RHYME AND FREEDOM

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orange, chimney, breadth, circle, desert,
monarch, month, virtue, wisdom

English words that "cannot be rhymed at all" listed in the
Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics

As for the organisation of rhymes, in so far as they are used in the frons or the cauda, it seems that as much liberty as may be desired must be allowed..

DANTE, *De vulgari eloquentia*

Two lines of poetry came to me one day in the form of a paradox: *"There is a kind of leaving when you arrive / even though it's the place you've come from."* And, as I continued to write, *arrive* became *alive,* and *from* grew into *none,* and I found myself composing in terza rima, as each new stanza followed with increasing insistence and increasing ease. What drove this insistence and ease? It was, it seems, a sense of living voice — to arrive "alive" in a poem that, in fact, turned out to be an elegy. The dangling preposition in the second line already seemed to have framed the poem as spoken, rather than written. Perhaps every elegy can't help being concerned with aliveness and its own living speech in the face of a death, but to begin by writing and then to find yourself in speech can be the difference between death and life for any poem, and rhyme, along with other intelligible repetitions of sounds, is often the symptom or indication that the poem is quickening. If, however, a poem remains predominately writing, never coming alive to voice and to sounds as voiced, it will remain only a sketch for a work.

In the case of this poem that emerged to be concerned with the shedding succession of generations, inherited memories, and the differences between closed and open kinds of knowledge, it wasn't difficult to see how terza rima seemed to "fit" the theme. Or was it the other way around? Was — is — terza rima there waiting, an opening to a certain means of shaping inchoate feelings and experiences into form? Later, as I looked at that first line, I realized that "a kind of leaving when you arrive" is exactly what terza rima does. As the second rhyme of a stanza "arrives," the middle-line end word "leaves" to form its own new pair in the ensuing stanza.

When any artist sets to work, various forces of contingency and necessity are at play, some conscious, others unconscious, some available to analysis and others not, or perhaps not yet. At the start, all the elements are assembled. As I began what turned out to be my elegy, I had the initial phrase. Until such a mark or note is struck, and then the next and the next, the form is replete with any number of choices, and each choice then exercised is dense with its relation to what otherwise could have been. Each determination thereby leaves behind a trace of alternatives; like the trail of filings left by a burin, and the sounds of similar words that went unchosen linger for a while. Before all these successive determinations reach the finality of form, the maker has an experience of expanded insight and increased powers of judgment that can be described as resonant.

Artistic freedom reaches its apogee when intention approaches the rich cognitive moment on the brink of realized structure. Because structures of this kind are historical, and those who make and apprehend them historical beings, it is inadequate to describe this as a moment of pure willfulness. Yet certainly whatever freedom the will might possess is available at this point of possibility without resolution. Rhyming is at once both intended and compulsive, an art practice that makes full use, by means of sound, of these possibilities for resonance and saturation. As Hegel noted, "what belongs peculiarly to lyric is the ramified figuration of rhyme which, with the return of the same sounds of letters, syllables, and words, or the alternation of different ones, is developed and completed in variously articulated and interlaced rhyme-strophes."[1] In other words, it is not only that stanzas demand rhymes, but also that rhymes create stanza structures; lyric process is propelled by the sounded repetition of sameness and difference, of rhymes thrown forward as both moving line and anchor.

How is it, then, that as early as Aristotle's denigration of mere verse in the *Poetics,* and especially under modernist theories of free verse, rhyming has

been viewed by many as both a purely formal device and a kind of restraint?[2] When the first modernists speak of free verse, their preoccupation is usually meter, but they often include rhyme as one of those features of verse from which poets have been "freed." In one of the earliest statements on free verse, in the pages of *The Egoist* in 1914, Richard Aldington argued against "the old rhymed, accented verse." There he wrote: "The old accented verse forced the poet to abandon some of his individuality, most of his accuracy and all his style in order to wedge his emotions into some preconceived and childish formality; free verse permits the poet all his individuality because he creates his cadence instead of copying other people's, all his accuracy because with his cadence flowing naturally he tends to write naturally and therefore with precision, all his style because style consists in concentration, and exactness which could only be obtained rarely in the old forms."[3] "Old" here may convey mostly an all-round fatigue with Victorian poetry, "childish formality" may refer particularly to Algernon Swinburne's obsessive rhythms. Even so, it's worth considering some of the ideas expressed in this long sentence as more than a reaction to immediate precursors, for Aldington's approach hasn't disappeared as a way of framing rhyme's relation to poetic freedom.

Aldington indicates that the "individuality" of the poet has some basis in a "natural flow" that nevertheless also has a "precision." In this regard, the end of poetry is, for him, to free the poet from the cadences of the poetry of the past. Aldington recognizes that "there is a tyranny of novelty as there is a tyranny of antiquity,"[4] but he believes that some essential individuality characterizes free verse. Is it true that fixing individuality would free the poet? Wouldn't this result instead in a reification of voice or style? And would relying on nature herself as a source of rhythms necessarily open up the possibilities of the poet's invention? In fact, Aldington's test for effective free verse lines is the degree to which they conform to the grammar, not of nature, but of ordinary speech: he constantly singles out inverted syntax as "inaccurate" and unnatural. Yet there is nothing natural about ordinary English syntax. And rhythm is not meter.

Our English word *rhyme* does come from Latin and Greek *rithmus* or *rhythmos,* and surely the natural flow Aldington mentions is based in organic life in such a way that our speech rhythms are only a small instance of rhythm as a force in nature, indeed a force in the cosmos. Solar pulses, the ebb and flow of tides, those circadian rhythms that affect our sleeping and waking as heliotropic beings are only some of the rhythms to which we are subjected. Rhythm indeed may be a necessary, if not sufficient, condition of human

life, for the embryonic heart begins to beat eighteen to twenty-one days after conception; at that point there is no blood to pump, no function for the heart to serve, but if the beat stops, the embryo dies.[5] What does this rhythm have to do with syntax? A periodic sentence of the kind Aldington himself has written has a certain prose rhythm, and that rhythm inevitably must grow out of the human experience of rhythms of all kinds, but there is nothing about syntax that makes it the basis of natural rhythm. To hope to free rhythm from meter, as such early proponents of free verse as Aldington and Pound did, is to return to a real, rather than ideal, relation to nature. Yet it is hardly to create a condition of freedom, for natural rhythms are a contingent force everywhere in our existence, bearing down upon and transporting us as surely as we have breathing lungs and beating hearts.[6]

The Old English word *rim* has a complex etymology indicating, among other meanings, counting or reckoning, as well as covering with "rime" or hoarfrost; it reminds us that meter is a determinative and ideal pattern placed over rhythm. Pure repetition of course is never possible. Even within the logical realms of mathematics and physics, the temporal situation of the beholder fragments the possibility of such perfect isomorphism. Yet meter admits the possibility of organizing the language in ways that may include, and may also go beyond, the spoken language, and meter can function as an abstract grid even as it is never totally realized. Syllables have a life in meter that they cannot have in the actual ordinary practice of spoken phonemes — a fact exploited beautifully, for example, in the sprung rhythms of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Consider the opening lines of his 1885 sonnet "(The Soldier)." If they were written as a prose argument, they would look like this:

> Yes. Why do we all, seeing of a soldier, bless him? Bless our redcoats, our tars? Both these being, the greater part, but frail clay, nay but foul clay. Here it is: the heart, since, proud, it calls the calling manly, gives a guess that, hopes that, makes believe, the men must be no less. It fancies, feigns, deems, dears the artist after his art.

Hopkins writes them, however, like this:

> Yes. Whý do we áll, séeing of a / soldier, bless him? bléss
> Our redcoats, our tars? Both / thése being, the greater part,
> But frail clay, nay but foul clay. / Hére it is: the heart,

Since, proud, it calls the calling / manly, gives a guess
That, hopes that, mákesbelieve, / the men must be no less;
It fancies, feigns, deems, dears / the artist after his art.

