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"Trippingly on the Tongue:" 近年の英詩形論の研究

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"Trippingly on the Tongue:" Recent Studies of English Prosody

Kenneth O. ANDERSON

近年、英詩形論への関心が再度高まっている。この論文では、英詩形論について詩人達が最近出版した数冊の本を考察し、検討してみたい。そこでは、自由詩と呼ばれるものであっても、英語がもつ本来の韻律に基づいているもので、全くの自由詩ではないと指摘されている。また伝統的な形態の詩や不規則な韻律の詩をとりあげ、様々な詩の技法や詩の形態についても論じられている。この論文の最後では、詩形論を含む多くの問題にもふれている、著者個人の詩評として書かれた2冊の本を考察し、さらに、詩形論の研究は詩の鑑賞力を植えつけ、また高めることができるものであると結ぶ。

Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in English prosody. Poets such as Elizabeth Bishop and Richard Wilbur often turned their hand to such difficult forms as the sestina and the villanelle, but free verse has dominated English poetry for the greater part of this century. Yet free verse has often been misunderstood: It has never been completely free. Louis Simpson (1986) has pointed this out:

> Free verse is not just prose broken into irregular lines. As Eliot said, no verse is free for the poet who wants to do a good job —— and free verse, to be written well, requires as much art as writing in regular meters. However, this has not been apparent to some people. Robert Frost said he would as soon play tennis without a net as try to write free verse. Even if we think that poetry is a game, there are games —— jai alai, for example —— that do not use a net.

And, as John Betjeman wrote (Finn, 1965), ". . . until you know and can use rhyme and metre, you cannot know from what you are breaking free to write 'free verse', nor distinguish between

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poetry and prose." The present plethora of bad poetry may be attributed to lack of recognition of this fact. Poets are reminding us and themselves of the importance of rhyme and meter because in poetry, as in anything else, there is no freedom without restriction.

Among the many books that have appeared on prosody over the last few years are *Rhyme's Reason* (Hollander, 1981); *Patterns of Poetry* (Williams, 1986); *An Introduction to Poetry* (Simpson, 1986); *The Poetry Dictionary* (Drury, 1995); *The Poem's Heartbeat* (Corn, 1998); and *The Sounds of Poetry* (Pinsky, 1998), as well as the redoubtable and recently revised *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poets* (Preminger and Brogan, 1993). All of them are interesting and very informative, but may be approached in various ways and serve various purposes. I intend to look at a few of these books and suggest ways in which they have been useful and welcome to me and, I hope, to anyone who is interested in poetry.

I. *The Poem's Heartbeat*

The Poem's Heartbeat is academic and formal in its approach to prosody. This is not pejorative; Corn's guide is a close and detailed study of a variety of poems, and as such is enlightening and instructive. At the same time, it is a pleasure to read, as in the following eloquent defense of verse forms:

> Many readers find these patterns beautiful in themselves —— as the hexagonal form of a snowflake or the design of a catenary suspension bridge is beautiful. There is no mistaking the pleasure arising from the discovery of a form capable of coinciding with experience that would otherwise have no special shape. This pleasure is part of the "magic" aspect of poetry; the surprising arrangements achieved in verseform [sic] make us regard the poet able to make them as possessed of special powers unavailable to most people. Even if no special magic or occult powers are actually involved, then at least virtuosity is. I think that most people would acknowledge that virtuosity, though far from being the greatest value in art, is nevertheless a real value. If we dislike the connotations of the word, then we can substitute for it "skill," "craft," or "mastery." Wordsworth says that successfully managed poetic form appeals to us with "the sense of difficulty overcome," a sense that is both reassuring and pleasurable. The admiration an audience feels for an effectively written ballade, say, is comparable to the admiration stirred by a dancer performing a solo that required years of training to achieve; or an aria only someone with superior vocal talent and training could begin to sing; or by an Olympic skier who successfully completes a complicated, zigzag

> course down the slopes. Achievements like these demonstrate to us that human effort can sometimes raise ordinary abilities to a new level of competence and brilliance and so serve as models for succeeding at other challenges beyond routine competence. (pp. 90, 91)

