmé, Valéry and so many others—seem to agree with Dionysius.

Such cases of "imitation by sounds" might be however merely accidental and the theory of "imitation" an age-old illusion. As a matter of fact, this is the opinion of most linguists and of a number of aesthetes.

The French scholar Jean Combarieu has devoted 400 pages to prove the inanity of the " imitation " theory, and the American linguist, Archibald Hill Jr., is startled still to find subjectivistic and pointless allusions to expressive sound features in works of linguists (*Language*, No. 31, 1955, p. 251 f.).

The thesis of Dionysius, which has been repeated, emphasized, questioned and denied for 2,000 years, can be easily tested today.

A STATISTICAL APPROACH

M. M. McDermott, through a statistical analysis of some English poems, found that dark vowels are more frequent in lines referring to dark colors, mystic obscurity, or slow and heavy movement, or depicting hatred and struggle (pp. 89-92). Comparing the whole cycle of *Desperate Love* of the Hungarian poet, Sándor Kisfaludy (1772-1844) to the cycle *Happy Love* he wrote some years later, we find an increase of light-colored vowels from 54.4 to 60 per cent.

A statistical analysis of Petöfi's lyric poems from 1847 until his death in 1849, separating aggressive poems from tender ones, reveals significant deviations for some consonants only: *t*, *k*, and *r* are dominant in the *aggressive* poems, the "soft" *l* and *m* in the *idyllic* poems. The correlation between the frequency of the "hard" *t*, *k*, *r*, and aggressive impulsions is not limited to Hungarian poetry, as is indicated by the statistics of two cycles of poems by Rückert, the idyllic *Liebesfrühling* cycle as compared to the cycle *Geharnischte Sonette* ("Harnessed sonnets"). The "hard" *t* and *k* are prevalent in Victor Hugo's *Châtiments* and Verlaine's *Invectives* as opposed to *L'art d'être grand-père* and *La bonne chanson* (Fónagy, 1961).

The strained articulation is simulated in angry poems by the dominance of "hard," strained consonants, the soft articulation is

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suggested in tender poems by the prevalence of soft ones in German and French poems as well as in Hungarian poetry.

The main purpose of non-poetic *translation* is to translate, to carry over the message from the original to the target language substituting the form *a* of the original language by form *b* of the target language. It would hamper this purpose if the translator tried to carry over formal features of the original into the target language. Contrary to this procedure the translator of poems carries over certain features of form *a* of the original into form *b* of the target language. The silvery tinkling of the bells in the poem of Edgar Allan Poe are reflected also in the Hungarian and German and Italian translation by the prevailing *i* sounds and the sequences *ng, nk, nt, nd.*

> How they *tinkle, tinkle, tinkle*
> In the icy air of night...
>
> Hall*d* mi*nd* pe*nd*ül, ko*nd*ul, cse*nd*ül...
> (Mihály Babits)
>
> W*ie* s*ie* kl*in*gen, kl*in*gen, kl*in*gen...
> Zw*ink*ernd s*i*ch zum Reigen schl*in*gen...
> (Th. Etzel)
>
> Come *tintin*nano, *tintin*nano, *tintin*nano...
> D*i* una cr*i*stall*i*na del*i*zia...
> (Federico Olivero)

Phonemes lacking in the target language are replaced by acoustically related other sounds, e.g. the nasal vowels of Verlaine's *Chanson d'automne* by nasal consonants, especially by the group *ng*, *nd* in the English and the Hungarian translation:

Les s*an*glots l*on*gs	When a sighi*ng* begi*ns*	Ösz húrja zs*ong*
des viol*ons*	In the violi*ns*	Jaj*ong*, bus*ong*
de l'aut*omne*	Of the autu*mn*-so*ng*...	A táj*on*
blessent *mon* cœur	(Arthur Symons)	(Árpád Tóth)
d'u*n*e l*an*gueur		
*mon*oto*ne*		

The poetic translator's procedure seems to prove that certain sound features don't only help to *convey* the message but they themselves *constitute* a message as well.

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INFORMATION CONTAINED IN SPEECH-SOUNDS

How to explain the fact that some phonemes occur more frequently in angry poems and others in tender ones? Why are some speech sounds felt "hard" or "soft," "light" and "dark," "fine" or "vulgar," "manly" or "effeminate," etc.

All these metaphors are widespread in both phonetics and rhetorics. We can find them in the works of Greek and Latin grammarians and partly even in modern papers on acoustics of phonemics. Maybe they are merely conventional based on a classical tradition. We meet however with very similar or the same metaphors in the works of Tibetan or Japanese grammarians (Fónagy, 1963). Metaphor-tests were made with 25 Hungarian nursery school children, probably uninfluenced by grammatic traditions, who declared unanimously that *i* is lighter, quicker, thinner than *u*; that the sound *r* (the Hungarian rolled dental *r*) is a man, but *l* a woman; to the majority of the children *i* seemed to be much nicer than *u*; *k* and *r* harder than *l*; the *m* and the *l* sweeter than *t* or *k*, etc.

We put the same questions to 20 grammar school students and 50 adults and obtained similar results (Fónagy, 1963). Experiments made with American, German, French, Swiss, and some Chinese subjects seem to point to the universal validity of sound symbolism (Sapir; Newman; Wissemann; Chastaing).

Speech-sounds have a double substance—acoustical and physiological—the metaphors can be based either on *articulatory* or on *acoustic* stimuli or on both. How to achieve a kind of perceptive filtering, in order to establish whether the metaphors are elicited by acoustic or rather by motor sensations? Unfortunately some human beings lack one or the other organ of sense since birth. We were able to make metaphor-tests with 20 deaf and 20 blind children and to compare the results, which were surprisingly similar for all groups in most cases. Deaf children declared the *r* and *k* sound harder than *l* and *m*; they guessed the *r* to be a man, the *l* a woman; they felt the *i* sound brighter, quicker and thinner than the *u*, etc. The blind children were even more unanimous than the normal ones. That seemed to prove that motor associations are prevailing in these cases.

The vowel *i* may be felt as thin on the basis of a preconscious

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kinesthetic perception of the tongue position. During the articulation of the *i* sound the tongue is raised toward the anterior part of the palate and the air stream has to pass through a rather thin channel. The sound is felt bright probably because the tongue is pointing upward and outward. Even blind children who had only a very vague sensation of light as something coming from outside and from above felt the *u* to be darker than *i* in 95.0 per cent of the cases. The *r* is perceived as stronger than *l* or *m* on the basis of the heavier muscular effort needed to produce a dental *r*; it is felt more violent, or quarrelsome, in that the vigorous rotation of the tongue resists the air stream. During the articulation of the "moistened" consonants (*tj*, *dj*, *nj*) the mucous back of the tongue is touching the palate on a larger surface than during the production of the non-moistened dental or velar stops. The preconscious sensation of the contact of the moistened surfaces might have elicited the metaphor "moistened" (or French *mouillé*), denoting the palatal consonants.

In contrast to normal children, the deaf felt the *i* to be stronger than the *u*. That means that their judgement was based on the stronger muscular contraction during the articulation of the *i* sound, while the normal children associated *i* with the voice of children, women, and small animals, the low pitched *u* with the voice of big animals and males (Trojan, 1952, p. 22).