Hopkins had written in his journals that hexameter lines such as these would not work in English without splitting down the middle. Here, in a poem he wrote while serving as confessor to the Cowley Barracks at Oxford, he uses that very effect, emphasized by his placing of a virgule in each line, to lay out a set of fissures: the see in seeing, the red in redcoats, the be in being, the call in calling, the man in manly, the makes in makesbelieve, the art in artist. Reading down his diacritical marks — *why all see / bless // these // here // makes // dears* — the emphasized monosyllables are like an x-ray of the conventional syntax whereby soldiers are blessed and thereby endowed with certain attributes. This syntax is in tension with the dense language of the poem that remains unmarked: the frail and foul clay out of which this art is made; the sacrifice that "dears," exemplified at the volta between the octave and sestet by "Mark Christ our King." The simple, exact *abbaabbacdcdcd* rhyme scheme (bless / art / heart / guess / less / art / smart / express / through / bliss / do / kiss / too / this) contrasts the enveloped, protective, structure of the octave's blessing to the march-like duality of the sestet's two rhyme words, designed to emphasize the soldier's own point of view.

To ask what is obviously a rhetorical question: which admits of more freedom of expression, the regular prose syntax here, or the poetic line, with its complex interplay of end rhyme, internal alliteration and consonance, split phrasing, and re-marked syllables? Aldington makes it clear that "cadence" or rhythm is what is un-"wedged" from the "preconceived and childish formality" of traditional meters, yet just how preconceived, if not childish, is traditional meter? Even if a rhyme scheme is anticipated, the unfolding consequences of its manifestation can be full of surprises, particularly surprises of content and perspective.

Nevertheless, despite an apparently universal tendency for rhyming to be part of the process of language learning, most of the world's languages do not use poetic rhyme.[7] Chinese poetry has had a continuous history of using rhyme since 1000 B.C., but the ingenious prosody of biblical Hebrew did not turn to rhyme; secular Hebrew poetry developed a system of rhyme words based on consonant/vowel units only as it came under the influence of Arab poetics during the medieval period. Ancient poetry, especially Greek

poetry, in the West rarely used rhyme, and when it did, rhyme was often a feature of ridicule or comedy, as in the rhyming speech of the drunk Hercules in Euripides' *Alcestis:*

> brotois hapasi katthanein opheiletai,
> kouk esti thnêtôn hostis exepistatai
> tên aurion mellousan ei biôsetai:
> to tês tukhês gar aphanes hoi probêsetai,
> kast' ou didakton oud' halisketai tekhnêi.

Here is Richard Aldington's own 1930 translation of these lines, which, perhaps not surprisingly, do not rhyme:

> Know the nature of human life? Don't think you do. You couldn't. Listen to me. All mortals must die. Isn't one who knows if he'll be alive to-morrow morning. Who knows where Fortune will lead? Nobody can teach it. Nobody learn it by rules.[8]

The slightly tipsy veering quality of the Greek lines is complete lost in this flat and broken-up rendition.

Rhyme appears as a dominant feature of poetry in the West only with the gradual substitution of accent for quantity in poetic measures, and the strongest influences upon Western rhyme come from Irish and Arabic poetry. *Homeoteleuton,* the repetition of words that end alike, regardless of stress or quantity, was frowned upon by most classical and medieval rhetoricians, especially with regard to unstressed syllables, and the fact that most words of more than one syllable adhered to the Latin rule of penultimate stress meant that few words could be rhymed.[9] But the hymns of Hilary of Poitiers and Saints Ambrose and Augustine in the third and fourth centuries begin a syncretic tradition of using both assonance and end rhyme, and the Latin hymn is indebted to Irish verse forms. Old Irish depended upon an alliterative accentual line similar to that found in German poetry. For a time Old Irish poets simultaneously practiced both this accentual verse and a syllabic line based on irregular speech rhythms with an end-line rhyme in a fixed meter; eventually, in Middle Irish verse, the syllabic system prevailed. The vernacular traditions of Irish poetry, known in print through monastic inscriptions from the fifth century forward, were in this sense a repository of a great array of techniques: accentual and syllabic verse; alliteration, internal rhyme, and end-rhyme, and a complex system of metrical requirements for rhyme.[10] In

the rhyming couplets of the sixth-century Latin hymn "Dies irae" (Day of Wrath) of Saint Columba (521–97) we find similar practices:

> Regis regum rectissimi
> prope est dies domini,
> dies irae et vindictae,
> tenerarum et nebulae,
> diesque mirabilium
> tonitruorum fortium,
> dies quoque angustiae,
> maeroris ac tristitiae,
> in quo cessabit mulierum
> amor et desiderium,
> hominumque contentio
> mundi huius et cupido.[11]

The end-rhymed couplets play on a cumulative and receding pattern of sound like a wave, with the most variation at either end: *aabbccbbccdd.* More subtly, the multisyllabic rhymes also cluster toward the middle at *ccb*(2)*b*(2). The end rhymes are offset by initial assonance and much internal rhyme, although there is no use, as there might be in Irish, of binding alliteration or any metrical parallelism in the rhyming words.

It is surely one of the ironies of literary history that a powerfully refined ancient Irish system of rhyming converged in the Latin hymn with an earlier classical tradition of discounting rhyme. Caesar's *Gallic Wars* contains the first Western record of the social context of such Irish rhyming practices, including an account of the professorial duties of the Druids.[12] Druid scholar/poet/priests instructed young men in verses for a period as long as twenty years so that they might acquire the sacred and juridical knowledge encoded in meter and rhyme. In addition to rules of line length and syllabic patterns, this Celtic poetics, also practiced by Goidelic, Brittonic, and Welsh poets, established what are known as generic rhymes — rhymes based on identical vowel sounds, certain nasal clusters, and clusters of consonants, particularly *g-d-b, dd-l-r, -gh-f-w.*[13]

The Germanic languages, including Old English, because of their emphasis on fore-stressed words, developed alliteration as the primary structural feature of their poetry. In the Romance languages, where word stress is not generally as strong as phrase stress and the pronunciation of vowels is rela-

tively fixed, it is difficult not to rhyme.[14] Rhyme as we know it in the West came to the fore in the period 1100–1300 by means of troubadour verse and the evolution of an emphasis on sound in the *dolce stil nuovo.* But the question of whether rhyme originated in this period is controversial. There is much agreement that the rhyming practices of Arabic poetics were an influence on the flowering of Occitan verse forms, yet older scholarship indicated an influence of Arabic poetics on Western prosody much earlier through similarities between Zoroastrian sacred texts and early Christian rhyme practices.[15]

The eroticization of rhyme and the aesthetic category of sweet words flourish in the late medieval period along with other developments in the arts, including the perspectivalism of Giotto, which relies upon viewing from a particular set of conditions, such as the aerial or bird's-eye view. At this moment the erotic and cognitive powers of art seem intensified by the development of techniques that require inhabiting multiple perspectives and anticipated patterns. Ezra Pound notes, for example, that a *canzon* of Arnaut Daniel beginning "L'aura amara" praised by Dante depended upon holding seventeen rhymes in mind at once.[16] Gestures of withholding and release, calculation and surprise, typify a poetics eroticized by its courtly love context where the metaphorical and imaginative had as much power as the literally realized and where the deferred pleasures of the aesthetic held sway.[17]

Yet despite their fellowship as Imagists, Aldington rejected Pound's medievalism tout court, arguing that "complicated accented metres were invented by the Provençals, who, as a rule have nothing to say and say it badly."[18] Such a broad condemnation perhaps does not even merit answering, but consider this little poem, heir to the troubadour tradition and addressed to rhyming poets ("A Diversi Rimatori"), by the poet friend of Dante Alighieri, Dante da Maiano:

Provedi, saggio, ad esta visione,
e per mercé ne trai vera sentenza.
Dico: una donna di bella fazone,
di cu' el meo cor gradir molto s'agenza,
mi fé d'una ghirlanda donagione,
verde, fronzuta, con bella accoglienza:
appresso mi trovai per vestigione
camicia di suo dosso, a mia parvenza.
Allor di tanto, amico, mi francai,

che dolcemente presila abbracciare:
non si acontese, ma ridea la bella.
Così, ridendo, molto la baciai:
del più non dico, ché mi fé giurare.
E morta, ch'è mia madre, era con ella.[19]

Published in Dante Alighieri's *Rime* as number 39, this sonnet was written, like most of da Maiano's work, as a piece of coterie poetry.[20] It compresses a remarkable amount of action and thought into its brief compass. The shift between possessive pronouns (*meo [cor]* / *mia [parvenza*] / *mia [madre]*) and passive verbs (*mi fé, mi trovai, mi francai, mi fé [giurare]*) adds to the drama of possession and transformation. The rhyme scheme's transition at the volta from *abababab* to *cdecde* signals as well the change from the kissing couple to the presence of a third figure — the poet's dead mother.[21] A psychoanalytic treatise could be written about this development, but for now suffice it to say that it would be impossible to render the action of this poem into free verse without giving up a great deal; the braided garland, the twined lovers, the echoing *b* and *ci* sounds of kissing (*baciare*), the toll-like sounding of *bella, bella, bella,* into *ella,* the ghostly triangulation of the third figure and third sound — all would be lost entirely.

The schemes of troubadour lyrics and the poetry of the *dolce stil nuovo* rely on rhyme patterns as much as accent. Nevertheless, free verse can use rhyme and remain free of the relatively fixed meters of earlier poetry, as it did in Irish and as it has in English verse at least since John Skelton's work at the turn of the sixteenth century. Indeed, the Skeltonic two- to three-beat line, with patterns of increasing and subsiding density of rhyme, seems as close as one could come to a merging of the compulsions of rhythm and emotion of the kind Aldington praises as exclusively new in the "intensity and concentration" of such modernist poems as H.D.'s "Gods of the Sea." Here is Skelton's "Mistress Margaret Hussey," written in 1495, revised and first published in 1522–23, and one lyric of a ten-lyric cycle, *The Garland of Laurel,* written for the women attending the court of the countess of Surrey:

Merry Margaret,
As midsummer flower,
Gentle as falcon
Or hawk of the tower
With solace and gladness,
Much mirth and no madness,

All good and no badness;
So joyously,
So maidenly,
So womanly
Her demeaning
In every thing,
Far, far passing
That I can indite,
Or suffice to write
Of Merry Margaret
As midsummer flower,
Gentle as falcon
Or hawk of the tower.
As patient and still
And as full of good will
As fair Isaphill,
Coriander,
Sweet pomander,
Good Cassander,
Steadfast of thought,
Well made, well wrought,
Far may be sought
Ere that ye can find
So courteous, so kind
Merry Margaret,
As midsummer flower,
Gentle as falcon
Or hawk of the tower.

At this moment of initial separation of English poetry from the alliterative verse that prevailed before it, we see certain changes literally being wrought by rhyme. The alternating rhymes of the refrain seem to collapse into the insistent trochaic rhymes of the exposition. Here is an inversion of our usual expectation that refrains will rhyme or sing the closures of the more discursive lines of a poem. There is a compulsion to Skelton's falling meters, underlined by the insistent rhymes, just as his rising meters seem to call up or slow the motion of his poems. In "Mistress Margaret Hussey" rhyme pairs separated by unrhymed lines turn into unseparated trios, then unseparated pairs again: Margaret /

flower / falcon / tower; gladness / madness / badness; joyously / maidenly / womanly; demeaning / everything / passing; indite / write; Margaret / flower / falcon / tower; still / will / Isaphill; Coriander / pomander / Cassander; thought / wrought / sought; find / kind; Margaret / flower / falcon / tower. These moments of intense rhyming are matched by exact, epideictic details: the trio rhymes list adjectival nouns and adverbs that swirl around the person of Margaret Hussey as the poet barely is able to "indite" and "write," and "find" her "kind." Spinning proper names and metaphorical terms, the poet's naming practices effect the turns and metamorphoses of praise by something akin to uttering spells. Rhyme is in the end the main reason Skelton can make such bold observations about Margaret Hussey and other ladies-in-waiting.

A striking feature of the history of rhyme is that even when, as in our own era, rhyming does not dominate poetry, the use of rhyme, continuing or renewed, does not acquire an archaic cast. Milton's introductory remarks to the reader of *Paradise Lost* described rhyme as follows: "Rime being no necessary Adjunct or true Ornament of Poem or good Verse, in longer works especially, but the Invention of a barbarous Age to set off wretched matter and lame Meter." He went on to say that "only in apt Numbers, fit quantity of Syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one Verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings" was a "fault avoided by the learned Ancients."[22] Classicist that he was, Milton was well aware that ancient poetry rarely rhymed. Nevertheless in neoclassicism rhyming couplets return to become the dominant verse form.[23]

Analogously, despite the triumph of free verse in modernism and in contemporary works by poets as varied as the Northern Irish lyricists Paul Muldoon and Ciaran Carson, the American Language poet Charles Bernstein, and the Milanese love poet Patrizia Valduga, rhyme takes precedence over many other aspects of poetic form. Rhyme returns as inevitably as, well, rhyme and the seasons that in many ways it emulates. If it disappears only to reappear in the practice of poetry, perhaps this is yet another level of the relation of rhyme to the aesthetics of interval and surprise. Rhyming is based in aural coincidences that themselves depend upon noncoincidence in time and space. If most poets can't help but rhyme at times by accident and passively, such a practice can also awaken an intention to rhyme; whether working in, as the troubadours put it, a "closed" or an "easy" style, the poet who rhymes along the way finds himself or herself in a sound world of echoes and resonances.

A natural cycle of rhyme and in rhyme was described by Emerson in his

essay *The Poet:* "A rhyme in one of our sonnets should not be less pleasing than the iterated nodes of a seashell, or the resembling difference of a group of flowers. The pairing of the birds is an idyl . . . a tempest is a rough ode without falsehood or rant; a summer, with its harvest sown, reaped and stored is an epic song, subordinating how many admirably executed parts. Why should not the symmetry and truth that modulate these, glide into our spirits, and we participate the invention of nature?"[24] Sound vibrations and color vibrations in fact do seem to have some correlation,[25] and rhyme can be a feature of visual experience as much as an auditory one. When Emerson speaks of the "resembling difference of a group of flowers," he could have in mind the abstractions of the color wheel or the way each spring, the yellows of daffodils, narcissus and forsythia are followed by the purples of crocuses and hyacinths, tulips and lilacs. This resembling difference is a feature of the numerical rhyme that underlies the appearance of the Fibonacci sequence in the seed heads of sunflowers and coneflowers; the fractal geometry of the chambered nautilus and pine cones, various twins and multiples in the living world, and the convergent evolution of similar species in different contexts. It is indeed possible to use the word *rhyme* to describe certain senses of rotation and repetition in time, as when we note coincidences or have a sense of déjà vu. Our temporal powers of retrospection and projection depend upon abilities to hold in mind and attend to aural likenesses.