Corn begins by offering a corrective to Pound's dictum to "compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in the sequence of the metronome" (Corn, p. 135). He discerns differences between music and poetry in pitch, accent, rhythm, harmony and timbre. While composers assign pitches, poets do not, for the pitch at which a poem is read depends on personal interpretation: "Since poets have only a limited control over pitch even when it is relative, they rely on it very little as an expressive resource" (p. 2). Where composers assign the number of accents, or stresses, per bar, the "relative strength of stresses in a [poetic] line varies according to a number of factors, some having to do with the sound of individual words, others with the line's conceptual and emotional content" (p. 3). As for rhythm, composers indicate how many beats there are per bar, while poets

> never provide any separate notation of recurrent stresses apart from the line divisions; they assume that readers have learned the artistic conventions indicating where stresses should fall in each line. In poetry, rhythmic notation is fused with the actual words themselves ——which is why novices have trouble determining the governing rhythmic pattern. With practice, though, a reader is able to determine the overall meter of a poem usually after examining no more than two or three of its lines. (p. 3)

Poetry is "written for and read by a single voice," so it "offers no equivalent to harmony, nor does it use timbre as an expressive source. . . . What poetry has instead of timbre is an appeal to the ear based on the interplay between vowels and consonants and their notable recurrence" (pp. 3, 4). Corn's discussion of the differences between music and poetry is extensive and detailed, and I have only provided the bare bones here.

Corn next examines poetic lines, the technique of enjambment and the kinds of stress to be found in English poetry: etymological, syntactic, rhetorical or emphatic, and metrical stress. He contrasts stress-based meter with syllabic meter, as in Japanese poetry. He discusses scansion and suggests that there is a range of roughly four levels of stress to be found in scanning poetry, while admitting that "there is room for disagreement here. . . . [but] Under this system, we are much more likely to reach a *consensus* as to the correct scansion of any given line" (p. 30). His judgments are never arbitrary; as he says, "Meter is a guide, not a straitjacket" (p. 36).

He then goes on to discuss metrical variations, the "most common" of which is metrical substitution, "where one foot (or more) of the governing metrical foot is replaced by a foot (or feet)

of another kind of meter" (p. 40), and rhythmical variations, caused by the feet in a line or lines being "made up of different kinds of stresses" (p. 59). He then takes up what he calls "phonic echo:" i.e., the various kinds of rhyme. These include alliteration, end rhyme (Corn's term for this is "normative rhyme"), internal rhyme, "'light rhyme,' where a stressed syllable duplicates rhyme conditions with an *un*stressed syllable" (p. 70), assonance, consonance, "identical rhyme" (the rhyming of a word with itself), "homophonic rhyme" (where rhyming words have identical sounds but different meanings or spellings), "half-double rhyme" ("the matching of duplicate vowel and consonant sounds in a stressed syllable that is one word's final syllable with the same vowel and consonants from a second word whose rhyming syllable is followed by a weakly stressed *unrhyming* syllable," p. 72), "amphisbaenic" rhyme (rhyming consonants in reverse order), "elided rhyme" (the elision of a vowel in a word with falling accent), and approximate rhyme. Clear and interesting examples are given for each kind of rhyme. He also discusses the aesthetic reasons for using rhyme and the function of rhyme schemes.

This leads to the various kinds of stanzas in a poem, which "are labeled by the number of lines they contain" (p. 81): for example, tercets (three lines), quatrains (four lines), and so on. Corn notes that most lyrics in English are written in quatrains. He also observes that stanzas can be either "isometric" (i.e., their lines all have the same number of metrical feet) or "heterometric" (having lines with varying numbers of feet).

Corn next discusses "verseforms:" poems that have both a fixed number of lines and a fixed rhyme scheme and usually rhyme in some way. Among these verseforms are the limerick and the various forms of sonnet. After that he goes on to "refrains:" "words, lines, or stanzas repeated verbatim at regular intervals throughout a poem" (p. 100). He also discusses "quantitative meter," "a system using syllable length rather than stress as the metrical base" (p. 109), as in classical Greek, and syllable count verse, such as haiku.