In everyday life we use the words as arbitrary signs without taking any notice of the movements of our speech organs articulating *i* or *r*. The whole vocal performance is invalidated and entirely covered by the words which are distinguished by these acoustic and articulatory features. It has been pointed out by Saussure and Hjelmslev that sounds themselves do not belong to language. In poetry the curtain seems to be lifted and we are much more sensitive to the *vocal gesturing* that the French poet and aesthetician, André Spire, called *danse buccale.*

PROSODIC GESTURES

Vocal gesturing is still more common in prosody. A higher speech rate may be reflected in a higher frequency of short (vs. long) vowels. In a group of *lively* (aggressive or joyful) poems of

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Petöfi the number of *short vowels* increases from 75.0 to 81.7 per cent as compared to another group of gloomy or calm poems. Paul Eluard's cycle *Une leçon de morale* is a kind of part-song based on the alternation of a melancholic voice and a more cheerful voice (the first part is called *Au mal*, the second one *Au bien*). The distribution of the lines is clearly different in both parts. In the optimistic part composed in "major key" short lines are prevalent, just as we have shorter phrases in lively, cheerful speech. In the pessimistic part composed in "minor mood" decasyllabic and dodecasyllabic lines prevail (See Table 1).

Number of syllables	2	3	4	6	7	8	9	10	12	14	16
Au mal	0.46	—	1.62	13.77	0.81	19.03	0.81	9.31	53.03	0.81	0.40
Au bien	0.63	0.21	0.42	6.65	8.16	38.08	—	5.83	40.37	0.63	—

TABLE I

Frequency distribution of verses of different length in Paul Eluard's *Une leçon de morale* (*Au Mal* vs. *Au bien*) on the basis of 1,225 lines.

The irregular breathing of emotive speech are reproduced in poetry by the shift of the metrical pause, the *caesura* toward the beginning of the line: in her monologue Racine's Phèdre abolishes the metrical restrictions at the same time she is trespassing against moral prohibitions. On the other hand the composure of Hyppolite's tutor, Théramène, is never shaken, and this is expressed in the steadily symmetrical construction of his verses: the twelve-syllable verse is constantly divided into two equal halves (six-six), and even the half line is in most cases divided into three-three syllables. On the other hand the number of irregular verses characterized by the shift of the caesura reaches an unusually high percentage in Phèdre's role (9.3 per cent; cf. Fónagy, 1960). The omission of sounds or syllables in emotive speech has been only recently and occasionally suggested by spelling in poetry:

> and bettyandisbel come dancing (= Betty and Isabel)
> (Cummings, *Just-spring...*)

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In classical poetry emotive slips of the tongue are represented by *elision*, synaeresis or aphaeresis:

> Schôn(e) unde schôn(e) unde schôn(e) allir schônist
> ist si, mîn vrouwe...
>
> (Heinrich of Morungen, *Leitliche blicke*)
>
> Beautiful, beautiful, the most beautiful
> amidst all the beauties, is she, my lady.

Elision and aphaeresis are much more frequent in the lively satirical poems of Horatius than in his letters (42.8 vs. 19.5 per cent, cf. N. Nilsson). Stress is frequently shifted in emotive speech (as e.g. in French "im-*per*tinence" vs. "perti*nen*ce") and two or more neighboring syllables may become equally emphasized. Even this can be simulated in written verses by *contradictions* between the *metrical* and the *linguistic* scheme if a first syllable is emphasized by metrical stress (*ictus*) and the following one bears linguistic stress. Hegel (p. 299) was probably the first who put the dialectic unity, the interdependence of metrum and rhythm in its proper light. Linguists later drew a parallel between metrum vs. rhythm on the one hand, and "langue" (language) and "parole" (speech) on the other (Gáldi, Trojan, 1951). The divergence of metrical and linguistic stress has been codified under the name of *distributed* stress or *hovering* accent in poetics (Deutsch). The complete correspondence of metrum and rhythm reflects the calm of the Mediterranean landscape, the harmony of nature in Goethe's *Mignon*, contrasting with rhythmic dissonances signalizing the longing of a human being:

Kennst du das Land? wo die Citronen blühn,	x́xxx́xxxx́xx́	[!]
Im dunkeln Laub die Gold-Orangen glühn,	xx́xx́xx́xx́xx́	
Ein sanfter Wind vom Blauen Himmel weht,	xx́xx́xx́xx́xx́	
Die Myrte still und hoch der Lorbeer steht,	xx́xx́xx́xx́xx́	
Kennst du es wohl?	x̍xxx́	[!]
Dahin! Dahin	xx́xx́	
Möcht'ich mit dir, o mein Geliebter, ziehn!	x́xxxx́x́xx́xx́	[!]

Cummings characterizes the lovers "anyone" and "noon" who are living and dying in a complete harmony with nature with four completely regular iambic verses, the only regular ones in a metrically irregular poem (Marks, p. 43). The verse is a "texture

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of expectations, satisfactions, disappointments, surprisals" (Richards, p. 137) and the beauty of a poem is less dependent upon the regularities than upon the irregularities, according to Willem de Groot (1964).

Less apparent and all the more significant are the metrical slips called *enjambements*, or *run-on lines.* Whether a verse regularly ends with a phrase or sentence, or whether metric and semantic units cross each other, has been considered mostly a simple question of metric etiquette.

Statistics might be revealing: in the poems of one of the most sensitive metricians, Heinrich Heine, sharp breaks of the sentence occur only in 3.5 per cent of the verses of his poems composed in his youth (between 1817-1821). In the poems written in his "mattress tomb" (*Matratzengrab*) during his last three years, 24.2 per cent of the lines are broken (Fónagy, 1960). It is no longer the voice of the young man wandering through Germany, "a man buried alive is crying in the night or a dead body or even the grave" as he told a friend in speaking of these poems (*Gespräche mit Heine*, ed. H. H. Houben, Frankfurt am Main, 1926, p. 897).

> Ein Wetterstrahl, beleuchtend plötzlich
> Des Abgrunds Nacht, war mir dein Brief;
> Er zeigte blendend hell, wie tief
> Mein Unglück ist, wie tief entsetzlich...

The Hungarian poet, Lörinc Szabó, lost his mistress after 26 years. Their friendship and their final separation is related in a cycle of poems, one of the most beautiful and most sincere human documents on love and death. The cycle as a whole reflects serenity as compared with the cycles of the *Sturm und Drang* period of the poet. In the early volume, *Masterpieces of Satan* (including the cycle "Give me poison, revolver"), 63.4 per cent of the lines are broken, as against "only" 29.4 per cent in the *Twentysixth year* (*A huszonhatodik év*), as he called his memorial volume. Comparing the 120 sonnets, following in chronologic order, among each other, we find that broken lines most frequently occur in the first ten sonnets composed shortly after her death and become less frequent in the course of time. The slowly descending frequency is interrupted however in

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rhythmic intervals by sudden rises corresponding to returns of agitation and anxiety (Fónagy, 1965). The frequency distribution of broken lines seems to be responsive to the slightest changes of mood.