Emerson's list of principles — resembling difference, iteration, pairing, sequence, symmetry, and ultimately invention under the pressure of truth — also indicates some of the relations rhyming holds to simile and what Emanuel Swedenborg, Charles Baudelaire, and Emerson himself have thought of as correspondences in the most general sense. Swedenborg wrote that "order and the world are in an imperfect state when they do not harmonize; and in such degree imperfect, as they fall short of harmony."[26] And in *Representative Men,* Emerson wrote of Swedenborg's theories of correspondence:

> These grand rhymes or returns in nature, — the dear, best-known face startling us at every turn, under a mask so unexpected that we think it the face of a stranger, and carrying up the semblance into divine forms, — delighted the prophetic eye of Swedenborg; and he must be reckoned a leader in that revolution, which, by giving to science an idea, has given to an aimless accumulation of experiments, guidance and form and a beating heart.[27]

Emerson's idea that "we participate the invention of nature," however, surely stems as well from Aristotle's contention that poiesis as making is a

means of discovery of our relation to nature. For Aristotle, all art as perfected form is an improvement upon nature, penetrating to nature's principles.[28] What, then, does poetic rhyme — that is, rhyme that is both intended and received — draw on and complete? If rhyme is a feature of nature, or at least of our temporal perception of nature, rhyme also is an ever-present feature of language, if not of poetry. Rhyme offers a particular kind of pattern, one that is only partly determinative. Unlike rhythm, which may exist as pure haptic or tactile feeling, rhyme comes with acoustical, if not always semantic, content; and unlike meter, which remains ideal, rhyme is always realized or manifested. There is a certain balance between the will and contingency that is effected in rhyming and that is a recurring theme of poetic treatises on rhyme. As we follow, for example, the intermittent discussion of rhyme in the text that provides the epigraph on rhyme and freedom for this essay, Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia,* we see a frequent play between describing rhyme as "weaving" (*texere*) and as "echo" (*eco*); the dynamic between activity and passivity, the production and reception of sounds could not be more starkly set forward.[29]

The willed production of sound always is in tension with the involuntary aspect of hearing. Yet in rhyme, the production of sound can seem involuntary and hearing can be attuned to particular intervals. It was this compelling attention, a feature of all repetitive form, that Wordsworth believed helped us endure painful feeling in poetry's content, and he especially singles out the power of rhyme in this regard: "The end of Poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure. . . . Now the co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed in various moods and in a less excited state, cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and restraining the passion by an intertexture of ordinary feeling . . . there can be little doubt but that more pathetic situations and sentiments, that is, those which have a greater proportion of pain connected with them, may be endured in metrical composition, especially in rhyme, than in prose."[30] In his treatise *The World as Will and Idea,* Arthur Schopenhauer further emphasized the mesmerizing power of rhyme when he described our "consent" to recurring sound. As he described it, such consent involves a strange combination of willingly following and blindly agreeing that takes place prior to judgment — a "power of convincing" independent of all reasons.[31] Even as it is often an effect of conscious will, or, as we say, a "scheme," rhyme seems to come to us from somewhere else, from some outside that may be deeply inside, in the sense that it is unconscious or, perhaps, simply compulsive.

The "I can't help myself" aspect to rhyming behavior can be found in babies' babbling and the verbal dueling in many cultures, including contemporary hip-hop and rap music practices of rhyming. Because vowels are acoustically more alike than consonants, any vowel can be in slant rhyme with any other, and whereas the differentiation of phonemes that creates intelligible sounds is the task of everyday speech, the ever-present possibility of alliteration, consonance, assonance, and the vast array of other kinds of rhymes is always latent in speech and serves such functions as stabilizing the forms of irregular verbs.[32] There is a family resemblance in this sense between rhyme and punning, for as puns join multiple meanings within one morpheme, and so make the integrity of a morpheme as a unit of meaning literally break apart, so does rhyming show that proximity in sound has little consequence for proximity of semantics.[33]

Rhyme is in this sense always a showcase for the arbitrary nature of the sign and limits our efforts to dominate meaning; rhyming draws us beyond ourselves with its potential for aural pleasure, which, when one is trying to concentrate on univocal meaning and syntactical sequence, can be something like aural pain. Here is the basis of the tension between rhyme and syntax, a tension at the heart of the modernist rejection of rhyme. This disparity is also the reason why syntax motivated by the requirements of rhyme will seem unnatural. Rhyme punctuates and concentrates, it does not flow.[34]

Although rhyming is part of the language of the crib, most people are able to notice and use nonadjacent rhymes for the first time between the ages of five and seven; other phonological skills appear at this age, and this is of course also most often the age of the onset of reading, whether children are learning to read a language with a fairly transparent orthography, such as Italian, or a fairly opaque one, such as English.[35] One of the most suggestive aspects of the role of rhyming in language learning is that rhyming seems to precede, or help facilitate, phonological awareness per se.[36] When words are grouped by "phonological neighborhood," such as *brat, rot, at, rat,* adults have some difficulty recognizing individual words, but such density actually leads to better word recognition in infants and young children.[37] Rhyme returns readers to the scene of distinguishing words from one another, of hearing them fully as both different from and similar to other words. In attending to rhyme in poems, we are deeply engaged in an art made of words, and we literally renew our sense of them.

Without ascribing any particular value or teleology to the dialectic that is implied, we could say that poetic rhyme mediates the relation between the

purely felt that is rhythm and the purely rational that is meter. Its relation to semantics remains both under- and overdetermined, for rhyme can endow meaning with greater depth or empty it of its syntactical or context-bound force. Rhyme introduces a realm of conscience and anticipation in poiesis that is particular to human experience, one that indicates a preference for variation and pattern at once. As the perception of rhyme is at once retrospective and proleptic, rhyming requires awareness in ways that the physical possession of rhythm does not. Rhythm is lulling; in contrast, rhyme, like meter, requires identification and attention; everything counts, including pauses and silences.[38] But meter happens at a constant rate of marks, while rhyme is an effect at a distance. To this extent, rhyme can serve as an interruption or counter to rhythm.

"Rhyme shmyme, I never use the stuff," a poet colleague said to me when I mentioned I was writing this essay. His very reply echoes the everyday use of what we call in English "close rhyme" (in German *schlagreim,* "hammer rhyme") as a mnemonic that somehow has a skepticism built in. When we hear rhyme shmyme, helter-skelter, fender bender, double trouble, mishmash, hoity-toity, flimflam, dingdong, or such ancient examples as hoi poloi and holy moly, we are in the realm of instant parody. The reason for that, it seems, is the universal principle that the closer rhymes appear as adjacent pairs, the stronger the sound play and lesser the stability of meaning in individual words. These mnemonics are literal models of equivocation; the second term modifies and weakens the force of the first as our attention is drawn to sound alone.[39] Poets use adjacency in a range of ways beyond rhyme, but it is memorable when rhyming words are stacked very close to one another in a poem, as they are in John Donne's "Song": "And swear / Nowhere / Lives a woman true, and fair."[40] Envelope stanzas, such as *abba,* foreground the possibilities of hearing the differences between consecutive and nonadjacent rhyme pairs and thereby require two kinds of suspension in the listener.[41]

Making rhymes involves separating marked and unmarked utterances, yet pause does not effect it, and rhyme is neither universal nor precisely language specific. Poetic rhyme is a record of the living language, more particularly the poet's living language at a moment of relation between languages and poetic practices; it is thus both more local and more universal than any given language's storehouse of rhymes. Those third- and fourth-century Latin hymns mentioned above that work under both quantitative and qualitative systems of meter are a practice where diverging traditions meet.[42] The variable initial, internal, and terminal rhymes of Hebrew liturgical poetry in the fourth cen-

tury and the free-floating rhymed strophes of early eleventh-century Iberian Arabic poetry are further examples of syncretic rhyming practices. Whereas Chaucer's rhymes tend, like those French rhymes upon which they were modeled, to be full or "perfect" for the most part, from the time of Spenser forward similar, rather than identical, sounds are used. Sidney's *Defense of Poetry* suggests that rhyme is an ornament, adding a pleasing melody and harmony to a work.[43] Other writers, such as the prosodist George Saintsbury, have been concerned with rhyme as a punctuating device in rhythm.[44]

Moments of intense rhyming activity seem to coincide with the meeting of dialects and languages — the melting pot of troubadour culture, the macaronic verse of medieval scholasticism, Dante's turn between Latin and the Tuscan vernacular, Chaucer's encounter with Romance languages, Spenser's with Irish. We find other polyglot practices in Pushkin's use of Turkish rhyming words in his poems of 1829[45] and the Greek, French, German, and English rhymes of Pound and Eliot. The freezing and melting that typify erotic poetry in the West also seem to characterize the social life of rhymes. Rhymes fix sounds inflexibly at the ends of lines or freeze a local pronunciation like a fossil. Yet rhyme seems also to flourish in situations where dialects and languages meet and to form a record of how pronunciation is constantly changing by means of living language.