Finally we come to unmetered poetry, or free verse. Corn admits that free verse can enhance spontaneity and naturalness, but points out that one of its disadvantages is "we can't always know where certain stresses fall" (p. 137), although this can be true of metered poetry as well. Another disadvantage is that writing free verse places a greater burden on the poet in writing good poetry: "The free-verse poet is confronted at every point with an almost unlimited number of possibilities, with the resulting necessity, at every point, of making technical decisions. The burden of constantly inventing new means of communication may be so great as to make it impossible to continue" (pp. 139-40). The poem may come to seem arbitrary, not necessary, in its choice of line length and stresses, and the burden of the reader in interpreting the poem be-

comes greater as well. In contrast, says Corn, writing a metered poem may offer not only a greater challenge, but a greater aesthetic pleasure:

> When a poet manages it well, the audience experiences a sense of vicarious pride in what human abilities and effort are capable of doing, and this becomes a model for other kinds of challenges that can be taken on and mastered outside the realm of art. Some would even go on to say that unmetered poetry suggests a lack of discipline, an unwillingness to work within reasonable guidelines, and that, as a model for behavior, it fosters unreliability, since the reader is never given any norm to gauge performance by and therefore never knows what to expect next. (p. 140)

That is not entirely Corn's view, however. Corn wishes to stress the fact that writing good poetry, either metered or unmetered, requires discipline and erudition. The poet who writes free verse should know the forms that have preceded it and be able to build on them or, in deviating from them, know exactly why and what s/he is doing in attempting to create something new. Moreover, says Corn, without a knowledge of the traditions of poetry, our appreciation of all the great poems of the past and what they have to offer us will be lost. He sensibly concludes that ". . . there is no reason why a contemporary poet cannot write some poems in free verse and others with the assistance of traditional prosody. Readers with a strong ideology for or against either practice will dismiss the poems that don't support that ideology, but it's impossible to please all of the people all of the time, and one advantage of writing poetry is that it offers an occasion, before all else, at least to please the author" (p. 142).

Throughout his book Corn gives excellent examples of both traditional and free verse to illustrate scansion, and his elucidation of the poems from which he quotes are thoughtful and perceptive, erudite without being ostentatious. Two examples will have to suffice for the many which could be quoted.

Corn quotes a couple of lines from Richard Wilbur's "A World Without Objects Is a Sensible Emptiness" to illustrate enjambment: "a line that ends without any punctuation at all so that the reader continues on to the next without a pause, the two lines being enjoined in one syntactic unit" (p. 10). Here are the lines in question:

> And move with a stilted stride
> To the land of sheer horizon, hunting Traherne's
> *Sensible emptiness*, ...

Corn says of these lines that "The impression of a step taken across a gap is easily perceptible between lines one and two, and, moreover, the sensation of emptiness in that gap is rein-

forced by the enjambment between lines two and three” (p. 11).

The second example is of metrical substitution, “where one foot (or more) of the governing metrical foot is replaced by a foot (or feet) of another kind of meter” (p. 40). Corn quotes a line from Shakespeare’s Sonnet 29. A sonnet is written in iambic pentameter (a line of five feet, each foot being an iamb, i.e., an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable). In the line which Corn quotes, a trochee (a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable, thus the reverse of an iamb) is substituted for the first foot:

Like to the lark at break of day arising,

Corn remarks,

> . . . the trochaic first foot gives an energetic snap to the line (reinforced as well by the shared l’s and k’s of “like” and “lark”) appropriate for the early morning upward soar of Shakespeare’s emblematic bird. How do our ears respond when this substitution is made? For one thing, we hear a strong stress in the first syllable where the meter makes us expect a weak stress only. This surprise gives the line a strong inaugurating rhythm that focuses special attention on the opening words —— an attention justified by the sense contained in the line. Notice also that putting a trochee before an iamb also results in two consecutive syllables with weaker stress —— here, “to” and “the” —— a rhythm that cannot occur in a regularly iambic line. This has a speeding up effect, adding a kind of skipping rhythm to the line, which, in this case, vividly corresponds to the darting flight of the bird (p. 40).

Corn’s book concludes with a useful bibliography of books on prosody, a general index and an index of poets and poems cited in the text, and an appendix of sample scansions which is useful and enlightening.

In contrast to Corn, Pinsky is breezy in his style, less formal, but equally authoritative. He notes that the reader’s feel for stress and intonation in his or her native language is inherent and that this inherent feel for language is the basis for appreciation of poetry. Poetry, therefore, “is a vocal, which is to say a bodily, art. The medium of poetry is a human body: the column of air inside the chest, shaped into signifying sounds in the larynx and the mouth” (Pinsky, p. 8).