Breaks in the line convey essentially the same message in poetry as emotive pauses do in speech. They express excitement, anger, and depression. The breaks in Verlaine's poems sometimes signal the emphatic lengthening of stops and the dismembering of words, which is especially widespread in modern French:

> Autre que toi que je vais sac-
> Cager de si belle manière...
>
> (*Et puisque ta photographie*)

Breaks may increase the tension and arouse the reader's interest:

> There will be the cough before the silence, then
> Expectation ...
>
> (W. S. Merwin, *Dictum: for a masque of deluge*)

They may bring into relief the last word of the verse or the first of the following line:

> ... till one greater *Man*
> restore us, and regain the blissful seat, ...
>
> (Milton, *Paradise Lost*)

> ... I would give
> *All* that I am to be as thou art!
>
> (Shelley, *Adonais*)

They often reveal a tendency to avoid or suppress a painful or awkward thought:

> ... sagen kann
> Nimmer ich's; doch dass ich dies
> Grässliche hier mit Augen schau'.
> Solches gewiss ja, weiss ich.
>
> (Goethe, *Faust*, II, 2 act)

Veult et ordonne que j'endure La mort, et que plus je ne dure... (Villon, *Les Lais*, V)	He desires and commands I shall suffer Death, and come to an end ...

Silence or any other prosodic feature is expressive—but only expressive—in speech. I am referring here to Karl Bühler's famous

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triangular speech-model. According to Bühler, speech has three basic functions: an expressive, an impressive and a representative. Only words may represent objects in speech. In poetry, silence and other prosodic features may acquire a *representative function.*

The poet *identifies himself*, e.g. with Brutus, stabbing his dagger in Caesar's breast:

> Wir schlafen ganz wie Brutus schlief—
> Doch jener erwachte und bohrte tief
> In Caesar's Brust das kalte Messer.
>
> (Heine, *Zur Beruhigung*)

Reading these verses our voice equally falters, reproducing the glottal stop inherent in every heavy muscular effort, and participating in the murder, we are even supposed to feel the resistance of the chest.

Furthermore, the poet identifies the verses representing the outside world with this world itself, considering *words as building blocks.* In creating a model of the external world, he represents a distance in space or time, by separating connected words:

> ... quand, sur l'or glauque de lointaines
> verdures dédiant leur vigne à des fontaines ...
>
> (Mallarmé, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*)

> ... To stand
> Remote and call it merciful?
>
> (W. Stevens, *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, VII)

> Five years have past; five summers, with the length
> Of five long winters! ...
>
> (Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*)

The disposition of the lines one below another may represent a similar stratification in the outside-world or a movement downward or upward:

> That with no middle flight intends to soar
> Above the Aonian mount ..
>
> (Milton, *Paradise Lost*)

> And let their liquid siftings fall
> To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud.
>
> (T. S. Eliot, *Sweeney among the Nightingales*)

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The break of the sentence—the German term for *enjambement* is *Zeilenbruch*—may be a kind of magic performance or "pre-formance" of breaking, destroying:

> Another in her willful grief would break
> Her bow and winged reeds ...
>
> (Shelley, *Adonais*)

The French term *enjambement* suggest a stepping over or a jump from one line to the other:

vil kleine grasemügge wa wilt du hüpfen hin ab dem neste? ... (Nîthart, *Ir fröut iuch*)	little grasshopper where will you spring from your nest? ...

> Pierrot qui d'un saut
> De puce
> Franchit le buisson ...
>
> (Verlaine, *Colombine*)

In Walter von der Vogelweide's *Yearning for the Spring* a ball is flying from one line to the other:

> Saehe ich die megde an der strâze den bal
> werfen, sô kaeme uns der vogele schal.
>
> (If I saw the girls in the street throwing
> the ball, we should hear the warbling of birds.)

As the sentence goes from one verse to the other, the run-on lines are suggesting a movement from outside to inside:

> ... The sixth age shifts
> Into the lean and slippered pantaloon, ...
>
> (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*)

> What fond and wayward thought will slide
> Into a lover's head!
>
> (Wordsworth, *Lucy*)

> Such as Columbia saw arise when she
> Sprung forth a Pallas, arm'd and undefiled?
>
> (Lord Byron, *Child Harold's Pilgrimage*)

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A movement from inside to outside:

> In the soothing thoughts that spring
> Out of human suffering;
>
> (Wordsworth, *Ode*)

> She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
> Out of the East, ...
>
> (Shelley, *Adonais*)

Words representing a hidden object may be really missing from the first line:

> Stay gentle Night, and with thy darkness cover
> The kisses of her lover.
>
> (John Fletcher, *Bridal Song. The Maid's Tragedy*)

> Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
> The Hanged Man.
>
> (T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, I)

The sentence we lose at the end of the verse reappears suddenly in the following:

> Leaves the room and reappears
> Outside the window ...
>
> (T. S. Eliot, *Sweeney among the Nightingales*)

> ... till one greater Man
> restore us, and regain the blissful seat, ...
>
> (Milton, *Paradise Lost*)

It seems that prosodic gesturing ignores the difference of concrete and abstract meaning. Abstract, ideal relations are depicted by the same gestures as physical ones.

> The homely beauty of the good old cause
> Is gone ...
>
> (Wordsworth, *Sonnet*, written in London, September 1808)

> Impitoyable sort, dont la rigueur sépare
> Ma gloire d'avec mes désirs!
>
> (Corneille, *Le Cid*, V, 2)

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There hangs by unseen film, an orbed drop
Of light, and that is love ...

(Keats, *Endymion*, I, 805)

Till from that summer's trance we wake, to find
Despair before us, vanity behind.

(G. Santayana, *As in the Midst of Battle there*)

Somewhere I have never travelled, gladly beyond
Any experience, your eyes have their silence...

(E. E. Cummings, *Somewhere I Have Never Travelled*)

Just as the poetic translators of Verlaine's *Chanson d'automne* had carried over the significant sound features in their respective languages, the translators of Rilke's *Torso of Apollo* have been rigorously faithful to the metrical slips, the "broken" lines suggesting the distorted statue.

sein Torso glüht noch wie ein Kandelaber,
in dem sein Schauen, nur zurückgeschraubt

sich hält und glänzt. Sonst konnte nicht der Bug
der Brust dich blenden, und im leisen Drehen
der Lenden könnte nicht ein Lächeln gehen
zu jener Mitte, die die Zeugung trug.

(J. B. Fleishman)

Exactly seven run-on lines echo the seven breaks of the German original in both the English and the Hungarian translation.

his torso like a branching street lamp's glowing,
wherein his gaze, only turned down, can shed

light still. Or else the breast's insurgency
could not be dazzling you, or you discerning
in that slight twist of loins a smile returning
to where was centred his virility.

POETRY AS PART-SONG

Phonetic features play in poetry a *double role.* On the one hand, they are elements of arbitrary signs, connected with reality

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through word and sentence; on the other hand, they are *immediately* linked with experience through symptomatic and symbolic correspondences existing between phonetic and non-linguistic events.

