Poetry and the Arts (ENG 266)
Professor Jeff Dolven

Readings for Monday (4/4)

Monday we will be joined by filmmaker Lynne Sachs, and we will encounter both her films and her poetry. We'll read five poems from her book *Year by Year*, for the years 1962, 1982, 1984, 1988, and 2006. Her film *Tip of My Tongue* is related to that poetical project; the whole is well worth watching, but especially 1:03:20 to the end (you'll see a familiar face featured). Please also watch two short films, *Starfish Aorta Colossus* and *Girl Is Presence*, and for the last, also have a look at the interview with Anne Lesley Selcer (especially 20:17 to 23:58). Links and passwords for everything are on the website.

Readings for Wednesday (4/6)

Walt Whitman, "A Noiseless Patient Spider."

Plus some definitions of poetry: "Linguistics and Poetics," by Roman Jakobson; "How to Recognize a Poem When You See One," by Stanley Fish; and short accounts by John Stuart Mill, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, and Ezra Pound.

Exercise (due Sunday 4/3 at 5 PM)

This week you will make a 90 second single-shot film using your cell phone or a digital camera. Your film will speak to, underneath, beside, and beyond a poem that you have read this semester in class. Because your film will have no edits, you need to plan in advance. In the language of the cinema, you will determine camera moves and visual gestures by designing a mise-en-scène that will cover the entire film. You might want to draw a story-board. Here you will decide, if the camera will be stationery or in motion, if you will use pans or tilts. In addition, you need to think about how to incorporate your poem. Will there be actual text from the poem on the soundtrack of the film? Will it be diegetic or non-diegetic? Making a film is often collaborative, so you might want to work with someone else as a performer or cinematographer. Or, you might prefer to do everything yourself. Choosing a location is also a key part of the process. Enjoy making this film outside in the spring air, in the privacy of your dorm room, or wherever strikes your fancy. We will watch some of the films in class on April 4.

Please upload your film to the online folder link on the website, along with the usual brief essay explaining what you did and why.

1 9 6 2

A nurse tugs a new baby girl
from between our mother's legs.

Dad is miles away
witnessing James Meredith walking up
the stairs of the University of Mississippi.
And other things he didn't tell her.

How long can she swim in
her anesthesia?

Two baby girls brown and blonde
at home with Mom and a nurse.

John Glenn circles the Earth
and comes back to the same place
he began,
a kitchen table.

1962

Is ~~a~~ a father who ~~can~~ can't see blood. ~~be~~ like a volunteer soldier who shies away from battle? In the glory days ~~of~~ a Kennedy presidency, a second baby girl squirms out of my mother's womb while my father is miles away witnessing a black man ~~bravely~~ walk up the stairs of an Alabama University. ~~It's '62 and a birth is not a birthing~~ What matters most is not a question but a ~~state~~ state of mind. Owning a first edition does not imply an understanding of a ~~novel.~~ the text inside.

And so ~~a~~ a man and a woman ~~begin the~~ follow another step of the blueprint ~~less~~ ~~construction of~~ ~~American new~~ a ~~family.~~ ~~All they~~ All the better ~~and all the~~ more painful without a ~~pla~~ ~~Of course there is~~ A plan, an american plan, ~~a continental~~ ~~breakfast plan~~ ~~for~~ two eggs any style, ~~but~~ not the ~~continental breakfast~~ ~~Such a plan does not a~~ ~~the~~ baby girls blonde and brown at home with mom and a nurse, a black woman whose name no one remembers, ~~At night~~ not ~~messy.~~

It is '62 and a birth is not a giving ~~but~~ but a taking. Assured hands pull my sister from between our mother's legs while she ~~dreams or sleeps,~~ ~~or conjures dictionary definitions of~~ distinctions between ~~intimacy of~~ a potential nuclear family and a potential nuclear war. Anything is possible.

Nursing is an ⓞccupation not an intimacy in these days of ~~colleg~~ truncated college education, barbie dolls and barbituates, ~~Marilyn is dead~~

My mother opens her eyes ~~and turns~~ quickly her head away. Marilyn is dead and she has no tears.

1982

Paris, traveling
by myself
Daisy Miller in Europe

Art

Vulnerable!

~~Daisy Miller of~~ 1982
~~doing Europe~~

~~The ghost of Daisy Miller,~~
~~Henry James' 21 year old~~

Not an astronaut, ~~not~~ a pioneer, ~~money~~ ~~not enough paper~~ in my wallet
~~Map~~ ~~Flagless~~ ~~with to wish travel,~~ compassless,
~~Compass~~ ~~red~~ points direction ~~was~~ alone
~~Ticket grab in zippered pack~~
~~Five pointed stars spins, droops~~
~~A part of the train is red, the others get lost in the color green.~~

                          women
                          go by
The gypsies ~~move~~ in groups of five, ~~no men.~~

Fabric from Saturn. Fabric ~~from~~ ~~reversed~~ inside out, same as yesterday
                                         cubish ~~but~~ and different
And I ...
              in ~~simple~~ paler ~~for~~ greens and browns, worn jeans, a pair of heels.
                                         ~~faded down wardrobe~~
Less color than in September, ~~product of industrial~~ colorless.
                             scrapped away by careless
Friendly dame who ~~only for handfull of~~ francs, ~~hand full~~ for her industry
                  asked only handfull of   ~~to head~~ wash.
                  Don't know who
I don't complain. ~~these~~ Each ~~to~~ washing paints a new Impressionist
                                 cavas icons brush strokes relics of the ~~Jardin de Plades,~~
Wate~~rcolors~~ ~~paint, less of days~~ by the Seine, in the Jardin de Plades,
                            late to class bus rides
napping in the library, ~~crumbs of bread~~ bruised ~~by~~ bread crumbs
~~mistakes~~ ground between fingers.
Hardly ~~Daisy Miller's ghost~~ but somehow ~~our~~ close to her.
~~Entente~~ I began my Marco Polo Voyage alone, sunrise train.
~~fill~~

1 9 8 2 *(for Ira, my brother)*

The gypsy women of Paris go by in groups of five
while I am in worn jeans, a pair of pumps, and a paisley blouse.
Each rain floods the sidewalk with a stream of green and brown,
like a studio of an Impressionist painter,
curious brush strokes,
relics of the Jardin des Plantes.
I'm a tired college student
napping in an empty Sorbonne classroom
late-to-class bus rides
crumbs from my morning baguette ground between threads.