The larger history of rhyme has yet to be written, but perhaps, as we saw in the example of Druid poetics and possible Zoroastrian origins for many Western rhyme schemes, it will reveal close connections to a history of the ritual or magical manipulation of objects. As Aristotle noted, sensation continues even after an organ has ceased to sense it; he uses the analogy of the motion of any object that has been thrown even after the thrower no longer touches it. Both rhyming and juggling are prominent in sixth-century Ireland, thirteenth-century Provence, and in the street performances and hip-hop forms of our own era, and in all these practices we see a separation, or breaking up, of bodily purposiveness in the service of an external form or outline that establishes a domain with its own internal power — the power of the intrinsic art work, or a space of sacred attention, or both.[46]

Rhyme tends to overcome alliteration once words drop their unstressed endings. But, as we have seen, rhyme does not have to show up at the ends of words or the ends of lines. And if it doesn't, the ends of lines are of course marked by measure, or ratio, or reason alone. Lines without rhyme, or reason in this sense, have to have some other means of ending — perhaps a dogma of "breath" or a simple adherence to prose syntax. Nevertheless, line-end rhyme

seems linked broadly to the kinds of paralinguistic marking we find in clapping, stamping, and clicking speech play in many cultures, from the clicking markers nursing mothers use in Chinese nursery rhymes to the recent fad for singing Happy Birthday in American restaurants with each phrase marked by a collective hand clap.[47] Clapping and stamping indeed emphasize the relation between our bodily symmetry and symmetrical sounds. Like nonsense phonemes, these motions of the hands, feet, and tongue can be considered a secondary level of rhythmic punctuation; once rhyme accrues around phonemes that are also morphemes, it becomes an indispensable and attached dimension of the poem's meaning. We could argue inversely that nonsemantic forms of punctuated sound become meaningful as they appear in poems. This is yet another way that poiesis keeps us ahead of the existing possibilities of a language, giving us the freedom to create meanings where there are none and deny them where they may seem to appear. When words are used at once linguistically and paralinguistically, separations between speech and sound do not hold and the performative power of words is strengthened.

Line-end rhyme thus often involves subduing or suppressing rhymes that occur elsewhere in the line, as hearing univocal meaning involves subduing or suppressing both rhymes and puns in the spoken language in general. We could conclude that a rhyme is a rhyme only if it is heard as one, but we can also think of rhymes as a vector of arbitrariness and sound for its own sake that is always latent in any utterance. Perhaps a desire for emphasis or semantic reinforcement, or for a practice that makes perfect, underlies a dog's multiple barks, a bird's repertoire of more than one song, animal warning cries that continue even after a danger is gone. But the repetition of sound in human rhymes also is conducive to memory; as George Santayana wrote in his study of the cognitive claims of memory, a memory does not sink back into old experience but rather recovers knowledge by means of the awakening of affect or sentiment, and the rhymes of any work create such an affective field.[48]

We have only to think of rhyme's relation to the production of sound in music to have some clearer sense of this power to create effects across temporal distance. To hear external objects ring, chime, or otherwise produce sounds against one another, we must hold them next to each other, rub them against each other, or pluck or otherwise play them. But to create those sounding external objects that are rhymes, whether we are producing them or receiving them, we need only use our aural memory. The physical sound itself is not lost into space; rather it can be called back or summoned by the

next instance of the complementary sound, and we need only do this three times to establish a pattern that makes it all the easier to go on to play variations on that sound.

Remembering and anticipating the progress of a piece of music depends upon certain structural devices in the same way that remembering and anticipating rhymes does. For a rhyme to be held over so many lines, so great a distance, it also must resonate beyond its adjacent sounds. Rhyming practices, by varying between opening and closing consonant sounds and internal vowel sounds, give words interiors and exteriors; because there are many more similarities between vowels than between consonants, rhyme also moderates and distinguishes those sounds. Similarly, the so-called unrhymed or unmarked end words of a poem can acquire a particular semantic cast simply because they do not rhyme: we are all familiar with the let-down effect of the World War I poets' use of such unrhymed words at closing. Consider as well how in the first two ballad stanzas of the "And Did Those Feet" passage of Blake's *Milton,* the lack of rhyme between *time* and *God* and *Divine* and *here* comes to outweigh the rhymes of *green* and *seen* and *hills* and *mills:*

> And did those feet in ancient time
> Walk upon England's mountains green?
> And was the holy Lamb of God
> On England's pleasant pastures seen?
>
> And did the Countenance Divine
> Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
> And was Jerusalem builded here
> Among these dark satanic mills?

Analogously, the slant rhymes of Emily Dickinson's "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass" (rides / is; seen / on; sun / gone) underline the intermittent exact rhymes of *corn* and *morn* and *bone* and *alone,* as the latter pair also stand in stark contrast at the close of the poem to the easy meeting of the singular syllable *me* with the several syllables of *cordiality:*

> A narrow fellow in the grass
> Occasionally rides;
> You may have met him, — did you not,
> His notice sudden is.

The grass divides as with a comb,
A spotted shaft is seen;
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on.

He likes a boggy acre,
A floor too cool for corn.
Yet when a child, and barefoot,
I more than once, at morn,

Have passed, I thought, a whip-lash
Unbraiding in the sun, —
When, stooping to secure it,
It wrinkled, and was gone.

Several of nature's people
I know, and they know me;
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality;

But never met this fellow,
Attended or alone,
Without a tighter breathing,
And zero at the bone.

The poem's geometry of barefoot meeting is made of lines and circles: lines that open into circles (like zero at the bone) and circles that open the spaces between lines (like the path of a cylindrical snake through a patch of grass). In this poem Dickinson also uses a device that seems close to "close rhyme," and yet, so far as I know, we have no term for it: the pairing of identical letters. Our letters, after all, are made of circles, parts of circles, and lines. Here are the words of the poem that have one or more such pairings: *narrow, fellow, grass, occasionally, sudden, grass, spotted, feet, boggy, floor, too, cool, barefoot, passed, stooping, feel, fellow, attended.* If we then look at the doubled letters themselves — *rr ll ss cc ll dd ss tt ee gg oo oo oo oo ss oo ee ll tt* — we can see that they begin with a rr[o]ll and culminate in a chorus of serpentines and oo circles that have emerged from the grass-like ll's before they [ha]lltt.

Given the power of rhyme schemes of all kinds to lend particular se-

mantic and visual weight to the place of unrhymed words, we might see the development of free verse as an unrhymed pause in the greater scheme of rhyme's poetic history. Far from a constraint, rhyme endows us with certain freedoms — among them: the vernacular, including the locality of the poem itself, released from the standard; the monolingual in dialogue with the multilingual; sound opened up by vision, and sound released from meaning entirely; expectation released into surprise; and pattern drawn from the oblivion of time. Rhyme is perfect, imperfect, total, and partial at once. To follow Dante, why, in making poems or any other art form, not allow "as much liberty as may be desired"?

orange/strange, chimney/skinn'd knee, breadth/heath, circle/girdle, desert/death's hurt, monarch/my ark, month/menthe, virtue/eschew, wisdom/his dome

27. Galt, *Sound and Sense,* 91.
28. Ibid., 94.
29. Ibid., 1.
30. Louis Zukofsky, *"A"* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 138.
31. Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Poetry of Life* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1835), 168.
32. *PEPP,* 804.
33. Ibid., 713.
34. Ibid., 714. Cf. Northrop Frye: "By musical I mean a quality of literature denoting a substantial analogy to, and in many cases an actual influence from, the art of music," "Introduction: Lexis and Melos," in *Sound and Poetry: English Institute Essays, 1956* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), ix–xxvii, x–xi.