Conceptual messages conveyed by sounds are necessarily different from the pre-conceptual messages contained in sound and rhythm; even if both refer to the same objects. Occasionally words and sounds may have *different "meanings"*; words happen to be counterpunted by sound and rhythm. We feel the spring-breeze blowing in Swinburne's poem:

> The *f*ull *s*tream*s* *f*eed on *f*lower o*f* ru*sh*e*s*,
> Ripe gra*ss*es trammel a travelling *f*oot,
> The *f*aint *f*resh *f*lame o*f* *th*e young year *f*lu*sh*e*s*
> *F*rom lea*f* to *f*lower and *f*lower to *f*ruit;
> And *f*ruit and lea*f* are a*s* gold a*s* *f*ire,
> And the oat is heard above the lyre ...

We hardly realize that no mention was made of the wind: we felt it through the frequent returns of spirants such as *s*, *f*, *sh*, *th*.

> Dü*nn*yög, mo*ty*og a cipö ...
> "the shoes mumble, and mutter,"

This is the literal meaning of a line in Attila József's poem *Esik* ("It rains"). The English reader may wonder how to interpret the verse. The meaning becomes quite clear only with the help of the "soft" and "moist" palatal consonants *ny* (n'), *ty* (t'), lost in the English translation which give the original words a squelching and squashy quality, suggesting the sucking noise of the wet shoes in the mud.

> C'est une laide de Boucher,
> Sans poudre dans sa chevelure
> Follement blonde ...
>
> (Verlaine, *A la princesse Roukine*)

The Hungarian translator of Verlaine's poem put into words the message contained in the *enjambement* (and the metaphor): "Her fluttering (!) hair has never been sprinkled with powder."

"Not only the words may convey meaning but also rhythm, through intuition," says the Hungarian poet Desider Kosztolányi

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in the introduction to his prosodic analysis of Goethe's *Wanderer's Nachtlied.* The most striking musical feature in Goethe's masterpiece is the sudden change of the rhythm; in the sixth line the quiet falling rhythm (trochees, spondees) is suddenly interrupted by lively dactyles:

Über allen Gipfeln	— ◡ | — — | — —
Ist Ruh ...	— —
Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde ...	◡ | — ◡ ◡ | — ◡ ◡ | — ◡

The change seems quite unmotivated: "The birds of the woods are silent." Kosztolányi considers the brisk rhythm as a breakthrough of pagan delight in life. For other readers the lively rhythm might suggest that a sudden breeze is passing through the branches. Or both. In any case, the contrast of the lexical and the musical message elicits phantasies resolving the contradiction.

Prosodic slips may reveal even *unconscious feelings.* In one of the poems of the cycle *La bonne chanson* Verlaine forgives his wife all the insults he gave her. "No more clenched fists and hatred." But the sentence sounds very different in French:

> A*rr*ière aussi les poings *cr*ispés et la *c*olè*r*e.
>
> (*Puisque l'aube grandit*)

His ambivalence is manifested on the rhythmic level in another poem written in an outburst of tenderness reflected in softly undulating iambic verses:

> C'est une tou- / te jeune femme
> Et son enfant / déjà tout grand
> Dans une barque / où nul ne rame ...

We see Verlaine's young wife who asked for a divorce in the very first year of their marriage (and she had a good reason for doing so), together with Verlaine's son whom he never met. In the poem he keeps his eyes with tenderness and paternal care on the boat. And now comes a sudden change on the musical level. Our iambic expectations are frustrated:

> Un jeune gar- / çon, une femme...

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Following the iambic course we have to stress the first syllable in *garçon* but this metrically stressed syllable runs counter to the next syllable which bears a linguistic stress. The softly dancing little boat strands all of a sudden. What is to become of both wife and child. The caesura breaking in two halves the word *gar-/çon* "son" seems to hint at a tragic issue.

INVERSION: SYNTACTIC GESTURING

It is a common belief still widespread, and deeply rooted in the traditions of ancient rhetorics, that deviations of the regular grammatic structure have to be interpreted as a voluntary use (or abuse) of poetic license dictated by the ambition "that language of poetry should be distinguished from that of prose" (I am quoting the intelligent *Poetry Handbook* of Babette Deutsch, p. 108). We know, however, that apparent disorder is a result of a secondary rearrangement of the grammatical (regular) structure, that irregularities suppose a *double-rule.*

> Blanche, Vénus émerge ...
>
> (Verlaine, *L'heure du berger*)

Reading the sentence, we first reestablish the grammatical order: *La blanche Vénus émerge* and pick up the primary message; then, after matching both the grammatical (ideal) and the poetical (actual) word order, we realize the secondary message—the exclamation: *Blanche!*—interfering with the primary one. This kind of rearrangement, reflecting the subjective processing of the stimuli—first, perception of a sparkling light, then identification of the source of light—is called an *impressive* or impressionistic word order. A slightly different kind of rearrangement, reflecting our emotions, is called *expressive* or expressionistic word order (Reitz):

> Doch ein Sturmwind wird (o er kommt! entflieh du,
> Eh' er daherrauscht)
> Grausam, indem du nun am hellsten glänzest,
> Dich hinstürzen!
>
> (Klopstock, *Ode an die tote Clarissa*)

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The original structure—*Entfliehe, eh' der Sturmwind daher-rauscht dich hinzustürzen, indem du am hellsten glänzest!*—is rent asunder by the sudden horror of approaching death.

The same kind of *sensible disorder* may have a representative function. The scrambled word order depicts the scattered leaves in Cummings' verses:

leaf of ghosts some
few creep there
here or on
unearth

(*Nonsum mob*)

The "grammatical" version was given by Barry A. Marks in his work on Cummings' poetry: "Some few ghosts of leaf creep there, here, or on unearth."

The arrangement of the "building blocks" can, at the same time, follow a musical plan and serve the *tension-relaxation* mechanism. We have in Shelley's *Waning Moon* an interesting parallel to Verlaine's impressive presentation of the evening star:

And like a dying lady, lean and pale,
Who totters forth, wrapped in a gauzy veil,
Out of her chamber, led by the insane
And feeble wanderings of her fading brain,
The moon arose up in the murky East,
A white and shapeless mass.

The identification of the celestial body is preceded by associations elicited by the rising moon. The (physiological and semantic) tension gradually increases up to the end of the sentence (up to the fifth line) in order to make relaxation more pleasurable.

SUBSTITUTION: GRAMMATICAL TRANSFER

The rich variety of poetic structures can be reduced to two fundamental procedures: 1) the change of the grammatical word order, the transposition of the elements along the time-axis (or syntagmatic axis), 2) the substitution of one (expected) grammatical category by another (unexpected one), e.g. singular by

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plural, past by present, verb by noun, etc., i.e. the transposition of elements on the so-called paradigmatic axis. (cf. Fig. 1).

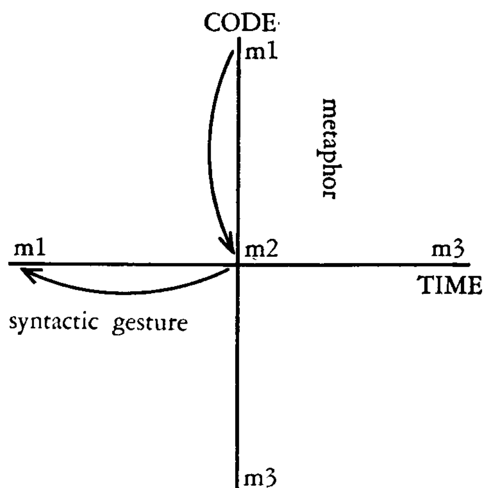

Figure 1

The substitution of grammatic categories, the *grammatical metaphor* is a quite usual procedure in Cummings' poems.