My evening phone booth call catches my brother
as he prepares for school at home, 4359 miles away.
His *hello* transforms this dirty glass box
into four dynamic movie screens.
I see him clearly
at home with Mom
eating a bowl of cereal and drinking a small glass of juice.
I see a new diamond stud in his left ear,
Mom at the sink, a confused look on her face,
wondering how to read the placement of his glistening gem.
What we share and still continue to hide.

Raindrops slide down the fourth window pane,
framing him with a man I can't quite see.
In a dark parking lot behind a downtown Memphis bar,
a secret cameo of infatuation.
I wipe away the condensation
to get a better view
as the screen goes dark on Boulevard Raspail.

1 9 8 4

I wake in the morning five floors above Canal Street
and watch the choreography of a flea market unpack itself –
wild fuchsia, burnt umber, worn evergreen.
Cardboard boxes not-empty-enough
lint clouds
pages of a *New York Post* from a season before I was here.
I pull shut the gate to an elevator made
for elephants in large crates.
Freight fright.
The tug and whir of mechanical ascension.
The cage arrives
I heave open the gate
unlock the padlock
step over the treacherous crack.
A gray rat passes me en route to the kitchen sink.

1 9 8 7

I hold blood
semen
water
wax
hair
pus
breath.
All that is mine to let go
is held in,
contained.

1 9 8 8

My camera travels from blue sunlight
to the orange glow of a kitchen bulb,
explosions of cyan, magenta, and yellow.

A troupe of twenty-four images marches
from darkness toward silver halide.
A 16mm target the size of my thumbprint.
Study of a film frame begins my life
behind the camera.

2 0 0 6 *(for Mark)*

Together we inhabit a few gray New Orleans afternoons.
You point to a gaunt woman in once-tight jeans
zig-zagging patterns across an empty boulevard.
We both take pictures of archeological wonders
 not yet meant for the garbage collector.
I hear dogs that are no longer there.
An old kitten plays with a thread, caught between two splinters
from a screen door swinging
open and shut by the arm of the wind.

Same woman,
 circles the globe
and comes back
more gaunt than five minutes before,
watching us pretend not to watch her.

Katrina's turbulent swell becomes a song
we can't get out of our heads.

A moth flitters over to your two-sip-left can of beer.
I pick up an invitation to a party from someone
who may not be okay.
You remind me that everything that appears is also
 carved away.

A Noiseless Patient Spider.

A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres
      to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor
      hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my
      soul.

Language must be investigated in all the variety of its functions. Before discussing the poetic function we must define its place among the other functions of language. An outline of these functions demands a concise survey of the constitutive factors in any speech event, in any act of verbal communication. The ADDRESSER sends a MESSAGE to the ADDRESSEE. To be operative the message requires a CONTEXT referred to (the "referent" in another, somewhat ambiguous, nomenclature), graspable by the addressee, and either verbal or capable of being verbalized; a CODE fully, or at least partially, common to the addresser and addressee (or in other words, to the encoder and decoder of the message); and, finally, a CONTACT, a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication. All these factors inalienably involved in verbal communication may be schematized as follows:

	CONTEXT	
ADDRESSER	MESSAGE	ADDRESSEE
	CONTACT	
	CODE	

Each of these six factors determines a different function of language. Although we distinguish six basic aspects of language, we could, however, hardly find verbal messages that would fulfill only one function. The diversity lies not in a monopoly of some one of these several functions but in a different hierarchical order of functions. The verbal structure of a message depends primarily on the predominant function. But even though a set (*Einstellung*) toward the referent, an orientation toward the context—briefly, the so-called REFERENTIAL, "denotative," "cognitive" function—is the leading task of numerous messages, the accessory participation of the other functions in such messages must be taken into account by the observant linguist.

The so-called EMOTIVE or "expressive" function, focused on the addresser, aims a direct expression of the speaker's attitude toward what he is speaking about. It tends to produce an impression of a certain emotion, whether true or feigned; therefore, the term "emotive," launched and advocated by Marty,[4] has proved to be preferable to "emotional." The purely emotive stratum in language is presented by the interjections. They differ from the means of referential language both by their sound pattern (peculiar sound sequences or even sounds

elsewhere unusual) and by their syntactic role (they are not components but equivalents of sentences). "*Tut! Tut!* said McGinty": the complete utterance of Conan Doyle's character consists of two suction clicks. The emotive function, laid bare in the interjections, flavors to some extent all our utterances, on their phonic, grammatical, and lexical level. If we analyze language from the standpoint of the information it carries, we cannot restrict the notion of information to the cognitive aspect of language. A man, using expressive features to indicate his angry or ironic attitude, conveys ostensible information, and evidently this verbal behavior cannot be likened to such nonsemiotic, nutritive activities as "eating grapefruit" (despite Chatman's bold simile). The difference between [bɪg] and the emphatic prolongation of the vowel [bɪ:g] is a conventional, coded linguistic feature like the difference between the short and long vowel in such Czech pairs as [vi] "you" and [vi:] "knows," but in the latter pair the differential information is phonemic and in the former emotive. As long as we are interested in phonemic invariants, the English /i/ and /i:/ appear to be mere variants of one and the same phoneme, but if we are concerned with emotive units, the relation between the invariants and variants is reversed: length and shortness are invariants implemented by variable phonemes. Saporta's surmise that emotive difference is a nonlinguistic feature, "attributable to the delivery of the message and not to the message,"[5] arbitrarily reduces the informational capacity of messages.

A former actor of Stanislavskij's Moscow Theater told me how at his audition he was asked by the famous director to make forty different messages from the phrase *Segodnja večerom* (This evening), by diversifying its expressive tint. He made a list of some forty emotional situations, then emitted the given phrase in accordance with each of these situations, which his audience had to recognize only from the changes in the sound shape of the same two words. For our research work in the description and analysis of contemporary Standard Russian (under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation) this actor was asked to repeat Stanislavskij's test. He wrote down some fifty situations framing the same elliptic sentence and made of it fifty corresponding messages for a tape recording. Most of the messages were correctly and circumstantially decoded by Moscovite listeners. May I add that all such emotive cues easily undergo linguistic analysis.