As for the art of writing poetry, Pinsky flatly states, “There are no rules” (p. 7). By that, he means that good poets, in creating new forms, have always broken old rules and formulated new ones. He therefore prefers the term “principles” to “rules:” “If a good line [of poetry] contradicts a principle one has formulated, then the principle, by which I mean a kind of working idea, should be discarded or amended” (p. 6).

Pinsky first deals with accent (stress) and duration, giving as an example of how the same

syllable in the same word can be said differently, according to syntax, the sentence "Permit me to give you a permit." In this sentence, of course, the noun "permit" and the verb "permit" are said differently and mean different things. The sounds of syllables in a sentence are also affected by their relationship to each other. Pinsky offers the sound "it" as an example: "It" is stressed in the words "bitter" and "reiterate" but not in the words "italicize" and "rabbit" or the phrase "*Pat* had it." He then goes on to offer the iamb as an example of how poetry employs the sounds of syllables, observing that no two iambic feet are the same. He further notes that duration is not the same as accent: In the word "popcorn," for example, the first syllable is stressed, but the sound of the second syllable lasts "slightly but distinctly longer," while in the word "ocean," "the first syllable is stressed and longer" (p. 15).

These are but a few examples of the many interesting ones Pinsky gives of variation in accent and duration (also called "quantity") in English, and how they contribute to the dancing, energetic movement of good poetry. He points out that a master poet does not consciously use these variations: S/he has gone beyond that, to the point where such variations are an integral part of the poet and any poems s/he makes: "The expert makes the moves without needing to think about them. But the more we notice and study, the more we can get from actual performance. And analysis of a fluid performance into its parts can lead to understanding, and perhaps eventually to the expert's level of insight and the expert's kind of joy" (p. 20).

Pinsky next moves on to syntax and line. Lines of poetry are not, of course, all of the same length, but "the lines do unmistakably have a certain rhythm in common, an artful coherence: part of the pleasure the poem gives is hearing that rhythm while the sentence courses over it, or through it, or along with it, or whatever spatial language you like to describe the way we hear the sentence-sound. . ." (p. 27). Pinsky quotes the first five lines from Ben Jonson's "My Picture Left in Scotland" to illustrate the play of lines in poetry:

I now think, Love is rather deaf than blind,
  For else it could not be
    That she
Whom I adore so much should slight me,
  And cast my love behind.

Pinsky comments:

> The run-over lines and pauses, the varying line lengths, the varying way the unit of syntax (that is, the grammatical phrases) coincides with the unit of rhythm (that is, the lines) or does not coincide —— all of these create an expressive, flamboyant whole. The poem

> speeds up and slows down many different ways in the course of these five lines. Though the lines are all made of iambic feet, the variation in pace and emphasis is great —— greater than could be easily attained in a comparable thirty-one words of prose. (p. 28)

Pinsky continues to discuss lines and syntax in detail, using various poems, both free verse and traditional, to illustrate. He notes that "the line and the syntactical unit are necessarily the same. Much unsatisfactory reading and much inferior writing proceeds from not getting this idea right" (p. 30) and that sentences in poetry should be read as sentences, "not treating the end of every line as an automatic pause. . . . reading each line differently according to the differences in syntax conveys more information: you get the information of the line as well as the information of the syntax. Ideally, you are hearing as much difference as possible, and also hearing the underlying pattern of the lines" (p. 36).

Pinsky vivifies his discussion of basic concepts of poetry by explaining the metaphors which lie behind them: "*Versus* in Latin, from which the word 'verse' derives, signifies the ploughman at the end of a furrow turning about to begin again, so that 'verse' and 'reverse' are closely related" (p. 25); ". . . enjambment, based on the French word for leg. In enjambment, or a run-over line, the syntax throws its legs over the hedge or low wall of the line" (p. 39); "The technical term for these symmetrical units [of lines in a poem], separated by white space, is 'stanza,' the Italian word for 'room'"(p. 40).