> Blow king to beggar, and queen to seem,
> (blow friend to fiend; blow space to time)
> (What if a much of a witch of a wind)

The irregular construction *blow king to beggar* could be resolved in the following two statements:

a) *the wind may blow,* b) *the wind may transform the king into a beggar.* The two statements may be coordinated: *the wind may blow in order to transform the king into a beggar.* In the phrase "and queen to seem" a verb is substituted for a noun. According to Barry A. Marks it is a way of enhancing the conceptual opposition, parallel to king vs. beggar. It could be added: he deprives his queen of her substance by denying her even the category of a noun, of a substantive. She does not exist any more; she only seems to be.

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In one of the best known of Cumming's poems, the protagonist is a pronoun, anyone, "who lived in a pretty how town," and did not strive to make a name for himself, neither did his beloved, the adverb "noon." He accepted the world as it was given to him (Marks, p. 40).

> he sang his didn't *he danced his did*

According to the comment of Marks, anyone, in contrast with "everyone" who "did their dance," i.e. they danced dutifully, without joy, anyone danced, enjoyed even his duty (Marks, pp. 40 f.).

Such sentences could not be generated even by means of a perfect English grammar (Levin). If they could be regularly produced there would be no grammatical transfers and would not convey any secondary message.

Grammatic transfers are far from being limited to modern poetry. We meet a most expressive transfer of time in one of the first French literary documents, in the *Chanson de Roland.*

> Mult larges terres de vos avrai conquises ...
> (I shall have conquered many of your lands ...)

The past future seems to be here quite inaccurate and pointless. These are the last words of the dying Roland who is not supposed to conquer new lands of the heathens. The past future (*futur antérieur*) has to be replaced by a past tense (*passé indéfini*) and the "erroneous" past future has to be interpreted as: "he has conquered many a land of the pagans." that will be recited by the bards.

HUNTING THE FIRST EXPERIENCE

The basic contradictions inherent in language, as pointed out by Hegel, lies in the fact that whereas language is made to express individual experience, it can only express the universal (*Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 1833, XIV, p. 2). Lexical and grammatical metaphor reflect the poet's endeavour to overcome this basic restriction.

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The process starts in poetry with a sudden but voluntary amnesia. The poet rejects the conventional term which has already existed before his own experience, and is therefore subjectively most inadequate, and replaces it by an objectively inadequate term, as R. M. Rilke does in speaking of a prophet:

> ... Eisenstücke, Steine,
> die er schmelzen muss wie ein Vulkan,
> um sie in dem Ausbruch seines Mundes
> auszuwerfen, welcher flucht und flucht.
>
> (*Ein Prophet*)

Even a prophet is not supposed to "melt lumps of iron and stones in his mouth." This poetical statement is obviously untrue. Arabic philosophers considered the metaphor as a lie and did not accept metaphorical interpretations of words contained in the Koran since the Koran could not tell untruth.

A false statement, or a mere lie is self-contained. The message conveyed by a metaphoric statement goes far *beyond the sentence.* The contradiction between the conventional meaning of the metaphoric term and the context excluding this meaning sets off a mental process in the reader which corresponds to the poet's day-dreams elicited by some event—e.g. by a phenomenon which will be called later on *word*—and is summarized in the metaphor *lumps of iron, stones.* Rejecting the conventional term representing the concept, the skeleton of previous experiences, the poet has to face the undomesticated, unmanufactured reality with unbiased eyes. We are reminded of the case of Helen Keller who was bereft of the sense of sight and hearing in the second year of her life. She learned (or relearned) to speak only some years later and could report her tremendous experience as she realized that there existed a spell powerful enough to master, to organize the chaotic universe, a charm which enables us to communicate with other people. Repeating over and over again Helen Keller's experience, Rilke perceives words once as stones and pieces of iron, another time as black birds fluttering around his head (*Sybille*), or as a wall (*Oft fühlt sich in scheuen Schauern*). We meet nearly the same metaphor in a poem of Dylan Thomas: "Shut too, in a tower of words..." Words are sprinkling stars in Apollinaire's *Fiançailles*, blood

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clots in the mouth of the Hungarian poet, Attila József (*A vasszínü égbolt*—"The iron colored sky"), knaggy wood in a poem of another Hungarian poet, Desider Kosztolányi (*Ének Virág Benedekröl*—"Song on Benedek Virág"). Each time the word has to be recreated on the basis of a very personal experience, in order to transform the skeleton of the *Ding für sich* in a lively and concrete *Ding für mich.*

The average person owes to the poet "the frightening sensation" that, like Adam, our ancestor, we all are essentially the first inhabitants in this world detecting "the hidden correspondences between things before it could be formulated as a concept," says Béla Balázs, author of the libretto of *The Bluebeard's Castle.* This main idea got a metaphorical formulation in a poem of Dylan Thomas: "When logics die [= if we can get rid of words and concepts], the secret of the soil grows through the eye, and blood jumps in the sun" (Light breaks where no sun shines).

Both metaphor and phonetic gesturing represent a deeper layer of verbal communication than arbitrary signs which are not immediately related to experience. The poet in his quality of tropator "maker of tropes" or troubadour has to *regress* for a moment to a pre-verbal stage, he turns into an *in-fans*, a "non-speaker," a child.

The basic experiences of early childhood are reflected in Victor Hugo's metaphors. In this world a roof is transformed into a hat, a river into a snake, a ship into a small fish (cf. Huguet). The child's non-perspective view is prevailing. In Heym's metaphors the river bank is flying towards us while sitting in the boat (*Die Dampfer auf der Havel*—"The steamboats on the Havel"). We are surrounded by gigantic figures (*Printemps, Savonarola*), "a few sharp twigs of bushes scrape the thin glass of the sky" in Attila József's poem (*Téli éjszaka*—"Winternight"). Still more deeply regressive are Mallarmé's verbal experiences. In his famous and much discussed sonnet *Surgi de la croupe et du bond* we see the room of Tournon through the eyes of a 10 or 11 months old infant. Therefore it hardly surprises us when the outlines of the furniture, the borders between the real and the imaginary world become blurred. One cannot find out—it was and remained a subject

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of debate—whether there is an empty vase before us or an unlit luster; whether the chandelier's arm reminds us of a sylph or else this sylph is just painted on the wall, or whether it is there at all, etc. (cf. Chassé; Mauron; Michaud).