Orientation toward the addressee, the CONATIVE function, finds its purest grammatical expression in the vocative and imperative, which

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syntactically, morphologically, and often even phonemically deviate from other nominal and verbal categories. The imperative sentences cardinally differ from declarative sentences: the latter are and the former are not liable to a truth test. When in O'Neill's play *The Fountain,* Nano "(in a fierce tone of command)" says "Drink!"—the imperative cannot be challenged by the question "is it true or not?" which may be, however, perfectly well asked after such sentences as "one drank," "one will drink," "one would drink." In contradistinction to the imperative sentences, the declarative sentences are convertible into interrogative sentences: "did one drink?," "will one drink?," "would one drink?"

The traditional model of language as elucidated particularly by Bühler[6] was confined to these three functions—emotive, conative, and referential—and the three apexes of this model—the first person of the addresser, the second person of the addressee, and the "third person" properly (someone or something spoken of). Certain additional verbal functions can be easily inferred from this triadic model. Thus the magic, incantatory function is chiefly some kind of conversion of an absent or inanimate "third person" into an addressee of a conative message. "May this sty dry up, *tfu, tfu, tfu, tfu*" (Lithuanian spell).[7] "Water, queen river, daybreak! Send grief beyond the blue sea, to the sea bottom, like a gray stone never to rise from the sea bottom, may grief never come to burden the light heart of God's servant, may grief be removed and sink away" (North Russian incantation).[8] "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Aj-a-lon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed" (Joshua 10.12). We observe, however, three further constitutive factors of verbal communication and three corresponding functions of language.

There are messages primarily serving to establish, to prolong, or to discontinue communication, to check whether the channel works ("Hello, do you hear me?"), to attract the attention of the interlocutor or to confirm his continued attention ("Are you listening?" or in Shakespearean diction, "Lend me your ears!"—and on the other end of the wire "Um-hum!"). This set for contact, or in Malinowski's terms PHATIC function,[9] may be displayed by a profuse exchange of ritualized formulas, by entire dialogues with the mere purport of prolonging communication. Dorothy Parker caught eloquent examples: "'Well!' the young man said. 'Well!' she said. 'Well, here we are,' he said. 'Here we are,' she said, 'Aren't we?' 'I should say we were,' he said,

'Eeyop! Here we are.' 'Well!' she said. 'Well!' he said, 'well.'" The endeavor to start and sustain communication is typical of talking birds; thus the phatic function of language is the only one they share with human beings. It is also the first verbal function acquired by infants; they are prone to communicate before being able to send or receive informative communication.

A distinction has been made in modern logic between two levels of language: "object language" speaking of objects and "metalanguage" speaking of language.[10] But metalanguage is not only a necessary scientific tool utilized by logicians and linguists; it plays also an important role in our everyday language. Like Molière's Jourdain who used prose without knowing it, we practice metalanguage without realizing the metalingual character of our operations. Whenever the addresser and/or the addressee need to check up whether they use the same code, speech is focused on the code: it performs a METALINGUAL (i.e., glossing) function. "I don't follow you—what do you mean?" asks the addressee, or in Shakespearean diction, "What is't thou say'st?" And the addresser in anticipation of such recapturing question inquires: "Do you know what I mean?" Imagine such an exasperating dialogue: "The sophomore was plucked." 'But what is *plucked?*" "*Plucked* means the same as *flunked.*" "And *flunked?*" "*To be flunked* is *to fail an exam.*" "And what is *sophomore?*" persists the interrogator innocent of school vocabulary. "*A sophomore* is (or means) a *second-year student.*" All these equational sentences convey information merely about the lexical code of English; their function is strictly metalingual. Any process of language learning, in particular child acquisition of the mother tongue, makes wide use of such metalingual operations; and aphasia may often be defined as a loss of ability for metalingual operations.

I have brought up all the six factors involved in verbal communication except the message itself. The set (*Einstellung*) toward the message as such, focus on the message for its own sake, is the POETIC function of language. This function cannot be productively studied out of touch with the general problems of language, and, on the other hand, the scrutiny of language requires a thorough consideration of its poetic function. Any attempt to reduce the sphere of the poetic function to poetry or to confine poetry to the poetic function would be a delusive oversimplification. The poetic function is not the sole function of verbal art but only its dominant, determining function, whereas in all other verbal activities it acts as a subsidiary, accessory constituent. This

function, by promoting the palpability of signs, deepens the fundamental dichotomy of signs and objects. Hence, when dealing with the poetic function, linguistics cannot limit itself to the field of poetry.

'Why do you always say *Joan and Margery,* yet never *Margery and Joan?* Do you prefer Joan to her twin sister?" "Not at all, it just sounds smoother." In a sequence of two coordinate names, so far as no problems of rank interfere, the precedence of the shorter name suits the speaker, unaccountably for him, as a well-ordered shape for the message.

A girl used to talk about "the horrible Harry." "Why horrible?" "Because I hate him." "But why not *dreadful, terrible, frightful, disgusting?*" "I don't know why, but *horrible* fits him better." Without realizing it, she clung to the poetic device of paronomasia.

The political slogan "I like Ike" /ay layk ayk/, succinctly structured, consists of three monosyllables and counts three diphthongs /ay/, each of them symmetrically followed by one consonantal phoneme, / ..l.. k..k /. The makeup of the three words presents a variation: no consonantal phonemes in the first word, two around the diphthong in the second, and one final consonant in the third. A similar dominant nucleus /ay/ was noticed by Hymes in some of the sonnets of Keats.[11] Both cola of the trisyllabic formula "I like / Ike" rhyme with each other, and the second of the two rhyming words is fully included in the first one (echo rhyme), /layk/—/ayk/, a paronomastic image of a feeling which totally envelops its object. Both cola alliterate with each other, and the first of the two alliterating words is included in the second: /ay/—/ayk/, a paronomastic image of the loving subject enveloped by the beloved object. The secondary, poetic function of this campaign slogan reinforces its impressiveness and efficacy.

As I said, the linguistic study of the poetic function must overstep the limits of poetry, and, on the other hand, the linguistic scrutiny of poetry cannot limit itself to the poetic function. The particularities of diverse poetic genres imply a differently ranked participation of the other verbal functions along with the dominant poetic function. Epic poetry, focused on the third person, strongly involves the referential function of language; the lyric, oriented toward the first person, is intimately linked with the emotive function; poetry of the second person is imbued with the conative function and is either supplicatory or exhortative, depending on whether the first person is subordinated to the second one or the second to the first.