He then discusses the various kinds of feet —— iamb, trochee, anapest, spondee, and so on —— and the kinds of rhymes to be found in poems, and how these kinds of feet and rhymes affect the sounds of various poems. As with Corn, so with Pinsky: The examination of language in action in a great variety of poems is what lends the discussion of prosody piquancy, making the discussion of prosody fun and stimulating (at least for anyone interested in poetry). Pinsky also agrees with Corn that knowledge of basic techniques of traditional poetry enhances understanding of free verse: "I think that an understanding of blank verse in particular, among the iambic measures, can help one hear more accurately and elegantly the rhythms of free verse. . . . My personal observation is that those [poets] who wrote the best, most striking pentameters [in their youth] went on to write the most attractive free verse" (pp. 97, 98, 101). Throughout his book Pinsky asks his readers to read aloud the poems he quotes, to judge for themselves the poems in question with their own prosodic skills, encouraging them to be active rather than passive. One way he encourages readers to do this is to suggest alternative line divisions for poems by poets such as William Carlos Williams, C.K. Williams, etc.: "If it can't be demonstrated why the author's version is better [than an alternative version], the question should be

open [as to which is the better version]” (p. 46).

Pinsky concludes his book with sensible recommendations for further study: “Read [the poem you want to read] aloud, perhaps ...write it longhand or type it out, and...get at least some of it by heart. Having done that, do the same with another poem, and with many more. . . . For an art is best understood through careful attention to great examples. As Yeats says in the lines I have taken for my epigraph: Nor is there singing school, but studying/ Monuments of its own significance” (p. 116).

He also includes end notes to show which poems he has quoted in the text and a useful index of names and terms. Both *The Sounds of Poetry* and *The Poem's Heartbeat* are useful and instructive for both the newcomer to poetry and the one who wants to explore poetry in more depth. They are the most readable and stimulating of the recent books on prosody, and that is why I have spent more time on them than I will on the other books I have mentioned.

For teachers of poetry, two invaluable resources are Louis Simpson's *An Introduction to Poetry* (third edition) and John Drury's *The Poetry Dictionary.* Simpson's book has an excellent introduction to what poetry is, how to read it, the specifics of meter, rhyme, stanza and sound; a comprehensive and well-chosen anthology of poems by poets from Chaucer to those of poets born in the 1950's; a very good glossary of poetic terms with excellent examples taken from a wide range of poems; and a useful index of authors and titles of poems. One especially interesting section of the glossary is the various definitions of poetry given: Simpson starts with a definition by Plato and continues chronologically until he gets to Auden: The variety of definitions, and the marked difference of opinions among the experts, is startling, leading Simpson to dryly conclude, “With [Auden's] idea of poetry, which is about as far removed from Plato's *Ion* as it is possible to get, I'll leave the question” (p. 616). Simpson's good humor and good sense is evident throughout his book, as evidenced in his preface: “The emphasis [in this book] is on reading for enjoyment and understanding. There is no understanding of poetry if we do not, first, enjoy it. And as the pleasure of reading is in noticing things for ourselves and proving an idea, as Keats said, ‘upon our pulses,’ I have given neither directions for reading individual poems nor lists of questions to be answered. Directions of this kind interrupt the immediate experience of a work and can turn reading poetry into an exercise devoid of intellectual or emotional engagement” (p. v).

The Poetry Dictionary is the most comprehensive dictionary of poetic terms and techniques that I have yet found, including such basic but very useful information as the names for stanzas varying from one line to nine on up to such little-known or little-used forms as the Malay *pan-*

toum or Welsh poetic forms. Many of the poems are very recent and not well-known, poems which deserve to be brought to a wider audience and are excellent embodiments of the ideas expressed in this dictionary's pages.

The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics is the primary reference work for those who want to read about poetry in depth. It is a useful compendium of information that would be difficult or cumbersome to find elsewhere: for example, surveys of the world's poetries. This is a book for browsers as well as scholars, a book to dip into and get lost in, letting serendipity lead the way. Say one wants to find out more about the pantoum verseform mentioned in *The Poetry Dictionary*. One finds that the *pantoum* is actually called the pantun in Malay and is given a detailed description of it, as well as the history of its use in the West and which Western poets have used it. Articles for further reading are mentioned and, if one craves still more information, one can turn to the "Malay Poetry" section and find much more, including lists of anthologies and translations into English. This is a book for the real poetry aficionado.