COMMUNICATION OF UNCONSCIOUS THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

The metaphor is an effective tool for the expression of preconscious fantasies, what Varendock called *das vorbenwusste, phantasierende Denken.* During the metaphoric process our attention is diverted from the object and turned inward for a shorter or longer period. The longer it lasts, the more difficult it is to find the way back, the more blurred will be the metaphor. The direction of associations is regressive and can hardly escape the attraction of the unconscious (Freud, X, p. 291; Hollós, 1919, p. 94). In such cases some links of the chain will be inaccessible to conscious thinking and the out-put of the process, the metaphoric term will be ambiguous but the more expressive. The word *süss* "sweet" attributed metaphorically to most different things in Trakl's poems is always beautiful and never fully justified on a conscius level. "O *süsser* Helios!" (*Der Spaziergang*) says the poet, remembering his paradise lost. He speaks of "drinking the white waters of the lake, drinking the sweetness of a sad childhood":

> Wenn uns dürstet,
> Trinken wir die weissen Wasser des Teichs,
> Die *Süsse* unserer traurigen Kindheit.
>
> (*Abendlied*)

This attribute is brought about in another way by an old nursery song and the sight of a woman nursing her child. This reminds him of bread and wine, sweetened by hard labor:

> Und Brot und Wein sind *süss* von harten Mühn.

And in the very next line: "you are stretching your hand silverly after the fruits. The dead Rachel is walking through the fields."

> Nach Trüchten tastet silbern deine Hand.
> Die tote Rachel geht durchs Ackerland ...

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We need no new documents to prove the importance of oral cathexis prevailing in poetry. I am quoting these lines simply to illustrate this special way of *communicating unconscious thoughts without revealing them*, just by lifting the veil.

HIDDEN AT THE SURFACE: DEMOTIVATION AND REVALUATION

The secondary messages contained in phonetic and syntactic gestures or conveyed by lexical and grammatical transfers are less clearly defined than primary messages and are partly unconscious.

We are used to think of hidden objects as *deeply* buried in the ground; to keep secret feelings at the *bottom* of the heart.

$$\text{The parallel:} \quad \frac{\text{Form}}{\text{Content}} \asymp \frac{\text{Unconscious}}{\text{Conscious}}$$

is rather unexpected. It is not easy to realize a secret message on the surface, a secret message which *is* the surface.

The key lies, I think, in the very nature of linguistic signs. Linguistic signs are perceived only as a reference to other objects. That means that a sign may function, may exist as a sign only if it has no existence of its own. Our attention turns from the speech-sound to the phoneme, from the phoneme to the morpheme, from the morpheme to the sentence, and from the sentence to the situation which the sentence implies. The oral mimicry is disguised by the phoneme (as a set of distinctive features), the phoneme is hidden through the morpheme; and quite frequently even the meaning of a morpheme does not reach the threshold of our consciousness. For example, in *Bad nehmen* ("to take a bath") the basic meaning of *nehmen* is invalidated, as if it had nothing in common with the same morpheme occurring in the sentence *Er nimmt ein Stück Brot* ("He takes a piece of bread"). The morpheme *bruch* ("break," "fracture") conserves its basic meaning in *Knochenbruch* ("fracture of bone") but is completely neutralized in *Ehebruch* ("adultery"). In puns we have documentary evidence that the basic meaning of morphemes is fully *preserved* on a *preconscious*

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level; e.g. the basic meaning of *nehmen* in *Bad nehmen*, in the anecdote reported by Freud (VI, 5-96), a Jew answers to the question *Hast du ein Bad genommen*? ("Did you take a bath?") *Warum, fehlt eins?* ("Why? is one missing?"). If the basic meaning of *nehmen* would not have been conserved on a preconscious level, the response of the second Jew would be pointless; if it would be entirely conscious, there would be no humorous effect. Dreams are even more indicative of the original meaning. A German physician dreamed he was treating his female patient for broken bones. At that time he was much concerned with the disruption of his marriage. Following Freud's analysis (II-III; 413), the fracture of the bone (*Knochenbruch*) has to be considered as an allusion to adultery *Ehebruch*.

In everyday life we don't attend to metaphors contained in idiomatic expressions. Let us quote some expression from a Hungarian handbook of general phonetics: *lándzsát tör,* literally "break a lance," actually "stands up for himself"; or *kardoskodott*, literally "drew his sword," actually "held his opinion"; *éles a harc*, literally "the battle is in full swing," actually "there is a lively debate"; *vallatóra fogta*, literally "he tortured (it)," actually "he examined," in speaking of the affricate sounds. All sorts of modern and classical weapons are put into action on the formal level, but nobody thought of resenting it, even the colleagues of this outstanding linguist who often criticized his quarrelsome manners.

Non-verbal activity may be equally formalized. Even a kiss can be invalidated. Let us think of kissing a woman's hand, a gesture considered in some countries as a polite way of greeting a lady.

We are reminded of the adventure of Reynard the Fox who once could not escape his persecutors. The huntsmen searched every nook and corner of the manor for the fox. All was in vain. Finally they had dinner and left without detecting Reynard who was all the time clinging to a hook in the dining room before everybody's eyes.

Demotivation, or *formalization* is a regular process in language development. It is—from a psychological point of view—a special mechanism of *ego defense*: declining the responsibility for certain thoughts or feelings. This mechanism seems to be

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less operative in poetry than in everyday life. Reading poems we are more sensitive to unconscious messages contained in verbal expressions.

Even the characters appearing in dramatic poetry react to the original, literal meaning of certain metaphors.

> Ach, Kann ich nie
> Ein Stündchen ruhig dir *am Busen hängen*
> Und Brust an Brust und *Seel' in Seele drängen?*

says Faust to Marguerite. In everyday life, we have to reduce the idiom *dir am Busen hängen*, (literally "to cling on your bosom") to the simple statement: "to be with you," and *Seel' in Seele drängen* which contains on the formal level an unmistakable allusion to sexual intercourse, would have to be interpreted simply as Faust's wish to converse undisturbed with the girl. Marguerite, however, replies as one who understood the hidden message:

> Ach, wenn ich nur alleine schlief'!
> Ich liess dir gern heut Nacht den Riegel offen.

"Oh, if I slept alone in my bedroom, I would willingly leave the door unlocked."

THE MESSAGE OF INDIVIDUAL STYLE

We considered run-on lines in Heine's, Rilke's or Lörinc Szabó's poems as prosodic gestures. It could be objected that run-on lines are frequent in Heine's last poems and in most poems of Rilke. Hence it would be unjustified to interpret each broken line as a gesture, containing a message of its own. Or that *enjambements* in Rilke's poems have a purely physiognomic function, that they are elements of his individual style.

This argument could be reversed. The high frequency of broken lines in Heine's late poems may reflect the broken, dying voice of the poet, independently of the different connotations of the run-on lines in each verse. Individual, occasional gestures are not invalidated through frequent use, but a permanent message is superimposed on the occasional messages.

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Hence individual style had to be considered as a *permanent message.* Comparing the frequency distribution of phonemes and prosodic features in the poems of Lörinc Szabó—one of the most dynamic and aggressive Hungarian poets—with those of Gyula Juhász, one of the most passive and placid lyrical poets, it turns out that "hard" consonants, short vowels and broken lines are more prevalent in Lörinc Szabó's poems. I am referring here to the results of the computer analysis of Hungarian carried out in the Computational Center of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Fónagy, 1965). The very high percentage of breaks (*enjambements*) had to be considered in the context of "hard" consonants as a mark of aggression, especially in view of the high frequency of words like *rossz* "bad," *vad* "wild," *harc* "fight," *gyülöl* "hates," *gyülölet* "hatred," *halál* "death," *fél* "he (or she) is afraid."