Now that our cursory description of the six basic functions of verbal communication is more or less complete, we may complement our scheme of the fundamental factors with a corresponding scheme of the functions:

REFERENTIAL

EMOTIVE   POETIC   CONATIVE

PHATIC

METALINGUAL
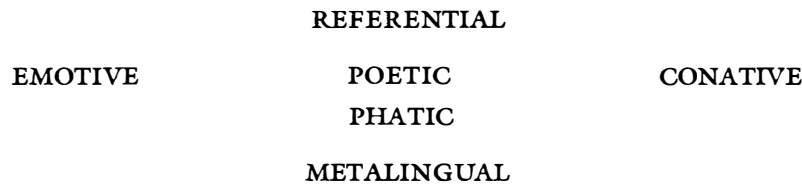
What is the empirical linguistic criterion of the poetic function? In particular, what is the indispensable feature inherent in any piece of poetry? To answer this question we must recall the two basic modes of arrangement used in verbal behavior, *selection* and *combination*. If "child" is the topic of the message, the speaker selects one among the extant, more or less similar nouns like child, kid, youngster, tot, all of them equivalent in a certain respect, and then, to comment on this topic, he may select one of the semantically cognate verbs—sleeps, dozes, nods, naps. Both chosen words combine in the speech chain. The selection is produced on the basis of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymy and antonymy, while the combination, the build-up of the sequence, is based on contiguity. *The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination*. Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence. In poetry one syllable is equalized with any other syllable of the same sequence; word stress is assumed to equal word stress, as unstress equals unstress; prosodic long is matched with long, and short with short; word boundary equals word boundary, no boundary equals no boundary; syntactic pause equals syntactic pause, no pause equals no pause. Syllables are converted into units of measure, and so are morae or stresses.

It may be objected that metalanguage also makes a sequential use of equivalent units when combining synonymic expressions into an equational sentence: $A = A$ ("*Mare* is *the female of the horse*"). Poetry and metalanguage, however, are in diametrical opposition to each other: in metalanguage the sequence is used to build an equation, whereas in poetry the equation is used to build a sequence.

In poetry, and to a certain extent in latent manifestations of the poetic function, sequences delimited by word boundaries become com-

mensurable whether they are sensed as isochronic or graded. "Joan and Margery" showed us the poetic principle of syllable gradation, the same principle that in the closes of Serbian folk epics has been raised to a compulsory law.[12] Without its two dactylic words the combination "*in*nocent *by*stander" would hardly have become a hackneyed phrase. The symmetry of three disyllabic verbs with an identical initial consonant and identical final vowel added splendor to the laconic victory message of Caesar: "Veni, vidi, vici."

Measure of sequences is a device that, outside of the poetic function, finds no application in language. Only in poetry with its regular reiteration of equivalent units is the time of the speech flow experienced, as it is—to cite another semiotic pattern—with musical time. Gerard Manley Hopkins, an outstanding searcher in the science of poetic language, defined verse as "speech wholly or partially repeating the same figure of sound."[13] Hopkins' subsequent question, "but is all verse poetry?" can be definitely answered as soon as the poetic function ceases to be arbitrarily confined to the domain of poetry. Mnemonic lines cited by Hopkins (like "Thirty days hath September"), modern advertising jingles, and versified medieval laws, mentioned by Lotz,[14] or finally Sanskrit scientific treatises in verse which in Indic tradition are strictly distinguished from true poetry (*kāvya*)—all these metrical texts make use of the poetic function without, however, assigning to this function the coercing, determining role it carries in poetry. Thus verse actually exceeds the limits of poetry, but at the same time verse always implies the poetic function. And apparently no human culture ignores verse making, whereas there are many cultural patterns without "applied" verse; and even in such cultures as possess both pure and applied verses, the latter appear to be a secondary, unquestionably derived phenomenon. The adaptation of poetic means for some heterogeneous purpose does not conceal their primary essence, just as elements of emotive language, when utilized in poetry, still maintain their emotive tinge. A filibusterer may recite *Hiawatha* because it is long, yet poeticalness still remains the primary intent of this text itself. Self-evidently, the existence of versified, musical, and pictorial commercials does not separate the questions of verse or of musical and pictorial form from the study of poetry, music, and fine arts.

To sum up, the analysis of verse is entirely within the competence of poetics, and the latter may be defined as that part of linguistics which treats the poetic function in its relationship to the other functions of

language. Poetics in the wider sense of the word deals with the poetic function not only in poetry, where this function is superimposed upon the other functions of language, but also outside poetry, when some other function is superimposed upon the poetic function.

The reiterative "figure of sound," which Hopkins saw as the constitutive principle of verse, can be further specified. Such a figure always utilizes at least one (or more than one) binary contrast of a relatively high and relatively low prominence effected by the different sections of the phonemic sequence.

Within a syllable the more prominent, nuclear, syllabic part, constituting the peak of the syllable, is opposed to the less prominent, marginal, nonsyllabic phonemes. Any syllable contains a syllabic phoneme, and the interval between two successive syllabics is, in some languages, always and, in others, overwhelmingly carried out by marginal, nonsyllabic phonemes. In so-called syllabic versification the number of syllabics in a metrically delimited chain (time series) is a constant, whereas the presence of a nonsyllabic phoneme or cluster between every two syllabics of a metrical chain is a constant only in languages with an indispensable occurrence of nonsyllabics between syllabics and, furthermore, in those verse systems where hiatus is prohibited. Another manifestation of a tendency toward a uniform syllabic model is the avoidance of closed syllables at the end of the line, observable, for instance, in Serbian epic songs. Italian syllabic verse shows a tendency to treat a sequence of vowels unseparated by consonantal phonemes as one single metrical syllable.[15]

In some patterns of versification the syllable is the only constant unit of verse measure, and a grammatical limit is the only constant line of demarcation between measured sequences, whereas in other patterns syllables in turn are dichotomized into more and less prominent, or two levels of grammatical limits are distinguished in their metrical function: word boundaries and syntactic pauses.

Except the varieties of the so-called vers libre that are based on conjugate intonations and pauses only, any meter uses the syllable as a unit of measure at least in certain sections of the verse. Thus in purely accentual verse ("sprung rhythm" in Hopkins' vocabulary), the number of syllables in the upbeat (called "slack" by Hopkins[16]) may vary, but the downbeat (ictus) constantly contains one single syllable.