John Hollander's *Rhyme's Reason* is not only a guide to English verseforms (with a useful appendix of poems illustrating various verseforms and suggestions for further reading on prosody), it is also an entertaining collection of verse about verseforms: For each concept he discusses, Hollander offers original verse illustrating the concept. When one considers the difficulty of some of the ideas or verseforms discussed (e.g., Gerard Manley Hopkins' "sprung rhythm," the sestina, the villanelle, the rondeau, the *pantoum*, and so on), one is even more impressed with his wit and skill. Hollander, of course, is a master poet, and only such a poet could bring off such a conceit so successfully. Here are but a few examples:

On the stanza:

A *stanza* in Italian means "a room";
  In verse, it needn't keep to square
Corners, as of some dismal tomb,
  But wanders anywhere:
Some stanzas can be built of many lines
  Of differing length;
Their variation then combines
  With rhymes to give it strength.
    Along the way
    Short lines can play,

And, at the end, a longer and more solemn

Line extends below, a broad base for a column.

(pp. 18, 19)

On the zeugma:

Zeugma's syntactic punning, sharp and terse,

As on *in's* senses, which we now rehearse:

"Zeugma is used in earnest and in this verse."

(p. 48)

On acrostic verse:

*A*crostic verse ("top of the line," in Greek)

*C*onceals, in a linguistic hide-and-seek,

*R*eadable messages, gems sunk in fetters ——

*O*nly read down the lines' initial letters.

*S*ometimes a loved name here encoded lies:

*T*his instance names itself (surprise, surprise!)

*I*ndeed, these final lines, demure and winning,

*C*onfirm the guess you've made near the beginning.

(p. 37)

Hollander includes takeoffs of blues and pop songs as well, and quotes poets whose work deserves to be better known. Here, for example, is Don Marquis (of *Archy and Mehitabel* fame) on the triolet:

Your triolet should glimmer

  Like a butterfly;

In golden light, or dimmer,

Your triolet should glimmer,

Tremble, turn, and shimmer,

  Flash, and flutter by;

Your triolet should glimmer

  Like a butterfly. (p. 84)

Miller Williams' *Patterns of Poetry* is appealing because so many good but little-known poems by both contemporary and past poets are given as examples of various poetic forms, and more information on such subjects as spatials and concrete poetry. In addition, there is an excellent introduction giving an overview of the history of changes in forms. Williams concurs with Corn

and Pinsky that traditional forms are still important for poets writing today and that, even if a poet is writing in free verse,

> These patterns, allowed to be a little more resilient, followed not so rigorously, can inform new poems in such a manner that a sonnet or villanelle or sestina is not written but suggested. This is the allusory pattern, and it has its own uses: it stirs old associations, as allusion will, and it surprises our expectations by being not finally the form it reminds us of. And even the suggestion of one of the forms, when a poet understands it well, can haunt a good poem like a ghost. (p. 12)

Like Corn's book, Williams' includes a useful bibliography and a comprehensive index. Most interesting, perhaps, are the three appendices. Appendix A is a list of additional poems in various patterns for readers to seek out themselves. Appendix B complements and buttresses Corn's argument for there being four levels of stress in poetry by applying structural linguistics to prosody: Williams finds that the four degrees of stress which structural linguists recognize —— primary, secondary, tertiary and weak —— apply to prosody as well and can enhance our appreciation of poetic sounds. As an example, he notates some lines of poetry by Theodore Roethke by translating them to an oscilloscope, and states that "we can see the nuances more clearly now and in a way that might encourage young readers of poetry to drop the metronomic, foot-patting voice and read as if poetry were a human activity" (p. 179) —— a statement both Corn and Pinsky would approve of. Williams concludes this appendix with the the remark that "certainly no one would suggest this complex presentation as a substitute for conventional scansion, but for a closer study of a poem's movement, it makes possible a replicable vocal interpretation to a degree hardly approached by the use of standard prosodic signs. Perhaps it is worthwhile to remind ourselves now and then of how much of a poem's voice conventional scansion fails to take into account" (p. 181).