Very interesting and important statistical work has been done by Paul Guiraud (1953, 1954), on the works of the French poets. The "key-words" of Stéphane Mallarmé for example were: *azur, baiser, or, pur, rêve, rose, nu, vierge, fuir, blanc, froid, aile, ou, triste, ciel, soleil, ombre, cheveux, jadis, sœur.* I would propose that the list of key-words might be considered as a fragmentary text, agrammatical like dreams—as scattered elements of a deeply unconscious message. Mallarmé's key-words seem to be related to a basic complex of the poet, who lost his mother at the age of five years; subsequently he withdrew into his own dream world (hence *rêve*), in which the sky (*ciel*) and the white-winged guardian-angel (*blanc*, *aile*) occupy the most prominent roles. He sank even farther down into this dream world, when after ten more years the only human being to whom he felt really close and whom he loved passionately also left him (*fuir*), Marie, his sister with golden-blond hair (hence, *sœur, or, cheveux*), thus also become a shade (*ombre*)—the same cold (*froid*), pure maiden (*pur, vierge*) who emerged naked (*nu*), dancing with a rose (*rose*) in her hand, from the snow-covered grave (*blanc, froid*): in Mallarmé's school composition (Mondor, 1944).

If this interpretation happens to be nearly correct, we should have in the list of key-words a confession which is entirely missing in Mallarmé's highly impersonal lyric poetry.

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We started with the assumption that poetic language is characterized by rules introducing redundancies in the text additional to those of everyday speech or non-poetic prose. Now we seem to be brought to quite different conclusions. Speech sounds are operating in a double way, indirectly, on the basis of an arbitrary linguistic code, and directly, on the basis of a "natural" code, producing a kind of part-song. Lexical and grammatical metaphors are dynamic morphemes, joining a series of messages. Endre Ady's 1877-1919 metaphor *agyonnyargalt akarattal* ("with a will driven to death") contains the essence of a whole stanza. Vörösmarty's (1800-1855) metaphor *az ember fáj a földnek* ("man aches to Earth") condenses a whole mythology. All these "voices" are completed by permanent messages: the self-expression of the poet, the expression of the attitude and ideology of a social group (called the "time-spirit" by some critics), or the message contained in the literary genre chosen by the poet.

The "linearity" of verbal art, emphasized by Lessing in his *Laokoon*, and later by Ferdinand de Saussure, conceals a rich polyphony, a harmonious *concert of different messages.* Just as a complex sound wave is a total of a series of simple sine waves.

Entering into the sphere of poetry we are startled by its *semantic density.* Despite repetition, parallelism, and other kinds of redundancies, poems prove to be specially informative, even in the technical sense of the word.

In the early fifties, we used to play in a circle of friends an impassioning game. We took the Sunday editorial of a newspaper and each of the "subjects" had to guess the text of the article sound by sound. At the end of the passage, the percentage of right and wrong guesses could be determined. These games did not lead to the discovery (or rediscovery) of information theory, but to some, less important though interesting conclusions. Sixty-one per cent of the sounds in a poem of Endre Ady had to be provided by the tester, whereas in the case of a leading article it was sufficient to give 33 per cent of the phonemes to enable the subjects to guess the rest. In a recorded conversation of two young girls only 29.3 per cent

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of the conversation was of informational value. Tentative experiments with scientific papers still point to a pretty high redundancy. It is a quite common experience that scientific papers written in a foreign language are easier to understand than poems or even novels.

In everyday language strong threads of association link words together (we cannot attach any rational modifier to a substantive or verb, according to Bally).

The poet cuts through the conventional threads, liberating word and thought. He works with the smallest of semantic units, with a most refined verbal network, in order to capture details which cannot be expressed or detected adequately by means of everyday speech. A child impressed by the milky smoothness of the lake Balaton in the twilight once cried out: "Look mother how white the water is." Whereupon the mother answered sternly: "Water can't be but blue or green." The poet doesn't heed such parental objections, he wishes to convey his own thought through his own words.

> Thou lovest, but ne'er knew love's *sad satiety*
>
> (Shelley, *To a Skylark*)

This unusual approach to the concept of satiety is corroborated by etymology: the original meaning of *sad* being "satisfied."

The tendency immanent to language is to form semantic units of words which are often coupled; this is in contrast to the poet's endeavor of splitting the semantic units by means of a special kind of poetic analysis or "static etymology."[1]

Dylan Thomas seems to connect for example the verb *crab* in *crabbing sun* with the substantive *crab*, reinterpreting the word *crabbing* which does not contain any allusion to crustaceans ("Especially when the October wind..."). Cummings goes even farther splitting the word *nowhere*:

> its way to *now*
> *-here*

[1] I am indebted for this concept to Roman Jakobson, who made a brilliant analysis of conscious and unvoluntary "etymologies" in classical and modern poetry during his lectures at M.I.T. in 1964.

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Reviving the virtual elements of the morpheme, he is "asserting the ultimate identity of life and death" by means of the equation: now-here = nowhere (Marks, p. 120).

Even the morpheme *soft* could be disintegrated:

so
!f!
t

(*Poems* 1923-1954, p. 458)

The *f* is transformed through a hypostasis into an exclamation, a preverbal sound-metaphor, anticipating the concept "soft" (Marks, p. 101). These poetic etymologies are very closely related with the preconscious and unconscious processing of words, the revaluation of linguistic elements in puns and dreams.

VISUAL MESSAGES

The French romantic aesthete, Ténint, illustrated by lines becoming gradually longer, then shorter, the clatter of hoofs approaching and then dying away. Mallarmé's "Un coup de dés" was intended as a visually orchestrated symphony of letters differing in size, type, color, and empty space ("les 'blancs' en effet, assument l'importance, frappent d'abord," p. 456): the words "*plume solitaire éperdue*" are really isolated, lost in the middle of an empty page.

The playful arrangement of the printed text in the form of a cigar (in Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*, "un Cigare allumé qui fume"), a funnel (Morgenstern's *Trichter*) have their antecedents in antiquity.

The less systematical and probably involuntary use of visual arrangement in the poems of La Fontaine, Goethe, Heine, Trakls, and other poets is even more impressive.

Nur dass am untern Fenster
Ein Mädchen sitzt,
Den Kopf auf den Arm gestützt...

(Heine, *Seegespenst*)

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The first and last lines are enframing the second just as the window-frame circles the young girl looking through the window.

A drive toward expressivity inherent in poetic language *does not leave room for the haphazard.* Even *noise*, the wrong (highly unusual) separation of words has to be interpreted, as a *message*:

quite silently hills
made of blueandgreen paper

scorchbend ingthem
-selves-U
pcurv E...

(Cummings, *Among These Red Pieces*)

According to the exegesis of Marks, the unusual word boundaries are reflecting "the traveler's sense of the day as smashed or being smashed—not pure and still but shattered like broken crockery" (p. 35).

THE MUSICAL MESSAGE

Even what we considered as mere redundancy—the regular distribution of vowels and consonants, long and short, stressed and unstressed syllables, the parallelisms on the phonetic, lexical, and syntactical level, the orchestration of content—this redundancy is to be considered as a special kind of aesthetic or musical message, substituting the accompaniment since the separation from verse and music. "Music" in poetry is as expressive, as music itself, which is always more than a rhythmical sequence of tensions and resolutions. The *t*-alliterations in *The man with the blue guitar* of W. Stevens contain a cheerful allusion to the poet's guitar; to his status as a gleeman:

To strike his living hi and ho,
To *t*ick i*t*, *t*ock i*t*, *t*urn i*t* *t*rue, ...