In any accentual verse the contrast between higher and lower prominence is achieved by syllables under stress versus unstressed syllables.

response to the discourse, which thus "shapes and cultivates the basic codes of value and belief by which a society or culture lives." This holds, he argues, for the audience of Thucydides, Plato, and Sappho. And of course Horace aspires to revive the Greek lyric tradition of Sappho and Alcaeus.

33. Jeffrey Walker, "The View from Halicarnassus: Aristotelianism and the Rhetoric of Epideictic Song," in *New Definitions of Lyric*, ed. Mark Jeffreys (New York: Routledge, 1998), 19–21.

34. Bruce Robbins, "Afterword," *PMLA* 12, no. 5 (October 2007): 1648.

35. Earl Miner, an eminent comparatist of Asian literatures as well as English, observes: "Lyric is the foundation genre for the poetics or literary assumptions of cultures throughout the world. Only Western poetics differs. Even the major civilizations that have not shown a need to develop a systematic poetics (the Islamic, for instance) have demonstrably based their ideas of literature on lyric assumptions." "Why Lyric?" in *The Renewal of Song: Renovation in Lyric Conception and Practice*, ed. Earl Miner and Amiya Dev (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2000). And he adds, "The first thing to be said of lyric poetic systems is that they are not mimetic."

36. Robbins, "Afterword," 1650.

37. A. R. Ammons, *Bosh and Flapdoodle* (New York: Norton, 2005), 22–4.

How to Recognize a Poem When You See One (1980)　　1.6

STANLEY FISH

Last time I sketched out an argument by which meanings are the property neither of fixed and stable texts nor of free and independent readers but of interpretive communities that are responsible both for the shape of a reader's activities and for the texts those activities produce. In this lecture I propose to extend that argument so as to account not only for the meanings a poem might be said to have but for the fact of its being recognized as a poem in the first place. And once again I would like to begin with an anecdote.

In the summer of 1971 I was teaching two courses under the joint auspices of the Linguistic Institute of America and the English Department of the State University of New York at Buffalo. I taught these courses in the morning and in the same room. At 9:30 I would meet a group of students who were interested in the relationship between linguistics and literary criticism. Our nominal subject was stylistics but our concerns were finally theoretical and extended to the presuppositions and assumptions which underlie both linguistic and literary practice. At 11:00 these students were replaced by another group whose concerns were exclusively literary and were in fact confined to English religious poetry of the seventeenth century. These students had been learning how to identify Christian symbols and how to recognize typological patterns and how to move from the observation of these symbols and patterns to the specification of a poetic intention that was usually didactic or homiletic. On the day I am thinking about, the only connection between the two classes was an assignment given to the first which was still on the blackboard at the beginning of the second. It read:

Jacobs-Rosenbaum
Levin

Thorne

Hayes

Ohman (?)

I am sure that many of you will already have recognized the names on this list, but for the sake of the record, allow me to identify them. Roderick Jacobs and Peter Rosenbaum are two linguists who have coauthored a number of textbooks and coedited a number of anthologies. Samuel Levin is a linguist who was one of the first to apply the operations of transformational grammar to literary texts. J. P. Thorne is a linguist at Edinburgh who, like Levin, was attempting to extend the rules of transformational grammar to the notorious irregularities of poetic language. Curtis Hayes is a linguist who was then using transformational grammar in order to establish an objective basis for his intuitive impression that the language of Gibbon's *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire* is more complex than the language of Hemingway's novels. And Richard Ohmann is the literary critic who, more than any other, was responsible for introducing the vocabulary of transformational grammar to the literary community. Ohmann's name was spelled as you see it here because I could not remember whether it contained one or two n's. In other words, the question mark in parenthesis signified nothing more than a faulty memory and a desire on my part to appear scrupulous. The fact that the names appeared in a list that was arranged vertically, and that Levin, Thorne, and Hayes formed a column that was more or less centered in relation to the paired names of Jacobs and Rosenbaum, was similarly accidental and was evidence only of a certain compulsiveness if, indeed, it was evidence of anything at all.

In the time between the two classes I made only one change. I drew a frame around the assignment and wrote on the top of that frame "p. 43." When the members of the second class filed in I told them that what they saw on the blackboard was a religious poem of the kind they had been studying and I asked them to interpret it. Immediately they began to perform in a manner that, for reasons which will become clear, was more or less predictable. The first student to speak pointed out that the poem was probably a hieroglyph, although he was not sure whether it was in the shape of a cross or an altar. This question was set aside as the other students, following his lead, began to concentrate on individual words, interrupting each other with suggestions that came so quickly that they seemed spontaneous. The first line of the poem (the very order of events assumed the already constituted status of the object) received the most attention: Jacobs was explicated as a reference to Jacob's ladder, traditionally allegorized as a figure for the Christian ascent to heaven. In this poem, however, or so my students told me, the means of ascent is not a ladder but a tree, a rose tree or rosenbaum. This was seen to be an obvious reference to the Virgin Mary who was often characterized as a rose without thorns, itself an emblem of the immaculate conception. At this point the poem appeared to the students to be operating in the familiar manner of an iconographic riddle. It at once posed the question, "How is it that a man can climb to heaven by means of a rose tree?" and directed the reader to the inevitable answer: by the fruit of that tree, the fruit of Mary's womb, Jesus. Once this interpretation was established it received support from, and conferred significance on, the word "thorne," which could only be an allusion to the crown of thorns, a symbol of the trial suffered by Jesus and of the price he paid to save us all. It was only a short step (really no step at all) from this insight to the recognition of Levin as a double reference, first to the tribe of Levi, of whose priestly function Christ was the fulfillment, and second to the unleavened bread carried by the children of Israel on their exodus from Egypt, the place of sin, and in response to the call of Moses, perhaps the most familiar of the old

testament types of Christ. The final word of the poem was given at least three comple-
mentary readings: it could be "omen," especially since so much of the poem is concerned
with foreshadowing and prophecy; it could be Oh Man, since it is man's story as it inter-
sects with the divine plan that is the poem's subject; and it could, of course, be simply
"amen," the proper conclusion to a poem celebrating the love and mercy shown by a God
who gave his only begotten son so that we may live.