Susan Stewart, "Rhyme and Freedom"

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art,* trans. T. M. Knox, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1137. Hegel discusses the various advantages of Spanish meters, the French Alexandrine, and German and English meters on p. 1174. The independence of rhyme from language practices is evident in English in the ways a "gendered" system of differences is carried over in the conventions of masculine and feminine word endings in rhyme while it is dropped in the everyday use of articles. By contrast, in the Romance languages a masculine or feminine rhyme can be made by means of a noun of the opposite gender — in English such a difference can be effected only through semantics.
2. *Poetics,* trans. Ingram Bywater, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle,* ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941). "The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse — you might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it would still be a species of history; it consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history" (1463–64).
3. Richard Aldington, "Free Verse in England," *Egoist,* September 15, 1914, 351. Donald Wesling's article, "The Prosodies of Free Verse," in *Twentieth-Century Literature in Retrospect,* ed. Reuben Brower (Cambridge: Harvard English Studies, 1971), 155–87, discusses Paul Valéry's claim in *The Art of Poetry* that he was "seized by a desire to throw away rhyme and everything else" and Donald Davie's pronouncement in his introduction to the Manchester edition of *The Poems of Dr. Zhivago* that "in translating rhymed verse the rhyme is the first thing to go" (160–61).
4. Ibid.
5. For a discussion of the heartbeat and rhythm, see Andrzej Szczeklik, *Catharsis: On the Art of Medicine,* trans. Antonia Lloyd-Jones (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 55–67.
6. One of the most thoughtful and provocative arguments about such issues of "traditional" and "free" prosody in translation is Yves Bonnefoy's 1979 rejoinder to Joseph Brodsky's contention that strongly metered Russian poetry, such as that of Mandelstam, was ill served by free verse translation. Bonnefoy describes the French alexandrine with its symmetrical halves as particularly suited, as a closed system, to metaphysical and idealized worlds — the Racinian world of "rational and intemporal exchange between the archetypes of the mind." In his translations of Shakespeare, Bonnefoy saw the alexandrine as particularly ill suited, but he also found that following the

Shakespearean line led him to a recurring emphasis on eleven syllables — a pattern of six and five that began freely, without preconception as to meter, and ended quite close to Shakespeare's own. Bonnefoy concludes that this encounter between "the absolute and life" led to a flexible meter that would at times even expand to an alexandrine as "an indication of plenitude." I cite this example because it describes a translation process that is quite close to the composition process with which I began this essay. Yves Bonnefoy, "On the Translation of Form in Poetry," in *Companion to Contemporary World Literature from the Editors of World Literature Today,* ed. Pamela A. Genova (New York: Twayne/Thompson Gale, 2003), 10–11.

7. T. V. F. Broghan, "Rhyme," in *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics,* ed. Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1061. I have relied on this entry throughout this essay.

8. Aldington, "Free Verse in England," 351. Here is another prose version from a recent translation by David Kovacs: "Do you know the nature of our mortal life? I think not. How could you? But listen to me. Death is a debt all mortals must pay, and no man knows for certain whether he will still be living on the morrow. The outcome of our fortune is hid from our eyes, and it lies beyond the scope of any teaching or craft." Euripides, *Cyclops; Alcestis; Medea,* trans. D. Kovacs (Cambridge: Harvard University Press/Loeb Library, 1994), 233.

9. William Harmon, "Rhyme in English Verse: History, Structures, Functions," *Studies in Philology* 84, no. 4 (1987): 365–66. See also Eduard Norden's discussion of *homeoleuton* in *Die Antike Kunstprosa vom VI. jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die zeit der Renaissance,* 2 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1898), 1: 51f. (in ancient rhetoric) and 2:871f. (in medieval texts and the genesis of rhyme).

10. Helen Fulton, "The Theory of Celtic Influence on the Harley Lyrics," *Modern Philology* 82, no. 3 (1985): 242 and 242n. Fulton's essay argues against an influence of Celtic versification on Middle English lyrics, but, she writes, "the contribution of Irish Poets to Latin verse in the early medieval period, in terms of alliteration, rhyme, consonance, and assonance, undoubtedly produced a verse rich in sound ornamentation, which influenced other Latin composers" (248). For overlapping accentual and syllabic systems in Irish verse, she cites James Travis, *Early Celtic Versecraft: Origin, Development, Diffusion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 42.

11. Helen Waddell, *Medieval Latin Lyrics* (New York: Henry Holt, 1929), 68. Here is her translation, p. 69:

Day of the king most righteous,
The day is nigh at hand,
The day of wrath and vengeance,
And darkness on the land.

Day of thick clouds and voices,
Of mighty thundering,
A day of narrow anguish
And bitter sorrowing.

The love of women's over,
And ended is desire,
Men's strife with men is quiet,
And the world lusts no more.

12. Caesar, *Gallic Wars* 6.13.

13. The description of Celtic poetry in this section relies upon a series of articles in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics:* Irish poetry; Celtic prosody; Generic rhyme; Indo-European prosody. For a complex system of rhyme analogous to Irish poetics — one that recognizes both external

rhyme (between end syllables of lines) and internal rhyme (within certain clusters of syllables in each line) — see Thomas John Hudak, "Internal Rhyme Patterns in Classical Thai Poetry," *Crossroads* 3, nos. 2–3 (1987): 94–105.

14. Of the fifty-four forms of the verb of first conjugation in Provencal, for example, only nine have the accent on the root; the remaining forty-five have it on the final syllable and hence all forty-five rhyme. See Francis Hueffer, *The Troubadours* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1878), 325, where he discusses further rhyme words as well.

15. Denis de Rougemont's classic study of courtly love and the Tristan myth, *Love in the Western World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), argues that the myth reveals a convergence of Celtic and Druid belief with a strain of Zoroastrianism that survived in Manichean thought. He contends that the very structure of Manicheanism is "lyrical" — that is, at once subjective and given to divine possession (61–66). On the basis of a leonine rhyme practice found in both Zoroastrian *Gāthās* and Tertullian's second-century *De judicio Domini,* John W. Drapper argues that Indo-Iranian rhyme practices are the origin not only of rhyming in the West but also of Chinese practices, perhaps through Scythian nomads. These arguments are laid out in two articles, "The Origin of Rhyme," *Revue de Littérature Comparée* 31 (1957): 74–85, where he argues a Chinese origin, and then a correction based on archaeological material indicating that Chinese rhyming followed Persian influence, "The Origin of Rhyme: A Supplement," *Revue de Littérature Comparée* 39 (1965): 452–53. Regardless of the soundness of these historical arguments, we still can see, throughout the West, vestiges of the shamanic power of rhyme in rhyming choruses and refrains of folk songs and folk stories, just as the incantatory power of rhyme remains evident in any playground.

16. Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance* (New York: New Directions, 1968), 30. Dante's praise is in *De vulgari eloquentia* (2.2).

17. F. R. P. Akehurst's empirical study of restrictions on rhyme words in troubadour verse ("Incantatory Value of Words in the Provençal Troubadours," in *Court and Poet,* ed. Glyn S. Burgess [Liverpool: Cairns, 1981]) underlines an argument made by Robert Guiette that "given the social requirement for discretion, the poet sings not the love which he experiences, but an ideal love": "le thème n'est qu'un prétexte. C'est l'oeuvre formelle, elle-méme, qui est le sujet." "D'une poesie formelle en France au Moyen Age," *Revue des sciences humaines,* n.s., fasc. 54 (1949): 61–69.

18. Aldington, "Free Verse in England," 351.

19. Here is an unrhymed translation by K. Foster and F. Boyd (*Dante's Lyric Poetry* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967]) of the poem as it appears in Dante Alighieri's *Rime* (approx. 1283–1308):

> You who are intelligent, consider this vision
> and please show its true meaning.
> It was like this: a fair woman, in gaining
> whose favour my heart takes much pleasure,
> made me a gift of a green leafy garland;
> and charmingly she did so. And then
> I seemed to find myself clothed
> in a shift that she had worn.
> Then I made so bold as gently to embrace
> her. The fair one did not resist, but smiled;
> and as she smiled I kissed her repeatedly.
> I will not say what followed — she made me
> swear not to. And a dead woman
> — my mother — was with her.