Appendix C discusses the poetic line and makes one realize anew how much thought and care goes into every detail of poetry:

> Every time a word is added to a poem, the poet has made a decision about a line's relative and absolute length; every time a line is ended with a rhyme word, the poet makes a decision about the quality of sound setting up a rhyme set or decides whether to answer the first sound with true or slant rhyme. In the case of typographical or spatial poems like many of Cummings' and Ferlinghetti's, a decision is made about the placement of the line on the page. It is by all these means that a poet makes the line, and the poem, a more effective construction so that it becomes a more convincing illusion of conversation. (p. 183)

For a poem, even if it gives the appearance of being natural conversation quoted verbatim (e.g., in certain poems by Robert Frost), is not: "Poetry, like all art, is ritual, and ritual doesn't want conversation. The poet balances the two demands, plays conversationally against form, and finds in this tension much of the energy that means life to a poem" (p. 184). Further on Williams states (just as Pinsky does), "In all talk about poems, there are no hard rules. But there are principles that, when heeded, result most of the time in a more effective poem. This is all that rules can mean in poetry. I doubt if they mean more in any other art, but this makes the understanding of these principles and the use of them by the poet no less essential" (p. 186).

Two other books on poetry, very recently published, are personal appreciations of poetry that touch on a variety of topics, including prosody. Both are written by contemporary poets. Kenneth Koch's *Making Your Own Days: The Pleasures of Reading and Writing Poetry* (Koch, 1998), begins with a look at prosody, goes on to explore the processes of writing and reading poetry, and concludes with a personal anthology of poems commented on by Koch. The second book, Edward Hirsch's *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry* (Hirsch, 1999), is a collection of some of Hirsch's favorite poems and his explications of them, followed by a glossary and suggestions for further reading.

Koch quotes Paul Valéry in defining what poetry is: "a language within a language" (Koch, p. 19). He continues, "I thought [this definition] worth taking literally and seeing where it might lead; I thought it might explain something important about how poems are written and how they can be read" (p. 19). Koch's discussion of poetic language is lively and interesting, involving not only prosody but his own experiences with and reflections on writing and reading poetry. His informal tone is engaging and his perceptions instructive without being pedantic (this is only to be expected from a poet well-known for books on teaching poetry to both children and adults).

One characteristic of poetry, Koch says, is synesthesia, "which, in poetry, means talking about details of one sense as if they were those of another: a green fragrance, a loud yellow" (p. 64). Another aspect of poetry is lying: "'The truest poetry,' Touchstone says in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, 'is the most feigning'"(p. 64). He continues, "One quality of poetic truth is that it isn't a general truth that can be separated from its expression in a particular poem" (p. 64). Poetic lying may be "stating a feeling as if it were a fact" or "stories, like the story of Kubla Khan or [Wallace] Stevens' Cuban doctor, that end up revealing some kind of truth. Metaphor and analogy may also take the form of lies" (p. 65).

Poetry, says Koch, allows us

> . . . to compare, to personify, to apostrophize, to lie, to boast, to tell secrets, to give advice, to constantly change, and to organize what is said into works of art; these characteristic kinds of utterance tend to bring together a multiplicity of words and experiences and to connect them in various ways that confer, at least momentarily, knowledge and power on those who speak the language. Thanks to this intellectual and verbal power, poets are able to say things —— important, enhancing, and powerful things —— that can't be said without it. It's a language that gives pleasure and communicates while doing so. . . It is understandable that poets, sitting down to write in such a language, would be stirred as painters are entering their studios, as composers are touching their pianos; and that readers would be stirred in a similar way by reading it. To be so affected, of course, one has to learn the language" (p. 70).

Hence the need for prosody. Koch calls the awareness of prosody, the awareness of what prosody has to offer us in understanding poetry, a "poetry base": "a knowledge of the language of poetry which will enable [poets] to respond to inspiration when it comes and will itself be part of their inspiration. To be 'fluent' in this language is to have a chance to be good at writing poems" (pp. 71, 72).

In discussing the actual writing process, Koch tries to recreate what certain poets went through in the creation of their poems, using poets such as Keats, Shelley, Yeats on up to Gary Snyder as examples. One of the most interesting examples is Frank O'Hara: Koch shows us a poem by Frank O'Hara with the changes to it as O'Hara made them in manuscript. This gives us a clear idea of how O'Hara revised his poem and to some extent why. Koch says that his hope is that a knowledge of how poets write can help readers "know what they are reading when they are reading a poem. They are looking at a curiously motivated kind of communication that is not entirely the result of rational or conscious work. It is no wonder if everything isn't clear from the first moment. Or even after reading several times. One reads poetry for its intellectual meanings, but also something else" (p. 108).