In addition to specifying significances for the words of the poem and relating those
significances to one another, the students began to discern larger structural patterns. It
was noted that of the six names in the poem three—Jacobs, Rosenbaum, and Levin—are
Hebrew, two—Thorne and Hayes—are Christian, and one—Ohman—is ambiguous, the
ambiguity being marked in the poem itself (as the phrase goes) by the question mark in
parenthesis. This division was seen as a reflection of the basic distinction between the old
dispensation and the new, the law of sin and the law of love. That distinction, however, is
blurred and finally dissolved by the typological perspective which invests the old testa-
ment events and heroes with new testament meanings. The structure of the poem, my
students concluded, is therefore a double one, establishing and undermining its basic
pattern (Hebrew vs. Christian) at the same time. In this context there is finally no pres-
sure to resolve the ambiguity of Ohman since the two possible readings—the name is
Hebrew, the name is Christian—are both authorized by the reconciling presence in the
poem of Jesus Christ. Finally, I must report that one student took to counting letters and
found, to no one's surprise, that the most prominent letters in the poem were S, O, N.

Some of you will have noticed that I have not yet said anything about Hayes. This is
because of all the words in the poem it proved the most recalcitrant to interpretation, a fact
not without consequence, but one which I will set aside for the moment since I am less in-
terested in the details of the exercise than in the ability of my students to perform it. What
is the source of that ability? How is it that they were able to do what they did? What is it
that they did? These questions are important because they bear directly on a question
often asked in literary theory, What are the distinguishing features of literary language?
Or, to put the matter more colloquially, How do you recognize a poem when you see one?
The commonsense answer, to which many literary critics and linguists are committed, is
that the act of recognition is triggered by the observable presence of distinguishing fea-
tures. That is, you know a poem when you see one because its language displays the char-
acteristics that you know to be proper to poems. This, however, is a model that quite obvi-
ously does not fit the present example. My students did not proceed from the noting of
distinguishing features to the recognition that they were confronted by a poem; rather, it
was the act of recognition that came first—they knew in advance that they were dealing
with a poem and the distinguishing features then followed.

In other words, acts of recognition, rather than being triggered by formal characteris-
tics, are their source. It is not that the presence of poetic qualities compels a certain kind of
attention but that the paying of a certain kind of attention results in the emergence of poetic
qualities. As soon as my students were aware that it was poetry they were seeing, they began
to look with poetry-seeing eyes, that is, with eyes that saw everything in relation to the
properties they knew poems to possess. They knew, for example (because they were told
by their teachers), that poems are (or are supposed to be) more densely and intricately or-
ganized than ordinary communications; and that knowledge translated itself into a
willingness—one might even say a determination—to see connections between one word
and another and between every word and the poem's central insight. Moreover, the as-
sumption that there *is* a central insight is itself poetry-specific, and presided over its own
realization. Having assumed that the collection of words before them was unified by an
informing purpose (because unifying purposes are what poems have), my students

proceeded to find one and to formulate it. It was in the light of that purpose (now assumed) that significances for the individual words began to suggest themselves, significances which then flesh out the assumption that had generated them in the first place. Thus the meanings of the words and the interpretation in which those words were seen to be embedded emerged together, as a consequence of the operations my students began to perform once they were told that this was a poem.

It was almost as if they were following a recipe—if it's a poem do this, if it's a poem, see it that way—and indeed definitions of poetry *are* recipes, for by directing readers as to what to look for in a poem, they instruct them in ways of looking that will produce what they expect to see. If your definition of poetry tells you that the language of poetry is complex, you will scrutinize the language of something identified as a poem in such a way as to bring out the complexity you know to be "there." You will, for example, be on the look-out for latent ambiguities: you will attend to the presence of alliterative and consonantal patterns (there will always be some), and you will try to make something of them (you will always succeed); you will search for meanings that subvert, or exist in a tension with the meanings that first present themselves; and if these operations fail to produce the anticipated complexity, you will even propose a significance for the words that are *not* there, because, as everyone knows, everything about a poem, including its omissions, is significant. Nor, as you do these things, will you have any sense of performing in a willful manner, for you will only be doing what you learned to do in the course of becoming a skilled reader of poetry. Skilled reading is usually thought to be a matter of discerning what is there, but if the example of my students can be generalized, it is a matter of knowing how to *produce* what can thereafter be said to be there. Interpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing. Interpreters do not decode poems; they make them.

To many, this will be a distressing conclusion, and there are a number of arguments that could be mounted in order to forestall it. One might point out that the circumstances of my students' performance were special. After all, they had been concerned exclusively with religious poetry for some weeks, and therefore would be uniquely vulnerable to the deception I had practiced on them and uniquely equipped to impose religious themes and patterns on words innocent of either. I must report, however, that I have duplicated this experiment any number of times at nine or ten universities in three countries, and the results were always the same, even when the participants know from the beginning that what they are looking at was originally an assignment. Of course this very fact could itself be turned into an objection: doesn't the reproducibility of the exercise prove that there is something about these words that leads everyone to perform in the same way? Isn't it just a happy accident that names like Thorne and Jacobs have counterparts or near counterparts in biblical names and symbols? And wouldn't my students have been unable to do what they did if the assignment I gave to the first class had been made up of different names? The answer to all of these questions is no. Given a firm belief that they were confronted by a religious poem, my students would have been able to turn any list of names into the kind of poem we have before us now, because they would have read the names within the assumption that they were informed with Christian significances. (This is nothing more than a literary analogue to Augustine's rule of faith.) You can test this assertion by replacing Jacobs-Rosenbaum, Levin, Thorne, Hayes, and Ohman with names drawn from the faculty of Kenyon College—Temple, Jordan, Seymour, Daniels, Star, Church. I will not exhaust my time or your patience by performing a full-dress analysis, which would involve, of course, the relation between those who saw the River Jordan and those who saw *more* by seeing the Star of Bethlehem, thus fulfilling the prophecy by which the temple of Jerusalem was replaced by the inner temple or church built up in the heart of every Chris-

Blackness and Poetry

Fred Moten

14-18 minutes

Given how the category of the human has been put under the severest pressure by the terrors of colonialism and imperialism, black thought, which is to say black social life, remains a fruitful site for inhabiting and soliciting the human differential within the general ecology.

1.