20. Perhaps groups of "rimatori" and rhymers' clubs are popular throughout literary history because they speak to the social

confederation of poets as a kind of rhyme, or echo chamber, of compatible sounds. The Imagists' identification by a visual phenomenon is far more unusual than the recurrence of groups of rhymers and rhymesters. The term has a derogatory ring based in Aristotle's denigration of "mere verse" that also becomes a badge of modesty — this resonance can be detected in the earliest use of the word in English print: John Dennis's 1719 "But as Poets are not capable, so neither are they impartial Judges. I speak of those who are only Rhimesters" (*OED*). When William Butler Yeats, Ernest Rhys, Lionel Johnson, and others formed the "Rhymers' Club" in London in 1890 their goal was to recite and publish works together that would follow a new aesthetic of becoming closer to speech. A useful contrasting example of poetic confederation and what might be called "dis-federation" is Edward Pen's contention in "Free Verse Movement: Its Reception in Japan and China" (*Tokyo 1991: The Force of Vision,* Proceedings of the International Comparative Literature Association meetings, [Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1995], 61–67) that free verse arose in Japanese poetry as a consequence of the deprofessionalization of the role of the poet.

21. There is an intriguing and uncanny connection between this poem and the argument Allen Grossman makes in his "Summa Lyrica" about the relation of rhyme to the prelinguistic chora of the mother: *"Scholium on rhyme and the mother tongue.* The mother is present wherever in the poem language is specialized toward sound, as in rhyme which arrests the word in the ear, requiring that it delay in the realm of the body, before passing to sensory extinction as mere notation in the brain. Rhyme like all phonic or merely structural repetition (as in grammatical rhyme) summons to common membership at the level of the species, tending to extinguish difference as transcendence and establish difference at the level of substance. The difference/no difference ambiguity in rhyme functions as the repetition of the sufficient conditions of sensing (the rule of texture), and as the substantiation of the parallel ambiguity at the level of meaning. Sound as silence (rhyme as sensation) articulates silence as sound (the meaning of words and sentences)." Allen Grossman, "Summa Lyrica" in *The Sighted Singer: Two Works on Poetry for Readers and Writers,* by Allen Grossman and Mark Halliday (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 362.

22. John Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose,* ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey, 1957), 210.

23. It is striking that couplets are dominant even earlier. Andrew Marvell, for example, seems to have had some knowledge of Dante: see Nigel Smith's note to line 62 of "Tom May's Death" in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell* (London: Longman, 2003). In that line he mentions the Guelphs and "Ghib'llines" and refers to the "basket" used to receive votes in Florentine elections. And his travels in Italy in the 1640s may have exposed him to Italian editions of the *Commedia.* Yet there is no use of terza rima in his poetry — he occasionally uses song forms of *abab* and *abcabc,* but the end-lined rhyming couplet dominates his verse.

24. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet," in *Essays: First and Second Series* (New York: Vintage Books, Library of America, 1990), 229.

25. Reuven Tsur, *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive?* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 5–35.

26. Emanuel Swedenborg, *An Hieroglyphic Key*

to Natural and Spiritual Mysteries by way of Representations and Correspondences, trans. from the Latin by R. Hindmarsh (London: R. Hindmarsh, 1792), 15. Hindmarsh writes in his preface to this work: "correspondence in general may be defined, the relation subsisting between the essence of a thing and its form, or between the cause and its effect; thus the whole natural world corresponds to the spiritual world; the body of a man, with all its parts corresponds to his soul; and the literal sense of Word corresponds to its spiritual sense." He contrasts this to the arbitrary choices of speakers and writers who are merely using figures and metaphors — it is the interior, intrinsic connection that he emphasizes, in accordance with the doctrines of Swedenborg, concluding that "the language of correspondences is the language of God himself" (3–4). In this sense, the sounds of words are more intrinsic and spiritual than the arbitrary meanings that are conferred upon them by human beings.

Baudelaire's deep interest in the doctrines of Swedenborg is evident even before his "Correspondances" of 1861 in his 1860 essay "Le poème du haschisch," where he writes: "Fourier et Swedenborg, l'un avec ses *analogies,* l'autre avec ses *correspondances,* se sont incarnés dans le végétal et l'animal qui tombent sous votre regard, et, au lieu d'enseigner par la voix, ils vous endoctrinent par la forme et par la couleur." Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes,* ed. Y.-g. Le Dantec (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), 376. "Correspondances" itself emphasizes the transposition of odors as strongly as the visual senses: "Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent." For Swedenborg a theology of the Word underlies rhyme; for Baudelaire correspondences are synaesthetic, but their "longs échos" are effected through the medium of poetic language.

27. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Swedenborg," in *Representative Men* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, 1850), 111.

28. In his *Physics,* Aristotle suggests that the maker partly imitates nature and partly carries to completion what nature has left incomplete. *Physics,* trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle,* ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 236–39 (2.2). And in the *Nicomachean Ethics* he also emphasizes the conceptual origins of art: "all art is concerned with coming into being . . . and considering how something may come into being which is capable of either being or not being and whose origin is in the maker and not in the thing made." *Ethica Nicomachea,* trans. W. D. Ross, in *Basic Works of Aristotle,* 1025 (6.4).

29. See Dante's discussion of rhyming practices by his contemporaries in *De vulgari eloquentia* 2.13.4, 2.12.8, and 2.13.6. Michael Hurley's essay "Interpreting Dante's *Terza Rima,*" *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 41, no. 3 (2005) discusses Dante's adaptation of metaphors from the Florentine wool industry to individual words and phrases (328–30).

30. William Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads and Appendix" (1850 version), in *Selected Prose,* ed. John Hayden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), 296.

31. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea,* book 2, reprinted in *Critical Theory since Plato,* ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 483.

32. Paul Bauschatz, "Rhyme and the Structure of English Consonants," *English Language and Linguistics* 7 no. 1 (2003): 52.

33. Henri Meschonnic brings this connection forward in "Rhyme and Life," trans. Gabriella Bedetti, *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 1 (1988): 96: "[Rhyme] participates in

paronomasia. . . . What only its restrictive identification to a final position masked. Rhyme cheats the way destiny would cheat if it played cards. Because it would know ahead of time. Rhyme knows ahead of time. . . . Because rhyme is a principle of listening" (96).

34. This tension between rhyme and syntax seems inevitable, despite various attempts by theorists of poetics to contradict it. Dryden, for example, in his dedication to his 1664 play *The Rival Ladies* claimed that rhyme could be successfully included in "ordinary speaking" so readily, and be such a helpful aid to memory, that it "has all the advantages of prose beside its own." Dedication to the Earl of Orrery, *The Rival Ladies* (London: W.W. for Henry Herringman, 1664), 5–7. An illuminating contemporary position on this issue of poetry's relation to ordinary speaking is the contemporary French poet Jacques Roubaud's argument that the free verse practiced in France in the 1970s had only an "illusion" of liberty because it had not yet freed itself from the demands of ordinary syntax: the freedom of free verse should be expressed in relation not to metrics but to the language. See Andrew Eastman, "Jacques Roubaud et le 'vers libre américain,'" *Revue Francaise d'Etudes Américaines* 80 (1999): 24.

35. See Ruth Weir, *Language in the Crib* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966). Clare Kirtley, Peter Bryant, Morag MacLean, and Lynette Bradley ("Rhyme, Rime, and the Onset of Reading," *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 48 [1989]: 224–45) argue that English-speaking children divide syllables into opening consonants or consonant clusters and the remainder (the rhyme). This predilection may make children more sensitive to rhyme and lead to heightened phonological awareness around the time of learning to read. In "A Deficit in Rime Awareness in Children with Down Syndrome," Margaret Snowing, Charles Hulme and Robin Mercer discovered that children with Down syndrome did fairly well on tests of identifying alliteration but could not score above chance recognition in determining end rhymes. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 15 (2002): 471–95.