The inner-rhyme in Heine's famous poem, *Die Rose, die Lilie...* is but the musical expression of the improvised and very personal philosophical doctrine that the *Eine*, Heine's

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unique lady is contained in every flower, in every bird, in every living creature, and in the life-giving sunshine, just as the word *eine* is contained in every word of the verse:

Die kleine, die feine, die reine, die Eine.

Words connected by rhyming syllables may be considered as free associations reflecting some inner (semantic) relation between different concepts. Goethe's chef-d'œuvre (*Über allen Gipfeln...*) is closed by the verses:

Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du *auch*.

The last line rhymes with: "Kaum einen Hauch" ("Hardly a breath.") Connecting the concepts of wind and rest, the rhyme seems to suggest: "Thou shalt rest just as the wind does now, since you are but a breath." According to Roman Jakobson's formulation: "words similar in sound are drawn together in meaning" (1960, p. 371).

The connecting words may represent on the other hand a physical contact:

O zärtlisches Phantom, umschliesse
Mich fest und fester, deinen *Mund*
Drück' ihn auf meinen *Mund*...

(Heine, *Ich sach Sie lachen*)

Her lips (*Mund*) meet his (*Mund*) and are closely tied by the rhyme.

FORM AND FUNCTION

Apparent repetition hides multiple meaning. Hence playful repetition may be freely enjoyed, it is tolerated by our highly critical inner judge, the super-ego who pronounces stricter and stricter sentences over the *repetition compulsion* prevailing in early childhood (Hollós, 1922, Spitz). We enjoy much less the concealed repetition in everyday conversations, when the

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speaker is repeating his own or someone else's phrases without any condensation of messages.

Only artistically exact, accurate and personal expressions can connected with the high *economy* of poetic structures. We are reminded of the humorous effect of puns and jokes attributed by Freud (VI, p. 133) partly to the economy of consciou intellectual effort saved through superimpression and condensation inherent to poetic structure. This difference—it is of course not *effort* is, in the case of jokes, instantaneous and unexpected. In the case of poems we are relaxed by the permanent economy inherent to jokes as well as to poetry. The *saving of intellectual* the only one—is clearly reflected in our physiological reactions to both jokes and poems. Jokes provoke an outburst of laughter, poems elicit a pleasing smile.

Polyphonic orchestration, far from being a kind of luxury, enables the poet to convey simultaneously conscious, preconscious and unconscious messages: to be sincere does not mean only to avoid untrue statements in poetry.[2]

On the other hand, the pleasureful effect of poetry is closely *reduce inhibition* and achieve a liberating effect. To *ex-press* means, in the original sense of the word, to push something out. We must indeed expel the stimulant which causes the tension in order to regain a normal state of equilibrium. Since semantic entropy stands in the service of ex-pression, the contradiction between the striving for maximal entropy and maximal redundancy seems to be resolved.

The expression of unconscious thoughts and feelings is at the same time facilitated by the dazzling, soothing, *narcotizing* effect of verbal music. Even the round-trips into the past by means of metaphors are conditioned by phonetic redundancies.

Poetic form means even more than the expression or expression of mental contents. Through sound mimetics, prosodic

[2] This is why clumsiness brings about lies in poetry: "Dans le language des vers la maladresse fait mentir" (Sully-Prudhomme, VII, p. 58). Or according to a great Hungarian poet of the 19th century, János Arany: "You can write an editorial without any conviction but never a poem." We may quote Heine as well: "Dem Lügner wird der gute Still erschwert" (*Letter to A. Meissner*, Paris, November 1, 1850).

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and syntactic gesturing the poet tries to introduce some crumbles of *reality* in his merely verbal universe into which he withdrew. He reconstructs a universe of his own in the microcosmos of the vocal tract. He wants a real experience of the storm or breeze; hard objects are introduced (introjected) by means of "hard" sounds, humidity is felt through the contact of the tongue and the soft palate; he is really fighting through the rotation of the tongue wrestling with the air-stream:

> *R*u*r*sus in a*r*ma fe*r*o*r*, mo*r*temque mise*rr*imus opto
> (Vergilius, *Aeneis*, II)

He has to undergo Phèdre's passion in shifting the caesura and participate in the murder of Caesar through a violent break of the verse. He incorporates persons and objects, he masticates even ideas by means of metaphor and appropriate vocal gestures.

Poetic language is half expression, *half activity*, on the midway between reality and the conceptual, verbal representation of reality. Poetic language represents according to Wallace Stevens a "flight to reality," or without any embellishment, a substitute for reality.

And all these hold for the reader as well. Communication has to be interpreted literally, as "communion," in poetry, an understanding through identification. No matter how eagerly we listen to somebody's account, we *identify ourselves* only with the poet. Our breathing is regulated by the rhythm of verses, we are compelled to repeat the poet's words, and gestures, to participate in his actions.

We are invited to take part in the creative process, e.g. to interpret freely the message conveyed by the metaphors. "The different interpretations may all be partial formulations of one thing," says Eliot, and the reader's interpretation "may be even better" (p. 23).

This is why poetic language is more suggestive than any other kind of verbal communication. The Polish general Joseph Bem, one of the military leaders of the Hungarian war of independence in 1848-1849, was asked if he would prefer to have new troops or the Hungarian revolutionary poet appointed to him as aide-de-camp. He chose unhesitatingly Sándor Petöfi, probably without having read Heine's verses about the poet whose

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words turn into daggers and swords ("rede Dolche, rede Schwerter").

Poetry is most effective *in its own domain*, as a monologue, a day-dream shared by both the poet and the reader. On the other hand, the "description" of the furniture in Mallarmé's sonnet *Surgi de la croupe et du bond* would contain only very scarce indications for the joiner or the furniture dealer. In case of a technical description it is most unlikely that the choice between a cup or a chandelier would remain vague. By reducing semantic and grammatical redundancy to an unusual level, the poet attempts to communicate even the uncommunicable. The increase in the amount of information goes hand in hand with the increase of noise, incomprehensible with noise being the message with the maximal entropy (Pierce).

None of the *poetic elements* are exclusively specific to poetry (Spitzer, p. 231). Phonetic (Kaiser, Trojan, 1952; Fónagy, 1962, 1963) and even syntactic gesturing (emphatic word order) plays a tremendous role in speech. Metaphors are inherent to everyday language, they are indispensable even in science, preceding and preparing the objective analysis, as e.g. the metaphors of "dark" and "light" vowels, "hard," "soft" or "moistened" consonants in Greek and Roman grammar, reflecting a preconscious knowledge of articulatory and acoustic features, facilitating the manipulation and classification of the elements of linguistic signs. The same holds for the metaphors in philosophy (Eucken, Fónagy, 1963) and other sciences.

Individual features of poetic language are as universal as some of the functions of poetry. Poetic language, as a whole, as a set of all these features, is a special kind of communication, the necessary expression of poetic thought.

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