New contributions to Afro-diasporic thought, whether under that contested rubric or the purportedly more politically attuned category of the transnational, whether they continue to explore and inhabit the anecological, anafoundational rupture of the slave trade or seek out the new epistemologies and ontologies that are said to correspond to an era more properly defined by global flows of information, labor, and capital across the boundaries that mark the Westphalian international order, continue to produce and expand possibilities for moving through the politics of identity that lie at the heart of the European political and philosophical project of sovereignty. Now, in the wake of poststructuralism, postmodernism (which should be understood not only as a political-economy of dispersal but also as the poetics of experiment that corresponds with and resists it) and the various ways they

allow for critical investigation of the very ideas of subjectivity, and given how the category of the human has been put under the severest pressure by the terrors of colonialism and imperialism, particularly when these are the forces the first world and its others turn upon themselves, black thought, which is to say black social life, remains a fruitful site for inhabiting and soliciting the human differential within the general ecology. Black thought is the socio-poetic project that examines and enacts these possibilities insofar as they exist over the edge of the separatist, monocultural and monotheistic imperium that will have been defined in and by ontological and epistemological settlement. So that while we must work in admiration of scholars whose attempts to discover and delineate new ontologies and epistemologies bring into sharper relief the limits and limitations of ontology's and epistemology's joint power and sphere of influence, it is from those terminal interminabilities of passage, which M. NourbeSe Philip announces in ana(n)themic song, that we won't and can't (re)turn. In turn, in this continual turning out of the plain of no return, in the constant dislocation of our endless arrival, we book passage on this transportive thought: that modernity (the confluence of the slave trade, settler colonialism and the democratization of sovereignty through which the world is imaged, graphed and grasped) is a socioecological disaster that can neither be calculated nor conceptualized as a series of personal injuries.

Consider Philip, whose example is so prodigious and so profound; consider, in particular, her *Zong!* (first published in 2008 but in progress insofar as it continues to deepen and unfold in rich irruptions of aniterations and nonperformance). The story whose telling *Zong!* seizes, the seizure whose toll *Zong!* sings, is well

known: In 1781 the captain of the slave ship Zong (a vessel of Dutch manufacture which earlier had been called *Zorg*, or *care*) ordered that some 150 Africans be thrown overboard so that the ship's owners could collect insurance taken out on their "lost cargo." Philip's irruptive interruption of the long, unnatural history that envelops and exceeds that event takes up the unseemly phonic proximity of song and *Zong!* Philip's heroism, which emerges as a radical disavowal of the heroic, consists in a deep and fatal sounding. She descends into a place from which neither return nor recovery are possible. Strangely, because it is of the eternal stranger, that place's character is that of a non-place, a zone of differentiated stress and distress whose particular gathering of trouble is not alleviated but redoubled by a transfer of energy from *atopos* to utopia that even all brutality and remembrance cannot still. The one who dives, who falls, into the wreckage of the shipped cannot come back for or as or by herself; but there is a frayed, refrained remainder that is more than both the reality and the dream of subjectivity. *What remains is more than incalculable loss.* The logic of this supplement, whose appearance as fade and induced forgetting is *terribly beautiful*, dictates that the next word be "nevertheless." Nevertheless, this deprivation is sung forevermore. Flung into and out of the depths, there's a broken psalm of gathered brokenness whose exhausted articulation by degrees, through every remote displacement of confinement in expanse, is given to us now as preservation, lifted, lifting, into fugal, centrifugal air, the lyrical imposition of the *commercium*, the celebration of our funereal, venereal mass. En masse, Philip realizes this inescapable and overwhelming truth: that insofar as the story of the Zong cannot be told, or sung, alone it isn't a story, it isn't anybody's story, at all. *Zong!* is the story of no-body and it

cannot be sung alone. The soloist, the "chorister whose c preceded the choir," has come to tell you that and nothing more. *What remains is that she who is no more, who cannot come, has come to tell you that there's nothing more than that incalculable loss and supplement.* She has come to tell you what she cannot tell, to tell you that she cannot come. Sent with a song for you to sound, a scar to swoon, a swarm to send you, too, there's just this sending, nothing more. Whatever anextraordinary rendition proceeds must be in haptic concert, the irreducible sociality of black descent/dissent and black ascent/assent in profoundly exhausted, animated and animative, consent.

2.

Poetry blurs, but where's that coming from? How is endless play confirmed after, and against the grain of the very idea of, the work? We're supposed to derive from the work, in its completeness, some sense of its rule. But what about the openness of the work, its internal sociality as well as the social relations of its own production, which not only escape but also succeed the works seizure, not to mention that rubbing of the work that rubs the very idea of the work out and into the everyday crowding of our everyday hold and, therefore, allows and requires the anti-interpretive erotics that Susan Sontag called for, in "Against Interpretation," but which her commitment to the work, to its accompanying metaphysics of discretion, kept her from imagining? This set of ethical questions turns out to be ecological as well—what sustains us in, what sustains itself as, poetry; what poetry calls upon us to sustain in and of itself; is impure production's anaproductive, degenerative and regenerative, madness. And it's still going crazy! The prophetic and projective

announcement of the work's opening was also a description of a
general socioecological *poiesis*—in imaginative compact with love
as well as lunacy—brought more fully into relief in and by
socioecological disaster. This openness, this dissonance, this
residual informality, this refusal to coalesce, this differential
resistance to enclosure, this sounded animateriality, this breaking
vessel and broken flesh is poetry, one of whose other names, but
not just one name among others, is blackness.

To think poetry in the name of (its) blackness is, crucially, to
consider the work's generative incompletion along with that of the
one who is supposed to have made it. The work presupposes a
productive self, an onto-mono-theological presumption with which
many contemporary poets have tried to dispense, the trouble being
that we have to account for the provenance and the fate of the ones
who dispense it. (Un)fortunately, Kant and Adorno are always here
to help us with that.

> Genius is the talent (natural gift) that gives the rule to art. Since
> the talent, as an inborn productive faculty of the artist, itself
> belongs to nature, this could also be expressed thus: Genius is the
> inborn predisposition of the mind (*ingenium*) through which
> nature gives the rule to art (*Critique of Judgment*, § 46).

The proper [*eigentliche*] field for genius is that of the power of
imagination [*Einbildungskraft*], because this is creative and, being
less under the constraint of rules than other faculties, it is thus all
the more capable of originality.... But every art still requires certain
mechanical basic rules, namely rules concerning the
appropriateness of the product to the underlying idea; that
is, *truth* in the presentation of the object that one is thinking of.
Now this must be learned by means of school rigor, and is indeed

Blackness and Poetry

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always an effect of imitation. However, to free the power of imagination even from this constraint and allow the talent proper to it to proceed without rules and *swoon*[*schwärmen*], even against nature, might deliver original folly; but it would certainly not be exemplary and thus also would not be counted as genius (*Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 329).