36. For a discussion of how nonsense choruses in lullabies encode the vowel preferences of the singer's language, see Bess Lomax Hawes, "Form and Function: Some Thoughts on the American Lullabye," *Journal of American Folklore* 87 (1974): 140–48.

37. Bruna de Cara and Usha Goswami, "Phonological Neighbourhood Density: Effects in a Rhyme Awareness Task in Five-Year-Old Children," *Journal of Child Language* 30 (2003): 697.

38. Marjorie Perloff's essay "The Linear Fallacy" (*Georgia Review* [Winter 1981]: 855–68) points out that the free verse line works as poetry only when it involves "both recurrence and suspension" (866). It is striking that these principles also characterize rhyme, even in its most "traditional" uses, and we might ask whether the most successful free verse, in abjuring rhyme, has taken on rhyme's most fundamental formal gestures (which I would rephrase inversely as suspension and recurrence) without its particular manifestation in sound.

39. Louis Simpson wrote that "in our time writing in regular form leads to writing light verse." If adjacent rhymes occur today most often in the realm of advertising, perhaps it is because advertising is designed to stamp its impression on the wax of our disbelief. "Irregular Impulses: Some Remarks on Free Verse," *Ohio Review* 28 (1982): 54–57.

40. T. S. Eliot uses close rhyme and related devices of sound repetition extensively in his "Four Quartets" where, he writes, "My words echo / Thus, in your mind." Close rhyme, and rhymes separated by only one word, appear in: *unseen eyebeam, white light, receipt for deceit, sea anemone, hardly barely, grief into relief, Mars converse, horoscope haruspicate, observe disease, tea leaves, riddle the inevitable, the womb or tomb, daemonic chthonic, budding nor fading, dark lake, flood and drouth, done and been, faces and places, all shall be well.* He also plays with transposed letters in *deliberate hebetude* and the several-times-repeated *dawn wind* and *winter lightning.* The overall effect is one of regeneration by echo.

41. Ian K. Lilly, "On Adjacent and Nonadjacent Russian Rhyme Pairs," *Slavic and East European Journal* 29, no. 2 (1985): 195.

42. At the same time, there is evidence that fifteenth-century scribes, when copying manuscripts, would change words into their own dialects but would rarely change the spelling of a rhyming word — the rhyme thereby was a way of transmitting pronunciation intact. Stefania Maria Maci, "The Language of *Mary Magdalene* of the Bodleian MS Digby 133," *Linguistica e Filologia: Quaderni Del Dipartimento di Linguistica, Universita degli Studi di Bergamo* 10 (1999): 135. For studies of poetic rhymes as a record of dialect pronunciation in American poetry, see Gene Russell, "Dialectal and Phonetic Features of Edward Taylor's Rhymes," *American Literature* 43, no. 2 (1971): 165–80, and Kathryn Anderson McEuen, "Whittier's Rhymes," *American Speech* 20, no. 1 (1945): 51–57.

43. Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry,* ed. Forrest G. Robinson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970). Sidney argues famously as well that "verse" serves as a mnemonic (52, 54–55). At the very end of his treatise, he discusses the differences between English verse and ancient verse on the one hand and French and Italian rhyming practices on the other. He sees English verse as best suited "before any other vulgar language I know" for carrying forward the ancient tradition of the "well-weighed syllable" and the possibilities of rhyme for "the sweet sliding" necessary for musical effects (86).

44. See Kristin Hanson's "Vowel Variation in English Rhyme: A Note on the History of the Rhetoric of Rhymes," in *Studies in the History of the English Language: A Millennial Perspective,* ed. Donka Minkova and Robert Stockwell (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter; 2002), 215. Hanson is particularly interested in the expressive possibilities of partial rhymes. For an analogous argument about iconic uses of rhyme (as in George Herbert's use of "rhyme" and "chime" in "Deniall" and Dryden's use of "alone," "grown," and "none" to signify negation, see Max Nänny, "Iconic Uses of Rhyme," in *Outside-In-Inside-Out: Iconicity in Language and Literature,* ed. Costantino Maeder, Olga Fischer, and William Herlofsky (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2005), 195–215. Following Marjorie Perloff's pathbreaking *Rhyme and Meaning in the Poetry of Yeats* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), Michael McKie's "Semantic Rhyme: A Reappraisal" discusses Yeats's composition process, which often would begin with a prose analysis of a set of rhymes and what could be made of them. *Essays in Criticism* 46, no. 4 (1996): 342–43.

45. Krystina Pomorska, "Semiotic Implications of Rhymes: Pushkin's Poems of the Erzerum Period," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 22, nos. 1–4 (1988): 377–81. All the primary rhymes in these poems are of Turkic origin, are feminine, and are placed at the end of the stanza, in the accusative case. Rhyme words end the stanza

and end the sentence, for each stanza is a sentence (378). In a suggestive comparison to the subtle changes in action worked by Skelton's rhyming adverbs, Pushkin rejected a popular proscription against using verbs as rhyme words. J. Thomas Shaw, "Parts of Speech in Puškin's Rhymewords and Nonrhymed Endwords," *Slavic and East European Journal*37, no. 1 (1993): 1–3.

46. See Hurley, "Interpreting Dante's *Terza Rima,*" for a discussion of terza rima's pattern as like "the juggler's three-ball cascade" (323).

47. See also the discussion of clapping, ululation, and other ways of marking line endings in Ode S. Ogede, "Oral Performance as Instruction: Aesthetic Strategies in Children's Play Songs from a Nigerian Community," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1994): 114–15, and the role of clicks in nursery rhymes used by nursing mothers in China in Geoffrey S. Nathan, "Clicks in a Chinese Nursery Rhyme," *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 31, no. 2 (2001): 223–28.

48. George Santayana, *Skepticism and Animal Faith* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1923), 153.

Leevi Lehto, "In the Beginning Was Translation"

1. See Charles Bernstein, *Runouden puolustus. Esseitä ja runoja kahdelta vuosituhannelta,* ed. Leevi Lehto (Helsinki: PoEsia 2006), 252–53. Translation published in original in Charles Bernstein, *With Strings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

2. For a useful discussion of the questions of "materiality" in translation, see Fredrik Hertzberg, *Moving Materialities. On Poetic Materiality and Translation, with Special Reference to Gunnar Björling's Poetry* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2002).

3. See M. H. Abrams, "Keats's Poems: The Material Dimensions," in *The Persistence of Poetry: Bicentennial Essays on Keats,* ed. Robert M. Ryan and Ronald A. Sharp (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 36–53.

4. Published, in Harry Zohn's 1968 translation, for instance in *The Translation Studies Reader,* ed. Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 2000).

5. Here I'm partially inspired by Andrew Benjamin's discussion, in his *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy* (London: Routledge 1989), on the relation of translation to the concept of tradition: "Existing at a particular point in historical time [the conflicts of interpretation] enact the plurality of tradition. Tradition in this sense is both plural and conflictual. Its unfolding is the unfolding of the conflicts that constitute it. . . . There is no outside of tradition. . . . Tradition becomes therefore the generalized site of interpretative differential plurality" (163–64).

6. Friedrich Schleiermacher, "Ueber die verschiedenen Methoden des Uebersetzens" (1813), *Friedrich Schleiermachers sämmtliche Werke,* part 3: *Zur Philosophie,* vol. 2 (Berlin: Reimer, 1838), 207–45.

7. See my essay "Plurifying the Languages of the Trite" for a seminar entitled "Poetry in Time of War and Banality," in Campinas, Sao Paulo, Brazil, April–June 2006, available at http://www.leevilehto.net and http://sibila.com.br/; in Portuguese in *Sibila* 10 (2006); in Norwegian at http://nypoesi.net; in Dutch at http://decontrabas.typepad.com; in Russian in *Говорим пограничная страна — Финнся стихомашина 21. века,* ed. Leevi Lehto (Helsinki: ntamo, 2008); and in Finnish in Leevi Lehto, *Alussa oli kääntäminen* (Turku: Savukeidas, 2008). Also see the