Koch's comments on the poems he includes in his anthology give us suggestions for interpretation but leave the real imaginative work of understanding the poem up to us —— as it should be. D.H. Lawrence's short poem, "The White Horse," is a good example. Here is the poem in its entirety with Koch's comments:

> The youth walks up to the white horse, to put its halter on
> And the horse looks at him in silence.
> They are so silent, they are in another world.

> A very short poem —— like Pound's "Alba" and Williams's "The Locust Tree in Flower" —— but which uses the real event it describes to suggest an "elsewhere" (in this case, "another world") rather than concentrating on the physical reality of what is there. The poem gets a certain musical unification from the repeated word *horse* in lines 1 and 2, and the *silence/silent* repetition in lines 2 and 3. Some of its words, even before "another world," are somewhat mysteriously suggestive: "youth," "white horse," and "in silence." If these are replaced, say, by "young man," "brown horse," and "quietly," the mysterious atmosphere is pretty much gone. The repetition of "they are" in the third line helps to make the second statement —— "they are in another world" —— as easy to accept as the first one. (p. 250)

We find ourselves agreeing with Koch, but then asking, "Why?" Why is a white horse more mysterious than a brown one, or a youth than a young man? It is musing on questions such as these that leads us deeper into poetry and enhances our appreciation of it. The answers we find depend on both language and the emotional experiences we bring to the poem as individual readers.

Hirsch begins his book with a statement of purpose which, like Koch's opening remarks, refers to Paul Valéry: "My idea is to present certain emblematic poems I care about deeply and to offer strategies for reading these poems. My readings are meant to be instructive and suggestive, not definitive, since poems are endlessly interpretable. There is always something about them that evades the understanding, and I have tried to remain aware that, as Paul Valéry has put it, 'The power of verse is derived from an indefinable harmony between what it *says* and what it is. Indefinable is essential to the definition'" (p. xi).

I find Hirsch's initial suggestion to readers on how to read poetry very sympathetic, as it corresponds with my own reading experiences (and, I think, the experiences of anyone who loves to read):

> Read these poems to yourself in the middle of the night. Turn on a single lamp and read them while you're alone in an otherwise dark room or while someone else sleeps next to you. Read them when you're wide awake in the early morning, fully alert. Say them over to yourself in a place where silence reigns and the din of the culture —— the constant buzzing noise that surrounds us —— has momentarily stopped. These poems have come from a great distance to find you. I think of Malebranche's maxim, "Attentiveness is the natural prayer of the soul." (p. 1)

Like Pinsky, Hirsch sees reading poetry as a physical act:

> When I recite a poem I reinhabit it, I bring the words of the page into my own mouth, my

> own body. I become its speaker and let its verbal music move through me as if the poem is a score and I am its instrumentalist, its performer. I let its heartbeat pulse through me as embodied experience, as experience embedded in the sensuality of sounds. The poem implies mutual participation in language, and for me, that participation mystique is at the heart of the lyric exchange. (p. 5)

Hirsch also emphasizes the emotional quality of poetry, the way in which the words of a poem set the imagination free to roam as it will: "The words move ahead of the thought in poetry. The imagination loves reverie, the daydreaming capacity of the mind set in motion by words, by images" (p. 8).

Hirsch brings his own perceptions to bear in the glossary, giving examples from his own experience and citing a wide range of poems which illustrate the various ideas, techniques, and so on. As for the text itself, it is good to see discussion of poems by Elizabeth Bishop, Borges, Delmore Schwartz and Wislawa Szymborska, among others. As with any anthology, of course, one finds that one's own favorite poems are often missing —— which is fine, for the effect of any good anthology is to encourage readers to go beyond its pages and do their own exploring. Discovering a poem by and for oneself is one of the rewards of reading poetry.

Unless one has a teacher like Kenneth Koch, one may find the study of prosody as taught in many schools difficult and tedious. This is a shame, for appreciation of poetry is as natural as a liking for music (think of the way young children respond to nursery rhymes). A liking for the sounds of poetry should lead naturally to wanting to know more about how poetry works, to progress to deeper and more intense enjoyment of poetry. Those who love poetry are fortunate that so many poets, all the authors mentioned in this article, have seen that this is so and have found it worthwhile to address, in Seamus Heaney's phrase, "the redress of poetry."

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