Even in Olson, whom I have been shamelessly and religiously chanting in my head this whole time, there's a massive problematic regarding the relations between genius, generative power, rule, concept, invention, concept, purposiveness and nature. The unnatural, the unprecedented, is there, awaiting discovery. You could ask: is genius that which gives or that which breaks the rule? And then you could say that giving and breaking are all devotionally bound up with one another. Let's call this monkish criminality Monk's Law since it is precisely in his flouting of rule, which is given in a bad, jurisgenerative romance with rule, that Monk requires and allows us to ask what is the nature of the rule that nature gives to art? If the proper (i.e. open and anoriginally improper) field for genius is imagination, because imagination flouts rule, then how do we speak of the rule that emerges from rule's eclipse? Eclipse, but not absence, evidently, for every art requires, according to Kant, "certain basic mechanical rules, namely rules concerning the appropriateness of the product to the underlying idea." This conception of rules is tied to a certain understanding of art as the representation of an idea that, in turn, underlies or undergirds the product/work. Kant speaks of this in relation to truth, "truth in the presentation of the object that one is thinking of." But what if representation is the instantiation of a radical impropriety? What if truth is given in and by way of this

dehiscence? This is something Adorno approaches by way of the notion of *Bewegungsgesetz*, which is usually translated as the law of motion, and by way of its relation to radical art's primary and necessary darkness.

> The inner consistency through which artworks participate in truth always involves their untruth; in its most unguarded manifestations art has always revolted against this, and today this revolt has become art's own law of movement [Bewegungsgesetz] (*Aesthetic Theory*, 168-69).

To survive reality at its most extreme and grim, artworks that do not want to sell themselves as consolation must equate themselves with that reality. Radical art today is synonymous with dark art; its primary color is black. Much contemporary art is irrelevant because it takes no note of this and childishly delights in color (*Aesthetic Theory*, 39).

What if genius is a kind of extralegal lawfulness, or a legality given in the breaking/making of rule/s? This, again, would be Monk taking the law out—his anabenedictine frenzy; his anaprocessual practice; his holy, anoriginal, anaperformative folly. Does the rule, the concept, come first? Does a rule, an idea of form, come first, even before the informal, out of which form might be said to have been generated? How does an improvisation begin? From here you could ask two more questions: how does the entrance into a compositional song form begin? What are the social conditions for the form's emergence? But you could also ask: How do we enter into an improvisation and how does the improvisation become recognizable (or does it ever become recognizable) as a work (of art) (*schöne Kunst*)? What if we refuse the distinction between fine art and handiwork, Monk's dissident elbow work, the imposition of

position in his halting dance, its extended recursion and still moving? What if practicing, what if the practice of art, is improvisation's continual breaking and making of the rule of art, in jurisgenerative refusal, in unofficial recusal, in the continual putting into play, of the very idea of the work of art? Monk's law becomes Monk's Dream, his dramatic, anarkestral, anatraumatic*Phantasie*, which moves as if swarm and swoon were meant to be together in a Zukofsky translation, in deliverance of old-new foolishness, an exemplary and supernatural. But what if I'm moving independently of the notion of the priority of the concept/rule, which is to say before the distinction between invention and discovery, which is the ground, for Kant, upon which genius rests? What is it that we have in mind—what fleshly, fugitive, dispossessive animation of mind is given—when we begin to improvise? Do we have in mind a representation, a concept, a rule, a model, that instantiates the very possibility of what we will have done? Or is there a common social underground capacity for such representation—which will have always turned out to have been retrospectively projected onto our activity, with no beginning and no end, calling into question precisely as it calls into being (the very terms of) the distinction between the new thing and what was already there—that troubles mind and whatever it is that mind is supposed to have?

The representational theory of mind is supposed to deal with the problem of unchecked genius, unchecked generativity, unchecked sensual materiality: "the imagination in its lawless freedom needs to have its wings severely clipped by the understanding": but what if the understanding is, itself, a function of the imagination and must, itself, be checked? Poetry is the highest verbal art, the place

where this interplay of creativity and rule manifests itself in such a way as to prove, more or less constantly, the capacity for the supersensual to assert itself, after all, in triumph over the tumultuous derangements of original folly, of this constant tendency for unruly materialization and differing. Again, what's at stake is a certain way of understanding how nature gives rule and how poetry re-gives that giving with austere extravagance. But when Olson speaks of the sentence as the first act of nature he does so within a general permission poetry takes—to push on and against that, to pass through the sentence and its passing, it's having been passed, to submit the sentence to a terrible modality of passage, a horribly excluded middle passion, Philip's extramusical plea, her complex pli, her deeply wrought and incalculable ply. Eternal, internal, discomposed and anacomputational commutation of the natural sentence is the solo gone awry.

This has been a pair of little pieces called blackness and poetry. This is blackness and poetry.

Some Definitions of Poetry

Poetry and eloquence are both alike the expression or utterance of feeling: but, if we may be excused the antithesis, we should say that eloquence is heard; poetry is overheard. Eloquence supposes an audience. The peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener. Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind. Eloquence is feeling pouring itself out to other minds, courting their sympathy, or endeavoring to influence their belief, or move them to passion or to action. (John Stuart Mill)

Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought; it is that from which all spring, and that which adorns all; and that which, if blighted, denies the fruit and the seed, and withholds from the barren world the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life. It is the perfect and consummate surface and bloom of all things; it is as the odor and the color of the rose to the texture of the elements which compose it, as the form and splendor of unfaded beauty to the secrets of anatomy and corruption. (Percy Bysshe Shelley)

If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire ever can warm me I know
that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.
These are the only way I know it. Is there any other way? (Emily Dickinson)

Poetry is what gets lost in translation. (Robert Frost)

'Great literature is simply language charged with meaning
to the utmost possible degree.'

Dichten = condensare.

I begin with poetry because it is the most concentrated
form of verbal expression. Basil Bunting, fumbling about
with a German-Italian dictionary, found that this idea of
poetry as concentration is as old almost as the German
language. 'Dichten' is the German verb corresponding to
the noun 'Dichtung' meaning poetry, and the lexico-
grapher has rendered it by the Italian verb meaning 'to   (Ezra Pound)
condense'.